

Armenian Historiography for the Mongols

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In the mid-thirteenth century, the Mongols, named by Grigor Aknerts'i, the contemporary Armenian historian, as a *Nation of Archers*, became widely known to the world for building the most extensive land empire in history. They controlled territory that stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the Adriatic Sea, all the way to Korea, most of Asia, excluding India, and Eastern Europe including Hungary.

The Mongol conquest has become the subject of extensive recent academic publications.¹ The relationship of the Mongols with their subject peoples remains the chief interest of modern scholars. Likewise, the goals and themes of my research were to explore the relationship between the Armenians and the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During my research, I became aware that this relationship developed in many different ways between the Mongol Empire and Greater Armenia on the one hand, and between the Mongol Empire and the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia on the other. My interest was particularly drawn by the fact that part of Greater Armenia, having been conquered by the Georgians, tried to sustain its sovereignty through the individual contacts of the Armenian princes with the new conquerors, the Mongols. Besides this, there was another pattern to the Mongol-Armenian relationship, which was established between the Cilician Armenian monarchy and the Mongol Empire, according to which the Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia accepted tributary status without suffering a Mongol invasion. In both cases, the Armenians entered into direct contact with the Mongols, which was exploited by the invaders, while the Greater Armenians acted as the subjects of the Mongols to assist the latter's further conquests of the Middle East, the Cilician Armenians, being vassals, participated in conquests as the Mongols' partners.

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¹ We are indebted to the fairly recent works and valuable expertise of Thomas Allsen on cultural exchanges within the Mongol Empire, Reuven Amitai on Mongol and Mamluk relations, Peter Jackson on the relations between the Mongols and the West, David Morgan on the Mongols' rule and administration, Christopher Atwood on the Mongol Empire and many others.

Despite the importance and comprehensiveness of the Mongol Empire as a subject for study, research on the Mongols and Armenians is relatively meagre and has generally been undertaken only in the light of the damage brought by the Mongols to Greater Armenia. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the historical events are often evaluated only in the light of local conditions. Second, the sources are sometimes biased and conform to the ideology of a particular time. Since the studies of the Mongols are based on what was written by their vassals, most of the information about the conquerors and their image is understandably more negative than positive.

There is substantial modern scholarship on the subject of the Mongol invasion of Armenia. For instance, the Soviet scholar H. Manandian explores the subject in depth as a separate topic in the third volume of his *K'nmakan Tesut'iwn Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmut'yan* (Critical View of the History of the Armenian People) in 1952. The main consideration of this work concerning the Mongol period in Greater Armenia is that it was a dismal moment in the history of Armenia. However, Manandian's detailed study of the initial Mongol conquest of Armenia, the location and names of the battlefields and the economic issues of the country, especially the trade circumstances under the Mongol governors, are very useful for this research. Despite this, in some details, such as the association of *Sayin Khan* only with Batu Khan,² his findings are arguable. His statement that the Armenians and Georgians were at a much higher level of social development than the Mongols and that the Mongols were unable to alter the social formation of the Armenians, was possibly dictated by the ideology of the soviet time the work was written.³

This seems to be a common approach by Soviet scholars. The second volume of the *Sketches of the History of the USSR*, edited by Grekov in 1953, which covers the medieval period and relates to the issues of this study, is also biased in favour of Soviet ideology, comparing the Mongol invasion with a huge devastating machine, which halted the progress of the world. However, it is of value as it highlights the local conditions under Mongol dominion in each region of the former Soviet territories. Especially the economic conditions of the Caucasus, including Greater Armenia, are examined in depth to demonstrate the damage brought by the Mongols. It is clear that the volume uses a range of primary Armenian sources, unfortunately, in most cases without mentioning them.

In addition to these works, the *Social Economic and Political History of Armenia in the 13th-14th Centuries* by L. Babayan, written in 1969, and his chapters on the Mongol period in Greater Armenia in the third volume of *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmut'iwn* (The History of the Armenian People) written in 1976, remain the basic works to consult, although they are not free from Marxist-Leninist ideology. Nevertheless, Babayan has extensive references to the primary sources of the Armenian Houses and their history. Moreover, he made a comparative study of Armenian and Persian sources to find out that Armenian authors like Kirakos Gandzakets'i, Vardan Arevelts'i, and Step'annos Orbelian were known to Rashīd al-Dīn, the Persian contemporary author.

However, A. Galstyan has a different approach. In his *Armjanskije istochniki o Mongolakh* (Armenian Sources for the Mongols) written in 1962, he examines the primary Armenian sources with an aim to demonstrate that the Armenian historians in their writings shared more sympathy with

² Cf. Cleaves, 1954, 425.

³ Manandian, 1952, 245.

the Mongols and particularly with the development of Mongol-Armenian relations. The essential point in assessing Galstyan's work remains the fact that he is inclined to confirm the possible existence of the actual document of the Mongol-Armenian agreement of co-operation, mentioned by Hayton or Het'um Patmich'. Therefore, he makes extensive references to this document in his Russian translation based on the French and Latin texts.⁴

Another point of view is expressed by R. Bedrosian in his doctoral dissertation "The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13th-14th Centuries" in 1979, which needs to be acknowledged as a meticulous work. However, Bedrosian tends to see the Mongols or external factors as a main motive in the decline of the Armenian Houses, although this process of the failing powers of the Armenian princely Houses started much earlier.

The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia has been studied by a number of scholars in connection with the history of the Armenians or with the Crusades and the history of Byzantium. The works by Rudt-Collenberg,⁵ Boase,⁶ Mutafian,⁷ and by Dedeyan⁸ have contributed greatly to the study of the political history of Cilician Armenia, its internal and external affairs and its involvement with the Mamluks, Crusaders and Il-Khans. Especially, Der Nersessian's textual study of the different editions of Smbat Sparapet's Chronicle known as the *Royal Chronicle*⁹ along with the partial translation into English need to be acknowledged. Her edition of the *Chronicle* discovered the important detail of the Mongol failure in Syria in 1260, which was explained by the excessive heat of the place and by the sickness among the Mongol horses.¹⁰

In addition to these, recent research on the Mongols in Syriac sources by Pier Giorgio Borbone, as well as an apologetic view of the facts and their interpretation for a Muslim and Christian readership in Bar Hebraeus by Denise Aigle should be also mentioned.¹¹

A wide range of modern western and Russian scholarship on the recent and early period should be mentioned with regard to the Mongols, Armenians, Mamluks and the Crusades. In addition to these, the use of the works of Mongol scholars, such as Bira,¹² Shirendyb,¹³ Dalai¹⁴ and Dulam¹⁵ should be brought into focus, some may be for the first time. With the great help of the scholarship of Amitai and Stewart, the extensive Arab sources could be tackled, in which the dynamics of Mongol-Mamluk relations and Mamluk-Cilician Armenian affairs are highlighted.¹⁶

⁴ Galstyan, 1962, 124-26, n.164.

⁵ Rudt-Collenberg, 1963.

⁶ Boase, 1978.

⁷ Mutafian, 2001.

⁸ Dédéyan, 1996.

⁹ Der Nersessian, 1973.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹¹ Borbone, 2004, 2005, 2006; Aigle, 2005, 87-107.

¹² Bira, 2002, 2006.

¹³ Shirendyb, 1966.

¹⁴ Dalai, 1992.

¹⁵ Dulam, 1999.

¹⁶ Amitai, 2004, 2005; Stewart, 2001.

Peter Jackson's assessment of Western sources for the Mongols, and especially his opinion of the Cilician Armenian source of Hayton written in 1307, inspired my study to look at the reasons where and for whom the primary sources were written.¹⁷

The information from different historiographical traditions is often contradictory and varies according to their views of certain historical events, which are based on their culture, locality, time and style of writing as well as the character of the sources. While reading primary sources in the original is important, but it is not enough. It is crucial to understand the patterns of thought of medieval Armenians, Mongols and the neighbours who wrote about them.

Since there are no sources compiled by historians of the Mongol dynasty for the Armenians, the issues connected with the Mongol-Armenian relationship are mainly based on what the Armenians and others chose to mention about it according to their historiographical traditions.

The twelfth-thirteenth centuries formed one of the richest periods in Armenian historiography. It gave more than ten historians and chronologists, like Samuel Anets'i, Mkhit'ar Anets'i, Matheos Urhayets'i, Mkhit'ar Ayrivanets'i, Vardan Arevelts'i, Kirakos Gandzakets'i, Grigor Aknerts'i, Vahram Rabuni, Smbat Sparapet, Het'um Patmich', Step'annos Orbelian, and etc. However, Armenian sources for the Mongols differ in their attitudes towards the Mongols, expressing both neutral and personal views and depending on where they have been written, in Greater Armenia or in Cilician Armenia.

The essential source for this study remains the *Patmut' iwn Hayots'* (History of the Armenians) by Kirakos Gandzakets'i (1200-1271) which has 65 chapters that review the political history of Armenia from its Christianisation until 1266/67.¹⁸ It has several thematic sections, such as political history and biographical accounts of clerics in Greater and Cilician Armenia as well as in Caucasian Albania. Much of this work is devoted to the events of the historian's own day: the Mongol invasion and Mongol domination. From chapter eleven onwards, Kirakos Gandzakets'i gives an extensive and in-depth account of the Mongols, starting from the emergence of the Mongols in the lands of Greater Armenia, Georgia and then in Cilician Armenia. The reason for this is that, in 1236, Kirakos was captured along with his teacher Vanakan Vardapet¹⁹ by the Mongol commander Molar in a village called Lorut, south of Tavush fortress, where they had taken shelter from the Khwārazmian onslaught. On Molar's order, Kirakos was taken to serve the Mongols' secretarial

¹⁷ Jackson, 2005.

¹⁸ In 1961 K. Melik' Ohanjanyan published a complete critical edition of the work. The work was translated into French by E. Dulaurier in 1858 (extracts only), by M. Brosset in 1870, into Russian by T. Ter-Grigorian in 1946 and A. Khanlarian in 1976, and into English by R. Bedrosian in 1975/1986. For details on various editions and translations, see R. Thomson, 1995, 141-42; T. Greenwood, 2007, 245-46.

¹⁹ Vanakan Vardapet or Yovhannçs Tavushets' i (1180-after 1251) was a scholar and teacher of Kirakos Gandzakets' i, Vardan Arevelts' i and Grigor Aknerts' i, and the author of the *History of the Tatars' Invasion*, which was lost; Galstyan, 1962, 118, n. 127.

needs, writing and reading letters during the whole of the summer of 1236.²⁰ This gave him a certain understanding of the history and religion of the Mongols as well as knowledge of Mongolian, which he elaborates in chapter 32.²¹

Several points can be highlighted in this work with regard to the Mongols. First, it is Mongol vocabulary. Kirakos spelt the Mongol words in the way they were pronounced at that time, which itself is one of the contributions of this Armenian author to Mongol studies. An important point that caught my attention is the way Kirakos interprets the words for sea - as *naur-tangez*, and river - as *morán-ulansu*. The sea in Mongolian is *dalai*, lake is *naur* and ocean is *tengez*, and river is *mörön*. *Ulansu* is an archaic expression for river, which is preserved in some dialects of Mongolian. However, for the Mongols in both the past and present, whose country was, and is still land-locked, the dual use of any water element is very common, and it is remarkable that Kirakos' vocabulary shows this usage. The middle-Mongolian *köke* (*qnquj*) is given for heaven; God is given as *ten-gri*, and *el* (*ł*) and *irgen* (*hpłquł*) for earth. Around 70 words and their meanings that Kirakos includes in his Mongol vocabulary still await linguistic analysis, which will certainly contribute to the study of middle-Mongolian.

The second point is that his work deals in depth with the history of his own age: the crushing of the Georgians by the Mongol armies in 1220/21, the sack of the cities of Gandzak (Ganja), Shamk'or, Lori/Lori, Ani, Karin (Erzurum) and of many other districts including Khachen.²² Kirakos is very explicit about the extent of the destruction wrought by the Mongols in Greater Armenia and Georgia, and also shows great concern about the Armenian lords' actions under Mongol pressure. He observes the hopeless situation of Prince Awag in resisting the Mongols and his decision to submit to them.²³ The author also comments on the breach of international etiquette in handing the Seljuk refugees to the Mongol commander Baiju by the Cilician Armenian King Het'um I (r. 1226-69), which was justified on the grounds of the safety of his kingdom.²⁴ He records that Het'um I followed the example of the Georgian king who went to the Mongol Khan to express his submission. The Armenian monarch sent his brother Smbat to the Mongol court and later he himself went to Mongolia.²⁵ The author also recounts Het'um's campaigns in Syria and describes the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols.²⁶

The third point is that Kirakos wrote his observations of early Mongol administrative-fiscal policies in Armenia and Georgia prior to the Mongol governor Arghun's census of 1243/44.²⁷ Fur-

²⁰ In the autumn of 1236, Vanakan and Kirakos were taken to the fortress of Gag, where only Vanakan Vardapet was allowed by the Mongols to be bought by the local people for eighty *dahekans*; Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 1961, 244-52. *Dahekan* is Persian *dahgān*, the name of the silver coin corresponding to the Greek *drakhmē*; Hübschmann, 1962, 133; M. Bedrossian, 1985, 132. It is 50 *dahekans* in Vardan Arevelts'i, 1991, 146. Kirakos escaped captivity. Vanakan Vardapet and Kirakos Gandzakets'i, were in Mongol captivity for about one year; Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 1961, 243-52; Davit' Baghishets'i in Hakobyan, 1956, 346.

²¹ Kirakos Gandzakets' i, 1961, 271-75.

²² *Ibid*, 235-37, 241-43, 254-55, 258-62, 267-69.

²³ *Ibid*, 254-57, 262-67.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 285.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 314-17, 364-72.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 377-84, 387-89.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 312-14.

thermore, Kirakos notices the important fact that Hülegü (1256-65), on coming to Armenia, was a royal prince but not yet a khan and so refers to him as 'khan-like' (*ηκυβαδβ*) Hülegü.²⁸ According to Kirakos, the Mongol army stationed in Armenia under the command of General Baiju feared Hülegü as if he were Khan.²⁹ Unfortunately, his history abruptly breaks off for unknown reasons after describing the war between the Il-Khan Abaqa (1265-82) and Berke Khan (1257-67) of the Golden Horde in 1266.

The fourth point is that Kirakos mentions the Mongol-Armenian agreement, established between the Mongol Khan and the Cilician Armenian monarch.

Finally, the work relies on oral reports of the informants and first-hand witnesses the historian met and interviewed, which reflect the plausibility of this source. Since his main account is of the Zak'arid Princes' deeds and their relations with the Georgians and the Mongols, the work possibly was written for the Zak'arids.

Nonetheless, some discrepancies over the location of certain events are found in his history that contradict the accounts given by Muslim historians. As is common in medieval historical records, Kirakos' history is not free from fanciful tales about the non-human shapes of barbarian peoples or their non-human behaviour.

Despite these, the *Patmut'awn Hayots'* remains as one of the most valuable thirteenth-century Armenian sources for the Mongols due to its abundant information about the dynamics of Mongol-Armenian relations.

Another significant source to complement Kirakos' writings is the work of Vardan Arevelts'i (ca.1200-1271), entitled the *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean* (Historical Compilation).³⁰ Since Kirakos and Vardan were students of the same teacher, Vanakan Vardapet, and they wrote their histories more or less at the same time, the sources tend to reinforce each other. However, the main highlight of this source is different and Vardan introduces Armenian clerical attitudes towards the Mongol invasion of Greater Armenia, which stands alone among the Armenian sources. For this, it is important to look at his biography. From the comments he left about himself, we may conclude that Vardan Arevelts'i was born around 1200 in the region of Gandzak in north-eastern Armenia.³¹ It is also clear that Vardan taught in several monasteries and then went to Jerusalem. On his way back, he stopped in Cilicia and stayed there for five years.³²

According to Kirakos Gandzakets'i, in Cilicia, Catholicos Kostandin Bardzrberdts'i (1221-67) was very concerned about the devastation of Greater Armenia under the Mongols, attributing these sufferings to their sins. Therefore, the Catholicos entrusted Vardan with an *Encyclical Letter* written for the ecclesiastics of Greater Armenia, which comprised 25 points of instruction for the re-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 375.

³⁰ He also wrote on geography and Commentaries on Grammar, the Psalms, and the Song of Songs; Thomson in Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 5-7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³² *Ibid.*, 6.

ligious canons.³³ In 1246, Vardan travelled through the districts of Greater Armenia collecting the signatures of the monks and lords and then sent this letter back to the Catholicos.³⁴

Vardan stayed for a while in the district of Kayen, teaching.³⁵ He returned to Cilicia later and remained there until 1251, and then left for Greater Armenia again with a *Letter of Spiritual Advice* from Catholicos Kostandin for the congregations, to help in the theological disputes about the son of God between Armenians and Roman Catholics.³⁶ He spent the rest of his life in Greater Armenia.

Unlike Kirakos' writing, the *Historical Compilation* of Vardan falls into the category of chronicles rather than of histories in the early Armenian tradition and is based on a wide range of previous Armenian sources.³⁷ Vardan reviews in a very condensed manner the general course of human history based on the narratives of Genesis and brings the history of Armenia up to 1267. He engages with the Mongols only at the end of his chronicle. He dates the first arrival of the Mongols in the land of Greater Armenia to 1220 and describes the division of the Armenian land into lots by the Mongol commanders, as does Kirakos Gandzakets'i, albeit very briefly.³⁸

More of his insights are also found in his narration of his visit in 1264, to Hülegü in Tabriz. He depicts the Mongol Il-Khan as having a very positive attitude towards the Christians. But he was most impressed by Hülegü's Nestorian Christian wife Doquz (Toquz) Khatun, who is mentioned in his work with a degree of excitement.³⁹ An important detail which is found in his source, along with those of Step'annos Orbelian and Kirakos Gandzakets'i, is the Il-Khan Abaqa's marriage to Maria Despina, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor.⁴⁰ At this point, the script of the *Historical Compilation* for some reason was lost and was found again by a relative of Vardan eighteen months later in the bazaar of Tiflis. But Vardan added only a few more pages and ended his Chronicle in 1267 with the death of Catholicos Kostandin.⁴¹

This work is well addressed in terms of the author's opinion of the Armenian ecclesiastical position in relation to the Mongol invasion. Vardan's personal view of the first two Mongol Il-Khans, the Cilician King's visit to the Mongol court,⁴² and the attitude which he dealt with the information available to him reflects the plausibility of this source.

Another important source is the work of Grigor Aknerts'i (1250-1335) or Akanets'i, entitled the *History of the Nation of the Archers*. His work has long been accessible in French, Russian and English translation.⁴³ The authorship of this source is associated with three different names: Vardan

³³ Kirakos Gandzakets 'i, 1961, 293-310.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 310-11.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 311.

³⁶ Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 148; Kirakos Gandzakets 'i, 1961, 329-38; Thomson, in Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 7.

³⁷ Thomson, 1999, 126; Thomson in Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 5, 9.

³⁸ Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 142-44.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 149-50, 157-61.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 161; Kirakos Gandzakets 'i, 1961, 399; Step'annos Orbelian, 1910, 470.

⁴¹ Thomson, in Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 9.

⁴² Vardan Arevelts 'i, 1991, 148-48.

⁴³ French translation by M. Brosset in 1851, Russian by Patkanov in 1871 and English by Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye in 1954.

Patmich', Maghak'ia Abegha and Grigor Abegha Aknerts'i. N. Pogharean, in his introduction to the critical edition of 1974, proved that the first two could not be the authors of the work.⁴⁴

Grigor Aknerts'i in his *History of the Nation of the Archers* describes the events relating to the Armenians from the reign of Chinggis Khan down to 1271/73.⁴⁵ The work was written in 1273 in Akants' Anapat (the Hermitage of Akan) in Cilicia.⁴⁶ Unlike traditional Armenian historiography, although the author introduces himself as a student of Vanakan Vardapet, along with Vardan and Kirakos, this source is far from being a universal history. Its main consideration is the history of the thirteenth-century Cilician and Greater Armenians. The analysis of this source in terms of our main topic concerns the following:

First, unlike the work of Kirakos Gandzakets'i, the *History of the Nation of the Archers* has some discrepancies in dating some events that occurred in Greater Armenia before the 1250s, like the first appearance of the Mongols in Armenia as 1214 instead of 1220, and the defeat of the Sultan of Rūm in 1239 instead of 1243. The reason may well be that the author was not an eyewitness of these events. Of course, these might be scribal errors as well.

Second point is that, from the 1250s onwards, Grigor accurately provides some details on the Mongols, Mamluks and Armenians, on a history that was well known to him and was connected to Cilician Armenia, that make this source very important to this study as well as to researchers of this particular period.

Thirdly, Grigor Aknerts'i contributes to Mongolian studies by mentioning many names of Mongol chieftains who governed in Greater Armenia.⁴⁷ Akinean, Alishan, Oskean and Blake suggest that Grigor had possibly used Vanakan Vardapet's lost annals as his source, which is possible. However, the series of Mongol names and expressions, which are not found in other works, show that Grigor added his own knowledge to his *History of the Nation of the Archers*.⁴⁸

The fourth point is that the source has some colourful details of the Mongol-Armenian relations, like the reception of the Cilician Armenian King by the Mongol Khan and his readiness to fulfil all wishes of the King⁴⁹ and the Mongol-Armenian treaty established by Smbat Sparapet and the Mongol general Baiju.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Grigor Aknerts'i, 1974, 5-15. Prior to Pogharean, Vardapet Nersēs Akinean and Fr. Hamazasp Oskean of the Vienna Mekhitarist Congregation raised the issue of excluding the name of Maghak'ia from the authorship of the work; Grigor of Akanc', 1954, 271-74.

⁴⁵ Grigor Aknerts'i, 1974, 28, 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 54. According to Pogharean, the manuscripts are found in the Hakobeants' collection the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, MS no. 32 (v. 1, Jerusalem, 1966, 144-47); and MS no. 960, (v. 3, 1968, 518, 527-28). Pogharean found the Armenian text edited with an English translation and notes by Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye with many misprints; Grigor Aknerts'i, 1974, 5-15.

⁴⁷ Grigor Aknerts'i, 1974, 26.

⁴⁸ Grigor of Akanc', 1954, 6-8.

⁴⁹ Grigor Aknerts'i, 1974, 37-38.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

Another significant author is Step'annos Orbelian (1250/60-1304), the metropolitan of the province of Siwnik', who wrote the *Patmut'iwn Nahangin Sisakan (History of the Siwnik' Province)*.⁵¹ The *History of the Siwnik' Province* has 73 chapters, starting with the creation of the world, recounting the time of Sisak, the predecessor of the Orbelian House, until the author's own days in 1299, when the History was completed.

From chapter 66 onwards, information on the Mongols is found. Since Step'annos Orbelian personally interacted with the Mongols, his history is essential for this study for information on the Orbelians and their relations with the Mongols that is not found in other works. His opinion of the Il-Khans is in line with the policy of the Orbelian House, which aimed to get power over other Armenian families through the Mongols.⁵² From his work it is clear that Step'annos himself paid a visit to Arghun Khan (r. 1284-91), who honoured him. After the death of Arghun Khan, he had to visit Tabriz again, this time to meet the Il-Khan Geikhatu (r. 1291-95), who re-established the Orbelians' rights. In connection with the accession to the throne of Ghazan Khan (r. 1295-1304), Step'annos was in Tabriz for the third time when he was given more rights than under former rulers.⁵³ The source can be viewed as a narration of the glorious deeds of the Orbelian House, although for the early part of his work, Step'annos Orbelian probably used the sources of his predecessors, namely Kirakos Gandzakets'i and Vardan Arevelts'i.

Apart from Step'annos Orbelian, there is another Step'annos called Episkopos, a chronicler of the thirteenth century, who wrote a *Chronicle*.⁵⁴ He started his work from the events occurred in 1193, when the *Chronicle* of Samuel Anets'i ended.⁵⁵ This source was mistakenly attributed to Step'annos Orbelian and in 1942, Ashot Abrahamian published this chronicle under the name of Step'annos Orbelian.⁵⁶ Due to events described in common by Step'annos Episkopos and by Step'annos Orbelian in the *Patmu'tiwn Nahangin Sisakan*, it was claimed that this *Chronicle* was written by the latter. However, L. Khach'ikian and V. Hakobyan expressed their doubts and argued that it was a different chronicle, written by Step'annos Episkopos of Siwnik'.⁵⁷

Step'annos Episkopos begins his work in 1193 with a short introduction and ends in 1290, thus covering almost 100 years. The *Chronicle* of Step'annos Episkopos, due to confusion around its authorship, was left out of the orbit of scholars' use. Without any doubt, it is one of the most important Armenian sources that relates events which occurred in Greater Armenia, Georgia and Cilicia, and involves the Zak'arids, the Mongols and the Mamluks as well as the Il-Khans.

⁵¹ Relatively detailed information about his life is to be found in his work. In chapters 65 and 71 of the *History of the Siwnik' Province*, he writes about himself as metropolitan and prelate. From childhood, he was brought up by the great prince Smbat Orbelian. Tarsaich Orbelian was the father of the historian. Step'annos Orbelian was ordained a priest in 1280 and in 1285 was sent to Hromklay, the catholicosal see, to be anointed as a bishop. Before he arrived, however, news reached him at Sis that Catholicos Hakob Klayets'i (1268-86) had died. Therefore, he spent three months in Adana, as a guest of King Lewon III (1270-89) until the appointment of a new Catholicos. On 14 April 1286 (on Easter day), Step'annos was ordained by Catholicos Kostandin as a bishop, the metropolitan of Siwnik', and spiritual leader of Eastern Armenia. In the same year, he returned home; Step'annos Orbelian, 1910, 477-82.

⁵² Step'annos Orbelian, 1910, 410-20.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 482-83.

⁵⁴ The *Chronicle* is held in Matenadaran, MS no.8481; Hakobyan, 1951, 32; Galstyan, 1962, n.80, 33.

⁵⁵ Hakobyan, 1951, 35-44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

The *Chronicle* of Step'annos Episkopos is valued for its details that are not found in other sources relating to the historical events in the Caucasus, Cilician Armenia, and the Near and Middle East. The *Chronicle* has some colourful moments regarding the depiction of the conquest of Karin by the Mongols and his surprise about how quick and suddenly the country was found full of the Tatars, or how these Tatars considered the manuscripts and the church utensils as their booty. These details without doubt are important to understand the Armenians' reaction to the Mongol invasion.⁵⁸ Therefore, the *Chronicle* of Step'annos Episkopos indisputably augments the list of Armenian historical records for the Mongol period.

The *Annals* by an unknown author of the thirteenth century who lived in Sebastia (Sivas) and was thus named Sebastats'i, is another source that requires our attention, because previous scholarship has paid insufficient attention to it.⁵⁹ The importance of this source is enormous; it gives a full account of the Mongol conquest of Armenia and of its regional history. The *Annals* cover the period from the first century AD until 1220. Then, after an interruption because the pages describing the events of 1221-1254 were lost,⁶⁰ the chronicle goes on until 1300, which is corroborated better by other sources.

An important characteristic of the *Annals* of Sebastats'i is that the author describes historical events along with natural calamities that preceded or followed warfare or the devastation of Armenian lands. For example, he observes that the earth cracked and oozed black water before the Mongol commander Chormaghan penetrated the Caucasus, and notices the earthquake that occurred before the Mongol governor Arghun started the census in Erzinka and Sebastia in 1254. The comet, which appeared in 1264, foretold the death of Hülegü Khan who died in 1265. After the death of King Lewon in 1287, a great earthquake killed many people, and when Ghazan Khan battled against the Mamluks, a severe famine followed in Sebastia in 1300.⁶¹

Some mysterious signs preceding the plunder of Gandzak described by Sebastats'i are very similar to what Kirakos Gandzakets'i mentions.⁶² These few similarities in the descriptions in these two texts may suggest that Sebastats'i was well aware of Kirakos' writing; however, it does not indicate that these texts are related to each other.

The names of battlefield locations and the consequences of certain events given by Sebastats'i expand the information from other sources, and suggest that he had access to some alternative information, making it as important as those mentioned above.

⁵⁸ Step'annos Episkopos in Hakobyan, 1951, 35-42; in Gastyan, 1962, 35.

⁵⁹ Three manuscripts of Sebastats'i that held in Matenadaran were published by G. Manvelian and G. Abrahamyan in 1940 and later as the *Minor Chronicles of the thirteenth–eighteenth Centuries* in the second volume by Hakobyan in 1956; extracts of it were translated by Galstyan into Russian in 1962.

⁶⁰ According to both Hakobyan and Galstyan, the text of the oldest of the three manuscripts, attributed to Sebastats'i in the Erevan Matenadaran, (no. 2174) goes as far as the events of 1220 and was carried on by a continuator with some slips until 1309; the other two MSS each end in different years (1297 and 1300); Hakobyan, 1956, 115; Galstyan, 1962, 106, n.1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 139, 141, 148, 151.

⁶² Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 1961, 235-37.

Before introducing the next sources, it is important to see from the works described above that the Armenian historiography of the thirteenth century, especially what was written in the 1270s, is rich and often very detailed in its information about the Mongol-Armenian relationship. The six major authors offered for consideration above deal in general with the issues of the Mongol invasion and the events that occurred in the Armenian territories and beyond them. These sources without any doubt reflect the growth of medieval Armenian historiography. In addition to that, they represent another excellent example of world medieval historiography.

The following sources represent the historical writings of the Cilician Armenians. The *Chronicle* of Smbat Sparapet (1208-76), a brother of King Het'um I, is one of the major works on the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and a valuable source for the Crusades and the Mongol-Armenian affiliation as well as for Armenian-Byzantine, Armenian-Persian, and Armenian-Arabic relations.⁶³ The first section of the *Chronicle*, which covers the period from 951 to 1162, mainly follows the *Chronology* of Matthew of Edessa (d. ca. 1140) and of his continuator Gregory the Priest. Smbat's original work covers the period from 1163 to 1272 and for an unknown reason terminates there. An anonymous writer continues the *Chronicle* up to the year 1331.⁶⁴

The Mongols are mentioned in the *Chronicle* of Smbat Sparapet in connection with the flight of the members of the Seljuk Sultan's family to Cilicia. He also gives detailed information on the penetration of the Mongols into Kh^wārazmia, Central Asia and the Middle East. The author is explicit about the capture of the city of Samarqand since he stayed there on his way to the Mongol court in Qara-Qorum and from Samarqand he wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, King Henry I of Cyprus or Henri de Lusignan (1218-53). In his letter, Smbat mentioned many places he passed through and many Christians he saw scattered in the East.⁶⁵

The interesting point of the *Chronicle* of Smbat Sparapet is that the author offers his own reasoning behind the historical events to many of which he was an eyewitness. Thus, he attributes the failure of the Mongols in Syria in 1260 to illness among Mongol troops and horses, because of hot climate.⁶⁶ Since the source was written for the Het'umids, Smbat was well aware that this failure had a negative consequence for Mongol-Armenian military co-operation, which had been established by the Het'umids. Being delegated to attend Batu Khan and then to go to Mongolia to open negotiations with the Mongol Khan, Smbat Sparapet has written a valuable work for consultation.

Another important Armenian source that merits consideration is *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient* by Hayton.⁶⁷ The author is also known as Het'um Patmich' (d. ca. 1311) or Het'um the historian. This is a major source for the medieval history of Mongolia, as well as the Middle East,

⁶³ Galstyan, 1962, 47-64.

⁶⁴ Der Nersessian, 1973, 353. There are three Armenian editions of the *Chronicle* published in Moscow in 1856, Paris in 1859 and in Venice in 1956. Extracts from this work were translated into French by V. Langlois in 1862, by E. Dulaurier in 1869, and by G. Dedeyan in 1980, into English by Der Nersessian in 1973, and into Russian by A. Galstyan in 1962 and in 1974; Thomson, 1995, 198-99. Smbat Sparapet is also the author of a *Lawcode* and the translator of the *Assises d'Antioche*.

⁶⁵ Galstyan, 1962, 64-66.

⁶⁶ Der Nersessian, 1973, 370; Halperin, 1985, 48.

⁶⁷ Hayton, 1869.

and is as renowned as Marco Polo's or William Rubruck's travel books.⁶⁸ By order of Pope Clement V (1264-1314), the Armenian monk Het'um (Hayton), lord of Korikos, a member of the royal family, dictated this history in French in the city of Poitiers in 1307. In the same year, it was translated into Latin by Nicole Falcon (Nikoghayos Salkon),⁶⁹ then in the last third of the fourteenth century into Spanish,⁷⁰ and later it was re-translated into French by Jean le Long in 1351.⁷¹ There are two Tudor English translations (probably made in the 1520s)⁷² as well as German, Italian and Dutch versions.

This work is valued in terms of the historiography of the Western Crusades, the Armenian Christians and Papal diplomacy.⁷³ But it appeals also to the Muslims and Mongols, and it is a remarkable account of the history, culture, ethnology and geography of the people who inhabited the Near and Middle East, and Central Asia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

However, according to Bundy and Jackson, this work represents early fourteenth-century Armenian propaganda aimed at promoting the Latin-Mongol-Armenian relationship and reflects the engagement of the Armenian elite to justify their action to ally with the Mongols.⁷⁴ Indeed the author was not a contemporary of the first submissions of the Armenians to the Mongol Khan and the final section of this source deals with a proposal for a Crusade to re-conquer Palestine, especially the Holy Land, in co-operation with the Mongols and Armenians.

Putting aside this notion of appealing for a Crusade, I would rather propose to look at the *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient* as a source of Mongol-Armenian relations written by an Armenian historian, since this source is, according to Bundy, 'the most sophisticated example of medieval Armenian historiography'.⁷⁵

The *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient* begins with an account of the fourteen oriental kingdoms that existed in the thirteenth century, with details of their inhabitants, natural resources and political status. The part that relates to the Mongols begins with a description of the realm of Cathay or Northern China.⁷⁶ Many details of the Mongols and their history, from this historian's viewpoint, are found in this work. For instance, Chinggis Khan in the *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient* is a poor old man who had a vision of a white man riding a white horse, who addressed him as *Chinggis*. This white man told Chinggis that by the providence of God he would

⁶⁸ On Marco Polo and his travels, see Jackson, 1998, 82-101 and edition by Komroff, 2003. On Rubruck, see Jackson, 1987, 92-97; Komroff, 1989; Jackson/Morgan, 1990.

⁶⁹ Hetoum, 1529.

⁷⁰ Hethum, 1934.

⁷¹ RHC, DA, 2, lvii; liii-lv.

⁷² Het'um, 1988.

⁷³ Bundy, 1987, 223-35.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 233; Jackson (The Mongols and the West), 2005, 120-21.

⁷⁵ Bundy, 1987, 233.

⁷⁶ The term Cathay (Khitai) emerged after the fall of the T'ang dynasty (685-907), when the empire was divided into regions under the domain of the Tangquts, the Ch'i-tan, the Chin and the Sung; Shirendyb, 1966, 95-103. After 947, the people called Khitan were sinicized and became a native Chinese dynasty, the Liao. In the twelfth century, the Qara-Khitai, a group of people who took refuge in Central Asia after the overthrow of the Khitan/Liao Empire, entered eastern Iran, but affected only Transoxania; Boyle, 1968, 147-48. On Qara-Khitai, see Biran, 2005.

rule over the Mongols. The enthroning ceremony of Chinggis, according to the nomads' tradition, was held on a black carpet.⁷⁷ Lifting him up, the Mongols named him Chinggis Khan. The administrative and military systems of the Mongols were characterised in the *History* by the decimal system⁷⁸ and by their obedience to the legislation called *Yasa*.⁷⁹ The story continues that God told Chinggis Khan to go west and conquer countries. Before setting out, the Mongols had to kneel down nine times, and Het'um emphatically states that, from this, the worship of the number nine started among the Mongols. After kneeling and worshipping, the sea receded to open the road to the west.⁸⁰ The accounts of some of the Mongol customs in existence at that time as well as the myths and legends of Mongolian origin are given, as is consistent with reports by Marco Polo and other western travellers.

Despite the fact that the source was written for the special purpose of persuading the Latin powers to ally with the Mongols, and the few lapses of dates and details, the *History of the Tatars* still has value as a contemporary source for the Mongols for several reasons. First, it has a reconstruction of the history of Mongol-Armenian relations as full as it was available to attract the attention of western kings.

Second, it is clear that the Mongols were seen by the Armenian author as the Christians' only allies against the Muslims to liberate the Holy Land and to save the Crusader states on the Syrian coast, and thus to resolve a long-standing battle against the Muslim world. This was also a common point of view of the lords in both Greater and Cilician Armenia.

Third, although the reference of Het'um Patmich' to the preparations made to convert Möngke Khan to Christianity, does not seem to be historically accurate, this act is also mentioned by other Christian travellers. Therefore, this source cannot be dismissed just as propaganda. As in the case of every medieval historian, we have to understand and take account of his outlook and aims in making use of the materials he records.

Fourth, one of the interesting points of this source lies in the fact that the text of a Mongol-Armenian agreement between the Cilician Armenians and the Mongols is included in detail. Although the details of this agreement are not found in other sources, the actual fact of his mentioning that the Armenians entered into an alliance with the Mongols is supported by other Armenian sources written long before Het'um Patmich', in particular by Kirakos Gandzakets'i. This may reflect a belief held true at the time. Therefore, it is impossible to exclude this source from the discussion if only because the Armenian interpretation of historical events is put forward.

⁷⁷ In Mongolian tradition, it is a white felt blanket. However, Het'um explained the choice of black colour, saying that 'the Mongols never had fine cloth, or maybe they were so foolish and vile that they did not know how to get it'; Het'um Patmich', 1951, 33.

⁷⁸ Any military unit was based on the decimal system, where the nuclear number increased in multiples of ten to *tumen* or ten thousand. Each commander was in charge of ten people. It was an easy way to be accountable and to take responsibility; Shirendyb, 1966, 109.

⁷⁹ *Yasa* or *Jasa* is the derived version of the Mongolian Code of Law *Ikh-Jasag*. The *yarliks* or decrees issued by the Khan should never conflict with the *Yasa*; Shirendyb, 1966, 129.

⁸⁰ Het'um Patmich', 1951, 39.

Besides these major sources, there are many minor ones, like the *Chronicle* of King Het'um II, written in 1296, which covers the period from the tenth century until his own days. The work was continued by different people up to 1351.⁸¹ Due to this work, the issues of Mongol-Armenian co-operation under Mamluk pressure became possible to consult. The *Chronicle* of Mkhitar Ayrivanets'i (1222-91) goes up to 1289, though the dates are not specified. At the end of his chronicle, there is some information about the Mongols, starting from the first raids of Jebe and Sübedei into Greater Armenia until the enthronement of the Il-Khan Arghun (1284) and the death of the Cilician King Lewon (1289). Mkhitar has some details that are not found in other Armenian annals, such as Hülegü killing all the Chaghataids (*ջաթալու*), who were the Chinggisid princes; and Tegüder fleeing to Swanetia to escape execution.⁸²

The Armenian colophons are important sources for this study,⁸³ not only because of their detailed information about the year and place the manuscripts were made, along with the copyist's and recipient's name, but also due to their references to the dates of the Mongol destructions or census-taking, like the colophon of the Gospel of the monastery in Getik dated in the early 1230s.⁸⁴

More particularly, I found them useful for their explicit references to the Mongol Il-Khans (e.g. the colophon of the Armenian Gospel from Vaspurakan dated 1304),⁸⁵ and the political and economic conditions under which the manuscripts were copied, as well as their descriptions of the circumstances of a particular event that was characteristic of a certain village, town or monastery (the colophon written in Glajor monastery in 1314).⁸⁶ They were also helpful in establishing the family relationships of some of those who were mentioned as patrons or recipients.⁸⁷

In general, although the Armenian colophons of the thirteenth century describe the Mongol invasion as a human disaster, they express more neutral views about the Mongols, whereas the Armenian manuscript colophons of the early fourteenth century interpret the Mongols as God's chastisement for human sins.

In spite of there being no direct link to the subject of Mongol-Armenian relations, the large collection of inscriptions of western and eastern Armenia represents another important source for this study. These inscriptions explore the details of taxes and tributes levied in Greater Armenia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (e.g. the inscription of the city of Ani, dated 1270 or the edict of Abū Sa'īd (r. 1316-35) in Ani), as well as the deeds of certain people inhabiting a certain area and the memorials they left behind (inscriptions in Gandzasar, dated 1280 and 1286).⁸⁸

⁸¹ Extracts of the *Chronicle* are translated in Hakobyan, 1951, 65-101; in Galstyan, 1962, 71-78.

⁸² Mkhitar Ayrivanets'i, 1860, 68.

⁸³ The colophons are collected and published by Khach'ikyan in 1950 in the *Colophons of the Armenian Manuscripts of the fourteenth century*, by Mat'evosyan in 1984 in the *Colophons of the Armenian Manuscripts of the thirteenth century*, and selectively translated into English by Sanjian in 1969 in the *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301-1480*.

⁸⁴ Mat'evosyan, 1984, 183.

⁸⁵ Sanjian, 1969, 48.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 58.

⁸⁷ Even in the thirteenth century, historians like Step'annos Orbelian made great use of the colophons in their works; Bedrosian, 1997, 52.

⁸⁸ The *Annals of the Inscriptions* by K. Kostaneants' and the eight volumes of *Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum* published in Erevan from 1960-1999 remain the foremost collections of Armenian inscriptions.

To conclude it is important to say that comparative reading of a large variety of contemporary sources allows a reconstruction of the details of historical events that can build a distinctive picture of the relationship between Mongols and Armenians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For that reason, the object of this study is to bring together essential knowledge of contemporary Armenian sources for the Mongols. The overall impact of this study is to add one more dimension to understanding the relationships established between conquerors and subject people within the Mongol Empire.

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