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A Comparison and Contrast of the History of Christianity as it Developed in Cappadocia and Armenia during the First Five Centuries AD

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A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AS IT DEVELOPED IN CAPPADOCIA AND ARMENIA DURING THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES AD

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Judy H. Henzel
December 2008

Accepted by:
Dr. Elizabeth Carney, Committee Chair
Dr. Stephen Grosby
Dr. Alan Grubb
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine key political, cultural or environmental factors which affected the rise and development of Christianity in two specific regions of eastern Anatolia during the first to fifth centuries AD. Hagiography and chronicle often portray the progress of Christianity as deterministic and providential. However, unique cultural and political elements proved very influential in shaping the success and forms of Christianity in Cappadocia and Armenia, particularly in the fourth and fifth centuries AD.
DEDICATION

To John, Joanna and John Russell for all their love, patience and support and to those who lived “as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” 1 Peter 1:1 (NASB)
I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to those who helped this thesis achieve its final form. My special thanks go to Dr. Elizabeth Carney for her willingness to serve as my committee chair and also for her patience, guidance and insight through the entire process. Particular credit for a majority of the editing goes to Dr. Alan Grubb. Also, I want to thank him for those informal chats which often helped to illuminate particular problems. Special thanks and acknowledgement go to Dr. Stephen Grosby. He understood my interests and encouraged me numerous times to pursue them. He, in fact, suggested this particular topic and was extremely helpful in pointing me toward ideas and resources that were central to the development of the thesis.

In addition, I state my appreciation to Dr. Roger Grant, Dr. Pamela Mack, Dr. James Burns and Dr. Steven Marks. Dr. Grant made graduate seminars, particularly those outside my area of interest, both illuminating and enjoyable. From Drs. Mack and Burns I learned valuable lessons about the practical aspects of teaching, structuring lectures and the use of internet or other media to connect students with the learning process. Dr. Marks, my department graduate advisor, was a constant source of encouragement and timely advice. I am grateful to the History Department at Clemson for working with this alternative student over the past four years. The classes I took, the books I read, and even the undergraduate papers I graded were all part of a very positive experience. Finally, I acknowledge Armenica.org, the Perry-Castañeda Library and the Ancient World Mapping Project for reproductions of their maps.
PREFACE

The history of religions is a fascinating topic. Throughout the ages, humanity demonstrated a propensity to develop belief systems of some sort to help cope with the tragedies and complexities of life. From the deserts of Egypt to the forests of northern Europe, various cultures produced distinct religions which helped provide order and meaning for their societies.

The history of Christianity is doubly fascinating. Some individuals find genealogy especially intriguing because of a desire to identify with their ancestors or to find connections with the past that help to clarify specific family characteristics; I view the history of Christianity in much the same way. Studying early Christianity forges a link with previous generations of Christians, no matter where they resided.

The topic for this thesis evolved in a rather drawn-out manner. Almost two years prior to beginning my graduate work, I chanced to read a very provocative book. From the Holy Mountain: a Journey among the Christians of the Middle East was William Dalrymple’s narrative of his retracing of a pilgrimage made by two late-sixth century AD monks. His work became a tribute to the dwindling populations of once predominantly Christian areas, Asia Minor and the Levant. Reading the book sparked an interest in the early Christian history of the Middle East.

That interest, however, was temporarily put aside when I re-entered academia after a long absence, specifically twenty years of home-schooling. Although I initially
drifted away from that area of interest, I eventually revived and refocused it, primarily as a result of several conversations with very helpful and insightful faculty members.

Refocusing involved necessary narrowing of the topic. Two distinct areas were finally selected: Cappadocia and Armenia. Why those two? Cappadocia was interesting as it was an area of Asia Minor that many Christians, particularly Protestants, were not very familiar with, despite its rich Christian heritage and influence on Church theology. Armenia was then chosen for comparison and contrasts since it bordered Cappadocia and had an early Christian connection to that land.

Tracing the history of Christianity in these specific locales involved addressing the question of whether certain historical particularities directly affected the localized development of the religion. Accordingly, specific political and cultural events were identified and studied as to their influence on Christianity as it formed in Cappadocia and Armenia. As a result of writing this thesis, I have come to a greater recognition of the almost inseparable link between politics and religion in the Near East during late antiquity. Many modern Americans find it difficult, if not impossible, to admit any interconnection between the two. For American Christians the concept of separation of church and state poses yet another obstacle to realizing just how interrelated politics and religion often were in early Christianity. Christians sometimes want to believe that their religion developed from an entirely spiritual basis and that material considerations such as politics had no direct consequence on its development. However, such ideas were simply not part of the actual history of Christianity in Cappadocia and Armenia in the late-fourth and fifth centuries AD.
The question, “What relevance does that hold for today?” probably arises. To me this topic has particular meaning in light of contemporary events in the Middle East. Politics and religion continue to affect that volatile area of the world. Whether the nation is Iran, Iraq or Israel, politics and religion are two significant factors that weigh heavily upon all decisions made by either national or local leaders. Particulars gleaned from studying earlier centuries help us as Westerners to perceive the unique relationship between the religion and politics and, hopefully, to understand its modern-day manifestations better.

Knowing the early history of Christianity in what is now eastern Turkey and areas of the western Caucasus also serves another purpose. It helps moderns and Christians in particular to recognize and, hopefully, preserve the Christian heritage of an area which today is almost completely void of any Christian presence. Their experiences and their contributions helped to shape the course of Christianity far beyond their own borders. Those Christian communities in Cappadocia and even Armenia may no longer exist, but their legacy deserves to continue.
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<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
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<td>AJA</td>
<td>American Journal of Archaeology</td>
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<td>The Geography of Ananias of Širak.</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

GEOGRAPHY OF ANATOLIA AND WESTERN CAUCASIA

Justifiably, history and geography are forever linked. People and ideas do not exist in a vacuum. The study of history must, in order to present balance and relevance, include some reference to geography, for the actions of humankind are indeed ‘played out’ on some variety of geographic ‘stage.’ To omit any discussion of geography then is to exclude important variables which necessarily contribute to the shaping of particular peoples and societies as well as their subsequent actions.¹ Along with the all-important ‘who’ and ‘what,’ history must include the ‘where’ as well. Given this, let us consider the geography of the general area with which this thesis is concerned: Anatolia² and the western Caucasus.

Anatolia is that section of the Asian continent better known to moderns as Asia Minor or even Turkey. The name itself derived from ancient Greek, identifying the area as the land to the east. Anatolia spanned that Asian territory where the continent intersected Europe. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus included little specific geographic description of the area. It was as if he took for granted that his audience was

¹ The nineteenth century professor and author, William Mitchell Ramsey, was a strong proponent of historical geography. It was his firm belief that the history of any specific area could not be understood without first taking into account its geography. His publications were predominantly concerned with Asia Minor; his Historical Geography of Asia Minor remains an important reference for the area. He combined archaeological and academic studies by conducting several journeys and studies of the area, some for the Royal Geographical Society.

² ‘Anatolia’ is the term which will be used consistently throughout this work. I chose that term for several reasons. First, using the modern national designations for the areas would simply be anachronistic. Turkey did not exist in any fashion within the Greek, Roman and indigenous cultures of the time. Secondly, while the term ‘Asia Minor’ may be allowable as moderns are more familiar with its use, I preferred to use a general term that was more representative of both the place and the time under examination. Therefore, I chose ‘Anatolia.’
familiar with the territory. From reading his Histories one would simply surmise that Asia was that land across the Propontis from Europe. However, Herodotus complicated matters somewhat by using the same term to specify that land area east of the Halys River (Hdt. 1: 130).

Strabo, writing in the first century AD, included more detailed description of both the general landmass and the specific regions or localities situated therein. To him Anatolia, or Asia, was an isthmus located between the Pontic (Black) and the Cilician Seas (Strab. 11.1.7). Like Herodotus he also made use of a secondary meaning. ‘Asia’ was also the ‘peninsula’ west of the Halys River. Both ancient sources are probably referring to a geo-political region; Herodotus saw Asia as the territory east of the Halys which belonged to the Persian sphere of influence. Strabo’s Asia was the district west of the Halys which constituted a Roman province (Strab. 12.1.3).

J.A. Cramer, in his 1832 work, delineated what he considered the boundaries of Anatolia. At the north lay the Black Sea, or Pontus Euxinus in Greek ages; to the northwest lay the Propontis, today’s Sea of Marmara. That body of water was connected by the Hellespont, or the Dardanelle Straits, with the Aegean Sea which formed the western border of Anatolia. The Aegean encircled the western coastal areas and abutted the Mediterranean Sea, forming Anatolia’s southwestern boundary. In that southern area near the region of Cilicia, the shoreline was replaced by the Taurus Mountains, which formed the boundary to the south. These mountains continued eastward to intersect the Euphrates River which formed a natural eastern boundary. The Euphrates originated in the mountains of the Armenian Plateau, mountains following the coastline of the Black
Sea along its southwestern littoral.  

![Figure 1.1—Geography of Anatolia. Map taken from ancientanatolia.com.](image)

Such a general outlining of the natural boundaries of Anatolia reveals two distinct, and important, geographic features: water and mountains. Each of these requires specific technological developments in order for humans to traverse them, especially with armies or in large, migratory groups. The location of the three seas makes Anatolia a peninsula, albeit an unusual one in its close proximity to the continent of Europe. The native Anatolian geographer of the first century AD, Strabo, referred to the area as both a peninsula and an isthmus, but inaccurately stated that by standing on the summit of the highest mountain, Mt. Argaeus, one could see both the Black and the Mediterranean Seas.

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3 Cramer 1971 (1832): 4-5.
(Strab. 12.1.3). The coastal areas, with a more temperate climate than the inland and highland areas, generally enjoyed greater agricultural fertility and prosperity. Historically these areas also saw a greater development of prosperous urban centers and independent kingdoms, although the Hittite Kingdom and possibly Urartu are notable exceptions. The Hittites ruled central Anatolia while Urartu was centered in the area near Lake Van, in far eastern Anatolia.

Mountains also constitute the distinctive feature which makes Anatolia unique; they, like the seas, form natural barriers on three sides. The Taurus Mountain range parallels the Mediterranean for over three hundred miles east to west, beginning close to the coast near the ancient regions of Lycia and Pamphylia and then running northeast through Pisidia, Isauria and Cappadocia. In that region a third distinctive geographic feature of Anatolia, the central plateau, separates the Taurus from the Anti-Taurus Mountains, which run north-northeast through Armenia Minor to connect with the mountains of the Armenian range, the most famous of which is Mt. Ararat. To the north of Armenia are the Caucasus Mountains, forbidding peaks which hampered north to south travel between Europe and Asia. It is only in the west of Anatolia that the mountain ranges taper off.

The presence of the mountains was a natural obstacle first to movements of large groups of people, friendly or otherwise, and later to the development of political unity. However, the mountainous terrain did not preclude trade or even long-distance travel. Anatolia might have been remote but evidence proves that trade existed between it and

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other areas of the ancient Near East. The Neolithic site, Catal Huyuk, has evidence of trade ca. 6700-5700 BC. As for the frequency of travel, even as late as the nineteenth century scholars note the nomadic patterns of shepherds who annually traveled from Syria to the plains of central Anatolia.

Anatolia is naturally divided into two different regions. The western and southern coastal areas typically have a lower elevation, but the mountains in some areas extend practically to the coast, leaving little room for the flat, open areas one might usually identify as ‘coastal.’ The eastern section is primarily mountainous with the central plateau dividing those major ranges. The plateau, with elevation between three and five thousand feet about sea level, is comprised predominantly, but not exclusively, of plains stretching east to west across a vast area. It also features a salt lake and a salt desert.

Anatolia is situated at the convergence of three plant distribution zones, each with distinctive vegetation and implications for agriculture. The Black Sea area has plants unique to the Euro-Siberian zone. Central Anatolia has much in common with the Irano-Turanian zone. Southern Anatolia, due to its location, has vegetation distinctive to the Mediterranean zone. The area near the Taurus Mountains, separating central and southern Anatolia, contains plants native to both the Irano-Turanian and Mediterranean zones.

Scholars visiting the area comment on how that vast plateau affects the human senses. For some the monotony of the plains produced a melancholy impression which

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5 Van De Mieroop 2004: 15. Obsidian, a product of central Anatolia, has been found in various places throughout the Near East.
7 Burney and Lang 1971: 8.
8 Burney and Lang 1971: 9-10.
heightened a sense of complete vulnerability of man to the elements. Others noted the “bare, treeless and dun-colored steppe” but found that, far from being dull, the landscape presented delicate disparities to those who were willing to investigate further. Centuries of erosion caused by deforestation or overgrazing has led in part to the modern bleakness of some sections of Anatolia. The presence of ancient forests is suggested by archaeological discoveries of the remains of animals commonly associated with more heavily wooded areas. Unfortunately, those areas have receded greatly since the Hellenistic age except for those forests along the Pontic coast or in Caucasia. Their continued presence in those two areas might be due, in part, to more consistent rainfall or the efforts of modern governments to protect such fragile environments.

The climate of Anatolia varies according to the region. The coastal areas enjoy, for the most part, a traditional Mediterranean climate. The eastern section has temperatures more in common with Central Asia; both plateau and mountains suffer from extremely hot but brief summers and longer, frigid winters. Although the soil of the plains is fertile in places, erratic rain patterns limit agricultural production. The inconsistency of the rains only adds to the adversities of living in what is at best a harsh environment.

While several rivers flow from the mountains and plateau down to the coastal valleys, only one main river actually traverses the central plateau. The Halys, noted by

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9 Ramsay 1972 (1890): 23. Ramsay associated the central plateau with the topography of Central Asia and contrasted the unbroken expanses of the plateau with the irregular landscape of the coastal, especially the Aegean, areas.
such ancients as Herodotus and Strabo, arises in eastern Anatolia, then flows
southwesterly through the plateau until it turns northward again, finally emptying into the
Black Sea.

For isolated areas such as the central plateau and the eastern highlands one
important feature is the presence of natural routes across the dominant geographic
barriers. Passes such as the Cilician Gates allowed movement across the Taurus
Mountains. The knowledge and use of such routes allowed men to migrate, trade, hunt, or
invade different sections of Anatolia from their own. While similar areas in Europe or
North America were explored or colonized by following the rivers, such was not possible
in Anatolia. The few rivers were often barriers in themselves; most had un-navigable
stretches of rapids.

The Caucasus has been ably defined by one noted scholar as that area bordered on
the north by the Caucasus Mountains, on the east by the Caspian Sea, on the west by the
Black Sea and on the south opening onto Iran, Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia.
Traditionally, it includes two distinct areas: Ciscaucasia to the north and Transcaucasia to
the south.\textsuperscript{13} It is Transcaucasia which is important to this specific work as the ancient
kingdoms of Armenia, Colchis and Iberia were all located in this southern mountainous
area which featured numerous rivers and lakes. Transcaucasia served as a barrier between
the peoples of Anatolia and the fierce northern barbarians of Ciscaucasia.\textsuperscript{14} Generally
considered to be separate from Anatolia, this region, particularly in the southwestern

\textsuperscript{13} Toumanoff 1963: 12. Toumanoff, born a prince in Tsarist Russia, immigrated to the United States and
became a noted historian on both Armenia and Georgia.

\textsuperscript{14} Tsetskhladze 1992: 365.
sections, shares a distinct topographical feature with eastern Anatolia—high mountains. To the east of the Euphrates, the elevation of the mountains increases making Transcaucasia a predominately mountainous area interspersed with plateaus and valleys.\textsuperscript{15}

Locating and identifying distinct geopolitical areas within the ancient Near East is somewhat challenging, if not outright problematic. Thousands of years separate the modern historian or cartographer from the ancient province or kingdom. During that time borders, nationalities and names have shifted or changed, some numerous times; nations, peoples and languages have come and gone. The modern historian or geographer is faced with an arduous task of reconstructing ancient boundaries based on the information in extant sources. Add to this modern unfamiliarity with the area in general and one can begin to understand the complexities facing a scholar of ancient Anatolia and the Caucasus, particularly in relation to helping others to identify unknown locations.

For the purpose of this thesis, Cappadocia is defined as that geographic area that had the Euphrates River for much of its eastern boundary while a southern border was formed by the Taurus Mountains. Separating Cappadocia from Pontus on its northern side were the Pontic Mountains, which continued northeastward into Armenia Minor. Cappadocia’s central plateau area, difficult to access but, when reached, provided easy passage, continued past the western border at Lake Tatta into eastern Phrygia, southern Galatia and northeast Lycaonia.\textsuperscript{16} Strabo, writing in the first century AD, presented the

\textsuperscript{16} In the reconstruction of the approximate borders of Cappadocia I am indebted to Strab. 12.1.1, map #10 produced by Edward Stanford Ltd. in the Jones edition of Strabo and Magie 1950; 200.
borders of Cappadocia: the Black Sea on the north, the Anti-Taurus Mountains to the northeast, Paphlagonia and Galatian Phrygia on the west, and the Amanus mountains to the southwest (Strab. 12.2.2).

![Figure 1.2---Cappadocia. Map used with permission of the Ancient World Mapping Center.](image)

Now that these borders have been identified, it should be stated that they were far from rigid. Hugh Elton, in his *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, proposed that the perimeters of the empire were not always clearly delineated and, when they were, they were often as not disregarded in favor of what he termed ‘overlapping zones’ affected by various factors. In the first century AD alone Cappadocia went from independent kingdom to Roman province; its frontiers and borders shifted and realigned as military

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17 Elton 1996: 4 and 37.
expansion, invasions or administrative reorganizations, in turn, affected the size and shape of Cappadocia.

Geologically, much of Cappadocia is considered flat plateau or tableland; the eastern half forms a “land bridge”\textsuperscript{18} between Central Asia, western Anatolia and Europe. The mountains encircling the plateau divert most of the rainfall, producing very lush, fertile areas near them but contributing to dry interior areas. The extremes of climate, unpredictable rainfall, as well as the ravages of time due to deforestation and over-grazing\textsuperscript{19} combine to create quite a visual contrast to the mountains which hem in the plateau. Described as “lunar . . . daedalic . . . [or] eerie,”\textsuperscript{20} sections of the plateau seem to undergo visual changes, appearing “blinding white in the midday sun, and at other times reflecting a variety of colors and hues—pink, mauve, yellow.”\textsuperscript{21} In one area south of the Halys River surreal escarpments loom unexpectedly out of the plateau. Formed by erosive actions of the river and its tributaries on the porous rock, these ‘sculptures’ occur in varying colors and bizarre shapes with cones occurring more frequently. Odd formations called ‘fairy chimneys’ are conical shaped porous rocks topped with hard, basalt tops set at odd angles.\textsuperscript{22}

Inhabitants of such an environmentally challenging location require adaptability. They must adjust to irregular rainfall as well as the possibility of floods. They utilize available resources. Due to the scarcity of wood on much of the plateau, residents naturally turn to more available alternative materials. The predominant one is stone, as it

\textsuperscript{19} Burney and Lang 1971: 1-4.
\textsuperscript{20} Kostof 1972: xv. Mango 1971: 250 also used the term ‘lunar’.
\textsuperscript{21} Mango 1971: 250.
\textsuperscript{22} Kostof 1972: 16.
was for many residents of the ancient Near East. But in Cappadocia, climate influences the choice as well; seeking shelter from the severe winters and relief from the brief but sweltering summers, the residents built into their mountains and rock formations instead of using them as quarries. Houses, stables, even whole villages were chiseled out of the malleable rock called tufa which comprises much of the region. After Christianity became predominant in Cappadocia, churches and monasteries were also carved into the rock for purposes of protection from raiding tribes or invading armies.\(^{23}\)

As characteristic of other semiarid areas in the Near East, certain types of agriculture in Cappadocia were dependent upon a consistent yearly rainfall. While the soil proved fertile, the production of important crops such as cereals was inevitably tied to seasonal rains. Any climate deviation could prove disastrous; famine often followed seasons of irregular or no rain.\(^{24}\)

Cappadocia’s plateau supported not only the raising of essential grains but also the flat grassy lands along the western Halys River were natural grazing areas due to the volcanic soil.\(^{25}\) As a result, Cappadocia became recognized for its herds of livestock: sheep, pack animals and horses in particular. Despite the vagaries of rainfall and harvest, the central plateau produced “the twin supports on which rural life could be supported,”\(^{26}\) grains and flocks.

Cappadocia was also noted for natural resources involving mining, quarrying and timber. Mineral deposits of red ochre, alabaster, translucent marble, mica, talc, silver and

\(^{23}\) Kostof 1972: 19-23.  
\(^{24}\) Mitchell 1993a: 144. For the production of cereals on the plateau, see Strab. 12.2.10; Magie 1950: 492 and Sullivan 1992: 870.  
\(^{25}\) Magie 1950: 492.  
\(^{26}\) Mitchell 1993a: 145.
lead were all extracted and exported.\textsuperscript{27} Stone was quarried in the central section of Cappadocia near Mt. Argaeus. That area, as well as mountainous regions to the north, supplied precious timber for use in building (Strab. 12.2.7-8).

Figure 1.3. Armenia and Armenia Minor. Map scanned from Loeb’s Tacitus, Volume III.

In the context of this thesis, Armenia, “the roof of Western Asia,”\textsuperscript{28} is that geographic area which on its western side borders Anatolia, the Caspian Sea on the east, and the Caucasus Mountains on the north, and opens to the south toward Syria, Mesopotamia and Iran. Predominately mountainous, it consists of several plateaus of differing elevations. Some plateaus are over a mile high in elevation, and Mt. Ararat rises to an imposing 17,000 feet above sea level.\textsuperscript{29} Terrains vary with the elevation, as well as the climate. Some regions of Armenia look like central Anatolia with their “treeless

\textsuperscript{27} Magie 1950: 493.
\textsuperscript{28} Tozer 1971: 113.
\textsuperscript{29} Tozer 1971: 114.
uplands and monotonous plains,” but other sections resemble alpine vistas or coastal resorts.

Several rivers have their origins in the Armenian highlands. The famous Euphrates River has its headwaters in Armenia and, in antiquity, it divided western Armenia Minor from Armenia Major, or Greater Armenia, as it flowed south and east toward Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. The Araxes River emptied into the Caspian Sea. The key commercial city of Artaxata was located in a bend of the river during ancient times.

Although similar in many geographic respects to parts of eastern Cappadocia, Armenia experiences more consistent rainfall due to its predominantly mountainous terrains. The more plentiful rainfall, in turn, allows Armenia a greater growth of forests than in Cappadocia. The climate is comparable to that of Central Asia, enduring longer winters and perhaps only three short months of summer.

Armenia, much like Cappadocia, utilized its areas of pasturage for the production of herds. Both areas became known for their excellent breeding of horses. Like its western neighbor, Armenia produced some natural resources, chiefly salt and gold during the time of Alexander (Strab. 11.14.9).

If Cappadocia was a natural ‘bridge’ between Central Asia and Europe, then Armenia was the abutment of that bridge. With natural passes in its mountains allowing

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30 Tozer 1971: 118.
31 Fowden 1993: 102.
for greater east-west than north-south movement, Armenia served as a conduit by which men, ideas and armies traveled between east and west.  

Now that a general description of both areas has been introduced, let us consider how that geography affected historical development. As previously described, Anatolia is a natural link between the two continents of Asia and Europe. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century scholar W.M. Ramsay noted that the mountainous obstacles of the Caucasus and the watery barriers of the Black and Caspian Seas combined to funnel human movement from Asia toward Europe in two main directions. First was along a northerly route from Central Asia through what is now Siberia and into Russia. This would be the path taken by the invading Mongols. The second was a more southerly course from Central Asia over the mountains into eastern Anatolia and then across the vast plateau that opened westward. Once the mountainous barrier to the east was pierced, the location of the central plateau facilitated easier access to the western portions of Anatolia and then Europe. Historically, as we shall see, the majority of invasions or migrations from Central Asia traveled along the southern route. That made Armenia and Cappadocia traditional points by which those armies or peoples entered Anatolia from the east. Being situated, as it were, ‘in harm’s way’ would greatly affect the social, political, cultural and religious developments of both the Cappadocians and the Armenians.

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34 Ramsay 1972 (1890): 105.
CHAPTER TWO
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CAPPADOCIA

Situated as they were in eastern Anatolia and the western Caucasus, Cappadocia and Armenia became virtual portals through which migrations and invasions, either large or small, occurred.\(^1\) While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine in detail the passage of various peoples into and across these areas, some mention must be made of those recurring human ‘waves’ which battered these locales in order to gain a better understanding of distinguishing characteristics which affected the history and religion of these areas.

As the geographic features described in the previous chapter contributed to the development of distinctive economic interests, so too the movement and interaction of people in these specific areas over thousands of years combined to create unique societies and states with distinctive cultural, political or religious characteristics. By examining the early history of the area later known as Cappadocia, one can begin to recognize specific socio-political traits which defined Cappadocian society in addition to the introduction of Christianity and quite possibly helped to influence the direction and development of that religion as it was expressed in Cappadocia.

*Designation*

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time when people of that section of eastern Anatolia south of the Halys River, north of the Taurus Mountains, east of Lake Tatta and

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\(^1\) Mango 1971: 19.
west of the Euphrates began referring to their land as ‘Cappadocia.’ In fact, they may not have even used that designation until it was imposed upon them by others. Without the benefit of a native historian versed in local traditions, as with Armenia, it is harder for the historian to ascertain an ‘original’ name. In attempting to reconstruct such an appellation, if at all possible, one must necessarily begin with the Romans. They simply seemed to have taken the name for granted and Latinized the Greek name, *Kappadokia*, used by Herodotus and repeated by later Greek, Latin and Christian authors (Hdt. 1.71-72, 76).

The Persians, immediate predecessors to the Greeks, referred to the area as *Katpatuka*. Armenians called it *Gamirq*, which some scholars think might indicate past Cimmerian presence. Assyrians from the time of Shalmaneser III identified numerous smaller ‘kingdoms’ or principalities within the overall area of *Tabal*; *Bit-Burutash* was the name assigned to the principality located in the southern area near the later capital of Mazaca. The Old Assyrians—approximately twentieth century BC—simply referred to the area as ‘the country.’ Any earlier designation is shrouded in the mists of prehistory.

**Prehistory**

Very little is definitely known of the earliest history of Anatolia. Neolithic sites providing water, abundant game for hunting and fertile soil for agriculture, were located in valleys between various mountain ridges. Çatal Hüyük, ca.6700-5700 BC, showed

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2 Rawlinson 1893: 160 n.3. The exact meaning of the name is unknown. Some propose “Land of the Beautiful Horses,” but as that can not be verified it remains simply a conjecture. *RE* 2002: 1074. The name itself is of “non-Iranian Old Oriental origin.”

3 *CAH* 3.2 1991: 559. Gamir was a late eighth century BC Assyrian name referring to a Cimmerian district in eastern Anatolia. Some connect this term to the Biblical name ‘Gomer.’ See Haupt 1925: 17.

4 *CAH* 2.2 1975: 421-3.

5 Pritchard 1969: 106.
evidence of hunting, agriculture, trade and the breeding of stock animals, such as sheep and goats. This would indicate the early appearance of behaviors, such as trade, raising livestock and agriculture, which continued to characterize the people of central and eastern Anatolia well into modern times.

Evidence also points to the presence of nomadic activity. Whether due, in part, to the need of hunters to follow migratory animals in order to provide sufficient food, the establishment of the obsidian trade, the geographic features of some locales which favored the movement of animals during specific seasons, or human desire to explore beyond the next ridge, nomadic activity became an established tradition in eastern Anatolia. The sometimes threatening presence of nomads alongside settled communities was a reoccurring theme in the history of the Ancient Near East for thousands of years, affecting civilizations from Mesopotamia to Arabia. In fact, transhumance continued to influence the Near East into modern times.

Roads in Anatolia date from prehistory. Many were developed for the obsidian trade. Some, no doubt, were little more than trails identifying recurrent nomadic activity. Many were adapted and expanded by later civilizations, such as the Hittites and Persians.

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6 *OCD* 1996: 190 and *CAH* 1.1 1971: 309. Although several prehistoric sites have been located within Cappadocia, no doubt the difficulty of carrying out archaeological excavations in remote locales that have only become accessible in the past fifty years leaves the historian with continued uncertainties concerning the earliest origins of the people who became known as Cappadocians.

7 *CAH* 1.1 1970: 307. Obsidian, found at prehistoric sites near sources in Anatolia, was an early export to Syria and Palestine.


Bronze and Iron Age Histories

The earliest records for the area associated with Cappadocia are epigraphic sources. Thousands of clay tablets bearing cuneiform writing were found near Kültepe, a modern Turkish village about fifteen miles from the ancient Cappadocian capital of Mazaca/Caesarea. These tablets provide evidence of Early Bronze Age commercial activity and social and cultural ties between eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Merchants from the Assyrian city of Ashur settled at Kaneš, or Kanesh. With the local ruler’s permission and protection, they facilitated trade of wool and copper via caravans to Mesopotamia and the import of textiles and finished goods. The various trading stations established by the Assyrians opened valuable opportunities for interaction with the local people. The basic exchange of goods led to other dealings; social bonds were formed when Assyrian merchants took native women as wives. Elements of Assyrian culture, such as cuneiform writing, were introduced to Cappadocia through personal association with the merchants. 11

A clay document dating from the nineteenth century BC discovered at Kaneš/Kültepe contained an interesting element which helps the historian to identify cultural viewpoints. Describing the dissolution of a partnership between two families, the document identified the locality of each partner. One lived in ‘the city,’ referring to Ashur. The other partner was recognized as residing in ‘the country,’ the settlement at

11 CAH 1.1 1970: 212, 695; 1.2 1970: 708-726; 4 1992(1988): 216; OCD 1996: 190 and Pritchard 1969: 106. Translation of the tablets offers opportunities to study business transactions, legal decisions and even marriage contracts from the twentieth century BC. Some Assyrian men took native women as wives in addition to their ‘official’ Assyrian ones left behind in their home city. The intermarriages would have had a cultural impact on the developing society of Kültepe. (A similar custom was later practiced by French and British traders on the American frontier.)
Kaneş in eastern Anatolia. If this document contains the oldest reference to the area later known as Cappadocia, the identifying name—the ‘country’—seems somehow appropriate for a locale which, even during Roman times, boasted few urban centers and was known for its geographic, and cultural, isolation.

Cultural connections to other areas of the Near East were verified when an Early Bronze Age ‘palace’ was discovered in Cappadocia. The palace was constructed in a manner showing influence, not from Mesopotamia, but from western Anatolia. Such evidence suggests more than cursory contact between eastern Anatolia and the western portion of Asia Minor. It is a visual demonstration that despite their relative geographic isolation the residents of Cappadocia had significant economic and cultural dealings with peoples as far away as the Aegean coast or the plains of Mesopotamia.

The Hittites, rising to dominance in Anatolia at the end of the Late Bronze Age, possessed a political and social structure which had great influence on the development of Cappadocian society. Nobles swore allegiance to a king, who rewarded them with large tracts of land in return for loyalty and military service. This feudal-type arrangement was reinforced by the highly structured society with emphasis on class and function.

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12 Pritchard 1969: 106. A separate marriage contract also used the same terminology to indicate areas of residence. The man, an Assyrian native of the ‘city’ married a woman from the ‘country.’ (Interestingly enough, the contract provided the woman an option whereby, if she proved incapable of bearing children, she was allowed to purchase a slave and present that female to her husband for the purpose of conceiving children. After childbirth the wife was allowed to dispose of the slave woman as she saw fit. A similar practice used later by Sarai and Abram was described in the Biblical book of Genesis. Documentation of the earlier custom provides evidence of cultural acceptance of the custom in specific areas of the ancient Near East.)
13 CAH 1.2 1970: 685.
The topography of Cappadocia favored the development of such a political and social system. Villages, sometimes little more than clan settlements, were located on the large estates assigned to particular nobles. Their remote locations and sometimes inhospitable terrain tended to insulate the estates. This retarded measures by the king to promote unity within his domain. Self-contained as many of these estates were, the more natural forms of local governments were typically controlled by family patriarchs or elders. Aristocratic estate holdings continued in Cappadocia past the advent of the Romans. (A similar form of vassalage proved even more resilient in neighboring Armenia and continued into the Byzantine era.)

The year 1200 BC proved to be significant for much of the ancient Near East. The much-discussed, and often debated, ‘invasion of the Sea Peoples’ occurred close to that time. Established states from Anatolia in the north to Egypt in the south bore the brunt of this vast movement of people. One such invading group was the Phrygians, a federation of as many as five tribes. They pushed into western Anatolia, possibly from Thrace in Europe, and settled predominately in the mountainous regions of southwest Anatolia. They, together with widespread famine, brought the Hittite empire to its end. Their influence spread during the twelfth to the ninth centuries BC and continued eastward across the peninsula towards Cappadocia. One historian wrote:

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16 CAH 2.1 1975: 251. Such family orientations continued to Christian times, as will be noted in a subsequent chapter. Large estates provided aristocratic families with sources of wealth and influence in local village or town affairs.

17 CAH 2.2 1975: 417-422 and OCD 1996: 190. The importance of Phrygian influence on religion will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it to say that their religious views strongly affected the later acceptance of both the Hebrew and Christian religions.

18 CAH 2.2 1975: 422.
When the curtain [of literacy] rises again, central Anatolia is ruled (or at least, occupied) by an invading people, a horse-rearing military aristocracy called the Phrygians (as they were known in the West to the Greeks through Homer), or the Mushki and Tabal (as they were known to the Assyrians in the East.)

Like the Hittites before them the Phrygians contributed to the evolution of later Cappadocian society. The introduction of a military class dedicated to raising horses for combat proved extremely effective in many sections of eastern Anatolia. Mazaca became particularly known for its herds of livestock as the volcanic soil and flat terrain surrounding Mt. Argaeus produced excellent grazing lands.

While the Mushki are clearly associated with the Phrygian invaders, some scholars consider the Tabal to be ‘neo-Hittite.’ These people were situated between the Mushki on the northwest, the Urartians to the east and the Assyrians on the south. Inhabiting what would later be Lacaonia and southern Cappadocia around Mazaca, “Tabal seems to represent the older Luwian elements that survived the Hittite collapse north of the Taurus.”

The argument carries weight considering the topography of the area. It seems entirely possible that groups of Hittites were pushed eastward ahead of the invading Sea Peoples. Those refugees sought shelter in the isolated valley plateau or mountainous regions in southeast Anatolia. Using isolation to their advantage, they formed a type of

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19 CAH 2.2 1975: 417. The Mushki are descended from the Biblical figure of Mosoch, according to Eusebius. He states “Mosoch, the ancestor of the Cappadocians.” (Euseb. Hist. eccl. 9.12.1,7) This legendary figure is also mentioned in the Bible. See 1 Chronicles 1:5 and Ezekiel 38:2.


21 CAH 2.2 1975: 422.
confederated state composed of numerous domains. One such domain was known to the neo-Assyrians as Bit-Burutash.22

This segment of Cappadocian history, much like the later Hellenistic years, would have provided an appropriate illustration for a Machiavellian handbook on political intimidation and domination. Neighboring rulers, such as Mitas/Midas of the Mushki, instigated conflict between the Tabal and Assyrians. Proving reluctant allies of the Assyrians, the Tabal more willingly looked to the kings of Urartu for protection and influence. Urartian kings gladly supported the Tabal to undermine Assyrian influence in the area. Resulting insurrections provided Assyrians with both motive and opportunity to intervene militarily in the area in order to impose Assyrian rule. Regional insecurities and hostilities were further exacerbated by raiding parties of Cimmerians, invaders from the Caucasus area.23

Assyrian leaders campaigned against the Tabal for over one hundred years, with varied success. Tiglath-pileser III’s reliefs from his palace at Nimrud portrayed the conquered Tabal as

men with fine, somewhat Greek features and black or sometimes red curly hair and close beards, wearing earrings of Lydian type, long shirts with horizontal colored bands and tassels at the corners, and high buskins identical with those typical both of Phrygians and Paphlagonians.24

23 CAH 2.2 1975: 423-7; 3.1 1982: 376-413; 3.1 1982: 547-590 and CAH 3.2 1991: 90-3. The Urartians will be discussed in the subsequent chapter on the historical background of Armenia.
24 CAH 2.2 1975: 427.
Sargon II attempted to use marriage alliances and resettlement to direct policy. Later Assyrian rulers were not particularly successful against the Tabal, as they had other more immediate concerns.

Assyrian intervention and rule in Cappadocia were terminated by the seventh century invasion by the Cimmerians. Foreshadowing the destructive migrations of Gothic tribes in later centuries, the Cimmerians swept into Anatolia, possibly from the Caucasus, and obliterated the cultures they encountered. Falling before them were the kingdoms of the Phrygians, Mushki, Tabal and the Urartians. Some scholars speculate that Cimmerians remained in Cappadocia. The association with a region named Gamir strongly suggests to some that a group of the invaders were able to retreat into the more remote areas and escape defeat by later Assyrians.

The Urartians had fallen to the Cimmerians, as had the Phrygians or Mushki and possibly the Tabal. Into this political vacuum of the seventh century BC step Cyaxares and his Medes. They, along with the Neo-Babylonians, destroy Assyrian domination. Next, they expand westward and subdue eastern and central Anatolia, bringing Cappadocia under their rule. But this expansion brings them into conflict with Alyattes, the king of Lydia, who had subdued the Cimmerians in Phrygia. During a battle between

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25 CAH 3.1 1982: 419. Unfortunately Sargon’s policy backfired; his son-in-law conspired against him and was transported to Assyria in chains, along with his family and ruling nobles. Sargon then declared that section of Tabal an Assyrian province and encouraged Assyrians to resettle there. When the Tabal rebelled yet again, Sargon annexed additional lands on the Euphrates border and, following typical Assyrian policy, relocated conquered peoples to populate the troublesome areas. He also built strong border fortresses to guard Tabal from incursions by the Urartians. This area proved troublesome to Sargon to the end; he died on a Tabal battlefield fighting the Cimmerians around 705 BC.

26 CAH 3.1 1982: 364, 429-31 and 3.2 1991: 559. Gamir was the Assyrian name for a section of eastern Cappadocia. Gamirq is also the Armenian name for Cappadocia. The association of Gamir with the Cimmerians comes from a similarity in language as well as personal association with Gomer, a legendary ancestor.
the two kings, a solar eclipse occurred, hastening an end to six years of fighting between the two kingdoms (Hdt. 1.74). As a result, the Halys River in Cappadocia was declared the official border between them.28

Little is actually known of the Medes or their political institutions, culture, art, etc. They left no known written records and what information historians have about them is derived from Assyrian or Babylonian annals and Herodotus.29 Therefore it is very difficult to determine what influence, if any, the Medes, exercised on Cappadocia. It has been suggested that the clothing of the two peoples is comparable. The men of both cultures wore tunics which extended to the knee, trousers fitted at the ankles, moccasins or boots, a cloak and a cap which covered the ears.30 Also, recent scholarship suggests that Pteria, the site of a later battle between Croesus and Cyrus the Persian, was in fact a Median city of significant size.31 If so, historians’ views on the Medes will need to be revised, as might the early history of Cappadocia.

In conclusion, the area that came to be known as Cappadocia experienced a series of political, social, cultural or linguistic changes as a result of the almost continuous movement of people into or across the Anatolian plateau during the Bronze and Iron Ages. The size of the area fluctuated accordingly as borders shifted due to conquest,
invasion, or internal fragmentation. However, by the seventh century BC the combination of two Tabal principalities—Melid, on the northeast along the Euphrates and Bit-Burutash, near Mazaca in the western plateau—formed the nucleus of Cappadocia as it became known to the Persians, Greeks and Romans.

Achaemenid Persian era

Persian hegemony came to Cappadocia when Cyrus defeated the ruling Medes in the mid-sixth century BC and established the Achaemenid Persian dynasty. The Persians, like other Near Eastern rulers before them, centralized political authority under a new dynasty which proved successful in expanding the territorial limits of the state. 

What distinguished Cyrus and his successors from previous Near Eastern rulers was their acknowledgement of existing ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political and religious diversities within this domain. The Persian kings were willing to recognize and assimilate certain political, cultural and religious traditions of their subject nations to strengthen the unity of their realm. Those nations were then allowed to retain certain characteristics, such as dress, language and religion, in return for acceptance of the centralized authority and its administrative policies. Such features allowed the Persians to rule the largest Near Eastern empire to that point.

Cyrus also instituted a distinctive policy toward religion within his new empire. Reigning over a multitude of dissimilar local, regional and national cults, he

32 CAH 3.1 1982: 432.
33 I acknowledge that scholars differ in the nomenclature assigned to Persians with some preferring to use ‘Iranian’ instead. For simplicity’s sake I intend to use ‘Persian’ throughout the course of this chapter with proper adjectives added to define the different empires. ‘Iranian’ will be used to denote social, cultural, or religious influences, which will be discussed in a later chapter.
34 Van De Mieroop 2004: 3.
acknowledged the diverse religions rather than attempting to force the subject nations to accept the Persian deities and forms of worship. Next he ordered that various religious objects which had been taken from their native lands by previous conquerors be returned and, in cases such as Jerusalem or Babylon, the native sanctuaries rebuilt or restored.\textsuperscript{36}

The famous Cyrus cylinder provides epigraphic proof of this policy. Cyrus pronounced,

\begin{quote}
I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Perhaps Cyrus was seeking to use the religious diversity of his subject peoples as a tool to fashion a unifying feature for his new empire. By permitting the free worship of the ancient and ancestral gods, and by requesting the gods’ prayers for him personally, Cyrus was possibly attempting to forge a common bond between the leaders and the diverse religious elements of his realm, foreshadowing what the Romans would later accomplish with the Imperial Cult. Or, by portraying himself as the guardian and restorer of the local or national cults, Cyrus was moving to strengthen the King’s position among his subjects.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} Pritchard 1971: 207-8. He also allowed the return of resettled peoples to their native lands and requested of the restored deities that they intercede for him with Bel, Nebo and Marduk. It is not known whether Cappadocia had ancestral gods or images restored. It does seem somewhat incongruous for a Persian king, who supposedly venerated Zoroastrian deities, to be concerned with gaining the favor of Mesopotamian and Aramaic gods, and indeed, some scholars question whether Cyrus actually followed Zoroastrianism.\textsuperscript{38} Briant 2002: 79.
The satrapy system was introduced into Cappadocia, or Katpatuka,\(^{39}\) to supervise the day-to-day administration of the new province. The satrap, “protector of the realm” in their language, was a Persian nobleman personally loyal to the Great King.\(^{40}\) His official seat is assumed to have been at Mazaca,\(^{41}\) but concrete evidence has yet to verify that.

The satrap generally used members of the local Cappadocian aristocratic families to assist in the management of the province. These elites often intermarried with noble Persian families, creating local dynasties with strong ties to Iranian society and religion. This occurred throughout Anatolia as well as both Cappadocia and Armenia, but was particularly characteristic of Armenia as family ties with the Persian dynasties lasted until the rise of the Sassanid Persians in the third century AD. In addition, these local dynasties formed marriage alliances with ruling aristocrats in adjacent countries, producing an intricate, and often confusing, interweaving of family ties.\(^{42}\) There is evidence that extensive land grants in Cappadocia were awarded to Persians,\(^{43}\) helping to build the foundation for the newer aristocracy.

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\(^{39}\) Briant 2002: 173, 742. That name is listed on the ‘empire lists,’ six royal inscriptions dating from Darius’ reign to that of Xerxes.

\(^{40}\) Briant 2002: 82. During the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses only Persians served as satraps. Later kings still used Persians but also included the offspring of Persian and local elites, the “dominant socioethnic class” of their society. The satrap’s first allegiance was to the king, not the satrapy. Their main responsibility was to “maintain order and to extend Persian power.” (65) In return for faithful service the satrap was often rewarded with the income from large royal estates, situated throughout the empire.

\(^{41}\) Summers 2000: 55. Mazaca was the capital of the later independent rulers of Hellenistic times.

\(^{42}\) Sullivan 1992: 396. In this fashion the nobles in Armenia and Commagene became related, as well as the rulers of Cappadocia, Judaea, Pontus and even Parthia.

\(^{43}\) OCD 1996: 288.
The first named satrap of Cappadocia/Katpatuka was Ariaramnes, who governed around 515 BC.\textsuperscript{44} Xenophon related that Cyrus the Younger served as satrap of Cappadocia as well as of two other provinces—Lydia, and Greater Phrygia (Xen. \textit{An.} 1.9.7). Mithrobuzanes was listed as satrap under Darius III.\textsuperscript{45} At some point he was succeeded by Ariarathes, who served as satrap during the overthrow of the Persian Empire by Alexander.

Herodotus included meager amounts of information on Cappadocia in his work. His identification—all the land between the Euxine/Black Sea on the north and the Taurus Mountains on the south (Hdt. 1.72, 76)—suggests a strategic location within the empire, attested by Xerxes’ order to assemble his army there (Hdt. 7.26). Herodotus referred to the people as ‘Syrians’ (Hdt. 1.72). He also mentioned the famous Royal Road\textsuperscript{46} which ran through Cappadocia and linked Sardis in western Anatolia with Susa in the east (Hdt. 5.52-53).

While not much is specifically known about Cappadocia during the time of the Persian Great Kings, the Iranian influence exerted by interaction with the Persians can be identified. The number of Iranian personal names, the worship of Persian gods, Persian pottery remains, similarity in clothing styles, as well as the adoption of Aramaic for both imperial and personal communications are all eloquent testimonies to the imprint of

\textsuperscript{45} Briant 2002: 796. At least one scholar suggests that he was the descendant of a Persian who saved Artaxerxes from a lion and was given Cappadocia in gratitude! \textit{CAH}, Vol. VI 1994: 220-1.
\textsuperscript{46} The Persian road system facilitated the communication of official edicts, the transference of annual tribute and troop movements. Experts such as Pierre Briant now recognize that there is little evidence to prove that those roads were used for commercial purposes Briant 2002: 376-7. Briant stresses that these roads served political and military purposes.
Iranian civilization on a receptive people. Many of these elements continued to affect Cappadocian society and culture until the establishment of Christianity in the early centuries AD.

At some point *Katpatuka* was divided into two distinct areas: Pontic Cappadocia, or Pontus as it was later known, stretching along the Black Sea between Paphlagonia and Armenia Minor, and Greater Cappadocia, separated from Pontus by mountains. The date and nature of the division in addition to whether these indicated official Persian policies or successful native revolts are unclear. Strabo suggested that the division occurred first under Persian rule, and was somewhat reluctantly confirmed by the Macedonians (Strab. 12.1.4). What is clear is that the southern region formed the core of the later independent

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48 *CAH* 6 1994: 220-1. Briant 2002: 741-2. Some scholars date the division to late Persian times, while other suggest the early years before Macedonian control was firmly instituted. Briant disagrees with Strabo’s account of the division while under Persian authority. He argues that not enough evidence exists to support Strabo’s version.
kingdom and Roman province. It retained a vast expanse of territory as well as its characteristic variety of landscapes, resources and cultural heritages.

**Greek/Hellenistic Age**

This portion of Cappadocia’s history is difficult to clarify, due in part to the tumultuous nature of the times. Alexander’s historians provide minimal information on Cappadocia as these areas “in large measure remained satrapies in partibus.” Much of the struggles at the local level are undocumented, leaving historians open to speculation on the transference of day-to-day authority, if, indeed, there was any. Also, later dynasts typically rewrote early history to portray continuity with the past, stress familial ties to certain dynasties or simply to justify a sudden seizing of power. Therefore, one must approach this time in Cappadocian history ‘with a grain of salt.’

Alexander’s victory at Issus might have weakened Persian supremacy in Anatolia, but it did not end Achaemenid rule or influence in Cappadocia. The large satrapy became the theater for the mobilization of troops by generals who regrouped after Issus. Other contingents responded to the Great King’s call for military reinforcements and proceeded to Cappadocia for deployment.

The fate of Mithrobauzanes, satrap at the time of Alexander’s invasion, is unclear. It is possible he died in battle against the Macedonians. Some scholars maintain

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49 Briant 2002: 694.
50 One scholar proposed that Alexander’s early victories at Issus and Granicus signaled the actual downfall of the Persian Empire as the loss of valuable resources from Anatolia proved too devastating. Cramer 1971(1832): 11. However, Briant 2002: 832 suggests that it was the victories of Antiogonus, Balacrus and Calas, c. 332 BC, which really ended Persian rule in Anatolia.
51 Briant 2002: 743, 829 and 832.
52 Briant 2002: 796.
that Cappadocia at this time “remained a no man’s land.”\textsuperscript{53} The presence of loyal Persian troops in, or near the borders of, the satrapy would support the possibility of military encounters of some type. The Royal Road running through the area expedited troop movements, especially in the western plateau areas. Perhaps some of those troops were adapted to ‘guerrilla’ warfare. It is definitely known that a strong Persian contingent forcibly gained control of the Cilician Gates, entered Cappadocia and “caused havoc.”\textsuperscript{54}

That Cappadocia’s was a precarious political situation is evidenced in the subsequent struggle for control between the Macedonians and assertive native rulers. Alexander’s empire continued to use the Persian satrapal system, with Macedonians primarily serving as satraps after his death. Cappadocia, along with portions of Paphlagonia and Pontus, was assigned to Alexander’s Greek secretary, Eumenes.\textsuperscript{55} However, Eumenes faced a formidable obstacle in the person of Ariarathes, a local dynast of Iranian descent.

Sources disagree as to Ariarathes’ position and his loyalty.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps he took advantage of the military events to successfully seize control of part of Cappadocia in his own name. Perhaps he succeeded Mithrobauzanes as satrap or was appointed governor by Alexander. Whether he changed allegiance to allow a smooth transition from Persian to Greek sovereignty is debatable, as Cappadocia was an early center of support for the

\textsuperscript{53} CAH 6 1994: 860.
\textsuperscript{54} CAH 6 1994: 808.
\textsuperscript{55} CAH 7.1 1984: 28. One author refers to Cappadocia as a “poisoned chalice” and suggests that the Macedonian generals, knowing the instability of the area, intentionally sent Eumenes, unproven in combat, hoping he would fail. His failure would eliminate one rival among many.
\textsuperscript{56} RE 2002: 1074 lists Ariarathes as satrap of ‘northern Cappadocia.’ CAH 6 1994: 220-1 refers to him as ‘usurper’ in the northern section, while 805 states a “native dynast was placed over southern Cappadocia” but does not specifically identify that dynast as Ariarathes. Jones 1971(1937): 175 simply refers to him as satrap.
embattled Great King. What, if any, office Ariarathes held he refused to relinquish it to Eumenes, and it took military intervention by Perdiccas to establish Eumenes as satrap (Plut. Vit. Eum. 472). However, direct Greek/Macedonian control proved short-lived.

Ariarathes II, thought by some to be the adopted son of the Ariarathes executed by Perdiccas, took advantage of the chaos after the battle of Ipsus in 301 BC to establish a claim to Cappadocia, yet remaining, for now, a vassal of the Seleucids.\(^57\) Ariarathes III was the first native dynast to use the title of ‘king’ (Strab. 12.1.2). He also cemented his position within the region by marrying into the powerful Seleucid family, as did his son, Ariarathes IV Eusebes, who married a daughter of Antiochus the Great.\(^58\) The intermarriage with the Seleucid family might have served to augment the introduction of Hellenic culture into certain sections of Cappadocian society.

Alexander’s policy of establishing or restoring Greek city-states, \textit{poleis}, and colonizing them with retired Macedonian soldiers or mercenaries produced outposts for Hellenism not just throughout Anatolia, but in other parts of the Near East, Egypt, the Persian heartlands and further east. While Alexander’s premature death prevented the establishment of a vast Eurasian empire built on ethnic incorporation and cultural diversity, the introduction of elements of Hellenic culture in the wake of his army’s advancements signaled the beginning of a new era in the ancient Near East. The Hellenistic Age witnessed the introduction of Greek civilization to the more isolated indigenous cultures of the Near East and created a medium by which ideas and traditions


could exchange more easily between east and west, particularly between the local elites and the new rulers.

Given the geographic isolation of some sections of eastern Cappadocia it is possible that, in the absence of Persian or Cappadocian nobles—absent fulfilling their military obligation to the Great King—the remaining estate holders or tribal chieftains gained a measure of semi-independence. When ‘the dust settled,’ these new leaders were less than eager to relinquish control of their areas to new rulers. The remoteness of some of the estates and fortresses only aided them in their efforts to retain control and evade foreign domination.

What is known is that Alexander’s death and the subsequent wars between his successors, the Diadochoi, resulted in a disruption of Greek rule in some of the more remote areas of the Near East. Where the three main Diadochoi were unsuccessful in establishing their hegemony, smaller independent kingdoms emerged. Some, utilizing familial ties to former satrapal rulers, established fragile hold over segments of land on the fringe of the larger domains.\textsuperscript{59}

Ariarathes IV successfully shifted his allegiance to Rome after the defeat of his father-in-law at the battle of Magnesia in 190 BC. He, with assistance, negotiated a separate peace (Polyb. 21. 40.4-8). His son, Ariarathes V Eusebes Philopator, advocate of Hellenic culture, was educated at Rome and also studied philosophy in Athens. He even became a citizen of that famous city. Like his father before him, he promoted the spread

\textsuperscript{59} Hewsen 2001: 9. Hewsen notes that more than twenty such kingdoms in the Near East emerged during this period of political instability. They included Pergamon, Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Commagene, Syria, Judea, Egypt, Nabataea, Hatene, Osrhoene, Adiabene, Gordyene, Media, Albania, Iberia, Colchis, Lesser Armenia, Sophene and Greater Armenia.
of Hellenism throughout Cappadocia. Despite a civil war and temporary loss of his throne, Ariarathes V remained faithful to his Roman allies (Polyb, 31.3.1-5) and died in battle, defending Rome’s claim to a neighboring kingdom.

The early death of Ariarathes V provided an opportunity for the neighboring kingdom of Pontus to become involved in the internal affairs of Cappadocia for several generations. Pontic designs on its southern neighbor also set the stage for Roman involvement in Cappadocia, thus setting into motion events that eventually led to the annexation of the kingdom. The Pontic king, Mithridates V, intervened militarily to support the young Ariarathes VI Epiphanes and arranged that king’s marriage to his daughter, Laodice. She was possibly involved in the subsequent assassination of her husband by a Cappadocian nobleman, Gordius. The murder led to efforts by Laodice’s brother, Mithridates VI Eupator, to manipulate the Cappadocian throne through his sister, who served as regent for the young king, Ariarathes VII Philometor. When that failed, the king of Pontus deposed her, murdered her son—at the banquet table—and placed his own son on the throne. His plans for Cappadocia were eventually thwarted by the Romans.

**Roman Era**

According to Strabo the earlier treaties between the Cappadocian kings and Rome included an unusual feature. “In all other cases they [the Senate] gave this honor to the kings individually, but gave it to the king of Cappadocia and the tribe jointly” (Strab.12.2.11). This aspect set the stage for Roman involvement as three parties—

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Mithridates of Pontus, Laodice and her new husband (the king of Bithynia) and the Cappadocian nobles—all sent envoys to Rome to request support for their claims. With the last legitimate Ariarathid heir dead, Cappadocian nobles appealed to Rome for help in the face of Mithridates’ and Laodice’s persistent efforts to install a foreign king on the throne. The Senate, ruling in favor of the tribe, declared Cappadocia free from external control and able to choose its own king. The nobles deferred that decision to the Senate, which named the nobleman Ariobarzanes king in 95 BC.\(^{63}\)

Regardless of the rationale behind the nobles’ dealings,\(^ {64}\) their actions serve as evidence of the socio-political structure which existed in Cappadocia at that time. Cappadocia was still very much a ‘feudal’ society; little had changed at the very heart of their society. Large estates were controlled by powerful nobles; some were very Hellenistic in their outlook, while others had been assiduously courted by the Parthians in attempts to undermine political stability.

Ariobarzanes now ruled Cappadocia, but he was far from secure. Angered at the Roman solution, Mithridates made an alliance with Tigranes of Armenia. Together they invaded Cappadocia; Mithridates reinstalled his son as king and Tigranes plundered and acquired territory. In 92 BC Rome sent Sulla to restore Ariobarzanes to the throne. Yet, after his departure, Mithridates returned and expelled Ariobarzanes again. He would be

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\(^{64}\) Magie 1950: 205. Magie suggested different reasons as to why the nobles rejected the Senate’s decision allowing Cappadocia to be self-governing. Their culture had less experience with ‘freedom’ and self-government than the Graeco-Romans. Also, as their culture had a greater eastern influence, the tradition for kingship and vassalage was strong, particularly in areas removed from Hellenistic influence. One might also speculate whether the nobles correctly assessed the political situation within their country and recognized the existence of factions within their own ranks. These factions could pose serious obstacles to political unity without a strong unifying presence of a monarch.
exiled a total of five times. This instituted a pattern which characterized Cappadocian
politics for several generations. Military assistance was periodically required to support a
king’s claim to the throne. Cappadocia had firmly moved into the Roman sphere, and for
all intents, Cappadocia was now a Roman dependency.65

Ariobarzanes abdicated in favor of his son who was later assassinated by a pro-
Parthian faction within Cappadocia. Ariobarzanes III then became embroiled in the
struggle between Pompey and Julius Caesar. Unfortunately for Ariobarzanes, his actions
garnered him the hatred of Caesar’s enemies and he was later killed by Cassius’ agents.66

In 36 BC Mark Antony deposed the brother of Ariobarzanes III and installed
Archelaus Sisines Philopatris, grandson of the general who had served Mithridates VI
during the Mithridatic Wars,67 on the throne (Strab. 12.2.11). He ruled Cappadocia
during the tumultuous years which witnessed the downfall of Antony and the rise of the
Empire. His rule was reaffirmed by Octavian after the Battle of Actium.68 In recognition
of his new imperial patron, Archelaus renamed Mazaca as Caesarea. He also promoted
marriage alliances with the kings of Armenia and Judaea; he himself married the widow

Sophene and Gordyene, former Armenian districts under Tigranes, to the territory of Ariobarzanes. This
would have given Cappadocia control of Euphrates River crossings from both sides of the river and
extended its sovereignty far into former Armenian and Parthian holdings.
67 RE 2002: 982. The general Archelaus was of Macedonian heritage; perhaps his family had settled in one
of the Hellenic cities along the Black Sea coast. His faithful service was tarnished, at least in the eyes of
Mithridates, by the negotiations for peace which he brokered together with the Roman general Sulla.
Suspicious of treason caused Archelaus to leave Pontus and seek asylum with the Roman general Murena,
left behind by Sulla in Anatolia. Supposedly Archelaus convinced Murena to begin the second Mithridatic
war by invading Cappadocia and attacking the temple-estate at Comana. Murena spent the winter quartered
in Cappadocia, stealing money from various temples. See Magie 1950: 221-230, 243 and 1109 and App.
Mith. 12.9.64.
68 Magie 1950:475 and CAH 10 1996: 151. The author asserts that Octavian confirmed several of Antony’s
client kings in the Near East for three reasons: clemency, continuity and to convey the rewards of loyalty to
the new ruler. In 20 BC, Augustus added the territory of Lesser Armenia to Cappadocia, making it a true
frontier district.
of the King of Pontus. Outliving notable contemporaries such as Herod the Great and
Augustus, he reigned until AD 17. Upon his death the emperor Tiberius, possibly
following Augustan policy regarding client states, annexed the kingdom as an imperial
province. Cappadocian political independence was over.

The Romans incorporated the area for two essential reasons: location and
resources. Cappadocia held a strategic position along the empire’s eastern frontier. That
frontier marked the western boundary of the unfriendly Parthian Empire, whose kings
had been attempting to undermine both Roman presence and political stability of the
adjacent kingdoms of Armenia and Cappadocia for several generations. Cappadocia was
now a crucial buffer state between the two great powers.

The addition of Lesser Armenia as well as the previous acquisition of Lycaonia
had given Cappadocia control over vital arteries: the roads which connected Anatolia to
Mesopotamia and the Levant and the Euphrates River crossings. The river crossings
guarded the approach into the Roman Empire from Armenia and beyond. As these
arteries provided access across important natural boundaries, the strategic location of
Cappadocia could no longer be neglected.

Cappadocia’s annexation also allowed Tiberius access to its wealth as the vast
estates belonging to the throne were now allocated to the emperor. This proved a benefit
to the status of Rome’s aerarium militare, established by Augustus in 6 BC to subsidize

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69 Salmon 1957 (1944): 104 and Jones 1971(1937): 177. Augustus’ plan for the client states was to allow
the native rulers to promote urbanization and economic growth. When those areas reached a certain level
of prosperity they were simply to be added to the empire. This pattern was repeated in several Anatolian
and Near Eastern buffer states. (For a list of such states, see Salmon 105.)
71 Mitchell 1993a: 118.
72 Magie 1950: 491-3 and Sherwin-White 1977: 68. Lycaonia had been granted to Cappadocia c. 131 BC.
the resettlement of veterans and payment of bonuses upon completion of their military service. In 17 BC this fund was precariously low; upon his accession Tiberius was faced with obtaining additional means by which to provide for retiring legionaries and auxiliaries. The annexation of Cappadocia thus presented Tiberius the opportunity to achieve his objective. He gained access to ample resources not only to replenish the military treasury but also to decrease an unpopular inheritance tax by half throughout the empire.

The new province was administered by a different system than had previously been used by the Romans in Anatolia. They chose to implement an administrative system similar to that used in Egypt since the death of Cleopatra. As in Egypt, the emperor was viewed as the ‘heir’ to the last monarch. He, in turn, chose a personal representative, or procurator, to administrate his ‘inheritance.’ The state lands became imperial estates maintained by Roman officials. Provincial control remained under the auspices of the emperor and not the Senate, as was the case in previous consular or senatorial provinces.

Despite the change in political leaders and systems, the Cappadocian aristocracy continued to possess considerable influence. Situated inside their fortresses on their extensive estates or living within the few existing Hellenistic cities, the aristocrats might present one of two ‘faces’ to the Romans. Such would mirror the political factions which had existed within the aristocracy for generations. Some had followed their monarchs’

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76 RE 2002: 1075.
examples and had embraced Hellenic culture and religion. These, upon annexation, might continue that tradition and choose to become involved with the Romans in the various levels of administration. Other aristocrats had maintained their eastern heritage and religion. These may have been more than willing to retreat within their estates to build semi-independent enclaves, strengthen ties with powers to the east and wait for the chance to exert their influence over local and regional politics.

It was as a province that Cappadocia was first introduced to the religion which, in time, came to spread across the area and become the principal religion of most Cappadocians—Christianity. The Biblical book of Acts states that Cappadocians were present in Jerusalem during the first Pentecost and heard the message of Jesus spoken to them in their native language (Acts 2:9 ff). The book of 1 Peter suggests the existence of Christian or Jewish Christian groups spread throughout Pontus, Galatia and Cappadocia by the end of the first century (1 Peter 1: 1).

Cappadocia played varying roles within the empire in the first to fourth centuries. In times of relative peace between the Romans and their eastern neighbors it became a ‘backwater’ area, remote and isolated from the mainstream of Graeco-Roman culture. Then, when eastern enemies to the Pax Romana reappeared, Cappadocia, due to its strategic location, became a focus of military activity.

Nero sent the general Corbulo to deal with a Parthian threat and the ongoing quarrel over Armenian sovereignty (Tac. Ann. 13.8, 34-35). Corbulo used Cappadocia as
a military base, much like the Persian Achaemenid kings, making mobilization of the Roman legions and auxiliaries easier as well as adequate provisioning of the army.\textsuperscript{77}

Vespasian made bold changes which directly affected Cappadocia. Experiencing firsthand the weakness of previous imperial policies concerning the east, he annexed the client kingdom of Lesser Armenia and Commagene and combined Lesser Armenia, part of Pontus, Galatia and Cappadocia to create one large province.\textsuperscript{78} Next he permanently stationed two legions within the new province to guard the Euphrates River crossings as well as the northern approach to Armenia. (\textit{XII Fulminata} was transferred from Syria to Melitene; newly created \textit{XVI Flavia Firma} was stationed at Satala.) Vespasian also ordered the building and garrisoning of as many as ten legionary fortresses at strategic intervals along the bank of the Euphrates River border. Administration of the new province and command of the legions were then entrusted to a governor of consular rank, changing Cappadocia’s status from its previous procuratorial rank.\textsuperscript{79}

Cappadocia, along with other areas of Anatolia, enjoyed the prosperity of the first and second centuries AD. But by the middle of the second century the Roman peace was shaken. Strong earthquakes ruined cities throughout Anatolia. Soldiers returning from a Parthian campaign spread a devastating disease which ravaged Anatolia and other

\textsuperscript{77} Magie 1950: 554.
\textsuperscript{78} Magie 1950: 574 and \textit{RE} 2002: 1077. Lesser Armenia and Commagene, previously annexed by Augustus, had been returned to native dynasts by Gaius, whose eastern policy seemed rather similar to that of Marc Antony—using client kings as buffers on the edge of Roman rule. Vespasian added Commagene to the Roman province of Syria in order to gain control of the Euphrates crossing at Samosata and to expand Syrian borders to meet those of the new Cappadocia. By adding Lesser Armenia he ensured that Rome controlled the northeastern border, an area threatened by incursions from across the Caucasus.
\textsuperscript{79} Salmon 1957 (1944): 250-2; Van Dam 1996: 7; Magie 1950: 574; Mitchell 1993a: 118-9; Jones 1971(1937): 182 and Millar 1993: 80-1. Millar notes that while Seutonius and Tactitus both attribute the reorganization to Vespasian, Josephus credits Titus. Legio XII Fulminata had been defeated by Jewish zealots early in the First Jewish War. It later ‘regained its honor’ and fought with Vespasian in Judaea and was among the first legions to back Vespasian as emperor.
regions; some harder hit areas were military camps and adjacent communities. Already weak from disease, many in Anatolia faced harvest failure and famine.\(^{80}\)

Economic problems engendered by high rates of taxation, currency debasement and increased financial demand of an expanding military combined with serious social problems to undermine the stability of the empire. Add to these the prolonged civil wars fueled by a breakdown in imperial succession, continued natural disasters and barbarian invasions of Roman territory.\(^{81}\) Such an admixture created the volatile third century AD.

In Cappadocia social, administrative and economic disruptions were only intensified by third century invasions. The Goths and the Scythians made repeated raids across the province, burning towns and villages and capturing slaves.\(^{82}\) Yet, the Persian Sassanids, who had overthrown the weakened Parthians, proved far more aggressive and hostile.

Shapur I made several incursions into Roman territory in the mid-third century, advancing as far as Syrian Antioch, which he sacked. In 260 he dealt the Romans a crippling psychological blow by capturing the Emperor Valerian, who lived the remainder of his life as a prisoner. During his third invasion of Roman territory Shapur ravaged large portions of Cappadocia, burning and destroying many of its cities and capturing numerous inhabitants.\(^{83}\)

The traditional foundations of Roman government and society had been undermined and Rome in the third century stood at the brink of collapse. In an effort to

\(^{81}\) Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003 (1962): 375, 393 and 403-408.
face the uncertainties of the age, many in the empire began to hold the Christians responsible for the calamities threatening their communities. The emperor Decius instituted a general persecution of Christians throughout the empire. From then to the time of Constantine, Anatolia was a scene of recurring strong persecutions.\textsuperscript{84}

To reinstate order, Diocletian reorganized both the imperial administration and military in the late third century. He separated the empire’s bulky provinces and, accordingly, divided Cappadocia into two parts. Armenia Minor was located on the upper Euphrates and Cappadocia to the south.\textsuperscript{85} After more than three centuries of Roman rule, Cappadocia at the time of Constantine’s accession was similar in size to the kingdom initially annexed by Tiberius.

In summary, Cappadocia’s long and varied history was marked by a number of significant events and characteristics which combined to produce the ‘soil’ of the first to third centuries AD from which Cappadocian Christianity grew to produce prominent and influential fourth century theologians and monks. Diverse characteristics such as an early pattern of transhumance, establishment of trade, frequency of invasions and migrations, limitations on agriculture due to geographic and climatic factors, and the integration of a variety of cultures, languages and religions all contributed to making Cappadocia what it became once Christianity was introduced. Native Semitic peoples were assimilated along with migratory Indo-Europeans, invading Phrygians and Celts, and conquering Macedonians or Romans. Though decidedly possessing eastern-style traditions, religions and traditional social groups, Cappadocia came under Roman influence while her

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003 (1962): 409-411 and Hunt \textit{et al} 2007: 208.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Butcher 2003: 61; Sullivan 1992: 871-2; Van Dam 1996: 7-8.
\end{itemize}
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emerging state was developing. Events dealing with regional powers forced Cappadocia to accept and foster aspects of Graeco-Roman civilization in order to preserve its independence. However, the remote kingdom proved no match for the imperial juggernaut of Rome, and it lost the independence it had so carefully cultivated. Absorption brought Roman cities, Roman systems, cultures and religions—the most important of which, in Cappadocia’s history, came to be Christianity.
Like that of Cappadocia, the history of Armenia provides clues as to the origin of 
distinct cultural and socio-political traits which characterized Armenian society and 
helped to shape the development of Christianity within that country. The unique social 
structures of the naXarar system often clashed with the emerging dynastic kingship. Both 
were influenced by distinctive geographic features and political events. All these 
elements aided in the formation of Armenia as it existed at the time of the introduction of 
Christianity.

While Cappadocia lacked a native historian and its past is known only as 
recounted within the context of Assyrian tablets or Greek and Roman histories, Armenia, 
on the other hand, produced several national histories. Unfortunately, none date earlier 
than the fifth century AD.¹ The late dates of these histories introduce what might be 
considered a ‘Christian dimension’ to Armenia’s earliest annals, as they were compiled 
after Christianity became the predominant religion. They, therefore, contribute to the 
overall complexities of reconstructing the historical background of Armenia. That 
process involves the problems common to the study of ancient history, added difficulties 
associated with ambiguities within the national histories,² as well as an additional aspect

¹ Hewsen 1975: 91.
² Hewsen 1975: 97 and Thomson 1978: 56. Hewsen considers some aspects of Khorenats’i and Sebēos 
“hopelessly muddled,” and Thomson admits that Khorenats’i wrote a blend of “fact and fiction.” 
Toumanoff 1963: 16-17. He notes five main sources: Agathangelos, Pawstos Buzand, Elishe, Lazarus’ 
History and Koriwn’s Life of Mastoc. He does not list Khorenats’i’s History of the Armenians or Sebēos’ 
Primary History. These he sees as important in the transmission of much older, but less verifiable, 
Armenian traditions. (104-5)
of historiographical controversy fueled by political developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 

**Designation**

Tracing the names given to the land north of Mesopotamia and Syria, south of the Caucasus Mountains, east of the Euphrates and west of Media Atropatene (modern Azerbaijan) is not as complicated a process as that for Cappadocia. The continued existence of the Armenian people into modern times allowed the transmission of their term for their native land, *Hayk*. This name was derived from an eponymous forebear.

Assyrian records from the reign of Shalmaneser I, 1273-1244 BC, confirmed the existence of a land known as Urartu. The earliest written record of a name associated with the area dates from Achaemenid Persian times. ‘Armina’ appeared on the ‘empire lists,’ six royal Achaemenid inscriptions dating from the reign of Darius to that of Xerxes. Herodotus was obviously influenced by the Persian name as he described the

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3 The pogroms of the late nineteenth century and the massacres during World War I and immediately following involving the Armenian people are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, those events decidedly affected Armenian perception of their history and religion and, no doubt, contributed to the continued preservation and study of their ancient sources. Contrarily, scholars of other nationalities have produced works which contradict or question traditional Armenian views concerning certain aspects of their political history. These discrepancies are noted only to refer to the complications this introduces to the study of Armenian history.


5 *CAH* 3.1 1982: 329. *Urartii* was a bitter rival of the Assyrian Empire on its northeastern border. It contained the land that later became known as Armenia, but the people of Urartu were not Armenians.

6 Hewsen 2001: 11. He acknowledges that the earliest identifiable Armenia is the Persian province. Toumanoff 1963: 67 concurs. ‘Armina’ is an Old Persian name; the meaning is unknown.

7 Briant 2002: 173 and Sullivan 1992: 396. Four of the inscriptions date from Darius’ reign and list the areas under Persian sovereignty. The names of both Armenia and Cappadocia are on the earliest of the inscriptions, that at Behistun. This inscription was located on a free-standing projection of rock near a Persian road linking the capitals of Babylon and Ecbatana. It was part of a monument consisting of four distinct parts carved high onto the rock to commemorate, in three separate languages, the rise of Darius I.
inhabitants of the land as *Armenioi* (Hdt. 5.49 and 7.73). The Romans, in turn, Latinized the Greek appellation, referring to the area as *Armenia Maior* and *Armenia Minor*. Lesser Armenia was absorbed within the Roman Empire, but Greater Armenia remained independent until it was partitioned between the Roman and Sassanid Empires. The portion assigned to the Sassanids became known as *Persarmenia*.8

**Prehistory**

Robert Hewsen has identified four broad theories as to Armenia’s earliest history. The first, a native tradition, attributes the founding of their country to an eponymous ancestor, Hayk. The second theory, based on Herodotus’ account, is that Armenia was settled by colonists from Phrygia. The third view is that the earliest Armenians were a Phrygian tribe which relocated *en masse* in the area of Armenia. The fourth, and newest theory, holds that the Armenians, along with several other people groups, were actually native to the area.9

The native tradition was reflected in certain of the Armenian national histories particularly that by Moses Khorenats’i. Khorenats’i was considered by many Armenians to be their Herodotus.10 Supposedly writing in the fifth century AD,11 he chronicled the origin of his nation to illustrate the antiquity of the Armenian people as compared with

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8 Hewsen 1992: 147.
10 Thomson 1978: 1. While recognizing the ‘literary heritage’ of Khorenats’i’s work, Thomson recognizes that as *history* the work has several faults. While he sees it as interweaving fact and fiction, he also acknowledges the value of including Armenian legends connected with prehistory (56-8). See Toumanoff 1963: 104-8 for his views on Khorenats’i.
11 Thomson disagrees with the date and instead assigns it to the eighth century AD for several reasons. For more information see Thomson 1978: 58-61. Toumanoff 1963: 104 concurs with the later date.
other Near Eastern people groups. His interpretation decidedly tied the nation and people of the Christian era to a distinct Biblical model concerning their background.  

Khorenats’i traced Armenian origins back to a prehistoric patriarch, Hayk, descended from Yapheth (Japheth), son of the Biblical Noah. Hayk, the bravest and strongest of the ‘giants,’ had led his people into the area around Lake Van (Ararat) from Babylon, conquered the local inhabitants, defeated the titan Bēl who sought to bring Hayk and his people under his domination, and left his name attached to the land (MK 1.5, 1.10 and 1.11).

Strabo, several centuries earlier, had also included a mythic origin for the Armenians. He stated that they were descendants of Armenus the Thessalian who accompanied Jason and the Argonauts on their journey. Strabo related that Armenus, along with some men, “took up their abode in Acilisenê and Syspiritis, occupying the country as far as Calachanê and Adiabenê; and indeed that he left Armenia named after himself” (Strab. 11.4.8). Thessalian origin was also proposed in The Geography of Ananias of Širak, a late-sixth or mid-seventh century AD Armenian text (ASX 3.11).

**Bronze and Iron Ages**

The Phrygians, possibly native to what is now the Balkans, had spread eastward across the Anatolian plateau in connection with the invading ‘Sea Peoples’ in the twelfth to ninth centuries BC. Just how far eastward they spread is difficult to determine.

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12 Thomson 1978: 32-33. Khorenats’i relies on the works of Eusebius and other Christian writers, as well as the Jewish writers Josephus and Philo, for themes throughout his work.

13 Hewsen 1992: 33. In the note accompanying 3.11, Hewsen notes that contemporaries of Alexander supported this theory. However, he thinks that since no other Armenian text mentions it, this reference must be derived from Strabo in some way.
Herodotus suggests that they were successful in penetrating the Armenian highlands as he refers to the Armenian people as settlers from Phrygia (Hdt. 7.73).

Ananias of Širak’s *Geography* makes an interesting distinction between the words used to describe areas within Anatolia. Normally he uses the word *asxarhk* to refer to ‘world,’ ‘country,’ or ‘land.’ In describing Phrygia he instead used the term *bnašxarh*,\(^{14}\) which means ‘native land’ (ASX 5.5). Perhaps Ananias was influenced by Herodotus in the same way that he had previously referred to Strabo. Perhaps he was including an older, oral tradition among his people. Whichever was the case, it certainly interjects the possibility of Phrygian influence.

Epigraphic sources place the Phrygians in eastern Cappadocia.\(^{15}\) It might be altogether plausible that certain groups continued eastward and independently settled in what came to be Armenia.\(^{16}\) That the Phrygians were “a horse-rearing military aristocracy”\(^ {17}\) should strongly suggest possible influence on the society of the inhabitants of the Armenian plateau as Armenia was renowned in Achaemenid times for both its horses and its armed cavalry.\(^ {18}\)

While the Phrygian influence on Armenia is possibly debatable, the influence of the Urartians is evident. The core of the Iron Age kingdom of Urartu was the mountainous area around Lake Van. Urartu rose to political ascendancy in the first

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\(^{14}\) In the note accompanying 5.5 Hewsen defines *bnašxarh* as being formed from the Armenian word for natural or original, *bun*, and *ašxarh*.

\(^{15}\) *OCD* 1996: 1176.

\(^{16}\) It would seem more likely that these invaders reached the area later known as Lesser Armenia, as it lies west of the Euphrates and is more easily accessed from Cappadocia. Also, if this, or a similar, scenario were to be proven true, then perhaps Herodotus’ reputation as an unreliable historian will be adjusted, if only slightly.

\(^{17}\) *CAH* 2.2 1975: 417.

century of the first millennium BC and expanded its domain northward toward the Caucasus Mountains, southwestward into northern Syria and southeastward into the Zagros Mountains. At its height in the mid-eighth century BC Urartu controlled vital trade routes within its borders, routes which connected Mesopotamia and areas to the east with the Mediterranean or provided access to necessary Anatolian metals.¹⁹

![Map of Urartu](image)

**Figure 3.1. Urartu at its Height. Map used with permission of armenica.org.**

Urartu’s location and control of the trade routes brought the kingdom into conflict with the dominant power to the south, Assyria. The Assyrians, bitter rivals of Urartu, mentioned the kingdom in their annals; Shalmaneser I was the earliest Assyrian king to refer to these enemies to the north. ²⁰ In the early and mid-1800s inscriptions carved onto rock faces were discovered near Van, Tushpah on the preceding map. These inscriptions,

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¹⁹ Van De Mieroop 2004: 202-205.
written in an adapted form of Assyrian cuneiform,\textsuperscript{21} provided evidence for the kingdom of Urartu.

At least one scholar argues that Urartian cultural influence on the Armenians, as well as the Medes, the Achaemenid Persians and the Greeks, was significant. He asserts,

To the empire of the Achaemenids it bequeathed—no doubt through the Medes—to be greatly developed, certain useful architectural forms: columnar architecture, the \textit{apadana} or hall of many columns, the \textit{zendan} or high tower, the quadrangular fortress with corner towers. In terms of techniques, it handed on the arts of precise stone-cutting and polychromy in building, that is to say, the use of stones of different contrasting colors. Above all, it saved the metal-workers’ secrets of manufacturing iron and steel. One of its most conspicuous legacies was perhaps the idea of publicly writing up on cliffs the royal annals of a reign—an example which Darius followed at Behistun and Augustus in the \textit{Momentum Ancyranum}, though in his case on the walls of a temple. In the west, we find the influence of Urartu in the ninth and eighth centuries BC playing an important role in re-awakening Greek art and life from their long isolation and slumber.\textsuperscript{22}

Mountain fortresses, characteristics of Urartu, remained part of the sociopolitical fabric of the area long past the fall of that kingdom.\textsuperscript{23} Succeeding rulers all utilized a similar system. Some fortresses served as treasuries; some guarded the all important trade routes. Others existed to store agricultural products grown or raised in the nearby valleys. Xenophon noted the existence of one such stronghold\textsuperscript{24} in his journey across Armenia in the winter (Xen. \textit{An.} 4.7.1-2). As many of these fortresses existed in isolated areas, their control was in the hands of local chieftains who easily developed semi-independent

\textsuperscript{21} Benedict 1960: 104.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{CAH} 3.1 1982: 370-1.
\textsuperscript{23} Van De Mieroop 2004: 204. These strongholds, possibly developed with regard to geographic limitations, existed at the time of Tigranes the Great, first century BC, and their use may have continued into the Christian era.
\textsuperscript{24} He noted that the Taochians dwelt in strongholds built on tops of steep mountains.
status. The self-sufficient condition of many such remote local rulers contributed to the rise of a unique sociopolitical feature of Armenian society, the *naXarar* system.

While Urartu contributed to the cultural and sociopolitical developments in later Armenian society, its influence on religion is not as clear. Worship of the Urartian gods, such as Khaldi and Teisheba, does not seem to have affected Armenia as did Iranian religion. There is no evidence that these earlier gods were incorporated into the Armenian pantheon, or ‘reinvented’ as Armenian heroes, as occurred with some Urartian kings as well as Iranian religious figures.\(^{25}\)

Urartu ceased to exist as an independent political kingdom by the sixth century BC.\(^{26}\) Its end was due to invasions by either the Cimmerians or Scyths from beyond the Caucasus or the Medes from southeast. Evidence in the form of Scythian arrowheads links that people to the destruction of several Urartian cities.\(^{27}\)

Armenians, whatever their origin, came to dominate the former Urartian lands near Lake Van. Either they took advantage of the chaos accompanying the fall of Urartu and successfully conquered the former inhabitants, or they were indigenous to the area and benefited from the collapse of Urartu to establish their own independent rule. By some means Armenians came to be associated with the land near Lake Van.

Robert Hewsen thinks that the early Armenians, or Proto-Armenians, came into the region after the fall of Urartu. They located first in the middle of the plateau and then spread gradually to the mountains. He does not believe that evidence supports an

\(^{25}\) Hewsen 1975: 95.  
\(^{26}\) Van De Mieroop 2004: 202-205.  
\(^{27}\) CAH 3.1 1982: 364.
invasion. Instead, he calls the Armenian relocation an ‘infiltration,’ which acknowledges only occasional confrontations with local inhabitants.\(^{28}\)

The land of Armenia was remote and isolated in comparison to other areas of the Near East, but it was by no means inaccessible. Indeed, despite the mountainous terrain, the broad valleys interspersed throughout the ranges facilitated the creation of numerous roads.\(^{29}\) These roads crisscrossed the plateau and allowed for easier movement once the ‘borders’ were breached. Armenia was particularly vulnerable to incursions through northeast Cappadocia on the west, and through Sophenê to the southwest.\(^{30}\) Also, the patterned movements of nomadic Iranian peoples opened possibilities whereby social, cultural and religious practices of the established, or domestic, peoples were mixed with those of the nomadic peoples.

Any independent status the Armenians might have achieved ended when the Medes under Cyaxares expanded their sovereignty westward into Armenia and then Cappadocia (Hdt. 1.103). However, lack of contemporary sources for either the Armenians or the Medes leave historians with little actual information on how that conquest affected local Armenian politics or society. The native Armenian histories, written much later, claim that the Median king Varbakēs [Cyaxares?] invested the first Armenian king, Paroyr. (\textit{MK} 1. 22) However, since information on this segment of Armenian history is scarce, Paroyr’s exact status is unclear. Was he ‘king’ of a proto-

\(^{28}\) Hewsen 1992: 286.
\(^{29}\) Hewsen 2001: 4.
\(^{30}\) \textit{OCD} 1996: 171.
unified Armenia or was he the Median king’s representative, like the later Achaemenid satraps?

Strabo noted similarity in customs between the Medes and the Armenians. “The Medes, however, are said to have been the originators of customs for the Armenians and Persians” (Strab. 11.13.9). Beyond that Strabo is not very informative. The lack of information does not allow conclusive comparisons beyond Strabo’s statement that both areas bred horses of exceptional quality (Strab. 11.13.7 and 11.14.9). Strabo did list specific cultural similarities between the Medes and the Persians (Strab. 11.13.9).

One example of cultural influence on the Armenians specifically identified by Strabo was religion. (At this point it might be more correct to refer to Iranian influence rather than trying to distinguish between Median, Persian, Parthian or Sassanian elements. All were Iranian cultures; as such, they shared similar characteristics, albeit in varying expressions.) Strabo wrote,

Now the sacred rites of the Persians, one and all, are held in honor both by the Medes and the Armenians; but those of Anaitis are held in exceptional honor by the Armenians, who have built temples in her honor in different places and especially in Acilisenê (Strab. 11.14.16).

Achaemenid Persian Era

Within two centuries the Medes themselves were overthrown by Cyrus and his Persians. Pierre Briant emphasizes that the Achaemenid Empire marked a “turning point”\(^{31}\) in Near Eastern history as it was the first time that diverse peoples and lands were united under one rule but allowed to retain certain ethnic, cultural or religious

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\(^{31}\) *OCD* 1996: 1144.
characteristics. Robert Hewsen argues that the Persians were the earliest non-local people to have a deep and long-term influence on Armenia and the various people groups of the Caucasus.\(^{32}\) That influence continued over the years as the different Iranian empires—Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanid—all affected the shaping of Armenian society.

At some point, either under the Medes but more probably by the time of the Achaemenid Persians, Armenia came to possess the unique sociopolitical structure which characterized it for hundreds or thousands of years. Xenophon, Strabo and Pliny all mentioned Armenia’s peculiar feature: the land was fragmented or divided into numerous holdings ruled by a variety of men. Over time the Armenians came to call them *naXarars*. Some of these were possibly no more than village or tribal chieftains who ruled one or two valley areas. Other *naXarars* controlled vast tracts of land and required subordinates to assist them in ruling their lands efficiently. Over time these local rulers became the aristocratic class in Armenian society. They intermarried and allied with, or against, each other. Their aristocratic ‘houses’ became synonymous with the areas they controlled. The larger, more influential, houses carefully perpetuated elaborate genealogies, including some of supposed Jewish or Chinese origins.\(^{33}\) Even after individuals from some of these families came to assert sovereignty over their fellow *naXarars* and became kings, the powerful connections and traditions of their distinctive social system continued to exert pressure on the new rulers.

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\(^{32}\) Hewsen 2001: 11.

Armenia’s social system was heavily class oriented. NaXarars came to comprise the upper class; clergy, either pagan or Christian, were assigned to serve them at their estates. Peasants who worked the naXarar domains formed the lower social class. Later, during the Hellenistic and Roman eras, merchants and artisans became more visible in Armenian society. This stratification continued to define Armenian society into the modern age, when economic and intellectual opportunities wrought significant changes in the predominately rural society. Cyril Toumanoff, respected historian of Caucasian studies, recognized that Armenia’s social system possessed a longevity which presented “a sharp contrast to the vicissitudes of its political history.”

Toumanoff saw Armenia as “a strongly aristocratic society which combined in an unusual way the features of a feudal regime with those of a dynastic regime evolved from earlier tribal conditions.” The feudal aspects were the rigid class system, the division of land among NaXarars and the lesser nobles, and dependence upon agriculture. He attributed these elements to two possible external causes. First, he suggested that invasions occurred as a ‘state’ was beginning to emerge; authority became dispersed in order to protect the society. (Similar events occurred in Western European history during the late Roman and early medieval periods.) A second possible cause was the forced introduction of the concept of a ‘state’ upon existing tribal structures by an outside force. In Armenia’s case the causes could have been the Scythian invasions which ended the kingdom of Urartu or the later incorporation within the Median Empire. The
development of Armenian ‘feudalism’ could also have been the result of Median conquest followed by incorporation within the empire.

The emerging dynastic elements within the *naXarar* system Toumanoff traced to the effect of tribal organizations on the emerging state. For example, tribal chiefs were incorporated into emerging Armenian nobility. Tribes expanded their holdings and controlled larger areas. Those regions then became identified with a ruling *naXarar* family. When those families came into contact with more advanced cultures, such as the Persians or Hellenes, new ideas of authority—such as kingship--exerted significant influences for change. Equally influential was the internal rise of a defined ruling class. By the fourth century AD there were over fifty recognizable Armenian princely houses. The dynastic rulers of those houses wielded authority over their own lands and some, by the extent of their holdings and position within society, exercised considerable power among other *naXarars* as well.38

Essentially Toumanoff argued that Armenia’s distinctive, and long-lasting, social system was produced as a result of external political and military pressures and concurrent internal social developments. The *naXarars* were the actual power in Armenia. They joined to shape a characteristic system, a coalition of *naXarar* and lesser nobility. In effect, they created what Hewsen described as “a new federation of princely states.”39

In Achaemenid times the land and the *naXarars* were under the oversight of the satrap. Xenophon recorded name of the satrap, Orontes, son-in-law of the Persian King

Artaxerxes (Xen. An. 2.4.8). The office became hereditary, remaining in the Orontid family into early Hellenistic times.\textsuperscript{40} Xenophon also noted that the province was subdivided; the western section was ruled by a vice-satrap, Tiribazus (Xen. An. 4.4.1-6). Both men maintained their own armies and were responsible for collection of any taxes or tribute within their respective areas. As payment could be made in silver or in kind, they used fortresses in remote areas and ‘palaces’ or village buildings to store the provisions (Xen. An. 4.4.7-9).

The general area comprising Achaemenid ‘Armina’ has been researched by Robert Hewsen. He suggests that the satrapy was limited to “the northwestern, southwestern and south central sectors of the Armenian Plateau.”\textsuperscript{41} This territory would correspond to the areas crossed by Xenophon and his fellow Greek mercenaries in their journey across the region (Xen. An. 4.4.1-6 and 4.5.34).

The Persians possibly adapted the tribal organization of Armenia to benefit their administration of the satrapy. At the local level the village chiefs were recognized by the Persian bureaucracy. Because of their strong tribal ties these chiefs provided vital connections between the Achaemenid state and rural Armenian society. These men wielded great power over their villages and served as the King’s intermediary within the local tribal communities.\textsuperscript{42} (See Xen. An. 4.5.28-29 for an account of his dealings with one Armenian chief.)

\textsuperscript{40} Toumanoff 1963: 73.
\textsuperscript{41} Hewson 1984: 362.
\textsuperscript{42} Parker 1999: 134.
How much the Armenian social structure was indebted to Persian influence is hard to gauge. Since the Achaemenids typically allowed the continuance of certain aspects of local government and traditions in exchange for loyalty and prompt payment of tribute, one might conjecture that much of the social system was uniquely Armenian. However, as some elements within Armenia revolted against Darius I, one has to speculate about the causes of such disloyalty.

The Behistun inscription recorded that Darius dispatched two armies to quell the revolt. He also journeyed to Armenia after victory was secured, no doubt to ‘make his presence known.’ Did he attempt a restructuring of some sort of the naXarar system? How did he punish those local nobles who supported the rebellion? Archaeological evidence shows that Darius built at Van a major city in Armenia. Why? Did the prominent Persian presence mean a stricter control over the province? Was it at this point that Armenia became subject to Persian colonization and was used for the exile of ‘undesirables’?

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence corroborate direct Persian cultural influence upon Armenia. Pierre Briant assiduously notes the discoveries at various sites in ancient ‘Armina’ which revealed the presence of highly developed Achaemenid settlements . . . the only example of an apadana in a satrapal capital . . . and . . . very rare wall paintings . . . three Elamite tablets . . . [which] testify to the existence of imperial archives.

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45 Briant 2002: 742.
Were the Persian communities the result of Darius’ new policy to bring Armenia under subjection? Were they the homes of Persian colonists meant to replace rebellious Armenians deported to more isolated areas? Or, after political control was reestablished, did the area become popular with leading Persian nobles, perhaps as hunting retreats? Did the presence of Artaxerxes’ daughter infuse an air of sophistication into the otherwise rustic locale? Unfortunately, those speculations can not be fully answered. However, the existence of the wall paintings and the apadana suggest a rather high degree of acculturation, if only within the satrapal class.

*Greek/Hellenistic Age (or Orontid/Artaxiad Era)*

Alexander of Macedon’s defeat of Darius III produced developments in Armenia which, in some regards, mirrored those of neighboring Cappadocia. The geographic locations of both former satrapies aided the rise of local dynasts who supported the new ruler. These dynasts began as ruling princes and gradually appropriated the title of king. Both areas experienced the introduction of Hellenic culture and eventually became part of the Seleucid Empire. Each successfully established sovereign dynasties who enthusiastically imitated the rule and lifestyle of Hellenistic or Seleucid monarchs. Those kingdoms each experienced aggression from a neighboring kingdom—Cappadocia from Mithridates in Pontus and Armenia from Parthia—which opened the door to Roman intervention and influence.

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47 In dealing with Armenian history it is perhaps more appropriate to use Orontid/Artaxiad in identifying the era. Although some of the early dynasts were philhellenes, overall, the Iranian influence outweighed the impact of the Hellenism. As a decided shift toward the East occurred during this era, Orontid/Artaxiad seemed a better name.

Geography and sociopolitical factors also contributed to create differences in developments in Armenia and Cappadocia. Whereas the size and location of Cappadocia seemed to oblige a division of the satrapy into two distinct parts, Armenia remained intact. The presence of the hereditary Orontid rulers added permanence in leadership which was initially lacking in Cappadocia. The close cultural ties between Armenia and Persia allowed continued Iranian influence in society and religion which, at some levels of society and in some locales, helped to counter the new Hellenic outlooks on society and religion. The naXarar system provided a unique social structure by which some nobles, accustomed to the level of Persian culture, accepted and identified with the new rulers and their culture, while others, fiercely semi-independent and more tied to local traditions, opposed and resented the claims of the new leaders.

The introduction of Hellenic culture to eastern Anatolia and the western Caucasus produced what Cyril Toumanoff described as an “inner polarity.” Inhabitants of these areas, accustomed to traditions and beliefs connected to their own culture were now introduced to new ideas and attitudes. The new culture meant new gods and different religious practices. It also meant diverse social norms and fresh political principles. But, the old ways—the established gods and their priests, the tribal and social structures, the concepts of eastern-style kingship—were strongly entrenched. This convergence of old and new cultures elicited individual and societal responses which expressed the resulting turmoil.

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49 Toumanoff 1963: 71.
As Hellenic and Iranian cultures each sought to gain ascendancy, the results were both positive and negative. In religious affairs, for example, local gods were ‘Hellenized’ and their worship—as well as the priests’ positions—continued. In economics, the opening of trade routes in the wake of Alexander’s armies, proved especially favorable as the caravans from Central Asia came through Armenia on their way to the Mediterranean. The presence of foreign merchants and the introduction of a moneyed economy helped to foster the growth of large, prosperous cities, such as those founded by Artaxias.\(^50\)

In political matters, however, the mix of cultures in Armenia produced less than favorable effects. The rise of strong central rulers threatened to undermine the authority of the *naXarars* who regarded the king as just another aristocrat. The new economic ‘boom’ and especially the introduction of a national coinage helped to strengthen the new rulers at the expense of the *naXarars* and the old tribal structures. While the kings sought to increase their power, some *naXarars* sought to preserve “their traditional independence and freedom of action even to the point of deliberately weakening the stability of the monarchy.”\(^51\) Thus, the *naXarar* system remained a formidable opponent for the dynasts, and the breeding ground for factional strife, especially following the rise of Parthia and Rome as regional powers. In many political situations in the later Orontid/Artaxiad era the *naXarars* would seemingly be torn between two worlds and two cultures.\(^52\)

Identifying Orontid Armenia would be a daunting task if not for the outstanding work of Robert Hewsen. Greater Armenia, as it was known to distinguish it from Lesser

\(^{50}\) Toumanoff 1963: 72.
\(^{51}\) Hewsen 1992: 288.
Armenia west of the Euphrates, expanded during the Orontid era into the Araxes River valley to the north and the land adjacent to Lake Sevan on the northeast. From the area south of Lake Van Orontid territory stretched west to the Euphrates, northward to the junction of the Antitaurus Mountains, eastward along the mountains to the north of the Araxes valley to Lake Sevan. From there the border turned to the west and followed

Figure 3.2.--The Extent of Orontid Armenia. Used with permission of armenica.org.

53 Hewsen 2001: 11, OCD 1996: 171 and Toumanoff 1963: 72-3. The concept of an eastern and western Armenia was an ancient one. Unfortunately, the earliest history of Lesser Armenia is rather obscure. It was part of the Seleucid Empire, but then came under the control of Pontus. Julius Caesar gave it to Ariobarzanes III of Cappadocia, but Mark Antony gave it to Polemon of Pontus. After Actium, Octavian gave it to a former king of Media, but in 20 BC it went to Archelaus of Cappadocia. It came under direct Roman control in the first century AD when Tiberius annexed it along with Cappadocia. However, Gaius restored it to Cotys, grandson of Polemon. After his death a son of Herod of Chalcis ruled the area until it was incorporated into the Roman Empire again by Vespasian. It eventually became a separate province under Diocletian. The length of Roman jurisdiction brought about a certain level of ‘Romanization,’ although Iranian cultural influences continued to some degree. Since Lesser Armenia is often considered part of Cappadocia, it will not be the subject of much individual discussion in this, or other, chapters. For a possible scenario of the origins of Lesser Armenia, see Hewsen 1984: 365 n. 76.
natural valleys to the southwest. At some point, probably south of Ararat, the border
turned westward again, following the Taurus Mountains west to the Euphrates.\textsuperscript{54}

The Orontid dynasty ruled parts of Armenia until the end of the third century BC.
Greek inscriptions found in Armenia dated before the end of the dynasty suggest that
Hellenic culture had been assimilated to some degree by the Orontid kings. Portions of
Greek literary texts, a Seleucid calendar and a copy of a communication to ‘Orontes,
king’ illustrate the effect of Hellenism on the intellectual and cultural life of the
Armenian dynasts. These important inscriptions also suggest an early date for the
introduction and spread of Hellenism in northern Armenia.\textsuperscript{55} However, Hewsen does not
think that Greek culture made any strong inroads into Armenia at this time. He noted that
wide-spread urbanization so prevalent in Hellenistic communities was absent in Armenia.
Also, the continued use of Aramaic instead of Greek as the official written language
during this era suggested no widespread acceptance of Greek culture outside the major
cities.\textsuperscript{56}

With the death of the last Orontid king, Armenia, together with neighboring
Cappadocia, was absorbed into the Seleucid Empire. The death of the last king did not
necessarily signal the end of Orontid power within Armenia for related nobles inherited
many of the royal lands.\textsuperscript{57} Antiochus the Great divided the land between Artaxias and

\textsuperscript{54} Hewsen 1984: 355-7, 362-3 and Toumanoff 1963: 72-3. Hewsen used quotations from Strabo (11.14.5)
to analyze the expansion of the Artaxiad period and trace the original holdings of the Orontids.
\textsuperscript{56} Hewsen 2001:11.
\textsuperscript{57} Hewsen 1984: 347.
Zariadris, who themselves may have been descendants of Orontids. Following Antiochus’ defeat at Magnesia in 190 BC, Artaxias and Zariadris asserted their independence; each took the title of ‘king’ within his respective area (Strab. 11.14.5). Toumanoff might have been more accurate in his deduction that the Roman Senate confirmed Artaxias and Zariadris as rulers in Armenia. Such a decision would have been more in line with previous Roman actions. The Romans typically used military victories as foundations from which to establish political influence, or justify interference, in an area outside their jurisdiction.

According to Strabo the Carthaginian general Hannibal, after serving as military advisor to Antiochus III and other Anatolian kings, came to Armenia where he advised Artaxias in the establishment of two new cities in his realm (Strab. 11.4.6). These new urban areas became important focal points for the spread of Hellenism by later Artaxiad kings who ruled Armenia until the first century AD.

The cities of Artaxata and Arxata were both located on the Araxes River (Strab. 11.4.6). Artaxata, the new capital, had better access to trade routes than previous capitals. It was linked to the opposite bank of the river by a bridge and several roads linked the city to other areas. With a reputation for beauty and boasting Armenia’s first Hellenic

58 Hewsen 1984: 347. Hewsen refers to these men as ‘satraps’ under Antiochus. Strabo, however, identifies both Artaxias and Zariadris as former generals (Strab. 11.14.5).
59 CAH 8 1993(1989): 350-1; OCD 1996: 108. For a discussion of the original lands belonging to these rulers and their expansions, please see Hewsen’s 1984 article “Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography III: The Boundaries of Orontid Armenia.” Also, in a 1975 article, “The Primary History of Armenia,” Hewsen states (p. 95) that Zariadris established the independent state of Sophene to the southwest of Greater Armenia.
60 Toumanoff 1963: 74.
61 Lane Fox 2006: 309.
theater, Artaxata became the center of Hellenistic culture.\textsuperscript{63} It developed into a regional commercial center and supported a large mixed populace which, at one point, was as much as twenty percent Jewish.\textsuperscript{64}

Unfortunately for Armenian rulers, the Orontid/Artaxiad era also witnessed the rise of the Parthians in the east. Originating in northeastern Persia, they—as did Artaxias and Zariadris in Armenia—took advantage of Antiochus’ defeat at Magnesia, broke from Seleucid control and re-established a ‘Persian’ empire.\textsuperscript{65} They eventually ruled an area from the Euphrates River on the west to the Indus River on the east. Like the Achaemenid Persians centuries earlier, the Parthians controlled an empire characterized by diversity. Ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural differences were recognized in return for administrative control and political loyalty. They considered themselves the ‘true heirs’ of the Achaemenids, thereby buttressing their claims to the lands of the former empire as well as justifying their conquests of, or interferences in, adjacent areas.\textsuperscript{66}

Apprehensive of the increasing Roman power and presence in Anatolia yet militarily unable to directly confront them due to both internal and external concerns, the Parthians exploited the geographic importance of Armenia. From an early date they regularly, and successfully, intervened in Armenian political affairs. This policy of intervention sometimes included military invasions, but, for the most part, consisted of

\textsuperscript{63} Hewsen 1992: 219, n. 305.  
\textsuperscript{64} Hewsen 1992: 219, n. 305.  
\textsuperscript{65} Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003(1962): 192.  
\textsuperscript{66} Butcher 2003: 33; OCD 1996: 1117-8.
manipulating the pro-Iranian factions within the Armenian naXarar system to advance Parthian designs.

The Parthians possessed social, cultural and religious characteristics similar to those in Armenia. Both societies were structured around noble classes located on large estates, whose military importance consisted of providing bands of armed cavalry to support the reigning dynast. In both lands, those nobles had the potential to foment disloyalty and instigate internal conflict, thereby creating an atmosphere of political uncertainty. Such factions could also be manipulated by outside forces to intentionally produce instability or end a reign.

As Zoroastrians, the Parthians shared a common religion with many Armenians, particularly the ruling Orontid and Artaxiad dynasties. However, following precedents of Achaemenid rule, the Parthians did not compel the varied residents of their empire to adopt a unified religion. Like many of the emerging dynasties of that section of the Near East they adopted elements of Hellenic culture while preserving their native Iranian traditions. Recent discoveries of both coins and documents suggest that the Parthians enjoyed a level of acculturation that belied the description of cultural backwardness attributed to them by the Romans. The Parthians came to exert strong cultural pressure in Armenia in regard to language, art, government, law, weaponry, architecture and music.

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67 Heichelheim and Yeo 1962: 196. The authors state that Parthia’s ‘feudal’ structure developed in response to external pressures, mostly the threat of invasion from the north and east by groups being displaced in those areas by the activities of the Huns. For Toumanoff’s discussion of similar reasons for the development of ‘feudal’ characteristics in Armenian society, see 1963: 34-5.
68 OCD 1996: 1117.
69 Hewsen 2001: 11.
The most successful, and arguably the most intriguing, Artaxiad king, Tigranes II (the Great), experienced Parthian control firsthand. Having been a hostage in Parthia as a young man, he was their candidate for the Armenian throne. Upon his accession in 95 BC (at the age of forty-five) he proceeded to take advantage of a weakened or distracted Parthian ruler and successfully reclaimed Armenian territory previously annexed by Parthia. He also acquired Sophene\textsuperscript{70} and the western Euphrates crossing at Tomisa, thus gaining direct access to Cappadocia and the Roman Empire. (Perhaps this facilitated the movement of ideas, culture and religion, as well as trade and armed invaders.)

Thwarted by the Romans in attempts to usurp the Cappadocian throne, Tigranes turned his attention eastward. More successful in that arena, he conquered territory from the Mediterranean on the west to the Caspian Sea on the east, including Syria, Phoenicia and portions of Mesopotamia and Persia.\textsuperscript{71} His victories made Armenia the only power between Parthia and Rome’s allied kings in western Anatolia. The kingdom of Tigranes II became the largest in Armenian history; it was also short-lived.

Having married into the family of Mithridates VI of Pontus, Tigranes became embroiled in his father-in-law’s political and territorial designs.\textsuperscript{72} Unfortunately that meant he became entangled “in the great struggle between the Hellenistic East and Rome which was then convulsing the Eastern Mediterranean,”\textsuperscript{73} the Mithridatic Wars. Tigranes further complicated foreign policy, not to mention family affairs, by giving his daughter

\textsuperscript{70} Sophene was the southwest territory which shared a border with Cappadocia along the upper Euphrates, as well as a southern border with Mesopotamia and Syria. It had originally been the kingdom of Zariadris and his descendants.


\textsuperscript{73} Toumanoff 1963: 75.
in marriage to the Parthian king, also named Mithridates. That meant he was related by marriage to the two greatest eastern enemies of Rome at that time.

Figure 3.3--Extent of the Empire of Tigranes II of Armenia. Map used with permission.

Tigranes invaded Cappadocia again at the behest of his father-in-law. He captured large numbers of Cappadocians and resettled them near his new capital of Tigranocerta. During the Third Mithridatic War, Mithridates VI fled before a Roman army and sought refuge in Armenia. When the elderly Armenian King of Kings refused to surrender his father-in-law, a Roman invasion of Armenia followed. Tigranocerta was
captured and destroyed, its captives returned to their former lands. Tigranes suffered additional defeats before surrendering to Pompey the Great, whose march into Armenia had been aided by Tigranes’ disloyal younger son. In return for relinquishing territory outside his traditional homeland of Greater Armenia, Tigranes was recognized as a friend and ally of the Roman people. By 66 BC, Tigranes the Great had been relegated to the status of a client king, deferential to the directives of the Roman Senate.  

**Roman/Arsacid Era**

Geographic proximity to Parthia and the fact that Armenia controlled vital routes linking that eastern power to the Roman Mediterranean area affected it far greater, and much longer, than Cappadocia’s treatment at the hands of the Pontic kings. And while Mithridates’ actions forced Cappadocia’s kings into alliances with Rome to preserve their independence, it can be argued that Roman action provoked Parthian interference in Armenia. After Tigranes’ death Armenia became a focal point of struggles, both political and cultural, between the two empires.

The new king Artavasdes endeavored to steer a neutral course after Crassus’ devastating defeat by the Parthians at Carrhae in 53 BC. However, Mark Antony’s failed Parthian invasion in 36 BC led to accusations of betrayal. Antony sent Artavasdes in chains to Alexandria, along with several members of his family, and attempted to annex

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74 CAH 9 1994: 143; Hewsen 1992: 147; Sullivan 1992: 396; Magie 1950: 339-40, 342-4, 357. Tigranes lived into his eighties! The surrender of his lands outside Armenia gave Rome its claim to direct control over Syria, an area crucial to eastern Roman policy under the empire. The disloyal son, also named Tigranes, was given Sophene by the appreciative Romans. However, he proceeded to make himself unpopular with Pompey, who retaliated by chaining him, sending him to Rome and including him in his triumph. Tigranes the younger was also son-in-law of the Parthian king. That meant that he married his cousin, and his mother-in-law was also his sister!
Armenia and plunder its treasuries. Antony’s reactions formed the beginning of what some historians refer to as the ‘Armenian Question.’ Rome was faced with a dilemma. Some Roman presence was required in the area to counteract the Parthian influence. However, Antony’s actions had alienated the succeeding Armenian king, placing him directly in the Iranian sphere. Thereafter, more direct Roman involvement became necessary to provide some sense of balance to the region. For hundreds of successive years this problem affected and directed Rome’s foreign policy in the east.  

Intervention by Parthia and support of Armenian naXarars placed Artaxias II on the throne, who then ordered a retaliatory massacre of Romans within his kingdom. The Romans, relying on previous victories as justification for involvement, countered Parthia by recognizing a younger brother of Artaxias. They sent Roman troops to ‘support’ his claim. Outright civil war was averted only by the premature death, some say assassination, of Artaxias.  

The Artaxiad dynasty came to an end in AD 14. Both Rome and Parthia then sought to install their candidates on the Armenian throne and a pattern was established that persisted for fifty years. Until AD 63 Armenia was ruled by a series of rulers, some foreign, backed either by an imperial power or conflicting naXarar factions. When one king died, pro-Parthians nobles rebelled against Rome’s next ‘choice.’ This typically forced Rome to assert enough military might to forcibly place their contender on the throne. Continued threats along the eastern border and problems with succession within 

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75 Magie 1950: 437.  
77 Magie 1950: 483 and Toumanoff 1963: 76.
their own empire kept the Parthians from countering Rome’s moves with sufficient force.\footnote{Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003(1962): 278.}

Understandably, years of internal strife followed. Augustus’ policy was to ensure that a client king favorable to Rome sat on the Armenian throne. However, he was either more concerned during his reign with western expansion, or he wisely understood that Rome at that time could not successfully wage wars on two frontiers. Perhaps he, and his successors after him, recognized that Armenia could not be successfully occupied in light of Parthian strength.\footnote{Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003(1962): 319.}

The status quo was threatened when Parthia’s king attempted to place his own brother, Tiridates, upon the Armenian throne in AD 52. Pro-Roman naXarars traveled to Rome to request immediate assistance, but almost a decade would pass before the situation was amended. Nero assigned Corbulo to the east; he invaded Armenia in 58, destroyed the cities of Artaxata and Tigranocerta and installed Tigranes as king. This Tigranes was not Armenian; his great-grandfathers were Herod the Great of Judaea and Archelaus of Cappadocia! Unfortunately for Rome, Tigranes incited an incident by attacking a Parthian vassal state and renewed hostilities between the two powers.\footnote{Magie 1950: 550-561.}

It would be AD 63 before the Parthians and the Romans agreed to an historic compromise. The Peace of Rhandeia mandated that the Parthian claimant would rule Armenia, but as a Roman client king. In other words, Trdat/Tiridates agreed to accept the Armenian crown from Nero in return for official recognition. He accordingly traveled to
Rome and in an official ceremony became a vassal of Rome. Fifty years of peace then followed.\textsuperscript{81}

Tiridates established the Armenian Arsacid dynasty, whose kings maintained close ties to Parthia until its overthrow by the Sassanid Persians in the beginning of the third century AD. The odd arrangement of Rhandeia continued with success until 114 when Trajan broke the treaty by campaigning in and annexing Armenia.\textsuperscript{82} Two years later, however, a resurgent Parthia invaded Armenia and forced Rome to relinquish rule.

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\textsuperscript{81} Magie 1950: 555-61; Toumanoff 1963: 76 and Sullivan 1992: 397.

\textsuperscript{82} Millar 1993: 100-1 and Magie 1950: 607-9. Trajan did not actually ‘conquer’ Armenia. Its king appeared before him and his army to be formally invested by Trajan, as Tiridates had initially received it from Nero. Trajan, however, was acclaimed ‘conqueror’ by his troops and refused to return the kingdom. He left a Roman governor in charge. Millar describes inscriptions found in Armenia which attest the presence of a Roman procurator and legionaries of the IV Scythica.
Emperor Hadrian later reaffirmed the Euphrates River as the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire and recognized Arsacid Armenia as an ally.  

The Arsacids then resumed the throne. However, the presence of strong semi-independent *naXarars* continued as a defining facet of Arsacid society. Pliny relates that the Armenia of his day was divided into as many as 120 administrative units (Plin. *HN* 6.10.27). The Greeks considered these military divisions for nobles living on ancestral estates of varying size were nominally sworn to serve the Armenian king. Their individual importance was dependent on the number of cavalry they could raise. Factions existed within these *praefecturas*. Some were pro-monarchy and pro-Roman; others favored monarchy but were decidedly pro-Iranian. Anti-monarchical factions also existed who resisted association with either imperial power.

Hewsen identified five specific groups within Armenian society that he interprets as favoring the existence of a strong king. First were those *naXarars* related to the king or either to his dynastic family. The second group was those nobles whose lands had been directly granted to them by the ruling dynast. A third group was made of those nobles who controlled small tracts of land and who feared their more powerful neighboring peers. *NaXarars* whose lands bordered the Roman Empire comprised the fourth group; they either looked to the Romans for assistance or to the king for help against the Romans. The last group was the ‘Hellenized’ nobles who recognized the need for a strong monarchy within the regional political system.  

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As stated previously, anti-monarchical groups existed within the Armenian nobility. Hewsen suggests that these were comprised of those princely dynasts related to the Persian or Iranian noble houses by marriage or birth, those whose lands were located farthest from the king’s domains or those who had no lands granted by the king. Other antagonistic naXarars were those powerful nobles who controlled such resources that they were independent of the king. A fourth faction within the naXarars was that whose lands bordered Parthian, and later Sassanid, territory and who feared invasion. The fifth group identified by Hewsen included the most traditionalist, and often most geographically remote. These men benefited from the factionalism within the naXarar system and wanted to perpetuate it as some type of ancient tradition.  

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As if the intermittent warfare between Parthia and Rome was not enough to disrupt social, political and economic life within Armenia, it and its adjacent areas were further destabilized during the invasion of the Alans in the mid-second century. These barbaric raiders from the northern Caucasus pillaged cities, captured local inhabitants and destroyed what they could not plunder. Parthia took advantage of the internal turmoil and a new period of conflict between the two powers began. Rome was able to reestablish military supremacy in the area, but at a very high price. Troops returning from the eastern frontier brought deadly disease (possibly smallpox) which devastated large sections of Anatolia, Italy, Gaul and Northern Europe.  

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A far greater danger to the stability of Armenia and the region came in the form of the militant Sassanid Persians who overthrew the Parthian Arsacid kings ca. AD 227. The

86 Hewsen 2001: 9-10.
political balance between Rome and Parthia had always been fragile; the new regime made matters worse by advocating "a neo-Achaemenian *renovatio* of Iran [central to which was the] religion of militant Mazdaism." 88

The Sassanids viewed Arsacid Armenia as a threat since its kings were related to the former Parthian dynasty. In 251 AD the Sassanid ruler Shapur I arranged the death of the Armenian Arsacid king, invaded Greater and Lesser Armenia and Cappadocia, then turned southward and conquered Antioch of Syria. The Roman emperor Valerian marched to meet this new threat, but in 260 was disastrously defeated and taken prisoner by Shapur. 89 During this time the Sassanids exerted direct control over the eastern section of Armenia. Narsēs, the second in command among the Sassanids, was acknowledged as king over the Armenians. Upon the death of the reigning Sassanid king, Narsēs then became king of the Sassanids. He then placed Trdat, who had ruled in western Armenia, in control of the east. Constant warfare between the Romans and Sassanids ended temporarily with the Treaty of Nisibis in 298/7, which forced the Sassanid king Narsēs to cede several Armenian districts along the upper Tigris River to Rome. Those areas became autonomous satrapies with rulers officially recognized by Rome. 90

Toumanoff argues that conflict with the Sassanids compelled the Armenian Arsacids into seeking assistance from Rome, even though that proved at times to be less

88 Toumanoff 163: 149. See also Hewsen’s notes to the *Geography of Ananias of Širak*, p. 147.
than helpful.\footnote{Toumanoff 1963: 149.} A second period of peace between the two powers followed the Treaty of Nisibis. During that time the Armenian king Tiridates III, and ostensibly the entire nation, converted to Christianity, aligning Armenia more than ever with the Roman Empire.

![Map of Greater Armenia before the partition](image)

**Figure 3.5--Greater Armenia before the partition. Map used by permission.**

In 387 Armenia was formally partitioned between Rome and the Sassanids. The western portion, areas around Artaxata and Dwin, was ruled by an Arsacid king allied with Rome. Specific trans-Euphrates provinces were transferred to Roman control and renamed *Armenia Interior*. Unfortunately, the Arsacid king died soon after the partition. Then a Roman civil ruler was appointed; the area became known as *Magna Armenia*. It contained different sections, each with a variety of feudal estates. It was possible that some of the areas had previously been ruled directly by the royal house or by the
Armenian Church; those sections became imperial estates. Thus, in the late fourth century, there was no unified Armenia; there were four distinct areas that each had large Armenian populations and which could, therefore, lay claim to the name ‘Armenia.’

The eastern part of Armenia remained firmly under Sassanid control. Regional hostilities were now mirrored in the tensions and conflicts between the naXarars and the kings. “The Kings of Armenia and of Iberia [modern Georgia] gravitated towards the autocratic and bureaucratic Roman state . . . their princely vassals, on the other hand, though Christians were drawn towards the aristocratic realm of the Sassanids.”

In the Persian-influenced Armenia the kingdom continued for almost one hundred years before the characteristic dynamics of weakened rulers and defiant naXarars combined to supplant it. Armenian naXarars petitioned the Sassanid King to supersede the monarchy and assume the position of their overlord. He did so in 428, deposing not only the king but the reigning bishop as well. Initially the naXarars retained their dynastic rights; they had only to acknowledge the Persian governor, swear fealty and offer military aid. However, within a few years the Sassanids began to force their culture and, particularly, their militant Zoroastrianism on Christian Armenia. The result was widespread Armenian insurrections, including a major one in 451 which was led by the leader of an important naXarar house.

In summary, certain distinctive aspects of Armenia’s sociopolitical structure evolved throughout Armenian history which affected not only the history and direction of

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92 Toumanoff 1963: 193 and Garsoian 1985(1971): III, 343-4. These four areas do not include that section that had been assigned to the Sassanids. That particular section became known as Persarmenia.
93 Toumanoff 1963: 151.
94 Toumanoff 1963: 152-3. The struggle against Sassanid persecution was a major reason for the absence of Armenian church officials at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.
the state and the people but the history and course of Christianity once it was introduced and accepted in Armenia. The naXarar system added dynastic and feudal features to Armenian society and the emerging state. Strong rising dynasts throughout Anatolia and the former Seleucid Empire often clashed with the growing power of the Romans in the eastern Mediterranean, resulting in occasional regional instability. The prosperity and expansion of the Roman Empire, however, increasingly brought Armenia under its ‘shadow,’ eventually creating a buffer state between Parthia and itself. Unfortunately, that buffer state did not remain independent or united. Within sixty or seventy years after the introduction of Christianity, Armenia was permanently divided. Christianity initially added to existing internal conflicts with Armenian society. However, it eventually became a rallying point for the Armenian people, especially in the face of severe Sassanid persecution.
CHAPTER FOUR
RELIGIONS OF EASTERN ANATOLIA

Cappadocia and Armenia, as other regions of the ancient Near East, were profoundly influenced by religion in the development of their social structures, laws, governments, and cultures. This chapter seeks to present the religious character of these areas at the time of the introduction of Christianity, in the first four centuries AD. In order to relate the defining characteristics of religions in these respective lands, the structure of this chapter varies from previous ones. Discussion of the two areas is not separated. It is hoped that by discussing the influence of religion in a unified, somewhat chronological, approach similarities and differences will be more easily perceived than if each area were examined individually.

The histories of religion in Cappadocia and Armenia shared some general characteristics until the Roman era. In religion, as in history, interaction with outside social and political forces and acceptance of non-native religious concepts and practices resulted in significant impacts on the development of society and religion in each of the respective areas. Although both lands were affected in varying degrees by Hellenism, the predominance of Iranian beliefs and culture continued. In Armenia this heightened after the advent of Parthian control over the eastern Seleucid provinces in the second century BC. It would be Roman influence and, in particular, the introduction of the imperial cult after annexation, that positioned Cappadocia on a decidedly different religious ‘path’ than that of Armenia. Armenia’s position as a semi-independent buffer state allowed Christianity to develop differently from that in provincial Cappadocia.
When Christianity arrived in Cappadocia and Armenia during the first to fourth centuries AD, the men or women bringing the new belief returned to, or encountered, cultures that were polytheistic, but with distinct differences as to their expressions or practices. The native beliefs were a blend of practices old and new, local and foreign. Different currents surfaced in the various cults: ancient Anatolian nature worship; Iranian dualism; Greco-Roman polytheism; and even Hebrew monotheism.

There existed in Cappadocia and Armenia a definite plurality of beliefs and expressions dating back to Neolithic times, such as the cult of the ‘Great Mother.’ This deity, revered in Anatolia from at least 6000 BC, was associated with fertility, a quality important to cultures dependent upon agriculture, hunting and livestock breeding.¹ The goddess was known as Mâ to the later Cappadocians. During the first centuries AD, she was venerated at an important temple-estate at Comana, located in a valley within the Antitaurus Mountains of central Cappadocia (Strab. 12.2.3).

The description of Comana by Strabo in the first century AD is an example of a feature of Hittite religion which continued to exert powerful religious influence within Cappadocian society despite political and social changes over the centuries. This component was the temple-estate. While the numerous gods² of the Hittites were venerated in various shrines throughout the land, main deities—such as the Storm god, Sun goddess or the Weather god—had large temples with land dedicated to supplying the

¹ Turcan 1996: 28-9. The Phrygians continued the veneration of the Great Mother, calling her Matar kubileya. She was depicted as a clothed standing figure holding a bird of prey; accordingly, the Great Mother was associated with the hunt. The famous black stone associated with her cult was taken to Rome during the Second Punic War and the worship of Magna Mater/Cybele was incorporated into the Roman pantheon. See CAH, 2.2 1975: 435, Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003:151 and Roller 1991: 128-143.
² OCD 1996: 81; Beckman 1989: 99 and Burney 2004: 223-4. Burney speaks of the “Thousand Gods of Hatti.” Rather than a figurative expression, this term was used in Hittite legal documents such as treaties.
specific needs of the gods and their priests. These temples and their staffs were provisioned by the large agricultural estates which, in turn, were worked by hundreds or thousands of workers.³

Certain geographic features of eastern Anatolia—less than frequent rainfall, harsh climate, and steppe-like terrain bordered by high mountains—influenced the creation of societies sustained by the produce of the soil. The Hittites, like the native peoples before them, fashioned a fixed relationship between their deities and their everyday lives. Specific features, such as mountains or springs, acquired divine status. Major Hittite gods, such as the Storm-God and the Sun-Goddess reflected the people’s daily basic needs. Ranked slightly lower were those deities associated with the vital occupations of cultivation and hunting. The Hittites equated divine goodwill with essentials such as timely rains, good harvests, protection from disease, and productive herds. The gods who ultimately controlled these requisites obliged the people to proffer prescribed gifts which assured their favor. Hittite belief in essence was a product of the society’s needs in light of the realities of their environmental factors.⁴

Elements of Hittite religion possibly spread eastward beyond the Euphrates into the regions which later became Armenia. A Hittite king warred against the king of the Hayasa, possibly a proto-Armenian people. The succeeding Hittite king not only established friendly relations with the people, but also formalized marriages between the

ruling families of both lands. In this way, an avenue was opened by which Hittite religious features were introduced to the natives of the eastern lands.\(^5\)

The kingdom of Urartu, which predated Armenia, contributed distinct practices and features to the Armenian religion. The veneration of sacred trees and their connection with divination continued in Armenia until the Christian era. Figures known as *vishaps*, depicted as giant fish or dragon-like shapes, were incorporated into Armenian beliefs and figured strongly in the folklore even after the introduction of Christianity. Urartian temples, as evidenced by archaeological finds, revealed structural parallels to early Armenian churches; both structures utilized a centralized square area surrounded at each corner by low buttresses.\(^6\)

*Iranian Influence on Religion*

Iranian cultures, whether Medes, Persians, Parthians or Sassanids, exercised significant religious influence in both Cappadocia and Armenia prior to the introduction of Christianity. As will be seen, the measure of that impact on each area was different, due, in part, to political developments as much as religious ones. Iranian influence upon Armenia remained strong even after Christianity became the official religion and affected the political development particularly in the fifth century AD.

Zoroastrianism was a major Iranian religion from the time of the Medes as the teachings of Zoroaster had been accepted by the priestly caste of *magi*.\(^7\) It is perhaps incorrect to view Zoroastrianism as an official Persian religion until the Sassanid era.

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\(^5\) Lang 1978: 79.
\(^7\) Russell 2004: 358 and Bowersock, Brown and Gabal 1999: 755-6. Robin Lane Fox disagrees with the view that Zoroastrianism was predominant and argues that only a minority practiced its tenets. Lane Fox 2006: 94-5.
Indeed, some scholars debate whether the Achaemenids practiced the strict Mazdean religion of eastern Iran. As modern scholars have no extant sacred texts from the Achaemenid era, what is known of the religion must be deduced from study of images, architectural reliefs and archival materials. The only deity attested in the Old Persian language until the time of Artaxerxes II is that of Ahuramazda. The ‘Wise Lord’ was depicted with wings on Persian reliefs and regarded as the creator of life, supporter of the truth and special protector of the king. Written archives reveal that both Elamite and Babylonian gods were still allowed customary provisions for sacrifices by the Achaemenid kings, suggesting that the early Persian rulers were not as rigid in their approach to religion as the later Sassanids.

Fire was considered a sacred element to the Achaemenid Persians. Many of the rulers had sacred fires tended on their behalf by the magi. Earth and water were other sacred elements and sacred words were considered able to oppose the powers of evil, the daēvas. The use of strength or force was an important feature in Zoroastrianism as it was an expression of the belief that man was created to contest evil in this world. That feature might also help to explain the development of the cult of Mithras, as well as its later popularity among Roman legionaries.

Zoroastrianism might have energized certain Achaemenid aims and spurred the Persians to incorporate moral values into their religion, but it made no great impact west of the Euphrates, except for the extension of some Zoroastrian concepts into Anatolia. A

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main reason is that the Achaemenids, for whatever reasons, did not attempt to impose their religion on their subject nations. One scholar asserted that, beginning with Cyrus, the Achaemenids chose a deliberate policy of leniency toward the religions of subject nations as a means of unifying their domain.\(^\text{11}\) Perhaps the imperial policy was, in fact, a political expression of the Zoroastrian belief that men were free to choose whether to join Ahuramazda in the struggle against the forces of evil in the world.

That is not to say that the religion did not spread beyond native Iranian lands. The number of Persian settlements throughout Anatolia and the presence of aristocratic Persians serving as satrapal officials were linked to the growth of Iranian cults in specific areas across the peninsula. At Ephesus, on the western coast of Anatolia, the priesthood at the temple of Artemis was held by a Persian family until the fourth century AD. In addition, there were regions, usually east of the Euphrates or areas with prior links to Iranian culture, where Zoroastrianism became heavily entrenched. Such regions were Armenia and eastern Cappadocia.\(^\text{12}\)

The experience of imperial rule also brought changes to the Iranian religion. Syncretism with native religions was allowed and even regarded as valid during several of the Achaemenid dynasties. Artaxerxes II introduced new elements with the cults of Mithras and Anahit. Animal sacrifices were no longer offered; fire was introduced as a central element of the royal religious practices. The role of the magi became vital in Persian religion.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^\text{11}\) Russell 2004: 100-3.
Despite the changes, there was also evidence of continuity of beliefs and practices from earlier periods of Iranian religion. Plants, animals, water, earth and metals continued to be venerated. Material goods and abundance were considered the gifts of Ahuramazda and were welcomed and enjoyed. Consequently, all forms of asceticism were rejected.\footnote{CAH 4 1992(1988): 100-103; Bowersock, Brown and Grabar 1999: 755 and Russell 2004: 37-8.}

The new cults introduced by Artaxerxes II found widespread acceptance in Cappadocia and Armenia. Mithras, an Indo-Iranian deity, became a popular cult in Cappadocia. Also seen as a warrior god fighting together with Ahuramazda against the powers of evil, Mithras was depicted with rays of the sun and was venerated at the Temple of the Sun and Moon in Armavir, capital of Armenia during the rule of the Orontid monarchs.\footnote{Lang 1978: 128.} Mithraism transformed later during the Graeco-Roman era into what is commonly termed an eastern mystery religion and was transported by Roman legionaries from eastern Anatolia to areas across the Roman Empire.\footnote{Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003: 364; Turcan 1996: 5, 195-215 and Cumont 1956:139-150}

Anahit was originally a minor Iranian spirit associated with water and fertility. Artaxerxes established her cult and ranked her with the primary Persian deity Ahuramazda and his personal god Mithras to form a triad. Perhaps spread by high-ranking Persians, her cult expanded into Cappadocia, Pontus and Armenia, where she quickly achieved status as patron goddess of the land. Her temples were scattered throughout Armenia and Pontus, but the one most associated with her cult was located at Ashtishat in Armenia. Known as Acesilene to the Hellenized world, it was home to a vast

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temple complex and a sacred grove of trees. The largest and best known structure of the complex was dedicated to Anahit; her golden statue stood inside.  

A fifth century BC altar base found near Mazaca in Cappadocia attests to Iranian influences on the area. The altar base was carved with scenes of magi offering sacrifices. That image suggests that Persian rites were honored, if not actually practiced, in areas of the Persian satrapy. It is possible that magi were brought to Cappadocia specifically to conduct religious rites. Even in the fourth century AD a group known as the *Magusaioi* was associated with fire-worship.  

The prevalent use of Iranian names among the local population was a custom that endured for several centuries and was not limited to Cappadocia. The great Hellenistic dynast, Mithridates Eupator, boasted a proud Iranian heritage besides his Iranian name. Iranian names, particularly among upper-class aristocrats and the emerging dynasts, were common in Armenian society; even the philhellenic Artaxias had an Iranian name. Other common Iranian names, such as Mithridates and Tiridates, continued in use until the conversion to Christianity. Among some of the Armenian noble houses, and particularly the royal house, the practice continued much later because of the influence of the Parthians.  

It is likely that Persian influence on religion directly affected the aristocratic classes in Cappadocia more than the general populace. The urban or rural aristocratic  

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17 *OCD* 1996: 80 and 991; Bowersock, Brown and Grabar 1999: 755; Russell 2004: 375 and Lang 1978: 127. Supposedly when Mark Antony’s soldiers attempted to plunder the temple, the first one to enter was blinded by the avenging goddess.  


20 Hewsen 2001: 11.
classes would have had more contact with the governing Persian class and more easily adopted religious acculturation, as occurred in the Hellenistic era.

In Armenia, the Iranian imprint on belief and society was more pronounced and longer lasting than in Cappadocia. Iranian deities continued to figure significantly in Armenian religion until the introduction of Christianity. Anahit, in particular, became the patron goddess of Armenia and was worshiped at shrines across the land. One cause for the successful religious integration in Achaemenid Armenia possibly lies with the satrap. During the reign of Artaxerxes II the satrap was Orontes, the Persian king’s son-in-law.\(^{21}\) It remains unclear if Orontes was a Persian assigned to Armenia or whether he was a member of the local elite who had intermarried with previous Persian officials to form a ‘Persarmenian’ aristocracy. As Artaxerxes II personally championed the cults of Anahit and Mithras, it might be entirely within reason to assume that his son-in-law actively promoted those cults within his area of jurisdiction. Artaxerxes successfully ‘converted’ Orontes to the worship of these deities, or Orontes established the cults in gratitude to Artaxerxes, as later Greek cities in Anatolia did in regard to the Roman emperors. It might even have been the influence of Artaxerxes’ daughter which inspired the establishment of one, or even both, of the cults which her father so favored. Information on involvement of Achaemenid royal or aristocratic women in their religious practices is limited, however.

\(^{21}\) Lang 1978: 120. Orontes took advantage of his father-in-law’s weaknesses as a ruler and consolidated an impressive power base in Armenia. Like satraps before and after him, Orontes became in effect a semi-independent ruler who used his position to amass great personal power and fortune. He later led the revolt of the satraps against his father-in-law in 336 BC. Although the revolt failed, he was reconciled to Artaxerxes and assigned the satrapy of Mysia.
The preeminence of Persian deities in Armenia does not imply that older cults were eliminated or declined.\textsuperscript{22} The geographic isolation of Armenian communities would have contributed to the continuance of the older religious rites and practices. Also, the high proportion of rural residents, similar to neighboring Cappadocia, guaranteed a measure of resistance to change and the persistence of the ‘old ways.’

\textit{Judaism in Cappadocia and Armenia}

The Jewish Diaspora began at the time of the Babylonian Captivity in the late sixth century BC.\textsuperscript{23} Despite Cyrus’ proclamation permitting the return of Jews to Jerusalem, many continued to live in Babylonia. Alexander’s conquest allowed the Jews additional freedom to move beyond Jerusalem or Babylon. As a result, Jewish communities began to emerge outside Israel, in the Greek cities along the Mediterranean coast, Syria and Egypt. The Diaspora widened as merchants took advantage of new trade and colonization opportunities. Although many Jews adopted Greek culture and language, they also retained affiliation with their native traditions and religion.\textsuperscript{24}

The Biblical book of Acts attests to the existence of several Jewish communities in the first century AD cities of western Anatolia visited by Paul, a Jewish/Roman citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia during his missionary journeys (Acts 13-14, 15: 36-16: 7). However, a generalization that Jews were strictly urban dwellers may not be historically correct. At the end of the third century BC the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III relocated two thousand

\textsuperscript{22} Russell 2004: 372.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{OCD} 1996: 797; Mitchell 1993b: 31; and Harnack 1904: 2. The early eighth century resettlement of Hebrews from the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian king Sargon II presents an interesting scenario. These Israelites were relocated in various sections of the Assyrian empire. As the Assyrians controlled, or heavily influenced, areas in close proximity to both Cappadocia and Armenia, it is speculation, one admits, as to whether groups of these Israelites came to reside in those locales.

\textsuperscript{24} Frend 1984: 16-34; Harnack 1904: 1-3; Mitchell and Young 2006: 53-5 and \textit{OCD} 1996: 797.
Jewish families from Babylonia to areas in central and western Anatolia to assist in pacifying rebellious regions. These families, considered loyal colonists of the Seleucids, were granted lots of land for cultivation and allowed to build homes. In addition, they were granted freedom to continue their traditional religious practices. By the mid-first century BC several communities of Jews were spread throughout that region of Phrygia, in both urban and rural areas.\(^{25}\)

A Jewish presence in Cappadocia is suggested in the Biblical book of Acts. “Devout men,” referring to Jews who continued to uphold the religious traditions of their fathers, was the term chosen by the author to describe those who had gathered in Jerusalem on the day that came to be recognized in Christianity as the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 5). Earlier indication of Jewish residents within Cappadocia is provided by a second century BC decree from the Roman Senate. This pronouncement called on the king of Cappadocia to protect the Jews within his kingdom.\(^{26}\) Specific Jewish settlements are not easily identified. The Palestinian Talmud referred to a significant community within Cappadocia and often named the city of Mazaca. In addition, it stated that an expatriate colony of Cappadocian Jews resided in Judaea in the first century AD (j. Shab 2.2, j.Yeb 16.4 and t. Shab 2.3).

During the Roman imperial era, a sect in Cappadocia sought to integrate elements of both Judaism and paganism. The followers of *Theos Hypsistos*, ‘The Highest God,’

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\(^{25}\) Mitchell 1993b: 32-36 and Frend 1984: 31. Phrygia of the third century BC would have adjoined the lands of Cappadocia. Some movement of the Jewish populations may have occurred, but that is a matter of speculation. Settlement of the Gauls in the Phrygian lands during the second century and the subsequent establishment of the land of the Galatians meant that Cappadocia and Phrygian no longer shared borders. Jewish communities existed in some of the southern Galatian cities, such as Derbe and Lystra.

\(^{26}\) Harnack 1904: 2, n.1.
believed that the various members of the pagan pantheon were ultimately subordinate to one supreme god. These Hypsistarians, who included fourth century Cappadocian bishop Gregory Nazianzus’ father,27 followed Jewish dietary laws and honored the Jewish Sabbath. They venerated no images and offered no sacrifices; instead, they reverenced Zoroastrian elements of fire and light.28

Large Jewish urban populations of the fourth century AD were documented by Armenian national historians. Thomas Artsruni, who wrote a tenth century AD history of his aristocratic naXarar family, claimed that Tigranes the Great sent Armenian forces to assist Cyrus the Persian in protecting Jewish captives from attack by the king of the Galatians.29 After successfully defending the Jews, Armenian soldiers then formed a bodyguard and escorted those Jews who chose to return to Jerusalem (Thom. Arts. 1.39-40).

Moses Khorenats’i dated Jewish communities in Armenia to the first century BC. His history also connected Tigranes the Great with the Jews, but in a different manner. He stated that Tigranes took Jewish captives during his campaigns in Palestine and Syria. These he resettled in the Armenian city of Armavir. They were resettled by later kings in other cities, including the Hellenistic capital, Artaxata (MX 2.14, 2.39 and 2.49).

Khorenats’i also referred to Jews living in the cities of Valarshapat and Van. (Problems with Khorenats’i surface here. Not only is his chronology very confused, but

27 Van Dam 2003b: 79.
29 Obviously, there is quite a problem with this claim! Cyrus predated both Tigranes and the Gauls by several centuries. The Gauls first appeared in Anatolia in the third century BC, predating Tigranes, who lived from approximately 140 to 55 BC. The author is no doubt attempting to portray the Armenians and his house in particular as supportive of the Jews.
also his historical facts.) He asserted that Jews had been taken as prisoners, along with Hyrcanus the Jewish High Priest, by a combined Armenian and Parthian force sent to Jerusalem by Tigranes the Great. The captives were brought to Armenia and settled in Van (MK 2.19). However, the Jewish historian Josephus ascribed the perfidious capture of the High Priest to the Parthians and not the Armenians. According to Antiquities, Hyrcanus was taken to Parthia where he was treated kindly by the Parthian king, granted liberty to live in his own house and became a respected leader of the Babylonian Jews before his return to a Judaea ruled by Herod. This would place the abduction and imprisonment of Hyrcanus in the early first century BC, almost fifteen years after the death of Tigranes (AJ 15.2.1-2).

Khorenats’i also referred to the Jewish heritage of one of the Armenian naXarar families, the Bagratuni. Supposedly an Armenian king at the time of Nebuchadnezzar requested that the Babylonian king send him one of the Jewish captives. The Babylonian king agreed and sent a Jew named Shambat to Armenia. He was honored by the Armenian king, rose in position and power and his descendants became the Bagratuni noble house (MK 1.22).

The historian P’awstos Buzand detailed the size and location of several Jewish communities captured and enslaved by the Sassanid king Shapur in the fourth century AD. According to this history, over sixteen thousand Jewish families living in six Armenian cities were displaced or captured by the Sassanid invasion. He, like Khorenats’i, attributed their presence in Armenia to the campaigns of Tigranes the Great (PB 4.55.178-179).
Neusner, in his article “The Jews in Pagan Armenia,” upholds the histories of both Khorenats’i and P’awstos in regard to Tigranes’ relocation of Jews to Armenia. He acknowledges that the numerical data in P’awstos lacks reliability, as does Garsoian, but he views both accounts as evidence for the presence in Armenia of a sizeable Jewish population from the first century BC. Neusner rejects the veracity of the Jewish heritage of Armenian noble houses, and suggests that the genealogies became significant after the introduction of Christianity. By proposing a link between Jews of the Old Testament and the naXarar houses the later Christian historians were attempting to portray Armenians as naturally belonging to the new Jewish Christian order.  

Religions of the Hellenistic Age

The introduction of Hellenic cults in Cappadocia and Armenia did not necessarily constitute an abrupt break with previously established beliefs and practices. Indeed, the process was marked by a degree of continuity. Many Hellenic deities were associated with similar types of locations and roles as the native gods. Therefore, some of the Hellenic deities became connected with familiar local or regional gods. Zeus was associated with Ahuramazda, Cybele with the Anatolian Great Mother, Artemis with Anahit, Aphrodite with Ishtar and Apollo with Mithras. Syncretism was a common occurrence in the Hellenistic east.  

The scholar Adolf Harnack saw syncretism as predating Hellenism in the Near East; elements of the various religions of the area had mingled for thousands of years.

He also viewed syncretism as a spiritual force which fostered new religious approaches, the products of Near Eastern and Hellenic cultures.\(^{32}\)

The modern author David Potter, on the other hand, objects to use of the word ‘syncretism’ on the grounds that it suggests the creation of one dominant form in all areas. Such a model, he insists, did not exist in Hellenistic times. Instead, Potter prefers to use ‘synthesis,’ ‘acculturation’ or ‘absorption.’ He acknowledges a similar premise as Harnack, that there was an exchanging and blending of religious beliefs along with other aspects of culture as a result of the Greek expansion throughout the Near East and other areas. He views that interaction between Greek and non-Greek religious traditions as the single most significant aspect of Hellenistic religion.\(^{33}\)

Potter recognized that contact between the Greek and the various Anatolian cultures produced a variety of outcomes, but noticed that two particular results happened more often. First, it was the Greek cults which assimilated to the local religious systems.\(^{34}\) In other words, a Greek deity and a local deity were synthesized; the cult center remained in the specific local to which the local deity had been associated. The deity was then given a combined name which provided continuity for both cultures. The

\(^{32}\) Harnack 1904: 25-39. Harnack saw this era as the time when belief in a division between the soul and body, with increasing emphasis on the soul, became apparent. The world and the body came to be seen as agents of corruption to the soul; this promoted an increase in the idea of escape and freedom of the soul apart from the body. Yet, such escape could only come to those who sought certain mysteries and who were successful in communicating with the deity in order to ascertain the needed knowledge by which the soul could escape or ‘be saved.’

\(^{33}\) Potter in Erskine 2003: 419.

\(^{34}\) Potter in Erskine 2003: 423-4.
best example in Anatolia was the worship of Zeus. He was known under various names, according to the locale. He was Zeus Stratios in Pontus and Zeus Tavianos in Galatia.\textsuperscript{35}

Potter’s second conclusion was that a local deity was sometimes accepted into the Greek culture, but retained its native name and some peculiar native characteristics. The native deity was not absorbed into a Greek form, yet neither did it retain its traditional location.\textsuperscript{36} Instead, the new cult often proved quite mobile, spreading far from its original site.

That second model, known to earlier generations of historians as ‘Oriental mystery religions,’\textsuperscript{37} included certain Near-Eastern cults which became increasingly popular during the late Hellenistic and Roman eras. Cults honoring Isis, Cybele, or Mithras succeeded in attracting numerous adherents throughout the Graeco-Roman world. Potter viewed them as significant, not because they signified any shift in religious thought, as proposed by Harnack, but because they were evidence of a unique fusion of new knowledge concerning the divine and the traditional cultic connection between humans and deities.\textsuperscript{38}

Such cults emphasized private or even secret rites that often involved emotional or ecstatic responses. Admission or participation in the cult was also a more selective

\textsuperscript{35} Mitchell 1993b: 22-3.
\textsuperscript{36} Potter in Erskine 2003: 424.
\textsuperscript{37} Turcan 1996: 3-9. Turcan argues that the term has fallen out of favor among academics because of two main factors. First, ‘Oriental’ suggests that those cults retained their eastern outlook even when transplanted to the west. Turcan does not see that as the case. Those religions came into contact with the Greek east first and, like so many religions before and after, fused elements of the new cultures into their practices and beliefs, producing hybrid forms of the original cult. This process continued again when the cult was transported to other cultures. Secondly, Turcan thinks that the term connotes an oversimplification of the cults and lends to a skewed perspective in which the diverse cults are lumped into one broad category. He prefers the terms ‘religions of eastern origin’ or ‘Graeco-Oriental religions.’
\textsuperscript{38} Potter in Erskine 2003: 407-8.
process; those given access were considered part of a distinctive fellowship with specific benefits or a unique purpose. The deity was described as both omnipotent and personally responsive. Consequently, the members were offered opportunities to communicate directly with the deity by acquisition of special knowledge through initiation and participation in the cultic rites. The accretion of secret knowledge was linked to a promise of salvation of the individual participant from the cares of this world or fears of the next.  

A distinctive feature of Hellenistic-era religion was also the continuity of the *polis*, or civic, cults. Greek gods were viewed as benefactors of the city. Therefore, each civic cult offered a bond between a specific deity and the city, an avenue by which the city might obtain divine favor. Priesthoods were gender-specific. Cults honoring male deities had priests; those worshiping female deities had priestesses. Both priests and priestesses were considered civic officials; their positions actually belonged to the *polis*. Thus, they served not as representatives of the deity, but as emissaries of the community to the deities they served.  

Exclusivity was not practiced within the *polis*; no one god was honored to the omission of others. Many deities and cults were welcomed. The breadth of cults that existed in a Hellenistic *polis* was reflected in a passage from the Biblical book of Acts. The apostle Paul traveled to Athens where he noted the existence of numerous altars to

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39 *OCD* 1996: 1017-8 and Turcan 1996: 1-27. These eastern religions also used a separate priestly caste, something unfamiliar to the civic cults of the Hellenes.
41 Lane Fox 2006: 47-54 and *OCD* 1996: 1300-1301.
various deities throughout the city, including one dedicated to “an unknown god” (Acts 17: 22-23).

Alexander the Great was not the first human to be granted divine honors. Hero cults had long been honored in Greek society. However, the magnitude of his military success significantly increased the number of cities, particularly in Anatolia, which recognized him as their particular patron. He had been powerful enough to grant them protection. Now those who enjoyed that protection often claimed his divinity as well.\footnote{Potter in Erskine 2003: 417-9 and Chanoitis in Erskine 2003: 433.}

Alexander’s conquests ultimately led to changes in Greek religious customs and practices. One such change involved the ruler cult, which Potter saw as a variation of the civic benefactor cult. He recognized that the ruler cult was the means by which new religious elements were integrated into Hellenistic life. Also, he identified the cult as that element in Hellenistic society which successfully adapted Greek culture in the various locales to which it spread.\footnote{Potter in Erskine 2003: 417-9.} Important within Hellenistic society, the ruler cult became even more powerful in Roman society.

As stated previously, religious assimilation or acculturation was a characteristic feature of the Hellenistic Age in the Near East. Greek deities were assimilated with local gods of similar personalities or common interests. Zeus Stratios became associated with AhuraMazda; the Anatolian moon-god Mên was also known as Pharnacou and the ancient Mother Goddess Ma was venerated together with Cybele. Perhaps a reason for such success in sections of rural eastern Anatolia was previous experience with the
convention. The Persian Artaxerxes II had introduced new deities into Cappadocia and Armenia, such as Mithras and Anahit, whose cults gained a wide following.

In some cases, however, the deities retained their distinctive Asiatic characteristics. That meant, for perhaps a majority of people within Cappadocia and Armenia, continuity in worshiping the same gods with similar rites. It is also likely that for those more remote areas of the plateaus or mountains where the people experienced fewer cultural contacts with Hellenistic culture or administration, the traditional deities and rites continued to be honored as before.44

Strabo alluded to a potentially significant development within Hellenistic Cappadocia. He recounted the successful unification of the different tribes living in the central and eastern portions of Cappadocia by Ariarathes III in the mid-third century BC (Strab. 12.1.2). By his time, the early first century AD, Strabo noted that tribal differences, especially the diversity of languages, had generally disappeared. Now, along with a common language, Cappadocia shared a general culture. One might assert that Ariarathes’ actions were the first phases of a growth that affected not only politics and society, but religion as well. That tribal merger was important in establishing within Cappadocia a degree of unity which later supported religious developments, such as the rise and acceptance of Christianity. This is not meant to imply a greater measure of unity within political or social forces than really existed in the area. One has to acknowledge the essential localized power bases within the aristocratic Cappadocian society. However,

44 CAH 9 1994: 137; Ramsay 1890(1972): 24; OCD 1996: 191 and Lang 1970: 150. All native religions were not completely assimilated; some survived for centuries.
the point must be made that some measure of unity was successfully introduced into the culture, a unity that later supported the expansion of a common religion.

The introduction of Greek culture produced some secondary adaptations in religion and culture. The upper levels of society often accepted the syncretized Hellenistic deities or at least gave their native gods Hellenistic names. A few among the new upper strata of Hellenistic society found the philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism fashionable. The acceptance and use of Greek names occurred more in the aristocracy of Cappadocia than Armenia, due to the strong Iranian influence particularly after the rise of Parthia. Temple estates continued as powerful institutions within both societies; their priesthods now became affiliated with the ruling dynastic houses. In the more mountainous areas where Seleucid control and the impact of Hellenism did not extend, however, most peasants remained devoted to their native cults, deities and superstitions. However, the force of superstition forced some concessions. Not the result of reasoned thought, the inclusion of new gods was often a decision made out of fear—fear that their traditional gods were no longer able to protect them or provide the regular rains or good harvests on which their lives depended.  

Comana in early first century AD Cappadocia was the site of a very large and powerful temple-estate. The high priesthood was hereditary, and during Hellenistic times typically reserved for members of the ruling family. The temple priest held a distinctive position in Cappadocian society. As ruler of the lands and the temple servants, he held both political and religious power, ranking directly below the king in authority. It is not

46 Magie 1950: 201.
clear whether this position stemmed from association of the priesthood with the ruling dynasty during Hellenistic times or the importance of Mâ within the Cappadocian pantheon. The city housed an estimated six thousand temple servants in Strabo’s time. Vast lands surrounded the temple-city, supported the needs of the complex and provided income for the high priest (Strab. 12.2.3).

Other important religious sites in Cappadocia at the time of Strabo included the temple to Zeus at Daciëus, the shrine to Cataonian Apollo at Dastarcum and an important sanctuary to the Venasian Zeus in Venasa. All of these are examples of the assimilation of Greek deities into the local cult systems. The high priesthood at Daciëus was also highly valued in Cappadocian society; the priest ranked third behind the king and the priest at Comana. The temple at Venasa boasted three thousand temple servants in Strabo’s time and provided its high priest with a sizeable annual income (Strab. 12.2.5-6). From Strabo’s description these cultic sites were very important within Cappadocia society as a whole; their significance was reflected in the powerful priests who served dual roles in their culture as political and religious leaders.

The northern land of Pontus, originally part of Cappadocia under Achaemenid rule, possessed religious cults which are important because of their influence among the many Armenians who lived in or near Pontus. The temple-city of Pontic Comana was modeled after its Cappadocian namesake. The shrine venerated Mâ/Bellona; Strabo acknowledged the practice of ritual prostitution there. In fact, he compared Comana to

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47 Magie 1950: 201.
Corinth, a location famous for its cult of Aphrodite and attendant prostitutes.\textsuperscript{48} During festival time Comana attracted vast crowds of male and female worshippers. Many of these were Armenians due to the temple’s proximity to Lesser Armenia and the border areas of Greater Armenia across the upper Euphrates (Strab. 12.3.36-37). Also, Pontic Comana was the temple-estate assigned by the Romans to Archelaus, former general under Mithridates Eupator of Pontus. His descendants remained hereditary high priests until Archelaus Sisines was appointed king of Cappadocia by Mark Antony.\textsuperscript{49}

The city of Zela in Pontus featured a shrine for the Hellenized Iranian goddess Anaïtis, revered by the Armenians as Anahit (Strab. 12.3.32). The reoccurrence of deities in areas outside their original places of veneration suggests the transference of religions among populations within these areas. Such movements of cultic practices could have accompanied large-scale migrations of peoples from one area to another as a result of war or natural disasters. Also, the seasonal movement of nomadic peoples between the areas might also be a possible reason for the establishment of cults in regions far from their original homes.

The Orontid and early Artaxiad eras of Armenian history are viewed by some as a time in which Armenian paganism took its unique shape.\textsuperscript{50} These periods were characterized by an intensification of the syncretism begun during Achaemenid times. The Armenian pantheon became enlarged as Greek deities were added to the Iranian and older Mesopotamian, Syrian and local gods. A temple to the Sun and Moon was built at

\textsuperscript{48} OCD 1996: 1263.  
\textsuperscript{50} Lang 1970: 127.
The only known public temple to Mithras was located in Armenia; a member of the Orontid family served as the priest of Mithras ca. 200 BC. The strong influence of that cult on the development of Armenian religion is seen as the pre-Christian term for temple, mehean, is clearly derived from Mithras’ name. Under the Orontids, Anahit became the patron goddess of Armenia. They also oversaw the establishment of numerous cultic centers, temples, feasts and festivals which became integral parts of Armenian religious life, at both the aristocratic and lower levels of society.

Despite ancestral ties to Zoroastrianism the Orontids, and the succeeding Artaxiad dynasty, welcomed aspects of Hellenistic civilization. They introduced identifiably Greek images into their worship, such as statues of the deities with traditional Greek forms. The Artaxiads in particular were Hellenized. Some of these monarchs appreciated and were very familiar with Greek culture. They spoke at least three languages, Greek, Iranian and Armenian. Yet, the social structure under the Artaxiads continued to be the tribal or clan patriarchal structure. The naXarar system had become firmly entrenched in Armenian society by the time of the Artaxiad Tigranes the Great.

Other features of Armenian religion during the Orontid/Artaxiad periods were the existence of numerous urban and rural temples, some located in temple-towns, the hereditary priesthood which was a social caste all its own, the continued veneration of fire and water, and the influence of superstition. Even in later Arsacid Armenia the priests and priestesses were generally hereditary positions. The high priest of the main

cultic center was often related to the royal family. Two aristocratic families in particular became noble houses which supplied priests for the shrines and sanctuaries. Superstitions of earlier Armenian society became mixed with those of Iranian origin. A fear of cutting the hair or nails existed alongside the more ancient fear of the 'evil eye.' The Arsacids, in particular, continued to venerate fire and water as sacred elements, often going to great lengths to avoid the desecration of those things.56

Sebastê, located in a section west of the Euphrates known to the Romans as Lesser Armenia, had a temple to the moon goddess Selenê (Strab. 12.3.31). This may have been a distinctly Hellenic cult in that the native Anatolian deity associated with the moon was the god Mên. East of the Euphrates a temple to Anahit, also known as Anaitis Khorê, was located in the district of Ekeleac, or Akilisênê in Greek, on the upper Euphrates (ASX 5.22.1). This temple boasted a golden statue of the goddess. Strabo connected the worship of Anâîtis and Mâ in both Armenia and Pontus with ritual prostitution.57 Also located in Armenia was a temple to Heracles, associated in that land with the Zoroastrian Vahagn.58

The rise of Parthia greatly influenced the development of society and religion in Armenia. Because of family and cultural ties to the Parthian ruling elite, the Arsacids presided over the zenith of both Iranian religion and cultural influences in Armenia. The Iranian god Tir, associated with the star Sirius, oracles, dreams and writing, became an

56 Lang 1970: 151.
57 He recounted that leading Armenian tribal families offered their virgin daughters as prostitutes at the temple in Akilisênê. After a length of service these women were then married. Strabo noted that the prospective bridegrooms did not treat their espoused with contempt. (Strabo 11.14.16) This practice may have been the result of older Semitic Mesopotamian influences on the area as well as the Hellenistic culture.
58 Burney and Lang 1971: 216.
important part of the pantheon. His name also became common in the Arsacid dynasty of the mid-first century AD. Zoroastrian dualism reentered Armenian religion; the concept of a perpetual struggle between powers of good and evil remained a significant Armenian belief throughout later history. Indeed, one might argue that this particular concept of an ongoing battle between good and evil became a hallmark of Armenian Christianity as a response to the more militant Zoroastrian Sassanids.

The Arsacid dynasty, beginning with Tiridates I in AD 53, signified “a return to an eastern, Parthian orientation in Armenian culture and religion.” Tiridates himself was a *magus*; he chose the longer land route for his journey to Rome rather than defile the sacred waters of the Mediterranean by crossing it in a ship. His very name reflected the increasing significance of the Iranian god Tir in the Armenian pantheon. Tir was associated with the star Sirius as well as with rain, oracles, dreams and writing. Several of the Arsacid kings were named Tiridates, even after the introduction of Christianity.

The Arsacid monarchs of Armenia did not force their Zoroastrianism on the various levels of society. They possessed their own syncretistic elements. Both the Arsacids in Armenia and Parthia established a cult to the deified king. Respect for the priestly caste of magi was promoted as was the practice of maintaining sacred fires in the fire temples on behalf of each Arsacid dynast. Yet despite these new practices, Hellenistic deities continued to be venerated. The god Zeus and the goddesses Tyche and

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60 Lang 1970: 141.
Artemis were popular with the Arsacids. The result of such syncretism was a pantheon which the Armenian peasants did not always understand.  

The Achaemenid triad of Ahuramazda, Anahit and Mithras now became Aramazd, Anahit and Vahagn. Temples to Aramazd, whose festival corresponded to the Armenian New Year, were built in northern Armenia and near Mt. Ararat. Mithras worship continued as the Arsacids built a new temple in the classical style, but with both Armenian and Hellenistic elements in the ornamentation. Little is definitely known of the precise images used in Hellenistic and Arsacid Armenian temples and shrines as the early Christians completely destroyed them. However, statues of Greek deities were discovered in numerous Parthian cities; they provide clues as to images used by the Armenians during the Arsacid period.

Various developments of the Hellenistic Age helped ‘set the stage’ for the introduction of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world. The rise in the appeal of universal rather than territorial gods contributed to religious environments which proved receptive to the message of early Christianity. The spread of Jewish communities allowed early expansion of the new Jewish sect among the scattered populations in Cappadocia and Armenia. The predominant use of the Greek language in the Near East provided necessary linguistic tools by which Christianity’s ideas might be easier disseminated. The popularity of the cult of Mithras in both areas anticipated the eventual success of Christianity as the two religions contained a number of similarities. Aspects of Iranian

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64 Harnack 1904: 19-23.
dualism in cults, particularly in Armenia, also helped to promote the acceptance of similar Christian beliefs.

**Roman Religion**

Roman cultic features and practices were introduced into Cappadocia even before its official annexation by Tiberius in the early first century AD. Roman involvement in the internal political affairs of the country had occurred regularly since the first century BC. Quite naturally, the Romans who came to Cappadocia brought their cultic practices with them. The Romans themselves had absorbed many elements of the Greek cults. Civic cults continued in the urbanized areas of Anatolia; their various festivals now crowded the Roman calendar as well. The Romans placed great emphasis on ceremony and practice. Individual gods, different seasons, specific professions and days of the week were all honored with sacrifices or festivals. Apart from the state rituals and practices was a common acknowledgement and practice of magic, dependency upon divination or reliance on astrology.\(^{65}\)

One particular feature of imperial Rome that affected the acceptance and development of Christianity in Cappadocia was the imperial cult. Angelos Chaniotis viewed the Roman ruler-cult as an expansion of the earlier Hellenistic ruler-cult.\(^{66}\) The Romans produced a significant adaptation; the cult developed from a civic to a provincial and then an imperial cult. In doing so, it became an instrument by which the various

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\(^{66}\) Chaniotis in Erskine 2003: 433.
rulers’ authority could be promoted and endorsed throughout the empire. In time, the imperial cult became a dominant institution within Roman society.  

Devotion to the emperor thus became a powerful unifying factor among the diverse peoples within the Roman Empire. In the Greek cities of Roman Anatolia, elements such as gladiator games or wild animal fights were incorporated into the cult’s festivals. Also, local urban elites recognized the cult as a tool for social advancement within their communities as the emperor was a symbol of the political, social and economic benefits bestowed by Roman rule.

Since there are no extant documents which describe the specific sacrifices involved in the imperial cult, it is difficult to determine whether the actual oblations were made to the emperor or on his behalf. The willingness of the Jews to participate in the cult suggests that the sacrifices were only offered on the emperor’s behalf, much like prayers for his protection and guidance. In that way their participation did not violate the fundamental laws of the Jewish religion concerning the worship of other gods.

Scholar Stephen Mitchell asserts that the imperial cult grew rapidly in Cappadocia after its annexation by the Romans, despite the lack of urban centers. (Strab. 12.2.7 mentions only two cities in the first century AD, Mazaca/Caesarea and Tyana.) Indeed, Mitchell considers the imperial cult a cornerstone around which the Cappadocian rulers beginning with Archelaus constructed “new traditions and patterns of civic life.” Archelaus even renamed his capital in honor of Augustus, changing its name from

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69 Price 1984: 207-221.
71 Mitchell 1993a: 117.
Mazaca to Caesarea. Mitchell also views the new buildings dedicated to the imperial cult as the earliest examples of public architecture in the new province. He speculates that the cult brought associated benefits to Cappadocia that remote areas generally did not enjoy. Such benefits included “the distribution of corn and oil, the feasts and banquets that accompanied public sacrifices, games, festivals and gladiatorial shows.”

Despite the strength of the imperial cult, it faced serious challenges in Cappadocia. Ancient native cults had strong support among the people. The local temple-estates had been firmly established within Cappadocian society since Hittite times. The Hellenize-Iranian cults remained influential, especially in the eastern sections. And the emerging mystery religions, particularly those of Cybele and Mithras, proved popular for their emphasis on personal fulfillment, membership in a selective society and the promise of an afterlife.

The Roman state viewed some cults with suspicion and state recognition was required to be considered legal within the Roman Empire. Any group considered religio-superstitio was illegal and could not openly perform its cultic practices without facing possible penalties. Illegal cults were forced to hold their meetings in secret, helping to fuel public ignorance and mistrust. Those who participated in such cults generally did so outside the protection of Roman law, but the response of the local officials many times reflected a wide disparity in dealing with such matters, especially in view of the widespread popularity among some groups such as women, slaves or soldiers.

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72 Mitchell 1993a: 117.
Roman religions, and in particular the imperial cult, failed to achieve any importance in Armenia as that country remained firmly in the Iranian sphere of influence. No doubt Mark Antony’s earlier attempt to desecrate and plunder the shrine of the patron goddess Anahit, as well as his interference in the internal political affairs of what had been a Roman client state, did much to alienate Armenia against all things Roman. Efforts by Augustus and the succeeding Roman rulers to intervene in Armenian politics by force or diplomacy continued to prejudice many aristocrats against Roman customs. When the brother of the Parthian Arsacid king became ruler in Armenia, a shift to the east began in earnest despite official recognition of the new dynasty by Nero. If anything, it appears that the new Armenian king Tiridates introduced Nero and the Roman elite to aspects of Near Eastern religion. Pliny the Elder relates how Tiridates attempted to familiarize Nero with certain feasts of the magi (Plin. HN 30.6).

*Early Christianity*

The history of Christianity in Cappadocia and Armenia involves recognition of various dynamics which were responsible for the acceptance and growth of the religion within those specific areas. Those dynamics were multi-faceted and multi-leveled. Local affairs heavily directed Christianity’s expansion as did certain regional, national or trans-national factors. Society and politics both played instrumental roles in the emerging Christian Church. Imperial administrative features influenced church structure and hierarchy. Theological disputes and variations affected countless individuals as did

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75 Turcan 1996: 267. Despite his affinity for a Syrian goddess, Nero supposedly was attracted by abilities of the Magi to exorcise spirits, especially that of his murdered mother.  
76 In the late nineteenth century Professor William Ramsay recognized the correlation between society and politics in the earliest history of the Christian church and urged students of Christian history to constantly remain aware of that significant relationship. Ramsay 1897: viii-3.
persecutions. Language played its own unique role in developing Christianity in these areas. Greek was the predominant language in the Christian communities in Cappadocia, while Syriac, Greek and eventually Armenian were all, at one point, used in the churches in Armenia. Religions in Cappadocia and Armenia had already undergone centuries of adaptation and change. The emerging Christianity would mirror significant aspects of those societies.

The advance of Christianity into Cappadocia occurred earlier than in Armenia. The exact methods of dissemination, or evangelization, of the new religion in the region are unclear due to lack of specific documentary evidence for Christianity in the first two centuries AD. Why do we know so little about the period of Christianity known as the Apostolic Age? Scholars speculate as to reasons for such an absence. One cause might have been a general indifference in the educated class of the first century, those who typically produced the documents of the age, to the spread of Christianity. Another possible reason was the composition of the early ‘audience’ to which Christianity was directed. The message of early Christianity was communicated primarily with the uneducated common people in view. Records of a movement among that segment of society were unlikely to have been produced within the movement because of the illiteracy of a majority of that social group, either in the Roman or native populations. A third likelihood for a lack of documentation involved a central belief of early Christianity—the imminent return of Jesus. The original followers of Jesus believed

77 Ramsay 1897: 144.
78 MacMullen 1984: 37.
79 Frend 1984: 126-128.
that he would come again soon, perhaps within their lifetimes. That belief added an element of immediacy to their faith. If Jesus’ return was directly related to the spread of the Christian message throughout the known world, then efforts within the early communities would have centered on conveying the message and not on the preservation of early tradition and history concerning their communities.

Finally, a fourth possibility for the absence of early documentation in Cappadocia and Armenia was the status and condition of the areas themselves. Armenia, although once a client kingdom of Rome, was falling under the influence and direction of the Parthians as the Artaxiad dynasty ended and the power shifted to the Arsacid line, direct relatives of the Parthians. The naXarar system reflected the chaotic political and social environments since various factions existed within its own ranks. Also, closer political alignment with Parthia brought a resurgence of Iranian influence and Armenia turned eastward again in cultural and religious orientation. However, a chief reason for a paucity of evidence in Armenia was the lack of a national written language with which to record the progress of the new religion. At that time the Armenian language was only oral; it had no written counterpart. The creation of the Armenian alphabet would not occur until the fifth century AD.\(^{80}\) Therefore, literature associated with early missionary activity, if any existed, would have been recorded in languages such as Syriac, Greek or perhaps Aramaic.

Cappadocia was very much a ‘backwater’ area of the empire, located near the eastern frontier. Cappadocia in the early first century AD had only recently been annexed.

by Tiberius into the Roman Empire. Despite a major road connecting the Cilician Gates in southern Anatolia with the Black Sea cities of Sinope and Amisus to the north via Tyana and Caesarea, the only official cities in first-century Cappadocia, travel in the central plateau and eastern mountainous areas was difficult, if not hazardous. The geographic diversity and vast size of Cappadocia contributed to the slower development of urban centers and limited the spread of Graeco-Roman culture. Roman institutions were slow to penetrate the remote plateau and mountainous areas which constituted the bulk of Cappadocia. The later years of the first century saw the province increasingly involved in support of Roman military campaigns against the Parthians in neighboring Armenia. While Christianity no doubt spread throughout Cappadocia during this time, social, military and political events within the region tended to overshadow the recording of the growth of a new Jewish sect whose main audience was the poor and uneducated.

Christianity possibly came south to Cappadocia from Christian communities along the Pontic coast. Evangelists might have traveled the road which connected cities along the Black Sea with Caesarea. The father of Marcion, a second-century heretic, was a member, if not a ruling elder, of a Christian community in Sinope during the first century. It has been proposed that Christianity spread to Cappadocia and Bithynia from Sinope and other early centers of Christianity along the Black Sea coast.\textsuperscript{81}

Two New Testament books suggest that the origins of Christianity in Cappadocia were linked to the Jewish communities which existed in the region at that time. The reference to Cappadocia in Acts occurred in context of the events of the Jewish Feast of

\textsuperscript{81} Frend 1984: 127.
Weeks in which Jews and their proselytes from various lands in the Near East and the Mediterranean areas assembled in Jerusalem. During that festival, Jesus’ followers, who had remained in Jerusalem according to his last instructions, “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Their words were overheard by Jews who recognized their respective native languages among those spoken by the followers of Jesus. Acts 2:9-11 enumerates a list of the lands whose languages were identified. Cappadocia was noted sixth in the list.\(^82\) Quite possibly those Jewish witnesses of Pentecost returned to Cappadocia and took at least a basic familiarity with the new sect which had arisen within Judaism. Continued communication between the two areas during the course of the first century might be another explanation for the appearance of Jewish/Christian communities in Cappadocia. Speculation might also focus on the dispersion of Jewish people from Jerusalem and Judea following the Jewish revolt in AD 66 and the subsequent war with Rome.

Harnack suggested that several locations in Cappadocia contained Christians in the first century AD, but unfortunately, he did not identify them. A modern scholar accepted Harnack’s claims, but noted that neither literary nor epigraphic evidence was available to adequately prove that assumption.\(^83\) Melitene, a town in eastern Cappadocia

\(^82\) Use of the Cappadocian language continued as late as the fourth century AD. Van Dam 2003b: 102. Johannes Munck, translator of Acts for the Anchor Bible, took the view that the followers of Jesus were actually speaking in foreign languages. He stated in his notes for this passage that it was ‘significant’ for the assembled Jews, proselytes and God-fearing Gentiles to actually hear the message of Christ proclaimed in their individual languages, rather than in Hebrew. Munck saw the phenomena as an ‘anticipation’ of the church’s liturgy in different languages. Acts of the Apostles, 1967: 14. (A different view was presented by C.S. Mann in an appendix, “Pentecost in Acts.” He argued that what drew the attention of the Jews was not hearing the native languages, but the recitation of traditional passages associated with the Jewish feast reinterpreted to focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus, an interpretation many of those hearers would have viewed as blasphemous. 1967: 275.)

\(^83\) Mitchell 1993b: 38.
near the Euphrates River and home since the time of Vespasian to the Legio XII Fulminata, supposedly had Christians by 180. Harnack asserted that eastern Anatolia had peculiar characteristics which favored conversion. He saw the fact that it was less Hellenized and Romanized in Christianity’s favor. Also, he believed the Jewish communities spread among the pagan majority produced a unique religious environment with opportunities for new spiritual experiences.\textsuperscript{84}

Political and military events of the last half of the first century also aided the expansion of Christianity in Cappadocia. Nero’s policies in regards to Armenia and the Parthian Empire opened Cappadocia to increased military traffic and settlements. Initiatives by the Flavian emperors to fortify the eastern frontiers against barbarian incursions from Central Asia led to the building of roads throughout the province and the establishment of permanent legionario camps, including that near Melitene.\textsuperscript{85}

The varied social, ethnic and religious backgrounds of Cappadocia and the adjacent provinces also eventually contributed to the formation of a Gentile constituency within emerging Christianity. The Jewish communities may have served as origination points for the new sect outside its native Judaea, but the factors of life in Cappadocia soon led to the expansion of Christianity beyond its original Jewish roots. Populations in both Cappadocia and Armenia were diverse groups encompassing broad ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. It was only a matter of time before that same mixture became reflected in the Christian communities. The new religion offered those of diverse

\textsuperscript{84} Harnack 1905: 242-5 and 327.  
\textsuperscript{85} Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003: 319-320, 329-331.
backgrounds and precarious social standing opportunities for “acceptance, security and belonging in an alien and often hostile environment.”

As the first century church in Cappadocia grew to reflect the social composition of the province, what attracted converts to the new religion? Several scholars agree that in the late first century the predominant appeal of Christianity to the average cultic worshiper was the working of miracles and the supernatural. While some modern scholars view such things with skepticism, it is imperative to acknowledge that such views were entirely consistent with the first-century world. For a great majority of people in the Graeco-Roman world the supernatural served to motivate them to belief and religious practice. Supernatural happenings were accepted as natural occurrences of their world. The inhabitants of the first century world believed in miracles. Miracles and the supernatural were thus vitally important in the dissemination of Christian beliefs. All of Jesus’ original disciples were connected with the working of miracles, as was the early missionary apostle Paul. Hagiographical writings of later centuries also emphasized the miracles associated with specific apostles, missionaries, bishops or ascetics.

Christianity was introduced into Armenia at a later date than in Cappadocia. The formal conversion date of the Armenian king was the fourth century AD. However, early Armenian historians suggested that previous contact with Christianity had occurred. They referred to missionary work in the first century by Thaddeus, one of Jesus’ original twelve disciples (\textit{MK} 2.91 and \textit{PB} 3.1.17). Thaddeus was also linked with Addai,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Elliott 2000: 102.
\item MacMullen 1984: 21-22.
\item \textit{ABD} 1992: 397.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
traditionally known as the founder of the church in Edessa. Some modern scholars interpreted the stories of Thaddeus and Addai in Armenian history to indicate a Syrian or Mesopotamian-based Christian heritage older than the fourth century. Armenian tradition also claimed that some members of the Armenian royal court in the mid-third century had become Christians. On the whole, however, there was no widespread adoption of the new religion until the fourth century, and, even then, not all segments of Armenian society accepted it eagerly.

Geography played its part in the dissemination of the new religion, but the limitations imposed by climate, altitude or simply isolation were in the end overcome by the persistence of human endeavors. Quite simply, Christianity expanded throughout Cappadocia and into Armenia because people brought it in some form. Whether Christianity came through the impetus of missionaries or bishops, the circulation of letters among groups of Jewish Christians, oral testimony, the effecting of miracles and wonders or the movements of proselytes, merchants or soldiers, the common element in its expansion was the person who transmitted its message to the next person.

Christianity in its earliest years was predominately an urban movement. In eastern Anatolia that would not be the case. It has been estimated that at the height of the Roman Empire only twenty percent of the inhabitants of Anatolia were urban dwellers. As noted previously, neither Cappadocia nor Armenia possessed the urban tradition like that which existed in the more Hellenized coastal areas. Aristocratic and imperial estates

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91 Mitchell 1993b: 57.
92 Harnack 1904: 251-3, 458-60 and 470.
constituted much of Cappadocia; *naXarar* and royal estates were predominant in Armenia. Beyond these aristocratic estates, the real core in both societies was the village. Christianity proved adaptive to these different environments and socio-political factors. The rural villages and communities of Cappadocia and Armenia came to accept Christianity, but in different ways, perhaps, than their urban counterparts in other sections of Anatolia.

Division of the land into large estates reflected ancient Anatolian social traditions dating from Hittite times and which were reinforced under Persian rule. This distinctive characteristic was also reflected in the New Testament book of 1 Peter. Possibly written toward the end of the first century AD, it was addressed “to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1). Urban areas of the Roman provinces of Asia and southern Galatia had been visited by the apostle Paul during his early missionary journeys and converts were made. Pontus, Cappadocia and Bithynia received no such visits. Eusebius, writing in the fourth century AD, credited the apostle Peter with evangelizing these areas (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 3.1.1-2). While it is difficult to totally deny the validity of such a claim, it is equally hard to prove it by literary, epigraphic or archaeological means. However, one might suggest that the presence of Christians in these areas was directly related to Jewish communities which were established throughout the region during the Hellenistic Era.

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95 Elliott 2000:138. He proposes a date between 73 and 92 AD because he thinks that the military, economic and social factors of Flavian rule, particularly under Titus and Domitian, allowed for the expansion of the Christian communities that was presumed by the author.
A modern scholar has suggested that specific language within the book of 1 Peter illustrated important organizational differences between the Christian communities in the five areas of central and eastern Anatolia and those western areas addressed in earlier Pauline epistles. Specifically, the absence of the term *ekklesia* suggested that the urban structure so common among the Christian communities founded by Paul in western Anatolia was practically non-existent in the east. Rather, the rural and, possibly tribal, nature of Cappadocian society was reflected in the early organization of Christian believers. Emphasis in 1 Peter on households rather than on an organized community, or *ekklesia*, mirrored the social patterns of Cappadocia, for the village or town based on tribal or family associations was the predominant social expression. This is perhaps an early indication that Christianity proved adept in adjusting to the regions in which it was introduced.

By addressing the Christians of these provinces as aliens the author of 1 Peter was also acknowledging the Christians’ social standing within the region. As aliens these believers were legally neither citizens nor foreigners. Who exactly were they? They might have been natives of the region who left their ancestral lands and moved to urban environments. They might also have been foreigners who were resident for longer than a month. As such, they constituted a social group which ranked beneath full citizens, but slightly above freedmen. However, they were subject to the same economic demands as citizens, faced harsher punishments if convicted of crimes and could be forced into military service. If non-natives, they probably spoke a different language than the locals.

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Their legal status, different languages, diverse social customs combined with their new religious beliefs all worked against them from a social standpoint. They were often isolated or alienated from local society. As a result, social tensions manifested themselves in public antagonism, verbal abuse for nonconformity with native cults or slander stemming from misconceptions concerning the Christians’ beliefs. The book of 1 Peter was written to address such concerns. There were, however, no indications of actual physical persecution.⁹⁷

The general spread of Christianity during the first centuries of the imperial age was facilitated by specific circumstances. These have been identified and discussed by various scholars. The political and social stability of the early Roman Principate allowed freedom of movement within the empire. That freedom, in turn, spurred greater trade and communication between various corners of the empire and beyond, helping to create diverse and open populations in areas that had previously been uniform and closed to customs other than their own. The gradual extension of Roman law and civic rights to all residents of the empire helped to break down social barriers which previously hindered the acceptance of some of the more radical concepts of Christianity. The existence of numerous private, civic or regional organizations facilitated the growth of Christianity in its structure as well as its acceptance by like-minded individuals. The appearance and success of the mystery cults even helped to increase conversions to Christianity. Individuals dissatisfied because of existing problems within society increasingly sought answers in alternative religious expressions. In addition, Christianity’s vitality and, after

the second century, its increasing appeal among both the common people and the elite led to continued growth.  

From the beginning of the second century an established organizational structure among the various Christian communities throughout Anatolia can be identified. When the coming of Jesus failed to materialize as expected, communities began to focus attention on issues such as church structure or the development of liturgy. Each local community was under the oversight of an *episkopos*, or bishop. Typically elected by the local community, a bishop was expected to possess high moral character as a prerequisite to his position within the community or congregation. Bishops of the second century did not travel among regional churches as had the first-century apostles, prophets or teachers; they remained in one city or one particular area. Gradually, they incorporated the early office of the teacher, becoming responsible for spiritual instruction of the members of their congregations. The episcopate eventually developed into a power within the Christian church. To those outside the Christian communities, the bishops represented authority, an impression supported in later generations when bishops were often members of the local elite. One scholar held the opinion that the remarkable growth within Christianity only occurred *after* it developed the episcopate. Central to his argument was the perception of the people. He stressed that in the office of the bishop the people discerned “something holy and authoritative.”

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98 Harnack 1904: 19-23 and Ramsay 1897: 190-1.
99 Harnack 1904: 279-280 and 430-3. Harnack mentioned that the office of the apostle continued into the early second century as noted by Origen and Eusebius, but recognized that while the *office* continued the name itself did not. By the second century the term ‘apostle’ was associated with the earlier disciples of Jesus or their immediate followers.
100 Harnack 1904: 280.
The church of the second century continued to feature the office of the prophet, although it began to disappear over the course of the next one hundred years. The prophet might have been particularly successful in promoting Christianity in remote areas such as Cappadocia and Armenia. In those locales a prophet or prophetess was viewed as an intermediary between God and humanity. For those individuals who had neither the opportunity nor the means to travel to a renowned oracle, the appearance of a prophet/prophetess allowed them to receive divine instructions or assistance on a personal basis.  

The second century likewise witnessed the rise of Christian exorcists. These individuals became the Christian communities’ points of contact with the society at large. At the communal fountains, local markets, area shops or street corners, everyday conversations no doubt centered on the basic needs of the people. That a major focus of the time involved the healing of sicknesses was reflected in the great appeal of the cult of Asclepius at Epidaurus or related sites in Pontus. Christian exorcists practiced the New Testament tradition of ‘laying on of hands.’ When, as a result of that touch, individuals were healed or had other problems resolved, news spread quickly. The result was often mass conversion. In essence, the second century exorcists continued the tradition of apostolic working of miracles at the local level.

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101 Mitchell 1993b: 46. Sometimes such ministry led to the formation of variant forms of Christianity, such as Montanism in Phrygia. Other times the prophetic office was used by individuals to gain a following for themselves apart from established Christian communities. Refer to the next chapter for the story related by Firmilian.

102 Nock 1964: 5 and Van Dam 1982: 300.

Christianity in the second century also saw an increase in the number of variants of the new religion. Disparate Christian groups had existed almost from the very beginning of the religion. However, in second century eastern Anatolia, alternative forms of Christianity were produced in part by the diversity of cultures within the region. No homogenous society existed in eastern Anatolia at that time. There was a multiplicity of separate communities that each boasted its own culture, dialect, or heritage. How could such an environment have produced an orthodox religious mentality? Local geographic and religious characteristics and peculiar features of the native peoples themselves all contributed to an escalation in the appearance and acceptance of differing forms of Christianity.  

Such groups differed in practices, structure or composition as well as belief. Some incorporated local cultic practices or beliefs. For example, the oldest identifiable evidence of Christian veneration of the Virgin Mary appeared in a second century Phrygian inscription. Even in the late-fourth century variants still existed. One group stressed bathing each day; another met naked to reconstruct Adam and Eve’s experiences in the Garden of Eden. A different group practiced forced castration on visitors, while an additional one revered the snake, considering it their ‘Christ.’ However, each sect, no matter how diverse, claimed to possess the sole message of Jesus.

Within Cappadocia the spread of Christianity during this period is difficult to document, probably owing in part to a precarious regional political environment. Early in the second century Trajan waged war against the Parthians, and temporarily expanded

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105 Mitchell 1993b: 63 and Ramsay 1908: 131. Ramsay thought the fact that the inscription was in Phrygian attested to the continued influence of the ancient cult of the Mother Goddess on the inhabitants of that area.
106 Van Dam 2003: 44.
Roman rule to areas of Mesopotamia and Greater Armenia. But, regional revolts during the reign of Hadrian and yet another war with the Parthians at the time of Marcus Aurelius, all contributed to destabilize the political, social and economic systems within the region. To make matters even worse, veterans returning from the Parthian war in the 160s spread a plague that decimated large sections of Asia Minor before affecting other areas in the eastern Mediterranean and then Rome itself.107

The political events of the second century directly affected Armenia. Trajan’s conquest of the region meant that formerly independent areas were now under the direct control of Roman administrators108 and, therefore, more open to indirect influence from elements within Roman society, including Christianity. The chaotic times would have presented opportunities for the Christians to present their message, but given the upheaval of society at that time it is difficult to determine exactly how, or if, Christianity spread in Armenia at that time. Certainly those areas closer in proximity and government to the Roman Empire were the areas most influenced by the new religion.

The demands of supplying the imperial legions, political unrest within the region which contributed to disruption of trade and economic activity and a devastating plague all made for very uncertain times. The Christians living in Cappadocia and Armenia, two vicinities directly affected by the events of the early to mid-second century, were doubtless faced with issues as basic as survival. Yet, glimpses of Christianity can be

identified. A late-second century bishopric located in Cappadocia was noted by Eusebius (Euseb. Hist. eccl. 6.11.2). Early bishops were Primianus and Theocritus.\(^{109}\)

The public features of the Roman imperial cult created a serious barrier to the advancement of Christianity. The rites and associated festivals of the cult made it extremely difficult for Christians to maintain their initial attitude of passive resistance. Non-participation then became an important issue in the second and third centuries when Christian indifference to the imperial cult changed to active resistance. At that point, public perception of Christians was suspicious at best.\(^{110}\) Natural disasters, military defeats, economic and political crises of the late-second century often led to sporadic physical persecution of the Christians by the majority population. They viewed the strange religion as contradictory to their traditional beliefs, possibly harmful to the empire and definitely to blame for the misfortunes and calamities which had inundated their society. As a result, Christians in various locales endured waves of arrest, torture and death.

At some point Christianity had to address how to attract a larger segment of the population and replace the dominant religious festivals of the day with its own unique forms of worship.\(^{111}\) That solution would, in itself, reflect the heterogeneous framework of Anatolian society; the sheer number of cults within eastern Anatolian allowed for paganism to be absorbed rather than completely eradicated.\(^{112}\) It proved much easier to

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\(^{109}\) Di Berardino 1992: 143.
\(^{110}\) Price 1984: 207-221.
\(^{111}\) Mitchell 1993b: 10.
\(^{112}\) Harnack 1905: 336.
Christianize the pagans gradually. Thus, assimilation and syncretism, hallmarks of Graeco-Roman culture, were themselves adapted by Christianity.

This process of assimilation can be particularly seen in the career of Gregory in the predominantly rural area of eastern Pontus during the third century. At this time Pontus was still located within the ‘super’ province of Cappadocia that had been created in the late-first century. While bishop of Neocaesarea and its surrounding areas, he performed numerous miraculous acts by which he visibly demonstrated the power of his deity to the pagan majority. As a result of these ‘wonders’ Gregory converted large numbers of residents and earned the epithet *Thaumaturgus*, or Wonderworker. When a general persecution was mandated during the reign of Emperor Decius, Gregory urged the Christians under his care, especially the newly converted, to seek refuge in the remote areas of the province. He did the same.\(^{113}\)

After the persecution subsided, Gregory traveled throughout the area and gathered the remains of those who had been martyred for their faith. He buried them with public ceremony and instituted feast days within the local church calendar to honor the dead. In addition, he allowed the people to hold festivals, similar in nature to the pagan cultic festivals, in conjunction with the new commemorative events. Thus, it would be the emerging cult of the martyr saints which helped to eventually supplant the predominant native cults in eastern Anatolia. Through his methods of assimilation, Gregory opened Christianity to further growth. The number of Christian holy places in rural areas

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\(^{113}\) Harnack 1905: 349-352. Gregory’s instructions, and personal actions, also reflect changing attitudes within the church toward martyrdom. Instead of having his community stay and face torture and possible death, he wisely advised them to seek shelter away from the violence. No doubt he realized the vulnerable state of many of the new converts and wished to save them from apostatizing in the face of persecution.
increased as a result of the establishment of various shrines honoring local martyrs. Festivals associated with the martyrs, in turn, offered the rural residents opportunities for economic and social exchange as many had the air of a market. In this manner Christianity overshadowed and eventually replaced the traditional cults in rural eastern Anatolia.\textsuperscript{114}

In summary, the unique religious environments in eastern Anatolia provided both opportunities and hindrances to the introduction and early spread of Christianity. The amalgam of the indigenous Anatolian nature gods with Hittite, Syrian, Mesopotamian and Urartian deities established over time a tradition of polytheism, or paganism. This polytheism then adapted in response to the Iranian religious elements introduced during Achaemenid control of the area. Both Cappadocia and Armenia developed sacred rites or cults which can be traced to distinct Iranian influence. Hellenic and Roman cultures introduced new forms of religion, some of which excited popular interest and participation and, in turn, were syncretized and absorbed into existing native cults. The Roman imperial cult had no effect in Armenia as it was independent of the empire and was more politically aligned with Parthia. In Cappadocia the inherently rural social structure and the scarcity of large urban centers deterred the development of the imperial cult in comparison with cities in western Anatolia.

\textsuperscript{114} Van Dam 1982: 275-6, 290-3, 301-2 and 304; Di Berardino 1992: 367; Telfer 1936: 228-30; Mitchell 1993b: 54, 64-9 and Harnack 1905: 349-352. Gregory's life affected more than his native province of Pontus. He became a personal source of inspiration to one family who escaped later persecutions by following Gregory's prudent advice. That family guarded oral traditions concerning the bishop and faithfully transmitted them to the following generations. In the fourth century that family relocated to Cappadocia but retained their ancestral estates in Pontus. Two sons became famous bishops and theologians in their own right—Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa who was named in honor of the Pontic bishop. Both men held Gregory Thaumaturgus in high regard. Van Dam 2003: 73-8
Jewish dispersion throughout Anatolia and in certain locations of Cappadocia and Armenia established communities in which news, and perhaps even representatives, of the new Jewish/Christian sect first became known outside Palestine. Characteristics of Hellenistic culture and realities of the Roman world aided the dissemination of the new message. Growth of the new movement was fostered in the first century by traveling missionaries or bishops, the circulation of literature and the producing of miracles. Expansion of Christianity in eastern Anatolia in the second century and third centuries was temporarily disrupted by political or military calamities as the Gothic invasion of Cappadocia and the Sassanid invasions of both Armenia and Cappadocia presented serious obstacles to the spread of Christianity. By the mid to late-third century the groundwork had been prepared for the next century’s development of Christianity in Cappadocia and the official acceptance of the religion in Armenia.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY IN CAPPADOCIA AND ARMENIA DURING THE THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES AD

This chapter will trace specific historical circumstances which had some relevance on the reception and development of Christianity in Cappadocia and Armenia during the third and fourth centuries. Of particular import will be distinct political events of those centuries which directly affected Christianity during its formative years in these locales. While some type of chronological order is used in this chapter, this does not mean that the progress of Christianity in eastern Anatolia followed a predictably successful pattern. Both Cappadocian and Armenian societies were too intricate and interactive to allow such a simplistic interpretation, although this seems so in hindsight. ¹ It can only be hoped that this brief discussion will accurately reflect, if only to some degree, the complex conditions from which Cappadocian and Armenian Christianities emerged.

All variables affecting the advance progress of Christianity in the areas under study are too complex and numerous to adequately address in such a brief space as this chapter. As stated earlier, the focus instead is on specific political events and cultural influences that shaped the course of the religion. During the third century defining events were natural disasters and political crises which produced waves of persecution against Christians in general and bishops in particular. After a slow but continuous increase in the first two centuries AD, Christianity in Cappadocia responded to those crises by

¹ Van Dam 1982: 276.
growing noticeably during the third century while Armenia’s political and social upheavals during that same time produced their own serious challenges to the spread of Christianity. As a consequence of the decline in civic involvement by local aristocrats and Constantine’s application of the traditional patronage system to bishops, the fourth-century political bishop became an important figure in both religious and secular Cappadocia. In Armenia, ‘Greek’ Christianity emerged despite being under the shadow of renewed Iranian pressure. Finally, in Cappadocia, a distinct form of monasticism flourished which, over time, influenced both areas.

Christianity in Cappadocia during the third century AD is better documented than previous centuries. Eusebius related that Alexander of Caesarea, who later became bishop in Jerusalem and cultivated a friendship with the famous scholar Origen, endured persecution in Cappadocia during the last years of the second century or the very early years of the third (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 6.8.7; 6.11.2-5 and 6.39.1-3). Since general persecutions did not arise in the Empire until the second half of the third century, Alexander’s mistreatment must have been within the context of a localized persecution. Possible reasons behind such violence in Cappadocia were suggested in an incident noted by Tertullian, Carthaginian contemporary to Alexander, who referred to a specific persecution in Cappadocia instigated by a Roman official in response to his wife’s conversion to Christianity.²

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² *OCD* 1996: 1487, Harnack 1905: 232-3 and Mitchell 1993b: 60. The story is also corroborated by Firmilian, a later Cappadocian bishop, in a letter to Cyprian of Carthage. The date of the persecution related by Tertullian has been placed at 235. The official is interpreted in some versions as the governor of Cappadocia.
That incident serves to emphasize certain social factors in late-second or early-third century Cappadocia. Knowledge of political and social events proves indispensable in helping to elucidate the attitude of the local Roman administrators and populace toward the Christians. The strain of the ongoing struggle between Rome and Parthia, the accompanying drain of Cappadocian resources to support Rome’s military actions, the rise of the militant Sassanids in the third century, the general animosity of the time toward Christians, and the tendency of the populace to blame disasters on peripheral groups like Christians all contributed to an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty. Add to these the official’s possible anger at his wife’s behavior (much less the social embarrassment he possibly experienced due to his ‘failure’ to control his wife) and one can distinguish why suspicion and distrust of local Christian believers erupted into violence during this time.³

Alexander’s relationship with Origen possibly established a tie between that scholar and Firmilian. Firmilian became bishop in Caesarea of Cappadocia sometime around the year 230 and served in that office for over thirty years. The sources are silent as to his life before he became bishop. It is not known if he was a native of Cappadocia let alone a member of the local ruling elite. However, his habits and activities while bishop suggest that he indeed was well educated. He communicated regularly with other churchmen outside Cappadocia, such as Cyprian of Carthage and Origen⁴ in Palestine. In

³ Salmon 1957(1944): 322-323 and Frend 1984: 293-294. Frend notes that such localized persecutions arose in various parts of the Empire at this time. Carthage, Alexandria, Rome, Corinth, Antioch, Cappadocia and possibly Britain were all sites where Christians were imprisoned or executed in the years between 195 and 212.

⁴ The Armenian historian Khorenats’i wrote that Firmilian was himself a pupil of Origen and that he wrote a history of church persecutions. Khorenats’i 2.75. However, Thomson notes that Khorenats’i may have
232/3 Origen arrived in Caesarea for a two-year stay, possibly to avoid ongoing persecution in Palestine.

At some point during his career Firmilian established a school in Caesarea to promote theological studies. Such a school reflected a greater trend within Christianity at the time, namely the incorporation of Greek culture and learning. Classical education, once rejected by early church fathers, was now encouraged. Leading Christian scholars increasingly utilized classical education to promote and expound Christian beliefs. Such influence in Cappadocia would reach its apex in the fourth century with the famous Cappadocian Fathers—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.\(^5\)

The coherent theological responses of those men were directly linked to the contribution of Greek philosophy and language as all three were classically educated.

During the short reign of Emperor Maximinus Thrax, AD 235-238, persecution of Christians again occurred in Cappadocia. Firmilian sought refuge with Origen in Palestine. In the general persecution ordered by Decius in 250, Firmilian once more avoided arrest.\(^6\) These actions possibly reflected changing views within the third-century Christian community toward martyrdom. Where second-century Christians had zealously sought martyrdom and bishops had encouraged such actions, Christian leaders such as Firmilian began to minimize such zeal and to propose actions that, pragmatically,

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\(^6\) \textit{EECh} 1992: 324.
removed their congregants from harm’s way whenever possible. Firmilian’s actions were mirrored in similar measures taken by other area bishops, such as Gregory of Pontus.  

Firmilian’s standing within the regional church councils of the day reflected the ‘orthodoxy’ of his actions and beliefs. If Firmilian’s actions during times of persecution had been considered suspicious or cowardly, other bishops in Cappadocia or neighboring lands would have condemned them and called for sanctions against him personally. A letter from Dionysius, Alexandrian bishop who also endured persecution and exile for his faith, enumerated the ‘eminent’ bishops among the eastern churches. Included in that list was “Firmilian and all Cappadocia” (Euseb. *Hist. eccl* 7.4.1-7.5.2). That would suggest that Dionysius, who was influential in his own right, considered Firmilian a recognized leader among regional bishops. Firmilian’s reputation is clarified by studying Eusebius’ remarks regarding the leaders assembled at the councils convened in Antioch after the persecutions to address the heretical views of Paul of Samosata (Euseb. *Hist. eccl*. 7.28.1). Firmilian obviously continued to be respected by fellow bishops in the east and was perhaps regarded as a ‘senior’ bishop. 

The scholar Adolf Harnack thought that one could gain broad knowledge of the development of Christianity in Cappadocia during the first fifty years of the third century by reading Firmilian’s letters. Those letters preserved first-hand accounts of church councils, contemporary persecutions and local heresies. They also noted problems he

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8 Mitchell 1993b: 60 and Frend 1984: 342, 356, 398 and 400. Firmilian was not one to avoid controversy. He sided with Cyprian concerning the Novationist issue and thus drew opposition from Stephen, bishop of Rome. He also seems to have been rather outspoken as to his views on the Roman bishop. Firmilian argued that the Stephen’s decision concerning the dating of Easter was not necessarily in keeping with traditional Christianity and claimed that Stephen was often “blind and in error.”
faced as bishop of the largest city in Cappadocia. One dilemma involved a prophetess who attracted a following among the local Christian population, including a presbyter and a deacon, because of her ability to predict earthquakes.⁹

Several interesting observations about Christianity in Cappadocia are gleaned from that incident. First, there was the continued presence in the mid-third century of individuals who were recognized as prophets/prophetesses by other Christians, although perhaps not by the church hierarchy. A second element was the presence of women in public forms of ministry or service. Although women had held such positions in nascent Christianity, the influence of Graeco-Roman society had gradually led to their exclusion by the church hierarchy. Finally, the response of sections within the general Christian community to times of adversity associated with natural disasters was interesting. These particular Christians looked for aid or direction from the church and, if the church officials offered no appropriate help, they were willing to seek answers from more unorthodox, but still Christian, channels.

Eusebius recorded that Firmilian was still bishop when Gallienus became sole emperor after his father’s tragic capture by Shapur in 260 (Euseb. Hist. eccl. 7.14.1). Thus, Firmilian had presided over the Christian community in Caesarea during the defining events of the third century. He had witnessed Gothic raids, Sassanid invasions, outbreaks of plague as well as the general persecutions. He died in route to a third church council in Antioch, possibly around the year 265.¹⁰

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¹⁰ EECh 1992: 324. It is regrettable that Firmilian’s actions concerning the Gothic and Sassanid invasions are not as well documented as those of Gregory of Pontus. It would have been interesting to compare the leadership style of the two bishops.
Events of the third century such as the political crises within the Empire, devastating invasions by the Goths and Sassanids, natural disasters such as famine and plague, general persecutions of the Christians ordered by the emperors and a decline in civic involvement by the local aristocracy due to increasing imperial demands\textsuperscript{11} all contributed to the development of unique opportunities for the advancement of Christianity during this age, despite periods of serious oppression and denunciation by pagan neighbors. If Christians in Cappadocia responded similarly to those in other areas affected by disasters or plague, they would have been visibly instrumental in caring for their neighbors who were sick or poor. Specifically, the decline in civic vitality created a void of leadership at the local level into which the Christian bishop, by now often a member of the local aristocracy, increasingly stepped.

Also present at the synod at Antioch was Gregory of Pontus, who was discussed briefly in the previous chapter (Euseb. \textit{Hist. eccl.} 7.28.1). Gregory’s career as bishop\textsuperscript{12} spanned the era when Christianity in eastern Anatolia progressed from being an insignificant cult to a respected minority and possibly a majority population in some areas.\textsuperscript{13} He, like other third-century bishops such as Firmilian, may be considered a

\textsuperscript{11} Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2003(1962): 397 and 403-8.

\textsuperscript{12} It is interesting to note that Eusebius refers to Gregory as ‘pastor’ and not bishop during the third synod at Antioch. At this date Pontus was part of the larger Roman administrative unit that also included Cappadocia and Armenia Minor. It is not known whether the bishops of Pontus were considered subordinate to the bishop of Caesarea at this time. That he fulfilled the obligations of a bishop is obvious from the canonical letters he addressed to church leaders in various sections of eastern Pontus following the Gothic invasions.

\textsuperscript{13} Mitchell 1993b: 57, 62-3.
bridge between the apostolic age and the age of the political bishops of the fourth century. 14

Although a member of the local pagan elite by background, Gregory had distanced himself from that society upon his return to Neocaesarea from Palestine. 15 Raymond Van Dam has posited an interesting interpretation of Gregory’s return by placing it within the social and civic contexts of the time. Gregory was expected to share his education and new connections to imperial officials (through his brother-in-law) with his native city by participating in the traditional patronage system in which the local elites sought status or power through competitive contributions which benefited the city and its various cults. By not associating with the established civic system Gregory placed himself outside that traditional client-patron social structure in which a client created an obligation for himself when asking for a patron’s assistance. Gregory effectively made himself a neutral figure and, therefore, accessible to all people. 16

In a sense Gregory stood as potential mediator between God and the people. When he was appointed bishop of Neocaesarea and particularly after his visible demonstrations of his deity’s power, the pagan majority recognized him as someone with the ability to address their problems. Recognizing Gregory as a potential source of aid

14 Van Dam 2002: 9 and 1982: 273-4, Telfer 1936: 22-237, Mitchell 1993b: 55-7 and Momigliano 1963: 9. Evidence of Gregory’s life can be gleaned from various sources—a discourse written by Gregory himself honoring Origen, various letters by Gregory to area bishops or churchmen, a hagiographical life written almost one hundred years after his life by Gregory of Nyssa, and Eusebius’s history. Gregory was born into a wealthy pagan family in the eastern city of Neocaesarea of Pontus in the early third century and was well educated.


16 Van Dam 1982: 300-4.
because of his aristocratic background, the people approached him for assistance. Indeed, because Gregory had distanced himself from the local civic system, the people might have been less hesitant to consult him. Their requests would not entail the normal obligations. Gregory’s ‘independence’ from the local civic system thus created opportunities for him and for the pagan majority. The locals were free to ask for his assistance, while he was given even more occasions to demonstrate his God’s power. As a result, both Gregory’s and Christianity’s reputations within the city and the district benefited from his altered role in local society.

The Gothic invasions of the mid-third century provide another context from which one gleans bits of information on Christianity in Cappadocia. During those invasions, the Goths had raped local women, captured and enslaved large numbers of Cappadocians and forced Christian captives to eat meat sacrificed to pagan idols. Unfortunately, some local Christians had collaborated with the Goths and had acted like barbarians. After the Goths left, the bishops moved quickly to reestablish a sense of discipline. Gregory’s canonical letters specified how the Christian communities under his jurisdiction should proceed. Women and captives, he indicated, were absolved of any guilt while those Christians found guilty of specific crimes by the church leadership were punished within the church community itself.\footnote{Mitchell 1993b: 56. Some Christians looted from their pagan neighbors. Others kept items recovered from the raiders, or claimed abandoned property as their own. Some even kept escaped prisoners instead of helping them return home.}

Mitchell asserts that such information provides the historian with enough knowledge to make four general statements about Christianity in eastern Anatolia during
the mid-third century. First, Christians in Cappadocia and Pontus at the time were numerous. Gregory’s canons mentioned large numbers of victims and captives and also addressed wide differences in either the levels of offences or severity of punishments. Harnack also pointed to the number of Christian captives as proof that the religion was widespread in eastern Anatolia during the third century.\(^{18}\)

Second, the degrees of punishment prescribed by Gregory indicated use of a sizeable building for worship. Certain crimes required the guilty persons to maintain various distances from the main altar, either in the narthex or just inside the church doors. Obviously, such distinctions suggest that the structures used for worship by the Christians during that time were large enough to sub-divide into separate identifiable sections.\(^{19}\)

Third, Gregory’s instructions to other bishops suggested that church administration in eastern Pontus was well-established. As bishop of Neocaesarea, Gregory exercised direct supervision over those leaders in surrounding towns and villages. By addressing his canonical letters to other bishops, Gregory was specifying uniform decisions to be carried out at the local levels. Finally, dispatching church officials to restore discipline in the rural locations implied that Christianity had already spread beyond the urban areas to the more remote sections.\(^{20}\) The success of Christianity outside the cities of eastern Pontus was itself suggested in a hagiographical story concerning Gregory. Upon his death, Gregory left only seventeen pagans unconverted in

\(^{18}\) Mitchell 1993b: 56 and Harnack 1905: 338. Among the captives were the parents of Ulfilas, future bishop to the Goths and translator of the Bible into Gothic.  
\(^{19}\) Mitchell 1993b: 56-7. The punishment for the mildest offence was exclusion from receiving the Eucharist. The worst offenders were barred from entering the church building at all. (Mitchell also notes that while the numbers of congregants suggest use of a large building, none from that exact time have yet been excavated.) 
all of Pontus. That number was significant; it was the original number of Christians in the area at the time Gregory began his ministry.\textsuperscript{21}

Diocletian’s political, administrative and military changes in the late 200s directly affected Cappadocia and Christianity. His administrative reorganization led to loss of territory as Pontus and Armenia Minor were separated from the province. Armenia Minor was then combined with the eastern portion of Cappadocia near Melitene to form an entirely new province.\textsuperscript{22}

Diocletian’s most drastic policy regarding Christianity was the issuing of an edict calling for general persecution. This directive was aimed at two specific groups, those who refused to participate in the imperial cult and Christians in the army. Imperial edicts in 303 and 304 called for the closure of all Christian churches and places of assembly, the burning of all Christian scripture and liturgical books, Christian officials to be deprived of any imperial offices, the imprisonment of bishops, priests and deacons, and mandatory sacrifice to the Roman gods. As Diocletian wanted to avoid producing new martyrs for the Christian cause if possible, the edicts did \textit{not} mandate death as punishment. Nonetheless, a wave of persecution swept through Cappadocia when uprisings in the province were blamed on the Christians. Eusebius related that certain Cappadocians had their legs broken during the violence, but he named no particular martyrs (Euseb. \textit{Hist. eccl.} 8.12.1). Many Christians fled for safety to more remote locations, but some perished

\textsuperscript{21} Mitchell 1993b: 53.
\textsuperscript{22} Van Dam 2002: 78 and Hewsen 1992: 18. Military reforms directly affected the legions permanently camped along Cappadocia’s eastern frontier.
in one of the last persecutions before Constantine’s conversion in the early fourth century.²³

Although Eusebius regarded the persecutions of the third century as the catalyst that sparked the phenomenal growth of Christianity, some modern scholars disagreed with that view. Mitchell, using epigraphic evidence to account for the spread of Christianity, asserted that certain areas of Anatolia had already experienced great growth in Christianity. By the time of the persecution under Diocletian a large number of residents were already Christian. Mitchell pointed to the strength of Christianity in rural areas such as Cappadocia as reason for the eventual failure of Diocletian’s persecution. In an earlier study on paganism and Christianity, Hyde had likewise suggested the strength of Christianity throughout Anatolia and estimated that Anatolia was fifty percent Christian by the time of Diocletian’s persecutions.²⁴

What of Christianity in Armenia during the third century? Eusebius mentioned Christians and a bishop named Meruzanes in mid-third century Armenia. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, addressed a letter on the topic of repentance to them (Euseb. Hist. eccl. 6.46.2). The presence of a bishop suggested a number of Christians in the area and the existence of recognized church leadership. Therefore, the reference more than likely was Armenia Minor, situated within Roman territory. As for Greater Armenia, Greek

sources do not have much information on this time and the validity of the early Armenian histories has been questioned by some modern scholars.\(^25\)

Military events worked to prevent large-scale missionary efforts in Armenia. The Goths raided Armenia just as they had Pontus and Cappadocia, and with similar consequences. Also, the overthrow of the Parthian Arsacids by the Sassanids in 224 placed Armenia, which also had an Arsacid dynasty, in a rather precarious and dangerous position. Its continued existence was at risk. Shapur’s invasions in 236 promoted disintegration of Armenian society due to widespread destruction and the resettlement of captives. Archaeological sites attest to the scale of social disruption; public buildings were even demolished for use in fortifications.\(^26\)

Political factors also contributed to the upheaval within Armenia. The Sassanids effectively controlled Armenia from the time of Shapur and appointed the kings. Slight concessions were won by the Romans at various times in the third century. Philip the Arab gained Sassanid recognition of Roman control of Armenia Minor. In 287 Diocletian reached an agreement with Vahram/Varanes II which returned control of Greater Armenia to the Arsacid Trdat/Tiridates III. Not long afterward, Narses, who had served as king in Armenia prior to Trdat and before becoming the Sassanid King of Kings, forced Trdat to flee the country. The capture of Narses’ family by the Romans led to the Treaty of Nisibis in 298/9 that not only restored Trdat to the throne and recognized

\(^{25}\) Harnack 1905: 345. He refers to the histories as “romancing Armenian chronicles.” Later scholars, such as Thomson and Garsoian, also urge caution when using the histories. Thomson sees some as more hagiographical than historiographical in nature. Thomson, Aa, xxvi. Garsoian warns against reading the works as national histories; she identifies their value as expressing the views of the particular noble houses for which they were written. 1985(1971): III, 342.

Armenia as a Roman protectorate, but also granted Rome control of several Armenian territories east of the Tigris.²⁷

The presence of some Christians in Greater Armenia in the waning years of the third century and early years of the fourth may be inferred from a letter written by Diocletian to the Arsacid king Trdat/Tiridates (Aa 5b§152-158). The emperor requested that search be made for specific Christian individuals who had fled to Armenia.²⁸ This letter suggested the possibility that the trans-Euphrates corridor was an escape route for those who sought to flee imperial rule or disfavor. As Diocletian’s edicts had particularly targeted bishops, church leaders and their sacred writings, one might reasonably conjecture whether certain Christian leaders were intentionally sent beyond the Euphrates in order to protect both them and the literature so valued by the Christian communities.

Geographic factors made Armenia an ideal location in which to hide from Roman authorities. One must remember that the ‘frontier’ between the Roman and Sassanid Empires was rather fluid. Individuals easily crossed the Euphrates River regularly to trade, worship, follow traditional transhumance patterns or escape the effects of natural disasters. In times of social or political crisis the more rural and isolated sections of eastern Anatolia also became bases of brigandage,²⁹ making it even more difficult to ‘police’ the borders. Individual naXarar leaders living in the western sections of Armenia

²⁸ Thomson, Aa, xlviii. Specifically, several women had fled the Roman Empire in order to escape from Diocletian. (He supposedly was forcing a beautiful Christian virgin to marry him.) Trdat’s answer to Diocletian was equally revealing. The tone of the letter suggested that Trdat considered himself subordinate to the Roman emperor and was eager to earn his bidding in order to maintain his protection. Garsoian 1985(1971): III, 346.
close to Roman territory possibly viewed the movement of small groups of Christian refugees seeking temporary shelter as routine occurrences.

Armenia Minor, because of its location within the Roman Empire, was Christianized much earlier than Greater Armenia. It was also the site of a well-known persecution during the brief reign of Licinius. The Forty Martyrs, part of the Twelfth Legion stationed at Melitene in Cappadocia, chose to freeze to death rather than compromise their beliefs by entering a warm Roman bathhouse near Sebaste.\(^\text{30}\)

One might also question whether continued missionary activity from Syria accounted for the presence of some Christians in Armenia, particularly in the southern sections that bordered Mesopotamia. Such origins were not typically mentioned by later Armenian historians, because their works reflected a later time in which Syrian Christianity was associated with the Persians and, therefore, viewed with suspicion. The scholars Garsoian and Thomson both recognized the Syrian heritage within Armenian Christianity. Thomson saw evidence for Syrian influence in the amount of terms in Armenian Christianity that he identified as ‘loan words’ from the Syrian language. He also linked the story of the virgin martyrs, supposedly killed just prior to Trdat’s conversion, to an older Syrian tradition.\(^\text{31}\) Whatever their origin, however, Christians within third century Armenia would have faced serious challenges from the new Sassanid rulers, many of whom were militant Zoroastrians.\(^\text{32}\)

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\(^\text{30}\) Harnack 1905: 206-7, 213 and 343.
Armenia formally accepted Christianity in the early fourth century. The year 314 is sometimes given as a possible date, but in actuality a precise date is hard to determine. 33 301 is another traditional date, but is often debated because it predates the Edict of Milan. Armenia, as a Roman protectorate, was not in a position to risk imperial displeasure by formally embracing a religion that was being persecuted within the Empire. It was possible that Trdat converted as early as 301, but the national recognition came only after his Roman overlords had issued the edict legalizing Christianity. 34

Despite the formal conversion of the king, the progress of Christianity was far from consistent. Armenian society and politics were fragmented at that time; Christianity would necessarily reflect those divisions. Because Armenia itself was not one homogeneous political entity, the church developed in similar manner. There was no one church organization for all of Armenia. The Armenian church adapted to the local political pattern when developing its indigenous hierarchy. 35

Western Armenia’s conversion to Christianity and its position as a Roman protectorate brought it closer to Roman influence. At the same time, eastern Armenia was more heavily influenced by Zoroastrianism and Sassanid political pressure. The political and military events only reinforced Armenia’s de-centralized naXarar system. Add to this political and social mix the continued influence of local religions, and especially the

34 Bournoutian 2002: 49.
Hellenized-Iranian cults which had been used by previous dynasties to ‘unify’ Armenia. Thus, while Armenia was formally Christian, in actuality a complex state of religious and political affairs presented difficulties to a ‘quick and easy’ conversion of the entire nation.\(^\text{36}\)

How, then, did conversion occur? Armenian historians focused predominately on the work of one man, Gregory ‘the Illuminator.’ Parthian by heritage,\(^\text{37}\) perhaps even related to the Arsacid family, Gregory grew up in Caesarea in Cappadocia as a result of political events. His father had moved to Armenia expressly to assassinate the Armenian ruler. Although the father and most of the family were killed by avenging naXarars after the deed, his young son survived and was taken to Cappadocia and raised by Christians. There, Gregory accepted Christianity. He also was educated in Caesarea (\textit{Aa} 2§37, \textit{MK} 2.74, 80 and \textit{PB} 3.2.18). Gregory returned to Armenia in the early fourth century, possibly as part of a Christian mission sanctioned by the church in Cappadocia. At least one history had Gregory serving in Trdat’s court during that king’s exile in Roman territory; and, according to this account, he accompanied Trdat to Armenia for his restoration to the throne (\textit{Aa} 2§27).

The Armenia to which Gregory returned had religions which were a blend of local, Iranian and Hellenistic cults. The cult of Anahit remained particularly important to

\(^{36}\) Garsoïan 1985(1971): III, 341-345. Thomson argues that a history of the conversion of the Armenians is not possible, meaning a study of the actual change that occurred in Armenian culture as a result of the impact of Christianity. He views the Armenian histories as corroborative works only, not primary works as they fail to incorporate two important factors. There is no substantive work on the church factions in the fourth century and additional Iranian material is needed to facilitate a more correct view of the political situation in Armenia in the late third and early fourth centuries. Thomson, \textit{Aa}, xvi-xviii.

the Armenian people and its royalty. Iranian/Zoroastrian cultic centers honoring important deities such as Aramazd (Ahuramazda in Armenian) or Mihr (Mithras) were located throughout the territory. Upon Trdat’s restoration he, together with his army, assembled at the great temple of Anahit in Erêz to offer sacrifices to the patron goddess of the land (Aa 2§48).

Gregory was successful in converting king Trdat. Agathangelos related a detailed version of Trdat’s conversion. The story was that Trdat, in order to please Diocletian, martyred certain Christian virgins who had fled into Armenia to escape the lustful attentions of the emperor. Because of those martyrdoms, the Christian God transformed Trdat into a boar. Influenced by a series of dreams, the king’s sister persuaded him to send for Gregory, who had been imprisoned by Trdat in a pit of snakes for fifteen years. Gregory confronted the king with the truth about his God. Trdat then repented, but remained as a boar, except for his hands and feet. Gregory then buried the martyrs and consecrated the site of their deaths by having the people erect three commemorative chapels in the royal city of Valarshapat (Aa 5.D§197-200, 6§ 212-224, 7§722-30, 9§757-772).

During a worship service, Gregory prayed for the healing of those afflicted by ‘torments.’ King Trdat and many others were miraculously healed. Just as in previous centuries, the miracles worked by Gregory resulted in a greater interest among the people to hear the message of Christianity. Agathangelos wrote that since miracles had not occurred in Armenia before that, large crowds gathered in Valarshapat from all across the land to hear and see Gregory (Aa 9§773-6).
Gregory, Trdat and the army\textsuperscript{38} then journeyed throughout the various provinces and, reminiscent of another missionary named Gregory, converted large numbers of Armenians by accomplishing miracles and wonders \textit{and} by destroying pagan temples and shrines. They began at the city of Artashat/Artaxata, where the altar to the patron goddess Anahit was torn down. After that the altars of Anahit at Erēz and the temples of Tir, Barshamin, Aramazd, Mihr and Nanē were all demolished (\textit{Aa} 10§778-781, 784-790). The destruction was thorough and most of the sites were reused as Christian shrines or churches.\textsuperscript{39}

The Armenian histories themselves, however, do not agree on the manner in which Gregory converted the Armenians. In some it is said he met with success from the beginning. In other accounts he was tortured and imprisoned by Trdat for several years, thus earning the title ‘confessor.’ The history by Moses Khorenats’i contains no account of the conversion of either king or people. Rather, he considered Trdat “the second hero and spiritual overseer of our illumination” but provided no details (\textit{MK} 2.92). Also, no contemporary histories of the work of Gregory or the conversion of the king exist, for the earliest Armenian histories date from the fifth century. It is also vital to understand that

\textsuperscript{38} Hewsen 2001: 10. Agathangelos recorded an interesting event which helps to shed light on why Trdat would be able to concentrate on the destruction of pagan shrines without fearing unrest among his nobles. Gregory’s first move was to convene the king, naXarars, lesser nobles and the army. He persuaded them to enact a truce among themselves, which in itself would have constituted a ‘miracle’ as blood feuds were commonplace and vengeance was an accepted part of Armenian social culture (\textit{Aa} 10§777). Unfortunately, the truce mediated by Gregory did not continue long past his death. During the bishopric of his younger son, the nobles resumed their blood feuds (\textit{MK} 3.2). Also, by ‘army’ one might question whether it was only those feudal nobles sympathetic to Trdat’s mission or whether it represented the actual Armenian army. In addition, did that military force include Roman forces which had remained in Armenia to sustain Trdat’s position?

\textsuperscript{39} Bournoutian 2002: 49-50.
the national histories represented a view of Armenian history as the later historians preferred to interpret it, rather than as it actually was.\textsuperscript{40}

Gregory traveled to Caesarea for consecration as bishop of Armenia by Leontius, metropolitan of Cappadocia. He was accompanied by a retinue of Armenian naXarars (\textit{Aa} 9§ 771-6, 10§778-9, 784-790, 11§803-6). He thus began a tradition for Armenian bishops that endured for several generations; candidates for the office of bishop were sent to Caesarea for consecration. On his return to Armenia, monks from Sebaste in Armenia Minor accompanied him to provide necessary support for the new religious work.\textsuperscript{41} This helped to create and maintain a direct avenue of communication between Armenia and the Roman West.

Ties to the church in Caesarea were initially strong. The Christians of Anatolia predominantly used Greek in their liturgies and sacred books. Gregory’s own education and ordination in Caesarea meant that the Christianity he promulgated reflected a ‘Greek’ form of the religion. The early churches he established were thus based on the example of the Cappadocian church regarding hierarchy, liturgy and theology. Monasticism also reflected a similar influence. In the mid-fourth century, Greek-style monasticism became more influential in Armenia due to reforms by Nersēs the Great who used Basil of Caesarea’s Rule.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Thomson, \textit{Aa}, vii and Garsoian 1985(1971): III, 342. Agathangelos included detailed description of the numerous and varied tortures applied to Gregory (\textit{Aa} 3b§69 and 74, 3c§102-119). He also recounted that the nobles, ‘great magnates’ and common people all assembled to hear Gregory explain the truths of Christianity and to see him work miracles (\textit{Aa} 6§225 and 7§725).
\textsuperscript{41} Sarkissian 1975(1965): 81.
\textsuperscript{42} Sarkissian 1975(1965): 82-3. Sarkissian credits Syriac Christianity with introducing monasticism into Armenia, but the influence of Greek monasticism was strong while the Armenian churches were in their infancy.
While Gregory established a Greek-influenced hierarchy within Armenia, church government soon developed along a distinctly different line from that in Cappadocia. Armenia had few urban areas, and most of those had been devastated during the raids by Shapur. The inherent decentralization of the naXarar system also worked against the development of urban bishops so typical of early Christianity in other areas. Indeed, it was the unique naXarar social system in Armenia that provided the context within which Christianity would develop. Christian bishops were typically located on the estates of the nobles. They were often appointed from within the naXarar houses, thus ensuring aristocratic leadership. Lower clergymen were typically members of the lesser nobility and often were given lands by their bishops in exchange for their work. Like later western feudal counterparts, both local clergy and bishops functioned as judges.\footnote{Hewsen 2001: 75 and Bournoutian 2002: 50.} Accordingly, church hierarchy in Armenia evolved partly in response to the social order of the day.

Gregory, unlike his Cappadocian counterparts, became the head of a priestly clan within Armenian society. He had married while living in Cappadocia, and, at some point after his return to Armenia, his sons joined him.\footnote{Again, the early Armenian histories have conflicting stories about his family. Moses Khorenats’i related that Gregory’s wife’s name was Mariam and that they agreed to separate after the birth of their two sons. She then joined a convent; one son was raised by an ascetic but the other was raised by tutors and later married (\textit{MK} 2.80). Agathangelos related that Trdat heard of Gregory’s sons after his conversion and had them brought to Armenia from Cappadocia (\textit{Aa} 13§ 859-862). There is no mention of the wife. However, Thomson’s introduction to the English translation states that a recension of the text did contain additional information on the wife. A Greek text dating from the twelfth century states that Gregory returned to Armenia in the service of Trdat and that he took with him his wife, named Julitta, and sons. After his arrest and imprisonment, Julitta returned to Cappadocia with the sons. She returned to Armenia after Gregory was released from prison, but he chose not to re-establish their marital relationship. Instead, he asked Trdat to allow Julitta to temporarily take charge of a group of nuns and to lead ‘the praising of God’ until such time that a priest be appointed to undertake the work. Thomson proposes that the omissions in the Armenian text reflect a later redactor who wanted to portray Gregory as ascetic. Thomson, \textit{Aa}, xxii, xxxii-iii.} The king gave estates which had previously belonged to pagan priestly families to the church. Gregory, and later his sons,
administered those lands (Aa 10§ 781,785 and 790). Gregory’s office as bishop over all Armenia, the Catholicos, also became hereditary, thus differing from previous models of Christian hierarchy in other areas. His descendants in the Gregorid house continued to oversee both church and family estates until the death of the last male descendant, Sahak (MK 2.80).

The Armenian historian P’awstos stated that hereditary leadership of the Armenian church was a continuation of pagan priestly traditions (PB 3.3.18). That assertion could be significant. It might be suggested that the hereditary positions of the early Armenian bishops were indicative of Magian, and thus Iranian, influence on Armenian religion. The Magi were a privileged aristocratic priestly caste dedicated to maintaining the fire-temples associated with Zoroastrianism. Their duties and positions were also hereditary. An Iranian cult called the Magusaioi venerated fire and remained visible practitioners of their religion even in fourth century Cappadocia. It was entirely possible that the influence of such groups was even more pronounced in Armenia, which experienced greater Iranian influence on its religion and society.

Gregory established his patriarchal see in the western province of Tarawn/Taron (PB 3.3.19). After his return from Caesarea he built the first Christian church at Ashtishat (previously he had only established chapels) on the ruins of the temples of Anahit, Astlik and Vahagn (Aa 12§809-815). He also instituted an annual festival to commemorate the martyrs of Valarshapat which supplanted the pagan celebrations of the

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47 The church at Ashtishat was the first built in Armenia. It was significant in that it was built on the site of the former temple to Anahit, patron goddess of Armenia. In addition, it was the first church consecrated by Gregory after returning from his own installation as the bishop of Armenia by the metropolitan of Caesarea.
New Year (Aa 12§836). He was regarded as bishop over all Armenia, the Catholicos, but initially he was bishop to the king and the Arsacid royal house. While Trdat was alive the church and the royal house experienced a close relationship, as their theology and affiliation with the Romans were of a similar vein (Aa 10§783).

Gregory’s success meant that the ‘Greek’ form of Christianity became more prevalent in Armenia. However, that did not undermine the Syriac influence on southern Armenia nor did the Gregorids treat the Syriac bishops as competitors. The two Christian groups coexisted; joint schools were established which taught prospective priests both languages. Agathangelos related that Gregory had pagan priestly families relocated to such schools and their children educated according to Christian standards (Aa 13§840 and 845). These two ‘strands’ continued to influence Christianity in Armenia for several generations, and were reflected in the national histories, but not in equal proportion.

While Gregory was successful in converting king Trdat to Christianity, he did not have the support of a majority of the naXarars. Lack of broad-based support for Christianity among the nobles was evidenced by their willingness to conspire against, and even murder, descendants of Gregory (MK 3.2 and 3). This challenge to the acceptance of Christianity can be better understood in light of the political realities of the day, the dynamic tensions between the pro-Roman and the pro-Iranian factions within the

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48 Hewsen 2001: 75.
50 Moses Khorenats’i made a brief reference to the “throne of the holy apostle Thaddaeus” but still placed greater emphasis on the conversion of Armenia by Gregory even though he did not detail that event (MK 2.91). The work done by P’awstos Buzand was the first history to include a record of the Syriac strand of Christianity. It could be that the later national histories were prejudiced against the Syriac traditions because of perceived connection with Iranian culture.
Armenian society at its very foundation was ethnically diverse; this diversity was reinforced by geography and then politics. At best, Armenia was a federation of *naXarar* houses, with the king as acknowledged leader among them. Continually working against that federation were *naXarars* who wanted to preserve their ability to act independently, even if it meant intentionally undermining the monarchy. That also meant that some *naXarars* opposed Christianity simply because it had been officially endorsed by the Arsacid monarch. Some of the nobles thus held onto their pagan beliefs longer than others and resisted all efforts to convert. Those who were staunchly pro-Iranian often adopted openly defiant attitudes toward the Christian pro-Roman ruler.

After the death of Trdat, his successors adopted the Arian form of Christianity favored by the Roman emperor Constantius, despite its previous proscription at the Council of Nicaea. Whether these decisions stemmed from personal religious preferences or were political moves designed to court favor at the Roman imperial court, as Garsoian argues, the result was the creation of yet another source of tension within Armenian society. The Arian Arsacids now opposed the Gregorids, adherents of Nicene beliefs in keeping with the policies of the church at Caesarea. The underlying strains on Armenian ‘unity’ were increased as Arian monarchs sought every opportunity to undermine the authority of the Nicene bishops and to promote and strengthen their own form of

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51 Thomson, *Aa*, xiii and Hewsen 2001: 9-10. Hewsen even identifies sub-factions within the pro-Roman or pro-Iranian elements in Armenian society that further complicated society and would have presented serious hurdles to the expansion, much less unification, of Armenian Christianity.

Christianity. The antipathy between the various groups was yet another example of how religion and politics were intertwined in Armenian society.

Such connections were not limited to Armenia, however. After his conversion to Christianity, Constantine encouraged dialogue between his court and the Christian hierarchy. Recognizing Christianity as a tool by which to strengthen the unity of his empire, he began to extend imperial favors to bishops. They went from being the targets of Diocletian’s persecution to a privileged segment of Roman society. Provincial governors were even ordered to assist local bishops in locating buildings which could be used as churches.\(^5\)

Constantine also granted bishops limited legal authority. They were given the right to free slaves and to provide arbitration for those individuals who requested it. Within their churches they still judged disputes, oversaw distribution of the wealth of the church and exercised moral and social direction over their congregants. A strong bishop could advance both his position and that of Christianity by providing security or assistance to locals, either Christian or pagan. In larger cities he often installed clergy and ordained *chorepiscopi*, rural bishops, in the areas outside his city. The bishop also gained prestige for his religion if he were strong enough to be considered a threat to those who would oppose his actions, such as leaders of other cults. The people responded favorably to such strong leaders in times of distress. However, the bishop did not interfere in

\(^5\) Barnes 1985: 130-1.
political affairs; the imperial officials remained in charge of maintaining local law and

Constantine saw himself as the protector of Christians, not only in the Roman
Empire but outside as well. That attitude directly affected his dealings with the Sassanid
Empire and Armenia. As a large number of Christians resided within Sassanid borders,
Constantine regarded it as his duty to ensure that they were treated fairly. He addressed a
letter to Shapur in 324 in which he implied that treatment of Christians within the
Sassanid Empire was a matter of paramount importance to him. Some scholars have
suggested that Constantine was planning an invasion of the Sassanid Empire to ‘liberate’
the Christians when he died. Further, it is interesting to note that Sassanid persecution of
Christians within their empire did not occur until after the death of Constantine.\footnote{Garsoïan 1985(1971): III, 347 and Barnes 1985: 126-36. The date of Constantine’s death was 337. Please refer to Barnes’ article for his views on the connection between Constantine’s proposed invasion of Persia and the Sassanid persecution of Christians. He particularly states his opinion that Constantine is responsible for the interjection of religion into the politics between the two empires. As the Sassanid persecution of Christians occurred so quickly after Constantine’s death, one might infer some connection between the two. However, Garsoïan argues that the religious positions of both leaders were reflected in their policies. While Constantine certainly saw himself as protector and defender of the Christian faith, the Sassanid kings equally saw themselves as divine instruments of AhuraMazda.}

The conversion of the emperor and the subsequent legalization of Christianity
meant a greater attractiveness of that religion among the local notables in Cappadocia.
One such example was the father of Gregory Nazianzus, later fourth century bishop and
theologian. Born in the late-third century to an aristocratic pagan family living near
Nazianzus, Gregory the Elder served as a member of his town’s municipal council and
participated in one of the civic cults. He was also a member of a Hypistarian sect, the
religious group in Anatolia that fused elements of Judaism and Zoroastrianism with
pagan monotheism. He converted to Christianity at the age of fifty when he witnessed firsthand the favor with which Christian bishops were treated by imperial officials on their journey to Nicaea for the council convened by the emperor himself. Within four years, Gregory was bishop of Nazianzus. Acting as the local aristocrat that he was, Gregory used his own wealth to build a new church. Octagonal in shape, the church at Nazianzus was covered with a dome and built of marble—a structure symbolic of his status and his service to his community. Gregory the Elder’s life served as an example of the conversion of society from paganism to Christianity in the early fourth century. Not necessarily drawn by great miracles and wonders or the example of Christian martyrs as previous generations, some pagans in the early fourth century recognized the value of imperial favor toward Christianity and ‘hitched their wagon to a star.’

The fourth century AD saw Cappadocia rise in importance in both the imperial and religious realms. Renewed aggression by the Sassanids brought Cappadocia into prominence for two basic reasons: location and resources. Constantius had established his

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56 Thomas Kopecek suggested that Gregory was a member of the Cappadocian curial social class. He rejected previous scholarship which had argued for Roman senatorial class. He also denied possible ‘plebian’ status by providing evidence from letters written by Gregory Nazianzus which referred to income derived from family estates. Kopecek 1973: 453-6.
57 Van Dam 2003a: 41-44. (Gregory the Elder died in 374. He had lived quite a long life for that time period, perhaps close to ninety years.) Gregory’s age at conversion may be open to debate. Kopecek, in an article written several years prior to Van Dam’s book, gave Gregory’s age as forty-five. Kopecek’s research agreed with Van Dam’s in that Gregory’s funding of the church in Nazianzus was indicative of his social class. Indeed, Kopecek interpreted his actions as reflecting Gregory’s continued regard for civic loyalty after his conversion. He noted that such loyalty had been included among the traditional values attributed by Libanius of Antioch to members of the curial class. The other characteristic values were commitment to ‘Greek paideia’ and strong family attachments. (Both of these were exhibited in the life of his son, Gregory of Nazianzus.) Kopecek 1974: 293-6.
58 Constantine’s designs on Persia may have contributed to the militancy of the Sassanids. In his article “Constantine and the Christians of Persia,” T.D. Barnes suggests that Constantine’s preparations for war against Sassanid Persia prior to his death in 337 had been prompted by his desire to ‘free’ the Christians who lived under the authority of the Zoroastrian Sassanids. He sought to replace the pagan Sassanid king with a Christian one. His unexpected death then led to invasion of Roman territory by the Sassanid king and intense persecution of Christians in Persia. Barnes JRS 1985: 126-136.
capital at Antioch; roads connecting the two imperial cities ran through Cappadocia. Some emperors even considered the area a “rustic retreat” from Constantinople or Antioch! The network of roads, combined with the frontier forts promoted by the Flavian emperors in the late first century, allowed easier troop movement to troublesome spots along the eastern frontier or south into Syria. Now the emperor, imperial administrators, and the army all traveled regularly through the province. In fact, more emperors visited Cappadocia than Rome in the fourth century.  

Caesarea at the beginning of the fourth century, despite the presence of Christians for over a hundred years, still contained a large number of pagans. Temples to Zeus, Apollo and the city’s own Tyche, or Fortune, continued to be important centers of worship or civic involvement. However, just after mid-century those same temples lay neglected; two were in ruins. And, in 363 Christians tried to destroy the temple of Tyche. (As punishment the pagan emperor Julian temporarily demoted Caesarea’s status from city to village.) By mid-century, Christian churches had taken the places of the temples.

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59 Van Dam 2002: 96.
60 Mitchell 1993a: 9 and Van Dam 2002: 1, 95-6. Van Dam notes that ecclesiastics also made use of the network of roads after Constantine’s conversion. They traveled through Cappadocia on their way to various councils called to deal with internal disputes and theological problems. (Mitchell also mentions the influence of veteran settlements that were established either in areas where the men had actually served while in the legions, or where they lived prior to recruitment. Troops seem to be spread throughout Anatolia. The number of troops increased substantially during the fourth century. They guarded the roads as well as the frontiers. They were also kept busy with the upkeep of the road system, which Mitchell asserts was so extensive that Roman troops alone could not have completed it. Neither Rome nor the local cities or communities could have borne the financial burden of such up-keep alone. He suggests that the roads were built by “corvée labour system” under the guidance of soldiers and their officers. Mitchell 1993a: 121-7.)
Christian citizens worshipped in one of four churches: St. Mamas, St. Eupsychius, St. Damas or St. Gordius.61

In Caesarea the third-century emphasis on scholarly theological studies continued. Such a climate produced bishops and churchmen whose names became synonymous with the promotion and formulation of significant theological truths. Hermogenes, who served as bishop in Caesarea at one point during the early-fourth century, was attributed with composing the now-famous creed adopted at the Council of Nicaea in 325. (Seven bishops from Cappadocia attended that council.) By the late-fourth century the focus of Christian scholarship had shifted eastward to Cappadocia. Gregory Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa—the Cappadocian Fathers—became influential figures in the Trinitarian debates.62

Cappadocia’s growing importance also influenced the development of the office of bishop. The fourth century saw the rise of bishops who increasingly became involved with political affairs. Whether on behalf of their city, region, or province, those local churchmen rose in influence and position in direct proportion to their connections with local imperial authorities or emperors who visited their areas. Contact with imperial officials, who only served locally for one or two years, was often accomplished by using


62 Van Dam 2003b: 15, Chadwick 2003: 339, Rousseau 2002: 148; Frend 1984: 640-1 and Mitchell 1993a: 10. Those three bishops produced an extensive body of literature. Numerous extant letters, homilies or treatises written by those men include information studied by theologians or church historians alike. Other famous Cappadocians of the fourth century included Asterius the Sophist, an Arian who attended the Council of Antioch in 341, Euphranius, who became bishop in Antioch, Gregorius and Georgius, who both served as bishops at Alexandria, Eudoxius, bishop in both Antioch and Constantinople and Ulfilas, bishop to the Goths and translator of the Bible into Gothic. (Chadwick 1990(1967) presents a different view of Ulfilas. He considered him a native Visigoth, stating that it was his maternal grandparents who were Cappadocian.)
Greek culture to promote a sense of familiarity between the two men. As one ‘man of letters’ to another, the bishop would then funnel specific requests from civic magistrates or individual families. Hellenism thus became a tool of the fourth-century bishop by which to establish “networks of patronage, friendship and influence . . .”

One area which presented the fourth century urban bishop with challenges to his spiritual authority was the rise of monasticism. The early ascetic movement rejected urban, ‘worldly’ life and sought escape in the more remote areas, such as deserts or mountains. The unique geography of Cappadocia provided ascetics with large areas in which to effectively withdraw from society. The urban bishops had less direct influence over rural society, except for those villages associated with cities. Thus, the rural residents tended to be less dependent than their urban counterparts on the bishop’s good graces and also less affected by urban life. As a result, the influence of local ascetics or hermits, whose lives were interpreted as exhibiting a high degree of spirituality, offered the bishops a direct challenge. The bishop was often perceived as part of the Roman civic culture while the ascetics lived a simple life dedicated to spiritual affairs. However, one bishop in the late-fourth century would successfully incorporate elements of asceticism with his duties within the urban hierarchy.

As a whole, that generation of bishop reflected significant changes in both the church and society—change within the church in regard to leadership and change in

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63 Van Dam 2002: 80-1. Three emperors were particularly connected with Cappadocia during the fourth century: Julian, Valens and Theodosius. Julian, trained in rhetoric and a student of the famous Libanius, had renounced Christianity in favor of traditional paganism; he had been held in ‘house arrest’ in Cappadocia during part of his youth. Valens favored Arian beliefs, while Theodosius was decidedly orthodox. See p. 74-5.

society as to focus. Increasingly, Christianity was attracting talented and well-educated men who would earlier have been leaders in the imperial system. Men such as Gregory Nazianzus, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa were highly educated, yet spoke to both the cultured and coarse of their time. They may have disagreed among themselves as to the extent to which classical learning was to be fused with Christianity, but they agreed in the general application of that education to their realm of Christian service. Loyalty was shifting from civic institutions to churches. Money even began to be diverted from civic, provincial or imperial projects to pay for new ecclesiastical structures. 65

Basil of Caesarea serves as an example of the quintessential fourth century bishop who wielded great spiritual and temporal power. His career highlights some of the changes which affected the bishop’s role in his city and province at that time. In addition to the responsibilities of guiding an urban church, Basil also figured prominently in the theological controversies of his day and helped to direct the distinctive form of monasticism that emerged in Cappadocia.

Basil became bishop in Caesarea in 370. Though he only served approximately eight years before his death, he left behind a legacy that not only enriched the church in Caesarea but Christianity as a whole. Born ca. 330 into an aristocratic Christian family that owned several estates in Cappadocia and Pontus, Basil received a superior pagan education. He studied in Caesarea, Constantinople and even Athens, where he made a life-long friend in a fellow Cappadocian by the name of Gregory. In his twenties he accompanied Eustathius, bishop of Sebaste in Armenia Minor, on a tour of monastic

centers in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, and formed his own personal assessment of monasticism. Returning home, he retired to family estates near Caesarea and, along with several relatives, devoted himself to an ascetic and contemplative life. He strongly believed that ascetics should not completely reject either the church or the community. Basil’s experience in, and continued practice of, asceticism allowed him to influence the emerging monastic movement in Cappadocia. Along those lines he prepared the Moral Rules, a written set of regulations balanced by selected scriptures which introduced order and structure to what had often been highly individualized ascetic behaviors. He called for establishment of monasteries in cities as well as in remote areas and stressed ascetic involvement in local churches, orphanages or hospitals as a form of service to the Christian community. He, while still in his thirties, established a monastery near Caesarea that was ordered according to those rules.66

While attending the Council of Constantinople in 360 as a junior clergyman, Basil recognized the threat that Arianism still posed to the orthodox community and spent the remainder of his life combating that heresy. He desperately sought to build consensus among those bishops in both east and west who still adhered to the Nicene beliefs. His writings attacking the beliefs of a fellow Cappadocian, Eunomius, helped establish his reputation among those who worked to re-establish the Nicene faith as the predominant expression of Christianity. Basil, his long-time friend Gregory Nazianzus and his brother Gregory of Nyssa were directly involved in the Trinitarian debates in the 370s. Reflective

66 EECCh 1992: 114, Chadwick 2003: 331-3 and Frend 1984: 630-1. Ascetics and monks had typically withdrawn from cities in order to forsake the pleasures associated with urban living and also to seek a more contemplative and rigorous spiritual discipline. By favoring the establishment of monastic centers within the cities, Basil was possibly seeking to harmonize the separate sections of Christianity.
of their efforts at conciliating theological differences of their day, their analysis of the issue emphasized the divine unity of the Trinity while acknowledging three distinct personalities. Unfortunately, Basil did not live to see his Trinitarian doctrines validated at the Council of Constantinople in 381.  

Basil, known for his ascetic yet benevolent lifestyle, was elected bishop of Caesarea in 370, though not without arousing opposition from other Cappadocian bishops. By that time Caesarea had a group of civic buildings dedicated for Christian use by the populace. Basil’s vision of the church as a social and religious center was reflected in a new facility he built just outside the city. That complex, known as the Basileias, was constructed using funds from the Christian community and included an almshouse, inn, hospital, monastery, church and, possibly, a cistern to meet the needs of the people better. The new facility, staffed in part by local clerics and monks, provided essential social services to the local community in addition to offering hospitality to travelers or visitors. By including ascetics in areas of service such as hospitals, almshouses or schools, Basil helped to establish a tradition which linked monasticism and the local churches in Cappadocia.

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67 Chadwick 2003: 332-339, EEC 1992: 114-5 and Frend 1984: 631-41. The influence Basil and the two Gregorys had throughout Cappadocia should not suggest that all bishops and churchmen in the area held similar views. Christianity in Cappadocia at this time was far from uniform; factions were aligned according to their adherence or rejection of Nicene doctrine. The anti-Nicene bishops were particularly favored by the emperors Constantius and Valens.

68 EEC 1992: 114, Chadwick 2003: 331-42, Mitchell 1993b: 67, Frend 1984: 630-1 and Ramsay 1954(1897): 461 and 1908: 153-4. The cistern would have been a practical and welcomed feature given the dry Cappadocian summers and the vagaries of the area’s climate. The association between monasticism and local churches became particularly characteristic of rural Cappadocia in later centuries, both Momigliano and Mitchell asserting that monasticism included elements of “political self-government.” (Momigliano 1963: 12. See also Mitchell 1993a: 4.) Both scholars also recognized that the monastic movement proved beneficial to Christianity, for in Asia Minor during its emergence asceticism provided options for those Christians who rejected the more pagan urban areas.
Basil exerted a great amount of political influence while bishop. His tenure as bishop of Caesarea and, until Valens’ division of Cappadocia in 372, as metropolitan of Cappadocia was directly affected by his personal character. His reputation of charitable works—influenced possibly by the aristocratic tradition of patronage within the community—and his ascetic lifestyle added weight to his opinions and decisions. Basil also enjoyed popular support. Educated classically, he also spoke the local Cappadocian dialect and his sermons, although framed according to classical standards, utilized features of everyday life so as to ‘connect’ with his congregants, many of whom were illiterate.

Considering himself the spiritual father of those people within his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, he wrote frequent letters to imperial officials requesting tax exemptions for clergy, monks or even iron-workers in the Taurus Mountains! He worked tirelessly to petition release from civic service for impoverished locals. In addition, his duties as bishop included raising levies to pay for requisitioned army equipment and serving as arbitrator in disputes between individuals.

Also contributing to his status and function as a political bishop were his connections with various emperors. While studying in Athens, Basil had met Julian, heir to the emperor Constantius. Julian recognized and respected Basil’s intellectual abilities and, despite their later differences in religion, continued to correspond with him. (Julian later renounced Christianity in favor of a mystical form of Neo-Platonism and sought to

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71 Chadwick 2003: 342.
re-establish paganism within the Roman Empire. He encountered fierce opposition in Cappadocia to his efforts and was forced to admit that there were no real Hellenes—no pagans—left in the province! Basil also met Julian’s successor, Valens, during the emperor’s visit to Cappadocia in 372/373. Despite Basil’s firm pro-Nicene stand, and Valens’ own Arianism, Basil impressed the emperor enough to be appointed to a commission which oversaw the appointments of bishops in Roman-controlled Armenia.

Basil actively petitioned Valens concerning his administrative division of Cappadocia into two civil provinces. Valens proposed the additional partition shortly after creating the new province of Armenia Secunda from territory in eastern Cappadocia. This imperial action posed a greater threat to Basil and his city than the loss of land. Redistricting meant loss of rank not only for Caesarea but also for its residents and its bishop since the new province—Cappadocia Prima—would only include the one city of Caesarea. Basil’s requests and petitions, however, proved futile and, in the process, he incurred enemies at the highest imperial levels. Valens’ decision stripped Basil, as metropolitan, of his subordinating bishops since all remaining cities were now in Cappadocia Secunda. Later, tension arose between him and the new metropolitan of Tyana not over doctrine, but rank.

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72 Van Dam 2002: 101. Julian’s assessment of paganism in Cappadocia was not literal; pockets of paganism persisted for quite some time. The famous temple of Ma at Comana continued as a pagan site into the fifth century. Of further interest was the term used by Julian to denote pagans. He used ‘Hellene.’ That signified a shift in cultural perception by the mid-fourth century. ‘Hellene’ had previously signified connection with Greek culture. Now, that term was synonymous with paganism.


74 Van Dam 2002: 28-32, 62 and Chadwick 2003: 341. Estimates suggest at least ten cities in Cappadocia before the partition. Each city had a bishop; each bishop had a clerical staff. Some bishops may have had up to one hundred such individuals. Basil, as metropolitan of Caesarea, oversaw fifty bishops and numerous other clerics. Cappadocia Prima was left with only one city as the majority of land in the area consisted of imperial estates.
The main cause for dispute between Basil and the metropolitan at Tyana was the appointment of bishops. Basil consistently favored the election of churchmen who endorsed Nicene beliefs. As bishop he actively canvassed on behalf of such selections whenever sees became available within his province. That process brought him into direct contact, and sometimes conflict, with local civic officials and the people. After the partition Basil continued this practice, but he soon encountered opposition from the new metropolitan, who sought to promote his own Nicene candidates. Basil responded by creating new sees within his own shrunken province. He appointed more than fifty *chorepiscopi*, rural bishops, to help him administrate the province. Included in that number were Gregory of Nazianzus as bishop of Sasima and his own brother Gregory as bishop at Nyssa.\(^75\)

During Emperor Valens’ visit to Cappadocia, Basil had been requested to help select bishops for disorganized western Armenia, possibly those areas called the Pentarchy which had rejected the pro-Arian king Pap and declared themselves a protectorate of Rome.\(^76\) Despite his desire to install qualified men—educated, possessing good character, of the Nicene ‘party’ and also able to speak the local language—Basil was prevented because of both physical and political differences. Even as late as the 370s, Syrian ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Armenia still existed. In a letter to the bishop of

\(^75\) *EECh* 1992: 114 and Chadwick 2003: 339-40. Basil also busily ‘campaigned’ on behalf of Nicene clerics outside Cappadocia. He was successful in his bid to have Amphilochius elected bishop of Iconium in nearby Lycaonia. These efforts were part of Basil’s overall goal to promote ecumenical unity. (His work to that end may often be misinterpreted; Van Dam in particular is highly critical of Basil’s actions and motives. He suggests that Basil was often driven by jealousy over the preservation of social rank in his appointment, or opposition, of clerics. See Van Dam 2003b: 16-41.) Gregory Nazianzus never actually assumed his bishopric in Sasima. He aided his father at the church in Nazianzus until his death and served temporarily as bishop to the Nicene congregation in Constantinople.

\(^76\) Bournoutian 2002: 52.
Antioch, Basil of Caesarea seemed to imply that the Syrian bishop retained some degree of influence in Armenia.\textsuperscript{77} Travel to the areas in question was problematic at the best of times; in addition, climate and Basil’s health prevented him from visiting those areas as he would have liked. He also encountered resistance from the new metropolitan in Tyana, who had courted favor with Valens.\textsuperscript{78}

Basil also faced opposition from Armenian bishops and king as a result of his refusal to consecrate an Arian successor to the Nicene Armenian Catholicos, Nersēs. Nersēs had been educated in Caesarea, probably at the theological center established in the third century by bishop Firmilian. While there, he had been influenced by Nicene theology and also by Basil’s example regarding social services and monasticism. Upon his return to Armenia to assume his hereditary position as Gregorid Catholicos, the office of national patriarch which had first been held by his ancestor Gregory, Nersēs implemented policies which reflected his Nicene and Cappadocian backgrounds. He condemned traditional social behaviors such as the abuse of lepers or the neglect of hospitality to strangers. (The latter may have been a by-product of the chaotic social conditions which characterized Armenia at the end of the fourth century.) He issued canonical rulings meant to change Armenian attitudes toward the less fortunate in society. He established poorhouses, inns and hospices similar to those he had seen in Caesarea and allocated the taxes of particular villages or towns to provide the necessary funding. In addition, he founded monasteries and hermitages in remote areas, possibly

\textsuperscript{77} Garsoïan 1985(1971): III, 346-349. Garsoïan indicates that the discrepancy among the histories concerning the Syriac tradition actually reflects the later historians’ own interpretations of Armenia. She argues that, due to the political realities of their day, they had rejected Iranian culture and those forms of Christianity that they identified as having the Persian ‘stamp of approval.’

\textsuperscript{78} Van Dam 2002: 129-30.
ordered according to Basil’s rules. Nersēs also attempted to amend specific marital and funerary customs prevalent among the *naXarar* (*MK* 3.20).

Unfortunately for Nersēs, his theology, new policies and social services, and particularly his persistent condemnation of immoral lifestyles brought him into conflict with various Armenian kings and noblemen. At one point he was either banished by the Armenian king or held hostage by the Roman emperor in hopes of converting the spiritual leader of the Armenians to Arianism. He was later restored to his office, but eventually poisoned by order of King Pap sometime before 374/5 (*MK* 3.24, 27, 29-30, and 38). Pap then appointed his own Arian candidate and asked Basil to consecrate him; Basil refused. At this point Pap broke the long-standing tradition concerning the consecration of bishops in Caesarea, and had his own candidate consecrated by other, more willing, church officials.  

Political events of that era provide illumination to the story of Nersēs. Constantine’s preparations for war had ushered in almost thirty-five years of aggression between the two world powers. In the process Armenia was negatively affected; its fragile federation was strained to the breaking point. The *naXarars* exerted greater power and influence, both politically and socially. Their internal dissensions further eroded the authority of the king, forcing him to greater dependency on outside powers. The Sassanid king Narses invaded Armenia and was welcomed by segments of the *naXarars*. Constantius later restored Arsak II to the throne and banished all disloyal *naXarars*.

Favoring Arian Christianity as did his Roman protector, Arshak clashed with Nersēs

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79 Baynes 1910: 625-643. Baynes was of the opinion that Pap’s decision was the first step toward the Armenian church’s full independence from eastern Christianity.
numerous times. It was at this point that Nersēs was either banished or sent as a hostage to the Roman emperor. Arshak then turned against the naXarars and attempted to eliminate all who refused to support him.\(^{80}\)

For the next few years Arshak essentially played one ruler against the other. He entered negotiations to marry a Persian princess, but then supported Julian’s invasion of Persia, a risky move for someone dependent upon the loyalty of several pro-Persian naXarars. His ‘house of cards’ came crashing down in the wake of Jovian’s treaty with the Sassanids in which Rome was forced to relinquish its protectorate over western Armenia.\(^{81}\) From 364 to 369 Armenia suffered as many as twenty-seven raids by the Sassanids, some led by disloyal Armenian naXarars. The result was political, social and economic chaos. Arshak was ordered to Persia, where he was blinded and later killed. He left behind his wife and son, the future king Pap. Shapur continued his aggressions, devastated several Armenian cities and made Armenia into a Sassanid province. He delegated rule of Armenia to pro-Persian naXarars. It was at this point that Zoroastrianism began to be actively promoted within Armenia, resulting in the destruction of some churches.\(^{82}\)

The Arian emperor Valens then intervened on the side of the Armenians, restoring Pap to the throne around the year 371. ( Actually, Pap ruled an Armenia occupied by Roman troops.) Nersēs was restored to his position as Catholicos at the same time. Unfortunately, Pap had greater regard for the old pagan ways and soon began to strip the

\(^{80}\) Bournoutian 2002: 51 and Baynes 1910: 625-643. Arshak thus broke the truce between Armenian noble houses that had been mediated by Trdat and Gregory.


\(^{82}\) Bournoutian 2002: 52.
church of its property and status. Pap also quarreled with some naXarars. When he ordered the death of Nersēs, they openly rebelled. Several in the section of Sophene declared their independence and formed what was called the Pentarchy. Pap was later assassinated, possibly with Roman support. 83

Pap’s son, Arshak III, fled Armenia for protection by the Romans. In his absence pro-Persian naXarars chose Khosrov/Khosroes as king. Rome and Persia finally tired of war and came to a historic decision. In 387 Armenia was formally partitioned between the two empires. Arshak III was installed as vassal-king over a smaller Roman Armenia. He died soon after the partition, but Rome appointed no successor. Instead, imperial governors now ruled Roman Armenia; Greek language and culture became predominant. Several naXarar families relocated to eastern Armenia where Khosrov IV had been recognized as ruler of Persarmenia, which was now officially part of the Sassanid Empire. 84

Similarly, by the end of the fourth century, Christian Armenia had been divided into various blocs. Christianity in the western portion assigned to Roman control was now free to resume its previous association with the church in Cappadocia, which by this time had seen its own territory divided. The southern sections of Armenia adjoining Syria or Mesopotamia were influenced by Syrian, and later possibly Nestorian, Christianity. In eastern Armenia, or Persarmenia, Christianity struggled to achieve not only unity, but also an identity. That struggle would occupy the last years of the fourth and most of the fifth centuries.

In summary, Christianity in Cappadocia grew during the third century and solidified during the fourth. It went from an illegal and suspicious cult to a legalized and imperially-favored religion in a little over three hundred years. Once considered a backwater area, Cappadocia in the third and fourth centuries became the location of a distinguished theological school and home to a generation of Christian scholars and theologians who were instrumental in placing Cappadocia ‘on the map’ regarding theology and church doctrine. The office of bishop increased in influence as the religion grew in numbers, and Caesarea, as provincial capitol, became the bishop’s see. From Alexander in the early-third century to Basil in the late-fourth, bishops of Caesarea were known for their devotion to Christian principles, commitment to Christian scholarship and service to the community at large. Thus, by the end of the fourth century, Christianity in Cappadocia was a major force within society at both the urban and rural levels. Its hierarchy was firmly developed, encouraging the active participation of many of its leaders in matters both spiritual and secular.

On the other hand, the appearance and persistence of Christianity in Armenia during those centuries was nothing short of miraculous. The struggle between the world powers for the right to intervene in its affairs ended in the formal division of what had once, if only briefly, been a unified people. Competing forces of paganism and Zoroastrianism, the social, and no doubt moral, chaos resulting from repeated invasions, and, in addition, the rivalries between naXarars and heads of state all made for factors which should have combined to severely handicap the growth of Christianity in an area
already heavily influenced by Iranian culture and religion. There just seemed to be too many obstacles to its success within Armenian society. Yet this was not the case.

Admittedly, the ‘official’ acceptance was initially a thin veneer of Christianity forced upon an ambivalent or unwilling populace by a zealous, but sincere leader. However, Christianity had a ‘staying power,’ something unique that enabled it to adapt to its adverse environment while never compromising its basic beliefs. The fourth century could have witnessed both the birth and death of Christianity in Armenia. While the king’s conversion at the beginning of the century led to the formal adoption of Christianity, the political and military events of the last fifty years threatened its continued existence. Iranian cultural elements remained a significant force within Armenian society, threatening to undermine the advances of Christianity. Differences between Greek and Syrian expressions of the same religion, when weighted with accompanying political affiliations, became ‘fuses’ which, when triggered, jeopardized far more than religious unity.

Christianity in Armenia at the end of the fourth century looked quite different from that in Cappadocia. Where one was weak, fragmented and sometimes forced ‘underground,’ the other was strong, united and a visible force for social and political influence. Perhaps the real reasons for Christianity’s survival in Armenia may never be fully understood. After all, the dominant reasons for the success of Christianity anywhere were often intangible. The believing villager who, to the best of his/her ability, transmitted what little Christian doctrine he/she understood to pagan neighbors, the faithful rural bishop who used all his available resources to keep his ‘family’ fed and
clothed after wave upon wave of destructive Sassanid raids, and the hospitable naXarar noble who granted protection to Christian refugees fleeing Sassanid persecution were probably the reasons why Christianity survived in Armenia during the lean years at the end of the century. Survive it did, and it would re-emerge in the next century not as Greek nor as Syrian, but as Armenian Christianity.
CHAPTER SIX

A PARTING OF WAYS—
CHRISTIANITY IN CAPPADOCIA AND ARMENIA IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

As stated at the end of the previous chapter, events of the late fourth century threatened the existence of Christianity in Armenia. Political events became predominant yet again in the fifth century, promoting a separation between Christianity in Cappadocia and Armenia that became official in later centuries. In particular, Sassanid policies affected and helped direct the development of Christianity in Armenia. Although a dark time as far as Armenian politics and society were concerned, the fifth century produced a watershed moment for Christianity as it emerged as a rallying point for Armenians in their struggle against Persian subjugation. The Armenian Christianity that began to arise in the fifth century was a blend of Greek and Syriac traditions influenced by native Armenian social structures and a new Armenian language, and framed by the political realities of the day. While battling, quite literally, for its existence and identity in Armenia, fifth century Christianity in Cappadocia adjusted to a shift in imperial political focus that resulted in loss of prestige for the province. Overall, it was the political affairs more than culture or geography that proved decisive and defining factors in shaping Christianity of eastern Anatolia.

The sixth century Armenian refutation of the Council of Chalcedon is often given as the central reason for the emergence of the Armenian church as an autocephalous
institution. Details of that church council and specific discussion of the theological differences which developed between Armenian and Greek Orthodoxy fall outside the scope of this work. Rather, an important premise of this thesis is that Christianity in Armenia became a separate ‘branch’ of the Christian ‘tree’ as a result of the influence of specific political events that occurred in the late-fourth and fifth centuries. These important events included the partition of Armenia between Rome and Sassanid Persia in 387, the end of the Armenian monarchy in both sections by 428, the attempted forced conversion of the Armenians by the Sassanids after 439, the Vardanank War of 451 and eventual Sassanid recognition of Christianity within Armenia in 485.

![Armenia, 387-591 A.D.](image)

**Figure 6-1. Armenia under Persian control after the Partition of 387. Map used with permission.**

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1 Sarkissian 1975(1965): 1-20. Official acknowledgement of the rejection of Chalcedonian tenets by the Armenian Christians actually came in the seventh century. The lapse in response time from 451, the date of the Council, to then was due primarily to momentous political affairs which prevented the church from addressing the important concerns raised at Chalcedon.

2 Bournoutian 2002: 52-60.
Religion and politics were closely associated in the major powers of the fifth century, the Roman and Sassanid Empires. Garsoian argued that the religious positions of both empires were reflected in their policies toward all other religions. For example, the Roman Emperor was considered co-ruler with Christ. The uniting of a spiritual position with imperial rule often led the emperor to regard all other religions as potentially treasonous. The Persian king was likewise considered a divine instrument, a faithful guardian of Zoroastrianism. Essentially, these rulers’ views produced similar results. Other religions were seen as political threats and treated as heresies. In particular, such views affected how Sassanid leaders, committed to destroying all vestiges of Roman culture, responded to those Christians within their jurisdiction whose religion was the same as that favored by their enemy, Imperial Rome.³

Direct political influence on Christianity in Armenia began with King Trdat’s conversion in either 301 or 314. From then on, he made decisions as both king and Christian. Religious decisions, such as destruction of important native shrines and temples, often had political consequences. For example, the naXarar priestly families who had traditionally maintained the native shrines were disenfranchised unless they converted to Christianity. In addition, nobles who remained stubbornly loyal to Zoroastrianism or the native Iranian/Hellenistic cults found themselves out of favor with the king. Further, Trdat’s acceptance of the ‘Greek’ form of Christianity from Cappadocia meant the formation of political, as well as religious, links between Armenia and the Roman Empire. Cappadocian-influenced Christianity, with its Greek language

and liturgy, became more firmly entrenched in the western sections of Armenia in the mid-fourth century and, due to royal support, soon became the dominant form of Christianity in many areas of Armenia.

Christianity in other sections of Armenia owed much to Syriac heritage and less to political influence. This older religious tradition introduced an important claim to apostolic authority, which was later used to support Armenian assertions of an autoccephalous status. And, as political events played out in the late-fourth and fifth centuries, the Syriac and Nestorian forms of Christianity were more tolerated within Persian-controlled lands simply because of their differences from the ‘Greek’ Christianity associated with Constantinople and its emperors.

Regardless of whether Constantine actually viewed Christianity as a tool to unify the empire,⁴ his politicization of religion did affect relations with bordering regions such as Armenia and the Sassanid Empire.⁵ Constantine’s policies toward Armenia might have produced closer political and religious ties between the two lands, but for the opposition of the Sassanids. Constantine’s proposed invasion of Sassanid Persia just prior to his death in 337, ostensibly to ‘rescue’ the Persian Christians from persecution and abuse,⁶ produced real danger for Armenia as the Sassanids responded to the perceived threat to their sovereignty by invading Rome’s ally. Without that invasion and subsequent Sassanid involvement in the internal affairs of Armenia, the Armenian church might have maintained close ties with imperial Christianity for many years. Instead, the Sassanids,

⁴ Frend 1984: 504 and 522-3.
⁵ Barnes 1985: 131.
hostile to Roman culture and authority in areas they perceived as within their own sphere of influence, became committed to eradicating Roman influence wherever possible.\footnote{Bournoutian 2002: 45.}

It is pure speculation to reflect on the possible progress of Christianity without taking into account Sassanid intervention. Freed from outside influences, would the two strands of Christianity have continued along that same path to produce a distinctive unified Armenian Christianity? Would the Greek and Syriac expressions have co-existed or would one form have eventually suppressed the other through accusations of heresy? One might venture to assert that even without direct Sassanid involvement, political considerations would have eventually led to some type of unique local expression of Christianity, as occurred in Egypt and North Africa. After all, Greek Christianity was strongest when Armenian kings had effective military and political support from the Roman emperors and in those areas controlled by pro-Roman naXarars. Without imperial support, as happened in the fifth century, pro-Roman Armenian rulers were less able to maintain direct ties with the Greek west. Thus, internal conflicts between opposing naXarar factions would have been enough to prevent the continued dominance of Greek Christianity.

Before discussing the fifth century political events that helped produce a distinctly different type of Armenian Christianity, some consideration must be given to the possible ramifications that culture and geography had on the development of Armenian Christianity. From the first century BC, when Marc Antony intervened in Armenia’s internal affairs, imprisoned and later executed the ruler, an anti-Roman sentiment existed
within Armenian society. Combine that with the importance of blood feuds in that society\(^8\) and a definite air of aversion to all things Roman developed among some Armenians. Thus, portions of Armenian society had openly hostile reactions to the introduction of a ‘Roman’ religion such as Christianity. Also, reluctance to change certain native cultural traditions, such as marital and funerary customs, initially complicated the conversion of some Armenians (\textit{MK} 3.20). In addition, Iranian culture had existed in Armenia since Persian times; traditions such as hunting, dress and the use of Iranian personal names continued after the introduction of Christianity, even among the converted royal family.\(^9\) Obviously, then, Iranian cultural influence within Armenia remained strong despite the conversion of the monarch and several of the leading noble families. Despite this, one cultural development did have a definite part in the shaping of Armenian Christianity. This was the Armenian script, developed in the first years of the fifth century, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

By far, the main hindrances posed by Iranian culture to the development of Christianity were the influence of Zoroastrianism and the continued strength and appeal of Iranian/Hellenistic religions, particularly in those areas far from the influence of either strand of Christianity. The two imperial religions stood in direct opposition to each other, as did the imperial political structures. The introduction of Sassanid influence in Armenia at approximately the same time that Christianity was unofficially filtering into the area produced tensions between the practitioners of the Christian religion and the supporters

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\(^8\) Hewsen 2001:10.
\(^9\) Hewsen 2001: 11. The Gregorid family, whose men served as Catholicos until the extinction of their lineage, predominately used Christian names for the male family members.
of strict Zoroastrianism. Committed to destroying all expressions of Roman authority and culture,\textsuperscript{10} the militant Sassanids aggressively pursued policies aimed at repressing the ‘Roman’ religion, Christianity.

How did geography affect the development of a distinctive form of Armenian Christianity? Armenia’s natural environment directly shaped the development of society.\textsuperscript{11} As stated earlier in this paper, the mountainous terrain, high elevation, and harsh climate were significant environmental factors which forced the various peoples of the area to adapt in order to survive. While some sections of Armenia were difficult to access and travel was problematic, particularly during the winter, yet, the land was not necessarily isolated from contact with the outside world. Xenophon’s \textit{Anabasis} showed that travel up the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and across the mountains to the Black Sea was possible, even during the harsh Armenian winters. Merchants following the trade routes connecting Central Asia and the Mediterranean areas traversed formidable mountains and valleys, but they did cross. Bands of Caucasian tribes occasionally forayed south through the mountainous areas of Georgia and Armenia. Parthian and Sassanid armies traveled northward through Media and entered Armenia from the east. Greek missionaries and Christian refugees crossed the Euphrates in the west. In short, Armenia’s geography made it diverse and challenging, but it was relatively accessible.

Overall, those environmental factors contributed to a natural subdivision of the area into distinct tribal areas. In time, these areas came under the control of aristocratic local rulers, the \textit{naXarar}. That decentralized system continued to dominate Armenian

\textsuperscript{10} Thomson 1992: 147.
\textsuperscript{11} Hewsen 1992: 286 and Toumanoff 1963: 37.
society after the introduction of Christianity. Indeed, as previously noted, early Christianity itself adapted to the *naXarar* system. Bishops were generally located on the *naXarar* estates instead of the traditional urban areas. Thus, geography, by shaping Armenian society, also indirectly affected Christianity.

Political geography particularly shaped the course of Armenian Christianity. Armenia’s location on the borders of both the Roman and Sassanid Empires was significant; its geographic situation forced it into becoming a buffer state between the two political powers of the age. At times Roman influence was ascendant; at other times, Iranian culture held firm sway. From the west and the south Christianity came into Armenia; but, from the east came Iranian and Zoroastrian religions. After the formal division in 387, Christianity in eastern Armenia was increasingly beset with persecution and faced eradication. Out of that experience, a distinctly Armenian Christianity emerged. On yet another level, geography helped to determine the shape of Christianity in Armenia.

In regards to geographical and historical contexts ‘Armenia’ proved a rather elusive term. Except for specific times, such as the reign of Tigranes the Great or the earlier Orontid rulers, one unified contiguous Armenia simply did not exist. In the third to fifth centuries AD there were multiple Armenias.\(^\text{12}\) Specific sections of the Armenian highland and the Euphrates uplands had a concentration of Armenians. Large numbers also lived west of the Euphrates River. Although Armenian nationalists argued,

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particularly in the nineteenth century, that those areas constituted an Armenian state, the reality was that Lesser Armenia had been under Roman jurisdiction since the first century AD. Eastern Cappadocia’s significant Armenian population lived in Roman territory as well, even after Cappadocia’s division in the fourth century resulted in the creation of two provinces, each named Armenia.

More so than geography, the naXarar system significantly affected the development of Armenian Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries. Geographic diversity had greatly promoted decentralization, allowing the naXarar system to adapt certain tribal elements introduced into Armenia by the Parthians. What developed over time was what some scholars have categorized as a ‘feudal’ society. Decentralization within Armenia created a naXarar system which acted as counter-balance to Orontid and Artaxiad efforts to urbanize using Hellenistic models. The political machinations of both Rome and Parthia in the first century AD produced corresponding factions within the ranks of the naXarars which, in turn, aided or hampered emerging institutions associated with the various political factions. One such institution was the nascent Christian church in Armenia.

The naXarar system became the predominant institution within Armenian society in the first six centuries AD, a definite ‘kingmaker.’ The scholar Adontz held the view that the naXarar system, and not Armenia’s conversion to Christianity, was the one distinct feature above all others that determined Armenia’s development as a nation.

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Where Christianity was effective, he asserted, it was in direct relation to its adaptation within the *naXarar* system.\textsuperscript{15}

This thesis does not seek to argue with the position of so eminent a scholar as Adontz; there is great value in his view. The *naXarar* system continued as an instrumental part of Armenian society for hundreds of years after the introduction of Christianity. The decentralization of leadership allowed Armenian society and culture to continue to exist despite repeated invasions and foreign rule. However, in the long run, it was Christianity that endured. The *naXarar* system did not continue until Ottoman or modern times, but the Christian religion did.

The *naXarar* system influenced Christianity’s structure and, in certain areas, protected it from Sassanid intolerance during the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries. Because of Armenia’s lack of urbanization in comparison with other eastern sections of Anatolia, the early Christian bishops were often located primarily on *naXarar* estates. Gregory had founded Armenia’s ‘mother church’ at Ashishtat. Like most early Christian churches it had been built on the ruins of native cultic centers (*Aa* 12 §809-815).

Yet, Gregory and the Catholicos after him had strong ties to specific *naXarar* families. Gregory was considered the personal bishop of the Arsacid royal family. *NaXarars* who were pro-monarchy and pro-Roman were in unique positions to protect and influence the developing religion. Yet, along a similar vein, those *naXarars* who were anti-monarchy and especially those who were pro-Iranian were powerful forces of opposition, not only to the ruler, but also to the emerging Christian communities.

\textsuperscript{15} Adontz 1970 (1908): 166.
The unique relationship between naXarars and church leadership in fourth century Armenia was discussed by early-twentieth century scholar Coneybeare, who commented on episodes related in the national history by P’awstos Buzand. One particular incident may help to clarify certain circumstances which affected church leadership as a result of the increasing political and social fragmentation of Armenian society during that time. A certain bishop named John traveled to attend a meeting of naXarars. At some point during that meeting he actually imitated the actions and sounds of a camel, offering to symbolically bear the sins of the nobles. They responded by placing deeds to villages and farms on his back. \(^{16}\)

Knowledge of the time period is crucial to comprehending that story. The late fourth century witnessed chaos and social upheaval after the Sassanids invaded Armenia, destroying Christian churches in the process. The resulting political and social disorder allowed the strengthening of some of the naXarar families and a growing subordination of existing institutions to the decentralized social system. \(^{17}\) Sassanid efforts to reintroduce Zoroastrianism in Armenia possibly led Christian leaders to find alternate meeting places for their services or to alter their methods of interaction with their congregants. The naXarars mentioned by P’awstos might have lived in the western sections of the land and, therefore, under less imminent threat from the Sassanids. Perhaps the incident described above took place when Bishop John accompanied his naXarar patron on visits

\(^{16}\) Coneybeare 1907: 433. The Armenian church did incorporate the use of mime into the public festivals of the church.

\(^{17}\) Adontz 1970(1908): 286.
to other nobles’ estates. Or, the noble may have generously provided temporary shelter for a bishop whose church had been destroyed by the Sassanids.

The behavior of the bishop was interpreted by Coneybeare as an example of the primitive state of church affairs in Armenia at the time.\(^{18}\) While the bishop’s method of communication possibly seems comical or even irreligious to moderns, perhaps it was an exaggerated form of allegory which enabled him to express his point more effectively. Other explanations could be that the bishop was not fluent in the Armenian language or perhaps unfamiliar with regional dialects used by the naXarars and, therefore, used symbolism to communicate his point. Also, the incident suggested that avarice, and not genuine concern, was the primary motivation of the bishop. As to the ‘payment’ of lands or farms, how different was that from the donations which enriched the church in Western Europe during the medieval period? However, that incident is interpreted as an apt example of the changes that had taken place not just within the church, but within Armenian political society as well.

Coneybeare also discussed another late-fourth century incident mentioned by P’awstos, this one occurring ca. 386 and concerning decisions of the church hierarchy. The Catholicos Zavên introduced ecclesiastical changes regarding priestly garments. The long vestments similar to those worn in imperial Christianity were replaced by short garments of a more military style which featured embroidery and even animal skins.\(^{19}\) This incident occurred soon after the murder of the Gregorid Catholicos Nersês. Zavên

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\(^{18}\) Coneybeare 1907: 433. His interpretation, at least in my opinion, was rather prejudicial and reflected typical late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century attitudes toward non-Protestant forms of Christianity.\(^{19}\) Coneybeare 1907: 432.
might thus have been the candidate proposed by King Pap, the one Basil of Caesarea refused to consecrate. If so, Zavên was either of the pro-Arian faction or a representative of the Syriac form of Christianity. His actions thus reflected some type of native reaction against Cappadocian influence in the church. Admittedly, the garment changes may have simply reflected environmental necessities; the shorter garments of animal skins worn over close fitting ‘trousers’ kept the clerics warmer! Regardless of whether the decision was one of reaction or practicality, it indicated that aspects of Armenian culture began to be expressed in the church.

The formal partition of Armenia in 387 directly affected the progress of Christianity. That political decision by the two major powers divided more than geographic areas; it also separated the Christians of Armenia. Those who lived in the western portions assigned to Roman protection could continue modeling their religion along Roman, and later, Byzantine lines. The Christians in what became Persarmenia underwent direct Sassanid control and were faced with multiple religious challenges in addition to the social and political chaos of the late-fourth century.

First, internal tensions existed between the kings succeeding Trdat, who supported Arian Christianity, and the Gregorid Catholicos, firm adherents of the Nicene position.20 That conflict mirrored the clashes in contemporary Cappadocia between Basil, a strong Nicene adherent, and the Arian emperor Valens. But, in the late-fourth century, Arianism was diminishing as a movement only to be replaced by other religious controversies. The

20 Bournoutian 2002: 50.
early-fifth century witnessed the first significant Christological debate, that between the followers of Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople.

Here again, the partitioning of Armenia affected Christianity. Christians in the eastern sections were introduced to this newest religious disagreement because Persian Christianity favored the Antiochene, or Nestorian, viewpoint. (Essentially, the Antiochene position argued that Christ was one person, but two natures.) The opposing view, promoted by Cyril of Alexandria, filtered into Armenia from Syria. (Cyril, a firm Nicene proponent, stressed that Christ had “one nature, and that incarnate of the Divine Word.”21) These new factions within Christianity thus vied for influence and control during the early decades of the fifth century. Due to extenuating political and social conditions, eastern Armenians did not attend the Council of Ephesus, which specifically dealt with the burgeoning Nestorian controversy. Therefore, in 436, Armenian ecclesiastical leaders, who at that time were of the Nicene position, appealed to Patriarch Proclus in Constantinople for guidance concerning what they viewed as heretical positions within their church.22

Proclus’ response, the Tome to the Armenians, began by stating the essentials of the Christian faith. Then, he specifically rejected the doctrine of two natures. He argued against Nestorian theology and warned the Armenians against accepting any teachings that might be interpreted as espousing Nestorian beliefs. Such written works had expressly been condemned by the 431 Council of Ephesus. Further, he urged Christian

21 Frend 1984: 754.
22 Sarkissian 1975(1965): 129. It seems that two priests of the Greek tradition in Armenia had written to the patriarch accusing Theodore of Mopsuestia of writing heretical works.
leaders in Armenia to accept the rulings of the Council of Ephesus, which had deposed Nestorius and condemned his teachings. Proclus’ Tome, by categorically denying the Christological stand promoted by Nestorius, has been interpreted by scholars as laying the theological foundation for Armenia’s sixth century ecclesiastical decision to reject the rulings of the Council of Chalcedon and to recognize what later came to be known as the Monophysite view.

Patriarch Proclus addressed his letter to the Armenian Catholicos Sahak. Sahak also received correspondence from Bishop Acacius of Melitene (formerly in Cappadocia, but then in Armenia Secunda). Acacius, as the closest Greek bishop to Armenia, sent a cautious letter to Sahak to avoid any hint of interference in Armenian church affairs. Acacius warned Sahak to be on guard against the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, as some churchmen thought them too similar to the Nestorian position.

Sahak, as head of the Armenian church and a man experienced in political affairs, reacted slowly and deliberately. First, Theodore still had a high opinion within ecclesiastical circles and had not yet been declared a heretic. Therefore, Sahak was wary of directing accusations of heresy against such a leader without proper evidence. Secondly, Theodore was currently popular in Armenia with two groups. Those Christians who favored Persian rule were more tolerant of the Nestorian position, perhaps because Nestorianism was allowed within the Sassanid Empire. Those Armenians who favored Syriac Christianity also favored Theodore and his teachings as more closely following the

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24 Frend 1984: 758-3 and 846. A Persian ecclesiastical synod had been held in 424. Frend suggested that the Armenian leaders under Persian domination used that synod to assert their ‘independence’ from western ‘Roman’ Christianity.
Antiochene theology. Therefore, Sahak was placed in a difficult position.\textsuperscript{26} As Catholicos in Persarmenia he had responsibility to foster true faith, in accordance with accepted church canons. As a pro-Nicene bishop he would have personally supported those positions which best adhered to the rulings of that historic church council. However, the political reality was that he lived in an area controlled, not by the Romans, but by the Sassanids, who distrusted and abhorred Roman influence. Therefore, he had to avoid appearing overly pro-Roman lest he infuriate his Sassanid overlords. As a result his actions were, as stated before, both cautious and deliberate.

As if the challenges discussed above were not troublesome enough, a third opposition to the Christian communities arose from the Sassanids. In 439, a new ruler ascended the Sassanid throne. Within a few years, Yazdgird II embarked on a mission to eliminate all forms of Roman influence. In order to better absorb Armenia into his political realm, Yazdgird recognized the need to reduce Greek Christian influence within his Persian sphere of control. Specific policies in Armenia were then aimed primarily at the Greek, but not the Syrian form of Christianity. The Persian governor outlawed both the speaking and translating of Greek. That policy meant that church services could no longer be conducted in Greek, nor could Bibles or other sacred writings be disseminated. Further, the governor forbade the studying of Greek culture. Yazdgird’s intention was the purging of ‘Roman’ Christianity altogether.\textsuperscript{27}

A potential crisis loomed over Christianity in Armenia. That crisis might have severely hampered Christianity’s ability to endure, had it not been for the introduction of

\textsuperscript{26} Sarkissian 1975(1965): 142.
\textsuperscript{27} Sarkissian 1975(1965): 84.
a cultural development which ‘tipped the scales,’ and allowed Christians in Persarmenia to structure both their religious and their ethnic identities. That development was the introduction of the Armenian alphabet and script.

A previous chapter discussed Armenian use of two different languages, Syriac and Greek, in its early liturgy and sacred writings. Neither language, however, was the native tongue of a majority of the people. In the years following the partition of 387, the Armenian king and the Gregorid Catholicos came to recognize the potential threat to Christianity from Sassanid control and the value of having a native script that would serve as a unifying tool both politically and religiously. Accordingly, in the waning years of the fourth century, the Gregorid Catholicos Sahak, supported by king Varamsames, commissioned Maštoc, or Mesrop Mashtots, to develop the Armenian script/alphabet.

Maštoc had been trained in the Greek language and employed in the royal court, but he clearly understood the value of having the scriptures in the Armenian language. His main motivation in developing a script was to provide the means by which Christian texts were made available for church leaders and others doing missionary work in Armenia. He studied both Syriac and Greek for ideas and was shown an alphabet derived earlier by a Syrian monk, but it proved inadequate. Maštoc, possibly accompanied by a

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28 Sahak, the last of the Gregorid house to serve as Armenian Catholicos, had been born and educated in Caesarea of Cappadocia. He was considered ‘pro-Roman’ by the Persians no doubt because of his background. When the last Armenian king was deposed in 428, Sahak temporarily lost his position. He was later restored, but limited by the Persians to a religious rank only. He had been one of the church leaders who had appealed to Proclus concerning the Christological debate. Even though he was Catholicos of Persarmenia, he was still able to maintain communication not only with Cappadocia and the western sections of Armenia but also with Constantinople. Sarkissian 1975(1965): 100-125. Khorenats’i stated that Sahak was Catholicos for over fifty years, dying in the first year of the Sassanid king Yazdgird II (MK 3.67).
group of young students, traveled to Edessa and Samosata\textsuperscript{30} where he worked with a Greek calligrapher in order to devise the specific characters for the new written script. After finally creating the Armenian alphabet and script around the year 400 (\textit{MK} 3.47, 49, 52-4), he returned to Armenia, bringing copies of sacred and theological works, including some by the famous Cappadocian Fathers. Maštoc’s trained students then established schools throughout the provinces of Persarmenia to instruct other young men from churches and monasteries in the use of the script. They, in turn, were set to work translating not only the books of the Bible and other sacred works, but theological treatises, canonical rulings, and homilies.\textsuperscript{31}

Catholicos Sahak later sent Maštoc and his own grandson Vardan to Constantinople to gain the emperor’s permission to promote use of the new script in Roman-controlled Armenia. On the way, Maštoc stopped in Melitene (formerly located in Cappadocia but at that time part of the Roman province of Armenia Secunda) to leave students to train under bishop Acacius. That trip to Constantinople was important for two reasons. First, it showed Sahak and Maštoc’s dedication to promoting a script for all Armenians, regardless of place of residence. Second, the trip helped to reopen an avenue

\textsuperscript{30} Sarkissian suggested three reasons as to why Maštoc traveled to cities other than Caesarea in Cappadocia. Quite naturally he visited the areas that had ancient links to Christianity in Armenia, such as Edessa. Also, as a Syrian monk had originally attempted to devise a script for use in Armenia, Maštoc visited that region to evaluate the value of that alphabet. Last, and perhaps more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, Maštoc lived and worked in ‘post-partition’ Armenia. As the Persians frowned on contact with the Greek-speaking west, it would have been easier for him to communicate with the Christians in either Syria or Mesopotamia. Sarkissian 1975(1965): 90-2.

\textsuperscript{31} Garošian, Mathews and Thomson 1982: 139-40 and Sarkissian 1975(1965): 88-9. Supposedly Maštoc’s first work was the translation of the book of Proverbs. (Thomson also related that the script was not intended by Maštoc to be the vehicle by which Hellenistic ideas or classical education spread into Armenia.) Bourdoutian supported that view by stating that Armenians who had previously studied abroad and were familiar with Greek works were responsible for translating non-Christian works into Armenian. Bourdoutian 2002: 55.
of communication with the west that had been partially blocked by the political partition and also by the introduction and dominance of the Persian-influenced theological issues.\textsuperscript{32}

The creation of the Armenian script proved significant for several reasons. First, it helped to lessen dependence upon foreign languages in order to convey foundational religious beliefs among the Armenian people. Christian doctrine could thus be expressed and expounded in written Armenian. That meant that people could be less dependent upon Greek or Syriac in order to understand theological issues. From a cultural standpoint, the translation project proved immensely beneficial because uniquely Armenian traditions could be more effectively preserved and transmitted to later generations. Indeed, within one hundred years of the development of the script, Armenia began to produce its own native ecclesiastical and historical literature.\textsuperscript{33}

The new script also became a means by which Armenian political leaders would foster a sense of collective identity, which became increasingly attractive in the wake of tragic events of the mid-fifth century. Original native literature thus came to embody the essence of the Armenian ‘national’ or ethnic identity, and both were heavily indebted to Christianity. A characteristic element in the early Armenian histories was the intermingling of religious and political history. Moses Khorenats’i linked Armenia to the genealogy enumerated in the Biblical book of Genesis. Elishē portrayed the uprising of 451 as a predominately religious struggle. Those works generated an image of Christianity and the political state merging to create Armenia. Consequently, the

\textsuperscript{33} Garosian, Mathews and Thomson 1982: 140-6.
Armenian script became, for religious and political leaders, a symbol of a society desperately seeking identity apart from Persian cultural and religious domination.\textsuperscript{34}

The need for a separate and unique identity became particularly important after 428. In that year the Armenian monarchy in Persarmenia ended when pro-Persian na\textit{Xarars} successfully petitioned the Sassanid king to remove the king and replace him with a Persian governor, or \textit{marzpan}.\textsuperscript{35} This official was given complete power over Persarmenia; he directly ruled not only over the political and economic administration but judicial and religious affairs as well. Despite the appointment of a Sassanid governor, however, actual rule in Persarmenia was often shifted to an Armenian na\textit{Xarar} willing to govern in Persia’s behalf. (The Arsacid monarchy had ended much earlier in western Armenia. The king recognized by the Romans died shortly after the partition, at which point the Roman emperor did not sponsor another Armenian candidate, but instead appointed an imperial governor.\textsuperscript{36} That obviously moved Roman Armenia from the status of protectorate to province. For Christianity it meant a more conducive environment for the establishment and expansion of Greek Christianity.)

Suspicion of the Gregorid house by both Sassanids and pro-Persian na\textit{Xarars} led to the temporary removal of the Catholicos Sahak. After his death, the office was given

\textsuperscript{34} Thomson suggested that the early Christian Armenian writers really struggled with that sense of identity. They rejected certain elements of Greek culture and also failed to identify with either their Syrian or Caucasian neighbors. He thought the strongest influence within Armenian society was actually the Iranian culture, but that posed problems for the Christian writers, particularly the ecclesiastical ones. After all, as Christians, they were not to identify with the non-Christian elements so prevalent in Iranian culture. Garosian, Mathews and Thomson 1982: 148.

\textsuperscript{35} Hewsen 1992: 290 and Toumanoff 1963: 152.

\textsuperscript{36} Bournoutian 2002: 53 and Toumanoff 1963: 193-4. Adontz held the view that after the partition no churchman held a position similar to that of Catholicos in western Armenia. He argued that the autonomous status of the ruling na\textit{Xarars} promoted a parallel structure within the churches of those provinces. Each bishop was thus acknowledged the equal of the others. Adontz 1970(1908): 88-9 and 284.
first to those who favored the Syriac form of Christianity. After this, rule of the church in Armenia increasingly came under Persian influence, causing isolation from Christianity in the West.\footnote{Toumanoff 1963:}

Not long after the abolition of the Armenian monarchy, the attitude within the Sassanid Empire changed toward Greek Christianity. As stated earlier, Yazdgird II favored policies intended to reduce any Roman influence within his empire, including the religion he considered ‘Roman,’ Christianity. (Garsoïan’s ideas on the religious positions of both imperial leaders were presented toward the beginning of this chapter.) Essentially she argued that those leaders’ religious beliefs were reflected in their policies toward all other religions. As Yazdgird personally adhered to Zoroastrianism, his zeal for that religion produced a greater intolerance for Christianity than that of his immediate predecessors. His intolerance eventually fostered active persecution of Christianity within his jurisdiction and particularly in Armenia.\footnote{Sarkissian 1975(1965): 149.} As stated earlier, his goal was to absorb Armenia totally into the Sassanid Empire. His anti-Greek policies in Armenia, mentioned earlier, soon led to harsher measures. His objective became to forcibly replace Christianity with Zoroastrianism.\footnote{Bournoutian 2002: 59.}

Many Armenians resisted the Zoroastrianism being imposed upon them. Resistance was answered first with repressive taxes on the people. Then, new taxes were imposed on churches, monasteries and churchmen. Next came the removal of some opposing na\textit{Xarars} under the pretense of fighting Sassanid enemies in Central Asia. Then
Yazgird sent Zoroastrian priests to Armenia with two purposes: they were to convert the Armenian populace and build a fire-temple at Dvin, the religious as well as administrative capital of Persarmenia. Those actions prompted further Armenian resistance. The Sassanid response was confiscation of lands and property, imprisonment, torture and even death (*Elishē* 1.8, 12).

Such persecutions and forced conversions were intended to eradicate Christianity completely in Persian-controlled Armenia. However, just as severe Roman persecution in the third and early-fourth centuries had led to widespread acceptance of Christianity in Anatolia, the Persian persecution of Christianity in the early to mid-fifth century proved a catalyst for the triumph of the Armenian Church. Christianity was then in a position to become the symbol, not just of a religion, but of the ethnic group as well. The Armenian Church became an accepted representative of a distinctly Armenian identity. For now it was not Romans or ‘Greeks’ who were being persecuted, it was Armenian Christians.

Severe persecution of Christians in Armenia brought no response and, tragically, no aid from the Roman emperor. Lack of military support possibly contributed to the further erosion of the popularity of Greek Christianity in favor of the emerging Armenian form. Understandably, the Roman Empire may not have been in a position to make demands of the Sassanids as it was still reeling from the effects of the battle of Adrianople in 378, the sack of Rome in 410, and faced a very real threat from Attila and his Huns. Meanwhile, Christians in eastern Armenia endured such harsh treatment that

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a violent struggle threatening both Christianity and ethnic Armenian identity occurred in 451.

Refusing conversion to Zoroastrianism had been only the first step toward open rebellion. In 451 some Armenian naXarars decided to fight for their religious beliefs. Under the command of Vardan Mamikonian, the sparapet or military leader of the naXarars, Armenians faced an opposing Sassanid force which included pro-Persian or Zoroastrian Armenian naXarars and lesser nobles. Christianity in Armenia was fighting for its very existence. The battle at Avarayr ended in Armenian defeat (Elishē 5.99-121). Vardan and many other naXarars died on the battlefield; others were taken prisoner and tortured in Sassanid Persia.\(^{43}\)

The battle, however, ignited over thirty years of guerilla warfare, known in Armenian history as the Vardanank War. The story of the battle inspired further resistance against the Sassanids, despite continued persecution and the imprisonment and torture of priests or neutral naXarars. But, even the adversity of prolonged guerilla warfare proved ultimately beneficial to Christianity, for as a result of the strife, the Sassanid rulers eventually acknowledged the futility of their policy in Armenia. In 484 the leader of the Armenian resistance, Vahan Mamikonian, ended his struggle and was restored to his hereditary position as sparapet. In return, the Sassanid king allowed the Armenians to freely practice their Christianity. A year later, in 485, Mamikonian was appointed marzpan, or governor, of Persarmenia.\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\) Bournoutian 2002: 59-60.
\(^{44}\) Sarkissian 1975(1965): 150.
As a result of the Vardanank War, the position of Armenian Christianity was strengthened and rooted within Armenian society. Vardan and the other faithful naXarars who died were venerated as martyrs who willingly sacrificed their lives rather than abandon the true faith. Not only regarded as religious heroes, the dead became political heroes as well, and the War consequently became a symbol of Armenian religious and ethnic identity. From that time, the Christian church, not a monarch or even the naXarar system, was at the heart of Armenian culture and history. A significant shift had occurred within society; it was a shift in influence and focus. Armenian Christianity thus became a rallying point and a unifying force in the face of occupation and persecution. It not only successfully resisted conversion by the Sassanids in the fifth century, but also later attempts by the Arabs, the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks.

AD 451 was the date for the famous Council of Chalcedon. Due to the political events just described, no bishops from Persarmenia attended the Council. As stated earlier, some historians and theologians view Armenia’s sixth century rejection of the Council of Chalcedon as the primary impetus for the creation of the auto-cephalous Armenian Church. However, this thesis maintains that the fifth century isolation and persecution endured by Christians in the face of severe Persian reprisals and attempted conversions were also important underlying factors behind that sixth century decision. Political events of the fifth century, rooted in religious motivations, thus directly affected the eventual emergence of Armenian Christianity as the defining cultural institution within that society.

45 Bournoutian 2002: 60-1.
If the fifth century was the defining century for Armenian Christianity, then what of Cappadocian Christianity during that same period? The zenith of Christianity in Cappadocia had been in the fourth century when the Cappadocian Fathers—Basil, Gregory Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa—worked to restore Nicene beliefs and aided in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The redistricting ordered by Valens in the late-fourth century meant new borders and, accordingly, a transfer of influence. Cappadocia in the fifth century was quite different from that of the previous century. No longer considered a frontier zone due to the creation of new provinces, Cappadocia Prima consisted primarily of imperial estates, and one major urban area, Caesarea.  

Cappadocia lost its strategic location within the Empire and resumed its earlier status of backwater region. A shift in military priorities occurred with the onslaught of Germanic invasions in Europe. With imperial attentions focused now on other areas, Cappadocia went from being a vital intersection to an out-of-the-way outpost and, eventually, to a place of exile for those unfortunate enough to have earned imperial displeasure. Decreased contact with the imperial court and the imperial church in Constantinople meant a loss of status and influence for its bishops. Cappadocia and its churchmen were forgotten or overlooked, replaced at the imperial level by other provinces and other bishops. No doubt as a result of these and other events, Cappadocian Christianity adapted. At the local level, the church continued to function as before, and

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46 The focus for this thesis is the area surrounding Caesarea. Cappadocia Secunda had been created during the time of Basil. Most of the urban areas, except for Caesarea, were located in that new province. Its metropolitan was located at Tyana.

47 Norwich 1999: 53.
possibly even strengthened. Monastic communities continued to be established, many linked to villages, allowing an extension of Christianity to the most basic level of Cappadocian society. In addition, unique carved churches and monasteries were constructed from the native *tufa* rock in several remote areas of Cappadocia. The carved churches also served as examples of Christianity’s adaptation to its physical environments. The Christians used available materials in the construction of their places of worship. What were produced were beautiful examples of early Christian church architecture and art. 48

Despite its loss of land and status within the empire, Cappadocia Prima maintained close association with imperial Christianity and orthodoxy. The theological influence of the Cappadocian Fathers continued past their deaths, encouraging the preservation of Nicene and Trinitarian beliefs and conformity among both urban and rural churches. The reputations of the three bishops were enhanced as the years progressed.

From Nubia to the Balkans, wherever Byzantine Christianity took root, he[Basil] and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus, appear on frescoes or mosaics—looking down on countless congregations as venerable exemplars of orthodox doctrine and the ascetic way of life.49

Cappadocia’s location within the Roman and Byzantine Empires helped to insure that the churches of Cappadocia remained ‘Greek’ in their liturgy and scriptures. The

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48 Kostof 1972: 18-9 and 53-6. Some of these carved churches exist today, but for how long in light of the forced relocation of Christians after World War I? Kostof laments, “Today Christianity and its architecture have no live relevance in Cappadocia.” 1972:35. Some of the churches have been desecrated or destroyed since 1923 by residents who view them as products of an ‘infidel’ culture. Others have been vandalized by antiquities thieves who plunder churches in remote areas for paintings or mosaics which can be sold on the underground antiquities market. Still others have succumbed to cave-ins due to continued effects of erosion and exposure to the extreme climatic conditions. 1972: xvii.

49 Frend 1984: 630.
native dialect, although still in use during the fourth century, slowly declined in favor of Greek.\textsuperscript{50} Uniform church hierarchy and administration further contributed to a stronger connection with the imperial church.

Christianity multiplied at the local level. The expansion of churches and monasteries to remote areas positioned Cappadocian Christianity to survive additional Sassanid invasions in the fifth and sixth centuries and the Arab incursions two centuries after that. The church supported the local people and church leaders often aided in the defense of towns or villages. Churches and monasteries were even built into the walls of the villages or towns.\textsuperscript{51} Christianity thus provided support and identity for the beleaguered and persecuted Cappadocians in much the same way as Armenian Christianity during the traumatic Vardanank War and afterwards. In this way the Greek Orthodox religion continued as a strong element in Cappadocia until the early twentieth century. The historic metropolitan see in Caesarea, once home to a theological school of high reputation and famous church theologians such as Firmilian and Basil, came to an end when the Treaty of Lausanne was finalized in 1923.\textsuperscript{52}

Cappadocia and Armenia were two areas with many parallels in geography, history, culture and religion. Both featured mountainous areas interspersed with plateaus and valleys. Both had characteristically harsh winters. Environmental factors favored the raising of livestock, particularly horses. Large estates, most controlled by local aristocrats, were common to both areas. Long-established transhumance patterns within

\textsuperscript{50} Brown 1971: 94. W.M. Ramsay even argued that Christianity ‘destroyed’ the native languages of Anatolia by insisting upon the use of Greek in the church liturgy. Ramsay 1956(1908): 146.

\textsuperscript{51} Ramsay 1956(1908): 156-7.

\textsuperscript{52} Kostof 1972: 34.
the area meant that large numbers of Armenians lived in or near Cappadocia.\textsuperscript{53} The scholar Adontz called such movements “ethnic ebb and flow.”\textsuperscript{54} Transhumance continued to a part of the culture of both areas despite changing political boundaries.

Along with the movement of peoples came a concurrent transfer of ideas and culture. Hittite culture spread eastward as far as Armenia. Cappadocia and Armenia shared common cultural elements due to centuries of Iranian influence. Similarities in religions occurred during the late-Persian and Hellenistic eras with the popularity of the Iranian cults of Mithras and Anahit. Greek deities were later introduced into both areas when aristocratic leaders adopted elements of Hellenic culture. Roman influence came to both lands following the Mithradatic Wars, and each kingdom was courted as a potential Roman client state. Cappadocia slowly fell under the sway of Roman authority, but Armenia was alienated by Roman politicians, namely Marc Antony, and turned eastward.

It is possible that Christianity was introduced into both Cappadocia and Armenia as early as the first century AD. While the new religion grew slowly but steadily in Cappadocia during the next two hundred years, its progress in Armenia was less visible. Efforts at evangelization or to establish organized churches may have been hampered by the chaotic conditions in the wake of the fall of the Parthian Empire. The rise of the Sassanid Persians, much more militant in their religious views than the Parthians, presented nascent Christianity in Armenia with formidable challenges.

Then, during the third to fifth centuries AD, Christianity was established in Armenia, possibly as a result of a church mission from Caesarea in Cappadocia. Links

\textsuperscript{53} Hewsen 2001: 65.
\textsuperscript{54} Adontz 1970(1908): 8.
between the Christian leadership of the two areas remained strong for several decades. During this time, Christian churches in both areas featured similar language, liturgy and hierarchy. The bishop of Armenia, the Catholicos, was consecrated by the metropolitan in Caesarea. Many of the early Armenian bishops were even raised and educated in Caesarea.

However, localized differences in the religions did begin to appear. Almost from its inception, Armenian church hierarchy became associated with the prevailing naXarar system, rather than being located in urban settings. In addition, the office of Catholicos, in a dramatic departure from typical Christian conventions, became hereditary within the family of Gregory the Illuminator. In Cappadocia, despite a greater uniformity of hierarchy and theology as result of the influence of prominent churchmen such as the Cappadocian Fathers, variations of Christianity continued to manifest. Some blended Christianity and local cults. Local prophetesses continued to be recognized by the people into the third century. Even Cappadocia’s carved monasteries of the fifth century and afterward bore the cultural imprints of the area; Syrian, Graeco-Roman, Armenian, and even Parthian and Sassanid elements all influenced the unique “sculptured architecture” peculiar to certain sections of the plateau region.

Before the late-third century Cappadocia was considered an insignificant region. Located on the high plateaus of central Asia Minor and physically isolated from the Mediterranean area by rings of high mountains, it was detached from other more urbanized and cultured areas. As a result, Cappadocia was deemed backward and

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barbaric. But, political events of the third and fourth centuries suddenly thrust the remote and rustic area into imperial prominence. Armenia, on the other hand, had been the pawn of two great empires and the center of frontier disputes since the first century BC. Nonetheless, events beginning in the third century propelled Armenia into a great political tug-of-war that culminated in the fifth century and, in the process, affected the development of Christianity in both Cappadocia and Armenia, but particularly in Armenia.

Once established, Christianity in both areas was, at differing times, subjected to periods of persecution and reprisals as a result of political decisions, either local or at the imperial level. General persecutions during the third century were ordered by various Roman emperors. However, those measures failed to halt the spread of Christianity in Cappadocia; in Armenia, they may have contributed indirectly to the conversion of the king and several of the nobles! Constantine’s preferential treatment of Christian bishops following his conversion directly led to the conversion of some in Cappadocia, namely Gregory the Elder, father of Gregory Nazianzus. Indirectly, that same decision helped change Cappadocian society by opening avenues of civic service to Christian leaders, and paved the way for later political bishops such as Basil the Great.

The adoption of Arian Christianity by the successors of Constantine and the threat of impending fragmentation of Christianity was mirrored in Cappadocia by the tension and disagreements between rival Arian and Nicene bishops. Increased political alignment with Rome eventually led to Armenian kings adopting Arianism, possibly from political

56 Van Dam 2003a: 2 and Hewsen 2001: 50.
expediency. Armenia was affected in much the same way as Cappadocia, as tensions escalated between the Arian rulers and the Nicene Catholicos.

After Theodosius became emperor in the late-fourth century, his orthodox religious views necessitated changes in imperial Christianity. Nicene bishops were restored to bishoprics and Christianity in Cappadocia turned its attention to more localized affairs. However, the formal division of Armenia in 387 proved to be a significant political event which had direct consequences on the status of Christianity in that land. Efforts by Sassanid kings and pro-Iranian naXarars to limit the ‘Roman’ form of Christianity included outlawing the use of Greek in church liturgies or the translation of Greek texts. The introduction of an Armenian script at the beginning of the fifth century, although intended to unite both church and people under a common faith, did, in fact, influence the development of a separate ‘national’ church. That resulted from direct persecution of Christians, which led to open rebellion in the mid-fifth century, and Christianity’s fight for survival. The forced separation and isolation from western, or Greek, Christianity, which was a direct result of the political partition, and the concurrent development of a national script both fostered a religious division which became formal in the sixth century with the establishment of the auto-cephalous Armenian Church.

For a period of almost two hundred years, Christianity in Cappadocia and Armenia shared similarities and struggles. Ties of common creeds, theology, liturgy and hierarchical authority bound Christians in the two lands together. However, religion in the Near East was never free for long from the influence of politics. While Christianity in Cappadocia remained firmly under imperial authority, the church in Armenia was
forcibly divorced from its connections with Greek Christianity by the events and realities of late-fourth and fifth century politics. Armenian Christians in the fifth century were faced with religious and political persecutions which threatened their very existence. They survived, in part, by using their ethnicity to their advantage. In short, the church survived by localizing.
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