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Relations of Kurds with Armenians (951-1150)

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Abstract

The Kurds and Armenians are indigenous peoples of the Near East. Historically, Armenians resided in the Caucasus and Anatolia, while the Kurds inhabited Upper Mesopotamia and southwestern Iran. Although the places where Kurds and Armenians lived were close to each other, the question of when, where and how the relations between the two communities began has not been answered due to the lack of comprehensive research on the subject. Armenian historians were interested in Armenian-Kurdish relations in the early 9th century and conducted preliminary studies. Although some researchers, including N. J. Marr, found the Kurds to be closer to Georgians and Armenians than the Caucasian peoples, this view did not gain wide acceptance. Since the early 20th century, some Kurdish intellectuals have claimed that the two communities share the same religion, lineage, and culture, though these assertions were not supported by rigorous research. Moreover, Armenian chronicles provide limited information about any significant historical partnership between the two groups. Modern Armenian historians tend to dismiss these Kurdish claims as unreliable.

This article seeks to answer the question of when, where, and how relations between Kurds and Armenians began during the Middle Ages. As there are no extant Kurdish sources describing the early history of the Kurds, Armenian chronicles, Islamic historical sources, and the works of modern scholars were consulted. According to the evidence found in Armenian chronicles and Islamic sources, Kurdish-Armenian relations appear to have originated in the 10th century. This conclusion is based on primary source material.

Keywords: : Kurdish-Armenian, Armenia, Kurdistan, Kurdish-Armenian Relations

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Introduction

In order to determine the Kurdish-Armenian relationship, the geography of two nations must be determined firstly. The geographical boundaries of Armenia, at their greatest extent, stretched from the Black Sea and Georgia in the north to Al-Jazeera and Syria in the south, from Iran and the Caspian Sea in the east to Anatolia in the west. The Euphrates River divided Armenia into two regions: the area east of the Euphrates was known as Armenia Major, while the west was referred to as Armenia Minor. The origins of the Armenian people are a subject of debate. While some claim that the Armenians were of Phrygian origin, Armenians traditionally considered themselves to be descendants of the Urartians. Modern researchers suggest that Armenians migrated from the Balkans. Armenians established kingdoms as early as 200 BC; however, these kingdoms were often under the pressure of both the Byzantine and Persian (Sassanid) Empires. The Byzantine Empire sought to spread Christianity and supported the Christian Armenian population. In contrast, the Sassanids attempted to assert dominance over the Armenians by promoting their own religious beliefs, Zoroastrianism and Mazdaism. Prolonged conflicts between the two empires led to frequent changes in control over Armenian territories.

The homeland of the Kurds is Upper Mesopotamia and the southwest of Iran, that is, around the Zagros Mountains. It is very difficult to determine the homeland and borders of the Kurds in the early period. Many foreign and local researchers have used the name Kurdistan for the places where Kurds live. However, the name Kurdistan was not used in ancient times. Kurdistan began to be used as a name by Muslim historians since the Middle Ages. It is only possible to determine the places where Kurds live from Islamic historical sources. According to our research, Kurds spread to the Caucasus, Anatolia and Syria regions after having converted to Islam. There is not enough information about how Kurds and Armenians lived together before Islam.

Kurdish historian M. Emin Zeki Beg commented on the historical relationship between Kurds and Armenians: “The relations between these two ancient societies have not been antagonistic in the past. Since the dawn of history, a shared homeland has embraced these two communities, and there is no doubt that, had it not been for the interference of the officials and administrators of occupying governments, these relations would have continued in the same

peaceful manner.” (Zeki Beg, 2011: 35, 236) Similarly, Nuri Dersimi stated: “I, and especially we Dersimis, along with the general Kurdish youth, felt a greater affinity for Armenians than for Turks or other nations. They were closer to us than other peoples and were children of the same race.” (Dersimi, 1992: 45)

Kurdish historian Mehrdad R. Izady offered the following insight on Armenian-Kurdish relations: “...Various place names in Northern and Western Kurdistan, mentioned in early geographic texts such as those of Strabo and Ptolemy, are corruptions of Kurdish tribal names, ending with the suffixes *vand* or *wand*, which are characteristic of Southern Kurdish tribal nomenclature, as opposed to the suffixes *kan*, *gan*, or *ana*, typical of Northern Kurdish nomenclature. The settlement areas of tribes such as Bagravand (Bekiran), Tiğravand (Tirikan), Hadhabani, Şeddadan, and Mamakan (Mamikon), first recorded in Armenian sources, are located in the southern and southeastern borders of Armenia.” (Izady, 1992: 90)

Unlike Kurdish writers, most Armenian authors of the 19th and 20th centuries spoke negatively about the Kurds, rarely acknowledging any Kurdish-Armenian partnership. Some Armenian nationalists considered the Kurds unreliable, though they saw them as potential strategic partners against the Ottomans (Turks). However, they did not mention any historical friendship or closeness. For instance, Vahan Baibourtian, in his book *Kurds, the Armenian Problem, and the History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations*, quotes 19th-century Armenian writers who expressed negative views about the Kurds. He himself did not accept the idea of a Kurdish-Armenian partnership or closeness. In the preface to his book, he states: "Throughout their centuries-long history, the Kurds were never able to establish their own state due to internal divisions and their dispersion across various countries." Nikoghayos Adonts located historical Kurdistan between the large plateau of the Zagros mountain range, the Luristan plains, Lake Urumiyeh, and the Botan River, noting that they later expanded their borders eastward toward the Tigris River. Starting in the 10th century, Kurds established local dynasties such as the Mervani, Hasnawi, Shaddadi, and Fadlunid dynasties. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Kurds were involved in bloody wars, rebellions, and other incidents, eventually expanding into the lands they now inhabit. According to Adonts, Kurdish expansionism involved the massacre of the local Armenian population and the use of force, with Armenia gradually transforming into Kurdistan over time. (Baibourtian, 2013: 2-5)

Even Armenian writers who took a more positive view of Armenian-Kurdish relations often discussed a history marked by conflict with the Kurds. For example, Garabet Moumdjian observed: "Throughout Armenian history, no society shared as much religious affinity with Armenians as the Kurds. Since ancient times, the two communities formed a remarkable unity and emotional closeness as neighbors who lived together. Over the centuries, many empires—Romans, Macedonians, Parthians, Arabs, Genghis Khan's armies, and the Russians—invaded these lands, but they left. They oppressed and tormented the people like snow in winter, but eventually, they melted away. Each time, the Armenian-Kurdish presence rose again. Despite differences in belief and character—one being itinerant and nomadic, the other settled and agricultural—these two communities often became enemies. Instead of living in harmony, they fought. At times, one ruled over the other." (Moumdjian, 1999: 274)

To understand when, where, and how Kurdish-Armenian relations began, it is essential to identify the common geography the two communities shared. While the Armenian homeland is relatively well-known, though its boundaries have shifted over time, the precise origins and territory of the Kurds are less clear. In ancient sources, the term *Kardu* was sometimes used to describe both the land inhabited by Kurds and the Kurds themselves. For instance, in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the terms *Kardu* and *Kardukhians* are used, with *Karduk* interpreted as land and *Kardukhians* as Kurds. (Xenophon, 2011, 263)

The name *Kardu* also appears in the earliest Syriac translations of sacred texts, written after 150 AD. In the *Peshitta*, terms such as *Kardu country/land*, *Kardu countries/lands*, *Kardu land/region*, *Arzu Karda*, and *Bilâdu Karda* are structurally and semantically similar. In Assyrian chronicles from the Islamic period, Kurds were referred to as *Kurdonoye* or *Kurdoye*. The term *Kardu Mountains* in these sources likely refers to the mountainous region stretching from northern Iraq to present-day Eastern Anatolia. (Tomakin, 2021: 6)

Armenian chronicler Moses Khorenatsi (410–490) used the name *Korduk* four times in his work *Armenian History*. While describing the Armenian-Assyrian wars, he writes, "Aram opposed him in battle and chased him towards Korduk." Thomsen, the editor of the book, notes in a footnote that Korduk is "a region south of Lake Van on the Mesopotamian border." Khorenatsi also used the term *Korduats* when describing the war's aftermath, mentioning that

"Abgar's sister was caught in a snowstorm in the Korduk Mountains while traveling to Armenia in winter." In his account of the Persian-Assyrian wars, he writes, "The Persians drove their army from the Azerbaijani border towards Korduk." Notably, Khorenatsi always referred to *Korduk* as a geographical location, without explicitly mentioning the Kurds. (Khorenatsi, 2017, 94- 220)

Garo Sasuni, without citing a source, claimed: "The Karduks, referred to as *Kordu* in ancient Armenian sources (modern-day Hakkari region), were neither under Iranian nor Armenian sovereignty, according to Xenophon. However, in the first century BC, the Armenian King Tigran II conquered the country of Karduk, which remained under Armenian rule for some time. During the Arshagunid period, until the end of the 4th century, the Armenian kingdom frequently included the Karduk region, but the area never had a strong Armenian presence. Karduk was effectively independent under Armenian protection during this period." (Sasuni, 1992: 17)

Müfit Yüksel, discussing Kurdish-Armenian relations, stated: "During the period of Islamic conquests, the regions inhabited by the Kurds, and the areas they had settled before Islam, covered today's Kurdish regions in Iran, Iraq (including Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah, and Khanaqin), as well as Turkey's Hakkari, the southern shores of Lake Van, and the regions extending to the Şırnak and Batman rivers." (Yüksel, 2013: 7)

Kurdish historian Cemal Reşid Ahmed noted, "The political rise of the Kurds, one of the local peoples, began to shine in the 10th century. Before this period, the Kurds, along with the Daylams, Tats, and Talish, were among the most populous groups in the region. Only the Daylams and Kurds could fill the political vacuum that emerged in the south of the Qazvin Sea. Kurdish tents were located in Southern Armenia, and here the Kurds became known as warrior cavalymen who spread into Western Azerbaijan and crossed the Arekes River." (Ahmad, 1998: 9)

Vahan Baibourtian remarked, "In fact, a significant number of Kurdish communities did not reside in Western Armenia until the late Middle Ages. Neither Armenian nor non-Armenian sources provide information on the density of the Kurdish population in the region. Researchers have found no trace of Kurds in Armenia. Kurds were settled in Armenian lands by Turkish rulers. For instance, Kurds settled around Lake Van during the Seljuk and Mongol invasions and formed semi-independent tribal unions." (Baibourtian, 2013: 2, 5)

Garnik Asatrian similarly claimed that Kurdish-Armenian relations began in the 11th century: "The relations between early nomadic Kurds and Armenians date back approximately to the 11th and 12th centuries AD. While they lived in varying numbers in Mesopotamia and Armenia until the 16th century, they later migrated in larger groups." (Asatrian, 2009: 34)

Mehrdad R. Izady added, "Kurds lived in large groups in the Armenian city of Dvin, north of Yerevan, by the mid-10th century, and in Ani, the capital of Bagratid Armenia, toward the end of the 11th century." By the 14th century, the Kurdish population in Armenia had stabilized. While Armenia's cities and towns were predominantly inhabited by Armenians, the countryside became increasingly Kurdish. Under pressure from Turkish nomads arriving from the East and moving into Byzantine territory, many Armenians migrated to the Cilicia region and established their own state there. Consequently, the Kurdish share of the population increased." (Izady, (1990: 93, 94)

The three Kurdish and two Armenian writers mentioned agree that Kurdish-Armenian relations began after the 10th century. Based on Armenian chronicles from the 10th century and earlier, the following observations can be made:

P'awstos, a 4th and 5th-century Armenian chronicler, provided detailed accounts of the religious activities of Armenians, as well as the social, political, and military structures of the state, the Byzantine Empire, and the Sassanid occupation of Armenia. However, he did not mention the Kurds at all.

Sebeos, a 7th-century Armenian bishop and historian, extensively described the birth of Muhammad, the entry of the Ishmaelites (İsmailoğulları) into Armenia, the death of Heraclius, and the reign of Constantine. He also angrily recounted the Islamic conquests, the destruction of the Sassanid Empire by Muslims, the Jewish presence in Jerusalem, the Byzantine civil wars, and Muawiyah's conquests. However, he provided no information on the Kurds.

Ukhtanes, Bishop of Sebastia and a 10th-century Armenian historian, (Bishop Ukhtanes, 1988) discussed Armenians' conversion to Christianity, sectarian conflicts, Georgian-Armenian wars, and the pressures exerted on Armenians by the Byzantine and Persian empires, but he did

not mention the Kurds. Armenian chronicles up to the 10th century thus do not reference the Kurds, suggesting limited contact between the two peoples during early periods.

“The term Kurd was unknown to 5th century Armenian historiography, as well as to the authors of the 7th-8th centuries (Sebos, Levond); and even the chroniclers of the 10th centuries, Hovhanns Drasx Anakertc'i, Asotik, Tovmay Arcruni, and Aristaks Lastivertc'i, do not have any information about the Kurds. In the case of the appearance of any, even a tiny number of the Kurds in Armenia, the Armenian historiographers very sensitive towards alien ethnic elements surely would have recorded them in one form or another, even without any political event connected with them or in which Kurds were involved.” (Asatrian, 2009: 36)

Kurdish-Armenian relations in the Caucasus, the shared habitat of Armenians and Kurds, are only partially illuminated in Islamic historical sources. Medieval Islamic sources have mentioned the Kurds since the 7th century. During the period of Muslim conquests, Muslim forces encountered and fought with Kurdish communities in the Caucasus. Some settlements where Kurds lived are mentioned in Islamic sources, including “*Belâsecan, Sebelan ve Sâtervedân, Eş-Siz (el-Belâzuri, 2013: 468) Shamkur, Arrân, (Hemedâni, 1885) Beylakan in Karabakh and Berdea, the capital of Arrân. (Kırzoğlu, 1966: 370)*

Ibn Hawqal wrote about the Kurdish presence in the region: "There are Kurdish tribes such as Rabia, Mudar, Hezbani, Humeydi, and Lariye in Azerbaijan and Armenia. The city of Ushnu is the homeland of the Hezbani Kurds, who graze their animals here." About Berza'a, Ibn Hawqal remarked, "One of the gates of Berdaa is called Bab el-Akrad (Kurdish Gate)." He also noted that while most people in Azerbaijan and parts of Armenia spoke Persian, some spoke Arabic, and Armenian was spoken in certain places around Armenia. However, he did not mention Kurdish-Armenian relations. (İbn Havkal, 2024: 261, 272) Masudi noted that the Macirdan tribe was from Kenkever in Azerbaijan, and al-Baladhuri mentioned a place called *Nehru'l-Ekrâd* (Kurdish River). (el-Belazuri, 2013: 287)

From the sources above, it is evident that Kurds lived in the South Caucasus. The use of terms like *Babü'l-Ekrad* (Kurdish Gate) and *Nehrü'l-Ekrâd* (Kurdish River) indicates their presence, though questions about the size of the Kurdish population and their origins remain unanswered. Arabic and Persian were spoken in the region, but Kurdish was not. Kurdish tribes

began settling in Southern Azerbaijan in the 8th century, and their locations and tribal names are recorded in historical sources. Although the Kurds were mentioned in early Islamic history, there are no references to their relations with Armenians or the existence of Kurdish political structures.

According to our research, Kurdish contact with Armenians began in the 19th century. Kurdish tribes migrated from Northern Iraq to the Southern Caucasus. In Anatolia, Kurdish-Armenian relations began with the Marwanid dynasty, and these interactions often took the form of warfare. As the Kurdish population increased in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, the Kurds became a political force in both the Caucasus and Anatolia. The increase in the Kurdish population in the Caucasus was largely due to migrations from Northern Iraq. One such migration occurred when Muhammad b. Bilal, leader of the Hezbani tribe, rebelled around Mosul, took refuge in Qandil, and, after being defeated, moved to the Azerbaijan region. (İbnü'l-Esir, 1986: 449, 451)

A second major migration occurred after the successes of Daylam b. İbrahim al-Kurdi. Kurdish communities joined him, further increasing the Kurdish population. "When the region around Mosul was conquered by the Arabs, Kurdish tribes were forcibly relocated to Azerbaijan. As with the Dasni tribes, these migrations were driven by the desire for better living conditions, access to more suitable land, or natural causes." (Lazerev-Mihoyan, 2010: 38)

By the 10th century, as the Kurds grew stronger and more independent, Muslim statelets such as the Shirvanshahs, Sacoğulları, and Musafirîs existed in the Caucasus. Alongside these dynasties, there were Armenian kingdoms, such as the Armenian princes of Syunik, Bagratuni, and Ardžruni. During this time, Daylam b. İbrahim al-Kurdi rose to prominence and began a power struggle in the region.

Daylam b. İbrahim and Armenians

The increase in the Kurdish population in Azerbaijan, their emergence as a political force, and the beginning of military relations between the Kurds and Armenians occurred during the reign of Daylam b. İbrahim el-Kürdi. "Daylam's father, İbrahim, was one of the men of Harun al-Shari, the Kharijite leader who rebelled against the Caliph in Mosul. After Harun's execution in

896, Ibrahim fled to Azerbaijan, where he married the daughter of a Kurdish leader. From this marriage, Daylam was born. When Daylam b. İbrahim came of age, he served under Yusuf b. Ebüs-Sac, gained power and fame, and through this connection, he established dominance in Azerbaijan. The majority of Daylam's soldiers were Kurds, with a smaller portion consisting of Daylamids." (İbn Miskeveyh, 2016: 380, 437)

"From 969 onwards, Daylam sought to consolidate his authority in Arran and Azerbaijan, establishing his sovereignty in eastern Erminiyye. Evidence of his influence in the region is seen in the fact that he minted coins in Dvin in 941-942. It was primarily due to the Kurds under Daylam's command that he gained control of these areas and established settlements. Since the Kurds formed the majority of his forces, they held significant sway in Daylam's army, eventually dominating many of his castles and cities. Finding this Kurdish dominance unsettling, Daylam sought to reduce their influence by increasing the number of Daylam people in his army. He eventually attempted to suppress Kurdish dominance by arresting a group of prominent Kurdish chiefs. When a conflict erupted between Merzuban and Daylam, the Kurds supported Merzuban. In 941-942, Daylam sought refuge with Gagik Ibn Deyrani, the Ardzruni King of Vaspurakan, maintaining friendly relations with the small forces that remained loyal to him."

"After fleeing his country and seeking protection from Derenik Ashot, Daylam realized that favoring the Daylamids over the Kurds had been a mistake and attempted to reconcile with the Kurds. Meanwhile, due to Merzuban's mistreatment of the Kurds who had sought his protection, the Kurds returned to Tabriz and rejoined Daylam. With the increasing number of Kurds and Daylamids rallying around him, Daylam regained control over Azerbaijan, Arran, and Erminiyye. However, Daylam eventually lost some of the territories he had gained to rivals such as İbrahim b. Merzuban, Muhammed b. el-Hüseyin er-Kürt Revâdî, and Şeddâdî Muhammed. Notably, the Kurdish states of the Shaddadids and Rawadids fought against Daylam b. İbrahim, a fellow Kurdish emir. Consequently, Daylam's reign was short-lived, as he faced attacks from rival Kurdish emirs, followed by internal rebellions."

"With only a small Kurdish army left, Daylam fled to Erminiyye for the second time. There, he was treated well by the local rulers, Derenik Ashot and Epusehl Hamazasp, who provided provisions for his men. However, as conditions worsened for him, Daylam fled to

Baghdad, but he did not abandon his military ambitions. He fought once more but was defeated and sought refuge again with Epusehl Hamazasp, the judge of Erminiyye. Due to pressure from Merzuban, Epusehl agreed to hand Daylam over to him. Merzuban captured Daylam, had his eyes gouged out, and imprisoned him. Daylam lived briefly in captivity before being killed in 957."

Daylam b. İbrahim el-Kürdi is a significant figure in the political history of Azerbaijan, Arran, and Eastern Armenia between 935 and 956. Kurdish-Armenian relations took on a political dimension during his reign, and the events surrounding his rule paved the way for the establishment of Kurdish states such as the *Shaddadids* and *Rawadids*, which played crucial roles in the region's later history." (Keleş, 2018: 118-145)

The Kurdish population grew as a result of migrations and exiles to the Caucasus and Anatolia during the 10th century. Kurds, who had previously been organized primarily into tribal structures, later formed more organized political entities. Around the same time, three important Kurdish states were established: the *Shaddadids*, the *Rawadids*, and the *Marwanids*. Since the era of these Kurdish states, relations between Kurds and Armenians became closer, continuing in various forms and intensities up to the present day.

Shaddadis (951-1199) ² and Armenians

The Shaddadids were a Kurdish dynasty that ruled in the regions of Arran and Armenia from the mid-10th century until the end of the 12th century. The Shaddadids emerged as one of the Kurdish dynasties following the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate, reigning between 951 and 1199.

The founder of the Shaddadid dynasty was Muhammad b. Shaddad b. Kurtuk. During a period when local administrators in Azerbaijan began to act independently, Muhammad b. Shaddad seized control of Dvin and established the Shaddadid dynasty in 952. However, Salar Merzuban sent an army composed of Daylamites and Kurds against Muhammad, and Muhammad was initially defeated and forced to flee. Nevertheless, after the Daylamites sacked

² this chapter mostly refers to Nevzat Keleş, *Şeddâdiler (951-1199), Orta Çağ'da Bir Kürt Hanedanı* Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 2016.

the city, they invited Muhammad to return and reinstated him to power. Soon after, Armenian King Ashot III attacked Dvin with an army of 30,000 soldiers. Muhammad was again defeated and sought refuge with Derenik, who then turned him over to Ashot's brother, Apusehl Hamazasp, King of Vaspurakan.

Muhammad b. Shaddad's wife, Mam, bore him three sons: Abu'l-Hasan Ali al-Lashkari, Fazl (Fazlun), and Merzuban. The eldest, Abu'l-Hasan Ali al-Lashkari, succeeded his father. Al-Lashkari and his brothers stayed in Vaspurakan for about ten years, serving the Armenian prince. Fazl (Fazlun), unwilling to continue serving Christians, left for Ganja, where he befriended the local governor, gained influence, and, with the support of Ali al-Lashkari, captured Ganja in 970-971. This marked the beginning of active Shaddadid rule in Ganja.

This episode is recounted in Vardan's work as follows: "During this period, a woman named Mam came from Iran with her three sons to the glorious Prince Grigor in Parisos. The sons left their mother as a hostage and took Shoktu and Shamiramabert for themselves. There, the three brothers befriended Hilaziz, the commander of Ganja, and later killed him, capturing the city. Parzuan, the eldest of the three brothers, did not live long. He was succeeded by the second brother, Lashkeri, who took Sandan Shamkur. However, their younger brother, known as Fadlun, killed Lashkeri while they were out hunting and assumed power. Grigor's son, Filip, pretended to be a friend of Fadlun and visited him. After his father's death, Filip imprisoned Fadlun and seized Şaşvağ and Şotk from him." (Vardan, 1937: 35)

Ganja Shaddadis and Armenians

Ali al-Lashkari took advantage of the declining power of the Musafirids and expanded his territory from Shamkur in the northwest to Berdaa in the east. Ali al-Lashkari ruled for eight years, and upon his death, his brother Merzuban succeeded him. However, Merzuban proved to be an ineffective ruler, unable to defend his territories. Consequently, during a hunting expedition, his brother Fadlun attacked and killed him, assuming control of the dynasty.

Fadlun reclaimed Berdaa and minted coins in his name. He then captured Beylekan, Ganja, and Shamkur, solidifying his power. Fadlun b. Muhammad focused his subsequent campaigns on the Christian principalities. First, he approached Prince Grigor of Parisos, with

whom he and his father had previously sought refuge, pretending to befriend him. However, Fadlun eventually arrested Grigor and seized the territories of Şaşvağ and Şotk. Emir Fadlun proceeded to conquer the regions of Gerdman, Parisos, Şotk, Achanan, and Artsakh, and later marched on Dvin, capturing the city. As he expanded his borders, the Emir found himself neighboring the Georgian Bagratuni Kingdom. While King Davit Anhonig was preparing to attack Fadlun, Fadlun preemptively launched an assault but suffered a defeat near the Kur River. His army suffered heavy losses, with many soldiers drowning in the river, and Fadlun narrowly escaped.

To strengthen his political influence and gain power against the Armenian and Georgian kingdoms, Emir Fadlun married the daughters of local leaders. Despite his earlier defeat, he continued his campaigns, launching raids on the territories of Hereti and Kakheti, occasionally seizing spoils and captives. In response, King Bagrat III mobilized his forces against Ganja, with Gagik, the Bagratuni King of Ani, joining the expedition. Upon seeing the combined Armenian and Georgian armies, Fadlun retreated to a castle for refuge. When the enemy forces besieged Shamkur, Fadlun was forced to sue for peace, agreeing to a harsh treaty that required him to remain loyal to King Bagrat, pay tribute, and fight Bagrat's enemies. Despite these terms, Fadlun accepted the peace and sent lavish gifts to the kings. According to the agreement, the Shaddadids became vassals of King Bagrat III, yet they continued to launch attacks on the regions of Kakheti and Hereti.

In 1026-1027, King George I, who succeeded Bagrat III, invaded Arran with his army, advancing as far as Shamkur. Emir Fadlun resisted, defeating George I's army and killing more than 10,000 of his soldiers. This victory earned Fadlun the title "Great Fadlun" in Georgian chronicles. However, his success was short-lived, as an alliance of Christians and even the Muslim Emir of Tiflis formed against him. The allied forces defeated Fadlun, destroyed much of his army, and forced him to flee. Ibn al-Athir described this defeat, referring to Fadlun as "Fadlun al-Kurdi," while Ibn al-Jawzi reported that more than 10,000 Kurds and other soldiers were killed.

When Fadlun appointed his son Musa as crown prince, his brother Askuye was alarmed and gathered soldiers to march on Ganja. While Fadlun was preoccupied with campaigns against

Georgia, his son Askuye (Askereveyh), then governor of Beylekan, rebelled. Fadlun sent Musa to confront Askuye. Musa sought help from the Russians, who attacked Shirvan and advanced along the Kur River. Offering a substantial amount of goods and money, Musa secured their support. With the Russians' assistance, Musa captured Beylekan, arrested Askuye, and had him executed.

After Fadlun's death in 1031, his son Abu'l-Fath Musa b. Fadlun succeeded him. During Abu'l-Fath Musa's reign, the Rus launched a second attack on the Shirvan region in 1031. Emir Musa fought them near Baku, defeating and killing many of their forces, thereby saving Shirvan from further devastation. However, Musa's rule was short-lived; he was killed by his son Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Musa al-Lashkari after three years of rule. While Fadlun was fighting against the Georgians and Armenians, the Kurdish Rawwadid Emirate, viewing the Shaddadids' expansion as a threat, adopted a hostile stance toward them.

In 1064, Sultan Alp Arslan marched from Rey to Azerbaijan. Abu Nasr Iskender, the Emir of Dvin, joined the Sultan with his forces. The Seljuk army captured several fortresses, including Anberd, Sürmeli, and Hagios Georgio, which had previously been held by the Byzantine Empire, and handed them over to Abu'l-Aswar. The Sultan then besieged and captured Meryemnişin Castle. After advancing into Georgia, Sultan Alp Arslan first entered Lori, arranged a peace agreement by marrying the Georgian king's daughter, and sent the king back to Lori with generous gifts. Thus, the Armenian Kingdom of Tashir-Dzoraget was subjugated. Georgian King Bagrat IV also sought peace, agreeing to pay an annual jizya (poll tax). The Sultan subsequently marched on Ani, which fell after a difficult siege, ending Byzantine control over the city. The Sultan handed over Ani to Shaddadid Emir Abu'l-Aswar.

The Armenian historian Aristakes of Lastivert wrote about the conquest of Ani: "In 1055, Persian troops³ under the Sultan's command came to Armenia. Some said they were forces of Abu'l-Aswar, the son-in-law of Armenian King Ashot, who held Dvin and Ganja. People from nearby regions flocked to Ani for safety, but not everyone managed to enter the city, as night had fallen and the gates were closed. Persian troops seized the gates, attacked the city with swords, and committed an unimaginable massacre, as no one was there to help. The captives and spoils were taken, and the troops returned to their lands." (Aristakes, 2020: 116)

³Armenian chronicles used the name Persian or Tajik for the Kurds and Seljuks.

After Sultan Alp Arslan left the region, Abu'l-Aswar marched on Ani, took over its administration, and began rebuilding it. To fully secure the city, he seized Becni Castle from the Armenian Pahlavuni family. Because of his campaigns and conquests against the Armenians and Georgians, Abu'l-Aswar adopted the titles "al-Amir al-Mujahid" and "al-Ghazi." He married the daughter of Armenian noble Gurgin and had six children from this union, including Fadlun, Ashot, Iskender, Menuchehr, Merzuban, and a daughter who married into the Shirvanshah family.

In August 1068, Fadlun b. Shavur, the Shaddadid Emir, set out for Tiflis and the Georgian countryside, settling in the summer residence of Georgian King Bagrat IV. Confident in his strength, Fadlun marched on Tiflis with an army of 33,000, establishing his camp on the Isan plain. Leaving his tents, he ravaged the surrounding areas of Kartli. However, the Georgians launched a counterattack. Burdened by the spoils they had captured, Fadlun's forces were slow-moving, and his rearguard was destroyed. His army was scattered in the first assault, and many soldiers were either killed or captured by the Georgians. Those who fled were slaughtered in the Şobo Forest. Bagrat captured Fadlun and demanded the surrender of Tiflis. Fadlun was ultimately forced to capitulate.

In response to these events, Sultan Alp Arslan dispatched Savtegin to the region. Savtegin mediated between Bagrat IV and Fadlun, securing the latter's release in April 1069 in exchange for a ransom of 40,000 dirhams. The poet Katran Tabrizi commemorated Fadlun's rescue with the following words: "He took Mir Fadlun from the hands of the infidels using his sword." Fadlun returned to Ganja with Savtegin and resumed control of the Shaddadid throne. Once he had regained some strength, Fadlun resumed his campaigns against the Armenian and Georgian kingdoms, capturing new territories. However, both the Armenians and Georgians acknowledged the authority of the Seljuks, remained loyal to the Sultan, and paid their taxes. Even the Byzantine Empire paid a significant tribute to the Sultan. Despite this, Fadlun continued his military actions, and once he regained power, he rebelled against the Sultan. In response, the Sultan sent Emir Bozan to suppress Fadlun's rebellion. Bozan successfully crushed the revolt and punished Fadlun.

Dvin Shaddadis and Armenians

In 1021, Shaddadi emir Fadlun I launched a campaign against Dvin, successfully conquering it and imposing a tax of 300,000 dirhams on the local Armenian population. This victory weakened the Bagratuni's rule over the Muslims and resulted in the annexation of Nakhchivan and Goltyn into the Shaddadi territory. Dvin was subsequently governed by Abu'l-Esvar Shavur, Fadlun I's son, who continued the Shaddadis' aggressive stance toward the Armenian kingdoms and the Byzantine Empire in the west.

During the reign of Abu'l-Esvar, internal strife plagued the Armenian kingdoms, with civil wars erupting among them. The *Aşirat* family, alongside a force of 12,000 men, sought refuge with Abu'l-Esvar, the Muslim emir of Dvin. Although initially welcomed, Apirat's strong military presence alarmed several Shaddadi emirs, who incited Abu'l-Esvar against him. Becoming suspicious, the emir had Apirat isolated from his men and secretly executed. In response, Commander Sari, fearful of the same fate, fled to Ani with his family and troops.

Armenian chronicler and commander Smbat provides insight into the rise of the Shaddadis and their relationship with the Armenians. He writes: "During the reign of the Iranian sultan Muhammad in 951-952, Gagik ascended to the Armenian throne. Gagik achieved victories in wars against the enemies of Christ and, with God's help, brought security to the land. Churches that had been extinguished by the Muslims (Shaddadis) flourished once more, and gratitude to God abounded."

By 964-965, the Armenian army had gathered in the province of Taron (Muş) and struck against the Muslim forces, achieving a decisive victory and liberating much of Muş from Muslim rule. Apirat, son of Hasan, sought refuge with Abu'l-Esvar but was eventually executed at the behest of the Shaddadi emir's court. (Sımbat, 1982: 2- 6)

Abu'l-Esvar's control extended further when he annexed Nakhchivan and Goltyn. After subjugating Western Siwnik (the Armenian Vayots-Dzor), he established peace and security in the region. His political alliances were strengthened through marriage to the sister of King Davit Anhoghin of Tashir-Dzoraget. However, relations between Abu'l-Esvar and the Armenians began to deteriorate in 1031 after Georgian forces, under Liparit, attacked and defeated the Shaddadis, particularly targeting Fadlun I.

In 1040-1041, Abu'l-Esvar led a substantial Muslim army—reportedly 150,000 strong—against the Christian provinces governed by Davit Anhoghin in the country of Aguank, spreading fear and anxiety throughout the region. Outnumbered, Davit refrained from direct confrontation. Abu'l-Esvar captured around 400 fortified positions and regions stretching from the south of the Kur River to the Armenian border of Aguank. According to some accounts, Abu'l-Esvar even attempted to persuade Davit to convert to Islam.

Desperate for aid, Davit Anhoghin appealed to Hovannes, King of Ani, threatening that if assistance was not provided, he would facilitate Abu'l-Esvar's march into Shirak. In response, Hovannes dispatched 3,000 troops, while King Smbat III of Eastern Siwnik contributed an additional 2,000 soldiers, and the Georgian king sent 4,000. Mustering an army of around 10,000 to 12,000 men, he sent a message to the Catholicos of Ağuvan (Taşir-Dzoraget) and said: “These Muslims are coming to us because they are enemies of the Christian religion. They want to ban the worship of the Cross and eliminate Christianity. Therefore, all Christians must die for Christianity. Take with you all the Armenian bishops in the land of Aguvan and come to my camp. You must die with us,” he said. Catholicos Hovsep joined the Christian army even though he had 200 bishops with him. Not satisfied with these, the king wrote a letter to all the monasteries and invited the priests and deacons, along with the abbots and priests, to join his army. “The opportunity has come for all men and women who want to become martyrs. Those who long for Jesus Christ should come to us” he called. Hearing this, fathers with their sons and mothers with their daughters joined the Christian army. In the words of Mateos from Urfa: “The whole town square was filled with crowds resembling a flock of sheep and lambs.”

When Abu'l-Esvar heard of the clergy's involvement, he mocked their efforts, but the united Christian forces launched a determined attack. Led by David's soldiers and backed by the clergy's prayers, they routed the Muslim army, pursuing and slaughtering the retreating forces for five days. The Armenian and Georgian forces regained control of the lost territories, and David generously distributed the spoils of war among his allies.

Armenian soldiers followed them for five days and slaughtered them. The plains and mountains were painted with their blood. The Christians collected countless amounts of gold, silver and large amounts of spoils. The surviving Shaddadi soldiers escaped with difficulty and

fled to their hometown with bare feet. David took back the provinces captured by Muslims within three days. Then he rewarded the soldiers who had come to help and sent them back to their places. He shared the spoils with the bishops, priests and all the men who came to him.” (Mateos, 2000: 68-70)

Meanwhile, the Byzantine Empire's ongoing conflict with the Armenian and Georgian kings was escalating. Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos sought to subdue Gagik II, offering vassalage in exchange for submission. When Gagik refused, Monomachos launched a military campaign but suffered defeat. To further pressure Gagik, the Byzantines allied with Abu'l-Esvar, offering him substantial rewards in return for military support. Abu'l-Esvar agreed, with the condition that he retain all territories he conquered from the Kingdom of Ani. Constantine confirmed this agreement through an imperial decree, stamped with the Golden Bull.

As the Byzantines attacked from the west, Abu'l-Esvar invaded from the east, capturing numerous cities and fortresses belonging to Gagik II. Gagik attempted to negotiate by offering gifts to Abu'l-Esvar, but the war persisted. Eventually, Abu'l-Esvar secured control over a vast region stretching from Surmeli to Anbert Castle and the Aras River. However, when a new Byzantine governor replaced Monomachos, the empire reneged on its promises, demanding the return of the conquered territories. Abu'l-Esvar refused, pointing to the imperial agreement.

In response, the Byzantines declared war on Abu'l-Esvar. In 1045, a Byzantine army under the command of Nicholas, reinforced with Armenian and Georgian troops, launched an attack on Dvin. Abu'l-Esvar, recognizing that he could not engage such a large force in open battle, retreated behind Dvin's fortified walls. Using his tactical ingenuity, he redirected a nearby river, flooding the surrounding fields and turning them into a swamp. As the Byzantine forces approached the city, they were ambushed by Abu'l-Esvar's archers, who had been lying in wait. The Byzantines suffered a crushing defeat, with many soldiers and horses becoming mired in the swamp.

In the aftermath, the Byzantines regrouped and launched several subsequent campaigns against Abu'l-Esvar, capturing various Shaddadi-held castles. Although they besieged Dvin twice, winter conditions forced them to withdraw. The Byzantine-Shaddadi conflict, which began after the annexation of Ani, persisted for two years, but the onset of the Tornikios rebellion in

Byzantium ultimately saved Abu'l-Esvar from further Byzantine advances. Nevertheless, Abu'l-Esvar was forced to relinquish the territories he had recently gained and pledge loyalty to the Byzantine emperor. By systematically eliminating the Armenian kingdoms, the Byzantine Empire extended its dominion to the borders of Dvin.

Shaddadis of Ani and Armenians

In 1064, Sultan Alp Arslan conquered Ani, the last and strongest Byzantine fortress in the east, after a difficult campaign during the Caucasus Campaign. Ani was the Seljuks' first and most crucial gateway to the east. Interestingly, after its capture, Sultan Alp Arslan entrusted the city's governance to Ebü'l-Esvar, the Emir of Arran. In 1065, Ebü'l-Esvar entered Ani, repaired the damaged areas, appointed officials, and launched an attack on Greek territories. This marked the establishment of the Shaddadis in Ani. By 1067, Menucehr had assumed leadership of the Shaddadis in Ani, a prosperous city known as a center of religion, trade, and art, reportedly home to about 1,000 churches. Menucehr also commissioned the construction of the Menucehr Mosque in Ani, named after himself.

Armenian historian Vardan provides insights into Emir Fadlun's reign, noting that in 1094, Fadlun, the Emir of Ganja, sent Vasak Pahlavi, the son of Grigor Magistros, to capture the hostile Bagkın fortresses. The forces managed to seize these castles through deceit, ultimately killing the Armenian king Senekerim. The Armenian dynasty's influence diminished, leading to the fall of the Bagratuni kingdom and the rise of Shaddadi rule.

Regarding the ruler of Ani, Menucehr, Vardan states: "Fadlun gifted Alp Arslan golden flower adornments, received Ani from him, and sent his young grandson, Menucehr, to govern the city." As Menucehr matured, he expanded Ani's fortifications and brought surrounding princes into the city. Grigor, the son of Vasak, was welcomed ceremoniously, leading to the consecration of Hognatta as Catholicos. Under Menucehr's rule, Ani was restored to its former glory. (Vardan, 1937: 179) Later, Armenian prince Ashot visited Ani and was appointed governor by Emir Menucehr. However, Ashot's growing influence led to his assassination by one of Menucehr's eunuchs. Ashot's body was taken to Istanbul, marking the definitive end of the Bagratuni kingdom.

Ani, a vassal of the Great Seljuk State, remained under Shaddadi rule until internal strife within the Seljuks prompted İlgazi b. Artuk to invade Ani with 7,000 Turkmen soldiers. Grigor, grandson of Menuchehr's commander Apirat, led the defense. Although Grigor succeeded in repelling the Turkmen forces, he died in battle while saving Menuchehr. His death deeply affected Menuchehr, and Grigor was ceremonially buried in Kecharis.

Menuchehr was succeeded by Ebü'l-Esvar Şavur II, who attempted to sell Ani to Erzurum's Emir Ziyaeddin Gazi for 60,000 dinars. This caused panic among Ani's Armenians, who appealed to Georgian King David. David arrived with a 60,000-strong army, captured Ani, and restored the Ani Cathedral, removing its golden crescent and replacing it with a cross to appease the Armenians. Şavur II and his family were taken to Georgia, but Fadlun IV, Şavur's son, sought to reclaim Ani with military support from Sultan Sanjar and the Shaddadi army. After a prolonged siege, Fadlun succeeded in recapturing Ani under the condition that the Ani Cathedral would remain untouched.

One notable Shaddadi ruler was Ebü'l-Esvar Şavur, son of Fadlun, a skilled administrator and respected figure among Muslims, though feared by the Armenians. During his reign, he supported Emperor Constantine Monomachos IV's campaign in Ani and seized some territories. An unusual event during Fadlun IV's reign was the conversion of his younger brother to Christianity, influenced by their Christian grandmother Kata of the Bagratuni family. His brother eventually retired to the Melik S. Grigor Monastery and lived a hermit's life for fifteen years before dying in Cilicia. Emir Fahreddin Shaddad, who later ruled Ani, was known for his cruelty and oppressive taxation, leading to impoverishment. His personal vendetta against İzzeddin Saltuk, ruler of Erzurum, resulted in a Georgian invasion of Ani, where Saltuk's army was destroyed. Fahreddin's trap led to widespread destruction, and Muslim emirs had to pay a hefty ransom to free Saltuk from Georgian captivity.

In 1155, the Armenian priests of Ani revolted, overthrowing Fahreddin and inviting the Georgian king to take control. The city fell after a bloody conflict, and the Georgians committed massacres in Ani and its surroundings. The Shaddadis, originally a Kurdish dynasty, ruled Ani and surrounding regions from 951 to 1199. They acted as a frontier state between the Muslim world and the Christian Armenian and Georgian states, establishing military, political, and social

ties with both groups. The Shaddadi dynasty came to an end when the Georgian general Zakaria Mkhargrdzeli, of Kurdish origin, captured Ani in 1199, marking the conclusion of nearly 250 years of Shaddadi rule. (Ersan, 2007: 91)

Armenian chronicles provide the following account of Kurdish-Armenian relations: "Through their courage, the two princes swiftly captured numerous castles and towns from the Turks. They seized the province of Shirak in 1191, Anperti in 1196, Ani in 1199, Dvin in 1203, the capital Kars in 1206, and subsequently Ketabaki and Çareki. As a result, the fame of the two princes spread far and wide. In 1210, the great Zakare wreaked havoc, avenging the Christians. In retaliation for the princes martyred in the church of Nakhchivan, Zakare ordered the burning of mosques, after filling them with men, in the territories he conquered. Similarly, in response to the priests massacred in Bakuan, he slaughtered the local hodjas and mullahs. Zakare, steadfast in his faith, returned from the war and died in 1212, being interred at the holy Monastery of Sanahin. He had a son named Şahinşah." (Vardan, 1937: 217, 219)

In his work *Chronicle*, Smbat Sparapet wrote: "In 964, Armenian forces gathered in the Taron region. They attacked and crushed the forces of the Tajiks, capturing many princes. From that point, the region was liberated from the rule of the despicable Ummah of Muhammad."

Smbat also recounts that: "In 1042–1043, Grigor Pahlavuni, son of Vask, assembled an army near Bıçni Castle on the banks of the Ahuryan River. A fierce battle ensued as Muslim forces advanced against the Armenians. Initially, the Muslims defeated the Armenians, but the Armenians, with the aid of Jesus, managed to overpower the Prophet Muhammad's soldiers, forcing them to flee. The Armenians slaughtered many and captured their leaders, while the remaining Muslim forces retreated to Iran." (Smbat Sparapet, 2005: 4, 18)

During the reign of Queen Tamara of Georgia, Sargis Mkhargrdzeli, a Kurdish nobleman, was appointed commander-in-chief to reclaim all Shaddadi lands. His sons, Zakaria and Ivan, led an expedition to Dvin, defeating the armies of Dvin and Surmari and returning with spoils. The Georgian forces, undeterred, launched numerous additional attacks across the region, from Ganja and Beylekan to the Ağrı area. In 1199, Zakaria's Georgian army brought an end to the Shaddadis of Ani. Thus, this Kurdish dynasty, which had emerged in 951 and ruled Arran and

Armenia for approximately 248 years—centered in Ganja, Dvin, and Ani—was finally overthrown by Zakaria Mkhargrdzeli, a Georgian commander of Kurdish origin.

The Shaddadis functioned as a buffer state between the Muslim world and the Christian Georgian and Armenian states, forming a frontier between non-Muslim peoples. Despite their position in a predominantly Christian region, they lived alongside Armenians, fostering political, military, and social relationships with them.

Marwanids and Armenians⁴

Bâd Ibn Dostik, who laid the foundation of the Marwanid State, operated in the Hizan mountains with his armed supporters. Through his generosity, he gathered followers and began to block roads. As he distributed what he acquired to the public, the number of people around him increased. He first expanded his domain to Apahunik, an Armenian region north of Lake Van. According to Ibn al-Athir, the first city captured by Bâd was Erciş, located in the Armenian region. Armenian chronicler Stephanos von Taron reports that while the Byzantine Empire was destabilized by the rebellion of Governor Bardas Skleros between 976 and 980, Bâd was able to plunder the Taron (Muş) region without facing sanctions. Bâd went further, capturing Erciş, Ahlat, and Manzikert from the Armenians. (Ripper, 2012: 139, 140)

Bâd continued his conquests by exploiting the Byzantine Empire's weakness in the region. In 978–979, to increase his influence, he raided Armenia, conquered the city of Erciş with the support of the Beşnevi tribe, plundered the region, and settled there. (Baluken, 2012: 55, 56)

Muhammed Emin Zeki Beg describes Bâd's continued advances into Armenia, noting that he captured Erciş, the first city to submit to his authority. As the proverb states, "The first rain was a drop, then it turned into a stream." The capture of this city bolstered his army's morale, significantly increasing their strength. Describing the conquests of the period of Abu Ali, Zeki Bey notes that Abu Ali's sovereignty expanded to include Ahlat, Malazgirt, and Erciş, covering all regions northeast of Lake Van. (Zeki Beg, 2011: 480- 488)

⁴ this chapter mostly refers to Arafat Yaz, *Marwani Emiri Nasruddevle Ahmed ve Dönemi*, Diyarbakır 2019.

Nasir-i Husrev, a contemporary of the period, observed that Ahlat, under Marwanid control from the time of Bâd to Nasruddevle's reign, marked the Muslim-Armenian frontier. He also notes that Armenian was still spoken in Ahlat, indicating a significant Armenian presence, despite long Muslim rule. It is clear that the cities where the Marwanids established their rule had been previously inhabited by Armenians. The areas west and north of Lake Van, where Bâd b. Dostik began to establish his state, were home to Apahunik Armenians.

The Van region, called Vaspurakan by the Armenians, and areas around Muş, known as Taron, were predominantly Armenian. Apahunik was the northern region, where Armenians fought against Byzantium. In the expansive geography south of Diyarbakır, a significant Arab population existed, organized into the Ukayli and Numeyr states, while Kurdish tribes lived east of the Tigris. (Yaz, 2018: 188)

When the Arabs were expelled from Meyyâfârikin in 994–995 during the reign of Abu Ali, only Armenians and Jacobite Christians remained. According to Mateos of Urfa, the population of Urfa in 1071–1072 included 20,000 Jacobites, 8,000 Armenians, 6,000 Greeks, and 1,000 Latin Christians. Describing the 1062–1063 campaign, it was noted that Tel Hum, Bagin, and Argana (Ergani) were primarily Armenian-populated areas.

The Armenian kingdoms and people lived to the north and west of the Marwanid borders. Historical sources often refer to the northern boundary of the Marwanids as "Armenia." Additionally, a significant Armenian population resided within the interior, including in Meyyâfârikin, the Marwanid capital.

After Bâd's death, Georgian Kuropalates David von Taik besieged Manzikert, subjugating the city through violence and starvation, expelling Muslims, and settling Armenians and Georgians in their place. According to Sibt İbnü'l-Cevzi, Bar Hebraeus, and İbn'ül Ezrak, two years after Bâd's death, the Marwanid cities in Apahunik—Manzikert, Erciş, Ahlat, and Bargiri—fell to the Byzantine Empire. David, ruling Manzikert for Byzantium, threatened the Marwanids from the north. When Abu Ali took power in 992–993, the Greeks attacked Ahlat, Manzikert, Erciş, and Bargiri, and Manzikert once again fell from Muslim control.

Abu Ali fought the Byzantines, forcing them to retreat. In response, the Byzantine Empire signed a ten-year truce with the Marwanids in 992, allowing the Marwanids to regain control of the region. Despite the truce, the Marwanids later agreed to pay taxes to Byzantium and became subject to Byzantine rule. (Yaz, 2019: 32, 33)

“In 997, Marwanid emir Abu Ali was killed, and Amid broke away from Marwanid control, leading to internal strife. Kuropalates David sought to exploit this weakness by besieging Ahlat in the winter of 998. The Georgians, showing disdain for the region’s Armenian population, used Armenian churches as military bases and stables. In response, the new Marwanid emir, Mümehhiddevle, set out with a small force to save the city. However, due to heavy casualties inflicted by Georgian archers, the Marwanid army was forced to retreat. The Georgians, panicked after David’s death in 998, fled during Easter night, allowing the inhabitants of Ahlat, with the help of Marwanid forces, to pursue and massacre them.” (Ripper, 2012: 171, 173)

By 1000, Emperor Basil II had established dominance over David's lands. The kings of Abkhazia, Lori, Kars, and Vaspurakan, as well as Mümehhiddevle, the emir of Marwanids, submitted to the Byzantine Empire. Mümehhiddevle received the title of "magistratos" and promised military support from the Armenian and Taron troops when necessary, aligning the Marwanids with the Byzantine border guard system. (Yaz, 2018: 36)

In 1031–1032, Nasrüddevle b. Mervan's regent in Al-Jazeera gathered over ten thousand soldiers to wage war on the surrounding Armenian lands, dealing a significant blow and returning with spoils and captives. (İbnü'l- Esir, 1986: 326)

The Marwanids also subdued revolts by Kurdish tribes in Hakkari, Buhti, Besnevi, and Zevzani. Armenians, living autonomously in the mountainous regions of Sason, ambushed Muslim pilgrims and looted merchants along the Tabriz-Meyyâfârikin route. The Marwanids fought against these Armenian bandits. (Yinanç, 2003: 105, 106)

The north and west of the Marwanid region were predominantly controlled by Armenians. However, due to Byzantine conquests, the displacement of the Armenian population, the establishment of Marwanid Kurdish rule, and Turkmen incursions into Armenian regions, the

Armenian population largely migrated. Mateos of Urfa noted that, by dismantling the Armenian kingdom, the Byzantines harmed themselves, as they destroyed the fortress that had stood between them and their enemies.

During the Marwanid period, Muslim Kurds played a significant role in the Islamization of Anatolia, engaging in jihad against non-Muslim elements. In the northern regions, the Kurds frequently clashed with Armenians, and Muslim Kurds gradually took control of Armenian lands. As the Byzantine Empire weakened, the Kurds expanded westward, capturing Byzantine cities. However, the Marwanids also fostered diplomatic ties with the Armenians; for instance, Nasrüddevle's brother, Abu Ali, married the daughter of Hasan Senharib, the Senasine king, and Nasrüddevle himself later married the same woman.

The Marwanid State and the Armenian Kingdom were neighbors, often clashing along their borders in regions like Sanasuna (Sason), Taron (Muş and its northern areas), Apahunik (north of Lake Van), and Vaspurakan (east of Lake Van). The Armenian Kingdom, which gained independence in 885 and acted as a buffer zone between Byzantium and the Muslims, was gradually divided by Byzantium into smaller principalities, which were later annexed. Key territories like Taron (966–967), Vaspurakan (929, 1022, 930), and the Ani Kingdom (1039–1043) were ceded to the Byzantines.

As seen, the Marwanids, considered the first Kurdish state established in Anatolia, not only expanded their territory but also plundered the wealth and lands of the Armenians. They conquered Armenian regions before seizing Kurdish lands, demonstrating that in the 10th century, cities like Van, Muş, Ahlat, and Erciş were originally Armenian homelands, not Kurdish.

Rawadis and Armenians

The Rawadids were a Kurdish dynasty that ruled from the early 10th century to the late 11th century in Azerbaijan and northwestern Iran. Originally, the Rawadis belonged to the Azd tribe, one of the Yemeni Arab tribes. (Tomar, 2008: 36, 37) The father of Saladin, Necmeddin Eyyub, hailed from the city of Dvin, located south of Yerevan, and was associated with the Rawadi branch of the Hezbâni Kurds. As Kurdish influence in Azerbaijan became more

prominent from the 10th century onwards, the Rawadis gradually assimilated with the Hezbâni tribe and, over time, became identified as Kurds.

Muhammad b. Husayn, one of the Rawadis, captured territories north of Tabriz between 949 and 952. His son, Ebu'l-Heyca Hüseyin, consolidated control over Tabriz in 956, fortifying the city and making it his capital in 961. Ebu'l-Heyca Hüseyin extended his conquests by attacking the lands of Ebu Dülef al-Şeybani and capturing Dvin in 987. He also demanded unpaid taxes from the Armenians, which were promptly delivered by the Armenian King of Ani, Smbat II. Ebu'l-Heyca died during the Vaspurakan expedition against the Armenians in 988, after which his son, Memlan, ascended the throne. The most renowned ruler of the Rawadis was Vehsudan, the son of Memlan, who ruled over Tabriz and the surrounding mountainous regions between 1029 and 1054. Nasir-i Khusraw, in his work *Safarnama*, mentions that the ruler of Azerbaijan was referred to as "Abu Mansur Vehsudan ibn Muhammed Mevlâ Emirü'l-Mü'minin" in the sermons of the time. (Hüsrev, 1950: 9)

Memlan faced significant challenges in the early years of his reign. After defeating his rebellious brother, he sought to protect the Muslim population from the incursions of Georgians and Armenians, launching two expeditions into Armenia in 998. However, he suffered a severe defeat against the allied Armenian and Georgian forces and died in 1001. Mateos of Urfa provides a detailed account of Memlan's reign, describing him as a cruel and tyrannical ruler who inflicted great suffering on Christians. According to Mateos, Memlan gathered a large army, filling the mountains and plains with soldiers, and marched on Christian lands, burning churches and executing widespread massacres. His campaign extended into the province of Apahunik, the homeland of Georgian Prince David Kuropalates. Memlan sent a threatening letter to David, demanding hostages, ten years' worth of taxes, and a letter of submission, or else he would unleash his full might against him.

The whole earth trembled from the fear of this oppressor. He captured many places with sword and fire and burned the churches. Thus, he deprived these places of God's blessing and blasphemed God Almighty. It is impossible to describe the massacre that Christians suffered because of the fear of this merciless monster, for his poisonous anger was poured out on the Christians like bitter wrath. He came to the Apahunik province, the hometown of the Georgian

prince Kupolat Davit, with this enormous army. He wrote a letter full of threats to this prince, who was a religious and saintly man. "Let no one deceive you, O David, a detestable man and rotten with age! If you do not send me the sons of the nobles as hostages along with ten years' tax and a letter of obedience, I will come against you with all my might. Then who will be able to save you from me? Oh, disgusting old man, I will subject you to the heaviest suffering," he said. He was making violent threats against him.

When David read the letter of the cruel Memlan, he was very touched by these bitter words and threw the letter on the ground. Weeping, he prayed to God: "O God, reveal your strength and remember what you did to Rafsak and Senekerim, the abominable ruler of Assyria, because he also said the same words. O Allah, do not turn away from the believers."

David ordered his soldiers, nobles, and cavalry to gather. These included Vache Tevdat and Fers and other armies of Armenia, 3000 infantry and 2500 cavalry. Cruel Memlan had set up headquarters in the village of Apahunik called Khosons with 200,000⁵ soldiers. David marched against Memlan, a man with a beast spirit. All the people of the country were crying and praying for God's help. When David arrived at the borders of Apahunuk, he appointed Garmiragel, a brave man, as a night guard along with 700 cavalymen. David himself spent the whole night praying. Early in the morning, the commander of Muslim soldiers came with 1000 horsemen.

The two sides clashed at night. The moon was illuminating the surroundings. Meanwhile, as a light rain fell in the mountains, all the hills began to shine like fire. Seeing this, the Muslim soldiers thought that there were many Christian soldiers and started running away at once.

When Garmiragel saw that they were running away, he slaughtered them mercilessly, as if he was chopping down pines in the forest. Garmiragel took Memlan's wife and his horse and immediately sent them to David and gave the good news that he had defeated Memlan. David, who was still praying, was extremely happy when he heard this. He pursued him with his entire army and inflicted great losses on the Muslim soldiers, forcing them to flee. They obtained a large amount of gold and silver from many captives. Cruel Memlan returned to his hometown in shame." (Mateos, 2000: 37, 39)

⁵ 200.000 The figure is very exaggerated, so it is not possible to collect this many soldiers.

Kurdish Conquests

As is well-known, predominantly Christian Assyrian, Syrian, and Chaldean peoples resided in Iran, Iraq, and northern Syria. Armenians and Georgians lived in the Caucasus, where Kurds also settled. In Anatolia, Greek, Armenian, and other Christian minorities were affiliated with the Byzantine Empire. The Kurdish population was significant in these regions, coexisting with Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Syrians, though this coexistence often took the form of a dominant-subordinate relationship. Frequently, Kurds clashed with non-Muslim groups, sometimes leading to the destruction of these communities.

Conquest aligns with the military (warrior) and social (plundering) structure of Kurdish society. Consequently, Kurds undertook conquests against Christian communities in the Caucasus and Anatolia. Muslim settlers, engaged in jihad, accelerated these campaigns against the Greeks and Armenians, expanding Islamic territories. Kurdish warriors, particularly during the Shaddadid period, launched military campaigns against Armenians and Georgians in the Caucasus, where Armenians were densely concentrated. These campaigns yielded significant spoils, with the Kurds settling in the conquered territories. In Anatolia, during the Marwanid period, as the Byzantine Empire weakened, Kurds attacked Armenians, expanding their control over Van, Erciş, Ahlat, Bitlis, Malazgirt, Muş, and Sason. Later, Kurdish raids targeted Armenians in Cilicia (Çukurova), leading to the occupation of Armenian lands. A substantial portion of the Armenian population became subjects of the Kurds, paying taxes to them. As Armenians retreated westward and northward, the Kurds settled in the vacated areas.,

Describing a Kurdish campaign near Erciş, the historian Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi stated: "The enemies (Armenians) could not withstand the brave Kurds. They took refuge in the Bargiri and Abakay mountains like wild animals. Many were struck down by swords from behind, and all fell into the hands of the Kurds, who were accustomed to plunder." (Hoca Sâdeddin, 1992: 255)

Following Kurdish victories over Greeks, Armenians, and Georgians, the Abbasid caliphs awarded the Kurdish emirs heroic titles such as "al-Mujahid," "al-Ghazi," "al-Mansur," and "al-Muzaffer." Additionally, Kurdish emirs were referred to with honorifics such as "Emir al-

mu'minin" during Friday prayers. This clearly illustrates that Kurdish leaders engaged in jihad and conquest in the name of Islam.

According to Mükrimin Halil, "Armenian kings and Kurdish emirs collaborated with the Seljuks in their struggle against the Byzantine Empire and their advance into Anatolia. They participated in campaigns led by Kutalmış, İbrahim Yinal, Yâkûti, and other prominent commanders as well as the Sultans, along with their entire retinues. Various clans from the Rawadi, Hezbani, Celali, and Mazincan Kurdish tribes, residing in the mountains south of Azerbaijan, joined the Anatolian conquests alongside the Turkmens."

The Buhti, Beşnevi, Humeydi, Hakkari, and Zevzani Kurdish tribes, which began to expand after the Marwanid conquest of Diyarbakır and Ahlat, migrated to the Erzen and Batman valleys and, after the Turkmen invasion, moved north of the Tigris River, joining the Turkmens in jihad. While the Turkmens established summer and winter camps on the plains, the Kurds, being a mountain-dwelling people, moved into the high, rugged mountain areas. In this way, Kurdish tribes began to occupy the mountainous regions of Eastern Anatolia, starting from the south of the Upper Euphrates. Castles built by the Armenians in these mountainous areas (except in Sason) were captured one by one. Armenians abandoned these steep regions and moved to the plains.

The mountainous parts of the Dersim region, which had never fallen under state control during the Roman and Byzantine Empires, were eventually occupied by the Kurds. These areas, which had been refuges for Rafizis and Christian groups, were taken after fierce struggles, forcing the Christians to descend to the plains." (Yinanç, 2003: 147, 149)

During the Shaddadid period, Kurds settled in territories they had conquered from the Armenians in the North Caucasus, establishing a Kurdish presence in the region. The Kurdish population also grew in the northeastern Anatolian areas of Erzurum, Kars, Ağrı, and Iğdır, which fell under Shaddadid control. Before the Marwanids, Kurds were already present in Anatolia east of the Tigris River, although their presence in other regions remained contested. However, with the Marwanid conquests, Kurdish settlement became more evident in the Van, Erciş, Bitlis, Ahlat, Silvan, Cizre, and Nusaybin regions. As city life began to develop among Kurds in Anatolia, Kurdish tribes found it easier to settle in these newly conquered areas.

İ. Şerif Vanlı described the demographic shifts that increased the Kurdish population as follows: "The Armenian kingdom, which once stretched from Van to Ahlat, Muş, Kars, and Aras, gradually became Kurdistan with the spread of Kurdish tribes from the 10th century onward. However, the region was not entirely abandoned by its original Armenian inhabitants. Most Armenians remained and were gradually assimilated by their Kurdish neighbors. Some resident Christians converted to Islam and became Kurds. Others accepted Kurdish protection and became discontented peasants." (Vanlı, 1997: 77)

Şerefhan, while describing the sixteenth-century borders of Kurdish territories, wrote: "Armenians still lived around Lake Van, and the Kurdish population in the region remained small. In the Cezire region, there was a dense Arab and Armenian population. Supported by tribal forces and engaging in jihad, the Marwanids captured the Kulb, Cıska, Taş, Hasoli, Meyyafarikin castles, as well as regions extending to the Diyarbekir River, including the Bediyan (Bidiyan), Kanıkan (Karukar), Dılkelokiya, Rıbat, Cırıs, Idnik, Selik, and Genc castles. They took these lands from the Georgian and Armenian infidels and ruled independently."

In the sixteenth century, Bidlis had a predominantly Armenian population. Ahlat was once the capital of Armenian kings and sultans. Bidlis and its surroundings were conquered by Kızıl Arslan, a Seljuk lord from the Ildeniz dynasty. The Seljuks were the first to capture Bidlis from the Armenians, after which Kurds gradually settled in the region. Armenians continued to live around Bidlis, Muş, and Van, but although they constituted the majority, they were governed by Kurdish tribes and emirs. The word Muş, in Armenian, means "smoke." (Şerefhan, 1971: 20-405)

It is understood from what Şerefhan said that, during the Marwanid period, the Kurds held the cities of Bidlis, (Ahlât) Bingöl, (Genç) Muş (Malazgirt) Van, (Hoşap, Mahmudiye, Gevaş) for a short time as a result of their raids on Armenian lands. After the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Seljuks conquered the surroundings of Bingöl, Bidlis, Van, Muş, Ahlât and Manzikert. After this, the influence of Kurdish emirs and tribes increased in the region.

Conclusion

Although both Kurds and Armenians are among the indigenous peoples of the Middle East, the historical relationship between these two communities has not been sufficiently clarified. Armenian intellectuals and historians have been investigating the relations between Armenians and Kurds since the early nineteenth century, and their writings generally reflect a negative view of the Kurds. On the other hand, Kurds began to write about Armenians and express their views starting in the early twentieth century. In Armenian chronicles from the fifth and sixth centuries, the term *Korduk* refers to a geographical region, yet no specific information about the Kurds is provided. Until the tenth century, Armenian chronicles contain little information about the Kurds, suggesting that before this time, there was limited contact between the two groups and they likely did not cohabit the same regions. Thus, Kurds and Armenians do not share the same ethnic origin, and Armenian chronicles, as well as some contemporary research, do not support the claim that the two communities have lived together since ancient times.

From the ninth century onward, Islamic historical sources and Armenian chronicles of the tenth century begin to mention the presence of Kurds in Azerbaijan, the North Caucasus, and Anatolia. This indicates that the Kurdish population in these regions increased during this period, marking the beginning of Kurdish-Armenian relations. From the tenth century onward, Armenian chronicles contain extensive references to Kurds, most of which are negative, suggesting that early Kurdish-Armenian interactions were not amicable.

The Kurdish population and political influence in Azerbaijan increased significantly during the time of Daylam b. Ibrahim. Under his rule, Kurdish-Armenian relations intensified, and Kurdish tribes in the region became more organized, establishing political power. Furthermore, Kurdish migration from the Mosul region contributed to an increase in the Kurdish population in Azerbaijan. Daylam's political and military activities in the area facilitated the establishment of the Shaddadid and Rawadi dynasties, which in turn made it easier for Kurds to conquer and raid Armenian territories.

The Shaddadids were a Kurdish state founded by Muhammad Kartuk in Ganja in 951. The Shaddadids periodically controlled key cities in the Caucasus, including Arran, Barda, Ganja, Shamkur, Berdic, Beylakan, Tbilisi, Hunan, Vardikiya, Shemahi, and Sheki, as well as

Kars and its surroundings in Eastern Anatolia. The region where the Shaddadids established their state was largely an Armenian homeland. They captured Ganja, the Armenian capital, and since their founding, were in constant conflict with both Armenians and Georgians. Politically, the Shaddadid state was divided into three regions: Ganja, Ani, and Dvin. All three Shaddadid regions engaged in frequent warfare against the Armenians. When the Seljuks conquered the region, Tuğrul Bey and Sultan Alp Arslan delegated the administration of the conquered areas to the Shaddadids. During this period, Kurdish political and military interactions with Armenians persisted, with the Shaddadids often emerging victorious. Armenian lands were frequently occupied, their wealth plundered, and their sacred values degraded. Friendly relations between the Shaddadids and Armenian kingdoms were rare. Armenian chronicles sometimes referred to the Kurds as Persians or Tajiks and at other times as Kurds. While the chronicles contain extensive condemnations of Kurdish cruelty, they include little positive commentary.

One of the most prominent Kurdish states was the Marwanids. The Marwanid State and the Armenian Kingdom were neighbors in Anatolia. The Marwanids fought Armenians in regions such as Sanasun (Sason), Taron (Muş and its northern areas), Apahunik (north of Lake Van), and Vaspurakan (east of Lake Van). Bâd, a Marwanid ruler, extended his domain into Apahunik, an Armenian region north of Lake Van. According to the Armenian chronicler Stephanos von Taron, during the rebellion of the Byzantine Governor Bardas between 976 and 980, Bâd raided the Taron region. He went on to capture Erciş, Ahlat, and Manzikert from the Armenians.

Beginning in the time of Ebu'l-Heyca Hüseyin, the Rawadis attacked the Armenians in 987 and captured Dvin. The most prominent leader of the Rawadis was Vehsudan Memlan. According to Mateos of Urfa, Memlan was described as a "cruel and detestable tyrant of Iran" who led merciless campaigns against Christians "like a bloodthirsty dragon."

Until the ninth century, the regions surrounding Kars, the southern areas of Lake Van, Muş, Manzikert, Erciş, and Muradiye were considered Armenian homelands. In the southern cities of Amed, Urfa, Ergani, and Siverek, Armenians initially outnumbered Kurds. However, during the Marwanid period, Kurds conquered or attempted to conquer these areas from the Armenians. It is important to note that these regions were originally Armenian territories, historically referred to as Western Armenia, and only later became Kurdish. The process of

Kurdification intensified following the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, when the Seljuks defeated the Byzantine Empire. With the end of Byzantine pressure on the Armenians and Marwanids, conditions became more favorable for the Kurds. As the Armenians retreated northward, Kurds followed and settled in Armenian lands. The demographic balance in the region began to shift in favor of the Kurds from the Seljuk period onward, as Armenians withdrew to mountainous areas while Kurds occupied the plains they vacated. Although Kurds and Armenians lived together for nearly a thousand years, historical circumstances have generally favored the Kurds. Over time, Western Armenia became a Kurdish homeland.

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