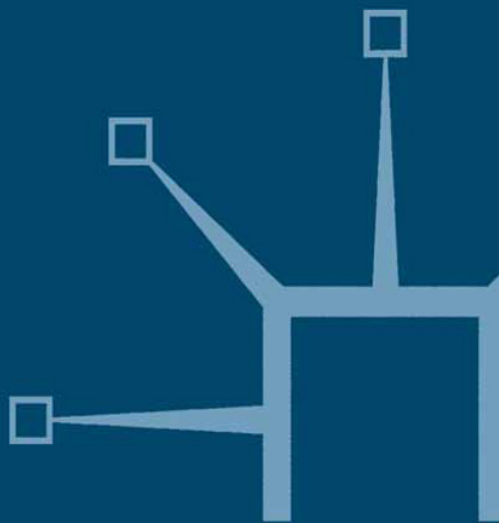


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THE HISTORY OF ARMENIA

FROM THE ORIGINS TO THE PRESENT

Simon Payaslian



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For my wife, Arpi

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Preface

This volume presents a survey of the history of Armenia from antiquity to the present, with a focus on four major themes: East-West geopolitical competitions, Armenian culture (e.g., language and religion), political leadership (e.g., *nakharars* or the nobility, intellectuals and party leaders), and the struggle for national survival. It places Armenian history within the broader context of secularization, modernization, and globalization. It would be mere truism to state that the geography of Armenia directly affected the local cultures and economies. The mountain chains and valleys across the historic Armenian land created distinct regions, each with its own local customs and interests. The Armenian Plateau, rich in natural resources, in times of peace became a center for international commerce, but precisely because of its resources and strategic location, it also served as a battleground for military competition between major powers, such as the Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Ottoman, and Soviet empires. The history of the Armenian people, therefore, whether in ancient or modern times, as in the age of King Artashes I in the 180s–170s B.C. and as demonstrated in the twentieth century and since the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, remains a constant struggle for security and survival.

This volume also challenges some of the conventional views on key aspects of Armenian history that are often presented through the traditional lenses of received wisdoms. For example, the historiography on the Armenian conversion to Christianity in the fourth century and the adoption of the Armenian alphabet in the fifth century is deeply rooted in theologically based analyses often blurring the line between history and mythology. Relying on more secular narratives (most of which are in the Armenian language), this book examines the political economy of the Christianization and transformation of Armenian culture. Further, one of the central themes in Armenian historical thought, as shaped by geographical determinism, has been the disadvantaged position historic Armenia had, and the current Republic of Armenia continues, to endure as a result of the lack of access to the sea. Of particular interest in this regard is the case of the Armenian kingdom in Cilicia (Armenian: Kilikia, Giligia),

which in fact had access to the sea for nearly two hundred years. Yet despite Cilicia's various achievements, the advantages accrued from access to the sea proved nugatory, as the Cilician system failed to rectify effectively its shortcomings in international relations and internal governance.

This volume consists of four parts. Parts I and II (chapters 1 to 4) examine the emergence of the Armenian dynasties and the formation of the Armenian state as an independent entity, the role of the major powers in the development of the Armenian kingdoms, the conversion to Christianity and the adoption of the Armenian alphabet, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Armenian monarchies until the collapse of the last Armenian kingdom in Cilicia in 1375. Close attention is paid to some of the most successful leaders in the Armenian kingdoms, including Artashes I, Tigran the Great, Trdat the Great, and Hetum I. Part III (chapters 5 and 6) reviews the major issues involving the emergence of modern Armenian culture and political life in Western (Ottoman) Armenia and Eastern (Persian and later Russian) Armenia from the late seventeenth to the twentieth century. It focuses on the emergence of Armenian national movements, the conditions that gave rise to Turkish nationalism and the Young Turk dictatorship, the genocide, and the creation of the first Republic of Armenia. Part IV (chapters 7 to 9) evaluates the successes and failures of Soviet Armenia and reviews the reemergence of the Republic of Armenia in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the current international and domestic issues confronting the republic.

I shall be greatly satisfied if this volume makes the history of Armenia accessible to a wide readership and generates debates on the various issues it examines. The genocide during World War I abruptly cut short the numerous intellectual currents that sought to address some of the fundamental issues at the time, such as religion and secularization, cultural revival and nationalism, civil and political rights and good governance. Since then, the evolving historiography in the former Soviet Armenia and across the diaspora has made a considerable contribution to our understanding of some of the old and new themes in Armenian history. I hope this survey will contribute to that historiography. Above all, I hope this book will be seen as a product of my intellectual curiosity in issues and ideas rather than as an expression of loyalty to ideas and political agendas.

Throughout this volume, I employ a simplified transliteration based on Eastern Armenian phonetics instead of the more scientific system with diacritical marks, except in citations to sources that utilize such technical transliteration. Turkish words and names are spelled according to the style used before the alphabet reforms in the late 1920s (e.g., *j* instead of *c*). Words in languages other than English are italicized only at first mention. Also, while it is common to include maps and photographs in books of this nature, the availability and far superior quality of such material on the

Internet to those found in print would make their inclusion here superfluous. I have therefore included at the end of the bibliography a sample of Internet links where the reader will find various useful materials.

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for Palgrave Macmillan for their suggestions and corrections that greatly improved the quality of the manuscript. Special thanks to Alessandra Bastagli, Yasmin Mathew, Brigitte Shull, and the editorial team at Palgrave Macmillan for their patience and for bringing this book to fruition. It gives me a great pleasure to take this opportunity to thank Professor John A.C. Greppin (Cleveland State University) for his comments and corrections on parts of the manuscript. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Richard G. Hovannisian (UCLA) for his usual attention to details and for his invaluable criticism and corrections. Of course, I alone am responsible for any errors in facts and interpretations. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my intellectual debts to the pioneering historians of the previous generations: Leo (Arakel Babakhanian, 1860–1935), Nikoghayos Adonts (1871–1942), and Hakob Manandyan (1873–1952), and to professors Hovannisian and Nina Garsoian, who have all, as indicated throughout this volume, greatly influenced my understanding of Armenian history.

Thanks to my mother, Kohar Payaslian, my brother, Zareh Payaslian, and the Payaslian and Hedeshian families for their moral support and their understanding for my prolonged absences from and inattention to family affairs as I worked on this project. I want to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Arpi. Without her love, patience, and constant support, I could not have completed this book.

Part I

Origins and Formation

1

Dynasties and the Geopolitics of Empire: The Ervanduni and the Artashesian Dynasties

The inhabitants of Armenia were in the throes of rebellion against their recent conqueror, King Darius I the Great of Persia, one of the greatest empire builders in history. Having briefly tasted local autonomy after the collapse of the Median empire, the rebels were in no mood to submit to yet another power. King Darius, a man of little tolerance for insubordination, had ascended to the Persian throne in 521 B.C. amid widespread political turmoil as rebellions shook the empire, and he was determined to resolve the crises. No sooner had he quelled the rebellions in the provinces of Elam and Babylon than fighting broke out in Media and Armenia, followed by uprisings in Sagartia, Hyrcania, and Margiana. By the ninth year of his reign, Darius I (521–485 B.C.) had suppressed eight major rebellions, including the revolt led by an ambitious imposter in Persia itself.¹ Having completed his military campaigns and consolidated power, Darius of the great Achaemenian empire ordered a set of commemorative inscriptions to be cut on the Rock of Behistun, located by the small village of Behistun (or Bahistun; Bisitun) on the caravan road between today's cities of Baghdad and Tehran. About 500 feet above the plain, the second column of the cuneiform inscriptions reads:

XXVI. [Thus] saith Darius the king: An Armenian named Dâdarshish, my servant, I sent into Armenia, and I said unto him: "Go, smite that host which

is in revolt, and does not acknowledge me." Then Dâdarshish went forth. When he was come into Armenia, the rebels assembled and advanced against Dâdarshish to give him battle. At a place in Armenia named [Zuzza] they fought the battle. Auramazda brought me help; by the grace of Auramazda did my army utterly overthrow that rebel host. On the eighth day of the month Thuravâhara the battle was fought by them.²

Here was recorded "Armina," one of the earliest references to Armenia, the name used by foreigners for nearly three millennia.

Armenians refer to Armenia as Hayastan and to themselves as Hay. They are believed to have emerged in historic Armenia after centuries of cultural fusion among various native and migrating peoples, perhaps extending as far back as to the Hurrians, Hittites, and Phrygians, as suggested by Greek (Ionian) historian Herodotus (ca. 490–431 B.C.), Strabo (ca. 63 B.C.–A.D. 21), and modern linguistic and cultural studies. During about the third and second millennia B.C., the Hurrians inhabited the area from the northeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Taurus Mountain range in Cilicia, across the Armenian highland to the Erzinjan region in the northeast, to present-day Kirkuk in Iraq in the southeast, and to modern Hama, Syria, in the south. The Hittites emerged as a dominant power in Asia Minor beginning in the nineteenth century B.C. and ruled the entire region from the Aegean Sea to the Mediterranean and to the Black Sea until their empire collapsed in the twelfth century B.C. The Thraco-Phrygians probably replaced the Hittites as a power in Asia Minor in about 1200 B.C. and expanded eastward to the Armenian highland by the eighth century B.C. As the historian Igor Diakanoff has noted, "The appearance in Asia Minor and the Armenian Highland of the Thraco-Phrygian ethnos means that all the basic components from which the Armenian people were ultimately formed were now present."³ The proto-Armenian people inhabited the regions surrounding Lake Van: Nairi in the north and northeast; Arme-Shupria in the west and southwest; and Hayasa-Azzi farther west.⁴ Their religio-cultural traditions developed over centuries in four major phases. The first represented the oldest proto-Armenian people as Hayassa-Azi in the region of Erznga (Erzinjan) on the plain of Erzerum. The second emerged in the region of Arme-Shupria, which included the vales of Kharpert and the Western Euphrates. The third developed on the shores of Lake Van, particularly the city of Van during the Urartian kingdom.⁵ The fourth phase witnessed the spread of Armenian culture across the Araratian plain to the shores of Lake Sevan.⁶

The Armenian Plateau rises from an average of 3,000 feet to 7,000 feet above sea level and covers about 235,000 square miles. This vast territory of mountains and valleys, rivers and ravines, and fertile lands is historic Armenia, the homeland of Armenian civilization for three millennia. The Pontus Mountains extend from the north to the Lesser

Caucasus and farther east to the Karabagh range to the north and northeast. The Anti-Taurus mountain ranges and the Euphrates River are located in the west, the Arax River and Lake Urmia to the east and southeast, and the Tigris River, the Taurus Mountains, and Mesopotamia to the south. In the current Republic of Armenia, the Areguni, Sevan, Vardenis, and Gegham mountains surround Lake Sevan. The most famous Armenian mountain, however, is Mount Ararat, a climb of more than 16,800 feet, where, according to the Bible, Noah's ark is said to have landed. Historic Armenia consists of numerous rivers, including the Arax, the Western and Eastern Euphrates, the Tigris, the Hrazdan, and the Arpa. Armenians built their ancient capital cities (e.g., Armavir and Artashat) on the banks of the Arax River. The largest lakes are Van, Sevan, and Urmia.⁷ Most of historic Armenian lands currently constitute eastern Turkey. The geography of Armenia directly affected Armenian culture and economy. The mountain chains across the Armenian Plateau created distinct regions, each with its own local culture, dialect, traditions, and interests. Rich in natural resources, historic Armenia became a major center for international commerce in times of peace but also a battleground for military and cultural competition between major empires seeking hegemonic spheres of influence.⁸

THE URARTIANS

The kingdom of Urartu emerged in the region of Arme-Shupria in about 870 B.C. under King Aramu I. During its formative years, Kings Sarduri I, Ishpuini, and Menua, who ruled from the capital city of Van (Tushpa; Tosp), united the western regions of Nairi, Arme-Shupria, and Hayasa, and expanded their armies from modern Erzerum to Mount Ararat, from Lake Urmia to Lake Sevan farther east.⁹ The Urartians had their own indigenous culture and language, which were mixed with Hurrian, Hittite, Aramaic, and Assyrian influences.¹⁰ The combination of these cultures and languages set the foundations for the Armenian culture and language, although the latter is of Indo-European origins.¹¹ Urartian religion venerated male and female gods, which were led by the male god Khaldi, the god of gods, whose wife, Arubani, served as the supreme female goddess. Appearing in military uniform, Khaldi often blessed the Urartian troops before they marched off to war. Other gods and goddesses included Teisheba (god of war) and his wife, Khuba; Shivini (the sun god) and his wife, Tushpua; Sardi, star goddess; Epaninaue, land goddess; Dsvinaue, sea or water goddess; and Babaninaue, mountain goddess. The local people worshiped the above gods, but also nature (e.g., tree worship [the concept of "holy tree"]) and the sun, the followers of which became known as the "arevordik."¹²

The most developed regions in the Urartian kingdom were the Lake Van basin and the area between Lakes Van and Urmia, followed by the region of Lake Sevan. During the reign of King Argishti I (r. ca. 786–764), when Urartian power is said to have reached its zenith, the Urartian military conquered the vast region across the Araratian plain to the eastern shores of Lake Sevan. Having strengthened his position in the region, he founded the geostrategically significant fortress town of Erebuni (present-day Erevan) in 782 B.C., where he deployed nearly 6,600 Urartian troops and non-Urartian military slaves.¹³ The imperial economy centered on four principal sectors: the royal (state) economy, temple economies, individual or private land ownership, and the communes. The productive capacity of each sector rested on the political economy of slavery. The royal economy, based on large tracts of land that included hundreds and thousands of people, developed near rivers and lakes and on arable lands, and its agriculture included vineyards and large-scale farming. The Urartian king owned these lands, which were named after him—for example, Argishdikhenli (Armavir) on the Arax River and the Argishduna fortress south of Lake Van. The king and the members of the royal family granted lands and slaves as gifts and patronage to their supporters and relatives.¹⁴ Armavir later emerged as the first capital of the Armenian people.

The temple economies played a very important role in the national economy. Each god in the Urartian pantheon had its own temples whose economies were based on agricultural production (as, for instance, the vineyards at the famed temple of Musasir located southeast of Lake Van), animal husbandry, and trade in domestic and regional markets. The economies of private landholders were run by the members of the nobility, including the leading members of the administrative and military bureaucracies. The economic and financial relations between the royal family and the military were particularly important as a strong monarchy required a prosperous economy, while the military establishment not only defended the borders but also brought in slaves whose labors contributed to the local economies. Equally important were the communes, which consisted of rural and urban economies and were owned mostly by *azat* (free) people who were neither part of the nobility nor slaves. Each commune had its own internal leadership structure and served as the primary base for taxation for royal revenues. The communes' cooperation with the royal court and the state bureaucracies were rewarded by a grant of additional land or slaves.

Wars and forced migrations constituted the primary means to capture slaves. In some wars, they totaled in the thousands. Argishti I, for example, is said to have brought 320,000 slaves to Urartu after his successful military campaign against the Hatti and Dsopk in the 780s. A large number

were taken to the northeast to build the fortress city of Erebuni.¹⁵ There was an inherent cycle in such ventures: the more successful a war, the greater the number of slaves; the greater the number of slaves, the greater the economic development (construction of cities, fortresses, irrigation canals, roads); the greater the economic development, the greater the need for slaves; and the greater the need for slaves, the greater the propensity to engage in wars. Loss in war led to loss of slaves and destruction. The most loyal among the slaves were employed in the royal economy, while others served in the temple economies. Most of them, however, worked for state bureaucracies on the construction and maintenance of cities, canals, roads, and fortresses. Some slaves escaped both Urartian and Assyrian rule and inhabited the areas between the two, in the region of Arme-Shupria west of Lake Van, and in the east of Urartu—that is, the Karabagh region—where (especially in the mountainous areas) they developed a tradition of guerrilla warfare.

The Urartian state hierarchy consisted of the central government and local principalities. At the apex of the political system stood the king, a hereditary office with absolutist powers. He led the royal court, which encompassed various ministries and a small circle of close advisers. The ministries included hundreds of high-level officials, thousands of administrators and secretaries, and hundreds of servants (including wine makers, architects, rug makers, and others). The administrative ministries were usually headed by the members of the royal family and included the military bureaucracies for internal security and war. Regional governors maintained law and order, transferred local agricultural production to the royal court and related financial institutions, and were responsible for the collection of taxes. These administrative institutions were available for the king to centralize or decentralize power as necessary, but weaknesses in the hierarchy could potentially undermine the king's leadership. Some kings were more successful than others as leaders, but wars proved to be the ultimate test of the loyalty of local officials and nobilities.¹⁶

Urartian kings Aramu (r. 870–845 B.C.), Sarduri I (r. 845–825), Menua (r. 810–785), and Argishti I (r. 785–760) were unusually powerful monarchs, but others, such as Sarduri II (r. 760–735) and Rusa I (r. 735–714), failed to maintain stability. Internal disunity and military failures against the Assyrians during the reign of Rusa II (r. 685–645) led to the decline of the Urartian kingdom, which finally collapsed in about 590 B.C. The demise of the Urartian empire should have enabled the Assyrian army to conquer a large part of the Urartian territories, but the Assyrian empire itself began to experience domestic turmoil, which by 600 B.C. proved insurmountable.¹⁷

The geopolitical vacuum created by the disintegration of both empires enabled the Medes to expand their power over most of former Urartian

territories and Mesopotamian regions and to emerge as the dominant empire in the Middle East. The vast administrative structure of the Median empire became highly decentralized, allowing satraps, or local governors, wide latitude in the management of their territories.¹⁸ Members of the local Ervanduni dynasty of Armenian origin served as satraps in the region of Lake Van and participated in the economic, cultural, and military affairs of the Median empire. Particularly significant was the Ervandunis' ability to mobilize considerable manpower for the military campaigns against the decrepit Assyrian monarchy to the south, in the process strengthening their own political and military base in the area. Relations with the Median empire deteriorated, however, when, confronted with financial difficulties, the imperial administration sought to tighten its control on the expanding domain. The Ervandunis, in turn, having contributed to that expansion, now demanded privileges of autonomous rule.¹⁹

In the meantime, the period between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. witnessed the emergence of the Armenian nation on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and in the regions of Mush (or Taron) and Van, the center of Urartian power where Armenians now established themselves as the predominant group. The disintegration first of the Urartian and Assyrian empires and subsequently of the Median empire, which collapsed in 550 B.C., provided the opportunity for the local Armenians, led by the Ervanduni dynasty, to conduct their affairs with a considerable degree of autonomy from the neighboring powers. An Armenian state thus took shape along the lines of Urartian institutions and heavily influenced by Urartian religious and cultural traditions and customs that themselves represented the amalgamation of various cultural and linguistic strata.²⁰

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ERVANDUNI DYNASTY

In about 585 B.C. the Ervanduni dynasty emerged as the powerful overlords in historic Armenia. The Ervanduni (or Orontid) dynasty, a name derived from the Iranian origin of *arvand* (mighty), ruled Armenia during the period from the disintegration of the Urartian kingdom and the rise of the Armenian Artashesian monarchy by 190 B.C.²¹ Although the origins of the Ervanduni family is not clear, historians suggest dynastic familial linkages to the ruling Achaemenian dynasty in Persia. The Greek historian Xenophon (ca. 431–355 B.C.) recorded in 401 B.C. as he passed through Armenia that a certain Ervand, the son-in-law of the Persian king Artaxerxes I, ruled as satrap in the eastern parts of Armenia.²² Ervanduni leaders included Ervand I (r. 401–344 B.C.), Ervand II (r. 344–331), and Mithranes (r. 331–317). They were the immediate descendants of the

Achaemenians through Princess Rhodogune, the daughter of King Artaxerxes II and the wife of an Ervanduni satrap.²³ During the reign of the Achaemenian King Artaxerxes III, Kodomanus, who later ascended to the Persian throne under the regnal name of Darius III (r. 336–330 B.C.), the last Achaemenian king, had served as a satrap in Armenia. The Ervandunis certainly stressed their Achaemenian lineage to strengthen their political legitimacy.²⁴

The Ervanduni dynasty ruled as satraps in the region of Van, once the capital of the Urartian kingdom, and named the city Ervandavan.²⁵ Subsequently its domain expanded to the southernmost territories of historic Armenia between lakes Van and Urmia, northward across the Armenian highland to Erebuni and Lake Sevan, and to the banks of the Upper and Lower Euphrates in the west. In the mid-sixth century B.C., a number of vassals, including the Ervandunis, led by King Cyrus II (r. 546–529 B.C.) of Persia, overthrew the Medes, whose empire at the time was rent by internal divisions and rebellions. Cyrus II strengthened the Achaemenian dynasty and with his eldest son, Cambyses, launched major military campaigns to India, the Mediterranean, and the Aegean.²⁶ Upon conquering Armenia in about 546 B.C., Cyrus maintained amicable relations with the Ervandunis and (like the Medes) supported their prominent position in society and government; in return he increased taxes and demanded Armenian troops for his campaigns. Confident of his relations with the Ervandunis, Cyrus granted them the freedom to establish their own political power and to practice their local customs.

The Armenians, however, having remained under Median control for more than a century, sought independence from outside powers, and in 521 B.C., when Darius I the Great assassinated Gaumata the Magian, who had succeeded Cyrus, they rebelled against Persian and pro-Persian authorities. To suppress the rebellions in Armenia, Darius I dispatched one of his loyal Armenian generals, Dadarshish, to impose stability. The general registered several victories but failed to end the crisis. Dissatisfied with the results, Darius I dispatched a Persian general, Vaumisa, who in fever-pitch battles destroyed the anti-Darius movements.²⁷ Thus Darius I, with the blessings of the great Persian god Ahuramazda, as he claimed, had successfully subdued the rebellious Armenians. Darius designated a number of Armenian families among the nobility to serve as satraps over the Armenian provinces, with Van serving as the principal administrative center. (Erebuni served as a center as well.)²⁸ Darius I eventually consolidated power over a vast empire, as indicated by the majestic portrayal of raw power and authority carved in the royal inscriptions of 518 B.C. at Behistun.

The Persian empire ruled the Armenian highlands, an area rich in tribal and linguistic diversity and populated by the descendants of Assyrians,

Hurrians, Urartians, and Scythians among others. The Achaemenians established a decentralized imperial administrative system encompassing more than twenty satrapies, whereby the Achaemenian King of Kings reigned supreme at his capital city of Susa. Under Darius I, the first Persian king to coin money, the Armenian financial system was based on the Achaemenian system, and Armenia was required to pay annual tribute and to serve in and supply horses for the Persian army.²⁹

The integration of the Armenian Plateau into a single political and cultural unit within the Persian empire in general proved beneficial to the Armenian people. As long as the subjects remained peaceful and fulfilled their obligations, the empire's loosely organized political structure and tolerance for cultural diversity enabled the Armenians to maintain their traditions while the imperial regime provided security against external and internal threats. Armenians benefited from East-West international trade relations and the economic and infrastructural development (e.g., the extension of the Royal Road covering a distance of 1,500 miles and passing through Armenia) sponsored by King Darius I.³⁰ The generally close relations between Armenians and Persians enhanced the formers' sense of loyalty toward the empire. Armenians served in the imperial army against Greece in 480 B.C. and provided a contingent of 10,000 soldiers for the Persian campaign in Cilicia in 368 B.C. Armenian soldiers served loyally in the Achaemenian army under the reign of Darius III, as during the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C. and the Battle of Gaugamela (Arbela) in 331 B.C. against Alexander the Great.³¹ As is often the case with imperial rule, however, the Achaemenian army failed to maintain absolute control, and on several occasions the Armenians, resentful of the high taxes, rebelled against the empire.³²

Persian political and economic dominance in Armenia also resulted in heavy Persian cultural influence ranging from industry to language and religion. Achaemenian influences were apparent in Armenian ceramics, metallurgy, architecture, jewelry, and the like. The impact of Persian culture was demonstrated by pre-Christian Armenian language and Zoroastrian religio-mythological traditions. Persian words have survived in the Armenian language to this day, including, for example, Persian *mazda*-Armenian *imastutiun* (wisdom), *arda-ardarutiun* (justice), *azata-azat* (free), and *shakert-ashakert* (student). Moreover, Armenians were forced to replace some of the Urartian temples with Persian temples for fire-worship and the Zoroastrian pantheon, including, for example, Aramazd, the creator of heaven and earth; Mihr, the god of light; Astghik, the goddess of love; Vahagn, the god of war; and Anahit, the goddess of fertility and wisdom.³³ Like Persians, Armenians practiced polygamy and imposed severe limitations on women's role in society and on their individual freedom beyond the familial environs.

Outside influences were not limited to Persians. Some of the earliest local Armenian mythologies that perhaps originated in relations with Babylon included Hayk and his archenemy, Bel. Hayk, a descendant of Noah and a god worshiped by Armenians as the progenitor of the Armenian people, refused to submit to the repressive dictates of Bel, the god and ruler of Babylon and, upon defeating Bel, he is said to have led his followers to the land of Ararat, where he established the Armenian homeland. According to traditional Armenian narrative Hayk and his descendants ruled Armenia for generations, and King Paruir, also a descendant of Hayk, founded the first Armenian kingdom. The Armenian people thus call themselves Hay and their homeland Hayastan (the place of Hay).³⁴

The collapse of the Achaemenian empire in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's invasions in 331 B.C. allowed the Ervandunis to claim sovereignty and to establish the first independent Armenian state.³⁵ By then "Armenia" consisted of three separate regions: Greater Armenia (Armenia Major); Lesser Armenia (Armenia Minor), situated northwest of the Euphrates; and Dsopk (Sophene). Greater Armenia comprised most of historic Armenia. Neither Greater Armenia nor Lesser Armenia was apparently listed among the divided lands in the post-Macedonian period, suggesting that Alexander the Great did not conquer Greater Armenia, although he probably appointed a handful of weak governors in Lesser Armenia. The latter administered the region for purposes of taxation, but Armenians under the Ervanduni leadership soon rebelled against them. Alexander's death in 323 B.C. led to power struggles among his top generals, who agreed, under the partitions of Babylon in 323 B.C. and of Triparadeisus in 320 B.C., to divide his vast empire into four areas. General Seleucus acquired the lands between the Euphrates and India. Upon assuming the throne in his capital Seleucia in 305 B.C., he rapidly expanded his domain from Central Asia to Asia Minor and to the Mediterranean Sea. He ruled until his death in 281 B.C. Meanwhile, the Ervandunis, taking advantage of the political turbulence, consolidated power in Greater Armenia (and at times Dsopk); the more Hellenistic Lesser Armenia at various times came under Seleucid, Pontic, or Cappadocian rule.³⁶ Armenia was not yet completely drawn into the East-West geopolitical struggles, but Alexander's campaigns against the Persian empire and the subsequent spread of Hellenistic culture throughout the Mediterranean basin heavily influenced Armenian culture and political economy.

ERVANDUNI ARMENIA AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE

The paucity of reliable information concerning the structure of the Ervanduni state remains a major obstacle for a comprehensive treatment

of the subject. Nor is there a consensus with respect to the chronological sequence of successive rulers during this period.³⁷ The historical reconstruction presented here therefore is fragmentary, although the available material show direct lineage to the Urartian and Persian cultural heritage and social, economic, and political structures. The Ervandunis consolidated their domain and unified the different cultures into a highly centralized state in the region previously under Urartian rule.³⁸ The state structure consisted of a palace court, the imperial military command and personnel, chamberlains, councils, secret police, accountants, representatives of conquered lands, wine makers, craftsmen, huntsmen, musicians, and cooks. The higher echelons of the socio-economic structure consisted of the royal family and its palace economy, the nobility, and temple economy, as in the ancient city of Bagaran.³⁹ The Greek inscriptions at Armavir indicate that the upper classes used Greek as one of their languages.⁴⁰ The economy was based on agriculture, metalworks, animal husbandry, and various crafts, all of which contributed to the development of highly sophisticated functional complexes, which in turn contributed to Armenia's trade relations with the neighboring economies.

Under Ervand the Last (r. ca. 210–200 B.C.), the structure of government had begun to resemble Greek institutions, and Greek was used as the language of the royal court. Ervand had surrounded himself by the Hellenized nobility and sponsored the establishment of a Greek school in Armavir, the capital of the Ervanduni kingdom.⁴¹ The Ervanduni kingdom registered significant economic successes, as demonstrated by the reconstruction and construction of several cities. It rebuilt the declining Urartian cities of Argishtikhinili (Nor Armavir), Erebuni (Erevan), and Tushpa (Van, perhaps Ervandavan),⁴² the latter two having served as Achaemenian administrative centers with geostrategic significance for the empire. The Ervandunis built a number of major cities of their own, including Ervandashat, Ervandakert, and Vardgesavan.⁴³ Ervandashat, a city of approximately 50,000 families on the banks of the Akhurian and Arax rivers, replaced Armavir as the capital city for the Ervanduni state, and Vardgesavan set the foundation for what later became Vagharshabat. Armavir, where the temples of Apollo and Artemis/Anahit were located, continued to serve as the religious center of Ervanduni Armenia but, along with Ervandashat, also became an important center for international commerce.⁴⁴

As the Ervanduni kingdom consolidated its domain over different tribes, rapid economic development, particularly in the newly emerging urban centers, created vast economic inequalities that pitted one local leader against another and gave rise to centrifugal forces. Local socio-economic differences and tensions weakened Ervand the Last by 200 B.C.⁴⁵ In fact, the transfer of the capital from Armavir to Ervandashat reflected the

deepening sense of insecurity prevalent in his court, as the internal divisions widened between the various pro- and anti-Ervanduni noble houses. The monarch refused to transfer some of the leading religious temples to the new capital, fearing that pilgrimages by a large number of people to the holy sites would occasion rebellion against him. The Seleucids, led by Antiochus III the Great (r. 223–187 B.C.), successfully exploited this internal structural loosening and the resultant political instability and supported Artashes (Artaxias) and Zareh (Zariadris), two of the leading anti-Ervanduni figures in Armenia, to rebel against the Ervandunis. The Artashesian-Ervanduni war commenced as the troops under the command of Artashes advanced across the northern shores of Lake Sevan and met Ervand the Last's army at Ervandavan on the northern banks of the Akhurian River, some distance from the capital. Ervand's army suffered heavy losses, and the king fled back to Ervardashat, pursued by Smbat, one of Artashes' loyal generals. The soldiers stormed the capital, and one stabbed Ervand to death. Then Artashes marched on to Bagaran, the last remaining stronghold of the Ervanduni government, and captured and killed Ervand's brother, Ervaz. Artashes, now in control, granted Bagaran to Smbat as a reward for his loyalty.⁴⁶ Thus the Ervanduni kingdom came to a tragic end in 200 B.C.

Antiochus III placed Artashes (now Artashes I) and Zareh as his new vassals in Greater Armenia and Dsopk, respectively, while his nephew, Mithradates, ruled as satrap over Lesser Armenia.⁴⁷ The Seleucid military command, having accomplished one of its geopolitical objectives in neutralizing Armenia, now turned to the grand strategies of conquering the whole of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Egypt. Yet such territorial aspirations proved unrealistic at a time when the empire was in the process of disintegration, as a number of Seleucid satraps (e.g., in Cappadocia and Pontus) secured their independence from the empire. This situation was further complicated by the shifting tides favoring the successor to the Achaemenian empire in the east, the Parthian dynasty. In Armenia, the initial support from Antiochus enabled Artashes to assume the leadership; the death of the Seleucid emperor in 187 B.C. and the decline of his empire strengthened the hand of the Armenian king.

By then a new power had appeared from the west and radically altered the region's geopolitical power configuration. The Roman empire had conquered most of the territories on the Mediterranean Sea and prepared to advance across the Balkans and throughout Asia Minor. Beginning in 192–191 B.C., the Roman military launched its eastern offensive. In 192 B.C., the Roman navy defeated the Seleucid admiral Polyxenidas and disabled his entire naval fleet, while the Roman army advanced eastward to Asia Minor. In 190 B.C., after destroying the troops of Antiochus III at the Battle of Magnesia, the Romans entered the region for the first time. The Peace of

Apamea in 188 B.C., which concluded the war, forced the Seleucids to withdraw from Europe and Asia Minor. Under the agreement, the Roman Senate also granted Artashes and Zareh sovereignty over Greater and Lesser Armenia, respectively. The military defeat at Magnesia and the internal instability caused by the death of Antiochus III eliminated the Seleucid threat and permitted Artashes, Zareh, and Mithradates to maneuver for autonomy. The Roman victory and recognition of Artashes as the sovereign king of Greater Armenia raised expectations among Armenian leaders that they could rely on Rome to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the rising Parthian power.⁴⁸

THE ARTASHESIAN KINGDOM

Artashes I (r. ca. 189–160 B.C.) hoped to cultivate amicable relations with Rome and Antioch. Yet the geopolitical competition between the Roman empire from the west and the Persian empire from the east, on one hand, and internal factionalism as witnessed under Ervand the Last, on the other, had greatly impressed on the king the necessity of military strengthen. This *machtropolitik* reality of strengthening Armenia and the Armenian monarchy shaped his policies. As the Ervandunis had inherited the Urartian and Achaemenian sociopolitical structures, so did the Artashesians inherit and maintain those structures and traditions. The monarchy was essentially absolutist in orientation. The office of the king was hereditary, a tradition continued since the Ervanduni dynasty, which in turn was shaped during the Achaemenian period and Persian tutelage. In matters of domestic policy, the king served as the source of legal and political legitimacy. All laws and policies were instituted in the name of the king, who held ultimate authority in the implementation and review of laws for repeal and amendments.⁴⁹ The king was the commander in chief of the armed forces. In foreign affairs, he and the royal court (*arkunik*), which consisted of a close circle of advisers, including the king's relatives and loyal members of the nobility, were the principal policymakers, especially in issues involving declaration of wars, signing of treaties, and alliances. As the country expanded and the economy became more prosperous, the role of the royal court increased and further contributed to the centralization of power.⁵⁰

Below the king were the royal functionaries, appointed by the royal court. They supervised the administrative bureaucracies, fiscal policy, transportation, commerce and customs, agriculture, and public works. These high offices were monopolized by or closely associated with individual *nakharar tuns* (noble houses) and eventually emerged as the *nakharar* hereditary offices. The monarch granted ministerial offices as

patronage to members of noble houses representing important sectors of economy, as determined by their loyalty to him, landownership, and location of land (access to rivers, irrigation networks, mountains). Whether the nakharar structure developed under the Artashesians or the next dynasty, the Arshakunis, has been the subject of much debate, but suffice it to note here that some of the nobles and the offices they held were clearly in place during the Artashesian period. The father of Armenian historiography, Movses Khorenatsi, for example, referred to the office of the coronant (*tagakap* or *tagadir*), which was perhaps established even before the Artashesians.⁵¹ Although the nakharar houses exercised enormous power in their loyalty or opposition to the monarchy, the nakharar structure formed the foundation of the Armenian political system, providing the prerequisite institutional strength for stability. The Armenian elite, however, was not monolithic and was rarely unified. The geography of Greater Armenia rendered members of the aristocracy highly divided along lines of local interests, converging and colliding with the priorities of the monarchy depending on political circumstances. Leadership required enormous balancing skills on the part of the Armenian monarch.

Urban social and economic structures represented above all else the interests of the prominent nakharar houses, whose commercial and agricultural interests constituted an essential component of the economy. They consisted of economically and politically powerful groups with their own individual and collective (commune-style) sectors, the “free” or half-free (*kisakakhial*) individuals, and slaves with minimum rights.⁵² The king maintained close economic relations among the cities and granted certain rights and privileges to city administrators. It was inevitable that cities, as they became more populous and prosperous, would seek greater local autonomy from the central government.

The construction of new cities—at least ten were built during the Artashesian period—had both positive and negative consequences for the monarchy. As Artashes I sponsored the construction of new cities, the interests of the predominantly agricultural sectors in remote and isolated rural areas sharply diverged from the growing power of the urban centers. The nakharar houses were often divided due to familial ties (*khnamitium*) and regional and commercial interests. Cities became centers of foreign merchants and dissemination of Greek cultural values; they extended Hellenistic cultural influences to Greater Armenia, with enormous domestic and geopolitical implications for the nation. As cities became centers of Hellenistic culture, factional divisions appeared between pro-West (pro-Rome) and pro-East (pro-Persia) nakharars and between urban and rural interests.⁵³ The capital city of Artashat (Artaxata) built by Artashes I symbolized his sovereign status as the king of Armenia and became one of the principal political, administrative, economic, and cultural centers in

Greater Armenia. Its geographical location made it easily accessible to international trade, linking commercial routes with neighboring empires.⁵⁴

Landownership, of course, represented the most important source of wealth and hence of economic and political power. It was divided into two separate categories: royal lands and landowning elites. The king used the royal lands for the accumulation of wealth and revenues for the royal treasury and for the distribution of patronage to military generals, religious leaders, and heads of administrative offices.⁵⁵ Loyal servants of the monarchy received personal and hereditary lands as rewards, which led to the solidification of the *nakharar* system under powerful noble houses. The landowning elites included the relatives of the king, the temples, the noble families, principal administrators in state agencies, and private landowners. As patriarchal values and customs dominated prefeudal and feudal Armenian society, the head of the *nakharar* house and his sons governed the affairs of their estates with minimum input by women, who possessed no rights in public life. Except in rare cases among the noble families, women lacked the legal right to inheritance and the means to secure financial independence. To be sure, they were not totally powerless, but their influence remained confined to matters of domestic responsibilities and family affairs.⁵⁶

An important economic sector, inherited from the Ervandunis, was the temple complex, religious and economic. Armenian kings and elites had promoted ancestor worship, and this practice had led to proliferation of temples with vast properties and wealth. The temples were dedicated to ancestors and pantheons, including, for example, Anahit, Vahagn, Aramazt, and Naneh, all worshiped by the polytheistic Artashesian elite. The religious leaders, the *kurms*, especially their chief *krmapet*, usually were members of the king's dynasty. Although ancestor worship had been central to the Armenian religion, Artashes I was the first to introduce worship of the king's dynasty, although he did not institute deification of the monarch. Like the urban sectors, the temple economies retained a certain degree of autonomy from the central government and possessed rights and privileges in matters of market relations and ownership and management of property. In fact, some temple complexes were similar to urban centers. Often referred to as *tacharayin kaghakner* (temple cities), they had their own self-sufficient economic base and commercial networks.⁵⁷

Among the lower classes, the peasants possessed certain rights on the land they worked, although they did not benefit significantly from the revenues accrued from their physical labor. The peasants were "free" but paid heavy taxes. The slaves were not "free"; their owners included members of the royal court, households, and temples. The state also employed slaves for the construction and maintenance of roads and canals, irrigation systems, cities, and buildings. Slavery thus constituted an essential component of the Artashesian economy.⁵⁸

Artashes I introduced various reforms and relied on territorial expansion to improve domestic social and economic conditions, which in turn substantially increased the role of the state. The reforms were in response to the centrifugal tendencies of the emerging urban elites and temple economies that could potentially threaten his rule. He codified landholding to better manage relations between the landowning and the administrative-military elites. Administrative reforms aimed at improving the royal treasury and accounting, the efficient use of water transportation for trade and economic development, and the centralization of decision-making authority. For military purposes, Artashes I divided the country into four military regions (*strategos*),⁵⁹ each with its own administrative subdivisions and governed by governors appointed by the king. These four zones integrated into the nakharar structure the semi-autonomous lords, the *bdeshkhs*, who received vast lands in return for their loyal service and commission as guardians of the monarchy's borders. Although at this time the position of border guards had not yet become a hereditary office, nevertheless, along with the ministerial posts, it set the foundations for the nakharar system. Territorial expansion created opportunities for the accumulation of wealth and strengthened the symbiotic ties between the landholding families and the military and administrative agents of the state. However, territorial expansion and centralization of authority also created tensions, as powerful landowners competed for a greater share of the expanding domain.⁶⁰

In the area of foreign policy, Artashes I launched successive military campaigns into the lands of the Medes, the Caucasian Albanians, and the Georgians (Iberians). He failed, however, to annex Lesser Armenia and Dsopk, then under the control of Pontus and Zareh, respectively. He initially pursued an equidistant policy, balancing relations with the two major powers: Rome from the west and Parthia in the east. But when competition between the two intensified, virtually threatening the survival of Armenia proper, Artashes I sided with Rome.⁶¹ In hopes of enlisting Zareh's cooperation in military matters, he also signed a security treaty with him in about 180 B.C., although the latter's troops, concerned with their own security, refused to participate in the military campaigns led by Artashes I. Their bilateral cooperation remained limited to immediate interests, particularly as the government of Dsopk preferred to maintain its independence, despite Artashes's efforts to the contrary.⁶²

Meanwhile, the polarization of Asia Minor between pro-Roman and pro-Seleucid camps posed a complicated problem. Mithradates III and Parnak I of Pontus pursued close relations with the Seleucids, whose empire had already collapsed, to check Roman geopolitical ambitions, while Cappadocia in turn relied on Rome to defend itself against both Pontus and the Seleucids. Artashes I sought alliances with Pontus in part to maintain access to its port cities on the Black Sea, which were essential for the Armenian economy, and to exert sufficient influence in the region so as to control Lesser Armenia as a

buffer zone for his kingdom. The governor of Lesser Armenia, Mithradates, an ally of Parnak in Pontus, was not so inclined, however. As relations among neighbors deteriorated and the constellation of alliances led to wars between 183 and 179 B.C., Greater Armenia and Dsopk drew closer against Pontus and Rome.

The declining Seleucid empire encouraged Artashes I to preempt a potential threat, and in 168 B.C. he launched a series of invasions across the southern border into Mesopotamia, instigating a war with the Seleucid Antiochus IV Epiphanes.⁶³ The latter first attacked Dsopk and continued his campaign farther into Greater Armenia. The military offensive posed a serious threat to Artashes I, but he defended the capital and maintained his sovereignty.⁶⁴ However, Antiochus's primary target at this time was Parthia. He made a final attempt at invading Parthia and Armenia in 165 B.C., but again he failed.⁶⁵ Internal political crises weakened his position in the region at a time when the Arshakuni Parthians were in the process of consolidating power at Ctesiphon, their capital city in Mesopotamia,⁶⁶ and Rome was not yet prepared for heavy engagement in the Near East. The dissolution of the Seleucid empire created a geopolitical vacuum, providing an opportunity for the Parthians, led by Mithradates I the Great (r. ca. 171–138 B.C.) and Mithradates II (r. 123–87 B.C.), to expand their domain over most of Mesopotamia and emerge as a dominant regional power,⁶⁷ which ineluctably drew the Roman empire into the region.

Artashes I died in about 160 B.C., leaving behind six sons: Artavazd, Vruyr, Mazhan, Zareh, Tiran, and Tigran. His death coincided with the Parthian imperial drive to conquer the neighboring lands. The Persian army defeated Artashes's successors, Artavazd I (r. 160–115 B.C.) and Tigran I (r. 115–95 B.C.),⁶⁸ and forced Greater Armenia to pay tribute to Parthia in return for peace. In the meantime, however, political stability at home had enabled the Roman empire to redirect its attention to the Near East. The subsequent widening of Roman involvement in regional politics and greater control over Cappadocia, Commagene, and Syria, on one hand, and Parthian territorial ambitions, on the other hand, pitted the two empires against each other over Seleucid territories and Armenia. Neither Artavazd I nor Tigran I had the luxury of remaining neutral.⁶⁹ In 96 B.C., Roman and Parthian representatives signed an agreement to partition these disputed lands, a partition that the Armenians viewed as a humiliating defeat at the hands of foreign powers and that Tigran's son, Tigran II, sought to rectify. Upon his accession to power, Tigran II revived Artashes I's expansionist policies and conquered the lands where his grandfather had failed. The Artashesian dynasty reached its zenith during the reign of Tigran II the Great (r. 95–55 B.C.).

TIGRAN THE GREAT AND PAX ARMENNICA

Tigran the Great had been held captive by the Parthians since the Armeno-Parthian clashes, but he secured his release with a promise to surrender southeastern lands. Mithradates II of Parthia, who had married Tigran II's daughter Avtoman and sought to strengthen his position in Greater Armenia, supported his father-in-law's return to his homeland and enthroned him as successor to Tigran I. Family ties, albeit briefly, encouraged amicable relations.⁷⁰ Immediately after the agreement of 96 B.C., internal problems in both Rome and Parthia created a political vacuum, allowing Tigran the Great an opportunity to reassert his own power and independence from the foreign conquerors. Undoubtedly, a key motivating factor in his expansionist thrust was to avenge past Armenian military defeats and humiliations.⁷¹ But the effective mobilization of his extensive military capabilities certainly required other essential ingredients as well.

Both domestic and external factors contributed to his imperial expansion. Decades of population growth had augmented the manpower available for the Armenian military. Further, the expansion in landownership begun under Artashes I had continued under his successors and contributed to vibrant commercial relations and rapid economic development, which in turn enabled the nobility to mobilize vast resources for external expansion at a time when Armenia was not yet fully drawn into East-West imperial scrambles for hegemony.⁷² External factors included the demise of the Seleucid empire and the failure of the Parthians, under Mithradates II, to strengthen their position in the region. Unlike Artashes I, Tigran the Great could not maintain good relations with Rome, in part because of his expansionist policies but also because Rome, determined to become increasingly involved in the region, would not tolerate the emergence of yet another military and economic competitor. European scholars have viewed western policies of Tigran as a mere extension of the geopolitical aims of his powerful father-in-law, King Mithradates VI the Eupator of Pontus. Tigran the Great, however, devised his own calculations and objectives for the strengthening of his economy and imperial expansion.⁷³

Once secure in power, Tigran the Great launched a number of ambitious military campaigns. He directed his first operation toward Dsopk, which he conquered in 94 B.C., thus consolidating his power over much of the former Ervanduni territories.⁷⁴ Tigran hoped to remove Dsopk (which he considered a second-rate kingdom) as a significant factor in regional politics, but his policy of outright annexation gravely complicated matters with Rome. The seizure of Dsopk threatened Roman interests in neighboring Cappadocia, although at this point the Roman army refrained from action. In 92 B.C. Tigran invited Mithradates VI to enter into a mutual security alliance regarding the kingdom of Cappadocia.

The agreement provided that Mithradates VI would gain control over the conquered lands in the region, while Tigran would receive the slaves and all movable goods. They sealed the alliance with the Armenian king marrying Cleopatra, one of the daughters of Mithradates VI. Encouraged by the alliance and in cooperation with Tigran, Mithradates invaded Cappadocia, drawing the Roman army directly into the conflict. Although the initial phase of Tigran's territorial ambitions had not moved the Roman empire, his alliance with Mithradates and the latter's annexation of Cappadocia provoked Roman intervention. General Lucius Cornelius Sulla was dispatched to defend Cappadocia, and while he and Mithradates were at war over Asia Minor, Tigran the Great in 90 B.C. recaptured the territories that he had earlier surrendered to Parthia in exchange for his freedom. Subsequently, he conquered the kingdom of Osroene and its capital city of Edessa (Orhai), Commagene, Cilicia, Syria, and Phoenicia, creating an Armenian empire stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean.⁷⁵ Exploiting the opportunity provided by Parthian internal weaknesses, he assumed the Persian title of *shahanshah* (king of kings).⁷⁶

Like Artashes I, Tigran the Great also built a new capital city, Tigranakert (Tigranocerta),⁷⁷ as the political, economic, and cultural center of his kingdom to symbolize the advent of a new Armenian imperial era under his leadership. The new capital, situated near the Achaemenian Royal Road, soon acquired strategic and commercial advantages as a growing center for international trade, while military victories and economic prosperity generated unprecedented wealth for the Armenian empire.⁷⁸ Tigran's empire encompassed a vast territory, rich in resources and slaves, dynamic economic centers (Antioch, Latakia, Damascus), and experienced civil and military administrators (Mtsbin became the imperial administrative center for the southern command)—all of which enabled the Armenian nobility to accumulate enormous wealth. The nakharar system was further solidified during the reign of Tigran the Great, as the empire expanded and provided opportunities for consolidation of power and wealth.⁷⁹

This prosperity could be maintained so long as territorial expansion continued and the conquered peoples remained loyal to the Armenian monarchy and contributed to its treasury. Tigran II required the local leaders throughout the empire to provide soldiers for his army and taxed them heavily. He resettled large number of Jews and Syrians from the Middle East in the major commercial centers (e.g., Ervandashat, Armavir, Vardgesavan, and Van). By one estimate, over half a million foreigners were resettled in Armenia, and the commercial and industrial developments across his empire were managed by Armenians as well as by Jews, Assyrians, and Greeks. The use of such words as *shuka* (market), *khanut*

(store), and *hashiv* (account) indicate Assyrian influence on Armenia's economic development.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, throughout the major cities and the vast expanse of his empire, non-Armenian inhabitants remained his vassals, albeit in a loosely structured system. So long as his subjects pledged loyalty and paid their taxes, they were granted some degree of local autonomy.⁸¹ There were no guarantees, however, that the king's subjects would remain loyal as political and economic conditions deteriorated. By about 70 B.C., the empire had become unsustainable for a number of reasons.

Tigran the Great and his supporters did not view the empire as an exclusively "Armenian" empire but rather as an international enterprise, whose beneficiaries could include all participants in its promotion and protection. This approach to empire-building contributed to the most serious structural deficiency: Its highly decentralized imperial administration. It not only relied too heavily on local nobilities in the conquered lands, but also on subjects whose loyalty to the Armenian crown were suspect. Both groups could claim to be loyal only so long as the benefits of loyalty outweighed the burdens of foreign imperial rule. Had Tigran the Great achieved the degree of centralization of power witnessed under Artashes I, he could have organized an empire that perhaps could have proved sustainable long after his reign. A related structural deficiency in the imperial scheme was the absence (perhaps due to the short duration of the empire) of a strong institutional arrangement to facilitate circulation of capital and benefits of commerce between the core and peripheral economies. The relationship was strictly unidirectional: Wealth acquired in the conquered territories served to enrich the royal treasury. Such shortcomings could be overlooked only so long as the two major empires, Rome and Parthia, did not challenge Tigran II.

THE FALL

Beginning in 79 B.C., changes in Roman military leadership stimulated a more aggressive policy toward the Near East. General Lucius Licinus Lucullus (110–56 B.C.), having succeeded Sulla, invaded Pontus and appeared ready to attack Armenia. Despite warnings of Roman intentions, Tigran the Great ignored the threat. The Armenian *shahanshah* had become too arrogant and refused to negotiate with Lucullus to avert a crisis. Rather than declare war on Armenia at this time, Roman officials secretly recruited alliances with the nobility at Antioch. Having secured the northern flank by 70 B.C., the Roman army led by Lucullus marched through Dsopk (Sophene) in the spring of 69 B.C. It crossed the Taurus on October 6 and attacked Tigranakert.⁸² During the battle, the local non-Armenian population sided with the Roman army, leaving the Armenians to fend for themselves. In his

book *The Art of War*, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), one of the most influential Italian political theorists, attributes Tigran II's military failure to his excessive reliance on his cavalry. Machiavelli comments:

Tigranes, king of Armenia, brought an army of 150,000 cavalymen into the field, many of whom were armed like our men-at-arms and called *cataphracti* [soldiers clad in iron mail], against the Roman general Lucullus, whose army consisted of only 6,000 cavalymen and 25,000 infantrymen. When Tigranes saw the enemy army, he said, "These are enough for an ambassador's train." Nevertheless, when they engaged, the king was routed; and the historian imputes the defeat entirely to the little service done by the *cataphracti*, whose faces were covered in such a manner that they could hardly see—much less annoy—the enemy and whose limbs were so overloaded with heavy armor, that when any of them fell from their horses, they could hardly get up again or use their arms.⁸³

To make matters worse, Tigran's two sons, Zareh and Tigran, rebelled against him, and the younger Tigran fled to his father-in-law, the Parthian king Phraates III, who later provided him with an army contingent to invade Armenia.⁸⁴ Having lost confidence in their king's military capabilities, the Armenian nobility also rebelled, leaving the civilian and military leadership deeply demoralized. The Romans captured and destroyed the city of Tigranakert, forcing Tigran to withdraw from Syria and Mesopotamia; however, Lucullus failed to advance farther northeast to the region of Ararat and Artashat, thus enabling Tigran to recover some of his losses. Several factors conspired against Lucullus during his winter campaign to capture Artashat. A large number of his soldiers had been killed and wounded, while heavy snow and logistical problems (e.g., food shortages) impeded movement across the mountainous terrain. His troops, away from home and family for too long, refused to move forward and rebelled on several occasions. Rome could not tolerate such a loss and subsequently recalled Lucullus. Encouraged by the favorable turn in fortune, Tigran the Great and Mithradates retaliated by reconquering Pontus, northern Syria, and Commagene.⁸⁵

Rome refused to relinquish its eastern policy. The appointment of General Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius), at the time in Cilicia, as successor to Lucullus indicated Rome's determination to continue its conquest of Armenia. Intrigue and ambition caused Tigran's son, Zareh, who had already refused to defend his father, to ally with Pompey; internal rebellions had now considerably weakened Tigran's hold on power. In order not to lose its influence in the rapidly changing events in Armenia, Parthia capitalized on Tigran's sudden weakness and attacked from the east. Although the Armenian emperor defended Artashat against Parthian attacks, the arrival of Pompey made the two-front defense against the major empires virtually impossible. In 66 B.C., he finally agreed to sign the