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ARTICULATING POWER THROUGH THE PAROCHIAL: THE 1956 ARMENIAN CHURCH ELECTION IN LEBANON¹

Abstract

A seemingly insular Armenian Church election that took place in Lebanon in February 1956 was simultaneously a site of contestation by Cold War powers and their proxies. Its disproportionately high coverage in the Lebanese press—and ensuing political intervention—provides an alternative view of the struggles for power between the United States and the USSR in Lebanon during the Cold War period. This election could have been understood as exclusively affecting Armenians in Lebanon and/or merely an entertaining anecdote of competition between Armenian religious figures. Instead, I argue that it is an opening to observe American-Soviet state competition for political influence in the region outside of the conventional case studies of the 1958 US marine intervention in Lebanon and the American government's inability to prevent the Soviet suppression in Hungary in the aftermath of the Tripartite Aggression in Egypt in October 1956. And yet, this election must also concurrently be seen as a moment where the Armenian population of Lebanon made use of Cold War suspicions to designate a leader of the Armenian Church seen to suit their community's interests. This article throws into relief the customary depiction and understanding of the Armenian population in Lebanon as temporary refugees and therefore not an integral part of the Lebanese nation-state by drawing out the use of Cold War rivalries.



THE LONG DELAYED ELECTION

The death of Karekin I in 1952 left vacant the seat of the Catholicos, the highest figure in the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Cilician See. Multiple postponements plagued the electoral process. Unable to elect a successor due to internal disagreements, the electoral committee appointed Archbishop Khoren Paroyan, Prelate of Lebanon, the See's caretaker until a time when a successful election could take place.² On February 20, 1956, Zareh, an outspoken critic of communism and the USSR was finally elected.³ Speaking against what he considered to be

“organized attempts by Soviet authorities to use the Echmiadzin See as an instrument to control the Armenian communities of the Diaspora,” his selection officially positioned the Cilician See against the Echmiadzin See, the Soviet Republic of Armenia, and the USSR.⁴ Chaos ensued. Violent clashes erupted between supporters and opponents of Zareh. The President of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun, ordered government troops to “secure” the Armenian populated neighborhoods.⁵ In the meantime, unknown assailants stole the right arm of St. Gregory (a solid gold mold of the arm of the saint accredited with converting the pagan Armenians to Christianity in 301) from the grounds of the Armenian monastery complex.

The events illustrate how multiple actors, from a variety of nation-states, used an Armenian affair to assert and compete for power. Concurrently, these events also reveal the extent to which members of the Armenian population challenged the scope of Lebanese, Soviet, and American state power by utilizing the Cold War sides to promote their own political and religious leaders. The battles for authority between Armenian, Soviet, and Lebanese (and also American as Chamoun’s government was largely supported by American intelligence and military services) politicians, religious leaders and journalists must, of course, be understood within the context of the Cold War. I contend that while the American and Soviet superpowers and their proxies were engaging in this “Armenian issue” in competition with one another, the efforts of Armenian religious officials to shape outcomes challenged the political prowess of the superpowers as they circumvented nation-state borders.

BUILD-UP OF THE ELECTION

While the multiple postponements indicated friction within the electoral committee, it was the visit of Catholicos Vasken of the Echmiadzin See in the Soviet Republic of Armenia, on February 3, 1956, that ignited tension amongst Armenians in Lebanon. While the Armenian population in Lebanon did not formally participate in the electoral process, many joined in planned and spontaneous public activities throughout the city, including lining the streets welcoming Vasken to Lebanon, following him en masse to his meetings with Armenian church officials and Lebanese state politicians. This unprecedented level of involvement—and its continuing media coverage—revealed the presence and power of the Armenian population in Lebanon. This power was not limited to the assembled crowds at key locations such as the airport or the presidential palace,

but in their ability to stop traffic, close places of business, delay the elections, and promote and publicize their victories and losses. The presence of the Armenian population attracted Soviet and American political powers to project their own competitions through them.

The public presence of Armenians in Lebanon could be interpreted as “simultaneity,” in line with the works of Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller.⁶ This articulation of power both reinforced and challenged the boundaries of the Lebanese nation-state. At the same time, transnational connections in the form of celebrating or opposing religious figures originating from outside of Lebanon (Before becoming the Echmiadzin Catholicos Vasken was the Armenian Prelate of Romania, while Zareh was the Archbishop of the Armenian community in Aleppo) did not negate the authority of the Lebanese nation-state. Armenians in Lebanon took to the streets as Lebanese citizens but also irrespective of a Lebanese identification. Vasken and Zareh, in turn, claimed a supranational ability, one that did not adhere to the boundaries of any particular nation-state, yet did not necessarily test its authority either. Accordingly understanding these struggles for power solely as supporting or hindering the apparatuses of the nation-state limits the actions of these individuals, groups, and institutions, while concurrently homogenizing them. Various actors—including state dignitaries, Armenian religious officials, and members of the Armenian population in Lebanon and beyond—fashioned multiple constructions of identification and belonging. The motivation of these disparate actors merits an examination beyond the classifications of a nation-state, diasporic group, and minority community.

While I subscribe to the view that the rethinking of the boundaries of social life are necessary, the focus of Levitt and Glick Schiller’s interventions on migrants and the daily activities, routines, and institutions located in a destination country and transnationally do not completely transfer to the actions and events surrounding the 1956 Catholicosate election in Beirut.⁷ While migrants often sought political refuge and vice versa, the history of Armenians in Lebanon diverges from this course. Armenians did not arrive as migrants but as refugees from the Ottoman Empire. In an effort to buttress the Christian population in Lebanon, the French mandatory government categorized them as citizens in 1923, and in so doing relinquished their legal connection to the lands of the Ottoman Empire that became contemporary Turkey. The labeling of the Armenians as migrants eclipses the actions of the Ottoman, French, and Lebanese governments and of the Republic of Turkey (which accepted this new legal status

with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne). In addition I contend that the category of “migrant” introduces a hierarchal ladder of Lebanese citizenship, insinuating a gradation of “nativeness.”

The Echmiadzin See and the figure of Vasken also present an additional conflict. While Levitt and Glick Schiller do not constrain transnational connections to a homeland, allocating for “dispersed networks of family, compatriots, or persons who share a religious or ethnic identity,” they also do not accommodate the unfamiliarity between Vasken and the Armenian population in Lebanon or the purposeful positioning of the Echmiadzin See vis-à-vis the Armenian population in Lebanon.⁸ The Catholicos of Echmiadzin’s visit to the Cilician See in February 1956 was extraordinary. Vasken’s religious jurisdiction did not extend to the Armenian populations of Lebanon, or to most of the Armenian communities in the Middle East. The announcement of his impending visit (only days after the caretaker of the Cilician See announced the election would take place in February 1956), and the visit’s timing (days before the election was to take place), also exposed his trip’s connection to the election of the Cilician Catholicos.⁹ “Simultaneity” does not account for this new and unprecedented relationship between the institution of the Echmiadzin See and the Armenian population in Lebanon.¹⁰

Vasken’s visit to Lebanon and the Cilician See shows how the scope of the electoral conflict had extended far beyond the boundaries of the Cilician See and Lebanon. The discord spread to include the Echmiadzin See in the Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Armenia, and in so doing, brought in the Soviet Union as well. Vasken spoke to the Armenian Lebanese press, and accordingly to the Armenian population in Lebanon, via the Soviet news agency, TASS: “To the acting-Catholicos Archbishop Khoren: Because of our love of our church and because we have foresight to protect and affirm its unity and its utmost interests, we have decided to participate personally in the election and anointment of the Catholicos of the Cilician See.”¹¹ This communication, from one See to another attempted to mute the complicated relationship between the two church authorities, the electoral processes, and the ability of the Sees to articulate internal and external tensions.¹²

Both Catholicos employed numerous proxies to communicate with one another, showcasing the multiple nation-states participating in this struggle for power.¹³ This communication involved Soviet authorities through TASS and Lebanese authorities through the Armenian Lebanese press, which was under the auspices of the

Lebanese government's press authority. In engaging with the Armenian press in Lebanon, the Armenian political parties were automatically enmeshed in the conflict, as almost every Armenian press outlet was either owned by or affiliated with an Armenian political party.¹⁴ While these political parties (and their affiliated institutions) operated throughout the Middle East and beyond, their position in Lebanon, was particularly significant because their central committees were located in Beirut.

The Cilician See had its own affiliated churches and prelacies not only in Lebanon, but also throughout the Middle East. Its authority transcended nation-state boundaries, similar to the Armenian political parties that enjoyed worldwide influence. The See's seminary and monastery educated and ordained priests and bishops who were sent to Armenian communities throughout the Middle East. This seminary worked to secure the influence of the Cilician See in Lebanon in every parish, regardless of nation-state borders. Leaders of Armenian parishes throughout the Middle East were fully integrated representatives of the Cilician See in Antelias and its system. Although this election has been understood as a local, circumscribed affair without considering the broader significance for the future trajectory of the Armenians in Lebanon and the Armenian Diaspora, I argue that this church election had wider importance. The election indicated the extent to which the power struggles for authority over the Armenian community in Lebanon took place across national boundaries, involving the political dynamics of multiple nation-state contexts and their respective power struggles with each other. Several nation-state authorities showcased their power through the position of the Catholicos in Lebanon, demonstrating the permeation of nation-state borders. At the same time, the Cilician See's articulation of power both inside and outside Lebanon, often through the employment of state officials (who in turn formulated their own additional agendas) demonstrated its own ambitious drive.¹⁵

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The growing involvement of actors from a variety of nation-states pushing opposing political ideologies through the election in Lebanon necessitates a review of the historical background of the precedence of multiple Sees in the Armenian Apostolic Church, and therefore competing centers of religious and political authority, and how the Cilician See came to be anchored in Beirut.

Under the Ottoman and Russian empires, there were numerous Armenian Sees, or Catholicosates, each with its own jurisdiction and hierarchal system. The Cilician See, located in Sis (present city of Kozan), and the Akhtamar See (located near Van), were both within the territory of the Ottoman Empire, while the Echmiadzin See was located in the Russian Empire. The Cilician See was established, along with the Kingdom of Cilicia after the fall of the Kingdom of Ani in the end of the 11th century, in Sis (in Southern Anatolia, present day Kozan). It had its own Catholicos, and under its jurisdiction, lines of archbishops, bishops, priests, and their parishes. Depending on the historical moment, they were in contact with other Sees, Constantinople/Istanbul, and Jerusalem.

In addition to these Sees, there were two patriarchates, one in Jerusalem, and the other in Istanbul. These patriarchates were doctrinally subservient to the authority of the Sees, even though they enjoyed a degree of autonomy over their own affairs and played an important role within their communities and beyond. Due to their locations, size of their congregations, and the political status assigned to them by the Ottoman authorities as official representatives of the Armenian community to the Ottoman state, these two patriarchates played powerful intermediary roles between the community they were made to represent and the state. The Patriarchate in Istanbul represented the Armenian *millet* to the Ottoman government in the imperial capital.¹⁶ The Patriarchate in Jerusalem not only represented the Armenians in the Armenian quarter of the city and throughout Palestine, but also was responsible for guarding the Armenian niches in the churches of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CILICIA AND ECHMIADZIN

The relationship between the Sees and patriarchates permeated imperial, and later nation-state borders. While the Sees were recognized as Armenian community representatives by imperial (and later nation-state) powers, neither See sought Ottoman/Russian state approval in formulating relationships with one another. In this way, they acted as supra-state structures, using the authority given to them by the state, while possibly subverting the state's authority. While rare, Sees and patriarchates made agreements that did not necessarily forward the political line of the states that housed them.¹⁷

In addition, they each had their own structure and degree of autonomy, and were known to participate little in each other's internal affairs. First, there were the practical issues caused by the 800 kilometers separating them, and second, they operated from within two different empires, the Cilician See within the Ottoman Empire, and Echmiadzin in the Russian Empire. Even their congregations would have had difficulty communicating with one another, as many Armenians from villages in South Eastern Turkey under the jurisdiction of the Cilician See spoke only Turkish, while areas under the leadership of Echmiadzin spoke Armenian and Russian.¹⁸

The formation of the nation-state further constricted the movement and communication between the two Sees with the imposition of the "national" borders, and engendered additional distinctions based on concepts of citizenship. And yet, the two Sees surmounted this new categorization and coordinated their efforts during the repatriation movement of 1946–1948, the organized population transfer of thousands of Armenians worldwide to the "homeland," the Soviet Republic of Armenia.¹⁹

The abilities of the Catholicos of Echmiadzin to practice and perform religious rites were also disproportionate to that of the Catholicos of the Cilician See. Armenians in Beirut were categorized as Christian according to the sectarian dimensions of the state making the Catholicos of Cilician See the officially recognized political and religious leader of the Armenians to the Lebanese state by 1946. In addition, this authority extended into the realm of personal rights, including marriage, divorce, and death procedures.

This relationship between the two Sees changed dramatically by the early 1950s—partly because of the altered Armenian political landscape in Lebanon and the increasing competition of the Cold War.²⁰ The coordinated efforts of repatriation were long past.²¹ With the drastic reduction of the leftist Hnchak and centrist Ramgavar party rosters, most of whose members repatriated to Soviet Armenia, and the relatively unaffected membership numbers of its own party due to their reticence regarding the repatriation movement, the nationalist/rightist Dashnak party was able to consolidate its prowess within the community of Armenians in Lebanon and the larger Lebanese community. This power was especially apparent in the Lebanese political realm, as it was mostly Dashnak members represented the Armenian community in parliament. In addition, the government of Lebanon at the time, led by President Camille Chamoun, was ardently anti-communist, and was thus supported

financially (and later militarily) by the United States. The natural alliance between the Dashnak party, by the 1950s fervently anti-communist, and the government of Camille Chamoun, buttressed the party's domination within the Armenian community. That acting Catholicos Archbishop Khoren had a close relationship to Dashnak officials and President Chamoun guaranteed the selection of a like-minded Catholicos. These alliances created an opportune moment to finally hold the election. The relationships between the Cilician See, the Dashnak party, and the Lebanese government also showcased the multiple authorities that were involved with the events surrounding the election, all operating for a variety of reasons.

Immediately after Archbishop Khoren's announcement that the elections would finally be held in February 1956, the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, Vasken, announced that he would be present at the elections. It was the first time the Catholicos of Echmiadzin had been granted permission to leave the Soviet Republic of Armenia. Vasken had become part of the infrastructure of the Soviet Union: not only were his movements monitored, but his very election, as well as his sermons, were sanctioned by the USSR. Nevertheless, this can also be seen as an attempt of the Armenian leader to secure his power outside Soviet borders, in effect superseding the authority imposed upon him by the Soviet authorities. His involvement—even at the behest of the Soviet Union—demonstrated an attempt to reposition his power outside of the USSR and in the region of the Middle East. Acting Catholicos Archbishop Khoren's announcement forced both Sees to confront the issue of hierarchy within the Armenian Apostolic Church and identified the 1956 election of Catholicos of the Cilician See as the medium by which struggle for power would take place.

VASKEN'S ARRIVAL

No official action of Vasken could occur outside the context of the USSR's larger policies vis-à-vis the Cold War. It was Soviet authorities that fixed his travel route (Vasken flew from Yerevan to Beirut via extended stops in Moscow and Paris where he met Soviet government officials).²² Once in Beirut, however, Vasken was greeted by tens of thousands of Armenians lining the streets from the airport to the monastery in Antelias, approximately 15 kilometers away.

Did Vasken shift from a Soviet authority into an Armenian one on this journey? It was unclear where the jurisdiction of Soviet authority ended and the Armenian began. However, the Armenian public's support of Vasken as either (or both) a Soviet or Armenian official challenged the authority of the Lebanese nation-state. In addition the spectacle of public support in Lebanon challenged his role as a Soviet affiliate.

Armenian political party figures, newspapers, and members of the public also participated in the spectacle. Armenian schools were closed, while the established "Committee to Welcome Catholicos Vasken" encouraged students to line the streets from the National Museum (of Lebanon) to the bridges that lead into Borj Hamoud, "out of respect for" to the Catholicos.²³ This directive was publicized by the Armenian newspapers along with



Figure 1: Crowds gathered at the Lebanese airport welcoming Vasken from the USSR. *Zartouk*, 14 February 1956.



Figure 2: Crowds lining the streets welcoming Vasken to Lebanon from the USSR. *Zartouk*, 14 February 1956. Photo taken by author.

five instructions. Number three announced, "The only flag that is permitted to be held is the flag of the Lebanese state."²⁴ While the directive did not elaborate on the significance of alternative flags, it deemed the Lebanese flag the appropriate symbol of representation for the Armenian population in Lebanon to welcome Vasken.

Armenians in Lebanon waved the Lebanese flag for Vasken, which sent numerous messages about national affiliation. The Lebanese national flag indicated a certain kind of authority, which was considered distinct from an Armenian, Soviet, or political party flag. For the Armenian citizens of Lebanon, the Lebanese flag became an Armenian symbol demonstrating the approval of Vasken, an official of the Echmiadzin See, and an extension of Soviet authority. At the same time, the flag could have also been seen as a challenge to Soviet authority, as the symbol of the Lebanese state.²⁵

The actions of both Vasken and the Armenians who welcomed him complicated the bounded notions of the nation-state. Where the authorities of the Lebanese and Soviet nation-states began, ended, and overlapped were ambiguous, as was the national identifications of the Armenians in Lebanon. In addition, the boundaries of the authorities of the Echmiadzin and Cilician Sees were consistently being renegotiated. Even though Armenians were participating in the spectacle, and thereby legitimizing Vasken's (and the Soviet Union's) authority, their status as Lebanese citizens and their continued support of the Cilician See and its institutions demonstrated otherwise. They still attended schools run by the Cilician See and their marriage, divorce, baptism, and death rites continued to be performed by the clergy of that See. The Armenian Apostolic representatives to the Lebanese parliament—regardless of political party affiliation—still sought the benediction of the Catholicos of the Cilician See.

While thousands of Armenians did line the streets to welcome Vasken, not everyone took part in the celebration. By speaking against Vasken's impending involvement in the electoral process, the electoral committee of the Cilician See challenged Vasken and the Soviet Union's authority. Nevertheless, the simulated warmth continued through the morning of February 14, 1956, the very day of the election. Acting Catholicos Archbishop Khoren opened the electoral meeting with a "friendly" invitation for Vasken to speak.²⁶ Vasken accepted, and in turn offered his personal well wishes from the Echmiadzin See to the Cilician See.²⁷ He then described what he considered to be the role of the elections, "to aid in the advancement of Armenian diasporic church life."²⁸ In his address to the electoral committee, Vasken also stressed

how his presence was an opportunity “to further strengthen the life of our churches and the national life in *these areas*.”²⁹ By connecting himself to “these areas” (presumably those areas under the jurisdiction of the Cilician See” Vasken extended his authority from the Echmiadzin See in Soviet Armenia to Lebanon, circumventing the authorities of Soviet Armenia, the USSR, Lebanon, and of the Cilician See.

Continuing in this vein, he announced the convening – that week – of an emergency meeting of The Council of Bishops in Jerusalem.³⁰ In so doing, Vasken assumed the guardianship of “diasporic” church life, and questioned the authority of the Cilician See and its necessity as an institution separate from the Echmiadzin See. Was Vasken placing the Cilician See under his realm, and possibly under Soviet control as well, given his status as a citizen of the USSR? Acting Catholicos Khoren, thwarted Vasken’s attempt at classifying the Armenian Sees and adjourned the meeting, rescheduling the elections for the morning of February 20, 1956.³¹

But how did Vasken, in Beirut, have the power to call for the emergency meeting and order it to be held in Jerusalem, in yet another city over (or in) which he did not have any jurisdiction, religious or otherwise? In calling for the meeting in Beirut, and in decreeing that it would take place in Jerusalem, he challenged the authority of the Lebanese and Jordanian state officials.³² In addition, Vasken’s “blessing” challenged the authority of the Cilician See. After all, Vasken’s jurisdiction extended from the monastery at Echmiadzin, within the borders of the Soviet Armenian Republic, and most notably not from the complex of the Cilician See in Antelias, Lebanon.

Vasken attempted to reinforce this authority by meeting with the head of the Lebanese state, President Camille Chamoun. The photographs printed in the following day’s Lebanese papers on February 15, 1956 were an affront to the authority of the Cilician See.



Figure 3: President Chamoun meeting Vasken at the Presidential Palace. *Aztag*, 15 February 1956. Photo taken by author.

Vasken used the Lebanese state to demonstrate his own importance to the Armenian population in Lebanon while challenging the authority of acting Catholicos Khoren and the Cilician See. Chamoun's statement following the photos offered yet another interpretation of authority. His words challenged the boundaries of both Vasken's and Zareh's authority. President Chamoun declared, "Please consider yourself in your own home, since it is without exaggeration when I say Lebanon is a second Armenia." While Chamoun's statement could have been interpreted as a gesture of friendship and goodwill between Lebanon and the USSR, it also simultaneously enveloped all Armenians, placing them under Chamoun's tutelage in the state of Lebanon.³³ The President of Lebanon further concluded his remarks with a final wish: "I hope that tomorrow's elections are held under normal circumstances and that I am given the honor to share in your happiness tomorrow evening and will have the pleasure to receive you and the Cilician See's Catholicos-elect thereafter."³⁴ In so doing, Chamoun reoriented the outcome of the election as reaffirmation of his authority. After all, not only was the election to take place within Lebanon, but also once the election was over, Chamoun would "officially" receive him, as if to offer his "final" approval. This exertion of authority was directed at Vasken, Soviet authorities, the Cilician See, and the Armenian population.

Vasken and the Soviet Union also attempted to extend their authority over the congregations of the Cilician See by the performance of religious rites. Vasken officiated mass and gave the sermon at the

compound of the Cilician See on Sunday, February 19, 1956, the day before the rescheduled elections. While the announcement that he would officiate mass was printed on the front page of all of Lebanon's Armenian newspapers, *Aztag*, the newspaper affiliated with the Dashnak Party, did not cover the event.³⁵ By not covering Vasken's Sunday's service, *Aztag* signaled its disapproval. The newspaper also became more persistent in attacking the presence of Vasken, labeling him as a foreigner, a pawn of Soviet authorities, and accordingly insinuating he was not privy to the goings on in Lebanon and to the Armenian populations there.³⁶

ELECTION AND DEPARTURE

The events that followed Vasken's officiating of the Armenian mass and his meeting with President Chamoun were anything but friendly. Having not yet secured a visa from the Jordanian authorities to visit Jerusalem, and yet aware that the elections would take place and that Zareh would indeed be elected, Vasken left for Paris. Zareh, a staunch opponent of communism and the Soviet manifestation of the Armenian Republic, was elected Catholicos on February 19, 1956, under the protection of the Lebanese national army.³⁷

In an attempt to annul his selection, a group of about one hundred women took over the St. Gregory Cathedral within the grounds of the Cilician See's complex.³⁸ Archbishops, including acting Catholicos Khoren were attacked and hospitalized.³⁹ Violent clashes erupted between supporters and opponents of Zareh.⁴⁰ These divisions were codified in the press as masses took to the streets in support or in protest of the election. A general strike was called for in the Armenian neighborhoods, and stores and schools closed in an attempt to deescalate the conflict.

In a matter of days, authorities of various nation-states converged through the Catholicos election of the Cilician See. The Lebanese state guaranteed the election of Zareh by sending its troops to “guard” the complex from those who opposed his selection. Numerous state dignitaries from Great Britain, France, and the United States offered their congratulations while officials from the Soviet Union and countries of the Warsaw Pact shared their dismay. Vasken declared the entire process illegal from Paris. The Jordanian authorities’ refusal to grant Vasken a visa to Jerusalem, demonstrated the authority of the Jordanian state and the tightening of the borders of the nation-state.⁴¹ In turn, when the Egyptian government granted visas to Vasken and his entourage so that they could hold their emergency Council of Bishops in Cairo, it demonstrated his influence in the Egyptian arena.⁴²

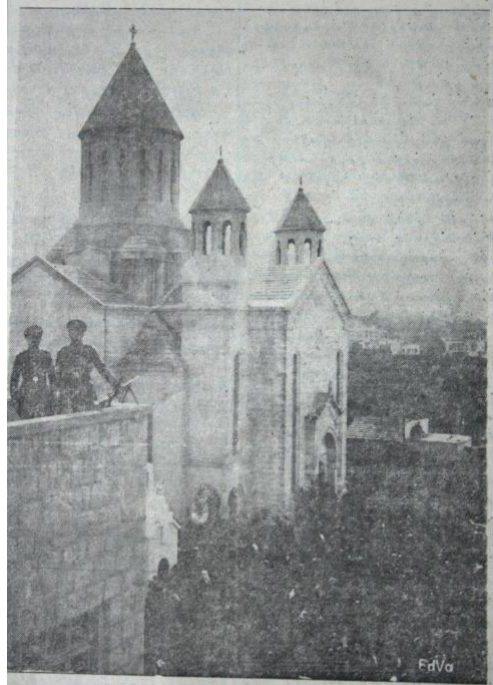


Figure 4: The scene at the Cilician See monastery complex on election day. The upper left corner shows two armed Lebanese officers overlooking the courtyard. *Zartonk*, 23 February 1956. Photo taken by author.

Egypt and Jordan’s reactions to the election and their differing treatment of Vasken were connected to their relationships with the USSR and the United States during the Cold War.⁴³ Both superpowers used their proxies to forward their own political agenda while demonstrating their authority to one another. When President Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser of Egypt welcomed Vasken, he was also receiving a Soviet official. Similarly, when Jordanian government authorities refused to give a visa to Vasken, they were acting against a Soviet official.

While many of these aforementioned authorities demonstrated the power of nation-state borders, they also brought to light their permeability. When Vasken called the entire process illegal from Paris, he (re)claimed authority from the capital of one nation-state, France,

within a national-space of another, Lebanon. The permeability of nation-state borders was probably best detected when the religious relics of the Cilician See, housed within the monastery complex in Antelias, went “missing” the day before the elections, only to be “found” a year later, in Jerusalem.⁴⁴

The involvement of authorities from a variety of nation-states demonstrated that this election was not merely an Armenian affair. Rather, the 1956 election of the Catholicos of the Cilician See became an international contest to establish authority. In addition to the power struggles that the global actors engaged in, the election also provided the opportunity for Armenian authorities in Lebanon to contend for power over the Armenian community. This election showcased local, national, transnational, and global actors and their struggles for power over authority.

MABROUK!

While Vasken and his Soviet and Armenian entourage were in Cairo, Zareh began to gather support from the Lebanese and Syrian governments. These governments legitimized Zareh’s election, and inserted (or further involved, in the case of Lebanon) their authorities within the power struggle. Three days after the election, on February 22, 1956, Zareh met with the President of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun.⁴⁵ Similar photo opportunities were taken with Syrian President Shukri Al-Quwatli and other Syrian governmental figures in the following days, all covered in the press.⁴⁶

In participating in these meetings, President Chamoun and President Shukri placed their governments’ support behind the election, and upheld the autonomy of the Cilician See against any meddling by the Echmiadzin See and the USSR. While the Lebanese and Syrian governments backed the Cilician See, they also correspondingly levied their authority upon the See and the Armenians that were under its tutelage. And yet, it was the Cilician See that enlisted these powers to defend itself and distinguish it from what it deemed a Soviet intervention. This presented additional complexities for understanding the power struggles surrounding this election. Syria, an outside government, in upholding the autonomy of the Cilician See, extended its own authority over the institution, located within the nation-state of Lebanon. At the same time the Cilician See legitimized its own power—by mobilizing Syrian state power—against an institution located in yet another national space, the USSR. In so doing,

both Syria and the Cilician See challenged Lebanon's ability to exercise sovereign control over "internal" affairs, while employing one another to claim additional power for themselves.



Figure 5: Photo taken of newly elected Zareh and President Chamoun. *Aztag* 23 February 1956. Photo taken by author.

Two photographs of Zareh's visit to President Chamoun were printed in the February 23, 1956 issues of *Aztag*, *an-Nahar*, and *The Daily Star* (and most notably not in *Ararad*

or *Zartonk*, two papers vehemently opposed to the election of Zareh) publicizing the Lebanese government's approval of the election.

The first of the two photos showed a smiling Zareh and an equally jovial Camille Chamoun at the presidential palace sharing a drink. While the atmosphere suggested amiability, as if Zareh and Chamoun had a long established relationship, Zareh was dressed in his official religious garb. This dress, including the black headpiece worn by bishops and archbishops, complete with gold medallions bearing the crest of the Cilician See, indicated that the meeting was being held in an official capacity. *Aztag* described their conversation: "The Catholicos-elect and the Honorable President exchanged views and had an intimate and tender conversation with one another."⁴⁷ This photo opportunity represented the two men as equals—two elected, and therefore legitimate, leaders of their respected flocks.⁴⁸ By withholding both the names of Zareh and Chamoun (and by identifying Zareh as Catholicos), *Aztag* implied that the particularities of the identities of these two figures are irrelevant. What is paramount, is that *the* Catholicos, and *the* President, met with one another. Whoever these two men are, they, ipso facto, were the leaders of their communities. Their pictures together, along with the official ceremonies, instantiated their mandate.

On the route home, when the motorcade passed the Armenian neighborhoods, *Aztag* reported that community members were gathered along the road, "in respect, holding Lebanese flags."⁴⁹ Here,

the holding of a Lebanese flag symbolized the Cilician See, in addition to what it had signified just a few weeks earlier when held to welcome Vasken from the airport. By waving this Lebanese national symbol, these flag-bearers assert the authority of Lebanon via the election of the Cilician See. In so doing, the flag-bearers inserted the Lebanese state within the authority of the Cilician See.

WITH BEST WISHES

The presidents of Lebanon and Syria were not the only figures who participated in the fashioning of their authority and that of the Cilician See in the days following the election. *Aztag* reported, "From yesterday morning onward, numerous state officials from all over Lebanon went to Antelias to offer their congratulations to the newly elected Catholicos."⁵⁰ Zareh was also visited by the president of the American University of Beirut and various scholars of different universities.⁵¹ This coverage linked the newly elected Catholicos to Lebanese institutions, while affirming his legitimacy as the spiritual, and political, leader of the Lebanese Armenian community.

On February 26, 1956, *Aztag* ran a front-page article publicizing the Archbishop of Canterbury's congratulatory remarks offered to Zareh. This same article invoked multiple sources of authority: the Archbishop of Canterbury as well as "these various other countries, including France, the United States, Great Britain, and Turkey" who had sent their well wishes and congratulations.⁵² All of these words of congratulations acted to reinforce the Cilician See's claims of authority upon the Armenian community of Lebanon. In addition, the See paraded this multi-national and multi-vocational support and projected it outwards, towards the Armenian congregations of the Cilician See situated outside of Lebanon and towards the Echmiadzin See in the USSR. At the same time, telegrams of best wishes could also be read as external players—from a variety of nation-states—staking a claim in an increasingly communist vs. anti-communist story by way of the Armenian church election. Those actors that congratulated Zareh instantaneously pledged and/or reaffirmed their association with the US, while those that did not at best maintained a non-alignment.

OUTSIDE THE REALM OF THE EXPECTED

The political actors involved in delineating authority were not only Chamoun, Vasken, Zareh, or the various forms of Soviet and American representations by way of congratulatory telegrams and visits. In the

aftermath of Jordan's refusal to grant Vasken a visa to Jerusalem, Egypt demonstrated its authority in convening the meeting within its borders.⁵³ In so doing, it also participated in the power struggle in the aftermath of the Catholicos election. Egypt's involvement was surprising, because unlike Jordan and Turkey, it did not house an Armenian Patriarchate, or a significant Armenian population.⁵⁴ Egypt's connection to the election and its aftermath showcased the investment of various nation-states in this purportedly internal Armenian election.



Figure 6: Vasken pictured at his arrival to Cairo. *Zartonk*, 29 February 1956. Photo taken by author.

Vasken's presence in Cairo also demonstrated his own authority and that it extended outside the Soviet Union. *Aztag* reported, "The church courtyard was completely packed and had a celebratory atmosphere. Vasken spent the entire day meeting and receiving both Armenian community members and dignitaries."⁵⁵ His ability to garner this attention even after—or in spite of—the election of Zareh also reminded all parties involved that the boundaries of authority were not settled.

Vasken also visited the President of Egypt, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser. Similar to his approach with President Chamoun three weeks earlier, Vasken first expressed his gratitude that he had the opportunity to visit "this amazing country, and meet Egypt's refined people."⁵⁶ He immediately thereafter recognized "the bravery and genius" of its leader, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, who "wholeheartedly has always supported Armenian matters."⁵⁷

In response, 'Abd al-Nasser expressed his gratitude for the Armenian community, emphasizing their place within the nation-state of Egypt. "Armenians are not foreigners, but are children of this country. Through their hard-work and commitment they have won-over the Egyptian people and its government and excelled in the country."⁵⁸ While 'Abd al-Nasser does not clarify why Armenians of Egypt would be qualified as outsiders in the first place, nor how they would have been categorized if they had not been deemed "hardworking and committed," his affirmation of the community claimed them under his country's control.

And yet, 'Abd al-Nasser also acknowledged Vasken's authority by meeting with him. Where the boundaries of that authority are, however, remained unclear. After being invited to the Soviet Republic of Armenia by Vasken, 'Abd al-Nasser replied, "It is with great pleasure that I accept your invitation. If I go to Moscow and if given the opportunity, I promise to visit you and Echmiadzin, because I really enjoy visiting religious centers."⁵⁹

In this brief exchange, the Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser aligned himself with the Soviet Union by hosting their representative, Vasken, and by allowing him to hold the meeting of the Council of Bishops in Cairo when he was prevented from doing so in Jerusalem. And yet, even in welcoming Vasken I to Cairo, 'Abd al-Nasser contained Vasken's authority within the boundaries of the Echmiadzin See, and confined it to religious matters. Furthermore, 'Abd al-Nasser made the proclamation that Armenians had always been, and would continue to be, an essential part of Egypt's fabric. While 'Abd al-Nasser publicly affirmed Vasken as an Armenian representative, he also asserted the Egyptian state's authority over the Armenians in Egypt. This exchange illustrates how these figures both recognized, and attempted to limit, each other's power.

FLINCHED DEXTER OF THE SAINT AND THE USES OF THE STRUGGLES FOR POWER

The traveling bishops and archbishops were not the only ones negotiating limits of sovereign control within multiple nation-states. On March 24, 1956, Armenian papers began to report on the theft of a handful of religious relics, including the Holy Right Arm of St. Gregory, from within the monastery of the Cilician See. Approximately one month after the elections of Zareh, this golden arm, along with other treasures, was revealed to be missing. Because the right arm had

been connected to the glory and survival of the See, it was understood as the incarnation of its very power. More pragmatically, it was to be used to anoint a newly elected Catholicos. Without it, those opposed to the selection Zareh argued, his election was worthless. The robbery, and the ensuing debates over the relic, served as an extension of the tense and controversial Catholicos election and became another site of struggle by authorities vying for power.

The relics had a history of transport through space. The golden arm of the right hand of St. Gregory (*atch*, in Armenian) was moved to Cilicia when the Kingdom of Ani fell in the 11th century. It then was transported to Echmiadzin when the Kingdom of Cilicia fell in 1441, only to be brought back to Sis (contemporary Kozan) a few years later.⁶⁰ During the organized massacres of the Armenian *millet* of World War I, the *atch*, along with other relics, was transported by ox-cart from Sis to Aleppo. Once Catholicos Sahag had secured the Antelias compound as the home of Cilician See, these relics, including the *atch*, were brought to Beirut.⁶¹ Their movement in 1956 involved a new set of authorities, those of various nation-states. The Cilician See was located within Lebanon, and relics were smuggled across the nation-state border. This event was another illustration of multiple authorities engaging directly with each other and within the pages of the Armenian newspapers in Lebanon to demonstrate their own legitimacy and power.

RECONDITIONING THE NEED FOR THE ARM

When it became clear that the golden arm would not be returned to the Cilician See immediately, Zareh and other religious figures of the Cilician See attempted to distance the *atch* as a representation of their authority. *Aztag*, the Armenian daily of the nationalist/rightist Dashnak party and the outlet most supportive of Zareh, ran a series of articles written by priests and bishops, dedicated to the history of the Armenian Sees and their often-contentious relationships with one another. In an attempt to discredit the Echmiadzin See and Vasken, these religious authorities declared the See a house of thieves. By detailing past stories of insurrections, defections, and most notably for their purposes, theft, the paper implicated Echmiadzin, and by extension Vasken, in the robbery. In one such example, "The Migration of the Armenian Catholicos Seat," written by Father Der Melkonian in the March 21, 1956 issue, *Aztag* asserted that because Echmiadzin had meddled before (albeit hundreds of years ago), it was most certainly doing so again, and would continue to do so in the future. This

educational, “historical essay” maintained that the Cilician See persevered in the past, not due to a golden arm of a saint, but rather, through the blessings of God.⁶²

Father Der Melkonian tracked what he considered to be the Echmiadzin See’s pathological tendency for treachery.⁶³ By consistently telling and retelling events from as early as 1443, Der Melkonian maintained that the actions of the Echmiadzin See were innately deviant. Not surprisingly, he dedicated a great deal of the article to one particular episode, the theft in 1443 of the Right Arm of St. Gregory from Sis and how it resurfaced in Echmiadzin.⁶⁴

While Der Melkonian attacked the authority of the Echmiadzin See, he also distanced the authority of the Cilician See from the *atch*. Der Melkonian closed the article with the words of the late Bishop Papken who “devoted his time to researching and writing about the dogmatic and emotional importance of the *atch*.”⁶⁵ Through the expertise of Bishop Papken, Der Melkonian delineated the authority of the *atch*. “The so-called arm of St. Gregory is not regarded as a holy relic within [Armenian] history. In fact, the narrated tales that surround the *atch*, connecting it with the Cilician See, consistently consider the *atch* to be symbol, or remembrance, of His [God’s] Illumination. Under no circumstances, however, is it considered to be connected to the existence of faith, hierarchal validity, or positioning [of the See].”⁶⁶ This treatment separated the *atch* from authority, and consolidated the power of the Cilician See.

Der Melkonian’s article was particularly useful for *Aztag* and the Cilician See to convey their position on the authority of the *atch* to their readership. He provided examples of at least two Catholicoi consecrations that took place without the presence of the *atch*, and detailed one consecration that was declared invalid on dogmatic grounds, even though the *atch* was present. “Thus,” Der Melkonian concludes, “in reality, the Illuminator’s *atch* is neither obligatory in the rule of the See nor in its governance.”⁶⁷ This article also separated the presence of the *atch* from the authority of Zareh and the Cilician See just in case it is never “found.” Here, the lack of the golden arm, once a representation of authority for the Cilician See, was made to demonstrate that the See did not need an object to affirm the institution’s faith in God. In so doing, it raised the caliber of its power vis-à-vis its opponents who, shortsightedly, deemed its presence necessary.

In the March 22, 1956 issue, the day after Der Melkonian's article was printed, *Aztag* reported on Zareh's sermon, which echoed both the spirit of Der Melkonian's article and its precedence of travelling across borders. In "The Moving Sermon of Zareh," *Aztag* quoted Zareh: "This is not the first time that there have been thefts. Similar thefts have occurred before. The *atch* can go missing. But no one can take the Illuminator's *atch* from its church and it cannot be stolen. I have faith that the *atch* [and other treasures that were stolen] will be found soon in their place, in this monastery. But still, I wish to pray not that we find them, but that this will be done through God's grace, and that the culprits return and put them in their place, at this church."⁶⁸ Zareh delicately called for the return of the *atch* while asserting its independence from his authority.

FOUND!

On March 31, 1957, over a year after its initial disappearance, the *atch* was found. *Aztag* announced, "The Holy *Atch* that was stolen from the Catholicosate is found: Archbishop Khoren arrives tomorrow, Sunday, at noon with the Holy Relics at the airport at Khalde."⁶⁹ The details of the theft, however, including how the relics were stolen, where they were found, under what circumstances, or how they were delivered to Archbishop Khoren, were not provided.⁷⁰ *Aztag* only disclosed that the relics were found "in a neighboring country," a claim that it accredited to the Lebanese French daily, *L'Orient*.⁷¹ There was no doubt that the golden right arm crossed nation-state borders. In fact, nation-states were unable to contain the Armenian struggle for power within their borders. Armenian authorities manipulated political platforms and ideologies of multiple states to bolster their own power.

The very following issue, April 2, 1957, *Aztag* covered the arrival of the relics, in "The Stolen *Atches* Yesterday Arrived in Beirut." *Aztag's* front page was filled with pictures of Catholicos Zareh joyfully raising the arm to bless members of the community who lined the streets from the airport until the monastery.⁷² Many of them were miming the form of the golden arm – their arms raised with their palms open and their thumb bent slightly towards the right.⁷³

In the same issue, it also finally provided details of the theft. "With names withheld in order to protect certain identities," the paper described both the robbery and the smuggling: On February 19, 1956, once it became clear that the election would take place and that Zareh would be selected, Archbishop Karekin, the Prelate of Istanbul, and

Archbishop Diran orchestrated the burglary as an attempt to invalidate or at least postpone the election.⁷⁴ “That very night,” *Aztag* recounted, “cold hands stole the case of the golden *atches* from their room and smuggled them out of the monastery to Beirut, to the home of one of the collaborators.”⁷⁵ The following day, when word spread within the religious circles about the theft and as rumors escalated that there will be door to door inspections of houses, the thieves decided that the *atches* “must vanish.”⁷⁶ The two collaborators (one of whom housed the stolen case at his house) gave them to Patriarch Yeghishe, Prelate of Jerusalem, with the “demand” that they be taken outside of Lebanon to Jerusalem.⁷⁷

According to *Aztag*, Patriarch Yeghishe took the relics to Jerusalem and safeguarded them outside of the monastery of St. James in the Armenian Quarter, “always thinking that one day he would be able to officially return them.”⁷⁸ When there was another attempt to steal the *atch*, this time from Jerusalem, *Aztag* reported that Patriarch Yeghishe engaged in a formal disagreement with “the authorities of Jerusalem” “believing the rightful holder of the golden arm and its associated treasures was the See of Cilicia, which must be returned to Beirut.”⁷⁹ The article does not denote if they are Armenian authorities but took this detail for granted, as if no other authority would exist in Jerusalem at that time that would be pertinent to such an issue. In its exposé, *Aztag* maintained that it was in these last few weeks that the Prelate of Jerusalem decided that the time had come to return the relics.⁸⁰ “And so he sent word to Catholicos Zareh in Antelias to send a representative first to Amman and then to Jerusalem to receive the Golden Arm.”⁸¹

The disappearance and reappearance of the golden arm expand the notions of nation-state borders and boundaries of authority. The movement of smuggling the *atch* out of one border (from the monastery at Antelias), and subsequently transporting it within and across others, was at the discretion of religious figures and not necessarily the national spaces that contain them. Figures dart in and out of multiple national borders while attempting to consolidate their own authorities as well as the authority of their national institutions (such as the Cilician See, or the Patriarchate of Jerusalem), while accommodating physical and symbolic borders.

The spectacle, while celebrating the reappearance of the *atch*, also demonstrated both the flexibility and persistence of nation-state borders and their authority. The *atch* was smuggled from Lebanon to Jerusalem, but its return was sanctioned by Jordanian and Lebanese

state authorities who authorized the transport and pick up of the arm. It also firmly placed power – literally – in the hands of the Catholicos of Cilicia and legitimized his position over the Lebanese Armenian and Cilician See community. This action competed with other manifestations of power, such as Jordan reinforcing its control of Jerusalem, Moscow demonstrated their rule upon the Echmiadzin See and Soviet Armenia, and Chamoun's consolidation of power over the Cilician See at Antelias. The sight also mimicked the scene of celebration that was held 14 months earlier not to reproduce an ode to Vasken but to reaffirm the glory of Zareh and the Cilician See.

The return, and its associated coverage, also highlighted the authority of the states that aided in the homecoming, affirming the control certain leaders exercised over the territory of the nation-state.

While Archbishop Khoren was given the order to collect the golden arm from Catholicos Zareh, he had to wait until the Jordanian

authorities in its capital, Amman, granted him permission to travel and collect the relic.⁸² His arrival in Beirut, together with the 25,000 gathered to welcome the golden arm, had to be sanctioned by Lebanese national authorities. The closing down of the arrival hall for Catholicos Zareh also did not occur on his order, but on the order of the Lebanese government authorities who controlled the airport. And yet, the entire spectacle did serve to trumpet the power and victory of the Cilician See.



Figure 7: Zareh with the recovered gold *atch*, using it to bless the people gathered to celebrate its homecoming back in Beirut. *Aztag*, 2 April 1957. Photo taken by author.

APPENDING THE LIMB

With the return of the *atch*, the autonomy of the See of Cilicia – at least with regards to the Echmiadzin See – was established. *Aztag* also maintained the Cilician See's authority in various nation-states. In "The Bewilderment of the Thieves of the *Atch*," printed on April 4, 1957,

Aztag stated, “The Armenians of Cilicia’s other parishes share in the true happiness of the Armenian People. Many hurry to Beirut to thank and congratulate the Catholicos and to see the Holy *Atches*. Antelias has become a place of pilgrimage since Sunday, where the Right Arm of St. Gregory the Illuminator blesses all its shepherds.”⁸³ The authority of the See in Lebanon was reinforced through the actions of parishioners who traveled to Antelias that day from different nation-states including Syria (from Aleppo, Damascus, Jezireh, among others), Jordan (from Amman and Jerusalem), and Cyprus.⁸⁴

The Cilician See as a site of pilgrimage also challenged the firmness of nation-state borders. Its churches and schools located in Cyprus, Greece, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Iran maintained the authority of the Cilician See in Lebanon. On the first Feast of St. Gregory the



Figure 8: Zareh holding the *atch* in consecration ceremony of the Holy Chrim later that year. From *Heghapoghagan Album*, 1963. Photo taken by author.

Illuminator (also the namesake of the church within the monastery) after the return of the *atch*, on April 9, 1957, Zareh announced that there will be the Blessing of the Holy *Muron*, or chrim, in the fall of that year.⁸⁵

The consecration of the chrim in Antelias was significant for four reasons. First, the chrim could only be consecrated at the center of the See, reinforcing the monastery at Antelias as the center of the Cilician See. Second, it could only be completed with the *atch* that blesses the oil. Third, the chrim could only be blessed and consecrated

by the Catholicos of the See, in this case Zareh, further securing his legitimacy. And finally, the chrism made at the center was then transported to the peripheral congregations which were under the jurisdiction of that See. No religious rite- including marriage, baptismal, or funerary could take place without the chrism. The Cilician See imposed itself as the authority over its parishioners, who in turn legitimized this very authority.

CONCLUSIONS

Multiple authorities intervened in the 1956 election of the Catholicos of the Cilician See and its aftermath. Manifestations of power circulated via the vocal encouragement or discouragement of American and Soviet officials, the protection of the election in the form of armed Lebanese military personnel offered by President Chamoun, the Lebanese police force that accompanied Armenian religious officials to and from the presidential complex, and finally in the investigation of a missing relic, the arm of St. Gregory, which went missing in the days following the election from the tightly guarded monastery complex in Beirut. These contentions, along with their political alliances and competitions, demonstrate both the permeability and presence of nation-state borders. These struggles showcased the expansive nature of the power of the Cilician See and the ability of the Armenian population in Lebanon to make use of state and society categorizations, such as citizenship and the Armenian Orthodox sectarian identification, to articulate power. Various authorities imposed their own power and/or reinforced the power of the Sees through an assortment of traveling, state visits, theft, and electoral coverage.

Additional approaches that consider how the actions of Armenian institutions shaped and were shaped by different local, international, and transnational actors in local and broader contexts have yet to be included within Lebanese and Armenian historiographies. The Cilician and Echmiadzin Sees used the movement of these actors and their Cold War political allegiances to enforce their own authority over the Armenian population in Lebanon. In addition, these articulations of power revealed the adaptability of religious and political institutions within the new organization of the nation-state in the decade following independence.

NOTES

¹ All Armenian and Arabic sources have been translated by the author.

² These “internal disagreements” were largely related to a candidate’s views on the USSR and the role the Echmiadzin See would play in the affairs of the Cilician See. In addition, but to a lesser extent, there was also disagreement due to a candidate’s outlook on communism. The bishops of the Cilician See largely viewed the Echmiadzin See as an agent of the USSR and as an affront to their own power. Elections were postponed so as not to further aggravate the tense relationship between the two Catholicos. For further details on the time period between the death of Karekin I and the election of Zareh, see Simon Payaslian, “The Institutionalization of the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia in Antelias,” in *Armenian Cilicia*, eds. by Richard G. Hovannissian and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2008).

³ “Atenagrut’yun Batgamaworak’an Zhoghvoh” [Minutes of the Meeting of Religious Representatives], *Hask* no. 1–4 (January–April 1956): 12. The elections taking place were seen as the Catholicosate of Cilicia taking a firm position against communism, the USSR, and any meddling of the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin. Before being chosen Catholicos, Zareh was the Archbishop of Aleppo.

⁴ Seta Dadoyan, *The Armenian Catholicosate From Cilicia to Antelias* (Antelias, Lebanon: The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2003), 95–6.

⁵ “50 Women Capture Church; Armenians Elect Anti-Communist Patriarch” *The Daily Star*, February 15, 1956. And “Two Armenian Merchants Knifed and Beaten Here” in *The Daily Star*, February 24, 1956.

⁶ Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller have called for the rethinking of the boundaries of social life, which, they argue, would take into account “simultaneity,” or “living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located in a destination country and transnationally.” In Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, “Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society,” *International Migration Review*, 38, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 1003. See also Peggy Levitt, “Routes and Roots: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 no. 7 (2009): 1225–42; and “Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends” (with Nadya Jaworksy), *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (August 2007): 129–56.

⁷ Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, “Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society,” *International Migration Review* 38, no. 3, (Fall 2004): 1003.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1003.

⁹ *Ararad*, February 5, 1956.

¹⁰ Levitt and Schiller, “Conceptualizing Simultaneity,” 1003.

¹¹ “Atenagrut’yun Batgamaworak’an Zhoghvoh” [Minutes of the Meeting of Religious Representatives], 12.

¹² After all, neither see acknowledged the superiority of the other, even though every parish of the Catholicosate of Cilicia prayed for the Catholicos of Echmiadzin during Sunday mass, and those of the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin did not.

¹³ For an exploration of the creation of a “German” identity in a divided Berlin, see John Borneman, “State, Territory, and National Identity Formation in Two Berlins, 1945–1995” in *Culture Power Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). A comparison can be drawn between Germans in Berlin in 1945–1995 as the USSR and the US compete to construct German identity and Armenians in Beirut in 1956, where the USSR and the US (through its proxy Lebanon) compete for authority.

¹⁴ The Armenian press outlets in Lebanon were an important venue for Armenian political parties in Lebanon to advance their claims to power in Lebanon and beyond. While the newspapers are written and printed in Armenian, limiting their readership to Armenians or the very select few who know Armenian but are not categorized as such, they do speak to multiple audiences: the readership who supports them, party members, oppositional papers and their readership. Further, when they address the entirety of the Armenian people, they extend outside the borders of the community in Lebanon. This diversity extends to the issues they cover as well. Ranging from a local news item, such as a banquet held to honor Armenian teachers, to the global, such as the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the newspapers engaged with their readership on a variety of topics, projecting a specific message that was to be consumed, internalized, and replicated. These internal power struggles among Armenians in Lebanon have long been ignored by Lebanese historiography, leading to a vision of the Armenian population as a coherent homogenous community, rather than an internally divided population with diverse political leanings and alignments. (The elections are neither mentioned in Caroline Camille Attié, *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); nor Fawaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*. (London: Pluto Press, 2007).) Regarding Armenian historiography see for example, Simon Payaslian, “The Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias” in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovanissian and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2008). He identifies the election of 1956 as “a most significant event in modern Armenian Church history,” connecting it to the ability of the Cilician See to overcome “political difficulties” (591). While this may be accurate, Payaslian still confines the event with “Armenian Church history” and does not consider the multiple authorities involved, or their competing constructions of power. Seta Dadoyan, *The Armenian Catholicosate From Cilicia to Antelias* (Antelias, Lebanon: The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2003) describes

the event as an “embarrassing episode (96) but does not fully address the implications of the “media wars between various factions and parties.”

¹⁵ In this context, I think it is more appropriate to use “trans-state-al”, rather than “transnational” to describe the Armenian Sees. It is not merely that the Cilician See (or the Echmiadzin See) extends or seeks power beyond the national boundary of Lebanon (or in the case of Echmiadzin, the USSR). I contend that “transnational” is a particularly fallible term, as many nation-states do not have a singular national identity or population. It is in this capacity that I find “trans-state” to be more apt.

¹⁶ While the Patriarchate of Istanbul represented the entirety of the Armenian *millet* to the Ottoman government, it was, with regards to hierarchy, lower in rank than the Catholicoi of Sis, Akhtamar, and Echmiadzin. That the vast majority of the Armenians under jurisdiction of these Catholicoi were peasants, while the parishioners in Istanbul were more landed and educated gentry, suggests the Ottoman government was engaging with issues of class rather than respecting the hierarchy of the institution of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

¹⁷ For example, the stolen Golden Arm of St. Gregory relic, taken from Beirut to Jerusalem, was “kept” in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem (to be discussed later below) without the sanction of Lebanese, Palestinian, or Jordanian authorities. There was evidence shortly after the theft was reported that it had been taken via Amman to the St. James Monastery in Jerusalem but Jordanian authorities either were unable or unwilling to press the issue further. This is significant as Jordanian authorities, pressured by the United States, did not issue a visa to Vasken of the Echmiadzin See who wanted to convene a meeting there, yet did not prevent the relic from finding its way to Jerusalem. Accordingly, the Jerusalem Patriarchate defied the Cilician See and was able to operate beyond the power of the Jordanian – and in so doing American – states.

¹⁸ This does change slightly when the Cilician See moved to Lebanon, as many of the original refugees arriving from the Ottoman Empire learned Armenian in Lebanon and subsequent generations spoke Armenian and Arabic. Still Armenians from SSR Armenia (and later the independent republic) speak a different dialect of Armenian than those in the Middle East (with the exception of Iran, where the population there speaks a dialect of Armenian more closely related to that in Armenia). While the differences are not (remotely) insurmountable, variances remain. In a conversation held with *Archbishop Kegham Khatcherian*, the head of the Armenian Patriarchate in Lebanon in 2008 at the Lebanese Prelacy in Bourj Hamoud, Khatcherian stated that the center of the Western Armenian language was in Beirut, Lebanon. Accordingly, he explained, he, and the Armenian Church of Lebanon, had the duty to protect it from being replaced by Arabic in Lebanon. Significantly, he added that it was his responsibility, as the head of the Lebanese Armenian community, to defend it against the growing

prowess of Eastern Armenian in the form of television and publishing from the Republic of Armenia.

¹⁹ There was not a single record of opposition by priests, bishops, or archbishops of the Cilician See to the position taken by the Karekin, even as thousands of their members were leaving their authority permanently. While this movement reduced the Cilician See's membership base by thousands and inevitably contributed to a decline in its power, it remarkably did not foster a greater power struggle between the Cilician See in Lebanon and the Echmiadzin See in Soviet Armenia. For more on the repatriation movement, see 'Going Beyond Overlooked Populations in Lebanese Historiography: The Armenian Case' by the author in *History Compass*.

²⁰ For more on US involvement in the Middle East during the Cold War see Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009).

²¹ Word had reached those outside of Soviet Armenia of the dire conditions within the Armenian Republic. Panossian, *The Armenians From Kings to Priests to Merchants to Commissars*, 361. Armenian political parties, most notably the nationalist/rightist Dashnak party, had consolidated their power in the interim. Many (though not all) of the leftist Hinchak and centrist Ramgavar leaders had repatriated to Soviet Armenia, along with many of their members. Nikola Schahgaldian, *The Political Integration of an Immigrant Community into a Composite Society: The Armenians in Lebanon, 1920-1974* (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1979), 103. *Aztag*, June 27, 1947. While the Dashnak party initially supported the movement, it was the first organization after the Catholic Armenian Patriarchate to speak out against repatriation starting in 1947. *Aztag*, October 4, 1947.

²² *Zartonk*, February 12, 1956.

²³ "Koch' Hay Zhoghovurdin" [A Call to the Armenian People], *Aztag*, February 11, 1956.

²⁴ Ibid. The others included the request for Armenian school students to line the route from the National Museum to Corniche al-Nahr, the expected crowds to facilitate the passage of the motorcade, not to gather en masse at the entrance to the Antelias monastery complex, and for all Armenians to act in an "orderly and respectful" manner.

²⁵ While there are different readings of flag holding, indicating the fluidity of identification at the time, they are still, as forwarded by Robert John Doster, "all within, against, or at least in dialogue with the nation, and understood as a salient frame of reference for delineating personal and collective identities." Robert John Foster, *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption, and Media in Papua New Guinea* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 17.

²⁶ "Kilikioh Kat'oghikosakan Ęndrut'yan Batgamaworakan Zhoghovė Bats'uts'aw Yerėk ew Ęndrets' ir Mnahun Tiwanė Khap'anarneru Bolor

Dawerë Dzakhoghets'an" [Yesterday the Meeting of the Election Representatives of the Cilician See Opened and Elected a Permanent Panel; The Naysayers' Ruses to Sabotage these Efforts Failed], *Aztag*, February 16, 1956.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

³⁰ Ibid. For more on the The Council of Bishops see Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*.

³¹ Buzand Yeghiayan, *Zhamanakakits' Padmut'yun Kat'oghikosut'yan Hayots' Kilikioh 1914-1972* [The Contemporary History of The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia] (Antelias: The Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1975), 675. Still, Acting Catholicos Khoren was not able to prevent the meeting from taking place (Though it does not take place in Jerusalem as Catholicos Zareh had instructed but in Cairo. This will be further elucidated later on in the work).

³² Since 1948, the Armenian Quarter was under the jurisdiction of Jordanian authorities.

³³ Vehap'ar'in Ayts'ë N.V. Hanrpetin Nakhagahin" [The Vehapar's Visit to the President], *Aztag*, February 15, 1956.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ While the election of the Catholicos takes place on this day, February 19, 1956, he is not consecrated until September 2, 1956. This lag time between election and consecration was not entirely unusual.

³⁸ "50 Women Capture Church; Armenians Elect Anti-Communist Patriarch," *The Daily Star*, February 15, 1956. Since the establishment of the Cilician See in Antelias, elections of the Catholicos had been held in the St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, within the grounds of the monastery. In order to prevent the elections from taking place, a group of Armenian women occupy the church, forcing the elections to take place in another building within the compound, thereby challenging its validity and legitimacy.

³⁹ *Aztag*, February 24, 1956.

⁴⁰ "50 Women Capture Church; Armenians Elect Anti-Communist Patriarch"; "Two Armenian Merchants Knifed and Beaten Here," *The Daily Star*, February 24, 1956.

⁴¹ *Aztag*, the Dashnak paper, reports on the snub with tempered glee: "We hear that that the Jordanian government has refused to grant a visa to the Catholicos of All-Armenians [his official title], Vasken I, and his entourage,

who, for ten days, have been in Egypt waiting for their visa to travel to Jerusalem. It is said that Echmiadzin's head will now go to Rome." In "Hordanan Merzhats ē Ējmiatsnah Kat'oghikosin" [Jordan Has Refused to Grant a Visa to Echmiadzin's Catholicos], *Aztag*, March 2, 1956. Emphasis added.

⁴² "Jordan Slams Door in Face of Armenian Patriarch," *The Daily Star*, March 11, 1956.

⁴³ For more on US involvement in the Middle East during the Cold War see *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009).

⁴⁴ These relics are not individually profiled, and are referred to in the press as "The Treasures of the Catholicosate of Cilicia," or "the *Atches*." The press later does focus on one particular relic that is stolen, the *atch*, or the golden cast of the arm of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the Saint attributed to converting the Armenian nation to Christianity. Nevertheless, other relics were taken in addition to the golden arm. The press probably concentrated on that particular relic due to its importance (which is debated later after its theft) and use in Armenian religious ceremonies. This is discussed further below.

⁴⁵ "Surioh Vsemashuk' Nakhgah Shuk'ri K'uat'li Kë Shnorhaworē N.S. Zareh I K'at'ogh.i Ĕntrut'yunē [His Eminence the Syrian President Shukri al-Qawatli Congratulates Zareh I on his Election], *Aztag*, February 24, 1956. (Also on the front page of *Aztag's* February 28, 1956 issue.)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Norēndir Vehap'ar' D.D. Zareh I Kat'oghikos Artakarg Patiwnerov Ĕndunewts'aw Libanan Hanrapetut'yan Vsemashuk' Nakhgahin Goghme" [Newly elected Catholicos Zareh I was Met with Great Honor by His Eminence the President of the Lebanese Republic], *Aztag*, February 23, 1956.

⁴⁸ The second photo continues to forward representations of legitimacy. Now that the two figures are established as leaders, their entourage must be validated as well. Below the photo of the two leaders is one of them flanked on either side by archbishops of the See of Cilicia and other community figures who have taken an active role in protecting the independence of the election and defending its outcome.

⁴⁹ "Norēndir Vehap'ar' D.D. Zareh I Kat'oghikos Artakarg Patiwnerov Ĕndunewts'aw Libanan Hanrapetut'yan Vsemashuk' Nakhgahin Goghme" [Newly elected Catholicos Zareh I was Met with Great Honor by His Eminence the President of the Lebanese Republic.

⁵⁰ "Azg. Pashdōnakan Marminer, Usuch'ich'ner, Usanoghner, ew Azgayinnyer Kë Shnorhaworen Norēndir Kat'oghikosē" [Official National Organizations, Teachers, Scholars, and Nationals Congratulate the Newly Elected Catholicos] *Aztag*, February 23, 1956.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Catholicos Zareh I's personal papers, 25-1(16): February 1956, Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon.

⁵³ "Hortanan Merzhats ē Viza Tal Ējmiatsnah Kat'oghikosin" [Jordan Has Denied a Visa to Echmiadzin's Catholicos], *Aztag*, March 2, 1956.

⁵⁴ Egypt's Armenian population fell dramatically as a result of the repatriation movement 1946-1948. It experienced a further decrease during the presidency of Gamal abd al-Nasser.

⁵⁵ "Amenayn Hayots' Kat'oghikosē Gahirēi Měj, [The Catholicos of All Armenians in Cairo], *Aztag*, February 24, 1956.

⁵⁶ "N.S. Ō. Vasken I Yegiptosi Varch'.in Mōt" [N.S.O. Vasken I Close to Egypt's Governor], *Aztag*, March 7, 1956.

⁵⁷ What types of "Armenian matters," Zareh did not made clear. "N.S. Ō. Vasken I Yegiptosi Varch'.in Mōt" [N.S.O. Vasken I Close to Egypt's Governor].

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Dickran Kouymjian, "The Right Hand of St. Gregory and other Armenian Relics," unpublished paper.

⁶¹ Hermann Goltz and Klaus E., *Rescued Armenian Treasures from Cilicia: Sacred Art of the Kilikia Museum Antelias, Lebanon* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000).

⁶² Father Ter Melgonyan, "Hay Kat'oghikosakan At'or'in Teghap'okhutynnerē" [The Migration of the Armenian Catholicos Seat], *Aztag*, March 21, 1956.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* In detailing this theft, Der Melkonian tells of how it was smuggled to Echmiadzin via the See of Akhtamar in Van (which has been disbanded since the massacres during the Ottoman Empire). In doing so, he exposes the precedence of an accessory See or prelacy that aids in the theft, suggesting it as precondition to its success. In 1443 it was the See of Akhtamar that was its co-conspirator, it would not be a stretch for the reader in 1956 to replace Akhtamar with Istanbul. After all, it was the Prelate of Istanbul's movements from Istanbul to Beirut to Jerusalem to Cairo that were covered with suspicion. And as his travels were scrutinized (though it should be noted not analyzed), his past comments on the USSR and communism were juxtaposed with his current friendly rapport with Vasken I on the front pages of *Aztag*. ("Yerēk ew Aysōr" [Yesterday and Today], *Aztag*, March 29, 1956.).

⁶⁵ Father Ter Melgonyan, "Hay Kat'oghikosakan At'or'in Teghap'okhutynnerē" [The Migration of the Armenian Catholicos Seat].

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ “Vehap‘ar‘ D.D. Zareh I-i Hogeshunch‘ K‘arozë” [The Moving Sermon of Zareh I], *Aztag*, March 22, 1956.

⁶⁹ “Kat‘oghikosaranēn Goghts‘uats S. Ach‘erë Gdnuets‘an” [The *Atches* Stolen from the Catholicosate Have Been Found], *Aztag*, March 31, 1957.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Goghts‘uats Ajerë Yerëk Hasan Pëyrut” [The Stolen *Atches* Yesterday Arrived in Beirut], *Aztag* April 2, 1957. This scene could be juxtaposed with that of the arrival of Vasken I, 14 months earlier.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Voronk‘ ew Inch‘pēs Goghts‘an Masunk‘nyrë” [Who and How They Stole the Relics of the Saint], *Aztag*, April 2, 1957.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ It is unclear what would have transpired if Patriarch Yeghishe had not heeded the “request *Aztag* correspondences, while they did not use the term “threaten” suggested that he had no choice in the matter and that he did so in order to safeguard the relics and prevent the already unraveling situation to descend into further chaos that could have led to the permanent loss of the *atches*. “Voronk‘ ew Inch‘pēs Goghts‘an Masunk‘nyrë” [Who and How They Stole the Relics of the Saint], *Aztag*, April 2, 1957.

⁷⁸ “Voronk‘ ew Inch‘pēs Goghts‘an Masunk‘nyrë” [Who and How They Stole the Relics of the Saint].

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² “Goghts‘uats Ajerë Yerëk Hasan Pëyrut” [The Stolen *Atches* Yesterday Arrived in Beirut].

⁸³ “Ajagogherë Sahmṛkats” [The Bewilderment of the Thieves of the *Atch*] *Aztag*, April 4, 1957.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ “Lusavorich‘i Tōnë Ant‘eliasī Měj” [The Feast of St. Gregory in Antelias], *Aztag*, April 9, 1957.