

**THE RELIABILITY OF THE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY FRENCH AND MODERN  
ARMENOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BIBLE  
INFORMATION ABOUT MT. ARARAT IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUMRAN  
MANUSCRIPTS**

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The mention of Ararat, the resting place of Noah's Ark (according to the Bible) in the course of centuries has been at the center of attention of theologians, historians and researchers. The name Ararat is mentioned in the Hebrew original of the Bible as *the mountains of Ararat*<sup>1</sup>, *the land of Ararat*<sup>2</sup> and *the kingdom of Ararat*<sup>3</sup>. The phrase *the mountains of Ararat*, mentioned in the Hebrew original and the Septuagint Version (the 3rd c. BC), is presented as *the mountains of Armenia* in the Vulgate (the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> c.-the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD) - *montes Armeniae*<sup>4</sup>. The phrase of the Septuagint εἰς τὰ ὄρε Ἀραράτ<sup>5</sup> ("into the land of Ararat") is translated «ի լեռինս Հայոց» ("*into the mountains of Armenia*") in the Armenian translation (the beginning of the 5th c. AD) of the Bible<sup>6</sup>.

Carrying out a detailed study of the records in question of the Hebrew original of the Bible and its translations, as well as of the various interpretations of these records in the ancient and medieval primary sources, Michael Chamchyants pointed out, "... instead of the land of Ararat some call Ararat, some - Armenia, and some others Korduk"<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The interlinear Bible Hebrew-Greek-English, Massachusetts, 1986, Gen. VIII 4. According to the Assyriologist J. Oppert, "...the *Urarta* expresses literally the name Ararat, which signifies Armenia in the Biblical texts" ("*Urarta*, ce qui exprime à la lettre le nom Ararat qui signifie l'Arménie dans les textes bibliques") (Oppert J., *Expédition scientifique en Mésopotamie*, Paris, 1863, liv. I, ch. I, com. 2, p. 18): The standpoint that *Urarta* or *Uratu* is identical with the biblical Ararat, Armenia, was prevailing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Layard H., *Discoveries in the ruins of Ninveh and Babylon*, London, 1853, p. 403. A. H. Sayce, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Van, deciphered and translated - The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS)*, New Series, Vol. 14, No. 4, Oct. London, 1882, p. 377, 388, 389). The mentioning of Armenia in the form of «*Armina/Arminiya=Uraštu*» is certified also in the 6th-5th cc. BC. in trilingual inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings Darius I (Behistun), and Xerxes II (Persepolis) (Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian, later Akkadian languages) (Lecoq P., *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide*, Gallimard, 1997, p. 89-92, 139, 246, 272).

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings XIX 37; Isaiah XXXVII 27.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah LI 27.

<sup>4</sup> «*Requievitque arca mense septimo, vigesimo septimo die mensis super montes Armeniae*» (Biblia Sacra Vulgatae, editionis juxta exemplaria ex typographia apostolica Vaticana, Romae 1592 & 1593 inter se collata et ad normam correctionum romanarum exacta auctoritate Summi Pontificis Pii IX, Valentinus Loch (Herausgeber), Manz, 1863, t. I, Gen. 8. 4.).

<sup>5</sup> The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, with an English translation and with various readings and critical notes, London, Τωβλτ I, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Գիրք Աստուածաշունչը Հին եւ Նոր Կտակարանաց, ի Վենետիկ, 1860, Տոլբիթ Ա 24:

<sup>7</sup> Չամչեանց Մ., Պատմութիւն Հայոց, հ. Ա, Վենետիկ, 1784, էջ 150:

Later, having investigated this issue V. Inglizyan wrote that the abovementioned phrase of the Hebrew original of the Book of Genesis and the Septuagint Version was translated into Armenian: “into the mountains of Ararat”, and in the Syriac (the Peshitta)<sup>8</sup>: “al tu-raï qardū.”<sup>9</sup>

Josephus Flavius (I century) mentions the reports of Berosus the Chaldean (330-250 BC) and Nicolaus of Damascus (64 BC- 5 AD) about the resting place of Noah’s Ark. Telling about the events during the Flood, Berosus wrote, “It is said that a piece of the Ark up to now is in Armenia, near the Korduk mountains”<sup>10</sup>.

According to Nicolaus of Damascus, “ there is a great mountain, called Baris, in Armenia, above the (country)<sup>11</sup> Minias, where, according to the history, many have found salvation during the Flood, and one, having been carried on the Ark, got down on the peak and the residues of the latter have been preserved for a long time.”<sup>12</sup>

The following information about Hakob Mtsbnatsi is recorded in the work of Pavstos Buzand (V century): “A man chosen by God, from his town reached the mountains of Armenia, the mountain Sararad, near the borders of the land of Ararat, in the region of Korduk.”<sup>13</sup> Regarding the form “Sararad”, Mkrtych Emin pointed out in an interpretation of the French translation of Pavstos Buzand’s “The History of Armenia” that it is supposedly a spelling mistake, made by scribes<sup>14</sup>. Considering the reading of *Ararat(d)*, Fr. Murad supposed it possible that the “Sararad” is a consequence of the

<sup>8</sup> It is the translation of the Old Testament, which was used by the Syrian Christians (Васильчева Ю., Пятикнижие сирийской Пешитты и экзегетические традиции армейских таргумов. Вестник ПСТГУ, Богословский сборник, N 11, М., 2003, стр. 116).

<sup>9</sup> Ինգլիզյան Վ., Հայաստան Սուրբ Գրքի մէջ, Վիեննա, 1947, էջ 5: Cf. Ю. Васильчева, op. cit., стр. 90, 115.

<sup>10</sup> Հին հունական աղբյուրներ Ա, Հովսեփոս Փլավիոս, Դիոն Կասիոս, Հրեական հնախոսություն, Գիրք առաջին, Թարգմանություն բնագրից, առաջաբանը և ծանոթագրությունները Ա. Մ. Կրկյաշարյանի, Երևան, 1976, էջ 55: Cf. Եսեբի Պամփիլեայ Կեսարացոյ Ժամանականք, Վէնէտիկ, 1818, էջ 36-37:

<sup>11</sup> In this regard, S. M. Krkyasharyan commented: “The country of Minias in the form of “Minni” (“Manna” in the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions) is always mentioned with the Ararat in the Bible” (Հին հունական աղբյուրներ Ա, էջ 102, ծան. 120):

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 55. M. Chamchyants (op. cit., p. 150) identified the mountain Baris with that of Masis. The French Armenologist Saint-Martin located it in the center of Armenia, in the province of Bagrevand, connecting with the mount Varaz, mentioned by Pavstos Buzand (Փաստոսի Բիզանդացոյ Պատմութիւն Հայոց, Վենետիկ, 1933, էջ 255, Saint-Martin M. J., Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l’Arménie, t. I, Paris, 1818, p. 265). Markwart identified it with Nekh-Masik-Sipan (Jos. Markwart, Südarmerien, und die Tigrisquellen: nach griechischen und arabischen Geographen, Wien, 1930, S. 78). About the identification Baris with Masis see also Fr. Murad, Ararat und Masis: Studien zur armenischen altertumskunde und litteratur, Heidelberg, 1901, S. 47-51; cf. Մովսիսյան Ա., Սրբազան լեռնաշխարհը. Հայաստանը Առաջավոր Ասիայի հնագույն հոգևոր ընկալումներում, Երևան, 2004, էջ 68-73). The records of the ancient and medieval primary sources about the Flood are also examined by A. Musheghyan, proving the viewpoint of Ararat-Masis as the place of descending of the Ark (Մուշեղյան Ա., «Ո՞ր լեռան վրա է իջել Նոյան տապանը (ըստ ասորա-բաբելական, հունա-հռոմեական, ասորական և հայկական աղբյուրների)», ՊԲՀ, 2003, N 1 (162), էջ 3-39).

<sup>13</sup> Փաստոսի Բիզանդացոյ Պատմութիւն Հայոց, էջ 33:

<sup>14</sup> Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l’Arménie par V. Langlois, Première période - historiens Grecs et Syriens traduits anciennement en arménien, t. I, Paris, 1867, p. 218, com. 2.

wrong separation of the words *ի լերինս Արարադայ* (into the mountains of Ararat)<sup>15</sup>. St. Malkhasyants has also considered the form “Sararad” doubtful, emerged from the incorrect partition of the two adjacent words, since “in old times, the words were being written close to each other in the Old Armenian (*Erkatagir*, or “ironclad letters”), *ԻԼԵՐԻՆՍԱՐԱՐԱԴԱՅ* (ILERINSARARADA) was separated as follows “i lerin sararata” instead of “i lerins Ararata”<sup>16</sup>.

It is apparent from the publication of the critical text of Movses Khorenatsi, the form of *Ararat* exists in the manuscript variant readings along with the reading of *Ararad*<sup>17</sup>. As concerns the reference to Korduk, it is possible to suppose that it was a later introduction to the text of Pavstos Buzand.

About Armenia and its highest summit, Ararat, in relation to the Flood and the Noah’s Ark, Eghishe (the 5th c. AD) wrote in his “Interpretation of the Genesis”: “Some call the mountain Ararat, Korduk, but the truth is that it is Masis”<sup>18</sup>. It may be seen that the problem emerged because in the 5<sup>th</sup> century the interpretation of the name of Ararat mountain had been already known, the answer of which was provided by Eghishe.

It is necessary to take into consideration the fact that the name *Kardu* or *Qardu* in the Syriac (the Peshitta) and, later on, Arabic translations of the Old Testament was applied instead of *Ararat*.

In this regard, Saint-Martin, examining the problem of Ararat as the resting summit of Noah’s Ark, remarked: “The name of Ararat is preserved in the translation of Septuagint, “The Antiquities of the Jews” by Josephus, the Vulgate and the Armenian translation of the Bible. It is being translated either as mountains of Armenia or the land of Armenians (les mots de Montagnes d’Arménie ou de Terre des Arméniens)<sup>19</sup>. Saint-Martin noted, “All of the translators and interpreters of the Holy Bible in Syriac while not preserving the primary phrase Ararat replaced it by an expression the mountains of Kurds”<sup>20</sup>. This example was followed by the translators of the Bible into Arabic”<sup>21</sup>.

As Movses Khorenatsi (the 5<sup>th</sup> century) reports, the Armenian Korduk was the territory of domicile of Hayk’s grandson, Kadmos (“տունն Կադմեայ”-“House of Kadmos”)<sup>22</sup>. The region name Korduk of the Kortchayk province of Great Armenia has no relation to the Kurds. Having described the route of the retreating Greek army (10000)

<sup>15</sup> Murad Fr., op. cit., S. 83-84.

<sup>16</sup> Փավստոս Բուզանդ, Հայոց պատմություն, թարգմ. և ծան. Ստ. Մալխասյանցի, Երևան, 1987, էջ 423, ծան. 32:

<sup>17</sup> Մովսէս Խորենացի, էջ 33, 34:

<sup>18</sup> Խաչիկյան Լ., Եղիշեի «Արարածոց մեկնություն», Երևան, 1992, էջ 245: See also Դանիելյան Է. Լ., Հայաստանն Աստվածաշնչում և Եղիշեի «Արարածոց մեկնություն» երկը. - Աստվածաշնչական Հայաստան, Երևան, 2005, էջ 151-157.

<sup>19</sup> Saint-Martin M. J., op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>20</sup> Saint-Martin mentioned the phrase *of the Kurds’ mountains*, taking into consideration the wrong standpoint of his time. The “Kurds” related misunderstanding appeared as a result of their tribal name’s wrong connection with the Armenian region name *Korduk* (Saint-Martin M. J., op. cit., p. 176).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Մովսէս Խորենացի, Պատմություն Հայոց, Երևան, 1991, էջ 34:

through Armenia (401 BC), Xenophon mentioned the inhabitants (Armenians) of the Korduk region according to the place of their residence - *Καρδυχοί* (Kordukians)<sup>23</sup>.

Declining the identification of Ararat with Korduk, Saint-Martin pointed out that two different opinions have been formed when specifying the location of the Ark after the Flood as a result of two variants of translations. According to Saint-Martin, the standpoint of the Ark as if being rested on the north of Mesopotamia and Syria was mainly accepted by “the Eastern Christians, Syrians and Arabs”<sup>24</sup>. He noted, “This first tradition was rather old in the East, for it had existed in the time of historiographers Abydenus and Chaldean Berosus”<sup>25</sup>.

Saint-Martin considered that tradition correct, according to which Mt. Ararat is in the center of Armenia, noting that “probably, it starts from the Septuagint Version.” He mentioned that “the Armenian translators of the Bible, have always followed the version of Septuagint and accepted the standpoint of their Homeland being a cradle of humankind”<sup>26</sup>.

In the translations of the Arabic primary sources made by Aram Ter-Ghevondyan, especially in the work of the Arab chronicler of the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries al-Waqidi, “The conquest of Syria”, it is reported that “And Vahb said we were told that the Ark... rested on the mount Ararat (Judi) for a month, which is a mountain in the country of Jazira”<sup>27</sup>. The Arab scholars of the 9<sup>th</sup> century were also of the same opinion<sup>28</sup>.

Later on, the Arab authors continued to speculate the name of Judi mountain in their interpretations of the Ark. The Arab author of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Ibn al-Asir pointed in his work “The Complete History”: “And the Ark [of Noah] was floating on the Earth... until it reached al-Judi, which is a mountain in Kardi, in the country of Mosul, and rested there”<sup>29</sup>. An Arab geographer of the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> noted, “The temple of Noah (according to the Arabic legend - A. D.) is on the mountain of Judi until now”<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Xenophon, *Anabasis*, books IV-V, with an English translation by Carleton L. Brownson and O. J. Todd, London, 1957, IV. I.11, III.24-27, V.5.17.

<sup>24</sup> Saint-Martin M. J., *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264-266.

<sup>27</sup> Արաբական աղբյուրներ Գ, արաբ մատենագիրներ Թ-Ժ դարեր, ներածությունը և բնագրից թարգմանությունները Ա. Տեր-Ղևոնդյանի, Երևան, 2005, էջ 128:

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 206, 332.

<sup>29</sup> Արաբական աղբյուրներ Բ, Իբն Ալ-Ասիր, թարգմանություն բնագրից առաջաբանը և ծանոթագրությունները Ա. Տեր-Ղևոնդյանի, Երևան, 1981, էջ 37:

<sup>30</sup> Արաբական աղբյուրները Հայաստանի և հարևան երկրների մասին, Յակուտ ալ-Համալի, Արու-Ֆիդա, Իբն Շահդադ, կազմ. Հ. Թ. Նալբանդյան, Երևան, 1965, էջ 50: Talking over the problem from the standpoint of political circumstances, M. Thierry groundlessly identified the Judi with the place of landing the Noah's Ark and concluded that the traditional identification of Ararat-Masis was made subsequently, conditioned by the political separation of Armenia and the influence of Ejmiatsin (M. Thierry, *Le lieu d'échouage de l'arche de Noé dans la tradition arménienne. – Syria*, 1995, vol. 72, issue 1-2, p. 143-158). About the criticism of such an opinion see Հ. Յարութին վրդ. Պղտիկեան, Հայ ժողովրդի ազատութեան պայքարը, (ԺԹ-Ի դդ.), Երեւան, 2004, էջ 82:

Interwining various opinions in the French publication of “The Encyclopedia of Islam” is noted that Ararat, mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, “was a territory south of the lake Van... Masis (Great Ararat), as well as Jabal Judi, both summits could be the mountains of Ararat as the traditional place of coming down of the Ark, according to the Biblical version”<sup>31</sup>.

Judi is mentioned in the Koran as the resting place of the Ark<sup>32</sup>. In the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries interpretations of the French translations of the Koran the authors considered Ararat as the resting place of the Ark, based on the records of the Pentateuch<sup>33</sup>.

George Sale touched the problem of the mountain Judi in an interpretation to his English translation of the Koran: “This mountain is one of those which divide Armenia, on the south, from Mesopotamia, and that part of Assyria, which is inhabited by Curds, from whom the mountains took the name of Cardu, or Gardu; by the Greeks turned into Gordyaei, and other names. Mount of (which name seems to be corruption, though it be constantly so written by the Arabs, for *Jordi* or *Giordi*)...”<sup>34</sup>. Likewise, it is noted (in the commentary of the French translation of the Koran by M. Kasimirski) that the name Judi corresponds to *Jordi*, the mountains of Korduk, which can be a corruption<sup>35</sup>.

The following commentary about the mountain Judi is made in the French translation (1979) of the Koran “It is a name of one of the Armenian great volcanic peaks, which is known as Ararat and the highest point of which reaches 5157 m”<sup>36</sup>. It can be seen that here Judi was wrongly identified with Ararat-Masis (the real elevation is 5165 m).

N. Adonts, writing about the usage of the Kurdish element in the conquest policy of the Ottoman Empire in Western Armenia, remarked that the migration of the Kurdish tribes started in the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Sultan Selim seized the great part of Armenia and “appointed Kurds as governors...”<sup>37</sup>.

A. Ter-Ghevondyan pointed that the mountain Ararat was well known to the Arab authors, who mentioned Great Masis as Haris and Lesser Masis as Huayras. He compared the legend about Masis, mentioned in the work of Movses Khorenatsi, with the records about Huayras in the Arabic sources, writing that “the Armenian legend of

<sup>31</sup> Encyclopédie de l’Islam établie avec le concours des principaux orientalistes B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat et J. Schacht, t. II, C-G, Paris, 1965, p. 589.

<sup>32</sup> Ղուրան, թարգմանեց արաբերէնից հայերէնի Աբր. Ամիրխանեանց, Վաննա, 1909, Սուրա XI. 46, էջ 205:

<sup>33</sup> Le Coran, traduit de l’arabe, accompagné de notes, et précédé d’un abrégé de la vie de Mahomet par M. Savary, Paris, 1782, t. I, p. 230. Le Koran, traduction nouvelle faite sur le texte arabe par M. Kasimirski, Paris, 1865, p. 175.

<sup>34</sup> The Koran or, Alcoran of Mohammed; with explanatory notes, London, 1877, p. 179. George Sale in his commentary wrongly considered the region of Korduk of Great Armenia as a part of Assyria inhabited by Kurds.

<sup>35</sup> Le Koran, traduction nouvelle faite sur le texte arabe par M. Kasimirski, Paris, 1865, p. 175.

<sup>36</sup> Le Koran, texte, traduction française et commentaire d’après la tradition, les différentes écoles de lecture, d’exégèse, de jurisprudence et de théologie, les interprétations mystiques, les tendances schismatiques et les doctrines hérétiques de l’Islam, et à la lumière des théories scientifiques, philosophiques et politiques modernes par le Cheikh Si Hamza Boubakeur, Fayard, 1979, t. I, p. 705.

<sup>37</sup> Ադոնց Ն., Հայկական հարցի լուծման շուրջ, Երևան, 1989, էջ 64-65:

the mountain Masis having passed through the Arabic environment was filled up with new materials,... the basis of which is Armenian, but it got an Arabic coloring over the time”<sup>38</sup>.

Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Caves Scrolls)<sup>39</sup> shed new light on the matter under question. It is reported in the 12<sup>th</sup> line of the 10<sup>th</sup> column of the Aramaic original that the Ark “rested on one of the mountains of Ararat” (“... l’arche se posa sur l’une des montagnes d’Ararat”)<sup>40</sup>. The French Qumranologist H. Lignée, who has explored that scroll, considered that possibly “this work either is a translation of one Hebrew original or an adaptation of an older manuscript”<sup>41</sup>. Researching this problem, G. Abgaryan concluded, “The text of the Aramaic Bible, known today, containing the interpolated Kardu is incomparably newer than the Qumran manuscript, where the interpolation has not been done yet, and Noah’s Ark comes to rest on the mountains of Ararat”<sup>42</sup>.

Thus primary sources on Ararat as a mountain where the Ark rested have been analyzed by the Armenologists since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among important historic sources on the issue under discussion are the Qumran manuscript and Eghishe’s interpretation about Ararat-Masis as the mountain where the Ark rested.

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<sup>38</sup> Considering the mountain Masis as a resting place of the Ark, at the same time A. Ter-Ghevondyan brought the viewpoint expressed in the Arabic sources (Տեր-Ղևոնդյան Ա., Մասիս լեռան մասին արաբական գրոյցը.- Հոդվածների ժողովածու, Երևան, 2003, էջ 226, 229).

<sup>39</sup> Since 1947 a collection of Biblical and Non-Biblical scrolls have been discovered in 12 caves (Qumran Caves) in the immediate vicinity of Khirbet Qumran (date back to the Hellenistic period and later). Most of them are in Hebrew, some in Aramaic and some in Greek (see in detail <http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/featured-scrolls>).

<sup>40</sup> Les textes du Qumran traduits et annotés ... par J. Carmignac, E. Cothenet et H. Lignée, (II) Paris, 1963, p. 225; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20): A Commentary, Roma, 2004, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> Les textes du Qumran ..., p. 215.

<sup>42</sup> Աբգարյան Գ., Աբգարյան Վ., Արարատը Կումրանի ձեռագրերում.-Աստվածաշնչական Հայաստան, Միջազգային գիտաժողովի նյութերի ժողովածու, 2005, էջ 112-113: