

ARMEN PETROSYAN, THE PROBLEM OF ARMENIAN ORIGINS. MYTH, HISTORY, HYPOTHESES, INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY, NAS RA, YEREVAN: "ANTARES PUBLISHING HOUSE", 2017, 248 P. (IN ARM.)

The recent study by Armen Petrosyan is the last one among his numerous studies, which were devoted to the Pre-History of Armenian people¹. As the author mentions in the Introduction, his goal was to summarize all that was achieved by Armenology during the last century and up to date.

The study is built on the analysis of several interconnected levels - biological, cultural, linguistic, religious-mythological, and historical. It consists of four chapters, where the reader finds the analysis of main problems of early Armenian ethnogenesis and statehood.

In the first chapter («Traditional data of Armenian ethnogenesis») the author introduces primary sources of his study - etiological myth, Armenian epos (discussed under the light of comparative mythology), ethnographic, linguistic data, as well as the studies of Classical Greek, Roman and medieval historiographers (Strabo, Josephus Flavius, Leonti Mroveli, Jakut etc).

The second chapter («Earliest tribal and state organizations of the Armenian Highland and the problem of their inheritance») discusses the early state formations of the Armenian Highland (III-I mill. B.C.), supplemented with the problem of inheritance or possible links between them.

In principal the methodology used by the author is without doubt, scientific and thus convincing, since he is trying to build his reconstructions referring to similar models gained from the study of other ancient civilizations. Most probably, the appearance of different ethnonyms in synchronous and diachronous sources for the population of a given geographical area could not be taken as a proof for the existence of different ethnic groups (p.74-77). The examples referred by the author are more than satisfying: the names of Mittani (Egypt. Naharina, Hitt. Hurri, Assyr. Hanigalbat), Urartu (Assyr. Nairi and Urartu, Urart. Biainili, Urashtu in Babylonian, Akkadian variant of the Behistun inscription, Armina and Harminuya of the Persian and Elamite versions of the same text).

In this regard it would be of interest to mention that exonyms used in regard to early state formations or population groups could not be taken as an argument for the linguistic affiliation/ethnic background of their population. Most of these ethnonyms are arbitrary since they were formed according to the external features of the population existing in the mentality of their neighbors (name of the settlement, a mountain or mountain range, lake or river in the neighborhood, true or fictional forefather etc.). As a rule, the endonyms and exonyms differ from each other. In this regard some cases are

¹ Petrosyan A., *The Myth of Aram in the context of Indo-European Mythology and the Problem of Armenian Ethnogenesis*, Yerevan, 1997 (In Arm.); *Armenian Epos and Mythology*, Yerevan, 2002 (In Russian); *The Indo-European and Ancient Near Eastern Sources of the Armenian Epic*, Washington DC, 2002 (= JIES Monograph No 42); *Ancient roots of Armenian pantheon*, *Patmabanasirakan handes*, 2002/2, pp. 205-233 (In Arm.); *Problems of Armenian Ethnogenesis*, Yerevan, 2006 (In Arm.); *Aramazd*, Yerevan, 2006 (In Arm.) etc.

worth to mention. For example, Lithuanians call Russians *krievs* (this was the exonym which denotes the eastern Slavic tribe of *Krivichi*, neighbors of ancient Lithuanians). Or *Tedeschi* which means Germans used by Italians (the name given to a small group of Jews settled down in Venice in the XVI century A.D.), not to mention French people, whose name originally denotes the German tribe of Franks. In this regard it would be worth to refer to the widespread practice in some studies where the authors were looking for the ethnonym "hay" or "armen" in ancient sources, neglecting others who probably could have been also Armenian-speaking.

In regard to the problem of political and spiritual-cultural inheritance the paragraph devoted to the Upper Armenia is of utmost importance. Here it is shown that this region is attested to in the written sources as a prominent cultic center still in the II mill. B.C. Strikingly, the main religious-cultic centers of Pre-Christian Armenia were located exactly here (in Ekexeac, Daranaxeac and Derjan gavars). It is not accidental that the ancestral tomb of the Armenian Arshakids was located in the fortress of Ani along with the part of the state treasury, not to mention that with the adoption of Christianity the district (gavar) of Ekexeac was given to Gregory the Illuminator as the domain of his family. Actually, in the case of the Upper Armenia we deal with the prominent region of the early Armenian statehood and the consolidation of the people.

In the case of the ancient Armenian province of Ayrarat the author also is inclined to see a considerable level of inheritance from most ancient period. He refers to the Armenian etiological myth, where this province figures as the center of "Armenian universe". Here used to live and rule Aramaneak, the elder son of the forefather Hayk and his offsprings.

Another variant of inheritance is suggested for the province of Vaspurakan (Lake Van area). Despite the absence of pan-Armenian state or religious centers in this region (capital cities, temples of prominent deities), here used to live the forefather Hayk (the battle at Hayotsdzor against Bel), and also "Mheri dur" of the "Daredevils of Sassoun" epos is located; other personages of the epos also are connected with the south. So, Vaspurakan, as well as Sassoun and Taron are considered to be the centers of ancient Armenian epos.

At the end of this chapter the civilizational role of Urartu is discussed. Indeed, the author rightly mentions that Urartu is to be understood as being an artificial political organization which includes different political, economic and linguistic components, where the ruling elite comprised a minority.

In the third chapter A. Petrosyan («Ethnolinguistic situation in the Armenian Highland in the II-I mill. B.C.») discusses the problem of ethnolinguistic composition of the Armenian Highland. Here the author lists a large group of proper names attested in the Mesopotamian and Anatolian cuneiform texts, where one could see clear traces of Indo-European and non-Indo-European population (Hurrian-Urartian, Indo-Iranian, Hittite-Luwian, Kaskaean, Semitic, Armenian etc.). In this panorama the original place of the Armenian speaking tribes, before their spread into other regions of the Armenian Highland, A.Petrosyan locates on the northern shores of Lake Van, in the upper

streamflow of Aratsani and adjacent regions, a view already proposed long ago². It is worth to mention that the above-mentioned situation is fixed long before the formation of the Urartian state. This is exactly the area where the forefather Hayk had settled down after his departure from Babylonia - Hark, which was entitled as "Primary Armenia" in some Armenological studies. This could explain the existence of some Armenian words in Urartian texts.

The last chapter of the monograph («Scholarly hypotheses of the identification of Armenians») represents an overview of different theories (migratory and autochthonous) dealing with the formation of the Armenian people. Further he goes on to discuss the background of all these theories under the light of modern scholarship.

The monograph is supplied with extensive bibliography and indices.

The monograph of A.Petrosyan is one of the most complete studies dealing with the Pre-History of ancient Armenia. It brings together a large quantity of sources and references to other authors with minimal suggestions, thus leaving space for further studies on each topic discussed in the monograph.

The evaluation of A.Petrosyan's monograph would be incomplete without some ideas concerning the problems of Armenian Pre-History aimed to future studies in this field.

The first and most important point in the understanding of ethnolinguistic processes is the civilizational diversity of the Armenian Highland. Although the three main regions pointed by the author (Upper Armenia, Ayrarat, Van-Vaspurakan) reflect the political and spiritual-cultural situation before the creation of the first pan-Armenian kingdoms (Urartu and Greater Armenia), these same areas were definitely divided into several smaller units. It is extant particularly in the case of the south. The northern and eastern shores of Lake Van and Axdznik, and the southern shores of the lake could be united at best only on the epic level. The same is true for the Upper Armenia.

The second point regards the cultural background of the inheritance. Local migrations were one of the most important features of the ancient societies of the Armenian Highland beginning at least from the late IV mill. B.C., which could and should have constantly re-shape the linguistic and cultural identities of the population. For example, several large migrations from the Kura-Araxes homeland (Ayrarat and adjacent regions) towards Upper Armenia, Tsopk, also to the Lake Van and Urmiya basins.

The third and last point is the poor discussion of the external factor while studying the problems of early Armenian statehood and ethnogenesis. The impact of our ancient neighbors - Mesopotamian, Anatolian, and Iranian cultural milieus on the formation and development of Armenian political, economic and cultural realities is well known and could not be neglected.

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² T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov, *Indo-European language and Indo-Europeans*, Tbilisi, 1984, vol. II, p. 956, Map.