

ԱՆԷԻՏԱ ԴՈԼՈՒԽԱՆՅԱՆ

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VII

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# SAINT-MARTIN THE FOUNDER OF FRENCH ARMENOLOGY

## Summary

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Jean Antoine Saint-Martin (1791-1832) is the founder of Armenian studies in France. His capital work *Mémoire historique et géographique sur l'Arménie* is a study in two volumes which were published in Paris in 1818 and 1819. With this work Saint-Martin contributed to the development of Armenian studies in Europe. In his Report at the beginning of the first volume he writes: "This is the first work devoted to Armenia in Europe; we allow us to think that it will communicate true geographical and historical information. Diverse mentions and translations it contains go up to 1812"<sup>1</sup>.

Saint-Martin was a renowned orientalist, the student of Sylvestre de Sacy. In the dedication to his prominent tutor at the beginning of his main work, he notes that his study "will contribute to give an exact notion about a country and a people that remained almost unknown until our days"<sup>2</sup>.

This work by Saint-Martin justified his expectation. Armenologists from Russia and Europe based themselves on data communicated by him. It suffices to mention that the prolix article "Armenia" in the second volume of the Encyclopedia by Brockhaus and Efron is mostly based on the above-mentioned study<sup>3</sup>.

One can cite among the students of Saint-Martin Marie Félicité Brosset who was at the same time his biographer. He published in 1833 in Paris his Notice historique sur *M. J. A. Saint-Martin*, a voluminous biography - ode, which is a really monumental characteristic devoted to the early deceased Armenologist. He characterizes his tutor as an inspired genius who freely mastered five oriental languages: Armenian, Persian, Assyrian, Arabic and Turkish. He was also able to use Zendi and Georgian<sup>4</sup>. By the way, Brosset considers that the book *Mémoires...* is simply magnificent<sup>5</sup>.

The founder of Armenian studies in France stressed how useful it could be for European science to study Armenian language and the translations done by Armenian authors. He explained the indifference of Europeans towards Armenia and its culture by the fact that at that time the country was deprived of sovereignty. Orientalists eagerly studied in Europe Arabic, Persian, Indian and Chinese languages, because those were

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<sup>1</sup> Saint-Martin J.-A., *Mémoire historique et géographique sur l'Arménie*, t. 1, Paris, 1818, p. IX.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pp. VII-VIII.

<sup>3</sup> Брокгауз Ф. А., Ефрон И. А., *Энциклопедический словарь*, т. II, Санкт-Петербург, 1890, с. 124.

<sup>4</sup> Brosset M., *Notice historique sur M. J.-A. Saint-Martin*, Paris, 1833, p. III

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

languages of sovereign nations, while Armenians had several times lost their sovereignty and at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were within the sphere of confrontation of the Ottoman Empire, Persia and the Russian Empire. According to Saint-Martin, at that time Armenians were dispersed all over the world and even if they lost their sovereignty and were persecuted by Moslems, they had managed to preserve their national language, their religion and traditions; and the most important - they cultivated and developed multi-branch literature and culture. Saint-Martin considered this phenomenon as unusual and he related it with the spiritual richness and capacities of the Armenian people.

Saint-Martin speaks with admiration about the spiritual flourishing of Armenia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century; he enumerates works which were translated by Armenians from Greek, Syriac, Latin and other languages. A part of the translations has now the value of originals, as their original texts are lost. Saint-Martin appreciates very much Armenian historians, whose works, even if they are not always voluminous, contain essential data for historical chronicles; they are true history, without imaginary deviations proper to Oriental historiography.

The Armenian historians' works are valuable sources for international historiography; thanks to them orientalists can find and study facts about Greeks of Constantinople, Persian kings of the Sassanid dynasty, Arab Moslems, Seljuk Turks, Crusaders, Mongols and the entire East, which cannot be found in other historical sources. They cover the period between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Saint-Martin speaks with great appreciation about the numerous printing houses which were founded by Armenians from the very beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in diverse countries, from Italy to India. They were opened in Venice, Amsterdam, Leipzig, Livorno, Poland, Constantinople, Smyrna and many cities of Russia, as well as in Echmiadzin, Madras, New-Julfa, Marseilles and elsewhere.

Saint-Martin communicates such facts about Armenia that cannot be found in Armenian historians' works and which became known to specialists thanks to his above-mentioned work.

Even if now some inexactitudes can be found in the Saint-Martin's masterpiece, they don't cast aspersions either on his unique contribution to Armenian studies, or its present value.

Saint-Martin's masterpiece was a scientific stimulus not only to the development of Armenian studies in Europe. In his study devoted to Ferdowsi Stepanos Nazarian notes with satisfaction that European scientific thought turned towards Eastern countries, which were not paid attention to before<sup>6</sup>.

The interest of European science for the history of Armenian people was a kind of stimulus for Armenian scholars, too, to present with more enthusiasm the contribution of their national culture to the world science and culture.

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<sup>6</sup> Նազարյան Ա., Երկերի ժողովածու, Երևան, 1996, էջ 106:

Nowadays, Turkish and Azerbaijani falsifiers, contrary to historic facts, spare no efforts to “declare” insanely that Artsakh was always an “Azerbaijani” territory. In fact, the refutation of such declarations may be found in Saint-Martin’s masterpiece, published as soon as 1818. Speaking about the territories of medieval Armenia, Saint-Martin takes advantage from information communicated not only by Armenian historians and authors, but he also finds its confirmation in ancient Greek, Roman, Syriac, Persian and Arabic sources.

He writes: “Armenian geographers, as well as Greek and Latin geographers, usually divide Armenia in two great parts. Great Armenia, Մեծ Հայք, which covers the territory between the Euphrates and the Caspian Sea, and Armenia Minor, Փոքր Հայք...”<sup>7</sup>. Saint-Martin speaks in details about Cilician Armenia, as well as about First, Second, Third and Fourth Armenia, mentioning their geographical borders.

Saint-Martin narrates the history of Armenia step by step, from century to century, mentioning for each period which were neighboring countries. He is often citing such prominent antique geographers as Strabo and Ptolemy, famous historian Josephus Flavius and the early medieval well-known author Stephanus of Byzantium.

Speaking about Armenian royal dynasties: Haykazians, Arsacids, Bagratids, Rubenids from Cilician Armenia and the last Lusignan king, Saint-Martin doesn’t forget to mention that until the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were small independent Armenian principalities in mountainous Artsakh, in Gandzak and at the south of Barda (Partav in Utik), /the rulers of which were calling themselves Meliks: “...a name derived from the Arabic Melik which means king”<sup>8</sup>.

In the first volume of his study the French Armenologist has a passage devoted to the “Description of Great Armenia” in which he describes in details the mountains, rivers and lakes of Great Armenia, then its fifteen provinces with their districts *gavars*.

He considers that the greatest lakes of Armenia are Lakes of Van, Urmia and Sevan. He describes each of them: their geographical situation, the quality of the water and their different names. For instance, Lake Van was known as Salty Sea, *Sea of Van*, *Bznuniats Sea*, *Rshtuniats Sea*, *Sea of Vaspurakan*, and *Sea of Tosp*<sup>9</sup>.

In the book of Saint-Martin (according to Armenian sources) the fifteen provinces of Armenia are the following: 1) Bardzr Hayk / Upper Armenia, 2) Tayk, 3) Gugark, 4) Utik, 5) Fourth Armenia or Tsopk, 6) Turuberan, 7) Ayrarat, 8) Vaspurakan, 9) Siunik, 10) Artsakh, 11) Paytakaran, 12) Aghdznik, 13) Mokq, 14) Korjayk, 15) Parskahayk (Nor-Shirakan).

Speaking about the tenth province, Artsakh, he tells that at his time, i.e. in 1818, “The main part of Artsakh is a subject of the Russian Empire”.

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<sup>7</sup> Saint-Martin J.-A., *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l'Arménie*, t.1, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.

He reminds that from the 13<sup>th</sup> century Artsakh was also called Khachen<sup>10</sup> and sometimes Lesser Siunik as well<sup>11</sup>. In this small essay Saint-Martin enumerates the towns and villages of Artsakh, which are Gandzasar, Khachen, Jraberd, Amaras, Varand and Dizak, as well as Gandzak and Tavush in Utik.

The French Armenologist gives the explanation of the name Gandzak. According to him “Gandzak” is derived from the Armenian word *gandz*, which means ‘treasure’, and the town was called so because Armenian kings used to keep their treasures there<sup>12</sup>. As to Amaras, it was the greatest sanctuary of Armenians, as the relics of martyr Grigoris (the grandson of St. Grigor Lusavorich/the Illuminator) were kept there, as follows from Movses Khorenatsi’s “History of Armenia”<sup>13</sup>.

In the first volume of his study Saint-Martin also explains the origin of the *nakharars* (feudal lords) family names according to Movses Khorenatsi’s (the 5<sup>th</sup> century) etymology. He confirms that the explanations of these family names have traditionally come down from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century and later many historians, such as Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi or Samuel Anetsi, just repeated what Khorenatsi had said.

Naturally, Saint-Martin gives the etymology of the names ‘Hayastan’ and ‘Armenia’. He explains why Armenians are called Askanazians, or the House of Torgoma, also mentioning evidences from the Bible about Armenians. He cites the following passage of the Old Testament book of Genesis: “And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Tagarmah”<sup>14</sup>. And he cites the following passage of the prophecy of Jeremiah against Babylon: “Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz; appoint a captain against her, cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars”<sup>15</sup>.

Saint-Martin reminds that according to Movses Khorenatsi and other Armenian historians, “Tagarmah (Torgom) was the father of Hayk, the first chief of their nation”<sup>16</sup>.

He also explains the names Armen and Armenia, remaining faithful to the evidence given by Movses Khorenatsi.

Among all the provinces of Armenia, Saint-Martin puts apart Ayrarat which was one of the fifteen provinces and the most important of them during the reign of Arsacids, as from the ancient times there were permanent residences of Armenian kings and the country was governed from there.

Saint-Martin considers that Armenian and foreign historians are quite right when they relate the resting of the Ark of Noah on the Mount Ararat, which became the cradle of mankind. He explains the origin of the name Akori of the ancient village at the foot of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 149,

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 150.

<sup>13</sup> Մովսէս Խորենացի, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, Երևան, 1991, Գ, 3:

<sup>14</sup> Genesis, 10, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah, 51, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Saint-Martin J.-A., Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l’Arménie, t. 1, p. 256.

Mount Ararat: “Արկունի, he put the seed and it was given to it”, then coming down from the Mount Ararat, Noah planted a vineyard”<sup>17</sup>.

In the same way, he considers that the word Nakhijevan means the place where Noah stepped for the first time.

In some parts of his book Saint-Martin speaks about the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, after the publication made by Anquetil Duperron. He sees great identity between Armenian and Pahlavi words.

The second important part of the *Mémoires...* first volume is titled *A Review of the History of Armenia*. In this part the French Armenologist widely takes into consideration data concerning the history of Armenia in the works of Xenophon, Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Josephus Flavius, Tacitus, Abu'l- Faraj and other foreign historians. He is also well aware of the works by Armenian authors Koryun, Agathangelos, Pavstos Byuzand, Movses Khorenatsi, Eghishe, Ghazar Parpetsi, Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi, Hovhan Mamikonian, Samuel Anetsi, Matthew of Edessa, Stepanos Orbelian, Hetum the Historian, Mikael Chamchian and others. Most of all he cites Movses Khorenatsi, Pavstos Byuzand, Eghishe and Matthew of Edessa. He considers that the *History of Armenia* by Pavstos Byuzand is an irreplaceable source for the study of the Armenian history of the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. It must be mentioned that Saint-Martin studied Armenian medieval sources mainly in manuscripts, because there were few printed books yet.

Saint-Martin dreamed to translate Armenian historians' works into French, but he could do only the translations of the histories by Stepanos Orbelian, and Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi. The main part of the second volume of *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l'Arménie* consists of the French translation of the *History of Siunik* by Stepanos Orbelian, with Preface and Commentaries.

The volume contains “The Geography attributed to Moses of Khoren and Doctor Vartan with some other works devoted to the history of Armenia”<sup>19</sup>. Saint-Martin rightly considered Movses Khorenatsi the author of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but not admitting that the Geography (“Ashkharhatsoyts”) was translated or written by Movses Khorenatsi, stated: “It will be superfluous to insist any more on this point. I shall not either do further researches to establish the time when it was written”<sup>20</sup>. Later, the *Geography* was found to be the work of Anania Shirakatsi, a great scientist of the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Saint-Martin J.-A., *Mémoires...*, t.1, p. 266–267.

<sup>18</sup> Saint-Martin J.-A., *Mémoires...*, t.1, p. 314.

<sup>19</sup> Saint-Martin J.-A., *Mémoires...*, t. II, Paris, 1819, p. 405.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 315. Saint-Martin used only one manuscript, so he had not been acquainted with other manuscripts of “Asharhatsyts” where is mentioned the name of Movses Khorenatsi. Saint-Martin's point of view was sharply criticized by Gh. Intchitchyan (Ինճիճեան Ղ., Հնախօսութիւն աշխարհագրական Հայաստանեաց աշխարհի, Վէնէտիկ, 1835, հ. Գ, էջ 304–313) and his followers [ed.]:

<sup>21</sup> Such an opinion (K.Patkanyan, J.Markwart, A. Abrahamyan, T.Hakobyan et al) is a result of the fact that the copies of “Asharhatsyts” have been preserved both in the collections of manuscripts with the works of Movses Khorenatsi and Anania Shirakatsi (see Աբրահամյան Ա.Գ., “Աշխարհացոյցի” հեղինակի պրոբլեմը, Պատմա-բանասիրական հանդես, 1969, 3, էջ 227). B. Harutyunyan followed the opinion (Gulielmus & Georgius, Gul. Whistoni Filii, Michael Chamchyan, Arsen Soukkry), according to which the author of “Asharhatsyts” is Movses

Armenological heritage of Saint-Martin confirmed the necessity of Armenian studies in France. His example was followed by French and Belgian prominent Armenologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Marie Brosset, Victor Langlois, Félix Nève and Edouard Dulaurier who loved Armenia and its creative people, representing one of the most ancient civilizations all over the world.

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Khorenatsi (Հարությունյան Բ., Մեծ Հայքի վարչաքաղաքական բաժանման համակարգն ըստ "Աշխարհացոյցի", մաս Ա, Արևմտյան և հարավային աշխարհներ, Երևան, 2001, էջ 33: There is an opinion that "Asharhatsyts" written by Movses Khorenatsi (the 5<sup>th</sup> century) was edited and continued in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by Anania Shirakatsi (see Դանիելյան Է.Լ., Հայաստանի քաղաքական պատմությունը և Հայ Առաքելական եկեղեցին VI-VII դդ., Երևան, 2000, էջ 37, Մուշեղյան Ա.Վ., Մովսես Խորենացու դարը, Երևան, 2007, էջ 111, 124) [ed.]: