Over the Mountains and Far Away

Studies in Near Eastern history and archaeology

presented to Mirjo Salvini on the occasion of his 80th birthday

edited by

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and

Yervand H. Grekyan

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Editorial

It is hard to quantify the enormous weight of Prof. Mirjo (Miroslavo) Salvini’s scientific contribution to Near Eastern studies, and especially to the history, philology and culture of the Urartian civilization. In over 50 years of unceasing research activity, he has contributed in many different fields, but mostly to Urartological studies, helped by his multilingual and multicultural education. Mirjo was inspired to understand Urartu thanks to an intuition of Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, one of his teachers, who motivated him to take an interest in that distant culture – regarding which, in that period, the first connections were established with Mediterranean cultures, in particular the Greeks and Etruscans. He is one of the few philologists to have understood the necessary relationship between philological data, landscape studies and archaeological knowledge.

This is clearly reflected in his enormous academic production, in which philological information and historical reconstruction are always flanked by the careful and perceptive observation of the archaeological contexts. The desire to know and understand the history and culture of Urartu led him to travel continuously in the areas where Urartu once spread, in Armenia, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. In the 1960s he established direct relations with, among others, Boris Borisovich Piotrovskij (head of Karmir-blur excavations), Nikolay Harutyunyan (philologist and Urartologist), Igor’ Michajlovič D’jakonov (orientalist and linguist), Konstantin Hovhannisyan (head of Arin-berd excavations), and Afi Erzen (head of Çavustepe and Toprakkale excavations), visiting the sites and collecting valuable information. He also collaborated with the excavation of Bastam, in northeastern Iran, again studying epigraphic material.

During these travels he was able to discover dozens of unpublished Urartian inscriptions, and very often contributed directly to saving these ancient texts, assisting local institutions, such as the Van Museum, to rescue them. Mirjo has spent almost his entire research career working for the National Research Council in the ‘Institute for Mycenaean, Aegean and Anatolian Studies’ (ISMEA, 1968-2001), founded by Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, Piero Meriggi, Carlo Gallavotti and Doro Levi and based on a previous study centre at the University of Rome. Later the name of the institute was changed to ‘Institute of Aegean and Near Eastern Studies’ (ICEVO, 2001-2013), before being involved in a series of mergers between different CNR institutes that have interrupted the long tradition of studies and research activities. After these events, Mirjo and its collaborators continued the research as members of the ISMEO - International Association of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies. Mirjo directed ISMEA/ICEVO for a long time contributing in those years to the enlargement of the institute’s library, considered at its peak as one of the best in the world for Anatolian and Mycenaean studies. During this period, there were many research activities related to Urartian studies most of which directed by Mirjo. Fundamental among these were the survey and excavations on the western shore of Lake Orumiyeh in Iran that led to the publication in 1984 of the book ‘Tra lo Zagros e l’Urmia’ co-edited by Mirjo and Paolo Emilio Pecorella, which is still today one of the essential works on that region. During the time of his ICEVO direction important archaeological work was started and continued in Armenia, aimed at studying the borders of the state of Urartu and its impact on local communities in the Lake Sevan area. Also important was his collaboration, and that of the institute, in the excavations of the fortress of Ayanis, on the eastern shore of Lake Van – one of the most important Urartian sites ever excavated, where Mirjo was for a period vice-director and responsible for the study of inscriptions.

However, there is no doubt that his main contribution to Urartological studies was his ‘Corpus of Urartian Texts’ (CTU), the work of a lifetime, which represents the sum of his entire career. Those lucky enough to assist him and accompany him on research trips in the East cannot fail to remember the red cover copy of his corpus, which he took everywhere in a constant effort to perfect the work. His burning passion for research drove his incessant visits to examine Urartian inscriptions still in situ – regardless of the harshness of their sites of conservation – as well as those kept in museums.

Among the many places visited, that to which he is most attached is the Fortress of Van. On the top of that dramatically beautiful rock spur, he loved to read at dusk, to a lucky few, extracts from the ‘History of the Armenians’ by Movses Khorenatsi, especially the passages concerning the mythical foundation of the capital of Urartu by Queen Semiramis. While we certainly do not want to limit Mirjo’s importance to the study of Urartu, given that he is also a scholar of primary importance in fields such as Hittitology and Hittitology, there is no doubt that his contribution to the civilization of Urartu is the most prominent, and that in which he invested most of his energy. We hope that this Festschrift presented to Mirjo by his friends, colleagues, collaborators and students, will serve as an appropriate tribute to this outstanding individual and scholar. Most of all, this book should be read as a sign of our gratitude for Mirjo’s indefatigable enthusiasm in promoting Near Eastern studies, especially of Urartu.

We would like to thank all the contributors that have decided to participate to this work and the people that have helped us in the different stages of the process of realization, especially Kristine Martirosyan-Olshansky, Priscilla Vitolo, Nshan Tomas Kesecker, and Onofrio Gasparro.

Pavel Avetisyan, Roberto Dan, Yervand Grekyan

Yerevan – Rome, 14 May 2018
Foreword

The present volume represents an excellent opportunity to celebrate the career of an outstanding scholar and personal friend, active over the years in many fields of Oriental research.

Mirjo was one of the first researchers to embrace the aims of the new ISMEO re-founded in 2012 – and the Association itself has, since the beginning, welcomed the carrying on of Mirjo’s scientific heritage, sponsoring many of the research lines he had been working for decades within the ICEVO framework.

We must remember Mirjo’s creation of the Italian (now ISMEO) ‘Urartu program’, as part of which a series of investigations were conducted in the field, and linked to research activities that led over time to the publication of important reference works in Urartology. The main purpose of that project was to develop convergence between historical-philological and archaeological research work in the field; it reached its apex with the publication of the Corpus of Urartian Texts in five volumes, in which all known Urartian inscriptions are gathered together, translated and commented upon. As part of this research, important missions were started in Armenia and Iran.

ISMEO, since 2013, has taken charge of this rich scientific heritage, continuing archaeological and philological research into the Urartian civilization; in this context an extensive research program was launched and archaeological investigations have been started in the Southern Caucasus, in Armenia (since 2013) and in southern Georgia (since 2017), now incorporated into the ISMEO Archaeological Mission to South Caucasus. The main targets of these activities – developed in selected areas of particular relevance – include: (1) the investigation of protohistoric phases (Late Bronze/Early Iron Age), (2) close study of the birth of the Urartu state, its territorial organization, and the relations between the state and local communities (Middle Iron Age), (3) the cultural heritage left by the Urartu state after its decline in the territories that it occupied, in the ‘Median’ and Achaemenid periods (Late Iron Age). Precisely the question of the relations between Urartu and the Achaemenid world, in which Mirjo made important contributions, was the basis of a volume recently published by ISMEO. From the perspective of Achaemenid studies, Urartu’s exact role is still debated and still presents many obscure points that only the progress of research will help to clarify.

All ISMEO members and friends are very glad to contribute with the present tribute to Mirjo’s human qualities and scientific expertise.

Adriano Rossi, President, ISMEO

Rome, 17 June 2018
Bibliography

Books and monographs


Books written conjointly with others


Books Edited


Articles in journals or books


**Varia**


Fig. 1. In Gaziantep with Paolo Emilio Pecorella.

Fig. 2. Working in Anzaf village surrounded by the villagers.
Fig. 3. In Turkey with Paolo Emilio Pecorella.

Fig. 4. Working on the Kelišin Inscription, still in situ.
Fig. 5. With one of the inscriptions on the Minua’s Canal.

Fig. 6. Working in Van Museum on Urartian cuneiform tablet.
Fig. 7. Working in Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

Fig. 8. Working on Gandzadur/Hazine Kapısı inscription in Van fortress (Tušpa)
Fig. 9. Working on Tsovinar inscription.

Fig. 10. Working in Van fortress (Ţuşpa).
Bīsotūn, ‘Urartians’ and ‘Armenians’ of the Achaemenid Texts,¹ and the Origins of the Exonyms Armina and Arminiya²

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Abstract: A new analysis of the Bīsotūn (Behistun) inscription and evidence from other texts of the Achaemenid period supports the developing conceptualization of Biainili-Urartu as an empire inhabited by different peoples that spoke a variety of languages. The exonyms Urartu, ‘Urartians’ and Armina, ‘Armenians’ cannot be interpreted as ethnic terms. Those rather were synonymic geopolitical and demographic concepts used by foreigners until the end of the fifth century BCE. It is highly probable that the peoples inhabiting the Iranian Plateau used the names Armina, or Harminu to define the empire of Biainili at the same time when the peoples of Syro-Mesopotamia called it Urartu, no later than in the seventh century BCE and maybe earlier. However, being synonymous, neither Urartu nor Armina had signified one and the same political and sociocultural unit. Urartu was a geographic and demographic identifier of the Armenian Highland and its population during the Early Iron Age, of the following empire of Biainili, and of the subsequent periods of domination of that territory by the Median polity and the Achaemenid Empire. Emerging in the times of Biainili, the exonym Armina continues its existence to the present in the exonymic name Armenia.

Keywords: Behistun, Bīsotūn, Achaemenid texts, Urartu, Armenia, Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Elamite

It was quite awhile ago... sometime around 1968 I had the pleasure of meeting Mirjo Salvini upon his arrival to Yerevan on a mission to photograph and study in situ a number of the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions. He just had completed the translation and publication in Italian of the foundational volume The Kingdom of Van by Boris B. Piotrovskij (1966) with who at that time I was preparing to begin my graduate studies in Saint Petersburg. In the course of that brief visit I had the chance of accompanying Mirjo to Garni where the cuneiform inscription of Argishti, son of Minua carved on a Bronze Age višap (‘dragon-stone’) stele was uncovered not long before,³ and to Lshashen on the shore of Lake Sevan with the purpose of exploring and photographing another inscription of the same Argishti.⁴ I still can remember Mirjo’s deep and enthusiastic Urartological devotion, which, nevertheless, couldn’t cool down his typically Italian excitement caused by the scenery of a dozen Sevan fishermen pulling out of the lake a large net full with jumping and flipping trout. But it was this devotion that led Mirjo through a lifelong journey full of major accomplishments in the studies of Urartian philology and history, which clarified many previously unanswered questions. But it also was his subtly critical work that contributed to the natural rise of new questions in the course of the last few decades, particularly concerning the last period of Urartian history and the historical destiny of Urartu and the Urartians.⁵

The current uncertainty regarding the history of the territories laying to the north of Mesopotamia beyond the Eastern Taurus mountains and of their inhabitants during the timespan stretching between the last reference concerning the king of Urartu Sarduri/Issar-dùrî in the records of Assurbanipal dated to 646/642 BCE⁶ and the ethnographically rich description of the Achaemenid satrapy of Armenia by Xenophon written down by him sometime in the first quarter of the fourth century BCE stems from several factors. One certainly could deplore the insufficient incorporation of archaeological record into historical reconstructions and the dearth of written texts concerning that period of regional history that we are discussing. Yet, it is undeniable that one of the most significant monuments of the Ancient Near East – the Bīsotūn (Behistun) inscription of Darius the Great completed soon after 518 BCE⁷ and being called oftentimes the ‘empress of Ancient Oriental inscriptions’, shed an invaluable light on the history of the territory that it mentions synonymously as Uraštu and Armina, respectively in its Babylonian and Old Persian versions exactly within that timespan, and that there are also other, sufficiently known texts of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods complementing the historical picture of that area. Thus, considering the substantial advancements in the publication and interpretation of the Bīsotūn monument in the course of recent decades, it becomes suitable to reexamine its interpretations together with other relevant data concerning the historical relationship between Uraštu and Armina in the Achaemenid sources and beyond.

What follows offer some observations regarding both few philological and historical details and a brief overview of the currently ongoing pertinent discourse from a general perspective of the sociology of scientific knowledge and Thomas Kuhn’s theory of scientific paradigms. Such an approach requires a pragmatic (in terms of semiotics) contextualization of meanings within a historical perspective, i.e. we need to juxtapose the potentially reconstructable meanings of the lexical and textual data of the past within the framework of the sociocultural context of their own times with our interpretations defined by the intellectual traditions and contexts developing from the 19th century to the present. Since any historical research is retrospective, we

¹For the purposes of this article we consider as ‘Achaemenid texts’ all the texts from the Achaemenid Empire written in different languages.
²The author happily expresses his gratitude to Yervand Grekyan for patience and the support that he provided in the course of the preparation of this chapter.
³Arakelian and Harutyunyan 1966.
⁴Salvini 2002: 40-45, Figure 2.
⁵Cf. most recently: Salvini 2017: 439-442.
⁶Salvini 2017: 447.
⁷Schmitt 2013.
need first and foremost critically explore the possible biases in our own interpretations.

A scholar who knows nothing about Urartu and Armenian history and reads for the first time the Babylonian and Old Persian versions of Bīsotūn would indubitably identify the synonymity of Urāštu and Armina (as it was done already by Henry Rawlinson), and the first thing that would come to her mind, if she desires studying further the cause of difference between these names, would be exploring separately their origins. A textbook example of totally different names between these names, would be exploring separately their diachronically interconnected sequence between them, unless a phonological historical-linguistic connection could be established in each particular case. The same is applicable to the Armenian case, in which the endogenous self-appellation ʰa-rɔ-ʰɛ́-t, i.e. the Hurrian land.4

The number of similar examples could be largely expanded, including the Ancient Near Eastern evidence. Among the Amarna letters sent to the court of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten one finds the letter from king Tušratta synchronically calling the country that he ruled Hanigalbat and Mitanni, using names that clearly had different historical origins but became synonymous during a particular timespan. The same Tušratta denominates his country also with a third name ʰa-rɔ-ʰɛ́-t, i.e. the Hurrian land.5

The Bīsotūn inscription follows the same pattern revealed through the comparison of its different versions, where linguistically unrelated forms present different names used for one and the same country. So, in the Old Persian version6 the name of Elam is rendered as Ōja (derived from the name of Susa/Susiana), yet by the sumerogram KUR NIM.MA.KI (read Elamtu meaning ‘high’, ‘elevated’ in Babylonian) in the Babylonian version,7 or spelled out in the same Babylonian version as KUR e-lam-ma-tu.8 The Elamite version of Bīsotūn naturally uses the endogenous self-appellation ʰa-tam-ʰu-ta which clearly is connected to the Persian, indicating the similarity of exonymic appellation of the Scythians used in different languages of the Iranian Plateau. On the other hand, the Babylonian version refers to the same ‘Scythia’ as KUR gi-r-i,9 i.e. ‘the country of Cimmerians’, which is an Assyro-Babylonian linguistic archaism calling Herodotus’ Scythians by the name of their precursors that had invaded several parts of the Ancient Near East at the end of the 8th and in the first half of the 7th centuries BCE and were followed by the Scythian invasion from the steppes to the north of the Caucasus and the Black Sea.10 Evidently the scribes supplying the Babylonian text to the engravers of Bīsotūn were aware of the Old Persian name Saka denoting the ‘Scythians’ of Central Asia and of the ethno-linguistic connection of those with the Scythians of Southeastern Europe, but used the Neo-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian name gimiri transposed onto a people of Central Asia.

Another detail in the multilingual Bīsotūn text is highly indicative of the same pattern. We find ʰa-tam-ʰu-ta in the Babylonian version, as well as ʰa-rɔ-ʰɛ́-t, i.e. the Hurrian land.5

The country (dahyu)/satrapy named g-d-a-r, i.e. Gandhāra (modern Peshawar in Pakistan) in the Old Persian version11 is rendered by an unrelated name KUR pa-ar-ú-pa-ra-e-sa-an-
A convincing reconstruction of the sequence of engraving of Bīsotūn texts in different languages, which was explored in many details starting from the 1960s through the 1990s, shed even more light on the historical connection between the toponyms Uraštu and Armina of the Bīsotūn monument. The inscription initially was conceived as single language text in Elamite, which was the language of the Achaemenid imperial chancellery, and was dictated by Darius, supposedly in Old Persian, to a bilingual Elamite scribe who recorded it in Elamite, keeping all the grammatical rules and spelling of names used traditionally by the Elamite. Sometime in 519 BCE the text was translated into Babylonian, inscribed on the Bīsotūn cliff, and used as the source of translation into Aramaic. Finally, with the creation of the Old Persian cuneiform script carried out upon the order from Darius, the Old Persian version was inscribed on the monument with the addition of some paragraphs not present in preceding versions. The differences between the exonyms in the Elamite and Old Persian versions, which was used to denote same geopolitical entities, indicate that each of the versions used the ethnonymic repertoire historically developed by each of those languages. For obvious reasons the same cannot be stated with regard to the forms of the Bīsotūn onomastics that most of the time followed the phonetic rules of the particular language of Bīsotūn in rendering personal names from different languages.

Thus, the Elamite exoexonym ʰaɾ-mi-nu-i-a-ip₂₉ – Harminuya-ns (with the suffix for animated plural –p)³₀ of the initial Elamite version of Bīsotūn was translated in the subsequent Babylonian version as the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian exonym Urartu/Uraštu, and only later rendered in the Old Persian as Armina. This is the reflection of fundamental differences between the socio-geopolitical perception of the Elamites on the one hand and of the Old Persians on another, revealed by the comparison between the earlier Elamite and the later, Old Persian versions of Bīsotūn: the 23 peoples subjected to Darius according to the Elamite version became 23 countries - dahiya, the latter denoting both countries and their peoples in the Old Persian text. Semantically, but not phonetically, the Old Persian Armina is closer to the Assyro-Babylonian Urartu/Uraštu (country) than to the Elamite Harminuyap (people).

Thus, a detailed analysis of the multilingual Bīsotūn texts based on the currently available evidence allows only to conclude that the Assyro-Aramaic-Babylonian Urartu/Uraštu (country) was interpreted by the multilingual Achaemenid translators as one of the different names, together with the Elamite Harminuyap (people) and the Old Persian Armina (country and its peoples), of the same exo-signifier at the time of Darius I c. 520 BCE and, obviously, during some earlier timespan. The aforementioned evidence also leads to the most sensible conclusion that the peoples inhabiting the countries located to the south from the Eastern Taurus mountain chain, i.e. in Syro-Mesopotamia called the lands to the north of that mountain range Urartu/Uraštu, while the peoples living to the southeast of those territories, i.e. the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau, called the same territories and their peoples Harminu/Harminuyap and Armina/Armniya.

So, why this, at first sight quite plausible, if not obvious and trivial, conclusion that exonyms Armina, Urartu and Uraštu simultaneously denominated the same territory and same peoples during one and the same historical timespan wasn’t further investigated and interpreted? The cause is that the difference between the names used for one and the same exo-signifier in different versions of the Bīsotūn texts was cherry-picked in order to justify a preconceived paradigmatic historical concept unrelated or only very distantly related to the meanings that Darius and his scribes would have attributed to those names. We are talking about the two opposite paradigmatic concepts of the so-called ‘emergence’ (Arm. caqum)’, ‘birthplace’, ‘proto-homeland (Germ. Urheimat)’ or ‘origin of the Armenian people’ and their relationship to ‘Uraštu,’ whatever meanings are implied in those terms by the creators and users of these two concepts.

The first, primitive-indigenous paradigmatic concept of ‘Armenian origins’ (that also could be named ‘primordialist’ in terms of the recent debates concerning the origins of the modern nation-state) is inseparably linked to the history of hayk-ean nationalism, which is justifiably identified with Armenian nationalism of modern times. The origin of that nationalism is linked to the Sasanian revolution of 224 CE.³¹ It was reinvented during the Bagratuni Age (9th–11th centuries), and revitalized in Modern times since c. 1700s in the course of recreation of the modern Armenian (Haykakan) nation-state, when it played a very important ideological role in the Armenians (hay-s)’ struggle for their nation-state. Never having serious scientific grounds and fulfilling its political goals in 1991, but still littering today school textbooks, this nationalistic paradigmatic concept maintains among a number of other amateurish ideas that ‘Urartians’ were ‘Armenians’, without even attempting to explore what ‘Urartians’ and ‘Armenians’ could have meant in the 9th-6th centuries BCE, thereby demonstrating a classical example of historical presentism. This concept, including its Nunc pro tunc methodological fallacy,³² has been consistently and justifiably criticized by a large number of scholars, including the author of this paper.³³ It would have been unnecessary even mentioning it in this paper, unless its continuing standing against the second paradigmatic concept that could be referred to as an offspring of Assyriological/cuneological academic compartmentalization. The latter, indubitably being professionally academic, nevertheless, cherishing itself in the context few facts from the Bīsotūn texts and inserted those in its narrative in order to support its preconceived vision of Urartu as a historically more or less isolated phenomenon of Ancient Near Eastern history, a powerful kingdom that disappeared without leaving any tangible descendants after its rapid collapse soon after 640 BCE. The intellectual process underpinning this, second paradigmatic concept could be summarized as follows.

³⁹ Areshian 2013.
³⁰ Presentism is one of the worst theoretical and methodological fallacies still plaguing the studies concerning human past. A number of theorists from different fields of social sciences and the humanities even attempted to argue its unavoidability. Yet, this is how one of the distinguished historians of the 19th century Thomas Babington Macaulay qualified it in 1848: ‘There are two opposite errors into which those who study the annals of our country (i.e. England – G.A.) are in constant danger of falling, the error of judging the present by the past, and the error of judging the past by the present. The former is the error of minds prone to reverence whatever is old, the latter of minds readily attracted by whatever is new. ... The latter error perpetually infects the speculations of writers ... when they discuss the transactions of an earlier age. The former error is the more pernicious in a statesman, and the latter in a historian.’ (Macaulay 1848: 217).
³³ F.G. Tiratsyan and Areshian 1990.
Deciphering and studying the Old Persian and Babylonian versions of Bīsotūn and integrating those with the Assyrian royal records in the course of the middle and second half of the 19th century the founding fathers of Assyriology and other areas of Ancient Near Eastern studies did not see any major distinction between what they perceived as ‘Urartu’ and ‘Armenia’. The first comment by Henry Rawlinson related to that matter in his decipherment and initial publication of the Old Persian version was that ‘...the Armenians appear to have been conjoined with the Assyrians in their revolt’ (against Darius – G.A.). In 1846 the name of Urartu still had to be deciphered in Assyrian texts and Rawlinson studying a number of cuneiform inscriptions in Biaínian/Urartian language across the Armenian Highland, which he was unable to decipher at that time, called those ‘Medo-Assyrian’ in his first classification of different kinds of cuneiform writing. Rawlinson’s thought process isn’t always easy to reconstruct, since from time to time he skips a usually detailed philological and linguistic argument. So, specifically with regard to our topic, in a more detailed English translation of the Old Persian version published by him in the following year he translates: ‘One was an imposter named Aracus (i.e. Arašu – G.A.), a native of Armenia’, instead of the later customary translations ‘...Arkha by name, an Armenian,...’ or ‘...Arkha by name, an Armenian’ which will be discussed below.

Proceeding to the decipherment of the Babylonian version of Bīsotūn Rawlinson faced a number of serious difficulties caused by the poor preservation of the text and by the complexity of Akkadian cuneiform script in comparison to the Old Persian. In his translation he filled the lacunae mostly occurring on the left side of his copy of the Babylonian text with the translations from the Old Persian, which he also did with regard to those parts where the Babylonian version was clearly legible, but he wasn’t sure about his readings. This is obvious from Rawlinson’s unsuccessful first attempt at deciphering the name Uraštu in the lines that he was able to copy, where he was able to identify correctly the phonetic values of the first two signs as -u- and -ra- but, doubting the readings of the last two signs that we read today as -šu- and -tu-, he interpolated the name Armenia from the Old Persian translation into the translation of the Babylonian version.

Finally, when in 1907 King and Thompson published a new edition and translation, which, remaining for a long time without making any distinction between those. So, in the translation of the Babylonian version, instead of translating the cuneiform ũ-ra-šu-tu and ũ-ra-šu-ta-a-a as Uraštu/Urartu and Urašša/Urartu they substituted those with Armenia and Armenian, also stating in the Index: ‘Urašu-Babylonian name for Armenia’.

So, how did it become possible at all that the difference between the exonyms Uraštu and Arminia, applied respectively by the Babylonian and Old Persian versions of Bīsotūn to the same political-geographic territory and population, was interpreted as an evidence of a dramatic ethno-cultural and socio-political replacement of the so-called ‘Urartians’ by the so-called ‘Armenians’? In order to answer this question we need a glance at the migrationist conceptualization of ‘Armenian origins’ that could be traced back to Greco-Roman antiquity and to the historical writing in Armenian language of the 5th-7th centuries CE, reinvigorated as a foundational narrative in the course of the 19th century.

It is an undeniable fact that migrations played an enormous role throughout human history, from the times when humankind spread across our planet to the currently occurring mass migrations of populations between countries and continents. Historical-comparative linguistics, archaeology, and now – human genetics have accumulated major accomplishments in studies of human migrations and population continuity and change from the Stone Age to the present. Yet, in its most primitive form:

‘Migration theory in a sense is as old as tribal mythology; indeed, it is a rare corpus of myth that does not include at least one migration episode. In this primeval form migrationism may be recognized as the handmaiden of creationism... This mode of thought has been remarkably enduring; it underlies not only the myths of antiquity but a good deal of migration theory even of the recent past’. This primeval form of etiological myths of origin concerning an ethnos usually was centered on the life and exploits of a mythical or legendary ancestor and his family and the consequent history of his progeny. At the dawn of the modern Armenian historical writing dating back to the last quarter of the 18th century Mīk’ayel Chamcheants was familiar with two different myths of origin that had interpreted differently the endonym hayk/Hayk/Hayastan and the exonym Armenians/Armenia, which, stemming from the false presentist thinking, were considered in the Early Modern times as always mutually equivalent and interchangeable, as they are today. Knowing the etiological myth of origin concerning Armenians/Armenia as recorded by Strabo, which could be implied from Chamcheants’ references to that Greco-Roman geographer, Chamcheants nevertheless focuses exclusively on the mythological etiology of the endonym hayk/Hayk/Hayastan derived from the sources of Late Antiquity and Medieval Ages written in Armenian language. Not going into further details, we should stress that both the endogenous and exogenous etiological myths concerning hayk/Armenians were stories of primeval type regarding the imaginary founding patriarchs of the people and their progeny. Both primeval myths were migrationist: the exogenous myth migrated Armenians from Thessaly in Greece, while the endogenous myth brought hayk’ from Babylon. The latter’s late version as drafted by Khorenatsi in the fifth century CE also accommodated the Biblical tradition by patterning the migration of the hayk’ after the narrative of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

The return of the primeval myth recounting the Thessalian origin of Armenians in the Eurocentric historical narrative created by both European and many Armenian scholars was inseparably related to the establishment of predominance

18Rawlinson 1846: XLVII.
19Rawlinson 1846: XXV.
23Rawlinson 1851.
24Rawlinson read the first sign as -u- or -hu- whereas today it is read as -u-.
25Rawlinson 1851, lines 49-53.
26King and Thompson 1907: 161, 176-180, 194.
27King and Thompson 1907: 222.

44 Cf. such classical Armenian language authors as Khorenatsi, I.10-12 in 1913: 32-42 and Sebeos.
45Adams et al. 1978: 483-484.
47Strabo, XI.14, (1928, vol. 5: 333).

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of a modern paradigmatic conceptualization of migrations theory, which one may call Urheimat (‘original homeland’ or ‘proto-homeland’) migrationism. Having antecedents in the historical thought of Greco-Roman antiquity, Urheimat-migrationism has developed a perception grounded in the basic imaginary idea envisioning that at some point of time peoples occupied particular territories where they developed a language, a related culture, and even biological features, and later migrated from that ‘original homeland’ to new areas of habitation under the impact of different factors, carrying and preserving at the same time characteristic features developed in the proto-homeland. Putting it simply, Urheimat-migrationism was, and in many cases still is, applied as an interpretation model explaining one unknown (processes of sociocultural, including ethnic developments in one region that are investigated) by another unknown (causes of those processes externalized into and envisioned in another region without adequate argumentation).

Once Urartu had been discovered in the Assyrian royal texts, which was followed by the clear understanding that the cuneiform inscriptions of Van were not written in any early form of Armenian language, and since Archibald Sayce successfully identified by 1882 the exonym Urartu (read by him at that time as Urardhu) with the endonym Baina,46 it became imperative to understand whether there was a connection between Biaina/Urartu and Armenian history, or not.

Here one should recall the concept of infinite semiosis, one of the foundational ideas of Peircean semiotics, which requires us considering each of the historical names discussed in this paper as developing or dynamic interpretants,5 and therefore their meaning must be analyzed and interpreted on the grounds of their specific contexts at a particular point of time. The researchers studying the Bīsotūn texts are well aware that there are three personal names hinting at the identities of people from Harmirn/Urašštu/Urartu/Armina who played a substantial political role in the narrative of Darius. The first is mentioned in the Babylonian version as “da-da-ar-šu LÚ ú-ra-áš-ta-a-a, i.e. ‘Dadarshu, an Urartian/Urartian’, who was sent to Urašštu as the commander of Darius’ forces ordered to suppress the first Urartian rebellion.52 The second name of interest recorded in the Babylonian version is “a-ra-ḫu LÚ ú-ra-áš-ta-a-a, i.e. ‘Araku, an Urartian/Urartian’, an imposter who seduced the Babylonians into rebellion against Darius. And the third is “ḥal-di-ta, i.e. Khalidta, the father of Araku according to the Babylonian version.53 The rendering of the name Darashshu in the Elamite version is ‘da-dur-šīš’, whereas the Old Persian version transliterates it as d-a-d-r-š-i-t-s; n-a-m : a-r-m-i-n-i-y ; i.e. ‘Dadrshish by name, an Armenian’.54 Since the Babylonian and Elamite cuneiform scripts are syllabic, whereas the Old Persian is essentially alphabetic, one should prefer the phonetic reading of this name as Dārdāššī over Dārurāš in the case of the Old Persian version, especially considering the Vedic equivalent of that name.55 “a-ra-ḥu LÚ ú-ra-áš-ta-a-a of the Babylonian version finds its counterpart in the Old Persian version as : a-r-x : n-a-m : a-r-m-i-n-i-y ;56 This a-r-x should be read Arakha,57 or, probably, Arakhi (see below), and the whole phrase translated as ‘an Armenian by the name Arakha (or Arakhi)’. Finally, the third name of the Babylonian version “ḥal-di-ta is rendered in the Old Persian as : h-l-d-i-t-h-y-y,” naturally in its Genitive form, since he is the father of Arakha.

These three names could give us some clues to the question whether under the exogenous name Armina of the Old Persian version we should understand Armenia as Hayk/Hayastan inhabited by hay- Armenians, speakers of hayeren — Armenian language, and bearers of some kind of hayakan — Armenian identity, as the modern presentist Urheimat-migrationist paradigm tells us, or a country (but not necessarily a polity), which exogenous name still was Urashku/Urartu represented in the Babylonian version, inhabited to some extent by speakers of the Biainian/Urartian language, and adopters of the exogenous characterization as Urartians?

The shocking answer to this question is that none of these three names has a demonstrable connection to the Armenian language, i.e. hayeren. Dardersh which origin is defined by Darius as ‘Urartian-Armenian’ served as one of Darius’ military commanders and had his name rendered in Elamite as Dadurshish, which finds its Vedic calque in dāḥrši—‘bold’, ‘audacious’, showing that this ‘Urartian-Armenian’ most likely bore an Iranian name. Another ethno-linguistic attribution of this name suggested by Simon Hmayakyan is also plausible. He considers it as a compound name formed from the personal name Dada attested in the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions as da-a-da-ni and the common noun iš-še, ‘male youth’ and according to such an interpretation this name should be viewed as Urartian. The second ‘Urartian-Armenian’ name that has a well grounded linguistic attribution is Khaldita whose name is a theophoric derivative from the supreme god ḫaldī(e) of the Urartian pantheon. The third name: Arakha or Araki should be considered in connection with the Urartian name of his father. In such case -hi-could readily be construed as Hurrian-Urartian patronymic suffix. Igor Diakonoff already interpreted this name as Urartian, and, applied to different people, the same name also is mentioned in other Babylonian documents of the Achaemenid period. Thus, the Bisotūn texts speak about three representatives of sociopolitical elites that migrated from Urartu-Armenia to Persia and Babylonia (Arakhi and, perhaps, his father Khaldita resided in Ur before initiating an uprising in Babylon) and either two of them bore Urartian and one – an Iranian name, or all three of them were Urartians. In any case there is absolutely no evidence that any of them were ethnic hay-er, i.e. ethnic Armenians. Moreover, Araki himself was deeply Babylonized, i.e. had undergone a conscious change of his identity, since, according to Darius, he was able to persuade the Babylonians that he was a son of Nabonidus and, therefore the legitimate claimant to the Babylonian royal throne.

Besides Bisotūn and other monumental inscriptions of the Achaemenid period, a substantial number of cuneiform tablets in Neo-Babylonian language recording daily transactions and activities mentioning Urartu/Urashku and the Urartians and dated to the sixth-fifth centuries BCE were summarized by Ran Zadok. The importance of this group of texts for our research purposes consists in one of their essential differences from the monumental inscriptions. Official texts, including monumental inscriptions, historical narratives, poetry, and other literary works oftentimes contain linguistic archaisms, especially in cases of usage of a formulaic language. A good example of such archaization, which is close to our topic and period of interest, is presented by Classical Greek literary texts that oftentimes describe the activities of Achaemenid Persians referring to them as the Medes. The recordings of daily life are essentially different, since those are documents of a living spoken language creating snapshots in the process of its change. Some of such documents are especially illuminating.

A transaction document dated to the first regnal year of the last Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (555 BCE) records in kind payment of barley to a Babylonian collector in the city of Uruk who is named Nergal-Uballit who is referred to as LÚ u-ra-aš-ta-a-a, lit. ‘a man from the Urashku country’. The name Nergal-Uballit is typically Babylonian, which leads to two possible interpretations: either this Nergal-Uballit lived for a long time in the country known to the Babylonians as Urashku, or, as it was suggested more persuasively by Dandamaev, he could have been a son of a family that immigrated from Urartu to Babylonia where that child was given a Babylonian name.

Another remarkable document of the same kind was discovered in 1893 during the excavations of Nippur in the archive of the House of Murashu that carried our real estate and banking transactions in Achaemenid Babylonia in the course of the second half of the fifth century BCE. The text was reconstructed, interpreted, and published by Dandamaev and dates to the sixth regnal year of Darius II (418 BCE). It is a rental payment receipt issued to the House of Murashu that paid silver to the commander of ṭu-ra-aš-ta-a-a a mi-li-du-a-a, ‘the Urashtians and Miliduans’, for the usage of fields that were a holding-fief collectively held by the community of warriors harru settled in two towns near Nippur, one of which is called ni-šu-mi-li-du. Those were soldiers’ settlements, each occupied by migrants of common origin who were in the service of the Achaemenid King of kings, in this case by Urartians and Milidians. Milidu is the famous early first-millennium BCE city-state of the Hittite-Luwians on the Upper Euphrates, included in the western borderlands of the Urartian Empire in the course of the eight and seventh centuries BCE and known in Classical Antiquity as Melitene (nowadays Malatya). It is noteworthy that the town that they occupied near Nippur in Babylonia was also named Milidu after the city of the immigrant’s origin. And it wasn’t an accident that they were resettled to Babylonia together with their neighbors from their homeland, the Urartians.

These documents of daily activities, partially shed light on the destiny of Urartians after the destruction of their rapidly deteriorated empire, which most likely received the deathblow by the Median invasion that could have happened around 620 BCE, after the Medes conquered the Kingdom of Mana. It is naïve to think that the many peoples that inhabited the Biajnian-Urartian Empire could disappear or lose their ethnic-cultural identity within the lifespan of a generation after the downfall of the imperial state organization. The onomastic evidence of the Bisotūn inscription indicates that at least some elite groups of those people preserved their Biajnian-Urartian identity up to the reign of Darius I and maybe at a later time. The later recording of the Urartian

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61 Personal communication.


63 Personal communication.

64 Salvini 2008b: 339, A 8-3 III.<sup>u</sup>


68 Dandamaev 1985: 93.

69 Ran Zadok.

70 Dandamaev 1990: 104.

71 Clay 1904: Plate 58, text no. 107; Cardascia 1951.

72 Dandamaev 1990: 104-106.

73 Cardascia 1951: 7.
ethnic identification in Babylonia of the fifth century BCE could be construed as the preservation of an exogenic cultural-political tradition, rather than an archaism in scribal writing. The Urartians and Milidians that were relocated by the Achaemenid administration from the satrapy of Armina/Armenia to Babylonia naturally used their exonymic identification that the Babylonians were familiar with. It could be suggested that, when those same people traveled or migrated to Persia or other Persian or Elamite-speaking areas, they probably would have introduced themselves as Armenians, yet at the stage of our current knowledge we are unable to determine whether those exonymic Urartians-Armenians were ethnic Biainians, Hays, or people of other ethnic identities.

Concluding that Mesopotamians and inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau synchronously used the exonymic appellations Urartu and Armenia defining the same actual country and its peoples for some period of time preceding the second half of the sixth century BCE, one may inquire about the origins of the exonym Armenia exploring the still scanty evidence belonging to earlier centuries. Ivan Meschaninov’s article of 1933 devoted to the interpretation of the name Erimena mentioned in the inscriptions of King Rusa (presumably Rusa III or IV) as his father is an eye-catcher with that respect. Arguing for the relationship between the names Erimen and Armina Meschaninov interpreted the name of King Rusa as ‘Rusa of Armenia’, which was refuted in subsequent studies. But, with the rejection of the translation, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater, because the high degree of certainty that Erimen and Armina were cognates also was forgotten. Besides the inscriptions of his son, Erimen is known from the seal impression of his official representative (possibly governor) ‘a-su-šī preserved on a tablet from Karmir Blur. Erimen could rule sometime between the end of the reign c. 660-650 BCE of Rusa son of Argishti, the founder of Karmir Blur/Teishebaini, and the destruction of Teishebaini in the last quarter of the seventh century BCE. Here it is quite tempting to speculate that the Medes, who are the most probable culprits of the destruction of Teishebaini, could create the exonym Armina to name Urartu after the name of its ruler Erimen, to which analogous cases are known from history (e.g. Romulus, the founder of Rome, and others), also corresponding to etiological legends concerning the origins of peoples. However, the roots of this Elamite/Old Persian exonym may have been much deeper. As a matter of fact, already at the dawn of the Biainian/Urartian empire, Minua, son of Ishpuini (c. 810-785/780 BCE), describing his triumphal campaign to the west of Lake Van in the plain of Mush records the capture of the town named e-re-ma-a-[ni] (with -ni that could be reconstructed with a high degree of certainty).

Erimani dating c. 800 BCE and Erimen c. 650-620 BCE – this toponymic and onomastic evidence covering two centuries points to the likely sources of origin of the Elamite/Iranian naming of Harminu/Armina and indicates with some degree of certainty that the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau called by that name the Biainian/Urartian Empire throughout a major part of the timespan of its history.

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