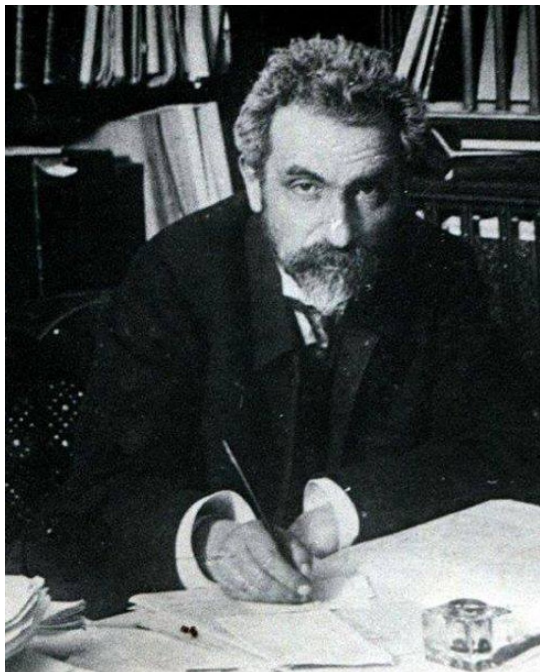

CLASSICS OF ARMENOLOGY

NIKOLAI MARR (1864-1934)



Nikolai Marr was born on December 25, 1864, in Kutaisi, Georgia (then part of the Russian Empire). His father (Scott James [Jacob] Marr) was Scottish and his mother (Agrafina Mugularia) was Georgian. Nikolai Marr's father was an agricultural engineer, botanist who was working in Georgia and was the founder of the Kutaisi Botanical Garden. He had previously established several botanical gardens in different cities of the Russian Empire. In Kutaisi, Scott James Marr met Agrafina Mugularia, married her and settled there. From an early age, Nikolai communicated with local Armenians and learned Armenian.

In 1884 he graduated from the Kutaisi Gymnasium, and in 1888 from the Faculty of Oriental Languages of the University of St. Petersburg. He specialized in Armenology, Georgian Studies, Iranian Studies and Classical Philology. In 1891 he joined the staff of the University. Then Marr was appointed associate professor of the Department of Armenology at St. Petersburg University, and from 1900 became the head of the Department of Armenian-Georgian philology (since 1901 he was a doctor of philological sciences, professor).

The publication of the monograph "Scientific Mission to the Caucasus" by the French archaeologist and explorer Jacques de Morgan in 1889, prompted the Saint Petersburg Academy to take a closer interest in the antiquities of Armenia. It was for this reason that Nikolai Marr was sent with a small team to undertake the first proper excavations in Ani during the summer of 1892.

He started his scientific activity as a researcher of Armenian medieval historiography. He was also one of the well-known figures in the field of Armenian medieval literature. Of particular importance are his source studies on the works of Movses Khorenatsi, Sebeos, Hovhannes Kozern, Shota Rustaveli and others. He also paid special attention to the history of the Armenian language. He revealed the importance of Armenian medieval literature for the restoration of the original editions of Assyrian and Greek written monuments. Contradicting a number of European scholars, he refuted the misconception that Movses Khorenatsi himself was Mar Abas Katina, and proved that Khorenatsi had indeed used Mar Abas Katina's work in writing his "History".

He first visited Armenia in 1890. In 1899 he carried out reconnaissance excavations at the Dvin Citadel. In 1909-1911 in the Geghama Mountains, he discovered giant stone monuments called Vishap (dragon), which are associated with

the worship of water and fertility. In 1913 N. Marr excavated the Bronze Age tombs of Shirakavan. Along with his initial excavations in Akner, Shirakavan, Dvin, Zvartnots and Garni, he also dealt extensively with the excavations of Ani (1892-1916, intermittent), the first comprehensive and well-planned archaeological work in Armenia. The sponsor of the excavations in Ani was the great Armenian businessman and philanthropist Mikael Aramyants.

Large-scale excavation started in 1905. Marr was especially interested in locating the site of King Gagik's church of Saint Gregory, known as the Gagkashen. This church was built as a copy of the famous church of Zvartnots near Etchmiadzin, the foundations of which had been discovered in the year 1900 and then excavated.

The excavations in Ani brought great glory to the scientist. With the discovery of the archaeological excavations in Ani, museums were opened in Ani. During the excavations, he discovered the complete statue of King Gagik I of Bagratuni (990-1020), as well as the Gagkashen Church, similar in plan and shape to Zvartnots Church. In addition to architectural monuments, he studied medieval urban planning, the social and administrative structure of the city, trade and crafts, and more. The work "Ani, a History of the city according to literary sources and the excavations of the ancient city" (Leningrad – Moscow, 1934) is a summary of the above-mentioned scientific studies.

Excavations actually continued until 1917, but nothing was published and the excavation records were lost at the end of the war.

In 1910-1911 N. Marr, together with architects Romanov and Smirnov excavated the ruins of the pagan temple of Garni.

In 1916 Marr took advantage of the fact that Russian troops had taken control of the Lake Van region. He travelled to Van with several members of his Ani team (A. Kalantar, H. Orbeli, and A. Vruyr) in order to study and excavate the Urartian remains that existed there. A book describing their findings was later published.

In 1922-1931 he founded and headed a number of scientific institutions in Moscow and Leningrad. In 1921, with the approval of the Academy of Sciences he founded the St. Petersburg (later Leningrad) "Japhetic Institute". In 1923 he was elected President of the Central Council of the Intellectual Workers Department, and in 1930 he was elected Vice-President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (Marr had previously been a full member of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences).

Caucasiologist, Armenologist, Orientalist N. Marr was one of the leading orientalists in pre-revolutionary Russia. But first and foremost, he was a linguist. Studying a number of Caucasian languages, he called those languages "Japhetic". He developed the so-called "Japhetic theory" (later criticized as unscientific). N. Marr founded the academic journal "Christian Orient" (1912-1922), which is a unique publication with its authorship and importance.

Nikolai Marr died in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in 1934.

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