

Ruzan Palanjyan

Armenia, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of NAS RA,

Researcher, ruzanpal@gmail.com

DOI: 10.56812/2953-7851-2022.1-9

Ancient Armenia in international wine trade

In the III-II millennia BC the wine-producing regions of the Armenian Highlands were already included in Middle Eastern wine trade. The cities of Southern Mesopotamia were profitable market for the consumption of wines made from high-quality Armenian grapes. The fact that it was possible to trade with Southern Mesopotamia through the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is very important. Southern Mesopotamia as a consumption market for Armenian wines also retained its importance in the future. According to the testimony of Herodotus, wine was taken from Armenia through the Euphrates River to Babylon for sale. Since Babylonia was one of the wealthiest countries of the Achaemenid Empire, its markets sold expensive goods sought by the elite. The analysis of written records of an economic nature has shown that imported grape wine sold in the markets of Babylon was very expensive, and therefore it was quite profitable to bring high-quality wine from Armenia to Babylon for sale. High quality and safe overland trade routes were of great importance for the development of the economy of Armenia, which was part of the Achaemenid Empire. The "Royal" road was especially important, a part of which passed through the southwestern territories of Armenia. Along the entire length of the road there were stations with excellent inns, where travelers could obtain provisions, including wine. The section of the road passing through Armenia had fifteen stations with inns, and the inhabitants of the regions near these inns had the opportunity to take their wine there for sale. The export of high-quality wines

from Armenia continued in the Hellenistic and Late Antique periods. Viticulture and winemaking were important branches of agriculture in Arshakid Armenia. Information has been preserved that in the IV century AD, the wine trade took a significant place in the economic life of the city of Vagharshapat. Thus, the study of a Jewish literary source of the Sasanian period, the "Babylonian Gemara", shows that in the first half of the IV century AD, the city of Vagharshapat was the most important international center of wine trade, and the wine prices set there were decisive, even for the cities of Mesopotamia. Undoubtedly, this circumstance should have greatly contributed to the development of winemaking not only in Vagharshapat itself, but also in the neighboring regions, as the vineyard owners had the opportunity to sell their wine at a high price to foreign merchants in wine market of Vagharshapat. The great role of the city of Vagharshapat in international wine trade was probably due to the fact that high-quality wine was produced there, which was in great demand in external wine market. So, we can conclude that in the IV century AD, Armenian winemaking became so famous that the city of Vagharshapat became the largest center of international wine trade.