



ГОАР КАРАГЕЗЯН
АРМЯНСКИЙ МИР В
«ПУТЕШЕСТВИИ В ЛЕВАНТ»
ТУРНЕФОРА

LITERARY REVIEW ON GOHAR KARAGOZYAN'S BOOK
“THE ARMENIAN WORLD IN TOURNEFORT'S
TRAVELOGUE “A VOYAGE INTO LEVANT”

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Gohar Karagozyan's monograph is carried out along the lines of the travelogue “A Voyage into Levant” of the famous French botanist, Member of Paris Academy of Sciences, Professor Joseph Pitton de Tournefort. The travelogue “A Voyage into Levant” contains a minute research of ancient and modern states of the islands of the Archipelago, the coasts of the Black Sea, Armenia, Georgia, the frontiers of Persia, and Asia Minor. The aim of the scientist was to examine and describe the

Literary Review on Gohar Karagozian's Book...

flora of the territory, though not confined to botany. The author organized his research in a systematic way by giving some comprehensive information on the topography of the territory, the economic situation of the period, ethnic composition, customs, traditions, and habits of everyday life. One cannot fail to observe that Tournefort's travelogue is unique research, comprising not only valuable facts in the sphere of botany, but also accurate depictions of the historical-cultural epoch. Tournefort's survey is fundamental and may show the way scientists can outline the practical and methodological aspects of the given subject.

G. Karagozian's research aims at representing the Armenian world in the light of the factual materials of the travelogue. So it is not by chance that the author entitled her book as the Armenian World in Tournefort's travelogue *A Voyage into Levant*. The author analyzed the professor's travelogue and singled out those parts, which were dedicated to the world of historical Armenia. Professor Tournefort's observations and interpretations are pivotal as they introduce a comprehensive analysis of the political, economic, ethnic, cultural situation of historical Armenia within the period of the 17th–18th centuries. In that geopolitical area there existed various cultural and ethnic worlds, in fact "world in the world", which professor Tournefort should perceive and objectively depict in his travelogue.

Valleys, forests, rivers and mountains of historical Armenia were not only a natural investigative laboratory for scientists, but also sacred symbols – biblical mountain Ararat, the river of paradise – the Euphrates, Echmiadzin Cathedral, etc. However, as the author stated, for professor Tournefort it was essential to underline the objective facts without any additional emotional-evaluative overtones and to transmit the real atmosphere of the territory under study¹.

It is essential to focus on some points, which G. Karagozian outlines in her work.

First, in the monograph there is a thorough description of toponyms of the travelogue and their transliterated variants in different languages. However, G. Karagozian mentioned that there were some difficulties in the identification of the geographical names in the travelogue, as Tournefort might have misperceived

¹ Карагезян Г. Армянский мир в «Путешествии в Левант» Турнефора, Е., 2017, с. 17–19.

their pronunciation. Besides, all Armenian geographical names were changed into Turkish, which caused obstacles on the way of further understanding. In this connection, G. Karagozyan in the monograph depicted the geographical names, which were introduced and transliterated by professor Tournefort (e.g. Sinichopri-Сеннаккюрпи, Dilijant-le pays de Cosac, Дилижан, страна казаков, Carakesis-Каракешиш, ныне Ддмашен, Віјні-Бжни, Бджни, Yagovat-Егвард, Itchmiadzin-Trois Eglises-Эчмиадзин, Три Церкви, Erivan-Ереван, Nocquevit-Норагавит, Corvirap-Хор Вирап, Acourlou-Акори, etc.). The depiction of geographical names makes the reader imagine the route of the scientist. Sometimes the professor chose complicated ways to survey the territory and to find an impeccable gem, a rare plant for the Royal Garden. For this purpose, he climbed biblical Mount Ararat and was given the title of the martyr botanist (*martyre de la botanique*)².

Next, the author illustrates the peculiar features of the Armenian national identity perceived and indicated by Professor Tournefort. At the same time in her survey G. Karagozyan represents fundamental thoughts expressed by the European scientists, philosophers, orators and Armenologists, and those deserve attention. We shall dwell upon some of them in the given review.

*In these Armenians rules a strange trading spirit, one where they are involved in commerce travelling from the borders of China to the shores of Guinea where Crusoe's shelter lies. This presents a rather intelligent and industrious people with unique roots, a people who can move from North to East and South to West within the old world and find genuine hospitality in whatever region they decide to stop*³.

The ancient land of Armenia is situated in the high mountains immediately north of the great plains and rivers of Mesopotamia. Although Mesopotamia, with its ancient civilizations of Sumeria and Babylon, is usually considered together with Egypt as the main source of civilized life in the modern sense, Armenia, too, has a claim to be ranked as one of the cradles of human culture. To begin with,

² Ibid, pp. 11–13.

³ Кант И. Сочинения в шести томах, т. 6, М., 1966, с. 572–573. <https://tamarnajarian.wordpress.com/2013/05/21/emmanuel-kant-on-armenians/>

Literary Review on Gohar Karagozian's Book...

*Noah's Ark is stated in the Book of Genesis to have landed on the summit of Mount Ararat, in the very centre of Armenia*⁴.

*Жизненное наполнение армян, их грубая ласковость, их благородная трудовая кость, их неизъяснимое отвращение ко всякой метафизике и прекрасная фамиллярность с миром реальных вещей – все это говорило мне: ты бодрствуешь, не бойся своего времени, не лукавь*⁵.

G. Karagozian is quite truthful to notice that the professor's representation of the Armenian national identity was more or less subjective, as he had his own preferences in reverberating and interpreting the image⁶. However, the depiction of the national identity is based on the collective European perception. As a result, Tournefort wrote 20th letter where the Armenian cultural and religious traditions were described. One of the valuable parts of G. Karagozian's monograph is the translation of the above-mentioned letter, which is of paramount significance for bridging and enhancing communication across cultures.

G. Karagozian skillfully translated the important parts of the travelogue from the original source and effectively presented them to the reader. The case in point is, Tournefort's representation of the image of Armenians by stressing out that they mercifully took care of other nations and each other in long travels with caravans. So the Armenians were a peace-loving and hospitable nation⁷. *The Armenians are the best people in the World, civil, polite, full of good self and probity. I think they will be happy if they use arms purely to defend themselves against the violence of others. But the Armenians trouble themselves with nothing but trade, which they do with the utmost attention and application*⁸.

Along with a thorough introduction of the national identity and the character of the Armenians, Tournefort represented the description of cities and castles in the territory of historical Armenia. Consequently, G. Karagozian's monograph is a special historical-literary survey of Tournefort's travelogue throughout the territory and it is not in vain that it has a particular structure ("On the Way to

⁴ **Lang D.M.**, Armenia: Cradle of Civilization, First published in 1970, Second edition, London, 1978, p. 9.

⁵ **Мандельштам О.** Путешествие в Армению (1931–1932) (Собр. соч. в 4 т., т. 3, М., 1994, с. 183).

⁶ **Карагезян Г.** Армянский мир в «Путешествии в Левант» Турнефора, 2017, с. 42.

⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

Ararat”, “Erzrum and its Surroundings”, “Kars”, “Echmiadzin-Three Churches”, “Yerevan”, “Ararat”, “From Ararat to Tokat”, “Back to Erzrum”, “On the Way to Tokat”, “Tokat”).

Tournefort not only revealed the geographical details of the city of Erzrum, but also the cultural coloring, its shades, atmosphere, customs and traditions, trade and commerce. He even did some etymological research on the toponyms; the city was originally known as Karno K’aghak’, in other words the city of Karin. During the Roman times, Erzrum was named as Theodosiopolis and according to Tournefort for Turks this name was complicated to utter, so they changed it into Artze-rum (**-rum** as for the land of Romans or Greeks). Erzrum was an important route between the East and the West⁹. Furthermore, in the monograph G. Karagozyan draws attention to the professor’s attitude towards trade and commerce. He noticed that in Erzrum there was no retail market and for instance, the sick man might have remained without rhubarb (drug from plant), while there were plenty of it for wholesale in the city. Besides Tournefort disliked the local caviar, he considered it extremely salty and even quoted the local proverb: *the devil should be served for breakfast the local caviar, coffee without sugar and tobacco*. Tournefort also adds *the wine of Erzrum* to the list. As a real French gourmet, it was the duty of Tournefort to taste and evaluate the quality of wine during his travel. He qualified the wine of Erzrum as the worst in the world. And to G. Karagozyan it seems strange that Tournefort, as a real scientist should correlate the quality of wine with the severe climate conditions of Erzrum, rather than winemaking procedures. In this connection, she introduces a valuable reference to the reader stating that winemaking in France was developed by the unique technique of the Armenian winemakers who were invited by the French king Phillip III¹⁰.

Dwelling upon further observations of the professor’s travelogue, G. Karagozyan proceeds to describe Echmiadzin. According to the professor, Echmiadzin is the embodiment of Paradise on Earth. Its spiritual atmosphere, its position and its unique architectural solutions inspired the humanity¹¹. The architect who formed the plan of this Church, according to the tradition, which

⁹ Ibid, p. 52–53.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 57.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 13.

prevails among the Armenians, was Jesus Christ, who drew the plan in the presence of St. Gregory using a ray of light instead of a pencil.

Having been a qualified botanist, the professor admired the richness of fruits and their delicious taste, moreover he dedicated nearly two pages to the description of the Armenian melon¹².

Tournefortian attitude to Mount Ararat and its surroundings was basically scientific. In this connection, Tournefort quoted, *"We began this day to go up Mount Ararat at about two o'clock in the morning. This mountain, which lies between the south and the southeast from three-churches, is one of the saddest and most disagreeable sights upon the Earth. There are neither trees nor shrubs nor monasteries"*¹³. In the monograph, G. Karagozyan interprets the professor's characterization of the territory by reinforcing the fact that the qualification of the sacred mountain is based on Tournefort's rational perception who aimed at describing the reality through the prism of objectivity as a scientist and researcher – botanist, conditioned by the epoch where the underlying principle was the objectivity rather than the expression of individual feelings and illustration of mythological thinking. Moreover, Tournefort was interested in the flora of the territory rather than in its biblical significance.

It is worth mentioning, that G. Karagozyan translated not only the essential parts of the professor's valuable work, but also analyzed and interpreted them by accompanying the actual text with notes and references. Certainly, one cannot but accept G. Karagozyan's viewpoint that Tournefort's research of the flora and fauna of the territory illustrated the realistic and natural picture of the Armenian world (during his voyage Tournefort categorized 1356 plants).

Thus, G. Karagozyan's monograph is a unique historico-cultural insight into the travelogue, where, along with scientific information, the ethnographic and cultural portrait of Armenia is revealed.

¹² Ibid, p. 96.

¹³ Ibid, p. 118.