

# HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OF ARMENIA IN THE MAPS OF FRENCH RESEARCHERS OF XVII-XIX CENTURIES

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Among other countries, Armenia occupies a significant place in antique and medieval maps. In the maps of the Greek geographers Hecataeus of Miletus (about 540 BC - 489 BC) and Eratosthenes (about 276 BC - 195/194 BC) of the ancient world the country of Armenia lies on the territory to the east of Asia Minor, between the Black, Caspian and Mediterranean Seas. Especially noteworthy are the maps of Strabo (about 64 BC - 24 BC) and Ptolemy (90-168), which give a detailed description of Armenia and reveal its geographical and national integrity.

A.J. Saint-Martin (1791-1832), the founder of Armenology in France, after thoroughly studying ancient Greek and Latin sources and guided by a complete understanding of the historical geography of Armenia (Great Armenia and Armenia Minor) wrote: «Armenian, as well as Greek and Latin geographers mainly divide Armenia into two major parts: Great Armenia, stretching from the Euphrates to the Caspian Sea and Armenia Minor, located to the west of Great Armenia»<sup>1</sup>. Based on the reports by Movses Khorenatsi and Procopius of Caesarea<sup>2</sup> Saint-Martin characterized the southern part of Armenia and its adjacent territories with the term *Armenian Mesopotamia* (Mésopotamie arménienne)<sup>3</sup>.

The geographic and historical descriptions of Armenia by Greek and Latin geographers contributed to the development of cartography in Armenia. A vivid proof of this is «Ashkharatsuyts»<sup>4</sup>, which according to S. Yeremyan is the first work in geographic and cartographic literature which continues the traditions of the science of geography of antique times<sup>5</sup>. However, the grave political and economic situation as a result of raids by Arabic (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> cc.) and later by Seljuk-Turkic (11<sup>th</sup> century) tribes suspended the further development of these branches of science in Armenia for a long time.

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<sup>1</sup> Saint-Martin 1818: v. I: 17.

<sup>2</sup> According to Procopius of Caesarea «*The [land] located at this side of the river, between [the Euphrates] and the Tigris, is naturally called Mesopotamia, part of which has another name too: thus, the [regions] situated up to the city of Amid are called Armenia by some, and Edessa with its neighboring regions is called Osroene, named after Osroes who used to rule there when the country was the Persians' ally*» (Procopius of Caesarea 1967: 45).

<sup>3</sup> Saint-Martin noted that Armenian Mesopotamia included Mtsbin (= Nisibis), Edessa and Adiabene (see Saint-Martin 1850: 113; Cf. Dulaurier 1858: VII): According to Josephus Flavius, Artabanus, king of Parthians, for the goodness done for him gave Izates, king of Adiabene «a vast and fertile land taking it from the king of Armenia. The land is called Nisibis and previously the Macedonians had built there the city of Antioch» (Foreign sources about Armenia and Armenians 1976: 85):

<sup>4</sup> Different opinions have appeared in historiography in regard to the period of the creation and authorship of «Ashkharatsuyts». Studies show that in the 5<sup>th</sup> century Movses Khorenatsi created «Ashkharatsuyts» which Anania Shirakatsi edited and continued in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Danielyan 2000: 37; Musheghyan 2007: 111, 124).

<sup>5</sup> Yeremyan 1963: 12.

In the 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries Cilician Armenia created favorable conditions for Europe to establish political and economic ties with the East. After the Seljuks' invasions, the routes that were passing from the Black Sea through major trade centers of Armenia, such as Trabzon, Artsn, Kars, Ani and other cities, were not active. According to T. Hakobyan, after the unification Mountainous and Lower Cilicia, the border of the Armenian state stretched along the Mediterranean for 400 km and had a free access to northern Italian city-states of Genoa and Venice<sup>6</sup>. The new trade routes were passing through Cilicia and enter the territory of Asia Minor which was occupied by the Seljuks<sup>7</sup>. The seaway charts - portolans, drawn by European seafarers, traveling merchants of that time also give important information about Ayas, Corycus and other Armenian ports of Cilicia. In his work R. Galchyan, referring to seaway charts, writes that the portolans that mark Armenia in the East of the Mediterranean generally depict here Ararat with Noah's Ark and the mountains of the Armenian Highlands, from which the Euphrates and Tigris rivers originate<sup>8</sup>. Among valuable portolans portraying Mount Ararat with the Ark are the famous Catalanian charts of Angelino Dulcert of 1339, as well as that of Mecia de Viladestes of 1413, and the 1450 chart known as «Estense»<sup>9</sup>.

The references to the location of Paradise in the book of Genesis, the location of the rivers originating from there, particularly the Tigris and the Euphrates, and the Ararat as the resting place of Noah's Ark were in the center of attention of French theologians, missionaries, researchers, particularly cartographers. In this sense, the Map of Terrestrial Paradise engraved by P. Starckman in 1675 is important; it was republished by French-Armenian hydrographer Z. Khanzadian in his «Atlas of Historical Cartography of Armenia»<sup>10</sup>. On the map Eden is located to the east of Lake Van where Mount Ararat is depicted.

In 1724 French cartographer Pierre Moulart-Sanson's «Map of Paradise According to Moses' Book of Genesis II»<sup>11</sup> was published. There the Terrestrial Paradise - Eden<sup>12</sup> is located in the center of Armenia. The map depicts Adam and Eve and the tree of life embodying the eternal life<sup>13</sup> «And the Lord God made to spring up also out of the earth every tree ..., and the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of learning the knowledge of good and evil»<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Hakobyan 1968: 348.

<sup>7</sup> Zulalyan 1990: 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Galchyan 2005: 23.

<sup>9</sup> Galchyan 2005: 94, 98, 99.

<sup>10</sup> Khanzadian 1960.

<sup>11</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8490536w/f1.item.r=carte%20du%20paradis%20terrestre.zoom>

<sup>12</sup> In historiography Eden was viewed as a geographical name and its location was looked for in different places. But its meaning in the Hebrew «gab eden» and Greek «παράδεισος τῆς τρυφῆς», as well as Armenian texts of the Bible is «heavenly softness» (Gen. B 15-16) and «it is the description of the paradise planted by the God, not the name of a country as was later thought» (Danielyan 2000: 19). In the same way it is used in Genesis III. 23-24 (Bible 1860).

<sup>13</sup> Armenian Medieval poet Azaria Jughayetsi uses the expression of the Word tree (Meitikhanyan 2001: 232).

<sup>14</sup> Genesis II. 9.

French theologian<sup>15</sup> Dom Augustin Calmet (1672-1757) in the map published in 1748, located Paradise in Armenia referring to the Genesis (Genesis, II. 8-10; VIII. 4). According to A. Calmet: «The sources of the rivers of Euphrates, Tigris, Araks and Pison are in Armenia (Gen., II. 11-15)... where, we believe, the Terrestrial Paradise was located...»<sup>16</sup>. Alluding to the Roman poet Virgil, who described the Araxes as a river not tolerating bridges<sup>17</sup>, Calmet mentioned that the Araxes was the same Gihon referred to in the Book of Genesis which in Hebrew means «fast-flowing»<sup>18</sup>.

Calmet attached special importance to the concept of the East as the place from where the humanity spread, which, according to him, should have been the country of Armenia<sup>19</sup>. This notion comes from the Bible which says that the paradise is in the East: «And God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and placed there the man he had formed» (Gen. II. 8). By quoting the information given by Eusebius<sup>20</sup> and Berossus<sup>21</sup> about the floods and the Noah's Ark resting in Armenia, as well as interpreting the references to the East in the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel<sup>22</sup>, he concluded: «the truth is that these countries, especially Armenia, are situated in the north, but to the East of Palestine»<sup>23</sup>.

The concept of the East has deep roots. According to E. Danielyan, «in the early days of piety, 'the East' was referred to as a place where the sun rose and rested. In Sumerian (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC) and Hittite (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC) sources as such was considered the region of Lake Van and Urmia»<sup>24</sup>. This view is based on the Armenian tradition where it is said that Lake Van was considered to be the resting place of the sun: «Those who climbed the top of the Mount of Varaga would see the sun plunging in the twilight and take a bath to clean and take a rest from the trip made. ... Its bed is made under the sea on foam»<sup>25</sup>.

In the «Small Pocket Atlas» drawn in 1762 by the cartographer Gilles Robert de Vaugondy (1688-1766), Armenia is represented as the land of the Paradise and Ararat, the resting place of the Ark. On the map both the old and modern toponyms are given. Here Armenia borders on Assyria and Mesopotamia in the south, Atrpatakan in the south-

<sup>15</sup> Exegetist - interpreter of Biblical texts

<sup>16</sup> Dictionnaire historique, archéologique, philologique, géographique et littéral de la Bible 1846: 586-587.

<sup>17</sup> Vergil, Aeneid, lib. VIII. 728.

<sup>18</sup> Dictionnaire historique, archéologique, philologique, géographique et littéral de la Bible 1846: 534-535.

<sup>19</sup> Calmet 1720: 144, 145.

<sup>20</sup> A small part of the ship, which came to rest in Armenia, can still be found in the mountains of the Cordyaei in Armenia (Eusebius 1818: 36-37).

<sup>21</sup> «They say that till now a part of the ship is in Armenia, near the Kordvats mountains, and that some reap pieces of tar (from it) and bring them, and people carry them upon themselves as an amulet» (Foreign sources about Armenia and Armenians 1976: 55).

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah, XLVI. 11; Daniel, X. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Calmet 1720: 145.

<sup>24</sup> Danielyan 1997: 18.

<sup>25</sup> Srvandztyants 1874: 107, 109-110.

east and Georgia in the north. The Terrestrial Paradise is located in the north-western part of Lake Van<sup>26</sup>.

In the early Middle Ages the Christian historiographical concepts were harmonized with the Bible. Movses Khorenatsi linked the origins of the Armenian genealogy with the biblical genealogy. According to him, Hayk the Patriarch descended from Thorgama, one of the descendants of Japheth, one of Noah's three sons: «Tiras gave birth to Thorgama, Thorgama gave birth to Hayk»<sup>27</sup>. In this regard, the map drawn by the first French geographer Philippe Buache (1700-1773) is noteworthy: on it the countries are listed according to the genealogy of Noah's sons. Eden is located in Armenia and of the four rivers originating from there, Pison is the River Araxes and the Gihon flows to the south, joining the Tigris and the Euphrates.

It is worth mentioning the map of «Terrestrial Paradise, Mount Ararat and Babylon» by Louis Brion de la Tour (1743-1803), King Louis XV's (1715-1774) cartographer, which is composed based on astronomical data<sup>28</sup>.

Armenia is known in spiritual history by the name «Aratta, the country of sacred rites (or laws)»<sup>29</sup>, «the mountains of Ararat»<sup>30</sup>. In his work about the Aryans, 19<sup>th</sup> century author Charles-Joseph-François Wolff wrote: «Mount Ararat was regarded by the Aryans as the sacred cradle of humanity» (*montagne que les arias regardaient comme le berceau sacré de l'humanité*)<sup>31</sup>.

In his work Saint-Martin referred in detail to the compliance of historical-geographical environment of Armenia with some reports of the Holy Scriptures, noting that the study of different parts of the Bible, where the lands inhabited by Thorgama's descendants are mentioned, indicates that some of them «correspond to the country named Armenia». Saint-Martin noted that «Eusebius and some ancient interpreters located the place of residence of the patriarch in this country, although other authors located it in different parts of Asia Minor»<sup>32</sup>.

The scientist notes that although in Armenia Ararat was always used in the sense of a province, it probably was initially the name of the entire Armenia which «was used in the Holy Scripture only referring to the mountain range where Noah's Ark stopped»<sup>33</sup>.

Saint-Martin paid attention to the fact that in the Septuagint translation, in Josephus' «Jewish Antiquities», in Vulgate and in the Armenian translation of the Bible the name «Ararat» has been preserved. It is either translated as *the mountains of Armenia* or *the*

<sup>26</sup> Galchyan 2005: 212.

<sup>27</sup> Movses Khorenatsi 1991: 19.

<sup>28</sup> <http://westernarmeniatv.com/en/media/armenia-forgotten-paradise/>

<sup>29</sup> Kramer 1952; Petrosyan 1974: 123; Movsisyan 1992: 29-32.

<sup>30</sup> Genesis, VIII. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Wolff 1893: 128.

<sup>32</sup> Saint-Martin 1818: 258.

<sup>33</sup> Saint-Martin 1818: 260. Gh. Inchichian rightfully identified the name of Mount Ararat with the name of Ayarat province in «Ashkharatsuyts», and according to the interpretation of the Bible with all Armenia (Inchichian 1835: 56-57).

*land of Armenians* (les mots de Montagnes d'Arménie ou de Terre des Arméniens)<sup>34</sup>. Saint-Martin wrote: «All the translators and interpreters that translated the Holy Scriptures into Assyrian, replaced the name of Ararat by the expression<sup>35</sup> 'the mountains of Kurds'<sup>36</sup> the original expression 'Ararat' was not preserved». By refusing to identify Ararat with the Kordvats Mountains, Saint-Martin noted that the two types of translations resulted in two different interpretations when determining the location of the Ark after the flood. According to him, the viewpoint that the Ark rested in the north of Mesopotamia and Syria was mainly held by «Eastern Christians, Assyrians and Arabs»<sup>37</sup>.

It should be borne in mind that in the Syriac Peshitta and later in Arabic translations of the Old Testament the name *Qardu* was used instead of the name *Ararat*. The manuscripts discovered in one of Qumran caves in the north-western side of the Dead Sea in 1947, show that the text of the Bible is much newer than the manuscript of Qumran, in which Noah's Ark came down in the Ararat Mountains<sup>38</sup>.

The spirituality of Ararat was reflected in the memoirs of the missionary William of Rubruck (1220-1293), travellers Jean-Baptiste Chardin (1643-1713), Amédée Jaubert (1779-1847), Frédéric Du Bois de Montperreux (1798-1850) and others.

William of Rubruck, a Franciscan monk who was sent to the East by the order of the King of France, Louis IX (1226-1270) in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, also travelled through Armenia. He referred to the Bible's information about Assyrian princes who killed their father and escaped to the land of Ararat, which is the same Armenia<sup>39</sup>.

Rubruck presents with great reverence the legend told by an Armenian elder about why it is not allowed to climb the top of Mount Ararat-Masis: «No one can climb Masis because she is the mother of the world»<sup>40</sup>.

In his notes the French traveller Jean-Baptiste Chardin (1643-1713) addresses in detail the source information about the flood and Noah's Ark. He mentions that wherever Armenia is referred to in the Bible, it is called Ararat. Chardin speaks of Armenia with great admiration and considers it to be the land of Paradise because «this is one of the most beautiful and fertile countries in Asia. Seven rivers irrigate it<sup>41</sup>, that is why the interpreters of the Old Testament place the Terrestrial Paradise here»<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Saint-Martin 1818: 261.

<sup>35</sup> Saint-Martin 1818: 176.

<sup>36</sup> Saint-Martin mentioned the expression *mountains of Kurds* following the erroneous opinion of his time. The confusion connected with the «Kurds» arose because their tribal name was wrongly associated with the name of the Armenian province of *Korduk*. (Saint-Martin 1818: 176). However, while writing about the use of the Kurdish element in the policy of occupation pursued by the Ottoman Empire in Western Armenia, N. Adontz noted that the migration of Kurdish tribes began in the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Sultan Selim seized most part of Armenia and «appointed Kurds as governors...» (Adontz 1989: 64-65).

<sup>37</sup> Saint-Martin 1818: 261.

<sup>38</sup> Les textes du Qumran 1963: 225; Fitzmyer 2004: 83. See also Abgaryan, Abgaryan 2005: 112-113.

<sup>39</sup> Rubrouck 1877: 281.

<sup>40</sup> Rubrouck 1877: 286.

<sup>41</sup> Probably the author bears in mind the rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Araxes, Kura, Chorokh flowing from the Armenian Highland and the rivers Halys and Gayl which flow from the western and southern slopes of the Pontic mountains

Based on the notes of French travellers, maps were drawn up, which are valuable sources for studying the geography and history of political, economic, spiritual and material culture of Armenia.

In this sense, especially important is the work by the orientalist Pierre Amédée Jaubert who travelled to Persia on a secret mission given by Napoleon. At the end of the book there is a map drawn based on his notes, which is valuable especially in terms of toponyms<sup>43</sup>.

Thus, in the XVII-XIX centuries the civilizational appreciation of Armenia in France has taken place in the light of the biblical perceptions of world historical and spiritual phenomena. The Book of Genesis served as a basis for European, particularly French cartographers and geographers, to identify Armenia as a country of Eden and of the mountain where the Ark dwells.

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pouring their waters in the Black Sea (Hakobyan, Melik-Bakhshyan, Barseghyan 1986: 90, 253, 400, 779, vol.3: 284, vol. 5: 94). The upper stream of Halys (Alys) was in the Armenia Minor (Yeremyan 1963: 32).

<sup>42</sup> Chardin 1711 : 151.

<sup>43</sup> Jaubert 1821.

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