

LOST SECRETS OF DISTANT PAST: THE KING OF URARTU, RUSA THE ARMENIAN

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*In memory of convinced Armenologist, Historian and
Cartographer Eduard Danielyan*

Aram, the 6th patriarch of the Haykid dynasty, who, according to Movses Khorenatsi, is the senior contemporary of Assyria's fabulous king Ninos¹, corresponds accurately to the King of Urartu, Aramu or Arame, mentioned in the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions of the first half of the IX century BC. The latter ruled in the Armenian Highland, as the Armenian history tells, in 888-845 BC, and, according to N. Adontz, from 880 to almost 843-840 BC².

He was succeeded by Sarduri I (or Sedur) (845-825)³, the founder of the Van dynasty of Urartu, 11 rulers of which reigned from father to son until 590 BC (or 585); these were Ishpuini (825-810), Menua (810-786), Argishti I (786-764), Sarduri II (764-735), Rusa I (735-713), Argishti II (713-685)⁴, Rusa II (685-645), Sarduri III (645-635), the latter having been called Ishtarduri by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in his chronicle. Ashurbanipal ruled in 668-633 BC, which means that he was the contemporary of Rusa and his son⁵.

It looks like the list of Urartu's monarchs is being interrupted to this extent⁶.

In 1892 and 1894, when the photos of eight bronze sculptures, shields and their fragments that C.F. Lehmann-Haupt, a prominent German scholar, the discoverer and decipherer of the Urartian inscriptions, found in Toprak-Kale (north-eastern outskirts of Van), were published in the 7th and 9th editions of a well-known yearbook of Assyrian Studies⁷, the scientific circles were acquainted to Rusa Erimenahi (Son of Erimena), a new king of Van. This Erimena was proclaimed the king of Urartu by Lehmann Haupt, allocating for him the period of 625-605, and his son, Rusa, 605- 590, when Urartu came to its end.

¹ Movses Khorenatsi 1913, Book I, Ch. 13. «This Aram, a few years before Ninos ruled over Assyria and Nineveh, hard pressed by the nations around him, gathered the host of valiant archers related to him; they were also powerful lancers, youthful and very strong, dexterous and spirited and ready for war, about fifty thousand men».

² Adontz 1972: 186, 195.

³ History of Armenia.1: 1971: 288.

⁴ According to N. Adontz, the reign of Argishti II lasted 33 years - 713-680 B.C.

⁵ Harutyunyan 2001: 489, also 1970: 331.

⁶ Later, the Bronze Shield Record and the cylindrical stamp found on the Red Hill revealed Sarduri, the son of Sarduri, on the basis of which Sarduri IV was added after Sarduri III (the 620s BC).- see Harutyunyan 1970: 331.

⁷ Belck und Lehmann 1892; 1894.

Contrary to this, N. Adonts came to another conclusion later on about the era of Erimena's reign: «We do not know precisely whether Erimena, the father of Rusa III was a king or not. The Assyrians did not recognize Menua and the last Rusa for a simple reason that Menua was a very successful opponent, and the arrogant Assyrian nobles were not interested in mentioning his name (I would add his courageous affairs – A. M.), while Rusa III was ruling in the era when the state of Ashshur had already been fallen into ruins. As for the rest, the two lists mutually confirm each other»⁸.

It is no coincidence that there is no significant episode connected with the name of Rusa III in the Assyrian inscriptions during the decline of Urartu. Even in the «Babylonian Chronicles» published by C.J. Gadd, the curator of the British Museum, the Babylonian king Nabopalassar mentions that he proceeded from the mountains of Izala to the town of the province of Urashtu (he means the capture of the capital city of Tushpa), and does not refer the name of Urartu's ruler despite the fact that Urartu was considered the ally of Assyria; at the same time, the king of Urartu was not mentioned among the supporters of Median-Babylonian united forces.

And despite this, taking into account the eight Urartian decorated inscriptions about the King Rusa Eremenahi (son of Erimena), the Urartologists had to place this Rusa in the end of the Urartian kings' list as the 11th ruler of the Urartu's decline period, but now it turns out that it is a misunderstanding.

As for Erimena, N. Adonts, in contrast to Lehmann-Haupt, doubts the rule of Erimena, father of Rusa: «If we leave Erimena aside for a while until we have proof that he has ruled out, or perhaps he is identical to Sarduri, then we must accept Rusa Erimenahini as the successor of Sarduri». Thus, Adonts concludes that «Sarduri ruled in 646-610, and Rusa, from 609 until the end of Urartu's empire, when he disappeared in the maelstrom of 585 events»⁹.

But the fact that the historian's sharp eye did not reveal any trace regarding Rusa III king of Urartu in the Assyrian inscriptions, has, in my opinion, only one explanation, and that is because this Rusa does not really belong to the period of the fall of Urartu. The fragments of the six bronze shields, as well as the bronze sculpture of the kneeling bull¹⁰ on which Rusa Erimenahi is mentioned, are clear witnesses of fighting and valiant image of king Rusa. The interpretation of «kneeling bull» in the «History of Armenia» of Adontz does not correctly describe the idea of the bronze sculpture. The Orion (Hayk) constellation in the starry sky opposes the Bull (Bel) constellation. The king Rusa is the one who brings Bel (that is, the Bull) to his knee, and therefore it is not justified to look for him in the period of the decline of Urartu. His honorable pedestal is on the height of the power of Urartu, which he himself has built as the inscription reads «virile and

⁸ Adonts 1972: 183-184.

⁹ Idem: 195.

¹⁰ Idem: 182, Text N. 163a-b, Harutyunyan 2001: № 441a-b. The French original text of N. Adonts "Un taureau agenouillé", means "a bull brought to knees":

constructor» (arniu šinili)¹¹. Hence, I am transferring this Rusa with his patronymic name Ereminahi to the beginning of the VII century, identifying with Rusa II. In this case, how the different patronymics of Rusa II and Rusa III (Argishti II and Erimena), should be reconciled? That is the most difficult puzzle of this conjecture.

Esarhaddon (Aššurahiddina), the most vindictive and haughty Assyrian monarch who had the most irreconcilable attitude towards Urartu and his kings, tells about Rusa in his prayers, addressed to the god of Sun, Shamash, «he is called ^mla-a-a in the country Pa ...». Here, «^mla-a-a» is not an interjection, but rather the epithet *Hay* (Armen) of king Rusa as J.A. Knudtzon, the publisher of the inscription understands it. The determinative «m» indicates that this epithet applies to a male. The «Ya-ya» transcription of this epithet, which we meet in the chrestomathy of the History of Armenian people published by the Yerevan State University as well as in the studies of various authors who made use of this unsuccessful source, is a linguistic misunderstanding - the Mesropian alphabet allows the most accurate translation of any ancient and new term, so this epithet should be literally copied as it is in the Assyrian language, «la-a-a».

I have pointed on the existence of this *Hay* in the inscriptions from Ebla of the third millennium BC¹² where it is used in the form Ha-ia and Ha-ya (Ha-a in the cuneiform). It means that the name Hay was changed slightly in the past two millennias.

The philologists did not pay appropriate attention to this important testimony of the king of Ashshur; it regards Rusa II, the son of Argishti II. Meanwhile, this testimony of Esarhaddon is a very important argument to finally reveal who was Erimena mentioned in the six fragments of the Urartian shields and who is recognized as the father of Rusa and a separate king by almost all Urartologists.

Here, as we can see, two kings bearing the name Rusa meet each other, one is called *Hay* in his country of *Pa...*, and the other is called Rusašē Erimenahiniše (Rusa, son of Erimena), the father of Rusa III in the inscriptions of the sculptured Bronze Collection. Putting these two testimonies side by side, we reveal a surprising fact that has not been seen so far - it is the son of Erimena, Rusa, who stands in front of us in the face of Rusa the *Hay*, a contemporary of Esarhaddon. Now it is quite appropriate to recall a forgotten suggestion made still in 1933 by the Russian Urartologist I.I. Meshchaninov, one of the most prominent students of Nikolas Marr, who had interpreted Rusa Erimenahi not as patronymic name, but as *Hay*, «Rusa the *Hay*»¹³. Meanwhile, Meshchaninov came to this conclusion without being aware of the testimony of Esarhaddon.

Though Meshchaninov's view was defended by G. Jahukyan, a prominent researcher in the fields of Indo-European Linguistics and old Armenian, prominent historians S. Yeremyan and G. Tiratsyan, as well as by the philologist M. Hasratyan, but

¹¹ Арутюнян 2001: № 414, line 9.

¹² Musheghyan 2007: 152.

¹³ Meshchaninov 1933: 37-42.

I.M. Diakonov opposed to this idea and categorically and repeatedly rejected such an interpretation in his numerous publications in the 1950-60's, considering it antiscientific. According to Diakonov, Erimena was the uncle of Sarduri III and the brother of Rusa II, due to which Erimena rule only during a short period. This incredible supposition of Diakonov was followed by a drastic rejection: «It should be, of course, completely rejected the previously very unlikely hypothesis that the patronymic name of Rusa III, Erimenahe, is not a patronymic, but an ethnonym, «Armenian»¹⁴. Unfortunately, the vigorous defender of Diakonov's negative opinion was the prominent Urartologist Nikolay Harutyunyan: «It is difficult to agree with I.I. Meshchaninov, who is inclined to interpret Rusa Erimenahi not as «Rusa, son of Erimena», but as «Rusa the Armenian» ... This point of view, deprived of any foundation, is for some reason still taken for granted by some Armenologists (S.T. Yeremyan, G.A. Tiratsyan and others). Recently, I.M. Dyakonov and the author of the published book categorically objected to it»¹⁵.

Thus, thanks to the efforts of Diakonov and his followers, the exact interpretation of Meshchaninov was completely lost. Coming back to the cylindrical seal with the name «Erimena» found in the Red Hill, it should be noted that this name has nothing to do with Rusa II, and as I have already written in another study, «this Erimena is quite different from Erimena stamped on six different shields and found in Toprak-Kale (Van), who is remembered as an Urartian king. The very fact that the name of Erimena is unique to the cylindrical seal indicates that this person is the King of Armeni(os), the founder of the new dynasty of Haikazuni in 585 BC, whose name was carved on the royal round seal without a patronymic name and with the Urartian cuneiform signs still in use. And since the new dynasty of Haykazuni in the Ayrarat province begins with the King Armenios, the name of the previous king is not mentioned on the seal»¹⁶.

Thus, in the name of King Rusa, the Armenian people have been given two passports, certifying her existence through millenniums, in which the Armenian ethnonym *Hay* and the tribal name *armen*, inherited from the patriarch Arame, are ratified by the cuneiform inscriptions of the ancient Near East.

It follows from the above mentioned that the transliteration Erimena (= *hay*) should be identical with the the tribal name of *armeni* mentioned in the records of Menua and Argishti I, which is being intentionally read as Urmeni and thus one tries to conceal the existence of Armenian ethnos in the Armenian Highland until the end of the VI century BC. Meanwhile, in the Babylonian and more ancient Akkadian cuneiform inscriptions contain only Armi, Armani, Armanum.

Some other geographical data could be referred to which undeniably confirm the identity of two different kings bearing the name Rusa; we will refer to those arguments on another occasion.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Арутюнян 1970: 332 п. 94.

¹⁶ Musheghyan A. 2013.

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Editorial note to the article by A. Musheghyan

The publication of the article by A. Musheghyan exclusively is conditioned by the exceptional interest of the problem Urartu-Armenia in both Armenian scholarly and amateur literature.

The main goal of the author, who is a well-known philologist (Armenian literature), tries to suggest a new dating for Rusa III son of Erimena, one of the last kings of Urartu, who traditionally is placed in late VII century BC., that is not long before the end of this kingdom. Taking this as granted, he concludes that Rusa son of Erimena is identical with Rusa II and that this Erimena represents the ethnonym of Armenians (*armen*), hence Rusa and his father were Armenians who came to power in Urartu at the beginning of the VII century BC.

First of all it is worth to mention that the possibility of re-dating the reign of Rusa III to the earlier period was already suggested by M. Roaf ten years ago in an international conference held in Yerevan¹⁷. The author has thoroughly discussed all available textual

¹⁷ Michael Roaf, Thureau-Dangin, Lehmann-Haupt. Rusa Sardurihi and Rusa Erimenahi, Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies, vol.V/1, 2010, p.66-82. According to the author, this Rusa could have been an usurper of the throne after the death of Sarduri II; at some date after his defeat at the hands of Sargon II the royal succession was restored with the accession on the throne by Rusa son of Sarduri II.

and iconographic data concerning this Urartian king and came to the conclusion that Rusa son of Erimena probably should be identical with «Ursa», king of Urartu, attested in the text of the Assyrian king Sargon II where he describes his campaign against Urartu in 714 BC. Let us mention also that the idea of an earlier dating for Rusa son Erimena was suggested still in 1912 by the outstanding French Assyriologist F. Thureau-Dangin¹⁸. Both studies are not referred by the present author.

In connection with the treatment of the name of Erimena the author suggests, without any argumentation, that the epithet given to Rusa in one Assyrian text from the period of Esarhaddon¹⁹, should be understood as the endonym of Armenians (*hay*). Let us quote the passage under discussion - «whom they call Yaya [^mla-a-a], [...] whom they call king of Pa-[.....]». He further compares this ^mla-a-a(= Hay?) with the proper name Ha-ia (Ha-ya), attested in the III mill. BC texts from Ebla (Syria). He does not explain how this ^mla-a-a could be compared with *hay*. The references to two scholars (J.A. Knudtzon more than 100 years ago and I. Meshchaninov in 1933)²⁰ who had suggested the possibility of comparing ^mla-a-a with the endonym of Armenians are not convincing since this was only a mere guess which needs to be argued.

Resuming the abovementioned it should be stated that, although the much discussed problem of the expected relationship between Urartu and Greater Armenia exists, it could be solved only through combined epigraphic, archaeological, linguistic studies, by no means on declarative level.

¹⁸ F.Thureau-Dangin, Une relation de la Huitieme Campagne de Sargon, Textes Cuneiformes du Louvre 3, Paris, 1912 (see discussion in Roaf 2010: 66-68).

¹⁹ The text represents a query to the Sun-god regarding the political situation in Urartu and its neighborhood (I.Starr, Querries to the Sun-god, Helsinki, 1990, text N.18, line 5).

²⁰ The same idea we find in the studies of S.Yeremyan and G.Tiratsyan, both on empiric level (in 1956 and 1958 respectively).