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**Nigar Albəndəyeva**  
Baku State University  
master student  
n.albandayeva@gmail.com

## AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE HYPOTHESES CONCERNING THE ORIGINS OF ARMENIANS

### Abstract

Various hypotheses concerning the Armenian people's ancestry are the primary subject of this article. There has been an investigation into Biblical, Phrygian, Hittite, Hayasa, and South Caucasus theories. Each of the theories and the alternate facts, as well as the inconsistencies among them, have all been laid forth. The article also includes a brief criticism of the primary Armenian sources and information provided by Movses of Khorene regarding the early history of the Armenian people. Moreover, the proof of migration of the Armenian population to the South Caucasus after the Turkmenchay and Edirne treaties has been presented relying on historical records and statistical data.

**Keywords:** *progenitor, ethnos, genesis, South Caucasus, Phrygians, Hittite, Bible, fable, Armenia, theory*

**Nigar Albəndəyeva**  
Bakı Dövlət Universiteti  
magistrant  
n.albandayeva@gmail.com

### Ermənilərin mənşəyinə dair fərziyələrə tənqidi baxış

#### Xülasə

Məqalənin əsas mövzusu erməni xalqının mənşəyi ilə bağlı müxtəlif fərziyələrin təhlilidir. Bibliya motivləri, Frigiya, Het, Hayasa və Cənubi Qafqaz nəzəriyyələri ilə bağlı araşdırma aparılmışdır. Bu nəzəriyyələr arasındakı uyğunsuzluqlar təqdim olunaraq, alternativ faktlar irəli sürülmüşdür. Məqələdə, həmçinin, ermənilərin erkən tarixi ilə bağlı mövcud olan və ilkin mənbə olaraq sayılan, Musa Xorenlenin qeyd etdiyi məlumatlara tənqidi yanaşılmışdır. Bundan əlavə, ermənilərin Türkmənçay və Ədirnə sülh müqavilələrindən sonra Cənubi Qafqaza köçürülməsini sübut edən mənbələrə və statistik məlumatlara müraciət edilmişdir.

**Açar sözlər:** *əcdad, etnos, genezis, Cənubi Qafqaz, Frigiyalılar, Hetlər, Bibliya, əfsanə, Ermənistan, nəzəriyyə*

#### Introduction

The South Caucasus is one of the major geopolitical regions. Given the diverse population of many ethnic groups in the present era, it is crucial to conduct a study on their roots to prevent any form of historical misinterpretation and misunderstanding. The origins of Armenians are subject to varying interpretations among different historical accounts. The process by which Armenians formed a distinct statehood, unfortunately, does not have a precise approach by historians.

The Armenians, who lacked a sovereign state until the beginning of the 20th century, chose to create their own state by gaining control over Azerbaijani areas. This was followed by several massacres committed against the local Azerbaijani population of the region. First historical fabrications started by claiming the presence of a legendary Armenian empire known as *Greater Armenia* and stating their intention to reinstate its borders. As it is seen from the history the

motherland of Armenians is considered to be wherever they live. In this regard, we may observe failed endeavors to develop self-governance within the Ottoman Empire.

Historically, researchers believed that Armenians and the Armenian language emerged in the Armenian Highlands. Consequently, it was thought that the history of the Armenian people began in this period. This perspective should be considered as simplistic and completely unsatisfactory. It is essential to recognize that the *Armenia* referred to in historical documents varies from the Armenia that exists in the present day. The term *Armenia* referred to a specific geographic region, whereas *Armenian* was used to describe the people living in that area, rather than indicating a national identity. The fact that Armenians did not refer to themselves as Armenian is probably due to this reason (Diakonov, 1968: 136).

Prior historical records of the Armenian Highlands and surrounding areas were documented not in Armenian but in several languages, including Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Hurrian, Urartian, Luwian, Old Persian, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. Once again, this demonstrates that the term *Armenian Highlands* was bestowed upon this region by external sources. The term *Armenian* was formerly employed in a manner similar to how we currently use the terms *Eurasian* or *European*. It is used in a broad sense without specifying any particular group and applies to all individuals who live in the area.

It is an undeniable truth that Armenian historians are engaging in historical revisionism by adding or substituting certain facts. For instance, while rewriting the map, *Ararat Mountains* were for some reason mentioned as *Armenian Mountains* (2). Movses of Khorene and Sebeos authored historical accounts detailing the origins and early history of the Armenian people. Both works were based on the writings of Mar Abbas Katina, a Syrian author who composed the *Annals of Armenia* at an unclear time period (Frothingham, 1884: 202). Nevertheless, those got lost and did not reach us. There is justification to believe that Movses fabricated material regarding the early history of Hais. Hence, the credibility of the works derived from this source seems questionable.

### **Biblical theory.**

The legends on the genesis of Armenians and Haik theory were first presented by *the father of Armenian history* Movses of Khorene (Khorenatsi). This hypothesis holds that Haik, the son of Togrom, the grandson of Japheth, and the great-grandson of Noah, is the ancestor of the Armenian people (before Movses of Khorene there was no information, nor the theory of Haik). A tradition states that he (Haik) and his sons arrived in Armenia and settled here following the fall of the Tower of Babel (Uras, 1988: 245). Furthermore, it was mentioned that Haik lived for around 400 years after leaving Armenia for Armenak, his eldest son. The geographical limits of Armenia, that was supposedly found by Haik and later left to Armenak however, were not stated.

First of all, the Bible should only be used as a historical source exclusively for religious interpretation, and other facts such as the origins of a nation in our case, should not be based on fables. Secondly, there is a debate adjacent to even these legends. According to one of the legends surrounding the foundation of the city of, Iravan, the city got its name after the prophet Noah declared, “yervadz,” which translates to “it is seen”, (Bayramov, 2011: 140) upon seeing the city for the first time following the Great Flood. The fable suggests that Noah settled in the place of what is known as modern-day Armenia. So, who arrived in so-called Armenia first, according to legends? Noah or Haik? If Haik was the first to establish in Armenia—the geographical bounds of which are left unsaid—then it would be impossible for his great-grandfather to find a city claimed by Armenians before him. An alternative argument could be the acceptance that the foundation of Armenia was somewhere away from the Caucasus region and had nothing in common with the city of Iravan which is now the capital city.

Another point of contention in this hypothesis is that the ruler of the realm during the tower's construction was named Bel (probably Biblical Nimrod). After his refusal to obey Bel, Haik departed to Ararat with his three hundred sons and grandsons. The legends also mention that there, he encountered individuals from his own nation and began speaking the language of Noah and Armenians still regard themselves and their language as the direct inheritance of Noah (Uras, 1988:

248). Firstly, the question is whether Haik is the ancestor of Armenians, and if he relocated to Ararat with his sons and grandsons, then how did he encounter individuals from the same ethnic group as him? Furthermore, determining the language spoken by Noah is a challenging task, and it is certain that it was not Armenian. Recent investigations indicate that the language spoken by Noah may have been Hebrew, a Semitic language (6), meanwhile, the Armenian language refers to the Indo-European family.

Armenian legends depict an epic rendition of the genesis narrative. Haik and the first Haikids had kingdoms, mountains, rivers, and months named after them in the Armenian Universe. Haik, Aram, and Ara the Handsome are symbolic representations of the early Armenian gods. Haik and Aram symbolize different parts of the thunder deity, while Ara the Handsome depicts the tragic figure of the thunder god's son, also known as the *dying god*. Probably Movses of Khorene tried to combine earlier beliefs with Christianity and present them as Armenian history.

#### **Phrygian theory.**

According to ancient authors including Herodotus and Xenophon, modern Armenians are derived from the Phrygians, who settled in the Balkans (Herodotus, 2013: 338). As a consequence of the conflict that took place between the Cimmerians and the Phrygians, the latter were forced to migrate to the eastern region. Xenophon made mention of Armenia and Armenians in his book *Anabasis*. Here, Xenophon states that the Hellenes claim that after passing through this region (Carduks' region), they will arrive in Armenia, a large and prosperous place ruled by Orontes. Taking a closer look at Xenophon's definitions of the terms that grab our attention, let's examine the following information from the same source. *"In the morning, they found armed horsemen on the other side of the river, who appeared to be ready to block the crossing, and fighters positioned on the hills above the horsemen, intent on halting the Hellenic invasion of Armenia"*. Those were the Armenian mercenary forces of Orontes and Artukh, along with the Chaldeans and Mards. Let us now condense the contents of Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Primarily, the Karduks and their territories were autonomous, but the Persians governed the eastern part of Armenia. Born in Persia, Orontes ruled Armenia as a satrap of the Persian empire. Second, Orontes, hired the Armenians, together with the Chaldeans and Mards, as part of his army. Put another way, the Persian army used the Armenians as mercenaries. Lastly, the Armenians described by Xenophon and other ancient writers belonged to a tribe union and were residents of the geographical territory known as Armeniya (Imanov, 2021: 65-66).

Armenian historian Movses of Khorene used ambiguous terminology such as Haik, Armenak, Masis, and Amasia. Nevertheless, they lack any affiliation with the Armenian language and instead originate from the Khaldean, Phrygian, and Uratian languages (Uras, 1988: 315). Studies show that Phrygians were chased by Cimmerians, as a result, they appeared to settle in Asia Minor, and later became the ancestors of modern-day Armenians (9).

#### **Urartu theory.**

Armenians assert their ancestry from the ancient civilization of Urartu, which thrived in eastern Anatolia from approximately 3000 B.C. until its downfall at the hands of the Medes. Following its demise, the region of Urartu remained disputed between Lydia and the Medes, until eventually falling under the dominance of the latter. This claim lacks empirical evidence.

Moses of Khorene asserted that the Armenian populace were descendants of the Urartus and that the designation Armenia originated from the appellation of an Urartu ruler named Aramu (Gurun, 1987: 112). Most Armenian historians have strongly rejected this assertion. There is no scientific proof to substantiate the correlation between contemporary Armenia and Urartu in historical records. The ruling aristocracy of Urartu were known as Bianili and they named their country Biana. The Urartu civilization utilized the Hurrian language, which is distinct from the Indo-European language family (Gernot, 2008: 81). Conversely, there is an additional record of evidence that links the name of Armenia to Armenak, the son of Haik. The place Armenia is thought to have been named by foreigners in honor of Armenak.

#### **Hittite theory.**

Some place names in the Armenian language seem to have a strong connection to terms in the Hittite language, leading to a notion that suggests the Armenians and the Hittites who lived in Cilicia (Uras, 1988: 321) were actually the same people. The Hittites derived their name from the Hattis, a group of people who were relocating to the area. It is claimed that the term *Hittite* underwent a transformation and eventually became the term *Haik*.

From the information provided, it is evident that Armenian researchers do not have a conclusive and universally accepted hypothesis regarding the historical background of the Armenian people.

#### **Hayasa theory.**

Armenian historians have not provided a plausible explanation for the derivation of the word Hai/Haik. According to the Hayasa hypothesis, Armenians assert that the term Hai originated from the state known as Hayasa-Azzi, which was situated in the northeastern region of Anatolia. They equate themselves with the people who inhabited that area (Osman, 2019: 367). The inhabitants of the Hayasa-Azzi Kingdom, which emerged under the rule of the Hittites, resided in a tribal structure in the regions of Eastern and Northeastern Anatolia. The first documented references to Hayasa-Azzi may be traced back to the reign of Hittite monarchs, such as Mursili II and Suppiluliuma I. These records mostly portray the Hittites' triumphs against Hayasa-Azzi. Based on the records, it is evident that two adjacent nations were engaged in a state of warfare. Regrettably, the Hayasas did not leave behind any written documentation that might shed light on their social, economic, and cultural existence. This includes information on their origins and the precise geographical boundaries of their settlement. Hayasa is believed to have been a term used to describe a group of people whose origins are unclear, as there are no historical documents referencing them as a state.

#### **South Caucasus theory.**

This concept posits that the Armenians share racial and cultural ties with the inhabitants of the Southern Caucasus, hence suggesting their origin in that region. However, the only evidence supporting this claim is the fact that Darius was triumphant over the Armenians in the Caucasus region. The Armenians have no genetic or ancestral connection to any of the Caucasian ethnic groups. The inscriptions uncovered in Bissutun, dating back to 515 BC, from the Achaemenid era of Darius, provide the earliest recorded mentions of the Armenian people. Armenia served as a Satrap, which is a province, within the empire of Darius, as evidenced by these inscriptions.

According to Armenian historian Vardan Parsamian, the South Caucasus did not have an extensive Armenian population before it became part of the Russian Empire (Isgandarli, 2011: 27). Upon their arrival in Russia in 1877-1878, Armenians from Asia Minor were compelled to recognize the supremacy of Russia and subsequently relocated to the South Caucasus. According to Shavrov, a Russian scholar and member of the Geographic Society, Russia forcibly transferred millions of Armenians who had no previous residence in the Caucasus region (Shavrov, 1911: 60). The major transfer of Armenians to the South Caucasus began only after the Russo-Gajar and Russo-Ottoman wars, which provided an opportunity for Armenians to discover a new home. The clause 15 of the Treaty of Turkmenchay does not explicitly mention the transfer of Armenians. However, the subsequent acts taken by the Russian Empire, as detailed in the letters of the Russian representative and writer Griboyedov, provide evidence supporting the notion of Armenian resettlement (15).

### **Conclusion**

Armenian historians lack the ability to present substantiated evidence on the origins of Armenians. There exist several hypotheses on the origins of Armenians. The theories given by them lack coherence and exhibit conflicting viewpoints. Furthermore, employing Biblical data, as presented by Movses of Khorene, and constructing historical narratives based on mythology is not a method that adheres to scientific principles when investigating the origins of a nation. Armenian historians do not accept the notion that Armenians had Phrygian origins, as claimed by Greek and Roman historical sources. It is intriguing that they are not concerned about the fact that their ancestor lived for around 400 years, but they are instead worried about ancient sources.

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