

About the rise of the name of Yerevan

Yerevan is one of the oldest cities in the world. The archeological excavations made in its territory, show that the human lived here thousands years ago. It is important to note, that the territory of Yerevan has been inhabited uninterruptedly. The researches showed, that a lot of settlements had arised in different periods and for different reasons were demolished in the territory of the city. In chronological sense, the oldest settlement,discovered in the territory of the city, is the Yerevan or Hrazdan Cave (near Lake Yerevan, on the left bank of the Hrazdan River), the oldest lower layer of which (4-5 cultural layers) dates with Musteryan Circle (100.000-35.000 thousand years ago). Then, in the territory of Yerevan, in new settlements the signs of the human being`s residence were discovered, making a complete chain of historical monuments. This is the list of those settlements: Shengavit the (4th-2nd millennium BC), Tsitsernakaberd, the square near the Central Railway Station, Karmir Berd (the half of the 2nd millennium BC), Karmir Blur (from the end of the 2nd millennium-beginning of the 1st millennium BC), Arin Berd (Erebuni, the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C.) Avan-Arinj (the 2nd-1st centuries BC), the Early Middle Ages Yerevan (the Center), Yerevan Fortress (the 7th century, 16th century) and so on.

The investigators (Gh.Alishan, Gh.Inchichyan) and the foreign travellers who visited Yerevan (J.Sharden, Robert Ker Porter, William Auzley, H.F.B.Linch) were especially interested in the name of Yerevan. In the Armenian literary Yerevan is mentioned as **Yervan, Erevan, Ervan, Eruan, Arevan** and in other forms.



Yerevan cave, 100 000-40 000 B.C.

In the works of foreign travellers and investigators Yerevan is mentioned as **Erivan Irvan, Iravan, Erevan, Irevan** and in other forms.It is supposed that on the map of Ptghomeos(the 2nd century) the mentioned settlement **Tervan** is Yerevan, and the letter **I** from the name **Irvan** was in the form of **T**, because on the map Tervan is mentioned in the same geographical latitude as Yerevan.

There are a lot of interpretations and legends commenting the name of Yerevan. The oldest and the most spread interpretation concerns the name of forefather Noah. According to the legend, popular with among the people,after the Deluge, when the water went back, Noah saw a land from Mount Ararat mountain and cried “Yerevats,Yerevats!” (I see the land), which later on was modified into Yerevan. This legend is very old and has always been popular with the people. The foreign travellers, who visited Yerevan and were told that legend by the residents, also testify this legend. One of the first tellers is Jan Sharden, who was in Yerevan in 1672-73years. The local Armenians had also told him, that Yerevan was the residence of Noah before the Deluge and was built in the same place just after it.

William Auzley, Robert Ker Porter, A.Haqsthaufen, Linch and the others also link the name of Yerevan and the foundation of the city with Noah. In Armenian historiography

Gh.Inchichyan, M.Smbatyan and the others had also touched upon this legend. This point of view is still a popular legend and it proves, that Yerevan is a very old settlement.

There is also another point of view explaining the name of Yerevan. According to it the name of Yerevan was taken from the name of Yervand the 4th (220-201 BC), the last king of Yervandyan dynasty. H.Nalyan supposes, that Yerevan is the same capital Yervandashat built by the king Yervand, other investigators think that – it's the city Yervandavan. Foreign travellers also testify that according to the legend widespread among the Armenians, the name of Yerevan was taken from the name of the king Yervand. Among the explanations we can ignore another Turkish-Persian legend, telling that the name of Yerevan was formed after the name of Persian khan Revan-Ghuli. This opinion is inadmissible, because that khan had ruled Yerevan in the beginning of the 16th century, but Yerevan and its name have a history of thousand years.

In the 19th-20th centuries the discovery and the reading of the cuneiform reports, by the kings of the oldest Armenian Ararat-Urartu State (Biaynili, the kingdom of Van), discovered in the territory of Armenia, enabled not only to precise a lot of geographical names, but also to interpret their meanings in a new way.

In Urartian reports the names of **Erian, Eriakh, Erebuni** can be read in the report by the king Russa the First (735-713 BC), discovered in the village Tsovinar, near to Lake Sevan, among the names of 22 lands the name of **Eriani** is also mentioned. The Russian archeologist M.Nikolski put the Eriani land in the environs of Yerevan, on the top of the mountain Arin-Berd and tells that the name of Yerevan was taken from Eriani. Ye. Shahaziz, Gh.Samvelyan and other scientists also accept this point of view.

Especially the surmise of Nikolski was very important, that they might search the ancient Yerevan in the territory of the hill Arin-Berd, where another Russian researcher, the archeologist A.Ivanovski had examined and described the ruins of the fortress for the first time.



Shengavit settlement V-III millennium B. C.

I.Meshchaninov, G.Melikishvili, G.Ghapantsyan had placed **Eriani** in the environs of Lake Sevan. G.Ghapantsyan identifies and links the fortress and the land of Eriani with **Eria (Aria) tribe**. He considered the land of Eriani as the same land of the Eria (Aria) tribe. G.Ghapantsyan also linked the land of **Eriakhi** to Eria(Aria) tribe, which some people identify with the land of Eriani. Ghapantsyan placed Eriakhi in the territory of Kumayri(Gyumri).

Returning again to the name of the Eri(Ari) tribe, Ghapantsyan supposed that the name of Yerevan arised from the form of **eri-avan(Eri-land)**, which later was pronounced "Yerevan". G.Ghapantsyan, identifying the name of Yerevan with the name of the tribe and the land of Eria(Aria), at the same time consideres his opinion mysterious, as the Eria tribe and the land

Eriakhi were situated on the territory of the town Gyumri. As we see, among the hypothesis and points of view G.Ghapantsyan gives the point of view that the name of Yerevan can be explained in the sense of “Eri avan”(Rti land).

For the elucidations of the questions concerning the foundation and location of Yerevan the report, discovered during the excavations made in the hill of Arin-Berd in 1950 by K.Hovhannisyanyan, and the cuneiform report (chronology), which is also called Khorkhoryan, engraved on the rock of Van, discovered in 1828 by an orientalist F.Shults, had played a very important role. In the last report they could read the name of Erebuni settlement, founded by the king Arguishti the First (786-754), but it wasn't clear where the new settlement was founded. In the report of Khorkhoryan Arguishti the First writes: “By the order of God Khaldi, Arguishti, the son of Menua, built the town Erebuni for the power of the kingdom Biaynili...The land was desolate... I did great works here. I lodged 6.600 soldiers from Khate and Tsopane lands there”. The report, discovered from Arin-Berd, tells: “By the power of God Khaldi, Arguishti, the son of Menua, built this wonderful fortress, called it Erebuni, for the power of the land Biaynili. The land was desolate. I did great works...”.

These two reports and the report of a Norq dweller Ter-Avetisyan, discovered from the foot of the hill Arin-Berd, made it possible to specify the exact place of the fortress Erebuni, built by Arguishti. The date of the foundation of the fortress was also specified: 782 BC.

After the finding and the reading of the report of Arin-Berd, the researchers B.Piotrovski, M.Israyelyan, K.Hovhannisyanyan gave the point of view, that the name of Yerevan was arisen from the name of Erebuni, and M.Israyelyan uttered an opinion that Erebuni means “Victory”.

But I.Dyakov has another point of view, concerning the explanation of the name Erebuni. He separates the word Erebuni into **ere-ebani** constituent parts and supposes, that in the name of the Ere tribe it has a meaning of the “land”.



Inscription of the king Arguishti the I about the foundation of Erebouni fortress in 782 B.C.

As we see this explanation is similar to the opinion of G.Ghapantsyan. But M.Israyelyan objects against the opinion of I.Dyakonov. He thinks that in the Urartian language there is a **er/e/bu** verbal root, which means **to steal, to win**, that's why he thinks it's possible, that in the stem of Erebuni is the word, from which was formed the name Erebuni “Victory”.

On the above-mentioned explanations were accepted or rejected by scientists for years.

The names, mentioned in the reports of Arguishti the First, are the oldest written records of the name Yerevan (Erebuni), (they are also read in Irpuni, Erbuni, Erebuni forms).

It is known, that the territory of Yerevan had been populated long before the fortress of Erebuni was founded. But what the names of the oldest settlements, discovered in the territory of Yerevan, especially Shengavit of today, which is about 6000 years old, is unknown. In this sense the name of Erebuni, as the oldest name of the Armenian capital, is especially important.

In ancient times it was spread to name the newly built settlement in the name of the founder king or a god. It is known, that later on Arguishti the First in 776 BC established a settlement in Ararat valley, on the left bank of the river Araks, which was called

Arguishtikhinili (later on –Armavir) after his name. In this case we can think, that for the name of a new settlement, founded on the hill of Arin-Berd, Arguishti the First had used the name of the ancient settlement existing in that territory, or the name of the land of the Eri(Ari) tribe. It is interesting that the forefathers of Indo-Europeans – the Aryan tribes, moving away from Armenian highlands and the surrounding territories remind that they belong to the Aryan tribe and mention about it in written sources: (Indian Vedas, Iranian “Avesta”, Behistunyan report of the Persian khan Dareh the First). The Urartian written sources, also literarists of Armenian Middle Ages don't pay attention to that fact in their works. We must think, that it was their reality, they were living in their homeland and didn't need to remember about it uninterruptedly. In this case, too, Arguishti the First had just established a settlement and named it as a land of the Ari or Eri tribe (or he had used the existing ancient name).

As it was mentioned above, this explanation had been offered by G.Ghapantsyan even in 1930-40 years. Let's try to develop this point of view. It is known that in Armenian highlands there are a lot of geographical, personal names beginning with Ar, Er, Ur, Ir: Ararat, Aragats, Ara, Araks, Aratsani, Armavir, Archesh... This phenomenon has a link to the name of the Creator (Ararich), Ar (God) and his adorers indigenes of Ararat highlands Hay Armen (Armen, Ari (Eri)).

We can notice that the names of Erivan, Arivan, Irevan also begin with the constituent parts Ar-, Er-, Ir-. The second part of the name is the constituent part --van. In Armenian highlands there are a lot of settlements, which have the ending --van: Van, Nakhijevan, Ijevan, Ditsavan, Otevan, Avan, Vanq and so on. In all the versions --van has the meaning of a place, settlement. In the name of Yerevan there is also the ending --van. And the roots Ar-, Er- of the word have a link to the name of the Ari, Eri tribe. So we can say, that the versions of the name of Yerevan Arevan, Aravan, Erivan are formed from the component parts Ar-, Er- and --van, which has the meaning of the land (in Armenian language- avan) of the Ari or Eri tribe, adorers of the God Ar (the Creator).

The name of Erebuni mentioned in the report of Arguishti the First, also speaks for the name of “land” (avan) of the Ari (Eri) tribe. In Urartian cuneiforms **ebani** has the meaning of “land, settlement”. The researchers consider the Armenian **avan** and famous **ebani** from Urartian reports as words having the same meaning. As we see, in this case Erebuni can be read as a settlement of the Ari or Eri tribe. It's necessary to remind, that in notes of foreign travellers Yerevan in Persian version is mentioned in Irivan, Irvan, Irevan, Iravan, Eriavan forms. The Persian form of Yerevan used by the Persians, the oldest neighbours and kinsmen of Armenia, also proves that the name of Yerevan has the meaning of the settlement of the Ari (Eri) tribe. For the comparison we can remind the name of Iran, when among the Persians the component part Ar- is used in a form of Ir-. And even one of the researchers Anqetil supposes, that the name Yerevan has likeness to the name of Eerien Veedjo or mentioned in “Zend Avesta”.

As a conclusion we can say, that the name of the capital Yerevan has the meaning of the “land of the Ari or Eri tribe” and “the settlement of the Aryan tribe”.

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