

THE MUSHKI PROBLEM RECONSIDERED

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Introduction

For a long time the appearance of the Indo-European element of the Armenian people was regarded as a consequence of a certain wave of Indo-European migrations from their original homeland, either in the XII B.C. or much later¹. The western route of migration from the Balkanic area still dominates since the current view on this problem states the following:

1) The Armenian language shows close relationship to the Balkanic Indo-European languages (i.e., Thracian and Phrygian).

2) The Armenians are not attested to in the Armenian Highland or in adjacent areas neither in the Hittite, nor in Assyrian historical records.

3) The Early Transcaucasian Culture (IV-III mill. B.C.) was plausibly non-Indo-European.

Before discussing the probability of the Armenian migration(s) some remarks on these arguments will be useful.

The first argument seems quite dubious because of an extremely small number of linguistic data which could be ascribed to the Thracians and Phrygians².

That the Armenian-speaking tribes could have been remained unrecorded in the contemporary cuneiform texts is not as strange as it may seem. One can hardly believe that it is possible to identify any known linguistic/ethnic group by the restricted number of anthroponyms, theonyms, and toponyms which have appeared in XV-XIII B.C. texts. This holds true for the Hayasaean data which shows some Anatolian and Hurrian influence, but could not be treated as being neither Anatolian, nor Hurrian³.

¹ See footnote 5 below.

² Diakonoff and Neroznak, 1985.

³ On Hayasaean linguistic data Kapantsian, 1948; Jahukian, 1961: 363ff.; idem, 1987: 322ff., etc.

If the Armenian ethnogenesis was in progress before the VII-VI B.C., then, indeed, one might expect the existence of a considerable number of different tribal names of Indo-European and non-Indo-European origin. The Hittite and Assyrian texts usually list certain areas after their settlements and rulers, as well as other geographical terms (oronyms, hydronyms). The search for the Armenians in its classical sense among these proper names is a rather misleading effort since we know that even in the VII B.C. Urartian texts dealing with the whole Armenian Highland, the Armenians are not attested to as such. But, at the same time, one could hardly argue for the rather groundless theses according to which the Armenians had made their appearance only in the late VII-VI B.C. as an ethnic unit ready to seize the power from declining Urartians.

As to the traditional view on the non-Indo-European affiliation of the Early Transcaucasian Culture and its direct heir – the Trialeti culture – recent studies seem to disprove its ethnic homogeneity. The archaeological investigation of this area shows clear traces of Indo-European presence here at least from the end of the III millennium B.C. if not earlier⁴.

The purpose of this paper is the following. If the bearers of the Armenian language are thought to be migrants from the Balkans in the XII B.C., then are we able to trace their arrival under the sidelight of the contemporary Near Eastern history? Only within the context of the latter one can discuss the complicated problem of the proposed Proto-Armenian migration.

The current theory dealing with the Proto-Armenian migration from the Balkans during the XII B.C. usually argues for the identification of Proto-Armenians with the group of tribes first attested to in the Assyrian cuneiform texts of the XII B.C. as newcomers in the Upper Euphrates area at the period when the Hittite Empire had ended⁵. What do we know about the ethnic term *Mushki*?

Assyrian texts of the XII-VIII B.C. tell of two different political entities or peoples with the same name *Mushki*. The former are those who in c. 1165 B.C. had captured Alzi and Purukuzzi, provinces in the Upper Euphrates basin and slightly before the reign of Tiglathpileser I (1114-1077) had penetrated into Kadmuhi, to the south of Taurus (20,000 warriors)⁶. The same people are reported in Kadmuhi in the IX B.C. first by Tukulti-Ninurta

⁴ Winn, 1981: 113ff.; Yakar, 1981: 101ff.; idem, 1992: 507ff.; Arechian, 1988: 84ff.; Burney, 1993: 313ff.

⁵ Markwart, 1928: 211ff.; Yeremian, 1958: 59ff.; Adontz, 1972: 52ff., 312; Albright, 1975: 597; Barnett, 1975: 420f.; Diakonoff, 1980: 360ff.; Diakonoff, 1984: 64f., 115ff.; Mallory, 1989: 34f., etc.

⁶ Grayson, 1976: § 12ff.

II, then by Aššurnaširpal II, as Assyrian tributaries⁷. Thus, this previously unknown people during the past three centuries was still distinguished by its southern neighbors. In the late VIII B.C. Sargon II (721-705) knows another Mushki⁸, which has long been identified with the Phrygian kingdom, in the Sangarius valley⁹.

This ethnonym is attested also in other sources. Rusa II of Urartu (685-645) mentioned one ^{KUR}*Muškini*¹⁰, probably, in the Upper Euphrates valley¹¹. The same name appears in the Hieroglyphic Luvian inscription of *Kargamis, A 6 – Musa and Musaka*¹².

Classical Greek authors know certain *Moschoi* in the Pontic area (north-eastern Asia Minor)¹³ among a group of unidentified peoples as the population of the XIX Persian satrapy¹⁴.

This wide geography of the ethnic name *mushk-mosx* from the Balkans to eastern Anatolia, along with toponyms like ^{KUR}*Mušani* and ^{URU}*Mušuni* of Urartian texts¹⁵ or Classical Armenian province *Mok-k'/Mok'-s*¹⁶ lacks satisfactory historical explanation. Either we must propose the existence of two different ethnic units, one in the Balkans and in western Anatolia (Indo-European Thracian-Phrygian tribes), the other in eastern Anatolia (Indo-European or non-Indo-European); or, if these ethnonyms and toponyms are related to each other, then one might think about a migration or series of several migratory movements either from west to east, or in reverse.

At present three absolutely different views exist concerning the Mushki problem. According to one, the “eastern” Mushki were the vanguard group of the Balkanic Indo-European peoples (i.e., bearers of Proto-Armenian) who during the early XII B.C. had reached the Upper Euphrates valley, participating along their long march in the destruction of central Hatti¹⁷.

⁷ Grayson, 1976: §§ 547, 567, 634.

⁸ Luckenbill, 1927: §§ 8, 16, 18, etc.; also Hawkins, 1982: 317ff. for Assyrian-Phrygian relations during the reign of Sargon II.

⁹ The equation of Assyrian ^{ma}*Muški* with historical Phrygia Bittel, 1950: 76; idem, 1970: 135; Götze, 1957: 202; Mellink, 1965: 317f.; Roller, 1983: 300; Muscarella, 1989: 333, etc.

¹⁰ Melikishvili, 1960: No. 278, lines 2-4.

¹¹ Harouthiounian, 1985: 147; cf. Diakonoff and Kashkai, 1981: 59 for western localization in the Sangarius valley.

¹² Meriggi, 1967: No. 10, line 2.

¹³ Hecat. Fr. 188 apud Steph. Byz., s.v.

¹⁴ Herod. III 94, VII 78.

¹⁵ Melikishvili, 1960: No. 158, lines 14-15, No. 77, line 4.

¹⁶ Yeremian, 1968: 92 derives *Mok-k'* from the name of Thracian Mushki (= Moxiani of Ptol., V, 2, 18).

¹⁷ See n. 5 above.

According to the other, these were the local population of north-eastern Asia Minor, the ancestors of Classical *Moschoi* or Kartvelian-Georgian *Meschians*¹⁸. The third view deals with the Indo-European affiliation of these “eastern” Mushki¹⁹.

Thus, the theory of “eastern” Mushki’s Balkanic origin shared by most scholars is based on the traditional treatment of events in central Anatolia in the late XIII-early XII B.C., that is the collapse of the Hittite Empire. According to this theory, the Balkanic peoples had participated in the destruction of Hatti, after which a considerable part of these migrants had moved further to the east.

Recent studies in Anatolian archaeology seem to prove the existence of two different migrations during the XII B.C. Near Eastern crisis, one in north-western and west-central Anatolia (Balkan peoples), the other in eastern Anatolia, in the general area of the Upper Euphrates valley (Mushku, Urumu, and Kashku-Apishlu). Correspondingly, the “eastern” Mushki tribes should be disassociated from Balkanic migrants whose movement towards Anatolia in the same XII B.C., most probably, was limited to its north-western and western parts. Below we shall discuss the geographic impact of these two migrations, especially that in eastern Anatolia.

The Balkanic migration and the end of Hatti

The crisis of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) civilizations of the Near East, including also the Aegean basin, had started in the last decades of the XIII B.C. and soon culminated in a major disaster for some areas (Asia Minor, Levant, Mycenaean Greece). Throughout this vast area the political, economic, and cultural decline or stagnation of the LBA centers is quite visible²⁰. Among the consequences of the crisis were widespread migrations of peoples which led to great demographic shifts (the Sea Peoples, Hittites, Luwians, Aramaeans, Hebrews, etc.). The Armenian Highland, particularly its western and south-western part, also shows clear signs of this decline, unfortunately, poorly discussed in literature (see below). Ethnic movements in this area, referred to in the Assyrian texts of the late XII-early XI B.C., presented major problems.

In order to enter the Upper Euphrates basin from the Balkans the Proto-Armenian tribes had to make their way through a territory where

¹⁸ Melikishvili, 1954: 106; idem, 1990/91: 73; Götze, 1957: 185; Mellink, 1965: 319ff.; Lortkipanidse, 1993: 6, etc.

¹⁹ Kossian, 1991: 77; Petrossian, 1991: 22ff.; Sevin, 1991: 87ff.

²⁰ See most recently “Crisis”.

until early XII B.C. the Hittite Empire was still active. On the other side, the only population movement attested to in historical records (also archaeologically), is that of the Mushku, Urumu, and Kashku-Apishlu who in c. 1165 B.C. had captured the Upper Euphrates countries of Alzi (= Arm. Ałdznik') and Purukuzzi²¹. These two events, i.e. the collapse of the Hittite Empire and the appearance of the Mushku and other tribes, leaves us with only a few decades for the proposed Proto-Armenian migration. Any attempt to propose an early migration through the Hittite Empire is untenable, unless that they were autochthons of eastern Hatti, but the latter variant is only in theory.

Until the early 1980's it was generally supposed that the Hittite Empire had come to its end under violent attacks from several peoples, amongst whom the Balkanic Thracians and/or Phrygians, the Sea Peoples, as well as the Kaska of north-eastern Asia Minor figured. This migratory theory with its different variants supported the idea of total destruction of Hatti²². The proposed depopulation of central Anatolia was ascribed to Balkanic and other intruders who had established their control over the whole Anatolian plateau, forcing the Hittites and Luwians to find safety in south-east as well as in northern Syria²³.

However, in the light of new epigraphic and archaeological findings²⁴ the general picture of events in Anatolia during the XII B.C. crisis has received serious revision. Recent view on the problem discussed by several scholars could be described as the theory of disintegration²⁵. According to this theory, the possible end of Hatti could be described as follows:

1) During the last decades of the XIII B.C. and in early XII B.C., due to the political and economic crisis the Empire had lost control over its peripheric provinces in the Levant, as well as in western and eastern Anatolia.

2) During the reign of Suppililiuma II or, maybe, his immediate successor²⁶, the Hittite capital in Hattusas was captured by the Kaska tribes.

²¹ Grayson, 1976: § 12ff.

²² Götze, 1936: 154; Bittel, 1950: 73ff.; von Schuler, 1965: 65; Barnett, 1975: 417; Albright, 1975: 507; Sandars, 1978: 140ff., etc.

²³ Barnett, 1975: 417; Hawkins, 1982: 372.

²⁴ Lackenbacher, 1982: 141ff.; Sürenhagen, 1986: 183ff.; Hawkins, 1988: 99ff.; idem, 1990: 305ff.; Otten, 1988; Freu, 1988: 395ff.; Neve, 1989/90: 7ff., etc.

²⁵ Singer, 1985: 120ff.; idem, 1987: 413ff.; Macqueen, 1986: 51ff.; Helck, 1987: 129ff.; Yakar, 1993: 3ff.; Kossian, 1994b: 247ff.

²⁶ That Suppiluliuma II could have been succeeded by at least one successor Hoffner, 1992: 49.

3) The imperial traditions were continued at least by two direct heirs – in Tarhuntassa (southern Anatolia) and in Kargamis (northern Syria), without chronological break; the latter could have included also the western part of the Upper Euphrates valley (the region of Malatya)²⁷.

4) Thus, it appears that in the early XII B.C. the Hittites had lost their control only over central Anatolia.

The problem of Balkanic migration depends mostly on archaeological data. So, let us briefly discuss all excavated areas along their proposed route from the Balkans to the Armenian Highland.

Thrace and the Troad

If the Balkanic Thrace had an outpouring of large groups of population into Asia Minor during the last phase of the LBA, then one might expect to find here a decrease of sites and population, i.e., a considerable cultural break at least in a number of settlements. Even if the original habitat of these proposed migrants was somewhere in the neighborhood of Thrace, their movements could hardly have passed untraceable on Thracian LBA sites.

However, archaeologically the LBA sites of Thrace showed nothing which could be treated as a cultural break or decrease of population²⁸.

As to the Troad, the Troy VIIb 2 city was destroyed by fire, an event at least contemporary to that in Hattusas. The existence of a new pottery (Knobbed Ware) of north Balkanic origin²⁹ in the destruction level indicates the people responsible for this action.

The Sangarius valley – Gordion

Archaeological data from Gordion, the Phrygian capital is of special importance, because the Greek tradition regarded the Phrygians as a people who had migrated into Asia Minor at some period before or after the Trojan War³⁰. What do we have to prove of the proposed large Balkanic migration?

²⁷ Hawkins, 1988: 107f.; cf. Kossian, 1987: 18 and 1994a: 100, where Melid is regarded as an independent Post-Hittite kingdom.

²⁸ Wells, 1992: 31ff.

²⁹ Blegen, 1963: 142; idem, 1975: 164; Finley, 1964: 5; Rutter, 1975: 30ff.; Muhly, 1992: 12, etc.

³⁰ For references to Classical authors on this point Barnett, 1975: 417ff.

Recent excavations in Gordion seem to prove the presence of Balkanic migrants here since the Early Iron Age (EIA) handmade pottery which is “the sole ceramic assemblage”, has some similarity with the Knobbed Ware (= Buckelkeramik) of Troy VII b 2³¹. Balkanic and even south-eastern European origin of the Knobbed Ware has long been proposed and this view is shared by most archaeologists³². The handmade ware of Gordion, thus, is intrusive and c. 1200 B.C. is to be considered as *terminus post quem* for its appearance³³.

Though it is not clear who were the EIA inhabitants of Gordion (Phrygians, Thracians, etc.)³⁴, possibly, their migration was not limited to Gordion; similar handmade pottery has recently come up also from Kaman-Kalehöyük, to the east of Halys-Kızılırmak³⁵.

As to central Anatolia, we can hardly expect that the same migrants are responsible. According to K. Bittel, all Hittite sites of central Anatolia which were destroyed during this period, are located to the north-east of Hattusas, except Karaoğlan to the west³⁶. The two post-Hittite levels of Boğazköy (Büyükkaya and Büyükkale) are not related neither to Balkanic peoples, nor to the post-Hittite culture of Gordion³⁷. Further to the east, Malatya and Karahöyük-Elbistan didn't suffer destruction³⁸. Here the transition from LBA to EIA was a peaceful process, without cultural break.

Thus, archaeologically, the north Balkanic migration seems to be limited to west-central Anatolia. Even during the late VIII B.C. the south-eastern borders of Great Phrygia were limited by the northern shores of Lake Tuz³⁹. Here clearly is the borderline between Phrygian and Luwian cultures⁴⁰.

The Upper Euphrates area

The archaeological data from the Upper Euphrates area, as well as from different parts of the Armenian Highland (= eastern Anatolia) now can shed

³¹ Henrickson, 1994: 95ff.

³² See n. 29 above.

³³ Henrickson, 1994: 107.

³⁴ For the origins of the EIA population of Gordion Henrickson, 1994: 108 and Voigt, 1994: 277.

³⁵ Mellink, 1992: 130.

³⁶ Bittel, 1983: 31.

³⁷ Bittel, 1970: 137ff.

³⁸ Bittel, 1983: 31.

³⁹ Summers, 1992: 195; idem, 1994: 241ff.

⁴⁰ Hawkins, 1982: 374ff.

light on the Mushki problem. Today we have good archaeological evidence for a quite different migration here at approximately the same period as that of from the Balkans to western Anatolia.

From the excavated sites of the modern province of Elâzığ (= Clas. Arm. Tsopk', Class. Sophene)⁴¹ a new type of EIA pottery was discovered in great number which "is strikingly different from the preceding Late Bronze Age pottery"⁴². The number of the EIA sites here shows nearly a 50% increase of population compared with the LBA period.

This, indeed, is of great importance since the EIA Elâzığ pottery is well known from Trialeti sites of Transcaucasia, in north-western Iran (*Geoy Tepe A*) in Erzerum province (*Güzelova* and *Pulur*), on the south-eastern shore of Lake Van (*Dilkaya Höyük*)⁴³, and near Adıyaman (*Tille Höyük*). Amongst these sites the Transcaucasian data is much earlier, the Elâzığ, Erzerum and Iranian Pottery is certainly intrusive.

Since the Assyrian texts clearly report three intrusive ethnic groups in the Upper Euphrates region in the mid-XII B.C. (see above), it seems that the new pottery should be ascribed to these peoples, or at least to one of them⁴⁴.

The ascription of the new Elâzığ pottery to the Transcaucasian LBA culture seems to contradict the Assyrian texts where these newcomers are clearly designated as the people of Hittite-land⁴⁵. The only plausible assumption which will fit these two sources (Assyrian and archaeological), probably, is a location of the Mushki and others before their migrations in the area which at some earlier date was under Hittite control or its political influence.

What we know about Hittite activities in the east is that during the XV-XIII B.C. the Upper Euphrates countries were under their political suzerainty⁴⁶. In 1230's the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I had succeeded in overrunning Hittite control after the battle at Nihriya⁴⁷, and putting a hand over the lands of Nairi which includes Alzi in the north⁴⁸. The latter seem to

⁴¹ Burney, 1958: 157ff.; idem, 1980: 157ff.; Hauptmann, 1968/69: 21ff.; van Loon, 1975-80; Sevin, 1991: 87ff., etc.

⁴² Sevin, 1991: 87ff.; Yakar, 1993: 18.

⁴³ Similar pottery types had come up recently from the pre-Urartian levels in the Van Castle Mound (Sevin, 1994: 221ff.).

⁴⁴ Sevin, 1991: 87ff.

⁴⁵ Grayson, 1976: § 93.

⁴⁶ Haas, 1985: 21ff. Cornelius, 1973: 138ff. etc.

⁴⁷ Grayson, 1972: §§ 773, 783, and for the discussion Singer, 1985: 100ff.

⁴⁸ For different opinions regarding the geographical scope covered by the term Nairi Melikishvili, 1954: 169ff.; Harouthiounian, 1970: 39ff.; idem, 1985: 148f., Singer, 1987: 105ff.

have been the northernmost area of Assyrian control. To the north of Alzi and Ishuwa was located Hayasa-Azzi⁴⁹ which at least during the reign of the Hittite king Tudhaliya IV could already have been free from its former vassalage⁵⁰. But, anyhow, this area to the north of Nairi, indeed, could have been entitled as the “Hittite-land” by the Assyrians.

Thus, it seems reasonable to point out a northern area for the Mushki departure, since 1) to the west of Alzi and Ishuwa the new Elâziğ pottery is represented only by few pieces, all from EIA period, and here the province of Malatya doesn't show traces of population shifts⁵¹; 2) the area between Alzi and Lake Van as well as that of to the east of Hayasa-Azzi could hardly have been entitled as the “Hittite-land”; 3) the participation of Kashku-Apishlu in this migration (one could say “infiltration”) is also of great importance, since they are safely located in north-eastern Asia Minor, to the west of Hayasa-Azzi⁵².

Conclusions and Perspectives

1) The current theory dealing with the Balkanic origin of the Mushki tribes should be rejected as a tentative suggestion in favour of eastern, presumably Hayasaean localization (with clear links to the Transcaucasian Trialeti culture).

2) Most probably, Mushki was a collective term designating numerous related tribes who during the second half of the II millenium B.C. were gradually infiltrating into different areas of the Armenian Highland (Erzerum, Van, Elâziğ, Mush, etc.).

3) One can hardly speak about a large migration of peoples from Transcaucasian cultural zone during the late XIII-XII B.C. associated with the new type of pottery in Elâziğ and elsewhere, since we lack more exact dates for some of this archaeological data; maybe one can argue for a series of local migrations during the centuries. The appearance of the personal name Mita in the Upper Euphrates area⁵³ seems to point to Mushki presence here as early as the late XV B.C.

4) The Indo-European affiliation of the Mushki seems doubtless since the area covered by their movements later was the most important part of

⁴⁹ Del Monte and Tischler, 1978: 59f.

⁵⁰ This can be deduced from the Hittite text dating to the period of Tudhaliya IV (KUB XXVI 12 II 12-15).

⁵¹ Sevin, 1991: 95.

⁵² Del Monte and Tischler, 1978: 190ff.

⁵³ KUB XXIII 72 and Gurney, 1948: 32ff.

early Armenian statehood. Whether these Mushki were the bearers of Armenian language, or they represented another Indo-European language, close enough to Armenian to be easily assimilated by Armenians later, is a problem for future discussions. If the Mushki of the XII-VII B.C. were of non-Armenian affiliation then the association of their name with western Mushki (Phrygia) can provide us with the next three alternatives for the usage of the ethnonym *mushk*:

a) The “eastern” Mushki and Balkanic Phrygians were two related groups of the Indo-European linguistic family who had departed after their migration from the Indo-European homeland located to the north of the Black Sea or in adjacent areas: those in the west via the Balkans, and the eastern ones via the Caucasian passes.

b) Balkanic Phrygians had migrated from the Armenian Highland during the III millennium B.C. or earlier, before the Anatolians (Hittites and Luwians).

c) The “eastern” Mushki migration possibly could have involved also central Anatolia either in the same XII B.C. or later; some population of the Phrygian kingdom could have been Mushki⁵⁴. Hence, the usage of this term for west-central Anatolia.

5) If the Mushki tribes could be disassociated from the bearers of the Armenian language, then one might expect to identify the latter under the other ethnonym – Urumu, whose name had long been associated with the region to the west of Lake Van – Urme⁵⁵. It would then seem possible to state that after Alzi and Purukuzzi the Mushki or, at least a single group of the Mushki federation had left for the south, while Urumu, or Proto-Armenians had occupied the area between the Euphrates and Lake Van (modern province of Mush and adjacent areas).

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⁵⁴ Mellink, 1965: 317ff.

⁵⁵ Yeremian, 1958: 62ff.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ArAnz – Archäologische Anzeiger, Berlin.
- AAA – Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology, Liverpool.
- AIA 3 – Anatolian Iron Ages. 3 (eds. A. Çilingiroğlu and D. H. French), Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi.
- AJA – American Journal of Archaeology, Princeton/Concord.
- AnSt – Anatolian Studies, London.
- CAH – Cambridge Ancient History, Cambridge.
- Crisis – The Crisis Years: the 12th Century B.C. From Beyond the Danube to the Tigris (eds. W. A. Ward and M. S. Joukowsky), Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- JHP – Journal of History and Philology, Yerevan.
- JIES – Journal of Indo-European Studies, Hattiesburg/Miss.
- KUB – Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi, Berlin.
- MDOG – Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, Berlin.
- RA – Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale, Paris.
- REA – Revue des études Armeniennes, Paris.
- VDI – Vestnik Drevnei Istorii, Moscow.