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## ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF ARMENIAN-RUSSIAN MILITARY COOPERATION IN KHACHATUR ABOVYAN'S NOVEL “WOUNDS OF ARMENIA”

## ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЕ ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ АРМЯНО-РУССКОГО ВОЕННОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА В РОМАНЕ ХАЧАТУРА АБОВЯНА «РАНЫ АРМЕНИИ»

### **Abstract:**

Khachatur Abovyan's novel *Wounds of Armenia* marked the beginning of new Armenian literature. Written in 1841, the novel accurately reflects the aspirations of the Armenian people related to the accession of Eastern Armenia to Russia.

The influence of the novel on the national self-consciousness of the Armenian people was best described by Avetik Isahakyan, “The Armenian people, having survived the difficult centuries of gloomy slavery, entered the 19th century — the century of enlightenment, revolutionary upheavals, amazing discoveries in the field of science and technology, and most importantly, the age of awakening and liberation movement small peoples, — entered without a clear consciousness of its task. From the bowels of the Armenian people a great educator was to emerge, who would inspire them with a fiery word, awaken them from hibernation, and strengthen their will with selfless appeal, light up their path to self-consciousness, to fight, to freedom. Abovyan was the chosen one, who announced the awakening of Armenia.” (1, p. 7)

The relevance of this article lies in the fact that it shows that Abovyan's attitude towards Russia was not a matter of political orientation. It was based on the bitter realities of the recent past, on the life experience of the Armenian people. Let us give two examples to support this.

The novel begins with a description of *Maslenitsa*, during the celebration of which the elders of the village ask God, "We are your creatures, do not destroy us. Lord God, instill mercy in the heart of our Russian Tsar, so that he comes and frees us. Don't let us die until we see Russian faces. Let everyone be healthy!" The fact that these lines are the exact expression of the time is evident from the words of the Decembrist E. Lachinov: "Already from a long time ago, dying fathers bequeathed to their children with the joyful ringing of a bell to tell them in the grave when the sun of happiness rises for the Armenians, when the Russians free them from the painful yoke and get together the distressed, scattered sons of Armenia." (1, p. 282)

In the novel, Abovyan writes about the same desire among his ancestors, passed down from generation to generation. As P. Hakobyan writes, "Abovyan's grandfather was one of the participants in the secret meeting convened in Yerevan in the spring of 1784, where it was decided to start negotiations with Russia, with which like-minded participants pinned hopes for the liberation of Armenia. For this purpose, a messenger was sent to Petersburg. Relevant documents have been preserved, under which there is the signature and seal of Abovyan's grandfather Paron [Mr.] Apov." (1, p. 263).

The purpose of this work is to show how with the help of artistic generalization, Abovyan represents the age-old desire of the Armenian people to become part of Russia.

The work consists of introduction, main body, conclusion, bibliography.

**Keywords:** Eastern Armenia, Khachatur Abovyan, Wounds of Armenia, national identity, General Madatov, Yerevan fortress

#### **Аннотация:**

Роман Хачатура Абояна «Раны Армении» ознаменовал начало армянской новой литературы. Будучи написанным в 1841 г., роман с точностью отражает чаяния армянского народа, связанные с присоединением Восточной Армении к России.

Влияние романа на национальное самосознание армянского народа наилучшим образом охарактеризовал Аветик Исаакян: «Армянский народ, пережив тяжелые века мрачного рабства, вступил в XIX век — век просвещения, революционных переворотов, поразительных открытый в области науки и техники, а главное, век пробуждения и освободительного движения малых народов, — вступил без ясного сознания своей задачи.

Из недр армянского народа должен был появиться великий просветитель, который бы огненным словом воодушевил его, пробудил от спячки, укрепил его волю самоотверженным призывам, осветил перед ним путь к самосознанию, к борьбе, к свободе.

Абоян и был этим избранником, возвестившим пробуждение Армении» [1, с. 7].

Актуальность данной статьи заключается в том, что ней показано, что отношение Абояна к России не являлось вопросом политической ориентации. Оно основывалось на горьких реалиях недалекого прошлого, на жизненном опыте армянского народа. В подтверждение сказанного приведем два примера.

Роман начинается с описания Масленицы. При праздновании которой старейшины деревни просят у Бога: «Мы — создания Твои, не погуби же нас. Господи-боже, всели Ты милость в сердце нашего русского царя, чтобы пришел он и освободил нас. Не дай нам умереть, пока не увидим лиц русских. Будьте все здоровы!». То, что эти строки являются точным выражением времени, видно из слов декабриста Е. Лачинова: «Уже издавна умирающие отцы завещали детям радостным звоном колокола дать им в могиле весть, когда взойдет для армян солнце счастья, когда русские освободят их от тягостного ига и соберут бедствующих, рассеянных сынов Армении» [1, с. 282].

В романе Абоян пишет о том же стремлении у своих предков, передаваемом из поколения в поколение. Как пишет П. Акопян: «Дед Абояна был одним из участников созванного в Ереване весною 1784 года тайного совещания, где было решено начать переговоры с Россией, с которой участники-единомышленники связывали надежды на

освобождение Армении. С этой целью в Петербург был отправлен поланец. Сохранились соответствующие документы, под которыми имеются подпись и печать деда Абояна — парона [господина] Апова» [1, с. 263].

Целью данной работы является показать, каким образом с помощью художественного обобщения Абоян представляет вековое стремление армянского народа войти в состав России.

Работа состоит из введения, основной части, заключения, списка литературы.

**Ключевые слова:** Восточная Армения, Хачатур Абоян, «Раны Армении», национальная идентичность, генерал Мадатов, Ереванская крепость

### Materials and Methods

Khachatur Aboyan is the author of stories, poetry, plays, fables, pedagogical essays and works for children. His main creation is the historical novel *Wounds of Armenia: Lamentation of a patriot*. It is the second part of the title and the plot of the work that brings Aboyan closer to his greatest predecessor, poet and theologian Grigor Narekatsi (951-1003) and his *Book of Lamentations*.

Between Narekatsi and Aboyan there is a period of time and history of almost a millennium, but both of them could say the phrase, “There is no stone in our country, there is no bush that is not stained with Armenian blood.” (1, p. 132) Since the Middle Ages, lamentation as a literary genre, is fraught with the hope of the future. Aboyan's lament is also a lament over the past of the Armenian people and contains hope for the future in the face of his main character Aghasi and his fellow campaigners. Yuri Veselovsky writes about this in the best way: “After all, it was he who decades ago not only described the suffering of Armenians in the grip of a tough, despotic and lawless regime, but also showed in the person of Aghasi one of those new people who were supposed to revive and save Armenia.” (2, p. 292)

Khachatur Aboyan, a chronicler of his time, sees a saving power in the unity of Armenians and Russians. “May the mighty hand of Russia be your support,” he writes. (1, p. 292)

Despite the fact that Aboyan calls *Lamentation of a patriot* a novel; it describes specific historical events with the help of artistic hyperbolic images.

Hovhannes Tumanyan compared various passages of the novel *Wounds of Armenia* with the corresponding descriptions from the materials written by the Russian military figures and historians about the Russian-Persian wars of 1804-1828. The poet's research resulted in the following articles: “The Battle for Yerevan and the *Wounds of Armenia* by Kh. Aboyan as History”, “*Wounds of Armenia* by Kh. Aboyan and the Russian Military Chronicle,” *The Capture of Yerevan and Armenian History*. (3, p. 97-234)

Most of the works of Russian authors were published after the publication of the novel *Wounds of Armenia* and even after the death of Aboyan. Consequently, Aboyan was not familiar with these materials and could not artistically describe the events presented in them in his novel.

Here we are faced with a complex and surprising phenomenon that goes beyond the scope of the novel *Wounds of Armenia*. Namely, with the question of what kind of artistic generalization a historical event is subjected to by an eyewitness writer one decade later and how it is described and interpreted by Russian military and statesmen who took part in that event.

Such a comparative study shows that the novel *Wounds of Armenia*, according to Aboyan, being the cry of his burning heart, is an artistic chronicle of the historical events of Eastern Armenia over a 20-year period from 1804 to 1828.

Descriptions of those events by Aboyan breathe, soul, and life into the dry lines of reports and summaries of the Russian military. The relevant parts of the novel *Wounds of Armenia* serve as an appendix to the materials of Russian military history about various events of this period.

Such work will show, on the one hand, what human grief and suffering are concentrated in the dry lines of historical facts, and on the other hand, it will reveal how accurately Abovyan's artistic and sensual lines reflect historical realities.

It would seem that the similarities between the lines of the novel *Wounds of Armenia* and the summaries of Russian authors will be more clearly presented in the case of a literal translation of the corresponding passages of Abovyan's novel. Here are some typical examples. (4, p. 199-229)

In the novel, a major portion is devoted to the description of the unexpected attack of the Persian troops on the Russian border outposts in July 1826 near the Armenian villages of the provinces of Lori and Shirak. These villages were the first to take the blast of the enemy. At that time, Kh. Abovyan was passing through Lori, on his way through Tiflis to Russia and Europe to continue his studies.

Kh. Abovyan heard from the participants in the defense of the village. About the self-defense of the Armenians in the village of K'ghlkarakilisa — Smaller Karakilisa (Black Church), and then the capture of the village by the Persians, its burning, and the barbarous murder of its inhabitants. Their stories in the novel are given in the following lines: "Like a drop of spring rain that fell into a stream of a stormy whirlwind, or like an innocent new-born lamb that confronted hundreds of wild animals and suddenly founded itself among them surrounded by four sides: sky above, bare earth below." (1, p. 130) Further we read, "The flames that engulfed the haystacks, the cries and screams of hapless women and children, the smoke from the blazing straw, the smoke from the burning barns — everything rose in a cloud, — the day faded. The fire occupied the village from all sides, the houses resounded with weeping. Father did not manage to kiss his son, mother did not manage to see her children. Love froze in the heart of a bride, a groom was dumbstruck. Sister hurried to caress her brother, brother to hug his sister. Mothers and their unfortunate daughters-in-law pressed young children to their breasts, the elderly and young men clutched their swords and weapons. Some closed their doors so that the fire would quickly burn them out, others — eyes, so as not to see the torment." (1, p. 135)

M. Kotzebue also describes the defense of K'ghlkarakilisa and the heroic death of its inhabitants in horrific detail: "At the same time, with an attack on Mirak, Hassan Khan with five thousand cavalry attacked another Armenian village of Smaller Karaklis, in which there were 700 families. The inhabitants and even their wives defended themselves desperately for several hours, but in the end, they had to give up to the numerous enemy. The monster Hassan Khan, having first poured out all the horrors of the war on the unfortunate inhabitants, set fire on the village and captured everyone who was still able to follow him, while the elderly were ordered to be killed. The detachment retreating from Mirak passed through Smaller Karaklis a few hours after the departure of Hassan Khan. It is important to keep silent about the terrible sight that opened before the eyes of the warriors; it brings shame to the human race." (5, p. 106, see also 3, p. 142-143)

The commanders of the Russian army, due to the numerical superiority of the enemy forces, were forced to decide to retreat. To save the local Armenians, the former were asked to retreat together with the Russian army, after setting fire to their houses. Abovyan, who was at that time in the administrative center of Lori — in Karakilis (Black Church), writes about the retreat from the village, "They burned everything: tools, jewelry, household property. When they saw smoke rising from the Russian church, set on fire by the commander with his own hands, crying and wailing, they began kissing the graves of their relatives and loved ones, saying goodbye to their land and water. Then, under the protection of soldiers and cannons, they began to cross to the other side of Mount Dval. We were still halfway when Nagi Khan entered Karaklis with his army, and each seeing his burning house from the mountain slope, sighed heavily and closed his eyes so as not to contemplate this grief. One end of the procession had already reached Jalalaghly, the other was still on this side of the mountain. The infidels, like fierce wolves, circled around us and fired at us from the mountains and from the gorges." (1, p. 164)

Retreat from Karakilisa in the collection of documents "Materials for the history of the Persian war of 1826-1828. The journal of military operations against the Persian troops in the

provinces of Bambak and Shuragel” is described as follows, “Prince Seversamidze with the rearguard remained in Karaklis until the entire column stretched out along the road to Gergers, then, having set fire to all the buildings, he joined the troop. The enemy from the direction of Hmzachiman observed our movements, but did not approach close; troops without a shot reached the village of Kishlyak, here the enemy cavalry began to appear from the village of Darbaza and, driving up the gorge of the Bambak river, entered into a gunfight with our skirmishers.” (3, p. 152, see also 6, p. 10-11)

The military action that began on the Persian side was led by the Yerevanian Sardar and his brother, Hassan Khan. Abovyan writes about Sardar with a certain sympathy, and describes his brother in the gloomiest colors, “Probably, they have never seen in Yerevan such a kind, honest, sympathetic to people’s grief, caring for every wellbeing of a person like Sardar. But as good-hearted as he was, so fierce was his brother. He was a true beast, a fiend — from one of his steps the mountains and gorges trembled. For him, everything was the same — what is the head of a person, what is an onionhead.” (1, p. 81)

The collection of historical documents “The Establishment of Russian Rule in the Caucasus” about Sardar and Hassan Khan says, “Sardar was a man of extraordinary talents and was considered one of the smartest people in Persia. He ruled his khanate absolutely autocratically and, focusing mainly on the development of agriculture, brought the Erivan region to a flourishing position that none of the Persian provinces could boast of. His brother Hassan Khan, who was under him the head of the cavalry, enjoyed, according to Berger, the reputation of a bitter drunkard.” (3, p. 145, see also 5, p. 13)

Abovyan proudly writes about the armed self-defense of the Armenians and about the assistance provided by the Armenians to the Russian army. He especially emphasizes the self-sacrifice and courage of the Armenian priests. He writes about Bishop Grigor that “at the request of Yermolov, he took off his episcopal robes and dressed in Circassian style, hung weapons all over him, took up a shield. When he passed through Tiflis, through Kazakh or Borchal, the people greeted him as a savior,” (p. 159) Bishop Grigor “For heroism and courage was awarded the Orders of George, Vladimir and Anna.” (1, p. 291)

In a report to General Yermolov dated September 1, 1826, General Madatov writes: “This elder, despite his advanced years and his rank, was always with our army in full military armament and in the action at the river Afik he was in the shotgun troops with the militia and Armenians from Shamshadin.” (3, p. 150, see also 5, p. 230)

One can continue the list of examples confirming that the work *Wounds of Armenia* is an artistic chronicle of the historical events described in the novel.

During the Russian-Persian war of 1803-1814, Armenian people supported the Russian army. Russian soldiers in the most difficult conditions of an unusual mountainous climate and terrain showed miracles of courage and fidelity to duty. “In this war, as in the further ones, not only Armenian sons serving in the Russian army, but also local volunteers who saw the Russian soldier as a friend and liberator took an active part” (11, p. 23), writes researcher of the topic Ivan Semyonov in the book *Russians in the history of Armenia*. In the history of the Armenian-Russian military glory of this period, the names of Tsitsianov, Yermolov, Montresor are preserved, which Abovyan writes about in *Wounds of Armenia*.

On August 14, 1804, on the orders of General Tsitsianov, Major Montresor set off with a small detachment from the besieged fortress towards the transport with food and ammunition, which was heading from Tiflis under the command of Major Stakhiev. The detachment included 4 officers, 108 musketeers of the Tiflis regiment, 11 Armenian volunteers and one bombardier with a light weapon - the “Edinorog.”

The exit of the detachment was tracked by the enemy - the enemy cavalry was sent after along the entire route, trying to involve the detachment in battle.

On the morning of August 21, having bypassed Amamla (now Spitak), Montresor entered the gorge of the Pambak river, punching his way with fire and a bayonet. This was their last

journey. A detachment of 124 soldiers was surrounded by a six thousand army led by the Persian Pir-Guli Khan and the rebellious Georgian prince Alexander (5).

The famous Russian military historian V. Potto writes about Montresor with admiration. (8, p. 374) In world history, the feats of Montresor detachment are compared with the acts of 300 Spartans of King Leonidas in the battle of Thermopylae.

Abovyan calls Montresor “major nicknamed ‘Kara,’ which means ‘Black.’”(1 p. 80)

At the site of the death of Montresor, Russian officers erected a monument in the 1830s. In Lori, people still remember the feats of Montresor and his soldiers, calling this monument the monument of Kara Major. (7, p. 94-125)

Abovyan writes that the Persians “at that time did not know about Russian soldiers and the Russian cannon.” The Russians “stood like a wall” and “did not turn their faces away even from a bullet.” (1, p. 88)

According to the Turkmenchay Treaty of 1828, which ended the Russo-Persian War of 1826–1828, Eastern Armenia was annexed to the Russian Empire. “The brave spirit of the Russians saved us,” writes Abovyan. (1, p. 186)

The writer feels that he must say his cherished Word, to write with his heart and pain before he goes to the grave. In agony, he often wanted to take his life by his own hands. “But alas! My tongue was bound; eyes were open, and lips were closed; the heart was deep, but the hand was powerless, the tongue — short,” he writes. (1, p. 4) The writer deeply experiences the tragic history of his people, he is worried that Europeans read Homer, Horace, Virgil, Sophocles, but do not know “Narek” (as the people call the *Book of Lamentations*). In Europe, he read that, allegedly, “the Armenian people have no heart, if so many events happened over their heads and there was not a single person who would write at least one work reaching the heart.” (1, p. 6)

And so, “once in a Maslenitsa week,” having let his students on a holiday, Abovyan began to sort out in his mind everything that he had heard and seen since childhood. Suddenly the images spoke to him: before his eyes appeared Aghasi and a hundred of good, brave Armenian men who laid down their lives for the freedom of their people. They inspired the writer who felt the mission. “Armenia, like an angel, stood in front of me and gave me wings,” writes Abovyan in the preface. (1, p. 9)

The writer is metaphorical in describing the fortress: he imagines it in the form of an impudent beast, which, with its massive paws, spread within several regions, “opening one mouth to the north, the other to the south, raising its withered head to the sky.” (1, p. 81) Especially memorable is the following comparison of Abovyan, “The destruction of hell would not have the same price for sinners as the capture of the Yerevan fortress for the Armenians.” (1, p. 235)

## Results

Khachatur Abovyan finished his novel *Wounds of Armenia* in 1841. By that time, Armenia had joined the Russian Empire for more than ten years. All hopes for autonomy died, the Armenian territories were divided among several provinces. It is worth mentioning that there is not even the slightest enthusiasm or counting for the political gain, and the author himself was in opposition to the ruling circles of Russia. These facts give us the right to assert that everything written by Abovyan came from the heart, therefore it remained in the consciousness of many generations of Armenians, and the novel *Wounds of Armenia* itself can be called a hymn to the Russian-Armenian military brotherhood and friendship.

Unfortunately, the novel was published posthumously. On April 2, 1848, Abovyan left the house and did not return. Two years after Abovyan's disappearance, his former student Akimyan visited the writer's Estonian widow Emilia Looze, who did not speak Armenian, and asked permission to look through the writer's personal archive. In this way, the manuscript of the novel *Wounds of Armenia* was discovered, and later gained wide recognition in copies. And only in 1858 the book was first published under the signature stamp of the Nersisyan Seminary. (1, p. 85)

## Conclusion

In the historical novel *Wounds of Armenia* Khachatur Abovyan raises questions not only about the identity of Armenians, statehood, but also of survival in general.

After writing *Wounds of Armenia*, Abovyan lived for another seven years. His political hopes were not justified the Armenian autonomy was not proclaimed as part of the Russian Empire. This deepened his spiritual drama. He could not come to terms with reality. However, his Russian orientation and political convictions remained unshakable. The writer created a romantic legend, feeling a duty to the motherland and its future. And this legend is not only about Armenia and Russia, the friendship of the two nations, but also about the patriot soul of Abovyan.

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