

# OF PHONEME-MORPHEME SYNTAXES & ARMENIAN ORTHOGRAPHY

*Posted on July 30, 2018 by Keghart*




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By **Khatchatur I. Pilikian**, London UK, 16 April 2013

Entertaining, even worshipping any national-racial-ethnic concept of purity stretched to denote divine superiority, is in itself an impure concept devoid of a healthy cultural value. Being different does not automatically make anything exceptionally unique. In fact most often genuine uniqueness transcends differences on many levels, thus illuminating boundlessness of humanity in the natural and cultural world. 

It is pure vanity to proselyte derailed syntaxes -- 'slaying' of words and dragging the crumbs of phonemes into illogical syntax of morphemes – all to be followed by an avalanche of foul swearing against the 'unbelievers' of the bestowed 'sacred' missions. Such is the end product of absolutism, recently promulgated by some Armenian supremacists, with a zeal that drags its practitioners towards the realm of narcissistic nationalism. The question then arises, as uttered in Latin: *CUI BONO?* = For Whose Benefit Is It? For sure not for the advancement of knowledge, let alone for the preservation of national cultural heritage. Perhaps the good British 'hand washing' NO COMMENT, tinged with ironic humour, is the best response to such wastage. Otherwise, as the Armenian saying goes -- *HEY VAKH, HAZAR APSOS.* = Alas, a Thousand Lament.

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Meanwhile, the disunity of the Armenian Orthography continues, while its divisive practice is relished by those who often nurture the indulgent zeal mentioned above.

Once upon a time when I received an invitation card from the Armenian Embassy here in London, the card had the surname of the Ambassador, as well as my own surname written with the so called Eastern Armenian Orthography -- the suffix *ian* disfigured as *yan* – the spelling norm in the Republic of Armenia. In my thankful response to His Excellency, the Ambassador, I gently questioned the discrepancy. I had no response. Perhaps it meant NO COMMENT? And, of course, the norm continues unabated (with the exception of the late Ambassador's own writing of her surname as Kazin**ian**...)

The suffix *ian* is an Indo-European one denoting **belonging, resembling, follower, specialist**. Hence, not only Persian and Indian languages, but some major European languages too use it precisely with those meanings, i.e., in English, as in Euclid-**ian**, Smithson-**ian**, Armen-**ian**, Arab-**ian**, Antiquar-**ian** etc.

But, alas, most surnames in Armenia and some even in the Diaspora have lost the original meaning of the suffix, as if inadvertently refusing to 'belong', not aware of falling into their own trap of sublimating the practice of change. Unbelievable but true, the worst of such disfiguring practices, whether in orthography or in syntaxes of phonemes-morphemes, are already in dithyrambic craze. Here are just few imitations of the fad to illustrate the craze...

If **God** is read **Dog** in reverse, in English, then surely **Dram (Money)** is **Mard (Man)**, read in reverse in Eastern/Araratian Armenian Pronunciation (triple consonantal system), as **Shoon (Dog)** is **Noosh (Almond)** in reverse, also in the same. Are we to conclude that for an Englishman an 'anti-God' or an 'atheist' is simply a 'dog' -- the worst animal for a 'jihadist' zealot -- or perhaps for an Armenian a 'Man with Almond' is an inverted 'Dog with Money'? The confusion surmounts when the Armenian examples are read in Western/Classical Armenian Pronunciation (dual consonantal system). Moreover, huge virtual towers can be built out of toppled words, not to mention what happens when languages are 'mixed' for the stars to become the chaotic ocean engulfing Noah's Arc, transmuted as an apocalyptic Tower of Babel of decibels and digits – just to mention a 'lofty' image. Of course, the 'mundane' ones are abundant, as i.e. **Kak = How, As, Like, What** in Russian, similar also when read in reverse, meaning **Shit** in Armenian, akin to **Foul, Bad**, in Greek, hence **Cacophony = Bad**

**Sound.** Just to denigrate people because of feelings of disapproval towards them, are we, or is it fair to conclude that a questioning Russian is always in a foul mood?

Perhaps it is tempting to ponder, in these turbulent times for humanity at large, upon Mammon's Ivory Tower, now nicknamed as World Bank or IMF, of the military and monetary industrial complex of profit-at-any-cost. To describe the accumulated power of such a 'Tower' a compound adjective in Armenian would certainly do well – and might easily be grasped with a smile by the many thousands of youth and students protesting and occupying public spaces in potentate states -- it is, **CHARASHAHOOTYOON = Evil Profiteering**. If tempted to read this compound word in reverse we have, lo and behold, **NOOYT - OO - HASH – AR - ACH = Matter/Money - And - Consumption - On - Sight ...** A vitriolic masquerade for Mammon's Tower of profit-at-any-cost for sure, albeit a blatant disfigurement of all syntax chiselled in the absurd.

But, there is the crux, and, no doubt, a crucial one at that.

We might as well acknowledge absurdity's pinching quality, granted it is employed judiciously in poetic and literary humour tinged with irony or even with sarcasm, if and when its creator is blessed with literary talent and writing style akin to that of a Mark Twain, an Hakob Baronian, and a Parouyr Sevak, just to mention a few masters of the genre. It might even be 'the talk of the town' as in the case of Theatre of the Absurd. Picasso envisaged these phenomena by saying: **"Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand."** (A. E. Gallatin, OF ART From Plato to Picasso. 1963 USA, p.17)

Moreover, the interplay/interchange of phonemes and morphemes -- as is the case with numbers -- continue to fascinate the audio-visual practitioners dealing with secret codes or riddles - **Rebuses**. Most significantly, the lack of the above mentioned prerequisite has never hindered audio-visual absurdities to flourish, particularly in the public media, and become part and parcel of commercials in the marketing business. In the latter, as it is the practised norm, anything goes to bamboozle the consumer. But it certainly becomes preposterous, nay even tragicomic when such practices are manipulated by 'sophists' and presented as radical linguistics to bamboozle ordinary readers and amateur linguists, as if Language is an absurdly illogical creation of the homo sapiens. By doing so, 'absurdity' itself loses its fascination for audio-visual art practitioners, especially when routinely accompanied by banal, often irrelevant, political bashings to proselyte such distortions while obfuscating **"the truth that is given us to understand."** (Picasso in *op.cit.*)

With all the relevant and good data included in the recent video programme, titled **Haroutyoun =Resurrection**. See [Resurrection on YouTube](#). There too abounds, ad nauseam, political bashings of the entire Second Republic of Armenia. *While refuting, and rightly so, the so named 'Abeghian Orthography'*, it continues to distort the programme's own positive data of pointing out the extraordinary courage of prominent linguists and writers of the day rejecting the blatantly controversial 'new orthography'. The video thus emulates, and paradoxically so, the worst of the

derailed 'bolshevism' which had become a monopoly of deranged absolutism in the Soviet Armenian Republic of the period. Lo and behold, the same is practiced now in the free-marketeering 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Armenia by the rabid monopolists of zealot 'anti-bolshevism.'

The video programme mentioned above publicly denigrates even the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic's State Heraldry (M. Sarian's beautiful composition of a design) and the Hymn of the Republic (A. Khatchaturian's majestic music). It presents its 'linguistic criticism' counting various items under 'falsities' with a musical background of Russia's esteemed National Hymn. (Alexandrov's Hymn of Russia of 1939 was in use in 1944-1990, replacing the "*Internationale*". It was re-adopted in 2000). The video's manipulation of it as a musical background for counting the 'falsities' of Soviet Armenia's orthography of 1920's and 1930's is not only an anachronism but a blatant insensitivity and bad taste, ruining, alas, the objectivity of its own refutation. Moreover, I felt a feeling of disgust, when the programme's political bashings reached its lowest denominator when it hinted about the death of Hovhanness Toumanian (in 1923, of cancer) by speculating about an alleged plotted crime, because of the poet's opposition to abandon the Classical Orthography. The sickening hint had therein a 'reinforcement' too with the death of Parouyr Sevak (another poet 'Refusenik') whose fatal car accident, in 1971, is now zealously envisaged to be a plotted crime...

Yet the sad truth of the matter remains -- the Classical Orthography was abandoned. It was replaced by the 'Abeghian Orthography', decreed in 1922, despite Abeghian's own reluctance of its adoption, back in 1913, when he felt it might fail to bring closer the two main literary variants of the Armenian language (as the video programme also points out). Albeit, the eminent scholar, Abeghian, proved right. His orthography did indeed fail in its ill-ordained mission. But he proved wrong by not pursuing his own original and objective assessment of 1913 -- no doubt under the duress of deranged political absolutism, the molesting ailment of all its zealot servants, at all times, in all places.

Burdened by obnoxious data which derails its own timely refutation, the above video contains just passing references with no critical assessment of the historical dual speech sounds – pronunciation – of the current Armenian language. It fails to acknowledge the source of the richness of the living language with Two Prominent Dialects, despite the derailed latter-day orthography of the Araratian/Eastern Dialect, and the diminished pronunciation/diction of the Classical/Western Dialect, due to the latter's centuries old usage in the Ottoman Empire. There, especially in Constantinople (later, Istanbul) the French culture had enormous influence also on the Turkish phonemes and morphemes, let alone on the Armenian ones. (It's worth remembering that Cilician Armenia's Francophile influence had already begun centuries earlier). The French literary influence 'softened' the consonants, particularly those Arabic intakes, so much so that the continuous usage of the Arabic script for over half a millenium was eventually abandoned for good. When Ataturk ruled the ways in Turkey, the Latin script got hold on the Turkish language...

As if 'fixated' by Ataturk's 'westernisation', a prominent Armenian literary intellectual, Poghos

Makintsian, who served as Soviet diplomat in Istanbul during 1922-1924, did not hesitate to suggest the same in 1926 – to abandon the Armenian Alphabet and let the Latin script get hold on the Armenian language. Such was the intellectual blindness of those imbued with political absolutism that they blotted the healthy internationalism of vibrant national cultures by imposing deranged 'Communist Globalism', even decades before Capitalist Globalisation paved the way for the melting pot of national cultures. A sad irony indeed when Makintsian himself had considerable input to Armenian language with literary publications as a researcher, compiler, editor (i.e. V.Terian's *Poetry*, in four volumes. 1923-1925) and a translator of Armenian literary treasures into Russian (i.e. H.Toumanian's *Gigor*) and world literary masterpieces into Armenian (i.e., *Don Quixote* of M. Servantes). Thanks to many prominent, far and fair sighted writers (among them Bolsheviks too) Makintsian and his derailed comrades failed to impose the Latin script. But, alas, the latter succeeded in derailing the Classical Armenian Orthography, vulgarising its 'novelty'.

Astonishing as it sounds, it's worth highlighting that in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Caliphate had even entertained the idea to officially adopt the Armenian Alphabet for the Turkish language, A whimsical joke? Apparently not so. The eminent linguist, Hrachia Ajcharian, who had insisted for and succeeded in publishing his magnum oeuvres in the Classical Orthography, had this to say about some Ottoman Pashas' fleeting wish:

**Many Turks learned the Armenian Alphabet and were reading *Manzoume* and *Mejmouwai*. The spreading of Armenian letters through the news-media made the Turkish informed classes to really appreciate the admirable simplicity of the Armenian script. In 1860, both Fouad and Ali Pasha entertained the idea to abandon the Turkish script and adopt the Armenian Alphabet as the official script. Rashid Pasha, the Grand Eparchos, learned to write Armenian to be able to spread its use among the Turks. It is said that the Assembly of the Ottoman Parliament too had agreed for the change, but national vanity or the early cessation of the Assembly did not allow the implementation of the act.** (Hrachia Ajcharian at the Armenian Academy of Art & Science, 1943. A presentation for his forthcoming monograph, titled, *The Role of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*. Yerevan University Herald. 1967, no. 1)

A century later and as if echoing the apparent fascination of the Ottoman Pashas with the Armenian Alphabet, the eminent American anthropologist, Margaret Mead, recommended, in 1960s, the adoption of the Armenian language and script for use as an "international language." While discussions and arguments continued among scholars for the need of a "Worldwide Language", it was felt necessary to underline the following:

**...the preference of Margaret Mead and other professional colleagues for Armenian as a second language to be spoken all over the world.** (Arthur J. Snider, JET AGE SPURS DRIVE FOR WORLDWIDE LANGUAGE *Chicago Daily News*, Saturday, August 17, 1968)

All the above primarily indicate and testify, at least for me, the richness, variety, lucidity and fluidity

of the phonetic structure of the Armenian script, with its original 36, now the Classical Alphabet numbering 38 letters, structured on triple consonantal system. Albeit, the Western Dialect has diminished that richness in its pronunciation/diction, which now functions only with the pattern of dual consonantal sounds, notwithstanding the triple system in its orthography, as mentioned earlier. Having in mind that the pronunciation of phonemes and morphemes encapsulate the incipient music of a language, then becomes obvious the richness of the Araratian Dialect's Pronunciation that has kept the primordial music of the Classical Orthography.

With much pleasure I read Mr Yeghia Gayaian's article, presenting his book, titled, ***Oughagrakan Batsatrakan Bararan*** (= *Expounding Dictionary of Orthography*, Beirut, 2012). To his credit, he has not allowed his theses to be derailed by any sort of distorted syntaxes or political bashings. But, alas, he is reluctant to tackle the betterment of the Western Armenian diminished pronunciation, accepting it as a FAIT ACCOMPLI, nay even as "our destiny" -- he concludes disarmingly. (Y. Gayaian, PREFACE. In Azad Tzayn, Nicosia, November 2012, p 8)

Last September, 2012, I wrote an abstract of my own observations, research and experience as a performer of songs and poetry, titled, ***Phonemic Syntax of Armenian Language in Araratian and Western Variants***. The crucial dual points of my concluding suggestion were,

1. Return to the Western, or better, Classical Armenian Orthography that has kept the time honoured and 'acid proven' classical system initiated by Mesrop Mashtots (hence its continuous usage in the literary Armenian – **Grabar**), with all the relevant and valid additions and practical changes in time, throughout sixteen centuries.
2. While keeping both Prominent Dialects of the language, it is best to return to the Araratian Pronunciation in speech and reading, anchored on the triple consonantal system closely linked with the Classical Orthography, diminished alas in the Western Armenian pronunciation, or speech sounds, with strange negligence to its glorious Orthographic heritage...

At this point, I shall permit myself to replicate my above mentioned concise article written in Armenian. Let the genuine dialogue continue its healthy mission – propagating the urgent need for a united front of orthography for our millennial heritage of a mother tongue with twin giant siblings.

## ՀԱՅՈՑ ԼԵՃՈՒԻ ՀՆՉԻՒՆԱՇԱՐԻ

### ԱՐԱՐԱՏԵԱՆ ՈՒ ԱՐԵՄՍԱՀԱՅ ՏԱՐԲԵՐԱԿՆԵՐԸ

## Խաչատուր Ի. Փիլիկեան

Ախ այս Արեւելահայ-Արեւմտահայ անճիշտ ու քանդիչ 'հակադրութեան' ...

Արեւի պէս յստակ է որ Արեւմտահայերէնի բառամթերքն ու քերականութիւնը հակադրել Արեւելահայերէնին ծիծաղելի է, փոխանակ Հայոց լեզուի հարստութիւնը

տեսնելու նաեւ ատոր մէջ: Հնչիւնային համակարգն է միակ 'խոչնդոտը' ձեւակասօրէն 'տարբերելու':

Արարատեան/ Արեւելահայ ծայնաշարը պահած է Մեսրոպեան Այբենարանի հնչիւնաշարը՝ եռամաս բաղաձայներու կառոյցը: Արեւմտահայերէնը, առաւելաբար Ֆրանսական մշակոյթի դարաւոր ազդեցութեամբ, սկսուած Կիլիկիոյ շրջանէն եւ յետագային Պոլիսը ունենալով իր գլխաւոր ենթական/ կեդրոնը, չքացուցած է բաղաձայնային եռամաս կառոյցը, պահելով միայն երկամաս ձայնարկում՝ նոյնինքն եռեակ բաղաձայներու գոյութեամբ ու գրութեանբ: Օրինակ, Բ, Պ, եւ Փ կը հնչուի միայն երկու բաղաձայնով, փոխանակ Մեսրոպեան երեքի: Ամեն մեղքիս վրայ այդ 'կարդարացուի' յաճախ եւ դիւրիմացօրէն 'խեղճ' Մեսրոպ Մաշտոցի անուամբ... Հէյ գիտի Բլբուլը , Հէյ:

Արժէ հոս յիշել որ նոյնինքն Թրքերէնն ալ, ազդուելով Ֆրանքօֆիլ տենչէն եւ սկսելով Պոլիսէն, կորսնցուց որոշ ձայներ, մասնաւորաբար Արաբերէնէ ներմուծուած հնչիւնները՝ 'մեղմացնելով' զանոնք: Առաւել եւս, այդ կորուստը 'պետականացաւ' գործածութեան դրուելով Լատինական տառերը փոխան Արաբերէնի: Եւ Լատիններէնը եղաւ Թրքերէն լեզուի պատկերը՝ Աթաթիւրքով...

Չրպարտութիւն է այն որ իբրեւ թէ Արեւմտահայը չի հասկնար Արեւելահային այդ հնչիւններու տարբերումին պատճառաւ: Ճշմարտութիւնը այն է որ տգեղ քաղաքականութեան ցաւալի 'խաղն' է որ կը շարունակուի: Ինչ խօսք որ Արեւելահայերէնի ուղղագրական անտեղի փոփոխութիւնները շեշտեցին այդ խեղկատակութիւնը, կարծես սովետօրէն/իմաստակօրէն 'ուղղելու' համար առողջ եւ ոչ սիւնանման ողնաշարը մեր Մեծասքանչի՝ Ձայն/Գիրի դարաւոր ներդաշնակութիւնը: Եւ իզուր կը շարունակուի այդ՝ իսկապէս 'պարապ վախտի խաղալիքը՝ ահաւասիկ մօտ մէկ դար, կարծես բաւարար չէր գոյութիւն ունեցող հնչիւնային երկփեղկումը...

Գործնական փորձառութեամբ միշտ ուրախութիւն պատճառած է ինծի այն՝ որ երբ ասմունքով, եւ ոչ միայն երգով, հաղորդակից կ'ընեմ ունկնդիրներուս Արեւմտահայ բանաստեղծութեան՝ Մեսրոպեան հարագատ, եռամաս բաղաձայնային հնչումներով, ոեւէ Արեւմտահայ չէ ըսած ինծի որ չի հասկնար լսածը: Եւ նոյնն է պարագան անշուշտ Արեւելահայ բանաստեղծութեան, զորս բնաւ չեմ 'յղկած' ոչ-Մեսրոպեան երկամաս բաղաձայներու առոքանութեամբ:

Ճշմարտութիւն է որ ոեւէ Արեւմտահայ, մանաւանդ ասմունք/երգ կատարման ընթացքին, բնական կը գտնէ Արեւելահայերէնի Մեսրոպեան եռամաս ձայնարձակումը, եւ, ի պատիւ հայ ունկնդրին ամենուրեք, յաճոյքով կ'ունկնդրէ Արեւմտահայերէնը նոյն եռամաս հարուստ ձայնարձակումով: Անշուշտ թէ կան նաեւ բանիմացներ -- բայց ոչ ընդհանուր ունկնդրող հասարակութիւնը -- որոնք կ'ուզեն համառօրէն 'պահել' իրենց Արեւմտահայութիւնը՝ ոչ-Մեսրոպեան երկամաս բաղաձայներու առոգանութեամբ... Թող



որ ըսենք Հալալ լինի բաղձանքը, երբ այդ ընելով կ'ուզեն վառ պահել Հայերեն լեզուն թելուզ իրենց ուզած ձեռով...

Ըստ իս հասած է ժամը որ վերագտնենք **Մեսրոպեան բաղձայներու եռամաս համակարգը**, ապաւինելով Արարատեան բարբառի **հնչեղութեան**, պահելով հանդերձ Արեւմտահայ բառամթերքի, քերականութեան եւ մանաւանդ **Ուղղագրութեան** հարուստ ժառանգութիւնը, ի սեր Հայ ժողովուրդի միասնութեան՝ իր Մեծասքանչ Ձայնով, Գիրով, Հոգով, Միտքով ու Տաղով:

Վերամշակուած՝ Ապրիլ 2013.

