

THE ARGHUTINSKY-DOLGORUKIY MYSTERY

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By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, 6 July 2020

The Dolgorukiy/Dolgorukov, one of the most prominent noble families of Tsarist Russia, had a family tree which made the family tree of the Greek gods as straightforward as a cypress.

The 17th to the 19th centuries were the heyday of the Dolgorukiy/Dolgorukov clan as dozens of family members led the tsars' armies in battle, were diplomats, and advised the tsars from Peter the Great to Nicholas II. There was also a Tsarina Marie Dolgourky. A Dolgorukov (there are several versions of the spelling the name) was the mayor of Moscow for twenty-six years while spiritualist Madame Blavatsky, a member of the family, co-founded the Theosophical Society. A Dolgorukov is a character in "War and Peace". Prince Alexander Dolgorukiy voluntarily accompanied Tsar Nicholas II and the royal family to internal exile and was killed by the Bolsheviks for contacting the British to rescue the tsar and his family.

Despite the family's high profile--or perhaps because of it—it's claimed by several groups through different narratives. As a result, its roots remain a mystery and subject to debate. The Armenians say the family was of Armenian origin while the Russians say it was Russian.

The Armenian version starts with Khosrov Zakarian who ruled Ani in the 14th century. His nickname was "Yerkaynabazuk" ('long-armed' in Armenian). After the fall of Ani, the Zakarian clan moved to northern Armenia. In the late 15th century, Arghut, the new patriarch of the clan moved to Georgia. Soon a number of clan members (brothers Zakar, Ivan, and Sarkis) led the Armenian-Georgian army eventually taking back Ani, Tvin, and other Armenian cities. As reward, Queen Tamar gave Ani to the Zakarians. In time their name was Georgianized to Arghutsvili-Mkhargrdzeli (the second name means long-armed in Georgian) to their name. When Russia captured Georgia, the family changed its name to Arghutinsky-Dolgorukov (Dolgorukov is Russian for long-armed). The family was admitted into the Russian nobility under that name.

While some members of the family moved to Russia, others remained in Georgia. For example, Nicholas Barseghyan Argoutinsky-Dolgoroukoff (1845-1916) was the mayor of Tbilisi. Other members of the family were Catholicos-elect Hovsep Arghutian and Prince Movses Arghutian Yerkarabazuk (1798-1855).

The Russian Claim

The Russians say the Dolgorukovs descended from the semi-legendary Ruric, the founder of the Russian nation. The thesis was offered by journalist and teacher Pyotr Dolgorukov (1816-1868). He was the son of Prince Vladimir Dolgorukov-Arghutinsky. He advanced the fantastic claim that the Arghutinsky and Dolgokurov families had a common ancestry rooted in the Rurikid Prince Yuri of Kiev (1096-1157). Yuri, he said, was called "Dolgorukiy" because he grabbed the lands of neighboring rulers.

The Russians had another version of the family's history. Prince Ivan Oblenskiy, who lived in the 15th century, was nicknamed Dolgorukiy because of his vengefulness. And yet another Russian story claims Prince Vsevolodovich of Chernigov, who lived in the 12th-13th centuries, was the patriarch of the Dolgorukovs.

That's not the end of stories and counter stories. Some third parties say the Rurikids descended from the Armenian house of Pahlavuni who were in turn descended from Artaxerxes II of Persia! If true, Russians owe their country to Armenians and Persians.

Finally, certain Armenian sources fantastically claim that Prince Yuri of Kiev was related to Armenian-Byzantine royalty. His grandmother (Marian) was the daughter of Armenian Emperor Constantine IX Monomach. Perhaps Yuri heard the "Yerkaynabazug" nickname of Armenian Khosrov Zakarian through the Byzantine-Armenian connection. *Armeniapedia* claims Armenian Prince Smbat Pakradouny founded Kiev in 585 naming it Smbatos. They buttress their thesis by claiming close ties between Kiev and the Armenians and say St. Cyril and his brother St. Methodius, who converted the Slavs to Christianity, were Armenian and students of Byzantine-Armenian scientist Hovhannes Karahan. The brothers also created the Slavonic alphabet with thirty-six letters—the same number as the Armenian alphabet.

Other Armenians say Prince Yuri of Kiev was known to Armenians as Grugy/Kruk. Kruk changed to Dolgoruky. Yuri's flag had a lion similar to the lion on the flag of the Armenian Pakradouni dynasty... but then every other prince had a lion on his flag.

Senior members of the Dolgorukys were killed or disappeared during the Bolshevik Revolution. One of them accompanied Tsar Nicholas II's family to Yekaterinburg where he was killed by the Bolsheviks.

There are Dolgorukovs and Arghutinsky-Dolgorukovs in Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Canada, and the U.S. Seda Vermisheva, an Armenian-Russian poet and economist descends from the Argutyanyan-Dolgoruky family. She was born in 1932. She studied in Yerevan and headed the Russian-speaking section of the Writers Union of Armenia and was chair of the Moscow Society of Armenian-Russian Friends. Another member of the family—Svetlana Dolgoruky (1917-2012) descended from an offshoot of the Pahlavuni dynasty, according to historian Cyril Toumanoff.

Zakarian-Yerkaynabazuk-Arghutsvili-Mkhargrdzeli-Arghutinski-Dolgorukov-Dolgorukiy...is a typical page from the turbulent history of the Armenian people who were forced repeatedly to leave their homeland and often change their Armenian names to avoid discrimination.

Comments



Mesrob – 2020-07-09 14:26:46

I've noticed Mr. Tutunjian has written several similar articles about "lost" Armenians. If he has written many more, it would be a great idea to compile them into a book. It would make fascinating reading. I am wondering whether he has written by "lost" Armenian Georgio Armani.