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VI B.C. - III A.D.**

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The Hellenistic Features of Armenian Art in VI B.C. - III A.D.

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Abstract

Hellenistic art as a synthesis of Greek and Eastern art manners and cultural interaction has always been a subject of scholarly interest. That synthesis has found its interesting expression in the examples of Armenian arts - decorative arts, visual arts and architecture. Their study is, however, incomplete and therefore there are big gaps in the complete description of the general Hellenistic art. This paper compares the artistic examples excavated until the time being in Armenia with the similar examples of the synchronous art of the Near East. This research defines the traditional Armenian and the generic Hellenistic elements of the art examples made during the period of VI B.C. - III A. D. In this paper it is argued that the examples of the Armenian Hellenistic art show not only the direct influence from the Greek art or from the arts of the already formed Hellenistic countries but more often they have elements of the local Armenian origin. The research of this material sheds light on the Armenian art as well as the whole Hellenistic art.

Keywords: Ancient Armenia, Near East, Hellenism, Hellenistic Art, Cultural Interaction, Decorative Applied Art, Jewelry, Visual Arts, Architecture, Sculpture, Coinage.

Introduction

The expansion of the developed Greek culture in Near East had its regular nature since IV B.C. when Alexander the Great began his invasion to Near East. The expansionist policy of Greek civilization in the East compelled the Eastern countries to adopt some Greek elements which were well-presented in their politics, economy, culture, language etc. Those elements of Greek origin were fitted with locals and made up a historical-political, economical-cultural period which later would be called Hellenistic.

The usage of the term Hellenism has always been at the center of attention of many researchers. The term was coined by the German historian Johann Gustav Droysen to refer to the spreading of Greek culture and colonization over the non-Greek lands that were conquered by Alexander the Great in the IV B.C., compared with "Hellenic" which describes Greek culture in its native form.¹

An English historian Tarn explains the term of Hellenism as a conditional label for three centuries during which Hellenistic culture expanded from the borders of the motherland.²

Ancient Armenia in the Hellenistic Period

After the battle of Gaugamela, the satrap of Armenia Yervand III Orontes seeing that the Achaemenid army is giving in, withdraws with his troops from the front and comes back to Armenia to recover the Orontid (Yervanduni by the native name) dynasty.

As it is well known, Armenia was not conquered directly by the Macedonian army. It is known that Alexander sent a little troop for invading the mines of the Ispir (Sper by the native name) province, but as it turned out they didn't succeed. However, it became obvious that the spread of Hellenistic civilization was a political choice, which played an important role in the development of Ancient Armenian culture.

The interaction with various cultures gave the enculturation of masses in Eastern countries. It showed its results in the standards of living, the diverse cultural transformations (religion: the combination of Greek gods with the indigenous gods, language: the usage of the Greek language and writing in the court and elite, fine arts: the usage of the Greek stylistic forms and art elements). Here it is worth mentioning that the Hellenistic lifestyle was typical for the elite and the ordinary people were out of the modern Hellenistic culture.

Urban planning was typical of the Hellenistic civilization and thus many cities were built during the reign of the Orontid and Artaxiad kings. These are for example Yervandashat, Artaxata and Tigranocerta, which carried in them the Hellenistic tradition.

¹Дройзен И.Г., История эллинизма, т. 1–3, (Droysen Y., The history of Hellenism) Ростов-на-Дону, 1995, 608 с.

²Тарн В., Эллинистическая цивилизация, (Tarn V., Hellenistic civilization), М. 1949, стр. 20.

The Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi mentions that the founder of the Armenian Artaxiad dynasty, Artaxias I brought the gilded copper statues of Artemis, Herakles and Apollo from Asia to Armenia and put them in different sacred places of Armenian gods.¹

It is also worth mentioning that Hellenism had become a dominant ideology in the area and it enabled Armenia to take a significant participation in the stage of Hellenistic counties.

Applied Art

As B. Arakelyan mentions it is one thing when the form of and ornament on clay or metal object is copied or taken and quite another one when people borrow the Greek writings, language or scientific, technical, construction achievements or even the elements of those. The latter required long-term communication and had greater importance in developing and logical process of the Hellenistic culture in a country.²

During the invasion of Alexander the Great, a huge number of artisans and artists came to inhabit the Eastern countries including Armenia. They made a great number of artistic objects and handed the techniques of making them to local masters.

There are many examples of applied art such as jewelry, medallions, pottery and so on in the archaeological material of Armenia. It should also be mentioned that some samples of them were both made in Armenia and imported from abroad.

The pottery used in practical life was mostly monochrome. Those were jars, vessels and various pots made in accordance with the traditions of Armenian pottery.

The main part of colored pottery has geometric ornaments with certain symbolic meanings, for example the ornament of the wave symbolizes water, the rhombus - a sign of soil, the triangle - fire and so on. We can also see the ornaments of plants and animals. The ornament festoon and the tree of life were widely spread related to an ancient beliefs and divination of the tree.³

The symbols of snakes and goats were more frequent. The depiction of goats has a very ancient origin and it is connected with the earliest beliefs. The goat was an ancient totem. Its cult was inherited from the earliest religious beliefs by the more matured religious system - paganism, and was identified with the Armenian god Vahagn, which was symbolized by the lightning and

¹Մովսես Խորենացի, Հայոց պատմություն (Movses Khorenatsi, The history of the Armenians), Yerevan, 1968, pp. 144, 147.

²Առաքելյան, Բ., Հելլենիստական մշակույթի առաջացման և զարգացման օրինաչափությունների առթիվ, (Arakelyan B., On the Regularities in the Rise and Growth of Hellenistic Culture) Պատմա-բանասիրական համոլես, N 2, 1985, p. 50:

³ Ancient Armenian priests forecasted with trees, mostly with Chinari tree. As an ancient legend says the Armenian mythological king Ara Geghetsk (Ara The Beautiful) devoted his son Anoushavan to the forest of Chinari trees.

the thunderstorm. The depiction of snakes is connected with fertility and the cult of water.

The spread and usage of gold in the ancient Armenia is shown very vividly. This was mentioned by many Armenian and foreign historians such as Plutarch, Strabo, Appian, Cassius Dio and many others. In the works of Greek and Roman historians the gold is mentioned as reparation taken from Armenia.

According to historians Strabo, Byuzand, Khorentsi, when in 34 B.C. Mark Antony arrested the Armenian king Artavasdes II, he robbed the Armenian treasures of temples, ruined the sanctuary of goddess Anahit, placed in Erez and broke the golden statue of the goddess into pieces. Moreover, he took the gold which was robbed from Armenia as a present for Cleopatra IV, the queen of Egypt.

The main centers of Armenian gold jewelry were the capitals. First of all it was Armavir, then Yervandashat, and later on the greatest Artaxata.

Brooches, earrings, necklaces, armlets and medallions made in this period are separate objects for observation. An armlet found in the tomb of Hasan Ghala has the earliest dating [Fig. 1]. The armlet has oval shape, both of its sides end with the heads of lions, but it can also be seen that the lion has the horns of a goat. The mane of lion-goat is rich, spreading over the edges of the armlet.

Actually, the combination of two or more animal characters is a very ancient tradition in art. It was used in the art of Urartu and also in the arts of the Ancient countries such as Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Iranian and Greek. In this case, the lion is used as a symbol of strength and power, and the goat - of heavenly powers, the incarnation of lightning.

A special attention is given to medallions. Those are silver gilded medallions found in various towns of Republic of Armenia. There are four gilded medallions of Sisian made of a thin sheet of silver with the technique of stamping. There is a figure of a woman at the center of one of them [Fig. 2]. The woman wears a light dress – chiton and there are narrow ribbons coming down from her head over the shoulders. There is a branch of a palm tree, a sword, and a military outfit on the two sides of her head. The woman's gorgeous haircut has a crescent shape. The head is depicted with the harmony of the proportions of Hellenistic art.

It is assumed that this medallion depicts a goddess worshiped in the Near East. It has some association with Egyptian Isis, Sumer-Babylonian Ishtar and Greek Nike and some features typically for Athena, Tyche, Artemis or Demeter. The images of Nike, Athena and Tyche weren't new in the Armenian art. Still the Orontid kings of Sophene and Commagene, and later on Artaxiads especially Tigranes the Great, had used the images of these gods on the reverse of their coins.

A glorious example of Hellenistic jewelry are the golden earrings found in one of the tombs of Artaxata [Fig. 3]. Two earrings are similar to each other. They depict a round woman's face having symmetrical features with detailed elaboration. The depiction of the faces has emphasized Greek tradition, the

haircut is also Greek. The scattered wavy hair is strengthened with a ribbon in the forehead.

Though the workplace was small because of the size of the earrings, the artist was able to handle it skillfully. It can be assumed that the depicted women were mythological characters or maenads – the female followers of Dionysus. Other earrings of such type are found in the territory of Ancient Macedonia, Turkey, Bulgaria.

A signet ring found in Karmrakar expresses the close connection between art and mythology [Fig. 4]. The signet vividly depicts a Greek goddess wearing long corrugated chiton. The right foot is slant. The goddess has directed her face to the right. She holds a branch with her left hand and the right one is down along her waist.

The goddess wears a helmet on her head, which obviously reminds us of the image of Athena, but the lush wing and the horn of abundance on the left side of the goddess leads us to assume that there is a combination of three goddesses: Athena, Nike and Demeter.¹

Couples of gilded handles of vessels made of silver arise great interest. They depict hippocampuses and Eros, Aphrodite's son [Fig. 5,6]. Even though the handle with the image of Eros is small in size it has a detailed processing. The body of the hippocampus is shaped like a bow and has scales on its surface. The head and the tail are out of the bow. Both the statue of the hippocampus and Eros date back to the I century B.C.

Figure 1. A Golden Armlet from Hasan Ghalah Tomb, III-I Centuries B.C.



¹Եգանյան, Լարիսա (1999) Ականջօղերն ու մատանիները անտիկ Շիրակի թաղման ծիսակարգում, (Yeganian L. Ritual role of rings and earrings in burial rites in ancient Shirak.) ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Շիրակի հայագիտ. հետազոտ. կենտրոն. Գիտ. աշխատ., № 2. pp. 68-84.

Figure 2. *A Medallion from Sisian, I Century B.C.*



Figure 3. *Golden Earrings Found in One of the Tombs of Artaxata*



Figure 4. *A Signet Ring from Karmrakar*



Figure 5-6. *Two Gilded Handles of Vessels Made of Silver. I Century B.C.*



Sculpture

The reason for the lack of archaeological findings is probably constant wars in this area, and the way of spreading the new religion – Christianity. As it is known, the first Christians destroyed a great number of temples and statues in them in barbaric manner. The same brutality was not used in the case of decorative and applied art examples, because most of them were kept in private houses or buried in tombs. Also the destroying of statues and their temples meant the victory over them.

Yet archeological excavations held in the XX century shed a light on the artistic taste of Armenian people.

During the excavations carried out in 1971 in the surroundings of Artaxata, the marble statue of Aphrodite was found [Fig. 7]. It reminds us of other kinds of sculptures of Greek goddess of love especially Aphrodite of Cnidus. Probably the goddess has been depicted after taking a bath because her dress seems to be wet. The head of the statue is not survived, the right hand has been up, and the left naked shoulder is obviously downwards.

The restrained position of the sculpture, the lack of expressiveness, the tendency to hide the naked body, the unpolished marble let us consider that the sculpture is a copy of a bigger one which dates back to the beginning of IV century B.C..¹ In Hellenistic period of Armenia Aphrodite was associated with the indigenous goddess Astghik, whose cult was connected with water worship.²

In Ancient Armenia, the cults of Astghik and Anahit had many common features. The cult of both was connected with the water, love, fertility and the moon. The worship of Anahit was widely spread. She also had the characteristics of the giver of courage and the patroness.

She was worshipped as The Great Mother (Magna Mater deorum), the wet nurse. Movses Khorenatsi mentions that the Armenian king Tigranes³ puts the statue of Artemis to the village Erez,⁴ which was the main place for the worship of goddess Anahit. Hence both Anahit and Artemis had the same functions: fertility and childbirth. Khorenatsi tells that the king Artaxias I set the statue of Artemis in Artaxata.⁵ The historian Agathangelos mentions in his work that the Armenian king Tiridates the III (III-VI A.D.) names the goddess

¹Тер-МартirosовФ., Характер развития культуры Древней Армении. (Ter-Martirosov F., The characteristics of development of sculpture in Ancient Armenia) Տարեգիրք. Երևանի Գեղ. Պետ. Ակադեմիա, Yerevan, 2006, p 113:

²The Armenians have an old legend that the goddess Astghik used to take a bath in the river Aratsani (Murat river in Turkish) and with purpose of hiding her naked body she filled the valley with fog. The Moush valley got its name after this (moush or mshoush means fog in Armenian). Also one of the favorite holidays of Armenians – Vardavar is connected with the cult of Astghik. During the celebration of Vardavar people used to water each other.

³In all probability it was Tigranes I.

⁴Մովսես Խորենացի, Հայոց Պատմություն, (Movses Khorenatsi, The history of the Armenians), Yerevan, 1968, p. 147:

⁵Ibid., 183:

Anahit as the benefactor, protector and life-giving, in other words the patroness of the Armenian land.¹

The depiction of Anahit has many interpretations and assumptions. In Hellenistic period some attributes and functions of Greek (Hera, Demeter, Artemis, Aphrodite, Nike, Athena, Tyche) and the Near Eastern (Ishtar and Cybele) goddesses were added to the cult of Anahit. The bronze head of the goddess Anahit² (The British museum of London) has some similarities with the head of sculptures of Aphrodite [Fig. 8]. Hair is decorated in Greek style, but the crescent in the forehead undoubtedly indicates the connection with the moon as well as the cult of Artemis and Ishtar. According to assumption the statue was made by Praxiteles or his students and brought from Greece in the I century B.C.

To be certain of the image of Anahit we also need to examine the sculpture of the Great Mother in the sanctuary of Mount Nemrut [Fig. 9].³ Its iconography differs from the bronze head of Anahit, made at the same time, which presents a local version of Hellenistic sculpture.⁴

The statue of the goddess in the Mount Nemrut is not theatrically flexible which is typical for Hellenistic art. On the contrary, it is very static and somewhat rough.

The image of the sitting goddess resembles the images of Eastern patronesses and Mother goddesses, whose hair is dressed not in the back of the head, but on the top. Such iconography also has the medallion, which was mentioned above.

Figure 7. *A Marble Figure of Aphrodite*



¹Ագաթանգեղոս, Հայոց պատմություն, (Agathangelos, The history of the Armenians), Yerevan, 1983, pp. 47, 81

²Ղ. Ալիշան, Այրարատ, (Gh.Alishan, Ayrarat), Venice, 1890, p. 40

³Armenian archaeologist Hasmik Margarian identifies the depiction of the goddess of the sanctuary of Commagene to the image of Demeter. Margarian H., The Basic Directions of Development and the Specific Features of Commagenian Sculpture, Պատմա-քանդակապետական հանդես, № 3 . pp. 159-180.

⁴Առաքելյան Բ., Ակնարկներ Հին Հայաստանի արվեստի պատմությանը (մ.թ.ա. VI-մ.թ. III դ), (Arakelyan B., The essays about the history of art in Ancient Armenia), Yerevan, 1976, p 24.

Figure 8. *The Bronze Head of the Statue of Goddess Anahit*



Figure 9. *The Mother Goddess's Head in the Sanctuary of Mount Nemrut*



Architecture

Both Movses Khorensatsi and Aganhangelos mention in their works about the existence of the temples dedicated to Armenian gods. With the adoption of the Christianity, those temples have been destroyed and Christian new churches were built on the places of pagan temples sometimes preserving the main structures of them.

The temple of Garni is the only well survived Hellenistic temple in the territory of the Republic of Armenia. According to the found inscription it was built by the king Tiridates I in 77 A.D. and was devoted to the god of Sun, Mihr-Mithra (Helios) [Fig. 10].

A destructive earthquake destroyed the temple in 1679 and it was rebuilt in 1966-1976 under the supervision of the Armenian architect Alexander Sahinyan.

The origin of the definition of the architectural type of the temple is very controversial. Being built in I century B.C. by the influence of the Hellenistic Roman period, the Temple of Garni with its architectural form is similar to Roman temples.

From the first sight, it is a Greco-Roman temple of peripteros type, surrounded with 24 columns from all sides. There are two young athletes

depicted on the high pedestals of both sides of the entrance of the temple. The Tuscan column, without flutes on its surface, stands on the base and bears the whole weight of the roof on itself. The capitals are Ionic and the scrolls are seen from four sides, which is more typical for the Roman architecture [Fig. 11].

The pediment is triangular with a smooth surface, without reliefs or ornaments on it. The frieze is decorated with unique ornaments with the form of acanthus and laurel leaves. There are reliefs of heads of roaring lions on the molding. As it was said above the temple was devoted to Mihr, the god of the sun and the symbol of the lion is the identification of the sun.

The peripteros style in Greek architecture was formed in about the VII B.C., but the excavation and research of the culture of carried in the XX put a great mystery to the science and history and it questioned the origin of a temple of this kind.

It refers to a relief on the wall of the palace of Assyrian King Sargon II (VIII B.C.). On the relief there is a scene of the soldiers of Assyrian King destroying the temple of the Urartian god Khaldi in Mousasir [Fig. 12].

Only the facade of the temple with gable roof and frontal massive columns is depicted in the relief. Therefore, it is quite possible that still in VIII B.C. such type of temple was used in Asia Minor after what it came to the Greek and Roman culture. There it developed and came back to East with the Hellenistic influence, representing Greco-Roman architectural type.¹

Yet the temple complex of Garni with a nearby bath resembles the Roman architectural construction.²

The bath is situated 50 meters away from the temple. It consists of three rooms and an apodyterium. Structurally and with the way of its construction it is very close to Roman baths (thermas).

On the floor of the first room of the bath, there is a polychromatic mosaic with mythological scenes. More than 15 color stones have been used in it. In the pink circle, there is a sea scene with mythological sea creatures such as tritons, nereids and different fish.

In the composition, there is the horned old man – the personification of Ocean and a woman – The Sea. The image is rounded in an ornamental frame and it is not preserved well. The composition is completed with the images of the sea divinities and creatures with their Greek names; ΒΥΘΟΣ - Depth of sea, ΓΑΛΗΝΗ - Sea Serenity, ΓΛΑΥΚΟΣ - Blue, ΘΕΤΙΣ and so on. All creatures are depicted with certain attributes according to their functions.³ In the middle of the composition, at the bottom of Ocean and the Sea, there is a very controversial note; ΜΗΔΕΝ ΛΑΒΟΝΤΕΣ ΗΡΓΑΚΑΜΕΘΑ, which means “We labored without getting anything.” This was a form of a protest,

¹Սահինյան Ա., Գառնիի և Գեղարդի ճարտարապետական հուշարձանները, (Sahinyan A., The architectural monuments of Garni and Geghard), Yerevas, 1969, pp. 18-19..

²International textbook company, The history of architecture and ornament, 1922. p 87.

³See the detailed description of the mosaic in Arakelyan B., Garni II, Yerevan 1957, pp 27-31.,

which meant that the slaves and prisoners of war did not get any salary for the work.¹ [Fig. 13].

B. Arakelyan takes into consideration the stylistic features and themes of the mosaic and personalization of natural phenomena and states that it is typical of the late period of Hellenism, dating back to the III B.C..²

Figure 10. *The Temple of Garni, I A.D.*



Figure 11. *The temple of Garni*

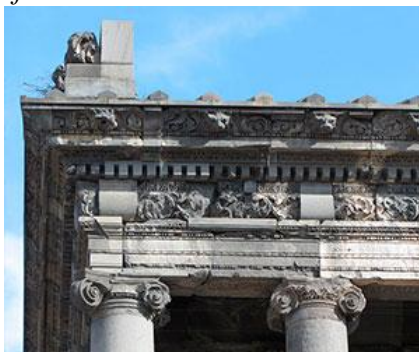
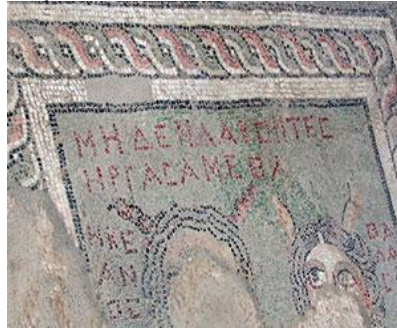


Figure 12. *The Relief Depiction of the Temple Mousasir*



¹The Romans therefore called on slaves and local subjects that were liable to labor for the state, and even men from the army were pressed into service. The punishment of criminals in many instances included their condemnation to work on public buildings, International textbook company, The history of architecture and ornament, 1922. p 87.

²Առաքելյան Բ., Գառնի II, (Arakelyan B., Garni II), Yerevan, 1957, pp33-36:

Figure 13. *The Fragment of the Mosaic*

Coinage

The involvement of Hellenistic cultural and economic environment contributed to the minting of coins in Armenia. The Armenian coins were mainly following to the traditions of Hellenistic coin minting, with some changes that became the characteristic features of Armenian coinage. The coins of Orontid kings of Sophene and Commagene have the earliest dating.¹

There are portraits of Armenian kings with the typical Armenian crown on the obverse of those coins. The crown came to its perfection on the coins of Tigranes the Great and later on Artavasdes II.² The Armenian crown has five prominences, where a star (sun) has eight vertices and is depicted with a pair of eagles. This was considered the Coat of Arms of Artaxiad dynasty [Fig. 14].

Though the kings preceding Tigranes the Great didn't have that combination of star-sun and eagles on their portraits, yet the image of the Armenian crown exists there prominently. We can also see an Armenian crown on the relief of Antiochus I Orontid in the sanctuary in Mount Nemrut [Fig. 15] and on the reverse of the coins of Roman emperors Marcus Antonius and Augustus.

According to the Greek and later to the Hellenistic tradition of coin minting there are usually the images of mythological characters on the reverse of the coins.³ The Armenian kings used the images of Hercules-Vahagn, Helios - Mihr, Atenas, Nike, Tyche and Demeter -Anahit .

The coins of Tigranes the Great with the sitting image of goddess Tyche on their reverses are more remarkable [Fig. 16]. Tyche was the goddess of fate and destiny in Greek mythology and the patroness of the city Antioch. Actually the divinities, architectural monuments and other images on reverse of the coins were not newly created. They were the copies of existing famous works

¹P. Z. Bedoukian, *Coinage of the Armenian kingdoms of Sophene and Commagene*, The American Numismatic Society, Museum Notes 28, 1983, pp 71-87.

²Тирацян, Г. А. (1973) ПортретноеискусствоАрмениипомонетамТиграна II иАртаваздаII. (Tiratsyan G., *Portrait Art in Armenia from the Coins of Tigranes II and Artavasdes II*) Պատմա-քանադիրական հանդես, № 4 . pp. 43-60.

³Dodd, Rebecca (2009) *Coinage and conflict: the manipulation of Seleucid political imagery*. PhD thesis, University of Glasgow. pp 57-65

of art. Before Tigranes the Great none of Seleucid kings had used the image of sitting Tyche.

In all the probability, the image of the statue of sitting goddess Tyche in Antioch¹ was first used on the reverse of the coins of the Armenian king Tigranes the Great² for showing his power over the city of Seleucus Nicator.

After Tigranes the Great some of the Roman Emperors such as Augustus, Claudius, Trajan used the image of sitting Tyche on the reverse of their coins, and later in the IV A.D. Maximinus II used the frontal depiction of the famous statue of the goddess.

Tyche depicted on the coins of Tigranes The Great is sitting on a rock or a throne, under her legs there is personification of the river Orontes. Tyche has a mural crown on her head early examples of which we meet in the art of Near East (Sumerian Inana / 4th century B.C., Akkadian Priestess Tuta-Napshum/ 3rd century B.C., the portrait of the Elamian goddess/ 8th century B.C., the portrait of Assyrian Libbi Al-Sarati/ 7th century B.C.). This is a vivid example of the mixture of Greek and Eastern arts, when the Greek goddess wearing the attributes of Eastern divinities.

There is another depiction of the goddess Tyche on the coinage of Tigranes the Great, which surely cannot be the priority of the Armenian king. This Tyche, who is mostly known as Tyche of Damascus, is depicted with a long chiton, sitting on a high rock or throne, facing left, spreading her right hand ahead, keeping in her right hand the horn of abundance [Fig. 17].

Again there is the personification the river, probably Chrysorrohas (Barada), under the legs of the goddess. Y. Nersisyan names this goddess the Fate of Damascus,³ whereas Z. Bedoukian defines this image as the goddess of Victory - Nike.⁴

Seleucid king Demetrius Soter (II B.C.) has used some kind of this image of Tyche on his coinage minted in Cilician cities. On the other hand the goddess depicted on the coins is not wearing the mural crown. The personification of the river is also missing.

Based on the quotations from the histories of Movses Khorenatsi and Agathangelos, the Armenian goddess Anahit was worshiped as the patroness of the Armenian land and the capitals, so she can be associated with the character of Tyche and depicted on the coins of the Armenian king.

The coins of Artavasdes II, the son of Tigranes The Great, have great value and importance for numismatic studies as well. The Armenian crown came to its new stage of perfection on the obverse of the coins. On the reverses

¹As it is known there was a statue of goddess Tyche made by Eutyhides in Antioch (IV-III B.C.). The Roman copy of the statue is in Vatican museum. It is assumed the statue was ordered by Seleucus I Nicator during the founding the city Antioch at the river Orontes.

² Yost. S. L., Shared symbols and cultural identity, The goddess Tyche on coins from the Roman province of Syria, B.A. 2008, p 7. The author mentions the name of Tigranes I but the year of 83 B.C. was in the period of reign of Tigranes the Great (The second).

³Nercessian Y., Armenian numismatic studies II, LA, 2009, pp. 45-47.

⁴Bedoukian Z., Selected numismatic studies, LA, 2003, p. 71.

there are images of Nike, Athena or the quadriga of the Helios-Mihr¹ [Fig. 18]. The image of the god of the sun (also the Coat of Arms – the eight edged star-sun) is quite logical here, because Artaxiad kings related the origin of their dynasty to the god of the sun, Mihr (Helios).²

Figure 14. *The Tetradrachm of Tigranes the Great*



Figure 15. *The Handshaking of Antiochus I Orontid and Vahagn-Herakles. Mount Nemrut*



Figure 16. *The Image of the Goddess Tyche on the Coin of Tigranes the Great*



¹Մուշեղյան Խ., Հայկական դրամական գանձերը, (Mousheghian Kh., The coin treasures of Armenia), Yerevan, 1973, pp. 30-31:

²D. Ulansey, The origins of the Mithras Mysteries. Cosmology and Salvation in Ancient world, Oxford 1989, pp 3-14.

Figure 17. *The Coin of Tigranes the Great, the Fate of Damascus on Reverse*



Figure 18. *The Coin of Artavasdes II*



Conclusion

Thus Armenia was actively involved in the communication network of Hellenistic countries in the IV B.C.-III A.D. International trade, the synoecism of craftsmen, artistes and common people from Hellenistic countries gave a new impetus to not only the urban culture but also to the development of Armenian artistic culture and the formation of its stylistic features. The local traditions of art freshened and gained a new breath by being combined with not only Greek, but also with the artistic elements of the neighboring eastern countries. The archaeological excavations started in the XX century made a set of new questions, which were connected with the dating of archaeological findings, origin and stylistic features.

A great number of coins, jewelry and other applied art examples give us an opportunity to have some idea about the art peculiarities and lifestyle of the Armenian people in the Hellenistic period.

The Armenian kings used the principles of Hellenistic civilization for strengthening their political and cultural power. Consequently in that period Armenia reached its peak in power of its history.