

# NOTAS HISTÓRICAS Y GEOGRÁFICAS

## **Artículos**

**GREATER ARMENIA – THE DISAPPEARED EMPIRE?  
GRAN ARMENIA: ¿EL IMPERIO DESAPARECIDO?**

**Litovchenko Sergey**

V. N. Karazin National University, Ukraine

litovchenkosd@gmail.com

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7602-9534>

**Recibido el 29 de noviembre del 2022    Aceptado el 5 de enero del 2023**

## Abstract

Rapid rise and the fall of the Armenian Empire, which was no less quick, can not be considered unusual for the ancient world. Many ancient states have experienced similar short-lived periods of explosion. However, the history of Great Armenia gives us the opportunity to emphasize important feature: having lost the status of great nation, the empire of Tigranes II has been saved as a state, at least of regional significance. We can say that Tigranes' empire didn't disappear, but transformed. And it was done mostly due to Tigranes' efforts. It was he who did it in such way that defeated Armenian Empire became not a pile of rubble, but a kingdom of Greater Armenia. The end of the Empire would come later, during the times of Antony and August. However, by that time, the situation would change radically and Strabo would write: "and therefore, they all speak the same language, as we are told" (Strabo, 11, 14, 5). We suppose, this phrase has a hint of Tigranes' state activity during the creation and transformation of the Armenian Empire, which finishes the description of the lands, joined to Armenian Kingdom.

**Key words:** Greater Armenia, Tigranes II the Great, "king of kings", Tigranocerta

## Resumen

El rápido ascenso y la caída del Imperio armenio, que no fue menos rápido, no pueden considerarse inusuales para el mundo antiguo. Muchos estados antiguos han experimentado períodos similares de explosión de corta duración. Sin embargo, la historia de la Gran Armenia nos da la oportunidad de destacar un rasgo importante: habiendo perdido el estatus de gran nación, el imperio de Tigranes II se ha salvado como estado, al menos de importancia regional. Podemos decir que el imperio de Tigranes no desapareció, sino que se transformó. Y se hizo principalmente gracias a los esfuerzos de Tigranes. Fue él quien lo hizo de tal manera que el Imperio armenio derrotado se convirtió no en un montón de escombros, sino en un reino de la Gran Armenia. El fin del Imperio vendría más tarde, en tiempos de Antonio y Augusto. Sin embargo, para entonces, la situación cambiaría radicalmente y Estrabón escribiría: "y por tanto, todos hablan la misma lengua, como se nos dice" (Estrabón, 11, 14, 5). Suponemos que esta frase tiene un indicio de la actividad estatal de Tigranes durante la creación y transformación del Imperio armenio, que termina la descripción de las tierras, unidas al Reino armenio.

**Palabras clave:** Gran Armenia, Tigranes II el Grande, "rey de reyes", Tigranocerta

## 1. Introduction

Rapid rise and the fall of the Armenian Empire, which was no less quick, can not be considered unusual for the ancient world. Many ancient states have experienced similar short-lived periods of explosion. However, the history of Great Armenia gives us the opportunity to emphasize two important features.

First, most states, experienced short-lived explosion, had perished under their own debris, disappearing from the history forever. The destiny of Greater Armenia didn't have the same way – having lost the status of great nation, the empire of Tigranes II has been saved as a state, at least of regional significance.

Second, the explosion of Armenian Empire hasn't been properly mentioned in sources. The interesting fact is that it hasn't been mentioned neither in ancient nor in Armenian sources. Despite the traditional conception, Tigranes the Great wasn't paid much attention in the famous Moses Khorenats'i "History of Armenia"<sup>1</sup>. Ancient sources also did not pay much attention to Tigranes II. It was so little, that even the most important historical events are dated rather not very accurately. So conventionally, that they are being reconsidered now. The most striking example is the changing in the date of joining the Seleucid remains to Tigranes' state.

The traditional date 83 B.C. was based on information from Justin (Just. 40, 1, 1-4) and Appian (App. Syr., 48) and hasn't been challenged for over 100 years<sup>2</sup>. Yet, in 2007 two scientists, independently of one another, suggested reducing the ruling period of Tigranes in Syria<sup>3</sup>. However, in 2011 R. Shayegan extended the ruling period of Tigranes in Antioch<sup>4</sup>. We will come back to the detailed analysis later but now, it's important to know that our sources give us the permission to accept this difference in meanings.

The same situation is in modern historiography and in overall evaluation of Tigranes' state. The quotation from the recent work can be used here as an example: "A related structural deficiency in the imperial scheme was the absence (perhaps due to the short duration of the empire) of a strong institutional arrangement to facilitate circulation of capital and benefits of commerce between the core and peripheral economies. The relationship was strictly unidirectional: Wealth acquired in the conquered territories served to enrich the royal treasury. Such shortcomings could be overlooked only so long as the two major empires, Rome and Parthia, did not challenge Tigran II."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Vashcheva, "Paradoxes of the historical concept of Movses Khorenatsi", *Dialogue with time* 40 (2012): 227.

<sup>2</sup> Reinach, *Mithridate Eupator, roi de Pont*, (Paris: Firmin-Didot et cie, 1896), 312; Asdourian, *Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Armenien und Rom von 190 v. Chr. bis 428 n. Chr. Ein Abriss der Armenischen Geschichte in dieser Periode*, (Venedig: Dissertation, 1911), 20; Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire des Séleucides*, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913), 430-431; Newell, *The Seleucid Mint of Antioch*, (New York: The American numismatic society, 1918), 125; Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome: a new interpretation based on primary source*, (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2007), 38; Bellinger, "The End of the Seleucids", *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 38 (June 1949): P. 80; Downey, *Ancient Antioch*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 136; Bernhardt, *Polis und römische Herrschaft in der späten Republik (149-31 v. Chr.)*, (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1985), 100; Chahin, *The Kingdom of Armenia: A History*, (Richmond: Psychology Press, 2001), 199; Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100-30 BC.*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 69; Callataÿ, *L'histoire des guerres mithridatiques vue par les monnaies* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de L'Art Séminaire de Numismatique Marcel Hoc, 1997), 231; Mittag, "Zur Integration Antiocheias in den römischen Herrschaftsverband", in *Rom und der Osten im 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Akkulturation oder Kampf der Kulturen? Akten des Humboldt-Kollegs Verona, 19.-21. Februar 2004*, (Cosenza: Giordano, 2009), 180; Sartre, *The Middle East under Rome*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 28; Burns, *Damascus: A History*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 45.

<sup>3</sup> Assar, "A Revised Parthian Chronology of the Period 91-55 B.C.", *Parthica – Incontri di culture nel mondo antico* 8 (2006): 74. not. 126; Hoover, "A Revised Chronology for the Late Seleucids at Antioch (121/0-64 BC)", *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 56, 3 (2007): 296-298.

<sup>4</sup> Shayegan, *Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 316, not. 923; 318.

<sup>5</sup> Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 21.

Consequently, the phenomenon of the rise and fall of the Armenian Empire, that many times attracted scientists, requires more detailed analyses. First of all, it's necessary to find out if Tigranes' state was actually an Empire, as it is often called in modern researches. Apparently, not only Armenian lands were the parts of Greater Armenia. Iberia, Albania, Media Atropatene, Northern Mesopotamia and of course Northern Syria can be considered as non-Armenian lands. That is why Greater Armenia can be perceived as an empire state in a modern meaning of this phrase. It is significant, that Tigran II himself realized the change of his state's sense. The evidence of this is the title "king of kings", which the Armenian ruler accepted after winning the war against Parthians<sup>6</sup>. This title was also recognized by such Greek historians, as Plutarch and Appian (Plut. Luc. 14. 5; App. Syr. 48)<sup>7</sup>. Of course, Tigranes' rule differed from Hellenistic kings or the one of future Roman emperors. His power was based on typical eastern despotism. But in our opinion it is obvious, that during the period of its prosperity, Tigranes' state was an empire. But we have to understand that the Armenian king did not imitate the Parthian empire. On the contrary, the researchers point out the differences. Here is one of the last opinions about the Armenian tiara: "It is no coincidence that this new symbol of kingship [Armenian tiara] emerges as Armenia establishes itself as an empire. As a new imperial image it rivaled the established traditions of the Arsakids, at least momentarily, as did Tigranes II's Armenian empire itself"<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Creation of an Empire.

The creation of Tigranes' state began from the joining of Armenian kingdom Sophene in 95/94 B.C.<sup>9</sup>. Right after that, Armenia was involved in a complicated system of international affairs, which were created by confrontation between Rome and Pontic kingdom. Tigranes II entered into an alliance with Mithradates of Pontus and took an active part in Pontic invasion in the Cappadocian kingdom. Contrary to most scientists' opinion, the participation of Tigranes in Mithradates antiroman actions was limited by only one march against Cappadocia<sup>10</sup>. According to the agreement with Mithradates, Tigranes received movable property and captives, he didn't claim to new territories (Just., 38, 3, 5). In the future the king of Greater Armenia didn't participate in Mithradates campaigns.

On no account did Tigranes plan the conflict with Romans<sup>11</sup>. That is why during the Mithradates war Tigranes took no actions to help his father-in-law. The Armenian king had many opportunities to intervene in a conflict between Rome and Pontic kingdom, however, he never used that chance. Tigranes' absolute refusal from Roman conflict shows, that Armenian king was able to lead independent policy right from the beginning of his rule. Neither Mithradates, nor his daughter Cleopatra, Tigranes' wife, could influence him.

Tigranes' position absolutely justified in the nearest future – Parthia was gradually degrading and the king got a wonderful opportunity to weaken his suzerain. In the beginning of the 80's Tigranes reinforce his matters by marriage of his daughter and Parthian king Mithradates

<sup>6</sup> Foss, "The Coinage of Tigranes the Great: Problems, Suggestions and a New Find", *Numismatic Chronicle*, 146 (1986): 37.

<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, it happened in the 70s, according to Marek Jan Olbrycht: "Mithradates VI Eupator and Iran", in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom* J.M. Hoejte ed., (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 177-178. On the other hand, even in the 60s, according to R. Shayegan: *Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 241, n. 768.

<sup>8</sup> Canepa, "Rival Images of Iranian Kingship and Persian Identity in Post-Achaemenid Western Asia", in *Persianism in Antiquity*, R. Strootman, M. J. Versluys eds., (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017), 215-216.

<sup>9</sup> Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100-30 BC.*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 99; Olbrycht, "Mithradates VI Eupator and Iran", in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom* J.M. Hoejte ed., (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, 2009), 169; Marciak, *Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene. Three Regna Minora of Northern Mesopotamia Between East and West*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 129.

<sup>10</sup> Litovchenko, "Cappadocian crisis of the nineties of the I century B.C. and Great Armenia", *Antiquities* 7 (2008): 54.

<sup>11</sup> Contra; Manaseryan, *Tigran the Great: The Armenian Struggle Against Rome and Parthia, 94-64 B.C.*, (Yerevan, 2007), 39-42.

II<sup>12</sup>. In the Avroman parchment Tigranes is called “The Great King”<sup>13</sup>. Soon the king intruded into parthian events and was able not only to get back Great Valleys, which were lost in 95 B.C., but also to capture the lands in Media Atropatene and northern Mesopotamia. Probably, at the same time kingdom of Iberia and Albania recognized the rule of Armenian king. Most of the local rulers kept their thrones; however, not all of them were loyal enough. As, for example, the king of Gordyene, who took the side of Romans. Some lands were under the direct control of the Armenian king. Gouras king's brother, was set to rule Nisibis. According to the sources, at the same time Tigranes took away the title “king of kings” from Parthians. We can state, that Greater Armenia has become an Empire and the new title corresponded to the status of Armenian king. However, Tigranes’ Empire was still of the eastern type and did not have much difference from Parthian Empire. In our opinion, the turning point came after seleucids lands had joined Tigranes’ Empire.

The history of joining of Syrian Kingdom to Greater Armenia has become relevant lately due to the reconsideration of the date of the war by O. Hoover and Gh. F. Assar<sup>14</sup>. They suggested referring Tigranes’ capture of Antioch on the Orontes to the middle or even the end of the 70s. Although some scientists have accepted this dating<sup>15</sup>, we believe, that the reconsideration of the date is premature. In the article of 2015, I extensively discussed all the arguments given by the supporters of chronological revision and came to a conclusion that they didn’t have serious arguments for the refusal from 83 B.C.<sup>16</sup> In general, this problem is not the topic of the article, it is important for us, that Tigranes had about 15 years for carrying out his policy, but not 3 or 4 years. Therefore, the king had enough time to follow a considered policy.

In 83 B.C. Tigranes took advantage of longstanding distraction in state of Seleucids and captured Antioch and most part of Syria. For most scientists this vent is just a typical episode in the race for Syrian throne<sup>17</sup>. Only few scientists see considered policy of joining Armenian and Syrian lands in king’s actions<sup>18</sup>. We are not going to examine the method of Antioch’s capture in these article, though Pompeius Trogus says openly about voluntary submission of Antiochians people to Armenians (Just. 40, 1, 1-4).

<sup>12</sup> Marek Jan Olbrycht believes that this marriage was a sign of Tigranes' dependence on Mithridates II: Olbrycht, “Mithradates VI Eupator and Iran”, in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom* J.M. Hoejete ed., (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press. Aarhus, 2009), 169.

<sup>13</sup> Minns, “Parchments of the Parthian Period from Avroman in Kurdistan”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 35 (1915):41.

<sup>14</sup> See note 3.

<sup>15</sup> Wright, “Tarkondimotid responses to Roman domestic politics: from Antony to Actium”, *Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia*, 20 (2009): 74; idem. “Non-Greek Religious Imagery on the Coinage of Seleucid Syria”, *Mediterranean Archaeology*, 22/23 (2009):197-198; Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 64, not. 117; Smykov, “Syria in 83-63 BC: from anarchy to province”, *Ancient World and Archaeology*, 16 (2013): 113-114. Probably, F. Haymann is inclined to such a dating: Haymann, “Ein entvölkertes Kilikien unter Tigranes II.? Für eine neue Sicht auf Ostkilikien in der Zeit von 78 bis 64 v. Chr.”, *Olba* 22 (2014):284.

<sup>16</sup> Litovchenko, “The reign of Tigranes the Great in Syria: chronology problems”, *Ancient World and Archaeology*, 17 (2015): 176–191.

<sup>17</sup> Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucos to the Arab Conquest*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.), 137; Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East: 168 B.C. to A. D. 1.*, (London: Univ. of Oklahoma Press 1984.), 174; Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100-30 BC.*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 69, not.15; Ehling, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden (164–63 v. Chr.): Vom Tode des Antiochos IV. bis zur Einrichtung der Provinz Syria unter Pompeius*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 249 Ann. 1131; Smykov, “Syria in 83-63 BC: from anarchy to province”, *Ancient World and Archaeology*, 16 (2013): 113.

<sup>18</sup> Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome: a new interpretation based on primary source*, (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers. 2007), 38-39; Manaseryan, “The process of formation of the state of Tigran II”, *Journal of Ancient History* 2 (1982): 128-138; idem. *Tigran the Great: The Armenian Struggle Against Rome and Parthia, 94–64 B.C.*, (Yerevan, 2007), 70-78; Mittag, “Zur Integration Antiocheias in den römischen Herrschaftsverband”, in *Rom und der Osten im 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Akkulturation oder Kampf der Kulturen? Akten des Humboldt-Kollegs Verona*, 19.-21. Februar 2004, (Cosenza: Giordano, 2009), 180; Sartre, *The Middle East under Rome*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 254.

No matter, what Antioch's joining was followed with, Tigranes demonstrated rather wise and careful policy in his new dominion. Apparently, the experience of Parthian's hostage gave the king an opportunity to avoid mistakes, regarding Hellenistic cities, constantly made by Arshakids. It seems that the king of Greater Armenia was the one, who managed to set balance between monarchical power and striving for autonomy. The brightest example of it are the Royal coins – basis of state propaganda of ancient world. We have all the reasons to claim, that it was the king, who started minting coins for the first time in the history of Armenian Artashesids<sup>19</sup>. In other words, Tigranes was the first king, who needed such kind of propaganda. The portrait of the king in tiara is set on obverse tetradrachms from Antioch. The image is glaringly nonhellenistic, which brightly demonstrates Armenian origin of the king. But this effect is compensated by reverse. For the first time in the monetary history of Antioch the image of the most recognizable symbol of the city - the sculpture of goddess Tyche of Eutychides<sup>20</sup>. Probably, the king tried to demonstrate not only his own cultural identity, but also to emphasize his respect for the traditions of the city<sup>21</sup>. In fact, it would be fondly of him to try to persuade Antiochians in the fact, that the new monarch was a direct heir of Seleucids dynasty. It was obvious that Tigranes was of Asian origin. It was much more effective to show, that the king foreigner respected the traditions of his new citizens not less, but maybe even more, than hereditary Seleucids.

It seems that Tigranes' refusal from dating the coins is one of the reasons of his policy. It is known that after 66 B.C. the ruler of Greater Armenia ordered to mint the regnal years on the coins<sup>22</sup>. However, there are no such dates on the coins, minted in Antioch. Apparently, the king didn't want to name real dates of his rule not to remind citizen of Antioch that first of all, he was the king of the neighboring state. But Tigranes could not date his tetradrachms since the accession to the throne in Syria not to offend his Armenian citizens.

The title of the king is closely connected with propaganda among Hellenized people of Syria. The sources clearly show, that by the moment of entering Antioch Tigranes had already had the title "king of kings"<sup>23</sup>, but we can't see it on tetradrachms from Antioch mint. It's obvious, that

<sup>19</sup> Vardanyan, "On the dating of two groups of Armenian coins of the Hellenistic era", *Historical and Philological Journal*, 2 (1987):201. Contra: Kovacs, *Armenian Coinage in the Classical Period*, (Lancaster, London: Classical Numismatic Group, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Lacroix, "Copies de statues sur les monnaies des Séleucides", *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 73 (1949): 175; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.), 138; Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Reflections of the Tyche of Antioch in Literary Sources and on Coins. An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art", *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1994): 55.

<sup>21</sup> Foss, "The Coinage of Tigranes the Great: Problems, Suggestions and a New Find", *Numismatic Chronicle*, 146 (1986): 34.

<sup>22</sup> Foss, "The Coinage of Tigranes the Great: Problems, Suggestions and a New Find", *Numismatic Chronicle*, 146 (1986): 27, 33- 4; Mousheghian, Depeyrot, *Hellenistic and Roman Armenian Coinage (1st c. BC –1st c. AD)*, (Wetteren: Moneta 1999), 41-42; Mousheghian, Mousheghian, Depeyrot, *History and coin finds in Armenia. Antiquity*, (Wetteren: Moneta 2000), 96-97; Nurpetlian, "Ancient Armenian Coins: The Artaxiad Dynasty (189 B.C. – A.D. 6)", *Beirut* 51-52 (2009): 83; Shayegan, *Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 241. Not. 768; Naco del Hoyo, "Garrisons, coins and war stress (89-63 BCE) in Late Hellenistic towns", in *The City and the Coin in the Ancient and Early Medieval Worlds* F. López-Sánchez ed., (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2012), 53. Not.32; Amela Valverde, "Sobre la era pompeyana de Artaxata. Una nota", *Numisma* 255 (2011): 72-73; Callataÿ, *L'histoire des guerres mithridatiques vue par les monnaies* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de L'Art Séminaire de Numismatique Marcel Hoc, 1997), 231. At the same time, E. Nercessyan reports that F Callataÿ, in an oral message, suggested that Greek letters on coins in this case may not mean numbers at all, see: Nercessian, *Silver Coinage of the Artaxiad Dynasty of Armenia*, (Los Angeles: Armenian Numismatic Society 2006.), 150.

<sup>23</sup> Strootman, "From King of Asia to King of Kings. Imperial Titulature in the Seleukid and post-Seleukid Middle East", in *Seleukeia: Studies in Seleucid History, Archaeology and Numismatics in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen*. (Berlin: De Gruyter 2015), 26.

the monarch didn't think it was necessary to show his Iranian titles, unusual for Greek world<sup>24</sup>. Only after the loss of Syria the title "king of kings" appeared on the coins, minted in Artashat<sup>25</sup>.

Although we consider assumption of agreement between Armenia and Syria being an overstatement, the opinion of Pompeius Trogus can't be rejected completely. At least, Tigranes II didn't show on occupation character of his power. He kept the illusion, that Antiochians, tired by long lasting civil wars, could choose their future by themselves. That is why Armenian "king of kings" Tigranes easily turned into Syrian suzerain king Tigranes.

### 3. The creation of Tigranocerta as a symbol of the new empire.

Despite the absolute agreement among the scientists<sup>26</sup>, the building of Tigranocerta was one of the most ambiguous actions of Tigranes. At first sight, we can't imagine anything more unsuccessful, than building of the new town in the place, which is hard to protect. To make matters worse, Tigranes settled immigrants from Greek cities of Cilicia and Armenian aristocracy in a new capital (Strabo, 11, 14, 15; Plut. Luc., 26, 1; Dio Cass., 36, 2, 3-4). All of them were settled there by force. Tigranes' actions were similar to those of Asian despot, who thoughtlessly imitated Hellenistic examples. In our opinion, Armenian king acted rather efficiently. Obviously, Tigranes thoughtfully refused from the idea of transformations into the capital Hellenistic Antioch. Also, the king didn't reconstruct Armenian capital Artashat. However, it is significant to say, that both variants were possible. The capital in Antioch would be a typical step of a monarch, seeking for Hellenization, while keeping the capital in Artashat would be logical for Asian monarch. Instead of this, a new city, situated in the center of the Empire, is created. People from all over the country populate the city. We believe that the creation of the new city had many advantages. 1. Comfortable ruling. Tigranocerta was situated in the center of Tigranes' II state, especially if taking into account the lands, which were under direct control of the king. 2. Neither Armenian, nor Hellenistic's had not influence the king. 3. The citizens could be used as a soldiers in the future. All of the above show, that Tigranes purposely ran risks and created a city, which would be the future capital. Our estimation of Tigranes' actions strongly depends on our information about rebellion of the garrison of Tigranocerta and its surrender to Lucullus (App. Mithr., 86). In addition, we must remember, that Tigranocerta was the capital of Armenian Empire only in Greco-Roman sources<sup>27</sup>. In reality, it would have become a capital in the future<sup>28</sup>. The city was undeveloped and the people were unassimilated. Beside this, the rebellion was started not by citizens, but by Greek mercenaries (App. Mithr., 86)<sup>29</sup>.

Modern state of resources don't allow us to reveal real plans of Armenian king, but we can assume, that Tigranes led thoughtful policy to create the empire. Indirect information shows, that Armenian king intended to build rather efficient multinational state. The most important error of the king was the incorrect evaluation of Roman foreign policy. As it appeared, Roman's were not going to stop on the devastation of Pontic Kingdom.

### 4. The downfall of the Empire?

<sup>24</sup> Engels, "Je veux être calife à la place du calife"? Überlegungen zur Funktion der Titel "Großkönig, "König der Könige" vom 3. zum 1. Jht. V. Chr.", In *Interconnectivity in the Mediterranean and Pontic World During the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*. V. Cojocar, A. Coşkun, D. Mădălina eds. (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House 2014.), 351.

<sup>25</sup> Manaseryan, *Tigran the Great: The Armenian Struggle Against Rome and Parthia, 94–64 B.C.*, (Yerevan, 2007), 77.

<sup>26</sup> Hakobyan. "The Capital of Ancient Armenia Tigranokerta", *Historical and Philological Journal*, 3 (2007): 3-5.

<sup>27</sup> Contra: Olbrycht, "The Battle of Tigranokerta, Lucullus, and Cataphracts: A Re-Assessment", *Mnemosyne* (2021): 10.

<sup>28</sup> Artashat was probably proclaimed the capital only in 66 BC, after the final loss of the Syrian possessions. Until this moment, Antioch minted municipal coins with the inscription ANTIOXEΩN THΣ MHTPOΠOΛEΩΣ (Seyrig, "Antiquités syriennes", *Syria*, 27, 1 (1950): 12; Chaumont, "À propos d'une ère d'Artaxata, capitale de la Grande Arménie", *Revue des études arméniennes*, 18 (1984): 398; Rigsby, "Antioch the Metropolis", in *New Perspectives in Seleucid History, Archaeology and Numismatics: Studies in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen* R. Oetjen, (Göttingen: De Gruyter 2020), 661-666.

<sup>29</sup> Olbrycht, "The Battle of Tigranokerta, Lucullus, and Cataphracts: A Re-Assessment", *Mnemosyne* (2021): 28.

According to most scientists, unsuccessful war with Lucull and Pompeus lead to death the Armenian Empire<sup>30</sup>. However, this conclusion seems too radical to us. The war with Rome didn't lead to the total destruction of Tigranes' state, and the king was rather free in actions. Firstly, he could submit to Parthians, who were already Roman allies. Secondly, he could continue the war with Romans until the last soldier, as it did Mithridates. Instead of all these, the king chose the submission to Pompeus.

Tigranes II openly and clearly admitted his defeat. The actions of Armenian king became the symbol of capitulation of the East to the West. However, as we can see, it was not more, than a symbol. In fact, despite the opinions of most scientists<sup>31</sup>, Tigranes' lands didn't reduce to the size of his father's kingdom. In this case, we come across the peculiarities of Greco-Roman historiography. The tradition supposed that the Romans acted fairly, that is why it wasn't mentioned in the text. Only the situations, when the Romans acted unfairly were discussed. Propaganda presented Tigranes as an aggressive adversary so the most suitable punishment for him was the forfeit of his gains (Dio Cass., 36, 53, 2; Vell. Pat., 2, 37, 4; Eutrop., 6, 13). Actually, Pompey treated Armenia softly. Tigranes saved the lands of Northern Mesopotamia, for example Gordyene, Sophene and some other territories<sup>32</sup>. Apparently, Pompey considered Tigranes to be a valuable ally in the fight against Parthia. The important thing for us is that Tigranes' Empire didn't totally disappear in 66 B.C., it just decreased in size. Saving of remaining gains became a new aim for the Armenian King.

Our sources tell little about Greater Armenia after admitting the king being a "friend and an ally of Roman people". That is why we have to base on indirect information. Obviously, Tigranes totally changed his policy. He refused from most of his innovations. Tigranocerta remained as a part of Tigranes' lands, but it didn't become a capital. The center of the state dislocated to the north, to Artashat. No doubt, that Tigranes found strength not only to retain the power, but also to adjust new principles of ruling the country to new conditions. New king's coins is the brightest example of it. The coins are interesting because they let us form the idea of propagandistic policy of authorities in informationally poor environment. The difference in die often fill the gaps in the reports of narrative sources, because the internal policy of eastern rulers wasn't interesting for them.

Tigranes continued to mint drachms and tetradrachms in Artashat<sup>33</sup>, as Antioch was lost and Tigranocerta was destroyed. Despite this, the images on the coins replicated coining dies of Antioch's coining. It was caused less by phantom pain of perished empire, than by recognition of the first coins' images of Artashesids in general. Both, the king's portrait in Armenian tiara, and Tyche of Antioch have already become the symbols of Tigranes' power. But the legend of coins has gone through substantial changes – neutral title "king" has replaced strongly pronounced Asian "king of kings". Having lost most of the Hellenistic citizens, the king of Greater Armenia had to strengthen his power among Armenians and their neighbors, addressing to them with habitual terminology. The title "king of kings" proclaimed predominance of Tigranes' II power over neighboring suzerains. The strength of power, cracked during the rebellion of Tigranes Junior and humiliation of Pompey, should have demonstrated years of king's rule, which first appeared on the coins after 66 B.C. Impressive dates, which demonstrated the fourth decade of king's ruling,

---

<sup>30</sup> Therefore, for example, the thirteenth chapter of the classic book by Y. Manandyan is called "The Capture of Tigranocerta and the Collapse of Tigranes' Large Empire". Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome: a new interpretation based on primary source*, (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers. 2007), 101.

<sup>31</sup> Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East: 168 B.C. to A. D. 1.*, (London: Univ. of Oklahoma Press 1984.), 224, not. 102.

<sup>32</sup> Litovchenko, "Great Armenia in the System of International Relations in the Middle of the fifties of the I century B.C.", *Antiquities* 5 (2004): 168; Smykov, "Syrian Governorate of Aulus Gabinius", *Ancient World and Archaeology* 12 (2006): 206-7.

<sup>33</sup> Foss, "The Coinage of Tigranes the Great: Problems, Suggestions and a New Find", *Numismatic Chronicle*, 146 (1986): 27, 33- 4; Mousheghian, *Depeyrot, Hellenistic and Roman Armenian Coinage (1st c. BC –1st c. AD)*, (Wetteren: Moneta 1999), 41-42; Nurpetlian, "Ancient Armenian Coins: The Artaxiad Dynasty (189 B.C. – A.D. 6)", *Beirut* 51-52 (2009): 83.

were significant propagandistic tool that visually proved the duration and stability of Tigranes' reign.

In fact, last years of Tigranes' reign in particular, can be admitted as the time of the most efficient ruling. Despite the capitulation in 66 B.C., the loss of the most part of territory, permanent threat from Parthians and lack of allied support from Rome, the king managed to save his kingdom in the boundaries, which were much wider, than the ones he had in the year of his coronation. Also, we shouldn't ignore Tigranes' success in internal policy. Literature says little about it just because ancient authors said nothing about internal political situation in Armenia, but indirect facts let us pay attention to important aspects. Tigranes II managed to stabilize tense situation in the kingdom. No doubt, that Armenian aristocracy, who were disaffected by moving to Tigranocerta, could try to oppose the king after his defeat and rebellion of his son. The elite of joined states had even more reasons for indignation. Gordyene's rebelled even before peace of Artashat (Plut. Luc., 29, 6), the guard of Sophene's castles contradicted Pompey (Dio Cass., 36, 53, 3). Nothing prevented them from going against weakened king after the Romans had left. However, the sources do not mention the instability in Greater Armenia. Most probably, Tigranes managed to pacify local elite as affectively, as he mended relationships in his own family. It is wonderful, but Tigranes' last son didn't follow his older brothers' bad example and remained faithful to his father till the end of his life. Nevertheless, the handover of power in Greater Armenia passed without an patricide, which was customary for Asia.

Tigranes II left his son, Artavasdes II, one of the greatest states in region with powerful army and economical system, and rather steady home-policy system. Foreign-policy situation also did not arouse suspicion, as an expected (and announced by Pompey<sup>34</sup>) Roman campaign against Parthia should have finally solve the problem with aggressive southeastern neighbor of Greater Armenia. Hardly someone on the East could assume that the campaign would be led by Crassus, who could least of all suit the role of "new Alexander".

#### 5. Conclusion.

In fact, after 66 B.C. Tigranes II started to create a new empire, based on different principles. The experiment with integration of Iranian and Hellenistic territories failed. The Armenian king demonstrated remains of the first empire, creating a new state on its ruins. The Tigranes Empire was canceled not only by sources, but also by himself, thereby preserving his kingdom.

We can say that Tigranes' empire didn't disappear, but transformed. And it was done mostly due to Tigranes' efforts. It was he who did it in such way that defeated Armenian Empire became not a pile of rubble, but a kingdom of Greater Armenia. The end of the Empire would come later, during the times of Antony and August. However, by that time, the situation would change radically and Strabo would write: "and therefore, they all speak the same language, as we are told" (Strabo, 11, 14, 5). We suppose, this phrase has a hint of Tigranes' state activity during the creation and transformation of the Armenian Empire, which finishes the description of the lands, joined to Armenian Kingdom.

#### References/ Referencias

- Amela Valverde, L. 2011. Sobre la era pompeyana de Artaxata. Una nota. *Numisma* 255: 65-76.
- Andrade, N. J. 2013. *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Asdourian, P. 1911. *Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Armenien und Rom von 190 v. Chr. bis 428 n. Chr. Ein Abriss der Armenischen Geschichte in dieser Periode*. Dissertation. Venedig.

---

<sup>34</sup> Litovchenko, "Syriam esse nostram... (Cic. Flac. 30). Why did Pompey turn the Seleucid state into a Roman province?", *Antiquities*, 17 (2019): 14.

- Assar, Gh. F. 2006. A Revised Parthian Chronology of the Period 91-55 B.C. Parthica – Incontri di culture nel mondo antico, 8: 55–104.
- Bellinger, A. 1949. The End of the Seleucids. Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 38 (June): 51–102.
- Bernhardt, R. 1985. Polis und römische Herrschaft in der späten Republik (149-31 v. Chr.). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Bouché-Leclercq, A. 1913. Histoire des Séleucides. Paris: E. Leroux.
- Burns, R. 2007. Damascus: A History. New York: Routledge.
- Callataÿ, F. de 1997. L'histoire des guerres mithridatiques vue par les monnaies. Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de L'Art Séminaire de Numismatique Marcel Hoc.
- Canepa, W. 2017. Rival Images of Iranian Kingship and Persian Identity in Post-Achaemenid Western Asia. In Persianism in Antiquity. R. Strootman, M. J. Versluys eds., Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 200-222.
- Chahin, M. 2001. The Kingdom of Armenia: A History. Richmond: Psychology Press.
- Chaumont, M.-L. 1984. À propos d'une ère d'Artaxata, capitale de la Grande Arménie. Revue des études arméniens, 18: 397-409.
- Downey, G. A 1961. History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucos to the Arab Conquest. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Downey, G. 1963. Ancient Antioch. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ehling, K. 2008. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden (164–63 v. Chr.): Vom Tode des Antiochos IV. bis zur Einrichtung der Provinz Syria unter Pompeius. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Engels, D. 2014. “Je veux être calife à la place du calife”? Überlegungen zur Funktion der Titel “Großkönig, “König der Könige” vom 3. zum 1. Jht. V. Chr. In Interconnectivity in the Mediterranean and Pontic World During the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. V. Cojocaru, A. Coşkun, D. Mădălina eds. Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 333-362.
- Foss, C. 1986. The Coinage of Tigranes the Great: Problems, Suggestions and a New Find. Numismatic Chronicle, 146: 19-66.
- Hakobyan, H. 2007. The Capital of Ancient Armenia Tigranakert. Historical and Philological Journal, 3: 3-29. (In Armenian).
- Haymann, F. 2014. Ein entvölkertes Kilikien unter Tigranes II.? Für eine neue Sicht auf Ostkilikien in der Zeit von 78 bis 64 v. Chr. Olba, 22: 281– 289.
- Hoover, O. A. 2007. Revised Chronology for the Late Seleucids at Antioch (121/0-64 BC). Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte. 56, 3: 280– 301.
- Kovacs, F.L. 2016: Armenian Coinage in the Classical Period. Lancaster, London: Classical Numismatic Group.
- Lacroix, L. 1949. Copies de statues sur les monnaies des Séleucides. Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, 73: 158–176.
- Litovchenko, S. 2004. Great Armenia in the System of International Relations in the Middle of the fifties of the I century B.C.). Antiquities, 5: 167-172. (In Russian).
- 2008. Cappadocian crisis of the nineties of the I century B.C. and Great Armenia. Antiquities, 7: 48-57. (In Russian).
- 2015. The reign of Tigranes the Great in Syria: chronology problems. Ancient World and Archaeology, 17: 176–191. (In Russian).
- 2019. Syriam esse nostram... (Cic. Flac. 30). Why did Pompey turn the Seleucid state into a Roman province? Antiquities, 17: 8-19. (In Russian).
- Manandyan, H. 2007. Tigranes II and Rome: a new interpretation based on primary sources. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers.

- Manaseryan, R. 1982. The process of formation of the state of Tigran II. *Journal of Ancient History*, 2: 78-87. (In Russian).
- 2007. Tigran the Great: The Armenian Struggle Against Rome and Parthia, 94–64 B.C. Yerevan. (In Armenian).
- Marciak, M. 2012. The Historical Geography of Sophene. *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 52: 295–338.
- 2017. Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene. Three Regna Minora of Northern Mesopotamia Between East and West. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Minns, E.H. 1915. Parchments of the Parthian Period from Avroman in Kurdistan. *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 35: 22-65.
- Mittag, P. 2009. Zur Integration Antiocheias in den römischen Herrschaftsverband. Rom und der Osten im 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Akkulturation oder Kampf der Kulturen? Akten des Humboldt-Kollegs Verona, 19.-21. Februar 2004. Cosenza: Giordano, 177–198.
- Mousheghian, A., Depeyrot, G. 1999. Hellenistic and Roman Armenian Coinage (1st c. BC –1st c. AD). Wetteren: Moneta.
- Mousheghian, Kh., Mousheghian, A., Depeyrot, G. 2000. History and coin finds in Armenia. Antiquity. Wetteren: Moneta.
- Ñaco del Hoyo, T. 2012. Garrisons, coins and war stress (89-63 BCE) in Late Hellenistic towns. In *The City and the Coin in the Ancient and Early Medieval Worlds*. F. López-Sánchez ed., Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 49-59.
- Nercessian, Y.T. 2006. Silver Coinage of the Artaxiad Dynasty of Armenia. Los Angeles: Armenian Numismatic Society.
- Newell, E. T. 1918. The Seleucid Mint of Antioch. New York: The American numismatic society.
- Nurpetlian, J. 2009. Ancient Armenian Coins: The Artaxiad Dynasty (189 B.C. – A.D. 6). Beirut, 51-52: 117-168.
- Olbrycht, M. J. 2009. Mithradates VI Eupator and Iran. In *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom* J.M. Hoejte ed. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 163-190.
- 2021. The Battle of Tigranokerta, Lucullus, and Cataphracts: A Re-Assessment. *Mnemosyne*: 1–36.
- Payaslian, S. 2007. The history of Armenia from the origins to the present. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reinach, T. 1896. Mithridate Eupator, roi de Pont. Paris: Firmin-Didot et cie.
- Rigsby, K.J. 2020. Antioch the Metropolis. In *New Perspectives in Seleucid History, Archaeology and Numismatics: Studies in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen R. Oetjen*. Göttingen: De Gruyter, 661-666.
- Sartre, M. 2005. The Middle East under Rome. Cambridge: Belknap Press.
- Seyrig, H. 1950. Antiquités syriennes. *Syria*, 27, 1: 204-250.
- Shayegan, R. 2011. Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. 1984. Roman Foreign Policy in the East: 168 B.C. to A. D. 1. London: Univ. of Oklahoma Press.
- Smykov, E.V. 2006. Syrian Governorate of Aulus Gabinius. *Ancient World and Archaeology*, 12: 198-213. (In Russian).
- 2013. Syria in 83-63 BC: from anarchy to province *Ancient World and Archaeology*, 16: 112-125. (In Russian).
- Stansbury-O'Donnell, M. 1994. Reflections of the Tyche of Antioch in Literary Sources and on Coins. *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*. Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin: 50-63.

- Strootman, R. 2015. From King of Asia to King of Kings. Imperial Titulature in the Seleukid and post-Seleukid Middle East. In *Seleukeia: Studies in Seleucid History, Archaeology and Numismatics in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1-29.
- Sullivan, R. 1990. *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100-30 BC*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Vardanyan, R. Ye. 1987. On the dating of two groups of Armenian coins of the Hellenistic era. *Historical and Philological Journal*, 2: 195-207. (In Russian).
- Vashcheva I. Yu. 2012. Paradoxes of the historical concept of Movses Khorenatsi. *Dialogue with time*, 40: 219-230. (In Russian).
- Wright, N. 2009a. Non-Greek Religious Imagery on the Coinage of Seleucid Syri. *Mediterranean Archaeology*, 22/23: 193–206.
- 2009b. Tarkondimotid responses to Roman domestic politics: from Antony to Actium *Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia*, 20: 73-81.