

Migrations in the Ancient Mesopotamia: Historical and Linguistic Influence of The Gutians¹

მიგრაციები ძველ შუამდინარეთში: გუთიების ისტორიულ-ენობრივი გავლენები

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Abstract

The article deals with the ancient Near Eastern ethnic groups and tribes that used to occupy a territory of the modern-day Zagros Mountains range (Western Iran) from the 3rd millennium BC until the middle period of the first millennium BC. The main objects of the research are the major ethnic groups (The Gutians and the Kassites,) from the above-mentioned region, who had a visible impact on ancient Mesopotamia and therefore, are frequently referenced in the cuneiform sources.

During the period of two millennia, the populous migrations from the east were a frequent occurrence in ancient Mesopotamia. In most cases, the migrations from the Iranian Plateau were caused by starvation and eventually had a violent nature, which is evidently represented in the ancient Sumerian and Babylonian texts. Presenting those examples could give us subjectively, but still, important information regarding the traits of the migrated tribes and ethnic groups.

The origin of the above-mentioned ethnic groups and tribes is still unknown. Most of the languages do not show resemblance to any known language family. The Specific metaphors and adjectives, which were used to describe the Gutians in the Sumerian texts have been translated and analyzed to gather additional data regarding the lifestyle, cultural traits, and migrational patterns of the above-mentioned people.

After reviewing the onomastic data, several assumptions have emerged, regarding the possible links between the Gutian and other, neighboring languages. According to the suggested theories, the largest ethnic groups from the ancient Iranian Plateau could have spoken the languages from different language families.

Keywords: Gutians, Sumerians, Kassites, Migration, Assyriology.

პანტელიმონ სოხაძე

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აბსტრაქტი

სტატია ეხება თანამედროვე ზაგროსის მთიანეთის ტერიტორიაზე (დასავლეთი ირანი) ძვ.წ. III-I ათასწლეულებში მცხოვრებ ძველადმოსავლურ ტომებს. კვლევის მთავარ ობიექტს ხსენებულ ტერიტორიაზე მცხოვრები ის დიდი ეთნიკური ჯგუფები (გუთიები, კასიტები)

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წარმოადგენენ, რომელთაც შესამჩნევი გავლენა ჰქონდათ ძველ შუამდინარულ ცივილიზაციებზე და შესაბამისად, ხშირად არიან მოხსენიებულნი ლურსმულ წყაროებში.

იდეალური საცხოვრებელი პირობების მქონე ნოყიერი ნახევარმთვარის ტერიტორია ათასწლეულების მანძილზე არაერთი მასიური მიგრაციის მომსწრე გამხდარა. აღმოსავლეთით მდებარე ზაგროსის მთიანეთის რეგიონიდან ჩამოსახლებული ტომების შემთხვევაში, როგორც წესი, მიგრაციებს ძალადობრივი ხასიათი გააჩნდათ, რაც თვალსაჩინოდ არის აღწერილი ძველ შუმერულ და ბაბილონურ ტექსტებში. ხსენებული წყაროების გაანალიზება ერთის მხრივ სუბიექტურ, თუმცა, ამავდროულად მნიშვნელოვან ინფორმაციას გვაწვდის ჩამოსახლებული ხალხების და ეთნოსების კულტურული მახასიათებლების შესახებ.

გუთიებისა თუ სხვა ზაგროსელი ხალხების წარმომავლობა დღემდე ბურუსით არის მოცული. ძალზედ მწირი ინფორმაცია მოიპოვება მათი ენების სტრუქტურისა და გენეტიკური კლასიფიკაციის შესახებ, თუმცა, დანამდვილებით შეიძლება ითქვას, რომ ირანის ზეგნის უძველესი მოსახლეობის ენები განსხვავდებოდა როგორც შუმერული, ასევე აქადური ენებისგან, რაც მიგრაციის ლინგვისტური ასპექტის შესწავლას საკმაოდ საინტერესო საკითხად აქცევს.

ძირითადად შუმერულ და აქადურენოვან ტექსტებში მოყვანილი ცნობების თარგმნისა და ანალიზის საფუძველზე გამოთქმულია რამდენიმე მოსაზრება გუთიების ტომის შუამდინარეთის ტერიტორიაზე მიგრაციის ტიპის, მათი კულტურული მახასიათებლებისა და გუთიური ენის შესახებ.

ნაშრომში პრაქტიკულად სრულყოფილად არის განხილული ის შედარებები და მეტაფორები, რომლებიც შუმერმა მწერლებმა ირანის ზეგანიდან ემიგრირებული დამპყრობლების აღსაწერად გამოიყენეს. ამასთან, რამდენიმე საკუთარი სახელის შესწავლის და შედარებითი ანალიზის შედეგად გამოთქმულია მოსაზრებები გუთიების წარმომავლობისა და მეზობელ ხალხებთან არსებული სავარაუდო კავშირების შესახებ.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: გუთიები, შუმერები, კასიტები, მიგრაცია, ასირიოლოგია.

Introduction

The research regarding the ethnicities from the Zagros mountains has a history of several centuries, but, unfortunately, the process is not developing with the necessary speed. The main reason for this problem could be a relatively small amount of scientific data. At a glance, the study of the isolated languages with unknown origin can seem to be an unpopular sphere, but, on the other hand, in the case of the peoples from the Iranian plateau, this puzzling nature generates the interest of the deeper, further research. Theories, emerged during the investigation process can demonstrate the importance and the perspective of future interdisciplinary research.

The initial part of the paper deals with ancient sources and the scientific literature regarding the subject. A brief overview of the migrations on the territory of Mesopotamia will be given. The subsequent part provides information, which was gathered from the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hittite cuneiform texts, with the translation of the principal parts of the ancient sources.

During the period of the III-II millenniums BC several relatively large tribes used to migrate to Mesopotamia, having contacts with the local civilizations such as the Sumerians and lately, the Akkadians (Babylon). The main focus will be on the tribes of the Gutians and the Kassites. In the case of the Gutians, the migration mostly had the nature of the raids, but at some point, they managed to establish their dynasty in Sumer for a short period. As for the Kassites, much like the Gutians, they also started to migrate to Mesopotamia to find better living conditions, but after several geopolitical events, they also ended up as a ruling dynasty of Babylon.

Several scholars have attempted to work on this subject, but it must be noted that for the last decades, the amount of research regarding the ancient people from the Iranian Plateau has been evidently decreasing. Most of the fundamental works concerning this topic were written in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Relatively new material has emerged during the 1970s, but according to the modern linguistic standards, those works can be also qualified as obsolete. The incalculable value of the previous research must be acknowledged and therefore we will try to strengthen several old hypotheses with relatively new conclusions.

As for the relationships between the Zagros mountain ethnic groups, the work by Igor Diakonov can provide us with some interesting data (Дьяконов, 1979). One of the quintessential works for this paper is an article by Walter Henning "The first Indo-Europeans in history" (Henning, 1978), where the author proposes a theory of the Indo-European origin of the Gutians. The possible connection between the Gutians and the Tokharian people was discussed in the work and for this matter, an article by T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov "Первые индоевропейцы на арене истории: прототохары в Передней Азии" became useful (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, 1989). Additional information regarding the above-mentioned subject was provided by another research from Gamkrelidze and Ivanov "Индоевропейская прародина и расселение индоевропейцев: полвека исследований и обсуждений." (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, 2013) The possible link between the Tokharians and the Gutians can map out the path of the Gutian migration after their defeat in Mesopotamia.

After the detailed description of the language, culture, and historical development of the above-mentioned ethnic groups, the paper will end with a comparative analysis and a conclusion regarding the role of the eastern migrations on the territory of Mesopotamia.

Methodology

During the process of writing the paper, we tried to analyze the complex historical and linguistic data regarding the peoples from the Iranian Plateau, from the point of view of Assyriology. An extensive amount of scientific literature written in Georgian, English, Russian and German language has been processed during the research. It must be noted, that access to this specific type of literature is still limited, but, enough amount of cuneiform sources is available. The analysis of the source material, alongside the scientific literature, has generated several new hypotheses regarding the origin of the peoples from the Zagros mountains.

During the research, reading the ancient cuneiform sources became the salient process. Texts written in Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hittite were used to gather information about the migrating tribes from the eastern part of the Zagros mountains.

In order to read some Sumerian cuneiform texts, the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Language (ETCSL)² was used, alongside with the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI)³. During the translation and transliteration process, some English language translations were used to clarify some complicated metaphorical meanings (Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zolyomi, 2004), but it must be noted, that the vast majority of the materials have been translated from the Sumerian language. For the topic of the Gutian onomastics, the crucial text is the Sumerian King List. For this source, a work by T. Jacobsen was used (Jacobsen, 1939), where the author represents additional data concerning the Gutian dynasty of Sumer.

Important information was gathered from the work *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* edited by Jeremy Black (Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zolyomi, 2004). The collective of authors has reviewed several texts about the Gutian migrations and raids from the Sumerian perspective. The ancient texts represent the foreign migrants as the antagonists and they use specific negative metaphors to describe the people who came to Mesopotamia from the east. The reevaluation of those metaphors and epithets allows us to understand the nature of the relationships between these ethnic groups.

During the translation process, *Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary* was used (EPSD)⁴, alongside the *Akkadian Dictionary* edited by J. Black, N. Postgate and A. George (Black, Postgate, George, 1999).

² <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>

³ <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>

⁴ <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>

Analyzing the lexical and onomastic data provides us with interesting information regarding several tribes and ethnic groups, who used to migrate on the territory of ancient Mesopotamia. In the case of the Gutians, only onomastic data is present, as for the Kassites, alongside the personal names of the kings and the theonyms, some other lexical data can be recovered, such as the names of the colors, adjectives, and some titles of nobility.

After analyzing the above-mentioned scientific literature and several museum exhibits, new theories have emerged regarding the origins and the migration patterns of the Gutians. The fact, that additional literature is available in other languages, such as German, French, and Spanish gives us the hope of further research.

Results

Sumerian historical texts have shown us the main characteristics of the Gutian people. The specific metaphors and adjectives, given in the cuneiform sources have confirmed that the above-mentioned tribes were considered as invaders from the Mesopotamian perspective. After the revision of several Sumerian verbs and adjectives, it can be proposed that the Gutians were noticeably overpopulated in their homeland, which led to hunger and initiated the migration process.

During the translation process, a number of new or more precise definitions of specific Sumerian words were proposed. Onomastic data, such as the personal names and ethnonyms have strengthened the theory regarding the possible Indo-European origins of the Gutians.

Combining and comparing the data from cuneiform sources and the most recent researches could locate the possible descendants of the Gutians in Central Asia. Limited linguistic materials tend to reinforce the theory regarding the similarities between the Gutians and the Tocharians.

Discussion

Ancient Mesopotamia and the Timeline of Migrations

When we are speaking about prehistoric Mesopotamia, we must consider this territory as a part of a much larger region, which is known as the Fertile Crescent. During the 9th millennium BC, several cultures were present in the above-mentioned region, but if we want to discuss the first migrations and populations of the land of Sumer, we must start from the period, which is known as the Ubaid period. Named after the modern-day settlement in Iraq, Ubaid culture can be considered as the prehistoric and pre-Sumerian stage of the history of ancient Mesopotamia. The dating of this culture is still a matter of discussion, but the most common timeframe would be the 7th-4th millennium BC. The importance of Ubaid culture is represented by the fact, that the mentioned period can be considered as the direct predecessor of the first massive migration on the territory of southern Mesopotamia. According to the archeological chronology, the Uruk period, which can be considered as the first undoubtedly Sumerian culture. The transition period between Ubaid and Uruk cultures marks the first Sumerian migration to Mesopotamia.

Unquestionably, before the chalcolithic period, there was a population in the region of the fertile crescent, but since the paper mostly focuses on the later migrations, especially during the 2nd millennium BC, we are going to skip these cultures and discuss the history of Mesopotamia since the historic era.

It is believed, that the Sumerians migrated to Mesopotamia sometime between the 5th and 4th millennia BC, by the time, most of the southern Mesopotamia was under the influence of Ubaid culture (Carter, Phillip, 2006). The arrival of people who were speaking a different language had a tremendous impact on the region. Before the arrival of the Semitic people, the Sumerian culture stepped into several different periods. The beginning of the massive Semitic migration can be dated just before the Akkadian period (24th-22nd Centuries BC). The nomadic people of Semitic origins used to wander around central Mesopotamia for centuries. At some point, where the Sumerian cities gained power and morphed into the states, the Semitic people were still on the lower level of development.

It must be mentioned that the Semitic emigration on the territory of Sumer and lately Akkad happened in different waves. During the centuries, the mutual dislike between the townspeople and the dwellers of the steppe was a common thing (Edzard, 1981: 2). Already in the Akkadian period, the second wave of Semitic migration happened. These tribes are referred to in the sources as mar-tu (in Sumerian) and Amurru (in Akkadian) (Edzard, 1981). At the end of the third millennium BC, the territory of the fertile crescent was populated by several Semitic languages-speaking people. The later migrants spoke a

language, which could be classified as a distant relative of Akkadian itself. The close relations between local Sumerians and Akkadians have caused the existence of a Sprachbund on the territory of central Mesopotamia, but the later migrants – the Semite Martus spoke similar, but not identical language. Judging by the patterns of Martu migrations, D. O. Edzard proposes, that in prehistoric times, the ancestors of Akkadians emigrated to Mesopotamia using similar patterns and the proto-Akkadian pantheon may have a nomadic history (Edzard, 1981). The main difference between the Mesopotamians and the Martus seems to be the development of the lifestyle level, some sources describe their dwellings as Kustaratum – a tent, contrary to the developed Mesopotamian architecture.

From the eastern part, the migration of several specific tribes was a frequent occasion for the fertile crescent. Three of the largest ethnic groups from the east – the Gutians, the Elamites, and the Kassites were rather unrelated to the Sumerians or Semites. They brought seemingly different languages to central Mesopotamia, alongside some local deities and traditions, which Babylonians have adopted. It must be mentioned, that the influence was not reciprocal. In most of the cases, the migrated people were under the influence of locals, which can be attested in the adoption of the cuneiform script, local pantheon, and massive amount of Sumerian and Akkadian loanwords. Mesopotamians referred to the Elamites or Gutians as Lu-Kur – Strangers, enemies, it is also interesting, that at some point, the Martu were also classified as Lu-Kur.

Out of those ‘Strangers’ or ‘Enemies’, the oldest ethnic groups could be the Elamites and the Gutians. Elam was an independent state which used to exist almost simultaneously during the whole span of Mesopotamian civilization. The Gutians started to migrate to the territory of Sumer at the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC and in the 22nd century, they have even managed to have their short-spanned dynasty. As for the Kassites, they started as the nomads, who came from the Zagros Mountains during the 3rd dynasty of Ur, but they ended up settling down in Babylon with their leaders from the 16th century BC. Several little ethnic groups and tribes have also managed to migrate to Mesopotamia during the 2nd millennium BC, but, unfortunately, the information regarding those tribes is almost unavailable. It seems that in the case of the peoples from the Iranian Plateau, the main reason for migration was a lack of grain and fertile lands.

The later Assyrian expansion could be also classified as the migration and to be exact as another wave of the Semitic migration, which was followed by the later Hurrian and Urartean raids and military campaigns, but everything after the 2nd millennium BC is a matter for another paper.

The Gutians according to the Cuneiform sources

During the years, the multiethnic region of the Zagros Mountains used to sparkle the interest of the Assyriologists and Orientalists. During the 3rd millennium BC, near the eastern border of the Sumerian lands, a new tribe has appeared, referred to as the Gutians, or the Kutians. In contrast with their neighbors such as the Elamites and the Kassites, the Gutians have not left any type of the written resources. This fact brings us to the problematic side of the research. The aggressive nature of the Gutian migration had a visible impact on the Sumerian and Babylonian writers, who frequently mention this tribe in a negative context.

Even though the sources regarding the Gutians are strictly limited, we still can gather some vital information, which can help us to describe the above-mentioned people and represent the timeline of their migrations. Salient text concerning the Gutians is the Sumerian King List, which mentions several Gutian leaders who used to occupy the throne of Sumer and are known as the leaders of the Gutian Dynasty (Jacobsen, 1939).

It can be proposed, that the onomastic data, which is inscribed on the Sumerian tablets is a single source, by which we can review the Gutian language. The texts, written in the Gutian language do not exist or have not been discovered at the moment. Onomastic data can provide several names with similar roots.

From the oldest Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian texts, we can gather an impression that the Gutians are pronounced as the occupants and the aggressors, most of the texts emphasize their low quality of life and their underdevelopment. The negative contexts can be seen after the analysis of the metaphors and the comparisons.

In the text, which was dedicated to the Sumerian victorious king Utuhegal, we can read the sentence, given below:

gu\-[ti-um^{ki}] muš-ġiri₂ ħur-saġ-[ġa₂] [ETCSL, t.2.1.6]⁵

Gutium — the land of Gutians + ki – Postdeterminative with the meaning of a place, land, country.

muš-ġiri₂ – Venomous snake, mythological snake.

ħur-saġ – Mountain, mountainous range.

The translation of the sentence will look like this:

Gutium – the venomous, fanged snake which is in the mountains.

In this case, the symbol of snake is definitely connected with the filth and the negative context. In the word ħur-saġ-ġa, the last syllable ga can be interpreted as the locative case sign -a, with the g being the possible link to the previous syllable. That is why, we think that in this sentence, the author does not speak about the specific breed of the venomous snake, he just implies, that these snake lives on the mountain, from where he frequently attacks the holy lands of Sumer.

In the same tablet, one of the most famous Gutian kings – Tirikan is mentioned, author blames him for “kidnapping the kingship” from the land of Sumer, alongside with the destroying of the irrigation system. It can be proposed, that this particular episode describes the long period siege of the city of Uruk. The Gutian leader blocks the roads and cuts off the irrigation in order to weaken the city:

kaskal kalam-ma-ke₄ u₂ gid₂-da bi₂-in-mu₂

Kaskal – road, way; kalam – land; ma-ke₄ - in this postposition *ma* can be divided in two parts, where *m* is a continuation of the root *kalam*, and *a* is a locative case ending. As for the Ke₄ – it combines the endings of the genitive and ergative cases. u₂ - plant, grass or moss;

gid₂-da – in this case, the root is a verb *Gid* – to lengthen, make it longer. After the root the nominalizer is added. The sentence ends with the verb Mu₂ – to grow, which has several positional prefixes added before the root.

On the road, the tall grass grew (on) the land.

The meaning behind the sentence must be the fact that the roads became so unfunctional that the grass started to grow there. This episode represents the fact, that Tirikans raids were not spontaneous, unplanned attacks and we are dealing with the organized military campaign, which was planned to be a long siege of the city of Uruk.

When we want to discuss the visual and personal traits of the Gutians, we must also use several Sumerian texts (Such as “The Curse of Agade”) (Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zolyomi, 2004). According to the texts, the gods frequently used the Gutians for punishing Mesopotamia. After a king destroyed the temple of the god Enlil, he decides to punish the whole region and unleashes the “curse from the mountains”. This episode properly describes the contrast between the civilized Sumer and savage Gutium. In the translation, provided by Jeremy Black, we can read: “Enlil brought out of the mountains those who do not resemble other people, who are not reckoned as part of the Land, the Gutians, an unbridled people, with human intelligence but canine instincts (some mss. have instead: feelings) and monkeys' features” [Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zolyomi, 2004: 121-122].

It is a fact that we are dealing with the non-Mesopotamian, foreign people, who attack Sumerian lands from the east. The words - “those who do not resemble other people” can be interpreted as an allusion to their visual traits. During the years, some of the scholars considered Gutians to be radically different from the local Mesopotamians, such as the Sumerians (with the bald, or shaved head, dark-colored large eyes) and Akkadians (Darker skin, frequent dark beard and hair), they proposed, that the Gutians were light-skinned, blonde-haired and had blue or green eyes. This theory, which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, derives from one slight lexical mistake. To describe Gutians and Subartu⁶ people several texts use the word *Namrum* which could be translated from Akkadian as a light, light-coloured, or maybe, even blonde. Famous Assyriologist Ignas Gelb used this word in his paper (Gelb, 1944) to describe the Gutians as blonde, light-skinned people. Ephraim Speiser countered this theory in his work, by translating the term *Namrum* as smart, good (Speiser, 1948: 12). Attaching this type of visual features to the Gutians lead some scholars to the rather unconvincing theory of the connection between the Gutians and the early Germanic people – the Goths, who have phonetically similar ethnonym. Several theories emerged regarding the migration of Gutians to northern Europe and the origin of the Goths. This theory was heavily criticized by later researchers. As for the translation of the term *Namrum* (*Nawrum*), J. Black

⁵ <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>

⁶ Territory to the north from Mesopotamia.

agrees with Speiser and thinks that the correct meaning should be *good, godly, perfect, or happy*. (Black, Postgate, George, 1999: 247)

In the same text, Black provides a relatively loose translation of some sentences and describes the Gutians as “the people who do not belong to the land”. After the analysis of the positional affixes from the verbs from those sentences, we reckon, that a more accurate translation would be “the people, who could not stand on the land/ground”. Black uses this sentence to describe Gutians as foreigners, our translation implies, that they were outnumbering Sumerians and their population was so high, that they could not stay in their homeland, and because of that demographic problem, they started to migrate to the west. This theory is justified by the patterns of the migrations during the 3rd-2nd millenias BC.

In general, the adjectives which are used to describe the Gutians are strictly negative, the words such as: *Doglike, Monkey faced people, uncountable, unboundable, who can not be tamed*, all indicate, that the Gutian migration was rather populous, aggressive and they were seemingly underdeveloped people compared to the local Mesopotamians. Similar to other peoples from the Zagros Mountains and Iranian Plateau in general, the Gutians are frequently compared with the deluge (George, 2003), which can also indicate their large population. Likewise, in the text “The curse of Agade”, the Gutians are known as the deluge of Enlil (Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zolyomi, 2004). It is also possible, that the information in Sumerian and Akkadian sources is hyperbolized and is a result of an anti-Gutian campaign, but to this day, those tablets can serve as the only sources to describe the nature of the Gutian migration.

In the text known as “The lamentation of Ur” we can read out the line mentioned below:

146. gu-ti-um^{ki} šag₄ ba-ni-ib-bal-bal numun ba-ni-ib-i-i (ETCSL: c.2.2.3)

The land of Gutians, šag₄ - heart; ba-ni-ib-bal-bal – The root of the verb – bal is reduplicated as balbal with the affix of socially active and passive persons and **ba** – the second positional affix marking the direction. In this particular case the compound verb is created with the combination of the verb *balbal* and the noun heart, which usually can be translated as procreation, birth, leaving the descendants (Michailowski, 1989). Numun – seed; ba-ni-ib-i-i – the root **I** is reduplicated to show plural and with several positional affixes it can be translated as *left*.

As for the translation of the whole sentence, it will look like this:

Gutium [people] have procreated and multiplied [and] left the seed.

Judging from this episode, we are dealing with the description of the permanent Gutian migration on the territory of Mesopotamia. In other texts, most authors characterize Gutian invasions as constant raids or military campaigns. It must not be surprising, that after several centuries of constant raids, the rich lands of Sumer have finally lured the larger population of the Zagros mountains to finally settle down there. Location-wise, the lands discussed in the text must be placed in central Mesopotamia, such as the city of Adab. The same text mentions the sentence, where an interesting detail is given:

228. X X-gin₇ igi gun₃-gun₃-me-eš i₃-[sag₃]-/ge\-de₃-en-de₃-en (ETCSL: c.2.2.3)

igi gun₃-gun₃-me-eš - can be translated as „*the eyes, which have the different colour*” but after the detailed analysis of the context, this comparison must not be perceived as the visual trait of the Gutians. It is more likely, that this word describes the noun which can not be recovered because of the damaged clay tablet. To characterize the Gutians, author uses the adjective *ha-lam* with the meaning of “bad, evil”. English translations are mostly accurate, but it must be mentioned that in some cases, Georgian language and precisely the verb can represent more accurate meaning of the Sumerian agglutinative verb. For example, in the same sentence, J. Black translates the verb *me-ze-er-ze-re-ne* as Wipe out. The root of the verb is Sumerian word ZIR with the meaning of *break, cut*. We think that the Georgian verb *ა-მ-ა-წყვეტ-ს* /*a-mo- ts'q'vet-a/* or *გა-წყვეტ-ს* /*ga- ts'q'vet-a/* has the exact semantics with the similar agglutinative positional affixes.

As for the onomastics, a relatively small amount of historical data is available. Perhaps, it should be mentioned that the greater part of this data is written in the “Sumerian Kings List”. The examination of the source has shown, that nineteen kings were considered as the Gutian dynasty rulers. Out of those names, one common root could be found in several of them, which is Yarla or Iarla. Several Mesopotamian name roots are also attested. The original Gutian names are noticeably different from local Sumerian and Akkadian onomastics. Some Gutian names are mentioned in Elamite sources, but

they contain information about relatively later periods and we can not be sure about the origin of this lexical data. Since we have mentioned the Elamite sources, we should note, that one rather interesting verb was used in the above-mentioned language. the verb *kuti* or *kutiray* which can be translated as kidnap, take away, David McAlpin compares this word to the Dravidian verb Kuti – jump, escape (McAlpin, 1974: 98). For sure, the semantic connection is visible, but we would also like to add the fact, that in some texts, the ethnonym GUTI or Gutium can be read as Kuti (Frequently interchangeable velar consonants). It is possible, that the etymology of the Elamite word is connected with the ethnonym of the Gutians or vice versa. When we analyzed the lifestyle and the nature of the Gutian migrations, we have mentioned that they used to organize frequent raids and military campaigns, which could have led the Elamite writers to associate their name with the verb with the semantic meaning of kidnapping. It is possible, that the Gutian raids were such frequent occasions on the territory of the Elamites, that they received this concrete nickname.

Theories Regarding the Origin and the Possible Descendants of the Gutians

In his paper, Walter Henning has reviewed -(e)š ending, where he discusses the possible link between the Gutians and one of the Indo-European ethnic groups – Tocharians. Henning accepts Jacobsen's theory regarding the possible morphological value of the -(e)š ending and links it with the IE nominative case ending (Henning, 1978:226-227). In the King List, the name Sarlagab is also mentioned, according to Henning and Jacobsen, the root must be Sarlag, and the ending -ab can be another case ending, most likely the genitive case (Henning, 1978: 227). As for the Tocharian theory, the paper by T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov also suggests this possible link. Linguistic analysis of the Tocharian language is one of the most popular subjects of Indo-European linguistics. It is definite, that Tocharian was an Indo-European language, but the territorial origin of this ethnic group is still unidentified. It is possible, that the key to this problem lays in the Zagros mountains. The stele which was discovered during the excavations of the city Ur, describes the military campaigns of king Hamurabbi when he defeated enemies such as Elam, Gutium, Subartu, and Tukris (Van de Mirepop, 2005:126). The last ethnonym – Tukriš seems rather interesting. The fact that they are mentioned with the Gutians and Elamites, allows us to speculate that they used to live near Iranian Plateau. W. Henning proposed that the word Tukriš and Tohar are phonetically similar. In the case of the neighbors of the Gutians, Henning thinks that the -š is the nominative case ending (Henning, 1978:220), which leaves the root Tukri.

The historical trace of the Gutian migrations does not disappear after the end of the Gutian dynasty of Sumer. Supposedly they returned to the north-eastern lands after their defeat. In the cuneiform sources from the 1st millennium BC, the Gutian people are still mentioned to live near the Zagros mountains, but the historians must be extremely careful when they are interpreting those texts. It is possible, that those, later Gutians are not the same people who used to occupy the region of southern Mesopotamia. The ethnonym itself had such negative connotations, that it is possible, that Mesopotamian authors could have assimilated the term with any type of nomad who came to their lands. In Assyrian royal texts, the people of Gutu are mentioned, which are definitely Indo-European Manaeans, or Medes (Parpola, 1970: 138). The ethnonym of the Gutians (But not necessarily the same people) is mentioned in several Greek sources, such as Xenophon's writings, which mentioned Gobriyas, the Gutian person (Briant, 1996: 51-52).

After the detailed analysis of the sources, we reckon, that it is possible to represent the migration direction of the Gutians, unfortunately, the lack of information does not allow us to speak decisively. The Gutians who are mentioned in ancient Persian sources (who lived in the northern part of Elam) could not be identified as the same Gutians from the early 3rd millennium.

It must be mentioned, that when we are trying to differentiate the Gutians from the Sumerian sources and the Gutians from the Persian texts, we do not mean that those people represent different language families, on contrary, after the research, we slightly lean to the Indo-European origin of the original Gutians. The Tocharian theory provides additional arguments for this matter.

Henning's theory regarding the ethnonym Tukri is rather realistic, in addition, the article by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov proposes the first Indo-European migrations to be happening on the same territory. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov have worked on the subject of the origin of Indo-Europeans for years and they have located their homeland somewhere near the Urmia lake (Гамкрелидзе, Иванов, 2013). According to this theory, the migration of Indo-Europeans should have started from the northern parts

of Mesopotamia to the different directions, the main area of their habitat became Anatolia and Zagros Mountains (or Iranian Plateau in general), lately India and modern-day Afganistan (Гамкрелидзе, Иванов, 2013: 119). The critics of this theory have brought out the chronological and territorial gap between the ethnic groups of the Gutians and Tocharians. To fill this gap, we can mention the case of the Yuezhi tribe, which used to occupy the territory of Tarim Basin in the 2nd millennium BC.

After the Tocharian migration to the north, they encountered several Chinese tribes. Local, Chinese sources from the province of Gansu refer to them as 禺氏 – Yúzhī, with the old Chinese pronunciation *ŋ^wjo-kje or Niúzhī 牛氏, - *ŋ^wja-kje (Thierry, 2005). Those versions of the ethnonym can be understood as the variants of the name Yuezhi.

After analyzing the different periods of Chinese language and their phonological traits, it can be mentioned, that in Middle Chinese the name of YueZhi was pronounced as *ngiwot-tsie (Henning, 1978), which shows some resemblance with the ethnonym of the Gutians. In Middle Chinese, the other names of this tribe Gwar and Gur had another phonetical form Gwat or Gut (Henning, 1978:222). Phonological similarities allowed Henning to come up with a theory, regarding the relations between the Gutians, Tocharians, and the YueZhi tribes. After analyzing the above-mentioned theories, we reckon that the Gutians and Tukri-s are related ethnic groups, who emerged in the near east (Zagros Mountains) and migrated to central Asia, where they became known as Tocharians. If the word Guti existed in the Tocharian language, it changed the form in other dialects, to be precise the velar G in front of the vowel u morphed into the consonant K, and t before the vowel i became č. This leads us to the word Kuči – the name of a Tocharian dialect. (Henning, 1978:225).

To summarize, the two main dialects of the Tocharian language represent Tukri and Kuči tribes' languages. The Gutians and Tukris, who are mentioned in the cuneiform sources migrated to the east and eventually ended up on the territory of western China, after inner migrations the Tocharian language was formed, which split up into two main dialects. The hypothetical descendants of the Gutians had the Kuči dialect, and Tukri people spoke the tukri dialect (Henning, 1978: 226). On the paper this theory looks rather likely, but, unfortunately, the scientific data which is available at the moment is not sufficient for the conclusions.

The specific sphere of Assyriology has not been popular lately, but with the joint effort of Assyriologists, Orientalists, linguists, and Sinologists the problem can be solved. The investigations which were carried out by T. Gamkrelidze, V. Ivanov, G. Starostin, etc. give us the reason for the optimistic attitude regarding the subject. Further interdisciplinary research can lead us to new results, which can change the course of the history of the ancient Near Eastern migrations and linguistics.

Conclusion

The frequent migrations from the relatively small region of the Zagros mountains changed the course of history in ancient Mesopotamia. During the 3rd-2nd millennia BC, Iranian plateau was a common ground for the ethnic groups which were used to the different lifestyle. For the duration of almost three millennia, Elam functioned as the classic ancient Near Eastern state. On the other hand, their neighbors the nomadic Gutians used to raid the territory of Mesopotamia and Elam as well. The main reason for their aggressive behavior and migration was the lack of food in their homeland, which caused their military campaigns to the west. If we exclude the Gutian dynasty of Sumer, they have never tried to establish their own state and used to wander on a vast territory from western Mesopotamia to modern-day Afganistan. It is even possible, that their ethnonym became associated with all other small nomadic tribes who used to inhabit the territory of the Iranian Plateau. It is possible, that after the migration to the north, the Gutians, or their descendants became known as Kuci, Tukris, and later as Tocharians.

As for the linguistic picture in the ancient near east, the frequent migrations have caused some interesting shifts in Mesopotamia. According to the research, the three largest ethnic groups from the Zagros Mountains could represent different language families. In the case of the Gutians, it seems that they might have been one of the oldest representatives of the Indo-European language family. As it has been mentioned, the onomastic data provide some links with other IE languages. If the Tocharian theory can be strengthened by additional factual data, it can solve the problem of the Gutian origins.

We reckon, that the solving of such complicated problems is not possible for scholars from only one scientific sphere. Assyriological research can benefit the process, but the results will be only visible after the interdisciplinary investigation, which, in this case, requires the combined effort from the linguists, historians, and orientalists.

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