

China and the Chinese according to 5-13th Century Classical Armenian Sources

by Robert Bedrosian

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References to China and to the Chinese are found scattered throughout Armenian historical sources of the 5-13th centuries. The references, which are not numerous, are of two main types: those which provide geographical information about China, and those which mention China in connection with one of Armenia's most famous lordly families, the Mamikonean house. Several Armenists have examined the information on China contained in the sources. Among them are N. Adontz (1), M. Toumanean (2), C. Toumanoff (3), and most recently, H. Svazyan (4). Some of these scholars have focused their studies on determining the geographical location of the "land of the Chenk", others have addressed the relationship between the Mamikonean house and its alleged Chinese progenitors. The present study will examine both the geographical information on China, and the question of the Chinese origin of the Mamikoneans.

The first of the Armenian geographical references to China appears in the *Geography* written in the 7th century by the Armenian mathematician, Anania of Shirak. Though Anania's *Geography* is primarily concerned with Armenia, it also briefly describes other lands. A translation of entry #37 follows:

37. Siwnika, which is Chenk', is a land of Asia, to the east of Scythia. On the west it borders Scythia, on the north and east, the Unknown country; on the south, the lands of India and of the Siwnets'ik'. Chenastan is a land of vast plains inhabited by 29 peoples, one of which, [dwelling] by the Unknown country, practises cannibalism. There are six mountains. Cinnamon and cinnamon-bark are found there from Kasia mountain, as is skiwt'ikon (?) which is of a natural fiery-red color. There are monsters, musk, many peacocks and other edible birds. And unlimited amounts of saffron are available there, to the point that if someone went hunting, dressed in white, mounted on a white horse and with a white falcon, on his return he would be completely covered with yellow. A great deal of silk is found there, and it is of a better quality than silk from any other country. Thus the inhabitants of the country are rich in artfully made silks. Their king is the Chenbakur who resides in the city of Siwra, which is in the southeastern reaches of the land (5).

The second reference to the land of Chenk' appears in chapter eleven of the *History* of Ghewond (8th century), and describes a perhaps fanciful incident occurring during the period 705-715. According to Ghewond, an Arab general promised the Caliph that he would make the king of Chenk' tributary. The general Mahmet left Damascus and "headed east crossing Asorestan, through the land of Persia, through Khurasan, and he went on until he arrived at a portion of the land of Chenk'. He encamped by the banks of an extremely mighty river called Botis" (6).

The general then sent an insulting letter to the king demanding taxes and 30,000 virgins. Employing a stratagem, the Chenk' ruler concealed 30,000 warriors in covered sedans. At the appropriate moment the soldiers sprang out and massacred the Arabs (7). Through an overly literal interpretation of this passage, the Armenist H. Svazyan concluded that the land of Chenk' was not China, but the area between the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers, centered at Samarqand (ancient Bactria) (8).

The third geographical reference is found in the 13th century *Geography* attributed to Vardan Arewelts'i (d. 1270/71). Describing the lands east of Iran, Vardan mentions a country called Chinumachin with the city of Xat'a where—very much in the tradition of medieval wonder-tales about Prester John—the population was Christian. East of Chinumachin was the country of the Kushans, and then the land of Chenk' whence, Vardan states, the Mamikoneans came (9). According to Vardan, the people of Chenk' were so wealthy that even the common people dressed in silk (10).

Another medieval Armenian geographer, Het'um the Historian, has a more elaborate and more colorful account. This appears in chapter one of his *History of the Tatars*, written in the early 14th century:

The kingdom of Cathay is considered the richest and most noble realm in the world. Full of people and incalculable splendor, it is located by the shore of the Ocean sea. There are so many islands in the sea bordering it that no one knows their number, since no one has visited all of them. Yet as far as the foot of man has travelled thereabouts, countless luxuries, treasures, and wealth have been observed. Olive oil is an item which fetches a great price there and is much esteemed, and kings and grandees have kept it with great care as a major medicine.

There are numerous strange animals in the kingdom of Cathay, which I shall not mention. People there are creative and quite clever; and thus they have little regard for the accomplishments of other people in all the arts and sciences. They claim that they themselves are the only ones to see with two eyes, while the Latins see with but one eye, and all other peoples are blind. And their word is confirmed by the fact that, generally, they regard other people as imbeciles. For such a quantity of varied and marvellous wares with indescribably delicate workmanship is brought from that kingdom, that no one is capable of matching such goods in the scales [g5].

All the people in that kingdom are called Cathayans, and among them are many attractive men and women. But by and large, they have tiny eyes and are beardless by nature. These Cathayans have very beautiful letters, in some respects similar in beauty to Latin letters. It is difficult to describe the [religious] doctrines of the people of this kingdom. For some folk worship idols made out of metal; some worship cattle (since they work the land which brings forth wheat and other produce); some worship gigantic trees; some, the natural elements; some, the stars. There are those who worship the sun and those who worship the moon. Yet others have no belief or doctrine and lead their lives like irrational beasts. Although they are full of genius with regard to making all sorts of material goods, no acquaintance with the spiritual exists among them.

[In warfare] the people of this country are very cowardly, and must be heavily armed. However, they are extremely skilled on the seas where they defeat their enemies more so than on land. They possess many types of weapons not found among other peoples. As for the money which this people uses, it is made of sedge, of square shape and bears the royal stamp, and it is based on this stamp that the money's value is determined, great or small. If the money becomes worn through age, they take it to the royal court and exchange it for fresh money. They make vessels and other ornaments out of gold and other metals.

Only in the west is Cathay bordered by another kingdom, that of Tars [g6]. In the north is the Belgean desert, and to the south are the aforementioned islands in the Ocean sea (11).

The geographical sources considered above are, relatively speaking, late sources (7th, 8th, late 13th, early 14th centuries). There exist several earlier Classical Armenian sources which contain references to China, or rather, to the Chinese origin of an important Armenian family. The sources in question are two 5-6th century compilations, the anonymous so-called *Primary History of Armenia*, and the *History* of P'awstos Buzand. According to the *Primary History*, in the early 200's A.D. two sons of an important Chinese noble rebelled against Chenbakur, the Emperor of China, who was their half-brother. When the rebellion failed, they fled for

refuge to the Parthian king of Iran. But the Emperor of China demanded that the rebels be sent home to face justice. The Parthian king, not wanting to kill the fugitives, but wanting to mollify Chenbakur, sent the two rebels, named Mamik and Konak, to Armenia in the west (12).

The Chinese origin of the Mamikoneans is alluded to twice in the 5th century *History of Armenia* by P'awstos Buzand. In the first instance, the Armenian king Pap (A.D. 367-374) told prince Mushegh Mamikonean that the Mamikoneans were as respect-worthy as the Armenian royal house itself. For, he says, "their ancestors left the kingship of the land of Chenk', and came to our ancestors [in Armenia] (13). The second reference to the Chinese ancestry of the Mamikoneans appears later in the same *History*. In this episode, the Mamikonean prince Manuel boldly informed king Varazdat of Armenia (374-378) that the Mamikoneans were not the vassals of the royal house, but its equals. "For", he said, "our ancestors were kings of the land of Chen. Because of a quarrel among brothers, to prevent great bloodshed we left [that land]. And to find rest, we stopped here [in Armenia]" (14).

Armenists have interpreted the information found in the *Primary History* and in P'awstos in a variety of ways. For example, Nicholas Adontz in 1908 speculated that when the early sources spoke of "the Chenk'" they referred not to the Chinese, but to the Tzans, a warlike people of the Caucasus who lived near the Mamikoneans' hereditary lands in northwestern Armenia. He derived the name Mamikonean from Georgian *mama* (meaning "father") plus the Armenian diminutive ending *ik* (15). Adontz was challenged by Michael Toumanean who, in an article published in 1911, sought to identify Armenian Chenk' with the house of Cheng which ruled south of Lo Yang in the 5-4th centuries B.C.

According to Toumanean, the Mamikonean emigration from Cheng took place around 221 B.C., at the time of the Qin conquests, when the Man people were expelled. To Toumanean, the name Mamikonean derives from *Gun-Man* or *Xu-Gun Man* which was the hereditary title of the head of the house of Cheng (16). The orientalist H. Skold in 1925 expressed the view that the Chenk' were not Chinese, but a Turkic group dwelling by the Syr-Darya river (17). H. Svazyan, who placed the Chenk' between the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers, suggested that the Mamikoneans may have come from Bactria (18). Finally, Cyril Toumanoff pointed out that the Mamikoneans' claim of exotic royal origins was nothing unusual within the Armenian political reality. For other families too claimed distinctive foreign origins. The Bagratids, for example, considered themselves descendants of the Biblical king David of Israel, while the Artsrunids claimed descent from the ancient kings of Assyria (19). Nonetheless, Toumanoff notes that the Mamikonean legend does concern China, even though the legend may not be true (20).

The origin of the Mamikoneans remains an issue of debate which probably will not be definitively resolved—at least based on the presently available Armenian historical sources (21). As for the geographical sources, for them China was a land of fantastic wealth; acknowledged, but not well known.

Footnotes

1. N. Adontz, Armenia in the Period of Justinian (Lisbon, 1970; Eng. trans. of 1909 Russian ed.).
2. M. Toumanean, "Mi k'ani nkatoghut'iwn Mamikoneanc' gagh'takanut 'ean masin [A Few Observations on the Emigration of the Mamikoneans]," Handes Amsoreay (1911) pp. 513-528.
3. C. Toumanoff, "The Mamikonids and the Liparitids," Armeniaca (Venice, 1969) pp. 125-137; also Toumanoff's Studies in Christian Caucasian History (Georgetown, 1963).
4. H. Svazyan, "Chenere ev 'Chenac' ashxarhe' est haykakan aghbyurneri [The Chens and the 'Land of the Chens' according to the Armenian Sources]," Patma-banasirakan handes 4(1976) pp. 203-212.
5. Ashxarhac'oyc' (Venice, 1881) p. 46. Svazyan does not accept the view that this passage refers to China. Rather, he believes that the Ashxarhac'oyc''s China is the land of the "Siwnets'ik" which borders Chenk' and is briefly described in #38. In my opinion, #38 describes a part of Indochina "bordered by India on the west and the land of Chenk' on the north" (p. 46). It is not unlikely that the 7th century Anania would have mentioned China ("Chenk"). It is known that in the 6th century, two important centers of exchange in the international trade between the West and the Orient were located in Armenia [Dwin and Artaxata, see H. Manandian, The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade (Lisbon, 1965; Eng. trans. of 1946 Russian ed.) pp. 80-82]. Furthermore, the remark in the Primary History (see below, note 12) that the author learned his information "from the great man who had come on an embassy from the king of China to King Khosrov" deserves attention. If the king Khosrov in question is the "Khosrov the Great, king of Armenia" mentioned in the immediately preceding sentence, then Armenia and China may have had direct contact in the late 3rd-early 4th centuries.
6. Ghewond, Patmut'iwn Ghewondeay meci vardapeti Hayoc' [History of Ghewond, the Great vardapet of Armenia] (St. Petersburg, 1887, 2nd ed.) p. 37.
7. Ghewond, pp. 39-40.
8. Svazyan, pp. 204-205, 209. Svazyan's reasoning is that the Arabs, encamped by the Botis [Amu-Darya] river could not have sent their letter to the Chinese ruler and received a reply quickly enough, if the letter was taken to the depths of China. Ghewond's vague expression "i masn inch' Chenac' asxarhin, a part of the land of the Chenk' " is insufficient evidence for Svazyan's theory which supposes that Chenk' was located immediately east of Khurasan. Furthermore, he is unable to explain the boasting of the Chenk' king that his land was the mightiest in world history: "Why was it that the king of Babylon, who ruled the world, and the Macedonians and Persians were unable to rule over our land?" (Ghewond, p. 38). This is hardly the remark of a king from the Samarqand area. The region suggested by Svazyan (Bactria) was ruled by both Macedonians and Persians.
9. Ashxarhac'oyc' Vardanay Vardapeti (Paris, 1960) p. 53.
10. ibid. p. 54.
11. Het 'um Patmich' T'at'arac' [Het'um, Historian of the T'at'ars] J. Awgereeian trans. (Venice, 1842) pp. 5-6. Het'um's History was originally written in French. The French and Latin texts are published in vol. II of Recueil des historiens des croisades: Documents arméniens (Paris, 1906). On the editions see W. R. Long, La Flor de las Ystorias de Orient (Chicago, 1934) Introduction. An English translation of Het'um's History is available on another page of this website.

12. An English translation of the Primary History is available in R.W. Thomson's Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians, pp. 357-368:

They are descendants of the forefather of our nation, Aramaneak, but they came from China in the years of Artavan, king of the Parthians, and of Khosrov the Great, king of Armenia—as I heard from the great man who had come on an embassy from the king of China to King Khosrov. I questioned him at the royal court: 'There is a noble family in Armenia, of which it is said that they have come from your country'. And he said to me: 'The bards of our country also say in their songs that Mamik and Konak were two valiant men and blood brothers of eminence, sons of Prince Karnam who was the second [in rank] in the kingdom of China. After the death of this man, their king took his wife in marriage. From her a son was born, who after the death of his father succeeded to his father's royal throne. His two brothers—from the mother, not the father—revolted against him. Bringing over a section of the princes and the army, they took an oath of unity. They hatched a wicked plot to murder their brother; Chenbakur, king of the land, and to seize his kingdom.

Mamik and Konak gathered their forces against him in one area of their country; the army of the country was divided into two. When Chenbakur heard this news, he too gathered the army of his part and went out to oppose them in battle. They attacked each other, smote (each other) with the sword, and the rebel army was destroyed.

Mamik and Konak fled to the Arsacid king who resided in Bahl-Shahastan in the land of the Kushans. And there was peace between the two kingdoms.

Then with great insistence Chenbakur sought them from the Parthian king: 'That he might exterminate (them). Otherwise the treaty of peace between us will be broken'. But the latter, sparing the [two] men, did not give them up into his hands but wrote to him in a friendly way: 'Let the treaty of peace, he said, remain firm between us, for I have sworn to them that they will not die. But I had them taken to the West, to the edge of the world, to that place where the sun enters its mother'.

Then the Parthian king ordered his army to take them under heavy guard, with their wives and sons and all their effects, to Armenia to his relative the Arsacid king, who was the king of Armenia. And there they multiplied greatly, and they became a great clan from Mamik and Konak".

13. P'awstosi Buzandac 'woy Patmut'iwn Hayoc' [P'awstos Buzand's History of Armenia] (Venice, 1889) p. 204.

14. *ibid.* p. 247. A somewhat altered version of the Chinese origin of the Mamikoneans appears in the History of the 8-9th century anti-Mamikonean historian, Movses Xorenac'i, translated in Thomson pp. 229-231: "When Artashir, son of Sasan, died, he left the throne of Persia to his son Shapuh (240-272). In his days, they say, there came to Armenia the ancestor of the Mamikonean family from the northeast, from a valiant and noble land foremost among all the nations of the north, I mean the land of the Chinese, of whom the following tale is told.

In the year of Artashir's death a certain Arbok Chen-bakur, which means in their tongue "honor of the kingdom" had two foster brothers called Bkhdokh and Mamgon, who were great princes. When Bkhdokh slandered Mamgon, the Chinese king Arbok ordered Mamgon to be killed. But when Mamgon heard of this he did not heed the king's summons but fled with his entourage and came to Artashir, king of Persia. Arbok sent messengers to seek his extradition, and when Artashir refused, the king of China prepared to war against him. But at that point Artashir died

and Shapuh came to the throne.

Now although Shapuh did not hand over Mamgon to his lord, nonetheless he did not allow him [to remain] in the land of the Aryans but sent him with all his entourage, as if exiled, to his governors in Armenia. And he sent word to the king of China, saying: 'May it not displease you that I was unable to hand over to you Mamgon, because my father had sworn to him by the light of the sun. But to cause you no trouble I have expelled him from my country to the edge of the earth in the west, which is equivalent to death for him. So let there not be war between you and me'. And because, as they say, the Chinese are the most peaceloving of all the inhabitants on the face of the earth, he agreed to make peace. So it is clear that the Chinese nation is truly devoted to peace and life.

Their land is wonderful in its abundance of all [varieties of] fruits; it is adorned with beautiful plants, rich in saffron, peacocks and silk. It has untold numbers of gazelles and marvellous [creatures] and the animals called 'donkey goats'. There the food of common people, they say, is what among us is aristocratic and food for the few—the pheasant and the swan and other such [delicacies]. The number of precious stones and pearls of the magnates they say no one knows. And as for garments which among us are the robes of the few, for them they are the common dress. So much for the land of China.

So Mamgon, having come to our country against his will, met the returning Trdat. He did not turn back with the Persian army but advanced with all his entourage to meet him with great presents. Trdat received him but did not take him with him in his war against Persia. However he gave his entourage a place [in which to settle] and a stipend for food; he changed their residence from place to place for many years".

15. Adontz, op. cit., p. 313.

16. Toumanean, op. cit., pp. 519, 526.

17. H. Skold, "L'Origine des Mamiconiens", Revue des etudes armeniennes (1925) pp. 134-35.

18. Svazyan attempts to support his view by citing a passage from the controversial "History" of Zenob Glak (Zenobay Glakay Asorwoy episkoposi Patmut'iwn Taronoy (History of Taron by the Syrian Bishop Zenob Glak) (Venice, 1889, 2nd ed.). While this author claims to have lived in the early 4th century, Armenists place his composition perhaps five centuries later. According to Zenob, Anak Pahlaw (the killer of king Xosrov) had two sons. One became Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia. The other, named Suren, was taken to the Persian court "and was raised there near his father's sister, who was the wife of Juanser, king of the Hephthalites. When he grew up he went to the country of the Chenk', after the death of king Xosrov [of Iran]. He remained there for ten years and then ruled as king over the country of the Chenk' for 19 years" (Zenob, pp. 21-22). Svazyan believes this tale was based on other written sources, and that the Mamikoneans were actually relatives of St. Gregory, descended from this king Suren, whom he identifies with the Karnam mentioned in the Primary History (Svazyan, p. 211). But the Mamikonean emigration to Armenia occurred long before the 4th century (see Toumanoff, Studies, p. 209).

19. Toumanoff, Studies, p. 140 n. 245.

20. Toumanoff, "Mamikonids..." pp. 132-33 accepts Adontz' hypothesis that the Chenk' originally were the Caucasian Tzans.

21. Under-utilized (and often not fully translated) Chinese sources contain valuable though enigmatic information regarding this subject:

On March 28, 2000, I received the first of several remarkable emails from Frank Wong, a teacher in the Los Angeles area, with a keen interest in the topic. While modestly pointing out that the material he provided derives from secondary sources he made the following fascinating points: "'Mangun' means 'people's army' in the Cantonese/south Chinese dialect. Of all Chinese dialects, Cantonese ...bears the strongest resemblance to the ancient spoken Chinese dialect of the Han through Tang periods. Can this 'mangun' title have any correlations to the Mamigonian family name? 2. This is only a legend and tale (no historical proof) heard among the people in my village: Near the end of the Han dynasty a certain Zhang-gun (general) Chang revolted against the decaying and despotic rule of the emperor. General Chang guarded a section of the Great Wall. He fought many battles against the Turkic Huns. He was also responsible for trying to put down the rebellion of one warlord. One day, after seeing so much internal misery and famine within the wall, General Chang stopped fighting. He played his beloved flute. His soldiers and the people all cried, as did the Huns. They all stopped fighting and went back to their villages. The next night, General Chang fled with his followers and cavalry beyond the wall and into the oasis of Central Asia on the pretext that he was in pursuit of the wanted warlord. What happened to them and where they ended up, we don't know. When people addressed him as 'Dai Zhang Gun' or 'Great General', he refused the title. He preferred and styled himself as 'Man Gun,' or 'people's army'. 3. During the first century A.D., General Pan Chao conquered all of Central Asia. His armies drove the most deadly of the nomads out of China and into eastern Europe. He pursued and chased them into what is now the Ukraine, killing many of them...After driving the Huns into Russia, Pan Chao's armies retreated east and encamped near the Caspian in what is now Turkmenistan. He sent an envoy, Kan Ying, to enquire about An Shi (Parthia or Persia) and Dai Chin (Rome). Kan Ying and some of his officers and army travelled through Iran. They saw many villages and were saluted everywhere they went. They were well received by the Arshakuni king. From Iran, they eventually established some type of contact with Rome, even though the Parthians did not want this to happen. Through which direction they went, we don't know for sure. Traditionally, it has been maintained that Kan Ying sailed around the Persian Gulf—from Iran to Syria. But recent research based on the ancient Chinese maps and texts [RB: in particular the partly-translated Hao Han Shu] has revealed the Black Sea to have been a more likely destination. They travelled through Armenia and Georgia to Batumi, to Tao-chih (Taurica in the Crimea) and An-To (once thought to be a rendering of Antioch in Syria, but now revealed to be 'Augusta Antonina'—the old name for Constantinople). Upon leaving Parthia, Pan Chao established deeper and more official relations with the Parthians, opened up many more caravan trade routes and commissioned some of his officers to Iran and other West Asia lands to safeguard these trails and to enquire more about Dai Chin (Rome). Through these officers, knowledge about Rome was described in more detail".

On September 3, 2000, I received another email from Frank, which appears below in full.

Dear Dr. Bedrosian,

How have you been? This is Frank Wong and I just came back from a 2 month trip to China and Tajikistan. You know, I asked some of the leading Chinese scholars at Gansu-Ningxia University about our topic of interest (Chinese-Armenian relations and Mamigonian story). They came up with many information pertaining to ancient Chinese-Iranian interactions and relations. I was able to visit 3 villages near Xian (ancient Chang'an capital) and Louyang (capital of latter Han Dynasty 100-220s A.D.). At Xian, they found the possible castle of the son of the last Sasanid Iranian king, Yazdgerd III. I wrote an article for an Iranian website regarding this:

[Pirooz in China, by Frank Wong](#)

At Louyang, we saw the tattered and decomposing remains of the once glorious Han Imperial Palaces. They found corpses buried around the castle and that their remains showed violent struggles, showing us the turmoil that did occur around the last 4 decades prior to the fall of that dynasty. I told the local scholars of your story and article, and they took me on a train to visit the Xinjiang Uigur minority region. One Uigur local student, Apuz showed me around the ruins of an abandoned Han Dynasty garrison ruins. He said the local people in

Kashgar city have tales of ancient Chinese and Iranian interaction, esp. during Han Dynasty. I visited some of the cave murals in that region, and saw that the hybridity and co-existence between Chinese, Iranian, and Indian cultures did take place. I really felt sorry for what the current Chinese government policies have been doing to these Uigur people, even though they speak a Turkish language. They are not really Turks. On their faces, I see also Chinese, Persian and Indian.

Apguz said that the cave murals also existed in neighboring Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. I asked the Chinese guide if travel to Tajikistan was permitted? Not many foreigners are permitted to that region because of all the violence and mess going around. But, China is occasionally allowed because of a sizeable Tajiki population also lives in China. They are allowed to visit relatives across the border under close supervision. Two years ago, the Afghanistan government allowed Chinese to retrieve some parts of the Patriot missiles dropped on that country by the U.S. I went along with the Gansu-Urumqi University exchange visit. We were only allowed to stay at the Tajik Hurriyat Univ. In Panjikant city, we were directed to some caves abandoned a very long time ago by Chinese travellers and refugees. Local Tajiks are camera-shy, but my Chinese colleagues were permitted to take some pictures. In one fresco, we found a Chinese nobleman clutching a sword.

The ancient Chinese inscriptions were quite hard to decipher, but some terms we instantly recognized. The term "western barbarians," appeared throughout the murals in many of the caves. We felt the chilling and anguish spirits within these caves. These ancient Chinese exiles knew that they probably could never return to their homeland. They were exiled to foreign lands and living in caves, so so sad. The fact that many in pictures were shown wielding swords gave me the impression that their warfare lifestyle lived with them forever. They fought nomadic Turkish Huns all their lives, and then they later had to fight fellow Chinese because of inept and corrupt emperors.

I asked the local Tajiks (through an Uigur interpreter) if they have heard any ancient legends or stories? They said they were well aware of the close Sogdian-Tang Dynasty past, but that 2,000 years ago the Chinese-Ashkani (Parthian) relation was even more close. They claimed that the Parthian originated from their territory and that many Parthian kings had summer palaces in Tajikistan. They told the story of how one local king was married to a Han Dynasty princess. They claimed that intermarriage between the two ruling families was occasional. Royal princes and princesses were exchanged and that their first place of stoppage was always in Tajikistan. Here is one of the few pictures they got of a Tajiki extended family. Some of them I can detect Chinese features. Some, esp. the isolated tribes (Yagnobi) living on the Pamir mountains look more Armenian than Persian. I heard some of them still secretly practice Zoroastrianism. Many Tajiks look like a beautiful blend of Asian and Persian features, but less so compared to Uzbeks.

There was so much more I wanted to find out about, but the stay was so short. Dr. Bedrosian, I think this country is worth studying and visiting but I advise to not go through American or Russian agency because the locals are not favored to either of them. Next fall, I got a new job and I don't think I have time for more research. Hope you continue the good work. I already experienced that chilling and incomplete feeling of what they felt and went through. I hope more Chinese and Armenians can learn and experience it as well! Best wishes to Armenians and Armenia. The spirit lives forever. God bless.

Best Regards,
Frank