S.T.Grigoryan, Aybbenagir. Armenian Aplphabetic Poetry (7th-19th cc.), Erevan, 2016, 944 pages, 10 insert pages (in Armenian)

Summary

Armenian written culture comes from the depth of thousands of years and has undergone evolutionary cycles of written culture: petroglyphs, hieroglyphics, a syllabic script and alphabet. The Alphabet is the last cycle of the Armenian writing. The present collection consists of the works of Armenian literature from the 7th to the 20th century, having certain structural peculiarities. These works, in their structure, make the Armenian alphabet of Mashtots. On that basis, we called them "aybbenain": "ayb" + "ben" (the names of the first and the second letters of the Armenian alphabet), that is alphabetical For such works, that make up the Latin alphabet and have similar structure, the term *abecedarium* is used.

This collection, due to its thematic characterization and within the set purpose, is the first experience of collection, description, classification and analysis of Armenian literature alphabetic products. Of particular importance is the target investigation of works, belonging to this special literary kind, with regard of the structural features of the Armenian Mashtots alphabet.

The collection has 223 works of 101 authors: prose and poetry. They are gathered from both manuscript and published sources. Material from manuscript sources is published for the first time. It makes 30% of the whole published material (66 units). Material from published sources includes rather large period of time: from 1704 up to 2008, a part (43 units) of which, published until beginning of the 20th century remained unfamiliar to the modern reader.

The present collection was made taking into account the importance of three main considerations.

1. Collection of the alphabetical works in a single book.

2. The alphabetical poems present a valuable material for the study of the Mashtots Armenian alphabet. In the structures of these works the presence of a number of Armenian alphabetical groups have an ideological basis derived from the perceptions of the Armenian alphabet in Middle Ages.

Alphabetic poems also provide valuable information about other aspects of the alphabet study. These are the names of signs, their spelling, questions on mystical perception of medieval thinkers, concerning the signs of the alphabet. Alphabetic poems also provide material about teaching the alphabet in medieval Armenian schools, especially ideological accent of teaching. It is very informative and essential from the point of view of history of the Armenian medieval pedagogy and philosophical basis of organization of education in the Middle Ages, as well as the history of the Armenian culture in general.

3. This collection may benefit the study of alphabetic poems as literary works with a special kind of the structural type. Collection of alphabetic works in one book makes it possible to consider the Armenian alphabetic poem as a family of one structural type, and examine the characteristics and volume of the selection and thematic grouping of poetic material, starting, in fact, with a conditional origin (the oldest known sample) of this literary type in Armenian literature up to modern times.

The collection consists of six sections: "Introduction", "Texts", "Appendices", "Notes, structural description, philological notes", "Tables", "Indexes" and "Dictionary".

"Introduction" of the collection consists of five parts. The first discusses some manifestations of author's intention, concerning the structure of the Mashtots Armenian alphabet.

The second part examines the boundaries of the concept of "*banakap*", arm. *ban* (word) + *kap* (bond). The definition of "banakap" is also given: *banakap* is an extra semantic unit parallel to the main content of a literary work, having verbal speech and / or ideological semantic characteristics, which is target insertion in structure of the literary work (from explicit visibility to cryptography).

Further, national literary source of "banakap" is reviewed, which is "Song of Vahagn". Then, the characteristics of *banakap* are described, as phenomena due to content, structure and form, and the description terms system is presented for the term "banakap" (66 terms).

In the third part of "Introduction" the types of forms of alphabetic works are described, brief tables of such forms and thematic groups of Armenian alphabetic poems are presented. The first of these tables contains types of forms of alphabetic poems:

1) Acrostic - 153 pcs.,
2) Labyrinth - 9 pcs.,
3) Diacrotautogram - mezostic 1 pcs.,
4) Diacrostic - 7 pcs.,
5) Three acrostic - 11 pcs.,
6) Tetra acrostic - 2 pcs.,
7) Sexta acrostic - 1 pcs.,
8) Poly acrostic mezotautogram - 1 pcs.,
9) Acrotautogram threemezostic- 1 pcs.,
10) Dilabyrinth - 1 pcs.,
11) Acrotautogram-tetralabyrinth - 1 pcs.,
12) Acromezostic - 8 pcs.,
13) Acrodimezostic - 1 pcs.,
14) Acrothreemezostic - 1 pcs.,
15) Acroditelestic - 3 pcs.,
16) Acrotetraatelestic - 2 pcs.,
17) Tetraacrotetraatelestic - 3 pcs.,

18) alphabetic tautogram - 2 pcs.

The second table includes collection material, due to 15 thematic groups dedicated to:
1) The Holy Virgin - 36 pcs.,
2) Holies - 26 pcs.,
3) The God - 22 pcs.,
4) Education - 20 pcs.,
5) Funeral speeches and sorrows - 18 pcs.,
6) Precepts - 15 pcs.,
7) Prayer, petition, thanksgiving - 15 pcs.,
8) Remorse and repentance - 12 pcs.,
9) Joy and feast 11 pcs.,
10) Others (complaint, glorification, the request for forgiveness …) - 11 pcs.,
11) Blessing 8 pcs.,
12) Church - 4 pcs.,
13) Love - 4 pcs.,
14) Holy Cross - 3 pcs.,
15) Curse - 3 pcs.

Further, in the third part of the "Introduction", the order of alphabetical groups of Armenian alphabet in alphabetic works are studied. In connection with the definition of alphabetical order the author describes examples of use of 36x1, 18x2, 12x3, 9x4, 6x6 and other varieties of alphabetical lines in the Armenian alphabetic works.

The fourth part of the "Introduction" is devoted to the study of alphabetic works as a valuable material for the investigation of the Armenian alphabet, and to five layers of medieval perception of the Armenian alphabet, which are expressed in alphabetic works:
1) Alphabet is a gracious miracle,
2) Alphabet is the comprehensive symbol of language,
3) The result of the alphabet is Armenian writing and it is "spiritual food",
4) Alphabet is the information system about the phenomena of Creation,
5) The system of signs of the alphabet represents the Creator in a peculiar way.

The fifth part of the "Introduction" describes the structure of the collection and principles of the used spelling.

In the collection, the part "Original texts" are represented examples of Armenian alphabetic poems (208 pcs.), which are arranged in chronological order and are numbered as alphabetic units.

The "Appendices" of the collection consist of four parts: In Annex 1 are represented 207 units, Annex 2 - 208 units and Annex 3 - 88 units. In Annex 4 are represented 15 works of 14 authors.

The collection's section "Notes, structural description, philological remarks" contains 18-points:

1) The name of the author, time,

2) Biography,

3) The serial number of the unit, page of the book (N$^{\underline{o}}$),

4) Title,

5) Sources,

6) Strophics,

7) The structure of the work,

8) The structure of *banakap,*

9) Form of *banakap,*

10) The shape of the alphabetic part of *banakap,*

11) *Banakap,*

12) Acrostic (mezostic, telestic, labyrinth),

13) The number of alphabetic units,

14) The number of usage of alphabetical group,

15) Alphabetical order,

16) The initial part of the unit alphabetic part,

17) The main initial part of the unit,

18) Other (philological observations and comments).

Then follow the sections of "Tables" and "Indexes". The collection has also a "Dictionary" containing words (requiring definitions) that are used in the poetic units of the collection.