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CONCEPT “FAMILY” IN THE ARMENIAN CULTURE

The article deals with the study of the concept ‘family’ in the Armenian culture in the frame of two modern linguistic disciplines: linguistic cognitology and linguistic culturology. The article considers some theoretical issues concerning the term ‘concept’. It lists national characteristics of an Armenian family resulting from etymological analysis of the Armenian word ‘family’ and its semantic structure. It also discusses the functions of the family, social and cultural norms of reproduction, relations between the concepts marriage and family, family and the state, the role of the family in the Armenian culture.

Key words: concept, linguistic culturology, linguistic cognitology, family institution, the key word of concept, etimological reconstruction, semantic analysis, gender role, abolition of the family.

Վարդուհի Գաբրիելյան

ԱՐՊՀ, անգլերեն լեզվի ամբիոնի պրոֆ. դասախոսի պ.

ԸՆՏԱՆԻՔ ՀԱՄԱԿԱՅՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՄ

Հոդվածում քննարկվում է ընտանիք հասկացությունը հայկական մշակույթում երկու ժամանակակից լեզվաբանական գիտական ճյուղերի՝ իմացաբանական լեզվաբանության և մշակութային լեզվաբանության շրջանակներում: Հոդվածում քննարկվում են որոշ տեսական հարցեր <<հասկացություն>> տերմինի հետ կապված: Թվարկվում է հայ ընտանիքին բնորոշ ազգային գծերը՝ էլնելով հայերեն <<ընտանիք>> բառի ստուգաբանական վերլուծությունից և նրա իմաստային կառուցվածքից: Այն նաև քննարկում է ընտանիքի ֆունկցիաները, հասարակական – մշակութային նորմերը, ամուսնություն և ընտանիք, ընտանիք և պետություն հասկացությունների կապը, հայ ընտանիքի դերը հայկական մշակույթում:

Բանալի բառեր՝ հասկացություն, մշակութային լեզվաբանություն, իմացաբանական լեզվաբանություն, ընտանիք հասկացության բանալի բառը/բառերը, ստուգաբանական և իմաստաբանական վերլուծություն, գենդերային դերը, ընտանիքի պարզեցումը:

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ПОНЯТИЕ “СЕМЬЯ” В АРМЯНСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЕ

В статье исследуется понятие “семья” в армянской культуре с точки зрения двух современных лингвистических дисциплин: когнитивной лингвистики и лингвокультурологии (лингвистической культуры). Статья рассматривает некоторые теоретические проблемы относительно термина “концепт”. Перечисляются национальные особенности армянской семьи, следуя этимологическому анализу армянского слова “ընտանիք” и его семантической структуре. В статье рассматриваются функции семьи, социально-культурные нормы, ее воспроизводство, соотношение понятий брака и семьи, отношение семьи и государства, а так же роль и значение семьи в армянской культуре.

Ключевые слова: концепт, когнитивная лингвистика, лингвокультурология, институт семьи, ключевое слово или слова концепта, этимологический и семантический анализ, гендерные роли, упразднение семьи.

Նվիրում եմ մորս, ի դեմս նրա՝ բոլոր հայ մայրերին:

The term ‘concept’ is widely used in various fields of linguistics. In modern linguistics the problems of analysis of particular concepts are so difficult and varied that they demand constant and deeper intrusion into its nature.

Nowadays concept studies are extensively carried out in the frame of two modern linguistic disciplines: linguistic cognitology and linguistic culturology.

Linguistic cognitology as an independent field of the modern linguistics has risen from cognitology which deals with cognition (from the English word “cognition” meaning *knowledge*, the process of getting knowledge); the linguistic cognitology deals with cognition on the basis of the language.

Note: At the present time the concept is the key notion of cognitive linguistics. *Իմացաբանական լեզվաբանություն* (Cognitive linguistics: movement in linguistics, nascent from the 1980s, emphasizing the continuity of language with the workings of the mind in general and seeking to ground a theory of language in accounts of cognition. Thus opposed especially to structuralist schools, including that of

*N.Chomsky, which stress the autonomy of linguistics. Leading proponents include R. W. Langacker and G.P. Lakoff, both advocates, in their early careers, of Generative Semantics.*¹

Linguistic culturology concerns the study and description of interrelation of language and culture, language and ethnos, language and national mentality. It became an independent field of linguistics in the 90s of the 20th century.

Despite concept is the main category of linguistic cognitology and linguistic culturology its definition and interpretation in the frame of these disciplines are different.

According to linguistic cognitology concept is “a discrete mental category with a relatively organized interior structure”. Concept is the result of cognitive activities of a person and society. It provides complex information of a reflected subject or event and represents the interpretation of this information in the public consciousness and the society’s attitude to this event or subject.²

According to linguistic culturology concept is considered to be the component of the culture. Concept is a relative mental category striving to complex studying language, consciousness and culture. The lingua-cultural concept differs from other mental structures with axiological element. It means if a native speaker can say about a cultural phenomenon that it is *good (bad, interesting, boring, etc.)* this phenomenon forms a concept in this culture. Lingua-cultural concept takes place in the individual and public consciousness. It has a three-component structure comprising of notional and imagine elements alongside with axiological one. Notional element is the linguistic denoting of the concept, its description and definition. Imagine element is seeable, acoustical tactile, gustative characteristics of the subject and events reserved in our memory.³

According to cognitologists the content of a concept can be found by linguistic methods, in particular by analysis of the semantic structure of the linguistic sign nominating the concept.⁴

From perspective of linguistic culturology it is important to find out the peculiarities of a concept in synchrony and diachrony. G.G. Slishkin notes: “to find out the content of any axiological/valuable concept of an epoch it is necessary to study not only the circumstances of this epoch but the evolution of this value in the culture of a nation.”⁵

To call something a concept means to pose the problem: to reconstruct the meaning of something for a particular spiritual culture. Considering, for example, the question of the concepts of family, love, beauty, truth, bread, friendship, etc, one tries to reconstruct that essence, which in usage is behind the words family, love, beauty, truth, friendship, etc.

The social sciences include many concepts that are basic to the understanding of the subject matter. Some of these concepts are defined differently and measured differently by social researchers, such as those concerning socioeconomic status. Others are defined and measured in a fairly consistent way across studies and over time. The latter concepts usually follow previous usages either because of research tradition or because of limitations in the collection of data, race, perhaps being an example.

Y. S. Stepanov defines the concept as follows: The concept – is like a bunch of culture in human consciousness in the form of what culture is a mental world of man. And on the other hand, the concept – is that by which a person – ordinary person, not “the creator of cultural values” – himself enters in the culture, and in some cases affects it.⁶

S.A. Askoldov, who one of the first referred to the study of concepts, considered the concept “mental entity that replaces in the mental activity a lot of objects of the same kind”. He further said that “one should not, of course, think that the concept is always a replacement of real objects. It may be replacement of different kinds.”⁷

I.A. Sternin and Z. D. Popova define the concept as a complex mental entity which is in the process of mental activity. The presence of a linguistic expression for the concept, its regular verbalization support the concept stability, study state, make it well known (because the meanings of words which is transmitted, are well known, they are interpreted by native speakers, recognized in the dictionaries).

A key concept in the social, and especially in demography and sociology is that of *the family*.

The *family* is regarded as a major social institution and locus of much of a person’s social activity. It is a social unit created by blood, marriage and adoption, and can be described as nuclear (parent and children) or extended (encompassing other relatives). The term family also represents a social group containing at least one-parent child relationship as the family group is organized and governed by social norms.

The concept ‘family’ in the Oxford dictionary has the following meaning:

a) *a group consisting of one or two parents and their children* (i.e. the term nuclear family can be defined simply as a wife/ mother, a husband/father, and their children).

b) *A group consisting of one or two parents, their children and close relatives* (i.e. the term extended family can be defined simply as a wife/ mother, a husband/ father, their children, and other close relatives).⁸

However, this straightforward structural definition is surrounded by a cloud of ambiguity and controversy.

The nuclear family is universal- found in every known human society. All societies have a concept of extended family. Its relative importance, structure, and functions, however vary according to the particular culture.

¹ Mkhitarian Yelena, Chubaryan Astgik, *Theoretical English Grammar/ seminars/* Yerevan, State University, 472p.

² Popova, Z.D., *Outline of Linguistic Cognitology,* Popova, Z.D., Sternin, I.A., Voronezh, 2001, 125p.

³ Karasik, V.I., *The Basic Characteristics of Lingua-cultural Concepts/* Karasik, V.I., Slyshkin, G.G., *Anthology of the Concepts,* Volgograd Paradigma, 2005-v.1.-p.p. 13-15

⁴ Popova, Z.D., *Outline of Linguistic Cognitology,* Popova, Z.D., Sternin, I.A., Voronezh, 2001, 125p.

⁵ Slyshkin, G.G., *Concept ‘honour’ in the American and Russian cultures (on the basis of dictionaries), Cultural Concepts,* Volgograd-Arkhangelsk; Peremena, 1999, p.p. 54-60.

⁶ Степанов, Я. Я. С., *Константы. Словарь русской культуры. Опыт исследования,* 1997 - 824 стр.

⁷ Аскольдов, С.Ф., *Концепт и слово. Русская словестность. Теории словестности и структура текста. Анталогия,* М. Академия, 1997- 267 -279 ст.

⁸ Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English,* Oxford University Press, 2000, 419 p.

Most commonly a concept finds its expression in the language by means of a word denoting the content of the concept completely and adequately and get the status of the name of the concept. The concept 'family' in Armenian culture is represented by the key word ընտանիք – ընդ + տանիք = ծուխ, երդիկ , օջախ:

1. գերդաստան (ծողովորդախոսակցական), ընտանեկան հարկ, ընտանեկան օջախ ամուսնական կապով կամ արյունակցությամբ միասին ապրող հարազատներ,

2. Մարդ ու կին , ամուսնական զույգ,¹

3. **ընտանիք—ընդ** նախդիր +**տուն** արմատ և **ք** ածանց, որը ժամանակին գրաբարային հոգնակերտ էր: **Ընտանիք** — ա) միասին բնակվող մարդկանց խումբ, որը կազմված է ամուսնուց, կնոջից, երեխաներից և այլ մերձավորներից, գերդաստան, բ) տղամարդու համար իր կինը և զավակները, գ) տոհմ, ցեղ, ազգատոհմ, դ) մարդ ու կինը: ²

Traditionally *family* is a universal concept presented in cultures of all nations. The concept *family* is metaphorically represented through such concepts: *marriage, parents, children, love, love of a mother, love of a father, love of a son/daughter, devotion, trust, happiness, respect loyalty, strength, cooperative attitudes within the family group, etc.*

The concept correlates with more than one word. The analysis of synonyms of the key words allows finding out different signs of the concept by means of juxtaposition of the key word to its synonyms.³ For example family = home; in Armenian-ընտանիք = օջախ, ծուխ, երդիկ:

The concept *family* can also be represented by the following grammar categories:

a) verb: to feed (*կերակրել*) to keep a family (*ընտանիք պահել*), to support a family (*պաշտպանել, օգնել ընտանիքին*), to take care of a family (*հոգալ ընտանիքի մասին*), to marry (*ամուսնանալ*), to have a large / small family (*ունենալ մեծ/փոքր ընտանիք*, etc.

b) name of an action: keeping a family (*ընտանիք պահելը*), family institution (*ընտանեկան ինստիտուտ*), a sense of duty (*պարտականության զգացում*), etc.

c) a noun: a wife (*կին ամուսին*), a husband (*ամուսին*), a woman (*կին*), a man (*տղամարդ*), a son (*որդի*), a daughter (*դուստր*), a child (*երեխա*), children (*երեխաներ*), etc.

d) adjective: domestic (*ընտանեկան*), family (*ընտանեկան, տոհմական*), maternal (*մայրական*), paternal (*հայրական*), etc.

The term *extended family* has been applied to the kinship network of social and economic ties composed of the nuclear family (*parents and children*) plus other, less immediate, relatives.

It is generally assumed today that the modern family has undergone significant transformations in its structure. Social changes have contributed to a sharp reduction of the percentage of classical 'traditional families' principally 'typical' families, principally 'nuclear' families. There are childless families, other family configurations, and quasi-family units based on non-marital cohabitation. Bane disagreed with that and pointed out that *family* sizes were getting smaller and mobility was splitting up some families, but the family remained as a functional social institution.⁴

Emigration, the process of leaving one's country of origin, also influences the family life. And here it is vital to keep the strength of the family. David R. Mace states, "Nothing in the world could make human life happier than to greatly increase the number of strong families, ". Family strengths are those relationship qualities that contribute to the emotional health and well-being of the family. Families who define themselves as strong commonly they say they love each other, find life together satisfying, and live in happiness and understanding.⁵

Decision making is also one of the terms (one of the concepts) used to describe the process by which families make choices, determine judgments, and come to conclusions, that guide behaviours. That process is called family decision-making implies that it requires more than one member's input and agreement (Scanzoni and Polonko, 1980) ⁶.

The family is generally recognized as an element of a broader kinship network that links ancestors and descendants of a person (the best example of it is the symbol of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) 'Grandfather and Grandmother'.

The family (with its individuals) and the culture is a complex set of relationships. On the one side, the family individual determines its culture, on the other; it is determined by its culture.

The family is part of the cultural change. Each nation has its own character. The French are not like the English, and the Dutch not like the Germans, the Armenians are not like the Georgians and so on. However, the concept 'family' traditionally is the same in all nations.

In his book "The History of Human Marriage" E. Westermarch defined marriage as 'a more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring'. The result of marriage is the formation of family, and according to Coser the family consists of husband, wife, and children born in their wedlock, though other relatives may find their place

¹Սուրբիայան, Աշոտ, *Հայոց լեզվի հունանիշների բառարան*, Երևանի պետական համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 2003, 1237, 32 էջ

²Աճառյան, Հր., *Հայերեն արմատական բառարան*, Երևանի պետական համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1979, 714 էջ

³Popova, Z.D., Sternin, I.A., *The Semantic-cognitive Analysis of the Language*. Monograph, Voronezh, Istok, 2007, 24 p.

⁴Bane, Mary, *Here To Stay: American Families in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Basic Books, 1976, 76 p.

⁵<http://family.jrank.org/pages/596/Family-Strengths.html>

⁶<http://books.google.am/books?isbn=0415966671> *International encyclopedia of adolescence: A.J. index. Jeffry Jensen Arnett. 2007.*

close to this nuclear group; and the group is united by moral, legal, economic, religious, and social rights and obligations (*including sexual rights and prohibitions as well as such socially patterned feelings as love, attraction, piety, and awe*). (Coser,1964)¹

As marriage was recognized as a matter of some importance, the entering into it came, like many other significant events in human life, to be celebrated with certain-‘ceremonies’. Very commonly it is accompanied by a wedding feast .It was natural (and nowadays is being continued) that a religious character should be given to nuptials, as well as to other events of importance by the evoking of divine help for the future union, i.e family.

Civil laws recognize marriage as having social and political status. Christian theology affirms the secular status of marriage, but additionally views it from a moral and religious perspective that transcends all social interests.(*Note: Among primitive men marriage was, of course contracted without any ceremony, whatever and this is still the case with many uncivilized peoples(e.g. Eskimos).*)

Marriage is honored among Christians and throughout the Bible. Christians believe that marriage is considered in its ideal according to the purpose of God. According to Genesis, marriage was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden.

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said,

*"This is now bone of my bone
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman',
for she was taken out of man.*

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

The biblical picture of marriage expands into something much broader. Marriage is a lifelong contract..." ...By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive..." (Romans 7:1-3).

Divorces are too easy to get. At every wedding ceremony the couple should remember: "I hate *divorce*," says the Lord God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself (or his wife) with violence as well as with his garment," says the Lord Almighty.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. (Malachi 2:16)

Որովհետև ես ասում եմ ապահարզանը, ասում է Բարսայելի Տեր Աստուածը. Եւ նա ծածկում է ոճիրով իր հանդերձը, ասում է Զօրաց Տէրը. Ուրեմն զգուշացէք ձեր անձերի մասին եւ անհաւատարիմ մի լինէք: (Մաղաքիա 2:16)²

In some traditional Christian weddings the groom and the bride take turns to read a wedding vow like this:

"I (name),take you,(name), to be my (wife/husband);to have and hold , from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish, till death do us part."

In Armenian Apostolic church the priest says,"Որոյակ, կը խոստանաս բոլոր պարագաներուն մեջ մինչև մահ տեր և պաշտպան ըլլալ այս օրիորդին, որ կինդ պիտի ըլլայ /տեր եւ հնազանդ ըլլալ այս պարոնին,որ ամուսինդ պիտի ըլլայ, եւ հավատարմութեամբ սիրել զայն..."³

Marriage is a lifelong contract. ... "by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive..." (Romans 7:1-3)⁴

Christian wedding vows are not only promises made between couples, but also a covenant made with God as well. Historically marriages were arranged by the couple's parents (Dzeron 1938/1984) Family marriage traditionally was between two families as well as two individuals, within mutual social obligations. Following World War II, marriage partners began select one another. Although the choice of a spouse is ultimately their own, many men and women still listen to advice from their parents and respected elders. Besides, as to the Armenians, the biblical picture of marriage and family expands into something much broader as we are surrounded largely by Muslim countries. Living at the crossroads of competing civilizations, Armenians were perpetually overrun by powerful outside groups. For centuries they have struggled to maintain their unique identity while living side by side with other people they considered outsiders at best, or, more often, enemies.

School textbooks often quote the great Armenian writer Muratsan's words,« Ազգերի գորությունը ընտանիքների մեջ է:Զորավոր է այն ազգը, որ ունի գորավոր ընտանիքներ.սիրով, միությանը, առաքինի եւ հավատարիմ կենակցությամբ ապրող ընտանիքներ:», Ruben Sevak's saying,«Առողջ տեր, առողջ սեր».

In Armenia, family is seen as the foundation and core of society. In Armenian national mentality it has traditionally been perceived as being the highest value in its capacity as an intermediary, situated between the individual and the state. In the absence of statehood, the concept 'Nation-as-a- Family', a *sui generis* 'familism', has evolved in Armenian society. A history replete with war, invasion, massacre, genocide and natural disasters shaped the Armenian family into a basic unit for viability and self – preservation. Family and kinship networks continue to be vitally important, not only for career advancement but also for physical survival.

Besides mixed families are a very painful question-a very real problem not only in diaspora but in

Armenia as well. That's why the cement of especially diaspora life is the *family* within which some connection to being Armenian is established and nurtured.

Because of selective abortion in Armenia another problem is the birth of girls which is less that the birth of boys. (100-114)

¹[http:// books. Google.am/books?isbn= 0415966671](http://books.Google.am/books?isbn=0415966671) *International encyclopedia of adolescence: A.J. index. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett.2007.*

² The Holy Bible, *New International Version, International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, Published in association with Hodder & Stoughton, London Sydney Auckland Toronto,1984*

³ [tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20AMSAGIR/Hask%20Ant/2012/2012\(8\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20AMSAGIR/Hask%20Ant/2012/2012(8).pdf)

⁴ The Holy Bible, *New International Version, International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, Published in association with Hodder & Stoughton, London Sydney Auckland Toronto,1984*

The pre-Genocide family in historic Armenia has been portrayed as patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, and patrilineal (see Bamber 1986-1987). Power and authority rested in the hands of the male elders of the family. A child's welfare was the responsibility of his/her father's family. An Armenian father passed on his identity to his children, irrespective of their mother's ethnic background. In addition, children inherited the material and nonmaterial assets that their families enjoy.¹

Armenian men and women remember matriarchal grandmothers dominating their images of their childhood. The Armenian grandmother continues to be a source of inspiration and prominent subject matter in the prose and poetry of Armenian authors. Gourgen Mahari in his autobiographical novel <<Մանկություն>> (Childhood) remembers: <<Մայրս ինձ համար Անուշ (mother's name) էր, տատս՝ մայրիկ, նրանց տունը՝ մայրիկենց տուն>>:

Or : Տատիկս էլէլ, չոքէլ լուսնի դեմ
Աղոթք է անում
Եվ աղերսում է նա ինչ որ մեկին,
Չգիտեմ, թե ում...
...Լուսնի դեմ չոքէլ, աղոթք է անում
Ձեռքերը սրտին,
Մակայն ոչ մի կերպ էս չեմ հասկանում
Խոսքերն իր խրթին:²

The traditional Armenian family consists of several families built around parents and grandparents. During the 19th century Armenian families usually have five to ten children, now they typically have only two or three. During the past century the number of extended families dwelling in the same residence decreased. Nuclear families now tend to live in separate homes. The estimated age of a newly wed couple is 21-25 for the woman, 28-30 for the man. This age increases among individuals who pursuing higher education; social factors, war, etc. The family life is greatly influenced by the globalization. Divorce and separation are new phenomenon for our nation.

However, kinship relationship among Armenians remain very close. Among all types of influences, the family has always had the greatest impact on young Armenian's developing identity. For Armenians family is not simply a social group or a social institution, *it is an all-encompassing structure*. Armenians take pride in their family cohesiveness, discipline, and strict moral standards.

Family (all kin and kinsmen) honour is very important. Cultural, social, and political values are transmitted to young people via parents and family. The family teaches young people to stand up for Armenian nationality. Most families want to show the world that Armenians are able to survive as an independent nation.³

Many Armenians follow a traditional cultural beliefs and practices. As it was mentioned the traditional culture is patriarchal. The father of the family is expected to fulfill the material needs of the household. Major economic decisions (e.g. buying a car, a flat, etc), banking, household repairs are his domain.⁴

The role of mother in the Armenian family is great. Above all mother plays a crucial role in shaping her children. The mother is the symbol of security and identity for the whole society.

Garegin Nzhdeh said, <<Նա կոչված է իր երեխայի դաստիարակության միջոցով կառուցելու իր ցեղի ապագան: >>.

Or, Paruir Sevak's poem "Mother's Hands" <<Մոր ձեռքերը >>
Այս ձեռքերը՝ մո՛ր ձեռքերը,
Հինավուրց ու նո՛ր ձեռքերը...
Ինչե՛ր ասես, որ չեն արել այս ձեռքերը...
Պսակվելիս ոն՛ց են պարել այս ձեռքերը՝
Ի՛նչ նազանքով,
Երազանքով:
Ինչե՛ր ասես որ չեն արել այս ձեռքերը...
Լույսը մինչև լույս չեն մարել այս ձեռքերը,
Առաջնեկն է երբ որ ծնվել,
Նրա արդար կաթով սնվել:
Ինչե՛ր ասես, որ չեն արել այս ձեռքերը...
Երկինք պարզված պուն են դառել այս ձեռքերը,
Որ չփվի իր տան պունը՝
Որդին կովից դառնա տունը:
Ինչե՛ր ասես որ չեն արել այս ձեռքերը...
Մինչև տատի ձեռք են դառել այս ձեռքերը,
Այս ձեռքերը՝ ուժը հատած,

¹<https://books.google.am/books?isbn=1134076762> Armine Ishkhanyan, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post Soviet Armenia*. 2000.

² Մահարի, Գ. *Երկերի Լիակատար ժողովածու*, հատոր 4. *Մանկություն: Պատանեկություն: Երիտասարդության սեմին: Երիտասարդություն*, Երևան, 2015, 576 էջ:

³Sabinina, E.A., *Family in the Arab Culture*, Issues of Linguistic and Literary Studies, Academic Journal Astrakhan State University, 2009 N2 p.p.16-20

⁴ www.hyeetch.nareg.com.au/Armenians/family.htm/ Shogher Markaryan, *HyEtch- The Armenians, -The Armenian Family*.

Բայց թոռան հետ նոր ուժ գտած...
 Քար են շրջել, սար են շարժել այս ձեռքերը...
 Ինչե՛ր, ինչե՛ր շարժեն այս ձեռքերը՝
 Նու՛րք ձեռքերը,
 Սու՛րք ձեռքերը:
 ...Եկեք այսօր մենք համբուրենք որդիաբար
 Մեզ աշխարհում ծնած- սնած,
 Մեզ աշխարհում շահած-պահած,
 Մեզնից երբեք չկշտացած,
 Փռչի սրբող, լվացք անող,
 Անվերջ դատող, անվերջ բանող
 Ա՛յս ձեռքերը,
 Թող որ ճաքած ու կոշտացած,
 Բայց մեզ համար մետաքսի պէս
 Խա՛ւ ձեռքերը... ¹

The mother of the family has the responsibility of daily cooking and cleaning, and raising the children. These tasks are strictly reserved to females, even if the woman is actively pursuing a career or running a business. Armenian mothers closely watch and constantly provide care/ food to their children.

The kitchen is the woman's kingdom (...and prison...).

When the man comes from work, the meal is expected to be ready, even if the wife was also working and then had to pick up the kids from school or kindergarten. The Armenian man is an excellent food critic; he will know which dish his mother made better than his wife, and will not be shy in comments. An Armenian woman is judged by her cooking. No Armenian woman will allow any other woman to cook in her kitchen. Even if she has 30 guests for supper, she is the only one that knows how to work her stove...

The mother takes all the doctor's appointments for the husband; the man doesn't need to see a doctor until very sick. The woman gets health information from friends and siblings. She tries to treat herself or tough it out. A woman's prestige is increased when she is obviously sick but doesn't consult a doctor and continues to take care of the others.²

In Armenian families children are the center of the attention. They are raised mainly by their mother, but also by their grandmother and aunts. At birth, children receive gifts, mainly jewellery (holly crosses, gold medallions, clothes, etc). The first male child often is named after his grandfather, the same way may go for the first female child.

A lot of families keep a very tight control on their teenage sons and daughters. But sometimes the boys can do as they please, go where they want and even take the car... Teenage girls are invited to participate in household chores, taking care of younger siblings, and get praised for doing so. Teenage boys come in hungry from school and expect food to be ready. They are taught to be entirely dependent on females for every day activities: they will never learn to cook, do the dishes, do the laundry, buy their underwear or go for groceries.

Young adults live at their parent's home until marriage. In any families the ancient tradition of looking for a wife still prevails. Parents mostly prefer their future daughter-in law to be an Armenian as mixed types of family are increasing in which Armenian mentality is slowly being lost. Married couples remain close to their families, and the husband's mother still has authority in the family. A man's elderly parents can live in the household. An Armenian family will try to avoid placing elderly family members in public care.

The families of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh) and those of the Diaspora are very similar to those in Armenia with regard to their structures, family values, and methods of child raising. (Jeshmaridyan 1995-1999)³

The study lets us conclude that in the history of any culture, the problems concerning human relationships, such as family, love or friendship, etc., played and still play an important role. The humanity still considers 'family' phenomenon as the universal value which could make human life happier. The family is generally regarded as a major social institution and locus of much of a person's social activity. It is a social unit created by blood, marriage, and can be described as nuclear (parents and children) or extended (encompassing other relations)

Family is understood in the consciousness of Armenian society as a solid group of people with a valuable component assistance, cooperation, responsibility. Family takes a great part in the system of Armenian cultural values. Despite traditionalism of Armenian society nowadays the concept 'family' (ընտանիք) undergoes some changes. (*The concepts don't have a constant structure. The changeability is one of the basic characteristics of a concept*). It is generally assumed today that modern family has undergone significant transformations in its structure. For example the number of nuclear, even mixed families have increased, the woman now has more opportunity to study, to get profession, to find her place on the labour market alongside with the man, etc.

Besides modern means of communications, the Internet informs Armenians of values and morality of western countries, which gradually penetrate into not only Armenian but other nation's cultures.

But it is still of primary importance for us to be faithful to interest to our family, to carry out obligations and duties despite the size and type of the family. Family for us is a solid group of members who are always ready to help one another. Family is the basis of any nation and its culture.

¹ Պարույր Սևակ, *Մոր ձեռքերը*, Սովետահայ պոեզիա, Քրեատոմատիա, ԵՊՀ, Երևան, 1986, 900-901 էջ

² www.hyetch.nareg.com.au/Armenians/family.htm/ Shogher Markaryan, *HyEtch- The Armenians,-The Armenian Family*.

³ <http://books.Google.am/books?isbn=0415966671> International Encyclopedia of Adolescence: A.J. index. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett.2007.