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TO THE BOOK OF “CAUCASIAN ALBANIA: AN INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK” (DE GRUYTER PUBLISHING HOUSE), EDITED BY JOST GIPPERT AND JASMINE DUM-TRAGUT

REVIEW

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Jost Gippert is considered one of the well-known and world-renowned scholars in studies of Albanian history, especially in the field of Caucasian linguistics. He has repeatedly delivered reports of various content (mainly based on studies on the Albanian language) at conferences and symposia on the history of Albania held in Azerbaijan and other countries of the world, and his materials on the subject have been published in prestigious scientific journals. Jasmine Dum-Tragut is a scholar of Armenian studies of Armenian descent who works in Germany, and until her joint work with Jost Gippert, his scientific portfolio consisted mainly of works related to the Armenian language (“Armenian (London Oriental and African Language Library)”, 2009, 758p.; “Cultural, Linguistic and Ethnological Interrelations in and Around Armenia”, 2011, 205 p.; “Monastic Life in the Armenian Church”, 2020, 224 p...). Although it seems surprising that an influential person like Jost Gippert co-authored a book with Jasmine Dum-Tragut, not with a person dealing with the history of Albania, and published it with the support of the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program and the support of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)), everything becomes clear when you read the first page of the book. When the authors tried to give “background” to the handbook, they questioned the existence of the Albanian state from the very first sentence and considered it appropriate to write the word Albania in quotation marks. [In Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, the Southern Caucasus was divided into three countries, Greater Armenia, Iberia (Eastern Georgia, Kartli) and the so-called Caucasian “Albania”, p. V-Introduction]. The fact that a book called an international handbook on the history of Albania begins with such a sentence actually raises more serious questions. Later, the authors noted that Georgians and Armenians have been known for their culture, which they have consistently conveyed in their languages since at least the 4th century, “and the history and culture of Caucasian Albania and the peoples living there have “disappeared” due to the lack of autochthonous sources” [p. V-Introduction]. The use of the words “Caucasian Albania and the peoples living there” instead of “the absence of an autochthonous source” or “Caucasian Albania and the Albanian

ethnos" makes the existence of both the state and the ethnos undecided, and the real goal of the authors, who supposedly aim to prepare a "handbook on the history of Albania" comes out.

In the introduction, the authors tried to talk about the "tripartite agreement" signed after the Second Karabakh war and the results of the agreement. They did not hesitate to falsify the contract parties, which are known by all the principles of international law and are clear to the whole world. Instead of the Russian Federation, which is the third party to the joint agreement with the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the authors indicated the so-called regime as a third party [After the Second Karabakh War in autumn 2020 and the ceasefire agreed between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the (internationally unrecognized) Republic of Artsakh in November 2020, p. V-Introduction], along with denying the historical reality, they also distorted it. It is hard to believe that an influential person like Gippert turned a blind eye to the distortion of the parties to the agreement established by international law in the 21st century, and became a part of the Armenian propaganda machine. When talking about the Albanian monuments existing in the Karabakh territory, the authors added "allegedly" to the beginning, noting that they are supposed to be Albanian monuments, but in fact they are Armenian monuments. They note that "Azerbaijani state and scientists are taking their history to Albanians and using it to create a historical root for themselves like Armenians and Georgians, to demonstrate a millennial presence in the region" [p. V-Introduction]. Although these sentences given in the introduction clearly reveal the purpose of the book, it is important to touch on the structure of the work and the personal considerations of the authors of the article.

In total, the book contains 16 articles by 15 authors in 5 sections. The first section of the book is entitled "Caucasian Albania in Foreign Sources" and contains the articles "Caucasian Albania in Greek and Latin Sources" by Marko Bais and "Caucasian Albania in Medieval Armenian Sources (5th-13th centuries)" co-authored by Jasmine Dum-Tragut and Jost Gippert. The second section is called "The Heritage of the Caucasian Albanians" and includes the following articles - "The Textual Heritage of the Caucasian Albanians" by Jost Gippert, "The Language of the Caucasian Albanians" by Gippert and Wolfgang Schultz, "The Caucasian Albanians and Modern Udis" by Schultz and Gippert, "The Appeal of the Udis to Tsar Peter" by Igor Dorfman-Lazarev. The third section is called "The Church of the Caucasian Albania" and includes the articles - Charles Renault's "Albanians, Armenians and Georgians: One Liturgy", Jasmine Dum-Tragut's "One or Two? Christological and Hierarchical Controversies on the Development of the Albanian Church", Armenuhi Drost-Abgarjan's "The Holy Testament", Yana Tchekhanovets's "The Albanians in the holy land: absence of the archaeological evidence or the proof of the absence", and the fourth section entitled "Architecture and Archaeology" includes articles - Armen Kazaryan's "Urban planning and Architecture in Caucasian Albania: main monuments and development trends", Patrik Donabedian's "Ensemble of Seven Churches - the Prehistoric Oykumen Monastery" and Hamlet Petrosyan's "Tigranakert in Artsakh". In the last section entitled "Ethnic, religious and social issues", Aleksan Akopyan's "Ethnic situation in ancient and medieval Caucasian Albania", Alison Vacca's "Revolts in Early

Abbasid Albania”, Sergio la Porta’s “You say Albanian, I’ll say Armenian: ethnic and power disputes around the Albanian rulers of Armenia”, Igor Dorfman-Lazarev’s “Planes and between mountains: David of Ganja and the Albanian-Armenian campaigns of the twelfth century”, Jost Gippert’s “The Ganja Gates” and Hratch Chilingiryan’s “Reverse Engineering: The state-created Albanian Apostolic Church”. It should be noted that, with the exception of a few articles, the vast majority of articles refer to biased, one-sided information, and contain new distorted information.

Marko Bais, the author of the first article in the book, is one of the well-known scholars on Armenian studies in Europe, and before that, in his work dedicated to the history of Albania called “Caucasian Albania: ethnos, history, territory-based on Greek, Latin and Armenian sources”, certain issues of Albanian history were touched upon, unfortunately, the author revealed his pro-Armenian position. This line is felt to some extent in his article “Caucasian Albania in Greek and Latin sources” in the handbook. One of the main mistakes of the author is that he does not accept the existence of the Albanian ethnos. He accepts the Albanian ethnonym as an endoethnonym, not an exoethnonym, and on the whole, believes that Albanians did not exist as a separate ethnos [p. 17]. Of course, it is impossible to agree with his opinion. From time to time the ancient authors mentioned the names of the ethnos included in the Albanian tribal union one by one, and at the same time listed the Albanians among them as well. For example, when mentioning about Pompey’s march to the Caucasus, Strabo writes: “... The Gelae or Gelians and the Legae resided among the Amazons and the Albanians; in this country the river Mermodalida flows between those tribes and the Amazons” [Strabo. XI.7.1]. Several ethnic groups living in the territory of Albania and constituting the Albanian ethnos are named here, including Albanians as a separate group. Almost the same information is given by Plutarch: “The Amazons lived in the part of the Caucasus extending to the Hyrcan Sea. However, they were not directly neighbors with the Albanians, the Gelians and the Legae lived between them” (*Plut. Pomp. XXXV.4*). Even before these authors, Arrian mentioned the Albanian ethnos as an independent ethnos in his “Anabasis of Alexander”: “On the right flank, the soldiers from Keleseria and Ichichayara, as well as the Medes, after them the Parthians and Sax, then the Tapurs and Hyrcans, then the Albanians and Saxens – they were in the middle of the phalanx (*Arr. Anab. III.11.4*). Marco Bais does not exclude the idea that this event is an anachronism. It should be noted that the name of the Albanian ethnos was found here for the first time in the sources, and we can see in many studies on the history of Albania the information about their fight against Alexander in the group led by Atropat.

Regarding territorial issues, Bais tried to speak more cautiously, however, referring to the Armenian author R.Hewsen, he stated that this is “a political issue, not an academic one, and it will undoubtedly be resolved on the basis of political considerations. Scholars wandering in the fragments of information that have reached us about the ethnohistory of the South-Eastern Caucasus two millennia ago will not solve it” [p. 23]. These sentences clearly show that the Albanian issue has been turned into a political one by the Armenians and not of a scientific essence.

One of the articles with the most distortions and forgeries in the book is Jasmine Dum-Tragut’s article “Caucasian Albania in medieval Armenian sources (8th-13th centuries)”. The Armenian author’s text begins with the idea that the “History of Albania” was written in Armenian by Movses Kaghankatvatsi [p. 33] that has no scientific evidence for this. The fact that the versions of “History of Albania” that have come down to us were written in Grabar cannot be considered an indicator that the original work was written both in Grabar and in Armenian. It should be noted that the researchers who studied the work in depth do not rule out that the source is a combination of several works, written in different periods and by different authors, in this case, such a definite opinion of Jasmine Dum-Tragut contradicts scientific approaches. The same things can also be said about the opinions expressed on the issues that are mentioned by the author in the book about Uti and Arsakh provinces belonging to Albania, about the Gargar language in which the Albanian alphabet was rearranged, Urnair’s religious affiliation, the ethnic affiliation of Vachagan III the Pious, etc. The author distorts even more the widespread misconception in Armenian historiography that Uti and Arsakh provinces belong to Armenia, only after the treaty of 387 (Note: whether this treaty was really concluded or not is in question in modern historiography) and given to Albania, and states that “Albanian Marzbānlig” was formed at the expense of these provinces [p. 37]. It is known from the sources and scientific literature that these territories were the ancient lands of Albania, and only after the battles of Amid and Dzirav, which took place during the Sassanid-Byzantine wars, for a short period of time they were lost by Albania. The Armenian author Moisey Khorenli also says that the southern border of Albania was taken from the Araz River [...After that, he appointed a ruler over the territories along the great river Kura, which cuts through the vast plain, in the large and majestic, populous north-eastern land, wisdom and intelligence declares Aran, who is the first in his affairs, to be the judge. But also know about the people of Sisak, because we forgot to mention this large and numerous tribe in the first book – they inherited the Alvan plain – stretching up to the mountains, from the river Eraskh to the fortress called Khnarakert. And the country called him “Alvania” because they called him “alu” because of his good nature. Book II, Chapter VIII]. In this case, there is no doubt that these ideas in Armenian historiography, beginning with Chamchyan, have had a political purpose and are an attempt to justify territorial claims. Also, Jasmine Dum-Tragut interpreted in a different way the information about the creation of the Albanian alphabet mentioned in the work “Albanian History” and in Armenian sources. She cites Khorenli (translated by Robert Thomson, 2009) and talks about the idea that the alphabet was drawn up in the language of the tribes living in the Gargar Plain, not based on the Gargar language in the source [p. 43], however, in each of Khorenli’s Russian, French, and German translations, these were translated as Gargars [Des Moses von Chorene Geschiebte Gross-Armeiicis. Dr.M.Lauer, Regensburg, 1869, p.215; Histoire de l’Armenia par Moise de Khorene. Annie et Jean Pierre-Mahe. 1993, p.300].

The issue of Urnair’s conversion to Christianity was also touched upon in the article, and Musa Kalankatli’s opinion about official adoption of Christianity by Albanians during Urnair’s time was questioned. He justifies this opinion by the fact

that if Urnair had been converted to Christianity, he would not have fought on the side of the fire-worshipper Sassanid ruler against Pap and Musheg [p.64]. This idea is completely wrong, because when political interests coincided, religious diversity could not prevent the union, and there are countless examples of this in history. In the same article, Jasmine Dum-Tragut made an absurd statement about the language affiliation of the Albanian ruler Vachagan III, and without any basis mentioned the ruler, who was clearly identified by sources as belonging to the Arshakid dynasty, as an Armenian-speaking ruler [p.63].

Similar ideas are also included in another article in the book “One or two? Christological and hierarchal disputes on the development of the Albanian Church” written by Jasmine Dum-Tragut. At the beginning of the same article, the author questions the independent existence of the Albanian church and notes that the creation of the “Church of Caucasian Albania” by the Udi Society was the factor that ignited the issue of an independent Albanian historical church [p.286]. She unjustifiably claims that the Albanian church did not exist independently, that all the churches in the Caucasus operated under the leadership and subordination of the Armenian church, as well as questions the date of the convening of the Aquen church council, which was convened during the reign of the Albanian ruler Vachagan III, and other issues [p. 299]. All this is nothing more than distortion of historical sources and ignoring reality. Although Musa Kalankatli’s “History of Albania” is a very important source for the Christian history of Albania because it is also a local source, the author prefers to ignore it and look for other sources to strengthen her claims.

One of the absurd ideas in the book can be found in Igor Dorfman-Lazarev’s article entitled “Udi’s Appeal to Tsar Peter”. Speaking about Peter’s march to the Caspian coastal areas, the author mentioned our ancient city of Shamakhy as a city where Armenians were in majority [p. 262]. At no stage in history have Armenians been the main ethnic group in Shamakhy, where the majority of the population has been Azerbaijani Turks.

Possession of ancient lands of Albania, distortion of historical names, neglect of sources, etc, to a large number of scientific frauds arising from the issues are encountered in the Armen Kazaryan’s article entitled “Urban Planning and Architecture in Caucasian Albania: Main Monuments and Development Trends”. The author not only gives the right-coast areas of Albania as Armenian provinces, including Girdiman, but also writes that the population of some cities located north of Kura is composed of Armenians. The author does not hesitate to write that until the beginning of the 18th century, the main population of Gabala was Udins and Armenians [p.354]. The author’s opinion about the poor study of the religious architecture of Albania is unacceptable. Quite experienced scientists engaged in the study of the architectural heritage of Albania have contributed in this field. Davud Akhundov, Rashid Goyushov, Aliya Garahmadova, Gulchohra Mammadova are local authors who are sufficiently cited in this field, and when appropriate, they responded to these nonsensical statements that Armenians wanted to formulate from the Soviet era. Considering that the long-term occupation of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan by Armenia did not allow to study the monuments in this region, and as a result of the occupation, there were enough damaged monuments belonging to the

Albanian heritage, this affected the in-depth study of the Albanian religious architecture. Also, some monuments related to the Christian architecture of Albania are currently located in the territories of the republics of Armenia and Georgia, and it is not possible to involve them in scientific research. After the 44-day war, despite the danger posed by the explosive devices placed by the Armenian side in the Karabakh region, local archaeologists and architects are engaged in the study of Albanian religious monuments located in these regions, and tirelessly carry out the work of restoring and re-investigating the parts of them destroyed during the occupation. It should be noted that during the occupation, 2645 historical and cultural monuments, including 1814 architectural and 747 archaeological monuments, became victims of Armenian vandalism, among which there are hundreds of Albanian monuments that their historical image was changed, destroyed, and added to them elements reflecting Armenian architecture. Unfortunately, similar ideas are also contained in Patrick Donabedian's article "Ensemble of Seven Churches – the Prehistoric Oykumen Monastery". The author writes that the population of the area where Yeddikilse temple (Seven Churches) is located (Note: it is located in the area of Lekit Ketuklu village of Gakh district) was mainly Armenian from ancient times [p.388]. On the whole, we see that there are such groundless claims of Armenians about the other cities of Azerbaijan mentioned above. In Plutarch's "Comparative Biographies", which is considered one of the most reliable sources about the ancient Caucasus, there is such a note: Pompey had to pass through the area inhabited by the autochthons while he was chasing Mithridates VI, the king of Pontus; "the most numerous among them are the Iberians and the Albanians" (Plut. Pompey. XXXIV.28). Confirming this, Strabo writes that other Caucasian tribes, with the exception of the Albanian and Iberian tribes, have very small territories (Strabo. XI.II.19). But how is it that Armenians have been describing themselves as an ancient people in all these areas since ancient times?

Absurd and unscientific ideas are also included in another article in the book – the text "Ethnic situation in ancient and medieval Caucasian Albania" by Aleksan Akopyan. The article consists of a distortion of the history of Albania from beginning to end, be it the opinions expressed about its territory and borders, ethnic landscape, ethno-linguistic affiliation, etc, the author made biased and unscientific opinions about the issues. The misconception that the Kura River forms the southern border of Albania, which is popular in Armenian historiography, the predominance of ethnically Lezgin-speaking groups, the history of statehood in BC Starting from the 1st century, etc. In addition to baseless claims, Aleksan Akopyan claims that the Armenian language is the official language in Albania, in addition to the Albanian language [p.481]. How the population of a country whose rulers were local, Arshakid, and in certain periods Sassanid marzbāns could use the Armenian as an official language? What is the scientific basis for this?

To sum it all up, the book is more a product of the Armenian propaganda machine than a handbook of Albanian history, and it is simply regretful that an influential person like Jost Gippet is a tool for such a game. Also, considering the names and surnames of the authors of the articles, the direction of scientific activity and their portfolios, it appears that the goal is not to gather an authoritative scientific

environment on the history of Albania and to prepare an international handbook that can be used by everyone. The fact that the funds of the European Union, which finance scientific research, allocate funds for such targeted publications, and that a reputable publishing house such as De Gruyter undertakes and publishes such a publication is not a contribution to Albanian studies, but a serious blow.