



PERIKHANIAN, ANAHIT

PERIKHANIAN, ANAHIT (b. Moscow, 24 April 1928; d. Saint Petersburg, 27 May 2012; [Figure 1](#)), scholar of Iranian studies, specializing in Sasanian jurisprudence, history, and society.

She was born into the Russian family (of Armenian origin) of Georg Perikhanian, an electrical engineer, and Arusyak, a physician. Anahit Georgievna Perikhanian went to school in Moscow and continued her education in Soviet Armenia, where her father had been appointed as a manager in the energy industry. During 1945-48 she attended the Department of History of Yerevan State University, where she took courses in Pahlavi with the Iranian-Armenian scholar Rouben Abrahamian. In 1948 she began her postgraduate study at the Leningrad State University, Faculty of History, Classics Department, and graduated in 1951.

Perikhanian's first article was "K voprosu o rabovladii i zemledelii v Irane parfyanskogo vremeni" (On the question of slavery and agriculture in Iran of the Parthian period; *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 1952, no. 4, pp. 13-27). During 1953-55 she took her postgraduate studies at the State Hermitage Museum under the supervision of Kamilla Trever. Her dissertation was later published as *Khramovye obiedineniya Maloi Azii i Armenii v IV v. do n.e. – III v. n.e.* (The temple communities of Asia Minor and Armenia in the 4th century BCE to 3th century CE; ed. V. I. Avdiev, Moscow, 1959). In 1956 Perikhanian was employed at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, Moscow, and three years later at its Leningrad branch. From a research fellow she was promoted to a senior research associate (1974) and leading research associate



(1986) in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Studies. She retired in 1998.

Perikhanian's scope of academic interest included history, philology, social-economic relations, jurisprudence, and law of ancient and medieval Iran, epigraphy of Asia Minor and the Middle East, Middle Iranian languages, Armenian language, and comparative Indo-European linguistics. An early textual study of hers on the Pahlavi model of a marriage contract (*abar paymānag ī kadag-xwadāyih*; see [MARRIAGE i. THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD](#)) was “Образцы пехлевишского брачного контракта” (*Sovetskaya etnografiya*, 1960, no. 5, pp. 67-75); the modified English version, with the collaboration of [D. N. MacKenzie](#), appeared as “The Model Marriage Contract in Pahlavi with an Addendum” (in *K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Golden Jubilee Volume*, Bombay, 1969, pp. 103-12). She also contributed to the deciphering of 14 Pahlavi papyri fragments from the collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (*Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 1961, no. 3, pp. 78-93).

Being a pupil of the distinguished Russian scholar [Igor M. Diakonoff](#), she prepared her fundamental research on the challenging Sasanian law book *Mādagān ī hazār dādestān* (*Sasanidskii sudebnik*, Yerevan, 1973), which a year later was defended in Leningrad as a doctorate thesis. This research made Perikhanian generally recognized as an authority on Sasanian law and jurisprudence. Twenty-four years later a corrected version of the Sasanian Law Book was translated into English by Nina Garsoian (*The Book of a Thousand Judgments*, 1997). In a review [A. Sh. Shahbazi](#) appraised the work as indispensable for all students of Iranian studies. Perikhanian further studied the Iranian legal practices, in particular the social and administrative institutions of the Parthian and Sasanian periods. Her *Obshchestvo i pravo Irana v parfyanskii i sasanidskii periody* (Society and law in the Parthian and Sasanian periods; Moscow, 1983) represented a well-documented and highly informative commentary on the Iranian jurisprudence and legal terminology based on Iranian and non-Iranian sources. At the same time she was commissioned to write the chapter “Iranian Society and Law” for [Cambridge History of Iran](#) (III/2, 1983). Her contribution to the Iranian law and society, as well as to the comparative Iranian linguistics, has been greatly appreciated by [W. B. Henning](#), [J. de Menasce](#), [H. S. Nyberg](#), [D. N. MacKenzie](#), [A. Tafazzoli](#), and [F. Vahman](#), among others. In 1995 Perikhanian was invited by the Center for Iranian Studies, Columbia University, to deliver a series of lectures on “Iranian Law of Property during the Sasanian Period.”



Perikhanian contributed to the reading of the Aramaic inscriptions found in Armenia; these include the inscriptions from Garni (*Istoriko-filologicheskii zhurnal* [IFZh; Yerevan] 1964, no. 3, pp. 111-17), from Zangezur (by King Artashes I) (*IFZh*, 1965, no. 4, pp. 107-28; *Revue des études arméniennes* [REA], 1966, no. 3, pp. 17-29), on a silver bowl from Sisian (*IFZh*, 1971, no. 3, pp. 78-82; *REA*, 1971, no. 8, pp. 5-11), and on a lazurite vase from Artaxata (*From Byzantium to Iran*, ed. J.-P. Mahé and R. W. Thomson, Atlanta, 1997, pp. 269-80). The articles dedicated to these inscriptions had an immense significance both for Iranian-Armenian and Semitic studies. In one of the articles (in *IFZh*, 1965, no. 4, pp. 107-28) she widely considered some aspects of Middle Iranian dialectology and explained the character of the Old Armenian borrowings from Middle Median, Middle Persian, and Parthian.

Anahit Perikhanian also had an interest in the history of the Russian orientalism. Having studied the archives of the Russian Academy, she wrote a full account of the life and works of the famous academician [Carl Gustav Hermann Salemann](#) (1850-1916; “Karl Germanovich Zalemann” in *Ocherki po istorii russkogo vostokovedeniya. Sbornik* IV, Moscow, 1959, pp. 79-115). She wrote an article on Old Russian lexemes of Iranian origin (*IFZh*, 1982, no. 1, pp. 56-62), and investigated the origin of the Armenian alphabet (*Peredneaziatskii sbornik* II, Moscow, 1966, pp. 103-33).

Following [H. Hübschmann](#), H. Acharian, and [É. Benveniste](#), Perikhanian was greatly involved in the study of Armenian lexicography and etymology. In a number of articles she gave a detailed etymological analysis of the Old Armenian words borrowed from the Iranian languages, e.g., place names Paytakaran and Partaw, personal names Sanatruk and Sasan, general lexemes *panduxt*, *soxak*. Her book *Materialy k etimologicheskomu slovaryu drevnearmyanskogo* I (Materials for the etymological dictionary of the Old Armenian language, I; Yerevan, 1993) began with a section on the Middle Median stratum of the Iranian borrowings in Old Armenian and covered dozens of such words. The book won for Perikhanian the honorary “Prix Roman et Tania Ghirshman” of the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 1995.

Anahit Perikhanian received recognition as a mainstay of the highest standards of scholarship. She had an excellent command in many Oriental, Classical, and Modern European languages and wrote some of her articles in French. Besides the aforementioned five monographs, she wrote many substantive articles in many peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes, and



festschriften. She was an executive editor of two books: M. M. D'yakonov, *Ocherk istorii Drevnego Irana* (Outlines of history of ancient Iran; Moscow, 1961); *Kniga deyaniĭ Ardashira syna Papaka* (The book of deeds of Ardašir, son of Pāpak; tr. O. M. Chunakova, Moscow, 1987). Her last article was devoted to interpretation of the name of the Paulicians, a Christian Adoptionist sect which flourished in Armenia and the eastern Themes of the Byzantine empire and which originated first among Iranian Christians; she traced the name's etymology from Middle Persian and Parthian *pāvlik*, meaning literally "a follower of the apostle Paul" (*Pis'mennye pamyatniki Vostoka*, 2011, no. 15/2, pp. 67-69).

After retirement Perikhanian became a research-adviser in her home institute and during 2001-02 delivered lectures in Old Armenian at the Special Oriental Faculty of Saint Petersburg State University.

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(Arthur Ambartsumian)