The Armenian Military in the Byzantine Empire
Conflict and Alliance under Justinian and Maurice

Armen Ayvazyan
Foreword by Ilkka Syvanne

This book brings to light one of the least known, yet most turbulent periods in the history of the Armenian military and its complex relationship with the Byzantine Empire. In its first part, Armen Ayvazyan embarks on a military-historical analysis of the Armenian uprising against Emperor Justinian’s government in 538-539. While revealing and evaluating various tactical elements and stratagems employed by the Armenian forces, he carefully considers earlier and later evidence regarding their military operations, including both conventional warfare and high risk missions such as targeting killings of enemy commanders-in-chief and assassination plots against the heads of colonial administrations.

And in the second part, Ayvazyan examines the Byzantine attitudes towards the Armenians and their armed forces, revealing, inter alia, that the underlying source for continuity of the anti-Armenian images with the analogous Roman tradition of prejudice was essentially geopolitical.

Dr. Ayvazyan has managed to perform an almost impossible task. He has demonstrated that, despite the perceived paucity of the relevant historical evidence, it is still possible to arrive at a completely new, well-substantiated and plausible reconstruction of the Armenian rebellion in 538-539.

Ilkka Syvanne, Ph.D.

5 offbeat questions to the author:

1) Who are you?
A scholar.

2) What is the central theme of your book?
Armenian resistance to the colonial policies of the Byzantine Empire.

3) If you had to bring forward a sentence of your book, which you would choose?
In spite of all countermeasures taken by the major powers of the time – the Eastern Roman Empire and Sassanid Persia, the Armenian armed forces continued to maintain an exceptional level of professional skill and combat effectiveness (and in Persarmenia – their organizational and command structure as well), regularly demonstrating them in subsequent military vicissitudes and, in the long run, effectively retaining the opportunity for Armenia to restore its full independence, if as late as 885.

4) If your book was a music, which it would be?
"Ride of the Valkyries" from Richard Wagner’s Die Walküre.

5) What would you like to share with your readers first and foremost?
The booming studies of the Romano-Byzantine and Partho-Persian militaries could hardly claim to be inclusive without a closer analysis of the enduringly dynamic armed forces of neighboring Armenia, may the latter be an intermittently fully independent or autonomous actor in the historical Near East. Almost incessant wars waged against the armies of such superpowers as Parthia/Persia and Rome/Byzantium (more often than not in alliance with one of them against the other) as well as against the Caucasian mountaineers and the invading nomads from Central Asia acquainted the Armenian military with the most potent war machines of the time and, by necessity, helped to develop strategies for opposing each of them and adopting their foes’ warfare practices, thus enriching the resourcefulness of Armenian battlefield tactics.