



## Armenian Myths and Legends and their Impact on Armenian Beliefs and Literature

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### ABSTRACT

Remnants and light sediments and reflections of the beliefs of Animistic and Totemistic ideological systems that have been dominant among clans and tribes residing in Armenian lands during very distant periods, that is Palaeolithic periods are still recognizable in some life habits and behaviours, social norms, popular beliefs, various folkloric fields, tales, mythological narratives, customs and traditions, folk songs, and proverbs of contemporary Armenian people.

This paper through studying beliefs and legends of Armenian people tries to prove their relationship with folkloric literature.

### Original Article:

Received 20 Mar. 2015

Accepted 22 June. 2015

Published 30 July. 2015

### Keywords:

Legends, Old Beliefs,  
Armenian Nation, Folk  
Literature, Myth

### Introduction

Ancient Armenian beliefs, religion, worships, and temples, a very complex and incompatible system in various stages of progress and development, are historical fruit of the formation of Armenian nation. This period, as a period of spreading worshipping fire and fire temples all over Armenian territory, lasted approximately 600 years and continued up until fifth century AD. Armenian beliefs are a part of general beliefs of the early Indo-European people that are derived from the early beliefs of these people, their religio-mythological ceremonies, and their perception of worship. This matter has later had a prominent impact on the nature of Armenian nation which has been emanated from its kinship with other ethnicities during various periods. It has also influenced Armenian culture with very close relationship with other civilizations and belief worship systems. Therefore, the course of historiography, ancient Armenian beliefs, religion, worships, and temples can be classified into three main periods:

- a) Early ethno-tribal periods that has been contemporary with mythological beliefs and ideas and witchcraft ceremonies.
- b) Periods of dissociation or disintegration of ethno-tribal societies and formation of large ethnic confederacies, and formation of early governments based on imagination-born ideas and religio-mythological perceptions, beliefs, and worships in distant times.
- c) Periods of formation of advanced governments that had evident and specific religion and temples.

### Imagination and Nature

Early humans from very ancient times, believed in the expression of beliefs and ideas about natural

phenomena and inanimate objects like stone, wood, etc. and the secret relations between animals and their incarnation associations with each other, which all for their part impacted the beliefs of humans of those periods through a series of magical actions. Beliefs regarding mountains, boulders, trees, waters, fire, sky, and luminous objects (stars, meteors, planets), visualizations and imaginations about weather events, attributing the nature of animals to humans and having reasons for being afraid of them and worshipping them, mythological narratives and beliefs, all begin from those eras. Armenian mounts are visualized as live characters that are siblings, like mounts Ararat and Aragats which are brother and sister. Mount Anduk and Marut and mounts Mrav and Tajus and Zagros were seen as bull and dragon that fundamental disagreements occurs between them and often this results in fight and ends in mutual cursing and damnation. Sun is imagined as a bird with a ring in its beak or as a fiery girl or as a child/juvenile with burning eyes (gazelle-eyed, Haratch) or sometimes to a radiant precious stone, a luminous shiny wheel, but moonlight has been likened to a newborn child or a newly-wed groom in deathbed. Stars and galaxies are associated with personalities, different animals and/or their foot prints (like Milky Way as a birthplace and chaff in space) or equipments such as chariot, scale, and skewer, and/or thundering clouds are likened to goat and ox. Thundering storms are likened to world's terminator dragon, and lightning and fearful celestial sounds to fights, and relentless and mutinous struggles.

### Totemism (Symbolism)

In this period some sort of contemplation about the kinship between tribes and human races with a common kinship and origin of creation, with animals, plants and sometimes in relation to natural objects has caused the emergence of totemic beliefs or worships and beliefs of predecessors. Among their living memories in Armenian beliefs are belief in Yervand and Yervaz the ox, dragon snakes rising from Sanasar and Baghdasar waters, giant dragon in the worship beliefs of Medes, sayings and narratives between animals and birds that have turned into human narrative myths and/or early human's belief regarding the worship of (ox, ram, ewe, gazelle, bear, wolf, fish, water snake, stork, crane, lion cub, leopard, wild goat, etc). Based on the ideology of the early beliefs of humankind, mountains, animal, plants, nature, and many objects at the beginning were all human that later, just without any change, have been transformed with the intervention of the higher power.

### **Worship of Elements**

From natural elements that have been worshiped among Armenian people from ancient times fire, water, boulders, some plants, trees and different flowers can be named which the memory of their worship stretches to the very old habits and traditions of current times. Water and fire as two living personalities being siblings, as the opposite figures, are always against each other (Water as a brother always puts out or kills his sister, fire). Fire is a sacred creature and free from any kind of evil and bad that has been worshiped by ancient Armenians. They swore to fire and later related fire to house, family, and family center and worshiped it. Oven or fireplace is the place of fire at home that means family and has always been represented in the form of tandoor and has always been kept lit. Armenians always performed all sacred ceremonies like marriage, baptism, etc. next to tandoor before and even after Christianity. In a little further periods, worshiping fire entered Armenian beliefs as one of the official worships, and turned into one of the basic pillars of Armenians important beliefs (worshiping the god of fire who is known as Bagin of fire or Hurbag), which later during middle age Christianity fire-worshippers were called "ash-worshippers" to ridicule them. One of their living evidences that has remained among Armenian people up to this date, is "Chaharshanbeh sur" or bonfire, in winter (during February, middle of Iranian calendar month of Bahman) that Armenians associate it to the sacred ritual of fire by getting together and performing bonfire ceremony. The impact and traces of water worship, in the form of narratives and mythical stories about miraculous fish "the enchanter goldfish", in places dug for irrigation in old times, like water canals and large water tanks - which its symbol is the "stone dragon" - have remained to this date. Names and their traces such as the name of residential areas (place names) and villages such as "Lusa biyur" meaning moonlight spring and "Gat nagh biyur" meaning advisor spring that are scared springs and have therapeutic properties, specially mineral waters that people perform sacrifices and special worship ceremonies next to them, have still remained. Ceremonies like lighting wax, incense or burning wild rue, sacrificing rooster, etc. Worshiping plants and in particular trees, therapeutic grasses, flowers,

and grain crops all in a way are related to the worship of plants (Harutunian, 2001, pp. 5-10). Plantain tree is one of the important trees worshiped by Armenians and in the ancient times Aramaic priests used its leaves and branches for fortunetelling. From the old beliefs, the sacrificed or donated pretty-faced character (Manuchehr) who is the grandson of Anushavan Susanar can be named as an example. Other trees worshipped were oak, poplar, willow tree, wild rose bush, and papyrus and from plants evergreen flower Hamasperam (Pahlavi word meaning plant) or flower etc. can be named (Acharian, 1977, p. 21). Among plants worshiped Lushtak (some kind of bitter plant root used as the master medicinal plant that is a remedy for many pains and at the same time for evil eye) and also plants with wild flowers and hardwood can be mentioned. Trees had their own gift-giving or respect day in Armenian beliefs and in Armenian plant decoration day is called Zakhkard, but the blessed and festive day of water and flowers is the day of Hambartsum or ascension, which in Armenian language is the (mother of flowers festival) is accompanied by performing worship and fortune-worship rituals (that both became coordinated with Christian festivals later) (Harutunian, 2001: pp. 5-10).

### **Primaries in Armenian Beliefs**

In ancient times among Armenians, at first space or galaxy are incarnated (visualized). First they were imagined as dual entities, heaven and earth, but later pictured as triple entities (earth, heaven, and sea or undersea). Its name often appears as Andundak or the black occult (perpetual black) that is later known as "kabus" or "Karos" which appears as Sandramatik Andundets in ancient Pahlavi language. This image often emerges in the form of a person climbing up an upright tree raised from the sea. It is sometimes known as an erect mount rose from water or sea. The latter as a helical (ring-like), or giant fish of the seas or the tree elevated from the back of fish, or sometimes also in the shape of flat ground on the horns of cow, or tree, or a mountain, always arises from the center of the world and is changed into an axis and causes the connection between earth, sky and underground. Their center is sainted and turned into altar. Among all these one that is more famous than others and can be mentioned is mount Ararat risen from famous Vastes or Armenian mountain range, which later turned into famous Masis myth or Noah's ark, or the famous rocky mountain known as Mush region in western Armenia that is located in Turkey today and is called mount Innaknia. In some locations which were a place for worshiping idols, later Vank, holy pilgrimage lake, and Surb Karapet were build instead. This place is built on the entrance of the hell Sadramelek and the underground door of the earth. Next to this rocky mountain the so-called center of earth Ashtishat, (or Yashti Shat in Pahlavi language meaning "altar") the old spiritual center of ancient Armenia is located (Harutunian, 2000, pp. 10-15-163). Earth and heavens are divided into seven belts that are called "Qat" or floor. Earth's floors descend stepwise downward and take the following: Goding, Dajukhak, Sandramadak, Tartarus, Gehen, Andundak, and Panatak (Paravashunch, 1902, pp. 264-265). Among this seven names the most famous ones, Dajukhak, Sandramadak, Tartarus, and Gehen all have Iranian or

Greek concepts that convey different names for underground and have equal meanings (Sukasian, 1967, p. 168). Dajukhak is a Pahlavi-Iranian word which has the same meaning as hell in Iranian languages. Gehen (Gehenna) is a Hebrew word that has entered other languages through the holy bible and has the same meaning as Dajukhak, the hell in old Persian and Pahlavi (Acharian, 1971, pp. 532-654). Sandramidak is also a loanword from Iranian Pahlavi language that has entered Armenian language and means "the deepest point of earth and underground" that is synonym with Dajukhak, the Pahlavi word for hell (Same book, pp. 172-388). Eastern principles of early human societies and establishments specific to Indo-European mythology and religion that have combined with each other, in that specific race, between two (coreligionist) tribes which marriage and kinship rules over their relationships, have penetrated the Armenian mythical/religious system which later brought about contradicting metaphysical perceptions and beliefs, and ultra-phenomena fantasies and imaginations among this nation, i.e. old Armenians. Since the confederation of Indo-Europeans sky is the principle personality so far as it reaches the divinity that is against earth itself or underworld or black depths. Radiant bright and clear sky in Armenian language originates from the same word by changing some sounds in the form of Tio "God", "bright day" and invisible thing "Deek", "God and sky" that is from Indo-European root "die" meaning "glow and radiance". Fortune is identified as an old man sitting on a peak (Jouk and Jamanak) meaning (time and date) that by having two black and white rings in hand and picking those rings conveys the meaning and interpretation of ongoing days and nights. Twilight or east is characterized as a virgin that pushes the darkness of night away and/or routs the evil spirits, and bring salvage and wisdom, and is known as the pure holy virgin. Blackness and darkness of night is identified as an evil face and appears with the appearance of nightly executioner wizards who go after sun and light of justice holding black snakes in their hands (Abghian, 1975, pp. 16-20-48-49).

### **Worship of Spirits**

Based on constant advanced relations between society and basic beliefs about nature having life and complication of these relations, beliefs in evil and good forces are gradually formed in society and nature (at first as an unspecified admixture of good and evil), and later (specified to some extent) with emergence of duality personality that there is both God and Satan and it is subject to higher and lower forces (sky and earth, light and darkness, day and night, and death and life). It is from this point in history that in parallel, the belief and vision of spirit and metaphysical world or afterlife appears. Evil and good spirits (evil and good) based on early human ideology appear as animals and/or fully human and sometimes deformed faces. In old narratives it is evident that irregular or messed-up destroying forces (Kabus) indeed were spirits in the form of animals (which appeared in parallel with lightning, clouds and cyclones). Dragons often visualized as giant snakes or as seal, buffalo, or whale in the form of sea spirits, Hambaroon or the same (Pahlavi word Hambaroon meaning demon) with Hooshaka pareek (fay), Pareek (Satan) with demon foot that sometimes appears in the form of a human.

Fay with human face, Yaralez or Arlez (a stone-like spirit for licking the dead), leader of savages (Shahabed) that is a spirit in the form of human or snake, (giant) Kajak Havjahares or (nymph, fairy) and other human-looking spirits (Asharian, 1977, p. 27).

Among the same old beliefs, the spirits of predecessors residing in fireplace (that are respected with special ceremonies) have special position among the Armenian people. Among these spirits, home properties and protective spirit of the blessing of the house which Armenians call it (fate, fortune) is imagined in the form of a person with human or animal face (snake-face). Other spirits totally have evil spirit, which are related to death, disease, winter, darkness, and deep dark underworld (hell) and they all called names that share the word(s) Chajak or (evil) Charunk and Divk. Among them, spirits separated from the body of the dead or Urvakank can be mentioned who appear with different animal faces to ordinary people and scare them and cause different diseases. Of this sort, we can name evil spirits who disturb sleeping people and cause them damage and harm. Like Khaplik (Khalulik), who interprets the personality of winter, and they call it Sutha whom they expel from houses and barns with special ceremonies in early spring. Or the darkness of winter night and foggy rains, and evil spirits who rip apart people and domestic animals like an evil wolf and they can be repelled by special prayers and invocations. In Armenian ancient beliefs, diseases are imagined in the form of faces of different spirits and each disease breaks out as the effective result of that evil spirit. Among these spirits the oldest one is the spirit of Aissen that means ego, spirit, and evil spirit and from creation and wisdom point of view is similar and synonym to the word spirit or self. All of them convey the meaning "ego" that when touched by someone, a psychic state and insanity dominates that person. We can delicately recognize this word, Aysha, the synonym of the word "Divahar", demonised "psychic", or "insane" which means released from demon or evil spirit. Another agent of the evils is the evil eye that through the action of the demon a bad human emerges. This spirit is often identified as the form and identity of humans, animals, plants, and evil-eyed objects. In such situations, great physical and spiritual harm is inflicted to the person, such as appearance of various diseases (e.g. in the history of the founder of Khurnatsi, the prominent historian from the fifth century AD, regarding the evil eye of the Armenian kingdom of Yervan it is stated that from his evil eye all large rocks had exploded). The evil spirits who harm pregnant women that are called "Aal" and "Taghpan" cause her death or illness by looking at the face of a person. Acharian explains the meaning of Aal as: "A spirit with ugly face who is the enemy of pregnant women". In Iranian beliefs Aal is also an enemy of pregnant women and they are harmful creatures who usually appear as a skinny woman with frail hands and legs, and red face to the pregnant woman (Ayvazian, 1391, p. 59). Evil spirits or the thief spirit or Azrael is portrayed with human face wearing pointed hats who holds a wand in three colors and the stroke of wand (depending on the color of the wand) causes either death or hard and incurable diseases such as plague.

### **Azrael's Hit**

To avoid all these problems and abnormal examinations some events specific to magic are performed and also some

spells (prayers) are said using of which magic beliefs each of them having different types and varieties spread rarely and over time. Later, these acts will be written into the tradition and become a kind of astral mystery or (magic word of stars) and are later and over time included in different concepts and beliefs of Christianity and different Christian religions in the form of books and important works (magic).

### **Conceptions of Soul, Death, and the World Beyond Life**

Among the Armenians, the human spirit has often been conceived in the form of a bird (white or black) with a round and moonlit face. After the death, the spirit come out of the body through the mouth and leaves it forever. According to the basic beliefs, the soul can leave the body temporarily, and travel to different places and even go to the underworld and come back again to the body. The journey of the soul is done especially when the man has slept normally done and when the soul is separated from the body for a few days travels to the underworld in the form of a "dream" or "subjective perception". Sleep is usually interpreted as a temporary death, yet the death itself is interpreted as a "long sleep" (sleeping is described as "dying" and sleeper is described as "dead" or "deceased"). Sleep and wakefulness have a direct relationship with the belief in death and resurrection and the winter of the world of plants and dying and spring is directly related to waking up or arising. In addition, a month spinning around the moon and reviving of sighting and the disappearance phases of the moon has more than anything made the Armenian people's beliefs in these issues stronger. The last case of life and death in the case of the death of King powerful Armenian myth that dogs lick the dead king's body is an expression of Armenian done. Or such other place as the cut head of Armenian generalissimo Mou Sheikh Mamikounian to give life again put the dogs to lick her body, give life back to him, or likening the young wheat personal suffering, death and resurrection he described as a puzzle he does. Armenians have several riddles of wheat some of them are international ideas. For example, we can mention some cases: They killed me with a sword; They cut me with a sword; I died, I went, I was doomed; I arose in the year of the Bear; He was alive, he died, and yet again revived; He was cut by the sword; Stone was pulverized on stone and crushed; Died and went to Hell; It became the cure of our spirit; Therefore, they shed sweats on wheat and bury them in the soil; And after growing crush and mill them and burn them in the fire and make them into bread. It is worth noting that the subject of taking bread into the mouth (which in Christianity is a religious secret) is actually a kind of phenomenon of spirit. This means that humans are not the words of ordinary bread, but the bread is similar rituals (Haroutonian, 2000, pp. 359-367). This riddle has also international instances like in Russian, English, Arabic and Persian narratives. The main streamline of all those riddles is as follows. Wheat is portrayed as the character of a man. The puzzles, wheat and generous with physical punishment is everywhere. The sword is sometimes fragmented and sometimes the crushed stone. Sometimes dies, but rises again, and the life or death and is set on fire (hell) and into the souls of others or saved by the bread (A.Taylor Englis, 1951, pp. 251-252). Death has adopted characters in

different forms. As the dog spirit Arnak (in Assyrians meaning the wolflike dog) that originated from the Indo-European narratives and traditions, then as humanlike spirit who comes as Azrael when takes a life who determines a person's way of death at his birthdate and the day of death and writes in the book of the dead (Book of Azrael). However, when fatal diseases such as plague spread, records the names of people who are to die. On the date of his death the person is offered to Azrael who strikes him with different weapons (spears, swords, skewers) and takes out his soul or separates it from him. Death is perceived as a war against Azrael. After accepting Christianity the duty of Azrael is transferred to the archangel Gabrael. According to the early human beliefs, the soul will ascend to heavens, if he is righteous accompanied by angels goes to the station of the righteous that is a very bright place, but if the dead person is sinful he is tormented by angels and is send to the station of the sinful accompanied with evil spirits, which is lower than the stations of the righteous and is dim and dark. But if he is neither sinful nor just, his soul is left behind in the justice station. These are all early Armenian man's imagination from hell, purgatory and heaven and these beliefs would later grow and develop even further. In Indo-European belief, the soul of the dead travels to the other world after death and heads towards the world-divider river and by passing over the bridge leaves that river behind. This belief is also preserved among Armenians, but the belief in heaven and hell are parallel with some other beliefs. According to this, paradise that is called tree in Armenian (it is a Persian word that means tree house or park) always has lush trees, of course, with fragrant flowers, fresh waters and springs, beautiful heavenly birds, and a very green and miraculous garden that is in the heavens, where there is delicious food with pleasant, tasty, and everlasting fresh fruits that blessed and godly people eat them. Hell is placed just perpendicularly against this heavenly paradise that in ancient Iranian language is called "bad station" Sandramt, (which is derived from the Persian language) and lies deep underground. It is a very dark place, a deep valley that has evil and bad spirits. It is where there are large boiling pots on the fired ovens that guilty spirits are pushed into it to suffer punishment. This way hell and heaven are placed horizontally against each other and are separated by Incendiary River that is under the narrow-as-hair bridge.

### **The Right Path**

When the spirits flee after the torment of hell and try to go to heaven by passing over the narrow-as-hair bridge the bridge collapses under the weight of their sins and they all fall into the incendiary river. In other words, the narrow-as-hair bridge is erected over hell and at the time of resurrection all the dead people of the world should pass over the bridge. Righteous and innocent people will pass over it without any concern and would go to heaven, while sinners will slip over the bridge and go to hell. After the idea of hell and paradise it is the turn for believing in the day of punishment and spirits. The day of the preliminary punishment of spirits is performed on Safagh day, when the gates of the heavenly paradise are opened. The judgment day is established at the gates of heaven and now in Christianity instead of ancient gods, Jesus Christ, Gregory

the Illuminator, and Virgin Mary and pious people are present.

On the Day of Judgment guilty people will mourn. After the Day of Judgment the righteous go to heaven and sinners go to hell. There is a belief for the Day of Judgment and that is: When on Judgement Day or the Resurrection, Jesus Christ judges all the good and bad spirits with his scales of justice based on their deeds, and places the righteous to his right side and the sinners on his left side and based on this people will be sent to hell or Paradise (this is consistent with the Mehr- Mithraist beliefs of the fair Varash). All ideas of the day of resurrection and afterlife are related to pre-Christian era beliefs that existed in Iranians beliefs as well. Especially it is in relation to the old Indian and Greek beliefs and the beliefs and traditions of other world religions and nations that the beliefs of the Armenian people -as a result of permanent and continuous relationship with all these nations- has found an independent and separate form.

#### **Funeral and Praising the Dead Ceremonies**

All ceremonies related to the notions of afterlife, are dependent on death. In the historical land of ancient Armenia different types of funeral are seen from different cultural eras such as cremation, stone graves, burial urns and regular graves (digging), which all are synonymous and in conformity with difference recovered instruments. (Such as furniture or room equipment, weapons, food, decorative objects of the sacrificed people and different skeletons of various animals). These all are representatives of very far and simple periods of the early human, with a variety of funeral rituals and their related ceremonies and existing beliefs about after lie in another world. The oldest existing writings about the time of death are related to the Armenian king Artaxerxes when upon his death all the sacrifices and property he had with Artabanus become damned with his father's curse because he had rebelled against him. Evidences and writings or existing letters from the time of his death exist in the books of the prominent Armenian historian of the fifth century AD Moses Khovarnatsi, and Pastos Bouzand and other ancient historians. Also the ways of mourning including: regular mourning, afterlife provision supply, corpse, clothes, messing up the hair, and even the cries of the bereaved grieving mothers and women who cry with wailing, all have been mentioned and seen in the books of Armenian historians. Based on subjective beliefs and afterlife a form of praise of the dead is formed (at the time of ancestors) that are parall with different signs and symbols of mourning ceremony. The worship of the dead quickly begins after death and by washing the corpse (even the clothes of the dead are washed), which its prupose is to keep the corpse and soul flawless at the time of going to the other world. Then they put bread on his chest, and place a blessed bread that is made from unsalted dough (Noshkharak) on his mouth, and smoke frankincense or (Esfand) in his nostrils. Put candles in his hands to light the way to the other world. After the burial they prepare soul food in cemetery or at home in the honor of the dead that is still common all over Armenia to this date. After the burial ceremony, other ceremonies are held during special days, such as memorial or the dawn day, seventh day, fortieth day, the anniversary of the passing day, and quintet days of commemoration of the dead, which all are related to the return of the spirit of the dead to earth from the heavens after performing of these

quintet ceremonies (Harutunian, 2001, pp. 11-34). The spirit of the dead at the time of descent is usually in houses or at the nearest cemetery, therefore, their heirs are required to commemorate them by performing various ceremonies and with frankincense and candles. (All these old ceremonies have been later harmonized and coordinated with the beliefs of the new worship religion by the new and dominant religion in Armenia being Christianity). According to these ancient beliefs and with the timely and prevalent union of Armenian clans that the Armenian nation's pagodas and religious worships are formed.

#### **The First Structure of the Armenian Pagoda and Gods or Ethnic Godheads**

The formation of the Armenian pagodas style and structure and its development and enrichment, has had clear and significant effect in the first millennium BC (one or two thousand years BC) among the Armenian races. This is formed by the arrival of and mixing with Indo-European tribes, such as the (Lullubian Khani, Phoenician Nazakiah) and non-Indo-European tribes such as (Uartian Houry, Caucasian) and close and fellow races (like the Iranians and the Medes) and the Middle Eastern nations such as (Assyrians, Babylonians, and ancient Persians) and later Greek civilizations. In the days of dissociation of old racial alliances and ethno-racial communities before the formation of early states, Armenian gods and their worship are born and created that are built as the co-racial and fellow countryman gods with specific cultures with unique mythological heroes, which are later united with each other in the form of co-racial gods. Racial affinity, gives the title of its race identity and personality that are demonstrated as co-racial leaders or gods of that race, which have their own features and fight against foreigners and enemies and defend their borders and boundaries and seek to expand their territory and to protect and guard it. Among Armenian gods (goddesses), the oldest and most ancient one is Torgom, which is of the same ancestor and race with Armenian nations. This is the kind of gods of the same race that his children Hayk, Aram (the ancestor of Georgians and Caucasians) and Kartoles are their heirs (Kartoles is the ancestor of Georgians). According to the traditions of the holy Bible, Torgom is the grandson of the son of Noah, Japheth, and thus, in all the past periods in Armenian first millennium and ancient middle ages Armenia was called Haystan or house of Torgom, but Hayek the ancestor of Armenians according to the traditions and stories of Khorny Nartsy, the prominent Armenians historian and medieval Georgian authors, is the son of Torgom. Torgom's name appears in many ancient places in Greece, the Middle East and so on, with place names such as Torkos, Torkunos, Tokvan and other names. For example, the national hero of Lydia, Tarkon or (Tarkhunin), appears in Liki Trokomasin, in Hetiti Taro and even in Lullubian language as Tarkhuya Tarkhuntin, meaning the "god of thunder". He name in the Old Armenian narratives appears in three forms, Tarban meaning the son of Sam and the founding father or grandfather of Tarun land, Angegh Tork, meaning the myth the grandson of Hayk son Paskam, and finally Torgom meaning the grandson of Japheth and Hayk's father. Various manifestations of the names are a witness to their old and extensive worship. The names that end in /Terh /, /Ter/ t\_h are an evidence of the victory and power of their owner. It

seems that Torgom has been one of the gods of ancient ethnic Armenian that had possessed divine glory and power and power over lightning (Ibid.). Later, because of the homophony of the names, the racial union of the nations or Sayatgharma (Batyl - Gar - Samavi of Assyria - Babylonian) that was a state in a city and fortress are united and its name appears in the holy book of Torah and Gospel in the form of narratives. In the lesser Hayk region in Asia Minor, Tarkoma (according to Hettite inscriptions) the same name as Torgom, resurfaces again and appears in the Urartian inscriptions as the name Nazkhongamany. Torgom as the primary racial father, the name of a myth with lightning characteristics is manifested more than before in the primary father Hayek and his heir and in the form of (the landlord, the owner -t pet\_h) among the Kings. Hayk is the first name among the ancestors of the Armenian race, their leader and chief who revolted against the great and powerful Baal, whose name probably from the root to grow, to swell that from there it is translated in Albanian (b FLLAR) meaning reptile and poisonous, snake and in Romanian (balaur) dragon, and in Armenian as (blur) hill and (bolor), meaning all. Later in the western Semitic language families Baal that is the name of the god of heavens revolts and leaves and goes away to the north and kills Baal, who had followed him and establishes a new world with a new race that is known after him as Hayk. The war between Hayk and Baal is like the war between the dragon with lightning hero that with his killing security (of the Armenian race and country) and the order of the progress of the world is reserved (Ibid.). A trace of the same myth exists in relation with name and title of the second person Armenian ancestral father that is Aram the son of Hayk, in some narratives and traditions, (The victorious wars of Kremaratsian or Medians) Madesy, Piapis Taghia. He wanted to extend and secure the boundaries of Armenians. In the deeds and names of the Kings, according to legend Aram the name of the early father of Arlim and the name of the Uratu king Raha appears in different forms. Hayk and Aram are the main gods of the Armenian races that the former depends on the identity of the Armenian nation and the latter is the early father of the Armenians of the Arim's race (the primary father figure according to the Greek tradition Aramis) that non-Armenian nations call him as such, like Armin and Armenian. It seems this pair of Gods is co-racial and their worship that had started since the formation of the co-racial races has also continued later on.

### **Holy Twins**

The results of the long and old worship of the Armenian twin gods or the beliefs of the ancestors and myths is related to the nature and society, and the manifestation of powers and contradictory phenomena that consolidates the order of the space, and are engraved on the boulders of Armenia along with national cultural realities and are demonstrated on the paintings of the bronze age, and especially in the historical narrations. Among the sacred twins of the nature sun and moon and/or fire and water, and from the myths, our ancestors Yervand and Yervaz (Yervandunian kings, Bagaran temple close to Yervandashat and founders of the magi) can be named. Brothers Baghdasar and Sanasar born of water (Azar-run and Guenoni from a family of Armenian rulers, the house of Sasan founder of the city and the

country), Demetron and Gissanon (the holy place in Ashtishat, snake and dragon, founders of new cities) all are driven from their private country and are established in a new environment (in Armenia) and have founded new cultural and national realities. The memory of their worship and their thoughts have been preserved all and has survived a little later in the religious ceremonies of the (green child) that is one of the saints. Since the time of the union of the Indo-Europeans the Armenian myth Yervand has prevailed in the Armenian beliefs that probably is the Indo-European thunder god (Per(K))uno and/or god Perua\_(Perwa) from Cappadocia or God Hittite-Lullubian god Peru (nt) and other similar and synonym names that are a pronunciation change of the word and the name of a myth. From the prefix of the name of its god in the ancient place of Bargvand that is formed by the combination of the Iranian (bag) meaning god and the name «vand» (a) Yerevana is made (Ibid.). The old Armenian tradition Yervand Yeraz is very miraculous twins who were born of the marriage between a bull and female woman. Yervand possesses a magical (wizardry) power of the effect of eye. The Indo-European divinity of thunder has prevailed as a historical event in Armenian old narrations and later even Armenian kings have been known with this title to the extent that the founder of the Yervanduni kingdom has been called by the title of the god of thunder. But even after the establishment and founding of the Kingdom Yervanduni he has maintained his thundering nature (like twins bulls, where the bull in divine interpretation of lightning is manifested as an animal, but has thunderly eyes that have wizardry power). Gods thunderstorms have had different manifestations in Armenian traditions that have later entered the beliefs of Armenian races and have had an important effect on the religio-cultural beliefs of this nation. Divine kings (Yervand, Tigran, Yervandian, Vahagn) (Ibid.).

### **Armenian Mortal and Resurrectional Gods**

The beautiful Aray is the child of Aram related to the Armenian race mythology that the basis of their name is in the root "ar" that leads to the general Indo-European root "er-" that means moving and lifting. Aray is the immortal and resurrectional Armenian god that refers to the world of plants, particularly cereal grains and things related to it like soil in which the seed dies in the fall and in the spring comes out of the soil. Dead plants are in the form of sprouts at first, then reach to yielding, harvesting and threshing. This is the plant seed that is perpetually in a dying and resurrection cycle. Plants and seeds have been thought of as a beautiful young person that are left with a failed and hopeless love by the mother of Pagoda and then die and get resurrected again. This subject has its roots in the faith of the ancient oriental people (the Middle East, such as the Assyrian-Babylonian as the mythology of gods) is a popular myth, among which we can mention the famous myth of beautiful Aray and king Miram that is based on ancient Mesopotamia religious beliefs and the impacts of the beliefs (of King Miram as the daughter of the beautiful Semite people gods Derektu who is the queen of Assyria). It seems that in the original and ancient Armenian myth, the god of beauty in the structure of the Pagoda that is the grain of wheat and is considered dead is the same as the young person of the Middle Ages that according to the narratives

of Platon, the famous Greek philosopher, is the child of Arminus (i.e. Armenian Aram) that is one of the mysteries of the Greek philosopher Platon and is also among the resurrection of the elites of the myth. All mythical heroes in Armenian novels such as beautiful Aray, (Ardavan, Mushikh Mamukunian) that the expectations of their resurrection is evident in mythical works, all come back to the Armenian stories or the anecdote of Aralz (or Ralz) (Releh that twice lies at the root of it the word ar-) and all are related to doglike spirits that exist in all stories, beliefs and historical myths of other ancient oriental nations, too (Ibid.).

### **Armenian Elements in Urartian and Hayasaian Mythology**

The Armeni races of the government of Armenia had left their last and most original foundation and impacts of their religious history and worship on the slopes of Armenian mountain ranges as their oldest religious civilization system. The earliest and oldest Armenian united race is seen in (717,711) BC in Indo-European myths and also in the emergence of the oldest Armenian nation in several mythical names such as (Tarumutry Tiytunish, Shili Li, Baltayk, Unagashtash, etc.), and Shant was also common among the ancient nations of Asia minor. A little later, the Armenian elements are clearly recognized in the organized Urartian official religion and its structure and methods between (seventh to ninth) BC. In Urartian inscriptions for the first time the word Ashtyusy or Demenshiv which means the idol of god, which is indeed the same and synonym with the Armenian word Astuvas, means god. In Urartian mythology the words of the engraved inscriptions Arsi Bedini, Sinvay Ardi, Aratuarasy, Si Uluny, Turani and other myths in Armenian language such as Arastvuadik, Arsiy Reddy, Syndar Ardy (the procreation god), Artu Arasy, have direct association with the Armenian word "Ard". Touranian has direct relationship with the Armenian word dur-k, which means "donator". Si Uguny has direct association with the Armenian word Sukon that its plural Zokunak gives the months (Ibid.). The ancient Indo-European and ethnic gods continue to remain in national narratives with a new form and appear as the historical heroes of the novel such as ethnic ancestors (Torgom, Turks, Hayk, Aram, Ara, Yervand, and Yervar, Tigran, Yervandian, but their evil opponents all appear as alien dictators (Bal or Baal, Nabart, King Miram, Azhdahak). Previous centers of ethnic Armenian alliances with their sacred places still existed in the new government-religious and also estate system as different worships places for gods such as (Anni - Kamakh - Arizan, Turdan, Bagaharij), at Hayk heights (a large part of Armenian territory, the territory of the Hayasa and its surrounding, Ashtishat and its nearby mountain karkeh in Tarunum, Bagavan in Bagrevand, Armavir, Artashat, Bhagavan in Ararat plane and its surroundings, blacksmith stone, mountain palace around the southeast of lake Van) (Ibid.).

### **The New Structure of the Armenian Religion**

The structure of the Armenian official religion and government has been greatly influenced by the worship of the Iranian gods (Mede and later Achaemenid and Parthian), which in turn has already been influenced by Semite and later Greek gods and their worship. Generally, from the late seventh century BC to the peak of the Mede government

and their attack, the Mede Magi that were a separate folk were doing religious rituals matching up with the name Mogk (a region in southern Armenia) and the conquered countries, among which is a large part of Armenia and believed in the Aryan beliefs (Indo-Iranian). Probably Mithraist religion (Mithraism) and the basis of worshipping and endowment to Anahita, the god of fertility and birth and later during the Achaemenid Empire (from fourth to sixth centuries BC), suddenly the worship of the Almighty Ormazd reached the pinnacle of worship and beliefs (maybe it has been influenced by the new Zoroastrianism religion). Armenia as a part of the Persian Achaemenid Empire was influenced by this new religion which later reached its peak in the Parthian period (3rd century BC), especially during the Parthian descent Armenians and Parthian born that ruled in Armenia. According to the historical evidences of the Greek historian Strabo, all the Persian sacred religious ceremonies were worshipped by Medes and Armenians as well. So some sort of Iranianization of the rituals specific to the Iranian gods was performed in Armenia. In seventh century BC, the Armenian sun god is transformed to the Persian Mithra god (in the Middle Ages to the Persian Mithraism) for five whole centuries. The past mother god, Anahita the ancient Iranian god of thunderbolt of Vahagn (Verethragna, Varahvang) is now the dominant God of Aramazad (Persian Ormazd) with the clear Persian functions and actions that are specific to Ormazd, or the underground god that is the same Persian god of Zaspandramt or Sandramt (in Avesta, spatna armaiti) or Iranian arrow, are responsible for the fate as well as the prophecy of the dreams and the god of the death (Ibid.). At Hellenistic (Greek civilization culture) in all the East, that Armenia is also among them, the impacts of Greek religion and culture take power. According to historical accounts, the Semitic and Greek idols were brought to Armenia by different Armenian kings (Artaxerxes Tigran), even when they were brought to Armenia with the Western priests' direct escort; they were placed in the central parts of the old Armenian temple. "Armenian Artaxerxes first sent the statue of Artemio and Heracles from Asia Minor to Armenia and placed them in Armavir region" (Khorenatsi, p. 2-12). Elders of the Armenian descent Vahuni tribe placed the statues of Apollo and Artemid in Armavir region of Armenia, but considered the Armenian statue of Heracles as the statue of former Khuvahagn (the Armenian god of war) and placed it in the region Tarun, located in the village of Ashtishatt itself. But the very same Armenian king Artaxerxes, from Ellada of Greece by removing the statues of Deus (Zeus) and Artemid, Atenas, Hapestos and Aerodite sent them again to Armenia together with a group of priests. The carriers of these statues were not yet in the middle of the country that heard the news of the death of the Armenian King Artaxerxes. The statues were taken to the greater Hayk area in the castle of Ani and placed there accompanied with the priests. The first child and successor of the Armenian Artaxerxes, Tigran, placed the olympic figure of Deus in the castle of Ani regardless of the fugitive Greek priests' advice, and placed the statue of Athenasin in Tilum, Artemid in Aryza, Hapestos in Bagaharich, but placed the statue of Aphrodite as Heracles' love in Ashtishatt area of Armenia (an area in Western Armenia). He made some fire temples there and contrived gods and an altar in front of them, so

that all the Armenian ministers and rulers can sacrifice and pray in front of them. Then when going to Mesopotamia and seeing the Semitic god, Barshamina that was made of ivory and silver alloy and transparent glass, orders to take it to the greater Hayk and place it in an area called Turdan (Ibid.). According to all these historical characteristics and other accounts from references, confirm that during the dominance of Hellenistic (Greek culture) there can be seen a new Greek cultural-religious layer on the worship and belief in Armenian gods and myths, especially Semitic influences that lead to Greek gods. So the Persian Ahura Mazda has been renamed to Zeus or Deus, Anahita to Artmid, Vahagen to Heracles, Mehr or Muthra to Hepestos, Arrow to Apollon and Hermsin, Astghik or Armenian star to Aphrodite, and Nanah to Aytasin. From this coordination of applications and new nature, the local gods are with no doubt enriched to some extent and under the influence of other priests and in front of those gods and by performing rituals, yet the Armenian nation still maintains its main traditional features (Ibid.). The main Armenian reality and other parallel Iranian religious cultures were some kind of being and a new source in terms of historical aspect and their deep process that totally are formed as an Armenian mythology upon which seemed to be something other than Hellenistic new visual worship (Greek culture) that in the holy positions of fundamental and total changes of the pre-Hellenistic, that is pre-Armenian and Armenian culture never existed. However, the new culture (Greek culture) did not leave significant influence on Armenian beliefs and rituals. That is why except for the Armenian historian, Khorenatsi and other Greek authors (two Greek historians), the traditional Armenian history whether from ancient eras or later on in continuation of worshipping their gods have preserved the original Armenian-Iranian names. Except this, some historical events are told to prevent further advance of the impact of Armenian religious worship from Hellenism or Greek religion (Ibid.). According to the fifth century Armenian historian Khorenatsi, "after the death of Khosrow Kavadh, the Armenian-Parthian king, Sassanian Ardashir I conquered Armenia (3rd century AD). He pays too much attention to worship in fire temple that seemed to have been very close to and accepted by Zoroastrianism, and orders that eternal fire and torch to be kept in front of the worshipped god, Ahura Mazda in Bagavan region. He also ordered the destruction and crushing of the statues of his enemy "Vaksh or Vaghersh", the founder of the Parthian dynasty". Although they had the picture of the sunshine and moonlight, they were moved from Armavir region and had them brought to Bagavan and Artashat. In other words, he replaced the religion of Sassanid dynasty, that is Zoroastrianism with the the religion of the previous Parthian dynasty Mithraism (Haroutonian, 2001; p. 11-43). According to historical accounts, the Armenian pre-Christian mythology consisted of nine Gods:

"Agathangeghos adds in this regard that: "Aramazad together with this octet group forms a group of enead gods" (Ayvazian, 2012, p. 79-80).

**1. Myth of the Almighty God** "Aramazad" that is Ahura Mazda or Vamizad (in Uni language) that dates back to ancient Persia. (Ahura Mazda the judgment owner) with great and courageous epithets (the great and courageous

Ahura Mazda) as the creator of the heaven and earth, the father of all myths, that is the godfather of gods who created all the blessings and benedictions. His main fire temple was located in the great Hayk region in Daranaghic areas and the castle of Ani, where all the treasures and wealth and Armenian-Parthian tombs were there (Pashayan, 1963, p. 64).

**2. Anahid the goddess of beauties and blessings,** Armenian's supreme adorable god after Ahura Mazda (which dates back to the Parthian Anahita) that means of pure and clean nature and she is the daughter or wife of Ahura Mazda and means the great lady, the mother of all rectitudes, supporter of all nations and people of earth that from her the Armenian land is created and continues its existence. In addition, she is also described as the golden, gold or gold born mother (probably because of her golden statues erected in fire temples). The original place of her worship is in the great Hayk area that is in Egeghiats areas in Ariza region, and consists of four main fire temples and is located between the greater and lesser Hayk land and Asia Minor (Ibid.). Because of the holistic and extensive popular worship of this myth, this entire region is called "Anahita Kan" after her name and fame. Her next fire temple was located in the ancient region of Armavir, the capital of Armenia, which later on moved to the new capital of Armenia that is Artashat by Armenian Artaxerxes I. The other fire temple related to Anahita was built in the territory of Tarun in Ashtishatt, that is near the fire temples of Vahagn (god of war) and the star of the Armenian god of beauty that was located in the Andzevats region near the temple of the Armenian Ahura Mazda. All of these indicate that the worship of Anahita had a huge popularity in Armenian beliefs at that time. Near the pasturages of the exclusive fire temples of Ariza where the milch cows grazed, there was a holy altar in front of them in the torch like opening of Keshel. Hundreds of male and female servants called Herodoles (holy gifts) have been donated to this temple or sacred altar (Ibid.). The virgins of this high glorious land donated their virginity to Anahita, the mother of goodnesses or gold mother. They hadn sexual relate with pilgrims who came there and later and after doing a holy ritual in that pagoda were allowed to marry. Anahita worshipping ceremonies were conducted twice a year:

1- One in the spring (early April) or the Persian Ordibehesht.

2- In late summer or early autumn in the beginning of the new Armenian year, that is Armenian Navasard 5<sup>th</sup> that is equal to Persian Shahrivar 20<sup>th</sup> (Ibid.). Usually, pilgrims and visitors of Anahita temple put thin green woven branches and stems like a crown on their heads. Sometimes doing these ceremonies is the evidence that Anahita is the goddess of blessing and bounties is also the origin of creation of the generations and their supported deeds that is the special attribute described for all gods. Anahita whose worship originates from the ancient mythical gods of oriental nations that themselves originate from the worship of the Iranian Anahita, has been worshipped with a supreme and greater nature in Armenian soil, with Armenian advanced aspects and national characteristics. The character of the Armenian Anahita was very complex and was easily loved and worshipped by the Armenian people and due to its popular



expansion, its worship transcended beyond the boundaries of Armenia and reached to other neighboring countries in Asia Minor. Later this kind of worship of the gods that is worshipping Anahita left a deep impression on the Christian religion. Especially in the face of Saint Mary and her worship; and by enriching the creative aspects of that character, she became the public plea of a vast number of Christian Armenian people that the birth, treatment and support of all the poor is manifested at the presence of Saint Mary (Pashayan, 1963, p. 62-64).

**3- The third god of Armenians Vahagn** is the mythical god of war and while his name is similar to the ancient Persian name Vertragna meaning (victory and neutralizing the attack) that is equiponderate with the name Var (H) (R) Agen, but in terms of the main worship has its root in the oldest Indo-European antiquity and these traditions are present in the Armenian traditions. Under his Persian name, he is the oldest Armenian god of thunderbolt that consists of three parts of the universe:

- a) Sky
- b) Earth
- c) Creation of the yellow or fiery sea

From the yellow flames arising from the sea and with his yellow pyrophoric beard and by his shiny yellow eyes and his magical wonderful and young face began to struggle and fight with the dangerous internecine dragon from his birth, and prevails over it and then becomes famous as the myth of "dragon killer". Vahagn has the very lofty nature of a brave human that was demanded for courage over the time of the Armenian kings' dynasty and they were his disciples. He is at the same time both the god of war and god of victory that is demonstrated by the image of "the Holy Karapt" and is followed by martial acts. The sanctuary or the main temple of Vahagn that was famous as Havanyan was located in Ashtishatt area of Armenian Tarun province in the rocky mountain hillside next to the golden mother temple or gold mother of birth "Anahita" and also Asteghik temple. Near the eighth temple of worshipping the famous Armenian goddess that is full of gold and silver and the gifts of the kings from all across the world where there was a temple and holy altar for the gifts of the Armenian kings as well. There were also next to these famous temples, the famous cities of "Snake" and "Dragon" whose Armenian names were "Udez" and "Vishab", that seems the traditional dragin war ceremony was held once a year. According to the Armenian mythology, probably Vahagn the dragon killer together with Aramazad (the Armenian Ahura Mazda) and Anahita have formed the worship of the triple gods that confirms the deity of Aramazad as the king of gods, Vahagn as god of war and Anahita as the goddess of blessing and beauty and fertility. In the ancient Armenian calendar each twenty seven days of the Armenian month is devoted to the god of war Vahagn and is named after him and it seems that he has been a supporter of that day (Haroutonian, 2001, 36-38).

**4. Mihr** derives from the Iranian ancient name "Mihr" that has the Iranian root of Mitra "friend" or "pilgrimage and solidarity", which according to Armenian mythology is the heavenly sun and moonlight. Later, it enters the scene of Iranian belief like Iranian gods. Its main temple was in Bagaharij province (Bagahadyj Pahlavi word "Worshipping God"), which was located in Derhaman village, he was

accompanied in Hellenistic religion time by blacksmith God and the fire of Hepstos. Mithraism and Hellenistic temple of Garni in Armenia which is currently located about forty kilometers from Yerevan, was given as a gift and ransom to that God. Based on the Greek written accounts, since fifth century BC, Armenians offered sacrifices to sun god (Helios). During the reign of the Achaemenids the Satrap of Armenia would send twenty thousand female horses (or stag) to Iranian king in Mehregan festival. Armenian ancient month of Arg is analogous with the Iranian month of Mehr, which is a representative of Iranian cultural influence on Armenian culture and the reason for this assertion is the primary name of the Armenians God, (Areg) or Armenian sun. Armenian sun worshippers like Iranian Mithraists, were worshipping the sun and light. Among Armenians worshipping Mihr as worshipping the sun had a widespread status. Its name and actions were so beloved that at the time of the famous Armenian Sassanid dynasty the name of the hero of the novel is Mihr that with identification with Pahlavi Mihr, meaning (sun), we recognize the performance of this Iranian-Armenian ritual. In famous Armenian novels "the children of Sasna", the father is the Sassanid David or great Mihr and his son is David is or the little Mihr. The worship of Mithra-Mihr which had been popular since third century BC, particularly in Asia Minor, was spread across Armenia in that time penetrates the ancient Rome and the entire Roman Empire by the invasion and conquest of these parts. The western worship of Mihr has been fundamentally different from Zoroastrianism religion's worship. In the West the worship of Mihr Sun is emphasized in particular. Worshipping war, the killing of the bull, the worship of the creation of earthly blessings, and also worshipping the salvation of human life, that according to the specifications of the Armenian novel "Sasna's children", we see that in that story the Armenians worship of Mithraism also exists. According to Western traditions, the origin of worshipping Mithra-Mihr, begins from the bursting and explosion of the rock. Female Petraes Deos is as "rock procreator" god which has been an objective witness of that phenomenon. In the Armenian novel although "Mihr gate" (in the boulder of a large mountain the image of Urartu is on mount Van) is comparable to the Roman or western myth. Among Armenians there is no issue of "rock procreator", but as for the "Great Gate of Mihr" or "Crow Boulder" according to Armenian mythical narratives small Mihr enters it and the door closes behind that is famous as the "Gate of Mihr". Now, if we compare it with the Iranian holy caveman Mihr surprisingly we will find her sibling's name (Mihr Gate). According to this myth, the gate of this cave opens once a year, the shepherd or herder enters into it and visits Mihr there. According to the beliefs of the Armenian and Iranian traditions Mehr gets out of the rock or cave in apocalypse, the end of life, and that time is the same as the time when Jesus returns to the earthly world and acts as the world's judge and separates the good and the bad and the guilty and the innocent and by the destruction of the old corrupted world, makes a new world and it is when wood turns to walnut and wheat enlarges to the size of a small plum, that is the world gets full of equal blessings (the time of the creation of earth blessings arrives). Moral Armenians have impatiently and anxiously been waiting for the return of Mihr from the rock "Mihr Gate". As in the old days that

Artabanus was supposed to emerge from Mount Massis to save them from other oppressors (Referring to acts of salvation). The subject of killing the bull also exists in the Armenian novel, (Where Great Mihr kills the black bull), but the subject of killing lion is more dominant in the novel of the children of "Sasna", when the Great Mihr on the way to Sassoon pins the vanguard lion to the ground and kills it and after this event Sassoon gets full of blessings and bounties and from then his title and name becomes known as "The Lion". This is very popular, prominent and serious in the Mithraism of western countries. This is seen frequently in stone carvings, where lion is seen as the worship of Mithra-Mihr (it is comparable to Iranian sun of lion and sun or the Iranian phrase-name "The Lion and Sun"). The Armenian Mihr in its own way has maintained its union and function with the Iranian Mihr-Mitra (alliance with the Egyptian King) and with the war characteristics of the Western Mitra in combat as idolatry, rebellion against God and the war of the prevalence upon angels, as well as the prohibition of the dynasty of the Persian kings during the coronation ceremony of the kings of Persia, who sometimes hid in caves and soon by obtaining secret ceremonies, such as temporary enclosure of small Mihr inside the rock and from there finding its way to the outside world. All this is evidence that Mehr or Armenian Mihr has preserved all of its Iranian and western Mithraism characteristics, and it appears that it works as a link between western and Iranian Mithraism religions. "Worship of Mihr, in the old Armenian calendar, has left its impact, such that the eighth day of each month is called Mihr and the seventh month in the old calendar that coincides with current February is called "Mehekan". "Mehian" which is the generic name for the holy places in the Armenian language, is related with the name Mihr (Ayvazian, *ibid.*, P. 93). The name Mihr also applies to sacred places of ancient Armenians (Mehian). Worshiping Mihr has left its profound impact on the religion of kindness, especially in uniting the dual character of moon and sun of Jesus Christ who wins the battle against the evil forces of darkness and evil. In most texts and rituals in Christianity the Son of God "God's wing" has appeared as "the mother of Light" or "core of light," as the waiting sun and the ritual of the song of moonlight. In Western Church, even the birthday of Mihr (25 December) or the birthday of Christ have been united with a series of religious ceremonies (Ohanjanian, 1946, p. 270,301).

**5. Astgik God**, this God after Anahita (Anahi) is considered the second (goddess) myth of Armenians that is "the god of love, water, humidity and a female genital and is synonyms and harmonized with the Greek Aphrodite". Her name is a combination of Armenian Astag (star) and the word "Haster" which is in parallel and of the same weight with the words of Akkadian and Semitic languages (Assyrian and Babylonian), where it is the same as Ishtar (Astara in Phoenician) Astart and Atargatis and Derceto in Assyrian, all these gods are the gods of blessings and creatures of love. Anahita and Astitic (Iranian Akhtar) were likely to have been at the start of names of the god of beauty, which later separated to distinct gods. These are all again evident in neighboring temples and monasteries in the region of Ashtishat in Armenia and exist side by side as the temple of

Anahita and Vahagen. The name Astitic (Akhtar) means and interpreted as (its Semitic and Perso-Italian form) the new star that is Venus or Saturn, that the Italian Venus and the name Venera, the god of beauty, are derived from there. Its main temple was located in Ashtishat in Taron. Next to the temple of Vahagn (god of war) that was called "Vahagny", the word worship in ancient Armenian is located that also had the meaning of "bride". Therefore, this compound word also means "Vahagny bride". Here probably based on myth, he had love-making and sexula relationship with her lover Vahagny. The next worship place of Astgic (Akhtar) has been in the region of Anzevasik in Western Armenia. A moon on the mountains which was called "Home of Armazad (or Ahura Mazda) and Astitic", where particular celebrations and ceremonies took place in there as well. One of the temples of Astgic began from South Van and continued towards Artamit. In Taron and Vasporakan region there are heights, hills, mountains, and castles (heights around Vank holy Dosoush Karapet, a part of the Holy Mountain of Varga, a part of the Astgic castle that all are evidence of the widespread worship of Astgic) in his name. Flowers were his good gift in Western Armenia and the title flower-like is taken from myth or God of tenderness and from bird, most probably flying pigeons. According to written accounts, the public day and the time of Astgic festival is the same as the irrigation festival (in the past Iranians also had it and called it with the name "vard-av-ra" that in contemporary Armenian is called "Vardavar") that they do it today as well. Armenians at the time offered flowers to the temple and worship place of this god Astgic. Worship of this God has had a direct relationship with worshipping water that has remained in contemporary myths today. Ghor Strait-Ghor is in the region of "Mush" (a region of Turkey) where the Tigris River runs through it, according to mythology, this place is the bathing place of the god Astgic where that beautiful god bathed there every night. The warriors who were in love used to burn fire on Taron mount so that in the light of those burning fires they could see the soft and beautiful body of their beloved Astgic while bathing, but she the god of Astgic covered the "Mush" and its surroundings with fog in order to hide from the eyes of the viewers According to another myth, Astgic is in fact the daughter of Noah that is born after the incident of Noah's flood, when her father and his children settle on the vast plain of the slopes of Mount Ararat (which suggests a direct relationship with water and carrier pegen of Noah (PBUH). In ceramic and sacred statues found in the old Artashat (Artashat today is a small city in Armenia that in BC was one of the ancient capitals of Armenia which is probably associated with Astgic) he is naked and bathing. Because of the relationship she had with water she has transformed to the mistress of the Armenian god of thunder and war Vahagen which is from the stolen concept "relevant" to the waters of the sky and the thunder fight against dragon. After killing the dragon, Vahagn most probably marries Astgic (sacred marriage). Its evidence that exists to this date is the performance of "Vardavar" celebrations in the days of ancient New Year that is presented as a gift to Astgic. This festival represents the war with dragon, the liberation of enclosed waters, the sacred time of divine marriage, the old concept of the New World and the New Year celebrations,

the origin of ancient ceremonies and interpretations, and creativity (Pashayan, *ibid.*, 33 to 35). Moses Khorni Nartesy "in his book only once has called this goddess as Astgic and in two other places has named her Aphrodite." In the Armenian Encyclopedia under Astgic it is written: "In the old Armenian calendar the seventh day of each month is named after her that is considered the day of her worship" (Ayvazian, *ibid.*, p. 98).

**6. Tyria the other mythical god "Tior",** "Tior" is the concept of the studies of the Armenian myth, the god of the knowledge of the magi and their supporter, predictor of the fate, secretary, and the first deputy scribe of Ahura Mazda; who was as the intermediary between man and God as well, whose synonymous and parallel in Greek mythology are Apollon and Hermes. The name "Tir" in fact has an Iranian origin and source whose meaning is the supporter of myth or the god of pen and writing. Tir, which also means "fate" and celerity in the holy book of Avesta, is called "Tirishta". In Iranian traditions it is also mentioned as the name of the radiant and bright planet and coincides with the fourth month and the thirteenth day of the Iranian solar calendar. This name is found in the form of "Tere" in Armenian, which is the fourth month of the Armenian calendar. Armenian Tir temple is located near the old Artashat and he was known as the science teacher of the magi and/or Armazad or Ahura Mazda's pen that was famous as the court of Tir or "Ahura Mazda Court" and the "Temple of engineering studies". He, the first secretary of Ahura Mazda, has a daughter or tribunal of "Tir" that simultaneously had an elementary or high school of concepts, philosophy, and arts as well. In there, the magi learned and taught their arts and sciences. Among the wisdom and the arts of the magi more than anything the wisdom of the oracle, particularly interpreting dreams and concepts were considered. Due to this, the status of the worship of Tir after his name is named as the "sleeping position" (sleeping place, great sleeping position), but it seems that in that place pilgrims received the interpretation of their dreams through the magi from the god Tir. During the Hellenistic period, the gods Apollon and Hermes were most probably established for the application of the aforementioned gods. It seems that Tir similar to Apollon like a prophet had messages about predictions and arts. He was also a supporter of human wisdom and the leader of human fate and fortune. He is the god of death and murder. And similar to Hermes sent messages of gods through dreams to people and has been the good intermediary between Ahura Mazda and assassins. Tir probably recorded people's fate by writing and compared their post-dream deeds by writing and giving titles. Later, he has changed this title from the original name of the myth of Tir to Azrael and has used separately, and has accompanied humans as the scribe of god's will to carry out God's command regarding the fate of the people as well as death and disease, and he also took human soul and sent it to the other world. Tir and Azrael are similar figures that are manifested in different duties and functions.

**7. Nanneh,** this Armenian myth is the third mythical goddess of the Armenians. She is the daughter of Ahura Mazda who is equivalent to the Greek goddess Athenas (Athena). She probably had a martial philosophy and nature. The name of this mythical goddess has a Semitic root, and

has its origin in the Akkadian goddess Nanay (she, like Ishtar, is the god of love and the myth of war, and this might be her third name). The place of her worship according to historical accounts was the only place that was discovered in Agqiatseder region in a place called til (the greater Hayk of Armenia). It seems that worshiping Nanneh has come from neighboring Assyria that, of course, has significantly been influenced by the worship of the myth of Anahita. This word applies to mother or grandmother which in Armenian is called (Nan, Nanny) as well. Girshman, regarding the possible common origin of the goddess Anahita and Nanneh, has stated that: "In the temple of Susa, the goddess Nah-nah-ya was recognized as the equivalent of her (that is Anahita) Semitic counterpart. Just as well, Athena and Artemis are her Greek counterparts". Karupian also writes: Qapantsian expresses the process of the transformation of Nanneh to Anahita with the term "re-god-ization" and calls both of them as "goddess of the mother of Asia minor". Therefore, the relation between these two goddesses cannot be ignored (Ayvazian, same source, pp. 100-101).

**8. Barshamina:** Barshamina or Barsham, from mythological point of view and origin, is a Semitic god that its name is derived from "Baal Shamem" which is a west Semitic name and has the meaning and concept of heavenly landlord or eminent god. The worshiping of this god came from Assyria to Armenia. It is not known to us to this date, what practice and place this Assyrian eminent god had in the ranks of Armenian mythology and structures. In Armenian narratives he is portrayed as a historical personality who was killed in the hand of Aram in one of Assyrian wars and was later elevated to godhood by Assyrians. Barshamin or Barsham is a Semitic god from mythological point of view and origin. Barsham as the old god of Assyrians steals straw and chaff from Vahagen, the Armenian god of combat and war, and the trace of straws (the Milky Way galaxy) remains in the sky. In both periods he is against Armenians and his worship later reaches Armenia from Tigran and he replaces one of the Armenian mythological gods in the ranks of Armenian mythology. His magnificent statue and temple was later demolished completely by the founder of Christianity in Armenia. "Maybe the reason Barshamin is not equal to other deities of Armenians, was the enmity between Armenians and Assyrians, because Barshamin is an Assyrian deity and this is probably why he is the only god that there is no day or festival named after him in Armenian calendar" (Ayvazian, same source, p. 102).

**9. Spandarmat (Sandramat):** He is the god or spirit of the underworld and/or the depths of the ancient land of winter. In very ancient times the form of "Sandramat" or the concept of "Sandramatak of the depths" and/or "the hell of the depths of the earth" have been prevalent among oriental and western people more than any other concept. In the old scripts of ancient people and their traditions, with this very same form, the name Sandramatapat or Sandrapat (Sandtrapat), meaning "the master of hell" has been widespread. This name, that has an Iranian concept and meaning, is derived from the Pahlavi word Sandramat, meaning the gods of the earth which in Avestan it is mentioned in the form of Spenta-Armaiti, meaning the sacred wisdom (in Zoroastrian religion Zarathustra is the living female spirit of earth who is the daughter or daughter-

in-law of Ahura Mazda). In Armenian translation of the holy Bible the Greek festivals of Dionysus or Bakusian and Diosiyus appear by the names Spandarmati and Spandarmat respectively. In old times and among Armenians, Spandarmat, like Diosiyus, had a prosperous country with fruit orchards, plants, and vineyards which (this concept) originated from the ancient beliefs of the Armenians. According to written evidences from Thomas Arzuni and according to Mantun, earth is the caravanserai of god Spandarmat and is not created by anyone. According to Armenian medieval narrators (Hovanes Mamikonian) the depths of Spandarmats was similar to hell and its gates that sometimes have taken the name hell gates or "death gate", are located on the rocky peak "Karke" in the outskirts of "Mush", right in the vicinity of Inna Kenia springs (nine springs) where the statues of Armenian gods Dimiter and Gisaneh were located. Later these all were destroyed in the hand of Gregory the illuminator and the famous Vank of the sacred Karapet or Gelala was built in their place. These all are evidences that Armenians, since ancient times, had special view about the world of deep underground that is sometimes displayed as a male character who enjoyed the blessings of vegetables and fruits who is orchestrated by the kingdom of the dead or even get involved in fight with evil spirits (compare with Agatangqus' works "dormant of Sandarmati" or the work of Narses Shnurhali) "Sandramatk Sarsets freed the captive spirit and/or in religious hymns like Sandramatasi learned terrible lessons" can be thought of. In Armenian religious traditions mythological names of Amanur and Anatur have appeared (the book of Agatangqus). In the Armenian translation of Bible it is stated that Vanatur is the same as hospitable Ahura Mazda which this word is related to the Greek Zeus as the asylum-giver and shelter-giver god and other titles. Vanatur is mentioned as the "shelter-giver" with his nickname in Greek being Zeus-Ahuramazda (Zeus Kosnius). In Armenian historian's account Aeatangeghos is the place or the ancient center of the Armenin religion. Later during the ancient Armenian New Year the remains of John the Baptist and saint Atakagens were buried in Bagavan (idol peak of Bagavan). This way by declaring that the new year festival coincides with the New Year festival of ancient Armenians, they held great celebrations in their memory which were just like the festival before Christianity, when the name of the festival of the "blessed New Year's festival" had been the festival of new fruits by the invitation of the mighty myth Vatanur. It seems (of course without any evidence) that since this New Year festival was offered and performed for the god of lightning and thunder Ahuramazda or his altar, so under the title "the mythical New Year festival" it must be conceived that it was offered to Ahuramazda. But under the title "in reception or the invitation of the myth Vanatur" according to the opinion of "G.Lagari" it matches just with the Greek god Zeus Cosinus, which both are the new titles of former Ahuramazda and Zeus and the festivals are related to them. The proof of this theory is with no doubt logical, but it is possible that the New Year of Ahuramazda, as the greeting of new festival of the abundance of devine blessings with bringing different fruits and natural blessings in that new year by pilgrims in the location of Bagavan with personalities in Khwaygans in the faces of the new year and

Vanatur according to the opinion of "H. Gelsar" the original name of the Arrmenian mythological entity has been Vanatur that later has changed to the Iranian name Ahuramazda). All memories of the personalities of the fruits and blessings for new year and new fruits have been preserved in Armenian oral narratives. In old narration traditions in one of the ancient Armenian sites Buqueen, a king called Amanor (New Year) sets a contest to find his bride, where with the hit of the diamond apple (Berlayat) wins this competition over a very beautiful virgin who has covered herself with flowers, and marries the same virgin. Therefore, it is seen from here that according to the opinion of (H.Hannush and H.FonVliskotski) the king hidden under the title of Amanor hidden as a virgin figure is the same ancient Armenian myth that people offered fruits to him. Just like this myth and image, we can see the face of a very beautiful Armenian myth of song and poetry called "Nobar" (which is derived from the ancient word "fresh fruit"), who with her beautiful songs whose performer is a beautiful virgin character or a young woman with her pretty face and/or according to the concept of her name picked great amount of fresh fruits and places them between her breasts to bring about fertility and give pain and agony to the hearts of brave and young men. These are the famous words of Armenian historian "Agathangelos" who has stated Nowruz re marks as: "brings all different fruits of the new year that beautiful Idol". These reasons and evidences prove that the existence of character Amanor among ancient Armenians was dependent on the growth and development of plants and newly ripened fruits and the concept of the "blessed" nature. And as the final result of this ceremony is the marriage of this sacred couple that causes the balance in fertility and the increase and protection of the objectives and consequences, so the Amanor myth, contrary to the opinion of (Hannosh and Fauna Veliscotesky) and their interpretation, directly and all of a sudden, has the same sense and meaning of the new year celebrations in ancient Armenia. Inside the name of the King Amanor (New Year) his bride's name is not hidden, but Amanor is the Amanor god himself, whose bride selection ceremony is performed at the same time as Amanor New Year. Here bride really means flowers and plants, as well as fresh fruits, which is in the form of a diamond apple and in a celebration competition hits and throws down the crown of Amanor from a far distance and disappear. After many searches king Amanor finds his bride in a cottage on a mountain and brings her to his court and marries her. The story in itself is a kind of myth of "death and resurrection" and losing and finding of a course that by the return of the heroine and performance of the weddings rebuilds the disturbed system of the world order, it is what that makes the meaning and concept of the traditional new year ceremony. So male god Amanor along and parallel with the world of plants and its fruits, and in the company of his female myth together become bride and groom; that also Mazda and Anahita, and in another case the legendary Vahagn and Astgic two mythical couples have exactly the same relation with each other and take part in a variety of ceremonies (Hartonian, 2001, p 4445). All these reasons are evidence of the god of new year (Amanor) that was associated with the firstling fruits and has existed in Armenians beliefs. Ancient Armenians celebrated Amanor

at the beginning of Navasard that coincided with modern August. Navasard is the first month of Armenian New Year that according to the fixed calendar starts from August 11<sup>th</sup> and lasts until September 9<sup>th</sup>. Navasard is an Iranian word which consists of Avestan words "new" and "year" (Ayvazian, *ibid.*, P. 112). "Demeter," and "Gisane" the twin gods who, according to medieval traditions, are also the gods of the predecessors, are two Indian Amirs that due to the rebellion against their king take refuge to Armenia and take the responsibility of running the region or province of Taron from the Armenian king of that time Vakash (or Vagrash) and in there build the city of (Vapshab) or (Dragon) in Ashtishat and build idols that of course after their death become the new gods. Their children erect their statues on a rocky mountain (near Ashtishat) and by building an altar set up their worship ceremony. Both of them due to being Indian have black face and long hair and because of this one of them was called Gisane. Thanks to their hair, the people who worshiped them as sacred symbols kept their hair long and even after acceptance of new religion "Christianity" they keep their children's hair long. This narration about the sacred twins is a kind of myth (about the rulers and kings of other countries that were upset with their kings and with fleeing their country took refuge in another country and in a new city and clan built a new temple for themselves. As an example, indeed the predecessors of Mamikonilnins (the commanders of the Armenian army) in Taron (Taron is a very beautiful mountainous region in Western Armenia that is located in Turkish soil today), and are Sanasar Sassoon and his brother; Izadin and Ziaedin (according to the Kurdish narration). "Demeter" and "Gisane" as sacred twins are connected to each other through the flood and its aftermath, so they dominate the deep underground. Their temple is located at a place called Intakenya near springs, in the old Sanorametek (underground hell) or on the gates of hell, that is, according to mythical world view and ideology are in the center of the universe and on an orbit that connects earth and depths of the Earth together. These two gods being dark faced and having long hair connects them to lightning and dark clouds, that in the form of flowing rains following it by having the identity of lightning have established the hero of dragon in particular, which very possibly in the early new year the dragon fight ceremonies were performed there. But on the other side of the rocky mountain that Ashtishat is located the idols of Gisane and Demetre are erected as well. Here as well, the mythical dragon killer or dragon fighter is the place of holy Vahagen, whose worship has certainly had a very close relation to twin gods. When Gregory the illuminator (Iranian promoter and great saint who founded Christianity in Armenia) wants to destroy the temple with an army, a big war between the magi and troops occurs, which on his own account reminds you of the ceremony of the new year founding dispute. Gregory the illuminator the conqueror destroys the twin gods and on the first day of Navasard, burries them at the foot of the remnants of the statue of John the baptist and Atanagis with baptism water and ceremony and declares that day as the day of celebration and festivity in their memory. Later in that same place sacred Vank builds "Gelaka" and "Karapet" that turns into an important center of pilgrimage not only for Armenians but for all Christian pilgrims and scholars, that

the sprinkling festival (old day of Nowruz) is held there with celebration ceremony and public competitions and sacrifices and performing traditional wrestlings. These two Christian saints with their connection to water and killing the dragon (Holy Ataganis is known as the dragon slayer) are similar to Demeter and Gisane, the twin gods that become famous as their substitutes. But the sacred Karapet probably, by the famous and holy place that obtains and with the higher status that earns, unites these twins, and Vahagen (the Armenian god of war) and other Armenian gods (Tir and moon) and gods of war and science and art, with the epic nature they have, as a Christian saint transform into a kind of popular and national god in popular narratives. Myth of dragon's fight that is his fight with the dragon is manifested in mythical novel "Children of Sasena". Vishab's war in this myth, which ends up in the marriage of its heroes, is the fight with dragon to free the girl. In the myth of the novel "Children of Sasena" in some accounts Sanasar fights with three dragons. In one place he kills the dragon that has blocked the water, in another place he kills the dragon that has covered the sun, but the third time he fights with the dragon that has killed and torn up the eagle chicks. The Interesting point is that in the common culture, still the beginning of the Iranian New Year begins by sacred deed of killing and tearing up the dragon. With this concept and purpose that carries the meaning of the renovation of the universe and in fact this is a new fight by the decayed elements of the new world that the past old year gives life and meaning to it (Die kelgionen, G.widengren, P 68-69).

## **Conclusion**

Animism or spirit worshipping existed before totemism, but the characteristic of inanimate and animate phenomena such as: different animals, stones, rocks, earthquake, lightning, fire, plants, etc. have helped the creation of animism. Nature worship has been a general phenomenon among ancient people that had existed before all religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. Totemism among Armenians has been expressed with different degrees of progress and development in all material and spiritual fields. Old beliefs, performing rituals, traditional and religious conceptions and beliefs have had great and deep impact on many Armenians beliefs, so that later, after embracing Christianity, especially in Christian popular beliefs many concepts and traditions of the new religion, have transformed to old conceptions and traditions based on appropriate and identical assumptions. Orient including Armenia in the Hellenistic period creates its specific culture. Parallel to worshipping their gods, Armenians have worshipped the Greek gods like Heracles, Apollon, Hepstos, Artemis, Aphrodite, Athena, but the life of Greek gods in the imagination and fantasy of the Armenian people is very short. Iranian culture and religion have had a profound impact on Armenian religious beliefs, such as the names of some gods that are rooted in Iranian deities. Such as Aramazad, Anahid, Vahagen, Mihr, Tir and beliefs about good and evil spirits, underground world and so on that is seen among Armenian as well. Similarities between Iranian and Armenian gods goes back to close ties between the two nations. In Armenians great celebrations

after Christianity there is also a trace of celebrations of infidelity or Pagan times. Of course the extensive and deep role of Assyrians in the religious beliefs of Armenians should be noted too. Armenians of Western regions of Armenia had worshiped gods such as Naneh, Astgic, Barshamina that were Assyrian.

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