



ARLEZ

ARLEZ, (Arm. *aralez* or *yaralez*), term for a supernatural creature in Armenian, of uncertain etymology. *Arlezk'* (plur.) were believed to have licked the corpse of *Ara* back to life, hence the most common folk etymology, from "Ara" and Arm. *lez*– "lick." Eznik Kołbac'i (5th cent. A.D.) explained that the *Arlez* was a kind of dog (*Ełc ałandoc'*, ed. Mariès, *Patrologia Orientalis*, Paris, 1959, par. 122), and Movsēs Xorenac'i relates an ancient tradition that the young prince Sanatruk and his nurse were rescued in a snowstorm by "some miraculous white animal sent by the gods," which, Xorenac'i explains, was a dog (2.36 = *History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, pp. 177f.). The 10th-century writer Țovma Arcruni refers to "the village of Lezk', where they recite the legend of the healing of the wounds of the dead Ara," i.e., where the *ara-lezk'* licked him back to life (see V. Vardanyan, ed., *Țovma Arcruni ev Ananun, Patmut'yun Arcrunyac' tan*, Erevan, 1978, pp. 225, 366 nn. 431-32). It has been suggested that the Armenian legend of the *arlez* may be traced to Assyria, where the god Marduk, called "resuscitator of the dead," is referred to at Ḥarrān as *mry dklbww* "lord of the dogs," (see K. Y. Basmacean, "Yaralēzk'" *Bazmavēp*, Venice, 1897, pp. 525-31; and R. Ajello, "Sulle divinità armene chiamate *arlēz*," *Oriente Moderno* 68, 1978, pp. 7-8, 306). It is as likely that the *arlez*, part of the archaic Asianic legend of Attis (Arm. Ara), came to be seen as a spirit-dog of Zoroastrianism, associated with the funeral rites of exposure (often in a high place: see Ara; on the significance of dogs in Zoroastrianism, see "Death and the Mysteries of the Dog," in M. Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 139ff.). Armenians continued to revere dogs in Christian times; Armenian and Byzantine writers note that during the fast of Aṛaḵaworac',



commemorating early Christian martyrs, some Armenians worshipped a dog (see N. Akinean, in *Handēs Amsoreay*, Vienna, 1904, pp. 313 and A. Matikean, *Aray gelec'ik*, Vienna, 1930, p. 159). [The word is variously spelled in the mss. with *-r-* or *-r̄-*.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.

(J. Russell)