



ARMENIA AND IRAN III. ARMENIAN RELIGION

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iii. Armenian Religion

The Armenian people, whose language is related probably to the Thraco-Phrygian branch of the Indo-European family, invaded the Armenian Plateau from the west. Stephen the Byzantine (5th century) cites Eudoxus (ca. 370 B.C.): “The Armenians are a people from Phrygia and in their speech resemble Phrygians.” Herodotus calls the Armenians “Phrygian colonists” (7.73). The origin of Arm. *hay* “Armenian” is uncertain, but it may come from the name of the Hittites, through whose territory the early colonizers passed: Proto-Arm. **hاتيոս* yields **hayo*, shortened to *hay* (I. M. D’yakonov, *Predystoriya armyanskogo naroda*, Erevan, 1968, p. 236). Others suggest that *hay* comes from the name of the inhabitants of the Hayasa-Azzi region in Armenia itself. Apparently subduing the Hurrian autochthons of the province of Arme-Šupria, a mountainous region to the west of Lake Van with a large Semitic colony, the Armenians became a ruling class from which were appointed satraps of the land when it was conquered by Media, early in the 6th century B.C. In this formative period the Armenians appear to have absorbed Hurrian, Hittite, and Urartian elements in their religious beliefs. Iran, however, was to be the dominant influence in Armenian spiritual culture. The Orontid, Artaxiad, and Arsacid dynasties were all Iranian in origin, and the greater part of the



Armenian vocabulary consists of Mid. Ir. loanwords. The Armenians preserved strong regional traditions which appear to have been incorporated into Zoroastrianism, a religion adopted by them probably in the Achaemenid period. Despite the conversion of the Armenians to Christianity early in the 4th century, numerous survivals of Armenian Zoroastrianism remain to this day. Evidence for the study of ancient Armenian religion comes primarily from the works of 5th-century Armenian Christian historians, although later medieval sources provide valuable information as well. Recent archeological expeditions in Soviet Armenia at sites such as Artašat and Garni have provided important new material, and ethnographical studies have been pursued since the mid-19th century.

Aramazd was the principal divinity of pre-Christian Armenia. The name is a loan from Parthian, cf. Gk. Aramasdēs in the Awrōmān documents (A. Meillet, “De quelques noms propres parthes,” *BSL* 20, 1916, p. 25). The fusion of the two words Ahura Mazdā “Lord Wisdom” into one occurred in Achaemenid times. Like the Iranians, the Armenians seem to have referred to adherents of Zoroastrianism as Mazda-worshippers, Av. *mazdayasna-*, Arm. *mazdezn* (Elišē, *Patmut’iwn Vardanay*, Erevan, 1957). A native form, *mazdēac’ik’* “Mazdeans,” is attested in an Armenian magical text of A.D. 1611 from Marsovan, Turkey (B. M. Or., MS 6471, fol. 133a). Aramazd is called “manly” (Arm. *ari*), and his temple held an image probably resembling the *eidōlon tou andriantos* (*Dios*) “image of the manly (Zeus)” destroyed by St. Acindynus (N. Marr, *Bogi yazycheskoï Gruzii po drevne-gruzinskim istochnikam*, St. Petersburg, 1901, p. 11). The Armenians made statues of their gods, or brought Greek images from the west which they installed at *bagins* “shrines” (probably a Parth. loanword; on Arm. loanwords with the element *baga-*, and on the Zoroastrian image cult, see below). Aramazd is a god of thunder, Arm. *ampropayin*. At Mc’xeṭ’a in Georgia there stood an image of Zeus Keraunios “the Thunderer” (*Zampropayin patkern Aramazday*, Movsēs Xorenac’i, *History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, II, p. 86). This is probably a function derived from a non-Zoroastrian weather god. Ba’al Šamīn, the North Semitic “Lord of Heaven,” was often characterized as *keraunios* in inscriptions (J. Teixidor, *The Pagan God*, Princeton, 1977, pp. 12-14; J. G. Février, *La religion des palmyréniens*, Paris, 1931, p. 105; *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* II, 3912). Baršam(in) had a temple at Ṭ’ordan in the Armenian province of Daranaḡi, northeast of the temple of Aramazd at Ani (Movsēs 1.14, 2.14). He has the epithet *spitakap’ar* “of white glory,” and is said to have fought another weather god, the Armenian Vahagn, in an ancient tale retold by Anania of



Širak (*Tiezeragituṭ'īwn ew tomar*, Erevan, 1940, p. 30). Aramazd is the “father of all” (Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson, Albany, 1976, p. 785); Anahit is called his progeny (*cnund*), Mihr is his son (*ordy*) and Nanē is his daughter (*dustr*) (Agathangelos 53, 790, 786). He is the hospitable one, Arm. *Hiwrānk'al dic'n Vanatri* (Agathangelos 836). The temple of Aramazd was located at Ani, the site of the Artaxiad royal necropolis, where Mažan, the brother of king Artasēs, served as high priest (Movsēs 2.14, 53); it seems that the royal family presided over the cult of the supreme God, while local dynasts, the *naxarars*, attended to the lesser *yazatas*. As the center of power in Armenia shifted eastwards to Ayrarat province in the Arsacid period, the temple of Aramazd was relocated to Bagawan, where his feast was celebrated on Nawasard, the New Year (Agathangelos 836). (On the word *nawasard*, a loanword from Old Pers., see H. Hübschmann, *Armen. Etymologie*, p. 202; on the date of the festival, see S. H. Taqizadeh, “The Iranian Festivals Adopted by the Christians and Condemned by the Jews,” *BSOAS* 10, 1940-42, p. 640.) A number of modern Armenian customs appear to be survivals of ancient rites of Nawasard (A. A. Ōdabašyan, “Navasardyan tonaxmbuṭ'yunneri verapruknerə,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs*, Erevan, 3, 1974). Movsēs Xorenac'i refers to four Aramazds, including one called *kund* “bald” (1.31). The “bald” Aramazd may be the Zeus *phalakros* “bald” of Argos (Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.39, cited by Thomson, Movsēs 122 n. 1; on the Arm. loanword *kund* and its Iranian origins, see H. W. Bailey, “Indo-Iranian Studies III,” *TPS*, 1955, p. 72). The four Aramazds may refer to the four days of the Zoroastrian month named after Ahura Mazdā (under the influence, according to H. S. Nyberg, of the four-fold Zurvān); or they may be the four seasonal faces of the Semitic god Tammuz, called *č'orek'dimean* “four-faced” by the 5th-century Armenian translator of St. Ephrem Syrus (Galust Ter-Mkrč'yan, *Hayagitakan usumnasiruč'yunner* I, Erevan, 1979, pp. 124-25). Armenian writers distinguish the native form Aramazd from Pers. Ormizd, the latter representing the god of the proselytizing Sasanian state church for Ehišē and the god of the Zurvanite cult of the Persians for Eznik. Anania of Širak states, “*Belos yunarēn Dios, heyerēn Aramazd, parskerēn Ormizd*” (Bel is Greek Zeus, Armenian Aramazd and Persian Ormizd; *Mnac'ordk' banic'*, St. Petersburg, 1877, p. 31).

Anahit was called “the Lady,” Armenian [Agathangelos] *Anahit tikin*, Gk. [Agathangelos] *Artemis despoina* (E. Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien*, Paris, 1966, 46); inscriptional Pahl. *'nhyt ZY MR'T* (= *bānūg* “lady”) in the inscription of Kartīr KZ line 8; the “golden mother” (Arm. *oskemayr*, Agathangelos 809). The exact meaning of this epithet is unclear; it



may refer to the golden corn and to fertility, or to a golden cult statue. Anahit possessed a great temple at Erēz, Gk. Eriza, in the province of Acilisene (Pliny, *Natural History* 5.34, 83; Strabo 11.16; Cassius Dio, 36.48, 53.5, calls the entire region *Anaitis chōra*); a hellenistic bronze head, believed to be from a statue of Anahit but more probably from a Roman temple, was found at Satala and is kept in the British Museum (B. N. Aṙak'elyan, *Aknarkner hin Hayastani arvesti patmuṭyan*, Erevan, 1976, p. 21, pl. 21; on the temple of Anahit at Zela, see A. Perikhanian, *Khramovye ob'edineniya Maloĭ Azii i Armenii*, Moscow, 1959, p. 48; a dubious theory on temples of Anāhīd and Armenian manuscript painting, is advanced by C. Trever, "A propos des temples de la déesse Anahita en Iran Sassanide," *Iranica Antiqua* 7, 1967, p. 121). The 19th day of the Armenian month is named after Anahit, and she was worshipped on the water-holiday of Vardavař; until recently, cattle bearing the brand of a star or half moon were slaughtered during the festival by the Armenians of Dersim, in Turkey, and it is probable that Anahit had absorbed these cult symbols of the Mesopotamian goddess Ištar (K. V. Melik'-P'ašayan, *Anahit dic'uhu paštamunk'ə*, Erevan, 1963, p. 147; L. Ališan, *Hin hawatk' kam heṭ' anosakan krōnk'*, Hayoc', Venice, 1910, pp. 157-58). Cattle were sacrificed down to the 19th century at the shrine of Bānū- Pārs, probably to Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā—who is likewise a water-goddess in origin—in the Zoroastrian community of Šarifābād, Iran (M. Boyce, *Stronghold* pp. 250, 255). Another feminine divinity, Inanna the "Lady of Heaven" of Uruk, was worshipped in Armenia as Nanē (on Inanna generally, see H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon*, London, 1962, p. 21). Her cult had become established in Elam (W. Hinz, *The Lost World of Elam*, London, 1972, p. 97) and was probably spread by the Achaemenid armies to eastern Iran (on her cult in Sogdia, see W. B. Henning, "The Date of the Sogdian Ancient Letters," *BSOAS* 12, 1948, pp. 601-15; in Kušan and Bactria, see J. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Art of the Kushans*, Berkeley, 1967 and G. Azarpay, "Nanā, the Sumero-Akkadian Goddess of Transoxiana," *JAOS* 96, 1976, pp. 536-42). To the west, in Phrygia, Nanā was revered as the daughter of the river Sangaris and the mother of Attis (Arnobius 5.6.12), a possible clue as to the meaning of numerous mother-and-child figurines found at Artašat (Gk. Artaxata) (B. N. Aṙak'elyan, op. cit., pls. 84-86). Nanē had a temple in Armenia at Ṭ'il (Agathangelos 786); she may appear as a luminous, supernatural being in a medieval Armenian love story, "Yovhannēs and Aša" (G. Šerenc', *Vanay saz* II, Tiflis, 1899, pp. 112-17).

Mihr, whose name is a Mid. Ir. form of Av. Mithra, had a temple in the Armenian town of Bagayařič (Agathangelos 790). His is the seventh month and



the eighth day of the month in the Armenian calendar, and in Armenian Christianity the twenty-first day of Mehekan, Greater Mihragān in the Zoroastrian calendar, is devoted to St. George the Soldier (Taqizadeh, op. cit., p. 642). Similarities have been noted between the Mithraic tauroctony and aspects of the cult of the saint (M. Schwartz, “Cautes and Cautopates, the Mithraic Torchbearers,” *Mithraic Studies*, ed. J. R. Hinnells, Manchester, II, p. 417 and F. Cumont, “St. George and Mithra, “The Cattle Thief”, *Papers Presented to Sir Henry Stuart Jones*, London, 1937, pp. 62-71). It has been proposed that the Armenian word for a pagan temple, *mehean*, comes from a Mid. Ir. derivative of OIr. **māithryāna-* or **mithradāna-* (A. Meillet, “Sur les termes religieux iraniens en arménien,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 1, 1920, pp. 233-36; I. Gershevitch in *Mithraic Studies* II, p. 357, suggests a Mid. Ir. derivation, which is unlikely as the word was a generic term by the 5th century in Armenian; but note the use of NPers. *Dare-e Mehr* for any Zoroastrian temple in the Islamic period). King Tiridates I of Armenia invoked Mithra, the Zoroastrian guardian of contracts, in his pact with Nero (Cassius Dio 63.5; Pliny 1.6; Dieterich, “Die Weisen aus dem Morgenland,” *ZNTW* 3, 1902; F. Cumont, “L’iniziazione di Nerone da parte di Tiridate d’Armenia,” *Rivista di filologia* 61, 1933), and referred to himself in a Greek inscription at Garni as *Hēlios* “the Sun,” with which Mithra was identified by the Parthians.

M. L. Chaumont’s reading of *Hēlios* as *Aurēlios*, despite the title *Aurēlios Pakoros Basileus Megalēs Armenias* on an alter in Rome (S. T. Eremyan, “Vaiarš II k’alak’akan haraberuṭ’yunnerə Hřomi ew Parṭ’evneri het,” *Patmbanasirakan Handēs* 4, 1976, p. 37; *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. A. Breckhins, Berlin, 1828-77, no. 6559), is not justified by the dimensions of the inscription (M. L. Chaumont, *Recherches sur l’histoire d’Arménie*, Paris, 1969, p. 179; on the inscription and the *mehean* excavated nearby, see B. Arak’elyan, “Excavations at Garni, 1949-50, 1951-55,” *Contributions to the Archaeology of Armenia* III/3, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, pp. 13-199; K. V. Trever, *Nadpis’ o postroenii armyanskoī kreposti Garni*, Leningrad, 1949; A. G. Abrahamyan, *Hay gri ev grč’uṭ’yan patmuṭ’yun*, Erevan, 1959, p. 30). The classical Armenian historians four centuries later recognized Mihr not as *Hēlios* but as Hephaistos, the Greek god of fire, and his prominence seems to have been eclipsed by Vahagn. Mihr is called Hephaistos by Movsēs Xorenac’i (3.17); T’ovma Arcruni later identified Hephaistos with the Sun (Erevan, 1978, pp. 51, 53, 54), but added that he had *hur vars* “flaming locks,” recalling the *hur her* “flaming hair” of Vahagn (Movsēs 1.31). The Armenian hero who fought Alexander is called Mithraustēs (presumably a Gk. form of OIr. *Mithra-*



Vahišta-) by Arrian and *Vahē* by the Armenians; the latter name is probably a shortened form of *Vahagn* (cf. the *naxarardom* *Vah(n)uni* and the *vahevahean mehean*, or temple of *Vahagn*; L. P. Sahinyan, “Moses Xorenac’u ‘Patmuṭyan’ mej hišatakvoḷ Vahei masin,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 4, 1973, p. 173). It appears that *Mithra* was identified with *Kummarbi*, the Hurrian god who created the monster *Ullikummi* to destroy his son *Tešub* (whom the Armenians identified with *Vahagn*) and was vanquished by *Tešub* (see Schwartz in *Mithraic Studies* II, p. 416, on pseudo-Plutarchus’ story of *Diorphos*, a Greek version of the Hurrian myth in which *Kummarbi* is called *Mithra*; on the apparent conflict between the cults of the two *yazatas* in Armenia, see J. R. Russell, “Zoroastrian Problems in Armenia: *Mihr* and *Vahagn*,” in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Classical Armenian Culture*, University of Pennsylvania, November, 1979, ed. M. Stone).

The ancient Iranian festival of fire, **Āθrakāna*-, Arm. *Ahekan*, which is celebrated by Zoroastrians with the kindling of a bonfire outside the *Dar-e Mehr*, is still solemnized by the Armenians under the new name of *Tearn* and *araḷ*, the Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple, on the evening of 13 February. Originally, the feast was celebrated in *Ahekan*, the ninth month, corresponding to *Ātar*, the ninth month of the Av. Zor. calendar, when the feast of *Sada* is celebrated (see M. Boyce, “The Two Dates of the Feast of *Sada*,” in *Yādgār-nāma-ye Pūr-Dāvūd*, Farhang-e Īrān-zamīn, 21, 1976). *Ahekan* renders Gk. *Xanthikos* in the Septuagint, which is equivalent to February (A. G. Abrahamyan, ed., *Hovhannes Imastaseri matenagrut’yunə*, Erevan, 1956, p. 81). The Armenians therefore celebrated the feast towards the middle of winter (see also M. Y. Ananikean, “*Tearnandaḷ ew erknyayin hurə*,” *K’nnakan usumnasirut’iwinner*, New York, 1932), and certain aspects of it may be related to observances in honor of *Mithra*.

The name of the god *Vahagn* probably comes from Parth. **V(a)rhragn* (Av. *Vərəθrayna*) compare *Artagnēs*-*Heraklēs*-*Arēs* at *Nimrud Dagħ* in *Commagene*. Sogd. *Vašayn*-, Saka *Varlaagn* (E. Benveniste and L. Renou, *Vr̥tra et Vr̥θragna*, Paris, 1934; V. N. Toporov, “Ob otrazhenii odnogo indoevropēiskogo mifa v drevnearmyanskoī traditsii,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 3, 1977). The 27th day of the Arm. month is named after him. He is called *k’aj* “brave” (*Agathangelos* 127). The *k’ajk’*, a race of supernatural beings mentioned frequently in both Arm. and Georgian historical texts and folklore, inhabit mountainous wildernesses, hunt, and live in palaces. S. Haykanun has suggested that some of the legends of the *tun k’ajanc’* “house of the brave ones”



in the Armenian epic of Dawit' of Sasun relate to the Arsacid house (*Ēminean azgagrakan žoġovacu* II, Moscow and Vaġaršapat, 1901; *Ararat amsagir*, Vaġaršapat, 1901), and the epithet of the Artaxiads in inscriptions, Aram. ȚB', may be translated as Arm. *k'aj* "brave" (cf. Movsēs 2.61; *Azgagrakan Handēs*, 1895, pp. 325, 338, 340; Manuk Abelyan, *Erker*, Erevan, 1966-75, I, p. 153; VII, p. 85; Atišan, op. cit., p. 208; M. Boyce, "The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," *JRAS*, 1957, 14; Ē. Pivazyan, ed., *Hovhannes Ț'lkuranc'i: Taġer*, Erevan, 1960, 10.36, 13.7; G. Charachidze, *Le système religieux de la Géorgie païenne*, Paris, 1968, pp. 533-37 on the *k'ajk'*; on possible etymologies, see O. Szemerényi, "Iranica III," *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, London, 1970, pp. 424-26 and H. Aġarean, *Hayerēn armatakan baġaran*, Erevan, 1926-35, s.v. K'aj; on the Aramaic inscriptions, see A. Perikhanian, "Une inscription araméenne du roi Artasēs trouvée à Zanguezour (Siwnik)," *Revue des études arméniennes*, N. S. 3, 1966; idem, "Arameiskaya nadpis' iz Garni," *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 3, 1964, p. 126; *VDI* 2, 1946; 2, 1955; 1, 1959; and *Syria* 25, pp. 1-2; G. Tirac'yan, "Artašes I-i evs mek noragyut arameakan arjanagruġyun," *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 4, 1977; A. M. Danielyan, "Artašes I-i hastatvac sahmanak'areri iravakan nšanakuġyunə," *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 3, 1977). It is likely that the sharing of this epithet with the *yazata* of strength and victory was deliberate; his cult was second only to that of Aramazd himself. Armenian writers identified Vahagn with the sun (Abetyan, *Erker* I, p. 75; Movsēs 2.14; *Nor baġgirk' haykazean lezui*, s.v. Vahagn), and he is hailed as *višapak'al* "the Dragon-Reaper," an attribute he seems to have acquired from the Hurrian divinity Tešub, who was second in the Urartian pantheon only to Ĥaldi and after whom the cities of Tušpa (the Urartian capital, now called Van) and Teišebaini (Karmir Blur, near Erevan) were named. (On *višaps*, see Benveniste and Rénou, op. cit., p. 79 n. 1; Benveniste, *Revue des études arméniennes*, 1927, pp. 7-9; M. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, p. 91 n. 42; N. Marr, Ya. Smirnov, *Les Vichaps*, Leningrad, 1931; on the epithet *višapak'al*; see Agathangelos 809 and Movsēs 2.12; on the legend of the birth of Vahagn, his *višap*-slaying and *hur her* "flaming hair," see Movsēs 1.31. On the legend of Tešub's conquest in his ox-drawn chariot of Ullikummi, see E. Porada, *Ancient Iran: The Art of Pre-Islamic Times*, London, 1965, pp. 96-101, figs. 63-64, pl. 24; on the oxen and their role in the reaping up of *višaps*, see Eznik of Kolb, *Etc alandoc'*, ed. and tr. A. G. Abrahamyan, Erevan, 1970, p. 81. Modern Armenian folklore preserves the legend of a weather god—the angel Gabriel—who plucks up *višaps* when they grow dangerously large and hurls them into the sun; see *Azgagrakan Handēs* I, p. 351, cited by Abetyan, op. cit., I, p. 88; Ališan, op. cit., p. 73 n. 1.)



The temple of Vahagn was located at Aštišat, and the importance of his cult is underlined by St. Gregory the Illuminator's choice of that place for the earliest See of the Armenian Church (Movsēs 2.8, 14; Agathangelos 809; S. Šahnazarean, *Mšoy barbarə*, Beirut, 1972, pp. 90, 155). The new Christian shrine was consecrated to St. John the Baptist and St. Athenogenes; the former was regarded as a protector of wayfarers, like the Iranian Vərəθrayna (Komitas *vardapet*, M. Abelyan, *Hazar u mi xał*, Erevan, 1969, p. 22). Vahagn shared his temple with Aşłik, a goddess whose name is apparently a translation of Syr. *kaukabtā* "little star;" she may fulfill the function of Hepit, consort of Tešub (see G. Kapantsian [Łap'anc'yan], *Istoriko-lingvisticheskie raboty*, Erevan, 1956, p. 276 on a possible connection between Arm. *htptank'* and Hepit).

Tir, the *dpir* "scribe" of Ormizd (*sic*), had a temple called Erazamoyñ at Artašat (Agathangelos 778). *Erazamoyñ* contains the Iranian loanword *eraz* "dream" (Gk. [Agathangelos] *oneiromousos* confirms this), but the ending *-moyñ* is unknown. The fourth month, Trē, is named after him, corresponding to Cappadocian *Teirei* (L. H. Gray, "On Certain Persian and Armenian Month Names as Influenced by the Avestan Calendar," *JAOS* 38, 1907, p. 336). The ending *-ē*, as in the loanword *margarē* "prophet," may be a Mid. Ir. form of OIr. **-akī* (H. W. Bailey, "Iranica," *JRAS*, 1930, pp. 11-19). Prof. E. Ałayan of Erevan (oral communication, July 1979) suggested that *-ē* is a contraction of Arm. *eay*, a gen. sing. ending attested in the very toponym *Treay geawł* "Village of Tir" (Atišan, *op. cit.*, p. 245), but the ending *-ei* in Cappadocian (Arm. *ē* comes from Proto-Arm. **ey*) would suggest that Trē is not a form evolved within Armenian. Tir survives in modern Arm. belief as the *groł* "writer" who inscribes the souls of men and carries them off at death (S. Šahnazarean, *op. cit.*, 88; Ē. Pivazyān, *op. cit.*, 12.16; Nahapet K'uc'ak, *Hayreni Kargav*, Erevan, 1957, XXIII, L, LV; Abelyan, *op. cit.*, VII, p. 21). His name is the Iranian word for the planet Mercury, which was considered by the Mesopotamians to be governed by the god Nābu, whose traits Tīr acquired. (Mercury, compare NPers. *dabīr-e falak* "scribe of fate," Pahl. *Tīr-ī abāxtarīg* "the planet Tīr" in *Bundahišn*, tr. p. 63.12, cf. W. Eilers, *Semiramis*, Vienna, 1971, p. 43; Šāpūr II ordered the general Mu'ain to worship Nebo, the god he presumably knew as Tīr, cf. G. Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer*, Leipzig, 1880, p. 29. Nābu's temple usually had a library attached, as did Tīr's at Artašat, cf. Saggs, *op. cit.*, p. 357.)

The ruler of the kingdom of death to which Tir conducted the souls of the



departed was Tork' of Angl; Tork' is the Luwian Tarhunda (see E. Laroche, "Tarhunda," *Revue hittite et asianique*, Paris, 1958, p. 88) "the Thunderer," while Arm. *Angel* (gen. sg.) translates Nergal in IV Kings 17:30. The Orontid necropolis was located at the center of the cult of Tork', at Angel Tun, Gk. Ingilene (Movsēs 2.8; N. Adonc', "Tork' astuac hin Hayoc'," *Yušarjan-Festschrift*, Vienna, 1911; C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, Washington, 1963, p. 109 n. 68; D'yakonov, op. cit., p. 233 n. 112; A. Lanalanyan, ed., *Avandapatum*, Erevan, 1969, p. clxxxiii).

Arm. *sandaramet* "Hades" (Ezekiel 31:16) is derived from a Southwest-Ir. form in *sw-*; *Spandaramet*, with northwest-Ir. *sp-*, renders the name of the god Dionysus in II Maccabees 6:7 (A. Meillet, "Sur les termes religieux iraniens en arménien," *Revue des études arméniennes* 1, 1920, p. 233; H. W. Bailey, "Saka śśandrāmata," *Festschrift für Wilhelm Eilers*, Wiesbaden, 1967, p. 136). As a female *yazata*, Av. Spəntā Ārmaiti, Arm. *Spandaramet* seems not to correspond well to Dionysus, a male god, but gender was not of primary importance in establishing correspondences between gods of different traditions (e.g., the representation on Kušan coins of a goddess by a male figure and *vice versa*, M. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, p. 68 n. 309); nor did the gender of all *yazatas* remain fixed within Iran itself; the Avestan female Haurvatāt and Amərətāt became the male Hordād and Amurdād in Pahlavi (Boyce, *ibid.*, pp. 204-05). The Armenian translators were evidently more anxious to create a parallel of function than one of gender. At Innaknean Artasēs II built temples of "Heraklēs and Dionysus" (T'ovma Arcruni, I, p. 8) = Gisanē (the shaggy one) and Demeter at Innaknean, i.e., Vahagn and *Spandaramet*; St. Ignatius declares that the heathens call the earth Demeter (Arm. *Demetrē*, in *Sop'erk' Haykakank'* 22, Venice, 1861, p. 144, cited by MA III, 450), and Spəntā Ārmaiti is the earth personified. In Avestan, the grave is called "the darkness of Spəntā Ārmaiti" (*Vd.* 3.35); in Pahl., she is *spandārmad zamīg* "Spandārmad, the earth" (Bailey, "Saka śśandrāmata"); and T'ovma Arcruni calls the earth her *pandoki* "inn" (loc. cit.).

Spandaramet is probably the *šahapet* of the tombs referred to by Tiridates III (Agath. 61). Arm. uses *šahap* "satrap" in the toponym Šahapiwan, the summer residence of the Arm. Orontids, who were satraps under the Achaemenids (S. T. Eremyan, "Osnovnye cherty obshchestvennogo stroya Armenii v ellinisticheskuyu epokhu," *Telemekir* 11, 1948, p. 41); the word *šahapet*, however, seems to derive from OIr. *xšaθrapati* attested in Aram *hštrpty*. The name of the god Sadrapēs (Pausanias 6.25.6) may come from here (see A.



Dupont-Sommer, “La stèle trilingue récemment découverte en Létoon de Xanthos: le texte araméen,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres*, Paris, January-March, 1974, pp. 136, 146). In Armenian, the *šahapetk’* are supernatural beings (Atišan, op. cit., pp. 199, 453); an Armenian miscellany of the 13th century (*Oskiberan*, cited by J. Karst, *Mythologie arméno-caucasienne*, Strasbourg, 1948, p. 55 n. 1) calls Dionysus the *šahapet* of vineyards; he was considered the protector of these in Pontus as well (F. and E. Cumont, *Studia Pontica* II, Bruxelles, 1906, p. 367). The goddess of the earth represented both fertility, particularly the fruit of the vine, and the resting place of the dead.

In accordance with pre-Zoroastrian custom, the Armenians buried their dead, as did many equally pious Iranian Zoroastrians. The Armenian kings had necropoli at Anġl, later at Ani and Bagawan (Agathangelos 785; Movsēs 2.61), with massive, impregnable tombs (cf. P’awstos Biwzand, *Patmuṭ’iwn Hayoc’*, Erevan, 1968, IV, p. 24 on the tomb of Sanatruk); towers in which the dead were interred in the first century B.C. have been excavated at P’arak’ar, on the Erevan-Ējmiacin highway, and elsewhere (G. Tirac’yan, “P’arak’ari aštarakajev dambaranə ev nman hušarjanner Hayastanum ev Aṛaḡavor Asiayum,” *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 1 (10), 1970, pp. 229-39). Grave burials were numerous (Ž. N. Xaç’atryan, R. M. Ṭ’orosyan, “Nyuṭ’er Vaḷaršapati hyusis-arevelyan dambaranadaštic’,” *Lraber* 5, 1976, pp. 99; G. A. Tirac’yan, “K voprosu o gradostroitel’noï strukture i topografii drevnego Valarshpata,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 2, 1977, p. 94; Ṛ. Ṭ’orosyan, F. Ter-Martirosyan, “Uš hellenistakan žamanakašrĵani dambaranner Ējmiacni šrĵani Aygešat gyulum,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 2, 1976, p. 265), and the Arm. *tapan* “coffin” is an Ir. loanword found in Khwarezmian *tpnkwk* “ossuary” (W. B. Henning, “The Choresmian Documents,” *Asia Major* 11, 1965, pp. 170, 177). It is possible that the figure of a naked goddess found on the lids of glazed ceramic Parthian sarcophagi represent Spandārmad rather than Anāhīd, as R. Ghirshman suggests (*Iran*, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 156). Like their Iranian neighbors, the Armenians paid reverence to the dead: Hrotic’, the 12th month, corresponding to Av. Fravašayō in the Zoroastrian calendar, is the gen. plur. of *Hro(r)t, a loanword from Mid. Ir. *fravart*, Av. *fravaši-*, the spirit of the departed (H. Hübschmann, *Armen. Etymologie*, p. 184; on Arm. *hr-*, see A. Ghilain, *Essai sur la langue Parthe*, Louvain, 1939, p. 10 n. 9); it was at the end of the 12th month that the Zoroastrians celebrate Hamaspaθmaēdaya, corresponding roughly to Mid. Ir. Fravardigān “All Souls’ Day.” The Armenians also possess the word *uru* “ghost,” from Ir. *urvan* “soul,” and Agathangelos scorned the *uruapašt* “uru-



worshipping” ancestors of the Christian Armenians (cited by Ališan, op. cit., p. 215).

The winged disk with human figure, well attested in Ir. iconography, may represent either Ahura Mazdā or the *fravaši*, while the disk alone probably symbolizes Av. *xʷarənah-* ‘glory’ (Arm. *p’ark’*, from OIr. *farnah-*, see G. Bolognesi, *Le fonti dialettali degli imprestiti iranici in armeno*, Milan, 1960, p. 28; Hübschmann, op. cit., pp. 88-90, 254; but see most recently P. Lecoq in *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemain Emerito Oblata*, Acta Iranica 23, Leiden, 1984, pp. 301-26). The winged disk, surmounted by a naked male torso in the Hellenistic style, is found on a coin of the Armenian Orontid satrap Tiribazus (4th cent. B.C., see X. A. Mušēlyan, “Hin Hayastani dramayin šrjanaruṭyan patmuṭyunic’,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 3, 1970, p. 68). Another disk, with either thunderbolts or wings on either side and no human figure, is found on a coin of the Artaxiad period (P. Z. Bedoukian, *Coinage of the Artaxiads of Armenia*, London, 1978, p. 31).

The Armenians to this day go out on the eve of Ascension Day (*Hambarjman tawn*) to collect bunches of the flower *hawrot-mawrot*, named after the Aməša Spəntas Haurvatāt and Amərətāt (G. Dumézil, “Les fleurs *haurot-maurot* et les anges Haurvatat-Ameretat,” *Revue des études arméniennes*, 1926, p. 43; J. Karst, op. cit., p. 349 n. 1; Potureau, ed., *Kostandin Erzncac’i*, Venice, 1905, XI, p. 5; on Sogdian *hrwwt mrwwt*, see W. B. Henning, *Sogdica*, London, 1940, p. 16 lines 16, 19). The two *yazatas* came to be regarded by the Armenian as lovers, because they are always mentioned together (a modern poem, Gełam Saryan, *Banastelcuṭyunner*, Erevan, 1954, p. 361, repeats a legend partly romantic, partly Koranic in origin, cf. Sura 2:96 and *EI*² II, p. 272), hence the modern Armenian expression of Karin (Erzurum), *Xorotə morot ē gter* “*Hawrot* has found his *mawrot*,” said when two fall in love (oral communication by V. Tarpinian, New York, July, 1979). Originally, *hawrot* and *mawrot* were two different flowers, and are mentioned by Agathangelos in a list (645, in G. Tēr-Mkrṭč’ean and St. Kanayeanč’, eds., *Agat’angelay Patmuṭ’iwn Hayoc’*, Tiflis, 1909, pp. 330-31; tr. R. W. Thomson, *The Teaching of St. Gregory*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 159). The folk rituals of Ascension Day suggest the ancient identification of the two Aməša Spəntas with the plants and water, and have parallels in modern Persian customs (Fr. Ep’rem Pōlosean, *Hambarjman tōnə ew Hay žolovurdi vičakaxatə*, Vienna, 1956, pp. 69ff.).

The Armenian vocabulary for evil and the demonic abounds in Iranian loanwords which indicate the influence of Zoroastrian concepts. Arm. *p’at’erak*



“distress” comes from Mid. Ir. *patyārak*, a word describing in Zoroastrian theology the adverse activity of Ahriman’s counter-creation (A. V. W. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies*, New York, 1928, p. 76 n. 11). For Arm. *kaxard* “witch,” compare Av. *kax^varəda* (Y. 61.2) (M. Schwartz, “Miscellanea Iranica,” *Henning Memorial Volume*, pp. 89-90); Arm. *vhuk* “witch,” from OIr. **viθuka-* (E. Benveniste, “Etudes iraniennes,” *TPS*, 1945, p. 75); Arm. *parik* and *yuškaparik* “harpy” (Hübschmann, op. cit., pp. 199-200); Arm. *Al*, the demon which attacks mothers and their babies (E. Benveniste, “Le dieu Ohrmazd et le demon Albasti,” *JA*, 248, 1960, pp. 65-74; J. S. Wingate, “The Scroll of Cyprian, an Armenian Family Amulet,” *Folk-Lore* 41, 1930). Arm. *karič* “scorpion” is related to Pahl. *kaṛčang* “crab” (on Arm. *gazan* “wild beast” and Pahl. *xrafstarān* “noxious, Ahrimanic creatures,” see H. W. Bailey, “A Range of Iranica,” *Henning Memorial Volume*, p. 25). The Armenian name of Ahriman, *Arhmn*, appears to be a native form parallel in development to another Iranian loanword, *arhawirk* “terror” (H. W. Bailey, “*Spanta,” in *Die Diskussion um das “Heilige,”* Darmstadt, 1977, p. 171).

The Armenian religious vocabulary is almost entirely Iranian, and covers most Zoroastrian ideas, religious institutions and instruments: *awrhnem* “I bless,” *nizovem* “I curse,” *paragast* “God forbid,” *draxt* “heaven,” *džoxk* “hell,” *datastan* “judgement,” *hrašakert* “wonder” (Hübschmann op. cit., pp. 254, 145, 142, 183; R. Godel, *An Introduction to the Study of Classical Armenian*, Wiesbaden, 1975, 2.345); *atrušan* “Fire temple,” *bagin* “altar,” *mog* “Magus,” *zoh* “sacrifice,” *yašt* “prayer, hymn” (Hübschmann, op. cit., pp. 195, 110, 151; on Armenian terms with *baga-* such as the toponyms Bagaran, Bagawan and the personal name Bagarat, see A. Meillet, *Revue des études arméniennes* 1, 1920, pp. 233-36.) *Atrušan* is the only surviving form of the Parth. word for a fire temple, **ātarōšan*; the *bagin* probably relates to the image cult suppressed by the Sasanian state and replaced by temple fires, see M Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian temple cult of fire,” *JAOS* 95, 1975, pp. 454-65. In referring to specifically named fires other than *atrušank*, Armenian writers use the Mid. Pers. forms *ormzdakan* and *vramakan* instead of Arm. Aramazd and Vahagn (cf. Akišan, op. cit., p. 51), indicating that these were not institutions of the older, Armenian form of Zoroastrianism. Most vestments of the Armenian Church have Iranian names; names of specifically Zoroastrian vestments and instruments include *k’ustik* “sacred girdle,” *p’andam* “face mask,” *šapik*, *sudra* “sacred shirt,” *barsmunk* “ritual bundle of twigs” (Hübschmann, op. cit., pp. 254, 211, 119; J. R. Russell, “The word *k’ustik* in Armenian,” in J. Greppin, ed., *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Armenian linguistics*,



University of Pennsylvania, publ. 1980).

It is seen that the Armenians came under Median influence at an early stage in their history, and that Zoroastrianism was introduced later, under the Achaemenids. The religion was strongly colored by local tradition and foreign influence, as indeed in Iran itself. Zoroastrian traditions were so much a part of Armenian spiritual and material culture that they survived the fanaticism of Kartīr and his successors and were absorbed into the Armenian Christian faith. The Armenian Cross itself is supported on tongues of flame and has at its center not the body of Christ, but a sunburst; an Armenian girl about to marry a Tatar khan is advised in a medieval folksong to remain true to her *loys hawat* “faith of light” (one recalls that King Mowbad swears in the Parth. epic *Vīs and Rāmīn* by “the religion of light,” tr. by G. Morrison, *Vis and Ramin*, New York, 1972, p.144, as the “glorious religion”).

But a small group of Armenian Zoroastrians, the Arewordik’ “Children of the Sun,” never converted to Christianity, and appear to have survived down to the massacre of the Western Armenians by Turkey in 1896-1922. The Arewordik’ were never converted by St. Gregory (see the Letter of St. Nersēs Klayce’i [Šnorhali, “the Gracious”, d. 1173, to Samosata in R. M. Bartikyan, “Eretiki Arevordi [“syny solntsa”] v Armenii i Mesopotamii i poslanie armyanskogo katolikosa Nersesa Blagodatnogo,” *Ellinisticheskiĭ Blizhniĭ Vostok, Vizantiya i Iran: Istoriya i filologiya. Sbornik v chest’ . . . N. V. Pigulevskoiĭ*, Moscow, 1967 (French tr. in *Revue des études arméniennes*, N.S. 5, 1968, pp. 271-88). They were said to have been “infected” by Zradašt (Zarathushtra; Gregory Magistros, 11th cent., and Mxiṭ’ar of Aparan, 14th cent., cited by Bartikyan, op. cit.) and were carefully distinguished from Christian heretics such as the Paulicians and T’ondrakites (loc. cit), whom they apparently taught to expose the dead on rooftops instead of burying them (John of Awjun, 8th cent., *Contra Paulicianos*, Venice, 1834, pp. 84-87, cited by N. G. Garsoĭan, *The Paulician Heresy*, The Hague, 1967, p. 95 n. 46; this would indicate that both burial and exposure of the dead were practiced in Armenia, as in Iran). The Arewordik’ spoke Armenian (Mxiṭ’ar of Aparan, cited by Bartikyan), and revered the poplar and all heliotropic plants (St. Nerses, cited by Bartikyan. On the worship of plants by the Armenians, see S. Avdalbekyan, “Buyseri paštamunk’i azdec’uṭ’ yunə haykakan mi k’ani tełanunneri vra,” *Patma-banasirakan Handēs* 4, 1964, p. 223 and Łanalanyan, *Avandapatum*, pp. liv-lv). A tree which is either a poplar or a cypress, probably the latter, which is particularly revered by the Zoroastrians, appears on an Artaxiad coin (see



Bedoukian, op. cit., p. 36, no. 157). The Arewordik' offered sacrifices for the souls of their departed (Mxiṭ'ar of Aparan, cited by Bartikyan and passed on their teachings orally (loc. cit.; on the importance of oral transmission in Zoroastrianism see H. W. Bailey, "Patvand," in *Zoroastrian Problem, in the Ninth-Century Books*, Oxford, 1971). Their leader was called the *hazərpət* (Arm. *hazarapet* "chiliarch," probably originally a Median title, see M. L. Chaumont, "Chiliarque et curopalate à la cour des Sassanides," *Iranica Antiqua* 10, 1977, pp. 140, 143. On the etymology of the word, see O. Szemerényi, "Iranica V," in *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg II*, Acta Iranica 5, Tehran and Liège, 1975, pp. 354-66; on the use of the title in 15th-century Armenian, see R. H. Hewsen, "The Meliks of Eastern Armenia II," *Revue des études arméniennes*, N. S. 10, 1973-74, p. 300). In the late 14th century there were four Arewordi villages in the Mardin area, and others lived in Samosata and Amida (Ṭ'ovma Mecop'ec'i, 14th century, cited by Bartikyan). In the early 20th century, the Armenian quarter of Marsovan was called Arewordi; there was a cemetery outside the town called *Arewordii grezman*, and the Armenian owner of a nearby vineyard was named Arewordean, i. e., Arewordi-son (Letter from Mme. Maric'a Metak'sean, Épinay-sur-Seine, France, 4 July 1979, in response to an article by the author in *Haratch*, Paris, 1 July 1979).

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