



FAUSTUS

FAUSTUS, Arm. P'awstos (Latin, "fortunate"), fifth-century author of the *Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'* (History of the Armenians) or *Buzandaran*. He is surnamed *Buzand*, a word taken to mean either "the Byzantine" or, as Anahit Perikhanian has proposed, "composer of epics": from OIr **bava(t)-zanta-*, cf. NP. *zandvāf* "Zoroastrian, lit. chanter of the Zand" (pp. 653-57). *Buzandaran* would mean something like "Epic Histories." There seems little doubt that, whoever the person P'awstos may have been, the *History* ascribed to him was composed in Armenian by an Armenian steeped in the Iranian traditions of the newly Christianized land, for his description of the events of the fourth century, from the death of St. Gregory the Illuminator to the period just preceding the downfall of the Armenian Arsacid dynasty, are cast in the form of ancient Indo-European epic, specifically, of the Kayanian epic preserved by the Parthians. There are numerous references in Armenian literature to the oral epics of the *gusans*, "minstrels"; but P'awstos (if one excepts the epic of Susan, which, though of very ancient origins, comes down to us in a version of Arab occupation) alone enables us to study such a work in its entirety and nearly original form and to establish its kinship with other expressions of the genre in kindred Indo-European cultures.

The basic pattern to which the *Buzandaran* belongs is this: In the course of an apocalyptic war, a good and heroic warrior serves a weak or evil king; one or the other or both receive the benefit of spiritual counsel from a divinity or sage, who provides an alternative to fighting, but urges them to pursue war instead; and the end of the dynasty or heroic age ensues. Armenian literature



can be triangulated, as it were between Greek and Indian examples, when its Indo-European aspects are studied (see Russel, 1998). Thus, in the oldest complete epic in Indo-European literature, the *Iliad* of Homer, the sea-nymph Thetis counsels her son, the hero Achilles, who can fight in the dubious war over Helen under the selfish, foolish Agamemnon, but win *kleos apthiton*, “immortal fame,” through the epic poet’s later recitation of his deeds, or else return to a long and anonymous old age in Phthia. When Achilles dies, it is to be by a treacherous arrow. The Trojan War ends the Mycenaean age. At the other, eastern, end of the Indo-European world, in the Indian *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* describes the counsel of Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, to the hero Arjuna, who fights a just war, but against his own cousins, under the command of the flawed king Dhritarashtra. Krishna’s advice embodies the religious teaching of yoga, and with the general destruction of the war comes the end of the golden age in India. Closest to Armenia, and maintaining the same structure, is the Kayanian cycle. The *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (q.v.) describes the advice of the visionary sage Jāmāsp to king Wištāsp, who will lose his brother, Zarēr, in the war with the Chionites (q.v.), who have demanded that the king renounce Zoroastrianism and return to *dēv*-worship (as indeed Ahriman [q.v.] had demanded, in the *Vīdēvdāt*, 19.6-7, of Zarathustra himself, offering as an example the monstrous tyrant Aži Dahāka; for a discussion of this passage, see Russell, 1994, pp. 63-71). The alternative is fruitless immortality in the Bronze Fortress, a place which reappears in the *Thousand and One Nights* (see *alf layla wa layla*). Wištāsp explodes in fury, but finally agrees to fight. When Zarēr is slain by treachery, his young son Bastūr (q.v.) escapes from the camp and goes to battle to avenge him. The line of the *kavis* ended with Wištāsp. The power of this epic theme was strong in Iran: the Pāzand version of the *Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag* is set at Wištāsp’s court, and the king’s fury, transferred from the *Ayādgār*, falls upon the sisters of Ardā Wīrāz (q.v.), who do not want him to drink the *mang ī wištāspān* and undertake his perilous spirit-journey.

P’awstos casts the war between the Armenian Arsacids and the Persian Sasanians (principally Šāpūr II) in the tripartite pattern described above, except with three families, instead of three individuals: the heroic Mamikonean *naxarars* (local dynasts, OIr. *naxwadāra-*), who are by hereditary privilege the *sparapets* (commanders-in-chief, OIr. *spādapati-*) of the royal forces; the Arsacid kings; and the Grigorid patriarchs of the Armenian Church. Material on the latter in P’awstos is cast often in the terms, not of epic, but of hagiography, especially Syriac. After an introductory section (bk. 3), the chief



characters of these three—Mušel Mamikonean, king Aršak II, and St. Nersēs—are all introduced together (bk. 4, chap. 1). Nersēs curses Aršak, dooming the dynasty, at the murder of the innocent Gnel (4.15: his death on account of his sexually captivating wife P'aranjem suggests a prototype in the myth of Sīāvōš, Arm. Šawarš, itself an Indo-European *topos*; cf. the Greek myth of Hippolytos and Phaidra), but Mušel, who will die, predictably by treachery, serves his liege lord with a dogged, self-sacrificing loyalty most reminiscent of that of the Iranian hero Rostam, who was popular in Armenian storytelling, and whose prototype may have been an Arsacid (see Shahbazi, 1993). In Book 5, chaps. 43-44, the boy Artawazd, son of Vač'ē Mamikonean, escapes to the battlefield in a scene probably derived directly from the episode of Bastūr in the epic of Zarēr. The earthly alternative to war against the Persians, for which the reward promised by the Christian sages is the crown of martyrdom and the ultimate triumph of the true faith in Armenia, is conversion to Zoroastrianism: the evil *naxarar* Meružan Arcruni chooses this path. P'awstos, writing most likely around 470 C.E., would have had in mind as a more contemporary exemplar the traitorous Vasak Siwni; Mušel then prefigures St. Vardan Mamikonean, whose martyrdom is celebrated by Elišē *vardapet* (see EĻIŠĒ) in imagery which owes as much to the biblical Maccabees as to Christian hagiography. Aršak dies in captivity, neither martyr nor traitor, in the Sasanians' Fortress of Oblivion (Andīmešk, q.v., or Andmšn berd)—a place of obscurity and a kind of suspended animation, somewhat like the Bronze Fortress. Aršak's interview in the feasting tent of Šāpūr II, where the Armenian king only speaks his true intentions, to fight the Persians, when standing on Armenian soil that the Sasanian monarch, unbeknownst to his guest, has sprinkled over half the floor, derives from a cognate of the myth of Antaeus. The Armenian king's elegiac moments, attended by the loyal eunuch Drastamat (lit: "welcome"), with feasting and dancers, are reminiscent of the end of Artasēs I, also the subject of an epic (Russell, 1986-87 and 1999; one notes that the son of Artasēs, Artawazd, betrayed him to his death and was cursed; Artawazd was then confined in Ararat to the end of his time, as is Aži Dahāka [see AŽDAHĀ, ŽAḤḤĀK] in Damāvand; the epic image of Aršak's son, Pap, will be seen below to be used in part on Aži Dahāka as well). The defiant speech of the captured Armenian commander Vasak (4.54) provides a sense of the word play of the oral source of the epic. When accused by Šāpūr of being a fox (Arm. *aluēs*), he retorts that the Persian does not take his true measure, for he was once a giant (Arm. *skay*, lit: "Scythian"; on Armeno-Scythian relations see Russel, 1997). The criticism is literally true, since /alVES/ is only one half of /SKAy/= VASAK.



Aršak begets his successor, Pap, on P'aranjem, whom he married after slaying Gnel. She devotes him at his birth to the demons (*dewk'*), who appear as snakes curling round him. He practices sodomy, and slays St. Nersēs: these attributes link him to the Christian Satan, who manifested himself as a snake in Eden and later possessed Judas Iscariot to betray Christ; and homosexuality is commonly linked with idolatry and heresy, which are the result of satanic deceit. But the same features apply, as directly, also to Aži Dahāka, the Iranian paradigm of misrule, from whose shoulders snakes sprang, and who, as noted above, was presented by Ahriman to Zarathustra as a paragon of demonolatry. The confluence of Satan and the Iranian monster is exemplified on a monument of medieval Armenian art: the Bagratid Church of the Holy Apostles as Kars has, among the other figures in bas-relief on the drum, a grotesque man threatened by a serpent at either shoulder, strongly resembling Persian depictions of Žaḥḥāk (Aži Dahāka). Though no text identifies this figure, local tradition holds that it is Judas, and Armenians of Kars called the building the Church of the Eleven—not Twelve—Apostles, to exclude the demoniac figure (see Elišē Č'arenc', p. 21): more recent Armenian folktales about an *ōjamanuk* "snake-child," one of which even names him Aždahak (see *Hay žołovrdakan hek'iat'ner*, pp. 415-25, dialect of Karabakh), reduce to harmless entertainment what was once a figure of horror (see Russell, 1994-95). The *Buzandaran* has always stood outside the mainstream of Armenian Christian literature, its archaism perhaps the cause of other writers' aversion; for although its author champions strongly the new faith, and the element of its literature from one strand of his book, his entire imaginative world is still Parthian. The only compositions akin to his work in Armenia are the epic fragments scattered through the writings of other 5th-century and later writers, and the great folk epic of Sasun, already noted, which, although referred to sporadically in the Middle Ages and early modern times, was not to be recorded until the late 19th century.

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