

FRIGG, ASTGHIK AND THE GODDESS OF THE CRETE ISLAND

Dedicated to the goddesses-mothers of Armenia and Sweden

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Introduction

According to conventional opinion, the well-known memorial stone (Fig. 1a) from the Swedish island Gotland (400-600 AC) depicts goddess **Frigg** holding snakes. The unique statuettes of a goddess holding snakes are discovered on Crete (Fig. 1b), which date to c. 1600 BC¹. The depiction of Frigg embodies a godmother with her legs wide open to give birth. In Norse mythology **Frigg**, **Frige** (Old Norse **Frigg**), **Frea** or **Frija** (Frija – “*beloved*”) is the wife of **Odin**. She is the mother of the three gods **Baldr**, **Hodr** and **Hermodr**.



Fig. 1. (a) Memorial stone from the Swedish island Gotland (400-600 AC) depicting Frigg holding snakes. (b) Goddess holding snakes, Crete (c. 1600 BCE)

The Swedish stone from Gotland island depicts the godmother, who is sitting atop the mountain before childbirth (Fig. 1a). Her hands are raised and she is holding two big snakes-dragons. The composition symbolizes the home/mountain of dragons (volcanic mountain). The composite motif of the depiction on the memorial stone, according to the

¹The findings belong to Crete-Minoan civilization and are found in the upper layers of the New Palace in Knossos. Two items are discovered (Archaeological Museum, Heraklion)

authors, stems to the archetypes in the Old Armenian song “The birth of Vahagn”². To illustrate the Natural Phyllosophic and Metaphysical description of the processes of interaction between the four forces of nature (water, air, earth and fire), volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, the pre-historic sages and artists model it in graphic mode and present it in the form of celestial and terrestrial dragons/snakes – the models of volcanic eruptions and avalanches. Dragons (masters of the underworld) threaten the life of the diety’s beloved, in this very case – the wife of Odin, Frigg. The heads of the snakes/dragons (Fig. 1a) are directed to the solar and lunar discs, i.e. they convey in artistic form the wish to “swallow” these celestial bodies, which actually models the beginning of the process of solar and lunar eclipse.

Odin saves his beloved, kills the dragons and they get married. In this context the historical and natural processes are depicted on the stone using “mythological constructions”, which only at first sight defy rigorous interpretation. The godmother is wearing a royal headgear. Her head has a three-rayed shape, symbolizing the royal power: she is the wife of the major diety Odin. The woman will give birth to three godlike heroic brothers perfect in their form and nature, who possess the power of dragons. They are presented in the form of a triad – the three-pointed left-facing swastika symbol depicted in the sky. The ornamented frame on the stone symbolizes the heavenly gate (Fig. 1a).

The whole composition embodies celestial eminence of the three bogatyr (heroes); their souls rise to the Heavenly Father. They are powerful and strong as dragonslayers. The stone is called memorial for a certain reason: it is built as a monument signifying the roots of the Aesir and the original homeland – the volcanic mountains (Asaland and Vanaland, the Kingdom of Van), the godmother **Frigg**, her husband **Odin** and their sons – bogatyr.

Relations between Frigg and the Goddess of the Crete Island

Both statuettes (Fig. 1b) were discovered by A. Evans during the excavations on Crete in 1903. They were hidden in a cache under the flooring of one of the palace rooms. They are made of faience covered with vitreous glaze coloured in bright reddish-brown and yellowish-green pigments, it is later roasted, acquiring vitreous gloss. These depictions with snakes are the only one in the Cretan art of this period³.

One of the figures depicts the “diety” in tensed posture⁴: *“Stretching out her hands and her big penciled eyes widely open, she gazes her concentrated sight at the moment of the snake spell; the two snakes enlacing her waist demonstrate this concept. The head of one more can be noticed atop her high cap”*. The snakes in her hands symbolize the relation of the woman with the Minoan ruling house, that’s why it could be supposed to be the depiction of a deity.

The big breasts of the woman represent the function of the fertility goddess, the supreme mother goddess. It is supposed that during this period matriarchy could prevail in Crete and Old Europe. Some scholars associate snake with the idea of life extension, as they shed their skin and are renewed, that's why they are associated with male reproductive ability. However, the true function of the statuettes remains unclear for experts. It is a depiction of an unknown deity⁵.

² Old Armenian song “The birth of Vahagn” (Khorenatsi M. History of Armenia)

³ Sidorova N. A. Aegean Art. M., 1972, p. 126

⁴ <http://zagadki-istorii.ru/sokrovishe-6.html#ixzz4RshmnLOh>

⁵ <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ruwiki/395673>

However, according to the authors, the statuettes have old Armenian origin. They visibly and accurately depict the Armenian goddess **Astghik**, the beautiful **bride of Vahagn** (the first man, dragonslayer and thunderer, liberator of water). **Vahagn** was the first to challenge serpents/dragons; he defeated them, freeing Astghik and the mankind, flora and fauna from extinction. But how did they appear in Crete along with the direct (Greek) marble cross and other artifacts?

It should be mentioned that it was beautiful Europa (the sister of Cadmus, Phoenix and Cilix), the granddaughter of **Hayk** – the patriarch of the Armenian royal dynasty – was abducted by Zeus and taken away to the island of Crete. There she gave birth to two sons of Zeus, who later became the founders of the Minoan civilization and the royal dynasty. A similar motif is observed in the story of the abduction of beautiful Astghik/Ishtar (Ishtar - goddess of Akkadian and Sumerian mythology, originally was the goddess/queen of Aratta). Therefore, it is natural that many of the major motifs associated with Ishtar are not Akkadian-Sumerian but are taken and transformed from Arattian original).

Motifs in Norse Mythology

Frigg or Frija (beloved) like Astghik is the goddess of marriage, love, family hearth, personification of femininity in nature. She (as the wife of Odin, Woden or Wotan) sits next to him enthroned in Hliðskjálf, where the divine spouse observe all the nine worlds. According to the “Prose Edda”, the race of the Aesir descends from **Odin** and **Frigg**.

Frigg, “though possessing the knowledge of fate, never predicted it”. Frigg first tries to save his beloved son **Baldr** from death (conjuring all living beings to request immunity for Baldr from all kinds of danger, and then bitterly grieves the death of her son). When **Baldr** was tortured by disturbing dreams, **Frigg** took an oath from all the things and beings that they will do him no harm. An exception was a shoot of mistletoe, which she has missed. It was a mistake, because blind **Hodr**, tricked by fire god Loki, shoot **Baldr** with a mistletoe projectile and accidentally killed him. Frigg tried to rescue his son from the underworld, but failed, because the insidious Loki refused to weep Baldr.

Frigg reigns over all the goddesses and is as wise as her husband. She greatly resembles Freya: both goddesses descended from the divine Mother Earth⁶. The name **Frigg** (Old Icelandic *Frigg*) is associated with **Yggdrasil** (Norse *world tree*). According to some records, she is the leader of beautiful Valkyries. According to other myths, it is Freya⁷. The prototype of the image of **Frigg**, according to the authors, is Armenian Astghik (presented in Akkadian-Sumerian mythology as the Queen of **Aratta** (or Ararat, the Kingdom of Van, the house of **Askanaz** and **Torgom** [sons of **Tiras**])). The image of the mother goddess Astghik, the beautiful and beloved bride of Vahagn, as a result of intercultural communication or by direct abduction is transformed into Anahit/Inanna/Ishtar/Astarte/Frigg.

Motifs in Armenian Mythology

(On how languished in suspicion of friendship between Tigran and Cyrus, Azhdahak had an amazing dream foreseeing the coming events)

“My courteous, he said, today I was in a foreign country, near a mountain rising high above the earth. Its top seemed to be covered with ice. They say it was the land of the Haykids [the Haykazunis]. As I stared at the mountain, a woman came into sight sitting atop

⁶ <http://godsby.ru/vikings/frigg.html>

⁷ <http://mythology.info/gods/skandinavy/frig.html>

it in a crimson/purple dress with a sky-blue veil, she has got big eyes and was strapping and ruddy; she was in travail. Astonished, I stared at the sight, and the woman suddenly gave birth to three perfect in their shape and nature god-like heroes. The first one jumped on a lion and rushed to the west; the second one made his way to the north on a leopard; the third one, riding a dragon monster, attacked our country.”

*Having such entangled dreams, it seemed to me that I was on the roof of my palace and could see the surface of this building with beautiful colorful tents of the gods that crowned us, representing a memorable spectacle, and me among them, honoring them with sacrifices and incense. And then, looking up, I noticed **a man riding a dragon who was rapidly impending as if on eagle’s wings**. Approaching, he intended to defeat the gods. But I [Azhdahak] rushed between them and incurred such a powerful attack and fought the amazing godlike hero. First, we mangled the bodies of each other with spearheads and shedding blood, made the roof of the palace shining in the sun into the sea of blood. So we kept on fighting for many hours, changing our weapons.*

*But what’s the use of going on with this story? After all, **I was defeated**. From this anxiety sleep fled from me, since then I feel that I have ceased to live. For what else can the content of this vision mean if not the threat of attack from Tigran Orontid [Haykazuni]? And who if not the gods can help us by word and deed and not expect to be our co-rulers?”⁸*

Tigran is from the dynasty of Hayk/Haykid/Haykazuni (Hayk is the son of Torgom and the nephew of Askanaz; Cadmus, Europa, Phoenix and Cilix are his grandchildren).

Artifacts

Fig. 2 and 3 present the identified by the authors typical archaic images clearly in the form of documentary evidence of the commonality of basic old Armenian-Scandinavian and Christian pictorial and linguistic, cultural and mythical-poetic motifs possessing a historical basis. The acts and deeds of the Aesir (descendants of Askanaz) and the Vanir (descendants of Torgom) formed the basis of sacred legends and mythological motifs of the genesis of the world, the world tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the tree of life, mother goddess, birth of the first man, three heroes, etc.

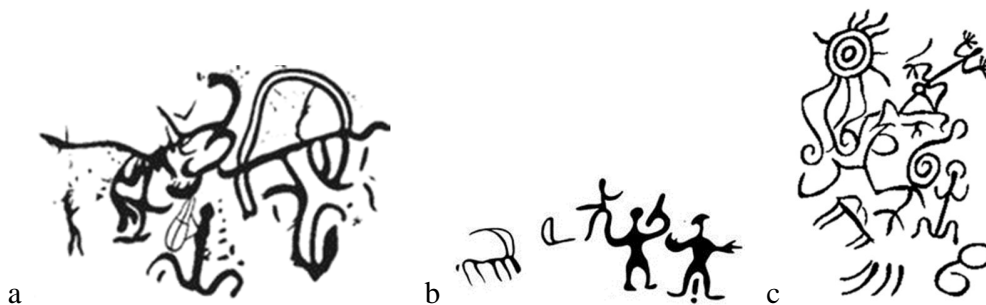


Fig. 2. (a) archetype of baptism in a cradle, petroglyph, Armenia (7-5 millennium BC). The mother goddess, with her legs wide open, holds the infant in the form of a small **cross** (Vahagn) in a cradle. Under one of her legs (stylized two-headed mountain – the mother mountain) are ideograms of feminine vulva representing the symbol of birth. The mother raises the cradle in her hands to the Heavenly Father, “the Sun” (big winged cross). The moon can be seen above the cradle. Two eyes are looking at the hero⁹. A celestial cow with mammary glands is depicted on the right side of the mother; a lyre and a star (the future bride, Astghik,

⁸ Khorenatsi M. History of Armenia

⁹ According to N. Marr, in Japhetology “the sun and the moon” mean “eyes”

Armenian “*little star*”) are depicted below. A bird (eagle) and a celestial snake are depicted above. (b) Birth celebration. The father holds proudly the son in his right hand, next to them is depicted the mother after the childbirth (with typical symbols of childbirth). A bird in the sky and a goat, the symbols of protection of the heaven, life and fertility. (c) Depiction of the genesis (petroglyph in the Geghama Mountains, Armenia). The In the centre of the composition is depicted the Mother Goddess after the childbirth with her legs wide open and her hands raised up. The sun rays fertilize the earth. The hero (Vahagn) with his fingers and toes wide open fights the “dragon”, the forces of evil, darkness and death, volcanic eruption, lava (having the form of a sphere above the crater), on the top of the mountain

The ancient Armenian ceramic pottery depicts: (d) volcanic mountain chain with four peaks, snakes-volcanoes – the stylized images of the forces of nature – the three heroes. (e), fighting against the forces of nature, the forces of evil and death - the snakes, huge celestial birds with huge beaks. Swastika – the symbol of Vahagn, born in the result of interaction of the four fundamental forces of nature.



Fig. 2. Depictions on ceramic pottery, Old Armenia (2 millennium BC). The triad-force (the three bogatyr, the sons of the Mother Goddess, the goddess of thee earth) symbols are depicted centrally

Marija Gimbutas¹⁰, who has reconstructed the cult of the Great Goddess in Ancient Europe based on archaeological research, notes: “*taking into consideration the myriad of images inherited from prehistoric Eurasia, the source of ancient religious experiences was the great mystery of woman's life-giving power of creation. The great mother goddess, whose sacred darkness of the womb originated all creations, was the metaphor of Nature itself, the universal source of life and death, constantly updated in the continuous change of life, death and resurrection*”.



Fig. 3. (a) Relief depicting the Mother Goddess with the child and a cow (Hittite Empire), (b, c) Virgin Mary enthroned with Jesus (Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Van, Vaspurakan, historical Armenia, modern territory of Turkey)

The great goddess was typically depicted in a pose of raised hands. The great mother of the gods, the master of snakes was always depicted with her hands raised up. Snakes were

¹⁰ Gimbutas M. The civilization of the Goddess: Old Europe. - M.: “Russian political encyclopedia”. 2006. p.243

considered a symbol of the underworld, and the goddess of the mother earth – the master of snakes.

In fact, the first childbirth is described in the song “The birth of Vahagn” (cf. Azhdahak's dream). Vahagn slayed the dragons, then his beloved Astghik gave birth to three heroes (according to the picture as described in the dream of Azhdahak, atop the mother mountain Masis). Under this mountain lived serpents/dragons, the symbols of the underworld, embodying the forces of volcanic eruption and lava. Serpents threatened the world. Vahagn saved the world from vishaps/dragons, defeated the king of serpents. For more information regarding the Armenian godmother, mother goddess Maruts, Tsovinar and others refer to the monograph of the authors¹¹.

Fig. 4 depicts female figures: snake-legged goddess descending from the mountain (rock art, Armenia); relief of Astghik/Inanna, Ishtar/Astarte (abducted from Aratta); snake-legged goddess of the Scythians and the bust of the Armenian goddess Anahit (possessed by the British Museum). Facial features and shapes of the goddesses and the mother goddess from Crete are similar (Fig. 1b.), which gives grounds to conclude: **Astghik is the archetype of the Indo-European mother goddess, Venus, Aphrodite, Ishtar and Astarte.** Her mother goddess Anahit is the prototype of pre-mother of all the gods: Astghik and Inanna (**Maruts** and **Tsovinar** (cf. Vinar and Venus) in Armenian mythology), and **Europa**.



Fig. 4. (a) Petroglyph, a snake-legged goddess (Armenia). (b)¹² Astghik/Anahit/Inanna. (c) The Great Mother, the Scythian snake-legged goddess, Api (kurgan in Kul-Oba, Kerch)¹³. (d) Heads of Armenian goddesses in Commagene¹⁴

In 62 BC King Antiochus of Commagene (from Armenian Orontid [Yervanduni] dynasty) built a sanctuary tomb, surrounded by huge statues of two lions, two eagles and

¹¹ “Stone annals of civilization”, “Nzhar”, Yerevan, 2016

¹² <http://secretsnicholasflamel.wikia.com/wiki/Inanna>

¹³ <http://www.iatp.am/ara/sites/articles/antropology/index.htm>

¹⁴ <http://strajj.livejournal.com/904363.html>

images of various gods such as Hercules-Vahagn, Zeus-Aramazd, Apollo-Mitra, as well as lions and eagles. The sedentary statues of the gods carry engraved names on them. The fragments of the statues and tablets are scattered around the kurgan/tumulus, which is 49 meters high and 152 meters in diameter. Fig. 4e shows the heads of Armenian goddesses, whose facial features are similar to those of Astghik/Anahit/Ishtar (Fig. 4b,d) and facial features of the women depicted on the artifacts discovered on Crete island (Fig. 1b).

The depiction of pagan mother goddess holding snakes and wild animals in her raised hands is identified on numerous golden plaques in all the Scythian kurgans/tumuli¹⁵. The name of snake-legged goddess **Api** is identified in a number of **Mycenaean** inscriptions. In Greek mythology goddess **Rhea** is the pre-mother of all the gods and the mother of supreme god Zeus. Rhea is the supreme goddess of Ancient Greek pantheon (Mycenaean *O-re-i* = “mountains”: *orei* – “in the mountains”, Greek *Ορος* – “mountain”).

In the Armenian rock art vishaps/dragons/serpents are typically depicted with horns. On a number of vishapakars (dragon-stones) are depicted reliefs of horned bulls, which personify celestial dragons. Is discovered a depiction of a hero (Vahagn/Hayk) in the form of a swastika symbol fighting a huge celestial ferocious bull. Hayk’s enemy, defeated Bel (ruler of Babylon), was depicted in the form of a bull. The kings of Urartu (Ararat, the Kingdom of Van) were depicted bestriding a lion or a bull. It should be mentioned, that the Old Armenians and Greeks vied with each other. **Matere teija = Ματήρ Θεία = ‘mother god’ in Minoan religion personified the eternally live nature, earth and fertility.**

The great mother goddess on Crete was depicted as a **queen-bee** (Latin **Api-apium**, meaning *bee*), the preserver of the whole swarm of bees, or metaphorically, the human race (Fig. 5a). The vase, discovered in the Knossos palace of King Minos, depicts the great mother goddess (Fig. 5b) with her arms traditionally raised and ornamented with six swastikas. She is holding two celestial birds. **Two roaring lions** are depicted from both sides of the great mother. Beneath the right hand of the goddess is the **head of a sacrificial bull**, the frontal part depicts **fish**. Such depiction of a fish was considered a symbol of the **great mother in Harappa** (North India). From left and right sights the entire composition is enclosed with vertically twisted snakes, symbolizing the underworld, embodying the “celestial vishaps/dragons” that emerge during volcanic eruptions and threaten the sun and the moon in the sky, causing solar and lunar eclipse (Fig. 5b).



Fig. 5. (a) The forces of nature embodied in the image of mother, progenitress, tutelary of fertility and harvest, the master of flora and fauna, household, underworld, tutelary of cities and settlements. (b) Vase depicting the Great Mother with six swastikas. The entire composition is enclosed with vertically twisted snakes (symbols of the underworld) from both sides

The researchers consider that swastika symbols reached Crete along with the Indo-European people through Asia Minor. Nevertheless, this point is outdated and needs

¹⁵ <http://ru-sled.ru/velikaya-boginya-minojnskogo-krita/>

correction. Swastika and cross symbols reached Crete from pre-historic Armenia (cf. the motif of Zeus abducting the granddaughter of Hayk, Europa, and taking her to Crete). The great mother, depicted next to the regal lions (cf. monuments of lions and eagles in the Armenian Kingdom of Commagene), embodies protection of every living being on the earth and in the heaven. Everything belongs to her: the kingdom of heaven together with birds, fruitage on the earth and the underworld with snakes, as well as the World Water, the dwelling of fish.

Tolkien, referring to the miscellanea of 13th century novels “Roman deeds”, mentions: “A road runs between the two mountains of Armenia, and people often took it [road] for a long time, then it so happened that because of poisoned air no one could go that way avoiding death. The king asked the sages of the reason for such a misfortune, but no one knew the true reason. Then Socrates was convened and told the king to construct a building of the same height as that of the mountain. When it was done, Socrates told to make a mirror of plane damask, polished on top and thin, so that one could see any place on the mountains reflected in the mirror¹⁶. Then Socrates went up the building and saw two dragons: the one near the mountains and the other near the valley, which opened wide their jaws and incinerated air. As he was looking, a young man on a horse, unaware of the danger, took that way, but then he fell immediately from his horse and died. Socrates rushed to the king and told him everything that he saw. Later, the dragons were tricked, seized and slew. Thus, the road was safe again for all the passersby.”¹⁷

The motif of the Tolkien novel might be the source for the mother goddess and the two snakes depicted on the artifact (Crete, Fig. 1a) personifying the two dragons mentioned in the novel. It should be considered that the two great mountains of Armenia, Masis and Sis, personify maternity. According to the Armenian legends, under the volcanic mountain Masis is the dwelling of the king of the dragons. The description of “jaws” and air incineration symbolize the processes related to volcanic eruptions on Masis and Sis, located next to each other. Moreover, in Armenian tradition, according to the motifs of the song “The birth of Vahagn”, Vahagn defeats the dragon and liberates the people.

As it was mentioned before, the Sumerian Inanna is the goddess of fertility, love and strife, the daughter of the sky Anu (the moon god **Nanna**¹⁸), the sister of the sun god Utu, wife of the shepherd-god Dumuzi. The myth describing Inanna’s descent to the underworld mentions that the goddess went there to attend the funeral rites related to her sister’s [Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld¹⁹] husband departure to the underworld. According to the authors, the main motifs of Inanna are transformations and development of the motifs related to beautiful Armenian **Astghik** (little star); her beloved **Vahagn**, the **dragonslyer** and **savior of water**, saves her from the vishap (the diety of the underworld, volcanoes of the Araratian Mountains). **Ereshkigal** is the goddess of death (in Armenian mythology “hresh” – *monster, beast, dragon*).

During her journey around the underworld, the “irrevocable country”, goddess Ishtar passes through the seven gates, enduring the fate of the dead; she is kept by the goddess of the underworld, **Ereshkigal**, but later the other deities come to force **Ereshkigal** free **Ishtar** and return her to the world of the living. The queen commands her servant Namtar: “Pour

¹⁶ Rising to the top of the tower and bending a thin iron sheet, Socrates uses a parabolic mirror to see the reflection of the dragons in it

¹⁷ Tolkien J. R. R. The Professor and monsters: Essay / Tr. From English, Latin and Old Icelandic – St. Petersburg: “Azbuka-klassika”, 2004

¹⁸ Nane – is the goddess in Armenian mythology, the daughter of the supreme god-creator Aramazd

¹⁹ Mythological dictionary. - M.: Astrel, Tranzitkniga, Scheglov G. V., Archer V. 2006

the water of life on goddess Ishtar and send her away”. He pours the water on Ishtar and she comes to life²⁰.

Circle of the World

According to Norse mythology, the Circle of the World, inhabited by people, is mostly indented by bays. From the ocean, surrounding the earth, big seas run into it. It is acknowledged that the sea stretches from Norvasund to Hjorsaland. A long bay stretches from this sea to the north, which is called Black Sea. It divides the parts of the world. The one on the east is called **Asia**, and that on the west – **Europe, Eneija**. The **Great or Cold Sweden** is located to the north of the Black Sea. Some researchers consider the Great Sweden having the same territory as the Great country of the Saracen, or the great country of the black people. The northern part of Sweden is deserted by frost and cold, like the southern part of the country of the black people is deserted by sun heat.

Sweden has many large areas. It is inhabited by many nations speaking diverse languages. Giants and dwarfs, black people and many other amazing nations settle it. There are huge beasts and dragons there. A river [**Tanais**] flows through Sweden from the northern mountains, located beyond the inhabited areas. It was earlier called **Tanakvisl** or **Vanakvisl**. It debouches into Black Sea. The area in the vicinity of its water mouth was then called the **Country of the Vans/Vanir**, the **Dwelling of the Vans**. This river divides parts of the world. The one on the east is called **Asia**, and the one on the west is called **Europe**.

Afterword

In the Armenian language **obsidian** (volcanic stone) is called “*vanakat*”. This word comprises two roots “*van*” and “*kat*”, literally meaning “*van milk*”, correlated to earth milk, lava, bursting from a crater or from the bottom of sea during a volcanic eruption. In the Armenian language “*erkat*” literally means **iron** and comprises two roots “*erki*” (earth) and “*kat*” (milk).

The **Aesir** and the **Vanir** are the descendants of Askanaz and Torgom, who resettled from the house of Askanaz and Torgom to Sarmatia, to the coast of Black Sea, to the sources of the river Tanais or Vanakvisl (Armenian “*way/path leading to homeland*”), historical characters, who later became heroes due to their wisdom and power, virtue and mind were worshipped by the people of Nordic countries, becoming Konungs, the founders of Yngling dynasty.

The statuette deities with snakes from Crete, referring to Crete-Minoan civilization are the witnesses of old cultural relations of the founders of this civilization (the castle, where the archeologists discovered the statuettes, was destroyed by an earthquake in 1600 BC) with the Aesir and the Vanir, in particular, according to Greek and Armenian historians, Europa, the sister of Cadmus and granddaughter of Hayk Nahapet, was abducted by Zeus and taken to Crete island; their sons became the rulers of Crete and the founders of Minoan civilization.

Swastika and cross symbols reached Crete through Asia Minor along with Europa, the sister of Cadmus. Hayk, re-founding the house of Askanaz and Torgom, built the dwelling of the God and passed it over to his grandson Cadmus, who created the Phoenician and Greek alphabets. His brother Phoenix became the king of Phoenicia, and Cilix whence

²⁰ Onians R. On the knees of the gods. M.: “Progress-Tradition”, 1999

of Cilicia. In his search for his sister, Cadmus reached Europe and later became a powerful ruler of Greece. Myths are stories about history: Norse myths bear traces of old pre-historic relations of the ancestors of the Armenians and the Nordic people; Greek myths – those of the Armenians and the Europeans.

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