

COGNITIVE MEANING, FORM AND CONCEPTUAL CONTENT OF THE NOTION "CAUCASUS"

*“Why did gods love the Caucasus, but people seldom pursue it?
Knowing the Caucasus you know the God.”*

Professor Vahanyan G., PhD in Art History Vahanyan V., PhD student Baghdasaryan V.

Foreword

According to the Book of Jubilees, the **Armenian Highlands** is the primary place of settlement of the Japhetites. After language division they spread to **the east, north and west, thus, settling throughout Eurasia** (except for Near East, which was settled by the Semites – the descendants of the first son of Noah, Shem). According to the Armenian and Georgian traditions, the Armenians, the Georgians and other nations in the Caucasus descended from the sons of Japheth's grandson – Togarmah. **Togarmah (Hebrew תוגרמה, Togarma, Armenian Թորգոմ, Torgom, Georgian თარგამოს, Targamos)** is a biblical patriarch (the period after the flood), the son of **Tiras**, the grandson of **Japheth**, the brother of **Riphath, Askanaz** [Ashkenaz] and **Javan**.

Askanaz founded the first Armenian house, which he later passed over to Torgom. Torgom renamed **the house of Askanaz** into **the house of Torgom**. Askanaz resettled to the Black Sea coast and founded Sarmatia, **Riphath** – Savromatia, **Javan** – Greece. The Phrygians descended from **Tiras** (M. Khorenatsi, H. Draskhanakertsi). The son of Torgom – **Hayk** – resettled from Babylonia to the homeland of his ancestors, the Armenian house, and re-established it. He built the Dwelling of the God and passed it over to his grandson Cadmus.

“Eight brothers (literally “eight men”), powerful and glorious heroes excelled among his [Togarmah] sons. Their names were as follows: first – **Hayos** [Hayk], second – **Kartlos**, third – **Bardos**, fourth – **Movakan**, fifth – **Lekos**, sixth – **Heros**, seventh – **Kavkasos**, eighth – **Egros**. These brothers were heroes. But the best among those heroes was **Hayos**, as **before and after the flood no one equaled him neither in body nor in power and courage** (Leonti Mroveli. “The life of the Kartlis kings”). Togarmah [Torgom] divided his lands and tribes among eight heroes: he endowed half of the tribes and the better half of his land to Hayos, and those seven inherited on their merits. To Kartlos [Togarmah] gave and appointed as boundary: from the east Hereti and the River Berduji; from the west the Pontus Sea; from the south the mountain which stretches along the source of the River Berduji and the mountain which lies to the west; it [Berduji] flows to the north and joins the River Kura, which flows between the mountains Klarjeti and Tao as far as the sea. From the north the boundaries are Ghado, the Malaya Mountain, which goes down as a branch from the Caucasus and reaches the end of Ghado, which is now called Lixi. And all [the land] between the boundaries [Targamos] gave to Kartlos”.

What does the notion Caucasus denote?

The findings of the analysis of Greek, Armenian and Norse mythological records provide the answer to this question. First, in the Caucasus **Prometheus** fashioned man out of clay, mixing it with water; Aphrodite breathed life into him. In the Caucasus “wild” men got knowledge, writing and other cultural values.

Thus, the word Caucasus denotes the holy territory (common cultural and historical unity) where the first man was created. Second, the Armenian language elucidates the following content for the word “Caucasus”: ***kav** – clay and ***kas** – being/existing (cf. the name of the Caspian Sea,

the Mountain range Kazbek), meaning **made, created from clay**. Table 1 presents facts and deeds related to the Caucasus.

Table 1

| N | DEEDS OF THE HEROES/GODS IN THE CAUCASUS |
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| 1 | Zeus fights the dragon Typhon . Several sources locate Typhon's homeland in Cilicia , others in the Caucasus . The father of Zeus – Cronus – is the supreme god (of unknown descent, titan, primarily the god of agriculture). |
| 2 | In the Caucasus Prometheus fashions man out of clay, mixing it with water (Armenian “ kavits kas ”). Cf. the biblical motif of the genesis of Adam and Eve. |
| 3 | By the will of Zeus, Prometheus is chained to a rock in the Caucasus , as he had ventured to give people the knowledge of getting fire. Prometheus taught “wild” mankind agriculture, art, literacy, writing , cultural values and how to build houses. Tir (Tiras) is the god of writing, wisdom, science and prophecy in old Armenian pantheon. He is the father of Askanaz [Ashkenaz] and Torgom [Togarmah], the grandfather of Hayk and Kartlos . |
| 4 | According to Armenian tradition, the first man, Vahagn , was born in the Caucasus near Lake/Sea Van . He is a dragonslyer, thunderer, savior, liberator of water and teacher. The motif of Vahagn fighting the dragon is one of the fundamental mythological motifs for the Caucasian nations. Armenian vishap (dragon) transformed into Georgian veshap (gveleshapi) , Abkhazian agulshap , Ingush and Chechen (Vainakh) eshap . |
| 5 | Heracles (son of Zeus) as a boy strangles two snakes. He is identified with Vahagn . He saves the daughter of the king of Troy . Not receiving the promised reward, he destroys Troy and kills king's sons except young Priam , who accompanied the Argonauts in their quest to Colchis (Caucasus) to find the Golden Fleece . He fights Zeus. Vani city is located in Colchis . Armenian Van (Tushpa, the capital of Urartu/Ararat) city is situated in the vicinity of lake/sea Van . Lake Sevan (or “ <i>black van</i> ”, cf. “ <i>Black Sea</i> ”; the toponyms “ <i>Caucasus</i> ”, “ <i>Kazbek</i> ”, “ <i>Sea of Azov</i> ”, “ <i>Azov city</i> ” relate to Askanaz) is located in Armenia. The toponym of the river Vanakvisl/Tanais (modern Don) relates to Armenian Van (“ ak ” literally “ <i>source, origin</i> ”). Armenian “ tan/tun ” means “ <i>home</i> ”, “ vis ”/“ is ” mening river (cf. Armenian “ viz/vis , literally “ <i>neck</i> ”). The Armenians founded the city of Nakhichevan-on-Don in the vicinity of Don. |
| 6 | Dionisus is the god of winemaking in Greek mythology. He is the son of Zeus and Semele (daughter of Cadmus – the grandson of Hayk – and Harmonia – the grand granddaughter of Hayk). |
| 7 | The concepts of the four fundamental/classical elements, the four forces of nature, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (“The birth of Vahagn”, History of Armenia, M. Khorenatsi, V century) originated in the Caucasus . I.e. the inhabitants of the Caucasus knew the principles of Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics long before the Greeks. |
| 8 | Noah's Ark comes to rest on the Mountains of Ararat after the great flood. |
| 9 | After Adam and Eve are created in the Caucasus, they move to Eden (“Vaspurakan”), to Lake/Sea Van, where the four rivers (Tigris, Euphrates, Aras [Araxes] and Kura) take their sources. |
| 10 | Eden is located in Vaspurakan (Armenian “ <i>garden with the source of life-giving water</i> ”). Archetypes of all the shapes of crosses and swastikas are identified in rock art on the territory of Lake Van . Crosses and swastikas are pictorial elements of the archaic teaching and worldview of the first man, dragonslyer and thunderer (Vahagn). |

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| 11 | Conceptual modeling of natural processes, particularly, volcanic eruptions, avalanches in the form of a serpent/dragon are identified and interpreted in Armenian rock art. Armenian rock art (c. 10-3 millennia BC) is the basis of the signs of Old Europe (Starcevo and Vinca) , and the homeland of the origin of Hittite, Egyptian, Luwian, Urartian and Indian ideograms and hieroglyphs. The fundamental motifs of universal symbols (religious teachings) and ornaments are identified in Armenian rock art. |
| 12 | Caucasus is the cradle of the culture of vishapakars (dragon-stones) and cross-stones – basalt steles placed vertically or horizontally in the vicinity of water sources. This culture transformed into the culture of dragon- and cross-stones in some European countries, including Nordic countries. |
| 13 | Hayk Nahapet (Hayos, the brother of Kartlos) re-establishes the house of Torgom (the house of Askanaz) – the house of the Aesir and the Vanir. After his resettlement from Babylon to Lake Van, he founds the first dwelling of the God (the temple of knowledge). |
| 14 | Kartlos is the legendary patriarch of the Georgians, the founder of Kartli, the younger brother of Hayos [Hayk]. |
| 15 | The Svans (Georgian სვანები) are the native and indigenous population in Mestia and Lentekhi regions in northwest Georgia (historical region Svaneti [Shwan]). The self-designation of the Svans is “ <i>lushnu</i> ” (sing. “ <i>mushwan</i> ”). Svan surnames end in suffix “ <i>-ani</i> ”. |
| 16 | Tiras , the son of Japheth and the grandson of Noah , resettled the Balkans from the Caucasus, becoming the ruler of Phrygia. According to Herodotus, one of the Phrygian tribes spoke a language similar to the Armenian language. |
| 17 | Tir is the god of writing, wisdom, knowledge and prophecy in the old Armenian pantheon. The abovementioned definitely claims that the first writing system and its variations were created in the Caucasus. |
| 18 | Tiras, Askanaz, Torgom, Hayk and Kartlos are the “cornerstones” of the common Caucasian house – the cradle of knowledge, common Indo-European civilization. Askanaz resettles to the Black Sea coast (his descendants settled Colchis, Abkhazia, Ossetia, etc.). The Sarmatians descended from Askanaz. The Ancient Caucasus, European, Asian and Nordic People worshipped the descendants of the related tribes of the Aesir and the Vanir. Tiras derives from the Armenian “ ter ” + “ as ” (or “ aspet ” – knight, governor, master, sage, god Tir). |
| 19 | Askanaz is the ruler of Sarmatia . In ancient times European and Asian Sarmatias divided Asia from Europe . The River Vanakvisl [Don] formed the border. The Caucasus connected Asia and Europe. |
| 20 | The words “ haskatsa ” (Armenian “ <i>understood</i> ”) and “ targmanel ” (Armenian “ <i>translate</i> ”; “ <i>tar</i> ” – <i>letter</i> , “ <i>ter</i> ” – <i>governor, master, sage</i>) are connected with the names Askanaz and Torgom . |
| 21 | The Greek Argonauts , lead by Jason on the ship Argo , steal the Golden Fleece from Colchis (Caucasus). Jason fights the dragon. The Golden Fleece is related to the system of ancient knowledge, cryptography. |
| 22 | According to Greek records, Cadmus is the creator of the Phoenician and Greek alphabets. According to Armenian records, he is the grandson of Hayk and the preserver of the dwelling of the God (temple of knowledge). He fights the dragon , defends the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. Cadmus is the powerful ruler of Greece , the founder of the legendary city of Thebes . He finds gold and copper mines. The chemical element Cadmium (copper) is named after Cadmus. |
| 23 | Hayk passes over to Cadmus the liberated lands of Phoenicia and Cilicia , named after |

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| | his brothers Phoenix and Cilix. The Greeks call Armenia , the country of the Aesir and the Vanir, after Aram (the descendant of Hayk Haykazuni). |
| 24 | Beautiful Europa (the sister of Cadmus and the granddaughter of Hayk) is abducted by Zeus. The children of Zeus and Europa (including Minos) become the rulers of Crete and the founders of Minoan civilization . |
| 25 | Odin (the descendant of Askanaz; “ as ” – of Caucasian ancestry) becomes the prior god in the Nordic pantheon. He created the Runes . |
| 26 | The descendants of the Aesir and the Vanir resettle in Scandinavia (Armenian “ hskanav ” literally “ <i>huge/great ship</i> ”). The ruler of Sweden – Sveigdir – is of Vanir descent. In the Kingdom of Van ha marries Vana from Van, they have a son called Vanlandi. Konungs descended from the Aesir and the Vanir. |

The mentioned facts in Table 1 demonstrate convincingly that the Caucasus is the homeland to pre-historic civilization. The Caucasus the homeland to the first writing system. The stone cultural artifacts of the Caucasus, particularly dragon- and cross-stones form the basis for the origin of the world stone culture and relief ornamental symbols.

The foundations of the teachings of Christ are associated with a **cornerstone** (cf. Armenian “**us**” – *shoulder*, “**usutsich**” – *teacher*, “**usanogh**” – *student*, “**usmunk**” – *teaching*) in biblical tradition. **The Son of God** was crucified on the cross (the model of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”/“the tree of life”, the symbol of Vahagn); **Prometheus** was bound to a rock. Cadmus and Harmonia turned into stone/rock or a dragon for fighting a dragon. **Prometheus** and **Jesus** were punished for disobedience and the spread of ancient knowledge. Meher Junior, the hero in the Armenian epos “Daredevils of Sassoun”, challenges the heavenly angels, enters into a rock and never comes out of it. A dwarf lures **Sveigdir**, the founder of Sweden, into a huge **stone** like the house of **Odin** (dwelling of the God). Sveigdir runs into the stone and never comes out of this stone.

According to a legend the dragon guarding the “tree of life” is given the unripe fruit, as a result he is weakened and defeated. In the biblical version, the serpent winds round the “**tree of the knowledge of good and evil**”, rips off the unripe fruit and tempts **Eve** to taste it, who shares the fruit with her husband. As a result, **Adam** and **Eve** lose their immortality and are expelled from the Garden of Eden (from Vaspurakan, the site of volcanic eruptions). The affinity/resemblance of the motifs is astounding.

Biblical Adam is made of clay mixed with water, like the man fashioned by Prometheus in the **Caucasus**. **Adam** and **Eve** became mortal, i.e. they remained “wild” in the cultural scope. In Armenian cultural tradition “**anasun**” (Armenian “*animal, dumb creature*”, cf. “**asun**” – “*speaking, thinking, not wild*”) means “*unthinking, unreasonable, illiterate, uneducated*” (cf. Armenian “*Astvats, aspet, asa, asmunk, asogh-xosogh, usanogh, usutsich*”).

According to the authors, “to deprive of immortality” means to restrict consciousness, cognitive ability, to deprive of wisdom, knowledge access, worldview, reasoning and thinking, to confuse the languages, i.e. to deprive them of the right to rule animals and plants (man’s mission recorded in the Bible). In the conception of the ancient people, **God is light and love; his son is the cornerstone, the teacher of the mankind**. God is wisdom and love, teacher, sage. The Caucasus is our homeland, “*he who does not love his Homeland does not know God, for God is love for Homeland*” (G. Vahanyan).

The Caucasus is the symbol of freedom. It is not a coincidence that Mount Masis is called Azat (free). It is free from the forces of evil, darkness and death, as according to Armenian mythology, the hero fights the king of the dragons, living under the mountain and the forces of evil (man learns to rule the forces of nature). Askanaz is related to the origin of the Aesir and the Vanir, the toponyms Caucasus and Sea of Azov, the city of Azov, Asia and other cultural formations.

Odin repeats Cadmus's (who has created the Phoenician and Greek national alphabets) **feat** and creates the **Runes** for the Norse people. With their help the ancient knowledge is disseminated. **Jason** steals knowledge decoded in the **Runes**. The ancient Greeks, perceiving this knowledge, become a dominant power in the region and in the world. **Zeus, Heracles** and even **Bel** (the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians) did not possess this knowledge. Due to **Tiras, Askanaz, Torgom, Hayk** and **Cadmus** the common old Caucasian teaching and worldview became available for other nations, speaking different languages (Aramaic, Phoenician, Syriac, Assyrian and Babylonian, Hurrian and Hittite, Hebrew and other Semitic and old Caucasian languages) after the construction of the Tower of Babel and language confusion.

“In the wrecks of the deceptive world no marvelous treasury was obtained without wounds inflicted by a venomous dragon” (Khodja Samandar Termezi. “Edification to the rulers”). Tolkien refers to the XIII century novels “Roman deeds”: “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 mirror¹. 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 passers by.”²

The life description of Saint Simeon Stylites (356-459, lived in **Cilicia**, on the territory of historical Armenia, modern southern Turkey) states: *“At that time in the northern lands where even grass did not grow, not very far from the place lived a dragon of extraordinary size; once a tree hit him in the right eye. One day this blind dragon hobbled and came to the dwelling where the man of God spent his time. There he twisted and began to shake his low bowed head as if asking for something. When the blessed Simeon saw him, he immediately withdrew an elbow-size stick from his eye. Everyone who saw it praised God but ran away for fear. But this beast twisted and lied motionless on the same place as everyone circumvented him. Later, he rose and bowed for almost two hours standing at the entrance of the monastery and then returned to his dwelling harming no one.”³*

Afterword

“The Armenian nation inherited from the Japhetic family the pagan gods along with its remarkable mythology, unfortunately, existing in scattered fragments, such as the cosmic passage devoted to “vishaps” and mentioned in a few records of Khorenatsi. Just a fairy tale, a legend, you may say? But these vishaps and their descendants, mentioned in the folk tradition, referred to with condemnation by the Armenian historian, receive quite different assessment in XX century since “vishaps” (huge sculptures of stone fish, monuments dating back to at least V century BC) were discovered on the Geghama Mountains. “Vishap”, which is the plural form of the Japhetic god “vesh” or “vish”, had many places of worship in Armenia, including Oshakan, which remained in

¹ 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.

² Tolkien J. R. R. The Professor and monsters: Essay / Tr. From English, Latin and Old Icelandic – St. Petersburg: “Azbuka-klassika”, 2004.

³ The life of Saint Simeon Stylites, written by his student Anthony // Alpha and Omega, 1996, № 4, tr. Timofeeva M. A.

the Christian era. From the days of the Kingdom of Van to the present day numerous remnant traditions on vishaps provide limitless resources for studying Armenia, Georgia, the entire Caucasus and far north lands..." (Academician N. Marr).

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