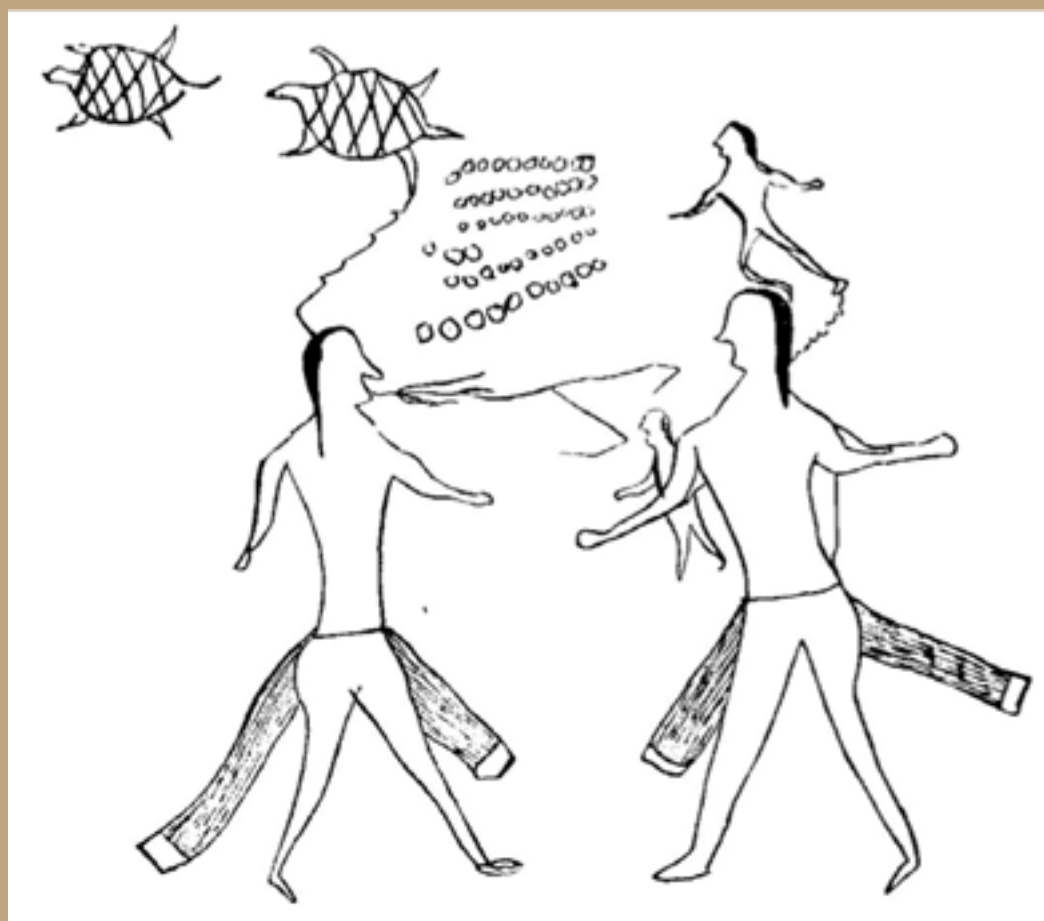


EXPRESSION

QUARTERLY E-JOURNAL OF ATELIER IN COOPERATION WITH UISPP-CISENP, INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPRESSIONS OF NON-LITERATE PEOPLES

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THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE IMAGE

Message sent by an old man of the Cheyenne tribe to his son. A man named Turtle-that-follows-his-wife sends the pictographic message to his son named Little-man. Their names are indicated above their heads. The sign coming out of the mouth of the old man indicates that he is the one sending the message. The movement of the two figures towards each other indicates encounter. The series of small circles over the line that exits from the mouth of the father towards the son is a numerical indication of round objects. The pictographic message reads: 'Turtle-that-follows-his-wife sends to Little-Man 53 dollars so that he comes to visit him.' In other words, the message says: 'Come to see me, I will pay your travel expenses.' (After Mallery, 1889).

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE IMAGE

Prehistoric and tribal people have left behind millions of images, in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Was their purpose just that of embellishing rock surfaces? What pushed people from all over the world to record their memories throughout the ages? This immense heritage, whether intentional or not, is full of messages to be read and understood. What are the images telling us? What are the stories that the makers intended to memorize or communicate?

Many events, many expressions of human thoughts and beliefs, many different aspects of life and culture, can add millennia to the history of mankind. Visual art is a source of history and prehistoric art suggests a new look at history since the earliest visual messages.

Traditional schoolbooks limited history to the last 5,000 years. The history of urban societies mainly concerns kings and generals from urban societies: it is a narrow perspective on the human adventure. What are the stories behind millions of images in the Serra da Capivara in Brazil or in Kimberley, Australia? What are the painted caves of Lascaux and Altamira in Europe, or those of the Drakensberg in South Africa, telling us about the history of our species? Prehistoric and tribal art is offering stories and histories of peoples and societies that traditional history had ignored.

There were times when peoples in Europe ignored the existence of America and people from America ignored the existence of Europe. History has made some progress since. The global study of prehistoric and tribal art has become a source of a real world history for the first time in history. Visual art is the biggest archive ever compiled: millions of ima-

ges, over five continents, contain 50,000 years of human events, feelings, beliefs, traditions and myths, an immense patrimony most of which has yet to be deciphered. They are the source of a new history and they are a major challenge for present-day research: discovering ages of cultures so far ignored. It is also a most marvelous and inspiring target. It demands the joint engagement and passion of all those interested in joining this venture. What do these depictions tell us about the life, the mind and concerns of their makers? This is not just a contribution to your career; it is a contribution to culture.

This issue of EXPRESSION magazine is presenting a first group of papers from five continents on the project 'Reading the message behind the image', but the project is continuing: it remains open and colleagues are invited to continue contributing to it.

Describing and dating findings, objects, and mobile and immobile art are the first steps of archaeological research. For conceptual anthropology they are the means to build upon them the rediscovery of the minds, thoughts and purposes of their makers.

The common denominator of the contributions offered by papers from different parts of the world and different disciplines is the focus on the search for these meanings. Whoever has something to say is invited to continue submitting papers and ideas. Together we are creating a new kind of world history. How did human societies think, act, believe and communicate in different social and cultural settings, in different periods, ever since the earliest conceptual expressions? How similar and how different can human behavior be in various climatic, economic and social conditions? Each specific case, small or big, is a contribution to the global picture.

Daring is the most noble quality of man. Without daring the human species would have survived in only a few corners of tropical Africa. Without daring, great minds would have never existed. Civilization is the result of daring. It is possible to make errors - which sooner or later are corrected. But the progress of research is based on trial and error. Trials open up new horizons to research. Errors invite awareness and debate. Both are important for culture. The courage of trial, even when there is the risk of making mistakes, is the mainspring of evolution.

A major advantage of mankind is the expression of ideas. The most negative fault is not expressing them. Reviewers will always help authors, when necessary, to avoid diffusing unsustainable ideas. Colleagues and friends are welcome to participate and share the experience. The project 'The message behind the image' is continuing, and it is not concluded with the present issue.

E.A.

Wed Mertoutek, Hoggar, Algeria. Dancing girls. Rock paintings of Late Hunters. Commemoration of an event: what is the message behind? (Archives Anati, EA 62).

EDITORIAL NOTE

EXPRESSION magazine is published by Atelier Research Center in cooperation with UISPP-CISENP, the "International Scientific Commission on the Intellectual and Spiritual Expressions of Non-literate Peoples" of the UISPP, *Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*. The goal of **EXPRESSION** is to promote knowledge and ideas concerning the intellectual and spiritual expressions of non-literate societies. It is an open forum in conceptual anthropology, welcoming contributions. Colleagues having something to say will find space in this e-magazine, which is reaching people of culture and academic institutions in over 60 countries. Authors are fully responsible for their ideas and for the information and illustrations they submit. Letters on current topics and short notes are welcome and may be published in the section "Discussion Forum".

Publication in **EXPRESSION** magazine does not imply that the publishers agree with the exposed ideas. Papers are submitted to reviewers for their evaluation, but controversial ideas, if they make sense, are not censored. Time will be their judge.



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FRIGG, ASTGHİK AND THE GODDESS OF THE CRETE ISLAND

Vahan Vahanyan (Armenia)

PhD in Art, Member of the Union of Designers of Armenia

Gregori Vahanyan (Armenia)

Prof. of the European Regional Academy, Armenia

Introduction

According to conventional opinion, the well-known memorial stone (Fig. 1a) from the Swedish island Gotland (400-600 AC) depicts the goddess Frigg holding snakes. The unique statuettes of a goddess holding snakes were discovered on Crete (Fig. 1b), and date to c. 1600 BC.¹ The depiction of Frigg shows the mother-goddess 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.

The Swedish stone from Gotland island depicts the mother-goddess, 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 authors, refers to the archetypes in the Old Armenian song 'The birth of Vahagn'.²

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)

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

To illustrate the natural philosophical and metaphysical description of the processes of interaction between the four forces of nature (water, air, earth and fire), volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, the prehistoric sages and artists model it in graphic mode and present it in the form of celestial and terrestrial snakes-dragons, the models of volcanic eruptions and avalanches. Dragons (masters of the underworld) threaten the life of the deity's beloved, in this case the wife of Odin, Frigg. The heads of the snakes-dragons (Fig. 1a) point at the solar and lunar discs, that is, 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 interpretation. The mother-goddess is wearing royal headgear. Her head has a three-rayed shape, symbolizing the royal power: she is the wife of the major deity 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 ornamental frame on the stone symbolizes the heavenly gate (Fig. 1a).

The whole composition embodies the celestial eminence of the three bogatyrs (heroes); their souls rise to the heavenly father. They are powerful and strong as dragon-slayers. The stone is called memorial for a certain reason: it was 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 mother-goddess Frigg, her husband Odin and their sons, bogatyrs.



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)



Relations between Frigg and the Goddess of the Crete Island

Both statuettes (Fig. 1b) were discovered by Arthur 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 colored in bright reddish-brown and yellowish-green pigments, later fired to acquire a vitreous gloss. These depictions with snakes are the only ones in the Cretan art of this period.³ One of the figures depicts the deity 'in a tense posture:⁴ 'Stretching out her hands and her big pencilled 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, 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 prevailed in Crete and old Europe. Some scholars associate the snake with the idea of life extension, as they shed their skin and are renewed, which is why they are associated with the male reproductive ability. However, the true function of the statuettes remains unclear. They depict an unknown deity.⁵

However, according to the authors, the statuettes have an old Armenian origin. They visibly and accurately depict the Armenian goddess Astghik, the beautiful bride of Vahagn (the first man, dragon-slayer and thunderer, liberator of water). Vahagn was the first to challenge snakes-dragons; he defeated them, freeing Astghik and 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, who 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 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 from their Aratta originals).

Motifs in Norse Mythology

Frigg or Frija, like Astghik, is the goddess of marriage, love, the family hearth and the 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 observes 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 her beloved son Baldr from death (conjuring all living beings to request immunity for him from all kinds of danger, and then bitterly grieves his death). When Baldr was tortured by disturbing dreams, Frigg took an oath on all the things and beings that they will do him no harm. An exception was a shoot of mistletoe, which she had missed. It was a mistake, because blind Hodr, tricked by the fire-god Loki, shot Baldr with a mistletoe projectile and accidentally killed him. Frigg tried to rescue her son from the underworld, but failed, because Loki refused to weep over Baldr.

Frigg reigns over all the goddesses and is as wise as her husband. She greatly resembles Freya: both goddesses are descended from the divine Mother Earth.⁶ The name Frigg (Old Icelandic Frigg) is associated with Yggdrasil (Norse world tree). According to some records, she is the leader of the beautiful Valkyries. According to other myths, it is Freya.⁷ The prototype of the image of Frigg, according to the authors, is the Armenian Astghik (presented in Akkadian-Sumerian mythology as the Queen of Aratta (or Ararat, the kingdom of Van, the

³Sidorova 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>

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

Languishing in suspicion of a 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 it in a crimson/purple dress with a sky-blue veil, she has got big eyes and was strapping and ruddy; she was in childbirth. Astonished, I stared at the sight, and the woman suddenly gave birth to three god-like heroes, perfect in their shape and nature. 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 approaching as if on eagle's wings. Approaching, he intended to defeat the gods. But I [Azhdahak] rushed between them and received a powerful attack and fought the amazing godlike hero.

⁶<http://~godsbay.ru/~vikings/frigg.html>

⁷<http://myfholology.info/~gods/~skandnavy/~frigg~html>

First, we mangled the bodies of each other with spearheads and shedding blood, made the roof of the palace shine in the sun like a 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 it 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

Figs. 2 and 3 present 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, the mother-goddess, the birth of the first man, three heroes, etc. Ancient Armenian ceramic pottery depicts: a volcanic mountain chain with four peaks, snakes-volcanoes, the stylized images of the forces of nature, the three heroes, and fighting against the forces of nature, the forces of evil and death, the snakes, huge celestial birds with beaks and the swastika, the symbol of Vahagn, fashioned as a result of the interaction

⁸Khorenatsi M. History of Armenia



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, 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). 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.

of the four fundamental forces of nature. Marija Gimbutas,⁹ 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.

The great goddess was typically depicted in a

pose of raised hands. The great mother of the gods, the mistress of snakes, was always depicted with her hands raised up. Snakes were 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’ (see Azhdahak’s dream). Vahagn slayed the dragons, then his beloved Astghik gave birth to three heroes

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

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



Figure 2. Old Armenia pottery describing the triad-force, the three bogatyr, the sons of the Mother Goddess (2 millennium BC).

(according to the picture as described in the dream of Azhdahak, atop the mother mountain Masis). Under this mountain lived snakes-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 mother-goddess, the mother-goddess Maruts, Tsovinar and others, see bibliography.¹⁰)

Fig. 4 depicts female figures: a snake-legged goddess descending from the mountain (rock art, Armenia); relief of Astghik/Inanna, Ishtar/Astarte (abducted from Aratta); a snake-legged goddess of the Scythians and the bust of the Armenian goddess Anahit (in the British Museum). The facial features and shapes of the goddesses and the mother-goddess from Crete



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)

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



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

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 or pre-mother of all the gods: Astghik and Inanna (Maruts and Tsovinar (see Vinar and Venus in Armenian mythology) and Europa.

In 62 BC King Antiochus of Commagene (from the Armenian Orontid, Yervanduni dynasty) built a sanctuary tomb, surrounded by huge statues of two lions, two eagles and images of various gods such as Hercules-Vahagn, Zeus-Aramazd, and 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 m high and 152 m 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

¹¹"Stone annals of civilization", "Nzhar", Yerevan, 2016

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

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

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

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

the facial features of the women depicted on the artifacts discovered on Crete (Fig. 1b).

The depiction of the pagan mother-goddess holding snakes and wild animals in her raised hands is identified on numerous golden plaques in all the Scythian *kurgans*/tumuli.¹¹ The name of the snake-legged goddess Api is identified in a number of Mycenaean inscriptions. In Greek mythology the goddess Rhea is the pre-mother of all the gods and the mother of the supreme god Zeus. Rhea is the supreme goddess of the ancient Greek pantheon (Mycenaean/Linear B O-re-i = mountains; orei - in the mountains, Greek Ορος = mountain).

In Armenian rock art *vishaps*/dragons/serpents are typically depicted with horns. On a number of *vishapakars* (dragon-stones) reliefs of horned bulls are depicted, which personify celestial dragons. There is a depiction of a hero (Vahagn/Hayk) in the form of a swastika fighting a huge celestial ferocious bull. Hayk's enemy, the 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 the Greeks vied with each other: *Matere teija* = *Ματὴρ Θεία* = mother-goddess. And in the Minoan religion she personified the eternally live nature, earth and fertility.

The great mother-goddess on Crete was depicted as a queen-bee (Latin *apis*, 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 on each side of the great mother. Beneath the right hand of the goddess is the head of a sacrificial bull; the frontal part depicts a fish. Such a depiction of a fish was considered a symbol of



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 great mother in Harappa (north India). On left and right 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 eclipses (Fig. 5b).

The researchers consider that swastika symbols reached Crete along with the Indo-European people via Asia Minor, but this point is outdated and needs correction. Swastika and cross symbols reached Crete from prehistoric Armenia (the motif of Zeus abducting the granddaughter of Hayk, Europa, and taking her to Crete). The great mother, depicted next to the regal lions (see monuments of lions and eagles in the Armenian kingdom of Commagene), embodies the protection of every living being on the earth and in heaven. Everything belongs to her: the kingdom of heaven together with birds, fruit on 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 [the 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 mirror.¹² 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.¹³

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 Armenian legends, the dwelling of the king of the dragons is under the volcanic mountain Masis. 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 mentioned before, the Sumerian Inanna is the goddess of fertility, love and strife, the daughter of the sky Anu (the moon god Nanna¹⁴), 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 underworld¹⁵) husband's departure for the underworld. According to the authors, the main motifs of Inanna are transformations

¹⁶Rising 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

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

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

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

and the development of the motifs related to the beautiful Armenian Astghik (little star); her beloved Vahagn, the dragon-slayer and savior of water, saves her from the *vishap* (the deity 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, the 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 to free Ishtar and return her to the world of the living. The queen commands her servant Namtar: 'Pour the water of life on goddess Ishtar and send her away.' He pours the water on Ishtar and she comes to life.¹⁶

Circle of the world

According to Norse mythology, the circle of the world, inhabited by people, is mostly indented by bays. Big seas run into it from the ocean surrounding the earth. It is acknowledged that the sea stretches from Norvasund to Hjorsaland. A long bay stretches from this sea to the north, which is called the 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 a desert of frost and cold, like the southern part of the country of the black people is a desert of the heat of the sun.

Sweden is a large place. It is inhabited by many nations speaking diverse languages. Giants and dwarfs, black people and many other amazing people have settled in 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 the Black Sea. The area in the vicinity of its mouth was then called the country of the Vans/Vanir, the dwelling of the Vans. This river divides parts of the world.

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 *erkir* (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 in Sarmatia, on the coast of the Black Sea, near 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 and were worshipped by the people of Nordic countries, becoming Konungs, the founders of the Yngling dynasty. The statuette deities with snakes from Crete of the Cretan Minoan civilization are the witnesses of old cultural relations of the founders of this civilization (the palace 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; their

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

sons became the rulers of Crete and the founders of the Minoan civilization.

Swastika and cross symbols reached Crete through Asia Minor along with Europa. Hayk, refounding the house of Askanaz and Torgom, built the dwelling of the god and passed it to his grandson Cadmus, who created the Phoenician and Greek alphabets. His brother Phoenix became the king of Phoenicia, and Cilix, whence 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 prehistoric relations of the ancestors of the Armenians and the Nordic people; and Greek myths bear the traces of the Armenians and the Europeans.

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