


“THE PEAK OF THE EARTH”: CRADLE OF THE INDOEUROPEAN AND SUMERIAN STORM GOD

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The province of ‘Bardzr Hayk’ (Upper Armenia) of Great Armenia has an important role in clarification issues of Indo-European-Sumerian mythological interrelations. Here were situated those three mountain ranges and upper courses of the four rivers which according to the author of “Ashkharatsuyts”¹ were located in the highest place of the Globe - “the Peak of the Earth”, as follows from the description of Bardzr Hayk: “Really, in accordance with the name, it is higher not only than the rest of Hayk’ (Armenia), but than the whole of the Earth, that is why it was called the Peak of the Earth. Thus it gives rise to the waters flowing to the four sides of the world, because from there flow out four mighty rivers. Euphrates to the west², Eraskh to the east, Gayl to the south, Akamsis, which is Voh, to the north. It has three big mountains...”³.

The Euphrates (of those abovementioned four rivers) in its lower course already was a Sumerian river, one of the sacred pair of rivers (another was the Tigris river, whose sources also were in the Armenian Highland) of Enki (Ea, Haya)⁴, the son of Enlil⁵ - the supreme god of Sumerians.

On the occasion of three mountains of “the Peak of the Earth” for now we shall remember only Enlil’s epithet Kur.gal “Great Mountain”⁶. The case is that the corresponding Akkadian group of wedges for Sumerian word “Kur” (mountain, mountainous land, land) consists of three wedges displaying the ideogram šadû for «mountain»⁷. It derives from the wedge group reading as “kur” in Sumerian  on the

¹ The analysis of the “Ashkharatsuyts” data indicates that the text of Movses Khorenatsi (V c.) was edited and continued by Anania Shirakatsi in the 7th c. (see: Դանիելյան Է.Լ., Հայաստանի քաղաքական պատմությունը և Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցին (VI-VII դդ.), 2000, էջ 37: Մուշեղյան Ա.Վ., Մովսես Խորենացու դարը, Երևան, 2007, էջ 111, 124):

² In its upper course the Euphrates flows to the west then turns to the south.


³ Երեմյան Ս., Հայաստանը ըստ «Աշխարհացոյց»-ի, Երևան, 1963, էջ 106:

⁴ <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/haya/>

⁵ Enki and the world order, ETCSL translation : t.1.1.3 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.3#>

⁶ Leick G. A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology, Padstow, 1998, p. 46.

⁷ Khazai Khosro, Les grandes étapes de l’archéologie mesopotamienne, “De Sumer à Babylone. Collections du Louvre”, Bruxelles, 1983, p. 24. The Akkadian šadû; šadû corresponds to the Sumerian kur (land, mountain) (The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd1/nepsd-frame.html>). A. Heidel expressed an opinion that the Akkadian word šadû usually meaning *mountain* in a number of cases may mean *steppe* (A. Heidel, The Special Usage of the Akkadian Term šadû. – Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Vol. 8, No. 3, Jul., 1949, pp. 233-235, cf. šādû- *meadow, pasture*, The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, vol. 15, 1984, p. 20).

basis of which is the following hieroglyph consisting of three signs - ⁸. The latter was recorded in the archaeological layers of the late phase Uruk IV lasting ca. 3500/3400–3100 BC⁹. This hieroglyph depicting three mountains reminds the *three big mountains* of “The Peak of the Earth” and their surrounding in general¹⁰. From this it can be clear how the Sumerian word “kur” could mean both *mountain* and *land*.

V.V. Ivanov reconstructing Indo-European word for ‘mountain’, ‘peak’ as an alternate stem *Hek^or- / *Hk^oe/or- / *Hk^or- paid attention to phonetic adjacency of this Indo-European stem in its different ablaut manifestations with *kur* - the Sumerian name of ‘mountain’, ‘mountainous country’¹¹.

Enlil was not only named Kur.gal “Great Mountain”, but also as a dwelling had the high mountain connecting the earth and the sky and his temple was in Nippur where É-kur “mountain house” was situated¹², closely linked to him¹³. Enlil’s emblem was a horned tiara¹⁴. It is possible that Enlil as “the lord, gust of wind” was connected to “*the Peak of the Earth*” (*Bardzr Haik*) and the Parkhar range constituting its northern border¹⁵. The northern wind was by the latter’s name “*Parkhar, Parkhartsj, Parkhrtsj*”. This wind name according to H. Acharyan “first originated in the regions of Armenia

⁸ Khazai Khosro, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ For example, in the Hittite cuneiform inscriptions under any mountain name is comprehended also the country of the given mountain (Ղազարյան Ռ., Մուրսիլի II-ի «Տառնամյա» տարեգրությունը, Եր. 2013, էջ 63):

¹¹ Гамкрелидзе Т., Иванов В., Индоевропейский язык и индоевропейцы (further: ИЯИ), т. II, Тб., 1984, с. 665–667. Hekur ‘top of rock, mountain’ (Hittite), ágra-, gairi-, giri- ‘peak’, ‘top’ (Old Indian and Avestan), δειρός ‘hill’ (Greek), Old Slavonic ropa and etc. derived from the mentioned stem. An essential peculiarity of ancient Indo-European perceptions about “mountain” and “rock” is huge height of mountains rising to the skies. Of the same stem has been derived the Armenian word *կռան* (Աճառյան Հ., Հայերեն արմատական բառարան (այսուհետև՝ ՀԱԲ), հ. II, Եր., 1973, էջ 669) (‘house roof’), *կռան* < **կռն-ալ-ն*. The word *կռն* // *կռն*¹¹ ‘spine, back, rear’, ‘the junction point of shoulder and arm’ could be derived from the root **կռն* and so on, taking into consideration the juxtaposition of the parts of the human body and geographical objects typical to the mythological imagination of ancient peoples [For juxtaposition see English ‘back’, ‘top of hill’, ‘spine’, ‘ridge’ (Англо-русский словарь, составил В.К. Мюллер, М., 1964, с. 76, 949), Russian ‘хребет’, ‘мнегр, крнակ, нл’, and «Լեռնաշղթա», (Ռոս-հայերեն բառարան, հ. IV, Եր., 1958, էջ 637)]. It is possible that the word *կռն* (<*կռն-ն*) derives from the stem **կռն* (“mountain”) relevant to Bardzr Hayk’. Relating to the latter St. Malkhasyants noted that “Kro-Name” (“Կռո-Անուն”) was given to the resettled Western Armenians by their compatriot Armenians in Eastern Armenia, mainly in Akhaltskha, Akhalkalak and Shirak (Մալխասյանց Ս., Հայերեն բացատրական բառարան (այսուհետև՝ ՀԲԲ), հ. II, Եր., 1944, էջ 494: See also Հովհ. Թումանյան, Երկերի լիակատար ժողովածու, հ. V, Եր., 1994, էջ 9). It is known that the resettlement of many Armenians to Eastern Armenia’s Akhaltskha and its surrounding, Javakhk and Shirak regions after Russian-Turkish war of 1828-1829 took place from Bardzr Haik’ and the name *կռն* refers to them.

¹² Leick G., op. cit., p. 46.

¹³ Khazai Khosro, op. cit., p. 45; Афанасьева В., Энлиль, – “Мифы народов мира” (МНМ), т. II, М., 1988, с. 662–663.

¹⁴ Historia religionum I: religions of the past, Leiden, 1969, p. 128.

¹⁵ Պետրոսյան Ս., Հայկական լեռնաշխարհի տեղը Էնլիլ և Էնկի աստվածների պաշտամունքում, – «ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ՇՀՀ կետրոնի միջազգային ութերորդ գիտական նստաշրջանի նյութեր. Գյումրի 22-24 հոկտեմբերի, 2010», Եր., 2010, էջ 58-65:

Minor and Western Armenia". (It is the most common phenomenon to name the winds by the names of places where they blow from)¹⁶. In their hymns and prayers Mesopotamian ancient inhabitants compared Enlil not only with their roaring and devastating wind but also with a wild bull¹⁷. Proceeding from the facts that Enlil's emblem was a horned tiara and he was called "Great Mountain" (Kur.gal) then it may be supposed that there is a mutual semantic connection conditioned by both the high mountain worship generally and, particularly the position of the northern wind's cradle, Parkhar, one of the mountain ranges of "the Peak of the Earth".

Mythological association of some mountains and horned wild animals is a widely known fact which was reflected in such mountain names of the Armenian Highland as *Յլնլ գլնլի* (*Tslu Glukh*), *Տավրոս* (*Tavros*) and others. The Armenian Parkhar name of the Eastern Pontic mountain range is also on this list. The Parkhar/parkh-ar mountain name has the same root *պարհ* as the word *պարհապարհ*. *Պարհ* and *պարհ* are the forms shaped as the result of metathesis. *Պարհապարհ* means "cattle, bull, herd" and in dialects it also means "ox", "deer", "chamois", "roedeer"¹⁸.

It is noteworthy that the northern cold wind was named *Parkhar* after the name of the northern mountain range Parkhar; with the same approach the Greeks called the northern wind Βορέης and the eastern Slavons called it Гора, Горыч, i.e. "mountain, mountainous"¹⁹. These words rooted in Proto-Indo-European language have the identical stems with the Armenian word **լնլր/*լնլն* 'mountain'.

The eastern part of the Parkhar/Eastern Pontic range was also known to the Greeks by the same name. Strabo called it *Μοσχικά ὄρη*²⁰ and in "Askharhatsuyts" it is named as *"Մոսխիկա լեռնիք"*²¹ ("Moskhic mountains"). The mountain name's root is the same as the root of the Greek word μόσχος "calf, young bull"²². To the south, in the contact zone of the provinces of Great Armenia, Bardzr Haik' and Tsopk there was another mountain with the name (*Պարհ-Պակհ*)²³ of the same stem as the mountain name *Parkhar*. The latter could not have been derived from Iranian presumptive form **parahvāθra* as the corresponding Avestian form "pouruxvāθra" means "full of kindness"; meanwhile *Parkharts* is the northern cold wind and the Parkhar mountain range was considered the place of its origin. Nerses Shnorhaly brings the following riddle which expects *Parkhar* as an answer.

¹⁶ ՀԱԲ, հ. IV, Եր., 1979, էջ 62:

¹⁷ Афанасьева В., Энлиль, – "Мифология. Золотой фонд. Энциклопедия"(МЗЭ), Москва, 2003, с. 635.

¹⁸ ՀԱԲ, հ. IV, էջ 7, ՀԲԲ, հ. IV, Երևան, 1945, էջ 36:

¹⁹ ИЯИ, т. II, стр. 678-679.

²⁰ Strabo, XI, 2, 15; 12, 4; 14, 1; XII, 3, 18.

²¹ Երեմյան Ս., Հայաստանը ըստ "Աշխարհացոյց"-ի, Երևան, 1963, էջ 100, Աբրահամյան Ա., Անանիա Շիրակացու մատենագրությունը, Երևան, 1944, էջ 347:

²² Liddel H.G. and Scott R., Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford, 1996, pp. 1147-1148. Cf. Arm. *մոզի (mozi)* (ՀԱԲ, հ. III, Երևան, 1977, էջ 338)- *bull calf*

²³ Երեմյան Ս., op. cit., pp. 76, 99:

«From the north comes a horseman,
Rushing as a winged sword,
Crushing pine trees
Stinging man's eyes as a hook»²⁴.

There are imagery and anagram forms resulting from mythological thinking in the riddle which are not typical to the epoch of Nerses Shnorhali who preserved them.

It is known that some Indo-European peoples maintained a principle (typical to Indo-European small scale texts in verse) which assumes hiding the targeted mythological character name by anagrams. It had been revealed by a “key” word which consisted of another word or words repeating the syllables of the hidden name²⁵. In Armenian texts the best example can be found in the hymn dedicated to the national god Vahagn in “Vahagn’s Song”. Here three times sounds the “key” *էր-էլ* (reminding the word *արէլ- sun*) which consists of the conjunction *էլ* and the ending *էր* of the preceding verb²⁶.

Երկնէր երկին, երկնէր երկիր,
Երկնէր *էլ* ծովն ծիրանի,
Երկն ի ծովուն ունէր *էլ* զկարմրիկն եղեգնիկ.
Ընդ եղեգան փող ծուխ ելանէր,
Ընդ եղեգան փող բոց ելանէր,
Ել ի բոցոյն վազէր խարտեաշ պատանեկիկ.
Նա հուր հեր ունէր,
(Ապա թէ) բոց ունէր մորուս,
Եւ աչկունքն էին արեգակունք:

The heavens and the earth travailed,
There travailed also the purple sea,
The travail held
The red reed (stalk) in the sea.
Through the hollow of the reed (stalk) a smoke rose,
Through the hollow of the reed (stalk) a flame rose
And out of the flame ran forth a youth.
He had hair of fire,
He had a beard of flame,
And his eyes were suns.

²⁴ Մնացականյան Ա., Հայ միջնադարյան հանելուկներ, Երևան, 1980, էջ 261:

²⁵ Де Соссюр Ф., Труды по языкознанию, Москва, 1977, с. 635-649.

²⁶ Պետրոսյան Ս., «Վահագնի երգի» ակրոստիքոսների վերականգնման և վերծանման փորձ, «Լրաբեր» հասարակական գիտությունների, 1981, 4, էջ 78-79:

Enlil was not only named Kur.gal “Great Mountain”, but also “meant *Lord Wind* (sometimes called Lord of the Air): both the hurricane and the gentle winds of spring were thought of as the breath issuing from his mouth”²⁷. Due to semantic relationship – ‘mountain’ / ‘horned’ / ‘wind’ it is worth remembering that “Cloudy creature that is the thunder is imagined as a bull-calf or a *mountain-like creature with big horns* ... , but the thundering one is imagined also as a *hurricane* as they believe that it thunders when turbulent *storm blows* into the heavenly sea”²⁸. Confirmation of M.Abeghyan’s consideration can be found in a belief “If an animal sneezes there will be a storm”²⁹ and in the old Greek word αἰγίς which had the meanings of ‘goatskin’, ‘the skin shield of Zeus’ and ‘rushing storm’, ‘hurricane’³⁰.

The Sumerians’ most powerful God Enlil’s name reveals also the fact of formation of a prototype divinity (or the main one of the prototypes) in the Armenian Highland, that is in the primary homeland of the Indo-Europeans.

Component ‘en’ of the god’s name Enlil<En-lil means ‘*lord*’ in Sumerian, (originally in spiritual meaning - the “supreme priest”), and ‘lil’ means ‘*wind*’³¹. In this case the meaning of god name is ‘*Lord Wind*’. The meaning of the component ‘lil’ from the god’s name ‘En-lil’ can be clarified considering the Indo-European protolanguage root *lel-/*lēl- ‘move, shake’ which is identical with it from the phonetic point of view and can reflect the visible result of wind (waving air) and consider it ‘moving, shaking’. In Armenian we have the word լէլ from the first version of the mentioned root, and the word *լիլ from the second version (from it *լիլ-նւկ<լլնկ). In the old Armenian language (grabar) this root is in secondary meaning լլնկ ‘*agitation and torment*’ and from it լլկէլ ‘*torture, tantalize*’, լլկիչ ‘*torturing*’ and so on but the dialects kept the primary meaning of the root. Compare լէլալ ‘move, shake’, լլկալ, լլկվիլ ‘move, shake’ (Van), լլգէլ ‘shake’ (Alashkert), լլգէլ ‘rock the baby’, ‘to move and shake the asleep person to make him wake up’ (Mush), լլգիլ (Kharberd), լիլիկէլ (Maragha), ‘to rock the baby in the cradle’ and so on, and from the related languages’ words: Old Indian lālayati ‘swing, wobble, shake’, lālayati ‘cherish’, Litv. leliúoti ‘rock, swing’, Latish leluôt ‘rock the baby in the cradle, to lull’ and so on.³² With this last meaning the positive role of the wind is

²⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Enlil>

²⁸ Աբեղյան Մ., նշվ. աշխ., հ. VII, էջ 66:

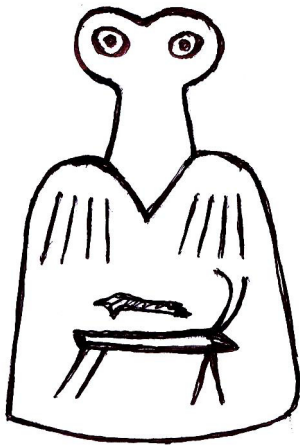
²⁹ Լալայան Ե., Երկեր, հ. I, Երևան, 1983, էջ 247:

³⁰ H.G. Liddel and R. Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 35. The Greeks considered the Amazons to be the daughters of the god of war, Ares (MHM, т. 1, с. 63) who “liked to storm around the battle-fields” (<http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Am-Ar/Ares.html>) thus inheriting the features of his character. For example, the Amazonian queen Penthesilea fought “like a fierce storm” but was killed by Achilles (M39, с. 35, Կոնս Ն., Հիւ Հունաստանի լեգենդներն ու առասպելները, Երևան, 1956, էջ 478). It is notable that in relation to the other queen of Amazons, Antiope, Amazons’ capital Themiscyra and Termodon River are mentioned. The latter starts from the north-western slopes of the Eastern Pontic range.

³¹ Lil in Sumerian means *wind, breeze*, <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>

³² ՀԱԲ, հ. II, էջ 288, ՀԲԲ, հ. II, էջ 192, 198:

revealed as it was the rocking and lullaby singer for the new-born orphans. It has the same role in a number of Armenian folk tales³³ where an orphan rescuer-protector character - the old woman, wild goat (deer), wind - should have been the symbols and different manifestations of Mother Goddess. In case of a positive answer to the question we can reveal another Indo-European - Sumerian parallel. The wife of Enlil was named Ninlil. In Sumerian language the gods' names En.lil and Nin.lil are parallel male (*en*) and female (*nin*) definitions of the root **lil* which enables us to understand the god's name Nin.lil as "Mistress of the Wind".³⁴ Ninlil was the adviser to Enlil, his assistant, a merciful goddess who could mollify her husband's rage.³⁵ If we remember the symbol of Enlil, the horned *tiara* and his revealed connections to the horned animals then it will be clear why the symbol of Ninlil could have been a feeder goat (deer) and she acted as a kind of an old woman and lulling wind. Connection of the old woman of the tale with the forest and the newborn baby left there let us to draw a comparison between her as a tale heiress of the wood mistress and the prototype of Sumerian Ninhursag (Nirhunsanga) goddess. The meaning of the god's name "Ninhursag" is "Mountain Mistress" but this name holder goddess was always titled as "Mother of all Gods", "Mother of all Children" and was considered the mother of such noted monarchs of



southern Mesopotamia as Eannatum (2450 - 2425 BC, a Sumerian king of Lagash), Hammurapi (1792-1750 BC, king of Babylon) and others³⁶. Obviously the character of Mother Goddess titled as "Mountain Mistress" has not been created in forestless and plain Sumer. Even today the high Parkhar is one of the most wooded places of the Armenian Highland.

It is interesting that the idol discovered during the excavations of Sumerian Lagash and assigned to goddess Ninhursag (see the picture) has a goat depicted on the lower side of the abdomen and a bit higher up to the breast there is a smaller and not a clear figure depicted, probably a goatling³⁷.

By the way, it has a likeness to the goat images carved on the petroglyphs of Armenia, and such idols were discovered during excavations of Tel-Brak, Uri, Mari etc.³⁸. The latter is made of alabaster and dated back to 3300 B.C.³⁹.

³³ Հայ ժողովրդական հեքիաթներ, հ. X, Երևան, 1967, էջ 169:

³⁴ M39, c. 400.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ M39, c. 399-401.

³⁷ Mallowan M.E., L'aurore de la Mésopotamie et de l'Iran. Éditions Sequoia, Paris-Bruxelles, 1966, p. 48, fig. 39; Les grandes étapes de l'humanité, T.1: Le berceau de l'humanité, Genève, 1976, p. 84.

³⁸ Mallowan M.E., op. cit., p. 47, fig. 37, 38 and p. 135; "Le berceau de l'humanité", p. 89.

³⁹ Homès-Fredericq D., La religion en Mésopotamie de Sumer à Babylone, see: De Sumer à Babylone. Collections du Louvre, Bruxelles, 1983, p. 68, fig. 20.

The episode of the feeding of a newborn by horned animals is present in other tales as well, but it is peculiar to the Armenian tale that the episode is accompanied by a song dedicated to the newborn baby. The fact of three versions of the Armenian tale containing the episode of a newborn child allows us to conclude that it had been widely spread because they were written down in different districts, far from each other - in Lake Van basin (Vaspurakan), Lori (Gugark) and Vagharshapat⁴⁰.

It may be supposed that the resettlers from ancient Bardzr Haik who brought the word 'kur' (mountain, mountainous land) and the worship of a mountainous prototype of Enlil to Sumer themselves appeared moving by the road parallel to the Euphrates⁴¹.

During the archaeological excavation of Kapan region (at present Keban) situated to the south of the mixing zone of the Aratsani (Eastern Euphrates) and Western Euphrates it was discovered that a Sumerian colony of the bearers of Uruk IV culture (3500-3100 B.C.) existed there. According to James Mellaart they came there by the Euphrates and the road along it⁴² and this fact was conditioned by the existence of copper and silver mines in Arkni (at present Arghana-Maden) and its surrounding⁴³.

Certainly, the Sumerians were also interested in the hardwood high trees of the Armenian Taurus which were irreplaceable material in shipbuilding, as well as in the building of temples and palaces. The advantage of the Euphrates road was also obvious. H.Klengel noted. "This road was convenient especially from the point of view of the supply of the donkey caravans with water. We have no records yet on the operation of the road which crossed the Syrian steppe and Palmira (Tadmor) in the 3rd millennium B.C."⁴⁴. The Syrian steppe located in the neighbourhood of Sumer was simply called 'desert'⁴⁵.

Thus, the abovementioned research based on the typological and linguistic analyses of Armenian and Mesopotamian mythological materials suggests that it is impossible wholly to reveal and comprehend deep layers of some Sumero-Akkadian mythological images without taking into consideration those parallels and juxtapositions which originated in the Armenian Highland and preserved in the Armenian lingvomentality and were reflected in the Armenian mythopoetic notions and the Armenian language.

***Translated from Armenian
by S. E. Chraghyan***

⁴⁰ Հայ ժողովրդական հեքիաթներ, հ. II, էջ 618, հ. VIII, էջ 850, հ. X, էջ 570:

⁴¹ According to Will Durant, Sumerians might come to Sumer also via the Armenian Highland.

⁴² See "Древняя Эбла" (Раскопки в Сирии), Москва, 1985, с. 23.

⁴³ Там же, с. 24..

⁴⁴ Кленгель Х., Архивы Эблы и история Сирии: Проблемы и перспективы, "Древняя Эбла", с. 208.

⁴⁵ Երեմյան Ս., Նշվ. աշխ., էջ 114: