

millennium B. C. (Figs. 21—26). Originating in the aeneolithic-early Bronze Age, this legend persists throughout the entire pre-historic epoch, survives in Urartu and finally enters the Armenian tradition of the early and mediaeval periods.

The research highlights all the ancient oriental Urartean and Armenian written records pertaining to the legend that have survived and shows for the first time that the pre-historic myths and legends, lost long ago, can be fully reconstructed relying on the rock carvings.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ROCK CARVED SIGNS OF PREHISTORIC ARMENIA. (TABLE XI)

As we saw above, the rock carvings are sources of positive information and in some sense can be treated as written monuments. One of the most important features of the rock carvings, however, is that they lay at the origin of all subsequent writing and scripture, which are based on the pictures of objects, luminaries, animals, birds, men, etc. A study of the rock carvings of the Gegham range and those of other areas proves that pictographic, hieroglyphic and ideographic characters originate in early Bronze Age Armenia in the 3rd millennium B. C. and in the later stages of development enter into the Urartean culture. Here pictographs presumably change into syllabic script which involves many ideograms borrowed from neighbouring countries. But hieroglyphic writing here does not achieve perfection. This form of writing is inherited by the Armenian priesthood—"a heathen script"; cult-religious, astronomical-astrological writing—it is then preserved in late mediaeval manuscripts. Those lists of manuscripts and a companion of Urartean hieroglyphs and pre-historic characters make clear that the symbols duplicate each other with the same semantic content. A special volume is dedicated to the investigation of rock carved characters. In the present work we print only the joint table XI of the pre-historic signs and their Urartean-Armenian parallels. Selecting two ideograms from this table, we translate their semantics by means of a complex study of the material. First of these is the character "Ram", which results from the gradual dissolution of the elements in the figure of the ram and is used as a symbol of the constellation Ram. This is a circle open from below with an axis descending from above. This celestial ram figures as a complete representation in a composition of religious, cultic nature in the sequence—bird, sun, moon, bull, snake and ram

(Table XII, Fig. 1). The iconographic details of the carved animals together with the images of the sun—the moon and the bird, indicate that those animals are truly celestial, i. e. extraordinary creatures of worship.

The morphology and logical succession of figures of these conspicuous rock carvings of the 3rd millennium B. C. is of mythological nature and resembles that part of the Babylonian creation myth in which Marduk overpowering the sea monster Tiamat, fills the sky with luminaries and constellations. Next he appoints the Twins-Taurus and the Ram, guards of the celestial gate: exactly in the sequence of our rock carving. At the same time he defined the successive revolutions of the sun, the moon, created vegetation, birds and animals. The sign of the Ram on a number of rock carvings of the Gegham mountain range (Table XII, Figs. 12,13) seems to continue or illustrate the Babylonian myth, amidst birds, celestial bodies, animals, trees; particularly in such pictures in which the sun gods descending to earth fertilize the soil, while the animals are cross-breeding. All these demonstrate that the Ram was associated with the cult of spring fertility. The sign of the Ram is central to and appears in the same compositional and semantic contexts on decorations of the 3rd millennium B. C. earthenware. But, more interestingly, in some parts of the Shengavit settlement (3rd millennium B. C.) supports styled as powerful rams which were made for performing rites connected with the cult of the Ram were recovered. The latter cult was long lived in the area. In the recent finds from the shrines in the pre-Urartean level of Dvin huge clay boards decorated with stylized ram heads and other celestial symbols were set leaning

against the wall high on the edge of altars. These shrines were completely dedicated to the performance of ceremonies of spring farming festivity, associated with the cult of the Ram constellation. The religious concepts connected with the cult of the Ram, the Taurus and the bull enter the Urartean and Armenian traditions and are represented in the monuments of Urartean art, Armenian manuscripts and miniatures. Furthermore, the symbol "Ram" survives until the 16th century.

The second is the writing sign "Twins" formed by a dissolution in the pre-historic period of the elements of twin human figures and their stylization; it has passed from Urartu to the Armenians and has been included in the lists of "signs and symbols" with the interpretation "Twins". Of frequent occurrence in the rock carvings of Syunik and Gegham mountains are also stylized human twin figures (not in the form of signs), short-legged, with long, dexterous hands, one of which is stretched upward and the other remains hanging (Figs. 27—31, Table 65, Fig. 3). Those twin images are almost invariably accompanied by the symbols of celestial bodies and geometrical figures that betray their supernatural celestial origin (Figs. 32—36).

The appearance of twin figures everywhere in the same stance deserves attention and indicates their unique function. One of the human figures in a picture of Syunik portrays the "Twin" sign which interprets the functional essence of the above figures. In an outstanding group of pictures relating to the calendar tables of Vardenis mountains those twin human figures are portrayed as holding coiled snake-lightnings in their hands which reveal their function as rain makers. Thus the twins of the rock carvings are celestial creatures with quite nimble, powerful arms, short legs and are charged with rain-giving and weather-regulating powers. They are reminiscent of the twins of our epos—Sanassar and Bagdassar, who also symbolized the thunder-lightning and were associated wholly with the water element and the cults of husbandry.

The occurrence of the cult of twins among ancient peoples or modern tribes contributes to our understanding of the nature of Bronze-Age twin gods. Everywhere the twins are connected with rain and weather; everywhere

a miraculous birth is ascribed to twin children and their graves are located near lakes and rivers. In our epos too, the Goddess of the sea became impregnated by water and gave birth to Sanassar and Bagdassar. Dark infants were also related to rain bearing clouds, water springs, lakes and rivers, water-born lightning-like horses and so on. The twins are well represented in beautiful compositions on belts of the late Bronze Age period. One of them, recovered during the excavations in Samtavro, shows the archer and the twins which are invariably accompanied by one or two stars. In two cases the twins are on horseback, in another—on foot and the third—they are pictured seated at a feast. Their jug and cup are possibly filled with a sacred liquid. Judging by the pictures they are bare infants, short legged, long armed and large headed. The same belt displays the fish, the deer, the horse, the lion, the otter, the pig, the bird and the bear. Most of them bear the signs of celestial bodies or phenomena and all of them are linked with the firmament and the constellations and accurately coincide with the order of constellations quoted by the 7th century astronomer Shirakatsi. The horses figure here as companions of the twins as in the case of the Dark Infants or Kurkik Jalali in Sassna Tserer. All the images on the belt symbolize rain and the concept of fertility. Another belt comes from the same necropolis; it differs very little from the one described above. Since the twins were considered rain-provoking creatures, in Zodiac signs of the firmament they identified the spring month of May, the month that fed the soil with copious rainfall. It should be added that the twins figuring in the rock carvings, on bronze belts and in Armenian ethnography are in many ways related to similar Greek and Indian Dioskouroi and ashvins. There's no doubt that thousands of years ago the twins were the object of profound worship of our ancestors.

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The above discussion completes the review of the groups of images, so far available, from the Gegham mountain range. The present instalment does not deal with the group of images discovered near the summit Minor Paytassar, the pictures of which have been published separately by S. Sardarian.