

A STEP TOWARDS ESTABLISHING MAGICAL TSOVINAR'S AND HER EQUIVALENT GENERALIZED IMAGE IN WORLD MYTHOLOGY (BRIEF REVIEW)

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The main heroes - founders of Armenia Sanasar and Baghdasar, Mets Mher, favorite hero Sassountsi Davit and mystic character Poqr Mher, almost always were in the center of the researches of the Armenian national epic. Researchers usually paid less attention to the female characters. Whereas in "Sasna Tsrer" epic, the women played an important role: they were typical characters, their actions possibly prevent, weaken or more and more sharpen the collisions, getting a determined role in the epic during different scenes. It is peculiar that the main actions in the epic derive from woman, from the events connected with her. Role of Tsovinar, mother of the founder-heroes of the house of Sasun, is very specific: the power of the water element is externalized in her. This character has almost all the typical attributes of the old goddesses. We can say that this character was created due to the conglomeration of the notions which Armenians had about the pagan gods and goddesses, the kind spirit of water in the early period. Even the name prompts, that the people, who had no sea, but were rich with rivers and icy springs, must have had the relevant goddess and gods. Unlike the other women of the epic - Deghtsun, Armaghan, Ghandut, Gohar, who initially were strangers and only after marrying became natives, Tsovinar was not only native, but also a national character. And it's quite natural, that she has a special role among the women in the epic.

The epic starts with the following scene: the Khalif of Baghdad sends tax collectors to Armenian king Gagik (in some stories – King Astghik, Gorgik, King Sinam, Ter-Khachik). As we know, the development of the future events leads to the place, where Armenians initially rejected Khalif's suggestion to marry, but after Tsovinar's interference it was accepted.

Christian's marriage with non-Christian is equal to death. But she preferred her death to the death of other people from her motherland. The

father and the natives debate for a long time to find a solution. And again the woman finds the solution. Our history is rich with such references of marriages because of politic relations¹. Kirakos Gandzaketsi says that Hasan-Jalal, the owner of Khokhanaberd, gives his daughter Ruzan to military commander Charmaghan's son Bura-Nuin for marriage besides many other gifts². Famous Armenian writer Muratsan wrote the plot of the famous drama "Ruzan or patriotic lady", based on this historical fact³. Muratsan showed the Armenian woman's unselfish and heroic nature in Ruzan's character, who resembles Tsovinar with her decisions and actions.

Tsovinar transforms from just a beautiful girl into a heroic and brave woman. It's remarkable, that in some versions of the epic, the marriage with Tsovinar is very important exactly for Khalif, that it has a very important politic reason. In the epic every action has its certain reason. Tsovinar's decision saves the country from many disasters, but anyway the opposition between her and Khalif, i.e. between a Christian and a Pagan, leads to the requirements, which Tsovinar should had set before her future husband. It's interesting, that powerful Khalif agreed to her conditions very easily: she wanted him to stay away from her for a year (in some versions -40 days, 7 years...) and he should build a separate 'palace' for her, and let her stay in her religion. This prompts, that it was a great honor for Khalif to marry the daughter of the Armenian king, besides the other political reasons⁴.

Before the marriage, on ascension's day, the bride walks around her favorite places with her servants and takes part in the feast (this was probably a tradition in ancient times). Tsovinar becomes pregnant from one full handful and one incomplete handful of water, which she drinks from a source, that appeared from a rock by miracle. Coupling with a woman and water has many

¹ It is also remarkable for Tigranuhi's marriage with Azhdahak from "Vipasank", "Tarun's marriage" from the "Aghjik Tarun" novel (Girl named Tarun). See M. Abeghyan, Works, v.1, Yerevan, 1966, pp. 137-138, 385

² See Kirakos Gandzaketsi, History of Armenia, Yerevan, 1961, p. 269

³ Muratsan, Collection of works, v. 5, Yerevan, 1953, p. 235

⁴ "Sasna Tsrer", edited by M. Abeghyan, K. Melik-Ohanjanyan, Yerevan, 1936, v. A, p. 476

parallels in myths of Indo-European and other people¹. This scene has its certain purpose. In mythology, the river or the sea is the border between different worlds or the earth and the sky, i.e. the male and female beginnings, and their unity, the holy marriage was done by water. In some stories the reason of the pregnancy is the holy water, in others – the element is changed into fire embodied by Khalif's breath. And finally Khalif believed that she became pregnant from the water. However, this phenomenon finds more precise explanation in the Tamil's worship poetry, where it is said verbatim that the Virgo contains fire accumulation. The Virgo has irrepressible fire, which in the occasion of not being adjusted can become a reason for the world's destruction"².

Sanasar and Baghdasar's birth from water has many similar versions in worldwide mythology. But according to some versions of the epic, they were born from the horse Qurkik Jalali. The birth from the horse is also a widespread version. It's known, that ancient Armenians had this kind of ideas about different tribes' origin. They had animistic and totemic beliefs.

For examples Khorenatsi tells a legend about a child of Artsruni and an eagle, where the eagle comes as the ancestor of Artsruni dynasty. He also tells about King Yervand and his brother Yervaz by observing that they were born from a mixture of an ugly woman, who was from Arshakuni dynasty, and a white bull³. The same plots can be found in Greek legend, where dioskur's (Zeus' son) originates from a wolf. The founders of Rome Romulus and Remus were born from the mating of Rea Silvia and the wolves' protector Mars god, etc. Similar mentioning about originating from animals has been preserved from one of the narrations of Armenian epic. The Astghik King of Sasun had a daughter named Sara Khanum. When walking along seacoast, she gets thirsty and orders the servant to find water. After a long search, Sara drinks from water gathered in a horse's footprints. Twin brothers are born, whom the angel down from the sky, names Sanasar and Baghdasar.

¹ See S. Harutyunyan, "Armenian mythology", Beirut, 2000, p. 464 and A. Petrosyan, "The Oldest Sources of the Armenian Epic", Yerevan, 1997, p. 23

² Armenian epos "Daredevils of Sasun" and world epic heritage, 3-6 November, 2004, Tsakhkadzor, pp. 102-103

³ See M. Khorenatsi, History of Armenia, Yerevan, 1981, p. 355

The phrase "you are bastards" during a game makes twin brothers to ask their mother regarding the truth about their birth. In the stories about the heroic women, according to the mythological research, the most important thing is who the mother is. The mother convinces going to the seaside, where promises to tell the reality. In the seaside Sanasar finds Qurkik Jalali's bridle under a stone and hits the sea. The sea opens and Qurkik Jalali comes out. Sanasar curbs the horse and again threatens to jump into the sea, if mother continues to keep silent.

Episodes about originating from water gathered in horse's footprint, finding a bridle on the seacoast, horses getting out of the sea because of bridle's hit, Qurkik Jalali's easily bridling by Sanasar, remind us that here are preserved twin brother's ancient mythical thinking response of animal's origination. Water as the beginning of everything and creator of power exists in various nation. One of the Indian Upanishads, called "Anthem of origin existence", starts with the following lines: "The Lord covered everything by himself, all the things which streams in this streaming World"¹. Assyrian-Babylonian water goddess Tiamat's name means sea, who had her heir twins as well. One of Avesta's Gatas tells that savior God's Astvart Artā's impregnation environment was again the sea, Kasaoya.

Generally, there are a lot of common things between the world's mythology creation of the Universe, the power of nature, perceptions about surrounding World, which is not and must not be necessarily conditioned with cultural borrowing. Hegel stated that the content of every epic is the World's entirety, where individual actions are played².

By the way, according to the material, preserved in a medieval manuscript, the goddess of love Astghik in Armenian pantheon is born from the sea, i.e. Tsovinar, like the twins are. (Aramazd fights a duel with his twin brother, wins, then kills and throws him in the sea. The sea dyes in blood and out of waving sea foams Astghik is born, with whose by every step, blood drops turn changes into roses)³.

Armenian well-known philologist M. Abeghyan finds that Tsovinar is not only incarnation of water but also elemental force of thunder, which in the

¹ Ancient Oriental Poetry, Yerevan, 1982, p. 301

² Hegel, Aesthetics, v. 3, Moscow, 1971, p. 459

³ See R. Hambardzumyan, The Armenian Calendar, Yerevan, 1992, pg. 15

concept of thunder anthropoid figures as a virgin with fiery eyes. In this case Tsovinar has her own equivalents in the World mythology. There is bewitching Mary in Basque mythology, and her character and activity are very similar or nearly identical to that of Tsovinar. In Basque traditions a wonderful beauty is mentioned, named Mari, whose features and actions strongly come closer and almost resemble our thunder spirit, miraculous Tsovinar. She moves by the speed of thunder, punishes people with drought, or gives fertile rain and snow. She was Basque's the most beloved goddess, natural phenomena such as thunder, rain, winds and snow obeyed her. Genealogically, the meaning of the sea is present in the name Mari, which in some folklorists' opinion, originated from Indo-European preform of **mari** or **mori** and means "sea"¹.

Tsovinar's thunder-born character preserves also in person's preliminary expression of ideas in fairy tales, as well as in traditional beliefs. They were finding the protection method from thunder in the praying, which were directed to Tsovinar. Rural women put "iron cross" in their teeth and with another hand covered their heads with a stone by continually repeating: "Qaraglukh, yerkatakerq" (stonehead, ironwheel) saving prayer².

Tsovinar is the epic's character from whom the life of the epics starts, the life which is embodied in twin brothers Sanasar and Baghdasar. There are that among the ancestors of Armenians mythological notions she symbolized mother goddess, which was later entitled to Iranian goddess Anahid-Nanayya³, and much later after adopting Christianity, entitled to Tiramayr (Virgin Mary). She closely deals with the latter, by meaning that in two cases the pure pregnancy happens with an element of power. In the first case, it is Holy Spirit, in the second one - life-giving (vital) water. With the further process of epic it becomes clear that Khalifa's persuasion in Tsovinar's innocence does not save from sacrificing twin brothers for their gods. Khalifa's constant idea of getting rid of twins can be discussed in a universal mythological mold, where are easily recognized Cronus-Saturn, who devoured his children or

¹ See Basque legends. Fairy tales of the peoples of the world, with 25 volumes; v.3, ed. By S. Harutyunyan, Yerevan, 1996, p. 127

² M. Abeghyan, Works, v. 7, Yerevan, 1975, p. 71

³ See S. Harutyunyan, On the issue of unity of Armenian spiritual and religious culture. PAI, 2002, N 2, p. 7

Zeus, who was diligently preventing his kids' birth could steal his throne in the future.

Thus, Tsovinar's character having the absolute and high ideology of virgin mother totally differs from other female characters in the epic. This character is perfect and comprehensive, it is close to the psychology of Armenian people. Tsovinar's image is based on virgin mother's supreme ideology and essentially differs from other women in the epic. Firstly, Tsovinar attracts with her purity, the ability to self-sacrifice and also with the heroic and willing features. When she dies, narrators immortalize her name in "voghormi"-s (which means commemorate). And the mythological figures of the character under consideration highlight her importance in the establishment and further development of the House of Sassoun, and make it an inseparable part of the world's mythological thinking. Everything, which is close to Armenian people is summarized in her character.

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ԸՆԴՀԱՆՐՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՇՈՒՐՋ**

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Հայ ժողովրդական էպոսում կանայք ծանրակշիռ դերակատարում ունեն. նրանք տիպականացնում են հերոսներին, նրանց արարքները, հնարավորինս կանխում, մեղմացնում կամ է՛լ ավելի են սրում բախումները, վճռական դեր ստանձնում վիպական անցուդարձի տարաբնույթ զարգացումների ընթացքում: Հատկանշական է, որ բուն էպոսի գործողությունները սկիզբ են առնում հենց կնոջից, նրա հետ կապված իրադարձություններից:

Սասնա տան հիմնադիր հերոսների մոր՝ Ծովինարի կերպարը շատ տարողունակ է ու հիմնարար. նրանում մարմնավորվել է բնության տարերային ուժի՝ ջրի անձնավորված վաղնջական, առասպելաբանական պատկերացումը: Հին աստվածուհիներին բնորոշ գրեթե բոլոր հատկանիշներն առկա են այս կերպարում: Կարելի է ասել, որ այն վաղ

շրջանի հեթանոս աստված-աստվածուհիների, ջրի բարի ոգիների մասին ունեցած հայ մարդու պատկերացումների միաձուլման շնորհիվ ձևավորված մի կերպար է: Հենց անունը հուշում է, թե ծով չունեցող, բայց գետերով ու սառնորակ աղբյուրներով հարուստ Հայկական լեռնաշխարհում /հմմտ. ՆԱԻՐԻ անունը/ բնակվող մարդիկ պետք է որ ունենային համապատասխան դիցուհի կամ աստվածություն: Ի տարբերություն էպոսի մյուս մերագնյա կանանց՝ Դեղձուն, Արմաղան, Խանդութ, Գոհար, որոնք սկզբնապես օտար էին և Սասնա տանը հարսնանալուց հետո միայն դառնում են յուրային, Ծովինարը ոչ միայն յուրային, այլև հայրենի կերպար է: Բնականաբար, նա էպոսի կանանց մեջ առանձնահատուկ տեղ է զբաղեցնում:

О ПАРАЛЛЕЛЯХ ОБРАЗА ЦОВИНАР В АРМЯНСКОМ ЭПОСЕ И ВО ВСЕМИРНОЙ МИФОЛОГИИ

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В армянском эпосе женщины играют значительную роль: они уподобляются героям, их поступкам, насколько возможно, предотвращают, смягчают или даже усугубляют столкновения, играют решающую роль в процессе развития различных эпических событий. Примечательно, что действие эпоса, в сущности, начинается с женщины и связанных с ней событий.

Образ Цовинар, матери героев-основателей Сасуна, ёмкий и цельный: он олицетворяет стихийную силу природы, персонифицированное древнее, мифологическое понимание воды. В этом образе заключены почти все особенности, присущие древним богиням. Можно сказать, что это образ, сформированный благодаря обобщенным представлениям армян о языческих богах и о добрых духах воды. Само имя Цовинар подразумевает, что люди, живущие в Армянском нагорье, не имеющем моря (ср. с НАИРИ), но богатыми реками и студеными источниками, должны были иметь соответствующее божество или богиню. В отличие от других женских образов эпоса – Дехцун, Армаган, Хандут, Гоар, – которые изначально были чужды Сасуну и стали родными только после того, как вошли невестками в его дома, образ Цовинар не только близкий, но и родной. Естественно, он занимает особое место среди женщин эпоса.