

THE FOREFATHER HAYK IN THE LIGHT OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

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1) In archaic myths the most important place is taken by stories of the “beginning” (Creation, cosmogony). They tell about the origins of the universe, the gods and heroes of that period. The cosmogonic action frequently is described as a very dramatic event, the first murder. Cosmogonic myths are closely associated with anthropogonic and ethnogonic myths, which may be regarded as special cases.¹

The Armenian ethnogonic myth of forefather Hayk and his descendants evidently represents the epicized version of the creation myth on the beginning of the universe and time (countries, mountains, rivers, months and hours were named after Hayk and the first Haykids, while the naming in mythology is equivalent to the creation itself). It combines theology, cosmogony, and ethnogony, and carry anthropogonic and sociogonic elements. Hayk and his descendants are the epicized figures of the oldest Armenian gods (theogony); lands, provinces, mountains, rivers and settlements are named after them (cosmogony); Armenian ethnonyms are derived from their names (ethnogony). The large family of Hayk reflects the structure of the oldest Armenian pantheon and patriarchal family (sociogony). The beginning of the time is also associated with the myth of Hayk—the months and hours of the day were considered to be named after the sons and daughters of Hayk.² The divine line ends with the death and supposed resurrection of Ara the Handsome, the last divine patriarch. The mythic sacred time ends with his death and our real (profane) era begins.

2) The ancient heroic epic, unlike some other genres of folklore, is formed in the process of ethnic consolidation and is in a lesser degree liable to the international influences.³ Thus the core of the ethnogonic myth would represent a native Armenian, i.e. Indo-European myth. As was shown by S. Ahyan and G. Dumézil, the pivotal characters of the legends—Hayk, Aram and Ara the Handsome—constitute an Indo-European “trifunctional” triad, associated, respectively, with the first (sovereign), the second (military) and the third (fertility) functions of Indo-European mythology. Moreover, Hayk and his son Aramaneak present the two aspects of the first function. Significantly, the characters of the opponents of Hayk, Aram, and Ara—Bel, Baršamin, Šamiram—functionally correspond to the respective Armenian heroes and also form an identical trifunctional system. Thus, this is a typical Indo-European myth.⁴

3) The name of the Babylonian tyrant Bel, Hayk’s adversary, is derived from the Semitic *bʿl* ‘lord, master.’ It was used as the name or epithet of the great gods (especially Bel-Marduk). The second eponymous patriarch Aram and his adversary Baršam would

¹ For the Creation, in this context, see Eliade 1959: 6 ff.

² For Hayk, as the father of the time, see Brutyan 1997: 156 ff., 385 ff, with bibliography.

³ Meletinskij 1986: 62.

⁴ For the Indo-European aspects of the myth, see Ahyan 1981: 270-271; Dumézil 1994: 133-141; see also Petrosyan 1997; Petrosyan 2002; Petrosyan 2007a.

represent the “second figures” of Hayk and Bel.⁵ Significantly, Baršam is also derived from Semitic *bʿl* (West Semitic Baʿal Šamin ‘Lord of Heaven’).

Several adversaries of Indo-European gods and heroes may also be derived from the West Semitic Baʿal. In those myths, as it seems, the Semitic god is represented as the negative mirror-image of the Indo-European divine heroes. Apropos of this, one can recall the similar situation in the mythologies of other peoples: e.g., in the Finno-Ugric tradition, the names of the celestial god are, as a rule, of indigenous origin, while his adversary is frequently represented by a borrowed god who has positive functions in the tradition from which his name is borrowed.⁶ This is explained as a result of ancient contacts of the Indo-European and West Semitic tribes.⁷

4) In several Armenian dialects the elderly women mention their husbands in their absence as *mer hay* ‘our hay’ i.e. ‘husband, chief of our family.’⁸ This word, very plausibly, can be etymologized from Indo-European **poti-* ‘master, lord, master of the house, husband’ (cf. Lat. *hospes*, Russ. *gospodi* < **ghos[t]-pot-* ‘host,’ Gk. *posis*, Avest. *paiti-*, Ind. *pati-*, Toch. A *pats* ‘husband,’ etc).

Hayk is described as the head of a patriarchal family consisting of three hundred men and their own families. Thus, Hayk’s name can also be associated with **poti-*, with the diminutive/ venerable suffix *-ik* peculiar to the appellations of the elders and mythological names: *Hay-ik* > *Hayk*, cf. *hayr/ hayrik* ‘father,’ *pap/ papik* ‘grandfather,’ theonymic *Astlik* ‘Venus,’ lit. ‘Little star,’ and Aramaneak (son of Hayk), with an analogical suffix *-ak*. Notably, the second part of Hayk’s constant epithet *nahapet* ‘patriarch’ presents the Iranian reflex of the Indo-European **pot-*; Thus, the name of Hayk, most probably, corresponds to that of his adversary and functional counterpart Bel.⁹

5) In Armenian tradition, the constellation Orion was named after Hayk.¹⁰ Hayk kills Bel with an *erek t’ewean* ‘three-winged, triple-fleshed’ arrow (Khorenats’i 1.11). In this context the best Indo-European parallel of Hayk is the Indic god Rudra, the father and leader of the Rudras called by his name (cf. the correlation of the name of Hayk with his descendants and followers *Hays* ‘Armenians’). In India, the constellation Orion is personified by the god Prajāpati who was transfixed by the three-jointed arrow (*iṅus trikāṅga*, the belt stars of Orion) shot by Rudra.¹¹ Notably, the second element of the characteristic epithets of Rudra (*ganapati*, *vrātapati*, *bhūtapati*, *paśupati*, *gṛhapati*, *sthapati*, *sabhapati*), as well as the name of Prajāpati, are derived from **poti-*.¹²

⁵ Abeghian 1966: 55; Petrosyan 2002: 56, 62, 83; Petrosyan 2007a.

⁶ Aikhenvald et al. 1982: 188.

⁷ For the reflection of the Semitic *bʿl* in the Indo-European myths, see Petrosyan 2007a; for the Indo-European and West Semitic early contacts, Ivanov 2004: 45-46.

⁸ For this appellation, see especially Khachatryan 2003: 19.

⁹ For this interpretation of Hayk’s name, see Petrosyan 2002: 58, 61, 161, with bibliography.

¹⁰ Alishan 1895: 119.

¹¹ For Rudra, in this context, see Allen 1963: 309-310; Forssman 1968: 58; Fontenrose 1981: 239-240; Tjömkin and Erman 1985: 16-18, 276-277.

¹² Petrosyan 2002: 55; Petrosyan 2007b: 30-31.

6) Hayk journeyed to Armenia with his patriarchal family which included his sons and daughters and sons' sons, martial men about three hundred in number, and other domestic servants and outsiders (Khorenats'i 1.10).

The Armenian patriarchal clans, which survived until the recent times, were usually called *azg*. *Azg* is a familial-akin group, which includes families of several generations, usually six-seven, rarely eight, the descensive and lateral patrilineal branches derived from the ancestor-founder, whose name becomes the generic term.¹³ Meantime, *azg* means 'people, nation.' The same is true for the other terms used for clans (*c'el* 'branch, clan, tribe, nation,' *tun* 'house, clan, nation' etc.).

The linguistic analysis shows that in Armenian no ancient term of family relationship is lacking except one (**nepōt-*), whereas the other Indo-European languages have lost several, or anyhow did not have them. The Armenian preservation of those terms is the more striking inasmuch as Armenian is neither an archaic nor a conservative language, and moreover, has lost a great deal of the Indo-European lexicon. This shows without any doubt that the ancestors of the Armenians had faithfully preserved for a very long time the large patriarchal family.¹⁴

Thus, the Armenian traditional family, survived to the 19th century would represent one of the most archaic successors of the Indo-European kin. Hayk's large family would present the mythological prototype, the most archaic version of the Armenian patriarchal family.

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Thus, the ethnonym *Hay* and the dialectal *hay* 'husband, head of family' would have been affined with the name of the patriarch Hayk (*Hay-ik*).¹⁵ The name of Hayk has become the generic name of Hayk's *azg*-family and *azg*-nation. It is to be associated with **poti-* 'lord, master, patriarch' (cf. also the terms **dems-pot-* 'master of the house' and **wik'-pot-* 'master of the clan, community'). The historical Armenian *azg*, i.e., the nation of Hayk, would have been regarded as the current state of Hayk's initial (mythic) family.

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¹³ Karapetyan 1966: 25.

¹⁴ Bonfante 1984: 29.

¹⁵ For various considerations on the etymology of the ethnonym *Hay*, see Djahukian 1961: 386 ff.; Djahukian 1987: 284. In his later works Djahukian accepted the etymology of *Hay* and Hayk from **poti-* (Djahukian 1988: 68; Djahukian 1990: 26; Djahukian 1992: 18), which makes unnecessary its special linguistic argumentation.

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