An Armenian Spirit of Time and Place: The Shvot

AN ARMENIAN SPIRIT OF TIME AND PLACE: THE *ŠVOT*.

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Some outlaws live by the side of a lake
The minister's daughter's in love with the snake
Who lives in a well by the side of the road
Wake up, girl, we're almost home
We should see the gate by morning
We should be inside by evening

—Jim Morrison, "Not to touch the earth".[1]

The *Švot*, or *švod* in Western Armenian, is a mythical creature of Armenian folk belief that lives during the colder months of the year in the walls of the house or the stable (*gom*). February is called "Švotsmonth", *Švotamis*; and the rite of banishing the *Švot*, called "Švot-outing", *Švotahan*, takes place the last night of February. *Švot (i) turs, Adar/Mart (i) ners!* "Out with the *Švot*; in with Adar (March)!" cries the lady of the house, banging on the wall of home or stable with a broom, her under-drawers (*vartik'*), or strips of leather. The *Švot* dislikes having to leave its cozy home for the warmer months of the year, and can be heard to complain. But it then dutifully, if perhaps grumpily, goes out into the family's fields to work. Presumably it returns the following winter to its comfortable lair in the wall.[2] In Malatya (Gk. Melitēnē), Armenians believed the *Švot* was an invisible being that deceived people by leading them away to faraway places. This kind of *Švot*— if that were all it did— would then have to be a creature wholly of barren tracts or wastelands remote from human habitation, different from the

[1] Danny Sugarman, ed., *The Doors: The Complete Illustrated Lyrics*, New York: Hyperion, 1991, p. 89.
[2] See J.R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard Iranian Series 5, Cambridge, MA, 1987, pp. 333-334. This paper expands considerably upon the data presented in that book; and my conclusions are now appreciably different.

house spirit described above. But this is probably not the case, and the report focuses on only one aspect of the spirit's activity. For according to beliefs recorded in various places, after being driven out of the house the *Švot* might try to sneak back in, in the form of a cat, or in the guise of a relative returning after a long absence. Then, in a mischievous or vindictive mood it might invite people out for a long walk, lead them astray, and abandon them.

As to its appearance, in Xarberd (Tk. Harput) the word *švot* was also used as a pejorative epithet for people with hideous (*aylandak*) faces; and in some places it was thought to be a demon or evil spirit as tall as a tree. As we shall see presently, the word might be applied to supernatural beings who were not house spirits at all and were very gruesome and terrifying indeed. Belief in the spirit was widespread over historical Armenia; and variants of the word in Armenian dialects include *šhod*, *šivod*, *šuved*, and *šuēt*. Armenians of Kesaria (Tk. Kayseri, i.e., Caesarea of Cappadocia where St. Basil lived) spoke of the *švot* as a spirit that appeared on the night of the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple (Arm. *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ*).

The latter, celebrated on 13th February, is the Christian Armenian winter festival of fire equivalent to Western Candlemas, and comes in the month Ahekan of the ancient Armenian calendar, a name derived from from the Old Iranian **Āthrakāna-* "Fire festival". The late Professor Zaven Khaṙatyan of Erevan wrote an important essay on the *Švot* that I have offered in translation in full from the original Armenian as Appendix 1 of this study, providing additional data and important insights. He concluded that the *Švot* was a house spirit who lived indoors in the cold months, stimulated thoughts of love and procreation as springtime approached, and then went to the fields to help the family's crops grow. The great ethnographer Prof. Hranuš Xaṙatyan, kindly provided his publication to me and added one of her own on *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ*, with data on the *Švot*. She reports: "The smoke and fire of *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ* burned the spirits called *švot* and *xonǰoloz*— demons that supposedly manifested themselves at the beginning of the new year and remained till this feast. After the evening meal the woman of the house would sprinkle a few drops of wax on her children's hats and other head-coverings from a

candle kindled in church so that the spirit called *švot* might be unable to enter the house and take them away. In order to prevent the entry of the *švot* the boards used to close the smoke-hole and window were smeared with ash from the bonfire. It was thought that a child born on the eve of *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ* would turn out very wicked and fiery since he had been 'born with the fire'. Children born on that day or on Easter were called *lus-paron* (for a boy) [i.e., "Mister Light"— JRR] or *lus-łatun* (for a girl) [i.e., "Lady Light, with Tk. l-w *khatun*— JRR]."[3] The custom seems to derive from the belief that in February the spirit acted lasciviously itself and put mischievous notions about love into the heads of the young; so the latter must be protected, though February's child was evidently fated to be imbued with the proclivities of the house spirit in that transitional season. And as we shall see presently from the data from the village of Datem, the *Švot*, rather like Goethe's Erlkönig, might entice or kidnap children.

The detail of the strips of leather used to drive the *Švot* outdoors in February is particularly telling, with respect to the association of the spirit with fertility. It ought to remind us of the *februa* and other rites of Lupercalia, when the Romans encouraged procreation and indulged in the riotous, lewd festivities that have survived in various forms, notably in the Western Mardi Gras or Carnival and its Armenian equivalent, *Bun Barekendan*, whose name might be translated as the Main (day) of Good Living, just before the Lenten fast.[4] It is a feature that highlights the importance of the *Švot* to the wellbeing of the traditional agricultural household, with its livestock and its reliance on the fecundative renewal of nature at winter's end. As one might expect with any seasonal observance, a coinciding date in the Christian calendar and a suitable etiology can be superimposed on a pre-existing feast; so accordingly some the Armenian rites are closest to those of their Zoroastrian substrates, and the fire festival of February bears an obvious affinity to the holiday that survives as the modern Iranian *jašn-e ṣadeh*. Indeed, the

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[3] Hranuš Xaṙatyan-Aṙak'elyan, *Hay žołovrdakan tonerə* ("The folk festivals of the Armenians"), 2nd ed., Erevan: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, 2005, pp. 53-62.

[4] Cf. in particular the ritual cry, *Mort'ē zt'ot'ovn*, "*Flay the mumbler (goat?)": on the rite in general and testimonia from the late medieval Armenian community of L'vov in Galicia (Poland/Ukraine), see J.R. Russell, "The Praise of Porridge," *Le Muséon* 116.1-2, 2003, pp. 137-179.

Classical Armenian name of the holiday, *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ*, is shortened in some dialects to *Terəntez* and the like, perhaps partly under the influence of the unrelated but similar-sounding Iranian *Tīrandāz*. People light a bonfire outdoors from tapers brought from within the church and leap over it, crying out *meṙelēd*, "from your dying". (The name of the fire itself in various places has taken on various deformations of this word, such as *melemet*.) That is, the celebrants hope the fire will transfer its warmth and strength to them as they warm the earth itself in mid-winter and look forward to spring. But the ritual word may also have had reference at one time to the spirits of the departed, Clas. Arm. *meṙeloc'*. This is significant if in fact the *Švot* was the spirit of a great, departed ancestor, as is the case with the similar Russian house spirit, the *domovoi*. And in pre-Christian Armenia spirits that received the honorific *šahapet*, "ruler of a realm", had a particular chthonian connection— relevant to the otherworld and to the fertility of the earth.

But to return to the bonfire, as it begins to smolder, people take embers from the fire (or, as we have seen, candles kindled in church) and carry them home to their own hearths. Village Armenians believed that if they brought home the half-burned logs of the *Melemet* [fire], those would expel the *švot* from their homes— a process evidently completed with the *Švotahan*. In one Armenian village the night of the *Melemet* of *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ* was itself called Švot's night (*Švoti gišerə*), and *švot*s were believed then to enter the bellies of cats.[5]

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[5] *Hayoc' lezvi barbaṙayin baṙaran* ("Dialect dictionary of the Armenian language"), Vol. 4, Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 2007, p. 283 et seq., s.v. *švod*, *švotahan*, *švotamis*. Nowadays no study of folkloric belief is complete without a foray into the dark forests of the Internet; so, my virtual horse snorting nervously, my knuckles white on my digital lance, I rode into Google and found this entry at Mythbeasts.com: "Shvod, Mythical Number: #2991, Culture: Eastern European, Attribute: Humanoid, Attribute: Domestic, Attribute: Rural, Behaviour: Friendly. A household creature from old Armenian beliefs. They choose a family and inhabit their house over the Winter period. They protect the home and its property. However their real work is outdoors where during the summer they help tend the animals and crops. The Shvod tend to get very used to the warmth of the house during Winter, and so on the last day of February it is customary to use sticks and other soft tools to beat the interior walls of the house to disturb the Shvod. The frustrated creature then leaves the house to start work on the farm. Shvod has been viewed 31 times.
Give Shvod a rating. [I gave it a positive rating— JRR]

One may add here to the dossier some interesting data on the *Švot* that have hitherto not been adequately considered by scholars: we travel first to a little Armenian hamlet. The Western Armenian village of Datem (pronounced /Tadem/ by its people, whose descendants still call themselves Tademts‘is) belonged in antiquity to the Lesser Armenian principality of Sophene (Arm. Cop‘k‘) and the region of Anzitēnē (Arm. Hanjit‘).[6] Contiguous to Cappadocia, and, later, the Byzantine frontier regions, it was a place where Armenians rubbed shoulders with Greeks and with speakers of Aramaic, the Christian Assyrians. The genocidal murder of the Armenians in their ancient homeland by Ottoman Turkey in the First World War and the subsequent ethnic cleansing of Anatolia by the successor state, the Republic of Turkey, entirely obliterated Datem and the hundreds of other Armenian cities and towns of the region. Many of the Tademts‘i refugees and survivors settled, like those of nearby Xarberd (Tk. Harput) and its environs, in the industrial centers of New England, particularly in and around Boston, Massachusetts. But in the early 20th century there had been over 1450 Armenian inhabitants of Datem; attached to the church of St. Astuacacin (i.e., Theotokos, the Holy Mother of God) was a school where about a hundred pupils were enrolled. Nearby stood the principal monastery, Datemavank‘ (Arm. *vank‘*, “monastery”), which is reputed by local tradition to have been built by St. Thaddeus the Apostle (Thierry dates the present ruins to the 16th century); the church of St. Astuacacin has been dated to the seventh century or earlier.[7]

Though the still-flourishing village in the early years of the last century was fairly obscure, it had evidently been a place of greater importance in antiquity. The monastery

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Vote Recorded! [replied Mythbeasts.com to JRR]
(Shvod has been rated 0 stars) 5 Stars = I want Shvod as my pet! 4 Stars = Awesome. 3 Stars = Interesting. 2 Stars = Nothing special. 1 Star = Best left as a forgotten myth. [Poor Shvod! What is it with those other thirty viewers? — JRR]”

[6] *Hayastani ev harakic‘ šrǰanneri tełanunneri baṙaran* (“Dictionary of the toponyms of Armenia and adjacent regions”), Erevan , 1988, vol. 2, p. 47 gives the variants Datem, Dadim, Dadima, Datemaberd, Datim, Datma, T‘adem, and T‘atem.

[7] Michel Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères Arméniens*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1993, p. 24 no. 116, Datemavank‘ (variant T‘lkativank, Greek Dadima): there is a photograph in Parsegian, *Armenian Architecture* (photoarchive), vol. 6, no. 106.

was at one time the seat of a bishop; and the memorial volume (Arm. *yušamatean*) of the village asserts that Datemu [*vank'*] was one of the four great historical monasteries of Sophene, the other three being Zardarič('), Sorsəray, and Xulay.[8] George of Cyprus mentions, moreover, that Dadima, as the village was called in Greek, was the seat of a Metropolitan of the Greek church.[9] Though the site has not been excavated, Byzantine pottery and coins have been found at the fortress, Datemaberd, which towered over the village. To the west of it flowed the spring of St. Yovhannēs; and Greek inscriptions cover the ruined church of the same name. The church was a place of local pilgrimage; and Armenians, Turks, and Kurds believed the spring to possess curative powers. A six-to-seven-hundred-meter-high hill crowned by the ruins of the aforementioned Datemaberd (Arm. *berd*, "fortress") rose over the new town, which lay east of older ruins. The fortress itself was square in plan, with thirty-foot towers.[10]

Datem is of particular interest to students of Armenian ethnography and religion because of its traditions concerning the *Švot*, which the Tademts'is themselves would pronounce as /shəvód/. South of the small, domed shrine of the Forty Martyrs near the village, writes G. Mxit'arean (Mkhitarian), the compiler of the memorial volume of Datem, "was the so-called Švot hillock (*blrak*), about which innumerable tales are told.

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[8] G. Mxit'arean, ed., *Mer giwłə Datem* ("Our village Datem"), Boston: Hairenik, 1958, p. 24. Some two hundred *yušamateanner* ("memorial books") of the martyred provinces, cities, towns, and small villages of Western Armenia exist in print. Although the Armenian Genocide of 1895-1896 and 1915-1922 was unprecedented in the history of the ancient nation, indeed in human affairs, medieval Armenian literature, from long chronologies and histories to shorter colophons, is replete with narratives of loss and disaster. The genre of the *ołb*, or historical lament, is very old; and in the nineteenth century ethnographers developed methods, and founded numerous journals and monograph series, to record the many facets of a way of life already disappearing. So, like the Jewish *yizkōr bikher* "memorial books" (Yiddish) compiled in the wake of the pogroms after the First World War and the wholesale slughter of the Second, which draw upon the existing genres of lamentation, of ethnographic writing, and, not least, on *pinkasīm*— community ledgers— the Armenian books such as Mxit'arean's are both old and new. At my suggestion my pupil Christian Millian has begun work on a thesis on the *yušamatean* genre: this has not, to the best of my knowledge, been undertaken before, though at least one fully catalogued collection of the memorial books exists.

[9] Mxit'arean 1958, p. 25.

[10] Mxit'arean 1958, pp. 21-22.

There is a small spring there, about which it is said that if little children wish to bathe in its waters, they are pulled into the spring and cannot return. To the west of the Švot stone (*k'ar*) is the little expanse called Haramik, which is ringed by mountains. There are two springs there, and hillside lands that belonged in our day to P'ehlivan [i.e., "brave or strong man", from Persian *pahlavān*] Gōgo and to the priest, Fr. Gurgēn."[11] Another spring near Datem was Šōš, whose bitter, salty waters were used in medicine. Haramik is remembered as the name of a *marzpan* [i.e., MPers. *marzbān*, a provincial governor of Armenia in the mid-Sasanian period].[12] From the above references to bishops, metropolitans, and Sasanian satraps, as well as from the physical evidence of the fortress and the monastery and churches, it would seem Datem was a town of considerable importance in antiquity.

As to the name of Datem, the native Armenian folk etymological tradition derives it from a law court, *datastan*, reputed to have been there in olden days. The latter word is an Iranian loan and the tradition may be not far off the mark, if one considers a possible derivation from the fairly important and widespread Old Persian personal name *Dātama. There was an Achaemenid satrap of Cappadocia, known in Greek as Datamēs, in the early fourth century BC, who rebelled against the king and captured cities in Pontus on the Black Sea coast.[13] The pioneering scholar of Iranian onomastics Prof. Ferdinand Justi, writing in the late 19th century, mentioned another person with the same name (and a different Greek nominative ending), Datamas, who appears in the *Cyropaideia* of Xenophon (which also mentions an Armenian, Tigranes, as the bosom friend of Cyrus), and as an abbreviated attestation of the form cited the form DATAM in Greek on coins. He considered the name a possible abbreviation of *Dātamithra-, with OP. *dāta-*,

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[11] Mxit'arean 1958, p. 23. *Hayastani ev harakic' šrǰanneri tełanunneri baṙaran* ("Dictionary of toponyms of Armenia and contiguous regions") Vol. 4, p. 154, describes as abundant the spring that flowed from Švot, a hill (*blur*) below Datem.

[12] Mxit'arean 1958, p. 27. The name Haramik is not recorded in the dictionary of Armenian proper names of H. Ačaṙean. It would seem to be the common Arabic term for a sacred or forbidden enclosure, with Arm. diminutive suffix *-ik*, perhaps referring to the feared and respected *Švot* whose hillock stood nearby.

[13] David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, p. 183.

"created, given" or "law, judgment" and Mithra. The much more frequently and widely attested compound with these two elements in reverse order is of course Mithradāta- "created by Mithra", Gk. Mithridatēs, New Persian Mihrdād, Milād. Mithradates VI Eupator of Pontus, indisputably the most famous bearer of this very popular name, was the father-in-law of the Armenian Artaxiad king Tigran II the Great (95-56 BC). The name *Dātamithra- can be interpreted as "Mithra the Judge" or "Judged by Mithra".[14] Writing more recently, Prof. Manfred Mayrhofer, in agreement with Justi's analysis, considers OP. *Dātama, attested as Elamite Daddama, a shortening of Dātamithra and one of a number of such "zweistämmige Kosenamen".[15] If the name of Datem is not Iranian in origin, but still comes from a human proper name, it might be derived in part from an old Anatolian form containing the element Dada-: Zgusta cites, for instance, the personal names Dadas, Daddos, Dadeas, Dadeis, Dadē, Dadēs, and Dadōn. He notes also a Greek inscription from Athens that mentions one Dadatēs *Kappadōx* (i.e., the Cappadocian), which "est plutôt un nom indigene de la Cappadoce, avec peut-être l'adaptation à la terminaison des composés iraniens".[16] This is possible; but the name Dadatēs might also be an Iranian theophoric form with the element *dāta-* with a hypocoristic or haplological abbreviated form of the divine name *Dathusa*. In his *Letters*, from the 370's, St. Basil of Caesarea of Cappadocia describes the surviving Zoroastrian community of the *Magousaioi* and their beliefs and customs in his native land; and he mentions also the Cappadocian name of a month, *Dathousa*– this is Avestan *Dāθušō* "of the Creator (Ahura Mazda)" (modern Persian *Dai*). The names of the other old Cappadocian months, preserved in other sources, including several Armenian lists, are Zoroastrian, too. An Iranian derivation for Datem, with its element *dat-*, is more likely than the Old Anatolian forms, all of which have *dad-*, unless the Armenian is itself a deformation of another form, such as the name of the place as attested in Greek, Dadima. Without a telltale suffix that clearly indicates the name of a city's builder or ruler, such as the Middle Iranian *-kert* "built by" (the Parthians indeed had a Mithradātkart; and there

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[14] Ferdinand Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, p. 81.
[15] Manfred Mayrhofer, *Onomastica Persepolitana*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Kl. Sitzb. 286.1,Vienna, 1973, pp, 146, 284.
[16] Ladislav Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personennamen*, Prague: Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1964, *s.v.*, and p. 683.

was Armenian Tigranakert) or *-āpāt* "idem" (cf. Arm. Vałaršapat, "built by Vologases") or *-šat* "joy of" (cf. Arm. Artašat, "Joy of Artaxias"), one's proposed derivation of the name of the place from that of a man remains hypothetical. Datem was more than an obscure village in antiquity; so if it did bear a man's name, then he might have been a person of some wealth and importance, belonging to the local Iranian or iranized nobility. If that man was one of the several Achemenid individuals named Dātama— a name that, as I suggest, means something like "Mithra the Judge"— then the local legend about a court, *datastan* (again locally pronounced, of course, *tadastan*), might be more than a mixture of creative *Volksetymologie* and memory of Datem's past greatness. It might preserve a grain of historical truth.

In Datem, reports Mxit'arean, "*Melemēt* caused people great concern. They believed that during the days of Lent, the Evil spirit harassed people. All waited impatiently for this day. On the day of Melemēt, every woman, young bride, and girl threw the Švot's Hat (*švoti gtakə*) they had knitted into the fire to defeat (*xap'anelu*) evil. The women and brides, or girls who had attained adulthood, would stitch together multi-colored canvas bags they filled with a pinch of salt, a few grains of wheat, a little piece of garlic, and a pinch of mustard (*anux*, for standard Arm. *ananux*). They took this bag to the church and prayed there. The newly-wed couples, numbering ten or fifteen every year, also took to the church a bundle of kindling and piled it in a broad space. They all waited for the service to end. At its conclusion the priest came out in his robe (*šurǰaṙ*) surrounded by deacons and unordained ministers (*tirac'u*) with candles. They assembled on the steps of the church and then descended, candles lit, approaching the pile of kindling. A young man (*eritasard*), candle in hand, approached the priest, kissed his hand, lit his candle from the one the priest held, and waited near him. The priest recited a prayer of protection (*Pahpanič'*)[17] over the youth, who, kissing the Cross, went over to

[17] This prayer was most likely the fifteenth stanza of the *Hawatov xostovanim* "I confess in faith" of St. Nersēs Šnorhali (d. 1173), which was also employed in talismans: "Christ, protector of all, my your sheltering right hand be over me, by day and by night, when I sit at home, when I walk in the road, when I sleep and when I wake, that I may never be swayed. And have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, of multitudinous sins." See J.R. Russell, "The Credal Poem *Hawatov xostovanim* ("I confess in faith") of St. Nersēs

the pile of kindling and set fire to it. The priest then circled the bonfire thrice with the clerks, other followers, and the people. After this rite came the turn of the newly-weds. Each couple in turn, hand in hand, would circle the bonfire thrice. Before the performance of the circuit our grandmas waited with the Švot's Hats in hand— and when the priest upon recitation of his prayer of protection ordered the newly-weds to begin their perambulation about the bonfire, they all cast the hats into it, crying out and praying, 'Lord God, take away the Evil and bring the Good!' (*Tēr Astuac, Č'arə tanes ew Barin beres*). After this ritual a fearless youth kicked out the fire, wading right into it and scattering the embers about with his feet to break its power. Then all present began to kick at and scatter the burning sticks from all four sides and to pile into each other. Everyone tried to secure an ember to take home, in order to kindle a fire under his own roof to protect his home from the Evil one and from scorpions, and so that his chickens would lay eggs— in a word, so that Evil might be conquered and good things rain down on the home."[18]

Children playing too close to the spring that issued from Švot Hill were in danger of being kidnapped by the spirit; and adult Tademts'is, too, feared to look behind them on processions to the sacred shrines and springs on the edge of town, lest the *Švot* take them: "On the afternoon of Easter Saturday, people came out of church bearing candles: many wanted to go to S. Ōhannēs. The older women, taking the brides and girls with them, walked in pairs. The young men, also two by two, walked fifteen to twenty paces ahead, on condition that they not turn around. If anyone happened to look back, everybody to a man would cry out 'I have sinned, I have sinned' (*Meław, meław*), since they thought that the Evil one, the Švot, had nested in the boy's heart (*Švotə ayd tłun srtin mēǰ t'arac ēr*). They believed that the Švot was even worse than Lot's wife and the person who turned

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the Graceful," in J.J. van Ginkel et al., eds., *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta 134, Leuven, 2005, pp. 185-236. For the prayers by St. Grigor Narekac'i employed to protect the home against nocturnal assault by natural and supernatural creatures, see Appendix 7.

[18] Mxit'arean 1958, p. 34.

back would be transformed into stone, like the mountain Mnkalenc‘.[19] When they reached the church of S. Ōhannēs, the boys still remained twenty paces away. The women entered the church, prayed, and piously lit candles, taking flat stones in the meantime from the ground and securing the candles to them. If it happened that the flat stone adhered to another on which many candles had left drops of wax before, it was considered a sign that the pilgrimage had been acceptable and the desire of the candle’s owner would be fulfilled. The mother of a girl would immediately take a kerchief out of her pocket, cover the girl’s head with it, and all would proceed to the stream, saying ‘St. John, let the hair of your horse’s tail shake two drops of water into my ears and fill them’ (*Surb Ōhannēs, jiud poč‘in mazovə erku kat‘il ǰur lec‘ur akanǰis*). The lucky girl would then make the sign of the Cross over her face. Wetting the little finger (*čkoyt‘*) of her right hand she would sprinkle water on all the women and girls, conferring thanks…”[20] So at Datem the *Švot* was not only a house spirit, addressed with rites similar to those described by Hranuš Xaṙatyan, but the powerful, chthonic, tutelary spirit of a hillock with a spring

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[19] one recalls here the nymphs of Leto or daughters of Goethe’s *Erlkönig*!— enticed little children to their doom. And youths passing by in procession dared not look back at girls, lest the Švot entice and possess them. One recalls the lines of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge: “Like one, that on a lonesome road/ Doth walk in fear and dread,/ And having once turned round walks on,/ And turns no more his head;/ Because he knows, a frightful fiend/ Doth close behind him tread.” (On the exorcism of an Armenian-speaking spirit in Coleridge’s poem see J.R. Russell, “A Scholium on Coleridge and an Armenian Demon,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 10 (1998,1999 [2000]), pp. 63-71.)

[20] Mxit‘arean 1958, p. 36. St. John the Forerunner (Arm. *Surb Yovhannēs Karapet*) is here envisioned as a mounted warrior saint, like Sts. George, Sergius, and Theodore. The popularity and tenacity of this image in Armenian popular Christianity cannot be over-emphasized. The three traditional mounted warrior saints appear together, each spearing with a lance a prostrate enemy underfoot, in bas relief on the royal Arcrunid church of the Holy Cross on Ałt‘amar island in lake Van; and i June 2011, at a rare book shop in Erevan, Armenia, just below the Matenadaran on Maštoc‘ Avenue, this writer purchased holy images of the three mounted saints, with printed prayers on the back to two, Gevorg and Sargis, featured in a rack of postcards for tourists. On the Armenian talismanic scrolls employed to protect women in childbed from the attacks of Lilith, called Al or T‘pła, three mounted saints are shown pursuing the demoness. As for Karapet, he is an extremely popular figure in Armenian folk belief as the successor to the warlike champion of the pre-Christian pantheon, Vahagn (Avestan Vərəθraγna-, Persian Bahrām).

disappearing deep within the earth. And there, at the onset of spring, it put the young in mind of love— a true nature spirit of fertility.

And one may add to the material from Datem similar and striking testimony from the province of Dersim (Tk. Tunceli). Near the Armenian village of Artaberd[21] was *Švoti k'ar*, "Švot's Rock", a great, isolated boulder about 50 meters high. People believed the *Švot* would kidnap a child, hurl it from the top of its rock to die, descend to drink its blood, bury the body, let the flesh rot, and then dig it up again and eat it. In the village of Parti in the same region it was believed that the *p'ir* (lit. "elder", Pers. *pīr*; here an honorific for a revered tutelary spirit) of a sacred forest nearby had chased the *alk'*s and *Švot*s into a subterranean tunnel. The warm mineral waters gushing from thence were believed to have been warmed and flavored by the fires the confined spirits kindled for themselves.[22]

The origin of the word *Švot* itself is beyond reasonable dispute. Mardiros Ananikian and subsequent scholars accepted a derivation from Classical Armenian *šahapet*, a *genius loci*— spirit of place— whose name is of obvious, standard Middle Iranian derivation from the MIr. of the Arsacid era, **šahrpet*, i.e., "ruler of a realm". In the *Agathangelos*, fifth century, Tiridates the Great when interrogating St. Gregory the Illuminator asks ironically whether this Christ he preaches is some *šahapet gerezmanac'*, a tutelary ruling spirit of tombs; and in the high medieval period are mentioned *šahapetk' vayrac'*, that is, *šahapet*s of outdoor places— tilled field, vineyards, and the like. And Step'an Malxaseanc' lists the forms *šaharik*, *šaharuni*, *šaharac'i* as "forest dweller, a spirit of the forests, a *šahapet vayrac'*", recognizing that the term is a synonym of *šahapet* though unmarked by the element *-pet*, "lord, ruler" and cites (from Ačaṙean's entry on the term in the *Armenian Etymological Dictionary*, it would seem) a late

[21] Clearly an ancient name, with the suffix *-berd*, "fortress", appended to the truncated form of what could once have been a noble proper name of the Arsacid era or earlier such as Artašēs, Artawazd, Artawan, etc. with Olr. *Arta-* "Truth, Righteousness".
[22] See Gevorg Halaǰyan, *Dersimi hayeri azgagrut'yunə* ("The ethnography of the Armenians of Dersim"), *Hay azgagrut'yun ev banahyusut'yun* ("Armenian Ethnography and Folklore") 5, Erevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1973, pp. 43, 66.

mythological usage, *Kočʻecʻaw siluanos, or ē šaharacʻi, vasn zi i šahar ew i mayris snaw*, "He was called Silvanus, that is, *šaharacʻi*, since he was nurtured in the field (*šahar*) and in the forests." The various citations of Ačaṙean in his discussion of *šahapet* make it plain that the term meant "ruler of a *place*", whether of the fields (*vayracʻ*), orchards (*aygeacʻ*), or— in the earliest attestation, from Agathangelos— of tombs (*gerezmanacʻ*). He cites approvingly an Indic parallel adduced by Hübschmann, *kshetrapāla-*, "guardian of a field". But a derivation from OIr. **xšaθrapati-* is secure.

It might be noted that terms such as *šaharik* and *Švot* are not confined to ethnographical works but find their way into Armenian literature of the early 20th century: Armenians of this period were not the passive subjects of anthropological research but creators of high literary culture who reflected actively and creatively on their folk traditions and antiquities, fully possessing and assimilating them. The Western Armenian Symbolist poet Misakʻ Mecarencʻ (Medzarents) was born in 1886 in the remote village of Bingean on the Euphrates near Akn, a place where Armenians lived a life steeped in ancient tradition, almost untouched by Islam or Ottoman rule; he died at Constantinople in 1908. A connoisseur of his people's antiquities, he uses *šaharik* in a poem, perhaps the last breath, then, of the Classical *šahapet* in texts. (See Appendix 7.) The *švot* has a kind of literary afterlife-after-the-afterlife, too: Hmayeak Arameancʻ, a leader of the Hnčʻak party and author of *Veracnundi erkunkʻə* ("The birth pangs of renaissance"), wrote under the *nom de plume* M.T. Šwōt, as in *Krderə Tačkacʻ-Hayastanum (Azgagrakan niwtʻer)* ("The Kurds in Turkish Armenia, Ethnographical Materials"), St. Petersburg: *Puškinean tparan* (Pushkin Publishing House), 1905.

The earliest (and sole) attestation of the Iranian form from which Armenian *šahapet* was to derive comes from a trilingual inscription of the Achaemenian period from Xanthos in Asia Minor. In the Aramaic text Iranian-in-Aramaic *ḥštrpty*, that is, Iranian **xšathrapati-*, "ruler of a realm", is given as the equivalent of the divinity named Apollo in the Greek and Lycian parallel versions. The Greek inscription also mentions prominently Leto and her progeny. The latter has an association with graves and her

children are nymphs who live in springs; so the Iranian word might have been employed to focus on the chthonic associations of Apollo.

In an article on the inscription Prof. Martin Schwartz of Berkeley cites the discussion in my *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* of Arm. *šahapet* and makes a case for the Iranian word as an identification of a Median Nergal.[23] Even if *ḥštrpty* is to be considered pure Median, rather than a loan into Old Persian, which latter possibility is far more likely— not least when one considers that no documentary attestation of Median, not one inscription, is known to exist— there is no particular reason to suppose that this "*gemeiniranisch*" form, adopted like some other terms of rank by the Achaemenian Persians, either reflected or was intended to convey a specifically Median religious belief. Nor, indeed, would one expect an identifiably distinct Median presence to be asserted by the middle Achaemenian era amongst the Iranian nobility of Xanthos or elsewhere in central and western Anatolia, who hailed from diverse satrapies but served a Persian king. There is almost as little evidence of the religious beliefs and practices of the Medes as there is of their language: it is impossible for the time being to reconstruct these in any but the most hypothetical way. Though the Medes dwelt in continuous proximity to the older, greater civilizations of Assyria and central Mesopotamia, the few sources we have are silent about any Mesopotamian presence in the Median pantheon, whatever other stars there might have been in that mysterious constellation.

All this is not to say there cannot have been a Median Nergal; and Prof. Schwartz's surmise, steeped in both deep learning and an ingenious, intuitive grasp of all matters relating to Iranian and Near Eastern religious traditions, may well be right. But in his otherwise meticulous survey of the data he neglects to mention that there is, however, a very prominent *Armenian* Nergal. This is Tork' Angeł, i.e. Tarḫundas-Nergal.[24] In the fourth century AD, Shapur II sacked Armenian Arsacid tombs in the region of Angeł Tun

[23] Martin Schwartz, "Apollo and Khshathrapati, the Median Nergal, at Xanthos," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 19, Ann Arbor, MI, pp. 145-150.
[24] See J.R. Russell, "Polyphemos Armenios," *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 26, 1996-7, pp. 25-38.

(Gk. Ingilēnē), which bore the name of this being. He seems to have had chthonic associations, then, but Armenians did not identify him with Apollo. They saved that syncretistic association for Mithra, probably because of the common and prominent solar aspect of the Greek and Iranian divinities; and the Greek inscription identifying the cyclopean statue of Mithras on the great platform before the *hierothēsion* of Antiochus of Commagene on the heights of Nemrut Dagh calls the god Mithras-Apollo-Helios-Hermes. The Armenian Nergal is not referred to anywhere as a *šahapet*. Tork‘ Angeł is discussed by this writer at length in both *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (which Schwartz cites in connection with the word *šahapet*, as noted above) and in a few subsequent articles, particularly “Polyphemos Armenios”. But, like the *Švot*, he is imagined as a powerful giant with frightful features, hence Movsēs Xorenac‘i’s *Volksetymologie* from Arm. *an-geł*, “not beautiful”— and the Armenian *Patmahayr*, “Father of history”, adds that Tork‘ was known to heave, Cyclops-like, huge boulders at the ships of invaders. So in a way he was, also like the *Švot*, a protector of the home writ large.[25]

The prominent Iranist Prof. Garnik Asatrian of Erevan University, an authority also on Armenian and Kurdish folklore, rightly accepts the derivation of Arm. *švot* and Cappadocian Greek *sifōtēs*, which he defines as “a class of house spirits”, as well as Pers. *šifūt*, “a human-like demon; desert demon; mad, insane, maniac”, as loans from Syriac *šəbaṭ*, the name of the month of February, “traditionally considered to be the period of the highest activity of evil beings.” But Asatrian derives from **xšathrapati-*, with the semantic influence of the word for “night”, the second element of Kurdish *mērē šavē*, literally “the man of the night”, a naked giant who wanders the fields inflicting cattle-plague, who must be placated with sacrifices. He regards the latter as a demonized emanation of Mithra.[26] Armenian contains forms such as /shəhót/, /shəvét/ and /shwét/,

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[25] J.R. Russell, “Polyphemos Armenios,” *REArm* 26, 1996-7, pp. 25-38; and J.R. Russell, “*Tork‘* and *Tarhu,*” *Proceedings* of the Third International Conference on Armenian Linguistics, Erevan, 1987, published Erevan, 1993.

[26] G. Asatrian, “Šifūt,” *Etymological Dictionary of Persian*, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming. In conversation at Erevan, Armenia, June 2011, Prof. Asatrian ventured an alternative derivation from *čufūt*, a word for Jew often used pejoratively in Persian and Turkish, on analogy with Modern Greek *armenida*, a kind of demonic nymph, literally, and Armenian woman or girl. On the latter, and on Greek attitudes to Armenians in the Byzantine

preserving both and unstressed form of /shah/ in the first half of the compound and the -e- of /pet/ in the second half: a direct derivation from /shahapet/ is admittedly difficult, but possible. Armenian compounds in *-pet* "ruler, master" are, as one might expect, a rather dignified assemblage in which the sacerdotal Grigorid *k'ahanayapet*, "chief priest", rubs shoulders with the aristocratic Mamikonean *sparapet* "commander in chief" under the benevolent gaze of St. John the Forerunner, Yovhannēs *Karapet*— who, as we have seen, is both a sacred and a martial figure in Armenian folk belief.

Radical abbreviation and deformation of divine names subjected in folk belief to demonization is a very common phenomenon generally. Arm. *sandaramet*, for instance, is one of two loaned forms of the name Spəntā Ārmaitī, "Holy Devotion", the one of the heptad of Aməša Spəntas, "Holy Immortals", who presides over Mother Earth: *sandarametk'*, used only as a plural, becomes "the subterranean regions", then hell; and *sondark'*, a class of demons bearing the truncated name of the former goddess, swarm out of the demonic hollows of her realm. The Cappadocian month-name *sondara* echoes the Armenian abbreviation; while in modern Persian the same month is now *Esfand*, with poor Ārmaitī gone altogether. The imprisoned king Artawazd was likened to another Ašxadar, whose name sounded perhaps similar, then becoming *šidar*, a class of chthonian demons— the process of the shortening of the form assisted by analogy to— and contamination by— a Syriac word meaning "insane". As we shall see presently, both *šidar* and *sandaramet* appear together, indeed, in a passage from the *Letters* of Grigor

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period, see J.R. Russell, "A Scholium on Coleridge and an Armenian Demon," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 10 (1998,1999 [2000]), pp. 63-71. But the connection with Jews was considered and rejected long ago by Ačaṙean and is not original. The most recent writer on the linguistic aspect of the question is Hrach K. Martirosyan, *Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Inherited Lexicon*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010, pp. 778-779, who cites H. Ačaṙean's mention of the dialect of Hačən (Hajin) in which Candlemas is called *šved*, i.e., *švot*; and he accepts Ačaṙean's derivation of the latter from "February, the month of freedom from devils, the demon of February", while rejecting folk Terndaz as a corruption or reinterpretation of [the canonical name of Candlemas,] *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ* [i.e., "before the Lord", i.e., the Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple— JRR], and accepting instead a connection to Iranian Tīrandāz. [The latter term means "Shooting an arrow" and would thus refer, in Martirosyan's view, to the hunter Orion— JRR.]

Magistros Pahlawuni, an erudite and prolix writer with a taste for rare and antique words and names, with a word containing *šuayt*, which may it turn derive from *švot*.

It is likely that the month-name *šəbaṭ* among the Aramaic-speaking neighbors of northwestern Iranians and Armenians colored the transformation of *šahapet* to both the Armenian *švot* with its variant forms and northwestern Iranian *šifūt*. The word *Švot*, by which the house spirit was renamed— after February, because of the rites associated with it in that month— might have seemed acceptable to the Armenian ear as an abbreviated form of the old and honorific term *šahapet*, irrespective of its etymological and semantic difference; and certainly it was a being that inspired both respect and, sometimes, fearful unease. And the name is associated with the titanic, dangerous tutelary demons of both desolate rocky heights and murky chthonic depths. It surely meant much more than a house spirit who became frisky with the onset of spring and had to be driven out to work off his energy on the farm. The name evidently embraced whatever numina the *šahapet* once had described, benevolent and demonic, disturbingly violent and erotically fecundative.

There is another lexical item in Armenian of relevance to this investigation, particularly since it highlights the association of the *Švot*— or at least the most prominent type of spirit so designated— with the rites of spring and their passions, so prominent to its role and its very name. Zaven Xaṙatyan (see App. 1) suggested on ethnographic grounds a connection of *švot* to Arm. *švayt* (Clas. Arm. *šuayt*), "*lascivius*, rowdy, lewd"— a word that well describes the revels of *Barekendan* in Armenia, *šbāṭ al-labbāṭ* "February the kicker" in the Lebanon (an idiom for which I am indebted to Prof. K. el-Rouayheb of Harvard), the madness of England's March hares a few weeks later and farther north, or, as we shall see presently, the misbehavior of Russian *domovye* on the feast of St. John Climacus in April, northwards still. The word *švayt,* with its various derivatives (an inchoative verb in *-anam* for gluttony, an adjective in *-akan*), is of medieval attestation, found earliest in the sermons attributed to Catholicos Yovhannēs Mandakuni (5th cent.) but more likely three centuries newer; and Yovhannēs Catholicos uses it of the notorious Semiramis, Arm. Šamiram, whose lust brought the death of the

Armenian king Ara the Beautiful.[27] I would propose a linguistic approach: the word could, given its relatively late appearance in the Clas. Arm. lexicon, conceivably be an Arabic loan, a diminutive of the month-name pronounced /Šəwaṭ/, so **šuayṭ*, hence late Clas. Arm. *šuayt*, Mod. Arm. *švayt*, though the Arabic dictionaries make no mention of such a word, which could have been wholly colloquial or localized to the Syro-Armenian regions.[28] But the formation of such a diminutive form is universal in Arabic, cf. the common name Ḥusayn, lit. "little Ḥasan", or *umaylaḥ* "cutie" (from *malīḥ*, "salty", cf., Arm. *ałēk* "nice, cute", lit. "little salty").[29] Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni, in his *T'ułt'k'* (*Letters*), No. 22, p. 67, uses the word in a passage brimming with darkly sonorous demonological and chthonian imagery: *... Asem ziard krkin matneac' Tēr ztuns Mamikonean i jeŕs nora? Ew aha karcis kaskacanac' mez ełeal yAštišatay dic' diwc'aznakan diwakan yarjakman, guc'ē sandarametakanin xzeal kapanac', kam et'ē iłjk' kiwsoy hmayic' diwt'ut'ean: ibrew aŕ i šawłovn yaruc'anen zSamuēl, kam* ***šuaytakan*** *šidarac'n šars šamandałeal šohanan i veray mer*. "... Shall I relate how once more the Lord handed over to him again this Mamikonean house? And here you might think us to have suspected a demonic assault of the hero gods of Aštišat, as though they had severed the bonds of the infernal one,[30] or perhaps the witchcraft of magic sorceries, as when in

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[27] See J.R. Russell, "The Platonic Myth of Er, Ara, and Arda Viraz,"*Revue des Études Arméniennes* 18, 1984, pp. 477-485.

[28] One recalls that users and speakers of Syriac lived in proximity to— and often shared households with— Armenians down to modern times at Xarberd, Diyarbekir (Tigranakert), and many other centers of Armenian population. See J.R. Russell, "On Armeno-Iranian Interaction in the Medieval Period," in R. Gyselen, ed., *Au carrefour des réligions. Mélanges offerts a Philippe Gignoux. Res Orientales*, Vol. VII, 1994, p. 235 n. 1 on the WArm. name Xač'ig attested in medieval Syriac script; and J.R. Russell, "The Armenians, the Holy Cross, and Dionysius Bar Salibi," *St. Nersess Theological Review* 8, 2004, pp. 1-12. From the time of the conquests of the seventh century Armenians were in constant contact also with speakers of Arabic.

[29] For the second Arabic example I am indebted to my colleague, Prof. Khaled el-Rouayheb (in conversation, June 2013; his own surname is a diminutive of the same form of a word for a Christian priest). For Arm. *ałēay* "salty" in the sense of "cute" translated with corresponding Arabic *malīḥ*, see J.R. Russell, "On an Armenian Word List from the Cairo Geniza," *Iran and the Caucasus* 17 (2013), pp. 195, 197.

[30] Arm. *sandarametakan*, "belonging to *sandaramet*", i.e., Hades. The term derives from a SWMIr. form of the name of the Zoroastrian *Aməša Spənta*, or Holy Immortal creative divinity of the earth, Avestan *Spəntā Ārmaitī*, "Holy Devotion", MPers. Spandārmad, NPers. Esfand. When the army of Trdat, following St. Gregory, attacked the temple of

the days of Saul they raise up Samuel,[31] or shadowy ranks of **lascivious** imprisoned demons[32] imperiously advancing upon us."

Let us descend into these infernal regions to visit a pair of demonized Iranian gods with rhyming names whose myth is related to that of another pair, also rhyming, this time of Egyptian magicians with another well— and Armenian Christian exegesis was to associate the Pharaonic pair with the *Švot*. Wells are a way into the subterranean realm of Hades/*Sandaramet* and the submarine lair of the dragon, the *višap*— they deep, dark, and dangerous, with a tinge of the magical and the apocalyptic. For Zoroastrians, though, the well represents the power of the Waters (Pers. *Ābān*, Parsi Zoroastrian *Ava*), whose creator-guardian is the Aməša Spənta ("Holy Immortal") Haurvatāṯ ("Wholeness, Health"). This being is paired with the related (and rhyming) Aməša Spənta of the plants, Amərətāṯ ("Immortality"); so Pers. Xordād/Amurdād and Arm. *xorot-morot*. In Arm. the latter is the name of a flower that is placed in a pot of water on the eve of the Christian festival of the Ascension and is used magically, for divination about love and marriage. In Mumbai (Bombay) many Parsis visit the sacred Bhikha Behram well and offer a net made of flowers to the waters. Each of the thirty days of the Zoroastrian month bears the name of a divinity, as do the twelve months— the Mazdean calendar has no division of the month into weeks— and the sea shore and well are favored sites of pilgrimage on the day whose name coincides with the name of the month of the waters (Parsi Guj. *Avanu parab*: i.e., *Ava mahino Ava roj*). It is customary there to recite either the long hymn to the goddess Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā ("The Damp, Powerful, Unblemished one", who is

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Vahagn at Aštišat, the "demons" fought back to preserve their sanctuary. After the sacking of the place and the consecration of a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, some demons were sealed up beneath a chapel called the *diwtun*, "house of the demons"; and the *kał dew*, "lame demon", was condemned, Sisyphus-like, to empty ash daily into the river Aracani till his efforts dam its flow.

[31] The episode in which the king of Israel consulted the witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28.3-25.

[32] The class of demons called *šidar(k')* is associated with the imprisoned king Artawazd, who is to burst his bonds at the end of days: see discussion *supra*. Grigor Magistros, in addition to choosing just the right demons— the confined sort— also constructs a series of alliterations in *š-*, employing a conceit of ancient Armenian poetry and later folk poetry that was appropriated also by Christian hymnographers; see Appendix 7.

associated with the waters, childbirth, and fertility; in Armenian, Anahit), the Ābān *yašt*, or the Ābān *niyāyišn*, a litany to the same divinity (Parsi Guj. *Ava yasht*, *Ava niyayesh*).[33] According to Qazvīnī (*Athār al-bilād* 2.202), the Jews and Christians at Babil (Babylon, i.e., Seleucia-Ctesiphon) held festivals during the year at a well named after the prophet Daniel. (This was perhaps an association with his confinement in the lions' den; cf. the association of the latter with the well-like pit at Artašat, Xor Virap, where the patron saint of the Armenians, Gregory the Illuminator, languished for fifteen years.) The Muslim historian adds that this was called also the well of Hārūt and Mārūt.[34]

The *Qur'ān* mentions the two as demons, imprisoned in a well in Babel. They are permitted to teach magic to interested visitors, but only after warning the latter that what they are about to hear is untrue. Zoroastrianism was associated in the minds of ancient Greeks and Muslims alike with magic; so perhaps the Koranic passages merely demonize a well that was sacred to the two divinities.[35] However there is also a Jewish tradition, older in its origin than the Islamic one but developed through the medieval period, that has two fallen angels, Šemḥazai or 'Azza, and 'Azzael (note again their rhyming names), confined and chained in a (presumably dry) well in the Mountains of Darkness beyond the river Sambatyon, the latter so named because it rests from casting up stones only on the Sabbath (Heb. and Arm. *šab(b)at (')*, Aram. *šambat*). A traveler desirous of meeting

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[33] See Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis speak about their religion*, Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon, 2001, pp. 23, 73, 296.

[34] Cited by Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 432 n. 3. Frescoes depicting a pair of magi or magicians bearing staffs flank the central niche for the cult statue of the tauroctony in the third-century Mithraeum of Dura Europos. They are not named in inscriptions; and for no particularly convincing reason previous scholars have identified them as Zoroaster and Ostanes. It is interesting and suggestive in the present context, at least, that they are an identical pair. Perhaps their names rhymed, like those of Cautes and Cautopates.

[35] In the spirit of oppositionalism that structures the Zoroastrian world view, Haurvatāṯ and Amərətāṯ already seem to have rhyming demonic opponents in the villains Teresh and Zeresh (personifications, in Iranian, of *Tairičā* and *Zairičā*, Drought and Jaundice), who appear in the Biblical Book of Esther, a text steeped in Iranian lore and associated with the rowdy early spring feast of Purim (see J.R. Russell, "Zoroastrian Elements in the Book of Esther," in S. Shaked and A. Netzer, eds., *Irano-Judaica II*, Jerusalem: Makhon Ben-Zvi, 1990, pp. 33-40).

the two fallen angels is to agitate the chain, at which point a cat-like monster, the *unimata*, comes to inquire as to the purpose of his visit. If he replies that he wishes to learn magic, he is admitted and instructed for fifty days.[36] Magicians, enchanted lairs, clanking chains: it is an entrancing *topos*, and we find an echo in the evocation by Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) of the British mage Merlin in *The Faerie Queene*.[37]

There is a second rhyming pair of magicians in Jewish and Christian tradition, Jannes and Jambres: Egyptian brothers, invented as a kind of double foil to Moses and Aaron (since Exodus does not name the rival magicians at court). It was they who instructed Moses himself in the black art at the behest of the princess who had adopted him, yet he defeated his tutors in a contest at the court of Pharaoh. The latter legend is known in Armenian tradition (see Appendix 2). The *Penitence* of Cyprian of Antioch mentions Jannes and Jambres as well. The third-century Antiochene wizard ruefully acknowledges that the two Egyptians respected at least the finger of God; but he, who has not acknowledged it, deserves a fate worse than theirs. This text is the core of a small book of prayers, the *Kiprianos*, employed talismanically by Armenians; in Western

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[36] See J.R. Russell, "Hārūt and Mārūt: The Armenian Zoroastrian Demonic Twins in the *Qur'ān* Who Invented Fiction," *Festschrift Vladimir Aronovich Livshits*, ed. Pavel Lurje, forthcoming 2013.

[37] *The Faerie Queene*, Book 3, Canto 3.8-9: Merlin entered the Glass House of Bardsey with the Nine Bards and the thirteen treasures of Britain; or went to the edifice Esplumeor he had built, and vanished. Or the water-fairy Nimiane or Viviane lured him to imprisonment for eternity in a tomb of rock, where he forces demons to build for him a brazen wall. "And if thou euer happen that same way/ to travell, goe to see that dreadfull place: it is an hideous hollow caue (they say)/ Vnder a rocke that lyes a little space/ From the swift Barry, tumbling downe apace,/ Emongst the woodie hilles of Dyneuowre:/ but dare thou not, I charge, in any case,/ to enter into that same balefull Bowre,/ for fear the cruell Feends should thee vnawares deouwre./ But standing high aloft, low lay thine care,/ and there such ghastly noise of yron chaines,/ and brasen Cauldrons thou shalt rombling heare,/ which thousand Sprights with long enduring paines/ doe tosse, that it will stoune thy feeble braines,/ and oftentimes great groves, and grievous stounds,/ when too huge toile and labour them constraines:/ and oftentimes loud strokes, and ringing sounds/ from vnder that deepe Rocke most horribly rebounds." See also E.M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948, pp. 107-109. This passage is certainly a foreshadowing of the poetic vision of Kubla Khan by Coleridge

magic it was employed till recent times as a manual of the black art.[38] The two magicians are extra-Biblical, but the story is old; for the Damascus Document reflects an early stratum of the tradition, and it is often suggested that Artapanus, a Jewish author of the Hellenistic period (and the bearer of an Iranian name prominent in the Arsacid house), is the ultimate source of it.

The story of Jannes and Jambres entered Christian lore: the fourth-century *Lausiac History* of Palladius and the *Life* of the Egyptian saint Macarius contain somewhat different versions of the Christian hermit's journey to the *kēpotaphion* "garden-tomb" or *paradeisos* "paradise, enclosed garden" constructed by the two. It is an antitype of Eden, watered by three springs, with huge fruit-bearing trees, its gates guarded not by an angel but by a throng of lewd demons. Eden was where Adam and Eve married; in their *herkos ponēron*, or "evil enclosure", Jannes and Jambres in suitable contrast pondered the benefits of adultery. But to return to Macarius, the monk after gaining admittance to the place finds the magicians are long dead. He sees there a wilted pomegranate, a well, and a rusted chain (see Appendix 3; for the Armenian version, which mentions neither well nor chain, see Appendix 4). Though the Egyptian sorcerers are not confined but dead, the latter two details still recall the developed myth of Hārūt and Mārūt, or of 'Azza and 'Azzael in their pit with their chain and feline familiar; and Albert Pietersma has suggested that the Koranic myth might have developed on the basis of the story of Jannes and Jambres.[39]

Two variants of the *Universal History* of Vardan, 13th century (see Appendix 5), and the strongly derivative *History* of Mxit'ar of Ayrivank' expand upon the tradition, adding the significant local, Armenian, detail of interest to our study: Jannes and Jambres drove the children of Israel into the desert, where over fifteen years they built the *draxt*

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[38] See Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 114 f.

[39] Albert Pietersma, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, p. 35. See also A. Pietersma and R.T. Lutz, tr. and intro., *Jannes and Jambres*, in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985, pp. 427-442.

(*paradeisos*). The two then sacrificed hundreds of boys to the demons (*dewk‘*), most of whom then became obedient to sorcerers (*kaxardk‘*). More boys were sacrificed to propitiate the rest; and the demons were then appointed to guard the place. However, the text adds, the demons are still disobedient in the month whose name is variously rendered as *šuat*, *šabat‘*, and *šwōt* (no equivalent Armenian or Latin month name is given). The first form is a faithful rendering of February as it was pronounced in Aramaic. The second, Mxit‘ar’s, seems a *lectio facilior*;[40] but the third reproduces the name exactly as we find it as the modern name of the Armenian spirit. The remark concluding the pericope suggests Vardan was perhaps attempting on the basis of learned apocryphal tradition to explain why the spirit or demon of Armenian folk belief misbehaves during one month of the year but is obedient for the rest: maybe the demons required still more sacrifices but did not get them! The problem of theodicy, after all, is that evil exists; but for the wicked the parallel (and practical) problem of theology, one might suggest, is that the forces of evil are not wholly under their control.

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[40] This author used Vardan Arewelc‘i as the principal source here: see Ē.H. Harut‘yunyan, *Mxit‘ar Ayrivanec‘i, kyank‘n u stełcagorcut‘yunə* (“Mxit‘ar Ayrivanec‘i, his life and work”), Erevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1985, p. 9. His additions seem attempts to rationalize the text in front of him, so a reading of an obscure Aramaic month-name as a commoner word, though the name of a day of the week, seems the sober suggestion. Mxit‘ar wrote a *Ganj bun barekendanin*, a hymn for the eve of the great Lenten fast, though (Ł. Ališan, *Ayrarat*, Venice, 1890, pp. 350-351) and so must have known of the folk rites of this Armenian Mardi Gras, including perhaps those involving the expulsion of the *Švot*. A possible known and intended connection to the river Sambatyon, in the myth of ‘Azza and ‘Azzael, is still, then, enticing; and one recalls that Armenians knew well the Aramaic form, *Šambat‘*, of the name they used for Saturday, *Šabat‘* (Sunday is *Kiraki*, from Gk. *Kyriakē (hēmera)*, “the Lord’s (day)”. In the West, witches are said to celebrate a Sabbat or Esbat— but unless Crusaders passing through Cilicia mentioned the superstition, which developed as a demonization of Jewish observance, it is unlikely Armenians knew of it. One tradition cited by Pietersma, p. 18, makes Jannes and Jambres the sons of Balaam and the princes of Midian. It will be of interest to some readers that in Clive Barker’s novel *Cabal*, Midian is the name given to a subterrene realm of outcasts, witches, and monsters ruled by Baphomet, the idol of medieval legend. But this Midian is in the New World, just outside Calgary. And the perspective is correspondingly enlightemned, too, for its denizens are the heroes and the police, clergymen, and psychiatrists of the upper world are the true monsters.

Armenians retained a lively and creative interest in the two Egyptian magicians: a poem, the earliest known manuscript of which is dated to the beginning of the 18th century, makes the claim that they planted tobacco in the Garden— though it is not clear which one, Eden or their antitype of it (see Appendix 6). The deadly weed is American in origin, but that did not deter the bold latter-day mythographer. The reason for this identification may be rooted in a detail of the legend that is not, however, attested to my knowledge in a known Armenian source: Jannes summoned the wise men of Egypt to see the quick-growing and abundant foliage of his "paradise".[41] One thinks of the huge leaves and rapid growth of the tobacco plant, as well as, of course, its addictive and other deleterious properties. Or Armenians perhaps imagined the anti-*draxt* rather as the garden of Attalus, a luxuriant place of poisonous weeds, that was in later centuries and an ocean away to inspire the tale about Rapaccini's daughter. And one of the demons interrogated in the *Testament of Solomon* (25.2-4) boasts, "I, king Solomon, am called Abezethibou... I was present at the time when Moses appeared before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, hardening his heart. I am the one whom Jannes and Jambres, those who opposed Moses in Egypt, called to their aid. I am the adversary of Moses in [performing] wonders and signs." This text, with its helpful list of all seventy demons, their purposes, and their conjurations, has served as the basis for illustrated Armenian magical books— another source, then, for continuing interest in the Egyptian sorcerers.[42] One should add that Paradise was of enduring interest to Armenians since it was somewhere in (or above) the country: we have seen how Macarius visited the anti-*draxt*, but Armenian monks saw Eden from a distance and described it to St. Nersēs Šnorhali ("the Graceful", d. 1173). MS 285 of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 15th century, a richly illuminated Armenian text of the *Lives* of the desert fathers, includes a picture of the scene, as well as legends of St.

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[41] See Pietersma 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

[42] Cit. by James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 506. On *Test. Sol.* in Armenian magical literature see J.R. Russell, "Language of demons, language of men," in publication, *Festschrift Michael Stone*, ed. Theo Van Lint, [2013]; on Solomon and the demons in a recent Armenian magical manuscript see J.R. Russell, "An Armenian magico-medical manuscript (*Bzhshkaran*) in the NAASR Collection," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 20, 2011, p. 124.

Macarius.[43] Armenian MSS of the Baptism of Christ often depict the shattering tablet of the Cheirograph of Adam and a little demon in the Jordan beneath the feet of our Lord—perhaps the former is none other than the helper of Jannes and Jambres![44]

The essay by Xaṙatyan cited and translated here provides very wide comparativist data, whereas much of my own research has been limited to the specific dossier of Armenia and the Iranian and Biblical material of relevance to Armenian Christian origins. But since all happy families are happy in the same way, as a certain writer observed in another context, I would offer finally a few points of reflection on the Russian *domovoi* or house spirit. It has some strikingly particular similarities to the Armenian *švot*. There is an association with the otherworld of the dead, since it is considered to be the ghost of a respected or primordial ancestor; cf. Christ called by Trdat a *šahapet* of tombs (with St. Gregory's clever assent) in Agathangelos, and the divine being designated as *xšaθrapati* and linked to the underworld, of ancient Iran. Indeed one of the Russian spirit's principal designations is *navnoi*, from *nav'*, a term for the afterlife. And because the dead ancestor was a prominent man, the spirit is also given honorific titles: *khozyayin*, "chief"; *bol'shak*, "big one"; *gosudar'*, "sovereign", etc.; cf. the title *šahapet*, the title in ancient Iranian usage of a divinity. The *domovoi* can appear in various forms: as a man covered with shaggy fur, as a member of the family, even as a pig riding a horse in circles. But he is not titanic in stature.[45] There is a vast corpus of

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[43] See Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers*, CSCO 566, Leuven: Peeters, 1997, pp. 81-90 and fig. 7. The present study was presented at a Workshop on Armenian folklore and mythology at Cambridge, MA on 31 August and 1 September 2013 co-sponsored by this writer (Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies, Harvard), the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes, and the Society for Armenian Studies. Nira Stone passed away late in June and the meeting by unanimous agreement of the organizing committee was dedicated to her memory.

[44] The authority on this subject is also the lifelong partner of Dr. Nira Stone and great Armenologist and founder of the AIEA, Prof. Michael E. Stone of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel: see his *Adam's Contract with Satan: The Legend of the Cheirograph of Adam*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002 (reviewed with a view to the folkloristic aspect of the myth by this writer in the *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, Boston, Summer 2003, pp. 309-312).

[45] This might suggest that there was no substrate in which the *domovoi* was divinized. From the Irano-Greek gods on their throne at Nemrut Dagh in Commagene to the

stories and beliefs about him.[46] He dwells in the *pech'*, the hearth, at the very center of the home. The *domovoi* is in general a benevolent spirit, though, its principal concern the wealth and well being of the household, especially the livestock; and here one perceives a similarity to the agricultural concerns of the Armenian *Švot*. Its name day is the feast of St. Ephrem the Syrian (Rus. *Efrem Sirin*), 7 Feb. O.S.— that is, roughly the time of Lupercalia, Candlemas, and Arm. *Teaṙnəndaṙaǰ*; and "it is precisely in February that unclean spirits who have forced their way out of the lower world carouse freely" (*imenno v fevrale svobodno razgulivayut vyrvavshiesya iz nizhnego mira nechistye dukhi*). So the name day fixed period when the disruptive, procreative energy of nature is associated with the spirit, though its own misbehavior comes later, with the later springtime of the Russian land. On 5 April O.S., the feast of St. John Climacus (Rus. *Ioann Lestvichnik*), *domovye* do not recognize their own, act up, and annoy the animals: people speculate that the spirit feels the sap of the northern spring and wants to bed a witch (*ved'ma*).[47]

The comparison of the Armenian and Russian phenomena does not suggest (and is not intended to imply) a genetic connection, even though the two peoples practice an eastern type of Christianity, both belong to old and fairly close branches of the Indo-European tree, and for many centuries they have been culturally and politically close. Their similarity seems, rather, to be functional; and these functions afford a point at which to conclude, since they are likewise diverse, likewise determined by intricate links to both space and time. The Armenian spirit likewise has a connection to the otherworld, is greatly respected, and dwells in the house but also has an important role to play outside its walls. This function has to do with procreation— hence the association with the mischief of February— and with agricultural fertility— hence the ritualized transition of the *Švot* to the outdoors in the same month. The spirit has, thus, multiple functions as a *genius loci* and a *Zeitgeist*, a spirit of place and a spirit of time. The adoption by Armenians of the name *Švot*, with its fortuitous resemblance to the term *šahapet*, an

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monolithic *moai* of the royal ancestors on the *ahu*s of Rapa Nui (Easter Island), the gods are always *big*.

[46] T.A. Novichkova, *Russkii demonologicheskii slovar'*, St. Petersburg, 1993, p. 130 f.

[47] See A.V. Nikitina, *Russkaya demonologiya* ("Russian demonology"), St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg University Press, 2006, pp. 13, 14 n. 3, 15, 25-26, 34.

epithet used, it would seem, of a variety of tutelary nature spirits, chthonian deities, and divinized ancestors of titanic stature inspiring both pious affection and noumenous dread, might have begun to gain a footing as early as the eighth century, if the explanation of *šuayt* proposed here prove to be correct. But the texts of Vardan Arewelc‘i and Mxit‘ar Ayrivanec‘i from the thirteenth century, examined here for the first time I believe with regard to this problem, push back the first *testimonia* for the *Švot* six centuries before the ethnographical data compiled in pre-Genocide Armenia. The *Švot* of recent times is usually a house spirit with its February frolics, but, as we have seen, could be also a dangerous supernatural being inhabiting a rock or stream— the word still covering the range, then, of the *šahapet* of old.

This documentation would suggest that one reason for the eclipse or diminution (literally and figuratively, with the truncation of the word) of the term *šahapet* and the rise to general usage of *Švot* might have been the association of the spirit overwhelmingly with the folk rites sanctioned by the Christian church in connection with the feasts of the Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple (*Teaŕnəndaŕaǰ*) and Shrove Tuesday (*Bun Barekendan*). And this would have happened at a time when the rich mythology of the Christian faith had finally and fully taken root in Armenia and captured the popular imagination: Jannes and Jambres, their busy demons, and eventually, even their enjoyable smoke weed. But for all that, behind the *Švot* and its vernal revels looms the earlier *šahapet*, master of the realm, the family hearth, the warm stables, the fields and pastures, outward and into the past, of the formative Achaemenian and Arsacid epochs and the immemorial ages of an Armenian antiquity that, like its powerful and unquiet spirits, endures in its folk lore and folk life.

APPENDICES.

1. An ethnographical study of the *Švot*. Zaven V. Xaŕatyan, *Paštamunk‘ayin motivnerə Hayoc‘ əntanekan cisakargum* (“Ritual motifs in Armenian family ceremonies”), *Hay azgagrut‘yun ev banahyusut‘yun: nyut‘er ev usumnasirut‘yunner* (“Armenian

ethnography and folklore: materials and studies") 17, Erevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1989, p. 44 f.:

"... The idea of a house spirit was embodied in all the objects and members of the family that to a greater or lesser extent were connected with the family's wellbeing; but for all that did not have a defined, strictly fixed personification. We may add also that the Armenians had the custom of selecting for the role of protector of the family, aside from the house spirits mentioned, one or another Christian saint. This attests to the rootedness in tradition of the idea of a patron or protector of the house and the family.

According to the conceptions of the Armenians, there existed also a certain demon who was capable of bringing harm to the family's affairs. According to the report of G. Bunatov, this spirit '... is active only at the beginning of March and is called *švod*. He, like all spirits, can take any sort of appearance. The *švod,* in order to sneak into dwellings, takes the form of a cat, enters the house without any obstacle, and brings in frost with it. The day particularly favored by the *švod* is the first of March: for this reason, peasants open the doors wide on that day and beat all the corners and walls of the house with sheepskins and switches, repeating *Švod durs, mard ners* ("*Švod* go away; man, come in" [i.e., understood as Arm. mard "man", not mart "March"— JRR]). After this, they draw lines around the corners and around the pillars, and put a plate of iron at the doors, so that the *švod* may not enter the room. In this way the *švod*, denied admission to the dwelling, wanders through the fields. Usually it is known to the *švod* who is absent and from the house of what family, so at night he assumes the form of the absent relative and asks in that one's voice that they open the doors. Through deceit he then compels the one who opened the doors to him to wander together with him through the fields till dawn. For this reason on the first of March all members of the family must be gathered at home so the *švod* is unable to trick anybody. The Armenians also call frost and the month of February *švod*.' [N. 59: G. Bunatov, *Iz poverii, predrassudkov, i narodnykh primet armyan Echmiadzinskogo uezda* ("Some of the beliefs, prejudices, and folk superstitions of the Armenians of the Echmiadzin district"), *Sbornik materialov dlya opisaniya*

mestnostei i plemën Kavkaza (“Collection of materials for a description of the localities and tribes of the Caucasus”), Vol. 17, Tiflis, 1893, p. 117.]

The people of Nor Bayazet called this spirit *švot*. Here they described it as ‘... a spirit thin and tall, clothed in a white shirt. Unlike Satan, he is not immortal, but he is born and does multiply. He is not an opponent of God, but, rather, prays to Him. In the winter he dwells in houses; and in the summer, he goes to the tilled plots and fields. In February his blood warms, and he bewitches people with erotic dream-visions. In [p. 45] February cats start to meow, because they can see the *švot*, who comes in and out of the house. The inhabitants chase out the *švot* with calfskins, saying *Švot durs, mart ners* (“*Švot* out; March, come in!”) [N. 60: E. Lalayean, *Nor Bayazet*, *Azgagrakan Handēs* (“Ethnographic Journal”), No. 17, p. 107.]

In Muš it was believed that ‘*švot*s live in groups and appear in the month of *švat* (Arabic *šubat*, ‘February’); on the evening of the last day of this month people draw a line around the *erdik‘*s [i.e., the smoke-hole in the squinch-formed dome supported by four pillars, above the hearth at the center of a traditional Armenian house or *glxatun*— JRR] and thresholds of all dwellings, and when it gets dark they take a apron, striking the pillars of the room and all the walls with it, to chase out the *švot*s, while repeating at the same time *Švotn i durs, Martēn i ners* (“*Švot* out; March, come in!”). Then they place the iron cross from the *t‘onir* [the earth-oven at the hearth— JRR] at the threshold of the entrance-doors; while the lines drawn around the *erdik‘* prevents their return through that entry.’

In Vaspurakan this spirit was known by the name *p‘uṙdik‘* or *pupušik*. Here the man of the house, winding a goatskin around his head, would take a sheepskin in one hand and a sickle in the other, and, striking all the walls with the skin, would say, ‘*P‘uṙdik‘*, out! *P‘uṙdik‘*, out!’ Coming up to the front door, he would say, ‘*P‘uṙdik‘*, go to the pastures, to the cool springs, to the green fields...’ after which he would shut the door at once. In order to prevent the *p‘uṙdik‘* from climbing back into the house through the smoke-hole, they would cover the latter in advance with two sticks in the form of a Cross.

According to these beliefs, *švot*s living in stables are particularly tenacious: in order to drive them out, people would strike the animals and the walls of the stable with a wineskin full of little stones to make a noise, repeating '*Švot* out; March, come in!'

In some places people did not believe in February dreams, considering them false and unreliable, since they could have been dictated by a *švot*.

In the popular conceptions about the *švot/d* presented here the following basic motifs stand out:
1. The *švot* was considered an evil spirit and was associated with cold, and therefore people drove him out of dwellings at the end of February or the beginning of March.
2. The *švot* caused people to have erotic dreams.
3. The image of the *švot* was closely associated with the Cat.

In analyzing the connection of the *švot* to cold, one notes the characteristic mythological images of old women personifying cold among the mountain Tajiks and the Uzbeks of Khwarazm: these were associated with a short period of frost that preceded the arrival of spring. It is true that the image of an old woman bearing cold was known to Armenians as well; but according to their conceptions this figure appeared at the beginning of April, not at the beginning of March. The Central Asian image of the old woman is interesting precisely because, according to the information provided by al-Biruni, the cold 'days of the old woman' came precisely during the winter month of Šubat. In Assyrian texts[48] this name is attested in the form *šebet*. It appears possible to associate with these names the form *švot* itself, which enables us to explain the genesis of Armenian folk conceptions about the *švot* spirit.

[48] In Armenian this term generally refers, not to ancient Assyria, but to the Syrian Christians, *aysor* or *asori*, who employ Syriac in their rituals and some of whom still speak neo-Aramaic. Armenians and *asori*s have always lived in close proximity to each other and many of their folk beliefs and practices are nearly identical.

H. Ačaŕean explains this term in the following way: 'The month of February; considered the month of the devil; a particular evil spirit active in February' (*Armenian Etymological Dictionary*, Vol. 3, pp. 537-538). A. Ōdabašyan, comparing the data of Armenian and Assyrian written sources, determined that Švot, the fifth month of the Assyrian calendar, would have corresponded to February, the second month of the Roman calendar (*Amanorə hay žołovrdakan tonac'uyc'um* ["The New Year in the Armenian folk calendar"], p. 34), and, citing ethnographic materials, affirmed that this term, as the designation of a month, was used in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Moks, where it was equivalent to the Roman February. (N. 46: In these materials, collected by A. Darbinyan, a native of Moks, the people of the region called the month of February *subat'* or *subəat'*: his papers are in the archive of the Institute of Armenian Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR.) All this served as a basis for Ōdabašyan to suggest that the words accompanying the banishing of the *švot* mean, '*Švot*-February, go away; March, come in.' She considers that 'the purpose of this ritual custom was not only to protect stores conserved from the previous year from the malign activity of evil spirits, but also properly to welcome the new agricultural year, which begins with the month of March and the arrival of spring.' A. Łanalanyan regards the ritual in much the same way (A.T. Łanalanyan, *Aŕacani* ["Compendium of proverbs"], Erevan, 1960, pp. xi-xii).

It seems to us that the explanation of such an intricate complex of folk conceptions as that of the *švot* spirit by the single sacral phrase '*Švot*, out; March, come in' does not provide an exhaustive characterization of this figure. And the interpretation of this phrase as 'February, out; March, come in' creates more problems than it solves. In this connection, the explanation of the interrelationship of the names of the months in various calendars employed in Armenian folk life (ancient Armenian, Assyrian, Roman) assumes great significance. This problem has not been substantially explored in specialized literature, and that naturally complicates the examination of the questions and aspects of interest to us. The understanding of the phrase '*Švot*, out; March, come in' serves as a striking example of this. For if the words *Švot* and March are simply month names, then one naturally poses the question why one is named according to the Assyrian

calendar; and the other, by the Roman. This would scarcely make sense. But if this is a matter of more and other than the mere names of months, then we deal with a phenomenon of purely ritual content.

In ethnographical and folklore materials relating to the Armenians of Moks, who employed the term *švot* (in the form *subat*) as the designation of the month of February, there are unfortunately no data attested about a corresponding name of a figure, ritual, or other expression of the *švot*. But it is very indicative that in the historical and ethnographical region of Vaspurakan, contiguous to Moks, the figure was known by the name *P'uṙdik'*, or, more affectionately, as *Pupušik* (E. Lalayean, *Vaspurakan*, *Azgagrakan Handēs*, No. 25, p. 58). Thus we deal with multiple designations of one and the same being: *Švod*, *P'uṙdik'*, *Pupušik*, *Švot*. What is this? Local differences of designations, or differences of a diachronic character, or the result of the confusion of various conceptions, figures, and names? One thinks a solution of the puzzle and an understanding of the concepts and acts associated with it can be arrived at on the basis of a consideration of all three parameters.

First of all, one notes the following aspect: in the description cited above by G. Bunatov, after the expulsion of the *švod* people invited into the home not the new month of March but a man (*mard*); while in the Vaspurakan variant after the expulsion of the *P'uṙdik'* they did not invite in anybody at all. These facts indicate to a limited extent that the understanding of the terms *švot* and *mart* as the names of months is not always supported by the ethnographic data. To the contrary, these data provide a foundation for the discovery and exploration of a defined demonological image and of the concepts and actions associated with it among the Armenians, for whom, in the majority of regions, it is known as a *švot*.

Let us now consider the role assigned to the *švot* in the economic life of the people: was it negative or positive? An answer to this question allows one to determine the character and basic functions of this specific demonological figure.

It strikes one forcefully at the very first glance that the *švot*, classified as an evil demon, still dwelt in warm houses and stables together with humans and animals all winter long and was patiently tolerated by them. And only at the end of February, or at the beginning of March, they chased it out, considering it an evil spirit. In one story about the *švot* it is related that the spirit expresses its displeasure at being ejected at just this time of year. 'Listen here, dearie,' the women say to each other, 'I went out tonight and what do I see but a bunch of *švot*s at the gates of Yekho's house. How they were cursing, cursing that house of Yekho's! For chasing them outside into this snow and ice. Would it have been so hard, said the *švot*s, to let us stay in the warm upper corner of the barn?' (Bense, *Bulanəx kam Hark'* ["Bulanəx or Hark' (district)"], *Azgagrakan Handēs*, No. 6, p. 10).

In Vaspurakan the expelled *švot* went out to the green fields, to the cool springs; and according to materials from Nor Bayazet the *švot*s generally spent all summer in the fields and farmlands. But, as is well known from the ritual practices of many [p. 47] peoples, no evil spirit, upon its expulsion, is ever dispatched to such useful and functionally important places of humans. How did the *švot* earn, then, such regard? And here another aspect of the *švot* commands attention: its instilling erotic dreams in people. Apparently with this feature it was somehow associated and connected at one time with this idea of fertility and conception— an idea so characteristic of the onset of spring. Not for nothing was the *švot* in most instances represented in the guise of a cat or else was associated with cats: after all, the end of February and the beginning of March is the start of the 'love period' of cats, which even in the present day in several regions is called *švat* or *švayt*. (N. 83: Of no small significance is the fact that the Armenian word *švayt* means "lewdly rowdy"— one cannot exclude here a connection to the *švot*.)

It is noteworthy that in a number of places a girl who wanted to get married would secretly clamber onto the flat clay rooftop of the home of her chosen young man, and, stealthily creeping up to the smoke-hole, would meow through the opening like a cat. It is interesting also that folks sometimes said of girls entering adulthood, 'She's meowing like a cat: it means she wants to get married.'

Commenting on the connection of the *švot* to cats, A. Ōdabašyan notes that the cat was a totemic symbol of pregnancy in the beliefs of many peoples of the ancient world. One might add that the same idea was familiar to peoples of South and Southeast Asia. In one Khmer myth, for instance, it is related that a hermit created a cat out of the first menses of a girl entering adolescence (*Kkhmerskie mify i legendy* ["Khmer myths and legends"], Moscow, 1980, pp. 26-28). In the same myth the cat created by the hermit is closely connected to customs of weddings and marriage, and to the happiness and well being of the bride in her new home— the house of her husband.

The Italian 'mimicry of the rite of courtship' is very important in this regard: it is performed in early March, the time when people fall in love (N.A. Krasnovskaya, *Ital'yantsy* ["The Italians"], in the vol. *Kalendarnye obychai i obryady v stranakh zarubezhnoi Evropy: vesennie prazdniki* ["Calendrical customs and rites in the countries of Europe beyond the (Soviet) border: vernal holidays"], p. 15). The holiday of *Šabuot* of the Georgian Jews, considered a festival of green plants, is interesting: 'In Jewish villages they try on this holiday to decorate dwellings with green plants and to spread green grass on the floor' (*Religioznye verovaniya narodov SSSR* ["Religious beliefs of the peoples of the USSR"], part II, p. 316). Most weddings also took place on the days of the *Šabuot* festival.[49]

Thus by comparative analysis of the materials connected with the complex of concepts and customs a particular link is found between the cat and the idea of conception, on the one hand, and that of this idea and the *švot* (in both name and content), on the other. This circumstance suggests the further thought that the *švot*, being located in the fields in the spring and summer, could by means of its 'fertilizing' capacity exert an influence upon agricultural labor as well, making the fields more fertile. The custom of the Armenians of Akhalkalaki serves as testimony to this (B. Karapetyan described this

[49] There seems to have been some confusion here. The holiday is actually that of "Weeks", Heb. *Šavu'ōt*; but the 15th day of the month of *Šəvaṭ*, corresponding to *Švot* and February, is celebrated as the "New Year of Trees" (JRR).

custom to us on the basis of stories told to him by his mother, a native of Akhalkalaki): on the night before the expulsion of the *švot* the women of the house would draw in flour on the walls and pillars of the house and barn depictions of either oxen in harness or domestic animals leaving the stable to graze. The meaning of those drawings was to make the *švot* go out to the tilled fields and pastures along with the animals and the plow. It is no coincidence that in Vaspurakan they would chase out the spirit while brandishing a sickle. No less important is the ubiquitous use in the ritual of expulsion of the *švot* of a sheepskin, which was understood among many peoples as a means of fertility. (N. 91: See for example N.P. Lobacheva, *Razlichnye obryadovye kompleksy* ["Various ritual complexes"], p. 307.)

The analysis and juxtaposition of all the motifs cited above, together with the characteristics and functions of the *švot*, seemingly elusive at first glance, provide a basis for associating its image with that of the *polevik* [the Russian spirit of the fields— JRR]. In this connection it is appropriate to mention the spirit called *xlvlik* (the word in Armenian means "playful"; it is noteworthy that Georgians call a lizard *xvlivi* or *xvliki*), which, according to the conceptions of the people of Vaspurakan, lived in the fields and was a producer and protector of crops (Lalayan, *Vaspurakan*, *Azgagrakan Handēs*, No. 26, p. 205).

It is interesting that the image of this spirit did not enjoy wide distribution among Armenians: perhaps only the spirit noted by Bense among the Armenians of the Muš region, the *xipilik*, can be regarded as a spirit-protector [p. 48] of the harvest. However in a number of regions of Armenia there existed a holiday of the *Xlvlik* celebrated in the autumn (N. 95: See, for instance, M. Salmastec'i, "*Xlvlik*," *Arjagank'* ["The Echo"], 1893, no. 1). One cannot exclude the possibility that with the *xlvlik* we deal with a surviving attestation of the figure of some sort of divinity of vegetation, a preserver and protector of crops and fields: the fact of the existence of similar spirits and divinities amongst various peoples of the Caucasus would argue in favor of this hypothesis (N. 97: See G.F. Chursin, *Ocherki po etnologii Kavkaza* ["Sketches on the ethnology of the Caucasus"], pp. 50, 53, 55; and V.F. Miller, *Osetinskie etyudy* ["Ossetic studies"], part II,

pp. 282, 297). It is also quite likely that the *švot* was once a divinity who returned home with the harvest in autumn. Later on this motif was consigned to oblivion; and all that was retained in folk memory was the rite of the expulsion of the god at the beginning in spring of the new farming year.

For the determination of the character of the extremely complex type of spirit called *švot* it is important to note that in Vaspurakan he was called *p'uṙdik'* — a name also given to bread that fell into the oven while baking, as well as to a kind of ceremonial bread. Ōdabašyan writes of the coincidence of names: 'Through the expulsion of the *p'uṙdik'-švot* and the baking of sacrificial bread called by the same name, people strove to frustrate the possible negative influence of this spirit on the stores of grain depleted towards the beginning of spring' (Ōdabašyan, "New Year..." *op. cit.*, p. 36). One should note that the custom of naming ceremonial breads after those divinities or Christian saints to whom the loaves were dedicated is attested in the cultic and ritual customs of numerous peoples, particularly among various Georgian ethnographical groups. It is quite possible that the *p'uṙdik'* as well was a theophoric designation of a ceremonial loaf that had at one time been consecrated to a god or spirit of the same name. At least, for Vaspurakan and contiguous regions this seems an entirely plausible suggestion.

The exposition of the functions and precise identification of the character of the *švot* as that of a demonic personage is further complicated by the fact that it does not have analogues in the demonological representations and ritual practice of other peoples. Of undoubted interest is the Georgian custom of expulsion of mice from the home, which is analogous to the expulsion of the *švot* among Armenians. The Georgians would address the mice with these words: 'Little mouse, little mouse, go out into the yard; angel, come into the home.' They would tempt the mouse at this point with a branch of *shipovnik* (Rus., sweetbriar or eglantine) on which were placed pieces of cheese, lard, and other kinds of food. It is also worthy of note that the Georgians regarded with reverence a household rat with a bright patch on its breast: during festivals, special sacrificial wafers called *lemzyr* were left on the floor for it. As we can see, Georgian images of the rat and the mouse were connected with the idea and image of a household spirit whom the

Armenians also sometimes imagined in the form of a mouse (E. Lalayean, *Nor Bayazet*, *Azgagrakan Handēs*, no. 17, p. 97).

Turning now to the *švot*, it is essential to mention another circumstance: in several regions of Armenia the bread that fell into the furnace upon breaking, the *p'uṙdik'*, was considered the portion of an angel (S. Amatuni, *Hayoc' baṙ u ban* ["Armenian *Wörter und Sachen*"], Vałaršapat, 1912, p. 660). The question arises: Which angel? Could it not be that of the good being of the same name, the *p'uṙdik'-švot*? In any case, one thing is clear: people would have been unlikely to call the angel's portion by the name of an evil spirit. If one adds to this the fact that in Sasun, bordering on Vaspurakan, the *p'uṙdik'*-bread was considered the *barakat* and *dovlat* of the home,[50] then there is no doubt that the *švot-p'uṙdik'* was actually considered a household spirit; and the rite of a sacrificial offering of bread to it is seen to be common among a wide range of peoples (N. 106: S.A. Tokarev, *Religioznye verovaniya vostochnoslavyanskikh narodov*... ["Religious beliefs of the East Slavic peoples..."], p. 95).

As is apparent from the foregoing material, one finds concentrated in the image of the *švot*-spirit various strata of folk religious world views; and in the complex of beliefs about it that has come down to us, one already finds diverse qualities ascribed to it. This circumstance makes it particularly difficult to specify the genealogical roots of this most particularly specific demonological type. But the fact that the *švot* was associated with cold and even to some degree embodied it [p. 49], indicates a genetic connection of the primordial archetype of the *švot* with the spirits of nature.

A comparative analysis of the complex of representations and rites connected with the *švot*-spirit allows us to distinguish one main idea: that of pregnancy, growth, rebirth, and, finally, fertility. In this aspect the syncretic type of the *švot-p'uṙdik'* can be interpreted as that of the good spirit regarded as the protector of the welfare and wealth of

[50] These two Arabic words, borrowed *via* Persian into Ottoman Turkish and from there into Armenian dialects, are left untranslated by the author. *Baraka* means "blessing"; *dawla*, "power" or "dominion" (JRR).

the family. From this point of view the *švot* is linked intimately to the *polevik* and to household spirits. The study of this material demonstrates also that the most archaic features attributed to this spirit were preserved in the folk conceptions of that part of the Armenian population inhabiting the Lake Van basin and neighboring parts of historical Armenia."

2. Jannes and Jambres in the Armenian apocrypha. From *Patmut'iwn Movsēsi* ("The History of Moses"), in S. Yovsēp'eanc', ed., *Ankanon girk' hin ktakaranac'* ("Non-canonical books of the Old Testament"), Venice, 1986, p. 202.

"... and then Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh and performed great signs. For Moses cast his staff before Pharaoh and it became a serpent (*višap*).[51] Then the magicians (*diwt'k'n*) of Pharaoh, Jannes and Jambres, stood forward. They had contempt for Moses, and said to Pharaoh, 'This one is our pupil and by our teaching does [add.: whatever he does].' And the two of them cast their staffs to the earth, and they became snakes (*ōjk'*), to the eyes but not in truth. For the snake of Moses swallowed the two staffs of the sorcerers (*zkaxardac'n*) and after a while they melted and it digested them."

3. The anti-paradise of Jannes and Jambres. From the *Life* of Macarius of Alexandria. Robert T. Meyer, ed., Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, *Ancient Christian Writers* 34, New York: Paulist Press, 1964, pp. 58-61.

(Palladius was born in Galatia (northwestern central Anatolia) in 363/364 and was a pupil of Evagrius of Pontus. He became a monk, traveling to Israel and Egypt; and then served in Bithynia as a bishop. He composed his *History* in Greek in 419/420 for Lausias, a chamberlain of the Byzantine emperor Theodosius II. There are translations in numerous East Christian languages, including Armenian, in long and short recensions.)

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[51] There may be an implied contrast between Moses' *višap*, which in Armenian tradition has the heraldic overtones of the noble *sēnmurw* of ancient Iran as well as the power of a dragon, and the generic *awj*, "snake", of the two magicians— even though Moses' creature is called one at the end of the pericope.

"He once wished, so he told us, to enter the garden-tomb of Jannes and Jambres. Now this garden-tomb had belonged to the magicians who had power along with Pharaoh back in the old days. Since they held power for a long time they built the work with stones four feet square. They erected their monument there and put away much gold. They even planted trees there, for the spot was damp, and they dug a well, too.

Since the holy man did not know the road, he followed the stars, traversing the desert as though it were the sea.[52] Taking a bunch of reeds, he placed one at every mile, leaving a mark so that he might find the way back on his return. After traveling for nine days, he reached the place. Then the demon who ever acts in opposition to the athletes of Christ collected all the reeds and put them by his head as he slept near the garden tomb.

He found the reeds upon arising. God had permitted this for his own further training, so that he might not place trust in reeds, but rather in the pillar of cloud that led Israel for forty years in the desert. He used to say, 'Seventy demons rushed from the garden tomb to meet me, shouting: "What do you wish, Macarius? What do you want, monk? Why did you come to our place? You cannot stay here." I told them,' he said, 'Let me but go in and look about, then leave.'

He continued, 'Upon entering, I found a hanging brass jar and an iron chain near the well, already consumed by time; the pomegranates had nothing inside, so dried out were they by the sun.'

Then he started back, and was twenty days traveling. When the water which he was carrying gave out, and also the bread, he was in a very precarious situation. And just when he was on the verge of collapse, he caught sight of a maiden dressed in a pure white linen robe and holding a jug dripping water.

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[52] When I was a graduate student at Oxford in 1974-1976 Fr. Goriun Khojababian (later appointed Archbishop of Isfahan) told me that when he had served the Armenian faithful of Qamishli in northern Syria he was driven through the desert to remote parishes in a limousine whose driver used an astrolabe to navigate.

He said that she was far off, about a stade or two, and he was on the journey three days seeing her with the jug, standing there as it were, but he was unable to attain it, as in a dream. He survived only in hopes of drinking it. Next there appeared a herd of antelope. One of them had a calf, and he saw that her udder was dripping milk. Crawling under her, he sucked and was refreshed. The antelope accompanied him to his cell and nursed him, but would not take her own calf."

4. The Armenian version of Macarius' journey. From *Patmut'iwn surb hōrn Makaray egiptac'woy* ("The history of the holy father Macarius the Egyptian"), *Vark' srboc' haranc' ew k'ałak'avarut'eanc' noc'in əst krkin t'argmanut'ean naxneac'* ("The lives of the holy fathers and the civilities of the same, re-translated by the ancients"), Venice: S. Lazzaro, 1855, vol. 1, pp. 90-92 (tr. by JRR):

"And it was when he had been three days in his cell, he said, 'I wish to go into the paradise (*draxt*) of of Jannes and Jambres. And he sought grace of God, that he might enter the paradise of the sorcerers (*kaxardac'n*), and said, 'I have heard that in every hour the demons (*dewk'n*) are armed by themselves, for Jannes and Jambres planted plants and so fortified it that there is nothing anywhere like it. And they did this because their hope was in the earth.' The blessed one, the elder and servant of Christ Macarius, had a desire for this paradise that he might be tried by the demons. And the blessed elder set out to go, making Venus (*zAruseakn*) his guide as helmsmen of ships do on the depths; and he departed, going into the desert. 'And I took,' he said, 'a bundle of reeds and made a mark of the places where I passed and said, 'When I return to my hut, I shall come without difficulty. When I was close to the paradise, about a mile, and night had fallen, sleep took me. And the wild and evil demons went off and gathered the reeds, made a bundle of them, and put it under my head. And I say, 'They did this great grace for me, and this was the will of the Lord and not from the demons, so that I might not rely upon the guidance of a reed, but upon the grace of our Lord as by a cloud He guided the children of Israel in the awful desert for forty years.

'When I approached the paradise, the demons came out before me. Some danced lewdly,[53] some made noise, some ground their teeth over me, and some like ravens flapped their wings in my face and said, "Why have you come, Macarius the hermit, to test us? Are we some sort of hermitage for you hermits? Is it not already enough for you that you drove our companions out of the desert? We are not the equal of you all, so why did you come to our place? Many are you hermits to whom we have left the desert. This place was erected in our name and there is no way for you to be here. Why do you seek to enter the work of others, for since its builders died no son of man has entered herein."' After these demons and those demons had expressed their stubbornness, the elder then addressed them: 'I will enter one time and look around, then I will exit and depart from this place.' And the demons said to him: 'Swear to us by Christ, who is God, that you will go away.' And Macarius said, 'I will do so.' And the demons vanished before him.

'So I entered,' said he, 'and saw everything and remained there for three days and departed from thence without disturbance. And after twenty days I returned from there to my cell, and for those days I tasted neither bread nor water till I had accomplished the matter. And when I had been three days in my cell, a demon appeared to me in the form of a girl, and in her hand she carried a pitcher, and her raiment was white, and for three days she walked about, and on the third day she made bold to say to me, "Take and drink this water, for here you are, dying of thirst." And I made no reply to her. After a short time the girl went away and milked a buffalo, brought the milk, and said, "Drink this, so that you do not die of thirst." And in this, too, the grace of God consoled me.' For God prospered Macarius in deeds, in grace, and in healing..."

5. Jannes, Jambres, and (the) *Švot* in Medieval Armenian Historiography.

(Vardan traveled to Cilicia and to the court of the Mongol khan Hulagu in northern Iran. In his *History* he relies heavily on the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian, which he translated from the Syriac. The latter, 12.1, mentions that the Byzantine emperor Leo IV (776-781) sent the caliph al-Maḥdī (775-785) the book Jannes and Jambres, which

[53] Arm. *kak'awēin*, lit. "did the partridge dance".

"contained all the magic of the Egyptians and everything they did in opposition to Moses."[54] Vardan died in 1271 and was buried at Xor Virap. He evinces an interest in etymology, offering an explanation, for example, of *mesrop*, the epithet of Maštoc', inventor of the Armenian alphabet, as "verdant", which, Thomson suggests, may be based on Arabic *masrur*, "fertile". The form *šuat* in the MSS seems closest to the actual pronunciation of the name of the month /Šəváṭ/, whilst *šabat'* may be a *lectio facilior* rendering the familiar Sabbath, Arm. Saturday; and *šwōt* could be our Armenian folk spirit itself.)

1. *Hawak'umn patmut'ean Vardanay vardapeti* ("The Compilation of History of Vardan *vardapet*"), Venice, 1862, p. 19, para. 9 (tr. by JRR; the text has also been tr. and ed. by Robert W. Thomson, "The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewelc'i," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43, 1989, pp. 125-226):

... ew Yanēsn ew Yamrēs aṙin zordisn Israyēli ew taran znosa hngetasan awur čanaparh ənd anapatn, ew šinec'in zdraxt iwreanc', zhngetasan tari: ew i katarman šinuacin, yordwoc'n Israyēli aṙin tłays innhariwr ew ut'sun, ew zohec'in diwac', ew hawak'ec'an aṙ nosa, ew edin pahapans draxtin, ew yaynmhetē aṙawel hnazandec'an dewk' kaxardac', ew č'orek'hariwr dewk', asen, oč' hnazandec'an, minč'ew krkin zohec'in yanun noc'a, ew apa ekeal aṙin hawanut'iwn, bayc' zšwōt amisn anhnazandeal gorcen zkams iwreanc' tanelov omans i mardkanē.

"... and Jannes and Jambres took the children of Israel and conveyed them fifteen days on the road into the desert, and they built their paradise (*zdraxt*), for fifteen years. And at the completion of the building, they took from amongst the children of Israel nine hundred and eighty boys, and sacrificed them to the demons (*diwac'*), and they were gathered to them, and they placed them as guards of the paradise. And thereafter demons were more obedient to sorcerers (*kaxardac'*), and four hundred demons, they say, did not submit till they again sacrificed in their name, and then they came and undertook agreement, but not submitting in the month of *šwōt* they work their will, taking away some of mankind."

[54] See Pietersma 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

2. Mkrtič‘ Ēmin, ed., *Mecin Vardanay Barjrberdec‘woy Patmut‘iwn tiezerakan* (“The Universal History of Vardan the Great of Barjrberd [‘the High Castle’]”), Moscow, 1861, pp. 28-29:

Ew yanēsn ew yamrēsn aṙin zordisn Israyēli ew taran znosa hngetasan awur čanaparh ənd anapatn, ew šinec‘in zdraxtn iwreanc‘ zhngetasan tari. Ew i katarman šinuacin yordwoc‘n Israyēli aṙin tłays inn hariwr ut‘sun ew zohec‘in diwac‘. Ew hawak‘ec‘an aṙ nosa ew edin pahapans draxtin ew yaynmhetē aṙawel hnazandec‘an dewk‘ kaxardac‘. Ew č‘ork‘ hariwr dewk‘, asen, oč‘ hnazandec‘an, minč‘ew krkin zohec‘in yanun noc‘a ew apa ekeal aṙin i hawanut‘iwn: bayc‘ zšuat amisn anhnazandeal gorcen zkams iwreanc‘: tanelov zomans i mardkanē.

“And Jannes and Jambres took the children of Israel and conveyed them fifteen days down the road into the desert, and they built their paradise (*zdraxtn*) over fifteen years. And at the completion of the building they took from amongst the children of Israel nine hundred eighty boys and sacrificed them to the demons (*diwac‘*). And they were gathered to them, and they placed them as guards of the paradise and thereafter demons were more obedient to sorcerers (*kaxardac‘*). And four hundred demons, they say, were not obedient, till again they made sacrifice in their name, and then they came and undertook agreement; but disobedient in the month of *šuat*, they work their will, taking away some of mankind.”

3. K. Patkanov, *Khronologicheskaya istoriya, sostavlennaya ottsom Mekhitarom, vardapetom ayrivankskim, armyanskii tekst* (“Chronological History compiled by Fr. Mxit‘ar, the *vardapet* of Ayrivank‘, Armenian text”), *Trudy vostochnogo otdeleniya Imperatorskogo russkogo Istoricheskogo obshchestva* (“Proceedings of the Oriental secrion of the Imperial Russian Historical Society”) XIV, St. Petersburg, 1869, p. 272:

Yanēs ew Yamrēs, ork‘ aṙin zordisn Israyēli ew taran hngetasan ōreay čanaparh ənd anapatn: ew šinec‘in draxt ink‘eanc‘ hngetasan am ew yIsrayēlē 980 tłays zohec‘in

diwac‘ ew hnazandeal znosa edin pahapans draxtin: ew ut‘sun dewk‘ [var.: *400*] *oč‘ hnazandec‘an, minč‘ew krkin 980 tłays ayl zohec‘in, ew apa hnazandec‘an, bac‘ i šabat‘ amsoy.*

“Jannes and Jambres [are the ones] who took the children of Israel and conveyed them on a road of fifteen days into the desert: and in fifteen years they built a paradise (*draxt*) for themselves and out of Israel they sacrificed 980 boys to demons (*diwac‘*), and having made them obedient placed them as guards of the paradise: and 80 demons [var.: 400] did not submit till they again sacrificed another 980 boys, and then they submitted, except in the month of *šabat‘*.”

6. The plant of Jannes and Jambres. *Patmut‘iwn piłc t‘ut‘unin* (“The History of Foul Tobacco”): the earliest MS is dated 1701; see for a full discussion and annotation of the poem J.R. Russell, “The Demon Weed,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 19 (*Festschrift for P.O. Skjaervo*), 2009, pp. 129-132.

O Christians, give ear!
See how foul a thing tobacco is:
They pay money- throw it in the fire-
And do their souls harm besides.

(5) The *qalyun*-pipe is richly adorned:
Putting their mouths to it, they lap it up like dogs,
Drink, and expel the smoke from their mouths,
Their noses, eyes, and ears.

They expel the smoke in billowing clouds:
(10) The angels flee the stench,
Soar up, and rise to Heaven
And make complaint to the Son of God.

There is a man hungry for tobacco
Who smokes fifty waterpipes in a day
And swallows the smoke, which reaches his gut
And— worse than a dog— turns and comes out.

He's withdrawn his hands from any work,
Fallen to the demons' lot.
What wretched children all they are!
And not a scrap of bread's left in his house.

At night his thoughts dwell on it.
He turns and tosses, cannot sleep,
Gets up, sits down, and strikes the flint—
And imbibes filthy tobacco greedily.

This world has phony priests
Who drink to excess foul tobacco—
They are like the evil Pharisees
And partners to the Hebrews' company.

They sit and drink in public
With hacking coughs like junkyard dogs.
Their waterpipe is marble black;
Of finely-worked ebony, its handle.

The laity see all this
And are emboldened to imitate it.
The pastor knows how to read— they say—
And must know best, for ignorant are we.

He's the shepherd, we're the sheep,
We'll follow him home, wherever he goes.
If he doesn't say that it's a sin,
(40) Then what do we care about such things?

Tobacco is a weed that grows:
Scripture does not refer to it.
But now it's found a cozy home,
A dwelling for the demons' throng.

(45) The sermon's plain when you get up close:
Worms and blood fall off the tongue.
The serpent deceived Adam and Eve.
The evil Tempter was the cause.

They didn't keep the Lord's command:
(50) Deceived, they ate of Eden's fruit.
As soon as they had, they felt regret,
And were stripped of the ineffable light they wore.

They saw that they were naked
And wrapped themselves in fig leaves.
(55) Where are you, Adam?— cried the Lord.
For shame he fled and hid.

He says: You did not keep the commandment!
Come on, get out! This is not your house.
They say: The serpent tricked us—
(60) And point at the tree with the fruit.

Our Lord cursed the serpent.

Off fell its limbs— it had to slither.
The demons collected them
And took them to the bold devil.

(65) We found the potion of perdition—
They said— Destroyer of men's souls.
Jannes and Jambres, they say, in the Garden
Planted them, and tobacco grew.

First they called it *k'ark'i*.[55]
(70) This is tobacco— the devil said.
They sowed its evil seed in the world,
A trap, a moth to eat men's souls.

Thus have they hunted down mankind,
Made a place for themselves, a home.
(75) Men have forgotten church and prayer:
Night and day they drink foul tobacco.

They do not want the aroma of incense.
They are blinded by this ugly smoke.
They have consigned their will to Satan,
(80) Signed on with the wicked foe.

They impoverish their widowed souls,
Consigning them to hell's undying flames.
They collect somewhere and drink that scum
And, like hounds barking, belch coarse coughs.

(85) With smoke you have blackened your soul.

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[55]Unless saffron is meant, this is an unknown word.

You never come to church to pray.
Wretch! Go and see for yourself
What the interpreter of Scripture has to tell.

They fasten on the water pipe and pass it round,
And, taking it, raise their hands above their brows
And declare: Let its dust and flame
Pile up and on our heads crash down!

They take it from the Muslims' mouths,
Drink, suck the poison up.
The body enjoys a little pleasure,
But the soul becomes black within.

They have become the demons' habitation,
Spending the whole day in that company,
For all the writings testify:
Repulsive is foul tobacco.

The soul clamors from within,
To the angels makes complaint
And says: Take me out of this place,
Out of this repulsive and foul body!

Better far the reek of hell
Than this foul tobacco that they smoke:
They smoke it, spill the smoke on me,
And murder me right now.

My place is hard and ugly, foul
And dark and muddy, gloom:

Satan's fattened us all up
To make of us the fiend's food.

Brethren, I counsel you,
Think well on what I've said.
(115) Do not perform Satan's will,
For hard and bitter is the day of death.

You despatch yourselves to hell for nought—
You do harm to your own soul.
When that evil *k'ark'i* grows green,
(120) They say it is shunned by the bee.

7. A *Šaharik* on the Euphrates. Misak' Mecarenc', *Irikuns* ("This evening"), from the volume *Nor tałer* ("New Lyrics"), Constantinople, 1907, no. 31; A.S. Šaruryan, ed., Misak' Mecarenc', *Erkeri liakatar žołovacu*, Erevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1981, p. 137. In the transcription I have restored the original, Classical orthography employed in Western Armenian, from the modified system adopted in Soviet Armenia and retained by the present Republic of Armenia that Šaruryan employs in his critical edition.

IRIKUNS

Banastełc Vahram T'at'ulin

(1) Irikuns ē bari! bari! u liajeṙn u hotewan:
Oski uł mə, kamurǰ ełac əndmēǰ tiwin u gišeruan.
Varsaditak caṙerun tak kə kłkat'im loysin hamar:
Arewin perč loysin hamar, or kə p'ałp'i k'rk'manəkar
(5) Mēǰn hotewan cayrineru cayracawal całiknerun,
Ur dic'anuēr bažakneru k'amec' ambrosn anyag mełun.

Cařoc‘ etin čačanč‘awuxt pastař mən ē arewn oski,
Ur całkacin ułēšneru čamuk hiwsk‘ə kə sołoski.
U zep‘iwřn al, kaytřun hamboyr, mankut‘iwn m’ē veradarjac:

(10) U ǰrc‘aytk‘n al, p‘sp‘suk‘n ē barekamin, mətermasac‘.
Siwk‘n ałǰənak, or hiwsisēn kə k‘nk‘šanay hogwoys vəran:
U ǰrc‘aytk‘n, or laǰak k’əllay narkisneru glxun dełjan,
Kam artasuk‘, ač‘k‘erun mēǰ šahprakneru hoylin c‘irc‘an
U k‘ałc‘rut‘eamb k’ōcē menik całiknerun ayd lərřaran.
(15) U t‘ert‘ikner, šahariki šənorhk‘, k’iynan ap‘erus mēǰ,
Bac‘ ap‘erus, or k’erkarin loysi xurjin p‘ołp‘ołenēǰ.
Aha! k’anc‘ni, məšušuac bil kazov tesil m’al zert‘ alik‘:
Zarmanuhi m’ē varsageł, kat‘ u vardi! hərašalik‘...
Yaweržahars kat‘ u vardē, całik, čačanč‘, ǰur u zep‘iwř...
(20) Šat ēr lec‘un hogwoys, ov Tēr! bazmazełumn ays šrǰasp‘iwř...

THIS EVENING

To the poet Vahram T‘at‘ul

This evening is good, fragrance-laden, its hands full:
Bridge betwixt the day and night, a path of gold,
I yearn for the moon, beneath the trees so shaggy to behold,
For the solar, splendid, saffron-daubèd lunar glow
(5) Amidst the fragrant trees’ lip-swelling blossoms[56]
Whose ambrosia, from cups offered to the gods, the insatiable bee drains.
The golden sun is the trees’ final flare-embroidered tapestry
Whose weave, fine raiment, slips down the flower-bearing stems;
And the zephyr yet, a boldly stolen kiss, is youth restored.

[56] The desired effect is an alliterative pattern in /dz/; the *cayri* is identified by Šaruryan as a kind of tree but I find no record of it in any source.

(10) And the plashing fountain is the fond murmur of a friend,
A girlish shade slipping from the north to gently cover me;
And the fountain's splash is the narcissus' blushing veil
Or the tears in the eyes of myriad corollas wide-flung:
With sweetness it anoints that place of silence of the flowers lone.
(15) And the petals, the *Šaharik*'s graces, tumble into my palms,
Palms open, stretching towards the light's sheaves' moving coruscations.
Lo! She passes, a vision like a wave, of misty blue and gauze,
Woman of marvel, lovely in her tresses, all of milk and roses! Miracle...
A nymph made of milk, of roses, flower, sunburst, water, zephyr...
Such fullness, O Lord, for my soul, this superabundance spreading its bounty everywhere...

Mecarenc' was influenced strongly by Symbolism; and its spirit is evident in these verses. But he sought also to evoke his idyllic rural childhood, which he describes, not only with the allusive images of the Symbolists, but with the bold strokes of a portrait from nature. Armenian nationalism of the late 19th century, like similar movements elsewhere, had a large antiquarian and mythological aspect, and the short life of Mecarenc' coincides with the period when most of the great ethnographical monographs and studies were published. His contemporary Daniēl Varužan (1884-1915) was the poet most explicitly associated with aesthetic neo-paganism, with his *Het'anos erger* ("Heathen songs", Constantinople, 1912). In the work of Mecarenc' one finds only a few lines imbued with any sort of nationalistic fervor; but the fairies (*payik-k'*), nymphs (*yaweržaharsunk'*), and sylvan spirits (*šaharik-k'*) of the pre-Christian Armenian pantheon and the folklore of the Christian nation abound in his poems.

Western Armenian poetry of the pre-Genocide era reflects also the high literacy of author and reader, the firm grounding in Classical texts that the community's excellent educational system provided to its best and brightest, and the continuity of the literary tradition from the earliest period to the present. It is not surprising, then, that two texts of

the tenth-century mystical poet St. Gregory of Narek, Arm. Grigor Narekac‘i (951-1003), also bring to bear their vivid lexical imagery and thematics in the poem. The first is the liturgical *Tał yawrhnel ǰroc‘n*, “Song for the blessing of the waters” (Arminē K‘yoškeryan, ed., Grigor Narekac‘i, *Tałer ew ganjer* [“Songs and hymns”], Erevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1981, pp. 66-71): one stanza (lines 13-20) contains Narekac‘i’s neologism *p‘ołp‘ołenēǰ* (used by Mecarenc‘ in line 16 of his poem); but two others, l. 29-36 and 41-49, are also relevant with their imagery. Armenian poets have loved and read especially the shorter hymns (*tał*) of the saint because of their use of alliterative sound patterns, richly obscure vocabulary, elements of the contemporary vernacular, and luxuriant, naturalistic imagery. Mecarenc‘ in 1908, the year of his early death from consumption, published an article, *Narekac‘iin het* (“With Narekac‘i”), on his engagement with the saint’s writings (*Loys*, Constantinople, 19 Jan. 1908; repr. by Šaruryan, pp. 265-270).

TAŁ YAWRHNEL ǰROC‘N: SONG FOR THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS.

Lines 13-20:

Awetis k‘ez, Tiramayr,/ Srovbēanman, k‘rovbēat‘oṙ,/ Hup erraki loys gerazanc‘,/ Lusoyn arp‘i vehinačem,/ Seṙic‘n ənt‘ac‘ biwruc‘ iǰeal,/ Šołšołeni, p‘ołp‘ołenēǰ,/ Manraheł, gałtni šawił/ Ancanawt‘i čanaparhin.

“Good tidings to you, Mother of the Lord,/ Like a seraph, enthroned as a cherub,/ Connected to the supernal, trinitarian light,/ Sunlight of radiance walking on high,/ Descending flow of the myriad races,/ Glitter and glow, shining in its rise and fall,/ Little flood and secret path/ On the road of the unknown.”

Lines 29-36:

Awetis caṙoc‘ całkanc‘,/ Bołbоǰaxit, xitasałart‘,/ Goyn gełec‘ik, ptłinawēt,/ Aknahačoy, ham k‘ałc‘runak,/ hot burazuart‘, p‘unǰ xuṙneram,/ Cayric‘ vardic‘ p‘t‘t‘inazard/ T‘ert‘ taraceal oskečačanč‘,/ Terewaxit kanač‘ac‘eal.

“Good tidings to the flowering trees/ Dense in bulbs, thick in green,/ Lovely of hue, abundant in fruit,/ Pleasing to the eye, sweet to the taste,/ Gay aroma to the smell, multifarious bouquet,/ The roses’ corollas with petals adorned,/ Leaves spread out like a sunburst of gold,/ Dense leaves glowing green.”

Lines 41-49:

Awetis tayr Yovhannēs/ Yord ałberac‘, hoyl vtakac‘,/ ǰur manuacoy cicał cawal,/ karkač‘ahos, ułxinahos,/ Cayt‘inasēr, manuacawal,/ Šrǰanaptoyt manr awazin,/ Holov xoroc‘ mēt mēt zugin,/ Vayr ver anēǰ! ver vayr i ver!/ P‘ut‘an i ǰursn Yordananu.

“John gave good tidings/ To the brimming springs, myriad streams,/ Laughing, spreading, winding water,/ burbling in flow, rushing rill,/ caressing shores,[57] in little streams,/ Swirling about the shallow sands,/ Flowing to meet and join the many depths,/ Plunging upwards, swirling up and down,/ As they hasten to the waters of the Jordan.”

The second text is the *Matean ołbergut‘ean* (“Book of lamentation”), a cycle of 95 meditative, penitential prayers, with the medieval poet’s neologism *lṙaran* (“place of silence”) in Ch. 91.2 (p. 228 of the Buenos Aires ed. used for the Erevan *Concordance* of the *Matean*), which Mecarenc‘ uses in line 14 (the *shva* indicates in printed Armenian poetry and hymnology a *suł vank*, i.e., the pronunciation of a consonant cluster as a full syllable). Jacques Sayapalean, a particularly obtuse critic who wrote under the *nom de plume* P‘aylak, took Mecarenc‘ to task for his recondite lexicon in a review of *Nor tałer*

[57] Arm. *cayt‘inasēr* is a *hapax* one tentatively emends to **cayrinasēr* with *cayr*, “riverbank”; the suffix *–sēr* “loving” would then fit with the next strophe mentioning sand. St. Grigor was accused of being a *cayt‘*, “heretic”, but the possibility seems faint indeed that the calumny occasioned a copyist’s *lapsus calami*.

with the title *Kanxahas zatik* ("Premature Easter", in the journal *Masis*, Constantinople, 1908.20): "'The Evening' [*Irikuns*], p. 56, is the chef d'oeuvre of words monstrous, tasteless, and vile to the ear [*ančoṙni, ančašak, xžalur*]." The poet replied in a vigorous polemic, *Hetamnac' barekendan* ("Retarded Carnival", *Biwzandion*, No. 3488, Constantinople, 13/26 March 1908, repr. by Šaruryan, pp. 271-277), pointing out that many of these words, including *p'ołp'ołenēǰ* and *lṙaran*, are actually Narekac'i's, adding, "*Lṙaran*, my boy, means 'a place in which to be quiet', and how much profit might there be for P'aylak, if only he knew and respected the meaning of *lṙaran*— the place to keep silent!..."

Mecarenc' poem is about evening; and Chapter 91 of the Narek is one of four listed in the Jerusalem, St. James' edition of 1964 as *Ałōt'k' gišeraynoy* ("Prayers for the night"), along with 12, 41, and 94. Ch. 12 is the most well-known, incorporated into the evening liturgy, and Mecarenc' cites it in his article on Narekac'i. It implores the protection of the Holy Cross as a barrier against demonic invasion upon the smoke-hole, the doors and windows— all the places where the expelled *Švot* tries to re-enter the home![58]

Ch. 91.2: "Now I stretch forth my hands to inscribe with my fingers your lordly sign, in this hour of night— you who are never darkened by tenebrous ignorance, but perceive all in your sight, even as you rest in your dwelling of unapproachable light. Receive me, imploring and in danger, speaking words of thanks, under your mighty arms' protection. Save me from the foul intruding phantasms, cleanse the mirror of my heart, my sense of sight, and strengthen me against sorrowful dreams by your tree of life. Besprinkle with your blood the bounds of my station; circumscribe my steps of departure and entry with the life-giving flow that sprang from your side; may the shape of your four-fold form be the protector of my perambulations; and when I lift up my eyes, may the mystery of your salvific passion meet them. May the deed of your suffering strengthen the lintel of my door and my hope's faith depend upon your tree of blessing. Confine, O Lord, hereby the

[58] On the prayer, see J.R. Russell, "Grace from Van," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 7, 1994, pp. 35-45.

ruiner of souls: may the defender of the light enter in unopposed. Lighten my debts' burden, in place of the severe weight of my pain, which I confess to you, knower of all: the innumerable particulars of my wicked and iniquitous deeds, here in the place of quiet of my thoughts, gathered in the bedclothes of my couch, recalling the bitter fruits of my despair."[59]

[59] Text in P.M. Xač'atryan and A.A. Łazinyan, eds., Grigor Narekac'i, *Matean ołbergut'ean*, Erevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1985, p. 609.