M. Tsereteli, The Asianic (Asia Minor) Elements in National Georgian Paganism

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THE ASIANIC (ASIA MINOR) ELEMENTS IN NATIONAL
GEORGIAN PAGANISM

according to information contained in ancient Georgian Literature

By Prof. M. Tsereteli

[For list of Abbreviations see p. 66.]

I.

PROFESSOR I. JAVAKHISHVILI, of Tiflis, a well-known Georgian historian, gives us a picture of the religion of pagan Georgia in the second chapter of his standard work, A History of the Georgian Nation, which is a result of his research into the customs and usages, tales and sagas of the Georgians.

Many interesting discoveries have been made by this tireless investigator of Georgian history and culture, which concern old Georgian paganism, as, for example, moon-worship in Georgia, which Strabo maintains was practised in Albania, and which, according to Javakhishvili was doubtless in existence in the whole of Georgia from earliest times, and still exists there as the cult of St. George, etc. Also it has become much easier through Javakhishvili's researches to differentiate the elements of the Mazdaic religion—which influenced the whole spiritual life of the Georgians for several centuries before and after Christ—from the elements of national Georgian pagan religion.

In spite of this, it must be said that the great Georgian historian is but a pioneer, and that Georgian paganism represents such a complicated subject for research, that science still has much to do to unravel its tangled elements.

Of course, all existing material on national paganism contained in ancient Georgian literature had been previously studied for this purpose, but, in our opinion, none of the Georgian or non-Georgian scholars who occupied themselves with the problem correctly grasped and estimated this information and in the end they even pronounced it to be of no value at all.

But, we consider that this very information of Georgian authors possesses great value, because it reveals the origin of those gods and cults which seem to have been known in Georgia from earliest times and which might be considered almost as native, whereas moon-worship and sun-worship, for instance, were practised throughout the whole of Hither Asia, Georgia included, without any possibility of ascertaining exactly from whence they originated.

Here we would like to examine once again the information preserved by the old Georgian authors concerning Georgian paganism which was misunderstood by the earlier scholars, and endeavour to show that this information points to quite different elements in Georgian pagan religion than it was formerly thought.

II.

The most important works which contain some valuable material concerning Georgian paganism are: The Conversion of Georgia, The Life of St. Nino, The Life of Georgia (the "Georgian Chronicle") and The Life of St. John Zedazneli. There is no doubt that there are indications in these sources which point to Asian, i.e. Asia Minor, religious elements in Georgian paganism. The Conversion of Georgia was written in the seventh century; the oldest version of The Life of St. John Zedazneli which has been lost (we possess only a much later, altered edition, unfortunately)—at about the same time. The Life of St. Nino belongs to the ninth century, and the part of the Georgian Chronicle which deals with paganism, to the eleventh century. Only The Life of St. Nino gives fuller details concerning paganism than does The Conversion of Georgia, while the author of the above-mentioned part of the Georgian Chronicle, Leontius Mroveli, merely quotes from The Conversion and copies The Life of St. Nino almost word for word.

The nature of the report, concerning paganism, which these sources contain, is so peculiar, that no question can arise as to whether these reports had their origin in the imagination of the Christian authors. Everything points to the fact that the authors compiled their works according to ancient traditions and ancient literary sources which to-day no longer exist, and thus the above-mentioned old Georgian sources have undoubtedly great value as material for research into old Georgian paganism.

The importance of the Georgian sources concerning the national paganism of the Georgians was, however, firmly disputed by the late Professor N. Marr, the eminent Georgian scholar of Armenology and Avariology, in his Bogi Yazycheskoy Grazi ("The gods of pagan Georgia"), published in 1912 in Russian in Zapiski Vost. ob. Imp. Imperat.

1 Quotations below from this source are from the variant of Queen Mary (\= QMV), Ed. E. Tsvakishvili, Tiflis.
Marr has maintained that all these gods were of Iranian or Semitic origin, and that the details mentioned by the Georgian Christian writers did not refer to national Georgian paganism, but to Mazdaism introduced into Georgia from Persia; they had described the Iranian cult of fire-worship resp. they had made from the Semitic names of deities found in Syrian literature Georgian national deities. Even the name of the chief deity of the Georgian heathen Pantheon Arma is apparently the Georumanized form of Ahura-Mazda: Arma = Armenian Aramaz = Persian Ormazd (Ohrmazd) = Ahura-Mazda. But if we examine still more closely the names of these gods and their attributes, mentioned in our sources, we shall see at once that Marr was in many respects mistaken and that the deities that we have here to do with were of Sumerian-Asia Minor deities, and that only one Semitic and probably one Sumerian-Babylonian are mentioned in Georgian sources.

Marr and Javakhishvili are justified in their criticism only as far as we have to deal here with a not purely national Georgian heathen Pantheon.

IV

The name of the chief god Arma certainly bears some resemblance to the name of Ahura-Mazda. This similarity in sound, such as the name Arma has with Ormazd (Ohrmazd), Ahura-Mazda, may well account also for the rendering of the Georgian name in the Armenian as Arman. The fact remains, however, that Arma was considered in all sources as the native, national chief deity of the Georgian Pantheon, although not called an ancient god of our fathers—as were Gatsi and Gaim. The Arma religion was considered in the literature also as opposed to the Ahura-Mazda religion, and just as a native one opposed to the Persian one. It seems to us to be more probable, therefore, that the similarity of names in the case of the Georgian deity and the Persian god is purely external, and that the gods Ahura-Mazda and Arma have in reality nothing at all in common.

But, let us suppose the name Arma to be really identical with that of Ahura-Mazda. Such an identification was evidently a tempting one to the scholars, for we know that Mazdaism was introduced into Georgia long before Christianity and exercised a great influence on the entire life of the Georgian people. The Persians carried out an intensive propaganda for their religion, even using harsh means, in Georgia as well as in every other country under their political

1 Marr, op. cit., p. 4.
domination. This propaganda of the Mazdaic religion was directed, before the advent of Christianity in Georgia, against national paganism, and after the official conversion of the Georgians, against the Christian religion. In Armenia, too, during Persia's long rule, Mazdaism had so uprooted national Armenian paganism that very little concerning the old Armenian pagan religion has survived. It might well be supposed, therefore, that Mazdaism had exercised a similar influence on the national Georgian pagan religion, so that Georgians might have used the name of the great Persian god Ahura-Mazda for their own chief deity in altered form of Armaz. But this does not, at all, mean that they also acknowledged Ahura-Mazda, or that Ahura-Mazda had replaced their national chief deity.

Here now, the old Georgian sources come to our aid and from their description of Armaz according to the good old tradition, we learn that Armaz was an entirely different deity from Ahura-Mazda.

It is related in The Life of St. Nino, that St. Nino himself had seen the idol of Armaz when, on the great feast-day, she stood "near the idol at the edge of the wall". She had seen "a copper man (idol), On its body was a golden coat of mail, on its head a golden helmet. It had shoulder-plates on. It was adorned with onyx and beryl. And in its hand it carried a polished sword which flashed and moved in its hand, as if to warn any man who dared touch it, that by so doing he would sentence himself to death."

According to this, Armaz-Mazda had conquered and replaced national paganism in Georgia to such an extent, that at least the Georgian kings and noble followers of the official Iranian religion—no longer knew anything about the old national religion at the time of the conversion to Christianity in the fourth century. And therefore the authors of our sources could have had absolutely no idea of the genuine national Georgian paganism (although, perhaps, idols were actually in existence). The author of The Life of St. Nino, too, has possessed no true information of the idol described in his work. He might have known only a description of the cult performed by the Persian magi in Mishek'ta, that of fire-worship, and of the attributes of the magi, and from these attributes the author's imagination had produced the figure and the cult of Armaz (ibid.). We have to do here, namely, with the barasan of the magi, used for ritual purposes, and the tiara with pieces of cloth hanging therefrom, which covered the magi's cheeks and lips during the ritual.

1 Cf. Procopius, B.P. 1, 12.
2 Cf. von Wissowa, op. cit., chaps. v. and vi.
3 Ed. Taqwishvili, p. 21; cf. Locatelli Mrovel in Life of Georgia (QMV), pp. 70 f.

Marr now lets the Georgian author's phantasy identify the barasan of the magi with the sword of Armaz, and the tiara with its overhanging pieces of cloth with the helmet and the shoulder-plates of Armaz, and in this way create the figure of the chief deity of the Georgian beathen Pantheon. But, even granting that a recollection of the above-quoted description of the magi might still have existed in Georgia at the time of the author of The Life of St. Nino, it is quite unlikely that an author would identify a barasan with a sword, and a tiara and cloth hanging therefrom with a helmet and shoulder-plates, or, in general create a deity from a mere description of the magi!

On the other hand, the god Ahura-Mazda whose name is supposed to be identical with that of Armaz, is represented on the Bisutun rock quite differently from the Armaz of the Georgian writers. Ahura-Mazda sits here on the winged solar disc and carries a garland in his left hand. This representation of the Persian god arose, as is well known, under the influence of the Assyrians, who represented the god Ashur in the same way, only with a bow in his left hand. This Assyrian form goes back to Hittite influence; the Hittites on their part took the solar disc symbol from the Egyptians. But these Persian, Assyrian, Hittite, and Egyptian representations have absolutely no connection with Armaz, as he is described in our sources.

Of decided importance, here, is the following passage in The Life of St. Nino, "In fear everyone worshipped Armaz who carried the terrible sword in his hand and said: 'Woe betide me, if I fall in any way in my worship of the majesty of our great god Armaz, or if I sin by talking to Jews, or by listening to the Magi when I meet sun-worshippers, and to other unreasonable talk about a great God in Heaven.' May he (Armaz) perchance find no fault in me and not strike me with his sword, before which the whole world is in fear."

There is no doubt that here a distinction is made between the different religions, which, in St. Nino's time had their followers in Georgia: that of Armaz—the national Georgian; that of the Magi—the Persian (Mazdaic); that of the Jews; and that of 'the great God in Heaven'—the Christian religion, which after the conversion of the Armenians by St. Gregory, also had its followers in Georgia.

The follower of Armaz is afraid that he may be suspected of leaning towards other religions, or of connections with their followers, and that for these supposed misdoings Armaz might vent his anger on him. Among these religions strange to him, the religion of the magi, that is, that of Ahura-Mazda, is mentioned, and hence it strictly follows that the Armaz religion must have been entirely different
from that of Ahura-Mazda and that the gods Ahura-Mazda and armaz could not possibly be identical.

Another passage of the same work is just as decisive on the question as to whether or not armaz is identical with Ahura-Mazda. St. Nino relates: "One day, when mighty and countless people set out from the town (Urbnisi, where St. Nino was at first) and went to the great city of Mslikhet'a, the seat of their kings, in order to do business there and to pray to their god armaz . . . I went with them and we came to the city of Mslikhet'a, to the Magi's quarter, near the bridge. We stood there and saw the fire-worshiping people and the Magi, and I wept over their erring ways, because of their perdition." 1 This ends one chapter of The Life of St. Nino, and the second begins thus: "On the following day, booming and trumpet-blasts were heard, and countless people came out; in formidable crowds as numerous as the flowers (of the field?), came they out. The king did not yet move and at an indicated moment, everyone began to run and hide himself. Everyone ran to a hiding-place, when Queen Nana came out. And, when Queen Nana had driven past, all the people came slowly out again and adorned the square with drapery of every kind and with leaves (from the trees). And the whole crowd began to praise the king, and then King Mirian came out with his face shining. And I asked the Jewess this question, 'What is this?' And she said, 'The god of their gods, armaz, commands them, that besides him there is no other god.' And I went to see armaz. The hills were covered with banners and with people, as numerous as the flowers. But I quickly entered the castle of armaz and stood near the idol at the edge of the wall." 2 Then follows the description of the idol itself.

Marr thought that we had here a description of a feast which lasted two days, namely, the Persian religious festival, The Life of St. Nino and The Life of Georgia had, in his opinion erroneously taken this feast for two different feasts: the one was, according to these sources, that of the fire-worship of the Persian Magi and the other that of the worship of Armaz by the royal family and the people. Marr said that it is only in the later version of The Life of Georgia that this view is taken, but that the oldest one considers this to be one and the same festival. Now Marr maintains that the oldest version of The Life of Georgia is his abbreviated and imperfect Armenian translation of the twelfth century. 3 But to-day we know for certain that Leontius Mrovelli, the author of this part in The Life of Georgia lived in the eleventh century and the compilation of The Life of St. Nino took place in the ninth century. 4 These texts are certainly much more reliable than the Armenian Chronicle of the twelfth century, which, as we have just said, is but an abbreviated and imperfect translation of the Georgian original.

The Georgian texts do not relate of two feasts; the passages in question are to be understood as follows: The authors of these sources knew that there were two pagan religions in Georgia: the foreign—Mazdaism—and the native—the worship of Armaz; and the difference between these two they strongly emphasize. They tell, neither of one feast which lasted two days, nor of two feasts, but definitely of only one feast on one day—of the Armaz feast. St. Nino only saw the fire-worship accidentally, on her way, when she came to the city-quarter of the Magi "near the bridge", in Mslikhet'a, and not as a feast, but as the performance of a religious rite. And the people and the royal family set out on the following day, to go to the Armaz feast. In no other way but this it is possible to understand the above-mentioned passage of The Life of St. Nino and that of L. Mrovelli's work. Indeed, the abbreviated Armenian version of The Life of St. Nino also tells of only one Armaz feast, without mentioning the passage concerning the fire-worship seen by St. Nino, which is contained in the Georgian original: "I followed the river (Kura) from the direction of the west, until the water turned to the east. And I reached Urbnisi, and was there one month. And then I came with merchants to Mslikhet'a. And on the day of the feast of Armaz I followed the king, and all the people," 5 says St. Nino.

Thus it is quite certain that Armaz was an entirely different god from Ahura-Mazda and that his cult had no connection whatever with that of fire-worship. What kind of god, then, was Armaz? Can we comprehend his character from the scanty details about him which our sources contain? We think this can be answered in the affirmative, for we consider Armaz to be identical with the Subarasean or Hurritic weather-god Teshub. 6

Teshub was also the national god of the Mitanni people whose language is related to that of the Hurrites 7 and who was second in the trinity of gods—Khalid, Tel(t)ishe, Ardinie—of the Urarteanes,

1 Javakhishvili, The Object, Sources, and Methods of History, etc., 1: K. Kodolitche, History of Georgian Literature, I (both in Georgian).
2 Translated by F. C. Curry on in O. Warlop's op. cit., p. 73.
3 Cf. also Brosset, Add. et Et., p. 21.
that is, of the pre-Indo-European people of Armenia. The cult of Teshub which was spread throughout the whole of Hither Asia, and also in Asia Minor, is practised, as it has been ascertained, by various peoples of the old Hittite Empire—not only by the Hittites whose national god he was, but also by the Hitittes, Luvian and proto-Hattians. He was worshipped, as is well known, by Western Semites and Babylomans and Assyrians under the names of Hdad and Adad. The Sumerians called the same weather-god, Ishkur.

The Asia Minor Teshub was represented with a thunder-bolt in his left and an axe in his right hand, with sword in his belt and with a cap, ball-shaped on top, and Arman as described in The Life of St. Nina and by Leontius Mrovelli reminds us of this Subarcaean god. The idol of Arman which stood on the hill in Mtskheta3 with the flashing sword and the helmet is just the Georgian Toshub, named by Georgians Arna. Arman stands on the hill in Mtskheta; Toshub as represented on the relief of Yasilikai is carried by a panther standing on a mountain-top. Arman carried a flashing sword in his hand; Toshub, who wears his sword in his belt, holds the thunderbolt and battle-axe in his hand. Arman wears a helmet, Toshub his cap. In spite of a few deviations, the picture of Arman is similar to that of Toshub. The Georgian conception of Arman with his polished sword which flashed and moved in his hand, and his helmet, corresponds with that of Toshub who carried his thunderbolt and his axe, and wore a sword in his belt and a helmet-like cap on his head. Both gods are represented as war-gods and Arman, like Toshub, is a heaven-god, lord of the air, a weather-god, as his epithets show: the giver of rain, the thunderer, etc.4

Now we must admit that Arman is not a Georgian name, its etymology cannot be ascertained from Georgian. But this is no argument against his cult in Georgia, resp. for his identification with Ahura-Mazda, with whom, except his name-similarity, Arman has nothing in common. It is also true, that the weather-god was worshipped by many peoples of the Hitittite empire (second millennium n.c.) where he was known by his native names, and invoked in the native tongues: by the Hittites in Hurrític, as Toshub; by the Hattians or proto-Hattians in proto-Hittitarian, as perhaps,

1 Cf. Sayce, The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Van, xiv. 1882; Corpus Inscriptionum Chaldacarum, 1928, 1985, etc.
4 Cf. The Life of St. Nina, p. 37; Leontius Mrovelli, op. cit., ii. 86, see, for instance, the epithets of the Babylonian weather-god, Mannaš 8 amunum 'bringer of springs and rain'. (V R. 50, Col. ii. 41, 27) Rammanum 'the thunderer' (H. Zimmern, Kat, p. 433) and many others.

Zahaparman, 5 by the Hitittes (the ruling people who had a West-Indian-European language strongly interspersed with the elements borrowed from the non-Indo-European languages of the aborigines of Asia Minor) in Hitittite, under a name not as yet known; by Luvians, who were related to the Hitittes, in Luvian, as perhaps Dalals. 6 This is the same Zevs of Labryanda, with the battle-axe, Zevs Brorov, Zevs Kepabwos, Zevs Yprônos of the later Asia Minor peoples and of the Gezan peoples related to them. Among none of these peoples do we find the weather-god called Arman or any similar name which the Georgians might have adopted.4 But there were in the Hitittite empire itself and in countries bordering on it, many peoples whose literary monuments are as yet undiscovered or never existed, and it is not impossible that the weather-god of one of these tribes bore a name identical with Arman, or similar to it, and this name was adopted by the Georgian tribe, K'art'vel or K'ty, or another...
tribe and retained after these people have immigrated into Caucasia and made their dwelling-place there. Much later, when Georgia stood in close relation with Persia, one thought of the similarity of the name Arma to that of Ahura-Mazda, and probably this explains the following passage in Leontius Movroli's work: "he (King Parnavaz) made a big idol called after his name. This is Arma. For Arma was called Parnavaz in Persia," that is, *xvarnakvani*-brilliant, splendid, endowed with *xvarnakh*-mystic brilliance. So they imagined in Mazdaic Persia the gods Ahura-Mazda, Mithra, etc., and the kings who were thought to be the earthly representatives of the heavenly ruler.  

But this has nothing to do with the true identity of the two gods Arma and Ahura-Mazda. We need only call to mind Jupiter Dolichenus. The Jupiter, who was worshipped in the Doliche, Northern Syria, whose cult was introduced into Europe by the Syrian and Roman soldiers and also by the merchants and slaves in the third century B.C., was originally Teshub.  

This Jupiter *optimus maximus Dolichenus was natus ubi forum exsoritur, or ubi forum nascitur*, as the statement on the inscriptions reads. According to Fr. Curnons, the worship of the god was brought to Kompagne by Khalybian smiths. On Syrian soil the god became *Balal (Samain),* that is, "Lord (of the Heavens)". In the time of the Achaeumides he was identified with Ahura-Mazda, because Ahura-Mazda was also represented as "the whole circle of the Heaven". Still later, in the time of Antiochus I. of Kompagne, he became *Zeus-Oromazdes.* Now the Khalybians, on account of their skill as smiths, were a famed Georgian tribe, but by what name they knew Teshub is not known to us, unfortunately.

Also the erection of idols to Arma and to other deities, of which our sources relate, can in no way be considered as the first introduction of the cult of these deities. The question is of the building of places of worship for the gods worshipped in the country, who had probably such places of worship in various localities.

L. Movroli recounts nothing else of King Rev but that he "brought home from Greece, his consort, who was the daughter of Logothetes."

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2 See Ed. Meyer, Reich und Kultur der Chatten, p. 119, fig. 89.
3 Ibid., p. 122 and p. 183 resp. p. 120.
5 Herod., i. 131.
perhaps some connection with the name of the Urartean King Arama, not with Ahura-Mazda.¹

Now we do not consider that Javakhishvili's objections can be taken as conclusive. Of course, miracle-stories of the destruction of the idols, etc., by the author of The Life of St. Nino, by Moses of Khorene and by Leontius Merveli, are legends which the Christian authors recounted farther in their tendentious writings or perhaps they imagined them. But, as already stated, that cannot in any way affect the fact of the existence of the idols, or of the worship of the heathen gods, of Armas and others. That Gelasios of Caesarea and Ruinus ² have written nothing concerning the destruction of the idols through the prayer of St. Nino, proves nothing. The Georgian, Bakur, might only have told Gelasios the essentials about the conversion of his country, or, which is more probable, Gelasios might have noted down what he considered to be the essential points in Bakur's story. It is true that in The Conversion of Georgia there is nothing about the destruction of the idols, but there are mentioned heathen gods and their idols which were "erected" by the kings,³ and it is this which is of decisive importance here. After all, the whole misunderstanding, as far as Javakhishvili is concerned, is based on the fact that Marc identified Armas with Ahura-Mazda and that Javakhishvili himself shared this view. But if the Georgian Armas and the Persian Ahura-Mazda are not considered to be identical, then immediately every difficulty disappears in the interpretation of the Georgian and also of the Armenian sources, for the Armenian authors must have taken their material concerning Georgian paganism from Georgian sources. Then it also becomes clear why the priest Jacob did not mention Armas. There was no need to mention him because the apostate Wask'en the Pilakish was converted not to the Armas, but to the Persian Mazdaic faith, for which he was bitterly reproached by his wife, Shushani, a pious Christian. In regard to Juansher's work too, the question refers to the Persian religion and not to Georgian idolatry, when he says: "And the Persians conquered K'art'li (5th century) and desecrated the churches. And the Georgians hid the crosses. And in all of the church of K'art'li the Persian fire-worshippers kindled fires." ⁴ The author of The Life of St. Nino indeed does not identify Armas with Ahura-Mazda, but strictly differentiates between the cult of Armas, that is, the Georgian idol-worship and that of Ahura-Mazda, the Persian fire-worship as already mentioned above. Javakhishvili is misconceived

by the following passages in The Life of St. Nino: "The Georgians served strange gods", "worshipped fire and stones and woods", and at the same time the "saint saw the fire-worshipping people and the Magi", and she wept "over their erring ways", and he says: "Consequently it seems that Georgians of the fourth century must have been fire-worshippers—both king and people." ⁵ Not exactly that! St. Nino (according to the author of her Life), saw the performance of different cults, which were practised for different deities, both foreign and native, among these cults being the Persian fire-worship, in which, perhaps, Georgians also took part. It is about this that our source reports, and therefore no contradiction is to be seen in the above-quoted words of the hagiographer. That the name Armas was forgotten by the Georgian people after their conversion is no wonder. The new Christian religion had taken care that the names of the pagan deities and their idols, as well as their cult in general, were eradicated, as St. Euthymius Mt'adsrnindeli has also testified.³ The god Armas, that is, the weather-god (not Ahura-Mazda) appears by other names—St. Elias, Piri-mze (sun-lace), etc., in the Georgian popular religion, even at the present time, just as the moon-god was worshipped and is still worshipped under the name St. George, by all Georgian tribes for centuries after the advent of Christianity—facts which have been so brilliantly demonstrated by Javakhishvili himself.³ The geographical name Armas-tsikhe ("Armas-castle") undoubtedly is no justification for believing that Ahura-Mazda was worshipped in Georgia in the form of an idol. This was not maintained by the authors of our sources, as already shown. But that the name is actually a combination—Armas-tsikhe = Armas-iz-tsikhe ("Armas-castle") cannot be doubted.² In The Life of Georgia it is related: "This K'art'li (the Eponym-ancestor of the Georgians), at first came to the place where (the river) Aragvi unites with (the river) Mtkvari (Kur). And he ascended the mountain which is called Armas, and the first he erected there a fortress and built himself a house. Until the setting up there of the idol to Armas: this mountain was called K'art'li..." (p. 5). K'art'li died and was buried on the summit of K'art'li called Armas" (ibid. p. 6). "The main fortress (near Mskhet'a) which is Armas" (ibid. p. 13). "King Parmaz (3rd century B.C.) set up the Armas idol on the summit of (the mountain) K'art'li and from that time it (the mountain) received the name

¹ History, ⁴, pp. 97-101.
² A. Glas, Die Kirchengeschichte der Gelasius von Kaisareia, die Vorlage für die beiden letzten Bücher des Kirchengeschichtsch Raffaeus (Pyrolianisches Archiv, Hef. 4).
³ Marc et Brière, op. cit., p. 870.
⁴ Life of Georgia, p. 117.
⁵ History, ⁴, p. 99 f.
The Georgian ethnologist S. Makalat'ia in his work on the Mithra religion in Georgia, inclines to think that Armaz is rather to be considered as identical with Mithra. According to him the cult of Mithra, which was spread throughout Asia Minor and Armenia was probably also practised in Georgia, although neither the old Georgian literature nor the archeological monuments provide any direct testimony of it. But Moses of Khorene says that in Mtiskhet'a "the people went at early morn to worship from their house-top that image (of Armaz) aloff their eyes", which might point to sunworship. According to Marr, Zaden may be identified with Yazata of Avesta, even with Mithra. O. G. von Wesendouk also accepts this identification, for Iberians worshipped the sun deity which we probably have to recognize in Zaden, the equivalent of the Iranian Mithra.

In different provinces, Georgians even to-day worship a deity, called by Megrans Mirsa, by Svans Mensi, by Gurians Maysari, which may easily be considered the equivalent of Mithra. Megrans celebrate the Mirs-feast before Lent. On the feast-day, which is always on a Thursday, a pig is killed, rolls are baked, and eggs are cooked. The members of the family take these rolls and eggs, touch their eyes with them and beg Mirsa to protect them from eye-disease and to grant them good eyesight, etc. The Svans and Gurians celebrate this feast in similar fashion and pray to the deity for the same favours. Here we have to do with Mithra, for he was esteemed as the eye of Ahura-Mazda. His emblem was the eye. The egg, as the symbol of life, was considered by Mithra worshippers to be the symbol of the god; and the wild boar, as is well known, was Mithra's animal. On the silver handle of a cult vessel found in Mtiskhet'a near the wall of the old cathedral (since 1899 the object was in the Caucasian Museum, but is now in the Georgian Museum in Tiflis), Mithra is portrayed with his attributes: solar disc, tiara, shoulder cover, staff, boar's head, raven- head and stove. The bronze statue found in Megrelia in 1925 (now in the Museum of Zongididi) with the Phrygian cap and the remains of a shoulder-cover, is also undoubtedly a statue of Mithra. Old Georgian kings bore such names as Mirian < Mithran, Mirdat < Mithdat, which contain the name of the god Mith, that is Mithra. Perhaps the name Amiran (Arm. Mher) of the hero of the famous Georgian Amiran-Saga, may also be traced back to A-mithran < A-mithra.

Javakhishvili also considers this possible; and in general there is much in the Georgian version of the Shah-Nahum and in the Avesta texts that points to the resemblance between the Aryan tales and the Mithra legends. Again, in the Georgian Tel'eti Giorgi (St. George, the "White George" who sits on a white horse), Mithra is probably hidden. All these prove indeed that the Mithra religion truly existed in Georgia and justifies us in concluding that the Armaz described in The Life of St. Nino, with his helmet, shoulder-cover (?), polished-sword, etc., is one and the same god as Mithra of whom we have similar representations, and who is further described in Khonda-Avesta thus: "Mithra is a warrior with the silver helmet; he is clothed in the golden coat of mail; he carries a piercing dagger; he holds in his hand a long sword, and sits on the white horse," etc.

Now we should like to make the following observation concerning Makalat'ia's arguments: It is just from these arguments that we can suppose that the Mithra cult in Georgia, although in existence, was not widespread. Up to now, no Mithraeaum has been discovered in Georgia, and if one were found, it would have to be proved whether it was a Georgian sanctuary of Mithra. The information given by Moses of Khorene, that in Mtiskhet'a Armaz was venerated at dawn, does not prove that Armaz was Mithra, the sun-god. Armaz was worshipped as the chief deity who was also god of heaven, spreader of the sun, etc. (See below, Section 3). The vessel-handle found in Mtiskhet'a and the statue found in Megrelia are evidently of foreign, not Georgian workmanship, and they in no way point to the diffusion of Mithra cult in Georgia. There is also nothing to indicate that they belonged to a Georgian Mithra sanctuary. The worship of Mirsa (resp. Mensi, resp. Maysari) in Georgia may well go back to the old Mithra cult in this country, but does not show that Mithra was ever the chief god of the Georgian Pantheon, as Armaz was, but shows that he was worshipped as a foreign god of light, and it is only as the protector of eyesight that he is still invoked in some provinces of Georgia.
Amiran (Arm. Mher) has hardly anything to do with Mithra (Mhr, Arm. Mher): there is nothing to justify us in analysing Amiran as A-mihan (A-mihan), theakhalian prefix a- + Mihan—(Mithra). But if its analysis as A-mihan were correct, and if we could find some common features in the Georgian Amiran Saga, Shah Nameh’s legends and the Avesta Mithra-myths, there can also be found still more of other elements in the Amiran Saga, which are not to be traced back to Persian influence. Besides, the Persian religion after the founding of the Achaemenian empire was strongly influenced by Babylonian and Asia Minor religions. Even the gods supplanted each other. Ahura-Mazda has been identified with the Babylonian Bêl, Mithra with Samaš, the Babylonian sun-god, resp. with the Asia Minor Men, the moon-god (Mithra with the horse), with Altis, Anahita with the Asia Minor goddess Kybele, resp. the Babylonian Ishlar, etc.; in Greece, Ahura-Mazda with Zeus; Mithra with Helios, etc. Astrology was appropriated by the Persian mages from the Babylonians, and it still remains to be examined exactly, how much Babylonian resp. Asia Minor elements are contained in the Persian Mithra myths. In any case, the Georgian Amiran Sagas contain nothing Persian. And what might be considered as Grecian or Persian in these sagas, belongs much more to very old sources, from whence the influence on the Grecian Prometheus saga resp. the Persian Mithra legends might have originated. Some details in the cult of the Persian T'êrî Gorgi which remind us of Mithra, may also be traced back to the times when Mithra, himself, in the Pontus, was identical with Men, the moon-god, and the Georgian St. George is but the moon-god, as Javakhishvili has incontestably proved.  

Wassendek’s identification of the Zaden of the Georgian sources with Yazata, Mithra, the sun-god who was also worshipped in Iberia, is unacceptable, as we shall see below. Besides, the Georgians worshipped the sun as a deity, not of the male, but of the female sex. The spreading of Persian personal names containing god-names in old Georgia (as Mirian, Mihran, etc.) still does not prove that the respective deities had their cult in the country.

Finally a few words about the representations and descriptions of Mithra. Mithra was, again under the influence of foreign religions, not only represented as god of light, neither of the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, but observing the world with his thousand eyes—and not only as god of fertility, giver of abundance, of prosperity and multiplicator of cattle, god of vegetation, giver of water, etc., but also as the fighter against evil spirits, the fighter for the Good, the helper in a fight for the Good, and finally the war-god. It is therefore comprehensible that some features in his representations and descriptions remind us of other war-gods, among them Teshub. 

But these representations of Mithra diverge greatly from the description of Armaz in The Life of St. Nino. The Armaz described there bears little resemblance to the Mithra who holds holy twigs in his left hand and stretches out his right hand to King Antiochus I of Kommagene, still less to the Mithra who kills the bull, and none at all to the Mithra portrayed on the handle of the Miskhet'a vessel. Also the Georgian samikhroni or samkharoni in our sources certainly signifies “shoulder-plates” (pl.) and not “shoulder-cover” (of the bull-killing Mithra) as Maklat’ia seems to think. The Mithra described in Khorda-Avesta is the only one which resembles the Armaz of our sources, but in spite of this we cannot consider Armaz to be the same god as Mithra, because it is absolutely impossible that the Persian Mithra religion, if it had become the official religion of Georgia, would have been in such a strong opposition to, and publicly manifested hostility against, the likewise Persian religion of the Magi (fire-worship) as our sources record. We should have had to do here with quite a curious phenomenon, for it was the Magi themselves who, from the time of Achaemenides, after the contact of the Iranians with other peoples of the East, and under the influence of their religions, had contributed in greatest measure to the development of post-Zarathustrian Mazdaism.

Thus, Armaz remains for us a totally different deity also from the god Mithra.

V

It is further related in The Conversion of Georgia that Parnamaz, the successor of King Mirvan (successor of Saurman, who succeeded Parnavaz), erected an idol to the god Zaden and built a castle on this spot. Which god, and whose god, was this Zaden? Marr thought that Zaden was none other than Yazata of Avesta, pl. yazata in...
Pahlavi, in Persian yazdān, which means "the good deity", that is, Mithra, Mithra, and then "god" in general. As we have already seen, Marr's opinion is that the Persian (properly Parthian) god's name Parnawmj was originally the epithet of Zaden-Mithra "Pāramanastis", the highest brilliance of Mithra "properly the most sublime", "the most magnificent" and Parnawmj, the Persian phonetic equivalent of this epithet. He maintained, also, that the Parthian king's name Payrunau (<Parnawmj) was the Persian form of the same epithet for Ahura-Mazda (without the final syllable -m). Now it is certainly true that the first component part of the name Payrunau and Parnawmj, Payru-goes back to old Persian γαρνα- ("glory", "brilliancy", "sublimity", "majesty"). Persian farnah (and it is also true that hor "sun" is mentioned just in The Life of St. Nino: "This says the king of Persia, Huvara, and the king of kings Huram-Huamay", etc.). But all this has nothing to do with the god Zaden.

Zaden, in our opinion, cannot be identified with Mithra, or have any connection with yazdān—at any rate we have no actual proof of it, but Zaden can be identified with the Asia Minor god Sandon, Santas (Sa-an-ta-æ, ZDMG, N.F., i, Heft 2, pp. 216 f.), Sandon-Santas (cf. Pauly-Wissowa: Realencyklopädie der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft: Σάντας, Σαντάς, Σάντας) was, as is known, the god of vegetation, who was worshipped from Cilicia to Cappadocia and also in the west and southwest Asia Minor (by Lydians and others). That he was worshipped in Georgia as Zaden, we presume from the Georgian name Zaden (Luvian Santas of the Boghaz-kiö text = Sandon of Greek sources) and the characteristics of the deity given in The Life of St. Nino and by Leontius Merveli. Marr denied the existence of Zaden-worship and of any Zaden idol in Mtshhet'a and considered the information concerning this god in the Georgian sources to be a fable arising from the Christian author's tendency to represent Georgian paganism as "horrible idolatry". But we can see in The Life of St. Nino, even admitting this tendency of the author, quite clearly, what kind of deities Armaz and Zaden were. The existence of the idols of these gods and their cult in Mtshhet'a is no tale of the author's imagination; on the contrary, the "horrible idolatry" is described in our sources in such a way, that, apparently it actually existed in Georgia.

King Mirian says to St. Nino: "These are the gods who give luxuriant fruits and rule the world, who spread out the sun and give rain, who make the fruits of the Georgian soil to thrive—Armaz and Zaden, who explore everything that is hidden." Evidently they are: (1) the Superman god of Heaven, of light, of rain, of the air (Arman = Tishb); (2) the Asia Minor (Luvian) god of fertility, of vegetation, (Zaden = Sendon-Santas), which in the Hittite version of the text KUB, ix. 37 is rendered through the ideogram of Marduk. To this Javakhishvili remarks that in the Georgian text the attributes mentioned are ascribed to both gods and that it is hardly possible to infer therefrom the respective character of each. Yet for us this information from our text is all the more interesting as both gods were represented by different peoples with many attributes common to them. For instance, by Babylonians and Assyrians (Adad = Hurritc Tishb) was esteemed not only as a weather-god and war-god, but also as (1) god of abundance, (2) Marduk of rain, (3) god of oracle, (4) ruler of the world, (5) judge of destinies, (6) god of harvest, etc. Marduk was also esteemed as (1) god of abundance, (2) lord of vegetation, (3) lord of the springs, (4) lord of the world, (5) creator of mankind—epithets of which there is no end in Babylonian-Assyrian literature. Marduk (worshipped by the Babylonians as the great god, creator of the world, sun-god, etc.), was also esteemed as the god of vegetation (the Babylonians had a special god of vegetation—Tammuz), hence the epithets which he has in common with Adad (= Hurritc Tishb) and Tammas (= Asia Minor Attis), and his ideogram for the rendering of the name of Santas in the above-mentioned Boghaz-kiö text. The case is just the same in our Georgian text, where the attributes common to both gods, Armaz and Zaden are enumerated, though the special character of each of them could not
fail to be recognized. But in another text the god of vegetation,
namely the god of wine, is actually mentioned.

The Georgian translation of the Canons of the Sixth Ecumenical
Council4 contain the following remark by St. Euthymius Mt'ad'minda;
"The names of the destroyed heathen idols, which they (the Georgians)
recognized as gods, of the male as well as of the female sex, are
exterminated: Dios [sic!] and Apolos [sic!] and Artemis and Baotsh5
and Galsi and Badagon and Arman and the name of the horrible
Dionysos which is invoked at the pressing of the grapes. . . . All that
is deviSh and was exterminated by the Christians." It is striking
here that the name Zaden is not mentioned by Euthymius. But this
name could not have been unknown to the great writer, who knew
Georgian literature too well, and it is to be admitted that he used the
Greek name Dionysos for Zaden, as he did in the case of other gods—
Dios, Apolos, Artemis, for only Zaden can be identified here with
Dionysos, according to his attributes as god of vegetation. Also
Sandon is portrayed in "Hittite" dress, with a bunch of grapes in
his right and a sheaf of corn in his left hand, on the rock near Ibrizi.

Arma and Zaden, as our sources show, were not only as the weather-god resp. god of vegetation, but both were esteemed
as gods of wisdom, the oracle-gods in Georgia, as Adad and Marduk
were in Babylonia.6 Here we may point to one more attribute of
Arma: "the Chaldean goddess It'rjan and this our god Arma,
are complete enemies to each other, for once Arma raised up the sea
against her and now she has taken her revenge and inflicted this
(that is, the destruction of his idol) on him," said King Mirian to
St. Nino,7 through whose prayer at the time of the Arma-feast in
Mtskheta, the idols were destroyed. This reminds us of Adad, the
ruler of the elements, also of the sea, as he is characterized in Sumerian
and Babylonian-Assyrian texts: sa abibi "(the god) of the flood 8;
esag-gal abzu "the great prince of the water depths" 9; bêl abibi,
"the lord of the flood" 10; Adad sa mâši: sa tawri nurri sa bišî, "Adad of the country: of the sea, of (the flood of) light, of the
lightning" 11; mnû-ti-tab-bêl šanê šadû ta-ma-a-ti, "the destroyer of
heaven, mountains and seas" 12; Adad tamâ irahhîs, "Adad will

1 Ed. Khakhmanashvili, p. 113; Javakhishvili, History, III, p. 80.
2 Nothing exact is known of this god.
4 Concerning Sandon (identified with Marduk in the Hittite text mentioned)—the
West, cf. Heiser in Roscher's Mythology, Lexikon, 4.330, 29; and concerning Sandon,
6 CT., xxv, 40, 49.
7 Ibid., 16, 38; 29, 85.
8 King, Magic, 21, rev. 80.
9 Viroliunani, Astr. Chalil, Adad, xvii, 34.
10 Viroliunani, Astr. Chalil, Adad, xvii, 34.
11 Aside, 21, rev. 80.

12 It is to this attribute of the weather-god, presumably, to which Mirian refers, when he relates that Arma had once raised the sea against the goddess It'rjan, his foe, for in
Babylonia the same attributes were assigned to this god as in other
countries, although we learn much less about the matter in the
literature of other peoples than in that of the Babylonian.

That the idols of Arman and Zaden were erected near the city
of Mtskheta, and that their cult was actually practised, is shown by the
following passage from The Life of St. Nino: "Now there were in
this land of K'art'li two mountains, and on these mountains two idola,
Arman and Zaden, from which arose the evil small of thousands
of first-born children, whom their parents brought as sacrifices—(these)
Arma and Zaden." The custom, spread throughout Syria and
Palestine, of sacrificing to the gods the first fruits of the harvest,
and also the first-born of man and beast—a custom which might have
come from Asia Minor to Georgia—is actually stated in our source, and
we have no ground for doubting the truth of this information from
the Georgian source. Also Strabo described the bringing of human
offerings to the moon-god in Caucasian Albania, which embraced one
part of Eastern Georgia. This custom, probably Semitic in origin,
sacrificing to the deity an adolescent son, especially a first-born,
was native with the Canaan tribes (with Carthaginians still at the
end of the fourth century), and apparently its influence spread to
Iran, as we learn from Herodotus account of the Magi in Thrace,
who buried alive nine native boys and nine girls. It seems to have
been native also in Georgia, as Strabo and the national sources show.
At any rate it is in no way a phantasy of a Georgian writer, as Marr
would have it.

In The Life of John Zedazeli, it is related that "formerly a tower
was erected by the heathen on this mountain (of Zedazeni). An
altar stood there which was used for the dreadful sacrifices to horrible
devils offered by awful men, wickedly misguided by them" 13 (= the

2 In the Armenian version of The Life of St. Nino, an abbreviated translation from
Georgian, the attributes of Arman and Zaden are assigned to other gods (Gemina and
Gazia), while the translator leaves out Arman and Zaden (cf. Conybeare, op. cit.,
pp. 89 ff.).
3 p. 50.
4 XI, iv, 7.
6 Herodotus, vii, 114.
7 Fr. Spiegel remarks concerning this, and with reason, that there is either a
misunderstanding here, or we have to do with the influence on Iran of a strange cult,
because human sacrifice is incompatible with the character of Persian religion and it
also contradicts all that Herodotus states elsewhere about this religion (Frudvnbles
Altermannhii, iii, p. 598). Perhaps the offering of sacrifice on the heights may also
be traced back to strange, probably Asia Minor influence (Herod., i, 131; Strabo,
xx. C, 739).
Here we have the same traditional idea as in The Life of St. Nino where the author makes St. Nino say to the women who have awakened from their dream of the full of the mountains near Mtskheta and the flooding of the rivers Mtkvari and Aragvi: "... the mountains of unbelief in Georgia are now destroyed and the water (of the rivers) which is still, is the blood of the children sacrificed to the devils, which has ceased to flow." 

The converted King Mirian says: "I am the thirty-sixth king in Georgia from the (first) appearance of our fathers to my own day. And for the horrible idols they (our fathers) killed [word for word—devoured] their children and the innocent people of the country, and some of our fathers mowed down their children like hay, as to please the idols." "And especially on these two mountains of Armaz and Zaden, whose stones even are impregnated with the blood of little ones! And these mountains truly deserve to be destroyed by the fire of the wrath of God!" 

Leontius Mroveli also tells that King Rev (A.D. 186—213) "during his reign no longer allowed anyone in Georgia to offer up children for children were sacrificed formerly. Instead, he ordered them to sacrifice sheep and cows. And therefore he received the name of Rev the Just." 

The memory of human sacrifice must have remained alive with the Georgians long after they had embraced Christianity, seeing that the later Christian authors were able to give such a description of the custom several centuries after its disappearance.

VI

Unfortunately the Georgian sources report very little about the deities Gatsi and Ga or Gaim, although even these gods are considered as national deities. According to The Conversion of Georgia, Alexander the Great brought to Georgia Ayo, the son of the king of Aran-Kart'li (vex. Ar'ian-Kart'li), made him king, and gave him Mtskheta for his royal seat. Ayo then went to his father in Aran- or Ar'ian-Kart'li and brought back with him eight families and ten families of his fellow-tribesmen, and took seat in old Mtskheta. He had with him the idols Gatsi and Gaim, which he worshipped as gods. And on the right of him (that is Armaz) stood a golden idol and his name was Gatsi, and on the left a silver idol by the name of Ga, which your fathers had worshipped as gods in Ar'ian-Kart'li.

3. Ibid., p. 68.
4. Ibid., p. 37.
5. V, 6, 18.
7. A. Götze, Kleinasien, p. 127.
But for him only the name is of importance which has been preserved in Syrian Christian literature, and which, together with the other god-name 'Ata under the form Galsi, the Georgian author versed in Syrian, had taken and made of them two national Georgian pagan gods. Marr explains the form Gais as being the Hebrew plural of Ga with -im. Since the translations (Grecian, Armenian, and Georgian) from Hebrew have often retained the Hebrew plural sign, the Georgian author, too, ignorant of Hebrew, might have affixed this plural sign -im to the name Ga, as for instance the Armenian translator of The Life of St. Nino did with both names Galsi and Ga when he rendered them in Armenian as Gais-im and Gay-im.

But the problem is not so easy to solve as Marr thought. Why the Georgian author versed in Syrian, who found in a Syrian book a semitized god-name resp. an epithet of another Semitic god, should have made of them national Georgian deities is quite incomprehensible to us. The Aramaic god-name 'Ata was certainly not taken out of Melito's book by a Georgian author, and introduced into the Georgian heathen Pantheon as Gais or Gat. 'Ata was indeed a Syrian deity, but originally an Asia Minor god, who was worshipped in Cilicia, Phrygia, Lydia, etc., known to Greek and Roman writers as Atis—a deity of the same nature as Adonis of Biblos and Tamiz of Babylon—who was admitted in the West-Semitic Pantheon as 'Ata. The Greek Ἀρδαίας is composed, as is known, of ἄρατξα and γάτας, Aramaic 'Atar-'Ata, which means "the goddess," the "Ishat" (the beloved) of 'Ata, of Tamiz. From Asia Minor the cult of 'Ata must have spread over all Syria, and it is also very probable that this god was worshipped by the Georgian tribe of Kartians in their Asia Minor home, and followed them to Caucasian Georgia, and to this the accounts in our source seem to point. Also the name Ga of the Georgian sources has no connection at all with the component Ga of the proper names found in the above-cited Semitic inscriptions. Such a deity is not known in the Semitic Pantheon with certainty. Some of the scholars, as, for instance, Gildemeister and Nöldeke (see the quotations above) denied the existence of such a deity and considered the name to be an epithet. It is also improbable that -im of the Georgian Gais-im is the Hebrew plural ending, as Marr thought. We have a variant for Gais—is Gais, and perhaps the name Gaiman [sic] in Leontius Mroveli's work is the complete, uncorrupted form of the abbreviated Gais: Gaimay. In the Moscow edition of the Georgian Bible, 1 Kings

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2 Mat. 12, 21, 22.
3 Also ḫer, cf. Noldeke, ZDMG, 1870 (24), pp. 92, 199.
4 Cf. 1 Sam. vii. 4.
5 Cf. 1 Sam. vii. 4.
7 Ib. 7, p. 71.
8 Cf. J. Meyer, Geschichte, 7, p. 470, 480, 485, 487; H. Hoppin, Atis, seine Mythen und seine Kulte, 1903; H. Groszmann, Die orientalischen Religionsim der hellenis-}

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7. See J. Friedrich, Orientalische Literaturkritik, 1923, col. 217.
8 Cf. E. Meyer, Geschichte, 7, p. 92, 109, 199.
9 Cf. 1 Sam. vii. 4.
10 Cf. J. Meyer, Geschichte, 7, p. 470, 480, 485, 487; H. Hoppin, Atis, seine Mythen und seine Kulte, 1903; H. Groszmann, Die orientalischen Religionsim der hellenis-}

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10. See J. Friedrich, Orientalische Literaturkritik, 1923, col. 217.
11 Cf. E. Meyer, Geschichte, 7, p. 92, 109, 199.
and also parallel figures to the sun deities; hence Sandon = Marsuk, Abis = Sandon, in Asia Minor, etc. But, unfortunately, our old Georgian sources contain no more information about these gods and their chosen brides than that their names were Guts-i and Ga and that they were the "old gods" of Ar[i]an Kar'ti, that is, of the original home of the Kart'ian tribe of the Georgian nation.

VII

We have another deity still to consider here, which, indeed, is not mentioned in our texts, but is worshipped, even today, by the Abkhazians, and seems to be of Asia Minor origin—the goddess Asahara or Azahara, who in our estimation is to be looked upon as the well-known Asia Minor goddess Is'hara. This goddess is often mentioned in the Boghaz-koi texts and was invoked in the Hurritic tongue. From earliest times she was also worshipped in Babylonia and Assyria, and an Elamite Naram-Sin inscription mentions her under the name of Ašhara.3

The similarity of the names Is'hara resp. Ašhara with Asahara resp. Azahara, is not the only striking thing here, but also the similarity in the nature of the Asia Minor goddess with the Abkhazian goddess: Abkhazians esteemed Ašṭār as the protecting goddess of the homestead, of the family. In Abkhazia, the father of a family prays Ašṭār to protect his son's bride and the newly founded family. Georgian mountain-tribes still honour "the angel of the house," "the mother of the place," and the cult of these goddesses goes back to the earliest times, as we learn from the note in the Georgian translation of the Decisions of the Antioch Ecumenical Council: "We have also heard, that in Armenian and Georgian countries . . . they call the tempters (devils) 'angels of the house' and serve them . . . and that they serve the invisible (spirits) in the house or outside in the fields."4 Her epithet's point to exactly the same character of the goddess Is'hara, which we learn from Babylonian-Assyrian literature: barsu-ru annu im-ni-tum sin isša, "Is'hara, the merciful mother of mankind,"5 qasat napiši, "the giver of Life,"6 ṣatē šalšu, "the mistress of the dwelling-place," etc.7

1 The name Kykele is perhaps to be identified with the Georgian Kopala, Kopala is worshipped by the Georgian mountain-tribes (in Eastern and Western Georgia) as a male deity and indeed he is identified sometimes with St. George the moon-god, and sometimes with Kevin (= manager of the earth). Sometimes also he is called the god of hunting. But it is to be remarked that he is considered to be a great hate of women (cf. Jakubskii, History, p. 594), which purely points to some kind of sexual perversion connected with the cult of Asia Minor.
4 Jakubskii, History, p. 83.
5 Jakubskii, History, p. 82.
6 King, Magic, 7, rev. 87.
7 King, Magic, 57, 2
8 IV R 89, coll. iv, 1.

Experts of the Abkhassian language derive the word Asahara from asa, "blood," "seed," "family," and hara, "protection," "rule."1 If this etymology were correct2 we should be justified in believing that the original home of the Abkhassians, like that of the Georgians, was in Asia Minor, and that the cult of the goddess Is'hara, even from earliest times, was spread as far south as Babylonia and Elam, and that later, with the immigration of the Abkhassians to Caucasus, it spread in the north.

VIII

A few words still about the goddesses who are mentioned in the old Georgian sources, but whose names do not appear to be of Asia Minor origin—Aminia and Dana. Unfortunately the texts report very little about these deities. The Conversion of Georgia only mentions that the idol of Aminia was erected by King Saumag "on the road," and the idol of Dana by King Mirvan "on the road, opposite to it" near Mtskhet'a.3 Leontius Mroveli4 says that King Saumag erected the idols of both goddesses Aminia and Danai on the Mtskhet'a road. Can this be a reference to the introduction of the cult of the Iranian Anahita by the successors resp. the successor of the King Parnavaz in Georgia? Certainly not, in so far as the introduction is concerned, for the cult of the goddesses probably existed before the erection of their idols by the Kings. But it is very probable that we have here to do not with Anahita, but with two names of the Sumerian Ishtar: Is'nina and Nis'ana whose cult had also invaded other lands and who had been merged with local figures of Ishtar.

In the original Georgian texts probably stood not Aminia and (Georg. copula da) Dana resp. Dana, but Aminia and Nima resp. Nana (that is, in Georgian Aminia da Nijana). A later copyist wrote da twice (copula "and"), and thus the miss-spelled name Danijana4 has been introduced in historical literature.

In Persia, Nana was merged with Anahita (originally a Persian water-goddess). Armenia (particularly Akilisene) was the chief seat of the cult of Asahib and Nana, who, like Ishkar in Babylon, was...
worshipped as goddess of war and identified with the Venus star; and this cult was originally not Iranian, but resembled that of Babylonian and Asia Minor. In Asia Minor, Anahita and her cult merged with the various figures of mother-gods and their cults. The Sumerian Ishtar was called 4Nimm (CT, xxiv, 33, K. 4349, obv. col. v, 4, etc.), 4Inana (CT, xxv, 17, K. 2100, obv. col. ii, 11), 4Nana (Dhorme, Choix de Textes, etc., xviii, rev. 16), 4Nina (Thureau-Dangin, SAK, p. 11 and Goddes Cyl. A., xx, 16, etc.), 4Inana (CT, xxv, 30, K. 2109, etc., rev. col. 1, 14), 4Inana (King, Seven Tablets of the Creation, append, v, 51), 4Inana (IVK, 4, col. iii, 27), etc., and in the Sumerian-Babylonian religious and other kinds of literature, she is honoured with countless epithets such as "mistress of battle" (war-goddess), "goddess of morning" and "goddess of evening." " (the star) Dilbal = Ishtar, mistress of the lands," "the morning which opens the way" (Venus star), "mistress of love," "crestress of mankind," "she who lets grow the young green (goddess of vegetation), "mistress of the mountains and of the seas," goddess of the water and the fish, etc.

As already conjectured, we probably have the Sumerian names of the goddess in the Georgian Artishina and Njishana (instead of Damišana) which are two forms of one and the same deity, whose idols were placed opposite each other on the road, and whose cult resembled probably the Sumerian-Babylonian resp. the Asia Minor-Armenian cult of Ishtar. It is to be observed here that nana, nasina of the Georgian lullabies, and also arnani, nani, etc. were most probably once invocations of these goddesses. The feminine names Ninae and Nana which were largely used in Georgia, and still are, have hardly any connection with the name of the goddess. These names of women are Asia Minor pet-names, whereas the names of the goddesses Artishina and Nisha seem to be Sumerian names for Ishtar, and point to the existence of the cult of Ishtar in Georgia, which only could come to this country from Babylonia through Asia Minor.

IX

Finally, which deity was the Chaldean goddess Ir'rujan which, as we have seen above, is mentioned in our sources as being opposed to Armaz. Marr correctly recognized in Ir'ru— the first part of the word Ir'rujan, the Georgian pronunciation of the Syriac 'esthrun-tha' ( = Ishtar). But his explanation of the second part -jan, of Ir'rujan,


is certainly wrong. According to him, -jan is connected with the Syrian word of feminine gender genialha "idol". It is true, of course, that in Georgian the foreign sound g becomes j, as in New Syriac (for instance, Georg. Pranji > Pranji, "Frank," "French," "European," etc.). This word Genialha is also used several times in the Syriac version of the Scripture, not just in the sense of idol, in general, but in that of the idol of Astarte. From these elements, Syr. 'esthrun-tha' and genia-tha (without the ending), the Georgian author must have made the goddess Ir'rujan. But the Georgian Ir'rujan can hardly be explained in this way. It cannot mean "Idol of Astarte", as Marr thought, for a construction like 'esthrun-genia is impossible in Syriac, and impossible also is 'esthruntha genialha "Astarte of the idol (of Astarte)," which has no sense. Besides, such a god-name is unknown in Syria, or in any other Semitic country, and the wonderful ability which Marr ascribed to our Georgian authors for making gods from pure words cannot possibly be recognized.

The name Ir'rujan, in our opinion, is to be explained thus: It is the Georgian pronunciation of the name of the Aramaic goddess 'Alar-samain (= Assyr. Istar (šašamē), "goddess of the Heaven," "heaven-goddess" (the deity of the heavens, male sex, was called Ba'al-samain by the Canaanites), which in the Assyrian-Babylonian literature is also called "stirrer-up of the sea" and "overwhelmer of the mountains." This 'Alar-samain is rendered as Ir'ruhana in a passage of The Life of St. Nino: "this Armaz and the Chaldean goddess (in the text 'God', for in Georgian g'mer means both 'god' and 'goddess') Ir'ruhana are complete enemies to each other," King Mirian says to St. Nino. And Ir'ruhana is certainly the form which, phonetically, is still nearer to 'Alar-samain than Ir'rujan. As it is to be seen from The Life of St. Nino, the might and greatness of the Aramaic goddess of heaven, 'Alar-samain, were well-known in Georgia, for the Georgian explanation of the destruction of the idol of Armaz was as follows: "Once our god Armaz raised the sea against her, and now she has taken her revenge and has let this (that is, the destruction of his idol) happen to him." Being a foreign Chaldean goddess, an enemy of the Georgian national god Armaz, the one who destroyed his idol, Ir'rujan probably had neither idol nor cult in Georgia and perhaps we have in this rivalry between Armaz and Ir'rujan an echo of the resistance which the native Georgian paganism,
or what was recognized as such, made against the gods who invaded Georgia from foreign countries.  

In connection with the worship of gods of vegetation, we must direct our attention to tree-worship and pillar-worship, the existence of which in Georgia we see quite clearly in our sources. Indeed, the accounts of the wonderful and miraculous trees and pillars given in The Life of St. Nino are not stories purely imagined by the authors, but are based on a good tradition which makes it possible to connect the old Georgian cult of trees and pillars with similar practices in Asia Minor and other countries.

When King Mirian decided to build a church, he asked St. Nino:

"Where shall I build the temple to God?" St. Nino answered:

"In that place where the sovereigns think good." And the King said: "I will not spare the royal garden, nor the height of the pine-trees, nor the fruitfulness of the vines and the perfume of the flowers, but in it I will build for my prayers a temple which shall last for eternity..." "And wood was brought and they began to build. And they felled a pine and made a pillar of it, and at its roots the foundation of the church was laid." Now the largest of the seven pillars made was so heavy that it could not be raised, even by a great number of men. Then, surely in answer to the prayer of St. Nino, it was raised up by a heavenly youth and carried heavenward. And they saw how the pillar descended in the form of a column of fire... and how, in coming down, it stood still twelve ells from the ground and (then) slowly rested on its own cut surface." On the following day the king saw a great light in his garden and everybody saw that "the marvellous, light-radiating pillar had descended as if it were standing in its place on its stump, and had firmly fixed itself in position without ever having been touched by human hand." 2

Naturally, this pillar performed many miracles in the king's garden, where the church was to be built. Hence the name "the living pillar," which was later given to the Cathedral of Mtskhet' a.

Surely this is a valuable testimony of pillar-worship in old Georgia—a cult which has been investigated by A. Evans on the

1 Our explanation of the name Hvania refutes that given by Broset (Historie de la Georige, p. 102, n. 2) and, after him, by Conybeare and Wordsworth (The Life of St. Nino, p. 74, n. 1), who identified it with Xishkhoti. The latter is indeed Zi-daut-e (of Sce Mesnner, Babyloniens und Assyriens, II, p. 114), the Sumonian name of the Babylonian Ut-napisritu ("Noah" of the Gilgamesh Epic), which has no connection at all with the Aryan goddess of heaven Abara-Imani.


Islands of the Aegaean Sea, in Greece, etc., and which apparently found its way into these countries from Asia Minor.

Concerning the erection of the "venerable cross" in Mtskhet'a, our texts tell the following stories which clearly point to tree-worship in old Georgia: "When the tree was felled (for the making) of the reverend and victorious cross, ten times ten men carried it upright, with its twigs and its leaves on, and brought it into the town, the people wondered at it because it had green color and the leaves in early spring-time, when every tree is still dry. This one had no dead leaves at all and was sweet-smelling and beautiful to look at. Then they placed it upright on its roots at the south door of the church. And a light wind blew from the side of the river and shook the leaves and moved the twigs of the tree. Beautiful it was to look at and sweet-smelling, as we know from report of the aloe tree. This tree we felled on 25th March, on Friday, and it remained thus for thirty-seven days. And its leaves did not change but remained like those of a tree which has its roots near the source of a spring, until all the trees of the wood were clothed with leaves and adorned with blossoms. Then on 1st May, these crosses were made, and on the 7th of the same month they were erected, receiving the laying-on of hands from the king, amidst the rejoicing and great zeal of the whole city." 1 And with the same jubilation crosses were erected in many other places in accordance with God's desire. 2

Still more interesting, perhaps, is the following passage from The Life of St. Nino, where King Mirian relates: "When I was informed about the erection (of the cross) I sent the carpenters out to look for a tree. How they had found a tree standing alone, growing on a rock, untouched by human hand, and how they had heard from hunters of the miraculous power of this tree, that a stag, wounded by an arrow, had run to the hill where the tree was standing, and had rapidly eaten seeds fallen from the tree, and had saved himself from death—all that they reported to me, and I was astounded. Therefore I had the tree felled, and three crosses made out of it," 3 etc. Leontius Mroveli gives the following: "At the time when the king and queen, their children and all the people were baptized, there stood a tree on a place, on an inaccessible rock. And this tree was beautiful and very sweet-smelling. The marvellous thing about this tree was, that a wild animal, wounded by an arrow, came (to it) and ate its leaves or its fallen seeds, and thus saved its life, although it had been mortally wounded. The former pagans thought this miraculous, and they told Bishop John about this tree." The bishop saw in it a sign

2 L. Mroveli, op. cit. pp. 102 f., and The Life of St. Nino, ibid.
3 p. 99.
from God and decided to have the venerable cross made out of it. Then the king's son Rev, the bishop himself, and other people, went and felled the tree and brought it to Mtshet'a.\textsuperscript{1}

If we now compare these details from the Georgian sources with what we learn of the Asia Minor tree- and pillar-worship in the accounts of Greek and Roman authors, we shall see that without doubt a connection exists between the customs of Asia Minor and those described by the Georgian authors. The tradition preserved in the Georgian stories appears to be an echo of the most ancient pagan cult of Asia Minor.

In Asia Minor and northern Syria, indeed, every large tree, especially a tree standing alone on a hill or a rock, was the seat of a deity and possessed miraculous power, particularly healing power. On its twigs people used to hang offerings, etc., and similar representations and customs are to be found in Georgia, which are to be traced back to the old tree-worship.\textsuperscript{2}

Naturally, the deity with his seat in a tree, was, in Asia Minor, the god of vegetation—Sandon, resp. Attis. From the seventh century B.C. to the end of the Roman Empire thus cult is to be found in different countries of Asia Minor, in Greece, Rome, etc. In Hierapolis the Attis feast took place in early spring. Large trees were felled and erected on the sacred places and sheep, goats, birds, drapery and ornaments were hung on their branches, and then burnt with great jubilation.\textsuperscript{3} According to another account, the pine-tree, which represented the corpse of the dead Attis, was burnt, together with a picture of the dead god, a year later.\textsuperscript{4} Similar feasts in springtime were celebrated also in Phrygia,\textsuperscript{5} Greece (Attika),\textsuperscript{6} and Rome.\textsuperscript{7} Also the pyre feast to the Cicilian god of vegetation, Sandon, who, sitting in the tree, is engraved on Tarsus coins of the time of the Celeniids and the Roman Emperors, is well-known.\textsuperscript{8}

Finally, the cult of the deities of vegetation in Asia Minor may be compared with that of the Egyptian god Osiris. In the city of Busiris they erected a large tree which was supposed to represent the spine of Osiris, etc.\textsuperscript{9} Remains of the pagan cults of the deities of

\textsuperscript{1} Op. cit., pp. 100 ff., after which follows the above-quoted account of the entrance into the town of the wonderful tree.

\textsuperscript{2} Tree-worship was also practised by Egyptian and Semitic peoples (cf. Ed. Meyer, Geschichte I, §§ 180, 182 ff., resp. §§ 543, 547 ff.), but not originally by the Aryans (ibid., § 882).

\textsuperscript{3} Lucian, Des Syrinx. 40.

\textsuperscript{4} Firmicus Maternus, De Errore, xxxi, 2.

\textsuperscript{5} Diodor, iii, 59, 7 ; Firmicus Maternus, De Errore, iii

\textsuperscript{6} Hesiod, Attis, sesne Mythen und sein Kult, pp. 147 ff.

\textsuperscript{7} Geissmann, op. cit., § 7.

\textsuperscript{8} Böhling, Die Göttachtultur von Tarsus, 1913, p. 32 ; Ed. Meyer, Reich und Kultur der Cherson, 1914, p. 117 ff.

\textsuperscript{9} Plutarch, de Is. et Osir., 69.
Ecumenical Council of Antioch, it is mentioned that in Armenia and also in Georgia "the invisibles" "in the trees" were revered. That points, indeed, to the fact that at this time in Armenia and Georgia tree-worship, just as much as any other heathen cult, had to be opposed by Christianity. Procopius of Caesarea testifies also that the Abkhazians "until our time worship the woods and trees, because they in their simplicity consider them as deities". Even to-day the tree cult is to be observed everywhere. The mountain-tribes of Kvevsureti and Pahavet'i revere the "angel of the oak"; in Kartli, a lime-tree (in Tedzdam Valley) is adorned with offerings and white threads; the Abkhazians worship the god of the forest Mtsikhu and at the beginning of spring celebrate the first appearance of the flowers, with which all houses are adorned. In Mogrelia we observe worship of large lime-trees and oaks, and the same belief in a god whom they call "king of the forest"; the Svanov revere the "forest angel", etc. It is the same with other Caucasian peoples in regard to tree-worship, especially with the Circassians, and, when we consider the details of this Georgian or Caucasian tree-worship, which still exists, we can come to no other conclusion than that it is related to Asia Minor tree-worship and that the old Georgian sources have really preserved the echo of the old Asia Minor—Georgian tree-worship.

XI

Now we should like to emphasize that the information in our sources concerning the pagan deities Armas and Zaden cannot be considered as an echo, even a faint one, of the domination of Mazdaism in Georgia, as Marr thought. It is true that Mazdaism was spread in Georgia long before Christianity. In Miskhet'a the fire-worship cult was practised. The magi had their altars there in a special quarter of the city, called Mogw'tay (the quarter of the Magi). Many Georgians (but not the whole nation!) adopted some Persian customs, for instance, the non-burial of the dead, etc. Mazdaism, as we have said above, conducted an energetic struggle in Georgia against the first Christian propaganda, and also against the Christianity when it became the national religion of Georgia. But the national paganism defended itself against Mazdaism, just as Christianity did later on.

1 De Bello Gallico, iv, 3, 14.
4 Cl. The Life of Georgia, pp. 117-125

Quite unequivocal on this point is the information given in The Life of Georgia concerning an episode during the struggle between the Persian religion and the national Georgian paganism. Indeed, Leontius Mroveli relates of King Parnajom as follows: "He built the castle Zaden and made an idol by the name Zaden and erected it on (the mountain) Zaden. After this event, he leaned to the Persian faith, to fire-worship, brought from Persia fire-servers and Magi, and settled them in Miskhet'a, at the place now called (the quarter) of the Magi. And he began to offend the idols publicly." Because of that, the inhabitants of Georgia hated him, for they had great faith in their idols. The majority of the Georgian erist'avis (dukes) rose against the king. They sent a messenger to the Armenian King, saying: "Our king has turned disloyal to the faith of our fathers, he no longer reveres the gods, the rulers of Georgia. He has introduced his father's religion (that is, Persian, for Parnajom on his father's side was a descendant of Nimrod, a Persian) and forsaken his mother's religion (that is, Georgian, for the king on his mother's side was a descendant of Paravaz, a Georgian). He is no more worthy to be our king. Give us thy son Arshak, whose wife is a descendant of the Paravazides, our kings. Bring us as help thy forces and we will expel Parnajom, the introducer of the new religion. Thy son Arshak shall be our king and his wife, a daughter of our kings, shall be our queen." The unified Georgian-Armenian military forces, so The Life of Georgia further relates, really defeated and slew Parnajom; and Arshak, the son of the Armenian king, ascended the Georgian throne (at the end of the second century B.C.).

Marr found this account from The Life of Georgia very strange: "thus the Persian magi offended Armas and Zaden, that is Ahura-Mazda and Mithra, and the Georgians defended them as their national gods! At any rate, the historical perspective is very interesting," he said, and traced this monstrous absurdity to the unreliability of the information. But we consider this account as one of the most valuable pieces of information which The Life of Georgia has preserved with regard to old Georgian paganism. Certainly it was the fault of the scholarch himself that this account appeared to him so absurd; he had started with the entirely wrong supposition that Mazdaism had completely exterminated Georgian paganism and had held, without any reason, the national Georgian pagan gods, Armas and Zaden for Ahura-Mazda and Mithra! Naturally the Georgian nation resisted the heresy of their king who wanted to introduce a new religion as the national religion. It was a struggle of Armas and of Zaden against
Ahura-Mazda, for the Georgians carried on not only a political and national, but also a religious struggle against the Persians, before and after the introduction of Christianity into their country. And this story of Parham, of his sad end, and of the introduction of the new dynasty of the Arshakides into Georgia at the end of the second century B.C. is, as already stated, but one incident in that long religious struggle of which our texts relate.\(^1\)

Again, it must be observed here that the "horrible sacrifices" which, according to our sources, were offered to the gods in Georgia, are incompatible with the Mazdaic religion—human sacrifice, in particular. For even in later times, when Mazdaism must have lost much of its original purity through its contact with the native cults in many countries, it knew no such "horrible sacrifices" as our texts mention. Especially Zaden, to whom these sacrifices were offered, can have no connection at all with the yazan, who were "angels", personifications of the original Zoroastrian notions as sama ("obedience towards God") (oppos. aima, "devil")—who represented the Good, and equally impossible is it to identify Ahmaz, whom The Life of St. Nino and Leonius Mroveli described as an idol carrying helmet and sword, with Ahura-Mazda.

As to the figurative representations of Zeus-Oromazdes, of Mithra-Helios-Apollon, etc., which appear on the memorial to Antiochus I of Kommagene (60–34 B.C.) on the summit of Nimrod-Dagh,\(^2\) they are to be traced back to the later identification of Persian deities with local gods, as, for instance, of Ahura-Mazda with the Asia Minor Teshub.\(^3\)

**XII**

So we think that the information from the old Georgian sources threw quite a different light on Georgian paganism than had hitherto been conjectured by many scholars—above all, Marr's theory, which holds Ahmaz and Zaden for Iranian deities, and Gasi and Gafim for Semitic names of gods, which entered the Georgian sources by way of Christian-Syrian literature, etc., is wrong. Only the Semitic origin of the goddess Cirja, which has been correctly recognized by Marr, but the name was wrongly analysed by him. Therefore, we consider Marr's judgment about the information from our texts also to be unjustified. "We see, really," he said, "that the authors try to attribute to them (that is, Galsi and Gaj) even a special national significance; but their tales (that is, those of the authors) can only serve to provide the strongest proof that these deities in Georgia were nothing but groundless and empty words."\(^4\) But these "tales" gained another meaning when treated differently than by Marr. In our opinion, even the following words from The Life of St. Nino are of importance: "(The Georgians) considered stones and woods, and copper and iron and bronze forged in relief, as creators, and worshipped them as gods."\(^5\) There the stone-, tree-, and metal-cult are indicated, the first two of which continue to exist in Georgia even at the present time, and the third is of importance because in olden times certain Georgian tribes were known in Western Asia as the best metal-workers.\(^6\) But we cannot go further into this matter here.

A question which should be raised is, why Strabo, who had travelled in Georgia and described moon-worship amongst the Albanians, neighbours of the Iberians, does not call the gods of Miskhet'a, Armaz, Zaden, etc., by their names, and does not describe their cult. It can only be answered after a special and detailed examination of Strabo's information about the Caucasian peoples. But of course, Strabo's silence does not bring into question all the reliability of the information of the Georgian texts.

The main task in investigating Georgian paganism is to distinguish the native resp. the Asia Minor elements of the religion, so far as they have been preserved in Georgia, from the Sumerian-Babylonian, West Semitic, Mazdaic, and Christian elements amalgamated with them. One step in this direction was made by the late O. G. von Wesendonk in his book Über Georgisches Heidentum. But whatever has been done hitherto in this domain of research must only be regarded as a beginning, however noteworthy some of the work may be.\(^7\) It is just the oldest, very scanty, indeed, but yet interesting information about national Georgian paganism contained in the old Georgian texts that have either not been taken into consideration or not quite truly appreciated, or have just been treated in Marr's fashion. Therefore, it seemed to us an important task to make a new endeavour to contribute to the right understanding of these

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\(^1\) The Georgians asked the Persian king, Khwaraz Armshvan, for his son Mirm, who was to be betrothed to the daughter of Asparag, king of Georgia, to be their king. But among their conditions they demanded that Mirm should embrace the old Georgian faith and that Persians should not intermarry with Georgians (4th cent. A.D.).

\(^2\) Fr. Cournot, Textes et Monuments figurés relatifs aux mythes de Mithra, p. 188.


\(^4\) Cf. op. cit., p. 17.

\(^5\) Cf. Leonius Mroveli, op. cit., p. 69.

\(^6\) Cf. Fr. Cournot, Die orientalischen Religionen im Römischen Heidentum, pp. 177, 183.

\(^7\) Cf. for instance, M. Kovalevski, Law and Custom in the Caucasus (in Russian), Moscow, 1890.
accounts, so as to render them useful for our research. Also in connection with old Asia Minor research, we think this may be of some interest.

ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABRT.</td>
<td>J. A. Craig, Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBS.</td>
<td>L. W. King, Babylonian Boundary-stones.</td>
</tr>
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<td>CT.</td>
<td>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>KARl.</td>
<td>E. Ebeling, Kellachriftliche aus Assur religiösem Inhalts.</td>
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<td>KB.</td>
<td>E. Schrader, Keilschriftliche Bibliothek.</td>
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<td>KUB.</td>
<td>Keilinschriften aus Baghchil.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIH.</td>
<td>L. W. King, The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi.</td>
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<td>Magic</td>
<td>L. W. King, Babylonian Magic and Sorcery.</td>
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<td>Magia</td>
<td>K. L. Talquist, Die assyrische Beschworungsserie Magia.</td>
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<td>I—VII.</td>
<td>H. C. Rawlinson, The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia.</td>
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<td>ZDMG.</td>
<td>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.</td>
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A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY GEORGIAN NEEDLE PAINTING IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

By Z. Avalishvili

A BEAUTIFUL piece of Eastern Christian applied art—an embroidered cross—forms the subject of an exhibit in the Morgan wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Room 22, case 11) under the official description—"Slavic (Armenian?) XIV century."

The whole decorated surface of the cross is embroidered on linen canvas, chiefly in silver-gilt thread, though silk has been used occasionally.

The Saviour is represented as issuing from a chalice in the centre of the cross; the archangels Michael and Gabriel appear in the upper and lower parts respectively; and a six-winged seraph is shown on either side of the central medallion.

Several inscriptions, almost entirely in Georgian and Greek, form part of the adornment of the cross. Above and below the central figure of Christ are the usual Byzantine monograms: IC XC and XIXA; on the left of it the Saviour's monogram is worked in Georgian capitals, the asomt'arruli of the so-called "priestly hand" or sacerdotal writing; on the right of it appears the memento in Georgian—"Oh God, have mercy on Solomon"; while surrounding it is a Greek inscription in uncial writing which reads, in English:

"Thou wouldst, for us incarnated, be most mercifully sacrificed like a sheep."

On the four extremities of the cross, on what seems at first sight to be used strips of brown velvet, but are not, the above-mentioned Georgian memento is again inscribed. This time it is in extended form, thus, reading from above to the left:

"O Lord Jesus Christ! O God, have mercy on sinful Solomon Shavashidze. Amen."

Another Georgian inscription, in uncial sacerdotal writing, runs along all four limbs of the cross. Beginning with the second line from the top, it follows the border of the cross (excepting the four extreme strips just mentioned) and reads, in English:

"God established the World that it shall not move. Prepared is thine throne from there and from eternity Thou art. Amen."