

Was Haldi the Triumph Fire God of the Urartians?

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Received: May, 10, 2014 Accepted: June, 11, 2014

Abstract: Fire held a special place and enjoyed respect and holiness among ancient people. We can trace the holiness of fire among various ancient nations, but this is less-studied in the case of Urartians. Usually there was a deity with the function of “Fire Deity” among ancient people, but this is not the case for Urartians. This is strange, as Urartians lived in a cold environment and therefore one can safely assume that fire must have had significant importance for them. There is no explicit reference regarding the importance of fire or a specific Fire Deity in Urartian royal inscriptions, but it is possible to trace the function of the Fire Deity in Urartian texts with respect to the most important Urartian god Haldi. This paper is an attempt to study some pieces of evidence, such as a depiction of Haldi on a shield from the archaeological site of Anzaf and fireplaces at the site of Ayanis to show that a fire was lit for Haldi and this could be called the “Triumph Fire”. Also Haldi, himself, may have been the Fire Deity and had the characteristics of the Triumph Fire such as ever-burning, relation with Triumph God, burning in temples and maybe even in demanding sacrifice and offerings.

Keywords: Fire Deity, Haldi, Triumph Deity, Urartians.

Introduction

Fire enjoyed a special ideological place and much respect in antiquity. It is possible to trace the sanctity of fire among many ancient societies, but this is less-studied among Urartians. Usually, there is a deity with the function of protecting the fire or other related functions in many ancient societies, but it seems that among the Urartians there was no specific Fire Deity. This seems strange, as Urartians lived in a cold environment in eastern Anatolia and north-western Iran, up to southern Caucases and fire must have been of utter-most significance in their daily life. Although in royal inscriptions there is no direct reference to the importance of fire, but the evidence for a Fire Deity being worshiped can still be observed in what is remained from Urartians. It is the purpose of this paper to assess various lines of evidence, including the Anzaf shield and the Ayanis fireplaces, to include the special fire for Haldi which can be considered “Triumph Fire”. It will also be argued that it is possible to describe Haldi as a Fire God.

Triumph Fire

Fire was highly revered by Indo-European people who almost all had special fire gods. In Indo-European ideology, Holy Fire was supposed to be burnt eternally and it was the purpose of Fire Temples being built and respected to protect this eternal fire. Agni, Āzar and Bahrām¹ are of some of the most famous Indo-European Fire Gods (Oushidari 1992).

Fire was sacred and sometimes it was also considered

the reason or symbol for victory. The Triumph Fire is considered to be the holy fire related or interpreted with the concept of victory and had to be burnt in temples and never to be extinguished. “Killing” this fire was among sins with most severe punishments. Bahrām Fire was such a phenomenon.² It is not the goal of this paper to study Bahrām or to compare this Indo-Iranian deity with the Urartian deity Haldi. Bahrām fire is just a counterpart to

2. “VƏrƏŌraŶan”, was the adjective for Bahrām, the Victory Deity, and also for fire. This underlines the importance of this fire and demonstrates the reason it should be burnt eternally. To extinguish fire was therefore considered to be an unforgivable sin. “VƏrƏŌraŶan ātar” or Triumph Fire was probably the ancestor of “ādur-ī warahrān” or Bahrām Fire. This process caused the association between Bahrām Fire and Bahrām as the Victory Deity. Some scholars suggest that Bahrām Fire is a recent belief and has no direct connection to Bahrām the deity. Connecting Bahrām Fire to Bahrām the deity seems to be a misunderstanding. This became a part of Zoroastrian beliefs in the Islamic era (Jamzadeh 1989). The similarity of both the fire and the deity in the word Bahrām made this misunderstanding more plausible. Also, according to Pourdavoud (1998, II: 115), Bahrām is an adjective for Āzar and Bahrām Fire is not related to Bahrām the deity. Additionally, Bahrām has its meaning, the victory and it was a common ritual to sacrifice or offer gifts to this fire (Tafazzoli 2000: 86). But, even if Bahrām is considered an adjective for fire, this would not make a big difference, because the concept of victory can be observed. This demonstrates that Zoroastrians still believed fire to be a “presenter-of-victory”.

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1. The word “Bahrām” or “vƏrƏŌraŶan” has been interpreted as “against resistance” (Boyce 1997: 82) or “triumph” or “triumphant” (Bahar 2002: 78).

clarify the concept of Triumph Fire which was eternally lit in a fire temple and was connected to a victory deity and seems to have required offerings in order to bestow triumph.

Haldi as the Pivot of Urartian Religion

War and triumph were two significant aspects of Urartian culture. Haldi, as the most respected deity in Urartian pantheon is a symbol of such beliefs and Urartians worshiped Haldi as War Deity. Urartian beliefs can concurrently be studied in Assyrian and Urartian inscriptions, reliefs and objects. Only a few deities are mentioned in Urartian texts and even those mentioned are not substantially described or even properly introduced. The function of the entire Urartian pantheon is therefore still ambiguous. Also Urartian myths, prayers and spells are still vague and not clear. Some engravings on ritual objects can occasionally be helpful in shedding some light on Urartian beliefs. But sometimes no clues are to be found on reliefs or inscriptions.

Urartian cuneiform inscriptions normally begin with phrases praising the deities, but these praises generally refer to Haldi, the most prominent deity in Urartian pantheon, and only occasionally refer to other two major deities, Teišeba and Šiuini (Piotrovskii 2004: 303, 310). In Urartian pantheon no deity approaches Haldi's status. Either his name or those of Teišeba and Šiuini, with Haldi in the first position, are mentioned in inscriptions. Menua was the only Urartian king to assign and dedicate inscriptions to deities other than Haldi. None of his successors made such an offering to other gods till the demise of the Urartian kingdom. Thus, all other Urartian inscriptions were offered to Haldi as a rule. There is, however, an exception from Rusa's reign, dedicating an inscription to Teišeba (Grekyan 2006: 152). There is a temple built for Iubša as well (Belli 1999: 31).

We should bear in mind that in earlier inscriptions Haldi was not the most important Urartian god. Haldi achieved his elevated status later, as a result of political affairs (Eph'al 1999: 116-121; Fales 2003: 133). Haldi was supposedly not a native god of Urartians and the population of newly conquered territories were forced to worship Haldi (Grekian 2006: 150). As a matter of fact, it was Išpuini who elevated Haldi to the most praised position in Urartian pantheon as he was gaining power and expanding the Urartian empire (Salvini 2010: 29).

Who is Haldi?

Haldi (alternatively spelled Khaldi, Haldi, ⁴Haldi) is one of the most important Urartian deities who eventually became the supreme deity in the Urartian pantheon. The etymology of Haldi's name is uncertain, but some scholars speculate

that Haldi is derived from Hal ("sky") root in certain Transcaucasian languages; therefore Haldi means "who comes from sky" (Piotrovskii 2004: 309).

Haldi appears in the figure of a man, with or without beard (Piotrovskii 2002: 36), with a crown (Salvini 1989: 85), usually standing on a lion. He was the War Deity and whenever Urartian kings were about to go to the war, Haldi was invoked to protect them from harm and to bring them victory, for his primary function was to bestow military victory. Military rituals took place in Haldi temples in order to plead to the deity for victory and success in battle. Many swords, spears, shields and arrows are found in Haldi temples called "Shields House" (Piotrovskii 2004: 309). Such temples shall be discussed later in this paper. One can assume that these shields were used ritually. There is an inscription on a shield of Argišti I (ca. 781-772 BCE) discovered at Karmir-Blur that mentions him offering this shield to Haldi in Erebuni. This shield was probably hung on a Haldi temple wall and was later brought to Karmir-Blur (Azarpay 1968: 21-22).

Haldi is best known as the Victory Deity in battles. Haldi and his arms are considered as conquerors in Kasimoğlu inscription (Salvini 2005: 259). However, some scholars believe that Hutuini, deity of Fortune and Destiny, is also the deity of Power of Victory (Konakçi and Başturk 2009: 172) and "the God of Combat" (Belli 1999: 47).

Haldi strikes the enemy with "šuri" (Konakçi and Başturk 2009: 169). Earlier, šuri was translated as Haldi's sword and chariot, but later a dagger of about one meter long with an inscription on its handle was discovered and made the meaning clear (Sagona and Zimansky 2009: 347). It does not seem necessary to further discuss Haldi's other weapons here, because his arms are not directly related to the fire.

Haldi was known as a Deity of Fertility and the Warrior and the God of war and other similar functions. Haldi possibly reigned in the Netherworld as well (Grekyan 2006: 157), he was therefore related to sacrifice, wine-making and vineyard planning (Hmayakyan 1990: 33, 35; Piotrovskii 2004: 75-76; Petrosyan 2006: 228). Some even have called him the archer-warrior (Tiratsyan 2008: 82).

Victorious Haldi bestowed kingship to Urartian rulers and protected them from harm and enemy (Piotrovskii 2004: 125); Argišti II (713-? BCE) declared Haldi as his aid in battle (Raisnia 2000, I: 174). Many inscriptions are offered to Haldi and royal Urartian victory reports were presented to Haldi (Piotrovskii 2002: 303).

Haldi ordered Urartian kings to build vineyard, artificial lakes and water canals (Piotrovskii 2002: 75-76; Harutyunyan 2008: 73). Urartian kings prayed to Haldi to protect them and bestow the power (Piotrovskii 2004: 128, 345; Andre-Salvini and Salvini 2002: 22) and called themselves "his (Haldi's) worshiper" (Grekyan 2006: 152-153) and "servants" (Zimansky 1985: 52).

Table.1 Chronological Table of Urartian Kings (after Salvini 2008: 23)

Name	Date BC
Aramu	—
Sarduri (Son of Lutibri)	—
Išpuini (Son of Sarduri)	ca. 830-820
Mutual reign of Išpuini and Minua	ca. 820-810
Minua (Son of Išpuini)	ca. 810-785 / 780
Argišti I (Son of Minua)	785/780-756
Sarduri II (Son of Argišti)	756- ca. 730
Rusa I (Son of Sarduri)	ca. 730-713
Argišti II (Son of Rusa)	713-?
Rusa II (Son of Argišti)	-
Erimena	-
Rusa III (Son of Erimena)	-
Sarduri (Son of Rusa)	-
Sarduri III (Son of Sarduri)	-

The cult center of ̄aldi was in southern part of Urartu (Grekyan 2006: 172-173), and as Urartians were expanding their kingdom they conquered Upper Zab Valley and Urmia lake basin. Išpuini (ca. 830-820 BCE) and Menua (ca. 810-785/780 BCE) changed people's beliefs and established Ardini or Muşaşir as the new religious center and thereafter, ̄aldi occupied the prime place in Urartian pantheon (Petrosyan 2006: 233). One can come to the conclusion that ̄aldi's worship began in this place. ̄aldi was presumably praised and worshiped all over northwest of present day Iran; his major temple was at Muşaşir, beyond Urartian borders though. According to Lemaire (1998: 116), ̄aldi was worshiped in southeast and southwest of Lake Urmia. Therefore, ̄aldi was also praised beyond the borders of the Urartian kingdom (Petrosyan 2006: 233). Urartian kings forced conquered people to accept ̄aldi as their chief or major god, a major difference between Urartians and other Near Eastern politics (Tyratsyan 2008: 81). Some scholars argue that ̄aldi did not have an Urartian origin (Salvini 1989: 89); some even argue that ̄aldi's cult began

to spread from the upper reaches of the Greater Zab river and therefore, his earlier manifestation should be traced elsewhere (Grekyan 2006: 150, 167).

Almost all Urartian kings, including, Argišti I, Sarduri II, Rusa I, Argišti II, and Rusa II- did mention ̄aldi in their inscriptions (Salvini 2008). Many objects are discovered with ̄aldi's image; e.g, bronze belts, silver plaques with scenes depicting sacrifice (Piotrovskii 2002: 84-86), and large pillar blocks from the fortification of Rusa (Piotrovskii 2002: 77-78). Additionally, ̄aldi's false doors are special gates or niches carved in rocks in ̄aldi's name. These niches had cultic and religious functions and kings refer to sacrifices to deities on the inscriptions of these doors. These monuments usually were called as ̄aldinili ("belonging to ̄aldi"). Zimansky (1985: 72) demonstrates that ̄aldi owned more doors than other deities. The best example is Mher Door or Meher Kapisi in Van. Its inscription with a long list of Urartian deities and their sacrifices, in order of supremacy, made this gate a magnificent monument. This is the first evidence for gods, their cults, and their sacrifices in eastern Anatolia. According to this inscription, there is no other deity in Urartian pantheon who could compete with ̄aldi regarding the quantity of sacrifices. The number of these sacrifices increase with ̄aldi's other aspects, as worshipers had to provide sacrifices to some other factors related to ̄aldi including his weapon(s), divinity, greatness, youthfulness, troops, chariot, gates, energy, power in the battle and even the gods of his *susi* temple³ (Belli 2003-2004: 110, Grekyan 2006: 184, Salvini 2008, A 3-1: 125-129).

Rituals and religious cults were important in ancient capital cities. In this regard, structures, temples and inscriptions dedicated to ̄aldi are best lines of evidence underlining his significance. According to Zimansky (1985: 72), Urartian kings were obliged to build temples and other ritual structures for ̄aldi.

Susi temples in Toprakkale, Altintepe and Arinberd are identified as Urartian temples as well (Piotrovskii 2002: 63, 67). *Susi* is a religious building mostly dedicated to ̄aldi. Of course there were exceptions as Arinberd *susi* was dedicated to Irša and Čavuštepe *susi* to Irmuşini (Zimanski 1985: 72, 120).

Rusa built a *susi* for ̄aldi. The first line of the first part of Ayanis *susi* inscription bears a phrase to this effect (Salvini 2001: 252). It is possible that *susi* had large gates just like Meher Kapisi and was not built in a tower shape (Sagona and Zimansky 2009: 343, 347). The plans of ̄aldi temples were mostly square, e.g., temples at Bastam (Kleiss 1978: 400), Upper Anzaf, Aznavurtepe, Kayalidere and Čavuštepe. This square-shaped plan seems to have inspired later Achaemenid structures of Ka'beye Zardosht at Naqsh-e Rostam (Roaf 1998: 63).

3. *Susi* is an Akkadian word meanings "tower" (Sagona and Zimansky 2009: 343, 347).

Haldi and Triumph Fire

The focus of this paper is the link between triumph and fire with Haldi. There are two pieces of evidences in this regard: a bronze shield from Anzaf and temple fireplaces from Ayanis.

Fragments of a bronze shield were found in Haldi's temple in Upper Anzaf fortification in 1995 (Belli 1999: 7) with figures of twelve deities, each with a special weapon, symbol, and sometimes an animal (Belli 2003-2004: 111). The shield belongs to the period of Išpuini and Menua's co-regency (Belli 1999: 35).

Meher Kapisi inscription is the main source of detailed information about the religion of the Urartian kings and the shield found in Anzaf is the first instance that Urartian deities have been found exhibiting divine attributes and local characteristics corresponding to those described in the Meher Kapisi inscription (Belli 1999: 7). Deities on Meher Kapisi inscription are mentioned in hierarchical order with the times of sacrifice and the kinds and numbers of animals that should be sacrificed for each god (Belli 1999: 29). According to Belli, this is the first time this sequence of gods is depicted (Belli 1999: 36).

On this shield, Urartian gods, except for Haldi, are depicted standing on different creatures, each carrying weapons. These gods seem to attack the Assyrian army from left to right and Assyrians' defeat is symbolically depicted. Indeed, Assyrians are trapped between Urartian gods and soldiers but the name of the exact battle is still unknown (Belli 1999: 35-36).

Haldi, first in the line, is not depicted on an animal but is almost as tall as all the other gods. Belli suggests that Haldi is surrounded in fire, as his most important divine attribute, and even flames continue below his knees. In fact, fire emits from his body the same way that sun emits light. Being very bright and being the source of light are also among Haldi's attributes in Meher Kapisi inscription. Therefore, Belli explains Haldi as the source of light and fire simultaneously. He argues that this special figure is to show and emphasize Haldi's outstanding supremacy vis-à-vis other Urartian deities (Belli 1999: 37-39). Petrosyan, also, relates this figure to fire and argues that Haldi is Fire Deity with regard to the flames the deity is illustrated in (Petrosyan 2006: 183, 227). Tiratsyan (2008: 82) too believes that the image engulfed in flames on this shield holding a bow in one hand and a spear in the other. However, some scholars believe that in this scene Haldi is holding his *šuri*, a kind of weapon kept in temples (Grekyan 2009: 111; Sagona and Zimansky 2009: 342). The crucial point is that most of the scholars who commented on the figures on the shield agree that the figure engulfed in flames is none other than Haldi.⁴ But Salvini (2008: 125) argues that Haldi

might be the God of Light. The word *da-ši-i-e* in Meher Kapisi (A 3-1, 15) is light (of Haldi) and one had to bring sacrifice to it. Also *da-šu-si* is translated as candleabrum in Urartian. Therefore *da-šu-si* can be *daši* (light) plus *usi* (Salvini 2010:31).

There is another scene on this shield, showing Assyrian soldiers and the lethal lance of Haldi can be seen thrown at the Assyrians. The most important feature of this lance is the rays it emits, exactly like the one Haldi carries in front of the line of Urartian gods on the other scene on the shield. The rays appear as fire. According to Belli, this emphasizes the sacredness and lethal power of the divine weapon that defeats the enemy army by spreading death and destruction among them as Haldi himself throws it (Belli 1999: 70).

It can be claimed that there is no other deity as Fire God or with fire function in Urartian beliefs. Šiuini, as Sun deity, is present on the aforementioned shield, but it is unlikely that sun was supposed to be shown twice in the figure of two deities or with two different appearances, one surrounded with the sun beams and one with winged disc. Additionally, the artist or the craftsman must have depicted Teišeba on the lion instead of Haldi for a specific reason. Also, Haldi surrounded with flames cannot be coincidence and must follow a belief or a cult.

The scene of twelve deities on the bronze shield from Anzaf is unique for its design and most of its aspects are uncommon, at least as far as the most prominent Urartian deity is considered.

Ayanis temple fireplace can be considered another piece of evidence. Hundreds of weapons including swords and shields, bows and arrows, mostly inscribed, were stored or hanged on the walls of Ayanis Haldi temple cella or courtyard as offerings to Haldi. We do not know much about "arrow and shield cult" in Ayanis and Muşaşir temples, but it seems that the Urartians decorated entrance gates with arrows and shields (Piotrovskii 2004: 309). Such shields are also depicted as pendants on walls in the scene illustrating Muşaşir on the relief from the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad. Six gold shields with images of dogs and twelve silver shields with images of dragons, lions and bulls hung over temple walls. These are also mentioned in the texts now in the Louvre (Piotrovskii 1969: 309). These weapons may have been used ritually and were possibly offered to Haldi at the end of the ceremony or as a token to assure triumph in an upcoming war (Çilingiroğlu 2004: 228-257). Additionally, *kumemuşe*, harmless weapons, were offered to Haldi temples. Ayanis temple shield is decorated with an Urartian famous lion-head pattern. Rusa, son of Argišti, dedicated such votive offerings to Haldi

winged disc standing on a bull Other deities such as Hutuini, Turani, Ua, Nalaini, Šebitu, Arsimela, Anapša, Dieduani and Šelardi are in the line (Sagona and Zimansky 2009: 342). Apart from Haldi, Teišeba and Šiuini, none of the gods are portrayed elsewhere. This shield could therefore be considered as a crucial piece of evidence (Belli 2003-2004: 114).

4. On this shield, one can also see Teišeba, the Weather God, holding a lightning rod, standing on a lion, as well as Šiuini, the Sun God, with a

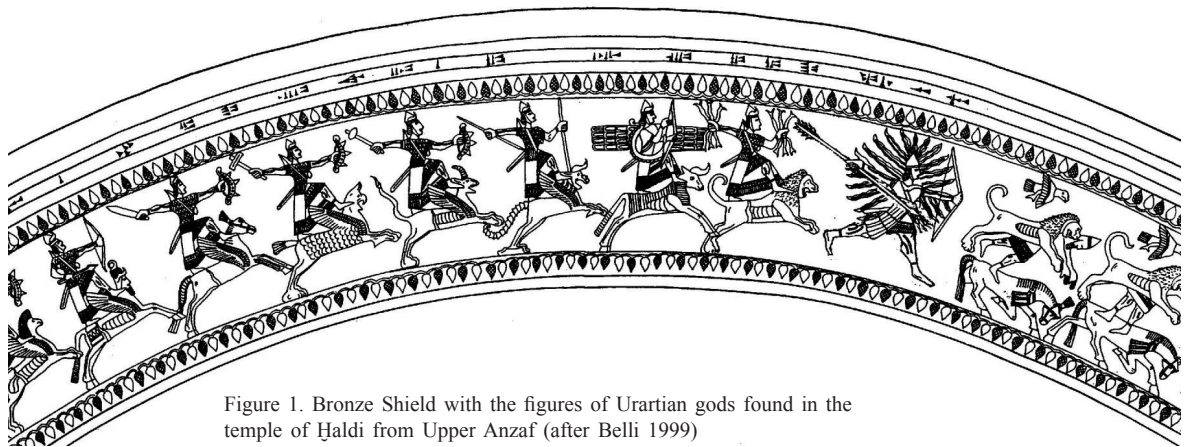


Figure 1. Bronze Shield with the figures of Urartian gods found in the temple of Կaldi from Upper Anzaf (after Belli 1999)

(Batmaz 2012: 3). Attention should be paid to this object which was supposed to be hung over the wall inside the temple in such a style that the lion appeared to look down (Batmaz 2012: 4) over the fireplace with traces of fire (Çilingiroğlu 2004: 199). This strengthens the proposition of a fire ritual in this temple (Çilingiroğlu 2004: 257-261). Rusa offered this shield to Կaldi. “Who takes this shield or throws it to the water or throws soil on the fire and who erases my name from it, may Կaldi destroy him and his seed and his seed’s seed under the sun” says Rusa (Batmaz 2012: 4). It is conspicuously observable that this fire should be kept eternal without any harm. A quiver, an object made of bone, and a vessel with remnants of grain were also found where the shield was discovered. According to Batmaz, the grains may have been emptied into the vessel from fire (Batmaz 2012: 5). According to Çilingiroğlu, the shield along with the bony object, the grain vessel and the fireplace can definitely be interpreted as having a ritual function. He suggests that an everlasting fire was kept in this fireplace and Կaldi’s weapons such as the shield or even the deity himself protected the fire but ritual procedures carried out with these paraphernalia are as yet unknown (Çilingiroğlu 2004: 257-261).

But, most scholars, however, believe that all of these objects are somehow related to war and fertility rituals. Though putting out fire was considered a great sin in some ancient societies, whereas maintaining fire was considered to be a symbol of continuation of life. According to Batmaz, celebrating Urartian “divine of threesome,” namely “Fire, Weapon and Grain” was an homage to Կaldi’s authority. This trinity is most noticeable in Rusa’s reign (Batmaz 2012: 5).

There was another fireplace – against the aforementioned fireplace – with firewood and cooked barley and wheat remains inside and beside it which can be considered an evidence for the fertility cult in the temple. Çilingiroğlu

suggests that fire, weapons and grains are related in this place (Çilingiroğlu 2004: 260-1) and holy and everlasting fire pertains to the religious cult of fire in Urartian community. He also believes that these rituals were presumably celebrated for the royal family in Urartian temples in the 7th century BCE. The precise function of such fireplaces and what was burnt in them is yet to be determined. Çilingiroğlu’s first guess is that the Urartians cooked parts of sacrificed animal flesh; these sacrifices were taking place in the open-air of the temple (Çilingiroğlu 2007: 265) and higher ranking worshipers consumed the meat; other parts of the sacrifice was presumably distributed among people. But, this fireplace does not have enough space for substantial amount of meat, so the act of cooking and consuming the meat had to be done symbolically. According to Çilingiroğlu, the remains beside the fireplace were emptied from it, but unfortunately there is a lack of information about the procedure. There is a ceramic basin outside, in the temple courtyard, possibly installed for purification cult and there is a canal beneath the courtyard for water or wine to flow. No sacrificial altar was found and it is not clear whether that cow and sheep bones discovered here belong to sacrifices or not (Çilingiroğlu 2011: 197-199).

Additionally, fire could be used to purify weapons or to prepare food. According to Batmaz (2012: 5), the temple is the symbol of continuity in monarchy and putting off the fire was interpreted as termination of royal power. The presence of fire in this place must therefore be considered of particular significance.

According to Çilingiroğlu, all the pieces of evidence put together could point to a fertility cult as harvest was considered an enormous triumph for Urartians (Çilingiroğlu 2007: 267).

This author suspects that one can come to the conclusion that Urartians stressed on deities’ role, especially that of



Figure 2. Ayanis fireplaces (Çilingiroğlu 2007: 268-269)

Ḫaldi, in their triumph and victory in wars and this was the most important factor of their life, for Ḫaldi's name is repeated in Urartian inscriptions and his power and blessing is required constantly.

As mentioned earlier, Urartian kings believed that they defeated their enemies with Ḫaldi's assistance: "... through the greatness of Ḫaldi I surrounded the country ..." says Sarduri II in his annals (§22-23) about his military campaign in Lake Sevan region (Salvini 2002: 49). He adds about his victories: "for the sake (?) of Ḫaldi these accomplishments in one year I made." (§ 42-44) (Salvini 2002: 50). Also according to Sarduri, thanks to Ḫaldi he did things in one year (Salvini 2002: 53). An inscription in The Sevan area by Rusa I refers to his conquest of enemy country through Ḫaldi's power (Salvini 2002: 55). With Ḫaldi's help, his Lord, Rusa conquered regions and whoever destroys this inscription may the Sun God annihilate him and his descendents. The same subject is referred in another inscription by Rusa in the southern shore of Lake Sevan (Salvini 2002: 57). Also, Ḫaldi advanced with his weapon against the enemy and conquered the country and they kneeled in front of Sarduri on a stela inscription of Rusa (Piotrovskii 2004: 126). Sarduri II claims to owe his victory and conquering about 21 fortresses and about 45 cities in his narration on Saqindel inscription in northwest of Iran (Raisnia 2000: 171-172).

These examples are chosen from hundreds of the same inscriptions of a similar subject matter from Urartian kings. Inscriptions on how an Urartian king expresses his faith and discusses his victories as a favor of Ḫaldi can be found from all Urartian era. Petrosyan calls Ḫaldi the giver of victory who bestows victory through fire (Petrosyan 2006: 227). Although the nature of these ritual practices and their exact sequence are not clear, some suggestions can be made from the location of the finds and remnants and features in the temples.

Conclusion

Fire was considered to have had a divine nature among many ancient cultures; evidence for sanctity of fire can be seen in many different forms in different parts of the World. Triumph Fire, possibly, had its own holiness too, as victory in battles was considered to be of vital significance in antiquity. In some regions, including Iran, Triumph Fire was related to Triumph God, but such a function is not defined for Urartian gods. This seems strange, for Urartians lived in a cold environment and fire should therefore have been important in their life. Additionally, Urartians were a warlike nation and fought many battles with their neighbors; they, possibly, had Triumph Fire to ask for victory in these battles.

Ḫaldi's most important function is war and victory and it seems that this deity acquired other gods' functions

through time. Apart from victory, Ḫaldi had the function of fertility and fire. These functions mostly belonged to different deities in antiquity.

Although the shield from Anzap and the fireplaces at Ayanis temple are the only pieces of evidence found regarding Ḫaldi's relation with fire and there is no inscription explicitly naming Ḫaldi as the Urartian Fire God, the author guesses that Ḫaldi was worshiped as such. A fire was lit in favor of Ḫaldi and in the meantime, he was requested to bestow victory. Putting these hypotheses together one can guess that he was Triumph Fire God as well. Also, it can be guessed that Ḫaldi's fire was in fact the Triumph Fire, as Ḫaldi controlled and possessed victory and fire simultaneously.

Possibly fire was honored and respected in temples of Ḫaldi as he owned the largest number of temples in Urartian territory. Temples of Ḫaldi may have been used for many functions such as praying for victory, fertility and power.

As we discussed above, Ḫaldi's fire is related to fertility by some scholars, but this author would argue that this fire can be connected to victory as its symbol. Based on Ayanis inscriptions, extinguishing this fire is prohibited and the fire should be kept safe in Ḫaldi's honor. This fire should therefore be lit eternally. Additionally, the fire was kept in Ḫaldi temples along with a large number of different arms. Urartian kings were supposed to furnish offerings to Ḫaldi temple and this is demonstrated by the remnants found inside and outside the Ayanis fireplaces. Therefore, the fire was celebrated eternally in Ḫaldi's temple of victory in battles. It is possible that Ḫaldi's fire had all the characteristics of Triumph Fire, including eternal burning, connection with Victory God, to be kept safe in temples, and votive offering presented to it.

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