

# On The Proto-form of the Native Armenian Word *Yerkin* “Heaven” and its Armenian Parallels

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## Abstract

The native Armenian word *yerkin* (heaven) is absolutely incomprehensibly derived from the Indo-European root “\*d(i)ui-n-, \*dei - “to shine, to beam” with the root determinative \*-u”, the Armenian parallel of which is the root *tiv*. At the same time, it is noted that “there are phonetic difficulties”, which is too mild a statement.

The comparative study of the vocabulary of Armenian and Polynesian languages has already proven its effectiveness and *mutual benefit*: Rapanui-Armenian lexical parallels help to clarify the boundaries of the Polynesian word-form and the structure of the word, and with the help of the ancient roots preserved in the Polynesian languages, it was possible to etymologically analyze many Armenian words of unknown origin, incomprehensible, as well as the ones considered loanwords and find out their origin and initial meaning.

A similar comparative examination reveals that the most probable form of the native Armenian word *yerkin* “heaven” is the word *rangi* (*rangi*) “heaven” from the Pan-Polynesian vocabulary. Not only the real living proto-form of the native Armenian word *yerkin* is revealed, but also the basic meaning, as well as a genealogical bunch of words with the same root in Armenian, three of which are presented in this article.

**Keywords:** *Rapanui-Armenian lexical parallels, Pan-Polynesian rangi “heaven”, Proto-form, Native Armenian word yerkin “heaven”, Genealogical bunch, Addition of a pre-sound.*

## 1. Introduction

Today, more than ever, there is a need to compare Armenian with non-Indo-European languages, taking into account the extreme scarcity of the latter’s roots recognized native Armenian - only 10% of the total number of roots, and the huge number of roots considered of unknown origin and loanwords (90%). G. Jahukyan believed that Armenian is the most mysterious among the living Indo-European languages, substantiating this opinion by the fact that its “...unanalyzed word-roots of unknown origin by approximate calculations make up at least half, if not more than half, of the total number of word-roots”. One of the ways to solve such mysteries of Armenian can be the comparison of wordstock of Armenian and languages of other language families.

The comparison of the vocabulary of Armenian and Polynesian languages has already proven its effectiveness and *mutual benefit*. For example, the Rapanui-Armenian lexical parallels help to clarify the boundaries of the Polynesian word-form and word structure, to clarify the still very vague form-word-particle concepts, to prove the belonging of some Polynesian words of unknown origin to the Pan-Polynesian vocabulary.

And through comparison with Polynesian languages, it becomes possible to etymologically analyze Armenian words of unknown origin and considered to be misspellings, sometimes to put forward the point of view of their indigenization, to reveal the true direction of borrowing of words considered to be loanwords from different languages in Armenian, and also to correct the real, living proto-forms of some words that are already considered to be native Armenian. The latter are the words whose

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obvious patterns showing dual-plan (morpho-semantic) overlaps are found in Polynesian languages, while the restored Indo-European proto-forms show significant phonetic or semantic deviations.

Let us bring some examples:

Rapan. huri<sub>4</sub> “to turn over”, “to wrap, to twist, to shrink”, hiro<sub>1</sub> “to twist, to turn” - Grb.<sup>1</sup> hiř “turnover, circle, coil” (derived from \*per-s-, \*sper- “to turn, to turn around”);

Rapan. hau<sub>5</sub> “mild wind” - Grb. hov “breeze, canopy, wind” - (derived from the PIE root \*pou-, \*p(h)u- “to blow, to swell”);

Rapan. hagu<sub>1</sub> “breathing, to breathe” - Grb. hagag; root - hag “breath, articulation” (\*pouio-, \*pu “to blow”);

Rapan. tao “husband’s sister” - Grb. tal “husband’s sister” (\*glōu-);

Rapan. tara<sub>1</sub> “trunk (of a tree), thorn”, tari<sub>4</sub> “name of seaweed” - Grb. tař “the seed or grain of a tree”, also çaiř “tree” (\*gers- “to twist, to bend, to weave from branches, bushes”, çaiř < grso-) (Jahukyan (2010) p. 360) etc.

Among such words is also our subject matter - the word *yerkin* recognized by G. Jahukyan as native Armenian.

The Armenian word *yerkin* “heaven, sky” is incomprehensibly derived from the restored Proto-Indo-European language root “\*d(i)ui-n-, \*dei- “to shine” with the root determinative \*-u, as “shining sky”. At the same time, it is mentioned that “...there are phonetic difficulties” (which is too mild a statement), a possible homonymous effect of the word *yerkir* “earth” is assumed, and it is compared to Old Indian dyau “heaven”, divām “day”, Lith. diena “day” (Jahukyan (2010) p. 227).

At the very first glance, it is obvious that the Armenian equivalent of these words, among the parallels of different languages is the native Armenian word *tiv* “day, light of the day”, “light” (Malkhasiants (1944) p. 1443) mentioned by Jahukyan, which shows undeniable commonalities both in phonetic and semantic terms with the above-mentioned words.

The question arises as to what made G. Jahukyan attach the phonetically incompatible word into the Indo-European restored root \*d(i)ui-n-, \*dei- “to shine, to beam”. In our opinion, the following facts played a significant role here:

- 1) no word or proto-form was found in the restored Proto-Indo-European language and related Indo-European languages more or less phonetically and semantically close to the Armenian word *yerkin*’ “heaven, sky” from which it would be possible to derive the root *yerkin* and
- 2) the word *yerkin*’ is a very important component of the basic vocabulary of the language. In Armenian, it is recorded in writing in the peculiar “prelude” to the birth of the cosmos in an undated story with the conventional name “Vahagn’s birth”, which begins with the phrase “Yerkner *yerkin*...”. Such a word could not be of unknown origin or non-native, and therefore Jahukyan had to attach it to the domain of such an inappropriate proto-form, in order not to doubt the Indo-European character of Armenian.

So, what is the more or less acceptable form of the word *yerkin*? It is necessary to find the answers to such questions through comparison with the languages of other language families, which we will do below.

## 2. Material and methods

The word meaning “heaven” belongs to the Pan-Polynesian vocabulary: PPN<sup>2</sup> lani, Rapan. rāgi, Maori rāgi, Mang. rāgi, Tuam. rāgi, Tahit. ra’i, Samoan lagi, Tongan langi, etc. Generalizing, let’s note that the root meaning *yerkin*’ in Polynesian languages, particularly Rapanui, is known as **rāgi**, or the same, in the form of rāgi. the back-lingual *ng* roughly expresses the sound-combination (ng) and is replaced by the letter g in writing for reasons of simplicity. It is obvious that the Polynesian root rāgi and the Armenian word for *yerkin* have a complete semantic correspondence and closeness of the phonetic plan. The presence of a large number of Rapanui-Armenian diverse commonalities

<sup>1</sup>Old Armenian – Grabar.

<sup>2</sup>PPN – Proto-Polynesian.

creates a basis for assuming that the closest proto-form of the native Armenian word *yerkin* is the word *rangi* “heaven, sky” belonging to the Pan-Polynesian vocabulary.

In order to understand the phonetic changes that this word underwent, we consider it necessary to recall some phonetic patterns revealed in Rapanui-Armenian word commonalities.

## 2.1. Addition of a pre-sound

According to the ruling point of view, “...in Old Armenian, it was impossible to start a word with **r**, so even in borrowed words, the word beginning with **r** received **a** or **e** in front of it” (Aghayan (1964) p. 161)<sup>3</sup>.

Examination of Rapanui-Armenian lexical parallels has revealed that this pattern of pre-sound addition also works in Rapanui-Armenian lexical parallels, which excludes the borrowing of these words.

Let us bring some examples:

Rapan. **rua** “hole, ditch”, “water well” - Arm. **arū** “water course, stream”;

Rapan. **rogo** “announcement, notification” - Arm. **arogem** “to say, to talk”;

Rapan. **rere** “to go aside”, “to retreat” - Grb. **ye-rer** “wobble, wavering” (derived from the root **\*tres-** “to tremble, to waver”);

Rapan. **rerara** (**rera-rera**) “the surface of the sea” - Grb. **ye-rer**, of which **ye-reral**, **yererun** “wavering, tottering”.

In exactly the same pattern, from the Polynesian word **rangi** (*rangi*) “heaven, sky”, with the addition of the pre-sound **ē** (*e*) and the drop-out of the unaccented **a**, we get the form **ē’rgi** “heaven”, which we find preserved in the Aslanbeg dialect, as well as the native Armenian word **yerkin**. In most Armenian dialects, it sounds like this: (Pl.) **ērgink’**, (Agl.) **e’rgink’**, **yērginq**, (Krb., Mrgh.) **yērg;inq**, (Gor.) **yē’rgink’**, (Khrb.) **ērginq**, (Vozm.) **yērkēnq**, (Ant.) **yrge’nq**, (Asl.) **ē’rgi**, **ē’rgink’** etc (Acharyan (1926) vol. 2, pp. 62-63).

Thus, the Pan-Polynesian word *rangi* “heaven, sky” is semantically identical, and phonetically is the closest to the Armenian word *yerkin*. For this very reason, it can rightly be considered as a living proto-form of the native Armenian word *yerkin*, from which the Grabarian *yerkin* and many Armenian dialectal forms legitimately originate. Therefore, we have reason to believe that it is an archaism preserved in remote eastern islands.

Perhaps one could question this correspondence as a unique example, if other words of the same origin were not discovered in Armenian, which are also the result of regular phonetic transitions specific to Rapanui-Armenian commonalities.

## 2.2. Drop-out of the final sound

It is known that most Rapanui-Armenian lexical parallels are roots resulting from the regular drop-out of the final sound of the Rapanui word, for example:

Rapan. **kite**<sub>2</sub> “to see, to notice”, “to know” - Grb. **gēt/git-** “knowledgeable, knowing”, “to know”, “magician”, derived from the root **\*ueid-/\*uoid-** “to see, to know” (Jahukyan (2010) p. 160);

Rapan. **teka** “to turn (around)” - Grb. **t’ek’**, from which: **t’ek’el** “to bend, to change into” (from the root **\*tek-** “to weave”);

Rapan. **turuturu** (**turu-turu**) “to pour drop by drop (water, liquid)” - Grb. **t’or** “flowing, flow, stream, drip”, from which **t’orel/t’urel**, **t’ort’orel** (derived from the root **\*(s)ter-** “impure liquid”);

Rapan. **hinihini**<sub>2</sub> (**hini-hini**) “ancient, old” - Grb. **hin** “old”, derived from the root **\*seno-** “old” (Jahukyan (2010) p. 461);

Rapan. **tova** “sea” - Grb. **čov** “sea”, derived with some doubts from the root **\*gob-** (Jahukyan (2010) p. 366);

Rapan. **taki**<sub>2</sub> “bottom of the net”, **taki**<sub>5</sub>, **taki eev** “place to sit” - Grb. **tak** “bottom”, “under, depth” (Acharyan (1926) vol. 4, p. 360)<sup>4</sup> etc.

<sup>3</sup>It is also noted that in the dialects of the new period (? L.S.) it is borrowed in the form of *rang*).

<sup>4</sup>Considered a loan from Middle Persian assumed root **\*tak**, Pers. *tak*.

With exactly the same regularity, from the Polynesian word *rangi* “heaven, sky” we get the Armenian dialect (Ar., NB, Tb., Krm. Krb. Hvr. (Knd.), Shmkh., Mghr. (Krch.), Urm., Kr., Msh. (Mks.) *řang*, (Ss. (Mtk.)) *řng* “color”, *řangerang* “multi-colored”, “pretty, patterned” (DDAL (2001) pp. 227-228) non-analyzable word *řang (rang)*<sup>5</sup> meaning “color in general”.

It is known in many dialects of Armenian in the form of *řang* and in the sense of “color in general”, from which we have the dialectal (Tb.) *řangavor/řangavur* “colorful” (DDAL (2001) p. 228), (Krb.) *řang-řang* “multicolored, motley, variegated” (Sargsyan (2013) p. 167), *řang t'aluk*, *řang t'rač* “pale”, “faded, discolored” (Malkhasiants (1944) p. 228), is said mainly for old multicolored rugs, carpets, clothes (DDAL (2001) pp. 227-228). It is considered a loan from Pers. rang (Malkhasiants (1944) p. 157). Taking into account the presence of Armenian-Polynesian multi-character commonalities and the chronological factor, the Armenian word *rang/řang*, derived from the Polynesian word *rangi*, with the well-known and active pattern of final sound drop-out, can be considered a native Armenian word.

We can be objected by reminding the ruling opinion that Armenian did not have roots beginning with *r*. This opinion needs revision, because a number of Polynesian words beginning with *r* have Armenian parallels beginning with *r/ř* (and not only) in Grabar and Armenian dialects (In more detail see (Stepanyan (2015) pp. 80-86)), such as:

Rapan. *ra*<sub>1</sub> “here”, “there” - dial. (J.) *res* “here is, this is”, *red* “there is, that is”, *ren* “there is, that is”;

Rapan. *raa* “sun” - dial. (Krb.) *regnak/rignak* “sun”;

Rapan. *raega* “first fruits” - dial. (Krb.) *rač* ‘in “first”;

Rapan. *rae*<sub>1</sub>, *te rae*, *rahe* “first”, *rae*<sub>1</sub>, *i rae* “firstly, first” - dial. (Krb.) *raškan/rašken* “first, at first”;

Rapan. *rivariva* (riva-riva) “big”, “rich”, “to surpass” - dial. (Krb.) *řaval*, which is the same as Grb. *aravel* “more, with advantage, with superiority” (Sargsyan (2013) pp. 167);

Rapan. *riki*, *rikiriki* “small” - Armenian diminutive particle *-rik*, etc.

Thus, we consider quite possible the existence, i.e. the nativity of the word *rang/řang* “color” in Pre-Proto-Armenian, taking into account its prevalence in many and territorially distant dialects of Armenian. Our opinion is supported by the word *raku* “evening” of the Meghri dialect lacking the pre-sound *e* which was added to it in literary Armenian *yereko* “evening”.

*In order to understand the semantic connection between heaven and color, let's note that Polynesian color names are not only color names, but names of the objects bearing it. For example, the signifiers of green color are associated with the meanings of “young and tender plant, small, young”.*

*Pan-Polynesian mata “green” and “sprouting plant”, Rapan. mata<sub>3</sub> “green” and “unripe (fruit)”, “juvenile, immature, green”, mata<sub>9</sub> “fruit, embryo”, Samoan moto “green” and “young”, Tonga mata “green” and “unripe (fruit)”, Maori mata “fresh plants”, which correspond to the dialectal Armenian (Ar., Hvr.) mat “excess parts of the grape vine that are pruned”, from which the native Armenian matat “young, baby calf” (\*mad- “wet., damp, to drip, juicy, rich, well-fed”)(Jahukyan (2010) pp. 513). Acharyan, relying on Slavic parallels (Old Slavic: mladu, (young)), derives it from the root \*mel- “to grind” with the root-determinative \*d- and its change (Acharyan (1926) vol. 3, p. 267).*

*A similar alternation of the words denoting colors and objects is also present in Armenian. Let's give one example. G. Jahukyan believes that “it is possible that the word dalar was used in ancient times not only for greens, but also for the color green itself” (Jahukyan (1987) p. 270). In our opinion, G. Jahukyan is absolutely right: the root dal of the Armenian word dalar originates from the native Armenian word tal (derived from \*dhel) with the sonorization of t. Its ancient form is preserved in the Rapanui word tara<sub>1</sub> “trunk of a tree”, “thorn” with the alternation (r>l). It is identical to the Armenian dialect (Krb.) root tal “tree branch”, from which we also have dial. (Krb.) words talar, telar, tilar “young, fresh” (Sargsyan (2013) p. 707). As we can see, even the Polynesian words denoting an object of the given color have native Armenian parallels.*

*Since the sky (heaven) is the area where various colors change each other continuously during the day, also in the blue sky you can see a parade of white, gray, black, yellow, red clouds, then the word ragi “sky, heaven” could rightly be understood as meaning both the concept of “sky” and the concept*

<sup>5</sup>Rapanui lacks the (ř) sound, but in the Rapanui-Armenian parallels there is a Rapanui r - Armenian ř correspondence.

of “color in general”. The proof of the aforesaid can be considered the Rapanui word *ragi-ragi* (**rangi-rangi**) “heaven, sky”. Its literal parallel is the Armenian dialectal (Ar., Tb., Krb.) word **rang-rang** “multicolored, colorful”.

According to the above-mentioned regularity of adding the pre-sound **e**, from the Polynesian word **rangi** “heaven” we also get the Armenian **yerang** “color, paint”; in the modern literary language, the word with the meaning “shade, subtle difference”, from which we have *yerang-yerang* “colorful”, *yeranganerkut’yun*, *yerp’nerang*, *bazmerang* or *bazmerank*, *karmrerang*. It is considered a loan from an Iranian source, and is compared to Parth. *rang*, Mid. Pers. and Pers. *rang* (Acharyan (1926) vol. 2, p. 39; Jahukyan (1987) p. 270; Jahukyan (2010) p. 221). It is also noted that in the dialects of the new region (?) it is borrowed in the form of *rang* (interrogative: L.S.). Acharyan brings the following parallels to the latter: Phl. *rang*, Pazend. *rang*, Pers. *rang*, *arang*, *ranj*, Kurd. *reng*, *renk*, Afghan. *Beluj. rang*, Sanskr. *ran’ga*, all with the meaning “color” (Acharyan (1926) vol. 2, p. 39). As we can see, it is widely used in various languages of a vast region.

### 3. Results

Thus, the most likely proto-form of the native Armenian word *yerkin* “heaven, sky” is the word *ragi* (**rangi**) “heaven, sky” preserved in the Pan-Polynesian lexicon, from which the Armenian words **yerkin**, **rang/rang** and **yerang** are obtained as a result of regular phonetic alterations. According to the accepted opinion, the first of these words derives from a phonetically and semantically unconvincing proto-form, the second and third are considered borrowings from Iranian languages.

A living and close archetype of these Armenian words is found in the ancient Polynesian languages, which are estimated to be 50 000 years old or more. The chronological factor, the presence of Armenian-Polynesian diverse (toponymic, mytho-onomastic, lexical, grammatical) commonalities, the phonetic regularities revealed in the Rapanui-Armenian lexical commonalities and particularly in the above-mentioned words

- a) prove the nature of these words as having the same root, the same origin;
- b) allow to substantiate the native Armenian origin of the latter and
- c) determine the actual direction of borrowing from Armenian to other languages.

Through the Pan-Polynesian word **ragi** (**rangi**) “heaven, sky”, a genealogical bunch of words is revealed in Armenian, of which, due to the lack of space and time, only three have been presented in this article.

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