

*who inspirited and granted faith to dust, Praise the enlivening holy Lord*

# In Search of Phoenix in Caucasus Land\*

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## Find

Mount "Ararat" in the Caucasus territories is believed and referred to as "Mount Qaf" in some narrative myths. Narratives such as its being the place where Noah's ship berthed since it was the first peak emerged from the waters and finally, concurrence of "Mount Qaf" which has been the greatest works of ancient mythology has contributed in naming the Caucasus land. Fairytales have the idea that Mount Qaf is the place of birth and life of Phoenix - King of the birds and symbol of perfection of human knowledge - and in old parable, birds fly toward Phoenix by guidance of the hoopoe.

Fig.1. Mount Ararat in Caucasus land, believed to be mystical Mount Qaf in legends. Photo: Mehrdad Soltani, archive of NAZAR research center, 2013.



*They argued how to set about their quest.  
The hoopoe fluttered forward; on his breast  
Discerning, righteous and intelligent,  
He spoke: "My purposes are heaven-sent;  
I know our king -- but how can I alone  
Endure the journey to His distant throne?  
We have a king; beyond Qaf's mountain peak  
The Simorgh lives, the sovereign whom you seek  
A hundred thousand veils of dark and light  
Withdraw His presence from our mortal sight  
Do not imagine that the Way is short;  
Vast seas and deserts lie before His court.*

### **Recognition**

Research trip at "NAZAR research center" in summer 2013 was aimed to visit this destination under supervision of "NAZAR research center" president and presence of 20 passengers. This travel required scientific preparations in addition of conventional and transportation procurements which were accomplished by participation of all research groups. These preparations were studies done by the supervisor. Prior acquaintance with the trip and its goal will definitely lead into the best results since these studies helped everyone recognize and realize his goal.

*It was in China, late one moonless night,  
The Simorgh first appeared to mortal sight --  
He let a feather float down through the air,  
And rumours of its fame spread everywhere;  
Throughout the world men separately conceived  
An image of its shape, and all believed*

Fig.2. Presentation of studies at NAZAR research center, prior to research trip. Photo: Pezhman Raeisian, archive of NAZAR research center, 2013.



*All praised the splendour of their distant king;  
All rose impatient to be on the wing;  
But when they pondered on the journey's length,  
They hesitated; their ambitious strength  
Dissolved: each bird, according to his kind,  
Felt flattered but reluctantly declined.*

### **Excuse**

The passengers found their subject to pursue their directions. Every question was queried to answer scientific studies selecting research themes in four formats of "Urban Landscape", "Art & Civilization", "Architecture of Caucasus" and "Natural & Cultural Landscape". Each passenger found an excuse for their trip, an excuse discussed prior to the tour to help the passengers confront it.

*The pompous partridge was next to speak,  
Fresh from his store of pearls. His crimson beak  
With angry blood. He clucked: "My one desire  
Is jewels; I pick through quarries for their fire  
No other goal in life. My heart is tied  
By bonds of love to this fair mountain-side.  
Besides, the journey to the Simorgh's throne  
Is hard. I cannot tear myself away;  
The hoopoe said: "You have the colours of  
Those jewels you so inordinately love,  
Yet those hard gems from which you cannot part*

Fig.3. One of the researchers who has selected to scrutinize "Art & culture of Caucasus" for field research is presenting her initial studies. Photo: Pezhman Raeisian, archive of NAZAR research center, 2013.



*Have only helped you to a hardened heart  
The coy duck waddled from her stream and quacked:  
“Now none of you can argue with the fact  
That both in this world and the next I am  
The purest bird that ever flew or swam;  
I spread my prayer-mat out, and all the time  
I clean myself of every bit of grime  
Water’s the only home I’ve ever known;  
Why should I care about this Simorgh’s throne?”  
The hoopoe answered her: “Your life is passed  
In vague, aquatic dreams which cannot last --  
A sudden wave and they are swept away.  
You value water’s purity, you say,  
But is your life as pure as you declare?  
A fool described the nature both worlds share  
Forgive me, reader, if I do not say  
All these excuses to avoid the Way;*

### Traverse

Traveling always introduces a new type of life. A life exempt of daily habits and routines, a type of social life with new people in new conditions. Travel is the theme for referring to inside and inquiring properties

Fig.4. Mountain climbing with the aim of visit Ggart mithraeum in Armenia. Photo: Seyedeh Fatemeh Mardani, archive of NAZAR research center, 2013.





within of each passenger that acknowledges his weaknesses and strengths in the community. Unpredictable events and circumstances provide a context for personal and social growth which may not occur during a lifetime within a family.

Traversing route is a goal itself that flourishes personal and social development. It's a privileged essence of traveling which is obtained by traversing the route, whether it is done for the purpose of acquiring knowledge or for pleasure.

*The trembling birds stared out across the plain;  
The road seemed endless as their endless pain.  
Another bird said: "Hoopoe, you're our guide.  
How would it be if I let you decide?  
Another said: "Whenever I decide  
To seek His presence, that arch-devil Pride  
Another bird said: "I love gold alone;  
It's life to me, like marrow to a bone --  
"Great hoopoe," said another bird, "my love  
Has loaded me with chains, I cannot move.  
Another bird spoke up: "The Way is long,  
And I am neither valiant nor strong.*

### Discovery Stages

Discovery in travel begins with doing prior studies and researches before the trip. These studies will offer a clear direction to all of activities earlier than the experience. Glances, pictures, notes and all discussions along the route, from starting the journey by bus and strolling in spaces and to friendly conversation in the way will eventually discover the truth. Everyone traverses the route on the basis of the subject he has set to discover and proof from the beginning of the journey. They pursue their movement to find the truth in two by two conversations, group meetings, public meetings and exchanging of useful information; a movement which will stay vivacious, in the bus, in strolling in cities, in accommodation spaces or in unplanned meetings. Every space is potent to become a place of understanding the truth whether it is near a wild river,

Fig.5. Fellow travelers in groups of four discuss their proofs or complete their hypothesis by consultation. Photo: archive of NAZAR research center, 2013.

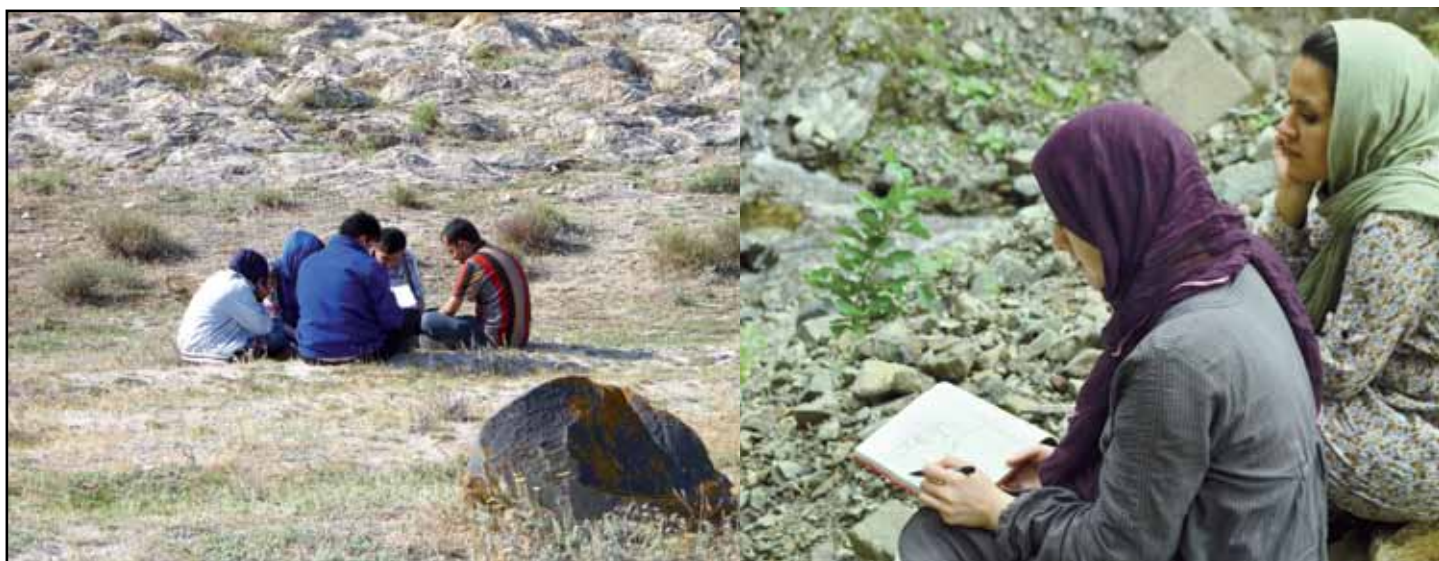


alongside the road, under a turbulent waterfall or in a hotel lobby. However, this discovery is not fulfilled unless some phases are finished. Although their boundaries of the interaction are different for everyone, their fulfillment is undeniable. "Learning", "Environment", "Challenge" and "Deduction" are four valleys of research and discover. Learning should start prior to the trip and it has to be supported by studies before the travel. The constantly changing environment is full of learning materials. Challenge is created by studying and will involve all the passengers which will end up in discussions and interlocution that leads to Deduction. A complete educational process...

*Before we reach our goal," the hoopoe said,  
"The journey's seven valleys lie ahead;  
How far this is the world has never learned,  
For no one who has gone there has returned  
The first stage is the Valley of the Quest;  
Then Love's wide valley is our second test;  
The third is Insight into Mystery,  
The fourth Detachment and Serenity --  
The fifth is Unity; the sixth is Awe,  
A deep Bewilderment unknown before,  
The seventh Poverty and Nothingness --  
And there you are suspended, motionless*

### Goal - End

Education, discover and knowledge of different dimension of Caucasus - Georgia and Armenia - occurred within their land. The Goal is selfsame that is discovered along the route. Exploring the causes and implications of the basic assumptions are achieved through field observations and supervisors' guidance. The goal is the same as that in the course of discovery. The important part of "NAZAR" research trip's goal is personal and internal development and gained through the route of personality perfection and occurred every day, by waking up on time, collecting tools, preparing breakfast, having lunch or dinner by group and doing all responsibilities and primary works together. On the other hand, scientific discoveries, proving the initial assumptions based on prior studies continue on the way. Perhaps many hypotheses are rejected during travel, or transformed and proven in the last days and thus the process of a full investigation to travel is





passed. The goal is not an absolute scientific visit. The goal is not the viewing of Caucasus and Mount Qaf! The goal is not arriving, but going and being on the way; on the way to Mount Qaf...

The Hoopoe declares that the last valley of deprivation and death is almost impossible to describe. In the immensity of the divine ocean the pattern of the present world and the future world dissolves. As you realize that the individual self does not really exist, the drop becomes part of the great ocean forever in peace. The analogy of moths seeking the flame is used. Out of thousands of birds only thirty reach the end of the journey. When the light of lights is manifested and they are in peace, they become aware that the Simorgh is them. They begin a new life in the Simorgh and contemplate the inner world. Simorgh, It turns out, means thirty birds; but if forty or fifty had arrived, it would be the same. By annihilating themselves gloriously in the Simorgh they find themselves in joy, learn the secrets, and receive immortality. So long as you do not realize your nothingness and do not renounce your self-pride, vanity, and self-love, you will not reach the heights of Immortality.

That was a brief description of a 17day trip of 20 researchers of art, architecture and landscape to the Mount Qaf and Caucasus land; a trip on the basis of discovery as a tool for education and social growth. Research trip to Caucasus is comparable to a trip of 30 birds to mount Qaf in order to visit the Phoenix; a trip that led to discovering a route and visiting the selfsame 30 birds. A trip to self understanding and link to the truth within....

### Endnote

\*.This article describes the discovery-based learning, based on research activities in Georgia and Armenia trip in summer 2013.

Fig.6 Social photo in main square of Mestia. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, archive of NAZAR research center, 2013.

