
BOOK REVIEWS

THE FAIRY TALE ABOUT DRAGON AND REALITY

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The Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia has published the second collection, dedicated to dragon-stone monuments. In the first collection, which was published by the "Gitutyun" publishing house in 2015, the term "archaeology of dragon-stones" was defined for the first time, and separate monuments, their architecture, construction features and the archaeological context were presented as well. The collection also discussed issues related to ritual-religious significance and functions (Dragon Stones, 2015).

In the present collection, which is in fact the creative continuation of the first book, are included articles by 55 authors from 7 countries and 20 scientific institutions. It takes a deeper look at the ritual-cultic functions of the dragon-stones, the problems of their spiritual significance.

The preface of the collection was written by Pavel Avetisyan, director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences. In the preface the author mentions the inter-professional nature of the articles.

The introductory section of the collection begins with the article "From Fairy Tale to Archaeology" by A. Bobokhyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography), where the author refers to the categories of "fairy tale" and "archaeology", their differences and similarities, formulating the term "fairy tale of archaeology" on the border of these two, taking into account the environment where the relationship between fairy tale and archaeology is revealed both in terms of method and reorganization. Based on this methodological basis, the author considers dragon-stones to assess the role of investigations of traditions in the study of dragon-stones.

The next article in the introductory section is "Visual history of the Ur-ritual: interpreting the images on the stone vishap stelaes" by Levon Abrahamyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author examines the recently discovered dragon-stone and concludes that the supernatural animal, whose fur is spread on top, refers apparently not to everyday rituals, but to the original event, which becomes a copy of the ritual that recreates it. Besides, the author throws a look at the musical competition between Marsius and Apollo, not excluding that it may have something to do with dragon-stones.

The article "Vishap with five-headed bull in mythological context" by A. Petrosyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography) is dedicated to the examination of the recently found statue of the five-headed dragon. Commenting on this monument, A. Petrosyan brings numerous mythological parallels and analyzes the five-dimensional

sculpture found in Harzhis. He concluded that the five-headed bull depicted on the "Arshaluys 5" dragon-stone is the animal correspondence of this image of the Weather-god.

The second part of the collection is titled "Space and Archetype". The section opens the paper of Hrachya Vardanyan and Avetik Vardanyan ("Dragon" cultural organization, Gyumri) entitled as "The Vishapous inside the art: node of space and human perception". The authors view dragon-stones from the art worker's point of view, considering dragon-stones as an integral part of the landscape.

The artist's point of view is also expressed in the article "The enigma of space: a panorama of Dragon Stones" by Zareh Tjeknavorian (American University of Armenia). The author does not limit himself to the study of dragon-stones in the Armenian Highlands, but includes information about European megalithic monuments. Z. Tjeknavorian not only considers dragon-stones in the context of the surrounding landscape, but also appreciates their role in the cultural life of people, discussing the traditions associated with dragon stones, which are an integral part of the spiritual cultures of Armenians and other people.

The section logically finishes the article "Manifestations of the Archetypal image of Dragon in the Armenian worldview" written by Karen Hovhannisyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). Summing up the system of popular ideas, the author considers its various manifestations – dragon fish, dragon snake, etc., noting their meaning in different periods. The author concludes that the dragon-stone actually united the past and the future, based on the present world.

The third part of the collection is called "Fairy Tale and Myth". If in the previous section the emphasis was on the placement and perception of the real space of the dragon-stones, here the authors consider the place of the dragon and its role in the mythical and fairy-tale domain. The first article in the section is "Vishap in Armenian folktales of magic" written by Tamar Hayrapetyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author considers both the separate manifestations of the dragon and their functions. The author concludes that the dragon and the fish play a key role in Armenian fairy tales. As if the inhabitants of the lower part of the universe, the snake and the fish share many functional similarities. Treatment of diseases, modeling of the world, and overcoming the pre-determined trials for a cultural hero are often played out by a dragon or a snake.

The second article of the section is L. Abrahamyan's "Dragon at the well". Based on the comparative method, the author analyzes two plots of Armenian fairy tales that are not similar at first sight, where there are episodes of a dragon fight. Using this method, the author observes the change of the Snake-Man relationship in the context of the Renaissance.

The next article is "Transforming serpent-vishap in marriage plots of the Armenian Fairy Tales" (Nvard Vardanyan, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author discusses the plot about the transforming dragon in the context of the plot of the animal

being transformed into an animal. As a result, the author separates a number of symbolic meanings of the transformed dragon - the snake as a part of the female essence (ancient sub-layer), as a phallic male symbol, some erotic code, as a dying and rising symbol.

Another semantic connection of the dragon in the fairy-tale world is the article "The Dragon and the Tree in the Armenian Folk Tales" (Lusine Hayriyan, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The sea, the tree, the dragon sheltered on the tree or under the tree are the unchanging motives of the ancient archetypal ideas about the world. The author analyzes the relevant tales and separates a number of plot lines.

From the point of view of comparative mythology and linguistics, the article "Indo-European serpent in the Armenian Tradition and the Dragon Stones" is dedicated to the interpretation of the dragon-stonemasons in the image of the dragon. The article is written by A. Petrosyan. The author analyzes the Indo-European root **we/-*, combining it with the Armenian divine names such as Angegh, Tork Angegh, Ara Geghetsik. In this context, the author examines the name of the patriarch Gegham, taking into account that the greatest concentration of dragon-stones is observed in Gegharkunik. Besides, A. Petrosyan compares the Urartian name of Velikukhi in the region with the name of the giant Ullikummi, the opponent of Teshub in the Hurrian mythology.

The next article in the section is "Religious-Mythological concept of Dragon in the Armenian epic folklore" written by Siranush Arakelyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author concludes that the dragon appears in all layers of epic folklore, both as a human and as a giant snake that requires human deaths. In the Christian era, the dragon was transformed into a devil. The dragon is confronted by a cultural hero or magician who defeats the dragon, ending the chaos.

The article "Ancient water supply systems, Little Mher and vishap-stones", written by Lilit Simonyan and Karen Hovhannisyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography), is dedicated to dragon-water interactions. The author correctly notes that the traces of ancient water supply systems have been preserved for millennia, not only as material remains, but also in the form of symbolic texts. In general, the author analyzes the image of Little Mher as the ruler of water and luck. The myths about dragons and great giants are also connected with the water system. The author believes that interdisciplinary research can greatly contribute to the clarification of this important issue.

One of the most important issues in the study and interpretation of dragon-stones is the identification of dragon figures. In the article "Demon in the Armenian folk superstitious stories" Hasmik Galstyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography) studies the image of the dragon: its origins, functional manifestations, habitats, as well as the characters of the dragon-reaper heroes. The author concludes that despite the ancient origins of the word "dev (dragon)", thoughts and beliefs about it are seen in the Christian period, which is not true in the case of the dragon, since it is a very archaic mythological character.

The materials included in the fourth section, "Belief and Cult", are a logical continuation of the themes of Section III of the Collection. The section opens with the article "The Good practices of snakes and dragons in the Armenian Beliefs" by Astghik Israelyan (History Museum of Armenia). The article is relevant in the sense that the dragon is considered an evil and negative force mainly by everyday perception. Examining a number of examples of applied art, the author rightly notes that the functions of the dragon and the snake are extremely diverse and multifaceted, including the role of giving evil, wealth, healing, saving lives, punishing evil and establishing justice.

One of the good features of the snake is the following article "Snake in Armenian Folk Medicine" written by Galya Davidova (Museum of Armenian Ethnography). In order to fully discover the subject, the author refers to a number of issues, examining the image of the snake as a symbol of medicine, as well as the use of the snake in folk medicine. The author also included a number of conversations and stories covering the snake's connection with medicine.

The section concludes with the study "The Dragon vishap (arvand) in the beliefs of Kessab Armenians" written by Hagop Tcholakian (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The mythical creature Arvand occupies a certain place in the beliefs of the Kessab Armenians (Syria). Arvand could be imagined as a flying or a horned snake. Arvand could also be in the form of a skull, a whale, or another fish-like creature. In other words, Arvand looked like a hurricane or lightning. Arvand lived near a spring or ruined sanctuary.

The next node in the logical chain of materials is Section V, "Ritual and Game". The section opens with the article "Manifestations of dragon-fighting in the wedding ritual" written by Anahit Mkhitarian (Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts). Putting into circulation the still unexplored manuscript, the researcher concludes that there are separate manifestations of dragonfly in both folk and church ceremonies.

Shushanik Hovhannisyan's (Museum of Armenian Ethnography) study "Snake's character in the Armenian folk games" states that in folk roles, in contrast to mythology, the snake has an unequivocally negative perception.

The sixth part of the book is called "Word and Logos". The section is built on clear logic: the origin of the word, the dragon in dialects and folklore, the dragon in modern literature. The issues of etymology are discussed in the article "Etymology of Armenian word višap" written by Tork Dalalyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). First, the author considers the ancient evidence of the word meaning dragon in Avesta, in the Armenian translation of the Bible. Then, the word perception is considered in a folk word and thing. The author also refers to previous research (H. Hübschman, E. Benveniste, H. Acharyan, G. Jahukyan and others). The author also draws parallels with the Ossetian words meaning "to destroy" and "to overturn", noting that these words reveal the functions of the dragon.

Armen Sargsyan's (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography) "The dragon in the Armenian folklore" presents dragons in Armenian dialects, folk sayings, legends, fairy tales, folk tales and amusements. Written specimens in ancient times, the image of the dragon was associated with the thinking of the Armenian people. It is also interesting to note the author's observation that nowadays, in connection with the peculiarities of modern person's thinking, almost all the examples of the art of the dragon are no longer told.

If in the previous sections the authors referred to the perceptions of the image of the dragon and the understanding of that image, then the seventh, by far the most extensive section, "Sign and image", is dedicated to the specific manifestations of these perceptions in the monuments. This section can be logically divided into several subsections. The first subdivision presents archaeological discoveries.

The section opens with the article "Snake-shaped ornaments on the pottery of the Shengavit culture" written by Anna Azizyan ("Erebuni" Historical-Archaeological Museum-reserve). The author analyzes the images, both in terms of the location of the pottery and the plot, concluding that the ideological core of most ornaments is the snake and the bird, sometimes associated with the Tree of Life.

From the chronological point of view, the logical continuation of this article is "Snake ornamentation on Bronze and Iron Age Pottery of Armenia: The IInd millennium – beginning of Ist millennium BC) by Nora Yengibaryan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author considers the pottery with a mantle according to the place of discovery - mausoleum complexes and sanctuaries. In the tombs, the placement of vase-bearing vessels is associated with the idea of death and rebirth, and in sanctuaries, where the ritual of agriculture and the worship of bread are clearly expressed, the worship of the serpent was intended to provide much-needed moisture in the agricultural process.

The image of the snake is dedicated to the bronze items "Image of serpent on the ancient bronze items (serpent-dragon)" written by Aram Gevorgyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author specifically mentions that the snake was mainly depicted in military items.

Nora Yengibaryan's second article, "Vishap-snake in Urartian Iconography" presents both the objects decorated with the image and an attempt to interpret some of the plots. Analyzing the archaeological sources, the author concludes that the dragon-serpent is mainly associated with the worship of water in the beliefs of the Urartians.

The second subdivision presents monuments of applied art (carpets, embroidery, dress). The first article of the sub-section is the program article "The origin and typology issues of classical dragon rugs" written by Ashkhunj Poghosyan (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia). The author considers the origins of dragon rugs, the main types of classical and later dragon rugs. The author specifically mentions that the late dragon rugs are typical only of the Syunik-Artsakh

region, from which it can be concluded that the traditions of the classical dragon rug were formed right here.

In the next article, "Snake-dragon in the Armenian embroidery of the XVIII-XIX centuries" by Karine Bazeyan (Shirak Armenological Research Center, National Academy of Sciences). The author discusses separate groups of embroidery on household items, clothing, as well as church accessories. The author believes that the image of the snake in embroidery, on the one hand, acts as a protector, and on the other hand, as an evil force.

Comments on the image of the snake-dragon often indicate the negative context of the Christian interpretation of the image, but this interpretation is not the only one in the Christian perception. The article "The symbol of the dragon in the vestment complex of the Catholicos and its reflection in the medieval miniature painting" written by Sofi Khachmanyant (Santa Monica City College, California-Hollywood Art Institute) is dedicated to the examination of this issue. The author concludes that the motives of the fish and the snake-dragon in the Catholicos' costume complex and miniature painting are in fact a distant response to the ancient pre-Christian beliefs, which in the new conditions adapt to the requirements of monotheism.

The image of a dragon warrior is inseparable from the image of a snake-dragon. The article "Jesus-Christ as a Dragon Fighter, church tradition and artist's memory" written by Levon Abrahamyan and "Demonfighter Christ and dragon's iconographic tradition in the medieval Armenian Art" written by Tigran Grigoryan (Yerevan State University) are dedicated to the reflection of Christian perceptions of this ancient image.

In the first article, the author reinterprets the image of a serpent depicted under Christ's feet in the scenes depicting Baptism, finding that it should be treated not on the basis of original or contradictory sources, but in the context of the ancient image of the Dragon Fighter.

In his article T. Grigoryan, first, separates the plots depicting the image of the dragon in miniatures and sculpture. Based on these sources, the author concludes that the characters of the hero, the snake-dragon, reaching the Christian circle, have remained intact.

This section concludes with two generalizing articles summarizing the reflections of the Christian perception of the dragon-snake in the miniature and the sculpture.

The first is the article by Ashkhen Yenokyan (Yerevan State University) "The iconography of dragon-snake in the Armenian miniature". The author notes that in Christian art, the snake-dragon was often identified with the devil, which was reflected in the corresponding pictorial episodes. At the same time, some of the scenes depicting the dragon-snake are associated with the miracles of God ("Moses' staff", "Ankez Moreni", "Copper snake", "St. Gregory in Virap"), others present the idea of victory over evil ("Baptism", "The Mansion in Hell", "The Destruction of Hell", etc.).

The eighth section of the collection, "Saint and Sanctuary", is dedicated to the discovery of the image of Dragon Fighters, as well as to the shrines associated with the

worship of dragons. The section opens with Lilit Simonyan's (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography) "Dragons turned to stone and dragon slaying saints: myth and memory". The author notes that many legends about petrified dragons have been preserved in various Armenian-populated areas, where dragons embody the harmful forces of nature. In this context, petrification is a memory of a wonderful or heroic act that once took place. At the same time, these perceptions do not change over time, as each period interprets the old cult in its own way.

The article "Saint serpent-fighters in the Armenian oral and written Tradition" by Lusine Ghrejyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography) the author concludes that in popular Christianity there are saints of pan-Armenian and local significance, whose characters and cults are based on the characteristics of the dragon-fighting deity. The dragon saints, according to the author, are the thunderous gods under the guise of Christianity, who act as patrons of the military class.

Next articles in the section are dealing with monuments and shrines. The first in this series is Yervand Grekyan's (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography) article "The Urartian Stela in the ancient Near Eastern context (preliminary observations)". The author considers *puluse*-type Urartian stone monuments in the context of the ancient landscapes of the Middle East. The author considers Urartian-Assyrian similarities of the monuments of the XIV-VII centuries BC, suggesting their general origin.

In Arsen Bobokhyan's article "The sanctuary Kuntara and the stone Kunkunuzzi", the author tries to localize the events described in the Hurrian theological text "Kumarbi's Song" about the victory of the god Teshub. The author analyzes the view that the *Ikunta luli pool* (Cold Lake) mentioned in the myth is Lake Van, the Great Rock is the Van rock, and Mount Kantzura is Tondrak, Npat or Nemrut. Then, analyzing the information of the myth, comparing it with the archaeological information, in particular the accumulation of dragon quarries in the mentioned period, the author supposes that Mount Kantzura is Nemrut. The article also presents a table of dragon stones in the Van region.

The section concludes with the article "Sanctuaries of antique period Armenia: geographical panorama" written by Arevik Parsamyan (University of Rouen, University of Ex-Marseilles) and "Outdoor sanctuaries in ancient Armenia: Tir and Anahit" written by Hrach Martirosyan (University of Leiden).

In the first article, combining geographical, historical, ethnographic sources, the author localizes the rocks dedicated to the worship of Mihr/Mithra, the hills dedicated to the goddess Astghik, the sacred forests and rivers dedicated to Anahit the Great Lady.

In the second article, H. Martirosyan moderates outdoor shrines, celebrating sacred forests, mounds, sacred monuments.

The ninth section, "Memory and Memorial", opens with an article entitled "Activities of Ashkharhbek Kalantar in archaeology and in protection of historical monuments" written by Karen Bayramyan (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia). Using the published works of A. Kalantar, the author covers the

archival materials published in the periodical press. In particular, it is mentioned that due to the activities of Kalantar as the secretary of the Committee for the Preservation of Antiquities of Armenia, it was possible to save famous monuments such as Zvartnots, S. Hripsime Temple, Tatev.

The article "Dragon-Stones in the Context of the Museumification of Monuments" written by David Poghosyan (Armenian State Pedagogical University) has a great practical importance. The author examines the types, methods and features of the museum-stones of dragon-stone museums, and offers a number of practical suggestions.

The two articles concluding the section can be viewed in the context of memory archaeology. The first is an article by Arsen Harutyunyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts) entitled "The epigraphs on dragon-stones turned into cross-stones". This study is the first attempt to examine the lithographic inscriptions of khachkarized dragon lithographs in terms of both content and archaeology.

The next article is the study of Avetik Ghazaryan (Historical-Cultural Reserve Museums and Historical Environment Protection Service SNCO) "Vishap-architrave in architectural composition of the Avan Temple ". The author examines the architectural features of the temple of Avan, looking at the "kind-dragon" in that context. Examining the stylistic features of the sculpture, the author does not rule out the latter's early Christian and pre-Christian origins. At the same time, the author notes that the sculpture is made of the same building material as the temple, a tuff from the Avan quarry.

The final section of the collection, "Object and Fact", is dedicated to the archaeological context of dragon-stones. The first article in the category is "*Les poisons muets*: Fish-shaped vishaps and cult of water in prehistoric Armenia", written by Marina Storachi and Alessandra Gilibert (University of Ca' Foscari, Venice). The article is dedicated to a type of dragon - fish-shaped monuments. The article develops a method that tries to decipher the symbolic meaning of monuments by integrating quantitative, pictorial and semiotic methods. The pictorial analysis allows the authors to conclude that the sculptures feature large fish species, such as the northern pike and the catfish, which live in low-lying rivers and lakes. Semiotic analysis of the sculptures shows that they are associated with the worship of mountain springs.

The last article on the study of dragon-stones is "Menhirs in South Georgia: new results based on photogrammetry" by Dimitri Narimanishvili (Georgian National Museum). The article presents a map of the distribution of *menhirs*, which was compiled during the reconnaissance, as well as the updated versions of previously made pictures and maps.

Two articles in the section are devoted to the tombstones in the context of the tomb: the article "Vishap stelae and grave tombs" written by Hakob Simonyan (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, "Historical and Cultural Heritage Research Center" SNCO). The author analyzes in detail the location

of the dragon-stones, their connection with the toponyms, presents the separate types of dragons, their imagery. H. Simonyan deals separately with the sacrifices of bulls and dragons in tombs. This information allows the author to make some conclusions about the period of the formation and worship of dragons and stones.

The next article dedicated to the mausoleum context of the Dragon-Stone Cemetery is the study carried out by Ashot Piliposyan, Ruzan Mkrtchyan, Hasmik Simonyan, Artavazd Zakyan, and Arsen Bobokhyan. The research is based on the studies of E.Khaznadyan, the prominent Armenian archaeologist, dedicated to the Lchashen dragon. The Lchashen dragon is unique in that, because it is the first dragon-stone in the context of which anthropological material was discovered. The study of bones shows that two newborns-twins were buried here. This fact makes it possible to observe the dragon's face in a mythological context.

The article "The Petrified vishap of Areni and the protector vishap of Chiva: from myth to archaeology" written by Boris Gasparyan, Arthur Petrosyan, Dmitry Arakelyan, Arsen Bobokhyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Institute of Geology) is dedicated to the clarification of the functions of dragons. The authors review both local legends about dragons and newly discovered dragon-stones.

A number of monuments are being studied in the archaeological context of dragon-stones, including the stones worked in the form of a cup, which are considered in the article "Cup-marks on vishap stelae and their parallels" written by Hayk Avetisyan, Artak Gnuni, Levon Mkrtchyan, and Arsen Bobokhyan. The authors consider such stones found during the excavations, their types, features of the structure, architectural context, and religious functions. Particularly are discussed dragon-stones and pit-shaped structures confirmed in their context.

In the context of the housing system, the problems of dragon-stonemasons are discussed in the article "Settlement system and hydrology of the southern slopes of the Mount Aragats and the problem of vishap stone stelae" written by Henrik Danielyan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography). The author concludes that the rich hydrographic system of the valleys of Amberd, Arkhashan, Shahverd and Kasakh rivers gorges and the roads passing through the mountain gorges were the important junction around which the settlements were grouped. The author especially mentions the fact that in both mountainous and foothill areas the worship of water is expressed by dragon-stones placed near the water sources. It was from these sources that the Bronze and Iron Age settlements of the Aragats foothills and Ararat valley were fed.

In the final article of the section "Tower-like constructions of the southern slopes of Aragats and the question of their interrelation with dragon stones" written by Levon Mkrtchyan ("Metsamor" historical-archaeological reserve-museum). The author discusses the relationship between dragons and megalithic towers, concluding that the ritual contexts of dragons and towers coincide, as they are both part of a common megalithic complex. In addition, although few, there are chronological coincidences.

Finally, the areas of the two types of monuments coincide to some extent, stretching to the southern slopes of Aragats and bypassing the eastern part (Aparan region).

Although “Dragon on the border of fairy tale and reality” is formally a collection of articles, but due to its solid logical structure the present volume is a unified summary that allows us to understand the construction of dragon-stones and worship as a socio-cultural phenomenon: the characteristic features, the subjects of interaction, the factor of significance without which all aspects are purely biological or mechanical, actions and material bearers, as well as long-term.

The high scholarly level of the presented articles, innovative approaches and interdisciplinary nature, allows us to consider this collection as a serious contribution to the field of Armenology.

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Translated from the Armenian by Anna Hakobyan