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Ireland and Armenia: Studies in Language, History and Narrative.
Edited by Maxim Fomin, Alvard Jivanyan, Seamus MacMathuna.
Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series 61. Institute for
the Study of Man, Washington D. C. 2012.

Folklore with its living traditions and customs, old and new elements, genres and subgenres (legends, music, popular beliefs, folk-tales, stories, jokes, etc.) is a true treasure of any nation. Folklore, in a single glance, look and touch, tells more about its nation than can be observed and experienced visually. All its areas of study, oral traditions, rituals and artifacts, have always been at the centre of academic and non-academic interest. Currently, scholars from different domains and disciplines (folklorists, historians, writers, linguists, artists, socio-cultural anthropologists, musicians, archeologists, psychologists, philosophers, etc.) 'dare' to gather together in various formal and in-formal contexts, i.e. within the scope of different projects and programs, including conferences, seminars, forums, lectures, etc, in order to discuss widely, interpret, share and argue broadly and extensively their experiences, ideas and opinions on the field. The international journal *Ireland and Armenia: Studies in Language, History and Narrative* is a brilliant result and a vivid example of this collaboration.

The journal is the outcome of a project which carried out some research on establishing connections and relations between the early cultures of Armenia and Ireland. Though the original research proposal was to explore issues on religious matters only, later the project was broadened and included aspects of linguistics, architecture, narrative and folklore. Though the primary focus was on the medieval period, attention was drawn to other periods too. The present volume explores historical and cultural issues as well as traditions and customs of the two nations within the Indo-European context.

The aim of the present volume is to investigate the cultural heritage of the two nations and discover whether there are any mutual relations and shared characteristics. Cultures do not exist separately but collaborate with each other during the course of history, creating complex and complicated intercultural and inter-textual dimensions. Are there sufficient grounds to establish likely connections between different cultures? This work is a good start.

The journal was printed by the Institute of the Study of Man, Washington D.C. It is a cross-cultural comparative study in the field of folklore, a collection of proceedings of the international interdisciplinary symposium which was held in September 2012, in Yerevan, Armenia. The editorial staff includes eminent figures within the field including Dr. Alvard Jivanyan, professor in English and Linguo-Folklore Studies at Yerevan State University; Dr. Seamus MacMathuna, professor of Irish and Celtic Studies at the University of Ulster and the former director of the National Folklore Collection; and Dr. Maxim Fomin, lecturer in Humanities at the University of Ulster.

The journal is organized thematically. It consists of a title page (with the title of the journal and the names of the editorial staff), a table of contents, an abbreviation list, an acknowledgement and a keynote address. It also includes four main parts, with a subtitle for each. This helps the audience to concentrate on articles in which they are particularly interested.

Though the journal is structurally divided into parts and sections, semantically they are all interrelated and interwoven, each section forming a part of the whole.

In its 300 or so pages this volume succeeds in covering various aspects of the issue. All the presented articles are both of popular interest and academically important. Moreover, most of the articles present “word-pictures” of scenes and events by giving such details as would appeal to all the senses of readers, thus stimulating their imagination.

Though some of the questions raised have been discussed previously by other authors, the works presented in the volume provide totally original and fresh views, which carefully, present and support or dispute previous academic ideas and thoughts.

The work opens with a study by Dr. MacMathuna. It focuses on the tradition of creative witness in Ireland and Armenia, presenting the parallels in historiography and the eremitical tradition.

In his paper MacMathuna refers to two major Armenian historians, Movses Khorenatsi and Agatangeghos, and discusses the issue from different perspectives including recent critical views and opinions. Thus he discusses the view suggested by Robert Thomson on the issue of why Khorenatsi wrote such an extraordinary book, a mixture of fact and fiction, of real and unreal, of history and legends. He explains that this should not be regarded as something extraordinary since it was a matter of the language ‘requirement’ of the time to write this way. And MacMathuna gives an example of an Irish historian (Lebor Gaba’la) who also wrote in a similar way. O’Rahilly considered the Irish history book as a book of fiction, and Thomson likewise states the same view on the Armenian history book. However, MacMathuna disputes these two views and provides convincing grounds for re-thinking.

Part 1 is dedicated to the study and thorough investigation of the linguistic data. The article *Armenian and Celtic: Towards a New Classification of Early Indo-European Dialects* written by Karl Horst Schmidt is the first article. The author carefully examines the role and place of the Armenian language among the Indo-European languages. His investigation provides evidence that there were some early contacts between Proto-Celtic and Eastern European languages. The author discusses grammatical and lexicological features such as morphology, syntax and word-formation of Proto-Armenian and Proto-Celtic.

The next paper is a logical follow-on to the previous one. The article entitled “*Celtic, Armenian and Eastern Indo-European languages: Comments on a Recent Hypothesis*” is written by Alexander Falieliev and Petr Kocharov. The authors go further and see connections not only between Proto-Armenian and Proto-Celtic but also with other Eastern Indo-European languages. They underline the existence of certain Celto-Armenian correspondences, which, however, are of less importance than those between Armenian, Greek and Indo-Iranian. It should be noted that this

approach is a fresh and updated version of the idea argued by Dr Schmidt previously.

The third paper within this part, titled "*Armenia in Ireland: Indo-European Cognates, Medieval Legends, and Pseudo-Historical Accounts*" is written by Maxim Fomin. He discusses some Celto-Armenian isoglosses and at the end of the article he presents works which belonged to the eighteenth century Irish antiquarians who tried to discover the roots of the race of the Gales in Armenia.

Part 2 is devoted to the study of another issue, the "*Lore of Origins*". It starts with an interesting article "*Armenia: the Cradle of the Gaels and the Amazons?*" by Sergey Ivanov, which presents a wide range of controversial ideas. Not all scholars within the field will agree with the presented thoughts; however, the work presents grounds for re-considering and re-discussing the issue and traditions that place the ancestors of the Irish people in Scythia. Ivanov suggests a new view of the question linking Armenia with the Irish people in genealogies. Moreover, going further, investigating various Irish texts where the Armenian female representatives were identified with Amazons, Ivanov tries to explain how the Amazons might have become associated with Armenians and how this might have come to be revealed in Irish sources.

The next paper is "*Lore of Origins in Medieval Ireland*" by John Carey. The author considers the issue of the Irish lore of origins in connection with Noah's descendants in Genesis.

Within the same section another article on the same topic is presented by Armen Petrosyan. In his work "*Armenia and Ireland: Myths of Prehistory*" Petrosyan compares certain Armenian myths and legends with those of Ireland. According to this study, a close and logical parallel can be drawn between the eponym figures Armenian *Ara the Handsome* and Irish *Bress*, since both of them are potential results of the Indo-Europeanized variant of a Near Eastern myth.

Part 3 of the book, "*Christianity in Armenia and in Ireland: a Comparison*", is focused on religious issues. It includes four articles which are mainly of a cross-religious and comparative character. The papers are entitled as follows: "*Adoption of Christianity in Armenia: Legend and Reality*", "*Similarities between Christian Armenian Monuments and Irish High Crosses in the Light of New Discoveries*", "*The Byzantine and Armenian Cultural Interface: A Sketch*", and "*Re-introduction of Lithic Discourse to Britain and Ireland: Armenian-Byzantine Influence*" written by Hayk Hakobyan, Hamlet Petrosyan, Dean Miller and Natalia Abelyan respectively. All four articles provide historical and folklore background on Christianity and its development. On Pan-Christian bases the authors also try to bring together and investigate all the possible parallels existing between the two cultures on the historical as well as the visual-physical art levels. This should be considered an important step for both folklore and religious studies at the international level. The works are mainly analytical and are based on convincing grounds.

Part 4, which is the concluding section, covers issues of "*Narrative, Historical Poetics and Folklore*". It consists of two thoroughly and strongly argued articles. The first article is written by the prominent Armenian folklorist Sargis Harutyunyan. In his work Harutyunyan presents some ritual mythological features

of the Armenian Epic *Daredevils of Sassoun*. This heroic epic poem in the tradition of heroic folk-tales that, in turn, dramatizes the life-story of a whole nation has been included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage representative list. Since it is of paramount importance to present this true Armenian treasure to the international academic world, this article is of particular importance.

“*The Poetics of the Fairy Tale Narrative: Irish and Armenian Tales*” by Alvard Jivanyan concludes this rich volume. Jivanyan argues convincingly that the similarities and parallels between the Armenian and Irish cultural sources are to be found mainly in style and on the level of the rhetoric of the fairy tales, particularly paying attention to the trope of metamorphosis and its presentation in the Armenian and Irish fairy-tale contexts.

To conclude, the whole informative volume is of a cultural-comparative and critical-analytical character. It aims at investigating the cultural paradigms in the vertical contexts and establishing some intersections on the horizontal level.

The work will suit perfectly the intended audiences. It will meet the demands of a variety of readers since the work covers different aspects of the same topic, provides full background and detailed information on the issue, refers to a wide range of both primary and secondary sources and includes different views on the topic.

This is a valuable source for scholars who are interested in folklore studies. The lively articles are provided with logical, clear and full notes and rich references to the major authorities and works within the sphere, references to Gevorg Jahukyan, Manuk Abeghian, Yervand Lalayan, Vazgen Chaloyan, Robert Thomson, Bruno Bettelheim, Thomas Francis O’Rahilly, James Russell, and many others. Some of the articles are controversial and open for further discussion.

Importantly, each author preserves his/her own individual style and manner of expressing ideas. Within the scope of this journal specialists from different parts of the world are gathered together to present their thoughts, circulate ideas and share academic studies on the topic. The vivid language and light style of this volume welcome everyone to enjoy the work.

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