

OPINION

regarding: the dissertation of Antoaneta Angelova, “*The Archetype of the Hero in Old and Medieval Armenian Literature*”, submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty “Literatures of Europe, America, Africa, and Australia (Armenian Literature)”

by: Prof. Dr. Ivo Panov, Department of “Classical East,” Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

The submitted work contains: Introduction (pp. 4–10), *Relevance of the Topic* (pp. 11–28), Chapter One: “Theoretical Framework” (pp. 19–72), Chapter Two: “The Image of the Mythological Hero in Old Armenian Literature” (pp. 73–139), Chapter Three: “The Hero—King or Warrior in Old and Early Medieval Armenian Literature” (pp. 140–249), Chapter Four: “The Hero’s Path in the Medieval Armenian Epic *Sasna Tsrer*” (pp. 250–387), and Conclusion (pp. 388–392).

This is followed by: “Contributions of the Dissertation,” three appendices, and a bibliography divided into two parts—“Sources” and “Specialized Studies”—comprising 91 titles. The number of referenced works is considerable in volume, but more importantly, the majority are organically integrated into the fabric of the dissertation, which serves as a solid testament to the level of the research.

The total length of the dissertation amounts to 408 pages, thus significantly exceeding the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor.” At the same time, this fact attests to the doctoral candidate’s serious approach to the scientific and creative task at hand.

On the content of the submitted dissertation:

First and foremost, one notices the achieved balance between the chapters and the very good structuring of the material. The research is built with logical consistency, allowing the reader to follow the development of the author’s concept. The last two chapters, in which the focus of the study is placed, reasonably exceed the volume of the first two.

In the Introduction, the author clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the research, the object and subject of the study, as well as the methodology used, which has clearly served the doctoral candidate well.

In the section *Relevance of the Topic*, Antoaneta Angelova convincingly defends her choice of research object, correctly pointing out prior work on the subject. She is not only well acquainted with publications on the topic, but also finds her own niche to further expand the discussion. The well-placed citations are particularly noteworthy—something observed consistently throughout the dissertation’s text.

In Chapter One, the author focuses on the theoretical framework of the study, employed in the “dissection” of the hero’s image in Armenian literature. This framework forms the basis for the successful development of the topic. The researcher examines in detail Carl Jung’s theory of the archetype of the hero and convincingly analyses it, identifying points of contact between it and Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis.

In the same chapter, Antoaneta Angelova devotes significant attention to the theoretical contributions of another major scholar of the hero’s image—Joseph Campbell. From her analysis of his concept of the hero, it becomes clear that the doctoral candidate is long at ease navigating the boundless ocean of “depth psychology.”

Antoaneta Angelova also devotes considerable attention to other theorists of the hero’s concept, such as Vladimir Propp, Northrop Frye, Georges Dumézil, and Maureen Murdock, thereby demonstrating, in a tangible way, her confidence as a researcher in this field.

In Chapter Two, doctoral candidate Angelova delves into the image of the mythological hero in ancient Armenian literature. Of note here is her conceptualization of Armenia’s role as a crossroads between East and West, and the cultural context in which the ancient state created its written works. The author herself states: “This chapter outlines the conceptual framework of the dissertation.” To substantiate this assertion, she turns to the principal sources for the mythological hero in Armenian written tradition, which are three in number: *The History of Armenia* by Movses Khorenatsi (5th century), *The History of the Armenian People*, attributed to Agathangelos, and *The Life of Mashtots* by Koryun. To illustrate the structure of the narrative and the function of the mythological hero archetype within the broader framework of Old Armenian literary tradition, the doctoral candidate quotes and skillfully analyzes well-chosen passages from these works. Particularly impressive are A. Angelova’s masterful

translations from Old Armenian literature, which retain the full color and richness of the depictions of heroes, landscapes, and situations. Equally valuable are the footnotes and commentary she provides to clarify certain aspects of the Old Armenian texts.

For each Armenian hero, the doctoral candidate offers a personal characterization and analysis of his actions, concluding: “Based on the images and plotlines examined in this chapter, one can clearly delineate the structured model of the mythological (emphasis mine) hero in the Old Armenian literary tradition. Heroes such as Hayk, Aram, Ara the Beautiful, Vahagn, Tork Angegh, Tigran, Artashes, and Artavazd form a complex system of archetypal figures, united by their symbolic weight, physical prowess, moral steadfastness, and connection to the collective identity of the Armenian people.”

In Chapter Three, the doctoral candidate poses the important question of the hero’s role in Armenian literature – whether he sits upon the royal throne or is a celebrated warrior whose feats are enshrined in dozens of legends. Against this background, the author fully develops the image of the king-hero and of the warrior-martyr, defender of faith and national identity. In the course of her discussion, A. Angelova arrives at the conclusion that “the study of the hero’s image in Old Armenian literature requires a multi-layered approach, including analysis of historical, as well as folkloric and religious texts.”

Particularly interesting is the section in which the doctoral candidate, using texts from ancient Armenian authors, provides a historical overview of central events in Armenian history, against which the foundations of Armenian literature were laid. Even in this more concise treatment, A. Angelova skillfully presents the colorful tapestry of cultural influences that shaped Armenia’s national literature.

Her subsequent presentation of central Armenian heroes is accompanied by appropriately chosen and masterfully executed translations of passages from the works of ancient authors, lending these images vividness and persuasiveness. At the same time, A. Angelova offers highly successful interpretations of important texts from classical Armenian literature, which is yet another contribution of her work.

Chapter Four is devoted to the hero’s journey in a single work – the medieval Armenian epic *Sasna Dzerer*. A. Angelova devotes special attention to this epic because of its central place in Armenian literary heritage. The author traces in detail the history of the manuscript, the discovery of its various copies, the identification of its fifty versions, the distinction of its four

branches, and finally the preparation of a unified text that became part of the Armenian folkloric epic tradition. This chapter includes translations from the various cycles of the epic, along with highly precise commentary and reflections by the doctoral candidate on the multi-variant nature of the different copies, once again demonstrating her well-founded confidence in her chosen area of research.

Conclusion

It was an exceptional pleasure to engage with the work of doctoral candidate Antoaneta Angelova – not only because of the wealth of diverse information, but also because of the precision of expression, the richness of imagery, and the “curtain” she draws back on the ancient Armenian literary tradition.

The Appendices are of real value to the dissertation and fit seamlessly into the conceptual framework of the research.

A defining characteristic of the work is the relevance of the chosen topic. To date, there has been no comprehensive study of this question in Bulgaria, which lends the work a high degree of innovativeness.

The conclusions consistently reached by the doctoral candidate are analytical, well-measured, and objective. Particularly impressive is the author’s ability to identify, highlight, and characterize a process, a literary phenomenon, or an individual character, and to study it in depth.

Another distinguishing feature of the work is its polyvalence: it develops not only a literary perspective, but also addresses aspects of cultural studies, linguistics, history, sociology, and religious studies. This breadth gives the work an interdisciplinary character – a merit not often found in studies of this kind.

The author’s style is concise, clear, and logically consistent; it is free of clichés and formulaic expressions. The scholarly and conceptual apparatus is of a very high standard. One cannot but agree with the contributions listed by A. Angelova at the end of her work.

The research contains no evidence of improper use of other scholars’ works or studies.

In view of the above, I am firmly of the opinion that the presented dissertation, “*The Archetype of the Hero in Ancient and Medieval Armenian Literature*”, possesses all the merits of serious scholarly research. I therefore recommend to the esteemed Academic Jury that Antoaneta Angelova be awarded the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor.”

I also submit for the consideration of the esteemed Academic Jury a proposal that the dissertation of Antoaneta Angelova be published as a standalone book.

Should this proposal be accepted, I recommend that a careful review and correction be made prior to printing regarding the usage of certain terms such as: “mythological – mythologic,” “mythic – mythical,” “heroic – heroical,” “poetic – poetical.” For example, one cannot say “heroic myths” (p. 75) instead of “heroical myths,” or “critical study” instead of the correct “critical analysis” (p. 252). There are also some minor oversights, such as the omission of capital letters in certain places (for instance, “Middle Ages” [p. 141] is written with a lowercase “m”). I also attribute to technical error the complete mismatch of page numbers in the dissertation as indicated in the abstract.

Prof. Ivo Panov

14 August 2025