
Symbolic animals, or rather, animal symbolism represent an impressive layer in the Iranian mythology and popular beliefs. The book under review consists of an *Introduction*, five major chapters, *Conclusion*, *Bibliography*, and *Index*.

Chapter I, *Gāv-e Gil. Mystérieux héro d’une fête hivernale*, is based mainly on Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī’s information on a festival held on the 16th day of the month *Dey*. The author gives all the possible interpretations of the term *Kākil/Gāv-e Gil* and the mythological background of the festival. During the feast, the animal patron is represented by a decorated ox. This principal figure is similar to Barmāye, Feridun’s cow foster-mother and Primordial Ox, an archetype of all living species and a totemic ancestor of the First Man.

Chapter II, *Une formule magique contre les scorpions*, is devoted to another festival, particularly to the practice of chasing scorpions from the houses. Its holy patron is Esfandārmaδ, i.e. Av. Spānta Ārmaiti, a personification of Mother-Earth.

The spell proper, recorded by Birunī in Persian, has also Pahlavi and Pzand parallels, and the whole festival seems to be the continuation of the well-known tradition of exterminating the harmful and noxious creatures, *xrafstars*, in Zoroastrian Iran. However, during this festival, the insects were not killed but just ritually removed from houses or fields, perhaps, due to the belief either in their protective power or, as chthonic beings, in their obvious ties with Mother-Earth.

Chapter III, *Le rossignol et le poète*, discusses the *rose and nightingale* motif, one of the most popular in the Persian literature and widely represented in the poetry by Ferdowsi, Rudaki, Onsori, Farrokhī, etc.

In Persian literature, the *gol-o-bolbol* pair symbolises a loving couple, in Sufi literature the nightingale being qualified as *mast* “intoxicated, mad” and opposed to other birds due to its ability to enter *golšan*, a spiritual rose garden.

Chapter IV, *Arbre—animal—eau. Le songe de Xosrow Nušinravān*, is based on two epic poems—*Šāhnāme* by Ferdowsi and *Vis-o-Rāmin* by
Fakhra\'ddin As\'ad Gorgāni. The same symbolic scene is described in both compositions. In the first one, the king Xosrow Nu\'shinravān sees a dream: he is sitting under a lofty tree, with a glass of wine, and there is a boar next to him, which tries to drink from his glass. In the second poem, a minstrel sings a song telling about a tree reaching Saturn and shading half of the world. There is a shining spring under the tree and a bull from Gilān grazing by the spring and drinking its water. The author comes to the conclusion that these are two similar visions with common elements. The tree implies the king, the water (glass of wine or the spring)—the woman, and the animal (a boar or a bull)—the woman’s lover. Yet, the moral messages of these two texts of different periods and cultural backgrounds (the Parthian and the Sasanian) are naturally different.

A separate passage in this chapter is devoted to the story of Bi\'žan-o-Maniže, sharing common elements with Vis-o-Rāmin. In both cases we see the motif of an intruder in the harem and the same nature symbolism. The boar symbolises the young lover, water and flowers—the woman, while the tree stands for the monarch.

Chapter V, *Le sauveur et son cheval dans le littérature persane classique et modern*, discusses the issue of a hero and his horse, particularly on the examples of Siyāvaš and his horse Behzād, and Rostam and his horse Raxš. Two parts of the chapter represent two interpretations—according to the classical and modern literature. Siyāvaš’s horse is connected with the deity of nature; it accompanies his master during all the important moments of his life. As for Rostam’s horse, the author pays attention to two elements—the theft of Raxš and the death and burial of the hero and the horse. She draws parallels with the Scythian burials, reported by Herodotus, and Indian epic poems *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. In such traditions, the horse is qualified as an animal connecting the mundane and the supernatural worlds. The continuation of this belief is the idea of the Prophet Mohammad riding a horse, *Burāq*, while ascending to heaven.

Despite the numerous works on the subject, the book by Anna Krasnowolska is a valuable contribution to the field.

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