

THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF DRINKING FOUNTAINS



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Abstract: In the late Middle Ages and until the beginning of the 20th century, the drinking fountain was one of the economic and cultural structures of the settlement. After the Sovietization of Armenia and especially during and after the Patriotic War, when monument-building was encouraged, favorable conditions were created for the construction of springs and especially spring-monuments. In Armenia today, memorial fountains come in a wide variety of forms and are placed in various locations for various purposes. Their ideological content and structural, figurative analysis have not yet been fully explored in the thematic literature. Since these monuments already form a sizable group in material terms, we believe it is essential to discuss the subject and fully unveil the image, to present a comprehensive study of the process of forming monumental fountains as a materialized product of memory. This work aims to present the memorial fountains' plan, spatial composition, typology, and characteristics, as well as the reasons behind their construction. It also attempts to address their ideological content, installation motives, compositional, structural and artistic features, to expose the cultural perception of memorial fountains, which is closely linked to the cult of water and the materialization of memory. The study used the landscape research method, based on analysis, data collection, and synthesis of interdisciplinary studies. The method also included work with literature, which made it possible to trace the historical development of memorials as separate monumental structures.

Keywords: monument, memory, water, worship, fountain, culture, architectural, heritage.

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Introduction

Drinking fountains are monumental structures erected in public spaces that have a public function and are intended to preserve the memory of important events and people of public importance. The study of memory, particularly in the last century, is one of the directions that has developed within the social sciences. It is an interdisciplinary field of study that draws on psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, and cultural studies to show how memory functions at the individual, collective, and cultural levels, where the focus of the study is not the event and date but the formation of social memory about this or that event and date and its manifestation. Here, we are particularly interested in a process that is commonly called "materialization of memory" in professional terminology.

The concept of "materialization of memory" has been used by various researchers, so it is difficult to point to a single source. However, the term is particularly associated with the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who, in his 1925 work *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Social Frameworks of Memory), discusses how memory is shaped and influenced by social structures and collective experiences, and how memory can manifest itself in tangible ways in societies. For Halbwachs, memory is an objective reality that exists outside and independent of human consciousness and shows how memories work together in society and how their actions are structured according to social order [1]. It was later used by the French historian Pierre Nora, who is known for his concept of "lieux de mémoire" (places of memory), which emphasizes the importance of physical spaces and material objects in the formation of collective memory [2].

The mystery of the spring, and in particular the fountain, is associated with both the sacred ritual of memory and the cult of water.

Alongside the beautiful legends about water worship among Armenians, we find place names that are also related to springs and ultimately the worship of water. In Armenia, there is Byurakan, which is precisely defined as a place with numerous springs. Of those "many springs" of Byurakan, seven springs are very famous: Katnaghbyur, Toghaghbyur, Paghaghbyur (spring), Gyughi metz aghbyur (spring), Kamun aghbyur (spring), Sev hatik aghbyur (spring), and Meghrik jur aghbyur (spring). They have special power. In folk tales, these seven springs are often found with coded meanings. The hero of the tale, passing by these seven springs, overcomes certain trials, and each spring has its unique meaning. According to ethnographers, the hero first goes to Katnaghbyur, which is connected with Tsir Katin (Milky Way) and the "first spring" from which a person is nourished when he is born. That is, from mother's milk he receives the genetic information, the genetic memory, which only that person should know. Then the hero goes to Taghaghbyur or Toghaghbyur. Here, knowledge is given through poems and lines, books, school, study, etc. Next, the hero reaches the Paghaghbyur (Cold Spring), which crystallizes his knowledge, as if freezing it, and when he approaches the Kamun aghbyur (Windy Spring), it mixes and shatters everything that a person had believed in for so long. Passing through this spring, he reaches the Sev hatik aghbyur (the Black Grain Spring), which symbolizes the dark point that happens in almost everyone's life, the stage of difficult trials, which if the hero overcomes with honor, he reaches the Great Spring of the Village. The elders of the village always sit here. That is, the hero grows up, already has experience and wisdom, and gets the right to vote. And at the end, he enjoys the water of the Meghrik (honey) spring (the source is located near the St. Hovhannes Church in Byurakan), which symbolizes perfection, paradise, and light. The hero of the fairy tale fulfills his life's mission.

The architectural examination of Armenian sources and particularly memorial fountains is presented in the works of V. Harutyunyan [3], S. Mnatsakanyan [4], H. Khalpakhchyan [5], Z. Dolukhanyan [6], K. Balyan [7], S. Karapetyan [8], L. Kirakosyan and G. Nahapetyan [9] and others. The cultural examination is found in the works of H. Marutyan [10], A. Safarian [11].

Applying a multidisciplinary approach, the research aims to present a comprehensive examination of the process of shaping memorial fountains as a materialized result of memory, which is contested in space. Currently, memorial fountains in Armenia are numerous, multifaceted, and installed for various occasions and in different places. Their structural, figurative examination, and ideological content have not been fully presented in the thematic literature to date. Considering that these monuments already form a fairly large group in material terms, we believe it is necessary to address the topic and, to fully reveal the image, to conduct the discussion in the context of "memory" and "recollection" categories. The work aims to describe the authenticated memorial fountains, identify the motives for their construction, and present the plan and spatial composition and typology. It also aims to reveal the cultural image of memorial fountains, which is directly related to the materialization of memory and the cult of water.

Materials and Methods

The article used the landscape research method based on analysis, data collection, study, and synthesis, which includes describing memorial sources, photographing them, and classifying them, as well as working with literature.

Results and Discussion

A memorial fountain is a monumental structure and is found in the recent past. The structure of the fountain, however, and the traditions of memorial architecture in Armenia are old, dating back to ancient times. The first monumentalization of a fountain and water is seen in the example of vishapaqars (dragon monuments). Their erection near water bodies and springs, according to some researchers, is associated with the cult of water [8,12] (Fig.1).

These took on perfect forms already during the periods of the Kingdom of Van and the early Armenian state. They were also manifested in the form of monuments, separate structures, and their complexes in the Middle Ages. The excavations of Dvin revealed the remains of a fountain dating back to the 4th-7th centuries, emerging from a vertical slab with a horizontal spout [13]. In the developed Middle Ages, the spring was already an architectural structure with a more complex composition. It became a remarkable element of the ritual environment. And the ritual environment itself represented a complex structure: a church, a chapel, a khachkar.

Especially interesting from the Middle Ages are the springs of Haghat and Sanahin, the first of which, with its solutions (at least in the front part), can be said to be the prototype of the Zorats St. Stepanos Church in Yeghegis, and the second, thanks to the division of the internal volumes into two parts by an arched roof, has affinities with the architecture of Armenian inns. The spring is located outside the walled area of the Haghat monastery complex, about 100 m east [8] (Fig.2.). It is an elongated hall with a rectangular plan, three walls of which are blank, and the southern longitudinal wall is formed by two small arched openings on the sides and a large central one under the gable of the gable roof. Inside, along the entire length of the northern wall, six interconnected troughs or basins are installed, through which water flows. And these troughs are specially made so that more people can use the water at that moment.

The Sanahin monumental fountain is a rectangular hall stretched horizontally in plan [8] (Fig.3). The front part is double-arched, which is also bordered by blind walls on the sides. The pair of semi-cylindrical chambers covered with a depth rest on the lateral walls and, in the middle part, on a lower transverse arch. The roof is gabled. In the right-hand corner of the interior of the hall, where the water outlet is located, a square-cut stone trough is built. From there, the excess water is poured into a water-collecting vessel built of large basalt slabs connected next to the longitudinal wall. Inside the hall, there are two interlocking khachkars, and on the wall is carved the inscription of the donation for the reconstruction by the priest Mkhitar. The source of the spring water is located in the depths of the mountain adjacent to the Surb Sargis chapel, from where it was brought in clay-fired pipes.

Such memorial fountains were built in Haghat, Makaravank, Khorakert, and elsewhere.

In the late Middle Ages and until the beginning of the 20th century, the drinking fountain was one of the most important socio-cultural structures of a settlement (especially a rural one). These are no longer monumental structures but mainly open-air structures, not covered, with a water collection basin, a well, and a boat.



Fig. 1. *Vishapaqar (Dragonstone)*



Fig. 2. *The spring of Haghat monastery complex*



Fig. 3. *The spring of Sanahin monastery complex*



Fig. 4. *Drinking fountain dedicated to Armenian Genocide victims, 1965. Etchmiadzin*

In the Soviet years, the construction of memorial fountains was intensified in the post-war years, especially in connection with the construction of complexes dedicated to the victims of the Patriotic War. A large group also includes complexes dedicated to the victims of the genocide, which are directly related to collective and historical memories (Fig.4). They are important elements characterizing the terms "ethnic community", "nation", and "national identity". This situation conditioned the emergence of memorial complexes and, in particular, memorial fountains already in the years of independence. It is noteworthy

that springs, along with other public-benefit structures, such as bridges, have been and remain unique monuments worthy of gratitude and inexhaustible blessings from generations, which is why people who have a desire to leave a good memory have given special importance to the construction of drinking fountains for centuries. Moreover, fountains were mostly built in memory of both living and deceased persons, as well as victims and martyrs who dedicated their lives to the homeland. There are also fountain-monuments built to commemorate individual anniversaries and significant events.

The abundance of these structures in the Armenian Highlands is primarily due to Armenia's arid climate. Water has been culturalized and has become an object of worship.

There are beautiful traditions related to water worship among Armenians, both in the Armenian epic and mythology, in everyday rituals, etc. The product of the ideas of our distant water-worshipping ancestors is the monumental monuments with bull-headed, fish-shaped, or simply mythical animal images—dragon stones—placed mostly at the sources of springs or on the shores of lakes. According to the ideas of the ancestors, these controlled and ensured the uninterrupted flow of water, protecting them from the encroachments of evil forces.

In the early days of Christianity, the ideologists of the new religion, using the people's reverent attitude towards water, attributed the emergence of various springs to the miracles of this or that apostle or saint (especially the prayers of the apostle Thaddeus or the striking of his staff on the ground). Springs named after various saints were built, to which healing properties were attributed (for example, the treatment of vision or infertility). This is where the names of the springs Katnaghbyur, Pagalhbyur, and Meghrik Jur came from. The drinking fountain becomes an integral element of the ritual environment. Each drinking fountain had its own church, chapel, and khachkar.

The emergence of memorial fountains and their spatial composition

The memorial fountain was not widespread in the ancient past. Its presence was excluded in the case of death monuments. There were separate fountain structures, and the monuments and tombstones that were erected for the deceased were located in the areas near churches or in cemeteries, which were usually located outside the settlements themselves. The reason for the separate appearance of the fountain and the tombstone was related to the semantic-symbolic incompatibility of the fountain and death that existed in early perceptions. According to the earliest perceptions, water, on the one hand, is the embodiment of chaos, and on the other hand, it is a symbol of eternity and this-worldly life, a new life.

The monument and tombstone built on the occasion of death were supposed to guarantee the safe passage of the deceased or his soul to the other world. The monuments erected in the ancient past had exactly that purpose and were exclusively for saving, which is why the idea of a fountain in that context became absurd. The fountain, built in memory of the deceased as a monument, appeared in public spaces later as a result of the transformation of these ideas.

The 20th-century Armenian architect Rafael Israelyan made a great contribution to the construction of fountain-monuments. The first fountain-monument, according to his idea, was built in 1943, during the Patriotic War, in Parakar. The construction of such fountains, as Israelyan himself notes, "became a demand

with which they constantly came to the Presidium of the Supreme Council" [14]. Fountain monuments in memory of the heroes of the Patriotic War were erected in different places in Armenia. Israelyan implemented more than two dozen such structures. They had the composition of medieval fountains but were not mere repetitions. The use of reinforced concrete structures allowed the Master to create freer, more sculptural, and even abstract architectural forms. Through the reinterpretation and symbolic depiction of clearly traditional architectural elements, he creates modern architecture. Israelyan's fountains are characterized by the exceptional richness of relief painting, which sometimes covers the entire surface of the stone. The architect conveys the elegance of medieval Armenian miniature painting on the stone. In some cases, this is a series of ornamental sculptures; in other cases, it is separate decorative layers that enhance the artistic content, necessarily subject to the tasks of architecture.

Another fountain-monument called "Katnaghbyur" is located on the eastern side of the courtyard of the Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, to the left of the main road, a little back from the road, west of the printing house buildings. According to the beliefs of the Armenian people, the "milk" fountains are endowed with a variety of signs. They gave people strength and power, cured various diseases, gave children to childless women, and provided milk to those who did not have milk. There was such a "milk fountain" in the garden of the Ter-Grigoryan dynasty in the city of Keghi. They erected this fountain in the courtyard of the Mother Cathedral in memory of the "Katnaghbyur (Milk Fountain) in their native garden and their relatives who were martyred during the genocide. The lower part of the "Katnaghbyur (Milk Fountain) built by Israelyan is a fountain with a decorated belt and a beautiful rosette; the upper part is a khachkar placed in a half-arch, like a half-ruined building, which symbolizes the destroyed settlement. The buried plain is separated by a long wall resembling a bench, where passers-by often sit and enjoy the soothing sound of water, awakening ethnic memory in them. The construction record is carved on the wall of the Milk Fountain-monument, according to which it was built in 1967. The symbol of eternity is carved next to the inscription (Fig.5). In this monument, the architect not only followed the style of classical fountains but also made the medieval khachkar an integral part of the fountain.

In 1965, in Yerevan, and in 1967, in Carrara, Italy, two drinking fountains were built by Israelyan to commemorate the sister cities.

The Yerevan drinking fountain-monument is located in the Circular Park and presents the following composition: In the center is a vertical, slightly expanding main part; on its right and left sides are sculptures symbolizing rams looking at each other, which in shape resemble the traditional sculptures of rams of Jugha. These are decorated with bas-reliefs. On the ram on the left, in addition to plant motifs, a horseman is carved. The right one is covered only with patterns. The central monument has the grape motif characteristic of



Fig. 6. Yerevan version of Israelyan's drinking fountain



Fig. 5. Katnaghbyur drinking fountain in the yard of Etchmiadzin Cathedral by Rafael Israelyan

Israelyan. From two connected branches stretching upwards in the middle, curved branches with leaves at the ends extend to the right and left sides, each of which has a cluster carved under its curvature. The entire composition symbolizes the tree of life. Above this are two large, one-dimensional, differently decorated rosettes. A bird-like fairy is carved under the right rosette. The sculpture of a mythical bird introduces asymmetrical activity into the overall symmetrical composition. The Yerevan version is built of gray tuff. The building material is gray tuff (Fig.6).

In the Italian version, the fountain-monument is made of orange tuff. In the composition, the right and left rams are this time not facing each other but are placed perpendicular to the central monument, facing forward in the same direction. Here, the bird is in the center. Instead of the horizontal Yerevan version, the motif of the ornaments is the same, but the ornamental carvings are different (Fig.7).

The widespread use of fountains was greatly facilitated, of course, by the development of construction techniques, which facilitated the laying of water lines and the round-the-clock supply of water. These circumstances were the reason for the construction of fountains in the border zones of settlements and on nearby heights.

A unique fountain was opened in 1963 in memory of the late medieval Armenian poet, ashugh, and philosopher Sayat-Nova (in front of the Sayat-Nova Music School, at the intersection of Mashtots Avenue and Moskovyan Streets) (Fig.8). The architect is Eduard Sarapyan, the sculptor is Ara Harutyunyan.



Fig. 7. Italian version of Israelyan's drinking fountain (made of orange tuff)



Fig. 8. A unique fountain was opened in 1963 in memory of the late medieval Armenian poet, ashugh, and philosopher Sayat-Nova (in front of the Sayat-Nova Music School, at the intersection of Mashtots Avenue and Moskovyan Streets)

The monument is a rectangular memorial wall lined with white marble stones, which, with a wide opening in the upper part and the absence of some stones in the lower part, seems to be divided into two equal parts. On the left side of the wide opening is the bust of Sayat-Nova; on the right is the fountain, from which water flows into a decorative, small pool in front of the memorial wall. It seems that Sayat-Nova's lyrical poems emanate from that fountain. And the upper right-hand stone of the memorial fountain is covered with a bas-relief decorated with motifs from Sayat-Nova's poems, which depicts Caucasian women in national headdresses and roses. The smoothness and rhythm of the lines harmonize with the plastic forms of the poet's sculpture. His broad forehead, regular features, the purity of the stone processing, and the white color reveal the melancholic but inspiring image of the immortal singer of love.

On the left side, the following lines from Sayat-Nova's famous poem are engraved, which seem to be the key to understanding the combination of the fountain and the sculpture:

Not everyone can drink my water; it is a different water.

Not everyone can read my writing; it is a different writing.

Don't assume my essence is sand; it is a rock.

In this memorial fountain, memory is represented in the form of a bas-relief, a writing, and decorative motifs, which the passerby admires when he approaches the fountain to drink water. This phenomenon resembles a ritual. This is how the greatest masters materialized memory and culturalized the given

environment, because they realized that remembering the past is an active, constructive process and not a simple restoration of information. To remember means to place a part of the past in the system of views and serve the needs of the present.

In the Soviet period, memorial fountains were more of an economic and cultural nature. The fountain was built to receive water and had a practical meaning. Here, it is appropriate to single out a type of memorial fountain, which is called a spurting fountain and is a purely Armenian phenomenon. These are mainly widespread in cities and are erected for various occasions.

One of the original examples of these is the "Seven Springs" fountain in Republic Square, next to the National Gallery, which was installed in 1965. Initially, the fountain was decorated with bronze decorative fittings in the shape of a fortress tower and had heads in the shape of a chessboard, which, in 2010, at the suggestion of designer-jeweler Nur, were replaced with new ones.

The idea of "Seven Springs" represents the epic spring on Mount Aragats. Epic heroes and legends drank water from there, becoming strong, powerful, courageous, and able to defeat any enemy.

The "Seven Springs" fountain consists of seven fountains and has a circular structure. The heads of the fountain are made of bronze. Patterns are made along the perimeter, which contain a message that charges the

water with positive energy, which is transmitted to those who drink water from the fountain. According to the author, one can also tell the time with the help of the fountains, since they are specially made to serve as a sundial at the same time (Fig.9).

All the memorial fountains presented above, and most of them, were built of solid stones (basalt, granite, and tuff). Being made of stone ensured permanence, eternity. These are memorial monuments and carry within them the idea of perpetuating memory; it was desirable that they be stable structures.



Fig. 9. *The "Seven Springs" fountain in Republic Square*

Location of memorial fountains, motives for construction, and sculptural themes

Memorial fountains are placed in public spaces: in micro-yards of residential complexes, in school yards (Fig.10), on sidewalks adjacent to highways, in main squares, at street intersections, in parks (Fig.11), near buildings, near church complexes (Fig.12), in village canyons (in the canyon of the village of Vahramaberd, Shirak region (Fig.13).

The motives for construction are numerous: they are built in memory of people who died in accidents, to perpetuate the memory of those who died unexpectedly or prematurely, in memory of famous people and events, and in memory of the repressed.

Initially, they had a collective nature, referring to a group of people who died not by an accidental death, but as martyrs, and thanks to whose sacrificed life a new life began and continues.

After the Spitak earthquake, which was followed by the Artsakh War of Independence, the fountain appeared



Fig. 10. *A drinking fountain in a school yard*

as a permanent component in many monuments erected in memory of innocent victims and fallen freedom fighters. Monument-fountains dedicated to a large number of individuals began to appear. These memorial fountains were dedicated to fallen freedom fighters and carried an educational and cognitive function, that is, they preserved the idea of martyrdom and the creation of a new life. And on these memorial fountains, the military nickname of the deceased was indicated, as well as his name and surname, which were simultaneously mentioned.

The memorial fountains are themed according to the sculptures on the walls. They depict:

- the sign of eternity, connecting with the idea of the eternity of the soul, symbolizing the sun, life, fire, lightning, fertility and childbirth, and progress and development.
- an inscription, through which information about the deceased is indicated, sometimes the motive for the erection, and other information.
- a cross, which, after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, became a sign of salvation, victory, and eternal life for Christians. In the cross-stone inscriptions, the cross is presented as the hope and helper of believers, the guarantee of the salvation of their souls, and the guide to God, and in the cross-stone composition, the cross was perceived as a universal mediator between the believer and God.
- plant-geometric motifs, in particular the vine and bunches of grapes, pomegranates, and fruits, which, in addition to Christological symbolism, are also evidence of the garden worldview of the Armenians, which we find formed at least since Uartian times and whose stable development is observable almost throughout the Middle Ages.
- portraits or other thematic images related to the life of the deceased.



Fig. 11. A drinking fountain in a park



Fig. 12. Memorial fountain in memory of Khrimyan Hayrik, Echmiadzin



Fig. 13. A drinking fountain in the canyon of the village of Vahramaberd, Shirak region



Conclusion

Armenian fountain-monuments belong to the group of memorial architecture and have traditions from ancient times.

We see the first monumentalization of a fountain and water in the example of dragon monuments, the erection of which near waters and fountains is associated with the worship of water.

Fountains are monuments and are found in the recent past. They embody memory, connecting the past and the present. Fountains are placed in public spaces and have public significance. They are aimed at preserving the memory of important events and people of public importance and contain comprehensive information about the details of the biography of an event or a memorable person, which are worthy of remembrance and have educational significance. In fountains, memory is also preserved through a monument, which bears an inscription, a cross, an image, etc.

As monuments or monumental components dedicated to the memory of the deceased, the first memorials appeared in our reality during the years of Soviet rule and after World War II.

Monuments from different periods of Armenian architecture and art history are of great importance with their architectural features, stone processing, artistic solutions, and educational function.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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