

Zmaj vseh zmajev

The Dragon of All Dragons

Dr. Marko Frelih



Slovenijo s prestolnico Ljubljano vsako leto obiše vse več ljudi z vseh celin. Veliko lepih spominov, fotografij in filmov spremlja turiste na poti nazaj v domovino. Ko so enkrat doma, sorodnikom in prijateljem pripovedujejo tudi o Ljubljani, kjer sta se jim vtisnila v spomin dva nepozabna motiva: čudovita veduta s stolnico in starim delom mesta, nad katerim se vzpenja hrib z dominantno grajsko arhitekturo in obrambnim stolpom, ter nenavaden rečni most, na katerem sedijo kar štirje zmaji! Srednjeveški Ljubljanski grad in Zmajski most iz leta 1901 sta dragocena bisera prestolnice in države, saj vsak zase ali pa v paru sestavljata učinkovito vizualno podobo, ki je človek nikoli ne pozabi.

Posebno občudovanje vzbujajo bakreni zmaji, ki v parih sedijo na vsaki strani rečnega brega ob dostopu na most. Štirje zmaji predstavljajo tistega zmaja, ki v mestnem grbu sedi na grajskem stolpu. To je zmaj vseh zmajev, ki ima zaradi povezave z grškim mitom o argonavtih med zmajskimi zgodbami na Slovenskem prvenstveno vlogo, hkrati pa sledi najstarejši tradiciji poslanstva zmajev – varovanju svetega prostora. Takšen sveti prostor je že v prazgodovini, zagotovo pa v rimski dobi, obstajal na mestu, na katerem danes stoji grad s kapelo svetega Jurija, ki se bojuje proti zmaju. S krščanstvom je zmaj postal simbol demonskih sil, ki so bile prisotne na lokacijah poganskih svetišč.

Dolga je zgodovina zmajev in še daljši je seznam različnih pomenov, ki jih imajo zmaji za človeštvo. Nekaj razlag o tem, kakšne predstave imajo o zmajih po svetu, predvsem pa o zmajih na Slovenskem, nam ponuja tudi razstava z naslovom Zmaj vseh zmajev. Slovenija je dežela zmajev in v bogatem ljudskem izročilu lahko v zmajskih zgodbah prepoznamo kodirano sporočilo, ki iz roda v rod prenaša univerzalno skrivno znanje o misterijih, povezanih z bogastvom narave, rodovitnostjo, nevidnimi nadnaravnimi silami in večnim življenjem.

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Every year, more and more people from all over the world visit Slovenia and its capital city Ljubljana. Many beautiful memories, photos and films accompany the tourists on their way back to their homeland. When they arrive home, they tell their relatives and friends about Ljubljana, where two unforgettable motifs made such an impression on their memories: the wonderful cityscape with the cathedral and the old town, above which rises a hill with dominant castle architecture and a defensive tower; and an unusual river bridge, on which as many as four dragons sit! The medieval Ljubljana Castle and the Dragon Bridge from 1901 are priceless gems of the capital and the country, each in themselves, or in tandem, representing an effective visual image that no one ever forgets.

Especially impressive are the copper dragons, which are seated in pairs on each side of the river bank by the access to the bridge. The four dragons represent the dragon that sits on the castle tower in the city coat of arms. This is the dragon of all dragons, which, due its association with the Greek myth of the Argonauts, plays the leading role among dragon stories in Slovenia, while also following the oldest tradition of the mission of dragons: to protect a sacred space. In prehistoric times, and certainly in the Roman era, such a sacred space was located on the site where the castle stands today with its chapel of Saint George, who himself does battle with a dragon. With the arrival of Christianity, the dragon became a symbol of the demonic forces that were present at the sites of pagan shrines.

The history of dragons is long, but the list of the different meanings that dragons have for mankind is even longer. Some explanations about images of dragons around the world, and especially in Slovenia, are presented in the exhibition entitled "The Dragon of All Dragons". Slovenia is a land of dragons, and in the rich folk tradition we can in some places recognise in dragon stories a coded message that, from generation to generation, conveys universal secret knowledge of mysteries connected with the richness of nature, fertility, invisible supernatural forces and eternal life.

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V egipčanski oazi Kharga stoji svetišče Hibis, kjer je ohranjen edinstven motiv krilatega krokodila z dvojno glavo ujede in rogovi. Relief hibridne živali je nastal v 6. stol. pr. Kr./In the Egyptian oasis of Kharga stands the Temple of Hibis, where the unique motif of a winged crocodile with the double head of a bird of prey and horns is preserved. The relief of the hybrid animal originated in the sixth century BC.

Fotoarhiv/Photo archive: Günther & Ingrid Höbl.

Naslovnica/Cover

Zmaj iz Zmajskega mostu/Dragon from the Dragon Bridge.

Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih.

Kraljestvo zmajev

Zmaji so zvesti spremljevalci človeške civilizacije. Nobeno zgodovinsko obdobje ni minilo brez njih. Tudi zdaj so med nami in sledili nam bodo vse do zadnjega diha človeštva. Čeprav jih ne vidimo, so ves čas nekje blizu, nikoli nas ne zapustijo, saj nas z njimi neprestano povezuje nevidna, čarobna energija, ki se dotika oddaljenih kotičkov naše podzavesti, kjer so shranjeni spomini iz pradavnine. To je spomin naših prednikov, ki so poznali veliko skrivnost in so se zavedali, da je človeški rod samo začasni gost v večnem kraljestvu zmajev!

Kingdom of Dragons

Dragons are the most loyal companions of human civilisation. No historical period has passed without their presence. They continue to be among us and will follow us until the last breath of humanity. Although we do not see them, they are always somewhere nearby. They never leave us, as they are constantly connected to us by an invisible, magical energy that touches the distant corners of our subconscious, where the memory of prehistory resides. This is the memory of our ancestors, who knew the great mystery and realised that humanity is only a temporary guest in the eternal Kingdom of Dragons!



Geneza zmajskih podob

Zmaje so poznale vse stare kulture. V Afriki, Mezopotamiji, Indiji, v daljni Aziji, Ameriki in Evropi so predstave o zmajih ohranjene v različnih materialnih in pisnih virih. Čeprav si zmaje predstavljamo kot krilata bitja, so zmaji v resnici največkrat velikanske kače, krokodili in kuščarji. Pri ustvarjanju predstav o zmajih so imeli velik pomen tudi fosilni ostanki dinozavrov in drugih živali iz pradavnine. Ko so ljudje naleteli na fosilne kosti, so bili prepričani, da so našli ostanke zmajev, in človeška domišljija je začela takoj ustvarjati hibridna bitja.

Izvor predstav o zmajih je treba iskati v starih kulturah Kitajske, Bližnjega vzhoda in Sredozemlja. Pojavijo se že pred 6000 leti kot fantastična nadnaravna bitja v kombinacijah velikanskega kuščarja in ogromne kače na dveh ali štirih nogah z ostrimi kremplji. Za vse so značilni velika glava s podolgovatim gobcem, koničasti zobje in dolg jezik. Zmajska bitja v Aziji imajo luskinasto kačje telo, na glavi rogove ali plamenu podoben greben. Sredozemski kačji zmaji imajo koničasto brado, na glavi pa trikotni greben. V Egiptu so že pred 4000 leti v grobnicah upodobljene velikanske krilate kače, pred 2500 leti pa se pojavi motiv krilatega krokodila z glavo ujede. Egipt je imel odločilen vpliv na grško in kasneje na rimsko umetnost pri upodabljanju mitoloških fantastičnih bitij, kot so gigantske kače in krilate zveri (grifoni, sfinge, sirene, harpije).

Zmaj iz Brna je v resnici krokodil, ki so ga domačini ubili v bližini mesta. Nagačenega so obesili pod strop hodnika stare mestne hiše. Zmajska trofeja je danes velika turistična atrakcija./The dragon from Brno is in fact a crocodile that the locals killed near the city. Its stuffed carcass was hung from the ceiling of a corridor in the old town hall. Today, the dragon trophy is a popular tourist attraction.

Foto/Photo: Blaž Verbič.

Dve krilati kači varujeta dostop do sarkofaga z mumificiranim truplom princa Amonherkopehefa, sina faraona Ramzesa III. Grobnica je bila poslikana okoli leta 1160 pr. Kr. in se nahaja v Dolini kraljic pri Luksozju na jugu Egipta./Two winged snakes protect access to the sarcophagus with the mummified body of Prince Amunher-khepeshef, a son of Pharaoh Ramesses III. The tomb was painted around 1160 BC and is located in the Valley of the Queens at Luxor in the south of Egypt.

Fotoarhiv/Photo archive: Günther & Ingrid Hölbl.

The Genesis of Dragon Images

Dragons were known in all ancient cultures. In Africa, Mesopotamia, India, Asia, America and Europe, various material and written sources are preserved that shed light on how dragons were perceived. Although we imagine dragons as winged creatures, they are in fact most often gigantic snakes, crocodiles and lizards. Fossil remains of dinosaurs and other animals played a major role in shaping perceptions of dragons. When people came across such fossil bones, they were convinced that they had found the remains of dragons, and the human imagination immediately began to create hybrid creatures.

The source of dragon images can be sought in the ancient cultures of China, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The first images appeared some 6,000 years ago, as fantastic supernatural beasts combining a giant lizard and a huge snake, standing on two or four legs with sharp claws. All of them are characterised by a large head with an elongated snout, pointed teeth and a long tongue. In Asia, dragons have a scaly snake body, a horned head and a flame-like crest. Mediterranean dragons have a pointed beard and a triangular crest on the head. As many as 4,000 years ago, giant winged snakes were depicted in tombs in Egypt, and the motif of a winged crocodile with the head of a bird of prey appeared 2,500 years ago. Egypt had a decisive influence on Greek and later Roman art in the rendering of fantastic mythological creatures such as giant serpents and winged beasts (griffins, sphinxes, sirens, harpies).



Kačast zmaj

Grška mitologija pozna mnogo zmajev, ki pa so dejansko velikanske kače (drakon). Med najbolj znanimi kačastimi zmaji je stoglava pošast tifon, ki ga je pokončal vrhovni bog Zeus. Preročišče v Delfih je varovala kača piton, ki jo je ubil bog Apolon in prevzel oblast nad svetim krajem. Grški junak Heraklej je ubil kar dva kačasta zmaja: večglavo močvirsko hidro in stoglavega Ladona, ki je v rajskem vrtu pod goro Atlas varoval drevo z zlatimi jabolki. Kačastega zmaja, ki je čuval zlato runo v Kolhidi, je ubil Argonavt Jazon, Kadmos pa je ubil zmaja ob rečnem izviru pri grških Tebah. Mitološki spopadi s kačastimi zmaji so bili priljubljen motiv v grški in rimski umetnosti ter so zagotovo pustili sledi v predstavah o zmajih v srednjeveški in novoveški Evropi.

Azijski zmaji

Na Daljnem vzhodu se je med azijskimi kulturami že v prazgodovini pojavila zavest, da je človeško življenje v fizičnem in duhovnem smislu odvisno od zmajev. Sobivanje je bilo neizogibno, saj so bili zmaji vladarji neba in zemlje, obvladovali



The Serpent-like Dragon

Greek mythology knows many dragons, but they are in fact giant serpents (drakon). Among the most famous serpents is the hundred-headed Typhon, which was destroyed by the supreme god Zeus. The Delphic oracle was protected by the serpent Python, which was killed by the god Apollo when he took over the holy site. The Greek hero Heracles killed two serpent dragons: the multi-headed marsh dragon Hydra and the hundred-headed Ladon, who guarded a tree with golden apples in the garden of paradise under the Atlas Mountains. The serpent dragon that guarded the golden fleece in Colchis was killed by the Argonaut Jason, while Cadmus killed the dragon at the sacred springs near the Greek Thebes. Mythological confrontations with serpent dragons were a popular motif in Greek and Roman art, which undoubtedly left traces in the images of dragons in medieval and modern Europe.

Asian Dragons

Among Asian cultures in the Far East, an awareness that human life is physically and spiritually dependent on dragons arose in prehistoric times. Cohabitation was inevitable, as dragons were the rulers of heaven and

Lastnosti kitajskega zmaja so rogovi, velike oči, brki in dolgo kačje telo, ki se na nebu spretno zvija pred velikim nebesnim biserom. Biser predstavlja popolnost duha in materije, absolutni red in kaos, je luna in sonce, je spiralna vrtinčasta masa kozmične energije, iz katere švigajo svetleče strele. Veliki nebesni biser je simbol stvarjenja vesolja, zemlje in človeštva. Nekaj podobnih lastnosti ima tudi kozmično jajce v starih kulturah Afrike, Sredozemlja in Evrope./The characteristics of the Chinese dragon are horns, big eyes, a beard and a long snake-like body that is skillfully coiled in the sky in front of a huge celestial pearl. The pearl represents the perfection of spirit and matter, absolute order and chaos, the Moon and the Sun; it is the spiral swirling mass of cosmic energy from which bright lightening flashes. The huge celestial pearl is a symbol of the creation of the Universe, Earth and mankind. Some similar properties are attributed to the cosmic egg in the ancient cultures of Africa, the Mediterranean and Europe.

Foto/Photo: Marko Habič, Slovenski etnografski muzej/ Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

V severnem Iraku, v vasi Lalish, se nahaja najsvetejši romarski kraj ljudstva Jazidov – grobnica šejka Adi ibn Musafirja iz 12. stoletja. Svetnikov grob varuje velika črna kača. Posnetek je nastal leta 1972./The village of Lalish in northern Iraq is the location of the most sacred pilgrimage site of the Yezidi people – the tomb of Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir from the twelfth century. The saint's tomb is protected by a large black snake. The photograph was taken in 1972.

Fotoarhiv/Photo archive: Günther & Ingrid Hölbl.



so prostor in čas, skrbeli so za ravnovesje nasprotujočih si naravnih in duhovnih sil. Zmaji so bili varuhi življenja, spremljevalci umrlih in gospodarji večnosti. Cesarji so izbrali zmaja za svoj simbol, da jih je povezal z nebeškimi silami. Njihova oblačila je krasil zlati zmaj, saj je razumel govorico bogov, ki so pogosto jezdili na njegovem hrbtu. V nasprotju s temačno podobo zmaja na Zahodu so zmaji v Aziji simbol svetlobe, modrosti, življenjske energije, moči in sreče.

Zmaj je v Aziji tesno povezan z vodo, saj z gibanjem na nebu ustvarja oblake z dragocenim dežjem, ki so ga potrebovali kmetje za svoje pridelke na poljih. Ker so zmaji pogosto na nebu, se je na Kitajskem pojavila ideja o papirnatih zmajih, ki so jih ljudje spuščali v zrak. Igra spuščanja papirnatih zmajev je iz Kitajske dosegla tudi Evropo.

Evropski zmaji

Že Rimljani so iz Afrike in Indije v Evropo pripeljali pitone in krokodile, kasneje, v srednjem in novem veku, pa je bila trgovina z eksotičnimi živalmi še bolj razširjena. Veliko živali je poginilo v ujetništvu, marsikatera pa je ušla in preživela v kakšnem močvirju ter pri ljudeh vzbujala strah in grozo. Nastale so zgodbe o zmajih in o junaških spopadih s strašnimi bitji.

V Evropi je ohranjenih veliko ljudskih pripovedi, epov in sag, ki omenjajo zmaje in heroje. Taka sta skandinavski junak Beowulf in pogumni nemški vitez Siegfried, ki v epu o Nibelungih ubije zmaja. K bogastvu predstav o zmajih je v Evropi prispevala krščanska ikonografija s pomočjo svetih oseb, ki so zmagoslavno pregnale verovanje v poganska božanstva v podobi zmajev.

Earth and the masters of space and time, overseeing the balance of opposing natural and spiritual forces. Dragons were guardians of life, companions of the dead, and masters of eternity. Emperors chose the dragon as their symbol, thus connecting themselves with heavenly forces. Their clothes were adorned with a golden dragon that understood the language of the gods, who often rode on his back. Contrary to the dark image of the dragon in the West, dragons in Asia are a symbol of light, wisdom, vital energy, power and happiness.

In Asia, the dragon is closely associated with water; by moving in the sky it creates clouds with the precious rain that farmers need for their crops. Since dragons are often in the sky, the idea arose in China of flying paper dragons in the air as kites, a pastime that also eventually reached Europe.

European Dragons

Even the Romans brought pythons and crocodiles from Africa and India to Europe. Later, in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, trade with exotic animals was even more widespread. Many animals died in captivity, but some escaped and survived in swamps, causing fear and horror among local people. Stories arose of dragons and heroic clashes with terrible creatures.

In Europe, there are many folk tales, epics and sagas that mention dragons and heroes, such as the Scandinavian hero Beowulf and the brave German knight Siegfried, who killed the dragon in the Nibelungs epic. The richness of dragon images in Europe was created by Christian iconography, with the help of holy figures who triumphantly destroyed belief in pagan deities in the image of dragons.

Sv. Jurij in zmaj. Fresko je narisal avstrijski slikar Tomaž Artula leta 1480. Cerkev sv. Jurija v vasi Gerlamoos na avstrijskem Koroškem./Saint George and the dragon. The fresco was painted by Austrian painter Thomas Artula in 1480. Church of St George, Gerlamoos (Carinthia).

Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih.

Večni boj

Sveti Jurij

V severnoafriškem mestu Silene na območju današnje Libije je imel strašni zmaj popolno oblast in prebivalci so mu morali žrtvovati svoje otroke. Ko je na vrsto prišla kraljeva hčerka princesa Sabra, je v mesto prijezdil Jurij in se spopadel z zmajem. Uspel ga je ukrotiti, zvezal ga je z verigo in ga odvelkel v mesto pred kralja. Nato je zahteval, da se prebivalstvo takoj pokristjani, sicer bo zmaja spustil h verige. Ljudje so brez pomislekov pristopili h krstu, Jurij pa je zmaja ubil.

Jurij naj bi se rodil v Kapadokiji v današnji Turčiji, umrl naj bi okoli leta 303, pokopan je v izraelskem kraju Lod (Lydda). Kot rimski vojak je zavrnil čaščenje božanstev starega Rima. Ko so ga k temu hoteli prisiliti, se je odločno uprl, sledile so grozljive oblike strašnega mučenja, ki jih je Jurij z

The Eternal Battle

Saint George

In the North African city of Silene, in the region of today's Libya, a terrible dragon had taken over and the inhabitants were forced to sacrifice their children to it. When the king's daughter Princess Sabra was due to be sacrificed, George galloped into the city on his horse and fought the dragon. He managed to overcome it, put it in chains and drag it before the king. George demanded that the population immediately convert to Christianity, otherwise he threatened to release the dragon from its chains. Without hesitation, the people agreed to be baptised and George killed the dragon.

George is said to have been born in Cappadocia in present-day Turkey. He died around 303 AD and is buried in Lydda (Lod), Israel. As a Roman soldier, he refused to worship the deities of ancient Rome. Although the authorities attempted to force him, he resolutely



molitvijo in s krščansko vero pogumno prenašal. Ko so mu naposled odsekali roke, noge in še glavo, so si rablji končno oddahnili; pred njihovimi očmi so angeli odnesli Jurijevo dušo v nebesa.

Ideja za motiv sv. Jurija in zmaja ima korenine v mitologiji starega Egipta. V svetiščih so bile pogoste upodobitve boga Hora s sokolovo glavo in njegovih bojov z bogom Setom, ki se je znal spreminjati v različne živali. Set je bil bog puščave, kaosa in temačnih sil. Ker je umoril svojega brata in Horovega očeta Ozirisa, je postal vse bolj negativno bitje, simbol zla. Prvi kristjani v Egiptu so Hora oblekli v rimski oklep, pustili pa so mu sokolovo glavo, Set pa se je spremenil v zmaja. Hor postopoma postane sveti Jurij, ki se bori proti univerzalnemu zlu, ki ogroža človeštvo in krščansko vero.

V 12. stoletju so evropski vitezi, ki so se vračali iz križarskih bojov v Sveti deželi, začeli častiti sv. Jurija kot zaščitnika viteških redov. Njegov pomen se je zelo uveljavil, saj je podoba viteza na konju, ki pobija zmaja, dobila nadnaravne magične lastnosti, ki varujejo pred nevarnostjo. Motiv sv. Jurija je postal simbol kraljestev, držav, mest, različnih organiziranih združb in posameznikov.

resisted. There followed terrible forms of torture, but George managed to bear the suffering with the help of prayer and Christian faith. When his arms, legs and head were eventually cut off, the executioners were left breathless, as the angels bore George's soul to heaven before their very eyes.

The idea for the motif of St George and the dragon has its roots in the mythology of ancient Egypt. Egyptian temples contain many depictions of the falcon-headed god Horus and his struggles with the god Set, who was able to transform into different animals. Set was the god of the desert, chaos and dark forces. Because he murdered Osiris, who was his own brother and Horus's father, Set became an increasingly negative being, a symbol of evil. The first Christians in Egypt dressed Horus in Roman armour but left him with a falcon's head, while Set was transformed into a dragon. Over time, Horus became St George, who fights against the universal evil that endangers humanity and the Christian faith.

In the twelfth century, the European knights who returned from the Crusades in the Holy Land began to venerate St George as the protector of knightly orders. His importance became widely established, as the image of a mounted knight killing a dragon gained



Med drugim je svetniški zaščitnik Anglije, Malte, španske Aragone in Katalonije ter simbol Gruzije. Po sv. Juriju se imenujejo številna mesta in vasi. Jurij je tudi zelo priljubljeno in razširjeno osebno ime.

Sveta Marjeta

V obdobju preganjanja kristjanov je v mestu Antiohija v rimski provinci Pizidija, v današnji Turčiji, živelo lepo dekle z imenom Marjeta. Njeno lepoto so občudovali številni snubci, ki jih je zapovrstjo zavračala, saj je na skrivaj sprejela krščansko vero in se zaobljubila k deviškemu življenju. Ko je zavrnila bogatega snubca Olibrija, so jo zaprli in strašno mučili. Neke noči se je pred njo pojavil Satan v podobi zmaja in Marjeta ga je pokončala s pomočjo molitve in križa. Tako kot svetega Jurija so tudi Marjeto na koncu obglavili. Včasih jo povezujejo s princeso, ki jo je sveti Jurij rešil pred zmajem, toda ta razlaga ni pravilna. Skupaj s svetim Jurijem sodi v skupino štirinajstih pomočnikov v sili.

Sveti Mihael

Nadangel Mihael je kot poglavar nebeške vojske angelov in varuh božjega prestola omenjen v Svetem pismu kot veliki preganjalec Satana v podobi zmaja, kače ali krilatega človeškega bitja. Mihael je že v 4. stoletju, v obdobju cesarja Konstantina, postal zaščitnik Cerkev. Z ognjenim mečem in ščitom se bojuje z nevidnim zlom, ki neprestano napada Cerkev in njeno občestvo.

Mihael je razsodnik, ki odloča o posmrtnem življenju pokojnika. S tehtnico v roki tehta grehe in pošilja duše v nebesa ali v pekel. To vlogo so Mihaelu pripisali prvi krščanski verniki v Egiptu, saj so potrebovali ustrezno zamenjavo za egiptčanskega boga Tota, ki je tehtal duše umrlih. Tako kot sveti Jurij ima tudi nadangel Mihael korenine v religiji starega Egipta.

Sveta Marjeta je s pomočjo križa in molitve premagala zmaja.

Cerkve sv. Marjete v kraju Kebelj na Pohorju./Saint Margaret overcame the dragon with the aid of a cross and prayer.

The church of St Margaret in the village of Kebelj in Pohorje.

Foto/Photo: Teja Peperko.

supernatural magical properties that protect against danger. The motif of St George became a symbol of kingdoms, countries and cities, as well as of various organised societies and individuals. Among other things, St George is the patron saint of England, Malta, and Spanish Aragon and Catalonia, as well as being the symbol of Georgia, while many towns and villages are named after him. In addition, the name George is very popular and widespread.

Saint Margaret

In the period of the persecution of the Christians, a beautiful girl named Margaret lived in the city of Antioch in the Roman province of Pisidia, in present-day Turkey. Her beauty was admired by many suitors, but she rejected them one after another, as she had secretly adopted the Christian faith and vowed to follow the life of a virgin. When she refused the proposal of the wealthy Olybrius, she was imprisoned and brutally tortured. One night, Satan appeared before her in the image of a dragon, but Margaret slayed him with the help of prayer and a cross. Like St George, Margaret was finally beheaded. She is sometimes associated with the princess whom St George rescued from the dragon, but this interpretation is incorrect. Together with St George, St Margaret is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers.

Saint Michael

As the head of the heavenly army of angels and the guardian of the heavenly throne, Archangel Michael is mentioned in the Bible as the great persecutor of Satan in the image of a dragon, a serpent or a winged human being. In the fourth century, during the reign of Emperor Constantine, Michael became the protector of the Church. With a fiery sword and shield, he fights with the invisible evil that constantly attacks the Church and its communion.

Michael is also a judge who decides on the afterlife of the dead. Scales in hand, he weighs their sins and assigns their souls to heaven or hell. This property was attributed to Michael by the first Christian believers in Egypt, as they needed an appropriate substitute for the Egyptian god Thoth, who weighed the souls of the dead. Like St George, Archangel Michael is rooted in the religion of ancient Egypt.

Zmaji na Slovenskem

Za Slovenijo lahko upravičeno rečemo, da je dežela zmajev. Ljudske pripovedi opisujejo različne zmaje in njihova dejanja po različnih slovenskih krajih. Običajno so zmaji velikanske kače, ki imajo eno glavo, obstajajo pa tudi taki s tremi, sedmimi in stotimi glavami. Podobno kot zmaji v Aziji so tudi zmaji na Slovenskem povezani z vodo, saj pogosto živijo v jezerih, močvirjih in izvirih ter povzročajo deževje, točo, nevihte, poplave. Nekateri zmaji živijo tudi v gorskih votlinah in povzročajo potrese. Proti zmajem se borijo krščanski svetniki sv. Jurij, sv. Marjeta in sv. Mihael. V Sloveniji se pripovedi o zmajih največkrat pojavijo tam, kjer so že v rimski dobi in v prazgodovini obstajala svetišča ali pokopališča. To povezavo med zmaji in svetimi prostori dokazujejo tudi arheološke raziskave.

V Sloveniji sodijo cerkve sv. Jurija med najstarejše, saj so nekatere zgradili že v 10. stoletju. Čaščenje sv. Jurija se pojavlja predvsem na krajih s starejšimi kulturnimi objekti, v katerih so potekali misteriji v čast božanstev, povezanih z rodovitnostjo zemlje, s človeškim posmrtnim življenjem in z duhovnim spoznanjem višje stopnje zavesti.

Nekoč zelo razširjen pomladni praznik, jurjevo, dandanes praznujejo le še v jugovzhodnem delu Slovenije v Beli krajini. Praznik simbolično predstavlja obredni lik zelenega Jurija, ki naznanja prihod pomladi, ljudem pa prinaša upanje na dobro leto.

Tudi cerkve sv. Marjete in sv. Mihaela so v Sloveniji postavljene na krajih, kjer so že v predkrščanski dobi obstajala svetišča. Zgrajene so bile na prostorih nekdanjih keltskih in rimskih svetišč.

Zmaj – beseda izhaja iz praslovanskega imena zmij, tj. kača moškega spola. Ime zmaj se uporablja od 19. stoletja dalje.

Druga slovenska imena za zmaja: drak, drakon, lintver, lintvern, lintvurm, pozoj, premog, ses, smok, viza, vož, zmak, zmijet, zmin.

Dragons in the Slovenian Lands

We can justifiably say that Slovenia is a land of dragons. Folk tales describe a range of dragons and their escapades in various places throughout Slovenia. Usually the dragons are giant snakes that have just one head, but there are also creatures with three, seven or even a hundred heads. Much like in Asia, dragons in Slovenia are associated with water, as they often live in lakes, swamps and springs, and cause rain, hail, storms and floods. Some dragons also live in mountain hollows and cause earthquakes. The Christian saints of St George, St Margaret and St Michael all fought against dragons. In Slovenia, stories about dragons are most common in places where temples or cemeteries existed in Roman and prehistoric times. This connection between dragons and sacred places is very well demonstrated by archaeological research.

In Slovenia, the churches of St George are among the oldest, with some of them being constructed as early as in the tenth century. Veneration of St George is evident primarily in places where there once existed ancient cult structures in which rites were observed in honour of the deities connected with the fertility of the earth, the afterlife and the spiritual realisation of a higher level of consciousness.

The spring festival of St George was once very widespread, but today it is celebrated only in the south-eastern part of Slovenia, in White Carniola. The festival marks the arrival of spring, which is symbolically represented by the ritual figure of Zeleni Jurij (literally Green George), who gives people hope for a good harvest.

In Slovenia, churches of St Margaret and St Michael are also located on holy sites from the pre-Christian era. They are built on the sites of former Celtic and Roman temples.

The Slovenian word for dragon is zmaj, which derives from the Proto-Slav name for a male snake. The name zmaj has been in use since the nineteenth century.

Other Slovenian names for dragons are: drak, drakon, lintver, lintvern, lintvurm, pozoj, premog, ses, smok, viza, vož, zmak, zmijet, zmin.

Zmajev mladič – človeška ribica, proteus./Dragon Offspring – »human fish«, proteus.

Foto/Photo: Ciril Mlinar Cic.

Zmajeve sledi v Sloveniji

Zmajevo gnezdo

V zapisih iz 19. stoletja se omenja, da je na Štajerskem, nedaleč od Vurberka, некоč obstajala zamočvirjena kotanja, v kateri se je izlegel zmaj. Zmaj se lahko izvali iz petelinjega jajca ali pa iz štirinajst dni starega velikonočnega blagoslovljenega pirha. Črn petelin mora biti star vsaj sedem let in jajce mora valiti v vlažnem okolju, najbolje v blatu ali v močvirju. V zmaja se spremeni tudi sto let stara kača, ki dobi štiri tace in dvojce peruti.

Zmajevi mladiči

Najstarejši zapis o »zmajevih mladičih« nam je ohranil Janez Vajkard Valvasor v knjigi Slava vojvodine Kranjske iz leta 1689. Med obiskom presihajočega vrelca v dolini Bele med Logatcem in Vrhniko so mu domačini povedali, da globoko pod zemljo živi zmaj, ki občasno bruha vodo na površje, takrat naj bi iz jame priplavali tudi zmajevi mladiči.

Leta 1800 je Karel F. Anton von Schreibers, ravnatelj cesarskega muzejskega kabineta na Dunaju, odpotoval v London in članom Kraljeve družbe znanosti predstavil nenavadno vodno žival, ki so jo takrat že poznali pod latinskim imenom proteus, po slovensko človeška ribica. Njegove raziskave so bile zelo odmevne in kmalu so od vsepovsod prihajala naročila za nakup človeške ribice, celo iz Amerike, Indije in Afrike.

Dragon Trails in Slovenia

Dragon's Nest

In records from the nineteenth century, it is mentioned that in Styria, not far from Vurberk, there was once a swampy hollow in which a dragon hatched. A dragon can hatch from a rooster's egg, or from a fourteen-day-old Easter egg. The black rooster must be at least seven years old and the egg must hatch in a moist environment, preferably in mud or a swamp. A hundred-year-old snake can also change into a dragon, sprouting four paws and two wings.

Dragon's Offspring

The oldest record of "dragon offspring" was preserved by Janez Vajkard Valvasor in the book *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* from 1689. During a visit to an intermittent spring in the Bela Valley between Logatec and Vrhnika, the locals told him of a dragon that lived deep beneath the earth. They claimed that the dragon occasionally spewed water to the surface, at which time dragon offspring swim forth from a cave.

In 1800, Carl F. Anton von Schreibers, director of the Imperial Museum Cabinet in Vienna, travelled to London and presented to members of the Royal Society of Science an unusual aquatic animal that was already known by the Latin name *Proteus*. In Slovenian, it was called the "human fish". His research made a great impression, and soon orders arrived for the purchase of human fish from all over the world, even from America, India and Africa.





Zmajeva kri

Blizu naselja Kisovec v Zasavju so odkrili stare okamenle sledi zmajске krvi, ki so jo imenovali Premogova kri. Premog je namreč ena najstarejših slovenskih oblik za poimenovanje zmaja. Okamnena zmajeva kri je bila v resnici antracit, metamorfna gorljiva kamnina, ki jo danes imenujemo premog.

Zmajeve kosti in sv. Jurij

V Škalah pri Velenju, nedaleč od cerkve sv. Jurija, so leta 1964 odkrili dva milijona let stare ostanke mastodonta, ki je prednik današnjega slona. Povezavo med najdbami kosti starodavnih živali in cerkvijo sv. Jurija zasledimo tudi v Motniku, kjer so v rudniku premoga našli kosti nosoroga, ki je živel pred 25 milijoni let. V Nevljah pri Kamniku se cerkev sv. Jurija nahaja samo nekaj metrov proč od najdišča okostja mamuta iz zadnje ledene dobe pred 20.000 leti. Ljudje so očitno že v preteklosti našli kosti izumrlih živali in so jih prepoznali kot ostanke velikanskih pošasti, kot je zmaj. Zato so v bližini najdišč postavili cerkev sv. Jurija.

Zmajeva koža

Ko je bil zmaj v Postojnski jami ubit, so domačini zvelkli pošast na površje in jo takoj odrli. Največji kos so obesili v vaški zvonik, iz najlepšega dela kože pa so odrešitelju, pastirčku Jakobu, naredili pastirsko torbo.

Okameneli zmaj

Nekoč je na območju Donačke gore živel velikan Ajd, ki se je spopadel z zmajem in ga pokončal s kopjem. Gromozansko zmajevno truplo je okamenelo, skozi stoletja ga je prekrilo zelenje, na njem so zrasla drevesa. Ta poraščen hrib poznamo pod imenom Macelj. Ajda so ljudje pozneje preimenovali v sv. Jurija in njemu v čast postavili cerkev na pobočju Donačke gore.

Zmajeva reka

Koprski škof Paolo Naldini je v zapisih iz leta 1700 omenjal Dragonjo kot največji istrski hudournik in jo imenoval Zmajeva reka. Nad rečno dolino stojijo cerkve svetnikov, ki so imeli opravka z zmajem: sv. Jurij, sv. Mihael in sv. Marjeta.

Zmaj iz Postojnske jame./Zmaj from the Postojna Cave.

Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih.

Dragon's Blood

Near the settlement of Kisovec in Zasavje, ancient petrified traces of dragon's blood were discovered. The substance was named Premogova kri (literally "coal blood"), as Premog is one of the oldest Slovenian forms for naming a dragon. The petrified dragon's blood was in fact anthracite, a metamorphic combustible rock that we know as coal (premog in Slovenian).

Dragon's Bones and St George

In Škale near Velenje, in 1964, not far from the church of St George, the two-million-year-old remains of a mastodon, an ancestor of today's elephant, were discovered. The connection between finds of bones of ancient animals and the Church of St George is also evident in Motnik, where the bones of a rhinoceros that lived 25 million years ago were found in a coal mine. In Nevlje near Kamnik, the Church of St George is only a few metres from the find of a mammoth skeleton from the last ice age 20,000 years ago. In the past, people apparently found bones of extinct animals and recognised them as the remains of giant monsters such as dragons, leading them to build a church dedicated to St George nearby.

Dragon's Skin

When the dragon in the Postojna Cave was destroyed, the locals dragged the monster to the surface and immediately skinned it. The largest piece was hung in the village belfry, and a shepherd's bag was made from the most beautiful part of the skin and given to the people's saviour, shepherd Jacob.

Petrified Dragon

In the region of the mountain Donačka Gora, there once lived the giant Ajd, who fought a dragon and killed it with a spear. The dragon's corpse became petrified and over the centuries was covered with greenery, with trees growing on it. Thus the dragon's body transformed into the overgrown hill known as Macelj. The people later renamed the giant Ajd as St George and erected a church in his honour on the slopes of Donačka Gora.

Dragon's River

In records dating from 1700, the Bishop of Koper Paolo Naldini mentioned the Dragonja River as the greatest Istrian torrent, naming it the Dragon River. Above the river valley, there are churches of the saints who dealt with dragons: St George, St Michael and St Margaret.

Zmajeva reka – reka Dragonja./The Dragon river – Dragonja River.

Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih.

Zmaj v mestu

Ljubljanski grb

Že v 13. stoletju so v Ljubljani uporabljali pečate z motivom grajskega obzidja in obrambnega stolpa. Sredi 15. stoletja se na vrhu stolpa prvič pojavi zmaj, ki zelo spominja na krokodila. Janez Vajkard Valvasor je leta 1689 zapisal, da je v ljubljanskem grbu upodobljen beli stolp, na katerem sedi zeleni zmaj, ki je podoben krokodilu.

Že v 17. stoletju se poleg krokodiljega zmaja pojavi tudi krilati zmaj, ki v grbu ostane prisoten vse do danes. Valvasor je posebej izpostavil, da zmaj v grbu pomeni čuječnost. Ljubljanski zmaj ima torej zelo pozitiven pomen, saj mesto in prebivalce noč in dan varuje pred nevarnostjo.

Zmajski most

Štirje zmaji in šestnajst grifonov! Dvajset pošasti na enem mostu! To je Zmajski most v Ljubljani, ki sodi med največje atrakcije na svetu, saj ga vsako leto obiše vse več turistov. Leta 1888 je mestna uprava sprejela sklep, da se namesto lesenega Mesarskega mostu zgradi nov betonski most, ki bo posvečen spomenu 40-letnice vladanja cesarja Franca Jožefa I. Gradbena mojstrovina arhitekta Jurija Zaninovića, rojenega v Dalmaciji, bi se verjetno še dandanes imenovala po priljubljenem cesarju, toda v tistem trenutku, ko je na mostu sedel prvi zmaj in potem še trije njegovi kloni, je bilo vsem jasno, po kom bodo poimenovali novi most. Zmajski most je bil dograjen leta 1901.

Dragon in the City

Ljubljana Coat of Arms

As early as in the 13th century, seals were used in Ljubljana with the motive of the castle walls and the defensive tower. In the middle of the 15th century, a dragon very reminiscent of a crocodile first appeared on top of the tower. In 1689, Janez Vajkard Valvasor wrote that the Ljubljana coat of arms depicts a white tower on which sits a green dragon similar to a crocodile.

In the 17th century, in addition to the crocodile dragon, a winged dragon appeared, which has remained on the Ljubljana coat of arms until the present day. Valvasor specifically emphasised that the dragon on the coat of arms represents vigilance. Thus, the Ljubljana dragon has a very positive meaning, as it protects the city and its inhabitants from danger night and day.

The Dragon Bridge

Four dragons and sixteen griffins! Twenty monsters on one bridge! The Dragon Bridge in Ljubljana is one of the greatest attractions in the world and is visited by more and more tourists every year. In 1888, the city council decided to replace the wooden Butcher's Bridge with a new concrete bridge in memory of the 40th anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I. Jurij Zaninović, an architect born in Dalmatia, would probably still today have named his bridge after the popular Emperor, but as soon as the first dragon sat on the bridge, followed by his three clones, it was clear to everyone whom the new bridge would be named after. The Dragon Bridge was built in 1901.

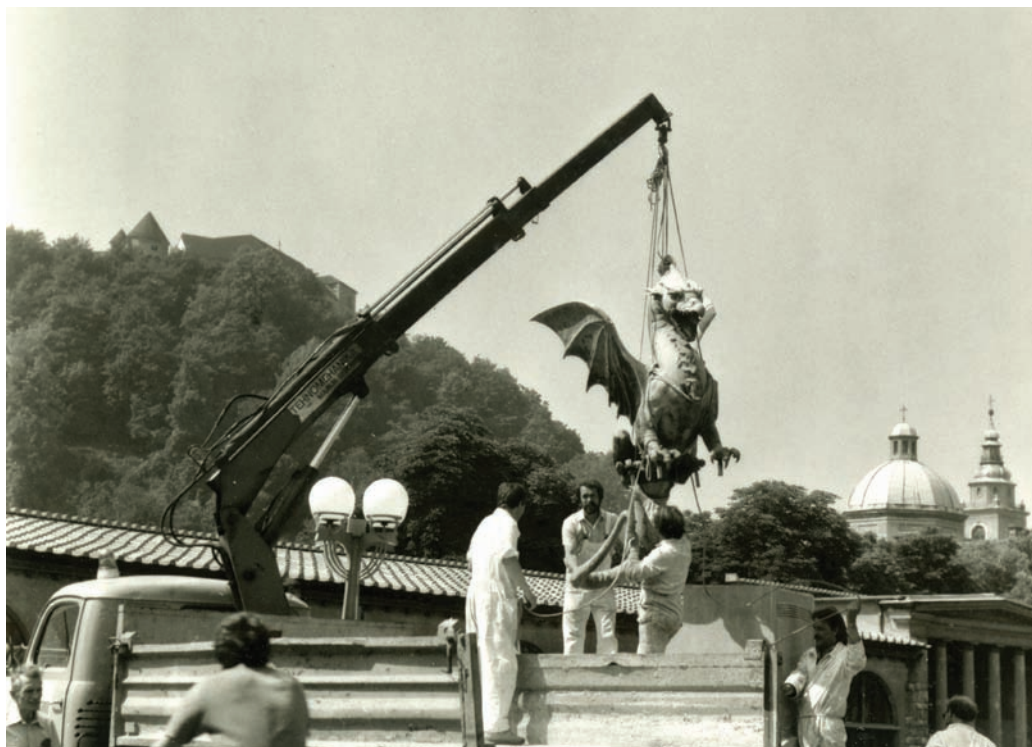
Prebivalci Ljubljane poznajo tudi neobičajne navade zmajev na mostu: če gre mimo lepo dekle, zmaji pomežiknejo in neopazno zasukajo glavo ter gledajo za lepotic, dokler ne prečka mostu. Znane so tudi govornice, da nekatere poročene moške zmaji na mostu spominjajo na njihovo ženo ali, še huje, na taščo! Takrat verjetno marsikdo razmišlja o zamenjavi, saj je znani slovenski pridigar Janez Svetokriški že leta 1707 zapisal, da je lažje živeti z zmajem kot s tečno ženo!

The inhabitants of Ljubljana are also familiar with the unusual habits of the dragons on the bridge: if a beautiful woman passes by, the dragons wink, surreptitiously turn their heads and follow the beauty across the bridge with their gaze. It is also said that the dragons on the bridge remind some married men their wife – or, even worse, their mother-in-law! On such occasions, some men may even consider an exchange, as the famous Slovenian preacher Janez Svetokriški wrote in 1707 that it is easier to live with a dragon than a nagging wife!



Zmajski most./The Dragon Bridge.

Foto/Photo: Marko Freljih.



Odstranitev zmajev zaradi restavratorskih del na mostu leta 1983. Zmajem so notranjost votlih teles utrdili s kovinskimi palicami. Vsakega zmaja so do polovice trupa napolnili s peskom zaradi stabilnosti skulpture. Zmaji so iz bakra in sestavljeni iz več delov, ki so jih vlili v livarski delavnici A. M. Beschorner na Dunaju./Removal of the dragons due to restoration work on the bridge in 1983. The dragons have a hollow body reinforced with metal rods. To ensure the stability of the sculpture, each dragon is half filled with sand. The copper dragons are constructed of various parts that were cast in the foundry workshop of A. M. Beschorner in Vienna.

Fotoarhiv/Photo archive: Restavratorski center Slovenije/
Restoration Centre of Slovenia.

Zmajevo vino

Tako Ljubljančani kot številni turisti bi bili danes navdušeni, če bi se pred mestno hišo vrnil zmaj iz leta 1728. Takrat je Ljubljano obiskal cesar Karel VI. Habsburški in ponosni meščani so njemu v čast postavili slavolok z zmajem. Na videz strašni zmaj je kmalu postal tako priljubljen, da bi ga nekateri za vedno obdržali – zaradi izjemne lastnosti: iz njegovega gobca sta namreč tekla belo in rdeče vino!

Čeprav zgodovinski viri o tem ne poročajo, lahko upravičeno sklepamo, da so posamezni Ljubljančani z zmajem navezali tesne prijateljske stike.

Dragon Wine

The people of Ljubljana, as well as many tourists, would be delighted today if a dragon dating from 1728 returned to the Town Hall. In that year, Emperor Charles VI of Habsburg visited Ljubljana, and the proud townspeople honoured him with a triumphal arch with a dragon. The seemingly terrifying dragon soon became so popular that some townsfolk would have kept it forever due to its exceptional qualities: white and red wine flowed from its snout!

Although there is no mention of this in historical sources, it can be reasonably assumed that certain citizens of Ljubljana established close friendly ties with the dragon.

Antični mit in baročni zmaj

Dandanes je splošno uveljavljeno mnenje, da ustanovitev prve naselbine na območju današnje Ljubljane izhaja iz mitološke preteklosti, ki sega v čas argonavtov. To je bila skupina petdesetih mož, ki so se zbrali okoli nesojenega kralja Jazona. Pod njegovim vodstvom so z ladjo Argo odpluli iz Grčije proti vzhodni obali Črnega morja. Argonavti so se podali na dolgo in nevarno pot z enim samim ciljem – poiskati zlato runo in ga odpeljati v Grčijo. Jazon je moral prestati nekaj težkih preizkušenj, da je končno prišel do bajnega zlata, ki ga je varovala velikanska kača. Kraljeva hčerka Medeja, ki se je zaljubila v Jazona, je s čarobnim napitkom uspavala kačo in argonavti so lahko odnesli dragoceno trofejo.

Na poti domov so argonavti zapluli v delto reke Donave. Po njej so pluli vse do Save in naprej po Ljubljanici do njenega izvira na Vrhniki. Tam so ladjo razstavili in jo odnesli do Jadranskega morja, potem so odpluli proti Afriki in se po nekaj mesecih vrnili v Grčijo.

Mit o argonavtih je v 17. stoletju pritegnil pozornost ljubljanskih humanistov, ki so pod vplivom klasične izobrazbe iskali privlačno vsebino za motiv nastanka Ljubljane. Argonavte so »ustavili« v obsežnem močvirju, ki mu je vladal strašni zmaj. Jazon je zmaja pokončal, posadka je izsušila močvirje in začela se je gradnja naselbine, iz katere se je skozi stoletja razvila Ljubljana. Baročni humanisti so bili zadovoljni z izmišljeno zgodbo, saj so temelje Ljubljane postavili v mitsko preteklost. In v to preteklost so nehote postavili tudi pojav prvega zmaja na območju Ljubljane.

Ljubljanski zmaj z argonavti nima nobene zveze, toda v širšem kontekstu lahko postane stvar zanimiva, saj mit odseva dejanske medkulturne povezave, pomorsko trgovino in selitve ljudstev v bronasti dobi. Takrat, pred okoli 3300 leti, se tudi na območju Slovenije začnejo intenzivnejši stiki z razvitimi kulturami Sredozemlja, predvsem iz Grčije. Migracije in trgovski stiki so vplivali na materialno in duhovno kulturo, ki je ustvarila nova božanstva, novo vero in rituale.

Arheološke raziskave so pokazale, da je bila vzpetina ljubljanskega gradu poseljena od prazgodovine dalje, saj ima pomembno strateško lego. Vendar je izjemna naravna oblika Grajskega griča že v daljni preteklosti vabila ljudi, da prepoznajo tudi duhovno bogastvo prostora, ki je ob številnih vodnih izviroh omogočal ustvarjanje svetih gajev in svetišč.

Ancient Myth and the Baroque Dragon

Today, it is widely believed that the establishment of the first settlement in the area of today's Ljubljana derives from the mythological past that dates back to the time of the Argonauts. A group of fifty men gathered around the heir apparent Jason. Under his leadership, they sailed in the vessel Argo from Greece towards the east coast of the Black Sea. The Argonauts set out on this long and dangerous journey with just one goal: to find the golden fleece and take it to Greece. Jason had to undergo many difficult trials before he finally made his way to the fabulous gold, which was guarded by a giant snake. The king's daughter, Medea, who was in love with Jason, put the snake to sleep with a magic potion and the Argonauts were able to remove the valuable trophy.

On their way home, the Argonauts sailed to the Danube Delta. They then sailed all the way to the Sava River and onwards along the Ljubljanica River to its source in Vrhnika. There, they dismantled their vessel and carried it to the Adriatic Sea, where they continued their journey to Africa before returning to Greece a few months later.

In the seventeenth century, the myth of the Argonauts attracted the attention of Ljubljana humanists, who, under the influence of their classical education, were seeking attractive content for the motive of the creation of Ljubljana. The Argonauts paused their journey in a large swamp that was ruled by a terrible dragon. Jason killed the dragon, the crew drained the swamp and the construction of a settlement began, from which the city of Ljubljana developed over the centuries. Baroque humanists were satisfied with this fictional story, as it placed the origins of Ljubljana in the mythical past, a past into which they unwittingly also introduced the phenomenon of the first dragon in the area of Ljubljana.

The Ljubljana dragon does, in fact, have nothing to do with the Argonauts. In a broader context, however, the matter can become rather interesting, as the myth reflects genuine intercultural connections, maritime trade and the migration of peoples in the Bronze Age about 3300 years ago. At that time, intensive contacts commenced between the territory of Slovenia and the developed cultures of the Mediterranean, especially those from Greece. Migration and trade contacts influenced the material and spiritual culture, giving rise to new deities, faiths and rituals.

Archaeological research has shown that the slopes on which the Ljubljana Castle stands have been inhabited since prehistoric times, as they have an important strategic position. In the distant past, the exceptional natural form of the Castle Hill also prompted people to recognise the spiritual richness of the area, which, with its numerous water sources, allowed the creation of sacred groves and sanctuaries.

Slikar Ivan Vavpotič je leta 1936 narisal fresko, ki prikazuje, kako so Argonavte sprejeli domačini na območju današnje Ljubljane. Izjemen mitološki motiv je upodobljen v vhodni avli Ekonomske šole v Ljubljani./In 1936, painter Ivan Vavpotič painted a fresco showing how the Argonauts were welcomed by the local inhabitants in the area of today's Ljubljana. The extraordinary mythological motif is depicted in the entrance hall of the Economics School in Ljubljana.

Foto/Photo: Blaž Verbič.



Izviri na pobočju, reka pod hribom, v daljavi pa obsežno barje ... so del naravne scenografije, ki je značilna za čaščenja kulta mrtvih in posmrtnega vstajenja. To potrjujejo prazgodovinska, antična in slovanska pokopališča na robu grajskega pobočja in ob reki Ljubljanici.

Navzočnost kulta, povezanega s posmrtnim življenjem, pa potrjuje antični napis, ki so ga našli v podzemnem grajskem kompleksu. Napis omenja grškega boga Asklepija, slovitega boga zdravilstva, ki je znal oživljati tudi mrtve. Njegov oče je bil bog Apolon, ki je ubil zmaja pitona v Delfih, Asklepijev simbol pa je bila velika kača drakon – zmaj.

The springs on the slope, the river under the hill, and the powerful marshes in the distance all form part of a natural landscape that is typical of the worship of the cult of the dead and mortal resurrection. This is confirmed by the prehistoric, Roman and Slavic cemeteries discovered on the edge of the castle slopes and along the Ljubljanica River.

The presence of a cult related to the afterlife is confirmed by an ancient inscription found in the underground castle complex. The inscription refers to the Greek god Asclepius, the famous god of healing, who also knew how to revive the dead. His father was the god Apollo, who killed the dragon Python in Delphi, and the symbol of Asclepius was the large snake drakon – dragon.





Zmajev red

Sredi 15. stoletja je obstajala močna versko-politična zveza pomembnih oseb, ki so skrbele za stabilnost razmer v Evropi, ki so jo pritiski z Vzhoda vse bolj ogrožali. Zveza se je imenovala »Zmajev red«, vodil pa jo je ogrski in češki kralj Sigismund z ženo Barbaro Celjsko. Simbol reda je zmaj, ki si rep ovija okoli vratu; s tem ima pod nadzorom samega sebe. Če prekorači mejo in poruši ravnovesje, se lahko tudi zaduši.

Med najbolj uspešne vladarje v Zmajevem redu je sodil romunski vojskovodja in princ z uradnim imenom Vlad III. Drakula (1431–1476). Kot član reda je svojemu imenu dodal še naziv dracul, ki v romunščini pomeni kača ali zmaj. Dandanes ga poznamo predvsem kot slovitega grofa Drakulo po literarni uspešnici irskega pisatelja Brama Stokerja.

The Order of the Dragon

In the middle of the fifteenth century, there was a strong religious-political association of important figures who oversaw stability in Europe, which was increasingly threatened by pressures from the East. This association was called the Order of the Dragon and was led by the Hungarian and Czech King Sigismund and his wife Barbara of Celje. The symbol of the Order of the Dragon was a dragon with its tail wrapped around its own neck, indicating that it has itself under control, as it can strangle itself if it oversteps the limit and destroys balance.

Among the most successful rulers in the Order of the Dragon was the Romanian military leader and prince with the official name Vlad III Dracula (1431–1476). As a member of the Order, he added the name dracul to his name, which is Romanian for snake or dragon. Today, we know him primarily as the infamous Count Dracula in the renowned literary work by Irish writer Bram Stoker.

Princ Vlad III. Drakula je na sliki prikazan kot Poncij Pilat, ki sodi Jezusu. Politični nasprotniki so v javnosti princa prikazovali kot krutega vladarja. Slika na lesu iz sredine 15. stoletja je delo anonimnega umetnika, znanega kot Mojster velenjskih tabel./Prince Vlad III, or Vlad Dracula, is portrayed in the picture as Pontius Pilate, who judges Jesus. Political opponents depicted the prince in public as a cruel ruler. The painting on wood from the mid 15th century is the work of an anonymous artist known as the Master of Velenje Panels.

Foto/Photo: Bojan Salaj, Narodna galerija Slovenije, Ljubljana/National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana.

Kraljica Barbara Celjska, kralj Sigismund in simbol Zmajevega reda. Cerkev sv. Marije, Ptujška gora, 15. stoletje./The Queen Barbara of Celje, King Sigismund and the symbol of the Order of the Dragon. Church of St Mary, Ptujška gora, 15th century.

Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih.





Sporočilo zmajev

Že od nekdaj so si ljudje po svetu razlagali naravne pojave, kot so potresi, orkani, toča, plazovi in podobne ujme, tako da so jih povezali z zmajem. Čeprav so naravne nesreče pogosto pripisali zmajem, so bili včasih za vse skupaj krivi ljudje, ki so s svojimi nepremišljenimi dejanji porušili skladnost naravnega okolja. Narava je samodejno ukrepala in se maščevala. Katastrofa je sledila tudi v obliki božje kazni, ko je človek pozabil svojo pravo vero in častil poganske idole. Uničujočo kazen, npr. v obliki potresa ali poplave, je v imenu boga uresničil zmaj. Dokler je naravno in duhovno stanje stabilno, zmaj miruje, ko pa je ravnovesje prekinjeno, se zmaj razjezi in ukrepa.

Zmaj je tudi simbol stabilnosti in ravnovesja človeškega duha. Zmajeva dremajoča čuječnost pomeni harmonijo notranjega duhovnega sveta. Ko se zmaj prebudi, se duševno stanje prevesi v nemir in kaos, iz katerih izvirajo temačne sile, ki lahko zavladajo človeku in ga vodijo do skrajnih meja zlovesnih dejanj.

Kot nadnaravna bitja z gromozansko močjo so bili zmaji v najstarejših obdobjih človeške zgodovine predvsem varuhi grobnic in svetih prostorov. Varovali so mrtve in njihove duše pospremili v onostranstvo, čuvali so vhode v svetišča, svete izvire, reke in močvirja. Bili so varuhi dostopov v podzemlje, kjer so se skrivali naravni zakladi Matere Zemlje.

Zmaj predstavlja univerzalni simbol božanske energije narave in rodovitnosti, skrivnostnih nadnaravnih sil in večnega življenja.

Norveški kralj in svetnik sv. Olaf, ki je živel v 11. stoletju, se je zelo dobro zavedal, da je zlo stalno navzoče v človeku. Umetnikom je naročil, da ga upodabljajo stoječega na zmaju, ki ima namesto zmajevske glave kronano človeško glavo z obraznimi potezami – sv. Olafa! Kopija kipa v katedrali sv. Magnusa v Kirkwallu, Orkney./ The eleventh-century Norwegian King and Saint Olaf was well aware that evil is constantly present in man. He ordered artists to portray him standing on a dragon that, in place of its own head, had the crowned head of a man with specific facial features – the features of St Olaf himself!
A copy of the statue in Saint Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney.

Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih.

Message from the Dragons

People throughout the world have long interpreted natural phenomena such as earthquakes, hurricanes, hail, avalanches and similar natural disasters by linking them to dragons. Although the consequences of natural disasters were often attributed to dragons, sometimes the blame was placed on people who, with their reckless actions, destroyed the harmony of the natural environment.

Nature automatically took action and retaliated. Catastrophe also followed in the form of divine punishment when man forgot his true faith and worshiped pagan idols. Destructive punishment, such as an earthquake or a flood, was executed by a dragon in the name of God. As long as the natural and spiritual state is stable, the dragon is calm, but when the balance is disturbed it becomes angry and acts.

The dragon is also a symbol of the stability and balance of the human spirit. The dragon's drowsy vigilance results in the harmony of the inner spiritual world. When the dragon awakens, however, the person's mental state falls into turmoil and chaos, from which arise the dark forces that dominate the person and can lead to the extreme limits of evil deeds.

As supernatural creatures with enormous power, dragons in the earliest periods of human history were mainly guardians of tombs and sacred places. They guarded the dead and accompanied their souls to the beyond, as well as protecting entrances to shrines, sacred springs, rivers and swamps. They were the guardians of access to the underworld, where the treasures of Mother Earth were hidden.

The dragon is a universal symbol of the divine energy of nature and fertility, mysterious supernatural forces and eternal life.



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(Foto/Photo: Marko Frelih)



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