



16 WONDERS OF WORLD VISUAL ART

All arts of mortals from one teacher spring.

PhD in Art History Vahanyan V.

Prometheus Bound: Monologue¹

Think not it is through pride or stiff self-will
That I am silent. But my heart is worn,
Self-contemplating, as I see myself
Thus outraged. Yet what other hand than mine
Gave these young gods in fulness all their gifts?
But these I speak not of; for I should tell
To you that know them. But those woes of men,
List ye to them, how they, before as babes,
By me were roused to reason, taught to think;
And this I say, not finding fault with men,
But showing my good-will in all I gave.
For first, though seeing, all in vain they saw,
And hearing, heard not rightly. But, like forms
Of phantom-dreams, throughout their life's whole length
They muddled all at random; did not know
Houses of brick that catch the sunlight's warmth,
Nor yet the work of carpentry. They dwelt
In hollowed holes, like swarms of tiny ants,
In sunless depths of caverns; and they had
No certain signs of winter, nor of spring
Flower-laden, nor of summer with her fruits;
But without counsel faired their whole life long,
Until I showed the risings of the stars,
And settings hard to recognize. And I
Found Number for them, chief device of all,
Groupings of letters, Memory's handmaid that,
And mother of the Muses. And I first
Bound in the yoke wild steeds, submissive made,
Or to the collar of men's limbs, that so
They might in man's place bear his greatest toils;
And horses trained to love the rein I yoked
To chariots, glory of wealth's pride of state;
Nor was it any one but I that found
Sea-crossing, canvas-winged cars of ships:

¹ Aeschylus, **Prometheus Bound**, <http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/bates019.html>

Such rare designs inventing (wretched me!)
For mortal men, I yet have no device
By which to free myself from this my woe.
Hearing what yet remains thou'lt wonder more,
What arts and what resources I devised;
And this the chief; if any one fell ill,
There was no help for him, no healing food,
Nor unguent, nor yet potion; but for want
Of drugs they wasted, till I showed to them
The blendings of all mild medicaments,
Where with they ward the attacks of sickness sore.
I gave them many modes of prophecy;
And I first taught them what dreams needs must prove
True visions, and made known the ominous sounds
Full hard to know; and tokens by the way,
And flights of taloned birds I clearly marked--
Those on the right propitious to mankind,
And those sinister--and what form of life
They each maintain, and what their enmities
Each with the other, and their loves and friendships;
And of the inward parts the plumpness smooth,
And with what color they the gods would please,
And the streaked comeliness of gall and liver;
And with burnt limbs enwrapt in fat, and chine,
I led men on to art full difficult;
And I gave eyes to omens drawn from fire
Till then dim- visioned. So far then for this.
And 'neath the earth the hidden boons for men,
Bronze, iron, silver, gold, who else could say
That he, ere I did, found them? None, I know,
Unless he fain would babble idle words.
In one short word, then, learn the truth condensed--
All arts of mortals from Prometheus spring.



Fig. 1. Genesis.

Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC). Gegham Mountains, Armenia

Figure 1 shows various layers, cognitive illustrations of chronological divisions – projections on a plane according to days of multidimensional picture of genesis in Biblical chronology. The first four days are marked with four curves at the bottom of the figure.

The first day: creation of light and darkness (“And there was evening and there was morning”, Genesis 1:1-5). Light appears and its curves descend (Fig. 1). **The second day: creation of dome** (“God called the dome Sky”, Genesis 1:6-8). Armenian hieroglyphic or ideographic symbols of heavenly and earthly dooms (spiral and circle with hooks) are depicted from the right. Stylized depiction of the sun (divine in its beautiful nature) with its ray-curls, “spurt of waves”, reaching the earth, its water surface from the sky.

The third day: creation of the dry land and Earth, the waters and vegetation. The figure depicts the dry land, double-peaked mountain, sea and vegetation.

The fourth day: creation of lights in the dome of the sky (“God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.” Genesis 1:14-17). Presented as the sun in the sky.

The fifth day: creation of reptiles, fish and birds. Presented in the form of symbols of fish and bird.

The sixth day: creation of animals and man (“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” Genesis 1:24-26). The sixth layer is presented as the depictions of a goat and a man. Birth of the Godson – the cultivated hero, the first man (Vahagn) is presented in the image of a stylized figure of a man, who was born near the double-peaked volcanic mountain (glxatun); there is a circle atop it, his fingers and toes are wide open. The figure depicts an angel in a squatting position. The heavenly semicircle above his head symbolizes fertilization and fertility.

The sixth day: blessing and sanctification of the seventh day – the whole picture in a synergy of all its layers and days.

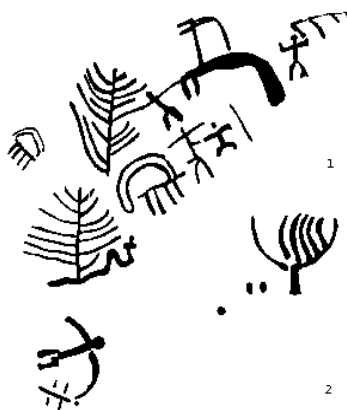


Fig. 2. Illustrations to the motifs of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”, “the tree of life”.

Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC). Gegham Mountains, Armenia

A unique depiction, illustrating the motifs of “**the tree of knowledge of good and evil**” and “**the tree of life**”. For the first time a pre-historic man used visual form of describing natural phenomena in the form of a stylized tree on the body of a serpent (modeling lava – volcanic eruption). The picture demonstrates knowledge of the ancient people regarding the world and the forces of nature.



Fig. 3. Hero archer, Hayk the Archer in Old Armenian tradition.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC). Gegham Mountains, Armenia

A stylistically and compositionally unique depiction of a hero (in the Armenian tradition – Hayk, who defeated Bel), defeating the forces of evil, chaos and darkness.

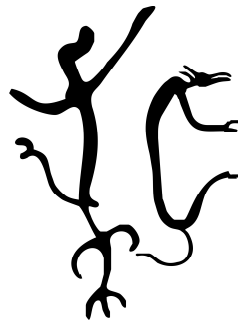


Fig. 4. Constellation “Cepheus and Draco”.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

The petroglyph depicts the images of the constellations of Cepheus and Draco (architect Petrosyan S.).



Fig. 5. Swastical hero, fighting a heavenly bull; Vahagn fighting a dragon.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

The hero – swastika-shaped, left-facing, carrying death to an enemy (the dragonslayer, thunderer Vahagn in the Armenian tradition). Harmonic and remarkably symmetric in its shape and content, the man-shaped swastika symbolizes and embodies the unity of the four forces of nature – thunder and lightning, fire and flame, earth and water. The composition reflects such features of the hero, as courage and bravery, valor, resolution and volition. This motif is transformed into the picture of Hayk (Fig. 3).

In Armenia are widely spread arevkhach (sun-cross), kerkhach (crooked-cross), chankakhach (hook-cross), khachatev (winged-cross), armnkakhach (arm-cross), eternity sign, the “cross of war” – “paterazmakhach”, which are shaped as swastikas. Right-facing and left-facing swastikas are identified, which are mostly depicted in Geghama and Syunik Mountains, on weapons, armor, jewelry, cult and household items.

The petroglyph “Genesis” illustrates the Earth (Fig. 6). Impresses the level of cognitive abilities of the ancestors, who presented the earth as a sphere with a winged cross (symbol of birth and growth). It is in the throes of birth of the moon. Human figures, illustrating the four races, the four cardinal directions, equidistantly hover over it. It is widely known, that various approaches on the earth shape were expressed in different time periods. Church rejected sphericity of the earth.



Fig. 6. Depiction of the spherical Earth in throes (Ararum) and birth of the moon.

Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

“And He (God) created it (the earth) on water” (Bible, Psalm 23:2). Shirakatsi stated the spherical shape of the Earth. “I think the earth is of an egg-shaped form, - he writes, - the ball-shaped yolk is in the middle, egg-white is around it and the eggshell surrounds everything; the same way the earth is in the centre like the yolk, air is around it like the egg-white and the sky surrounds everything like the eggshell.”²

In this regard, Shirakatsi expounds his view on shape of the Earth, contradicting it to other points of view (including the Biblical).

“Some good pagan philosophers, - he writes, - state that it [the Earth] is of spherical shape. The others [state] that it is a six-sided cube – raised up and fixed in the middle of the sky...”³. *“Thus, - he writes, - the upper sky, which the Greek call ether and the Chaldea – dense fire... enclosed in itself, its indivisible essence, natural composition, like the vault, by proper*

² Shirakatsi A. Geography (Ashkharatsuyts). Yerevan, 1962, p. 43.

³ Shirakatsi A. Geography (Ashkharatsuyts). Yerevan, 1962, p. 42-43.

coverage of plain round (form) it stretches **around the spherical earth** (with its) incessant and inseparably fast rotation, invisible materiality, cognized through only mind”⁴.

In “Geography” Shirakatsi sharply criticizes the approach, according to which the Earth has a quadrangular flat form and is located on the sea: “*Insane pagan philosophers state that wall-shaped sea surrounds the earth, and the earth, like an island, is located in the middle of sea, and water rests in the air*”. “*It is said that ocean surrounds not only the hot zone but the earth itself. In his “Christian topography” Constantine of Antioch states on this basis that the Ark came from the eastern countries, Ptolemy states that it is not ocean that surrounds the earth... and that is a right statement*”, - states Shirakatsi.

The question of the spherical shape of the Earth is closely related to the problem of antipodes. Christian cosmography denied the existence of human beings and living creatures on the opposite side of the Earth. Shirakatsi writes: “...according to the prophets, the Holy Scripture and church teachers, there are no creatures inhabiting the lower part (of the earth), but I admit existence of the antipodes”⁵. Following this view, he tells a dream on how he met the sun and asked him about the antipodes, and the sun answers, that there are no antipodes on the opposite side, as it “*gives light only to the mountains, ravines and lifeless caves*”.

Following the ancient scholars, Shirakatsi states that the **sensual realm and all the things are composed of the four elements: earth, water, air and fire**; all animals, plants, trees, fruits, man also comprise compounds of the abovementioned four elements. According to him, the world is a specific composition of mixed elements. **These elements have both created and acquired features**. Their diversity depends on size, heat, cold, water and dry. “*And he (Creator) forms the four, - he writes: - first is fire, second – wind (air), third – earth, fourth - water... They interact due to the common qualities they share. The nature of fire is heat and dry, air – heat and wet, water – cold and wet, earth – cold and dry. While interacting, they (elements) acquire qualities of each other.*”⁶

Shirakatsi presents nature in motion and conversion: all the things with no exception are in motion and are changeable; through time, the existing old unit decomposes and a new one is formed. “*Creation is the beginning of decomposition; and decomposition is the beginning of creation. And due to this intact opposition the world is created*”⁷. In the material world nothing can be created or destroyed, rather, it transforms from one form to the other (the law of conservation of matter).



Fig. 7. Metaphysical (Natural Philosphic) illustration of volcanic eruption and solar eclipse.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

⁴ Shirakatsi A. Geography (Ashkharatsuyts). Yerevan, 1962, p. 100.

⁵ Shirakatsi A. Geography (Ashkharatsuyts). Yerevan, 1962, p. 46.

⁶ Shirakatsi A. Geography (Ashkharatsuyts). Yerevan, 1962, p. 38.

⁷ Shirakatsi A. Geography (Ashkharatsuyts). Yerevan, 1962, p. 63.

Petroglyph in a unique composition, in expressive eloquent forms, in an unambiguous style, stylized and abundant in its content elements of the figure creatively represents the concept of the oldest motif of a serpent/dragon fighting the sun on its terminal phase, depicted as an illustration of solar eclipse: the sun is in the jaw of the serpent (the sky is ideographically depicted). The other moiety of the serpent does black deeds on the Earth, it symbolizes lava flow on the Earth that sows death, destroying the animals (depicted as deer and plant elements). These visual imprints of knowledge about the world and natural phenomena illustrate profound cognitive abilities of the early hunters and cattlemen.



Fig. 8. Hero sitting astride a huge lion.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

Impresses strength, mighty power and athleticism of the hero, who distinguished himself in the battle against the mighty lion. The main features and character of the invincible hero is outlined with fine artistic taste. His formative plastic and almost perfectly balanced figure symbolize a matchless example of a winner, who performed a heroic deed, defeating previously unconquered king of the beasts. The hero is standing in his glory with his legs wide apart. The great artist managed to reflect a new alliance, a synthetic image of the hero and the conquered lion. It bents its huge front paws in sign of obedience, recognition of might, strength and power of the hero. The lion moves forward its neck of incredible length and size, which underlines the absolute obedience of the predator.

*“My courteous, - he said, - today I was in a foreign country, near a mountain rising high above the earth. Its top seemed to be covered with ice. They say it was the land of the Haykids [the Haykazunis]. As I stared at the mountain, a woman came into sight sitting atop it in a crimson/purple dress with a sky-blue veil, she has got big eyes and was strapping and ruddy; she was in travail. Astonished, I stared at the sight, and the woman suddenly gave birth to three perfect in their shape and nature god-like heroes. **The first one jumped on a lion and rushed to the west; the second one made his way to the north on a leopard; the third one, riding a dragon monster, attacked our country.**”⁸*

The cosmic model of worshipping the Sky – the Father, the Creator (Fig. 10). The first man is depicted in a unique stylized form, illustrating the concept of the motif of the world tree – the home from which spirit “arises”. The figure is characterized as having an integer character, reflecting the unity of spiritual and material natures, illustrating the integer picture of the world. He is created “in the image and likeness”.

⁸ Khorenatsi M. History of Armenia (translated from Old Armenian by Sargsyan G.), Yerevan, “Hayastan”, 1990.

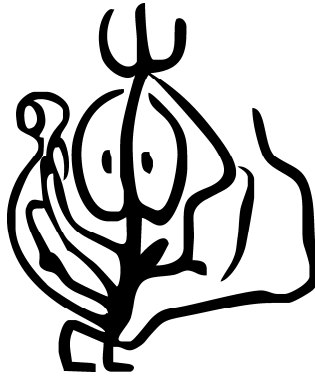


Fig. 9. Spirit of the First Man. The Kneeler.
 Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

The petroglyph reflects artistic description of the three-component cognitive figure of a man in a synthesis of home – **visual corporeal shell and invisible spirit**. Moieties of “the sacred apple” are depicted on the “trunk of the tree of spirit”, symbolizing fruitage. From the man’s corporeal shell (namely, from his chest) “arises” the tree of “spirit”, which is transformed into the “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. Biblical Adam eats the apple – the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and he is punished, deprived of immortality.

The trident atop the “tree of spirit” of the first man reminds of the symbol of the “trinity” (as well as Old Armenian ideogram “**ւր**” – **the symbol of royal power and immortality**) and characterizes man’s power. He tends to the House in the Heaven from the House on the Earth.



Fig. 10. Man symbolizing unity of the houses in heaven and on the earth
 Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

“The perception that the heaven and the earth gave birth to the god of thunder is quite natural” (Max Muller). The hero with a bow and arrow, a snake-shaped long phallus symbolizes the unity, connection and interaction of spiritual and material worlds, the kingdoms of heaven and the earth. The picture emphasizes the exclusive role of a man (motif of the song “Birth of Vahagn”), hovering above the earth: first, he is in the centre of the composition; second, he combines the heavenly and earthly

worlds' third, he is the result of a union. The role of man is presented as the main systematical factor of macro- and microcosm as an artistic model of ternary notion of "birth, death and resurrection".



Fig. 11. Antipodes and the Equilibrium Law.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

The confrontation scene in the animal world, displaying eternal struggle and the role of man mastering over flora and fauna, judge ruling the plant and animal worlds. The picture expresses man's power, emphasizing dominance of spiritual values and knowledge. This worldview gives human activity an organized, conscious and purposeful character.



Fig. 12. Tsovinar.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

Thus, after the very first great flood the Earth was formless and empty, and the Spirit of God (the eye of God) was hovering over the waters seeking for something. What was he seeking for? And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. And all dark waters were lightened and first God saw the goddess of water sources – Tsovinar – that conceived from water and gave birth to two sons.

And when God saw Tsovinar and her sons, His spirit rejoiced and exulted, and He said: Water will be the origin of life this time! Tsovinar called her sons Sanasar and Baghdasar. And after God arranged the vault, He did all that is known. And when the Creator proceeded to the creation of man, Tsovinar asked the Almighty not to inhabit the earth by horrible beasts, aggressive monsters and cyclopes this time, and to create man in His own image, as there is no more beautiful and perfect being than He is. And she asked to embed a piece of divine light and spirit and to evoke thought in a man, which originally and eternally will serve to immortal and perfect harmony that He created. The entreaty of the goddess of water sources was after the Creator's own heart, and He created man, choosing water (primary element of Tsovinar) as the basic constituent of his essence.

Later, He gave body to Sanasar and Baghdasar, and placed them in the centre of the Ararat plain, calling them Sis and Masis. And He told Tsovinar: queen of waters, as there is Surb Sar (holy mountain) named after Sanasar, my throne on the earth will rest on his shoulders, and men I have created will inhabit the whole country at the foot of the mountain and will spread across the world!⁹

Tsovinar Tsovyan (Armenian “*marine*”) – in Armenian mythology is the spirit of thunder, personification of lightning and heat lightening. According to myths, Tsovinar is a furious fiery woman, who rides a fiery horse in the sky during thunder; she sends people life-giving rain or harmful hail.

Astghik (Armenian “*little star*”) – in Armenian mythology is the goddess of love and water sources, beloved of Vahagn. Her major temple in Ahtishat (located on the north from Mush – a city in modern Turkey) was called “Vahagn’s bedroom”. According to myths, every night beautiful Astghik had a swim in the Euphrates (where it flows from a narrow rocky ravine – Gurgur region). To admire the naked goddess, the young people lighted fires on Mount Daghonats (Taron mountain, located on the territory of modern Turkey). To hide from them, Astghik covered Taron valley with fog and mist.

According to the Armenian calendar, in the middle of summer (by the end of the old year and on the eve of the new year) Vardavar (Armenian “*vard*” – “*rose*” or “*water*”) festival was held. On the day of this fest people presented roses to the goddess, released doves and sprinkle water on each other.



Fig. 13. Baptism in the cradle and the fertility symbol.
Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

The petroglyph “Baptism in the cradle” is a unique reflection of knowledge and creativity of human genius. The thinker and artist depicts his vision of the world on the stone: the relation of the Godfather (Sun god, Creator – the big cross on the left) with His son – His Messenger on the earth (the small cross in the cradle). The godmother, sitting in a squatting position, is holding the cradle with a cross, the newborn. In Armenian tradition, this godmother is Saint Maruta, singing a lullaby. The big cross symbolizes the father (in Armenian tradition – Mets [Big] Mher from epic poem “Daredevils of Sassoun”), and the small cross – Little Mher, who entered the rock and did not come out. The cow symbolizes life (full mammary glands symbolize prosperity). According to old customs, the Khachapashts baptized their children in a cradle. A lyre is depicted on the left side, a little star and cows – on the right side of the composition.

⁹ Davoyan R. “Voice of Armenia”, <http://makarats.ru/publ/armenovedenie/obistokakhdoistoricheskogoarmjans-kogehposacovinarismezhnykhvoprosakh/3-1-0-70>

“In travail were heaven and earth,
 In travail, too, the purple sea!
 The travail held in the sea the small red reed.
 Through the hollow of the stalk came forth smoke,
 Through the hollow of the stalk came forth flame,
 And out of the flame a youth ran!
 Fiery hair had he,
 Ay, too, he had flaming beard,
 And his eyes, they were as suns!”



Fig. 14. Relief depiction of Vahagn on a stele from Commagene.

After his birth, Vahagn fights and defeats vishaps (thus, the epithet “*vishapaqagh*” – “*vishap slyer*” originates). Vahagn fighting a vishap symbolizes battle against the consequences of volcanic eruptions and avalanches, “thunder fight” of the god against evil personification of storm, whirlwind and thunderstorm clouds (vishap-demon).

During the Hellenistic period Vahagn was identified to Zeus and Heracles. Vahagn is the first man. In his honor were built temples in Ashitshat, Aghevakan, Little Aghbak (located in modern Turkey). According to Shirakatsi A., it was Vahagn who confronted the Semitic god – Bel.



Fig. 15. Dragons/vishaps and solar eclipse.
 Rock Art (VIII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

In Armenian mythology, vishaps are dragons, chthonic creatures. They have zoomorphic (frequently serpent-shaped) and anthropomorphic appearance, personifying volcanic eruption, avalanche, thunderstorm, whirlwind or thunderstorm clouds. According to myths, a big **Vishap swallows the sun**, which results in an **eclipse**. Vishaps inhabit high mountains, large lakes, the sky and the clouds. Rising to the sky or descending beneath (into lakes), they rumble, sweeping away everything on their way. A thousand-year-old Vishap can swallow the whole world. Frequently during thunder the old Vishaps rise to the sky from high mountains or lakes (Fig. 7), and the sky-Vishaps descend to the earth.

The myths on fighting a dragon are based on a widely spread mythological motif of chaos fighting cosmos. According to the Christian approach, the myths on vishaps have undergone modifications, vishap-slayer Vahagn was replaced by Angel Gabriel and angles: they fight vishaps, who together with evil spirits try to swallow the sun during thunder (fiery thunder clouds symbolize the fiery vishap bodies, thunder – their cry, and lightening – Gabriel’s arrow or angels’ crook/stick). Angels raise vishaps to the sun; its rays incinerate vishaps and they fall to the earth.

Vishaps are beasts, who seize water sources; they make people sacrifice girls; fighting vishaps, the heroes liberate water sources and girls. In the epic poem “Vipasank”, vishaps live at the foot of Masis.

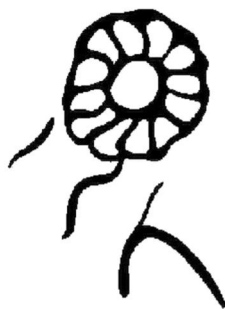


Fig. 16. Hamaspyur flower (Haoma). The twelve month-brothers.
Rock Art (VII-IV millennium BC), Armenia

The start of the Armenian calendar is associated with Hayk (according to Shirakatsi A.): the Armenian chronology starts in 2492 BC denoting the date (“the cycle of Hayk”) when Hayk defeated Bel. The names of the Armenian months correspond to the names of Hayk’s sons and daughters. Navasard, Ori, Sakhmi, Meheki, Aregi and Mareri, - writes Shirakatsi, - were Hayk’s daughters; and Tre, Kakhots, Arats and Riots – his sons.

Afterword

The oldest mythical-legendary figures are internally supported by people’s social intentions, their freedom-loving spirit, ideology and worldview of their teachers rather than religious feelings and worshipping.

“...Myth is not an unproductive fantasy, but basically – the real truth, supplemented by imagination and designed to guide the vital functions of a collective...” (M. Gorky).

“...**Form is a purpose, and complete is what achieved its purpose...**” (Aristotle).

