



THE CROSS, THE SWASTIKA, THE STAR OF DAVID AND THE EIGHT-POINTED STAR IN THE ROCK ART OF ARMENIA

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ABSTRACT - Many papers have been written about the tree of life, the cross, the swastika, the Magen David (shield of David, or star of David) and the eight-pointed star. Their story is associated with paganism and continues with the spread of Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. The tree of life, the cross, the swastika and the Shield of David had a huge impact on the consciousness of history of man, culture and the traditions of symbolic descriptions of the world.

However, the life philosophy and origins of the semantics of the tree of life, the cross, the swastika, the shield of David and the eight-pointed star are less clearly explained on the archetypes of the fragments of rock art of the Araratian Mountains. Moreover, the cause-effect relationships in cross-cultural influences and the universal knowledge transformation into the motifs of the cross, the swastika, the shield of David and the eight-pointed star have not been identified.

The paper presents the results of a comparative study, classification and interpretation of rock art of the Araratian Mountains, which identified various transformations of the semantic motifs and improved the knowledge of the history and intercultural influences. The paper identified the universal knowledge that is stored in the compositions of the Armenian rock arts, forming an encyclopedia of the prototypes (archetypes) of their world's visual symbolism.

RIASSUNTO - Molto è stato scritto sull'albero della vita, la croce, la svastica, la Magen David (scudo di David, o stella di David) e la stella a otto punte. La loro storia è associata al paganesimo ed è continuata con la diffusione dell'Ebraismo, del Cristianesimo e del Buddismo. L'albero della vita, la croce, la svastica e lo scudo di David hanno avuto un grande impatto sulla coscienza storica dell'uomo, sulla cultura, sulle tradizioni della descrizione simbolica del mondo.

Tuttavia, la filosofia di vita e le origini della semantica dell'albero della vita, della croce, della svastica, dello scudo di David e della stella a otto punte sono spiegati in modo meno chiaro negli archetipi dei frammenti di arte rupestre sul Monte Ararat. Inoltre, le relazioni di causa-effetto nell'influenza transculturale, la trasformazione universale delle conoscenze sui motivi della croce, della svastica, dello scudo di David e della stella a otto punte, non sono stati individuati.

Questo intervento presenta i risultati dello studio comparativo, della classificazione e della interpretazione dell'arte rupestre del monte Ararat, che hanno individuato varie trasformazioni nei motivi semantici e nella conoscenza della storia e dell'influenza culturale di tali simboli. Nell'articolo viene identificata la conoscenza universale conservata nelle espressioni dell'arte rupestre armena, che offrono una sorta di enciclopedia dei prototipi (archetipi) del simbolismo visivo mondiale.

THE HISTORY OF OF THE UNIVERSAL SYMBOLS AND THEIR CULTURAL INFLUENCE

A comparative study of the motives of the symbols, the visual archetypes of the cognitive graphics and ornamentation, the main motives of the world's religions and mythologies, scientific concepts and ideas of E. Anati and (Valcamonica Symposia papers) in the context of linguistic description, allowed the authors to sum up the 30-year study and to present them. First, world rock art is a cognitive protolanguage of ancient civilizations. This cultural phenomenon distinguishes the thinking man from the wild, humanoid, less developed culturally. The carriers of this proto-language we call human with their pre-art of communication: thus, rock art, its mother tongue, which describes the prehistory of the history of civilization and at the same time, the prehistory of a cognitive language (stone encyclopedia of ideas, thinking, feelings, emotions, human values).

In this duality is a more complete explanation of the phenomenon of world rock art and the understanding of its essence documented for posterity, the cultural prehistory of humanity. Through the knowledge of the pre-language, we may be able to better predict the future of humanity in the paradigm of universal cultural values. Unlike other cultural artefacts and archeological sites, given a visual mother tongue and created with the help of the legacy of rock art, people deliberately shaped this wealth to preserve and transmit to future generations, and were taught to "rock voice" and were able to master the ideas, thoughts, values and knowledge that they possessed. Thanks to them.

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THE VISUAL PROTO-ALPHABET OF HUMAN PREHISTORY

Out of the tens of thousands of rock paintings of the world, we detected and identified universal, invariant, typical, most informative visual elements of the proto-alphabet of the archaic civilizations of the world, whose ancestors still live. Among them is the cross, the most symmetrical image with its multi-variance, flexibility and dynamism. The emergence of cognition and the imagination of modern man are characterized by the unique range of its semantic description (the cross serves to indicate the plant and animal worlds, the human and the cosmos, heaven and earth, the tree of life and of knowledge good and evil). It depicts the newborn human, and god, father and son. The winged cross is alive, a living image, wingless means lifeless, dead. The direct cross symbolizes the male principle, the oblique the feminine. The union of male and female is in the form of the eight-pointed star, the eight-pointed cross or eight-socket, which, depending on the context, are symbols of love, fertility, the divine nature of Venus and the Virgin Mary.

The endless circle or circle represents an integer enclosed space that stands out from the chaos of the creator-father-god, and at the same time is an invisible image of the creator-god-father. The form of the circle is described by the earth, the heavens and the universe. The eight-pointed cross in a circle transforms the idea of the trinity-god-father in heaven (space), god the son and the mother goddess (the virgin), or what we call family.

The triangle, another element of the proto-alphabet, which depicts the hearth, hill, house, family, clan and tribe. In heavenly terms it has a different focus: a triangle, with home the top down and the earth's centre; a triangle pointing up the house. The triangular shape represents a step-pyramid or calvary; a mountain range, consisting of a set of triangles along a straight line or a circle, a space, the territory where they live or the unification of related tribes and nations. Two triangles superimposed on each other is a union, a unification of the two centres, homes, families, clans, tribes.

The rectangle, square or octagonal in a diamond shape surrounded by a pair of lions, eagles and swastikas, is a comprehensive, well-established hearth, a solid house that represents the union or joining of many peoples, nations, under the auspices of the gods of heaven and earth.

Two squares superimposed on each other is a strong union of heaven and earth houses, many unification triangles, families, clans and tribes. With the help of the square is a group of kindred tribes of hunters, ranchers and early farmers.

The swastika is also one of the main characters of movement, development, the course of history. The dextro-rotatory swastika shows a positive development, personifying the forces of good, light and life. The levo-rotatory swastika symbolizes the rule of the evil forces of darkness, chaos and death. Two swastikas (dextro-rotatory and levo-rotatory), superimposed on each other, represent a square with a cross. A swastika in front of an animal (a snake or a bull) illustrates the history of the struggle between good and evil, the struggle of man against volcanic eruptions and earthquakes in a struggle with the celestial bull, a dragon or a snake, symbolically depicting the deadly lava and fire, toxic smoke.

One of the famous characters of the proto-alphabet, the shield (star) of David, or 'Paterazma cross' (the Armenian cross of war), served as a talisman, a symbol of the patronage of the god-father. Depicted as a circle or a square with an eight-pointed cross or swastika, symbolized the victory of the forces of good, light, order over the forces of evil, chaos, darkness. The image of a dragon or a bull against the swastika symbolizes a victory over the enemy (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters, etc). The eight-pointed star has become transformed over thousands of years into the image of a modern menorah. In fact, the archetype of the menorah is the eight-pointed star, based on one of its eight rays as the ground that resembles a stepped mountain (calvary or pyramid). The essence of the menorah is a tribute to the memory of the loss (death) of the founder of the archaic civilization to mankind in the first son of the god-father, whose name was Vahagn the son of Van and An (god-mother), the first teachers. The image of a man (with male genitalia) is an illustration of a union of heaven and earth. Here lies the clue, perhaps, emphasizing the primary role of humanity. Judging by the rock paintings, the mission of humanities is the sustainability of communications (union) of one family in the form of heavenly and earthly forces (harmonizing the relations of heaven and earth). The image of a woman sitting on her haunches with a cradle and a small cross (a unique feature of Armenian rock paintings) is transformed into images of Our Lady, and God-Father. The large winged cross and implements are an archetype in the visual motifs of Christianity in modern fine and decorative arts. The image of the struggle with the heavenly bull, hero of rock art, is transformed into a universal theme of chivalry, courage, fight or battle hero, warrior on horseback (the prototype of George the Victorious) with a spear, killing a snake (or dragon).

The eight-pointed star is found both in Armenian rock paintings and in pre-Christian symbolism (in the period of paganism) and the art of the Christian Middle Ages. It is used in Armenian «*vishapakars*» (dragon stones) and cross-stones, in miniatures, in carpet weaving, in ornamentation, in architecture. The eight-pointed

star, as an archaic motif of union and unification, has entered into the modern symbols of the coat of arms and the flag of the United Kingdom. The swastika was a symbol of Buddhism and a symbol of Nazi Europe, in particular the German flag.

We see the image of the triangle (step pyramid) and the Shield of David on the one-dollar bill, which is a testament to the stability of the cultural traditions of the proto-alphabet. The name of the one-dollar bill (one dollar) is translated into Armenian as ONE (1; pron.: win), which is a number, a numeral and the name of the glyph representing that number, Van, which is a linguistic symbol of the whole, the first, the creator, hero, founder (in Armenian Van is the name of a kingdom, the name of lakes Van and Seven (black Van), ‘avian’, village, ‘avand’, heritage). The father created in the mountains of Ararat was a first human by the name of Vahagn (as symbol of victory and culture). The fearless dragon-fighter Vahagn, the son of god, defeated a mighty dragon and buried him on Mount Nemrud near Lake Van. The root of Van is related to many Indo-European gods, including the gods of German-Scandinavian tribes and peoples. There are many legends about Van among different peoples of the world. Vahagn was identified with the Greek Heracles. The priests of Vahévahian temple, who claimed Vahagn as their own ancestor, placed a statue of the Greek hero in their sanctuary. In the Armenian translation of the Bible, ‘Heracles, worshipped at Tyr’ is renamed Vahagn. The love story of Vahagn (direct cross in Armenian rock art) and his bride Astghik (oblique cross as archetype of a star and Venus in Armenian rock art), according to professor N. Marr, was the prototype of the more well-known European love story of Tristan and Isolde. According to Professor V.V. Ivanov, Armenian and Greek mythology have a lot in common. Moreover, once their ancestors are united by a single language framework it serves to generate not only the Indo-European family of languages. According to the *History of Armenia* by M. Khorenatsi (an Armenian historian of the fourth century), one of the 12 tribes that played an important role in the formation of the Jewish nation and culture were from the Armenian plateau. They considered their home space (earth and sky) to be near Lake Van. Astghik’s name is the diminutive of the Armenian *astg*, meaning ‘star’, which came down through the Latin and Italian *stella* and *astro*, the French *astre*, Spanish *astro*, German *stern*, English ‘star’ and Semitic Ishtar.

The study of the unique monuments of prehistoric Armenia, *višap*, *vishaps* (Armenian *višap*, serpent, dragon) or dragon-stones in rock art, spread round many provinces of historical Armenia, Gegharkunik, Aragatsotn, Javakhk and Tayk. Armenian rock art in the context of the identified linguistic interpretations of elements of the proto-alphabet, reveals universal cultural characters that are preserved and are found not only in paintings, but now widely used in modern culture – cross-stones, miniatures, carpet weaving, ornaments, arts and crafts, architecture and painting.

The figure below shows the fragments of the universal characters of the proto-alphabet, which have come to us from the study of the mountains of Ararat. It should be noted that the phenomenon of rock art culture of the Araratian civilization is creator of all known forms of early writing systems – pictograms, ideograms, hieroglyphic, cuneiform and the alphabet. Until now, the descendants of the Araratian civilization remain faithful to the cross, the swastika, the star of David, love (eight-pointed star), the moon and the sun, and the eyebrows, the family hearth, the triangle, the triangle house (*glghatun* in Armenian, mountains of Ararat), the earth and the heavenly mother, and god-Van-Vahagn as the life-giving, the beginning.

All these signs are more valuable in unity. The various peoples of the world appropriated some of them. They are now used separately, in isolation, not presenting, unfortunately, their main idea, all of the properties, their essence, in a relationship in a one system of the values. World rock art, including Armenian, wants to say ‘Please, open your eyes to the amazingly beautiful, rich, unknown world of rock speech, music and dancing.’ So rock art is a visual archaic speech and proto-language of communication and the study of the cultural prehistory of humanity.

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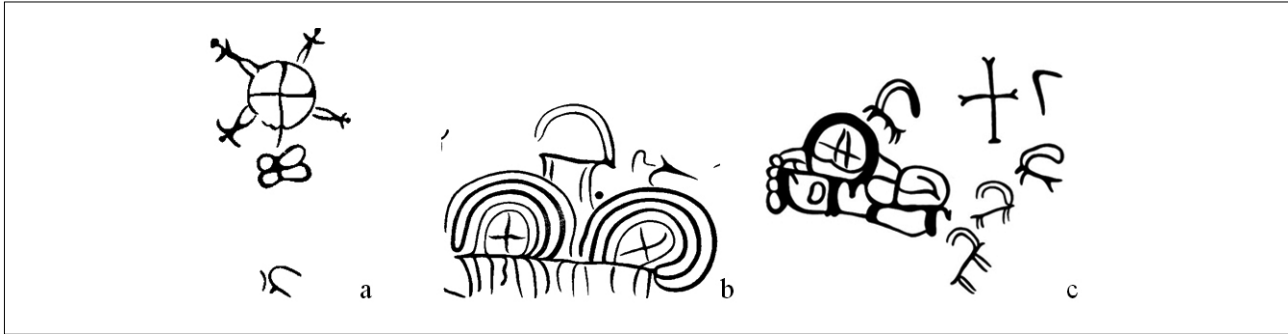


Fig. 1. Armenian Rock art: the Earth as the global life-giving - Cross (a), direct and oblique crosses as a union of male (with male sign) and female (b) and winged cross (c).

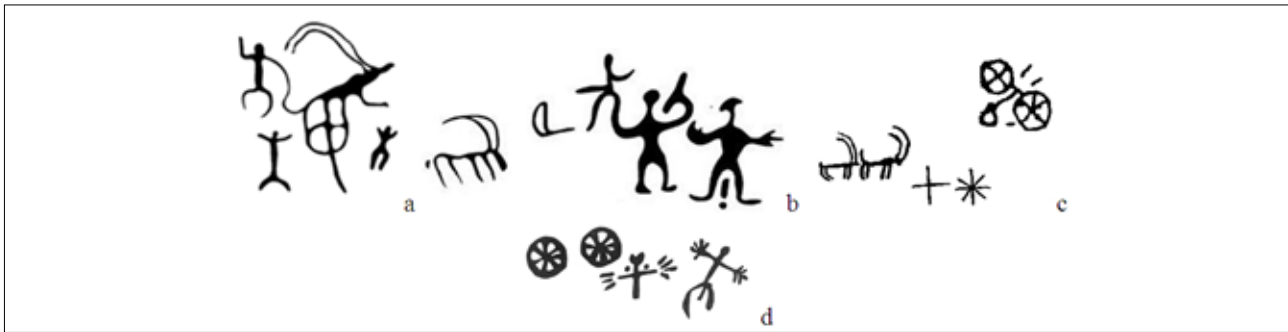


Fig. 2. Armenian Rock art: a cross and newborn (a, b). The Cross and the eight-pointed star and World Tire (c), Heavenly Thunder (d).

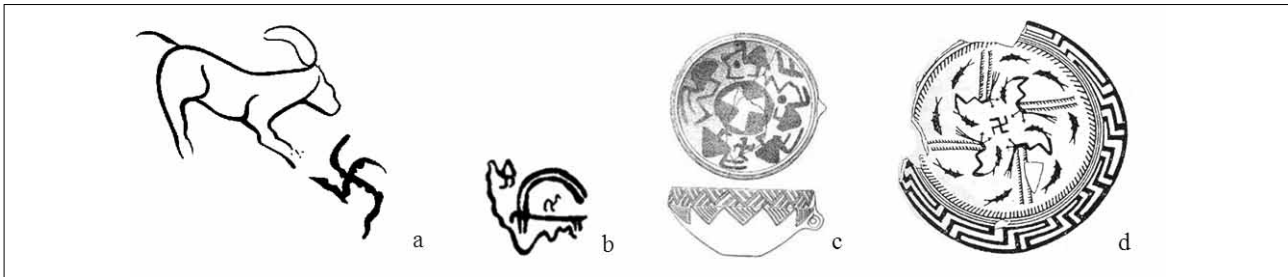


Fig. 3. Armenian Rock art: fight the forces of good as swastika (a) with the forces of evil (celestial bull). The celestial bird fighting with snake (b). Swastika on the polished ceramics (c), Shengavit, Armenia (5-4 century BC). Swastika and the fight scene with the celestial bird fighting with fish (d), an artifact from Samarra (Iraq), 4th century BC, Berlin.

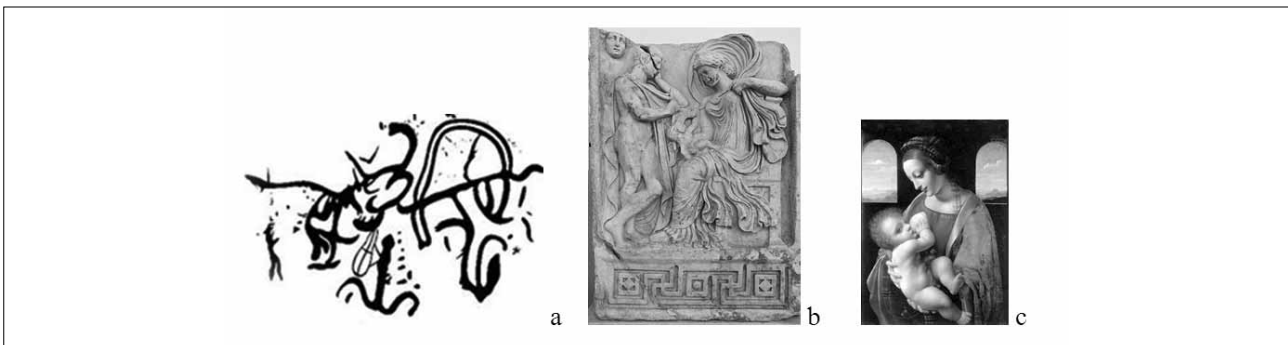


Fig. 4. Armenian Rock art: “The Christening in the cradle,” the archetype of Madonna (a). Venus-Aphrodite holding an infant and Luna-Selene from Roman-era relief (b). Madonna Litta (Leonardo da Vinci), St. Petersburg, State Hermitage (c).

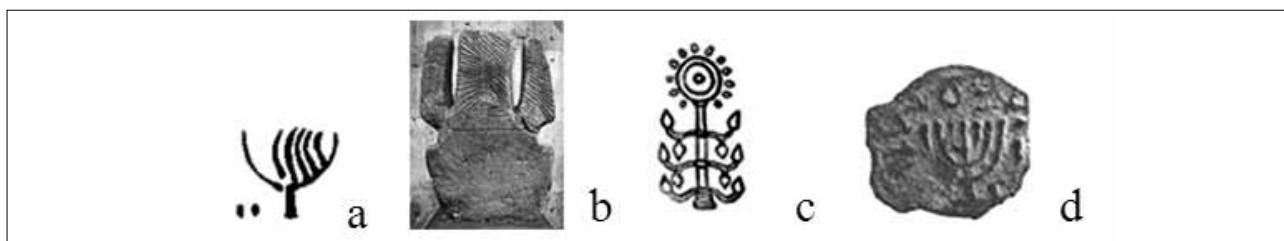


Fig. 5. The motive of the tree of life as prototype of menorah, Armenian rock art (a). The stone “tree of life”, the Museum “Erebuni” Armenia (b). The tree of life with sun and plant elements - similar eight-pointed cross, Urartu, 9-7 BC (c). Coin (Matityahu) Antigonus II the last king of Judah (d) from the Hasmonean dynasty (37 year BC).

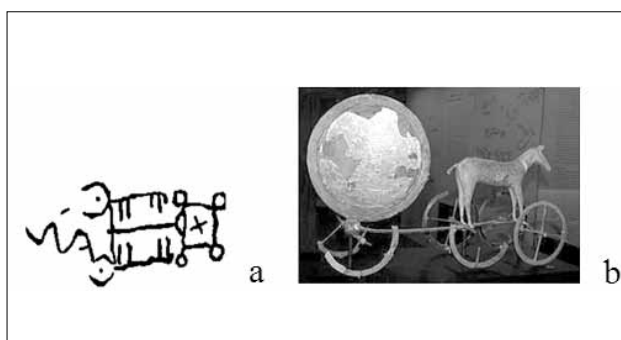


Fig. 6. Solar cart. Armenian rock art (a). Solvognen, XVIII - XVII centuries BC, gold. The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (b).

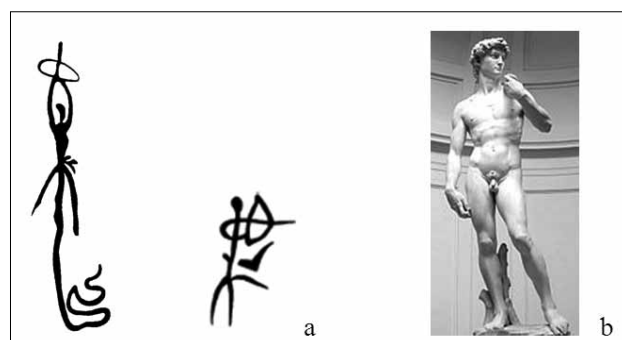


Fig. 7. Divine hero as a male symbol of a unit of Heavenly and Earthly worlds, Armenian rock art (a). David by Michelangelo (b).

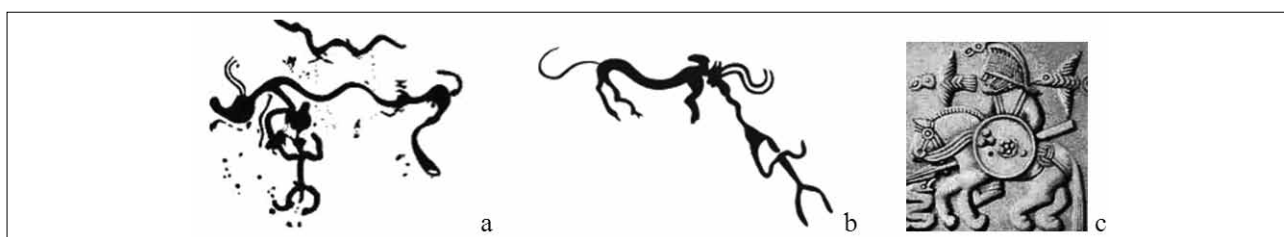


Fig. 8. Armenian rock art: the transformation of the hero motif struggle with the celestial serpent, dragon, Armenian Rock art (b). 7th century depiction of Odin on a Vendel helmet plate, Uppland (c).



Fig. 9. Eight-pointed crosses with a stepped base on cross-stones of Garni and Geghard Armenia.



Fig. 10. Fragments of the Armenian stone Encyclopedia of symbols, Buzhakan.

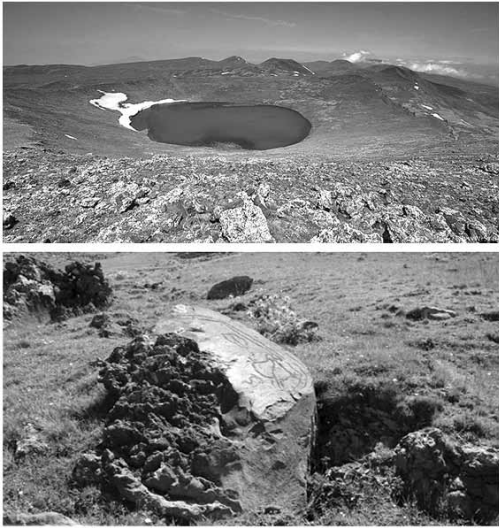


Fig. 11. Ajdahak volcano with many rock paintings that have been carved before the eruption of the volcano.



Fig. 12. After the eruption of the volcano Ughtasar.