



## ARARATIAN ROCK ART AS A PARADIGM OF COMMUNICATION AND VISUAL ARTS IN THE PAST AND FUTURE

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**Abstract** - Araratian rock art as a paradigm of communication and visual arts in the past and future

Pre-literate societies differ from literate societies mainly in the level of development of thought, speech and visual arts, as well as in the volume of accumulated knowledge and skills. Culture, language and speech, as tools for communication and exchange of knowledge, experience and skills, depend on internal and external conditions. Their differences are manifested especially in the artefacts of visual art. Rock art is an objective factor, an indicator pointing to the beginning of preparations for the transition from the stage of pre-literate societies to the stage of literate societies.

The creators of rock art had speech and thought. This stage of activity is an objective necessity for the creation of written signs to facilitate communication. Since communication is an art, it goes through several stages. Studies show that literate societies have gone through the stages of rock art. The internal art of communication is characterised mainly by internal archetypes of rock art, that are equally interpreted in paintings from pre-literate and early literate societies, and the external art of communication is characterised through external archetypes (universal symbols) that are understandable and accessible to various pre-literate and early literate societies. Internal and external archetypes may vary, and this difference describes the difference in language and mythological motifs. For later literate societies this accumulates mainly due to the implementation and transformation of internal archetypes, which dominate the art of intercultural communication.

**Riassunto** - L'arte rupestre dell'Ararat come paradigma di comunicazione e arte visiva nel passato e in futuro.

Le società pre-letterate differiscono da società alfabetizzate soprattutto per il livello di sviluppo di pensiero, di parola e delle arte visive, così come nel volume di conoscenze e competenze acquisite. Cultura, linguaggio e parola sono strumenti per la comunicazione e lo scambio di conoscenze, esperienze e competenze che dipendono dalle situazioni interne ed esterne, le loro differenze si manifestano soprattutto nei manufatti di arte visiva. L'arte rupestre è un fattore oggettivo, un indicatore che punta all'inizio dei preparativi per il passaggio dalla fase delle società pre-letterate allo stadio di società alfabetizzate. Gli autori di arte rupestre avevano parola e pensiero. Questa fase di attività è una necessità oggettiva per la creazione di segni grafici per facilitare la comunicazione, poiché la comunicazione è un'arte, passa attraverso varie fasi. Gli studi dimostrano che le società alfabetizzate sono passati attraverso le fasi dell'arte rupestre. L'arte della comunicazione interna è caratterizzata principalmente da archetipi propri dell'arte rupestre, che sono ugualmente interpretati in dipinti di società pre-letterate; l'arte della comunicazione esterna è caratterizzata attraverso archetipi esterni (simboli universali), che sono comprensibili e accessibili a varie società pre-letterate e durante l'inizio delle società letterate. Archetipi interni ed esterni possono variare, questa differenza porta alle diversità della lingua e dei motivi mitologici. Per le successive società alfabetizzate questo si accumula soprattutto per l'attuazione e la trasformazione di archetipi interni, che dominano l'arte della comunicazione interculturale.

**Résumé** - L'art rupestre du Mont Ararat comme paradigme de communication et arts visuelles dans le passé et à l'avenir.

Les sociétés pré-littéraires diffèrent de celles littéraires surtout pour ce qui concerne le niveau de développement de la pensée, du discours et des arts visuelles, ainsi que pour la quantité de connaissance et de capacités accumulées. La culture, le langage et le discours constituent des moyens de communication et échange de connaissance, expérience et capacités, donc ils dépendent des conditions intérieures et extérieures. Leur différences se révèlent particulièrement dans les artefacts de l'art visuel. L'art rupestre est un facteur objectif, un indicateur du commencement des préparatifs pour le passage du stade des sociétés pré-littéraires à celui des sociétés littéraires.

Les réalisateurs de l'art rupestre possédaient un discours et une pensée. Ce niveau d'activité constitue une nécessité objective pour la création des signes écrits qui rendront plus simple la communication. Étant donné que la communication est une forme d'art, elle passe à travers plusieurs stades. Des études démontrent que les sociétés littéraires ont passé à travers les stades de l'art rupestre. L'art de la communication intérieure est caractérisée principalement par des archétypes intérieurs d'art rupestre, qui sont également interprétés soit par les sociétés pré-littéraires, soit par les sociétés aux premiers niveaux littéraires. À la même façon, l'art de la communication extérieure est marquée par des archétypes extérieurs (les symboles universels), qui sont compris et accessibles pour plusieurs sociétés pré-littéraires et aux premiers niveaux littéraires. Les archétypes intérieurs et extérieurs peuvent varier, et cette différence détermine la différence du langage et des motifs mythologiques. Dans le cas des sociétés littéraires postérieures, ces différences s'accumulent à cause de l'application et de la transformation des archétypes intérieurs, qui sont dominants dans l'art de la communication interculturale.

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Comparative study of the rock paintings of the mountains of Ararat (Armenia, Anatolia in Turkey and Azerbaijan, Figures 1–3) shows that the vast majority of rock art, the fragments of their internal and external archetypes are in general identical. These archetypes have a single source of origin, which substantiates the hypothesis that the authors of the petroglyphs and rock art of the region thought and spoke in the same language, which is part of the unity or a single culture of the Araratian pre-literate and early literate societies. Its internal and external rock art archetypes are the same, key words are characteristic of carriers of the old Armenian, as are the motifs of archaic Armenian myths and ideograms largely preserved in the modern Armenian language (Vahanyan and Vahanyan, 1993–2011).

The identified archetypes of rock art, similar in subject, style and technique, are at 1,200–3,500 metres above sea level (Figures 7–11). The authors of the petroglyphs created a long-lived genetically uniform and connected cultural environment of thinking, which is reflected and identified not only in the similarities of the artefacts, but also in the majority of archetypes of proto-Indo-European (PIE) languages and mythological motifs (Vahanyan and Stepanyan, 2005).

These conclusions are confirmed by systematic generalisation of the results of both old and new archeological, epistemological, anthropological, geological, linguistic and comparative mythology and art history studies conducted in recent years, including the following.

- 1 The hypothesis of the existence of the Armenian and Anatolian versions of the Indo-European homeland, based on comparative analysis of linguistic data (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1990). They are finding more supporters (for example R. Gray, Q. Atkinson, C. Renfrew, G. Poghosyan and others).
- 2 The archaeological studies of the Russian-Armenian scientists over the past five or six years indicate the earliest appearance of thinking man and his activities in Armenia (S. Sardaryan, V. Lyubin, E. Belyaeva, T. Mkrtchyan, S. Aivazyan). Scientists believe that the traces of pre-literate societies may also be found under lava. Many artefacts from the cave paintings show depictions of avalanches (explosions), volcanic eruptions and ice. There is a growing belief that a significant portion of artefacts and caves with rock art were destroyed during volcanic eruptions (T. Mkrtchyan, S. Shahinyan). Glacial traces were registered the south of Mt Ararat as far as the mountainous region of Aragats, Lake Sevan and Lake Van. After the thaw the sedimentary layers (sand, clay and loess) formed a considerable part of the low areas.
- 3 The results of a comparative analysis of maps of volcanic eruptions (Figure 4), volcanic mountains of Ararat, deposits of obsidian and scheme of the supply routes of obsidian (Figure 5) and rock art centres of Armenia, Anatolia near Lake Van and Azerbaijan (Figures 2 and 3a), the area of diffusion of PIE dialects (for instance the root of 'stone', Armenian 'cr' or 'kr') and other archaic words and syllables, the names of cities, rivers and mountains (Figure 3a), as well as distribution maps of monuments of stone culture – *vishapakars* (dragonstones, stele) – and early symbols, such as crosses and swastikas depicted on the stones, steles and caves (Vahanyan and Vahanyan, 2006).
- 4 The identity of the origin of the major archetypes of the archaic Armenian language, mythological motifs, the major archetypes of the common Indo-European mythological motifs and internal and external archetypes of the rock art motifs of the Araratian Mountains (Vahanyan and Vahanyan, 2010); the origin of the iconography of the basic common Indo-European mythological types connected to the history of the visual arts of the Araratian Mountains.
- 5 The identity of the origin of Urartian (archaic Armenian), Hittite, Indian and Egyptian ideograms and hieroglyphs, based on the archetypes of Armenian rock art (G. Vahanyan, A. Kocharyan, V. Bleyan, V. Vahanyan, G. Martirosyan).
- 6 The identity of the origin and development of the archetypes of the geometric, plant and animal ornamentation motifs applied to the Armenian *vishapakars* (dragonstones) and cross-stones, as well as in the world of pre-Christian and Christian symbolism (Vahanyan and Vahanyan, 2006).
- 7 The identity of the influence of the archaic traditions of the Armenian architecture in the establishment of the Roman-Greek and Byzantine architecture (S. Der Nersesyan, Ch. Texier, Strzygowski, N. Marr).

Approximately 12,000 years ago, after the catastrophic volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, and possibly a falling comet, all the pre-literate and early literate societies, developed in the mountains of Ararat, were destroyed and its remnants emigrated to Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia (Sumer), India and Old Europe. The mixture of cultures led to a surge in the development of language and speech, artefacts and rock art, creating and implementing internal and external archetypes of visual

art, language and mythological motifs. However, the surviving heirs, the miracles, of groups of archaic societies in the Araratian Mountains in even a few thousand years managed to preserve and creatively develop genetically inherent cultural traditions, cognitive skills and abilities, and develop culture, language, ideology and religion. They first adopted the idea of the creator, one God (first man, tree of life, trinity, tree of knowledge of good and evil, dragon-volcano, fish, cross, swastika, winged solar disk, mountain – house of God, eagle and lion, horse, the veneration of the child, the family, the father, the mother and others), then Christianity as the state religion, making a significant contribution to the world art of architecture and symbolism. These symbols are the origin of the common iconographic schemes of ancient civilisations: from Mesopotamia, Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, the Hittites, Urartu, Assyria, Persia to Egypt and prehistoric Europe.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN ARMENIA AND THE REVOLUTION IN APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF THE EARLY PALEOLITHIC OF THE CAUCASUS (CONFIRMATION OF A POLYCENTRIC THEORY)

It is a hitherto unknown area with an abundance of Acheulian and middle Paleolithic sites with products from local raw materials of volcanic (dacite) identified in northwestern Armenia. It was established as partial similarity upper Acheulian materials of these monuments with the obsidian industry in Central Armenia, and a local identity, partly explicable as raw materials. Identified as a more archaic stratum of products, not previously encountered in the Caucasus, suggesting an earlier than previously thought, the stages of settling the South Caucasus (average or even early Acheulian). Proved repeatedly and different intensity of migration waves, binds to the pale-ecological dynamics. This implies a discontinuity of settlement in the region and, as a rule, lack of continuity between different stages of settling in early and in the middle Paleolithic. For the Middle Paleolithic to today there are two main phases of settling, broken in time and characterized by different patterns and habitat use of natural resources.

Made the medium - Lori Region of Armenia (north of the Armenian volcanic highland) opening dramatically expanded view of early Prehistoric Armenia, making them not only substantial changes, but the principal novelty. Had discovered a new resource area: local Acheulean industry based on other volcanic materials (dacites, andesites). As part of abundant, as in Central Armenia, lifting materials were first greeted not only upper Acheulian, but much more archaic forms of guns. Finally, opened the first in Armenia stratified Acheulean sites.

The examination found an abandoned pit with diatomite, which is a very archaic product (chopper and nucleus of flask, scraper and a basalt point). This confirms that traces of early hominids' visit to Armenia were to be found in sediments buried under lava (Lyubin and Belyaeva, 2008). By the interval (1.5 million - 600 thousand years BC) to treat and new materials found most recently in northern Armenia. The relatively late age of Acheulian materials in localities such as the Razdan Valley is determined not only by the techno-typological characteristics (Upper Acheulian), but also by local dated obsidian raw material (350,000–300,000 BC). Recent discoveries made in Armenia marked a real revolution in the approach to the study of the early Paleolithic of the Caucasus. Most of the monuments found in the open air in the North Caucasus and Armenia were older than in the caves. They are arranged in a variety of high-altitude and landscape zones, from the high, to middle to coastal lowlands. This work in the Caucasus on sites in the open air is a huge new step forward in studying the early history of the Caucasus (Lyubin, 2008).

#### OBSIDIAN, ETHNO-CULTURAL COOPERATION AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN THE STONE AGE

In addition to the legendary relationship of the Nemrut Dag volcano with King Nimrod (in the myths personifying the forces of evil, a dragon), scientists discovered the important role played by the volcanoes of Mount Ararat and Nemrut during the first civilisations. It turned out that, despite the abundance of obsidian sources in Anatolia and Iran, Nemrut Dag (near Van) is a major source of obsidian, a major material of the Stone Age, for all settlements in Mesopotamia and the settlements around the Dead Sea in the Mesolithic, the Middle East (5000–3000 BC) as far as India (S. Sardaryan, S. Ayvazyan, M. Mkrtchyan, C. Chataigner, J. Poidevin, 1998). On the shores of Lake Van were also found traces of an ancient centre for processing and trading obsidian, which therefore is an important site in the first known cross-cultural, trade routes of antiquity (Wright and Gordus, 1969).

Obsidian in Armenian, 'Vanamilk' (milk from Van), 'erkat' (iron), the milk of the earth, iron, sometimes considered as a separate nugget in the hardened lava flows: thus, 'Van' (son and one), 'Vanamilk' and 'erkat' are archaic and sacred designated logical transactions, names associated with 'son', and 'milk' of the earth (as 'mother') (N. Marr, V. Vahanyan). Another major source of obsidian



in Armenia is the volcanic mountains in the vicinity of Lake Sevan (compare with 'seven', as well as 'Siv'an'. This word is traditionally connected with Vahagn (by Van and An), and may possibly be dated to the first man winning, that is, Vahagn (Vahagn, the son of Van) on the 'dragon' (see 'Victory', the Roman numeral V for the fifth day of the week; according to the Bible, the first man was created on the fifth day and this was the start of an archaic calendar. Vahagn-associated semantics are the Armenian word for eye (*achk*). The eye symbolises the omniscient, all-seeing eye, the ability to have intuitive vision. The eye represents all the solar gods, possessing the fertilising power of the sun, which is embodied in the god-king, the Creator. Plato calls the eye the sun's tool. 'Eye, whom I gaze at God is the same eye, Kojima, he looks at me' (Angelus Silesius). The song is about the birth of Vahagn, of whom it is said that his eyes (in Armenian *achkunk*, literally the eyes and eyebrows) are *aregakunk* (literally, the sun with an eyebrow or disk of the sun with a crescent moon). The figures show the location of the obsidian sources in Araratian Mountains (Figure 5), including obsidian mining areas and areas on the periphery (S. Sardaryan, C. Chataigner, O. Barge).

In Jarmo in modern Iraq, 60 percent of the guns were made of Araratian Mountains obsidian. At Ali Kosh in modern Iran, too, there was obsidian from Armenia. Thus, the ancient traders transported their goods huge distances for those times. Trade was especially important for the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, where there was no stone, wood or metal. Obsidian was popular in ancient Egypt and in Canaan, where, according to A. Lucas, it was used back in the Pre-dynastic period. Egypt brought obsidian from Armenia, from the shores of Lake Van (G. Wainwright, X. Kink) (<http://www.mecenat-and-world.ru/45-48/seyranyan.htm>). In Lake Van the climate history of the last 800,000 years is stored, an incomparable treasure house of data which may be tapped for at least the last 500,000 years (L. Thomas). A test drilling in 2004 detected evidence of 15 volcanic eruptions in the past 20,000 years. The Lake Van region is the home of the rare cat (*Vanacatu* in Armenian), noted for its unusual fascination with water. The lake was the centre of the Armenian kingdom of Ararat from about 1000 BC, afterwards of the Satrapy of Armina, the Kingdom of Greater Armenia and the Armenian Kingdom of Vaspurakan.

The dragon (fire-breathing snake – *vishaps*) lived in volcanic mountains. Ararat is the location of a lot of fire, where the king of dragons lives. *Vishapakar* (dragonstone, Figure 7c and 8), the first processed stone sculpture, a cultural monument with images of fish, snakes and birds (dated by N. Marr at no later than the fifth or fourth millennium BC) served as a signal, warning local residents about the possible dangers. Monuments are found primarily in Armenia, in the Geghard Mountains, in Javakheti (Armenian-populated region of Georgia), in Egypt, Mongolia, Anatolia (near Van) and Azerbaijan. Even in ancient Armenia various gods and heroes can be traditionally identified with the gods and heroes from Greco-Roman mythology. From the beginning of the fourth millennium BC archaic Greek-Armenian-Aryan myths and earlier, common Indo-European myths, originated from this one region (Ivanov, 1990). The figure shows the stages of transformation of the cross from rock art to the Christian cross-stones in Armenia (Figure 6) and archetypes of the universe of space (Figure 7).

#### THE PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE

There appears to have been a pre-Indo-European substratum of speech which strongly influenced Indo-European-Armenian. N. Marr suspects that the language of the Vannic cuneiforms (Urartu cuneiforms) is of the type of several modern Caucasian dialects of the Japhetic class. However, the Aryo-Indo-European must have exerted great influence upon the Urartians, even long before the times of the Vannic empire. The Armenian hypothesis suggested by V. Ivanov and T. Gamkrelidze, postulated the Armenian language as an in situ development of a third millennium BC PIE language. The Armenian hypothesis of the PIE *Urheimat*, based on the Glottalic theory, assumes that the PIE language was spoken during the third millennium BC in the Armenian highlands.

The study of New Zealand scientists Gray and Atkinson (2003) showed that the PIE language was 7800–9800 years old. It was from this stem that the Hittites separated, who created a highly developed civilisation of Asia Minor, competing with Babylon and Egypt. Ancestors of the Armenians and Greeks separated off about 7300 years ago. In the reconstruction of Indo-European culture, the mythology and visual symbols of the Araratian rock art and, accordingly, the language have a special role. The famous 'Anatolia' and 'The Kurgan' theories of origin of the Indo-European language community are quite compatible with each other. The difference lies in the terminological level, given that the Kurgan and Anatolian theories do not take into account scientific documents and historical phenomena, such as rock art and rock art communication and language from common ancestors, the Araratian Mountains relating to the cultural components of the pre-literate and early literate



societies. According to Renfrew, it is suggested that all the other branches of the Indo-European languages (except possibly Armenian) were derived from the western branch of the divide (ancestral to the Indo-European languages of Europe, including those of the steppes, and thus also of the Iranian plateau, central Asia and south Asia). The first to branch off from the Indo-European proto-language community was the Greek-Armenian-Indo-Iranian language community. It must have begun to do so in the fourth millennium BC, because by the middle of the third millennium BC the community was already dividing into two groups, namely, the Indo-Iranian and the Greek-Armenian. Tablets in the Hattusha archives show that by the middle of the second millennium BC the Indo-Iranian group had given rise to a language spoken in the Mitanni kingdom on the southeast frontier of Anatolia that was already different from ancient Indian (commonly called Sanskrit) and ancient Iranian. Cretan-Mycenaean texts from the same era as Mitanni, deciphered in the early 1950s by the British scholars M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, turned out to be in a previously unknown dialect of Greek. All these languages had gone their separate ways from Armenian (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1990).

In revising the consonant system of the Indo-European protolanguage, we have also called into question the paths of transformation into the historical Indo-European languages. Our reconstruction of the protolanguage's consonants shows them to be closer to those of the Germanic, Armenian and Hittite daughter languages than to Sanskrit. This neatly reverses the classical conception that the former languages had undergone a systematic sound shift, whereas Sanskrit had faithfully conserved the original sound system. Another significant clue to the identification of the Indo-European homeland is provided by the terminology for wheeled transport. There are words for 'wheel' (\*rotho-), 'axle' (\*hakhs-), 'yoke' (\*iuk'om) and associated gear. 'Horse' is \*ekhos and 'foal' \*pholo. The bronze parts of the chariot and the bronze tools with which chariots were fashioned from mountain hardwoods, furnish words that embrace the smelting of metals. Petroglyphs, symbols marked on stone, found in the area from the Transcaucasus to upper Mesopotamia between Lakes Van and Urmia are the earliest pictures of horse-drawn chariots (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1990).

The more extensive migrations of speakers of the Greek-Armenian-Indo-Iranian dialects began with the break-up of the main Indo-European language community in the third millennium BC. After the separation of the Indo-Iranians and their departure for the east, the Greek-Armenian community remained for a time in the homeland. There, judging by the numbers of loan words, they had contact with speakers of Kartvelian, Tocharian and the ancient Indo-European languages that later evolved into the historical European languages. One such borrowing from the Kartvelian became the Homeric *koas*, 'fleece' (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1990).

#### CHARACTERISTIC PLANS OF CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

'Armenian churches were thus beginning to be known and Auguste Choisy was able to attempt a critical study in his *Histoire de l'Architecture*, published in 1899. Though he looked upon Armenian architecture as a provincial expression of Byzantine art, Choisy noted certain forms which seemed to him specifically Armenian; he pointed to methods of construction which differed from those used by the Greeks, and he called attention to the Armenian influence on the architecture of the Balkans, especially on that of Serbia' (S. Der Nersesyan, 1945).

Strzygowski not only claimed a major role for Armenia in the development of Byzantine architecture, but he also held that Armenian influence had spread far beyond the frontiers of the Byzantine empire and the Balkan states, and had affected western European art both in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance. Strzygowski stated that the Armenians of the fourth century were the first to introduce, for use as a church, the square building with a single dome, and niches which served as abutments to the dome in the longitudinal, transverse and diagonal axes. The Armenians also created other characteristic plans of Christian architecture. 'Greek genius at St. Sophia and Italian genius at St. Peter's,' says Strzygowski, 'only realized more fully what the Armenians had originated'...

Our knowledge of Armenian architecture is at its beginning. When systematic studies of the surviving monuments are resumed, when careful excavations are undertaken in the entire Near East, some of our ideas may have to be rejected, others established with greater certainty. But even in this imperfect state of our knowledge Armenian architecture appears as an original and vigorous art, and as one of the important factors in the development of East Christian art. In touch with the East and with the West, it drew its inspiration from both sources and served as a link between them. In these exchanges Armenia was not always the one who received; new types, new structural methods elaborated by her architects spread to other countries and exercised an influence which is far from negligible (S. Der Nersesyan, 1945).



The history of arts, culture and communication is the history of rock Art. The history of the rock art of the Araratian mountains is the story of the origin and genesis of pre-literate and early literate societies, the history of the relations (communication) of nature and a reasonable person (between Father, Mother and Son), its archaic myths about the history and the visual history of universal myths.

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Fig. 1. The Mountains of Ararat (wikipedia)

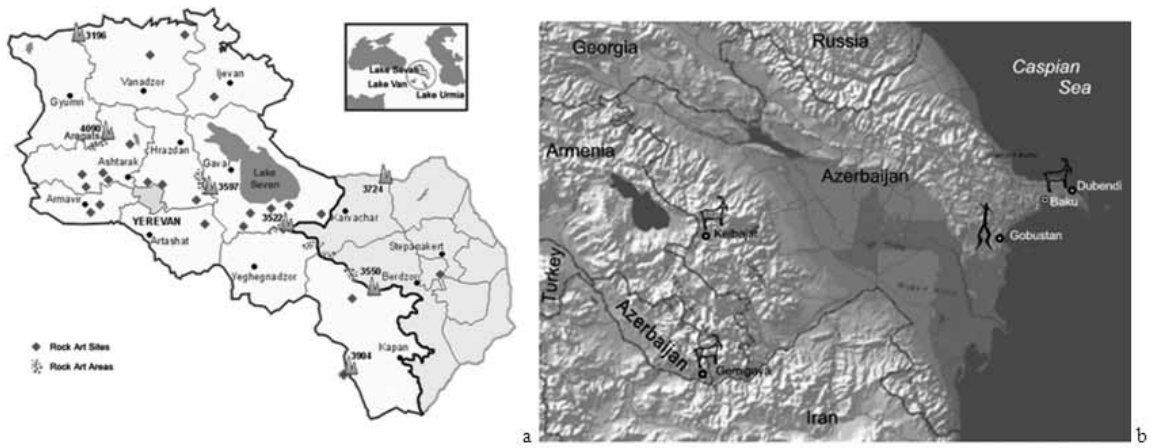


Fig. 2. Area of dissemination of Armenian petroglyphs (a, by K. Tochatyan) and petroglyphs of Azerbaijan (b, by M. Farajova)

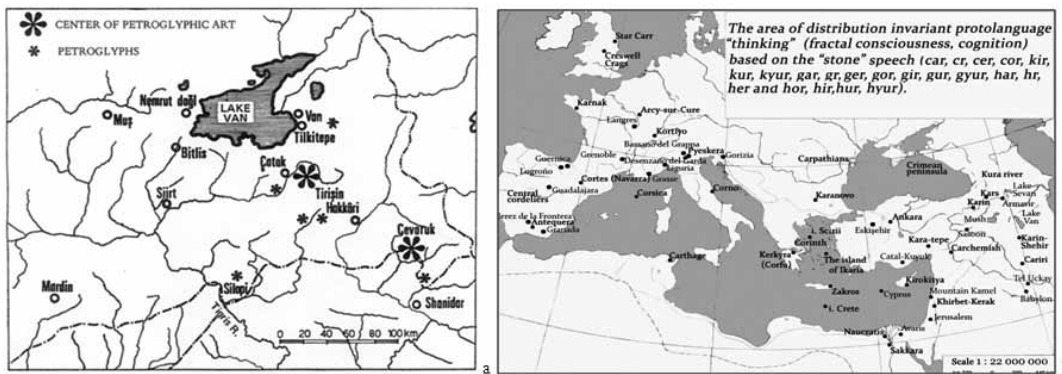


Fig. 3. Area of dissemination of petroglyphs of south-eastern Anatolia (Turkey), near Van (a). Map from Bollettino dell CCSP, Vol. V, Capo di Ponte 1970 (by Prof. E. Anati). The area of 'stone words' and communication (b, by G. Vahanyan)

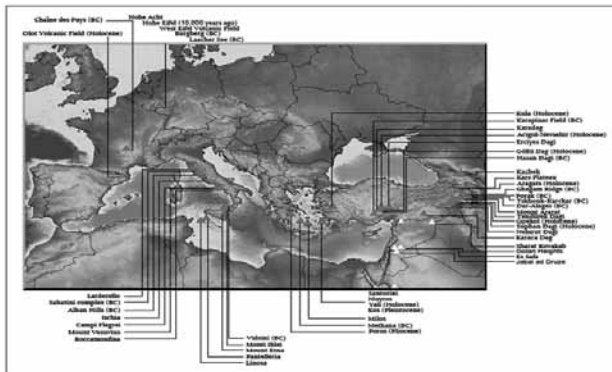


Fig. 4. From Armenian to the Greco-Roman mythology and area of volcanic eruptions (by V. Vahanyan and G. Vahanyan)

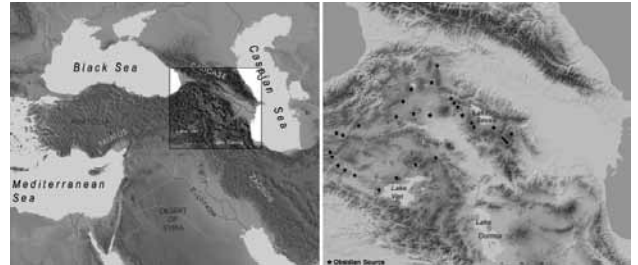


Fig. 5. Location of the obsidian sources in Araratian Mountains (by C. Chataigner, O. Barge, Layers of Perception – CAA 2007)



Fig. 6. The stages of transformation of the art of cross in Armenia (by V. Vahanyan)





Fig. 7. Cosmic tree (a), the creation with ideogram 'ararum' (creation of the world). Geghama Mountains. Heavenly 'rosette' and wings and ideogram 'ararum' (b). Vishapakar with ideogram 'ararum' (c), Armenia (by A. Petrosyan)

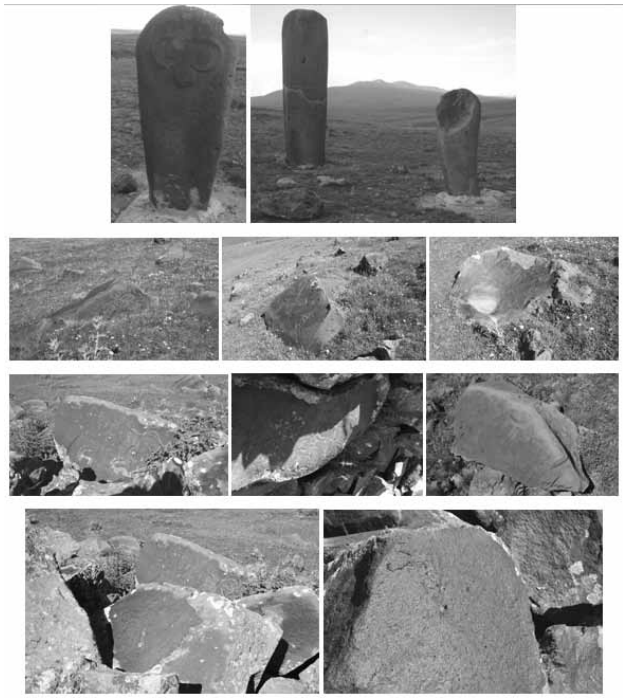


Fig. 8. The Azhdahak dragonstones and rock art, Armenia ([www.azhdahak.com](http://www.azhdahak.com))



Fig. 9. Aragats rock art, Photo D. Arakelyan



Fig. 10. The Ukhtasar rock art, Armenia, Photo T. Walkling



Fig. 11. The rock art of the Geghama Mountains, Photo V. Vahanyan