

THE ROCK CARVINGS OF THE GHEGHAM MOUNTAIN RANGE¹

It has been noted on many occasions that the pre-historic rock carvings of Armenia are genuine and treasurable sources of the history of the tribal society, they have handed down to our days quite reliable, detailed and multiple information on the activities, mode of life, production ways and means, animal husbandry and farming, ancient legends and myths, natural phenomena and general trends of past generations. This circumstance accounts for the mounting interest in research and a number of important publications in recent years. Among those very monuments the rock carvings of the Gegham mountain range, a good deal of which are treated in a separate volume², deserve special attention. The present investigation is a continuation of the above volume and includes the results of the expedition³ from 1969 to 1972 carried out under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, at

the foot-hills of mountains Major and Minor Paytassar. The information provided by those rock carvings are of exceptional value and date back to the 5th-1st millennia B. C. (Fig. 1).

In the present publication techniques of execution, chronology, stylistic-contextual peculiarities, sources, socio-economic, ideological considerations as they pertain to new finds, are treated in the respective chapters in the order given⁴.

¹ Translated from Armenian by K. Hofman.

² H. A. Martirosian, H. R. Israellian. The Rock Carvings of the Gegham Mountain Range, Instalment I, Archaeological monuments of Armenia, Book 6, Yerevan, 1972.

³ The expedition consisted of H. A. Martirosian (Head of the team), R. M. Torossian, H. R. Israellian, S. K. Mezhlumian (research fellows) and the late promising artist Avetik Assatryan.

⁴ The study was completed by H. A. Martirosian, with the cooperation of S. K. Mezhlumian (Chapter IV) and H. R. Israellian (The Sun God and the Twins).

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE TECHNICAL AND STYLISTIC EXECUTION OF ROCK CARVINGS

The late Neolithic—Iron Age art of the rock carvings, as an outcome of neolithic evolution, conveys the changed attitude of man toward nature in the chain of complex, versatile, interrelated manifestations of reality; with ancient man as the leading actor. The need of portraying the multifaceted aspects of man's activities finds expression in the conventionality of the pictures, their strict stylization, compositional and narrative nature. The millennial evolution manifests itself not only in various

technical and stylistic skills but in the private tastes and executional abilities of pre-historic artists as well. Amazingly enough, the pre-historic artist achieved perfection in execution, expression, and dynamism by what seems at first glance simple technical devices. Both single and group figures were carved out on comparatively smooth surfaces of basalt rock fragments by means of various hand-size stone swingles and obsidian cutters, substituted, later on, by metal ones. The figure was brought into