



Zurvanite Iconographic Canon. Astronomy and Mythology.

Vitalij E. Larichev^{1†}, Sergey A. Parshikov²,
Elena G. Gienko³

¹ Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of SB RAS, Novosibirsk, Russian Federation.

² NO "Environmental center of rational management of natural resources" (NO EC RMNR), Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation.

³ Siberian State Academy of Geodesy, Plakhotnogo st.10, Novosibirsk, Russian Federation;
E-mail: elenagienko@yandex.ru

Abstract

This article reveals the results of the study of iconographic canon of Zurvanite mythologem belonging to the worldwide myths, comprising the myth of the divine twins. The following reasons make the theme relevant:

1. There is no iconographic canon Zurvanite mythologem which is universally accepted by modern Iranian studies;
2. Saratsk petroglyphic composition of XVIII-XVII centuries BC (Minusinsk Basin of Siberia) in Khakassia that we have defined as the earliest of all supposed images of Zurvanite myth;
3. The significance of Zurvanite myths in the process of monotheistic theology's forming.

In our work we have come to the conclusion that the creators of Saratsk petroglyphic composition were the bearers of the Andronovo cultural-historical community who came to the territory of Khakassia in XVIII-XVII centuries BC. In the processes of semantic disclosure of mythologem of the symbols of Saratsk petroglyphic composition due to the fact that Andronovs belonged to the circle of Aryan tribes confederation we relied on the text of the Avesta, Pahlavi texts and medieval authors mentioned in Zurvanite mythologem. Studies have shown that the spatial distribution of Saratsk petroglyphic composition corresponds to the astronomically significant areas of the Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary which is a "classical" Iranian-Aryan vara (protective slab separating the sacred world from the real world - profane) located on the top of the Saratsky Sunduk mountain. Sacred Astronomy built in the structure of the sanctuary by its creators confirms our assumption of Zurvanite content of Saratsky petroglyphic composition's semantics. In addition the study of the nature of the images of Saratsk composition revealed the principles of "sacred" geometry in the composition structure of Zurvanite iconographic canon.

Keywords: Zurvanite iconographic canon, Andronovo culture, Zurvan Akarana, Zurvan Dargahvadata, Ahura Mazda, Angra Mainyu.

Introduction

Zurvan Akarana means boundless, limitless time. He also personifies eternal and endless principle of unity in Nature. He could be called the Ein Sof of Zoroastrians – an incognizable deity, from whom emanates Ahura Mazda, an eternal light and logos, which is the cause of all things. According to current point of views, dogmatic Zurvanism didn't have any canonization. Zurvan could be both considered as gendered or androgynous god. (Dictionary of mythological terms)

A hymn dedicated to the god of Time is presented in Iranian Bundahishn (BD):

«Time is more powerful than both the creations, the creation of Ohrmazd and even that of the Evil Spirit; Time is accessible for work and regulation; of accessible beings, Time is the most accessible; of beings worth inquiry, Time is the most worthy of inquiry,» -- that is, determination can be made by Time--; "It is by Time that a temporal dwelling is erected; by Time, the ornamented is dilapidated; and of mortal men, none can escape from it, neither when he flies above, nor when he digs a well in the depth below and sits within it, nor when he goes down underneath the spring of cold water» (Iranian Bundahishn), [1].

From Pahlavi texts and a 13th-century source “Ulema-i Islam” [2] – i.e. “an exposition of the constitution of the world and of the soul of man from the beginning up to eternity”, we know about dichotomous structure of a time stream that was symbolized through Zurvan, a creator god. The dichotomy of Zurvan was represented by two hypostases:

I. Zurvan Akarana – a time of spiritual pre- and post- existence: «except Time all other things have been created and Time is the Creator. Time is without bounds; its top is undiscoverable; its bottom is undiscoverable; it has always existed and it shall ever be». [2, 3];

II . Zurvan Dargahvadata – a time of things existent (“time and the supreme decree of self-existent eternity” [MH, XVII]¹: “Then, out of Infinite Time, He produced forth Time which is the Lord of duration -- there is someone who calls it Finite Time” [BD, 1.39]. «For, verily, Time, which is the Lord of duration, is the first creature that He created forth; on account of that is it infinite that, from the original creation, when He created the creatures, up to the end, when the Evil Spirit will be inactive, is a cycle of twelve thousand years, that is finite, which will finally mingle with and be transformed to infinity» [BD, 1.42].

There is also no general Zurvanite mythologem, which would be recognized by the majority of experts. From all the artifacts which are supposedly connected to Zurvanism, in all the museums around the world, the most famous is a plaque from Lorestan (VIII - VII centuries BC) in the Cincinnati Art Museum (Fig. 1), which was interpreted by R. Girshman [4] as a picture representing a Zurvanite myth. It should be noted that the majority of iranologists disagreed with his point of view.

The composition illustrates a horizontally expanded mythologem, depicting three anthropomorphic deities in its central part (Fig. 1) and three groups of deities arranged asymmetrically to the left and to the right of the central triad. The central “trinity” consists of a deity and two mirror-symmetric anthropomorphic creatures that grow from the deity’s beard, looking to opposite directions.

¹ The abbreviations of the names of the Pahlavi texts, explanations for them are given in the Application at the end of the article

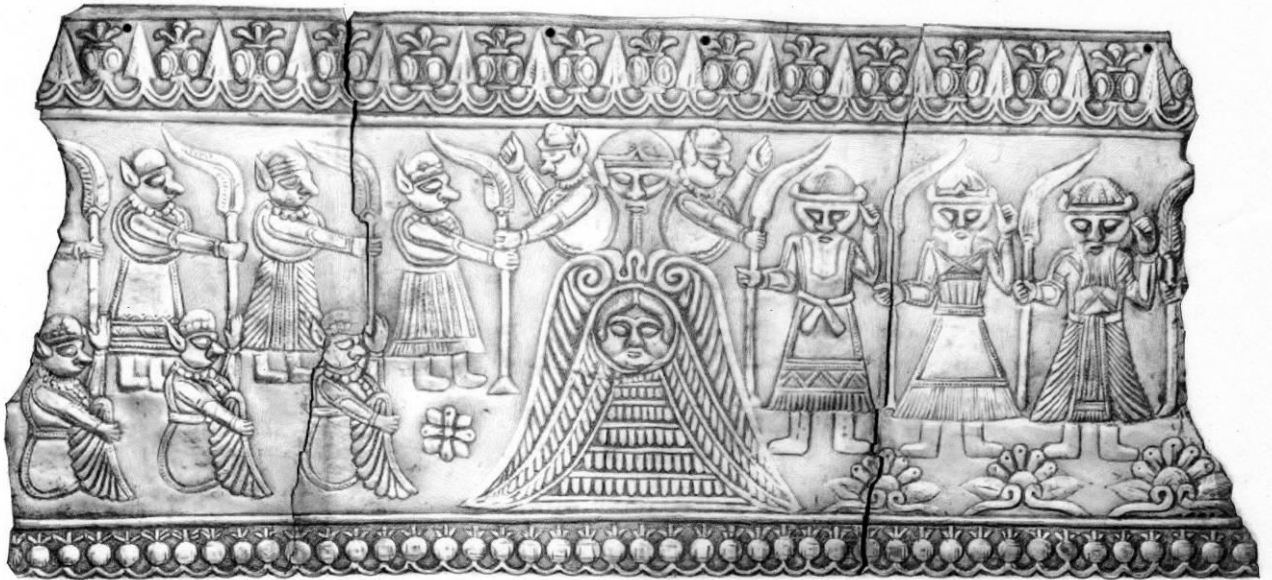


Figure 1. Zurvanite composition from the Cincinnati Art Museum.
Lorestan (VIII – VII centuries BC) [4].

One of the gaps in our knowledge about Zurvanite theologem is a lack of universally accepted canon for iconographic images of Zurvan and his sons – Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu.



Figure 2. Lorestan composition XII?-X centuries BC. [Museum Rietberg Zurich. Drawing with a photo of the artifact from the Museum Rietberg by C. Karlov]

The composition of that image denotes that central anthropomorphic god is the supreme god in relation to gods he brings to birth from the left and right parts of the composition. Less known, but not less expressive is a bronze plate from Lorestan in the Rietberg Museum in Zurich (Fig. 2) that presumably depicts Zurvan with his sons Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. The Zurvanite nature of these two Lorestan compositions' mythological semantics suddenly found its confirmation in the petroglyphs of Khakasia dated II millennium BC.

Petroglyphic composition from Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary

Consider the following example of a petroglyphic composition from Saratsky Sunduk (means “chest”, “trunk”) sanctuary [5] as a prove of the statement mentioned earlier. This composition, which has long been known to researchers, is located in a Bely Iyus River valley, in Ordzhinekidzevskiy district of Khakasia.

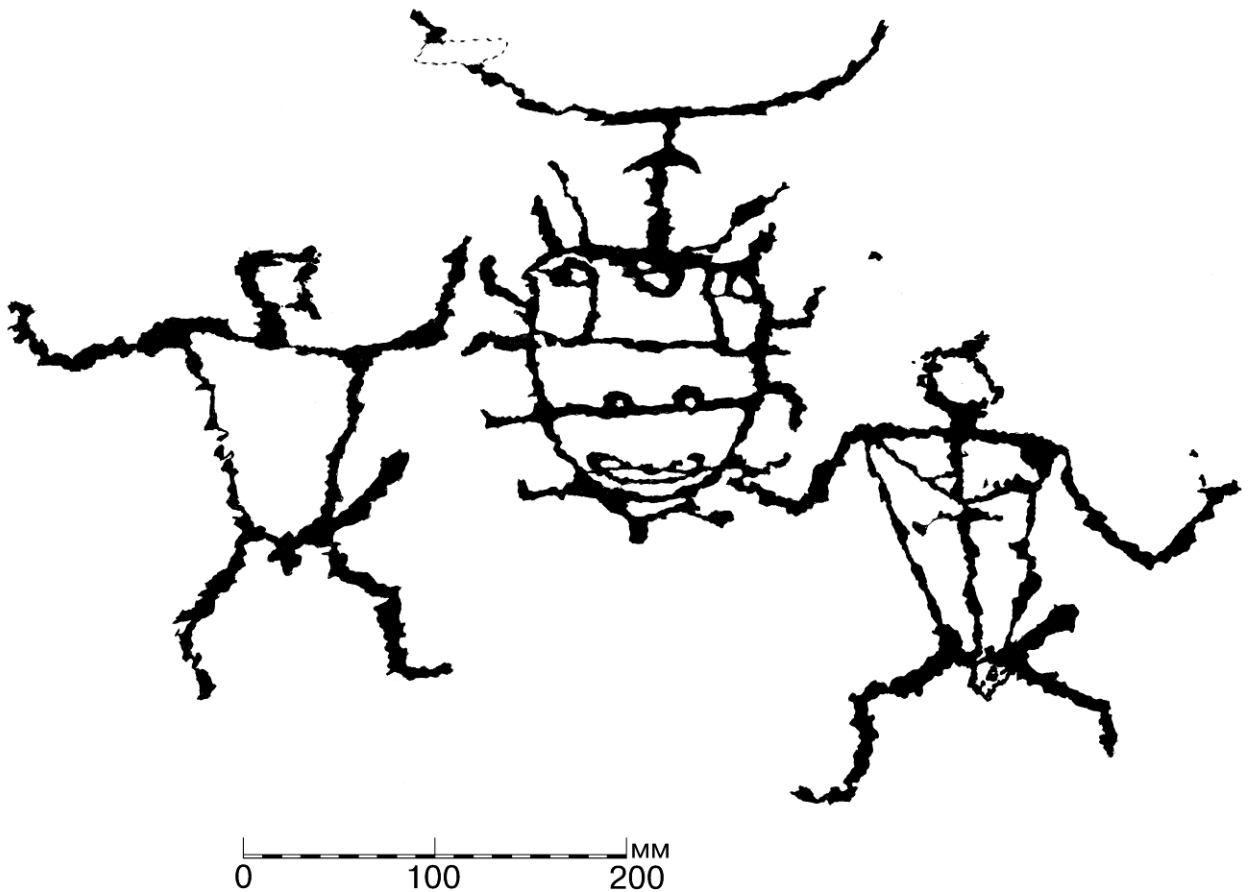


Figure 3. Petroglyphic composition depicting Zurvanite myth. Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary. Khakasia (XVIII – XVII centuries BC).

The image of a deity in the center of the composition (Fig. 3) clearly indicate the connection to okunev culture (second half of III, beginning of II millennium BC), found in Khakasia [6,7,8,9].

Furthermore, stylistic and semantic features of the Saratsky composition indicate that it was created no sooner than the beginning of the II millennium BC, i.e. at the final stage of okunev culture.

The mythologem depicted on the vertical plane of Devonian sandstone (Fig. 3) is a horizontally structured composition that shows a triad of deities. The triad is formed by a face of

a deity, related to okunev culture in the center and two anthropomorphic deities that are untypical for okunev culture, placed symmetrically on the left and on the right sides from the central part. One of the anthropomorphic gods, arranged on the right side of composition (from an observer's view point) touches the face of the central god with his right hand.

Another one, arranged on the left, is stretching out his left hand to the crown of the god. The face of the central deity is segmented by two transverse horizontal lines into three parts. The semantics of anthropomorphic images and the central image represents a combination of dualistic twin motif with a sacred triad of three levels of creation from Irano-Aryan mythology. We believe that the story depicted in Saratsky petroglyphic composition belongs to Zurvanism on the basis of mythologem basis as well as to Zurvanite-Mazdean theologem basis. Analysis of the Saratsky composition's possible timeline shows with high probability that it was created by people of fedorovo culture (andronovo cultural and historical community), who came to the territory Khakassia in XVIII centuries BC [10].

During the last 9 years we have conducted researches at the three sanctuaries of North Khakassia – the Saratsky Sunduk, the Seraphim Stone and the First Sunduk that are located in a direct line of sight of each other, to determine the chronology of the functioning of these cult centers using astronomical methods. Absolute stellar chronology for these sanctuaries [11,12] determines the time of their functioning as astronomical cult centers in the XIX – XIV centuries BC. It turned out that the structure of these sanctuaries built of stone slabs and astronomically significant menhirs, contain not only solar (observation of equinoxes and solstices) and lunar (making calendars based on observations of lunar cycles) astronomical points, but also objects to observe astromechanics. In particular, there are menhirs and flagstones which could be used for calendar observations of Arcturus and Betelgeuse constellations in order to predict the time of the winter solstice [11, 12]. The presence of items used by priests for the purposes of stellar astronomy, made it possible to determine the functional time of these sanctuaries with an accuracy of ± 50 years.

The exploration of okunev culture ceramics inside the sanctuaries of Saratsky Sunduk and First Sunduk confirms chronological (by means of stellar astronomy) analysis of the functional time of these okunev- andronovo cultic centers. The analysis of stylistic and semantic features of the composition's central image also signifies the possibility of that chronological evaluation. The structure of the central image of Saratsky composition can not be considered as "classic okunev" due to untypical solar crown - "a solar boat in the constellation Libra". Same can be said about the Saratsky composition as a whole, because of horizontal configuration of the composition are also untypical for okunev culture. The iconographic canon of okunev culture is characterized by vertical compositional configuration of the universe [13,14,15]. Moreover, archeological excavations of Andronovo graves in the vicinity of the Saratsky Sunduk in 1968-1970, performed by N.V. Nashchekin [16] proved that people of fedorovo culture lived around sanctuaries of Saratsky Sunduk, Seraphim Stone and First Sunduk. All the above-mentioned bring us to the most likely conclusion that iconography of Zurvanite theological canon found in Saratsky composition was brought to Khakassia by people related to Andronovo cultural community. Historical time of arrival of these people to Khakassia [17] coincides with all the above arguments given to assess the timeline of Saratsky composition. Therefore, we believe that the petroglyphic composition from Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary was created in XVIII-XVII centuries BC, and can be described as a syncretistic: belonging to andronovo – okunev cultures on the basis of stylistic and figurative embodiment of the twin myth and to Zurvan – Mazdean tradition on the basis of its theology.

Let's consider the possibility of interpretation of Saratsky composition (Fig. 3) in relation to Zurvanite myth with the following proposed semantics of its images in order to substantiate the above-mentioned point of view:

1. The face of an okunev deity that is located in the center of the composition and segmented into three parts and represents Zurvan;
2. The anthropomorphic creature, pictured above the other creature, to the left (from the observer's viewpoint) from the face of Zurvan is Ahura Mazda;
3. The anthropomorphic creature, pictured below and on the right side (from the observer's viewpoint) from the face of Zurvan is Angra Mainyu.

Let us interpret the semantic content of Saratsky mythologem starting from the most obvious character here - Angra Mainyu.

Angra Mainyu of Saratsky composition

Angra Mainyu from Pahlavi (Ahriman) or Ahriman is an evil spirit, (avest. anra mainyu), and a malign hypostasis of his father Zurvan. It is supposed that anthropomorphic creature that touches the face of the okunev deity with (Fig. 3) the right hand is Angra Mainyu – a malign son of Zurvan. This conclusion is proved by the following:

1. The character of the mythologem, shown on the right side (from the observer's viewpoint) of the face of the central deity is anthropomorphic. Pahlavi texts describe Angra Mainyu as a creature with "*log-like lizard's body*" (BD, 26), but he could appear as a young man (BD, 27). When Viraz was in Hell, he saw Angra Mainyu in human form (AVN, 54);

2. The anthropomorphic creature has got a backbone, a spine. The literal translation of an avestian word "life" is "bony life". Being alive (*astvant* - having bones) means to have bones. However, the presence of bones in creatures of the created world is an inherent part of their mortality. According to Mazdayasna pantheon, Angra Mainyu is a mortal god. He would perish along with the existent universe after the 12- thousand-year of the "world cycle". Angra Mainyu "*was and is, but it is he who will not be*" (BD, 17). So the presence of a backbone or "spine" in anthropomorphic creature (Fig. 3) is evidence in favor of the assumption that it is an image of mortal Angra Mainyu;

3. The body of Angra Mainyu is "sacredly damaged" – crossed out with a sidelong cross from the shoulders through the solar plexus (Fig. 3). According to Irano-Aryan beliefs, any physical defect must be considered as a sign of inferiority, a curse, a sign that a person is damage by the "evil spirit". The agnomen of Angra Mainyu is "*accursed*" (CAP, 14), "*deadly*" (AVN, 54). It means that "sacredly damaged" and therefore mortal, in the composition could be only Angra Mainyu. Moreover, according to Vedic mythology, a sidelong cross on the body or garment anyone can symbolize the mortality of a creature, while the cross is associated with "ropes" of chthonic Varuna the Binder;

4. The anthropomorphic creature touching the face of his father symbolizes Angra Mainyu's claims to rule over the universe by rights of being firstborn. In Mazdayasna mythology the ephemerality of that claims is consistent with Angra Mainyu "*narrow-minded*" (BD, 20) thoughts, where he is "*not omniscient and almighty*" (BD, 20). This theological semantics embedded in the sacred symbolism of Angra Mainyu, trying to touch the face of the central deity, which is presumably Zurvan. The face of Zurvan is segmented by two transverse horizontal lines into three parts. The three-part structure deity's face in Aryan theology symbolizes three levels of the universe. The upper level is a heavenly world of the gods, the

middle and the lower parts represent Earth and the world of the dead. The right hand of the anthropomorphic creature touches the lower segment of Zurvan's face – the world of the dead. It means that the deity sacredly marks himself as a mortal and therefore a malign son - Angra Mainyu. The place of Angra Mainyu is in hell, «*in the world of the dead*» (BD, 27, 29). Therefore, by sacredly touching the lower segment of his father's face with his right hand, Angra Mainyu demonstrates his domination over the world of the dead during the finite interval of the time “when good and evil are mingling” - (pahl. gumezisnih);

5. Angra Mainyu's head is located below the horizontal line on Zurvan's face, which separates the sacred, heavenly world – a world that is inaccessible to the malign son from the earthly world, in which he would stay until the end of the “mingling” time. Angra Mainyu's head is compositionally located at the middle - the earthly part of the universe, symbolized by the face of Zurvan. This compositional semantics can be also confirmed by a Mazdayasna mythologem, according to which, during the era of “*good and evil mingling*” (BD, 20) there is a place for both good and malign manifestations of the existent things;

6. Angra Mainyu's figure is located compositionally below the figure of the left anthropomorphic creature. Therefore, he stays on the lower level of the theological hierarchy, in comparison with the deity, depicted on the left side of the composition (from observer's viewpoint)

7. Bony body of Angra Mainyu is located below the sacral line on the face of Zurvan that separates the world of the dead from the living world. It means that the body originally belongs to the world of the dead - the world of darkness. The semantics of such arrangement of Angra Mainyu's body corresponds to Bundahishn, which states that Ahriman dwells “*in the endless darkness*” (BD, 21), in the world of the dead;

8. The phalluses of both anthropomorphic deities are erect. Both of them claim to have a dominion over the universe, and to continue themselves in eternity, but in comparison with the left deity (Ahura Mazda), Angra Mainyu has a weak potency. Angra Mainyu's phallus is smaller than the phallus of the left anthropomorphic figure. The top of the malign son's phallus is located lower than the scrotum of Ahura Mazda. The scrotum of Angra Mainyu is empty – there are no testicles and no seed – he is sterile, and therefore the evil personified by him, does not have the everlasting nature. He “*was, is, but it is he, who will not be*” (BD, 17);

9. Claiming to get Zurvan's priestly functions in order to prevail over existent and inexistent universe, Angra Mainyu has his arms bent at the elbows and hands lifted up to heaven in a gesture showing the utterance of hymns to Father. His palms are located below the line of his shoulders as well as positioned below the horizontal line on the face of Zurvan that separates the world of the dead from the world of living. Therefore, the claims of Angra Mainyu to get divine functions of Zurvan and eternal dominion over the universe are not feasible, because all things existent and hell, where he stays, as well as the malign son himself are finite;

10. The proportions and body composition of Angra Mainyu are identical to proportions of the left anthropomorphic figure (Ahura Mazda), which by virtue of their anthropological similarities may signify that they are twin brothers;

11. If we take a wart at the upper right of the face of anthropomorphic creature as his nose, the “gaze” of Angra Mainyu will be directed upwards and to the opposite direction from the face of Zurvan. It is obvious that even the gaze of Angra Mainyu does not belong to Zurvan, because the father did not want the malign son to be even born. Therefore, Angra Mainyu couldn't “see” the greatness and wisdom of the Father Zurvan's plan because he is “*unobservant and through ignorance*” (BD, 21);

12. During the summer solstice, sun that rises over the top of Saratsky Sunduk, throws its lights – sacredly cleans – on the image of malign Angra Mainyu after all other images of petroglyphic composition. The images of Ahura Mazda and Zurvan appear and “come out” first of the shadow of the sanctuary. Such a sequence of (sacral “cleansing”) sunlight shining on image of the right anthropomorphic deity in petroglyphic compositions indicates that it is an image of Angra Mainyu;

13. Angra Mainyu is pictured without a beard in opposition to Zurvan and Ahura Mazda. Perhaps that symbolizes the lack of masculinity and maturity as well as indicates that Angra Mainyu is “spiritually immature”, in contrast with spiritually mature and bearded Ahura Mazda, who is equivalently “mature” as a bearded Zurvan.

All the 13 above-mentioned points concerning the composition of and images of Saratsky mythologem, make it possible to say that the image of anthropomorphic deity depicted in petroglyphic composition on the right side (from the observer’s viewpoint) from the face of the central deity is the image of Angra Mainyu.

Ahura Mazda of Saratsky composition

Ahura Mazda (from pahl. Ormazd), (from avest. Ahura Mazda) means “Wise Lord” [18] and is a good hypostasis of Zurvan. Let’s consider some arguments proving that the left anthropomorphic image from Saratsky petroglyphic composition (from the observer’s viewpoint) is Ahura Mazda.

1. The image of this figure is anthropomorphic. Zoroaster claimed that Ahura had “*head, hands, feet, hair, face and tongue*”, although he is “*an intangible spirit*” and “*it’s not possible to grasp his hand*” (ShnSh, 81);

2. The anthropomorphic deity doesn’t have “bone spine”. Therefore, he is immaterial and spirituality is his primary feature. There is information in Mazdayasna mythology about the spiritual essence of Mazda. It also has information about six divine sparks of Ahura Mazda – his six spiritual emanations which are called Amesha Spenta (pahl. amahraspandan – “Bounteous Immortal” of avest. amesha-spenta) (BD, 22). According to Shayest-na-Shayest, Ahura Mazda himself classified as one of “Amesha Spenta”, as the seventh holy immortal – “The Holy Spirit” (ShnSh , 81, 88). Ahura Mazda and Amesha Spenta are intangible (ShnSh , 81, 88) which means that they are spiritual;

3. The fact that Ahura Mazda does not touch the face of Zurvan, symbolizes that he is the second, after the birth of Angra Mainyu. The absence of touching Zurvan face also symbolizes the innocence of absolutely good Ahura and disassociation with malicious constituent of Zurvan’s dichotomous content;

4. The “spiritual body” of Ahura Mazda is not “damaged”, in contrast to his brother and antipode. Ahura’s image isn’t crossed by a sidelong cross, unlike the image of Angra Mainyu. According to Mazdayasna theology, Ahura Mazda is unharmed, the good and the immortal god. Absence of any sacral damage to his image marks that it is an immortal and good son - Ahura Mazda, who “*was, is, and ever will be*” (BD, 17);

5. The image of the second -born son Ahura Mazda is located compositionally above the image of Angra Mainyu, and therefore he belongs to higher level of the sacred hierarchy and goodness in accordance with theology of Gathic Mazdayasna;

6. Head, arms and shoulders of Ahura Mazda are pictured above the horizontal line on the face of Zurvan that separates the earthly world from the world of heaven. These body parts of

Ahura are compositionally associated with sacred, celestial, spiritual and benevolent part of Zurvan's face, which is inaccessible to malign Angra Mainyu. Ahura is full of light and benevolence in his spiritual content, as well as sunlight, symbolized by the "Solar boat" – a solar crown of Zurvan, toward which Mazda raises his left hand. The compositional placement of Ahura Mazda semantically fits in the "moral matrix" of Mazdayasna theology, where "good thoughts, good words and good deeds" happens through Ahura's good thoughts (in his head), good words (which he pronounces) and good deeds (committed by Mazda) on the spiritual level of universe, according to initially good conception of Zurvan;

7. Ahura Mazda's potency exceeds the potency of Angra Mainyu. Ahura's phallus is bigger than a phallus of Angra Mainyu. The phallus and scrotum of Mazda are located compositionally higher than Angra Mainyu's. Ahura Mazda testicles are full of semen and, in contrast with Angra Mainyu, he is not sterile - for Soshyans the Saviour will come as well as "the rising of the dead and the Final body" (SAP, 16). It means that all that is good is personified in the form of Ahura and has got an eternal continuation. In Denkarte says that time is included in the body along with the "seed and time (...) is embodied in the seed and the time needed to control a godsend in this seed" [19];

8. Claiming to get Zurvan's priestly functions in order to prevail over existent and inexistent universe, Ahura Mazda has his arms bent at the elbows and hands lifted up to heaven in a gesture, showing the utterance of hymns to Father. His "palms" are located above the line of his shoulders. His right hand is raised towards the solar crown of Zurvan, which signifies his as a good son, making a claim for heavenly and luminous universe – a blessed abode for the gods of the Irano-Aryan pantheon. That is the place, where Mazda stays together with "Amahraspandan" (AVN, 6.7), (KN, XXII 7, 10), with "gods and amahraspandan" (MH, 28);

9. Body proportions of Ahura Mazda are identical to proportions of Angra Mainyu, which by virtue of their anthropological similarities may signify that they are twin brothers;

10. The eyes of Ahura Mazda are directed to Zurvan's solar crown, but not to Zurvan's face. This fact represents the innocence of good Ahura's absolute spirit and with not - good constituent of Zurvan's dichotomous. The possibility of such semantic content of is confirmed by the direction of Mazda gaze pointed at a good component of Zurvan image – his solar crown;

11. During the summer solstice, a rising sun firstly illuminates and hallows the image of Ahura Mazda as the good hypostasis of dichotomous Zurvan, then (due to the initial dichotomy) illuminates, hallows and cleans Zurvan and only after that it finally (due to the initial non-goodness) illuminates and clears the image of Angra Mainyu. The fact that the image of Ahura Mazda "comes out" of the shadows, created by the mountaintop of the Saratsky sanctuary first, primarily among other characters of the composition, could signify his absolute goodness;

12. Ahura Mazda like Zurvan has got a beard. This feature of masculinity and spiritual maturity may indicate coincidence of spiritually mature content of Ahura Mazda's absolute good intentions with the initially good intention of his father Zurvan.

All the 12 above-mentioned points concerning the composition of and images of Saratsky mythologem, make it possible to say that the image of anthropomorphic deity depicted in petroglyphic composition on the left side (from the observer's viewpoint) from the face of the central deity is the image of Ahura Mazda.

At this stage of the analysis of Saratsky mythologem's semantic content, it has already become obvious that theologically dichotomous construct of a twin myth, where Ahura Mazda is the good spirit and Angra Mainyu is a malign spirit was presented in Aryan mythology since the beginning of II millennium BC. The semantics of Saratsky composition signifies that Ahura

Mazda and Angra Mainyu were initially perceived as opposites, embodying the spiritual good and material malicious manifestations of the universe. Ahura Mazda appeared to be incorporeal, immortal and benevolent spirit and the good hypostasis of Zurvan, while Angra Mainyu was a physically embodied and therefore mortal, malign spirit and the malicious hypostasis of Zurvan.

Zurvan of Saratsky composition

Let's consider some arguments proving that the central image from Saratsky petroglyphic composition (from the observer's viewpoint) is Zurvan:

1. The face of central deity has anthropomorphic features (Fig. 3). His facial contour reminds a human's face, with eyes, nostrils, mouth and beard. Zoomorphic part of his image expressed through horns on his head. The deity doesn't have a body pictured in the composition, and it means that he has got a non-material and spiritual nature;

2. The solar crown marks this okunev culture's image as the supreme deity among those other anthropomorphic images that doesn't have any headdresses. The crown is displayed above the heads of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. In addition to the crown, the supreme nature of the central deity of the composition is symbolized by his three eyes – *“Zurvan has seven faces, and three eyes on each face”* [20]. According to the Ulema-i Islam [21,22] and Eznik Koghbatsi [23] Zurvan is a supreme god. According to Bundahishn, *“Time is more powerful than both the creations”* [24]. The sacral semantics content of Zurvan's solar crown include the fact that the crown symbolizes the *“Solar Boat in the constellation Libra”* – i.e. a sunrise at the autumnal equinox in the beginning of the II millennium BC. The sacred motif of changing seasons during the autumnal equinox symbolized an approach of winter as well as the fact that powers of darkness and evil are coming to earth. Therefore sacred symbolism of Zurvan crown is dichotomous. It contains both the good symbolism of the luminous Solar Boat and non-good calendar symbolism, because *“Sun in the constellation Libra”* indicates the end of summer and the onset of the winter season. This calendar symbolism, in turn, means that the face of okunev deity belongs to the god of time Zurvan. Zurvan's dichotomy is also expressed through the twin symmetry of composition, where good and luminous Ahura Mazda symmetrically opposed to malign Angra Mainyu like summer contrasted with winter and daylight contrasted with the darkness of night.

3. Zurvan's face is segmented by two transverse horizontal lines into three levels of the universe. This means that in the Zurvan's face there is a luminous component of heavens as well as malicious component of the lower world of the dead. The mingle of two Zurvan's incarnations emphasize the middle segment of his face – the real world at the era of *“mingle of good and evil”*;

4. Zurvan's face is framed with twelve spikes, symbolizing twelve millennia of *“World Cycle”* and the twelve months of the annual cycle. Semantics of the spikes framing Zurvan's face specifies the days of the autumn and spring equinoxes. Zurvan's crown symbolizes the autumnal equinox, and his beard symbolizes the vernal equinox. The number of *“months-spikes”* shown on the right (from the observer's viewpoint) side is *“the number of the winter months in the year”*, which exceeds the number of left spikes on the face of Zurvan that symbolize *“months of the summer season”*. This sacred asymmetry means duration of good and non-good seasons and also finds its confirmation in Pahlavi texts, where the description of the ancestral homeland of the Aryans climate record that winter lasts longer than summer.

5. Four three-thousand years' periods of "World cycle" are symbolized by the four stages of the dynamics of the universe, depicted in a vertically structured form of Zurvan. The first three-thousand year's period of spiritual pre-existence (*menog*, avest. - mainyu) of the universe according to the Creator's plan (BD, X) is marked by the solar crown of Zurvan. The second, third and fourth three thousand years' periods of "World Cycle" are symbolized by the Zurvan's three-part structured face - three levels of existence of the universe. Four levels of the universe are fixed in the form of Saratsky composition's Zurvan and are also confirmed in the semantics of the Zurvan tetrad, which was proposed and developed by H.H. Schaeder [25], H.S. Nyberg [26] and R.C. Zaehner [27]. R.C. Zaehner believed that tetramorphism is the original model of how Aryans represented time.

6. During the summer solstice, a rising sun illuminates and "sanctifies" firstly the image of Ahura Mazda, and then illuminates and "sanctifies" left part of Zurvan's face that is directed to Ahura Mazda, after that illuminates and "purifies" the right side of Zurvan's face directed to Angra Mainyu. Obviously, that particular sequence of illumination and "purification" of Zurvan's face symbolizes the dichotomy of Zurvan's content;

7. Taking into consideration the Saratsky petroglyphic composition it should be mentioned that the gaze of Zurvan is directed to the south-west as well as to the sunset and to the winter solstice at the latitude of Khakassia. According to the sacred geography of the Vedas, northern direction was believed to be good [28] as pointing the ancestral home of the Aryans. Southern and western directions were considered to be hostile. West was associated with death and south, probably as a geographical area, where the Aryans moved to, when they were forced to leave the ancestral home in the north. Probably, Zurvan's gaze directed to double malicious southwest symbolizes the sacred dichotomy of Zurvan, where "the holy ancestral home of the Aryans" is located behind him, and his face is directed to malicious land of sunset and winter solstice.

8. Proportioned Zurvan's face surpasses in size the faces of his sons, which shows the superiority of the Creator over his good and malicious essences;

9. The upper segment of a three-part structured Zurvan's face is flush with the face of Ahura Mazda, and the middle segment is on the same level with the face of Angra Mainyu. This indicates a dichotomous content of Zurvan, which contains good and malicious components;

10. Zurvan's face symmetrically divides the sacred images of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu;

11. Zurvan's gaze is directed neither to one of his sons. This indicates that Zurvan could see more than his sons, because he embraces not only existent things and after-existence, but also the pre-existence that had preceded all. Zurvan looks directly to us as observers of the dynamics of the universe that symbolizes his knowledge of our finitude;

12. Zurvan's androgyny is expressed indirectly through the ability of being a cause of two twins;

13. Zurvan has the same shape of beard as Ahura Mazda, which probably indicates a spiritual coincidence of Mazda thoughts content with initially good plan of Zurvan as the Creator.

According to the above-mentioned reasoning that includes 13 positions of compositional and symbolic structure of Saratsky mythologem, it is believed that the face of the central deity (Fig. 3) of Saratsky petroglyph composition represents a deity of time, Zurvan. The presence of calendar component on the face of the composition's central deity as well as the symbolism of the "World Cycle" also testifies that it is the image of Zurvan, a god of time.

Lorestan compositions from Rietberg Museum in Zurich and Museum of Art in Cincinnati

Within the context of proposed methodology used to identify Zurvanite semantics in Saratsky petroglyphic composition, let us consider a mythologems depicted on Lorestan bronze plate (Fig. 2) from Rietberg Museum in Zurich and in silver plate from Cincinnati Art Museum (Fig. 1, 4).

The analysis of the semantic content of the composition from Cincinnati Museum would include mainly the examination of its central part. Three groups of anthropomorphic deities in the composition due to their partial integrity will take a secondary place in the analysis. There is horizontally arranged in Rietberg composition that represents three anthropomorphic deities and a central triad of three anthropomorphic deities depicted in composition from Cincinnati. The same can be said about the central group triad of deities. As it was mentioned early, the first rendering of composition from Cincinnati in terms of Zurvanism was proposed by R. Hirschman, but was not accepted by the majority of iranologists. It seems to be necessary to pay a tribute to a scientific insight of R. Hirschman and reiterate his scientific investigation adding some new iconographic material.

Despite the fact that the Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions unlike Saratsky composition contain a central deity with a depicted body, the first thing that draws attention in the process of analysis is a compositional and semantic identity of these compositions to Saratsky composition. The same applies to central group containing the triad of deities from the Cincinnati composition.

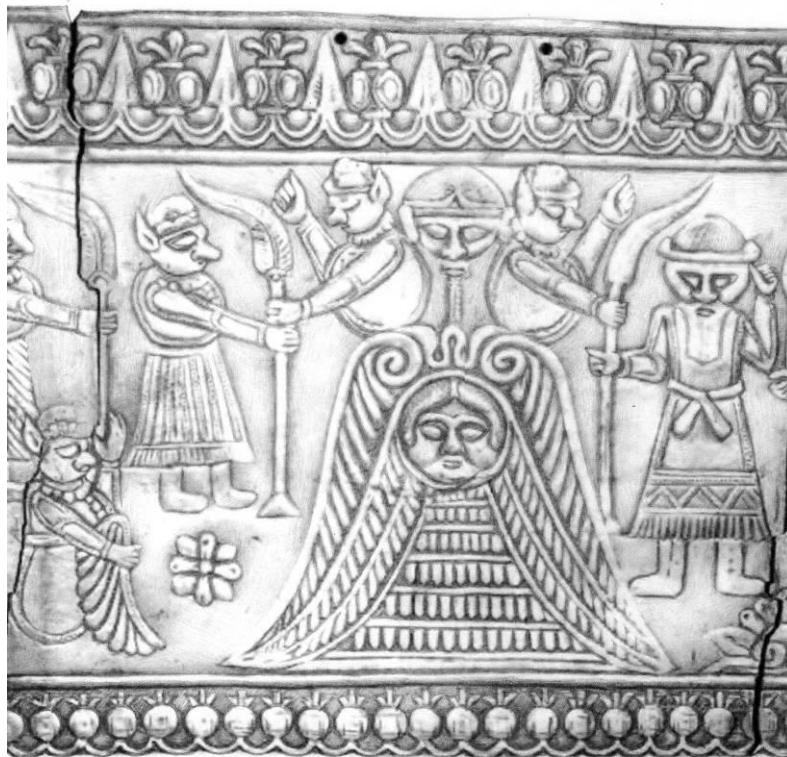


Figure 4. Zurvan with twins Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. Fragment from Museum of Art in Cincinnati. Lorestan VIII - VII centuries. BC.

Considering these compositions (Fig. 1, 2, 4) in terms of Zurvanite myth, the following semantic interpretation can be offered:

1. The deity in the center of the compositions embodies Zurvan;

2. Anthropomorphic creature, shown on the left side (for the observer) to Zurvan is Ahura Mazda;

3. Anthropomorphic creature, shown on the right side (for the observer) to Zurvan is Angra Mainyu.

The comparative analysis of semantic similarities and differences of mythological characters from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions in comparison with Saratsky composition starting with an alleged image of Angra Mainyu is given below.

Angra Mainyu of Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions

Here are some arguments of semantic and composite similarity of anthropomorphic images located in these compositions on the right side (for the observer) from the central deity in favor of interpreting them as images of Angra Mainyu:

1. Mythological characters depicted on the right side from the central deity are anthropomorphic;

2. The images of these deities don't have spine bones, unlike the Saratsky composition. At the same time, there are nipples on a bare-chested body of the Rietberg deity, which is a sign, marking this anthropomorphic creature as material and mortal. In the Cincinnati composition the alleged figure of Angra Mainyu is surrounded by old men (Fig. 1), and senility symbolism characterizes them as mortal and finite creatures. In turn, this may also characterize the right anthropomorphic figures, handing them barsoms as a mortal and finite Angra Mainyu;

3. The image of right anthropomorphic creature from Rietberg composition is "sacredly damaged" - crossed out by a sideline cross from shoulders through the heart and solar plexus (Fig. 2). This is similar to the symbolism of sacred "damage" of Angra Mainyu's body (Fig. 3) in Saratsky composition. The sideline cross could also be considered as a kind of garters supporting Angra Mainyu's garment, which is a bell-shaped skirt, but the image of the left anthropomorphic creature (Ahura Mazda), dressed in similar garment, doesn't have garters. According to Vedic mythology, the sideline cross on Rietberg anthropomorphic creature may also symbolize the finiteness of its existence as being "bounded" with chthonic ropes of Varuna the Binder. In the Cincinnati composition the figures of two of the three old men (malicious deities or daevas), are located near the alleged "sacredly damaged" Angra Mainyu. Their apparels (Fig. 1) are also crossed by a sidelong cross, similar to the figures of Angra Mainyu from Saratsky and Rietberg compositions. Also the image of the central elderly has the same headdress as the central deity, who is (allegedly) Zurvan. It is possible that this feature marks this creature as Zaurva, a daeva of age;

4. Right hand of Angra Mainyu touches the left hand of the central deity (Zurvan) by the rights of being first-born. Number of branches of a barsom (seven branches), to which Rietberg Angra Mainyu extends his hand, corresponds to the number of seven millennia of the era of "mingle of good and evil", which suggests the interpretation of that image as a malign son. According to Bundahishn, Ahura Mazda once said to Angra Mainyu: "*I project the time fixed for the contest in the mingled state, to nine thousand years*" (BD 1.17-18). The duration variance of "mingling era" mentioned in Bundahishn and depicted in Rietberg composition is confirmed by the petroglyphic composition called "The Temple of creation of the Universe" [29,30] in which the duration of "mingling" era is seven thousand years, which is similar to Rietberg composition. It is possible that a nine thousand-year duration period of the "mingling era" that is recorded in Bundahishn is a later interpretation of mythologem. Sacred symbolism of Zurvan's opposing

gesture by not allowing Angra Mainyu to seize the barsom of “mingling” time indicates the Creator’s unwillingness to give to the malign son duties of the High Priest even in this era. Similarly to Saratsky and Rietberg compositions, Angra Mainyu from Cincinnati composition presents barsom to the closest old man or daeva by his right hand. Cincinnati Angra Mainyu touches Zurvan’s ear, showing his rights as the firstborn. The barsom that Angra Mainyu hands to the nearest daeva contacts with an garment of the central deity - Zurvan. The leg of that daeva also touches Zurvan’s garment;

5. Rietberg Angra Mainyu’s head is compositionally located below the head of the left anthropomorphic creature (Ahura Mazda). In the Cincinnati composition, headdresses of old men or daevas as incarnations of Angra Mainyu are compositionally below the line of the eye and forehead of Zurvan and are located in the middle – the earthly part of Zurvan’s face, similarly to a compositional location of Angra Mainyu’s head in Saratsky and Rietberg compositions;

6. The eyes and forehead of Angra Mainyu from Rietberg composition are below the line of the eyes and forehead of the central deity and located in its middle part - the earthly part of the Zurvan’s face, which is similar to Saratsky composition. The headdress of Angra Mainyu from Cincinnati composition is against the lower edge of upper decorative frame of composition, while the headdress of another deity (presumably Ahura Mazda) overlaps the bottom edge of the frame (Fig. 1, 4). Thus, the top of Angra Mainyu’s headdress is located below the top of Ahura Mazda’s headdress;

7. Two clubs that are the insignia of Zurvan’s power over existent universe from Rietberg composition vary in size like phalluses of two anthropomorphic creatures from Saratsky composition. The club that is located from the sideline of Angra Mainyu is smaller than the club from the sideline of the left anthropomorphic creature, which is Ahura Mazda. Both clubs have a phallic shape. Barsom’s bottom end, to which Rietberg Angra Mainyu extends his right hand, is depicted below (Fig. 2) the bottom end of Mazda’s barsom. In Cincinnati composition, the bottom end of barsom, which Angra Mainyu is presenting to the nearest old man-daeva is depicted below the bottom end of barsom, which Ahura Mazda is presenting to the closest to him deity, which is presumably a good deity, similarly to the location of phalluses from Saratsky composition and location of barsoms from Rietberg composition (Fig. 1, 4);

8. Rietberg Angra Mainyu’s hands are posed in gesture similar to the gesture of the right deity from Saratsky composition, bent at the elbows and lifted up to level of his shoulder, showing a pose of hymns utterance. Palms of Rietberg deity (Fig. 2) are also depicted below the line of his shoulders. Cincinnati Angra Mainyu’s left hand is bent at the elbow, and ascended to heaven in the similar gesture to Angra Mainyu’s left hand from Saratsky and Rietberg compositions;

9. Body proportions of Rietberg Angra Mainyu are identical to proportions of the left deity from the composition. Profile of the face (Fig. 2) is the same as the left anthropomorphic creature that by virtue of the similarity of their anthropological faces and figures indicates the fact that they are twin brothers. Body proportions, head and face of Cincinnati Angra Mainyu are identical to the left anthropomorphic creature from the triad of deities. It may also testify in favor of the fact that they are twins-brothers;

10. Angra Mainyu’s gaze from Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions is not directed to Zurvan’s face which is similar to Saratsky composition;

11. If we draw a model experiment by replacing a petroglyphic composition of Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary with the compositions from Cincinnati or Rietberg, the situation during

summer solstice would be the same - a rising sun would illuminate and sacredly “purify” the image of malicious Angra Mainyu only after all other characters of the compositions, which is similar to the semantics sequence of illuminating characters from Saratsky petroglyphic composition;

12. In contrast to Saratsky composition, Rietberg Angra Mainyu has a beard, while Zurvan doesn't have any. Cincinnati composition on that feature is similar to Saratsky composition. Obviously, in the dichotomous semantics of these compositions' characters, the external difference between the images of Angra Mainyu and Zurvan on the basis of having beard or not is a priority compared with the signs of the differences between Angra Mainyu and Ahura Mazda. So it is possible to use the distinction between Angra Mainyu and Zurvan on the basis of presence of beard as an argument in favor of our proposed semantic interpretation of characters from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions.

Differences of Angra Mainyu images from Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions in comparison with Saratsky composition

1. Instead of Angra Mainyu's bony spine symbolism from Saratsky composition, in Rietberg composition the nipples of the right anthropomorphic deity are shown as a sign of his materiality and mortality;

2. Rietberg Angra Mainyu's head is smaller than the head of Ahura Mazda while the remaining proportions of their body parts are identical. In Saratsky and Rietberg compositions the proportions of the bodies and heads of Angra Mainyu and Ahura Mazda are equal;

3. By the right of the firstborn, the right hand of Rietberg Angra Mainyu is stretched out to Zurvan's barsom, but he does not touch the barsom. At the same time with his right hand Angra Mainyu doesn't touch Zurvan's face but his left hand. In Cincinnati composition Angra Mainyu gives a barsom with his right hand to a malign spirit and raises his left hand to heaven. In Saratsky and Rietberg compositions Angra Mainyu raises both hands;

4. Angra Mainyu's gaze from Rietberg composition is fixed on a dead old man depicted lying on his right side in the pose of crouched burial. In contrast to Saratsky and Rietberg compositions, Cincinnati Angra Mainyu is depicted “growing” from the beard of the father and isn't compositionally arranged on the left of Zurvan. There is no image of a dead old man between Angra Mainyu and Zurvan in Cincinnati composition. At the same time Angra Mainyu gives barsoms to a group of anthropomorphic, old and undoubtedly mortal and malicious daevas;

5. In contrast to Saratsky composition, Rietberg Angra Mainyu is exposed only to the waist and adorned with the wristbands. Below the waist he wears a bell-shaped skirt. Masculine signs of Rietberg Angra Mainyu are not symbolized by depicting his phallus, but are marked with his beard. Due to the shape of ears, the image of Cincinnati Angra Mainyu has the features of zoomorphism, which are missed in the other compositions. In contrast to Saratsky and Rietberg compositions, Angra Mainyu's neck is adorned with a necklace. The clenched left hand of Angra Mainyu from Cincinnati composition is raised up above his shoulders, but in Rietberg and Saratsky compositions it is located below shoulder level;

6. In contrast to Saratsky and Rietberg compositions, the face of Angra Mainyu from Cincinnati composition is shown on the same level with the faces of Zurvan and Ahura Mazda.

Thus we have identified 12 basic points supporting the semantic similarity of right (for the observer) anthropomorphic figures in three compositions. The first five of six identified positions of the semantic differences are additional arguments supporting the interpretation of the right

deity as Angra Mainyu's image. The five positions from the list of differences contradicts our assumption. In total of 18 identified positions of the semantic similarities and differences in the interpretation of the right anthropomorphic deity's image in Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions as Angra Mainyu, 17 positions support this assumption. Due to the above reasoning on 17 similar positions of the composition and image construction in three considered compositions, we believe that the deity imaged on the left of Zurvan (for observer) (Fig. 1- 4) in these compositions is Angra Mainyu.

Ahura Mazda of Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions

It is necessary to carry out the comparative analysis of semantic and compositional similarities and differences in anthropomorphic deities depicted on the left (for the observer) from the central deity from Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions with those from Saratsky composition. Here come the arguments of similarity supporting the semantic interpretation of the left anthropomorphic figure in these compositions as an image of Ahura Mazda:

1. The figures in both Rietberg and Cincinnati Museum compositions are anthropomorphic;
2. Similarly to Saratsky composition where Ahura Mazda is shown without a spine, in Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions Mazda is depicted without a spine and nipples unlike Angra Mainyu. This supports the interpretation of the left anthropomorphic deity's image as a spiritual and immortal Ahura, who has eternal continuation;
3. The sacred contents of the fact that Rietberg Mazda does not touch Zurvan means that Ahura is secondborn, and he gets the power over the post-existing universe after a fight with Angra Mainyu in the era of mingling, a gumezishn. Therefore the left hand of Ahura Mazda with a "five-millenniums barsom's" in it, which is good in its initial state of being, does not touch the right hand of Zurvan. Similarly to the symbolism of Saratsky and Rietberg compositions where Mazda respectively stretches out his left hand to the solar crown of the Creator and accepts with the left hand a barsom from Zurvan, Ahura Mazda in Cincinnati composition also gives a barsom to the closest to him Amesha Spenta (Fig. 1, 4) with his left hand. Due to the fact that the given barsom does not touch Zurvan's garment, Cincinnati Mazda marks himself as a second born. The good deity, whom Ahura gives a barsom, also does not touch the central deity. As a second born Cincinnati Ahura Mazda does not touch the head of the central deity;
4. The images of Rietberg and Cincinnati Ahura Mazda "are not sacredly damaged," i.e. are not crossed with a sidelong cross. None of the good deities located near Ahura Mazda in Cincinnati composition "are sacredly damaged" either.
5. The head of Rietberg Ahura Mazda (Fig. 2) is depicted above Angra Mainyu's head, and hence is higher according to the levels of the sacred hierarchy. The headdress of Ahura Mazda from Cincinnati composition is located higher than Angra Mainyu's headdress and overlaps the bottom edge of the decorative border (Fig. 1.4);
6. By analogy with the phalluses vertices of the anthropomorphic figures in Saratsky composition (Fig. 3), the bottom end of the barsom that Ahura Mazda is holding with his left hand, is higher (Fig. 2) than the bottom end of the barsom from the side of Angra Mainyu;
7. By analogy with the phallus sizes of the anthropomorphic figures in Saratsky composition, the rod of Rietberg Ahura Mazda has a phallic shape and is larger in size than the rod of Angra Mainyu. On the same grounds (Fig. 2, 3) the bottom end of the barsom which Cincinnati Ahura Mazda gives to the nearest good deity is located higher than the bottom end of the barsom which is given by Angra Mainyu to the nearest daeva;

8. The eyes and forehead of Rietberg Ahura Mazda are depicted on the same level with the line of the eyes and forehead of Zurvan. Faces and eyes in the upper row of the good deities from Cincinnati composition are at the same level with the eye and forehead line of Zurvan, similarly to Ahura Mazda's face in Saratsky and Rietberg compositions;

9. The arms of Rietberg Ahura are bent in the elbows and raised up to the sky in the posture of the hymn utterance similarly to Mazda from Saratsky composition. The right arm of Cincinnati Ahura Mazda is bent in the elbow and raised to heaven similarly to the right arm gestures of Ahura in Saratsky and Rietberg compositions;

10. The body proportions of Rietberg Ahura Mazda and Cincinnati Mazda are identical to the proportions of Angra Mainyu. The anthropological similarity of their faces and body dimensions is indicative of the fact that they are twin brothers;

11. The gaze of Rietberg Mazda and Cincinnati Ahura is not directed to Zurvan. In both compositions "the flower of life" is located at Ahura Mazda's side, between him and Zurvan. In Pahlavi sources various flowers embody Ahura Mazda and the six Amesha Spentas (BD 63-64). It is well known that the symbol of Ahura Mazda is the jasmine flower (BD 63-64);

12. If we carry out a model experiment by replacing the petroglyphic composition of Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary with Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions, in summer solstice, a rising sun will sacredly illuminate the image of good Ahura Mazda first among other figures of the composition by analogy to the illumination sequence of the figures in Saratsky composition.

Differences of Ahura Mazda images from Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions in comparison with Saratsky composition

1. The head of Rietberg Ahura Mazda is larger than Angra Mainyu's in contrast to other two compositions. He has thick hair, arranged similarly to Angra Mainyu's hairstyle;

2. In contrast to Saratsky composition, Rietberg Mazda is holding a barsom with his left hand. It was passed to him by Zurvan, which is similar to the compositions from Cincinnati. The barsom that Rietberg Mazda is holding in his hand has five branches. The number of the branches in barsom corresponds to the sum of three millennia comprising spiritual era, *menog*, and to the following two millennia after it when the existing universe is in initially good before the invasion of Angra Mainyu;

3. A fifteen-petal "flower of life" is depicted between Ahura and Zurvan's figures. Mazda's gaze is fixed on the flower. The numeral symbolism of fifteen flower petals corresponds with a spiritual initiation of Mazda-Yasna disciple at the age of 15 (CAP.1), which favors the interpretation of Rietberg anthropomorphic figure as Ahura Mazda. Between the figures of Cincinnati Ahura and Zurvan, there is an eight-petal "flower of life", in contrast to Rietberg composition. Cincinnati Mazda looks at the good deities and doesn't look at the crown of Zurvan in contrast to Saratsky composition;

4. Masculine signs of Rietberg Mazda are symbolized with a beard and are not symbolized with the image of his phallus;

5. The palms of Mazda from Rietberg composition are raised to the shoulder level, while "the palms" of Ahura from Saratsky composition are depicted above the line of his shoulders. Cincinnati Mazda raises only his right hand to heaven similar to Persepolis symbols of Ahura Mazda. With his left hand he gives a barsom to the closest to him Amesha Spenta. His right hand is raised up above the level of his shoulders as in Saratsky composition. In Saratsky and Rietberg compositions Ahura raised up both of his hands;

6. Rietberg Ahura Mazda is not completely naked as in Saratsky composition, but only nude to the level around his heart. Rietberg Mazda is dressed in a complex bell-shaped garment and is adorned with wristbands. In contrast to Saratsky and Rietberg compositions, Mazda from Cincinnati has a headdress, which apex is higher than the headdress of Zurvan and Angra Mainyu. Due to the ears shape, the image of Ahura Mazda in Cincinnati composition bears the features of zoomorphism. In contrast to Saratsky composition, Ahura's neck from the compositions of Rietberg and Cincinnati is adorned with necklace;

7. The face of Cincinnati Ahura Mazda is arranged at the same level with the faces of Zurvan and Angra Mainyu in contrast to Saratsky and Rietberg compositions.

Therefore, there are 12 basic points supporting semantic similarity between compositionally left (for the observer) anthropomorphic deities from Saratsky and Rietberg compositions. The first five positions from seven identified semantic differences in the images of deities from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions in comparison with Saratsky composition are the additional arguments supporting the interpretation of the left anthropomorphic deity in Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions as an image of Ahura Mazda. The sixth position in the difference neither confirms nor denies our argumentation, so it cannot be counted as argumentation for or against. The seventh position contradicts this assertion. Thus in the sum of 19 identified positions of similarities and differences in the interpretation of the left anthropomorphic deity as image of Ahura Mazda, 17 positions support this assumption.

Due to the above reasoning on 17 positions of compositional and semantic similarity among three compositions, we believe that the image of anthropomorphic deity placed in these compositions on the right of Zurvan (left to the observer) (Fig. 1 - 4) is an image of Ahura Mazda.

Zurvan of Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions

Next step is to carry out a comparative analysis of semantic and compositional similarities and differences in the compositions of the central deities from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions with Saratsky composition. After that, it would be necessary to examine similarity points in favor of the interpretation of the central deities in these compositions (Fig. 1, 2, 4) as an image of Zurvan, which is semantically similar to Zurvan from Saratsky composition:

1. Images of the central deities from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions are anthropomorphic;

2. The central deity from Rietberg composition rises above the left and right images of anthropomorphic deities. The face proportions of the central deities in Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions surpass the face proportions of both sons. The central location in the compositions and excellence in the geometrical dimensions of the twin images means that these deities are supreme deities in relation to the right and left anthropomorphic figures. The supreme divine being of Creator in both compositions is symbolized with the presence of the insignia of priestly authority, barsoms and rods. Moreover, the barsoms vertices of Rietberg Zurvan are located above the images of his sons. The barsom of Rietberg Zurvan on Ahura Mazda's side has five branches, and the barsom on Angra Mainyu's side has seven branches. The number of branches of two barsoms is twelve, which correspond to the number of millennia in "World Cycle" and the number of calendar months in a year;

3. In Cincinnati composition there is "a solar face" depicted on the central deity's garment, which is semantically equivalent to the solar crown of Zurvan from Saratsky composition. As

Rietberg composition was preserved partially, it is impossible to say whether Rietberg Zurvan had a crown like Zurvan from Cincinnati and Saratskysky compositions or not;

4. The semantics of Zurvan's tetrad in Cincinnati composition is symbolized with a crown, the bearded face of the creator and the complex structured garment with the image of the solar face. The first three thousand years of the spiritual pre-existence plan of the Creator from Cincinnati composition is marked by Zurvan's crown. The tetrad of Rietberg Zurvan is symbolized with the double number of barsoms and rods. The second, third and fourth three thousand year periods of "World Cycle" in both compositions are symbolized with ternary structured images of Zurvan, which indicates three levels of the universe existence. The top or heavenly level is located above the level of Zurvan's eyes. The middle, the earthly level of the universe for Rietberg Zurvan, is located between the eye line and the waistband of his bell-shaped garment. The world of the dead is placed below the waistband of Zurvan's garment. This sacred semantics is similar to the tripartite division of Zurvan's face symbolism in Saratsky composition. The Cincinnati Zurvan's earthly world is probably symbolized with the winged solar face and his garment, and the world of the dead is located below the solar face;

5. The eyes and forehead of Rietberg Zurvan are at the same level with the eyes and forehead of Ahura Mazda, but above the eyes and forehead of Angra Mainyu, similarly to the face image of Zurvan in Saratsky petroglyphic composition. Zurvan's eyes and forehead in the Cincinnati composition are at the same level with the faces and eyes of the good deities in the upper row in the composition and are higher than the malign daevas;

6. If we carry out a model experiment in replacing the petroglyphic composition of Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary with Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions, during the summer solstice, a rising sun would shine, sanctify and clean dichotomous Zurvan's face in these compositions in a sequence which is similar to the sacred semantics constituting the illuminating sequence of Zurvan in Saratsky petroglyphic composition;

7. Zurvan's face proportions surpass in size his sons' faces in both compositions, indicating the superiority of the Creator over his good and malign essences;

8. Upper segment of Zurvan's ternary structured face in Rietberg composition is compositionally arranged at the same level with Ahura Mazda's the face, and the median segment is at the same level with the face of Angra Mainyu. This indicates a dichotomous content of Zurvan, who has good and malign components;

9. Similarly to Saratsky composition, Zurvan's image in both compositions sacredly and symmetrically divides Ahura Mazda's and Angra Mainyu's images;

10. Zurvan's gaze in both compositions is not directed to neither of his sons. This testifies that Zurvan could see more than his sons because he embraces not only existence and post-existence but also pre-existence that preceded them. Zurvan looks into our eyes as we are the observers of the existing universe that symbolizes his knowledge about our finitude;

11. Zurvan's androgyny is expressed indirectly as an ability of giving birth to two sons. The presence of explicit masculine traits in the image of Cincinnati Zurvan and the absence of them in the winged solar face (Fig. 4) depicted on his garment, can also testify in favor of his androgyny. The bell-shaped priestly garment of Cincinnati Zurvan is similar to Zurvan's garment in Rietberg composition;

12. Similarly to Saratsky composition, Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions shows a difference between Zurvan and Angra Mainyu. The difference is based on the presence of a beard.

Differences of Zurvan images from Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions in comparison with Saratsky composition

1. The partial preservation the composition in Cincinnati makes it impossible to determine the total number of good and not-good deities, united into three groups of anthropomorphic figures around the central triad of Zurvan and his sons. The fact that in the survived fragment of the composition the number of deities (taking into account the surviving images of barsoms) is equal to eleven, suggests that there might be twelve of them, three groups of four anthropomorphic creatures. In this case, the set of 8 good and 4 malign deities can embody the number of the millennia in “World cycle” in Mazda-Yasna mythologem. In addition, the total number of “altar steps” on the bell-shaped garment of Zurvan of Cincinnati and “feathers in the wings of the “solar face” on his garment is twelve. Therefore, at least two of the above mentioned positions can represent the number of millennia in “World cycle” and the number of calendar months in the year;

2. With his right hand Rietberg Zurvan passes to Ahura Mazda a barsom with five branches, the insignia of his priestly functions, and Mazda takes the barsom with his left hand. Cincinnati Mazda also with his left hand gives barsoms to the good deities. Although, there is no process of passing barsoms to Ahura Mazda depicted in Saratsky composition, Mazda claims the solar crown of Zurvan with his left hand;

3. In the compositions of Rietberg and Cincinnati there is flower as a symbol of eternal life depicted between Zurvan and Ahura Mazda at the waistband level of Zurvan’s garment. This symbolism testifies that Ahura Mazda, whose symbol is jasmine, is depicted on the right side of Zurvan. There is no image of flower in Saratsky compositions, but the eternal nature of Mazda is emphasized with the absence of his spine bones;

4. In Rietberg composition at the waistband level of Zurvan’s garment, on the right side (for the observer) to Angra Mainyu, there is an image of a dead old man lying on his right side in the pose of crouched burials. Old and mortal malign deities are depicted on the right side (for the observer) in Cincinnati composition. There are no any symbols like that in Saratsky composition, but finitude of Angra Mainyu is symbolized with his spine bones;

5. Rietberg Zurvan in contrast to images of Zurvan from in two other compositions is beardless. However, he differences between Zurvan and Angra Mainyu is based on the presence of the beard;

6. With his left hand Rietberg Zurvan does not allow Angra Mainyu to touch the seven-branched barsom. At the same time Angra Mainyu touches Zurvan with his right hand, which is similar to Saratsky composition. Cincinnati Zurvan passed a barsom to Angra Mainyu, who then gives it with his right hand to the nearest to him daeva. Taking into account the difference in three compositions on the basis of barsom transfer, we shouldn’t consider this difference as a pro et contra argument. It is obvious that the characteristic of giving barsoms as the insignia of Zurvan priestly power is later, in comparison to Saratsky composition, and is not the base for the source iconographic canons of Zurvanite mythologem;

7. Zurvan’s images in the Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions are not zoomorphic in contrast to Saratsky composition. At the same time, good deities from Cincinnati composition have zoomorphic features. Taking into account the difference among three compositions on the basis of zoomorphism, so it cannot be counted as argumentation for or against. All the diversity of the votive semantics in Lorestan bronze artifacts also shows us both the presence and absence of the zoomorphism of the central deity’s image;

8. In contrast to Saratsky composition, Zurvan from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions has a body, which is depicted with a bell-shaped garment. There is the face of the solar winged deity arranged on the bell-shaped garment of Cincinnati Zurvan. Saratsky and Rietberg compositions don't have that image. At the same time, the solar face of this deity can be an analogue of Zurvan's solar crown from Saratsky petroglyphic composition. Taking into account the differences in three compositions, on the basis of garments, we shouldn't consider these differences as a pro et contra arguments;

9. Cincinnati composition except Zurvan, Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu has images of good and divine beings that are absent in Saratsky and Rietberg compositions. Considering the fact that Rietberg composition is preserved only partially, it is impossible to say if there initially were images of any good or malign deities. Taking into account the difference in three compositions, based on the presence of spiritual beings my, we shouldn't consider these differences as a pro et contra argument. It is obvious that the appearance of the spiritual beings in Cincinnati composition is the later result of dynamics of Zurvanite theologem and is not basic for the original iconographic canon of Zurvanite mythologem. This conclusion can be proved by the fact that Zarathustra's Gathas don't have any information about Amesha Spenta;

10. Rietberg deity has an almond-shaped plane instead of third eye. It is impossible to interpret it unambiguously as an image of the third eye due to the poor preservation of the bronze plates. It is also impossible to interpret unambiguously a triangle symbol on Zurvan's crown in Cincinnati composition as a symbolic image of third eye. Nevertheless, both compositions have some kind of symbolic marks arranged instead of Zurvan's third eye. Due to the impossibility to interpret correctly the presence or absence of the third eye in Zurvan's image in both compositions, we shouldn't consider this fact as an argument supporting proposed semantic interpretation of the images from the compositions;

11. Divine potencies of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu from Cincinnati composition are almost equal. Their compositional and image arrangement as well the presence of barsoms intended for both sons proves that. In Rietberg composition, Zurvan prevents Angra Mainyu's attempt to seize barsom while there is no barsom symbolism in Saratsky composition. It can be stated that comparing the semantics of mythologems in Saratsky, Rietberg, and Cincinnati compositions we observe theologemic dynamics from a clear Zurvan-Mazdean character of Saratsky mythologem to Zurvan-Mazdean-Ahrimanist nature in the composition from Cincinnati museum. At the same time the primacy of Zurvan in all the variants of mythologems is undeniable.

Thus we have identified 12 basic positions of arguments for the semantic similarity of the central (for the observer) deities in Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions in comparison with Saratsky compositions. The first four of eleven identified semantic positions of differences in the images of these deities are additional arguments supporting the interpretation of the central deity as a Zurvan's image. Six subsequent positions do not contradict to this statement, but they do not confirm it either. The eleventh position contradicts it. In total of 23 identified semantic positions of similarities and differences in the interpretation of the central deity images from both mythologems, 16 positions of the arguments support the semantic interpretation of the central deity from Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions as Zurvan. Due to the abovementioned argumentation, 16 positions of the arguments of compositional and image construction, we believe that the central deity from all three compositions (Fig. 1–4) is an image of Zurvan.

We examined three mythological compositions, and all of them with a probability greater than a confidence interval in the magnitude of the error of their correct semantic interpretation are

considered to be representations of Zurvanite mythologem. If we assume that the creation time of the Cincinnati and Rietberg compositions is currently accepted chronological interval for Lorestan bronze artifacts of XII – VII centuries BC, it would mean that there is an interval 500 years between creation of Saratsky petroglyphic composition and possible chronological boundaries of Lorestan artifacts. It follows a number of conclusions:

1. Petroglyphic composition (Fig. 3) of Saratsky sanctuary (XVIII – XVII centuries BC), is currently the oldest image of Zurvanite mythologem;
2. Semantic and symbolic content of Zurvanite mythologems depicted on Lorestan artifacts from Rietberg and Cincinnati museums indicates the existence of at least 1000-year old sustained Zurvanite iconographic canon, which is presented by Saratsky petroglyphic composition;
3. Taking into consideration the remoteness of Khakasia from Lorestan and about 1000-years chronological interval between the creation of Saratsky and Lorestan compositions, it can be assumed that the iconographic canon fixed in petroglyphic composition from Saratsky sanctuary in Khakasia is an example of basic iconographic canon of Zurvan-Mazdean theologem, established in chronological interval of XVIII – VII centuries BC.

Consequently, Zurvan-Mazdean theologem is a basis of Zoroastrianism (Gathic Mazda-Yasna) established by Zoroaster, who was born at least 700 years after petroglyphic composition of Zurvanite mythologem was depicted in Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary.

We should mention a scientific priority and the correctness of the Swedish school in the interpretation of Zurvanite issues, represented by such iranologists as H.S. Nyberg and G. Widengren, who believed that Zurvanism was a theologemic source and the forerunner of Zoroastrianism. The scientific results obtained by H.S. Nyberg [31], and G. Widengren [32] arise admiration, taking in account the insufficient number of archaeological artifacts that both scientists had. Their views on the formation of theology of Mithraism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism and Sassanid cult of Anahita on the basis of Zurvan-Mazdean theologem are undoubtedly valid. In view of the fact of Saratsky composition's chronology, it is also obvious that theologems of Bon religion [33,34], Judeo- Christianity and Islam, are also formed on the basis of Zurvan-Mazdean theologem. At the same time we cannot agree with Widengren's point of view that Zurvanism was originally connected with the cult of worshiping Angra Mainyu. Relying on semantics theologem of Saratsky composition it can be argued that since the beginning of the II millennium BC, Zurvanism was a theologem of Zurvan-Mazdayasna instead of being theologem of Ahriman. We believe that Ahrimanistic trends in Zurvanite theologem began to emerge later in the chronological interval of XII - X centuries BC, but before the birth of Zoroaster. As a result of sociodynamics processes that Aryans experienced, there was a occurrence of such "equilibrium balance of good and evil sources" in Zurvan-Mazdean theologem and it was probably the motive for Zarathushtra's theologemic reforms to elevate the role of Ahura Mazda on the level of the Zurvan's good incarnation as well as to the level of the supreme deity of Gathic Mazda-Yasna.

In the abovementioned context, it is difficult to overestimate the value of works H.S. Nyberg and G. Widengren for the history of religion and culture of the Indo-European civilization as a whole, in the respect of the fact that they actually substantiated reference value of Zurvan-Mazdean theologem in the formation process of Judeo-Christian theological basis. The argument about influence of Zurvan - Mazdean theologem on the formation of Judaism even requires more facts, but we believe that this process took place at least on the basis of extra-systematicity of both theologies. Kabbalah content in both of its "theosophical-theurgical and ecstatic" forms

indicates the presence of extra-systematicity in it as well as sacral numeric semantics of Zurvanite theologem [35].

The most important issue is connected with a problem of the stability Zurvanite iconographic canon during ten centuries of theologem dynamics from the creation of petroglyphic composition of Saratsky sanctuary until the Lorestan compositions of VII BC. This question is particularly relevant in light of the variety of symbols that could be found on Lorestan bronze artifacts that currently can not be strictly interpreted in terms of semantics. Due to the abovementioned, we believe that the diversity of the sacred symbols of Lorestan bronze artifacts can be described through the framework of Zurvanite mythology. Semantics content of Lorestan mythologemic stories lies in the basis of theologemic parameters of monads, dyads, triads and tetrads of Zurvan. It is obvious that there is a Zurvanite basis in symbolism of Lorestan bronze artifacts dated XII – VII centuries BC, which is characterized by completeness, embodied with Zurvanite symbolism of twin myth. As an additional argument for the abovementioned Zurvanite Lorestan compositions from the Borovski collection from Basle [36] and University of Philadelphia Museum [37] can be given as an example. Iconographic canon of these Lorestan compositions is identical to that one of the three abovementioned Zurvanite compositions.

Considering the dynamics of Zurvan-Mazda theologem for XII – VII centuries BC it becomes apparent that the teachings of Zarathushtra is reformist to the original Zurvan-Mazda basis of Saratsky composition of XVIII – XVII centuries BC. Thus the replacing of the epithet Ahura in Ahunavairyā to the original – Zurvan and regarding the transcription of the Mazda epithet as "Wisdom" [38] clarify the content and meaning of the hymns of Ghat which we understand vainly. Consequently, in the first half of the II Millennium BC, the proto-Ahunavairyā from the mouth of the andronovo priests Khakassia could sound like this:

**As the best Lord,
and as the truly Head.
Submitter of the Good Thought of
the existence acts the Wise (Mazda).
With the power of the Lord (Zurvan) –
give a shepherd to the poor.**

This Zurvan transcription of Ahunavairyā was made on the basis of one of the translations by I.M. Steblin-Kamensky [39] which is the closest, from our point of view, to the original. In this context "Ahunavairyā" Zurvan shows its wisdom - Mazda through the "good thought of the being's deeds" which he assigned to the Irano-Aryan flock for the sake of victory over evil embodied in Angra Mainyu and for the sake of personal salvation of believers. From this setting becomes semantically clear theological content Ahunavairyā the last line - "the poor shepherd to give. Meaning of the word "poor" here is devoid of positive spiritual content and meaning – a defective, mentally retarded person and in the religious sense – "poor in spirit", whacky man. It follows from this that the Christian context of the statement "blessed are the poor (the poor soul) as they close the "Kingdom of God", as marked by the seal of God. In mazdayasnizm a pejorative understanding of the role of the believer in a theodynamic society is absolutely unacceptable. Therefore in the proto-Ahunavairyā semantic content of the last line of the anthem "with God" is "close to God" which marks the congregation of the Aryans as socio-active supporters of Zurvan in his good incarnation of Ahura – the Wise. Consequently then the

translation of the original content of Zurvanite proto-Ahunavairya may sound more correctly this way:

**As the best Lord,
and as the truly Head.
Submitter of the Good Thought of
the existence acts the Wise
Zurvan in power –
(to those) who are with God, a pastor to give.**

The analysis of dynamics of Zurvanite iconographic canon beyond the chronological period covered by this paper, shows that the stability of the iconographic canon of Zurvanite divine triad can be clearly traced to the late Middle Ages AD. For example, the icon “Trinity” by Andrei Rublev, which was inspired by the story from Old Testament, is built compositionally and semantically on the basis of iconographic canon of Zurvanite petroglyphic composition from Saratsky sanctuary. Three-thousand year period of dynamic stability in regards to Zurvanite iconographic canon, starting from the middle of the II millennium BC to the XV century AC, can be a sufficient argument to support the claim of its archetypal theologemic basis for Indo-European culture in general. Indirectly that mythologemic construct of Creator, who sacrifices his malign son for the sake of harmonization of the universe, was initially presented in Zurvanism and is subsequently connected to theologemic maxims of Judeo-Christianity on this subject.

Therefore, the analysis of the features of Zurvanite iconographic canon construction signifies that Zurvan is the supreme deity, who determines existent time and space or the space-time continuum (STC) of dynamics of the existent universe. Operators that define sociodynamical format for Aryans are his good and malicious incarnations, manifested in the forms of his twin sons. Pahlavi sources confirm that according to Indo-Aryan cosmogony, Zurvan as a Dargahvadata incarnation and the guarantor of the agreement between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, is the primary source of the dynamics for formation of things – *“The creator, Ohrmazd, produced these creatures and creation, the archangels and the spirit of wisdom from that which is his own splendor, and with the blessing of unlimited time (Zurvan). For this reason, because unlimited time is undecaying and immortal, painless and hungerless, thirstless and undisturbed; and forever and everlasting no one is able to seize upon it, or to make it non-predominant as regards his own affairs.”* (MH 8.9).

Symbolism of the three groups of anthropomorphic deities of composition from Cincinnati Art Museum

In the Cincinnati composition, in addition to the central triad, there are images of three groups of anthropomorphic deities which are differentiated by age (Fig. 1). The first examination of a semantic content and a sacred symbolism of these three groups makes it obvious that they represent dually opposite incarnations of good and malign deities from the encirclement of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. This opposition presented in Cincinnati composition is highlighted by the following features:

1. The differentiation of age for depicted groups of deities is clearly expressed. Good deities from Ahura Mazda encirclement are younger than those malign from Angra Mainyu’s. This age symbolism can be described in terms of eschatological content of Mazdean theologem. The

sequence of passing barsoms from Ahura Mazda to “40-year old” good spiritual creatures, and then from them to the “15-year old” creatures, most likely shows the process of spiritual initiation of 15-year old disciples of Mazda-Yasna. The sacred content of this process implies the symbolism of the two ages of the final incarnation of the dead disciples (BD, 69);

2. The upper part of the good deities’ garments from Ahura Mazda encirclement has a rounded, “solar-like” form. The diameter of circular part of these deities’ garments is equal to the diameter of the solar face, depicted on the bell-shaped dress of Zurvan. Due to the fact that the form of these deities’ garments from the shoulders to the waist is rounded and “solar-like”, it may indicate their luminosity and hence good nature and spiritual immortality. Luminosity of Ahura Mazda and good spiritual beings - Ameshaspendis is mentioned in Pahlavi texts and it is described as they stay in an “*celestial paradise*”, in a “*place of infinite light*” (BD, 17.70; AVN 13 – 14 54);

3. The garments of the good deities doesn’t have any signs of sacred damage in the form of a strikethrough by a sidelong cross, as distinguished from the two malicious old men daevas (Fig. 1). Two of the three images of the daevas from the surviving fragment of the composition are sacredly damaged by a sidelong cross which is crossing the upper part of their garments, much alike Angra Mainyu of Saratsky and Rietberg compositions;

4. The garments of old and malign deities from Angra Mainyu’s encirclement are not rounded and the form of their garments is typical for mortal men;

5. Shape of ears makes the good deities look zoomorphic, as well as different from anthropomorphic images of old daevas from Angra Mainyu’s environment. Perhaps that zoomorphic element is a iconographic relic and symbolizes some kind of spirituality specific to good entities from the environment of Ahura Mazda;

6. The headdress of one of the malicious deities is similar to Zurvan’s headdress. It is possible that this feature marks this deity as Zaurva, a daeva of age. Headdresses of good deities are not similar to the headdress of Zurvan, which may indicate a difference between their absolute good nature and Zurvan’s dichotomous content.

Therefore, all of the abovementioned signs of differences in appearance, age and garments and of good and malicious deities from Cincinnati composition are the evidence in favor of their spiritual dichotomous opposition on the grounds of goodness and non-goodness. This, in turn, is an additional argument in favor of the correctness of our interpretation of the two symmetrical “grows” from Zurvan’s beard in the form of anthropomorphic deities as images of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu.

Symbolism of barsoms

According to the interpretation of Zurvanite myth by Armenian theologian Yeznik Kokhbatsi (V century), Zurvan handed to Ahura Mazda a rod, with a help of which he had performed sacrifices for the sake of Ahura Mazda birth. Passing the rod to Mazda, Zurvan said – “*So far I have sacrificed for yours benefit, now it is time for you*” [40]. From the symbolism of Rietberg composition, it is evident that a particularly designed rod with a top that consists of five (probably palm) twigs, which Zurvan gave to Ahura Mazda (Fig. 2) is a barsom for the ritual sacrifices. The apparent contradiction between Rietberg and Cincinnati compositions in terms of presenting barsom in the first case only to Ahura Mazda, and as well as to Angra Mainyu in the second case, is also presented in various Pahlavi and medieval sources. According to Eznik Kokhbatsi, Zurvan handed his priestly rod only to good Ahura Mazda. However, according to

“Vizidagiha-i Zatsparm” *“Reflecting on the end, he (Zurvan) handed to Ahriman a weapon of the very substance of darkness, mixed with Zurvan’s power (...) a contract, which looks like coal , soot and ashes, and told him that “with a help of this weapon daeva Az (daeva of lust) will devour what belongs to your , and he would starve to death if after nine thousand years you haven’t accomplished what you had threatened to complete in order to perform the contract, to end time”*(BD 1,44). This mythological discrepancy implies that the most probable sacred content of barsom symbolism in both versions of the myth indicates a torch. The proposed interpretation of barsom’s sacred symbolism becomes evident from its usage in religious practices and confirmed by Pahlavi texts. When a disciple of Mazda-Yasna holds a barsom made of twigs and looks at sacred unquenchable fire, the optical effect due to the visual overlay makes the flame of sacred fire “emanates” from the top of barsom although the barsom itself remains unburned and “incorruptible”. In this context of the ritual, the part of Bundahishn becomes semantically understandable where it says – *“using his essence, which is the matter light, Ormazd created the form of his creations – in the form of the fire - a bright, round that could be seen from afar”*[41]. Thus, the Pahlavi texts contains the dichotomy of sacred content of the good , luminous and creative nature of fire for all the creatures of Ahura Mazda and annihilating function of the same fire for Angra Mainyu’s creatures. This is the content of sacred fire’s cleaning functions, represented by the barsom, which Zurvan hands to his malign son. The possibility of such an interpretation for this variant of Zatsparm myth is supported by the text of Bundahishn, which states that *“using the material darkness, which is his own essence, the spirit of destruction created a body of his creations in the form of coal, soot and ashes”* with a help of *“weapon of the very substance of darkness”* [42] given to him by Zurvan. It is obvious that the barsom or torch becomes a substance of darkness only in hands of Angra Mainyu, because turns all his malicious creations into coal, soot and ashes. Therefore, the variant of Zurvanite myth depicted in the composition from Cincinnati corresponds to the embodiment of the myth from “Vizidagiha and Zatsparm”.

In consideration of Saratsky composition’s chronology, it can be claimed that the Zurvanite myth initially interpreted the priority of spiritual eternity of pre- existent Zurvan, who is embodied in his post-existent luminous wisdom – Mazda, the priority over the material existence and finite Angra Mainyu. In Rietberg composition, the location of spiritual Mazda is only relatively higher than the location of Angra Mainyu (only because of the larger size of the Ahura’s head) and it is an illustration of the mythological dynamics towards Zurvanite basis with a absolute supremacy of Zurvan and nearly equal spiritual potency of his sons in the dynamics of the existent universe. In the composition from the Cincinnati Museum, Zurvan is equaled to his sons in terms of the hierarchy, and only the size of his image and its central location indicate his original spiritual priority. The compositional placement of three characters, who are practical equivalent in Cincinnati composition and the fact that Zurvan and both his good and malign sons have got barsoms on the one hand contradicts Gathic Mazda-Yasna but in terms of theologem is closer to it than mythologems of Saratsky and Rietberg compositions. In comparison with these compositions Zurvan’s role in the Cincinnati composition is minimal. Thus, as exemplified by these three compositions, there is probably a nonlinear, but incremental dynamics from interpretation of Saratsky composition through Zurvan - Mazdean myth to “proto-Gathic” version of Mazdean mythologem, presented in the composition from Cincinnati. Zarathushtra had only one step to take in order to elevate Ahura Mazda to the level of the supreme deity.

Therefore, despite the consistent humiliation of Zurvan’s role, all the compositions clearly content the inalterability of theologemic triad – “trinity of deities” of Zurvanite iconographic

canon, and the evolution of its emergence as an archetypal iconographic canon. After three thousand years the same iconographic canon is presented in “Trinity” by Andrei Rublev and “Lute Player” by Caravaggio, as well as in an infinite variety of other votive and “non-votive” iconographic images of European civilization.

Zurvanite iconographic canon

The abovementioned arguments make it possible to summarize that Zurvanite iconographic canon (Fig. 5) for creation mythologem (beginning of II – mid I millennium BC) represents the following:

1. Horizontally detailed composition of the twin myth, which displays a triad of deities;
2. The composition’s central deity is a god of time, Zurvan and his image represents dichotomous symbolism of unity and struggle of opposites, Light and Darkness, Akarana, an endless stream of time and Dargahvadata, and a finite time. The composition itself as well as sacred symbols identify Zurvan as beginning less and endless, spiritually dichotomous deity, who outranks his twin sons in terms of the levels of the divine hierarchy. Zurvan’s image is anthropomorphic. His sex couldn’t be defined by the primary sexual characteristics. As a first approximation, we can assume Zurvan as an androgynous deity;

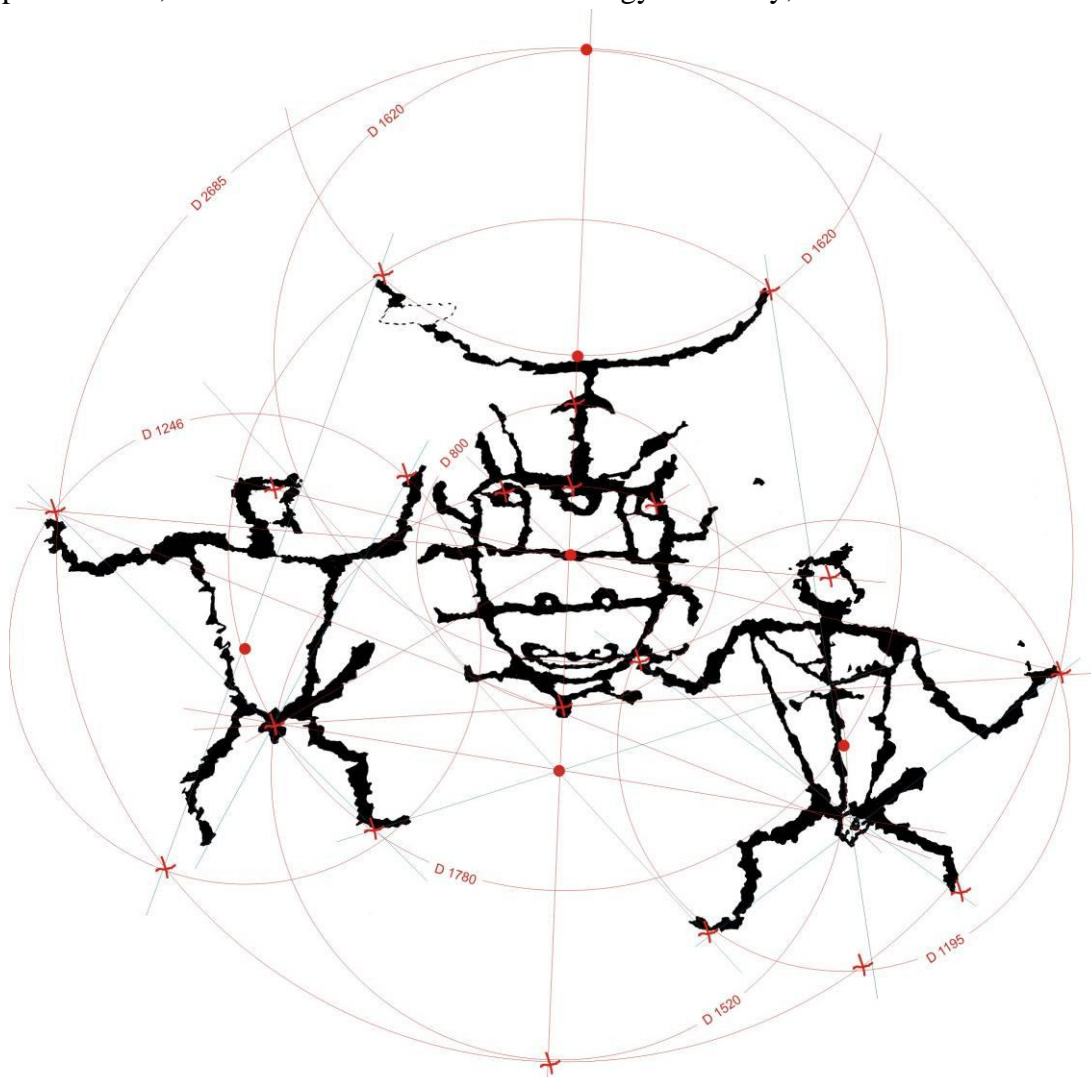


Figure 5. Zurvanite iconographic canon.

3. To the left and to the right of Zurvan, there are images of his twin sons Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, located symmetrically;

4. Ahura Mazda is arranged on the left side for an observer and to the Zurvan's right;

5. Angra Mainyu is arranged on the right side for an observer and to the Zurvan's left;

6. Zurvan's gaze is not fixed on his sons;

7. Ahura Mazda's gaze is not fixed on the faces of Angra Mainyu and Zurvan;

8. Angra Mainyu gaze is not fixed on the faces of Ahura Mazda and Zurvan;

9. Angra Mainyu marks himself as the first -born son through the gesture of touching Zurvan;

10. Ahura Mazda marks itself as the second -born son through the absence of touching Zurvan;

11. Compositional arrangement and sacred symbols indicate Ahura Mazda as an immortal spiritual good deity, who outranks Angra Mainyu in terms of sacred hierarchy;

12. Compositional arrangement and sacred symbols indicate Angra Mainyu as finite, malicious, physically incarnated deity, who is inferior to Ahura Mazda in terms of divine hierarchy.

Sacred coordinates of Zurvanite iconographic canon contain:

1. The monad of endless time stream – an “arrow of time”, symbolized by a sole source of pre- and post - existent things, which is a god of time, Zurvan Akarana;

2. The dyad of time stream, symbolized by the dipole structure of finite time interval of existent things Dargahvadata, which is relaxing on the endless stream of pre- and post- existence of Akarana;

3. The triad of time streams for pre-existent, existent and post-existent things, which is structured by three levels of the dislocation structure of existent universe – the stages of “**birth, formation and renewal**” [43];

4. The tetrad of space-time continuum for time stream, symbolized by a structure-forming potential of Akarana's monads over eschatologically determined by luminous completion of the «**conception, birth and death**» [43] triad's dynamics of existent things on the dislocation structure of Dargahvadata.

The physical basis of compositional arrangement geometry for Zurvanite iconographic canon is the space-time continuum with axis (+OX) for deploying the finite time interval of existent things Dargahvadata, the endless stream of pre- and post-existence Akarana, which is deployed along the axis (+OY) and collapsed due to the finiteness of existence on the axis (–OZ) as the direction of the observer's view, looking into the eyes of Zurvan, a god of time. It means that for us, who are simultaneously immersed in the dynamics of existent things and observing the process of the establishment of universe, Zurvan's space-time continuum (STC) is like a topological surface of time stream. Therefore, for us any other dimensions in STC, except the existent one, are non-existent.

Theologemic content of Zurvanite iconographic canon is an endless vertically structured time stream of Zurvan Akarana that contains a monad, dyad, triad and tetrad of universe structure, it's «**conception, birth, death and eschatological renewal**» [43]. The vertically structured iconographic image of Zurvan is overlaid by centrosymmetric and horizontally detailed structure of the twin myth, showing the good hypostasis of Akarana, which is Ahura Mazda and malign subsistence of Dargahvadata, which is Angra Mainyu. Zurvan's sons represent the source of dynamics for eschatological completion of existence, in which Ahura Mazda is the creator and eternal continuation of luminous time stream Akarana and Angra Mainyu is the destroyer and darkness of the ultimate sacrifice of existence for time interval Dargahvadata.

The links of Saratsk composition with astronomically significant directions of Saratsky Sunduk sanctuary

We wrote about Saratsky sanctuary (**Fig. 6**) in previous publications [44, 45]. In this publication we state only the place of Saratsk petroglyphic composition in the structure of the sanctuary.

Table 1 lists astronomical direction found in Saratsk the sanctuary fixed in ancient time. The direction of the meridian passing from south to north through the five man-made objects located in alignment with an error of less than 0.5 degrees divides the territory of the sanctuary into two parts. It should be noted that there is no line of sight between two extreme points. Saratsk composition (**X**) takes extreme northern position on the line, as in the whole structure of the sacred sanctuary. The nearest base point to the south of the composition is an equinoctial plate (**R**) of the sanctuary (**Fig. 6**).

Tabl.1. Number of astronomical directions fixed in the ancient times found on the territory of the Saratsky sanctuary. Preliminary results.

| Object | Observation sites | | Astronomic direction | Star observing | | | Petroglyphs associated with astronomical sites |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|--|----------------|-------|--|
| | Published | Explored | | Sun | Moon | Stars | |
| Saratsky Sunduk | 2 | 8 | Meridian: 3 East west-2 | SS: Sr1, Ss1 WS: Sr3 SE: Sr2 | LM: 1 HM: 1 | – | 4 |
| Necropolis of Saratsky Sunduk | 3 | 3 | 1 | SS: Sr2, Ss2 WS: Sr2, Ss2 ES: Sr2, Ss2 | HM: 1 LM: 1 | – | 3 |

Abbreviations: SS – Summery Sun, WS – Winter Sun, ES – Sun in Equinox, LM – Low summer Moon, HM – High winter Moon , Sr – sunrise, Ss – sunset. Numerals after abbreviations are number of fixed (and published) directions

That equinoctial plate installed in the northern branch of the vara (**Fig. 7B**) determines the direction (**R-ES**) to "equinoctial hole" (**Fig. 7A**) in the top of the sanctuary where sunrise is fixed twice a year at the equinoxes (**Fig. 8**). Due to the very small angular size of the hole (**ES**) in the top of the sanctuary (**Fig. 7A**) it is virtually invisible to the naked eye from the northern branch of the Vara and only one step to the left or right of the equinoctial plate is enough to lose the appearance of the sun in the hole at the equinoxes. The installation of plate was absolutely necessary to fix the place of observation. Due to the fact that in the sacred Iranian-Aryan calendar a new year beginning was calculated from the date of the vernal equinox (the Iranian Nowruz) we can conclude that the fundamental importance of astronomical direction "equinoctial slab" - "equinoctial hole" allowing priests to determine with astronomical methods the vernal equinox - the beginning of a calendar "new year.

Except the meridian the Saratsk composition is associated with another astronomically important direction – to the sunrise at the winter solstice in the aperture with a "sight" (Fig. 9) in the top of the Saratsk sanctuary (**X-WS**), (**Fig. 10**).

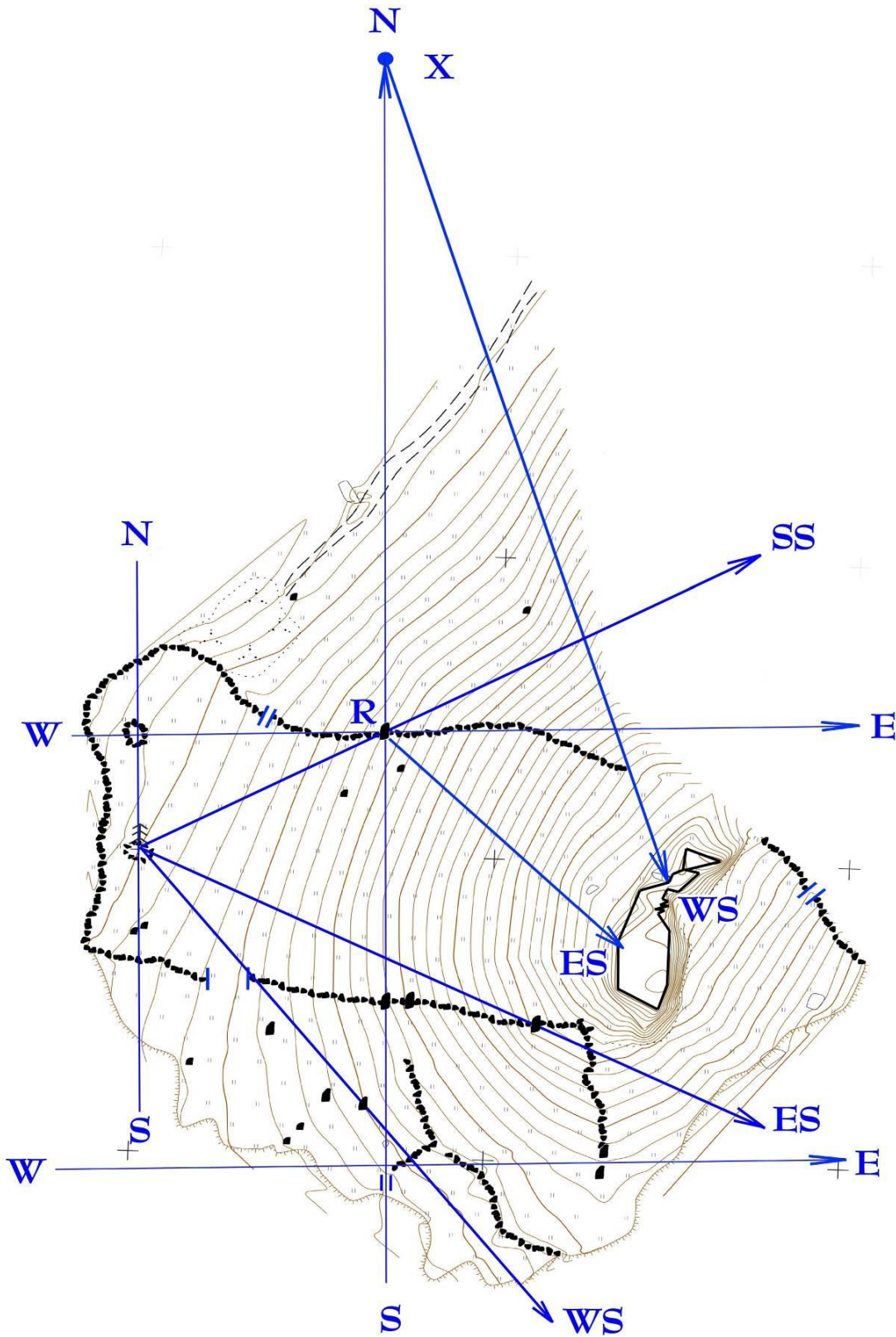


Figure 6. Topographic plan of Saratsky sanctuary's Vara.

Abbreviations: SS – Summery Sun, WS – Winter Sun, ES – Sun in Equinox, X – Saratsky composition, R – Equinoctial slab. The distance between marks - 50 m

Sandstone block forming the "sight" aperture (**Fig. 9**) was installed on the backup of the smaller tiles, alternating between a layer of white and red sandstone. Between the block and the bottom plane of the aperture there is a gap which could be seen from Saratsk composition. On a contemporary photography (**Fig.10**) the winter sun rises over the front sight, in a wide aperture. According to preliminary calculations based on known geographic coordinates, distances and dimensions of the structural elements, the winter sun in the middle of the II millennium BC rose in the horizon about 55 ' more to the south (right) so it could appear in the upper edge of the gap formed between the front sight and the lower plane of the aperture. Observation of the rising sun in the aperture of the top of the sanctuary allowed priests to fix the shortest daylight hours of the year, to do religious rites "to facilitate the rotation of the Sun to summer" - shifting points of sunrise on the horizon to the northeast and calendar - to the mostly long-lasting day in the year, in the summer solstice.

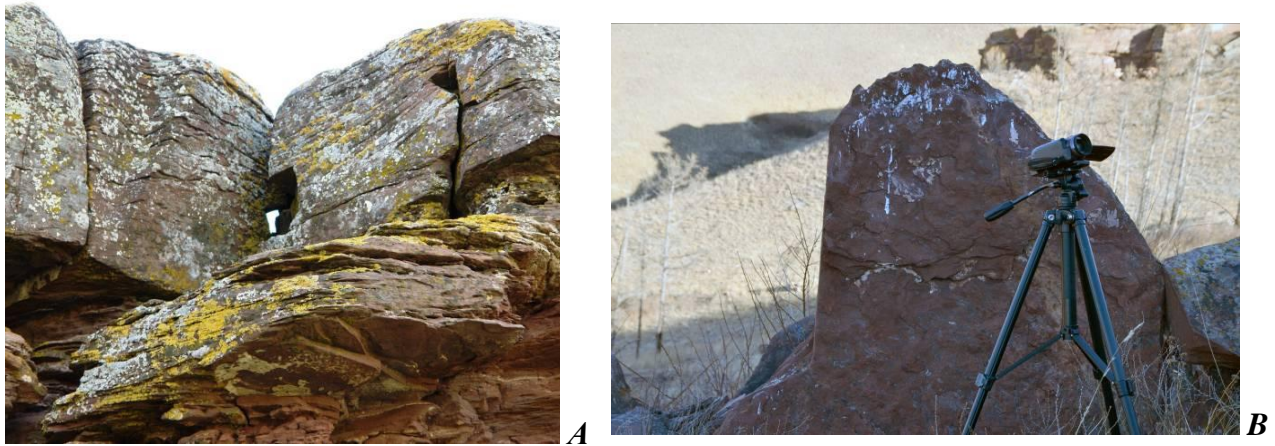


Figure7. A - Equinoctial hole, B - Equinoctial slab of Saratsky sanctuary (Photo by O. Maleev).



Figure 8. Sunrise in the equinoctial hole Saratsky sanctuary.
View from the equinoctial slab. Photo by O. Maleev.



Figure 9. "Sight" fixing the sunrise at the winter solstice.



Figure 10. Sunrise at the winter solstice in the Saratsk sanctuary aperture. View from Saratsk petroglyphic composition. Photo by O. Maleev.

Conclusions

In a view of the period of the Saratsky petroglyphic compositions creation (XVIII -XVII centuries BC) we can say that Zurvanite theologema is chronologically the earliest monotheistic concept where the only Creator is and all subsequent divine emanations are only its characteristic

forms. In addition, the principle of building of Zurvanite iconographic canon and sacred astronomy inherent to the structure of the construction of the Saratsk sanctuary shows that from the outset Zurvanite mythologem was Zurvan-Mazdean theologem in its content. Theologem content of Zurvanite iconographic canon is an endless stream of Akarana time containing a monad, dyad, triad and tetrad structure of the universe, its "**conception, birth, death and eschatological renewal.**"[46]. In this theologem concept the of an implementation myth about twins, sons of Zurvan represent a source of dynamic of eschatological completion of real where Ahura Mazda is the creator and eternal continuation of the luminous flux of Akarana time and Angra Mainyu is a destroyer and the darkness of ultimate victim of real in the time interval of Dargahvadata.

Author`s notes

Translations of Zoroastrian texts made O. M. Chunakova published in reference [47,48, 49,50,51,52].

Translation of Bundahishn to Russian with the reference to the authorship of O.M. Chunakova was made from Pazend manuscript (**I - 6/170**) from Institute of Oriental Studies of Russian Academy of Science. This manuscript is one of the records of Pazend code **L 22** which is kept in India Office Library in London. The difference between manuscript **I - 6/170** and other manuscripts is that it contains not only Bundahishn, four chapters (V, XV,XVIII,XX) Šāyest-nē-šāyest, the text from Čīm-ī drōn but also two Pazend texts Andarz-i dānāg mard («Admonition from the wise man») and Xvēškārīh-i rēdakān («Children`s responsibilities») that have no Pahlavi versions. O. M. Chunakova correlated every Pazend text to Pahlavi origins used in the process of translation because due to the fact that Pazend transcription distorts the original Pahlavi texts it is difficult to translate Pazend text correctly without correlating it with the Pahlavi origin. Bundahishn text from all the Pazend records originated from Pahlavi manuscript **M51** (previously **M16**) [53]. Pahlavi text Čīm-ī drōn was published by Jamasp Asa, [54], a Šāyest-nē-šāyest was published by [53] and Kotwal [55]. Translation of Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag was made by O. M. Chunakova from manuscript **K 20** [56]. Translation of Dānāk-u mainyō-i khrad from the manuscript **K 43** [57], [58], [59], Kārnamak-i Artāšir-i Pāpakān [60], Čēdag andarz ī pōryōtkēšān from the manuscript **MK** [61] и [62].

AVN – Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag [47];

BD – Bundahishn [48];

MH – Dānāk-u mainyō-i khrad [49];

ShnShv – Šāyest-nē-šāyest [50].

CAP – Čidag-i andarz-i poryotkēsan [51];

KN – Kārnamak-i artakhshīr pāpakān [52];

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