

# CULTURAL HERO AS A PART OF ARTISTIC THINKING OF CLASSICAL TIMES

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**Summary.** The article analyses the features of the cultural hero paradigm in the visual arts of the Classical Antiquity. The author highlights the parallels with the modern understanding of the place of a cultural hero in the visual art, mostly sculpture, and researches the basic principles of the cultural understanding of «cultural hero» concept in the Antiquity comparing to the present times.

*Keywords:* paradigm of a hero, mythology, visual arts, Antiquity.

The creative thinking logic in fine art is caused by complex relationships that are formed between the positions of all participants in the artistic process: the author, the hero and the audience. Each historical epoch finds internal and external factors that affect these relationships. Since ancient times, since the time morphological figurative European art system is built, artwork character becomes certain «intersection» of figurative communication between the author and society (the audience). The issue of the formation and existence of a cultural hero is one of the most common in culturology, and art criticism. Understanding of the existence of different incarnation of the hero was known since ancient times. Reasoning of heroic features and paradigm could be found in «Bhagavad Gita», the legacy of Confucius, Heraclitus, Plutarch and many others. Mythological (fabulous) characters were studied by E. G. Kagarov, Y. E. Golosovker, V. Y. Propp, M. Eliade, N. M. Kovtun and others; psychoanalytic theory of myth in which the hero appeared was formed by the studies of C. Jung, J. Campbell, O. Rank and others. The study of epic heroes characteristics is associated with basic researches of O. F. Losev, M. L. Gasparov, V.

N. Yarkho, I. V. Shtal, N. L. Saharnyi, F. H. Cassidy, E. M. Meletynskyi, A. J. Gurevych and many other scientists. The image of a cultural hero has very ancient origins and distinguishes by some archetypal syncretism inherent to mythological consciousness of primitive society period. In the tradition of many nations a cultural hero is to some extent identical to the concept of «demiurge» and «totemic ancestor.» Purpose of the article — to study an interaction of elements of ancient creative thinking system on the formation of the hero in the ancient fine art.

Objectives:

- 1) determine internal and external factors which affect the relationship between elements of the ancient system of creative thinking;
- 2) identify the relationships between the authors position and mythological hero in the ancient art;
- 3) explore the typology of mythological hero in the art of antiquity;
- 4) identify the characteristics of classical paradigm of the hero formation regarding to the claims of ancient society.

Humanity has come a long way from the elementary stage of feeling and experiences of its life to the

next stage, when concepts (ideas) did not exist, and the only means of expression was an image, metaphor, transfer of meanings of the known to unknown based on certain features. Myth as a product of the understanding of the surrounding world was both social and artistic phenomenon and existed as an exact description of «higher» sacred reality. «Tangible» («sensitive») (as defined by A. Rigle) public vision of the archaic human revealed the expression of subjective aesthetic experience in which anonymous «multiple author» of the ritual work was its audience at the same time. Archaic figurative culture consistently reflected totemism with its transformations. At the earliest stages of human development deities appeared as animals. Only at the end of the primeval period and in the age of first archaic civilizations a cultural hero figure and its figurative image arose between the anonymous «multiple author» and himself as the audience (listener, etc.). Selection of this element of artistic process (cultural hero) in the archaic period depended solely on the specific tasks of archaic society which it (society) was had been solving at a certain time. Evoke a rain, pray for a successful hunt etc. — exactly these tasks motivated anonymous «multiple author» of archaic images when choosing their subject. The presence of cultural hero was the factor which began dramatically affect the spiritual life and historical destiny of society. In turning, transitional periods of the history cultural influence of hero was growing. Typically, the main phase of social development and cultural hero embodied (and continues to do so) normative part of its (society) existence, but in transition period cultural hero with his innovative ideals comes in certain conflict with society dogma, mostly because it is ahead of time. That is why the hero is the hero not to behave like a normal person, to offer new forms of relationship to the world, showing how the things should be done, thus enriching forms of culture. Archaic civilizations (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese) have formed two main types of cultural hero. Mythological hero and epic hero — the first cultural hero types that appeared in art. As one of the universal concepts of culture, the hero always re-

flects space of moral invariants, such as the deed, the common good, patriotism etc. Studies of many specialists show mythological hero initiates a creative function, in contrast to the primary function of the epic hero which is protective. Complications of original figurative techniques gradually introduces removal mechanism in archaic culture in contemplation. Consciousness archaic man contained, according Z. I. Alferova, «a kind of temporal» stretching» in the events of perception, understanding and vision» [2, p. 21], making possible the formation mechanisms of exclusion and moving towards the creation of imaginative image structure. At the stage of archaic civilizations mythological deities got human bodies, but their animal heads were still there. Animality in images of mythological gods would be remained, but as a kind of «extra» images. Anonymous «multiple author-craftsman» on order of priests searches typologized features that characterize archaic mythological cultural hero — deity of archaic civilization (Osiris, Horus, etc.). As a rule, that figurative structure created by means of fixing of the typologized signs in the artistic traditions of archaic civilization survived almost unchanged for centuries. Incorporating of the acquired imaging canon of deity in figurative tradition of archaic civilization becomes notional and expressive «backbone» which connects generations of anonymous creators of the images with the next generations. For G. Hegel, the idea of God in archaic age, as embodied in painting or sculpture, retains absolute purity and impartiality. Monumental sacred sculpture or painting, being autonomous on the one hand and as a part architectonics temple performances in archaic civilization on the other, illustrate a gradual morphological selection of the plastic art thinking in till that time syncretic culture. The last of archaic, ancient Greek-Roman civilization is characterized by a new stage in the development of creative thinking and coincides with the gradual formation of analytic, conceptual consciousness and creating new links with the empirical reality. The idea of God begins to be implemented in the context of experience that this civilization becomes in total universality of material uni-

ty of the world and self-organized artistic form. Just then position of the author, a cultural hero and the audience are to some extent defined as relatively autonomous ones, and thus artistic thinking as a system was established. On the one hand, ancient man metaphorically endowed natural phenomena and social phenomena with supernatural signs, on the other hand tried to find his place among them, based on the protagonist of ancient mythology: mythological hero. Features and mechanisms of implementation of sociocultural practices of ancient mythological consciousness identified position of the author (artist) of that days. In early antiquity archaic anonymous «multiple author-craftsman» continued its nameless existence. But with increasing skills of individual craftsmen the Greek concept *technites* (and later Latin. *Artifex*) appeared, due to that a multitude of anonymous «authors-artisans» was divided in its identity into artisans and craftsmen. As, unlike musicians and poets, the authors of graphic works were valued in ancient society much less, such differentiation was important. Mythological social consciousness founded mythological worldview of ancient artist, who, in turn, created a vision (image) of mythological hero who at last influenced society. A mythological hero of ancient time is timeless, universal constituent of the single system of the social universe with mythological consciousness. A mythological hero had been supporting the unity of human with higher structures of the spiritual multidimensional universe and came forward as an instrument of perceptible personification of psychological features of man of time of antiquity. Structuring of religious images in the mind of ancient man took place in a way that attracted him to complicity in the events described in myth. The combination of archaic and ancient mythological social consciousness takes place in theogony, myths about birth of gods (stories that the first generation of gods born of Heaven and Earth, etc.) and other myths of the «chthonic series.» Thus, in Hesiod's «Theogony» is told that at first there was chaos, endowed despite its formlessness the properties of living beings. Then there arose Gaia who was a personification of earth, the goddess

of Earth, foundation of the future cosmos, and the void of eternal darkness formed inside Gaia — Tartarus. The oldest sculpture of Gaia on the frieze of the Pergamon Altar with Amalthea horn in his left hand indicates the origin of anthropological images of chthonic gods during the intense urbanization of ancient civilization. Artistic practice of the Mycenaean culture proves a figurative kinship with earlier Egyptian and Mesopotamian art thinking systems, which the Viennese art «formal school» critics called «tangible vision.» Images of gods and heroes of the Mycenaean era is rather an expression of «an integral» typologized than detailed concept. Ancient images of chthonic Hades, Pluto, Gaia, Demeter, Kore, Hecate, Dionysus, Hermes, Asopo and others are closely related to the «tangible vision» of the world of nature and its elements, which they represent in minds of ancient artisans. Saved in world museums sculptures of archaic Kouros, Samos Hera, Samofrakian Athena (VI cent. BC) confirm this thesis: they have no details in figures nor in faces. Their postures performed in accordance with the archaic canon. Nevertheless, after the stage of archaic «tangible vision» of the first civilizations ancient mythological consciousness formed preconditions for «normal vision» of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Already in the Homeric period in ancient mythology appear characters directly connecting the world of gods with the world of ancient people. The emergence of Admetus in myths (Mycenaean ruler Eurystheus daughter) priestesses of the goddess Hera, or Alceme (Mycenaean ruler Eliktriona daughter, mother of the future mythological hero Hercules) indicate strengthening of anthropomorphic mythological factor in the minds of ancient Greeks and preparation for the emergence of so-called Olympian deities. A connecting link between the gods and the people in the ancient world are mythological heroes: first, they were the direct descendants of gods, heroes and later honored people, who became accepted as heroes after their death. Homeric epic has kept the names of Hector, Achilles and Aeneas — the most famous heroes of Troy. As the cult of Achilles was widespread in Elida, Sparta, Olbia, the image of the hero happen ex-

actly there. Episodes from the life of the hero and his exploits were reflected on vases and wall paintings in Pompeii. He is often depicted with a shield, which was forged for him by Hephaestus, and in position of a man dying after snake bite. The eldest son of Priam and Hecuba — Hector — was the bravest warrior in Trojan army. The late ancient images of Hector are saved in Ilium and Thebes, where, according to legend, the hero's ashes were moved. Later, the ancient Romans mentioned both Achilles and Aeneas as their ancestors. So, Timaeus, contemporary of Pyrrhus, alludes to the Trojan origins of ancient Romans. In the third century BC legend of the Trojan origin of the ancient Romans became consolidated in Rome that we can see in works of Gnaeus Nevius, Fabius Pictor. For example, all the basic features of local legends of Aeneas are grouped in the «Aeneid» of Virgil. Actually Roman artists are detailing features of famous epic heroes, hinting they were historical persons. Images of the same heroes in different places and historical periods differ significantly. Aristocratic families of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome readily traced their genealogy of gods and heroes (Roman family of Julius, with the conviction of its members came from the goddess Venus). Spartans supposed mythical hero Hercules as their ancestor. Argonauts took their origin out of the hero Perseus. The Athenians called hero Theseus their ancestor. Genealogical mythology of antiquity becomes complicated with urbanization of territory of ancient civilization: ancestor — a mythological hero appears also as the founder of cities-polities: oikist (mythological hero-founder of city). Oikist of Rome was Romulus, son of Mars. Also the names of mythological founders were taken out of city names — the eponyms. So the eponym of city of Argos was mythological Argos and of city of Byzantium — mythological Bizant etc. Division of the ancient mythology into myths about gods and about heroes (demigods-semipeople) implementation of elements of human behavior and other signs of such antropomorphization in ancient mythology indicate significant changes in archaic society. Thus, the elements referred to in the «chthonic» myths gradually become

semihuman and then human physicality. The image of such corporalness is practically canonized in the V century BC (so, for example, the sculpture of Poseidon, tribal god of the Ionians of «chthonic series», son of Cronus and Rhea, the god of the sea and seafaring, who was depicted as a strong man with fish-spear — a trident in his hand; his hair seemed to be always wet and full of seashells, sometimes he appeared in a chariot drawn by the hippocampi — two-legged sea horses). Exactly in the ancient time mythological deities (heroes) «get» idealized human body, and allusions to their animal origin remain images of totemic animals and birds as an «additional» body (an eagle for Zeus; an owl for Athens, a snake for Asclepius, a dove for Aphrodite, etc.). The cult of historical ancestors is connected with honouring of mythical ancestors — Progonolatria. Oikistic, heroic, energetic myths approach to the actual historical myths which are based on historical events or certain historical core. Collective identity that was formed in this period was based on ancient mythology, including common historical past, historical memory, spatial and temporal concepts, summarized rituals etc. A hero figure, embodied in the ancient plastic mentality, becomes a part of important general patterns, which «cement» ancient culture. For example, the myth of Heracles' return to Peloponnese, who were descendants of the mythological hero Hercules, reflects historical event: the resettlement of Dorian tribes from the north to the south of the Balkan Peninsula in the late second millennium BC. And the myth of the Trojan hero Aeneas' resettlement in Latium associates with migration of the Etruscans from east to west on the peninsula. Hercules the most popular mythological hero of antiquity. Delphic oracle called him by that name, meaning «one who performs his feats through the oppression of Hera.» In times of Pisander (VII cent. BC) Hercules' image was canonized as follows: mythological hero was dressed in lion's skin (after overcoming Cithaeron or, according to some legends, Nemean lion) and with a stick in his hand. Additional symbols of Hercules became the white poplar, olive, ivy and healing thermal springs. Strong beautiful man,

armed, bare or in a lion skin — this image of Hercules in the graphic tradition remained almost unchanged. Sculptural image of Hercules with bow in hand on the pediment of the Parthenon (VI–V cent. BC) is less schematic than the first images of Chthonic gods. Hercules appears in military costumes, with a lion mask on the head and in aggressive posture of bow shooter. Theseus — the Greek hero, which was in antiquity considered a historical person (his biography was written by Plutarch) — at the age of five he met Hercules, who announced the great future for the boy. Becoming youth, Theseus went to Athens to visit his father. Attic Ionians believed Theseus the main hero and opposed him to Dorian Heracles. Athenian potters, decorating tableware with mythological pictures in VI of century BC, almost forgot about Heracles and instead of him represented portrayed the exploits of Theseus, especially those related to the names of Ariadne and Phaedra. Relief image of Theseus in Delphi and Theseion in Athens (V century BC) show similar trends of representing of this mythological hero: his image is already typologized, but it lacks details. Theseus is not differed from Hercules in ancient images except youthful appearance and posture. Gods and heroes of the «Olympic» mythology are show by ancient artists more detailed. Thus, Prometheus the son of titan Iapetus and the nymph Climen was the first who sided with the people in «Olympic» mythology. His image in ancient art stars a gallery of «eternal images», that humanity will call to later. Aeschylus devoted a series of tragedies to Prometheus, of which remained known «Prometheus bound». Mind, strength of spirit and freedom of Prometheus were praised in ancient days, as well as in the subsequent periods of human history. For J. Goethe Prometheus embodied artistic creativity. Images of Prometheus on ancient vases and sarcophagi, created by ancient masters, also form the «title» model of his presentation. Hermes — mythological messenger of the gods, the patron of wit, conductor of souls died, the son of Zeus and Maya, born on the Arcadian mountain of Killen. Unlike the graphic character of Heracles, visual character of Hermes has changed with development of

his cult. At first he appeared as a sign of masculinity, later as the patron of sheep, with lamb in his arms. In an archaic art Hermes becomes a doublebearded man; in classic time of antiquity and Hellenistic epoch — a strong slender youth man in a flat hat with wings, with facial features that indicate a subtle mind and kindness. A. Puchkov, making an attempt to figure out the principle of figurative nakedness of Greek gods sculptures, makes an interesting conclusion that the interpretation of mythological story in marble at most expresses the divine virtue (arethe) either militant or gracious. Depiction of a militant goddess needed some outfits (Athena the fighter — ideal of Olympic deity) and charity on the contrary required nakedness. In case of male deity we can see the contrary principle: Apollo Belvedere, who had just shot with a bow is naked as his is militant. The scientist states: «male and female militancy of deities sculptures was expressed the opposite way: a male deity was naked and a goddess — dressed. On the contrary with charity: male god was dressed and female goddess was nude (or semi-nude)» [7, p. 923–924]. A. O. Puchkov offers the following principle: «The principle according to which the ancient Greek deity is depicted dressed or naked, might be called the principle of militancy that consistently revealed in a material form of artistic metaphor, which was brought to the ideological integrity» [7, p. 925]. But this situation can be seen already in classical Greece, which received the «mythological library» of Apollodorus. In general aspiring of the ancient Greek sculptors and painters-monumentalists to dynamic, proportion, civil pathos in thinking is predetermined by the increase of role of the anthropomorphous dimension of mythology in age of antiquity. Its appearance is an external determinative of the ancient system of the artistic thinking and forming of the realistic system of vision in the European culture. Human capacity for self-concentration and artistic self-reflection becomes the objective founding for realism in the antiquity. An «individual author» whose name is marked by history, comes instead of the archaic and anonymous «multiple author» of archaic images. Already in the first half of the V century BC represent-

atives of «artisan groups» express a new era in the development of the ancient art of thinking. Names of Kritios, Nesiotus, Phidias, Peonius, Lysippos, Scopas and many others in the history of ancient Greek sculpture [4] indicate transition to «normal vision», because these masters assert proportionality in the image of human body, their dynamism and vitality. But despite the large personalization degree, Greeks retain cultural hero idealization in art. Sculptural images made by these artists are more detailed and make their transitional to sculptural portraits: recall, for example, sculptural group of Arystohiton and Harmodis (476. BC) and of Kritis and Nesiotis. Some canonization of transition to the «normal vision» during the high classics period was made by Policletus in its theoretical work «Canon» was supported not only by master's art practice (eg, religious image of Hera in 423 BC), but by his contemporaries and followers as well. The sculptor of high classics period contemporary to Miron and Policletus — Phidias, who worked in Athens, Delphi, Olympia, showed the transition from sculpture (statue of Zeus, Athena Promachos or Athena Parthenos and others) to the historical sculptural portrait (such as sculpture Pericles). That genre had been finally emanated in ancient sculpture since IV century BC accompanied with detailing of the model image. There arise are more or less detailed «worked out» historical sculptural portraits of Alexander the Macedonian and other historical figures made by Lysippos. It is well known, Lysippos reinterpreted the Policletus canon by making people bodies lighter with elongated proportions. Since then faces of mythological heroes are detailed even in sculpture (as in the copy of the «Pharnesian Herculesus» statue made by Lysippos). Thus, already since the period of high Greek classical art the conditions for creating the classic paradigm of hero as a historical person whose features are implemented by ancient «individual» authors as detailed, portrait were formed in antiquity. Distance that does not allow to get not only an idea about the cultural hero of ancient graphic work but also about its author is thus kept. The certain distinction between the author-master from and anonymous «mul-

tiple authorartisan» however abandons individuality of this master in shade. Collective character of artistic work, that is kept in time of antiquity, does not give an opportunity to find the personal fate of his author out through a figure a cultural hero. Studying the practice of arranging of sculptural seasons in Ukraine, in relation to creation of landscape parks of sculpture M. Protas marked that «synthesis of Hellenic style of thinking with the ideas of society, culture and art renewal out of dictate of logocentric philosophy of domination and submission is realized here at the level of internal self-examination and professional plastic discipline» [6, p. 46–47]. Thus, these features are inherent to the modern sculptors that mark character of cultural hero, the same as ancient. The same practice was typical for Roman art as well. But unlike the ancient Greek sculpture, representation of cultural heroes by Romans focuses on details and on finding individual features in historic sculptural portrait. Particular care Roman sculptors paid to the head of model; half-length portrait of statesmen, rulers and others also became widely extended. Ancient Roman artistic practice accumulates drawing and sculpting from life, which, as rightly pointed by O. V. Shylo, «makes the one who draws ready to the work of the whole to the parts» [8, p. 19]. Mass execution of orders for Roman nobility portraits reinforced in a plastic thinking of ancient Rome principle of republican centralism and strict hierarchy, from which the foundations of the European ceremonial portrait would be laid later. Regarding another historical era — the Middle Ages, K. Muratova notes that «the problem of reflection of beauty in the world of sensible things, and the distance difference of the model and the artwork, which aims to reproduce, the sharp distinction creative process into two stages — conception and execution, contemplation and recreation — all these problems are dealt with philosophy of Neo-Platonism and complete movement of ancient thought and form a circle of ideas that have contributed to the formation and development of medieval ideas about the reflection of the image of the deity in the sensual world» [5, p. 59–60]. But this tradition was started precisely in late

antiquity. Thus, we can say that the foundations of European creative thinking were formed exactly in ancient days, which system singled cultural hero of antiquity — the mythological hero — as the main component. External and internal factors affecting the relationship between the elements of the ancient system of creative thinking led to the separation of solid anonymous «multiple author» a master author, whose individual work has provided «tangible vision» some archaic parameters of «normal vision». Embodying images of mythological and epic heroes

in art in the system of proportionality and anthropological dynamics, ancient Greek and Roman artists not only created a typology of various mythological hero by canonizing him for ages, but also prepared a system of visual art to create a new morphological level: the historical portrait. Formation of a new genre was an example of the gradual transition of society from ancient mythological consciousness to the historical one. The figure of the hero embodied in the ancient plastic thinking becomes an expression of the collective identity of ancient man.

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**Сидоренко В. Д. Культурний герой як частина художнього мислення античної доби**

**Анотація.** Аналізуються особливості парадигми культурного героя в образотворчому мистецтві в античну добу. Проведено паралелі із сучасним осмисленням місця культурного героя у візуальному мистецтві, переважно в скульптурі, виявлено базові за-  
сади культурологічного усвідомлення концепту «культурний герой» в античному часі порівняно із сучасністю.

*Ключові слова:* парадигма героя, міфологія, візуальне мистецтво, античність.

**Сидоренко В. Д. Культурный герой как часть художественного мышления античной эпохи**

**Аннотация.** Анализируются особенности парадигмы культурного героя в изобразительном искусстве античности. Проведены параллели с нынешним осмыслением места культурного героя в визуальном искусстве, преимущественно в скульптуре, выявлены базовые основания культурологического понимания концепта «культурный герой» в античной эпохе по сравнению с современностью.

*Ключевые слова:* парадигма героя, мифология, визуальное искусство, античность.