

Research Article

## Early Prototypes of Cartoon in the World Art

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**SUMMARY:** The article considers the very early stages of the development of the cartoon and its primary forms. The history of the origin of cartoon that has been tested within long centuries, which has a very ancient and rich history was analyzed in this article. The article provides information on very rare works, which could be called the early prototypes of the cartoon.

**Key Words:** elements of cartoon, history, grotesque, humor, art, prototypes, irony, artists.

The way of history and civilization experience allows us to come to such a conclusion that there is no advanced nation that besides philosophical-poetic spirit had not satirical-humoristic mood in its art. In this sense, the samples carrying satire and humor elements and which are parts of the art of the nations who have given irreplaceable contributions to the history of civilization are of great significance.

This rare art samples which are carriers of the culture inherent to them survived through the long centuries and reached our time reflecting the period it belonged to. Each sample of these drawings, monuments and applied art found in different territories and covering different periods besides being indicators of the nation they belonged to, also gives us extensive information about the world outlook, taste and handicraft of the nation.

It is known that the nation which has a sense of humor and which can criticize itself is great and powerful. In this sense, these samples carrying the elements of laughter and humor can be also accepted as perfect art monuments created by ancient nations who have enriched the world history with unique pearls.

From the day that the human learnt to think and to laugh, a feeling of teasing, reproaching and mocking at others accompanied him. It is not accidental that to criticize the events taking place in everyday life and to laugh at the incidents and surrounding people meets internal requirement of men, creates some type of self-confidence. Of course, this laugh in major cases can be bitter, ironic and quizzical. One of the art types including in it laughter, criticism and irony is a caricature. Caricature which was often addressed to as a means of humans' self-expression is known to be formed yet in archaic society. Research of latent (*latens-* secret) development history of expression means used in caricature allows specialists and researchers engaged in this field to claim it to be one of the most ancient art genres (2,7).

Actually, the art of caricature had been formed far before the word "caricature" was created. The caricature which is the indicator of the culture it belongs to, and which is the mirror of its time, and reflects the events taking place around

sometimes can be presented in Aesopian language, as an encoded system. It is mainly explained by the historical condition in which it has been created and its author.

Cartoon can be bitter and ironic, cruel and of goodwill, revealing and humoristic. It reveals by means of satire and makes laugh with the help of humor. Of course, it goes without saying that in order to comprehend the cartoon, one should have at least a small sense of humor and ability of laughing which distinguishes human from other living creatures. As states Fransua Rable (1494-1553): "Laughing is one of the peculiarities differing a human from other living creatures".

There are different thoughts and suppositions about date and place of formation of the art of caricature the roots of which goes up to ancient times. The prominent cartoonist, the president of International Federation of Cartoonist Organizations *Peter Nieuwendijk* writes about it: "As far as I know, cartoon has been created in England. But during my trips to Turkey, France, Italy, Egypt, Cuba, Serbia, Romania and Korea the people there claimed that the first cartoon in the world was created namely in their country. The director of the Egyptian museum demonstrated with slides the cartoons found in ancient pyramids. The Turkish ambassador said that the first cartoon in the world was drawn in Istanbul in 1645. The French emphasized that the first cartoon was drawn in France, and the Romanians claimed it to be created namely in the motherland of Dracula. Maybe the cartoon was created for the first time in Nederland, during Spanish-Holland war (1568-1648). As this war is considered one of the longest in the history of wars, and there was quite long time to make laugh at the enemy. But where is the truth? When was the cartoon formed? In which country? Actually, we do not know it. Perhaps, the cartoon was created namely in Azerbaijan? " (3.8).

Not depending on the country and date of creation of the cartoon, we can confidently state that this genre of art underwent a long period covering many centuries and played a significant role in culture and art of a number of nations and countries. The cartoon became the mirror of the society in which it was historically formed and was an integral part of

everyday life and household of the nation in which it was created. About the first feature of the cartoon we read the following in Russian researcher A.V.Shvirov's "History of cartoon" book: "The first humans who had nothing else to do except hunting and fighting used to draw drawings where they mocked at their enemies teasing the latter. These people building shelters for themselves described their enemies in a funny and ugly form on the walls of their huts. In this sense, we can quite confidently say that satiric drawing exists since the day of creation of human and it will keep existing until the last human on the Earth dies away (5.7).

Alas, the Russian researcher put forward no aptly fact in order to confirm his thought. In order to express one's opinion towards this thought of the author to which he has come on the basis of certain investigations, one should research the first forms of the caricature, the stages of its creation and formation, the samples which are called early prototypes of the caricature, the primary and reliable sources known to us.

Today referring only to the existing materials, concrete facts or serious sources, we can say that the ancient drawings carrying in them the elements of caricature in some extent can be met among the first samples of the world art and perhaps, we will not be mistaken if say that these drawings are early prototypes of cartoons.

Before putting forward suppositions about the drawings which are among the first samples of the world art and which we can call the early prototypes of cartoon it should be noted that the primary art is subdivided into two main parts.

First of them are drawings on rocks and in caves, the second is mainly small monuments prepared from stone and bones. Material and cultural samples found during archeological excavations conducted in different points of the world mainly since the middle of the XIX century gives us detailed information about way of life and household of the primitive people (4.22).

Some researchers investigating the drawings on the rock and in the caves which are considered the first part of the primary art divided into two parts by the scientists refer these art pearls called "Sikistin choir of primary painting" which are found in Lasko (*fr. Grotte De Lascaux*), one of the most ancient human shelters, to approximately the XVIII-XV centuries B.C.

In the drawings in Lasko cave (France) which is the most important and valuable monument of Paleolithic period according to the quantity and quality, as well as in Altamira referring to the XVIII-XII millenniums B.C., in Valtorta referring to the X-V millenniums (Neolith period), in Kogul (Spain) referring to the XII-X centuries B.C., in Three brothers (*Trois-Freres*) (France) referring to the VI millennium B.C. (Madlen period), in "Tassili N'Ajjeri" located in Central Sahara and referring to the V millennium B.C. or in Maak (Namibia) cave referring to the II millennium B.C. the humans depicted what they saw

around them – fights, hunting, household scenes, men, women and numerous animal figures, including different zodiacs, symbols (swastika, spirals, cross, etc. ), and collective dance scenes.

Perhaps, there are some exaggerations, ridiculous moments, even satiric approaches in these pictures. But actually, from the point of view of a modern man these samples can be accepted as the drawings with satiric elements. Most likely, these rare samples actually were not meant for sarcasm and irony. It is just our supposition and in fact, it still remains as an eternal question for many scientists.

But it should not be forgotten that the desire to see the enemy weak, powerless, ridiculous and defeated is natural for a man who can think and laugh and want to see himself as a hero, a brave fighter and an accurate hunter. In this sense, it would be correct to call these pictures with the elements of irony and sarcasm drawn with the desire of making laugh at one's neighbor, friend or enemy, to mock at them or to reproach and at the same time exaggerating oneself.

Drawing attention of any scholar, researcher and specialist who try to find early prototypes of cartoons on cave walls and on rocks, after getting acquainted with the drawing samples of a modern man, we can agree with the thought of the Russian researcher A.Shvirov that "satirical pictures exist from the day of creation of a human" (5.7.).

It would be to the point to research these drawings directed to criticize an incident or any action (fighting, hunting, dancing etc.) carried out by a part in a target more seriously and attentively. It should not be forgotten that as the authors of these presented drawings were "bad painters", their ability were limited in reproaching or laughing at any incident taking place around or a person. If to say more exactly, they had not ability to depict their thoughts fully as their drawing ability was very weak. But in spite of it, the humans already stepping in evolution period and having ability to think, to laugh and to criticize somebody tried to show these wishes of them by means of drawings on rocks, monuments and household things.

Our main aim in representing primitive drawings, pictures on rocks, monuments prepared from different materials etc. of these people is to show the desire of the author to convey his thoughts to others through drawings. Effort of the authors of the drawings to deliver any information, idea or discontent via the images, their desire to tease somebody, to mock at him gives us ground to seek even minimum portion of elements of humor, laughter and criticism in these drawings.

If thoroughly to investigate drawing of human and animal figures found in different places and covering different periods, carving samples on rocks, masks, frescos, pictures on vases, monuments of different dimensions and other such kind of art works which can be accepted as the first embryos of the cartoon, we will notice satiric mood in each of them. In these art samples which have been included to

the gold fund of the world culture, we see the points, exaggerations causing laughter of the spectator, and of course, the hand of the artist having a high sense of humor.

Different human figures and masks, monuments made from various materials referring to Sumerian, Olmek, Maya cultures, drawings on papyrus and stone plates found in Egyptian territory, numerous images on walls and vases referring to Greek and Roman cultures and their exaggerated forms not meeting any proportions cause a laughter of a modern man and naturally, we look for satiric elements in these works.

As it s seen, geography of these rare samples with a certain humor is quite large and history is quite ancient. This list also includes ridiculous human and animal figures prepared from baked bricks and found in Ailat (Eilat) (nowadays is kept in Israel museum) and referring to the V-II millennium of Eneolithic period, also numerous monuments found in Easter island, as well as other such kind of samples made from stone and bone referring to Far and Near East culture (Pic.1).

**Pic.1.** “Human figures of different forms and masks referring to Maya culture. Central America”. ( the II millennium, B.C. I mille.).



Şək.1. "Maya mədəniyyətinə aid müxtəlif formalı insan fiqurları və maskaları. Mərkəzi Amerika". (e.ə. II minillik, b.e. I min.).

**Pic.1.** “Human figures of different forms and masks referring to Maya culture. Central America”. (the II millennium B.C., I min. A.D.).



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Of course, we do not have serious ground to present these art samples as the early cartoon samples involving humoristic elements. However, today when we look

through these samples attentively we can state it with confidence that these works prepared out of schematic and real proportions are rare and original art pieces carrying joyful mood.

The head of Tabriz Cartoon Museum Rahim Bakkal Asgari in his “World cartoon” book writes the following about the first samples found in Iran territory (South Azerbaijan) which bear cartoon elements:

“The elements of cartoon in the carvings made on the stones found in Iran territory are obvious. Pictures of lions with human image engraved on upper parts of the columns of ancient buildings of Shiraz city draw attention. The enemies depicted in the fight scenes drawn on other carvings were shown very small, however Persian king was shown much greater than them. Comparative, exaggerated and satiric approach is already observed in these images. Tabriz people in their religious ceremonies skillfully use exaggerated images. They also used to draw funny pictures on their belly and laughed at their enemies with poems and music.” (1.143).

While looking at the monuments, applied art samples, decorative accessories etc. prepared from different materials and found in South Azerbaijan, as well as other territories it is possible to find moments of laughter, satiric and humoristic approach in them. The same thought can be referred to the monument found in Iran territory referring to the IV century B.C. Skinny and tired horses joined to the cart and two human figures sitting in it are described in a humoristic form, causing laughter of the spectator.

In this monument made from gold a deviation from accepted forms is observed. The laws of proportion and relativity have been violated, sitting and gestures of the figures significantly differing from each other unwillingly makes the spectator smile. But there is no warranty to suppose that the people of that time while making these monuments by deviating from accepted forms and preferring exaggeration wanted to make laugh or mock at somebody.

As we have already mentioned, this thought can be accepted namely as the viewpoint of a modern man, his look at the art work from the prism of today. It is interesting that among the weapons that Azerbaijan masters have prepared, although episodic, but we come across the images making joyful mood. Decorative elements, especially figures, human and animal heads, engraved on the weapons in fact should be in a fearful form in order to frighten the enemy. But in this case, on the contrary, we see smiling men on the weapons (a shield, a helmet, a mace) decorated with very elegant and beautiful ornaments.

This exceptional case most likely is the indicator of the humoristic character of the master, his creative approach to his work, or vice versa, of joyful character of the ordering man. In fighting instruments, to be more precious, such an approach to helmets could be met in the samples referring to Greek culture. On the helmet of a Greek fighter referring to the IV-III centuries B.C. found in Southern Italy there is

a smiling soldier face. Of course, the master preparing this helmet could or should engrave more frightful and furious face on it. But in this case, we see a warrior's helmet which makes the opposite side smile, rather than to fear and awe. These samples can be met in the cultures of both Near and Far East, Africa and America, and also in European nations. Besides the samples referring to Egyptian, Greek and Roman culture involving in themselves the elements of cartoon, in monuments and applied art samples found in Japan and China, in colorful masks referring to African culture, as well as in numerous art works discovered in Latin America, Iran, India and in other territories satiric approach causing spectator's laughter is clearly noticed.

These and other such type of samples prove penetration of satire and humor into the people's lives not depending on their time, period, language and religion. As the result of these penetration and influence quite large number of art works bearing caricature elements have been created. It is a pity that some people consider these art samples just ordinary wall drawings, images on vases or ordinary stone monument and do not want to see the in these drawings, figures and stone engravings artist's individual attitude to a concrete event or a person with satiric tone and sarcasm, his sense of humor. In any case, any scholar, specialist researching these art samples causing infinite discussions and disputes, as well as a spectator watching them have a right to express his own subjective opinion.

Going through centuries this art type proved its significance and importance in all periods and stepped into a new development stage. In the research works, articles and other publications published by well-known scholars and art critics, the power and impact of the cartoon on the society is particularly emphasized and its historical necessity is confirmed with substantial facts. At present day one of the important issues standing before the science of modern study of art is systematic research of satiric graphics which is an integral part of the world fine art and indication of the place and weight of the cartoon art in the context of the world art.

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