

ROCK ART RESEARCH IN NORTH AND CENTRAL ASIA 1995–1999

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Introduction

The previous survey (Sher & Goryaeva 1996) embraced a territory named “Northern Eurasia”, but was in fact a review of rock art sites and rock art research on the territory of the former USSR. In this review we have decided to change the territorial limits and omit the rock art of the European part of Russia and the Urals (because these are absolutely independent areas from a historical-cultural point of view), but to add the territory of Mongolia. We will still cover the incredibly vast region of Northern and Central Asia – including Siberia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan – whose ancient history and rock art are not homogenous, of course, but which forms a more unified area both geographically and culturally. The rock art of this region reflects contacts between its inhabitants over millennia, and has numerous common subjects and styles, as was shown in the previous review (Sher & Goryaeva 1996) and in a number of publications (Devlet & Devlet 2000; Francfort 1998). We will not include the Russian Far East (Chukotka Peninsula, the Amur basin, etc.) and the taiga areas of Siberia (Yakutia), although they are also part of Northern Asia and contain rock art sites, because there have been no new discoveries or other notable work here during the given period. In reviewing the sites, we have divided the area according to political borders (the countries of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the national republics of Tuva and Gorny Altai in the Russian Federation), while for Siberia we have also used the major rivers such as the Lena, Angara, Yenisei and Tom’, along which the main concentrations of rock art sites are located, and also Lake Baikal. The main issues considered here are investigations and discoveries at rock art sites, advances in the study of their chronology, their preservation, and the organizational side of research. But we have not reviewed the question of the study of semantics and interpretation, because this is a different matter and so much major work has been done in this direction, that even a brief review

would double the length of the text and especially the list of references.

I. New discoveries

I. 1. Lena

Researchers from the Irkutsk Centre for the Preservation of Historical-Cultural Heritage have been carrying out investigations in the basin of the Lena. In 1997 they found about 400 images on the rocks of the right bank of the river, situated near the villages of *Kunitsyno*, *Kozlovo*, *Pulyaevo*, in the estuary of the *Yamny brook* and opposite the island of *Pisanyi Kamen’*. There are images of elks, deer, goats, horsemen and anthropomorphs; scenes of hunting, caravans and rows of anthropomorphs; the techniques are pecking, engraving, abrading and painting with ochre; dating is from the Bronze Age up to Medieval times (Nikolaev & Melnikova 1999). In 1998 in the valley of the Kulenga river (a left-bank tributary of the Lena) they discovered two new sites: *Zulman I and II*. The petroglyphs are deeply abraded and engraved on red sandstone panels; there are about 300 images of elks, deer, goats, camels, horsemen and anthropomorphous figures; dating is from the Bronze Age up to Medieval times. Near the decorated rock there are places for shamanic rituals, with some cult objects including poles with sacrificed rams’ and horses’ skins (Perzhakov *et al.* 2000). One of the approaches of this team’s work was revealing the connection between archaeological sites and rock art. Thus, in 1998 they excavated a Bronze Age burial (site of Tyshinka II) whose head was oriented towards the rock massif with petroglyphs (Shaman-Kamen’ site), among which there are images of the Bronze Age. This was already the second example, because earlier they had excavated three burials in the Silinka cemetery whose heads were oriented towards the decorated rocks of the famous Shishkino site. This is evidence for some connection of the funerary rite with rock art in the Bronze Age of this area (Perzhakov *et al.* 2000).

I. 2. Angara

New sites on this river were discovered by a team from Krasnoyarsk in the course of producing an inventory of archaeological sites. In 1996, in the basin of the Lower Angara on the territory of the Krasnoyarsk region, they found sites named *Shuntary* and *Vydumsky Byk*. At the first site the images of animals, human figures and signs are painted with ochre of various colours; of special interest is a multi-figure panel in the central part of the site, with depictions of anthropomorphous horned figures. The site of Vydumsky Byk contains ochre images which extend for 1.5 km. The images of horsemen, animals, signs, face-masks and masked anthropomorphous figures (Fig. 1: 3) are depicted as contours and silhouettes, in a linear and 'skeleton' style (Drozdov *et al.* 1996). In 1997 they discovered the sites of *Zergulei* on the Angara, *Kamenka III and IV* on a tributary (Zaika *et al.* 1999), and *Kokui* (Zaika *et al.* 1997).

The team of researchers from Irkutsk investigated the valley of Kuda, a right-bank tributary of the Angara, and in 1997 discovered and recorded the sites of *Shara-Shubute II, III* and *Turyse-Under*. The first site consists of three panels with pecked and abraded images of elks and anthropomorphous figures in horned head-dresses (Fig. 1: 1) which are dated to the Bronze Age (late 3rd millennium – early 1st millennium BC), as well as unidentified animals and a horseman image executed in the Kurykan style (Early Medieval). The panel of *Shara-Shubute III* contained 8 abraded and engraved figures of elks and deer (Fig. 1: 2) dating to Medieval times (2nd half of the 1st millennium – 1st half of the 2nd millennium AD) (Nikolaev & Melnikova 1998).

I. 3. Baikal

The first rock art was found on the shore of Lake Baikal more than a hundred years ago. Since then 20 sites have been revealed and investigated there. A new site was discovered by chance in 1995 and recorded in 1996 in the *Gurbi-Nur* locality. The pictures – a horseman, deer, other animals and anthropomorphs – are concentrated on two rocks of yellowish limestone located 15 m from each other (Fig. 2). The pecking has no patina on it, and the images are dated to the Medieval Period (Goryunova 2000).

I. 4. Tom'

The river Tom' has long been known for its three rock art sites, the most famous of which is Tomskaya Pisanitsa. But detailed archeological surveys of its right bank in the early 1990s revealed some new sites. In 1997 two of them (discovered in 1993) were published: *Novoromanovskya II* and *Nikolskaya*. Both sites, and especially *Nikolskaya*, were very badly preserved. The petroglyphs were pecked on vertical and inclined panels of the riverside cliffs, only a few metres higher than the water level. The rocks had

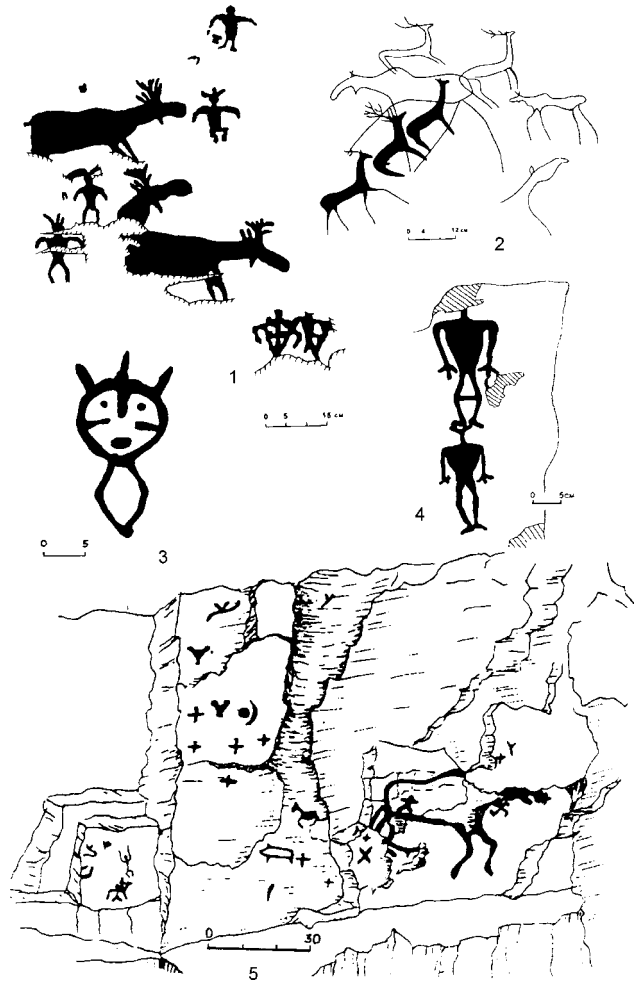


Fig. 1: New images from the Angara basin. 1 – *Shara-Shubute II*. Images of elks and horned anthropomorphous figures. Pecking. Bronze Age. (After Nikolaev & Melnikova). 2 – *Shara-Shubute III*. Images of elks and deer. Abrading and engraving. Medieval. (After Nikolaev & Melnikova). 3 – *Vydumski Byk*. Anthropomorphous masked figure. Painting with ochre. Bronze Age. (After Zaika). 4 – *Kamenka 2*. Anthropomorphous figures with hypertrophied shoulders and three-fingered hands. Pecking. Bronze Age. (After Zaika, Emelyanov, Berezovski). 5 – *Manzya*. Composition with elk, crosses and anthropomorphous figures. Paintings in ochre (after Drozdov, Zaika, Makulov).

been destroyed by weathering and spring floods for millennia, and many other images have probably gone. However, between the numerous cracks the investigators discovered fragments of very interesting images and compositions: running elks, boats, birds, a bear, and an anthropomorphous figure with rays around its head. The main core of the imagery in these sites has been attributed to the Early Bronze Age (Rusakova & Barinova 1997).

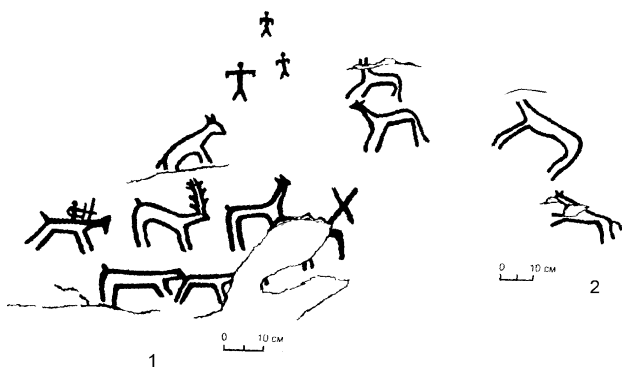


Fig. 2: Images of Gurbi-Nur – a new rock art site from the Lake Baikal coast. Hunting scene. Pecking. Medieval. (After Goryunova).

I. 5. Yenisei

The basin of the Middle Yenisei is an exceptional area in Siberia, since thousands of varied sites of great archaeological significance are located in this relatively small territory, including almost a hundred sites with rock art. Archaeological investigation has already been underway here for nearly 300 years, and a huge quantity of data (including rock art) has been gathered and documented in that time. Numerous rock art sites on the banks of the middle course of the Yenisei have been discovered and re-discovered, documented and recorded by dozens of famous and little-known researchers since the early 18th century. So it seemed unbelievable that discoveries of new sites could be made in this area. Nevertheless in 1995 during archaeological investigation of the shoreline of the Krasnoyarsk reservoir, an absolutely new rock art site was discovered by A. Zaika on the right bank of the Yenisei, 10 km from the village of *Anash*. There are two panels, badly preserved because of weathering, and probably the bigger part of the site was destroyed by the waters of the reservoir. Of great interest is a composition with figures of fantastic beasts with big claws (Fig. 3: 1), which has analogies among some other Yenisei sites and can be dated between the mid 1st millennium BC – 1st millennium AD (Zaika 1997).

Since 1992 the team of researchers from the “Tomskaya Pisanitsa” museum reserve have been carrying out investigations of rock art locations near the village of *Abakano-Perevoz* on the left bank of the Yenisei. The presence of petroglyphs here was already known, since they were mentioned by Pallas in 1772, and by many others afterwards, but they had never been published. They were probably located on riverside panels which are now flooded by the artificial Krasnoyarsk reservoir. New locations in this area were discovered by Rusakova, located on five hills far from the river. The petroglyphs on these panels were not well known, even to the locals, but they had suffered a lot from natural phenomena, such as weathering, lichens and exfoliation of the rocks. The

compositions that have been revealed are very interesting and quite unusual; they obviously reflect some mythological subjects: there are figures of horses with twisted croups (Fig. 3: 4), fantastic predators, a depiction of a dwelling, a chariot, battle scenes and anthropomorphous figures in clothes decorated with spirals (Fig. 3: 3). The petroglyphs are dated from the Bronze Age up to the ethnographic present, but the great majority belong to the Tagar culture of the Early Iron Age (Rusakova 1997; Rusakova *et al.* 1997; Rusakova 1998a).

New sites were also discovered on the lower course of the Yenisei which is much more forested and has been far less explored. The northernmost rock art site on the Yenisei – that on the island of *Ostrovki*, 240 km north of Krasnoyarsk, after the famous Kazachinsky rapids – was found in 1995 and recorded in 1996. There were other archaeological sites on the island, and the rock art site was named *Ostrovki III*. Images of deer, goats, unidentified animals, cupules, face-masks and anthropomorphous figures in horned head-dresses (Fig. 3: 2) are pecked into 10 panels. They are dated to the Early Iron Age (Melnikova *et al.* 2000). Another team of researchers chose the tactic of searching for rock art sites in the arduous taiga areas in the winter, from the frozen river. In 1997 they succeeded in finding a new site on the *Bazaikha* river, a right-hand tributary of the Yenisei. The pictures are painted with pink ochre on a limestone panel: solar signs with spots between them, and a big phallic figure of an archer in a mushroom-like head-dress. The site has been tentatively dated to the Early Iron Age – Medieval (Zaika *et al.* 1999).

I. 6. Tuva

The Republic of Tuva and the upper course of the Yenisei is another Siberian area that is incredibly rich archaeologically, and includes numerous rock art sites. But unlike the Middle Yenisei, it has still not been well explored due to its remoteness and severe environment. New sites are being discovered here on every expedition’s route. New images of four face-masks and cupules were found on a boulder in the cemetery of *Dogee-Baary* near Kyzyl (Chugunov 1997: Fig. 1). In 1995 the petroglyphs on the *Sary-Dash* hill were investigated and documented. This work also had a salvaging purpose, as this location was in the quarrying zone of black Edigei jasper. All the petroglyphs are executed on separate blocks of this kind of stone (Fig. 4). Some decorated blocks were removed, after their full documentation, to the museum in Kyzyl-Mazhalyk. The depictions are dated to the Scythian (mid-1st millennium BC) and Kyrgyz (1st millennium AD) periods. They are mainly images of goats, scenes of goats chased by dogs, hunting scenes, and there are rare images of deer. Of special interest are late Tuvian “scratched” depictions, probably executed by local shamans (Semenov 1996). In 1996 the petroglyphs in the *Kara-Bulun* ravine were found. There are 16 figures of bulls from various periods, which were superimposed by Turkic runic



Fig. 3: New petroglyphs from the Lower and Middle Yenisei. 1 – Images of fantastic clawed beasts from the Anash site. Pecking. Dated to the mid 1st millennium BC – beginning of the 1st millennium AD. (After Zaika). 2 – Anthropomorphic figures in “horned” head-dresses from the Ostrovki III site. Pecking. Early Iron Age (?). (After Melnikova, Nikolaev, Mandryka). 3–4 – Two compositions from the Abakano-Perevoz site. Strange anthropomorphic figures in ornamented “clothes” have tentatively been dated to the end of the 1st millennium BC. Composition with images of horses with twisted croups and predators probably reflects some mythological subject, and is dated to the Early Iron Age. (After Rusakova).

inscriptions, as well as figures of goats, horses and deer. A migration trail passes through this ravine, and the petroglyphs here served as landmarks from the Bronze Age up to the present, and were constantly renewed (Kilunovskaya 1998).

In 1998 a quite unusual composition was found in the mountainous valley of the *Begireh* river (a tributary of the *Biy-Khem*). Animal figures (deer, goats and a boar), weaponry (daggers, battle-axes and, possibly, a shield) and a horseman are pecked here on a vertical panel. The repertoire of the images is analogous to that on the so-called “deer stones” which are dated to the early stage of

Scythian art (8th – 7th centuries BC), but here they are represented in a totally different compositional association. Images on the deer stones form a unified composition, which is connected with the vertical structure of these monuments and their tripartite division, while images on the plane surface of the rock form a composition of a narrative character (Kilunovskaya & Semenov 2000).

In 1997 and 1999, a new site located on the *Chyrgaky* river in western Tuva, was investigated and recorded by a group of archaeologists (it was first discovered in 1971 by a geologist). The petroglyphs are found on the southern slopes of a ridge that starts by the confluence of the



Fig. 4: Figures of goats, deer and dogs on a split rock at the Sary-Dash site in Tuva. The petroglyphs here are executed on separate blocks of black jasper, and the site was going to be destroyed by a quarry. In addition, the site is being destroyed through natural causes. Some decorated rocks were moved to the local museum of Kyzyk-Mazhalyk.

Anyak-Chyrgaky and Ulug-Chyrgaky rivers and extends to the middle course of the Dageyr-Shemi river. Rock surfaces with pictures face south and south-west, and they are covered with a thin varnish. The Chyrgaky petroglyphs were made by the pecking technique; most of them are silhouettes, some are contours, while others are made in the so-called “skeleton style”. The pecking is mainly superficial, but the figures are quite visible due to a difference between the colour of the pecked areas and that of the surrounding rock. About fifty surfaces with rock art have been discovered. Some of them contain separate images, while others have compositions. The main images are: a deer, a goat, a horse, and a predator. In the hunting scenes there are figures of archers shooting at deer and goats. The most ancient petroglyphs at this site are, probably, those from two multi-figure compositions with unusual images of deer depicted in a geometric style, with crossed appendages on their antlers (Fig. 5a), which can be dated to the Late Bronze Age (early 1st millennium BC). Some of the Chyrgaky images are related to the Scythian period (Fig. 5b). These are, mostly, figures of deer with branching antlers, as well as of goats, boars and predators (wolves, dogs and felines). There are also a lot of common schematic figures of goats, that may be dated from the early centuries AD up to the present (Kilunovskaya *et al.* 1998).

1. 6. The Altai

In 1995–96 D. Cheremisin discovered and investigated new petroglyphs in the *Uzhungur* canyon on the right bank of the Djazator river in the south of the Mountain Altai. They are pecked on a large granite boulder and a

cliff and represent images of deer, bovids, elk, ibex, bears and anthropomorphous figures (Fig. 6). The author compared the style of these images with some early examples from other sites of the Altai and Middle Yenisei, and referred to them as “typical Eneolithic petroglyphs” (Cheremisin 1998a). In 1998 analogous images of deer, along with some later depictions, were found at other sites on the same river: *Rybinskoye I and II* (Cheremisin 1998b). In 1996 the work of recording the petroglyphs of the *Djuramal* site on the Karagem river was completed. A total of more than 500 images were discovered here, mainly from the Bronze Age and some from the Scythian Period. One peculiarity of this site is the presence of some very fine images of animals executed by combining the techniques of pecking, abrading and engraving, and also numerous cases of superimposition, which allows more possibilities for establishing the site’s relative chronology (Cheremisin 1998c). In 1999 a new site on the Karagem river, named *Kerim-Dash*, was discovered. The petroglyphs here are executed on the vertical surfaces of schist rocks, and on big boulders on a high slope. Images of horses, deer, ibex and predators are dated to the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age. The researcher paid special attention to the technique of the ancient artists: they began the execution of an image with an engraved sketch, then they carried out a thorough pecking on top of this, while such details as manes and the hair of the horses’ tails, horns, arrows etc, were left engraved. He also copied many engraved inscriptions and pictures recently made by the local Altaian people (Cheremisin 2000a).

In 1996 work on the Ukok Plateau was continued, and its southern part was investigated. New petroglyphs were found on the schist rocks along the *Kara-Chad* brook.



Fig. 5a.



Fig 5b.

Fig. 5a: New site of Chyrgaky in Tuva. Photo – This composition with pecked images of deer, goats and dogs is dated to the Late Bronze Age. The manner of executing the deer antlers is the most characteristic feature of this site. Fig. 5b: This composition with images of deer, goats and a boar is dated to the Scythian period.

There are stylistically homogenous images of bulls, deer, ibex and scenes with hunting anthropomorphous figures in mushroom-like head-dresses, which is very characteristic of Asian Bronze Age rock art (Molodin & Cheremisin 1997, 1999).

In 1996–97 rock art was found on the stones of the megalithic complex near the *Tarkhata* river. This mysterious site, discovered in 1994, consists of stones, rocks and stone rings, forming a circle some 60 m in diameter. Some megaliths used for the construction, as well as nearby

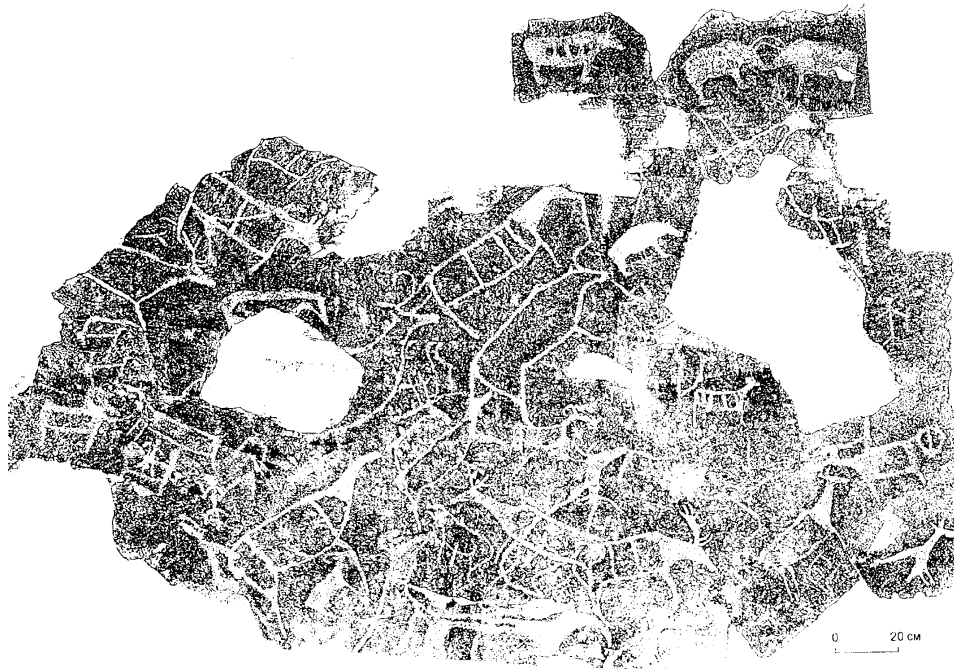


Fig. 6: Multi-figure composition from Uzhungur canyon in the Altai. Images of bovids, deer, elk, ibex, bears and anthropomorphic figures are pecked on a boulder. They possibly date to the Eneolithic. (After Cheremisin).

rocks, bear pecked images of bulls, deer, ibex, camels, horsemen and anthropomorphic figures, including some in mushroom-like head-dresses. The petroglyphs are dated to the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, which may help in dating the megalithic construction (Soyenov *et al.* 2000).

Some scattered and not very impressive figures of bovids and deer, but mostly goats, were found in the valleys of *Sebysteï* and *Kalanegir* in the Chuya Depression (Bourgeois *et al.* 1999).

I. 7. Mongolia

In 1996 a Russian-American-Mongolian expedition, which is carrying out an archaeological investigation of Mongolian caves, discovered paintings in the cave of *Saal'tyn* (Bayan-Khongor aimag). This limestone and sandstone cave is 12 m long, 4 m wide and 2.5 m high. Its mouth faces south, and the walls and ceiling are covered with soot. The pictures are at the level of human height, and form four groups. The most interesting is relatively well preserved and consists of 21 figures and their fragments. One can clearly “read” four anthropomorphic figures and five inclined crosses. Other images are in a worse state of preservation. The figures are executed with a mineral paint of red colour, partly covered with a thin film of calcite. Their date is unclear. The same expedition also discovered three rock art locations in Shine-Zhinst somon. One is located 1 km from the cave of *Tsaagan-Halga* and contains mostly images of goats. Another site, called *Getseliyn-U*s, is a sandstone outcrop 12 m long

and 3 m high, completely covered with numerous petroglyphs. The most expressive are images of bulls, chariots, horses, goats and camels. They can be divided into three chronological groups from the Eneolithic up to the Iron Age. The third site, the *Sanginoi* rock in the Indert locality, contains images of horses, goats and horsemen, probably of very late date (Derevyanko *et al.* 1997: 384-385).

Another Russian-Mongolian-American expedition (V. Kubarev, D. Tseveendorj and E. Jacobson) continued its work which began in 1993 on the territory of the Mongolian Altai (Bayan Olgy aimag in the west of Mongolia). In 1995–1998 they completed the investigation of a colossal rock art complex in the valleys of the *Tsagaan-Salaa* and *Baga-Oigor* rivers. This unique location covers about 20 sq km at an altitude of 2400–2900 m above sea level, and contains thousands of images pecked into boulders and rocky outcrops. They are dated to the Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Medieval period (Fig. 8). Images of elephants (or “mammoths”) were also recorded (Fig. 8: 11) (see Bahn, this volume), which led to speculations about their possibly dating to the Palaeolithic (Tseveendorj) or Mesolithic (Jacobson). The imagery of this complex is incredibly interesting both from the artistic and the semantic point of view, and this is reflected in a whole series of preliminary publications (Tseveendorj *et al.* 1997; Kubarev *et al.* 1998; Jacobson *et al.* 1999; Jacobson 2000a; 2000b; Kubarev & Tseveendorj 2000; Kubarev *et al.* 2000; etc). The wealth of this site can best be comprehended by realizing that, of the approximately 200 known petroglyphic complexes in

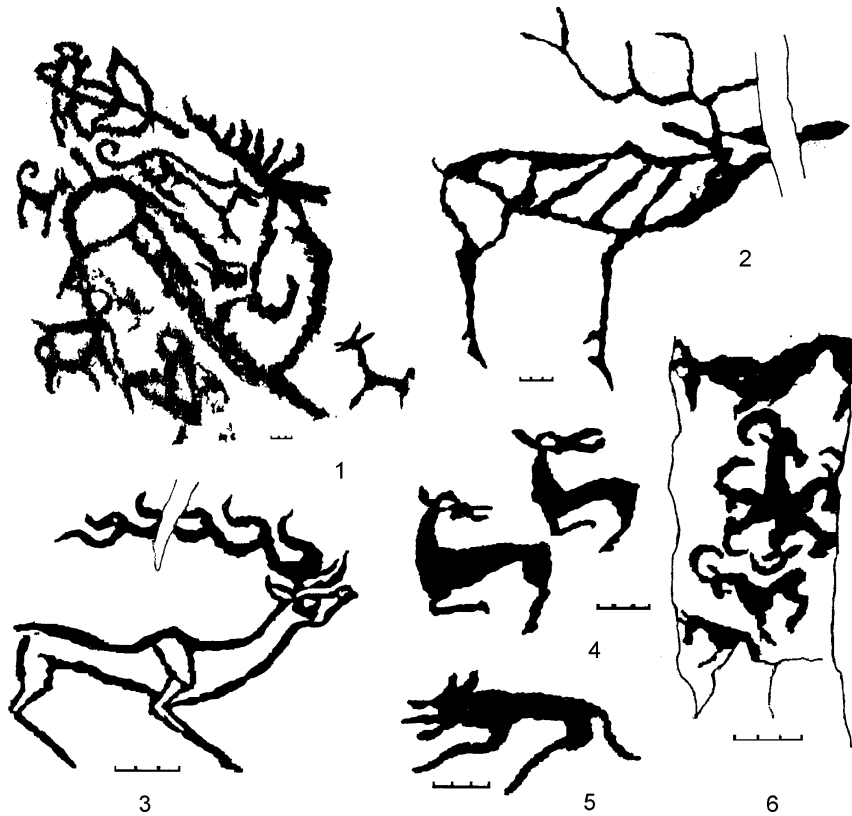


Fig. 7: New images from Eastern Kazakhstan. A hunting scene, images of deer, goats, a predator and a solar symbol are dated to the Early Scythian Period (8th–7th centuries BC). Mayemyr rock art site. (After Samashev, Francfort and others).

Mongolia, this is unquestionably the largest to have been recorded to date, and the quality of much of its imagery is unsurpassed. It may also prove to be one of the largest and finest of all Eurasian sites (Tseveendorj *et al.* 1997). Apart from this major rock art complex, this expedition also discovered some other smaller ones in other districts of Mongolia and investigated many decorated stela. Among the rock art sites one should mention those of *Tsagaan-Gol* (with detailed depictions of ancient weaponry – bows, daggers, spears, darts and cudgels), *Shiveet-Khairikhan* (with finely pecked images of Early Turkic horse-riders), *Tamgat* and especially *Aral-Tolgoi* (Kubarev *et al.* 1998), whose contour images of bulls, ibex, deer and birds (Fig. 8: 7–10) are believed to be the most archaic in this part of Mongolia, possibly dating to the Neolithic – Early Bronze Age (Kubarev *et al.* 1999).

1. 8. Kazakhstan

The Kazakh-French expedition under the leadership of Z. Samashev and H.-P. Francfort continued its systematic search for, and investigation of, rock art sites in Kazakhstan. They investigated rock art sites in *Bayan-Zhurek* (Dzhungarian foothills), with impressive images of “dancing shamans” (anthropomorphous figures with rays around their heads, holding strange objects and with

their legs and arms in a “dancing” position) dating to the Bronze Age (Samashev 1998; Lymer 1998) and in *Terekty-Aulie* in Central Kazakhstan. The petroglyphs here are pecked and abraded on granite outcrops, often on horizontal and inclined panels, which conditioned their unusual compositional structure: the figures are arranged along the whole perimeter of a panel, making a sort of round composition, sometimes with circles and cupules in the centre. The predominant image is a horse (90 % of all zoomorphic figures) depicted in the very characteristic, so-called “Seima-Turbino” style of the Bronze Age. There are also images of snakes, chariots, bulls, camels and fantastic creatures (Samashev *et al.* 2000). In 1997 the expedition, in the course of its archaeological investigation of the necropolis of *Mayemyr 2* (the Altai mountains in Eastern Kazakhstan), discovered a series of rock art sites on rocky outcrops near the cemetery. They are mainly related to the Early Scythian Period (8th–7th centuries BC) and represent images of deer with branched antlers, ibex, boars, an eagle, predators, solar symbols and hunting scenes (Fig. 7). Some new deer-stones were also found in this locality (Samashev, Francfort *et al.* 1998: fig. 3–11).



Fig. 8: New petroglyphs from Mongolian sites. (After Jacobson, Kubarev, Tseveendorj). 1–3 – Shiveet-Khairikhan. Early Middle Ages. 4 – Baga-Oigor/Tsagaan-Salaa. The Scythian period. 5–6 – Baga-Oigor. Compositions from the Bronze Age. 7–10 – Aral-Tolgoi. Archaic images of birds, bulls and other animals. 11 – “mammoths” from Baga-Oigor. Date is indefinite.

I. 9. Kirghizia

In 1996 a Kyrgyz-German expedition carried out archaeological work in central Tien-shan. Among the numerous archaeological sites they found petroglyphs in the locality of *Suttuu-Bulak*. They are pecked on boulders and rocks, and mainly comprise schematic figures of goats and

horsemen, but their date is unknown. They also found two decapitated Turkic statues on the site of *Ayaky-Buletu* (Anke *et al.* 2000). In 1995 the petroglyphs of the previously discovered site of *Uch-Koshkon* were published (Martynov & Miklashevich 1995a), followed in 1997 by those from the *Barscaun* river (Miklashevich

1997). Both sites are situated in the Issyk-Kul region of Kyrgyzstan, and were recorded in the course of work on making an inventory of the archaeological sites of this region. They contain typical images of goats, deer, camels and horsemen, dating to the Epoch of the Early nomads up to Medieval times, but some other interesting images were found, such as bulls and a face-mask, which were hitherto unknown in this area, and which can be tentatively dated to the Bronze Age (Martynov & Miklashevich 1995: Pl. I: 1; Miklashevich 1997: Fig. 3–6).

I. 10. Tadjikistan

Among the numerous rock art sites of the Pamir Plateau, only two were known to contain paintings: the Shakhty Cave and the Kurteke Shelter, and both are considered to date to the Stone Age. Recently another painted composition was found by chance by V. Seleznev, a biologist, on the ceiling of a small shelter near the Naizatash pass, high in the mountains (4132 m above sea level). The drawings were made by a finger or a stick with a red mineral paint, and they depict three ibex, a circle, a possible human outline with a stick, a comb-like sign, and unidentified lines. They have been dated to the Neolithic (Ranov 1995).

II. Works and new discoveries at known sites

II. 1. Angara

Depictions on the rocks on the banks of the Angara have been known since the 17th century, and had been periodically studied by various researchers. Most of the sites were discovered and published by Alexey Okladnikov from the 1930s to the 1960s, but discoveries of new images and compositions at these sites still occur. Thus, the site of *Manzya*, which Okladnikov found in 1937 and where he recorded 41 images, by 1996 had revealed more than 200 images, scattered over 2 km on the riverside cliffs. Among them there are images of elks, deer, horses, bears, boars, goats, dogs, anthropomorphous figures and symbols (Fig. 1: 5) (Drozdov *et al.* 1996). Investigations at the site of *Rybnoye*, known since 1888, revealed that the images published by Okladnikov as being from this locality are actually from other nearby sites. The new images found here are pecked and sometimes abraded on vertical and inclined panels. Most of the images are birds, but there are also anthropomorphs, animals, solar signs and a face-mask. At the known site of *Olenny Utyes* new images have been found: anthropomorphs, animals and a horseman, probably very recent (Zaika *et al.* 1997). In 1997 at the site of *Kamenka 2* (Angara tributary), alongside the composition recorded by Okladnikov, another 14 new multi-figured compositions have been revealed. They are painted with red and brown ochre and represent fantastic face-masks, big anthropomorphous figures in “skeleton” style, shamans, boats, horsemen, birds and numerous symbols (Drozdov

et al. 1996). Some pecked relief figures were also found (this technique was hitherto unknown at this site of limestone cliffs): anthropomorphous figures with hypertrophied shoulders and thin waists, three-fingered hands and “horns” instead of heads (Fig. 1: 4). Excavations on top of the cliff with rock art have revealed a multi-layered offering complex with traces of ritual fires. Within this offerings location, under a stone structure, there was the burial of a man, characteristic of the Serovo stage of the Baikal Neolithic (3rd millennium BC) (Zaika *et al.* 1999).

In 1999 investigations of rocks in the Lower Angara basin were carried out with the aim of identifying a site with images of horsemen, near the village of Klimova, which was mentioned by Messerschmidt 270 years ago. The site was found: it is the so-called “*Pisany Kamen*” and contains five compositions on vertical limestone rocks, painted with red ochre: images of elks (possibly Neolithic), horsemen, an anthropomorphous figure with rays around its head, a heart-like face-mask, and animals (tentatively dated to the Bronze – Early Iron Age). The site is being intensively destroyed because the limestone is unstable and the locals also use the rocks for producing lime (Makulov *et al.* 1999).

II. 2. Yenisei

Work has been carried out at some well-known sites of the Middle Yenisei, with the aim of amplifying old copies, re-investigating the sites, and revealing the state of preservation of the riverside panels after several years of being flooded by the Krasnoyarsk reservoir. In 1996–1997 the re-investigation of petroglyphs on the *Kunya* mountain, which is situated on the left bank of the Yenisei, was undertaken by Miklashevich and Sovetova. This site was found and first recorded by Adrianov in 1904–1907, and his copies were later published by Vyatkina in 1961. The re-investigation has shown that there are two main concentrations of petroglyphs: one – which was known to Adrianov – high up on a slope of the second gully from the north, to which it is very difficult to climb, and the other on the upper horizons of the riverside cliffs. The inner valleys of the massif also have some images, but only rare isolated ones, despite the presence of quite suitable rock surfaces. On examining the petroglyphs that were copied by Adrianov and published by Vyatkina, we discovered that many of those which were published as separate images are, in fact, fragments of very interesting multi-figure compositions. Making copies on mykalent paper, as well as photographing and videoing, enabled us to record these scenes completely. We also improved some details, revealed some engravings, and found some new images there. Taken as a whole, the site contains about three hundred images related to different periods – from the Late Bronze Age (presumably) to the ethnographic present. However, the great majority of the *Kunya* images represent a stylistically homogenous stratum, which we consider it possible to date to the last centuries



Fig. 9: A new composition found at the well-known site of *Tepsei* (Middle Yenisei). Images of a goat and a bull (or, perhaps, a deer with unfinished antlers) are executed in a way that is very characteristic of the Scythian Period style. Anthropomorphic images were, probably, added later. Mykalent copy.

BC – first centuries AD. Stylistically this stratum reflects a replacement of the Tagar art tradition by the Tashtyk art tradition. The main images are: deer (many of them depicted in a characteristic kneeling pose), elks, goats, birds, bears, fantastic animals. There are also lots of figures of armed people: with bows and quivers, chekans and daggers, with plumes or in horned head-dresses. One can pick out the main subjects which are often repeated: combats of warriors, scenes of opposition or fighting of animals, including fantastic creatures (Sovetova & Miklashevich 1998a).

In 1997 at the site on *Tepsei* mountain, already well investigated and fully published (Blednova *et al.* 1995; Sovetova 1995), a beautiful new composition was found and recorded which depicts a bull (?) and a goat whose bodies are decorated with helixes, as well as anthropomorphic figures (probably later additions) and a bird (Fig. 9). The composition is an example of a very decorative art style of the Tagar culture (Early Iron Age).

Two major panels with images of ancient dwellings at the site of *Boyarskaya Pisanitsa* are, probably, the most frequently published compositions in Siberian rock art. Rusakova has found some new images on nearby panels: figures of bulls, deer, dwellings, spirals and circles, human and animal figures. Those panels were covered with lichens and barely visible (Rusakova 1998b).

In 1999 work started on investigating sites in the north-west part of the Minusinsk basin. The petroglyphs here have been known since the late 19th century, and separate images had been published. But for a long time this area, far from the main concentration of rock art sites in the Middle course of the Yenisei, escaped the attention of scholars. The new investigation has revealed a large number of petroglyphs at two locations: *Kedrovaya* and *Kara-Tag* hills. *Kedrovaya*, earlier known as *Oraki*, contains depictions of deer, anthropomorphic figures, horsemen, archers, cauldrons and a monster, dated to the

Early Iron Age, while *Kara-Tag* contains images of two periods: elks, “shamans”, wild horses, deer and various symbols can be dated to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, and anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures to the early 1st millennium AD (Kilunovskaya *et al.* 2000).

II. 3. Tom’

Tomskaya Pisanitsa on the river Tom in Western Siberia is one of the most famous sites, particularly because of its very long and rich historiography. Its petroglyphs have been published many times since 18th century. And it was clear that some of those earlier published pictures have not survived. The expedition of the “Tomskaya Pisanitsa” museum reserve in 1996–97 aimed to reveal these changes at the site, and to make new recordings using modern techniques. Some images, and even a whole panel which had been published before, could not be found, but the expedition also discovered some images that had never been published (Martynov *et al.* 1998), including a composition which was later dubbed “Asia’s northernmost depiction of a chariot”. Depictions at other known sites on the river Tom, such as *Tutalskaya Pisanitsa* and *Visyachy Kamen*, were also investigated, and some new images found (Rusakova & Barinova 1997).

II. 4. The Altai

In 1995 the expedition of Kemerovo University, the CNRS and the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (Novosibirsk) continued its work in the Altai: the investigation focused on the biggest and best-known rock art complex in the valley of *Elangash*. Here thousands of petroglyphs are concentrated, and some of the sites were published in a series of monographs in the 1970s and 1980s by A. Okladnikov and E. Okladnikova. The re-

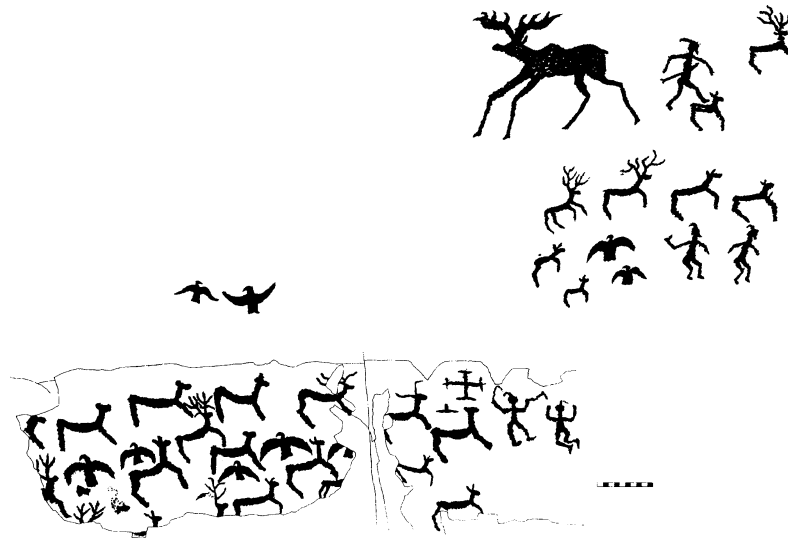


Fig. 10: Petroglyphs on the Kunya mountain, Middle Yenisei. A scene with images of an elk, deer, birds and warriors dated to the last centuries BC.

investigation has shown that some fragmented and engraved images had been left unpublished, and some images that are unusual for the Altai were also found, such as face-masks of the Okunev culture type and depictions in the Tashtyk style (both styles are characteristic of Yenisei rock art). The expedition also studied the processes connected with the destruction of rock surfaces. The main cause is the series of abrupt changes of temperature during the year, and the influence of the extreme climate of the high mountains (Kubarev & Sher 1996).

Other major, well-known and frequently investigated sites, such as *Chaganka*, *Kalbak-Tash*, *Dzhalgyz-Tobe*, *Turu-Alty* and others, continued to attract the attention of various investigators, and many new panels, images and details are being revealed with every examination of these rich rock art locations (Kubarev & Jacobson 1996; Kubarev *et al.* 2000; Cheremisin 2000b and others). Kubarev discovered new images at the very well-known site of *Kurman-Tau*, which, in his opinion, may be the most ancient petroglyphs in the Chuya steppe. They are contour figures of animals combining features of an elk and a bull, and images of deer and bulls, very patinated and dating to the Eneolithic or Early Bronze Age by their style (Kubarev 2000a).

II. 5. Mongolia

The decorated cave of *Khoit-Tsenker-Agui* discovered in 1952 in western Mongolia and claimed by Okladnikov and his followers to be of Palaeolithic age, is still the subject of numerous discussions and an attractive subject for investigations by various researchers. Two brief new studies were published: one, naming the site as the “Blue cave I” and with no reference to the numerous earlier studies, had new tracings of some paintings (Birchall

1997), while another gave a short history of the study of the cave and the characteristics of its present state, concluding that a new survey and campaign of copying are needed to prove or disprove the alleged age of this site (Jaubert & Giscard 1997). The latter researchers’ Mission has also investigated surrounding areas and found pecked images on open-air rocks (Jaubert & Giscard 1997, Fig. 2).

II. 6. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia

Work has continued at all the major known sites of this region, such as *Tamgaly*, *Eshki-Olmes*, *Ters*, *Karasai* and *Arpauzen* in Kazakhstan by Francfort, Maryashev, Rogozhinski, Samashev and others; *Saimaly-Tash* in Kirghizia by Tashbaeva; *Sarmishsai* in Uzbekistan by Khudzhanazarov and Rozvadovski. The goals of these continuing investigations were to re-confirm the accuracy of previously documented recordings, make necessary retracings (as an example – see a very accurate amplified copy of one of the panels from *Tamgaly* – Fig. 11) and collect new images and scenes for further study; an examination of the state of the sites’ preservation was also involved. Unfortunately, this work is not well reflected in publications, but one may note three monographs published during the period: on the rock art of Uzbekistan (Khodzhanazarov 1995; Sztuka naskalna Uzbekistanu 1997) and Kazakhstan (Mar’jasev *et al* 1998).

III. Problems of flooded sites and publication of old materials.

In Soviet times, on some big Siberian rivers, such as the Yenisei, its tributary, the Angara and others, dams for

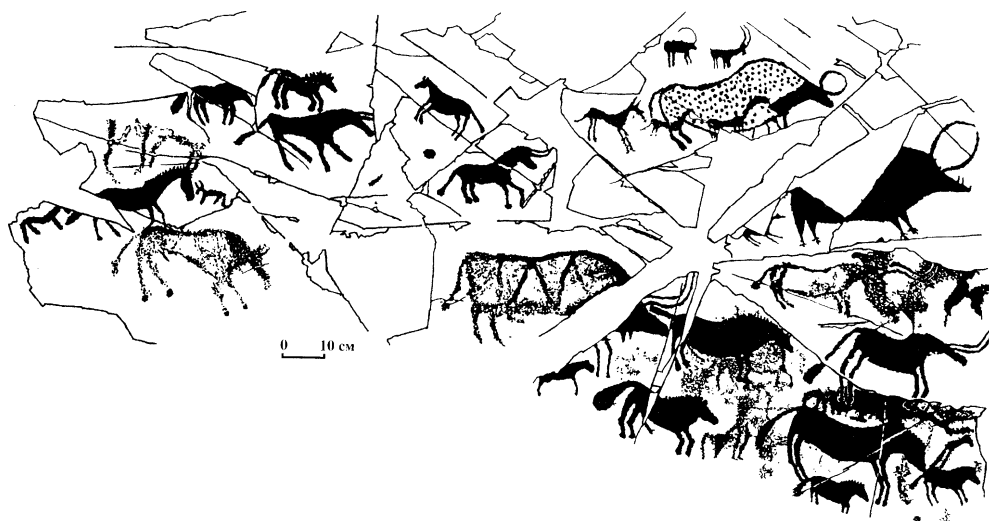


Fig. 11: Bulls, horses and goats on the rocks of Tamgaly in Kazakhstan. Bronze Age. Pecking. (After Rogozhinski).

Hydroelectric Power Stations were planned and erected. The Yenisei is the biggest Siberian river, its basin is one of the world's richest rock art areas, and this river suffered the most during “the great constructions of Communism”. On its banks there were thousands of archaeological sites, including first-class rock art locations. Huge amounts of money were assigned for preliminary investigations in the zones of flooding, and big archaeological expeditions worked in the 1960s and early 70s, trying to save this heritage, at least for scholarship. Special groups were organized for the documenting of rock art on the riverside cliffs. One group, under the leadership of Y. Sher, worked in the zone of flooding by the Krasnoyarsk dam in the middle course of the Yenisei. Another group, under the leadership of M. Devlet, worked in the zone of flooding by the Sayan dam in the upper course of the Yenisei in Tuva (Fig. 12). Both groups, during several field seasons, documented and copied thousands of images from dozens of sites. The preparation of these extensive materials for publication took years, and some of them began to be published only recently. Y. Sher, with co-authors, has published his materials from such Middle Yenisei sites as *Oglakhty* (Sher *et al* 1994), *Tepsei* and *Ust'Tuba* (Blednova *et al.* 1995), *Cheremushny Log* and *Ust'-Kulog* (Sher & Savinov 1999) in the series of volumes entitled “Répertoire des Pétroglyphes d'Asie Centrale” and edited by H.-P. Francfort and Y. Sher. M. Devlet, who published part of her materials from the Upper Yenisei sites in the 1970s–80s, in 1998 published a monograph devoted to the petroglyphs of the *Aldy-Mozaga* mountain. This site which contained beautiful compositions (such as the one in Fig. 13) from the Bronze Age up to the 1st millennium AD has already spent many years at the bottom of the Sayan reservoir (Devlet 1998).

The flooding of the sites on the big Siberian rivers in

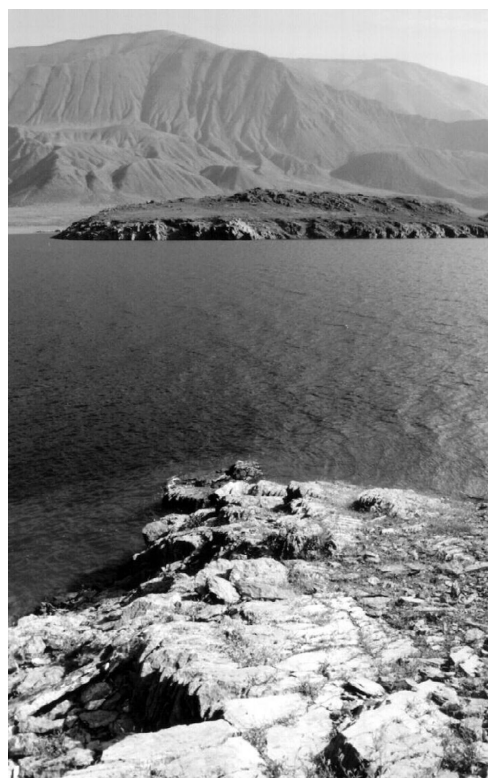


Fig. 12: A view of the rock art area flooded by waters of the Sayan dam on the Upper Yenisei. In the foreground one can see the upper rocks of the famous Mughur-Sargol site. The “island” in the background is the top of the Usty-Mozaga mountain, whose slopes contained many decorated panels.

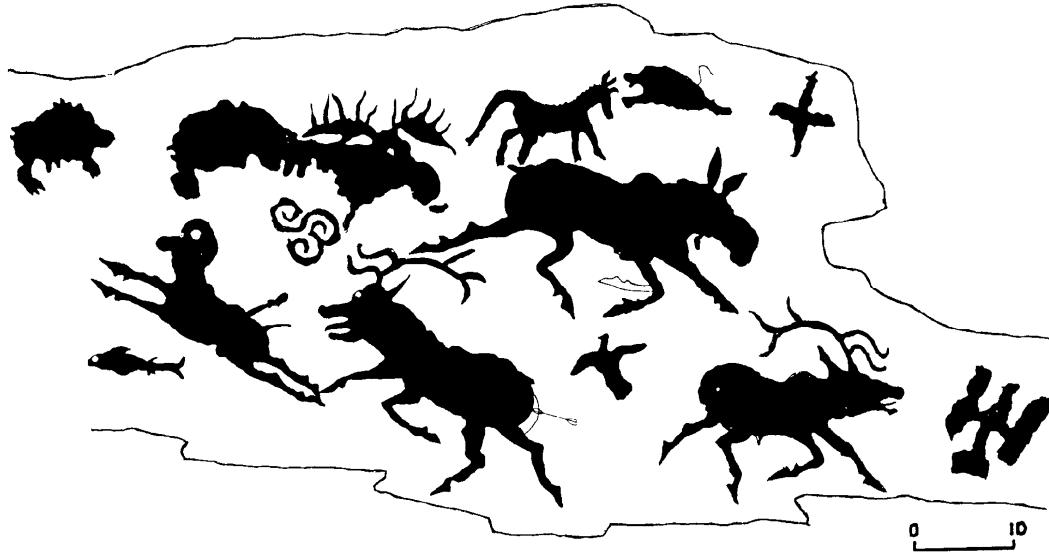


Fig. 13: A composition from the Aldy-Mozaga site in Tuva. Pecking and engraving. Dated to the last centuries BC – first centuries AD. The site was flooded by the Sayan dam on the Upper Yenisei. (After Devlet).



Fig. 14: Rock panels of the Tepsei site, which used to be under the waters of the Krasnoyarsk reservoir. In the upper part of the picture one can see a panel with a contour figure of a deer. The panel itself is well preserved, but it is not accessible because of the erosion of soil and the rock base. The lower horizons had crumbled to pieces.

the 1960s-70s not only stimulated an intensive study of rock art and a growing interest in it, but also affected some aspects of research for many years afterwards. Thus, by the 1990s, there had arisen the problem of the deterioration and preservation of rock art sites. Concerning the Yenisei, the most crucial aspect of this problem was the state of the flooded sites. Since the mid-1970s the riverside panels of such sites as Oglakhty, Sukhanikha, Tepsei, Ust'-Tuba, Turan and others had been underwater, but in the 1990s the water level in the Krasnoyarsk reservoir began to drop, and in some years reached the original Yenisei level. On examining the panels in 1990, and comparing them with old recordings, we were surprised how little they had suffered from being underwater: nearly all the panels, all the depictions, including one painted with ochre, had survived. At that time we concluded that the destructive consequences of flooding for rock art were very exaggerated, but we did not take into account the long-term consequences. Another examination of the same sites in 1997 showed that even the preserved panels had begun to decay. The water eroded and destroyed the rock bases and washed away the soil; some low panels are crumbling to pieces, and though the upper panels are still preserved, they have become almost inaccessible to investigators because of damage to the rocks below (Fig. 14) and it is very possible that in the future they may be lost too (Sovetova & Miklashevich 1998b).

IV. Other kinds of rock art

Apart from images on rocks proper (such as cliffs, boulders, rocky outcrops etc), other kinds of imagery are

considered to be related to rock art in Asian archaeology. Generally speaking, any images executed on stone fall within the field of rock art research: various stone sculptures, decorated stelae and slabs used both as cult objects and for funeral constructions, engraved pebbles and small stone slabs found in settlements and burials. Those kinds of rock art are of special importance since, unlike images on open rocks, they are one way or another connected with the archaeological complexes from which they originate, and this is significant for the chronological and cultural attribution, and stylistics and semantics not only of those depictions but also of their analogies at open-air sites.

IV. 1. Decorated grave slabs

One of the peculiarities of Asian archaeology, and this is especially characteristic for South Siberia, is the widespread use of stone slabs for the construction of burials and burial mounds (kurgans). These slabs are very often decorated. Sometimes the images were executed specially for the burial or the kurgan, and in such cases they form part of the funerary ritual. In other cases the decorated slabs or their fragments were used simply as a construction feature. They can be slabs broken off from the nearest rock art locations, or stelae or statues taken from earlier shrines and cemeteries. In any case, the discovery of images in archaeological complexes, with analysis of their stratigraphy, location, composition, style, connection with the burial etc., enables researchers to define their cultural attribution quite precisely and to correlate them with images on rocks. The tradition of the use of decorated slabs for funerary constructions was maintained for millennia by various peoples and cultures, and is especially characteristic of the Minusinsk basin. This has made it possible to build a very precise chronological scheme for that region's rock art and to extend it to the petroglyphs of contiguous territories.

Many especially interesting depictions have been found in excavations of graves of the Okunev culture – one of the most dazzling and mysterious cultures of the Bronze Age, famous for its unique artistic monuments. In 1995 a wonderful depiction was published of a fantastic character from Okunev mythology (Fig. 15: 1), which was found earlier in the excavation of a kurgan of the Tagar culture in Khakasia. This was a big decorated stone slab which once stood, probably, in a Bronze Age sanctuary, and was later re-used as a tombstone for a grave of the Early Iron Age (Pyatkin & Kurochkin 1995). In 1997 Leontjev published a drawing of another decorated slab which was discovered earlier by Sevostyanova on the Askyz river in Khakasia (Leontjev 1997). On this slab two similar syncretic creatures are depicted, along with other images, and they are superimposed on a typical Okunev face-mask (Fig. 15: 2). The excavation of the Okunev kurgan near the village of Mokhov revealed images on the slabs of the stone grave-cist, such as an engraved depiction of a flying

snake-dragon, a pecked figure of a bull, and an anthropomorphic image (Kirginekov 1977, Fig. 5–7); kurgans near the village of Uibat yielded a whole series of anthropomorphic face-masks pecked on burial slabs, as well as depictions of a typical Okunev ritual vessel, a bull and some ornamental motifs (Lazaretov 1997, Pl. XI–XII); on slabs from kurgans near the village of Verkhny Askyz were found an engraved image of an elk, painted with ochre grids, and with pecked and painted fantastic face-masks (Fig. 15: 4), a fragment of a fantastic beast (Fig. 15: 5) and a unique ochre image of two syncretic creatures with human and animal features in a heraldic pose (Fig. 15: 3) (Khavrin 1997; Kovalev 1997).

Another cultural tradition which provided many depictions on grave slabs was that of the Karasuk culture (Late Bronze Age). The most characteristic images of this period are chariots and horses, including the very first figures of horsemen; the most characteristic style is geometric and schematic (Miklashevich 1995). Slabs with such depictions were often found in later kurgans, mainly those of the Tagar culture from the Early Iron Age (Fig. 17: 1, 2). They are usually very thin and rather small slabs with miniature figures, but in 1998 Leontjev discovered a massive sandstone slab, one side of which was entirely covered with pecked images of chariots and unidentified geometric motifs. The slab had been re-used for constructing a perimeter of the Tagar kurgan and was half buried in the ground between two also re-used Okunev stelae (Leontjev 2000). In 1997 Filippova published unique materials from her earlier excavations of the Karasuk cemetery of Khara-Khaya. One of the graves was constructed of stone slabs decorated with images of chariots, a wagon, a human figure, horses and other animals (Fig. 17: 3). The images were clearly related to the same culture as the cemetery; the author connected them with the funerary ritual and even proposed a new term 'funeral petroglyphs' (Filippova 1997). This find provided a sounder basis for attributing numerous images of the same style on open rocks to the Karasuk culture (Sovetova & Miklashevich 1999: 60–62).

In the course of an excavation of the cemetery of Esino III (southern Khakasia) dated to the Tesin culture (final centuries BC), numerous decorated slabs were found. About 40 of them looked very specific, covered with depictions of spirals, interwoven and meandering lines (Fig. 20). The conditions of their discovery enabled the author of the excavation to correlate them with the period of the cemetery's construction, and on this basis to identify an absolutely independent and new artistic tradition which was completely different from the figurative art tradition of the previous periods. The same depictions were also found in other cemeteries and on open rocks (Savinov 1995a).

These examples demonstrate the importance of such finds for the chronology of art on the rocks, i.e. how archaeology helps rock art research. But there was also an interesting case where rock art helped archaeology –

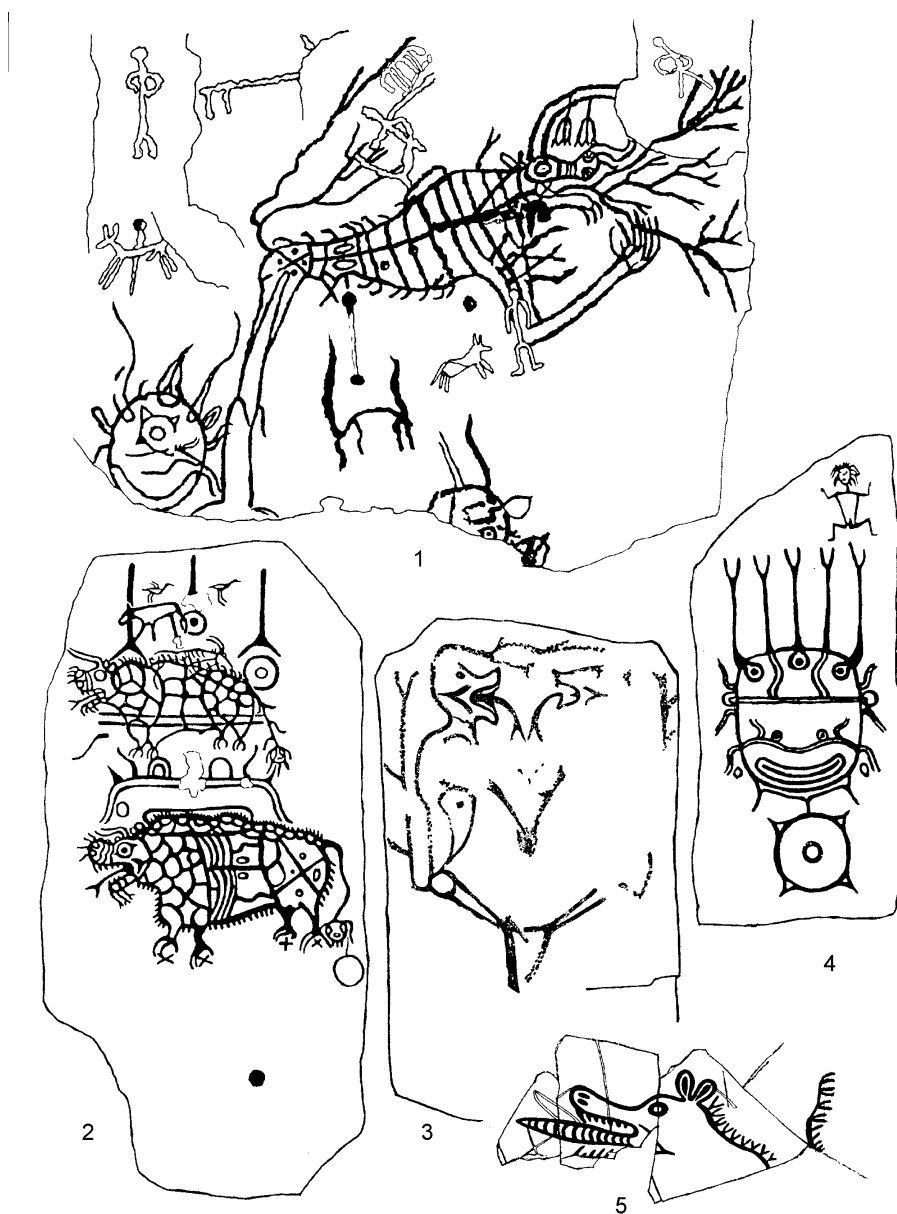


Fig. 15: Images of the Okunev culture (Bronze Age, South Siberia) on stone slabs which were used in burial constructions. 1 – Byrganov. Depiction of a fantastic creature, combining features of a bird and various animals, with fragments of three face-masks. This composition was pecked on the slab in the 2nd millennium BC and probably stood in the open air for some time, after which the small figures of humans and animals were added. Then the slab was re-used as a tombstone for a grave dating to the 7th century BC. (After Pyatkin & Kurochkin). 2 – Stela from the Azkyz river. Images of two fantastic creatures superimposed on a face-mask. Pecking. (After Leontjev). 3 – The cemetery of Verkhny Azkyz I. Depiction of fantastic creatures in a heraldic position, painted with ochre. The left image is partly preserved. (After Kovalev). 4 - The cemetery of Verkhny Azkyz I. Depiction of a face-mask, solar symbol and a female figure. Pecking and ochre. (After Kovalev). 5 - The cemetery of Verkhny Azkyz I. Fragment of an image of a predator. (After Kovalev).

images found on grave slabs helped to date the grave. In 1995 the excavation of a single kurgan near the Zhalgyz-Tobe hill (a famous rock art location) in the Altai was completed. The kurgan had a stone construction in a form of a vault, made of slabs, some of whose internal surfaces were decorated with images of horses and goats. The burial had no grave goods, and was supposedly dated to the

Bronze Age by the style of the images (Kubarev 2000b).

IV. 2. Monuments

Stone statues and stelae, an integral part of the historical landscape of the Eurasian steppes, constitute another kind of rock art. Combining relief carving with engraving, painting, pecking and polishing techniques on their flat

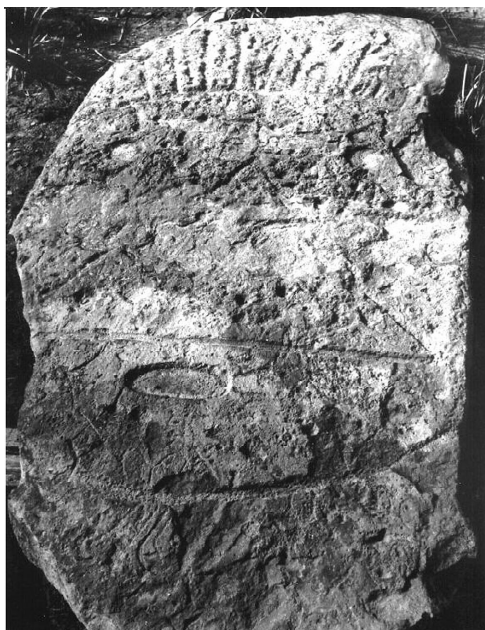


Fig. 16: Decorated stone stela of the Okunev culture, which was re-used for perimeter construction of the Early Iron Age kurgan. The depicted image of a face-mask with a "crown" of rays is, probably, the biggest of all known images of this kind (the height of the slab is 2.5 m). The stela is now installed in the unique open-air museum of decorated slabs from burial constructions in the village of Poltavov, Khakasia.

surfaces, they also often served as rock panels for later artists. They can be divided into three major cultural-chronological groups: the statues of the Okunev culture (Early Bronze Age), the so-called "deer-stones" (Late Bronze Age – Early Iron Age) and the statues of the Ancient Turkic peoples (Early Middle Ages). While the Okunev monuments are known from a limited area of South Siberia, the deer-stones and the Turkic statues were widespread all over the vast mountain-steppe areas of Central Asia. Hundreds of them have survived, and many are now in museum collections. The publications of the past 5 years have mainly been devoted to analyses of individual monuments and the entire collections of some museums. One such piece of analytical work was carried out on the impressive deer-stone collection from the Republic of Tuva, housed primarily in Kyzyl museum (Kilunovskaya & Semenov 1998, 1999). In this two-part work the authors fully published all recent finds of deer-stones, providing a thorough analysis of their typology, cultural attribution, subjects, style and semantics. These stelae represent a warrior figure, but without clear human features. They are usually divided into three zones by two horizontal lines, depicting a necklace and belt; the upper part shows earrings, with three oblique lines in place of the face; the lower part has weaponry attached to the belt; the area between the necklace and the belt is completely covered with animal images, most often highly stylized deer figures (Fig. 18: 1).

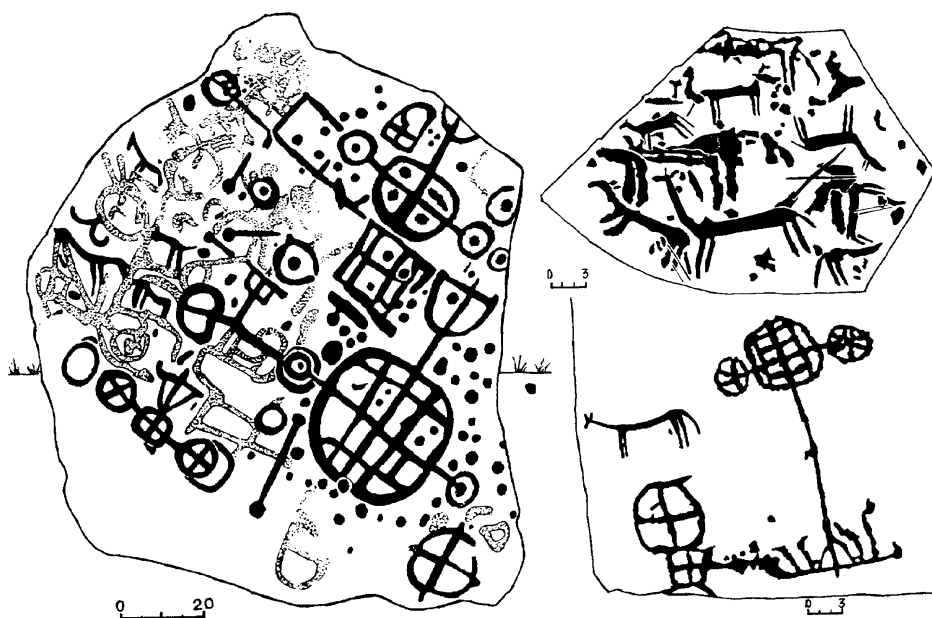


Fig. 17: Depictions of the Karasuk culture (Late Bronze Age) on stone slabs. 1 – stone stela with depictions of chariots, which was re-used for construction of later kurgan. Nizhnyaya Baza, Khakasia (After Leontjev). 2 – stone slab with depictions of horses executed in very characteristic manner – the so-called "Karasuk style". Found in a kurgan at Esino, Khakasia. (After Savinov). 3 – fragment of a stone slab with depictions of chariots and a horse. These images were found in a kurgan of the Karasuk culture (Khara-Khaya cemetery, Khakasia) and are believed to have been executed specially for the burial (After Philippova).

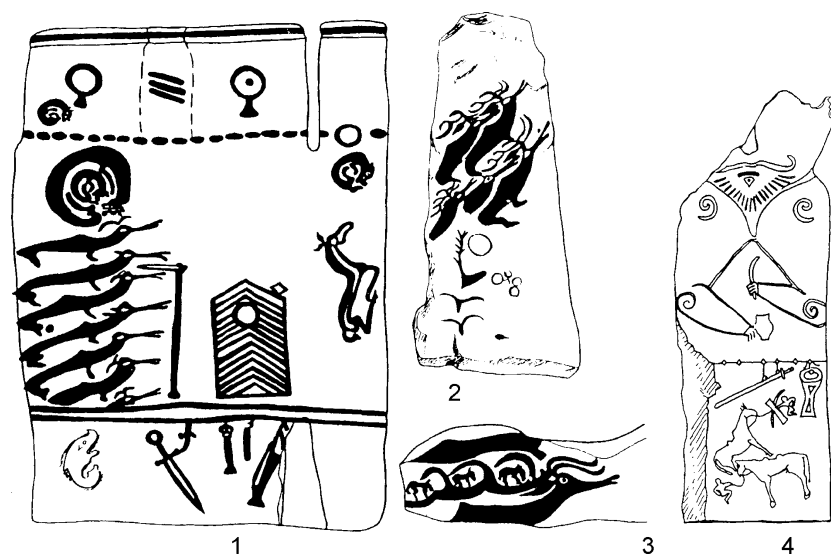


Fig. 18: Rock art images executed on stone stelae. 1–3 – Deer stones from Tuva (1 – Kosh-Pei hill, 4 sides of the stone; 2 – White Lake; 3 – Saygyn). This kind of decorated stone stelae was erected in the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age (beginning in the 1st millennium BC) over a vast territory from Mongolia to the Danube. They represent a warrior figure with weaponry and covered with animal images, most often highly stylized figures of deer. Images in exactly the same style also occur on rocks all over Central Asia (After Semenov & Kilunovskaya). 4 – Stone stela from Mongolia depicting a bearded Turkic warrior. Early Middle Ages (6th–9th centuries AD). In its lower part there is an engraved scene with two kneeling men holding two horses. (After Bayar & Erdenebaatar).

Mongolia is especially rich in deer-stones and Ancient-Turkic statues, so rich that they are still being discovered and documented. The thorough documentation of Mongolia's Ancient-Turkic statues was begun in the Bayan-Olgyn aimag. In this district 90 statues were discovered or investigated and documented (Bayar & Erdenebaatar 1999). All the statues are similar iconographically, and depict a standing man of Mongoloid appearance, with a vessel in his hand and weaponry hanging on his belt. They are dated to the 6th–8th centuries AD, and several to the 8th–10th centuries. The most interesting statue is that from the Khar Yamaty-Gol locality. It is executed in the form of a bearded man with a vessel in his left hand and a sabre in the right hand. In the lower part of the statue's flat surface there is an engraved composition which depicts two kneeling human figures holding two horses, and crossed depictions of a quiver and a bow (Fig. 18: 4). The well-illustrated catalogue of the Turkic statues of the neighbouring Altai mountains was published by Kubarev (1997); and many other new deer-stones and statues were discovered along with the archaeological survey and search for rock art sites in other districts of Mongolia (Kubarev & Tseveendorj 2000), Kazakhstan and Kirgizia.

IV. 3. Portable objects

Engravings on pebbles and small stone slabs are to be found in sites of various periods all over the world. But in

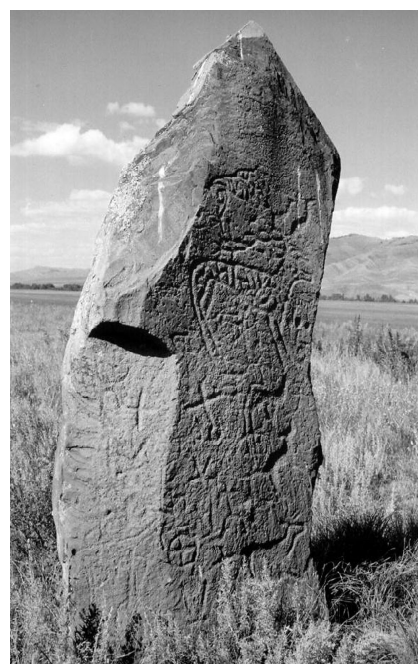


Fig. 19: Decorated stone stelae are still a very characteristic feature of the South Siberian landscape. This one was erected as a corner stone of a kurgan of the Tagar culture (Early Iron Age in Khakasia) and had been decorated with ornamented images of deer, a boar and a bird in the same period. Such stelae were often used as appropriate surfaces for executing rock art by later people.

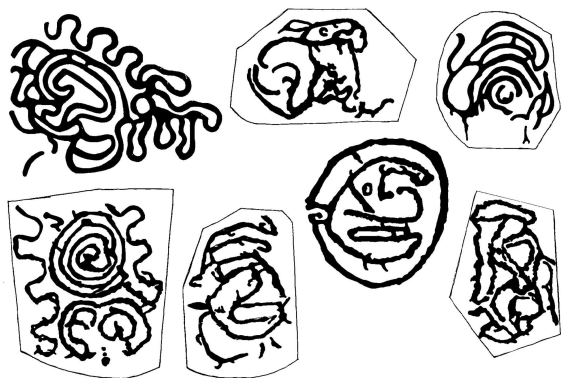


Fig. 20a.

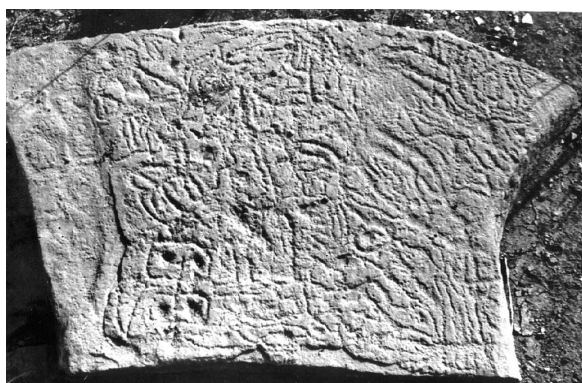


Fig. 20b.

Fig. 20: Depictions of so-called “labyrinths” attributed to the Tesin period (2nd-1st centuries BC) of the Minusinsk basin. These spirals, interwoven and meandering lines were first discovered on slabs from burial constructions dated to the Tesin period, which made it possible to attribute similar depictions on open-air slabs and rocks. This art tradition is very different from previous and subsequent ones, which were very realistic, and is connected with eastern Hunnic influence. (After Savinov).

the archaeology of Northern and Central Asia they had escaped the attention of scholars until the recent discovery by Savinov at the settlement of Torgazhak in Khakasia. The main sensation of the excavation of this settlement dating to the Late Bronze Age was the discovery of a large series (222 items) of miniature pebbles with very fine engraved lines depicting images of human faces and decorated clothing (Fig. 21: 1–6). The full publication of these materials (Savinov 1996) created an increasing interest in this kind of art and other publications followed, mainly devoted to analyzing old materials in a wider historical context. The problem of the correlation of such objects found in various areas of Northern Asia was addressed by Krupyanko and Tabarev, who published the first compendium of all known engraved pebbles from

sites in the Russian Far East, Eastern Siberia and the Chukotka Peninsula (Krupyanko & Tabarev 1996). Aseev compared engraved pebbles from Siberia and Alaska and found some common features (Aseev 1998). Kiryak published and analyzed all previously known and some new pebbles with engravings found in the sites of the Chukotka Peninsula (Kiryak 2000).

V. Dating, chronology and cultural attribution

Stylistic analysis remains the leading method of cultural-chronological attribution for the rock art of the region. As mentioned above, Asian archaeology provides many possibilities for researchers to compare numerous decorated objects from dated archaeological sites (from various periods and cultures) with stylistically and iconographically similar images on rocks. In South Siberia, and especially the Minusinsk Basin, archaeology is highly developed through the number of excavated sites and well-founded cultures and chronological periods. A detailed and fairly exact chronology of the archaeological cultures that existed there has been worked out, and forms the pattern for investigations of the neighbouring regions; and the same situation applies to the study of petroglyphs. Chronological sequences of the rock art styles of the Middle Yenisei area have been worked out not only by traditional methods of dating but also thanks to such a unique phenomenon as the use of decorated slabs in the burial-ground constructions of different periods. The results of many years of study of the main rock art sites in the Middle Yenisei basin by the Petroglyphic Group from Kemerovo University (Pyatkin *et al.* 1998) have been assessed by Sovetova & Miklashevich (1999). They have analyzed the stylistic features of rock art imagery from the sites of Oglakhty, Sukhanikha, Bychikha, Shalabolino and Tepsei, and on this basis have divided it into eight cultural-chronological groups from the Stone Age up to the ethnographic present (Fig. 22).

The same work has also been carried out for other regions and sites. Thus, a chronological sequence was constructed for several rock art sites investigated in the valley of the Ursul river in the Altai (Fig. 23) (Miklashevich 2000); and for a rock art complex investigated on the Ukok plateau, also in the Altai (Fig. 24) (Molodin & Cheremisin 1995). The latter was recently made even more detailed by one of the authors, and correlated with other archaeological complexes and cultures: the images which were earlier attributed to the “Stone Age”, were defined as “Palaeolithic”; the general “Bronze Age” was divided into three stages, and their respective images attributed to the Afanasievo culture (end of the 4th – beginning of the 2nd millennia BC), to the Developed Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC) and to the Late Bronze Age; petroglyphs of the “Early Iron Age” were also divided into those related to the Mayemyr culture (8th–7th centuries BC) and the Pazyryk culture (6th–2nd centuries BC) (Molodin 1997, Fig. 2). Kubarev

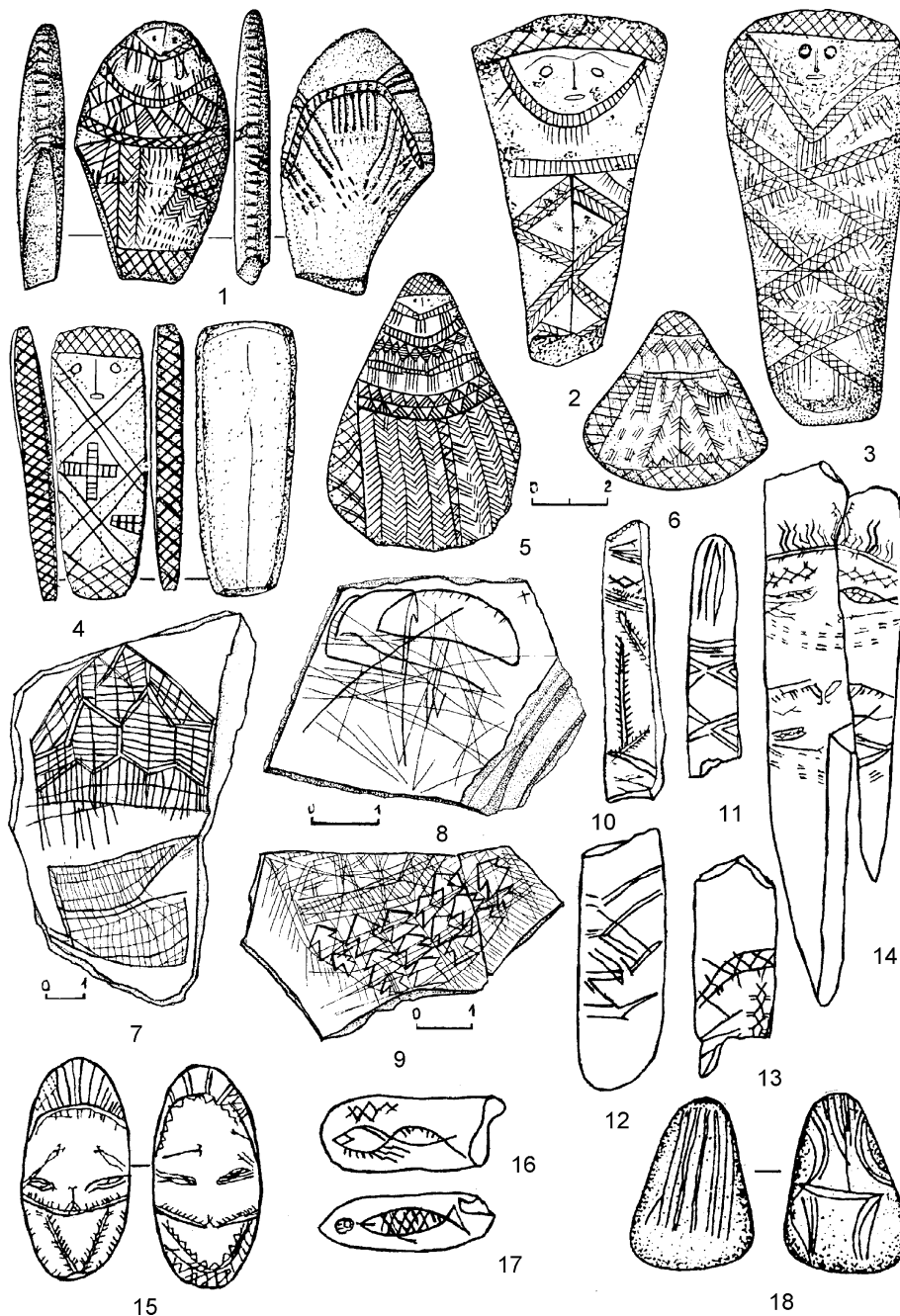


Fig. 21: Engravings on pebbles found in archaeological sites of Siberia. 1–6 – anthropomorphic images and ornaments on pebbles from the Late Bronze Age settlement of Torgazhak, Khakasia, South Siberia (after Savinov); 7–9 – ornamental compositions, possibly presenting a “dwelling” (7) and “mushroom symbols” (8–9) from sites dated to 2500 BP. Chukotka peninsula, North of the Russian Far East (after Kiryak); 10–17 – images of fish, masks and ornaments on pebbles from the Angara, Eastern Siberia. Date unknown. (after Klimashevski); 18 – engraved lines on a pebble from the Neolithic site of Tetukhe, South of Russian Far East (after Krupyanko).

proposed a chronological sequence for the rock art of the Altai in general, including both its Russian and its Mongolian parts (Kubarev 1999). Martynov criticized the practice of correlating specific groups of petroglyphs with archaeological cultures, claiming that “the rock art of this or that territory is not a part of an archaeological culture

existing on the same territory, since this is constructed by us on the basis of archaeological complexes... Rock art is a totally different cultural-archaeological sphere Rock art is connected with broad historical-geographical regions, with the environment and the mythology of this or that natural-historical zone” (Martynov 1997). In his opinion,


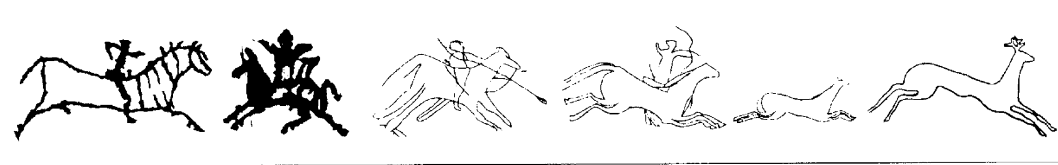


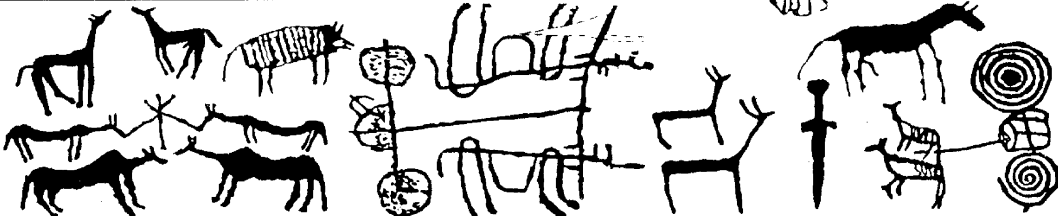


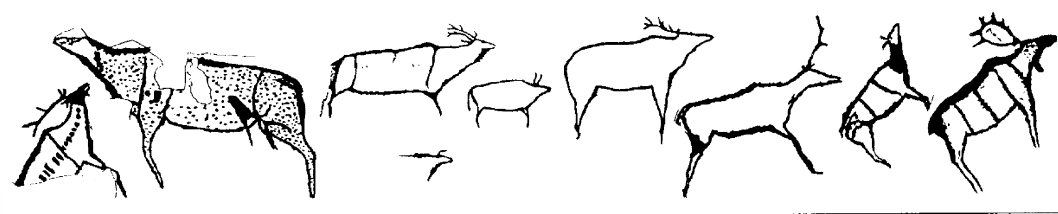
Ethnographic Period	
Early Middle Ages	
Tashtyk culture	
Early Iron Age Tagar culture	
Late Bronze Age Karasuk culture	
Early Bronze Age Okunevo culture	
Stone Age (?) "Angara" style	
"Minusinsk" style	

Fig. 22: Chronological column for the imagery in rock art sites of the Middle Yenisei.

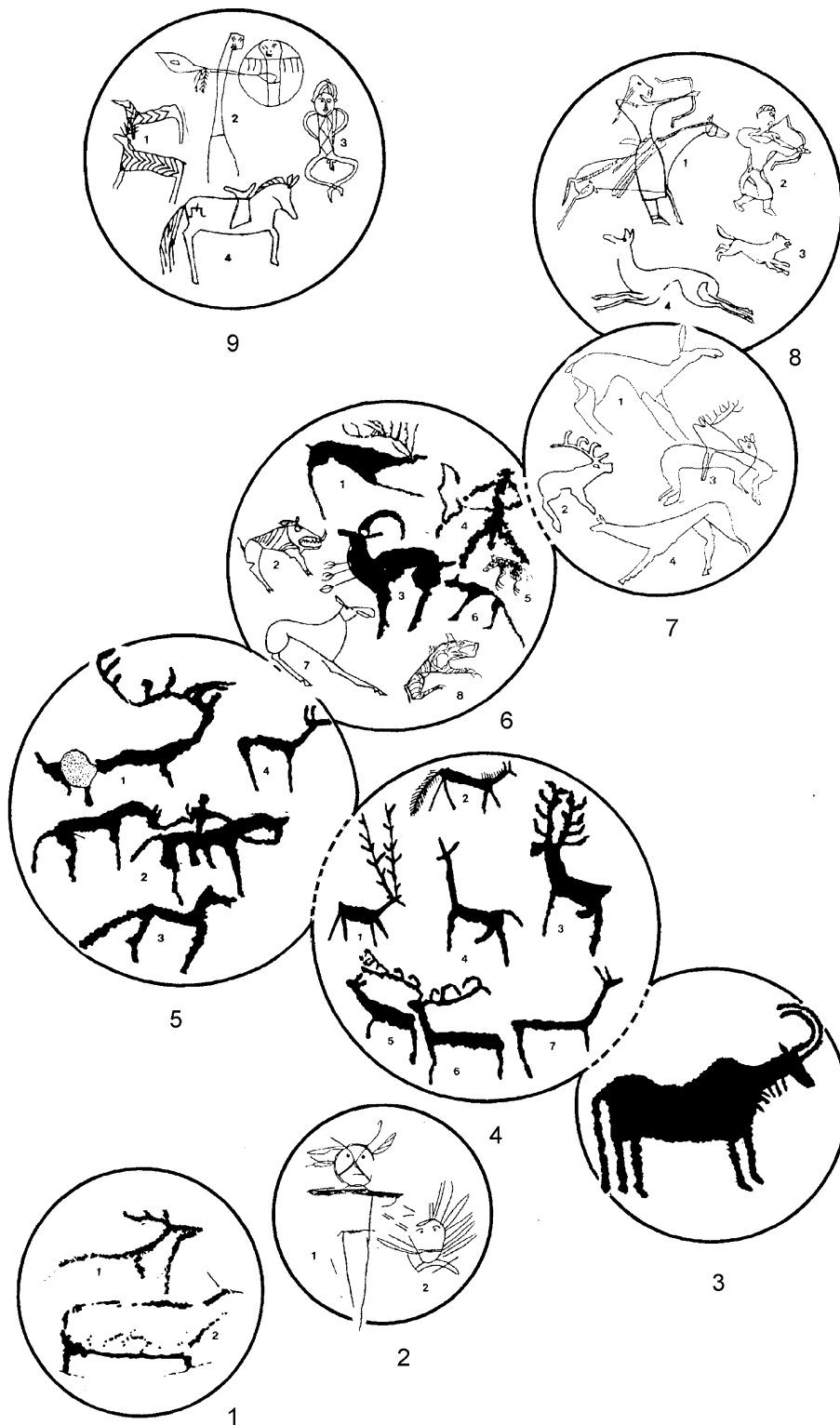


Fig. 23: Chronological column for petroglyphs of the Ursul valley in the Altai. 1 – Stone Age (?); 2 – Bronze Age (Karakol culture); 3 – Bronze Age (“Kalbak-Tash style”); 4 – Late Bronze Age; 5 – Pre-Scythian Period; 6 – Scythian Period; 7 – Post-Scythian period; 8 – Early Turkic Epoch; 9 – Ethnographic period. The adjoining circles show continuity of the art traditions.

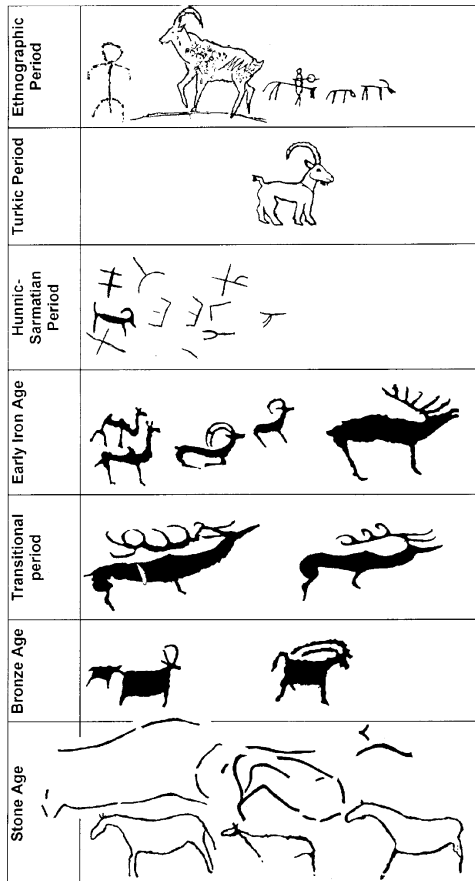


Fig. 24: Chronological column for the imagery of rock art sites of the Ukok plateau (Altai). (After Molodin & Cheremisin).

each such zone has its main image or symbol which appeared in the Neolithic and did not change much through time. For the forested Siberian zone, that symbol is an image of elk, so Martynov showed the “typological-chronological development” of the elk image, using the example of Tomskaya Pisanitsa, and dividing the elk imagery of this site into eight types according to their technique, style and iconography (Fig. 25).

The most noteworthy discussion on chronology was that on the problem of the earliest images in rock art of the region (see Bahn, this volume). A number of publications by Molodin & Cheremisin, including a book (Molodin & Cheremisin 1999), were devoted to the petroglyphs of the Kalgoot Mine site on the Ukok plateau, situated in the high mountains of the Altai at the junction of the borders of Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China. This site contains some badly preserved, contour figures of bovids, wild horses and deer, which look very different from most images on the plateau, in the Altai and other regions, dating to the Bronze Age and later. On the other hand, the authors see some similarity of those images with European Palaeolithic art, especially with the recently discovered petroglyphs in open-air sites. Analyzing the style and

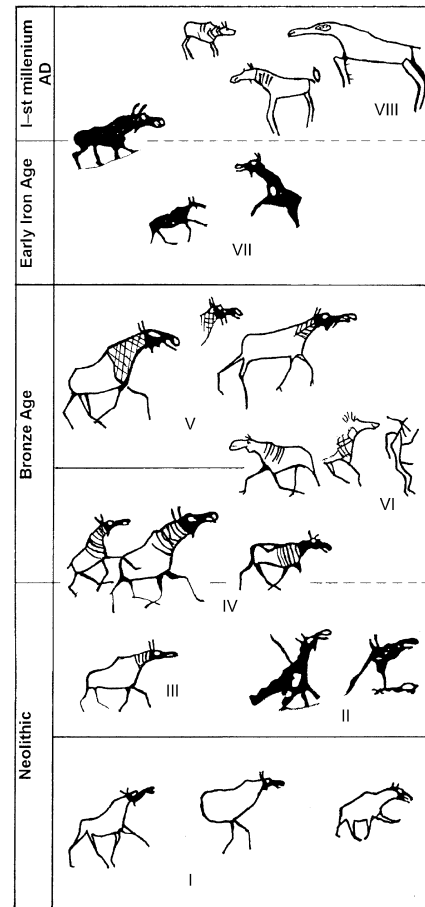


Fig. 25: Typological-chronological development of elk images at Tomskaya Pisanitsa (a rock art site on the Tom river). Type I – elk figures with pecked contours, heads in silhouette, no cross lines; type II – fully pecked profile images; type III – bodies with pecked contour, heads in silhouette, cross lines in the necks; type IV – pecked contour, abraded heads and cross lines in necks and chests, animals are depicted running; type V – all contours and heads are abraded after pecking, necks are covered with fine engraved grids; type VI – deeply abraded and highly graphical figures; type VII – silhouettes of the figures are fully abraded and their contours are deeply carved; type VIII – schematic engraved contour figures. (After Martynov).

iconography, pecking technique and patination, as well as the terrain of the site, and presenting a number of analogies with both Europe and Asia, Molodin & Cheremisin attributed this series of images to the end of the Upper Palaeolithic, or, in any case, considered them to be the most ancient in the rock art of the Altai. Kubarev does not agree with this dating, considers that Molodin & Cheremisin have exaggerated the uniqueness of the Kalgoot figures, and gives examples of similar figures from the other Altai sites (Fig. 26). In his opinion, some of them, such as life-size figures of deer from the Kuyus cave (Fig. 26: 1) and from Kalbak-Tash (Fig. 26: 2–4), are indeed

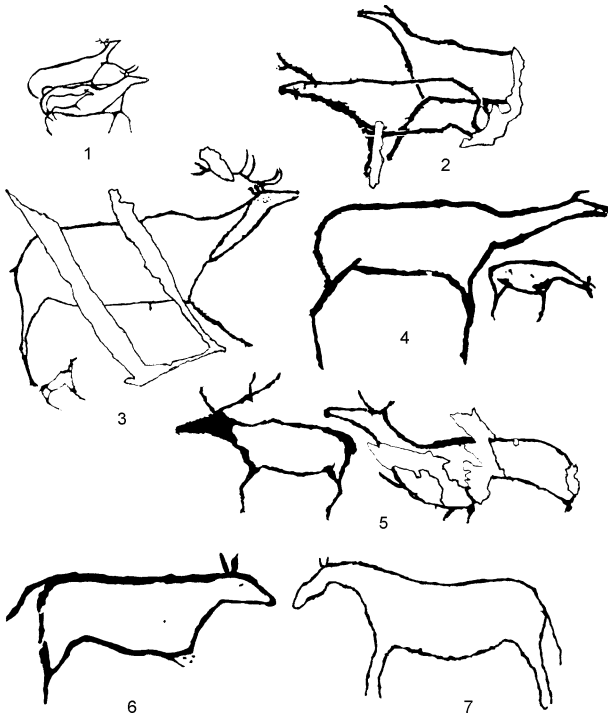


Fig. 26: The most ancient images of the Altai (after Kubarev). 1 – Kuyus; 2–4 – Kalbak-Tash; 5 – Kuylu/Kucherla; 6 – Kurman-Tau; 7 – Kalgoot Mine.

the most ancient images in rock art of the Altai, but they only can be dated to the Eneolithic or, possibly, to the Neolithic, but not to the Palaeolithic – there are no Palaeolithic images in the rock art of the Altai, Mongolia or elsewhere in Central Asia (Kubarev 1997, 1999).

One of the most interesting aspects of rock art research is cultural attribution, when a certain stylistic group of images is not only defined chronologically, but is also correlated with a certain archaeological culture. During the period under review, two new correlations of this kind have been undertaken. Molodin related some images from the Altai sites to the Afanasievo culture (which existed in South Siberia in the Early Bronze Age) on the basis of a composition with contour deer figures (Fig. 26: 5), found on the Kucherla rock. This rock bears images from various periods and is a part of a cult complex with cultural layers from various periods. The deer figures are the most ancient among the petroglyphs, and the earliest layer of the deposits contains artifacts of the Afanasievo culture. This fact, along with some other arguments, made it possible to pick out the Afanasievo stratum of rock art (Molodin 1996). Savinov revealed a totally new rock art tradition of the Tesin culture (which existed in the Minusinsk Basin in the last centuries BC) on the basis of decorated stone grave-slabs from the cemetery of this culture (see III.1). The Tesin rock art contains mainly depictions of spirals, interwoven and meandering lines, “labyrinths” and geometric anthropomorphic figures (Fig. 20), which

differentiates this art tradition from the figurative art of all the previous and subsequent cultures (Savinov 1995a). Special attention was paid to the rock depictions of the Early Medieval Epoch and Ethnographic period. The images of these periods are mainly executed with very fine engraved or scratched lines which, on the one hand, makes them very interesting to study, because this technique makes it possible to show the finest details of clothes, warriors and hunting equipment, horse harness, facial features, etc. – i.e. details that are not shown in the pecked images of the previous periods; on the other hand, these fine lines became barely visible with time, and often go un-noticed by the investigators: most of them can only be revealed and copied by very experienced rock art recorders. Moreover, the scratched and engraved depictions of the so-called “ethnographic period”, i.e. executed by indigenous peoples during the last few centuries, for a long time were not considered to be a subject for scholarly interest. This situation has changed relatively recently, and increasing numbers of publications appear which are devoted to the engravings of the Early Medieval period (Fig. 27) and the Ethnographic present, recorded on the rocks of the Middle Yenisei (Pyatkin *et al.* 1995, Pl. II: 5, IX: 5–6, XIII: 3, XVI: 2–3; Pyatkin 1998, Fig. 6; Sovetova & Miklashevich 1999, Pl. 6–8), the Altai (Martynov & Miklashevich 1995b, Fig. 2–3; Kubarev 1999, Fig. 7–9; Kubarev & Jacobson 1996, pl. 15, figs 3, 31, 95, 384, 409, 598; Cheremisin 2000a, 2000b), Mongolia (Kubarev & Tseveendorj 1996) and Kirghizia (Sher *et al.* 1995; Samashev 1996). Of course, pecked images are also characteristic of these periods, and engravings were also made during earlier periods.

VI. Preservation and conservation

Work on preservation and conservation is not yet a widespread aspect of rock art research in the area. But since early 1987 the first, very successful activities of this nature have been carried out in the Irkutsk region (Eastern Siberia). The work was initiated by the Centre for the Preservation of the Historical and Cultural Heritage in Irkutsk in order to preserve one of the most important Siberian rock art sites, that of Shishkino on the Lena river, and make it into a museum. The increased anthropogenic influence and various natural processes have altered the petroglyphs of this site, even threatening their very existence. Many images were covered with visitors’ inscriptions and paintings, as well as with chalk and pencil outlines made by earlier investigators. The Centre invited specialists from several fields: geologists, to evaluate the rocky mass, its structure and qualities; engineers, to make an engineering survey and to investigate the best paths for visitors; restorers, to work out the methods of removing modern inscriptions and outlines, to develop techniques for conserving the damaged parts of rock surfaces and for fixing of some images; and archaeologists, to re-copy all the images of the site and to prepare a catalogue



Fig. 27: Fine engraved images and scenes from the Early Middle Ages. 1 – Shalabolino, Middle Yenisei (after Pyatkin); 2 – Tuekta, Altai (after Martynov & Miklashevich); 3-8 – Zhaltyrak-Tash, Kirghizia (after Sher, Miklashevich, Sovetova, Samashev); 9 – Tsagaan-Salaa, Mongolia (after Kubarev, Tseveendorj).

(Perzhakova & Sklyarevski 1997). This project was successfully implemented and has been evaluated as “a remarkable initiative and achievement, being of a breadth of vision that would do much credit to many a project based on greater experience, access to know-how and institutional support, in countries with well-established conservation programs” (Bednarik 1995).

Later the conservation project was extended to the sites on the shores of Lake Baikal: Sagan-Zaba and Orso. The petroglyphs on the marble rocks in Sagan-Zaba bay on the west coast of Baikal are of undoubted importance from a historical-cultural point of view. They are very badly preserved (Fig. 28), but even from the surviving

fragments one can see that it was a large integrated scene with a quite clearly expressed mythological subject, that can be reconstructed. Since 1992, specialists working on the project have been studying the site’s state of preservation. They have carried out a complex investigation and their conclusion was that the condition of the monument is in a state of emergency and is arousing serious apprehension for its future. Active natural and anthropogenic influences on the site have deteriorated the pictures and the rock mass itself. Because of the intensive weathering and biocorrosion process, the crust of the rock surface is being destroyed and as a result some images are lost. The process is strengthened by



Fig. 28: A deteriorating rock art panel in the Sagan-Zaba bay of Lake Baikal. One of the preserved fragments of a big composition dated to the Bronze Age.

major daily and yearly fluctuations of air temperature, by the structure of the rock itself, and especially, by excessive wetting of the rock during the last few decades in connection with an increase of the water level of Baikal because of pressure from the Irkutsk dam. Another destructive factor is of a biological nature. All of the rock surface is infected by algae. They are developing intensively, again due to excessive wetting of the rock. All these processes are considered to be irreversible, and the commission concluded that “it is impossible to save the monument in its natural environment”. They developed two variants of a future strategy for the site: 1) removing the rock fragments with images to museum conditions, and replacing them with facsimiles in their original location; 2) making an exact copy for the museum, for example, by the photogrammetric method. But that would not solve the problem of saving the original. Eventually, it was decided to try and carry out some measures for saving the Sagan-Zaba petroglyphs (Ageeva *et al.* 1995). Beginning in 1994 specialists from the Institute of Restoration in Moscow (Emma Ageeva and Natalia Rebrikova) have been trying out some methods of conservation. They carry out a biocide treatment of the rock and consolidation of flaking crusts. Conservation is being done very carefully, on small parts of the surface, not touching the petroglyphs themselves so far. Every

year, in different seasons, specialists check the condition of the treated areas. The results are very reassuring. It is also planned to undertake such preventive measures as placing breakwaters, and constructing drains for deflection of rain and melt waters.

Another rock art site on Baikal, named Orso is not so important from a cultural-historical point of view – this is one small rock with a dozen animal figures on it, dated to the 1st millennium AD – but conservation work that has been carried out there by the same team can serve as an example for further work in this direction being applied to other sites. The Orso site, due to its remoteness and difficult access, has been safe from human influence, which is very rare. But natural destructive factors made it necessary to carry out urgent measures to save it. The main damage was caused by rain and meltwaters, flowing down from the slope. As a result of their impact, deep cracks were formed in the marble running parallel to the edge of the rock. Eventually the rock would have totally flaked off and the surface with images would have been lost. Also, the action of the waters was causing excessive wetting of the rock, and that, in its turn, was increased by the alternate freezing and melting of water in cracks and pores, and assisted the development of algae, lichens and cyanobacteria. The restorers implemented some conservation measures at the site, mostly directed towards the reconstruction of the conditions which had originally existed at the site. Depressions and cracks were filled and closed up with a lime cement mortar. These closures were toned down and treated with silicon water repellent (Fig. 29). To prevent wetting of the petroglyphs, they fixed a stone slab over the fissure. Along the upper part of the panel they created a ridge made of pieces of the same stone and a binder. This also deflects water from the petroglyphs. Exfoliating crusts were fixed with a special filler based on a slaked lime, marble grains and a binder. Areas with lichens were treated with a 30 % H_2O_2 solution, and then dead lichens were removed mechanically with a brush. During the last years they have been observing the condition of the site. The results of the observation confirm the effectiveness of the conservation carried out: water has been deflected from the images, the ridge is fixed very well and does not spoil the view of the monument; the closures maintain their water repellent capacity; and exfoliation has stopped (Ageeva & Rebrikova 1999).

Conservation and restoration measures were also undertaken at Tomskaya Pisanitsa in Western Siberia, Cholpon-Ata in Kirghizia and Tamgaly in Kazakhstan (no information published). So this kind of work has been successfully launched. Moreover, observations on the state and deterioration of petroglyphs are becoming an important part of the field work at rock art sites in Siberia and Central Asia (Blednova *et al.* 1995, pp. 41–76; Francfort *et al.* 1995, pp. 173–179; Sovetova & Miklashevich 1998b; Vidal 1999; and others).



Fig. 29: Orso site on Lake Baikal. A rock panel with medieval images of deer. An example of very thorough and careful conservation work.

VII. Historiography

Many publications contained essays on the history of the study of certain sites or regions, but one should note the only monograph of historiographic type to be published during the period (Devlet 1996). This book is devoted to the exciting history of investigations of the Yenisei rock art from the 18th century up to the beginning of the 20th. The author collected many interesting data from archives, rare, old and little-known publications; describes the activities of all the investigators; and analyzes the main periods in the history of rock art research of this area and their achievements. Special chapters are devoted to the two most significant persons of the Pre-Soviet period: Ivan Savenkov and Alexander Adrianov. The first was the author of the very first monograph on the Yenisei rock art, and the latter was an outstanding researcher, whose scholarly level was amazingly high for his time: at the beginning of the 20th century he discovered, recorded and described petroglyphs from all the main rock art sites on the Middle and Upper Yenisei; his purpose was the complete documentation of all images in their compositional connection and his method was the making of relief contact copies with soft paper (so-called “estampages”); he was also the first to photograph the rock art and to recognize the problem of its preservation. Adrianov’s extensive legacy of manuscripts and estampages is still not fully published and remains a valuable resource even for modern researchers.

There were also several publications on the modern state of rock art research. Matyushchenko has characterized rock art research as a specific field of history, relative to archaeology and ethnography, but different from them, and proposed to name this new discipline “petroglyphika” (Matyushchenko 1995). Sovetova, reviewing the above-mentioned monograph by Devlet, also gave a brief survey of the Soviet and modern periods in the study of Yenisei rock art (Sovetova 1997). And E. Devlet analyzed the

state of rock art research in Russia at the end of the 20th century in the light of general world trends in this field, with special attention to the problems of direct dating, contact copying and preservation of rock art sites (Devlet 1999).

VIII. Organization

Where organization is concerned, the main event of the period in question was that rock art research in the region became truly international. In Soviet times, the richness of Siberian and Central Asian rock art was practically unknown in the West because nearly all publications were in Russian or Asian languages, and contacts with foreign scholars were minimal. Some international projects began in the previous period (1990-1994), such as a very important co-operation between French and Russian researchers under the leadership of Dr H.-P. Francfort (CNRS) and Professor Y.A. Sher (Kemerovo University) in order to create a data base for the rock art sites of Central Asia and to publish a series of volumes entitled “Répertoire des Pétroglyphes d’Asie Centrale”. This work was successfully continued during the past five years, and several volumes of the “Répertoire” were published, documenting rock art sites of the Minusinsk Basin (Blednova *et al.* 1995; Sher & Savinov 1999), the Altai (Kubarev & Jacobson 1996) and Kazakhstan (Mar’jasev, Gorjacev & Potapov 1998). Another international project, which started in 1994, combines American, Russian and Mongolian researchers (E. Jacobson, V.D. Kubarev and D. Tseveendorj) and aims to record and study the rock art sites in the mountains of the Mongolian Altai. Their documentation work was very successful in 1995–99 and a whole series of albeit preliminary publications (Tseveendorj *et al.* 1997; Kubarev *et al.* 1998; Jacobson *et al.* 1999; Jacobson 2000a; 2000b; Kubarev & Tseveendorj 2000; Kubarev *et al.* 2000; and others) showed the incredible richness of this newly discovered rock art area. Other international projects which included joint expeditions of researchers from different countries, mainly on previously known sites with the purpose of better recording using modern technology, and of producing further publications of the materials, were carried out in Mongolia (Mongolian Petroglyphs 1998), Uzbekistan (Sztuka naskalna...1997) and Kazakhstan (Francfort *et al.* 1995; Lymer 1998, 1999).

A whole series of international conferences and conference sessions were devoted specially to the rock art of the region: “Pétroglyphes d’Asie Centrale” organized by CNRS and UNESCO and held in Paris in April 1995; “Rock Art of Asia. Problems of study, preservation and management” organized by the Museum-Reserve of “Tomskaya Pisanitsa” and held in Kemerovo, Russia, in August 1995 (abstracts of the papers are published in *Rock Art of Asia*, 1995); and the International Prehistoric Art Conference organized by the Siberian Association of Prehistoric Art Researchers, and held in August 1998 in

Kemerovo (a book of abstracts and the Proceedings in two volumes were published. See International Prehistoric Art Conference 1998, 1999, 2000). The latter gathered together 130 researchers from Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Estonia, France, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, USA, Australia and South Africa, and successfully brought about an interchange of Russian and western scholars in the field of rock art. Pre- and post-conference excursions were also organized for the Conference participants to the ancient monuments of South Siberia. These were so successful that it was possible to design an exhibition entitled “Siberian Rock Art. Archaeology, Interpretation and Conservation” (organized by CeSMAP under the leadership of D. Seglie) and to publish a fine catalogue (Siberian..., 1999), which contributed to a better awareness among western readers of the rock art of the area. This increasing interest was also indicated by another event: for the first time a session devoted entirely to the rock art of North Asia was included in the programme of the International Rock Art Congress, held in Ripon, Wisconsin, USA, in May 1999. Organized by Esther Jacobson (University of Oregon) and Alice Tratebas (U.S. Bureau of Land Management), the session was titled “Reassessing the Cultural Significance of Central Asian and South Siberian Rock Art Complexes” and was a notable success.

And probably the most noteworthy event of the period has been the creation of SAPAR, the Siberian Association of Prehistoric Art Researchers, at Kemerovo State University in 1997. Headed by Yakov Sher, the famous Russian scholar, this organization united more than a hundred members from Russia and all over the world, and has its own journal (SAPAR Bulletin) which is published with all texts in both Russian and English, and its own website (www.kemsu.ru/org/sapar).

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