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Rock Engravings  
in the Middle  
Yenisei Basin

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## ROCK ENGRAVINGS IN THE MIDDLE YENISEI BASIN (The Major Boyar pisanitsa)\*

**F**rom the point of view of an archaeologist, the Middle Yenisei basin is one of the most interesting places in our country. Among the wealth of rich and diverse monuments of ancient times there are here unique famous rock engravings which are known in Siberia as pisanitsas. The two pisanitsas in question, the Minor and the Major ones, are cut on a smooth surface of Devonian sandstone exposed in the near-shore mountains through which winds its way the great Siberian river Yenisei. They are of great value for in them some aspects of economy, everyday life and ideology of ancient people found their expression which cannot be deduced from any other sources.

This is a picturesque story told by the past generations about themselves. At the same time the rock engravings are striking examples of representative art of the past, a sort of encyclopaedia of arts covering a period from early antiquity to the Middle Ages. Examining series of petroglyphs originating from different regions of the world, one can reveal certain specific features and recurring scenes. In southern Scandinavia these are scenes of sea voyages, battles, cattle stealing, boat funerals. In Spain—drawings of daggers; French dolmens depict axes, feet and cuttlefish, and Alpien petroglyphs picture scenes of plough land tilling. In the Siberian pisanitsas the most typical pictures are those of wild animals, scenes of hunting, battles and of shaman cult.

In the Middle Yenisei basin the art of rock engravings reached its peak in the Tagar period (VII—III centuries B. C.) when vast territories of steppes and submontane areas of Eurasia were inhabited by tribes of cattle-breeders and by those engaged in stock-breeding and land

cultivation. These people formed a peculiar cultural entity with common material and spiritual values. Living in areas separated by thousands of kilometers, they used similar weapons, decorations and horse harness. Between the tribes there was going a process of interchange of cultural values. The art in these vast territories had in those times many common features. Particularly typical were pictures of animals in certain postures characterized by some specific details which gave rise to the term the «Scythian-Siberian animal style».

The bronze animal images of the Tagar period are primitively realistic, styled and schematic, but whether monumental or full of expressed movement they are not like any other in their originality, colour and skill of finish. We find here a deer at rest with its head on the back, or swiftly running in a «flying gallop», beasts rolled up in a ball or preparing for a jump or, else, fighting their last battle. Some scenes and images of the Tagar bronze are reflected in the art of rock engravings of the 1st millennium B. C.

Among the rock engravings of the Middle Yenisei basin the Boyar pisanitsas are of special importance. Depicting the life of ancient settlements, they differ in their plots from the drawings found in other areas of Siberia (Tables I—X). The petroglyphs derived their name from the Boyar Ridge on the slopes of which they were produced by some ancient artists. The Boyar Ridge is twelve kilometers long and consists of layers of Devonian sandstone. It runs along the right bank of the mid-stream of the Soukhaya Tes River, a tributary of the Yenisei. The river is surrounded by rich meadows which offered good pasture and soil for ancient tribes of cattle breeders and land cultivators. The valley of the Soukhaya Tes River seethed in those times with life of which numerous ancient monuments found here are a vivid evidence: tumuli of the Tagar period, the famous Kopenchaatas discovered in the vicinity, stone

\* The word pisanitsa means a collection of petroglyphs on a single rock. The word, being a fixed Russian term, will be used hereafter to avoid descriptive phraseology.

images, ancient irrigation canals, remains of settlements, rock engravings.

The Minor pisanitsa is six kilometers away from the village Troitskoye. It is found in the upper ravine of the Boyar Ridge to the right of the road leading to the Kopeny village. The Major pisanitsa is situated some 400 meters from the Minor one up the ridge saddle. It is cut on the vertical surface of the cliff which runs around the top of a grassy hill that rises steeply over the saddle. In its western outcrops the Devonian sandstone form fancy sheds and small caves. The southern part of the cliff belt represents a natural frieze, a part of which 9.8 meters long and 1.5 meters wide, is covered by drawings of ancient artists.

The Boyar petroglyphs were discovered by the prominent archeologist of Siberia A. B. Adrianov in 1904 when he began studying petroglyphs in the Minusinsk district on the request of the Russian Committee for historic, archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic studies of Central and Eastern Asia. He found, plated and described a great number of rock engravings, including the pisanitsas of the Boyar Ridge. He plated the Minor pisanitsa and photographed it, the materials being published later by M. P. Griaznov. A. B. Adrianov was unable, however, to take picture of the Major pisanitsa. He wrote: «We did not attempt to plate or even sketch this Pisanitsa for this task required preliminary cleaning and a long stop. We could not afford this as we did not have necessary equipment and were too far away from water and human habitation. The weather was extremely bad: it was cold and windy; the drizzling rain and snowfall in the distant mountains indicated that the work had to be postponed till summer. We, therefore, decided to devote the time of our stay in the Boyars to brief surveying only».

In the summer of 1962 six students from the Student's Scientific Society of the Moscow Higher Productional School of Arts plated and photographed the rock engravings of the Boyar Ridge. Upon examination, the sketches of the Major Boyar pisanitsa made by them proved to be inaccurate, and I had to copy them again. While printing the plate I omitted on purpose two questionable, unclear details in the right-hand part of the pisanitsa where it is almost impossible to tell artificial lines and designs from natural dents.

The surface of the Major Boyar pisanitsa is covered with scars, scratches and dents, and cut by deep cracks, some of which are evidently older than the drawings themselves.

Time has smoothed out the designs which

are now in places covered by lichen. Besides the Major Boyar pisanitsa is unfavorably lit. It faces South and is clearly seen only in the evening and especially well at the early dawn; when slanting rays of the sun glide on the rough weathered surface of the rock the drawings take a distinct shape. They become more and more vivid in the eyes of an enchanted viewer in front of whom there appear settlements of ancient inhabitants of the Middle Yenisei area, their dwellings, sheep and cattle, domestic utensils, weapons and the artists themselves. Below, for instance, one can see three riders on horseback and one astride a deer. They are driving a deer herd to the log houses and one sees their facades with entrances. The central part of the middle tier of designs shows the main group of dwellings: big log huts with sloping roofs and conical constructions resembling yurts. Nearby are coppers and animals: rams with powerful sharply twisted horns, he-goats with beards and long horns bent backwards. At a considerable distance to the left there is a man wearing a peculiar head attire who is herding home long-horned cattle. The upper tier shows again houses, and there are coppers, cattle, rams and horses among them; one of the horses is saddled. A rider holds a rein in one hand and, possibly, a whip in the other. Nearby stands a man in a pointed headwear with a drawn bow in one hand and a staff(?) in the other. There is a dog at his feet. At the dwellings there are people in a praying posture with their arms raised to the skies.

For some twenty or thirty minutes the drawings are seen distinctly but as the sun rises higher the drawings dim and gradually disappear. In ancient times the designs were much more vivid. Not darkened by time they loomed as bright spots against the reddish-brown rock. Ancient artists chose rock exposures for their petroglyphs in such a way that their pisanitsas were well seen from afar. The monumental frieze with its designs on the smooth surface of the rock belt running around the top of a steep hill was a majestic sight which gave these places an air of unique originality.

The rock engravings were cut using the so-called point technique which was typical to the Tagar period. A multitude of direct or slightly slanted repeated strokes made by a certain sharp metallic implement produced irregularly shaped dents forming contour lines and silhouette images on the pitted and rugged surface of the rock. Drawings of considerable size such as dwellings were made by removing the surface layer of the Devonian sandstone within the areal extent of the design, the space between the dents produced by the usual technique being evidently scraped.

Most designs both in the Major and Minor pisanitsas are made in the silhouette technique and some of them are contoured. In a number of cases the drawings are detailed with their inner surface carrying some designs. Thus, the inner surfaces of dwellings and coppers have some additional details.

Pictures of animals in profile show how keenly observant the ancient artists were and how well they knew their individual peculiarities. Though the drawings are recurrent, there are no two identical designs. The pictures of animals are dynamic and very expressive; most animals move from left to right. Anthropomorphic figures have a full face. The drawings differ in the skill of finish. Many of the human figures are symbolic and schematic.

The Pisanitsa is not a mere collection of drawings but a single whole composed of well-developed individual compositions linked up by a common conceptual line. The Major Boyar pisanitsa has a characteristic rhythm of well-defined tiers which follow the laminated texture of the Devonian sandstone. Every tier has the «ground» which is felt by the viewer; compositions of different tiers are inherently connected, the drawings inside them being grouped into scenes characterized by a common plot. Proportions are mainly kept within a tier. Certain features of drawings can be interpreted as rudiments of perspective: the designs which should be inferred to be situated farther off than others are drawn respectively higher. It is only the group of designs in the light-hand of the middle tier that is stylistically out of line with the general composition. Here one feels the absence of a story plot though the designs there depict human figures and real objects. The drawings overlap in an irregular fashion, no scale or proportions are observed; these are some symbols or signs representing people and things.

The designs of the Major and Minor pisanitsas follow a single conceptual line and were cut on the rocks in about the same historical period, during a rather short time interval: they closely remind each other by the technique of their production, stylistic features, plots and composition, though the conceptual aspect of the Major pisanitsa is far richer than that of the Minor one.

As for the question which of the two pisanitsas is older, I think it is obvious that the Minor pisanitsa antedated the Major one though the chronological interval separating them was insignificant. The Minor pisanitsa is produced on a beautiful smooth frieze of natural origin. A. B. Adrianov was the first to note that ancient artist chose for their pisanitsas the most solid and strong rocks of the best quality in the most

accessible parts of cliffs. They could not find another frieze of similar smoothness for the Major pisanitsa in the locality but by that time the dells of the Boyar Ridge had apparently become connected with some cult traditions. Therefore it was just here that there appeared another pisanitsa of a greater size not far away from the Minor one, in spite of the absence of a suitable surface. It was cut on a stepped and pitted surface of a rock already covered by earlier cracks.

It is commonly acknowledged that the most difficult part in the study of rock engravings is their dating. When dating petroglyphs, researchers usually start with studying the plot, artistic peculiarities and technique in which they were cut on the rock. Of decisive importance here is the correlation between the drawings in question and some other artifacts the age of which is reliably established. In dating the Major Boyar pisanitsa we proceeded from the drawings of coppers, complex bows and lying rams, considering also the design of dwellings represented in the pisanitsa.

The bronze coppers suggest a broad chronological range within which we have to locate the pisanitsa with possible exactness (Tables XI, XII, XIV). The bronze coppers, generally known as Scythian coppers, were widespread in the steppe and adjacent forest steppe territories of the European part of the U.S.S.R., Kazakhstan, Siberia and areas beyond Lake Baikal. The coppers of the Siberian type generally have semi-round handles fitted vertically to the upper rim of the copper and some ornamental two or three nail-like branch pieces running horizontally across the walls. Coppers of this particular Siberian type are presented in the Major Boyar pisanitsa. Bronze coppers of Siberia originated mostly from the Middle Yenisei area. The Minusinsk museum alone possesses several dozens of them from big and massive coppers to the tiniest ones. Bronze coppers, with the exception of smaller ones and of tiny pendants, come from accidental finds for they were, apparently, ritual vessels which belonged to a whole tribe and were not, therefore, buried in graves. Absence of bronze coppers from the burials of Siberia hampers determination of their time range. The archaic type of Scythian coppers proper is dated back from the 7th-6th centuries B. C. and the classical ones from the 5th-4th centuries B. C. The first small bronze copper with three knobs on its handles and some relief rods on the body to be found in a burial place was discovered in a Tashtik ground grave in the Salbik locality. At the present stage of investigations the problem of the origin of Siberian coppers



and their dating still remains to be solved. It seems likely that some of the bronze coppers existed for a long time by virtue of tradition being used, thanks to careful handling and solidity as cult accessories. It can be safely stated that in the last centuries B. C. the Tagar tribes already knew the coppers for their ceramic replicas are already found among the burial accessories of that time. There is evidence that ceramic and bronze forms influenced each other, the newly developed forms of bronze vessels affecting, in turn, the production of earthenware pots. The finds from Tuva burials of the Hunnish period, where there were found exact ceramic replicas of the Hunnish-type bronze coppers, show that bronze and ceramic vessels existed simultaneously. Another proof is furnished by identical forms of ceramic and metallic coppers produced in Central Asia during the same period of time. The most similar to the drawings of the Major Boyar pisanitsa is the ceramic copper-like vessel from the Big Tesin tumulus dug out by the Finnish archeological expedition headed by I. R. Aspelin in 1889. The vessel dates from the 2nd- the first half of the 1st century B. C.

Of great importance for the chronological assignment of the pisanitsa is the complex bow depicted with an arrow placed on it ready to fly. Before that only some indirect evidence indicated that it had been known to the Tagar tribes. In the Scythia proper it appeared, evidently, in the 8th century B. C. but its existence is reliably established only from the 6th century when some pictures of the bow appeared on metallic products: on the vessels from Kul-oba and Voronej and on numerous buckles from the rich Scythian tumuli. The fact that the Tagar people knew a complex bow of the Scythian type is supported by bronze arrow heads whose forms and sizes are similar to those of Scythian bows, though no remains of the complex bow itself have been found so far. Besides, among the accidental finds from the Khakass — Minusinsk hollow of the Tagar period there are several miniature complex bows, one of which is placed in a bow case. The size of the complex bow depicted in the Major Boyar pisanitsa shows, however, that it does not belong to the Scythian type, as one of the distinguishing features of the latter is, as is generally accepted, a small size: one third to one fourth of a man's height. On other occasions it was noted that Scythian-type bows used in the painting of Greek vases vary in length from one fifth to over a half of a man's height. These size variations might have also referred to the Scythian bows. However the relative size of the bows in the pisanitsa is great as compared

to the man's figure that it cannot be considered to be of the Scythian type. Smaller bows are superseded by bigger ones at the end of the 1st millennium B. C. when their sizes were close to those of long complex bows used by Siberian peoples in the previous century.

A more accurate dating of the Major Boyar pisanitsa is greatly facilitated by the images of «flying» rams which bear a strong resemblance to the bronze buckles from the Ordos area (Table XV). Typical of the Tagar period pictures of a noble deer in «flying gallop», which are known from the 5th to the 3rd or 2nd centuries B. C., are later superseded by images of other animals: horses, roes and rams. In the early Tashtik burial vaults of the Izikh stage (middle of the 1st century B. C. beginning of the 1st century A. D.) there have been found small wooden statuettes of a lying ram with sharply twisted horns. In the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C. pictures of rams were extremely popular: they are found in the Ordos steppes in the form of bronze statuettes and relief buckles; in Sarmatia these are convex decorations of golden fibulas. Finally, the assignment of the Major Boyar pisanitsa to the end of the 1st millennium B. C. is consistent with the data on dwellings (Table IV). The pisanitsa depicts both timber log huts and dwellings of the yurt type. It is generally assumed that burial constructions — «houses of the dead» — imitate the dwellings of living people. The two early stages of the Tagar period are characterized by burial chambers in the form of a log frame. It is only at the Tagaro — Tashtik transition stage that there appears, along with the log frame, a burial construction resembling a yurt. Describing the cover of a burial vault of the Big tumulus which dates from the 1st century B. C., D. A. Klements noted: «If you are acquainted with the dwellings of nomadic people, it is enough to mention that birch bark formed a sort of a vaulted roof of a yurt».

Most probably, the Major Boyar pisanitsa was created at the third stage of development of the Tagar culture, i. e. during the Tagaro — Tashtik transition stage (2nd — the first half of the 1st century B. C.).

The Boyar pisanitsas are extremely important for the reconstruction of the mode of life of the late Tagar people. The plot of the Major Boyar pisanitsa is closely associated with productive activities of the ancient inhabitants of the Middle Yenisei basin, who were mainly engaged in cattle-breeding. Primitive artists depicted in the pisanitsa just those animals which were of greatest interest for them from the point of view of their economy. These were cows,

yaks, long-horned cattle of the aurochs type, horses, reindeer, sheep and goats. Animal drawings of the Major pisanitsa give a broader idea of Tagar herds.

The most common among the designs of the Major Boyar pisanitsa are, apart from the animal drawings, constructions of the two types: log houses and yurt-type dwellings. Not a single ancient wooden dwelling has survived to our time because wood is a comparatively short-lived material. The Major Boyar pisanitsa's designs remain therefore, the only source-material on the dwellings of the Tagar period. It took people a long time of living in log houses to reach, by passing on their skills from generation to generation, that high standard of construction of wooden dwellings which can be inferred from the log frames of burial chambers in the big tumuli of the Tagar period. To build their houses and, apparently, to construct the frames strengthening the walls of Tagar graves, people used larch wood which possesses such properties as resinaceousness and solidity, is very straight and has no hollows. Birch bark was used for preservation purposes. The Tagar people made use of the birch bark for a very long time, as evidenced by numerous burial constructions. Thus, the dome-shaped vaults over burial chambers of the Uibat (dug out by D. A. Klemenets) and Big Tesin (dug out by I. R. Aspelin) tumuli were covered with several layers of birch bark. In the Big Salbik tumulus (dug out by S. B. Kiselev) the slopes of the construction in the form of a truncated pyramid placed on top of the burial chamber were covered by birch bark in fifteen layers; besides, the upper pyramid logs turned out to be wrapped in stitched birch bark. The principal form of wooden constructions was a framework made of horizontal layers of logs fastened at the corners with a half lap joint or a dovetail joint. The horizontal grooves on the house facades signify logs of the frames made of eight or ten rows. Judging from the figures of the people standing at the dwellings the height of log frames of houses somewhat exceeded that of man. Log houses differed in size and structural features, particularly, in the design of roofs. The most common design of a roof was that with horizontal poles cut into front logs. To build a roof of that kind an additional row of logs was put over the ceiling, which ended the side walls; the front and rear walls were then continued so that each following log was shorter than the previous one, forming in the end a triangle.

It is interesting to note that the protruding ends of front rafters of log houses crossed, forming forks similar to compass legs, like those

of the dwellings of some modern Siberian people or of the hut on the grave of the Sagiains. The majority of log houses of the Major pisanitsa is characterized by two (as in the Minor one) or three bands bending upwards at the point where the upper row of frame logs is butt-joined with the roof planking. M. P. Gryasnov believed that these were «the ends of horizontal logs which supported the poles and stakes on which the logs rested». Most probably we see here twisted lower ends of the front rafters, which are due to natural branching of tree roots. A similar, though not identical roof design of log houses is encountered in the case of some modern peoples of Siberia. In the wooden architecture of Russia such logs with the roots left intact are called «hens». In the Major Boyar pisanitsa there is also a house whose roof differs in design from these described above, coinciding with the roofs from the Minor pisanitsa. An article by M. P. Gryasnov gives a reconstruction study of the Minor pisanitsa's log house with the four-slope roof. M. P. Gryasnov compares this dwelling to modern dwellings of the Tubalars in the Northern Altai. According to V. G. Kartsev, the conical roofs of log houses in the Minor pisanitsa strongly resemble conical bark roofs of Khakass dwellings where the bark is fixed by overlying poles with their ends converging to the top of the roof.

Another principal type of dwellings depicted in the Major Boyar pisanitsa are yurt-like dwellings. They are, like the log houses described above, crowned with compass-like forks. The following analogy with the Khakass birch bark yurts can be suggested in the way of reconstruction: two main poles were stuck into the soil at an angle and then fastened at the point of intersection; the upper ends of inclined roof poles converged at the same point. The framework and roof of the yurt were covered with birch bark which was fixed in place by overlying boards. Modern birch bark yurts of the Sagiains are of a similar design. Later the Tagar people lost partially their high skill in building wooden dwellings. The yurt became a primordial Khakass dwelling. The Khakass people lived in yurts in the 13th — 14th centuries, and so they did in the 18th century. Yurts of birch bark or felt continued to exist even in the 19th century.

The specific character of the Tagar tribes' economy made it necessary for them to have seasonal dwellings: log huts for the winter and framed dwellings for the summer time. Among the designs of the Major Boyar pisanitsa there are some pictures of deer herds. These herds had to be driven overland from one place to another

and the people driving them to distant pastures or engaged in semi-nomadic economy were obliged to have winter and summer abodes. This suggests some conclusions on the mode of tribal life in the late Tagar period. Owing to a shortage of pastures in the river valleys and in the areas of their winter settlements, ancient cattle-breeders had to take their herds to highland meadows in summer, thus preserving forage for the winter time when the winds bared the grassy spurs. In this way their cattle, sheep and goats could be at grass all the year round. «The modern Soyot, especially among the khoshuns, is governed by its herd of deer or horses: it has to go wherever the herd goes — and this is the way in which undoubtedly, lived other Minusinsk peoples not so long ago», wrote the ethnologist E. K. Iakovlev at the end of the 19th century. I. Kornilov described the life of the Khakass people in the second half of the 19th century as follows: «It might be well to point out that the nomadic people drive their sheep, cattle and horses overland at least twice and sometimes three or four times a year; for the summer pastures they choose cool mountain valleys on the shores of rivers and lakes, in winter they take them to open places where the wind from mountain gorges blows off snow and where the cattle can, if the snow is not too thick, be at grass all through the winter. What is more, some of them choose also autumnal and spring pastures for their herds. Driving the herds, the herdsmen roamed with them from place to place. As pastures are usually the same, many of the people construct there permanent yurts of logs or wattle (yurts made of birch bark and felt are usually moved from place to place). There are, therefore, winter and summer abodes». N. F. Katanov wrote: «The Minusinsk Tatars live for about half a year (from September to the end of the year or mid-April) in their winter abodes, where they have log huts and strong yards for their cattle; for the rest of the year they live in their summer homes where they have nothing else but log, birch bark or felt yurts and yards of poles or wattlefence». This ethnographic evidence allows us to form a most general idea about the mode of life of ancient predecessors of the Khakass people.

Figures of people in the pisanitsa give an idea of their clothes and headwear. They wore shortened fur-trimmed caftans \* and conical head-tires or of a hood type which were extremely popular in the Scythian-Sarmatian period with many tribes of the great steppe belt. Apart from figure pictures in a realistic manner, there are

\* Caftan — a long tunic with waist-girdle.

some anthropomorphic ones made in a schematic and symbolic fashion. These are mainly phallic images similar to those encountered today in modern Chukot embroidery. These images have probably some relation to the cult practice.

Semantics of the rock engravings is a long-standing subject of discussions. What made primitive artists undertake this labourious and uneasy work of creating petroglyphs? What ideas did they try to convey by their drawings? These questions are inevitably faced by a researcher concerned with ancient arts. One cannot but admit that the pisanitsas reflected, to a considerable degree, the realities of the world which surrounded their creators and served as nutrient medium for their art. No matter how tempting it is to see in the drawings of the Major Boyar pisanitsa a mirror reflection of a real settlement or a sketch from life, this would be hardly tenable. The task of deciphering the meaning of the drawings which are monuments of the spiritual culture of primitive man is facilitated to a certain degree by ethnographic parallels. The ideological notions and rites practiced by Siberian people not so long ago, incorporate some fragments and survivals of the outlook of their ancient predecessors.

Of special interest are the data on seasonal feasts and rites which were related to the magic of fertility of man and animals and to the cult of natural productive forces. Thus, the Yakuts have two annual festivals called «Isiakha», one in spring and the other in autumn. These were koumiss \* festivals with one or two wooden tubs of koumiss being the center of attention of all the participants as symbols of wealth, abundance and prosperity. Koumiss was worshipped by the Yakuts as a drink of divine origin granted by the bright heavenly gods who had brought down to the Earth the koumiss ferment. During the feasts they made koumiss libations to their gods and shaman gave a drink of koumiss to the kneeling worshippers. Yakut koumiss festivities included horse races, traditional wrestling and ritual dances. They reveal, in a most complete form, the elements of the ancient cult which is reflected in the designs of the Major Boyar pisanitsa.

One should not be too sure of direct parallels between the rock engravings and the ethnographic evidence. But still, there are reasons to think that the Major Boyar pisanitsa depicted an unreal, ideal settlement at the moment of a traditional calendar feast. Working laboriously to depict an imaginary settlement on the rock surface, the ancient artists tried to secure with

\* Koumiss — fermented mare's milk.



the help of their drawings material well-being, abundance and prosperity for the real settlement.

It seems likely to me that the rectangular objects with spurs in the upper part are pictures of koumiss vessels: small wooden or clay barrels or, possibly, leather bottles. Such vessels were discovered in burial places of the Upper and Middle Yenisei areas dating back from the last centuries B. C. and the first centuries A. D. Till quite recently they were in use with the Khakass and Touvinian peoples (Table XIII, XVI, XVII). Apparently the pictures of these objects were meant to symbolize and, to a certain extent secure, wealth and material well-being for their owners.

At a koumiss festival the Yakut poured the koumiss in ritual goblets. It is possible that ancient inhabitants of the Middle Yenisei basin used small clay or bronze pots for goblets. Coppers with nail-like spurs encountered in Southern Siberia vary in size from huge coppers with a capacity of several buckets to the tiniest ones. The size of coppers in the pisanitsa also varies. Gerodot gives an indication of the purpose of the bronze coppers. According to him, the Scythian used them for boiling meat of sacrificed animals whose bones they threw into the fire. Siberian rock engravings which depicted people boiling something in coppers, stirring embers under them, or throwing firewood in the fire serve as a direct illustration for this story (Table XIV). It appears that big coppers were used for cooking meals for the participants of the feast and smaller ones for drinking koumiss. Some of the coppers depicted on the rock might have been made of clay like those found in the late Tagar tumuli.

Among the houses there stand people with their arms raised to the skies (Table XVIII). It is customary to believe that this ritual gesture means a prayer to the heaven. Among accidental finds from the right bank of the Middle Yenisei there is a bronze miniature statuette of a man in a similar posture.

In the upper tier of the pisanitsa is depicted a man with a bow and an arrow in one hand and a staff (?) in the other. One can suppose that this is a shaman and his bow and staff are his cult implements. The rock engravings and other pictures on «olyenni» stones tell a story of the way in which the bow was used in Mongolia and Siberia during the Scythian period. There were different types of bows, among them a big simple bow, used mainly in hunting, and a complex bow of the Scythian type, employed for war purposes. If we assume that the complex bow was used in wars, then it is not clear why

it is present in the picture of a peaceful settlement. It is possible, however that the bow plays here the role of a ritual accessory because, until the advent of the tambourine with the Altaian people, the role of a magic ritual implement had been played by a bow and an arrow. Till very recently, all Northern Altaians used a bow in their rites. That the ancient predecessors of the Khakass people practiced shamanism with a complex bow is evidenced by the rock engravings from the Khakass — Minusinsk hollow. Till the 19th century the bow was reputed among the Khakass people to have magic qualities and its replica wrapped in a piece of cloth was put in the cradle of a newly born boy.

It is probable that the schematic phallic images of people and figures of animals with accentuated signs of masculinity were connected with the magic of fertility, reproduction and propagation. It is noteworthy that the herds of animals are heading towards the settlement and not away from it.

Among the houses there are pictures of rams in a 'flying' posture. Similar bronze images which superseded at the end of the first millennium B. C., the traditional Scythian-Siberian buckles in the shape of a deer in «flying gallop», suggest that this is an emblem of a tribal predecessor — a totem. Another argument in support the favour of this suggestion is the absence of any evidence on domesticated mountain goats (arkhars). Proceeding from the fact of life of the primitive people we cannot explain why their images are found among the houses of the settlement.

The association with the cult traditions is further evidenced by the picture of a fantastic animal outlined in the lower right-hand corner of the pisanitsa below a group of schematic and symbolic figures (Table XIX). This is the upper part of the body of a strange hunchbacked monster with the front paw indicated by an unfinished line, a small hook of a tail, small ears and horns, and a toothless mouth half open. It first seemed to me that the line on the rock had accidentally taken the shape of an animal. However, among the rock engravings published by the Finnish archaeological expedition of 1887—1889 the author of this paper came across a picture of the front part of the same fantastic monster from a stone fence of a Tagar tumulus. The drawings are very much similar with the only difference that the horns and ears which are only slightly visible in the first picture, are more distinct in the second one and an eye is marked by a point. It is interesting to note that in front of the toothless mouth of the animal in the second picture there is a figure of a man



turned upside-down. Ethnologists think that this is the posture in which the dead were depicted. Thus, the similarity, almost identity, of the two images points to the fact that the image of the mythical animal was canonized.

The Boyar pisanitsas reflect the complicated ideological notions of their nameless creators. It is possible that mountain valleys of the Boyar Ridge were sanctuaries of the primitive people who visited them during their seasonal feasts. Magic rites and ceremonies at the cliff friezes with the images were, probably, of a collective, rather than individual character, and the pro-

sperty and abundance were prayed for not for every feast participant separately but for the whole of the tribal settlement.

Thus, the Major Boyar pisanitsa was created for the sake of cult worshipping. This fact, however, does not in any way belittle the significance of the realistic content of the drawings which is a most precious source of knowledge about the life of a society which vanished long ago. The designs of the pisanitsa reflect objects and phenomena of a real life and give some data on the economy, ideology and culture of ancient inhabitants of the Middle Yenisei area.