

**ROCKCARVINGS  
AND  
INSCRIPTIONS  
IN THE  
NORTHERN AREAS OF PAKISTAN**

BY  
KARL JETTMAR







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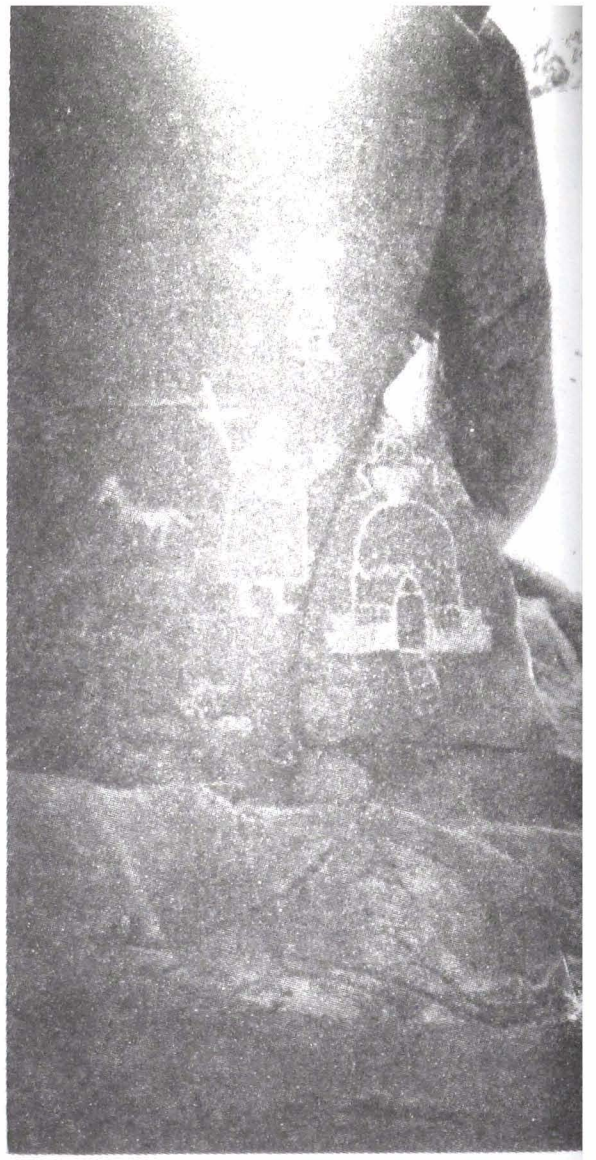




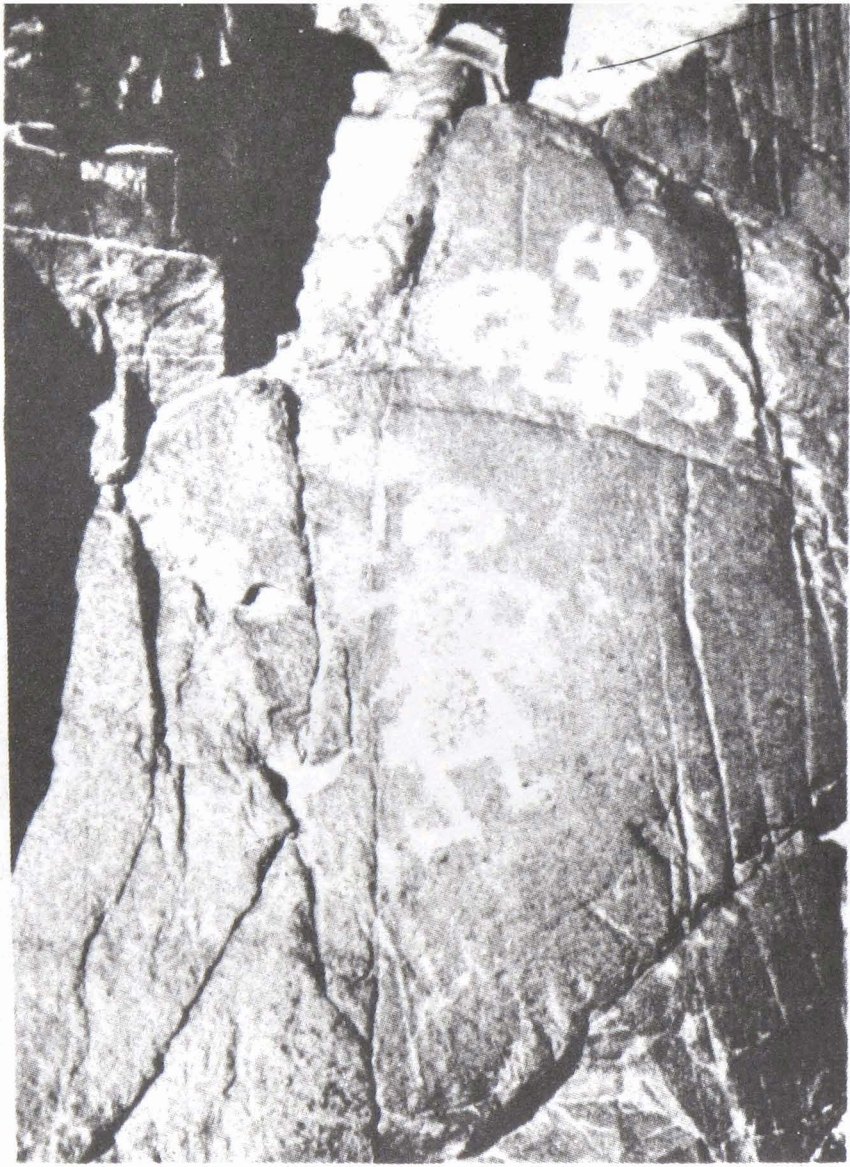












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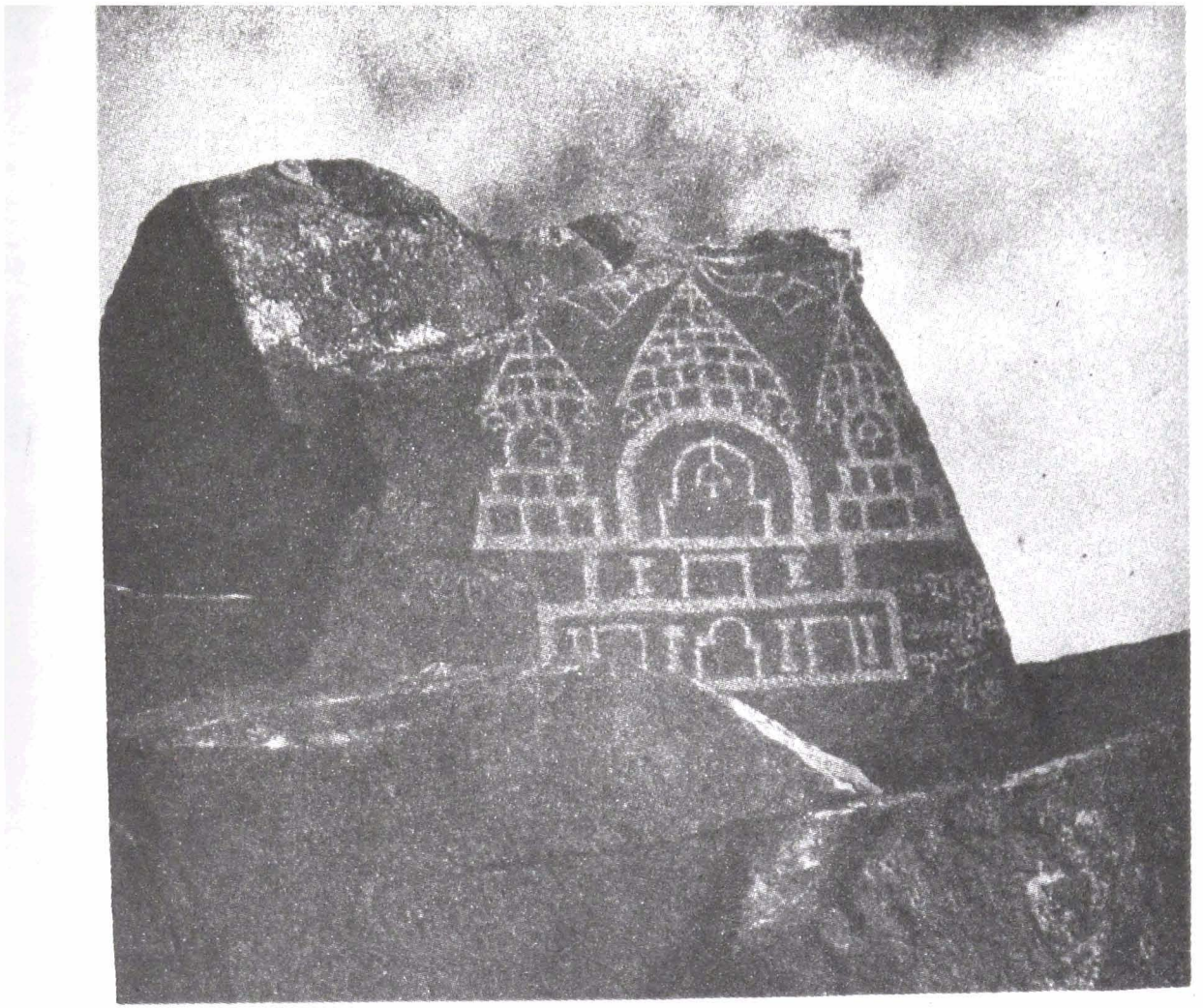




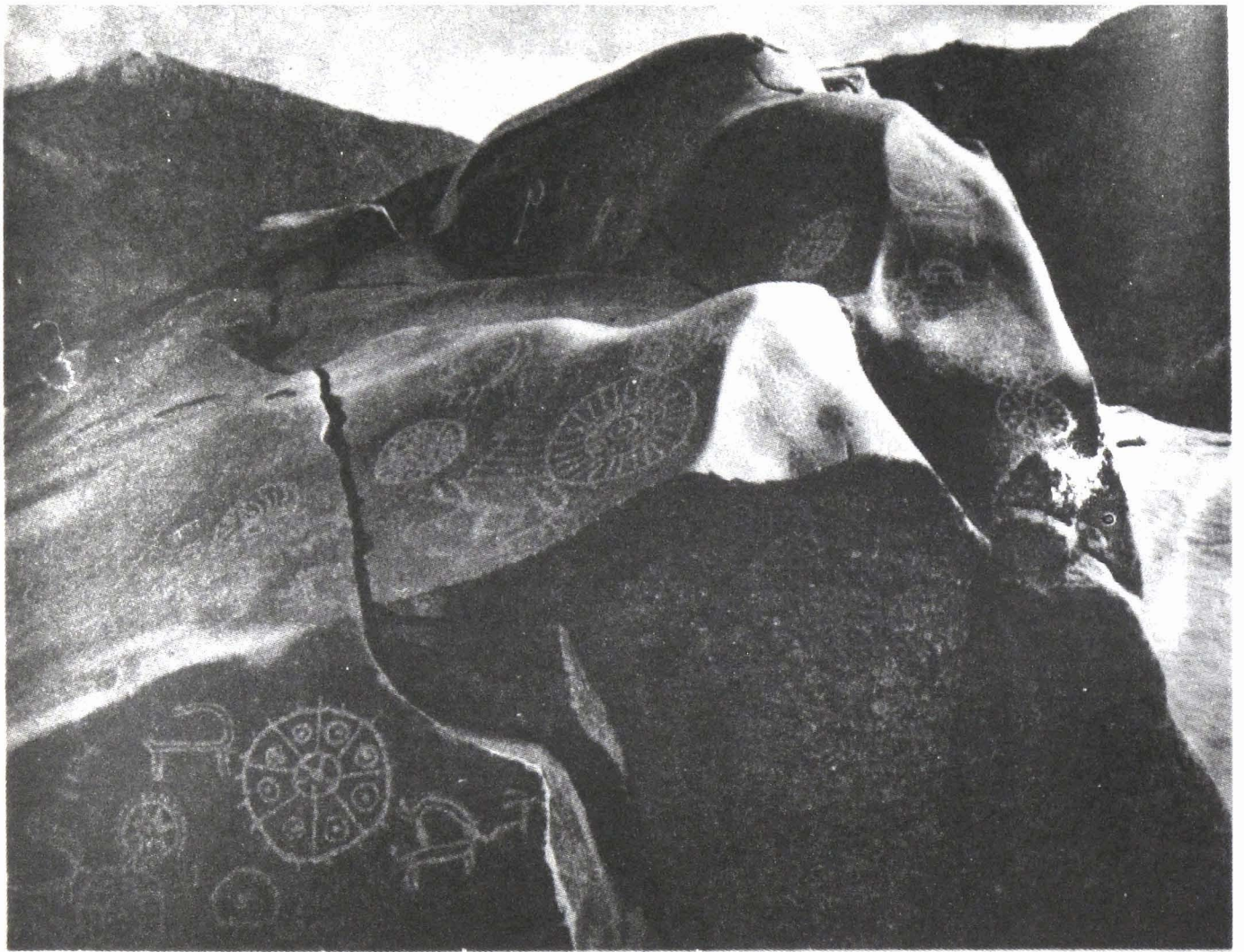














In 25 years of travelling through the northern areas of Pakistan I noticed rockcarvings at many occasions. Most of them were only simple line-drawings rendering wild or domestic goats made by pecking with a pointed stone. Seldom I saw hunting scenes or inexplicable symbols. Some of them looked quite recent. In a short film Dr. Peter Snoy showed how they are still made today, so they are an ethnographic and not so much an archaeological phenomenon. But Snoy also got hints to a former religious meaning (SNOY 1960, 1974).

After some time I learnt to discern a second category of carvings (JETTAMAR 1979): They occur almost exclusively near the banks of the main rivers. In most cases they are carefully executed, often with the help of metal implements showing predominantly Buddhist symbols or even complex representations. Inscriptions in various scripts occur at the same places, all of them belonging to the pre-Islamic past.

At first I did not consider studying of such monuments as one of the most urgent tasks of the ethnographer. There are so many customs and beliefs to be recorded which quickly vanish under the impact of influences intruding from the lowlands as a consequence of a dramatically improved road-system. Orthodox Islam is fast superseding the popular beliefs and ancient customs — certainly outdated, but revealing many interesting historical connections.

But I had to change my mind. Rather surprised I per-



ceived that only very few of the rockdrawings and inscriptions well-known to the local population had been properly studied, namely the long royal inscription at Hatun (CHAKRAVARTI 1953/54) and some artistically fascinating drawings plus inscriptions near Chilas. Sir Aurel Stein (STEIN 1944) was fully aware of their importance. But after the death of the Grand Old "Archaeological Explorer" (MIRSKY 1977) nobody proceeded in his footsteps. Moreover, I understood that even the few historical monuments studied so far, complementary to the written sources of the same period, had contributed enormously to the interpretation of the ethnographic facts which my colleagues and I had observed.

Since evidently no scholar better prepared for this task was interested to devote himself to this kind of studies, I started to take photographs of all carvings belonging to the "historical" category. I offered them to several experts hoping that their readings would elucidate some of the many open questions.

In some respects I was successful. G. Fussman used my hints and my photographs to locate, study and publish the inscriptions of Alam Bridge (FUSSMAN 1978). K. Sagaster translated for me inscriptions at Gakuch, unpublished so far.

Such initiatives were suddenly interrupted. When in 1975 I wanted to revisit a place near Thor in the Indus valley, the building of the Karakorum Highway instead of an unpaved and narrow road had started as a joint Pak-Chinese project. This meant that I could not continue my studies on a site where I had seen no inscriptions — it is true — but a multitude of drawings. One of them was a crouching beast of prey, its limbs ending in rings. Beyond doubt I had found the first typical sample of the Scytho-Siberian Animal Style ever observed in the Karakorums (JETTMAR



1979: Fig.4). The old saying that no Animal Style occurs in the areas of Sir Aurel Stein's researches had become obsolete. This was a new argument for the thesis verified by B.A.Litvinsky (LITVINSKIJ 1963, 1964) for the first time by archaeological data, namely that the Saka tribes invading the Northwest corner of the subcontinent did not only come via (present) Afghanistan but also directly through the mountains.

When I was back in North Pakistan in 1979 the situation had thoroughly changed. The Karakorum Highway, finally completed, was open to foreigners and an agreement for Pak-German collaboration to study present and former cultures along this route was under consideration by the Pakistan Government. I was allowed to invite Professor Dani, who was proposed as coordinator of the Pakistan team, to join me during the initial phase of investigation. We wanted to formulate concrete proposals, where and how our common work should begin.

We started our trip by a journey along the Karakorum Highway to Gilgit on October 6, 1979. Even before reaching Chilas on October 7, I saw an inscription, perhaps 15 metres off the road. A.H.Dani identified the script as Brahmi and gave a preliminary reading. For my interests such first glimpses proved to be equally rewarding. Our driver showed me a rather small drawing which I identified as an ibex executed according to the rules of the Scytho-Siberian Animal Style. I could not find the "crouching beast of prey with his limbs ending in rings" again - evidently it had been blasted when the Highway was broadened. A.H. Dani observed some signs in the increasing darkness which he interpreted as "Maues", the name of the famous Saka ruler. Unfortunately no good photograph was possible, and later on we tried in vain to locate the place of this possibly important discovery.

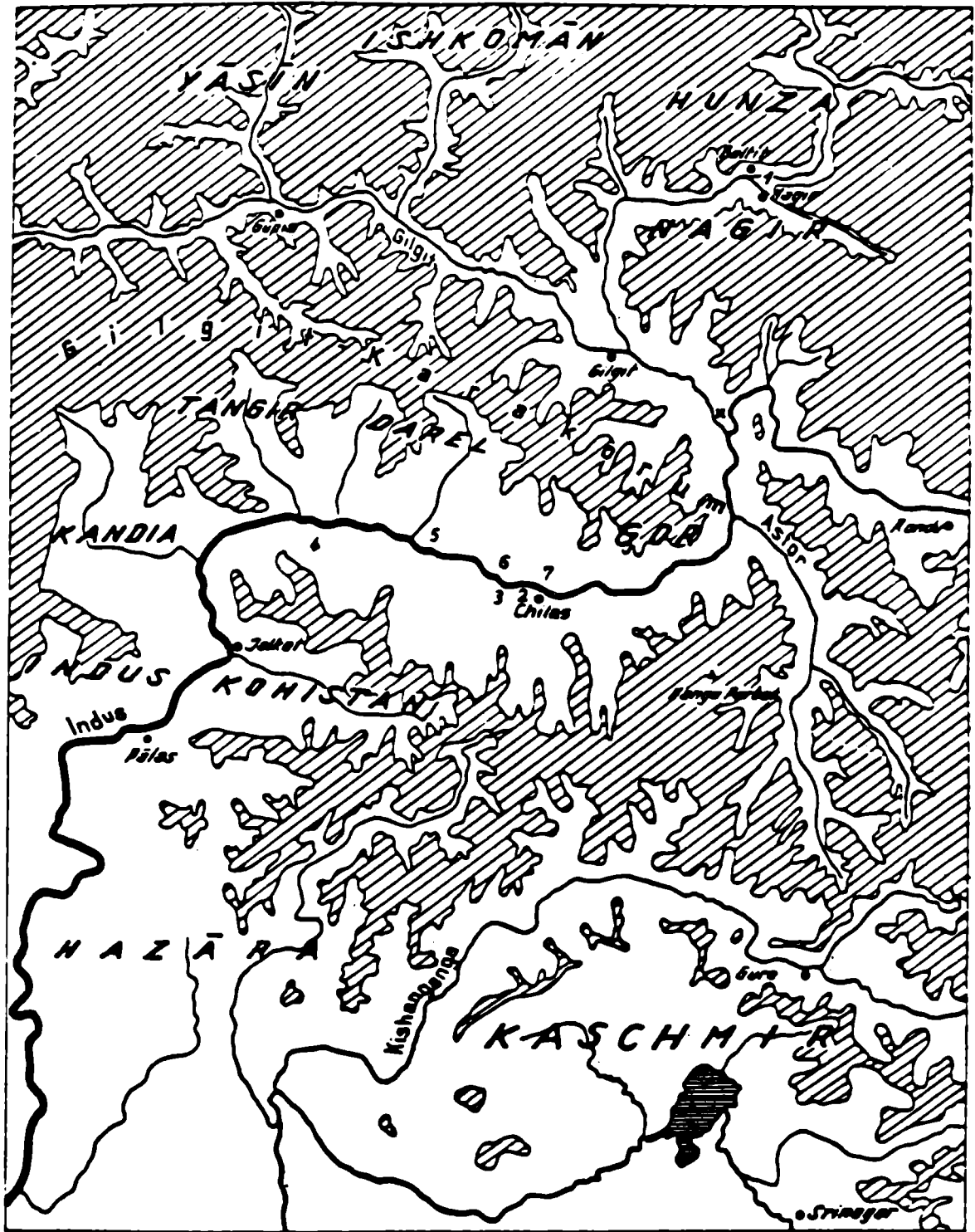


On the next morning, October 8, 1979, on leaving Chilas we were struck by a very elaborate stupa-drawing, about two metres high, on a rock in a sandy plain, perfectly visible from the main road. On the right side there is a proto-Sarada inscription. Other inscriptions and more stupa-drawings were located in the surroundings. Afterwards it became clear that the same rockcarving was already described and even depicted in a primitive sketch more than 70 years ago by the Chief Clerk of the Gilgit Agency, Ghulam Muhammad (1907:110). It is beyond my understanding why the Archaeological Survey of India, headed by scholars of world-wide fame had neglected such a concrete indication.

From Gilgit, which we reached on the same day, we made a short visit to Danyor, now easily accessible by the Highway. More than twenty years ago I had seen here an inscription in proto-Sarada before I had realized the negligence of the archaeologists in charge. In size it could only be compared with the Hatun inscription. On arriving at the spot I learned why G.Fussman, to whom I had given a vivid description as well as photographs taken by myself in 1975 and by my friend E.Piffel during the Haramosh Expedition (1958), had postponed the study of this monument to a later visit: In the meantime a house had been built so near to the rock that no good photos were any longer to be taken. The inscription is now deciphered by O.v.Hinuber — on the basis of a plaster-cast.

On October 10, we reached Hunza, which I never had visited so far as I was rather disgusted by the cult that had been created by proliferous writers around this "Lost Kingdom in the Himalayas", the homeland of the healthiest people on earth. My old friend and guide Rahbar Hassan accompanied us, and when we met his nephew Suleiman Shah who was engaged in the Ruby Mining Project of Hun-







za, we, of course, asked him whether he had seen rock-carvings somewhere. Yes, he had, and he took us on car over the bridge beyond Ganish right to the place where the area open to foreigners ends by a well-guarded barrier. (In the meantime this barrier was shifted to the bridge, so no discovery would have been possible).

Between the Hunza and the Hispar river there is a barren mountain and on its left flank there is flat ground where the inhabitants of Ganish bury their dead. Between the river and this terrace there is a rocky ridge of various height called Haldeikish, in some places covered by alluvial soil so that several segments can be discerned. Two higher ones in the East I may call bastions.

The easternmost bastion ends abruptly, evidently the river which makes here a bend has eaten away the perpetuation of this formation. On the eastern narrow front and on the adjacent parts of the sidewalls one sees a multitude of rock inscriptions, some of them difficult to reach from the ground sloping down to the river bed. Especially the lengthy inscriptions in several lines were made on the precipice in a height of eight or more metres. In the meantime it became clear that most inscriptions are in Kharoshti, but Brahmi is also well represented. Intermingled and at least partly contemporary are rather primitive-looking drawings of animals and human beings. Splended exceptions are found as well: a horse in full movement is rendered in elegant outlines resembling the so-called Dardic rockcarvings observed by Francke in Ladakh. A warrior is depicted like the figures we can see on Kushana coins. Not far from this spot I observed a tamga, the so-called Gondopharean symbol. The rest of the same bastion has only a few inscriptions and more or less primitive animal drawings, most of them depicting either ibexes or domestic goats.

The second bastion has also inscriptions and animal



drawings in several places. The most interesting of them are concentrated on a detached rock at the left (=western) corner. Besides Brahmi another script is used here, evidently Sogdian. A human head in profile with hair knot and pigtail is clearly outlined, surprisingly (Fig. 1) elegant. Another human head seen in profile was observed nearby in 1980. It is of the same type as portraits at Shatial Bridge found in clear context with Sogdian inscriptions.

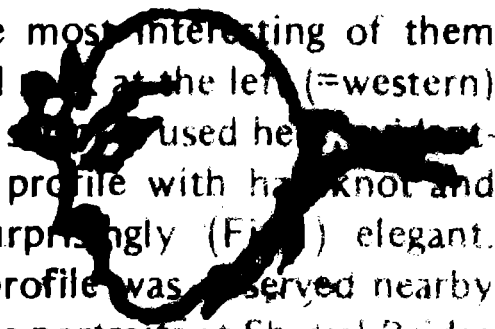


Fig. 1

The third part of this ridge is in many places covered with a multitude of animal drawings — and here finally the name of the locality becomes fully comprehensible: “Place of the male ibexes”. Almost all of them show tremendous horns, male sex is clearly indicated. Some animals seem to occupy a central position, others are marked by a dot or circle hovering above their bodies.

Male ibex figures and, in rare cases, other pictures (men, riders, abstract symbols) are to be seen on the flanks of the fourth part of the ridge. In 1980 I saw here a Bactrian inscription and another tamga.

Many thousand years ago, when the Hunza river was flowing at a much higher level and the rock was like an island in its course, deep niches were carved out by whirlpools at some places, so they have almost polished surfaces. These spots evidently were of special importance to the people making the later rockcarvings. Therefore we find them artistically decorated, with more sophisticated drawings, made double in lines. One of them conceals a Brahmi inscription of several lines. Our Muslim collaborator called such niches “mihrabs”, and that may point into the right direction.

Around the ridge there are some larger or smaller boulders which also show drawings or inscriptions. This periphery extends over several hundred metres on the eastern side. In that distance rockshelters were found, maybe



inhabited in the time when the ridge was used as a venerated monument. (This extension, however, was only observed in 1980 by Mr. M.S.Qamar, our counterpart, representative of the Department of Archaeology).

The inscriptions of Hunza-Haldeikish have been studied primarily by Prof. Dani, who was present during the discovery in 1979 and published the first information on the "Sacred Rock of Hunza". He came back in 1980 with the German team which will be responsible for the photographic and photogrammetric record. Dani started the decipherment on the spot. What he told me is very promising. He identified Kushana and pre-Kushana names combined with dates. But of course the full translation can only be done on the basis of better photographs. Certainly most of the names identified so far belong to travellers crossing this innermost part of the Karakorum.

The French scholar Prof. Fussman had seen my photographs taken in 1979. He got the chance to pay a short visit to the rock in 1980. One of his observations may be mentioned here: The inscriptions are roughly contemporary to those which he studied some years earlier at Alam Bridge. The latest stratum which can be observed along the Indus near Chilas (Proto-Sarada) and in Punyal (Early Tibetan) is absent in both sites. Hunza-Haldeikish and Alam Bridge correspond to important stages on the same route: from the Kilik over the Mintaka pass down the Hunza valley (following the Nagir side) and along the northern bank of the Gilgit river to the Indus. When there was a period without any more names scratched into the rock, this gap may in fact indicate that the road went out of use. Perhaps another route over the Baroghil and Darkot passes was preferred. The Chinese army invading Gilgit in 747 A.D. chose this alternative. Whether there were political reasons or climatical causes (an advancement of the glaciers) responsi-



ble for the shift of the main artery to the West, we don't know.

One thing is conspicuous especially when we compare with the various sites in the Indus valley where we now know huge numbers of rockcarvings. There are only very few typical stupa-drawings in Hunza-Haldeikish, one of them on a boulder lying before the second bastion of the ridge. On the ridge proper we have signs which resemble beehives. Some of them are like towers with many storeys and a strange knob on the top. Other drawings could be explained either as stupas or as lingams. Buddhist symbols of any other kind are very sparsely represented. So we might assume that the so-called "Sacred Rock" was initially some sort of memorial or frontier-post where the hardy passengers reaching this point left their marks. The same could be said of Alam Bridge. This may explain why tamgas occur, the property-marks of the Northern Nomads later on used as dynastic symbols, especially on coins.

But in the following periods there may have been changes. For a while Buddhist worship was concentrated here. Later on the population of the villages on the other side of the river used this place with its enigmatic drawings and inscriptions as a sanctuary in their own way concentrating on the "mihrabs" which got additional carvings. The rock on the left (=western) parts of the ridge became sprinkled with animal figures. Such figures, mostly ibexes or domestic goats are painted with flour on the beams and pillars inside the houses during special festivals even today. They shall bring blessings to the inhabitants and fertility to the cattle. Similar rituals must have been the background of the later carving-activities. There are local legends connecting Haldeikish with the demonic kings of Gilgit - Shiri Badat or Shiri Bager Tham. Either of them is considered as the owner of the mayaro, the pure wild goats, and either



of them is addressed for progeny of man and animal.

Finally there is a layer of recent inscriptions, the names of the Army Engineers and their Chinese friends who undertook the perilous task of constructing the Karakorum Highway. So the rock again turned into a memorial, a function it had almost two thousand years ago.

The inscriptions and other signs have now been given numbers. They were carefully recorded by a team of the German Archaeological Institute headed by Dr. Thewalt, in collaboration with Prof. Dani and Mr. Qamar.

When I started my journey from Islamabad I was determined to locate and to study the place where Sir Aurel Stein almost at the end of his long life had observed artistically important Buddhist rockcarvings and inscriptions of the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. When we passed Chilas in the first day of October 1979, nobody seemed to know anything about the place of this discovery.

After four weeks of busy ethnographic fieldwork I came back to Chilas on November 6, 1979. The man who had been "Raja Orderly" during the British period and had led Sir Aurel Stein to the spot, was entrusted by the helpful Deputy Commissioner to do me the same service. It turned out that the Karakorum Highway had been broken right through the rocks covered with Buddhist carvings, just below Chilas, between the places where two rivers, Butogah and Thakgah, fall into the Indus. Much of the remaining carvings can be seen by any attentive traveler just passing on the highway. The most conspicuous scene reported by Sir Aurel Stein representing "the well-known legend of Buddha in a former birth sacrificing his body to a famished tigress in order to save her starving cubs" (STEIN 1944:20) was found only in 1981. Only one important fact I have to add to Stein's description of the site: Chinese certainly have reached the place. Chinese



characters can be seen, almost sure to be names, only the first signs are readable. They are quite different from the modern additions made by the road builders. I called this today rudimentary site *Chilas I*.

During this trip good old friends and experienced counterparts accompanied me, the retired D.C. of Chilas Mohammad Ismail Khan and the erudite former police-officer Abdul Hamid Khawar. Their relatives, friends and friends of friends were ready to help us, so I got a rather clear idea of the situation at least on the left (=southern) side of the Indus river. There is a zone of carvings and inscriptions along the river between Chilas and Shatial over a length of about forty miles between the slopes of the barren mountains and the banks. Sometimes they also reach into the side valleys, especially at Thor. Sir Aurel Stein became aware of a part of this zone. In 1955 the German Hindukush Expedition had crossed it. In some places there are small clusters or isolated pictures, some of them of great historic interest.

But there are also concentrations of rockcarvings in restricted areas clearly belonging together. They form cultural units connected by one tradition, even if this tradition may have lasted for a considerable period. Such a site is *Chilas II*, i.e., carvings on cliffs breaking down like a wall to the river-banks and its sand-dunes. They were fluted and polished when the flow of the river was much higher than today. In one place there is a sort of "abri" like an enormous baldachin, and just below is a rock forming a platform. In my imagination this must have been a suitable place for religious ceremonies, a sanctuary.

The main theme in the decoration of this evidently Buddhist monument is the veneration of stupas. Their forms are rather archaic, sometimes a big dome (*anda*) over a low cylinder (*mehdi*) sometimes the shape looks like a



big bell. In other cases the *mehdi* is higher and surrounded by a gallery. Many of the stupas have prominent doors either in the *mehdi* or in the *anda*, so they are hollow, chapels as later on in the lore of the Bon-pos (DENWOOD 1980). They are accessible by a sort of ladder or staircase. The central pillar and the umbrellas are rather restricted in size, but one of the stupas is topped by a crescent. To the side of the monument the radiating sign is to be seen in which a human bust appears. Some of the stupas are combined with one or two pillars. They have well known topplings. Such stupas are venerated, in two pictures by a priest with shaven head in a wide fur-coat(?) who presents a cup evaporating smoke or mist. The priest is assisted by a cult servant carrying a bottle(?). In all other cases the worshippers are warriors, riding, leading their horses or approaching on foot. Elephants are rendered in a very realistic way, they are hardly to be explained as religious symbols. There are also other animals, zebu and goat. One goat is depicted standing on his hindlegs like in Achaemenian art. The body of a horse shows likewise Achaemenoid stylization. Some of the large human figures are armed and expressively male. On a vertical plane which must be passed by when ascending the platform there are several rows of human figures. Among them is a person sitting on a chair (maybe a diety) facing a dancing(?) group, the knees of the dancers bent inward. Some are ithyphallic. Deities seem to occur also on other spots, e.g., a figure with a tremendous mace.

The design of the stupas, the dress of the warriors (with pointed caps or helmets, baggy trousers), the Achaemenoid reminiscences — all point to a pre-Kushan or Kushan date of the drawings. The inscriptions have not yet been systematically deciphered but can be dated by palaeographic comparison. According to Fussman they



belong to the first century A.D., i.e., a period when there existed still a number of independent Saka and Parthian statelets. Only few (later?) inscriptions are in Brahmi.

I remember only a single drawing of a meditating Buddha. However there is an enigmatic drawing which must be mentioned. You may guess to see a man with opened legs forming a sort of rectangular basis. Above this basis there is a quadrangular body with two pairs of arms at different levels and head with three faces on a short neck under a bow-shaped line. I have the idea that a highly stylized stupa was here transformed into a human being, because on the left side there is a column which has also been converted into a man with legs and hands and head. (Fig.2)

There is a category of drawings in *Chilas II* distinctly different from the rest. The topics are uniform: ithyphallic men, some on horses, axes and animals, all of them depicted by a few bold strokes. They have less secondary patina and are therefore certainly younger than the main pictures which were in some places brutally intersected.

On the south bank of the Indus there is one site more of equal fascination. I am speaking of rocks densely covered with drawings and inscriptions below the jeep-road which branches off the Karakorum Highway near Shatial and leads down to the bridge which gives access to the valleys of Tangir and Darel. The rocks are here very dark with what we call desert varnish, so that drawings and inscriptions can easily be seen. They are wellknown to the villagers around. The Chinese workmen have left their names and year of their presence - 1075 - on one of the boulders, therefore it is a sheer wonder that no report reached the authorities as for the rockcarvings of *Shatial Bridge*.

The most interesting works of art are delicate engravings on a big rock almost in the centre of the site. They



were made on a sloping plane, so an elevated platform will be needed to take good photographs. The centre is filled by a big stupa. Staircase, substructure, dome (with a sort of window?), the pole and umbrella canopies are clearly indicated. The construction seems to be sheltered by a sort of open roof. Pennants are floating in the wind below the top. Adorants are to be seen on both sides of the staircase. But the most typical detail is a multitude of small bells. To the left a Buddha is squatting on a high postament inside a frame formed by a tree with many leaves. He has a bird in his lap. Below there is a horn-of-plenty with adorants on both sides. Between the central stupa and the Buddha in the tree a figure is to be seen holding a balance in his hand. The meaning of this scene has been ingeniously traced out by G.Fussman. It is a well known Jataka. On the other side of the great stupa there is a much smaller one with its upper part completely covered by a pyramidal or conic roof. The staircase at the bottom is easy to discern and so is the wooden(?) construction with some bells. There is an adorant below the staircase. On the spot I got the impression that this work was created by an artist or a group of artists familiar with Chinese art of the Wei or Early T'ang period. I still stick to this idea adding that this not necessarily means that the artist was a Chinese himself.

There are not so many other figures at this site, e.g., some human heads seen in profile wearing a smooth cap or helmet (if it is not a special kind of hairdressing). Moreover there are monkeys, the upper part of the body transformed into a phallus. Phallic representations of other kinds also occur.

One drawing I would explain as an altar table. There are sketches of animals (camel, snake) and animal heads (sheep? horse?). We find a labyrinth and some sort of mandala as well as Hinduistic emblems: the trident of Shiva. Fin-



ally there is at least one stupa drawing more, complicated but not very clear.

But basically this site is important due to the inscriptions found here. A considerable number of them is in Brahmi, some quite readable long texts. The bulk of the inscriptions however is Sogdian. As there are not specialists for this field of studies in Pakistan, I had to address scholars outside the country. Prof. Humbach (Mainz, Germany) has deciphered more than two hundred inscriptions almost invariable of similar contents: name and father's name of the traveller, sometimes with date and indication of the destination and intention of the journey. Many names are theophoric, so they give hints as to the religious background, dominated but not exclusively designed by Buddhism. One of the destinations was China (Chinistan), and this fact may explain the stylistic tendencies of the main picture. The general results of Humbach's study are confirmed by Prof. Livsic, Leningrad. On the basis of only a few mediocre photographs he gave not only most interesting interpretations, he also showed that there are palaeographic hints that the inscriptions of *Shatial Bridge* were made during a long period from the second to third centuries A.D. down to the seventh, perhaps even eighth to ninth centuries A.D. Nearby may have been a trade-post. Perhaps the road from Badakhshan and another one from Sinkiang joined here in a territory which was for a while under the direct control of the Hephtalites. This would explain the tamgas found on some of the rocks. It should be mentioned that the latest paintings in Panjikent and other Sogdian towns show many artistic and iconographic borrowings from India. The trade system disclosed here avoiding areas under Arab control may have led to the contacts.

So there are three major sites on the left bank of the



Indus: *Chilas I, Chilas II, Shatial Bridge*. As for the many more or less isolated rocks with inscriptions or carvings in this zone, two observations are important:

1. At least at three places I have seen animal pictures designed according to the principles of the Scytho-Siberian Animal Style. (Fig. 3)
2. Many stupa-drawings in this periphery are rather primitive with a clumsy stylization. You could suppose that they render a framework of wooden beams only partly filled in with stones and plaster. According to rough inscriptions nearby (Brahmi) such drawings (and the buildings represented?) were made at the same time as artistically perfect buildings. Perhaps they belong to different social strata.

We do not know whether the sites observed by me on the other side of the river form part of a similar continuous zone. So far I could only cross the Indus at such places where I suspected eminent discoveries or where such discoveries were already made by the local population and reported to my friends.

The site opposite of the Thor river was observed by the local goldwashers only some time ago, when their access to the meadows in the upper part of the Thor valley was barred to them by the landowners. They then had to go for firewood to the other side of the Indus — almost totally barren — and to bring their cattle there for a meagre grazing. So a ferry was fitted up, and this ferry also gave access to us. We followed the path of the shepherds to the right and up a steep slope. At first we found badly damaged carvings, but later on better preserved ones and some inscriptions too, mostly on isolated boulders. They surrounded a sort of an open place on a gentle slope forty metres above the river.





Sanchi and Barhut.

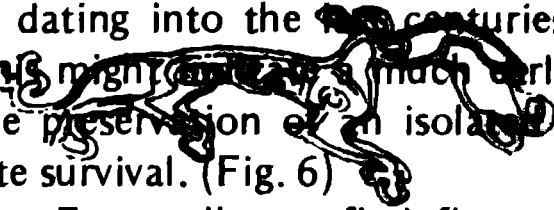
Very strange is a highly erotic scene as known from Achaemenid cylinder-seals. There must be some popular story behind it.

At several places there are strongly stylized figures of humans, ithyphallic, their arms opened with large opened hands. They represent the latest group of the carvings on that site.

Perhaps ten miles to the East and about seven miles below Chilas the Hodar-gah joins the Indus river. There is a new-built splendid bridge across the Indus, but the jeep road ends soon in a sandy plain. Formerly here were rich fields but during the first half of the nineteenth century they were swept away by one of the floods of the Indus. A small village has grown up on the left (=upper) side of the Hodar-gah, and here between the Indus and the hillside topped by an old fortress (which was visited by Sir Aurel Stein) on isolated boulders just emerging out of the sand dunes petroglyphs plus inscriptions were found by my party.

Carefully executed stupas with forms usual during the fifth century A.D. (e.g., in Chitral) are difficult to see, since the incisions are flat and have almost the same varnish as the plane of the rock. Irregular and apparently careless drawings of stupas with a narrow base but many stages are certainly of a later date. They do not correspond to actual buildings but are votive exaggerations. The inscriptions clearly connected with such representations are in proto-Sarada. The same population has decorated many rocks with lions in heraldic position: a front(leg) raised for striking. May be they were the "coat of arms" of the tribe dominating this area. Such lions occur in the decor of metal vessels in the Sasanian tradition (DARKEVIC 1976)

There is another animal with a long down-bent snout, its body covered with spirals, its tail ending in hooks — characteristic traits of the Scytho-Siberian Animal Style. A dating into the 9th centuries B.C. must be suggested. This might ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> a much earlier stratum of carvings, or the preservation of an isolated motive of Nomad art as a late survival. (Fig. 6)



Eventually, we find figures looking like insects, their bodies divided by a perpendicular line, or, more often, by horizontal stripes. Tentacles emerge from the head, at the basis you may recognize feet and a penis. They have arms and hands with three fingers only. I suspect that the stupa in a time when its real meaning was forgotten was considered as a sort of demonic being. Perhaps real stupas were also misunderstood in this way, but certainly so were their drawings. I know one example from Chitral where the horizontal lines dividing the base are regarded as fetters captivating a dangerous giant.

All in all, *Hodar* as a site is somewhat crude and provincial, after a regular start evidently no foreign masters of superior training were working here.

The last site to be mentioned is a little below the village of *Thalpan* on the same (right) side of the Indus, almost opposite of Chilas I. So we have returned to our starting-point. This site can be reached by a jeepable bridge useful only for pedestrians, because the road is rudimentary on both sides. We see some carvings and inscriptions immediately after crossing, badly damaged when the bridge was built, but we stepped into the real concentration only after climbing a moderate slope. Rocks of various sizes are scattered over a declining sandy plain. In the left upper corner the most noteworthy monument is a rocky ridge stretching vertically to the slope. It has a sort of elongated platform below its crest, in this way forming



a giant bench. If there once was an altar on the platform, it could have been seen from far away. On the wall under the platform and on the flanks of the ridge Buddhist carvings from various periods are visible, among them a veritable crowd of schematic Buddhas, their clothing neatly arranged in parallel folds. But the main carvings have nothing to do with this religion. One of the drawings, on a prominent place, must be considered as influenced by the Animal Style: an animal with antlers (not a goat but rather a stag) is persued by a beast of prey with two tails. A spiral is drawn on the shoulder of the "stag". Two snakes attacking the head of the "stag" are evidently later additions. (Fig. 7)

Only a few feet apart another technique and another style are represented: animals in a somewhat stiff position, their front legs advanced. (Fig. 8) Their bodies are covered by peck-marks but with blanks spared out mostly in shape of a circle or comma. One animal has a straight horn on his forehead, a mane topped by balls, his tail ending in a strange flower touching a loop on the back of the body. One leg is very long and bent in the knee. If there is a model for this sort of stylization, then in Achaemenian art. (Fig. 9) To make the confusion perfect, warrior figures in different poses belong to the decoration of the front of this rock.

One person is dancing, the other one holds a spear ready to thrust and the third one holds a goat perched on one back leg and swings a heavy knife. The helmets have a nape-cover; the shoulders of the two figures to the right are seen in front, the lower part of the body in strange leggings seen from the side. Their tuniques end in folds. (Fig. 10, a-c) The dresses of these warrior figures were identified by Porada as "Late Parthian", but the artists who have created them were certainly influenced by more archaic Near Eastern traditions. It is difficult to say

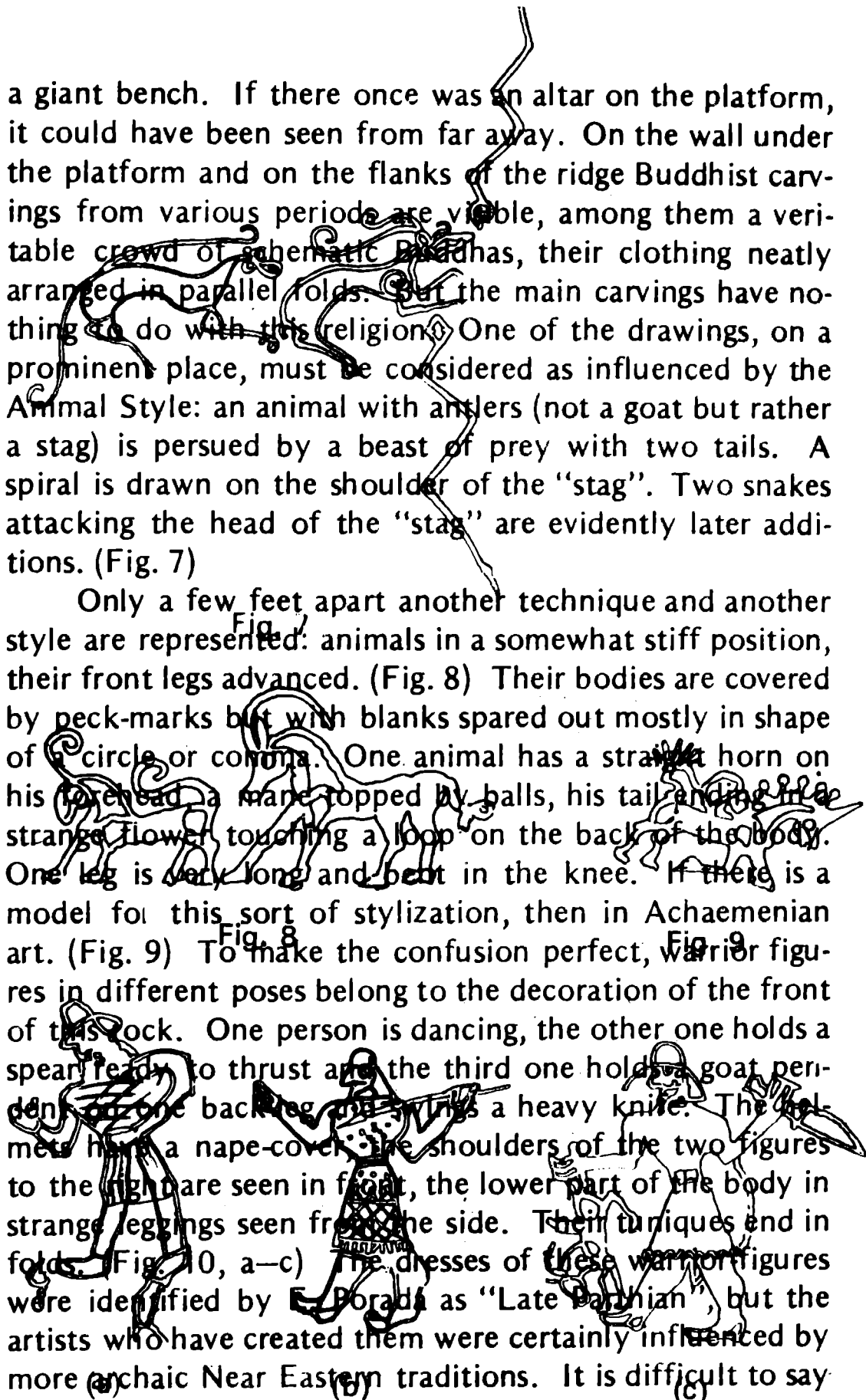


Fig. 10

what this combination means: did refugees of several invading races find shelter in the mountains after the end of their rule in the Indian plains and have come here together venerating a common sanctuary?

As much puzzling are representations on the next rock. The decorative system using omissions serves to render a phantastic horse with a big mane, a rider with a high headdress following a beast.

On other points artists of high standard have rendered complicated scenes, stupas with elaborate constructions, Buddhas, single and in pairs, an ascetic under a tree. The most conspicuous scene — the enlightenment — was only observed in 1980. Such representations, some definitely under Chinese influence, occur also on the near hillside which is densely covered with boulders and jaggy rocks. Two special artistic traditions must be mentioned. One is rendering stupas in bold lines, their umbrellas are moulded into a sort of casket-roof equipped with jingles. Often the stepped basis of the stupa is intersected by empty niches — according to a Central Asian tradition (FRANZ 1980: 44—45). Since such representations have votive inscriptions in Brahmi as well as in proto-Sarada, a rather late date seems appropriate. In one case the basis of the building seems to support two additional stupas beside the central dome. Such complex constructions are described in the religious texts of the Bonpos. Evidently they have inherited traditions endemic in some remote areas of Central Asia for a long time.

Very regular stupas of rather small size, certainly chiseled by steel implements form the other group. They are supplemented by miniature inscriptions executed in the same way which should be recorded by plaster-casts.

But I am unable to describe the full scope of stupa types represented on this site in a short paper — beside the



fact that the northwestern outskirts are still unexplored. Some stupas are slender but with a sort of cupola, others have four especially enlarged pennons, so they look like wind-mills. I think on the basis of the specimens observed here, the history of the development of the stupa between Gandhara and Central Asia should be revised indicating hitherto unknown local trends and degenerations. The intermingling of stupa-drawings, inscriptions and complicated scenes may give additional hints.

In the lower fringe of the sandy plain where the slope goes down to the river-bed, there is a chain of rocks and here beside Buddhist scenes and stupas another sort of drawings is to be found. Animals with geometric contours resemble seemingly those from Thor, Northern Bank but are certainly later than the Buddhist period. The same may be said of riders, human figures and circular "shields" decorated with different patterns. What these circular wheel-shaped symbols, very seldom with four spokes, may mean is difficult to say, derivation from Nestorian crosses would be very far-fetched.

Therefore definitely Thalpan is the most promising and at the same time the least known site in the Indus valley. Whether there are smaller or bigger clusters of rockcarvings on the right bank below or beyond Thalpan, is so far unknown.

Let us try to trace out in bold strokes the History of the Northern Areas as revealed by the petroglyphs.

Already before the discoveries of the last years there existed some hints pointing to the existence of routes of trade and migration in the westernmost part of the Great Himalayan system since at least four millennia.

Of course, trade and migration were not possible without the help of a local population adapted to the environment, so the occupation of the valleys by man must

have happened even earlier.

Definite arguments for migration from the North were found during excavation at Burzahom in Kashmir (B. AND R. ALLCHIN 1968:160) and at Loebanr in Swat (STACUL 1976:29). In the last years movements into the opposite direction became evident as there existed colonies of the Harappa culture in Eastern Bactria (FRANCFORT - POLLIER 1978). This means that high passes were crossed in both directions.

Perhaps we shall learn about the importance of the upper Indus valley in this early system of traffic when the rockcarvings of *Thor, Northern Bank* are properly studied. The Soviet scholar Ja. A. Sher (1980) published a lucid summary of what is known about petroglyphs in Middle Asia (Western Turkestan) and Central Asia (i.e. Southern Siberia, Eastern Turkestan, Mongolia). Stylistic peculiarities which he considers typical for the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age, e.g. Bi-triangular animal drawings (rendering the body by two triangles, adoescent at one corner) were observed near Thor. The representation of a chariot fits in this milieu. (Fig. 11)

The Han-shu, the oldest Chinese monograph on the Western Regions clearly states that one part of the Saka mounted warriors who during the first century B.C. founded principalities on the soil of modern Afghanistan, Pakistan and India came directly from the North via the "Suspended Crossing" (HULSEWE 1979:108). Rockcarvings belonging to the vast field of the Soutno-Siberian Animal Style may hint to this migration. Maybe they were made relatively late by groups who had preferred to settle in the mountain valleys. (Figs. 12, 13)

Near one place where the Sakas left their marks, other drawings are to be seen with features derived from the Achaemenid art which was based on Near Eastern



traditions. Perhaps we have to do with a late offshoot of the art of the Persian Empire, since Parthian influences are to be recognized in the warrior-figures on the same rock. In other places the *tamga* of the Gondopharean dynasty appears.

Evidently during the many invasions which were the fate of Gandhara about the beginning of our era, stragglers of the earlier waves escaped the superior newcomers by retiring into the mountains. Perhaps Swat was an even more important place of refuge.

Maybe the cluster of drawings and inscriptions observed near *Chilas II* was the Buddhist sanctuary of a Saka or Parthian garrison posted here in the time when the dynasties emerging from the restless movements tried to organize even their periphery. Such a dynasty of Iranian origin was perhaps established in Swat (BAILEY 1980). Some of the warriors posted here had perhaps previously done service in the Central Indian provinces — so we find a strange blending of barbarian traits with Buddhist symbols not typical of Gandhara.

The Kushan emperors reduced the local rulers to feudal lords, but they were interested to have a strict control of places on the shortest road to the Tarim Basin. This was essential for Kanishka's active politics in Central Asia. Inscriptions near Alam Bridge studied by Fussman (1978:55) belong to this context. Similar inscriptions evidently occur at *Hanza-Haldeikish*.

The Kushan Empire lost these regions rather soon. The innermost valleys of the mountains with their centre near Gilgit were organized by the state of Bolor. The rulers of the Patola Dynasty used an Iranian title (among others): "Śahi". The Patola Śahis were devoted Buddhists. Together with their courtiers they initiated and subsidized the copying of pious texts. The result of this pious zeal were

the *Gilgit Manuscripts* found since 1931. I have tried to reconstruct what actually happened between 1931 and 1939, my article is in print. The manuscripts are mostly written on birchbark, they were deposited in the two chambers of a building which had the outer shape of a stupa. It was situated near Naupur, one of the original quarters of Gilgit. Nearby was a Buddhist monastery apparently under special protection of the king as his residence lay not far away.

Since we have so far not a single coin, the history of the Patola Dynasty must be reconstructed by diligent interpretation of the Chinese sources, some names found in the Gilgit Manuscripts indicating the donators, and two royal rock-edicts. One of them shown to me in 1958 near Danyor is still unpublished. Prof. O. v. Hinuber, the leading authority for the Gilgit Manuscripts (1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1981) succeeded in deciphering the essential passages. By his illuminating analyses, the names of six rulers are known together with their consorts and dignitaries. They belong to the seventh and eighth centuries. A.D. The names in the Chinese texts cannot be identified with these names so far.

The state of Bolor, however, was founded already much earlier, in the fourth century A.D. at the latest. It had the essential – and highly profitable – function to organize and to protect the international route between Gandhara and the Tarim Basin leading across the high passes and through the barren valleys where vegetation is found in a few cases only. This route was a vein of the expanding Buddhism of Central and East Asia. Preachers of Buddhism had used this path, Chinese pilgrims came back to see the holy places and to collect authentic texts. Their travel reports are an unrivalled source of information since the fifth century A.D.



Many inscriptions and rockcarvings may reflect the anxious feelings of pious travellers on crossing dangerous spots. Some foreigners used their literary or artistic training to work for the local notables in order to restore their funds of travel.

This traffic lasted for centuries, people from many tribes and nations were among the participants. Some were rather simple-minded, others gifted craftsmen who had their book of patterns with them. This explains the tremendous stylistic diversity of the performances, the use of different scripts even on the same boulder. Some of the passengers may have settled in the mountains creating local schools.

We may take it for certain that the visitors have also left other works of art, but beside the manuscripts found at Naupur — and perhaps some bronze statuettes which were so far labelled as coming from Swat or Kashmir — nothing has been preserved. We must remember the fact that the valleys were repeatedly harassed by destructive floods.

The rocks, polished through millennia by sandstorms and water, covered with a brown or blue desert varnish, were not affected by such catastrophes. Drawings and inscriptions are still visible from a considerable distance, no deep incisions were necessary. So they are somewhat like an empty canvass tempting every passing artist. They were therefore occasionally used for drawings of a rather private character capriciously rendering popular folk-tales or even caricatures of some persons. Some of the drawings have sexual themes — but they must not necessarily be explained as tantric. They resemble graffiti by their quick grasp and sophistication but not rock art which is characterized by solemn emphasis.

Between the court with a Buddhist flavour of inter-

national standard and so many learned visitors on the one side and the simple farmers, herdsmen and hunters who lived in the villages on the other side there must have been a considerable cultural lag, and consequently also tensions. The tendency of the population outside the radiation of the court and the monasteries to adopt and to assimilate the foreign ideology may explain the existence of a group of variegated and even ambiguous drawings which are however technically inferior. Many of them transform and exaggerate the normal shape of the main Buddhist monument, the stupa. (Fig. 14) In some cases the results are strange beings like insects. The garlands on top of the monument had become some sort of antennas. (Fig. 15) Confronted with such deviant drawings I supposed that they were primitive imitations made in later centuries, when the Buddhist faith had completely disintegrated, its symbols become incomprehensible. But in some places such drawings are connected with Brahmi inscriptions produced in the same technique by pecking with a stone. They are short and primitive but still readable. Perhaps the drawings reflect the emergence of a folk religion, still in the wake of the official cult. To the same layer may belong drawings of animals, hunting — and sometimes fighting scenes.

We learned that in one site Sogdian inscriptions abound. Even the drawings have a different character. Maybe the place was not under the control of the Patola-Sahis, and nearby was a colony of Sogdian merchants, a basis for their travels.

The middle of the eighth century A.D. was a critical time when the armies of the Tibetans appeared from the East. The repeated attempts of the Chinese to stop their progress by sending troops deep into the mountains were without lasting effect. Bolor was certainly under Tibetan



overlordship. There are reliable reports the Saca Itinerary (BAILEY 1968) and the story of Ki-ye (CHAVANNES 1904) indicating that the roads for travellers were open up to the tenth century A.D.

There is one Buddhist bronze of superior quality (PAL 1975:108, SCHROEDER 1981:118) which was cast according to its inscription by order of one of the Patola-Sahis. Specialists are inclined to date this piece into the eighth or even ninth century. This would mean that there was no decline of the artistic competence. However the specialists who have seen the inscriptions on the rocks did not observe so far an inscription which could safely be contributed to this late period, the inscription on the bronze mentioned above being no exception. This could indicate that there was indeed a cultural break caused by the Tibetan invasion. Either the production of meritorious works stopped or the inscriptions and drawings repeated the standard reached in the eighth century, when they were cut off from the main stream of artistic development.

Along the Indus river below Chilas between the Buddhist drawings sometimes intersecting them we find a special category rather uniform in its demantic aspect. They are totally devoid of inscriptions. The main subject is a male figure with extended arms. His hands are exaggerated, his fingers spread widely. Often we find this male standing on a horse. In some cases the right hand holds a battleaxe. The edge of the blade is pointing upwards, the shaft-tube is extended in the same direction. Axes of this shape were common among the Kafir tribes in the Western Hindukush, but they were also locally used for ceremonial purposes. Animal figures and circular designs with a complicated filling belong to the same complex. Biddulph submitted the thesis that there was an intermediate phase between the decline of Buddhism and the coming of Islam.

The intermediate period was characterized by an aggressive form of Hinduism. Dards (=Shina speakers) were the main protagonists, they have preserved a caste-system going back to this period. It is possible that the complex of rock-carvings with battle-axes originated in this time. The last stand against the conquering Islam was offered by the Sahis of Hund but not in the name of Buddhism as they were effervescent Hindus. Certainly they deeply impressed their neighbours, perhaps after the final collapse many of their stubborn fighters escaped into the mountains.

Only animal drawings of a rather simple type were made even after the conversion to Islam. They show goats, wild goats and ibexes. Such pictures were made as a part of the hunting ritual. We have to compare simple drawings made from meal-pap which decorate the main pillars and the main beams of the house during festivals.

Maybe such drawings were made from the earliest times up to the twentieth century.

Rockcarvings and inscriptions along the Karakorum Highway are henceforth a source for the historian of great importance. Besides they are an impressive part of the artistic heritage of Pakistan, in future centuries they may provide thousands of visitors with the idea of the role of the Mountain Zone of Pakistan in the context of world history.

They are different from most of the petroglyphs discovered elsewhere in one respect they show, how a population living under most difficult conditions reacted to a world religion propagated by the nobles, stimulated by so many foreign visitors.

In many respects Islam was fitted to include the basic tendencies of the common men. Islam did not try to suppress the warlike mentality of the mountain tribes, their virtues which became evident when they opposed the Dogras and later on fought for their freedom in 1947.



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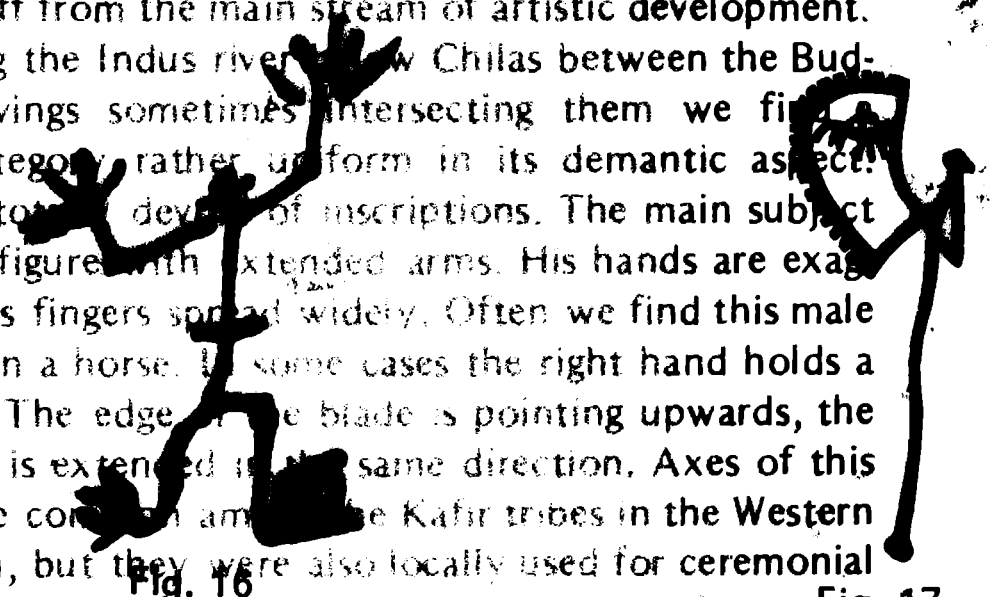


Fig. 16

Fig. 17

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Drawings belonging to a pre-Buddhist sanctuary

1. *Two animals and a warrior slaughtering a goat. Stylistic peculiarities from the Achaemenian period are still in use. Before 1st century B.C.?: Thalpan Bridge.*
2. *Snow-leopard attacking an ibex. Influence of the Achaemenian period still prevalent. The prey, an ibex, is a later addition. Thalpan Bridge.*
3. *Scenery with rock pictures: adoration of a stupa in Chilas II Buddhist sanctuary of a garrison of Parthian or Sakish warriors, most probably 1st century A.D., i.e. pre-Kushan. Chilas II.*
4. *Karoshthi inscriptions from the 1st century A.D., partly covered by drawings from the end of the 1st millennium A.D. or later (axe, man standing on a horse, deity (?), animals). Chilas II.*
5. *A (bisexual ?) deity, holding a spear (names in Karoshthi). Same complex, Chilas II.*
6. *Drawings on the back wall of the sanctuary: stupa, dancing man, elephant, humped bull, goat. Chilas II.*
7. *First sermon of the Buddha in the deer-park at Benares. Rock-drawing near Thalpan Bridge, stemming from the time of most intensive traffic of pilgrims and merchants, approximately 6th century A.D.*

8. *Chinese signs, Hindu and Buddhist symbols on a rock near Thalpan Bridge. The passage of Chines is certain because of several inscriptions, mostly names. 5th to 6th century A.D.*
9. *Figures of running warriors with sword and shield between Thalpan Bridge and Thalpan Village, certainly made by foreign visitors during the Buddhist period.*
10. *Drawings made by the local population during the time of Buddhist preponderance. Near Thalpan Bridge.*
11. *Drawing of a stupa with inscriptions using different scripts, the right. Middle of the 7th century A.D. Thalpan Bridge.*
12. *One side of this huge boulder is almost completely covered by a drawing of a stupa in a special (Central Asian ?) style. Thalpan Bridge.*
13. *Drawings made during the end of the pre-Islamic period, partly covering older stupas, some of which were carefully drawn. Thalpan Bridge.*
14. *Typical symbols of the late period (beginning of the 2nd millennium A.D. or later): battle axes and round "shields". The round pattern is still being used in women's embroideries. Thalpan Bridge.*





























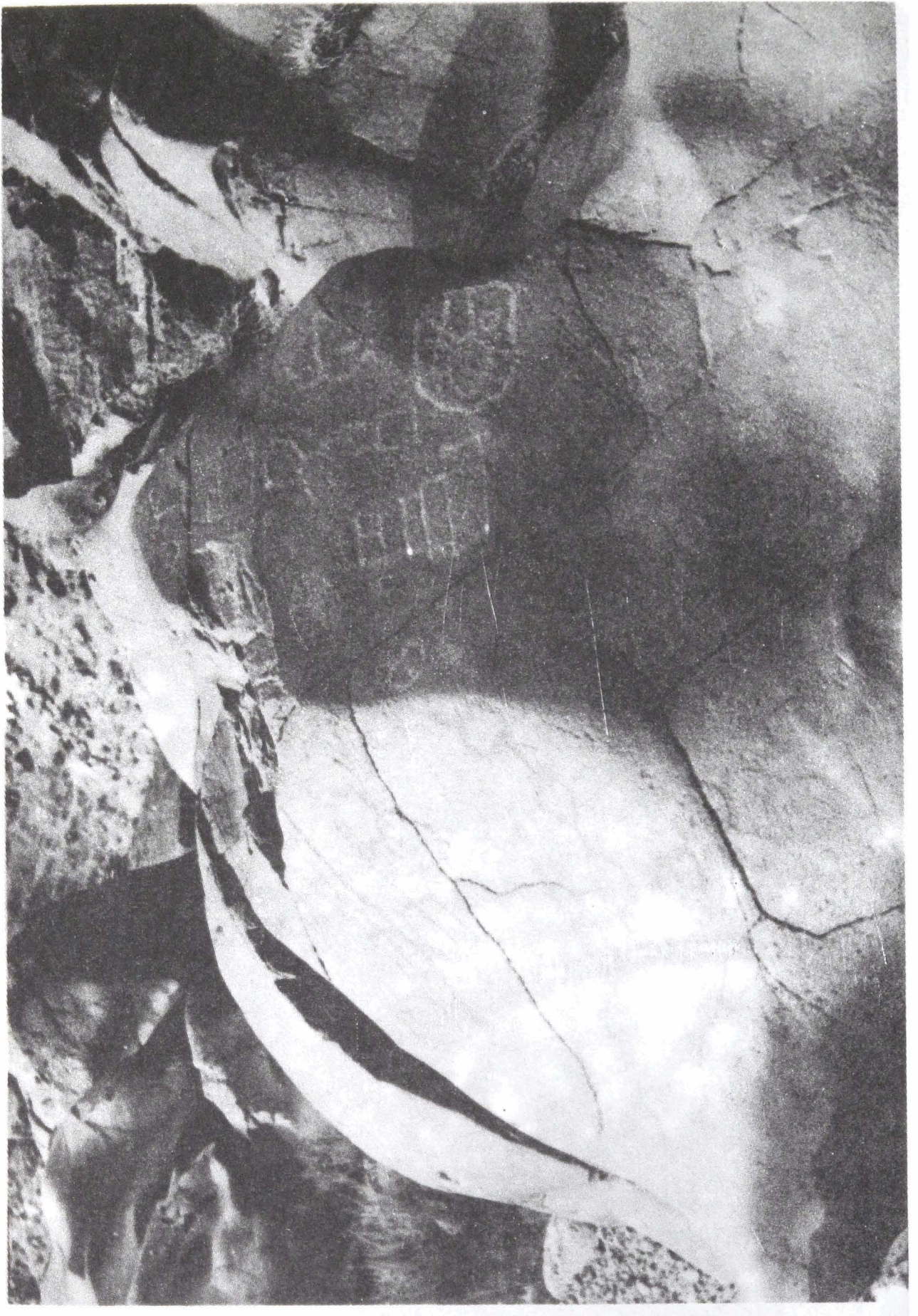








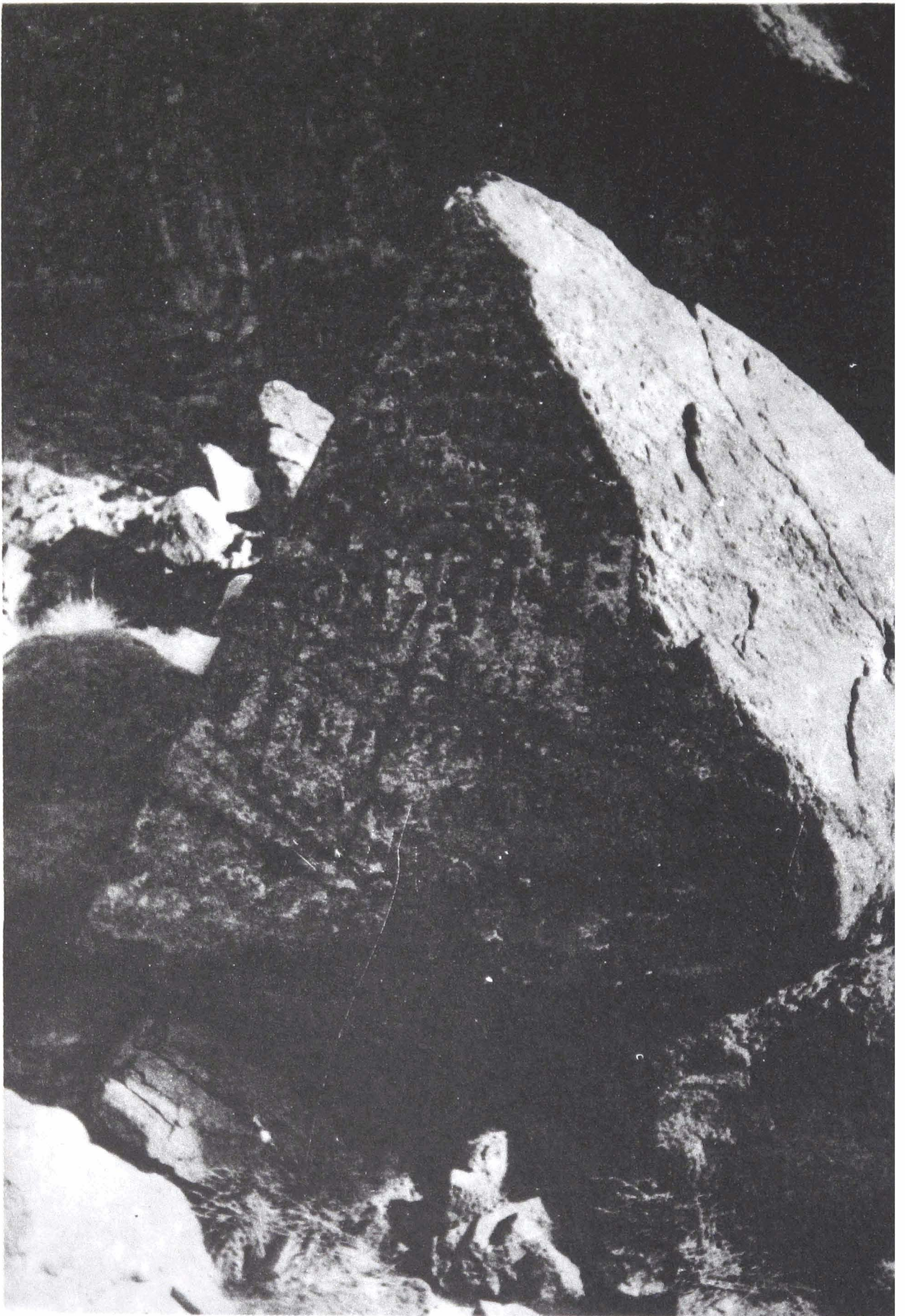






















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