



Kosova rock art Interpretation and Decodification

by Ilaz Thaqi*

ABSTRACT

On the basis of resources produced by international studies of rock art, we have developed a fairly good attempt of interpretation and decodification of Kosovo rock art. Many of the oldest traditional engravings we found in different locations were for prehistoric people a way to express their preoccupations on rock surfaces. Symbols of rites of passage and more signs and symbols engraved on open-air rock surfaces in Zatriqi suggest association with fertility (sex symbols), interconnection (marriage-exchange), energy (prayers for growing up healthy and strongest), territoriality, hope for the future, such as rituals bringing good fortune. We will interpret the graphemes engraved in rock art and decode them in a context of association, superimposition and accumulation. In this way we generate a three-dimensional interpretation of graphemes to construct possible concepts concerning sex, territory subdivision, and ceremonial devotion. By analysing these graphemes we would like to present some cognition examples analogous to those obtained with the study of earlier cultures. We would like to present some of these rock art items for discussion.

RIASSUNTO

Avvalendoci dei risultati prodotti da degli studi internazionali sull'arte rupestre, abbiamo tentato d'interpretare e decodificare le incisioni rupestri del Kosovo. Gran parte delle più antiche e tradizionali incisioni, scoperte in zone diverse, possono essere considerate come un'esternazione delle preoccupazioni dell'uomo preistorico. Simboli legati ai riti di passaggio e altre figure incise sulle superfici rocciose en plain air di Zatriqi richiamano alla mente temi come quello della fertilità (simboli sessuali), delle unioni (scambi matrimoniali), dell'energia (preghiere per crescere forti e sani), della territorialità, della speranza per il futuro e dei rituali propiziatori. Possiamo interpretare i grafemi incisi sulla roccia e decifrarli in un contesto che tenga conto delle associazioni, delle sovrapposizioni e delle accumulazioni. In questo modo creiamo un'interpretazione tridimensionale dei grafemi per giungere all'estrapolazione di concetti legati al sesso, alla suddivisione territoriale e alla devozione religiosa. Attraverso l'analisi di questi grafemi siamo in grado di presentare alcuni esempi cognitivi analoghi a quelli ottenuti con lo studio delle precedenti culture. Vorrei presentare in questa sede alcuni di questi elementi d'arte rupestre per un confronto.

CONTENT-

- ARBOLET IN CONNECTION WITH OTHERS SIGNS
- INTERACTION BETWEEN ASSOCIATIONS
- TERRITORY AND LEAF COMBINATION WITH OTHER SINGS
- TYPOLOGY TABLE

My tentative to interpretative and deciphering is based on methodological work. Rock Art is discovered by us in 2003, in Zatriqi Village 65 km south-west from the capital Prishtina. I wish to thank for supporting and collaboration Institute CCSP, prof. Emmanuel Anati and Ariela Fradkin, for their willingness to visiting Kosova rock art sites last year and for their instruction during the visit. Also many thanks for Dr.Paolo Mietto from the Padova University for encourage.

Rock Art site in mountains Zatriqi are engraved by the flint in Open air surface in horizontal natural position. Just in the Zone A are engraved 276 sings and symbols. (Photo.Horizontal rock art surface).

* Ilaz Thaqi
head of Kosova Rock Art Research Association - KRARA



Most of them are in group associations and just a small of them are engraved out of groups and standing single divided. Views from the rock art site have a nice landscape in a very big part of this region. Nearly 20 m from the rock art sites is the Cave, explored during 1980 for the Chrome mineral resources. (Photo. Cave several meters near rock art site)

In same place, stone have natural perforated were the local people still in present, one day in a year, make procession, going from down to up, specified ceremony day, most of them modern youngest, in a 8 August going their and played old habitat (rite de passage)

INTERPRETATION AND DECIPHERING

I trying to interpretation and decode some of Groups of graphemes according to the typology and association we have a type of graphemes, known for they structural construction, and forms are repetitive; (lines, bi-lines, stars, territory, cross, dots, vulva, arbolet, plants) . They are reflex of the people with complex economy from the Neolithic period. According to the characteristics of rock art, rock art from Zatriqi is a schematic. Many of combinations of graphemes marked associations are ideograms, my signify hops, fertility, sex, territory, prayer, things, etc. I try to inscribe compositions, structures, contacts, superimpositions and meaning. During the work have in consideration many studding on rock art. In this work character A impress association, with ordinal number, also to more clearly understand explication should we help typology table. (Table is writing in Microsoft office visio)

- Arbolet in connection with others signs

A1-You can see in this association there levels of structural symbols which are in pairs: in the first level come arboles and line, in the second one the square with the rectangle followed with the symbol X for territory while in the third level we have two pairs of V (vulva, V, and line)

Based on the structure, the composition can be explained according to the levels and in upside down order. Above the arboles, the male symbol is a thick line which might be an indication of a distinguished symbol regarding the status and the position of man, for his important role in the community; the line above the arboles might be associated with a certain rule/law of action which might take place or even it can be an omen for an action which needs to be carried on or to be followed.

In the second level, we have the square-the symbol of the territory which according to its internal construction is similar to the archaic game; however, this is not a game since the existing small dimensions could not be possibly used for the game and the predicates are not designed for such a thing. Near the square can be found the X symbol which might indicate the fertility; the symbols together can establish the concept of hope/pray, praying for more. Meanwhile, in the third level we have a clearer view on the action which might serve as an illustration for the action. Thus, in the third level can be found the superimposition, a line which comes out of the square with a lateral and penetrate and the sexual symbol of female (V), while close to it is also located the other V which is untouchable, however it has a connection to it.

In this level is also present the pair of symbol V and the line which penetrates thoroughly the other vulva. What can be learnt from this association? Maybe, the whole thing is a good illustration of symbols (signs) which appear in an association, and where each of the pair symbols has a role which constitutes to the concept of interaction. Those symbols which appear in pairs from the ancient history are classified even by the Leroi Gourhan. Nevertheless, here we deal with a sort of message, a cult predisposition which tells from which side the action can have sufficient growth from the ground, and a strong, healthy and fertile family. Hence as we can see, there are three sub-groups in an association, which are in pair symbols and thus create a whole. As can be noticed from the graphic, arboles with the line is in the upper part and in the middle we have the symbol of territory with X, the place when it lives and exercises everyday activities; in the lower level, we have two V and V (female sexual symbol) with a line, as an indication of contact action through sex. Arbolets and the line stand in the upper part and do not have physical contact with the middle level and neither with the lower one; the middle and the lower levels get in touch with one another by a direct tie. The upper graphemes, arbolet and the line might indicate the respect and the power of action. Symbols are described with the role of the leaders, or it might be a sign of the leader (male), the regulation of respect toward the person who gives orders and makes sure that those orders are obeyed by others.

(Figure nr. 1 (A1))

Association 3, arbolets, the star, lateral line, vulva, territory, X (cross), and Y (leaf). Maybe before we begin explaining association 3, it would be a good idea to stop and talk a little bit about the Paleolithic time.

I would prefer to stop a bit in decoding of graphemes by High Paleolithic from the culture of Mas'd'Azil, by James Harrold in "Branch and Chevrons". The focus will be on how these graphemes mark the process of cosmogonist transformation and the appearance of new life, blossoming, and "continuity," for all the living things.

This decoding would help and assist us in supporting the concept of transformation while taking in consideration the physical building of the star (female symbol) and arbolet (male symbol). In order to decompose such a concept of transformation through graphemes of sexes, we refer to the physical building/construction of these symbols. Arbolet is shown in a full blossoming, probably in its most fertile phase. From the outside view, we have an impression that the sign is in a good conductive physical condition: in its culminant living force. The arbolet penetrates thoroughly the V, from which you might get the impression that the arbolet is coming out and getting bigger while the V vulva might be a signal which shows its power; V has contact with the symbol of star which also shines pretty good and is an indication that the V sign takes that energy from the heavenly shining, natural beauty, and godlike light. I think that the dot symbol of energy in the center of the star is a good argument for what I am saying. So in this way, all these three signs through the chain contact accomplish and realize their existence as well as their transformation. The lower star with a lateral line has a contact with another lateral line which might signify the power of life, and the power of life which is energy.

In the upper part of the star are located the symbols such as X and Y, cross and leaf respectively, which are quite smaller than the other symbols. This might mean something, a destination for something. Also, in the upper part is also the symbol of territory (net)- an indication for a meaning. While the X and Y symbols are linked with each other, the other symbols have chain linkage between themselves; Arbolet is in superimposition in Vulva. In addition to that, Vulva is in physical contact with the star and the star with the lateral lines; in this way, we have a chain contact excluding the symbol of territory which seems to stand in position. It look as if that we are dealing with a hopeful situation, union, optimism, and transformation. They are united, paired, healthy, long-lived, and in full harmony with the ground (earth). Fig.2(A3)

-Interaction between associations

Association 2 and 13 are much more complex because both of them are connected with each other. This may be a very good example on showing the process of separation, and transformation. In this composition, two association bind together with the analogy of the sub-group structure. Let's firstly explain the A3. The symbol of territory above is the star (female symbol) and close to it is a line which penetrates its ray. In the upper part of the same association is the cross with two paired lines, and it has a contact with one of the lines. The symbol of territory is divided into several fields, three of which are marked with X and two with a dot; three other fields are pervaded with a lateral line which then makes contact with another line which comes out from the territory symbol and penetrates association 13.

Now, we move on and explain Association 13, which happens to be quite complex.

Two of the territory symbols (signs) V contact with the dot that comes from the A2 while creating a big corner. In the upper part of that corner, we have V vulva which is infiltrated by a line, net with a marked X and two parallel lines above it. In this case, we have to do with clustering of sub-groups by opposite corners. Maybe, this separation is a rule that must be executed. In the beginning, the line that creates the big corner moves in the direction of opposite corner up to the X symbol which is located in the other corner while the point of start might indicate the direction of action which should be carried on. Inside the big corner is the sign of territory (net). Outside the small corner is the lateral line. As we mentioned, both of the associations correspond to each other while being connected with a line which unites the rectangle- the symbol of territory with the other part of the symbols. If we carefully analyze in whole both of the associations, we find out that both of them are complicated; however, we can find the connections of such separation order. If we can make an analogy between two associations of transformation or separation, with their symbols, we would observe the appearance of groups (the sign of territory) outside in the 2nd association, and symbols and groups that appear inside and outside the corner of A13. Fig.3 (A 2 - A 13)

It is very tricky to understand, however based on in the analogy, people of that time used the analogy as a way to pre-calculate things; hence, we can say that the sub group with component symbols from the cross to the bi-lines that come from A2 correspond with A13 (territory, bi-lines,). A2 Star with a line that penetrates them corresponds with V (vulva shape) which is also infiltrated by a line. The sign of territory might have indications on separating parts of each signs. Those can also appear as divided parts with signs (net) in A13. The symbol of territory from A13 might be the baseline of spreadness (separation, breeding,



adjustment, and order). This can hint which tells and transmits the rule of separation, breeding, and the new life in separation/compartments. If we turn back at the vulva then we can notice that this is a pray for new life; the territory with bi-line stands for breeding (pairing or numbering) the fertility of the ground whereas the territory and the leaf with the cross mean long-life, fertility, and prosperity. In this instance, we need to mention that the line that comes from A2 is penetrated with another line which seems to have connection with all the sub-groups; this tells the ordering. The upper line in the beginning is marked with a dot which might also indicate that this action is obligatory or must be done (separation must be done). The star (female symbol), which stands close to the symbol of territory (net) A2 maybe has a role and a crucial position in the process of separation.

-Territory and Leaf combination with other signs

In A11, we have an interesting composition with the sign of territory, dots, X and the separation lines out of the frame. The composition is quite regulatory with two dots, and a bi-line that hold Y (8c) in the middle. Let's turn back in the inner structure of the symbol of rectangle (territory) which is split up in two parts: in the upper and the lower part. In the lower part is a dot and in the upper one are two dots- the sign of energy. The branch sign begins in the lower corner of the rectangle goes up while its branches cover the whole upper area of the rectangle. This is a very interesting figure and pretty similar to the sign which symbolizes the Lord of the Space in Indus graffiti (space and time, Indus sign). The inside construction and structure of the rectangle is composed by two levels, the upper and the lower one as it can be noticed. In the upper level, the body of the branch sign begins to move from the end while touching the line of rectangle very close to the corner and continues to move up while penetrating the separation line of the levels. When it moves up to the upper level, it spreads out in the whole area of the rectangle. The sign of territory is positioned in the center of its structure while around it are engraved three Xs of different sizes; the small one has physical contact with the rectangle, respectively the framing lines have double role: framing of the inside area and the coordination of the outside part. The X pervades the upper frame of the rectangle which also has its line of contact. In the other hand is the medium size X close to the rectangle, the determining line of the rectangle which goes up and with a bend is straight forwarded to the big size X, which eventually contacts with a line.

With just one more bending, the X is forwarded in the beginning direction. From this composition, you can get a feeling of describing the concept of understanding the cycle of life birth and re-birth as well as the creator. Close to the big X stand a structure with a good order, just like a ideogram which might have a certain meaning, might be a name or a respected title, and which can be read from whatever side you wish - from the right or the left, it does not really matter. However, the maze exists on the issue: what is hidden inside of it? We know the hidden Mr. Amen and later on we recognize him with the new name Amen-Ra from the ancient Egypt. He is the personification of the hidden power, the creator and the holder of the universe who in the material form symbolizes the sun. It seems like the sign inside the frame has a holy function, thus generating energy and control for every process around it; moreover, it has a full control of the inside area.

Association 6 - In this composition, we have a content of signs/symbols which are spread out in constant distance between each other. Even in this composition, the sign of territory covers the main position which can be noticed not only from its huge dimensions but also from the structuring of the composition. In the corner of the territory are engraved two bi-line (aslope ones) that are pervaded with a line in the middle (a horizontal one) and it is touched by the inside diagonal of the square. In the upper part of the square is the X which is penetrated by an aslope line, and a vertical line whereas in the upper part are two bi-lines (sloping ones just like the lines that touch the diagonal, the symbol of territory).

It is worth saying that in every association with a line that will follow shortly, it is also present a sign of identification which in some cases was identified and treated by us as an indication of action; it might be that the function of this identification symbol in here is similar. The physical contact of the sign of territory (diagonal) with the two bi-lines in the corner outside of the frame might point out the contact, breeding, fertility, and the abundance. Near the sign can be noticed the bi-lines, the cross which is also penetrated by a line in the middle which has a special meaning. In the upper part, we have got two lines (bi-lines) that might be a sign of the whole action, and message. As we mentioned in the beginning (one line, an action), the line is oriented from the territory in the direction of two lines; then, they double for the pray, fertility, and abundance. Fig.5 (A6)

Association 7 – We have V (vulva shape) and four lines. One line is in symmetrical direction with the position of V whereas the other three lines are disoriented in divergent directions. They spread out in different directions. One of the lines touches with the line which is in symmetric position with the Vulva. If we refer to the decoding by Jakop Harrod, divergent lines form Paleolithic, UP- Paleolithic, then this might represent the inheritance and spreading of origin. Moreover, this concept might have to do with the same mentality; however, research should be conducted to prove this point. In top of all, we need to say that this does not change much in comparison to the decoding by Mr. Harrod, the origin of life (vulva), spreading and diffusion, and energy (divergent lines). Fig 6 (A7)

Association 27- It is a composition of two vulvas, vulva (root), three dots in line, two bi-lines, and another line in the shape of T. This might indicate the origin. In the ideogram, the V sign, the sign of origin surrounded by lines, vulva, and dots takes the main position. Here, we have a transmission of signs which give fruits around the main/central sign. However, none of them touches each other and no contact between them takes place. Maybe this structure might be a mark of the essential role that the sign of origin might have, not only because the sign is in the center of this structure but also because it is a source of energy and re-generation. It can be easily noticed that one V is bigger in size than the other ones in this association. Fig.8 (A26-A27)

Association 38 – The sign of origin (7c) (developed root) is in much bigger size compare with the three vulvas and Y. In the ideogram, the root has a contact with other four parallel lines. The middle line is penetrated by another line which is in the shape of T (1d). Meanwhile, Y (8a) is inside the vulva area (7a) and makes a contact with the inside wall of it. It seems like something is being delivered. Probably, this ideogram is an indication which tells about the good hope, the vision, and health. (7c) is much underlined and scored compared with the other signs. It is in large size which might represent the concept of pride, and appraisal for the ancestors. The Y which is inside the vulva has miniature dimension if we compare it with the other signs present in this composition. These might represent signs regarding the future, the new birth. The contact between the sign of origin (7c) and the other four lines (1b) might indicate the origin of generations.

The lines symbolize generations, and the upper vulva the source of life and energy and the transmission of them to the generations, holding and continuing the life as well as preserving the origin. This might be a rule for the scholars who explore on ancient events and issues; it is a lesson for the future generations who are ready for the new identity. They even can be attached to the new rituals (rite de passage) which have been developed in this country. Fig.9 (A38)

Association 34- (7b 7bvulva pubic, 7a 7a vulva shape) is a composition made up of four vulvas in two engraved variations which stand very close to each other. Two vulvas that stand in the middle (7b) are on a similar variation, in an opposite position with each other. Outside of them, a dot and two other vulvas are engraved (7a). These hold vulvas in the middle.

The peripheral vulva is penetrated from a line. Maybe this is a process of accumulation. The two centered vulvas maybe are lined with the upper dot in the ideogram and thus are special and positioned in retrospective way. So we have here a kind of reflection similar to it and its shade. This process looks similar to the effect of the mirror. One of the vulvas is bigger in size than the other vulvas. Maybe the bigger one is for real, and the others are just imagined. The enigma on which one is the real one and which are the imagined ones still remains undiscovered. Fig.10 (A34)

Association 26 – (6, 8a, 3b, 3c, 1a, 1d). It is a composition where in the center of can be seen an arbolet sign (6), much smaller in comparison to the other signs.

The arbolets touch the female sign (7a), and gives an impression that is growing and developing. The whole area is fulfilled with dots, and in the upper part we have a curved line (1e) as a framing of this area and a T (1d). In the lower part, a curved line penetrates the big vulva and connects that with another big V (A25). This vulva has bigger dimension than the other vulvas and in one side, its area is filled with eight dots whereas the other part of the area is empty. Those two associations are associated with each others through a wave line (1e). This might be a connection so that they can complement each other, the process of enfolding life, hopes, and prays for something that might bring life as well as to complement a wish, a will, or a purpose. The above arbolets contact with the Y sign (7b) through a dot which ties them together. Moreover, it is penetrated by a long line which goes through the dot of connection. The signs of energy are spread through the whole area. There is always something to be wished or hoped such as the empty area in A25, and a line which is comes from the A26 and goes in the direction of empty area in A25. Fig.8 (A26-A27)



A10 – The composition with the cross sign (4c) – the center is more scored and the size of the signs is bigger than the other signs that surround it from all the directions. It is a similar sign or symbol with the character of Chinese sign Yang. From the bottom part, it is pervaded from a line whereas in the upper level, at the top, is the cross (4b) with smaller dimensions compared with the other two cross signs (4a). The net sign (2a) makes a contact with itself while the leaf signs can be found in the lower level, in the left side. Not to forget to mention the engraved V which stands at the top(7a). This structure is much distinguished from the other associations with the sign positioning in the center. This might also reflect the establishment of any character, the appearance of any God, leader or faith/religion. The V sign at the top of the composition might be helpful in trying to solve the identification. Fig.11(A 10)

Associations 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, are among the most complex structures which are composed of several signs and concentrated in an area. A 42 is composed from the sign of star, line, and dot which are linked with the upper complex level through the cross and line signs. We are going to stop and talk a bit about A43 whereas we will explain the other ones other times. Fig.12 (A 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48)

The A43 is quite complex composition in which we have the net, arbolets, vulva, lines, the cross sign as well as other signs which are very small compare to the overall composition.

The sign of territory has a superimposition with arbolets. In fact, it is a line which extends from the sign of territory and is pervaded by the arbolet. I would say that this is the realization of contact in the structures of this composition, throughout the whole area. As can be seen, the arbolet is scored and emphasized and is in a good condition, together with the net. In the corner of territory sign, can be seen much smaller signs which as mentioned early probably have a specific position and meaning in this structure. It might happen that those small signs to have the role of defensive signs. In the inside area of the territory is a vertical line which comes out of the frame and immediately is penetrated by another line. In the upper part we have the V vulva shape, a line, and the cross sign which occupy a small area. On the other hand, we have two vulvas of different sizes where one is bigger and the other one is much smaller. The big vulva is penetrated by a lateral line and it seems like is tied with the bottom small signs which eventually might represent protective signs of communities, signs of luck, etc.

We have parallel lines in the bottom part of the arbolet (1c) and another line which is shorter. What can we read and what message can this complex composition have? I would return for a moment to the association 3. I will provide an aspect of similarity in the aspect of how graphs are presented, meaning the graphs that are in different composition but indeed are similar in the foundation/construction and their appearance. The leaf and cross sign which are shown in small size compare with the other signs in A3, and the sign of star and vulva which are penetrated by a line which appears in the corner of net sign in A43, are very small in size in order to give us an explanation and provide us with a connection between the concept and the similarities of those two compositions. Another aspect that can be noticed is the arbolets that appear in a good condition and in a very progressive stage of development. In the case of A3, we have tried to come up with a conclusion based on the appearance of the signs and structural positioning of them. The conclusion that we reached says that this is optimism on bandage while the pairing might mean that the optimism can occur with the assistance of supernal energy. In A43 as well, we might have to deal with a praying on fertility and earth; however, based on the structural building we get an impression of an act ceremony.

The transformation of arbolet comes from its contact with the sign of earth. Vulva and the lateral lines do not have a contact with the arbolets. They appear in the upper part of the composition and no contact is encountered. Meanwhile, the net is penetrated by arbolets and the small sign of star and vulva that stand in the corner. As we mentioned previously, those signs might represent defensive signs for the earth, community, or are signs that bring luck. The penetrated line which comes out of the inside area which is also associated with another line forms a corner or a rectangle. Then, the direction is oriented to the other upper graphemes which might suggest a description of ritual and the purpose of overall structural texture. In the upper part can be seen the vulva which is vividly pervaded by lines and lateral lines. It is quite obvious that this description brings us to a conclusion that we are dealing here with the earth fertility; praying ceremony for abundance food. Fig.13 (A 43)

There are many things left to be explained despite my goal that based on the structural texture of compositions to come up with an appraisal and try to interpret and decode some important and complex parts from Zatriqi's graphemes in Kosova. I am very grateful and thankful to the Prof. Anati and Mrs. Fradkin for their diligence and readiness as well as for their visit to Kosova last year. I am thankful to them for visiting rock art and for their extraordinary assistance in encouraging us to move forward in our investigations and the study of pre-historic art.

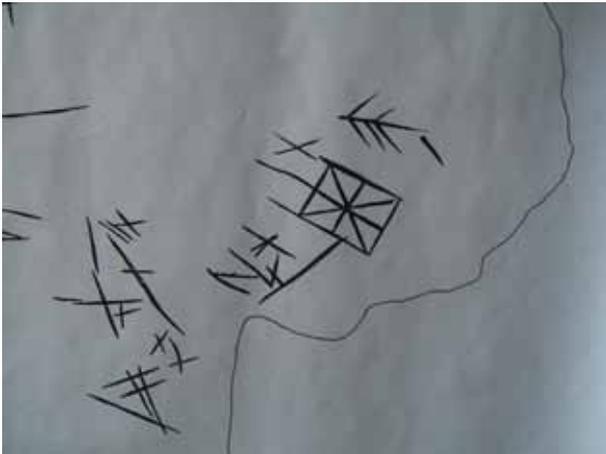


fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 2 photo

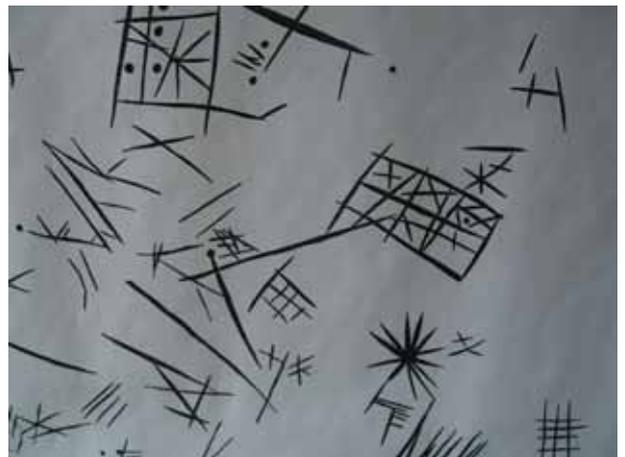


fig. 3

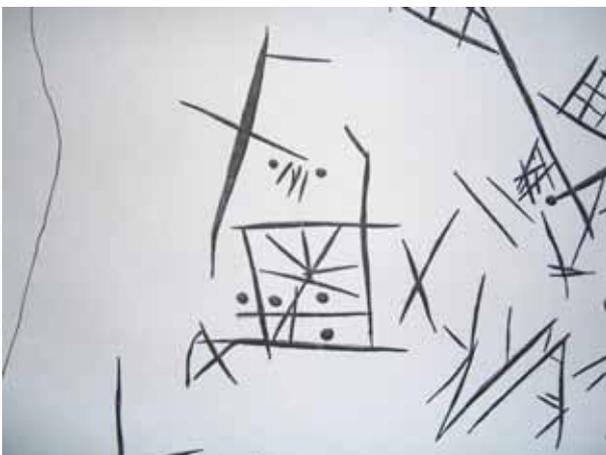


fig. 4

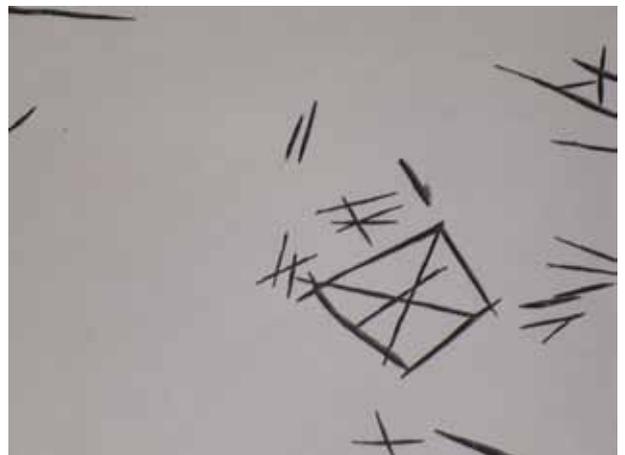


fig. 5



fig. 5 photo



fig. 6

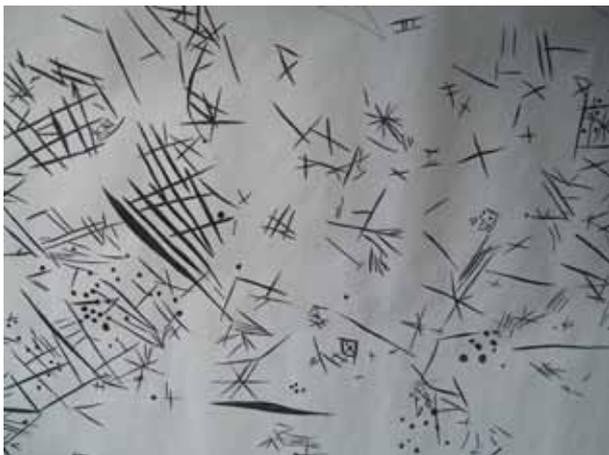


fig. 7

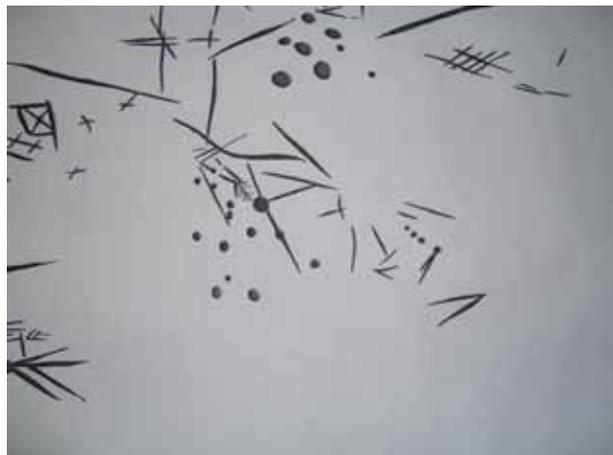


fig. 8

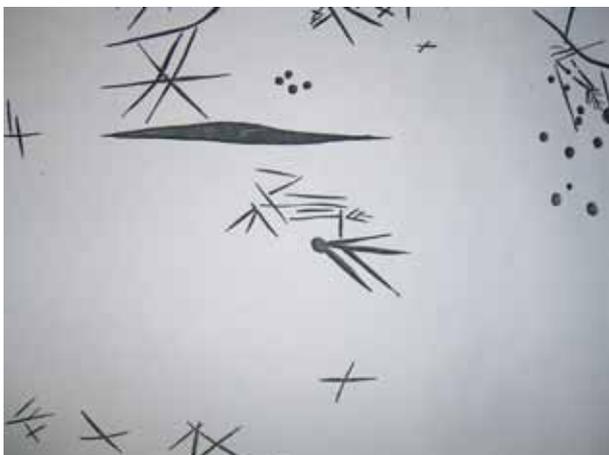


fig. 9



fig. 9 photo



fig. 10



fig. 11



fig. 11 photo



fig. 12

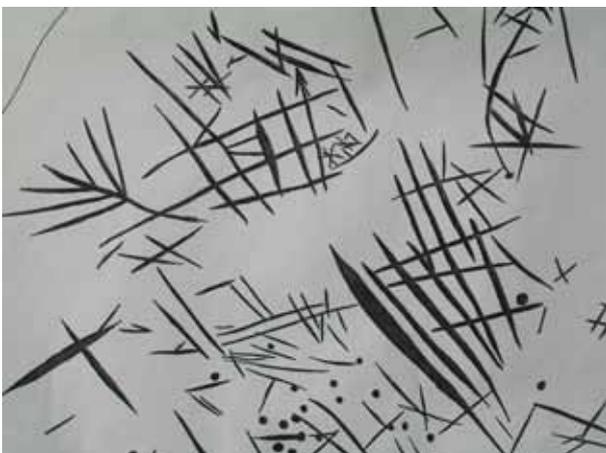


fig. 13



fig. 13 photo

