Rock art in Macedonia

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Rock art is all that our ancestors passed onto us as a message using stone and rock in painted or carved form, as well as in the form of various types of sculptures. Rock art is an important medium for the world cultural, historical, linguistic, ethnographical and religious/philosophical heritage.
The discovery of a number of prehistoric caves with several cultural layers signifying existence of our prehistorical ancestors over a long period of time was a key factor that compelled us to realise that in Macedonia as well, there had to be a very early manifestation of rock art even in prehistory. Numerous prehistoric artefacts from the Neolithic also indicate that the extremely rich Neolithic culture in Macedonia had to be preceded by a prehistorical culture in all of its forms. I was therefore very happy indeed when during my journey through Macedonia I discovered rock carvings of many periods and stylistic forms.

The cup marks (recessed, hollowed hemispheres) are the most frequent rock carvings in Macedonia. These carvings represent the first spiritual manifestation of prehistoric human beings who first observed the natural hollows for which they had no explanation of how they originated. Later on they observed the stars twinkling like little lamps in the sky and concluded that they were the souls of all people that are born on the earth, whereas the falling meteors were stars that faded out after someone dies.
After the cup marks the prehistoric ancestor started carvings net carvings COSA SONO?. These carvings also originated by means of observation of the hollows of this type carved by the nature. This type of carvings were discovered in large concentrations in the region of Mas d'Azil in France. Sometimes they have a very complex form and sometimes are relatively simple and resemble letters from contemporary alphabets.The cup marks and net carvings are followed by cross-shaped carvings COSA SONO? as the third type produced by our ancestors. In some places these carvings are so frequent that they determined the name of the locality: Krstat Kamen (Stone of Crosses), Krstato Mesto (Place of Crosses) and the like. The swastika as a type of cross is also found engraved on Macedonian stones and rocks, ceramics from the iron age as well as ancient mosaics.
At the present we are unable to say which of the deities are associated with fertility, birth and the like. These kind of idol forms are analogous to the idol forms discovered in the Camonica Valley in Italy. Future research may reveal the origins of these carved idol forms. In the locality Orlov Kamen, near the village of Trnovets (Kratovo region), I discovered an idol form which could be interpreted as a god of fertility, judging by the two bullhorns. Above this deity there is its name carved out that begins with the letters KOK….., while the last letters cannot be identified. This is the first time in Macedonia, and in the world for that matter, that the name of a deity is found to begin with the letter K. That probably means that in Macedonia one worshiped deities that were not known in neighbouring regions, which would confirm the fact that rock art is also a basis for the religious heritage of world civilisation. Rock carvings representing the sun are numerous. I discovered the most impressive carved sun symbol in the villages of Rugjintze and Maldo, near Nagorichane (Kumanovo region). I discovered the most impressive carvings complex of arc-form type (in the form of bow) COSA SONO? in the locality Pishan Kamen, near the village of Zheleznitsa (Kratovo region) in the context of cup marks, cross-shaped forms and deities.
One should mention the complex of Chamot, near the village of Smolare, where on a very small area I discovered miniature rock carvings of many kinds: cup marks, cross-shaped carvings, retikuli, COSA SONO? Idol forms, geometrical shapes, and several types of arc-shaped (form of a bow) carvings. It is very surprising that all these carvings were made with precise thin lines as if they were created in a period when the rock was in a different physical state. This complex gives the impression of having been a "prehistoric university", a place where experienced artists were teaching others how to create various types of carvings. In an area of only 5 square meters one finds about 4,500 miniature carvings. The discovery of the carvings made by means of knocking on the rock – or *piktazha*, speaking in technical terms – was the last piece in that puzzle called rock art in Macedonia. I discovered this additional kind of carvings along the river Pena (Tetovo region), which in itself represents a true museum under the sky. The forms of these carvings are various: ordinary lines, animals and geometrical shapes.