

SAT ROCK DRAWINGS CENTRE – EASTERN ANATOLIA

Lake Van, in Eastern Anatolia, with a surface of 3764 square metres, influences its hinterland sufficiently to create a mild sea climate in the region. For this reason, from pre-Christian times to the end of the Middle Ages, this lake was called the *Upper Sea*. The suitability of the climate caused various civilizations to develop in the area. The Hurrians, and following them, especially the Urartu (900–600 B. C.) were advanced to the level of the Assyrians (1) and left behind them works which managed to survive to the present day.

Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunting communities were believed to have existed in the region because of the suitable conditions prevailing.

The forests of the Van region sheltered all kinds of game animals. Even today, rare game animals continue to exist in the highlands. The abundant obsidian beds of the crater lake Nemrut and the availability of various hard stones facilitated the making of primitive tools (2), caves in the valleys provided shelter and fish from the lakes, wild fruit from the forests and nourishing herbs provided subsistence to prehistoric men.

Excavations made at Tilkitepe on the lake shore, cave paintings discovered in the Pagan and Put Caves in the Hosap region (3), as well as the discovery of the Tirisin Rock Drawings Centre (4) all prove that Palaeolithic – Mesolithic and Neolithic societies flourished in these territories.

South of this region, in the high mountainous area (Resko 4170 m., Ciya Handevade 3810 m.), however, a harsh climate prevails and most of the valleys are covered with glaciers (5). In the Cilo and Sat Mountains of Hakkâri there are permanent snowfields and some 25 Alpine glaciers. With the slow retreat of glaciers, the earliest hunting groups entered the Cilo and Sat Mountains together with the game animals.

We came to learn of the existence of the rock drawings executed by those people, in the Sat – Gevaruk Valley, in 1956 only (6). The number – 54 – of rock drawings we found at the head of the valley reached a total of 554 during our 1958 expedition. Under our guidance, British and German mountaineering teams were able to discover more than 600 further rock

drawings in the same valley (7). An Italian expedition from the Ferrara University combed the valleys of the Sat Mountains in 1970, discovering yet further drawings (8). It seems that this expedition failed to see the great composite drawings of the Sats.

In August 1972, my colleague Ersin Alok, together with Haldun Sel, combed many valleys and the ground bordering the lakes in the Sat Mountains and discovered more than 250 new rock drawings, returning with a rich harvest of still and motion pictures.

Other rock drawings are to be found in various regions of the Sats, outside Gevaruk Valley. Thus, the Sat Mountains have earned the right to be numbered among the major rock drawings centres of the world. The fact that the Sat Mountains extend into the highlands of Iraq add to their importance. Shanidar Cave, where remains of the Neanderthal Man were discovered (9), is only some 30 km. distant from the Mountains under discussion.

There are areas suitable for market gardening and farming on a small scale, in the valleys of these mountains. Permanent snows and glaciers, together with crater lakes, feed the streams in every season and ensure the regular flowing of the waters. Game animals, finding all the conditions suitable in these regions multiplied greatly. That is the reason why most of the rock drawings hitherto discovered depict hunting scenes.

We classified the rock drawings we have been able to discover so far as follows.

a. *Composite Drawings.* These are drawings, neatly arranged, which bring 8–10 figures together to express a certain subject. Such drawings are found below Gevaruk Valley, at the end of a defile we named Narrow Gevaruk, above the lake in the permanent snowfields, at an altitude of approximately 3000 m. The composite drawings under discussion are sometimes found in groups of 30–100. Their surface dimensions are 3 x 8 m., 4 x 5 m. and 1.5 x 2.2 m. The height of the figures themselves varies between 20, 30 and 70 cm. All were executed in the pitting technique and are semi realistic drawings. (Fig. 1)

The points which draw attention in these drawings are that the hunters, generally speaking, are suitably clothed and armed with spears and swords, they are equipped with some kind of a ski or snowshoe for not floundering in the snow and that they make use of covered sledges for approaching the game. (Fig. 2–3) It can also be observed that the hunters

are helped by children carrying spare spears and that the dog (Fig. 3A) has joined the hunt. We further photographed a series of drawings showing different kinds of traps, as well as establishing that game, caught or trapped alive, were kept in that state for some time by being tied to one another. We may accept this as a step towards domestication.

The composite drawings may be classified as belonging to the bronze and the iron ages.

b. *Single Drawings*. Such drawings were generally made on imposing rocks at the heads of lakes. Compared with composite drawings, their heights are greater – 1.35 m., 0.60 m. and 0.40m. Their patina is dark and some are very indistinct. These drawings, which are of a different style, were executed more realistically. Of the drawings under discussion, some eight have been discovered so far (Fig. 4–5), but more will come to light as and when a thorough search will be made. We defined three of these drawings as god-figures. I am of the opinion that single drawings may well be the earliest – possibly late Mesolithic.

c. We may place the *Stylized Drawings* – which are found in large numbers – in a third category. These drawings have their parallels on the Tirisin Plateau. It would be appropriate to define highly stylized drawings as Neolithic (10). Among the drawings under discussion, two boat figures (Fig. 6) – at the entrance of Gevaruk Valley – are really remarkable. Another boat figure, 40 cm. long, was found at the end of Narrow Gevaruk. It seems that the Sat hunters fished and hunted on the lakes when they were ice free. One of the boats is a tub shaped single seaker (coracle? ), while the other is a long, light canoe seating three. Sun discs with crosses have also been found among the figures, (Fig. 7) which may represent the earth and the cardinal points. These wheel-like figures are also encountered in Denmark, Sweden (11) and Austria (12).

Snake figures are very common both in the composite drawings and the others (Fig. 8). Even in some single drawings the snake was not neglected. Among hundreds of drawings, some of these snake figures extend literally for metres. As snakes also appear together with the god-figures, it may be assumed that they were considered sacred. For the same reason, the snake was not forgotten even in the winter hunting scenes. Scorpion figures were encountered in two different localities. (Fig. 9) It was rather surprising to find this creature, fond of warm and tropical climates, pictured on rocks at an altitude of 3000 metres. Ersin Alok found a live, yellow scorpion – which he photographed in colour – at the same place.

Nevertheless, I still suspect that this scorpion was brought along with nomadic tents from the lowlands. Was the scorpion also considered sacred together with the snake? Tombstones which we found in the vicinity, decorated with figures but with no inscription, bear the figures of the snake and the scorpion.

Among the rock drawings we classified in the third group (C) are two plant figures, which may have been used as a warning against highly poisonous plants which, of course, were to be avoided. There are, in this region, such plants capable of killing even cattle.

Rare game animals such as buffalo, aurochs, bison, giraffe and tiger – which are now extinct – which were observed among the Tirisin rock drawings, were not encountered here, possibly because the said animals did not care to move into the region because of the severity of the climate. Fallow deer (*dama dama*) were encountered among the single drawings and in one composite drawing. This species of deer is now extinct in Anatolia.

Among various species of animals, a two humped Bactrian (Asian) camel attracts attention. A large horn was added to this drawing at a later period (Fig. 10). Two animal figures resembling llama – described as a camel without humps – were among those we discovered in 1958 (Fig. 11). The nature of these figures has not yet been solved. The height of one figure, which we think resembles a bear, is only 5 cm. Here again, it is obvious that the animals in question were not considered game animals.

Of smaller game, no fowls were encountered – while quail, partridge and a variety of ducks still exist in the territory. We are, however, doubtful about a figure which we suspect represents a duck.

The number of rock drawings which we discovered in the Sat Mountains exceeds 1500. I expect this figure to be doubled by exploration in other valleys and a thorough study of the details of drawings already discovered.

I hope I have been sufficiently able to stress the importance of these discoveries in the foregoing paragraphs. It will be possible to make a full classification of the drawings under discussion only when, in the coming seasons, exploration in other valleys will bring to light rock drawings which may exist there.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIE

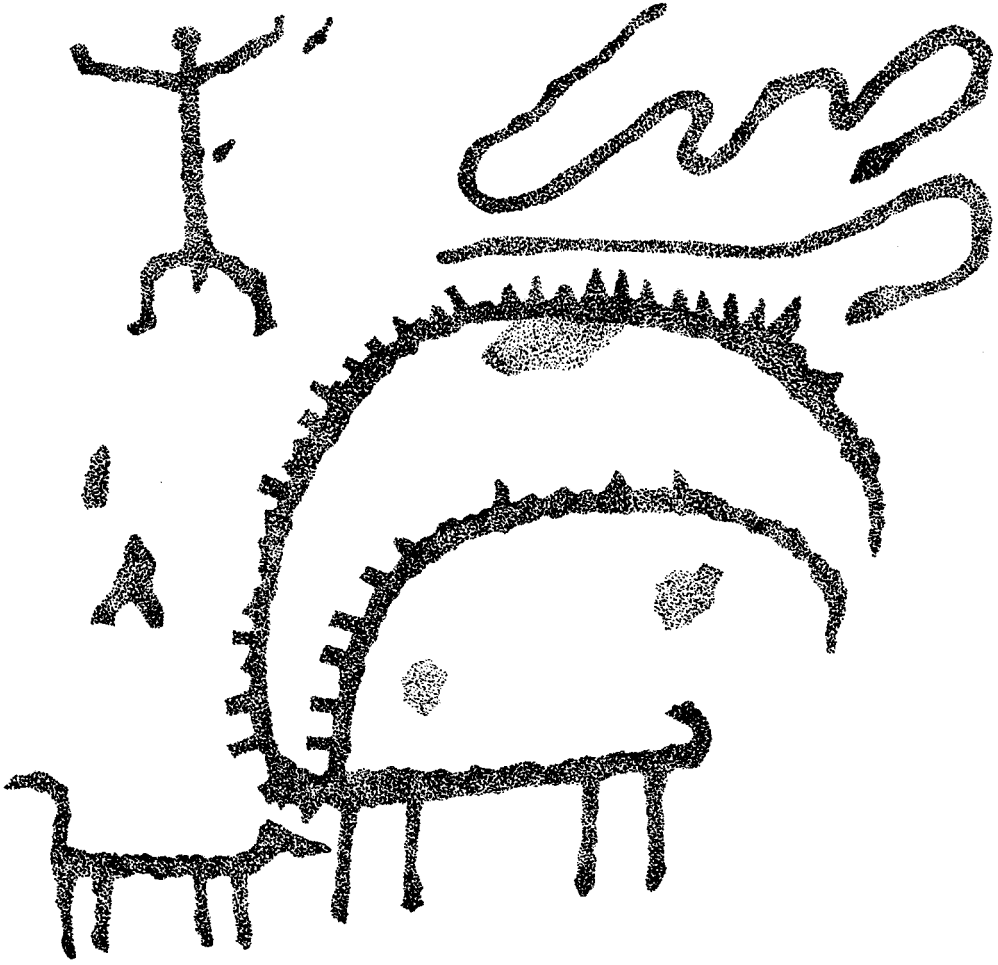
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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

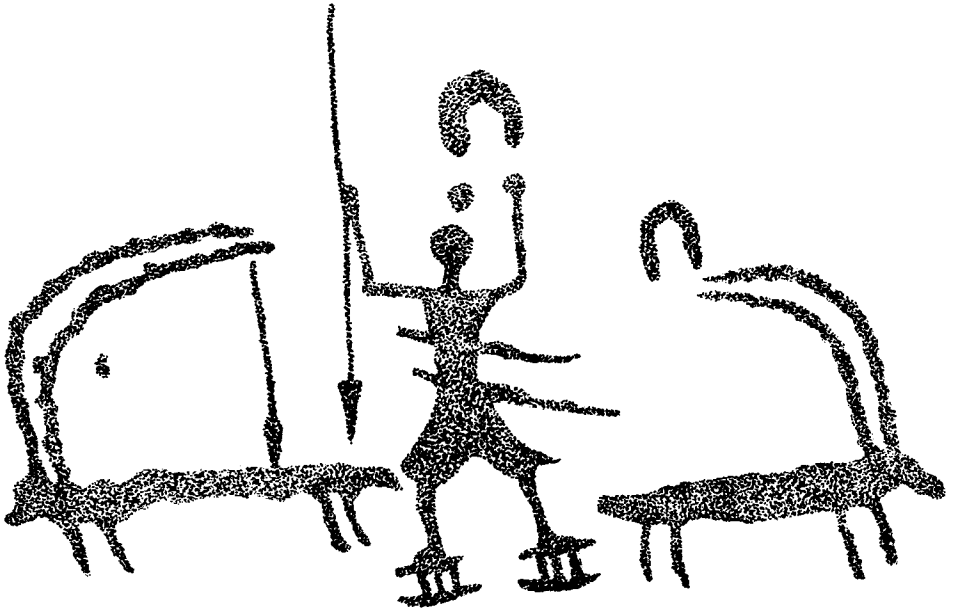
Der Autor berichtet über die seit 1956 gemachten Entdeckungen von Petroglyphen im Bereich südlich des Van-Sees im östlichen Anatolien, vor allem in den Tälern Sat und Gevaruk. Es handelt sich um eine für die Erforschung vorgeschichtlicher Felskunst überaus wichtige Region, die z. B. in den Sat-Bergen allein bisher bereits mehr als 1500 Felsritzungen ergeben hat. Systematische Forschung in den Tälern der Umgebung könnte diese Zahl sicherlich wesentlich erhöhen.

## RESUMEN

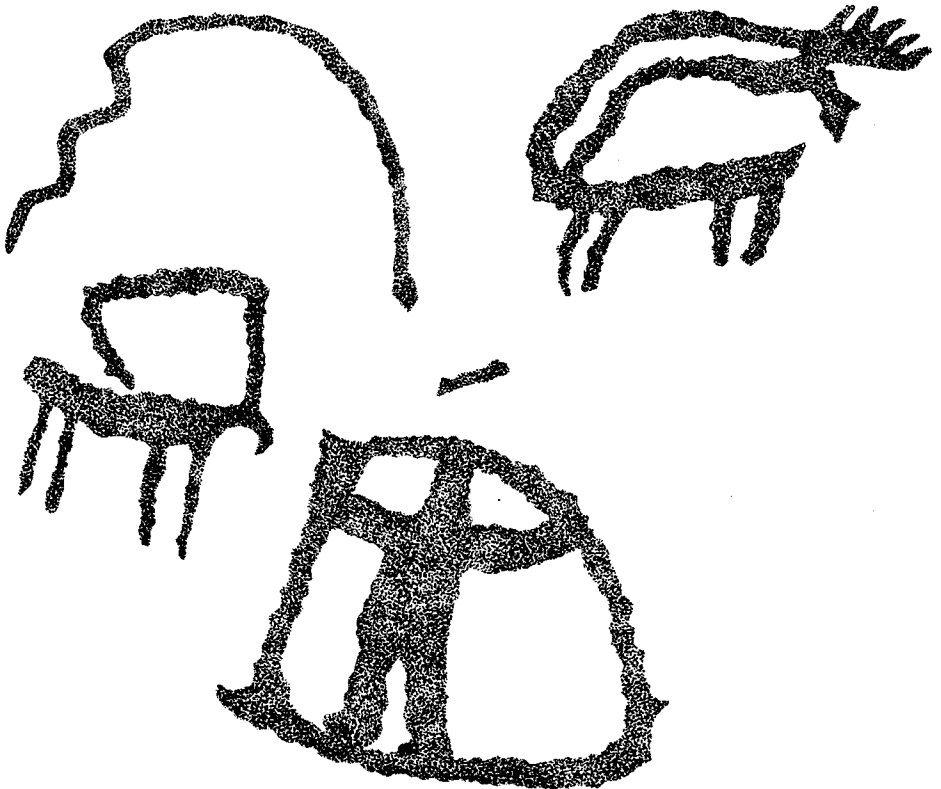
El autor informa acerca de los descubrimientos de petroglifos que se realizaron, a partir de 1956, en la región sur del lago de Van en la Anatolia oriental, sobre todo en los valles de Sat y Gevaruk. Se trata de una región especialmente importante para la investigación del arte rupestre prehistórico, en la que, por ejemplo, sólo en las montañas de Sat, se han encontrado más de 1500 grabados en roca. Exploraciones sistemáticas en los valles de los alrededores podrían ciertamente elevar en gran medida esta cantidad.



(Fig. 1) A composite rock drawing. 1.30 x 0.70 m



(Fig. 2) Hunter with spear. 30 cm

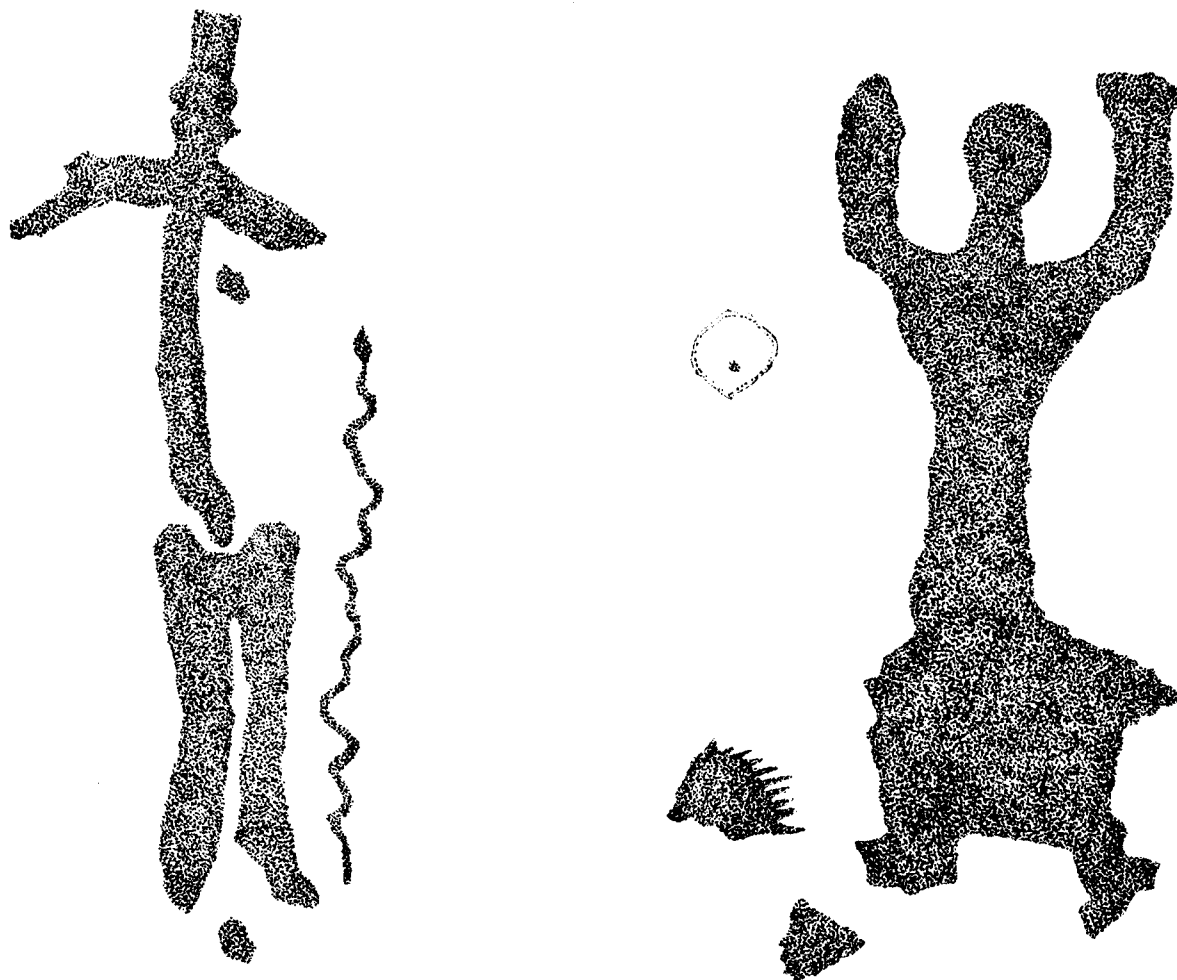


(Fig. 3) 75 x 70 cm

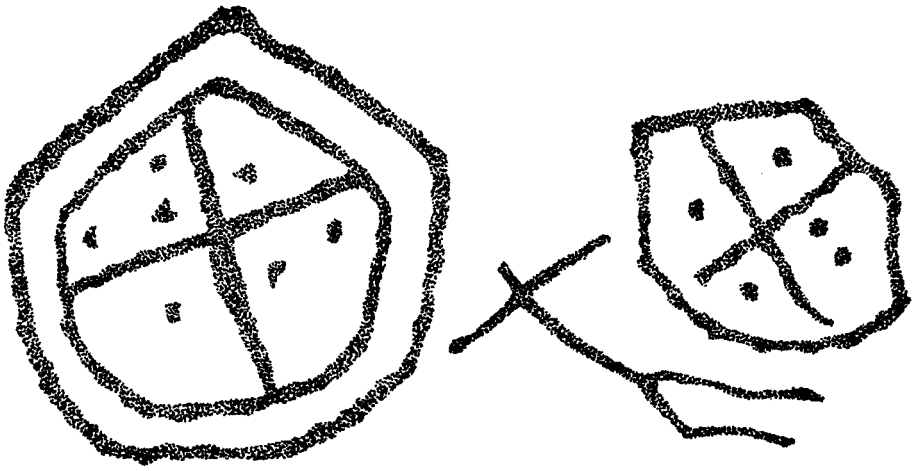




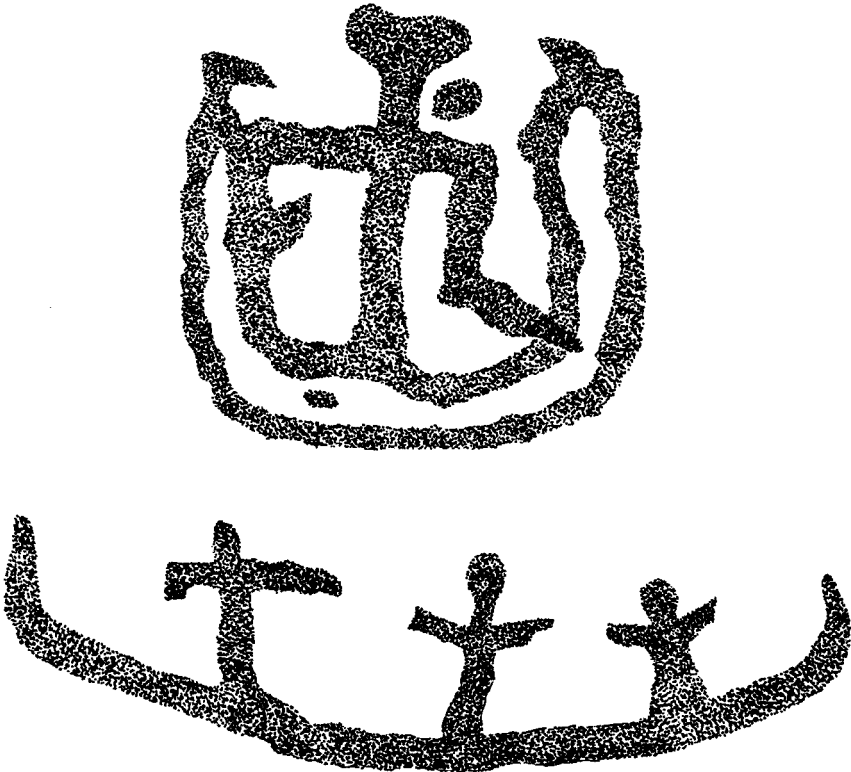
(Fig. 3a) Battue. 0.80 x 1 m



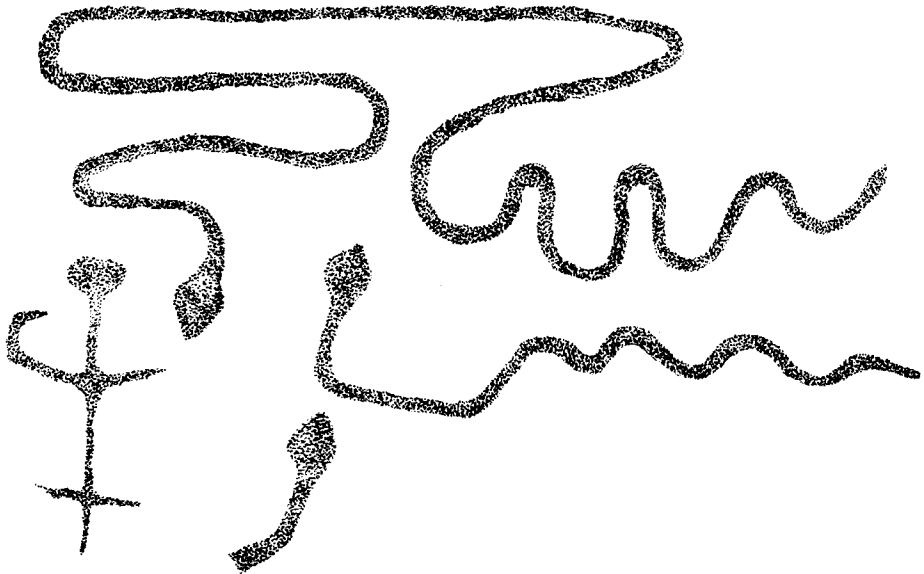
(Fig. 4–5) God and goddess. 45–40 cm



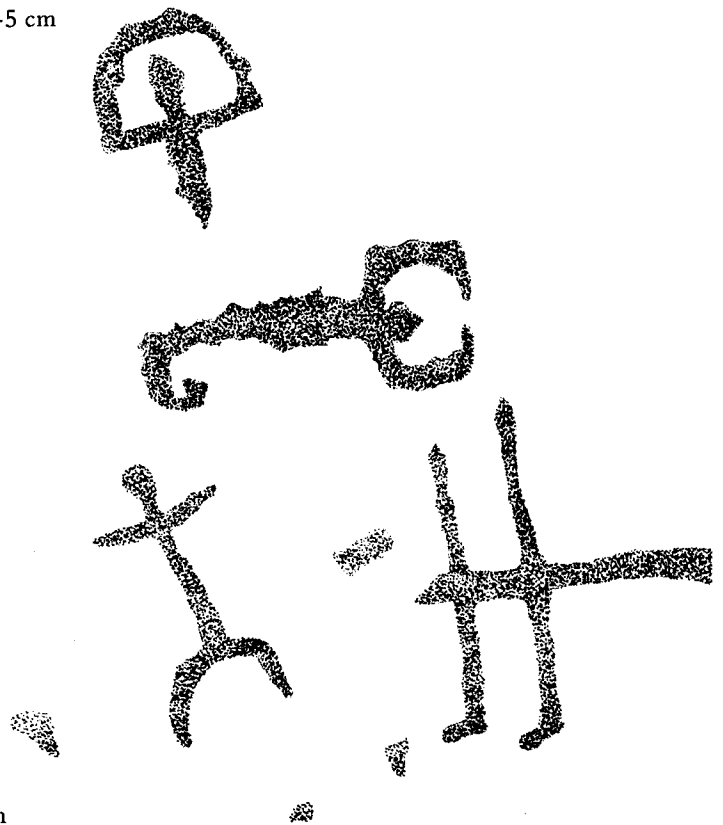
(Fig. 6) The boats. 15 and 25 cm



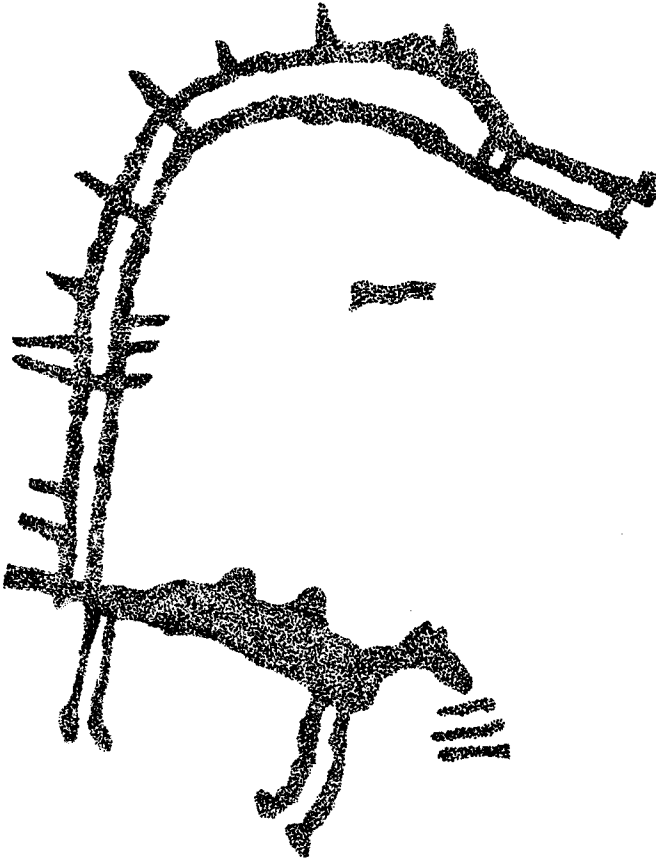
(Fig. 7) 20–15 cm



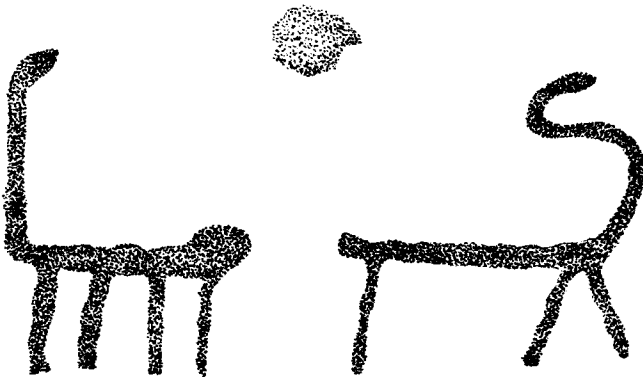
(Fig. 8) Serpents. 70 x 45 cm



(Fig. 9) Scorpion. 10 cm



(Fig. 10) Camel. 25 cm



(Fig. 11) 12–15 cm



Hakkiari- Sat Mountains. Lake Bay 2850 m (Foto M. Uyanık)

Sketch of South – Eastern Anatolia

