

## Summary

The author of this book undertakes an attempt to decipher the most ancient script in the world. The principal subject of his investigation is the unique archive of original inscriptions found in the Kamennaya Mogyla. The Kamennaya Mogyla is an enormous natural complex of shrines in the Azov region, near Melitopol (Ukraine) which functioned from the Palaeolithic Period until Middle Ages. The Kamennaya Mogyla which is the literary translated as «rocky burial ground» contains 62 grottoes and caves which are currently under excavation. These grottoes have inscribed vaults, and walls. Archaeological studies have dated the earliest caves to the twelfth millenium B. C. and the latest to the third millennium B. C. Exploration began on the Kamennaya Mogyla in the eighteenth century and was at it's peak 1940's. This monument, the unique character of which was obvious to all researches who dealt with it, was studied by prominent Russian, Ukranian scholars such as Otto Bader, Mikhail Rudinsky, Valentin Danilenko, and Boris Mikhailov. These all recognized the extraordinary appearance of signs, some of which were pictographical. Yet, none of them could grasp their meaning until Yuri Shilov, a Ukrainian archaeologist, put forward the theory to regard them as Sumerian in origin.

This volume includes the transcriptions and very much hypothetical translations of some autonomously inscribed panels, comprising approximately one third of the general stock of the archive. The author attempts to establish the relation between this script from the Kamennaya Mogyla and the Sumerian script. The method he used in deciphering the script is found in the second chapter. Practically speaking, each inscribed panel is analysed from the point of view of its general structure. Subsequently some outstanding, individually written, or easily recognizable signs are isolated from the others. Then, these written symbols are compared to the Sumerian script, with great accuracy, keeping in mind their possible formal evolution, giving rise to preliminary transcription. Later the other signs found in the site are subjected to the same procedure, until the newly defined syllables can be formed into words. In such manner the route of the text is determined. The route is very important because it enables us to derive a correlations to the decorative system of the Neolithic vessels resulting in the supposed data of the inscription. Finally, different words can be tied together producing meaningful syntagmata. The author's analysis is written in the form of a scientific diary, thus, those interested in the process of decipherment can trace all the stages of this work.

Each inscribed panel has been analysed from its formal point of view, being supplied with the Tables in which every written symbol is identified as corresponding with those found in Deimel's «Šumerisches Lexikon» (1925–1947 — ŠL); this procedure is entitled «The Unfolding of Signs». In addition, the author gives the general plan of each panel, thereby distinguishing the boundaries between the neighbouring signs (the so called Topoliterarion) and

defining the principal direction and sequence of signs in the text (see the Schematical Sequence of Signs in his Tables) Each sign found in the Kamennaya Mogyla and paralleled to the Sumerian version has both its individual number and its definite location catalogued in the general compendium which is entitled the «Syllabarium of the Kamennaya Mogyla», Vol. I (ISKM, 1 sq.). The Syllabarium includes written symbols listed in specific order commencing from the most archaic and progressing to classical Sumerian, listing the number of each panel (or inscription on the panel, for example the Bull Grotto). The signs are found in copies made by two prominent specialists, Mikhail Rudinsky (P) and Boris Mikhailov (M). Two other scholars, Otto Bader (B) and Valentin Danilenko (D) are also cited.

The transcribed and hypothetically translated texts deal mainly with mytho-ritual problems. They contain the names of the known Sumerian gods, such as Inanna, Enlil, Dumuzi, Enki, Gatumdug, Nindara, Sin, Šara, Enzu etc. One of the panel (No. 48 + 37/4) which contains the text telling of Ninlil and Enlil are reminiscent of a famous Sumerian poem. However, its form is much more archaic and primitive. It is of interest that it presents the fourth Moon god (in addition to Sin, Enzu, and Ninazu), the son of Enlil and Ninlil, whose name has not survived in the Sumerian epic — Nannarušgi (No. 34/A). Very often A-KUD — «a water judgement» is mentioned, which is believed to be one of the most ancient rites connected with ritual death and rebirth. One large text, that of the panel No. 25/A, is considered to be a species of a chronicle. It contains two rows of names (of mythical kings-rulers) surrounded by numeric symbols. It has not been possible to manipulate the symbols to yield the desired results, as of all the grottoes and caves of the Kamennaya Mogyla are filled with sand. Only one of them could be studied in the site in 1994 (No. 51/B). The rest can only be studied from copies. In order to identify the numeric symbols one must study the depth of the hole (for example Sumerian «60» and «600» differ only by the depth of their holes).

There are some «historical» names recognized from Sumerian texts: Suhuršabgal, Saltuš, Kisal, Salkalamdug, Aimdugud etc. However, the relation between Azov and Mesopotamian names is not clear. The author gives some possible explanations in order to put the new information into some known context. The written texts have some traces of their Sumerian character which is attested, in particular, by verbal bases-forms such as Presense and Perfectum (cf. No. 34/A) and noun cases such as Genitive and Initial (cf. No. 7: im-ma, No. 9/7: uraš-ša, No. 34/A: mes-lam-ta-è<sub>3</sub>-a, etc). Some panel texts refer the reader to other written sources (um: cf. um kas kisim, um kas šegbar etc.) which appear to be sandstone plaques, or tablets. These were not known to the author, but their existence is verifiable. There are about 160 such tablets with signs inscribed on one or both sides and being collected in four special «archive rooms» of the Kamennaya Mogyla (the She-Goat Grotto No. 60, the Churingas Grotto No. 54, the Wizard Cave No. 52 and the Cave No. 36). These have not been studied so far.

In order to understand the phenomenon of this early writing system the author turned to Chatal-Hüyük, a Neolithic town in Anatolia (Central Turkey) which was excavated by James Mellaart in the 1960s. About twenty years ago he postulated that the «garment» on one of the goddess' figure is

decorated with written symbols rather than with ornaments. This decorated relief (layer VII, shrine 23, ca. 6200 B. C.) copied by Grace Huxtable appeared to be a text consisting of 9 separate inscriptions, perhaps also, of Protosumerian origin. The general subject-matter of Anatolian inscriptions seem analogous to those of the Azov texts (they include the standard ritual plots called by the author a canon), though these texts seem to be abbreviated and give only the main lines of those, which were studied in the Azov sanctuary. It is worthy of note that the Anatolian script appears much more organized and schematized. So, one is let to believe that the Anatolian version is more developed and articulated whereas the Azov rendition seems to be purely archaic. The Chatal-Hüyük signs are also included in the Syllabarium (marked as Ч.Г.).

In addition to Chatal-Hüyük, other script examples of this protoliterate epoch were found. These were unearthed in Middle Asia (Turkmenia, Namazga III-IV) as well as in the Balkano-Danubian region (Körös, Tordaš, Tärtäria etc.), and in ancient Troy (I-V). Some interesting examples originate in the Ukraine. The first was a Neolithic stone stele which had been erected over the grave with the inscription «Šara» and excavated by Boris Mikhailov in the Melitopol region near the village Nadezhdino. Later, the vertical slabs which surrounded the barrow (about 150 m in diameter) near the village Verbovka, not very far from Cherkassy (excavated by A. Bobrinsky in 1903 which was later lost, the testimonies are known from archive documents). 17 out of 29 slabs, were engraved with numerous written signs. Their absolute dissimilarity to usual drawings has been noted by A. Bobrinsky. One more example presents similar slabs which encircled at that time the now lost barrow near the village Vilino, in the Bakhchisarai region in Crimea. It has been excavated in the 1970s by the late archaeologist Valeri Khomenko. By chance, two photographs in good condition which have simple but impressive inscriptions were found. Another interesting monument is the cave Arkhundiya-Tarama which was excavated in the Donetsk region near Dokuchaevsk. The vault of its first room was painted with symbols which appear to be archaic written signs.

Another category of monuments which might contain some Protosumerian texts present the so called «pisanitsy», rocky shrines with inscribed or painted signs; many of them are also known in the Ural and Siberia. Apparently, the Protosumerian characters have been found on two two-sided clay plaques found in the Gorbunovsky sanctuary (peat-moss) near Chelyabinsk. The author pays a special attention to the Ignatievskaya cave in Urals (the twelfth millenium B. C.). Its «decoration» which includes the names of the Sumerian gods Ishkur and Bear (AZ) is meaningful and shows a very advanced system of ritual thinking in spite of its early stage.

This Protosumerian script seems to have existed from a very early period. The most ancient shrine of the Kamennaya Mogyla, i. e., the Wizard Cave dates back to the twelfth millenium B. C. It is also located in the Ukraine, in the village Mezhirich on the river Ros'. There, Ivan Pidoplichko found painted mammoth bones placed in a special order an archaic shrine. In actuality, these drawings, and those found by the aforementioned archaeologist in Myozin (Ukraine) can be regarded as primitive «texts». Moreover, on the river Dnestr, near the village Molodova I, Alexander Chernish excavated

another impressive find — engraved mammoth bones interpreted to be the most ancient examples of man's artistic activity. Moreover these «drawings» closely remind us also of written signs, and thus can be studied in the same context, even though they date back to 42,000 years B. C.

In addition, script analogous to that of the Kamennaya Mogyla has been recognized in Palaeolithic caves and grottoes of the Franco-Cantabrian region. The cave Arcy-sur-Cure in Burgundy (35,000 B. C.) is of special interest as are also the prehistoric caves at Fontainebleau near Paris (IXth–VIIIth millenium B. C.). These all seem to be very much like those of the Kamennaya Mogyla. Although these inscribed or painted signs, have been known for a long time, they have never been adequately understood. Finally, at this moment in time, we have the opportunity to study this, which purports to be the most archaic script ever discovered!

Therefore, if the human language existed in some fixed form as far back as the Palaeolithic age (c. 35,000 years B. C.) we can construct another history of mankind. Moreover, one can regard the Protosumerian script from the Azov archive sanctuary to be a relic of that most ancient language of humanity. According to classical archaeological thought, the Sumerians, as a local ethnic formation had developed their culture in Mesopotamia, quite independently, then later spread far from the South to the North. The author considers this idea to be inconvenient. Perhaps, before their appearance in Mesopotamia the Protosumerians had populated the Northern Black Sea Coast including the Azov region, and later the majority of them migrated southwards where they settled down giving rise to their famous cities such as Susa, Uruk, Ur, Eridu, Umma, Keš etc. Some of these are mentioned in the texts from the Kamennaya Mogyla, and, as the author believes, one specific inscription ingraved in gigantic signs on the upper stones of this sanctuary (fig. 4) could bear its proper name. This sounds like ŠU.NUN — «Queen law». However, Gemdet Nasr, believed to be the earliest Sumerian city and which has the oldest script ever known, also bore the same name. It is worthy of note that Gemdet Nasr had a strange and misterious fortune. Both city and its script remained a lonely island inside the newly emerging Sumerian culture. Virtually, it appears to be an isolated non-developing remnant of the Protosumerian language at that historical moment when a very long and slow process of language creation transformed itself suddenly into flourishing Sumerian writing.

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