Chapter 7

Eneolith: The Search for Balance

ABSTRACT

Since the number of Eneolithic cultures has grown considerably in contrast with the previous epochs, it was necessary to determine the criteria and select the cultural content. The choice of the Cucuteni-Tripolye and the Harappa-Mohenjo-Daro, as well as of the Eurasian steppe cultures has been substantiated, and the artifacts for analysis have been selected. Comparisons of the space depicting features with the characteristics of Neolithic painting have been performed. A detailed reconstruction of the World Tree myth has been carried out, and features of the Eneolithic version have been compared with the Neolithic ones. The correlations of markers and the state of levels and channels of subjective space are determined. A generalized psychological portrait of a man of the Eneolithic era is compiled, and his behavioral patterns are described.

BACKGROUND

Relatively short in length (from the end of 4000 up to the beginning of 3000 B.C.), the Eneolithic period is interesting, first and foremost, as a transitional period encompassing the prehistoric times of the Stone Age when there was no writing yet and the historic times for which written evidence already exists which one can to rely on. A possibility to trace changes in the human mind over time, in between the “barbarism” and the “culture” is also thought valuable.

Among the Eneolithic painting monuments are rock paintings, reliefs, paintings on rock steles and slabs, painted pottery and certain seals. Art of sculpture is perfected, whilst artistic images continue to be used in embellishing the tools of labor and articles of a household.

Sources for Eneolithic painting are very diverse and are represented both by the results of archeological research of the cultures in question and by theoretical generalizations made both within the framework of history and history of arts.

Accordingly, it is necessary to examine exhibits from museums, reproductions of the pieces of art represented both in the albums and electronically.

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Historical and archeological publications made it possible to adjust the chronology of Eneolithic cultures, the dating and the identification of paintings (World History, 1955), as well as to consider the images in the context of other achievements of that epoch (Griaznov, 1999; Gromov, 1997). It is this that enabled us to substantiate an approach to the choice of cultures that are viewed as those containing the required content.

There is a number of publications which are specifically dedicated to the culture of the Cucuteni-Trypillia (Gerasimov, 1960; Passek, 1961; Chernish, 1982; Ellis, 1984; Mantu, 2000; Videiko, 2010; Menotti, Korvin-Piotrovsky (Ed.), 2012) whose authors express varying views as to their dating, origination, rise and decline.

The same publications devoted to Harappa-Mohenjo-Daro culture (Hunter, 1934; Bongard-Levin, Ilyin, 1971; Albedil, 1991; Farmer, Steve, et al., 2004; Parpola, et al., 1987-2010; 2010; Rao, 2010), especially to proto-writing problem. Some authors propose that the symbols should be treated as the signs of writing, and make attempts to decipher it, while the others deny this.

Other publications represent the Eurasian steppe cultures (Vadetskaya, 1980, 1986; Leontiev, Kapelko & Yesin, 2006). The results of recent studies, accompanied by numerous and high-quality maps and illustrations, are given on site (European steppe-eneolithic, n/d).

Mindful of the tasks of this research, it would be advisable to focus on those specific features of the artifacts which make it possible to reconstruct the changes in the condition of Eneolithic human while setting aside lots of most interesting materials.

Therefore, of primary interest are the reconstructions of visual representation techniques, of peculiar features for expressing spatial relations, as well as the interpretations of their meaning and incentives of their authors.

It is advisable, remembering the goals of the study, to focus on those artifacts that make it possible to reconstruct the change in the human mind during the Eneolithic era, leaving aside many interesting materials.

First of all, it is of interest to reconstruct the technique of images, the features of the transfer of spatial relations, as well as the interpretation of the meaning of images and the motives of the authors.

Among the many plots traced in the mythology of this period (Rybakov, 1965; Golan, 1993), the myth of the world tree stands out, reflecting ideas about the space of the Universe, acting forces, human interaction with them, as well as the goals of such interaction. Therefore, reconstructions of this myth are important.

CHOICE OF ENEOLITHIC CULTURES

The Eneolithic period, otherwise known as Chalcolithic or Paleo Metal Period, was marked by the formation of proto-civilizations, whose sites would appear and vanish in the spacious areas of the Middle East, Egypt, Mediterranean, Hindustan and China, as well as on the American continent. In addition to those mentioned, the centers of such cultures are Uruk in Lower Mesopotamia, early Aegean culture in the Eastern Mediterranean, the culture of painted ceramics in the territory of the Central China Plain that triggered the appearance of such early state formations as Xia, Shang-Yin, and Shu, and Olmec culture in Mesoamerica. Their chronological frames varied across different parts of the Earth. It is acceptable to consider even the Egyptian civilization, especially its oldest periods, to be Eneolithic.
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