Introduction

In this book I have used both published materials, drawn from archaeological, ethnographic and historical research, and also my own, as yet unpublished research. This book has been designed to help the reader in the selection of particular sources (monographs, articles, collections of articles) concerning the topic of nomadic monumental sculpture. Based on my own experiences, I have tried to describe already classic publications in an objective, and above all helpful, manner for further research works conducted by professional archaeologists, historians, ethnographers, art historians and other interested people. I did not want to duplicate the information already known from older and newer works containing the timeless insights of their authors, nor to repeat previous discussions of issues associated with stelae. The main purpose of this work is to draw attention to the problem of the rapid disappearance of monumental anthropomorphc sculpture from the area of South-Eastern Europe and to indicate possibilities for rescuing these relics (this issue is also related to the art of stelae in Central Asia). In this book I have included a chapter concerning the history of research and the most important publications, both historical and recent, concerning the study of stelae. The next section is dedicated to the complex issue of the origins of anthropomorphic statues and the cult-sacrifice places associated with them. Since it is connected with the Asian cradle of the Turkic people and their distant and complicated history that is still discussed by archaeologists, turkologists and ethnographers, I have decided to present an outline of this broad issue allowing for an understanding of the function of sculptures in the Turkic environment, both in symbolic as well as social and political aspects. I have not described here the history of the Asian ancestors of the Polovtsians, because it is not the subject of my considerations. This issue could become a topic for a more comprehensive monograph. I have presented here only a brief record of “European” beginnings of the history of these people based on known sources. In the next chapters I discuss subjects associated with the spread of stelae in Europe, their chronology and classification systems based on older publications, together with my comments concerning their validity.
I have also outlined my own observations, correcting some theories rendered obsolete in the light of recent discoveries.

In the chapter dedicated to the collection of anthropomorphic stelae from the Veliko-Anadol Forest Museum, we, together with Michał, have focused on the descriptive section of relics, especially their technical condition recorded three decades earlier, a comparison with 2006, and their condition after the conservation. Michał has precisely described each activity related to the preservation of relics that he conducted on particular objects. Each sculpture required an individual treatment, what we have stressed many times. It is the most complex and important section of this monograph. In these chapters we have also tried to familiarise issues related to the protection and preservation of monumental anthropomorphic sculpture in Eastern Europe. We based our conclusions on own experiences and knowledge acquired from local archaeologists and people who, though not involved professionally with the art of stelae, are however aware of losses and interested in rescuing the cultural heritage of their homeland. We understand that our voices might seem to be unfair or critical, in that we have not described any positive mechanisms giving hope for rescuing monumental sculptures, both those already found and those still waiting to be discovered. We do believe, however, that the painful truth in the presentation of the actual status of relics in the Eastern Europe is better than describing an unrealistic state of affairs to adulate those local people responsible for heritage protection; particularly due to the fact that, as citizens of the European Union, we have an opportunity to look for the help and support of international organisations and institutions dealing with the protection of cultural heritage. As Poles, who survived serious political and economical changes in the 1990s, we do understand the causes of many problems occurring in the countries of Eastern Europe, related to widely understood mechanisms in the social and economic sphere. We are not the only ones to have described problems related to the condition of relics of monumental sculpture. Each scientist dealing with this subject has appealed for possibilities for their protection and preservation for future generations. Unfortunately, without success.

In the concluding chapter we have laid out our proposals related to the protection of this category of relics and dissemination of this subject, based on possibilities brought by modern methods of communication. We have also decided to include short guidelines enumerating measures that could be conducted on objects by each employee of a museum or a curator of relics. We have stressed which works can be executed only by a conservator experienced in working with the monumental stone sculpture. We also remain available for all people interested in the development and implementation of projects to save anthropomorphic stelae in the area of Eastern Europe.

For my part, I would like here to thank participants of the expedition for their outstanding commitment to the project. On the Polish side, the expedition in 2008 was attended by the following persons: MA Ewa Stanecka, Agata Migdalska,
Bartosz Adamski, Bartłomiej Brożyna, Piotr Pawełczak, Maciej Stadkowski, Mateusz Szubiński (alumni and students of the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University, Poland), Petra Sedlackova (student of the Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic), Katarzyna Korn, Grzegorz Lasota, Jakub Olszyński, Przemysław Podolski (students of the Cracow Academy of Arts, Poland), Iwona Koszałka, Przemysław Polakiewicz (students of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Rzeszów, Poland). The Ukrainian side was represented by: the Director of the Donetsk Regional Museum, Evgeniy Denysenko and MA Viacheslav Podobied, MA Nikolay Skliarov, [MA Aleksander Grachov] (research employees of the Donetsk Regional Museum), MA Vladimir Grib (independent consultant), MA Galina Vorotintseva, Natalia and Vladimir Stacenko, Sergey Kashyniets (research employee and technical employees of the Veliko-Anadol Forest Museum) and MA Natalia Skliarova (employee of the Culture Department of the City of Donetsk). The archaeological practices were attended by students and volunteers from the Donetsk National University guided by MA Vladimir Garbov.

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Aneta Gołębiowska-Tobiasz

Step. Viacheslav Gutyrya.