

Map 1

CARVED AND INCISED STONES FROM CHALUKA AND ANANGULA

By

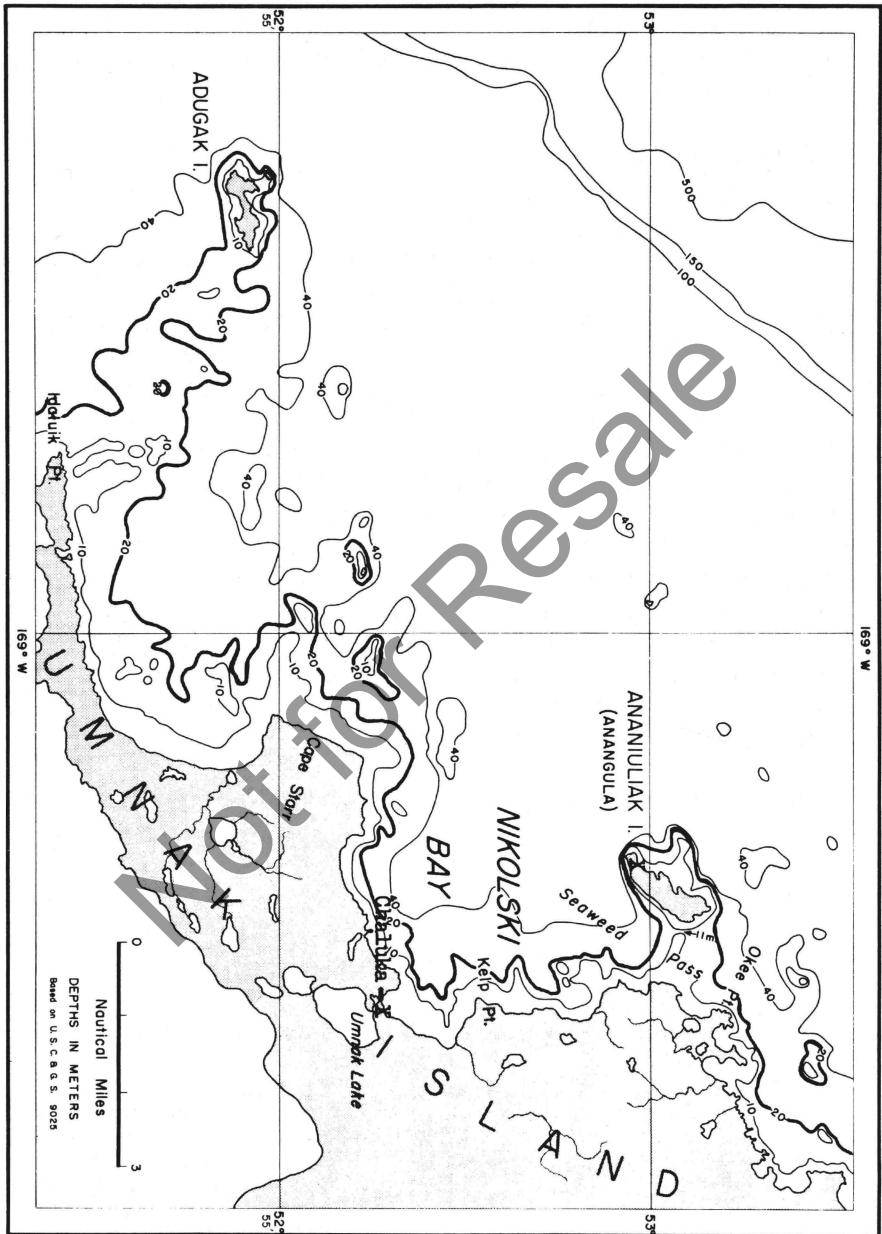
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During the 1962 work at the Aleut base village, Chaluka, on Nikolski Bay, southwest Umnak Island, Alaska, members of the Aleut-Konyag Prehistory and Ecology Project ¹ excavated a number of beach pebbles with incising. (Maps 1, 2). It is now clear that many discarded beach cobbles were also incised but their decoration had been obliterated by mud and soil. Returned with the other cultural materials were several dozen stones. These were mentioned briefly in previous publications (Aigner, 1963, 1966: Fig. 30). In 1968 and 1970 further excavations on Nikolski Bay ² revealed more incised and carved stones and added 4000-5000 additional years to the presence of this artifact group among Aleuts in the eastern Aleutians. Largely as a result of excavations at the 8,400 B.P. site of Anangula there is compelling evidence of population and cultural continuities between that village and later peoples on Nikolski Bay (Aigner, 1970).

MATERIALS AND MOTIFS

The majority of foreign stone materials in the Chaluka site, excluding obsidian, basalt and greenstone (chert) artifacts, consists of fine-grained, water-worn pebbles and cobbles

1. The project was funded by The National Science Foundation through the University of Wisconsin, Madison, William S. Laughlin and William Reeder co-principal investigators.
2. In 1968 Aigner and Laughlin returned to Chaluka under the auspices of the National Broadcasting Company; travel funds were also provided by NSF grant GS 1756, Laughlin and Aigner co-principal investigators. The 1970 work was undertaken as part of the IBP sponsored and NSF funded project "Aleut Adaptation to the Bering Land Bridge Coastal Configuration" (GB 18741); principal investigators are Laughlin, Aigner and Robert F. Black, all of the University of Connecticut.



Map 2

collected on the nearby beach. The surfaces of the stones are worn smooth; long bar shapes are most common. Cross sections of the stones which received incising are rectangular and subrectangular; stones with incising vary in length from 4.2 to 19.5 cm. Breadth and thickness are 1.1 to 9.0 cm and 0.6 to 3.3 cm, respectively.

In the 1962 Chaluka collection, 22 examples of incised stones could be assigned provenience. Several examples clearly functioned as awl and needle smoothers and sharpeners (Fig. 1ab); on these examples grooves are worn into the stone which are shallow at both ends and of uniform depth the rest of their length. Other specimens are difficult to interpret functionally although at least one was suspended (Fig. 1c). Yet another example is a carved replica of a spear or harpoon (Fig. 1d).

There is no one discernible style or characteristic motif. Most pieces are decorated with one or several motifs evidently placed arbitrarily on one or more surfaces. A few examples are decorated on four faces by designs running the length of the stone (Fig. 1e). In the 1962 collection there are two examples of carved and incised faces, and a possible third (Figs. 1c, 2 ab).³

Decoration consists of checkered motifs, cross hatchures, "arrow" motifs, zigzags, feather designs, "X"'s, "V"'s and inverted "V"'s and figure-eights. Cross hatchures, checkers and feather motifs appear most commonly. Faces have lines for the eyes, eyebrows, mouth and cheeks; the nose is generally carved in slight relief.

The faces are of particular interest for they appear on bone tools and ornaments in essentially the same form, and are associated with an Image of the Deity from one early Chaluka house, a carved stone face is also associated with one of the 8400 B.P. houses at Anangula. The features of slit or slanting eyes, large nose with a narrow root and broad nostrils and low forehead give the faces an Aleut Mongoloid cast. One late

3. In the collection there are also two examples of incised faces on bone (Aigner, 1966, Fig. 26.2) and one of a carved face (Aigner, 1966, Fig. 26.1) [Figs. 3e, 5].

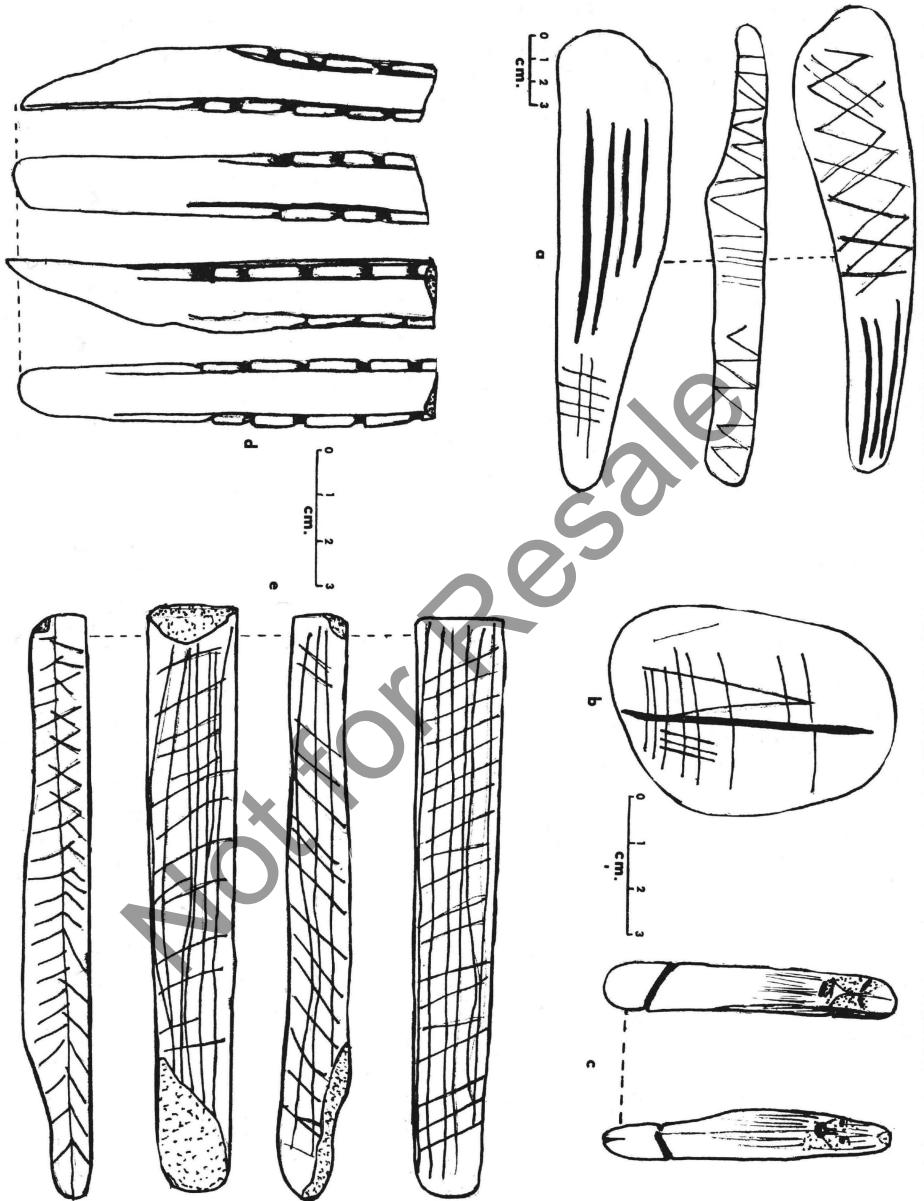


Fig. 1

Figs. 1-3: Incised and carved stones from Chaluka.

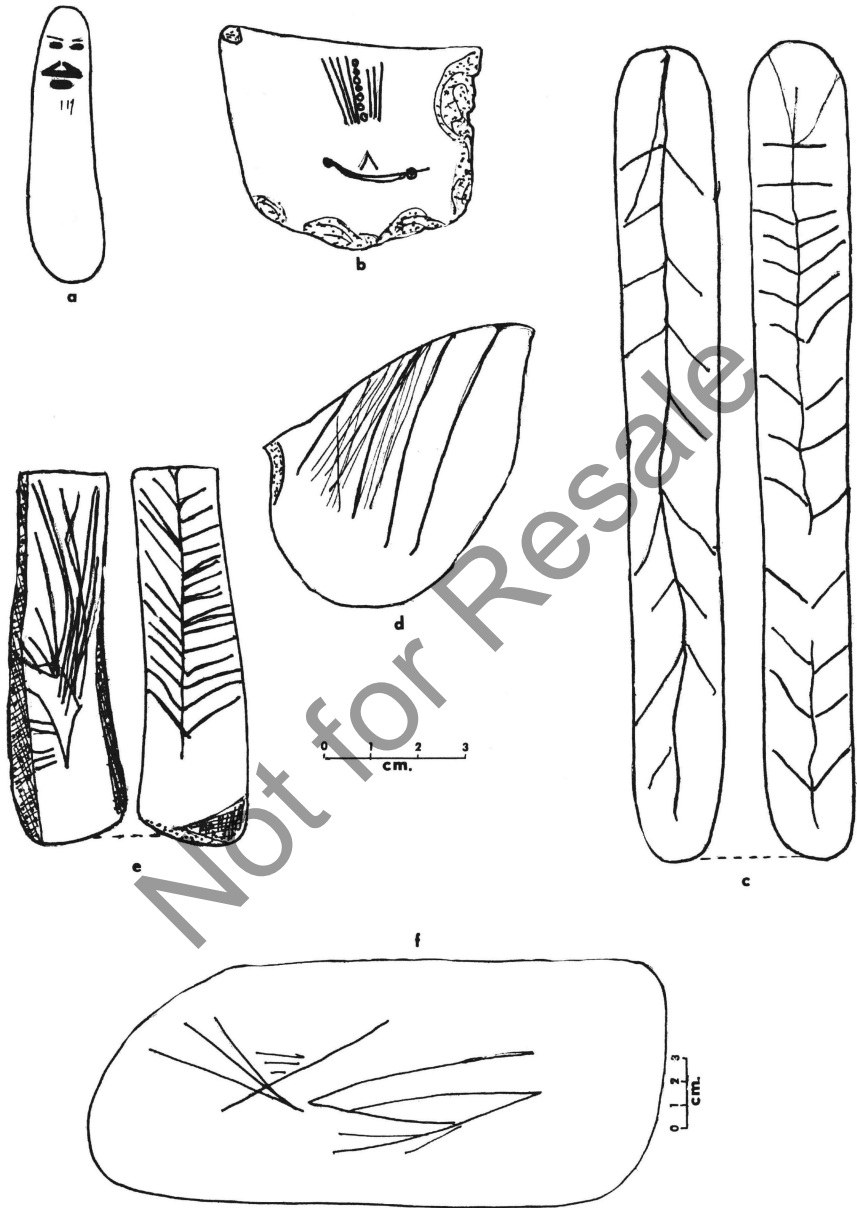


Fig. 2

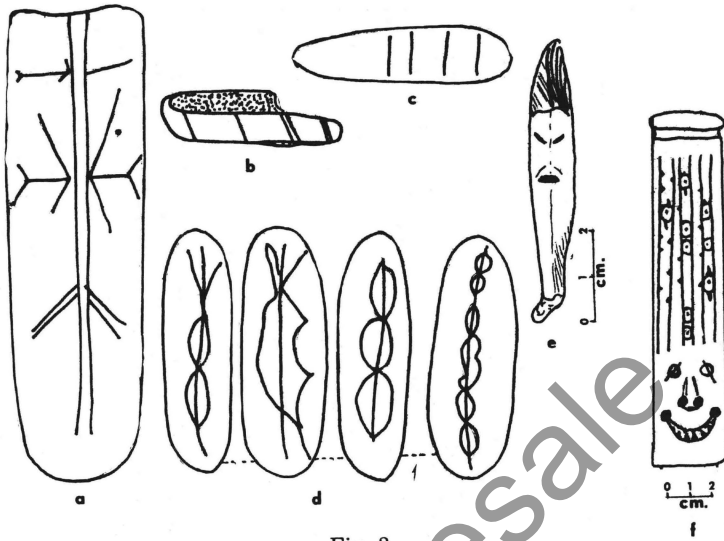


Fig. 3

schematic face (?) is incised on a small flat cobble (Fig. 2b).⁴ The mouth is wide, the nose an inverted “V”, and at the corners of the mouth circles are drawn (perhaps to represent labrets). Above the nose are seven vertical lines; the third and fourth lines are separated by a column of seven circles.

4. Schematic faces and incised stones are known from elsewhere in Alaska but bear no more than general phenetic similarities to the Aleutian examples. Clark (1964) described incised stone tablets bearing conventionalized human representations from two sites near the town of Kodiak; Monashka Bay and Kizhuyak Bay. Decoration on the majority of his specimens consists mainly of lines representing the mouth and nasal ridge and orbital arches, with or without eyes represented below the arches. Hair and tattooing as well as labrets and clothing are represented. The figurines he describes are found in cultural layers post-dating the Lower Levels at Uyak; they are later than 1000 A.D. according to Clark.

Geographically far distant, and clearly unrelated, Ipiutak incised designs on the one hand (Larsen and Rainey, 1948), Chugach rock paintings (de Laguna, 1956) and paintings found in Cook Inlet (de Laguna, 1934) on the other, like the Kodiak examples, are most concerned with depicting faces (in contrast to geometric incising at Chaluka). At Kodiak, Clark is able to define a “style” of incising for the figurines; this is not the case for Chaluka incising in general. However, in the latter site the conventions for carving human facial features are distinctive and appear to have continuity over thousands of years.

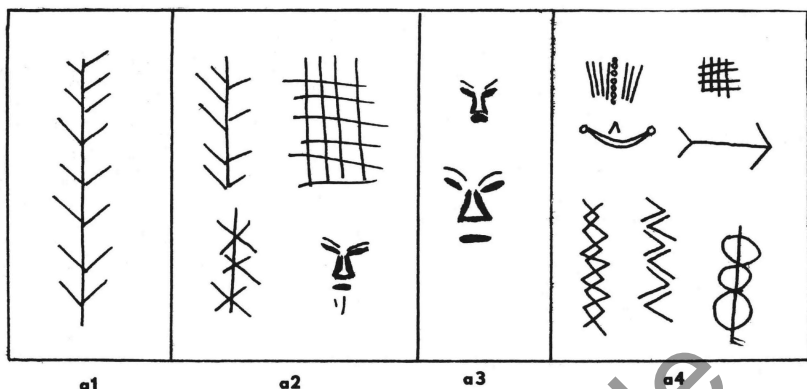


Fig. 4A: Designs on incised and carved stones from Chaluka: 1. 3500-plus B.P.; 2. 3100 B.P.; 3. about 3000 B.P.; 4. as early as 1500 B.P. but mainly more recent than 1000 B.P.

The small sample size from 1962 does not lend itself to sophisticated studies of temporal distributions of motifs, basic shapes and the like (Fig. 4a). Incised stones are distributed throughout the 3500-plus years of the deep Chaluka midden. Two date from levels 3500 years old (4b1). These are the carved spear or harpoon and a bar shaped stone with feather motifs on two faces (Figs. 1d, 2c). Five examples date about 3100 years ago (Fig. 4b2); motifs include incised faces, feather motifs, checkering and cross hatchures. One small cobble with two carved schematic faces is girdled for suspension (Fig. 1c); it dates about 3000 B.P.

The fifteen specimens known from the upper part of Chaluka date after 550 A.D. (1400 B.P.) – most are probably later than 1000 A.D. (Fig. 4b4, 4b5). Motifs include checkers and cross hatchures similar to designs present earlier but feather designs are absent in the collection. Zigzags, figure-eights, “V”’s and inverted “V”’s and arrow motifs, not represented in the small collection from earlier levels, are present (Figs. 1a-b, 3a-d).⁵

In 1970 several weeks were spent excavating an Aleut house interior at Chaluka dating to about 3800-4000 B.P.

5. Details of the considerable bone carving and decorating by incision are not discussed here; some information is available in Aigner, 1966.

(Details are provided elsewhere).⁶ From the house floor we recovered one example of a stone with incising; it was clearly an awl sharpener and smoother. In addition, a carved stone Image of the Deity was found on the floor near a wall (Fig. 5). The characteristic features of slit, slanting eyes, long nose with narrow nasal root and broad nostrils, cheeks, and even the philtrum are clearly indicated. This Image of the Deity is only 6 cm long, compared with the 15 cm figure in the round recovered from Chaluka by Laughlin (Aigner, 1966: Fig. 25). As is characteristic of these Images, girdling and suspension are from the head area.

Of interest are the large number of beach stones present on the house floor at Chaluka, none of which appears to have been further altered. The concentrations of these suggest they may have been associated in sacks as amulets or served some other function as a cluster. For example, within a 50 cm radius of the pebble feature (101 small, egg shaped stones) in the east corner of the house, there were 25 small triangular to round flat pebbles, 14 medium sized and less regularly shaped flat stones, and 10 bar shaped pebbles, mainly 5 to 8 cm long. Near the Image of the Deity there were 7 small pebbles, a bar shaped stone and a teardrop shaped stone. In a quarter meter square in the west corner of the house we recovered 4 small pebbles and 2 egg-shaped stones. While only 5 or so pebbles of various sizes and shapes were present in the north corner of the house, along the south-east wall, south of the pebble cluster, 8 small flat pebbles were found within a quarter meter square. Finally, in the area of several subfloor stone lines and unlined depressions, where we recovered 22 awls and needles, pebbles of various shapes are scattered about; however, from one quarter meter adjacent to the two stone slab lined depressions with covers, there were no less than 22 flatish, round to oval pebbles and 9 bar and teardrop shaped pebbles. In addition we found a perforated pebble but no egg shaped stones. The awl-and-needle smoother is from this general area.

Our analysis of the 1963 Anangula remains revealed one flat pebble with incising (Laughlin and Aigner, 1966). The faint

6. Aigner, 1971 ms "Activity Zonation within a 4000 Year-old Aleut House from Chaluka Village, Umnak Island, Alaska", submitted for publication.



Fig. 5: Examples of carved faces from Chaluka; left, face carved in bone, girdled for suspension, from 1962 Chaluka excavations, age 2500-3000 B.P.; right, carved stone Image of the Deity, girdled for suspension, from 1970 Chaluka excavation of an early house, age 3800-plus B.P.

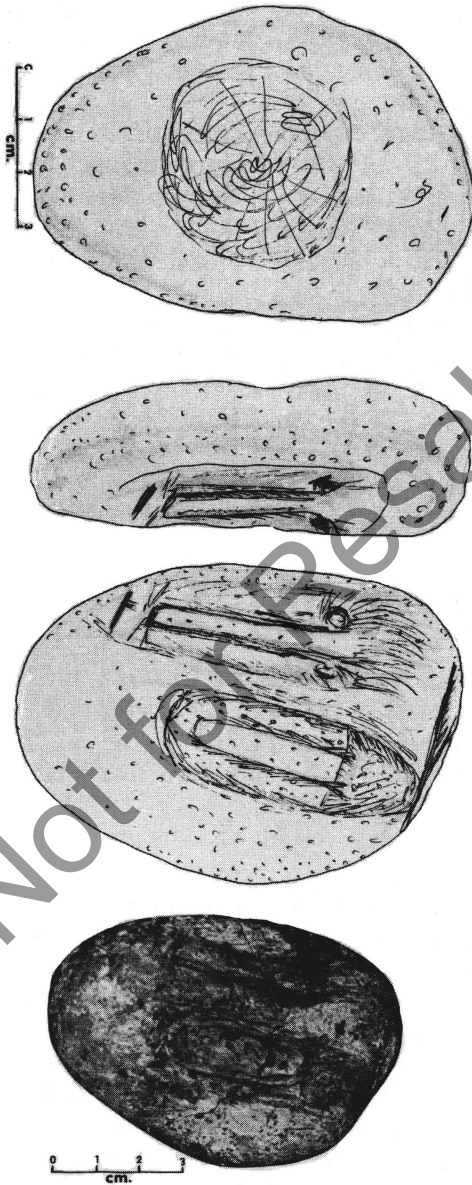


Fig. 6: Carved stone face recovered in 1970 Anangula excavations, age in excess of 8400 B.P., associated with a house.

extended back another 4000 years to Anangula is strengthened by our recent studies of that maritime village site.

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