



A rock relief, cut at a height of 23 m on to the almost vertical Madara rocks on the western slope of the Madara plateau. This is the most significant early medieval monument of Bulgarian art, the only one of its kind in Europe. Included in the list of UNESCO-protected world cultural and natural heritage in 1979. The relief is a composition of a horseman with a shepherd's crook, a dog running after the horseman, a snake under it and a lion. There is a widespread view that the monument symbolizes the victorious campaign of the rulers of early Danubian Bulgaria. According to the latest approach to deciphering the monument, the places of the horseman, the dog and the lion (the earthly counterparts of the Sun, the Moon and the Leo Constellation with its main star Regulus) corresponds to the year 165 (the Year of the Snake). This, according to the "List of Names of the Bulgarian Kants", a valuable written monument of the 8th century, had been the first year of Bulgarian statehood in Europe. This comes to prove one more time the thesis that the old Bulgarians were a highly civilized people forming a state.