

Fig. 3 - Paspardo, Valcamonica. The monumental composition of Capitello Dei Due Pini, 1.

THE STATE OF RESEARCH IN ROCK ART

THE ALPINE MENHIR-STATUES AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN PROBLEM

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I. Introductory remarks

The monuments generally called menhir-statues consist of monoliths, at times modelled by man, upon which engravings, paintings or high reliefs were made. Most of these monuments have a vaguely anthropomorphic shape, although usually the traits are so generalized that they cannot be identified with specific human features. They have been described as imaginary anthropomorphic entities. For over one hundred years scholars have asked themselves why they were made, when, by whom, and what was the purpose.

Three main types of such monuments are recognized on the basis of their morphology: 1. Statues-stelae are slabs or stones which have been intentionally fashioned by man to give them an anthropomorphic outline; 2. Menhir-statues are naturally shaped monoliths upon which engravings or paintings, depicting the entity or its attributes, have been represented; 3. Monumental Compositions consist of the same iconography on immovable rocks. The whole of the three types is referred to as «Menhir-statues assemblage».

In a provocative article, Mario Piantelli (1983, pp. 33-54) presented an interpretation of the iconography of Alpine menhir-statues based on the Vedic literature on Purusha stelae related to cosmogenesis. This hypothesis is raising much discussion. The menhir-statues and related compositions date back to the late fourth and third millennium B.C. and the proposed interpretation would place the Indo-European culture of the Alpine area much earlier in time than ever suspected. Furthermore, it would bring back to the fourth millennium (at least) the origin of concepts that were believed to have developed in the second millennium B.C., and would indicate the Alps as a very early core of Indo-European culture, upsetting some widespread concepts about the origins of the Indo-Europeans.

II. The Place of Menhir-Statues within the Succession of Alpine Rock Art Styles

The study of rock art in the Camonica Valley and in other Alpine sites has revealed a stylistic sequence synchronized with horizons of material culture from archaeological excavations. Four main periods have been recognized within the Camunian civilization; they are preceded by a Proto-camunian period and followed by a Post-camunian period. The whole sequence covers a range of ca. 10,000 years, from early Holocene times to the Middle Ages. (Anati, 1982). Over two hundred thousand figures have been recorded in Valcamonica. Numerous superimpositions of different styles and some rock art sites related to archaeological living floors and structures corroborate the chronological sequence, which was derived from depictions of extinct animals, weapons and many other figures of datable value. In the latest phases, nearly 100 North Etruscan inscriptions add a further chronological element.

The Camonica Valley, with its wealth and variety of figures, provides links and

correlations between various groups of Alpine rock art. It also provides a continuity of artistic creativity lasting several millennia in the same zone, and reveals a local evolution of rock art which is unique in its ethnological and archaeological significance (Anati, 1989). Between the first and last periods of Valcamonica rock art various changes took place in style, artistic approach and subject matter. Three major changes mark the division between the four main periods.

In the Camonica Valley one of the common types of figures of Period II illustrates a vaguely anthropomorphic being considered to represent some sort of widespread idol, which is also found in connection with Late Neolithic cultures from Iberia to central Europe and the Balkan countries. In these figures emphasis is frequently given to the eyes and to a collar around the neck. In the Camonica Valley several such figures are rather large in size, reaching over two and a half meters in length. The weapons represented in Camunian Period II are mainly stone daggers and axes, and can be attributed to the Late Neolithic period.

Figures representing copper weapons appeared for the first time in Camunian Period III/A. In addition to daggers and axes, halberds were also depicted. They show similarities to objects found in tombs of the Remedello culture in northern Italy (Bagolini, 1982) and to figures represented at Mount Bego (Bicknell, 1913). Similar weapons were widespread throughout most of Europe in the Chalcolithic period (or Copper Age).

The figurative elements of Period III-A reflect the wide geographical range of Chalcolithic ideology, as well as the relative unity of cultural background in several parts of Europe during the third millennium B.C. This dating is inferred primarily by depictions of weapons and tools and is confirmed by connections with Baden and Remedello cultures and, in its final phases, by the depiction of objects related to Bell-Beaker pottery assemblages.

Period III/A of Valcamonica, which is characterized by menhir-statues and monumental compositions, seems to mark the first serious break in the previous religious-ideological unity of the rock art representations. While at Mount Bego and other sites of rock art the style and range of subject matter were evolving slowly, the Camonica Valley and other central Alpine sites underwent a sharp change, influenced, apparently, by a wave of new ideas that entered northern Italy with another custom: that of making menhir-statues. This seems to have happened about two centuries before 3000 B.C.

After a brief transitional phase, Camunian art came to clearly reflect a mixture of old traditions and new acquisitions. Objects and symbols were composed in a certain order, to imitate the shape of the new anthropomorphic entity that now received the honours and attributes that the Camunians had formerly reserved for the Neolithic idol-like figures. The results illustrate an ideology which remained localized in the central Alpine zone, principally in three distinct regions: Valcamonica, Valtellina and Tyrol.

In the Tyrol-Adige Valley, menhir-statues found at Lagundo (Battaglia, 1934), Termeno (O. Menghin, 1925), S. Verena (Mazza, 1952) and Totschling (Fink & Mayr, 1956) show a gradual evolution. Initially there were simple, stereotypical anthropomorphic menhir-statues, datable to just before 3000 B.C.. Shortly afterwards, Camunian influence was felt and Camunian symbols were added to some statues. Menhir-statues of this period show patterns very similar to those of the contemporary Camunian monumental compositions (Anati, 1982). A similar process seems to be illustrated by the stelae from Valtellina (Anati, 1968).

As aforementioned, in the Camonica Valley a different process took place. The Camunian symbols preceded the new elements imported by the cultural-religious «wave» that brought the menhir-statues to the area.

This wave must have been extremely powerful, leaving deep traces wherever it passed. One may speculate on the vast range of ideas that it brought forth, but the main material evidence it left behind was the custom of making menhir-statues, monumental compositions and other related rock pictures. Iconography and ideology underwent drastic and rapid changes in the central Alpine zone; similar episodes occurred at the same time in Liguria (Anati, 1981), in the Midi region of France (Arnal, 1980), and in several areas of the Iberian peninsula (Anati, 1968-b). As the figurative results reveal, groups of people encountered along the route of diffusion were deeply influenced, and radical changes took place in the figurative approach of rock art in the above mentioned regions (Anati, 1964).

The wave also reached Mount Bego, but its influence was not strong enough to entirely transform the subject matter and the figurative approach of the rock art. Only a few figures, such as those known as the «Chief of the Tribe», the «Sorcerer» and the «Christ», show a figurative approach similar to that of the menhir-statues; however, they are isolated examples and are considerably different from the bulk of Mount Bego depictions. Elsewhere, as in the Valais and the Grison areas in Switzerland, the menhir-statues movement does not appear to have had much influence on the local rock art. Engraved slabs and menhir-statues were discovered not far from rock art sites in the Grison and at Sion; nevertheless, menhir-statues and rock art remained two partially contemporary, though quite distinct phenomena (Gallay, 1982; Anati, 1984).

Both local developments and external influences led to gradual differentiation among rock art groups, and by the Bronze Age each major site had already established its own specific characteristics.

The third major change that took place in Camunian rock art can be dated to the final Bronze Age, towards the end of the second millennium B.C. (Anati, 1982). A new external wave reached the area and quite suddenly transformed the style and the range of subject matters of its art. The rock pictures were enriched by new elements. Human figures, birds and other animals, and various symbols and decorative patterns recall those which appeared on Urnfield and, later, Hallstatt pottery and metal objects. The new cultural contribution was powerful and its influence on the ideology and the religion of the Camunians must have been substantial. The Alpine area appears to have been particularly receptive to external influences throughout the Metal Ages.

In the fourth period, when rock art is most richly represented in the Camonica Valley, the scenes reached a high degree of complexity; hundreds of descriptive and anecdotal depictions gradually covered the rock surfaces. Isolated images of objects, weapons and tools, as specific themes of depiction, practically disappeared. Weapons and tools, shown as personal accessories, became prevalent. Schematic figures and compositions of conceptual symbols, which characterized previous periods, become rare, while complex descriptive scenes of hunting, combat, social events and processions, magic and religious performances, agriculture and other scenes of daily life, gave new dynamics to the rock art.

Strangely enough, from that moment, sometime in the tenth century B.C., till the beginning of the period of Etruscan influence in the late sixth or the early fifth century B.C., the major group of rock art that most resembles the Camu-

SYNCRHONIC TABLE OF CAMUNIAN ROCK ART						
Camunian period	Phase	Dating B.C. Absolute/Tentative		C14 Dating not calib.	Archaeological Period	
Photo-Camun.	Sub-Naturalistic	8000		4500	Epi-Palaeolithic Proto-Neolithic	
		5500				
I	Archaic	5000		4150	Early	
		4500		3700		
	Evolved	4000		3200	Middle	
II	A	3800		2700	Late	
	B	3600				
	C	3500				
		3300				
	Trans. II-III	3200				
III	A Early	3000		2400	Early	
		2800				
	Middle	2600			Late	
	Late	2500				
		2000				
	B	2000			1500	Early
	C	1650			1250	Middle
		1500				
		1400				
D		1200				
		1000				
Trans. III-IV	1000		830	Late		
IV	A-B	850		420	Final	
		700				
	D	550				
	E	500				
		450				
		400				
	F	200			Middle	
Final	0 a.C. d.C.		200	Late		
Post-Camun.	A	500		+ 60	Iron Age	
	B-C	500				
					Roman Medieval	

Fig. 4 - Chronological chart of the Camunian rock art.

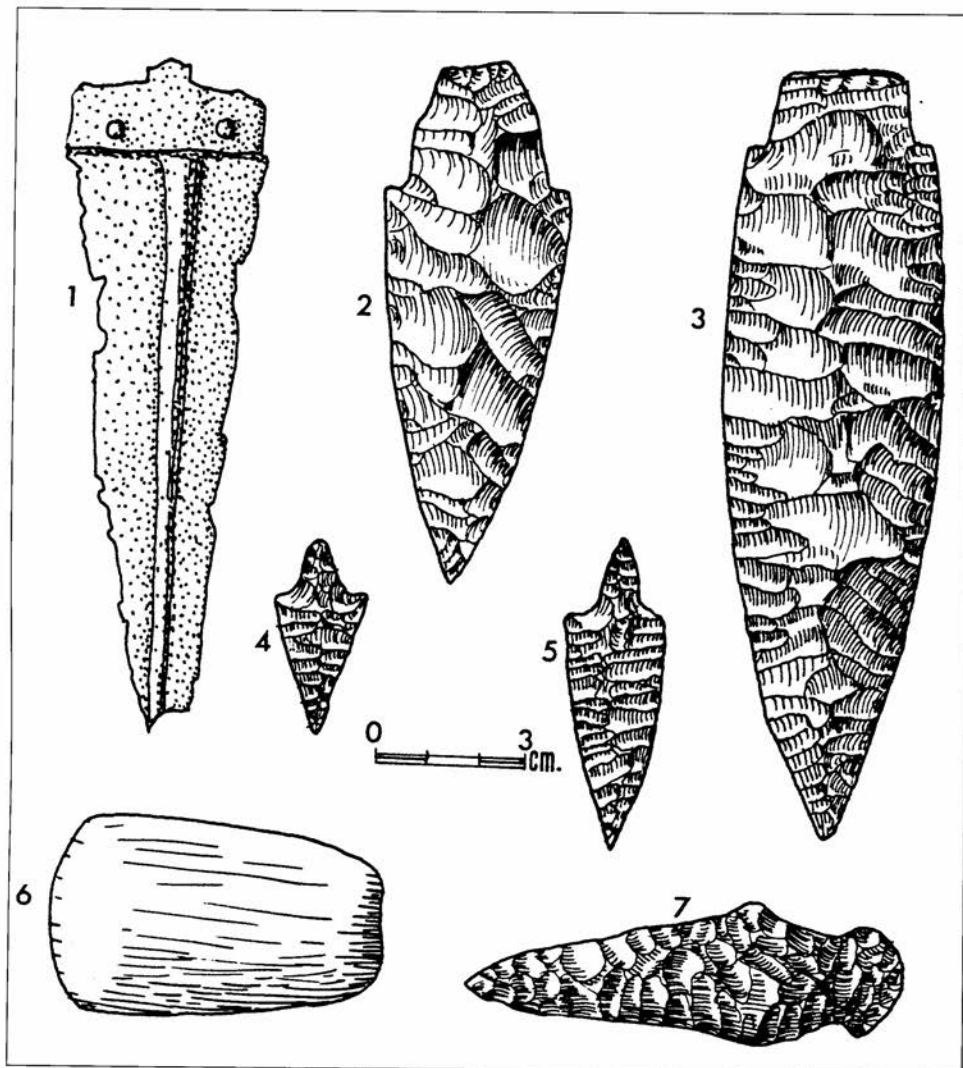


Fig. 5 - The Remedello culture. Copper and stone implements from Fontanella Mantovana.

nian is not to be found in the Alpine area but far to the north, in southern Scandinavia (Fredjo, Janson & Moberg, 1956). By then the Tyrol and Valtellina groups had ceased to create new figures, Mount Bego was in the last stage of its decadence, and other sites of rock art were being abandoned. The Camonica Valley remained the only major site where rock art was still produced in the Alpine area; the art still evolved through the period of Etruscan influence and the subsequent «Celtic» Late Iron Age. The practice of making rock art persisted there till the Roman conquest in the year 16 B.C.. Later, in Roman and Medieval times, the production of rock art continued, though only as a pastime which had lost its previous deeper significance.

Thus, chronologically, the central Alpine menhir-statues are located, in a clear context, in Period III/A of Valcamonica, which corresponds to the Chalcolithic, beginning around 3200 B.C. and lasting through most of the third millennium.

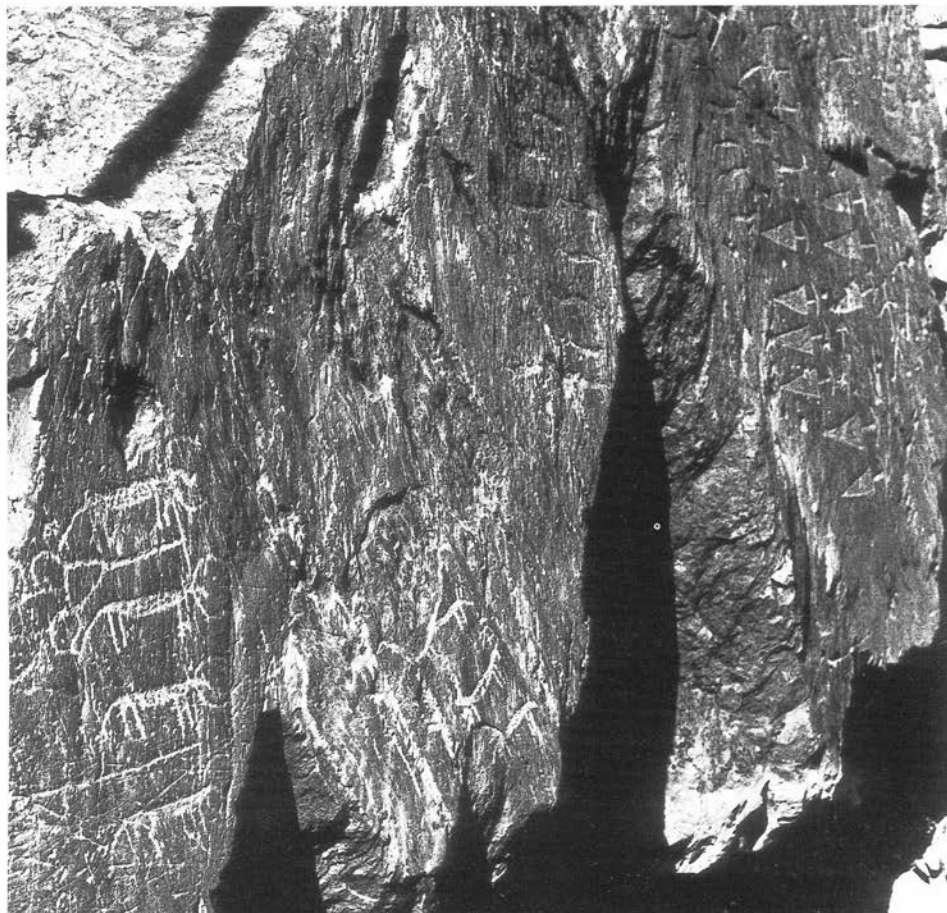


Fig. 6 - Cemmo 2. Valcamonica. The earliest known depiction in Italy of a wheeled wagon (Chalcolithic). It appears coupled with a plough in phase 3 of this surface. In the background, depictions of Chalcolithic copper daggers with triangular blade, from phase 2.

The same general chronological frame fits other mentioned groups of similar monuments in Liguria, southern France, Switzerland and the Iberian peninsula.

III. The Context

In the Alpine area, and indeed, in several other parts of Europe, the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third millennium B.C. was a time of great ferment, full of inventiveness and imagination, with the diffusion of ideas and movements of people. Among the principal technical acquisitions which constituted the determinant economic factor of various cultures in this period is the art of metallurgy, with the relative exploitation of mineral deposits. Primarily copper, though other metals as well, such as gold and silver, were sought and utilized. The richest zones of mineral deposits which were not suitable for agriculture and had thus been undeveloped and marginal during the Neolithic period became centres of intense economic and cultural activity. In this period, the accumulation of surpluses led to the rise of the first conspicuous individual fortunes.

Metal implements and weapons offered new technical possibilities and extended the power of the artisan, the hunter and the warrior. The search for mineral

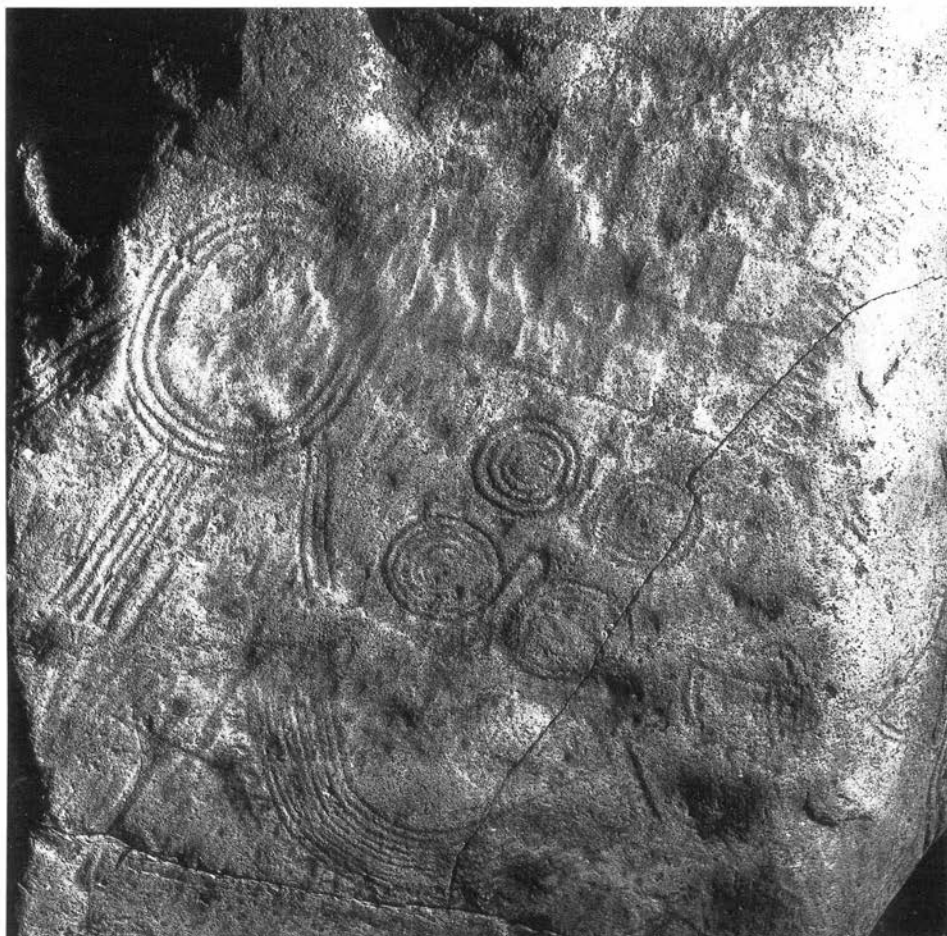


Fig. 8 - Borno 1. The central part of face 1 showing depictions of solar disk, «necklace» parallel lines element, spectacle pendants, animals and a carpet-like checker-board pattern.

all of them are present on one monument. Some of the monuments have only a few of the elements. The same theme may be repeated several times on the same surface; on almost every monument there is one type of figure that plays a dominant role. The standard figures are: 1. The disc, or central face, which is often identified with the «solar disk»; 2. Two discs to the sides of the central disc; 3. A series of parallel or wavy lines, which seem to have the bivalent value of «belt» or «collar» of the entity and also of «river» or «water»; 4. Weapons with handles, such as axes, halberds and daggers; 5. Spectacle spirals; 6. Ploughs; 7. Wagons; 8. Animal; and 9. Human figures. These compositions were made during all three main stages of Period III/A and some were used again and modified in Period III/B. They cover the Chalcolithic period and persist until the beginning of the Bronze Age. According to present chronology they date to between 3200 and 2000 B.C. (E. Anati, 1972b).

It is probable that the great idols of the preceding period are the precursors of the monumental compositions and the menhir-statues. Assemblages of figures of a similar kind and age, but with different characteristics, are distributed over a wide area that forms a belt stretching from the Caucasus (Tallgren, 1934; Hausler, 1966; 1974), the Crimean peninsula and southern Ukraine (Kurinnij, 1931;

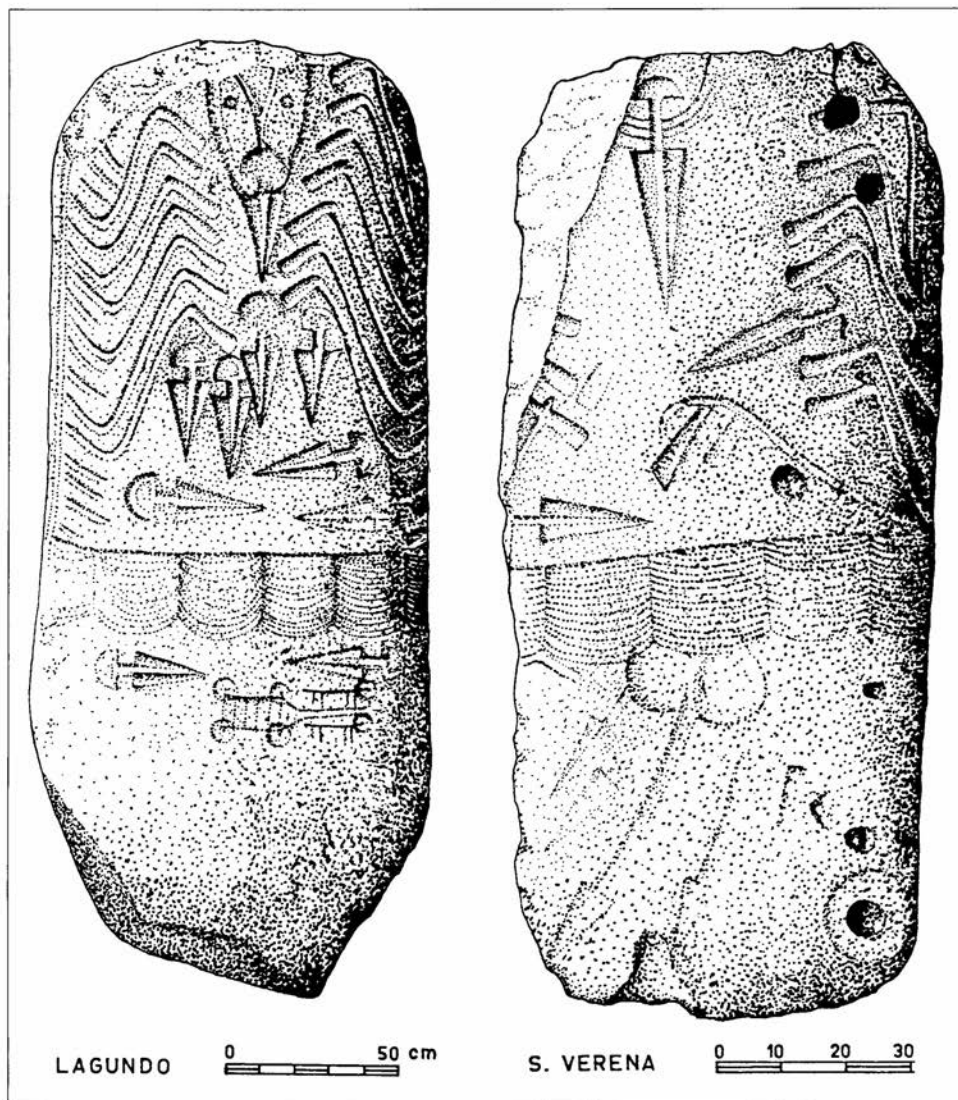


Fig. 9/a-b - Lagundo 1 side 1 and S. Verena, side 1. Two monuments from Alto Adige where figures of weapons and tools have been added at different phases. The figure of wagon at Laguno is posterior to that of the dagger which it overlaps. The dagger appearing as «beard» of the image overlaps the face. At S. Verena the upper dagger overlaps the «necklace» parallel lines.

Hausler, 1966; 1974) to the Alpine area (Anati, 1967-b; 1970-a), Liguria (Anati, 1982) and the south of France (Octobon, 1931; Picard 1962; Arnal, 1980). Analogous monuments are known in central Europe (Kirchner, 1955) in the plain of the Seine, Oise and Marne rivers near Paris, as well as in the Iberian peninsula, and are probably the result of a secondary, later diffusion (Leroi-Gourhan, 1963; Anati 1968a).

In Period III/A the environment of Valcamonica was characterized by a climate of increasing coldness with intermittent dry spells. The pollen diagrams show a reduction of conifers, as vast woody areas were transformed into clearings of shrubs and other low vegetation.

The principal activities illustrated in the rock carvings in Period III/A are the

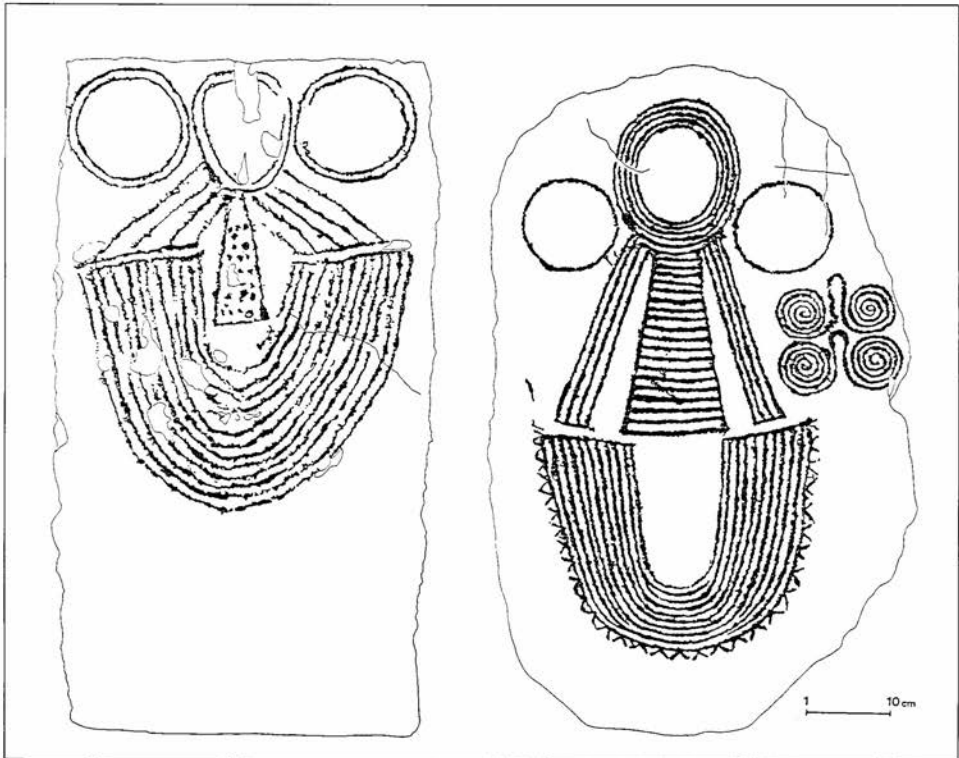


Fig. 10/a-b - Cornal 1 and Caven 1, side 1. Two monuments from Valtellina (tracings by Soprintendenza Archeologica Lombardia).

raising of livestock (mainly cattle and goats), hunting, agriculture, metal-working, trade and handicrafts, which included manufacturing new types of tools. The domestic horse is not yet present in this period. It will first appear on the rock art of Valcamonica, in the Middle Bronze Age, in Period III/C. The pig, a domestic animal already known in other parts of Europe and also in the Alpine regions, is represented for the first time in Period III/A. It has not been identified in the rock art of previous phases to date, but relying on information provided by archaeological excavations, it might well have been present earlier. Metal-working developed in Valcamonica during this time, from 3200 B.C., and since then this activity has remained one of the primary creative expressions of the Brescian Pre-Alpine populations.

The first wagons also came to the valley at the beginning of Period III/A. They were four-wheeled squat vehicles of heavy wood with an almost square body and solid wheels. In the oldest example, known from Masso II at Cemmo, the wagon is drawn by two long-horned oxen. This cart has characteristics similar to those of the proto-Indo-European populations of Trialeti and of other locations in the south of the Soviet Union and the Danubian area (Piggot, 1968, pp. 244-94; Van Berg, 1972, pp. 90-92). A statue-stele of Lagundo in Alto Adige has a wagon on the lower half which seems to show symbolically the transport (on the same wagon) of the monument or of the idol that it represents (Anati, 1968-a, p. 60). Considering the similarities between the monuments of Valtellina, Valcamonica and Alto Adige, one would think that some of these compositions were made by the same artists, or at least by the same school.

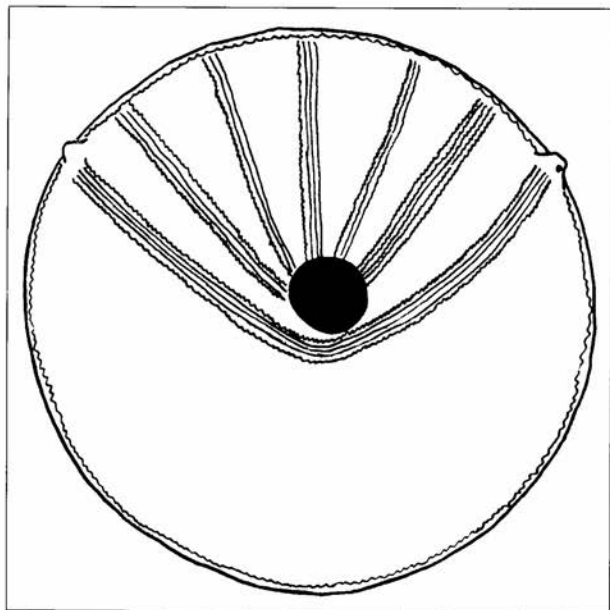


Fig. 11 - Incised decoration of a clay dish from Killin-Möringen. Kr. Stendal, Germany. The concave base is seen as a «solar disk» with engraved bands of rays. The «necklace»-parallel lines are engraved below (Halle-Saale Museum).

Some differences exist between the above mentioned groups and those of Val d'Aosta and of Valais. The latter have fewer drawings of weapons and place more emphasis on geometric designs; there are, however, some common elements. Similar daggers are represented in all the areas, and spectacle spirals are found as one of the essential symbols in Valcamonica, Valtellina and Valais. The necklaces and belts follow the same models, and a checker-board pattern from Masso di Borno 1, finds its parallel in a statue-stele of Petit Chasseur at Sion. The solar disc is identified with the face of the «entity» in all the areas; there is no monument where more than one solar disc occurs for each phase of the composition; axes, daggers and other weapons often appear in groups of 2, 5, 7 and more. In Valcamonica, Valtellina and Alto Adige, the weapons are sometimes arranged in such a way as to symbolize the multiple limbs of the vaguely anthropomorphic entity (Anati, 1968a).

IV. The Conceptual Background

The iconography of the menhir-statues and affiliated rock art assemblages spread across various parts of Europe and, as aforementioned, some 500 such monuments are presently known. These monuments display recurrent patterns and illustrate a certain psychological and conceptual unity between the different human groups that produced and made use of them. The presence of a common figurative denominator in different areas hints at an ideology or a faith that had crossed ethnic and linguistic barriers, then followed somewhat parallel developments. With the beginning of menhir-statues, changes can be noted in the type of symbolism, style, figurative repertoire and concepts of composition, as well as in the technique of carving rock art. In the final stages of Period II of Valcamonica, spaced peckings prevailed. In Period III/A the hammering became deep and sharp. The figures that supposedly had had uncertain and irregular contours were now well-defined and precise. Instead of following the cracks and natural forms of the rock as in Period II, the artist planned the composition on a surface chosen

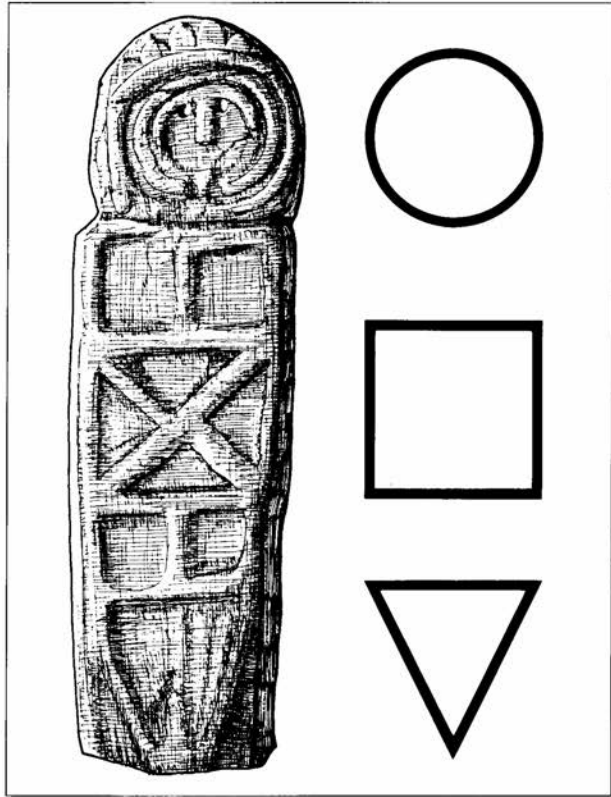


Fig. 12 - Triotosenda (Cuña) Spain. A Statue-stele with tripartite structure. The round head, the rectangular bust and the triangular lower part are separated by metopic spaces.

to suit himself, smoothing out irregularities or unevenness with polishing-stones before making the engraving. He seems to have been a very self-reliant creator who derived inspiration from precise and preconceived visual planning rather than from the shapes of the rock. This may be considered as a major change in the making of rock art: from the task of outlining the messages contained

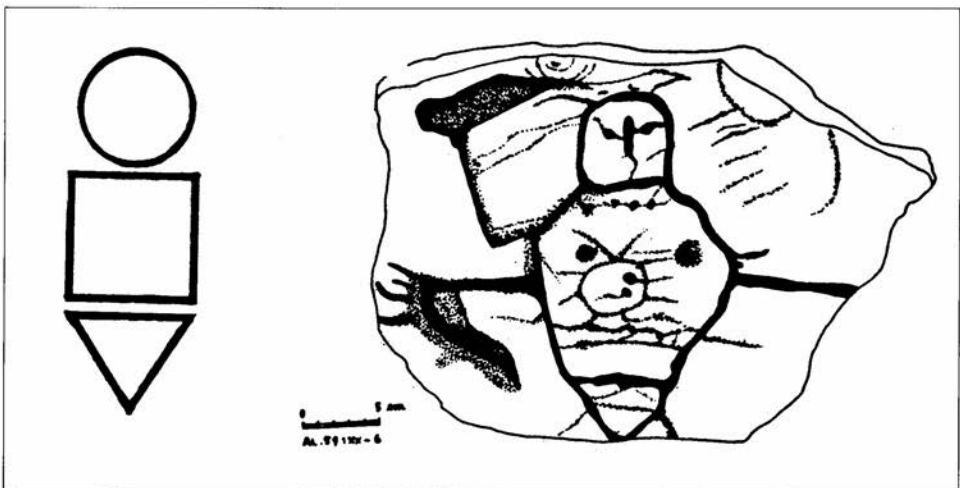


Fig. 13 - Chalcolithic slab from Miandassa (Pinerolo), Italy, with a being, probably holding an halberd. It has a tripartite body with finely engraved patterns.



Fig. 14 - Chalcolithic rock engraving of the tripartite conception, represented in an essential way at Incanale di Rivoli (Trento), Italy.

in the natural shapes of the surface, to the polishing of the natural shapes to produce premeditated ideograms on the rock surface. In fact there appears to be a shift in the type of considerations that determined a selection of the surface: from the shapes of the cracks and irregularities of the surface, to the shape of the surface itself.

In Valcamonica two episodes of cultural change, with only a brief time span from one to the other, are evident in rock art. Modifications in style and subject matter marked by the phase of the Great Idols, Period II/C; then, just a few generations thereafter, monumental compositions and menhir-statues made their appearance. The latter episode reflects the symbiosis between previous traditions and the new ideas and concepts that occurred with the beginning of in Period III/A.

Period III/A in Valcamonica is partly contemporary to the Baden culture of the Danubian zone and to the Remedello culture of northern Italy. In the tombs of these cultures daggers and axes have been found which are similar to those carved on the Valcamonica monumental compositions (Acanfora, 1956). The advanced stages of this period are contemporary to the horizon known as «Bell Beaker», a name derived from its characteristic ceramic, whose wide distribution allows archaeologists to establish a synchronism between various regions of Europe. This horizon in northern Italy marks the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age.

As already mentioned, the skill of metal-working and the first wheeled wagons reached the area simultaneously, along with other new ideas that we consider

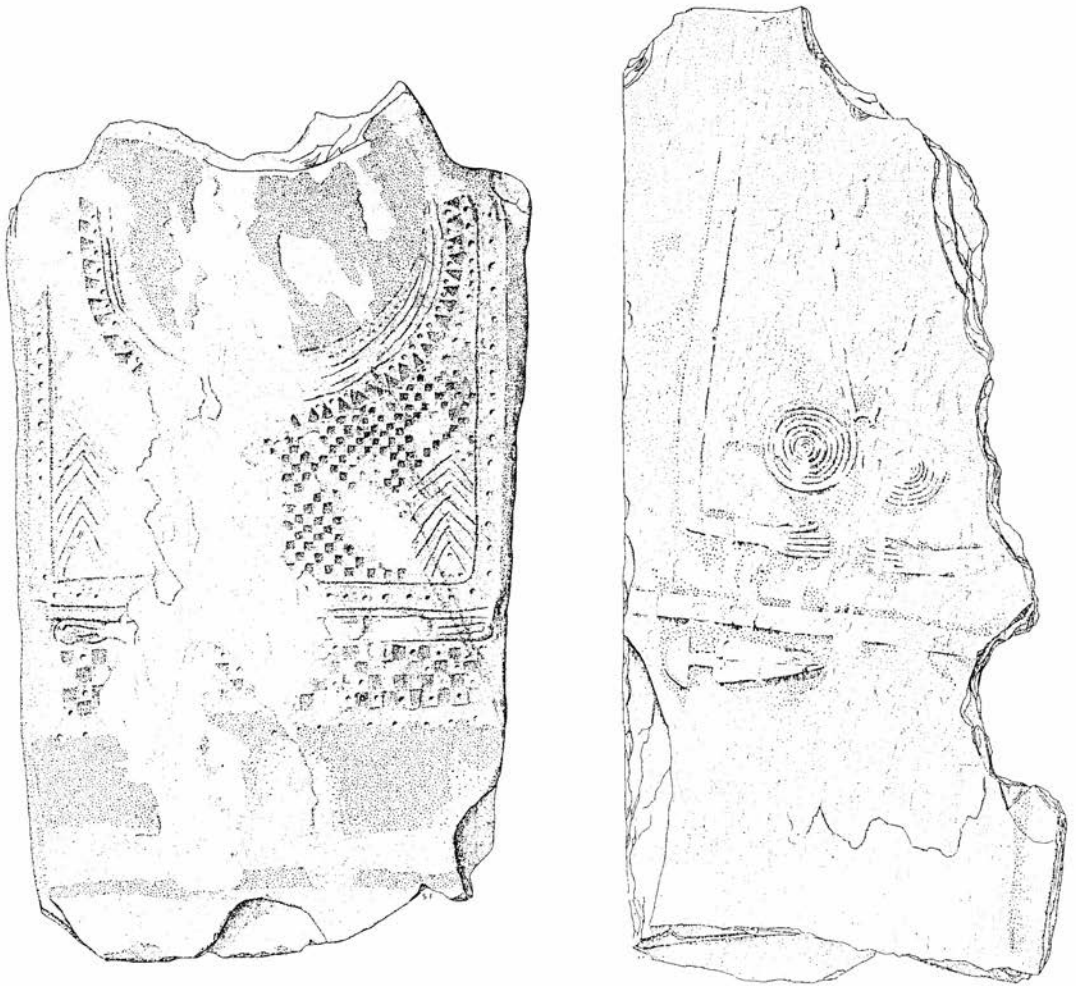


Fig. 15 - Sion, Valais (Switzerland). Two of the stelae from the excavations at Rue du Petit Chasseur (Courtesy A. Gallay).

to be closely associated with a formative, or very archaic, layer of Indo-European culture and religion.

The oldest monumental compositions are relatively simple, grouping together essential elements in a conventionalized way. Later evolves a tendency to cover the entire surface with assemblages of weapons, animals and other subjects, which has led to the subphase at the end of Period III/A being improperly defined as «baroccheggiate» (baroque-like). This evolution of a new concept occupies all the expressive and figurative interest of the ancient Camunians. It represents a very imaginative era, and perhaps also the development of a religion in phases of ascent and of eventual decadence. The following Period III/B shows us how this episode was perpetuated and transformed in the ideological-conceptual expressions of the Bronze Age (Anati, 1982a).

From what is known today it appears that the making of rock art was originally



Fig. 16 - Clay figurine from Klicevac, Yugoslavia. Early Bronze Age? (from Gimbutas, 1963, p. 335).

a religious performance. In some cases this may have changed with time; in the Camonica Valley it is possible to follow a pattern of «laicization» of the rock art, which began there with highly symbolic and abstract religious compositions and after several phases finally reached the descriptive and anecdotal scenes of the later periods. A similar process is also illustrated at Mount Bego and in the southern Scandinavian group, though the figurative results were different in each area. Adaptation to different environments and climates, contacts with different neighbours, different diets and daily activities, and other possible factors, caused cultural differentiation in the various groups of rock art and in the material culture of their makers. Obviously, groups that kept contact with each other maintained more elements in common than groups entirely independent of each other (Anati, 1960).

The introduction of new ideas and concepts, of new stylistic and thematic patterns, emerges at times as local episodes and other times as widespread phenomena. In such a context, the age of menhir-statues appears to illustrate a particularly significant occurrence which interested several areas simultaneously all over Europe. In a broad perspective of time, looking at episodes which took place between four and five thousand two hundred years ago, it is possible to reach some generalizations that would not be possible for more recent history.

At the beginning of the Chalcolithic period a wave of ideologico-religious influence united some tribes from the central Alps with other human groups producing very similar conceptual art in other parts of Europe and beyond. Then, at the end of the Bronze Age, a new wave of external cultural influence came to unite the central Alpine zone to larger areas in the general sphere of influence of the Urnfield culture. It is a long-established fact that later peoples in the area with Indo-European culture and language were offsprings of the Urnfield culture (Hencken, 1955; Gimbutas, 1963).

From the analysis of menhir-statues it now emerges that the earlier wave of cultural influence that spread over the central Alps at the end of the fourth millen-

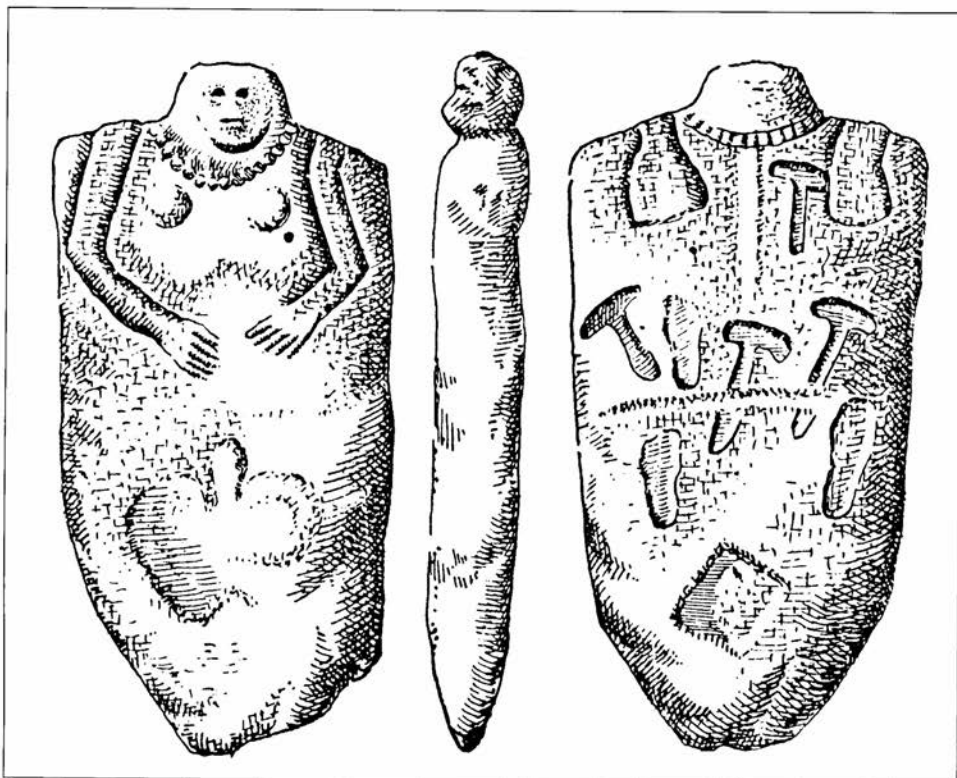


Fig. 17 - A stele from Hamagia, Romania: It seems to represent a bisexual being, feminine on one side and male on the other. The latter has a tripartite body with a collar separating the rounded form on top from the rectangular bust. Here battle axes are represented. In the lower part are represented two feet and a large cup-mark. The feminine side, which is likely to be later than the male side, has more naturalistic features face and necklace, breast and arms (from Gimbutas, 1963).

nium B.C. also had some connection with Indo-European culture and ideological background. The divinity figures with multiple «arms» that appear in some of the monumental compositions of the central Alps appear to include symbols of traditional Indo-European type (Anati, 1966).

Moreover, in the Camonica Valley, in Valtellina and in Tyrol, the earliest evidence for wheeled vehicles is from depictions on Chalcolithic menhir-statues, stelae and monumental compositions, where the wagons are located in such positions within the composition so as to seem to carry the divine figure both symbolically and as part of an actual ritual.

The menhir-statues and the monumental compositions illustrate concepts in which «Nature» is viewed as the supreme entity, with the sun as head and the river as belt, having attributes of fertility and power which are transmitted to men and animals. We shall further elaborate this point in the following pages.

In the Alpine zone these many-armed entities are accompanied by symbols which became characteristic of Indo-European divinities: the wagon pulled by oxen, symbol of authority; the belt, representing the river or water, symbol of plenty and of purification; the spectacle pendant, symbol of fertility (E. Anati, 1972-a); the triangular bladed daggers and the perforated axes, symbols of strength, virility,



Fig. 18 - Feminine stele from St. Sermin (Aveyron), France. Here again a tripartite body. The bust, in addition to the breast, has a frequent bucranium-like attribute.

power; solar discs, symbols of light and heat; and the presence of animal-companions, elements guaranteeing the necessary symbiosis between supernatural powers, man and the animal kingdom (Anati, 1972d). The data collected seem to open up the way to significant developments in the study of the ideological-conceptual aspects of the European civilization in this epoch. They also lead to the consideration that religion and mythology must have had a tremendous importance in the formation of a basic cultural unity between diverse peoples who might have been ethnically different yet who fell within the range of the expanding Proto-Indo-European culture.

One of the most significant and recurring aspects of these monuments is their subdivision into three registers. The upper part appears to represent the «head»; it may have an anthropomorphic face or a solar disc, or a central disc with two smaller lateral discs, or some astral symbols. This is the superior and dominant part of the monument which is equated with the sky, and symbolizes heat, «light», «sun» and perhaps also «intellect» (Anati, 1972c; 1973a).

The central register, between the «neck» or the necklace, and the «belt», represents the bust of the entity. In this register are depicted weapons and tools, symbols of power and strength; spectacle-spiral pendants, symbols of fertility; pectorals and necklaces, symbols of wealth, prosperity and beauty.

The lower register, below the belt, is the least decorated. Sometimes it has the figures of a wagon or of a plough, or snake-like marks; a stag or a pubic triangle appear in it in isolated cases. Sometimes nothing at all is depicted in this part,

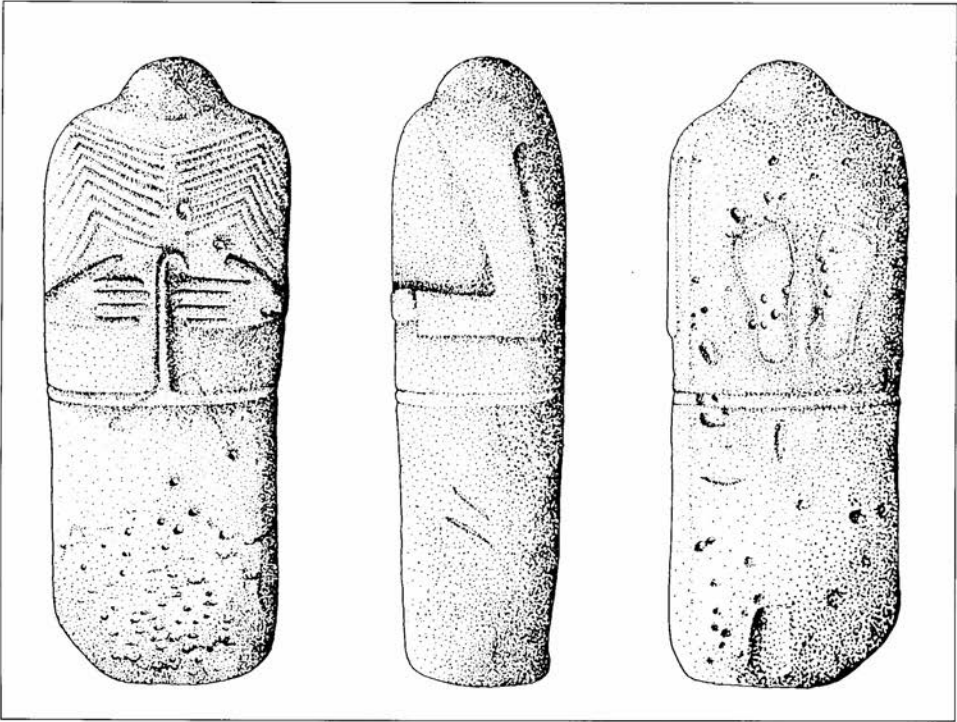


Fig. 19 - Stele from Novocerkassk (Rostov), USSR, showing the overlapping of two phases. The hands on side 1 and the arms visible on the lateral side, appear to have been added upon a more hermetica iconography of an earlier phase.

most of which was located below the surface of the soil. Some of its symbols, like the plough and the stag, may be related to food-procuring activities.

These monuments appear to represent supernatural entities which seem to illustrate a precise cosmological view. The three registers reflect a conceptual system composed of three logoi which form the unity of the universe: the head is the sky, head of the universe; the bust is the earth, shelter of human activities, pleasures and ambitions; the lower register, which is located below the earth surface, is the underworld, the resting site of the dead (Anati, 1972c; 1973b). The trinity of logoi forms one cosmic body with vague anthropomorphic associations (Anati, 1975 pp. 67-83). At the same time, the three logoi also illustrate three sectors of society that need each other to form a single body, respectively reflecting the intellect, military and trading power and the production of food: in other words, the brahmins, the soldiers and the merchants, and the parias, as reflected in the Vedic social structure.

Another recurring aspect is that of the three discs in the upper register: a head with two earrings at the sides, a solar disc with two astral discs at the sides, or simply a larger disc in the middle flanked by two minor ones - in any case, again, three items in one assemblage. Such a concept of trinity is already present in Neolithic idols from Valcamonica, but in the Chalcolithic it acquires new and more determined expressions. (Anati, 1988). The concept of «three in one» or a trinity of logoi in the supreme entity may well be one of the pillars of Indo-European ideology ever since.

From the images and the compositions of the menhir-statues, we infer the introduction of new social patterns. A new emphasis is given to depictions of weapons, tools, pectorals and body decorations which must have constituted status symbols. The planning of these compositions, in the central Alpine area, shows an unprecedented, meticulous concern with the organization of space, and indicates a clear concept of well-determined order. Figures are sometimes depicted in strict rows, with great rigour, with a concern for symmetry, composition and harmony that had never been seen before in the rock art of this region. Such graphic elements must reflect a novel way of thinking, a new type of collective consciousness, and probably a new type of social order as well.

It is rather unlikely that each group of menhir-statues came into existence as the result of local evolution, as some authors have hypothesised. There are too many elements in common. The phenomenon, in our opinion, should be seen as a major cultural wave with a single matrix (Anati, 1981). The common denominators which emerge everywhere are the figurative gamut, the conceptual context and a common religious-ideological background. This is primarily evidenced by the recurrence of similar symbols and of their associations. It is not unlikely that the monuments reflect some sort of «universal» religion which quickly spread all over Europe, toward the end of the fourth and at the beginning of the third millennium B.C., overcoming ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries. In a somewhat similar way Islam spread four thousand years later, conquering vast areas of North Africa and the Near East, bringing different people under the same new faith and unifying their customs and ethics within two or three generations. In the case of Islam, the language of the Quran became the *lingua franca*.

Methodical analyses of graphic elements of the menhir-statues allow us to discern a very early stage of Indo-European religion and provide insight into the roots of Indo-European ideology while still at a formative phase. They also seem to reveal the importance that religion and ideology had for early Indo-European culture: probably religion was one of the major - if not the major - elements that linked together human groups in different areas who may have also come to share linguistic and other cultural patterns.

As already mentioned, the cultural wave that introduced the new concepts did not destroy the basic elements of older traditions. On the contrary, it used them and fitted them into a new scheme of values and a new figurative approach. Looking at Period II of Valcamonica and comparing it to the monumental compositions of Period III/A, it is clear that previous traditions and beliefs were incorporated into the new faith, and that, in fact, no drastic break existed between the two.

We also realize that the wave of «menhir-statues» did not impose itself everywhere in Europe, but only in certain areas where the population, for some reason, was well inclined and particularly receptive to the new ideas. Strangely enough, the West European areas where the pattern of Chalcolithic «menhir-statues» is found - northern Italy, southern France, Spain and Portugal - are often traditional areas of rock art. Almost everywhere in these regions, depictions of «menhir-statues» were accepted, produced and broadly used by the makers of rock art. We have seen this in the central Alps, but this is also true in Liguria (E. Anati, 1981), France's Midi (Arnal, 1979), Asturias (Hernandez Pacheco, Cabré & Conde de la Vega de Sella, 1914), and Galicia (Anati, 1976) in Spain.

It appears that the wave of cultural and religious influence that spread over southern and central Europe at the end of the fourth and during the beginning of the third millennium B.C. succeeded in taking root where cultural and religious affinities existed already. The ties may go back to a period for which we prefer to use the term «Proto-Indo-European» rather than «Indo-European».

The combination of previous traditions with these new ideas produced, in the central Alpine area, a result which shows some graphic originality, when compared to the images found in other areas of menhir-statues. The multiarmed images, the associations of the «entity» with the ritual wagon, the special emphasis on the tripartite subdivision of the cosmic body, give this area a particular character and emphasize more than elsewhere some basic elements of Indo-European ideology.

Whatever the case may be, in the Camunian civilization, as in other central European cultures, the so-called «Indo-europeization» took place as a consequence of a series of subsequent waves that acted mainly upon those already inclined, culturally and ideologically, to accept the new elements which were probably considered changes rather than radical innovations. In other words, it seems that the waves of Indo-European culture that reached central Europe from the east during the late fourth and the third millennium B.C. appealed above all to populations with a cultural formation and a religious background showing affinities and, probably, earlier connections with the eastern Indo-European core.

We have remarked that the menhir-statues episode in Valcamonica was the result of external influence which became integrated into previous local traditions. It is worth noting that in various parts of Europe menhir-statues appear as expressions of new ideas but are produced by local cultures. At Simferpol in Crimea and in the Pontic area they are found in the context of Catacomb graves in the Kurgan II and III horizons, in the early centuries of the third millennium B.C. (Gimbutas 1973, p. 163 ff.). In the French Midi several menhir-statues are connected with megalithic monuments having a local material culture (Arnal, 1979). Some are related to monuments of the Ferrières and Fontbuisse cultures, dated in the first half of the third millennium B.C. (Colmer, Roudil & Gultherz, 1975 p. 115). In Portugal they are connected with local Late Neolithic facies datable to the third millennium B.C. (Pinho Monteiro & Varela Gomez, 1981).

The general image that one gathers is that the menhir-statues reflect a new ideology, but not necessarily the arrival of a new people. New ideas spread very fast, and were assimilated by various local populations in different parts of Europe. Can we then speak of an «Indo-European race» or of Indo-European ethnic groups? Or should we consider the Indo-European diffusion as the result of religious indoctrination or of cultural colonization? Does the presence of a widespread religion and of some sort of lingua franca imply more than that? There are minor disagreements among scholars as to where the menhir-statues episode started first, in eastern Europe, in the Alpine area or in western Europe.

At the moment the diffusion of the menhir-statues and of the ideas they imply appears to have taken place as a very rapid process just before and around 3000 B.C. In a few generations, from an absence of the phenomenon, we pass to a widespread presence of menhir-statues in many cultural «islands» all over Europe. It does not seem possible at present to determine with certainty where the wave

began. The earliest evidence for multi-armed (or limbed) entities is from the Central Alpine areas: Valcamonica, Valtellina and the Adige Valley.

There are, however, antecedents which seem to evidence a gestation period of the ideas and concepts which subsequently took shape in the menhir-statues.

V. The Antecedents

As we have seen, the so-called «menhir-statues wave» which spread over Europe shortly before and around the year 3000 B.C. appears to be the expression of a new religion, of new conceptual and cosmological ideas that viewed the world as the body of a primeval entity composed by three main parts: the sky, head of the universe, source of heat, light and wisdom, dominated by the sun; the earth, body of the universe, source of human life, activities, power and strength, pleasures and ambitions; the underworld, which in the discussed monuments is partly covered below the ground, is often separated from «life» by the belt/river. Below the ground is the haven of death, but is also where seeds germinate and where new life is born.

From what we know at present, we may postulate that this beautiful and complex philosophy must have taken shape in the late fourth millennium B.C. and was soon accepted as faith and truth by different populations in various corners of Europe.

West of the Alps, in Switzerland, France and the Iberian peninsula, several hundred menhir-statues have been found, many of them connected with tombs and other sites which could be dated by their material culture. The proposed dates of a few monuments of this kind connected with Atlantic megalithic tombs in Brittany and Ireland should be further verified; if their dating in the middle of the fourth millennium B.C. is correct, they would be the earliest menhir-statues known in western Europe (Giot, 1960; Helgouach et al. 1970). Besides them, of the numerous menhir-statues known from Spain, Portugal and southern France, not a single one can be dated before 3000 B.C. Such repeated chronological evidence seems to indicate that this kind of monument was not invented or conceived in western Europe.

The fact that the idea of producing menhir-statues reached the Alpine area around 3200 B.C., together with a package of innovations, among which the wheeled vehicle and metallurgy, may suggest that the wave came from an area where these technological acquisitions already existed. In general terms this seems to indicate a place of origin in the Balkans or elsewhere in eastern Europe. As discussed already (Anati, 1982), it appears that the Baden culture of the central Danube Valley may have had a significant role in the transmission of these cultural elements westward.

From the available data, the new ideology seems to have developed first as a local pattern in the Central Alpine area and to have incorporated previous ideas and concepts. The recurring pattern of the tripartite subdivision of the cosmic body, three logoi in one entity, is already present, in embryo, in Alpine Neolithic rock art, where idol-like figures frequently have two minor discs or images at the sides of the main «face». The belts and collars with parallel lines seem to have symbolized «water» or «the river» already in the Late Neolithic «oculi face» depictions of Valcamonica. The equation of weapons with the arms or limbs of the primeval entity also occurs previously in Late Neolithic rock art at Luine, in this valley.

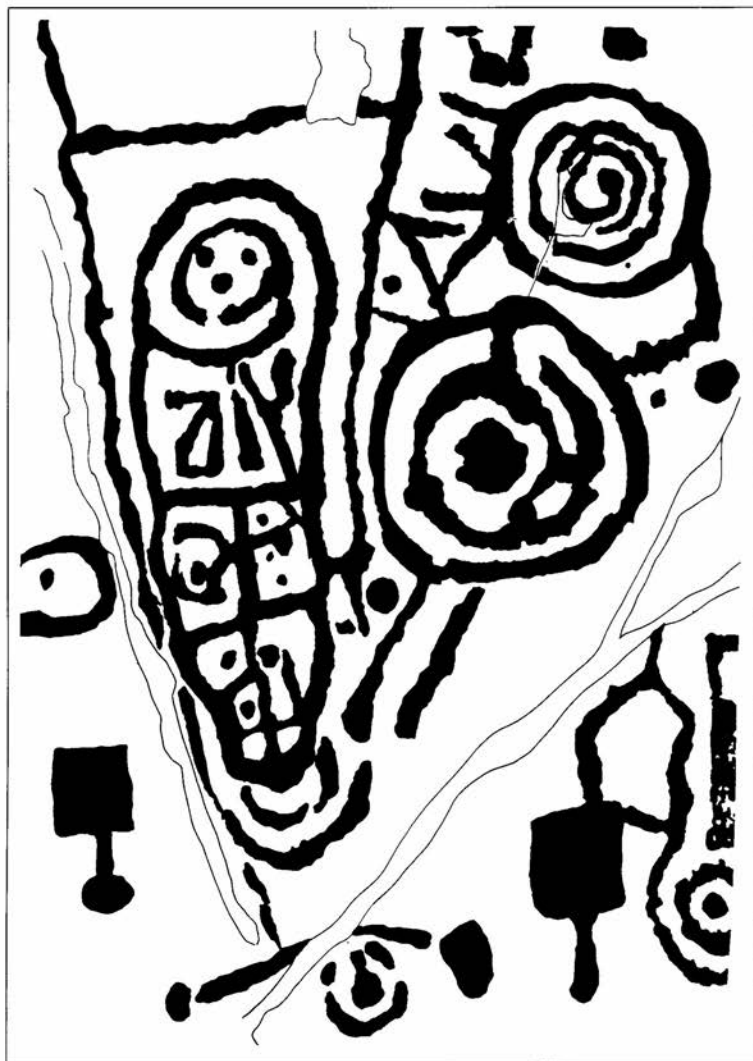


Fig. 20 - The «Sonic Idol» (Valcamonica), Italy, The so-called «idol» is surrounded by symbols. the body has four main registers. the uppermost is circular, the two central ones are rectangular and the lower one is sub-triangular. In each register there are several symbols. Late Neolithic, ca. 3400 B.C.

The principal new factors are the structuralization and formal arrangement of these ideas into the three-logos-body, the stylistic character of the depictions, the very specific concern for the composition, the exact location of the symbols and signs in the assemblages, and the presence of multi-armed entities.

New kinds of weapons and tools are introduced at the beginning of Period III/A, such as the earliest copper tools, some of which may have been brought to the area along with the ideas reflected by the menhir-statues. Depictions of pectorals and of spectacle-spirals appear for the first time. The image of wagons, as an accessory bestowing honour and prestige to the entity, is also a new factor, as the wagon appears to have been introduced by the same wave and had not existed in the area before.

The principal concentration of Late Neolithic rock art in Valcamonica (Periods II/B and C) is found at Luine, near Boario Terme (Anati, 1982b). Anthropomorphic «oculi-faces», axe-like schemes, concentric circles, zig-zags and wavy

lines, meanders and mazes show repeated figurative, stylistic and conceptual analogies to the megalithic art which decorates tombs in Ireland, Britain and the Atlantic regions of the Iberian peninsula, but also elsewhere in Europe from the Caucasus to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean (Powell, 1960; Hausler, 1974; Anati, 1982b). There are interesting analogies to the archaic phases of Mount Bego as well (Bicknell, 1913; Anati, 1959b). Already before the «menhir-statues wave», in Neolithic cultural horizons, all these groups of rock art and megalithic art indicate the presence of rather well-defined conceptual similarities between peoples living in different parts of Europe.

The economic activities described in the Alpine rock art of Period II are hunting, agriculture, fishing and raising livestock; the presence of trade may be indicated by the depictions of weapons and objects of exotic origin, in particular, several kinds of perforated stone axes of Danubian types. Domestic fauna include dogs, cattle, goats and perhaps deer. Attempts at the domestication of deer are apparent in Valcamonica much earlier in time, already in the Proto-camunian Period. The main developments of the economy between Period II and Period III/A are the introduction of metallurgy and of extensive trade, the use of wheeled vehicles, and increased proportional importance given to animal-raising.

The idoliforms grow quantitatively and develop in elaboration and size during Period II/C, reaching their largest dimensions in the transitional phase between Periods II and III (around 3400-3200 B.C.). One can find an entire range of idoliform figures with parallel examples in other parts of Europe. The oculi-faces, slate idols and images of other supernatural beings of the epoch, ranging from the Iberian peninsula to the Caucasus and to the Mediterranean area, show us that some of the ideological concepts were widely diffused throughout Europe and beyond, during the fourth millennium B.C. Definite concepts were accepted and disseminated over a large area (Crawford, 1957). The dynamics of diffusion of this iconography and ideology is not yet clear. The dates provided by Crawford and others over thirty years ago must be completely revised. However, the phenomenon of ideological similarities over large areas at given cultural stages seems to repeat itself in Europe in different periods.

Some of the Camunian «idols» from the end of Period II are over two metres long, and are often associated to recurrent conventional symbols that seem to represent attributes or qualities of the central image. These large idol figures may be the result of a local evolution of the preceding oculi-face and the smaller idoliforms of Periods II/B-C, but the possibility of external influences should not be excluded. Some of them are carved with series of parallel necklaces, analogous to other figures in various parts of Europe. The curious way of depicting the faces of these figures, with emphasis on the eyes and arch of the eyes brows, is not limited to the Alpine area. The idea of covering the images with symbols has a wide geographical diffusion as well. The most famous of the large Camunian idoliforms are the Idol of Sellero, the Idol of Sonico and the Idol of Luine (Anati, 1982).

According to actual chronology, the idoliforms developed in Valcamonica during the fourth millennium B.C. They imply the concept of supernatural beings having anthropomorphic shape. This was the formative moment for ideas which seem to reflect a great intellectual and conceptual turmoil in the Alpine zone and all of northern Italy. The horizon of the great Camunian idols immediately



Fig. 21 - Neolithic anthropomorphic vases from Drachmani, Greece and Keneslő, Hungary (from Crawford, 1957, p. 37).

precedes or corresponds to the initial phase of the oldest group of «menhir-statues». It is not clear at the moment what part of this ideology was developed locally. It is also premature to say what Valcamonica's role was in this vast movement of ideas that found common expression in the iconography of zones quite distant from each other.

The great idols had antecedents in Valcamonica, and in their own turn seem to have been the antecedents of the monumental compositions and the menhir-statues which characterize Period III/A. From the various signs, for now enigmatic, that surround the great idols, one can imagine the presence of a standard system of symbols, limited to a certain number of basic elements. There are some types of figures which persist into the menhir-statues stage but, as mentioned already, the main symbols of Period III-A are then still absent.

In the final stages of Period II (around 3200 B.C.), in other types of Camunian rock art, appear scenes describing specific actions and moments. The most common are ploughing scenes with a recurring formula of a man driving a plough pulled by two yoked oxen. Sometimes a second man is found ahead or to the side, in the conventional position of prayer. In some cases this praying figure is headless. An important series of these scenes is located at Foppe di Nadro and at Dos Cui, near Nadro, where there are pairs of «bucrania», schematic figures of long-horned cattle (a type of figure which also appears at Mount Bego, in the French Maritime Alps), as ideograms related to the ploughing scenes.

Another class of figures which appear for the first time at the end of Period II are the «topographical complexes». They are compositions of lines, rectangles and hammered areas which have been interpreted as maps of fields, villages and valleys, either real or imaginary.



Fig. 22/a-b - Proto-menhir statues from Lepenski Vir (Yugoslavia). Early Neolithic, 6th millennium B.C.

These topographical maps, which are the most ancient depictions of their kind known in Europe, reveal the appearance of a new capacity of abstraction and figurative synthesis unknown previously: the schematic representation of the countryside. They also reflect a new kind of attention given to land ownership. They are mainly concentrated in the Capo di Ponte area and appear to have developed further during the entire course of Period III; they appeared before the menhir-statues, but continued to be depicted along with them, and thereafter.

At the end of Period II, the iconographic repertoire of rock art has become enriched with figures that reflect a notable variety of interests and concepts. The schematic praying figure is still present; the idoliform figures and oculi-faces are also characteristic of the moment, as are the mazes, snake-like and zig-zag motifs, the compositions of geometric and symbolic-‘decorative’ elements, together with depictions of axes and other implements, the ploughing scenes, and the topographical compositions.

Some engravings of late Period II show a distinct technical peculiarity. Natural chinks and irregularities of the surface are used and converted into part of the figure. In some cases it seems that the artist is inspired by the natural forms. The carvings appear to complete the natural «figures» suggested or rather provided by the rock. Sometimes it looks as if the artist had almost wished to conceal his work, in order to make the figure appear like a creation of nature.

In these examples he must have used tools made of stone only slightly harder than the engraved surface, because the carved surfaces, examined microscopi-

cally, show that the shape of the hammering point changed, flaking or being blunted with every blow. One monument made by this technique differs from all the others, in that it is not part of a fixed rock, but is on a boulder of movable dimensions. The figures represented include an oculi-face characteristic of late Period II, but the choice of a boulder whose natural form suggests a human bust allows us to consider the monument, known as «Masso di Dassine» (boulder of Dassine, near Borno; recorded as Borno 2 in the inventory of rock art sites), as a «menhir-statue», the oldest of this type of monument known so far in Valcamonica (Anati, 1974).

As mentioned previously, the introduction of wheeled vehicles and of metallurgy, both of which arrived to the central Alpine area together with the menhir-statues, would indicate that the vast cultural influx originated in the Balkans. It is therefore somewhat disappointing to note that very few menhir-statues are known from the Balkan area; furthermore, all those which can be dated appear to fall within the same chronological horizons as those of the Alpine area and of western Europe and some of them are still later.

A group of menhir-statues from Hamangia, Rumania, apparently belongs to the period of the Red Ochre Graves, a phase of the Kurgan culture, and has been dated to the third millennium B.C. (Dumitrescu, 1972 p. 86). Several other isolated Balkan menhir-statues are known but were found out of context, and thus no reliable dating is available (Todorova-Simeinova, 1973; Tontcheva, 1967).

Further east, similar monuments are found in the Ukraine, the Pontic area, Crimea, the Caucasus and in central Asia, all the way to Siberia; yet all the datable monuments of this kind only go back to the third and the second millennia B.C. Nothing so far is dated earlier, while several examples may even be more recent (Formozov, 1969).

What is particularly surprising is that when compared with the wealth of such monuments in the Alpine area, western Europe, the southern Ukraine and Crimea, the Balkan area is very poor so far in this kind of finding.

Today it seems that there are no direct and immediate antecedents of these stone monuments on record. As mentioned already, however, there are numerous indirect antecedents to be found in the oculi-faces, the stone idoliform figures and the clay representations of anthropomorphic entities from the Neolithic period, both in the Alpine zone and elsewhere in Europe.

In the course of the fourth and fifth millennia, there is a real proliferation of such figures. These images in clay often have collars with parallel lines and two discs or earrings at the sides of the face, which indeed show strong figurative resemblances to the menhir-statues. In the Balkan area they develop in the cultural horizons of Vinica-Tisza-Boian around 5000 B.C. (Gimbutas, 1974 pp. 29-33).

Later on there are also pots with high-reliefed or incised decoration of daggers (Kovacs, 1973, pp. 7-31). Considering the importance of the dagger, as an attribute of certain groups of menhir-statues, this element appears particularly significant. All this indicates that the ideological and conceptual background of the menhir-statues is present in the Balkans.

The main problem in this search for antecedents may well be caused by the fact that the principal raw material used in the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Bronze Ages in the Balkans was wood, and very few artifacts have been preserved in this material. Objects in stone and clay often imitate shapes which must have been inspired by models in wood. It is therefore not unlikely that monuments of the menhir-statues kind were made in wood and thus were not preserved. Obviously this can only be, at the moment, a working hypothesis. It is noteworthy that a small stone statuette of menhir-statue shape was unearthed in Hungary, in the excavations of Szegvar-Tuzkoves; it belongs to the Tisza culture and can be dated to the late fourth millennium B.C. (Kalicz, 1970 fig. 43). Another figurine, this time in clay, belongs to the Bukk culture and can be dated to the second half of the fourth millennium. The front is decorated with a zig-zag pattern which may well be related to water symbology; the back is divided into the three registers of the menhir-statues type, and series of parallel lines separate head, bust and lower section (Kalicz, 1970 pls. 16-17).

Again, in the second half of the fourth millennium B.C. the anthropomorphic vases of the Baden culture, in the central Danube Valley, appear as authentic prototypes of the menhir-statues (Kalick & Makkay, 1973). All these examples, however, are contemporary (or almost) to the «menhir-statues wave», and thus fail to solve the problem of origins.

Almost nothing comparable to the menhir-statues, in shapes, concepts or size, is found in the fifth or the sixth millennium B.C. It is therefore quite surprising to find stone statues with several similarities to those concerning this study, in the Danubian culture of Lepenski Vir, in the sixth millennium B.C. (dates C14 not calibrated: 5400 to 4900 B.C.; cf. Srejovich, 1969, p. 39). At the site of Lepenski Vir and in a few other localities along the shores of the Danube, on the border between Yugoslavia and Romania, stone statues have been unearthed which are the earliest large-size statuary creations of Europe to date. They are anthropomorphic images, sometimes displaying fish-like characteristics. They have zig-zag and wavy-line engraved decorations which refer to water symbology; some have the tripartite body, the face being separated from the bust by a relieved necklace; the lower part of the body is separated from the bust by a groove and has a pubic triangle or a schematic vagina.

Some of these proto-menhir-statues have been found inside huts, near the family fireplace as well as on top of graves. In a few cases they have fantastical faces, with exaggerated eyes and a fish-like mouth. The discoverer of this culture, Dragoslav Srejovich, refers to them as the man-fish spirits. Apparently they represent the image of a protective, ancestral spirit or mythic beings connected with water, the river and fishing; and fishing constituted the major economic resource of this Danubian Proto-Neolithic and early Neolithic culture (Srejovich, 1969; 1975; Letica, 1975).

These monuments reveal a rather complex ideology. They are located near the fireplace, and join the family in their meals and their gatherings. The main food was fish, and man-fish-image attends as a silent member of the clan. In some cases, inside the hut, below or near the fireplace, a grave has been found with the statue propped on top of it. Somehow the Ancestor and «Father-River» may have been identified as one and the same.

The time span between the Lepenski Vir stone spirits and the Alpine menhir-statues make the existing analogies quite surprising. The iconographic resemblances are accompanied by conceptual ones. In both groups water symbology occupies an important role. In the Alpine monuments water is viewed as a source of life and of purification, as way of transition between this world and the after-life. Similar concepts are still present today, both in Hinduism and in Christianity. It may be mentioned that one can see a river, or waterfall, or water source, from almost every one of the locations where menhir-statues have been found in Valcamonica, Valtellina and Alto Adige-Tyrol. Out of some 60 monuments, only three or four do not seem to conform to this rule. In the Lepenski Vir statues, water symbology is self-evident. All of the statues are in villages which face the Danube, and the flowing waters of the river were obviously visible from the huts where the statues were located.

The concept of a food-procuring entity emerges both at Lepenski Vir and in the Alpine menhir-statues; the same can be said for most other groups of menhir-statues from various parts of Europe.

We may remember some of the fertility and bonanza symbol-attributes of the Alpine groups: the solar head; the fertility spectacle-spiral pendants; the river belt; the plough, fertilizer of earth; the animal figures, symbols of plenty and source of food.

However, both in the iconography and in the contents, there are also obvious differences between the Lepenski Vir monuments and the Alpine menhir-statues. The question, to what extent we may seek at Lepenski Vir the origins and the early antecedents of the monuments under study, must, for the time being, remain open. All we can say is that some of the figurative trends and conceptual contents of the menhir-statues seem to have already been present in the Lepenski Vir culture in the Danube Valley, some two thousand years before the «menhir-statues wave» spread across Europe.

VI. Conclusions

Despite the possible antecedents mentioned in the previous pages, the «menhir-statues wave» of the Chalcolithic period remains a rather mysterious episode. It provides concrete evidence of a rapid diffusion of a new cosmological view and, probably, a new religion, which became present in the same general period between 3200 and 3000 B.C. in different parts of Europe.

We have seen that the basic motifs and concepts go through a gestation period, in the Alpine area and in eastern and central Europe, during the fifth and the fourth millennium B.C. The earliest findings of an embryonic aspect of the same or of a similar ideology come from the Lepenski Vir culture, in the middle Danube Valley, in the sixth millennium B.C.; however, a direct derivation from these episodes cannot be established as yet.

A well-defined package of concepts, iconographic and psychological elements, social organization, way of life and technological acquisitions, was well conceived, and formed an organized movement which, after its initial wave, developed rather autonomous patterns in each area where it arrived. The local characteristic, in

several cases, persisted and further evolved during the Bronze Age, in the second millennium B.C., and beyond (Anati, 1981).

The character which emerges from various groups all over Europe, with a precise and common iconography and ideology, indicates that the menhir-statues and their conceptual background must have been invented at one primary core from whence it must have had some sort of swift, almost explosive expansion. The place of origin has not yet been determined, but the fact that the phenomenon reached the Alpine area as a package, along with metal-working and the wheeled vehicle, probably indicates the area of origin where these two technological elements had previously been in existence. This consideration would point to a source in the east, possibly in, or coming through the Danube Valley.

The formalization and structurization of several basic conceptual elements, such as the tripartite subdivision of the cosmic body, after sporadic previous examples, found truly recurrent patterns in the central Alpine zone just before 3000 B.C.

The importance of the «menhir-statues» wave relies on the fact that it constitutes the earliest certain evidence to date of Indo-European concepts and ideology in the Alpine area, and indeed, in all of western Europe. Tracing back their origin could lead to the location of the birthplace of this ideology, and would identify a very early and fundamental core of Indo-European culture.

As we have seen, we may consider that a formative period, somewhere in or near the Balkans was the main core for the birth of concepts recognizable as Indo-europeans, the earliest evidences of which come from the central Alps. The continuation of this research is rich with expectations. In the meantime it seems possible to consider that such an early nucleus is more likely to have originated in Europe, rather than in Asia, as some scholars have proposed in past years. And perhaps more precise geographic connotations can be postulated already.

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