

NOTIZIE D'ARCHIVIO — NOTES AND NEWS
 NOUVELLES D'ARCHIVE — NOTICIAS DEL ARQUIVO

THE WARLI CHAWK: A WORLD-VIEW

Yashodhara DALMIA

While working amongst the Warli tribes of Thane district in Maharashtra, I found that a sense of design was innate to their lives. The smallest object of use - the bark pouches made for storing tobacco, or the bamboo basket «*malay*» made for catching fish, or the large, rounded cane bin «*kangi*» for storing the rice of the year - each was carefully constructed and brought about an inner rhythm. This was especially noticeable in the «*painstakingly*» woven mats which were spread on the floor for sleeping. Made out of dried grass, each blade meshed into the other to form an intricate surface of hatchings. Initially, broad bands of these were made and then joined together with green grass which is more pliable than dry grass. The ingenuity with which two bands were joined at the exact spot, where they seemed to continue into each other was a master stroke of design. Later we had to learn that the intersection of two lines was the motif par excellence for the Warlis, for beneath its graceful turn lay a virtual world view. The importance of design in the lives of the Warlis can be judged from a painting, made by Jivya Soma Mase, depicting a man fishing in the river. The infinitely expandable fishing net with its whirling, looping lines seems to encapsulate the whole universe, as the minute man holds it at the apex.

While discussing the Warli sense of design in this essay, I have kept two things in mind. I have made an attempt to extend the term «*design*» to a whole way of life for that is the only way in which it can be used in the Warli area. I have also tried to study intensively a traditional mode of design in the belief that by understanding its function within a homogeneous group we will hopefully be able to draw a parallel with the use of design in our own environment.

The few objects of utility hang upon the walls of the hut, in the dark, merging with the walls. The space side is cool, dark and silent, taking one centuries back to the earliest cave shelters. And yet the simplicity of the hut is deliberate and attained with meticulous care. A rectangular frame-work of saag wood is prepared with slanting roofs. Once the frame is ready, the walls are built with bamboo sticks and plastered with mud. The huts are roofed with straw or dried

leaves. The inner frame of the roof is supported by wooden beams and a central pole. The beams are placed with remarkable ingenuity in horizontal strips across the ceiling, very similar to the inner ceiling of the Karle caves, close to Pune and formerly part of Thane district. The basic construction of the hut is firmly and clearly made to provide a cool, dark retreat from the heat outside. There are no windows and a narrow door opens to the external world. It is at once the basic human habitation essential to survive in a tropical, thickly forested area, and an extension of wilderness. The design of the hut with its gently differentiated textures are a reminder of this.

It is with a shock that one comes upon the glittering, white marriage painting made with rice paste, in the darkest part of the hut. The most striking part is an elaborately ornamented square consisting of triangles, circles, diagonals, chevrons and other patterns. It could be an intricately woven tapestry. Inside the square stands a figure made of two triangles with outstretched arms and legs. She is, we are told, the goddess Palghat (pot with leaves) without whom no marriage can take place. The sun, the moon, the comb, the «*bashing*» (wedding headdress) form part of her wedding ensemble. On the side is a smaller square consisting of the five-headed god, «*Panchehiriya*» the male consort of the goddess. Large trees with highly stylized leaves loom over the square. A few minuscule men can be seen finishing the chores of the wedding, the ancestors grace the ceremony on horse back and toddy-carriers can be seen on the top right, carrying the toddy for the wedding. The entire painting, as it were, pulsates in a rhythmic unity. Dots and dashes are the basic stuff which compose men, animals and trees, and one can easily become transmuted into the other.

A slow, even rhythm which binds man to man, is brought out in an early painting by Jivya Soma Mase. As men bend and sway to harvest the paddy, a swinging swirling movement is woven over the bed of electric dashes. Among the Warlis we found, as each man went about performing his day chores, be it cutting wood for the fire, ploughing the field or fetching water from a distant well, there was a silent rhythm to his work. When there was no work the men sat silently smoking bidis, each man alone in the plenitude of nature. Then they set about their work again, till night fell, ceaselessly toiling, ceaselessly mov-

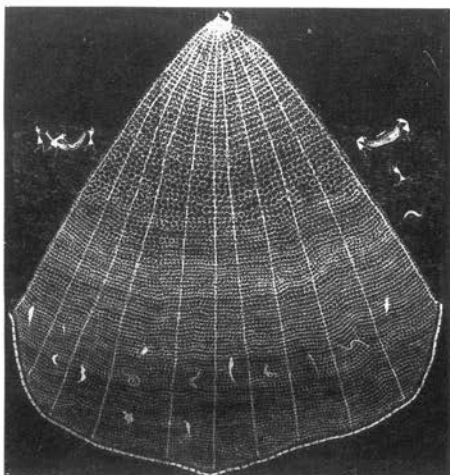


Fig. 124 - Man fishing in the river. Painting by Jiva Soma Mase a Warli.

ing for to survive was to work was to live. The long periods of work in a hot, humid weather are followed by three or four days of riotous celebrations when the Warlis drink and dance with abandon. No sooner do the rains come that the sonorous notes of the tarpa, a phallic shaped wind instrument made from dried gourd and played around this time, can be heard emerging from lone huts. A Warli boy can sometimes be seen playing the instruments behind bushes, as if urging the vegetation to grow. The lush greenery, the rippling waterfalls, the sounds of the tarpa find their climax in the festival of Divali. Boy and girls dance continuously, holding each other to form a circle, while the tarpa player moves in the centre. This is the occasion for boys and girls to come together, provoking the fertile forces of nature. Their bodies form sharp diagonals as they move in a circle, swiftly cutting the air.

As the season changes and the fields reach a ripeness, the Warlis pay obeisance to the god appropriate to each period. The ritual year of the Warlis culminates with the festival of Kansari, the corn goddess, whose anger can make the field completely barren. For three nights and days the epic song of kansari is sung to the notes of the ghangli (a small string instrument). Only then does the season for marriages begin and the presence of the fertility goddess, Palghat, is invoked. The song of kansari conjures up vivid images of the act of pregnancy in both woman and the field and the feeling of wonder at their creativity. For instance:

«It was bending this way, bending that way
with the forest breeze it was growing
Like a flame of light it was growing
We should not go to the field
Kansaribe is blossoming
O Kunbis! We cannot go to the field
If we go, she will drop
In the afternoon we cannot go
Eight or nine o'clock we cannot go
Five o'clock, six o'clock
At twelve noon we cannot leave for the
field
The trees grow with every puff of the
breeze
The Hay has come, flowers and corn have
come».

The Warlis have lived along with other tribal groups in Thane, since immemorial time. According to the 1971 census there are about two lakh fifty-five thousand Warlis in this area, mostly in Dahanu and Talasari district. Little is known of their origin except that they had fled from the north southwards. The fact that the Warli language apart from original words, contains a mixture of Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi words, points to a pattern of migration from the extreme north of India towards the South. Were they part of the early inhabitants who were driven away by invading groups of Aryans? Their belief in the cult of the mother goddess and images of violent humiliation of her by the gods, primarily Indra, point towards this, but have yet to be proved conclusively.

The Warlis shun contact with outsiders and keep to themselves as much as possible. This may also be attributed to the invasion of their territory by successive dynasties that ruled Thane. For all its rugged and isolated appearance, Thane has been under Mindu, Muslim, Maratha, Portugese and British rule. In each case, they were left a little more impoverished, their rights over the forest further depleted. The Warlis have retained their own social organization in which there is no caste differentiation. The head of community is the sarpanch, but the virtual ruler is the «bhagat» the priest-cum-medicine-man, for nothing can be done without consulting him. There is, however, a measure of equality introduced by the fact that the bhagat like other Warlis has to plough and work on his field and shares a common material basis with the others. The Warlis own small plots of fallow land (the larger acreage still belonging to the landlords) on which they practise primitive agriculture. They seem to have just left behind the slash-and-burn method and taken to



Fig. 125 - Circles drawn during the marriage rituals.

the plough, which hangs proudly on the outer wall of the hut. Lack of sufficient water allows them only one crop of paddy in the year. They compensate their meagre diet of rice and dal with an occasional chicken, killed freshly from their own stock. There is, however, no organised poultry farming. Indeed, not even their cows are milked, for the «milk must be kept for the calver». This fact typifies the Warli relationship with nature, which is not of harnessing it for their own needs, but of entering into a meaningful exchange with it.

There are a breathtaking variety of chawks in different parts of Warli area. In the northern areas like Talaseri, Karanjvira, Gagangon, and Haladpada we come across relatively simple squares and the figure contained within it is both archaic and awe-inspiring. Further south the chawk becomes intricate and resplendent, the goddess more human and sensuous, and the landscape more stylized. On the eastern side we find that the chawk becomes larger than life but also more static.

All over the Warli area chawks are made by women artist or «sahvasinis», a term used to denote that their husbands are alive. Each village has two or three artists, usually, the ones who have reached a ripe age. The sahasinis are called upon to make the chawk during the wedding and the Warlis claim that without it the marriage cannot take place. At both the brides

and the bride grooms' place, it is made by the sahesinis, songs are sung before it by the wedding priestesses «dhavleri» and they are animated in the night by the «bhagate» in a state of possession. That the chawk is sacred is evident from the fact that most of the wedding rituals are performed before it. And the artists apart from making the chawk, play an active role throughout the wedding initiating all the rituals.

The importance of the chawk can be justified from the fact that the entire painting is called «chawk» or «chaukat» after it. An interesting connection can also be made with the fact that the inner courtyard of the havelis of Shekawati in western India are also called «chawks». In the havelis of Shekawati, life is centred around the chawk, where children play, women perform their household chores and the entire family sleeps in the night. For the Warlis the chawk is the fourcornered universe which houses the goddess, but it could also be the home where the most important acts are performed.

The Warlis claim that the chawk is the jewelry of the goddess; and indeed it seems to be the only ornament of their lives so deeply is it wrung from their hearts. The basic frame consist of four rows of lines drawn into a square and looped at the edges. On each outermost line is placed a row of upturned goblets known as «pophala». These are placed shoulder to shoul-



Fig. 126 - Men cutting wood. Painting by Jivya Soma Mase.

der to form hollow centres which are sometimes dotted. The Warlis maintained that these circles have to be drawn at the time of marriage and death. We had also seen round circles filled with dots drawn on the wall at the time of birth. This was said to be the circle of the goddess Sathi, the deity of birth. The circle seem to be symbolic of the mother-goddess as the womb, the womb which both generates life and takes it within its fold. In turn the womb is represented as the «ghata» or the pot, always round bottomed and auspicious in the Warlis area as a symbolic container of vegetal life. In the northern paintings, where the archaic form of the goddess, containing the bride and bridegroom within her womb, is emphasized, the chawk can be seen in its elemental form with only the rounded globets pattern.

The inner boundary of the frame is lined with sharply pointed chevrons. This is known as a «sakhli» a metal chain worn by the bride and bridegroom during the wedding. The pattern of the chawk barely resembles the actual sakhli, which consists of a series of round loops interlocked into each other. At Karanjvira, to the south of Talasari, where the pattern first appears, it fills every available space in abundance, including the body of the mother-goddess. There is a sharpness about these early paintings, emphasized by the forked mouths of the animals carrying the bride and bridegroom placed within the body of the mother-goddess. Another note feature is the extended stomach of the animals. Both these characteristics indicate the

discovery of food and closely linked to it - sexuality. The pointed arrow-tips then maybe the first symbols of sexuality, euphemistically called «sakli» by the Warlis.

A row of intersecting triangles follow in a typical chawk. This is the «dhak» pattern and the shape is similar to the dhak, a small leathered drum played for invocation at the time of marriage. An elongated version of this is also played during the death anniversary. The importance of the dhak lies as much in its shape as in the rhythmic notes it produces. As the «dhak» first appears at Gagangaon however, it is in the shape of rough, uneven triangles. Surrounding the square is a plethora of vegetation creating a lush atmosphere of fertility. Within this a transmutation of forms can take place from bird to animal to human. The intersecting triangles here could represent the act of copulation - not just between two humans, but the universe at large. And the drama that the first notions of sexuality may arouse can be evident in the shape of triangles - unwieldy, uncontrollable, magnificent!

The next few designs in a typical chawk are all variations of the triangles. Placed horizontally they are «bashing» the wedding headdress. The succeeding pattern is known as «pasodi» or the auspicious red cloth dotted with yellow, worn during the wedding by the bride and bridegroom. The «pasodi» design is greatly emphasized at Haladpada, to the south-east of Gagangaon. The design in fact appears with an unparalleled intensity here, moving with a frenetic zeal around the square. In addition there is a greater appearance of the human elements - a train complete with an engine-driver, driving it back-wards, a horse-rider competing with its speed, many more humans and side-chawks with hands. The greater participation of human beings in their own affairs is in evidence here, and what better symbol of this than «pasodi», a cloth which is woven by man body when he becomes conscious of himself? While the crosses resemble the closely woven texture of cloth, we were also told at haladpada that what is important is that the two lines cross each other. If the intersecting triangles have now been abbreviated to the crossing of lines, it could also be to emphasize the essential factor of human existence - sexuality.

There is a brimming over of human activity in the next few chawks in the villages south of Haladpada. At Ambesari and Jamshet, we have triangular men, scurrying about performing the different chores of the wedding. The «turewallas» are playing the band while the «surawallahs» bring the toddy and groups of men and women

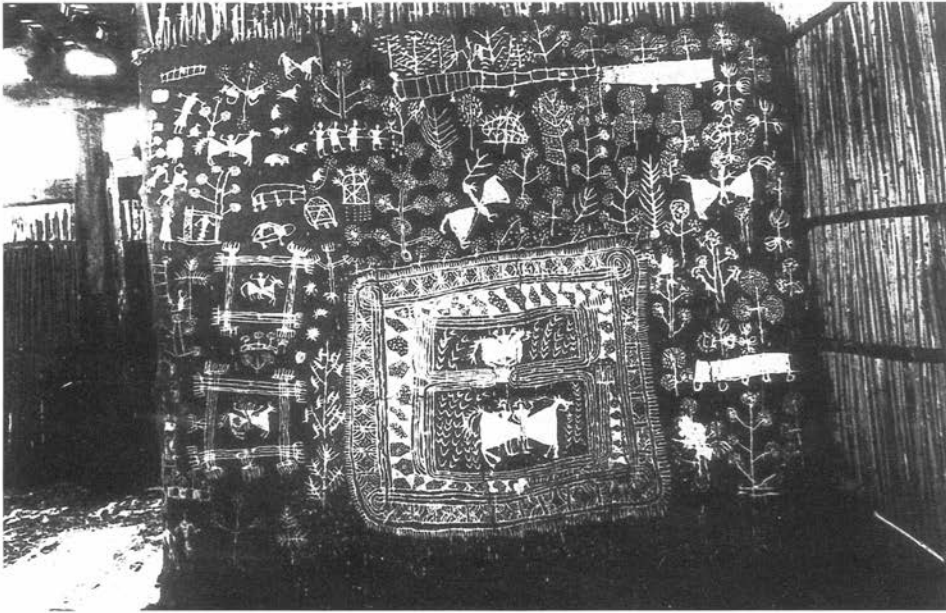


Fig. 127 - A marriage painting at Gagangaon, Thane district.

dance. The figure of «vrarkya» or the middle man typifies the human dilemma - poised as he is between movement and stillness. For the human being has discovered that to exist is to find a balance between contrary pulls, between life and death, light and darkness. In these chawks the shape of the goddess attains an almost monumental humanity as she stands her figure closer to that of women wearing the bark of a tree for a dress. Variations and combinations of the traingle glitter in the chawk.

At Ganjad, the southern most tip of the Warli area, which is also close to the national highway, we have an altogether human approach to the marriage painting. The goddess in the centre appears both elegant and sensuous and very accessible. What is characteristic of these paintings is the great stylization of earlier motifs, a matching of nature with human prowess. The trees glitter with leaves which while drawing their inspiration from nature are also decorative motifs made by man. Some trees are entirely man's conception - like the sun-tree or the kiranjhad and the bashing-tree. But even here the first impression are received from the play of light upon the ever-moving trees and masterfully transformed into design. The Ganjad chawk is resplendent with motifs - at once more symmetrical and ordered than their counterparts in the northern areas. They seem to both order man's growing consciousness in relation to nature and to fix it in some way.

As we move eastwards from Ganjad, towards the more Hinduized areas of Kasa Hudruk and

Jawhar, the chawks begin to dominate the rest of the painting. There is a mechanical, static quality about the designs which reminds one of machine-made motifs. The role of the mother-goddess is both diminished and degraded while many more human figures appear for the first time within the square.

While gazing at the central square, one is reminded of some observations made about the traditional «alpanas» by Stella Kramrisch. «Originally far removed from decoration, all these ritual magic designs are forms of will directed to an end which is to confirm and control a supernatural power and to isolate it from the ground. The effect of these symbolic shapes is at one with their efficacy. They do not form abstract patterns for they are the shape of conceptions. They are intuited and functional diagrams transmitted by women... Into it the power of a god is invoked. It is assigned to its enclosure, it is spell bound... The art of floor painting is a visual form of magic, a delineation and coercion of the presence of the numinous» (S. Kramrisch, 1968).

In the Warli area, however, the embellished chawks also represent a house for the goddess - the richest, most beautiful one. The designs create an atmosphere of lush decorativeness around her stark figure, similar to the effect mithuna figures have around a Hindu temple. In either case the aim is to create the appropriate «ras» or state of being which would enable the devotee to enter into communion with the deity inside.

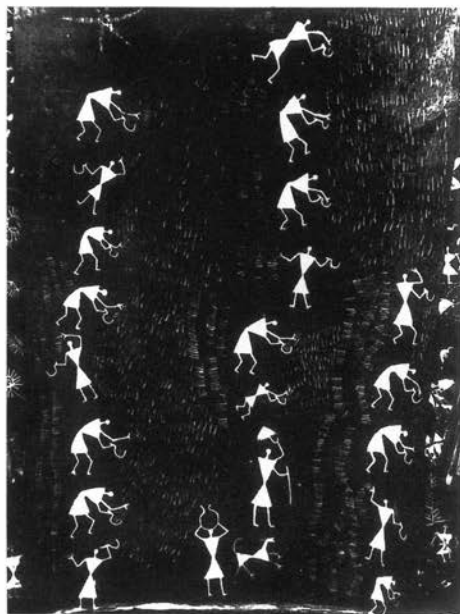


Fig. 128 - Harvesting the paddy. Painting by Jivya Soma Mase.

A typical marriage chawk contains the «pophala», the «sakhli», the «dhak», the «bashing» and the «pasodi»; a summary assortment of wedding gifts, more important for their shapes than for their likeness to actual objects. Of these we find that the shape of the triangle is the most often represented and transformed into other motifs. Its significance may lie in its resemblance to the «yoni» the generative organ of the mother-goddess which brings the field, the house hold and indeed the universe into being. Possibly it is for this reason that the Warlis hold the conical peak of Mahalakshmi hill, situated in Dahanu, in great awe and worship the goddess at the foot-hill temple on all important occasions. But the triangle also enables a relationship between two lines to take place, by crossing it, and this is of even greater importance to the Warlis. For the crossed line or the intersecting triangles enable copulation to take place - between man and woman, the active and the passive, the doer and the container. The central creative force of the universe then is a permanent, continuous intercourse between the male and the female force inherent in all things.

If the triangle is symbolic of this world-view, we have to bear in mind that a symbol for the Warlis is not a dry concept but one very much in contact with sensuous reality. Indeed a symbol is what it represents, for the Warli really do believe that the shapes contain an immanent force which can affect reality. That is why they

regard all round objects, for instance, with great wonder and awe. So intimately are these shapes linked to a felt reality that we find them pulsating within the chawk - no two triangles, no two lines are the same though the motif may be repetitive.

And in the east where the patterns their link with an innate faith, they become devoid of life, mechanical. In the overall space of the painting, we find that the geometrical chawk bears a relationship to the loosely arranged landscape above. Indeed abstractions and representative forms in the Warli painting are but two complementary aspects of each other and cannot be seen in isolation.

What does design mean? The play of lines and forms on a surface which is «aesthetically» organized. By such a criterion, the Warli painting will not be found wanting. The uniform geometry of the lower half of the painting is balanced by the flow of natural forces above. Then again the square of the chawk is matched by the square of the train and the triangles within the square find an echoing note in the triangles of the horses. The juxtapositioning of squares, circles and triangles provides a perfectly balanced, grand unity of the whole. But «aesthetics» has a different connotation in the Warli area, for that which is pleasurable is so because it has significance. If there is unity in the entire painting, it is because of the underlying world view. Like the mother-goddess this world-view encompasses the ebb and flow of time and holds is together in fertile moment - the wedding.

The question that arises then is: can form so intimately related to life ever be conceived independently of it? In other words, can we extract the designs from Warli paintings and the rituals which surround them and re-use them in urban context? If we want to use them in their alive, significant form, it would be virtually impossible, for these designs have been born out of a whole way of life. Already, we see that in the eastern part of the Warli area, the chawks appear mechanical because of their lack of lives contact with the traditional world-view. How much more so would it be in their cities, where the link with their life would be even more tenuous. From this distance then, we can only understand the living tradition of design-making among the Warlis and learn to make designs out of our lives.

REFERENCES

- KRAMRISCH S.
1968 - *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, Philadelphia.

Giorgio SAMORINI

Mircea Eliade, trattando dell'uso di sostanze inebrianti da parte degli sciamani di varie popolazioni eurasiatiche, al fine di procurarsi l'estasi (utilizzo che in alcuni casi si è protratto sino ai nostri giorni), offre un'interpretazione del fenomeno la quale, a seguito di ricerche più approfondite e dell'acquisizione di nuovi dati archeologici, si mostra non corretta e sviante: «Presso gli Ugri, l'intossicazione a mezzo di funghi speciali propizia anch'essa un contatto con gli spiriti, benché in forma passiva e brutale. Ma noi abbiamo già rilevato che questa tecnica sciamanica sembra tardiva e importata. L'intossicazione produce in modo meccanico e sovvertitore l'"estasi", l'"uscita da se stessi": essa cerca di realizzare un modello di esperienza preesistente che però aveva avuto punti di riferimento diversi» (Eliade, 1972, p. 247).

In realtà il rapporto fra sostanze inebrianti ricavate da certe piante, in particolare l'Amanita muscaria, e il fenomeno dello sciamanismo è più intimo di quanto appaia dagli studi di Eliade, e questa contrapposizione ha già dato luogo a dispute letterarie (Wellmank, 1981, p. 315; Warren, 1982, pp. 21-24; DeRios, 1984, p. 35). Nuovi dati iconografici avvallano sempre più l'ipotesi che l'utilizzo umano dell'Amanita muscaria per scopi religiosi, socializzanti e terapeutici, si perda nella notte dei tempi, risalendo all'uomo cacciatore, inseguitore di branchi di quadrupedi, più volte disperso in immense foreste, affamato, in cerca di una qualche radice, frutto o fungo per affievolire i morsi della fame (e l'Amanita muscaria, dal cappello rosso ricoperto di puntini bianchi è uno dei funghi più vistosi nei boschi di conifere e di alcune latifoglie, un tempo molto più diffusi nei territori euroasiatici).



Fig. 129 - Kooda-kally «Umbrella stone» appartenente alla cultura megalitica sud-indiana. Eyalè, Trichur, Kerala (da I.D. Lajour, 1964).

Ricordo brevemente alcuni dei più importanti reperti archeoetnomicologici sinora individuati. Nelle estreme zone orientali della Siberia, nel territorio che si estende nei mari di Ciukci e di Bering, sulle rive del fiume Pegtymel, è stata rinvenuta una ricca stazione di petroglifi, per lo più del periodo paleolitico locale; fra di essi si riconoscono immagini di raccoglitori di funghi (Dikov, 1979, fig. 51). In alcuni casi appaiono figure femminili (o effeminate) dotate di vistosi «orecchini» e di un grosso e corposo fungo in testa. Sono stati ritrovati motivi di funghi anche nei petroglifi degli insediamenti paleolitici sulle rive del lago Ushokovo, all'interno della penisola della Kamciatka; in questi casi i motivi di funghi sono rappresentati all'interno di capanne, visti in prospettiva (Dikov, 1979, p. 90). Entrambe le iconografie micologiche del fiume Pegtymel e del lago Ushokovo fanno intrinsecamente parte di scene ritualistico-simboliche, e non è azzardato associarle con l'utilizzo di funghi «magici», probabilmente l'Amanita muscaria, come già suggerito da altri autori (Wasson, 1979).

Da più autori è già stata posta in evidenza la relazione simbolica fra rospo e fungo sacro (A. muscaria) nell'etnomicologia popolare europea ed asiatica; essa è evidente anche da semplici osservazioni etimologiche (R.G. Wasson, 1968, p. 174 e segg.). La simbologia del rospo, insieme a quelle relative al fungo muscario e al fulmine, è di probabile origine pre-indoeuropea, legata ad arcaici e diffusi culti agrari e di fertilità o proveniente, ancor prima, dalle culture pastorizie e di raccoglitori di frutti.

È sorprendente constatare la relazione fra fungo sacro, rospo e fulmine anche fra le antiche civiltà mesoamericane. Sono noti oltre un centinaio di cosiddetti «funghi-pietra» (mushroom-stones) provenienti da diversi siti archeologici del Messico e del Guatemala. Molti di essi sono copie artigianali di archetipi che potrebbero risalire ai tempi precolombiani dell'America centrale. Di fatti i più antichi sinora accertati avrebbero origine nel periodo pre-classico antico (2000-1000 a.C.) (Lowy, 1971), di altezza variabile fra i 15 e i 30 cm, queste statuette di pietra rappresentanti funghi sono a volte sorrette alla base da figure antropomorfe femminili rannicchiate o da rospi; addirittura in un caso il fungo pare uscire dalla bocca del rospo. Sono state evidenziate anche dirette associazioni, sia dal punto di vista filologico che da quello folcloristico, fra il fungo muscario ed il fulmine, fra le stesse culture guatemalteche e messicane (G.B. Lowy, 1974). Ricordo, inoltre, le frequenti rappresentazioni fungine, inserite nelle complesse scene dei «codici» Maya. Varie di queste mostrano individui in atto di adorazione e di offerta ad una divinità e l'oggetto offerto ha tutte le sembianze di una schematica Amanita muscaria, dotata di evidenti e spigolosi «pun-



Fig. 130 - Mushroom-stone della cultura preclassica mesoamericana guatemalteca (da G. Lowy, 1971).

tinì» sul cappello (Lowy, 1972). L'iconografia simbolica del fungo sacro, quella relativa agli stadi preistorici dell'umanità è dunque caratterizzata da specifici elementi di culto; il rospo e il fulmine sono i più importanti e diffusi. È probabile che anche il simbolo fallico, associato a culti di fertilità e di fecondità così come il concetto archetipico dualistico maschio-femmina, individuabile nella stessa immagine fungina, possano rientrare nell'iconografia simbolico-religiosa del fungo sacro. In effetti il fungo, per la sua forma, composta di un gambo (fallo) e di un cappello (vulva), è già stato sinteticamente associato all'atto della fecondazione, della fusione, della nascita (es. popolazioni mesoamericane, Furst, 1981, p. 226). Ma in effetti è proprio questo il fulcro della questione; simbologia femminile, emblema fallico o fungo? L'uomo primitivo associava oggetti ed eventi in maniera alquanto differente dai modi attuali, basandosi più sull'associazione diretta di una coppia di eventi vicini nel tempo o dotati di affinità percettivo-sensoriali, che sulla deduzione logica, per noi ora così importante nella valutazione dei più svariati fenomeni. Espungo un esempio: nota è la leggenda che vede ogni fulmine caduto nel bosco dare origine ad un'Amanita muscaria. La troviamo, tramandata dal folclore delle tradizioni popolari, nella valle dell'Indo, in Siberia, in Europa, in America centrale (Lowy, 1974, p. 188 e segg.). Noi dedur-

remmo, con logica, dal fulmine il temporale e la pioggia, la quale porta umidità necessaria perché nascano i funghi. L'uomo primitivo invece non pensa a tutto questo, non è in grado di farlo o, forse, non gli interessa; si avvale di una più diretta associabilità degli eventi per la valutazione dei fenomeni (la «simpatia» del Frazer, 1922, p. 23 e segg.), in questo caso si basa sul ritrovamento di Amanita dopo la tempesta piena di fulmini; in effetti fulmine e fungo sacro vengono «simpaticamente» associati fra loro poiché entrambi manifestazioni del sacro (ierofanie) e manifestazioni di forza (cratofanie) (Eliade, 1976, p. 146 e segg.). In una visione più allargata è possibile notare come la mente primitiva si avvalga ampiamente delle affinità geometrico-visive degli oggetti e dei paesaggi osservati; oggetti che hanno funzioni diverse, ma simile forma e/o colorazione sono visti dall'uomo antico più vicini, anche nel significato (valore simbolico) di quanto noi, o la sola nostra razionalità vedrebbe ora. È anche per questo che «fungo» e «fallo» (e «fallo» e «vulva») sono così vicini nella visione della mente primitiva.

Reperti iconografici archeologici relativi all'Amanita muscaria sono sparsi nelle più disparate zone del globo; viene da domandarsi se siano presenti simili reperti nei territori europei con maggior concentrazione dell'arte rupestre, in zone caratterizzate da una quasi perenne (nei millenni) presenza naturale del fungo. A tal proposito, come già notato dal Marro (1945), il motivo «cornuto», tipico dell'espressione artistica di Val Meraviglie, è probabilmente da associare con il fenomeno del fulmine, potenza naturale dominante dalle vette di Monte Bego, e lo stesso fulmine, come si è visto, rientra nella simbologia e tradizione culturale del fungo sacro. V'è comunque da tenere in considerazione il fatto che la mancanza di iconografie etnomicologiche fra le ricche incisioni rupestri dell'arco alpino possa essere dovuta più all'attuale carenza di specifici studi a riguardo, che alla sua effettiva non presenza.

Ricordo ancora i comprovati arcaici rapporti fra sciamanismo e allucinogeni estendentesi ai vari casi, non presi qui in considerazione, dell'utilizzo di altre piante «sacre», quali l'uso culturale della Datura (Jimsonweed) fra gli sciamani Chumash della California, fonte primaria di ispirazione della complessa arte rupestre di questa e vicine popolazioni autoctone (Wellmann, 1981), così come l'uso di funghi allucinogeni differenti, anche nella loro azione farmacologica, dall'A. muscaria (generi Psilocybe e Stropharia) da parte degli sciamani mesoamericani (Heim, 1959).

Riporto infine l'immagine di una scena rupestre sahariana (Tassili) la cui evidente simbologia fungina assume un ruolo centrale nell'intera scena magico-culturale. A tal riguardo sono in



Fig. 131 - Pittura rupestre sabariana. Tin Tabarift. Tassili (da I.D. Lajoux, 1964).

corso miei più approfonditi studi sulla stupenda arte preistorica sahariana che già da un primo sguardo mostra di possedere una ricca iconografia micologica la quale, tuttavia, non sembra collegabile alla specie di grossa taglia *Amanita muscaria* (cfr. Lajoux, 1964, pp. 68-69 e 70). Verificato l'arcaico rapporto fra sciamanesimo e fungo sacro, in questa sede, mediante reperti archeologici, vi sono più deduzioni che rendono inaccettabili le ipotesi di Eliade: «Le droghe non sono che un surrogato volgare della trance "pura"». E presso molti popoli siberiani abbiamo già avuto occasione di constatare che le intossicazioni (con alcool, tabacco, etc.) sono innovazioni recenti, le quali, in un certo modo, accusano una decadenza della tecnica sciamanica.

Si è cercato di "imitare" con un'ebbrezza a base di droghe uno stato spirituale cui non si era più capaci di giungere in altro modo. Decadenza, oppure - bisogna aggiungere - volgarizzazione di una tecnica mistica» (Eliade, 1972, p. 247). Pur riconoscendo l'inizio della decadenza della tecnica sciamanica con l'introduzione delle intossicazioni alcoliche o, ancor prima, si deve far distinzione fra questo o «simili» surrogati di funghi sacri, la voluminosa documentazione scientifica ed empirica relativa a questi ultimi non dovrebbe più lasciare dubbi sul fatto che il loro effetto sull'uomo sia caratterizzato da una tendenza verso esperienze di natura rivelatrici-religiose, nella sfera del sacro.

Gli stati mentali indotti con le sostanze psicoat-

tive non sono un'illusoria imitazione di stati di coscienza «puri», bensì si inseriscono con la medesima importanza nelle generali casistiche degli stati alterati di coscienza, e la storia dell'utilizzo di questi composti dimostra come essi vengano generalmente impiegati come mezzi per raggiungere le manifestazioni del Sé, obiettivo comune ai vari «continuum» su cui si sviluppano gli stati di coscienza, differenziati fra loro dai «metodi» impiegati (autoindotti, con droghe, etc.): «Il Sé dell'estasi e dello samadhi sono lo stesso ed unico Sé» (Fischer, 1971, p. 902).

Gli stati psichici di sensibilità, creatività, ansietà, così come gli stati acuti schizofrenici e di catatonìa, assieme ai rapimenti mistici e agli stati allucinatori stimolati con sostanze psicoattive, sono tutti distribuiti su un continuum di stimoli egotropici che dallo stato «normale» portano il soggetto verso la rivelazione del Sé; anche il continuum degli stimoli trofotropici, caratterizzato dagli stati meditativi, dello Zazen e dello Yoga samadhi, portano il soggetto dallo stato «normale» alla rivelazione dello stesso Sé, e la serietà di questo nuovo (almeno per la cultura occidentale) campo della scienza richiede la soppressione di qualunque preferenzialità di carattere moralistico e pregiudiziale.

Di fatti, tutti gli stati psichici sopra elencati, sia autoindotti che non, rappresentano, fanno intrinsecamente parte della storia fisica umana, anzi, rappresentano i «mezzi» coi quali è avvenuta e tuttora avviene la sua evoluzione; è poco scientifico dunque, svalutarne alcuni e vederne come «puri» e unici altri.

Inoltre, è ben più probabile che gli stati allucinatori ed estatici indotti da sostanze psicoattive, così come gli stati di acuta schizofrenia, siano da annoverare fra le più arcaiche alterazioni psichiche sperimentate dall'uomo. L'origine relativamente recente delle tecniche meditative orientali, alle quali appartengono i più noti stimoli trofotropici indirizzati verso lo samadhi, avvalorerebbe una simile ipotesi. Valutando poi, anche nelle sue origini, l'intima relazione fra stati alterati di coscienza e sfera psichica del sacro, del religioso e del divino, è intuibile la probabile e significativa partecipazione delle esperienze indotte da vegetali psicoattivi, forse inizialmente casuali, negli originari eventi psichici che hanno dato vita, per dirla con Eliade (1961, p. 7), all'*homo religiosus*.

Sia l'esperienza diretta di generazioni di individui che la documentazione storiografica (mitologico-religiosa) tendono a confermare questa supposizione.

RIFERIMENTI BIBLIOGRAFICI

BETENSON G.

1982 - *Verso un'ecologia della mente*, Milano (Adelphi).

DERIOS M.D.

1984 - *Hallucinogens: cross-cultural perspective*, Albuquerque, NM (Univ of New Mexico Press).

DIKOV N.

1979 - *Origini della cultura paleoeschimese*, BCSP, vol. 17, pp. 89-98

ELIADE M.

1961 - *History of religions and a new humanism*, History of Religions, vol. 1, pp. 1-8

1976 - *Miti, sogni e misteri*, Milano (Rusconi).

FISCHER R.

1971 - *A cartography of the estatic and meditative states*, Science, vol. 174, pp. 897-904

FRAZER J.G.

1922 - *Il ramo d'oro*, Torino (Boringhieri), vol. I; Rist. 1973.

FURST P.

1981 - *Allucinogeni e cultura*, Roma (Cesco Capanna).

HEIM R.

1959 - *Les champignons hallucinogènes du Mexique*, Paris (MMH).

LAJOUX J.D.

1964 - *Le meraviglie del Tassili-n-Ajjer*, Bergamo (Istituto Arti Grafiche).

LOWY G.B.

1971 - *New record of mushroom stones from Guatemala*, Mycologia, vol. 63, pp. 983-993

1972 - *Mushroom and the symbolism in Maya codices*, Mycologia, vol. 64, pp. 816-821

1974 - *Amanita muscaria and the thundrbolt legend in Guatemala and Mexico*, Mycologia, vol. 66, pp. 188-191

MARRO G.

1945 - *Le istoriazioni rupestri preistoriche dell'Italia settentrionale I: Alpi Marittime*, Atti accademia delle Scienze di Torino, vol. 81, pp. 22-27

TART C.T.

1972 - *State of consciousness and state-specific science*, Science, vol. 176, pp. 1203-1210

WARREN P.

1982 - *Le piante diaboliche*, Milano (Savelli).

WASSON R.G.

1968 - *Soma, divine mushroom of immortality*, New York (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

1979 - *Fly agaric and man*, in D.H. Efen et al., Ethnopharmacological Search for Psychoactive Drugs, New York (Raven Press), pp. 405-414

WELLMANN K.F.

1981 - *Rock art, shaman, phosphenes and hallucinogens in North America*, BCSP, vol. 23, pp. 89-104

ROCK ART SITE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE SIERRA GORDA OF CENTRAL MEXICO, QUERETARO AND GUANAJUATO

John W. GREER

During spelaeological investigation in 1972 by the Association for Mexican Cave Studies (Austin, TX, USA), in the high limestone karst regions near Pinal de Amoles in the state of Queretaro, five previously unreported rock art sites were recorded. Informations come from Alfonso Salinas of Riò Blanco and Jesù Fernà of Atarjea.

Interest in the area has been heightened by the recent discoveries of El Sòtano (Sòtano de los Cocos or Sòtano del Barro) on the Riò de la Atarjea between Ayutla and Atarjea. This natural limestone shaft, or pit, is one of the world's largest deepest, with an entrance 420x210 m, and a vertical entrance drop of 410 m (Courbon, 1972:30; Raines, 1972).

Location

The sites are on or near the Riò Ayutla, in the section known as Riò de la Atarjea, on the north side of Sierra Gorda between the towns of Ayutla, Jalpan, Pinal de Amoles, Pena Blanca, and Pena Miller.

Site 1 and 2 are lands under the jurisdiction of Riò Blanco, municipio de Pena Miller, estado de Queretaro; sites 4 e 5 are within the lands of Atarjea, municipio de Atarjea, estado de Guanajuato; site 3 is near the state boundary but is presumed to be within Guanajuato.

Distance are usually given in minutes walk which indicates a rapid walk without stopping. This is the usual measure of distance used in this area. Maps are not detailed enough to indicate accurate kilometers distances.

Site descriptions

Site 1. No Name

Location: The site is a 15 min. walk below Riò Blanco on the dirt road to Mangas and is 7.5 m above the streambed on the west side of the road.

Description: The small eroded cave is 2.4 m deep, 1 m wide, 0.6 m high, and faces north. Rock at the entrance suggests that at one time the mouth may have been a sealed tomb.

Pictographs: Figures occur on the ceiling and walls at the entrance only. There are many indistinguishable red lines and dots; one small yellow patch may be part of a circular linear figure on a red painted background. A double circle (3 cm in diameter) of thick red paint, applied

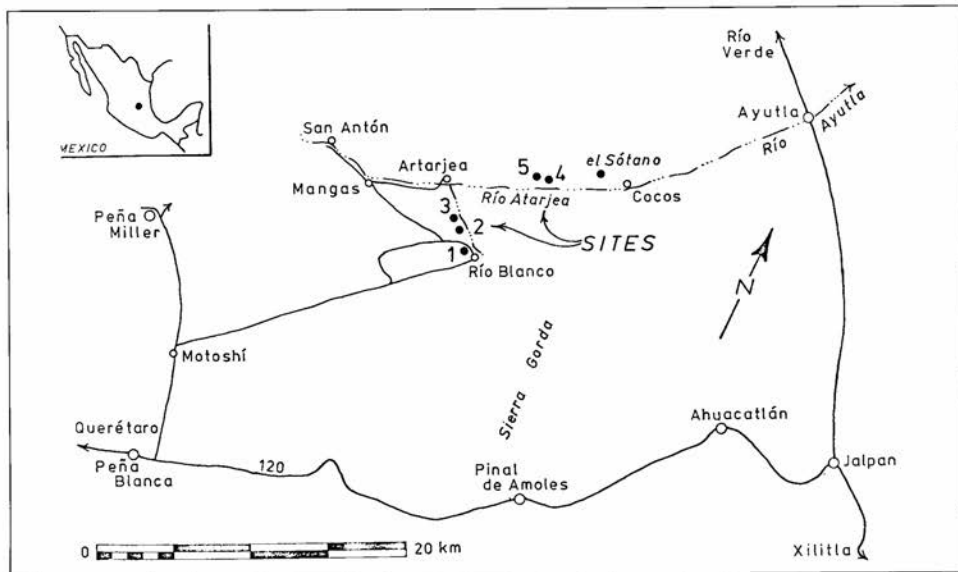


Fig. 132 - Map of survey area with locations of rock art sites.

with the fuger and surrounded by thick spattered dots mainly 2-3 cm wide, suggests the form of a shield. No human or animal figures are represented.

Site 2. El Cedro

Location: The site is a 45 min. walk down the canyon from Río Blanco toward Artarjea. One must take the dirt road from town down to the canyon, follow a trail along the stream past Mina Sona and Mina de los Gallos to Horno de Cedro (an abandoned mercury separation oven), a climb through a large, very steep hillside «milpa» (plowed corn field) on the left bank up to the bottom of a limestone bluff and then follow a faint trail to the right contouring the bottom of the cliff up to the overhang.

Description: A very high limestone cliff with a slight overhang 18 m long faces northeast. Pictographs occur in the central section. At the edge of the shelter floor in front of the pictographs, there is a slight depression 1.5 m in diameter and 20 cm deep, bordered by large rocks. This appears to be a very old cooking pit, of the type used to roast agave and similar plants in many desert regions of Mexico and the southwestern United States. Large agaves grow on the hillside around the shelter, but the actual function of the depression is unknown. The few obsidian flakes and plainware sherds with rolled quartz (?) temper are scattered in and around the shelter, back to the upper part of the milpa. Pottery and obsidian flakes are especially common at the base of the protective bluff at the top of the milpa, where the groupings of stones possibly suggest some old structures but cer-

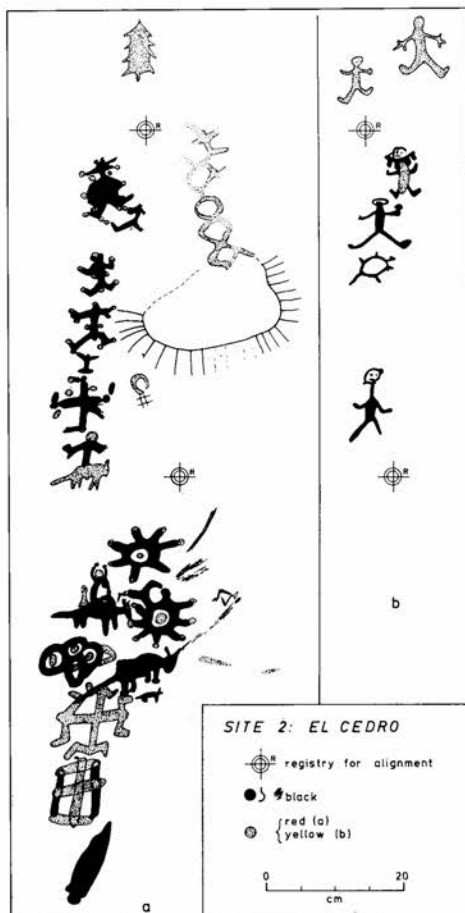


Fig. 133 - Site 2. Main panel. a, older figures (painted).

tainly a periodic camp overlooking the canyon.

Pictographs: On the main panel, one finds anthropomorphic figures and several isolated, faded and indistinguishable elements. These figures are varied: broadly-outlined men in a monochromatic red hue; finely-outlined figures in black; small, bichromatic dark red and black figures, men and horseback as well as a few geometric elements. Yellow and black men at the top of the main panel appear. There are in part superimposed over the older paintings and are on top of a very thin calcium deposit partially covering the older panel. All the oldest figures have been drawn with the finger using a well mixed liquid paint, while the recent black and yellow figures are made with a dry crayon. Isolated figures are 0.3-1.5 m above the floor; the main panel is 1.7- 4.0 m above the floor and can be reached from a narrow ledge.

Remarks: No other figures like the ones in the central panel have been seen elsewhere. The most interesting single feature is the use of red dots beside or on top of black figures, on the head, hands, feet, knees, waist, and genitals on the human forms, and at the tips of the rays and in the center on the «sun figures». The three or more animal figures are probably domestic stock and seemingly would date the main panel as post conquest. Some figures, such as the largest finely-outlined black figures are partially covered with a very thin layer of flowstone, which could, of course, have formed very quickly. A large ruin group locally known, as Ruinas Aztecas is above the right bank of the stream 400 m below Horno de Cedro and it is visible from site 2. Stone structures include walls, walled enclosures (small milpas?) and at least three houses. Ceramic includes unglazed plainware sherds with rolled quartz temper and glazed plainware presumably from a later occupation.

Obsidian tools reportedly are common here, although none were observed. Probably the site is a large, very well preserved family habitation (Otomi) dating back to at least early Spanish time.

Site 3. No Name

Location: The site is on the left bank of the Río Blanco canyon about halfway from Rià Blanco to Atarjea and 550 m below El Mago mine, 65 m from the stream, and slightly above a flood plain milpa.

Description: The triangular rock shelter is 14 m wide, 8 m deep, 5.5 m high at the entrance, and faces east. The bare limestone floor slopes to a nearly vertical position on the north wall, where the petroglyphs occur. The shelter currently is being used to store corn stalks. An obsidian flake was observed on the talus, but no other artifacts were found.

Petroglyphs: Figures are shallow, and all are pecked into the nearly polished limestone surface (artificially smoothed, possibly from use); these include a horned man, a square spiral, an inverted man, a snake-like figure, a small man with a triangular head, and many other indistinguishable lines. A few traces of red paint appear near the largest figure (with the triangular head) but it forms no design not does it seem to have any function with the petroglyphs, and may not be related at all.

Remark: Several sparsely occupied rock shelters occur in the immediate vicinity including a very large one across the canyon.

Site 4. Rincon del Media Dia

Location: The site is nearly half way up the left side of the main river canyon, 2 hrs walk below Atarjea and reportedly 2 hrs walk up from los

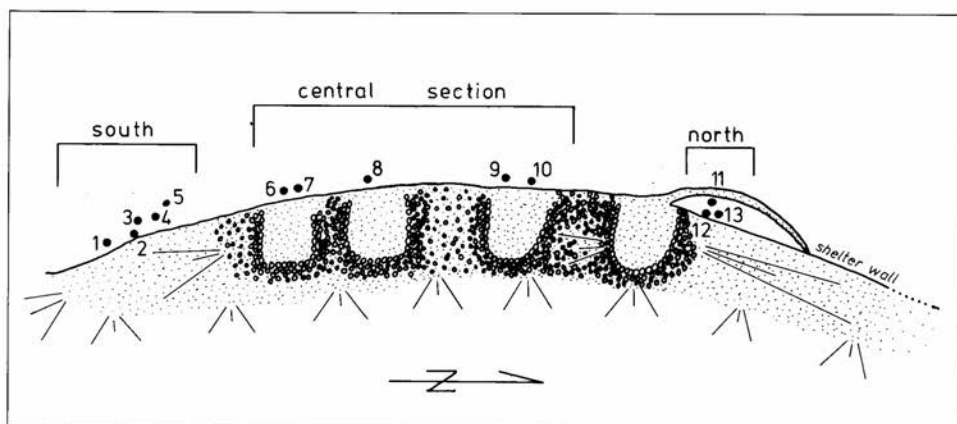


Fig. 134 - Site 4. Floor plan with locations of pictographs.

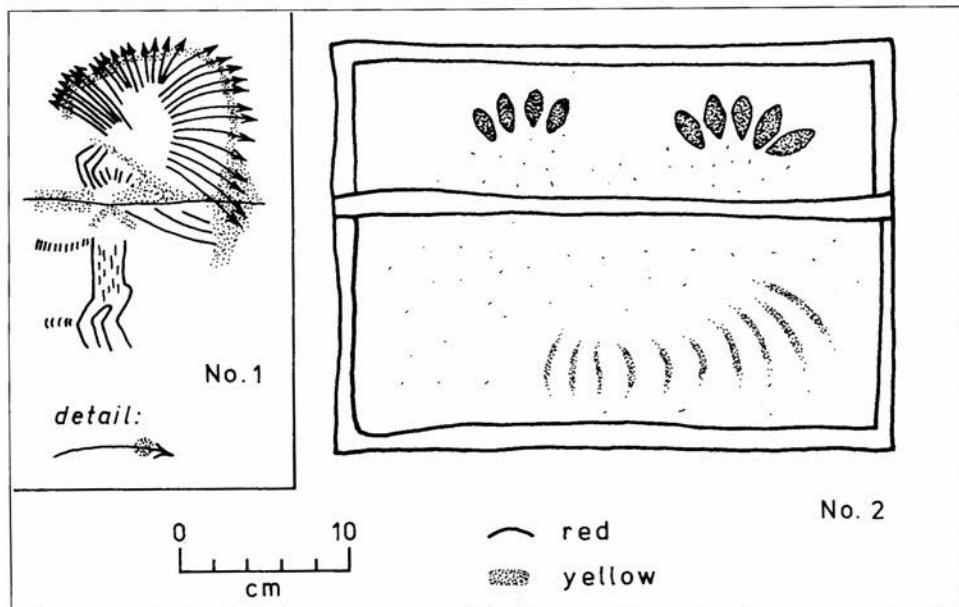


Fig. 135 - Site 4: nos. 1, 2. Red and yellow pictographs.

Cocos. It is also just around the hill and below El Sótano. The shelter is entered by a dim trail up the steep hillside from the river.

Description: A high overhanging orange and yellow cliff, 60-75 m long, faces east. Pictographs occur along about 25-30 m at the south end. Small occupation floor ca. 1.5x2.1 m have been cleared and leveled and are bordered by large rocks. Fire blackening on the shelter wall appears to be linked with the domestic activities. Many plainware sherd occur on and around the floors.

Pictographs: The panel is here divided into three sections. Elements are individually numbered. The southern section or lower end is bordered by the house floor and contains complicated fine-line figures. The recorded pictographs, elements n° 1-5, are badly weathered and faded, and many more are indistinguishable. They are in monochrome red and black and bichrome red-yellow and red-black. Yellow is used as lines in n° 2, n° 4, and n° 5 and in patches as if representing feathers on or between, fine red lines in n° 1. All coloring in this section appears to be crayon, and some yellow is additionally dry-smearred. These fine-line figures usually have double-line borders which separate them from each other, including at least two additional figures too faded to discern the design. One figure appears to be a dancer with an elaborate plume headdress. Hand smears also occur in this area giving the impression of a painter cleaning his hands on the shelter walls.

Pictograph elements n° 6-10 are in the central section behind the house floor. Figures are primarily red monochrome in both finger paint and crayon, with a few indistinguishable figure in fine-line black crayon. Monochrome red animals are finger paint applied when wet. At least six animals face left, including one upside-

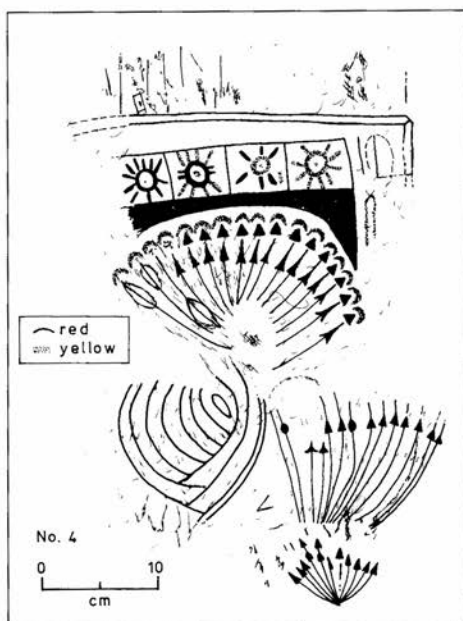


Fig. 136 - Site 4: no. 4. Red and yellow pictograph.

down. Another small stick animal with curved horns probably represents a deer and is the only animal facing right.

Elements n° 11-13 are in the north section, at the upper end, and are quite dark and particularly well preserved. The two bichrome geometric figures in this section are predominantly broad red lines applied by finger, with fine to relatively broad gray to black crayon lines for emphasis. Three red negative handprints are very high above the floor, probably requiring the use of long ladders. All three are adult right hands and all were applied using a spatter technique; paint was sprayed or blown around the hand held against the rock, thus producing a negative print. One print has a large red dot in its center.

Site 5. La Tinajita

Location: This site is about 500 m west of site 4 and a little higher. No trail leads to the overhang, although a paint cow trail comes up the exceedingly steep hillside from the river and passes relatively nearby. It is necessary to chop one's way to the shelter with machete or huingaro.

Description: A small south-facing bluff has a very slight overhang 6 m long, in the center of which is a small cave entrance 1.5 m wide x 0.6 m high with a crawlway passage 6 m long containing burned limestone cobbles. The pictograph is directly above this entrance.

Pictographs: A large red monochrome mask or deity face of thick red paint applied by finger or brush is 2.5 m above the floor, but can be reached from a nearby ledge. Hand smears occur to the right of the figure, the result of someone attempting to wipe red paint off his hands. The main figure is on a clean, sheltered, naturally yellowish section of limestone; all surrounding portions of the wall are rough or grayed. The hand smears are on an adjacent gray section.

Other reported sites

1. A pictograph group between El Gallo and El Mago mines, below site 2 toward Atarjea and also on the left side of the canyon (left bank), was reported by a man from Atarjea and another in Mangas.
2. A pictograph group is reported to be very high up on a big side canyon just below and across from Horno de Cedro and site 2. This was reported by a man at Mina Sona situated in the canyon below Riò Blanco.
3. Pictographs reported to be near San Antòn, just up the river canyon from Mangas, apparently do not exist. These were reported by a man of questionable dependability in Riò Blanco and well checked out in San Antòn and Mangas.

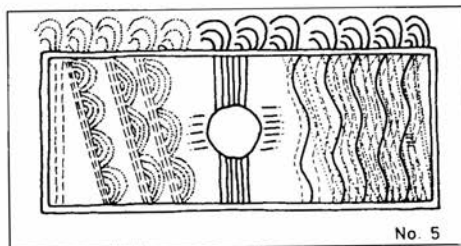


Fig. 137 - Site 4: no. 5. Red and yellow pictograph.



Fig. 138 - Site 4: no. 11. Red pictograph.

4. A small horizontal cave with pictographs was reported by a local goat herder to be 2 hrs walk south-southeast of Pena Miller. A light is needed to enter the cave. Others pictograph sites reportedly are in the vicinity of Pena Miller.

5. Pictographs are reported high up on a cliff southwest of Pena Blanca. They must be approached from above, necessitating 25-30 m of rope. From Hwy 120 just west of Pena Blanca, one follows a dirt road south or southeast for a 2-3 hrs walk (1 hr by jeep but the road is sometimes washed out) to Rancho Liguerra. The pictographs are within one hour's walk towards Rancho Quenado. People in Pena Blanca report Quemado to be 3-4 hrs walk below Liguerra. The site was reported by a man in Higuerrillas, west of Pena Blanca.

Discussion

The rock art sites described for the first time here are located in a limestone canyon country so exceedingly rugged that systematic reconnaissance is nearly impossible.

Riò Blanco, Mangas, Atarjea, and San Antò usually can be reached by vehicle, but most trav-

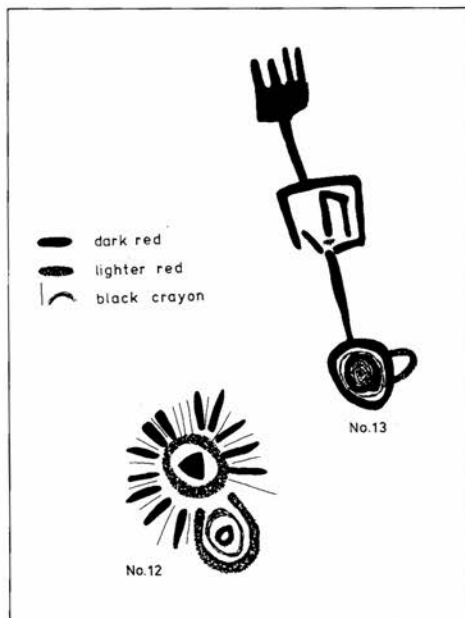


Fig. 139 - Site 4: nos. 12, 13. Red and black pictographs.

el is by foot or by horse or mule on the better trails. Rock art sites (except for site 1) must be reached by foot, and probably the most accessible are reported here.

Canyons are deep and with steep walls; for example, the Riò de la Atarjea canyon is over 11 meters deep, often, with vertical walls and nearly always impossibly steep. Non-vertical sections are covered with a jungle-like monte vegetation that requires constant use of huingaro or machete (large jungle knives with curved or straight blades) in order to travel at all. Chopping constantly, my guide and I were able to travel the 500 meters from site 4 to site 5 in a little over an hour.

Vegetation changes almost as much as the elevation. The river-level region around San Antòn is a very dry desert area characterized by scattered brush. The sides of the Riò de la Atarjea canyon are thickly covered with a dense combination of brushland growth and jungle. Pine forests cover the highest elevations, especially the upper parts of the Sierra Gorda proper. Downward from these areas, the pines become mixed with oaks and other large hardwoods; for example, the area around Riò Blanco and the extensive limestone upland area north of Los Cocos to north of San Antòn and somewhat westward toward La Florida are in the forest. Lower still, particularly in the vicinity of Riò Blanco, the largest trees make way for more scattered pinons and cedars.

The entire area is composed of limestone. In the Sierra Gorda south of Pinal de Amoles to Riò

Blanco and essentially to Atarjea, the usually thin-bedded, fractured limestone is altered greatly, especially in subexposure beds, and it is in this area that many mines exist; principally mercury, but also some silver and gold. The area north of Riò Blanco, the big ridges east of Los Cocos, and all the upland area northwest of the Riò de la Atarjea are composed of sthick-bedded, karsted and dissected limestone of the El Doctor formation, well known for its numerous horizontal caves and deep vertical pits. Small cave entrances, rockshelters, overhangs and exposed rock faces abound throughout the area at all elevations. Although the visited rock art sites are along deep canyons containing running water, others also are reported from highland areas. Because of the unlimited potential here, it is presumed that future reconnaissance will discover additional sites.

The archaeology of the area has not been studied in any details. Early travellers and geologists (Reyes, 1880; Segerstrom, 1961) mention the existence of sites on the south side of the Sierra Gorda, on the highway east and west from Pinal de Amoles. These generally are fairly large to extensive stone ruins with large structures, walls, and trench-like features. Open sites with small stone structures, caves containing ceramic vessels and other cultural features, and field areas with potsherds and obsidian flakes have been briefly described in a speleological survey conducted in 1972 in the La Cienaga-Los Pinos area, just south of a line from Riò Blanco to Los Cocos (Greer, 1972, ms.). One relatively large occupation site with stone structures was visited during the rock art study described here. Also observed were several sparsely occupied rockshelters (one with deposits containing potsherds, obsidian flakes, and human bones) and a few small stone ruins possibly dating back to early or pre conquest times. Local inhabitants have also reported additional rockshelters containing human burials in the Riò Blanco region, small caves containing painted pottery vessels and other implements in Canon de los Javelinas, a few kilometers northwest of Los Cocos, small stone ruins in the uplands around Los Pinos east of Riò Blanco, and caves with pottery and ceramic figurines near Jalpan.

Seemingly important to this area is the reported test excavation of a large ruin locally known as Casas Viejas. Local inhabitants report that several years ago this large open ruin containing structures and one possible temple, about 5-10 km (2 hrs walk) up the Riò de la Atarjea west of San Antò toward Carrecillos was partially tested by a state agency (presumably Guanajuato) for three days using local labour. This is the only scientific work known to have been done in the area, but no report on the result has been found.

Historically the Riò Blanco area was inhabited by Otomí Indians, although there has been some mixture with the Huastecan to the east (Velasco, 1891) and possibly the Tarascans to the west (Quiroz-Martínez, 1932; Sergerstrom, 1961:29). Beals (1932: map 1) shows the situation possibly more complicated with several major, recognized groups coming together in this general area, which seems to have been used by many outside groups traveling through. Even though presently recognizable Otomí groups are not found here, Indian place names and families occur in the Pena Blanca-Pena Miller area. Soustelle (1937: cartes I and IV) indicates that the native population of the entire surrounding area has been Otomí since pre-Spanish times. The present village at least locally thought of as the Otomí center is Cadereyta, farther to the west, where an abundance of pictograph sites remains to be studied. It is unknown whether any of the Riò Blanco area rock art is attributable to Otomí. Assigning a pre-Spanish cultural identification to the rock art figures is impossible. Certainly their age and function are unknown. Styles and technique of execution vary widely, as do the elements themselves and it is uncertain whether this variation is a result of time, function, the artist, the group, or some other variable. The site 5 mask and the site 4 fine-line figures, especially the plumed dancer and the formal quadrilinear outlining, intuitively seem reminiscent of the elaborate cultures of central Mexico, but comparisons cannot be more limited. The use of red dots on black figures would seem to be uncommon and, if more than just the style of an individual painter or his group, should be a trait easily recognizable at other sites or in other areas. The same should be true for the site 3 figure with a triangular head and with three fingers and three toes on each hand and foot. The use of spatter technique to produce negative handprints is probably too widespread to be of much help. I recently described several sites to the north in the Sierra del Abra (San Luis Potosí), near Cd. Valles, where the tradition is especially well founded (Greer ms.). Negative handprints with a large dot in the center (site 4) however, may serve as a useful element.

In order to progress any further in the knowledge of this area, additional reconnaissance is necessary, more pictograph sites must be recorded, and existing archaeological materials or complex should be at least preliminary studied. Only when patterns begin to emerge, will rock art be integrated into a cultural scheme and not just treated as an isolated phenomenon. Spelaeological surveys by the Association for Mexican Cave Studies probably will continue to locate new sites. Unvisited pictograph sites reported to us have been listed here, and there are many other likely-looking locations through-

out the Riò de la Atarjea canyon and the Pena Miller area.

A special problem which should be considered in the future is the possible influence of El Sótano on the lives of the people in the area in the past. Today there seems to be no native interest in the pit, and it is not visited by local people. Significantly, however, the modern population is completely Mexicanized, and there seem to remain very few non-catholic practices in the religious showing of the people.

The pit is situated on the west side of the Riò de la Atarjea canyon, high on the east flank of the Cerro de la Mesa (Cerro de Charcos) and at an altitude of 1010 meters above the river (Raines, 1972:112). The 420x210 m entrance is overwhelmingly huge and one of the most impressive in the world, and the bottom is not visible until one lowers himself on a rope to the edge of the shaft. Objects thrown into the pit from the best vantage point on the north side do not hit the bottom for 13 seconds, a 410 meters freefall! Guacamayas, very large parrot-like birds, circle nearly constantly inside the pit, the sun reflecting from their beautiful feathers in multishades of blues, greens and red against the darkness of the shaft; the feathers undoubtedly were prized in ancient time.

An archaeological study of the pit would, of course, initially take into account archaeological materials, if any actually exist, at the cave entrance or in nearby sites. Explorers who have descended into the pit have not reported finding sherds (from vessel which may have been thrown into the pit) in the mass of rough stoney terrain and jungle at the bottom, but they also were not trained to look for archaeological evidence and might have overlooked tiny sherds because of their understandable excitement. The area around the pit, which necessitates constant chopping through a solid growth of thorny bushes, also has not been checked, including a large rockshelter on the southeast side of the entrance. Nearby likely-looking locations remain numerous. Site 4 is just around the hillside and below the pit, and site 5 is only about 500 meters farther away, both well within reasonable distance of the pit for the pictographs and the pit to have been related. Other locations undoubtedly exist. It is presumed that if the pit was previously culturally or religiously important, this importance might be portrayed in some way in the nearby rock art.

Summary: Following a spelaeological survey in 1972, four pictograph localities and one shelter containing petroglyphs were found in a high limestone mountainous area northwest of Pinal de Amoles (Querétaro) in central Mexico. The pictographs occur on adequately lit, smooth limestone walls and generally seem to depict non-god-like figures (except possibly the face

at site 5) in red, black, yellow, red-black, and red-yellow lines. Paint was generally applied wet with the finger, rarely with a brush, and as a presumably dry. Spattering was used alone in uncontrolled gross amount or was finely applied as an outlining agent to produce negative hand-prints. The archaeology of the region is unstudied. The area historically was inhabited by Otomí Indians under several outside influences, but it is unknown whether the rock art is attributable to indigenous or to transient groups.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BEALS R.L.

1932 - *The comparative ethnology of Northern Mexico before 1750*, Ibero-Americano, Berkeley (), vol. 2.

COURBON P.

1974 - *Atlas des Grands Gouffres du Monde*, Paris
GREER J.W.

1972 - *Project at La Cienega, municipio de Pinal de Amoles*, Qro. Association for Mexican cave studies Newsletter, vol. 3/6, pp. 142-144.

19.. - *Archaeological Speleo Features at La Cienega de San Juan*, municipio de Pinal de Amoles, Qro. Association for Mexican cave studies Newsletter, vol. , pp. - .

19.. - *Aboriginally Occupied Caves in the Sierra del Abra*, San Luis Potosí and Tamilipas, Association for Mexican Cave Studies Newsletter, vol. , pp. .

HEIZER R.F. & BAUMHOFF M.A.

1962 - *Prehistoric Rock Art of Nevada and Eastern California*, Berkeley and Los Angeles (University of California press).

QUIROZ-MARTINEZ R.

1932 - *Querétaro, sus Elementos de Riqueza, Irrigación en Mexico*, vol. 4, pp. 369-381, Mexico

RAINES T.W.

1972 - *Preliminary Report on the Initial Exploration of El Sótano*, Association for Mexican Cave Studies Newsletter, vol. 3/5, pp. 107-112.

REYES J.M.

1880 - *Breve Resena Histórica de la Emigración de los Pueblos en el Continente Americano*, Boletín de la Sociedad Geografía y Estadística (Mexico), vol. 5, pp. 385-457.

SOUSTELLE J.

1937 - *La Famille Otomi-Pame du Mexique Central. Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie*, vol. 26, Paris (Université de Paris).

SERGESTROM K.

1961 - *Geology of the Bernal-Jalpan Area*, Estado de Querétaro, Mexico, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin (Washington), vol. 1104-B, pp. - .

VELASCO A.L.

1891 - *Geografía y Estadística del Estado Querétaro*, Geografía y Estadística de la República Mexicana, vol. 7, pp. - .

DUE ROCCE INCISE RISALENTI AL PERIODO CLASSICO MAYA, 90 ANNI DOPO LA LORO SCOPERTA. PIEDRAS NEGRAS, GUATEMALA

Doris BONACCORSI-HILD

Nel marzo del 1983 partecipai ad una spedizione della FLAAR (Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research) a Piedras Negras, sulla riva guatemalteca dell'Usumacinta, sotto la guida dell'archeologo Nicholas Hellmuth. Ne facevano parte inoltre un gruppo di archeologi, tra cui Michael Coe e Mary Miller della Yale University, George e David Stuart del National Geographic, che dovevano recarsi colà per un sopralluogo.

Piedras Negras, come anche altri centri antichi che si trovano nelle vicinanze del più importante fiume della penisola dello Yucatan, corre il rischio di venire sommersa, qualora venisse realizzato il progetto del Governo Messicano di costruire una diga per sfruttare le acque dell'Usumacinta.

La scoperta dell'antica città Maya avvenne nel 1895. Teobert Maler, che in quel periodo svolgeva nella zona ricerche archeologiche per incarico del Peabody Museum dell'Università di Cambridge, venne informato da persone che lavoravano nelle monterì (Monterias: cantieri per l'abbattimento ed il taglio di tronchi di mogano) e con i cicleros (operai che estraggono la gomma per la fabbricazione del chewing-gum dallo Chicozapote) gli unici che praticavano e conoscevano la giungla, dell'esistenza di un esteso campo di rovine a «Piedras Negras».

Dieci anni prima il señor Emiliano Palma vi aveva impiantato la sua monterìa, e le aveva dato questo nome per via delle rocce nere che si trovano nell'ansa del fiume.



Fig. 140 - La Roca de los Sacrificios, sul greto del fiume.



Fig. 141 - La Roca de los Sacrificios. L'istoriazione come si presenta oggi.

Accompagnato solo da pochi indiani Maler attraversava allora la foresta inospitale alla ricerca delle antiche vestigia. Egli liberava le rovine dalla vegetazione, ne rilevava le misure mettendole in pianta, disegnava i prospetti e le ricostruzioni ideali. Portava con sé una completa attrezzatura fotografica e spesso sviluppava le lastre in loco, per il timore di non poter tornare una seconda volta nello stesso posto. Il materiale documentario da lui lasciato è ancora oggi di inestimabile valore, sia come base di partenza per la ricerca, sia come termine di confronto. Molti dei templi e delle piramidi da lui rilevati nel frattempo sono crollati oppure sono stati coperti dalla foresta pluviale.



Fig. 142 - La Roca de los Sacrificios. L'istoriazione nel disegno di Maler.

A bordo di grossi battelli di gomma, con al centro un'impalcatura di metallo, su cui venivano attaccati i remi e il bagaglio, discendemmo senza motore le acque dell'Usumacinta. Passato Yaxchilan ci inoltrammo nel temuto Raudal de Anaité, le rapide che costarono a Maler la sua canoa. Dopo due giorni di navigazione arrivammo sotto una pioggia torrenziale a Piedras Negras. L'indomani vedemmo ai piedi del nostro accampamento «La Roca de los Sacrificios», come Maler la chiama: «One of these rocks, rising obliquely there is carved upon its steeply inclined surface a circular design which resembles that upon the great sacrificial table. This fact seems to justify the surmise that on the rock in question were performed sacrifices intended to appease the water dieties, the blood of the victims trickling from the rock and mingling with the waters of the river. I called this rock "La Roca de los Sacrificios"». Egli aggiunge che il bassorilievo è molto eroso perché durante la stagione delle piogge si trova spesso sotto la superficie dell'acqua. Comunque egli riesce a distinguere: «two personages crouching opposite each other within a circle which is surrounded by a concentric band of glyphs. Only the spaces which contained the glyphs are still recognizable in outline; the glyphs themselves have quite disappeared. The diameter of the entire design is 166 cm».

Se novant'anni fa il bassorilievo era già molto eroso, oggi lo è ancora di più comunque il doppio cerchio a tracce del disegno interno è ancora riconoscibile.

Se il suddetto progetto di costruzione della diga sarà realizzato, la Roca e molti antichi edifici con essa, spariranno per sempre.

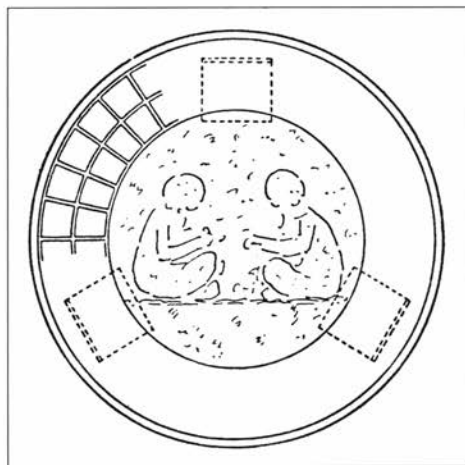


Fig. 143 - Altare 1 nel disegno di Maler.

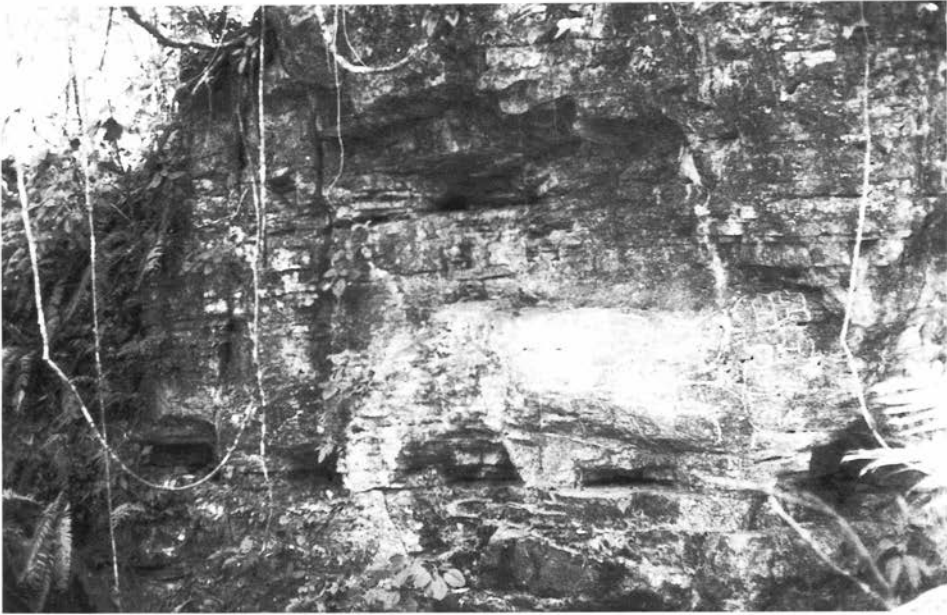


Fig. 144 - La parete istoriata.

Oltre alle quattro visite di Maler (i primi veri e propri surveyings) in cui da solo aveva scoperto, rilevato e messo in pianta, 11 tra piramidi e costruzioni imponenti, 4 altari e 37 stele scolpite, sono state svolte a Piedras Negras, altre campagne archeologiche di cui le più importanti sono state quella di Morley nel 1921 e quella della Pennsylvania University dal 1931 al 1939. La maggior parte delle sculture si trova ormai nei musei, principalmente nel museo della città di Guatemala. Le loro iscrizioni hanno rilevato soprattutto date, personaggi e fatti dinastici, nascite, morti, investiture e relazioni fra centri diversi.

In occasione del sopralluogo del 1983 Mary Miller ha identificato la parete rocciosa di cui Maler scrive: «I discovered on a rock wall, about four metres above the level ground, a second piece of sculpture, which was much worn. However I think I recognized a large hieroglyph in the middle, separated by an ornamental flourish on the right and on the left from two heads in profile. The head on the right is still fairly well preserved; the one of the left has entirely scaled off. The height of the design is about one metre, the total length about two and half metres».

Come si vede dal confronto dello schizzo di novant'anni fa con le nostre foto, la parete istoriata non ha subito nessun ulteriore danno. Il glifo menzionato rappresenta un ahau, cioè il segno del ventesimo giorno del mese, che conta venti

giorni. Nelle lingue dello Yucatan lo stesso segno può avere anche significati diversi, come re oppure sole. Gli svolazzi cui Maler si riferisce ricordano le rappresentazioni più o meno stilizzate di tartarughe, che in altri contesti si trovano associate ad un mitico personaggio maschile che «nasce» o «risorge» da un guscio di tartaruga ed

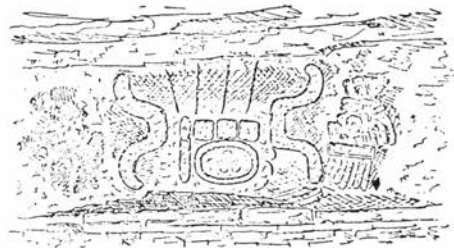


Fig. 145 - Disegno di Maler della parete istoriata.



Fig. 146 - L'incisione. Particolare della parete con le incisioni evidenziate in bianco.

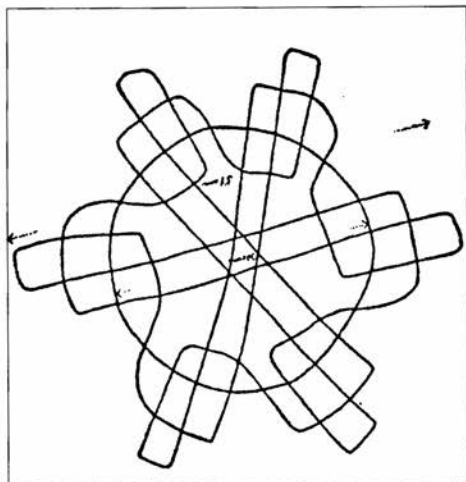


Fig. 147 - Incisione rupestre «Lintel 6» nel disegno di Maler.

è quasi sempre accompagnato da due figure laterali. Questo motivo è ricorrente nelle pitture vascolari del periodo classico (400-800 d.C.). Lo studio sistematico della ceramica maya è cominciato appena una decina di anni fa. Per la presenza di glifi già noti, la varietà di personaggi e di dettagli spesso ricorrenti, e la chiarezza di intere scene rappresentate, questo materiale apre uno spiraglio di luce sulla vita all'interno dei palazzi, di cui i primi esploratori potevano contemplare solo le maestose rovine. In questo specifico caso la rock art, cioè le due rocce istoriate, si inseriscono come contenuto e stile nel contesto di altre manifestazioni artistiche come appunto le sculture, gli affreschi, la ceramica dipinta e i codici.

Una terza incisione di cui ci riferisce Maler è di un genere diverso: si può considerare una vera fortuna il fatto di trovare un determinato oggetto nella giungla, sotto il tronco di un albero caduto in mezzo a un groviglio di liane, rami e foglie appassite, tra cui il machete ha scavato un passaggio; il Lintel 6 si riconosce dalla frattura descritta: «A large thin lintel, which we call N. 6, had been previously laid upon posts, it has served as a table. On what was formerly its under side it has an incised design, consisting of a threefold crossing, which intersects a circle of 30 cm in diameter, or to express myself differently, a wheel with six spokes, the ends of which projekting beyond the periphery of the circles area, in a certain way, connected. Lintel 6 when found by me was 134 cm in length, but it must have been larger since it had a piece broken off one end. Breadth 125 cm, thickness 9 cm».

Altrove furono trovati simili disegni, graffiti su lastre di pietra oppure sulla nuda roccia. Sembra trattarsi del tracciato di un gioco ancora oggi in voga.

RIFERIMENTI BIBLIOGRAFICI

MALER Teobert

1901 - *Piedras Negras. Researches in the Central Portion of Usumacinta Valley*, Memoirs of Peabody Museum (Cambridge, MA) vol. 2/1, (for 1898), pp. 40-75

PROSKOURIAKOFF Tatiana

19.. - *History implication of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras*, Guatemala, American Antiquity, vol. 25, pp. 454-475

SANSORES William Brito

1949 - *La escritura de los Layas*, Mexico, (), p. 44.

HELLMUTH Nicholas

1983 - *Iconography of Early Classic Myths*, Classic Maya Iconography, Princeton (Princeton University Pres).

ROCK ART FROM SOUTHERN LIBYA, NORTHERN NIGER AND NORTHERN CHAD

P. CERVICEK

E. Klitzsch, geology professor at the Technical University of Berlin (West), photographically recorded rock pictures as he explored Southern Lybia, Northern Niger and Northern Chad in the early sixties (Klitzsch & Pesce, 1966; Ziegert, 1967, p. 11, pl. 185b, c). Professor Klitzsch donated his photographs to the Frobenius Institute of Frankfurt-am-Main (Cervicek, 1976, p. 165), and as well as the prints and other important data concerning the sites he supplied to the author in a personal letter some hitherto unpublished examples of rock art reported in the following text.

The rock picture belong to eleven different sites: 1. Takharkhuri Pass, 2. Wadi Akar, 3. Jebel Ati, 4. Jebel Ben Ghnema, 5. Bir Ben Ghnema, 6. Death Valley, 7. Ehi Loga, 8. Bardai, 9. Jebel Trident, 10. Jebel Eghei, 11. Ain Dua. Among these eleven sites only four have been previously referred to in literature: Jebel Ben Ghnema (Graziosi, 1933; 1942, p. 201 ff.; Klitzsch & Pesce, 1966, pp. 70-71, ff. 26-28; Ziegert, passim; Cervicek, 1976, p. 165), Bardai (Dalloni, 1935, p. 260, f. 95; Perret, 1937, map; Graziosi, 1942; Huard, 1953; Klitzsch & Pesce, 1966, p. 71, f. 29; Beck & Huard, 1969, pp. 275-276), Jebel Eghei (Graziosi, 1942, pp. 209 ff.) and Ain Dua (Di Caporiacco, 1933; Perret, 1937; Graziosi, 1942, pls. 147-151; Rhotert, 1952, pp. 16, ff. 1-4, 6-35, pls. I-V).

The considered material is extremely varied: some rocks are painted while others are engraved, with pecking or linear techniques; the colours of paintings are red (from red clay slates), yellow ochre, black and white. The depicted

subjects include human and animal figures, hand and foot prints, cupmark and other symbols; most of the drawing styles can be compared to art already known in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

Attempts to place the newly discovered rock pictures are made by comparing these to similar figures that appear either in rock art or on pottery and other artifacts.

The oldest figures seem to be those engraved on a rock at Jebel Ati, where representations of handprints, serpent-like figures and other symbolic abstractions appear. The same rock was engraved again later and elements superimposed on handprints can be seen. The handprint is a characteristic figure as well as a very difficult one to interpret: it may be of interest to note that in ancient Egypt it was a symbol of the numinous and using the word «hand» was taboo, in colloquial speech (Altenmüller, 1976).

Among the animal figures bovids are clearly predominant. Attributed to the Bovidian period for the most part, they are assumed to coincide with the Neolithic (5th-1st millennium B.C.) (Hugot, 1974, pp. 40-41, 248). Some of the features present in the rock art seem to indicate the domestication of the bovid; a small hump is probably due to the crossbreeding of the African longhorn (*Primigenius*) and shorthorn (*Brachyceros*) cattle with the thoracic-humped zebu. The first record of these in Africa is an ancient Egyptian bronze from the XXIIIrd dynasty (ca. 9th century B.C.) which is considered apotropaic (Cervicek, 1974, 1. c.; Hickman, 1976). Other features have been interpreted as neck pendants or excisions leaving protrusions on the lower part of the pendulous neck of the animal and would therefore testify to domestication; similar feature appear on the C-group pottery in Lower Nubia and can still be seen in Southern Ethiopia, where the Dassanetch mark their oxen in that way (Almagor, 1972, p. 85; Cervicek, 1974, p. 183). Some of the bovids represented have deformed horns and one is ridden by a personage.

The formal repertoire also includes serpents, ostriches, camels, equidae, dogs, giraffes, capride (ibex), ovis, rhinoceri and others. Some of the figures are found in hunting scenes, i.e. a hunter accompanied by his dogs chases wild prey.

Human figures occur in various contexts; in most cases they are rather small and stylized in different ways. There is a female figure that closely resembles figure known at the Udei El Kel site in Tripolitania; Graziosi believes that these figures continued to be executed and date from Bovidian period up until the end of the period of the Camel or even later (Graziosi,

1971). Other human figures can be attributed to the Camel period, beginning at the end of the first millennium B.C., onwards (Hugot, 1974, pp. 40-41, 248). Historically, the earliest explicit indications of camel use in north-eastern Africa date back to the sixth and seventh centuries B.C., and are related to the Assyrian and Persian invasion of Egypt across the Sinai peninsula (Bulliet, 1975, p. 116). Representations of camels are associated with long spears with iron tops like those known from the Meroitic (Dunham, 1963, p. 380, ff. 180, 185, 207; Hofmann, 1975, ff. 1, 2, 8) and the X-group cultures of Nubia (Emery & Kirwan, 1983, vol. I, pp. 222-223, f. 83; vol. II, pl. 67); some are related to engravings of sandals recurring in the Libyan desert (Cervicek, 1976, p. 179, f. 270) Dakhla Oasis and in Nubia to foot dedications with Meroitic script, possibly representing the memorials of pilgrims (Frend, 1974, pp. 39-40, f. 1 top, pl. X; Thissen, 1976) and with the tiffin inscriptions of our era (Mauny, 1954, p. 32 ff.).

A group of cup-marks disposed in a rectangular shape finds parallels in the Yorda cave and elsewhere in the Tibesti Massif; it cannot be considered as having served as a game because it also occurs on almost vertical slopes (Dalloni, 1925, p. 348 ff. 145).

Note

The author wishes to thank Professor Hamberland of Frobenius Institute, and Professor Klitzsch, for the permission to reproduce the photographs, as well as his wife, Rosita Cervicek, for her assistance in preparing this article.

THE MALTESE TEMPLES: FUNCTION, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

D.H. TRUMP

Introduction

Though most of the Maltese prehistoric temples have already been considered in the literature (Evans, 1966; Trump, 1972, etc.), all merit further and more detailed discussion. This is not easy since we are looking at an interlocking system, like a piece of close-woven fabric. Insofar as it is possible to tease separate strands out of the web, I should like to look at three closely related ones which emphasise, as we surely ought to, the people who actually built and worshipped in these monuments, their function, their history and their social background.

For a start, it is necessary to review the evidence for what actually took place in these buildings,

if only to justify our use of the work «temple». The major alternatives can be rapidly eliminated. There is nothing here to suggest a defensive function. No industrial residues and few tools have been noted from any excavated site. The only human remains recovered were from Tarxien, where they were patently of more recent date, separated from the occupation levels by a substantial sterile deposit (Zammit, 1930). They were not then tombs, though we cannot exclude their use for funeral ceremonies before the bodies were removed for interment elsewhere. It is less easy to rule out so categorically domestic, or indeed palatial, use. Admittedly, several were later adapted for such use, notably Borg in-Nadur and Skorba West, but only at the level of reoccupation by squatters. But the features listed below weigh as strongly against this explanation as they do in favour of a religious function for these buildings.

Among these positive features are the following. The 3m high statue at Tarxien (an estimate only as it had been destroyed down to waist level), in a prominent position inside the principal entrance, can hardly represent other than a divinity within its sanctuary. The same applies, if rather less forcibly, to the range of statues from Tarxien, Ta' Silg and above all Hagar Qim. Without wishing to prejudge the issue by calling them «altars» from the start, the solid blocks and table-like structures from most sites, many

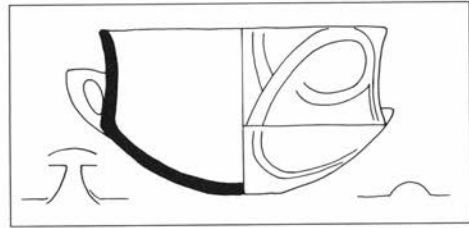


Fig. 148 - Tarxien period offering bowl (Evans shape 41), diameter 22.5 cm.



Fig. 149 - Decorated altar block with niche and cubby-hole. Tarxien South, first apse right.

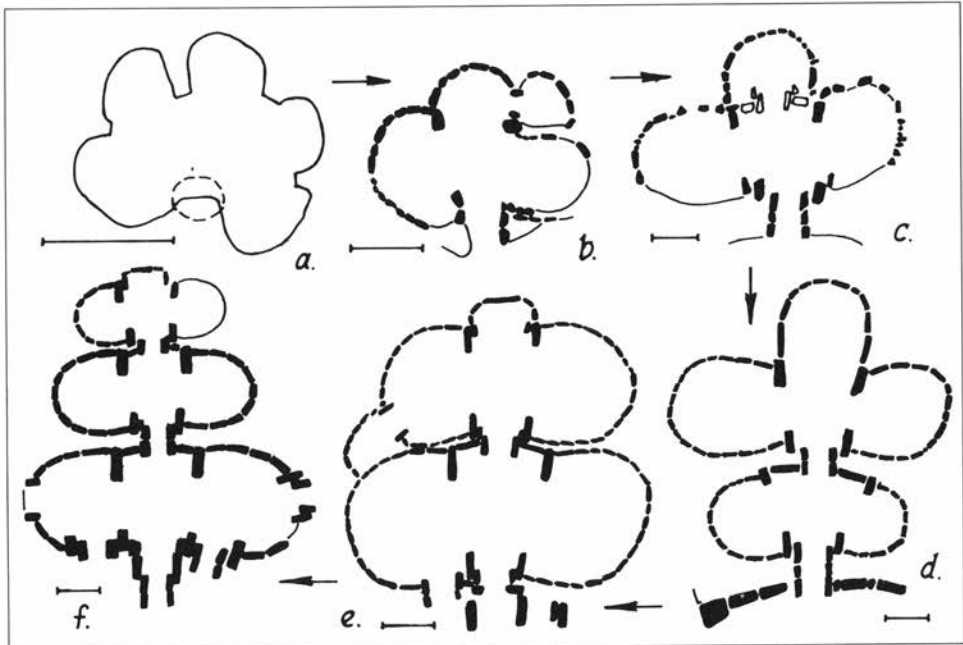


Fig. 150 - Developmental sequence of Maltese temples.

elaborately decorated, are difficult to explain by any other term. Nor can one find a simple alternative explanation for the so-called oracle holes, to be further considered, like the rest, below. The decorated sill-stone in Tarxien Central impedes all passage and again looks bluntly ritual, and even the barholes in doorways seem functionally excessive. The frequent holes through paving and threshold slabs, where they would have been downright dangerous, make good sense for libation, not at all in a domestic context.

The contents of cotemporary deposits tend to support a religious interpretation. The accumulations of animal bones look like the remains of sacrifices, and the large numbers of standardised carinated bowls (fig.), literally hundreds from the North Cave at the Ggantija, seem designed for offerings rather than simply for eating, drinking or storage. On the other hand, the correspondingly small number of stone blades, rubbers or other utilitarian tools, argues in the same direction.

Finally the very size of the buildings would seem to group them with other ritual monuments around the world rather than with political ones, particularly when one considers their close proximity to each other. Man has always laboured more willingly to exalt his gods than his secular rulers.

Ceremonial

Given the quantity and quality of both architectural and other evidence from these sites, it should be possible to go much further than usual in reconstructing the activities which actually took place in them. Within certain limits, that is indeed the case.

Animal sacrifice seems well attested. Quite apart from its form, the altar at Tarxien (fig.), with flint knife blade and goat horn core stored in the cubbyhole in its face, and the deposit of bones heaped into the niche behind, looks unequivocal. The animal friezes on blocks from the western apse nearby are at least suggestive. Animal bone was a frequent find, as for example the dove skeleton in the central niche of Skorba East. That these explicit finds are few is no great surprise considering the small number of both well preserved and well excavated sites.

Many sites include rock-cut tethering holes, and these are much more durable. At Skorba West, one projected from beneath an altar. At Hagar Qim, one is cut in bedrock outside the main entrance. But such «V» perforations must in some situations have other explanations, paired in door jambs for example, or at the entrance of the Holy of Holies in the Hypogeum, in one case functional, in the other perhaps symbolic. Cer-

tain chambers, like that with the bull and sow reliefs in Tarxien, or the inner right apse at Hagar Qim, may well have served as animal pens, though this would be hard to prove. Some of the evidence is fairly conclusive, then, but much of it falls well short of that.

Libation holes have also been mentioned. This seems by far the best explanation for the holes through paving slabs, thresholds, and even more the external shrines at Tarxien. It takes us little further since we remain in ignorance of the nature of the liquids being offered, the significance of the ceremonies, or even who performed them, in honour of which divinity.

The oracle holes have intriguing, albeit inconclusive, implications. These are perforations through orthostatic walls, usually through the orthostats themselves but occasionally by notching the sides of juxtaposed orthostats. They allow communication between the principal apses of temples and smaller secluded chambers. They give no clue as to the objects or messages which passed through them, but they do have some implications, to be examined below, on the people involved. If we stand back from the details to look at the overall plans of these buildings, further general conclusions can be drawn. Various elements in their design can be separately recognised. Whereas the outer boundary wall of all temples is markedly convex at back and sides, the straight or concave facade, with central entrance, makes a distinct contrast. This is emphasised at the Ggantija, Mnajdra South and Tarxien South particularly by lower extensions to the facade on the same concave line. At the first two, the area out in front is raised on a curved terrace wall to form a complete oval. A similar but smaller oval at Borg in-Nadur is enclosed by a megalithic wall on all sides. These all strongly imply the importance of this area of, but not within, the temple, and this probably applied at all sites, whether or not their forecourts were structurally delimited. It is surely not unreasonable to take this as evidence for some sort of ceremonial activity in front of the main entrance. The same deduction has been made for other monuments with concave facades, like the court cairns of Ireland or the Tombe dei giganti in Sardinia. Once more, however, the precise form of these ceremonies cannot now be recovered, popular gatherings, processions and dancing all being likely.

An even greater contrast is provided between the spacious open forecourt and the dark, enclosed temple interior. Though the structure of the roofing is open to debate, its existence is undoubted. But within the temples, not all the space was equally accessible. Firstly there is always a fairly spacious area within the main entrance in which elaborately decorated fittings are concentrated. Here a congregation of a few

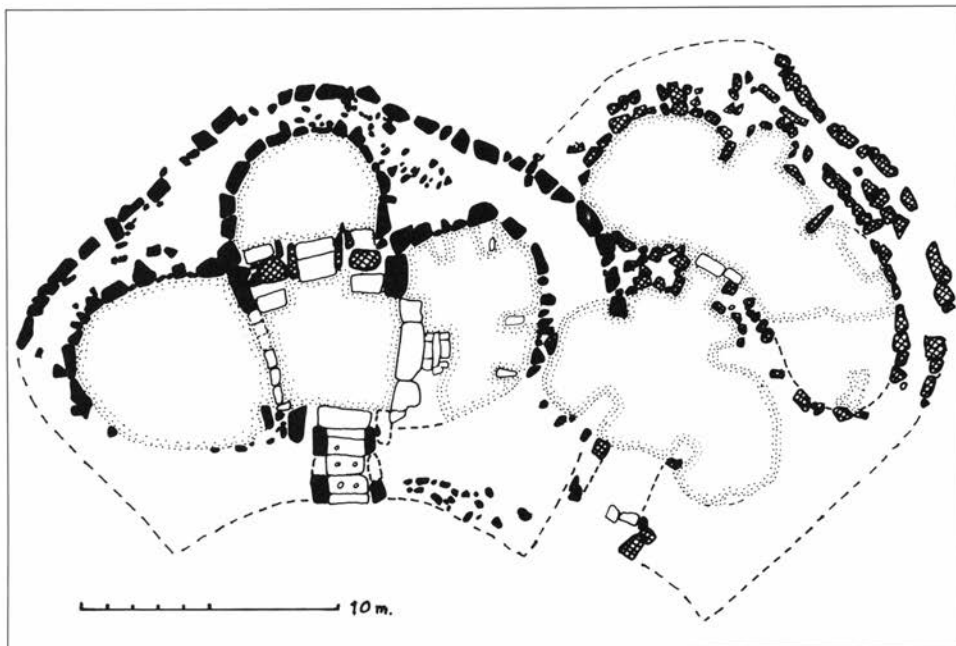


Fig. 151 - Skorba. In solid black the West Temple, a trefoil, in cross-hatch its inner apse later closed off and the East Temple of four-apsed plan, all flooring stippled. Bronze Age alterations omitted.

score persons could be accommodated, though this is unlikely to have been anything like sufficient for the whole population at the time. Then there is a passage or doorway into a usually smaller pair of apses (the Ggantija South and Skorba East are rare exceptions), normally without decoration, as if for a more select group or use. Thirdly there are even more «private» looking chambers within wall thicknesses, such as those behind the oracle holes. We seem to be looking, then, not at one activity within the temples and forecourts but at least four, though they could of course be closely related and probably were.

We have also noted the likelihood that at least two classes of people entered them, implied in the dichotomy between public and private areas. Before considering that, however, we must guard against assuming that there were no changes through time. The history of the medieval church is enough to warn us how dangerous that assumption might be. Indeed, if we look, we can find structural evidence for such changes within the Maltese temples.

Historical Development

By studying the typology on the one hand of the temple buildings themselves, and on the other of the pottery associated with them, Evans was able to suggest a convincing developmental sequence for both. Furthermore, there was strong mutual support between them. The possible derivation of the built temples from earli-



Fig. 152 - Kordin-III West, the multi-boled quern across the mouth of the left apse.

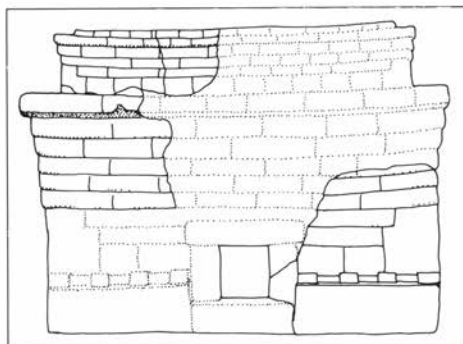


Fig. 153 - Contemporary model representing the front elevation of a temple, from Tarxien. Original height 33 cm.

er rock-cut tombs remains unproven, though no serious alternative is available. Also, one or two temples seem to be out of place in the sequence defined by the pottery. However, these anomalies can be simply explained by either import of earlier material to make up a floor level or the cutting out of an earlier floor during a later rebuilding.

The sequence can be rapidly summarised, fuller details being available in the quoted references (fig.). The first built temples had an irregularly lobed plan, probably imitating that of the larger, later rock-cut tombs, as at Xemxija 5. This plan was then tidied to a more or less neat trefoil shape of three somewhat elongated semicircular apses. With structural limits on roofing spans, any enlargement necessitated additional chambers, an extra pair on the front. As will be discussed shortly, increased size was not the sole, or even the main object, since the next step was to reduce the size of the central apse, leaving the standard four-apse-and-a-nich of all Tarxien period temples except Tarxien Central itself, where a third pair of apses was added.

Within this temple sequence, three general trends can be observed, towards greater size, greater constructional ability and a higher level of decoration. As became apparent from the excavation of Skorba (Trump, 1966), a significant point in the story is a more subtle one. All trefoil temples had their inner apses walled off, leaving only a closable doorway (fig.). This was not possible at the Ggantija South, where the whole of the inner apse was taken up by a raised altar, so the same result was achieved by adding an outer pair of apses. The object seems to have been the same, to divide the temple into private inner and public outer parts, a division not present in the earliest temples but universal thereafter. It was this five-apse plan which was copied as it stood, or adapted to the standard four-apse one.

The Temple Society

Archaeology should be studying people, though this is always going to be difficult. The attempt should however be made, and at three different levels.

Firstly we need to estimate, if only at order-of-magnitude level, the over-all population size. The obvious source for this, the physical remains of the dead, is nearly always too misleading to be useful, depending so much, as it does, on variable factors of funerary practice, and the accidents of survival and discovery of the evidence. We are left with two alternatives, the carrying capacity of the land and the labour force implied by constructional works. Malta is comparatively well supplied with evidence on each.

Being a small group of islands, totalling only 320

square kilometres, we are looking at a clearly delimited area. But the critical area to determine population size is not the overall total but the total of cultivable land, today substantially less than this. Though there is plenty of evidence to suggest a measure of soil erosion in the past, it would be foolhardy to try to estimate its extent with any accuracy. Our best hope is to compare Malta with the closest comparable area for which population figures are known, and use the results, with all diffidence, as the best we can do in the circumstances. Such a comparison has been made with the Aegean islands, which would suggest something like 10,000 to 20,000 people, which seems not unreasonable.

No detailed work has been done on the input of effort required for Maltese temple building in the way that it has on stone and earth built monuments in Britain. All such arguments are, in any case, weakened if not invalidated unless one has a close idea of the duration of construction, which one rarely if ever has. The best one can say here is that a population of the size suggested would be quite capable of building works of the magnitude we see.

A point arising from this, which cannot be overstressed, is that monuments are built by communities, not by individuals, and have to be understood in that context. Since many peoples worship without constructing elaborate buildings in which to do so, to say that temples are built for worshipping can be only part of the explanation. It is now fashionable to interpret them, and monumental tombs likewise, as symbols of community pride and ownership also. Without such an explanation, it is difficult to see why the prehistoric Maltese would have been prepared to devote their labours on such a massive scale to the constructions we see. Furthermore, Refrew (1973) points out that, as on the Atlantic seaboard or Easter Island, Malta is the sort of place where we might expect such disproportionate responses. Given a restricted area and a rising population (the increasing quantity of pottery from successive phases in the sequence hints strongly at this), competition for the available land is bound to increase, and visible expressions of ownership would be valuable. The alternative is internecine warfare. Easter Island illustrates both responses, Malta at this period only the first.

This is not to deny religious and social functions. The first have been already discussed; the second are illustrated most graphically at the site of Kordin-III. Here a multiple queurn is built integrally into the temple (fig.). It has become something much more than a simple tool for corn grinding as a domestic chore. It is now surely a social activity, with religious overtones, as well as a functional one. The same applies almost universally with burial practices. Indeed, the dis-

inction between the social and the religious is always slight, since a principal object of the latter seems always to be to reinforce the former, the functional object of disposing of the dead becoming almost incidental. The Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni makes the point well since it appears to have been both temple and tomb.

In the temple society three groups seem to stand out from the general populace of farmers and fishermen, though there is no reason why they should necessarily have been exclusive. Firstly, chiefs. Renfrew advances arguments for a segmented society at the chiefdom level. This would, indeed, explain the complexity of organisation implied by the temple-building. Such chiefs are admittedly not otherwise attested, though this does not invalidate the argument in the near-absence of adequate funerary or domestic evidence (Malone, Stoddart & Trump, 1988).

Returning to the temple plans for a moment, some emphasis has been placed on the suggestion of a division between private and public areas within them. The doorways between have provision for not only doors but also bars, to be secured from the inside. The oracle holes reinforce the argument that there was a possibly small group of people who had exclusive access to the inner chambers. Without reading too much into the term, we are tempted to use the word «priests» for this second restricted group.

Finally, details of the temple development, of technical advances in their construction, but above all in the contemporary models, both plans and elevations, found within them (fig.), all imply individual choices and decisions. This in turn can be construed as hinting at the existence of individual architects. The evidence has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Trump, 1979), so does not need rehearsing again. It does, however, reinforce the conclusion that the temples of Malta give us a remarkably detailed picture of a prehistoric society, even if, as always, we are left with many inadequately answered questions.

REFERENCES

EVANS J.G.

1959 - *Malta*, London (Thames & Hudson).

N.D. - *I Segreti dell'Antica Malta*.

1966 - *The Prehistoric Monuments of the Maltese Islands*, London.

MALONE C., S. STODDART & D. TRUMP

1988 - *A home for the temple builders: recent investigations on Gozo, Malta*, *Antiquity*, vol. 62, pp. 297-301.

REFREW C.

1973 - *Before Civilization*, London (Jonathan Cape). TRUMP D.H.

1966 - *Skorba*, Research Report vol. XXII, Oxford & London (Society of Antiquaries).

1972 - *Malta. An Archaeological Guide*, London (Faber & Faber).

1979 - *I primi architetti: I costruttori dei templi maltesi*, in Fontana, Piraino & Rizzo (eds.), *Philias Hariu, Miscellanea in onore a Eugenio Manni*, pp. 23-32.

ZAMMIT T.

1930 - *Prehistoric Malta. The Tarxien Temples*, Oxford.

ARTE PARIETALE A MALTA

(Relazione Preliminare)

Emmanuel ANATI

Il piccolo arcipelago sito nel cuore del Mediterraneo, tra la Sicilia e la Libia, non cessa di meravigliare per le sempre nuove scoperte archeologiche che vi si susseguono. Ora un eccezionale ritrovamento viene a rimettere in questione perfino le origini stesse del popolamento delle isole maltesi. Quando furono abitate per la prima volta dall'uomo? Finora si era pensato che i primi coloni già praticassero l'agricoltura e vi fossero approdati nel Neolitico, circa settemila anni fa, portando seco sementi ed animali domestici. Alcuni studiosi li avevano considerati di origine sicula, altri ne avevano cercato le origini nel Vicino Oriente.

I risultati conseguiti dalla Missione Archeologica Italiana fino all'inizio del 1988 sono stati pubblicati nel volume *Missione a Malta*. Da allora si sono svolte altre campagne di ricerca nel corso delle quali sono state scoperte (per la prima volta nell'arcipelago) delle pitture preistoriche in grotta. Si tratta di una trentina di figure ed alcuni simboli, in rosso, marrone, grigio e ocra, scoperti nella grotta di Ghar Hasan nel 1988. Comprendono diverse figure animali, una immagine antropo-zoomorfa, alcune impronte di mani e una varietà d'ideogrammi.

Ghar Hasan è una delle grotte più ampie che si conoscano nell'arcipelago maltese con una serie di corridoi che coprono alcune centinaia di metri di lunghezza. È ubicata sul filo dello strapiombo che cade a picco nel Mediterraneo, presso il campo di aviazione Hal Far nel sud dell'isola. Il magnifico paesaggio e le leggende concernenti saraceni e pirati, attirano turisti alla grotta, che è aperta al pubblico ed è assai frequentata. Ma nessuno, per quanto ne sappiamo, aveva notato le pitture e questo già sta a testimoniare il loro stato di conservazione e di visibilità. La grotta non è registrata nel repertorio dei siti archeologici di Malta, noto come «Evans Gazetteer 1971».



Fig. 154 - L'ingresso di Ghar Hasan a picco sul mare.

L'ingresso della grotta, che si presume sia anche stato l'ingresso antico, fu sistemato con un passaggio sullo strapiombo, protetto da ringhiera, nel periodo dell'amministrazione inglese dell'isola. Prima che venissero effettuati tali lavori, l'accesso era alquanto spericolato, dovendo attraversare un passaggio obliquo, a picco sul mare, oppure calarsi dall'alto, dal ripiano sovrastante, cosa fattibile solo con l'aiuto di corde.

Molte delle immagini sono tenui e parzialmente coperte da incrostazioni per cui il loro sistematico rilevamento riveste non poche difficoltà. Tuttavia sembra possibile stabilire fin d'ora che i modelli stilistici, associativi, grafici e concettuali riflettano un orizzonte di popoli cacciatori mai prima segnalato a Malta e anteriore alle culture del Neolitico.

La grotta ha una sua naturale configurazione in quattro principali settori:

I. Sala d'ingresso: un vano assai largo che s'incontra entrando nella grotta.

Sulle pareti si sono notati segni di graffiti ed alcune macchie di colore.



Fig. 155 - Ghar Hasan. Vista della Galleria B. Sulla parete a destra della foto vi sono segni di pitture (MLT.88.EA:XLIII-35).



Fig. 156 - Ghar Hasan. Grande macigno dalla suggestiva forma naturale reminiscente di animale. In vari punti si riscontrano tracce di colore in parte sovrapposte da incrostazioni calcaree (MLT.88.EA:XLIII-31).

II. Galleria A: Una lunga galleria con alcuni diverticoli laterali che penetra nella montagna perpendicolarmente alla costa. Termina in un cunicolo che abbiamo appunto denominato «il Cunicolo». In esso, su una forma rocciosa sporgente, si trova l'area istoriata definita come «Pannello 1». Dal cunicolo verso la Galleria B, sul lato sinistro, vi sono altre tracce di colore e graffiti.

III. Galleria B: Questa galleria si apre sul lato sud-est della Galleria A, parallelamente alla linea costiera e giunge fino alla Sala Hasan. Sulla parete sinistra, andando verso la Sala Hasan, vi sono tracce di pittura in pessimo stato di conservazione, in parte coperte da incrostazioni, più oltre, alcune impronte di mano su una superficie senza incrostazioni. Queste ultime hanno l'apparenza di essere molto fresche; la loro datazione non è facilmente definibile senza ulteriori analisi.

IV. Sala Hasan: Da questo vano si diramano le gallerie B e C. Vi è un orifizio che si apre sulla parete a picco sul mare. In questa sala vi è una celletta, tagliata nella roccia dall'uomo, che la tradizione vuole sia il nascondiglio di Hasan, il pirata galante della leggenda. La cella ha tutto attorno, lungo la parete dalla pianta ovale, un banco in pietra, simile a quello delle tombe a grotticella, ed un ingresso rettangolare irregolare. Si direbbe che all'origine, la «cella di Hasan», sia stata, di fatto, una tomba a grotticella. A breve distanza vi è un doppio foro comunicante ricavato in un angolo della roccia,

un espediente per legare corde che ritroviamo a Malta in vari periodi, a partire almeno dall'epoca dei templi megalitici.

Sul lato sinistro esterno dell'ingresso della cella vi è l'insieme di pitture definito come «Pannello 2». Lo scavo eseguito in epoca antica per ricavare l'ingresso, taglia le pitture che sono sicuramente precedenti. Sul taglio stesso ed in vari altri punti vi sono tracce di colore rosso, di tipo diverso da quello delle pitture che c'interessano. Mentre il colore delle pitture è leggero, appare oggi pressoché trasparente ed è in gran parte assorbito dalla porosità della roccia stessa, il colore che si sovrappone all'opera di scavo è grasso e denso e non è penetrato nella roccia. È rimasto a livello superficiale, come si può vedere da alcune scheggiature che rivelano la microsezione della superficie.

V. Galleria C: Questa galleria si diparte dalla Sala Hasan e si ricongiunge alla Galleria B, circa a metà di essa. È più bassa degli altri passaggi della grotta e in certi punti si deve procedere carponi. In varie parti di questa galleria si riconoscono segni di colore tra cui una silhouette animale, dipinta in rosso con linea di contorno, ed alcuni segni neri, probabilmente prodotti con una torcia, nonché alcuni graffiti tra cui almeno una figura animale.

Le due zone dipinte di maggiore interesse, per quanto si è potuto finora constatare, sono le due superfici definite come «Pannello 1» e «Pannello 2»; di queste si dà una descrizione preliminare e probabilmente incompleta.



Fig. 157 - Gbar Hasan. Sullo sfondo il Pannello I con resti di colore rosso che mostrano almeno due fasi di colorazione (gruppi 7-8) (MLT.88.EA:X-6).



Fig. 158 - Gbar Hasan. Particolare del Pannello II con resti di colore rosso e marrone in sovrapposizione. Diverse figure animali furono eseguite l'una sull'altra (gruppo 1) (MLT.88.EA:X-14).



Fig. 159 - Ghar Hasan. Galleria A. Segmento di parete dove si vedono tracce di colore. Sembra riconoscere, tra l'altro, la figura di un grande animale. (MLT.88.EA: XLIII-36).

Pannello 1: Su una superficie lunga poco più di m. 2 e alta circa m. 1.50, si è identificato una decina di figure o di gruppi di figure, tra cui si riconoscono due pesanti quadrupedi con musi molto allungati, come si trattasse di proboscidi. Una di queste pitture, in rosso, ha sull'area del corpo tre segni verticali in marrone. In un settore che sembra avere interessato particolarmente gli artisti preistorici, si hanno tracce di sovrapposizione di almeno tre mani diverse di pittura di tre diverse tonalità: rosso, marrone e marrone scuro (gruppo 8).

Da segnalarsi è la forma naturale del supporto. Si tratta di una sporgenza della roccia, alla biforcazione tra due diverticoli, che ha sembianze reminiscenti di una faccia umana. Fu completata dall'uomo che ha disegnato una forma di occhio là dove ci si aspetterebbe in effetti che questo organo si collocasse rispetto alle forme naturali circostanti.

Pannello 2: Su questo pannello, lungo circa m. 1.70, si sono riconosciute almeno 10 figure o gruppi di figure ed anche qui, almeno due di esse sembrano rappresentare gli stessi animali dal muso molto allungato e con proboscide. Se la cosa non apparisse quanto mai improbabile, si potrebbe pensare a raffigurazioni di elefanti, ma

solo un accurato rilievo potrebbe permettere d'identificarne la specie. Il gruppo più complesso, all'estremità sinistra (gruppo 1) ha una fitta serie di sovrapposizioni con tracce di almeno tre figure animali in rosso, ocra e marrone. Come nel Pannello 1 anche qui si nota la persistenza nel dipingere e ridipingere in particolare un'area ristretta di circa un metro di larghezza.

Due aree di questo pannello sono rovinate da lavori di taglio della superficie, probabilmente connessi con lo scavo della cella di cui si è parlato. Dove parti della superficie originale si sono conservate, si vedono tracce di colore che fanno presupporre la presenza all'origine di altre figure delle quali restano oggi poche tracce. Le figure sono in parte rovinate anche da incisioni che includono nomi e segni recenti. La dimensione delle figure varia, da una lunghezza di cm. 75 per la più grande, a pochi centimetri per le più piccole. Il loro stato di conservazione fa ritenere che in questa grotta possano esservi altre pitture che ancora non si sono viste.

Le pitture parietali della grotta di Ghar Hasan presentano una serie di problemi archeologici di non facile soluzione. Dal punto di vista stilistico e concettuale, le pitture che abbiamo scoperto



Fig. 160 - Ghar Hasan. Galleria C. Pittura di un profilo di corpo animale a linea di contorno in rosso (MLT.88.EA:XLIII-30).

non hanno paralleli diretti anche se esistono alcune somiglianze. La carenza di scene, il tipo di sovrapposizione intenzionale, l'associazione con serie di linee, di punti e d'ideogrammi, permettono di definire quest'arte come quella di popoli cacciatori arcaici e di considerarla chiaramente diversa dalle altre manifestazioni artistiche dell'isola (E. Anati, 1984; 1989).

Alcune figure mostrano similitudini con l'arte preistorica di grotte spagnole, mentre per ora non si conoscono precisi paralleli nell'Italia meridionale dove l'arte parietale è nota in varie località, anche con caratteristiche tipologiche, tematiche e associative simili, ma con stile diverso (P. Graziosi, 1987).

Forse più vicine stilisticamente delle altre, sono alcune figure animali dipinte in rosso e nero della grotta Paglicci, presso Rignano Garganico (Foggia) ma anche in questo caso, oltre alla differenza delle specie animali, si hanno anche concezioni diverse della colorazione degli spazi (F. Zorzi, 1962).

Stranamente, esistono similitudini stilistiche con pitture paleolitiche di altre zone, come quelle della grotta di Cuculiat in Romania (M. Carciumaru, 1985), o della grotta Kapova, negli Urali, in URSS (O.N. Bader, 1978; G. Bosinski, 1989).

In contrasto anche cronologico con tali paralleli, si notano talune somiglianze stilistiche e di

esecuzione con figurazioni risalenti alle più antiche fasi dell'arte rupestre del Levante spagnolo che, in base alle presenti valutazioni, risalirebbero già all'Olocene. Ci riferiamo in particolare a figure animali, con superfici interamente coperte da colore, della Sierra di Albaracin, di Tormon e di Alpera (A. Beltran, 1979). Ma anche qui, oltre alle generiche similitudini di alcuni tratti stilistici, si riscontrano differenze.

Il gruppo maltese di Ghar Hasan ha di fatto caratteristiche sue proprie che rendono ogni paragone estremamente arduo. Come si è già detto, sono indubbiamente opera di popoli cacciatori ed è presumibile che siano anteriori ad ogni altra opera d'arte finora nota a Malta, ma oltre a tale generica constatazione, per il momento null'altro certo può dirsi riguardo alla loro datazione.

Lo studio approfondito e l'esame sistematico delle pareti di questa e di altre grotte, potrebbero portare alla scoperta di altre figurazioni.

In effetti occorre una maggiore varietà di pitture e incisioni per approfondire lo studio. Eventuali scavi potrebbero inoltre portare al ritrovamento di reperti di cultura materiale e ciò indubbiamente costituirebbe un ulteriore tipo di testimonianza archeologica che aiuterebbe a formulare una più ampia visione del fenomeno.

Oltre a suggerire la presenza umana assai prima di quanto si fosse pensato, la scoperta è importante perché rivela, nel Mediterraneo centrale,

elementi culturali e concettuali inediti. Molti quesiti restano aperti e le ricerche proseguono, ma fin d'ora l'eccezionale scoperta fa meditare sul fatto che siano ancora possibili rinvenimenti del tutto imprevedibili in una delle zone dove maggiormente si erano concentrate le ricerche archeologiche negli ultimi cento anni.

Le Missioni archeologiche a Malta si sono svolte per iniziativa del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, con il concorso del Ministero Italiano degli Affari Esteri, con la collaborazione dell'Università di Malta (Dr. Anthony Bonanno) e del Museo Nazionale delle Antichità di La Valletta (Dr. Tancred Gouder), ai quali viene rivolto un cordiale ringraziamento.

RIFERIMENTI BIBLIOGRAFICI

ANATI E.

1984 - The State of Research in Rock Art, a World Report Presented to UNESCO, *BCSP*, vol. 21, pp. 13-56

1989 - *Origini dell'arte e della concettualità*, Milano (Jaca Book)

BELTRAN A.

1979 - *L'Arte rupestre del Levante Spagnolo*, Milano (Jaca Book).

BOSINSKI G.

1989 - Die Grosse Zeit der Eiszeitjagen *JDRGZM*, vol. 34 (1984), pp. 1-143.

CARCIUMARU M.

1985 - La grotta de Cuciulat, *BCSP*, vol. 22, pp. 89-97.

EVANS J.

1971 - *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: A Survey*, London (Athlone Press).

FRADKIN ANATI A. & E. ANATI (eds.)

1988 - *Missione a Malta*, Milano (Jaca Book).

GRAZIOSI P.

1987 - *L'Arte dell'Antica età della Pietra*, Firenze (Le Lettere). Ristampa con aggiornamento sintetico.

ZORZI F.

1962 - Pitture parietali e oggetti d'arte mobiliare del paleolitico scoperti nella grotta Paglicci presso Rignano Garganico, *RSP*, vol. 17, pp. 123-137.