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STATUE-STELE IN EUROPE, ASIA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

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The presence of statue-stele, decorated menhirs and engraved boulders, connected to the Atlantic megalithic tradition, encompass, from at least the 4th-3rd millennia BCE, extensive territories within Europe, Asia and the Mediterranean. Elements of comparison can be drawn from the similarities in the execution, form and chronology of these monoliths.

The papers in this session focus on: the research on the primary and secondary contexts of the finds; the methods of production of these monuments and how they have been decorated (by etching, engraving or painting); the proposed dating of their manufacture and/or later re-carving; the iconographic features (weapons, clothing items, ornaments, animals, etc.) and their proposed interpretations and functions.

The duration of this phenomenon, in several regions, lasted for longer, encompassing periods leading up to, and including, historical times. Some of the research presented may also focus on the areas where this tradition has spanned for a longer period of time and will analyze this continuity. Within this continuity evident changes in the execution, techniques and context may be highlighted and changes of an iconographic and/or ideological nature identified.

Engraved stele in the western area of the Golasecca Culture

Many of the findings in Castelletto Ticino, and in particular the excavation of the structure in Acacie street, allow us to draw a first hypothesis on the evolution of the use of stele in Golasecca Culture. The morphology of the artefacts, the presence in some cases of engraved figures or epigraphs, and their presence in enclosed and datable secondary contexts allows for the analysis of the chronology and the use of stele in the proto-urban center of Castelletto Ticino-Golasecca-Sesto Calende. Additionally, the author proposes a detailed list of figurative engravings on movable stone artefacts from the Novara, Varese, Verbano-Cusio-Ossola and Valsesia areas, which will enable the consideration of a broader geographical horizon in western Golasecca culture.

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Keywords: Golasecca Culture, Castelletto Ticino, stele, chronology



Fig.1 - Castelletto Sopra Ticino, stele in Acacie street. (photo Cerutti Chiara)
Fig.2 - Castelletto Sopra Ticino, stele in Acacie street. (photo Cerutti Chiara)

The lives of stelae and statue-menhirs in Bronze Age and Iron Age Iberia

The biographical approach has great potential for addressing the social and historical dimension of prehistoric stone monuments. This paper will present results of recent multidisciplinary research on the 'biographies' of stelae and statue-menhirs in Iberia. Focus will be placed on the *chaîne opératoire* involved in their production, as well as on the various natural and anthropogenic post-depositional processes that have contributed to their present state. The results of this research are shedding light on the roles of craftspeople and long-distance connections in the making of Bronze Age stelae and statue-menhir traditions in Iberia, as well as on the significance of place and the role of stone monuments in attracting human activity across millennia.

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Keywords: statue-menhirs,
Bronze Age, Iron Age, Iberia,
stelae

Statue-menhirs and context: new results and an overview from Ossimo Anvòia (Borno Plateau, Val Camonica)

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Keywords: Statue-menhirs, Ossimo Anvòia, Copper Age, 'Val Camonica'

Pioneering excavations at the survey-generated Ossimo Anvòia site between 1988–2004 have provided substantial information for an understanding of Copper Age Central Alpine ceremonial sites in their context. New results from laboratory work (as of 2018), together with an improved knowledge of the regional and Circum-Alpine cultural background, allow for behavioural and ideological inferences and contribute to situate such a site in its social and physical setting. In Val Camonica as elsewhere, statue-menhirs represented real or remembered persons with their associated “biographies”. At Anvòia they demonstrably co-acted with landscape features, non-engraved monoliths, small artefacts and ecofacts (e.g. image-making tools and pigments, pottery, evocative natural stones), and human skeletal “relics”. This archaeological context suggests a pervasive sense of place and an ideology of descent and memory, and by emphasizing the whole site as the significant unit it refutes the usual emphasis on image-bearing monoliths alone: a more balanced approach to the roles of statue-menhirs can thus emerge. In this paper, in addition to an overview of the site, its imagery, and criteria for interpretation, several newly restored monolith fragments are presented. Reused statue-menhir fragments recovered from recent pastoral structures in satellite areas further attest to Anvòia’s 5000-year-long “life” as a special site.

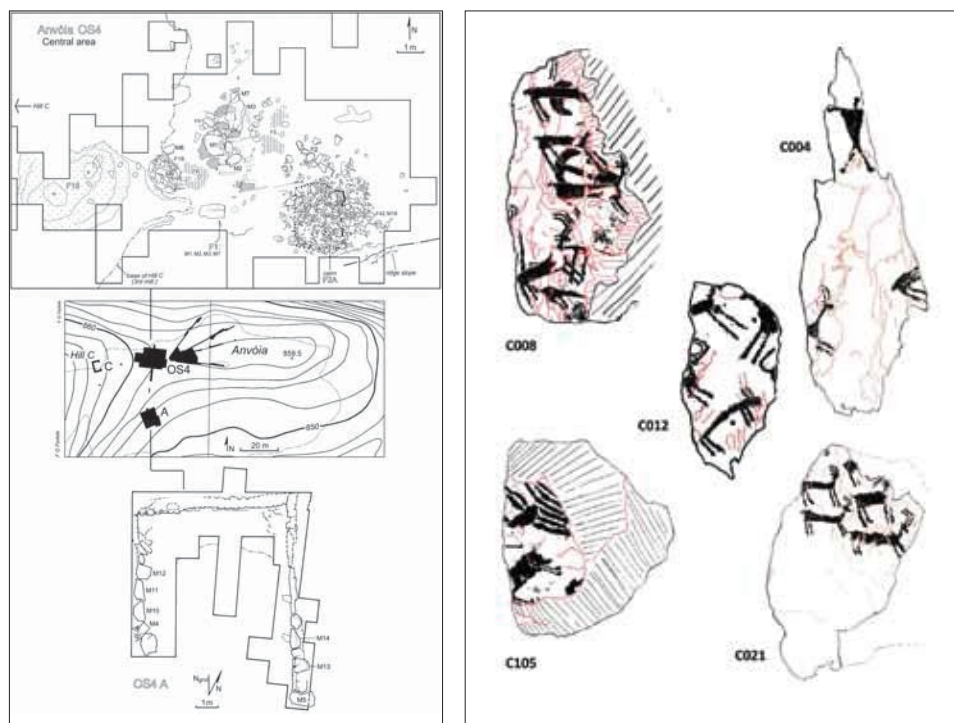


Fig.1 - Ossimo Anvòia: the locality and excavations (1988-2004), and simplified plans of the excavated areas. Monoliths are marked “M”. (drawing Francesco G. Fedele)

Fig.2 - A selection of unpublished / newly restored monolith fragments from Ossimo Anvòia - not to scale. (tracing A.E. Fossati)

The statue-stele in Valcamonica and Valtellina: an update

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Keywords: Valcamonica-Valtellina group, Alpine Statue-stele, Copper Age, female stele

The new National Museum of Prehistory in Capo di Ponte (BS) displays many engraved boulders found in Valcamonica in the last 30 years. The analysis of this new iconographic evidence resulted in supplementary results; however, the research also confirmed the overall picture of the chronology (Copper Age until the early Bronze Age), the succession of styles (style III A1, A2 and A3) and relationships between the symbolic groups (sun, weapons, ornaments, and fringed cloaks) as outlined in our previous research.

With regard to the Valtellina monuments, in the last 10 years new fragments have been brought to light; the local heritage has thus been enhanced in addition to expanding the iconographic repertoire. The comparison with the figures from Valcamonica, in particular those considered female, has revealed iconographic and chronologic differences. The characteristics of the Valtellina stele can be considered as a form of expression stressing particular aspects of cultural identity within the same language and ideological system.

Over the last years, the interpretational research of these monuments has been expanded, especially regarding the analysis of animal figures and their arrangement on the engraved surfaces, identifying dominant social groups within the local social structure in relation to the sites in question.

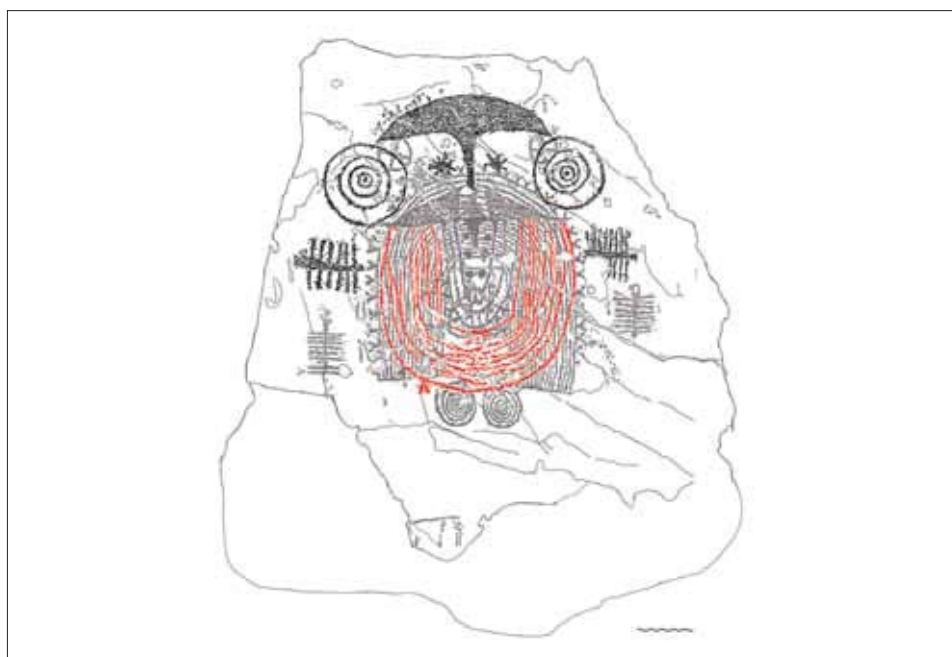


Fig. 1 - Teglio, Sondrio, Italy. Cà Morei 1 (Valgella). Female Stele. (photo A.E. Fossati)

Fig. 2 - Ossimo, Valcamonica (Bs), Italy. Anvoia, M001 (Ossimo 4). The drawing of the different engraving phases (tracing by S. Casini & A.E. Fossati)

Daunis revelations, in the statue-stelae and in the pottery of ancient Daunia (Apulia, Italy)

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Keywords: statue-stelae,
Daunia, pottery geometric
figures, hypersensory,
therapeutic, opium poppy,
Aegean

Daunis, an Italic population which lived in the north of Apulia during the first millennium BC, had an important cultural expression between the eighth and the fourth century, when they produced two very significant forms of art: pottery and statue-stelae. Pottery has very typical shapes which are mainly decorated with geometric figures and only seldom with descriptive scenes. On the other hand, statue-stelae are mainly covered with narrations, have geometric decorations similar to those of pottery and represent entities connected to the sacerdotal and martial world. In the 1990s I conducted a study on the interpretation of stelae which demonstrated that they are linked both to the sacramental use of the opium poppy, hypersensory states and therapeutic practices, and to hunting, war and myth. In this report I propose further connections both to the sacred sphere and to the art that is linked to modified states of consciousness, and also to heroes and deities from other cultural and geographical contexts, especially from the Aegean world.



Fig.1 - Museum of Manfredonia, Foggia, Italy. Daunia female statue-stele. (photo L. Leone)

Fig.2 - Museum of Manfredonia, Foggia, Italy. Detail of a female statue-stele, with engraved schematic opium poppies. (photo L. Leone)

Stone heroes and warrior ideologies from the east. Late Neolithic statue-steles in central Germany

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Keywords: Corded Ware Culture, Yamnaya Culture, central Germany, iconography, warrior

There are about 60 menhirs in central Germany which are little known. Five menhirs in southern Saxony-Anhalt exhibit pictograms such as bows, axes, cross-ribbed belts and sandal soles. Remarkably, these iconographic motifs have parallels in the statue-steles of the Yamnaya Culture which are distributed from the eastern Balkans to the Ukrainian steppes. It is thus possible to date the statue-steles in Saxony-Anhalt to the early 3rd millennium BC and to relate them to the Corded Ware Culture spreading from east to west. According to genetic analyses the bearers of the Corded Ware Culture are related to the population of Yamnaya Culture and thus immigrated. Other finds, e.g. hammer-headed pins made of bone, also came from the east. In this context the stone chamber from Göhlitzsch with its ornamented interior, showing among other things a reflex bow and a quiver, is important. They have extremely close parallels in representations in Klady in the northern Caucasus. Together with the new custom to erect burial mounds for single individuals, this shows influences coming from the eastern steppes and a new ideology focusing on the warrior. After their death, some of these warriors were then worshipped as heroes by erecting stone-steles in a ritual landscape.

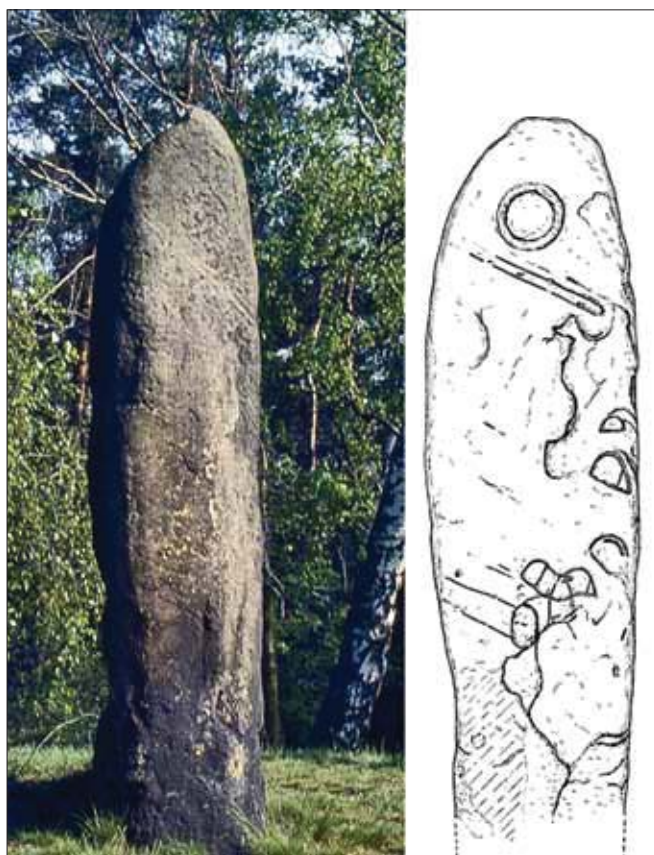


Fig. 1 - Statue-stele from Dingelstedt, Harz county, Saxony-Anhalt (left), and statue-stele from Belogradovk, Ukraine (right). (Dingelstedt: J. Lipták, Munich; Belogradovk: Ambrosio 1998, 139)

Fig. 2 - Statue-stele from Seehausen, Börde county, Saxony-Anhalt: (photo LDA Sachsen-Anhalt; drawing Müller 1995, 299 fig. 2,2)

**The anthropomorphic
monoliths of
Pietra Tara (Capo
Gallo - Palermo
- Sicily - Italy).
New iconographic
characteristics of
the Mother Goddess,
halfway through the
II Millennium in the
Mediterranean**

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**Keywords: Anthropomorphic
monoliths, Pietra Tara
site, Mother Goddess,
Mediterranean, Sicily**

The present research highlights the construction context of the site at Megaliti di Pietra Tara site, the methods used for the installation of anthropomorphic monoliths, including a proposal for their construction and their iconographic and ideological interpretations.

The megaliths site of Pietra Tara, is located in Monte Gallo (Palermo) opposite the island of Ustica 40 km away. It appears to be the first megalithic site found in Italy that used a cyclopean building technique, with a primary date of (3183 cal BP), 1300-700 BC. On the northern side, near the coast, some large carbonate landslide blocks were erected, like totems/menhirs, and enclosed by the cyclopean walls of the room/hut structures. The site analysis demonstrates its proto-urbanistic complexity with its division into two zones: low and high zone, separated by two pseudo-trenches. All the room/huts were associated with the "anthropomorphic" monoliths. The "anthropomorphic" monoliths so far detected number about a dozen, are boulder forms of uniform dimensions 2.00 x 1.20m, placed in the cyclopean walls, or above them at the corners of the huts, whose shape is always similar to a triangular polygon with the tip pointing upwards and at the base a small hypogeal cavity. Among these stands the so-called Mother Goddess of the Zone of Tara II anthropomorphic monolith.



Fig.1 - Pietra Tara, Capo Gallo, PA.
Zone VI - Tara II. The anthropomorphic
monolith of the Mother Goddess. (photo
© F. Mercadante)

Fig.2 - Pietra Tara, Capo Gallo, PA. Zone
IV - Baluardo. The cyclopean walls of
the rooms/hut structures. (photo © F.
Mercadante)

Take a bow: an overview of representations of archers, bows and arrows on Stelae from the 4th to the 2nd Millenium BC

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Keywords: archer, bow, arrow,
stelae, Copper Age, Italy,
Iberia

From the Late Neolithic, in rock-art and funerary contexts, male identity starts to be associated with the idea of the warrior. Stelae from the Occidental Alpine area and the Mediterranean begin to bear engravings of weapons, including the less common theme of bow and arrow. These latter two have been recorded as far north as Guernsey and can appear as part of a panoply, or as if they were being held. In some cases, the figure of the archer is central, appearing either on his own, as on the Longroiva Stelae in Portugal, or in combination with a separate engraving of a bow and arrow, as observed on the stelae uncovered in Laces, Val Venosta (Italy).

Arrowheads have been found associated with burials, both deliberate or accidental. Some of these suggest that quivers were used to store the arrows. By comparing the engravings to the funerary data, we will attempt to draw a line between the functional and symbolic values of the bow and arrow and will try to establish if the figure of the archer and the weapons related to it reflect a specific set of skills or class in the warrior world.



Fig.1 - Detailed view of the Dehus dolmen, Guernsey, British Isles. (Author © B.Moore)

Fig.2 - Tracing showing the engraving of an archer on the front of the statue-stelae from Laces, Val Venosta, Italy. (Author © E.A. Fossati, A. Pedrotti)

Statue-stelae in Sardinia at the dawn of the nuraghi. New data gathered from the audit of material and from field surveys

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Keywords: statue menhir, Sardegna, upside down, double dagger, symbols, reuse, nuragic age

This contribution aims to provide a general overview of the Sardinian statue-stele with particular regard to the Sarcidano region. It also aims to present new data.

The analysis of iconography and the interpretation of symbols engraved on the statue-stele are integrated with the study of primary and secondary contexts. Of special interest are the phenomena of reutilization and change in function of statue-stelae from the period between the Copper and the Bronze Age until the beginning of the Nuragic period, involving both funeral contexts, such as the tomb of Murissiddi in Isili and that of Aiodda in Nurallao, and subsequent habitative contexts, such as the Orrubiu Nuraghe in Laconi and the Terra Arrubia Nuraghe in Senis. These phenomena are not limited to the mere reuse of statue-stelae as building material, as is often the case: in many instances, the symbolic significance remains intact or is reinterpreted, and is used for the Cult of the Dead or for marking strongholds at strategic points across the territory. This significance continues until the beginning of the Iron Age and forms an ineluctable premise for the development of large statuary, as can be seen in the extraordinary finds of Mont'e Prama.



Fig.1 - Statue menhir Barrili I, Laconi.
Fig.2 - Statue menhir statues from the Megalithic tomb of Aiodda, Nurallao.

This land is my land. Stone maps, Archeology and Geography in the alpine territory

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Keywords: Caven 3, Mother Goddess, Teglio, border, maps, comparative reading

This research involves the analysis the “Caven 3” stele, known as the “Mother Goddess”, identifying its fascinating design within the territory of Teglio, in Valtellina. This mysterious Copper Age stele, found in 1940, is preserved in the “Antiquarium tellinum” at the Palazzo Besta State Museum. Traditionally it would represent the cult of the “Mother Goddess”, or symbols of solar worship. Different disciplines can contribute to the interpretation of the engraved signs: with a technical-scientific approach the figure of “Caven 3” can be read as a representation of the territory of Teglio and its natural boundaries through codified symbols, responding to conventional rules, some of which still used in cartography (as Y for the term on the border). The same symbols are found in Valcamonica, arranged according to the characteristics of the various places (Cevo, Bagnolo). These could be the first representations of the delimitation of a territory belonging to an entire community.

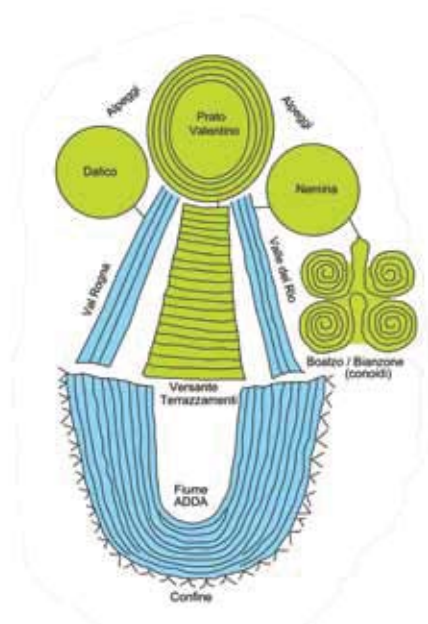


Fig. 1 - Stele of Caven 3, Antiquarium Tellinum, Teglio, Italy. (photo courtesy CCSP Archive, under concessione of Mibact, Polo Museale della Lombardia)
Fig. 2 - Stele of Caven 3, Antiquarium Tellinum, Teglio, Italy. (graphic elaboration S. Onetti, 2018)

Do the stelae discovered in the Stolovatetz locality, town of Razlog, Bulgaria belong to an ancient Thracian origin?

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Keywords: stele, spirals, sanctuary, prehistory, Razlog, Bulgaria

The discovery of these monuments near the town of Razlog (Bulgaria) more than 60 years ago continues to be the subject of controversy in the scientific community. Four of the stelae were discovered accidentally in 1953. Unfortunately, only two of them were preserved. Archaeological excavations were carried in 1973 at the site of the earlier discovery where three more steles with fragments of figure decoration were found. The white marble which served as stele material was extracted from a local quarry. The spiral elements depicted in the front surface of the steles is their common feature. On the front surface of the largest stelae are depicted spirals in three rows, separated by a zigzag line, and a figural scene consisting of a solar boat, a snake with two heads and an ithyphallic figure standing beside it. A large number of scholars interpret these findings in the context of the Thracian tradition, influenced by the Mycenaean culture. It is a disturbing fact that, even after the publication of the results of the research from the site, an important fact is obviously missed; the steles are secondarily reused as building material in a building dating from the 4th to 3rd century BC.



Fig. 1 - Restoration of the stele with the ithyphallic man, Razlog, Bulgaria. (photo Ivo Filipov)

Fig. 2 - Restoration of the stele with the spiral element, Razlog, Bulgaria. (photo Ivo Filipov)

New anthropomorphic stelae from Trontano/Causasca in Ossola (Northwestern Italy)

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Keywords: stelae, Copper Age,
Alps, Ossola

Recently in Val Vigezzo, a lateral valley of Ossola, in Northwestern Italy, close to the cottages of Trontano/Causasca, some stelae have been identified. Although no carved representations are now visible (we'll make some more exhaustive analysis after the spring of 2018), their shapes are similar to the ones in Aosta/Saint-Martin-de-Corléans and Sion/Petit-Chasseur and Vestignè/Tina. Ossola is the closest valley to Valais, so we may recognize another site similar to the former ones. Unfortunately, they were displaced and relocated near some cottages in early 20th century during the construction of a railway and now any other ancient structures are now no longer visible. Some in-depth investigations are projected for the spring-summer of 2018.



Fig. 1-2 - Trontano/Causasca, Val Vigezzo, Ossola, Italy. The two Copper age stelae in their actual relocation. (photo A.E. Fossati)

The stylistic group of Monte Hijedo in the beginnings of complex societies in the North Iberian Peninsula

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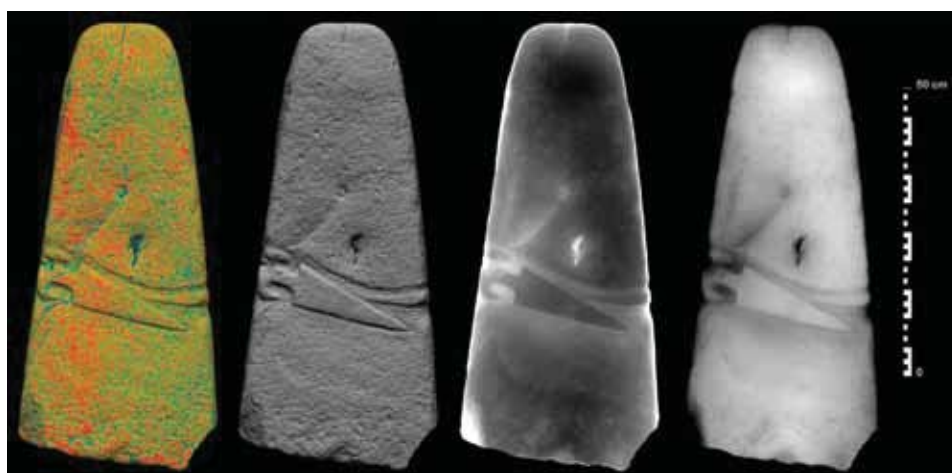
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Keywords: stylistic group, anthropomorphic, Iberian Peninsula, Bronze Age, dagger, semiotics

Fig.1 - Statue-stele of Salcedo, Cantabria, Spain. Stylistic Group of Monte Hijedo.

Fig.2 - Anthropomorphic stele of Tabuyo del Monte, León, Spain.

Since the 1990s, several sites with anthropomorphic representations have been found in the upper Ebro valley. They share a particular formal canon and can be dated to around the beginnings of the Bronze Age, in the late third millennium cal BC. In this paper we analyze the use, in them, of certain ideographic resources understood as a leitmotiv of a primitive form of social portrait. We also compare these elements with similar ones observed further north, already in the Atlantic valleys of the Cantabrian Region. Finally, we reflect on how a similar set of significant elements is expressed with differentiated graphic solutions, in what seem to be alternative cultural contexts that we define as styles. Could we be observing a Mediterranean mode of representation versus another Atlantic one but within a similar social complexity?



The technical differentiation of Aosta Valley anthropomorphic stele

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Keywords: anthropomorphic stele, technical differentiation, process of working, stylistic typology

The corpus of the steles of Aosta Valley consist of 46 items of which until now only a portion have been published. According to the classification of Franco Mezzena, who had initially studied them, the anthropomorphic steles have two different styles: archaic and evolved.

This reproposed iconographic reading is more robustly conceived, with the inclusion of an additional category, defined as 'transitional', for the peculiar stylistic and technical typology found on two steles.

The archaic anthropomorphic steles were usually created on coarse grained schistose rocks, which were difficult to work with, of large dimensions, worked on two sides, and have a reduced ornamentation traced out by a shallow incision. The 'evolved' steles are monofacial, on fine grained rocks which were easier to work with; the drawing was carried out in minute detail, ranging from rich detail to light relief, whose effects contrast the shiny surface with opacity.

An exact identification of the technical differentiations is indispensable to provide clarity to the methodology and consequently the results as well. On this basis this critical inquiry will be able to verify the specificities of processes, as well as the possibility of individualising a chronology for the creation of the sculptures.



Fig.1 - Anthropomorphic stele with double spiral pendant, Archaic or transitional style. (Archivi Regione autonoma Valle d'Aosta)

Fig.2 - Anthropomorphic stele 30, evolved style. (Archivi Regione autonoma Valle d'Aosta)