

UMBERTO SANSONI ALBERTO MARRETTA SALVATORE LENTINI

IL SEGNO MINORE

Arte rupestre e tradizione
nella Bassa Valcamonica

(Pisogne e Piancamuno)

Prefazione di R.A. Lorenzi

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IL SEGNO MINORE

*Arte rupestre e tradizione nella Bassa Valcamonica
(Pisogne e Piancamuno)*

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Premessa

Di Pisogne e Piancamuno poco si conosceva sul piano archeologico; le notizie riguardanti rinvenimenti di reperti antichi erano sporadiche e restavano solo nella memoria di chi li aveva effettuati.

Solo di recente sempre più numerose segnalazioni di presenze archeologiche hanno indotto le Amministrazioni di Pisogne e Piancamuno alla riscoperta di queste vestigia incaricando della ricerca, nel 1998, gli esperti del Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici.

Il lavoro si è concretizzato in questo libro, curato dal Prof. Umberto Sansoni, Alberto Marretta e Salvatore Lentini, nel quale sono illustrate 23 località (16 a Pisogne e 7 a Piancamuno) con circa 80 superfici incise, che offrono al lettore la visione del territorio di questi due Comuni quale esempio da manuale di arte schematica di gran pregio. I contesti in cui questi siti sono ambientati sono talora magnifici: Corno Palazzo, Coren di Marte, Prevent; vi sono composizioni preistoriche, ad esempio La Biosca, che trovano confronti fino all'occidente atlantico (età del Bronzo, II mill. a.C.) e composizioni storiche legate alla vita ed al credo della nostra era come a Pontasio, Gratacasolo, Beata ecc.; vi sono date e iscrizioni dal XVI al XX Sec.; segni sulle gallerie di miniera, vicini alle cave di pietra da macina, lungo i sentieri dove sono stati trasportati materiali per almeno due millenni.

Tutto ciò riconduce alla memoria di attività intense, legate ai luoghi, la cui testimonianza è stata impressa indelebilmente sulle nostre rocce dalle popolazioni antiche, che hanno conferito a questo territorio un valore di ecomuseo.

Il titolo "Il Segno Minore" deve indurre noi moderni ad una riflessione sull'importanza delle umili tracce lasciate dall'attività dei nostri predecessori.

Al lavoro di ricerca sul territorio si aggiunge la recentissima scoperta del prezioso sarcofago romano dei primi secoli d.C. rinvenuto durante gli scavi sotto il pavimento della Pieve di Santa Maria in Silvis a Pisogne; questo fatto apre nuove ipotesi sulla storia di questa cittadina e sulla presenza romana nel territorio.

È auspicabile che partendo da quest'opera si intraprenda ora un progetto che possa rendere i luoghi storici e preistorici di questa parte della Valcamonica un polo di attrazione e di arricchimento culturale per il visitatore.

*Il Sindaco di Piancamuno
Giuseppe Garatti*

*Il Sindaco di Pisogne
Giacomo Lanzini*

*Ad Antonio Magni, a cento anni dalla pubblicazione su le
"Pietre coppelliformi nuovamente scoperte nei dintorni di
Como".*

*Ad Ercole Verzeletti, appassionato cultore della storia
pisognese, nell'anno della sua scomparsa.*

Prefazione

Archeologia ed antropologia culturale di fronte ai "segni minori"

Talvolta nei "segni minori" si celano storie grandi e generali che le narrazioni dei "segni maggiori" hanno invece finito per occultare o consegnare alle letterature. Nei tempi lunghi della storia, la culturalità comunitaria non solo inventa nuove forme, ma incontra contaminazioni ed apporti provenienti da altrove, rifunzionalizza condotte e rituali consegnati dalla tradizione, sedimenta ed aggiorna un patrimonio che è vivo e per ciò stesso soggetto ai bisogni ed alle urgenze di ogni contemporaneità.

La memoria, che è nell'ambito dei culti e delle visioni del mondo che li fondano patrimonio collettivo e comunitario, non si limita a conservare: la mitopoiesi delle favole antiche, continuamente e costantemente rivisitate e ri-narrate, è testimonianza certa del rapporto costante che si instaura tra tradizione e innovazione, cosicché è proprio sulle rovine di città combuste e distrutte che gli antichi edificarono le nuove.

Dunque, la contaminazione culturale origina proprio dall'incontro di diverse visioni del mondo, che tuttavia nella filogenesi del loro prodursi condividono un'identica apertura ontologica, un'identica ricerca di senso alle stesse e ripetute domande. Tale prospettiva antropologica può trovare conferma soltanto nell'estensione del confronto e della comparazione tra i diversi campi e settori che unitariamente costituiscono il contesto culturale, come già aveva osservato Bernardo Bernardi riprendendo Tylor. Completerei questa prospettiva, insistendo sulla necessità di confronti che devono essere condotti orizzontalmente e verticalmente, e cioè, da una parte, di confronti tra diverse civiltà anche molto distanti tra loro nello spazio e nel tempo ma accostabili per costanti e sviluppi, dall'altra di confronti stratigrafici all'interno di una stessa civiltà, operando sul suo materiale culturale (tutto) quasi come sul "tell" di una arcaica città distrutta.

Credo che il lavoro che ora viene dato alle stampe e che porta l'inconfondibile segno della passione e della serietà di ricerca di Umberto Sansoni e dei suoi collaboratori presenti questi pregi, non facilmente riscontrabili in fatiche simili. L'arte schematica di due limitate plaghe della Valcamonica — una tra le terre europee dalle profonde origini culturali e culturali — è qui indagata con passione e con rigore, con il preciso obiettivo di documentare alcune "pagine" del grande corpus alpino di questa produzione "minore", ma anche con l'intento di riscontrare in essa quelle caratteristiche antropologico-culturali che ne fanno una delle espressioni della culturalità arcaica se non proprio universale, certo di una vastissima area che dall'Occidente atlantico arriva fino alle più sperdute vallate alpine del nord Italia. Tra le navi funerarie e le case dei morti attestate da queste rocce e le case dell'Ade di memoria classica o l'imbarcazione che porta il monaco medievale san Brandano nell'al di là, oltre le acque, è possibile intravedere parentele e connessioni remote e tutt'altro che casuali. L'archeologia del territorio anche in questa direzione costituisce uno straordinario strumento di verifica delle permanenze antropologico-culturali, poiché può essere assunta come il primo e forse generativo momento di una più generale "archeologia dei saperi", così come la intese Michel Foucault. I contributi di A. Marretta che il volume presenta suggeriscono di guardare a questo orizzonte affascinante e complesso che qui viene soltanto accennato, ma già dotato di utili indicatori sulle civiltà pastorali e minerarie delle valli prealpine, organicamente costituite in società che,

parrebbe di capire, fanno guerre difensive e praticano rituali propiziatori e benefici. A Pisogne e a Piancamuno, come un po' ovunque in Valcamonica, una civiltà di pastori e fabbri andò disseminando, nel tempo ciclico e fuori dal tempo storico, testimonianze che ressero all'usura degli elementi naturali, e qui sorsero nel tempo storico narrazioni e leggende che ancora oggi conservano le tracce di visioni del mondo arcaiche, animistiche, simpatetiche, poietiche sottoposte a continui riplasmi che rispecchiano trasformazioni sociali e culturali profonde e talvolta drammatiche.

I due linguaggi, quello delle pietre e quello delle narrazioni folkloriche, trovano in questo lavoro un primo, interessante ed utile tentativo di corrispondenza, come bene accertano le "favole" rintracciate da S. Lentini, che spesso testimoniano di uno scontro protratto e cruciale tra visioni del mondo diverse che si esprimevano attraverso la pratica e la simbologia dei culti.

Sono storie che narrano spesso di confini, fisici e tra i vivi ed i morti, di eventi prodigiosi (più che miracolosi), di fuochi sorprendenti ed acque fatali, quasi sempre di culti agrari rivestiti di religiosità cattolica tridentina, perché qui fu proprio il disciplinamento conseguito al Concilio di Trento a tracciare un confine culturale tutt'altro che simbolico tra passato e presente, tra civiltà agraria e dottrina teologica restaurata. I culti agrari di passaggio stagionale del solstizio d'estate caratterizzati dai rituali dell'acqua e del fuoco, diventano i fuochi di San Giovanni (23 giugno) che bruciano nella prodigiosa notte in cui tutto può accadere.

Capita così che nella "Mariogola della Confraternita di San Giovanni Battista" di Cimbergo, approvata in Venezia nel 1553 (dunque, in pieno svolgimento del Tridentino), si possa leggere come, nella notte del 23 giugno del 1522, gli abitanti avessero avuto una "miracolosa vision", "la qual vision fu che nella notte de miser San Zuane baptista vitemo visibilmente andar a torno el monte ditto Dos da grom una grandissima luminaria de torzi accesi". Cimbergo sovrasta in posizione eminente le Campanine, il sito archeologico-rupestre di forte impronta culturale noto da alcuni anni proprio grazie ai ritrovamenti di Umberto Sansoni. La "miracolosa vision" del solstizio d'estate accoglie e cambia di senso l'evento prodigioso della religiosità agraria pre-cristiana, segnata da prodigi e da infrazioni del normale corso della natura, da manifestazioni naturalistiche straordinarie.

Qualche chilometro più a nord, sempre in Valcamonica, a Vione, a memoria di B. Bianciardi (a. 1624), Carlo Borromeo, nella sua visita alla Valle del 1580, aveva ordinato che venisse distrutta "quella diabolica e superstiziosa pietra, in mezzo della quale vi stava un buco tondo, a cui come a Dio per impetrare la pioggia faceva ricorso la Comunità medesima cavando a sorte nelle necessità nel numero delle Zitelle, le dodici vergini, che adornate di bellissime galle e provviste d'un vaso per cadauna si spedivano come processionalmente verso del monte cantando superstiziose preci, et invocando sovente il nome falso del Nume di quella Pietra". I "numi" che in un lontano passato governavano il tempo meteorologico, elargendo pioggia e sole, sono, con la vittoria del disciplinamento culturale ed ideologico tridentino, sostituiti da nuovi intermediari cattolici e le antiche coppelle culturali sono consegnate all'intelligenza dell'archeologo più mute e più ardue da interpretare.

Questo lavoro a più mani, che ha il pregio di proporre una sfida inusuale, quella di uno stretto apporto interpretativo di archeologia e antropologia culturale, costituisce un contributo importante in questa direzione.

Roberto Andrea Lorenzi

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Fig. 1
Vista della Valcamonica dal Dos della Regina, Pisogne (foto A. Marretta).

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Introduzione

Negli ultimi 20 anni il Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia del C.C.S.P. ha lavorato a più riprese sull'arte schematica; in particolare in Valchiavenna, nel Sondriese, in Valmalenco ed in varie aree camune (Alta Valle, Malonno, Demo, Sellero, Grevo, Valsaviore); alcuni contesti sono pubblicati ed altri in via di edizione. Il nostro metodo è quello di far prospezione integrale sulle aree segnalate, e quindi analizzare (e pubblicare) il corpus rinvenuto con particolare attenzione ai confronti ed al contesto storico-archeologico, al fine di integrare tutto quanto possa aiutare la nostra comprensione (le fonti storiche, le tradizioni e il folklore, i modelli socio-economici, la presenza di peculiari attività di sussistenza come quella estrattivo-mineraria).

I contesti alpini presentano molti punti di contatto, direi una certa omogeneità di fondo, ma nel contempo peculiarità d'area che conferiscono un carattere speciale alla vicenda d'ogni zona. E dico vicenda perché si tratta in ogni caso di frequentazioni stratificate con una sicura presenza pre- e proto-storica ed una successiva, e forte, componente cristiana; è proprio quest'ultima, spesso, a dare le maggiori caratterizzazioni, in quanto riflette una più conosciuta contestualità storica.

Tale inquadramento in un ampio ambito storico-geografico è cornice e scopo di una ricerca d'area come la presente: cornice perché nessuno dei rinvenimenti può prescindere dalle connessioni in rete accennate, scopo perché ogni contesto è tassello importante in tale rete e dà indicazioni preziose per una complessiva comprensione del fenomeno nell'arco alpino. In tal quadro Pisogne-Piancamuno si configura come un'area rilevante e per varie ragioni: è uno dei siti rupestri più meridionali della media regione alpina (il più meridionale fra quelli con consistente arte schematica) e la sua stessa posizione ne fa come una porta, una terra di confine tra Prealpi e Padana, tra il lago e la valle, fra la valle, la montagna e le altre valli ad est, oltre il passo di S. Zeno: qui infatti era lo sbocco dell'arteria principale che collegava la Valcamonica alla Valtrompia, a Brescia, ed alla pianura e qui l'approdo principale della via lacustre da e per il Sebino. Questo valore di area soglia o cerniera, molto inibito con l'apertura delle gallerie verso Marone-Iseo, ne fa sì una terra di montagna, ma con una forte proiezione (e recezione) verso l'altro, la città, la pianura. Si aggiunga poi la risorsa economica tradizionale, l'agro-pastorale, quella imponente della costruzione di macine, della preparazione di carbone e soprattutto quella minerario-siderurgica, per avere idea di un ruolo produttivo-commerciale di storia lunga, che molto ha determinato la storia di questi luoghi.

L'arte rupestre introduce i suoi elementi per meglio intendere tale vicenda ed assaporare anche le atmosfere di epoche ormai lontane, visto che le trasmette, fatto unico, come reperto intatto in un ambiente che spesso solo la natura e l'uomo in antico ha trasformato.

Se dunque è importante l'analisi del sito, nel contesto della Valcamonica e delle Alpi Centrali, e tanti sono i richiami, altrettanto importanti sono le peculiarità di zona, le speciali linee storiche dell'area: ogni territorio si configura come un microcosmo, un insieme con le sue enfasi e le sue originalità. Queste concernono anche l'espressione rupestre ed indagarle è l'altro polo della ricerca: nel nostro campo si spinge di routine sino alle caratteristiche delle singole rocce e segni, ma anche sino a cercare le possibili motivazioni nella ricostruzione archeologica, come nelle abitudini economiche, nelle leggende e aneddoti dell'area, nelle particolari situazioni storiche.

Non si vuole però focalizzare troppo sulle ipotesi interpretative né su quelle cronologiche, sia perché è prematuro tentare affondi che riguardano un'area molto più vasta, sia perché non si vuol scadere in riduttivismi e forzature.

Con le sole eccezioni di alcuni elementi come i dischi puntati, gli scivoli, i "ferri di cavallo", i segni topografici e quelli confinari, che si è scelto di approfondire in modo tematico, si è tentato piuttosto di stringere il cerchio sui significati più probabili a testimonianza di quelle cultualità e ritualità minori, popolari o dotte, che hanno informato la vita di questi luoghi per millenni. In questa prospettiva un ampio spazio è perciò dato alle "tradizioni", cioè alla religiosità popolare, agli aneddoti, a tutto quel patrimonio documentabile (dalle fonti od oralmente) che ci dà ambito e sostanza di credenze, mentalità, "anomalie" degli ultimi secoli; è un tentativo per intendere il quadro in cui si è sviluppata buona parte dell'arte rupestre individuata ed è anche un modo per intendere o ipotizzare le motivazioni di alcune istoriazioni. Ma abbiamo soprattutto coscienza che le radici di tante tradizioni affondano indietro, molto indietro nel tempo: esse hanno genetica precristiana, specie in un'area a forte resistenza e conservatività come la nostra, dove la nuova fede si affermò tardi, a fatica e dovette scendere a compromesso con il tenace mondo preesistente. Certo il gesto ed il credo originario è stato trasformato, coperto, alterato nei secoli, ma è comunque lì, latente e per quanto difficile sia distinguerlo, il tentativo è dovuto. Autori come M. Eliade, V.J. Propp e C. Ginzburg, sul campo ampio, e R.A. Lorenzi, G. Sgabussi ed altri sul piano locale, testimoniano come e quanto un lavoro serio possa recuperare: ne facciamo tesoro.

Pisogne e Piancamuno, come l'intera Valcamonica, hanno un patrimonio speciale di tradizioni, in buona parte inesplorato ed a rischio d'esser perso del tutto: è un dovere allo stesso tempo urgente e stimolante, quello di salvarlo e analizzarlo. Non diversamente per quanto riguarda i reperti archeologici, anch'essi notevoli: si pensi ai bivacchi mesolitici in quota, ai numerosi "castellieri" ed in particolare al Dos della Regina, uno degli esempi forse meglio conservati del bresciano, all'ara romana recentemente rinvenuta nella pieve di S. Maria in Silvis. A tali testimonianze dedichiamo paragrafi "ad hoc" con il gradito concorso della Soprintendenza Archeologica della Lombardia.

Altro fattore considerato, per la prima volta in modo specifico, è quello geologico: si è voluto analizzare al meglio quei casi dubbi fra segno naturale ed artificiale, che da sempre sono come una spina nel fianco della ricerca; alcune aree di Pisogne e Piancamuno sono un ottimo laboratorio al riguardo ed hanno permesso di affrontare il problema con metodo. È l'inizio di un'indagine difficile, ma ora ben impostata.

Siamo tuttavia convinti che il valore fondamentale dell'opera sia quello di presentare integralmente e correttamente il contesto rupestre, con le sue caratteristiche tipologiche, dispositive e di posizionamento. Se poi saremo riusciti a ridare considerazione a questi documenti, a far intendere che le montagne, le nostre montagne, sono un grande ecomuseo con le tracce delle innumerevoli generazioni che vi son passate, se si intenderà meglio il rispetto che meritano e la protezione di cui necessitano, allora il risultato sarà per noi massimo.

English Summary

INTRODUCTION

The text presents the results of the research made by the Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia of the CCSP since 1998. The aim was to survey and to study the rock art heritage of a little-known area of Southern Valcamonica: we discovered and analysed 23 localities (16 in Pisogne, 7 in Piancamuno), and over 80 engraved surfaces. Engravings belong mostly to schematic art (with the remarkable exception of the medieval crossbowman of Saresa), such as cup-marks, footprints, circular signs, crosses, inscriptions, dates (from 1592 to the XX century), topographic compositions and borders signs.

Even if these "minor" signs lack the stage-effect figurative rock art, they are not less important: if the figurative art is an exception in the Alps and in Europe, schematic signs are engraved in every Alpine valley and practically in all European regions, representing an important element for anthropological and historical comprehension of popular traditions, beliefs and uses of these lands. This expression reflects in fact a symbolic scheme which assumed, from prehistory, through the Roman Age, until Middle and Modern Ages, a variety of meanings connected to rituals and cults: the schematic sign is the common denominator of the Alpine area.

Pisogne and Piancamuno show many interesting examples of schematic art, often in a wonderful environment: there are prehistoric compositions such as La Biosca (in all probability belonging to the Bronze Age), Coren di Marte or Coren del Diaol; and historical compositions connected to life and work in the wood or in the mines, as in the cases of Pontasio, Gratacasolo, Beata.

These signs are deeply connected to territory and its historical development, to mountain life and economy. So the text analyses the archaeological context of a land that was the "door" of the Valley in the communication with the plane and the city.

Archaeological features range from the Mesolithic Period (VI-V mill. BC), with several temporary hunting sites, to the several prehistoric settlements (probably belonging to Bronze and Iron Ages, II-I millennia BC) and to the Roman remains.

The first churches (and *parishes*), towers and villages appeared in the Middle Age.

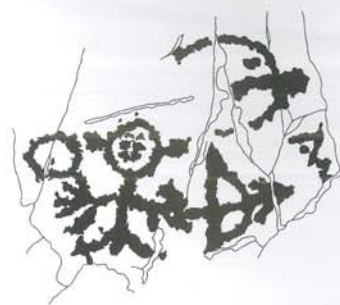
At the same time particular attention has been reserved to traditional beliefs and uses, obtaining interesting results: an important "pagan" heritage (sometimes joined into Christian minor rituals such as rogations, fires of S. John, etc.) has been recognised in the popular novels and rituals (with the exceptional *corpus* about witches and *sabba* cults).

All this features flow into the text as part of a history of which engraved signs are an integral expression...

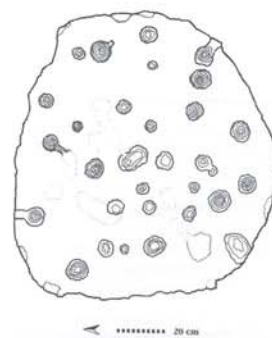
Chap. I. SCHEMATIC ROCK ART IN THE ALPINE AREA

The term "schematic" assembles all the non-figurative rock art expressions, such as cup-marks, grooves and, in historical age, crosses, dates, inscriptions, symbols, etc. These signs have been considered less interesting than figurative engravings for a long time, and for this reason they have been mostly ignored. In the last fifteen years researches have brought a big *corpus* of new data that has stimulated new interest and attention on a universal phenomenon that lasted for millennia in all the continents and, in particular, in Europe.

Several fundamental aspects, such as chronology and meanings of these signs, are still obscure and strongly debated by researchers. Only new methodical and comparati-



The crossbowman of Saresa.



Ca' Bianchi di S. Maria (Valmalenco, Sondrio). The cup-marked block in front of the Chapel dedicated to the Virgin.

ve studies could help us to understand deeper this traditional way of communication.

The numerous researches made in the Alpine area permit anyway to point out some recurrent aspects: if the figurative art is, in the Alpine area, an exception, the schematic one is present everywhere. The chronological *excursus* of the two expressions seems to be comparable but they usually appear in different sites and localities (when schematic and figurative engravings are on the same surface, they are well separated in different zones of the rock).

The chronological attribution is the most problematic question but now we have some important indications coming from Val d'Aosta, Valais, Val di Susa, Valcamonica and Switzerland and we are able to attribute some assemblages to prehistoric times (Neolithic Period, Copper, Bronze and Iron Ages) or to Roman, Medieval and Modern periods. It is also possible to distinguish Christian expressions, in which cup-marks are often accompanied by crosses or other signs, from pre-Christian ones, in which cup-marks are more cured, frequently aligned or connected to grooves. The recurrent position is, especially during prehistory, in panoramic sites and often along ancient paths.

The interpretation is still obscure and even if, no doubt, schematic signs changed their meanings during time, in many cases it is clear that they were connected to rituals and religious acts: only the growth of the research will help us to define their meaning more precisely.

Chap. II. CORPUS

The schematic "art" *corpus* of Pisogne and Piancamuno, even if it belongs to different phases (from the Bronze Age to the XX century), shares some common characteristics.

The most evident one is that the engraved sites are mostly located at an altitude between 200 m and 1000 m, in an area characterised by constant and fundamental human activities. They are often placed along paths and, especially in recent times, they sometimes appear connected to economical activities such as mines and stone quarries (Pontasio, Gippone, Costa della Beata). Prehistoric sites are always located in dominant and panoramic position, often on top of stone peaks and hillocks (Coren di Marte, di S. Nicola, del Diaol, Corno Palazzo).

There isn't a central and focal site: the locations seem to be utilised in different times and most of them present no stratification of phases. On the contrary, they seem to be frequented for a limited period, showing a mono-thematic appearance (for example the circles of La Biosca, the cup-marks of Coren di Marte and del Diaol, the crosses of Corno Palazzo). An exception could be the unclear cases of Prevent and Saresa, where the signs are in high number (even if a big part is natural) and they show different typologies.

The schematic "art" of Pisogne and Piancamuno presents constant similarities (and a deep connection) with the rest of Valcamonica and with many areas of the Alpine area (Ticino, Lago Maggiore, Comasco and many more); for this reason it is here analysed in this wider context.

Chap. III. THEMES

Circular signs in Bronze Age rock art

Circular shapes are one of the most important symbolic motives of Prehistory, being diffused in every region and continent: they appeared in the Palaeolithic Period, acquiring importance from the Neolithic Period and, above all, during Copper and Bronze Ages, finally becoming one of the most important sign in all the religious systems of antiquity. Circular signs must have had many different meanings, changing in space



Circular signs of La Biosca.

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and time; the various manifestations seem nevertheless to belong to a unique archetypal concept, recalling the primordial and generating principle, which rules the material world.

The Bronze Age is characterized a big emphasis on circles, representing the junction between the Copper Age conception and the Iron Age imagery. In the Alpine area, while circles, weapons and human figures were engraved in the same composition during the Copper Age, in the Bronze Age these symbols were mostly engraved isolated and separated: big concentrations of one or more elements, often on different rock surfaces, were found in the same selected areas (the main sites are Luine-Sorline in Valcamonica and M. Bego in France, while other significant concentrations are known at Foppe di Nadro and Sonico in the Valley, Valtournanche in Valle d'Aosta, Grosio and Tresivio in Valtellina and Grigioni in Switzerland, etc.). In this separation of signs, circles are the only ones that show constant connections to the others, being sometimes associated to human figures, weapons and sometimes to maps and other compositions.

In this period engraved circular shapes are concentric, crossed, pointed (like La Biosca) or with ray and they have parallels in some archaeological Bronze Age findings coming from all Europe such as personal and decorative objects, or vessel decorations, often connected to funeral and sacred occasions. The same similarities characterise the European rock art of Bronze: circular motives have important concentrations in all the Western area, for example in Galicia, Scotland and in the Scandinavian Peninsula. These Scandinavian circular motives are connected to "funeral" boats, weapons and knights, to deer and horses and, as in the case of Trundholm, to the wagon, showing the same constant connection (mostly funeral) evident in Valcamonica Iron Age rock art.

Topographic engravings

In the locality of Beata there are two topographic engravings typical of prehistory, the only two presently known in Southern Valcamonica. The analysis of the engravings shows some peculiarities that make them important, even though comparisons are still possible within their typological class.

As far as the chronology goes, the two maps are to be traced down to the end of the Neolithic Period and the beginning of the Copper Age and they reveal a practical attention for the landscape and its natural resources. As a consequence of this attention, the ancient inhabitants chose the places where to live and the ones where to start agriculture. From this viewpoint the engravings are a precious help for reconstructing the way man used this territory.

Reading the two maps as one, we can see a typical settling: open areas near the houses, used in agriculture or as grazing land, and, more isolated, a building used either as defence structure or as storage place.

These two maps are important for the study of this territory since there has been no archaeological excavations yet.

The age of these engravings makes them irreplaceable. We do hope thus that Rock 1 will be safeguarded and we also hope that Rock 2 will be discovered again since many questions have not been answered yet.

Two surfaces (one cited by Sgabussi between Artogne and Gianico, at Cascina del Roccolo dei Biascià; the other one in Coren di Marte R. 2) maintain engravings from historic times that illustrate borders and paths: this attention to the territory forms is interesting, as the way the area has been represented can be compared to prehistoric topographic carvings in Middle Valcamonica (belonging to the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age).

The carvings of Gratacasolo (La Plagna) and Coren del Medel are peculiar: grooves and hollows engraved with metallic tool in full historic age (there is another similar surface recently discovered in Gorzone).



The "map" of Beata Paese, R. 2.



The slide of La Biosca.

The development of the grooves and the morphology of certain surfaces suggest us the topographic interpretation: the carvings could show the places where millstones were quarried. But other interpretations are still possible: the solution is open.

To conclude, the area of Pisogne – Piancamuno has turned out to be unexpectedly rich in topographic carvings. The study of the relationship between inhabitants and territory in Valcamonica should consider the information obtained from rock art too. Knowing where and how ancient inhabitants of Piancamuno and Pisogne lived, we would understand the political, cultural and economic role they played. The topographic carvings are a precious help in this research.

Slides on Rocks

On carved rocks we can often find long smoothed strips, used traditionally as slides, especially by young people. Between Pisogne and Piancamuno, these slides are to be found in La Biosca, Coren del Diaol, La Plagna, Gippone, Coren di Marte and Prevent.

The habit of sliding on carved surfaces has very ancient roots and it is common in the Alps and in the European mountains. In all cases, slides are present in the rock art sites often inhabited in the prehistoric age; these slides are frequently related with cup-marks, disks with central cup-marks and crosses; engravings and slides are not necessarily contemporary. In some places there are small holy chapels dedicated to the Holy Mary and the Infant or churches dedicated to Mary near the rocks with slides. In popular tradition sliding on particular surfaces was a habit of sterile women who desired children but also pregnant women who wanted an easy delivery used the slide.

It is not a “veneration of the rocks”, as it is often understood. Probably, those women looked for a generative force hidden in the rocks themselves and tried to absorb it by means of direct contact and rubbing. It is clearly a surviving unconscious belief of a pre-Christian and archaic faith in natural forces of fecundity and maternity. The images of the Holy Mother and the Infant – among other evidences - lead us to make up this connection.

We do not know, unfortunately, how ancient this traditional habit of sliding is, not even if it belongs to prehistory. Nonetheless the prehistoric engravings near the rim, at the top and at the bottom of some slides, could be a clue of their age. Only in recent times we have forgotten the importance of sacred places and the meaning of sacred rites, such as sliding on rocks. This activity has become thus a trouble-free play as many others traditional games.

The geometric structure of the schematic rock art

The following paper is a contribution on the structural interpretation of the schematic art. The author tests the evolution of cup-marks patterns in curvilinear directions trying to prove that, in some cases, the cup-marks positions on the stone surface are not casual but they respect an internal geometrical structural order. The frequent alignments can also be used as an interesting access to understand this kind of rock art scene. The presence of a geometric structure in European schematic art seems to suggest that different *phenomena* (such as cup-marks and megalithic expressions) share the same origin (see the *schema* in the text).

The crossbowman of Saresa

The crossbowman of Saresa is the only figurative incision found in this area: it is a human figure carefully engraved, even if without “stylistic elegance”, and “equipped” with unordinary signs such as crosses, circles, snake-like and enigmatic figures. The shape of the weapon and the way in which the figure holds it suggest interpreting the subject as a crossbowman.



Grevo (Valcamonica). The “geometric” disposition of the cup-marks and grooves.

There are many stylistic parallels for this strange figure in Valcamonica rock art, at Campanine of Cimbergo (the biggest concentration of medieval rock art in Europe), where the engravings are attributed to XIII-XIV centuries. Campanine seems to be a sort of open-air sanctuary showing two different traditions: the first belongs to an "orthodox expression" of Christian religion (crosses, keys of St. Peter, symbols of Passion, mitres, Salomon knots); the second is apparently lay and secular (castles, towers, knights, weapons, banners but also scaffolds, hanged persons, the Devil and the Death). But in the Middle Age the border between the sacred and the profane was weak, and heresy and pagan traditions emerged constantly.

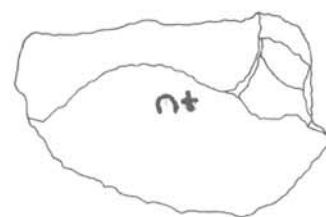
The crossbowman of Saresa collocates in this "picture" and not as an isolated echo of Campanine but, on the contrary, as an expression belonging to the fertile tradition preserved by oral memory. The significance of this figure is still obscure, but its analysis could give us some indications: the hands are evidenced perhaps to indicate a sort of "magic-spiritual" power; the protuberances at the sides of the face may belong to a mask (recalling spirits, "demons" and figures witnessed in popular tales). The location of the engraving (at the centre of a track and at the side of a cup-marked rock) and, above all, the elaborated equipment represented seem to exclude that this was a sort of "pass-time figurine". Therefore the hypothesis that it could be a sort of magic "guardian" is strengthened by the practical role of such a figure, suitable for fighting at distance and also for defending the passage points.

Border signs

To trace a border, that is to mark the limit of a territory, was never only an administrative demand. The "limit" supported the social order and the control over possible territorial conflicts in a social structure and, for this reason, a magic-religious tradition was in the past bound to it. The "administrative" engraving act was always accompanied by rites and gestures focused on the value of the stone (lasting, inflexible, visible) as "witness".

This sacred value of borders was present in most ancient societies, for example in Mesopotamia and Egypt, even if we must expect the Etruscans-Italics and then the Romans to see the codification of the ritual appearance of the delimitation act: Roman religion presented in fact a divinity (*Terminus*) voted to the control of the boundary stones and annual ceremonies (*Terminalia*) took place to re-establish the holy aspect of these stones. The past suggests constant elements which characterise the "*limen*": the absolute prohibition, under the punishment of an eternal damnation, to move the boundary stones; the need to confirm or to renew periodically the border with rites accomplished by authority; the power to trace the border given only to authority, who could approach in this way the divine world (like the Sumerian Enki or the biblical God).

Also the area of Pisogne and Piancamuno is an evidence of this millenary practice: there are isolated signs on boulders or little surfaces with the task to define the limit between properties. Among the main characteristics there are the simplicity and the schematic shape: crosses, followed sometimes by other signs (often cup-marks), simple linear strokes used to divide signs such as mirror-like letters or cup-marks, dates and initials. A simple line followed by the owner's or authorities' initials identified the simplest form of border, but in other cases we found also "horse footsteps" (belonging to '400), alphabetic signs, like the "C" or "T" (for "border"). The use of the cross raises particular interest, for his religious value (witnessed in Valcamonica also by legends and believes referred to border signed stones, focused on spirits of deceased persons, demons and witches) and for the universal symbolic meaning of the double axis, which is shared by many cultures around the world.



Ossimo - Borno (Valcamonica).
Border signs with horse foot-
step and crosses (XV century).

Horse foot-steps

Horse-step prints are widely diffused in the area, from Austrian Alps to the French *Midi*, to Galicia and Portugal. Significant examples have been found in China and Nepal recently. In Valcamonica they are present in Pontasio, in the Ossimo-Borno area and in the Middle Valley. In the Alpine area, when the horse-step is not isolated, it is mostly associated with crosses and cup-marks; in some cases the engravings are dated by medieval documents to '400 - '500.

The significance could be referred to the protecting value of the sign in European folklore but the most ancient expressions of this symbol, in the European and Mediterranean mythologies, show a more complex and deeper connection: this sign unifies elements such as "iron", which fight against demons and spirits, generating fertility and protecting harvest; "horse", animal connected to the sun, to fire, water and life but, in a characteristic duplicity, also to the darkness and to the dead world. In addition to that, the "shape of horse-step" recalls also the crescent (or descent) moon and the cyclical movement of birth and death.

Leaps, borders and ravines

The engravings of Pontasio (Pe' de l'Aden) were engraved, in all probability, as territorial border between Pisogne and Zone during the XV century. Horse-steps and crosses produced a lot of believes and tales about this rock: people believed that this was a meeting place for witches and dead-spirits, a sort of border with these creatures. This case has many comparisons in Valcamonica and always the prints are attributed to S. Martino, who engages jumping-matches with the Devil, or, like in Pontasio, to S. Carlo, the "confiner" of pagans, damned souls and witches. These peculiar saints show elements coming from popular and traditional religiosity and, in all probability, from a pre-Christian tradition connected, in the case of S. Martino, with the figures able to cross over the border between alive and dead. The lameness of S. Martino's horse (in the legends as in the engravings) shows similarities with the lame shamanic figures in the ancient mythologies (Roman, Germanic, Greek), still alive in medieval and modern times in most of Europe. S. Carlo, the "Vatican hero" in the battle against pagan and heretic doctrines, seems to be a sort of protector of borders and community from dangerous dead-spirits.

Chap. IV: ARCHAEOLOGY AND TRADITIONS

Archaeology of the territory

The territories of Pisogne and Piancamuno have an undeniable historical, economical and strategic value. Their areas lie on the East side of the mountainous line, which divides the Valtrompia and the Sebino, with a marked control over the surrounding area. The tradition places to the San Zeno pass, between Valcamonica and Valtrompia, the access door to Valcamonica. The Romans consolidated this ancient path and then built an official and more exploitable road, remembered as the "Valeriana". Clues of the road can be found in the local tradition, but we have also recent signals that make its existence by now quite undoubted.

Deeper investigations on the territory showed also a more ancient human presence. It is the case of the Mesolithic stations scattered on the ridge between Valtrompia and Valcamonica (at an altitude of about 2000 m), probably seasonal base fields of hunters-gatherers already in possession of quite advanced stone tools. The axe found at Vissone, fraction of Piancamuno, a zone at a lower height, maybe more suitable for the cultivation, refers to the Neolithic Period.

With the coming of metallurgy the whole area gets a remarkable importance, as testified by the numerous ruins of mining excavations found in the strip at an altitude



Medieval incision of a witch on an animal.

between 200-300 m, with a particular concentration in the zone of Trobiolo Valley. It was the trade of iron and copper that probably gave, perhaps from Bronze and Iron Ages, a remarkable economic impulse to the whole area and possibly caused, as a consequence, a sort of social stratification, with the emerging of a class beholding the control over metal manufacturing and marketing, whose military, religious and economic importance is widely testified by the Copper, Bronze and Iron Age engravings of Valcamonica and Valtellina.

With the II-I millennium BC a demographic increase seems to take place, evaluated on the growth in number of populated sites for this period: these places, called “*castellieri*”, were fortified villages characterised by their dominant position with wide sight on the surrounding territory, usually on passes or close to forced narrow paths, by the scarcity of the occupied area and by massive defensive buildings.

The Dos della Regina (“Queen’s Hill”), in the Fraine neighbourhood, is an ellipsoidal hump, which dominates the superior part of Iseo Lake and Southern Valcamonica. It is composed by two main areas, with remarkable remains of the external walls structure (South and North-East sides), built with a simple “dry-stone-posing”, of the defensive groove and of the embankment. The top of the hump, almost plain, seems to conceal a few wall structures below the ground. Unfortunately, because of the lack of archaeological excavations, it is not possible to give a chronological sequence of the site occupation. The comparison with analogous *castellieri* scattered in the entire valley suggests however a chronological age which goes from the middle Bronze Age to the late Iron Age (see, for example, Dos dell’Arca, Lovere, Breno). Given the not easy agricultural exploitation, the inhabitants were likely to practise more intensely in the surrounding area the stock farm, especially of sheep and pigs. Probably they also exploited the favourable position for trade, controlling the access to the valley from South. It is likely that some cult activities took places in the vicinity, testified by the engraved rocks with cup-marks around the site. Analogous situation can be found in other similar sites (Grevo, Novelle, Saviore, Capo di Ponte, Grosio), where rock art cores, sometimes just schematic, are in the area engaged by the *castelliere*.

Another artificial hill signalled at Solato would probably conceal a fortified village. Also the presence of a *castelliere* at Dos Vanil, near San Zeno pass, is quite significant. In fact, with this site, it becomes plausible to suppose a regular and voluntary distribution of villages or outposts with defensive character along the Southeast access points to Valcamonica. The importance of S. Zeno pass is also suggested by the fact that Roman legions probably entered the valley from here to submit *Camunni* in 16 BC. The tradition remembers also that Romans battled and defeated indigenous people in Piancamuno. Some traces of the Roman passage have remained: ruins of two guard towers at Sonvico, few references of a necropolis at Castrino-Gratacasolo and, above all, the recent remain from the parish of S. Maria in Silvis. An altar belonging to the I or II century AD, decorated with low relief and epigraph, describes a personality of prestige, Tiberius Claudius Numa, whose presence is maybe to put in relation with the exploitation by Romans of the mineral wealth of this zone.

Also some traces of the Longobard presence have remained, especially in the highest fractions (Grignaghe and Siniga): there are buildings with ornaments in low relief, architraves and little pillars, maybe the reflection of a little local aristocracy. With the age of Carl the Great Valcamonica entered the disputes among feudatories and bishops, which gave back the Middle Age of Valcamonica as a period of fights and bloody struggles.

The imagined territory: traditions and popular religion

Folklore and traditions show a complex picture of a popular and ancient religion “dominated” by dead. As in all Europe, they were considered the guarantors of cyclic renovation of nature and, for this reason, of the success of agricultural and pastoral



Monte Guglielmo (Valtrompia).
Arrow-head (Bronze Age).

activities: works in fields, in the woods and in the mountain were scanned by a series of “gestures” (often joined in Christian popular ceremonies, like rogations or dead cults) finalised to propitiate the positive and fertile energy of dead but also, in a typical duplicity, to defend the community from the dangerous damned spirits (to whom calamities such as hail, storms, able to threaten human activities and subsistence, were attributed).

These aspects were still present in Modern Age, when the Inquisition brought to light the existence of *sabbatic* cults of “witches” (that gave evidence of the presence of a possible shamanic component in dead cults), but they have, in all probability, very ancient origins: several elements present in popular tales and believes may be in fact found in ancient mythologies (Celtic, Germanic, Greek-Roman and East-European), suggesting that this traditions has appeared before the historical age.

Surely this sort of cosmology must have been re-moulded in the Middle Age for the penetration of Christian elements. Ancient believes were transposed in new syncretic religiousness, assimilating new shapes and concepts. Especially the cult of Saints seems to have had a role of receptacle in which, in all probability, attributes of previous figures were “translated” in the popular hagiographies (S. Carlo, for example, but also S. Martino and S. Vito) or even generated the creation of new Saints, not belonging to Christian orthodoxy (S. Glisente, Fermo and Cristina).

Another aspect of great interest is represented by the emerging of numerous “geographic” indications: the structure of traditional *cosmo*, divided into domestic and favourable souls and “damned” dangerous spirits and crossed by borders that can be overstepped only in some moments of the year, had a physical correspondence in the territory surrounding the community. This “imagined” environment was the presupposition of popular rituals preserved in Christian tradition, such as the rogations (to which the annual delimitation of the border between the community with the domestic dead and the dangerous souls was demanded), but also Fires of S. John or dead processions. This division (and opposition) of spaces is witnessed in popular memory (where the places “outside” were perceived as potentially dangerous for the frequent apparitions of dead, spirits and witches) and can help us in the comprehension of the engraving phenomenon, an expression deeply localised in territory too.

At Pisogne and Piancamuno relations between engraved sites and dead believes, even if they are still mostly obscure, are sometimes clear and interesting: the frequency of these connections appears a relevant phenomenon. In one case (Pe’ de l’Aden), belonging to the end of Middle Age, we are able to verify a superimposition (between engravings and legends) permitting a coherent reconstruction of the confining intents (of damned spirits) of engravings. In other cases this connection, suggested by popular memory, appears to be interfered by present uncertainty in defining the engraved signs (La Plagna, Coren di S. Nicola, Prevent): therefore in the case of La Plagna the existence of rituals still performed in this century (Fires of S. John) could reveal itself as a fundamental element to understand the enigma. The relation between the “altar” at Coren of S. Nicola and the figure of a saint-protector with a protecting (and meteoric) function, deeply connected with dead, is also remarkable. The Coren of Mars suggests finally the existence of a still unclear relation between cup-marks and a place-name connected to funeral suggestions and characterised by a presumable antiquity. The hypothesis that cup-marks should sometimes had as addressee the dead world, proposed by Magni (Magni, 1901) at the beginning of this century, has some interesting comforts by ethnological evidences coming from Estonia (Tvauri, 2001) and, in the Alpine area, by elements such as the frequency of cup-marks and other signs related to place-names referred to Dead or figures assimilated to pagans, witches, fairies and devils. Another remarkable element is the superimposition of Christian *ediculae* (often connected with rogations) on cup-marked rocks. Maybe a careful investigation on this aspects and on



Medieval incision of two witches making the rain.

the relations between popular traditions and engraved rocks (and territory) could give more information which may be useful to verify what today is only a preliminary hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

Pisogne and Piancamuno has never been rock art primary site, like Boario (Luine) or the Middle Valcamonica (Naquane, Nadro, Seradina, Campanine, etc.): this territory was a sort of "marginal" land, probably influenced by main sites but characterised by an own personality and originality of signs (circles of La Biosca, prints of Pontasio, cup-marks of Coren di Marte, the crossbowman of Saresa). What superficially seems to be "marginal" opens an interesting perspective, permitting us to consider what extended from main centres to the "periphery" during prehistory and, additionally, the quality and quantity of the penetration of Christian doctrine. Despite the strong evangelic efforts made by the Church since '500, the "popular religion" seems to have had an active role in assimilation, selecting new elements, adapting them to previous traditions and, finally, creating a new and original *synthesis*. The schematic art is one of the main expressions of this religiosity: the "queen" is the cup-mark, a simple and elementary sign (but connected to the circular archetype, to the recipient, to a common conception of engravings as a way to communicate with supernatural), used in different periods and contexts.

In this perspective Pisogne and Piancamuno are not a periphery: on the contrary the chronological *excursus* of engravings (from the Bronze Age to the XX century), the variety and the quantity of signs give evidence of the presence of a creative and imaginary spirit, where incised signs are integrated in a wider heritage of traditions, tales, legends and rituals. An investigation on this aspects reveals in fact some remarkable connection: traditional novels of Valcamonica talk about *places*, sometimes remembered as "pagan", sometimes connected with Christian popular rituals (like rogations) and to engraved rocks (Pontasio, La Plagna). Places bring *themes* with protagonists (as S. Carlo and S. Martino), believes, and "facts" that seems to have a pre-Christian origin, as a part of a sort of cosmology and mythology constantly re-moulded during time. Several elements bring us to think that this traditional imagery can, in the future, help to discover some aspects on more ancient rock art today unknown.

APPENDIX A

This contribution presents the first results of a geologic research on cup-marks in Valcamonica, and in particular in Pisogne and Piancamuno. In Prevent and Saresa in fact aside cup-marks made by man the rocks show numerous marks of natural origin, due to the presence of inclusive elements, to vegetal action of excavation and to the different resistance of the *strati*. The authors propose elements and tools to individuate artificial cup-marks and natural ones.

APPENDIX B

The author presents the preliminary results of investigations in S. Maria in Silvis, the ancient parish of Pisogne. The excavation inside the actual church, built during '400 and known for its beautiful *frescoes* of the Triumph of the Death, revealed graves from XVII to XVIII century, excavated inside the deposits of previous buildings. A smaller church appeared in fact in the centre of the *aula*. The floor was in mortar on a layer of pebbles and a baptismal basin was carved from a Roman funeral monument of the I century (and dedicated to a *sacerdos divi augusti*). The monument suggests the presence of a Roman *villa* in the parish area and focuses our attention on the role of the parishes



Parish of S. Maria in Silvis.
Detail of the Triumph of the
Death.

in christianising the Valley. In front of the actual apse the excavations found a previously unknown crypt, closed during the XV century.

APPENDIX C

The preliminary investigations on the Roman *ara* re-used as baptismal basin in S. Maria in Silvis show that it was, in origin, a funeral monument. Even if it was carved and abraded, three faces preserves an inscription, with the dedication to *Tiberio Numa, sacerdos divi Augusti*, and two figures, on the sides of the inscription, of a typical funeral subject (two whinged-deities), which confirm the attribution to the I century suggested by the epigraph. The analysis of the name and the role of the protagonist, in parallel with the data coming from excavations in the Roman centre of Cividate, reveal important elements for comprehension of Roman conquest and social organisation.