



Valcamonica and Mt. Bego, prehistoric phases correspondence

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MOST ANCIENT PHASES OF THE TWO MAIN ALPINE ROCK ART POLES, MOUNT BEGO AND VALCAMONICA

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### SUMMARY

*Valcamonica e del Monte Bego sono i due poli dell'arte rupestre alpina, due poli diversi e lontani.*

*Le differenze riguardano principalmente la geomorfologia (altitudine, maggiore escursione del polo sud-occidentale) e la storia delle ricerche (il Monte Bego è stato scoperto 60 anni prima, la ricerca tende ad essere tassonomica e descrittiva, mentre in Valcamonica la sistematizzazione è caratterizzata dall'individuazione di fasi cronologiche). Comunque ci sono molti punti di contatto, sia per la struttura, che è effettivamente la stessa e che ha permesso una tale enorme concentrazione di incisioni, sia per i soggetti incisi, identici o molto simili, come le figure topografiche (IV mill. a.C.), le scene di aratura (III e inizio del II mill. a.C.) e le raffigurazioni di pugnali e alabarde (inizi del II mill. a.C.). Queste somiglianze permettono di stabilire una connessione cronologica e tematica tra le due capitali dell'arte rupestre alpina.*

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Valcamonica-Valtellina complex and Mount Bego can be defined as the two poles of the alpine Rock Art, bearing by far the largest number of engraved signs. In appearance they are different and distant. Differences can be outlined in the geomorphology, the Valcamonica pecked areas being situated within a 250-1200 m elevation range, while M. Bego engravings start from 1950 m and reach 2800 m above sea level. The research history is clearly distinct: M. Bego rock art was scientifically discovered more than sixty years before, tracing methods were preferred in the south-western pole, while photography was the choice in Valcamonica until the 1950s. Starting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century two research teams, based their studies on the contact transparency tracing method, with differences related to the reproduction of the inner pecking (Valcamonica) *vs.* the marking of the external outline only (M. Bego). In the central Alps pole the goal of the research was to build a chronological frame, drawing in such a way a palimpsest where each phase corresponds to a different archaeological period. On the south-western pole classification was more taxonomical than chronological, leading to an interpretation which looks at each engraved panel as a single unit composition.

Given all these differences, it is however possible to find many contact points. First of all both the two alpine rock art poles lie on the same rocky framework: a Permian fine siliceous sandstone, a perfect natural blackboard, present only in the two main rock art poles, hence the huge amount of engraved signs. Moreover it is possible to unveil three couples of common subjects, which are topographic figures, ploughing scenes and weapon depictions, particularly daggers and halberds. All these pairs correspond, in shape, in stratigraphy and in matching archaeological comparisons. In both sites it is possible to demonstrate the chronological priority of the topographical representations. In this way such compositions, an anthropic agricultural landscape depiction, represent the first engraved phase, late Neolithic-first Chalcolithic. The subsequent ploughing scenes, Chalcolithic (M. Bego

Monte Bego - seriazione stilistica

| Cronologia                | Stili | Fasi | Iconografia  | IA | IB |
|---------------------------|-------|------|--|----|----|
| Neolitico                 | I     | A    | Composizioni topografiche ad anelli (5000?- 4000? a.C.)  |    |    |
| Neolitico - Rame 1        |       | B    | Composizioni topografiche geometriche: rettangoli, perimetri, aree e pallini (3900?-2900 a.C.)   |    |    |
| Rame 2                    | II    | A    | Bovidi e arature a corpo lineare, aratro a vanga, pugnali e alabarde a base rettilinea, Rame 2 (2900 - 2400 a.C.)                                      |    |    |
| Rame 3                    |       | B    | Bovidi e arature a corpo pieno, aratro a vanga, pugnali a spalla romboidale o cadente, alabarde a lama triangolare allungata Rame 3 (2400 - 2200 a.C.) |    |    |
| Età del Bronzo            | III   |      | Pugnali a guardia sporgente e base arcuata, alabarde a base arcuata, arature con aratro a zappa (2200-1600 a.C.)                                       |    |    |
| Forte contrazione, crisi? |       |      |  |    |    |
| Età storica               | IV    |      | <p>Iscrizioni latine</p> <p>Incisioni storiche: graffiti, scritte, armi, date, velieri, costruzioni, attrezzi...</p>                                   |    |    |
|                           |       |      |  |    |    |
|                           |       |      |  |    |    |
|                           |       |      |  |    |    |

and Valcamonica) and Ancient Bronze Age (M. Bego only), may also be compared in the two poles, showing an evolution of the plough from the spade type to the hoe type. Focus must be given finally on the weapon representations, mainly dagger and halberd triangular blades, where the crucial point is the base-shoulder diagnosis. The comparison with archaeological objects shows the parallelism of the two poles with Copper Age 2 (2900-2400 BC, *i.e.* Remedello culture phase 2) flat-based blades, Copper Age 3 (Bell-Beaker, 2400-2200 BC) blades with a rhomboidal base or falling shoulders and Ancient Bronze Age (2200-1700 BC) melted handle daggers. In this way it is possible to demonstrate the parallelism of the most ancient Valcamonica and M. Bego engraving phases, from the end of the Neolithic to the end of the Ancient Bronze Age–beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. This range matches the Löss cold climatic Phase (3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the II mill. BC) at its ending point, harsh to endure at the high elevation of the M. Bego area, so probably forcing the interruption of the summer mountain pasture and subsequently of the engraving practice. It is also possible to draw a M. Bego four styles seriation, where the chronology is raised starting from the Neolithic and where the Style I (Neolithic and first Copper Age) is represented by the topographical representations (IA ring type, IB geometric type), the Style IIA (Copper Age 2) by stick body horned figures (and ploughing scenes) and flat-base triangular blades, the Style IIB (Copper Age 3) by full body horned figures (and ploughing scenes) and rhomboidal-base triangular blades, the Style III (Ancient Bronze Age) by arched base blades and hoe-type ploughs, the Style IV, to be better detailed, by the historical figures.