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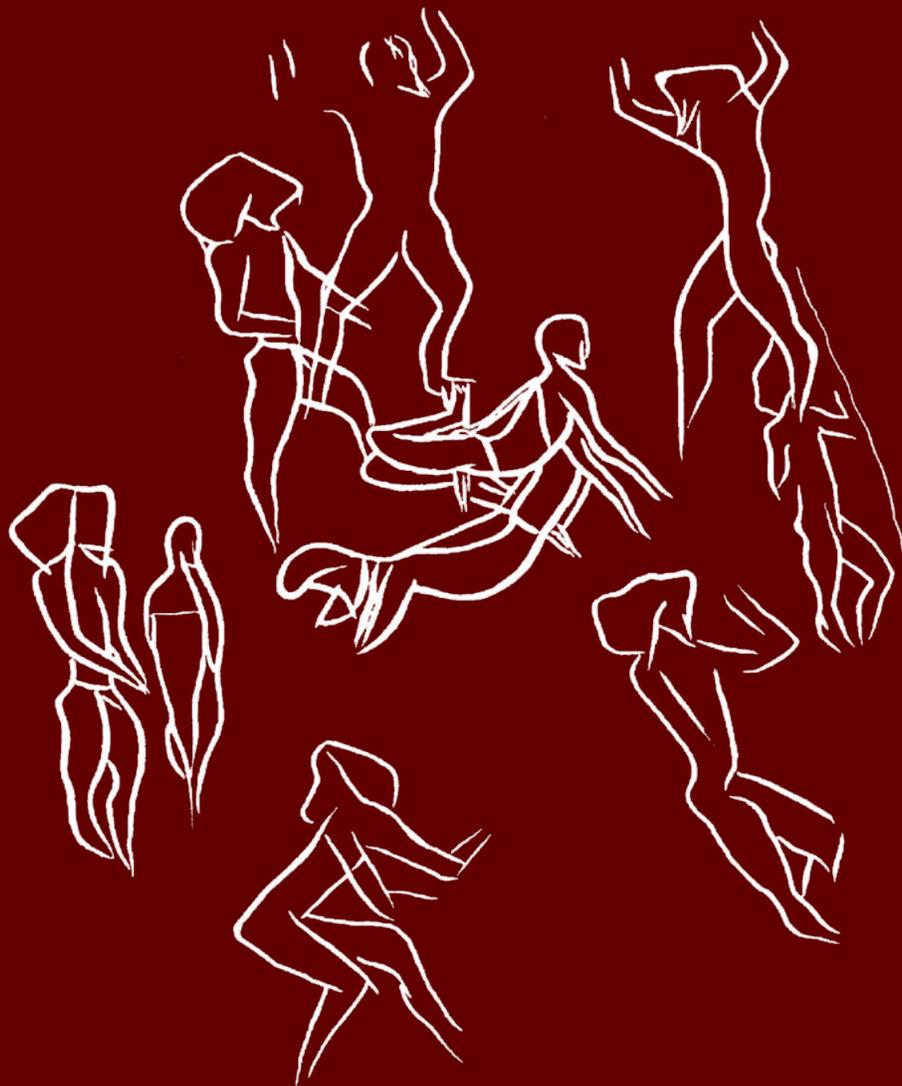
# EXPRESSION

QUARTERLY E-JOURNAL OF ATELIER IN COOPERATION WITH CISENP

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPRESSIONS OF NON-LITERATE PEOPLES

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## READING THE LANGUAGE OF PICTOGRAMS

### PART II

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# EDITORIAL NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

EXPRESSION quarterly journal has reached its 40<sup>th</sup> issue. Round numbers tend to have a special significance and 40 issues in 10 years says simply, it is what it should be. All we can say is that the journal has reached maturity while still maintaining its youthful character. It is the first and only international journal of conceptual anthropology, a new discipline of the human sciences. Its aim is the diffusion of the use, function, and knowledge of this new discipline. It is the meeting space of scholars and authors concerned with conceptual anthropology and their readers.

Thanks to the involvement of its team, it has grown as an independent journal, reaching thousands of readers in about 90 countries, including researchers, teachers, students, and also a vast public involved in human sciences. It promotes innovative research, new targets of enquiry and new trends in archeology, anthropology and art history. These three disciplines, along with psychology and sociology, form the core of conceptual anthropology. The 40 issues published so far are a sort of encyclopedia of conceptual anthropology and they mark the progress of the new discipline.

This issue continues the theme of the previous one, but with a new approach. Reading the language of pictograms is one of the aims of the new archeology: art becomes language, images become writing, their makers are people with feelings and emotions, and new horizons on the formative ages of culture and on the conceptual identity of our species are re-emerging. The goals ahead are ambitious: research proceeds step by step, exploring different trails, and EXPRESSION preserves its records.

In this issue, the discussion forum faces issues well worth being considered. Conceptual anthropology

is a new discipline and its few professionals work together in Atelier, building up its base; what is its use and function? A preliminary answer to this query is provided.

Another topic is presently renewing a vast debate: the origins of Homo sapiens and his earliest presence in Europe: when did he arrive and where from? The main points of this issue invite some rethinking. The debate on the origins of religion continues a discussion held in previous issues. Also, the arguments on the location of the biblical Mount Sinai follow a previous discourse. These various discussions are expression of a live confrontation of different scientific viewpoints.

The main articles take us to different spots, different ages and different topics. The pictographic language of Eurasian Paleolithic art is analyzed according to its grammar and syntax, a new investigation method which unlocks new horizons of research but also arouses debates. Observing the shadows of Neolithic standing stones and megalithic monuments in the British Isles, an unusual archeological method, gives them new meaning. A study of solar symbols in the Pueblo rock art of North America reveals the breadth of ancient astronomical knowledge. And then we move on, to a new and arguable interpretation of Chalcolithic and Bronze Age rock art from Valcamonica and other Alpine areas. What do the anthropomorphic images on the menhir statues represent? Gods, mythical ancestors or human beings?

The Notes and News section presents new books and updates from the Atelier research center and other institutions.

Readers are welcome to participate actively in the debates and to contribute to the permanent dialogue through the issues of EXPRESSION journal. If you have something to say, do let us hear from you.

E.A.

## A NOTE FOR THE AUTHORS

EXPRESSION is a quarterly journal on conceptual anthropology addressed to readers in over 90 countries. The readers are cultured scholars and students in anthropology, archeology, the arts, and other sectors of the humanities, eager to keep alive the dialogue, to communicate, to learn, and to contribute in opening up new trends of humanistic studies.

This journal offers space for expression and communication to researchers and authors from all over the world. Published papers are intended to be read and produce culture: they are addressed to learned and open-minded people. If you wish to contribute a paper, try to make it interesting and enjoyable to those who are not specialized in your specific research field. You talk to them, not just to the restricted circle of experts in your specific field. Articles are expected to be stimulating and pleasant to read. The target of EXPRESSION is to promote dialogue, knowledge, and ideas concerning the intellectual and spiritual expressions of non-literate societies. This journal is an open forum on conceptual anthropology, where over 250 authors from 50 countries, so far, have published their research and their ideas. Papers should be conceived for an audience involved in various fields of the humanities, mainly anthropology, archeology, art, sociology, and psychology. Your ideas, even if related to a local or circumscribed theme, should awaken the interest of an international and interdisciplinary audience. The visual aspect is important for communication with the readers: quality images and text should complement each other.

Authors should address readers openly, and avoid long descriptions, catalogues, and rhetorical arguments. Please refrain from unnecessary references and excessive citations; they make reading discursive and do not improve the scientific level of the article. Excessive quotations may be a symptom of an inability to express independent ideas. Do keep in mind that short articles are more read and appreciated than long ones. Avoid unnecessary words and sentences. Communications on current topics and short notes may be included in the 'Discussion Forum' or in the 'Notes and News' sections.

Publication in EXPRESSION quarterly journal does not imply that the publisher and/or the editors agree with the ideas expressed. Authors are responsible for their ideas and for the information and the illustration they present. Papers are submitted to reviewers, not in order to judge them but to help authors to better communicate with their readers, if needed. Controversial ideas are not censured if they make sense. New thoughts and concepts are welcome; they may awaken debate and criticism. Time will be their

judge. EXPRESSION is a free journal, independent and not submitted to formal traditional regulations. It offers space for ideas and discoveries, including debatable issues, healthy discussions, and imaginative and creative papers, if they contribute to research, are conceptually reliable, and respect the integrity, ethics, and dignity of authors, colleagues, and readers. Additional information on how to submit a paper is found in the 'Notes and News' section.



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### Front page image

Addaura cave, Sicily, Italy. Scene of masked people in dancing postures (detail). The dancers make a circle around two people fighting, or in a state of trance, or performing. (see Anati, p.27, this issue)

# DISCUSSION FORUM

**The Discussion Forum invites readers to be active protagonists in debates of worldwide interest in Conceptual Anthropology.**

## CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY: USE AND FUNCTION

What is the use and function of conceptual anthropology? In different forms, this question has been addressed to Atelier, the research center of conceptual anthropology. A general definition of *CoAn*: Conceptual Anthropology, how and why it was born, appeared in *EXPRESSION* 38, pp. 68-72. Here we consider just the specific query on use and function. Atelier is entering its tenth year of activities as the founder and promotor of conceptual anthropology. The initial goal was to make further progress in extrapolating cause from effect by means of archeological and anthropological research: recovering social, psychological and conceptual motivations to understand the minds behind tangible remains. The use of multidisciplinary research models to delve into the background of material evidence beyond accepted boundaries, was a promising new horizon. The development of these aims has so far attracted over 250 authors and thousands of readers and followers in five continents. It is a starting step towards awakening a wider interest and an even more active participation into the search for new dimensions of understanding the past. And it is not just an intellectual amusement, it is a further insight into human nature, our own nature.

The use and function of research is established by its results. Results and new research goals are constantly published here, and are open to discussion, criticism and, when necessary, revision. Trials and errors produce progress: this is the nature of research. The concrete results of conceptual anthropology are documented in 70 books published in 10 years by Atelier and in the 40 issues of this quarterly journal. Further to the tangible and documented results, they bring

about novel perspectives into the cause and effect of human behavioral patterns in a perspective of different ages and contexts.

The main cause of misunderstandings, disagreements, criticism, offence, insults, fights, and wars that plague human society is the limited consideration of the mental processing of the human mind. Despite the use of artificial intelligence and statistics, economic, social, political and psychological evaluations, personal and political decision-making ultimately depends mainly on the output of the human mind. The awareness of what is defined logical or illogical, right or wrong, friend or foe, is enhanced by a vision of human behavior in the span of times and trends. After all man, like horses, birds, fishes, bees or elephants, has his own basic mental structure. Behavioral patterns of different traditions share the processing range of this structure. Each human is equally equipped with two eyes, one mouth and one brain, though each one uses them as dictated by inherited tendencies, cultural indoctrination, and state of mind. Different decisions or indecisions lead to different results.

Man was not born today; the present is the outcome of its past. The heritage gathered in ages of evolution is partly concealed in the archives of the human mind, and it may or may not be restored to consciousness. It is a legacy which lies at the background of human behavior: the trends of mental logic are acquired by millenary experiences, not sufficiently conscious, thus not sufficiently present in behavioral performances and decision-making. Not infrequently, human relations, with their bluffs and cheats, appear as a game of poker, highlighting the weakness and inadequacy of the mental process.

Personal, social and political decisions alike have repeatedly brought about success, but also led to mistakes and disasters. The past is a teacher, but there are no written records of the 99% of our past. Nevertheless, the traces left behind by visual art, material objects, living structures, burials, shrines, temples, other monuments and other relics reveal behavioral habits. They are the outcomes of both predispositions and cultural conditioning, accompanied by reason, emotions and reactions. Humans are not robots. Recovering the mental trends of these millennia is the task of conceptual anthropology. The goal is to add further meaning to facts, make evidence more evident, effects

reveal their cause, create wisdom out of knowledge.

Even artificial intelligence can be fed only by what is consciously available. Bringing back to consciousness past experiences affects the awareness of cause and effect of behavioral patterns and decision-making. The results are already recorded by what has been so far published. But the future will tell us more on the use and function of conceptual anthropology.

(Edited by Alisa Caine)

## THE DEBATE ON THE ARRIVAL OF *HOMO SAPIENS* IN EUROPE

*Emmanuel Anati*

The earliest traces in Europe of a toolmaker being are about 2 million years old. Since then various types of the Homo species reached the continent. Neanderthal man was a dominant presence for half a million years until 40,000 years ago. And then Homo sapiens appeared. How and when did he reach Europe?

The debate on this issue was already alive when the Abbé Breuil, in 1912, presented his typological subdivisions of Upper Paleolithic lithic artefacts, in Geneva, at the 14<sup>th</sup> congress of Anthropology and Archeology. Ever since the argument has recurred. Homo sapiens is not native to Europe, but arrived from elsewhere. How and where from?

Discoveries of early lithic industries of Upper Paleolithic type in the Near East and elsewhere in Asia gave rise to different ideas on the birth place of Homo sapiens, Africa, the Near East or other parts of Asia. Recently, the stratigraphy of the Mandrin cave in southern France and a comparative study of its flint implements with those of the Syrian site of Ksar Akil has raised the hypothesis of three different attempts by Homo sapiens to conquer Europe, the third one being successful. The main point of discussion is how and when did this Upper Paleolithic Sapiens become European.

The debate started a problem of terminology. The Middle Paleolithic Neanderthal, deemed to be the maker of the Mousterian flint industry, is sometimes named Sapiens Neanderthalensis and the Upper Paleolithic Sapiens, the maker of the various blade lithic industries, is named Sapiens-sapiens. To avoid misunderstanding, we call the Middle Paleolithic Neander-

thal, Neanderthal and the Upper Paleolithic Sapiens, Sapiens, thus avoiding the second, redundant, sapiens term.

Two main queries arise. First, is Neanderthal the only producer of the Mousterian lithic industries? Second, is Sapiens present in Eurasia just during the Upper Paleolithic, or is he present already during the Middle Paleolithic?

An essential issue focuses on the presence of visual art. Early isolated cases of visual art are claimed to be present in several regions of the world but the phenomenon of visual art as a social widespread cultural pattern is a vital event in cultural evolution. Is it linked to the advent of Homo sapiens?

As discussed in *Expression* 25 (2019), in Africa, Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas there are numerous traces of visual markings, such as non-figurative signs, lines, dots, cup-marks, stencils of hands, and other items copied, printed but not deliberately drawn by the human hand. Such graphic markings are present before figurative art. Some tribal groups still use this kind of non-figurative graphics, which appeared at different times in different regions. It represents a type of conceptuality, a means of externalization and communication which may belong to different periods. In Europe, the producers of various types of the Mousterian lithic industry, Neanderthal or other human groups of the Middle Paleolithic, already produced this kind of graphic marking which is not yet figurative art. Conceptual anthropology defines them as proto-art.

Figurative depictions, deliberately shaped by human hand, are tentatively deemed to be the tangible expression of a new conceptual rationality. They first appear and fast become a widespread pattern of culture in areas of Eurasia, Africa, and Australia, which are unlikely to have had direct contact at the time. They mark the presence of new mental abilities, those of men reproducing and making permanent images outside their minds, creating an external database. They represent a conceptual revolution, a new type of human mental ability. Is that the mind of Homo sapiens?

In Eurasia and Africa, proto-art graphic markings and hand stencils may go back over 70,000 years, while figurative art shaped by hand and created by a new kind of mind is considered to originate between 50,000 and 40,000 years ago. Stencils and other ex-

pressions of proto-art were present at least 20,000 years previously.

An archaic phase of Paleolithic image-making art defined La Ferrassie style (*Acts of Valcamonica Symposium XXII*, 2007), is present in France and Spain and has a specific typology which is different from that of later art forms. This style precedes the Aurignacian horizon and was defined typologically in *World Rock Art* (Atelier English edition, 2015, pp. 92-101). A similar style, using the same repertoire of graphemes and the same associative syntax, is known in other parts of the world, mainly in Australia and Tanzania. In all cases it is considered to be an incipient phase of deliberately drawn visual art (*Expression* 18, 2017). Similar outputs are the outcomes of similar mental processes. They express a similar conceptual core; they are not necessarily evidence of contact or cultural relations.

In Europe, considering the stratigraphic context at La Ferrassie and other sites of Dordogne where this style of rock engraving is present, it was associated with the Châtelperron material industry (*Premiers Hommes en Europe*, Paris, Editions Fayard, 2007, pp. 73-78). An old debate re-emerged: who were the makers of the Châtelperron blade industry? Homo sapiens, Neanderthal or Proto-sapiens? Do we have to reconsider the old axiom according to which the Neanderthal people were the sole inhabitants of Europe throughout the Middle Paleolithic? If the expressions of this peculiar style are issue of the same conceptual core also in Australia or Tanzania, then the term Neanderthal would be inappropriate.

The possible common conceptual roots of this archaic pattern of visual art still have to be clarified. The associative syntax reflects a specific type of conceptual logic, which may derive from common cores and parallel evolution, not necessarily from direct cultural contact. One thing can be guessed: that in Europe, like in Australia, this pattern is an innovative cultural element, a revolutionary conceptual invention reflecting a new ability of the human mind, a new kind of mental processing. The original core of figurative art is unlikely to be in Australia or in Europe and it may have been introduced by newcomers.

A fact already stressed in previous issues of *Expression* (29, 2020) is that most likely Neanderthals were not the only inhabitants of Europe in the Middle Paleolithic. Figurative depictions intentionally shaped by

human hands are the tangible expression of a new conceptual rationality: is it that of *Homo sapiens*?

The present debates awaken a few questions.

**Typology of flint implements.** The similarity of a few types of flint tools in Mandrin cave and Ksar Akil does not mean that Mandrin people reached Ksar Akil or that Ksar Akil people reached Mandrin. It means that people shaped tools according to their needs and found similar solutions for similar functions. The Châtelperron points are found in the Australian aboriginal lithic industry, but they are unlikely to have come from Châtelperron.

**Tools marking cultural patterns.** The concept that the Middle Paleolithic Mousterian industry belonged exclusively to Neanderthal people, then that the Upper Paleolithic blade industry is to be associated exclusively with Homo sapiens may be a misleading structural concept. The typological varieties of lithic tools reflect technological methods often similar in different regions of the world, whence similar needs and functions with similar raw material may lead to similar shapes. The Levallois flaking technique is present not only in various regions of Eurasia, but also in Australia. This does not imply that a peculiar type of Levallois flaking was the output of a Levallois race! Likewise, Ksar Akil type points found at Mandrin or Mandrin points found at Ksar Akil do not imply a connection between the two sites; they imply similar outputs due to similar needs using similar raw material, made with a similar level of technical ability. Similar technical abilities constitute a culturally relevant factor but do not necessarily imply direct relations or ethnic association.

**The concept of migration waves.** The theoretical possibility of three migration waves of Homo sapiens into Europe, with the conquest of Europe in the third round, is arguable. What is the concept behind this view? That a congregation of Sapiens, having their headquarters in the Middle East, planned a military campaign to conquer Europe? How did these societies of hunter-gatherers function? Usually, they are structured in small clans. Their size is determined by the available economic resources and their related activities. Hunters of rabbits or other small animals, reindeer hunters and bison hunters live in different-sized units, which move in search of resources, reaching different territories. Organized mass migrations may take place when, for some rea-

son, the human units have to abandon a territory, otherwise the movement of each human clan may be rather autonomous. Some of these small units may have reached Europe quite early, during the age of the Middle Paleolithic lithic industries, while Neanderthal and other proto-Sapiens groups lived there. The early presence of figurative art in Spain and France may indicate just that.

**Territorial ownership.** Even accepting the unlikely supposition that during the Middle Paleolithic, 100,000 people lived in Europe, an area of over 10 million sq. km, the resulting population density would be on average one inhabitant per 100 sq. km. They did not have a Maginot defense line. People moved around in the open country. The idea that Neanderthals could have pushed back early migration attempts by Homo sapiens would be suitable for a science fiction story. Territorial ownership, according to known patterns of hunter-gatherer groups of historical times, may concern sites: caves, rock shelters and water sources may have been claimed as private property by a clan or a tribal unit. The presence of a Neanderthal confederation claiming territorial ownership on the European continent to push back the Sapiens invaders is hardly conceivable. Different types of clans moved

around; they could have met occasionally but there was plenty of space for everyone.

**The areas of migration of the European Sapiens.**

The main migration routes into Europe have historically been three: from the Near East, through Anatolia and the Caucasus; from Asia crossing the Urals; from North Africa, into Iberia through the Gibraltar Straits. Likely, the European population of the Upper Paleolithic used these three routes to expand in Europe.

To our mind, the peopling of Europe by Homo Sapiens was a gradual, spontaneous, multi-millenary process of penetration by clans or small nomadic groups, coming from various directions, bringing various traditions, beginning in the Middle Paleolithic and continuing during the entire Upper Paleolithic. The hypothesis of three planned migrations waves would require at least some additional evidence, besides the hypothetical interpretation of a stratigraphic sequence of levels in a cave.

An engraving on bone, from Les Eyzies in Dordogne, likely describes the migration of a group of eight people from eastern into western Europe. Movements of people took place all the time, from the first arrival of the first hominids, to the various waves of Homo sapiens, to the 'extra-communitarians' of our times.



Fig. 1. Les Eyzies, Dordogne, France. A fragment of decorated bone from the Paleolithic Magdalenian period. A group of eight anthropomorphs in profile are holding on their shoulders forked *bâtonnets*, meaning traveling. On the right side there is a bison in profile and on the top and the left side are two double signs, the plural of whatever they may represent, probably fire. This composition is presumed to be telling the story of a journey or migration of people who identified themselves with fires, from a region marked with the ideograms of fire, to the land of the bison. The proposed reading would be: eight people (or clan heads) of the land of fires, leave the land of fires traveling to the land of the bison. This interpretation is suggestive, since Azerbaijan has been known as the land of fires, where petroleum and gas deposits create fire choreographies, since the beginning of written history. The land of the bison could be the Franco-Cantabrian area, where this fragment was found and where the bison is the dominant figure of Paleolithic art (after Anati, 2001b).

# THE DEBATE ON THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION

Following the publication of the new edition  
of “The Origins of Religion” (2023)

## ON THE NATURE OF RELIGIONS

*David Andrea Anati*

Senior Researcher (Physics, ret), Weizman Institute,  
Rehovot, Israel

In our everyday language, belief means doubt. If you say: “My neighbor is not at home, he went to see his mother,” we normally take it as a fact. But if you say: “My neighbor is not at home, I believe he went to see his mother,” doubt immediately appears.

And not only in our everyday language. People believe in black cats’ ill fate, UFOs, the Bermuda triangle, Nostradamus’ predictions, and many other doubtful theories. People are naturally attracted to the mysterious and the supernatural. And religious beliefs are no exception; humans are attracted to them in spite of their being doubted. It is an innate desire that must be satisfied. As are many other desires, such as socialization, hunger, thirst, and sex.

If religion is a human innate need of *Homo sapiens*, this can explain why a local religion had to be invented in every corner of the globe. In barren places, in rainy ones, in remote islands of the Pacific, everywhere *Homo sapiens* felt the need to create a religion for himself, and that religion always fitted the place. The laws of the local religion dictated the way executions of misbelievers and heretics were to be performed: by pelting with dry stones in the arid Sinai desert, or by drowning in muddy quicksand puddles in the Flanders, all according to the local conditions.

Nowadays, well into the 21st century, rational *Homo Sapiens* who doubt the dogmas of priests, rabbis, and qadis are nevertheless atavistically attracted by the occult and satisfy themselves by taking to a religion. It would seem logical that they would study several existing faiths before choosing an acceptable one; but in fact, as a rule, one’s chosen religion, or even the strict sect within a religion, is just that of one’s fathers. It is the easiest choice, and it requires no great intellectual effort.

An atheist is a non-believer in any deity, and atheism is a modern phenomenon. In previous centuries atheists were very rare; everybody belonged to an established religion. You could ask anyone: “What is your religion?” Nowadays that would sound out of place. You should ask first: “Are you a religious person?”, and only after an affirmative answer you could add: “Which religion do you belong to?” Otherwise, it would be like asking “Which golf club you belong to?” of a stranger you don’t even know whether he is a golf player at all. In the holy scriptures there is no mention of atheism. The prophets’ wrath was directed only to worshipers of a deity other than Jehovah (called Jove by gentiles), and it was tacitly assumed that everyone must worship some deity; the possibility of atheism was not even taken in consideration. Today, although most of humanity still adheres to some religion, there are millions of self-declared non-believers; this is a huge change in the story of humanity, it is the dawn of the end of the religions’ period.

### **P.S. A note not pertinent to the nature of religions:**

It can be somehow understood that a religious person would believe in a superior entity called God, who decides all events according to his unlimited wisdom. But it is hard to understand why a religious person would think that divine decisions can be altered by prayers. Or that one’s uncle doomed by a lethal illness, for example, could recover by lighting enough candles in church, or if by reading enough psalms at his bed, and that the Almighty would then change his previously taken divine decision and make the uncle recover. That would be trying to bribe the superior judge. Not quite a noble idea.

## THE CONCEPT OF DIVINITY

*Brian Britten*

Delta, BC, Canada

A soul has its connection to the concept of divinity; and I wonder if our ancestors came to that belief because of firsthand experiences with intelligent energies and included them in their worldview, not something all of our modern cultures and some of their religions are eager to encompass, perhaps out of a fear factor of the unknown or an instilled cultural belief that nothing is real unless you can touch

it. We live in a multiverse of potentials and human beings are just one kind of possibility. Our ancestors expressed their beliefs in stone artwork because it could be around for the next generation, although its significance has been sadly forbidden and forgotten through the shifting sands of time.

## SHORT SUMMARIES OF OTHER READERS' COMMENTS ON RELIGION

- “Religion was revealed by God on Mount Sinai”
- “Religion started with the Prophet, messenger of God, who revealed the only true religion”
- “Religion was born with a supernatural event. Miracles, the resurrection of a dead or a supernatural apparition may cause the birth of a religion.”
- “Religion started with the first rituals related to the burial of the dead. Was it half a million years ago?”
- “Religion is a social formula of association of people sharing the same beliefs. At the beginning each tribe had its mythical ancestors to worship.”
- “Religion relegates the believers from the non-believers.”
- “Religion is a social institution domesticating the adepts.”
- “Religion has always existed, it keeps communities together and regulates their behavior.”

## AGAIN, ON MOUNT SINAI

### Comparing the Views from the Top of Saint Catherine and Har Karkom According to Egeria's Account: a Reply

*Fabio Crosilla*

Senior Professor, University of Udine (Italy)

In the paper published on Expression N. 39, entitled “Comparing the Views from the Top of Saint Catherine and Har Karkom According to Egeria's Account”, the author, Eng. Flavio Barbiero, writes at the end of the manuscript, in relation to the paper by Fabio Crosilla entitled “Could Egeria Have Seen the ‘Parthenion’ Sea from the Top of Mount Sinai? The Landscape Visibility from the Top of Mount Sinai, climbed by Egeria” (Expression, N. 38), **“I must have missed something in his (Fabio Crosilla's, e.n.) line of reasoning”**.

I feel that Eng. Barbiero is correct. In fact, he never mentions in his paper that the reported results are obtained by a “Viewshed Analysis” conducted on a raster Digital Elevation Model available from the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), obtained by the Shuttle Radar Topography Missions, with a real cell resolution of 50 m.

Crosilla writes in his paper (pages 8 and 9) that “The viewshed is created estimating the difference of elevation from one cell (the view point cell) to the next (the target cell). To determine the visibility of a target cell, each cell between the viewpoint and the target is examined for a line of sight. Where cells of higher altitude are between the viewpoint and the target cell, the line of sight is blocked. In this case, the target cell is determined not to be part of the viewshed. On the contrary, if the line of sight is not blocked, it is included in the viewshed.

The results of the viewshed analysis are visible with red pixels in figures 1,2 and 3 of the paper by F. Crosilla (Expression N. 38). Starting from fig. 2, relating to Har Karkom, it is possible to state that “from the top of Har Karkom it is possible to have a wide vision of the Paran desert, located at the south-southeast of Har Karkom. Also, the mountains of the Transjordan chain, placed east of the Aravà valley, are visible from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Dead Sea. There is good visibility of the hills of the Jebel El Tih desertic plateau

in the central part of the Sinai Peninsula” (F. Crosilla. Expression N.38, page 9). The visibility situation is therefore completely different from that reported in Egeria’s book, where it is written “Egypt, Palestine, the Red Sea and the Parthenion Sea, that extends as far as Alexandria, and even the immense territory of the Saracenes: from up there we saw them so far below us, we could hardly believe it. And all these places, the Saints pointed out to us one by one”(F. Crosilla, Expression N. 38, page7).

For what concerns the visibility of Gebel Musa, Crosilla writes on page 9 of Expression N. 38 that “some directions towards the Gulf of Suez and the Egyptian coast, the northern part of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Jordan coast, the Red Sea and part of Arabia in the

southwestern direction from Gebel Musa have free visibility, satisfying that reported in the book of Egeria. Furthermore, from fig. 1 it is possible to note some limited visibility areas in the hills of the Negev desert, in the direction of Har Karkom. It is noteworthy then, that the visibility along the northerly direction from Gebel Musa allows the sight of the Jebel El Tih desertic plateau, characterizing the central part of the Sinai Peninsula. Of course, Egeria could not see the Parthenion Sea (Mediterranean), 270 km from Gebel Musa.”

I hope to have clarified the results obtained through the Viewshed analysis for the visibility on the top of Har Karkom and Gebel Musa. I am amenable to a personal discussion with Eng. Barbiero about this stimulating problem.

## FORTHCOMING NEW DEBATES

Readers are proposing themes for debate. When at least three articles are submitted on the same theme, the topic is considered for a forthcoming issue.

1. **CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION AND THE ORIGINS OF ART**
2. **IS *HOMO SAPIENS* THE INVENTOR OF FIGURATIVE ART?** Is visual art the sign of his presence?
3. **MIGRATIONS AND CULTURAL DIFFUSION, DID INDEED MAN ORIGINATE IN AFRICA?**
4. **IMAGES OF WARFARE AND FIGHTING IN PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL ART.** Their commemorating role and their historical value.
5. **SEAFARING DEPICTIONS: RECORDING MYTHS AND EVENTS** Considering the story of seafaring and its earliest documentation.
6. **MYTHS OF ORIGINS: WHERE DID THE ANCESTORS COME FROM?** Global and local versions.
7. **PERSONAL IDENTITIES OF ARTISTS.** Identifying the hands of a specific artist, school or tradition in prehistoric and tribal art.
8. **VERNACULAR DECORATIVE PATTERNS AND THEIR SOURCES.** Decoration of objects, huts or rock surfaces as the expression of identity.
9. **THE ART OF HUNTERS AND GATHERERS:** Different patterns as expressions of different lifestyles and different resources.

## PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEBATES

Proposals for papers and suggestions on these and other issues are welcome.

# GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX OF PRIMARY ART AN ENQUIRY IN CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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## The Structural Core

### The context

The images and signs of primary visual art can only be the expressions of the minds that produced them. They form a window on the thinking processes of their makers. Why were they made? What can they tell us about their function and purpose? And what can they reveal of the rational and irrational concepts at the source of our own ways of reasoning?<sup>1</sup>

The images and signs of the art of hunting and gathering, past and present, are the expressions of a grammar which comprises subjects, objects, adjectives, and verbs. Single graphemes are words or ideas; deliberate groups or sequences of graphemes are unions of words or thoughts meaning an association or sequence deriving from the assemblage of their components. They create a pictographic recording meant to memorize and communicate.<sup>2</sup>

### Defining the assemblage

When a surface shows more than one phase of painting or engraving, in order to analyze it further, it is necessary to separate what goes together from what does not. Sometimes decorated surfaces present in caves or in open-air rock art or on movable objects present layers of different phases which have to be defined and isolated in order to be understood. Both direct observation and various technical methods are the tools used in this stage.

Identifying what goes together and what does not is the necessary initial step. Finding out the meaning of a deliberate assemblage of graphemes is the next step.

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1 The present paper follows an article which appeared in the last issue of *EXPRESSION* journal (Vol. 39, 2023, pp. 19-32); it reconsiders and further develops the data gathered on the decoding of prehistoric art (2020a) and on its typology (2020b).

2 On the typology of prehistoric art see two papers in *EXPRESSION* 23 (2019), and 37 (2022).

Likely, such intent was more easily grasped by a hunter 20,000 years ago than by a contemporary scholar. The instinctive analytical mental processing is influenced by cultural conditioning which makes people more or less familiar with some oral or visual messages. A supporting interpretative tool is offered by comparative analysis showing recurring formulae of associative patterns, indicating the presence of logical constants.<sup>3</sup>

### The analytical process

The analysis of grammar and syntax is aimed at understanding the logical process behind the graphic output and is a step towards decoding its contents and purpose. In this paper we consider the analytical processes behind the decoding. The deciphering process of several Paleolithic documents has been previously illustrated.<sup>4</sup>

The comparative analysis of primary visual art shows the recurrence of similar associative conceptual patterns among early hunter-gatherers from different continents who had never met each other. This indicates the presence of logical processes shared by human beings in different regions of the world, even without any direct cultural reciprocal influences. It implies the existence of archetypal conceptual processing trends.

In fact, the early phases of visual art display the same basic graphemes and the same basic associative trends in faraway parts of the planet. The array of signs and images in the early phases of visual art is the same in different continents and shows the same typology, limited to handprints, figures of tools, vulvar ideograms, animal heads and schematic outlines, zigzags, dots, and lines.<sup>5</sup>

In the successive phases of Early Hunters' visual expression (EH-2, EH-3) the range diversifies, the styles

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3 For further details see Anati, 2015a.

4 For further details see Anati, 2007a, 2015a, 2020a, 2020b.

5 Phase EH-1, see typology in Anati, 2020b.



Fig. 1a. Cave of La Pileta, Malaga, Spain. Large panel with numerous paintings. The tracing shows layers belonging to different phases, Paleolithic and post-Paleolithic (after Breuil et al., 1915).

vary, but always have five main subjects: 1, anthropomorphic; 2, zoomorphic; 3, objects; 4, structures; and 5, signs and symbols (ideograms). They represent the topics of concern recorded by the visual art of the epoch. They interplay and form assemblages and sequences. It is a simple visual language, preserved for tens of thousands of years. It was still used by some American native groups when Garrick Mallery recorded them some 150 years ago (Mallery, 1888-89).

### The Grammar of Primary Art

#### Five categories

As a working hypothesis we assume that art reflects the mind and that the mind is conditioned by the way of life which encompasses the activities and concerns of individuals and groups. In the schematized synthesis of a vast variety of different contexts, the global typology of prehistoric and tribal art is defined by five major categories having distinct typological features, according to different ways of life: 1, Archaic Hunters (no bow and arrow); 2, Gatherers; 3, Evolved Hunters (using bow and arrow); 4, Pastoralists (shepherds), an-

imal raisers; and 5, Farmers, populations with diversified economies. Each of them reveals peculiar artistic orientations, stylistic patterns, and the typological range of subjects, recurring in every continent.<sup>6</sup>

The typological peculiarities of these categories are retained as the output of current activities, diet, the social and economic context, and related concerns (Anati, 2002b, 2010, 2015, 2020a). The mind is occupied by the interests and thoughts dictated by the way of life. Obviously, a buffalo hunter and an oyster gatherer do not have the same dietary habits, they do not perform the same activities, and do not have the same daily concerns and the same mental conditioning. Their way of thinking is different and their visual art expressions are different.

An oyster gatherer is unlikely to draw buffaloes and a buffalo hunter is unlikely to draw oysters. Analogous differences occur between carnivorous hunters and vegetarian gatherers of yams or other tubers, cassava-manioc, sprouts or natural fruits. Again, their way of thinking is different and the visual art output

<sup>6</sup> For further details see Anati (2020b).



Fig. 1b. Detail of the left side of the previous panel. To the Paleolithic animals were added at a later period two small figures, a quadruped, an anthropomorphic figure, and other signs.

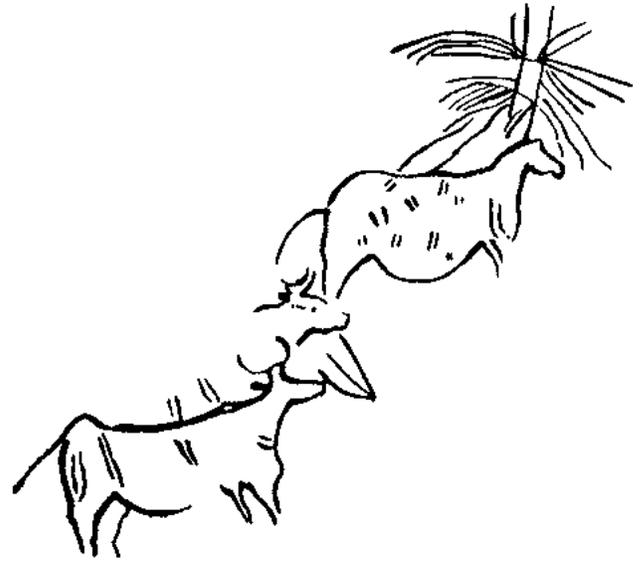


Fig. 1d. Sector A, after the removal of later additions. The composition includes a bovid and an equid, a head of bovid between the two and a vulvar sign. In the upper part is a rectangle surrounded by emanating lines or rays. Below, a sequence of graphemes from top right to bottom left.



Fig. 1c. Another detail of the previous panel showing a section of the right side of the panel, including successive superimpositions.

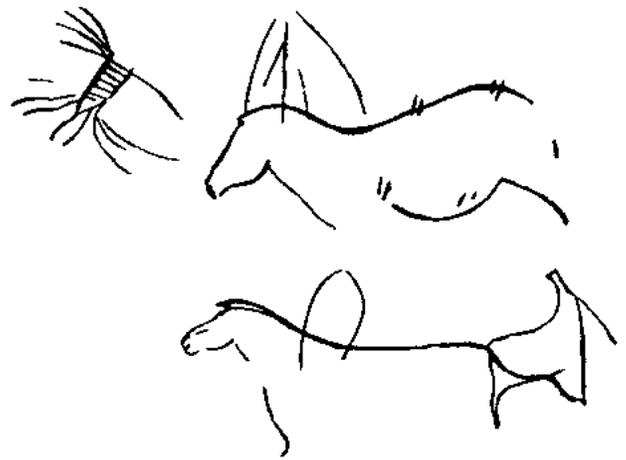
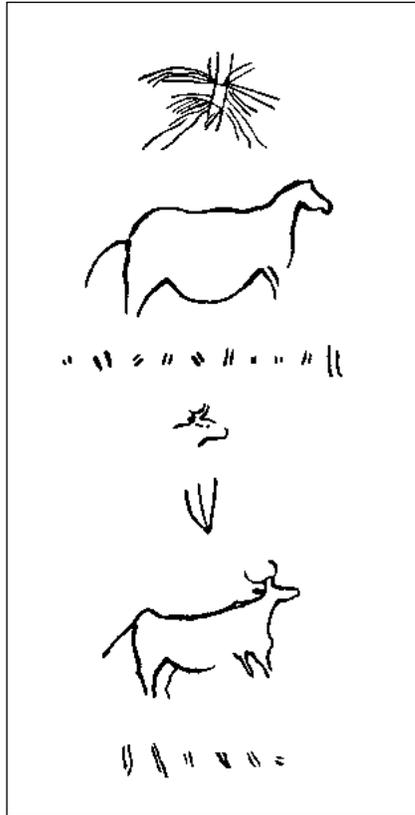


Fig. 1e. Sector B after the removal of later additions. An assemblage of two horses, a vulvar female symbol, accompanied by a *bâtonnet*, a male symbol. On the body of one of the equids are four ideograms of lips, a female symbol. On the left side, at the top, there is a rectangular sign with emanating lines or rays. Below, the sequence of graphemes from top left to bottom right.

### Sequences of graphemes of Group A.



### Sequences of graphemes of Group B.

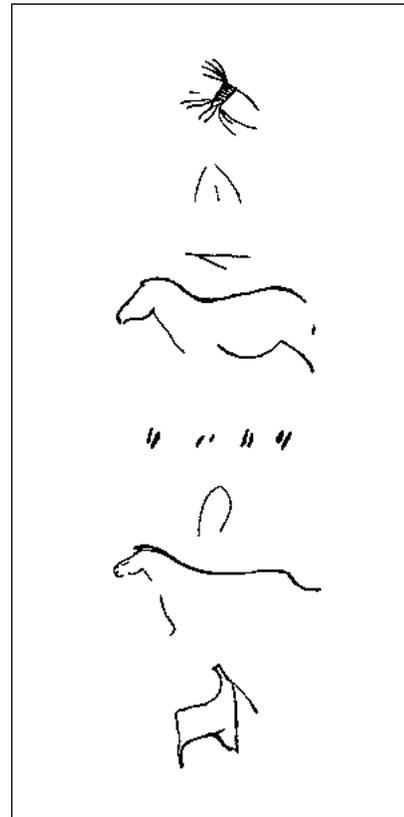


Fig. 1f. The messages to be decoded: the conceptual sequences of the graphemes

is different. The analytical process leads from effect to cause.

The typological and stylistic constants of the categories and their different peculiarities evidence the impact of way of life as a conditioner of the human mind, partly contradicting some aprioristic commonplace conceptions. The multi-millenary persistence of such different typologies in visual arts is relevant to related social theories, relevant also to contemporary societies, which are currently supported mainly by the evidence spanning a limited temporal time-range.

The environment appears to be a determining factor. Reindeer hunters of the Arctic could hardly lead a vegetarian diet since nature does not provide the resources needed. Humans, like every other animal, can only benefit from available dietary resources. We postulate that the different categories of visual art reveal different mental leanings conditioned by a different way of life and a different consumption of dietary resources.

Two of these categories, the oldest, Early Hunters and of Gatherers, are present in the Pleistocene; the others reflect the diversification of human economic and social patterns that evolved in the last 14,000 years. Human evolution has a detectable acceleration: the presence of the species *Homo*, a bipedal primate living on hunting and gathering, has been in existence for at least 4 million years; visual art as a cultural pattern emerged just 50,000 years ago, and the diversification of patterns of life style and economic resources, besides hunting and gathering, evolved in the last 14,000 years. But humans maintained different ways of life: hunters and gatherers still exist along with farmers and urban communities. Pictographic message-writing is still performed in some corners of the world, while hundreds of alphabetic writings have since developed. Because of the remarkable time range, spanning around 50,000 years since visual art appeared as a cultural pattern, the art of hunters and gatherers is



Fig. 2. Castillo cave, Spain. Rock painting of Early Hunters. Two phases of paintings are present. The latter represents figures of quadrupeds, mainly bison and horse. The earlier phase is an accumulation of hand stencils and of signs, some of which represent tools (tracing by H. Breuil, in Alcalde del Rio et al., 1911).

particularly relevant analytically, as the expression of persistent trends of physical and conceptual behavioral standards.

Traditional schools of prehistoric studies considered hunters and gatherers as the same group. Indeed, there are human groups practicing both hunting and gathering; however, comparative study of prehistoric art has brought to light substantial differences between the art of societies whose main activity is hunting, practicing a predominantly carnivorous diet and focusing their concerns on animal resources, compared with the art of food gatherers, who do not practice a predominantly carnivorous diet and do not represent hunted game as a dominant theme, adopting instead other subjects as dominant themes in their visual art.

In different parts of the world, like Australia, Azerbaijan, and Tanzania, different assemblages of Pleistocene art display two main different figurative repertoires, one with animal figures as its predominant and almost exclusive subject, the other devoid of any animal figures, or showing animals as a secondary subject. Likewise, some art groups are devoid of anthropomorphic

images, while in others they are dominant. These sharp typological differences imply different conceptual trends.<sup>7</sup>

The diversities in graphic expressions observed in tribal art in India and other areas would seem to characterize carnivorous and vegetarian groups. They are supposedly influenced by their mental concerns but likely also by the different protein intake. No less relevant may be the effects of certain types of vegetables on influencing, enhancing, doping or deforming mental abilities.

### Three grammatical types

All five categories have three types of signs, defined as pictograms, ideograms and psychograms.

Pictograms (and mythograms) are figures in which one may recognize the shape of real or imaginary things or beings.

Ideograms are repetitive and synthetic signs, which may have male or female values, positive or negative

<sup>7</sup> For further details see Anati: for Azerbaijan, 2015b; for Australia, 2018; for Tanzania, 2019a.



Fig. 3. Queensland, Australia. Association of ideograms of Early Hunters. On this surface there are also later engravings (omitted in this drawing). Stencils of human hands are associated with stencils of animal limbs, zigzags, and tools. Base of tracing: 1.50 m (drawn from photograph, Clegg, 1983).

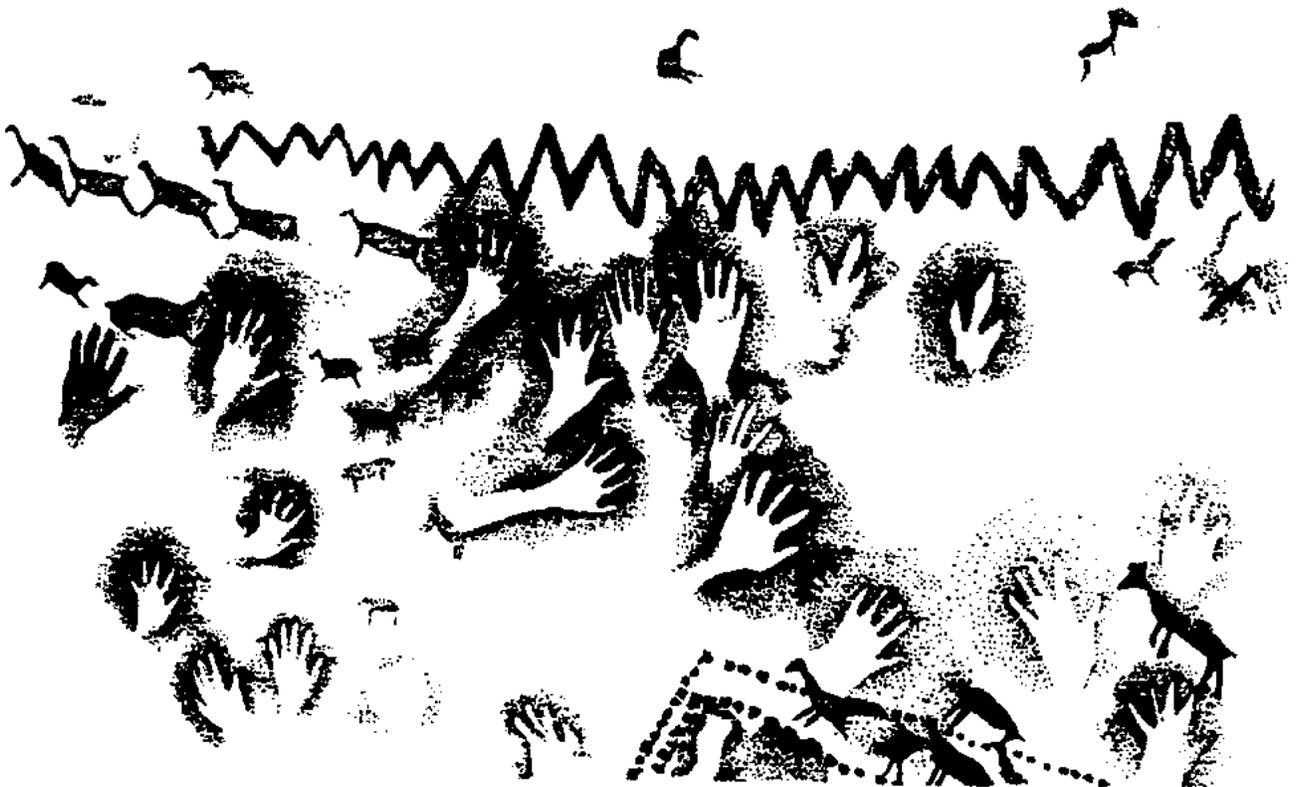


Fig. 4. Rio Pinturas, Santa Cruz, Patagonia, Argentina. Rock paintings. Hand stencils and other symbols of Early Hunters. Human hands and stencils of animal feet are accompanied by a long zigzag. The animal figures and the rows of dots are later additions. Base of tracing: 2.60 m (after Anati, 1989).



Pictogram	Ideograms				
					
Schematic quadruped	Vulvar sign	Sequence of dots	Association dot-and-line	Conjugation dot-and-line	Coupling dot-and-line

Fig. 5. La Ferrassie, Dordogne, France. Schematic tracing of a stone block with engravings. A quadruped outline is surrounded by ideograms. A vulvar sign occupies a central position. Rows of dots, lines, and groups of lines and the ideogram dot-and-line are present (after Anati, 1989).



Pictogram	Ideograms			
				
Schematic quadruped	Vulvar sign	Sequence of dots	Association dot-and-line	Coupling dot-and-line

Fig. 6. Murray River, Australia. A rock shelter surface with engravings. A schematic quadruped outline is surrounded by ideograms. What appears to be a vulvar sign (and probably another one) occupies a central position. Rows of dots, lines, and groups of lines and the dot-and-line ideogram are present (after Anati, 1989).

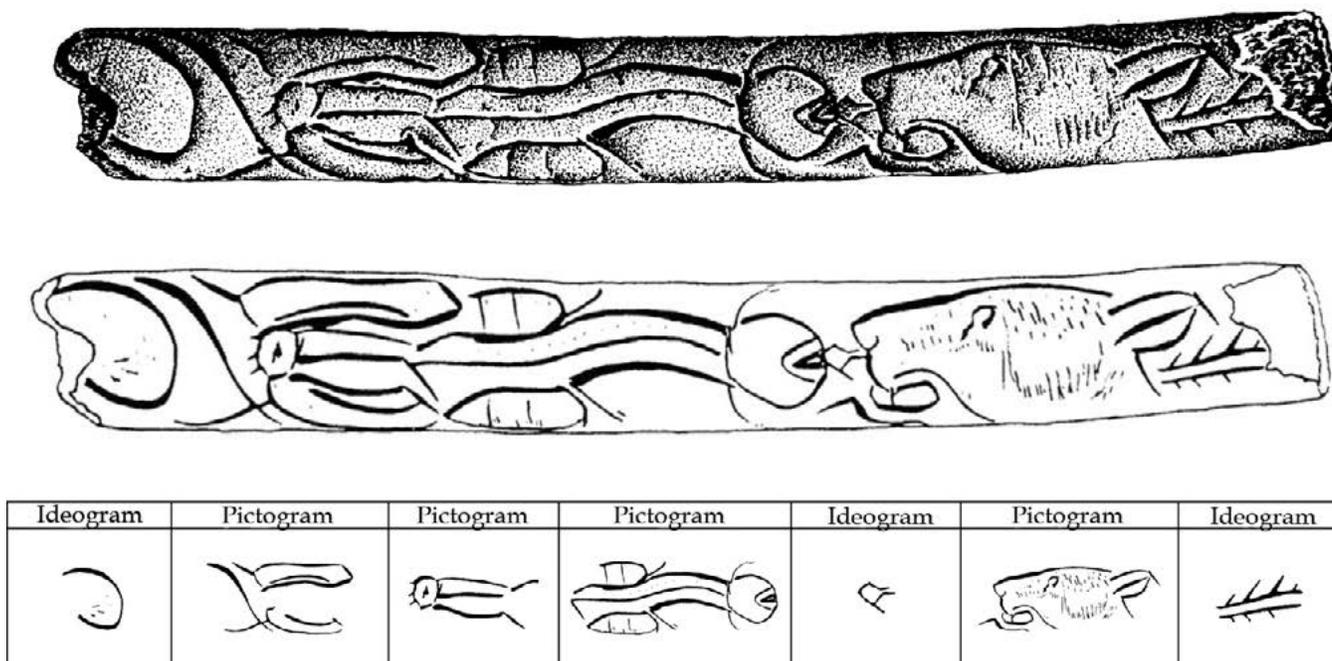


Fig. 7. La Madeleine, Dordogne, France. Tracing and outline of engraving on antler. The composition has at the center what seem to be two phalluses oriented in opposite directions. On the left, the phallus penetrates an orifice, which may represent a vulva; on the right, the larger phallus faces the nose and mouth of a bear. The last visible sign at the left is an oval shape or a vulvar ideogram (in any case an ideogram of female value); the right side ends with a fishbone or *arbolet* (ideogram of male value). The various elements are identified as pictograms and ideograms in their sequence from right to left. The main subject appears to be the bear's head, likely to represent a name or a totemic symbol. What did this composition intend to record or convey (after Anati, 2007a)?

indications or other conceptual denominations. Psychograms are signs that do not represent objects or symbols, but express sensations and feelings. Their meaning came through a comparative analysis of rock art and movable art objects from different areas (Anati, 2020a).

Pictograms, ideograms and psychograms reflect three components of what the human mind considers to be reality: pictograms are the visual transfer of the physical look, ideograms the visual transfer of conceptual contents, and psychograms the visual transfer of emotions and feelings.

These three kinds of graphemes are the expression of a primary cognitive process as a common basis of visual art, as well as dance and music. Also, they are the elements of oral communication. Their interplay determines the theorem of the grammar of human conceptual expressions and their visual outputs.

**Pictograms** (and/or mythograms) are recognizable representations of anthropomorphic or zoomorphic structures and objects, real or imaginary. They can

be defined as figures; they are subjects or objects, the reading of which is not necessarily literal, as each figure may have a metaphorical or conventional meaning. Pictograms have four main themes: anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, topographic or tectiform, and objects, tools and weapons. Symbols accompany them as ideograms. Other motifs like vegetation, landscape or realistic portraits recur rarely and only in specific contexts. They are not in the range of usual visual representation in primary art. The limitation of themes may reflect the range of conceptual concerns.

In prehistoric and tribal reasoning, images can have symbolic, allegoric, metaphorical or mythographic meanings. A bull, a wolf or a snake may represent just the animal, an attribute or an adjective, the name of a person, a tribe or a site, a totem sign, a territory or something else. In some cases they may also be key words. Some examples of hunter-gatherer art of traceable meaning may clarify the concept. Among tribal groups of the northern Arnhem Land,

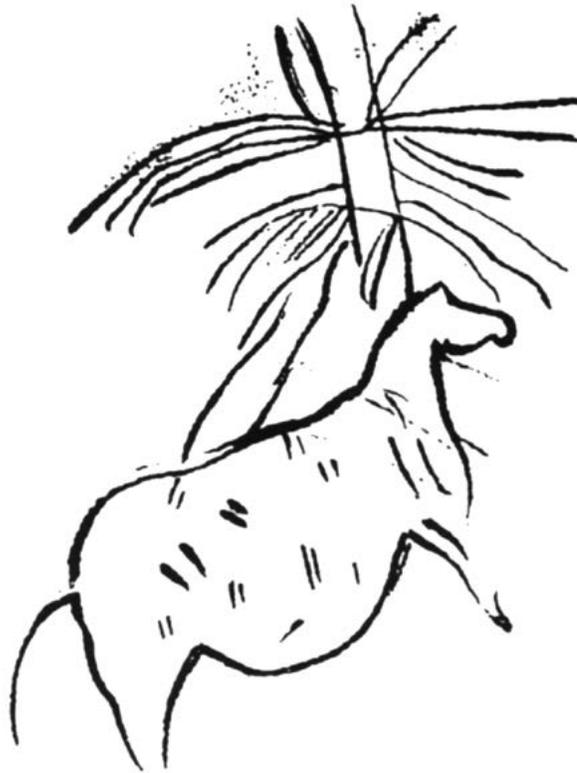


Fig. 8. La Pileta, Spain. Cave paintings. Pre-historic art grammar: pictograms, ideograms, and a psychogram. The pictogram is a brown horse, on his body is an ideogram made of two parallel lines repeated ten times. It is defined as lips, and a female meaning is attributed to it. These ideograms have been made by different hands using different color tones, red, brown and black. They are the accumulation of the same ideogram on the area defined by the body of the pictogram. Above the horse pictogram a black psychogram appears, a rectangle radiating outward. An apparently simple painting is an intentional assemblage produced by several hands. What is the message behind this composition? An elementary reading would suggest: 'Pleasure or satisfaction (the psychogram) for the horse (clan, name or totemic identity) related to 10 lips, female symbols, each one painted by a different hand' (tracing by H. Breuil, in Breuil et al., 1915).

Pictograms	Ideograms	Psychogram
		
Horse	Two parallel lines defined 'lips' are repeat 10 times	Rectangle that emanates energy rays

the name of a type of kangaroo also means food. The figure of that animal can just represent that animal but could also mean food or eating. In the same region, bad weather is attributed to a mythological being called *Nadjiurlum*, hence its name is used also to mean bad weather; its image on rock art can be that of the mythic being but could also mean bad weather. Yet again in the same region, the figure of a bat is painted on a rock along the trail leading to a still active sacred rock art site. The guardian of the site explained that it meant site forbidden to women, since in that tribal group the bat is a taboo animal for women.

In the opposite hemisphere, in a place called Writing-on-Stone, in Alberta, Canada, the rock art image of a buffalo painted in black depicts a historical tribal chief

called Black Buffalo: the image does not represent the depicted animal but the chief's name.

An association of pictograms may have pertinent meanings befitting the meaning attributed to the pictograms.

**Ideograms** are repetitive signs, several of which have a global diffusion. Among the most common shapes present in the art of Hunters of Eurasia are the point (or dot), series of points, line, disc, disc with a central dot, line and point, V, T and S-like signs, square, rectangle, triangle, arrow, branch, cross, star, serpentine, zigzag, phallic sign, vulvar sign, lips, eye, the five fingers of a hand, the net pattern. There are other repetitive marks, but the most common and most widespread ones number between 22 and 25, surprisingly like the number of alphabet letters.

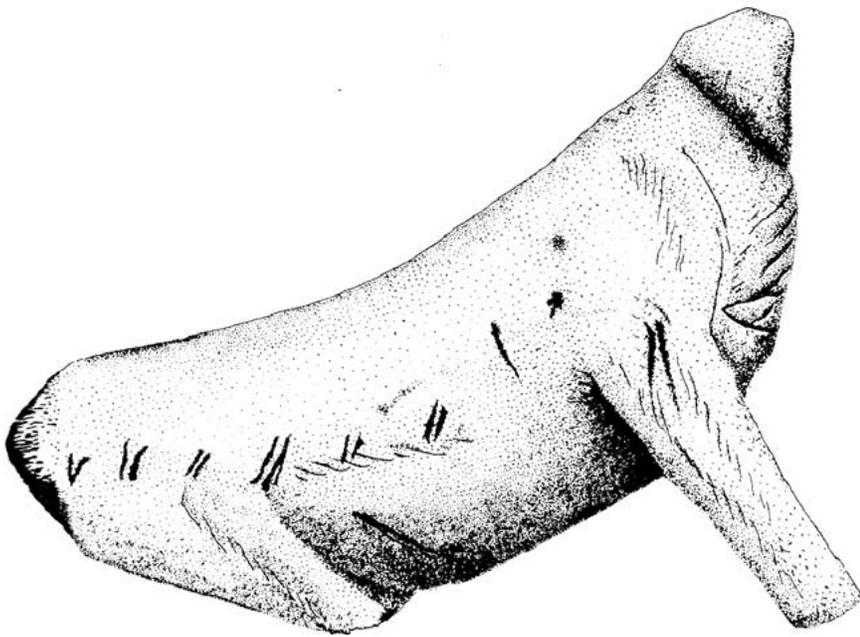


Fig. 9. Animal figure, part of a decorated tool, probably a spear-thrower, from the Paleolithic site of Arudy, Pyrenees, France. A series of lips ideograms are engraved on its body (after Anati, 2003).

**Psychograms** are present mainly in the art of Early Hunters and Gatherers. Comparative studies concluded that they are not figurative and that they represent neither objects nor symbols. They are visual expressions of sensations, feelings, auspices, and concepts. Sometimes they may serve as exclamation marks.

The typology of the graphemes and their meaning is the expression of a logic which concerns, besides the reading of primary art, also the roots of linguistics, psychology, semiotics, sociology, and conceptual anthropology. It is the expression of an elementary activity of the cerebral associative system.

#### The Syntax Or Associative Process

##### The associative trends

In every kind of writing, words are part of a sentence. In the art of hunters and gatherers, graphemes usually form groupings; isolated images are present as well, but what helps the decoding are the assemblages and sequences. One or more pictograms are accompanied by ideograms and sometimes by psychograms. An association not to be neglected is that of manmade graphemes with the natural shapes of the selected surface. Often, these natural shapes, fissures, fractures or marks due to geological factors are why the spot was chosen: they are attributed a meaning and they are

the core of the artistic creation, where their meaning is thus completed or further defined by manmade graphemes. The shapes convey messages that make the surface suitable for human intervention. Manmade graphemes fit into the shapes created by nature.

These assemblages of manmade signs and figures expose an aspect of the cognitive system and present formulae of associative concepts that make communication possible and ideas legible through images. Their logic is accessible to those to whom the message is addressed, be they humans or spirits. They become accessible to the researcher who is able to decrypt that kind of associative logic.

Symbolization is a basic aspect of the functioning of the human mind. It has a wide range of alternatives and different kinds of symbolization are markers of the conceptual identity of their authors. The earliest graphic associative forms of hunters and gatherers' visual expression appear as simple associations of graphemes or clusters of assembled graphemes; sequences of graphemes in a pre-conceived order have not been found in the earliest conceptual horizons and are present just in certain regions; the scene has rare, still later examples but never became a common syntactic system in the art of hunter-gatherers. Descriptive scenes are rare or totally absent in Early Hunters' major rock art sites, all over Europe, North Africa, Azerbaijan and Tanzania. Early Hunters use

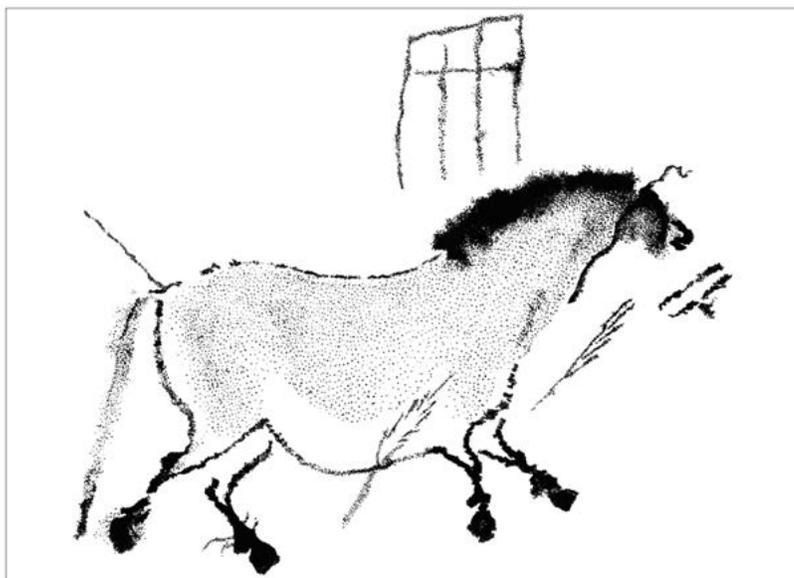
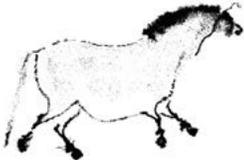
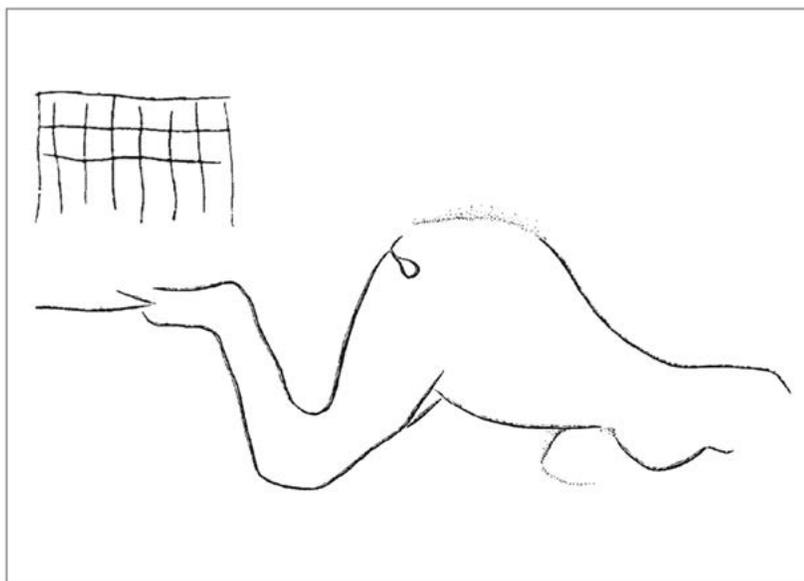


Fig. 10. Lascaux Cave, Dordogne, France. Horse painted in yellow ocher with black outline. This pictogram is accompanied by ideograms of *arbolet* (male value) in yellow and lips (female value) in black. Above the pictogram there is a reddish brown psychogram composed by a rectangle and four vertical lines or rays. What is the horse and what is the message behind this composition (after Anati, 2000).

Pictogram	Ideograms	Psychogram
		



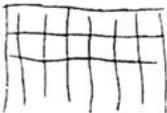
Pictogram	Ideograms	Psychograms
		

Fig. 11. Gabillou, Sourzac, Dordogne, France. Engraving of a female figure with indication of the vulvar orifice (eye ideogram of female value). An arrow ideogram (of male value) reaches a foot of the female pictogram. Above there is a psychogram formed by a rectangle crisscrossed by vertical lines or rays. Comparing this composition with that of the previous image, it may be presumed that both intend to convey a similar message. The female pictogram is instead of the horse pictogram (tracing by J. Gaussen, 1964, in Anati, 1995, p. 104).

the syntactic systems of simple association, cluster, and sequence.

A descriptive, anecdotal scene is the reflection of a moment, a specific event or situation. From the available data, it is practically non-existent in the early expressions of Pleistocene visual art and becomes more recurrent in some regions at the end of the Pleistocene and the beginning of the Holocene. It is a late conceptual acquisition. It is present in most categories of prehistoric art of Evolved Hunters (who used bow and arrow), Pastoralists and Farmers, with the exception of Early Hunters and certain groups of Early Gatherers.

### **Does diet influence the way of thinking?**

The Pleistocene art of Australia has two distinct grammatical features and different stylistic characters: the art of hunters which is dominated by animal figures and that of food collectors dominated by anthropomorphic figures. The figures may be on the same surface but produced in different styles, by different hands, in different times. The same typological diversity is present in Tanzania and Azerbaijan, for example.<sup>8</sup> If the dates provided by C14 and other technical tests coincide with those obtained in the rest of the world, in Australia the syntactic formula of the scene appears before anywhere else in the world (Anati, 2015; 2018; 2019). In the early phases, the art of Early Hunters, depicting large animal figures that include extinct Pleistocene fauna, probably coexisted with the art of food-collecting societies, in which anthropomorphic figures were the dominant art theme. Both categories, likely belonging to different human groups, kept their autonomous stylistic and thematic identities for centuries. We hypothesize that the persistence of different subject matter and style derives from the persistence of different habits, and that different diets may have had a role to play.

Food-gatherers developed the syntactic form of the scene, whilst Early Hunters maintained the forms of association, cluster, and sequence. These distinctive typologies of art styles reflecting different conceptual thinking are evident in the Pleistocene in different parts of the world – besides Australia, also in Tanzania and Azerbaijan – and persisted among later Holocene hunters and gatherers.

The art of archaic Food-gatherers displays what seem to be mythical scenes or surreal events involving imaginary beings in euphoric assemblages, likely due to the use of hallucinogens. They are not realistic scenes – if the term scene is at all suitable – describing moments, but surrealistic allegories of myths or imaginary visions.

In Africa, so far as we know, the art of Early Gatherers is present in the Pleistocene mainly in Tanzania and in the early Holocene also in the oasis art of the Sahara. In Australia it is found both in the Pleistocene and Holocene all over, but mainly in Kimberley, Arnhem Land and the Cape York Peninsula. In America it is present in Texas, California, and in Mexico, from the final Pleistocene and well into the Holocene; and in Europe, only in sporadic expressions of rock art defined as macro-schematic in eastern Spain, attributed to the Holocene (Anati, 2010, figs. 88a-b). The persistent typological differences between the art of societies characterized by a mainly hunting economy and carnivorous diet, and societies of food gatherers with a prevailing vegetarian diet, raise a question about the influence of diet on the way of thinking, which is reflected by different styles and artistic themes.

### **The role of the scene**

Associations, assemblages, and sequences of graphemes may convey messages in a figurative communication system, closer to formal writing than scenes. Both in Eurasia and in Africa, the scene becomes a widespread iconographic system only at the end of the Pleistocene, during the last 14,000 years, whereas the first figurative art goes back over 50,000 years. In general, symbolic associations precede the use of the scene in the succession of periods and stylistic horizons of visual art, this being a relevant factor in conceptual evolution.

The presence and absence of the scene and of symbolic associations in primary art indicate different cognitive formulations and imply distinct types of associative mental processing. Different cultural entities during different periods displayed different degrees of abstraction and symbolization, although the main distinction is defined by the presence or absence of scenes.

Emerging at a certain moment, among the older visual stylistic patterns of associations, clustering, and sequences, the scene acquires an anecdotal character,

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<sup>8</sup> For a general overview see Anati, 2015.



### Grammatical Analysis

### Logical Analysis

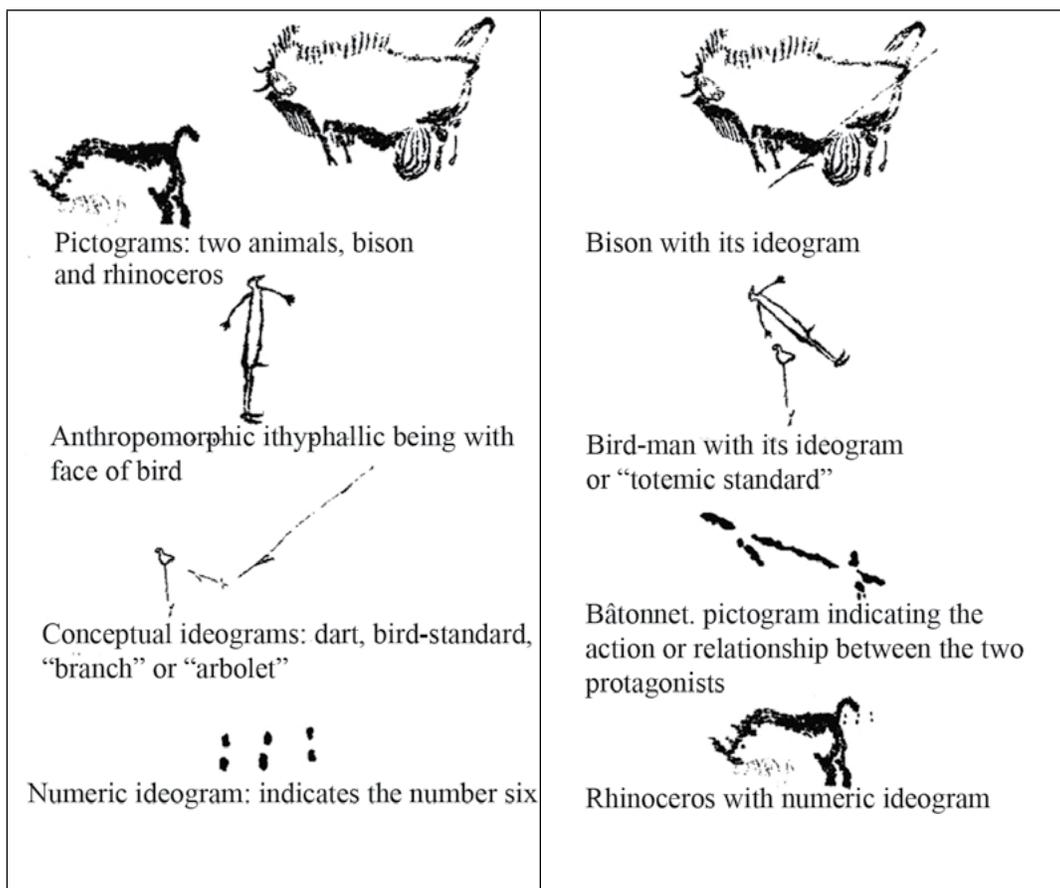


Fig. 12. Assemblage, sequence or scene? Lascaux, Dordogne, France, composite conception of Early Hunters. According to the direction of the animal figures, the composition should be read from right to left. A bison is facing an ithyphallic bird-man. Both pictograms are accompanied by ideograms: near the bird-man there is a bird-standard and the bison is associated with an ideogram, near the back legs, which may represent a magnified vagina. If the hypothesis of Leroi-Gourhan is correct, the bison should represent a female entity. Overlapping the bison there is a spear. The spear is not wounding the bison, it is on top of it and may indicate a name or an attribute of the animal figure. Below both pictograms there is another ideogram, a *bâtonnet* which is likely to indicate the type of relationship between the two pictograms or the type of action which is described. On the left side, there is a rhinoceros, which may have been depicted by a different hand. It seems however to be intentionally related to the other graphemes. Near its pubis, it has a numerical ideogram of six dots. This is another element of a story which has not yet been fully decoded. This association of graphemes illustrates the syntactic system used and its metaphoric concepts. A thought-provoking hypothesis surmises that it represents a story, an event or myth, in which an aggressive Ms Bison-Spear is facing a reticent and powerless Mr Birdman (tracing after Leroi-Gourhan, 1981a, pl. 93. The different interpretations of this composition are detailed in Anati, 2020a).



Fig. 13. Nabarlek, Arnhem Land, Australia. Rock paintings of vegetables by Food Gatherers. Anthropomorphized yams, with tuber limbs and heads. The painting is in dark red, while the natural color of the yam is yellowish-brown. The color is used for its symbolic meaning, and it is not meant to reproduce naturalistically the yam (after Lewis, 1988, in Anati, 2010).

losing the main role of conveying the metaphorical contents of conceptual compositions. The presence of the scene causes a split in the function of graphic art between conceptual and contemplative, a fact which may be relevant not just to the history of graphic art. Something new, less symbolic, more contemplative, was acquired in the minds of the artists.

In conceptual associations, even when the single images have a realistic or naturalistic aspect, the association between them tends to have a conceptual content and the assemblage does not appear as a contemplative scene. The human tendency to abstraction and symbolization undertakes a change when realism is predominant. A change in the visual output discloses a change in the concerns causing mental processes: the scene marks a shift in the way of reasoning. In the syntax of the association of graphemes, abstraction and symbolization preceded realism, which is a meaningful factor for both art history and psychology.

The scene knew ups and downs from its first appearance in graphic art, at times being the dominant syntactic form, at times functioning as an illustration of

events or moods, and at other times being completely set aside. The scene seems to be the output of contemplative intellectual tendencies, which were not popular among hunters and gatherers.

This quick overview of the role of the scene was necessary to clarify a controversial debate. Some authors use the word scene for Paleolithic assemblages which are associations, clusters or sequences, but are not scenes. Also, some authors claimed that the scene played a prominent role in the development of writing, although recent decoding of prehistoric art seems to demonstrate just the opposite. The tendency to use the scene as graphic syntax did not favor the use of symbolic visual art as a means of introducing the system of pictographic writing (Anati, 2020a). The syntactic form of sequence, on the other hand, is a sort of pictographic writing, going back to hunting and gathering conceptual expressions.



Fig. 14. Modzangara, Mtoko, Zimbabwe. The shaman communicates with roots. Rock paintings of Late Gatherers. The shaman is addressing some edible tubers, 22 of which (rounded with a tail) are surrounded by a line, while longer tubers are left out. Food Gatherers may represent plants or roots in order to refer to their qualities or powers. Similar metaphors are common with animals in hunters' rock art (after Goodall, 1959, p. 83).



Fig. 15. Panther Cave, Seminole Canyon, Texas, US. Rock painting of Food Gatherers. Anthropomorphic figure over 2 m high, depicted with a mask or a zoomorphic face, likely indicating his totemic identity. The arms are branches which produce fruits and emanate energy. Ideograms, pictograms and psychograms often appear in a syncretic composition in the art of Gatherers (tracing by Wellman, in Anati, 1995).

### The logical process and the archetypes of the allegoric conceptions

The origins of writing are not to be found in the realistic aspect of graphic art but rather in the conceptual association of graphemes. The clearest evidence of preliterate ideographic or pictographic writing is present among the earliest art of the Early Hunters. Later categories appear as derivations or deviations from this primary source. It can be presumed that the function of graphics as a means of communication preceded its aesthetic functions. Since its prelude graphic art was not just an attempt to imitate the shapes seen by the eyes. It was a conceptual action intended to convey or memorize information. In fact, it was semiographic writing. The rules of grammar and syntax reveal a system based on a logic naturally shared by the executors of the visual art and the recipients to whom the information was addressed, be they humans or imaginary beings.

Scenes usually display their own meaning, while the emblematic allegorical assemblages of the earliest visual art are meant to convey it through the reading of a symbolic language legible in any spoken language but having a specific meaning in a particularly oriented way of thinking. The possibility of decoding depends not on the knowledge of the spoken language but on the understanding of the metaphorical logic.

Paleolithic Eurasian art, which is presently better known than that of other parts of the world, displays an ingenious conceptual system of associations, clusters, and sequences of graphemes, and employs a kind of logic which reveals a way of thinking and is the key to decoding and understanding its contents. We postulate that the key to the meaning of the earliest figurative art lies in the understanding of its metaphorical concepts and its syntax, the logical associative and allegorical system. The two main elements to success in this endeavor are comparative analysis of the available primary art, and the study of the metaphorical way of thinking of the peoples still leading a hunting and gathering economy and keeping a similar diet and way of life.

The definition of the grammar and syntax of primary art is a source for understanding the mental processes that produced it. It is a source for understanding the archetypal characters of the human mental structure and logic.

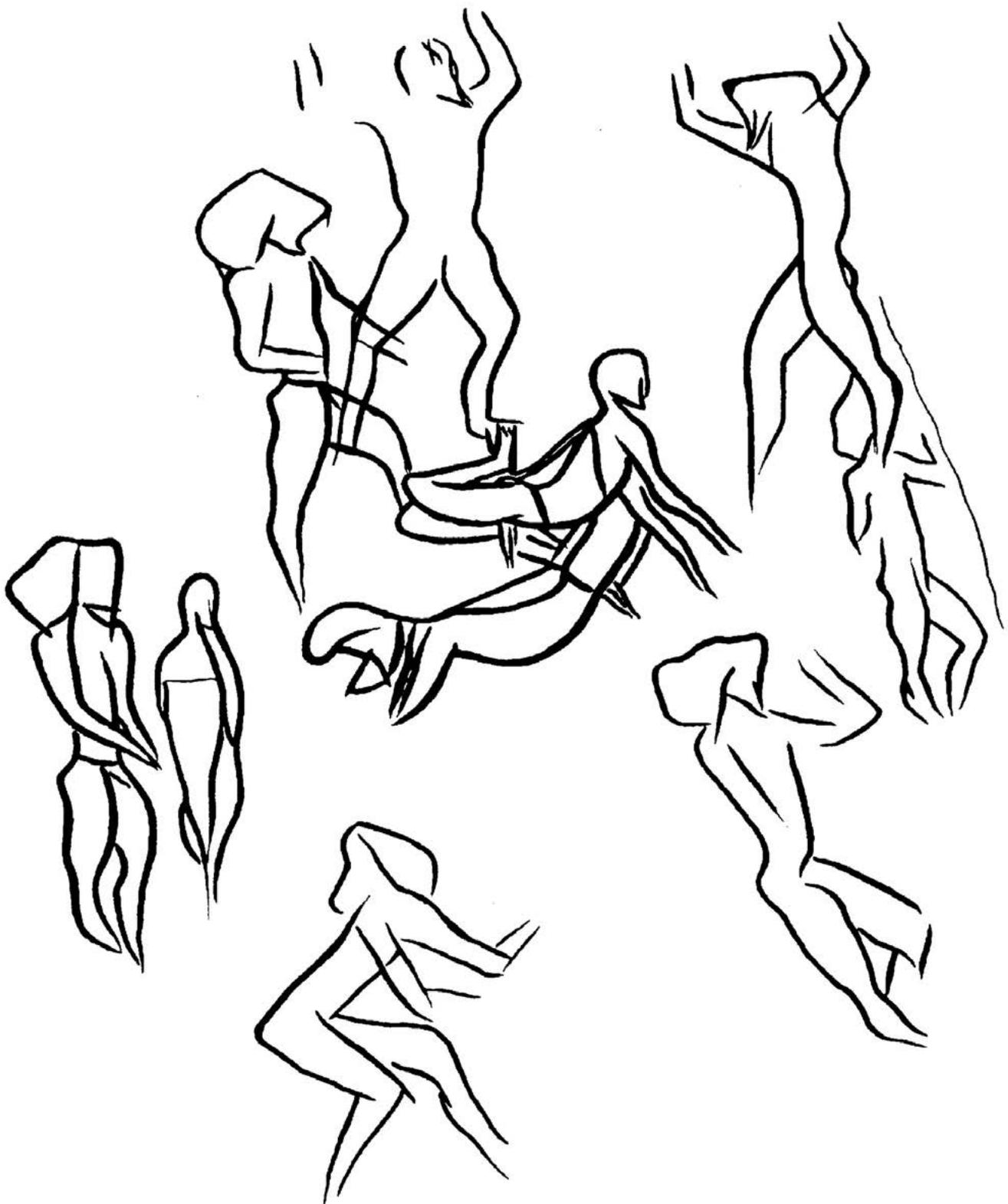
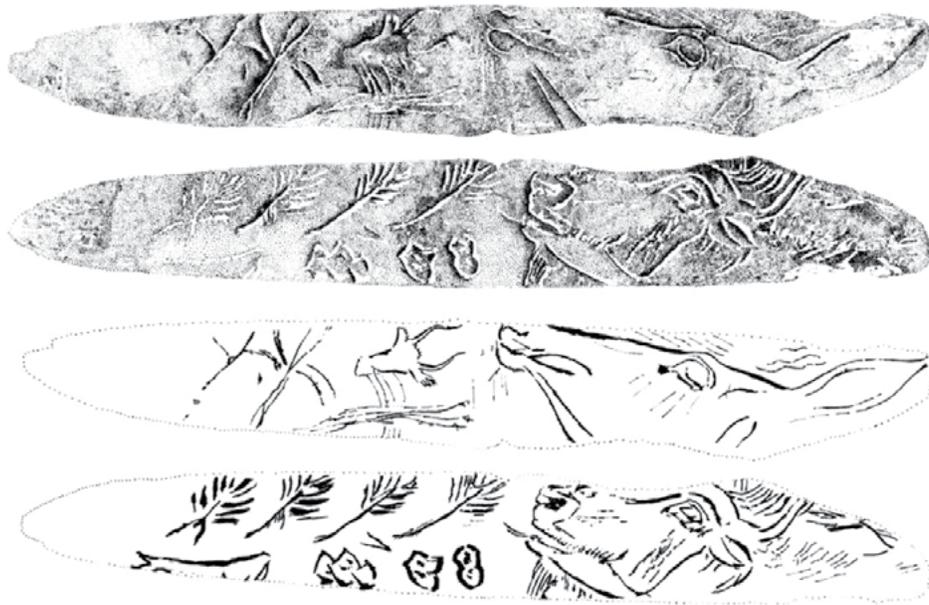


Fig. 16. Addaura cave, Sicily, Italy. Scene of masked people in dancing postures (detail). The dancers make a circle around two people fighting, or in a state of trance, or performing. This scene does not display a usual Early Hunters syntax. Several hypotheses have been proposed about its age. The syntax would relate it to Evolved Hunters rather than to Early hunters (after Anati, 2007a).



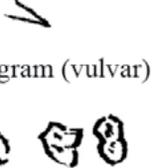
Lato A	Lato B
	
<p>Subject: gazelle or doe (female)</p>	<p>Subject: buffalo head with his tongue licking</p>
 <p>Attributes? Wavy lines, water, fertility; parallel lines, numeric ideogram</p>	 <p>Attributes? Series of lines that repeat the shape of the horn; group of signes between which an ideogram of eye</p>
 <p>Vulvar symbols, mouth; vulvar symbol, "lips"; vulvar symbol, "lips" repeated on the ear</p>	 <p>Ideogram: "arbolet" leaf-type (male)</p>
 <p>Ideogram: diagram of frontal view of ibex or chamots (male). Likely counterpart of the binary system</p>	 <p>Ideogram: fish (?). Likely counterpart of the binary system</p>
 <p>Ideograms or psychograms: body</p>	 <p>"v" ideogram (vulvar) Ideogram: nut or seed. It is repeated in three</p>

Fig. 17. La Vache site, Ariège, France. Tracing and schematic drawing of the two sides of a bone implement, Upper Paleolithic art of Early Hunters. Each of the two sides shows a subject, the head of an animal, likely a name, accompanied by a sequence of symbols, probably indicating goods. The object may be the record of a trading exchange of goods (Anati, 2020a, p. 70).



Fig. 18. Les Eyzies, Dordogne, France. A fragment of decorated bone from the Paleolithic Magdalenian period. A group of eight anthropomorphs in profile are holding on their shoulders forked *bâtonnets*, meaning traveling. On the right side there is a bison in profile and on the top and the left side are two double signs, the plural of whatever they may represent, probably fire. This composition is presumed to be telling the story of a journey or migration of people who identified themselves with fires, from a region marked with the ideograms of fire, to the land of the bison. The proposed reading would be: eight people (or clan heads) of the land of fires, leave the land of fires traveling to the land of the bison. This interpretation is suggestive, since Azerbaijan has been known as the land of fires, where petroleum and gas deposits create fire choreographies, since the beginning of written history. The land of the bison could be the Franco-Cantabrian area, where this fragment was found and where the bison is the dominant figure of Paleolithic art (after Anati, 2001b).

## Conclusions

The images and signs of primary visual art are the earliest historical documents of mankind, millennia back into prehistoric times. Their decipherment reveals the interests, concerns, and worries of their makers, and discloses the mental processing that produced them. The analysis of the grammar and syntax of primary visual art is a means of deciphering contents and intentions, and recovering fragments of a way of thinking belonging to our collective submerged memory.

The primary roots of grammar and syntax expose archetypal conceptual abilities, lying at the core of symbolic thinking. They echo the elementary human ability of mental organization, defining archetypal patterns of reasoning and primary cognitive processes. The elementary typology of visual art shows the global presence of defined archetypal conceptual patterns. The different typologies and styles present already in the early trends of visual art, between style patterns having animals as the dominant theme and those having others, reveal the role of diet in conditioning mental processing. Predominantly carnivorous and vegetarian diets produced different typological visual outputs.

The definition of the dominant subject is a meaningful character of typology. The variations of the dominant themes of different social groups evidence the

dependence of the way of thinking on patterns of life, activities, and diet. What may have been is being supported by 50,000 years of visual documentation.

Elementary human mental trends are re-emerging from an age of primary conceptual evolution, when man, like other animals, lived off hunting and gathering. The way of thinking was that of a bipedal primate, yet capable of symbolic thinking and metaphorical associations. The records he produced in the form of visual art express his needs to witness, record, memorize, and transmit information, a crucial factor in conceptual evolution.

Man had found the way of keeping a memory external to his mind, and this was a revolutionary achievement marking the beginning of culture. He created his archives, his database. What survives of it brings back to our knowledge the early expressions of the human identity. And they constitute an extension of millennia in the range of our conscious memory.

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GRAMMAR ANALYSIS

SYNTAX ANALYSIS

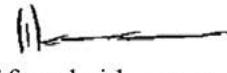
	
<p>Pictograms: two animals figures (horses), one vertical, the other horizontal</p>	<p>Vertical animal with male ideogram</p>
	
<p>Ideograms: two male signs (branch and arrow)</p>	<p>Horizontal animal with female ideogram</p>
	
<p>Ideograms: two female signs (lip and ear)</p>	<p>Union of female ideogram (lips) and male ideogram (arrow)</p>
	
<p>Psychogram: sinuous lines bundle</p>	<p>Psychogram. exclamation or omen</p>

Fig. 19. An assemblage of engravings in the cave of Altamira, Spain. It shows two horses, some ideograms and one psychogram. The dart or spear usually has a male value, like the *arbolet* ideogram. Vulva and lips ideograms have a female value. The ideograms have male values and female values. A vertical horse is accompanied by a male ideogram, a horizontal horse by a female ideogram. On top of them appears the depiction of the dart ideogram (male) penetrating the lips, a female ideogram. Below the composition, a psychogram appears, as a sort of exclamation. The document may read: 'Mr Vertical Horse met Ms Horizontal Horse: sexual union, Ohh!!' This Altamira engraving may simply tell a love story of 20,000 years ago (tracing after Breuil, 1912).

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# TEMPLEBRYAN STONE CIRCLE AND A PETRIFIED-TREE OBELISK

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## Introduction

Templebryan Stone Circle is one of more than a hundred Bronze Age stone circles in southwest Ireland. It is in the village of Shannonvale, a few kilometres north of the town of Clonakilty in County Cork. Only five perimeter stones survive from an original nine, together with a fine quartz stone nearly at the circle centre (Fig. 1).

250 metres away is a 3.3-metre high, pillar-like cylindrical stone whose rough surface texture resembles tree bark. Next to it is a typical bullaun stone with hemispherical hollow.

Much can be ascertained about the intelligence, cultu-

ral beliefs and spirituality of the builders and users by analysing the stones.

On the one hand, the methods of inquiry initiated by the author for understanding the stone circles of Southern Ireland and Britain can be applied by studying the meaningful shapes and positions of the surviving stones and assessing the locations of missing ones, for which refer to pp 26 to 41, volume 29 of *Expression* (Meaden 2020).

On the other hand, as fortune would have it, an account of the stones with sketch (Fig. 2) and plan (see below) was published in January 1743 in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* by Robert



Fig. 1. General view of the stones at Templebryan.

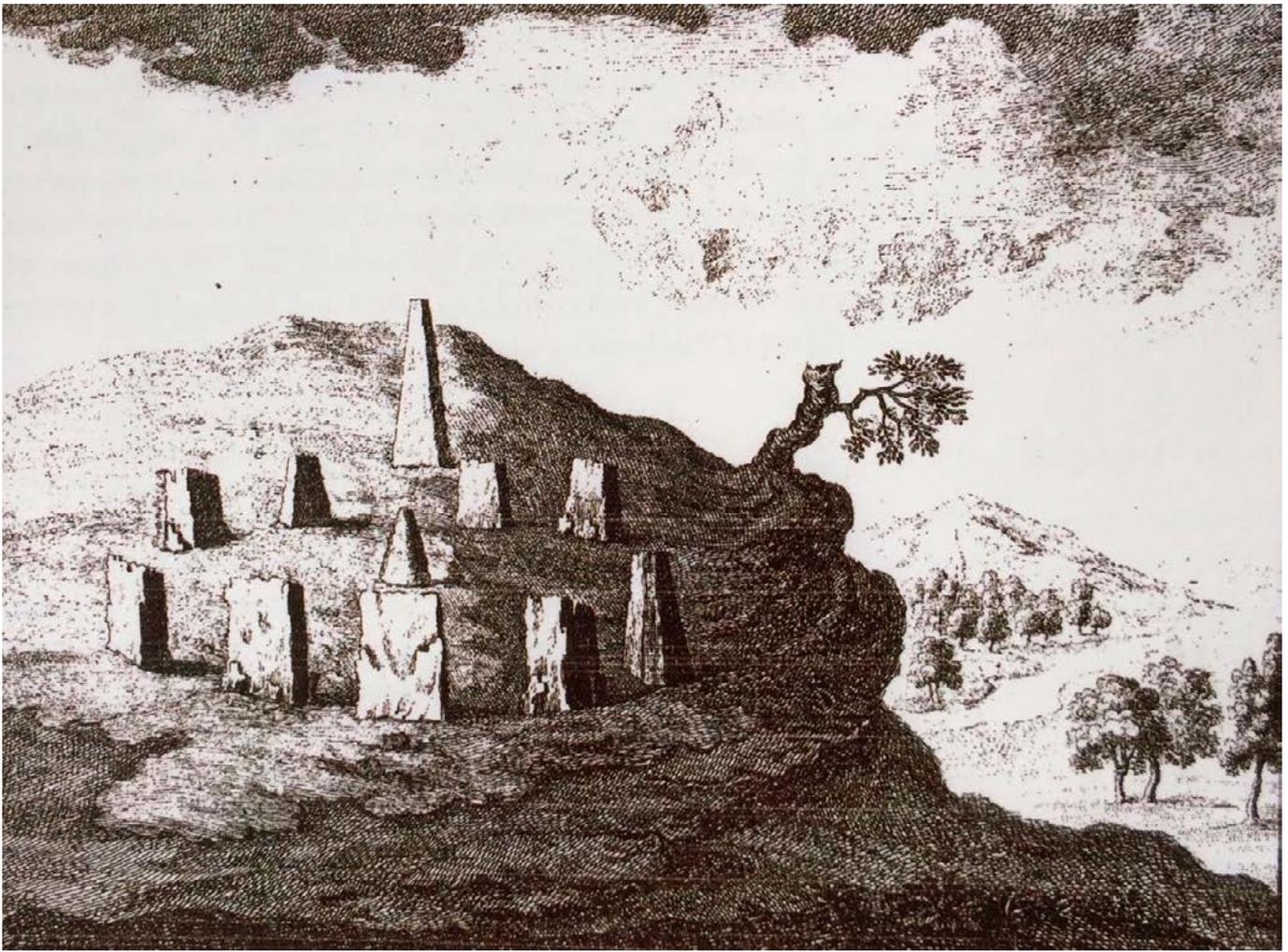


Fig. 2. Templebryan Stone Circle, 1742, etching by Anna la Bush for Robert Clayton. The tapered pillar stone, 250 m away on higher ground is included as well.

Clayton, Bishop of Cork. Despite some eccentricities introduced into the landscape by the engraver, the picture holds useful clues that help the investigator uncover the reasons behind the purposeful planning. The Templebryan circle was previously surveyed by Ó Nualláin (1984: 22, 55) and brief notes added.

### Survey and research

Fig. 3 shows the location of Templebryan in Ireland. It is four kilometres north of Clonakilty on the south coast at an altitude 64 metres above sea level. The latitude is 51.643°N and longitude 8.883°W.

All multiple stone circles of the counties Cork and Kerry were planned with an axial stone located opposite two entrance stones called portal stones. At Tem-

plebryan one portal stone is missing.

Most axial stones in Cork and Kerry are long and were set to lie recumbent, i.e., horizontally. Templebryan, however, is unusual because the axial stone is short---nearly as wide as it is high (Figs. 4 and 5). Moreover, its interior surface to the circle is bifacial.

Fig. 5 is the author's survey of surviving stones. By convention for a nine-stone circle the portal stones are numbered 1 and 9. Stone 1 is absent, and Stone 9 is the tall stone standing. The latter is 2.08 m tall and 1.30 m wide at the base. It is unusually thin, probably narrowed by a layer splitting away over time.

Stone 5 is bulky and has an unusual shape for an axial stone. 1.39 m wide and 1.03 m thick, it stands 1.35 m high. The horizontal upper side of this hard

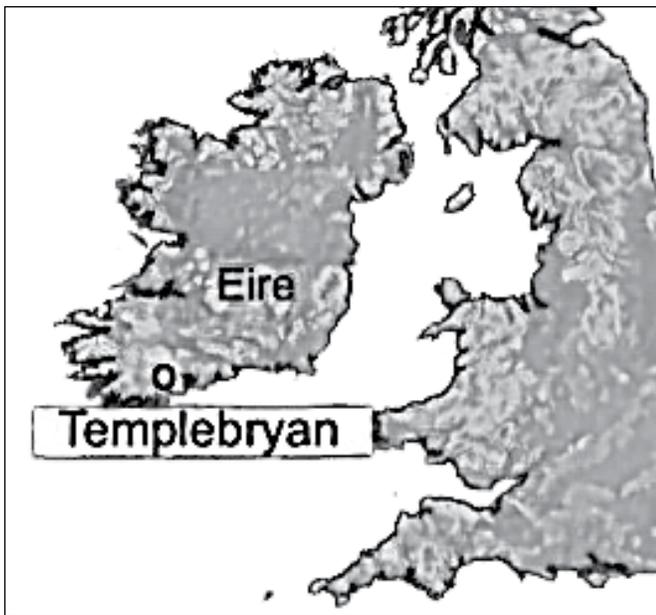


Fig. 3. Templebryan in County Cork, Ireland.

stone has been smoothed flat by laborious rubbing, as would have been done similarly when flattening the top surface of the two-metre-long recumbent stone at Drombeg, which is 15 km distant (Meaden 2016). The height at Templebryan is extreme for an axial stone, in being as broad as it is high above current ground level. The profile is almost square. Untypically, the inside surface is bifacial, one facing north-northwest and the other northeast. The latter is the direction of midsummer sunrise where stands the 2.1-metre-high Stone 2 at 51° east of north (Fig. 5). The midsummer sun comes into sight such that most (not all) of the axial Stone 5 is immediately in the shadow of Stone 2. As the sun continues rising while moving southwards, the axial stone is soon fully covered by shadow. Stones 2 and 5 are then in union. It would have been the same in the Bronze Age. This parallels the shadow dy-



Fig. 4. Viewed from inside the circle, the broad flat-topped axial Stone 5 is at the right. The taller narrower stone is Stone 4. 13 April 2018. Compare with figg. 1 and 5.

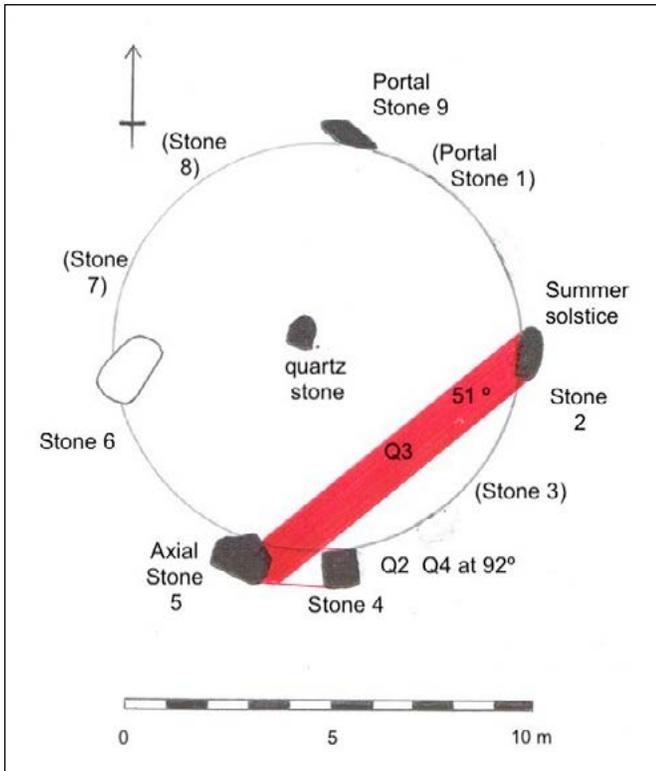


Fig. 5. Plan of the surviving stones at Templebryan. The broad shadow (pictured red) of Stone 2 is drawn at 51 degrees east of north for when the sun at summer solstice has risen enough to expose the full orb. As the rising sun continues southwards, the shadow moves northwards across the axial stone. N.B. Numbers of the missing stones are bracketed. Stone 6 has fallen away from its hole.

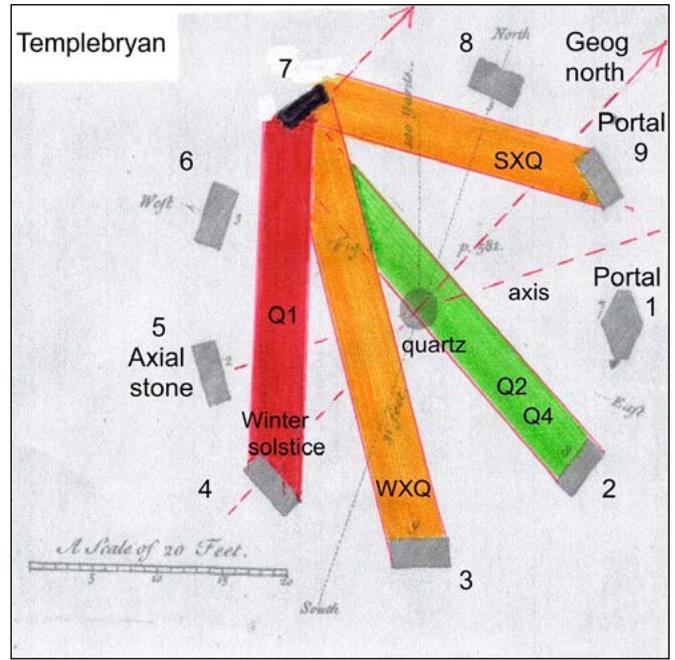


Fig. 7. Reanalysis by the author according to present conventions, with consideration given to Stone 7 as the winter-period focal-reception stone. The axial stone is Stone 5. Note the direction of geographical north indicated by the north arrow.

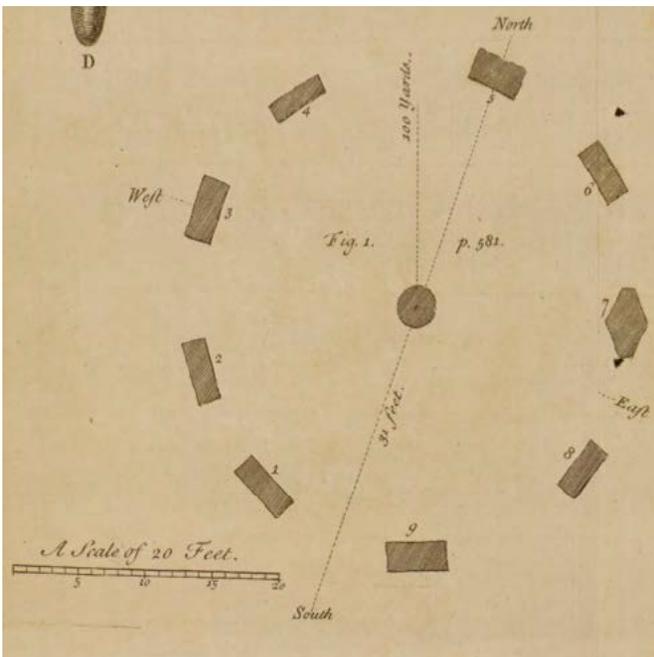


Fig. 6. Plan drawn in 1742, by Robert Clayton.

namics at Stonehenge between the Heel Stone shadow and the recumbent Altar Stone at midsummer sunrise (Meaden 2016 and 2017a). The cognitive meaning is likely similar (Meaden 2021).

The next point is why Stones 4 and 5 are set so close together (Fig. 4, Fig. 5). The symbolism may be like Drombeg's Stones 14 and 15, as explained elsewhere (Meaden 2016). The contrasting dimorphic shapes at Templebryan support the logical symbolism of male-female union through coupling by shadow at sunrise on the March and September quarter dates. These are the same dates as at Drombeg where the gender pairing by shadow is spectacular at sunrise (Meaden 2015, 2017b).

The axial stone being in the south-southwest, the Templebryan circle is a Type 2 stone circle because the axial stone can only be the focus for the summer half of the calendar and unable to serve for the winter half of the year (Meaden 2020). Therefore, when the stones were planned with Type-2 geometry, there was a second focal stone in the west to provide for the winter festival dates. The latter focal stone was probably the now absent Stone 7, as explained below.



Fig. 8. Templebryan Stone Circle showing the near-central quartz stone at left, portal Stone 9 beyond, and Stone 2 at right.

Moreover, at Templebryan sunrises on the eastern horizon are hindered by hills. These delay the times of sunrise and modify directions compared with sunrises for low, level horizons. Hence, when viewing from Templebryan the Bronze-Age rising sun reached full orb at  $51^\circ$  east of north for the summer solstice Q3 (instead of  $49^\circ$ ) and  $138^\circ$  for the winter solstice Q1 (instead of about  $131^\circ$ ). The directions for full orb on the March and September quarter days are  $c.92^\circ$  for 22 March (Q2), and  $c.273^\circ$  for 21 September (Q4). The summer and winter cross-quarter directions for full orb sunrises are respectively  $c.63^\circ$  (6 May and 6 August) and  $c.119^\circ$  (5 February and 5 November). Unfortunately, the responsible stones are missing. Because of this, little more can be gleaned at the site of the stone circle until excavation is done to locate stone holes.

Next, it is worth checking aspects of Clayton's plan drawn in 1742 (Fig. 6), which accompanied a letter he

wrote as Lord Bishop of Cork to the Earl of Egmont. The plan illustrates where the missing Stones 1, 3, 7, 8 and the stone hole of the fallen Stone 6 were located, but how accurate is the plan?

Clayton (1743, 581-582) remarked that the stones were unevenly spaced. This is an understandable consequence of the careful planning needed to fulfil calendar needs. Note that in the plan cross-section shapes of the stones are schematised, while the quartz stone is positioned as if at the geometrical centre although it is offset by half-a-metre. Furthermore, the geometry is slightly non-circular (Fig. 6) instead of true circular as in Fig. 5. Next is an attempt to find out whether the stones as given in the eighteenth-century survey are in credible positions.

The true direction to north is indicated on the new survey plan (Fig. 5).

Clayton's plan (Fig. 6) of Templebryan indicates that the direction to the obelisk in the abandoned



Fig. 9. A side view of portal Stone 9 at midday on 22 December 2013. Compare this view with the broad frontal side of the same stone in the previous figure.

Shannonvale medieval churchyard (discussed below), which is 250 metres distant, is 19 degrees west of north. This is incorrect. Its true direction is 43 degrees west of north. This skews the old plan by 24 degrees, and immediately confirms that Clayton's stone number 2 is the axial stone that is Stone 5 in this paper.

The revised plan in Fig. 7 reproduces Clayton's original plan but with a corrected geographical north, and uses the sequential stone numbering that starts with the more southerly of the two portal stones as Stone 1. The stones that might cast meaningful shadows on to Stone 7 are those indicated by numbers 9, 2, 3 and 4. Note also that in Clayton's plan true widths of the missing stones were not indicated but schematised instead, so some locations could be misplaced.

Clayton writes (1742: 587) about the stones that may be the portal stones. "And you may observe that this Stone, of which you have the Plan marked (6), is somewhat in the Form of an Obelisk; being Ten Feet high, and Two Feet square at the Bottom, diminishing gradually to a Point at the Top. It is remarkable, that some of these Stones manifestly appear to have been reduced to the Form they are by Art; particularly the one last mentioned, as well as the one marked N.7. which is reduced into an hexagonal Form, the inward and the outward Front being similar, with an Angle in the Middle, as represented in the Ground-Plan. There is no Appearance of any Mark of Tool, so that it is probable, that this was done with great Labour, by the assistance only of sharp Stones ...".

It seems that two portal stones are being described. Clayton's Stones 6 and 7 (Fig. 6) are numbered in the plan of Fig. 7 as portal Stones 9 and 1 respectively.

He also mentions that "The Middle Stone ... is lower than the rest, not being above Three Feet high." This is the quartz stone, 0.8 m high.

However, note that the existing Stone 9 is not 10 feet high (it is 2.08 m, or nearly 7 feet), nor is its base two feet square. It is 3.5 feet wide (1.10 m) with a narrow base that is hexagonal in form. It is also not more than 0.6 feet (0.2 m) thick, and narrows upwards to almost a point in side view. Compare Figs. 8 and 9.

On the other hand, portal Stone 1 (said to be hexagonal in cross-section) is absent from the site today. Might it survive elsewhere in the neighbourhood, as a step at a farmhouse or barn?



Fig. 10. From the stone circle, the sun is rising at the winter solstice. Photo by Bart Murphy.



Fig. 11. Looking northwest, the stones are still in the shadow of the southeastern hill. Photo by Bart Murphy



Fig. 12. Winter solstice. Soon after the photograph of Fig. 11, the shadows of standing Stones 4 and 5 and the quartz stone (at right) fall across the field. The fourth stone (lying angled) in the picture is the misplaced fallen Stone 6. Photo: Bart Murphy.

By way of explanation regarding stone measurements, did Clayton perhaps make field notes that got mixed up by the time he did his desk work?

Stone 2 at the site is recognizable from the sketch as being Clayton's number 9 (Fig. 8). Perhaps crucially, Stone 7 (Clayton's number 4) is shown as tapering upwards (Fig. 2) and somewhat triangular in outline (remindful of axial Stone 5 at Ardgroom Outward, for which refer to Meaden (2021, Figs. 19, 22 in *Expression*).

As a crude trial, the plan in Fig. 7 experimentally carries directions for three of the quarter-date sunrises with respect to Stone 7, approximating for the winter solstice Q1, the March (Q2) and September (Q4) quarter dates, and for the two cross-quarter dates of winter (WXQ). The summer cross-quarter dates (SXQ, in May and August) may apply too.

*Winter Solstice Q1:* Figs. 10 and 11 are photographs taken at the winter solstice by Mr. Bart Murphy, son of the farmer Mr. Dan Murphy, and are used with permission of both.

Fig. 10 shows the sun rising over a distant hill, while Fig. 11 shows the actual shadow of the hill when the stone circle is still in the shade.

Fig. 12 shows the stones just as they became sunlit. Unfortunately, the missing Stone 7 is not present to receive the shadow of Stone 4 as per the plan of Fig. 5. The shadow of the axial Stone 5 falls upon the partly buried base of the fallen Stone 6. The latter is at an angle to the camera because the stone appears to have pivoted as it fell. Its true height above ground when standing is not known. Excavation is needed to locate the original stone hole. Allow, too, that in the Bronze Age the direction of winter sunrise was a



Fig. 13. The needle-like pillar stone is 3.3 metres high. 18 September 2016. Photo by Austin Kinsley.

degree of azimuth farther south than now. Stone 6 probably plays no role in the community calendar (as intimated by Fig. 7).

*Summary:* The angles for the surviving positioned stones 2 and 4 at Templebryan demonstrate that their locations had been arranged in prehistory to ensure shadow-casting on to the axial recumbent Stone 5 in the summer half year (Fig. 5). In the winter half of the year it is deduced that shadows from Stones 2 and 4 likely fell on Stone 7, which unfortunately is missing. The position of Stone 3 might account for the sunrise directions of the summer cross-quarter dates but Stone 3 is also absent so its stone-hole unknown. Excavation will be the ultimate test in deciding to what extent the current predictions are correct. The present study of Bishop Clayton's report shows that the stone circle with nine perimeter stones, then about 4000 years old, was still intact in 1743.

### **The superb tapering obelisk near Templebryan Stone Circle**

In the deserted Shannonvale Medieval churchyard, 250 metres from the stone circle on the same farm, is a tall tapering stone, 3.3 m high. To judge by the nature and texture of the surface it could be a petrified tree trunk or a fossilized tree (Figs. 13, 14 and 15). There is a faint Ogham inscription on its western edge and a carved Christian cross pattée. The tapering towards the top of the cylindrical stone is decidedly artificial. Nearby at its south is a splendid example of an Irish bullaun stone.

The photograph in Fig.15 was taken at right angles to the one in Fig. 13 and shows better the location of the bullaun stone. Such stones with a central hollow are commonly encountered in Ireland. Bullaun stones originated in prehistory and continued in use in later times as a means of catching rainwater to which sanc-



Fig. 14. The uneven texture of the cylindrical surface resembles tree-bark.



Fig. 15. This shows the bullaun stone with rainwater in it.

tity was often assigned.

Fig. 16 is a clearer picture of the sandstone boulder and its rainwater-filled bullaun hollow.

The obelisk situation is abnormal for a Christian medieval site. The petrified tree with its carved tapering top likely dates its emplacement from early times, even possibly from the Bronze Age. The suggestion is that Christian locals reused a previously admired prehistoric site for their own religious use. Traces of an ancient fosse around the site still exist. The proposed prehistoric connection arises from the powerful fertility imagery presented by the pairing of a male-symbolic partly carved, vertical stone with a female-symbolic vulvar, hollowed, boulder stone, a duality that all Hindus would appreciate.

In Anglesey, North Wales, at Bryn Celli Dhu towards

the northern side of the internal circular chamber of the splendid Neolithic tomb, there is a freestanding cylindrical vertical stone nearly two metres high that seems it might be part of a smoothed petrified tree (Fig. 17). The stand-alone pillar stone inside the monument at Le Déhus in Guernsey might be another. Most other unattached narrow pillarlike stones are rectangular or square in cross-section, as at Drombeg and the two at Knowth.

#### **A shadow connection at midday on the winter solstice**

At midday GMT on the winter solstice the shadow of Stone 4 at Templebryan falls upon the quartz stone in the middle area of the stone circle. Fig. 18 is a photograph taken at 12.02 GMT on 22 December 2013.



Fig. 16. The bullaun stone.



Fig. 17. The cylindrical pillar stone inside the chamber of Bryn Celli Dhu. 1988. Photo author.

This midday linkage by shadow is probably an unintended consequence of stones being positioned for other reasons. If the positioning for midday linkage had been deliberate, the prehistoric community would more likely have used the local time of day when the winter sun at Templebryan was highest in the sky as proved by the maximum length of the gnomon's shadow. At longitude 8.8833 degrees west of Greenwich, London, this would be 35-and-a-half minutes later than 12.00 GMT, by which time most of the shadow from Stone 4 has moved off the quartz stone. And yet, what if the quartz stone has been moved a little in the past 3500 years?

### Conclusions

An attempt has been made at understanding the meaning of the stones at Templebryan Stone Circle despite only five stones out of the original nine being present. Quarter dates and cross-quarter dates of a seasonal calendar were probably intended, as at dozens of other stone circles in Cork and Kerry (Meaden 2020, 2022), although it is stressed that uncertainties about the locations of missing stones can only be removed through excavation by archaeologists of the future. Nearby a powerful expression of prehistoric fertili-



Fig. 18. At 12.02 GMT on 22 December 2013 the shadow of perimeter Stone 4 is shown upon the quartz stone. Photograph by the author.

ty worship is unmistakably enunciated and affirmed by the meaningful pairing of two remarkable fertility-symbolic stones, one of which appears to be a petrified tree artificially tapered.

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# SUN SYMBOLS AND PREDICTED SOLSTICE SITES IN THE BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

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## Introduction

This preliminary investigation took place over the course of several years while doing research in Grand Gulch Primitive Area, Mossback Butte, and the Sand Dune site near the San Juan River. See map, fig. 1.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to compare the cosmologies of the Hopi, Keres, and Tewa, although there are many similarities with the stories of the twins, the sun and the moon. The strongest correlation is between Zuni stories and the iconography found in Pueblo II through Pueblo III petroglyphs in the Greater Bear Ears study area. The full discussion

of the cultural continuity of Zuni ethnography and ceremonial cycles associated with the sun and Katsina societies can be found in Patterson (2019).

## Grand Gulch sun and moon pictographs

The first site, located in the Grand Gulch wilderness study area of the Bears Ears National Monument on Cedar Mesa, depicts what the Zuni refer to as the Sun Father and his wife, Mother Moon. See fig. 2.

This site is popular with many photographers, but no one has noticed the tiny footprints on the face of the sun. A closeup shows the little blue-green footprints

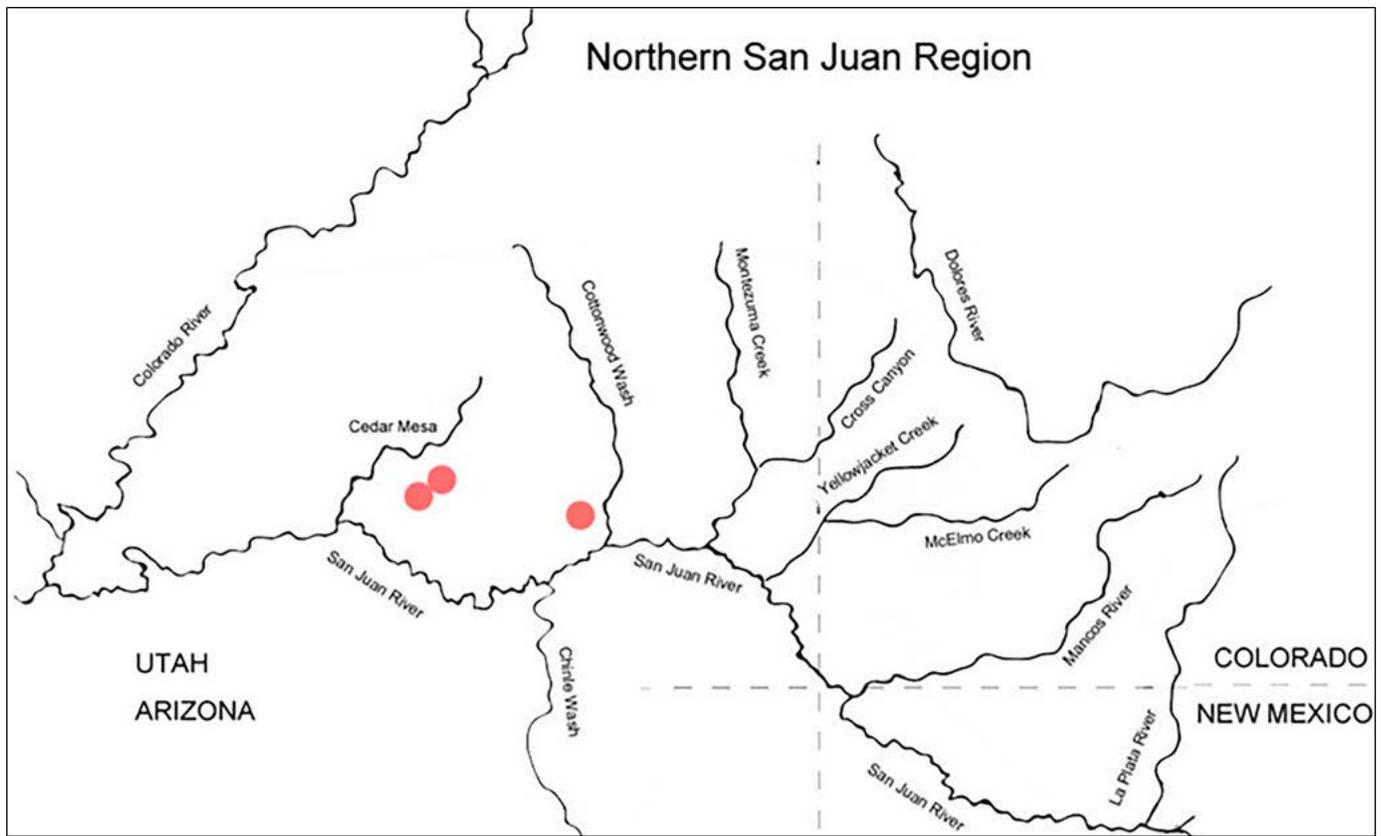


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of three petroglyph sites in the northern San Juan region of the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. From left to right are the Mossback Butte site, Grand Gulch site, and Sand Dune site.



Fig. 2. Grand Gulch, photo of the pictograph of the sun disk above a notch in the wall and the moon off to the right. The solid white disk represents *yātokyā*, Father Sun, and his wife, *tsita yaʻonanʻe*, Mother Moon, who is also a white disk with two unpainted orbs for eyes. This picture was taken to show the alignment of the sun directly over the doorway notch in the stone wall, which may have been purposeful in the event of a solar alignment, though I have not tested it.

on the right side, going up the face of the sun to the top, and then back down on the left side its face. These tracks indicate the sun's journey to the top of the sky and back down to the earth. See fig. 3.

### **Mossback Butte, Cedar Mesa**

Not too far away from Grand Gulch is another site on a small mesa called Mossback Butte. Here the Zuni boy war gods are shown with their father, the sun rising above the horizon. (Circa Pueblo III era, AD 1100-1350.) See fig. 4.

The Zuni Katsinas travel through the sky in the disguise of a duck, and when they land, they take off their

disguise “in the manner of a shirt” (Cushing in Wright 1988, 14). This is a Zuni cultural signifier reported by Stevenson (1915) and Bunzel (1932, 516-17). The movement of the sun is shown with two sun symbols. The first is positioned low down with only a few rays, and as it emerges higher in the sky, it is shown again with the total rays. The twins fly in disguised as ducks on the right and are shown again as they sit opposite each other. Figure 5a is a closeup of the twins' head profile. Figure 5b is a rare portrait of the twin war god Katsina mask with swept-down feathers with the same profile as that of the twins in this panel.

I visited the Mossback site with Christopher Lewis, a



Fig. 3a. Close-up of the disk with the little green footprints going up and coming back down the face of the sun. The Zuni myths describe the Sun Father as having two houses, one in the earth (below the horizon) and one in the sky. In the morning he “comes out standing to his sacred place ... in the evening he goes into the earth to sit down at his other sacred place. Mother Moon is his wife, but she is always separated from him,” (Bunzel, 1932, p. 487, fn 14).

Fig. 3b. A close-up of Mother Moon's face.



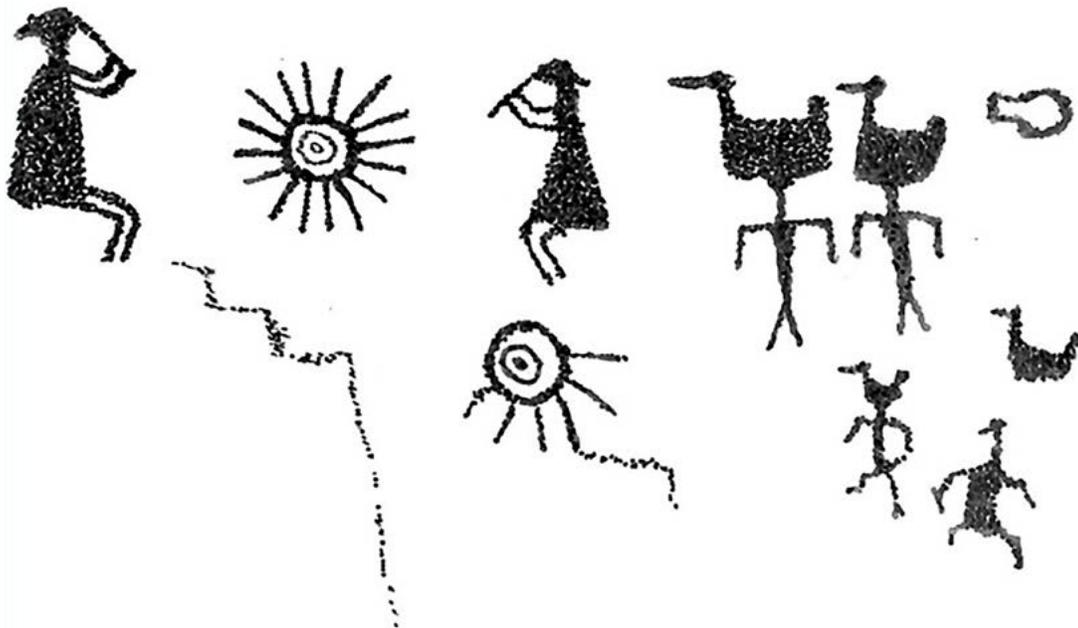
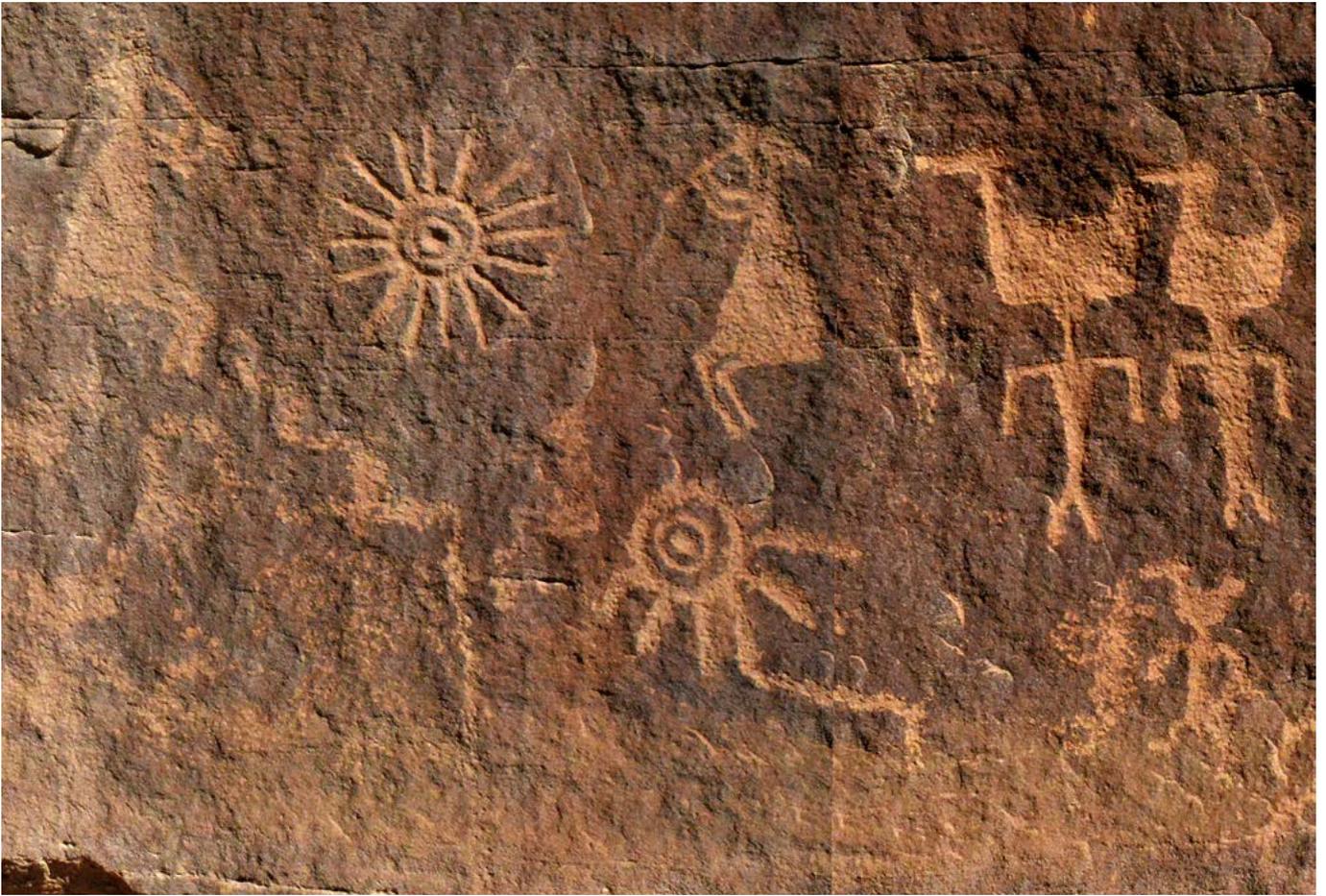


Fig. 4a and 4b. Photograph and drawing of the boy war gods playing flutes to their father, the sun. These gods are children, represented by their bent knees, a youthful posture. Because they are also Katsinas, they are shown arriving in the disguise of a duck (duck heads) on the right. They arrive, take off their disguise, and sit across from each other playing flutes. The lower sun symbol has only a few rays, and a tail (trail) that is the track it makes as it rises behind the horizon. The upper sun symbol is the same sun coming out above the horizon. See Chart 2, Sun symbols.

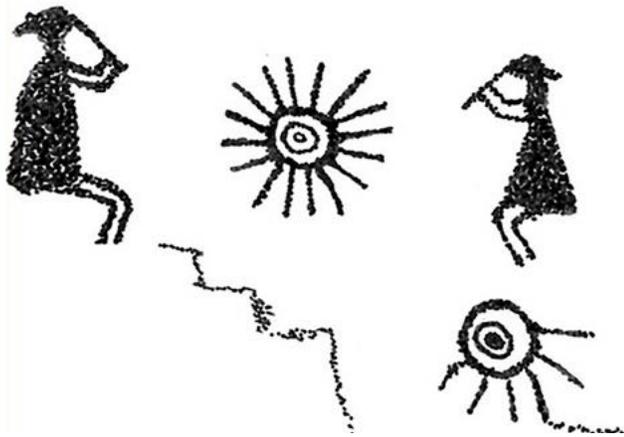


Fig. 5a. Drawing of the boy war gods playing the flute to the rising sun (their father).

Fig. 5b. Illustration of the Zuni mask of the boy war god from Stevenson (1915).



cultural spokesperson for the Zuni people. I was surprised when he recognized the site as a culturally significant panel to the Zuni. He said the boy war gods and rising sun (god) represented the summer solstice event. Below the panel on another boulder, on the back face (not pictured here) he showed me a long horizontal line of tiny dots. These, he said, aligned with the notch on the horizon where the sunrise would occur. He then sat down on the other side and pointed in the direction of the horizon, parallel to the dots on the other side.

I photographed the eastern horizon and made plans to

return on the summer solstice. Figure 7 is the horizon with the drawings of the panel superimposed at the anticipated location.

I returned for the summer solstice with a friend and camped near the trail overnight, so we could hike into this site before dawn. We arrived in plenty of time, in fact, we had to wait several hours for the sun to emerge above the horizon. It was further to the north than I had anticipated and obscured by the mesa until about 10 am.

The final example of solar sites in the Bears Ears National Monument is similar to this one but with the



Fig. 6. Christopher Lewis of Zuni visited this site in 2019 and pointed out that the sun would rise on the eastern horizon on the summer solstice in the manner in which the fluteplayer panel depicted. He indicated that the rock face he is sitting next to is aligned with the direction of the eastern sunrise.

interaction of the setting sun through a notch in the profile of a cliff face.

Sun Shield Bearer at Sand Dune site, 19-23 June 2020  
 The third example is near the San Juan River at the Sand Dune site. I recorded the solstice sunset at this site because I believed the rayed circle depicted a sun, and the small concentric circle above it indicated “*come out.*” Added to the concentric circle, is a slash mark, often indicating something has “*gone out*” when it is pointing downward. (See Chart 1, Concentric circles.)

The panel faces directly west and I base my interpretation on Zuni ethnology that specifically describes the Sun Father going into his *house* in the west each night. I wondered where on the horizon it might set during the solstice.

This panel has a well-defined, fully pecked figure with bird hands and feet and is touching the circular

rayed disk at the top of the panel. Above is a concentric circle with a slash mark across the lower right of it, (see Chart 1). The slash mark emphasizes the concept of *leaking out* or *gone out* in the context of water, or sunlight.

Below is a figure with a very bulky body and long fingers and toes. The toes pointed downward are associated with a spirit being (Patterson, 2019). All of this combined may describe the spirit of the earth we call Earth Mother in the Zuni context. “The earth is a raw person, Earth Mother, the trees and bushes are her arms and hands” (Tedlock, 1979), and she wears “a robe of yellow flowers (pollen grains) in the summer and white flowers (snowflakes), in the winter (Bunzel, 1932a, 484). Using this ethnographic analogy from Zuni, I interpret the panel as depicting the sun going down into the arms of the Earth Mother at sundown. I have drawn the proposed Earth Mother spirit super-



Fig. 7. Photograph of the view scape Chris was pointing towards. I have superimposed the drawings of the twin war gods and the rising sun.



Fig. 8. On the morning of 21 June, the sun rose further to the north than we predicted. It slid along behind the cliff face for a while and finally emerged through the notch near the jet trail shown in this picture.



Fig. 9. At about 10 am the sun finally burst through the notch.



Fig. 10. The revised illustration shows the petroglyph drawing superimposed over the notch in the profile of the mesa wall. The sun took hours sliding upwards behind the mesa before emerging through the notch. Perhaps the sunrise event was supposed to be viewed out in the open area beyond the cliff wall. From that position, the sun easily cleared the horizon hours earlier through any number of notches depending upon where you stood.

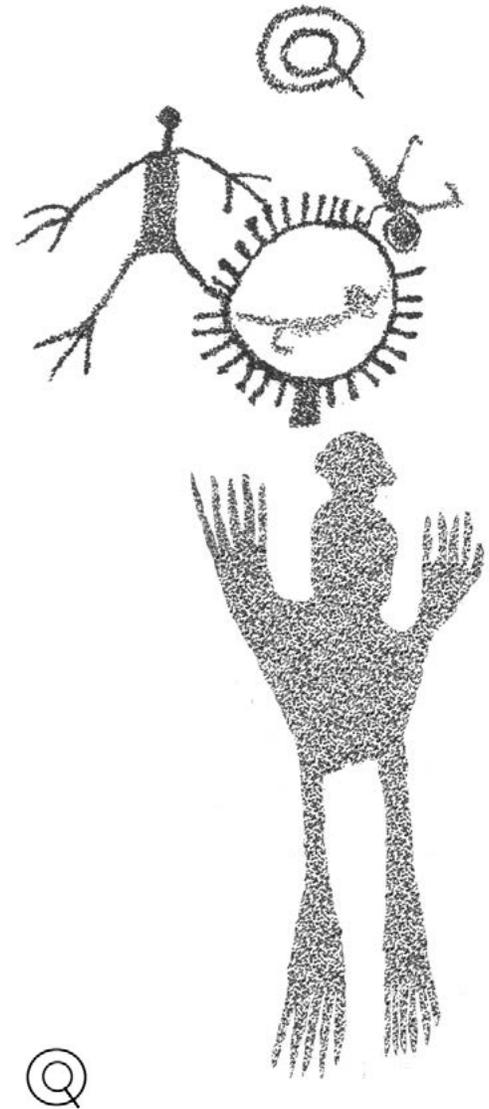
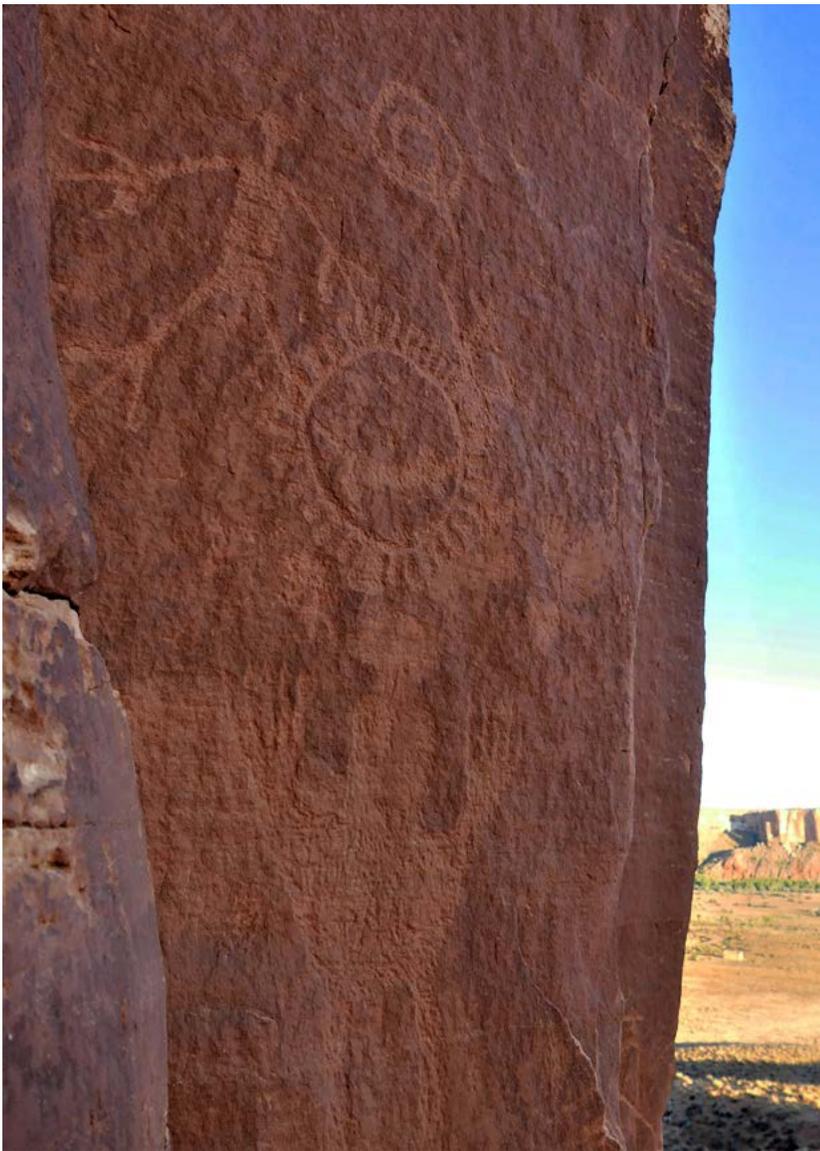


Fig. 11a. Photograph of the Sun Shield Bearer panel on the cliff faces across from the San Juan River shown in the distance as a green strip of trees. The concentric circle at the top means *coming out*, and the slash mark means something has *gone out*. In context with a sun symbol, the sun is going down.

Fig. 11b. Drawing of the panel that reveals a human figure with bird hands and feet, a reference to birds whose domain is in the sky. The sun (like birds) dwells in the sky. He is touching the large disk with radiating lines that represent the sun. He may be what's known in Zuni myths as the Sun Shield Bearer. On the other side of the sun symbol is a figure shown upside down and also touching the sun symbol. This figure indicates the direction of the sun heading downwards. Below them is a prominent figure reaching up with both arms towards the sun disk. (See Chart 2, Sun symbols.)

imposed over the profile of the crevice in the cliff directly west and perpendicular to the panel. The sun is heading down behind the escarpment into the crevice where the rocky arms of the Earth Mother are reaching upward.

The proposed solstice site interpretations here are

based on ethnographic analogy and the combination of graphic symbols used in these panels. Their associations with the sun and water have cultural continuity in meaning when found in their respective contexts. The following chart provides a few examples of concentric circles and rayed circles that are secondary



Fig. 12. The view standing at the panel looking directly west. The photograph shows the sun beginning to set down into this crevice on the cliff. Both sides of the sandstone rock cliff face are like arms embracing the sun.

Fig. 13. Minutes later, the sun set right in the notch on 19 June. It will repeat this for the next few days. Then, slowly the sun will begin its journey south along the horizon.



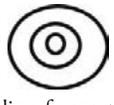
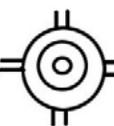
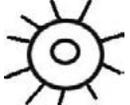
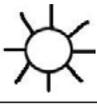
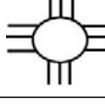
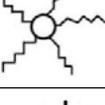
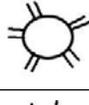
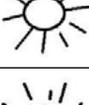
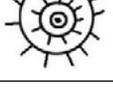
Concentric circles		
35b	 lines close together	Held inside decreasing slowly
35	 lines far apart	Spread out, coming out, increasing rapidly
61		Spreading out, empty out, decreasing, coming out fast (4 directions)
30 (31)		Once had many but now have none
RBS p. 101 #25		Left, gone out, gone down

Fig. 14. Chart 1. Concentric circles.

Fig. 15. Chart 2. Sun symbols.

symbols often found in context with the physical sun events or water contexts. They modify the actions of the primary symbols, Father Sun and his wife, Moon Mother, in the context of ethnographic analogy. The tracks that lead to the top and back on the face of the sun disk are diagnostic of the Zuni oral tradition, identifying it as their Sun Father. The eye holes in the face of the moon help clarify it is a being associated with the sun, perhaps his wife, and not a shield. At Mossback, the primary symbols are the duck-headed figures and the flute players with the same war twin head-dress profiles that are uniquely Zuni. The sun symbol appears twice, changing as it moves from below the horizon. It mimics a sunrise event in the context of the physical landscape. In the third example, the primary symbols are the gestures of the anthropomorph touching (holding) a rayed circle and his bird hands and feet that identify his position in the sky. The solstice sunset is predicted based on the Zuni analogy and the context of the profile of the cliff face that mimics the arms of the Earth Mother. The concentric circle with

Sun Symbols		
36		Sun to come out
1.		Sun, burn, fire, light, fever, heat
1a		Sun is shining (glorious) in all directions
53		Spirit of the sun coming from all 4 directions
68		Sun dries it up
12		Hot springs (hot comes out)
5.		To put out a light, be in darkness (#4270), underworld.
6.		Sun fully up at sunrise
9.		To remove from within and burn
23.		Sun held back, eclipse, arctic darkness
24.		Sun destroyed
25.		Sun is breaking off = sunset
27.		Light rays break off, become shorter (become darker)
172		Sun (heat) increasing, getting hotter

a slash mark is a secondary symbol that modifies the action of the sun.

The different sun symbols and their interpretation are proposed by LaVan Martineau and redrawn from his pencil sketches in his unpublished dictionary of symbols that contains dozens of chapters on different topics. The first column contains reference numbers assigned to each drawing with sun symbols from one chapter and concentric circles from another chapter (fig. 14. Chart 1, and fig. 15, Chart 2. P).

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# FEMININE SYMBOLS: NOTES ON THE CHALCOLITHIC SYMBOLOGY OF THE CENTRAL ALPS

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## Introduction

The Chalcolithic engraved stelae or menhir-statues, from the Pontus-Caucasus to Iberia and from Anatolia to the Maghreb, constitute one of the major puzzles of European archeology. They belong to the late fourth millennium BC, but are found till the early second millennium in the Early Bronze Age.<sup>1</sup>

Large clusters of such boulders, though displaying regional characteristics, show common features underlying a unified origin. They are contemporary with the development of metallurgy, agriculture boosted by plough, trade, human mobility aided by wheeled wagons and efficient sea-vessels, a more widespread use of wool, the first dairy products, and alcoholic beverages. The Chalcolithic people cleared forests and expanded their presence into mountainous regions with pastures and by mining for copper, gold, and silver. Their new awareness of self-realization brought about social and economic development. Their new ideology, or rather *Weltanschauung*, had a “philosophical,” essentially religious foundation.

When Anati (2000) stated that the new Europe was born in this period from a single cultural matrix, he was right: proto-modern Europe was born when these ideologies and technologies seemingly acted together supporting the evolution of the continent until the dawn of history and beyond.

Awareness of the socio-economic context is needed to understand the meaning and values of rock art, cult sites and other symbolic sets. In our opinion, a correct and exhaustive symbolic-iconographic investigation is necessary, well integrated by archeological data and the analytical resources of archeology and the history of religions, together with both common and specific methodologies. First, it is necessary to analyze each individual iconographic element, without losing sight of

its relationship with the whole iconography.

Our investigation is centered on the central-Alpine Chalcolithic iconographies, the most complex symbolic expressions of their time in the entire continent. The anthropomorphism of the menhir-statues or stelae, widespread in Europe (figs. 19-29), is almost absent or only vaguely referred to here. In the Valcamonica, Valtellina, and Alto-Adige the iconography includes a larger number of intelligible recurrences and variations. The rebus is therefore more problematic, but at the same time offers more chances of solution.

On the specific theme of female symbolism in the central-alpine stelae, works by Casini (2008), De Marinis, Fossati (1995, 2014), and Pedrotti (2010) emphasize the role of ceremonial ornaments and garments, markers of gender and rank, and anatomical features such as eyes and brow ridges. We can further see dresses, cloaks, pendants, earrings, headdresses, and such elements of the female clothing of that time which are known from funerary finds.

Without detracting from the value of these attributions, they seem to reserve only a secondary role to what should be the main justification and the semantic of the given expressive choice. The same authors, in fact, show more awareness when dealing with the parallel male symbols, such as astral elements, the zoomorphic, anthropomorphic figures, and tools' representations. The conceptual reconstruction of Anati himself (1982, 1990) comes close to a similar process. It should be kept in mind that a symbol is by definition a bridge between the perceptible known and intuitive not directly identifiable, between a known entity and a substantially unknown one. The image of the sun depicts the well-known central star emanating light and heat, and could convey the corresponding spiritual principle that radiates on the living. What is known about the conception of Helios, Apollo, Surya, the divine Sol Invictus or Aton is not an exception

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1 This article is a preliminary report of research to be further developed.



Fig. 1. Carpine R. 2, Valcamonica. The "Idol of Sello", composition on an outcropping surface, attributable to the final Neolithic-Chalcolithic I (late fourth-early third millennium BC). Relief by Sansoni 1987.



Fig. 2. Stele Ossimo-Bagnolo 2, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II (2900-2400 BC). From Archivio Storico (Historical Archive), photo and survey by Casini cur. 1994.

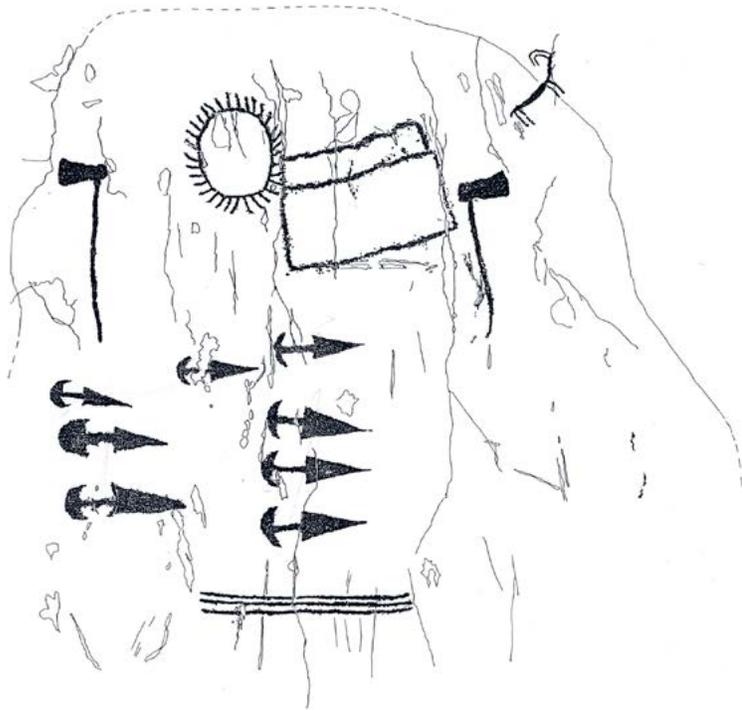
but the rule, expressed in phenomenological terms. Likewise, how should the radiant sun and the explicit haloed anthropomorphic figures of the Valcamonica stelae be interpreted?

The shape and decoration of a feminine dress or ceremonial object of a third-millennium figure must allude to principles of the deepest feminine radical, and to its conceptual and religious manifold implications, rooted in the culture that created them. Just as the authors mentioned above adopt a symbolic reading to findings with a masculine tone, should we adopt a similar approach to contemporary feminine ones found in the same setting?

### Parallel lines, maps and plowed land

The clusters of bundles of parallel lines, straight or U-shaped, are among the most recurrent shapes in the Chalcolithic statue-stelae of Valcamonica and Valtellina. Generally, the vaults or arches have been interpreted as feminine symbols, given the comparisons and the context modules in which they appear.

What is presumably the oldest instance of this symbol in Valcamonica is not on a stele but on a rock surface in Carpine di Sellero, and it is known as the "Sellero Idol" (R. 2, fig. 1), a sketchy anthropomorphic representation, 149 cm high. Between the head and the breast, three parallel lines have been etched, one of



Figs. 3, 4. Stele Ossimo-Bagnolo 1, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic I and II. Relief by Casini cur.1994.

them split in the middle; and another three are in the topographic rectangle which intersects the figure. Given the accompanying elements (topographic quadrangles, cup marks, dotted circles), it can be dated to the final Neolithic or Chalcolithic I (late fourth to early third millennium BC). Here, the parallel lines could represent a torque gorget.

In the monuments of gorge the Chalcolithic II period (2900-2500 BC), bundles of straight lines are found in 17 stelae, including fragments.<sup>2</sup>

Where the image is more complete, like Bagnolo 1 (figs. 3-4) and Campolungo 1, the bundles of lines are in the lower part, close to the line which marks the point from which the stele originally protruded from the earth; the same symbol appears in Ossimo 8, Cemmo 11, and Pat 1, where it is significantly associated with plowing representations, which may provide its explanation, thus reproducing the parallel furrows of agricultural work; likewise, it does not seem at all accidental that the sibling compositions of Bagnolo 1 and 2 (fig. 2), feature also the same low positioning, and show three parallel lines and a plowing scene each. Another proof of this interpretative hypothesis is in the pairing of the bundles of lines with the daggers characteristic of the Remedello culture (Chalcolithic or Copper Age). The daggers are usually placed immediately above the bundles also in Pat 5, Borno 6, Anvoia M12 and 19, Campolungo 3 and 4, Plas (where the daggers are placed below), and in Valtellina at Valgella 1, Caven 4, and Chiuro. The same plowing scenes in several cases place the dagger in the same relative position.<sup>3</sup>

Except the probable interpretations as a belt or other element of clothing in some Trentino-Alto Adige stelae, (with festooned bundles), we can hypothesize that the parallel lines may indicate plowing furrows and therefore represent the tamed land, prepared for sowing, as the fecundating act of germination and vegetative procreation. A similar parallel could significantly link plowing representations on rocks or boulders, even older ones, with topographical maps. By

2 The stelae of Bagnolo 1 (figs. 3 and 4), Pat 1 (fig. 7), Borno 3 (fig. 8), Cemmo 11 and 15, Capitello dei due Pini (Plas), Campolungo 1 (fig. 15) and 4, Ossimo 8, 12, 17 and 18.

3 Bagnolo 2, fig. 2; Ossimo 7, fig. 12; Cemmo 1; Borno 1; Pat 1, fig. 7; on rock outcropping at FdN r22 and Dos Cui; dozens of other cases are present in the rock art of Monte Bego.

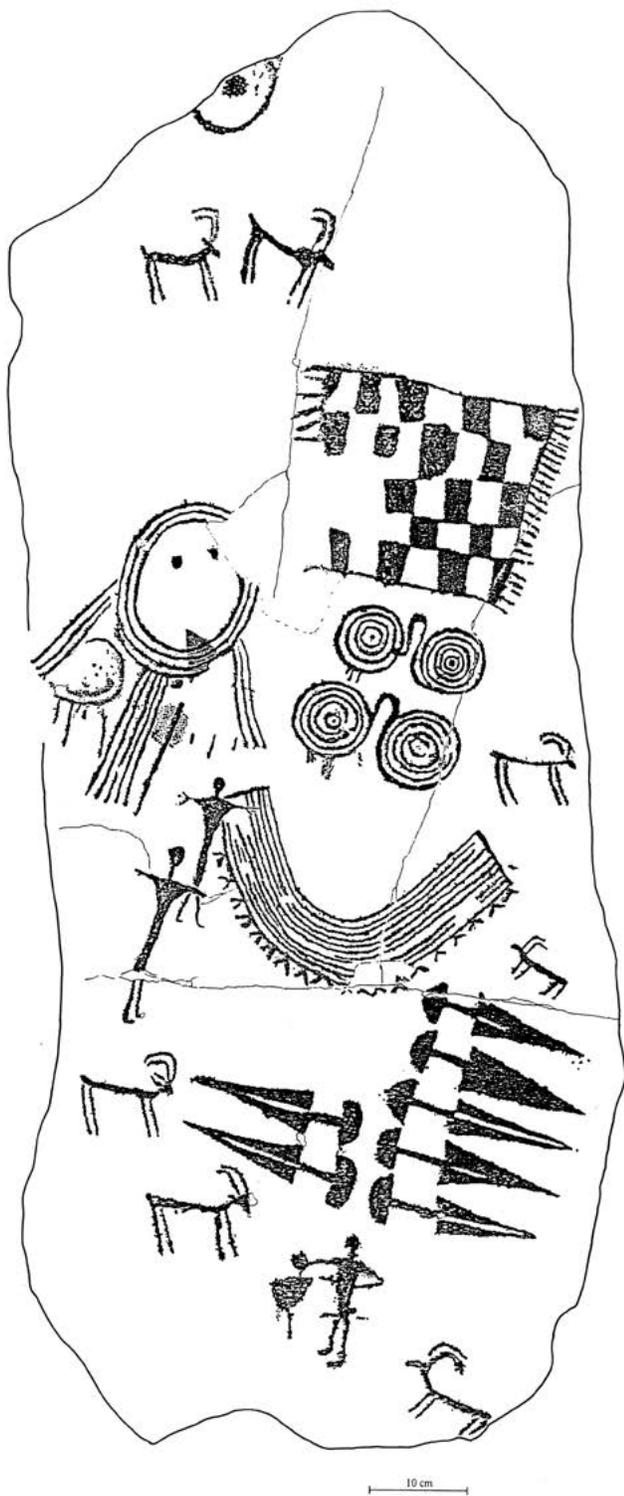


Fig. 5. Stele Borno I, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II. Survey face A by Casini cur. 1994.

the same token, by extension, we can assume that the entire set of topographical maps (*maculae* spots and geometric elements), etched on many rocks and also early on boulders as in the late Neolithic, could likewise have a fully feminine symbolic meaning, a value that in the context of agricultural symbolism could be the result of a reworked late Neolithic legacy.<sup>4</sup>

As already expressed (Sansoni, 2004), plowing itself has been universally considered a reproducing act, in which the plough (*phallus*) penetrates the earth (furrow, *vulva*) hence creating a *topos*, a semantic field of innumerable mythical implants (see also A. Bonfanti, 2021h). The repeated coupling of the symbol of the dagger with lines and plowing can be read as a symbolic transposition of the act of the same male principle. It is possible that the dagger (as the ax and the halberd) refers to the sacrifice, the ritual act par excellence, the penetration into the victim, which seals the fruitful alliance/interpenetration between human and divine. The corresponding close association between dagger and *bucranium* on Monte Bego and the Sardinian stelae would also seem to point in this direction.

### The fringed mat

A second relevant symbol in this context is the so-called mat, or fringed mat, which is placed in the upper part of the compositions, next to the solar disc.<sup>5</sup> In seven cases it shows vertical parallel lines (fig. 12), in one case a checkerboard pattern (Borno 1, fig. 5); alternatively, a simple quadrangle intersected by a radial disc (Pat 24), and a simple rectangle bisected by a repeated long side (Bagnolo 1, fig. 3). The latter feature is perhaps the most indicative: a topographic element, typical of Chalcolithic I, found on outcropping rock. Thus, the motif of the mat, especially if decorated by parallel lines, could, like the bundle of parallel lines, refer to domesticated land; in this case, it would not be a coincidence that probably in three cases the closest element to the mat is again the dagger. Following the same associative process, the frequent contiguity of the quadrangular symbol to the solar disc should also

4 As an early stage: Borno 1b; Bagnolo 1, fig. 3; Ossimo 8, Pat 8, 9, 24, 28 and 29.

5 Borno 1, fig. 5, and 6; Pat 2, 4 and 20; Ossimo 7 and 14, or on the side, contiguous to the main symbol, always in a high position Ossimo 5 and 8; Cemmo 20, Pat 2 and 11.

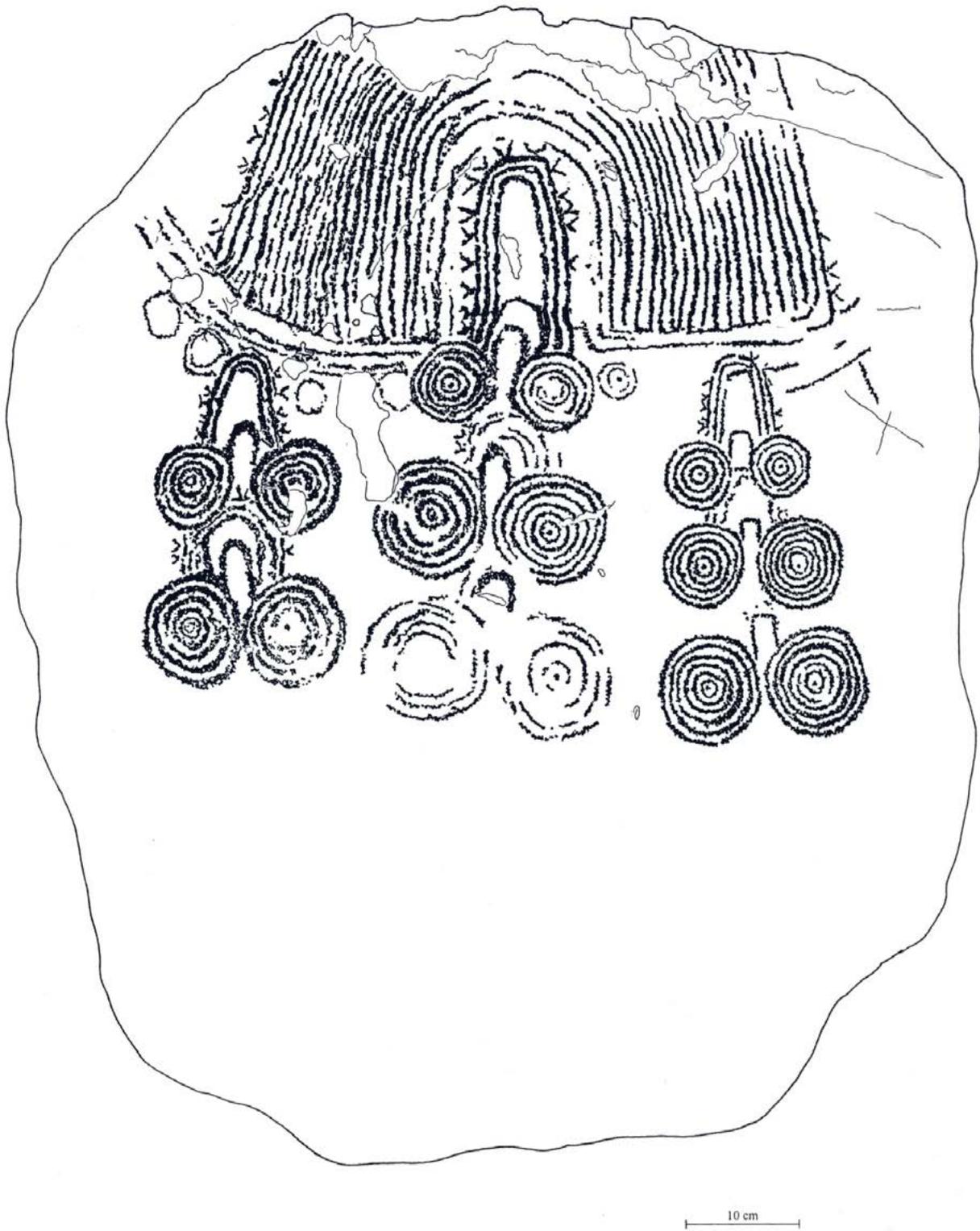


Fig. 6. Stele Ossimo 8, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II. Survey face A by Casini cur. 1994.

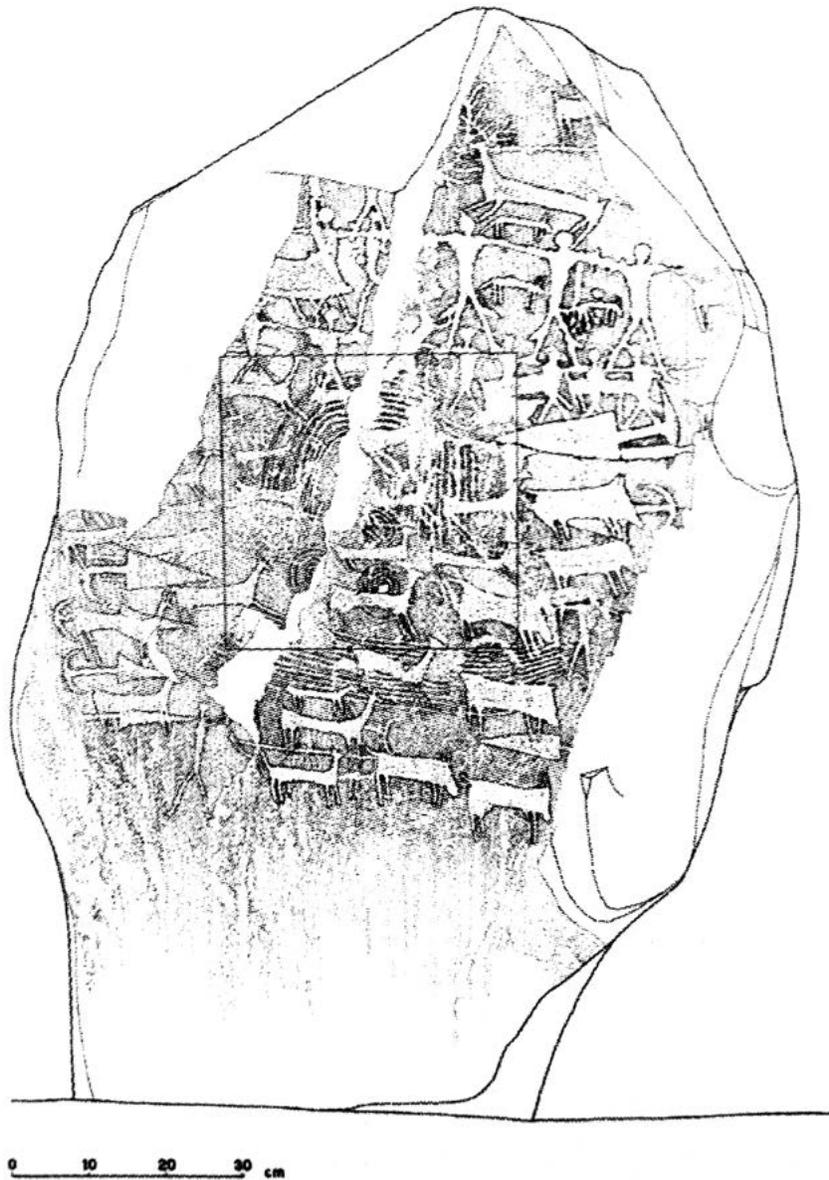


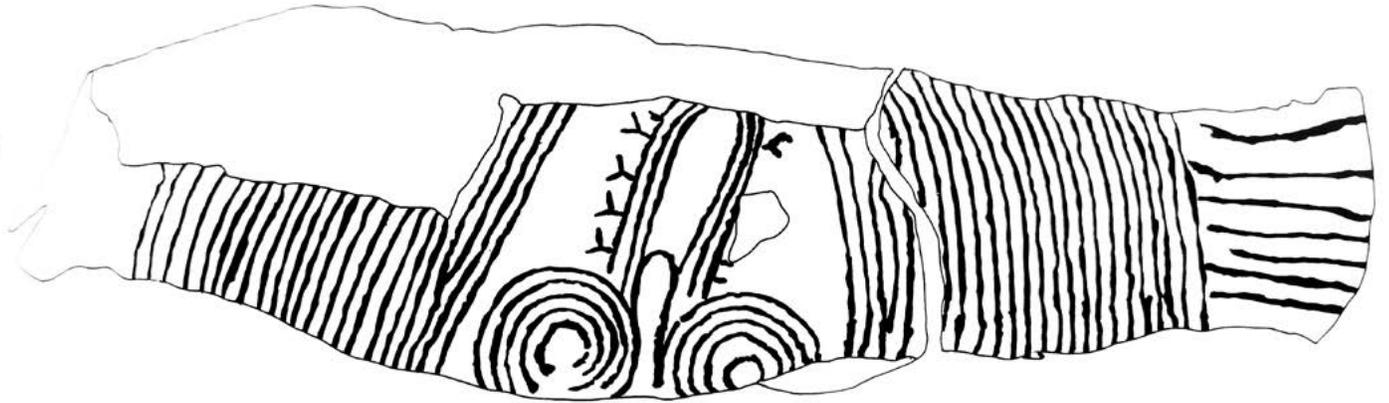
Fig. 7. Stele Pat 1, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II and III. Recomposition based on frottage by Poggiani Keller 2009.

be interpreted as the union between the uranic and chthonic dimensions, symbolized at a conceptually high, abstract level. In his research Bonfanti (2022a-b) also has indicated the association between the celestial cosmogonic solar, as the masculine element, and the chthonic underground one, its material and feminine counterpart, where life develops. The solar energy, incorporeal, which acts on the inert matter, the womb of life, fertilizing it, is a conception in line with typical Indo-European thought.

Even if we surmise that the mat is the reproduction of a real object symbolically referenced to the agricultural

world, its function seems ritual; this, in our opinion, is the most plausible reading, considering the well-known, later parallels with ritual veils and mats. Likewise, the tunic or cloak are represented by parallel lines (and arches) on some Alto Adige anthropomorphic stelae.<sup>6</sup> The occasional decoration of the female dress with U-shaped lines (as in Sion and the Alto Adige group)

<sup>6</sup> In particular those from Arco 3 and 4 (fig. 18), Lagundo 1, the back of Arco 2 and Lagundo 4 (a male, with reference to Ötzi's cloak); as well as on other stelae with a more elaborate decoration, like those from the Sion-Aosta area (figs. 20 and 21) and of the Rouergat group (figs. 22, 23 and 24).



8) Fragment Borno2, Valcamonica. Copper II. Survey by Anati 1982.

would lead to a feminine value interpretation of the mat, with the only exception of Borno 1 (fig. 5) and perhaps Cevo (fig. 9b, anomalous in some way), although they never appear in association with the U-shaped parallel lines, but are similarly placed and in one case the mat seems to be their substitute (Bagnolo 1 compared with Bagnolo 2, figs. 2, 3 and 4).

The mat's appearance only in masculine stelae (except for the dubious case of Cevo), does not prejudice its possibly belonging to the feminine symbolic sphere; in our case, especially in combination with the radiant sun, it could easily have a symbolic function of an accompanying *paredro* symbol.

### **The arches of parallel U-shaped lines and the spectacle-spiral pendants**

The concentric parallel lines in an upright or inverted U shape (arches) appear to be, especially during Chalcolithic II, the main feminine symbol on the Valcamonica-Valtellina rocks, bearing extensive European comparisons, especially in the Atlantic area, both contemporary, earlier (Neolithic) and later (Bronze Age). In the anthropomorphic stelae of continental Europe, the motif generally alludes to the torque pectoral, sometimes to women's clothing, but in some cases it is placed differently, thus revealing other meanings. In 20 different monuments of Valcamonica and Valtellina, 23 arches are datable to Chalcolithic II, 14 of which are shaped as an inverted U, open upwards

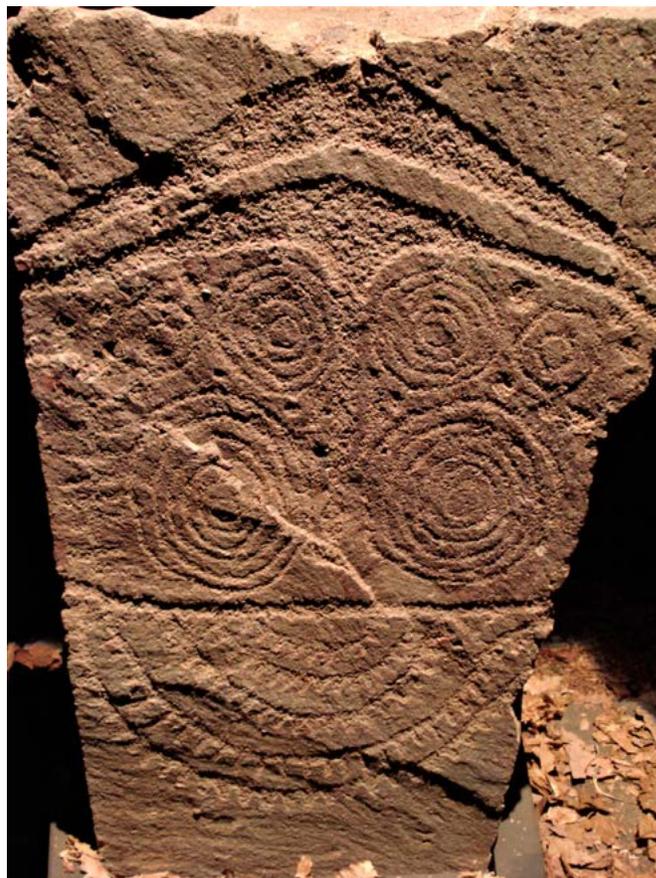
(including the fragments, all in in Valcamonica, figs. 2, 6, 7, 8, 9a, 9b), and 9 in an upright U shape (5 of which in Valtellina, out of which 3 linked to the three rayed disc, figs. 5, 9a, 16, 17). The inverted U group is therefore clearly prevalent and here it can hardly be read as a collar or a pectoral. In Chalcolithic III we find other arches, all upright and U shaped, of a different kind, decorated with dashes or triangles, accompanied by the so-called gendarme hats above (a facial T, figs. 9a, 10 and 11), which probably are sketches of the eyebrow arch and nose. These arches could therefore represent actual collars (Ossimo 10, Pat 5, Cemmo 6 and 10). These late compositions are the version closest to the anthropomorphic stelae scheme found in the Valcamonica-Valtellina context.

In one case (Pat 18, in the first numbering), the inverted U-shaped arch significantly overlaps a vague female praying figure with U-shaped limbs, probably dating to the Late Neolithic or Chalcolithic I.

The U shaped arches symbol is often paired with spectacle-spiral pendants (in 13 verifiable cases, of which 10 in Valcamonica and 3 in Valtellina), showing the hook always pointing upwards, and a pair of concentric discs or spirals (only in 4 cases) put on the sides: in no less than 6 cases the pendant is placed at the base, inside or beneath the reverse concave side of an inverted U-shaped arch (figs. 6, 7, 8, 9a, 9b); and in 2 cases it is inside the arch (like in Boalzo), or immediately above its concave side (like in Borno 1, fig. 5), at



Fig. 9. Stele Anvoia-Ossimo 4, Valcamonica. Copper II and III. Survey face A by Fedele 2006.



Figs. 10 and 11. Stele Cemmo 10, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic III. Photo and recomposition based on frottage by Poggiani Keller 2009.

the top of the straight U-shaped arch; in only one case of this series (Caven 3, fig.16) it is placed above it, to the side and in only one other case the pendant stands on its own between a radial disc, daggers, and parallel lines, in a male symbolic composition (Campolungo 1, fig. 15), which can be found also in a case of the Valais group (Sion 2, fig. 20) and in another one of the Aosta group (Aosta 2, fig. 21).

The relative and constant positioning, with only one exception, as in fig. 16, is that of the pendant inside and above the concave side of the U-shaped arch, and generally, in 7 instances, in a sort of penetration by the whole pendant or by its hook alone. This applies to both the inverted U and the upright U

series (2 cases), which could point to a common or complementary role of the U series, given a possible phallic value of the symbol.

More ambiguous and difficult to understand, though, is the specific role of the spectacle-spiral pendant, already recognized as a symbolic object in deposits and in female funerary objects in central and eastern Europe (Casini, 1998) and in different contexts in the east (Anati, 1972); the pendant could thus be a strengthening of the meaning of the arch, or else a symbol of the fertilizing masculine principle.

As already noted about the quadrangular symbols which appear in the rare and preciously intact mixed compositions, arches and pendants are likewise cen-

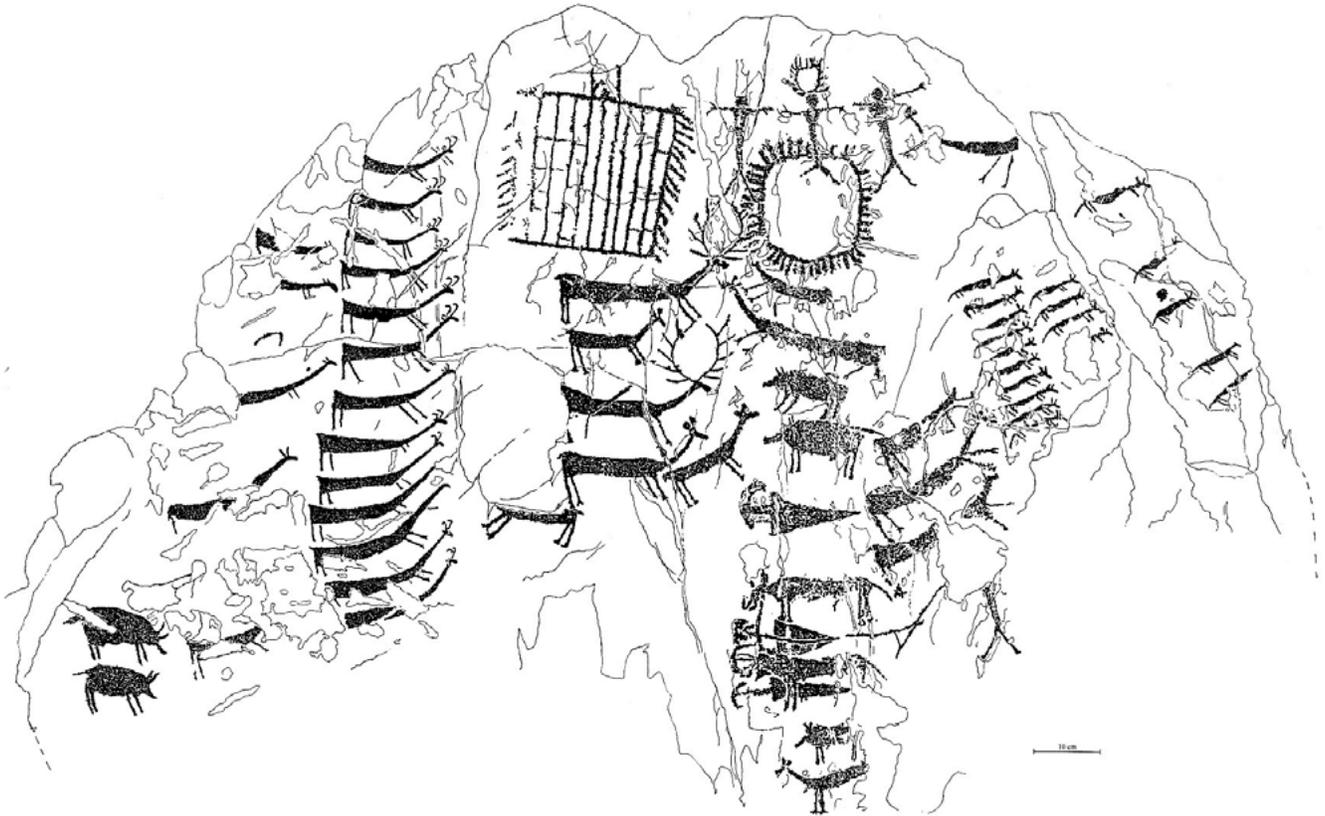


Fig. 12. Stele Ossimo 7, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II and III. Relief by Casini cur.1994.

trally placed between the radiant sun and the weapons (with axes on the side and daggers below, such as in Bagnolo 2, fig. 2; with only daggers below in Pat 1, fig. 7, and Borno 1, fig. 5), perhaps giving it an integrative protective value.

Another element common to arches and pendants are the series of Y or V arranged on the outer edge of both, suggesting yet again a complementary/integrative role, but also hinting to a similar meaning of that of arches and pendants, since decorated hooks may recall miniature arches.<sup>7</sup>

It has been hypothesized that both Y and V express fertility, since they could represent shoots or in any case vegetal sprouts emerging from the arches themselves (Sansoni, 2022). Bonfanti (2022a-b) sees in

them the symbols of shrubs, as elements delimiting the field invested by the energy flow, while finding continuity of the Y glyph in the northern cultures up to the modern Germanic context, as the graphic representation of *Irmingsul*, the *Axis Mundi*, central in German myth to the creation of *Mann*. This hypothesis is valid on an iconographic level, if we assume the arch and the pendant to be symbols of female fertility.

A distant similarity can be found with the Y-shaped signs evident in the Neolithic vase of Szeleveny-Vadas (fig. 38), and on the belly and under the torques in the female stelae of the Rouergat group (at least 6 clear instances, figs. 22 and 23). Here the probable link to fecundity is more explicit, as in the well-known Neolithic instances of tree-shaped elements drawn on the belly (Venus of Gaban, bust of Jela from the Culture of Vinča) or, in later cultures, on the garments and

<sup>7</sup> 10 instances, figs. 2, 5, 6, 9a, 16 and the pendant hooks 3 instances, figs. 6 and 8.

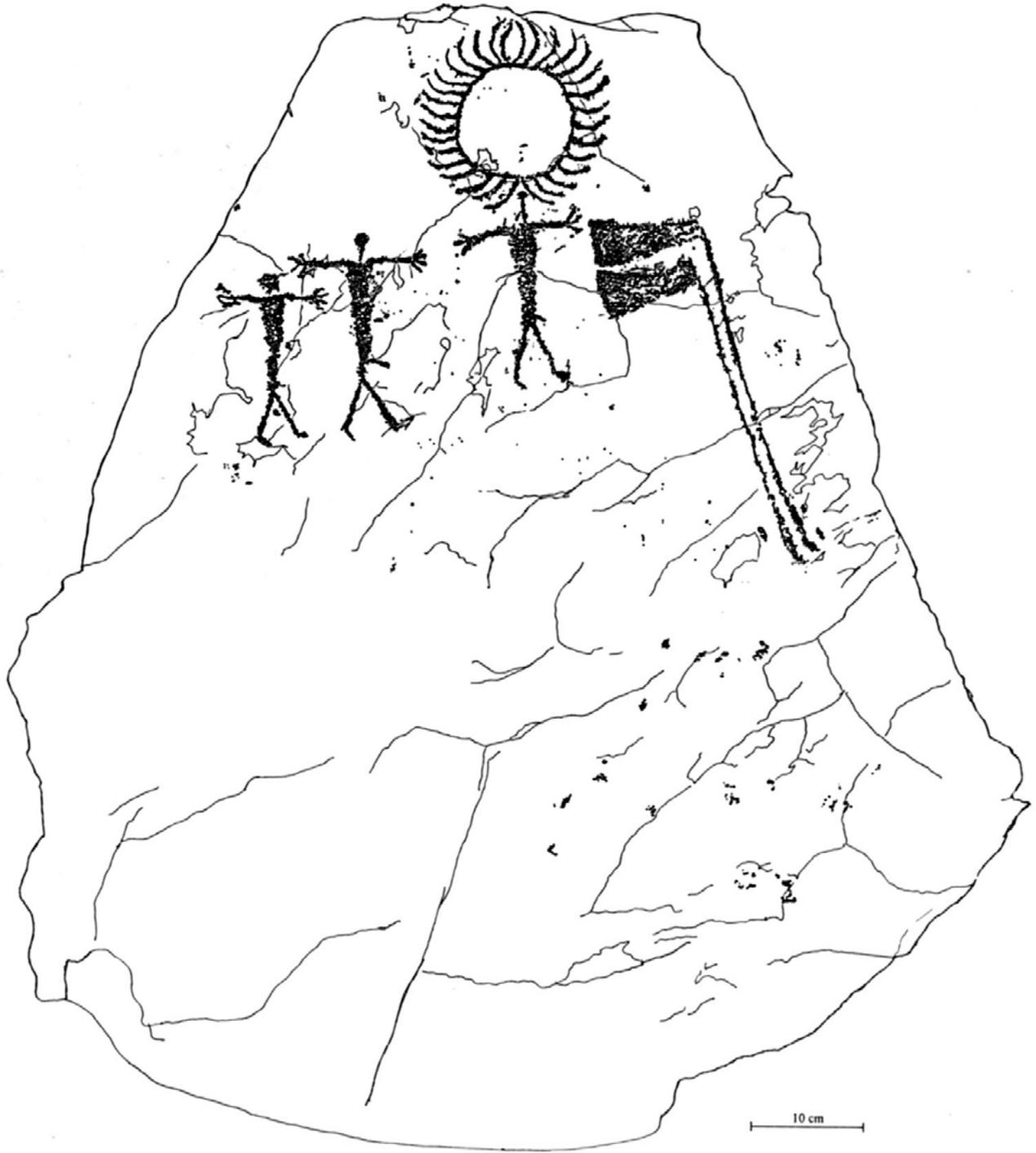


Fig. 13. Stele Ossimo 9, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic III. Relief by Casini cur. 1994.

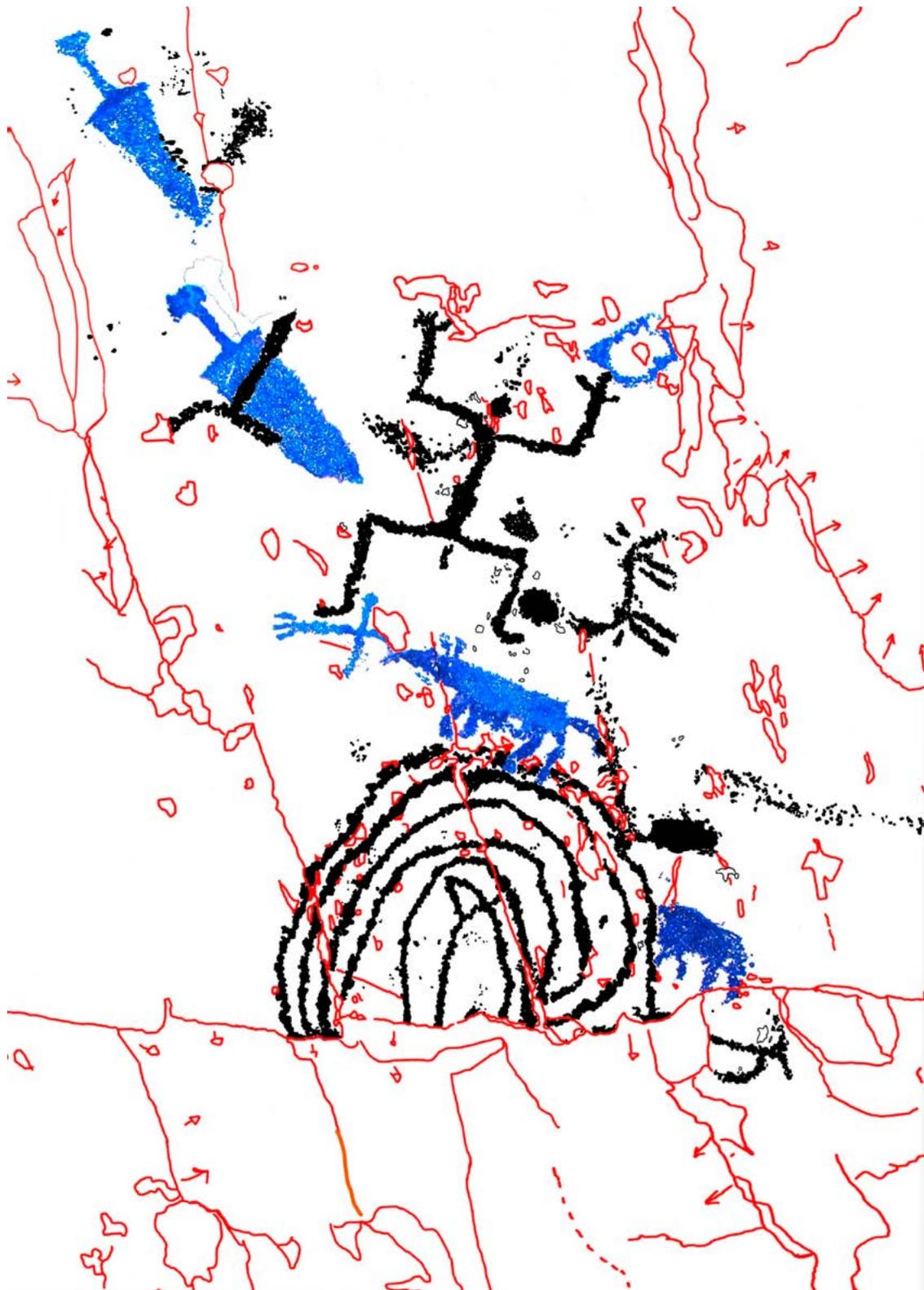


Fig. 14. Foppe di Nadro R. 60, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II. Composition on outcropping surface, relief by Gavaldo and Medici 2019.

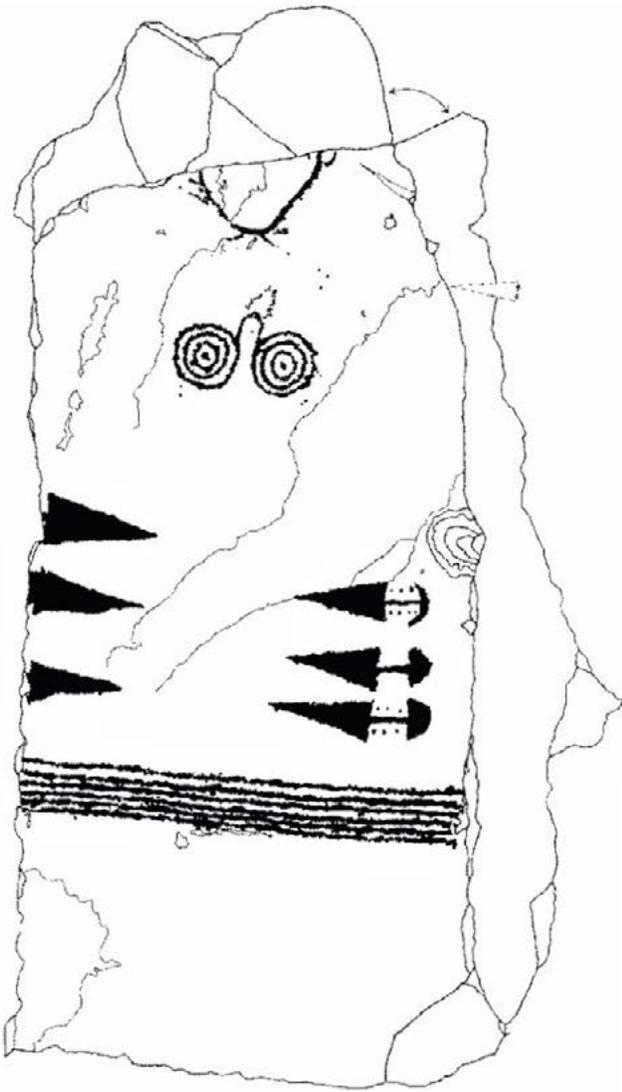


Fig. 15. Stele Campolungo I, Valcamonica. Chalcolithic II. Relief by Marretta 2007.

alongside female images.<sup>8</sup>

The theory put forward here goes hand in hand with these interpretations and adds the furrows symbols. With the exception of three cases (Borno 1, Ca Morei and Caven 3, figs. 5 and 16), Y-shaped symbols appear together with inverted U-shaped carvings, most likely representing the reproductive power: a female genital and its fertilized expansion in a pregnant womb; or maybe fertility, the generative and regenerative power and the fruit of the fertilized earth, always carrying an

<sup>8</sup> Examples from Minoan and Helladic cultures.

analog spiritual symbolic value. If this were the case, the two Valtellina stelae (Ca Morei 1 and Cornal 4, fig. 17; likewise Pat 19), which seem to represent a sort of penetration through the band descending from the central concentric, solar (?) disc at the top, would then be explicit symbols of the hierogamic union between human and deity, thus repeating the arches and pendants symbolism.

In this regard, Bonfanti's theory (2022a-b and personal communication) depicts a probable symbolic transposition whence the arches would represent, as we surmise, female fertility, but primarily on a spiritual level, where energy waves/radiations are activated by the spectacle-spiral pendant, as a theurgic symbol of God's recall of the male divine principle, linked to the sun's role; this is indeed a daring theory, but not devoid of possible phenomenologist references.

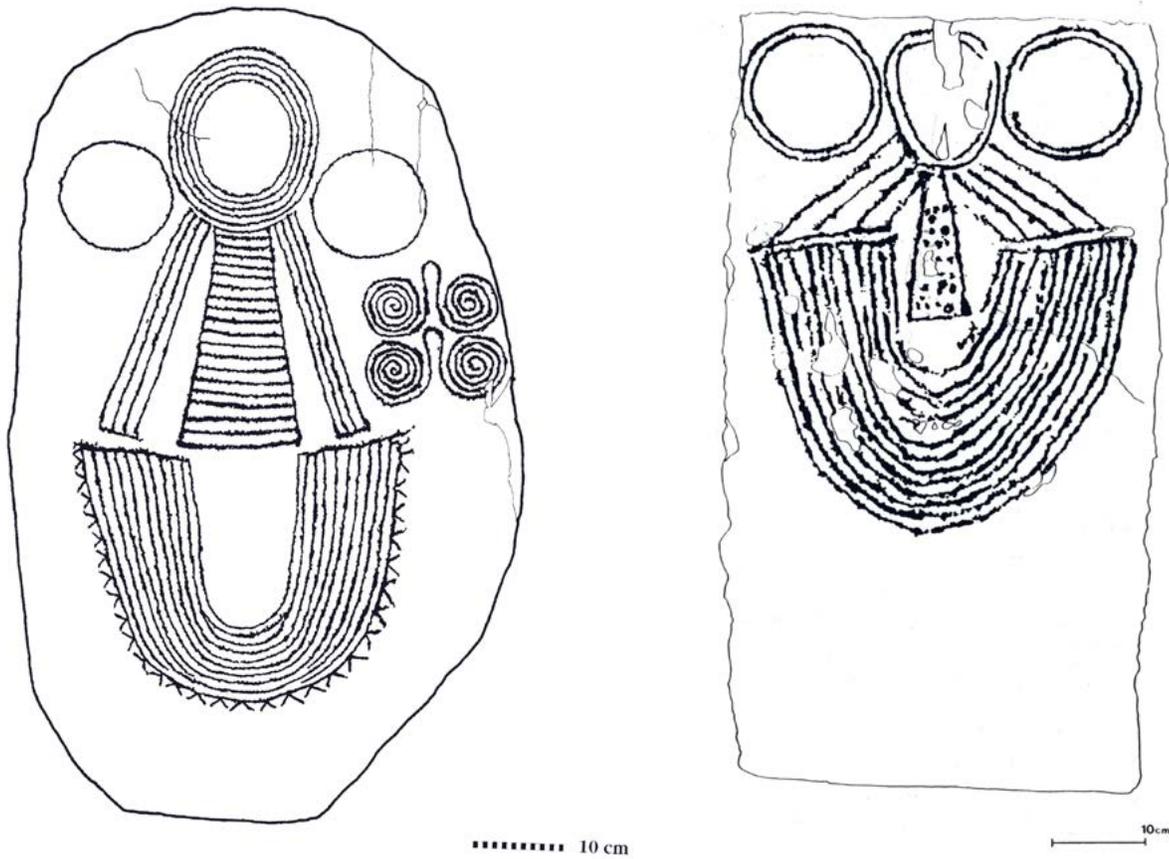
### Comb-shaped carvings and discs: remarks on compositions

Finally, a few remarks about the possible roles of other symbols in the scenario we have sketched.

1. The comb-shaped elements (Ossimo 4; Cevo; Caven 3, figs. 9a, 9b, 16), identified as feminine symbols used since the Neolithic (Casini-Odone, 1994; Gimbutas, 1990), found also on the female stele of Schafstad, could represent carding brushes, or more probably a household tool, but the regulating principles set forth above would seem to apply to them as well.

2. Pairs of discs.<sup>9</sup> Many sources refer to the symbolism of the simple circle and the concentric circle, especially in the context of the Bronze Age; I will refer here to the circle's meanings of perfection and harmony, stemming from its being a geometric development from its central point and its celestial connotations; as per the concentric circles, the concepts of hierarchy of entity, progression of values and growth should be kept in mind in their interpretation. At first reading, these discs, which in the anthropomorphic stelae indicate the breasts or maybe the eyes, would seem to have in the Valcamonica and Valtellina stelae a similar but

<sup>9</sup> Simple in FdN 30, Pat 19, Borno 1, Plas 2, Caven 2 and 3, Anvoia; concentric in Ossimo 10, Pat 5, Anvoia, Cornal, Cemmo 6 and 10, Cevo, figs. 9b, 10, 11, 16, 17 up to the most complex instance, Ossimo 4 (fig. 9), where the disc are accompanied by a pair of asterisks, a pair of crossed discs and the gendarme hats mentioned above.



Figs. 16 and 17. Stele Caven 3 and Cornal 4, Valtellina. Chalcolithic II. Reliefs by Casini cur. 1994.

more elusive role, as support and corollary to arches and T-shaped arches, again hinting to a feminine symbolism. A similar interpretation could be given to the carvings of pairs of discs, which in some cases, could primarily symbolize eyes (Cemmo 10; Ossimo 4 and 1), or mainly breasts, executed in anatomical position. Besides the physiological meaning, a symbolic reading can be assumed, with possible reference to the moon.<sup>10</sup> These symbols are usually placed in perfect horizontal symmetry, on the same median axis, a characteristic common to almost all the other symbols analyzed above; likewise, the doubling of the binary signs.<sup>11</sup>

10 Cemmo 10; Cemmo 20; Ossimo 4, 10 and 18, Cevo; perhaps Caven 3 and Cornal 4, figs. 9a, 9b, 10, 11, 16, 17.

11 SAs in the case of the discs in Ossimo 4 and 10, Cemmo 6 and 10, the comb-shaped elements in Ossimo 4, the arches in Ossimo 2, the spectacles-shaped pendants in Borno 1, Cevo, Ossimo 2, Caven 3, Pat 1 and 2, Cornal 4, Ossimo 8 and Caven 2.

To confirm that these are not random cases, we remark that pairs of small spectacle-spiral pendants are among feminine funerary objects of Krusza Zamkowa (Poland, from the end of the Neolithic) and Mokrin (Serbia, from the Bronze Age). This mirroring and doubling iconography seems to be characteristic of feminine symbolism, even if sometimes similar examples can be found with weapons in masculine compositions – double axe, double halberd, ax plus halberd, the rarer double dagger. However, in compositions of a masculine character there is a prevalence of asymmetrical settings – such as the disposition of the daggers, axes, halberds, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements – and a vertical median placement of unique signs – rayed sun or anthropomorphic halo, plowings, bundles of lines. The separation of meanings and connected roles is undoubtedly very clear in the iconography of the Chalcolithic, and it is clear in



Fig. 18. Stele Arco IV, Trentino. Chalcolithic II. Photo from Archivio Storico del CCSP.

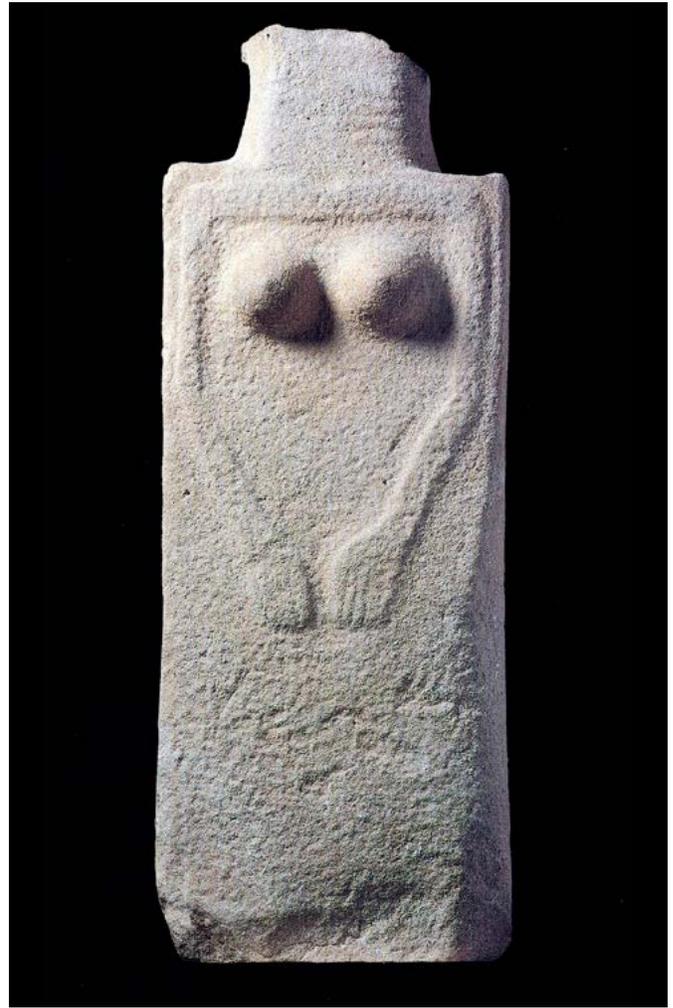


Fig. 19. Stele from Treschietto, Lunigiana. Chalcolithic II. Photo by A.Ghiretti, Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, Pontremoli.

the context of outcropping rocks – in horizontal, partial and dispersed vision – and in that of stone blocks or rock walls, frontal, vertical, and tidy.

To conclude this series we should mention the female praying figure, noted above, from the first phase of Pat 18, and the only certainly female anthropomorphic figure from Chalcolithic III in the Ossimo 9 stele (fig. 13), the smallest one of the two carved ones, appearing to be heading toward a figure with a solar halo; and finally, the deer harems in the Ossimo 7 stone block (fig. 12), Ossimo 8 and Cemmo 4, the only ones among Chalcolithic III zoomorphic stele carvings where the female gender of the animal is identifiable; and we also refer to deer harems, where the stag is symbolically the closest to the solar symbol, or even

takes its place. Even supposing that the female figures, both human and animal, could have been originally more, the images, which tend to appear only in the stelae with male symbolism, appear to play a marginal - or in any case a secondary - role.

In Valcamonica and Valtellina, anthropomorphism seems just a vague and late trend reserved solely for feminine stelae, and it is barely readable in a context of cosmological entities as bringing harmony between the sacred sphere and the human level: these are compositions which only abstract and lofty theological thought could conceive.

The symbols are the same ones found in contemporary continental iconography, while their elaboration is completely different there, in a simple and



Fig. 20. Stele from Saint Martin de Corleans n. 3, Val d'Aosta. Chalcolithic II. Photo by Mezzena cur. 1998.



Fig. 21. Stele Petit Chasseur 15, Valais. Chalcolithic II. Photo by Mezzena cur. 1998.

fragmentary level of meager anthropomorphism, without the articulation and richness that appears solely in the central-alpine context. Only the nearby Alto Adige ensemble shows a clear affinity to the Valcamonica-Valtellina rock art, but it presents more evident anthropic elements, especially in the female stelae (fig. 18, while only face and belt appear in the male ones).

Further parallels are in the Sardinian, Brittany, and Iberian groups, and fewer ones in the Pontic and central Germany areas, showing expressions of symbolic abstraction, which split from or add to the canonical anthropomorphism. This can indicate – the Alto Adige example being the most explicit evidence – that the Valcamonica-Valtellina compositions latently could refer to the human figure, perhaps with reference to

ancestors, more or less deified, but always in a more precise reference to the sacred context.

### **Possible Neolithic origins**

The roots of these iconographic expressions are quite evident when examining the Neolithic art which preceded them. Parallel lines, multi-strand torques and arches/vaults in semicircles or concentric Vs, placed in different patterns, are in fact among the most typical recurrences in small sculptures and pottery of a wide range of Neolithic cultures and mostly they have a precise reference to the feminine sphere. Good examples are findings in the Anatolian and Balkan areas, dating as early as the sixth millennium BC, flourishing in the fifth millennium, but decreasing in the fourth and third millennia, when the establishing



Figs. 22, 23 and 24. Stelae from the Rouergue group, Aveyron. Chalcolithic I-early Chalcolithic II. Photo by P. Soissons, Musée Fenaille, Rodez.



Fig. 25. Stele from Grana de Torinuelo, Spain. Chalcolithic. Photo by Mailland cur. 2000.

of metallurgy in the area brought about fundamental changes.

The clearest and oldest findings, so far, belong to the cultures of Karanovo, Starčevo, Hacilar, and Vinča, and in the pre-Minoan Cretan, hence Dimini, Tisza, Larissa, and mainly the various phases of Cucuteni; the bow of Mediterranean cultures between Cyprus, Crete, Malta, southern Italy and Iberia is also involved in this process. Further examples can be found also beyond the Hungarian plain, in the central European linear pottery and Lengyel (Moravia).

Emblematic examples are found in small ceramic statuary, where the female representation (and the connected zoomorphic one) is dominant and the context is often that of funerary trousseaux or votive objects. These symbols, often paired with spirals, sinuous signs, wavy lines, chevrons, grids, and other geometric elements, appear on every part of the body, sometimes as a torque, but more often on the belly, the breasts, the legs, and the back, both on the naked body and on dress, almost always together with a notable accentuation of feminine features (belly, buttocks, sex, sides). Examples are found in the aforementioned cultures of Vinča (from the end of the sixth to the fifth millennium BC, in the central and southern Balkans) and Cucuteni (since its initial stages, between the fifth and fourth millennium BC, in Romania, Moldavia, and western Ukraine, figs. 24 and 26), Karanovo (mid-fifth millennium BC, in Bulgaria), Dimini (beginning of fifth millennium BC, in Thessaly), Nudra (beginning of the third millennium BC, in central Anatolia) up to Lengyel (beginning of fifth millennium BC, between Moravia and Hungary, figs. 34, 35, 36).

Other types of ceramics and lithic objects, remarkably the anthropomorphic vases, also bear the same symbols. For example, breast vessels often bear bundles of vaulted lines - semicircles or concentric Vs, such as in the cultures of Vinča (Serbia, Bulgaria), Tszadob (Hungary, end of the sixth millennium BC) and Troy I (beginning of the third millennium BC, figs. 32 and 33). Notable are also the series of chevrons, which were already present during the Neolithic both in the Balkans and in Anatolia and along the Atlantic coast: we find them in western Iberian female stone blocks, such as the case in Sion, also in the shape of a zig-zag (stelae/piles 5, 6, 10, 15, 20b, 22), in Provence, in Pfützthal (Germany) and, significantly, in Souphli Magoula (Greece).

These remarks outline a deeply rooted tradition in the Balkan-Anatolian Neolithic, up to the early metal ages: this area was a true driving force behind the neolithization of the European continent, and was strongly influenced by the middle-Danubian area.

It is indeed the middle-Danubian area, linked to cultures from the East and the South, that seemingly influenced the central-eastern Alpine region during the Chalcolithic; here, in the course of a long process (Kalicz, 1980), which stems from the culture of Koros

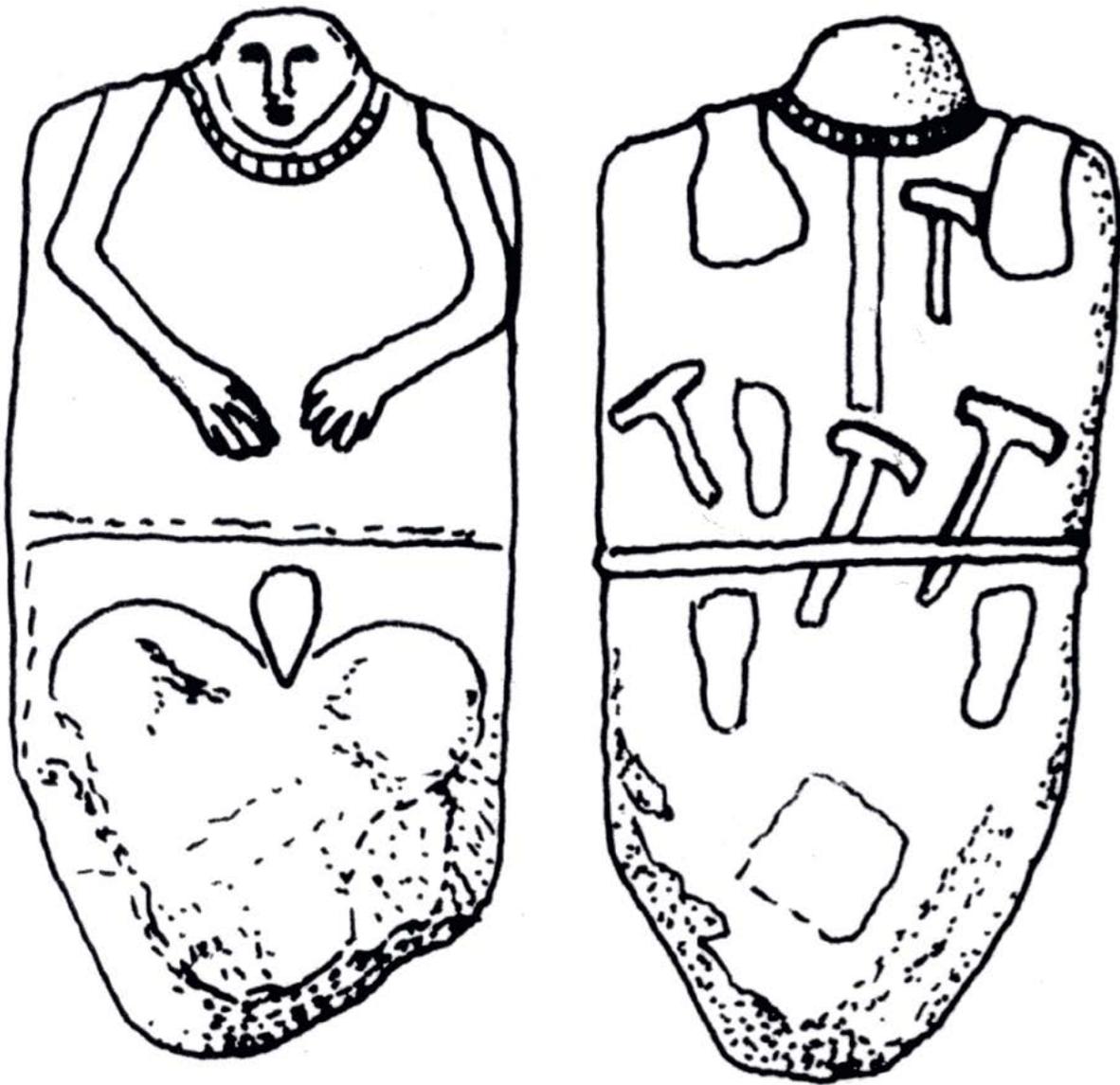


Fig. 26. Stele from Hamangia, Dobrogea (Romania), with both male and female faces/sides. Chalcolithic Age. Probably end of fourth-beginning of third millennium BC. Relief by Mailland cur. 2000.

(Early Neolithic), the culture of Bukk (figs. 27, 28, 29) and the culture of the Linear Pottery, Lengyel, and Tisza (Middle and Late Neolithic), until the apex of the Chalcolithic (Tisza, Polgár, Boleroz-Pecel-Baden), we find anthropomorphic vases and small ceramic statuary, although not stelae, of both sexes, with sometimes complex decorations (parallel lines, chevrons, meanders, quadrangles). There are also elements that make us think further: Y-shaped and tree-shaped signs accompanying a whole series of schematic hu-

man (such as the aforementioned from Szelevény, fig. 38) and zoomorphic figurines; we also find the dagger and the ax on later masculine anthropomorphic vases (Mende, Culture of Baden), together with discs and chariot models (Culture of Pecel-Baden). These are motifs to which both late-neolithic rock art and mid-alpine Chalcolithic symbology seem to give a local interpretation, together with the converging cultural waves from the West, which we shall examine forthwith. Until now, different schools have hypoth-



Fig. 27. Stele from Tiritaka, Crimea. Chalcolithic. Probably end of fourth-beginning of third millennium BC. Survey by De Marinis 1998.

esized, with different methodologies, that the Central Alps rock art has an almost exclusively oriental origin (Anati, 1981, who sees an influence in the carved blocks of Lepensky Vir from the seventh-sixth millennium BC); or western origins (De Marinis, 1989), or Anatolian-Armenian roots (Mezzena, 1989); our analysis leads us to believe that each hypothesis contains valid elements, in the sense that the central-Alpine area would seem to have been the meeting point of ideologies and beliefs originating from different and distant environments, with a first Indo-European oriental prevalence (Pontic and middle-Danubian). Precisely this melting process seems to be the fundamental basis of the extraordinary conceptual level of the Chalcolithic Alpine art.

### A gylanic Neolithic?

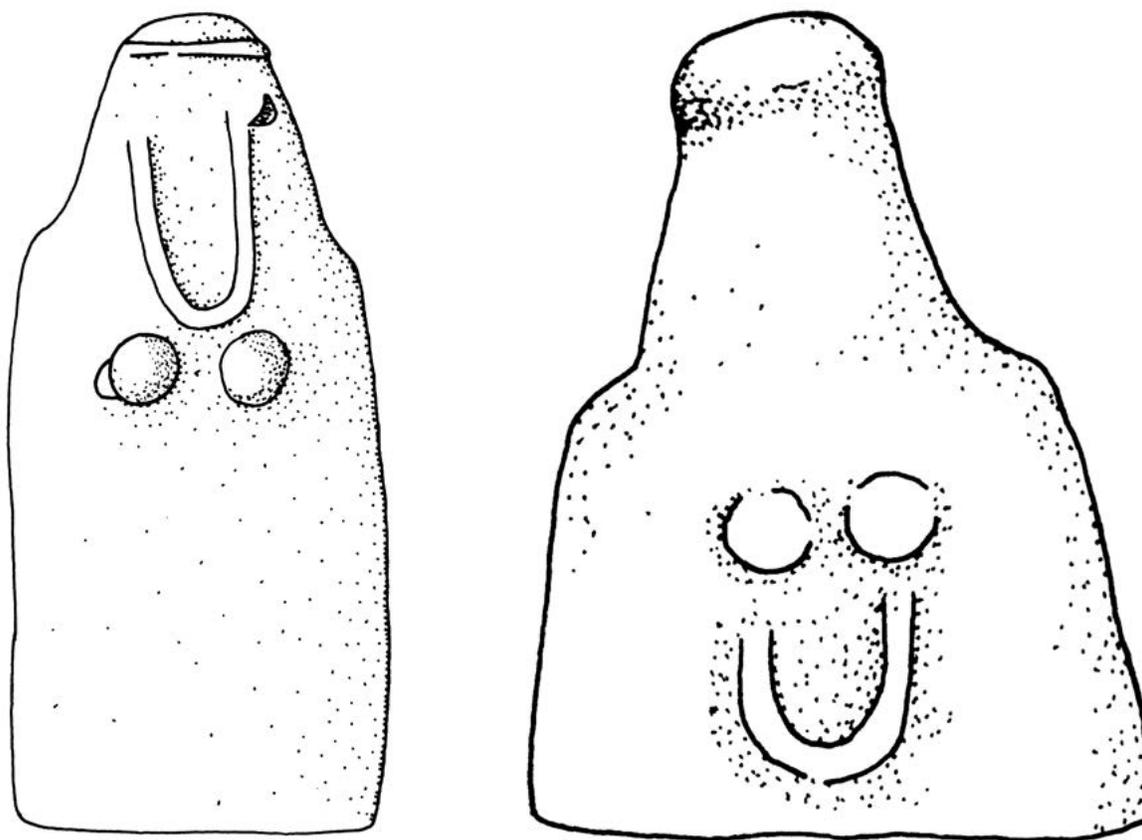
Restricting the classic Neolithic interpretation of the cult of the Mother Goddess to a gylanic, maternal, fruitful, and regenerative function would appear to be reductive; in this context, some narrow and forced remarks in Gimbutas's work, although in general inspirational, would appear an ideological preconcept. The theories of a gylanic Neolithic and the non-existence of a continental development path, autonomous from the east, need to be reconsidered, but surely we witness an exceptional – sometimes almost to the limits of conceptual monopoly – emphasis on the feminine or agrarian feminine sphere; this complex process, rich in nuances that are almost inaccessible to us and which seem to refer to cardinal religious ideas focuses on the sacral powers of the feminine. The existence of a corresponding continental gylania has still to be proved, as is, even more so, a Paleolithic gylania. The situation is different in the Chalcolithic, where we witness the strong emergence of a juxtaposed sacredness, opposite yet complementary, centered on the powers of the masculine, in a sort of reaction to the Neolithic. Yet, in an order that appears hierarchically organized, the role of the feminine maintains a reconsidered, important continuity, as witnessed by European monoliths, stelae, and menhirs. These highlight, logically, a process of new harmonization, rather than the alleged and radical crushing of the feminine.

Thus, the feminine symbols – certainly much more than the masculine – seem to derive directly from the Neolithic world, and are expressed in a more sober, essential, and probably syncretistic way, as required by the new, proto-Indo-European ideology.

### Western megalithism

To better understand this process, we should mention the dynamic wave of the Neolithic development, from the central and western Mediterranean to the Atlantic coastal area, on a route that appears to have been undertaken by sea and probably originating in the Aegean and Anatolian region. This was an innovative cultural current which grafted itself on to existing and vibrant native traditions.

Megalithism, which appears from the advanced Neolithic up to the Early Bronze Age, is connected to this process. The highest of its expressions are indeed found on the Atlantic coasts, from Portugal and Gali-



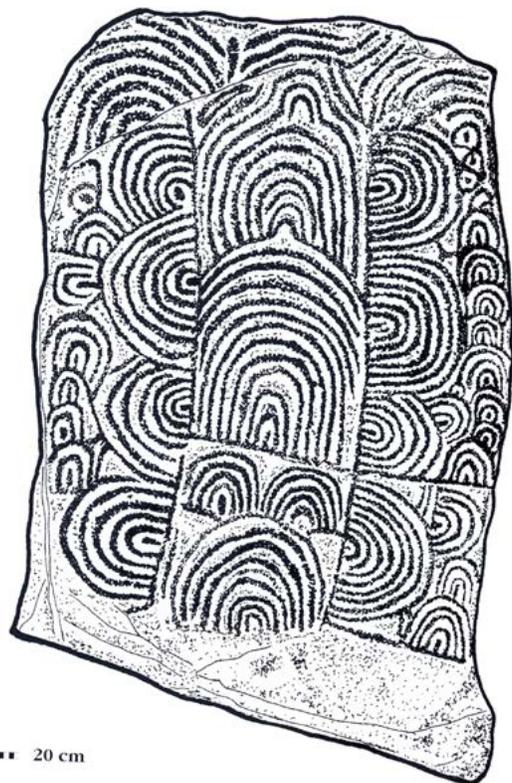
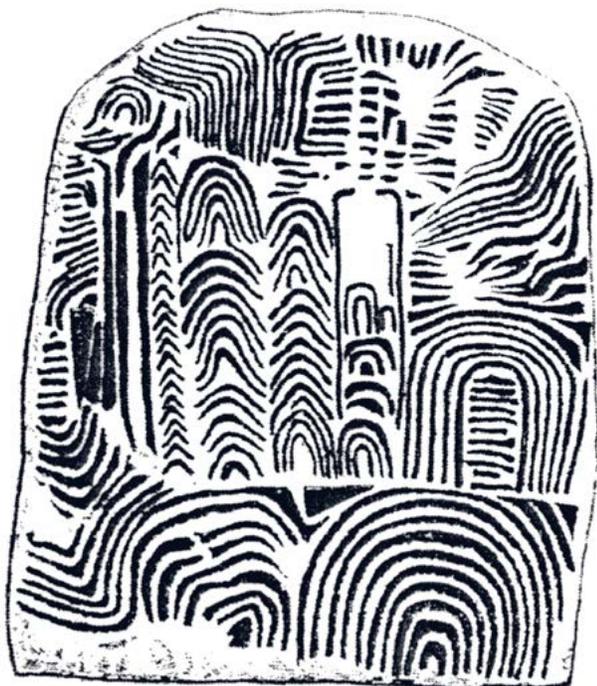
Figs. 28 and 29. Monoliths from C atel and Laniscar, Brittany. Late Neolithic. Reliefs by Giot 1995.

cia to Brittany and Britain. Relics of a monumental character are found in the middle of this area in Brittany dating as early as the beginning of the fifth millennium BC. In this location, some symbols of our study appear repeatedly.

Even the sole example, Gavrinis (first half of the fourth millennium BC, figs. 30 and 31), with its 28 carved blocks in the corridor and in the room of the tomb, is a perfect illustration. The inverted U-shaped arches/vaults are predominant, together with ax-shaped elements, meanders, winding lines, chevrons, spirals, sometimes filling each space and seemingly generating one out of the other, mostly with a deep fissure at the bottom, and in some cases with a protuberance in the upper part to suggest the idea of a pregnant belly whose development is represented in consequential stages, therefore with the sex and perhaps the navel at the two extremes.

Other instances are on the slabs of Locmariaquer (the Pierres Plates) and in various other Atlantic locations up to Ireland (Knowth, Newgrange, Sess Kilgreen), even if in a less clear and pivotal expression. In my opinion, Bonfanti's hypothesis (2022a-b), seeing in the arches/vaults the expression of energy radiation, is very sound, and I would add that they can relate to a symbolical projection into the macro-dimension of nature.

There are also instances of pairs of concentric discs, spirals, and bundles of parallel lines; the same grandiose alignments of the Breton menhirs (Menec, Kermario, Kerlescon, Kerzehro, and other places) make up drawings of long parallel oriented lines (up to 1,167 m long at Menec). To what extent these ensembles may be the expression of concepts relating to feminine symbolism in a cosmological agricultural meaning has still to be better understood, but it would seem that it is here



..... 20 cm

Figs. 30 and 31. Blocks from the Gavrinis corridor, Brittany. Atlantic Neolithic. Around the middle of fourth millennium BC. Surveys by Twohig 1981.

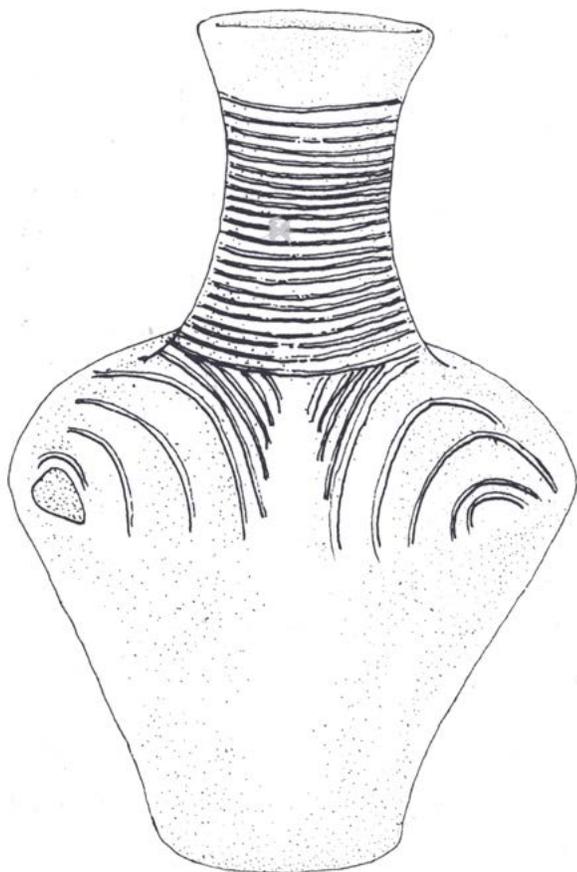


Fig. 32. Breasted jar from Rudna Glava, Serbia. Neolithic Vinča culture. Around early fifth millennium BC. Relief by Jovanovic 1978.

Fig. 33. Breast pot from Gradesnica, Bulgaria. Neolithic Vinča culture. Around early fifth millennium BC. Relief by Nikolov 1974.

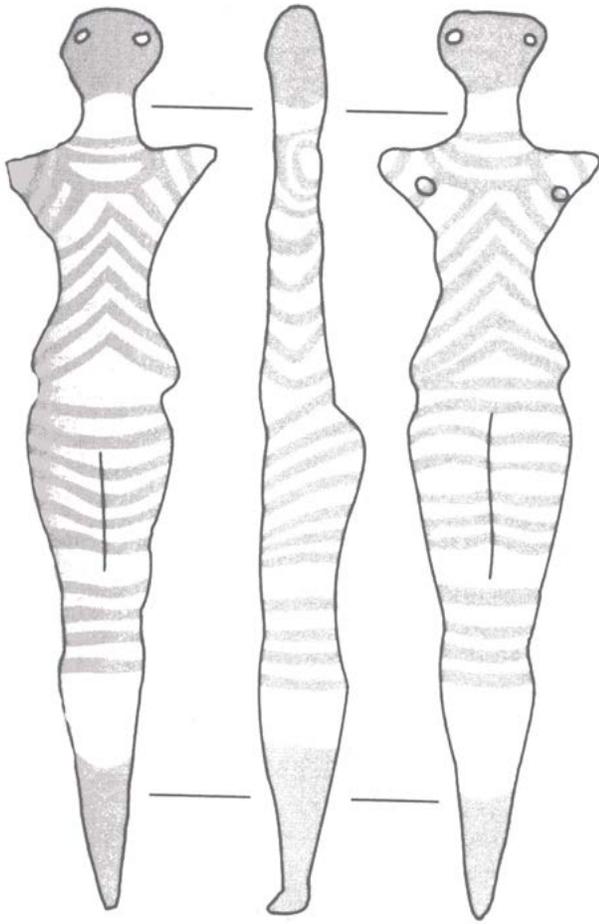


Fig. 34. Statuette from Medeia, Romania. Neolithic culture of Cucuteni B. First half of fourth millennium BC. Survey by Cucos 1973.

that the cultural wave that will greatly permeate the subsequent Chalcolithic symbolism starts, or restarts, at least in the middle western part of the continent, with the central alpine area as its "border.

### Conclusion

The symbols attributable to the feminine and also the masculine type are well characterized in a small group of signs on the Chalcolithic stelae, in addition to the breasts, the pairs of discs, the bundles of lines, and above all the arched/vaulted lines, whereas in most of the anthropomorphic stelae the latter are identified with torques and decorative elements, such as arches/vaults and lines under the breasts. In Valcamonica and Valtellina, however, such an interpretation is dubious. Even if and where these signs represent torques or gar-

ments, they would still seem to take on different and deeper meanings, representing the very essence of the feminine in the human, natural, and divine spheres, without solution or continuity. My belief is that even the symbols easily interpreted as torques or vaulted pleated dresses on many European monoliths hide the same basic meanings. The symbolic reference would be to the sexual, maternal, reproductive, and regenerative context, extending to the entire natural environment. The highly probable references to agricultural rituals, the plowing furrows in particular, would denote a special attention to cultivation and agricultural work in general. These accents also align with the hundreds of topographical representations (at least from the Late Neolithic to Chalcolithic II) and the dozens of plowings (at least from Chalcolithic I to II) that dot the outcropping surfaces and are clearly found also on stone blocks, rocks, and structural parts of ceremonial sites dating from the same period.

Most of these basic connotations are present already in Neolithic symbolism, and they are absorbed and reworked in the Chalcolithic. With less intensity and harder readings, they will also pass to the following eras, especially in pottery decoration. It suffices to mention the many cinerary vases and other funerary objects bearing bundles of arches in a vast range of cultures. The topic has not been sufficiently studied, but the continuity from the Neolithic, through the Chalcolithic, up to the entire Bronze Age, is already clear.

As for the necropolises of the Terramare Culture, for example, is it possible to surmise that the ashes of a family member were placed in a vase decorated with arches, in a meaningless way? Can we ignore the possible link between this symbol and a ritual regarding the bosom of the earth? This is just a hypothesis, but it is corroborated by the presence of a strong and deep-rooted, very long-standing and wide-ranging symbolism.

The cultural transition to the Chalcolithic, taking place in real waves during crucial moments such as the beginning of the II phase (around 2,900 BC) and the III phase (still in the Bell Beaker culture, around 2,200 BC), was complex and not unidirectional.

The central Alps art must have sustained a special and complex conception, in all probability precisely due to the fact that cultural waves from the Danube, the Balkans, and the northeast of Europe met here together

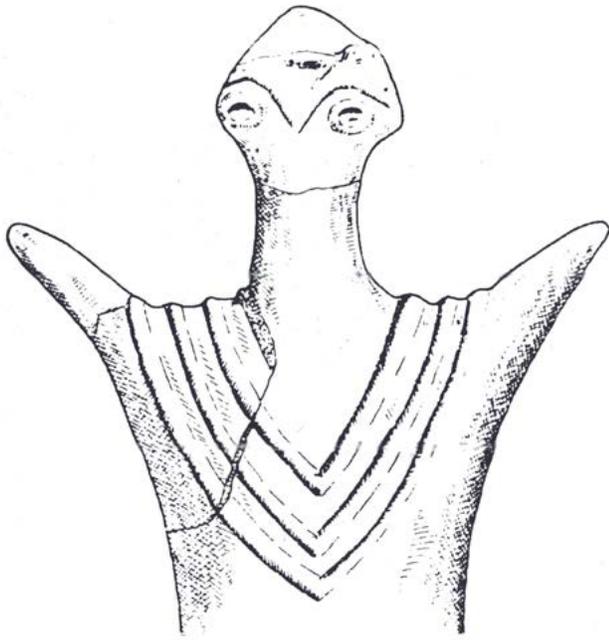


Fig. 35. Statuette from Tesetice-Kyiovice, Moravia. Lengyel Neolithic culture. Around early fifth millennium BC. Survey by Gimbutas 1990.

with Atlantic and southern European Mediterranean influences, whence they all drew their roots.

These different but connected stimuli thus activated a high conceptual diversification, integrating compatible concepts and common roots, but on the other hand expressing an original, rich and deep re-elaboration, in the wake of the local tradition already alive in this period. The evidence lies in elements such as the arches, of western origin, the spectacle-spiral pendants, the comb-shaped elements of oriental derivation, and likewise the wagons, ploughs, human and zoomorphic figurines, weapons, and masks.

The archeological context of the Central Alps and their foothills confirms this theory, and the whole iconography, better apt to express ideas and concepts than a generic artifact or structure, presents us a privileged panorama of an area that must have known a magnificent ideological effervescence in that period.

The symbols of the feminine, far from being marginal, appear in a unified order, 'uranic' referencing *in primis* to the rayed sun with the corollary of its attributed symbols, which are masculine or mixed in character, and appear absolutely dominant, central just like the sun is in the sky and in its influence on the earth, taking into account also the first historical Indo-Euro-

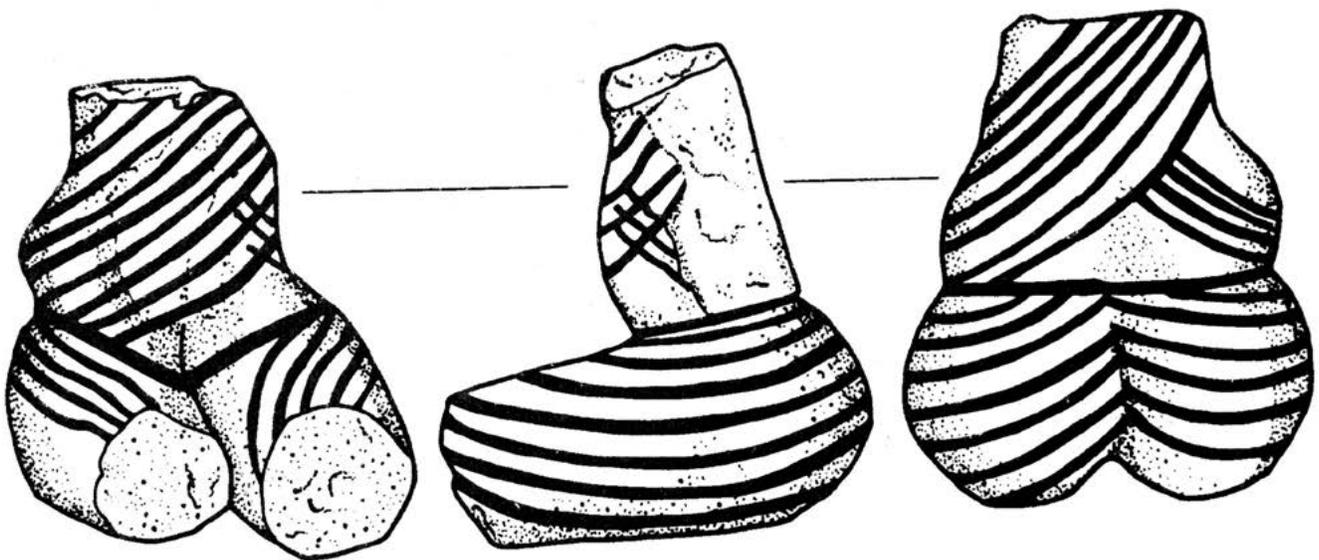


Fig. 36. Statuette from Trifesti, Romania. Neolithic culture of Cucuteni B. First half of fourth millennium BC. Survey by Gimbutas 1990.



Fig. 37. Cycladic Keros-style statuette, Greece. Early Cycladic II Aegean culture (2800-2200 BC). Historical archive photo.

pean cultures. I would logically assume its royal value as a maximum creative and ordering power, religiously perceived as a living, active reality and as a manifestation of a universal principle. The anthropomorphic haloed figures with sunbeams of Chalcolithic III bear witness to the crucial transition to the human dimension and its ideological implications. This Vitruvian-like image creates a unitary vision centered on the solar symbol, thus assuming a monotheistic tone (Anati, 2023; Sansoni., 2022).

In this context, the symbols of the feminine seem to be inserted as the sacred *sine qua non* of all being, therefore as an integral part of the one, due to their reproductive, gestative, and maternal roles. These are represented in an agricultural ritual context, as referring to an orderly, fertilized, and worked object such as a cultivated field. The same composition and the admirable precision of execution of Chalcolithic art on stelae and vertical rock surfaces are their witnesses. These images seem to allude at least, first and foremost, to the properly Demetric aspect of the feminine, which in Chalcolithic art seems to be carefully reflected in images of plowing, cultivated fields, furrows and the solar star itself. All this belongs in ancient Greek terms to the kingdom of the goddess Demetra, and certainly not to the wild kingdom of Artemis, which however could be alluded to in the many late images of wild animals.

We can ask ourselves how much of this symbolism is the root of the agricultural hierogamic funeral bond present in the Indo-European context (Sansoni, 2005. How much can we already see of Demeter (*Tellus Mater*, fig. 39, the great agricultural goddess, the mother of cereals, and goddess of domesticated spaces, the Homeric bearer of the seasons, she who welcomes seeds and the deceased (“the dead are people of Demeter”) in the cycle of life, death, and rebirth depicted in the Chalcolithic age stelae? In my opinion, quite a lot, and at least all its basic characteristics.

We can thus confirm the thesis according to which the carved stelae of the Central Alps have a fundamental sacred value, in a strictly religious sense. But moreover, besides representing ancestors or deified heroes, the central Alpine monoliths seem to express an overall cosmic vision, with their icons and symbols ordered in a rigid logic of a highly abstract degree, a symbolic syntax to be read analogically at several levels.

As for the monoliths, the interpretation which sees



Fig. 38. Vase from Szelevény-Vadas, Hungary. Linear ceramics culture. Around late sixth-early fifth millennium BC. Historical archive photo.

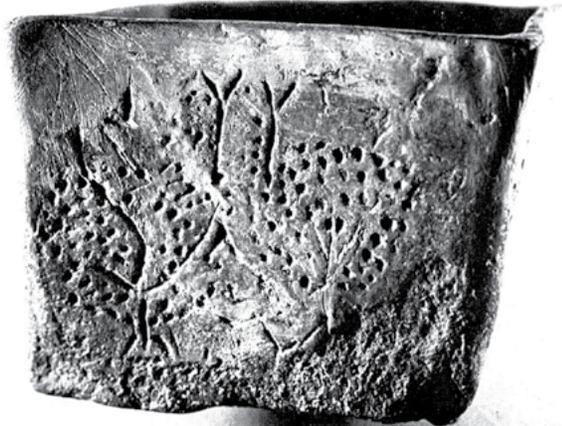


Fig. 39. Statuette probably representing Demeter from Boeotia, Greece. Seventh-sixth century BC. British Museum, London. Historical archive photo.

these monuments marking or decorating sacred sites intended for major collective religious rituals would seem to be a valid one. The data emerging from the formidable ceremonial sites, such as Anvoia, Teglio, Velturmo (Fedele, 2013; Poggiani Keller, 2004; Tecchiati, 2007), but above all Cemmo and Pat (Poggiani Keller, 2009), can confirm this thesis. Here the orderly structuring, typology, and arrangement of the findings speak of sites dedicated to ceremonies and worship, maybe sanctuaries in a pre-Christian meaning, much more therefore than just supposed ancestors or clan

totems worship. Thus, in my opinion, the monoliths are monuments aiming to express, in close connection, either the essence or the particular facets of an unitarian religious vision and so it would be misleading to attempt the reading of a single set or a single type out of its general context.

The *mens philosophica* of these our Alpine sculptors appears to have been of a very different caliber from that of their continental contemporary counterparts: their conceptualization seems to be on a universal level compared with the elementary characters of almost

all the others.

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# NOTES AND NEWS

ATELIER, RESEARCH CENTER FOR CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

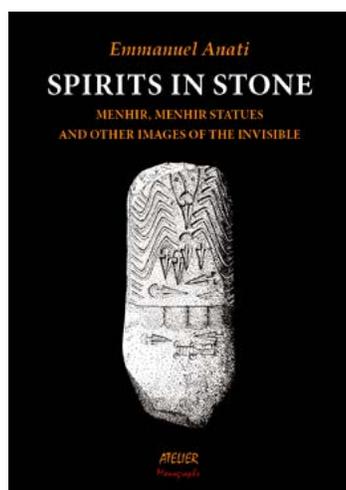
Director: Prof. Emmanuel Anati

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## NEW BOOKS, NEW TRENDS

**New releases: new books published by Atelier Research Center. 'SPIRITS IN STONE':** 5,000 years ago, in the Chalcolithic period and the early Bronze Age, the cult of ancestral spirits evolved into that of the spirit of heaven and earth. The iconography on standing stones, menhir statues and monumental compositions seem to evidence the embryo of a conceptual turning point that would dominate Europe for millennia: the concept of divinity. **'ARTE RUPESTRE DELLA VALCAMONICA' (in Italian):** A comprehensive overview of the largest European site of rock art, in Valcamonica, in the Italian Alps. Leafing through the pages of a chronicle of memories engraved on rocks under the guise of pictograms and ideograms, images are presented by the author from different viewpoints, to extract various social and conceptual themes, yielding history from prehistory. **'MYTHS AND BELIEFS UNVEILED BY ROCKS':** An opportunity to visit different corners of the world, unveiling myths and beliefs preserved by rock art. From the rocks of a sacred mountain in the Negev Desert in Israel, to the enigmatic messages of rock engravings in the Karakol mountains in Kyrgyzstan, to the rocks preserving stories of native American culture heroes in Utah, to an insider's view of the glorious Central American Huichol art, to northern Brazil, where some cave paintings have been dated to over 20.000 years ago, to the megalithic cultural heritage of Greek Thrace, in a landscape that unites mythology and history.



### Spirits in Stone

#### Menhir, Menhir Statues and Other Images of the Invisible

Anati, E.

2023, *Spirits in Stone, Menhir, Menhir Statues and Other Images of the Invisible*

Monographs XX

Capo di Ponte (Atelier), 150 pp., 74 figg. € 20

The menhirs, or standing stones, decorated or not, appear to be the expression of a conceptual movement aimed at the cult of ancestral spirits, that dominated religious thoughts for millennia. These prehistoric monuments, spread over most of Eurasia, are witnesses of the first great universal religion of which we have traces. In this context, ethnic and regional trends are revealed by the local evolutions of iconography. From their study emerges, among other things, the presence of a monotheistic cult in Valcamonica and surrounding valleys, in the heart of Europe, that of a spirit that encompasses heaven and earth, already 5000 years ago, long before the polytheism of the Greco-Roman Olympus.

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### **Arte rupestre della Valcamonica**

Anati, E.

2023, *Arte rupestre della Valcamonica*

Monografie XXI (in Italian)

Capo di Ponte (Atelier), 308 pp., 145 figg. € 30

Valcamonica, in the Italian Alps, with over 300,000 images engraved on rocks, is the major rock art site in Europe. It is the first “World Heritage Site” listed by UNESCO in Italy and the first rock art site listed in the world. Its study reveals the largest archive left behind by the ancient inhabitants of Europe. After having excavated, traced, described and analyzed it for over half a century, the author presents this synthesis bringing new light on 10,000 years of history. The present work represents a turning point in the methodology of archaeological research. Europe regains millennia of its forgotten history.

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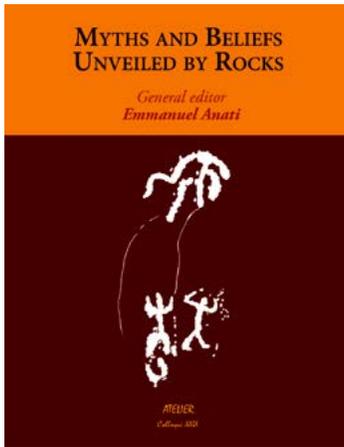
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Anati, E. (ed.)

2023, *Myths and Beliefs Unveiled by Rocks*

Colloqui XXIX

Capo di Ponte (Atelier), 208 pp., 68 figg. € 40

Understanding the primary expressions of human attempts to explain the shapes of nature opens up a window on the roots of esthetics and also on the processes leading to scientific research. The natural reactions of our senses are wrapped in the many veils of cultural conditioning, ever since the first tool was conceived by a human hand, and even before. The meaning of a rock differs between those who believe that it is the shelter of an ancestral spirit, and those who are looking for gold, petrol or precious stones. This difference of approach is still a cause of conflict. Rocks have a meaning, but not the same for everyone.

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## SHORT COMMENTS BY THE READERS

### ON ART AND PROVINCIALISM

*Bouzac, JP., France*

Dear Professor Anati,

I have just read your book "*Aux origines de l'art*" and I am very impressed. I just regret not having read it earlier!

I do appreciate your effort to consider the history of art in its largest context. My impression as an amateur is that nationalism is still alive when considering art of older times: French, Spanish or Chinese art with 20.000 years does not make any sense!

The idea of a global source for art, language and religious thinking is fascinating. Unfortunately, I found very few on this topic in other books. e.g. in *Le temps de cavernes* by Gwenn Rigal. My question is: Could you please recommend me further texts you wrote on this (could be in French, English or German, maybe in Italian) or from further authors.

Another point which I would like to deepen is the pas-

sage from rock art to writing. Is there some publication on that topic you could recommend to me?  
Kind regards

JP Bouzac

### **Editorial Reply**

Dear Mr. Bouzac,  
Thank you for your email addressed to Prof. Anati. We are pleased to recognize in your queries our own engagements in the cultural function of conceptual anthropology. Topics like the origins of writing, of art or of religion are causing vast debates which you are cordially invited to share. Please find enclosed a complimentary copy of EXPRESSION quarterly journal and the catalogue of our available books, where you will find, if not the solutions to your queries, at least the state of the art of the topics of your concern.  
Cordial regards and best wishes  
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### **BEING ON SCHEDULE (Expression 39)**

Congratulations for this remarkable regularity, my very best wishes

Luiz Oosterbeek, Portugal

### **Editorial Reply**

Thanks for your good words on our “remarkable regularity”. Keeping on schedule despite pandemics, wars, economic crises, social strikes, political disputes, inundations and earth-quakes, is a matter of miracles. But, for the record, such miracles may happen. So far, so good. We try to continue being on schedule. Regarding the future, as expressed in the last issue of Expression, it is a matter of predictions. Whether we shall succeed or not, will only be clear thereafter. Thank you for your kind remarks and cordial regards.

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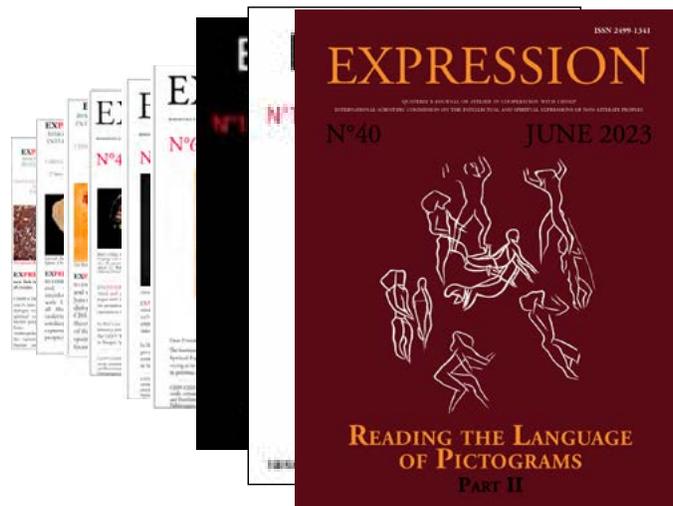
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