



SUN, WATER AND SACRED MOUNTAIN BETWEEN THE ROMANS AND THE CAMUNIANS

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SUMMARY

The culture of the Camunni was linked to the territory on which it was located among the mountains. Roman beliefs overlapped local worships without wiping out previous native cults. The sun, the water and the mountain were locally adapted and kept their sacred meanings in Roman Age. The Romano-camunians culture was a rare syncretism of Roman and Camunian characteristics. Rock art was still a form of expression in Valcamonica under the Roman rule. Valcamonica showed a conflation of Roman and Camunian customs and tastes where the indigenous traditions were integrated into the new Roman system. Rock art subjects were renewed with new topics and symbols, as for example the introduction of Latin Inscriptions. The preroman magic-ritual beliefs may be interpreted through the message on stone of the Latin Inscriptions.

RIASSUNTO:

La cultura camuna è legata alle montagne tra le quali vive e si sviluppa. Con l'arrivo dei Romani nuove credenze si sovrappongono a quelle indigene, senza una reale volontà di estirpare la vita religiosa precedente. A partire dall'età imperiale, infatti, si assiste a due fenomeni principali: l'arrivo di nuovi culti romani che vengono progressivamente naturalizzati e il mantenimento di divinità ancestrali locali. Le incisioni rupestri si rinnovano grazie all'introduzione di soggetti nuovi, come per esempio le epigrafi latine su roccia. Alcuni elementi portanti della sacralità camuna persistono anche in epoca romana e ne danno talvolta una chiave di lettura possibile. La montagna, il sole e l'acqua continuano a essere protagonisti dell'immaginario sacro locale. Le credenze magico-rituali preromane che si esprimono sulle rocce sacre camune seguono pertanto ad avere un forte valore simbolico in epoca romana, grazie ai cui testi scritti si può forse tentare di interpretarne il messaggio.

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The Romano-camunians culture was a rare syncretism of Roman and Valcamonica characteristics. The middle valley remained still relatively inaccessible as a border region in the middle of the Alps during the Roman Empire. The Roman impact arrived very slowly. Augustus conceived and implemented the projects to arrange economically and administratively the Gaul¹. Valcamonica was certainly a minor junction between Northern Italy and the Raetia. It became a buffer state to consolidate the Roman power in the middle of the Alps on the fringes of the Empire². Alpine economy was still based on pastoralism and forest exploitation³. Valcamonica history still remains unclear during the

1st century B.C. as not many records are left. Roman literature and historiography rarely mention the valley of Camunians. First archeological Roman remains date to the 1st century B.C., between the leadership of Julius Caesar and Augustus⁴. Remote valley corners show early trading contacts with the Romans as new imported artefacts were flanking the local production⁵. Evidence of conservatism appears with the persistence of interment in funerary rituals and the use of specific grave goods, as well as the fact that traditional dwellings are still made of local elements (wood and stone)⁶. Material with a religious association began to be visualized in a Roman form. Ancient local deities, although obscure, were recorded in Latinized form on inscriptions, as for example *Aburnus* and *Aburna* in Lovere⁷.

Human memory was perceived as a container of traditions whose knowledge might be expressed by transmitting native rituals and by passing down stories

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1 FERDIERE 2005, p. 88.

2 PAVESE RUBINS 2014, pp. 18, 95, 336.

3 TASSAUX 2003, p. 105.

4 ROSSI 2010, p. 19.

5 ID. 2004, p. 39; ID. 2010, p. 21.

6 IBID.

7 CIL V 4935; INSCR IT X, V 1162; URBINATI 1958, p. 251; ABELLI CONDINA 1986a, pp. 104-105 n.21; SUPPL IT N.S., 8, n. 1162 p. 185; GREGORI 1990, p. 125 n. A, 179, 005; ID. 2000, p. 289; PAVESE 2006 n. 103; ID. 2014, pp. 279-280 n. 1: *Aburno et / Aburnae / Lucret(ia) Anapaum(a) / V(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*

and myths through the centuries⁸. Rock art was still a form of expression in Valcamonica under the Roman rule. Valcamonica showed a conflation of Roman and Camunian customs and tastes where the indigenous traditions were integrated into the new Roman system. The new Roman culture started to take its own place among the Camunian rock engravings, but all steps which marked out the transformation process of Camunian society under the Romans appear to have been gradual⁹. The local identity was very strong and specific if compared to other neighbouring alpine valleys. Valcamonica was annexed to the Empire and had its own magistrates and electoral tribe (the *Tribus Quirina*), so it was considered as a separate territorial and administrative entity, other than Valtrompia, Brixia, Bergomum and Tridentum¹⁰. Archeological evidences show that the local lifestyle has not been very affected between the 1st century BC and the first part of the 1st century AD. In the light of the archeological data, the integration of Valcamonica to the rest of the Roman Empire seems to have started pretty early, according to the field excavation results of the few Roman sites which have been well explored (Cividate Camuno, Breno and Borno)¹¹.

Since the first Empire, the adoption of Roman-type representations was gradually naturalized by local gods and goddesses. Rock art subjects are renewed with new topics and symbols, as for example the introduction of Latin inscriptions. New rituals and new deities were worshipped on Roman altars, votive stones, statues, temples and shrines. One of the first sacred Roman documents is an altar in Pescarzo which was dedicated to an unknown god by the centurion Cerialis during the Early Empire¹². Pescarzo is located on the Concarena, which was a sacred mountain since ancient times. In the middle Valcamonica prehistoric rock art was indeed mostly engraved on its slopes between the Concarena and the Pizzo Badile Camuno. Still nowadays, in the collective unconscious, the local

community talks about the “The Spirit of the Mountain” (“Genio della Montagna”), when the sun goes beyond the horizon of Concarena in the evening or beyond the Pizzo Badile in the morning and the sun-rays spread in a circular ring throughout the indented mountaintops. Roman Valcamonica was also home to imported deities and worships. From the second half of the II century AD, eastern Gods and Goddesses were transplanted as a continual interest of native cults which were perceived as equivalent or complimentary. The Mother Goddess (*Mater Deum*), *Isis*, *Serapis*, *Cautopates* and the Divine Sun (*Sol Divinus*) were adapted to the local context. Many of the people who settled in the valley came for military and business opportunities. Roman Valcamonica became a relatively international cosmopolitan society of soldiers, traders and freedmen who imported and adapted their beliefs from Europe, Northern Africa and Near East into the valley¹³. That’s not indeed easy to interpret exactly the value of Isis in Valcamonica, as she could have been the Roman visualization of a local Mother Goddess¹⁴ as well as an official cult devoted to her in Cividate Camuno, the administrative center of the valley, where all her inscribed stones have been found¹⁵. The connection with a local native deity could be mirrored by her traditional attributes. Her headdress consisted in the solar disc between the horns of a cow, and sometimes she’s depicted on a solar barge¹⁶. The sun has indeed prolific evidence in the magic world of the preroman Valcamonica rock art¹⁷. Rock engravings were at the center of the preroman sacredness and were carved on the slopes of a sacred mountain, in some inaccessible or uneasy to reach spots, and close to a water course¹⁸. Some key elements of the native religion of Camunni persisted until the Roman time. The mountain, the sun and the water continue to be the key players in the local sacred ritualism.

The fusion and the combination of sun, mountain and water is present on a rock at Foppe di Nadro, the n.

8 About the importance of traditions, rituals and social relations in prehistoric societies GIDDENS 1995, pp. 4-5 in CREIGHTON 2006, p. 81

9 In the indigenous preroman camunian society the relationship with the father indicated the social identity as a continuous line of succession from ancestors and forefathers. The indigenous patronymic is indeed often quoted in the Latin inscriptions of Valcamonica as the case of priest C. Claudius the son of Sassus/Sassius in Cividate Camuno, Roman citizen of an indigenous family (CIL V 4960; ILS 5525; INSCR. IT. X, V 1199; ABELLI CONDINA 1986a, p. 58 n. 20, 1; SUPPL. IT. n.s., 8, n. 1199 p. 186; GREGORI 1990, p. 67 n. A081, 002; GREGORI 2000, pp. 39, 42, 63, 153, 256, 290, 318; PAVESE 2006 n. 29; ABELLI CONDINA 2012, p. 29 n. 24; PAVESE RUBINS 2014, pp. 279-280 n. 11: *C(aius) Claudius / Sassi f(ilius) Quir(ina) tribu) / Sacerd(os) Aug(usti) / D(e) p(ecunia) s(ua) / Res p(ublica) tribuna / Fecit et columnam / mutavit*).

10 RICHARDSON 2012, p. 21; GREGORI, FILIPPINI 2012, p. 118.

11 Romanisation involved a few villages in the low and middle Valcamonica, and in some strategic crossroads where small altars were dedicated to some Roman deities. Archaeological remains from Lovere and Borno consist mostly in graves and tombs. Pescarzo’s house discovering opened an interesting window of the local lifestyle during the 1st century BC. About Pescarzo’s house ARDOVINO 2002.

12 CIL V 4951; INSCR. IT. X, V 1195; GREGORI 1990, p. 252 n. D021; ID. 2000, p. 172; PAVESE 2006 n. 128; ID. 2014, pp. 288-289 n. 9: *Cerialis Pladae f(ilius) / cent(urio) coh(ortis) Alpinae / aram refecit l(ibens) m(erito)*

13 About cosmopolitanism and religion in the Britannia Romana DE LA BEDOYERE 2010, p. 235.

14 Isis and the Goddess Mother are associated on two Latin inscriptions from Garda Lake. In Malcesine (CIL V, 4007): *Matri Deum et Isidi / G(aius!) Menatius G(ai!) filius / Fab(ia) Severus fanum refecit et pronaum de suo fecit ex voto*. In Arco (INSCR. IT. X, V 1058): *Matri deum [magnae?] / Numisius Her[mes] / Numisiae Tyches [et] / Numisi Primi Herm[etis] f(ilius) / fanum ampliavi[t]*. In Valcamonica a Latin inscription could be interpreted in the same way: *Matri deum [et Isidi]* (CIL V 4940; INSCR. ITAL. X, V 1172; ABELLI CONDINA 1986a, p. 72 n. 1; SUPPL. IT. n.s., 8, n. 1172 p. 185; GREGORI 2000, p. 290; PAVESE 2006, n. 10; ID. 2014, p. 208).

15 FONTANA 2010, pp. 34-35. In general about official roman religion SCHEID 2005, p. 75.

16 PAVESE 2014, pp. 205-206; pp. 285-285; DE CARO 2007; FUSCO, GALBIATI 1990, p. 17; PASCAL 1964, p. 93.

17 *Roccia del Sole* (Sun stone) at *Capitello dei Due Pini* (ANATI 1982, p. 217 n. 231); Rock of Cemo n. 2 (IBID., p. 207 n. 220); Rock of Bagnolo (IBID., p. 226 n. 237) and many other rock engravings with sun symbols.

18 GATTIGLIA, ROSSI 1991, p. 95; LE ROUX 1998, pp. 347-348; ANATI 1982, p. 136 n. 149 e p. 318 n. 334.

4, the so-called “the diver” (*il tuffatore*). This panel represents a diving man who seems to plunge into a rock cavity which is filled up with water after it has rained. A round shaped effect surrounds the protagonist which recalls a solar disc. The engraving can be seen just during the morning or the evening at the oblique sun lighting. It seems to take advantage of the natural shapes of the rock. The sacred mountain Concarena stands out in the background. We don’t know the exact hydrography of this site in Ancient time, but the image utilizes the three major local sacred elements (rock, water, sun). The *Masso di Bagnolo II*¹⁹, the *Roccia del Sole al capitelto dei Due Pini* in Paspardo²⁰ and the menhir of Caven in Valtellina²¹ are other samples with these three elements which occur often in Valcamonica rock art and revive later in the Latin Inscriptions.

The Romans were generally very impressed by the high frozen tops of the mountain and perceived them as sky entities²². In Aquitania, a Latin Inscription was devoted to the Mountain Gods²³. The stone was indeed seen as an eternal material that was dedicated to the deities and to the spirit of the ancestors who were immortal. The wood was a perishable material that could fit just for the huts of living people and it was not supposed to last forever. Maybe in Valcamonica, as it has been hypothesized at Stonehenge on the base of the comparison with the modern megaliths of Madagascar, tombs and monuments erected in a sacred place should be made by stone as an eternal material creating an enduring contact with the Gods and the immortal spirits of the deceaseds; in contrast, the wood was intended for mortal human beings²⁴. The high concentration of sacred engravings in Valcamonica show that the action of rock carving is essential in preroman magic ritualism where a concrete activity might influence the reality²⁵. Valcamonica’s cliffs continued to be carved in Roman time with some new and renewed contents and styles (Latin inscriptions, deities and personal names, boundary signs, ex votos)²⁶.

Mountains have always been important according to many ancient myths and traditions, from China to na-

tive Americans, from Near East to Jews and Christianity²⁷. In the religious history of many communities, it appears often to be a mystical and physical place with many shapes and purposes. Mount Carmel, the Sinai, the Tabor are just a few samples. It’s the target of pilgrimage. It’s the cosmic mountain which bears the vault and links the sky to the earth and the cardinal points in Babylon cosmology; it’s the favorite connection’s place between man and God where man can reach the divine vision and its power while climbing to the mountain top in the Christianity; it’s the abode of the God in the Semitic religions²⁸; the paradise in the Koran is a mountain. In Ethiopia, the Book of Enoch reports that the settlement of the Eden is on a mountain too²⁹. In the Armenian mythology, heroes seat on mountains, as shown by the protohistoric steles (*višap*) near mountain springs water³⁰.

The mountain has always been sacred as well as the water. Water is a recurring pagan symbol on rocks and standing stones of Darfo, Borno, Bagnolo of-Malegno, Ossimo, Paspardo. In Northern Bohuslän in Sweden it seems that many of the engraved panels were deliberately centred on natural water runs that had smoothed the rock, and it may well have been water itself that was important to the Bronze Age people³¹. The Swedish landscape was probably lower, it was warmer, nearer the sea, perhaps the waves lapping the foot of the rock, while around the low soil was damper³². In the Bronze Age, the sea reached far inland, flooding the valleys and spreading around many of the low rocky hills and ridges of Northern Bohuslän³³. In Valcamonica rocks were maybe in strict contact with some watercourse, spring, river or others as well. A Latin inscription of Berzo inferiore was devoted to the Holy Springs (*Fontes Divini*)³⁴ at the end of the 1st century A.D. and it is unique in Cisalpine Gaul, where local tutelary deities (*genii locorum*) and nymphs (*nymphae*) are more common³⁵. It could be also a local reinterpretation of the *Fons Perennis*, a sacred spring that was created from an arrow thrown by Saturn into a stone³⁶. The first nucleus of Minerva’s

19 ANATI 1982, p. 228.

20 IBID., p. 218.

21 IBID., p. 231.

22 “*Saxa impellentia caelum*” according to Silius Italicus, IT. PUN. XI 216-218 (GIORCELLI BERSANI 2001, p. 30).

23 CIL XIII, 382: *Dei Montes*.

24 About Stonehenge and Madagascar COVINGTON 2010, p. 18.

25 ASTORI 2000, p. 27; CARDONA 1987, p. 182.

26 PAVESE RUBINS 2014, pp. 216-220.

27 NERI 2001, pp. 65-66.

28 IBID.; CLIFFORD 2010.

29 NERI 2001, p. 67.

30 TRAINA 2001, p. 215; RUSSELL 1987, p. 206.

31 COLES 1990, p. 36.

32 IBID., p. 39.

33 IBID., p. 43.

34 CIL V 4938 = ILS 3890; INSCR. ITAL. X, V 1165; PASCAL 1964, pp. 93, 96 note 7; CHEVALLIER 1983, p. 459; ABELLI CONDINA 1986a, pp. 34, 236-237 n. 28; SUPPL. IT. n.s., 8, n. 1165 p. 185; GREGORI 1990, p. 40 n. A018, 006; GREGORI 2000, pp. 72, 287, 291; PAVESE 2006, n. 94; PAVESE RUBINS 2014, pp. 200-201: *Fontibus / divinis / sacr(um) / M(arcus) Antonius / Sp(urii) F(ilius) Stephon / V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito)*.

35 PASCAL 1964, pp. 93, 95-97; CHEVALLIER 1983, p. 458. *Fons Perennis* is in Milan (CIL V 5766). Other inscriptions devoted to the *Fontes Divini*: ILS 3885; AE 1936, n.160. Other deities of water are *Neptunus* (Brescia, CIL V 4285), the *Nymphae* (Carate, Como Lake): CIL V 5224; Este: CIL V 2476; Fumane: CIL V 3915; Gardone (Val Trompia): CIL V 4918, CIL V 3184, CIL V 3106; Sarsina: CIL XI 6493; Schio (Vicetia): CIL XI 3106; Val Policella: CIL V 3915; Veleia: CIL XI 1162; Vicetia: CIL XI 3184; Villincino (Brianza): (CIL V 5684), *Fons* (Sarsina: CIL XI 6494), *Fontes* (Aquileia: CIL V 754; CIL V 8250).

36 SRENGLER 1957, p. 970; FONTAINE 1990, p. 103.

shrine in Breno which dates back to Augustus, is related to a sacred spring where the ablution was probably performed by the pilgrims with water gushed from the rock and collected in basins³⁷. Holy water has been always well used in both pagan and christian religions. The baptismal font is just a sample. In the Middle Age, the pagan religion was still worshipped in Valcamonica. In Edolo, Aripert the II, king of Lombards and nephew of Theodelinda, has to demolish a portrait of Saturn at the beginning of the VIII century³⁸. The persistence of pagan cults reaches the XVIII century in Valcamonica when people and entire villages are still prosecuted for witchcraft and sorcery³⁹. In 1624, a historic document reports an interesting pagan ritual in Vione where a procession of twelve young girls paid homage to a holy rock while begging a pagan god and sprinkling it with water during drought⁴⁰. That's a speaking witness of an ancestral deity with the association of the rock and the water in post-medieval time. The association of rock, water and sun finds similarities in the Celtic society. According to a legend, witch *Cailleach Bheur*, which seems to be an ancestral Goddess linked to the peak of Ben Crauchan (Argyll) in Scotland, should obstruct the water flow with a wide flat stone in the evening and release it at the sunrise⁴¹. She's the personification of winter, so she's linked to the solar cycle. In the middle Valcamonica, in a field between Capo di Ponte and Cemmo, every March the incoming springtime is celebrated by burning a puppet of a witch who represents the winter to exorcise. In the local dialect this feast is called "Brusa la 'ecia" (Burn

the old lady). The 30th of April is the eve of a similar celebration day in the Northern Europe (Netherland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Finland and Estonia) for the so called Walpurgis night when huge bonfires are built and burnt in the evening.

The sun occurred on prehistoric rock art as well as on Latin inscriptions of Valcamonica. In Breno an inscription was consecrated to the *Sol Divinus*⁴². It could have been connected to a local Sun deity as well as to Mythras⁴³. In the shrine devoted to Minerva in Breno a pendant-amulet depicts a figure of a half a woman and a half a bird who is rising from a solar boat⁴⁴. It has been interpreted as a Goddess of the Water, well known in the Paleovenetian region under name of *Reitia* or *Pora*, a deity of fording or transit, metaphorical or real⁴⁵.

That's specifically the Latin inscription to *Cautopates* from Sale Marasino⁴⁶ that summarizes all three elements of sun, water and rock. It's a solar deity connected to the stone as the God Mithras was born from the rock⁴⁷ and in Latin "cautes" means "rock, cliff". In the traditional iconography, Mythras is depicted between *Cautopates* and *Cautes*, two torch bearers who represent the sunset and the sunrise respectively⁴⁸. Other interpretations have seen them as the personification of the evening and the morning, the autumn and the springtime, the West and the East, the life and the death, the sun (*Cautes*) and the moon (*Cautopates*), and vice versa⁴⁹. As already mentioned, the nowadays collective unconscious of Valcamonica still looks at the "The Spirit of the Mountain" which is embodied by

37 ROSSI 2010, pp. 155-244.

38 LORENZI 1991, pp. 15, 26.

39 *IBID.*, pp. 98-99, pp. 202-209 docc. XLVIII-LII, in PUTELLI 1929, *Miscellanea di storia e d'Arte Camuna*, pp. 30-31 (8th of December); *Comunitatis Valliscamonicae Statuta*, chapp. 458, 460, 463, 469, 470, 461 (year 1498); Letter of the castellan of Breno, Carlo Emiliani, to Marin Giorgio, Venetian diplomatic of 14th of June 1518 (in M. PREVIDEPRATO, *Le streghe del Tonale*, pp. 20-25); *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, XXV, pp. 586-587 (Pisogne 1518); *Libro antico delle vicinie del Comune di Edolo*, 7th of August 1558.

40 BIANCARDI 1695, *Istoria del forte et antico Castello di Vione*: "Nel 1624, per ordine di Carlo Borromeo, cardinale di Milano, il parroco di Vione in Valcamonica distrusse sul monte Fossano quella diabolica e superstiziosa pietra, in mezzo della quale ci stava un buco tondo, a cui come Dio per impetrare la pioggia faceva ricorso nella siccità la Comunità medesima cavando a sorte nella necessità dal numero delle Zitelle, dodici vergini, che adornate di bellissime galle e provviste d'un vaso per cadauna si spedivano come processionalmente verso del monte cantando superstiziose preci, ed invocando sovente il nome del falso Nume di quella Pietra "Santa Paola mite nobis pluviam": et ivi giunte dopo averla venerata si portavano per il monte raccogliendo ne'vasi acqua di fontane non cessando di cantare le preci medesime, e ritornando alla pietra medesima dopo fatte le solite venerazioni d'intorno a quella dentro il buco della medesima con somma riverenza invocandola gettavano la raccolta acqua donde subito riempiendosi di spaventevoli nubi il Cielo tramandavano con folgori, e tuoni spaventevoli precipitosissime piogge che caggonavano rovine al territorio (LORENZI 1991, p. 101 n. 3).

41 MATTHEWS 2002, p. 5.

42 *CIL* V 4948; *INSCR. ITAL.* X, V 1185 (=X, V 33 p. 228); URBINATI 1958, p. 251 n. 4; ABELLI CONDINA 1986a, p. 27 n.8; *SUPPL. IT. n.s.*, 8, n. 1185 p.

185; GREGORI 1990, p. 42 n. A021, 005; AE 1991, n. 847; GARZETTI 1991, p. 228 n. 33; GREGORI 2000, pp. 74, 217, 223, 290, 291; PAVESE 2006, n. 109; *Id.* 2014, pp.209-210: *Soli divino / L(ucius) Apisocius / Succ[e]ssus, pro / se et pro patro / nis / MGLQ / [...].+io / [-----?] / [---]++eniis.*

43 Generally Mythras is depicted as the personification of the Sun, with or without the epithet of "Invictus"; in Brescia an inscription (*CIL* V 4283) is dedicated to *Sol Deus Invictus* (URBINATI 1958, p. 251).

44 ROSSI 2010, pp. 92-95. About solar ships and birds in Valcamonica rock art DE MARINIS 1992, pp. 162, 164.

45 ROSSI 2010, pp. 94-95, 214; FONTAINE 1990, p. 103; SPENGLER 1957, p. 970.

46 *CIL* V 4935; *INSCR. ITAL.* X, V 1162; URBINATI 1958, p. 251; ABELLI CONDINA 1986a, pp. 104-105 n. 21; *SUPPL. IT. n.s.*, 8, n. 1162 p. 185; GREGORI 1990, p. 125 n. A, 179, 005; *Id.* 2000, p. 289; PAVESE 2006, n. 103; *Id.* 2014, pp. 207, 280-281: *Cautopati / C(aius) Munatius / Quir(ina tribu) Tiro II vir / I(ure) d(icundo) et C(aius) Mun(atius) Fronto / Filius D(ono) D(ederunt).*

47 A portrait of Mythras born from the rock, "petra genetrix" (AE 1980, 48; FRIGGERI, GRANINO CECERE, GREGORI 2012, pp. 642-643 n. IX, 51).

48 FRIGGERI, GRANINO CECERE, GREGORI 2012, pp. 647 n. IX, 54, and p. 656 n. IX, 59; PASCAL 1964, p. 63; IANOVITZ 1972, pp. 12, 34, 47, 100; VERMASEREN 1981, p. 100.

49 RE 1813: *Cautes, Cautopates*. VERMASEREN 1981, p. 101. The torch flame is important in the cult of Mithras as usually it was celebrated in the darkness of underground shrines and natural caves (*castra tenebrarum*), just enlightened by a few sacred fires, even if it was the deity of the Sun (IVI, p. 98). Tertullianus (*De corona*, 15), and Julius Caesar talk about these temples of darkness (*De Bello Gallico*, 16.18.2). The use of water during the rituals devoted to Mythras have been witnessing by Iustinus, Tertullian and Porfirius, according to whom the neophytes were subjects to several ablutions at the same way as a sort of baptism to wipe out all moral stains (IUST., *Apol.* I, 66; TERT., *De bapt.* 5; PORPH., *De antro Nymph.*, VI e XVIII in AMBROGI 2005, p. 38).

the Concarena at the sunset and the Pizzo Badile at the sunrise. *Cautes* and *Cautopates* are also linked to the water as they used to drink at a sacred spring created from an arrow thrown by Saturn into a stone⁵⁰.

In Britannia, new knowledge by far may have arrived with freedman trading and members of the army, though their experience and behavioural norms will have been very different⁵¹. They re-created pattern of life on the basis of their own experience⁵². In Valcamonica the presence of *Cautopates* could be ex-

plained in the same way, as he's not much spread in Cisalpine Gaul⁵³ and he's more common in Germania Superior where it arrived through the army⁵⁴. In the Mithraeum of Martigny, *Cautes* (the personification of the rising sun) is associated to the Sun⁵⁵.

The preroman magic-ritual beliefs expressed by the Valcamonica Rock Art seem to continue to have the same strong symbolic value in the Roman time, thanks to whose Latin words inscribed on the stone we could try to read the message.

50 SPENGLER 1957, p. 970; FONTAINE 1990, p. 103.

51 CREIGHTON 2006, p. 86.

52 *IBID.*, p. 106

53 Three Latin inscriptions in Northern Italy, two in Aquileia (CIL V, 763: *Cauti / Q(uintus) Baien(us) / Procul(us) / pater // Cautop(ati) / Q(uintus) Baien(us) / Procul(us) / pater*; CIL V, 765: *Cautopati / Aug(usto) sac(rum) / Callistus / O[-]*) and one in Novara (CIL V, 5465: *Cautopati sac[r(um)] / M(arcus) Staius Nig[er] / VIvir Aug(ustalis) c(reatus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) M(ediolanensium) / leg(atu?) dend(rophorum) c(oloniae) A(ureliae?) A(ugustae?) M(ediolanii) / et C(aius) Valerius Iulia(nus?) / leones leg(ati?) v(otum) s(oluerunt) l(ibentes) m(erito)*).

54 VERMASEREN 1981, p. 102; PASCAL 1964, pp. 60-61.

55 WIBLÉ 2001, p. 52.

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Abbreviations

AE = *L'Année épigraphique*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1888-

CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum*, Berlin, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, 1863-

ILS = DESSAU H., 1892-1916, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, Berlin, Weidmann,

INSCR. IT. = *Inscriptiones Italiae*, Ist. Poligrafico dello Stato, Rome 1931-

RE = PAULY A., WISSOWA A., 1839-1980, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft (Pauly-Wissowa)*, Stuttgart, J. B. Metzler.

SUPPL. IT. = *Supplementa Italica*, n.s., Ed. Quasar, Rome 1981-



Fig. 1 - Foppe di Nadro, rock n. 4 (photo by M. Pavese Rubins)

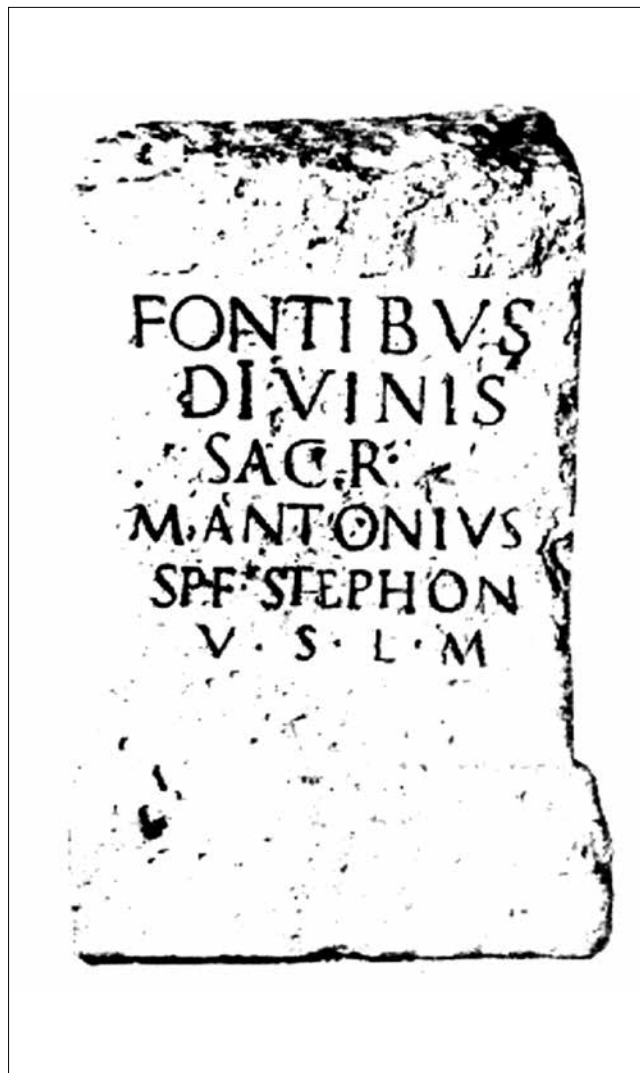


Fig. 2 - Latin Inscription of *Fontes Divini* (CIL V 4938)

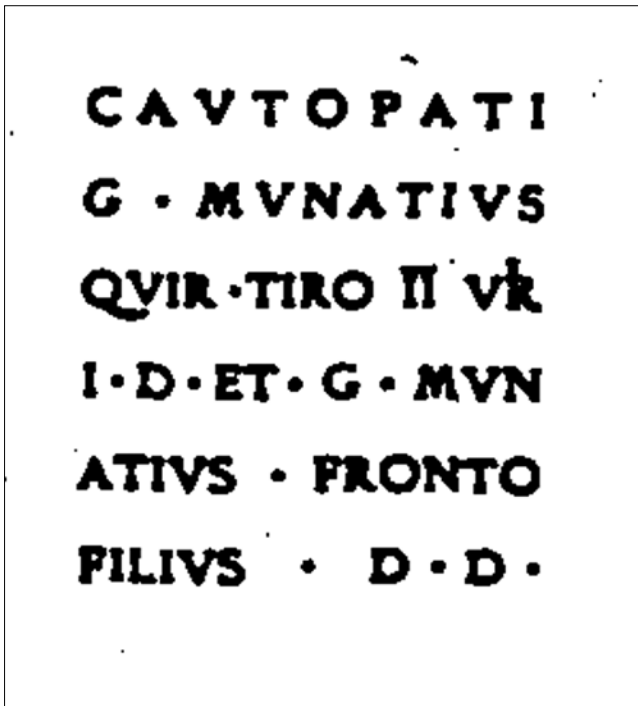


Fig. 3 - Latin Inscription of *Cautopates* (CIL V 4935)

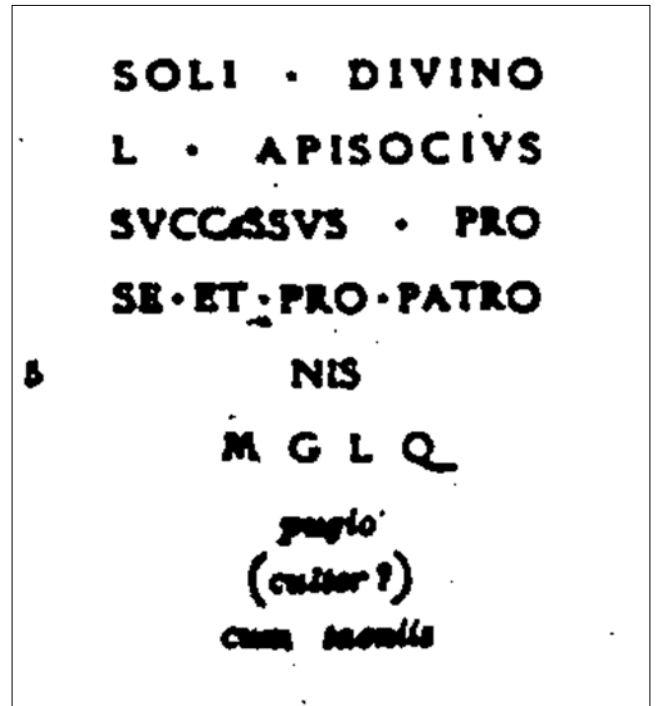


Fig. 4 - Latin Inscription of *Sol Divinus* (CIL V 4948)

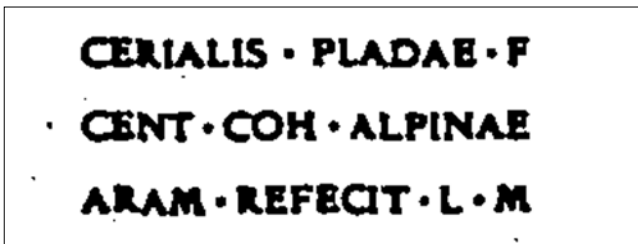


Fig. 5 - Latin Inscription of *Pescarzo* (CIL V 4951)



Fig. 6 - The Concarena (photo Pavese Rubins)

