



Camunian Rose from Guifões



The Camunian Rose and other engravings

POSSIBLE LATE PREHISTORIC CONTACTS BETWEEN THE ALPS AND THE IBERIAN PENINSULA ANALYZED THROUGH ROCK ART EXAMPLES AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE.

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RIASSUNTO

I motivi come la "Rosa camuna" con tipologia a svastica appaiono non solo sulle Alpi ma anche in Portogallo ed altri paesi. Questo simbolo ricorre diciannove volte in Valcamonica, suo probabile centro di diffusione.

Per quanto riguarda l'arte rupestre incisa del post-paleolitico si riscontra un gruppo di motivi, come reticoli, pentagrammi, scaliformi, zig-zag e altri, che compare in forme e modi analoghi sia nelle Alpi che nella penisola iberica. Recenti scavi nelle grotte dalla Spagna centrale, dove questi motivi appaiono sia sulle rocce che sulla ceramica, sembrano collocarli in un orizzonte più antico rispetto ai paralleli europei.

Tutti questi elementi permettono la costruzione di una teoria di possibili contatti tra le regioni studiate in questa carta, durante la tarda età del bronzo o anche prima. Questa teoria si basa sullo studio di esempi di arte rupestre e su prove archeologiche.

In Late Prehistory, or already in Protohistoric times, some contacts between the Alps and the Iberian Peninsula seem to have occurred and their traces can be analysed not only through rock art examples but also by archaeological evidence.

The aim of this text is to present some case studies of these possible contacts, focusing mainly in a descriptive way, since for an interpretive approach it would be necessary much more pages, which is not available now.

The author selected two case studies: a *Camunian Rose* with swastika typology, from the Hillfort of Guifões (Matosinhos, Portugal); a group of incised motives carved on schist or on limestone (inside caves) from Central Portugal and Central Spain, which also appear frequently on the Alps.

"Camunian Rose" from the Hillfort of Guifões.

The *Camunian Rose* with swastika typology is a motive which appears with nineteen examples in Valcamonica, certainly its diffusion centre. There are also other examples in Europe (Portugal, England and Sweden) and in North Africa (Mali).

The *Camunian Rose* from Guifões is associated with other engravings and was carved on a piece of granite inserted on a wall of a building interpreted as a sanctuary. The stone where the motives were depicted is different from the granite used to build the mentioned structure. So probably the motives were previously made on a rock surface which was cut later into the actual shape and inserted in the sanctuary.

In Valcamonica this type of *Camunian Rose* is usually associated with warriors, as it happens in Rocca Grande from Sellero, in Giadighe, in Dos Sulif (Rock 1), and in Rock 34 and Rock 38 from Luine.

These examples seem to reveal a protective role of this kind of swastika regarding the warriors, but that doesn't happen at Guifões where the motif appears associated with "hooks" and cup-marks.

A typological analysis shows that this swastika is very similar to the example found at Giadighe, having this motif arrived to Portugal probably through sea trade.

Curiously, on the Hillfort of Parreitas (Alcobaça), near the Portuguese west coast, there was found a bronze fibula, dated from the 8th century BC, very similar to another one discovered during the 19th century in the north of Italy and today exposed on the Museum of Copenhagen. These two artefacts must have been done by the same artist. This archaeological evidence seems to reveal contacts between the North of Italy and the West of the Iberian Peninsula during Late Bronze age.

Group of incised motives

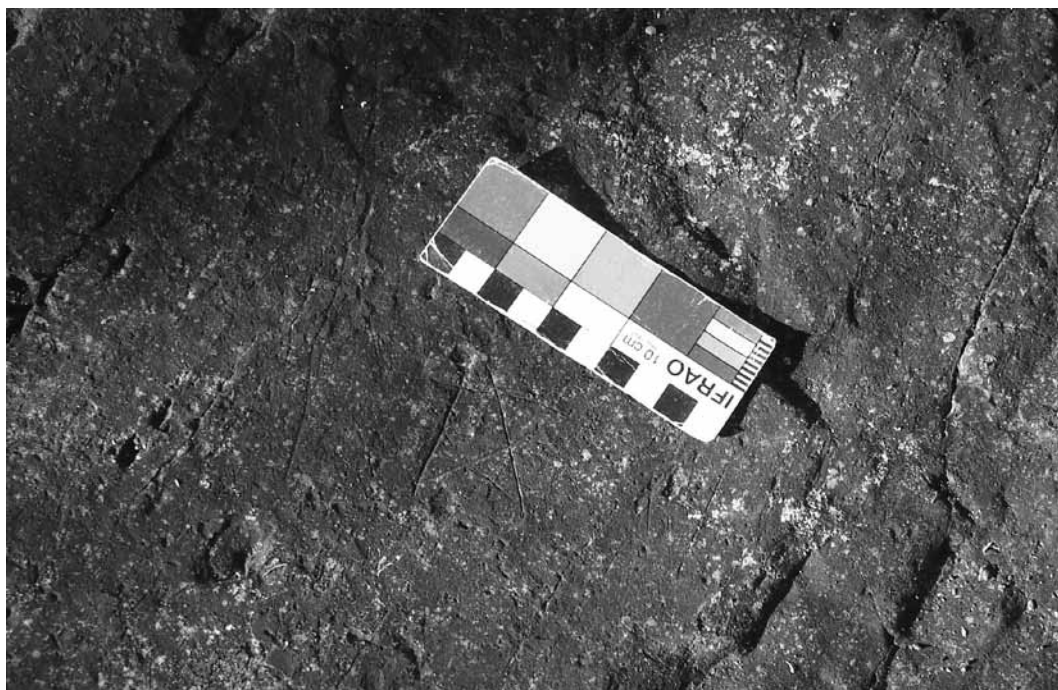
There's a group of incised motives like net patterns, pentagrams, "ladders", zigzags, tree-like motifs and others, which appear in a very similar way in Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France and Italy. This surely shows contacts between several peoples during protohistoric times. Otherwise it would be very strange that people from all these countries could have, at the same time, the idea of depicting those motives.

Some authors argue that the tree-like symbols are from historical times, but they can already be found in schist plaques from the centre of Portugal, dated from the Neolithic. This motif, together with net-patterns and zigzags also appear carved with filiform technique on clay plaques from the Copper Age site of *Vila Nova de São Pedro* (Portugal).

Some caves from Segovia, Soria, Burgos and other places from Spain revealed the same kind of symbols and the presence of archaeological context allows to date these figures in a long period that goes from Late Neolithic until Late Bronze Age. Curiously, recent excavations in the cave of *Galeria del Sílex* (Burgos) brought to day light a ceramic vessel from



Neolithic schist plaques, one of them with a tree-like symbol.



Pentagram from Rock 1 of Figueiredo (Portugal).

Late Bronze Age with the depiction of a human figure almost alike another one carved on the wall of the cave, near the place where the pottery was found.

All these examples may indicate that the origin of post-Palaeolithic incised rock art could be found in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula and passed through the Pyrenees to other regions during Late Prehistory and Protohistory.

Nevertheless, regarding some of the ideas presented here, we must keep in mind that, like Colin Renfrew wrote, "Facts modify theories, while theories are used in the determination of facts".