

**THOMAS HUET, Les gravures piquetées du mont Bego (Alpes-Maritimes). Organisation spatiale et sériation (VI<sup>e</sup>–II<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C.).** Mémoires de la Société Préhistorique Française volume 63. Société Préhistorique Française, Paris 2017. € 30.00. ISBN 2-913745-71-7. 166 pages with 132 illustrations and 19 tables.

The Mont Bego, an Alpine mountain area of a height of 2872 m, shows one of the most important concentrations of rock engravings in Western Europe. In the Alps, with its almost 40 000 marks, scattered over 14 km<sup>2</sup>, it is second only to the area of Valcamonica, the first archaeological site in Italy listed as UNESCO World Heritage. Located in the Maritime Alps, only some 30 km away from the Mediterranean Cote d'Azur-Riviera dei Fiori, the Mont Bego area belonged to Italy until the postwar modification of the French border settled in 1947. Since 1901, Arturo Issel, the “father” of Ligurian prehistory, coined the appellative term *Montagna Sacra*; however, it was the British naturalist Clarence Bicknell, based in the Riviera town Bordighera (Liguria), who made the site famous in the archaeological network publishing the most meaningful of the 12 000 figures he recorded on paper (see Ch. CHIPPINDALE, *Una vita sacra. Clarence Bicknell and the discovery of Alpine prehistoric rock art*. In: C. Malone / S. Stoddart (eds), *Papers in Italian archaeology* 4. The Cambridge Conference. Part 2. Prehistory. BAR Internat. Ser. 244 [Oxford 1985] 177–204). The archaeologist Piero Barocelli spent much time on the mountain, got the “Soprintendenza” to build up a mountain shelter to help the research, and promoted a three-dimensional recording on cardboard and by plaster casts. In 1921, by comparisons between the engravings and the archaeological artefacts (many of them still valid today), he proposed a chronological span from the Copper Age to the Iron Age (P. BAROCELLI, *Val Meraviglie e Val Fontanalba*. *Atti Soc. Piemontese Arch.* 10, 1921, 1–51). In the year 1947, the number of engravings exceeded 40 000 items, stylised cattle being by far the majority, followed by weapons (daggers) and geometric figures (*reticolati*) (P. BAROCELLI, *Le incisioni rupestri di Monte Bego nelle Alpi Marittime* [Comune di Tenda]. *Riv. Antr.* 35, 1947, 246–272).

Later on, after the switch of nationality, a team led by Henry de Lumley in 1967 started a 40 years programme of research with the goal of surveying and georeferencing all of the engraved rocks and plotting each engraving. Thus, an impressive and systematic amount of data became available, suitable for developing general and / or targeted research.

On the interpretative side, Henry DE LUMLEY resumed A. Issel's suggestion; “Le grandiose et le sacré” is the title of a huge tome published in 1995 (Aix-en-Provence). He proposed a chronology mainly compressed into the Early Bronze Age and interpreted the figures displayed on some of the rocks as associations representing ideograms, that is: messages, perhaps a kind of protowriting. The basic idea concerns a primordial divine couple: the *Dieu de l'orage* (storm), who manages rain and lightning (the daggers) against the Earth, represented by the reticulates (the fields, to be fecundated and watered). Later on, the chronology was extended to the Copper Age (H. DE LUMLEY ET AL., *Datation, attribution culturelle et signification des gravures rupestres d'armes dans les Alpes Occidentales au début de la Métallurgie* [Mont Bègo, Valcamonica, Haut-Adige, Val d'Aoste et Valais]. *Pre-actes du IX<sup>e</sup> Colloque International Les Alpes dans l'Antiquité* [Tende 2000] 93–128).

Thomas Huet's research regards the pecked figures, which are by far the most common (about 36 000 of 40 000). He dedicated his PhD to a geomatic study of the distribution of the engravings via quantitative spatial analysis. Then, in order to achieve an historical perspective, he matched the results obtained with insights from the bioarchaeology and the material culture known so far in the area. The book reviewed here is at the same time a summary and an improvement of the PhD, directed by Didier Binder and discussed in spring 2012 at the University of Nice. Here, we are not dealing with a huge tome: it is only 166 pages in total. In fact, the communication largely relies on

topographic maps of the location of the engravings and on reliefs, graphs, and photographs. The wide use of colour is certainly helpful. Th. Huet summarises the few material evidences which, in conjunction with the index of anthropisation deduced from biostratigraphic records, argue for Epipalaeolithic, Cardial, SMP, Chasséen, Beaker, Early Bronze Age 1, and Middle Bronze Age phases of human use of the mountain. He also uses the huge amount of data provided by the work of the H. de Lumley team (p. 29) for a comprehensive way of topographical mapping of the engraved rocks, including weighting the distance according to walking time. Other chapters discuss technology, associations, and overlaps of engravings in their geographical context as well as quality and orientation of the supporting rocks. A quantitative approach is devoted also to the topics represented. The matching of these data with the chronology of comparable archaeological items lead Th. Huet to propose five periods of engraving activity carried out on the rocks of M. Bego.

The last words of the book's title, "sériation (VI<sup>e</sup>–II<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C.)", make clear that Thomas Huet deconstructs the iconographic system of the M. Bego intended as unitary entity supporting the concept of a "sanctuaire de l'Âge du Bronze", as Didier Binder remarks in his "Préface". He is not alone on this path (e.g. see A. ARCA, Monte Bego e Valcamonica, confronto fra le più antiche fasi storiativie. Dal Neolitico all'Età del Bronzo Antico, parallelismi e differenze fra marvège e pitoti dei due poli dell'arte rupestre Alpina. Riv. Scien. Preist. 59, 2009, 265–306) (p. 18).

The only excavation of some extension carried out on M. Bego was performed in 1942 by Carlo Conti at the Gias del Ciari (2210 m) (p. 21). The lowest layer yielded a few shards today classifiable as Cardial pottery. This shows that people of the second part of the Provençal-Ligurian Early Neolithic reached the highest slopes of M. Bego between 5450 and 5100 cal BC (p. 23).

Th. Huet carefully checked the overlaps of the figures, that is: the stratigraphy. It turns out that the figures older than any of the others are those *à franges*, which, in fact, resemble the Cardial decorative stile. Most of the engravings are located in the range of 2100–2600 m asl; however, the maximum density is between 2400 and 2500 m, well above the upper tree-line. The average altitude of the figures *à franges* is 2180 m, definitely lower than that of any other theme. The Dunn test suggests that such altitudinal difference is significant. Is this somehow related to the altitude of the upper tree-line that was still a bit lower during the Early Neolithic?

Gias del Ciari also yielded Chasséen pottery, and the technological attributes of a flint blade found below the famous stele of *Chef de Tribu* are typically late Chasséen (4000–3600 BC). This fits perfectly with the scenario provided by the Lac des Grenouilles coring (1993 m), which shows anthropogenic markers of pastoralism (p. 25). So it might well be that the so called *Chef de Tribu* representation is a product of the Chasséen pastoral culture. In the general stratigraphy of the engravings, the *rétilés* (possibly representing huts and fenced cultivated fields) and the *plages* (pecked zones of regular shape) follow or may be parallel to the fringes and are followed by the simple *corniformes* (stylised cattle). Thomas Huet also stresses the importance of technology as chronological indicator, in this case: thin incisions usually overlap the pecked technique. Sometimes incised traits collaborate in shaping the contour of the blade of halberds (Bronze Age), so it can be argued that they are later than daggers (Neolithic / Copper Age).

To put it briefly, by combining overlaps, technology, comparisons of the iconography with well dated archaeological artefacts and with reliable chronologies already set up for archaeological and rock engraving contexts (such as Valcamonica), Th. Huet proposes setting the chronology of the pecked iconography of M. Bego into five periods (which for some reason start with zero rather than 1 as you would expect). So the earliest (and long lasting) fringed figures mark Period 0, of Cardial chronology (5500–5300 cal BC); the addition of *rétilés* mark Period 1, the arrival of the earliest Chasséen shepherds possibly around 4200 cal BC. The numerous, ubiquitous stylised

*corniformes* announce Period 2, the late Chasséen (4000–3350 cal BC). The further addition of cattle yoked to the plough and of daggers characterises Period 3 (Final Neolithic in French terminology, Copper Age in the Italian) that flows into Period 4 with the appearance of halberds and with the representation of humans who are ploughing or holding strangely long (composite?) halberds. Th. Huet figures that the chronology of Periods 3 and 4 spans from the late Chassey to the Late Beaker or perhaps the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, that is from around 3600 to perhaps 1800 cal BC (pp. 154–156).

The absence of Bronze Age type swords suggests that no engravings have been made during the Middle Bronze Age and later. In fact, it can be argued that the widespread changes which occurred in southern France and northern Italy, concerning virtually all of the aspects of life – cultural, economic, social, ideological, and land management – led to a radical change in using and living in the high mountains, particularly in the Western Alps. The practice of engraving boulders and rock outcrops of Mont Bego only resumes in historical times.

Some scholars quickly accepted such a chronological framework; for example, Andrea Arcà upgraded his 2009 model, also showing the existence of quite a good consistency with Valcamonica (A. ARCA, *L'arte rupestre nell'Età del Rame: il Monte Bego*. In: R. C. De Marinis (ed.), *L'Età del Rame. La Compagnia della Stampa Massetti Rodella editori* [Brescia 2013] 141–160).

Chronology is just one, even if the main, of the subjects discussed by Th. Huet. Concerning the ritual context of the engravings, he denies the existence of summit's and water's cults noticing that the weighted average distance of engravings is above 15 minutes from the peaks (p. 66 Fig. 43) and 5–10 minutes from the streams (p. 69 Fig. 46). There is no room here to discuss other apparently minor observations, such as the fact that the engravings are generally oriented toward the summit of the boulders and that they are independent from the geology, despite the fact that reddish and smoothed rocks are preferred. Let me just leave the other themes to the reader.

About 14 000 engravings represent cattle (70 % of all of the figurative engravings). Such a preponderance easily evokes pastoralism. However, archaeological indicators suggest that Chasséen and Early Bronze Age shepherds used mountain pastures for the whole herd of domesticated animals, dominated by sheep. So the fact that not a single sheep nor a goat nor a pig is represented on Mont Bego looks intriguing.

Another aspect I like to stress is that already early Chasséen people used flint arrowheads and that metal was known (for sure awls) by around 4000 BC; however, the symbolism focused on cows, perhaps the most precious item. Weapons got in later, perhaps together with ploughing: two main ways to produce surplus, or, if you prefer, to sustain the increasing of population. Also the representation of ploughing with four oxen (within the mid Early Bronze Age!) tells a lot about the productivity and the demography of these periods.

To conclude, Th. Huet faces the questions when and who directly. Over a long time, people of different cultures “used” the high slopes of M. Bego, leaving on the attractive rocks several marks somehow related to their symbolism. Appreciable evidence of human impact, that most probably included pastoralism, spreads over most of the time. 36 000 engravings are a lot. On the other side, 36 centuries are a long time; as an average, this means ten engravings per year. Mont Bego was remarkable to Early, Middle, Late, and Final Neolithic as well as to Beaker and Early Bronze Age people; however, it seems archaeological support is insufficient to see it like an Olympus of the Maritime Alps.

The book of 166 pages, 132 figures (many in colour), 19 tables, shows that after one century of research the Mont Bego still holds huge explanatory potential; for its historical insights and the

methodological perspective, it is highly recommendable to everybody interested in rock engravings and more generally in Neolithic-Early Bronze Age European archaeology.

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**BERNHARD HÄNSEL / KRISTINA MIHOVIĆ / BIBA TERŽAN, Monkodonja. Istraživanje protourbanog naselja brončanog doba Istre. Knjiga 1. Iskopavanje i nalazi građevina – Monkodonja. Forschungen zu einer protourbanen Siedlung der Bronzezeit Istriens. Teil 1. Die Grabung und der Baubefund.** With contributions by Claudia Gerling, Helmut Kroll, Damir Matošević, Igor Medari, Branko Muši, Douglas Price, Barbara Teßmann, Rafko Urnikar, Bernhard Weninger. Monografije i katalozi volume 25. Arheološki Muzej Istre, Pula 2015. Kn 350.00. ISBN 978-953-6153-92-3 (Hardcover). 589 pages with 336 illustrations and 7 foldouts.

**ANJA HELLMUTH KRAMBERGER, Monkodonja. Istraživanje protourbanog naselja brončanog doba Istre. Knjiga 2. Keramika s brončanodobne gradine Monkodonja – Monkodonja. Forschungen zu einer protourbanen Siedlung der Bronzezeit Istriens. Teil 2. Die Keramik aus der bronzezeitlichen Gradina Monkodonja.** Volume 2,1 Text. Monografije i katalozi volume 28,1. Arheološki Muzej Istre, Pula 2017. Kn 200.00. ISBN 978-953-8082-03-0 (Hardcover). 438 pages with 283 illustrations. Volume 2,2 Catalogue. Monografije i katalozi volume 28,2. Arheološki Muzej Istre, Pula 2017. Kn 150.00. ISBN 978-953-8082-04-7 (Hardcover). 247 pages with 153 tables.

Two voluminous publications present results of the research on the fortified Bronze Age site of Monkodonja, situated near Rovinj in the region of Istria, Croatia. The work on the site was carried out in the years 1997–2008 by joint efforts of the Archaeological Museum of Istria in Pula, the *Freie Universität Berlin*, Ljubljana University, and Rovinj Heritage Museum. The overall research, conservation, and reconstruction work on the site has earned the *Europa Nostra* award by the European Council for the special results in the preservation and protection of cultural heritage monuments in 2002. As the result of the research, Monkodonja presently stands out as the best-studied Bronze Age site on the eastern Adriatic coast.

The first publication introduces the excavation and presents the architecture of the settlement. The prologue (pp. 11–24) and introductory chapters (pp. 25–50) lead us into the volume. The authors present the chronology of excavation campaigns on Monkodonja. The elaboration of key research goals and decisions helps a lot with the understanding of this comprehensive and very informative volume. A detailed insight with the critical overview of publications on the history of research of Istrian hillforts is provided here as well.

The chapter titled “Fortified site of Monkodonja” (pp. 51–108) opens with the presentation of the natural surroundings and the reconstruction of the geomorphology of the site. Further on, excavation methodology and strategies are described. As we read, most of the trenches have been positioned to define the complex structures around two entrances, the main one in the west and a minor one in the north. It is clearly pointed out that the excavation has been performed by arbitrary horizontal layers (*Planum*), which have been defined mostly by their relation to the remains of architecture. Construction of drystone walls and habitation structures, interpretation of post-depositional processes, and the condition of the architectural remains at the time of excavation