This article considers the "metopal" wares of Northern Italy in an attempt to understand the chronological and cultural significance of this Chalcolithic material. As far as we know, thirteen sites have produced ceramics decorated in this style (fig. 1). They are distributed in various environmental conditions and the pots have been uncovered associated with different cultural contexts.

Restricted mouthed vessels with metopal incised decorations are known from the large cemetery site of Remedello Sotto (COLINI, 1898-1902; CORNAGGIA CASTIGLIONI, 1971), in the Central Po Valley as well as from the mortuary houses recently brought to light by BARFIELD (1983,1986) at the Riparo Valtenesi along the south western coast of Lake Garda.

Regarding to Remedello, two complete pots were found in tombs 46 and BS1, while other fragmented vases decorated with hatched panels come from tombs 74 and 71. Remedello is the largest Chalcolithic cemetery today known in Northern Italy. At the end of the last century approximately 124 burials were excavated on the left terrace of the Chiese river. Most of the tombs were in two separate groups. Only a very few isolated skeletons were found.

The cemetery of Riparo Valtenesi presented extremely different burials from Remedello. The excavations which were carried out between 1976 and 1983, revealed the exisitance of five mortuary houses with wooden walls made of oak piles. They were rectangular in shape, with pavements made of water-worn flat lake pebbles. Most of the human bones were located in the northern part of the chamber and none were in clear articulation. All the bones were mostly burnt and almost all...
were crushed and broken extensively. Fine ware pottery is comprised of restricted mouth pots of Remedello type, with vertically perforated lugs, incised hatched motifs on the neck and the body and carinated bowls ornamented in the same way (Barefield, 1986).

At the end of the last century, the excavation of Tana della Musina, a burial cave which opens on the northern slopes of the Emilian Apennines, also yielded closed mouthed and carinated vessels, only one of which was decorated with metopal patterns (Chierici, 1872; Barefield, 1975).

The recently excavated cemetery of Spilamberto, in the Emilian Po Valley, produced evidence of one sherd only decorated with incised metopal motifs, while the whole assemblage strongly resembles Central Italian influences from the Rinaldone sphere (Bagolini, 1981).

Another site that yielded metopal decorated sherds is Selva di Stanghella in the Veneto. Here both a settlement and a cemetery were completely destroyed before rescue excavations could begin. It is not clear whether the pots we are dealing with come from the settlement or from the burials (Corrain et al., 1968).

The Copper Age village of Colombare di Negrar in the Lessini Hills was excavated by Zorzi (1953) in the Fifties. A rectangular house made of square local stones with a possible small entrance at one of the shortest edges, gave carinated bowls decorated in the metopal style as well as a very rich assemblage of other typical Chalcolithic material (fig. 2, n. 3).

Other miscellaneous sherds are known from the uppermost layers of the Arne Candida Cave in Liguria (Bernabò Brea, 1956) (fig. 2, nn. 1, 2), from Grotta Perin in the Berici Hills (Leonardi, Broglio, 1962-63), from the Gaban sequence and the Bersaglio di Mori rock-shelter in Trentino (Avanzini et al., 1985), from Volleins...
Fig. 2 - «Metopal» ornamented wares from the Caverna delle Arene Candide (SV) (1, 2) and Le Colombré di Negrar (VR) (3).

in the Val d’Aosta (Mezzena, 1982), from Briona (Gambari, 1986) and Chianocco in Piedmont (Bertone, 1986), a site in the Susa Valley with typical Balm'Chante material (Nisbet, Biagi, 1987).
CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned above, metopal wares have been found in different geographic locations: caves of the Ligurian coast, burial caves in Emilia, large cemeteries in the Po Valley, mortuary houses in perilacustrine rock-shelters, open air settlements and stratigraphical sequences.

In regards to the cultural contexts, it is clear that this pottery is an intrusive element common to various facies of the same chronological horizon. From available data, we calculate that the facies of the burial caves found in Liguria, in the Emilian Apennines and the Alps are dated from the periods between the Copper Age and the very Early Bronze Age (BARFIELD, 1981).

The Po Plain cemeteries of Remedello, Volongo (BAROCELLI, 1971), Fontanella (ACANFORA, 1956), Cumaro (BAGOLINI et al., 1982) and Selva di Stanghella and Spilamberto seem to have been in use for a shorter period probably around 2400-2200 bc as confirmed by a C 14 date from Spilamberto which gave the result of 2245 ± 95 bc (E-11816) (BAGOLINI, Von ELES, 1981: 133).

All the above mentioned sites probably flourished slightly earlier than the spread of the Bell Beaker Culture. On the contrary it is not quite clear whether the “White Ware” pottery is contemporary or earlier than the typical Remedello ceramics (BARFIELD et al., 1975-76). In fact these two different traditions are mainly known from sites scattered in the same region and no C14 date is actually available for the “White Wares” horizon.

Reasonable similarities can be observed between the Italian metopal style and the southern French Fontbouisse one (GASCO, 1976). Also the radiocarbon dates might suggest that the two traditions are more or less contemporary to each other (MILLS, 1985; GUTHERZ, 1975: 106).

BIBLIOGRAFIA


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