

The Myth of the Cynos (Swan) and Ethnic Carvings of the archaic Apuo-Liguri population near Pontremoli -Upper Lunigiana (Massa Carrara,Italy)

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Abstract - Together, with the teachings of Anati and other famous pre-historic art and myth scholars, the writer has flanked her personal direct experience of the particular high reliefs present on the cave painting sites present in Upper Lunigiana of which nobody knew about their existence before the discovery made by the Archeoclub Italy ALate: ApuoLigure of the Tuscan-Emilian Appennines of which she is President. In her paper she presents prehistoric high reliefs of the archaic population that had in Apua its capital, now, no longer legendary as the discovery of the high reliefs of the Ligustian Boat demonstrates held up by the mythical figure of the Swan/Cynos. Cut out on mountain rock, but regarding sea-voyages, it is the expression of a population that has two souls, a mountain one and a sea one. The Apuo Liguri population, also connected to the figure of the moon cut out five times on the "Rupe delle Lune" (Rock of the Moons). The high reliefs in the six sites of the "Parco Lunigianese delle Incisioni Rupestri" in the "Lunigianese high relief Park" which one hopes will soon be set up, deal with many concepts connected to the social organization, to the religion, to the sacredness of human manifestations, in which also sexuality finds its place.

Key words: high relief, stele statues, Lunigiana, Archeology, Apuo Liguri

-Why remember the myths present in pre-historic times.

Why remember myths from a prehistoric point of view and in tribal art? To this question I could contradict: why remember Gilgamesh, why read Homer, Hesiod, and so on? The only difference is in the expressive form: on one hand there are the high-reliefs (or bas-reliefs) of a population that couldn't write, whose deep meanings are at the roots of humanity, in visual art which is a "first hand historical document" (E.Anati. *Origini dell'arte e della concettualità*, 1988, pag.38); on the other hand there are many famous works of art, whose complex aspects deal not only with one single particular population and its society, but human knowledge itself. Writing before the advent of writing, this is how E.Anati defines high-reliefs and cave paintings: a different way of expressing oneself that, directly from the stones, sends messages that are full of meanings to today's man, messages not only regarding the way of life of the archaic Apuo Ligure population, but to its spiritual vision, that, also through myth, is present and important for us living in the 21st century.

-The Cynos (Swan), the Moon, and the "Apuo-Liguri"

Therefore I intend to go into the subject more deeply as it regards a myth, and a figure: the Swan and the Moon, both of them ethnic elements present in the culture and in the conceptuality of the ancient population which lived in Upper Lunigiana, near Pontremoli (MS Italy). Michel de Montaigne who travelled through Pontremoli, during his journey in Italy, in the 16th century, was also involved in the debate regarding the legendary Apua and taken to see the mythical site of the Apuo Ligure population Capital, on the hill of San Genesio, south of Pontremoli, today called Urceola. Famous scholars from the 15th to the 20th century believed in the real existence of Apua, they believed in the tradition regarding the Apuo Liguri and their settlement on the mountains near Pontremoli. In the 20th century Manfredo Giuliani, one of the

most famous expert historians and ethnologists was certain of this theory, he based himself above all on the writings of 15th and 16th century notaries and other scholars, but also on certain ethnological peculiarities, like the archaic cuculminal pronunciation of certain consonants, an archaic characteristic typically local, and on the historical hostility, heritage of the Pontremolese people, still present in the 20th century against Luni, ancient Roman colony of the 2nd century B.C., established on the coast to control the last Apuo Liguri rebels, who had remained after the historical deportation (40000 alone were deported in 180 B.C.) to Sannio, Campania, South Italy. Significant his words "just a few flowers and often prickly thistles were taken from the mountains of Pontremoli to the Roman ruins of Luni" (M. Giuliani, 1933). He was utterly convinced of the real existence of Apua and of the archaic Apuo Ligure population settlement on the mountains near Pontremoli, but there was no proof of such settlement: almost only a strong feeling of hate that through the milleniums is still felt by the Lunigianesi against Roman Luni.

-Tradition and research from the 15th century to the 20th century.

In the first half of the 20th century the historian Ubaldo Formentini discovers the ancient road that connects Pontremoli to the marina anziante, that is the ancient port on the Ligurian coast near present-day Deiva Marina, regarding which Scilace or Pseudo Scilace had written about in the 4th century B.C. Formentini's work shows two important aspects: the settlement of the archaic Apuo Ligure population near modern day Pontremoli and their knowledge of navigation, but it wasn't enough, due to the reason that the tradition sent down to us by the 15th century notaries, like the same Formentini's contribution, were considered consistent indications, but without the certainty of any proof. In fact the archaic Apuo Ligure population could have passed along the ancient road, but this didn't prove their settlement on the mountains of Pontremoli.

-The missing proof in the discovery of the Archeoclub of Italy, *ALATE* seat.

The recent discovery of *ALATE*, Archeoclub of Italy of an extraordinary high-relief of a sun boat cut out on a rock, re-opens the centuries old debate, and in my opinion, it also concludes it with the important meaning that sallies forth from other nature ethnic high or bas-reliefs, but above all from the high-relief that hints at the famous ethnic myth of the Cynus, the Ligurian king turned into a white swan, this is the proof that was missing (**Fig.1**). I have called the high relief *Ligustian Boat*. Its aspect and its function are the same as those of all ancient sun boats, Etruscan, Roman, Sardinian and from the pre-indoeuropean Mediterranean area of the 4th Millenium B.C. Like the apparent movement of the Sun re-birth after sunset, the sun boat transported the soul of the dead and, in common belief, it took the soul to be born again in the after life. The *Ligustian Boat* doesn't only have a cultural meaning, but also an ethnical one: it belongs to the Apuo Ligure population and it shows their double identity of a sea and mountain population both at the same time, how only the Apuo Liguri were in this part of the Appennines, where their descendents were slaughtered or deported by the Romans in the 2nd century B.C., after having confirmed their disastrous defeat that outraged the consul Q. Marcio (186 B.C, Livius,XXXIX,20,8). *Prius sequendi Ligures finem quam fugae Romani fecerunt*, that's: the Liguri stopped following before the Romans stopped running away. *Non tamen obliterare famam rei malae gestae potuit; nam saltus unde eum Ligures fugaverant Marcus est appellatus* (Livius, XXXIX,20,10), that's: but any way he couldn't cancel the memory of the defeat, because the mountain pass from which the Liguri had sent him away from was called Salto Marcio. The Ligustian boat shows a definite knowledge of the various parts of the vessel with a nice finishing touch: the broadsides, the cheniscus, the protome, the hull and the various proportions, all things which are difficult for a mountain population to know about. But on the other hand the high-relief, cut out on sandstone in one of the most inhospitable and wild places in the mountains, also shows the other aspect which is the opposite, but at the same time complementary: the marine soul of the same Apuo Ligure mountain population.

-The Ligustian boat and its characteristics

Near the *Ligustian Boat* there are small burial caves and also female sexual high-reliefs, two aspects that according to Ambrosi do not regard the historical, but the archaic Apuo Ligure population that buried its

dead; it didn't burn them, as the historical population did. Which other population, if not the archaic Apuo Liguri sextons ancestors of those who practiced burning? The fact that the high-relief belonged to the archaic population is also revealed by other aspects which are :

- 1- the sign that covers the high-relief twice as a sort of frame, and similar in shape as the one of another ethnic high relief, in a nearby site, called *Scudo Oblungo* (**Fig.2**), typically Apuo Ligure, as Polibio writes (Storie,XXIX,14,4). Inside the double frame, the high-relief of the boat has a central position, like a carving cut out on the basis of a planned project.
- 2- Its perfect achievement on the rock, that differently to bronze does not allow second thoughts after the first touch, reveals a project to start off from and its commission to a very good artist, capable of cutting out not any old sun boat, but the ethnic sun boat with its representation of a Cynus, the mythical Ligure king infact turned into a swan.

Infact, even if the animal head has been lowered due to friction (by stones, wind, water and so on), on the small protome (2X5 cms) across millenia, notwithstanding it is reasonable to recognize the Swan 's head, above all because of the long propellor neck that pushed forward the small boat, cut out on slanting rock and already moving toward the edge of the cliff, like the soul towards the end of life. Which animal can accompany a Ligure soul, better than the ethnic Cynus? The rhetorica question also finds its confirmation by looking at other ethnic high reliefs in the six nearby sites, all of them discovered by Archeoclub ALATE, precisely the *Oblong Shield*, the *Archaic Cameo*, the *Rock of the Moons*, the *Stele Bas-relief*. Altogether these carvings take us back to the Apuo Liguri population and to their settlement in archaic times in the mountains near Pontremoli. As notaries and famous scholars have always upheld from the 15th to the 20th century.

-Emmanuel Anati's lesson, a guide to understand rock art.

It also happens in this case, what Anati says regarding rock art: *"like writing, it is an unending source of information for historical reconstruction"* and furthermore *"for the fact that for its own nature it has remained in situ and we can find it there where it was created, it constitutes an immense archive more than any other reliable and comparable"* and what is more: *"each high relief [...] is a first hand historical document"* (E.Anati 1988,pag.32,35,38)

-Rock Art, an archeological find on site, improves the historical reconstruction

On the basis of the above explained reasons, I think it is necessary to improve the historical reconstruction, acknowledging the fact of a settlement of the archaic Apuo Ligure population on the mountains near Pontremoli, where its high-reliefs can still be found, all of them facing west, towards the mythical Apua, their capital nowadays no longer legendary. Its ethnic membership avails itself of the fact that it was found in the place where it was born, in its original context. Almost all the stele statues ascribed to the same Apuo Ligure population, also the creator of the *Stele Bas-relief* (**Fig.n 3**), have been found out of context, differently to the *Ligustian Boat* which was found in its exact context, on its native rock, certain sign of its belonging to Ligure population and to its mountain also soul.

-Particular aspect of the Ligustian boat

Another important particularity refers to the peculiar conceptuality of the high relief. Comparing it to other sun boats, one can notice the particular relation of existing sense between the protome and the cultual boat in all the other sun boats: Etruscan (in Camporeale,2015), Roman (in Winckelmann 1831), Sardinian (in Lilliu 1966,pag.514; Lilliu 2000 pag.483; Iaia,2004; Dolfini 2004; Bartoloni, 1987), from the Valcamonica (Fossati 1991,pag.208), from the cycladic population (in Kerényi,2012, fig 17 and in Gimbutas, 2014,pag 102), the protome is always functional to the boat, instead If I am not mistaken, on the contrary in our *Ligustian Boat*, the boat is functional to the protome, as can be seen

from Fig.1. Infact the whole boat goes up towards the long neck and towards that which in origin must have been the head of the ethnic Cycnus, typical Ligure archetype, particular and identifiable, also present in the Liguri small bronzes dating back to the 4th century B.C. now in the Louvre Museum, and also in Virgil's poetry: *Ligurum ductor fortissime bello...Cupavo/cuius olorinae surgunt de vertice pinnae* " in Aeneidos X,185 following). The archetype represents the reference image (Kerényi,Prolegomeni,1972) on which *Weltbild* is based, "*the reality of the world*" the idea of the genesis and of the origins. In our case the shape of the archetype is the Ligure king Cicno, transformed into cigno (italian for swan) an animal which is associated in the high relief to re-birth of the soul, therefore with a double value: ethnic and spiritual. So, in my opinion, the sense of the ascending of the sun boat towards its protome, that is also its archetype. The other ethnic high reliefs discovered by the Archeoclub of which I preside over, all regarding the same population, are: the *Oblong Shield* (Figure 2) that stands above the *Archaic Cammeo* (**Figure 2**) with the typical Ligure dolichocephalous skull (as from the research carried out by Sittoni, look at Bibliography), the *Bas relief of the Stele* (**fig.3**) and the *Rock of the Moons* (**Figure 4**). On this last rock, the Moon, ancient mother, as M.Giuliani defines her, turns exactly towards west and towards Pontremoli "*ad confluentum*" that is at the confluence of the Verde and Gordana streams in the Magra river, under the mythical Apua of the San Genesio hill, as understood by the Pontremoli notaries of the 15th-16th centuries and so called by the eminent Giuliani all his life.

-A Livian quote and a toponymy interpretation.

At this point it seems natural to remember the words of Livio (XLI,19,1): *Cis Appenninum Garuli et Lapicini et Hergates, trans Appenninum Friniates fuerant, intra Audenam amnem*" "On this side of the Appennines the Garuli, the Lapicini and the Ergati had their settlement on the other side, the Friniati within the waterway of the river Audena". Audena recalls Antena, the ancient name of the river Magra that even today gives its name to the small village of Cavezzana d'Antena and to the whole valley d'Antena itself, were the river Magra rises, a valley that connects the populations that live on both sides of the Appennines, through the Cirone Pass. As far as I know, nobody up to now, before this paper, has ever put together the connection Audena\Antena\the river Magra\the Cirone pass between the Pontremoli area and the Corniglio area. So I expect that whoever wants to use my survey, should at least mention the present paper, which is where I have talked about it for the first time.

-The Moon population

Last of all on the *Rock of the Moons*, real and proper rock temple, are cut out five images of the moon and of its various phases, from a full moon to a black moon from a humped increscent moon to a humped waning moon and to a half-moon to signify its deification and the religious adoration of the Apuo Ligure population. The high relief that can best be seen (the first on the left in **fig.4**), contains on its inside the image of the bear, maybe, to represent the Mother Goddess (Gimbutas) or in connection with the above Mount Orsaro, or on the basis of Anati's observation (Anati, 1988, p. 46), in connection to the prehistoric cult for aggressive animals, such as the bear or the wolf. The image of the Moon, which characterized an entire population, is still today present on the standards of many historical Lunigiana towns: Bagnone, Villafranca, Podenzana, Sarzana, Bolano, Pignone, Fivizzano and Casola in Lunigiana (where the moon is paired up with the bear). In all the six sites discovered by the Archeoclub ALATE, the image of the Moon is always recurrent, but only in one site, the one that has been dealt with up to now, is it definable as a *Temple of the Moons* with its naturalistic, conceptual and religious meanings, but also with the proclamation of the archaic population handed down to the following generations, the historical ones that Livio writes about. Their manifesto is: we are the Moon population, in a

land whose name even today is Lunigiana, land of the Moon, the "ancient mother"

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