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**STONE SCULPTURES AND ENGRAVED STELAE IN THE  
PROTOHISTORIC ITALIAN SOUTH -EAST**

**RODOLFO STRICCOLI**  
(Bari University)

During last years many authors thought stone sculptures were not so numerous and used along. Our current knowledges allow to assert that their production in the territory is probably joined with the funeral ritual of necropolis. Now, the presence of stone sculptures is more remarkable than in the past and includes a laps of time from X/IX century until the end of VI century B.C., even if, recently, more ancient datings until III millennium B.C., have been suggested (TUNZI SISTO 1989).

In the territory of Castelluccio dei Sauri, in an area of about 10 km squares, on eastern slopes of "Subappennino Daunio", prof. Michele Leone discovered the first stelae in 1954 and the scholar O. ACANFORA published them in 1960. In last thirty years other twenty five discoveries from surface harvest have come on the top of precedents. Even if these archeological evidences were fragmentary they offered an enough exhaustive frame of these monumental evidences that you can find in Civic Museum of Bovino, and consist of a bust without limbs and head. This bust represents two antropomorphic entities : a male armed one (sheated dagger with triangular blade connected to a ribbon), a female one represented by a necklace or a couple of breasts limited by engraved and parallel lines which cross as a X around them (fig.1). Sometimes breasts are not represented and crossing motif appears. A little cupel is reproduced on some stelae in order to represent the navel that is expressed with a plastic sense of a rare realism. Cuts of little nicks or vertical segments marked by horizontal and parallel lines are drawn on the upper border or on the belt, probably to mean hair or the head-dress or sexual references. Male exemplars are recognizable from stylized dagger. A band or a bow or many segments hanging down from the top of the dagger. In the sities, O. Acanfora dated the first discoveries to the progressive period of the first Iron Age. Twenty years after M.L. Nava dated them between the end of the

beginning of the first Iron Age, since she considered the previous dating too much recent. Her dating is based on some comparisons with the sculptures found in Monte Saraceno.

Among the sculptural fragments found in Castelluccio dei Sauri there is a discoid one which was catalogued as the upper part of a signal mushroom shaped which is well documented in the territory of Siponto and Monte Saraceno. In Monte Saraceno many antropomorphic stone sculptures were recovered, these sculptures probably belong to the necropolis of the same period placed on the outside of the settlement. Sculptures are antropomorphic heads scarcely sketched, their front surface is flat and on it essential anatomical elements are withdrawn by relief or incision. Anatomical elements represent fundamental features of the individual, as eyes, nose, and mouth. Female patterns are characterized by a long back tress which is documented in the late engraved images of the following "daunie" stelae. These heads (fig. 2) were placed on a base bust constituted by a short parallelepiped pillar, that is unadorned except for the back, where there's the tress. Two entire exemplaries have this image : one iconic and the other uniconic; while two similar heads were found in the territory of Troia, they had a big tress on the back too. This ornament going from the head to the bust allowed the reconstruction of a stele found at Arpi and considered the "trait-d'union" between the stele of first Iron Age in Monte Saraceno, and the archaic ones found in "sipontina" area, known as "Stelae Daunie".

Indeed the aforesaid stela (fig. 3) seems to be unique and is formed by a large and fairly thin slab that in the upper surface shows the dead's folded arms which have been made by relief technique. The stele shows a glasses shaped fibula on the breast, on the top of the back surface there is a tress, and in the lower part a band of engraved motifs, difficult to understand. The slab can be dated to VIII century B.C. and represents the nearest pattern to "sipontine" stelae of VII century. It has the shape, folded arms, fibula, and engraved decorative motifs in common with "sipontine" stelae. Besides the female heads, male heads with globular shape were also found. They showed a flat fore face marked by the most meaningful elements of the face (mouth, nose, and eyes) as the ones found in Monte Saraceno. These subjects found at Troia as at Arpi are well made and probably belong to the production of the first Iron Age. The production of

this art continues for all the archaic age and flows into the rich blooming of beautiful and excellent “daunie” stelae, as the above mentioned Arpi exemplar of VIII century B.C. attests. This exemplar preannounces next archaic production with its typical features.

These stelae consist of a large, thin and rectangle shaped slab, made of local limestone, between 40 and 130 cm. high and between 4 and 12 cm. thick. On the top of them there is the head, made of the same stone, before modelled apart and then installed. The stela represented the dead's image and was probably settled in ground in order to show the below grave. The dead of the stela is represented covered by a long cassock, personal ornament and engraved red or black colored weapons which people can still see. Ornamentation regarded not only the two facial surfaces as well as the lateral ones, except for the basic band that is distinguished from an overhanging decoration and from an engraved horizontal line. The surface of the slab is considered the dead's dress. The scenes represented on it concerne daily life customs (shooting, fishing), domestic life ones (grinding of the wheat, spinning, weaving), myths and magic-religious rites, dead's faith with its eschatological beliefs. These beliefs are represented by the same dead who becomes a hero or is going to hereafter, or by horrid infernal monsters. According to the outfit reproduced objects, M.L. NAVA (1980) could date the over 1500 stelae found in siponto plain, until now, to the first Iron Age. The stelae were found thanks to late lamented prof. Silvio Ferri's obstinate passion. M.L. Nava could classify the stelae in two distinct groups: the female one according to the ornaments, glaved forearms and hands, the male one characterized by weapons, naked forearms and hands. She arranged the aforesaid classes in several groups with reference to decorative schemes, for the so-called female stelae with reference to their monumental structure.

According to these standards five female groups and three male ones were recognized. The first female group includes the stelae with straight shoulders and unadorned neck, while the fibulae are leech-shaped with long stirrup that ends as a button. The arms are represented in a naturalistic way and the circle is the most recurrent geometric element. A little risen shoulders characterize the stelae of the second group, funeral outfit objects are reproduced in a schematic way and the represented geometric motif is the concentric circle. The shoulders of the third group

are more risen and arcuated, other images are schematized and the swastika appears as a decorative motif (fig. 4).

In the fourth group the shoulders are even more risen and arcuated, the neck is marked by necklace, the "fibulae" are *navicella*-shaped with side apices and the arc is often decorated, the arms are extremely schematic and the decorative scheme is the swastika and the meander-swastikas (fig. 6).

The fifth group is extremely schematic, the stelae haven't the arms but have a fibula and there is the dog among the decorative elements. The heads which complete the above mentioned stelae are long conical-shaped, they reproduce a kind of headgear and are usually uniconic and sometimes iconic. It is difficult to assign the heads to a kind of stelae, because they have been found separated from the monuments except for one of them.

The male stelae are grouped on the grounds of their decorative features more than of their structure that always shows straight shoulders and unadorned neck.

The first male group is represented with a simple circle and a whirl decorated shield (fig. 5). The second group is characterized with a double concentric circle and a decorated shield with 12 or 24 lozenges. The third group represents the swastikas or the meander-swastikas, and the shield with 12 lozenges. Besides in the male gathering you can find a particular stylistic evolution in the schematism and in the stiffness of the figurative theme. The male heads, unlike the female ones, are placed on the neck of the stela, they are sub-spherical uniconic or cylindrical iconic with a disk-shaped headgear. The represented outfit objects which are similar to the objects found in "piceni" cultural backgrounds allow to date all the monuments between the second half of VII century and VI B.C., even if, recently, this dating "ad quem" has been extended until V century B.C. because of some later and poor exemplars.

Their disappearance from the country between VI and V century B.C., is explainable with the opening of the *daunio* world to ellenic and etruscan cultural influences which suggested new models of the funeral ideology to the detriment of these out of date forms of protohistoric sculptures.

Represented scenes unite all the stelae except for the female ones of the fifth group. Leading characters of the represented scenes are men and

real or imaginary animals, they move in a kind of continuative narration where you can recognize daily life scenes, hellish world, episodes and mythical tales. Among them we can remember the representations of the "redemption of Hector's body", of the "Pegasus", of "Chimera", and of "Tracian sacrifices", probably in order to mean the daunia faith customs joined to a common protohistoric religiousness of the Mediterranean Sea. Finally, according to our knowledges, the spreading area of the daunie stelae concerns the sipontina area which spreads from the garganic southern slopes to the ancient Salpi lake, including Cupola and Salapia settlements. Some sporadic fragments of stele and a sipontina head were found at Tieti, Herdonia and Melfi. Other heads are from Arpi and belong to the first Iron Age. Some heads are from Troia, they are amigdala-shaped and are supported by a cylindrical neck. From the heads which are similar to the sipontine ones, probably coeval, it is impossible to recognize style and the suitable base to support them.

The above mentioned evidences about daunie stelae may be checked visiting the *Museo Archeologico Nazionale Garganico*, in Manfredonia, lodged in the castle of XIII century built by Manfredi to defend the town.

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**Fig. 1.** “Feminine” stela from Castelluccio dei Sauri (Foggia - *Museo Civico*).

**Fig. 2.** “Feminine” stela with the posteriore pigtail from Monte Saraceno (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale Garganico Manfredonia*).



**Fig. 3.** “Feminine” stela with *glasses-shaped* fibula from (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale Garganico*).

**Fig. 4a.** “Feminine” stela of type no. 3: front (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale Garganico*).

**Fig. 4b.** “Feminine” stela of type no. 3: behind (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale Garganico*).

**Fig. 5.** “Male” stela of type no. 1: a (front); b (behind) (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale*).

**Fig. 6a.** “Feminine” stela of type no. 4: front (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale*).

**Fig. 6b.** “Feminine” stela of type no. 4: behind (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale*).