

NON-BELL BEAKER, BELL BEAKER AND EARLY BRONZE AGE 2 IN EASTERN EMILIA

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper we briefly present new data resulting from the analysis of recent excavations and from a revision of old assemblages from Eastern Emilia, dating from between the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC. Given the complexity of the topic, we have chosen not to give images and detailed descriptions of the materials here. A more extensive discussion relating to this research, as well as a more precise presentation of cultural groups with proper images and references will soon be available (Dal Santo et al. in press).

In the investigated geographic area, radiocarbon chronology places the appearance of Bell Beaker communities in approximately the 25th century BC, about one century later than in Monte Covolo. There is currently no earlier known evidence and our archaeological record commences with the beginnings of regional characteristics of Italian style.

Three non-Bell Beaker groups are documented in the same period: (1) the final stages of the Spilamberto Group - where the majority of pottery is scale decorated, (2) the Castenaso facies - where scale decorated pottery is present but infrequent, and (3) the Marzaglia facies - where scale decorated pottery is completely absent (Dal Santo et al. in press).

The radiocarbon dates available for the Spilamberto Group span the 35th to the 26th century BC (Ferrari and Steffè 2009a; 2009b). Only one pit from Cava Marchi, one burial in the Spilamberto cemetery and certain finds from Cava S. Lorenzo are believed to date to the 25th-24th centuries (Steffè 1988; Ferrari and Steffè 2009a; 2009b). This later evidence of the Spilamberto Group will be discussed below, but first we will give a slightly more detailed description of the Castenaso and Marzaglia facies, which have only recently been recognised.

THE CASTENASO FACIES

The Castenaso facies has been defined based on excavations at Castenaso-via Frullo (Bologna; Lucianetti, et al. 2011). Although there are a few common elements, the Spilamberto and Castenaso lithic and ceramic assemblages are notably different. In Castenaso, ‘alpine’ flint is present at a relatively high percentage (20%), and it is processed by means of indirect percussion in order to obtain regular blades and bladelets. Retouched blades, a sickle blade and a microlithic crescent were all made of ‘alpine’ flint. Blade production, ‘alpine’ flint and sickle blades are nearly absent from the later stages of Spilamberto lithic technology (Dal Santo 2009) and no microlithic crescents have been recovered from Spilamberto Group sites. The aforementioned elements seem to suggest a connection with northernmost groups, as suggested by the introduction of ‘alpine’ flint.

In addition, the pottery, together with some traits resembling Conelle, is influenced by northern industries, e.g. the irregular surfaces, badly cooked vessels and ‘fori non passanti’ (semi-perforated rim) pottery. Quite typical of Castenaso are syncretic productions, such as scale-decorated pottery with semi-perforated rim and the cordon pottery with semi-perforated rim. The Castenaso facies and similar phenomena are documented between western Romagna, western Emilia, eastern Lombardia and possibly Piemonte, with a chronological range spanning the 29th to the 22nd century BC.

THE MARZAGLIA FACIES

The Marzaglia facies has been defined based on the Cava Aeroporto 2, liv. 1 excavations (Modena; Ferrari et al. 2012); some similar elements can be recognized at Montecchio Emilia-Costa Bassa Est (Reggio Emilia; Tirabassi 1997).

The material culture from Marzaglia is completely different from Spilamberto, while some common elements with Castenaso can be traced. Knapped stone is characterised by the prevalence of ‘alpine’ flint mainly processed with a blade technology employing indirect percussion and pressure flaking. Local materials are scarce, mainly represented by siliceous limestones used as chopping tool implements. From a typological point of view, retouched blades, sickle blades and frequent microlithic crescents are the most common artifacts, while no flat retouches nor bifaces are found. The ceramic assemblage is rather monotonous with prevalent regular surfaces (more or less smoothed) and undecorated vessels often fashioned with cordons (usually plain) and/or lugs and bosses. One short walled bowl, two elbow handled cups and one jug are the only elements exhibiting intercultural diffusion.

More or less generic affinities with groups to the north and west of Alps can be outlined, and with Italian communities strictly influenced by them, in particular Balm’ Chanto (Torino; Nisbet and Biagi 1987) and Arene Candide and Castellaro di Uscio (Liguria; Maggi 1990, 1997). Vessels with horizontal plain cordons are documented between Tuscany, Trentino, central Lombardy, western Emilia and eastern Veneto. Cava Areoporto 2 is dated to the 26th-24th century BC. Taking into account other sites with a prevalence of plain cordons, the chronological range can be estimated to include the 27th-23rd centuries. The latest date comes from Castellaro di Uscio, where pottery and lithics deriving from the Bell Beaker tradition are documented.

RELATIONS BETWEEN NON-BELL BEAKER AND BELL BEAKER

The Spilamberto, Castenaso and Marzaglia reaction to the penetration of Bell Beaker communities is rather complex. The Spilamberto Group seems to lose its unity: at Cava S. Lorenzo (Fiorano Modenese) elements recalling Castenaso are introduced, such as segmented impressed cordons; on the other hand, in one pit at Cava Marchi and one burial of the Spilamberto necropolis we find pottery inspired by the Fingernail Coarse Ware of S. Ilario d'Enza and other artefacts usually connected with the Bell Beaker tradition. The absence of reciprocity with the contiguous rising Bell Beaker societies, in which no significant elements deriving from Spilamberto can be recognised during this phase, seems to foreshadow the Spilamberto Group's end. It is significant that in the same chronological range Bell Beaker elements appear in the 'Rinaldone Culture', which can be recognized in the Fontanile di Raim (Viterbo) necropolis (Negroni Catacchio and Miari 1998). Probably subsequent to the end of the Spilamberto Group, scale decorated pottery, rusticated pottery and sherds with striations appear at Pescale and M. Castello di Gesso, apparently in association with a late Bell Beaker complex (Ferrari et al. 1996).

In regards to the Castenaso facies and other similar phenomena, the situation is different. In the Brescia area, settlement of early regional Bell Beaker type replaces the pre-Beaker population at M. Covolo, while at Lovere syncretic productions seem to last longer, at least as long as in the Bologna area. In Emilia, the Parma-Benefizio site seems to coexist with regional Bell Beaker and later, at Casalecchio di Reno (Bologna; Steffè 1984), some elements from the late Bell Beaker tradition are introduced. In the Bologna area the end of the Castenaso facies is represented by the birth of many settlements ascribed to the late Bell Beaker phase, such as Borgo Panigale-S. Agnese, Borgo Panigale-Metanodotto, Castenaso-Stellina, Castenaso-via Tosarelli and Castenaso-via Gramsci. Furthermore, we can report the presence of some Castenaso facies elements within the common ware of the late Bell Beaker site of Cesena-Provezza.

The Marzaglia facies assemblage of Cava Areoporto 2 shows some affinities with the so called 'Domaine Méridional' of Bell Beaker common ware (Besse 2003), but it lacks some typical elements (multi-perforated rim vessels, with or without cordon) which are well represented in regional Bell Beaker sites in Emilia and Tuscany. The end of the Marzaglia facies is locally represented by the intrusion of the Bell Beaker site of Cava Busani. The difference between the two sites is evident in ceramic production and the Cava Busani common ware is rather distinct from the Cava Areoporto 2 pottery.

BELL BEAKER

In this region Bell Beaker is evidenced mainly in small assemblages and rarely unearthed through archaeological excavations. We propose a provisional division between the regional style and late Bell Beaker, essentially considering the presence/absence of beakers in domestic context as a chrono-typological marker. This subdivision is valid only for settlement sites, while funerary rituals seem to diverge considerably as reflections of symbolic and ritual practices and as expressions of cultural identity: indeed, typical beakers are found in burials when they seem to be completely abandoned in everyday life (see also Mazzieri et al. forthcoming).

In eastern Emilia the Bell Beaker phenomenon as a whole is dated between the 25th and 19th centuries BC cal. Radiocarbon dating places the regional style between the 25th and 23rd and the late Bell Beaker between the 22nd and 19th centuries. The transition between the two can be estimated as having taken place between the end of the 23rd and the mid-late 22nd century BC. In addition to the well-known findings of S. Ilario d'Enza and Rubiera (Barfield et al. 1975; Bermond Montanari et al. 1982), the regional Bell Beaker style is attested at Cava Busani, Bologna-Hera and, probably, Anzola Emilia. In this phase the relationships with northern Tuscany are rather generic. In particular, with

regards to Anzola Emilia beakers' frequency and prevalent syntactic organization of decorative motives, they are more connected with Po Plain than with the contemporary stage 2 of Florentine Bell Beaker. 'Alpine' flint is about 15% at S. Ilario d'Enza, higher than 50% at Rubiera and Cava Busani, but the last two sites yielded very small assemblages. The common ware is quite variable. At the moment it is possible to distinguish sites where impressed decoration is either more (S. Ilario d'Enza, Cava Busani, Bologna-Hera) or less frequent (Rubiera). The multi-perforated rim vessels, often fashioned with a cordon, seem to spread in an advanced phase, for example at Pescale, M. Castello di Gesso, Cave dall'Olio, and they recall the "Domaine Méridional" of Bell Beaker common ware. As said before, rusticated, scale decorated and pottery with striations appear at Pescale and M. Castello di Gesso and sherds with striations are documented at Bismantova, which also date to a final regional/initial late Bell Beaker (Guidi et al. 1995). From this phase onwards, Bell Beaker sites in eastern Emilia increase in number.

In late Bell Beaker settlements typical beakers disappear and are replaced by different kinds of cup, often handled. At the same time the frequency of bowls increases. Decorative syntaxes are frequently and perhaps exclusively organized by metope. Sometimes metopes are delimited by narrow bands (so called Tanaccia style: Barfield 1994).

Relationships with the Florentine area are evident from stage 3 of local Bell Beaker (Leonini and Sarti 2008). The radiocarbon chronology of Castenaso sites is younger than that of Tuscany, being coherent with the so called Epicampaniforme (Sarti and Martini 2000; the authors consider it as the first phase of local Early Bronze Age) and the succeeding Early Bronze Age 'phases' with Bell Beaker elements.

As regards common ware, the connections with regional style are generic, while many more evident similarities can be traced in multiple examples of analogous horizontal cordon pottery from Monte Covolo or, more generically, with Bell Beaker sites of eastern Lombardy. Within non-Bell Beaker groups we can signal some affinities with Marzaglia and Castenaso.

Although more or less significant local differences can be outlined, late Bell Beaker style is diffuse between Emilia Romagna, central and northern Tuscany and part of Marche. To the north of Po River, the late Bell Beaker development (e.g. Ponte Pier; Barfield et al. 1995) is suddenly extinguished by the rise of Polada Culture in the southern fringe of the Pre-Alps. The coexistence of Polada Culture in the north and late Bell Beaker in the south of the Po Plain in the last centuries of the 3rd millennium BC would suggest likely competition between different societies: on one hand the post-Bell Beaker societies (Polada) and, on the other, societies still deeply involved in Bell Beaker symbolism and ideology (late Bell Beaker).

In the late Bell Beaker sites of Castenaso, 'alpine' flint is nearly absent and this could reflect a low degree of permeability between the two cultural groups, since the flint outcrops were controlled by the Polada Culture. Comparatively, the continuity of Bell Beaker tradition (with a delimited territory and cultural definition) is relatively well understood, while the birth and emergence of post-Bell Beaker populations remains an unclear process.

Late Bell Beaker elements are recognizable at Spilamberto site 12, although in a form already modified and strongly influenced by neighbouring Early Bronze Age communities (Ferrari 2009). Traits of late Bell Beaker tradition are still recognisable at Spilamberto site 11 (Ferrari and Steffè 2009c) and at Sasso Marconi. The distribution of bronze caches mirrors the introduction of truly Early Bronze Age cultural symbolism. The Savignano sul Panaro cache, the oldest found in this area, is dated to the beginnings of Early Bronze Age 2. Only when the late Polada Culture starts to move southward, can northern Po Plain elements be clearly identified in eastern Emilia. The earliest sites can be dated to an advanced phase of Early Bronze Age 2, such as Rubiera (Tirabassi 1996),

Pompeano (Modena; Cardarelli et al. 2006) and Spilamberto site 14 (Ferrari and Steffè 2009d), some of the Farneto Cave findings (Bologna: Belemmi et al. 1996) and Castenaso Villa Gozzadini.

With reference to Christian Strahm's interpretation of Early Bronze Age phenomena (1996) and to his definition of Metallikum, it is significant that these Final Neolithic remnants come to an end in Early Bronze Age 2, when an outbreak in large scale bronze metallurgy reflects new social and economic structures.

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