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The Authors describe the site, its location, description of the remains of possible archaeological and archaeoastronomical interest, together with hypotheses about their dating and function.

**Website:**

<http://ilfinalese.blogspot.it>



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# PETROGLYPHS AND MEGALITHS AT THE “BRIC LE PILE”

## (FINALESE – WESTERN LIGURIA)

Authors: Alfredo Pirondini\*, Gian Paolo Bocca\*, Filippo Pirondini\*, Cecilia Pirondini\*, Cesarina Villa\*.

**\*Il Finalese: Studi e Ricerche**

<http://ilfinalese.blogspot.it>

### Summary

The Authors describe the site, its location, description of the remains of possible archaeological and archaeoastronomical interest, together with hypotheses about their dating and function.

### Description

The Bric Le Pile is a rocky tower, in almost vertical walls, overlooking a group of old houses called “del Sanguineto”, on the orographic right of the Aquila Valley, in Finale Ligure (Western Liguria).

The rocky terrace that is placed on the top is carved by numerous tanks, some of which have artifact characteristics.

The most significant, in this sense, is a rectangular tank with sharp edges and a gutter in the most sloping portion.

The artifact (Photo1), carved in the Finale Stone, measuring 130 cm x 90 cm with a maximum depth of 20 cm, follows typical patterns of other places of Finalese, i.e. Ciappu de Cunche, de Cexi and Pila delle Penne (41), characterized by more or less extensive rocky outcrops with the presence of petroglyphs, tanks of different sizes and cups.

It is located 279 masl, at a latitude of 44.20266° N and longitude of 8.324172° E, roughly rectangular, with major axis oriented towards East-West and presents collector and drainage gutters (Photo 2).

On the possible functions of such a basin or "pila" (21), (26), (28), (44), we can only speculate.

It could, in fact, have been used as a cattle trough here bred or caught for hunting. You might also consider a destination for the collection of the blood of animals after killing them, both for food that sacrificial offering.

The presence of many other cupmarks and basins (also of karst - meteoric nature), partly connected to each other and partly tributary, thanks to the slight inclination towards this tank located in a more sloping site, at the steep wall of the cliff, may support the latter hypothesis (23), (24).

The artifact is located also in close proximity to the caves inhabited by humans since the Neolithic (in the Finale this age developed between 5800-3600 BC).

The homonymous Cave, called Le Pile, (20), not to mention the other natural cavities therein, far a few dozen meters from these findings, might suggest that the whole area was already inhabited in prehistoric times and that can go back to this period.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Particularly, the mentioned Cave (20), returned materials of the Middle Neolithic (5000-4200 BC, the period of the Square-Mouthed Pottery Culture) (9), (33), of the Upper Neolithic (4200-3600 BC) and Copper Age (3600 - 2200 BC).

During the Middle Neolithic, also had to exist on site a small settlement, of which there are many examples, in addition to those already described.

In a little higher position (339 masl, Lat .: 44.20191° N; Long: 8.322312° E), in fact, there are stone fences and stone walls that resemble those of Hillforts of Verezzi, of the Anime and of Pila delle Penne (41).

In a similar way to the latter, in the context of a drywall, oriented towards East - West, delimiting the summit of the Bric Le Pile, we found likely an artifact in Finale Stone, that could be referred to an anthropomorphic stele (Photo 3).



Photo 3

The finding shows, however, a well preserved cephalic extreme, but separated from the rest of the body, due to a fracture of the monolith of Finale Stone (27) from which it was obtained.

The major axis of the stele is superimposed and parallel to the major axis of the drywall, with an inclination forming an acute angle, opened dorsally of about 45° to the plane of the surrounding terrain.

It has well defined orbital cavities and, among them, a coarse nasal relief.

In this find, the described anatomical details appear less rudimentary, compared to the stele in Pila delle Penne (Photo 4) (41).



Photo 4

Moving a little further upstream (Lat.: 44.20195° N; Long: 8.322263° E, at 339 masl), there is a large boulder, resting on a base of stone and soil (Photo 5).



Photo 5

There are two steps, upstream, on the west side (29), (30), (31), (32). The megalith has at its center a clear cupmark of 20 cm in diameter with a gutter oriented to the East. The surface is occupied by a number of other petroglyphs (Photo 6).



Photo 6

About 50 meters to the North, staying at the same altitude, there is a Menhir-like vertical lithic formation, (Lat.: 44.20255°; Long.: 8.32246° E), about 130 cm high above the surrounding ground (Photo 7), crowned by a more flattened stone.



Photo 7

Near this finding, there is also a stone table, further downstream (Photo 8).



Photo 8

### Discussion

The dating of the described finds, all obtained by Finale Stone (a Miocene bioclastic limestone rock formation, rich in fossils, originated in the Miocene, i.e. from 20 to 10 million years ago), is a difficult problem, because the artifacts are located in an "open" place (47), easily modifiable by meteoric factors, animals and humans (27), (49). These places, in fact, have been frequented by man, even in fairly recent times. The appearance of petroglyphs and megalithic structures as dolmens, menhirs and fences can be traced back to a period between the Neolithic (which in Liguria developed between 5,800 and 3,600 BC) and the Bronze Age (2,200-900 BC), the terraces to the Bronze Age, while the fortifications of the high places, as Hillforts, of the Finalese and Western Liguria, are mostly dated now to the Iron Age (900-180 BC).

In particular, the summit walls, built with very voluminous stones, following the lay of the soil, provided protection, such as those already mentioned and known of the Iron Age Hillforts. The construction technique of the walls also recalls the megalithic model: the large boulders of local stone (43), are combined and overlaid. The free spaces, between a rock and the other, are filled, sometimes with smaller stones and topsoil. We can not, however, exclude the possibility that they were part of the megalithic enclosures of "cromlech" type. The same Anthropomorphic Stele is leaning against a boulder, part of these walls (Photo 3). The carved standing stones are traced back to the third millennium BC (at the turn of the Copper Age and the Bronze Age). The one on the Bric Le Pile is similar, in shape and positioning, to other similar findings discovered in Pila delle Penne (41). Other similar artifacts were also discovered at considerable distances, e.g. the Stele of Giurdignano, near Lecce, Apulia (45).

The engraved boulder, at the top of the relief, may have been used for the collection of the blood of animals killed, with goals similar to those assumed for the basin carved into the stone, found at an altitude of 279 meters above sea level (34), (35), (36), (37), (38), (39), (40).

These findings may remember as reported in numerous studies that refer to the sanctuary of Panoias (Northern Portugal) where, next to a large rock with tanks, channels and cups, there is the following Latin inscription dating from the third century. A.D. (14): "HVIVS HOSTIAE QVAE CADVNT HIC IMM (ol) ANTVR EXTA INTRA QVADRATA CONTRA CREMANTVR - SAN (gu) IS LAC(i)CVLIS (juxta) SVPERFV(ndi)TVR" (i.e.: *"Here the slaughtered victims are consecrated to the Gods: their entrails are burnt in the square ponds and their blood is diffused along the surrounding small ponds"*).

The presence of extensive rocky outcrops with characteristics similar to those described for the sanctuary of Panoias, are not rare in the Finalese. They have, at least for a time, had a similar function. The fact, moreover, that these probable "stone altars" are found on high places indicates, probably, the desire to choose an appropriate site of visual control of the land below, also in relation to the sacredness of the hills and mountain peaks, typical of Ligurian-Celtic populations (8), (25). The megalithic structures, such as menhirs and dolmens, are located, as already stated above, in a period between the end of the fifth millennium to the late third millennium BC, corresponding roughly to Neolithic and Bronze Age (46).

These megaliths are therefore no strangers to the cultural sub-alpine area, as was thought until a few decades ago.

It was believed, in fact, that the megalithic culture had been arrested in transalpine regions, without crossing the Alps. The only exception was Apulia, where the dolmens, menhirs and "specchie", however, were attributed to the influence of people from the Balkan Peninsula across the Adriatic Sea. In the Mediterranean Basin, in fact, the Megalithic findings are extremely frequent. The publication of S. Puglisi "La Civiltà Appenninica. Origine delle Comunità pastorali in Italia" (42) at the end of the '50s of the last century and the discovery, in the '60s, the megalithic necropolis of Saint Martin de Corléans, in Aosta, showed the groundlessness of this thesis (15), (16), (17), (18), (19), (22).

Regarding Liguria, in the second half of the '80s two circular burial mounds have been identified in North of San Remo (near Imperia). One of these fences, studied with stratigraphic methods, by the local branch of the "Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri", could be attributed to the final phase of the Bronze Age (1).

These studies demonstrated that megalithic culture in this region, presumably penetrated from the nearby Provence and the Po Valley. As a result, other artifacts found in Liguria, especially in the area of Finale Ligure (including the Menhir and Dolmen of Verezzi), hitherto attributed, though with reservations, to the peasant recently civilization (22), have taken on a different meaning and scarcity of megalithic remains in Italy, differently from the transalpine regions (especially the north-western and islands), could be explained by the higher turnover of civilization over time, that would have radically changed the appearance of the area, resulting in the loss of many of these artifacts (10), (11), (12), (13).

### Conclusions

The Bric Le Pile appears to be an area of great archaeological interest that probably might hold additional findings. The procurement of petroglyphs and megaliths, shows a man-attendance, not only during the Neolithic, but also in periods subsequent to it (e.g.: Metal Age), up to a time very close to our (2), (3), (4), (6), (7), (8), (9).

The megaliths, also, as stated in previous papers, as well as the spread of the Impressed Ware Culture and Square-Mouthed Pottery Culture, can be considered as the evidence of the links, since Neolithic Age, between the Mediterranean Sea, the North West of Italy and Transalpine Europe. In this perspective, Liguria and, above all, the Finalese area (for its geological, palaeontological and palaeontological



peculiarities), could represent a kind of crossroads for trades and cultural exchanges, already widely documented for later prehistoric and protohistoric ages (48).

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