

Digging the Past: one hundred years of research on Valcamonica rock art

The pioneering era

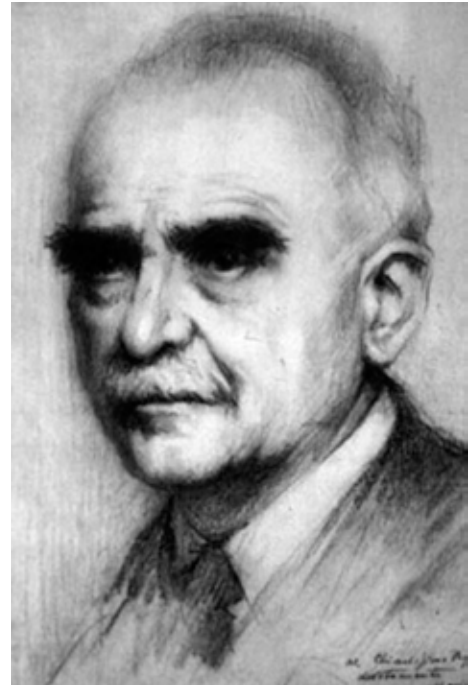
The strange tale of a discovery

The first official mention of the presence of stone carvings in Valcamonica dates back to 1909 when Walther¹ Laeng, a young alpinist from Brescia devoted to geological, chemical and naturalistic studies who used to pass his summer vacations in Valcamonica, pointed out in a letter to the *National Committee for the Protection of Monuments* the presence of two engraved boulders at Pian delle Greppe near Cemmo (Capo di Ponte, Brescia, Italy). In 1912 Laeng wrote a short note about the existence of these two monuments as part of his description of Cemmo to be published in the first edition of the *Guida d'Italia: Piemonte, Lombardia, Canton Ticino* in 1914, edited by Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli on behalf of the Touring Club Italiano. Laeng says that these stones bear engravings "similar to the famous ones of Lac de Marveilles in the Maritime Alps" (p. 595), but the discovery does not seem to have been of particular interest among Italian scholars. During the '20s the engravings are mentioned only by Giuseppe Bonafini, an archaeologist and teacher from Civate Camuno², and Senofonte Squinabol, a geologist from the University of Turin who was related to the influential Murachelli family of Cemmo.

Realizing the potential antiquity of the carved figures at Pian delle Greppe, in 1929 Squinabol brought the anthropologist Giovanni Marro (Fig. 1), a friend and colleague

of his at the same University in Turin, to the site. Marro was already a well-known personality. Some years before he had joined the Italian Mission in Egypt led by Ernesto Schiaparelli in order to collect data on mummies

Fig. 1. A portrait of Giovanni Marro (1875-1952).



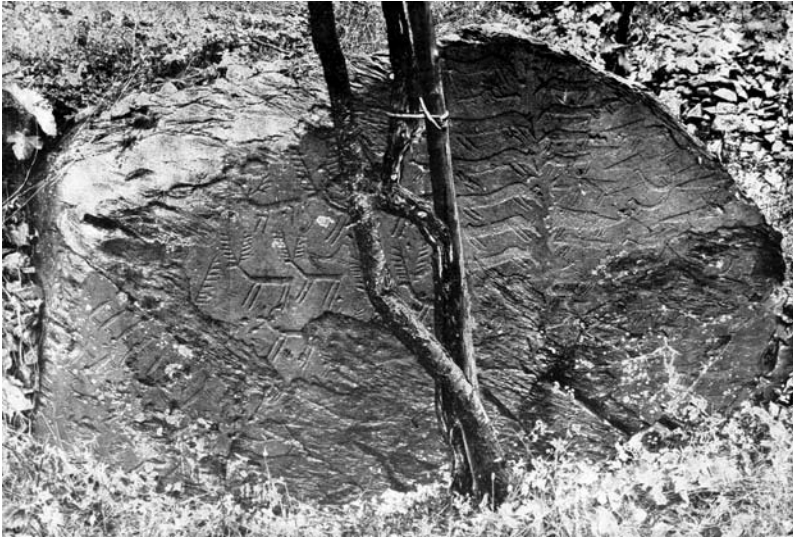


Fig. 2. Cemmo boulder n. 1 in 1929/30 (after Marro 1930).

and, afterwards, had founded the Institute of Anthropology in Turin, where his eclectic interests in psychology, ethnography and archaeology found the ideal place for their development and dissemination.

But a strange coincidence took place: almost simultaneously Gualtiero Laeng, suddenly remembering the discovery he had made fifteen years before, invited dr. Paolo Graziosi, then a young prehistorian at the University of Florence, to examine the engravings of Cemmo. Marro and Graziosi therefore worked on the same spot (Fig. 2), each unaware of the other, making sketches and rubbings, presenting the discovery in various sessions of the same congress³ (!) and not seeing the second engraved boulder (!!), which was very close by but completely hidden by bushes and debris. Paolo Graziosi, after this short period in Valcamonica, would rapidly devote himself to other studies (rock art of Sahara, Libyan engravings, etc.), becoming after the war one of the most influential and esteemed scholars of prehistory in Italy.

Unveiling the past: Giovanni Marro and Raffaello Battaglia

By 1930 the news of archaeological discoveries in Italian Alps was widespread among

scholars both in Italy and more widely in Europe. Marro, back in Valcamonica after his first public announcements abroad during a session of the XV Congr s International d'Anthropologie & d'Arch ologie Pr historique held in Lisbon (Portugal), identified, cleaned and published the second boulder (Masso di Cemmo n. 2). By now even the Soprintendenza Archeologica became fully aware of the discovery and planned protection for the two monuments. While at Cemmo to oversee the construction of wooden shelters to protect the boulders, assistant Antonio Nicolussi, pressed by his supervisor to broaden the research to the surrounding rocks and almost certainly taken there by local people, traveled on foot to a location called Gi deghe⁴ (Fig. 3), and discovered the first engravings on the emerging bedrock. Marro too was made aware of the discovery through a letter from the Soprintendenza's office and soon he was able by himself to find another site called J l dei Betin i⁵, while the Soprintendenza focused on other rocks at Seradina, just beyond the famous Romanesque church of Pieve di San Siro.

Assuming the possible presence in the area of other petroglyphs and thanks to the private tips of his friend Senofonte Squinabol, to the aid of native guides and

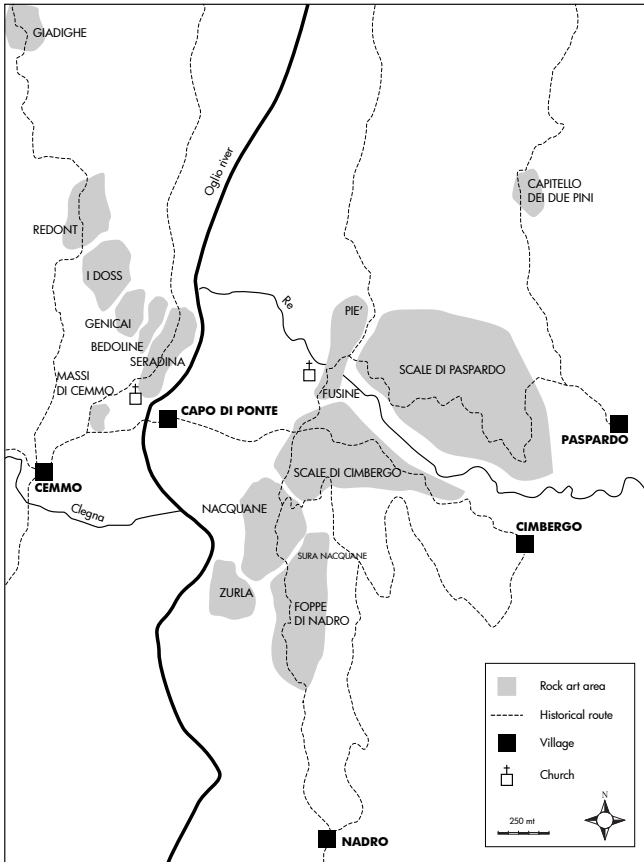


Fig. 3. Map of rock art areas around Capo di Ponte as mentioned by researchers during the '30s.

to the strong support of the local fascist government, then headed by the mayor of Capo di Ponte cav. Murachelli, Marro began a quick, independent but effective research effort that soon brought him to identify almost all the existing rock art sites of middle Valcamonica, especially those of the eastern side. Names such as Naquane, Zurla, Foppe di Nadro, Scale di Cimbergo and Scale di Paspardo appear in the writings of Marro from the early '30s. Many rocks and famous carvings from Naquane or Campanine were published and described by Marro in his fast paced production of articles and memoirs during the period 1932-1935.

One of his main achievements is undoubtedly the discovery (Marro 1934) and monographic study of the "Rock of the Five

Inscriptions"⁶ at Campanine di Cimbergo (Fig. 4), which for the first time directly addresses not only the epigraphic-linguistic findings but also the historical identity of the ancient adopters and users of this alphabet, acknowledged as the "alfabeto di Sondrio" but today definitively addressed as "camuno". In 1935 Francesco Ribezzo, a well-known linguist to whom Marro had submitted an essay on the freshly discovered inscriptions, even thought that the examples at Campanine were "[...] written [...] in an alphabet perhaps older than the common North-Etruscan" (Marro 1936), starting a wide debate which would also bring foreign scholars to Valcamonica. Some of these researchers were attracted mainly by the epigraphic discovery and, subsequently, by the ethnic implications



Fig. 4. The "Rock of the Five Inscriptions" (after Marro 1934).

arising from it. In Scandinavia the archaeologist Arthur Gustaf Nordén, aware of the Valcamonica findings from personal letters from Giovanni Marro himself, was actually thrilled at the possibility of an origin for the runic alphabet in the one used in Valcamonica inscriptions and eagerly pressed Marro to perform more field research⁷. This theory about the Central Alpine origin of

the runic alphabet, taken to its extremes by Franz Altheim, lost its strength starting in the '60s, but the linguist Tom Markey has recently revived it with interesting new evidence based upon a fresh interpretation of the inscriptions on the two Negau helmets (Markey 2001).

At the same time research on Valcamonica stone carvings were performed also by the archaeologist Raffello Battaglia, this time officially and on behalf of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Padova, the institution which at the time was responsible for archaeological activity in this area and which was led by the archaeologist Ettore Ghislanzoni. Battaglia, though devoting less time to Valcamonica rock art than Marro, discovered and published many engravings that would become famous in future times, like the iron-age plowing scenes of Seradina, the forge-house of Le Crus or the Bedolina and Pià d'Ort maps (Fig. 5). His "topographical" interpretation of the latter, following the classic explanation of similar pictures in Mount Bego rock art made by scholars like Clarence Bicknell, Piero Barocelli or Federico Sacco, will be strictly followed by Anati and subsequent researchers and it is still the preferred approach nowadays (Turconi 1997).

Marro and Battaglia, often in conflict on theoretical matters or discovery priority⁸, began to publish photographs and several studies, laying the foundations of future research methods, creating comparisons with other comparable sites like Mount Bego or Scandinavian rock art, and suggesting simi-

Fig. 5. The big "map" of Giadeghe, locality known today as Pià d'Ort (after Battaglia 1934).





Fig. 6. Building figures on Naquane rock n. 35.

larities with the Iron Age Italic imagery, primarily that of the Etruscans.

Marro argued that the carvings confirm the existence in prehistoric times of a local, previously almost unknown, civilization dwelling in *palafitte* (pile dwellings; see Fig. 6) and engaged in several primitive religious practices, like for example the cult of waters⁹, and rituals or offerings to the sacred Concarena mountain. In this respect he followed what Miles Burkitt had supposed for Mt. Bego rock art just few years before (Burkitt 1929). Unfortunately Marro often succumbed to fanciful explanations of rock art scenes and his conclusions are nowadays almost completely overturned, although his works should today be better acknowledged at least because of his important discoveries¹⁰.

Battaglia, a much more cautious individual and a much more skilled archaeologist as well, analyzed carefully the petroglyph production technology, styles of figures, figure-artifacts comparisons and chronology, possible ethnic collocation of the rock art producers and thus reached more accept-

able conclusions. He was a strong opponent of the *palafitte* theory, often stating that buildings on wooden poles at the lakeshore were inconsistent with the geomorphologic environment of prehistoric Valcamonica. For this reason they should not be regarded as actual buildings, he wrote, but probably as food storage places or as religious constructions (Battaglia 1934).

Both of them actually agreed on one particular point: Valcamonica rock art had to be considered quite solely an Iron Age activity due to the pecking technique and the hardness of the local sandstone, with only doubtful figures possibly of more ancient times and with a clear continuation in medieval and modern times, especially in Campanine di Cimbergo.

German invasions

While the two scholars carried on their explorations¹¹, the news of the discovery of rock art in this Central Alpine valley began to awaken more and more interest abroad. Taking into serious consideration the oppor-



Fig. 7. The big warrior of Scale di Cimbergo (today Campanine rock n. 50), discovered by Erika Trautmann during her lonely trip in Valcamonica in 1935 (after Altheim 1936).

tunities offered by Valcamonica rock art for the reconstruction of certain fundamental aspects of the prehistory and protohistory of central Europe, some German researchers came to Valcamonica with the official aim of studying the engraved pictures. Over the years 1935-1937 Franz Altheim, at the time professor at the University of Halle, and his assistant Erika Trautmann repeatedly visited the areas of Capo di Ponte, Nadro and Cimbergo. Their first two missions are counted as the XV (1935) and the XVIII (1936) Research Expedition (*Forschungsreisen*) organized by the *Institut für Kulturmorphologie*¹², founded and led at the time by the famous German anthropologist and rock art researcher Leo Frobenius, and later on, probably due to favorable political opportunities arising from the special relationship of Erika Trautmann with eminent Nazi chiefs, under the financial and ideological auspices of Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* Institution and the support of powerful Nazi minister Hermann Göring, Trautmann's close friend (Pringle 2006).

During these campaigns they found a lot of new engravings, which were rapidly published in their several subsequent articles (Fig. 7, 8). The scientific nature of their research, while important for the reporting of some remarkable figures and for the quantity of discovered and published panels, is unfortunately undermined by the ideological framework that in that period pushed not only Altheim himself but several other scholars of Nazi Germany to appease their political sponsors by happily reinterpreting archaeological sources in the light of the sup-



Fig. 8. The previous figure as re-discovered and traced by Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia del CCSP in 1997.

posed dominance and civilizing supremacy of the Indo-Germanic peoples.

Altheim stressed in particular the connection with Scandinavian rock art by showing similarities between the two rock art imagery and a common ideology. He claimed that the *Camunni* people known from Latin epigraphic remains and Roman authors are nothing more than those *Euganei* people mentioned in classical sources (like Pliny the Elder)¹³. The rock art belongs to these Euganei of the Iron Age (I mill. BC), it is unquestionably of Indo-Germanic type and therefore is the result of migration of Aryan peoples from northern Europe, the same people who a few centuries before had produced the great Scandinavian rock art, which, according to him, is clearly an "Aryan" production as well. These common roots were, to these authors, quite plain in Valcamonica: the cult of the Indo-Germanic divine entity in the form of a sun-disc, the presence of rune signs identical to those of central and northern Europe, the incidence of a warrior and heroic background typical of Aryan people and expressed in deer hunting, in fighting scenes, in an emphasis on spear and spear bearer, etc. (Altheim & Trautmann 1937, 1938, 1939b).



Fig. 9. The supposed stag-god Kernunnos at Naquane (after Altheim & Trautmann 1937).

One of Altheim's major achievement is without doubt the discovery and description of the deer-god of Naquane, which also today is credited as one of the most ancient pictures known of the Celtic god Kernunnos (Fig. 9), and the first publication of the famous symbol known as the "rosa camuna" (Altheim & Trautmann 1939a; see Fig. 10). His arguments and somewhat improbable interpretations of these topics gave rise in these years to a wider debate on Celtic and Etruscan influences on Valcamonica rock art, thanks primarily to the critical comments by the expert in Celtic art Paul Jacobsthal (1938) and the subsequent remarks by Pierre Lambrechts (1940). Anyhow, Altheim's papers contributed strongly to diffusing in European scholarship an awareness of Valcamonica rock art sites and their breathtaking engraved scenes.

Rise and fall of an anthropologist

Meanwhile Marro, though sturdily opposing this sort of invasion of his territory by the



Fig. 10. The famous symbol known as "rosa camuna" showing on a rock at Foppe di Nadro nearby a warrior with unusual round and rayed helmet.

Germans, shortly fell into the same ideological trap, embracing the Fascist racism laws (1938) and supporting the idea of a strong "Italic race" whose ancient cultural roots, according to him, were largely testified too in Valcamonica rock art. In this way Marro, sustaining the so-called nativist trend among the different Italian racist theoreticians (Gillette 2002)¹⁴, himself created the reasons for the later total rejection of his work, although today some believe that some of his observations should be at least reintroduced into the history of research. By the way, this was the first time that Valcamonica rock art showed all its ambiguity, thus testifying the ease with which documents may be misused and become voice for subtle ideological and political interests.

The awakening of the '50s

After the emptiness and confusion following the Second World War, Gualtiero Laeng regrouped local forces and managed to renew research with the help of some assistants,

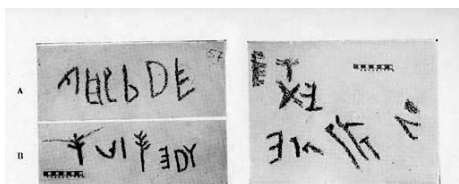


Fig. 9a - Iscrizione alla roccia n. 57 della zona di Naquane - Ronchi di Zir. 18

Fig. 10 - Lettere isolate nella zona di Campanie.

Fig. 11. Inscriptions in local and Latin alphabet (after Süß 1954).

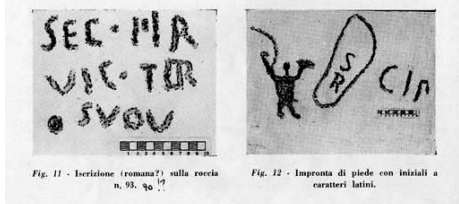


Fig. 11 - Iscrizione (romana?) sulla roccia n. 93. 30

Fig. 12 - Impronta di piede con iniziali a caratteri latini.

especially Emanuele Süß, Piefranco Blesio and Italo Zaina (all active members of the newborn Museum of Natural Sciences in Brescia), and aided by the essential hints thrown by the enthusiastic young Battista Maffessoli from Capo di Ponte, who by himself had unveiled many new rock carvings. In 1954 this group discovered the engravings upon the Luine hill (Darfo Boario Terme) and compiled the first map of the engraved rocks in the area of Naquane-Ronchi di Zir (Süss 1956a), i.e. the 93 rocks that were included in the territory of the Rock Art National Park of Naquane established the next year (1955) by the Superintendent Archaeologist of Lombardy, Mario Mirabella Roberti. The same group also promoted the first debate about the twenty-five years of research carried out until then (Giuseppe Bonafini) and the compilation of a bibliography on Valcamonica rock art (Süss 1956b)¹⁵. Süß devoted also much of his time in the discovery and edition of new inscriptions, which seemed to him to support a general chronology almost overlapping the first roman period (Fig. 11).

Meanwhile at the University of Turin Sabina Fumagalli, former Marro's assistant, in addition to continuing the study of hut figures, discovered and published new engravings at Sònico (Fumagalli 1956) in Up-



Fig. 12. Footprint and running warrior at Naquane rock n. 14.

per Valcamonica and started up a ferocious argument with Laeng in an attempt to rehabilitate the work and figure of her teacher after the exclusion which followed the rapid erasure of the Fascist past and the death of Marro himself which occurred in 1952.

The '50s once again brought Raffaello Battaglia to Valcamonica, being called by Bonafini after the discovery of the first engraved monoliths in Borno (Battaglia & Acanfora 1954) and Ossimo (Battaglia 1957). Battaglia studied and rapidly published the two monuments, inaugurating locally the productive line of research on the Copper Age statue-stelae¹⁶.

During the '50s the dating of the engravings to the Iron Age became stronger and it was actively supported by Raffaello Battaglia, who thought that, for example, the triangular daggers found on boulders should be compared with Italic or Hallstatt short swords from early Iron Age (Battaglia 1934), and Emanuele Süß, solidly convinced that only



Fig. 13. A praying figure, supposed by Emmanuel Anati to be one of the most ancient category of Valcamonica carvings (neolithic period), emerging from the moss coverage at Naquane.

iron tools could produce the fine pecking visible on many engraved pictures (Süss 1954; see Fig. 12). The issue of chronology was an obvious first disagreement between Süss and the young archaeologist Emmanuel Anati, who, after his first visit to Valcamonica in 1956, was developing the idea that many carvings dated to a much older time than then commonly accepted (Fig. 13).

A growing army of researchers

On the other hand the number of people, Italian and foreign, interested in the intriguing mysteries of Valcamonica rock art was quickly growing as a result of the more favourable political situation in Europe and the expanding knowledge of the presence of rock carvings in this Alpine valley. Worth mentioning from these years are the research led by Piero Leonardi from the University of Ferrara, who in 1950 identified the engraved figures closest to the Oglio river (Seradina - Ponte di San Rocco) and other engravings in the area of Paspardo. Some foreign scholars came to the Valley and its extraordinary heritage as well: Hercli Bertogg (Chur, Switzerland), Herbert Kühn and E. Vogt (Germany), Peter Vilhelm Glob (Denmark), who studied the plowing scenes making valuable comparisons with those in Scandinavia and Mount Bego (Glob 1954), Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer (Switzerland), who resumed research on the hut figures inter-

preted as *palafitte*, Ake Fredsjö (Sweden) and Sverre Marstrand (Norway), Raymond Christinger (Switzerland), known mainly for research about the labyrinth, and finally Emmanuel Anati, who had arrived in Valcamonica in 1956 only to stay a few days.

The Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and the global study of rock art

Emmanuel Anati: a quick run to solve the riddle

Emmanuel Anati, partly motivated by the works of the "father" of European prehistory, the Abbé Henry Breuil, came to Valcamonica to compare the local rock art with the Mount Bego stone carvings, a research that he was carrying out on behalf of the French Institute of Human Paleontology (1956). The arrival of Emmanuel Anati introduced important new elements into the framework of the established local rock art interpretations. He was the bearer of new ideas and new tools, not only from a practical and purely methodological point of view, as in the systematic coloring of the engraved rocks (which would soon evolve into the so-called "neutral method") and the tracing (at the beginning executed by sight, then "in contact" with the introduction of appropriate transparent media; see Fig. 14) but also theoretical, as in the centrality of the concept of style, of the

methodical comparison with archaeological artifacts and, finally, of the superimposition analysis in order to achieve a better chronological understanding of the entire Valcamonica rock art phenomenon.

Already in his second campaign (Anati 1957) he discovered in the area of Paspardo some important engravings at the "Capitello dei Due Pini", i.e. beside a small chapel surrounded by two huge pine trees. The carved panels were called the "Rock of the Five Daggers", which was later adopted as Anati's organization's emblem, and the "Rock of the Sun", but today are catalogued more prosaically as Plas rock n. 1 and rock n. 2. Continuing the exploration Anati became more and more interested in Valcamonica rock art and began to feel the need for a systematic and extensive study, clearly recognizing the bad habits of past researchers who had conducted their work only in a fragmented and uncoordinated, independent way. With the help of Battista Maffessoli, who in previous years had repeatedly helped Süss and Laeng and who had discovered with



Fig. 14. Emmanuel Anati working with a collaborator on a rock art panel at Seradina (photo courtesy of CCSP).

then and on his own dozens and dozens of new engraved rocks, together with a small group of students and volunteers Anati documented through tracing and then edited and published for the first time (Anati 1960a) a

Fig. 15. Figures from the Big Rock of Naquane or rock n. 1.



complete large carved rock, *La Grande Roche de Naquane* (the Big Rock of Naquane or rock n. 1; Fig. 15). It was the starting point of a new era.

Soon after this pioneering effort Anati published another milestone: *La Civilisation du Val Camonica* (Anati 1960b). The book is the result of his early years of exploration and study and represents the first comprehensive synthesis of the whole Valcamonica rock art phenomenon, assuming resolutely that this incredible archaeological site stands out as the most lasting, large and detailed historical source for the comprehension of European civilization from the end of the glacial period to the Roman era. Anati portrays an isolated and brilliant people struggling for life inside the harsh prehistoric Alpine environment and evolving locally from a small community to a great and spiritually uncontaminated civilization, until their final "globalizing" absorption into the all-conquering Roman Empire. One of the main problems faced in the book is the attempt to create a general chronological arrangement. It constitutes an attempt to give sense to the stylistic va-

riety of human, animals and other figures found on rocks, and to the presence of very ancient weapons like halberds, two facts that seemed apparently to reflect a carving tradition which had lasted for a much longer time than had been suspected until then.

The Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and the methodical study of Valcamonica rock art

In 1964 the "Anati Mission", namely the small study group that operated from 1956 in Valcamonica under the dynamic personality of a young and lively Emmanuel Anati, found a stable home in which to think about and plan the immense work of documentation and study that seemed now to be emerging on the horizon: thus, under the patronage and sponsorship of the municipality of Capo di Ponte and the main Valcamonica political institutions (Comunità Montana and Bacino Imbrifero Montano), the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici (CCSP) was born and settled inside the large building that still stands between Capo di Ponte and Cemmo.

The fieldwork campaigns have continued without interruption since then. The CCSP launched full prospecting and systematic detection efforts directed not only at individual rocks but also at entire engraved areas. An effective documentation method using transparent sheets to create the faithful copies of the figures beneath was meanwhile developed and rapidly adopted to produce large quantities of raw graphic data for subsequent analysis. In 1968, addressing the problematic state of conservation of the engravings upon the Luine hill (Darfo Boario Terme), Anati adopted the treatment of engraved rock surfaces called the "neutral method"¹⁷ as the ultimate system to allow a precise and faithful detection and subsequent tracing of the existing pictures. At the same time began a fruitful edition of journals, like the BCSP or Bulletin of the CCSP, and monographs about prehistoric art and religion. Particularly important are *La datazione dell'arte rupestre camuna* (1963), the second draft after *La Civilisation du Valcamonica* toward a general subdivision into four main styles/periods of the whole Valcamonica imagery, and the

Fig. 16. Daggers with triangular blades from engraved menhir Campolungo 1. This object are supposed to depict copper weapons with shapes very similar to the ones found in Remedello necropolis, a copper age site southern Brescia.





Fig. 17. One of the big animals from Luine (Darfo Boario Terme) attributed by Anati to pre-neolithic peoples.

monographs *Il Masso di Borno* (1966) and *I Massi di Cemmo* (1967), both representing the definitive revision of the monuments and making the argument that these kind of engraved boulders should be dated mainly to the Copper Age due to the consistency with some carved figures and weapons of that period, especially the so-called Remedello daggers (Fig. 16). Meanwhile, fieldwork campaigns carried on activities in Seradina, Bedolina, Dos Mirichì and, finally, the Luine hill, but explorations continued throughout the Valley.

Era of the great events

In 1968 the first Valcamonica Symposium was held, an international congress that gathered in Valcamonica several Italian and foreign scholars to discuss art, religion and expressions of the intellectual life of pre-historic and tribal people. In the same year the general chronological arrangement of Valcamonica rock art, proposed by Anati eight years before, reached its ultimate stabilization with the division into four styles or main periods and two appendices, the Protocamuno (Fig. 17) and the Postcamuno styles¹⁸, a system continuously repurposed and recently repropoed with only minor changes (Anati 2004).

During the '70s fieldwork documentation was carried out mainly in Foppe di Nadro, where also was discovered and excavated the archeological site at Riparo II (Shelter II). The important site of Dos dell'Arca (Capo di Ponte) had already been dug by the Anati Mission during the early '60s, while other archaeological excavations were conducted by CCSP at the site of Le Sante di Capo di Ponte and, by Francesco Fedele on behalf of CCSP, at the Neolithic settlement in Breno's castle (years '70-'80). The pioneering excavations by Anati revealed for the first time the existence of specific Valcamonica archaeological *facies* during the various periods, especially the later phases of Iron Age, with very typical pottery shapes found in the eponym site of Dos dell'Arca. Following findings at Massi di Cemmo, Anati also claimed to have found evidence of carvings being painted during prehistoric times, a claim that seems to have been definitely proven by Francesco Fedele at the Copper Age site of Anvòia-Ossimo¹⁹. Fedele's excavation at Breno's castle on the other hand discovered the definitive presence of Neolithic settlements in Valcamonica, thus partly confirming the existence of local communities possibly being the carvers of the many praying figures that Anati thought as of Neolithic tradition. At the same time individual scholars went on with research on



Fig. 18. The Concarena mountain cast his majestic shape upon many engraved areas of Middle Valcamonica. In foreground carvings on a rock at Piè (Capo di Ponte).

some of the many subjects represented in Valcamonica rock art, such as figures of buildings, alphabetic inscriptions, topographical compositions, wagons, labyrinths, plowing scenes, “big hand” human figures, etc.

In 1979 UNESCO, upon the suggestion of Emmanuel Anati and the formal proposal of the Regione Lombardia, put Valcamonica rock art into the World Heritage List, the first Italian monument to achieve this honour (Fig. 18). In 1982 in Milan the exhibition *I Camuni, the roots of European civilization* took place. The event, accompanied by a voluminous book (Anati 1982a) and attended by thousands of people, renewed some interest amongst the public, especially from an educational point of view. In the same year the site of Luine was finally edited by Anati in

the book *Luine collina sacra*, but Anati would progressively focus his efforts away from Valcamonica and would devote almost all of his time to gathering information about the rock art of every continent and period, trying to trace the roots of humankind's language and religion (Anati 2003) and to collect all this knowledge into the largest existing database about the subject: the World Archive of Rock Art (WARA). The base and main laboratory of this life-long project would remain the CCSP in Capo di Ponte, but local fieldwork would be largely transferred to trusted collaborators, like Umberto Sansoni, Tiziana Cittadini or Mila Simoes de Abreu.



Fig. 19. Running deer from Naquane rock 44.

Contemporary approaches and research projects

During the '80s new engraved rocks were found and documented in Foppe di Nadro, Seradina, Selloero and Paspardo. For some of them there would be a complete edition by Anati's teammate Umberto Sansoni, like *Arte rupestre di Selloero* (1987) and *Pià d'Ort, la vicenda di un santuario preistorico alpino* (1995). In the late '80s the Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia del CCSP was born, led by Umberto Sansoni, as was the Cooperativa Archeologica "Le Orme dell'Uomo" ("The Footsteps of Man"), led by Angelo Fossati and founded with Mila Simoes de Abreu, two organizations which are continuing in an autonomous manner and with diverging chronological ideas the challenging work of documentation and study of large areas such

"Rosa Camuna" and geometric symbols on the rock of the Map, Bedolina.



as Pià d'Ort, Campanine di Cimbergo, Zurla or the several sub-areas of Paspardo, like In Val, Dos Sottolaiolo, Vite/Deria, etc. (Marretta *et al.* 2007). A lot of discoveries must be granted also to independent researcher Ausilio Priuli, who above all studied and published the fresh new area with late Iron Age imagery of Piancogno (Priuli 1993) and who is the founder of several successful educational parks about rock art and prehistory.

Recently a slightly more systematic reassessment of Anati's chronology had been undertaken by Raffaele de Marinis, prehistorian at the University of Milan, and his colleague Angelo Fossati. The authors think that the praying figures should be primarily placed into the Middle-Final Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and not in Neolithic times (De Marinis 1992, Fossati 2000), a period

Elegant horse carved on a rock in Bedolina.





Fig. 20. The inextricable mass of engravings recently highlighted on a rock at Pagherina (Capo di Ponte). Remarkable overlappings are showed by footprints, geometric shapes, huts and cupmarks.



that, according to them, is probably represented only by the so-called “topographic compositions”²⁰ spread on many rocks and mostly highlighted in recent years in the Paspardo areas (Arcà 1994). Another point regards the more precise definition of the Copper Age IIIA-style (De Marinis 1994) and a thorough study of the Iron Age warrior imagery, seen as a production characterized by a set of votive images engraved during initiation rituals through which young people belonging to the local aristocracy entered the adult age (Fossati 1991).

Current scholar relationships between Valcamonica and Scandinavia have revamped an interest that started almost from the early '30s (Nordèn) and continued through the '60s (Glob, Fredsjö, Marstrander), clearly due to the striking similarities between the two rock art traditions. Some of the latest Valcamonica Symposium was actually held in Tanum (Bertilsson & McDermott 2004), while a three years large and structured research plan, the RockCare Project, brought to a tight collaboration between researchers of both countries on issues of conservation, documentation and general knowledge about rock art (Bertilsson 2001; Fig. 20). In this new direction of exchange and growing awareness about the reciprocal cultural heritage the two towns of Capo di Ponte and Tanum started in 2006 a twin-project which is contributing to bring also to younger students and to the population the need of research and conservation of this extraordinary European archaeological sites.

Many other Alpine areas were investigated during the '90s, among them principally Valtellina, whose rock art expressions bear the strongest connection with Valcamonica's immense production. In more recent years constant new discoveries are bringing light to large unknown areas, particular topics, like building figures, birds, topographic compositions (Fig. 21) or specific periods, such as the Copper Age (Campolungo-Cedegolo, Ossimo-Anvòia, Ossimo-Pat, Cemmo, etc.)²¹,

Fig. 21. A new big “topographic composition” stand few meters behind the more famous Bedolina Map. In the background the Pizzo Badile mountain rise from the plateau of Cimbergo and Paspardo.



Documenting rock art during the '50s. Annotating pictures after the painting of the engravings (photo courtesy Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici).



Documenting rock art today. The tracing with transparent sheets and black markers at Campanine di Cimbergo (photo courtesy Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia del CCSP).

and are allowing the formulation of a more refined interpretation of many of the problems with which Valcamonica rock art, after almost one hundred years of discoveries and studies, is still challenging the contemporary human mind.

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Notes

1 During the First World War he would change his first name to Gualtiero in order to underline his opposition to the Austrian occupation in Trentino-Alto Adige and express his support of the war by Italy against the Central Empires. His father was a Swiss engineer transferred to Brescia in the second half of the XIX century.

2 Scholar of ancient Rome and Latin epigraphy Bonafini was for many years honorary inspector of the Soprintendenza Archeologica as well. He photographed the Cemmo boulder n. 1 for his degree thesis in 1927 but

didn't manage to find the second engraved boulder.

3 The communications were held in different section of the XIX Riunione della Società Italiana per il Progresso delle Scienze, Bolzano-Trento, September 1930. See Bonafini 1932.

4 Part of the area today known as Pià Ort, which is quite far from Pian delle Greppe – Massi di Cemmo. See map in Fig. 3.

5 Still part of Pià d'Ort and far only a few feet from Giadeghe. See Marro 1932.

6 This rock is today classified as rock n. 27 of the area of Campanine di Cimbergo. The area is part of the Riserva Naturale Incisioni Rupestri di Ceto, Cimbergo, Paspardo. See Marretta *et al.* 2007.

7 See the quoting by Marro of a Nordén's letter to him (Marro 1936).

8 This last issue will become a *leit motiv* of Valcamonica rock art research. Many engravings will be "discovered" two or three times, often without mention of previous publications. See Marretta 2007.

9 This cult, according to Marro, was proved by the frequent occurrences of shovel figures ("palette"), which were identified by him as paddles.

10 See Brunod 1994, 1996.

11 But interest is already fading off during the years 1934-35, when Battaglia give up his Valcamonica studies and Marro gradually loose the initial originality and strength.

12 A third mission, marked as XIX (1937) Research Expedition and led by D.C. Fox, will miss Franz Altheim and Erika Trautmann, who will carry on Valcamonica researches by their own.

13 The same idea, obviously cleaned of any political or ideological background, is today sustained on the basis of archaeological data by Raffaele de Marinis. See De Marinis 1999.

14 But shamelessly changing his mind just minutes later toward possible Aryan roots of the Italic people as well, in total opposition to his previous statements and thus clearly according to political opportunity.

15 An updated bibliography, with some comments on Süs 1956 edition, has been compiled and published by the author in 2005. See Marretta 2005.

16 Many other carved boulders will be found later in Ossimo-Borno and other areas of the Valley. See especially Casini 1994 and Casini & Fossati 2007.

17 The method consisted in painting the whole rock with a white pigment and softly colouring the not-carved smooth surface with a contrasting tone, usually black, thus revealing all the smallest pecking and scratching which remained brightly white upon a black background. See Anati 1977 for further details on methodology issues.

18 Protocamuno (a late Paleolithic phase represented by only a few figures of large mammals at Luine), Neolithic (styles I and II), Copper Age (style III-A), Bronze Age (styles III-BCD), Iron Age (styles IV-ABCDEF), Post-camuno (covering the Roman, medieval and modern times). See Anati 1976.

19 The site, today open as Anvòia Archaeological Park (Ossimo, Brescia), has been excavated from 1988 to 2003. Some fundamental but still preliminary interpretations of the site can be found in Fedele 2007 and 2008.

20 Excluding the Bedolina Map-type compositions which, according to them, belong to Middle Iron Age. See Turconi 1997.

21 A recent survey can be found in Marretta 2004. Some up-to-date information on excavations at Massi di Cemmo can be found in Poggiani Keller & Ruggiero 2005.