

Towards an Archaeological Approach to Prehistoric Rock Carvings. From Method to Symbolics: the Finale Area (Western Liguria, Italy) as a Case-Study

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This article presents an insight into archaeological approach in the study of rock carvings. The first section is mainly methodological and highlights the significant problems within dating this kind of evidence. Furthermore, it delves into the specific contribution of interdisciplinary research in this field. The second section focuses on the Finale area (Liguria, Italy) as a case study, which has not been studied systematically until now. A hypothesis on the dating and significance of carvings from the Finale area is formulated by comparison with two contexts in which rock-carving art has been studied in detail: the Mount Bego area (France) and Valcamonica (Italy). A table as an appendix is made to propose a first chrono-typology of the carvings from the Finale area.

KEYWORDS: rock carvings studies; prehistoric art; Finale, Liguria; symbolics

INTRODUCTION

Studying prehistoric rock carvings entails facing a significant challenge: the absence of relevant archaeological contexts permitting a proper systematic approach. The problem essentially pertains to dating, as currently no evidence (except a few carvings dating to the Paleolithic¹) has been found covered by a relevant archaeological deposit that may serve as *terminus ante quem*.

Thus, studying those elements implies going beyond a strictly archaeological approach.

This paper aims to illustrate the contribution of different scientific approaches to the study of rock carvings, showing how interdisciplinary research may allow a better contribution to archaeological evidence.

Data from the Finale area (Western Liguria, Italy) will be presented as a case-study whose chronology and general interpretation can be proposed by comparison with better-known contexts. These are, in the Alpine arch, Mount Bego (Mecantour National Park, Alpes du Sud, France), and Valcamonica (Bergamo-Brescia, Italy) (*fig. 2*).

¹ See “the horse” carving from Caviglione Cave at Balzi Rossi (Ventimiglia, Italy), dating to Upper Paleolithic: Vicino 1972: 13–15 and pl. III B; about the importance of this evidence in prehistoric rock art: Del Lucchese 1996: 19–20, 50–51, 62–63 and fig. 41.

STUDYING ROCK CARVINGS: QUESTIONS OF METHOD

FROM TECHNIQUE TO RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY

The absence of relevant archaeological deposits makes it particularly challenging to obtain an absolute dating of rock carvings. As Odetti and Ravaccia correctly stated (Odetti & Ravaccia 1990: 14–15), one of the significant issues of this kind of investigation is distinguishing ancient carvings from modern evidence. This proves to be a difficult task considering that the conservation of most carvings is likely to be compromised by exposure to rain, temperature change, pollution, and even human action.

Nevertheless, as Priuli has demonstrated (Priuli 2006: 19–21)², typological and technological approaches both concur in establishing a relative chronology of rock carvings.³ Technology, in particular, implies first the identification of the tools used in Prehistory and, second, understanding their use and deterioration conditions (Priuli 2006: 295–296).

To perform a thorough survey of rock carvings in the area, the team operating in Valcamonica (Bergamo-Brescia, Italy) first adopted micro-plaster casts and then photogrammetry, which is even more efficient (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 24–25). The combination of these methods called attention to the use of four different techniques⁴, based on the shape, width, and depth of the grooves (which can be thinner or deeper). The most common techniques are the *graffito* (Priuli 2006: 22–23) and the stippling (Priuli 2006: 26–27).⁵ The first consists of severely imprinting a mark on the stone in a single gesture either with a lithic or a metallic tool, while stippling results from the direct percussion of the surface with a small stone.

The other two techniques, scratching (Priuli 2006: 24) and engraving (Priuli 2006: 24–26), are rarely used. Scratching requires forcefully scraping the surface with a flat-pointed tool, while engraving means removing a part of the lithic material by cutting the stone in the same and parallel direction.

Studies and surveys in the Finale area proved two types of evidence. First, carvings were produced with metal and lithic tools and, second, *graffito* and stippling techniques were both used (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 37). The latter is much more frequent than *graffito*, as proven by the only exception of a cave, *Arma della Moretta* (*fig. 3; fig. 12*; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 10).

ON ROCK CARVINGS INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Il simbolo per sua natura, se non accompagnato da una legenda, è intraducibile per chiunque non appartenga alla stessa cultura che l'ha prodotto,

² Priuli's assertions are based on Coles' experimental studies theories (Coles 1973).

³ For a recent update of the question: Bianchi 2016: 15–17, 21. The author points out that both technology and typology concur to determine chronological sequence, especially within the study of the overlaps of carvings realized with different techniques.

⁴ For a general description of these techniques: Priuli 2006: 17–35.

⁵ See also: Priuli 2006: 295.

con il risultato che molti messaggi di pietra, per noi che siamo lontani dal tempo che li ha visti produrre, risultano quasi indecifrabili.
(Priuli & Pucci 1994: 7).⁶

The first descriptions of the signs carved on the rock were greeted with a great deal of disbelief. For instance, at the end of the 18th century, superstitious French traveller Pierre de Montfort interpreted evidence from Mount Bego as the product of some evil spirit's hand.⁷

At the beginning of the 20th century, geologist Issel was the first to give testimony of carvings from Liguria; though he attributed them to “high antiquity” (Issel 1908: 458, 553), he partially misunderstood their meaning. Indeed, Issel generically interpreted the pictures as a sort of alphabet (Issel 1908: 460⁸). It has been emphasized (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 37, 39 and fig. 83) that the scholar dated to Prehistory a number of undoubtedly modern carvings, in particular regard to the long, tight figure resembling to a “train” in *ciappo* delle Conche (Issel 1908: 575–476 and fig. 124). Later researchers, such as Bicknell, who conducted the first systematic study of the Mount Bego evidence (Bicknell 1913: 55–57 and pl. XXI), proved that similar (and ancient) figures likely picture ox skins. Issel himself described the “skins” (Issel 1908: 512 and fig. 209). As a matter of fact, more recent research has demonstrated that the shape in *ciappo* delle Conche overlaps a more ancient one: perhaps, a “ox skin” (Tizzoni 1975: 90).

Leale Anfossi (1976) highlights the difficulty in reaching a univocal interpretation of this kind of evidence, observing that their visual perception is affected by the rock morphology and conservation, as well as by the meteorological conditions. Considering these parameters, how is it possible to achieve a complete survey and documentation, allowing a univocal interpretation of the carvings?

Sansoni's answer to that question is interdisciplinarity (Sansoni 2012a: 52–53; Sansoni 2012b: 285). As he correctly states, art history, ethnology, and cultural anthropology all enrich archaeological research and contribute towards understanding the meaning of the carvings.

Art history surely brings a significant contribution to studies on rock carvings. The first step to understanding its unique input is to assume that the creation of the carvings is strongly related to a proper symbolic system. According to Anati, art assumes a kind of visual language whose elaboration is connected to the evolution of cognitive processes in the human mind (Anati 1990: 34). In this perspective, signs carved on the rocks correspond more to a pure expression of cultural identity than to a mere art form.

Understanding what sort of cultural background brought people living in Prehistory to express themselves through signs and figures carved on the rock, implies determining the origin of imagery.

Brusa-Zappellini bases her interpretation of the question on cultural anthropology, ethnography and even medicine (Brusa-Zappellini 2012: 306–307). The author establishes

⁶ “Anybody who does not belong to the same culture who produced a sign can translate it; this is due to the nature of symbolics itself. As a result, far in time as we are, we're unable to decrypt many “stone messages” we haven't seen being produced” (T.o.A.).

⁷ See Montfort's letter to his wife published in: De Lumley 2003: 23.

⁸ See also: Graziosi 1973: 154–155.

a connection between rock art and entoptic phenomena such as phosphenes, visual distortions occurring when an optic system is altered (Brusa-Zappellini 2012: 309–311). To illustrate her theory, she quotes South-African archaeologists Lewis-Williams and Dowson’s interdisciplinary research, and a study by Austrian anthropologist Reichel Dolmatoff on Tukano Indians (Amazon area) in South America. Both investigations are based on two major enquiries: first, German neurologist Klüver’s research (Klüver 1926: 511–513) into “eidetic vision” (mental perception derived from physical stimulation), which produces a number of changes in sensory fields; second, electrical engineer Knoll’s experiments on the excitation of a spectrum of subjective abstract light patterns in the human brain, by means of temporal electrodes and pulses (Knoll & Kügler 1956: 1823).

In particular, the investigation has proven the resemblance between drawings realised during San (Bushman, Kalahari Desert) and Shoshone Coso (California Great Basin) shamanic rituals, and european rock art. This is the case of zigzag thunder-like figures⁹, which are both present in San art and Shoshone rock art, but also of the square-like grids¹⁰ connotating Shoshone art (*fig. 1*; Dowson, Williams 1988: 201, 204, 205 and *fig. 1*).

Imputing figures carved on rock to a psycho-physically altered condition seems inappropriate, as the naturalistic character of most figures appearing in rock art should not be forgotten. In fact, they essentially reproduce what the artists could see in everyday life: animals (De Lumley 2003: 49), tools and arms (Vicino 2013: 66), as well as members themselves of the community (Süss 1958: 39, *fig. 51*). Yet, studies like those by Brusa-Zappellini (2012) point out the symbolic meaning of the carvings as an art form, which attains the level of a cult and religion.






























	ENTOPTIC PHENOMENA		SAN ROCK ART		COSO
	A	B	ENGRAVINGS	PAINTINGS	E
I					
II					
III					
IV					
V					
VI					

Fig. 1: This schema shows the correspondence between entoptic phenomena studied by electrical engineer Knoll, San art (South Africa) and Shoshone Coso art (California). Dowson, Lewis-Williams 1988: p. 206, *fig. 1*.

⁹ For thunder-like pictures in prehistoric carvings: Priuli & Pucci 1994: 38, *fig. 82* (Finale area) and De Lumley 2003: 77 (Mount Bego area).

¹⁰ On square-like grids figures in prehistoric carvings: Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, *fig. 84*; 41, *fig. 89, 90* (Finale area) and De Lumley 2003: 82 (Mount Bego area).

THE FINALE AREA: A CASE-STUDY

GENERAL PRESENTATION

Liguria represents an exceptional case-study. Indeed, it holds the richest carving heritage in the Alpine arch, after those of Mount Bego (France) and Valcamonica (Bergamo, Brescia, Italy) (*fig. 2*).

Within the Ligurian geographical context, the Finale area is the second in terms of importance after that of Mount Beigua (*fig. 2*; Savona; Pizzorno-Brusarosco 1990). In this context, Finale has a particular interest, because rock art from this area has never been the object of a systematic analysis aiming to define a proper chrono-typology.

Finale is enclosed by Bergeggi territory in the East, Pietra Ligure territory in the West, and by the River Bormida di Mallare in the North-East.

The presence of the carvings in this geographical area is connected to local geology, which is widely characterized by the so-called Finale limestone or *pietra di Finale*. This rock, with colour variations from orange to white, has a very peculiar structure, due to the presence of intense karstic phenomena since its formation between Oligocene and Miocene (11-28 million years ago; Bonci & Firpo 2013a: 5–6; Bonci & Firpo 2013b: 8–9). Long has been debated that this character affected the conservation state of the carvings and impacted the problem of dating.¹¹ The question is not so simple, however. In fact, the red rock *facies* from Verezzi, which since the Middle Ages has been used for construction works, differs from the clearer *facies* located in Monte Cucco/Rocca degli Uccelli, Rocca Carpanea and Perti, where most of the carvings are located. On rock outcrops locally referred to as *ciappi* (*fig. 3*; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 35), the rock is porous and compact. For this reason, it shows a better resistance to water action and temperature changes.

As it is almost impossible to establish the duration of these processes, they cannot be used as a criterion for dating.¹²

These assertions demonstrate that the *corpus* of carvings from Finale examined in this work is representative of evidence produced initially in prehistoric times, but also that typological analysis is decisive to determine a relative chronology for them.

Rock art from the Finale area was first pointed out by the cleric Amerano and by the naturalist Bicknell at the end of the 19th century, as their correspondence with Issel shows (De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 25–27). Thus, the first publication of this heritage is that of Issel himself, at the beginning of the 20th century (Issel 1908); after his survey, investigations interrupted and restarted in the 1970s (Tizzoni 1975; Leale Anfossi 1976). However, since then, the research has been rather sporadic. In fact, a number of contributions dating to the 1970s and 1980's focus on single sites as *ciappo del Sale* (*fig. 3*; Leale Anfossi 1976) and *Arma della Moretta* (*fig. 3*; Giuggiola 1982), without attempting an integrated analysis.

¹¹ Graziosi's dating to recent times of Finale carving is precisely due to the feeble resistance of the *Pietra*: Graziosi 1935: 231–233. For further remarks on this debate: Priuli & Pucci 1994: 37; Prestipino 2007: 35–37; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 27.

¹² I wish to thank Prof. Bonci for her advice on this question.

Very few works have proposed a general, useful updating (Graziosi 1973: 153–157; Graziosi 1974 for Liguria in general). This is especially the case of Odetti and Ravaccia's contribution (Odetti & Ravaccia 1990). Concerning Prestipino's monograph (Prestipino et al. 2007), it must be stressed that he focuses on the description of the ways to get to the carvings, without discussing their dating and cultural origin.

Only Tizzoni (Tizzoni 1975), and Priuli and Pucci (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 35–55) attempted to establish a sort of *corpus* of the carvings from the Finale area, which Vicino and De Pascale usefully updated (Vicino 2013; De Pascale & Vicino 2017). However, in neither of these occurrences has a real chrono-typological analysis been proposed.

INTERPRETATION

Based on typological studies conducted in Mount Bego and Valcamonica, a relative chronology for the carvings found in the Finale area can be determined. In this context, we should differentiate rock carvings most likely dating to the Bronze Age from those probably dating to the Iron Age.

The first group includes pictures such as the only axe (*fig. 4*) and plough (*fig. 6*) known in the Finale (Vicino 2013: 66), zigzag lightning-like lines (*fig. 22*; Tizzoni 1975, 90, 97; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 39, *fig. 80* and *Fig. 82*; Vicino 2013: 66) and *bucrania* (*fig. 18*; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 42, *fig. 92*, *Fig. 93* and 51, *fig. 127*; Vicino 2013: 69).

These images should date at least to the beginning of the Bronze Age, as they can be compared to Italian evidence likely dating to the Chalcolithic or Early Bronze Age. This is the case of two axes of the same typology carved on the menhir-statue “Bagnolo II” from Valcamonica (*fig. 5*; Anati 1990: 60¹³) and of a large number of *bucrania* from Mount Bego area (De Lumley 2003: 100–101; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, *fig. 16*, 176). The case of the plough is peculiar, as it can be compared with ploughing scenes from the Mount Bego area dating to the same period (*fig. 7*; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, *fig. 244*, 1).

Another kind of figure that should be dated to the Bronze Age are the square-like grids (*fig. 20*; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, *Fig. 84*, 41, *fig. 89*, *fig. 90*). These should be more properly defined as large, square-like pictures with a surface split into a number of approximately equal-sized squares. These carvings have the same shape as evidence that De Lumley interprets as stylised maps or parcelled fields (De Lumley 2003: 82–83). As most of the time, these figures are associated with *bucrania* (*fig. 21*), or axes, we could suggest that the grids from Finale date back to the Bronze Age as well. This interpretation may also be validated by De Marinis and Fossati's assertions on “topographic representations” occurring in Camunian rock art between the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 33 and *Fig. 6*).

We should, finally, mention cupels, like that found in Olle, resembling shovels used in the Bronze Age during incineration rituals (Vicino 2013: 69; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 30, and *fig. 10*). The use of this kind of object for the collection of ashes is attested in Northern Italy and Alpine arch in Final Bronze Age.

¹³ The author proposes a dating to Chalcolithic for this evidence (Anati 1990: 61–62).

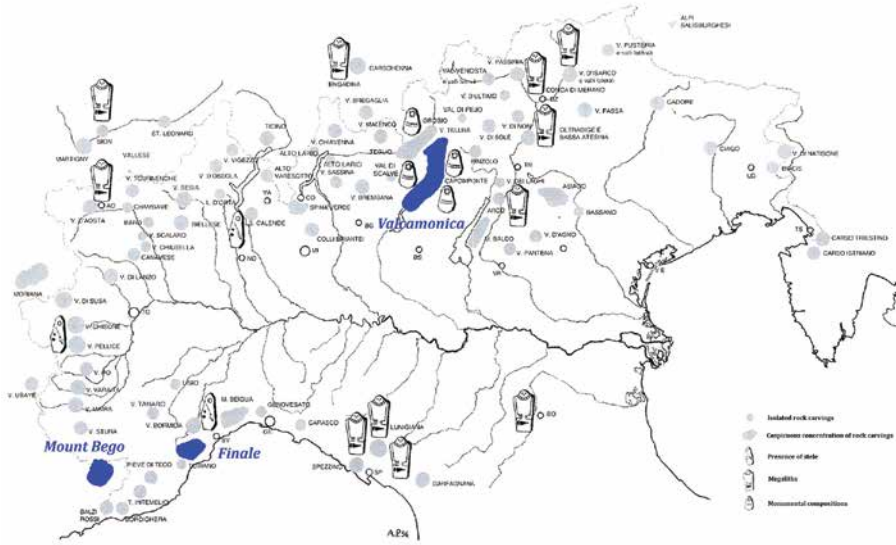


Fig. 2: Location of the areas where rock art is mainly found in Alpine arch. Olcese, elaboration from Priuli 2006:135, fig. 285.

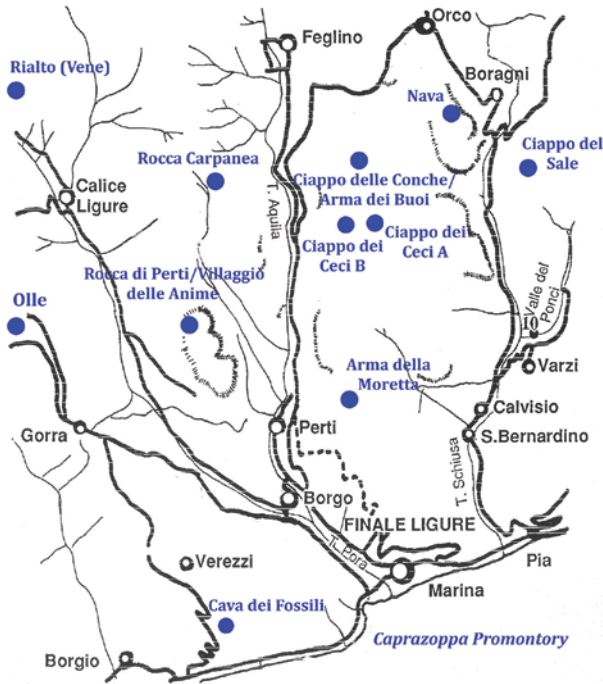


Fig. 3: Location of the major rock carvings evidences in the Finale area. Olcese, elaboration from Priuli & Pucci 1994: 35, fig. 73.



Fig. 4: Carving representing a axe from Cava dei Fossili, Finale area, Italy (Caprazoppa promontory). Photo: Olcese, 2018.



Fig. 5: Carving representing a axe from menhir-statue “Bagnolo II”, Valcamonica, Italy (drawing). Anati 1990: 60.



Fig. 6: Carving representing a plough from Cava dei Fossili, Finale area, Italy (Caprazoppa promontory). Photo: Olcese, 2018s.

Fig. 7: Carving representing a ploughing scene from Mount Bego area, France (drawing). De Lumley, Échassoux 2011, fig. 244,1. Courtesy of Prof. H. De Lumley.



Fig. 8: Carving representing four crux-like shapes interpreted like stylized human beings holding hands in a dance. Ciappo delle Conche, Finale area, Italy. Photo: Olcese, 2018.



Fig. 9: “Initiation dance” scene carved on rock 32 in Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy. Süss 1958: 39, fig. 51.



Fig. 10: Carving representing a hut from *ciappo del Sale*, Finale area, Italy. Photo: Olcese, 2018.



Fig. 11: Carving representing a hut from Coren del Valento, Valcamonica, Italy. Süss 1958: 62, fig. 90.

The second group (beginning of the Iron Age/Roman period) includes stylised representations of human beings (*fig. 8 - cover photo; fig. 13*; Leale Anfossi 1976: 23–24; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, 41, Fig. 85, Fig. 86, Fig. 87, Fig. 89; Vicino 2013: 66). It is particularly difficult to propose a dating for these representations, as styles from different areas are quite diverse. Still, they could be connected to the increase of human-stylised figures in Camunian rock art in the Final Bronze Age and Iron Age (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 30, 34; Bossoni et al. 2014: 65–66). Parallels, which essentially pertain to symbolics, can be drawn with the “initiation dance” carving from Rock 32 in Naquane (*fig. 9*; Valcamonica, Süß 1958: 39, *fig. 51*), dating to the Iron Age.¹⁴

Figures of buildings from *ciappo* del Sale (*fig. 10*) may also be attributed to this epoch (Leale Anfossi 1976: 21–25; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 47, *fig. 110*). Priuli and Pucci (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 47) assert that these carvings are modern. However, according to Leale Anfossi (1976: 23), the theme and style resemble very much to carvings from Valcamonica that seem to picture huts (*fig. 11*; Anati 1990: 128). This kind of evidence has been attributed to Camunian style IV, corresponding to the Iron Age (De Marinis Fossati 2012: 36). Savardi does not directly propose a dating for these carvings, but he compares them to hut-like cinerary urns, a very typical burial custom of the Final Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age (Savardi 2012: 13, 134).¹⁵

A few considerations can be made on typologies for which it is particularly difficult to propose a dating. The first case concerns crux-like, arrow-like and *phi*-like figures’ linear carvings (*fig. 8 - figure on the front page; fig. 12; fig. 22*; Tizzoni 1976: 89–90;¹⁶ Priuli & Pucci 1994: 43; 46, *Fig. 107*)¹⁷. They form a group that can potentially be attributed to the Iron Age.

The major problem in studying this kind of evidence is that they can easily be misinterpreted as stylised representations of human beings. Furthermore, it occurs that Christian cruxes overlap prehistoric symbols (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 44 and *fig. 101, fig. 104*). In this perspective, Greek Christian cruxes with equal arms, fiercely carved on the rock, should be distinguished from thinner, ancient signs, which look very much like Latin cruxes and possibly human beings.¹⁸

The most important evidence in Finale is that of *Arma della Moretta* (*fig. 3; fig. 12*). Here, both crux-like, arrow-like and *phi*-like figures are reported (Isetti 1965: 112–114; Giuggiola 1982: 48–49; Pucci & Priuli, 1994: 53–54, *fig. 138–154*; Vicino 2013: 66, 69; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 30). A relative chronology of these carvings was proposed by Isetti, who stated that the *graffiti* were antecedent to stippled carvings (Isetti 1965: 114). Thus, he suggested dating them all to the “Metal Age”, without indicating if he was referring to the Bronze Age or the Iron Age. However, he firmly distinguished the

¹⁴ Concerning the hypothesis of dating to Iron Age dance scenes and interpreting them as initiation rituals: De Marinis, Fossati 2012: 49.

¹⁵ For a general introduction of this funerary custom, which is very typical of Southern Etruria and Latium: Bietti Sestieri 2010: 228–232.

¹⁶ The author distinguishes modern cruxes from human-like symbols.

¹⁷ The latter evidence published by Priuli and Pucci are Christian greek cruxes.

¹⁸ For an interesting comment on the shape of the crux-like carvings: Odetti 1977: 140.

signs from the well-known bronze-aged Mount Bego carvings (Isetti 1965: 116). Considering the similarity between this kind of evidence and the stylised human figures, we may propose they date to the Iron Age.¹⁹

The second case of figures which are particularly difficult to date is that of carvings that likely evoke the stars (Tizzoni 1976: 89–90; Vicino 2013: 66–68). Small cupels, which Vicino interprets, together, as a representation of the Pleiades cluster, are particularly enigmatic (Vicino 2013: 66, 67).

Yet, the case of a stylised human being observed in *ciappo* dei Ceci B (fig. 3; fig. 13), which Vicino interprets as a priest (Vicino 2013: 68; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 29), may enrich the enquiry. Here, four cupels below the picture also form a question mark and possibly evoke the Pleiades (Olcese, personal information; fig. 15).

Vicino (Vicino 2013: 67; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 29) compares question-mark cupels from Perti and Vene to a likely representation of the Pleiades on Nebra sky disk dating to 2100–1700 B.C. (Early Bronze Age), just like De Lumley had done for some figures found in the Mount Bego area (fig. 14; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 57). Still, Vicino generally dates star representations to Protohistory.

The last occurrence that is not simple to date is that of sexual symbols. Round figures, surrounded by several rays, have been interpreted as vulvas (fig. 16; Tizzoni 1976: 86; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 49, fig. 118, fig. 119). The problem with this interpretation is twofold. First, clearer representations of sexual symbols (male and female) in Ligurian rock art found in Grotticella Blanc-Cardini, dating back the Paleolithic (Balzi Rossi, Western Liguria, Vicino 1972: 16–17 and fig. 4),²⁰ have a totally different shape from the Finale ones: they are longer and narrower. Moreover, the shape of the “vulvas”



Fig. 12: Carvings representing a *phi*-like shape and crux-like figures from Arma della Moretta, Finale area, Italy. Photo: Olcese, 2013.



Fig. 13: Carving representing a stylized human being from *ciappo* dei Ceci B, Finale area, Italy. Below the picture, four cupels seem to form a question mark, as if they evoked the Pleiades cluster. Photo: Olcese, 2018.

¹⁹ See again the assertions on the increase of human stylized representations in Camunian rock art in Final Bronze age and most of all in Iron age (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 30, 34; Bossoni et al. 2014: 65–66).

²⁰ For a recent analysis of these carvings: Mussi & Vicino 2012: 491–492, 494, fig. 7 and fig. 9.



Fig. 14: Carved cupels whose question-mark shape have been interpreted as a representation of the Pleiades. Mount Bego area, France (drawing). De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, Fig. 364, 2b. Courtesy of Prof. H. De Lumley.



Fig. 15: The Pleiades cluster as it has been photographed by telescope Hubble. De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, Fig. 364, 1.

in the Finale area, these signs likely bear a deep symbolism. In fact, they can be connected to the “grids” (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, fig. 84; 41, fig. 89, fig. 90) that De Lumley interprets as parcelled fields (fig. 21; De Lumley 2003: 82; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 79).

These assertions allow a better understanding of the close link between the sphere of fertility and the cult of cosmos in the Finale area. Considering that elements such as sun and rain are essential for survival, both aspects melt together.

from Rocca Carpanea resemble very much to evidence from Mount Bego (fig. 17) De Lumley interprets as representations of the sun (De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 57; 336, 337, fig. 353).

It is difficult to understand the exact nature of these figures, which may very likely depict suns instead of female genitals; still, studies on rock art have already proven the specific symbolic function of caves in their association to fertility. Hrobat Virloget (has pointed out that such places, since the beginning of the history of mankind, have been devoted to fertility rites whose significance was also expressed with the use of sexual symbols (Virloget Hrobat 2015).²¹

Even though its linkage with sexuality is currently impossible to be established, the interpretation of the symbolics of rock carvings from the Finale highlights a particular connection with fertility.

The general chronology that has been proposed, which corresponds to the Bronze and Iron Ages, is a key for the interpretation of rock carvings. De Lumley’s analysis of rock carvings discovered in the Mount Bego area is very useful within this perspective. The author considers that those images may be related both to the symbolic sphere of fertility and to the cult of cosmos and atmospheric elements.

De Lumley’s assertions on *bucrania* (fig. 19) point out the powerful significance of oxen, which could be related both a deity of the earth and to the cosmos (De Lumley 2003: 101). Though extremely rare (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 42, fig. 92, fig. 93; 51, fig. 127; Vicino 2013: 69) in the Fi-

²¹ The author focuses on the ethnographic example of Triglavca cave in Slovenia (Virloget Hrobat 2015: 158), and points out the similarities between signs recurring in rock art from this region and carvings from Valcamonica (Hrobat Virloget 2015: 159, 160).



Fig. 16: Carving representing a round shape surrounded by several rays from *ciappo* del Sale, Finale area, Italy. Images of this kind have been interpreted as female genitals. Photo: Olcese, 2018.



Fig. 17: Carving representing a round shape which has been interpreted as a sun. From Mount Bego area, France (drawing). De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, fig. 353. Courtesy of Prof. H. De Lumley.

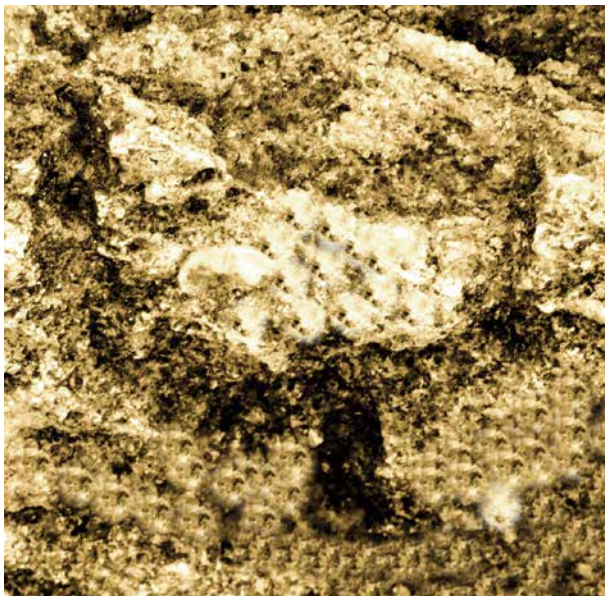


Fig. 18: Carving representing a *bucranium* from Arma dei Buoi, Finale area, Italy. Photo: Olcese, 2018.



Fig. 19: Carving representing a *bucranium* from Mount Bego area, France (drawing). De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, Fig. 176, 16. Courtesy of Prof. H. De Lumley.

In this perspective, elements in rock carvings suggesting a possible connection with the observation and the cult of the cosmos should once more be pointed out. The first element to note is that square-like grids (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, fig. 84; 41, fig. 89, fig. 90) can also be interpreted as cosmos maps (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 34). Star-like figures and especially Pleiades-like cupels (fig. 13; Tizzoni 1976: 89–90; Vicino 2013: 66–69) would confirm the general “cosmic” interpretation of rock carvings.

This may find an interesting parallel, though merely symbolic, with Hesiod’s assertions on the role of the Pleiades for the beginning of the ploughing season (*Works and Days*, 618–623). Such considerations suggest how deep the link between the observation of the sky and agriculture should have been perceived by the farmers of Protohistory.

One last feature concurring to the general “cosmic” interpretation is the parallel between crux-like figures at the top of zig-zag signs (fig. 22; Olcese, personal information for *ciappo* delle Conche) and proper stylised human beings holding thunder-like objects from Mount Bego (fig. 23; De Lumley 2003: 77).

Ciappi or other places where rock art has been discovered could thus be interpreted as open-air sanctuaries, where protohistoric people could have had a cult devoted to deities they identified with sky and water, the very source of fertility (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 36).

In this perspective, stylised human beings holding zig-zag lightning-like objects (fig. 22; fig. 23) may also represent a priest making water spring from rocks (De Lumley & Échassoux 2001: 284), while zig-zag lines could ideally evoke natural sources or irrigation channels.

Carved rock outcrops like the *ciappi* (especially *ciappo* del Sale; fig. 3) deserve specific attention on this matter, as a number of studies suggest their likely functional use as meeting and exchange points. Thus, zig-zag thunder-like carvings (fig. 22) would have functioned as conveyors of rainwater (Leale Anfossi 1976: 23, 26; Priuli & Pucci: 1994: 36; Vicino 2013: 66).

The hypothesis is undoubtedly very interesting. Still, one should distinguish between the zig-zag carvings whose shape and disposition seem to suggest their use as conveyors, from those whose use does not seem to have been functional. The first case is that of carvings orientated from top to bottom of the *ciappi*, and are big enough to evacuate the water. The second is that of zig-zag lines that are realised in the very middle of rock outcrops, not large enough to evacuate the water. In such occurrences, their use seems to have been mostly symbolic. The same can be said for large cupels disposed at the bottom of carved *ciappi*; one could conjecture they were meant to water the cattle, but smaller cupels must have had a different function.

Thus, if it cannot be excluded that some carved *ciappi* gathered a large number of people, it should be accepted that this cannot have been solely for a commercial purpose. In fact, it seems much more probable that carvings “sacralized” these places that only occasionally gathered large numbers of people, who shared the same purpose. If this theory is correct, those may have been shepherds practising transhumance. Comparison with proper mountain sites like Mount Bego seems to confirm this theory, as most of the carvings from this context have been dated to the Chalcolithic or Early Bronze Age (De Lumley 2003: 110–113). This is exactly the moment when transhumant farming developed in Liguria (Maggi 2013: 6, 8, 10).



Fig. 20: Carving representing a square-like grid from *ciappo delle Conche*, Finale area, Italy. Photo: Olcese, 2018.

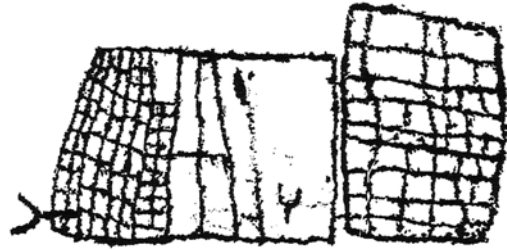


Fig. 21: Carving representing a square-like grid and two *bucrania* from Mount Bego area, France (drawing). De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, Fig. 84,5. Courtesy of Prof. H. De Lumley.



Fig. 22: Carving representing a zigzag thunder-like line from *ciappo delle Conche*, Finale area, Italy. The presence of a crux-like shape at the top may be interpreted as a stylized human being holding a thunder. Photo: Olcese, 2018.

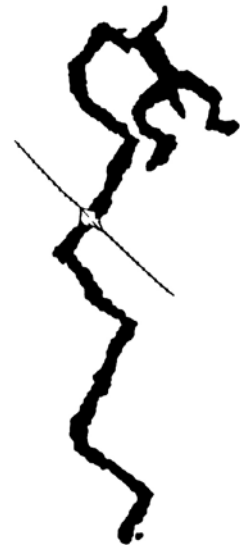


Fig. 23: Carving representing a stylized human being holding a thunder from Mount Bego area, France (drawing). De Lumley 2003: 77. Courtesy of Prof. H. De Lumley.

CONCLUSION

This work aimed first to illustrate how complex and interesting studies on rock carving art are, even though they require facing major difficulties regarding dating and interpretation.

Enquires in Valcamonica (Bergamo, Brescia, Italy) and the Mount Bego area (France) prove how useful modern technologies in this research field are. Techniques including photogrammetry, laser scanning (Malnati & Keller 2012: 297–298), or electronic microscopy (De Lumley 2003: 34–35), combined with a close topographic approach (Huet 2017), enable detailed surveys, and a better understanding of the overlaps. A relative chronology can then be proposed for such evidence.

Furthermore, recent research projects, such as that lead by the *Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, aiming to realise a proper catalogue of the carvings from Valcamonica (Malnati, Keller 2012: 297–298) prove how vital the prospects in rock carvings art research are.

This preamble allows a better understanding of the importance of the carvings from the Finale area (Savona, Italy) as a case study. This context would require a complete study with the same methodology used by the *Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* in Valcamonica or De Lumley's team in Mount Bego area. This research should include a proper technological analysis and the creation of a detailed catalogue of the carvings. For the time being, the comparison with these better-known contexts only allowed the establishment of a relative chronology of evidence from the Finale area between the Chalcolithic and Iron Ages, and a general interpretation of their symbolism.

Just like any form of art, rock carvings resume the cultural identity of the people who created them (Anati 1990: 71). This is why studying them requires an interdisciplinary methodology, in which archaeology, art history and cultural anthropology merge (Brusa-Zappellini 2012: 306–307).

These assumptions and the comparison with carvings from Mount Bego (De Lumley 2003: 94–98) lead to the conclusion that the evidence from the Finale area may be related to a form of cosmic ritual. This cult would have gathered restrict groups of people in specific occasions, possibly due to the change of lifestyles in Liguria, with particular regard to the appearance of transhumance, between the Chalcolithic and Bronze Ages (Maggi 2013: 6, 8, 10).

APPENDIX. TABLE: *FINALE ROCK CARVINGS CHRONO-TYPOLOGY:* *A PROPOSAL*

This table has been realized by comparison with evidence from the Mount Bego area (Mercantour National Park, France) and Valcamonica (Bergamo, Brescia, Italy).

The dating of Mount Bego rock art is based on the work of the French archaeologist De Lumley'. Since 1964, his team combined the use of plaster casts with electronic microscopy, as well as drawing at direct contact with surface, and experimentation (De Lumley 2003: 34–35). Based on the position of the carvings, but also on the shape, width and depth of the figures, De Lumley established an approximate relative chronology of rock art from the Mount Bego area.

Typological comparison based on representations of arms offered more specific and complete results.

The study of the resemblances between the carvings and arms typical of the *Civilisation du Rhône* and Polada culture, spreading throughout the Rhône Valley and northern Italy between 1800 and 1500 B.C., established a *terminus ante quem* to the Medium Bronze age (De Lumley 2003: 112–113, De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 16–22).

Most recent research studies have extended this chronology from Neolithic (5600–3400 B.C. ca.) or even Mesolithic (8000–5600 B.C. ca.) to the Iron Age (900 B.C.–Roman epoch, De Lumley 2003: 116–117). Two elements led to this conclusion: first, a complete revision of archaeological material from the Mount Bego area dating to the Mesolithic (Bianchi 2016: 13); second, the study of a few tree-like carvings that can be compared to evidence dating to the transition between the Bronze and Iron Ages (Bianchi 2016: 23)²².

A closer enquiry on the topography of Mount Bego carvings has recently permitted an even better understanding of the overlaps and, consequently, a more complete chronology. In his recent work, Huet has, for instance, pointed out that the representation of some kinds of arms, as the knives, precede the pictures of axes at the Bronze Age; again, the difference between different “types” of *bucrania* proves the evolution of this kind of representation between the Copper Age and the Final Bronze age (Huet 201: 157–158).

It was the Italian archaeologist Anati who began, in 1964, a systematic study of the carvings in Valcamonica. He combined manual survey (drawing) with an analysis of stylistic evolution.²³ He specifically conducted a thematic study of descriptive scenes, which allowed him to propose a dating.

Most ancient carvings, which mainly represent abstract forms, would date to the Mesolithic (Proto-camuno style, ca. 8 000–5500 B.C., Anati 1990: 120). Styles I and II, characterised by the presence of stylised human beings praying and geometric forms, would refer to the Neolithic period (ca. 5500–3300 B.C., Anati 1990:122–123; De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 27–27). Between the Chalcolithic and Bronze Ages, rock carvings art is characterized by naturalistic Style III (ca. 3200–1200 B.C., Anati 1990: 124–127; De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 28–29; Bossoni et al. 2014: 62–65). Human representations show ploughing and hunting scenes, “divine” figures associated with the sun, and a large quantity of arms: halberds, swords and daggers. Square-like grids, interpreted as maps, are also present (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 33 and fig. 6). In the Iron Age (Style IV, ca. 1200 B.C.–Roman epoch/1st century B.C., Anati 1990 128–129; De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 30; Bossoni et al. 2014: 65–66), stylised human representations increase. Mainly duel, hunt, and cult scenes are presented.

The Roman (from 1st century A.D.) and Medieval periods (post-Camuno style) are marked by a reworking of more ancient shapes and themes, such as the transformation of bronze-aged *phi* pictures into Christian cruxes (Bossoni et al. 2014: 69).

²² The author draws a specific parallel with tree-like pictures from Iberian Peninsula dating to the transition between the Bronze Age and Iron Age (Coimbra 2013:180, fig. 2).

²³ For a comment on Anati’s contribution in rock art research field: De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 22.

Finale rock carvings chrono-typology : a proposal						
THEME/ SCENE OF THE CARVING	DETAILS	SITE OF DISCOVERY	DATE PROPOSED	BIBLIOGRAPHY	COMPARISONS (CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCES)	
Axe	Rectangular-blade, long-hilt axe	Caprazoppa pro- motory, Cava dei Fossili area	Chalcolithic (3400-2200 B.C. ca.)	Vicino 2013: 66	The carving found in Caprazoppa promotory can be compared to a stylized human being from Mount Bego (France) holding a axe dating to Bronze age (De Lumley 2003: 77, 110-113). A parallel can also be drawn with two axes carved on the menhir-stature Bagnolo II (Valcamonica, Italy) dating to Chalcolithic or Early Bronze age (Anati 1990: 60-62); De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 28	
	Grids	Large, square-like shapes with surface splitted in approxi- mately equal-sized squares		<i>Ciappo</i> delle Conche	Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, fig. 84; 41, fig. 89, 90	A parallel can be drawn with carvings which are, in both cases, interpreted as maps or parcelled fields, and date to the transition between Chalcolithic and Bronze Age. This is the case of a number of "grids" from Mount Bego area (De Lumley 2003: 82-83; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, fig. 84, 5) and Valcamonica (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 33 and fig. 6)
Plough		The plough share is clearly visible	Caprazoppa pro- motory, Cava dei Fossili area	Arobba & Caramiello 2013: 86; Vicino 2013, 66	The shape of the carving found in Cava dei Fossili can be compared to a oak tree plough dating to Early Bronze age found in Lavagnone (Garda lake, Brescia, Italy; Arobba & Caramiello 2013: 86). A parallel can also be drawn with ploughing scenes in Mount bego area (De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, fig. 244, 1)	
Zigzag thunder-like lines	Sery of large, long channels, most the time associated to cupels	<i>Ciappo</i> dei Ceci A/ Bric Spaventaggi area	Bronze Age (2200-1000 B.C. ca.)	Tizzoni 1975: 92-93; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 43, fig. 98, fig. 99; Vicino 2013: 66	Thunder-like carvings can be compared to stylized human beings holding thunder-like signs from Mount Bego area dating to Early Bronze age (De Lumley 2003: 77, 97-99, 110-113). In one case a crux-like shape at the top of a zigzag line in <i>ciappo</i> delle Conche may be interpreted as a stylized human being holding a tunder (Olcese, personal information for <i>ciappo</i> delle Conche)	
		<i>Ciappo</i> delle Conche		Tizzoni 1975: 90; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 38, fig. 80, fig. 82; Vicino 2013: 66	Two parallels can be drawn. First, Priuli and Pucci compare the whole structure of <i>Arma</i> dei Buoi to some Chalcolithic or Early Bronze age funerary hypogea from Sardinia (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 42). Secondly, the <i>bucranium</i> can be compared to a similar carving from Mount Bego likely dating at Bronze Age (De Lumley, 2003: 99-101; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, fig. 176, 16)	
<i>Bucrania</i>	In Prehistoric times, <i>Arma</i> dei Buoi has been transformed into a sort of structure including vaulted walls, false columns, seats and even wooden covering. The <i>bucranium</i> was located on the internal vaulted wall	<i>Arma</i> (cave) dei Buoi not far from <i>ciappo</i> delle Conche	Val di Nava	Priuli & Pucci 1994: 42, fig. 92, fig. 93	The <i>bucranium</i> can be compared to a very similar carving found in Mount Bego De Lumley dates at Bronze Age (De Lumley 2003: 49, 99-101; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011, fig. 176, 10)	
	So-called "Altar" in Val di Nava			Priuli & Pucci 51, fig. 127; Vicino 2013: 69; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 30		

Shovel - like cupels	The shapes have got a particular shovel-like form	Olle	Vicino 2013, 69; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 30 and fig. 10	This shape can be compared to shovels used in Bronze Age during incineration rituals in Final Bronze Age (Vicino 2013, 69; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 30 and fig. 10)
Stylized human beings	Images interpreted as stylized human figures are most of the times long crux-like figures, a circle representing the head, a thin bifurcation indicating hands and feet. In one case, people are holding hands, in a sort of dance	<i>Ciappo delle Conche</i>	Priuli & Pucci 1994: 40, 41, fig. 85, fig. 86, fig. 87, fig. 89; Vicino 2013: 64, 66	Dating these figures is particularly difficult, as styles from different areas are really different. Still, they can be connected to the increase of human stylized representations in Camunian rock art in Final Bronze Age and most of all in Iron Age (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 30, 34; Bossoni et al. 2014: 65-66). Specific parallels can be drawn with the "initiation dance" carving from Rock 32 in Naquane (Valcamonica: Stüss 1958: 39, fig. 51)
	Two figures with thin body, curved legs and arms crossed behind the head, stay in front of each other. The scene has been object of two different interpretations. Thus, the characters could be praying or dwelling	<i>Ciappo del Sale</i>	Leali Anfossi 1976: 23-24; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 45, fig. 103, fig. 104	
	Crux-like, isolated stylized human beings	Rocca Campanea	Tizzoni 1976: 87; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 48, fig. 114, fig. 115, fig. 116	The picture can be connected to the increase of human stylized representations in Camunian rock art in Iron age (De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 30, 34). G. Vicino interprets the shape as a priest (Vicino 2013: 68; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 29). The cupels below the picture seem to evoke the Pleiades cluster like he supposes in the case of Rocca di Pertì and Vene (Vicino 2013: 66, 69)
Building - like figures	The figures have the form of stylized huts	<i>Ciappo dei Ceci B</i>	Vicino 2013: 68; Olcese, personal information	A. Priuli and I. Pucci (Priuli & Pucci 1994: 47) assert the huts are modern. Still, they resemble to carvings from Valcamonica which likely picture huts (Leali Anfossi 1976: 23; Anati 1990: 128; Stüss 1958: 62, fig. 90). Savardi compares these evidences to hut-like cinerary urns, a typical burial custom of Final Bronze Age and beginning of Iron Age (Savardi 2012: 13, 134)
		<i>Ciappo del Sale</i>	Leali Anfossi 1976: 21-25; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 47, fig. 110	

<p>Crux-like, arrow-like and "phi" figures</p>		<p><i>Arma dei Buoi</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Arma della Moretta</i></p> <p><i>Ciappo dei Ceci A/ Brie Spaventaggi</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Ciappo delle Conche</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Ciappo del Sale</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Val di Nava (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Monte Cucco (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Rocca Carpanea</p>	<p><i>Arma dei Buoi</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Arma della Moretta</i></p> <p><i>Ciappo dei Ceci A/ Brie Spaventaggi</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Ciappo delle Conche</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Ciappo del Sale</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Val di Nava (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Monte Cucco (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Rocca Carpanea</p>	<p><i>Arma dei Buoi</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Arma della Moretta</i></p> <p><i>Ciappo dei Ceci A/ Brie Spaventaggi</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Ciappo delle Conche</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p><i>Ciappo del Sale</i> (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Val di Nava (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Monte Cucco (ancient and cristian?)</p> <p>Rocca Carpanea</p>	<p>Tizzoni 1976: 91; Odetti 1977: 140 (cruxes)</p> <p>Isetti 1965: 112-114; Giuggiola 1982: 48-49; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 53-54, fig. 138-154; Vicino 2013: 66, 69; De Pascale & Vicino 2017: 30 (crux-like, arrow-like and phi-like figures)</p> <p>Tizzoni 1976: 93; Odetti 1977: 140; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 43 (cruxes)</p> <p>Tizzoni 1976: 89-90; Odetti 1977: 140 (cruxes); Olcese, personal information for phi-figures</p> <p>Odetti 1977: 140; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 46, fig. 107 (cruxes)</p> <p>Tizzoni 1976: 95-96; Odetti 1977: 140; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 50, fig. 125 (cruxes) and fig. 127</p> <p>Tizzoni 1976: 88; Odetti 1977: 140 (cruxes)</p> <p>Tizzoni 1976: 86; Odetti 1977: 140; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 49, fig. 118 (cruxes)</p>	<p>As he tried to propose a precise chronology for carvings from <i>Arma della Moretta</i> G. Isetti proposed to date them all to "Metal Age", without indicating if he was referring to Bronze Age, or rather to Iron Age. Yet, he firmly distinguished them from the well-known bronze-aged Mount Bego carvings (Isetti 1965: 116). As a matter of fact, if we consider the similarity between this kind of evidences and stylized human figures, we should propose they date back to Iron Age</p>
	<p>Simplified representations of the stars</p>	<p>Star</p> <p>The 7 cupels seem to picture a crescent, or a question mark</p> <p>Cupels have the same form of a crescent, or a question mark</p> <p>The figures have been interpreted as stylized representations of vulvas. Still, their shape evokes most of all that of suns</p>	<p><i>Ciappo delle Conche</i></p> <p>Top of the so-called "Rocca di Petri"</p> <p>Vene di Rialto</p> <p>Rocca Carpanea</p> <p><i>Ciappo del Sale</i></p>	<p>Iron Age?</p> <p>Indefinite chronology</p>	<p>Tizzoni 1976: 89-90; Vicino 2013: 67</p> <p>Vicino 2013: 66</p> <p>Vicino 2013: 66, 69</p> <p>Tizzoni 1976: 86; Priuli & Pucci 1994: 49, fig. 118, fig. 119</p> <p>Leali Anfossi 1976: 20, fig. 8</p>	<p>G. Vicino points out that star representations such as that of <i>Ciappo delle Conche</i>, Petri and Vene are known at least from the beginning of Protohistory (Vicino 2013: 66)</p> <p>These cupels have been interpreted as representations of the Pleiades cluster (Vicino 2013: 66-68; De Pascale & Vicino 20107: 29). A few carvings from Mount Bego would also have the same form (De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 344-347). They can be compared to Nebra sky disk dating to Early Bronze age (Vicino 2013: 67; De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 57). Still, G. Vicino generally dates star representations to Protohistory (Vicino 2013: 66-67)</p> <p>Better known representations of sexual symbols from Grotticella Blanc-Cardini (Balz Rossi, Western Liguria) dating to the Palolithic (Mussi & Vicino 2012: 491-492, 494, fig. 7 and fig. 9) have a totally different shape. Besides, the "vulvas" figures from Rocca Carpanea could also evoke a sun, as proves a comparison with Mount Bego area (De Lumley & Échassoux 2011: 57; 336, 337, fig. 353)</p>
<p>Sexual Symbols (?)</p>						

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VERSO UN APPROCCIO ARCHEOLOGICO ALLO STUDIO
DELLE INCISIONI RUPESTRI PREISTORICHE. DAL METODO
ALLA SIMBOLOGIA: IL CASO-STUDIO DEL FINALE (LIGURIA
OCCIDENTALE).

MARTINA OLCESE



Il presente lavoro intende proporre una riflessione sull'approccio scientifico allo studio delle incisioni rupestri, partendo da una prospettiva archeologica.

In tal modo, la prima parte dell'articolo pone in essere le principali problematiche inerenti l'indagine su queste testimonianze, fra cui spiccano gli elementi inerenti la datazione e l'interpretazione. Da un lato, la datazione delle incisioni è da sempre confrontata all'assenza di depositi archeologici di riferimento che consentano una cronologia assoluta. Dall'altro, lo studio tecnologico di queste testimonianze, con particolare riferimento al microcalco, alla fotogrammetria e al laser scan, consente di stabilire per esse una cronologia relativa.

L'interpretazione delle figure incise sulla pietra, d'altro canto, appare imprescindibilmente legata ad una prospettiva interdisciplinare, che trascende l'archeologia per trarre puntualmente spunto dalla storia dell'arte, dall'antropologia culturale e persino dalla medicina. In questo contesto, è fatto riferimento a recenti studi che hanno messo in rilievo come il repertorio iconografico e persino lo stile delle incisioni rupestri preistoriche trovino riscontro in immagini prodotte da menti in stato psicofisico alterato. Tali fenomeni si ascrivono ad esempi etnografici ravvisabili in popolazioni del Sud Africa e del Sud America. Sebbene paia improprio ascrivere sistematicamente a questo tipo di fenomeni la realizzazione dell'arte rupestre, da queste considerazioni si deduce che la pratica di incidere la pietra nel più remoto passato dovesse rientrare in un particolare contesto culturale e simbolico.

La seconda sezione del testo propone una prima scansione cronologica delle incisioni rupestri rinvenute nel Finale (Liguria occidentale, Italia), sino ad oggi mai oggetto di uno studio sistematico. A tale scopo, viene intrapreso un riscontro con due contesti particolarmente bene indagati: l'arte rupestre del Monte Bego (Alpes du Sud, Francia) e della Valcamonica (Bergamo-Brescia, Italia).

Il risultato di questo primo tentativo è di aver suddiviso le testimonianze rinvenute nel Finale in due gruppi. Il primo e più antico, che include soprattutto i cosiddetti "fulmini", è stato datato tra il Calcolitico e l'antica età del Bronzo. Il secondo, in seno al quale si distinguono alcune figure antropomorfe, risalirebbe invece all'età del Ferro.

Sul piano strettamente simbolico, il confronto con la teoria di H. De Lumley sulle testimonianze dal Monte Bego ha consentito di porre i rinvenimenti provenienti dal Finale in relazione con una forma di religiosità solare o comunque legata agli elementi atmosferici, i cui richiami all'ambito simbolico della fertilità e della pastorizia sono numerosi.

Al testo è aggiunta un'appendice che illustra brevemente le premesse metodologiche su cui si è basata la datazione delle incisioni rupestri del Monte Bego e della Valcamonica, e propone una vera e propria tavola crono-tipologica delle incisioni del Finale.

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