XXVI VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM 2015
Capo di Ponte (Bs) ITALY
September 9 to 12, 2015

PROSPECTS FOR THE PREHISTORIC ART RESEARCH
50 years since the founding of Centro Camuno

PROSPETTIVE SULLA RICERCA DELL’ARTE PREISTORICA
a 50 anni dalla fondazione del Centro Camuno
Proceedings

PROSPECTS FOR THE PREHISTORIC ART RESEARCH
50 years since the founding of Centro Camuno

PROSPETTIVE SULLA RICERCA DELL’ARTE PREistorica
a 50 anni dalla fondazione del Centro Camuno

Proceedings of the XXVI Valcamonica Symposium, September 9 to 12, 2015
Atti del XXVI Valcamonica Symposium, 9 - 12 Settembre 2015

I Edizione multilingua, Edizioni del Centro (Capo di Ponte)
ISBN 9788886621465

© 2015 by Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, Capo di Ponte

All rights are reserved. No copying. Reviews can reproduce short citations and no more than two illustrations. All other reproduction, in any language and in any form is prohibited. Approval shall be granted only by the copyright holder, in writing. Unless otherwise stated, illustrations of articles have been provided by the Archive of CCSP or by the respective authors. The ideas expressed by the authors do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board. Likewise, the illustrations provided by the authors are published under their own responsibility.


International Scientific Committee / Comitato Scientifico Internazionale:
Ulf Bertillon, Director of Swedish Rock Art Research Archives, University of Göteborgs, Sweden
Tino Bino, Catholic University of Brescia, Italy
Filippo Maria Gambari, Archaeological Superintendent of Lombardy, Milan, Italy
Raffaele de Marinis, University of Milan, Italy
Annaluisa Pedrotti, University of Trento, Italy
Cesare Ravazza, CNR – IDPA, Laboratory of Palynology and Palaeoecology, Research Group Vegetation, Climate and Human Stratigraphy, Milan, Italy
Mila Simões de Abreu, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD), Vila Real, Portugal

Edited by / A cura di: Federico Troletti (CCSP / University of Trento, Italy)
Editing / Redazione: Federico Troletti, Valeria Damioli
Translated / Traduzioni: William J. Costello, Valeria Damioli, Ludwig Jaffe, Federico Troletti
Layout and Graphic Design / Impaginazione e grafica: Valeria Damioli

Printed in September 2015 by Press Up s.r.l.
Finito di stampare in Settembre 2015, presso Press Up s.r.l.

EDIZIONI DEL CENTRO
Via Marconi, 7
25044 Capo di Ponte (BS) - ITALY
tel. +39 0364 42091
email info@ccsp.it - www.ccsp.it
XXVI VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM 2015
PROSPECTS FOR THE PREHISTORIC ART RESEARCH
50 years since the founding of Centro Camuno
PROSPETTIVE SULLA RICERCA DELL’ARTE PREISTORICA
a 50 anni dalla fondazione del Centro Camuno

Under the auspices and the partecipation of / Con il patrocinio e la partecipazione di

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
World Heritage Centre
ICCCROM
Organizzazione Italiana per l’UNESCO
Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo
Suprintendenza Archeologia della Lombardia
Regione Lombardia

Consorzio Comuni BIM di Valle Camonica
Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica
Valle Camonica Distretto Culturale
Arte rupestre della Valle Camonica Sito Unesco n. 94
Comune di Capo di Ponte
Riserva Naturale incisioni rupestri di Ceto, Cimbergo, Paspardo

With the support of / Con il sostegno di
Banca Valle Camonica (Gruppo UBI Banca)
SIAS Segnaletica Stradale s.p.a., Esine
STYLE DATING OF ROCK ART - AN OUTDATED METHOD?

Heidrun Stebergløkken *

SUMMARY
In this article I have tried to show some of the basic challenges that are addressed in my PhD-thesis. This article’s framework only allows a short introduction of my work and the methodical challenges within this topic. The article is intended to question the use of shoreline dating and style dating, and especially considering the combination of those two. The challenge is twofold. On the one hand we see that shoreline dating assumes that all rock art localities were shore bound, and some of the material from Central Norway seems not to be. Shorelines only give maximum dates, but the rock art could have been made any time after the panel had become dryland and were accessible. On the other side the challenge is that the concept of style has never really been defined. A solution to these challenges is so distinguish between gestalt, type and style, which I think is representing different levels within rock art expression.

INTRODUCTION
My PhD-project focuses on the concept of style in rock art. Style is often seen in a time perspective. Since the beginning of the 20th century many researchers have tried to systematize the rock art of Norway (Brøgger 1906; Gjessing 1936; Hallström 1938; Hansen 1904; Malmer 1981; Shetelig 1921, 1922). As an attempt to make sense of the material, much effort has been put on classifications, typology and chronological sequences based on the rock art’s style. Traditionally, the rock art in Norway is divided into two traditions; the Northern and the Southern tradition. The first is often connected to the Stone Age hunting tradition and is dominated by cervids, but you also find marine birds, whales, boats (rectangular and often without crew), some geometric figures (e.g. zigzags or fringe figures) and fishes. The Southern tradition is often seen in relation to the South-Scandinavian Bronze Age cultures and is overrepresented with large ships with lines indicating crew. Spirals, concentric ring figures, cup marks, foot prints, domestic animals as horses, are also represented.

My study area is Central Norway, where both traditions are represented. In this paper I will focus on the Northern material from Central Norway, which constitutes the basis of my thesis. The aim is to study how style has been used in the rock art research of Central Norway. The material consists only of 552 figures from 67 panels. Of the 552 figures, 260 are cervids. The cervids therefore stand out as the largest group of motifs. The rest consists of 86 whales, 110 birds, 65 boats and 31 fish figures.

STYLE AND DATING
Using style in combination with shoreline dating, researchers developed a stylistic sequence of the Northern material which has been used in greater or lesser extent for almost a century. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a common theory that style developed from naturalistic to schematic. This was founded in an evolutionary idea that style developed in this linear way, and that the style degenerated from a primitive naturalistic and artistic expression to a schematic form; that lacked aesthetics and was reduced to something abstract and symbolic (Gjessing 1936, p. 159). Gutorm Gjessing (1936) developed a chronological sequence of the material from the Northern tradition in Central Norway. The sequence evolved from naturalistic via semi-naturalistic to schematic style;

* PhD-Candidate Archaeology NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Historical Studies (Norway)
• Style I – Large naturalistic animals, often just contoured drawn.
• Style II – Smaller but still contoured drawn animals, less naturalistic and sometimes with internal lines (lifelines).
• Style III – Small schematic animals with internal pattern (Gjessing 1936, p. 168)

The stylistic sequence was supported with shoreline dating. In Scandinavia, since the Holocene, there has existed a land uplift after the disappearance of the ice that coved Scandinavia during the last Ice Age. This land uplift is actually still going on. The logic behind it is; the higher up in the landscape, the older the rock art. Combining these two methods is common in Norway and in other parts of the world. The challenge is that this style sequence developed in the 1930s and is not always supported by the findings in Central Norway. According to the theory, younger styles can be found at higher sea levels, but older styles should not be found at lower sea levels. There are several sites which doesn’t follow the pattern, one site in Central Norway really stands out; Evenhus (Frostastad municipality). The challenge is that there is no good relying shoreline curves throughout Central Norwegian, so the datings I use are rough dating meant only to show a tendency. All these boats show great similarity (Fig. 2), but the shoreline dating is quite different. Figure A: is located 22 masl, this sea level correspond to approx. 3300 BP. Figure B which are almost identical to A, is located 30 masl, which makes it a thousand years older, approx. 4400 BP. Figure C is a bit different, but the figure show similarity in the way it is constructed. This figure are much older according to shoreline dating, it is located 22 masl, which in this area dates approx. to 5000 BP. Of course, shoreline dating only gives maximum dates. The rock art could have been made any time after the panels were available after the land uplift. But figure A from Evenhus cannot be older than 3300 BP, and I find it difficult to dismiss the similarity with figure B. This indicates that the panels not always were shore bound. This is just one example of many, and it shows that shorelines not always support the similarities or dissimilarities of the material in Central Norway. Using shorelines to support the rock art’s style is therefore problematic in this region.

Style makes no sense?
What I miss about Lindgaard’s (2014) conclusions, is the concept of style. When she points out the incorrect use of style in connection with the chronology, she rejects the methodical use of style. As a consequence of this, she leaves the concept of style. In my work I wanted not to follow this path because I believe style gives meaning to the material. A great challenge with the rock art research on a general basis is the lack of definition of style. As a consequence, researchers use the concept differently. Many rock art researchers also use the concept of type. Style and type are often used interchangeably and researchers do not necessarily make the same distinctions between them. This doesn’t always lead to serious consequences, not if the
research’s aim isn’t to sort, classify or make chronology based on these concepts. I feel strongly that we need to develop a conscious awareness of these concepts, especially when they are being used as a foundation for classifications and dating.

I also believe it is necessary that we separate type and style, and treat these concepts as foundations for different methodical approaches. I define type as something that is constructed by the researcher. Types are tools used for generalization in order to classify and organize a certain material. This helps the researchers to see potential patterns. Images are sorted into types based on their construction. For example, is the animal contour drawn or made up of different parts? Therefore, types do not need to reflect chronology.

Style, however, is something else. In my definition, style is part of the rock art, and is an aspect of the image which comes from the artist. Elements which can affect style may be: the artist’s choice of panel (the geology), choice of technique, composition, size of the figures, perspective, traditions (group, family, generation etc.) and the individual artist’s preferences. Since style can be seen as a reflection of the artist, I believe style should be seen on an individual level. This means that different styles do not necessarily have to mean a difference in time or dating. It can reflect different artists coexisting at the same time.

This correlates to what Polly Wiessner (2009) calls emblemic and assertive style. The emblemic style refers to groups and borders between groups. Assertive style, however, refers to individual identity and expression (Wiessner 2009, pp. 107-108). Researchers such as James R. Sackett (2009), William K. Macdonald (2009) and Stephen Plog (2009) have also worked with the same topic and how style can be an expression of both groups and individuals. In other words, style can refer to different levels. This represents the crux of the matter, how do we separate what is individual style or group style? And how can we be sure that what I see as an individual expression of style representing the artist is the same as another rock art researcher sees it? If we don’t define how we interpret style it is very likely that researchers will operate on different levels of style. The consequences can be misinterpretations and chronological sequences that make no sense. As a result the rock art material will appear as meaningless. One of the challenges in my PhD-project was to make a typology of the different motifs (presented in the introduction). At first this seemed like a comprehensible task, and many figures show similarities in the way they are constructed. Studying the figures further, they started to show more dissimilarities than similarities. What separated them wasn’t easy to pinpoint. As I started to group the material, I ended up with almost as many groups that there were figures, pushed to the extremes. There was a need for trying to identify what connected the figures, and if there was something similar to figures.

Michael Polanyi (1962) claims that all art forms is impossible to carry forward between different people or different generations with only some sort of a user manual. The art must be taught. He reckons that art can be taught through a master-apprentice relationship (Polanyi 1962, p. 53). It is difficult to say if this teaching have taken place by a master giving step by step guides to an apprentice, or if the apprentice where watching a master’s actions. A closer look at the material from Central Norway shows that there are some similarities in the basic structure of the motifs.

Ernest W. Adams and William Y. Adams (1991) use gestalt-theory to support typology as a method. Briefly summarized, gestalt-theory addresses our perception and how we see a picture. Wolfgang Köhler (1972) refers to that gestalt is often being used as synonym for form or shape. Perception is about creating meaning, to recognize and understand. Gestalt-factors like stimuli that are similar to each other/may be associated to each other, will affect how we organize and interpret the object/image. The overall principle behind gestalt-theory is the quest for the wholeness, how we are able to see patterns and relations (Ekeland 2004, pp. 214-216).

Peter S. Wells (2012) explains our process of seeing, and how our eyes move in all directions when looking at a picture, as saccadic movements. This means that our eyes are always fixed at two points and our eyes move in quick simultaneous movements between these two points. In other words our eyes are always comparing. When we study an object, we will first recognize the external form before we see the details and internal structure (Wells 2012, p. 20). I have transferred this theory to how we recognize rock art pictures, and find it most likely that the people that produced the rock art started with the external lines of the figure.

The typology should only answer one question. That means that you cannot explain several topics like dating, geographical variations and figurative construction at the same time. The goal for my typology is to see if there are any patterns in the way the figures are constructed. Because of this, my typology doesn’t tell anything about geographical orientation or chronology. But my typology shows that there are 4-5 basic compositions (for all five motifs) which I have identified as gestalts. These gestalts can be interpreted on the basis of Polanyi’s theories, as different schools or traditions of making rock art, used by different people at the same time period or passed down generations. The figures belonging to the same gestalt shows variations in different attributes. These variations I have interpreted as artistic freedom within a certain framework (gestalt). Some of these figures have similarities in attributes, and the figures are divided into different types according to absence or presence of certain attributes. My typology only shows the variation of gestals and types, but I have identified a third individual level; style. Very few figures are made so similar that they can be interpreted to have been made by the same person. There are however, a few figures that can be seen as having the same style. These figures don’t necessarily occur on the same panel as the figure under illustrates.

This illustration (Fig. 4) is an example to show how I have sorted the material. All of these boat figures
belong to gestalt B because they are all rectangular boats with two stems and internal markings. The top three figures belong to type 1; and have two vertical lines, and the three last figures belong to type 2; as they have both vertical and horizontal lines. I believe the two upper boat figures share the same style. The lines are constructed in a way that they almost seem identical. As explained in Fig. 2, these two boats (found at Evenhus V and Hammer VIII) are shoreline dated a thousand years apart. The sites are located 100 kilometers apart, but by sea the distance is reduced to 62 kilometers (Fig. 1). Both sites are located on strategic harbor areas at a passage through the fjord of Trondheim (Trondheimsfjorden). If I am correct in placing style at an individual level, it means that Hammer VIII were no longer shore bound when the figure was made, if it was made at the same time as that at Evenhus V. There are also more two more figures (4 & 5) in this example that share the same gestalt, type and style. These two figures are found at Hammer VIII as well but do not share the same type as previous example from this site. They are located right underneath each other at the same panel. Based on the fact that these two figures show the same style and the positioning on the panel, I interpret that they could have been made by the same person.

The general trend and conclusion
Asking in the title of this article if style dating is an outdated method, the answer has to be yes. The material from Central Norway supports that. I find both style and shoreline dating to be problematic at best, but they can also be directly misleading. This consequently will affect the interpretations. Operating with only the concept of style, it will not distinguish the different levels of information each figure may possess. Need to recognize the complexity of this rock art and the material in predetermined chronological phases, we closer to the individual artist. Instead of trying to fit the style at an individual level it might be possible to get passed down for generations. By attempting to see style at an individual level it might be possible to get closer to the individual artist. Instead of trying to fit the rock art sites served as markers or medium for the same or between different groups of people. A medium for communication for different groups of people, but not necessarily a meeting place. The gesticats, types and style imply several visits to the same panel. Even if the panels can be seen as one context, in fact it could consist of many different contexts involving different people belonging to different groups of tradition. In this setting, different style may reflect different artists. The few gesticats and types imply a standardization that may have been used for a long time. The teaching of the rock art could have been passed down for generations. By attempting to see style at an individual level it might be possible to get closer to the individual artist. Instead of trying to fit the material in predetermined chronological phases, we need to recognize the complexity of this rock art and the different levels of information each figure may possess.

Acknowledgements
Thanks to Kalle Sognnes for reading and commenting the manuscript.

Bibliography

Adams W. Y., Adams E. W.

Alsaker S. K.

Bakke E.

Bringer A.W.
1906 Elg og ren paa helleristninger i det nordslige Norge, i »Naturen« 10 (3), pp. 275-308.

Ekeland T.-J.

Gjesing G.
1936 Nordenfjelske ristninger og malinger av den artiske gruppe. Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, Serie B: Skrifter.

Hallström G.
1938 Monumental art of Northern Europe from the Stone Age, Stockholm, Thule.

Hansen A. M.
1904 Landdøm i Norge. En udsigt over bosætningsens historie, Kristiania, Fabritius.

Kohler W., Iversen G.
1972 Gestaltpsykologi, København, Vinten.

Lindgaard E.

MacDonald W. K.

Malmer M.P.

Pluc S.
2009 Sociopolitical implications of stylistic variation in the American
Session 5: Changes in rock art dating methods


POLANYI M.

SACKETT J. R.

SHETELIG H.
1921 Steinalders-kunst i Noreg, Bergen, Norsk aarbok.
1922 Primitiv tider i Norge. En oversigt over steinalderen, Bergen, John Griegs Forlag.

SOGNNES K.


WELLS P.S.

WIESSNER P.

Fig. 1 - Central Norway. Illustration: Raymond Sauvage, NTNU, The Museum of Natural and Cultural History (2015).
Fig. 2 - Boat figures. A: Evenhus V (Gjessing 1936), B: Hammer VIII (Bakka 1988), C: Rødøy I (Sognnes 1984).

Fig. 3 - Development of style phases, made by Sognnes (1994).

Fig. 4 - Gestalt, type and style. The six boat figures from the top: 1. Evenhus V (Gjessing 1936), 2. Hammer VIII (Bakka 1988), 3. Evenhus V (Gjessing 1936), 4. & 5. Hammer VIII (Gjessing 1936) and 6. Evenhus V (Gjessing 1936).