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PASTORAL GRAFFITI. OLD WORLD CASE STUDIES IN INTERPRETATIVE ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY

Giovanni KEZICH, *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, San Michele all'Adige, Trento, Italy*

Marta BAZZANELLA, *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, San Michele all'Adige, Trento, Italy*

Silvia SANDRONE, *Musée des Merveilles, Tende, France*

Contact email: g.kezich@museosanmichele.it; m.bazzanella@museosanmichele.it; ssandrone@departement06.fr

In a number of significant sites of the vast ancient pasturelands of the Old World, generations of wandering shepherds have left their testimony in the form of graffiti drafted on the rocks, sometimes in their tens of thousands, over a period of hundreds of years from ancient to modern times. The phenomenon is a conspicuous one, and has considerable significance, under a double perspective. On the one hand, the study of such pastoral graffiti may convey fresh ethnoarchaeological information as to the circumstances of the pastoral activities and the pastoral economy of the past. On the other hand, these signs, which can be often fully alphabetic as well as drawing upon ancient symbolic repertoires, can be of some aid to the interpretation of rock art as a whole genre of human expression, and projected back, in their significance and their modes of appearance, the earliest times of prehistory. Starting from ground breaking research on the sheperds' writings of the valley of Fiemme (Trentino, Italy cf. www.scrittedeipastori.it) the session will aim at bringing together evidence from similar cases in other eurasian settings, so as to further the specialists' acquaintance with this still largely unplundered terrain, in the general sceintific perspective of the interpretation of rock art.

Valcamonica rock-art: made by shepherds?

The rock-art of Valcamonica is justly famous: more than 100,000 figurative images are found in a limited area. Prior research approaches to the origin of this rock-art have focused on ritual and religion. This paper instead starts by placing the rock-art in the physical context of its landscape and in the social context of everyday life in a small-scale Iron Age society. I lay out hypotheses that draw on the whole range of views about the making of the rock-art, and develop their spatial and demographic implications. I consider those implications in light both of spatial analyses using, inter alia, viewshed and cost-distance measures, and of a reconstruction of the valley's Iron Age economic geography that draws on demographic modelling and land use analysis. On this basis, it becomes clear that the most likely creators of much of the rock-art were ordinary people going about their everyday lives: shepherds, farmers, hunters, wild-food gatherers.

Craig ALEXANDER, *Independent researcher*

contact email: craiga304@gmail.com

Keywords: Valcamonica, GIS, economic geography, demography, landscape archaeology

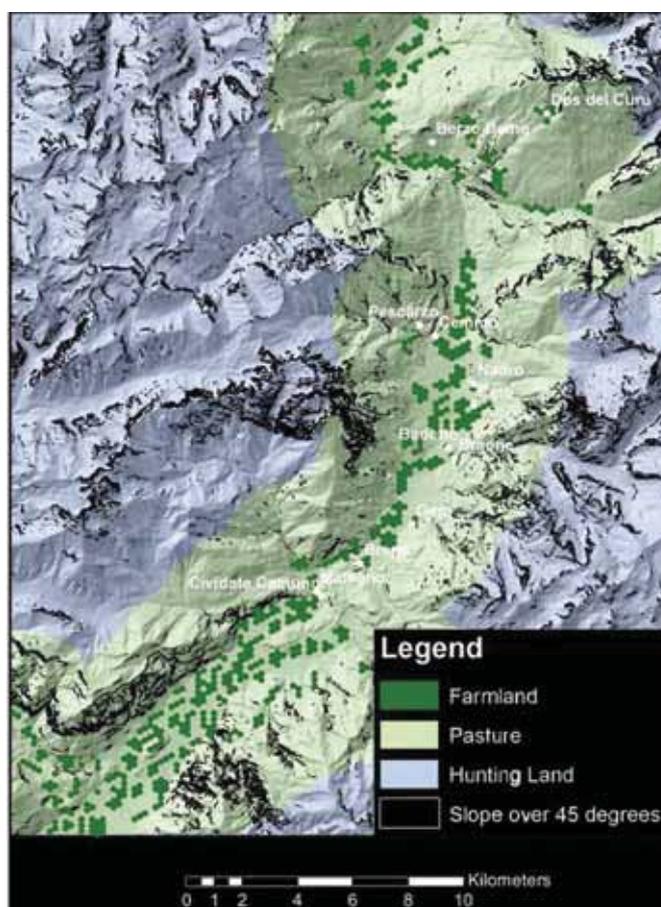


Fig.1 - Reconstruction of Iron Age Valcamonica economic geography (source: Craig Alexander)

Fig.2 - Sheep in modern Valcamonica (source: Christopher Chippindale)

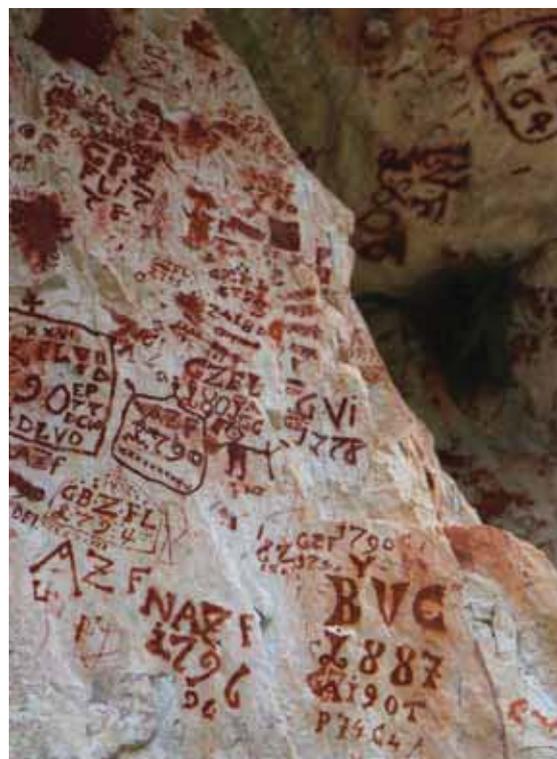


A painted mountain: the rock art of the shepherds of the Fiemme valley

On Mount Cornón in Fiemme Valley (Trentino region - NE Italy) more than 47,700 writings were created with red ochre, in contrast to most of the alpine inscriptions, which are engraved into the rock. These writings consist of initials, dates, cattle counts, family symbols, pictographs and short messages. The resulting visual effect is that of a painted mountain which is reminiscent of sacral places such as Monte Bego or Valcamonica. The chronological context however is more recent, it spans from the 15th century to the second half of the 20th, when the depopulation of the mountain caused the abandonment of animal husbandry, which is the economic activity that engendered these writings. The prelude to the writing activity on this mountain might even be older. The archaeological investigations carried out in two rock-shelters with evidence of pastoral activity documented in fact the presence of man since the Copper and Bronze Ages. More than 4,000 depictions from Mount Cornón have been analyzed and constitute the subject of this contribution, which also aims to provide an interpretative model for many other parietal art contexts in the Alps.

Marta BAZZANELLA, *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, Italy*
contact email:
martabazzanella@gmail.com

Keywords: landscape
archaeology, pastoralism, rock
art, ethnoarchaeology



A sign for every shepherd, for every shepherd a family: the “home sign” in the writings of the shepherds of Mount Cornón in the Fiemme valley

Giovanni BAROZZI, *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, Italy*
Vanya Delladio
contact email:
giova.barozzi@gmail.com

Keywords: Pastoralism, landscape archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, family-symbols, shepherd writing

On the rock faces of Mount Cornón, in Fiemme valley (Trentino), there is an incredible number of inscriptions consisting of initials, dates, cattle counts, drawings and messages, made with a natural pigment called bøl. The present contribution intends to dwell on a particular symbol, contained within some of these writings, the so-called “home sign” or “family sign”, used to uniquely identify each family of a community. Family signs, recorded and associated with other information included in the writings, such as the date and the initials of the shepherd and, sometimes, even the signature or the family nickname, makes it possible to recognize some of the family groups who, moving across the mountain pastures, used to practice activities related to the transhumance or to alpine cattle. The continuity over time of some of these home signs allows us to hypothesize on the practice of transmitting pastoral work from father to son, probably indicating a specialization of this activity in the territory concerned. This contribution is part of the popular alpine epigraphic research and in particular it aims at providing elements of comparison to the hypotheses already generated by the observation of the family signs of Cadore, in the Eastern Dolomites.

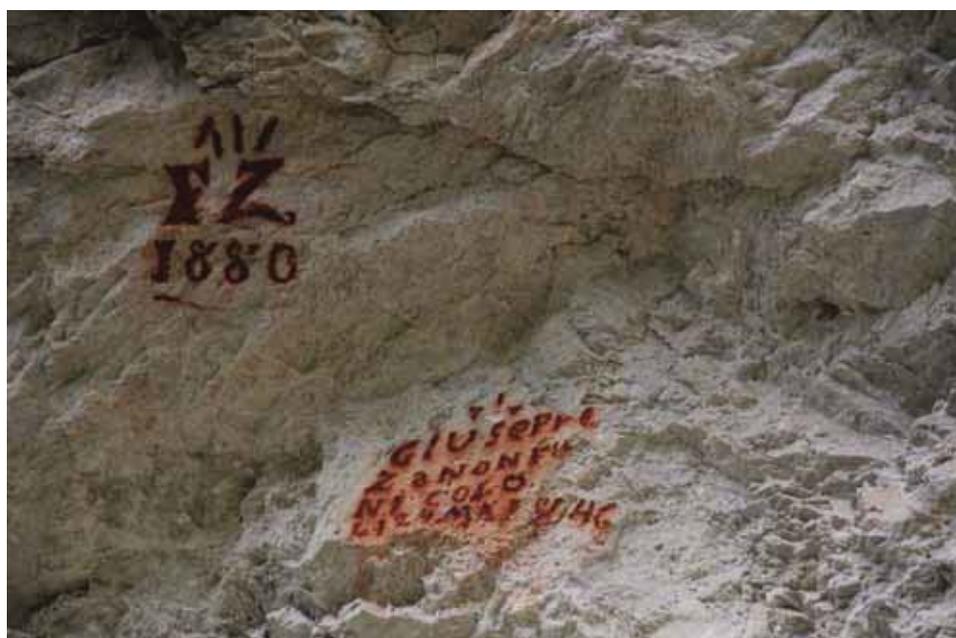
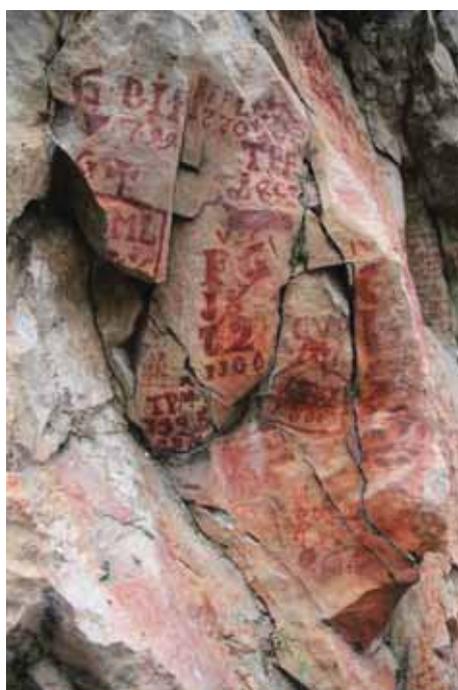


Fig.1 - Mount Cornón, Fiemme valley.
(photo Marta Bazzanella)
Fig.2 - Mount Cornón, Fiemme valley.
(photo Marta Bazzanella)

Written and Pictorial Graffiti as Sources for pastoral and hunting Activity in Medieval Scandinavia

Lack of written sources and archaeological excavations in Scandinavian rural areas represent the main obstacle for investigating hunter and pastoral communities in historical times. One of the few, but well attested cases concerns the boulder in Storhedder (Aust-Adger, Norway), whose use as natural shelter since the medieval period up until modern times, is attested by numerous pictorial and written graffiti which appear on the surface of the rock. Eighteen written graffiti make it possible to date part of the human activity since they have been recorded with the native Scandinavian writing system, the runic writing, which had been in use in Norway until late in the 14th century. The messages reflect in part the isolation in which medieval Norwegian shepherds and hunters must have lived, more impressive however, is how writing competences spread among Scandinavian medieval rural communities. To have mastery of writing in a still deeply oral-oriented society could have nonetheless symbolized prestige. Particularly remarkable are the hunting scenes and animal-like drawings which accompany the written graffiti. This paper will aim to contextualize human activity from an archaeological and philological perspective.

Giacomo BERNObI, *Institut für Nordische Philologie, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München*

contact email:
giacomobernobi@hotmail.it

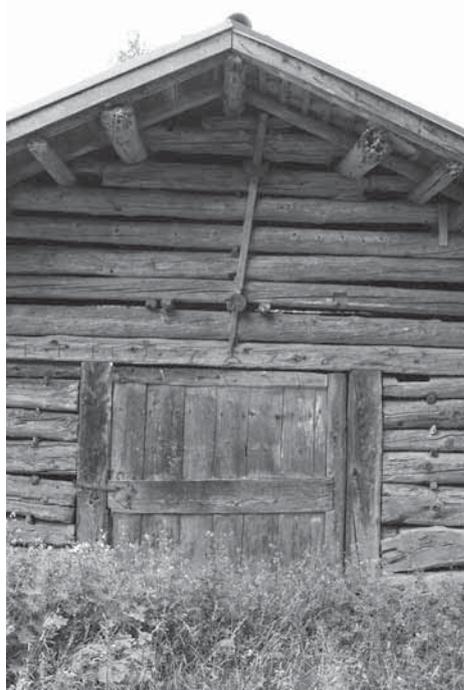
Keywords: pastoral graffiti, medieval Scandinavia, runic inscriptions

The mountain and the cross as center of the maso

From the XVI century onwards, in Primiero (in the eastern part of Trentino province, Italy), one can find a symbol composed of a mountain silhouette with a cross on its peak. This symbol appears in the center of the milèsimi: Which is a type of enigmatic inscription similar to an acronym and containing the date of construction (or re-construction). Symbol and inscription are carved in the door frame of the barn of the maso (farmhouse) which are situated in the maggenghi (mountain meadows) of middle elevation sites. Some useful comparisons may be drawn in relation to the wooden engravings and regional rock art engravings. Usually the symbol's position is perpendicular to both the door frame and the whole frontage of the cottage. Its exact position defines the placement of the other elements which make it part of the inscription. The particular importance of the symbol's placements seems to indicate the barn as the most sacred place of the whole maso as well as its functional center. Local memory does not preserve neither the name nor the significance of this symbol. In conclusion, the fact that these symbols indicate the center of the masi, puts into question the recently introduced term by scientists "calvary", with its direct connection to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, may be inadequate or even misleading.

Gianfranco BETTEGA,
Independent researcher
contact email:
zanco55@gmail.com

Keywords: symbols, cross,
inscriptions, barn, maggenghi



Ethnoarchaeology of Pastoralism in Valcamonica's high pastures

Jessica BEZZI, *Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy*

Mara MIGLIAVACCA, *Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy*

contact email: maragioia.migliavacca@gmail.com

The high pastures of Vione, in northern Valcamonica, have been exploited for many centuries by shepherds and people carrying out various other activities. A systematic field survey, made by one of the authors in the summer of 2017, has located several structures, most of which are probably linked to pastoral activities. Forty-seven buildings have been documented, subsequently mapped thanks to GIS technology and classified in different categories according to their dimension, shape and techniques of construction. Thanks to a multidisciplinary approach, data coming from different fields and sources (such as remote sensing, historical cartography, written sources, historical cadastres and place-names) has been combined and processed with GIS spatial analysis, in order to understand the interaction between structures and territory; understand pastoral strategy and their changes through time; reconstruct the absolute or relative chronology of the structures; understand the relationship between pastoral structures and rock art. The paper will compare the research results from northern Valcamonica with those of the two areas used as models for this research: Val di Sole (Trento) and Lessinia (Verona). Links will be drawn between the possible relationship of the analysed structures and the engravings found in Valcamonica.

Keywords: ethnoarchaeology, high pastures, pastoral activities, pastoral structures

Compass-made circle engravings from Giau Pass and Mondeval (S. Vito di Cadore, Dolomites, Veneto region, NE Italy)

Fabio CAVULLI, *Laboratorio "B. Bagolini", Dep. Of Humanities, University of Trento, Italy*

Francesco CARRER, *McCord Centre for Landscape, Newcastle University, UK*

contact email:
fabio.cavulli@unitn.it

Keywords: engravings, compass-made circles, Dolomites, mountain archaeology, landscape archaeology

The alpine pastures between the Giau pass and Mondeval have yielded significant evidence of human activity, from the Mesolithic to the present, including the Copper Age, the Bronze Age, the Middle Ages, the Modern period and World War I. The main reason for this intense occupation of the area, located between 1900 and 2700m asl, is related to the exploitation of ore resources (galena mining), as well as faunal, forestry and other environmental resources (traditionally animal husbandry and hay-making, nowadays hiking). Three areas, characterised by a gentle terrain and open vegetation, correspond to clusters of engravings on rocks or volcanic bedrock outcrops. These engravings are mainly compass-made circles, with variable grooves (from large and deep to shallow), often concentric, sometimes organized in geometric patterns and other times lacking any geometric organization. This evidence, which is difficult to date, matches with very few other examples. Analysing their spatial distribution, the land-use of the area and the information provided by documentary sources, we suggested they might have been used as boundary markers within the old community of San Vito di Cadore (Regola Grande di San Vito).



Igniting fire under mobile conditions and Late Neolithic-Bronze Age shepherding traces

Giorgio CHELIDONIO, *Accademia della Lessinia Onlus, Italy*
contact email:
gkelidonio@gmail.com

Keywords: strike-a-light, flint, pyrite, tinder, fire strategies

The availability of fire in high altitude alpine contexts was certainly significant for the late prehistoric pastoral frequentation, as the Iceman's discovery confirms: Ötzi had, in his belted pouch, a piece of *Fomes fomentarius* (as tinder) and a flint tool suitable as strike-a-light. During the IV millennium BC, this igniting technology, was widely adopted: the recent finding of a flint tool, with specific wear traces, on the Monte Baldo ridge (at 1734 meters a.s.l.) confirms that this kind of fire-making kit was used in alpine areas, maybe in shepherding and/or hunting strategies. Nevertheless, fire representations seem mostly uncommon in rock engravings, despite several ethno-archaeological sources which highlights the importance, in the Alps area, of fire ignition as a sacral meaning such as:

- ritual blazes (German: Brandopferplätze) on uplands as a message directed to divinities;

- fires from the sky, ignited by lightnings, which were considered as an expression of a "thunder divinity", such as "Jupiter Feretrius" for the Romans.

These considerations aim to promote a wider interpretation of rock engravings that could represent fire and/or lightning symbols, may be like "The Sorcerer" or "The tribal chief" of Monte Bego.



Fig.1 - Costabella ridge in middle the Baldo mountain chain. (photo Guido Gonzato)

Fig.2 - Flint strike-a-light, with heavily worn ends, found in Costabella ridge. (photo Giorgio Chelidonio)

Cameraccia cave in Valle dell'Alpe (Valfurva, SO)

Giuseppe COLA, *Istituto
Archeologico Valtellinese, Italy*
Francesco PACE, *Istituto
Archeologico Valtellinese*
contact email: frpc@libero.it

**Keywords: Valfurva,
epigraphical witnesses,
shepherds, engravings**

The Alpe Valley, the left lateral branch of Gavia Valley, joins Valfurva with Val di Rezzalo, at the Alpe Pass (2462 m. above sea level). It retains a clear glacial imprint from the final late glacial phases and the subsequent Holocene fluctuation. The schist has marble intercalation and an asymmetrical shape due to the dipping of the schistose layers. Going up the left slope of the valley, towards the imposing outcrop of the saccharoidal marble, just a little before reaching the Alpe Pass, we can observe several cavities, presumably due to the karst phenomenon. The biggest one of these cavities is now known as "grotta da l'Édélvâis", once called "grotta de la Cameraccia". Before the entrance and inside the cavity, a great number of marble slabs fallen from the vault of the cavern or removed by man are the epigraphical witnesses presumably left by shepherds, who had engraved their names and surnames in big letters, simple initials or dates and symbols. Analyzing these surnames we can recognize two principle areas for their origin: the Valtellinese area with surnames such as Simonelli, Castelli, Zubiani, Menini, Ricetti, Girelli, Pruneri, Rastelli, Bormolini, and the Camuna area indicated by surnames such as Boldini, Angeli, Faustinelli, Cenini, and Carettoni.



Fig.1 - Valle dell'Alpe (Sondrio),
Cameraccia Cave. (photo G. Cola)

Fig.2 - One of the several inscription
engraved on a marble slab. (photo G.
Cola)

“Pastoral Graffiti” in the Val Grande National Park and in the protected areas of Ossola Valley. Results of a first mapping

Fabio COPIATTI, *Parco Nazionale Val Grande*
Elena POLETTI ECCLESIA, *Civico Museo Archeologico Mergozzo*
contact email: fabio.copiatti@parcovalgrande.it;
elenapoletti@aligraphis.it

Keywords: pastoral graffiti, val grande, ossola, wood carving, rock carving and painting

The Val Grande National Park is a protected area located in the Italian Alps, in North-Eastern Piedmont. This alpine environment is mostly wild and uninhabited but retains traces of the once pastoral civilization. Among these are the rock carvings previously mapped in a 2012-2013 survey and published in the catalogue “Messaggi sulla pietra. Censimento e studio delle incisioni rupestri del Parco Nazionale Val Grande”. The logo of the Park was inspired by a stylized “tree-man”, an arboriform petroglyph carved on rocks in the valley. This paper presents a first mapping of the so-called “pastoral graffiti”, sometimes painted, but mainly engraved on rock and wooden supports in the National Park and in the nearby Natural Parks of Veglia Devero and Alta Valle Antrona. The writings are mostly the initials of the author followed by the date and accompanied by drawings, symbols, short messages and diary annotations. The graffiti of the Ossola’s shepherds occupy a specific historical time frame, from the 17th century to the second half of the 20th century, that is, until the end of what is known as “Mountain Rural Civilisation”. In some cases, however, the graffiti certainly shows continuity within the same sites and with the same techniques used in prehistoric rock art.



Fig.1 - Alpe Misanco, Natural Park Veglia-Devero. (photo Fabio Copiatti/ Parco Nazionale Val Grande)

Fig.2 - Alpe Sassoledo, Val Grande National Park. (photo Fabio Copiatti/ Parco Nazionale Val Grande)

The symbol of the cross on the rocks of Mount Cornón in the Fiemme Valley

Giacomo FAIT, *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, Italy*

Marta Bazzanella, Desiree Chini
contact email:
giacomofait@hotmail.it

Keywords: pastoralism,
shepherds writings,
religious symbols,
landscape archaeology,
ethnoarchaeology, Fiemme
Valley

There are many sacred symbols among the 4000 pictograms discovered within the more than 47700 writings by the shepherds on the rocks of the Fiemme Valley. They are mainly representations of the cross, but there is also of the sacred heart, aedicules, monstrances and monograms of Christ and Mary, all of these expressing a strong radicalization of the valley floor religiosity. Between the 1700s and the 1800s, up until the beginning of the 1900s, we are facing the folks' expression of a faith permeated by doctrinal certainties. Sacred aedicules, tabernacles, shrines and recesses were always inside the residential areas or on the sides of the country roads and mountain roads, at crossroads, bridges and stopping stations, to provide reassurance to the believers. Therefore, in most of the cases the crosses depicted on the rocks of Mount Cornón are to be interpreted as gestures of extemporaneous religiosity, probably emulating crosses drawn by other shepherds with auspicious intents. The subject of this contribution is the in-depth study of the typology of the many shapes in which the cross is depicted.



Fig.1 - Monte Cornón. (archivio MUCGT)
Fig.2 - Monte Cornón. (archivio MUCGT)

Graffiti in the Pré-Végèen pasture in Villa di Chiavenna

Stefano GALLI, *Istituto Archeologico Valtellinese, Italy*
contact email:
samu01@hotmail.it

Keywords: Chiavenna, Pré-Végèen, Bregaglia, Valtellina Institute

Villa di Chiavenna is a town of 1000 inhabitants in Val Bregaglia. The valley, partly Italian and part Swiss, descends from the Maloggia threshold, a watershed between the river Po and the Danube basin, orientated towards Chiavenna. The ancient borderline of Villa di Chiavenna, created by the rift of the Lovero and Casnaggina torrents, distinctly indicates areas influenced by Chur in the Middle Ages from those of Como and Milan. The Pré-Végèen mountain pasture is on the orographic left side of the valley. There are dates engraved from the 17th century with much older evidence found at an altitude of 1700 m a.s.l., on the grazing lands of the glacial basin where the Valtura stream originates. The scenic rocky ridges marking the northern boundaries of the pastures, are full of engravings. Hundreds of symbols, some more ancient than others, which are evidence of the presence of shepherds. Cruciform symbols have recently been discovered, probably from the late Medieval period, some with cup marks at the top of the rod, or crossbow shaped (phi) crosses, as well as hourglass figures, step ladders, branches, vulvar, rake and lattice forms. Among the graffiti there is also a female figure, with a baby in her lap, showing its navel and reproductive organ.

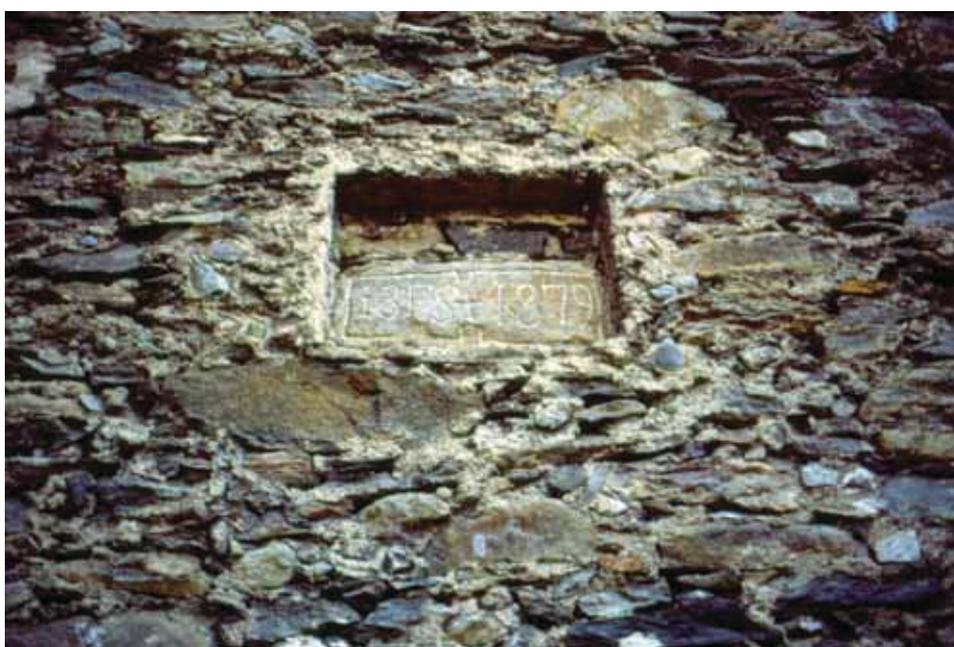


Beyond cup-marks: rock engravings and ethnography in Val Malenco (Sondrio, Italy)

Cristina GASTALDI, *Centro
Camuno di Studi Preistorici*
contact email:
crigasta@gmail.com

Keywords: Val Malenco,
rock engravings, eponymous
villages (contrade), property
borders, building techniques

Twenty years ago, the author was involved in research on schematic engravings the area of Sondrio, particularly in Val Malenco. Whilst working in the area, she noticed the wealth of ethnographic evidence scattered through the villages, mountain pastures, and trails. This paper aims to initiate an analysis of this evidence, well beyond the mines (the most well-known ancient craft of the area) and to show how engravings are bound to everyday life and linked with property, as well as crafts. Not only has this work identified ways of living dating back to the Iron Age, such as fireplaces placed right in the middle of the kitchen in stone houses (the so-called Cà), pre-writing signs have also been identified that indicate amounts, such wheat, and an intricate system of indicating property rights. At Chiesa in Valmalenco, for instance, in the area of Carotte two rocks are covered with acronyms, boundary crosses and surnames, in a sort of public village record. The paper will also show how people of Val Malenco were skilled in creating villages (which were eponymously named) and giving them specific features, linking some of them with arts and crafts (such as in Contrada Zarri, where panniers and basket were made for the entire valley).



Tattooing the rocks

Some striking parallelisms are found between the art of pastoral graffiti, such as can be seen on the slopes of Mt. Cornon in the Fiemme valley (Eastern Alps), and the conventions of the body art of tattooing. There is the prevailing red colour of the marks, which is clearly reminiscent of blood, but also a number of formal and stylistic features of the writings, which makes them akin to the specific graphic jargons of inmates and forced labourers worldwide. Following the combined suggestions of a number of influential authors, from André Leroi-Gourhan to Julian Jaynes, the paper will try to tackle the general significance of this form of expression within an evolutionary, i.e. diachronic, framework in the understanding of the development of human consciousness and expressive faculties.

Giovanni KEZICH, *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, Italy*

contact email: g.kezich@museosanmichele.it

Keywords: pastoral graffiti, pastoral culture, Fiemme Valley, tattoos

Petroglyphs and Graffiti in the Syunik Highlands, Armenia - summer pasture for thousands of years

Franziska KNOLL, *Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Institut für Kunstgeschichte und Archäologien Europas*
 contact email:
 franziska.knoll1@gmx.de

Keywords: Southern Caucasus, Alpine transhumance, Pastoral Graffiti, Prehistoric petroglyphs, Spatial analysis GIS/DTM

This still abundant alpine steppe, of volcanic origin, was used for grazing flocks during the snow-free summer months at least since Neolithic times. Within an Armenian-German project all topographic, artificial, and rock art features across two major areas of investigation, measuring 2,4 km² in total, were recorded and mapped in high resolution (Knoll/Meller 2015; Knoll 2017). At least 198 out of 3493 decorated basalt rocks bear recent Graffiti, most of them incised, whereas the ancient depictions were pecked into the varnished surface. Predominantly, the shepherds left their names (or initials) and the year of their visit. The dates recorded range from the 1930s to the 1980s. Names were written in Latin and in Russian alphabet. In combination with this there are also some portraits, pastoral scenes, and objects related to space (especially rockets). These Graffiti provides an immediate insight into Soviet history, when the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia was open and the highland pastures were again populated after a long absence. Furthermore, the analysis of the Graffiti's spatial placement patterns show, that the recent inscriptions are closely related to stone settings and pens, and that their authors preferred different areas for their "campsites" than the ancient ones. Both, however, meet at prominent waypoints.

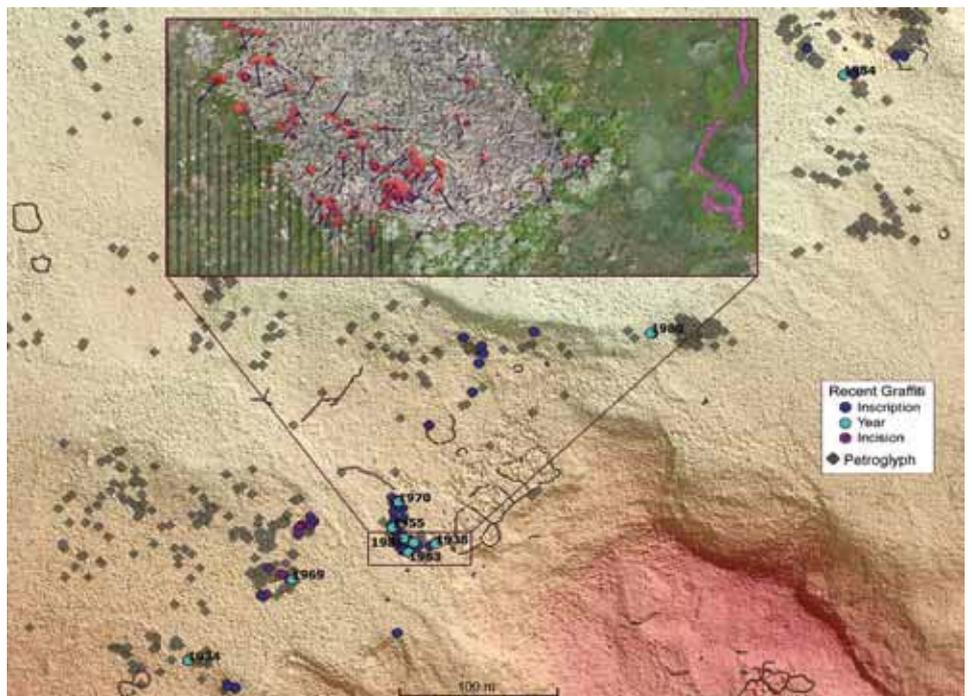


Fig.1 - Representative Graffiti sample from the Syunik investigation area. (© LDA Halle)

Fig.2 - Segment of the DTM of field "Sepasar". (Aerial photography by GEO-METRIK, Magdeburg/LDA Halle; Rendering DTM/GIS: T. Rödel, MLU Halle-Wittenberg)

Pastoral graffiti and “protohistoric” engravings in Mont Bego region: a study of marking practices over long time spans

Nathalie MAGNARDI, *attached to the Musée départemental des Merveilles de Tende, France*

Thomas Huet

contact email:

nat.magnardi@gmail.com

Keywords: pastoralism, rock-art, engravings, diachrony, traditional continuity, Alps

The region of Mont Bego (Tende, Alpes-Maritimes, France), close to the transalpine pass of Tende, is known as a major rock-art concentration in western Europe with some 36,000 pecked engravings (also called protohistoric engravings) and thousands of other incisions concentrated between a height of 2000 and 2700m. Pecked engravings are dated to the Neolithic, lato sensu, whereas the incised engravings are from a much more heteroclite and diachronic group such as drafting lines for weapon figures (Neolithic), arboriforms (Protohistory, Antiquity, Middle-Ages), surnames, dates and shepherds’ inscriptions (Early and Late modern period), etc. The spatial correlations between shepherds’ inscriptions (about 5,500 drawings and texts created since at least 1836) and pecked engravings is very high: $\frac{3}{4}$ of these historical engravings are on the same rocks as Neolithic engravings. This correlation is explained through our research on Mont Bego’s engravings with particular attention to the history of pastoralism (transhumance, alpine pasture, etc.) and relative contexts of graphical expressions (commemorative, territorial marks, etc.). First, we will focus on shepherds’ engravings (text, signatures, dates, location, etc.) and related ethnological data (pastoral paths, types of flock, age groups, etc.), then we will examine the more ancient periods: pecked and “schematic-linear” engravings, indexes of anthropic pressure, first occupations of the site, etc.

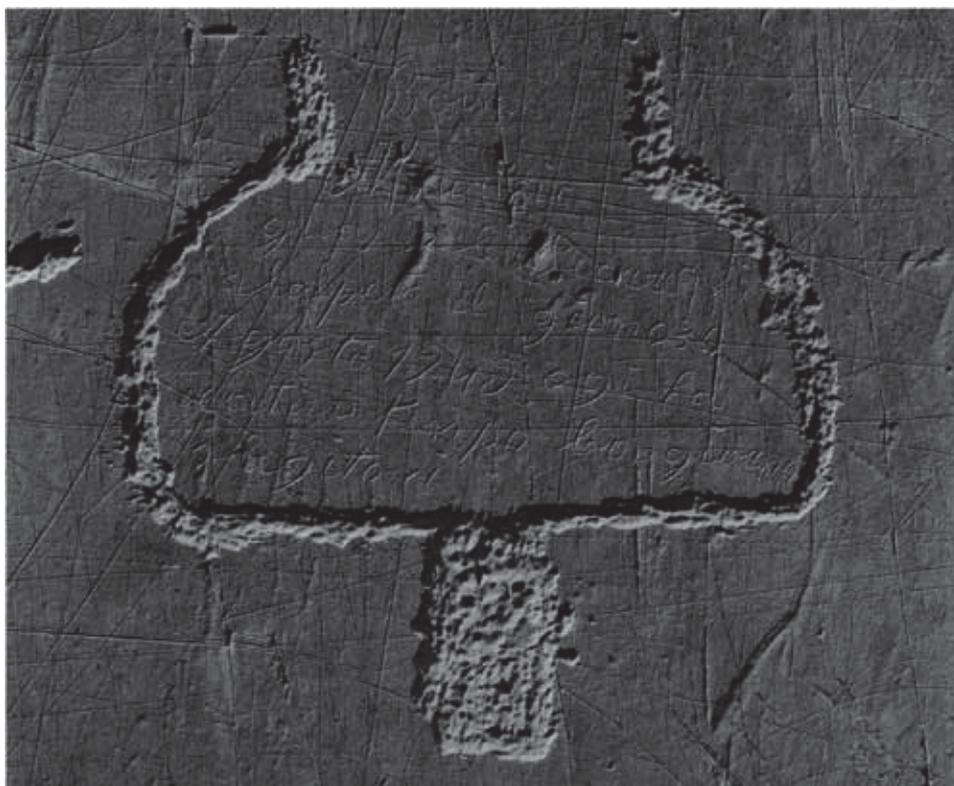


Fig.1 - Valley of the Marvels, the Alps-Maritimes, France. Text of shepherd between the horns of a bull figure. (photo Emmanuel Breteau)

More than just shepherds. In the extreme territories of the Central and Eastern Alps between cult and resource use

Franco MARZATICO,
Soprintendenza per i Beni Culturali della Provincia Autonoma di Trento

Serena SOLANO,
Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Province di Bergamo e Brescia

contact email:
franco.marzatico@provincia.tn.it

Keywords: central eastern Alps, prehistory-protohistoric, Roman period, exploitation of resources, borders, places of worship enclosures, corrals made of stones not attached with mortar, in Italian is “a secco” (dry-stone wall)

In recent years numerous sites dating back to Bronze Age and Roman times, located in “extreme” high altitude locations, have been investigated in the Central Eastern Alps of Italy. In addition to places of worship (Alpine Brandopferplaze) and ancient paths, often connected with places of worship, evidence emerged regarding the exploitation of resources (stone, wood, mines and pastures). Recent surveys have been conducted at the Passo del Tonale, between Lombardy and Trentino, where an ancient passageway is perhaps referable to Roman times. Materials and inscriptions found on high altitude mountains between the Raetian and Camunian regions suggest some interesting consideration on the use of resources and the possible role played by signs carved on high altitude mountains. The cultural interpretation underlines the sacred meaning of some sites on mountain tops, explaining them as passage sanctuaries, or more generally sacred areas associated with nature and the mountain. In addition to this interpretation, the practical function of such engraved rocks with pre-Roman and Roman inscriptions is becoming more evident. The carved signs could be used to mark a border, relating to the control and exploitation of the mineral resources, to indicate the rights for using the pasturelands, or to define aspects of the rules for using the territory.



Caves and shepherds' engravings on the Majella mountains

On the Majella mountain the migration of the sedentary shepherd to summer pasture and use of caves and the transhumance of large herds on the high pastures are of great importance and allow for a thorough study of these two aspects of sheep farming. The pastoral sites, created in caves or in shelters situated under rocks, present different typologies of enclosure with dry stone walls and scrub pine branches according to the permanence or not of the shepherd during the night. The engravings that the shepherds left on the rocks during their whole lives, divulge 300 years of their history: it's a story of paupers and of sufferings and loneliness. Looking at these engravings, we discover these shepherds cursing against the mountain, or expressing their happiness for their departure. The engravings represent crosses, or the monsters they had admired on the capitals of their village churches, and the big ship they saw during their long transhumance trips towards the sea of Puglia; but they also represented their home, writing repeatedly numerous names, many dates and the names of their villages. All these engravings deserve our attention: they are the sign of an ancient world which has disappeared and we didn't pay attention to its death!

Edoardo MICATI, *Independent researcher*

contact email:
micatiedoardo@gmail.com

Keywords: sheep farming, caves, engravings, Majella, summer pasture



Fig.1 - Pastoral cave. (photo Edoardo Micati)

Fig.2 - Pastoral engraving. (photo Edoardo Micati)

Pastoralism without writing: the case of Monti Lessini

Mara MIGLIAVACCA, *Museo Civico "Dal Lago" Valdagno (VI), Italy*

contact email:
maragioia.migliavacca@gmail.com

Keywords: Lessini highlands, ethnoarchaeological survey, shepherds' structures, Final Bronze age

In the Lessini highlands a project has been underway since 2005, with a focus on obtaining more information on the most ancient exploitation of the area, which is related to shepherds' activities. The aim of the project was to locate and document traces of shepherds and sheep farming in the area, distinguishing them from the traces left by the other activities performed in the territory, such as cattle farming; to understand the changes that pastoral structures underwent over time; and to single out the specific characteristics of pastoral sites. A systematic field survey covered the whole of the Lessini highlands. In this way about 600 pastoral structures were discovered, identified and recorded in databases collecting their geomorphological location and architectural features. Archaeological findings dating to the final phases of the Bronze Age and to historical times were found in the same area: they are possibly connected with some pastoral structures (Sauro et al. 2013). Except for a few cases found on the edge of the Lessini highlands, where significant traces of mining activities were recorded, no traces of writings were found: the paper will try to explain this absence, which is likely due to a variety of factors.

The relationship of rock art to pastoral settlements in medium and high-altitude sites in Valcamonica and the Alps

Ausilio PRIULI, *Museo di arte e vita preistorica, Capo di Ponte, Italy*

Contact email:
museocapodiponte@libero.it

Keywords: pastoral settlements, rock art, Mt Bego, Valcamonica, sacred mountains

Mountains have often been perceived as sacred places, spiritual centers, the home of the gods or where they manifest themselves and often places where the ritual language - engraved, scratched or painted - is what remains to reflect this concept of sacredness and of frequentation. At the same time, many mountains have also been economically productive places for communities that, despite living in the valleys, have utilised the alpine meadows for pastoral activity, in some cases combined with the extraction of minerals and the creation of permanent or seasonal housing settlements. Almost every mountain in the Alps bears traces not only of material culture, but also of these graphic expressions. This art is the expression of ritual necessity to establish and maintain a good relationship with the world of superior beings and spirits that dwell in the mountains and rocks.

In the case of Monte Bego, a prehistoric sanctuary likely for the entire Ligurian world, it is emblematic in this sense, but more unique than rare in its wealth of figurative expressions. Its most famous rock art is the result of the activity of few artist-priests, while the simpler expressions, like the cup-marks which are found almost everywhere, are the result of popular religiosity.

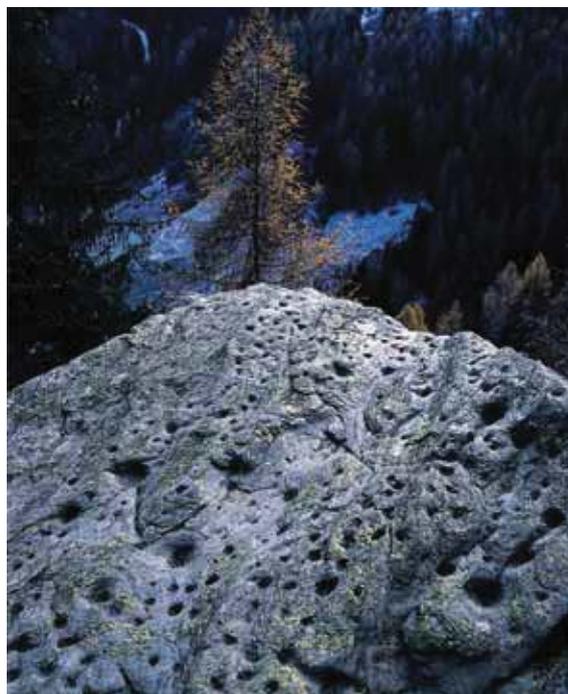


Fig.1 - Corteno Golgi, Corna di bus, Valli di S. Antonio (Bs).

Fig.2 - Tesero, Val di Fiemme (Tn).

Podomorphic petroglyphs in the Moroccan High Atlas - Ethnoarchaeology and Aït Atta nomadism

Thomas REITMAIER, *Institute of Archaeology, University of Zurich, Switzerland*

Mirijam ZICKEL, *Department of Geography, University of Cologne*

Thomas WOLTER, *Department of Pre- and Protohistory, University of Cologne*

contact email:
thomas.reitmaier@adg.gr.ch

Keywords: High Atlas, Aït Atta, transhumance, podomorphs, picking technique, weathering

During the field campaign of a new ethnoarchaeological project in Morocco in 2017, 11 petroglyphs were found around the summer camp of the Aït Atta family the project is concerned with. These nomadic pastoralists spend the summer period at ca. 2500 metres asl in the High Atlas region, some 150 km away from their winter camp in Jbel Sarhro. Focussing on traditional long-distance transhumance activity ("Arehhal"), the group's historical and social background is one of the targets to which the discovered rock art could represent a significant key. Two petroglyph sites of a grouped symbols type were chosen for detailed optical analysis. Most of the petroglyphs from the Islamic period with its picked podomorphic geometrics match at least to the stylistic record of Southern Morocco and other regions and can be associated with intertribal pacts called "Tad'a /Tata" and a ritual exchange of sandals. Another site is more difficult to interpret but seems significantly older. Limited by a strongly weathered condition some of the traces cutting the rock surface are indefinable anthropogenic or erosion marks. This issue qualifies the second site for photogrammetric and GIS classification analysis which results in a 3D model and a vectoral interpretation of the rock engravings to enlarge the regional occupation history.



Fig. 1 - Agdal Tamda, High Atlas, Morocco. (photo A. Azizi)

Fig. 2 - Agdal Tamda, High Atlas, Morocco. (photo A. Azizi)

Pastoralism and quarrying: possible typological divergences in the production of historical rock art in accordance with the sites intended use

Federico TROLETTI, *Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, Italy*

Contact email:
federico.troletti@ccsp.it

Keywords: shepherd rock art, historical rock art, quarrymen, miners

This paper aims to investigate a small number of rock art sites dated to the modern period, to identify any typological divergences between the 'signs' left by the shepherds and those produced by those engaged in different work activities. The presence of figurative rock art is observable in many places frequented by shepherds, farmers and forest product gatherers: as a matter of fact, different types of 'signs', such as anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, fortifications, keys, coffins and ostensories, and spirals, are recorded here. Conversely, in the areas where there was a predominance of people engaged in mining and stone quarrying a greater percentage of incisions were found, that could be defined as "schematic". Perhaps this divergence is due to the fact that shepherds and gatherers had at their disposal much more time for engraving, while quarrymen and miners, often working for many hours, sometimes in the subsoil, have created these less elaborate engravings (from a graphical point of view) but with a more useful function, that is to indicate the territory for concessions of exploitation and properties. There are also signs and writings that have propitiatory purposes, these were made for the protection of one's own life in consideration of the high risk of fatal accidents faced by miners.