



# POST-PALAEOLITHIC FILIFORM ROCK ART IN WESTERN EUROPE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE XVII UISPP WORLD CONGRESS  
(1-7 SEPTEMBER 2014, BURGOS, SPAIN)

Volume 10 / Session A18b

Edited by  
**Fernando Coimbra and  
Umberto Sansoni**





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## **Foreword to the XVII UISPP Congress Proceedings Series Edition**

**Luiz OOSTERBEEK**  
Secretary-General

UISPP has a long history, starting with the old International Association of Anthropology and Archaeology, back in 1865, until the foundation of UISPP itself in Bern, in 1931, and its growing relevance after WWII, from the 1950's. We also became members of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences, associate of UNESCO, in 1955.

In its XIVth world congress in 2001, in Liège, UISPP started a reorganization process that was deepened in the congresses of Lisbon (2006) and Florianópolis (2011), leading to its current structure, solidly anchored in more than twenty-five international scientific commissions, each coordinating a major cluster of research within six major chapters: Historiography, methods and theories; Culture, economy and environments; Archaeology of specific environments; Art and culture; Technology and economy; Archaeology and societies.

The XVIIth world congress of 2014, in Burgos, with the strong support of Fundación Atapuerca and other institutions, involved over 1700 papers from almost 60 countries of all continents. The proceedings, edited in this series but also as special issues of specialized scientific journals, will remain as the most important outcome of the congress.

Research faces growing threats all over the planet, due to lack of funding, repressive behavior and other constraints. UISPP moves ahead in this context with a strictly scientific programme, focused on the origins and evolution of humans, without conceding any room to short term agendas that are not root in the interest of knowledge.

In the long run, which is the terrain of knowledge and science, not much will remain from the contextual political constraints, as severe or dramatic as they may be, but the new advances into understanding the human past and its cultural diversity will last, this being a relevant contribution for contemporary and future societies.

This is what UISPP is for, and this is also why we are currently engaged in contributing for the relaunching of Human Sciences in their relations with social and natural sciences, namely collaborating with the International Year of Global Understanding, in 2016, and with the World Conference of the Humanities, in 2017.

The next two congresses of UISPP, in Melbourne (2017) and in Geneva (2020), will confirm this route.

# **Post-Palaeolithic filiform rock art in Western Europe**

## **Introduction**

**Fernando A. COIMBRA and Umberto SANSONI**  
Session coordinators

The so called filiform rock art is characterized by having very thin grooves, just scratched on the rock surfaces, being produced either by stone or metal tools. In Western Europe it appears with a similar typology of motives in countries such as Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France and Italy. However, these very same motives are frequently found produced with larger grooves, after the use of a ‘polissoir’ technique, being first incised on the rock surface and then polished with repeated movements. This way it’s crucial to distinguish engravings made with thin grooves (the true filiform carvings) and others done with medium/thick grooves, which often doesn’t happen in the published bibliography.

Except some Palaeolithic cases, this kind of art was first considered as belonging to historical periods and therefore, in a general way, it didn’t deserve much attention by the part of rock art researchers. Meanwhile, new discoveries and research carried out regarding Post- Palaeolithic filiform rock art, in several different countries, proved that it has many examples dating from Iron Age and also from Bronze Age, if not even earlier.

Engravings with this typology can be found usually on open air schist greywacke surfaces, but it’s also present on the walls of several caves from central Spain, some of them with an archaeological context.

The already mentioned similarity of motives can result from possible contacts of different peoples in Protohistory. However, in the present level of knowledge about this art, it’s difficult to understand who influenced who, because there are also differences in the typological characteristics of the engravings from one country to another.

Filiform rock art appears as a spontaneous technique, more simple and immediate than pecking, good either for autonomous strands of expression, or for sketches and first drafts regarding works of painting or pecking.

According to the order of presentation of the session’s papers during the XVII IUPPS (UISPP) Conference in Burgos, the articles published here are the following: *Late prehistoric incised rock art in southern Europe: a contribution for its typology*, by Fernando A. Coimbra, where the author presents a preliminary typology of this kind of rock art, divided in two groups (geometric and figurative), approaching not only common themes to several countries, but also some examples that have only a regional character; *Filiform rock art in mount Bego (Tende, Maritime Alps, France)*, by Nicoletta Bianchi, which analyses some cases where pecked carvings overlap filiforms, therefore pre-dating pecked engravings and studies the interaction of the two carvings tradition; *Filiform figures in the rock art of Valcamonica from Prehistory to the Roman age*, by Umberto Sansoni, Cinzia Bettineschi and Silvana Gavaldo, that provides a general *corpus* of the figurative incised rock art of Valcamonica with a quantitative and qualitative approach, by considering the typological variety, the long-lasting chronological dating and the strong relation with the local pecked rock art of the Camunian filiforms; *Threadlike engravings of historical period on the rocks and plaster of churches and civic buildings. Some comparisons and proposals of interpretation*, by Federico Troletti, which presents the incised engravings exclusively of historical time located in some sites of Valcamonica – the area of Campanine di Cimbergo and Monticolo di Darfo; *The rock art from Figueiredo (Sertã, Portugal): typology, parallels and chronology*, by Fernando A. Coimbra and Sara Garcês, focusing

on the description of the engravings from three carved rocks with incised motives from the place of Figueiredo, in central Portugal, which were studied during different fieldworks.

Two other papers of researchers that couldn't attend the Conference were also presented: *The filiform rock art from Kosovo*, by Shemsi Krasniqi, which presents recent findings from Kosovo with a similar typology of figures from other European countries; *The filiform rock engravings of the Parete Manzi of Montelapiano (Chieti, Italy)*, by Tomaso Di Fraia, which analyses the problematic of incised rock art from a rock shelter in the centre of Italy.

After the presentation of all the papers there was a productive final discussion, which led to some conclusions:

The engravings produced through incisions on the rock surface resulting either in a thin groove (filiform) or in thicker grooves (polissoir) should be mentioned generally as incised rock art.

The analysis of scenes and contexts regarding this kind of art also identified many panels with a ritual or symbolic value, which reveal a great autonomy and conceptual and artistic dignity, allowing considering the technique of filiform engraving much more than secondary.

It was emphasized the uniqueness of the number, of the chronological and typological range of the Camunian filiform examples.

Finally, it was considered that regarding chronology there's still a lot of work to be done about Post-Palaeolithic filiform rock art. Indeed, there are known examples dating from Late Neolithic, from all the Metal Ages, and even from historical periods, until the Middle Ages and more, reaching some examples the 20th century.

# **Late Prehistoric incised rock art in southern Europe: a contribution for its typology**

Fernando A. COIMBRA

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## **Abstract**

*Late prehistoric incised rock art occurs in several countries from Southern Europe with a large range of motives. It's possible to observe anthropomorphic figures, zoomorphic figures (horses, dogs and deer), weapons (halberds, axes, spears, swords, daggers and arrow heads), many diverse geometric motives and several symbols, among other figures.*

*In this paper the author presents a preliminary typology of this kind of rock art, divided in two groups (geometric and figurative), approaching not only common themes to countries such as Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Kosovo, but also some examples that are typical from only some regions of the same countries.*

**Keywords:** *incised, filiform, polissoir, schematic, figurative*

## **Résumé**

*L'Art rupestre Préhistorique à incision se produit dans plusieurs pays d'Europe du Sud avec une large gamme de motifs. Il est possible d'observer des figures anthropomorphes, des figures zoomorphes (chevaux, chiens et cerfs), des armes (hallebardes, haches, lances, épées, dagues, flèches), beaucoup de divers motifs géométriques et de plusieurs symboles, parmi d'autres figures.*

*Dans cet article l'auteur présente une typologie préliminaire de ce genre d'art rupestre, divisé en deux groupes (géométrique et figuratif), approchant pas seulement des thèmes communs à des pays comme le Portugal, Espagne, France, Italie et Kosovo, mais aussi de quelques exemples qui sont typiques de seulement certaines régions de ces pays.*

**Mots clés:** *incisé, filiforme, polissoir, schématique, figuratif*

## **1. Introduction**

The figures represented in incised rock art appear either with very thin or with thicker and deeper grooves, being the first usually called 'filiform' and the second 'polissoir', being produced by stone or metal tools.

The present article tries to be a contribution for the typology of Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric incised rock art in Southern Europe. However it's a difficult task, since this kind of engravings occurs in several countries with a very large range of motives.<sup>1</sup> Despite several common themes based on similar figures, which appear in Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France, Italy and Kosovo, there are regional identities, corresponding to peculiar engravings occurring only on certain regions from those countries, seeming to reflect cultural aspects of particular communities.

Furthermore, some figures represented in Post-Palaeolithic incised rock art can appear in Late Prehistory, in Protohistory and in Historical periods. If they are isolated, they become difficult to date, if there aren't any elements or contexts to establish a more precise chronology.

<sup>1</sup> Elaborating a detailed typology of Late prehistoric incised rock art is a task for the network of an international team. We hope to have started it at the XVII IUPPS Conference in Burgos, with the session 'Post-Palaeolithic filiform rock art in Western Europe', coordinated by Fernando Coimbra and Umberto Sansoni, with papers from Portugal, France, Italy and Kosovo.

Therefore, this study must be considered only as one more piece in the enormous puzzle that is Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric incised rock art. Indeed, the recent discovery of about 500 plaques with filiform Iron Age portable rock art in the Sabor Valley (Portugal), and not yet completely published, will significantly enlarge the typology of this kind of rock art, together with the Iron Age filiform engravings from the Côa Valley (Portugal), studied only in a preliminary way. In fact, as Baptista and Reis (2008b) mentioned, despite the intensive work of prospection in the region of the Côa and Douro rivers the area is not yet properly prospected. This way, more incised engravings may appear in a near future.

Late Prehistoric incised rock art is mainly schematic, with many geometric figures such as rectangles and squares of different typology, circles, opposite triangles, pentagrams, net-patterns, zigzags, cruciforms, scalariforms, ‘asterisks’, parallel and convergent lines, among other examples.

However, there are also many cases that can be considered naturalistic or figurative, such as anthropomorphic figures, horses, deer, dogs, fish, tree like motives, huts, labyrinths and different kinds of weapons and tools.

Anthropomorphic figures appear not only as figurative but mainly as semi-naturalistic and as schematic, therefore with a huge variety of typologies that constitute itself a theme for another publication.

This way, this article is presented in two parts: one dedicated to the schematic (or geometric) group and another concerning the naturalistic (or figurative) one.

## **2. Schematic or geometric group**

In previous articles we already approached, in a preliminary way, the typology of Post-Palaeolithic incised rock art, presenting a table of the most widespread figures in southern Europe (Coimbra, 2013a; Coimbra & Garcês, 2015).<sup>2</sup> However, due to methodological aspects, we joined in the same table schematic and also some figurative engravings.

The figures belonging to the schematic group that appear more often in the mentioned area are: the pentagram, the net-pattern, the scalariform, the asterisk, the zigzag, the ‘Greek cross’ and the square with diagonals and medians (Coimbra, 2013a: Table 1).

The pentagram is almost a ubiquitous figure in European incised rock art,<sup>3</sup> with a chronology from Late Bronze age till the post-medieval period, appearing sometimes isolated but other times with very interesting associations. Typologically (Table 1) it can be seen as an almost perfect five pointed star (Table 1, 1A), as an irregular star (1B, 1D), with an open point (1C), inserted in a circle (1E) and inside a net-pattern (1F), among other cases.

Regarding associations there’s also a very large diversity. It appears together with footprints at Pisada de la Mora (Caminomorisco), in the Spanish province of Cáceres (Sevillano & Bécarez Pérez, 1997), associated with circles and a scalariform at Aceitunilla (Nunomoral), and associated to triangles e halberds at Peña Rayá de La Huetre (Casares de las Hurdes), all sites also in Cáceres (Sevillano 1991).

In Menorca Island the pentagram appears in the cave of de s’Encantament (Biniguarda Vell), associated to a swastika, an anthropomorphic figure and an axe (Mascaró Pasarius, 1953-54). In the French Eastern Pyrenees it can be seen at Peyra Escrita associated to a mask (Abélanet, 1990), at Coll

<sup>2</sup> In countries such as Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France, Italy, Kosovo and Greece. In some of them, these motives appear in several regions (Coimbra, 2013a).

<sup>3</sup> There are many examples in Portugal (Alentejo, Beira Interior, Alto Douro), Spain (Extremadura, Castilla y Leon), Andorra, France (Eastern Pyrenees, Ariège, Mont Bego), and Italy (Liguria, Lombardy, Puglia, Sardinia).

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Pentagram							
2	Net-pattern							
3	Scalariform							
4	"Asterisk"							
	4.1							
5	Zigzag							
6	Double zigzag							
7	"Greek cross"							
8	Square							
	8.1							
9	Rectangle							
10	Circle							
11	Triangle							
12	Opposite triangle							
13	Parallel / Convergent lines/angles							
14	Indeterminate							

TABLE 1. TYPOLOGY OF THE GEOMETRIC GROUP.

de la Font Roja (Caixás), in a kind of astronomical context (Coimbra, 2008a) and at Err Carbanet, near an arrow head (Campmajó; Rendu, 1995), among many other cases. In the region of Ariège (France) it's associated with a female figure with a diadem on her head, at the cave of Sainte Eulalie (Glory, 1947).

In Italy, the pentagram can also be seen frequently with interesting associations: at Foppe di Nadro (Valcamonica), with a net-pattern (Rock 23) and near a bow with an arrow (Rock 24); at Luine (Valcamonica), with swords and axes (Rocks 6, 20, 46 and 70) (Ventura, 1996); at Piancogno (Lower Valcamonica), with several Iron Age warriors (*Roccia dei Guerrieri*), with depictions of probable huts (*Roccia del Villaggio*) and at *Masso di Cà di Dos* together with several weapons (Priuli 1993); at the Rockshelter of Cavone (Bari), with anthropomorphic figures (Astuti *et al.* 2008).

The net-pattern appears also with several typologies, being the ‘net’ simple or more intricate (Table 1, 2A-2E). Together with the pentagram, is one of the most widespread themes in incised rock art, appearing in Portugal (Alentejo, Beira Interior and Trás-os-Montes), Spain (Extremadura, Castilla y Leon), Andorra, France (Eastern Pyrenees, Mont Bego), Italy (Val d’Aosta, Liguria, Lombardy, Sardinia, Puglia) and Kosovo (Coimbra, 2013a; 2013b). Some examples from the Rockshelter of Cavone associated with zoomorphic figures suggest the representation of enclosures for cattle (Astuti, *et al.* 2008).

However there must have been different meanings of the net-pattern, according to different associations, such as one example from Peyra Escrita (Table 1, 1F), where it has a pentagram in its interior, among other examples.

Despite being geometric, motif 2E may constitute a topographic engraving, depicting fields for agriculture (Coimbra and Garcês, in press: Fig. 1), being then figurative. Indeed, the rock where it's carved is placed about 900 m above sea level, having a good observation point to the bottom of the valley, like it happens with topographic engravings from Valcamonica.

The scalariform can appear open (Table 1, 3B), closed (Table 1, 3A) or open in a top and closed on the other (Table 1, 3C). There are several examples of scalariforms in Portugal (Alentejo, Beira and Trás-os-Montes), Spain (Extremadura) Andorra, France (Corsica), and Italy, where they are widespread in several regions (Val d’Aosta, Liguria, Sardinia, Lombardy, Alto Adige).

When this figure appears isolated is difficult to date, since it's present already in Neolithic pottery from Arene Candide (Liguria) and has several examples in protohistoric and historic rock art.

The ‘asterisk’ appears so far with several variants of different number of ‘rays’, from five to twelve (Table 1, 4A to 4.1A). For example,<sup>4</sup> with 5 ‘rays’ it can be seen at Rock 2 from Figueiredo (Sertã, Portugal); with 6, at Pedra Escrita do Poço da Moura (Vila Flor, Portugal) (Coimbra, 2013b); with 7 at Vegas de Coria (Cáceres, Spain); with 8 at Castillo de Pinofranqueado (Cáceres), at Cancho de los Letreros, Salamanca (Sevillano, 1991) and at Rock 17 from Guils, in France (Campmajó, 2008); with 9 at Vegas de Coria; with 10 at Tossal de Cava, in Andorra (Casamajor, 2008), at Coll de la Font Roja (Caixás), in the French Eastern Pyrenees (Abélanet, 1990) and at *Roccia degli Asteroidi*, in Val Susa, Piedmont, Italy (M. Colella, pers. com.); with 11 at the Rockshelter of Cavone, Italy (Astuti *et al.* 2008); with 12 at Sharenicë, in Kosovo (Krasniqi, 2013).

‘Asterisks’ can also be seen in Malta, with a Late Neolithic chronology, in a slab from the temple of Tal-Qadi, where several examples appear associated to what seems to be the representation of a crescent moon, depicting probably stars in a night sky (Coimbra, 2013a: Fig. 6).

<sup>4</sup> We don't mention here ‘asterisks’ inside circles, because they are probably the representation of wheels.

The zigzag can be simple (Table 1 5A), simple with bifurcation (5B) double parallel (6A) and double crossed (6B). The first case is the more frequent, appearing in Portugal (Trás-os-Montes and Beira Interior), Spain (Extremadura, Castilla y Leon), Andorra, France (Eastern Pyrenees, Mont Bego) and Italy (Lombardy, Puglia, Sardinia).

According to H. de Lumley (1995), the zigzag is the more represented figure regarding the incised rock art from the region of Mont Bego, representing lightening. In the French Eastern Pyrenees some examples are associated to figures that may represent deities<sup>5</sup> (Abelanet, 1990) and at Piancogno (Italy) one zigzag is associated to a clear depiction of Kernunnos (Priuli, 1993).

The other examples of zigzag are rarer: The case with bifurcation can be seen at Rock 1 from Figueiredo (Portugal); the double parallel appears at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991); the double crossed has one example at Rock 1 from Figueiredo, one at Baridá (Lérida), in Spain (Casamajor, n/dated) and three at the Rockshelter of Cavone (Astuti *et al.* 2008).

The typology of the so called ‘Greek crosses’ is very simple, having just four arms equal (Table 1 7A, 7B), being done in filiform or in ‘polissoir’ technique. There are several examples in Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France (Corsica) and Kosovo (Coimbra, 2013a).

Squares have the biggest typological diversity (Table 1): simple square (8A); square with incomplete medians (8B); square with complete medians (8C); square with diagonals (8D); square with diagonals and one median (8E); square with incomplete diagonals (8F); square with irregular diagonals (8G); square with one diagonal and incomplete medians (8.1A); and squares with perfect diagonals and medians (8.1B).

This last case is common to Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France (Eastern Pyrenees and Corsica), Italy (Liguria and Lombardy) and Kosovo, being the other examples less widespread in southern Europe. Nevertheless, in a general way, they have examples in more than one country from that area, being impossible to describe them here in a particular way.

Rectangles are also very diverse typologically (Table 1): simple rectangle (9A); rectangle with large median (9B); rectangle with short median (9C); rectangle with two medians (9D); rectangle with medians, diagonals and two crossed opposite triangles in the centre (9E); rectangle with medians, diagonals and two shorter medians on the left (9F); rectangle with diagonals and inner parallel lines (9G).

Type 9A appears in Portugal and in Italy but is much more frequent in Spain, in the region of Extremadura. Type 9D can be seen in Portugal, Spain and Italy (Coimbra, 2013b). The other cases are less frequent, constituting regional identities from certain areas.

Circles can be simple, concentric or having inner lines (Table 1). In this last case the lines can be rays from a centre (10C), two crossed diameters (10D), one diameter crossed by two parallel lines (10E) and two crossed diameters, being one of them crossed by two other lines (10F). Regarding rays from a centre, they can appear with different numbers, as it happens at Vegas de Coria, in Cáceres: 6, 7, 12, 15, 17 and 19 (Sevillano, 1991: Fig. 41-45). In Table 1, due to the lack of space we only consider the type with six rays, because the others would be difficult to see in a reduced scale.

Simple and concentric circles are not very common in incised rock art but they appear in Spain in the Provinces of Badajoz (Domínguez García & Aldecoa Quintana, 2007) and Cáceres (Sevillano, 1991) and also in Italy, in Sardinia (Tanda, 1985) and Tuscany (Sani, 2009).

Circles with rays from a centre are rather frequent in Spain. For example, in the Province of Cáceres they can be seen at Vegas de Coria with at least seven cases (Sevillano, 1991) and in the Province

<sup>5</sup> See Fig. 1c.

of Badajoz they appear four times. This motif is also present, but with less frequency, in Andorra at Cultia de l'Hort (Casamajor, 2008), in France, in the cave of La Tune de la Varaime (Drôme) (Hameau, 1992: Fig. 6) and in Mont Bego (Bianchi, 2013). In Italy it appears at *Roccia degli Asteroidi*, Vale Susa, Piedmont (Colella, pers. com.) and in Kosovo at Sharenicë (Krasniqi, 2013).

Circles with crossed diameters appear at Puerto del Gamo and at Vegas de Coria, both in the Province of Cáceres (Sevillano, 1991), in Italy in the Rockshelter of Cavone (Astuti *et al.* 2008) and in Sardinia (Tanda, 1985). In Kosovo they are present at Sharenicë (Krasniqi, 2013).

Triangles have a simpler typology (Table 1): they can be simply isosceles (11A), isosceles with a hypotenuse (11B) and equilateral with a pecked hypotenuse (11C). This last case is unique in incised rock art and can be seen at Rock 1 from Figueiredo. The other two cases are also from Portugal, the first from Rock 2 from Figueiredo and the second from Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991).

The typology of opposite triangles is not very diverse, consisting only in four variants (Table 1, 12A to 12D). They appear in Portugal at Rock 1 from Figueiredo (12A, 12C), in Spain (12B) at the Provinces of Badajoz (Dominguez Garcia & Aldecoa Quintana, 2007), Caceres (Sevillano, 1991), and Teruel (Royo Guillen, 1999). In France there are some examples in the Eastern Pyrenees (12B), where P. Campmajo (2008) considers them as Iberian letters. However this motif can also be seen through several examples in Italy, at the Rockshelter of Cavone (12B, 12D) (Astuti *et al.* 2008), and in Kosovo (12B) (Krasniqi, in press), where it has certainly a different value, because the Iberian people never reached these areas.

Parallel lines/parallel and convergent lines<sup>6</sup> are very widespread in southern Europe, appearing in Portugal (Beira, Trás-os-Montes), Spain (Extremadura, Cataluña), Andorra, France (Eastern Pyrenees, Corsica), Italy (Liguria, Sardinia, Lombardy) and Kosovo (Coimbra, 2013b). The examples from Sardinia occur on a slab reused in a megalithic monument from the complex of Sa Mandra (Sassari), dating back to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC (Coimbra, 2013b: Fig. 22), what is an important information for the chronology of these figures.

In the North of Portugal and in Andorra there's a common popular legend that attributes parallel and convergent lines to the fact of the devil being furious, scratching the rocks with his claws, making this way those figures (Coimbra, 2013a).

Motif 13 D (Table 1) can be the schematic representation of a hut, very similar to one case at *Roccia del Villaggio* (Priuli, 1993: 82), associated with other examples more naturalistic.

### 3. Naturalistic or figurative group

Being impossible to describe here all the known cases in this group, some considerations will be made regarding the representation of anthropomorphic figures, footprints, horses, deer, tree like motives, labyrinths and different kinds of weapons. Concerning anthropomorphic figures, some examples must be stressed:

The human figures with strange ‘hats’ from Vale da Casa, Douro Valley, Portugal (Fig. 1a), constituting a regional particularity of this region, because they don't appear anywhere else; the human figures with shaved heads in the front and long hair in the back, from Rock 3 of Vermelhosa, Douro Valley (Fig. 1b), illustrating a fight between warriors; the figures which have a circle with inner rays in the place of their heads and hands and feet looking like tree branches from Peyra Escrita, France (Fig. 1c), depicting probably a mythological being or a divinity;<sup>7</sup> The human figure with tiara and mantle from the cave of Sainte Eulalie, France (Fig. 1d), representing possibly a deity; the warriors

<sup>6</sup> For commodity of exposure and saving space in Table 1 we include here, together, parallel lines, parallel and convergent lines and also ‘angles’.

<sup>7</sup> This figure can be considered semi-naturalistic, but we decided to include it here due to its interest.

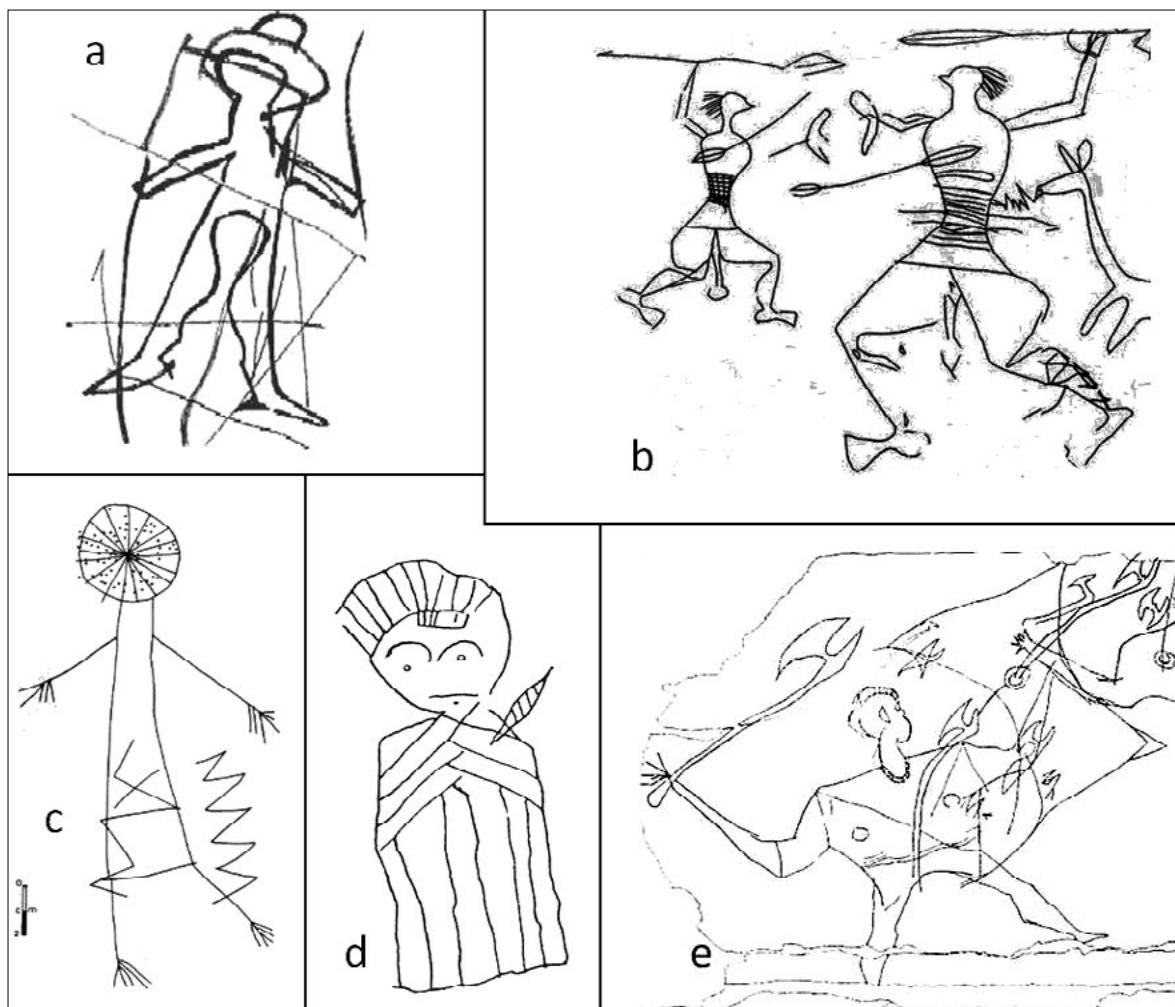


FIGURE 1. DIFFERENT TYPES OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURES:  
 A-AFTER BAPTISTA, 1983; B- AFTER ABREU, ET AL. 2000; C- AFTER ABÉLANET, 1990;  
 D- AFTER GLORY, 1947; E- AFTER PRIULI, 1993.

with shields and axes of La Tène D type, from Roccia dei Guerrieri, Piancogno, Italy (Fig. 1e), showing details of their kind of axes and shields, which rarely are found complete in archaeological excavations.

Anthropomorphic figures are also seen riding horses and holding weapons (spears or swords). However, since many examples from the Côa Valley and from the Sabor Valley are still being studied by other researchers and not yet published, we prefer not to mention them here. Together with other examples found recently in the Iberian Peninsula, they can constitute a subject for a large publication with the participation of several authors.

Footprints are more frequently done with pecking technique but there are also a few filiform examples. They can be seen at Molelinhos (Tondela, Portugal), at Pisá de la Mora and Peña del Molde, both in Las Hurdes, Cáceres (Sevillano and Bécarez Pérez, 1997). At Pisá de la Mora there are two kinds of footprints: one depicting only the foot contour (Fig. 2a) and another where the footprint is completely marked with inner filiform lines (Fig. 2b).

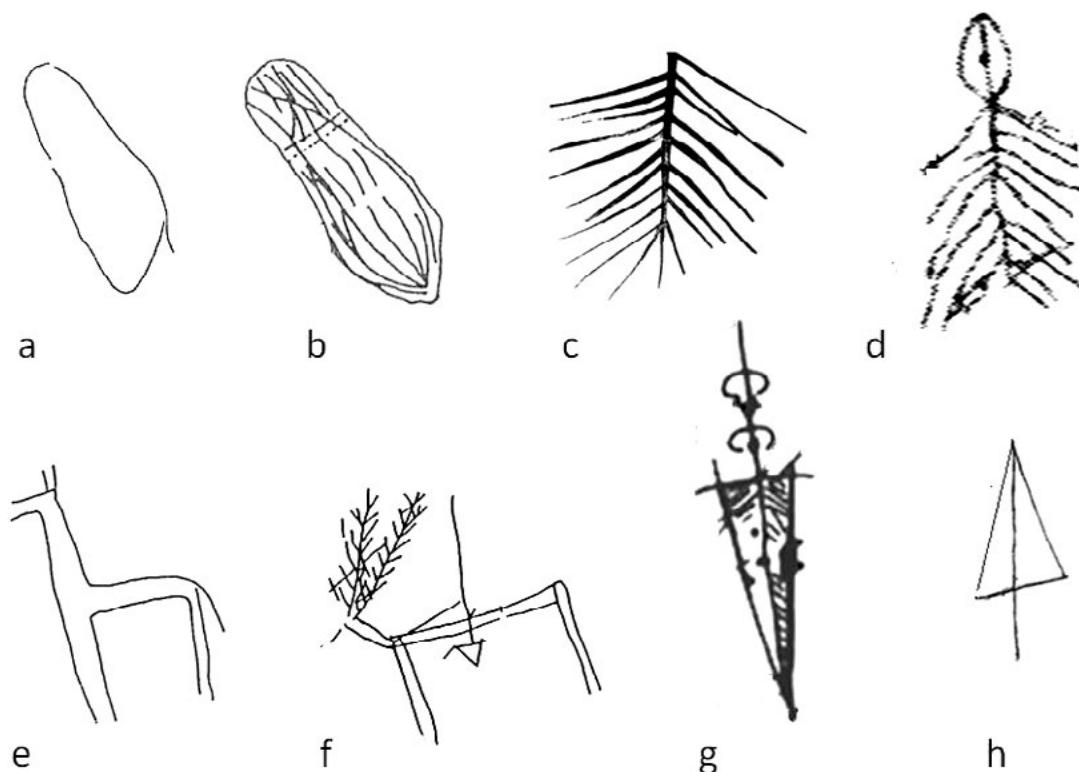


FIGURE 2. FOOTPRINTS, TREE LIKE FIGURES, DEER AND WEAPONS: A-AFTER SEVILLANO AND BÉCAREZ PÉREZ, 1997; B- IDEM; C- AFTER KRASNIQI, 2013; D- AFTER ILIADIS AND PALAZIS, 2013; E- AFTER ROYO GUILLEN, 1999; F- AFTER CAMPMAJO, 2008; G- AFTER CUNHA, 1991; H- COIMBRA, 2013B.

In Italy, at Rock 24 from Foppe di Nadro, there are filiform footprints with the depiction of toes (Sansoni *et al.* in press).

Horses appear usually with the depiction of the horse rider, but there are also some examples when these animals are represented alone, such as in the following cases, among others: in Portugal, Rock 6 and Rock 10 from Vale da Casa, (Baptista, 1983); Rocks 148 and 195 from the mouth of the Côa (Baptista; Reis, 2008a); Rock 6 from Vale de Cabrões and Rock 14 from Penascosa (Royo Guillen, 2006); in Spain, four depictions of horses at Peña del Cuarto (Navarra, Spain); several horses in the Cantera de Peñalba (Villastar, Teruel) (Royo Guillen, 2006); three examples on Rock 23 from Rio Guadalefra and two on Rock 10 from Arroyo Tamujoso, both rocks in Campanario (Badajoz) (Dominguez García & Aldecoa Quintana, 2007); in Italy, two cases in Rock 24 from Pià d'Ort, in Valcamonica (Sansoni & Gavaldo, 1995).

Depictions of deer can be found sometimes in the context of hunting scenes, such as the engravings on Rock 23 from Vale da Casa, (Baptista, 2000), on Rock 177 from the Mouth of the Côa (Baptista; Reis, 2008a), both in Portugal, on Pla del Lloser (Cerdagne, France), where the animal is trespassed by a spear (Fig. 2f) and at Parete della Caccia, Piancogno, Italy (Priuli, 1993: 187), besides other examples from the French Eastern Pyrenees.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In some of these examples from France the chronology is not clear, being in some cases probably medieval, according to Campmajó (2008). That's why we don't include those cases here.

However, deer are also represented without being hunted, as it happens at Rock 10 from Arroyo Tamujoso, in Campanario, Badajoz, (Dominguez García & Aldecoa Quintana, 2007) and at *Roccia del Dolmen*,<sup>9</sup> in Monte Beigua (Savona, Italy), among other examples.

We consider as ‘tree like motives’ only the figures that present a central axis and oblique lines in each side (Fig. 2c), being probably the representation of the vegetable world. They are very widespread in southern Europe,<sup>10</sup> appearing in Portugal (Trás-os-Montes, Beira Interior), Spain (Castilla y Leon),<sup>11</sup> Andorra,<sup>12</sup> France<sup>13</sup> (Eastern Pyrenees, Ariège, Mont Bego), Italy<sup>14</sup> (Val d’Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardy, Sardinia), Kosovo<sup>15</sup> and Greece<sup>16</sup> (Thrace and Crete).

Three incised labyrinths were recently found in the pavement slabs of the Hillfort of Formigueiros (Lugo, Spain) (Meijide Cameselle, 2012). This motif has also examples in Italy, at Piancogno (Priuli, 1993) and in Sardinia (Tanda, 1985).

Different kinds of weapons are also part of the typology of Late Prehistoric incised rock art. Those which appear more frequently are arrow heads, with examples from Portugal (Beira Interior), Spain (Badajoz, Cáceres, Burgos), Andorra, France (Mont Bego), Italy (Lombardy, Puglia) and Romania (Coimbra, 2013b). These figures have many examples in the Province of Badajoz.

Bows with arrow are much rarer than arrow heads alone. Thus it’s important to mention some examples: one at Rock 2 from Figueiredo, two at Pedra Letreira de Góis (Coimbra, 2103b) and one at Rock 10 from Vale da Casa (Baptista, 1983), in Portugal. In Spain there’s one case at Puerto del Gamo, Province of Cáceres (Sevillano, 1991) and three examples at Puebla de Alcocer, Province of Badajoz (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana 2007). In Italy, bows with arrow appear at Rock 24 from Foppe di Nadro and at Rock 12 from Seradina, these last hold by human figures in pecking technique (Coimbra, 2013b).

Spears appear usually hold by horseriders or by warriors, but there are some examples where they are depicted without the association to the human figure. It’s the case of the municipality of Campanario, province of Badajoz, with five depictions of this motif (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana 2007). In Italy there are also some examples at Masso di Cà di Dos (Priuli, 1993). Spear heads can also be seen in the region of Mont Bego (Bianchi, 2010).

Halberds appear usually with the ‘polissoir’ technique, but there are a few filiform examples at Mont Bego.<sup>17</sup> Regarding the first type, in Portugal there are some examples at Ridevides. In Spain they are represented at Peña Rayá, province of Cáceres (Sevillano, 1991) and at Puebla de Alcocer, in the Province of Badajoz (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana 2007).

Regarding weapons there are also depictions of daggers and axes, but only with regional characteristics. Some interesting examples are the dagger from Molelinhos with elaborated handle (Fig. 2g) and the axes from Roccia dei Guerrieri at Piancogno (Fig. 1e).

#### 4. Final Statements

Obviously we don’t present here a complete variety of figures regarding the typology of Late Prehistoric incised rock art. There are also engravings such as fish, dogs, boats and huts, among

<sup>9</sup> This example was seen personally by the author in 2008.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed list of rocks see Coimbra 2013b.

<sup>11</sup> In several caves from the Provinces of Soria and Burgos (Sanchidrian, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Casamajor, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Abélanet, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Coimbra, 2013a; 2013b.

<sup>15</sup> Thaqi, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Iliadis & Palazis, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Nicoletta Bianchi, personal communication.

other, which appear with a shorter distribution across the studied area. Indeed, the main goal of this article is to establish a preliminary typology of this kind of rock art based on two groups (geometric and figurative), considering mostly the more widespread figures. In the future, with the collaboration of other colleagues, it will be possible to enlarge the present typology, especially in what concerns the large variety of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures.

Regarding chronology, the work of several researchers from different countries proved that, if there are filiform engravings dated from historic periods, there are also many examples dated from Late Prehistory and Protohistory. Among other important examples one must be highlighted: the discovery of two pentagrams under a pecked figure of a deer dated from Iron Age, at Rock 24 from Foppe di Nadro (Sansoni *et al.* in press). This contradicts the arguments of some researchers that still consider the pentagram in rock art as a historical motif.

Despite the aim of this study being mainly typological, the diverse associations between the pentagram and other figures,<sup>18</sup> regarding many different cultures, make clear that this symbol must have had several meanings according to different times and places, as we already mentioned before (Coimbra, 2008a; Coimbra, 2011).

Indeed, we believe that, for interpreting some engravings from Late Prehistoric incised rock art, it's necessary to analyse the context where they appear, looking also for the representation of the same figures in other archaeological remains of the same chronology such as pottery, funerary stele, weapons, and so on. Therefore, it's important to establish a methodology of interpretation, in order to avoid subjectivity. But that would be a theme for another article.

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<sup>18</sup> See above the description of the examples.

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# **Gravures linéaires et schématiques-linéaires de la région du mont Bego (Tende, Alpes Maritimes, France)**

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## **Abstract**

*Rock carvings of Mount Bego region are situated in the high valleys of the Mercantour National Park (France), at altitudes of over 2000 metres.*

*Recent works on superimpositions have shown that in some cases pecked carvings overlap filiforms and that, consequently, some filiforms pre-date pecked engravings. The study of filiform engravings complete the chronological setting established for the carving activity in Mount Bego. The finding of filiform motives covered by some pecked engravings denies the hypothesis that in Mount Bego region only pecked carvings date from Late Prehistory; besides, the repetitive association of pecked engravings and filiform patterns suggests an important interaction of the two carvings tradition.*

**Keywords:** Mount Bego; Late Prehistory; linear schematic art

## **Résumé**

*Les roches gravées de la région du mont Bego se situent dans les hautes vallées du Parc National du Mercantour (France), entre 2000 et 2900 m d'altitude.*

*Les recherches en cours sur le thème des superpositions entre motifs ont permis de mettre en évidence l'existence de gravures piquetées superposant certains signes linéaires, qui s'avèrent donc contemporains, si non antérieurs, à la tradition piquetée de la région. La découverte de ces motifs linéaires superposés par des gravures piquetées dément l'hypothèse selon laquelle seules les gravures piquetées datent de la préhistoire récente. L'association réitérée entre figures piquetées et linéaires suggère en outre une certaine interaction entre les deux traditions de gravure.*

**Mots clés:** Mont Bego; préhistoire récente; art schématique-linéaire

Le site archéologique du mont Bego, sur la commune de Tende (Alpes Maritimes, France), se situe entre 2000 et 2900 m d'altitude, dans les hautes vallées qui constituent aujourd'hui un des secteurs du Parc National du Mercantour.

Les recherches de terrain, sous la direction d'Henry de Lumley, ont permis de répertorier quelques 4134 roches gravées, sur lesquelles ont été inscrits, à l'époque préhistorique, plus de 35,000 signes réalisés par la technique du piquetage. Les signes piquetés que l'on trouve sur les roches ne sont pas très variés et peuvent être classés en cinq catégories bien distinctes: Corniformes, simples ou attelés, Armes, Figures géométriques, Anthropomorphes, Figures non représentatives (Lumley, 1995, p. 60; Lumley et Echassoux, 2011).

Des fouilles archéologiques ont également été réalisées sur le site: la première – sous la direction des Antiquités du Piémont – date de 1942 et fut effectuée par Carlo Conti dans un abri sous blocs dénommé *gias del Ciari*; par la suite, entre 1995 et 1997, l'équipe d'Henry de Lumley procéda à divers sondages archéologiques à l'intérieur de certains abris situés sur le secteur des Merveilles. La révision du matériel archéologique provenant de la région (Bianchi, Binder et Huet, en cours) a permis de proposer pour la fréquentation du site une chronologie longue, à partir du Mésolithique, jusqu'à l'âge du Fer. La discordance entre cet intervalle chronologique et celui proposé par Henry de

Lumley et son équipe (Lumley, 2003a; Lumley, 2003b; Lumley et Echassoux, 2011) pour l'activité de gravure au mont Bego, a imposé la réflexion suivante: si les gravures piquetées datent – sur la base de la comparaison typologique entre armes gravées et armes de la culture matérielle – du Néolithique final et de l'âge du Bronze ancien, sont-elles les seules à pouvoir être attribuées à la préhistoire? Ou d'autres motifs gravés, et en particulier la famille des gravures schématiques-linéaires, pourraient-ils avoir été réalisés aux débuts du Néolithique et après le Bronze ancien, périodes pendant lesquelles le site est occupé par l'homme préhistorique, mais dépourvues d'une activité de gravure actuellement reconnue?

Sur les traces de Pietro Barocelli et Carlo Conti – qui, les premiers, ont parlé d'une phase ‘Pré-Merveilles’ à gravures linéaires – les rapports de superposition entre gravures piquetées et gravures filiformes ont été vérifiés sur le terrain, et ont confirmé l'existence de motifs schématiques-linéaires superposés par des figures piquetées et pouvant donc être datés de l'époque préhistorique. Mais avant d'analyser les données récoltées lors de dernières recherches, il est souhaitable de se focaliser sur le concept même d'art ‘linéaire’ et ‘schématique-linéaire’, au centre de nos réflexions. Parmi les premiers, en 1986, Jean Abélanet définissait ainsi les gravures linéaires, et en particulier les motifs schématiques-linéaires de la région du mont Bego:

*“... Il nous reste à parler, maintenant, d'une autre catégorie de gravures, exécutées à la pointe fine, d'une trait de main, comme dans l'écriture, et appelées pour cette raison ‘linéaires’, qui affectent en particulier certains parois favorables de la montagne, où elles se retrouvent mêlées aux gravures piquetées. En elle-même, la technique linéaire est de toutes les époques, mais en éliminant la multitude des graffiti, les dessins et inscriptions d'époque historiques, dus aux bergers ou aux visiteurs, il reste un certain nombre de signes schématiques et de symboles, dont le style et la fréquence montrent clairement qu'il s'agit d'un ensemble aussi cohérent que celui des gravures piquetées.”*

(Jean Abélanet, 1986, pp. 232-233)

Depuis Carlo Conti, les gravures à technique linéaire ont été appelées ‘linéaires’, ‘filiformes’, ‘graffiti’ et le terme de ‘schématiques-linéaires’ adopté surtout par les chercheurs français pour les ensembles rupestres du mont Bego, de la Provence et des Pyrénées.

Avec le terme ‘schématique-linéaire’ les deux concepts de ‘schématisme’ (pour l'iconographie) et d'incision à pointe fine (pour la technique de réalisation) sont fusionnés.

Dans les années 1940, C. Conti associait en premier aux ‘graffiti’ linéaires du Mont Bego le concept d'un schématisme ‘Breuilien’, en comparant les motifs linéaires du Bego aux figures schématiques de la péninsule Ibérique, sur la seule base de leur forme géométrique et de manière totalement indépendante de leur technique de réalisation (Conti, 1940).

Bien que la technique de gravure ne puisse pas être séparée de l'iconographie du symbole représenté, il est avéré que l'ensemble de l'art rupestre protohistorique est influencé par un certain schématisme, c'est-à-dire par une tendance à la simplification dans le cas d'une image (icône) utilisée couramment et parfaitement reconnaissable par un groupe culturel qui fait preuve de cohésion.<sup>1</sup> En effet, sur la base de nos résultats, il est possible d'affirmer que, au mont Bego, les deux familles de gravures, piquetée et linéaire, s'influencent réciproquement d'un point de vue iconographique. Cela dit, il est possible de définir l'art schématique-linéaire du mont Bego comme une famille cohérente et codifiée de motifs incisés à pointe fine (linéaires), dont la forme géométrique tend vers le schématisme.

## 1. Historique des recherches

Le premier à aborder le sujet des gravures schématiques-linéaires du mont Bego fut, comme nous l'avons dit auparavant, le chercheur italien Carlo Conti (Conti, 1940) qui met en évidence sur le site

<sup>1</sup> La définition de ‘schématisme’ est reprise d'après Otte, 2007, p. 83.

l’existence de deux cycles de gravures bien distincts et chronologiquement non contemporains. Pour Conti, le cycle des gravures schématiques-linéaires devrait être attribué à une population de chasseurs, qui aurait donné vie à la tradition de la gravure sur le site au cours du Paléolithique – si l’on admet l’existence éventuelle d’une période interglaciaire particulièrement favorable – ou, plus certainement, à partir du Mésolithique: en effet, selon l’auteur, les gravures filiformes, qui affichent une prévalence de motifs anthropomorphes, ainsi que des motifs scalariformes, arboriformes et pectiniformes, ne comprennent en aucun cas de figurations corniformes, principal symbole du deuxième cycle de gravures (piquetées) et expression d’un groupe humain pratiquant désormais l’agriculture et l’élevage (Conti, 1940, p. 1-9). Par la suite, Conti maintient son hypothèse et l’existence d’une phase de gravures ‘Pré-Merveilles’, basée jusqu’alors uniquement sur des questions typologiques, est confirmée par la découverte de certaines gravures piquetées superposant des gravures linéaires (Conti, 1946).

Une quinzaine d’années plus tard, Giuseppe Isetti, archéologue italien travaillant depuis quelques années sur la vallée des Merveilles, se penche également sur la question des gravures linéaires. Dans la lignée de Conti, Isetti met en évidence l’existence de nouvelles superpositions entre gravures piquetées et gravures linéaires, démontrant une fois encore l’ancienneté de ces dernières. Dans ses nombreuses publications (Isetti, 1957, 1958, 1969, 1965), l’archéologue se montre toutefois plus prudent que son prédécesseur, et avance l’hypothèse que les gravures linéaires sont tout au plus contemporaines des gravures piquetées.

Après le rattachement de 1947 de la commune de Tende à la France, les recherches sur le site sont reprise en 1967 par Henry de Lumley qui, avec Jean Abélanet, entreprend une nouvelle analyse des gravures schématiques-linéaires et parvient à des conclusions opposées à celles des chercheurs l’ayant précédé. Affirmant avoir vérifié tous les cas de superposition signalés par Conti et Isetti, Abélanet infirme leurs hypothèses, en se basant principalement sur deux cas de superposition interprétés de manière erronée par Isetti: la superposition d’un arboriforme sur les cornes d’un corniforme et la présence d’un deuxième arboriforme superposant l’inscription latine de la célèbre Paroi Vitrifiée aux pieds de la vallée des Merveilles *stricto sensu*. Pour les deux archéologues, ceci démontrerait la postériorité de la famille schématique-linéaire par rapport aux gravures piquetées et situerait la réalisation de la première aux alentours du I<sup>e</sup> siècle après J.-C., période à laquelle il est possible de dater l’inscription latine. En outre, la ressemblance avec la symbolique de l’art schématique-linéaire des Pyrénées – production d’une population parvenue aux portes de l’Histoire et dont Abélanet peut-être considéré comme l’un des spécialistes – semble certifier, selon le chercheur, l’appartenance des gravures linéaires du mont Bego à une période ultérieure à celle des gravures protohistoriques piquetées (Lumley *et al.*, 1976; Abélanet, 1986, p. 232-234, 295-301). H. de Lumley maintiendra la position de J. Abélanet pour les années à venir (de Lumley, 1992) et encore à présent; toutefois les résultats de travaux plus récents remettent à nouveaux en discussion leurs hypothèses (Bianchi 2013, Chap. 5).

## **2. Contemporanéité dans l’utilisation des techniques de gravure piquetée et incisée-linéaire: traits de construction et de détail, gravures à polissoir, motifs linéaires évoquant les signes réalisées par piquetage**

Au mont Bego, l’utilisation de la technique de gravure par incision durant la période de réalisation des gravures piquetées a été mise en évidence grâce à la documentation de diverses figurations piquetées complétées par des portions incisées: il s’agit de l’existence, dans certains cas, de traits que l’on peut qualifier de ‘traits de construction’, servant à établir une esquisse préalable de la figure, et de ‘traits de détail’ rajoutés par incision comme compléments au motif de base; d’autres gravures sont quant à elles réalisées en partie par piquetage et en partie par un type d’incision à section en V, que l’on appelle ‘à polissoir’; certains motifs enfin, réalisés entièrement par incision, semblent reproduire les motifs classiques du répertoire piqueté de la région du mont Bego et en représenter donc l’alternative linéaire.

Nous connaissons aujourd’hui de nombreux cas de gravures dont les différentes phases de réalisation sont toujours visibles: sur certains poignards, par exemple, il apparaît que le contour a d’abord été tracé par incision avant que la figure soit remplie par piquetage; d’autres exemples témoignent du même processus d’exécution, mieux observable dans le cas de certaines gravures demeurées inachevées. Des considérations similaires sont également valables pour la hallebarde de la roche ZIV.GIII.R31B2, révélée grâce aux traits qui relient la pointe piquetée de la lame à son talon, de manière à former un triangle, et ceux qui relient à leur tour la lame au pommeau piqueté en formant ainsi le manche; la figure, tracée d’abord par incision et inachevée du point de vue du piquetage, a finalement été terminée par raclage (Fig. 1); d’autres poignards ont également été complétés par raclage ou totalement raclés, tels ceux de la roche ZXIV.GI.R1β, située dans le secteur de Valmasque (Fig. 2).

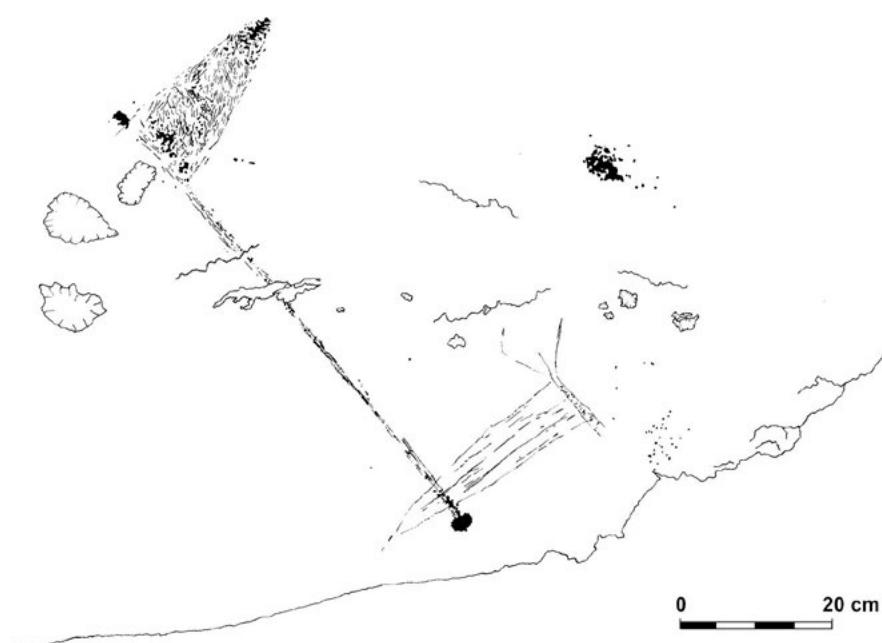


FIGURE 1. ZIV.GIII.R31B2: HALLEBARDES INCISÉES ET COMPLÉTÉES PAR RACLAGE  
(CRÉDITS: LABORATOIRE DÉPARTEMENTAL DE PRÉHISTOIRE DU LAZARET).

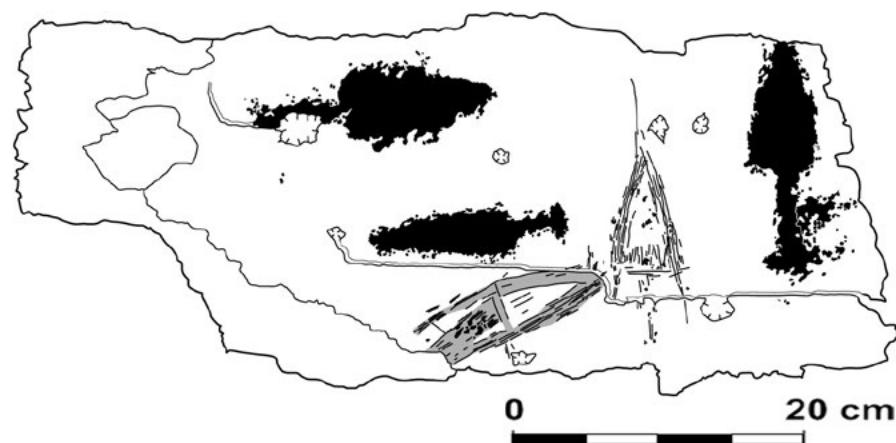


FIGURE 2. POIGNARDS RACLÉS SUR LA ROCHE ZXIV.GI.R1B DU SECTEUR DE VALMASQUE.

Les traits de construction ne comprennent pas que les lignes de contour. Sur certaines gravures inachevées on note l'existence de traits initiaux, servant de lignes directrices pour l'élaboration de la figure, en règle générale recouverts ensuite par du piquetage: par exemple certains corniformes possèdent des cornes piquetées inachevées qui révèlent les traits de construction de la figure sous-jacentes. Ce phénomène ne concerne cependant pas que les corniformes: une hallebarde dans la zone des *chiappes* du Sorcier présente un manche piqueté court et inachevé, qui se prolonge par un trait linéaire se terminant sur un groupe de cupules qui servait probablement à former le pommeau. La différence avec les traits de contour est évidente: le trait simple, indicateur des cornes du corniforme ou du manche de la hallebarde, démontre qu'il ne s'agit plus ici du remplissage d'une figure dont le contour est préalablement tracé, mais de la réalisation d'une figure dont l'apparence est globalement esquissée avant son exécution par piquetage.

Il reste à préciser que l'utilisation des traits de construction n'est pas appliquée à l'ensemble des gravures piquetées du site: l'existence de figures grossièrement réalisées, avec des cupules non jointives et parfois très espacées, qui ne laissent entrevoir aucun traits incisés, prouve que les processus d'exécution que l'on vient de décrire ne sont pas systématiquement mis en œuvre.

Autre cas de coexistence entre incision et gravure piquetée est celui des 'traits de détail' qui enrichissent certaines figures piquetées par la présence de détails mineurs, réalisés par incision.

L'un des meilleurs exemples à ce sujet est constitué par un poignard à manche en décapsuleur dont l'intérieur de la poignée trapézoïdale réservée est décoré par des petits traits incisés parallèles, que l'on pourrait assimiler à des franges.

Des conditions particulièrement favorables de luminosité nous ont également permis de noter que l'un des personnages aux bras levés de la roche dite 'des Hallebardiers' sur le secteur de Fontanalba, comporte des traits incisés sortant de ses mains, de manière à former des doigts ou plus symboliquement des rayons. Le personnage auréolé de la roche ZIV.GIII.R17D, dont la moitié supérieure est gravée par piquetage et la moitié inférieure par un mélange d'incision et de raclage, présente les mêmes doigts incisés que le personnage de la roche 'des Hallebardiers' (Fig. 3): même si l'on admet que la partie inférieure de son corps n'est pas aboutie et que l'intention du graveur était de recouvrir ultérieurement cette partie par piquetage, les doigts du personnage n'auraient toutefois pas pu être couverts, car trop fins pour être raisonnablement piquetés et donc destinés à être des détails incisés d'une figure probablement piquetée dans son ensemble.

Plus larges et plus profondes que les traits de constructions et les traits de détails dont nous venons de parler, les incisions 'à polissoir' font partie intégrante de la figure gravée et ne sont pas destinées à être recouvertes par du piquetage. Lors de notre recherche, il a été constaté que les gravures mêlant piquetage et incision à polissoir se situent dans leur presque totalité sur le secteur



FIGURE 3. ZIV.GIII.R17D: PERSONNAGE RÉALISÉ À MOITIÉ PAR PIQUETAGE ET À MOITIÉ PAR INCISION (CRÉDITS: LABORATOIRE DÉPARTEMENTAL DE PRÉHISTOIRE DU LAZARET).

de Fontanalba; de plus, elles ne concernent quasiment qu'une seule catégorie de figures, celle des armes gravées et en particulier des hallebardes.

D'après les exemples les plus connus, à nouveau sur la roche 'des Hallebardiers' (ZXIX.GIV.R13α), parmi les nombreux personnages de la composition, deux brandissent une hallebarde dont le manche présente une incision à polissoir; en outre le manche tenu par le personnage de droite est complété par une série de traits horizontaux, réalisés par des incisions beaucoup plus fines et superficielles (Fig. 4). Sur les roches de Fontanalba, des exemplaires de hallebardes miniaturisées ou de dimensions plus importantes et de ce fait plus proches de la réalité, présentent le même type de manche incisé à polissoir. Un phénomène similaire a été mis en évidence également au Valcamonica, sur une roche du site dit

Dos di Costapeta, où des lances incisées – notamment leurs manches – présentent le même aspect que celui des manches incisés des hallebardes du Bego. En ce qui concerne enfin les autres secteurs à gravures, un nombre restreint de figures réalisées par piquetage et par incision à polissoir n'a pu être trouvé qu'aux Merveilles: il s'agit en particulier des corniformes de la roche ZIV. GII.R19, dont les cornes, et parfois la queue, ont été gravés par incision.

Enfin l'existence de gravures linéaires incisées représentant les motifs faisant partie de l'univers piqueté, confirme l'hypothèse de la contemporanéité des gravures incisées et piquetées.

Sur la roche ZIV.GII.R23A on peut observer un corniforme incisé à corps réticulé et cornes en zigzag (Fig. 5) et l'utilisation de l'incision sur la roche à un moment datant de la protohistoire est déjà attestée par les traits de construction du poignard piqueté situé à côté du corniforme, inachevé au niveau de la poignée. En outre, les détails qui caractérisent le corniforme sont trop minutieux pour être repris par piquetage, et donc la figure doit être considérée comme achevée sous sa forme linéaire.

D'autres exemples de corniformes linéaires existent, mais il est alors plus difficile de déterminer s'il s'agit de figures volontairement filiformes, ou d'ébauches de gravures à piquer.

Des figures réticulées linéaires apparaissent régulièrement sur les roches gravées du mont Bego. Etablir avec précision le moment exact de leur réalisation demeure ardu si l'on n'est pas en présence de superpositions avec des gravures piquetées. Toutefois, si nous tenons pour acquis le fait que le réticulé est



FIGURE 4. ROCHE DITE 'DES HALLEBARDIERS' (ZXIX. GIV.R13A): PERSONNAGES BRANDISSANT DES HALLEBARDES À MANCHE INCISÉ À POLISSOIR'.

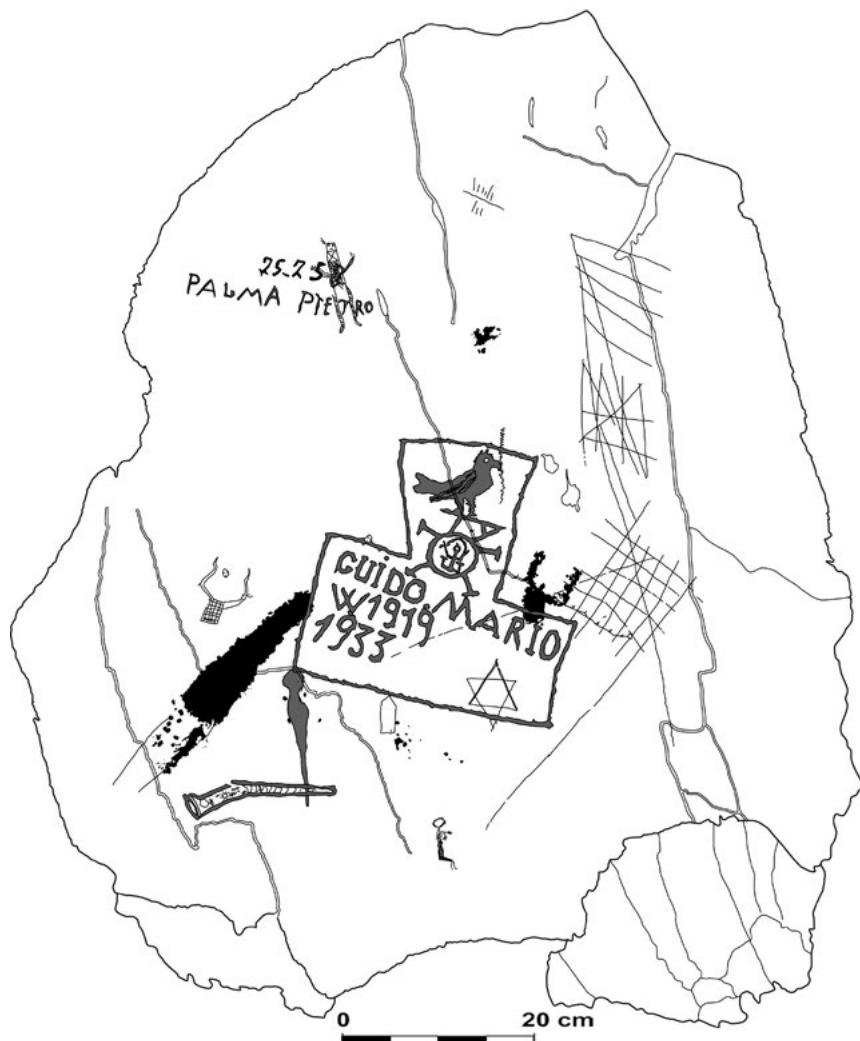


FIGURE 5. CORNIFORME LINÉAIRE À CORPS RÉTICULÉ ET CORNES EN ZIGZAG SUR LA ROCHE ZIV.GII.R23A.

un symbole utilisé assez précocement durant la préhistoire, nous pouvons admettre la possibilité que certains réticulés incisés datent de la même période que les gravures piquetées. Un exemple dans ce sens est apporté par la présence, sur la roche ZVIII.GI.R2(5), d'un groupe de réticulés incisés, associés dans la composition avec d'autres figures linéaires superposées par des motifs piquetés.

En ce qui concerne la catégorie des attelages, nous ne connaissons aujourd’hui qu’une seule roche comportant ce type de figure réalisée par incision: il s’agit de la roche ZIV.GII.R1C (Fig. 6) sur laquelle deux des corniformes de la composition piquetée – celui dont les cornes se présentent en zigzag et celui à cornes refermées sur elles-mêmes – font respectivement partie de deux attelages dont le deuxième corniforme, le joug, le timon et l’araire sont réalisés par incision; en outre, le corniforme à cornes en zigzag porte à l’intérieur de ses cornes un autre attelage entièrement linéaire. Le reste de la surface est couvert d’incisions évoquant également des attelages linéaires et un personnage schématique, aux bras écartés et à la tête triangulaire est présent au centre de la composition.

Pour ce qui concerne les armes, sur la roche de l’‘Anthropomorphe aux bras en zigzag’, 29 petits poignards entourent le personnage principal. La typologie de ces poignards filiformes reprend celle



FIGURE 6. ATTELAGES INCISÉS SUR LA ROCHE ZIV.GII.R1C  
(CRÉDITS: LABORATOIRE DÉPARTEMENTAL DE PRÉHISTOIRE DU LAZARET).

des poignards homologues piquetés, mais, étant donné le manque de superpositions discriminantes avec les motifs piquetés, il est difficile de déterminer s'il s'agit d'une production propre à la préhistoire ou plutôt d'un phénomène d'imitation postérieur. Toutefois, la reproduction exacte de la base trapézoïdale de la lame propre au Campaniforme – encore mieux représentée que dans le cas des deux poignards piquetés homologues – laisse supposer une connaissance précise de l'objet permettant d'exclure qu'il puisse s'agir d'une simple imitation.

Dans la zone des *chiappes* du Sorcier, parmi les gravures piquetées présentes sur un panneau (ZVIII.GVII.R1(3)) de la grande surface rouge polie par le glacier que l'on appelle la ‘Dalle en pente’, se situent de grands zigzags incisés, à la patine très foncée, presque noire: l'un de ces zigzags en particulier forme des décors en triangles rayés par l'ajout de petites lignes horizontales dont la ressemblance frappante avec les motifs triangulaires ornant certains gobelets campaniformes de la région nous a poussés à effectuer une analyse plus approfondie de la surface gravée et de l'ensemble de ses gravures, piquetées et linéaires, grâce à laquelle, non loin des zigzags, un poignard entièrement incisé a été découvert. Encore une fois la morphologie de l'arme correspond exactement à celle des exemplaires campaniformes déjà utilisés lors de la comparaison avec les poignards piquetés présentant la même typologie. Dans la même zone, sur la roche ZVIII.GX.R8 (Fig. 9), un autre poignard incisé possède une lame triangulaire à base rectiligne comparable aux lames en cuivre du Néolithique final phase 2 (environ 2900-2500 avant J.-C.): cette représentation s'avère parfaitement compatible avec les poignards piquetés faisant partie de la composition de la roche et pouvant être attribués à la même période: ce fait permet donc de soutenir la contemporanéité de ce poignard linéaire avec les gravures piquetées de la roche.

Dans la catégorie des armes, les hallebardes font également partie de la panoplie de motifs gravés aussi bien par piquetage que par incision. Symbole indiscuté de l'âge du Bronze ancien, et existant

déjà à la fin du Néolithique final, des hallebardes entièrement filiformes sont présentes sur la roche dite ‘de l’Autel’ (ZXI.G0.R1), mais l’exemple le plus pertinent à ce sujet est cependant fourni par les deux hallebardes miniaturisées découvertes en ZXVII, sur le secteur de Fontanalba, en 2012. Il s’agit de figures incisées à polissoir, dont la ressemblance est frappante avec les hallebardes filiformes de Tarmen (Ceto), au Valcamonica: l’épaulement de forme triangulaire, autant sur les figurations du Bego que sur celles du Valcamonica, constitue un élément de comparaison et d’attribution chronologique précis, qui évoque les hallebardes à manche métallique de l’Europe centrale et du nord (De Marinis, 1994, p. 104).

### **3. Superpositions entre gravures piquetées et linéaires et antériorité probable de certaines gravures schématiques-linéaires**

Comme nous l’avons dit précédemment, C. Conti fut le premier à aborder le sujet des superpositions entre gravures piquetées et gravures linéaires, afin de justifier son hypothèse concernant l’antériorité des motifs schématiques-linéaires par rapport à l’ensemble des figures réalisées par piquetage. D’autres cas de superpositions recensés par l’archéologue italien G. Isetti permettent de confirmer l’hypothèse selon laquelle des gravures piquetées superposant des motifs schématiques-linéaires existent sur le site.

Sur l’Ensemble D de la roche dite ‘de l’Autel’, trois figures qualifiées par Isetti de ‘palmier’ sont respectivement superposées par un poignard, un corniforme et une plage de cupules de forme arrondie, réalisés par piquetage (Isetti, 1957, p. 69) (Fig. 7). Lors de dernières recherches sur le site, l’existence d’une quatrième superposition, située sur la même surface, non loin des trois précédentes a également été mise en évidence: il s’agit d’un faisceau de lignes incisées convergentes, superposées par un deuxième poignard faisant partie de la même composition.

Un autre exemple de superposition entre gravures piquetées et figures en palmier a été découvert dans le secteur de Fontanalba: sur la roche ZXIX.GIV.R76β, un corniforme à appendices recouvre, avec ce que l’on peut considérer comme une queue, la partie supérieure du palmier filiforme.

D’autres cas de superposition des gravures linéaires par des figures piquetées ont été inventoriés sur la roche ZXI.GI.R16E, sur laquelle un réticulé réalisé par piquetage superpose un réticulé incisé, ou encore sur la roche ZX.GII.R18B, non loin de la roche de l’Autel, qui présente un corniforme superposant différents zigzags filiformes. En revanche, la superposition par un arboriforme de l’inscription latine de la Paroi B – Paroi Vitrifiée, datée du I<sup>e</sup> siècle après J.-C. (de Lumley, 1995, p. 369) ne nous semble pas constituer une donnée suffisante pour dater l’ensemble des gravures schématiques-linéaires à l’époque romaine et aux périodes successives. En examinant l’organisation des figures sur la paroi, en effet, on s’aperçoit assez rapidement que les trois gravures piquetées – un corniforme et deux poignards homologues – sont situées au ras du sol: il est raisonnable d’exclure que cette position ait été choisie volontairement par le graveur, et de supposer une importante sédimentation depuis la préhistoire, sur la zone attenante à la paroi. Ce fait, très probable d’un point de vue géologique en raison de la position de la falaise, située au pied de la vallée des Merveilles, amène à lire la paroi comme une sorte de coupe archéologique: au bas de la roche on retrouve les motifs les plus anciens; puis au milieu l’inscription latine également intermédiaire en ce qui concerne la chronologie; enfin, dans la partie la plus haute, on peut déchiffrer de nombreuses signatures ainsi que des gravures souvent accompagnées d’une date plus ou moins moderne. Cette analyse permet de remarquer que sur la frise des gravures piquetées au bas de la roche, se situent également de nombreux arboriformes, au sujet desquels on pourrait supposer une contemporanéité avec les gravures piquetées et une attribution chronologique subséquente à la période protohistorique. Par ailleurs, les faits archéologiques permettent de prouver l’existence de motifs arboriformes déjà durant le Néolithique: par exemple à l’Arma dei Parmorari (Borgio Verezzi) en Ligurie, des tessons de céramique datant du Néolithique moyen sont décorés de motifs arboriformes incisés; pour la même période il faut citer également les décors des Vases à Bouche Carrée, dont le motif scalariforme est sans doute l’un des plus représentés.



FIGURE 7. ROCHE DITE 'DE L'AUTEL' (ZXI.G0.R1): MOTIFS LINÉAIRES SUPERPOSÉS PAR DES GRAVURES RÉALISÉES PAR PIQUETAGE.

Parmi les motifs figuratifs, d'autres comparaisons sont possibles avec les céramiques néolithiques: un archer linéaire découvert sur les *chiappes* du secteur des Merveilles trouve sa correspondance avec une figure incisée sur un vase provenant des niveaux du Néolithique moyen de Serra Cicora, dans les Pouilles (Ingravallo, 2004).

Enfin, du point de vue des superpositions, il s'avère que ce sont toujours les motifs en palmier à être superposés par des gravures piquetées et jamais les arboriformes classiques. Il est donc possible d'avancer l'hypothèse que l'arboriforme pourrait éventuellement être une évolution du motif original en palmier, pouvant ainsi être considéré comme plus ancien. En effet la comparaison avec l'art rupestre paléolithique et mésolithique de sites tels le Foz Côa, au Portugal, ou le bassin parisien français, nous amène à redéfinir ces motifs en palmier en tant que 'tectiformes' (comm. Pers. A. Arcà) et à reconsiderer leur attribution chronologique: le mont Bego étant inaccessible durant le Paléolithique en raison de la glaciation, il est quand-même possible d'envisager une première activité

de gravure au Mésolithique, les figures en palmier pouvant être interprétées comme la représentation schématique des huttes paléo-mésolithiques, déjà présentes sur les parois de la grotte de Lascaux et dont la figuration continue durant le Mésolithique.

#### **4. Du Bronze moyen à l'âge du Fer**

La révision du matériel archéologique provenant de la région du mont Bego a permis de mettre en évidence pour la première fois la présence de céramique datant de l'âge du Bronze moyen-récent (*cf. supra*), ainsi que de quelques objets métalliques pouvant être attribués à l'âge du Fer, qui témoignent de la présence de l'homme sur le site après l'âge du Bronze ancien. Jusqu'à présent, en effet, on admettait communément que la détérioration climatique due à l'*'épisode froid de Löbbet'* à la fin du Bronze ancien avait entraîné un abandon du site et de la tradition piquetée. Cette idée semblait en outre renforcée par l'absence sur le site de pointes de lance et d'épées, caractéristiques des périodes postérieures à l'âge du Bronze ancien (Romain, 1991; de Lumley et Echassoux, 2011). Pour H. de Lumley et A. Echassoux, des bouleversements culturels violents auraient également contribué à l'abandon du site.

Bien que cette absence de lances et d'épées piquetées ait été confirmée par nos recherches, certaines représentations de poignards à lame très longue et plutôt étroite pourraient être datées d'une période plus récente que le Bronze ancien: des comparaisons sont en effet possibles avec les poignards de l'âge du Bronze moyen et peut-être postérieurs; d'autres poignards piquetés à lames 'pistilliformes' peuvent être comparés avec des exemplaires d'Italie septentrionale ou du midi français, couvrant une période chronologique qui s'étend du Bronze moyen au Bronze final. D'un point de vue stylistique, les poignards pistilliformes du mont Bego rappellent les figurations des roches de Castelletto et des Griselle, sur le lac de Garde, qui renvoient quant à elles à la culture matérielle du Bronze moyen et récent (entre autres Gaggia et Nardi, 2010, p. 82-83). D'autres motifs, différents des armes, peuvent également être datés de la fin de l'âge du Bronze et de l'âge du Fer: il s'agit en particulier de certains anthropomorphes et de quelques exemplaires de 'palettes' que nous avons interprétés comme des rasoirs.<sup>2</sup>

Le nombre de figures piquetées pouvant être attribuées aux périodes postérieures à l'âge du Bronze ancien demeure cependant très faible: il est probable qu'à partir de l'âge du Bronze ancien, la tradition de la gravure piquetée perd de son importance, en raison de la rupture survenue à la fin de l'âge du Bronze ancien lorsque, à cause de la détérioration climatique mentionnée plus haut, l'accès au site a dû devenir plus difficile. A partir du Bronze moyen la gravure linéaire semble alors prendre de plus en plus d'importance et les motifs schématiques-linéaires viennent compléter les compositions piquetées déjà existantes par l'ajout de figures incisées superposant les figurations piquetées et s'associant avec elles. Les grandes compositions mixtes (Fig. 8), piquetées et linéaires, pourraient ainsi traduire l'expression d'une période charnière, correspondant raisonnablement à la fin de l'âge du Bronze et les débuts de l'âge du Fer, durant laquelle la gravure piquetée est en train de céder la place définitivement à une tradition entièrement linéaire. Cette hypothèse chronologique est confortée si l'on tient compte de la récurrence importante de motifs schématiques tels que les pentagrammes, les scalariformes, les astérisques, les zigzags, les croix, les arboriformes, les pointes de flèches sur de nombreuses surfaces riches en gravures schématiques-linéaires complétant des compositions piquetées: en effet les recherches sur l'art schématique-linéaire menées sur d'autres sites d'art rupestre proposent une datation à la fin de l'âge du Bronze et à l'âge du Fer pour ce type de motifs (Coimbra, 2013).

Par ailleurs, à partir du Bronze moyen, sur les grands ensembles d'art rupestre de l'arc alpin, lances et épées (également accompagnées de personnages les brandissant) apparaissent sur les roches gravées

<sup>2</sup> Pour ce qui concerne les rasoirs, nous avons présenté cette interprétation avec F. Rubat Borel au Colloque de Strasbourg 'Le Bronze Moyen et l'origine du Bronze final, en Europe occidentale, de la Méditerranée aux pays nordiques', le 17-20 juin 2014 (Bianchi et Rubat Borel, en préparation).



FIGURE 8. ZIV.GII.R12A: COMPOSITION PIQUETÉE COMPLÉTÉE PAR DES MOTIFS SCHÉMATIQUES-LINÉAIRES.

tout autant que dans la culture matérielle; au mont Bego, bien qu'absentes du *corpus* piqueté, elles font partie de la tradition incisée.

Mais c'est surtout la classe des anthropomorphes qui nous fournit à nouveau des données intéressantes d'un point de vue chronologique et stylistique. Certains personnages avec une épée ou une arme à hampe renvoient à des moments plus avancés de la métallurgie; un anthropomorphe présent sur la roche ZVIII.GX.R8 porte notamment une épée frangée, selon une symbolique propre à la préhistoire (Fig. 9).

Certaines figures cornues, dont une en particulier (Fig. 10), pourraient éventuellement être assimilées au dieu celtique *Kernunnos*, très représenté par exemple sur les roches gravées du Valcamonica. En outre, dans le secteur de Fontanalba, sur une roche située au pied d'un de ces anthropomorphes, a été découvert un signe en arc avec flèche, qui trouve une comparaison exacte dans les motifs filiformes de Foppe di Nadro, au Valcamonica. Si ces représentations d'arc avec leur flèche peuvent

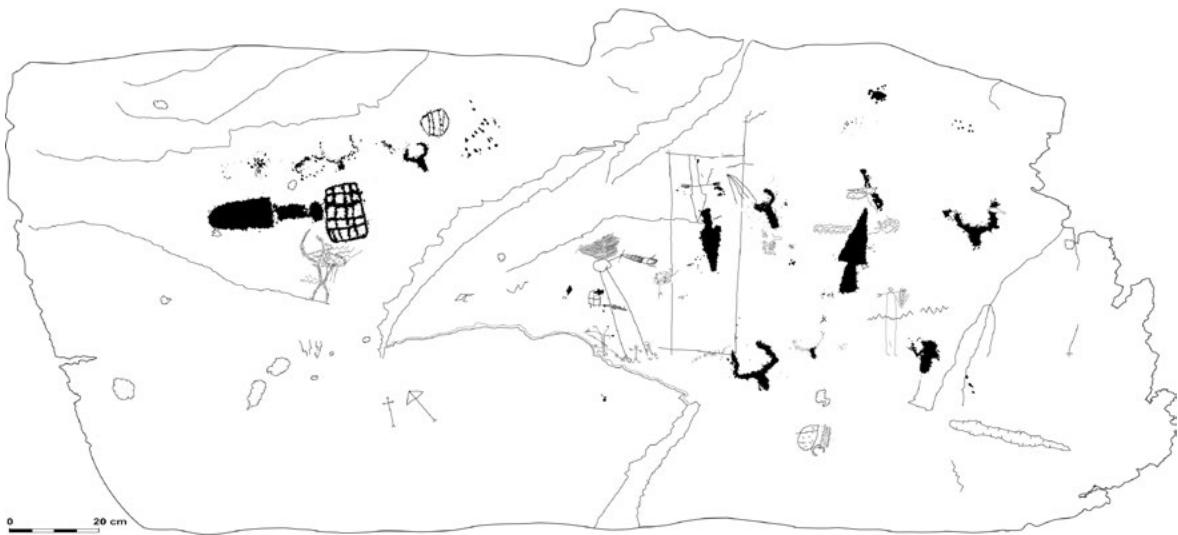


FIGURE 9. POIGNARD LINÉAIRE ET ANTHROPOMORPHE AVEC ÉPÉE FRANGÉE SUR LA ROCHE ZVIII.GX.R8.

être attribuées au début de l'âge du Fer (Arcà, 2009), on pourrait éventuellement envisager la même datation pour l'anthropomorphe à cornes ramifiées, pouvant donc être interprété comme une autre représentation de *Kernunno*.

Pour conclure, il est nécessaire d'évoquer la question des inscriptions latines présentes sur les roches gravées du mont Bego. Si jusque très récemment on admettait que la seule inscription latine du site était la célèbre ‘*hoc qui scripsit patri mei filum pedicavit*’ – présente sur la Paroi Vitrifiée au pied de la vallée des Merveilles – les récentes recherches sur le site ont permis d'identifier une deuxième inscription sur la roche ZVIII.GX.R32 (Fig. 11). L'examen de la gravure<sup>3</sup> conclue à l'existence d'une certaine vulgarité dans le texte et dans la forme qui permettent d'attribuer cette deuxième inscription à un légionnaire romain provenant de *Cemenelum*, ayant traversé la vallée des Merveilles encore une fois au Ier siècle après J.-C.

## 5. Conclusion

L'utilisation de la gravure incisée durant la préhistoire récente au mont Bego peut être démontrée par la présence de gravures réalisées dans une certaine proportion par piquetage et en partie par incision: il s'agit de traits ‘de construction’ de la figure, de traits ‘de détails’ exécutés par le biais d'une incision fine et superficielle, ou encore de gravures incisées à section en V, que l'on peut qualifier de ‘à polissoir’. L'existence de gravures incisées évoquant



FIGURE 10. PRÉSENTATION PROBABLE DE *KERNUNNO* (D'APRÈS LUMLEY, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> L'analyse de l'inscription est en cours par le Prof. G. Mennella, épigraphiste de l'Università degli Studi di Genova.



FIGURE 11. INSCRIPTION LATINE SUR LA ROCHE ZVIII.GX.R32.

la symbolique de l'univers piqueté plaide également en faveur d'une contemporanéité avérée entre gravures piquetées et certaines gravures linéaires.

Les travaux actuels sur la tradition linéaire du mont Bego démontrent en outre que quelques gravures linéaires sont superposées par des motifs piquetés et qu'en conséquence, certains filiformes peuvent être même antérieurs aux gravures piquetées. Bien qu'il soit difficile de quantifier cette antériorité, il est indéniable que des points communs apparaissent entre les motifs schématiques-linéaires de la région du mont Bego – arboriformes, palmiers, réticulés, zigzags – et certains motifs datant du Néolithique, à partir de ses phases les plus anciennes, provenant d'autres sites.

La présence d'armes linéaires absentes du corpus piqueté – notamment pointes de lance et épées-, et d'autres motifs pouvant être datées de la fin de l'âge du Bronze et de l'âge du Fer, ainsi que l'existence de gravures schématiques-linéaires complétant ultérieurement les compositions piquetées, permet de supposer enfin que la gravure piquetée a été abandonnée graduellement à partir du Bronze moyen, pour laisser entièrement la place à la gravure linéaire à la toute fin de la protohistoire.

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# Filiform figures in the rock art of Valcamonica from Prehistory to Roman age

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## Abstract

*The report examines pre or proto-historic rock art from Valcamonica made with the both the filiform (scratched) and the polissoir techniques.*

*The study herewith presented considered the entire corpus of incised engravings of Valcamonica and their complex relationship with pecked figures. It was thus possible to draw up a specific typology for incised rock art, which shows undeniable parallels with what is known for pecked rock art; moreover we were able to provide a dating for some of the analyzed filiform figures through the analysis of superimpositions and associations.*

*The analysis of scenes and contexts also identified many panels with a ritual or symbolic value, which allow us to consider the technique of filiform engraving anything but secondary.*

**Keywords:** *incised rock art, filiform figures, Valcamonica*

## Résumé

*Ce rapport examine l'art rupestre pré ou protohistorique de Valcamonica réalisée avec les techniques du filiforme et du polissoir.*

*L'étude présentée ici a examiné l'ensemble du corpus de gravures incisées de Valcamonica et leur complexe relation avec les figures piquetées. Il a été donc possible d'établir une typologie spécifique pour l'art rupestre gravé, qui montre des parallèles incontestables avec ce qui est connu pour l'art rupestre picotée; en outre, nous avons pu fournir une datation pour certaines figures filiformes en étude par l'analyse des superpositions et des associations.*

*L'analyse des scènes et des contextes a aussi identifié de nombreux panneaux avec une valeur rituelle ou symbolique, confirmant que la technique d'incision filiforme ne peut en aucun cas être considérée comme secondaire.*

**Mots clés:** *art rupestre incise, figures filiformes, Valcamonica*

## 1. Introduction

Incised rock art consists in schematic or figurative representations scratched on the rocks with a lithic or metallic tool and can be characterized by thin (*filiform* or *graffito*) or thicker (*polissoir*) grooves. The *graffiti* are usually not very deep and can be hardly visible to the naked eye, if not in proper lighting conditions. Incised rock art is a minority within the expressive framework of Valcamonica (Fig. 1a-b), which is usually characterized by pecked figures. Nevertheless incised representations can be conceptually significant, with peculiarities which show, in certain periods and areas, an original semantic value.

## 2. Methodology

The chronology of Valcamonica rock art, whether scratched or pecked, is still subject to extensive discussion (Anati 1963, 1975; De Marinis 1992; Sansoni, Gavaldo 1999; Arcà 2001 and related bibliography). Thus, hereinafter, we will synthesize the methodologies used during this work for the purpose of dating the camunian filiforms.

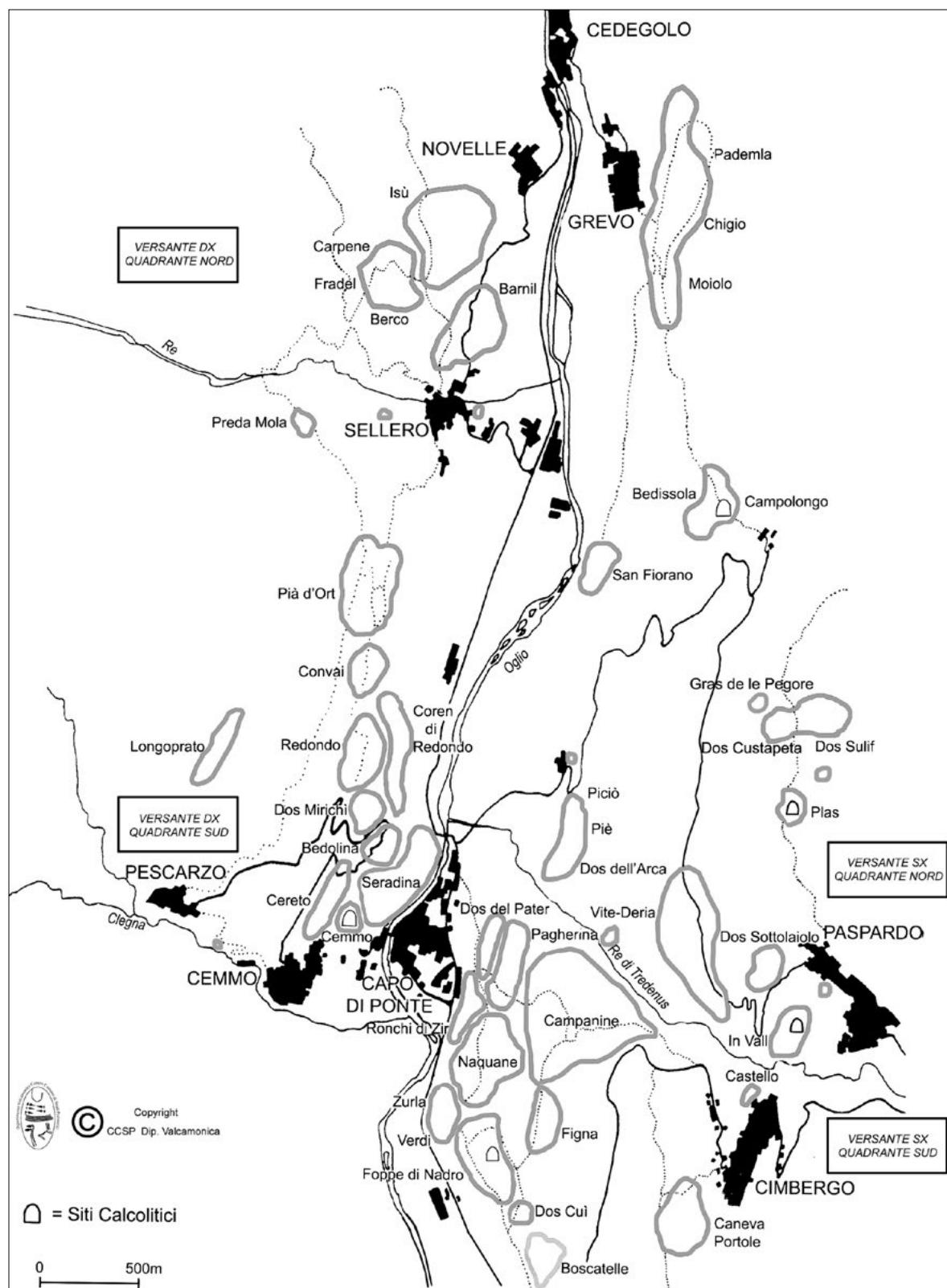


FIGURE 1A. MAP OF THE ROCK ART AREAS IN THE MIDDLE VALCAMONICA.

In particular, we considered: 1) stylistic classification and identification of distinctive typological markers; 2) systematic analysis of superimpositions; 3) analysis of context, associations and

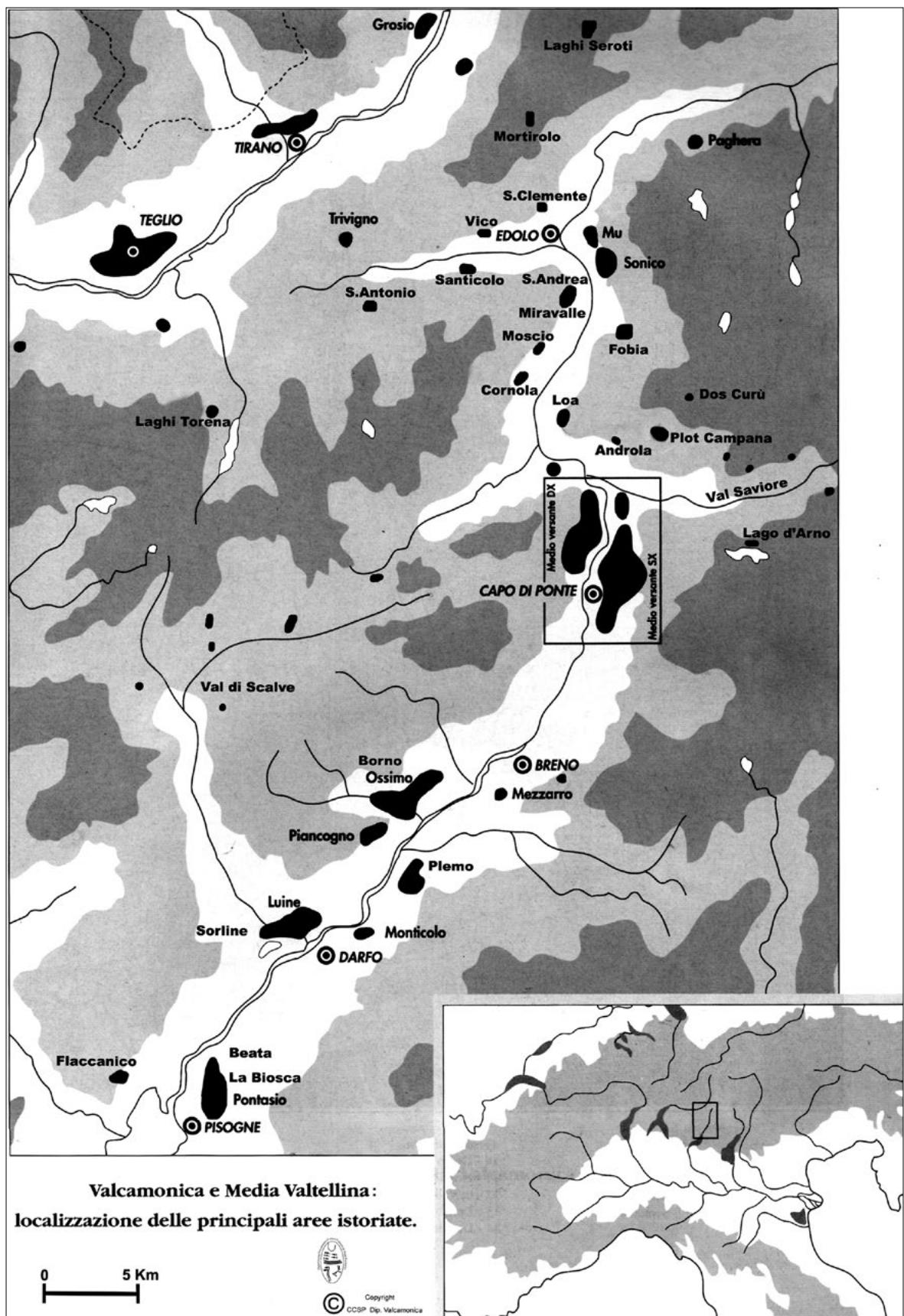


FIGURE 1B. MAP OF THE ROCK ART AREAS IN THE MIDDLE VALCAMONICA.

proximity; 4) similarity with weapons, tools and other equipment found in the archaeological record and therefore provided with a precise stratigraphic and typo-chronological sequence; 5) comparison of the filiform rock art with similar painted or engraved representations that, given their abundance, are often characterized by a more accurate chronology.

It should however be stressed that the possibility of linking rock art and archaeological remains may, in some particular cases, be a difficult tasks to carry out. Tools and weapons, in fact, are rarely depicted with a good deal accuracy and precision. Moreover, the representations do not always respect real-size proportions or lack important details to determine the typology. The only possible reference for comparison is the silhouette of the objects and their profile which, at times, cannot be sufficient for a specific identification.

### **3. Earliest filiform and *polissoir* representations in Valcamonica**

The associations and especially the superimpositions between incised and pecked figures show a very wide chronological *excursus* for filiform rock art in Valcamonica, which goes at least from the late Copper Age/early Bronze Age uninterruptedly until the Roman era (and even later, with a real *exploit* from the late Middle Ages to the XXth century). However, except for a few cases, the filiform phenomenon is mainly concentrated in the Iron Age, especially starting from the sixth century BC and until the final stages of full romanization that, in Valcamonica, extends until the early centuries of the Christian era.

The most ancient figures that can be dated with some confidence are undoubtedly weapons. In this regard, the halberds identified in Termen area are of particular interest since it was possible to date them to the Ancient Bronze Age thanks to precise comparisons with similar archaeological finds from excavation context (De Marinis, Fossati 2004).

The chronology of the spearheads from Dos di Costapeta (Fig. 2) is quite complex. De Marinis (1992) proposed to classify the representations into three main categories: those with triangular blade



FIGURE 2. SPEARHEADS  
FROM DOS DI COSTAPETA  
(PHOTO DIP. CCSP).

and straight base, dating back to the Ancient Bronze Age, those with foliated/ogival blade, related to the Middle and Late phases of the Bronze Age and those with flamboyant blade, which were in turn sub-divided into two variants, the first dating to Final Bronze Age and the second between the Final Bronze Age and the early Iron Age.

The dating of Loa, Zurla and Paspardo spears is even more problematic. From a typological point of view, some of them fall in a rather uniform class with rhomboidal/ogival blade, similar to the one which De Marinis attributes to the Middle and Late Bronze Age. On the contrary, Solano and Marretta (2009, 2014) suggest that, at least for the occurrences of Loa and Zurla, the dating should drop to the second Iron Age. According to the authors, the association of those spears with representations such as inscriptions in camunian alphabet, huts/barns, Introbio knives and Iron Age warriors as well as the use of a technique and a stylistic signature entirely comparable make a chronology to the Bronze Age hardly sustainable.

Casini (2012) dates to the Bronze Age, and especially between the Ancient Bronze Age and Middle-Late Bronze Age, two groups of daggers represented on the rock number 23 of Foppe di Nadro. In particular, the author points out that some occurrences in panels C and F are characterized by a profile incised with the filiform technique, which internal part was subsequently filled by pecking. Two halberds represented on the rock number 4 of the same site seem to have a similar treatment, characterized by a mixed technique: a continuous contour line with blade completely pecked on the inside (Masnata 2004). The chronology proposed for this last representations ranges from the Bell Beaker Culture to the Ancient Bronze Age.

#### **4. From Iron Age to Romanization**

The most flourishing period for Valcamonica rock art is undoubtedly Iron Age. Not surprisingly, it is precisely from the middle of this phase that the highest number of figures incised with filiform or *polissoir* techniques emerges. If we exclude the thousands of short, often confused signs that surround the pecked images, three particular categories of filiforms can be defined: a) mixed technique: traces of preparatory sketches and/or signs on completion of pecked figures; b) complex anthropomorphic or zoomorphic figures, weapons, vessels, buildings, symbols and inscriptions; c) geometric shapes such as circles, pentagrams, *trias* or more structured schematic representations.

Being the latest extremely difficult to date, since their long-term and often generic typologies, in this paper we will only discuss what concerns the first two categories mentioned above, postponing the debate on the schematic and/or geometric figures to future insights.

##### **4.a Mixed technique**

The use of incised rock art in association with the pecked one is, as mentioned, generally related to guidelines/preliminary sketches or with the representation of the finer details of the figures. Examples of both this types are known in Valcamonica and we will only enumerate here the most representative.

In Zurla (Giarelli, Sansoni 2011) rock number 2, for example, both case studies are well exemplified. The most striking panel is that of a group of four deer, depicted each in a different stage of preparation. This feature gives us the opportunity to investigate some technical and cognitive aspects of the creation process of the camunian rock art. One of the figures clearly shows the preparatory contour lines, but the animal is completed by pecking; legs and part of the antlers, however, remain filiform. A second deer nearby still shows traces of the preparatory sketch, but is completely over-engraved by pecking. The last two animals are completely pecked, but one of them – incomplete – is characterized by very thin pecked lines that define its silhouette, as if it were a first draft too. On the same rock there are also a pecked warrior with a filiform spear and a bird whose feet are represented by incised lines: these elements seem to confirm the hypothesis that, at least in some cases, the filiform technique

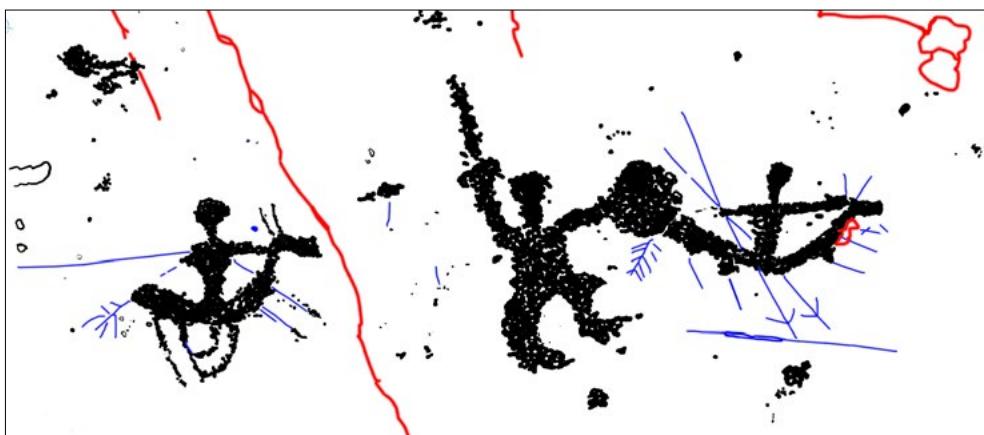


FIGURE 3. TWO HORSEMEN WITH FILIFORM PREPARATION LINES,  
PAGHERINA R. 5 (TRACING DIP. CCSP).

may have been used for finishing details, in search of the stylistic variety that was granted to painted art, but which was very difficult to obtain in rock engravings. This is further confirmed by the use of filiforms to refine the trappings and the clothes of the acrobats and warriors on rock number 50 in Naquane (phases IV C-D).

In Pagherina, rock number 5, the figures of two horsemen still show traces of filiform preparation lines which form the animals' legs, tails and ears, besides men's arms and weapons (Fig. 3). On rock number 27 in Foppe di Nadro it is to mention the scene of the deer wounded by an incised spear; moreover in Seradina, rock 12, there are both an archer with a filiform bow and a goat with *graffiti* horns. In Vite ('al de Plaha – Bial do Le Scale) rock number 94, there is a small building for which both of the techniques were used; finally in Dos Sulif a dog engraved with mixed technique and an Iron Age warrior with scratched spear are present (Marchi, 1996).

#### **4.b Figurative, non-geometric, incised rock art**

In Valcamonica numerous filiform subjects find punctual comparison in pecked or painted representations. Below, we will list and discuss the most significant case studies, according to a general classification on a typological level.

##### *Weapons*

In addition to the earliest examples which have already been briefly discussed, several different weapons – mostly axes or knives with sinuous blade – were engraved in various contexts of the middle Valley.

Because of their central importance as a chronological guide fossil, knives and sheath of the Introbio type (dated between the II century BC and the beginning of the I century AD) represented in filiform technique in Foppe Nadro rock number 24, Pia d'Ort rock 1 and 24 (Fig. 6), Redondo rock 20 are of great importance. This typology, which is well known in terms of archaeological finds, counts around fifty specimens in pecked technique (Roncoroni 2011). Introbio and similar knives are also present in Piancogno, so far the only area in Valcamonica characterized by an exclusive presence of incised rock art. The engravings, which are located in an impervious area between the Trobiolo and the

Daen Valleys, also retains a number of depictions of axes, swords and spears sometimes difficult to date, but generally ascribable to the final phase of the Iron Age or to the full romanization. Between the swords, the roman *gladius* is well attested in the area, for example on the so called Roccia delle Spade/Swords Rock (Priuli 1993).

Various axes-halberds (*Hellebardenäxte*) similar to the Ornavasso and Giubiasco types, with crescent-shaped cutting edge, are incised in the central portion of rock number 44 in Naquane; on rock 62 of the same site, a series of *Hellebardenäxte* is covered by an equid of the Late Iron Age (phase IVF). These weapons find precise comparison with the iron axes deposited in central alpine funerary contexts, dating approximately from the IV to the I century BC. The Latin poet Horace, in his ode dedicated to Drusus, remembers them as one of the weapons used in combat by the Alpine populations during the Iron Age. Another filiform ax, probably of the same typology, is also recognizable on rock number 24 in Pia d'Ort (Sansoni, Gavaldo 1995).

Although the arch had to be widespread, it is extremely rare in the rock art of Valcamonica. However two filiform cases with nocked arrows are known on rock number 24 in Foppe di Nadro.

As for spearheads, there are some figures from Loa characterized by narrow, elongated blade and extended cannon-shaped socket, comparable with specimens dating back to the mid-late La Tène (III-I century BC) and particularly well represented in ritual sites of the Alpine region (Solano, Marretta 2009). The most recent discovery, however, came to light in July 2014 on rock number 60 in Foppe di Nadro during our last recording rock art fieldwork. It is a slightly leaf-shaped spear characterized by short, conic socket and large rhomboidal blade, not entirely dissimilar from some of the Golasecca spearheads found in Moncucco (CO) and dated to the first half of the Iron Age.

#### *Vessels*

Figures of vessels, though present in Valcamonica, are quite rare consisting in no more than thirty cases. Regarding the filiform attestations, Piancogno is again characterized by the highest concentration of figures, thirteen of various types, mainly *oinochoai* (one in Ca' del Doss and three on Roccia dei Vasi/Vessels Rock) and generic vessels (two in Roccia dei Vasi/Vessels Rock, four on Roccia delle Spade/Swords Rock and three on Roccia del Labirinto/Labyrinth Rock).

However, the most peculiar specimen is undoubtedly the *Schnabelkanne* incised on rock number 20 of Redondo, with raised spout, conical, slender body and nearly horizontal shoulders (Marchi, 2007). The details and the delicate realization, allowed Porteri (2003) to propose that this wine container came from a Celtic context, but was an imitation of Etruscan models. Its dating could thus be placed between the V and IV century BC.

#### *Huts/barns*

To date, approximately two thousands of different representations of hut/barn buildings were surveyed in Valcamonica, the vast majority of which produced by pecking (Savardi 2013). Only very few examples of the same typology, definitely comparable with the pecked models, is executed with the filiform or *polissoir* technique. The chronology of this kind of figures is in all cases restricted to the Iron Age.

Rock 24 in Foppe di Nadro shows one building well detailed and provided of hoof and two rectangular elements placed horizontally one over the other (basis) and topped by a roof with a triangular section (Fig. 4). Cross-shaped fillers pattern part of the structure. Another occurrence in the same area is incised on rock number 4. Five filiform huts/burns can be found on rock number 27, 16 (with two examples juxtaposed), 47 and 49 in Campanine di Cimbergo (Savardi 2007; Sansoni, Gavaldo 2009). In Dos Cuì rock number 1 and Vite ('al de Fuos) rock number 51 are also represented isolated huts/barns, the latest being V-IV century BC in dating (Tognoni 2007).

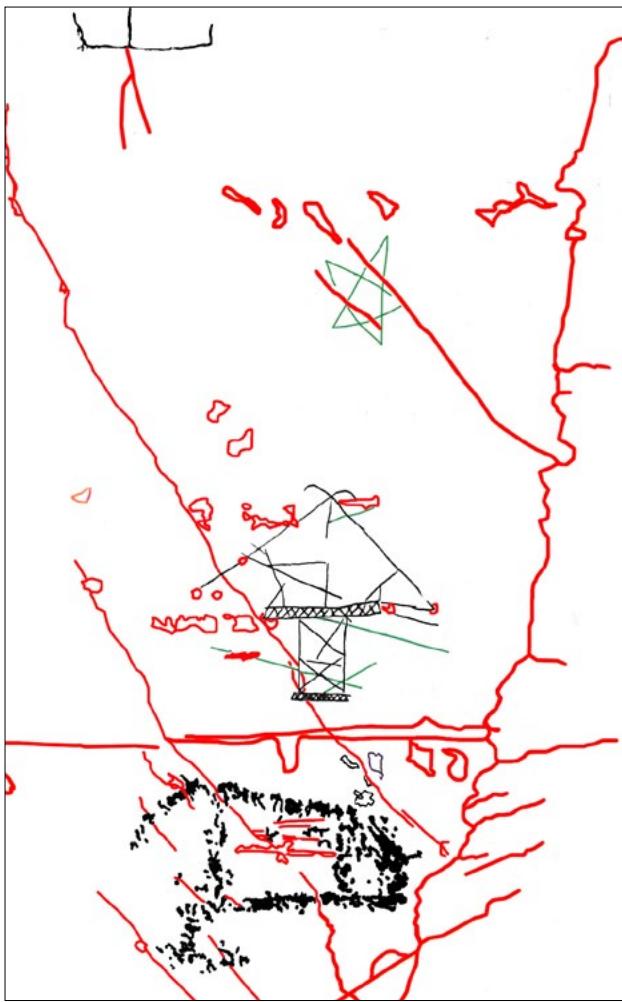


FIGURE 4. FILIFORM HUT/BARN REPRESENTATION AND PENTACLE, FOPPE DI NADRO R. 24 (TRACING DIP. CCSP).

In addition, great interest has the ‘village’ represented on rock number 2 in Loa, where it can be recognized a bipartite type of building scratched in *polissoir* and surrounded by two similar but smaller figures. The very same idea of ‘inhabited area’, but in a naturalistic style that has no comparison in the context of pre and proto-historic rock art, is expressed by the unusual pile-dwelling kind of building with elevated timber trackway incised on the rock number 2 in Zurla. In this case, thou, it is highly probable that the composition is the work of a modern hand.

#### *Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures*

The number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures scratched on the rocks of Valcamonica is quite high, but only in rare cases it is possible to date them with some confidence to the proto-historic period. From what is known to date, this type of engravings is definitely more common in the historical period. Most of men’s and animals’ representations have very generic typologies, made with schematic traits, and superimpositions are rarely present to solve the issue of dating.

Therefore we will present below only a selection of examples of those panels which fit most certainly in the context of the camunian Iron Age or in the process of Romanization.

Foppe di Nadro is a key location for the analysis of this class of representations: on rock number 24, sector C, just below the famous ‘camunian rose’ lies a filiform warrior who is partially superimposed and appears to fight against another anthropomorphic, made with the pecking technique. The difference in the armament of the duelists could be an indication of a slight chronological anteriority of the incised figure, but it is possible that this was a way to emphasize an underlying cultural difference (thus representing, in a general sense, the fight against the enemy/the other). The probable chronology stays within the limits of the IV D phase. On the same surface there is a second human representation, armless and in front view. A series of eyes, which are surely engraved by the same author, are arranged in pairs or individually around it. The chronology proposed by Gastaldi (in press/personal comment) is the Iron Age, with possible influences of eastern origin.

A group consisting of a ‘hunter’ with a spear and a pair of deer is portrayed on rock number 27 in the same area of Foppe (Fig. 5). The panel is difficult to define from a chronological point of view,

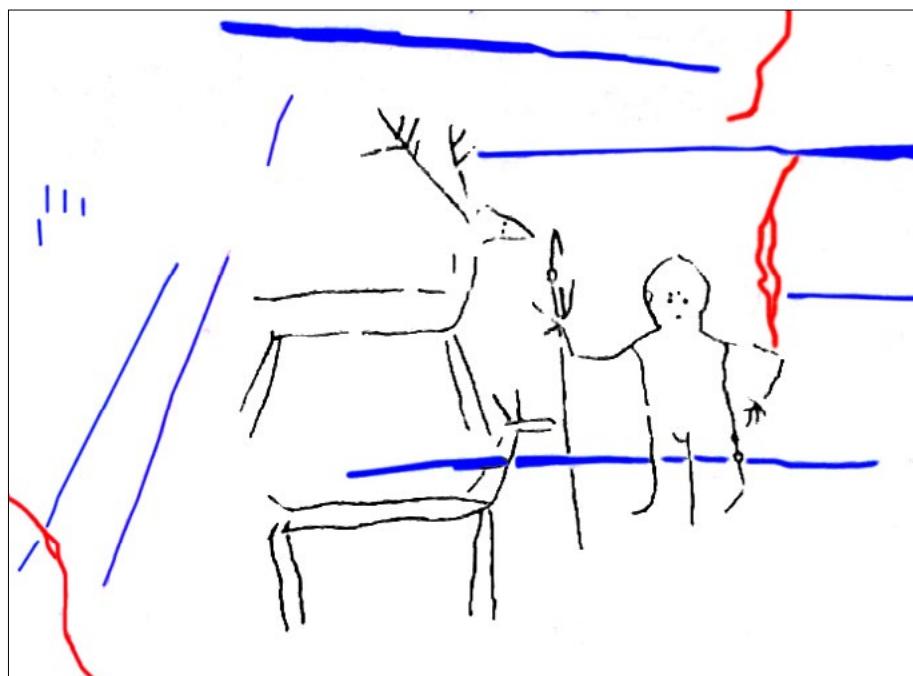


FIGURE 5. PANEL REPRESENTING A 'HUNTER' WITH A SPEAR SURROUNDED BY A PAIR OF DEER, FOPPE DI NADRO R. 27 (TRACING DIP. CCSP).



FIGURE 6. A POSSIBLE METALLURGICAL WORKSHOP OF THE IRON AGE SUPERIMPOSED TO A SERIES OF FILIFORM ANTHROPOMORPHIC AND ZOOMORPHIC FIGURES, INTROBIO SHEATHS AND INSCRIPTIONS, PIÀ D'ORT R. 1 (TRACING DIP. CCSP).

but the ithyphallic nature of the representation argues in favor of a proto-historic dating. At Pia d'Ort rock number 2 there is a number of animals (mainly horses) and human figures in realistic style that in certain cases are clearly covered by daggers of Introbio type, which provide a *terminus ante quem* for the anthropo and zoomorphic representations.

Filiform horses are also present in Dos Sulif and Pià d'Ort (Fig. 6, r. 1; 24), while a group of Iron Age warriors with spears can be found on rock number 20 of Redondo (in filiform technique) and in Loa, rock number 1 (in *polissoir*). Men armed with spears and oxhide shields are also engraved in Seradina, rock number 12 and Zurla (phase IV D-E).

But again the area of greatest interest with regard to quantity, but also quality of the panels is undoubtedly Piancogno. We report here as examples the representations of Cernunnos, the antlered god



FIGURE 7. SORCERER ROCK,  
PIANCOGNO (PHOTO  
M. COLELLA, DIP. CCSP).

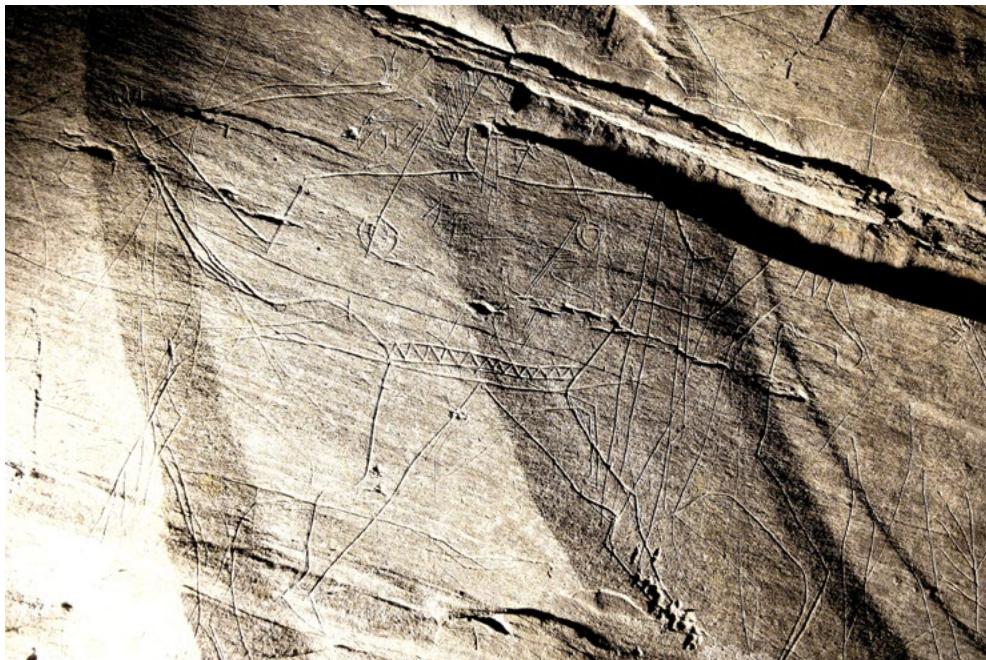


FIGURE 8. WARRIOR ARMED WITH AN AX, PIANCOGNO,  
WARRIORS' ROCK (PHOTO M. COLELLA, DIP. CCSP).

of Celtic tribes (also pecked in Naquane, r. 70), the so called ‘sorcerer’ (Fig. 7), on the homonymous rock, and several groups of animals (horses, deer, canids, swine and even a sort of gallinaceous) and warriors armed with sword, ax, spear or rarely bow present on a variety of surfaces in the area (Fig. 8). As far as the typology of their armaments is concerned, what described in the section dedicated to unclasped weapons still applies.

#### *Symbols*

The footprint is one of the most frequent representations in the rock art of Valcamonica starting from the Ancient Iron Age, with more than a thousand cases counted to date (Gavaldo 2012a).

This symbol, related to the concept of presence, is also known in filiform examples on rock number 24 of Foppe di Nadro. There, in a circumscribed portion of the surface, at least two different sequences of footprints, partially overlapping, are engraved. A rather anomalous element, not totally unknown in Valcamonica, should be noted: five of the footprints also show toes, incised using simple vertical lines.

Much rarer – only fifteen occurrences – is the theme of labyrinth (Gavaldo 2012b), which is known in two filiform examples in the area of Pincogno (Roccia del Labirinto/Labyrinth Rock) and Campanine di Cimbergo, rock number 5 (for the pecked versions see eg Naquane r.1, Verdi r.1, Zurla r. 2 etc.).

#### *Inscriptions*

The catalog of pre-Roman and Roman inscriptions on the rocks of Valcamonica is extremely wide, enough to not be possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic in this paper. However, we will report here some of the areas of greatest interest for the study of camunain epigraphy in relation to the engravings made with the filiform or *polissor* technique.

The north-Etruscan inscriptions consist mostly of single words (usually proper names) and more rarely alphabets. Alphabets are located in at least four complete copies, plus some fragments, on rock number 24 of Foppe di Nadro, while three others (one of which is lost) come from Piancogno on Roccia delle Iscrizioni/Inscriptions Rock, Roccia delle Spade/Swords Rock and Roccia dell'alfabetario camuno/Camunian Alphabet Rock (Tibiletti Bruno 1993). Letters, single words or inscriptions are incised, *inter alia*, on rocks number 1 and 24 in Pià d'Ort, number 24 and 26 in Foppe di Nadro, number 1-2-3-4 in Loa, number 1 in Pagherina, on Dos del Curù boulder and, of course, in many examples on Piancogno outcrops.

This same area is also known for its interesting testimonies of Latin writings: two incomplete alphabets, one clockwise from A to T (on Roccia dell'alfabetario/Alphabet Rock) and the other counter-clockwise from A to S with omission of some letters, on Roccia del Labirinto/Labyrinth Rock. On the so-called Roccia di Vanius/Vanius Rock two warriors accompanied by a series of Latin inscriptions are represented; the reading of the text has allowed to interpret the scene, giving an identity to the figures: both sons Maccus (a name of Celtic origin), the two brothers are called respectively Ponticus, the horseman, and Vanius, the warrior on foot (Priuli 1993).

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the overlaps and associations between and among filiform and pecked figures reveals that on some surfaces (Foppe di Nadro r. 24 and r. 27, Pià d'Ort r. 24, Naquane r. 1 and so on) the two techniques coexist, alternate, complement each other, while in the late Iron Age, on other panels (in Piancogno and again Foppe di Nadro, r. 24, r. 43) the filiform technique is used exclusively or predominantly. The filiform technique plays a relative marginal role in most sites, but also it can sometimes assume characters of great centrality in others (Piancogno or Campanine for the historical period) or on individual rocks (Foppe di Nadro rock number 24 or Pià d'Ort rock number 1 and 24) or areas of the surfaces, where it seems to deliberately play a special, dedicated role, like painting.

It should also be pointed out that incised rock art allows expressing specific details that are way more difficult or even impossible to create by pecking. On the other hand this technique is very fast and perhaps, in some cases, it was probably used in one go, with a partially 'popular' connotation. Pecking, maybe even for its potential to accommodate the colour may have had – in general – a higher or at least a more traditional value.

The geometric shapes and the complex images, typologically near to the similar pecked engravings, feature a certain stylistic naivety and often their own logic and symbolic structure. The relationship with the contemporary pecked images is strong, as well as the thematic parallels with painted figures, such as those recently discovered in Paspardo, areas of Bial de le Scale (Fossati 2007) and Forra del Re (Stig Hansen 2009; Colella, Sansoni 2010) that are extremely rare in Valcamonica.

From the above analysis, we can see that the themes represented have a strong symbolic or ritual meaning, not certainly less important than that of the pecked figures, thus giving incised rock art a significant role in the context of pre and protohistoric engravings of Valcamonica.

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# **Threadlike engravings of historical period on the rocks and plaster of churches and civic buildings. Some comparisons and proposals of interpretation**

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## **Introduction, state of research, method**

This essay examines the threadlike engravings exclusively of historical time located in some sites of Valcamonica: the area of Campanine Cimbergo (Natural Reserve of Ceto, Cimbergo and Paspardo) and Monticolo di Darfo.

The rock art of historical time, whether it is graffiti or incisions, has never attracted the interest of scholars.<sup>1</sup> It has been only in the last 15 years that some researchers have been attempting a study of images from this period. On the topic there are, therefore, few publications when compared to the literature on the rock art of Prehistory and Early History.<sup>2</sup> I think it is important that in this conference there is space also for the historic period in the session that studies threadlike rock art.

While studying rock art I have directed my attention to the threadlike engravings present on plaster and stone in churches and civic buildings.<sup>3</sup> I think, in fact, that these evidences can be a major point of comparison with the images on the rocks. For a matter of time I would like to present below a just a few cases, the most explicative, to illustrate schematically some topics of study and to assist the reader in a quick understanding of the methodology that I adopted.

The starting point is the site of Campanine (730-550 mt), one of the European places, along with Mount Bego, where there is the highest concentration of figurative subjects made in historical times with the thread-like technique.

Another issue that deserves a discussion in this conference is the difficulty of detection of the signs made with thread-like technique on the stone. There are examples in which archaeologists have not seen the signs on rock. The sign was then discovered only years later when the rock was better cleaned, or thanks to special lighting conditions. It is therefore to consider that we are dealing with a type of rock art difficult to analyze: it is likely that some signs, even if located in sites already studied, are unknown because they have never been identified.

## **The threadlike rock art in Valcamonica**

The area of Campanine is located in the municipality of Cimbergo, in the central part of Valcamonica. This site has more than 100 engraved rocks: known since the '30s, has been fully investigated in the

<sup>1</sup> A first attempt of cataloguing and dating of threadlike engravings of historical time discovered on rocks in Luine, was proposed by Anati 1982, p. 197-208. Troletti 2015.

<sup>2</sup> A brief summary of the methodology (with bibliography) adopted by various researchers for the study of historical rock art can be found in Troletti 2013c; to which must be added Copiatti; Poletti Ecclesia 2014.

See also Priuli 1982; Casini; Fossati *et al.* 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Troletti 2004; Troletti 2013c; Biganzoli; Pizzigoni 2006; Heath 2011; Graves; Rollason 2013; Westerdahl 2013: the authors have investigated the graffiti on the plaster of buildings of historical age. The ones mentioned here are not the only ones who have dealt with the matter. The methods used are different; so are the results. Needs to be added the contribution of Bassi; Bellandi 2009 (with previous bibliography): the two scholars have focused only on the problem of the detection of the graffiti, proposing the methodology of tracing considered more accurate and less invasive for the plaster.



FIGURES 1-2. BERZO INF., S. LORENZO CHURCH.

past 20 years, and the study has been published entirely in a catalogue of the rocks. In this site is recorded the highest concentration of images of historical era in Valcamonica. The second site, in order of importance for iconography, is the Monticolo di Darfo, which, apart from some preliminary test, hasn't been studied yet.<sup>4</sup> Of some relevance is also Pisogne.

In this speech I will present only a brief catalog of the topics that have already been studied and published from 2009 onwards. While listing the themes on which the threadlike technique is mostly

<sup>4</sup> See some notes with previous bibliography in Troletti 2013a.

used on the rocks of Valcamonica I will try to provide some data about the method used for dating and some comparisons between engravings on rocks and plasters.

On the rocks 5 and 6 of Campanine we have found 21 images resembling gallows, with and without hanged. Dating from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century can be confirmed by several considerations and comparisons: the punishments described in the Statutes of Valcamonica during the Venetian Republic domination, the history of costume, the illuminated manuscripts, frescoes, popular prints, the gallows (thread-like) on the plaster of the churches, the depiction of the human figure represented in profile (Troletti; Gastaldi 2009b). The same way of representing the human figure in profile (threadlike) is located on the plaster of a fresco (but is not the only one) in a church of Valcamonica (church of S. Lorenzo in Berzo Inferiore; Figs. 1-2; Troletti 2004). This data allows a comparison between images created with the same technique. Also the image on the plaster provides a *terminus post quem* for dating.

The same happens for the representation of knights in Campanine (Gastaldi 2009) and the knights engraved on the plaster of a church. In this case the knight was drawn over an image and then partially covered by another layer of fresco. Being able to date the two frescoes and knowing that the knight was made above (and after) the older plaster, but below the most recent one, we can tighten the field of dating to a few decades. The study of the knight on the plaster of the church is useful also to date the same image on the rock. This example is a connection to the presence of armed anthropomorphic figures (with horse) made in graffiti (but also pecked) discovered in Campanine. The warriors are always dating from the late fourteenth to the sixteenth century (R. 26, sector B, Fig. 3) and present



FIGURE 3. CAMPANINE OF CIMBERGO, R. 26, WARRIOR.

many details: the technique of graffiti allows to better represent some details and specify the shape of the shields, helmets and armors. These data have been able to confirm the dating by comparison with real objects. Similar comparisons have been applied to the study of fortified buildings (whether engraved or pecked) in Campanine (Troletti 2009). Even overlays have been useful for dating: as in the case of the knight (threadlike) of r. 98 sector B underlying a pecked image of a key (Figs. 4-5).



4



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FIGURES 4-5. CAMPANINE OF CIMBERGO, R. 98, KEY OVERLAP A THREADLIKE KNIGHT.



FIGURE 6. CAMPANINE OF CIMBERGO, R. 6 SOLOMON KNOT.

These images suggest continuity between the Early History and the Modern era: it seems, in fact, that the presence of depictions with a military background (of different historical codification), already seen in the Bronze Age and Iron age in Campanine, continue to be represented even in historical times. We are not able to give an explanation of the presence during historical time of this kind of military deployment (armed anthropomorphic, knights, fortifications).

In Campanine there are 25 signs known as Solomon knots (Fig. 6): regarding this image many different suggestions of interpretation have been proposed, and they have not led to an explanation shared by all scholars who have dealt with it.<sup>5</sup> I will therefore omit the symbolic value and meaning.

The symbol appears, expressed in threadlike technique, on the rocks and on plasters of churches and civic buildings, with the same features and during the same centuries. This fact could suggest that the use of this technique, at least in the late medieval period, was widely spread, and accepted and shared by various social levels and in different geographical contexts. This assumption is based on limited data, inherent to the symbol known as Solomon's Knot. It would be interesting to proceed with a similar verification for other symbols reproduced with the same technique.

These are just a few examples of representation and comparisons useful for dating the figurative entirety of historical time in the site of Campanine. There are other threadlike engravings: stairs, crosses, daces, tiaras, heraldic eagles, Florentine lilies, monstrous figures, stars (Fig. 7), crosses and alleged witches, non-figurative signs, plants. The dates and inscriptions (Troletti; Gastaldi 2009) also help to understand the utilization of the site, the dating and even the presence of educated people.

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the issue, see Fratti; Sansoni *et al.* 2010.

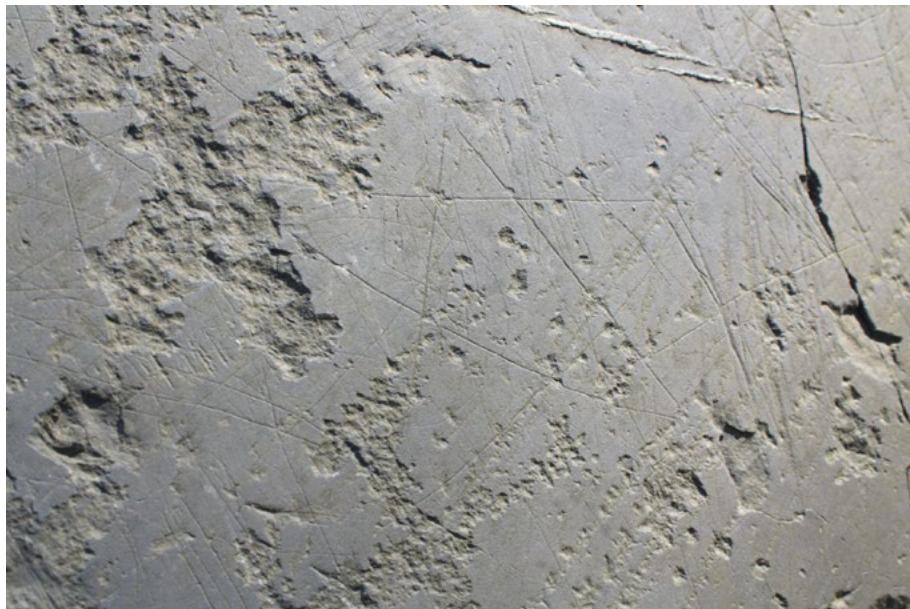


FIGURE 7. CAMPANINE OF CIMBERGO, R. 6, STAR.

### The choice of the site

Why was this site chosen? What are the reasons that have led to prefer a rock rather than another one? Why was the population of the XIV-XIX roaming in this area?

I have been able to carry out a quite exceptional investigation about Campanine for the availability of archive material. The study of archival documents has allowed us to understand the relationship between the position, the rocks, the historical roads, the names of the locations, the owners of the areas and the exploitation of the place (Troletti 2013b). The site was used as a communication link between Capo di Ponte and the village of Cimbergo. In this area was practiced herding and gathering of forest products such as chestnuts and timber. My observations are borne also from studies of the colleagues in Trentino, who have identified on their mountains many depictions, even with inscriptions made by shepherds and dating in the Modern era.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore to exclude the use of the site for specific purposes of cult, although there are many crosses engraved. I believe that the signs of the historical period are, for the most part, non-religious expressions, although the religious and civil components were in the Christian past often indivisible. The many crosses where good fortune signs that were repeated by both educated and illiterate people.

I think it is to be excluded, as I have said in other conferences, that the many crosses found were engraved to bless the territory. If the religious authority had wanted to destroy the rocks, they would have done it easily and without second thoughts. Today we have many rocks preserved because they were not considered a threat to Christian orthodoxy.

The Religious practices opposed by the Catholic (Controriforma) where others; I believe that even the local clergy knew about the engravings and allowed them. The presence of human beings capable

<sup>6</sup> Bazzanella; Kezich *et al.* 2010; Bazzanella; Kezich *et al.* 2014.

of writing is documented by various inscriptions, an example is found in the Latin inscription *Ambula in via Domini*.

Nicoletta Bianchi points out (in a speech during this session of the conference) that there is no archaeological evidence documenting the human presence during historical times near the rocks engraved of Campanine; therefore the supposed temporal hiatus of about a thousand years (from the second to the fourteenth century), during which we don't have any engraved signs, can be questioned if you think that some threadlike engravings, which we have dated back to Modern time, are also present in prehistoric times. The dating to the full historical period (Middle Ages onwards) proposed in 2009 is based on several overlapping incisions that can be dated as for example the keys, the different type of gallows, the characters used for the inscriptions, the knights, the weapons (Gastaldi; Troletti 2009). Some signs, which we could define of known dating, are placed under, on, or close to other threadlike images, and have allowed us to propose a chronology from the fourteenth century onwards.

Regarding the human presence in the area, it seems that this 'rebirth' of rock art during the historical phase coincides with the expansion of the construction of the castle of Cimbergo (located above the rock art site), in which, a recent archaeological excavation, has highlighted some engraved rocks preserved in the perimeter wall. Finally, although of a few centuries more recent, the studies of the Austro-Hungarian Land Registry data have allowed us to hypothesize a use of the area with purely pastoral aims, and also for the gathering (to a lesser extent) of forest products. From this point of view we can already find one thing in common, at least for this historical stage, between the graffiti and the engravings in Valcamonica and Mont Bego: in both places seems like that pastors have had a key role in the creation of the signs on the rocks.

### **The area of the Monticolo di Darfo**

The Monticolo (small mountain) is a small hill (350 m) located at the center of Valcamonica. During prehistory, the site was already in use as witnessed by a large boulder engraved with halberds and daggers dating back to the Copper Age. The engravings of historical era, known for several decades, have been recently surveyed thanks to a project of the Archaeological Heritage of Lombardy. During this monitoring 16 rocks with engravings of historical period ranging, roughly, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century (of which only 6 already known; Troletti 2014; 2015) have been identified. The most part of the rock art found here is figurative, but there are as well writings and dates (Troletti 2013a). There are also threadlike images of which however we do not have the tracings. We have noticed that in this site the use of threadlike is minor compared to the technique of the pecking. On some rocks there is a great concentration of images which makes it difficult to read the signs: it seems like the pecking has been preferred in order not to risk to lose the image engraved. Many figures overlap each other; it appears that some are no longer visible because they have been damaged by more recent ones. Can we speculate that pecking technique is preferred compared to the threadlike one? Probably through it could be ensured a greater visibility of the sign right in the sections of the rocks where there was a greater concentration of figures. The thread-like, at least from what we saw, seems relegated to less crowded areas. From these preliminary data, and only for this site, it seems like the abundance of presence of the pecking technique, instead of the thread-like one, could be explained by the need to make a mark more visible among many other signs.

### **Graffiti on the walls**

The habit of engraving with a nail or a metal blade on plaster and building stones of civil and religious buildings is present throughout Europe. It is only in recent decades that several scholars, driven by various purposes and in various countries, have collected this data. Most of the interest in this research was motivated by the possibility of collecting information from these graffiti. One example is a study where have been recorded many inscriptions and drawings (perhaps of illiterate people) discovered on the walls of the cells of the castles used in the past as prisons (Lombroso 1996). The

signs provide diverse information about the lives of the prisoners. In other cases, however, scholars have used the inscriptions for paleographic analysis that could give a support to other research (Mile; German 2012; German 2014), for civic, anthropological or theological studies (Muir 2014). We can't give in these paper a comprehensive overview of all those who have dealt with the matter.

These analyses seems to be interesting as a support to the study of rock art: just think about the issue of dating, already mentioned above, the support of plaster can provide a *terminus post quem* for the image, which can't take place with the same certainty for a rock. One thing is certain: the threadlike engravings on plaster of churches, houses, castles are also present in places where there isn't rock art. It follows that the occurrence of 'drawing' on the walls of the buildings is not necessarily connected to rock art. This activity is not relegated to isolated areas an rarely visited sites: there is no distinction of location or of social status so that graffiti can be found in the rooms of the cathedrals of Siena and Parma as in the most remote churches, or on frescoes of Perin del Vaga in the halls of Pope Paul III Farnese in Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome (Troletti 2010, p. 84, 87). But these are just a few examples, the catalog is still incomplete.

On the plaster of the churches, not only of Valcamonica, the thread-like writings and drawings left by the faithful were tolerated. My hypothesis is suggested by the fact that the priest (or other appointed man) could control the wall of the church, especially in the interior, and stop those who wanted to engrave, but they did not. I documented in Assisi, on the wall of a religious building and on a fresco with some saints, the inscription left by a priest to remember his second visit to the place of pilgrimage. This case shows that even the priests practiced the inscriptions on plaster. Similar cases are recorded also for other locations outside of Italy. The data are limited because there are few studies on the graffiti made on the plaster of the churches.<sup>7</sup> However, we have seen an increase in the collection of these data in the last fifteen years. A series of essays allowed us to document a specific strand of the different kind of boats shown on the walls of mostly religious buildings.

For the majority of the data collected we can state that there are no pecked images on plaster, but only threadlike ones. This could be due to the ease and the excellent results that could be achieved by engraving the plaster with a pointed tool. I would like to point out that threadlike drawings are also present on parts of building stones and wood components such as doors, furniture, jambs (Blindheim 1985). We have less evidence on wood because this material tends to deteriorate more quickly.

In general, the threadlike in churches can be interpreted as a devotional gesture of respect, even if they dent the fresco. I have already shown (Troletti 2004), even with a few examples which I have surveyed, that the incisions made for devotion do not destroy the faces and arms of the saints painted, but are placed in areas of the painting where there are only decorations, on the garment, between the legs and in the background. Graffiti made in castles used as prisons can have instead the double purpose of prayer for the salvation of the condemned or witness of his imprisonment and of his innocence.

Graffiti in civil buildings are very varied. To sum up I would say that they testify events, dates, anniversaries, battles, but also include signs of devotion. As an example, I find interesting the palace of the Duke of Urbino. I focused my attention on this location some time ago because there were threadlike engravings (but charcoal ones as well) various Solomon's knots. I have actually found an endless catalog of images and inscriptions, more or less evaluated, in various rooms of the building, including those of the soldiers who took possession of the duchy, some of which well written bearing some kind of chronicle of the court,<sup>8</sup> in a specific case probably related to the Duke Guidobaldo II himself. This is one of the many useful examples to demonstrate the spread at all latitudes and at all levels of society of this practice.

<sup>7</sup> Liebgott; Østergaard 1973; Helms 1975; Ovcharov 1977; Rivera-Collazo 2006; Walsh 2008; Hermanns 2010; Westerdahl 2013; Gomes; Casimiro *et al.* 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Indication about inscriptions is provided by Serra 1930, p. 46; see also Troletti 2010, p. 95, note 6.



FIGURE 8. NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON, *THE INTERIOR OF THE BUURKERK AT UTRECHT*, 1664.

The practice of writing and affect plasters of churches was definitely known: in this regard I bring, as a chronicle of the time, a painting by Pieter Saenredam (1597-1665), *The Interior of the Buurkerk at Utrecht* (Fig. 8, 1664, London, National Gallery) where an individual seems intent to put marks on the wall.

I think it is interesting that also in ancient Egypt the pilgrims left signs engraved on the stones of the temples; is well known a long series of deep threadlike engravings with both images and writings for propitiatory purposes to the god Abusir in Northern Saqqara referable to visitors during the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasty (Jacquet Gordon 2004). This, and other records (Lindstedt 2014), allows us to define that the habit to leave markings of the pilgrims in a temple, on stone or plaster, is not an exclusive phenomenon of Christianity.

#### **Continuity of symbols between prehistory and history**

Following a study conducted by other colleagues (Coimbra 2013) I have tried to assess whether there are thread-like images on rocks that endure from prehistoric times until today. As for the areas investigated by me, I excluded all the signs related to the sphere of Christianity, the inscriptions and dates. Pentacles (five-pointed stars), the lattices, the ‘scaliformi’, and squares with internal lines are left. In some cases it is difficult to confirm with certainty if a threadlike sign is prehistoric or of

historical time. The difficulty increases when it comes to generic figures (as asterisk, square, star) that are located on the rocks where there are both prehistoric and historical signs. Also in the catalog of the corpus of Campanine we had many doubts, some of which remain unresolved. It would be interesting to verify if also for other symbols there are more representations in threadlike technique or through pecking. The lack of complete data does not allow me to formulate a convincing hypothesis about the continuity of the symbols depicted with threadlike from Prehistory to historical time. For these reasons we are not able at this meeting to propose a certain conclusion to the matter.

### **Why threadlike?**

In the sites that I have analyzed, I have tried to understand the relationship, if there is one, between the hammering technique and the threadlike one. I wondered if the threadlike image was seen by all, especially on the rocks where there is the presence of both thread likes and hammerings. See the case already mentioned above, but only by way of example, the r. 98 (Campanine, Figs. 1-2) where a key overlap a threadlike knight (Troletti 2009). The chronological space between the figure below and the one above should not be large. This finding suggests me, between the various hypotheses, that the one who engraved the tower did not see the ‘thin’ knight. One has to ask why someone chooses to adopt the threadlike style considering the serious risk that after a short time the picture would go into oblivion due to the risk of superimpositions, in addition to the degradation of the rock, but I think that this factor was not evaluated.

The choice of the filiform, instead of the pecking, may have been made because it gave to the author the possibility of making better details of the figures, as well as a greater speed of execution at the cost of visibility. A similar question was already placed by Pietro Ferrari in the first CCSP bulletin. The scholar called for a comparative study (Ferrari 1965, p. 78) that is in part satisfied in this congress. For Campanine I also believe that those who frequented the place, mostly shepherds and farmers, always used to carry a metal blade. In conclusion I think that, at least for the historical phase, the choice was dictated by the wide spread of metal blades and the need to accurately make some details. Regarding writings in italic, moreover, I would say that the filiform is the ideal technique for their realization.

### **Conclusions**

The panorama of graffiti on rocks and plaster of historical era is still vague and we are very far from having a complete catalog. The considerations presented here are based on sporadic data and they are not exhaustive of geographical areas, iconographic types and historical periods. It seems premature to draw conclusions. However, after this introduction, I would like to summarize some observations. There seems to be a close continuity, at least in terms of typology, among what is made in threadlike in Prehistoric rock art and modern graffiti on the walls and on the rocks. The Modern era makes extensive use of Christian symbols, dates, inscriptions typical of the period. You may find a few common images between prehistoric and Modern era (5-pointed stars, the scaliformi, geometric patterns), but I’m not sure, and I cannot confirm, that there is an ideological continuity. It is therefore difficult, in the current state of research and with the limit of the lack of a database, to confirm or deny whether there is a nexus of ideological continuity in the use of certain signs across the millennia. As you know over time a symbol can completely change its meaning, or lose some components to acquire new ones. With this background it is very difficult to propose a solution to the issue. However, we can now confirm that the perpetrators of threadlike graffiti in Modern era are, in all probability, the common frequenters of the places: shepherds on the rocks of Campanine, but also on the Monte Bego, the diggers on the rocks near quarries and mines, devotees of churches and the inhabitants for the castles. So the practice was not only for a select few, but quite common among all social categories. I wonder if this could also be seen for Prehistory, however several theories would like the engraver to be somehow charged with a sacred value and then an elected among the population.

From what we could understand for the site Campanine (at least for the types of images made with the technique of the threadlike and hammering between the fourteenth and nineteenth century) every social category could leave marks on the rocks for reasons both religious and civil-military, and both cultured or popular. I ask my colleagues whether this solution can be taken into consideration for the threadlike of protohistoric times.

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# The rock art from Figueiredo (Sertã, Portugal): typology, parallels and chronology

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## Abstract

*This article focuses on the description of the engravings from three carved rocks with incised motives from the place of Figueiredo, municipality of Sertã, in central Portugal. Some remarks about the typology and chronology of the engravings are also done, besides the indication of parallels in the Iberian Peninsula. The article concludes with some considerations about conservation procedures that should be taken and also about some planned methodological aspects regarding further research in this rock art complex.*

**Keywords:** Figueiredo, incised rock art, typology, conservation

## Résumé

*Cet article se concentre sur la description des gravures rupestres de trois rochers avec des motifs incisés de la place de Figueiredo, municipalité de Sertã, au centre du Portugal. Quelques remarques sur la typologie et la chronologie des gravures se font aussi, outre l'indication des parallèles dans la Péninsule Ibérique. L'article se termine par quelques considérations sur les procédures de conservation qui doivent être prises et aussi sur certains aspects méthodologiques prévus concernant la poursuite de recherches dans ce group d'art rupestre.*

**Mots clés:** Figueiredo, art rupestre incisé, typologie, conservation

## 1. Introduction

Figueiredo is a small village that belongs to the municipality of Sertã, District of Castelo Branco, in the Center of Portugal. During several years only one rock with incised art was known in this area, the so called ‘Laje da Fechadura’, discovered by C. Batata (1997; 2006).

In 2004, in the sequence of a forest fire, two new rocks were found near this outcrop, revealing engravings of the same technique.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the new findings these rocks are designated respectively as Rock 1 (former Laje da Fechadura), Rock 2 and Rock 3 from Figueiredo (Coimbra, 2013b; Coimbra & Garcês, 2015).

The present article appears in the sequence of fieldworks carried out in these three rocks in 2008 and 2009, under the coordination of one of us (F. Coimbra), integrated in a larger project (RUPTEJO), regarding the rock art of the basin of the river Tagus (Oosterbeek *et al.* 2012).

In other articles we already approached in a developed way aspects such as the typology and chronology of incised rock art (Coimbra, 2013a; 2013b; Coimbra & Garcês, 2013; 2015; Coimbra,

<sup>1</sup> These new rocks were found by F. Coimbra and C. Batata, after a visit to Laje da Fechadura with the aim of taking new photos.

in press 1; in press 2). In this text we focus on the description of the engravings from the three rocks of Figueiredo, mentioning also some parallels that can help to understand better the rock art studied here, besides obviously making some necessary remarks regarding typology and chronology.

Thus, the bibliography presented in this text is just a selection, being given preference to articles regarding incised rock art in the Iberian Peninsula, due to the location of the rock art from Figueiredo in the interior centre of Portugal. We also tried to have a diversification of bibliographic references between this article and the other from one of us (F. Coimbra) published in these same Proceedings, not repeating them unless indispensable. There are other articles about incised rock art that are important to understand better the engravings studied here, which list can be seen, for example, in Coimbra & Garcês (2015) and in Coimbra (in press1).

## 2. The complex of the rock art from Figueiredo

### *Rock 1*

It is the largest of the three studied rocks in Figueiredo, being a schist outcrop, flat to the ground, with 11, 10 m long and 4 m wide, presenting a Northwest/Southeast orientation. The engravings are done by incision, some of them with a medium/thick trace and others with a very thin one (filiform).

The highest concentration of figures appears on the half of the rock that is facing Northwest, being rarer in the rest of the rock surface. There are representations of weapons such as an axe without handle and two filiform arrowheads. As a defensive weapon there is a possible shield.

Most of the engravings are of geometric character, such as squares (simple, with medians, with diagonals and medians), rectangles (simple, with a median, with two medians), net-patterns and trapezoidal shapes.<sup>2</sup>

Among the net-patterns one case which is rather elaborated may constitute a topographic engraving (Coimbra, in press 1), depicting eventually fields for agriculture (Fig. 1).



FIGURE 1. NET-PATTERN CONSTITUTING A POSSIBLE TOPOGRAPHIC ENGRAVING.

Regarding the other engravings there are the following examples: two tree like motifs, one with medium/thick trace (Coimbra, 2013a: Fig. 2) and the other very thin; four scalariforms, being three

<sup>2</sup> Complete typological tables can be seen in Coimbra, in press1, and in Coimbra & Garcês, 2013.

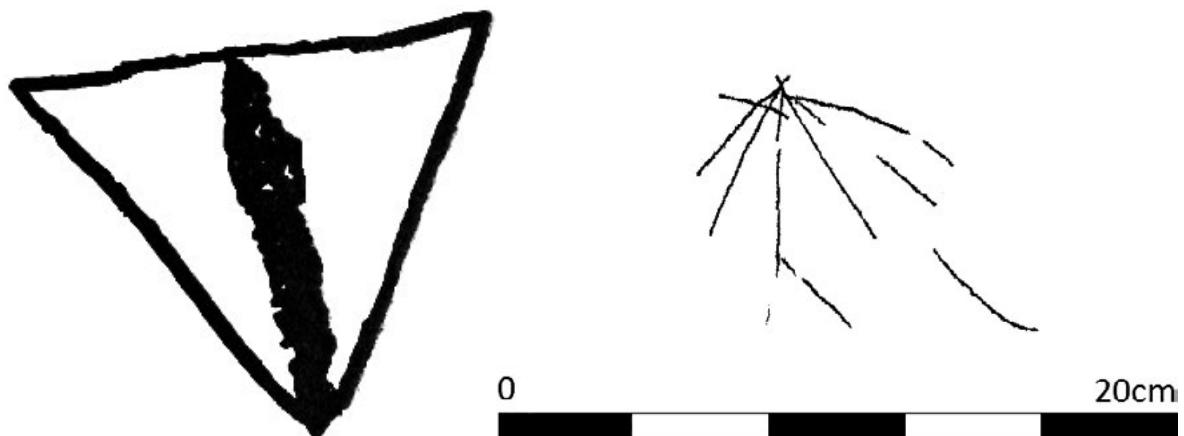


FIGURE 2. POSSIBLE REPRESENTATION OF A VULVA.

FIGURE 3. BUNDLE OF LINES

of medium trace and one filiform; seven pentacles, being four filiform and three of medium/thick trace. A possible vulva (Fig. 2), with the particularity of having the internal line pecked;<sup>3</sup> numerous crosses of four equal arms, done either with medium/thick or thin trace; a simple zigzag and another double, both filiform; a filiform asterisk; parallel and convergent lines either with medium/thick or thin trace; a bundle of filiform lines, possible representation of a hut (Fig. 3), with parallels in *Roccia del Villaggio* (Piancogno, Valcamonica), where similar figures really seem to depict huts in a village (Priuli, 1993); a filiform net-pattern with a later (?) motif with a thicker groove, constituting the figure a possible ‘palette’ (Coimbra & Garcês, 2015: Fig. 11; Coimbra, in press2: Fig. 9).

There are also five inscriptions, being two Roman (MIITAMVS and MAVRAE), and the others possibly from Late Iron Age. Among these, we outline an example which uses a swastika as a letter (Coimbra, 2013b: Fig. 23; Coimbra & Garcês, 2015: Fig. 12), besides other characters apparently Greek, such as the gamma ( $\Gamma$ ).

Another of these pre Roman inscriptions combines the characters ‘O’ and ‘V’ with elements of the so called writing from the Southwest (Batata, Coimbra *et al.* 2004).

Finally, there are still many extremely thin lines without constituting an understandable figure.

Rock 1 from Figueiredo can be considered as one of the most important examples from the basin of the Middle Portuguese Tagus, regarding the type of rock art that it presents. In fact, it has about twenty different figures, which is exceptional in the context of the incised rock art in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

## **Rock 2**

It is a schist outcrop flat to the ground, with 5.40 m length and 1.65 m wide, with a Northwest/Southeast orientation as it happens with Rock 1. The most densely engraved area is the half situated further north (Fig. 4). There are filiform figures and other incised with a medium/thick trace, resulting from abrasion.

<sup>3</sup> It’s the only figure at Figueiredo that presents pecking.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, in other countries where this kind of art appears, in a general way one rock presents only about nine to ten different figures (Coimbra, 2013b).

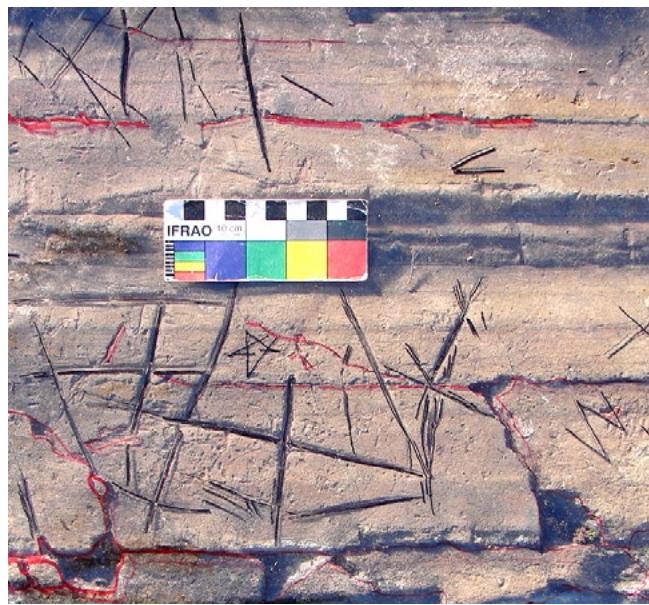


FIGURE 4. DETAIL OF THE TRACINGS ON ROCK 2.

Among the filiform type there are worth mentioning:

A bow and arrow (Coimbra & Garcês, 2013: Fig. 3); a cruciform anthropomorphic figure done in multiple trace (Fig. 5); a schematic anthropomorphic figure with the depiction of legs; two zigzag figures; one asterisk; two pentacles; a possible human figure with a filiform triangular head and the body done in a medium/thick trace (Coimbra, 2013b).

There are still many extremely thin lines without constituting an understandable figure, like it happens in Rock 1.



FIGURE 5. ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURE DONE IN MULTIPLE TRACE: PHOTO AND TRACING.

Regarding engravings done in a medium/thick trace we point out: a scalariform, a triangle, squares and other quadrangular geometric figures.

The engravings of this rock are well preserved due to the fact that it was covered with earth over a certainly long period of time.

### ***Rock 3***

It's the smallest of the three rocks from Figueiredo, being a schist outcrop flat to the ground with 1.30 m length and 0.75 m wide and an identical orientation of the other rocks. It's the rock surface with fewer engravings, which are constituted by filiform parallel and convergent lines, existing also a triangular figure. The motifs are so thin that they must have been done with a flint tool, what can be a clue for an early chronology, possibly Late Neolithic/Early Calcolithic.

### **3. Parallels in the Iberian Peninsula**

Some of the figures represented in these rocks from Figueiredo appear in a very similar way in other regions from Portugal (Trás-os-Montes, Alto Douro, Beira Interior, Alentejo), Spain (Extremadura, Castilla y Leon, Aragón, Cataluña), Andorra, France (Eastern Pyrenees and Mont Bego), Italy (Valcamonica, Vale d'Aosta and Monte Beigua, in Liguria) and even in Kosovo, Greece and Romania (Coimbra, 2013a; 2013b).

Despite the geographical distance between some of these regions, the presence of similar engravings in countries such as Portugal and Greece may be associated with cross cultural contacts during Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Otherwise, by what reason should men produce, at the same time, the same type of symbols in Portugal, Romania, Spain and Greece without mutual contacts?

In the present article we only have possibility to consider parallels in the Iberian Peninsula, existing on outcrops,<sup>5</sup> not considering here examples made on portable art such as schist plaques.

We start the list of parallels following the order of the description of figures made in the previous section. Thus, arrow heads are also present in Portugal at Pedra Letreira de Góis (Barros *et al.* 1959) and at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991). In Spain they appear in the Province of Cáceres, on the rocks of Pedrosanto (Benito del Rey; Grande del Brío R, 1995), Puerto del Gamo and Peña Rayá de La Huetre (Sevillano San José, 1991). In the province of Burgos they are present at Galería del Sílex, Atapuerca (Sanchidrián, 2005).

In Andorra they can be seen at *Roc de les Bruixes* (Gómez Barrera, 1992).

Squares appear on Rock 2 of Santo Cebolloso and on Rock 25 of Arroyo del Valle de Casatejada, both in the municipality of Puebla de Alcocer (Badajoz, Spain). At Campanario, another municipality from Badajoz, this geometric figure is also present on Rock 15 of Rio Guadalefра, on Rock 1 from Arroyo Tamujoso and on Rock 1 of Campo del Toro (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana, 2007).

Rectangles can be seen frequently in Spain on Rock 19 of Arroyo de Casatejada, on Rock 1 of Casa de Chenche, on Rock 14 of Santo Cebolloso (Puebla de Alcocer) and on Rock 1 of Las Romeras (Esparregosa de Laredo). At Campanario, they appear on Rock 13 of Rio Guadalefра, on Rock 1 of Arroyo Tamujoso, on Rock 2 of Serrezuela, and on Rock 2 of Los Barrancos (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana, 2007), among other examples.

Tree like motifs appear with two examples at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991), being one filiform and another done with a thicker trace. Other filiform examples exist on Rock 1A from Vermelhosa,<sup>6</sup> in the Douro Valley near the Côa Valley, in Portugal. In Spain they can be seen in the Province of Segovia in the cave of Los Enebralejos and in the cave of La Vaquera; in the Province of Soria they appear in

<sup>5</sup> For a more complete list of parallels, see Coimbra, 2013b.

<sup>6</sup> According to tracings by Mila S. de Abreu kept in the Laboratory of Rock Art from Instituto Terra e Memória, in Mação.

Cueva Maja, in the cave of San Bartolomé and Covarrubias; in the province of Burgos in the cave of San Garcia and in Galeria del Sílex of Atapuerca (Sanchidrian, 2005). In Andorra they appear at Puy de la Massana (Canturri Montanya, 1974; 1985) and at *Roc de les Bruixes* (Gómez Barrera, 1992), either filiform and with thicker trace, while at Tossal de Cava (Casamajor i Esteban, 2008) this figure appears only in this last technique.

Scalariforms exist in Portugal in S. Cristóvão, Monsaraz (Calado *et alli*, 2008), in the Côa Valley (Baptista & Reis, 2008a; 2008b) and on Pedra Escrita de Ridevides (Santos Júnior, 1963). In Spain, in the Province of Badajoz, they appear with several examples at Santo Cebolloso, at Arroyo del Valle de Casatejada and at Barranco de los Terciones, all in the municipality of Puebla de Alcocer; at Las Romeras (Esparragosa de Lares); at Campo del Toro, Rio Guadalefra, Los Barrancos and Arroyo Tamujoso, all in the municipality of Campanário (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana, 2007). In the province of Cáceres they can be seen at Pimpollos II (Sánchez Martín, 2004) and at Aceitunilla (Sevillano, 1983; 1991).

The pentagram, pentacle, or five pointed star is one of the most represented figures in incised rock art, having this way many parallels. Besides the cases from Figueiredo, in Portugal it appears at Rock 2 from Ribeira de Piscos (V. N. de Foz Côa) (Coimbra, 2005; 2008), at Molelinhos,<sup>7</sup> at Rock 3 from Mocissos (Baptista & Santos, 2013) and at Monte do Oliveirinha, in Monsaraz (Calado *et alli*, 2008).

In Spain it appears in the province of Cáceres, at Pisada de la Mora (La Huerta, Caminomorisco), together with footprints (Sevillano; Bécarez Pérez, 1997), at Aceitunilla (Nunõmoral), associated with circles and one scalariform (Sevillano, 1983) and at Peña Rayá de La Huetre (Casares de las Hurdes), associated with triangles and halberds (Sevillano San José, 1991). In the province of Badajoz the pentagram can be seen at Los Terciones (Puebla de Alcocer) and at Rio Guadalefra (Campanário) (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana, 2007). In today's submerged area of Molino Manzanez (Cheles, Badajoz) there were twenty one cases of pentagrams incised in nine different rocks (Collado Giraldo, 2006). In the Province of Teruel, this symbol is present at Penalba de Vilastar.

Still in Spanish territory, in Menorca Island, this motif appears in the Cave of s'Encantament (Biniguarda Vell), associated with an anthropomorphic figure, one axe and a swastika (Mascaró Pasarius, 1953-54).

In Andorra there are some examples of pentagrams at *Roc de les Bruixes* of Prats de Canillo (Gómez Barrera, 1992), at Tossal de Cava and at Montalarí (Casamajor i Esteban, 2008).

Filiform crosses of four equal arms appear in Portugal at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991). In Spain, at Puerto del Gamo (Cáceres) (Sevillano, 1991) and at Galeria del Sílex (Sanchidrian, 2005). With a thicker trace this figure can be seen very frequently in the Spanish province of Badajoz in twenty three rocks in the municipality of Puebla de Alcocer and on three rocks in the municipality of Campanario (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana, 2007).

In Andorra they appear at Montalarí, Encamp (Canturri Montanya, 1985) and at Cultia de l'Hort.<sup>8</sup>

In Portugal the zigzag can be seen at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991) and in the complex from the Mouth of the Côa River (Baptista & Reis, 2008).

In Spain it appears more often, such in the cases of Rocks 2, 17, 19 e 23 of Rio Guadalefra (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana, 2007). It's also represented in the caves of Los Enebralejos and La Vaquera, both in the Province of Segovia; in Cueva Maja (Soria) and at Galeria del Sílex, in the Province of Burgos (Sanchidrian, 2005); in the cave of San Garcia, Burgos (Gómez Barrera, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> This case is not mentioned by Cunha (1991) but it's perfectly seen in the drawing published by the same author.

<sup>8</sup> Jordi Casamajor pers. comm.

In Andorra the zigzag is present at Puy de la Massana (Gómez Barrera, 1992).

In Portugal, ‘asterisks’ are quite rare, but they can be seen, for example, at Pedra Escrita do Poço da Moura (Vila Flor). In Spain they appear more frequently, with a large concentration in the province of Cáceres, in the rupestrian sites of Vegas de Coria and Castillo de Pinofranqueado, existing also at Cancho de los Letreros (Tejeda y Segoyuela, Salamanca) (Sevillano, 1991).

In Andorra, this figure appears at Tossal de Cava (Casamajor i Esteban, 2008).

Parallel and convergent lines appear either with medium/thick or thin trace, existing sometimes on the same rock. In Portugal they are present at Pedra das Letras, (Proença-a-Nova) (Henriques & Caninas, 2009), at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991), at Pedra Escrita de Ridevides (Santos Júnior, 1963) and at Prado da Rodela, Mogadouro (Santos Júnior, 1980). They can also be seen on the shelters 1, 3, 5 and 6 from Fragas do Diabo, in the municipality of Mogadouro, where they are associated with popular legends (Lemos & Marcos, 1984).

In Spain they appear very frequently, such in the cases of Pedrosanto (Benito del Rey e Grande del Brío, 1995), Vegacha del Rozo, Azabal, (Sevillano & Bécares Pérez, 1997), in the province of Cáceres. In the province of Lérida they are present at Guils, at Collada de Lles (Campmajó, 2005) and at Vall Ferrera.<sup>9</sup>

In Andorra they appear at *Roc de les Bruixes* de Prats (Canturri Montanya, 1974), at Puy de la Massana (Gómez Barrera, 1992) and at Mas de Diumenge (Casamajor i Esteban, 2008).

Net-patterns are among the most represented figures in incised rock art, appearing either with medium/thick or filiform trace. They can be seen at Pedra Escrita de Ridevides (Santos Junior, 1963), in the Mouth of the Côa (Baptista & Reis, 2008a; 2008b), at the Rock Shelter of Foz do Ribeiro das Taliscas (Henriques *et al.* 2011), at Rock 3 from Mocissos (Baptista & Santos, 2013) and in the cave of Escoural (Coimbra, in press 2), all in Portugal. In Spain, in the Province of Badajoz they are countless. For example, only in Rock 1 of Arroyo Tamujoso (Campanario) there are thirty three cases of this geometric motif, appearing also in many other rocks from the same Province (Domínguez García & Aldecoa Quintana, 2007). Net-patterns are also present at Penalba de Vilastar in the Province of Teruel.

This motif can also be seen in Andorra at Tossal de Cava (Casamajor i Esteban, 2008).

The filiform bow and arrow from Rock 2 of Figueiredo has parallels in Pedra Letreira de Góis (Barros *et alii*, 1959) and on Rock 10 of Vale da Casa (Baptista, 1986). In Spain there's one example<sup>10</sup> at Puerto del Gamo, in the Province of Cáceres (Sevillano San José, 1991).

#### 4. Chronological approach

Some figures which appear at Figueiredo such as net-patterns, zigzag, scalariforms and arrow heads, among others, are also present on the walls of several caves from Castilla y León (Spain), where archaeological excavations found contexts from about 3000 BC to 1500 BC., being the engravings probably from the same period (Sanchidrián, 2005). Furthermore, motifs such as net-patterns and zigzag appear also on clay tablets from several Calcolithic settlements from the Iberian Peninsula, like, for example, Vila Nova de São Pedro, in the centre of Portugal (Coimbra & Garcés, 2015: Fig. 13).

Archaeological prospection carried out during 2001 in the left bank of the River Ocreza (a tributary of the Tagus) allowed identifying some rocks with filiform grooves, being some of these engravings

<sup>9</sup> Jordi Casamajor pers. comm.

<sup>10</sup> The bows with arrow from Rock 19 and Rock 25 of Arroyo del Valle de Casatejada and from Rock 2 of Santo Cebolloso, all in Puebla de Alcocer, are done with a thicker trace (Domínguez García; Aldecoa Quintana 2007).



FIGURE 6. NET-PATTERN FROM THE CAVE OF ESCOURAL, PORTUGAL.

overlapped by pecked figures (Coimbra & Garcês, 2015).<sup>11</sup> According to L. Oosterbeek (2003), some of these filiform motives may, eventually, date from the Neolithic. Indeed, incised rock art with thin trace (filiform) has several examples dating from the Neolithic as it happens at the funerary monument of Maeshowe (Bradley *et al.* 2000) and in the recent findings of the settlement of Ness of Brodgar (Card & Thomas, 2012), both sites in Orkney Islands, Scotland.

In Portugal, the cave of Escoural which last occupation dates from the Neolithic, as a burial place, has an example of a net-pattern (Fig. 6), appearing also this motif in the Rock Shelter of Foz do Ribeiro das Taliscas (Henriques *et al.* 2011) and on schist plaques found inside the Dolmen of Las Colmenas, Cáceres (Samaniego Bordiu, in press).

Regarding the rock art from Figueiredo, a few engravings may date from the Late Neolithic but, in a general way, it's possible to find figures from the middle of the II millennium BC till the 1st century AD.

Constant new discoveries of incised rock art in the Iberian Peninsula, unfortunately some of them still unpublished, show that the chronology of this kind of art is still an ongoing process.

##### **5. Final note**

Despite the fieldworks already organized in the three rocks from Figueiredo, more work must be done there, in order to simultaneously get more information from the engravings and to preserve them, since there are some conservation problems. For example, Rock 1 is placed on a mountain about 900 m above sea level, where, during winter, the water on the cracks around some engravings

<sup>11</sup> In Mont Bego, there are filiform engravings covered by pecked motives and vice-versa (Nicoletta Bianchi pers. comm.)

usually freezes, becoming ice, thus enlarging those cracks and destroying slowly the rock surface with the loss of engraved areas. Indeed, one important depiction of a Bronze Age axe is already menaced by such cracks (Fig. 7) and, if preventive conservative measures will not be taken, it can soon be lost.

Despite some bureaucracy and also some controversial ideas from some persons regarding the conservation process of these rocks, a new project is being prepared in order to make a virtual 3D replica of Rock 1 that, besides the natural weathering is also menaced by forest fires.

In what concerns getting more information from these rocks, it would be important continuing to do a 3D laser scanning of the engravings, after a promising initial experiment carried out in the spring of 2010. Furthermore it

would also be useful to take night photos with an artificial light, since some figures are very thin and difficult to observe without ideal conditions of lightening.

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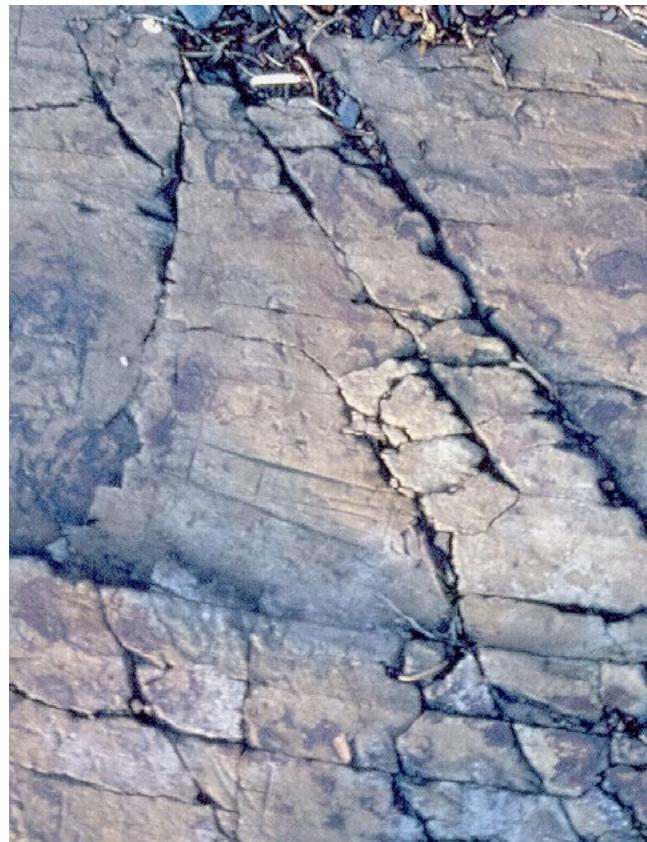


FIGURE 7. DEPICTION OF AN AXE MENACED BY CRACKS ON THE ROCK.

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# The filiform rock art from Kosovo

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## Abstract

*The study of rock art in Kosovo started few years ago. Until now, eight sites have been discovered, and most of them represent the filiform rock art. The most important site is Zatriq, where, in a place called Sharenicë, hundreds of symbols since prehistoric period are engraved on the rock surface, and a rite of passage occurs even today. All the other sites of the filiform rock art, except Krileve, are at the megalith complexes (Papaz, Llaushe, Aqareve, and Vitak). The motifs of filiform rock art from Kosovo are very similar with motifs found in other Mediterranean and European areas (asterisk, tree like motifs, pentagram, vulva, net pattern, circle, square, lines). Some associations of symbols are very frequent, and what is more important, some of them correlate very well with the meaning of today's rituals. This paper presents some comparative analysis, interpretations, and a typology of filiform rock art in Kosovo.*

**Keywords:** filiform rock art, rite of passage, asterisk, net pattern, tree like motifs

## Résumé

*Il y a quelques années quand a commencé l'étude de l'art rupestre au Kosovo. Jusqu'à présent huit sites ont été découverts et la plupart d'entre eux représentent l'art rupestre filiforme. Le site le plus important est la roche de Sharenicë à Zatriq, où des centaines de symboles ont été gravés, depuis la période préhistorique. Ce qui fait plus important la roche de Sharenicë, c'est un rite de passage qui se déroule là encore aujourd'hui. Tous les autres sites de l'art rupestre filiforme au Kosovo, à l'exception de Krileve, sont les complexes de mégalithes (Papaz, Llaushe, Aqareve et Vitak). Les motifs d'art rupestre filiforme du Kosovo, sont très similaires avec ceux trouvés aux régions méditerranéennes et européennes (astérisque, arbre, pentagramme, vulve, grill, cercle, carrés, lignes). Certaines associations de symboles sont très fréquentes, et ce qui est plus important, certains d'entre eux se trouvent en corrélation avec le sens de rituel d'aujourd'hui. Cet article présente une analyse comparative, des interprétations et une typologie de l'art rupestre filiforme au Kosovo.*

**Mots clés:** art rupestre filiforme, rite de passage, asterisk, réseau, arbre comme motif

## 1. Introduction

The study of rock art in Kosovo started in the last decade. Until now, eight sites have been discovered, and six of them represent the filiform rock art. The sites of Zatriq and Krileve are in the rocks, while four other sites are megaliths (Vitak, Aqareve, Llaushe, Papaz). The motifs of filiform rock art from Kosovo are very similar to those found in other Mediterranean and European areas (asterisk, tree like motifs, pentagram, vulva, net pattern, circle, square, lines). This is somewhat understandable, having in mind the migration of populations, the interbreeding, influences and their cultural exchanges since the pre-historical periods. Kosovo is situated in the central part of Balkans, and the trajectory migrations from North to South, and from East to West, may have crossed through this territory. The migratory movements are not the only cause for the transmission and dissemination of culture and symbols in different regions, sometimes in a very long geographical distance, but also the human nature itself; living in similar conditions of life seems to produce the same model of intellectual expression and symbolic representation.

However, in addition to global similarities, we should also consider local diversity. The motifs of rock art in some sites in Kosovo are pretty different from other sites. In general, the Kosovo filiform rock art sites have similar motifs, but it is important to mention that each site is dominated by a different symbol. In this context, in Zatriq, the asterisks and net pattern seems to be the mostly dominant

motifs, in Aqareve we found lines and triangles, whereas in Papaz, David's star is the predominant symbol.

## 2. The filiform rock art in Zatriq and Krileve

The most important among the currently known sites is Zatriq. The site is located in the south-west of Kosovo, near the town of Rahovec, in the Prizren region. This region is also known by very rich material and spiritual cultural heritage, coming from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Furthermore, the importance of this site, from the standpoint of anthropological research, rests in the fact that it is still a place of a special ritual, namely a rite of passage through stone. Therefore, the rite of passage takes place in the same rock where the engravings are. The ceremony of rite of passage through rocks could be found in others places in Kosovo, nevertheless this is a place where the ritual is related with a specific date, that of the 9th August. According to the traditional beliefs of local population, this is the date when grapes start to ripe. The residents of this area have a long tradition of viticulture.

Zatriq (Fig. 1) is also an important site as it represents the largest concentration of engravings in abstract and geometric style. The motifs of the figures are also numerous, but mostly dominated by asterisks, networks, tree like motifs, lines crossed like the letter 'X', holes, etc. Very few figures have zoomorphic or anthropomorphic character, but even in those cases they are schematic and abstract.

Table 1 shows symbols identified so far, but obviously the number of symbol types is larger than it appears to the eye. A big part of the rock surface is already covered with musk and this is an obstacle to identify the exact number and types of symbols.

Not only the musk, but also the accumulation of symbols and their superimposing, makes it more difficult to classify and to interpret their meaning. It is very difficult also to count the frequencies of



FIGURE 1. THE FILIFORM ROCK ART IN ZATRIQ.

Nr.	Description	Type	Nr.	Description	Type	Nr.	Description	Type
1	Asterisk/Sun		19	Trapezoid with crossed lines		37	Hand	
2	Tree		20	Network/grill		38	Mask	
3	The letter 'X'		21	Square with crossed lines		39	Column	
4	Lines		22	Double square with crossed lines		40	Tent	
5	Cross		23	Sun		41	Tent	
6	Vulva		24	Moon		42	House	
7	The letter 'V'		25	Pentagram		43	House	
8	The letter 'T'		26	David star		44	Stairs	
9	The letter 'A'		27	Comet		45	Axe	
10	The letter 'H'		28	Two headed fish		46	Dish/Boat	
11	H&Y		29	Deer/animal		47	Carriage	
12	Concentric circle/calendar		30	Man crossing/swastika		48	Face	
13	Circle with crossed lines		31	Vulva/tree		49	Rope	
14	Circle with a hole		32	Masculine genital organ		50	Roots	
15	Triangle		33	Feminine genital organ		51	Snake	
16	Triangle with diagonals		34	New born		52	Fence	
17	Two opposite triangles		35	Dress/body		53	Holes	
18	Two opposite triangles		36	Plow		54	Flesh	

TABLE 1. TYPES OF SYMBOLS IN ZATRIQ, KOSOVO.

appearing of the symbols, and understanding their function. Before any assumption on the meaning of symbols, we should have in mind the plurality, not only in terms of frequencies, but also in

terms of the meaning. The same symbol could have different meaning in different contexts. For interpretation of symbols, we have in consideration the context in which the symbol was used, that's meaning the association with other symbol (Coimbra, 2013: 182). In this paper we will be focused on some symbol associations, especially some symbols that are pretty similar to the meaning of actual ritual.

Some symbols are very frequent, and what is more important, especially for this site, is the fact that some symbols correlate very well with the meaning of today's ritual. It is about the fertility and reproduction as the most important existential issues since the human origin. This was the main preoccupation of prehistoric groups as well as the modern population. The belief that rock influences fertility is widespread in other regions of Europe, thus rituals through dolmens, caves and megaliths are evident everywhere. (Pozzi, A, 2009: 25). Sharenica Rock in Zatriq continues to serve today as a sanctuary to local population beliefs that it helps fertility, as well as it helps overcome various difficulties, such as mental health.

Figure 2, shows the relationship between the ancient symbols and contemporary rituals. We named this figure '*The symbol of fertility*', a very complex composition both in its shape and content. The core and most distinctive element of this composition is a straight incision about 7 cm long, deeper and larger in the central part, apparently representing a vagina. Besides the carved 'vagina' is the symbol of male genital organ with four cupules beside its head, which could represent the act of fecundity.

On one side of the upper part of the vagina symbol appears the sun or asterisk (masculine principle), whereas on the other side, the moon symbol – crescent (feminine principle). Moon symbol closely resembles the belly of a pregnant woman. Underneath the 'moon' ('belly') appears a figure of an engraved newborn whose body is camouflaged with the symbol of tree with branches, and an engraved pentagram on its entire body, as a symbol of protection. In Zatriq there are other symbols representing the vagina and phallus, but Figure 2 seems to be more complex. Otherwise, this example confirms what Anati says that main themes of prehistoric and tribal art are based on three topics: sex, nutrition (food) and territory (Anati, 2002: 29).

Above this very complex ideogram, there are several asterisks related to each other, creating a complex structure, very similar to the multicellular networks in human organism. This could represent the human community existing in the real space. The sexuality, giving birth,



FIGURE 2. THE SYMBOL OF FERTILITY.



FIGURE 3. THE SUN AND THE TREE.

growing up and socialization, being protected and interrelated in the society, the interdependence and interconnectivity with nature and environment, are the main aspects of human life. Therefore, the rock art doesn't represent only the aesthetics of our ancestors, but the way in which the human life develops. 'Prehistoric rock art is much more than a sample of aesthetic sensibility of past human groups. It is the graphic expression of past cultural system of knowledge, composed of beliefs, thoughts, values and human perception of environmental and sociocultural contexts.' (Sanz, 2012: 307).

Figure 3 represents 'The sun and the tree.' The association of asterisks and tree like motif is very frequent in this site, but Figure 3 shows a clear and very powerful view. This composition reflects the idea of the interconnection of ecosystems and natural cycles of renewal, expressed in social and economic life. These two symbols are present in many rock art sites of the Mediterranean and European regions. The symbol of tree in Zatriq appears also in association with square (Fig. 5).

Figure 4, represents the clearest zoomorphic symbol in Zatriq, yet still appearing in abstract geometrical style. This symbol, which we named 'The fish with two heads' is in a perfect symmetry. The bifacial fish can be a part of the mythological system. It is represented in a total symmetrical axis, and apart from the right – left symmetry, we can observe the ambivalence: front – back. The front part of the image (head/s) is full, optimistic and very dynamic, in contrast to the backside, which looks exhausted, pessimistic and static. Representing the animals in the form of axial symmetry was the characteristic of parietal art (Testart, 2013: 261).

#### **Krileve**

This is an open-air site and, until now, we found only one symbol engraved and this represents the 'net'. This Pierced Stone resembles a giant arch about 6 meters high and about 2 meters wide. In the past, the rite of passage was done through this gate. Young unmarried and married couples without children have passed through the passage of the Pierced Stone hoping for luck. In southern column is

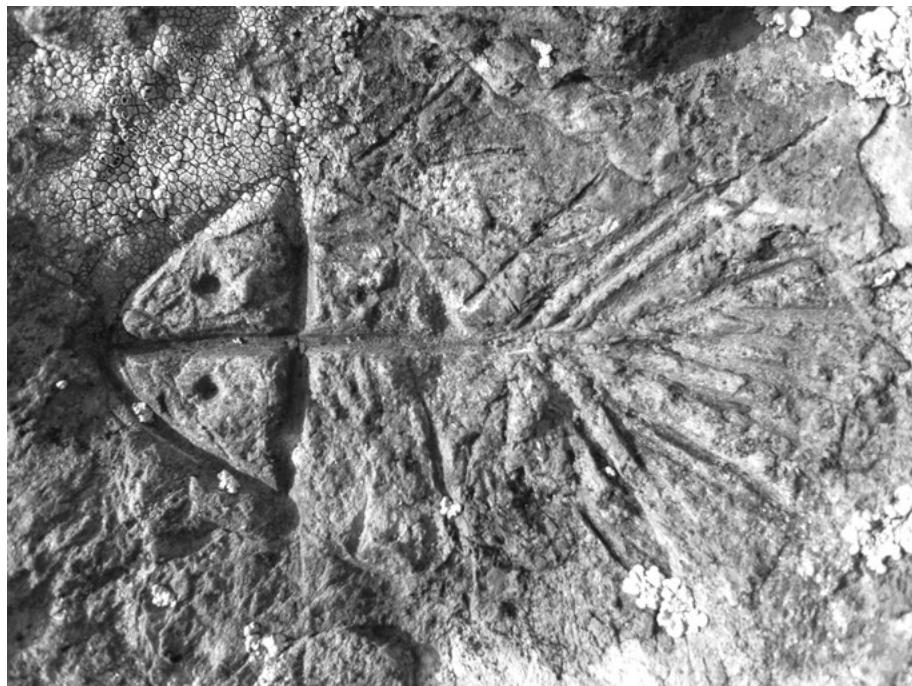


FIGURE 4. THE FISH WITH TWO HEADS.



FIGURE 5. THE TREE AND SQUARE.

a symbol engraved in the form of network. Net (Fig. 6) usually represents the property symbol and it is very likely that its Pierced Stone was a frontier dividing the territory of ancient settlements, and to this day it is precisely the dividing line between the two big villages – Marevc and Krileve.

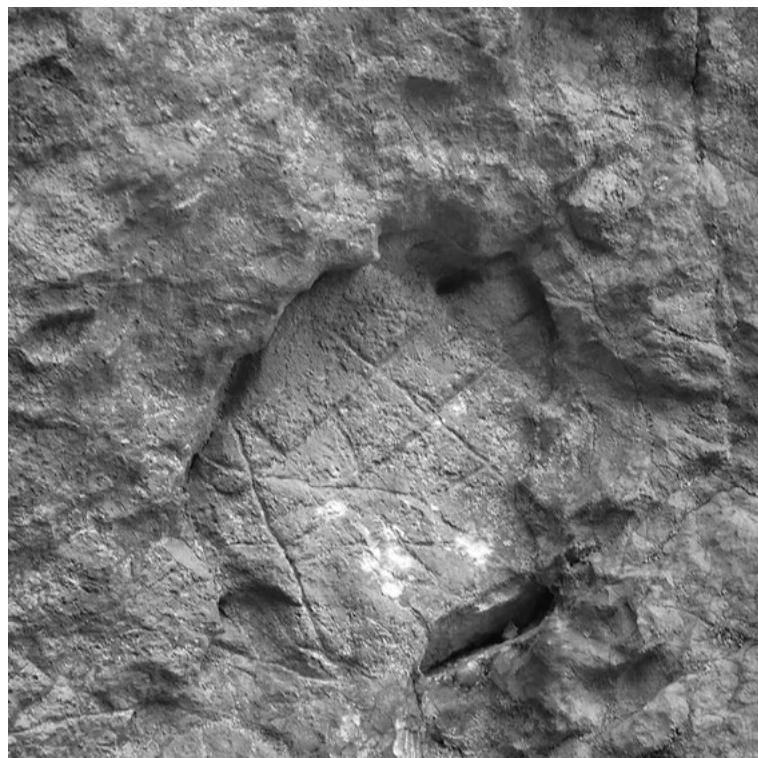


FIGURE 6. THE SYMBOL OF NET IN KRILEVE.

### 3. The Filiform Rock Art and Megaliths

So far, engravings symbols in megalithic stone have been found in four places in Kosovo. Three of these sites – Aqareve, Llaushe and Vitak are located in the region of Drenica (central Kosovo), where the structure of rocks and motifs are more or less similar; the fourth one, Papaz, is located in south-western Kosovo. The carved motifs in many cases are similar to those in Zatriq. In fact Kosovo archaeologists have so far only recognized some of these sites but did not excavate to determine the exact time of the creation of symbols. Their motifs consist of mainly straight lines and cross (nets), cupules, triangle, asterisks, Star of David, abstract compositions, concentric circles, etc.

#### *Aqareve*

Figure 7 presents the most important megalith with filiform rock art in Kosovo. In the old cemetery of village Aqarevë, there are two megalithic stones with engravings, and most of symbols are cupules (over 400), but in the upper part, one can see



FIGURE 7. FILIFORM ROCK ART IN AQAREVE.

Nr.	Description	Type	Nr.	Description	Type
1	Triangle		6	Cupules	.....
2	Double Triangles		7	Lines	
3	Triple Triangles		8	Network/grill	
4	Opozit Triangles		9	Square	
5	Asterisk/Sun		10	Chariots/Calendar	

TABLE 2. TYPES OF SYMBOLS IN AQAREVE, KOSOVO.

the triangles (double, triple, and opposite), asterisks, as well as straight lines, concentric circles, connected to each other with straight lines, representing the image of the chariot.

### ***Llaushe***

Some motifs, especially straight and parallel lines, look the same as the ones in Aqareve and Vitak, but what characterizes stone of Llaushe is its sonority. If it's hit by something hard, they make a sound. On the cemetery site, there is a lying stone with deep lines in the middle, which could have been used in ancient times to produce sacred sounds during the burial rituals. To know the culture and spiritual tradition, to understand the sacredness, we must also know the sacred sounds as well. All the old tombstones in this locality have this feature, and they are probably brought from afar, because there are no stones of such structure in the vicinity. In addition to this, the stone of Llaushe (Fig. 8) has fossil of marine animals.

### ***Vitak***

Archaeologists do not yet know about this site. Local population has a legend related to the stone, which says that this is a cemetery of a marriage ceremony. Some tombstones have engravings, mostly with motifs nets, cupules, abstract figures and one of them shows two circles rotate associated with a line between, somewhat similar to the symbol of chariot in Aqareve.

### ***Papaz***

The engravings in Papaz are dominated with motifs of triangles, Star of David, but also geometric abstract motifs consisting mostly of straight parallel and crossed lines.

### **4. Conclusion**

The filiform rock art in Kosovo is very rich with motifs, pretty similar to those found in the Mediterranean region and Western Europe. What is particularly important about the filiform rock art in Kosovo is that a number of ancient symbols have a correlation with contemporary rituals. The symbols are not used for rituals nowadays, but some symbols have common meaning with today's rituals. The symbols of the rock art are important not only for their style and meaning, or for showing the influences between

eras and regions, but also to emphasize the cult of stone in these localities. Sharenicë in Zatriq still remains as a holy stone for the local population.

Up to this day, there is no archaeological research in any of these sites. Moreover, archaeologists in Kosovo are oriented toward the Roman-Illyrian period; they lack competence and often make wrong assumptions by confusing the periods of the creation of the filiform rock art. Indeed, this is a new field of study, and the findings in Kosovo represent a significant contribution to the expansion of knowledge and culture of ancient societies.

This is not just the problem of lack of knowledge of this kind of culture in Kosovo. The biggest problem is the lack of protection of this cultural heritage. Law does not protect any of these sites. The site of Zatriq is particularly at risk, due the number of people coming there, and staying during the ceremonies of rite of passage.

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FIGURE 8. FILIFORM ROCK ART IN PAPAZ.

POST-PALAEOLITHIC FILIFORM ROCK ART IN WESTERN EUROPE

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# The filiform rock engravings of the Parete Manzi of Montelapiano (Chieti, Italy)

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## Abstract

*The filiform rock art site of Montelapiano (CH) poses several problems:*

1. *the site is in a position difficult to reach because of the very steep slope and many unstable stones;*
2. *the almost total use of the engraving with thin grooves (the Parete Manzi is the only one with this characteristic out of a dozen rock art sites in the province of Chieti);*
3. *the superposition or juxtaposition of figures in different stages;*
4. *the types of figures differ from the repertoire known in other rock art sites in the area.*

*This study provides the first documentation and some remarks.*

**Key words:** Montelapiano (Italy), filiform rock art, fishes, five-pointed stars, geometric figures

## Résumé

*Le site d'art rupestre filiforme de Montelapiano (CH) pose plusieurs problèmes:*

1. *le site est dans une position difficile à atteindre par la très forte pente et la présence de pierres très instables;*
2. *l'utilisation presque totale de la technique de l'incision par de fines rainures (Parete Manzi est le seul d'une douzaine de sites d'art rupestre dans la province de Chieti avec cette prédominance);*
3. *la superposition ou juxtaposition de figures dans de différentes étapes;*
4. *la typologie aussi des figures s'éloigne du répertoire de l'art rupestre de la province.*

*Cette étude fournit une première documentation et quelques considérations.*

**Mots clés:** Montelapiano (Italie), gravures rupestres filiformes, poissons, étoiles à cinq pointes, motifs géométriques

## The site

In 2010 Prof. Aurelio Manzi discovered a series of engravings on the rocky ridge (Fig. 1) that stands out in the landscape and separates the towns of Montelapiano and Villa Santa Maria (Chieti), on the left bank of the river Sangro, today about 35 km from the sea. The depictions are located at a height of 445 meters on the W side of the ridge and therefore are located within the Municipality of Montelapiano. The only access road that has so far been possible to identify is the climbing from the bottom of the ridge, the W side, starting from the outskirts of the town of Villa Santa Maria. It has not yet been possible to establish whether there is an access from the top, because of the dense vegetation and the conformation of the rocks, which is very steep. The slope is very strong: on a distance of about 170 m (from the urban street, at the base of the ridge, to the engraved wall) the height difference is about 95 m: nearly 60% steep! The ascent is made even more dangerous by the debris, which is prone to falling. For these reasons, it is unlikely that in the past the site could be part of the usual routes or at least accessible without difficulty. Its access from the bottom had to imply, as today, a considerable physical effort and the will to reach precisely that point, steep and uncomfortable. The very fact that until recently the people was unaware of the presence of these depictions, located a short distance from an urban area and not covered by vegetation, indicates that the site is outside the usual paths of local people, including hunters. The only indication of a possible visit in modern times could be some signs that may be interpreted as a date weakly engraved with digits rather large compared to the other figures ('1941', Fig. 2).

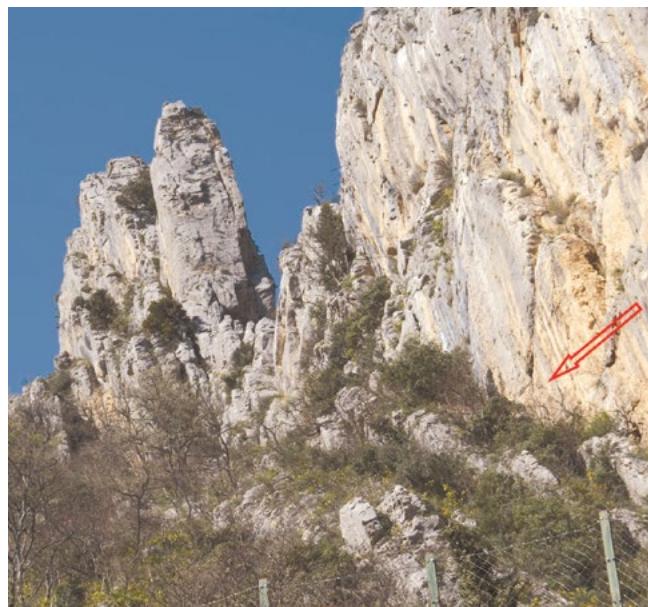


FIGURE 1. W FRONT OF THE RIDGE THAT SEPARATES THE TOWNS OF MONTELAPIANO AND VILLA SANTA MARIA.

At the bottom of the ridge, about 150 m from the engravings, a median fragment of a flint blade trapezoidal in section was found on the surface.



FIGURE 2. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: FIGURE PAINTED IN BLACK (TOP CENTER) AND A PROBABLE DATE SLIGHTLY ENGRAVED (BOTTOM RIGHT).



FIGURE 3. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: AREA WITH ENGRAVINGS DURING THE DRAWING ON TRANSPARENT SHEET.

The following information was obtained from a first photographic documentation, by optical vision during three explorations and a contact copy, yet to be perfected. For the summer of 2015 a campaign of excavations is planned, and it has been scheduled the graphic recording of the engravings, which should permit a more precise and exhaustive reading of all the engravings.

The depictions are located on a portion of the wall (now called 'Parete Manzi') almost vertical and exposed to W, for a total area of about 1 m (height, starting 90 cm above the ground) by 3 m (width; Fig. 3). There is a single figure painted in black (Fig. 2), while all the others are engraved. At the foot of the wall there are large blocks of collapsed debris.

### Technique and features of the figures

The depictions are preserved quite well and are quite readable, except a few cases where the grooves are thinner and / or more superficial and some small area covered by a limestone encrustation.

The real figures show predominantly fine or very thin grooves and only a few have been done with a blunt end tool, and then with a groove wider and concave, instead of 'V' shaped. There are overlapping or juxtaposed figures with different patinas and grooves, probably incised at different times. The signs which are certainly superimposed to others are generally more marked, with a wider and deeper groove (Fig. 4); they are predominantly simple lines, especially straight and rather long, unlike the closed contour shapes, which are predominantly small.

Some existing figures were retraced with a more marked groove. Indeed, in the case of a fish with many fins (Fig. 5) the segments that represent the tail fins on the left side of the fish (and perhaps even a fin on the right) are engraved with a fine line and show a patina older than the rest of the figure, which then appears to have been marked with a second incision. However, the substantial technical and stylistic homogeneity argues in favor of a continuity of the engraving activity, with the probable exception of the wider signs (see below). This also means a short duration of the cycle of frequentations during which the engravings were made? Or just the cultural continuity may imply a relatively long duration?

Another element of stylistic coherence is the rather small size of the closed contour figures (one of the most complex, the Solomon's knot, measuring less than four centimeters) and this reinforces the impression of a strong cultural homogeneity and a probable continuity of the frequentations, at least for a large part of the engravings.

### The painted figure

This figure, painted with black pigment, is partially faded and therefore difficult to read (Figs. 2, 6). The fundamental element is an almost vertical rod, originally



FIGURE 4. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI:  
THE LEFT PART OF THE AREA  
WITH ENGRAVINGS.

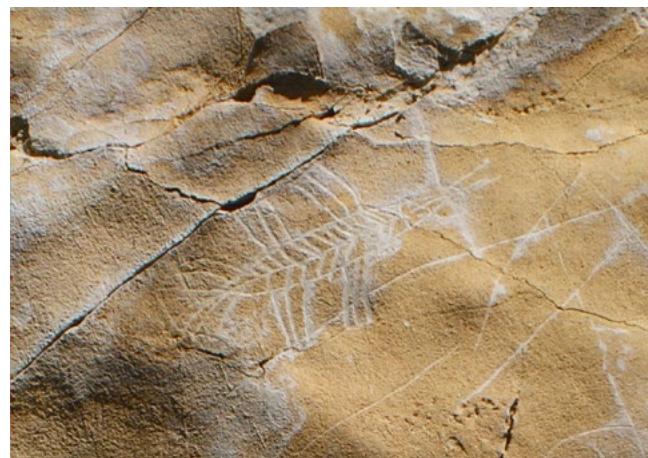


FIGURE 5. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI:  
FISH WITH THE HEAD INSERTED INTO  
AN OBJECT DIFFICULT TO READ.



FIGURE 6. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: PAINTED FIGURE (LEFT) AND SOME OTHER FIGURES (RIGHT) COPIED ON TRANSPARENT SHEET.

long from 10 to 15 cm, depending on whether one considers possible or not its continuity in the faded parts. On the left we recognize a small segment almost horizontal, while on the right at the top there is a sort of hook and a little below, a semi-circle, under which the rod has an enlargement. At first the figure had seemed a phi-shaped ( $\varphi$ ) anthropomorphic, but actually on the left you see no trace of a second semi-circle, necessary to form this figure.

There are four vertical lines engraved immediately to its left in the middle and two on the right to the top, while to the right of its base there is a sort of small fan with nine segments, always engraved.

The greater antiquity of this figure seems demonstrated by the wearing

of the rock surface, namely the presence of at least two transverse cracks and the detachment of a flake of the rock. Since it is unlikely that the author has painted the figure on a support so deteriorated, we must assume that it has passed a lot more time since the painting of this figure than the carving of the other figures, whose support is not deteriorated as much. If this is true, the presence of segments engraved close the figure can be considered random or purely additional. However at the top right of the figure there is an engraving very similar (Fig. 6): is it a pure accident or was there the intention to reproduce the painted shape by incision?

#### **The engraved figures<sup>11</sup>**

##### **Fishes**

The typology is varied and includes at least 10 reliable figures and 4 or 5 doubtful cases. The two simplest figures are formed by two curved segments that at one edge intersect by drawing a 'V' tail and at the other edge are joined at an acute angle to form the head; these two figures are made with a slight groove and exhibit a patina older (Fig. 7). It is possible, therefore, that these are the oldest versions of this figure. To this basic depiction, many additions have been added to increase realism in the other figures, further increasing the probability of a progressive (chronological) development. Among



FIGURE 7. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: SOLOMON'S KNOT (LEFT) AND FISH (TOP RIGHT).

<sup>11</sup> The catalog is not exhaustive, as various figures, as indicated above, need to be better observed and copied.

the added elements are the spine, the dorsal and / or ventral fins, the gill opening, the mouth and the eye (Fig. 8). The orientation is varied: from right to left or vice versa, or oblique or vertical, but always with the head upwards.

A strange figure resembles a cetacean (sperm whale?), in which the trait that outlines the top of the head up to the beginning of the back reuses a natural thin crack. Even what appears to be the eye is actually a small natural gap (Fig. 9). Part of the profile of the head is formed by a curved portion of a longer line, which could also have been previously engraved to form another figure.

A fish (Fig. 5) differs from all the others for the almost perfect bilateral symmetry (two groups of three segments for the ventral and dorsal fins and two groups of four segments for the tail), and for the particular shape of the head showing two lateral segments almost perpendicular, two shorter, longitudinal and two other small oblique lines, all intersected by a nearly circular line. If the segments represent antennas, one could think of a crustacean, but this interpretation contrasts both with the tapered shape of the body, and with the presence within it of a central line and of a double set of oblique lines which seem to represent the fishbone. Perhaps the circle superimposed on the head and the lines that cross it indicate some traps or noose to catch the fish?

If we wanted to make some guesswork about the species depicted, we could probably think of trout and carp.

### **Harpoons?**

A recurrent figure that, although elementary, seems to represent a particular artifact is formed by a straight line, which at one end, is joined to a short right or curved segment at an acute angle (Figs. 4, 10). If we consider likely a certain degree of schematization, we can see a harpoon. The presence of harpoons with multiple spikes is dubious. The figuration of fish leads to associate the harpoons with fishing. The greater length of the alleged harpoons compared to the size of the fishes could reinforce

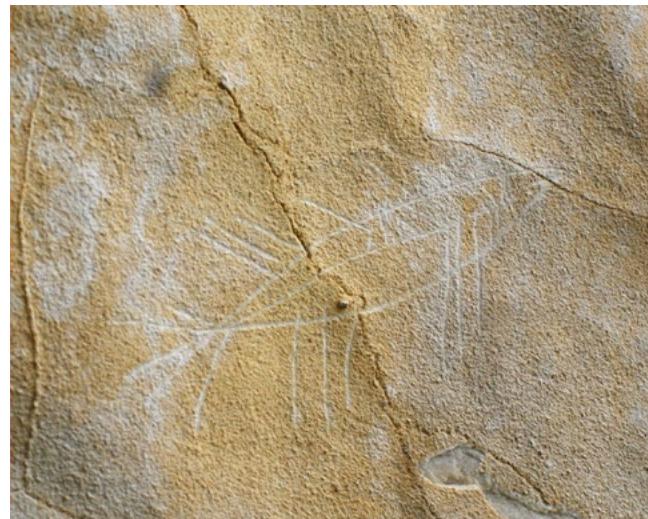


FIGURE 8. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: FISH.



FIGURE 9. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI:  
VARIOUS ENGRAVED FIGURES, INCLUDING A PROBABLE  
HUMAN FACE (BOTTOM LEFT).



FIGURE 10. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI:  
THE LEFT PART DURING THE DRAWING.



FIGURE 11. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI:  
FIVE-POINTED STAR.

this interpretation. Some fishes are actually transfixed by various linear segments, but in many cases these lines are so dense (in the case of the ‘cetacean’ they are at least eight) and intricate that it is difficult to distinguish the individual elements, which may not be parts of the harpoons.

#### **Arrows?**

Only a few engravings seem to look like arrows; they are formed by a rod and a cusp formed by two rather long segments at an acute angle (Figs. 9, 10): these are not realistic depictions of arrows, if that is what they represent.

#### **Stars**

Star-shaped figures are made using two forms: in the first, five continuous segments form a five-pointed star, forming a central pentagon and a triangle to each tip (Fig. 11). The second form uses superimposed triangles (Fig. 12).<sup>2</sup> However, only a few such figures are quite regular, while the others are strongly asymmetric or crooked or even unfinished. In one case, it seems that the line formed by a slight natural ridge has been opportunistically inserted in the star.

#### **‘Butterfly’ and lozenges**

A sign that resembles a butterfly and two underlying lozenges are inserted into a long rod, even if the patina is thinner in the latter and therefore the rod may be more ancient than the rest of the figure (Fig. 4).

<sup>2</sup> This figure is also called pentalpha or pentagram, because you can also read it as particular conjunction of five letters alpha ('A'), partially overlapping, but in fact the execution of the pattern does not follow this procedure.

We can recognize a group of lozenges. In one case the two sides of a lozenge are formed by the two segments of a fish tail.

#### ***Comb-shaped and ladder-shaped figures***

Some figures are simple, others are inserted into rods (Fig. 10). In an irregular ladder-shaped figure (multiple lines one on top of the other, at regular distances, the first and last lines the two long sides have a significant prolongation at one end. If we consider their proximity to the representations of fishes, then they suggest a net or a trap for fish.

#### ***Groups of lines and angles***

Many lines, mostly straight, but also curved, sometimes pile up more or less parallel, sometimes intersecting, but without any intentional perpendicular crossing. They rarely have three segments that are joined together to form a triangle. Only in one case it is possible to recognize a rudimentary asterisk.

#### ***Frames***

Some frames are small and irregular, only one is larger, with an opening and with complex signs inside (Fig. 13). It is the only figure which could be a fence, but it could also be something else, e.g. a trap.

#### ***Solomon's knot***

The figure is constructed from a central cross, from which 4 or 5 curved lines branch in each quadrant (Fig. 7). The fresh look of the incisions, especially when compared with that of the fish a little higher up on the right, suggests that the knot is more recent than other figures.



FIGURE 12. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: VERY IRREGULAR STAR AND (LEFT) A SERIES OF CURVED LINES CONVERGING.

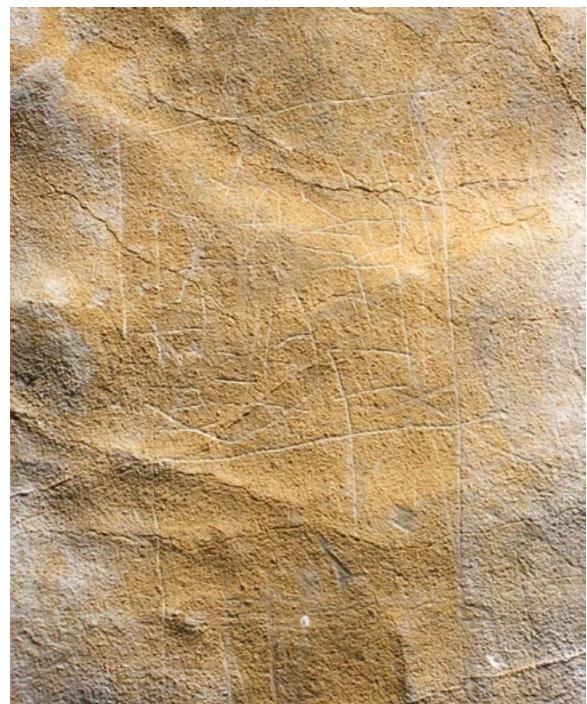


FIGURE 13. MONTELAPIANO, PARETE MANZI: FRAME WITH AN OPENING AND VARIOUS SIGNS INSIDE.

### **Figures difficult to interpret**

There are also a series of figures difficult to read and interpret, which can be divided into two categories.

The first one is constituted by figures always formed by fine grooves, as the vast majority of the figures, but in shapes and patterns that are not easily decodable; the second group includes all those shapes, which are distinguished by the length and irregular lines and also by the track often messy.

At least two figures of the first group have the form of large leaves with many ribs, but lack the contour line; therefore, as a second hypothesis we could think of tree-shaped figures, even if the position is not vertical. One figure (Figs. 9, 10) has a centerline nearly horizontal, from which a dense series of segments branches out obliquely on both sides. A second line almost parallel is joined at the right edge of the centerline. At the union point there is a small rhomboid shape that could represent a schematic head and then refer to an anthropomorphic figure. It may be interpreted as a fish with a sketchy outline, with fins that cover the entire length of the back and belly.

A human face was also sketched very likely; Fig. 9 shows an incised line that demarcates the contour of the face, excluding the top, where however the intersection of some natural cracks may suggest the presence of hairs or a cap. Another element is the natural curved crack with a raised edge that seems to form an open mouth. The possible nose is suggested by a simple vertical segment, while the eyes are formed by two big irregular points engraved with strength. It is important to note that throughout the wall there are no other cases of similar dots and this seems to confirm that the engraver used this particular sign for a subject (human face) that appears just one time.

There are also two calotte-shaped figures, which in one case is partially filled with oblique lines.

The figures of the second group, that is the more confused and carried out with a bigger groove, seem generally to overlap the filiform ones. This second group might be the work of a group intervened at a later date or a group of different cultures, but the purpose remains unclear.

### **Considerations and open issues**

In the context of prehistoric rock art discovered in the province of Chieti since 2006 (some fifteen sites: Di Fraia 2011; Di Fraia, Manzi 2012; Di Fraia 2014), the Parete Manzi of Montelapiano is a special case, for the following reasons:

1. the technique of execution, by thin and often filiform incisions, while the stippling technique is entirely absent, despite being present in all the rock art sites in the neighboring Municipality of Civitaluparella;
2. the large concentration of figures. In the other rock sites in the Valdisangro the figures are distributed over large areas with a lot of freedom and in cases where they are close together there is no overlap, but just contiguity, as in the case of the crossed circles in the Grotta Di Cicco (Di Fraia 2014);
3. Many of the figures represented (e.g. fishes, harpoons, butterflies, five-pointed star) are not recorded in other sites of the territory.

There are a number of important similarities in the Riparo del Cavone near Spinazzola (Bari)<sup>3</sup> (Astuti *et al.*, 2008) and in particular:

1. exclusive (Cavone) or almost total (Parete Manzi, with one painted figure) use of the engraving technique;

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<sup>3</sup> Also in the Grotta S. Martino of Toritto (Bari), there are many similar figures engraved: line groups, stars, lozenges, triangles, comb-shaped etc.; unfortunately the preliminary communication (Princigalli 2012) does not allow for more accurate comparisons.

2. the similarity of many figures, in particular line groups, comb-shaped figures, lozenges, butterflies, five-pointed stars;
3. the overlapping or juxtaposition of many signs and figures at different stages, but always within the same panel, as if a particular value was assigned to a precise area or already in the origin or after the engraving of the first figures.

The probable connection between the two contexts could be explained in two ways, not mutually excluding each other: 1) local communities used symbols and styles widely available; 2) or small groups that could travel long distances expressed their imagination in places too far away, with codified techniques and procedures. We know that in the metals age, and in particular in the Bronze Age, the mobility of people and thus the spread of ideas and symbolic images could occur even on a relatively large scale, as, for example, I have suggested for a number of Albanian rock paintings depicting crosses and crossed circles (Di Fraia 2011).

The first hypothesis does not seem to explain the peculiarities of this site compared to those of the surrounding territory. In the second scenario, it is possible a role of transhumance as a vector spreading ideas and ritual behaviors, also because other intermediate sites may exist or have existed between Spinazzola and Montelapiano, with similar evidence of rock art. The rock shelter of Morricone del Pescò (Sigari, Peretto 2014; Sigari *et al.* 2014) is the only (as yet) site in Molise with prehistoric rock art, with filiform incisions and paintings demonstrating some region-wide connectivity. And probably more rock art sites exist in the region and only await discovery.

The repertoire of Morricone del Pescò includes geometric, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, simple groups of lines; the five-pointed star is also represented.

This finding supports the hypothesis that the shepherds, but perhaps also other individuals ('merchants' or anyway persons interested to acquire and / or exchange certain products or to provide certain services), were an important, perhaps the most powerful vehicle for transmitting also ideas and symbols. For the Morricone shelter it was observed that it is located along the modern age *tratturo* Castel di Sangro-Lucera. The site of Montelapiano is not far from the *tratturo* L'Aquila-Foggia, but it must be remembered that there was still a dense network of secondary *tratturi* along the eastern side of the Abruzzo Apennines. But beyond this matching old sites to modern transhumance routes, it is important to note that certain geographical areas, such as river valleys, were forced routes also during prehistoric times. This is proved by archaeological findings. In this regard, for the Valdisangro I ought to mention the Riparo Di Cicco, not yet fully excavated, where there are Ancient and Middle Bronze Age ceramics and black painted pottery, perhaps dated to the Greek period (Di Fraia 2014b, 2014c).

The individual rock art sites in the province of Chieti show aspects very original, but the extraordinary characterization of the Montelapiano complex compared to the surrounding area (and also to the site of the Cavone, particularly for the presence of fishes) can perhaps be explained with a specific function of the site, maybe connected to a particular category of people, perhaps riverine fishermen or people who had a particular (also symbolic?) interest for the fish. Perhaps the visitors of the site had experience (also?) of sea fishing or at least of some species of marine fish.

The painted figure is probably the oldest of all. Painted figures predate engravings also at Morricone del Pescò, at least in some places, where the latter are superimposed on the first.

The previous presence at Montelapiano of the painted figure is purely coincidental, and therefore with no relation to the subsequent engraved figures, or it may have been an important factor of attraction for the location of subsequent representations?

Looking at possible comparisons in local culture, Iron Age bronzes are promising. With regard to the five-pointed star, one of the most significant comparisons is recorded in bronze discs of the Fucino

and of other Abruzzo areas. This artifact is traditionally interpreted as *kardiophylax* or *disco-corazza* ('armor-disk'). In particular, the perforated disc from the necropolis of Forme (IX-VIII century BC.; Grossi 2011) shows in the center a five-pointed star built with the criterion of continuous line, that is according to the first pattern described for Montelapiano. That of course has important implications, especially if we consider that the same disk contains a decorative band formed by a series of crossed circles, and we know that this figure is a fundamental solar symbol (Di Fraia 2004, 2010). The fact that the armor-disk of a warrior is associated with the star and the crossed circles might confirm the hypothesis, proposed by Fernando Coimbra (2011), who suggested a probable protective function performed by the star. In the Parete Manzi of Montelapiano the star appears in various positions, but in no case we are able to associate this one with other significant figures.

Only a specimen is surmounted by a series of curved segments converging, that only with all possible reserves we could interpret as the representation of the solar rays or of a comet.

Regarding the crossed circle, it is well documented in rock art sites of Civitaluparella (Di Fraia 2011, 2014) and can be inserted in a framework that goes chronologically from the Late-Final Bronze Age to the Iron Age and has a geographically and culturally wide diffusion, on various types of supports (the Novilara stele, bronze pendants, greaves etc.), with meanings ranging from the symbol of light, heat and life to the function of protective power.

This chronology seems strengthened by the five-pointed star, which is documented only from the Bronze Age and then during the Iron Age (Coimbra 2011) and that, as the crossed circle, at some point may have assumed an autonomous symbolic significance.

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