

EMMANUEL ANATI



VALCAMONICA ROCK ART

A NEW HISTORY FOR EUROPE

STUDI CAMUNI - VOLUME XIII - ENGLISH EDITION - 1994

EDIZIONI DEL CENTRO

STUDI CAMUNI

A series of monographs on art, archaeology and history
directed and edited by
Emmanuel Anati



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STUDI CAMUNI

Monographs on art, archaeology and history

The Camonica Valley is home to the greatest concentration of rock art incisions discovered until now in Europe; here, as elsewhere, the carved figures reveal the history of an ancient people, the course of their evolution and their contacts with neighboring cultures. The object of this series to explore the Camunian civilization and diverse cultures in Europe and the other continents through the study of the rock art and other archaeological finds, seeking to introduce new and innovative concepts into the field of research.

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VALCAMONICA ROCK ART A NEW HISTORY FOR EUROPE

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with a presentation by
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President, World Heritage Committee, UNESCO

and appendix:

ITINERARY FOR VIEWING CAMUNIAN ROCK ART
by TIZIANA CITTADINI



Vol. 13

STUDI CAMUNI

Edizioni del Centro

1994

VALCAMONICA ROCK ART

by Emmanuel ANATI

First English edition, 1994

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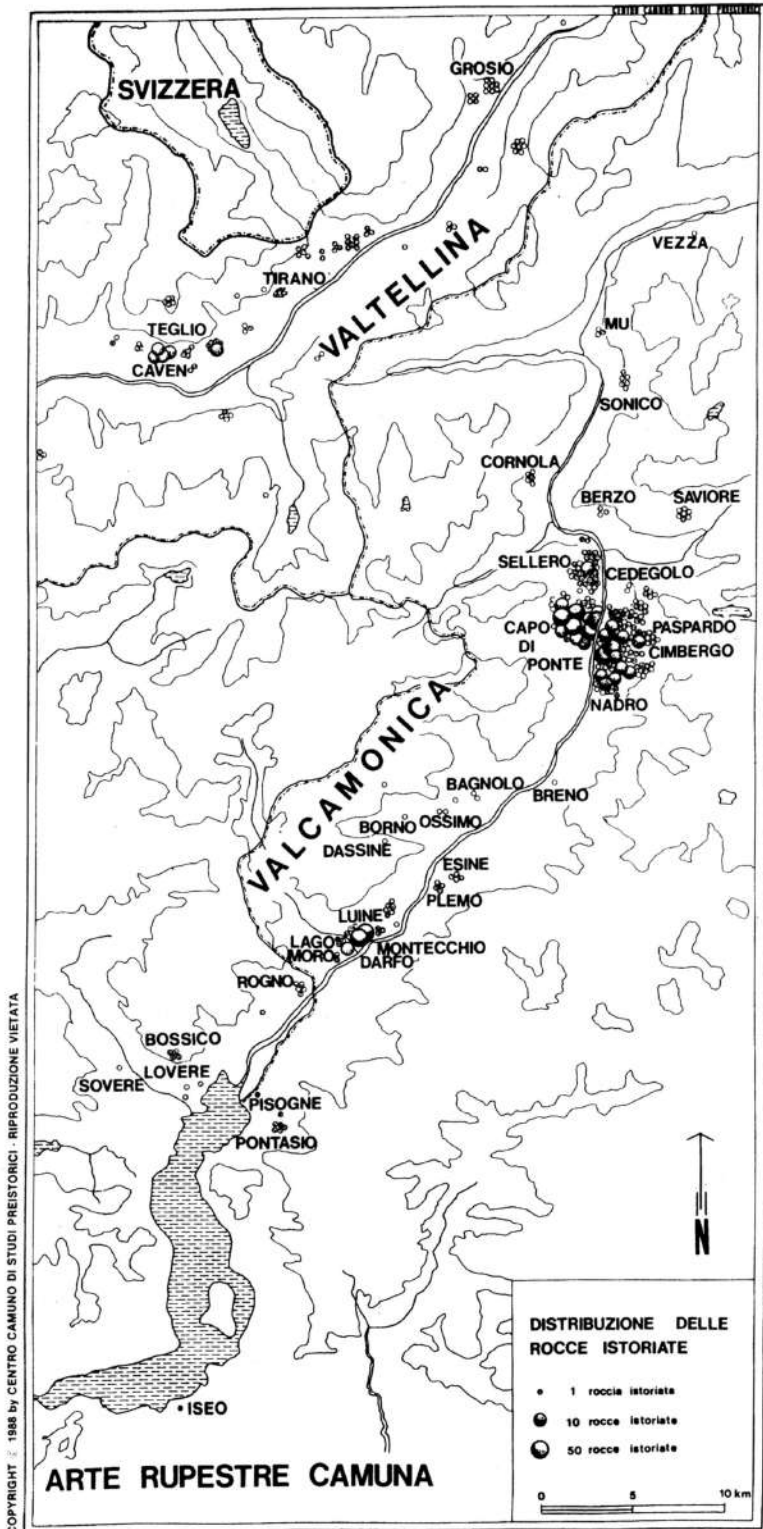
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SVIZZERA

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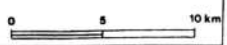
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Presentation by the President of the
"World Heritage Committee"
UNESCO

VALCAMONICA: WORLD CULTURAL HERITAGE

The prehistoric area of the Camonica Valley with its wealth of rock art is one of 85 cultural and natural sites that have so far been designated by Unesco in the World Heritage list. This list was selected by the *World Heritage Committee*, an intergovernmental committee established at the International Convention that is concerned with the cultural and natural heritage of the world. Approved by the Member States of UNESCO at the General Conference of '72, the Convention organized a system of cooperation for the protection of world heritage sites for the benefit of humanity and future generations, and furnishes a permanent legal, administrative, and financial structure for this cooperation. The compilation of the List of World Heritage represents the middle step for guaranteeing that those parts of the World Cultural and Natural heritage of the Member States of the Convention (cultural zones, monuments, and natural areas considered to be of preeminent universal value) are identified for such protection of world heritage and thus obtain international recognition.

Cut into approximately 2400 rocks over the course of the last 8000 years before the present era, the rock art of Valcamonica, which includes figures of both animals and humans, in scenes of everyday life, constitutes a precious testimony on the life of primitive man. The interpretation, classification and chronological study of these incisions, which change their style and content with the evolution of the economic and social structures of the inhabitants of Valcamonica, constitute an important contribution to research in the fields of prehistory, sociology, and ethnology. Maintaining for these reasons part of the heritage of the human race, the rock art of Valcamonica was included into the List of World Heritage in October 1979 and so benefits from the conservation measures put forth by the Convention, guaranteeing the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the world.

Michel Parent

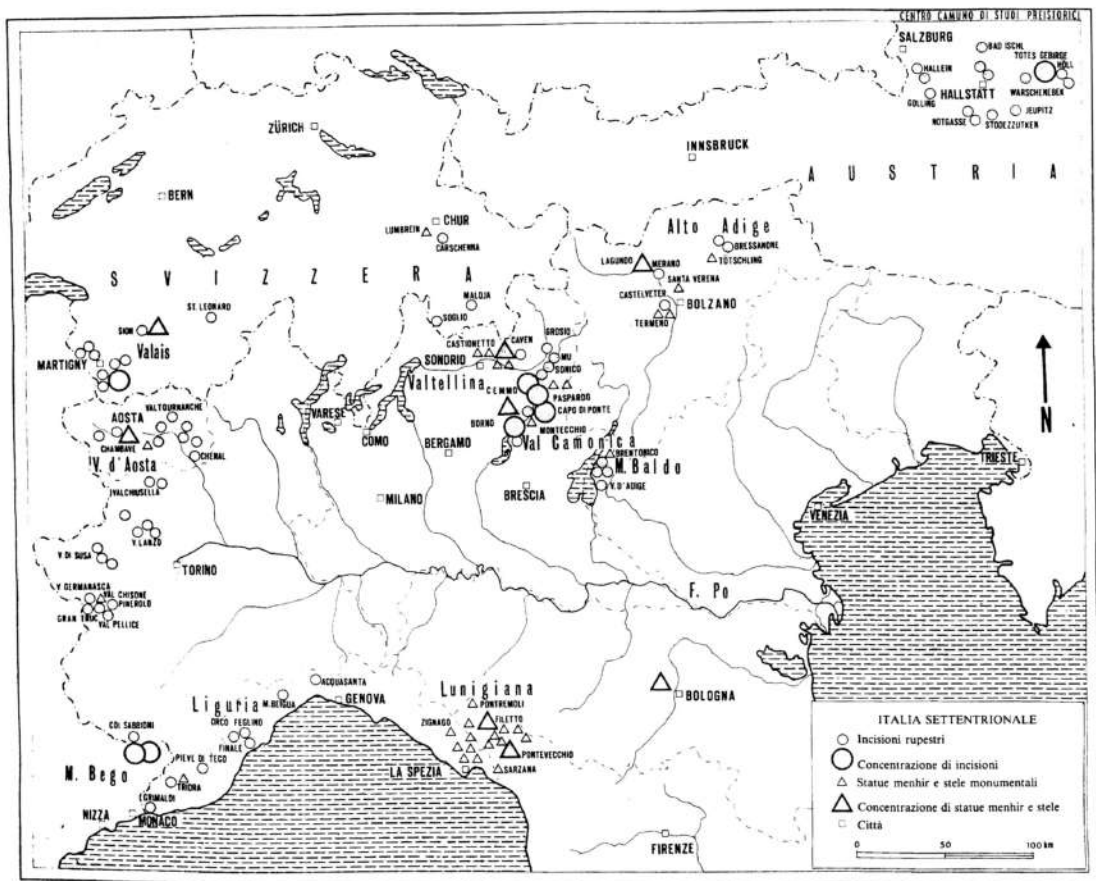


Fig. 1. (preceding page)
Map of the distribution of rock art sites in
The Camonica Valley and Valtellina.

Fig. 2.
Distribution of rock art and menhir-statues
in Northern Italy and the Alpine area.

INTRODUCTION
VALCAMONICA: A NEW HISTORY FOR EUROPE

When the rock art of the Camonica Valley was recognized by UNESCO in the "World Cultural Heritage" list, the first Italian site to receive such an honor, many asked themselves why these engravings, left by a small number of the prehistoric inhabitants of this valley, were considered so important. In fact only later was similar recognition given to works and places which receive much more importance in Italian texts, such as Venice with her canals, the Last Supper by Leonardo in S. Maria delle Grazie in Milan, or the forum and historical center of Rome.

The judicial committee, composed of representatives from over 60 countries, considered that while other monuments are expressions of brief moments of glory or of national identity, the rock art of Valcamonica is the testimony of 8000 years of European history, a history that begins 10,000 years ago and yet still remains, for the most part, unpublished. In fact, Valcamonica, stretching north into the Alps from the cities of Bergamo and Brescia, with its thousands of rock incisions which have been dated, organized by period, and analyzed for content, restores to Europe 10,000 years of history, 8000 of which, predating the rise of Rome, had been practically ignored by contemporary historical research.

And what a story these rock engravings tell! A marvelous visual account, inscribed directly onto the rock by the very subjects of this history, by the artists who can be called the most willing collectors, scribes and narrators in the course of the millennia. The art remains in situ, where it was rediscovered, allowing us to recognize the position in which the creators stood as they carved these thousands of testimonials.

These rock art of the Camonica Valley therefore correctly considered to be part of the cultural heritage of humanity. No other

single source, for now, gives a similar quantity of data on the history of Europe and the origins of European civilization. This volume is a history book, a history which Europe is only now reacquiring and which already constitutes an irrenounceable part of its culture. Reemerging only through the archaeological research of the last few years, the pictograms and ideograms of the ancient Camunians have to be read in order to be understood, only then can they reveal events that are thousands of years old. Such a reading has only just begun, but already it is becoming clear that the history Europe, Italy, and the region of Lombardy cannot do without those chapters which are being brought to light by Camunian rock art.

Who are modern Europeans? How have they become what they are today? These are questions which return us to those distant millennia in which bands of nomadic hunters settled down in permanent areas, and the first attempts were made to produce food. Human society became more complex, developing the methods of communication, co-operation, identity of the clan, then of the tribe, and finally of the population, which have given social organization its modern form. Through these "comic-strips" carved into the rock surfaces by the ancient Camunians, assembled by phases and by periods, we can catch a glimpse into the birth of European civilization.

Rock art also narrates the process of technical and conceptual evolution, by means of images which vary from period to period. These images provide information on the customs, clothing, tools, and objects, as well as on the economic, social, and religious activities of the tribes who left them. Further, we can see the rise and the assertion of the values, as well as their shortcomings, which have remained from then on characteristics of European civilization.

The discovery of rock art in the Camonica Valley is a great adventure as well as being part of history. This book, then, contains two histories in one. The history of Europe and the events which, in the course of 10,000 years, have shaped who we are, and the history of the finds and ideas which have lead to the rediscovery of these events.

Often history texts are the work of editors who have obtained their information from compilers who have taken from the writers who, in their turn, have used reports of the facts which are often loaded with apology, having themselves been dictated by those who stand to gain the most from the publication of those same histories. The historical reliability of the texts is evidenced by the changes to which they are

subject over the course of time. This can be seen by a comparing a text of Roman history written in Italy during the Mussolini regime of the thirties with one written in the last few years.

The history which we present here, on the other hand, is the result of a single interpretation of the primary documents, that is the rock art figures and archaeological finds, done first hand, by those who have conducted the research, without filters or intermediaries. It is a new method of writing history, and as we will see, deals with the history of a period that before today was considered prehistory. These are the first chapters in the history of Europe.

The so called "historical facts," the incidents and the events, are usually reported by the annals and chronicles in versions which are not always unequivocal or concordant. It is important to know how a certain version was arrived at in order to understand its accuracy and significance. It is even more important when discussing periods in which writing did not exist or, in any case, for which written texts have not survived. The written text, when it exists, is the principal channel for historical information, but at the same time also the principal instrument of deception. For the periods or contexts for which written texts do not exist, the sources can be of two types: the oral tradition or the archaeological testimony. In the specific case of the Camonica Valley, it is the archaeological testimony which has survived.

Also in this case, it is important to know how a given version is reached. The understanding of the process by which "historical facts" are formed is the third dimension of history, without which history risks being transformed into mere "stories." Such understanding is also the element in the study of history usually most attractive to students, because it goes beyond the facts which have been already more or less established. The mind is introduced to the process of historical reconstruction and so to the dynamics of historical research and criticism. The acquisition of this "third dimension" adds a bite to the study of history that fascinates the spirit because it involves one directly in the process of historical analysis. The student becomes studious and participates firsthand in the analysis of documents.

To arrive at the "true" version of history- that of the participants themselves and of the actual events which took place five or six thousand years ago- requires an unaccustomed temporal dimension, and leads not only to the fortunate opportunity of analyzing moments

in history such as those reflected in the rock art figures, but also to the understanding of particular elements of the dynamics involved in the formation of history. This focus can then be widened to encompass the fundamental universal aspects of the structure of human psychology which have created the very concept of history.

Those which, at the moment, are considered documented facts, may or may not have much relevance to history. From the temporal perspective, that which makes history is then retained as such by successive generations, while the rest is rejected in the natural process of selection. But be careful: that which is forgotten in one period may re-emerge in a later one. And it is precisely this which is actually happening. For generations the study of history has concentrated on the last two millennia. Now interest in the distant past brings us to the rediscovery of millennia in which European society was formed, in which the bands of nomadic hunters in search of prey became sedentary tribes dependant on agriculture, crafts, industry, commerce, which from then on have characterized European civilization.

The need for a history that "explains" the present human condition is felt by all the peoples on Earth. Not a tribe exists which, among its own cultural baggage, does not retain some form of history, often one characterized by legends and myths. But also on this basic level of creation myths and the complex narration of genealogies, one meets the presence of a superstructure of apologia which renders complex the simple reconstruction of facts.

Historical research is not always based on pure documents or the direct expressions of the protagonists, but often, rather, on second hand elaborations. Unedited documents, if possibly uncontaminated by interpretation, are to be found in archaeological sites which have remained buried and unknown for millennia until the moment of discovery. These documents still rest in the anthropological contexts in which unfolded the realities of everyday life, the drama of human relationships, the economic needs and the choices made at each crux. They are deprived, within possible limits, of additional apologetic conditioning and the deceptions which can accumulate in the process of making history. Each culture, ours included, can be seen in such an anthropological context.

The historical reconstruction of a period from which we have documents uncontaminated by successive reinterpretations, is a means for enriching our understanding, our knowledge and our

Fig. 3.

"The Temple." Rock engravings depicting a large building with a series of smaller structures at its base. On the facade one can see an anthropomorphic image and, on the roof, several axes. Above the central structure is a deep cup-mark of large size, while there are smaller ones below and in ordered series beside the composition. It is probably the representation of a temple, a "marai" or, house of spirits. Period IV/C (Early Iron Age: 850-700 B.C.). Within the lines of the house one can see a series of concentric discs belonging to a previous period Foppe di Nadro, rock 27.



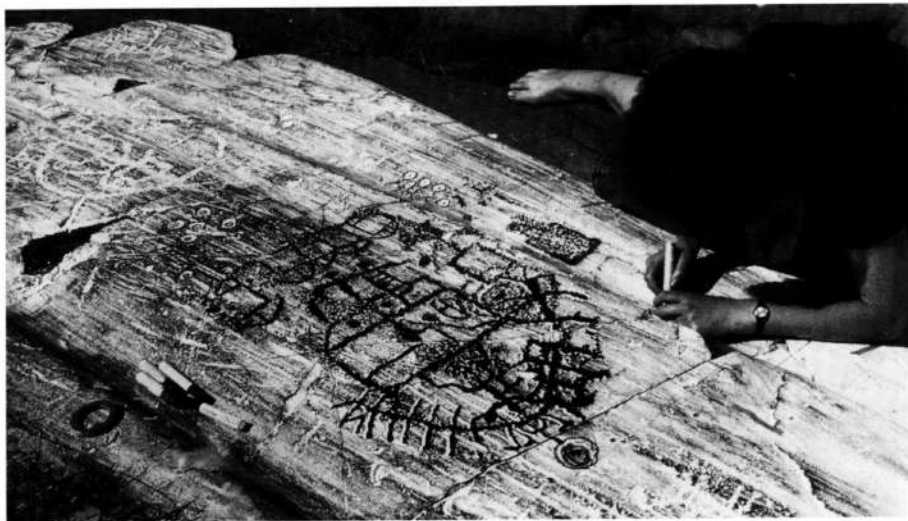
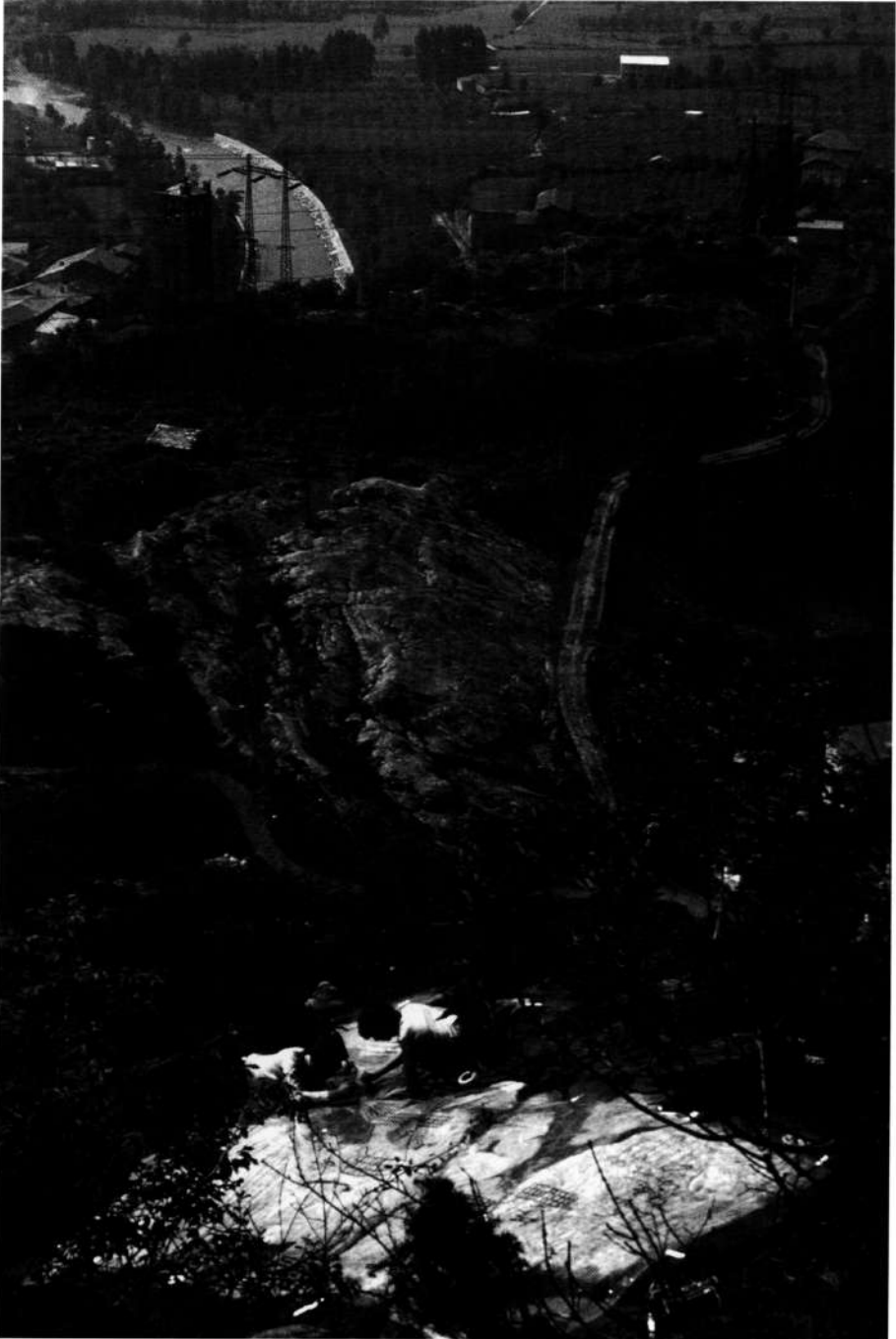


Fig. 4.
The Camonica Valley, a narrow valley stretching from the Lago d'Iseo into the heart of the Alps, contains the major concentration of rock art in Europe.

Fig. 5.
Tracing of rock art figures onto polyethylene, Foppe di Nadro (Ceto).



*Fig. 6.
A group of students tracing an engraved rock at Bedolina (Capo di Ponte).*

comprehension. The Camonica Valley is an exceptional example which furnishes us, in a unique context, with an enormous quantity of data. More than 300,000 "prehistoric" figures have the immediacy and the historical reality of documents created by those who participated in the very events which led to the formation of European civilization, and which were left, not as chronicles for posterity, but as an organic function of their lives. In this way they act as a medium through which we can revive the past.

Through rock art we can collect information on the events and preoccupations of "artists", revealing which changes, which developments of an economic, social, cultural and political character reflect the progressions of the historical process. Within the limits of ethnic and social contexts stand the chiefs, the warriors, the priests, and also the men of learning, who found prominent roles which otherwise would not have been able to operate outside of the social context. In history there is a constant dialectic relationship between the individual and the group. This means that the individual would not be able to express himself without the group and the group would not be able to express itself without the individual. This "cultural" history has not developed only among peoples without writing but among all cultures, and continues to develop even today.

Regarding "prehistoric" periods we obviously do not have the names of the tribal chiefs, the rulers, the colonels or the court dignitaries. Though only rarely do we have the precise location of particular events, we do have signs indicating cultural relationships, economic realities, meetings and clashes. We learn what were the technological acquisitions and social customs in each period and we follow the cultural and political evolution between one period and another. Rock art in particular is one view of the events, of the attitudes and the fears. From the images left imprinted on the rock and from other evidence, we know that in a certain epoch there was a type of social equilibrium, that in a determined period there were characteristics of political instability with contrasts between populations or between this leader and that, or that in another period there was calm and economic prosperity. These images and discoveries permit the recognition of periods loaded with creativity and imagination, as well as periods in which there appears to have been only scanty interest in material expressions, periods of harmony in which ethics and aesthetics were exalted, and periods defined by brutishness.

Through rock art and other archaeological remains, it is not always possible to determine the date of a battle, the name of the hero who determined the outcome, or the appearance of his consort, but we must ask ourselves if these are the pressing questions which shaped history. The images on the rocks show how the interests and emphases of Camunian society changed from period to period. We see for example that in the initial phase of Camunian rock art, the human figure is for now absent. The interests of the hunters was turned to animal figures of great size, being reflections of that which they longed for. In the Neolithic period, anthropomorphic figures, namely man, were the theme of major interest, while in the subsequent period, the Chalcolithic or Copper Age, interest was concentrated in the depiction of metal tools, in particular, of weapons. In the Neolithic there are feminine figures, while in the succeeding epoch masculine figures are quantitatively much more superior to feminine ones.

Historical analysis allows us to reconstruct the processes of conceptual and technological evolution, to see the introduction and assimilation of cultural innovations, and to recognize the intervening changes in the group's social structure and economic activities. Through such analysis we can follow the course of their thoughts which have traced the path of the human epic. Until today the official history of the alpine zone, and in fact of Continental Europe, began, for all intents and purposes, 2000 years ago with the rise of the Roman Empire. The addition of 8000 years to the last 2000 gives a new balance to our historical perspective, forcing us to recognize the enormous quantity of cultural baggage that has accumulated along with the troubled events which have spurred the growth of human society and which have made us what we are today.

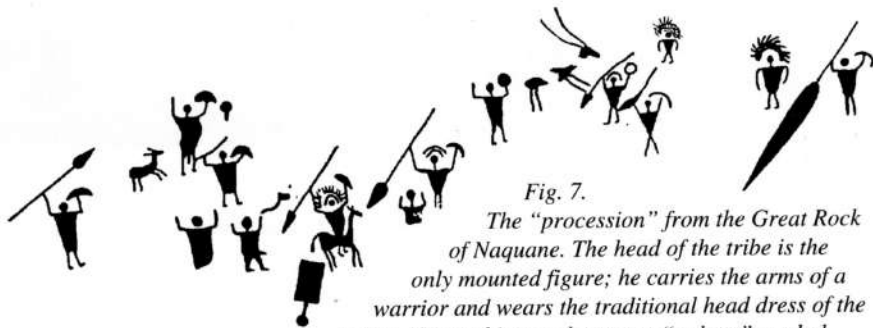


Fig. 7.

The "procession" from the Great Rock of Naquane. The head of the tribe is the only mounted figure; he carries the arms of a warrior and wears the traditional head dress of the priest. Next to him can be seen a "palette" symbol.



Fig. 8.
View of decorated rock surface from Foppe di Nadro. The polish and glacial striation are typical of the rocks chosen by the ancient Camunians.



Fig. 9.
Detail of the "procession" from the Great Rock of Naquane.



Fig. 10.
A team at work on rock 34 at Luine.



Fig. 11.
A research seminar in the Camonica Valley. A student helps the other participants to interpret the rock figures.

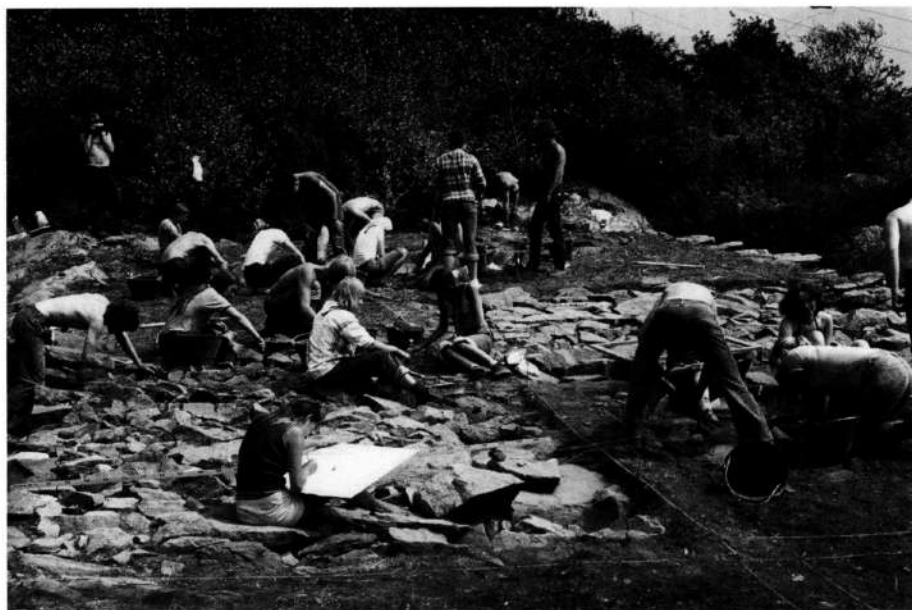


Fig. 12.
The excavation of a megalithic platform
near Capo di Ponte.

Fig. 13.
Excavation of a collective grave at Dos
dell'Arca, Capo di Ponte.





Fig. 14.
Recording of archaeological strata at Dos dell'Arca.

Fig. 15.
Tracing of rock engravings onto polyethylene at Le Cruz near Capo di Ponte.



Fig. 16.

Plowing scene, next to a Chalcolithic dagger with wide, triangular blade. Dos Cui, Ceto. The type of dagger, known from copper examples found in excavations, helps to date the scene.



Chapter 1
**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVENTURE:
FROM FINDING TO DISCOVERY**

The discoveries that took place in the Camonica Valley accumulated for many years before a historical interpretation was proposed for the phenomena. As early as the Middle Ages, legends already spoke of "Pagan's Altar" (Altare dei Pagani), "Fairies Horns" (Corna della Fate), "Mystery Plain" (Plan Mister), "Rock of the Altar" (Preda de l'Altar), "Castle" (Castel), "Hill of the Arc" (Dos de l'Arca), and other impressive place names, some of which are still used today for locations where figures are engraved into the rocks and ruins of pre-Roman dwellings can be found. Already in these names we find that the sites are being remembered and interpreted.

Now and then, there are medieval figures carved next to the prehistoric petroglyphs. The shepherds and other inhabitants of the valley who traveled the woods and mountains in the Middle Ages must have known about them and must also have known that in certain places, settlements and rock engravings existed which dated back to those epochs of the past which as a whole were commonly called "the pagan age".

The medieval petroglyphs often imitate those from the prehistoric age, or they consisted of crosses whose aim, it is presumed, was to exorcise the power of the earlier images. Sometimes there are also medieval carvings which are anecdotal or narrative, constituting historical testimony to public or private events. The chroniclers of these rocks were interested in the life and the defense of the castle, in religious ceremonies, and, what must have been for them a fascinating spectacle, the hanging of persons on the gallows. As with the prehistoric incisions, there are also ideograms and symbols, among which are the keys of St. Peter and the knot of Solomon.

Even during the Roman period, rock engravings accompanied by

Latin script show that, despite the change in regime and creed, the Camunians had not entirely lost their habit of carving on the rocks of their valley. At times they even plagiarized earlier figures. In Luine, for example, next to the engraving of a dagger from the Chalcolithic age, there is an inscription added 2000 years later which defines it as a *mucro* (dagger in Latin). For the most part, however, pre-Roman settlements and rock engravings fell into oblivion when the Camunian civilization was overcome by the arrival of the Romans.

In the course of 2,000 years, shrubs, moss, and fields covered up and hid the rock surfaces on which the engravings had been carved. In at least two areas of the Camonica Valley, one near Capo di Ponte and the other near Gorzone di Darfo, they were still partly visible and were known by the local population during the last century. One of these rocks, near Cemmo in Capo di Ponte, was known as "Preda dei Pitoti", or the puppets' rock.

Gualtero Laeng was a prominent figure in Brescian culture; a sensitive and highly intuitive person, he suspected that there was some hidden message in the figures. However, knowing only of a rock at Cemmo, he did not have nearly enough proof to rediscover the civilization which had left these images. Laeng announced his find in 1908, but his report did not arouse scientific interest until 1930, some 22 years later.

Paolo Graziosi of the University of Florence and Giovanni Marro of the University of Turin (and a Senator of the Kingdom) both paid separate visits to the Camonica Valley, one just a few days after the other. They studied the rock at Cemmo and published separate reports on it (P. Graziosi, 1931; G. Marro, 1930). While they were at Cemmo inspecting and describing the carved boulder, however, neither of them noticed a second engraved block which lay just fifteen meters to one side. It could have happened to anyone, but if these engravings were addressed to spirits that live in the rocks, as we have hypothesized from subsequent research, these spirits must have found the scene somewhat amusing. Two experts competing with each other to be the first to conduct research on an engraved rock, while right next to them was a second which passed unobserved by them both.

Later, following the excavations which took place in 1962, it was discovered that the two blocks lay in a megalithic alignment with each other and in between them lay several monoliths. A short distance away, two more engraved stones were found in the course of ground-

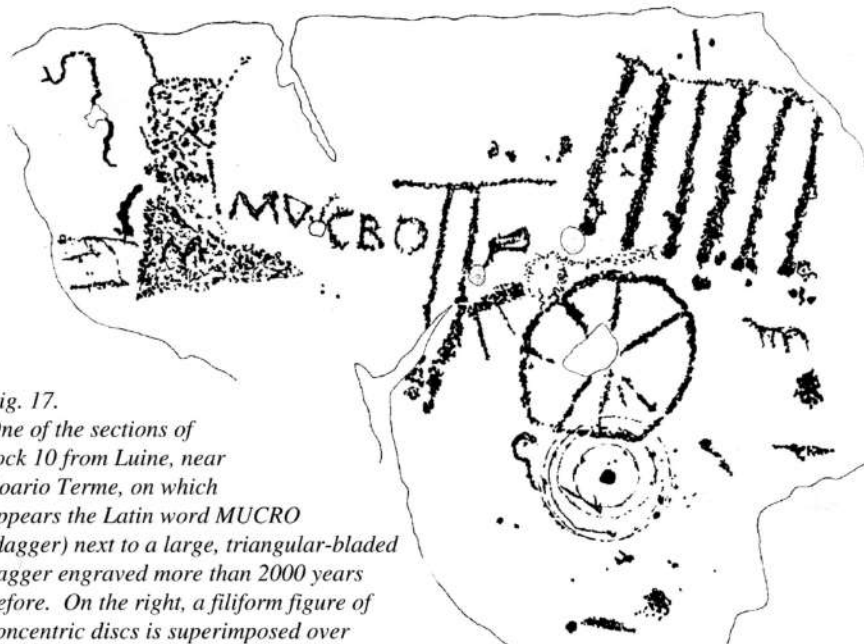


Fig. 17.
 One of the sections of rock 10 from Luine, near Boario Terme, on which appears the Latin word MUCRO (dagger) next to a large, triangular-bladed dagger engraved more than 2000 years before. On the right, a filiform figure of concentric discs is superimposed over another disc with internal rays from an earlier period. Above, a grill-shaped form executed in the same technique as the rayed disc. Also on other rocks one can notice the repeated use of the combination of discs and rectangles. The depiction of this pairing can vary: the disc may be simple, with internal rays or

concentric circles; the rectangle may also have diagonals, be grill-shaped, scutiform, or even "idol form". In several cases the disc and the rectangle seem to represent the sky and the earth, and at the same time, the head and body of a cosmological entity.

leveling operations. Further excavations conducted by R. De Marinis in 1989 have revealed other particulars of stratigraphy.

In any case the first pioneers were already photographing and describing the first block. The second block lay just to one side; it rose up from the ground to a height of nearly two meters and was covered with figures who in their turn were covered by moss. The two publications were published without having mentioned this other stone. It was spotted a year later, by Marro himself (G. Marro, 1933). The two "Cemmo Rocks" were to be the point from which all further exploration would begin.

In the meantime, a local teacher and archaeology buff, Guiseppe Bonafini, who was also the mayor of Cividate Camuno for many years, had taken a great interest in the history of his town, which had been the capital of the Camonica Valley during the Roman period. He published a number of finds, among which was an important series of



Fig. 18.
*Deep engravings of hand prints in the
crypt of the "Chiesa della Sante" near*

*Capo di Ponte. The church was built over the
engraved rock, indicating that this cult symbol
persisted into the present age.*

tile seals written in a strange language which used Northern Etruscan characters. This turned out to be the language of the ancient Camunians, and the tiles either precede by a little or were simultaneous to the arrival, in the year 16 B.C., of Publius Silius' legion (Bonafini, 1930). Bonafini was also interested in rock art and was among the first to suggest creating an archaeological park.

There were other findings in the thirties, both of rock art and material culture. Giovanni Marro (1933), Raffaello Battaglia (1934), and others extended the exploration of the area and found rock engravings in several places around the town of Capo di Ponte. The ensuing publications expressed, above all, wonder, but they also raised questions about the age of the engravings and the ethnic group to which the artists might have belonged. In the more ambitious publications, the engravings were defined as "pre-roman." The Ligurians, the Celts, the Rhaetians, and the *Veneti* were all taken into consideration, but often the hypotheses constructed to explain the finds were nothing more than an erudite game. No attempt was made yet to arrive at the real meaning, at a tangible interpretation of what the figures meant, beyond that which appeared obvious and purely

figurative: nothing was known of the ancient Camunians, because the material which had been gathered up until then was an insufficient basis for any real historical analysis. All this initial work was able to do was to describe the finds themselves and encourage further research. A few years later, Franz Altheim, professor of ancient history at the University of Berlin and an ardent supporter of Hitler's racist theories, came, along with his assistant, Erica Trautmann, to the Camonica Valley in their search for traces of Aryan civilizations. They saw the rocks found by Marro and Battaglia, as well as a few others which had not yet been reported (F. Altheim and E. Trautmann, 1938/1939). To demonstrate the theory of the Indo-Germanic origins of the Alpine peoples and to expound his theories on the history of religions, Altheim wrote several works on the Camunians. One of these, "*Vom Ursprung der Runen*" (1933) is prefaced by a short benediction written by the *Reichsführer SS*, Heinrich Himmler. The Camonica Valley rock engravings thus entered historical research through the back door, as an apology for another theory.

Little research was carried out during the Second World War or in the ensuing years, and for more than a decade nothing was written. The most important discovery in this period did not take place in the Camonica Valley at all, but in nearby Valtellina, where Maria Regiani Rajna announced the discovery of three stele covered with etchings which she had found in her vineyard at Caven near Teglio (M. Reggiani Rajna, 1942). It was only in the fifties that a Swiss scholar, Hercli Bertog, director of the Coira Museum, as well as scholars from the Brescia Atheneum - in particular Gualtiero Laeng (1951) who had been the first to announce the discovery of the Cemmo rock forty years earlier, along with Emanuele Suss (1954/1955), set out once more to search for rock engravings.

A great merit of Suss' was that he made a map of the distribution of engraved rocks in the Naquane area, which became the basis for the creation of a national park. The map of Naquane compiled by Suss was the first inventory of a rock art site in the Camonica Valley. It showed with a fair amount of precision the positioning of about one hundred engraved rocks in the area. Since then, only six new rocks have been found at the site. At other sites in the Camonica Valley, however, from 1956 to today there have been found more than 2500 decorated surfaces which bring the total of rock art engravings in the Valley to over 300,000: an archive of "prehistoric" documents which

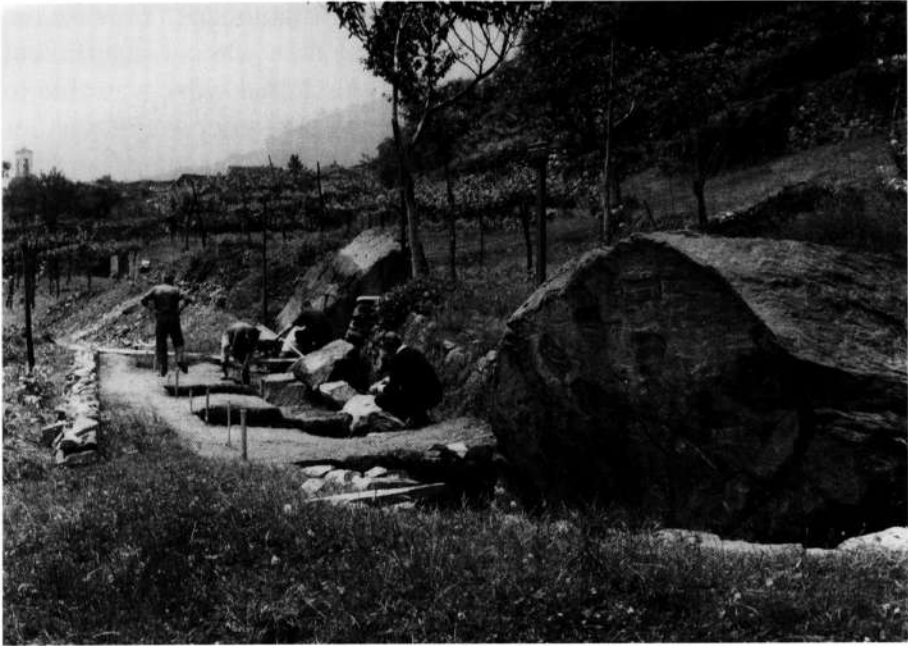


Fig. 19.
Excavation of the Massi di Cemmo in
Capo di Ponte, 1962.

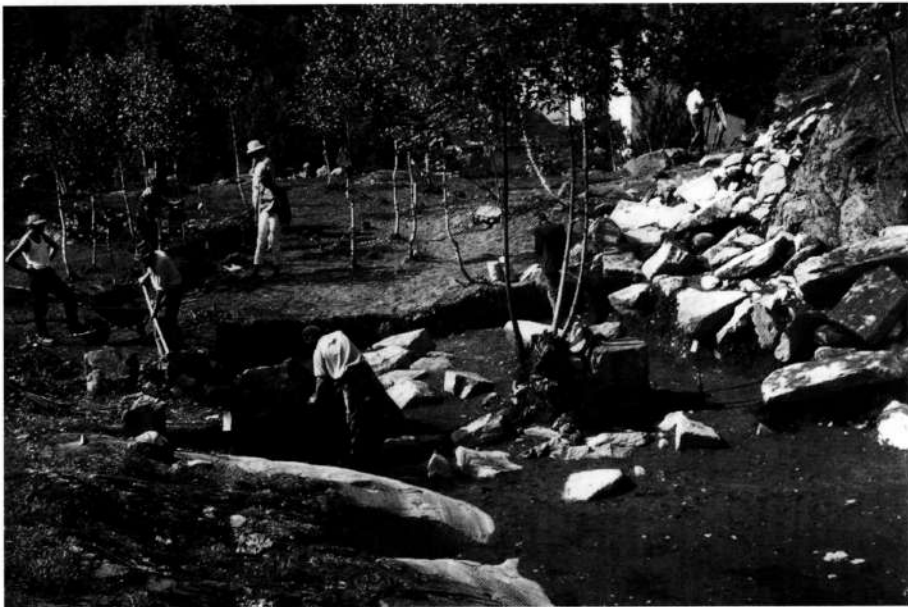


Fig. 20.
Excavation of Dos dell'Arca, also near
Capo di Ponte, 1962.



Fig. 21.
During excavations at Sante in Capo di Ponte, there came to light a splendid stratigraphical sequence which illustrates the climatic and environmental variations of the last 10,000 years.

Fig. 22.
A course in practical field work, led by the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici.

Fig. 23.
Differentiated tracings. The two animal figures from the Proto-Camunian period are rendered on polyethylene (in black). The superimposed Etruscan incisions are not traced on the same polyethylene.

more recent research has permitted us to call history. In 1956 the systematic recording of data began with the first large-scale exploration of zones in which rock art was found.

Since then, work has continued. The number and size of the finds vary from year to year, according to the economic resources invested, but each year new data is added and new rock engravings are found.

The author arrived in the Camonica Valley in 1956, with the intention of comparing the known rock art of the area with that of Mount Bego in the French Maritime Alps. Still a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, I was preparing a study of Western European rock art, on behalf of the C.N.R.S., the French National Center for Scientific Research. Originally, the idea was to stay for just one week, inspecting and photographing those ten or so engraved rocks which had been cited in the literature, and then return to Paris.

Since then about forty years have passed and that "week" has lasted a bit longer than expected. Indeed, the very next year I returned to the area with a group of students and volunteers: it was the beginning of the "Anati Expedition." At that time, archaeological knowledge of the Camonica Valley was still in its embryonic stage. For the most part, any archaeological finds in the area had been sporadic. Apart from some exceptions, the findings consisted of pottery, stone tools, and other common, everyday objects lacking outstanding original features. Generally speaking, archaeological documentation of the traditional type was very scarce.

Even then, the major characteristic of the archaeology of the Camonica Valley was rock art. Yet the subject stimulated only mediocre interest among both professional archaeologists and the general public. Authoritative archaeological texts made no mention of it, and it was rare to find any historians or archaeologists who gave it any real consideration. They were considered rather strange and unusual, rather like the few individuals in Galileo's time who thought that the Earth moved around the sun, and not vice-versa. It was inconceivable to even think of the possibility of a serious diligent study and scientific analysis of rock art. It was first and foremost a way for "Sunday archaeologists" to have a little fun. They went looking for rock engravings much as one would go looking for mushrooms. It was possible to count on one hand the number of professional archaeologists throughout the world working intensively on rock engravings. I was one of them.



Fig. 24.
Rock surface at Naquane on which is seen
a complex series of superimpositions.

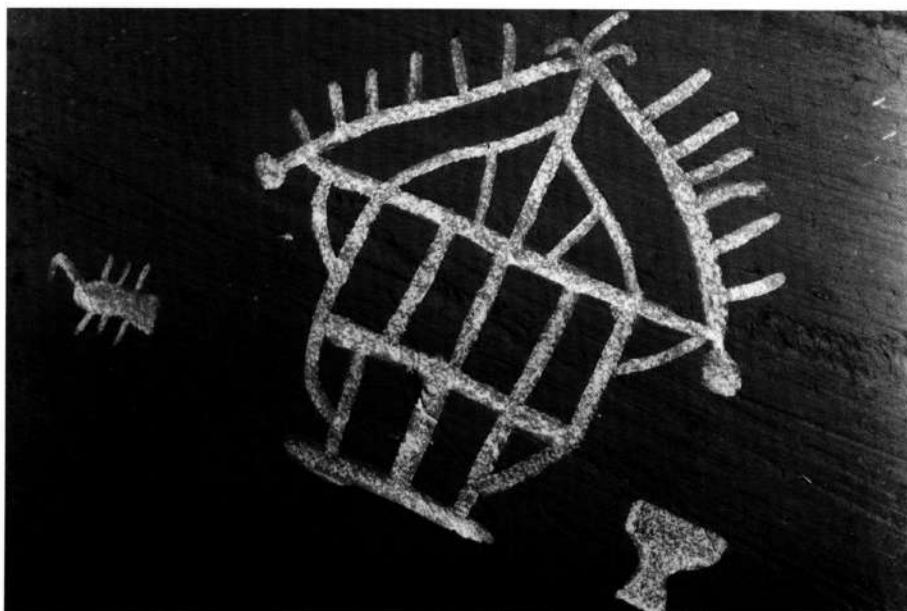


Fig. 25.
Another rock surface from Naquane which
shows only a single phase of engraving.

For the most part, rock engravings cropped up here and there, only to disappear again under grass and moss. But they were preserved underground, and by removing the grass and earth which covered them, new figures were continually coming to light. Pushing ahead with our explorations, it soon became apparent that these etchings extended across rocks and into areas which hitherto had lain unsuspected.

The "Anati Expedition" as such ran from 1956 to 1964, the year in which the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, which continues the project, was founded. In the course of eight years work, more than 30,000 prehistoric figures were discovered. An attempt was then made to classify the finds, to introduce some order and organize them on the basis of type. Because we lacked an archaeological nomenclature for the rock art, we developed the idea of "stratigraphy." This classification technique is based on the way in which the engravings overlap one another on the rock surface, and the degree of wear to which each one has been subjected. The ancient artists returned to the same rock surfaces for generations and inscribed new signs over those already present. Thus, many rocks show a sequence of decorative phases which in turn translate into a chronological value.

This hypothesis at first ran up against strong opposition. The idea of a chronological succession of incised figures on each rock surface was considered by many to be absurd. For quite a few years the author had to work in an atmosphere of aprioristic reticence through which he held on to his fundamental principle of research in progress. It was almost ten years before the principle of stratigraphy in rock art came to be widely accepted.

A series of detailed analyses allowed us to draw up the basis for a chronology. We started with a study of the "Capitello dei Due Pini", (E. Anati, 1957). This was followed by "La Grande Roche de Naquane", (E. Anati, 1960a) and a study of two rocks near Boario Terme (E. Anati, 1962b). The relative chronology which emerged from these studies was first presented in the book *La Civilisation du Val Camonica* (E. Anati, 1960c), which was first published in French, then reexamined and expanded in the English versions (E. Anati, 1961) and again, four years later, in the Italian *Civiltà preistorica della Valcamonica* (E. Anati, 1964). In this way we were able to lay down a rational basis for the study of Camunian rock art. There followed a "consecration" of the proposed ideas and of the principle of rock art

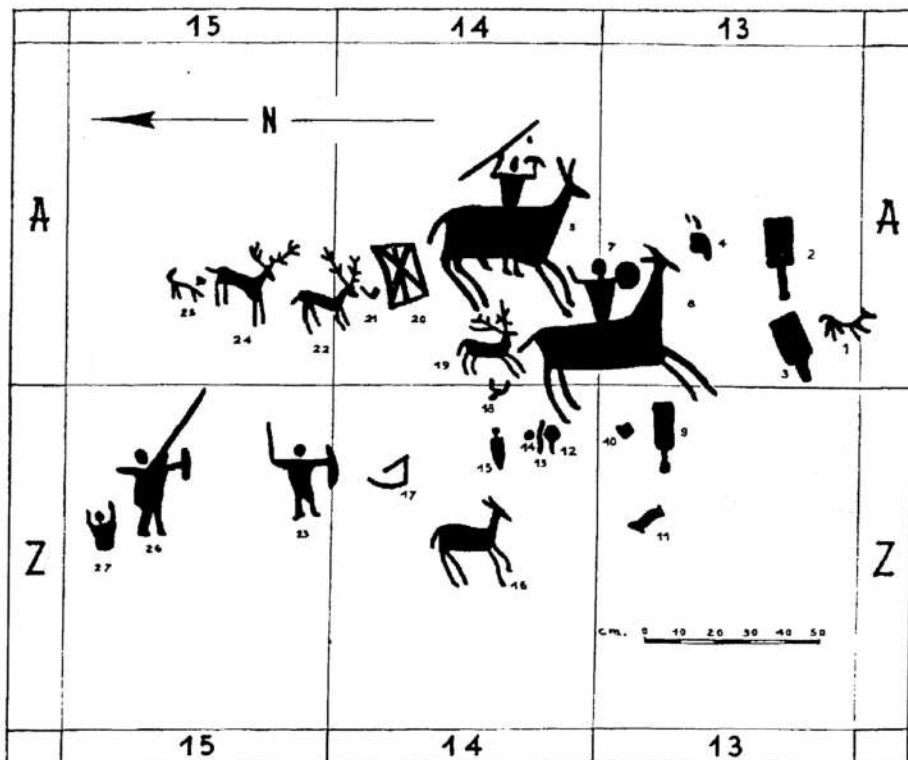


Fig. 26-27.
Schematic relief of one sector from the Great
Rock of Naquane. Below, one phase of the
engravings has been isolated.
The separation of phases is
indispensable for the reading of the
iconographic language.



stratigraphy, with an article commissioned and published by the prestigious *Journal of World History*, in 1967.

When the discovery of the Camunian civilization was announced in 1960, in *La Civilisation du Val Camonica*, the news of a practically unknown civilization which had evolved in the heart of Europe was received with skepticism, especially in Italy. A report presented to the Institut de France (E. Anati, 1959c) won agreement in that limited, albeit prestigious circle, but in the wider environment doubt continued for some time. During the last thirty five years, the general attitude has gone through three distinct stages: 1. The Camunian civilization is a figment of Anati's imagination; 2. The Camunian civilization is an interesting phenomenon, but not enough is known about it; 3. The Camunian civilization is an historical fact which has always been known! The way in which the discovery was gradually accepted has enabled us to follow the often ignored process by which new historical facts are assimilated into contemporary culture, from flat-out initial rejection to acceptance into textbooks.

The discovery of the Camunian civilization is sometimes attributed to those who have simply come across a number of rock etchings and made them known to the public at large, treating them more as a curiosity than as a historical discovery. But a historical find and a historical discovery are not the same thing. A find may be random and is often a matter of luck, and even if it is the result of the most scientific methods, a find will remain just that unless it is located, understood, and deciphered correctly. A discovery, on the other hand, is the result of an intellectual endeavor and implies an explanation of the historical, social, and cultural meaning behind what has been found.

Broadly speaking, the chronology established by our research team in 1960 has shown itself to be valid and has been confirmed by later discoveries. This does not prevent us, however, in the face of new finds and progress in study, from each year adding new details, modifying, refining, or checking the elements of the chronology. Today more than 300,000 prehistoric figures are known in the Camonica Valley, making it the principal rock art site in all of Europe. The study of overlapping (one set of incised figures engraved over another) permits us to establish a chronological sequence of styles in the rock art of the Camunians.

These studies of "chronology" are the basis for recognizing phases

and periods and thus for organizing the iconographic documents in a succession of episodes which constitute the prime material for historical research. No serious study would have been possible before one was able to recognize diverse styles and to attribute the engraved



Fig. 28.
Rock no. 1 at Cemmo, side 1; general tracing.



Fig. 29.
Rock no. 1 at Cemmo, side 1. Detail of several animal figures from the central area.

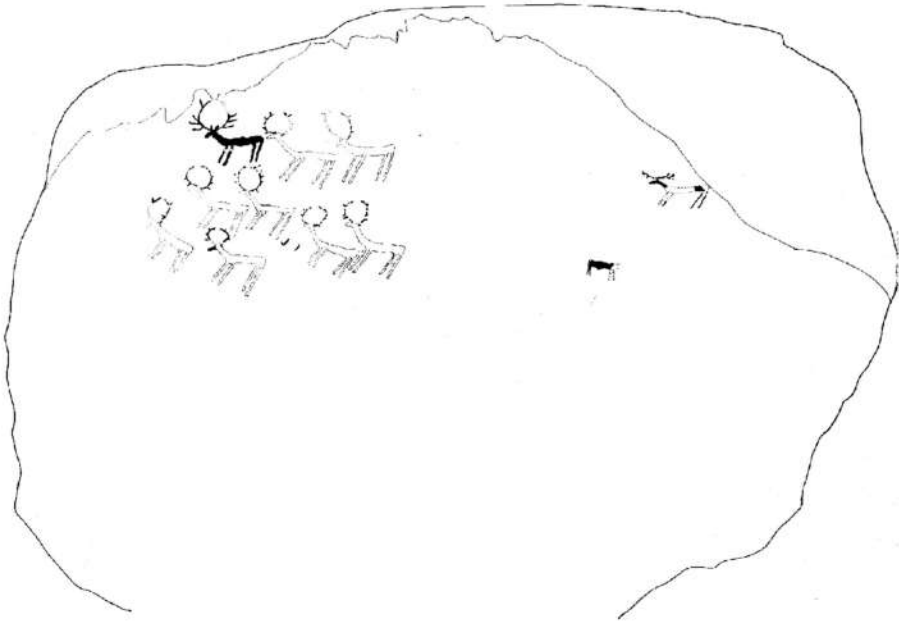


Fig. 30. Rock no. 1 at Cemmo, side 1. Tracing of figures from the first phase.

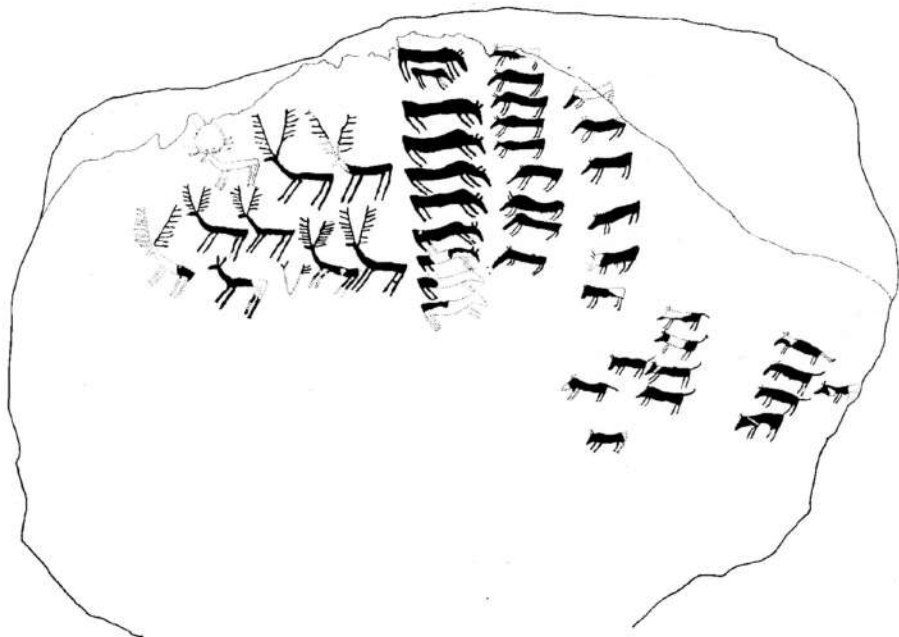


Fig. 31. Rock no. 1 at Cemmo, side 1. Tracing of figures from the second phase.

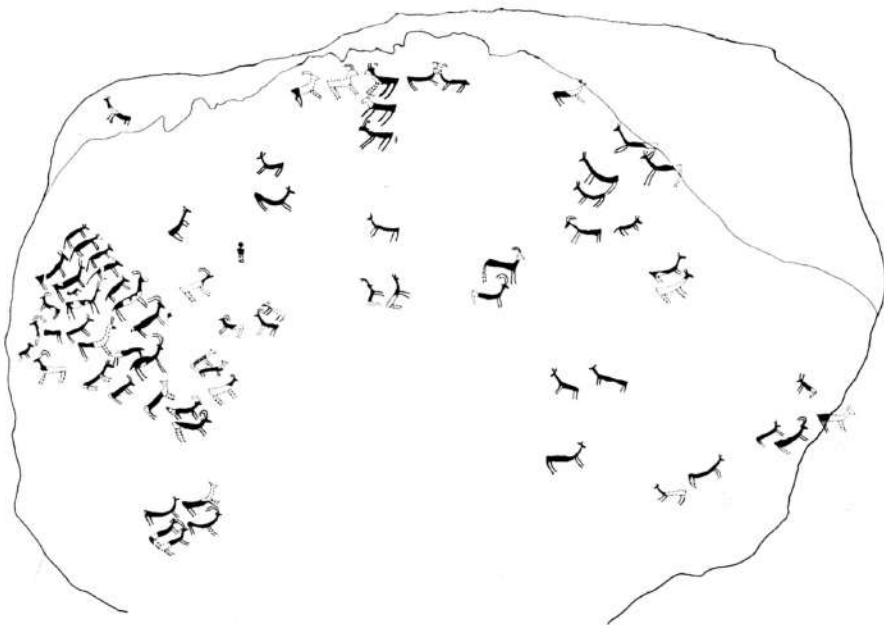


Fig. 32. - Rock no. 1 at Cemmo, side 1. Tracing of figures from the third phase.



Fig. 33. - Rock no. 1 at Cemmo, side 1. Tracing of figures from the fourth phase.

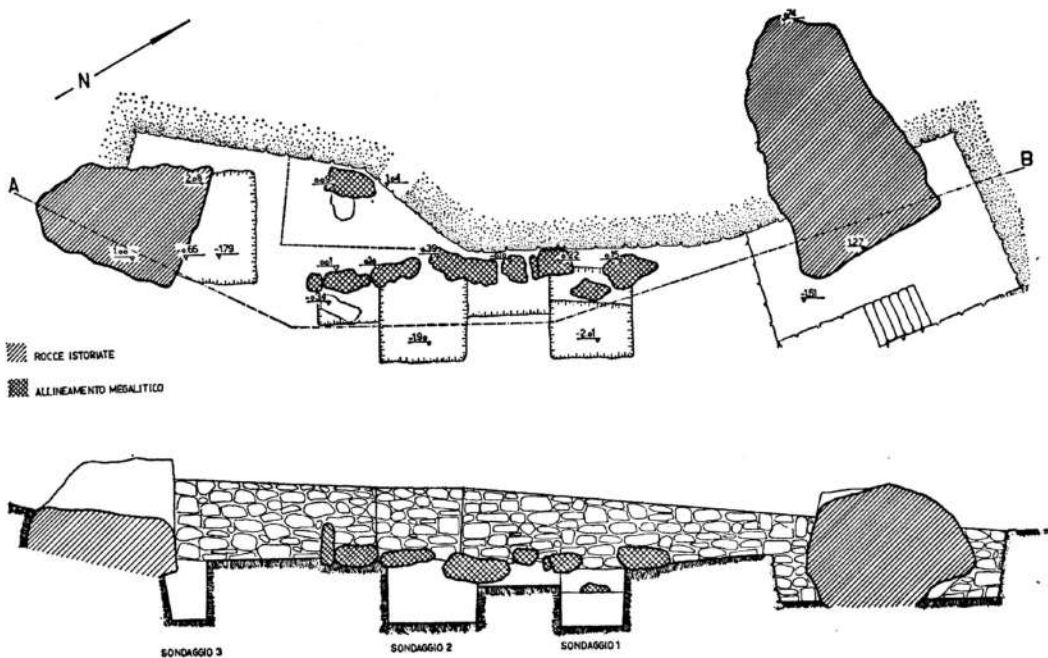


Fig. 34.
Plan and cross-section of the zone around the Massi di Cemmo during excavations in 1962. Between the two larger rocks can be seen the megalithic alignment.

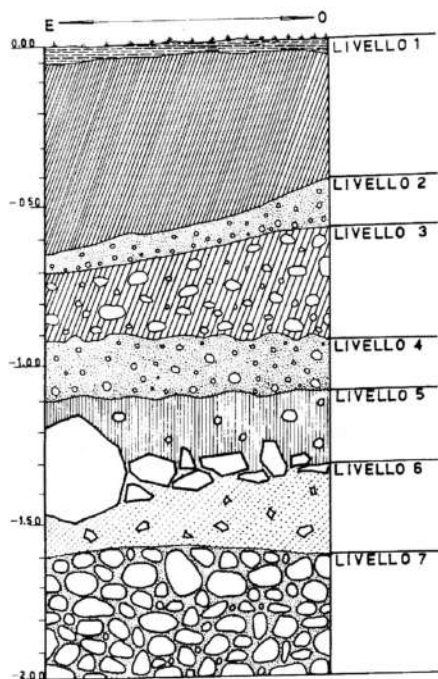


Fig. 35.
Excavations of the Massi di Cemmo. Stratigraphy from the first sounding. Anthropic remains have been found in level 4, including a group of 38 crayons of red ochre and other coloring materials. Between levels 5 and 6, a layer of sharp, angular stones indicates a rock fall. It is during this period (Early Holocene) that the two engraved rocks probably reached their present position, while the engravings were made during level 4, some time later. Level 7 is glacial deposit of the Final Pleistocene.

figures to the periods to which they belong. In the early sixties, two digs were carried out in Capo di Ponte by the Anati expedition under the auspices of the Superintendent of Lombardian Antiquities. One, near the Cemmo Rocks, allowed us to establish a stratigraphical sequence for the geology of the blocks themselves.

They had fallen from the hill overhead during the Boreal period, eight or nine thousand years ago, and were engraved during the Atlantic period, three thousand years later. A hiding place containing 38 items of coloring material was also found, presumably left there by the same men who, after having produced the rock engravings, then painted them as well (E. Anati, 1972a).

The other dig unearthed the prehistoric walled village of Dos dell'Arca, a fortified habitation from the Bronze and Iron Ages, where were found, among other things, pottery, flint flakes, and a number of rock etchings from archaeological strata. The work at Dos dell'Arca continued for two years and remains to this day the only large scale Bronze and Iron Age excavation undertaken in the area (E. Anati, 1974b). Sector by sector and layer by layer, we uncovered a small village, protected by heavy defense walls which are up to four meters thick in some places. Founded in the Chalcolithic period, it had been inhabited and reconstructed at various times during the Bronze and Iron Ages. It is situated on a spur-shaped hill with the mountains behind it. A sizable stream flows nearby, and the site is in a strategic position, dominating the central section of the Camonica Valley.

In 1964, the broad and systematic study of the Camunian civilization was resumed with new vigor. In that year the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici (CCSP), the product and continuation of the Anati Expedition, was founded. With one of its principal aims being the study and research of rock art (BCSP, 1967). In the same year, the National Park of Naquane near Capo di Ponte was established. The area contains the approximately one hundred rocks identified by Suss, and was donated to the Italian state by the municipal council of Capo di Ponte. Under the management of the Superintendent of Lombardian Antiquities, it began operation in the early sixties, with the intent of opening to the public a fascinating and important resource of rock art.

Meanwhile the exploration began to take on new dimensions, extending throughout the entire Camonica Valley and surrounding zones. Thus, every year a new piece was added to the mosaic of

Camunian civilization. The digs added new dimensions to what the rock engravings had revealed, and the further exploration of the area led to the discovery of an increasing number of engraved rocks. The researchers' experience was enriched from year to year and a methodology for carrying out a broad, systematic analysis of the area gradually came into focus. A wide collaboration saw the involvement of many researchers in the field, among whom were Martine Van-Berg, Aharon Horowitz, Ygal Shilo, Umberto Sansoni, Tiziana Cittadini, Raffaele De Marinis, Francesco Fedele, Bernardo Bagolini, and Raffaella Poggiani, along with the help of a great number of other enthusiasts.

Recently there have been carried out various other new excavations. An important sequence of overlapping strata was discovered in Cividate Camuno, in a dig conducted by the Superintendent of Archaeology.

In Castello di Breno, Francesco Fedele has brought to light the remains of habitation and burials from various periods. On the plateau of Ossimo, the same researcher has excavated strata containing menhir statues *in situ*. In the vicinity of Massi di Cemmo, Raffaele De Marinis has widened the excavations to include more of the area around these monuments.

The evolution of nearly 40 years of uninterrupted field research in the Camonica Valley has corresponded to the development of the general recognition of rock art. Our research here, along with the publications which have followed, have contributed to an increase in public interest in this area of archaeology. An underrated subject only thirty years ago, it can now claim a growing number of enthusiasts throughout the world.

Both because of its geographical location at the center of the Alpine range, with its opening onto the Po River plain, and because of the unusual number of figures with a realistic, descriptive nature, it soon became clear that the Camonica Valley would be able to supply a great deal of new data on the evolution of culture and the history of art and religions (E. Anati, 1956b, 1960a). But there is was much more to the Camonica Valley than just that. The many finds have brought to light not just an excellent area of rock art, but also the vestiges of a previously unknown civilization which, both by maintaining a cultural coherence over the course of eight thousand years, and by exhibiting a strong ethno-cultural personality, recorded the times in which Europe

conceived, shaped and acquired the patterns which it still follows today. By understanding the ancient Camunians, we can read the spirit, the economic, social and political characteristics, the successes and failures, the ambitions and the vain hopes of eight thousand years in the course of European history, which in the last two thousand years has come to have a major effect on the history of the whole of the planet Earth. The Camonica Valley, then, gives us a new understanding of the growth of European civilization and of contemporary society.

Discovery is continuing process. The material found is analyzed and becomes the subject of intellectual work, thought, debate and publication. When such an enormous amount of material is studied, some small discovery takes place almost every day; previously perplexing elements become clearer and require new interpretations, which in their turn must be analyzed. As long as research continues, the discovery is incomplete and new data can always be added. Even if the discoveries, excavations, and the process of recording and describing them were to be concluded in just one generation, a fact which is most unlikely, the discovery of the true nature of the Camunians would require generations more.

Over the years, the research on the rock art of Camonica Valley has been brought up to date by new publications which are noted in the bibliography. Several of these have marked the stages of progression in research. In 1960 the first two volumes came out of Paris, *La Grande Roche de Naquane* and *La Civilisation du Val Camonica*. The chronological organization then found its systemization in "Origins and Evolution of the Camunian Civilization", in the *Journal of World History*, 1967. There followed several monographic works on the prehistoric art of Valtellina (1968), the stele and decorated menhirs of the Chalcolithic period (1970), the depiction of daggers in rock art (1971), the role of carts and plows in Camunian art (1972), the rock art of Luine at Boario Terme (1973), various monuments and incised rocks on the plateau of Ossimo-Borno (1972-76). Several years later was issued another work of synthesis, *Evolution and Style* (1976), followed six years later by a further elaboration, *I Camuni alle radici della civiltà europea* (1982). Other monographic studies continued to be published while, at the same, there was added a work of synthesis with *10.000 Anni di Storia in Valcamonica* (10,000 Years of History in the Camonica Valley), in

various additions from 1980 to 1990, and, most recently, *Valcamonica Riscoperta* (1990).

This work presents a further updating of the previous books and stands, for now, as the most finished product of our research on the Camonica Valley; it presents our most recent hypotheses and speculations on the importance of rock art. The rhythm of research has not diminished. New finds are still turning up with regularity, but by now the general chronology, the itinerary of evolution and history, has proved to be valid and has not undergone notable changes. The chronological study is refined with the analysis of new discoveries, and the periods are subdivided into phases and the phases into sub-phases. Thus we are able to read in greater depth the documents which are constantly being enriched as the research on them matures. The reading of the messages contained in the rock art figures is today a great challenge which requires the concentrated efforts of the researchers.



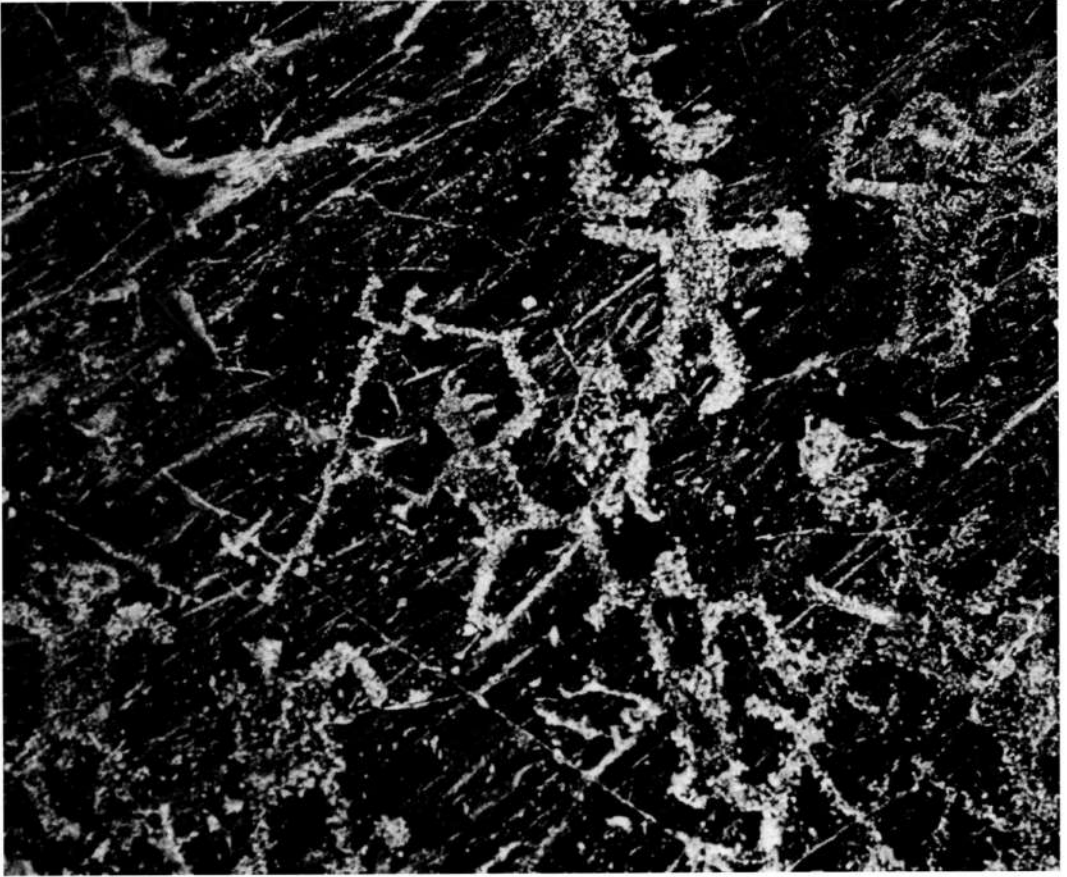


Fig. 36 a - b.

The "Devil Scene" from Bedolina.

A mythological figure with horns and a beak, armed with a pitch-fork, attacks two human figures. In lower left, other figures seem to have their right arms amputated.

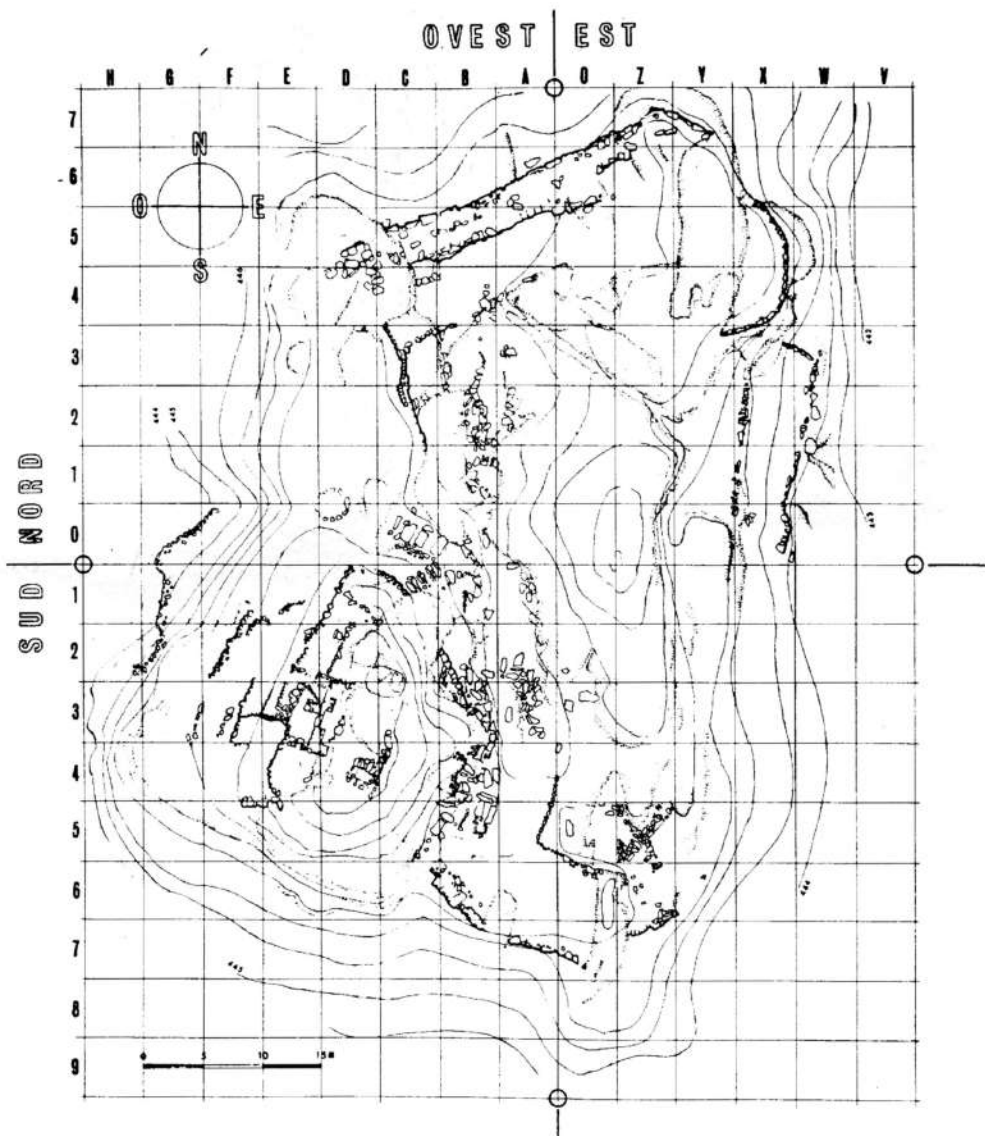


Fig. 37.
 The hill fort of Dos dell'Arca, Capo di Ponte, with principal structures from the Bronze and Iron Ages. The massive north wall, of a thickness of almost four meters, was constructed during the Bronze Age and, in its upper layers, includes numerous ceramic fragments from the Terramara culture. The wall was partially reconstructed, in a lesser thickness,

towards the Middle Iron Age. In the South-West sector, on the highest part of the hill, there appear remains of a cult-like structure from the Iron Age in which were found many ceramic fragments with inscriptions in Northern Etruscan characters. Near by was excavated a collective grave with remains of several skeletons. In the middle of this sector, a rampart was constructed during the Roman epoch.

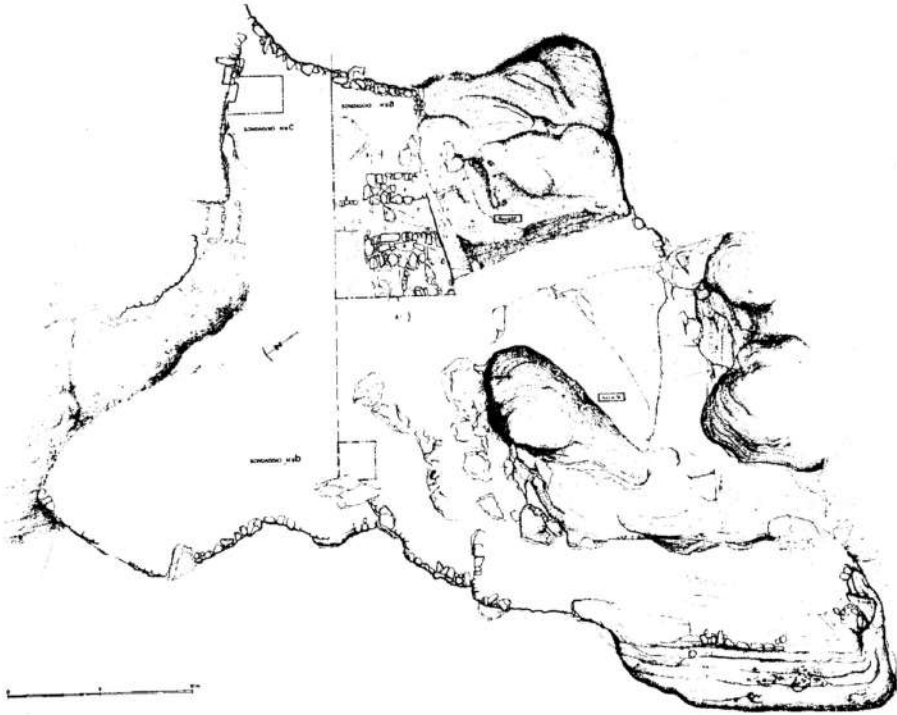


Fig. 38.
Excavation of hill 6
at Luine, near
Darfo-Boario
Terme. A small
sanctuary with two
massive stone
walls is huddled
next to an
engraved rock.
A ceremonial area
between three
decorated surfaces
is surrounded by
megalithic walls.



Fig. 39.
Excavation of a hut
(probably from the
Bronze Age) in
front of an
engraved rock at
Foppe di Nadro,
Ceto.

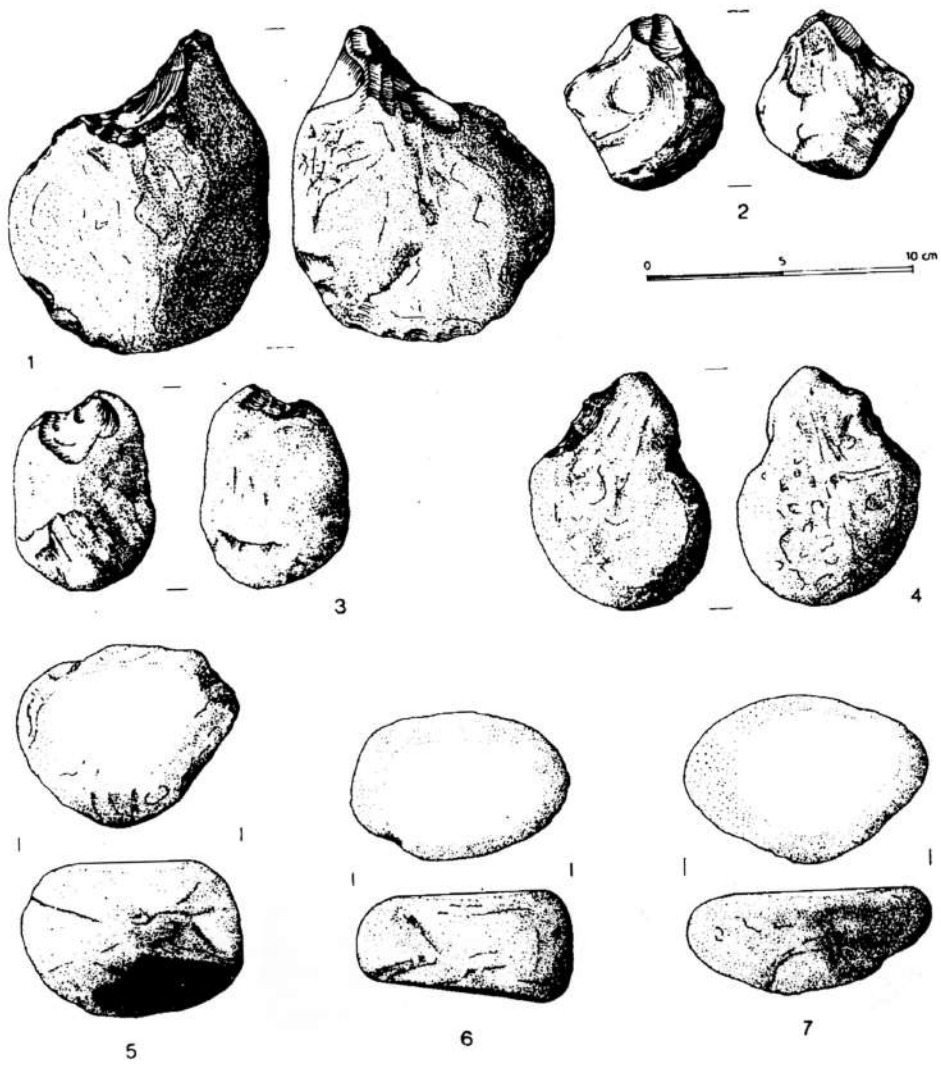


Fig. 40.
 Finds from excavation 2 at Luine, Darfo-
 Boario Terme. Tools used for making rock
 art engravings: 1-4, pecking tools in
 quartzite and conglomerate; 5-7, polishing

stones in granite, quartz and conglomerate.
 These instruments were presumably used for
 the engraving of the rock surface near which
 they were found.

Chapter 2
MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

Why has a greater concentration of rock art been found here, in this valley, than in any other region of Europe? What is the significance of this place? Perhaps we do not yet know the true answer. One thinks of a series of contingencies; the particularly smooth rock surfaces, the environment of a closed valley which was conducive to settlement and to the introverted life, the presence of a sacred mountain around which revolved particular rites. Other hypotheses have also been proposed. It is entirely possible that, as is the case also with other major concentrations of rock art around the world, there were particular aspects of the relationship between man and his environment which offered the stimuli for the artistic creativity.

The Camonica Valley winds down from the heart of the Alps and the Adamello and Cevedale glaciers. Two streams flow from the Tonale and the Aprica Passes to meet at Edolo where they become the Oglio River, which in turn courses south for about sixty kilometers before reaching Lake Iseo near the bottom of the valley. It is mainly in this stretch of valley that the vestiges of the ancient Camunians are to be found. Beyond Lake Iseo, the Oglio River cuts through a morainic amphitheater, a reminder of the great Quaternary glaciers, before reaching the Padana plain where it flows into the river Po.

For about two million years, from the beginning of Quaternary period onwards, the valley had been repeatedly covered by a glacier which sometimes reached a thickness of more than a thousand meters. During these periods, the valley and the surrounding areas looked like a great frozen desert, the rocky peaks of the mountains appearing dark among the white sloping expanses. The landscape was similar to that seen today in Greenland.

Ground debris, stones, and sand were dragged along by the slow descent of the glaciers, which pressed into the slope with their weight, smoothing down even the hardest rocks. Thus the sides of the valley

were filed down, the mountain sides were shaped, and the walls polished and striated, creating games of nature and leaving suggestive shapes. Man, who arrived later, was attracted by these forms and felt inspired to decorate them with the expressions of his imaginative and artistic creativity.

The Camunians were present in certain other areas outside of the Camonica Valley which took their name, such as on the banks of Lake Iseo, in Valtellina, in the Chiavenna Valley, and in Bregaglia. The Camonica Valley, however, was always their favorite territory, from the time of their first settlements there up until the Roman conquest when their culture finally died out.

The great Pleistocene glacier withdrew from the plains and valleys of Northern Italy between 14,000 and 10,000 years ago. Subsequently, less dramatic glacial movements took place, with the ice advancing and withdrawing along the valley. Like most of the sub-Alpine area, the Camonica Valley is very sensitive to climatic changes. This is probably due to the influence that continual fluctuations in the snow line have on the environment of narrow valleys surrounded by high mountains. Variations that might not have affected the great plains became important here, both for the flora and fauna and for man. An analysis of the pollen found in datable strata, the study of geological stratigraphy, and granulometric tests all tell us that the climate of this valley has been subject to constant change in the last 12,000 years (A. Horowitz, 1974b).

The Camonica Valley was covered by glaciers during the Late Pleistocene period. When the ice age came to an end and the glaciers began to melt, the valley floor was left scattered with small lakes and marshes, while innumerable streams ran down the sides of the valley, the slopes of which were still almost completely covered with rock and lacking in vegetation. These streams, much fuller and more turbulent than they are today, rushed down into the valley, dragging along rocks and large stones and deeply eroding the terrain.

Shut off at the bottom by Lake Iseo, from the sides of which rise sheer cliffs, and accessible at the top end only via two Alpine passes, which must still have been permanently, or almost permanently, covered with ice, the Camonica Valley was difficult to access. The valley was also swampy and hard to cross, and the two sides were criss-crossed by streams and brooks, and so full of shifting rocks and other rubble that it was arduous to move along them. Thanks to the

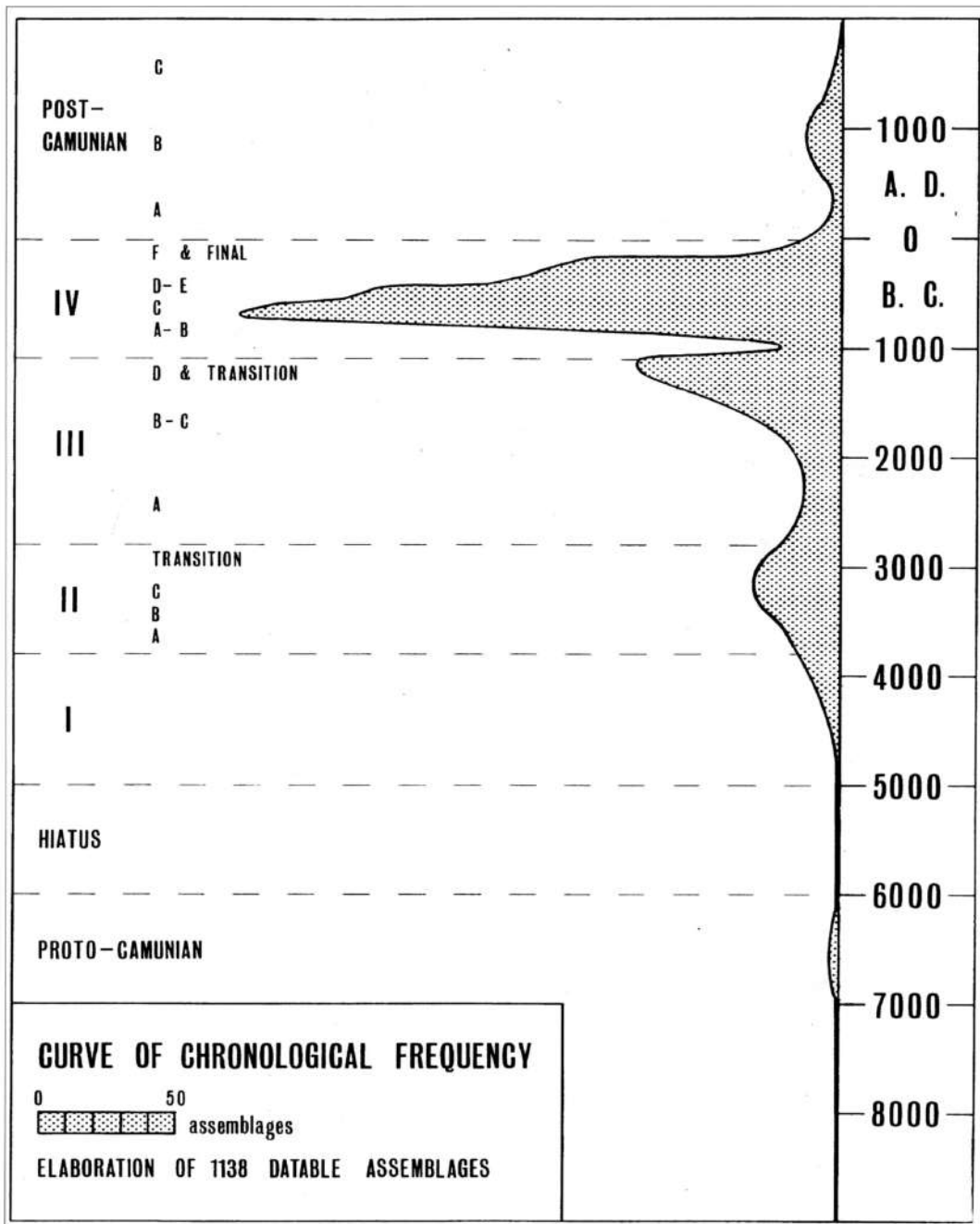


Fig. 41.
Rock art in the Camonica Valley. Graph of
chronological frequency. According to the

studied samples, there was an explosion of
artistic creativity in the Iron Age.

growth of algae, lichens, and steppe bushes, a blanket of humus began to cover the rocky ground and transform it into a more hospitable habitat for trees. Fauna followed the vegetation, and finally the first human groups moved into the area.

The environment since then has never remained constant. There have been minor alternations between warmer and colder periods, as well as between periods of greater and lesser humidity; and the process continues. The last century was colder than the present and we find ourselves today, actually, in a phase of climatic warming, through which the level of the permanent glaciers has been retreating year by year.

Ice, rain and wind have caused landslides, erosion, and the accumulation of deposits, helped from time to time by minor tectonic tremors. The streams have found new passages, always changing and modifying their routes. Even the most desolate landscape has always been alive and active.

The vegetation has undergone continuous transformation under the influence of two principal factors. First of all, climatic change has on occasion modified the altitude limits for various types of vegetation and has caused the extinction of others. Second, the penetration of external flora has introduced foreign species into the area.

Before the end of the Pleistocene, glaciers advanced and withdrew along the valley on several occasions. During the more temperate periods, which geologists call interstages, man may well have arrived in the valley, and there is in fact some evidence of the presence of human activity from this time. For now, however, apart from a single site at Nadro, where flint tools which date back 40,000 years, to the mid-Paleolithic, were found, the first certain evidence of human presence is testified by the oldest rock etchings. They were created shortly after the final withdrawal of the glaciers, in the Pre-Boreal climatic stage, about 8,000 B.C. In this period the temperature was rising, and large trees, mainly pines and birches, covered the valley.

Groups of hunters then entered the Valley in search of game; and it was these men who were the creators of the oldest figures etched into the rock yet found in the Alpine area. Animal life was still of the Pleistocene type. The elk, largest of the deer family, is the dominant figure in the rock engravings of this period. There are no figures of elk among the thousands of engraved rocks known from subsequent periods. The remains of temporary encampments with fireplaces and

small flint tools, or microliths, have been found dating to this period, which archaeologists call Mesolithic or Epi-Paleolithic. Two sites in particular yielded important evidence of these first human groups, one in a small cave in Nadro near Ceto and the other on the hill of Castello di Breno.

AGE		CLIMATIC STAGES	CLIMATIC FEATURES	CLIMATIC CURVE		PREVAILING VEGETATION		CAMUNIAN PERIODS	ARCHEOLOGICAL AGES
FROM TODAY	B.C.			HOT	COLD	TONALE, 1800 m	ISEO 200 m		
1000	0	SUB-ATLANTIC	Temperate and humid with fluctuations			alders, pine-trees and oak-trees	alders and ashes and chestnuts	POST-CAMUNIAN	RECENT MEDIEVAL ROMAN
2000	0								IRON AGE
3000	1000	SUB-BOREAL	Heat diminishing with drought episodes			alders, firs, pine-trees and oak-trees	oak-trees and alders	CAMUNIAN CIVILIZATION	BRONZE AGE
4000	2000								CHALCOLITHIC
5000	3000								NEOLITHIC
6000	4000	ATLANTIC	Humid hot weather (climatic optimum)			forests of firs	alders and oak-trees	CAMUNIAN CIVILIZATION	NEOLITHIC
7000	5000		Cold and dry weather episode						
8000	6000	BOREAL	Dry hot weather			forests of alders and firs	hazel-trees and oak-trees	CAMUNIAN CIVILIZATION	EPI-PALAEOLITHIC
9000	7000		hiatus?						
10000	8000	PRE-BOREAL	Temperature increasing			pines and birches	pines and birches	PROTO-CAMUNIAN	PALAEOLITHIC
11000	9000	LATE-GLACIAL	Very cold						
			Cold decreasing						

Fig. 42.

Graph of the environmental variations that have taken place in the last 12,000 years.

In the Boreal stage that followed, during which hazel and oak forests became predominant in the lower valley, the average temperature continued to rise. The sub-Arctic fauna that had occupied the valley during the preceding thousand years was disappearing. Various types of small and medium sized wild deer (Cervidae) and goats (Caprinae) were the most characteristic types of animals.

After a brief period when the climate became colder and dryer, from which we have no known archaeological remains, there began, in the Atlantic period, around 5,500 B.C., the more permanent and large scale settlement of man in the Valley. This was a warm, humid era during which many groups of humans throughout Europe began to make the gradual change from food gatherers to food producers and systematic exploiters of nature. They developed agriculture and introduced into their culture those technical innovations which help to define the Neolithic period, in particular new kinds of flint tools and pottery. The valley was covered by fir, alder, and oak forests as well as prairies, which made excellent pasture for wild and domestic herbivores. As a consequence there was a noticeable population increase, and the presence of humans has been documented in several sites in the valley.

Such climatic changes were taking place throughout Europe and were accompanied by a cultural evolution of man which developed along similar lines in various areas. This period, differing from the last, revealed a demographic explosion of vast proportions, stretching from one end of temperate Europe to the other and to the Near East. Everywhere, the archaeological sites dating from this time show an increase not only in their numbers, but in their dimensions as well.

Man by this time had already learned to modify the environment. The need to stake out fields for cultivation and the need for wood to build huts and feed fires led him to fell trees and introduce new plant species to the area.

The Sub-Boreal stage, during which the climate gradually cooled, lasted from 3,000 to 800 B.C., with a peak of intense cold near the end, probably between 1,000 and 800 B.C. The valley was covered with forests of alder, fir, pine, and oak trees, with a prevalence of oak at lower altitudes, as well as with luxuriant meadows and cultivated fields.

In this period, there was another significant increase in population as the Camunian civilization reached its peak. After 800 B.C., there

were only minor climatic variations, with hot and cold periods and increases and decreases in humidity levels. These fluctuations continue to occur today, at intervals of 200-300 years. The greatest increase in population took place during the Iron Age, from the ninth century B.C. to the arrival of the Romans in 16 B.C.. The sparse clans of the original inhabitants were transformed into a people whose name, the Camunni, was immortalized by the Romans.

By the beginning of the Holocene, in the pre-Boreal and Boreal periods, the river and lake beds had acquired the general topographical features which exist today. Millions of cubic meters of ice had been transformed into water, which flooded the large plains. The Po, Rhone, Rhine, and the Danube valley plains were at that time huge swamps, criss-crossed by enormous rivers. The floods modified the topography of the area and were also the one of the principal causes of change in animal life.

The Oglio river is the backbone of the Camonica Valley. Around this river the economic life of the territory was born, grew, and continues to develop today. The waters of the Oglio and its tributaries are now sources of electrical energy, used by factories and power stations which flourish along its banks. They are also used to irrigate fields. For thousands of years these waters were the habitat of a variety of fish which have recently disappeared because of pollution. The waters are a source of prosperity, though at times they can also lead to landslides, erosion, and floods which devastate the fields and cause changes in the features of the landscape.

The life of man in the Camonica Valley has always been shaped by the natural history and the ecological events of the area. In particular, the growth of the region has always been dependent on deviations in the path of the river, whose features and bed have often changed. Even today, erosion and small landslides claim small areas of land for the Oglio every year, modifying its course.

During the periods of intense humidity which followed the melting of the last great Quaternary glacier, lakes and quagmires formed in the level areas of the Camonica Valley. These were linked to one another in the more sloping zones by the course of the Oglio. The river brought both disease and plenty in this period. The waters were alive with fish and aquatic birds and attracted other animals while the swamps must often have been the cause of disease and have made crossing the valley very difficult.

In the particularly rainy seasons or during thaws, the level of water must have risen and its force must have repeatedly disturbed life along the course of the rivers. The landscape has preserved evidence of these catastrophes. It is possible to detect the effects of landslides and mud slides which occurred after the thaw, in the last ten thousand years. Two thousand years ago even the Romans, who were able builders, had to abandon the idea of building an easy, direct road along the valley floor. The road that they finally designed, the Valerian Way, was windy and difficult as it meandered halfway up the mountain to get above the mires and small lakes and avoid the dangers of flooding and erosion. Inhabited areas sprang up along this road, and in many cases, the villages of today have remained in the same location as those first settlements.

As far as we know, even the areas inhabited by the pre-Roman Camunians were not normally situated on the dangerous valley floor, but rather on the elevated hillsides. The megalithic walls, as well as the flint, stone tools, pottery and other finds which have come to light in a number of different sites in the valley are evidence of this. Ruins of important settlements have also been found, such as the ones at Castelliere in Dos dell'Arca or Castello di Breno. In the valley there are vestiges of several different strata, evidence of periods spanning thousands of years. Stratigraphic sequences demonstrate that some settlements remained in one place for very long stretches of time.

It is here, in this environment, that the Camunians carved their messages into the rocks, leaving them for future generations, and, without this being their intention, leaving an iconographic patrimony which tells the story of their events. Many other valleys throughout Europe, have had an analogous history, but here it has been handed down and preserved for posterity. At the beginning of this chapter we asked why just here? There are other zones in the Alps and elsewhere in Europe where the population has left their own paintings and engravings, but nowhere else, as far as we know today, have a people left such a rich sequence of recordings, covering such a long period, from the melting of the great glaciers to the arrival of the Romans and beyond: 10,000 years of history.

In other places we know that man has left similar, but more perishable messages, for example in paintings rather than in incisions. But probably, for the most part, the iconography of these long periods was left on perishable materials, such as the bark of trees, on fabric,

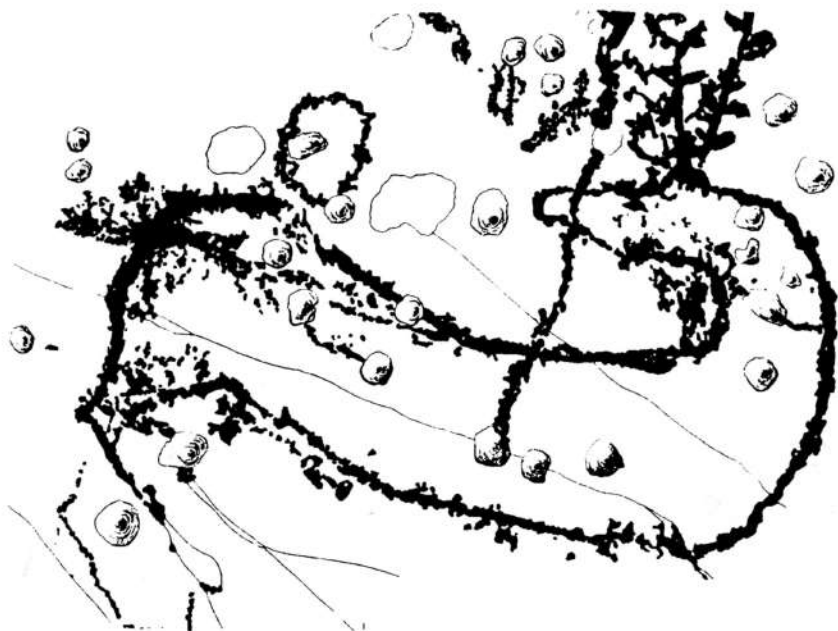
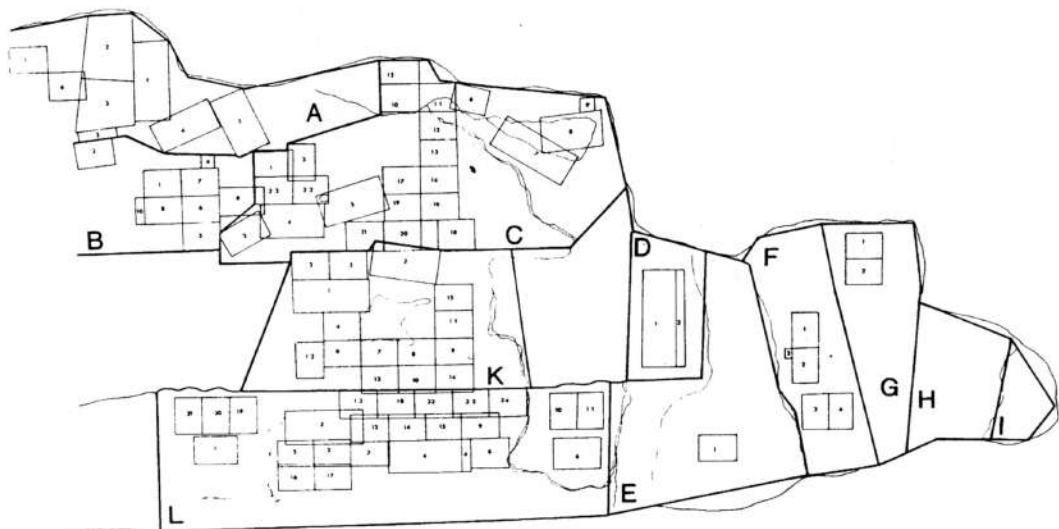


Fig. 43.
Tracing of a deer pierced by a spear from
the Proto-Camunian period, VII
millennium B.C. Luine at Darfo-Boario
Terme, rock 34.

Fig. 44.
Recording of sectors from rock 34 at
Luine, the most richly decorated rock in
the Valley, where more than a thousand
figures have been identified. The deer in
the above illustration is found in sector A-1.



skins, papers or leaves. Such documents are usually destroyed in the course of millennia. This must also have happened in the Camonica Valley. Even here, as everywhere else, there must have been, apart from the rock engravings, also paintings and objects fashioned from wood and other perishable materials. That which has been preserved is most likely just a small part of the iconographic heritage, and it stands as a treasure for humanity, which must be studied, understood and protected because it is a great source of knowledge of the past that becomes even richer as our comprehension of it deepens.

In the present chapter, along with tracing the history of the alpine environment, we have attempted to reconstruct the demographic history of the ancient Camunians. The population grew through the centuries and became always better adapted to the natural habitat. On the other hand the climate has also changed with alternations between periods of lesser and greater humidity, with warming or cooling trends, with changes in the levels of glaciation and the subsequent variations in flora and fauna.



Fig. 45.
A scene of combat between two persons wearing rayed helmets and holding small shields. This raises the question: is this the representation of a real battle or rather of a dance? Zurla, Ceto. Period IV/E.



Fig. 46.
Prehistoric art in the Camonica Valley. Table of the stylistic evolution of several of the principal themes.

EVOLUTION OF CAMUNIAN ART

STYLE	PHASE	CORRESPONDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS	DATING ATTEMPTS	ANTHROPOM	GENIVALE	WEAPONS	SYMBOLS	TOOLS	FLOORS	CARTS	STRUCTURES
PROTO-CAMUNIAN	Sub-neolithic	EPI-PALEOLITHIC	BEFORE 6000 BC								
	Phase 1		5500								
I	A	NEOLITHIC	4000								
	B										
	C										
	T-transition										
II	A	CALCOLITHIC	3200								
	B										
	C										
	LATE										
III	A	BRONZE AGE	2500								
	B										
	C										
	D										
IV	A	IRON AGE	1000								
	B										
	C										
	D										
POST-CAMUNIAN	E	ROMAN AND LATER	700								
	F										
	F1										
	16										





Fig. 47.
Typological table of Camunian art. The classification of graphemes is made by category: A.. Anthropomorphic, B. Zoomorphic, C. Structures, D. Tools, E. Symbols.

Fig. 48.
Naquane near Capo di Ponte. Depiction of an artisan from the Iron Age who is assembling parts of a wheeled vehicle. The scene probably concerns the evocation of a myth.

Fig. 49.
Naquane. A deer hunting scene showing the use of dogs. The hunter is stabbing the deer with a spear. Is this an anecdotal or symbolic representation?





Fig. 50.
Study of the superimposition on a menhir-stone. The
superimposition of the contour lines of each figure
indicate the accumulation of diverse patterns of
engraving, one on top of the other.