

TRACCOE



Tracks - by Footsteps of Man - On line Rock Art Bulletin

Number 1 - 1996 January

Send texts and images for next issue at Andrea Arcà email!

Footsteps of Man is an IFRAO association from Valcamonica - Italy

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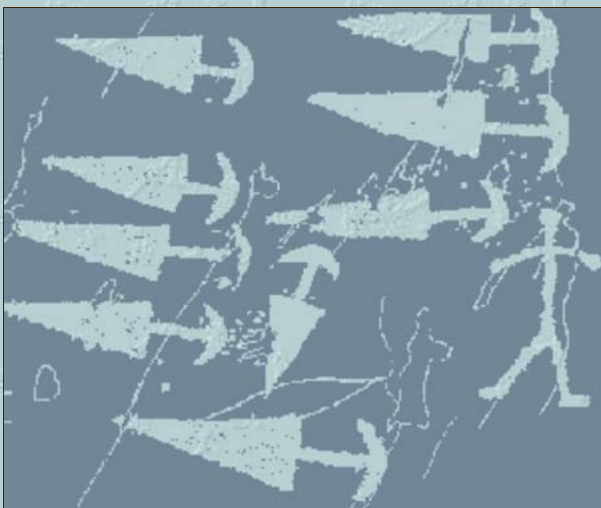
This number is dedicated to Davide Pace, who discovered Valtellina's Rock Art, died 1-15-1996

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Cemmo boulders [back to index](#)

In this article there is outlined the story of the road and of the tunnel that the Capo di Ponte Municipality (Valcamonica, Italy) is opening 60 meters far from the Cemmo Boulders.



The two boulders (Cemmo 1 and Cemmo 2) are the first engraved rocks found in 1909 in Valcamonica. It was the Italian geographer Gualtiero Laeng who gave news about the "Massi di Cemmo". The rocks were studied some years later by Italian and foreign scholars. The engravings are 262 and belong to a period between 5 and 4 thousands years ago.

These petroglyphs document the oldest chariot and plough figures of the European prehistory.

The area where the boulders are, "il Pian delle Greppe" has been protected with a bond since 1961. This bond was enlarged in 1981 and in 1983 after the discoveries of the engraved stelae (dated to Copper age) Cemmo 3

and Cemmo 4. This bond was asked for and stated by the Archaeological Superintendency of Lombardy and confirmed by the State Ministry of Culture. In 1991 the new Archaeological Superintendent of Culture, Dr. Angelo Maria Ardivino, and the Ministry of Culture cancelled the bond and gave the permission to build the road that connects Capo di Ponte to Pescarzo, a little village hamlet of Capo di Ponte. Recent investigations certify that the bond was never cancelled but only ignored because of political pressures. Nobody knows and understands why he changed the decisions of his predecessors.

Moreover six months ago the local inspector of the Archaeological Superintendency, Dr. Raffaella Poggiani Keller, found a fragment of a Copper Age stele in a trench, made just in front of the area where the entrance of the tunnel has to be constructed. This confirms that the area maintains a great archaeological importance.

The Minister of Culture, Prof. Antonio Paolucci, on October the 20th, 1995, decided to stop the building of the road. Then a commission came to Cemmo and decided to confirm the stoppage of the works. But on November the 20th a second commission decided to allow the works on condition that the road should turn in an S shape just outside of the tunnel. The Minister ordered the carrying out of the excavations in the area before the tunnel is finished.

This was the sad story of the Cemmo boulders.

Some questions remain:

- how can an area, bound and protected for 34 years because of its archaeological importance, have its bond cancelled?
- we are not sure that the blowing up of the mines (that started on October the 11th) do not damage the boulders and the engravings
- if in a bounded area the bond can be cancelled and a road constructed what will happen to other important sites that are not bounded yet?



We hope that UNESCO will take a strong position asking for conservation of the area that is included in the World Heritage List

Angelo Fossati - Elena Marchi

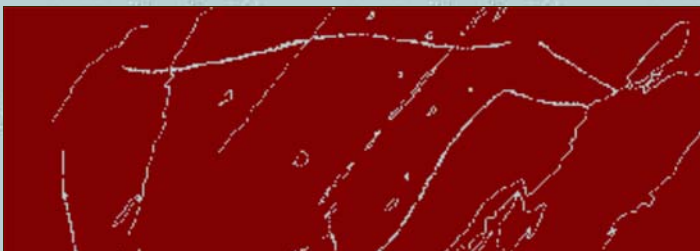
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Direct dating at Côa Petroglyphs [back to index](#)

For the first time in Europe supposed scientific direct dating methods on open air rocks have been applied.

According to the necessity of doing an experimental test, the site chosen was little and not relevant: the Côa Valley petroglyph site, the first European open air rock art site in palaeolithic style.

The work has been commissioned by the EDP, Electricidade de Portugal (Portuguese Electric Energy Company), the most interested in a (recent) dating of these petroglyphs, and in their preservation (under water).



The fact is that in Côa Valley a big dam is under construction.

I suggest reading [Mila Simões de Abreu - Ludwig Jaffe text](#) for better information.

Two different kinds of direct dating experiences have been tested: AMS14C on silica skin



(Watchman) and microerosion (Bednarik). I'm referring to NEWS 95 International Rock Art Congress pre-acts.

The micro radiocarbon dating (AMS) on silica skin is a method trying to catch (and date)

sedimentary organic matter encapsulated by silica, which year by year (and century by century) makes accretions on every rock surface.

Watchman's experience found a 7000-3000 BP ranging in carbon from silty brown accretions inside Côa engraved figures. But Watchman also found that :

- earlier dates have been found in adjacent unengraved surface
- 6500 BP dates have been found on a 100 year old railway quarry rock (always near the Côa valley)
- ancient carbon has contaminated the accretions in engravings
- Côa engravings seem "fresh"

Watchman himself says that there are some calibration problems in this kind of dating, always affected by environmental conditions.

Rejecting AMS dating obtained by himself and sustaining that silty brown accretions started from 1700 years ago (by pretending that only in this time man began to cultivate this area), he claims to date the Côa valley engravings between 1700 and 100 years ago, it means 300-1800 AD.

Grandfathers of some local Portuguese archaeologists perhaps engraved some of them.

Second experience: Bednarik's work.

It is based on microerosion analysis and internal analysis.

Microerosion analysis is experimented by very few researchers by watching rock surface with a kind of geologist eyeglass.

In this way it is possible to examine the erosion of little crystals on rock surface, affected by weathering (water-wind-temperature).

Although "attempts to achieve microerosion dating were hampered by poor suitability of the schistose facies and the lack of reliable calibration", Bednarik claims that "the most Palaeolithic stylistic features are generally less than 3000 years old".



In which way is it possible to examine the erosion of little crystals on rock surface?

We don't know. How to obtain a calibration curve?

We know only that some Copper age engravings (5000-4500 BP, haute Ubaye) on marble in the Alps, in open air (but not directly affected by rain), at 2400 m above sea level, have no patina, are white while the rock is orange (the same occurs in M. Bego), and that we can distinctly recognise each engraved dot.

On the contrary we know that by now no one can recognise some 100 years old engravings in open air, on limestone (1000 above sea level) exposed to rain and wind. We also know (by a long direct experience in seeing every kind of engraved sign) that there is a big difference between engraved figures on a vertical surface and signs on a horizontal

surface. We know that patination and erosion depends on kind of rock, surface exposition, environmental condition, temperature, human pollution...

Do these conditions take full place in direct dating Côa calibration curve? Which experience in a rainy European climate has been tested? Why reject stylistic analysis completely, when they are based on archaeological and cultural considerations?

However, we have good luck:

**CÔA VALLEY PETROGLYPHS HAVE BEEN SAVED BY
NEW PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT!
CONGRATULATIONS TO MEMBERS OF APAAR
(Associação Portuguesa de Arqueologia e Arte Rupestre)
who saved engraved rocks!**

Andrea Arcà

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Rupe Magna [back to index](#)

is situated at Grosio, Valtellina, northern Italy. It was found in 1970 by Davide Pace, simply scratching away the moss stratum. The nearest Rock Art of Gioldo was found by the same Pace five years before.

**5454 figures have been
counted after the tracing work**

Rupe Magna (from latin, simply big rock) is a large surface polished by the glacier, completely engraved during prehistoric periods. Near the rock there are two ruined middle age castles (Visconti-Venosta family).

Rupe Magna and the two castles take part in *Parco delle Incisioni Rupestri di Grosio* (the Engraved Rock Park of Grosio), which take care of archaeological and historical heritage with panels, guided tours, school programs.

In summer 1990 Footsteps of Man were charged to begin the whole tracing and recording of Rupe Magna. This work was completed in spring 1995 after 780 plastic sheets and 342 square meters of engraved surface traced. Each figure has been recorded in database (by a clipper application), with measures, typology, description and under/overpositions.

69 different kinds of engraved figures were noticed, being able to understand at the end of the work the sequence of engraving periods.

First figures belong to the end of the Neolithic - beginning of the Copper Age (spirals, repeated arcs), by comparison with megalithic Rock Art.

In the Bronze Age we find schematic anthropomorphic figures (so called "orants", with symmetric arms and legs, probably fighting), which continue in the first Iron Age with couples of men duelling and a few animal figures. Cup marks cover every other figure and represent the last engraving period (middle Iron Age).

With its length of 84 metres and width of 35 meters Rupe Magna is the biggest engraved rock in the Alps. It contains more figures (2987 taking away not significant dots) than rocks like "Altare" (M. Bego) and "Grande Roccia" of Naquane, Valcamonica.

The whole tracing is reduced 1:8 in 86 sectors. So each figure is identified by letters and number, like for example RPM-AA-112, which means figure 112 of sector AA of Rupe Magna.

The tracing method is the same used in Valcamonica: it consists of reproducing dot by dot on a transparent plastic sheet each engraved point found on the surface.

Rock Art of Rupe Magna is very close to Valcamonica Rock Art, with strong likeness in periods and styles. In this way it is easier to interpret it.

In October 1995, a book was published, containing archaeological description and interpretation of figures and periods, and the whole tracing.

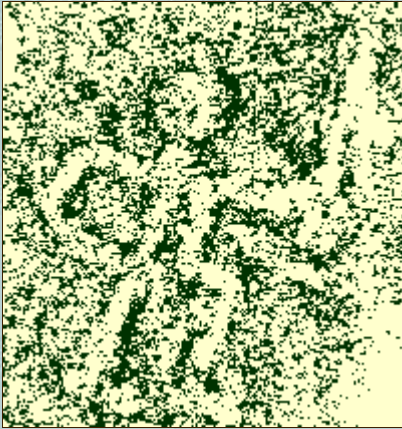
Andrea Arcà, Angelo Fossati, Elena Marchi, Emanuela Tognoni - Footsteps of Man



- **Book reference:** ARCA' A. - FOSSATI A. - MARCHI E. - TOGNONI E, 1995.

Rupe Magna, la roccia incisa piú grande delle Alpi.

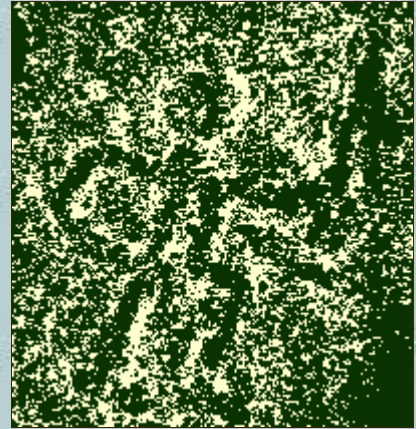
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Western Alps

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New Iron Age engraved rocks were found on July 1995 in Valcenischia Valley, west of Turin, at more than 2300 m above sea level.



The discovery was made by G.M. Cametti and P. Meirano, researchers of [Gruppo Ricerche Cultura Montana](#) of Turin (a cultural association studying alpine culture and heritage).

On many limestone rocks, laid by the glacier and polished by the same glacier and by the wind, it is possible to see (only with grazing light) figures of warriors and topographic engravings.

Some warriors present a square body, in the typical style of the last Iron Age in Valcamonica.

Another figure (the one represented in negative and positive) draws a sword, in a dynamic posture that seems to represent an armed dance, still alive in popular tradition, called the dance of "Spadonari" (men with swords).

The rectangular figures filled by regular dots are linked to the ones found in the near French valley of Haute Maurienne, and represent probably some topographic elements, like in Valcamonica in Iron Age maps.

The site is now covered by meters of snow. A work of documentation, with survey, recording, tracing and moulds is prospected next summer. This work will increase the catalogue of [engraved rocks in the western Alps](#), based on the international file, used by Italian, French and Swiss researchers.

Rock Art of the western Alps, except M. Bego, is not as huge as the one of Valcamonica. The fact is that there is not sandstone in these valleys. New finds on limestone in Val Grana (schematic antropomorphs), Val Susa (Iron Age paintings), Val Cenischia, Haute Maurienne (warrior with weapons, hunting scenes, inscriptions) are taking Western Alps Rock Art into a most important place in alpine Rupestrian Archaeology.

Gianni Cametti - Patrizia Meirano, Gruppo Ricerche Cultura Montana - via Pastrengo 20 - 10121 - Torino - Italy

- **Book reference:** ARCA' A. - FOSSATI A.- GAMBARI F.M. - MANO L. - SANTACROCE A. 1995.

Immagini dalla Preistoria, Incisioni e pitture rupestri: nuovi messaggi dalle rocce delle Alpi Occidentali
pages 106-107

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Archaeo-links [back to index](#)

Main Archaeological links

- [Archnet](#) *The most complete world-wide. Many pages, areas, subjects, guest book (by University of Connecticut).*
- [ARGE](#) *Archaeological Resource Guide Europe: it takes Naquane engravings as logo (Neolithic? Bronze Age?)*
- [Romarch](#) *Roman Classic (and Iron Age) archaeology in Italy and Roman provinces (by University of Michigan).*
- [Archaeological Fieldwork Server](#) *all over the world.*
- [SCESCAPE Science: Anthropology & Archeology](#), *many good links*

Main Rock Art links

- [ROCK ART LINKS](#) *Best Rock Art site, by Bob Edberg. At the same time a call for preservation*
- [The homepage of American Rock Art Association \(ARARA\)](#)
- [AURA Home Page](#) *The WWW Home Page of AURA, Australian Rock Art Research Organization*
- [ROCK - LINKS](#) *by Footsteps of Man*
- [Valcamonica - Footsteps of Man](#)

Short news and appointments

[Fieldworks in Valcamonica \(Italy\) with Footsteps of Man](#)

Grosio (Valtellina) July 20-30, 1996

Paspardo (Valcamonica) August 1-10, 1996

Training in studying - recording - tracing prehistoric alpine Rock Art

Rock Art lectures

Vacancies for 20 volunteers at both sites

Minimum stay one week

[Rock Art Research - Moving into the Twenty-First Century](#)

Swakopmund, Namibia, August 11-18, 1996.

Official IFRAO meeting 1996 organized by SARARA.

Suggested topics for papers:

Recording methods

Dating

Meaning and motivation

Environmental issues and site management

Education

Aesthetic considerations

[International Rock Art Congress 1997](#)

Cochabamba, Bolivia April 1-6, 1997. Sponsored by IFRAO and UNESCO.

Symposia and chairmen:

Rock art dating (*Watchman-Prous*)

The earliest rock art in the Americas (*Steinbring-Schobinger*)

The earliest rock art - a world perspective (*Bednarik*)

New approaches to rock art studies (*D'Errico-Ogleby*)

Administration and conservation of rock art (*Wainwright*)

New studies of rock art in south America (*Briones-Dubelaar-Aschero-Podestrá-Taboada*)

IFRAO meeting - Exhibitions. Registration of papers before September 30, 1996

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Notice

It is possible to submit to us short texts and images for the next issue (1996 March). Text (obviously about Rock Art and in English) must be no longer than 2000 characters, and images (any DOS-WINDOWS) no bigger than 20 K. Texts must have a short title, a signature and an address (also email if available). Send them as attached files to aarca@inrete.it.

For short news and appointments (meetings, exhibitions, field works, books) please send an email to Andrea Arcà with no more than 200 characters and a WEB link if available

[Valcamonica Home Page](#)

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