



The site was registered in 1979 on the basis of Criteria III and VI, as may be read in the ICOMOS report (Registration Proposal dated April 10<sup>th</sup> 1979). The definitions of the two criteria cited in UNESCO's general specifications and ICOMOS' specific reasons for *Val Camonica's* listing are quoted below:

- ICOMOS, Criterion III (English): "*The rock engravings of Val Camonica stretch back over the 8 thousand years which precede our present era. It is unnecessary to accent the conspicuously invaluable nature of human renderings which are of so great an antiquity.*"
- ICOMOS, Criterio III (francese): "*Les gravures rupestres de Val Camonica s'échelonnent dans le temps sur les 8 millénaires qui ont précédé notre ère. Il n'est pas besoin d'insister sur le caractère éminemment précieux de manifestations humaines remontant à une si haute antiquité.*"
- ICOMOS, Criterion VI (English): "*The rock engravings of Val Camonica constitute an extraordinary figurative documentation of prehistoric customs and mentality. The systematic interpretation, topological classification, and the chronological study of these configurations in stone have brought about a considerable contribution to the fields of prehistory, sociology and ethnology.*"
- ICOMOS, Criterio VI (francese): "*Les gravures rupestres de Val Camonica constituent une extraordinaire documentation figurée sur les moeurs et les mentalités préhistoriques. Le déchiffrement, le classement typologique et l'étude chronologique systématique de ces pétroglyphes aboutit à un apport considérable dans les domaines de la préhistoire, de la sociologie et de l'ethnologie.*"

The WHL's recognition of the site thus confirmed in 1979 the international importance of Valle Camonica's rock engraving heritage.

The preparation of the Site Management Plan provides an opportunity for reflecting upon and analysing the need to involve the various institutions present in the valley in a synergic process to make compatible with the territory's integrated development the unquestioned need for protection, conservation and development of the heritage.

## 1.2 The Engravings and Their Archaeological Context

### 1.2.1 A Brief History of Research

In 1914 Gualtiero Laeng, following up a note published in 1909 (LAENG G. 1909, *Scheda di segnalazione al Comitato Nazionale per la protezione del paesaggio e dei monumenti*, Touring Club Italiano), described for the first time to the general public the engravings present on the two boulders of Cemmo in the *Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano: Piemonte, Lombardia e Canton Ticino*, Milan, Touring Club Italiano, p. 595 (Figs. 3-4). The news caught the interest of other scholars, who came to the valley to see for themselves these manifestations of prehistoric art (see the Bibliography).

In the 1920s and '30s, the search was extended to other localities in Valle Camonica by Giovanni Marro, Paolo Graziosi, Raffaello Battaglia and Giuseppe Bonafini. The latter was one of the first to propose the creation of an archaeological area (BONAFINI G. 1932, *Il Parco Nazionale Preistorico di Valcamonica, Brescia*, 11/Dicembre, Brescia, pp. 24-30) (Figs. 5-6).

During the '30s Valle Camonica (along with other sites) stimulated the interest of the Third Reich in its attempt to legitimize the idea of an Aryan Race, and the rock engravings of the ancient Camuni attracted the attention of Franz Altheim, Professor of Ancient History at the University of Berlin and enthusiastic supporter of racist theories (ALTHEIM; TRAUTMANN, in Bibliography).



After the interruption of the Second World War, research was continued in the '50s by Hercli Bertogg (director of the Coira Museum, Switzerland: BERTOGG 1952, 1956, 1967) and local scholars such as Gualtiero Laeng and Emanuele Süss (see the Bibliography), who worked for the Museo di Scienze Naturali di Brescia (Brescia Natural Science Museum).

Süss was commissioned by the Ancient Monuments Superintendent (Soprintendente alle Antichità), Mario Mirabella Roberti, to produce the first distribution map of engraved rocks in the Naquane area (SÜSS 1956 a, b), a prerequisite for the establishment in 1955 of the Rock Engravings National Park (Parco Nazionale delle Incisioni Rupestri). This was the occasion of an important collaboration between the Municipality of Capo di Ponte and the administration of the Provincial Authority of Brescia (Provincia di Brescia), which purchased the land and donated it to the State (transaction dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 1963, ratified by DPR on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1967, N° 1358 – ENCLOSURE 2) (Fig. 5).

A fresh and decisive impetus to the research was given by the arrival in 1956 of Emmanuel Anati, who came to compare the Valle Camonica rock art with that of Mount Bego in the French Maritime Alps and settled in Capo di Ponte, where in 1964 he founded the "Centre for Prehistoric Studies, Valcamonica, Italy" (Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici).

His group launched systematic field campaigns to record the engraved rocks, using a method of drawing by direct contact and in some cases employing the casein-carbon black technique to render the engravings more readily visible (*Il trattamento delle rocce istoriate* in ANATI 1982, pp. 65-66 and Fig. 47).

In the '60s Anati, in addition to his rock art studies, conducted archaeological excavations (under concession from the Lombardy Archaeological Superintendency (Soprintendenza alle Antichità della Lombardia) at Luine, in the Municipality of Darfo Boario Terme (ANATI 1982 d) and at Capo di Ponte, in the Massi di Cemmo (ANATI 1967 b, 1972 d) and Dos de l'Arca localities (ANATI 1982 c, *passim*). In the latter site a fortified Bronze and Iron Age settlement was found, together with several engraved rocks (Figs. 7-10).

The "Centre for Prehistoric Studies, Valcamonica, Italy" (Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici), and its Valle Camonica and Lombardy Department (Dipartimento Valcamonica e Lombardia-CCSP), founded in 1987 as a section of the CCSP, have remained active up to the present, with annual rock art research campaigns drawn up on a yearly basis in collaboration with the Soprintendenza for Archaeological Heritage of Lombardy (Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia), with whom the Centre has stipulated in 1994 a five-year agreement.

Research on sites with rock carvings has also been carried since the 1970s by A. Priuli of the Didactic Museum for Prehistoric Art and Life (Museo didattico Arte e Vita preistorica) at Capo di Ponte and from 1988 by the Footsteps of Man Archaeological Society (Cooperativa Archeologica "Le Orme dell'Uomo").

Various study groups conduct territorial searches throughout Valle Camonica and every year report the discovery of new rock art sites.

To date, more than 180 engraved rock localities have been discovered, scattered through the lower, mid and (to a lesser extent) upper valley. Sometimes these are grouped together, or situated near long-inhabited settlement sites, such as at Luine (Darfo-Boario Terme) and Dos de l'Arca (Capo di Ponte).

A summary of work on rock art sites is given in the table enclosed (ENCLOSURE 28), which lists the research and excavations carried out at each locality by the various institutions and study groups active in Valle Camonica.

A comparison of the List of Rock Art Sites (*infra*) with the Table of Research Activities gives a picture of the current state of research.

The rock engravings were executed from the late Palaeolithic until the Iron Age, with sporadic persistence during the Roman and Medieval periods and later. Contemporary settlement throughout these epochs was widespread in Valle



Camonica, but is still poorly understood; it was concentrated in bands halfway up the valley sides, but also present in small lateral valleys and at greater altitude for the exploitation of natural resources (hunting territories, pastures and outcrops of copper and iron ores). Evidence is to be found in traces of villages, burials, sacred localities, sites of mineral extraction and finds of isolated artefacts (mostly metallic) which have, especially in recent years, been the subject of works of synthesis and excavation reports (Fig. 11).

It should be emphasized that the widespread occurrence of important rock art sites has resulted in intense interest in this sector and the corresponding neglect of studies of the territory as a whole and of archaeological sites which, although their presence was known, were not paid equivalent attention until 1980, with the result that our knowledge of the prehistory and protohistory of the Camuni is still today somewhat inadequate.

Since 1980 the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities-Soprintendenza for Archaeological Heritage of Lombardy (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali-Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia) has reinforced archaeological work on sites not necessarily connected with rock art, both with respect to rescue excavations (numerous sites in Darfo Boario Terme-Luine and Corni Freschi, Cividate Camuno-Via Palazzo, Malegno, Ossimo-Passagròp and Pat, Capo di Ponte-Cemmo, Temù-Desèrt, Cevo-Dos del Curù and Dosso-Andròla, Cedegolo-Dosso Poglià and other smaller sites) and research projects (digs conducted by F. Fedele of Naples University on Breno Castle Hill, a settlement, and on a cult and ceremonial site at Ossimo-Anvòia locality; research by M. Tizzoni of Bergamo University in the mine of Campolongo di Bienno; the excavation by Trento University at Coren Pagà di Rogno).

From this work a rich and complex picture is emerging in which it is now possible to delineate the settlement patterns of the valley, from ancient prehistory onwards (the oldest hut discovered dates from the Palaeolithic), and to discover the nature of the villages, the religious sites and places of work; all but the burial practices, which are still rather obscure.

The principal excavations conducted in prehistoric and protohistoric sites in Valle Camonica are summarized briefly below. The Soprintendenza carried out further investigation of the Massi di Cemmo area, in 1983 and 1984 (directed by R.C. De Marinis: DE MARINIS 1988 b), after the casual discovery, in 1981, of a fragment of a stele (the "Cemmo 3").

From 1988 onwards the Ministry granted concessions to several universities for excavations in settlement and ceremonial sites. At Breno, on Castle Hill (Fig. 12), excavations directed since 1988 by F. Fedele (Federico II University of Naples) have brought to light a Neolithic settlement which continued during the Bronze and Iron Ages (FEDELE 1988 a, 2003). Other campaigns were begun at Ossimo in Anvòia locality (Fig. 13), where, from 1988 to 2003, a Copper Age megalithic sanctuary was investigated (FEDELE 1995, 2001).

Excavations directed by B. Bagolini of Trento University have concentrated on an upland Neolithic site in Rogno (Fig. 14) (FERRARI-PESSINA 1997 a, b; FERRARI, PESSINA, VISENTINI 2003); M. Tizzoni of Bergamo University started in 1997 an international project concerning Iron Age mineral extraction in a mine at Campolongo di Bienno (ANCEL *et alii* 2000; CUCINI TIZZONI *et alii* 2001).

During the same period the work conducted directly by the Soprintendenza for Archaeological Heritage of Lombardy (Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia) has intensified and spread over various localities in the valley, frequently in areas with dense concentrations of engraved rocks (cf. ENCLOSURE 33-Bibliography and reports in "NSAL", 1988-2005); these have included rescue digs, excavations in advance of large-scale public works and programmed research. In 1988 in Cividate Camuno (Figs. 15-16), the remains of a hut with layers datable



to the Upper Palaeolithic (13,805 ± 440 years ago) were found, and a Lower Mesolithic (9<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) occupation deposit. These constitute the oldest evidence of human presence in Valle Camonica (POGGIANI KELLER 1999 a, 2004 d); in the same site during the Middle and Late Neolithic was founded a village with hut on a wooden platform.

Other important discoveries (starting from the lower valley) were the Neolithic and Eneolithic settlements in the Parco di Luine, Darfo Boario Terme (excavations 1999-2000, POGGIANI KELLER 2003); in 1993 at Ossimo, in Passagròp locality, a site with Copper Age steles and menhir-boulders was brought to light; since 1995 at Ossimo, in Pat locality (Figs. 17-18), the Soprintendenza has been excavating a Copper Age ceremonial area with megalithic burials, near to which a *Camunni* settlement existed in the Iron Age (POGGIANI KELLER 1999 b, 2004 a, b, d).

At Cemmo, after an excavation in 1995 in which a small stele fragment (Cemmo 5) was found, new important remains were found in 2000 during preparatory work for the establishment of the Parco Archeologico Nazionale dei Massi di Cemmo (Figs. 19-21). The Soprintendenza programmed a series of excavation campaigns, still under way, which brought to light the remains of a megalithic sanctuary founded in the Copper Age and used until the late Roman/Early Medieval period (POGGIANI KELLER 2000 a).

Traces of prehistoric occupation were found in 1999 inside the Parco Nazionale delle Incisioni Rupestri, in the I Verdi locality (near Rock 33) and in Baitello del Pedù (NSAL 1999-2000).

In Upper Valle Camonica, where only sporadic finds were known, the remains of a dwelling datable to the late 6<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century BC constitute a particularly important discovery; they were excavated by the Soprintendenza in Desèrt locality, Temù during 2000 (POGGIANI KELLER, DE VANNA 2001).

In 2004 the traces of a middle Iron Age mining settlement, associated with a long inscription in the North-Etruscan alphabet and rocks engraved with cup-shaped depressions, were investigated at Cevo at an altitude of 2000 m (Figs. 22-24). In addition, a dig in Malegno town centre uncovered a village founded in the Late Neolithic and occupied until the middle Iron Age, when a metallurgical workshop for bronze was present.

### 1.2.2 Rock Art: Engraving Techniques and Chronology

#### *Introduction*

The Valle Camonica rock art constitutes the most important assemblage of this kind of manifestation of human thought in the world. The valley's rock art heritage, composed of over 140,000 engraved figures, distributed on about 2,400 rocks, is an extraordinary expression of human creativity over the millennia, for a total of over 8,000 years, from the epi-Palaeolithic until the Roman and Medieval periods.

The number, chronological distribution and variety of the carvings determine the exceptional value of this site.

#### *Engraving techniques*

The carvings were performed on rocks which may be classified as Upper Permian sandstones and conglomerates. They are hard and composed largely of quartz; the erosive effect of the passage of Quaternary glaciers has been to smooth the surface of the outcrops. On these rocks the ancient inhabitants of the valley executed engravings which depict aspects of their everyday lives (especially hunting and agricultural scenes) and spiritual lives (divinity figures, cult scenes, ritual practices e.g. dances and initiation rites).

The majority of the engravings were executed using a "hammer" technique in which



the rock surface was subjected to repeated blows with a stone or metal tool, thus creating small circular concavities. Figures may be portrayed by hammered outlines only, or the internal areas may be completely infilled by hammering (Figs. 25-26). Another technique used is that known as "filiform" or "graffito" in which the rock surface was cut with a pointed instrument, leaving a groove (Figs. 27-28). It is not uncommon to find, amongst the vast assemblage of Valle Camonica rock art, figures which have been created using both methods; in these cases the filiform technique was used to add detail to the works (Fig. 29).

### *Chronology*

The first comprehensive typological and chronological study of the valley's rock art, based on an analysis of the style, content and superpositions of thousands of carvings, was made by Emmanuel Anati, who in 1964 founded the "Centre for Prehistoric Studies, Valcamonica, Italy" (Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici).

In *Evoluzione e stile nell'arte rupestre camuna*, published in 1975, Anati classified the rock art into four main stylistic groups which correspond to the prehistoric period (from the epi-Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age: Styles Protocamuno, I-III), distinguished by schematic portrayals of figures in isolation or in symbolic groups (weapons and other artefacts), and the protohistoric (Iron Age: Style IV), which is characterized by a naturalistic and narrative art with figures in movement and illustrations of events (Fig. 30).

The engravings of the latter period may be attributed to the *Camunni* people (the Latin name of the Camuni), which are referred to by historical sources as the Retic (Strabo) or Euganeic peoples (Pliny).

This chronological system is still held to be valid, but over the last fifteen years has been subjected to partial revision on the basis of recent research and the important new discoveries which have been made in the valley.

### *Rock art chronology*

After the end of the last glaciation, the climate, vegetation and fauna of the Alpine regions underwent a process of gradual change, affecting and profoundly altering the lives of the human populations.

The economy of the hunting groups continued to be essentially predatory; due to the spread of the use of the bow and arrow, middle and large-sized animals were hunted, such as roe and other deer (still present in Valle Camonica) and elk. Other means of obtaining food were fishing and gathering wild fruits.

The oldest evidence of the presence of humans in the valley dates from the Upper Palaeolithic, followed by the Mesolithic; an Upper Palaeolithic hut (radiocarbon date GX-17274/1991: 13,805±440 B.P.) and a Lower Mesolithic bivouac (radiocarbon date GX-18843 AMS/1993: 8,820±112 B.P.), were excavated in Cividate Camuno (POGGIANI KELLER 1989 b; 1996 b; 1999 a; 2004 d). Other finds of these periods were made at Breno Castle (Upper Paleolithic: FEDELE 1988 a) and at "Rockshelter 2" in Foppe di Nadro (Mesolithic: ZANETTIN 1983; BIAGI 1983). A system of seasonal upland bivouacs has been identified on the mountains which divide Valle Camonica and Valtrompia (BIAGI 1989 a; 1997).

Rock engravings attributed by scholars (especially ANATI 1982 c, pp. 139-153) to this period are to be found in the Darfo-Boario Terme area, on rocks in Luine (ANATI 1982 d): these are depictions, often large in size, of big animals such as elk, pierced by hunting weapons (Fig. 31).

The figures were outlined with irregular hammer blows produced by heavy stone tools, some of which were recovered at the base of the carved rocks.

In the **Neolithic** (6<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) the economy changed from one of subsistence to one of production, due to the introduction of agriculture and animal rearing. Other important innovations were ground stone tools, pottery, spinning, weaving and, in the Late Neolithic, the introduction of the plough.



Although in Valle Camonica there are numerous Late Neolithic archaeological sites – in fact at this time villages were founded which remained in use until the Iron Age (Lovere, Luine in Darfo B.T., Cividate Camuno, Malegno, Breno and Dos de l'Arca in Capo di Ponte: POGGIANI KELLER 2003; 2004 d) – it is difficult to indicate features which distinguish the rock engravings of the period (despite past attempts: ANATI 1982 c, pp. 154-185).

The characteristic figures of the epoch are the schematic "orants", with symmetrical legs and arms bent at right angles; these carvings have been variously interpreted as people at prayer, in lamentation or dancing (Fig. 32).

Several geometrical designs, considered to represent landscape features (cultivated fields), are dated to the end of the Neolithic or the beginning of the Copper Age (Figs. 33-35). The conclusions of the rock art scholars (ANATI 1982 c; ARCA 1999 a, b, c; 2001 b; 2004 b) are confirmed by recent finds in the ongoing excavations of the Ossimo-Pat megalithic sanctuary: Fig. 34 (POGGIANI KELLER 2004 b, e).

During the **Copper Age** (mid 4<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC) the search for and working of metal and other important technological and cultural innovations, represented by the introduction of the cart and the spread of the plough, led to expansion into new territories, increased settlement density determined by the exploitation of resources and the control of access routes, the development of agriculture and the strengthening of long-distance contacts. Alongside the tools made from flaked and ground stone, axes, daggers and halberds came into use with the spread of copper production.

The rock art of this period is typified by steles and menhir-boulders engraved with symbolic and naturalistic figures, erected in cult and ceremonial localities, which were sometimes associated with primary or secondary burials.

This phenomenon is known from all of Europe, from the Atlantic coast and the Iberian peninsula to the Ukraine, and dates from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. It is found in the Alps during the Copper Age in an area which extends from Valle d'Aosta to Trentino/Alto Adige, with localized concentrations (in Valle d'Aosta, Vallese, Valcamonica, Valtellina, Trentino and Alto Adige). In Italy such monumental compositions also occur in Lunigiana, in the Appennines (Fig. 36).

In Valle Camonica from the Late Neolithic (1<sup>st</sup> half 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) onwards, long-lasting settlements were founded, which controlled key points along the River Oglio valley floor, where mountain paths branched off. Over the course of the next few centuries, during the Copper Age (2<sup>nd</sup> half 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC), striking and singular monumental religious-ceremonial complexes were constructed (Fig. 37). These megalithic cult and ceremonial sites contain engraved rocks, mostly menhir-boulders made from glacial erratics, with a lesser number of steles. They are positioned both along the Oglio (at Corni Freschi, Darfo-Boario; at Cemmo and Cedegolo-Campolongo) and in more internal areas crossed by the route which connected Valcamonica and Val di Scalve, on the Ossimo-Borno upland (Fig. 37, map, nos. 10-16).

In Valle Camonica (and in neighbouring Valtellina) this phenomenon is particularly evident, unusual and clearly allied to the exceptionally abundant manifestations of rock art present in the same area. After ten years of excavation, it is evident that this distribution of numerous cult and ceremonial sites, sanctuaries used for millennia, constitutes a novel and distinctive aspect of the rock art of Valle Camonica, which is thus also one of the parts of Europe with the greatest density of Chalcolithic monumental sites. There are over eighty engraved monoliths (steles and menhir-boulders) distributed between sixteen separate localities (Corni Freschi in Darfo-Boario Terme; Piancogno-Dassine; Ossimo-Pat (Figs. 38-40), Passagròp, L'Anvòia, Asinino, Via S. Carlo; Ossimo Inferiore-case Zendra and Feriti, Via S. Rocco; Borno-Valzel de Undine, Lazzaretto, Centro; Malegno-Ceresolo; Capo di Ponte-Cemmo



(Figs. 41-42); Cedegolo-Campolongo; Ceto-Foppe di Nadro).

A careful evaluation of the circumstances of these finds suggests that eleven of the locations correspond to the original monument sites (POGGIANI KELLER 2004 e).

In four of them excavations have been carried out, of which three (still under way) by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia (Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia): at Ossimo, in Passagròp (FEDELE 1990 f; POGGIANI KELLER 1996 b; 1999 d) and Pat localities (POGGIANI KELLER 1996 c; 1999 b; 2002 e, f; 2004 b, d, e), and at Cemmo in Capo di Ponte (POGGIANI KELLER 2000 a; 2002 b). The fourth was recently concluded at Ossimo-l'Anvòia locality (directed by prof. F. Fedele of the Federico II University of Naples under concession from the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali: FEDELE 1990 f; 1995; 1999; 2001). These sites, together with others that may be hypothesized on the basis of chance discoveries of one or more engraved monuments, have a special significance in the landscape of the valley (as in that of nearby Valtellina) and constitute an expression and consequence of the density of occupation, extending from the valley floor to high altitudes, which developed from the Late Neolithic onwards, an enduring and demonstrated possession of the territory.

These open-air sanctuaries were monumental and visible from various directions, by means of *ad hoc* visual corridors created by the clearance of extensive portions of woodland (Fig. 43), and contained engraved monoliths of various sizes (those known at present range from 1.95m to 0.5m in height). They formed long-lasting territorial markers, as Colin Renfrew has observed for other parts of Europe (RENFREW C. 1984, *L'archeologie sociale des monuments mégalithiques*, "Pour la science", 75, pp. 28-37), to the extent that their presence has influenced and perpetuated the use of these sites through changing millennia and religions. This may be seen from recent excavations in Cemmo, where the prehistoric sanctuary became an Iron Age and then Roman cult area and, finally, the location of a parish church.

The presence of metal slag in several of the sites (Ossimo - Passagròp and Pat localities) and the conversion of large areas of woodland into meadow by burning clearance at the time when the complexes were founded (both of which are recorded in excavations) indicate possible underlying motives for the occupation of certain internal zones – the exploitation of minerals and animal rearing – and the consequent religious importance of particular sites on the access routes.

Two of these sites will be equipped for visitors and opened to the public in 2005:

- in Anvòia, Ossimo, where excavation ceased in 2003, there is the Parco Archeologico di Anvòia, an archaeological area with casts of several monuments, (opened on May 28<sup>th</sup> 2005: Fig. 44);
- at Cemmo in Capo di Ponte the remains of the sanctuary with Rocks 1 and 2 will form part of the Parco Archeologico Nazionale dei Massi di Cemmo (inauguration in October 2005).

The abundant variety of figures found on Copper Age monuments includes weapons, ornaments, animals and humans (Figs. 45-48). The wild animals include deer, fawns, ibex, chamois, foxes, wolves and wild boar; the domesticated varieties are dogs, pigs and cattle, the latter at times yoked in pairs to ploughs or carts. The predominant symbolic figure is that of the sun disc, inscribed towards the top of the more anthropomorphic monuments in place of the face.

A study of the weaponry, the superposition of some figures with respect to others, and the most common associations has led to the recognition of two chronological phases (DE MARINIS 1994 c), which find stratigraphic confirmation in excavations currently under way (Figs. 49-50).

The earlier is also known as the "Remedello Phase" on the basis of the depictions of daggers with triangular blades and straight bases, similar to those found in the burial ground in Remedello Sotto (Province of Brescia), which are dated to the Copper Age (2800-2400 BC).



The second phase (late Copper Age, 2400-2200 BC) is called the "Bell-Beaker Phase", after the daggers with long narrow triangular blades, slightly curved sides and ogival handles, which resemble the Ciempozuelos type widespread in the Bell-Beaker culture (characterized by campaniform vases which are found throughout most of Europe).

The Valle Camonica steles and carved rocks have been interpreted as divinities or heroic entities, represented at first by real and symbolic objects and later by human figures. The places where these sacred images were situated seem to have been, in the light of recent discoveries, open-air sanctuaries in which regular ceremonies would have been held. In the case of the Ossimo-Pat sanctuary, the presence of tumuli indicates that this ceremonial site also had a funerary role, which might suggest the interpretation of some carved monuments as ancestor figures (POGGIANI KELLER 2004 e).

During the **Bronze Age** (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC) metallurgical techniques underwent further development with the invention of bronze, made by adding tin to copper. The production of work implements, sickles, axes, daggers, halberds, swords, helmets, spearheads and objects for personal use, such as razors, pendants and brooches for fastening clothing, intensified.

In this period Valle Camonica was on the periphery of cultures which developed on the Po Plain (the Polada culture and that of the inhabitants of pile dwellings and *terramara* mounds) and also subject to Alpine influences. Important excavations were conducted in Dos dell'Arca, Capo di Ponte (excavations in the '60s by the Antiquities Superintendency (Soprintendenza alle Antichità), directed by E. Anati) and at Luine, Darfo (research and excavations by the "Centre for Prehistoric Studies, Valcamonica, Italy" (Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici), directed by E. Anati, 1968-1970; excavations by the Soprintendenza for Archaeological Heritage of Lombardy (Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia), 1999-2000: Fig. 51), of sites occupied for millennia, with dwellings in the same localities as engraved rocks. The Luine locality, Darfo-Boario Terme, which contains the remains of a prehistoric and protohistoric village and 237 engraved rock surfaces, has been a municipal park area since 1976 (ANATI 1982 c; CITTADINI 1989), recently included in the Parco Locale di Interesse Sovracomunale del Lago Moro.

Most of the carvings from this period show weapons, especially daggers, axes and halberds (Figs. 52-55). Composite engravings are usually, but not always, made up of groups of arms of the same type; they have been compared to the practice of hoarding metal artefacts, sometimes to be interpreted as votive deposits (FRONTINI 2001). A hoard consists of a group of metal objects (ingots, slag from metalworking, broken or complete artefacts) which were hidden at moments of particular difficulty or danger (in this case these usually belonged to founders). Arms deposited on riverbeds or in streams have a different meaning: they are interpreted as offerings to divinities. A connection has recently been proposed between the weapons engraved on the rocks in Foppe di Nadro and the presence of nearby watercourses. Other bronze tools portrayed in the Valle Camonica carvings look like small shovels (Figs. 56-57), and have been subject to a wide variety of interpretations: oars, razors, mirrors, spades or sleds, to cite but a few. The most plausible theory is that the engravings show the small bronze shovels which are found as grave goods and were used to move the ash of the cremated deceased or from domestic hearths. Amongst the other Bronze Age engravings, particularly noteworthy are the ploughing scenes (Foppe di Nadro, R. 29), looms (Naquane, Roccia 1: Fig. 58)) and orants which are still schematic, but distinguished by the presence of anatomic details (Fig. 59).

**Iron Age** carvings are attributed to the *Camunni*, the ancient population of the Valle Camonica referred to by historical sources (Pliny, Nat. Hist. III, 133-134).



Archaeological evidence of Iron Age settlements in the valley has been found in excavations conducted in the '60s in Luine (Darfo-Boario Terme) and Dos dell'Arca (Capo di Ponte); there is also an isolated find from Valcamera di Borno (ANATI 1982 c, d; DE MARINIS 1989 b) Fig. 60.

Especially interesting are the well-stratified remains, datable to the Middle Iron Age, of the mining village of Cevo-Dos Curù (Fig. 61), founded at high altitudes, and also the remains of a house excavated in 2000 in Temù, Desèrt locality; various scientific analyses were performed (a Soprintendenza dig: POGGIANI KELLER, DE VANNA 2001). The single-roomed sunken building contained 6<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> century BC pottery. This type of construction remained in use after the Romans annexed the valley, as may be seen from the remains of a house discovered in Pescarzo (Capo di Ponte), dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (ROSSI 1999 a), and the village at Berzo-Demo found in 2001 (excavated by the Soprintendenza: "NSAL" 2001-2002, p. 52): Figs. 62-65.

The majority of the Valle Camonica Iron Age rock engravings exhibit a naturalistic, realistic style, distinguished by the progressively more detailed portrayal of anatomical detail and attempts to illustrate the movement in the events shown (Figs. 66-76).

The figure of the warrior is dominant, involved in various activities appropriate to the aristocratic class: duels (Figs. 77-79), horse riding and hunting (Figs. 80-82), which have been interpreted as initiation trials or rites undergone by local young aristocrats in order to enter adulthood (FOSSATI 1991).

The variety of arms (swords, shields and helmets: Figs. 83-85) with which the warriors are depicted and the precision of the engraved detail has allowed comparisons with finds from archaeological excavations.

In the hunting scenes the prey shown are almost exclusively deer; the hunter, sometimes on horseback, is in several instances helped by a dog (Figs. 86-88).

Examples of other subjects illustrated in this period are buildings (Figs. 89-92), ploughing (Fig. 93), footprints (Figs. 94-95) and aquatic birds (Figs. 96-97). It is interesting to note that in the ploughing scenes the work is now done by horses (Fig. 93) rather than the cattle shown in the carvings of previous epochs.

Of great importance is the appearance during the Iron Age of inscriptions in the alphabet known as "North-Etruscan", at times clearly associated with frequently illustrated subjects, such as "sun-boats" and footprints (PROSDOCIMI 1965; 1971 a, b; MANCINI 1980, 1982, 1984, 1991; TIBILETTI BRUNO 1978, 1990, 1992; MORANDI 2003 a, b; 2004 a, b, c): Figs. 98-99.

The end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, after the definitive **Roman conquest** of Valle Camonica, saw the foundation of the town of *Civitas Camunnorum*, now called Cividate Camuno. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD it progressively acquired a monumental appearance, with the construction of important public buildings, a theatre and an amphitheatre (excavated, and open to the public since the inauguration, in 2003, of the Parco Archeologico del Teatro e Anfiteatro: MARIOTTI V. 2004, *Il teatro e l'anfiteatro di Cividate Camuno*, Firenze).

The Roman occupation of the valley and the arrival of new cultural models effectively brought the sequence of Valle Camonica rock art to a close. In reality, though, the practice of engraving the rocks did not completely disappear, as may be seen by the presence of several Latin inscriptions (Figs. 100-101). Figurations in the Iron Age tradition also probably continued for some time.

After the arrival of Christianity, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards there spread an energetic campaign against the idolatry of carved rocks (*saxorum veneratio*). Official documents from up until the 11<sup>th</sup> century show the firm intention of the Catholic Church to extinguish these forms of pagan cult from mountain areas. The campaign took the practical form of inscribing Christian symbols (especially crosses: Figs. 102-107) on rocks next to the ancient engravings and of building churches and shrines



close to prehistoric and protohistoric sites.

The recent excavations conducted by the Soprintendenza at the Massi di Cemmo (Capo di Ponte) shed some light on these events (POGGIANI KELLER 2000): the megalithic sanctuary, founded in the Copper Age (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC) and used until the Roman period, fell into disuse in the late Roman/Early Medieval period. Near the old pagan religious site a church was built, dedicated to St. Siro, the saint who, according to tradition, brought Christianity to the valley.

Depictions of towers and castles (Figs. 108-109), symbolic figures such as those known as "Solomon's Knots", keys and gallows bear witness to the continuation of engraving tradition into the Medieval period and beyond. The refined recording techniques of recent years have revealed that in this later epoch burins were often used for engraving grooves ("filiforme" style); such carving was often practiced on monuments and religious buildings as well as rocks. The Campanine site, Cimbergo, is particularly rich in Medieval inscriptions (SANSONI 1993, 1997).

The practice of engraving rocks continued, however, in the following centuries, up to the **modern and contemporary periods**. Numerous modern carvings mark private property and municipal boundaries, or record individual names or dates, in addition to illustrations in which the artistic qualities prevail over the simplicity of the engraving.

Monticolo locality, Darfo Boario Terme, which is included in the Parco Locale di Interesse Sovracomunale del Lago Moro, contains a large number of historically recent figurations and inscriptions; many of these are of a religious and devotional nature, such as crosses and elaborate monstrosities (Figs. 104-106), and demonstrate that the practice was still common in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact, it continued into the modern epoch, as may be seen from the engraving which commemorates the construction of the Valle Camonica railway between 1904 and 1908 (Fig. 110), an ancient way of recording an important 20<sup>th</sup>-century event!

### 1.3 Cultural Value

For the sheer quantity of engravings, their incredible iconographic variety and the vast span of time they cover (the earliest examples date from c. 8000 years before the modern era, and the practice continued up the Medieval period and after), nowhere else in the world is a phenomenon such as Valle Camonica's rock art to be found. It is a unique manifestation of Alpine and European culture, a huge open-air museum that occupies the entire valley. It is therefore an outstandingly precious patrimony which must be protected and developed for present and future generations.

The thousands of rock engravings provide an exceptional illustrated record of both the everyday existence and the spirituality of the people of the past. The study of these continues to make important contributions to the disciplines of prehistory, proto-history, ancient history, the history of religion and those of linguistics, glottochronology, and anthropology in general.

## 2. The Site's Geographical Basis

### 2.1 Boundaries and Composition

**Nation:** Italy

**Region:** Lombardy

**Province:** Brescia

**Name of Site:** Rock Drawings in *Val Camonica*

**Geographical Coordinates:** The site has been defined by two polygonal bound-