



Editorial

MesoLife. A Mesolithic perspective on Alpine and neighbouring territories

Federica Fontana^{1*}, Davide Visentin^{1,2}, Ursula Wierer³

¹ Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Corso Ercole I d'Este 32, 44121 Ferrara, Italy

² UMR 5608 TRACES, Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès, Maison de la Recherche, 5 allées A. Machado, 31058 Toulouse Cedex 9, France

³ Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio delle Province di Siena, Grosseto e Arezzo, via della Pergola 65, 50121 Firenze, Italy

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- MesoLife conference
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- Holocene
- Alpine region
- south-central Europe

Parole chiave

- Convegno MesoLife
- Mesolitico
- Olocene
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* Corresponding author:
e-mail: federica.fontana@unife.it

Summary

This volume represents the first part of the conference proceedings “MesoLife. A Mesolithic perspective on Alpine and neighbouring territories” which took place at the Museo “Vittorino Cazzetta” of Selva di Cadore (Belluno, Italy) from 11th to 14th June 2014. The conference aimed at investigating the role played by the Alps in favouring or preventing contacts and cultural exchange during the first part of the Holocene. Thanks to contributions from neighbouring regions the picture could be enlarged to a European scale and gave the opportunity to compare and discuss adaptation dynamics to different environments and geographical contexts both from a synchronic and diachronic viewpoint.

Summary

Questo volume rappresenta la prima parte degli atti del convegno “MesoLife. A Mesolithic perspective on Alpine and neighbouring territories” che si è svolto presso il Museo “Vittorino Cazzetta” di Selva di Cadore (Belluno) dall'11 al 14 giugno 2014. Il convegno ha avuto per obiettivo quello di valutare il ruolo svolto dalle Alpi nel favorire o ostacolare i contatti e gli scambi culturali durante la prima parte dell'Olocene. Grazie ai contributi inerenti le regioni limitrofe è stato possibile portare la discussione ad una scala europea e confrontare le dinamiche di adattamento ad ambienti e contesti geografici differenti, sia da un punto di vista sincronico che diacronico.

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Introduction

The papers published in this volume represent the first part of the conference proceedings “MesoLife. A Mesolithic perspective on Alpine and neighbouring territories” which took place at the Museo “Vittorino Cazzetta” of Selva di Cadore (Belluno, Italy) from 11th to 14th June 2014. The event was organized by the Universities of Ferrara and Siena, the Soprintendenza Archeologia of Veneto and Tuscany, the Municipality of Selva di Cadore and the Association “Amici del Museo” of Selva di Cadore. Altogether 26 communications, 2 key notes and 24 posters, dealing with studies conducted in 8 different countries, gave an overview on the state of the art of Mesolithic research in several regions of Europe.

A special focus was given to on-going research in the Alpine territories, aimed at investigating the role played by the Alps in favouring or preventing contacts and cultural exchange during the Early Holocene. Thanks to contributions from neighbouring regions, extending from Spain and France to Montenegro and Rumania as well as from Southern Italy to Denmark, with a good number of contributions from the Mediterranean area, the picture could be enlarged to a European scale and gave the opportunity to compare and discuss adaptation dynamics to different environments and geographical contexts both from a synchronic and diachronic viewpoint. The conference has also highlighted the variability both in research questions and methods among researchers, which is also reflected by this volume. The two concluding conference trips, directed respectively to the sites of Mondeval de Sora (San Vito di Cadore, Belluno), the block-shelter at 2,130 m a.s.l. famous for its Castelnovian burial, and Staller Sattel/Passo Stalle (Rasun-Anterselva, Bolzano), a Sauveterrian open air site at 2,125 m a.s.l. currently under excavation, gave the opportunity to experience the specific environmental setting of the “Mesolithic” territories located in the sub-Alpine and Alpine belt.

Overview of the papers

The contributions of this volume, which had originally been divided among the 6 thematic sessions (“Mesolithic Landscapes”, “Settlement Dynamics”, “Subsistence Strategies”, “Lithic, Bone & other Technologies”, “I versus II Mesolithic”, “Mesolithic Territories”), have here been re-organized in a geographical order according to the regional contexts they are dealing with. Besides facilitating the consultation of the volume, this choice arose from the observation that many papers, thanks to their multidisciplinary approach, deal with more than one topic. In this way the volume guides to a sort of “Mesolithic excursion” throughout Central-Mediterranean Europe (Fig. 1).

Starting from Switzerland, the contribution of *Cornelissen & Bassin* analyses the scrapers of the stratified rock-shelter Arconciel/La Souche at the foot of the pre-Alps. The Authors observe modifications in production and use of this tool category over time, especially in the raw material, the used blanks and the performed action, which may reflect changes in scraper requirements.

Crotti, Guélat, Bullinger & Pignat present the results of the geoarchaeological study carried out at the rockshelter of Château-d’CEx «Sciernes-Picats» (1,180 m a.s.l.). In particular authors analyse the different sedimentary levels of the stratigraphic sequence dating between 11,000 and 6,000 cal BC and compare their main geoarchaeological features with the respective anthropic evidence and material culture.

Mesolithic research in Austria is represented by the work of *Schäfer, Bertola, Pawlik, Geitner, Waroszewski & Bussemer* which gives an overview on the study of Ullafelsen (Northern Tyrol) in the frame of contemporaneous sites. Amongst others, the paper discusses the relationship between the timberline and human land use, transalpine Mesolithic mobility and the activities carried out in the site.

Crossing the Alpine watershed, two papers deal with sites lying in the Adige Valley Basin in Northern Italy.

Gala, Tagliacozzo & Wierer present the bird bone assemblage of Galgenbühel/Dos de la Forca (South Tyrol). Woodland species dominate over water fowl and birds of open habitat, reflecting a mosaic of biotopes near the site. With respect to the neighbouring Mesolithic rock-shelters the assemblage is more numerous. The incidence of different accumulation agents is evaluated on the base of taphonomy and bird ecology.

Thun Hohenstein, Bertolini, Valverde, Dalmeri & Pedrotti discuss the taphonomical data of the Castelnovian faunal sample from Riparo Gaban in Trentino. Hunting was mostly directed towards red and roe deer, with a preference for adult individuals, and towards wild boar. Abundant butchery marks along with evidence of marrow extraction and hard tissue manufacturing attest the long-term occupation of the shelter.

The volume contains several contributions on research conducted in the Belluno Dolomites.

In the frame of a field survey project in the district of S. Vito di Cadore, *Visentin, Fontana, Cavulli, Carrer, Cesco Frare, Mondini & Pedrotti* give insights into highland occupation strategies at 1,900–2,200 m a.s.l. Distribution of lithic scatters along a flat upland band might be related to high altitude paths, whilst the clustering of find-spots on passes, ridges and secondary valleys indicate favoured settlement locations.

Berto, Luzzi, Guerreschi, Fontana & Valletta illustrate the small mammal assemblage recovered at Mondeval de Sora (Belluno). The assemblage of this high altitude context indicates a shift from a mainly grassland environment, with woodland extending over the present tree-line in the early Holocene, to a less grass-covered environment with exposed rocks during the late Holocene.

The paper by *Colombo, Martinelli, Motella, Castelletti, Fontana, Guerreschi* and *Michetti* reports preliminary results of the analysis of an anthracological sample from the Mesolithic layers of Mondeval de Sora with the aim of contributing at the reconstruction of Early and early-Mid Holocene landscape in the Venetian Dolomites.

The site of Mondeval de Sora and in particular the lithic assemblage from Sector III is also the object of the paper by *Valletta, Fontana, Bertola & Guerreschi*. Thanks to the comparison of the different Sauveterrian layers the evolution of the techno-typological and economic parameters of the lithic assemblages is highlighted.

Franco presents the preliminary results of the recent excavation at the high altitude Castelnovian site of Pian de la Lora which brought to light a rich lithic assemblage together with a structured hearth.

Moving to the west a paper by *Martini, Lo Vetro, Timpanelli, Magri & Poggiani Keller* focuses on the Mesolithic assemblage recovered at Cemmo (Lombardia) in proximity of the famous engraved boulders. Here a typological analysis allowed the identification of a well preserved Sauveterrian layer.

Southward along the Camonica valley, in the town centre of Cividate Camuno, a rich Prehistoric sequence has been identified in the layers underlying a Roman *domus*. *Martini, Baglioni, Magri, Mazzucco & Poggiani Keller* present the results of the typological and traceological analysis carried out on the Sauveterrian assemblage.

Two papers discuss the Mesolithic occupation of the Venetian plain. *Duches, Gilli & Peresani* present new data on the Mesolithic settlements of the Montello hill. In particular, thanks to the analysis of different surface collections, authors have identified some Early Mesolithic artefacts along with the already known Castelnovian ones.

Fontana, Visentin, Mozzi, Abbà, Corradi, Gerhardinger & Primon illustrate the preliminary results of the extensive surveys and palaeoenvironmental reconstruction that are in progress in the area of the river Sile springs. Numerous sites dated from the Late Upper Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age have been discovered and mapped.

Moving to the southern part of the Po plain, *Visentin, Angelucci, Berruti, Bertola, Leis, Marchesini, Marvelli, Pezzi, Rizzoli, Thun Hohenstein, Ziggliotti & Fontana* discuss the Early Holocene environmental setting and settlement system of the Emilian area starting from the rich assemblage of lithic artefacts and organic remains re-

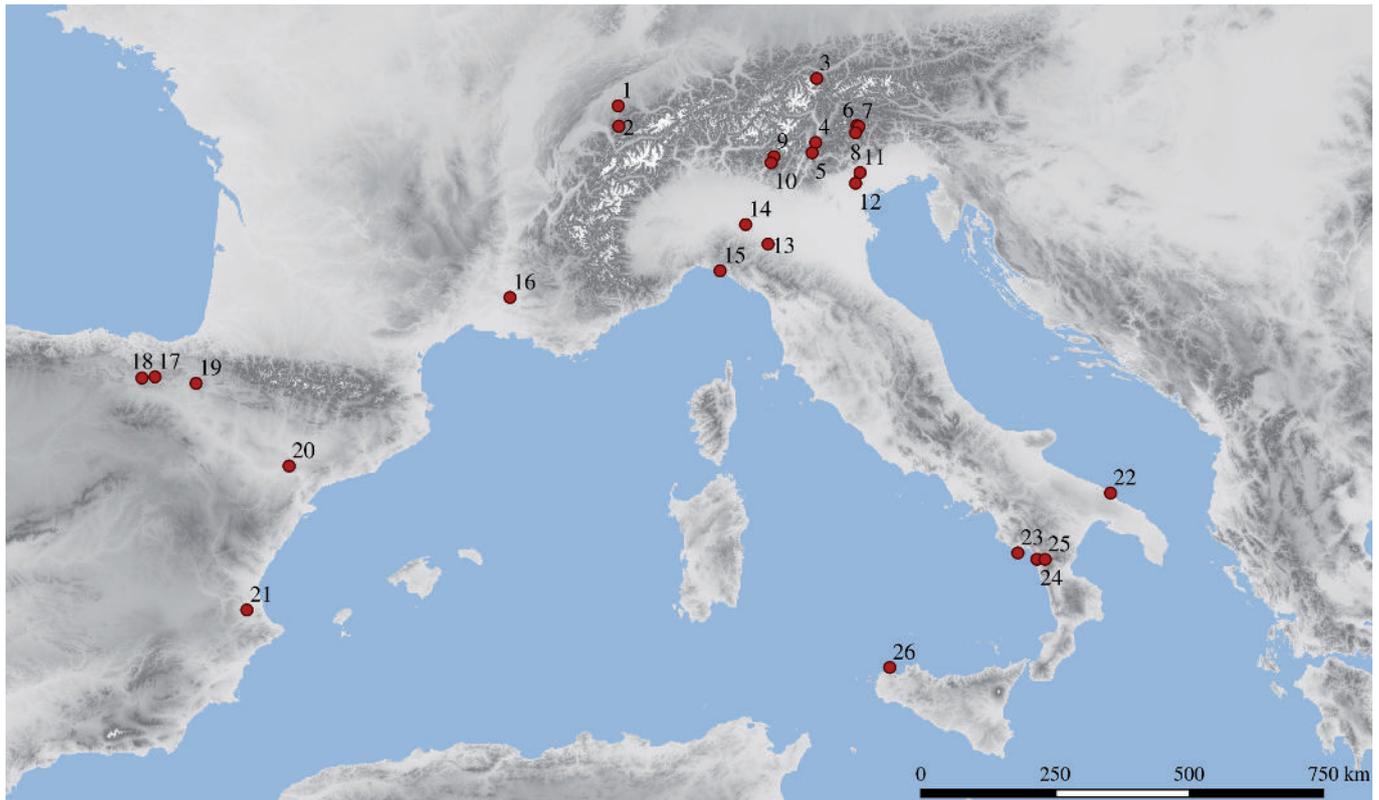


Fig. 1 - MesoLife. Location of the Mesolithic sites and study areas presented in the volume. 1. Arconciel/La Souche; 2. Château-d'CEX «Sciernes-Picats»; 3. Ullafelsen; 4. Galgenbühel/Dos de la Forca; 5. Riparo Gaban; 6. San Vito di Cadore; 7. Mondeval de Sora; 8. Pian de la Lora; 9. Cemmo; 10. Cividate Camuno; 11. Montello; 12. river Sile springs; 13. Collecchio; 14. Le Mose; 15. Ligurian sites; 16. Mourre de Sève; 17. Atxoste; 18. Mendandia; 19. Artusia; 20. Valmayor XI; 21. Cocina; 22. Grotta della Mura; 23. Grotta della Cala; 24. Grotta del Santuario della Madonna; 25. Riparo del Romito; 26. Isolidda.

covered at the site of Collecchio (Parma).

In the same area, the site of Le Mose (Piacenza) is the object of a paper by *Marchesini, Marvelli, Gobbo* and *Rizzoli* that presents new palynological and anthracological data highlighting the environmental evolution of the western Emilian plain during the Preboreal and the Boreal.

Focusing on the Ligurian area *Maggi & Negrino* illustrate the “paradoxical” situation of the state of the art on the Mesolithic occupation exclusively represented by several open-air sites mostly located on the rugged eastern bank of the region.

In the following paper we move again outside Italy towards the west, reaching the area of Vaucluse in Southern France. Here *De Stefanis, Beyries & Binder* focus on the results of use-wear analyses carried out on the lithic assemblage from the Sauveterrian and Castelnovian levels of the site of Mourre de Sève, a rock shelter located close to the Rhône and Ouvèze confluence.

The paper by *Mazzucco, Gibaja-Bao, Perales-Barrón, San Millán-Lomas, García-Puchol, Rojo Guerra, Royo-Guillén, García-Martínez de Lagrán, Juan-Cabanilles, García-Gazolaz & Gassin* allows a glimpse to the Iberian peninsula. In this work Authors analyse micro- and microscopically a series of notched blades from five different Late Mesolithic contexts of the Iberian Peninsula in search for traces that can attest the use of such tools.

Moving back to the Italian peninsula we reach the Southern Adriatic coast with a paper by *Calattini & Tessaro* dedicated to Grotta delle Mura in Apulia. Authors present layer 2 referred to the early Mesolithic, and describe its rich lithic assemblage from a techno-typological perspective which allows them to reveal a Sauveterrian structure together with elements of the local final Epigravettian.

The site of Grotta della Cala - on the Tyrrhenian coast - is the object of the paper by *Moroni, Boscato, Allevato, Benocci, Di Bella,*

Di Pasquale, Favilli, Manganelli & Gambassini who report preliminary results of the archaeozoological, malacological and anthracological studies regarding Mesolithic layer 7 of the “internal series”. Results provide a detailed framework of the local landscape and the subsistence strategies adopted by the Mesolithic groups during the Boreal.

Three papers focus on the Mesolithic levels of the impressive sequence of Grotta del Santuario della Madonna at Praia a Mare (Northern Calabria). In the first one *Tagliacozzo, Fiore, Lo Vetrol, Calcagnile & Tiné* illustrate the stratigraphic sequence and the dwelling structures recovered at the site, comment the radiocarbon dates obtained and report results of analyses carried out on the Early Mesolithic lithic assemblages attributed to the Undifferentiated Epipalaeolithic.

The second paper by *Fiore, Lo Vetrol, Pino Uria & Tagliacozzo* deals with the spatial organization, the faunal assemblage and the lithic industries recovered from several features, amongst which a ritual pit, and combustion structures, identified in the Mesolithic levels excavated between 2008 and 2011. The evidences are interpreted as the result of repeated and short occupations for exploiting a large variety of fauna.

The third one by *Gala, Fiore & Tagliacozzo* synthesizes results of the analysis of raptor remains from Mesolithic layer I discussing the large number of anthropic traces identified on several bird specimens which belong to this rich sample. Results allow to hypothesize the role of raptors in the diet of the Mesolithic groups besides their exploitation for ornamental and/or symbolic purposes.

Martini, Lo Vetrol & Timpanelli draw our attention on a further Prehistoric site of the same area, Riparo del Romito. By illustrating new excavation results which revealed the presence of a pre-Neolithic sequence overlaying the Upper Paleolithic deposit they place the newly identified Mesolithic assemblages within the context of the “Sauveterrian-like armature complex” of the low Tyrrhenian region.



Fig. 2 - Foto di gruppo dell'escursione a Mondeval de Sora / Group photo during the excursion at Mondeval de Sora

Reaching Sicily, *Lo Vetro, Colonese, Mannino, Thomas, Di Giuseppe & Martini* focus on the Mesolithic occupation of Isolidda on the north-western coast of the island, namely on the abundant mollusc remains and the few fragmented herbivore bones. Authors discuss the seasonal data obtained from oxygen isotope analyses on shell carbonates.

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Fig. 2 - Foto di gruppo dell'escursione a Staller Sattel (BZ) / Group photo during the excursion at Passo Stalle (BZ)

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