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Mesolithic findings from the area of the engraved boulders at Cemmo (Lombardia, Italia)

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Summary

During the recent excavations carried out by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia close to the famous engraved boulders of Cemmo (Capo di Ponte, Brescia), an archaeological deposit was unearthed. The cultural sequence spans from the Early Mesolithic to the Copper Age. Among the lithic materials a Sauveterrian production has been identified. Mesolithic artefacts were found not only in primary deposition layers but also in other disturbed stratigraphic units containing intrusive Neo-Eneolithic artefacts.

Riassunto

Recenti ricerche nell'area dei massi incisi a Cemmo (Capo di Ponte, Brescia) effettuate dalla Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia hanno messo in luce lembi di deposito antropico sul quale poggiano i massi stessi. La sequenza culturale del deposito archeologico indagato si estende dal Mesolitico all'età del Rame. Tra i materiali litici è stata individuata una produzione di tipo sauveterriano che è stato possibile esaminare sia in porzioni di deposito in posto sia in altre contenenti materiali intrusivi neo-eneolitici.

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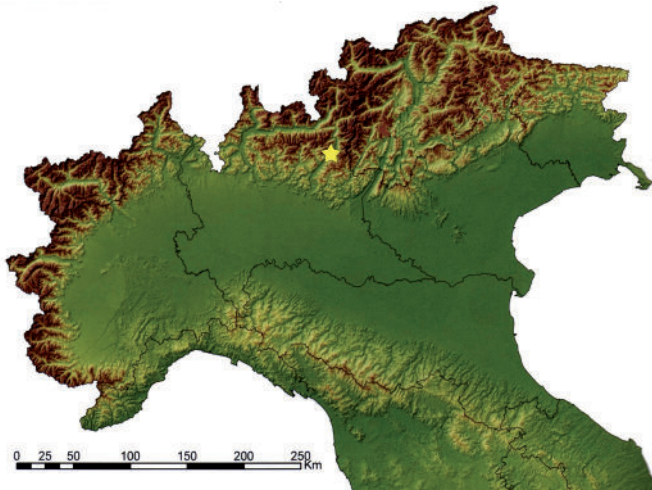


Fig. 1 - Cemmo (Lombardy, Italy). Site location. / Localizzazione del sito.

Introduction

The famous "Massi di Cemmo", two engraved boulders dating back to the Copper Age, are located in the little valley of Pian delle Greppe, North of Capo di Ponte (Brescia), around 400 metres a.s.l. (Fig. 1, 2, 3). Recent archaeological researches performed in the area around the boulders have brought to light an anthropogenic deposit on which the rocks themselves lie. This deposit has been the focus of a stratigraphic excavation by the Soprintendenza per i Beni archeologici della Lombardia. The cultural sequence of the archaeological deposits extends from Early Mesolithic to Copper Age (Poggiani Keller 1999-2000; 2009).

The lithic assemblage

Several *in situ* stratigraphic units underlying the Neolithic and Eneolithic layers have yielded lithic artefacts related to the Sauveterrian *facies*. Due to its paucity this Mesolithic assemblage is described here in its techno-typological and stylistic characteristics, which cannot be traced back to a typological structure (*sensu* Laplace).



Fig. 2 - Cemmo. The archaeological area of the engraved boulders (Archive of Paletnologia - Università di Firenze). / L'area archeologica dei massi incisi. (Archivio fotografico di Paletnologia - Università di Firenze).

The group *in situ* is composed of 35 retouched pieces, 3 cores, 19 microburins, 226 *débitage* products (prevalently *debris*, secondarily unretouched blanks, rejuvenation blades, cores shaping and maintenance blanks). A hypermicrolithic crescent, a centripetal core (Fig. 4, n. 7) and few hypermicrolithic microburins (Fig. 4, nn. 5-6) were found in secondary position.

Raw material, technology

Some of the few useful finds for a diagnosis of the sources of the raw materials (most of the artefacts have a heavy white patina) are made of high quality flints that, by macroscopic observations, seem to refer to Lombardy formations (Maiolica, Selcifero Lombardo, Medolo) whose closest known outcrops are found in the reliefs located South of Lake Iseo (Baroni & Biagi 1997) and South-East of Lake Garda (Barfield 1990). To these formations might refer some blanks extracted from small nodules and blocks gathered in areas not distant from the primary outcrops. Few items might be related to the Veneto-Trentino platform formations.

In brief, with the reserve due to the nature of the sample and the lack of specific studies about flint source availability in the areas surrounding the site, we hypothesize that a part of the exploited flints come from areas more than 40 kilometres from Cemmo.

Technological features

The reduction sequences are oriented to the production of hypermicro and microbladelets for the manufacturing of armatures of less than 10 mm in width. The rare larger laminar blanks (length over 35 mm) and the microflakes are used to make common tools. The main reduction scheme is recognizable in some bladelets and in a small core, connected to the same technical system: direct percussion, basic preparation of the striking platform, abrasion of the core overhang (Fig. 4, nn. 1-4, 8). To the same scheme can also be attributed a thick *tablette* from a *semitournant* core related to an initial phase of the core exploitation.

Retouched artefacts

The retouched assemblage (here described following Laplace's typology 1964) is represented by 7 armatures and 28 common tools. The size of common tools is micro (length 16-25 mm) and small (up to 50 mm); the hypermicro (up to 15 mm) items are very rare. The armatures are equally micro and hypermicro in size.



Fig. 3 - Cemmo. The engraved boulders in the excavation area where the Mesolithic layers were found (Archive of Paletnologia - Università di Firenze). / I massi incisi nell'area dove sono stati intercettati gli strati mesolitici (Archivio fotografico di Paletnologia - Università di Firenze).

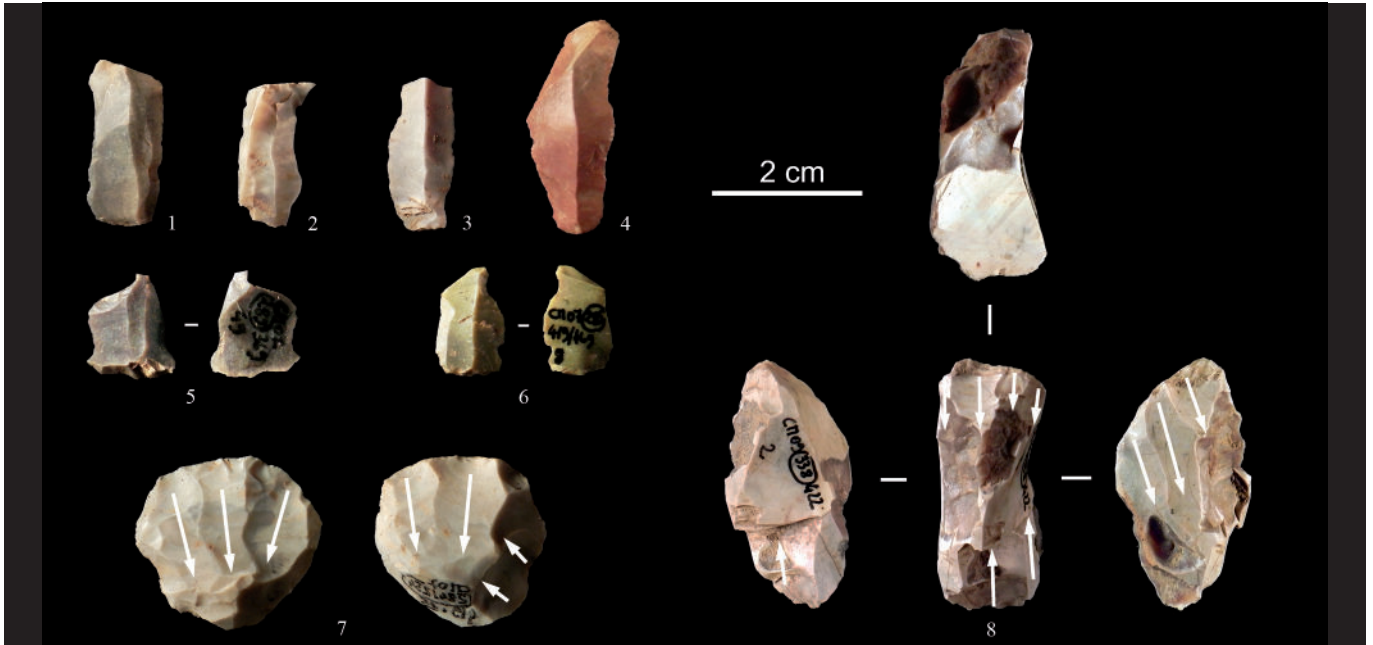


Fig. 4 - Cemmo. Sauveterrian lithic industry: 1-4 plein débitage bladelets; 5-6 microburins; 7-8 cores. (Photo D. Lo Vetro). / Industria litica sauveterriana: 1-4 lamelle di pieno débitage; 5-6 microbulini; 7-8 nuclei (Foto D. Lo Vetro).

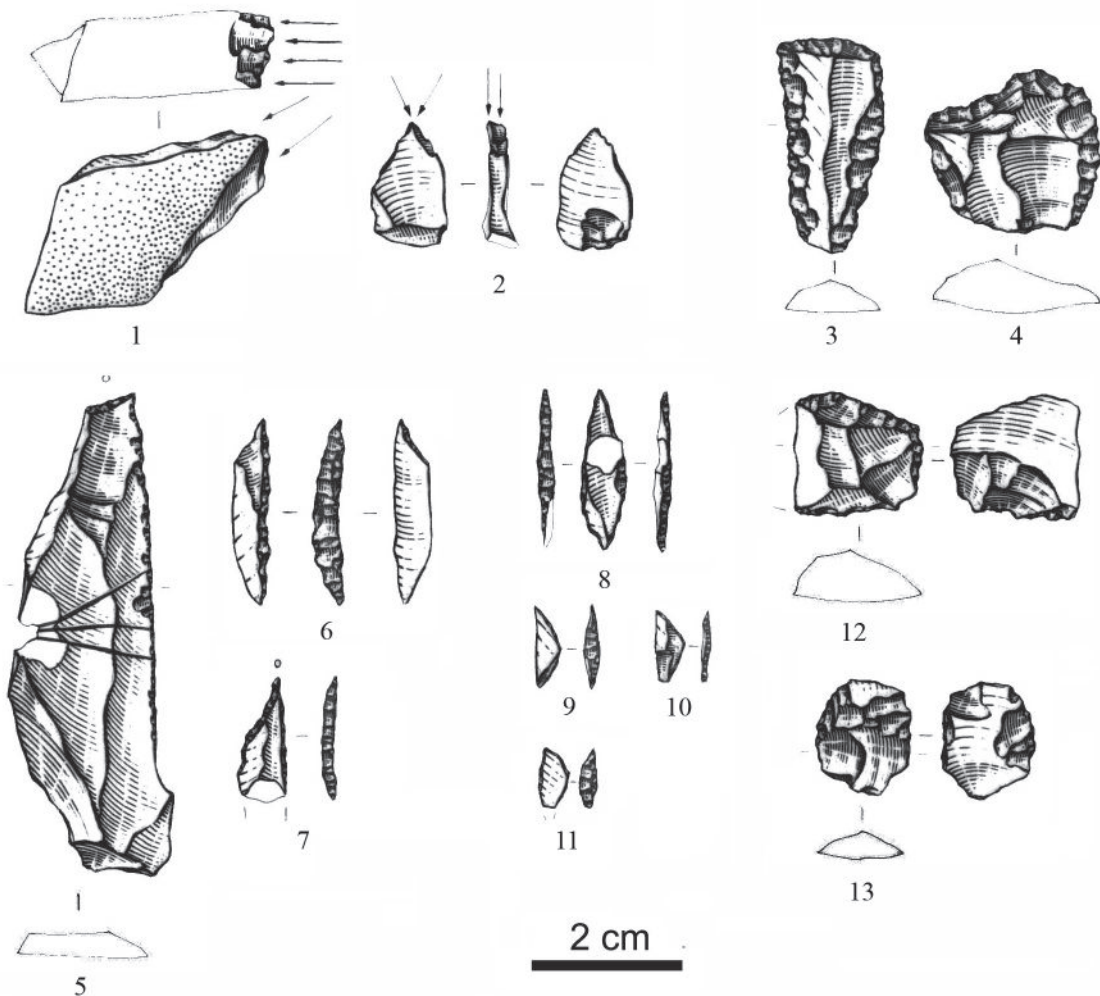


Fig. 5 - Cemmo. Sauveterrian lithic industry: 1-2-burins; 3-4 end-scrapers; 5-7 borers; 8-double backed point; 9-10 triangles; 11- crescent; 12-transversal scraper; 13- splintered piece (drawings by L. Baglioni). / Industria litica Sauveterriana: 1 e 2-bulini; 3 e 4 grattatoi; 5-7 becchi; 8- punta a dorso bilaterale; 9-10 triangoli; 11- segmento di cerchio; 12- raschiatoio trasversale; 13- pezzo scagliato (disegni L. Baglioni).

Armatures

The typical double backed point (Sauveterre) is lacking; the geometric armatures are represented by crescents and triangles always carefully made. The armatures are listed below:

- convex double backed point (PD4), symmetric, made on a wide microbladelet (Fig. 5, n. 8)
- total unilateral rectilinear backed blade (LD2) on a narrow ipermicrobladelet
- partially retouched wide, microlithic crescent (Gm1)
- two crescents (Gm1) obtained from two narrow ipermicrobladelets (Fig. 5, n. 11)
- scalene triangle (Gm3) on a wide microbladelet (Fig. 5, n. 10)
- scalene triangle (Gm3) on a narrow ipermicrobladelet (Fig. 5, n. 9)

Common tools

The burins category consist of 3 items: one Simple axial burin (B2), one single angle burin (B3) and one probable retouched burin with oblique facet (B7). These burins are not accurate and made on flake (Fig. 5, nn. 1-2). The two end-scrapers consist of a item on a blade (G2), with rectilinear scraping edge, and a short item (G4), on a wide flake with a very irregular asymmetrical scraping edge (Fig. 5, nn. 3-4). Two of the three borers are made on microbladelets (Fig. 5, nn. 6-7); these items are very similar, in shape and size, to the armatures.

The other tools share the partial and rough shaping, as well as a more or less peripheral retouch; this is the case of the blade-scrapers (8 items, all asymmetrical: six with inframarginal retouch, two with marginal retouch) and the flake-scrapers (5 items), as for two fragments of a blade/flake-scrapers, for the two abrupt retouched flakes, for the two denticulates (a scraper and an end-scraper) and for the splintered piece (Fig. 5, 13). Among the common tools signif-

icant is a transversal scraper (*Skrobacz*) whose morphology tends to subrectiform end-scraper (Fig. 5, n. 12).

The Mesolithic assemblages of Cemmo generically fit the Northern Mesolithic complexes of Sauveterrian facies, the evidence of which is also attested in Valcamonica at Cividate Camuno site (Martini *et al.* this volume).

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