



Articolo / Article

New research at Seradina I Corno (Capo di Ponte, BS, Valcamonica): rock art and the archaeological context

Alberto Marretta^{1*}, Paolo Rondini²

¹ Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina, Capo di Ponte (BS)

² Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università degli Studi di Pavia

Key words

- Valcamonica
- Rock engravings
- Iconography
- Material Culture
- Bronze Age
- Iron Age

Parole chiave

- Valcamonica
- Incisioni rupestri
- Iconografia
- Cultura Materiale
- Età del Bronzo
- Età del Ferro

Abstract

The identification and study of archaeological sites in close relationship with rock engravings is one of the most interesting elements of recent research on the prehistory and protohistory of Valcamonica. This text analyses for the first time the site of Seradina I Corno (Capo di Ponte, BS), taking into account its more strictly archaeological aspects (old trenches, analysis of materials, new research), the surrounding rock art ensemble (17 engraved rocks, part of the larger Seradina rock complex) and its relationship with other prehistoric evidence from the Capo di Ponte area. A complex picture emerges, with several phases of occupation, but above all the possibility of adding an important new piece of knowledge to the material culture contexts in which the characteristic phenomenon of Valcamonica rock art has been interwoven and developed over the different epochs.

Riassunto

L'individuazione e lo studio di siti archeologici in stretto rapporto di continuità con rocce incise è uno degli elementi di maggior interesse per quanto riguarda le ultime ricerche sulla Preistoria e Protostoria della Valcamonica. Nel presente testo si analizza per la prima volta il sito di Seradina I Corno (Capo di Ponte, BS), prendendone in considerazione gli aspetti più strettamente archeologici (vecchie trincee, analisi dei materiali, nuove indagini), l'insieme di arte rupestre che lo circonda (17 rocce incise, parte del più ampio complesso rupestre di Seradina) e il rapporto con altre evidenze pre-protostoriche pertinenti all'areale capontino. Ne emerge un quadro articolato, con più fasi di frequentazione, ma soprattutto la possibilità di aggiungere un nuovo importante tassello di conoscenza ai contesti di cultura materiale entro i quali si è intrecciato e sviluppato nelle varie epoche il caratteristico fenomeno dell'arte rupestre camuna.

* E-mail dell'Autore corrispondente: alberto.marretta@gmail.com

1. Introduction (AM, PR)

This paper focuses on Seradina I Corno (Capo di Ponte, BS), a sub-area located on the hydrographic right side of middle Valcamonica (BS), at the central part of the southern Alpine region (Fig. 1). The main area of Seradina was first explored by R. Battaglia (1932) and is now encompassed within the Seradina-Bedolina Archaeological Park. As part of a broader initiative to conduct a comprehensive survey, recording, and analysis of the known archaeological remains, the renowned rock art¹ sites of Seradina and Bedolina have undergone re-exploration since 2011. Seradina boasts 198 carved rocks,

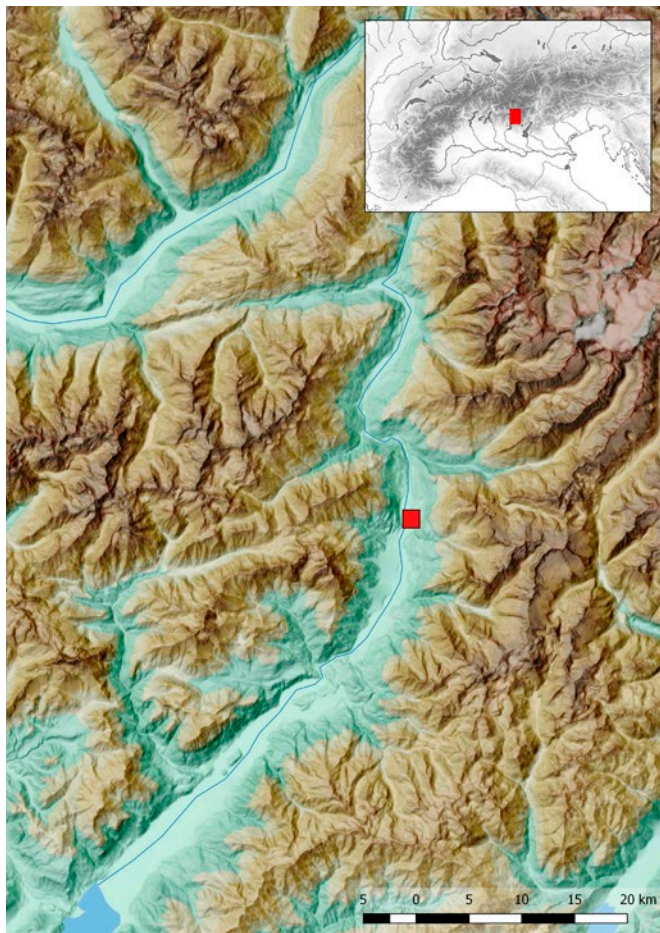


Fig. 1 – Map showing the location of Valcamonica in the southern Alpine region. In red the Capo di Ponte area (GIS elaboration: AM, PR). / **Fig. 1** – Cartina con localizzazione della Valcamonica nella fascia alpina meridionale. In rosso l'area di Capo di Ponte (elaborazione GIS: AM, PR).

traditionally categorized into three sectors (I-III), while Bedolina features 53 rocks². Regarding archaeological aspects, the sites have been sporadically researched over the years, including preventive archaeological investigations, yielding interesting albeit preliminary results (Poggiani Keller 2017: 100-105). Despite the sporadic nature of the archaeological data, it is possible to establish the coexistence of rock art production and human presence in Seradina: a fact in itself worthy of study, making it a site of significant interest for prehistoric archaeological research in Valcamonica.

Seradina I, formerly known as “Dos de la Greppa/Dos de Seradina” (Battaglia 1934: 69) or “Seradina San Rocco” (Anati 1965), is the northern part of the vast Seradina area. It covers an area of about 2.5 hectares on a mountainous strip that stretches from the river Oglio (370 m above sea level) to the border with Seradina III (455 m above sea level). Morphologically, it is divided into two smaller parts or sub-areas by the “Strada della Greppa”, the historic path that connects Cemmo di Capo di Ponte to Sellero. The western part is called “Ronco Felappi”, while the eastern part is known as “Corno”. Images are created by pecking into the bedrock – primarily composed of sandstone shaped by glacial processes and referred to as “Verrucano Lombardo” – using stone or occasionally metal tools. While uncommon, some depictions are made by delicately scratching the surface, resulting in fine lines and often scarcely visible images.

The Seradina I area contains a wide variety of motifs on a total of 64 carved surfaces. The heart of the rock art phenomenon here is undoubtedly the unique R. 12, which contains the largest concentration of images (around 1700) on the western side of the central Valcamonica and can easily be counted among the most important rocks in the entire valley (Marretta 2018).

The area examined here, known as the “Corno”³, is an elevated promontory which rises on the western side of the mountain, partially detached from the wider context and characterised by an almost entirely rocky aspect with few flat plateaus. It dominates the valley floor and faces the large cone formed by the Re stream and, further east, the Quattro Dossi area (Fig. 2)⁴. Many parts of the hill have been altered by human activity over the centuries. Apart from the obvious presence of petroglyphs, scattered almost everywhere, there are several dry-stone walls of different sizes, structures and probably periods (see §3.2.1). In addition, many of the archaeological finds from Seradina come from this restricted sector, which was also the subject of research in the 1980s⁵. All these elements give the impression of a well circumscribed context, almost a site in itself in the wider Seradina area, where archaeology and rock engravings interpenetrate and coexist.

In 2021 a special research project was launched under the direction of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Bergamo e Brescia (SABAP: dir. S. Solano and C. Longhi) by A. Marretta (responsible for the rock art documentation and study⁶) and P. Rondini (responsible for archaeological excavations and material culture studies). This project was conceived in

¹ To indicate the figures visible on the rock surfaces we are using here the general term “rock art”, which is widely adopted in scholarly research across European regions – especially the Iberian Peninsula, the Atlantic coast, the British Isles and Scandinavia – and thus represents a convenient label for a wide range of graphic manifestations (painted, engraved or scratched) on mobile supports (like decorated statue stele or menhirs) or open-air rocks. See for example Arruda 2017; Bradley 2020; Horn et al. 2023; Valdez-Tullett & Robin 2021. Since Valcamonica rock art is almost entirely represented by figures made through pecking (or light hammering) the rock surface, the terms “engraving”, “carving” and “petroglyph” are used here as synonyms without implications regarding the specific production technique.

² See Anati 1965, 1966 for the division of the Seradina area in three sub-zones each with independent numbering of the engraved rocks. For a quick and updated overview of the Seradina and Bedolina areas after the creation of the Seradina-Bedolina Archaeological Park in 2005 and the beginning of the present ongoing project see Marretta 2014, 2022b.

³ Corno – “horn” in English – is a local dialectal expression literally meaning “rocky promontory”.

⁴ This area, which has been the subject of new research since 2016 due to the extraordinary presence of rock art and material culture, especially in the famous site of Dos dell’Arca, consists of a series of hills that are morphologically very similar to Seradina I Corno. See Rondini 2016; Rondini et al. 2018; Rondini & Marretta 2019; 2021; Rondini et al. 2021.

⁵ The first reports can be found in Sansoni 1984a-b. See §3.2.2 for further analysis.

⁶ I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who made the 2021 campaign in Seradina and Bedolina possible: Valentina Ligas, Elena Balduzzi, Alessandra Guglielmetti (rock art documentation); Riccardo Zintilini, Andrea Paroletti, Dario Peloso (fieldwork preparation, logistics); Sergio Turetti, Elisa Salvetti (administration).

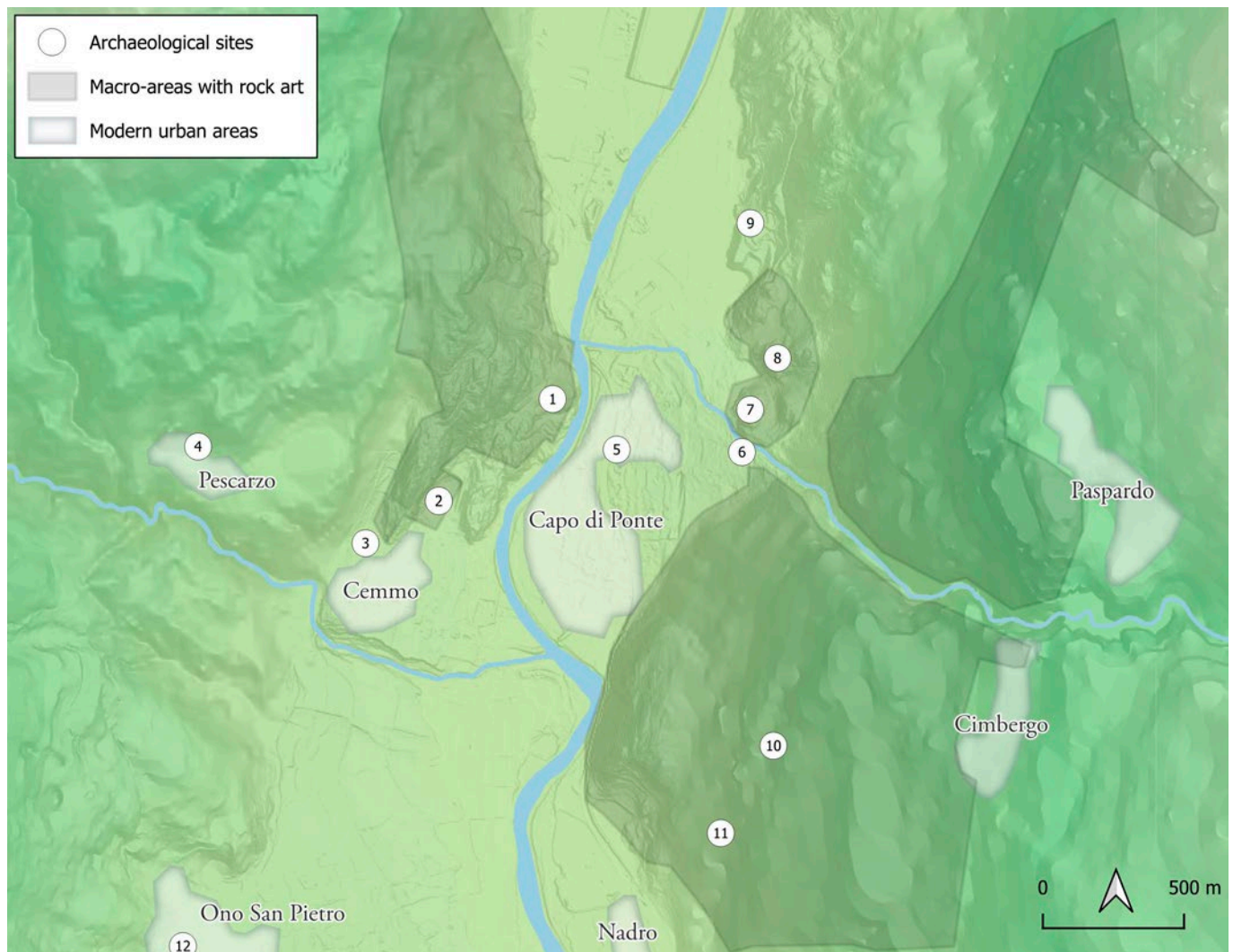


Fig. 2 – Map of macro-rock art areas and archaeological sites around Capo di Ponte: 1. Seradina I Corno site, 2. Cemmo Boulders, 3. Cemmo (house), 4. Pescarzo (house), 5. Le Sante (cult site), 6. Le Sante (church) Boulder, 7. Dos dell'Arca (Quattro Dossi), 8. Fondo Squaratti (Quattro Dossi), 9. San Salvatore, 10. Riparo del Cuel, 11. Riparo II, 12. Ono San Pietro (houses) (GIS elaboration: AM). / **Fig. 2** – Cartina con macro-aree rupestri e siti archeologici nella zona di Capo di Ponte: 1. Seradina I Corno, 2. Massi di Cemmo, 3. Cemmo (insediamento), 4. Pescarzo (insediamento), 5. Le Sante (luogo di culto), 6. Masso delle Sante (chiesa), 7. Dos dell'Arca (Quattro Dossi), 8. Fondo Squaratti (Quattro Dossi), 9. San Salvatore, 10. Riparo del Cuel, 11. Riparo II, 12. Ono San Pietro (insediamento) (elaborazione GIS: AM).

continuity with the annual recording campaigns carried out in the park, specifically to understand the nature of these finds and their relationship with the surrounding iconographic manifestations.

2. Rock art (AM)

2.1 A brief history of research in the area

The rock art discoveries, recording activities and research at Seradina and Bedolina can be divided into four phases. Phase I corresponds to the first mention and the pioneering work of the archaeologist R. Battaglia, working on behalf of the Regia Soprintendenza alle Antichità, and the German Forschungsinstitut für Kulturmorphologie between 1931 and 1936 (Phase I)⁷. This first assessment leads to the publication of only a few photographs, but the articles containing them will be very influential for future research. Unfortunately, there are no maps of the area for this period.

The second phase of activity coincides with the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici (CCSP) campaign at Seradina, carried out by E. Anati between 1963 and 1966 (phase II)⁸. It is characterised by numerous new rock art finds, the first map of the rocks and the systematic tracing of the carved panels, although this first important and truly scientific endeavour was not followed by a complete edition. The third phase was again a CCSP project, returning to Seradina between 1981 and 1984 to carry out new fieldwork only at Seradina I Corno (phase III: see further observations in §3.2.2)⁹. This renewed interest, led on site by U. Sansoni, M. Simoes De Abreu and E. Ingravallo, added new carved panels to the earlier inventory and re-recorded everything by contact tracing. Extensive removing of soil cover brought to light some of the most important sectors of R. 12 visible today, while archaeological excavations revealed the presence of material culture on the top of the hill. Apart from a few short notes, however, the results of these campaigns have not found a much-needed edition.

⁷ Battaglia 1932, 1934; Marretta 2019: 56-57.

⁸ Anati 1965, 1966.

⁹ Sansoni 1984 a, b; Simoes De Abreu & Sansoni 1983; Simoes De Abreu 1984.

The fourth phase corresponds to the current research (phase IV)¹⁰. This programmatic activity, begun in 2011 under the direction of the Soprintendenza Archeologia della Lombardia and carried out on site by one of the authors on behalf of the newly established Seradina-Bedolina Archaeological Park (2005), has so far resulted in several new discoveries, updated GPS mapping, the establishment of a GIS management system of the two areas, and finally a complete recording and edition of the rock art, with the fundamental Seradina I R. 12 monument published in full in 2018 (Marretta 2018).

2.2 The 2021 rock art recording campaign

In this paper we only deal with the petroglyphs positioned around the archaeological area on the tophill (Fig. 3), which was the main focus of the 2021-2023 fieldwork (see §2.4 for analysis and §3 for the archaeological context). The rocks involved are RR. 15-21, 41-47, 61-63, i.e. all the carvings known so far in the southern sector of Seradina I Corno. The numbering reflects the phases of past research during which they were discovered. Thus RR. 15-21 belong to the phase II, RR. 41-47¹¹ to the phase III and RR. 61-63 belong to the phase IV, i.e., the current research programme. The order of description follows an approximate route toward East starting from the Strada della Greppa.

The first images are found on R. 21, the broad area north of the steep path that reaches the top of the hill from the west

(Fig. 4). It consists of five different sectors showing warriors with square, empty bodies and linear limbs, with deep, natural cup marks pecked along the edge¹² and a rectangular shape. These armed anthropomorphs defend themselves with a large rectangular shield, as in the isolated example in sectors C and D, but other occurrences show a small semi-circular shield instead. Particularly noteworthy is the fighting pair with this type of shield in sector B, where the warrior on the right has been depicted as significantly smaller than his opponent and with his body fully pecked. With the exception of the figures in sector A and D, all these warriors use a spear as an offensive weapon.

Few metres N of R. 21 a small panel partially hidden inside the thick vegetation and numbered as R. 63 has been carved with only four anthropomorphs (Fig. 6). The biggest one is not clearly discernible due to weathering, but the other three show quite distinct rendering. One has in fact a rectangular body with a central line dividing it by the height, a shield of irregular shape and a short sword handled on top of the head. The other two are markedly smaller and, although incomplete, are depicted as linear duellist not facing each other but both oriented to the left.

The highest point of the hill is entirely occupied by R. 18 (Fig. 4). This large area has been carved into many sectors with few or only single images. Predominant again are the rectangular warriors with empty bodies (sectors A, B, F), who in one case are

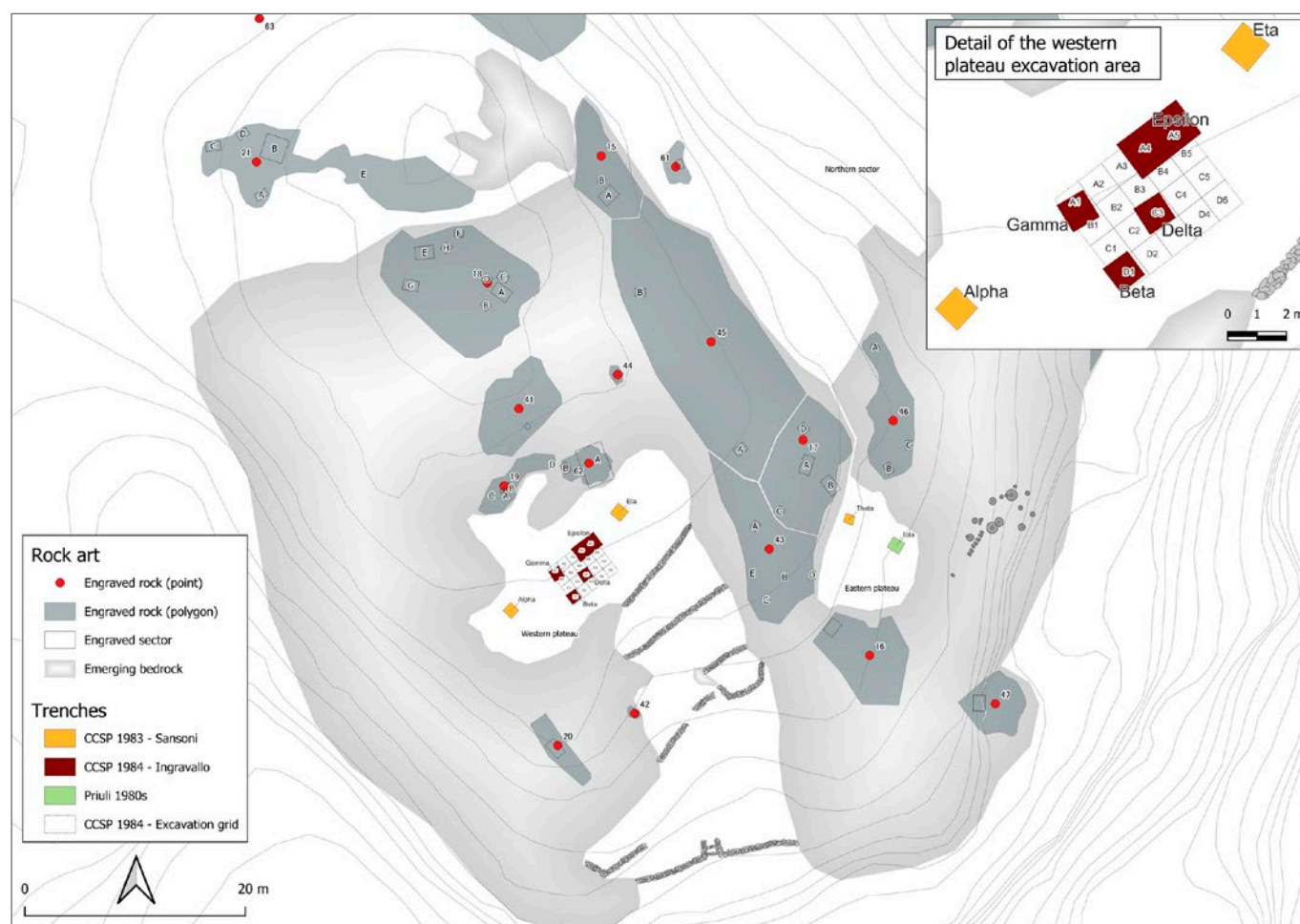


Fig. 3 – Map of the Seradina I Corno sub-area examined in the article (GIS elaboration: AM, PR). / **Fig. 3 – Mappa schematica di Seradina I Corno con le evidenze esaminate nel presente articolo (elaborazione GIS: AM, PR).**

¹⁰ Marretta 2022a, 2022b, 2018, 2014.

¹¹ R. 47 is the only rock of this group shown in a photograph of phase I research. See Battaglia 1932: tav. III.

¹² It is not rare to find natural features of the rock surface, like small weathering pits, cracks or glacial striations, modified by artificial pecking in order to use them as standalone images or part of more elaborated images. See for example Marretta 2018: 95-98.

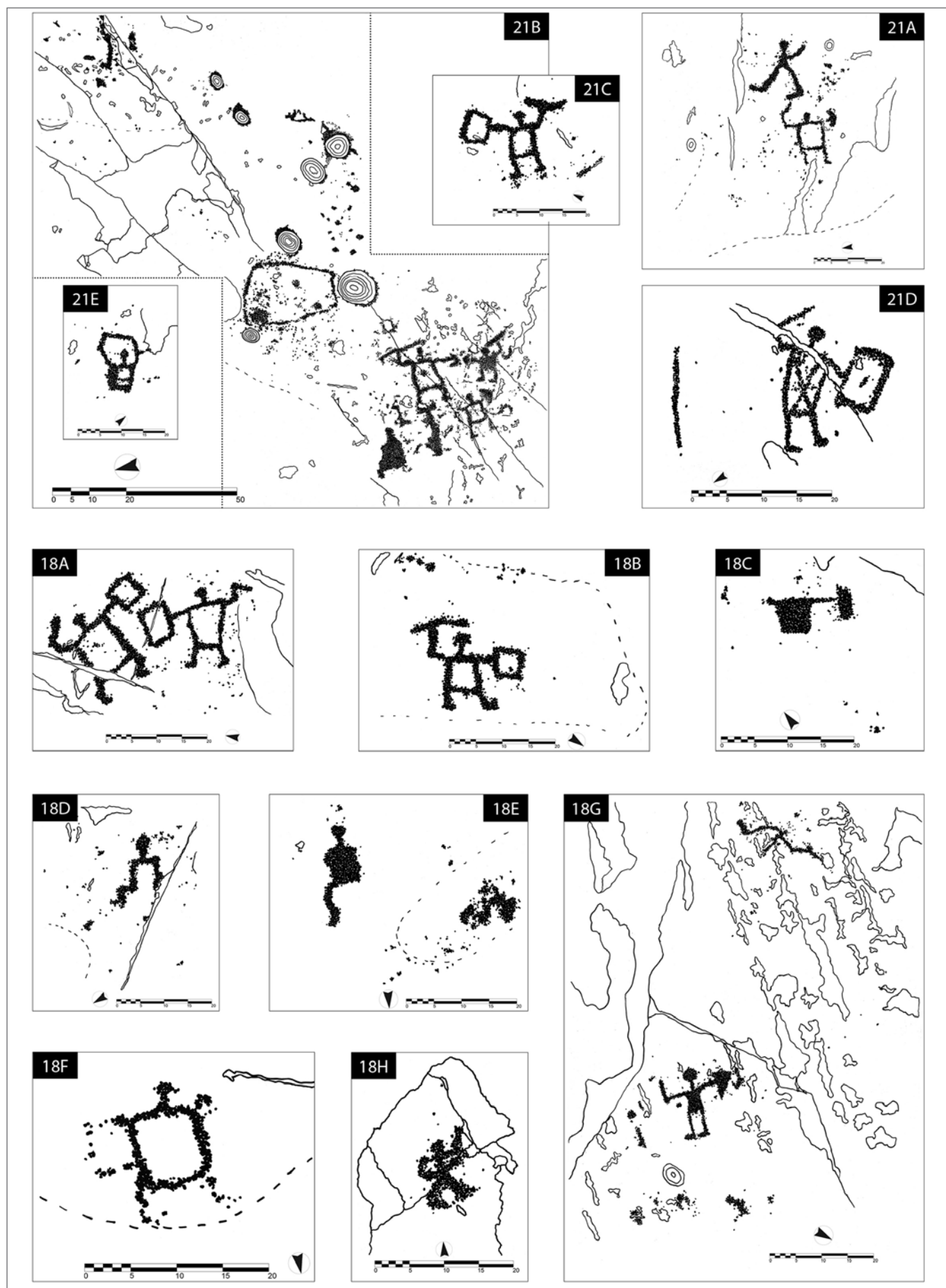


Fig. 4 – Seradina I Corno, RR. 21 (sector A-D), 18 (sector A-G) (tracing: AM). / **Fig. 4 – Seradina I Corno, RR. 21 (settori A-D), 18 (settori A-G) (rilievo a contatto: AM).**



Fig. 5 – R. 18, sector A: duel between warriors with rectangular and empty bodies armed with big rectangular shields and swords (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 5** – R. 18, settore A: duello tra guerrieri con corpi rettangolari vuoti armati di spade e grandi scudi rettangolari (fotografia: AM).

involved in the classical duel scene with rectangular shields and swords/spears depicted as simple linear “sticks” (Fig. 5). Other types of human figures are isolated (sectors G, H) or largely incomplete (sectors C, D, E).

R. 18 joins R. 41 to the southeast, which also forms a natural end to the rocky summit and descends into R. 19 and R. 62. The 2021/2023 archaeological activities were conducted at the base of these two rocks. Only one isolated and incomplete human figure with linear body and legs is carved on R. 41 (Fig. 6), although many flat areas in the upper part show sparse groups of peckings suggesting a dispersed and rather indefinable carving activity. This rock should probably be considered as part of R. 19 (Fig. 6), where the human figures seem to be of the same type, i.e., with linear bodies and limbs. Moreover, we are dealing here with another type of warrior often depicted on both sides of the central valley of Valcamonica, but with particular preference in Seradina¹³. This is an anthropomorph holding both offensive and defensive weapons in front of his body, usually a small round shield and a sword in a vertical position. Very often the forearm is depicted circularly on the warrior's back, as here in Sector A. Curiously, the apparently incorrect depiction in Sector D, where the back of the arm is connected to the top of the head rather than the other half at the bottom holding the shield, appears identical on R. 36¹⁴, not far away, and on one of the two small human figures visible in the upper right corner of R. 63 (Fig. 6). This apparent detail is thus recurrent, and seemingly suggests a voluntary intention rather than a simple mistake by an inexperienced author.

In Sector C, a rather confused group of light and sparse pecking outlines what looks like a hut depiction, one of the very few found so far in Seradina I¹⁵.

Adjacent to the east of R. 19 is R. 62, by far the most important and richest rock surface in this part of Seradina I (Fig. 6). It consists of the lowermost part of a gently sloping cliff that opens into the western plateau, the one with the most intense traces of prehistoric presence (Fig. 7). The images almost exclusively show warriors with a rectangular, empty body, very often grouped in symmetrical pairs, fighting each other with large, rectangular shields and spears. A few notable features should be noted. Some warriors bear a single dot in the centre of the empty body, perhaps a symbolic distinction or a reference to a particular suit of armour not otherwise specified. The shields vary in size and shape, from rectangular to smaller square examples. Sometimes the shield is completely pecked except for a small round area in the centre, which in this case could indicate the presence of a boss. The spear, usually very short and held horizontally above the head, seems to be omnipresent, as we have also seen, for example, on R. 18. Only two warriors have the sword hanging from their waist, as is the case with other stylistically identical human figures, especially from Seradina I (e.g., R. 5¹⁶). Normally this specific type of warrior does not wear a helmet. Here, however, an interesting pair stands out because of a kind of pointed “hat” with a wide brim worn by the respective fighters. This peculiar headgear has another unique counterpart only in a small horseman found on Seradina II R. 40¹⁷. Although some images could belong to different phases, the superimpositions recorded here are of warriors of the same style and therefore seem to be dictated by lack of space rather than chronological reasons.

In the centre of the main panel, above one of these square warriors, is a newly discovered inscription in the local pre-Roman alphabet. This very interesting find is discussed in a separate section of this article (see below §2.3).

The surface is badly damaged on the left side, where only partially preserved figures can be seen. However, a separate sector (B) of small smooth slabs amidst an otherwise cracked and broken rock shows the other usual representation of the warrior already mentioned on the adjacent R. 19, i.e., the linear human figures holding both weapons in front of the body. Here, two instances wielding the usual short sword and small shield, apparently not in any reciprocal relationship, stand around a group of simple signs consisting of a line with some kind of hilt (a schematic sword?) and a circle with internal decoration (a round shield?).

To the south and beyond the excavation area, a group of stone terraces regularize the slope between the emerging rocks. Here are two isolated surfaces with carved images. These are R. 42 and R. 20 respectively. The first consists of a single small panel showing two dynamic warriors in duel with swords and concave shields rendered with a simple “C” shape¹⁸ (Fig. 8). One of the swords is very long and is held back to deliver a powerful blow from above. Overall, the weapons and the depiction of the bodies,

¹³ See namely the many examples on R. 12 in Marretta 2018: 185-217.

¹⁴ Ibid.: 201, fig. 29.

¹⁵ The hut/house/building is a familiar motif of the eastern areas, but appears quite rarely in the western sites. See Savardi 2007.

¹⁶ Sansoni 1984b: 78, fig. 11.

¹⁷ The image is unpublished. These distinctive “hats” bear an intriguing resemblance to the “sombros” worn by the seated lords depicted in the Situla art, indicating a temporal shift of some centuries further into the past than generally anticipated for our figures (see §2.4.3). Beyond the chronological issue, the exploration of helmets and headgear in Valcamonica rock art proves to be an interesting topic, and a dedicated study on this subject is currently in preparation.

¹⁸ The assertion that this “C”-shaped concave shield is, in fact, the oxyhede type as seen in side-view (Fossati 1991: 42) is problematic. While the “C”-shaped version consistently appears in conjunction with anthropomorphs depicted according to the “regional” or “silhouette” morphotypes, long cutting swords, and sometimes crested helmets, the so-called oxyhede type – rendered as a rectangle with slightly concave sides – can be found not only wielded by “regional” and “mixed linear-region” morphotypes but also in association with a diverse array of offensive weapons. This happens, for instance, in Dos dell’Arca R. 24, which features horsemen and warriors with filled bodies and swords (Rondini & Marretta 2017: 10), in Paspardo Vite R. 11, which depicts rectangular and empty-bodied warriors with spears and swords/knives hanging from the belt (Fossati 1998: 208, fig. 1B), in Paspardo Vite R. 134, which portrays painted horsemen with *Hellebarden* and crested helmets (Chippindale et al. 2021), in Piancogno Rocca dei Guerrieri, which showcases figures with *Hellebarden* and conic helmets (Priuli 1993). The subject holds great significance for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between “style”, archaeological comparisons of weapons, and chronology, but further investigations are imperative to delve deeper into this aspect.

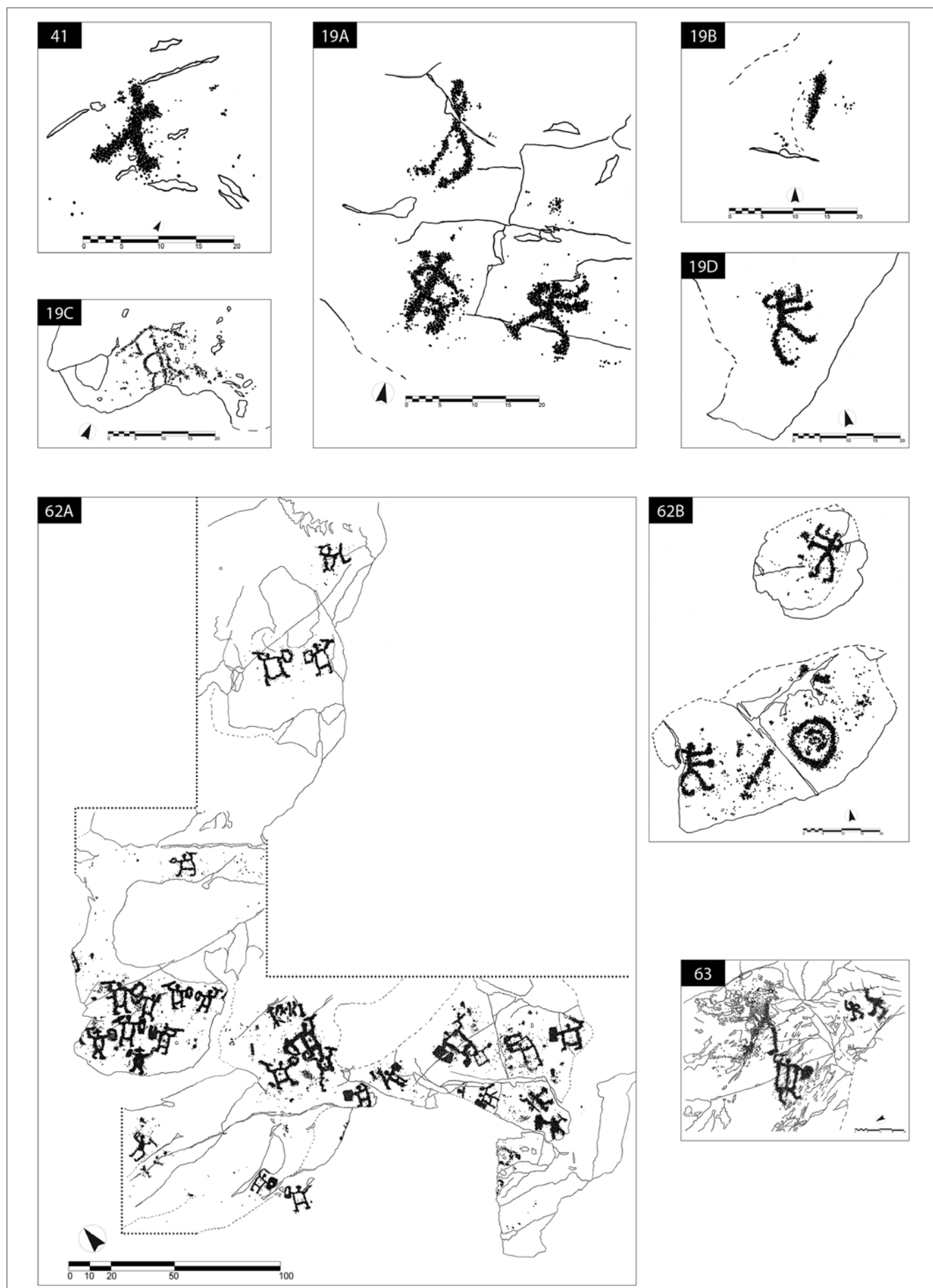


Fig. 6 – RR. 41, 19 (sector A-D), 62 (sector A-B), 63 (tracing: AM). / **Fig. 6 – RR.** 41, 19 (settori A-D), 62 (settori A-B), 63 (rilievo a contatto: AM).



Fig. 7 – The western plateau seen from W during the tracing activity on R. 62 (in foreground on the left). The trenches from the 1980s are visible in the flat area few metres beyond R. 62 (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 7** – Il pianoro occidentale visto da Ovest durante l'attività di rilevamento sulla R. 62 (in primo piano a sinistra). Le trincee degli anni '80 sono visibili nell'area pianeggiante pochi metri oltre la R. 62 (fotografia: AM).

which are much more naturalistic than what has been described so far, probably indicate a different chronology or at least an author with a radically different interpretation of the human figure.

R. 20 stands as an almost vertical section on the rocky edge that borders the hill to the south (Fig. 8). From here, the group of carved rock surfaces in the lower part of neighbouring Seradina II – and especially the large R. 1 – are clearly visible. The panel shows three humans with their arms stretched upwards, moving in the same direction (as indicated by the position of the feet). They seem to hold only schematic spears and no shield. Around them, two animals – possibly horses – are moving in the opposite direction. One of the animals is walking on a long, winding line. Below this rather enigmatic scene, two footprints have been carved (one is incomplete). Considering the rarity of this motif in Seradina, its presence here is somehow remarkable. On the right, the panel is completed by an isolated warrior armed with a sword and shield, while on the far left is a cruciform motif.

Just a few metres below the outcrops overlooking the hill is an elongated rocky area aligned towards NW-SE and consisting of RR. 15, 43, 44, 45 and 17. The distribution pattern of carved figures is the same as at R. 18, where isolated images or small rock art panels are scattered over the entire surface, lying among bushes, low plants and mosses. R. 15, with only four armed humans, sums up the main theme of this sector of Seradina I (Fig. 8): on one side the warrior with raised large shield and spear in the rectangular and empty body representation (Fig. 9), on the other side the linear anthropomorph with sword and a small round shield in front of his body (Fig. 10). In

addition to these easily recognisable and repeated motifs, a rectilinear man with a large round shield in side view, a spear in vertical position and a helmet was carved on the western part of the rock.

R. 61 shows a unique connection between the ordinary warrior with a rectangular and empty body and an extraordinary rider (Figg. 8, 11). The horse and the rider, who holds the bridle with one hand while the other wields a very short spear or javelin, are depicted in the same style as the opponent – i.e., with a simple contoured body – and seem to be facing each other in some kind of duel. The small round shield carried by the warrior on foot is remarkable, while another fragmentary warrior below holds the classic large rectangular shield. R. 61 is a noteworthy discovery, because the horseman was a theme that was almost absent from Seradina I Corno beyond the great concentration on R. 12.

A few metres further south lies R. 44 (Fig. 8). Only two full-bodied warriors with outstretched arms can be seen. Both are carrying a large, semi-circular shield, marked in the centre by a protruding hump, and a downward-pointing spear. One of them is clearly recognisable by the presence of the sexual organ.

R. 15 smoothly transitions into R. 45, where, amid numerous instances of sparse pecking, only two sectors exhibit recognizable iconography (Fig. 12). In Sector A, a peculiar figure with outstretched arms emerging from the midsection well below the shoulders holds a sword and a small shield. In close proximity, a human bust and a vaguely pecked area accompany this representation. Sector B proves more intriguing. Here, two elongated shapes could potentially be interpreted as a pair of highly schematic daggers (Fig. 13)¹⁹.

¹⁹ More clear images of daggers with triangular blades are known in Seradina I Ronco Felappi R. 29, Seradina II R. 36 and Seradina III R. 28. They can be attributed to the Copper Age or Early Bronze Age. See Marretta 2018: 37-40.

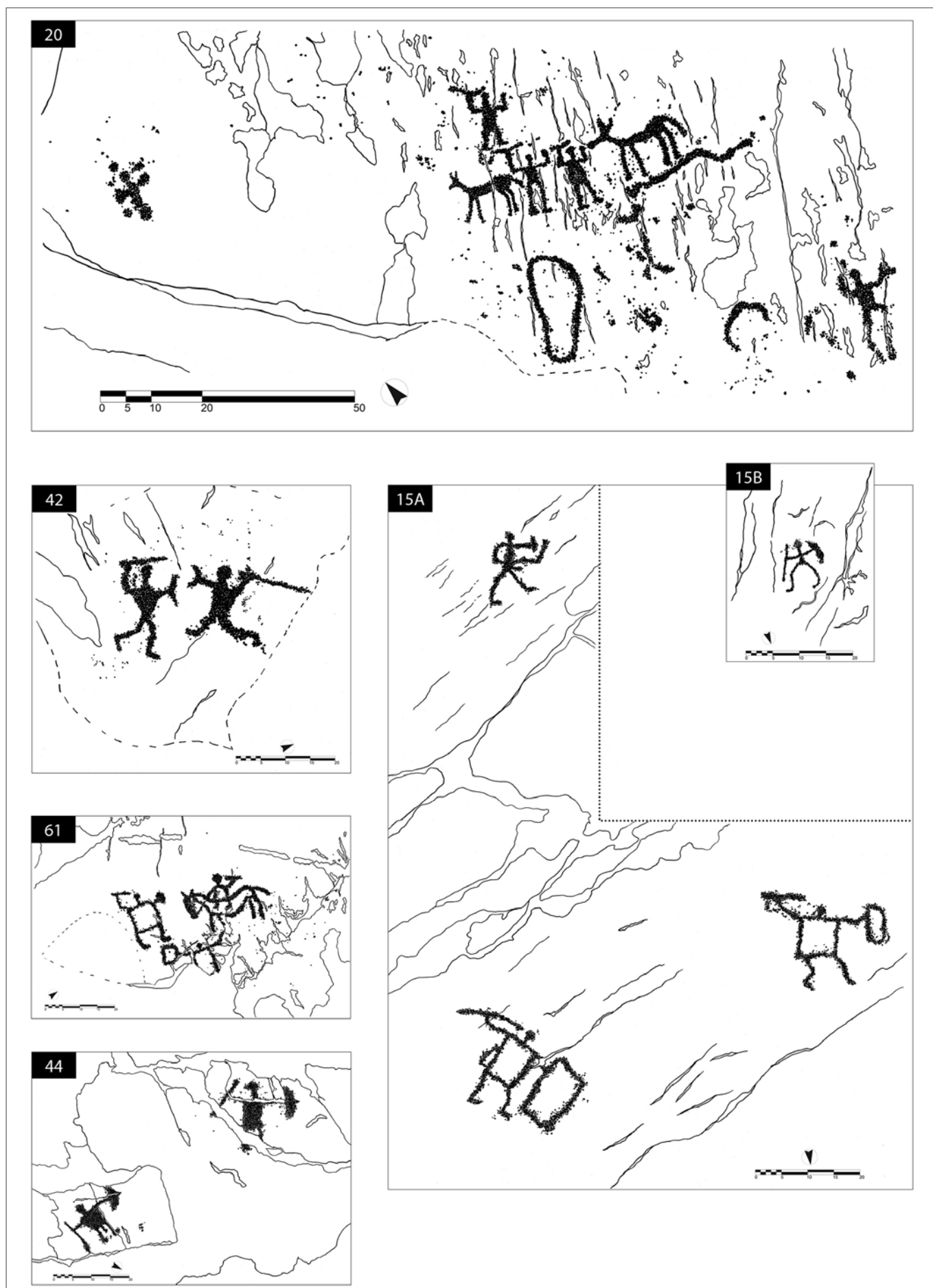


Fig. 8 – RR. 20, 42, 15 (sector A-B), 61, 44 (tracing: AM). / **Fig. 8 – RR. 20, 42, 15 (settori A-B), 61, 44 (rilievo a contatto: AM)**



Fig. 9 – R. 15, settore A: antropomorfo con corpo rettangolare e scudo vuoto armato di grande scudo rettangolare e lancia. Dalla vita pende una corta spada o un coltello (fotografia: AM). / **Fig. 9** – R. 15, settore A: antropomorfo con corpo rettangolare vuoto armato di grande scudo rettangolare e lancia. Dalla vita pende una corta spada o un coltello (fotografia: AM).



Fig. 11 – R. 61, settore A: a rare fight scene between a horseman and two warriors on foot. All the anthropomorphs are characterized by empty rectangular bodies (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 11** – R. 61, settore A: rara scena di combattimento tra un cavaliere e due guerrieri a piedi. Tutti gli antropomorfi sono caratterizzati da corpi rettangolari vuoti (fotografia: AM).



Fig. 10 – R. 15, settore A: antropomorfo con corpo lineare armato di piccolo scudo e spada. Un braccio si piega in modo caratteristico dietro il busto (fotografia: AM). / **Fig. 10** – R. 15, settore A: antropomorfo con corpo lineare armato di piccolo scudo e spada. Un braccio si piega in modo caratteristico dietro il busto (fotografia: AM).

The most conspicuous feature is the larger, semi-circular pom-mel on the more detailed of the two specimens, with evident indications of a handle. However, the blades are depicted as simple enlarged lines. Determining the chronology of these objects remains speculative. While finding direct comparisons within the Copper or Bronze Age proves challenging, some similarities emerge in the most schematic examples identified by S. Casini on Foppe di Nadro R. 23. Specifically, one figure (Casini 2012: 247, fig. 3, A3) appears to correspond well with the more detailed “dagger” in our pair. Yet, even Casini acknowledges that its extreme schematization makes comparisons with actual finds impossible (Id.: 246). The possibility that these could be straightforward representations of schematic Iron Age weapons cannot

be dismissed as well and this forces to use this datum with a high degree of caution.

The whole of the extensive spur ends in R. 17 and R. 43 (Fig. 12). The former is shaped as a kind of prow dominating a modest flat area to the east. On this surface we again have some examples of warriors with square bodies (many are incomplete), but the majority of the human figures were depicted in different styles. Of particular note is the anthropomorph with spear and concave shield from Sector C (Fig. 14), which is reminiscent of the naturalistic representation and the same shield of the warriors on R. 42. Sector D features two linear warriors equipped with small round shields and swords, seemingly moving away from each other. Notably, there is a distinction in their orientations, and one of them holds the sword pointing downwards. This particular gesture, uncommon in Valcamonica rock art, introduces a specific symbolic nuance to the scene, maybe with intent to emphasize the aftermath of the duel rather than the duel itself.

On the neighbouring R. 43, the type-warrior with square body is absent (Fig. 12). In Sector A we are instead dealing with a scene depicting three armed human figures with pecked bodies tapering towards the waist and straight limbs. They are joined by two incomplete anthropomorphs and other unrecognisable signs. The most distinct warrior has a large round shield, seen from the side, and a spear held downwards. In Sector B, only a small figure can be seen holding a very long sword (?) in front of its body. Very interesting is the scene in sector D, where a fighting couple of two dynamic warriors shows different degrees of “incompleteness”: the one on the left is missing only one leg (and possibly the offensive weapon), while the one on the right has nothing below the torso. Finally, Sector E offers a curious clue to the frequentation of the area in historical times, as the rock faces west and looks directly onto the excavated area. A single word has been carved here in modern cursive and mirror writing from right to left. The name is “Michel” and can be related to the almost identical “Michele” on Seradina I R. 12. The execution technique and the calligraphy suggest a date between the 19th and 20th centuries²⁰. A confused group of scratched lines in

²⁰ In the general catalogue these modern traces have been classified in the category “Other”, as the category “Inscription” refers to the cases in local pre-Roman alphabet.

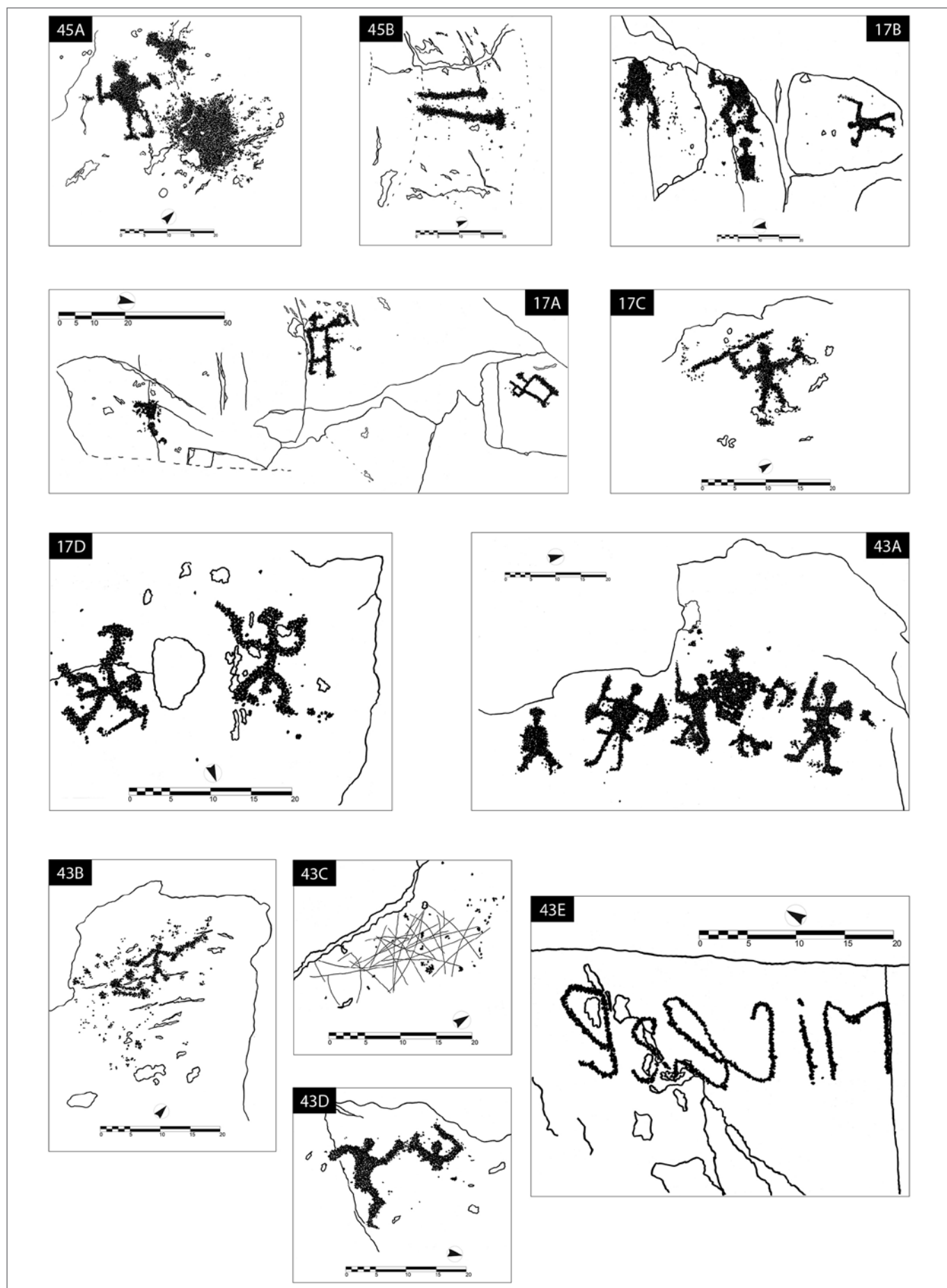


Fig. 12 – RR. 45 (sector A-B), 17 (sector A-D), 43 (sector A-E) (tracing: AM). / **Fig. 12** – RR. 45 (settori A-B), 17 (settori A-D), 43 (settori A-E) (rilievo a contatto: AM).



Fig. 13 – R. 45, settore B: two schematic figures possibly representing a couple of daggers (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 13** – R. 45, settore B: due figure schematiche che forse rappresentano una coppia di pugnali (fotografia: AM).



Fig. 15 – The group of big glacial pits and the staircase cut in the bedrock (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 15** – Il gruppo di grandi pozzi glaciali (“marmitte dei giganti”) e la scala scavata nel banco di roccia (fotografia: AM).



Fig. 14 – R. 17, settore C: isolated warrior handling a concave shield and a spear (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 14** – R. 17, settore C: guerriero isolato con scudo concavo e lancia (fotografia: AM).

Sector C could be the result of modern activity as well, though these kinds of figures (sometimes called “filiforms”) are well known also in protohistoric times.

The eastern flank of the study area is distinguished by a number of notable features. The first is again the presence of sporadic archaeological artefacts on the flat part here noted as eastern plateau, partially protected by the vertical limit of R. 17. No less interesting is a series of steps carved into the rock, forming a staircase that connects this flat area with a group of imposing glacial potholes known in Italian as “marmitte dei giganti” a few metres further down (Fig. 15). Although it is very difficult to assess the chronology of this unusual structural modification of

the natural appearance of the hill, it needs to be further explored to understand its possible relationship with the other prehistoric remains.

All over here we find RR. 16, 46 and 47 (Fig. 16). The first two surfaces delimit the flat area to the north and south. R. 16 shows a warrior with a small concave shield and a curved long knife or sword resembling the *machaira*. In Seradina, similar swords are found mainly in the Ronco Felappi part of Seradina I. Two of the few animals in this area can be seen on the right: a male deer with long legs, followed by a much smaller and ill-defined quadruped (a baby deer? A dog?). R. 46 shows images carved in three distant sectors: a couple of very schematic animals, followed by a merely implied further figure (sector A)²¹, a pecked rectangle possibly belonging to the “topographical” tendency of the earlier period (sector B)²², a group of historical elements comprising a cross, two Latin letters (MI) and a curving whirligig.

On the flank of the hill few metres below R. 16 there is a kind of natural balcony, bordered on the west by a vertical wall (Fig. 17). The surface of the rock face is very smooth, due to the strong action of the glacier which, only a few metres to the north, created the fascinating group of perfectly cylindrical pits described above. In the central part of the wall, just where it curves inwards and forms a kind of wide round niche, there is a very interesting rock art panel called R. 47 (Fig. 16). First of all, it should be noted that this is one of the few cases during the Iron Age where a nearly vertical rock face has been carved, as it is well known that in Valcamonica surfaces with a slope of no more than 45/50 degrees are preferred²³. Secondly, the panel focuses specifically on the depiction of duel combat, which is repeated here five times according to the standard formula of symmetrical combatants with small round shields and swords. As with other rocks with this theme, one of the pairs is flanked by identical warriors who are at the back of their opponents. The composition is enriched by three dogs in the centre, while two circles (one concentric) are visible in the lower part.

²¹ It seems reasonable to interpret this group of signs as an attempt to create a ploughing scene. The same arrangement occurs in at least two incomplete instances on Seradina I R. 12. See Marretta 2018: 141-153.

²² Pre-Iron Age phases are poorly represented in Seradina and are confined to few rocks and subjects: some geometric compositions (the so-called “maps”), daggers. See Marretta 2022b, 2018: 39-40.

²³ Marretta 2011: 287.

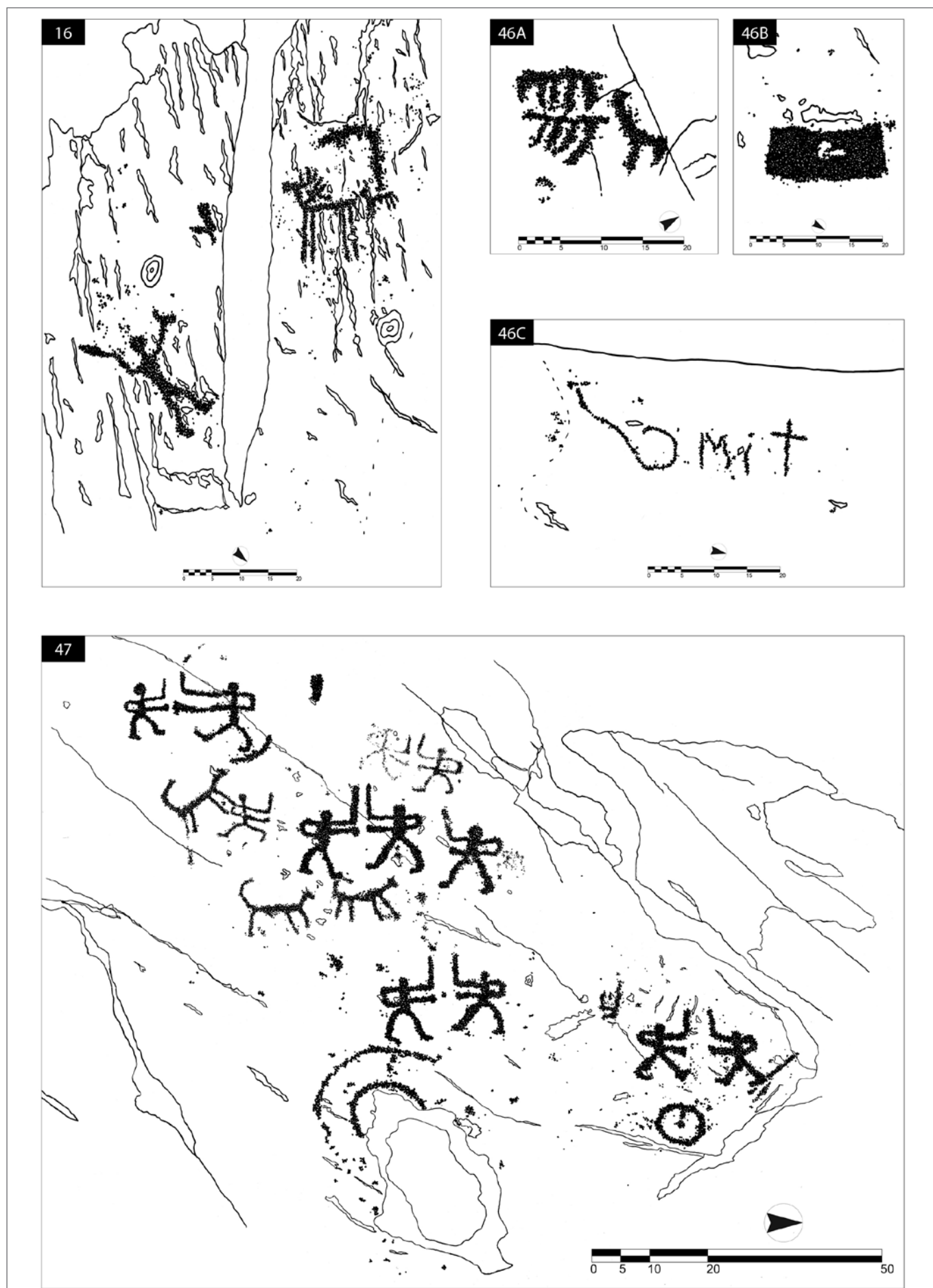


Fig. 16 – RR. 16, 46 (sector A-C), 47 (tracing: AM). / **Fig. 16** – RR. 16, 46 (settori A-C), 47 (rilievo a contatto: AM).



Fig. 17 – The round vertical niche hosting the group of duel scenes named R. 47 (photograph: AM). / **Fig. 17** – La conca verticale che ospita il gruppo di scene di duello denominato R. 47 (fotografia: AM).

2.3 Pre-Roman inscriptions in Seradina and Bedolina: the new case on R. 62

The first inscription found in this area is from Seradina II R. 21²⁴, while in the same early years the only other two occurrences were recorded in Bedolina R. 5 and 16²⁵. The second find, at Seradina II R. 18, was not mentioned until 20 years later²⁶, even though Altheim had seen the panel as early as 1936²⁷. The third find, discovered in the course of the renewed interest in the pre-Roman epigraphic material from Valcamonica inspired by Süss' research, was noted on Seradina I R. 11²⁸. A fourth find on Seradina I R. 6, not far from the previous one, followed closely and was prompted by Anati's extensive campaign in the area, which began in 1963²⁹. Curiously, this last rock has a second word, which was not published until 1980, when A. Mancini proposed a drawing of the inscription and a preliminary reading³⁰. Now, thanks to the new inscription found on R. 62, this particular case takes on new meaning and a possible solution for the transcription (Fig. 18).

The inscription on R. 62 is inserted into a rich figurative ensemble dominated by warriors with rectangular bodies fighting in pairs. It consists of a single word with five letters. The orientation of some letters, especially *a*, suggests a reading from right to left. The first letter is almost certainly an *i*, with two "bulges" at the ends that appear to imitate a Latin capital letter. The second character looks like a tripartite *s*, which is very rare among the known Valcamonica inscriptions³¹. Then, very close to the previous one, but still to be considered as a separate element, we see a simple *i* in the form of a vertical segment. In the fourth position there is a dot instead of a letter. After the dot, a very common ending combination appears in *az*, with *a* and *z* rendered in the usual inverted form common in the inscriptions of the western areas, including the peripheral Pià d'Ort³². The reading is *isi.az*, which gives a new sense to the confused *z??az* suggested by Mancini for the second word on Seradina I R. 6³³.

²⁴ Altheim & Trautmann 1937, tavv. 32-33.

²⁵ Op. cit., tav. 10, 31.

²⁶ Süss 1956: 254-255.

²⁷ Marretta 2019: 56-57.

²⁸ Radke 1962: 512.

²⁹ Prosdociami 1965: 597.

³⁰ Mancini 1980: 123.

³¹ In the Capo di Ponte district it has so far been attested only in two cases from Pià d'Ort, while further South there are more occurrences only from Piancogno-Annunciata (e.g., "Roccia delle Spade"). See Bellaspiga 1995 and Priuli 1993.

³² With the only notable exception of *pueiaz* on Bedolina R. 16. See Marretta & Solano 2014 for more details on this and other issues related to the pre-Roman epigraphy from Valcamonica, with particular emphasis on the inscriptions found in the rock art.

³³ Mancini 1980: 123. The *ductus* of this word is left to right while on R. 62 the inscription is written from right to left.

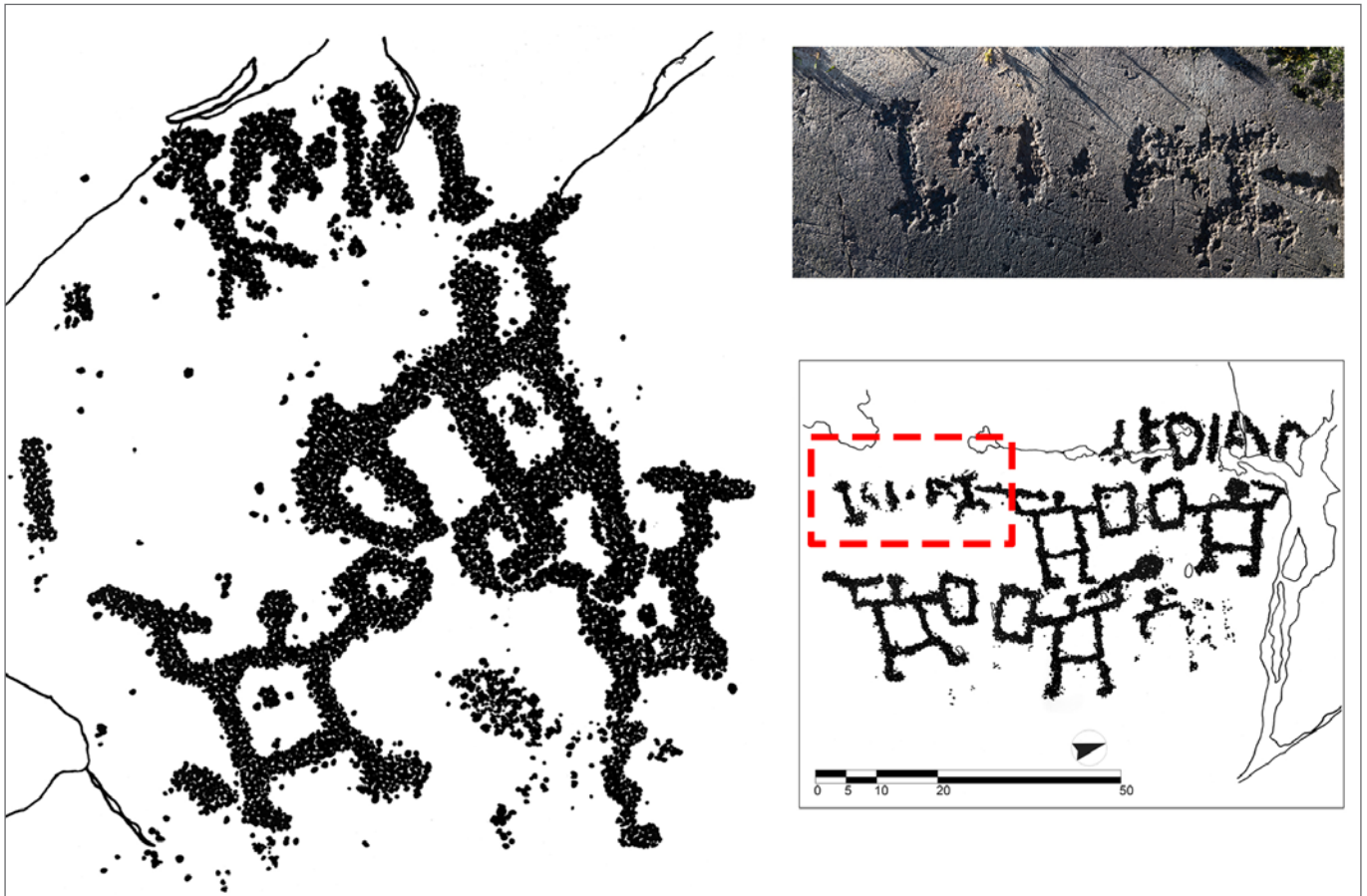


Fig. 18 – The one-word inscription on R. 62A (on the left) compared to the inscription on Seradina I Corno R. 6 (on the right), composed by two words (photograph, tracing: AM). / **Fig. 18** – L'iscrizione composta da una sola parola sulla R. 62A (a sinistra) a confronto con l'iscrizione sulla R. 6 di Seradina I Corno (a destra), formata da due parole (fotografia, rilievo a contatto: AM).

2.4 General considerations and open problems

2.4.1 Catalogue analysis quick overview: themes and spatial distribution.

The carvings here considered comprise a total of 240 images scattered on 17 rocks (Tab. 1). The vast majority of them is limited to a single category, namely the human figure (108 figures = 45% of the total), with a specific preference for armed men on foot (85 figures), often engaged in duels. Horsemen are here barely present³⁴, while on the other hand they are a celebrated theme in other parts of Seradina I and certainly occupy a special role in R. 12. The usual abundance of animals found in the rock art of central Valcamonica or the typical range of “narrative” scenes (like hunting, ploughing, sexual intercourse etc.), which is particularly intensively represented on R. 12, is also missing. Animals are here present with 10 figures, representing only a mere 4% of the counted images. In this respect, R. 20 looks a little bit eccentric because it also has a rare footprint along two animals and warriors that are somehow different from the rest of the hill.

2.4.2 Morphology and armament.

Humans are represented in three main forms: fully “linear” figures

(29 figures = 27% of the total), “regional figures” (6 figures = 5% of the total), and “mixed regional-linear” figures (73 = 68% of the total)³⁵. The linear anthropomorphs with the arm bent around the body fighting in symmetrical pairs belong to the first category, while the rectangular and empty body warriors with linear limbs are counted in the third one. The second category (“regional figures”) includes dynamic anthropomorphic representations, which are less common and avoid the use of simple lines for depicting the body and the limbs. As a result, these figures tend to emphasize motion, details and anatomical features.

Each form shows a precise selection of offensive/defensive weapons and postures: “stick” swords and small round shields for the first, cutlasses (with a case of long knife or *machaira*) and concave shields for the second, spears/javelins and large, rectangular, often not-internally-pecked shields for the third³⁶. Some other details are not exclusive, as we have seen that the third form in particular involves a slightly more varied choice for the type of shield used. The association between large empty rectangular bodies and large empty rectangular shields is in fact inconsistent if we just look at areas where this specific combination is well represented: in Pià d'Ort and in the Paspardo areas for example the most common shield carried by this type of warrior is the small round one

³⁴ With the interesting exception of R. 61, where there is one of the very few examples of horsemen in a context where rectangular and empty body warriors are also present.

³⁵ For the definition of these categories in the study of the large sample of images present in Seradina I R. 12, see Marretta 2018: 71-86. The methodology adopted in the present paper uses the same concepts of ‘ontology’ (what image is represented?), ‘morphology’ (how is it represented?) and ‘style’ as discussed for Seradina I R. 12, avoiding the classical chronological sequence by style (Anati 1982; Sansoni & Gavaldo 1995; Fossati 1991; de Marinis & Fossati 2012) in order to address the various contradictions and problems that have emerged in recent years (highlighted in particular in Marretta & Solano 2014 and Chippindale et al. 2021).

³⁶ A detailed analysis leading to similar conclusions has been done for Seradina I R. 12. See in particular Marretta 2018: 266-270.

Tab. 1 – Seradina I Corno: catalogue of the recorded images per rock distinguished by categories. The category “Icon” include a broad range of images going from artifacts (e.g., weapons, shovels, wagons, hut/buildings etc.) to symbols (e.g., footprints, “rose camune”, pentacles/stars etc.) (elaboration: AM). / **Tab. 1** – Seradina I Corno: catalogo delle immagini censite su ogni roccia, distinte per categorie. La categoria “Icona” comprende un’ampia gamma di immagini che vanno dai manufatti (ad esempio, armi, palette, carri, capanne/edifici, ecc.) ai simboli (ad esempio, impronte di piedi, “rose camune”, pentacoli/stelle, ecc.) (elaborazione: AM).

Rock n.	Human (armed + unarmed)	Animal	Icon	Inscription	Geom. elem.	Other	Total figures
15	4 (4+0)						4
16	1 (1+0)	2			1	1	5
17	9 (6+3)					1	10
18	9 (6+3)					9	18
19	4 (3+1)		1		2	1	8
20	4 (4+0)	2	1		4	8	19
21	8 (6+2)				9	11	28
41	1 (0+1)						1
42	2 (2+0)						2
43	8 (4+4)				2	8	18
44	2 (2+0)						2
45	2 (1+1)		2			2	6
46	1 (0+1)	2	1		1	3	8
47	12 (12+0)	3			4	7	26
61	3 (3+0)	1					4
62	34 (28+6)			1	9	33	77
63	4 (3+1)						4
Total	108 (85+23)	10	5	1	32	84	240

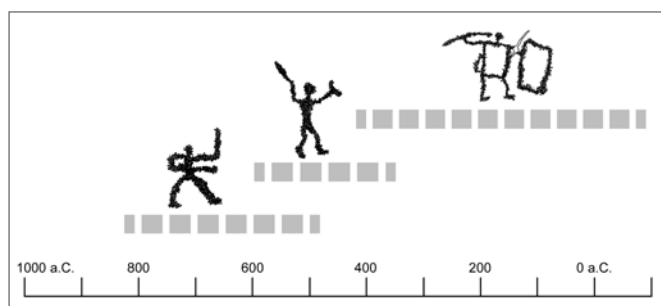


Fig. 19 – Seradina I Corno: proposed chronological sequence for the most representative morphological types of humans analysed in the present research (elaboration: AM). / **Fig. 19** – Seradina I Corno: proposta di sequenza cronologica per i tipi morfologici più rappresentativi analizzati nella presente ricerca (elaborazione: AM).

(Sansoni & Gavaldo 1995; Bezzi 2021; Bossoni et al. 2016), often associated with a sword held perfectly horizontal above the head. Internal ornamentation of the body in the form of crossing lines with small dots in between, relatively common again in some areas of Paspardo such as Sottolaiolo (Fossati 1998: fig. 3; Simoes De Abreu et al. 1988) or Vite La Bosca (Bezzi 2021; Bossoni et al. 2016), is quite rare in Seradina I Corno and almost confined to a single small central disc, which is sometimes considered as a schematic representation of a *kardiophylax* (Fossati 1998: 207). In a few cases, the

sword is seen hanging from the waist, sometimes attached to a belt depicted with a simple horizontal line across the body. The helmet is notably absent in this part of the hill, although we can see from the rocks in the northern portion of Seradina I that when it is present, it is a specific feature of the first form (e.g., R. 1, R. 12³⁷: crested helmet in frontal view) or the second form (e.g., R. 10, R. 51³⁸: crested helmet in side view). Incomplete human figures, as already noted on Seradina I R. 12 (Marretta 2018: 217-220), are a recurrent motif.

2.4.3 Chronology of engravings.

Prehistoric periods are represented only by the generic and isolated rectangles on R. 21B and 46B, a type of well-known images in Valcamonica and likely to be dated to Late Neolithic/Early Cooper Age³⁹. The two “daggers” of R. 45 raise many doubts and if they really are two schematic weapons, they could be the only hint to an Early Bronze Age carving activity in the area. That said, it is manifest that the rock art production was intense and continuous only during the Iron Age, even if the lack of superimpositions between the three main forms of the human beings described above is not helpful for building an accurate relative chronology (Fig. 19). Their spatial distribution also offers no clues, as they are all evenly distributed over the hill, with only the first form (linear type) showing apparent concentrations on R. 19 and, especially, R. 47.

This first form has been discussed extensively in a recent work (Marretta 2018: 185-203) and appears to belong to the early Iron Age, although with a wide range going from 8th to 6th-5th century BC. Its recurring association with typical themes of archaic ideolo-

³⁷ Marretta 2022a: 90, fig. 6; Id. 2018: 189, fig. 10.

³⁸ For R. 10 see Marretta 2018: 186, fig. 3. R. 51 is unpublished.

³⁹ See Arcà 2016 (with previous bibliography) for the more recent discussion of this chronology and for the interpretation of this varied range of geometric and sub-geometric shapes as “topographic” components.

gy (ploughing, sex, hunting, horse riding), as seen at Seradina I R. 12, seems to be the strongest evidence for this dating, although its schematism may have led to a longer-ranging life. This form is commonly embodied by the “duellist”, i.e. the anthropomorph oriented left or right holding a small round shield and sword, one arm bending around his back and the other straight in front of him. Although commonly found in symmetrical fighting pairs, the “duellist” is often present without a recognisable opponent in front of him. We can fairly say that this is the most common scene found in Seradina, with a record of 62 duels present on Seradina I R. 12 (Marretta 2018: 280).

The second form is characterised by body and limbs hinting at anatomical features like muscles, chest and waist. Anthropomorphs rendered in this form handle the well recognisable concave shields seen from the side and often a cutting long knife or sword, which in some cases can even be identified as a type of *machaira*, a weapon with a long and complex life but largely in use in the Mediterranean and central Italy especially during the Middle Iron Age (6th-4th century BC). An interesting evidence of the presence of this peculiar weapon in the Central Alps along with a concave shield in front view is on the bas-relief from Bormio, which has been variously dated to the 5th century BC or the 1st century BC (Pauli 1973; Mariotti 1999).

In Seradina I the interesting close association of the third form, especially in regard of the rectangular-and-empty-body warriors, with pre-Roman inscriptions containing details influenced by the Latin alphabet, like the reversed *a* letter or the very rare *s* made with three segments (R. 6 and now R. 62), seems to be the strongest evidence for their dating to the Late Iron Age, as generally suggested in literature based on the classic methodology of the chrono-stylistic sequencing⁴⁰. This last evidence is confirmed also by a superimposition visible on Pià d'Ort R. 24 (Bellaspiga 1995), where a warrior with rectangular empty body partially covers an inscription in pre-Roman alphabet showing elements of the Romanization period and being probably in phase with the many Introbio knives (1st century BC) depicted on the same panel. Although this warrior has flexed legs and a small round shield, we can assume that this rectangular and empty body format was indeed in use at least between the Iron Age and the romanisation phase.

The presence of large rectangular shields with a central boss, handled spears and swords hanging from the waist seem to indicate a gallic armament, but everything is very schematic and difficult to compare with actual objects. The absence of indisputably datable weapons carried by warriors, such as the well-known *Hellebardenaxt*, so numerous instead in the Paspardo areas and in Piancogno⁴¹, is in fact quite problematic. Why, with this concentration of supposedly very Late Iron Age warriors in Seradina I, there is not even a single occurrence of the *Hellebardenaxt*, which in fact is one of the clearest chronological markers of this period (Fossati 1998; Marretta 2017), remains a question unanswered. As, by contrast, it is unclear the reason why these warriors should really wear a round *kardiophylax* (Fossati 1998, 2007), which, as far as we know from material culture, is a typical mid-Adriatic defensive armour in use between

the 7th and the 5th century BC. It's unmistakeable that there is not an immediate answer to these apparent contradictions and that further investigations are needed to unravel the complex issue of the “stylistic sequence” of Valcamonica rock art during the Iron Age.

The very last carving activity in the area is finally represented by modern engraving that could be attributed to the intense historical presence in the area, well-testified by the careful terracing of the S-E flank of the hill, by the Strada della Greppa presence close to the Western flank and by the important placement of the Romanesque church of San Siro bordering the Seradina area to the South.

3. The archaeological context (PR)

3.1 The background

As already mentioned (§2.1), the research activities carried out between 1981 and 1984 in the area of Seradina I Corno were included in the annual fieldwork programme of the CCSP, then directed by E. Anati. In 1981-1983, some excavations were carried out under the direction of M. Simoes De Abreu, to uncover parts of the large R. 12 that were still buried: we have no information about the methodology used in these activities, except for a small amount of material without further contextual subdivision⁴². In 1983 a second programme of excavations began at Corno di Seradina, on the two plateaus on the southern side of the hill, under the direction of U. Sansoni. (Fig. 21). The information we have on these excavations is also unsatisfactory (Sansoni 1984a): it is reported that an unspecified number of trenches were excavated on both plateaus, without any indication of their shape, size or name, while no plan or photograph of the excavation is provided. Even the mention of finds is cursory, as “ceramic and lithic finds, together with slags and part of a probable stone structure with burnt remains, dated to the Early Bronze Age⁴³ are mentioned with no graphic rendition or further specification. Other activities were carried out roughly on the same spot in 1984. In this case, the direction was taken by E. Ingravallo (University of Lecce), who opened an excavation sector “immediately downstream of rock 19⁴⁴. The site manager's brief report reveals a different strategy from the previous year: whereas in 1983 an unspecified number of independent investigations had been carried out, in 1984 it was decided to excavate an area of 20 square metres, which was then divided into squares of 1 metre on each side (Ingravallo 1984: 22). Despite this, no stratigraphic or large-scale excavations were carried out. In fact, only six squares of the total area were investigated using a non-stratigraphic methodology: 6 cm thick vertical cuts⁴⁵ were made, and no documentation other than some photographs is available today. No research campaign has been followed, and the data obtained from the two excavations were neither analysed nor published. As for the artefacts found, they remained unpublished and their location forgotten over the years, so they were considered lost⁴⁶. A third excavation, a single trench that was neither officially authorised nor carried out according to a verifiable methodology, was carried out on the eastern plateau by A. Priuli in the mid-1980s⁴⁷.

⁴⁰ Fossati 1998; de Marinis & Fossati 2012.

⁴¹ Fossati 2007; Priuli 1993. But in Piancogno, for example, the warriors wielding this type of weapon are depicted in a much more “naturalistic” style and are therefore very different from the rectangular and empty body seen here. This is one of the strongest pieces of evidence against an evolutionary lineage of human styles common throughout the entire Valcamonica and found in the literature so far.

⁴² For a brief history of the studies, see §1. For the complete study and publication of R. 12 of Seradina I, see Marretta 2018. Anati 1983 refers to excavations carried out in the year 1983, but the evidence of some 1981 and 1982 excavations is given by Simoes De Abreu 1983: 5. Further information about these activities was documented by the author in 2021, on the occasion of the study of the archaeological material then kept at the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici in the inventory of a small batch of chronologically incoherent material marked: “1982. Corno di Seradina roccia 12 - Sondaggio A”.

⁴³ In Italian: “*reperti ceramici e litici, scorie di fusione e parte di una probabile struttura in pietra con resti di combustione attribuibili all'antica età del Bronzo*”: Sansoni 1984a: 4.

⁴⁴ In Italian: “*immediatamente a valle della roccia 19*”: Ingravallo 1984: 21.

⁴⁵ The “*per plana*” technique mentioned in Vidale 2022: 51.

⁴⁶ The finds from the two excavations were initially assigned to the author for study in 2010 by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia, as part of the database for the doctoral thesis (University of Pavia, 2010-2013). The impossibility of finding the materials eventually led to the exclusion of the lot from that work.

⁴⁷ Personal communication by A. Priuli, whom we thank for the collaboration.



Fig. 20 – Seradina I Corno: the western plateau in the summer of 2021, seen from the NW, before the start of the archaeological activities. On the left is R. 62, on the right R. 19. In the centre of the plateau, still visible from the 1980s, from right to left, the beta, epsilon and eta trenches (panoramic photograph: PR). / **Fig. 20** – Seradina I Corno: il pianoro occidentale nell'estate del 2021, ripreso da NW, all'inizio delle attività archeologiche. Sulla sinistra è visibile la R. 62, sulla destra la R. 19. Al centro del pianoro, ancora visibili dagli anni '80, da destra a sinistra, le trincee beta, epsilon e eta (fotografia panoramica: PR).

3.2 Digging up Seradina Corno

3.2.1 The site.

Although the available data on the “old” research at Corno di Seradina is scarce and the various field operations difficult to reconstruct, the location of the site in the immediate vicinity of several engraved rocks, its position in front of the Quattro Dossi site (Fig. 2), combined with the reported discovery of Bronze Age material with evidence of metalworking, aroused interest. The opportunity arose when, in 2021, the original artefacts from the 1982-1984 excavations were found again at the CCSP⁴⁸, allowing the ceramic and lithic artefacts and metallurgical slags from the various 1983 trenches and the 1984 excavation squares to be inventoried and studied⁴⁹. At the same time, thanks to the inclusion of archaeological activities in the project for the study of the Seradina area by the Park Direction, excursions have also been organised to re-establish contact with the site. The area of the Corno di Seradina affected by the archaeological activities is the one facing south-east. It is dominated by a wide flat area (which we refer to as “western plateau”) that opens out at the foot of a large rocky massif, and measures approximately 21 m NE-SW and 13 m NW-SE, at 426 m above sea level (Fig. 3, 20).

This open area is bounded and supported to the SE by a terracing wall of indeterminate date. Three other smaller artificial plateaus, also supported by dry-stone terracing, lie below the main one to the SE, are connected by short ramps and, in the case of the lowest one, by three steps. This terraced articulation faces the valley floor and represents an anthropic structuring of this slope, useful both to allow access from the valley floor paths and to exploit as much land as possible. None of these lower plateaus have been archaeologically investigated, nor are we aware of any archaeological presence here. The second plateau (“eastern plateau”) mentioned by Sansoni in his report on the 1983 activities (Sansoni 1984a) is smaller (about 10 m

NE-SW x 8.5 m NW-SE) than the one just described and is located a few metres to the east, at 422 m a.s.l. It is a natural flat area of sub-circular shape placed above a series of glacial pits. These natural rocky wells are of extraordinary naturalistic interest, but also archaeological, considering that a series of 9 steps have been carved into the rocky base of the hill to facilitate the access (Fig. 15).

3.2.2 Analysis of past research.

With regard to the data from the 1983 excavation, it must be pointed out that the available documentation does not clarify the exact number of trenches dug at that time (from July 6th to August 8th), nor the methodology used. It was only a visit to the site that helped to solve this problem, as the original trenches can still be clearly seen in the grassland⁵⁰ (Fig. 7, 20). To date, nine trenches can be seen on the Corno di Seradina: seven on the western plateau and two on the eastern plateau. In the absence of the original names, it was decided to use the Greek alphabet for the operational part of the 2021/2023 fieldwork. Their shape and dimensions are more or less regular: almost all are 1 m trenches on either side. Based on their relative position and common orientation, we can attribute the three 1 m square trenches and the single 1 x 2 m trench in the central part of the summit plateau to the 1984 campaign, which we know was carried out on a precise square grid positioned in the centre of the plateau, directly aligned with the engraved R. 19. We know from the report that six of the 20 squares in the grid were investigated. In the field, we were only able to identify five squares (*beta*, *gamma*, *delta* and *epsilon*): based on the data from the original artefact bags, we can assume that their original designations were A1, A4+A5 (which were excavated together), C3 and D1. The sixth excavated square mentioned in the published note could not be identified on the field nor it is mentioned in the notes on the artefact bags. The remaining two trenches on the western plateau (*alpha* and *eta*) are a few metres

⁴⁸ I would like to thank Dr. P. Medici for the find and the report. The materials were then given over to the ABAP Superintendency for the Provinces of Bergamo and Brescia.

⁴⁹ A selection of the material is presented in this work. A complete edition of the artefacts will be included in Vol. II of the study “Protostoria delle Valli Lombarde” (Vol. I: Rondini 2022), which is in preparation. The metallurgical slags have been studied by R. Poggiani Keller and C. Giardino and will be part of a forthcoming study.

⁵⁰ Contrary to current practice, the excavated soil was not repositioned in the trenches and the area was not restored to its original state.

Tab. 2 – Seradina: state of the available documentation on past research. / **Tab. 2** – Seradina: stato della documentazione disponibile sulle ricerche passate.

Excavation	Published	Unpublished report	Photographic documentation	Graphic documentation (plans, sections)	Study of material culture	Location of artefacts
1982 Simoes De Abreu	Short note (Simoes De Abreu 1984)	No	Yes (Archivio Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici)	No	No	Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina
1983 Sansoni	Short note (Sansoni 1984a)	No	Yes (Archivio Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici)	No	No	Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina
1984 Ingravallo	Short note (Ingravallo 1984)	No	Yes (Archivio Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici)	No	No	Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina
Late '80s Priuli	No	No	No	No	No	Unknown



Fig. 21 – Seradina I Corno, western plateau: trench eta, 1983 excavations (photograph: Archive of the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, code EUR83XLIII015) / **Fig. 21** – Seradina I Corno, pianoro occidentale: trincea eta, scavi 1983 (fotografia: Archivi del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, codice EUR83XLIII015).

SW and NE of the 1984 grid, and do not have the same orientation: they can therefore be attributed to the 1983 campaign, together with the northernmost trench (*theta*) on the eastern plateau. The easternmost trench found on this plateau (*iota*), due to its slightly different size compared to the rest of the interventions, and thanks to the author's personal communications, is undoubtedly the one made by A. Priuli at the end of the 1980s (Fig. 3).

As far as the excavation methodology is concerned, we know from the published report (Ingravallo 1984) that the methodology used in 1984 was that of 6 cm artificial cuts. As for 1983, thanks to the study of the notes on the pottery bags, we know that almost all of the material found came from only one of the three trenches opened at that time, which was excavated with seven artificial cuts of unreported depth. On the other hand, we have no news of the Priuli excavations, whose material is still not available.

3.2.3 The 2021 research.

In 2021, following the rediscovery of the material from the 1983-

1984 excavations and several visits to the site⁵¹, an archaeological exploratory activity was begun, carried out in close contact with the old excavations. This method, which has already been successfully applied to the Dos dell'Arca (Rondini 2016; Rondini et al. 2018) and Verucchio-Pian del Monte (Rondini & Zamboni 2016) sites, allows us to pick up the threads of old, interrupted studies, producing new data and at the same time reviving old ones. In the summer of 2021, after the initial clearing of vegetation, the first archaeological action to be undertaken was the reopening of the 1983 *alpha* trench, located on the south-western edge of the western plateau, close to a loose stone wall enclosing the flat area.

Work began by removing the soil that had naturally collapsed inside the trench after it had been abandoned. A PVC sheet, held in place by some rocks, indicated the level reached in the old excavations, 55 cm below the ground. Its size, slightly increased by the partial collapse of the soil inside the trench, was originally 1 x 1 m. Cleaning of the trench bottom revealed a level of compact, flat clayey silt (US 1101) of a vivid yellow ochre colour with reddish hues, characterised by the widespread presence of gravel. Several large sandstone blocks outcrop in several places of the layer, which did not appear anthropogenically altered and can be interpreted as the barren glacial layer of the area. The only evidence of some interest uncovered during these activities was an oval-shaped layer, about 20 cm deep, identified near the southern trench limit: the clearing of this layer (US 1104), dark in colour (Munsell Soil Color Chart reference 7.5YR 2.5/2, Very Dark Brown) and slightly more organic, did not yield any artefacts, and was not investigated further. Trimming and observation of the trench walls shows that the glacial subsoil at this site has not undergone any obvious anthropogenic remodelling and is covered by a thick layer of brown clay. The cleaning of the cross-sections allowed the discovery of some tiny sherds of coarse ware pottery, comparable to the artefacts from the 1983-1984 excavations, along with some more recent artefacts. However, their provenance was linked to a layer of infill that was mixed and of inhomogeneous characteristics and chronology. The trench therefore provided poor archaeological evidence, inconsistent with the data given by Sansoni for the 1983 fieldwork, and was closed following measurements, photographs and sketches.

The second trench to be reopened⁵² was called *epsilon*, the fifth from south to north. It is the largest, located in the centre of

⁵¹ During one of them, in 2019, some tiny fragments of pottery and flint were found over the ground on the top of the hill and on the north-eastern flank of the "Corno Area" (Fig. 3, the area labelled as "northern sector"). These materials, too small to be significantly reproduced but enough to cause a spark of interest on the site, were then handed over to the Soprintendenza ABAP per le province di Bergamo e Brescia.

⁵² In this case, the same procedure was followed as in *alpha*: only the recent soil was removed to reveal the exact situation in which the trench was abandoned in 1984. However, a small widening was decided on the SE side due to an animal shelter found there, which partially destroyed the profile of the trench, reaching the size of 2,55 x 1,45 m.

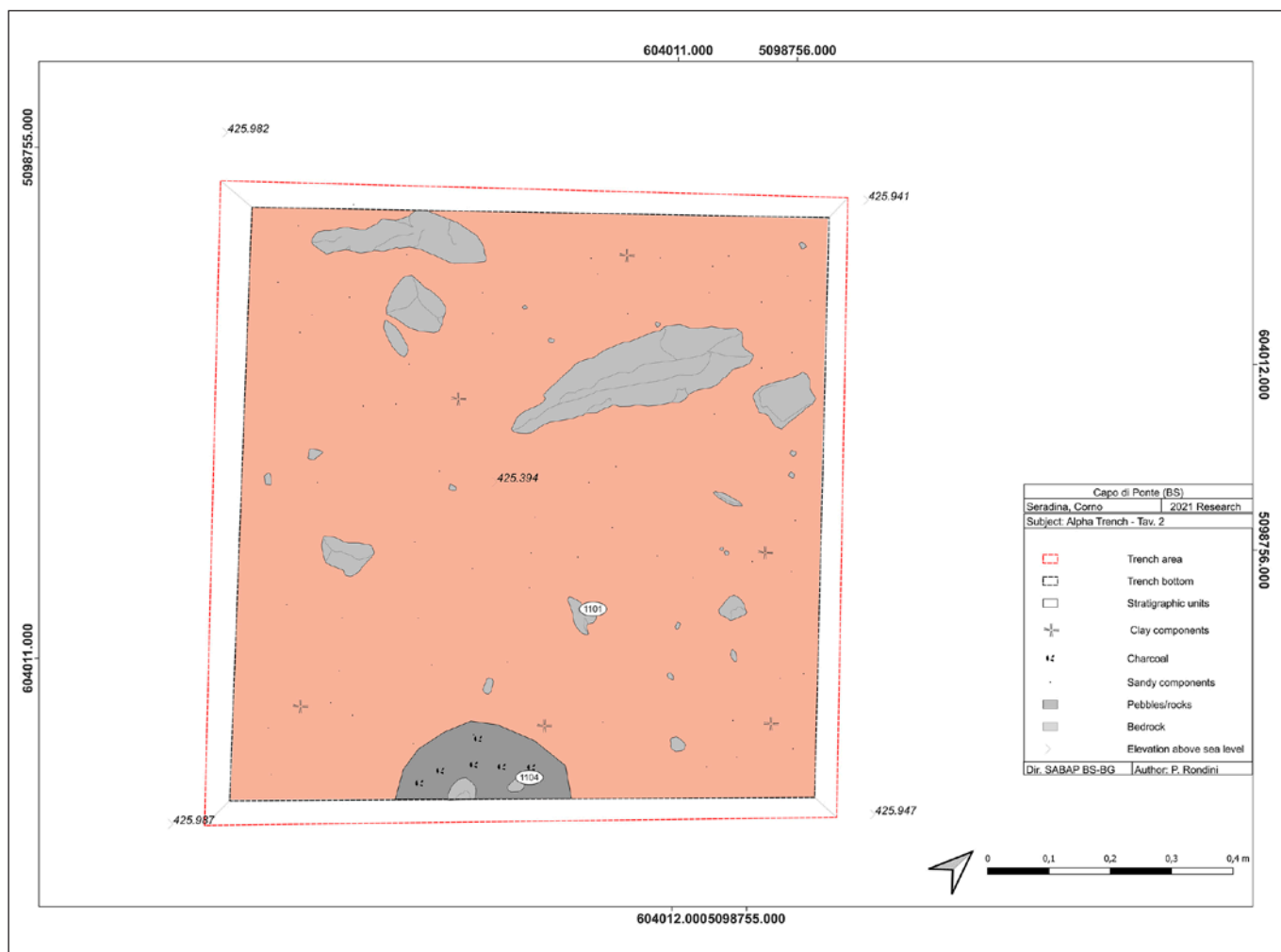


Fig. 22 – Seradina I Corno, trench alpha, 2021 excavations (GIS elaboration: PR) / **Fig. 22** – Seradina I Corno, trincea alpha, scavi 2021 (elaborazione GIS: PR).

the plateau and it was originally opened in 1984. Its size covered almost two complete squares of the 1984 grid (Fig. 23 B), probably the original “A4 and A5”. The exposed soil revealed a situation similar to that of *alpha*, with a layer of compact, reddish clay with gravel (US 1203) alternating with less compact, yellowish lenses, about 50-60 cm below the surface, resting on a base of rock (Permian sandstone, the so-called “Verrucano Lombardo”). Unlike the first trench, where the layer had been spared, the 1984 excavation of this area had partially removed it by reaching the bedrock.

However, thanks to a slight widening of the investigation and the observation of its cross-section (Figs. 23 A, 25), it was noted that this level 1203 had a curvilinear course in both its northern and southern sections, suggesting that it may have originally had a concave shape. It can therefore be assumed that it was an undercut structure with a flat bottom and sloping sides, a kind of artificial pit or wide ditch. The basal layer (US 1204), a yellowish gravelly/sandy compact natural formation, interfacing with the bedrock, was not removed and the trench was later closed.

The very few materials associated with layer 1202 are compatible with the level already described in the *alpha* trench: modern glazed ceramic sherds mixed with tiny pieces of refined ware, such as the wall (Fig. 26, n. 1) with a combed surface, related to a well-known type of artefact of the Late Iron Age in Valcamonica

such as the large truncated-cone pans. A single ^{14}C date was obtained from a charcoal from the lower part of this layer, at the interface with the underlying 1203, which is consistent with these observations: 2110 ± 40 , 2σ 206-36 cal BC (90%)⁵³, thus dating the brown fill layer of the site to the Late Iron Age, the very same period to which most of the petroglyphs of the area can be attributed (§2.4.3).

The trimming of the western profile, carried out for its documentation, also allowed to scratch the exposed section of 1203, the upper part of which yielded some coarse pottery sherds (Fig. 26, n. 2) compatible with a Bronze Age date, together with some small copper slags and some stone grinders and sandstone percussion tools (Fig. 26, nn. 3-5). These elements are consistent with a possible Bronze Age date, not so much for the 1203 deposit itself, which can easily be interpreted as the natural glacial subsoil of the area, but for the use of its surface, as well as its artificial treatment with a “U” cut. We can also establish a link between this processing of the natural subsoil and the metallurgical sphere: indeed, both the slags and the sandstone tools point in this direction. As far as a more precise dating is concerned, the vagueness of the elements at our disposal prevents us from doing so for the moment: we can, however, look for clues in the *eta* ditch, only 2.3 m NE.

⁵³ The analysis was performed by Università degli Studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli” – Dipartimento di Matematica e Fisica labs, lab Code DSH11268_WO. It gave the following complete result: 2110 ± 40 , 1σ 172-88 cal BC (76%), 81-53 cal BC (24%); 2σ 349-310 cal BC (8%), 206-36 cal BC (90%), 14-4 cal AD (2%).



Fig. 23 – Trench epsilon, 2021 excavations: A. the northern section; B. the trench, photographed from N (photographs: PR) / **Fig. 23** – Trincea epsilon, scavi 2021: A. la sezione Nord; B. la trincea, fotografata da N (fotografie: PR).

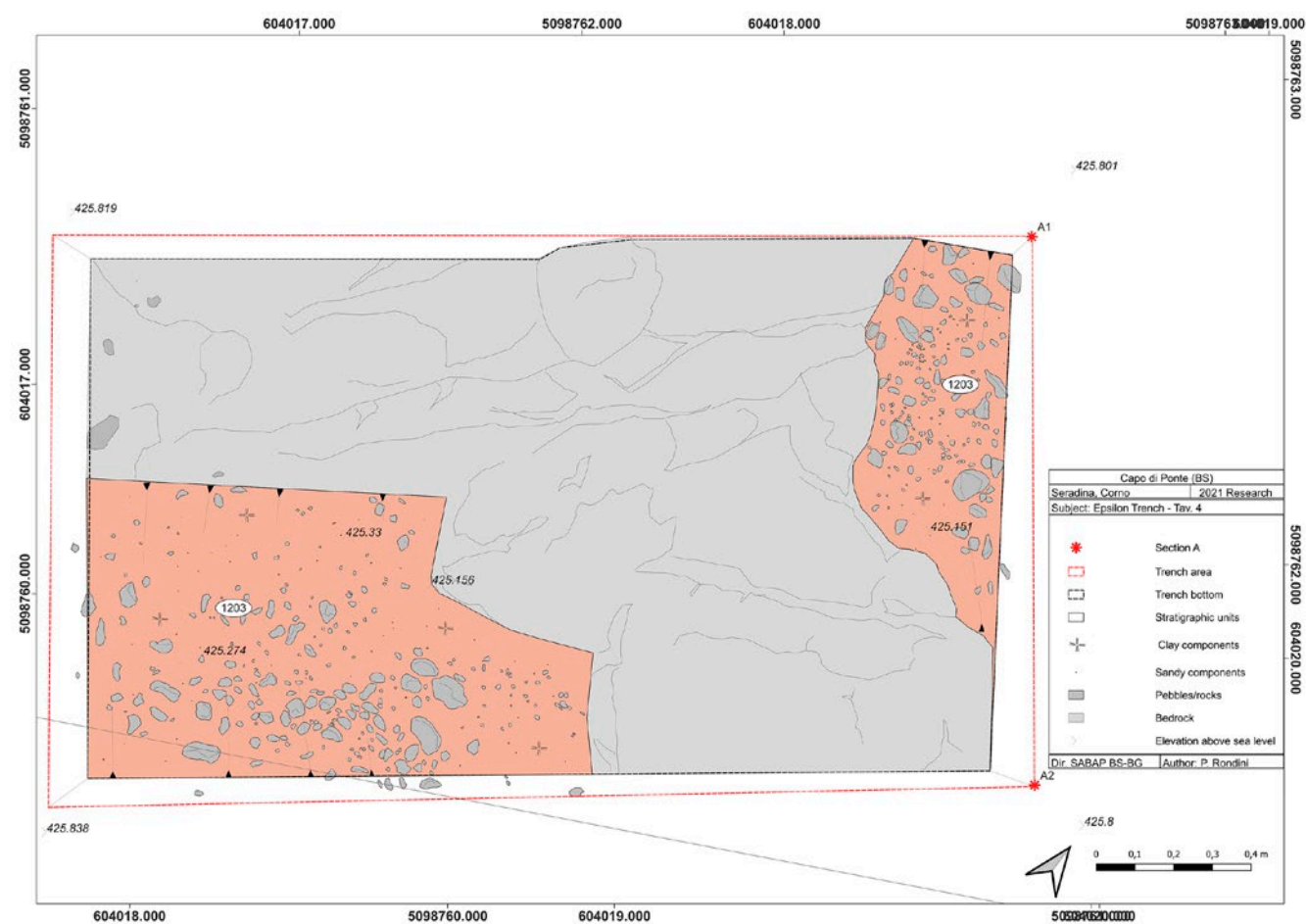


Fig. 24 – Trench epsilon, 2021 excavations (GIS elaboration: PR) / Fig. 24 – Trincea epsilon, scavi 2021 (elaborazione GIS: PR).

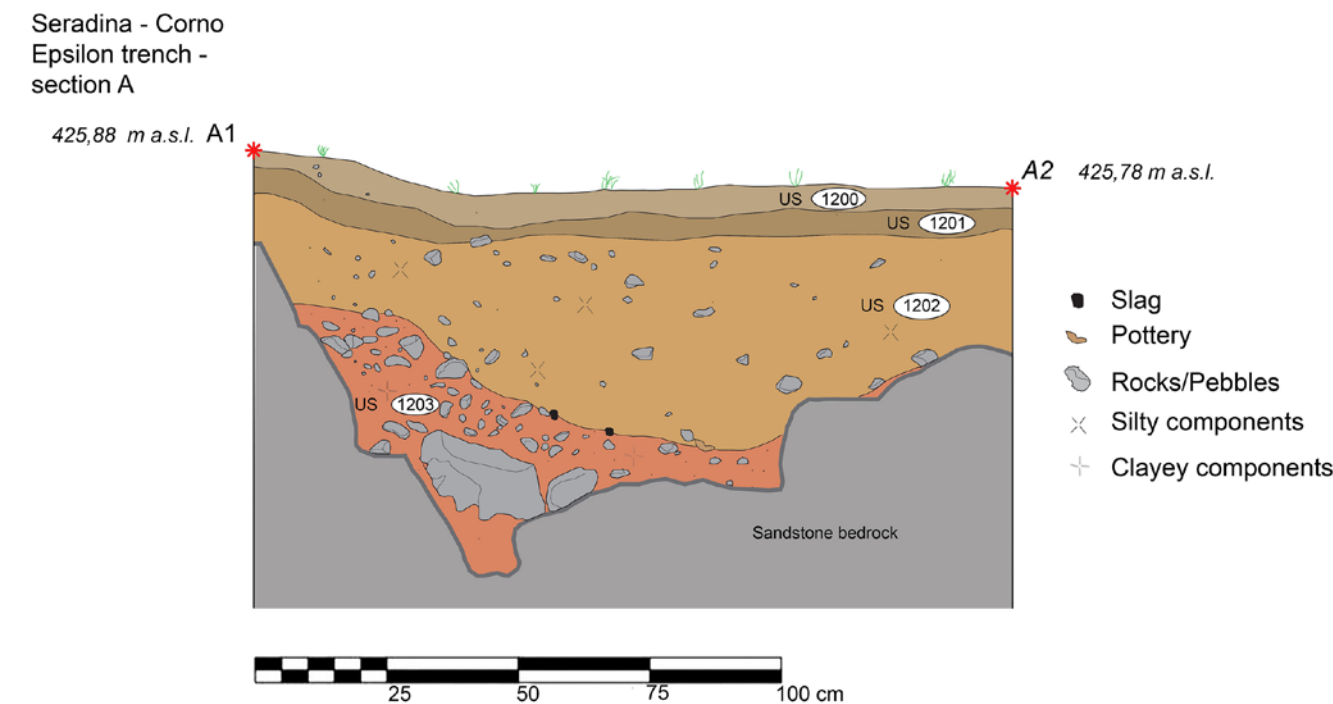


Fig. 25 – Trench epsilon, 2021 excavations: the northeastern section “A” (elaboration: PR) / Fig. 25 – Trincea epsilon, scavi 2021: la sezione nordorientale “A” (elaborazione: PR).

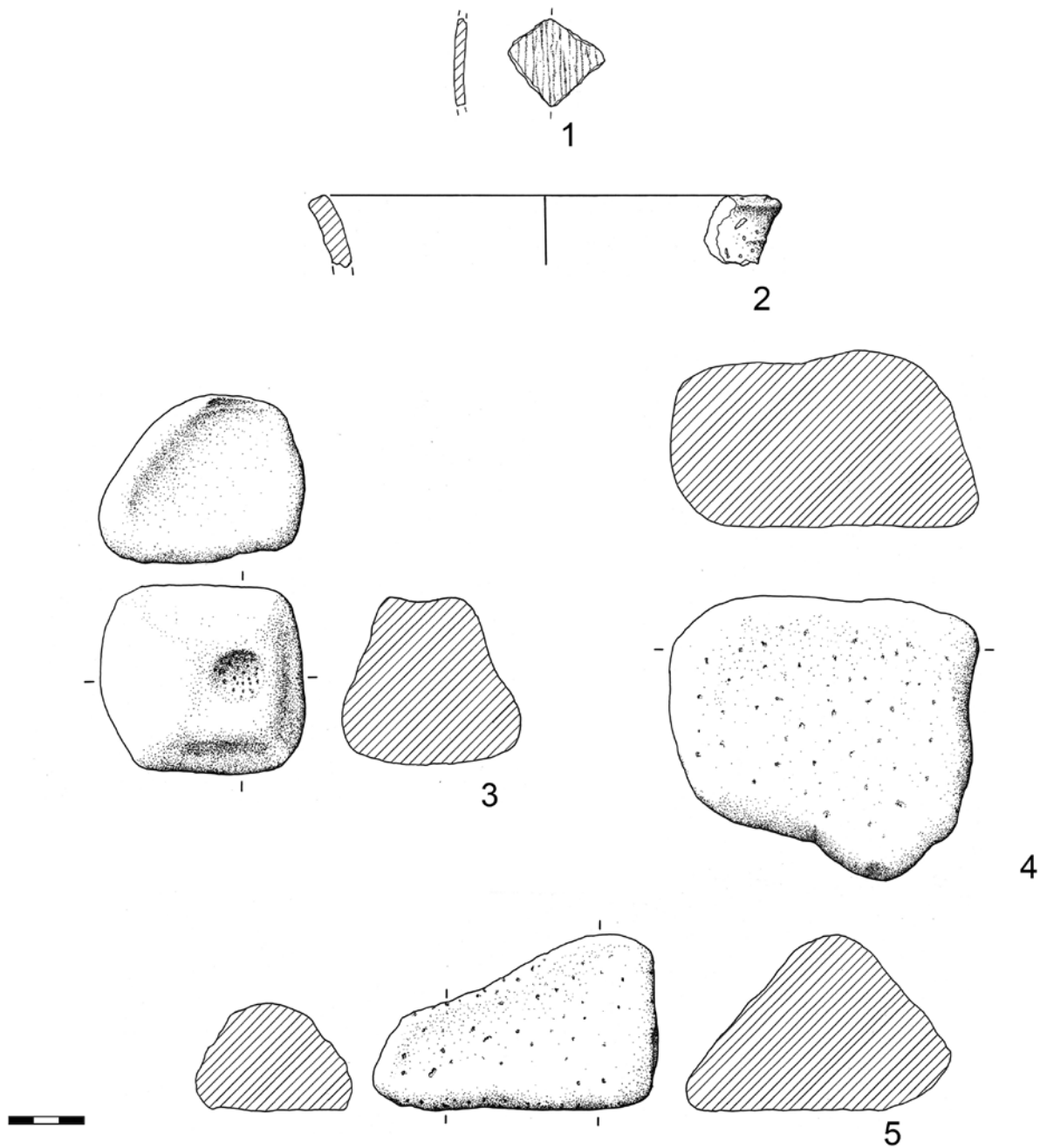


Fig. 26 – Trench epsilon, 2021 excavations: material culture (1-2: pottery; 3-5: stone). Scale 1:3 (Drawings: PR) / **Fig. 26** – Trincea epsilon, scavi 2021: cultura materiale (1-2: ceramica; 3-5: pietra). Scala 1:3 (disegni: PR).

3.2.4 The 2023 research.

After a break in 2022, the research was resumed in 2023. This time, the trench chosen was *eta*, the north-easternmost one of the main plateaus, originally opened here in 1983 under the direction of U. Sansoni, and the one most likely to have yielded the majority of the artefacts. As in the previous two cases, the method chosen was to simply reopen the old trench and restore it to its 1983 state for up-to-date documentation.

After removing the recently fallen soil from the sections and the PVC plastic sheeting, it soon became clear that the old excavation, in this case a square of the usual size of 1 x 1 m, extended down to the bedrock of the area. The profiles were then trimmed to an area of 1.20 x 1.20 m, to provide sufficient visibility for observation and documentation of the stratification (Fig. 27). The rocky base of the hill, the usual Permian sandstone, has two oblique flanks (NW and NE) on a horizontal ground plane, cracked and fissured. The NW

flank has a 90° cut forming a kind of step, which could be the result of intentional working, as well as its basal part. Part of a reddish brown (Munsell Soil Color Chart 5YR 4/3 Reddish Brown) topsoil level with stones (US 1301), comparable in height and character to level 1202 identified in the *epsilon* trench, is preserved in the N corner of the trench and remains well visible in all the four recorded profiles (Fig. 28 B).

Also visible in all four sections, but particularly thick in the NW and SW profiles, is a sequence of two silty and highly carbonaceous deep-black layers. The upper one (1302), richer in stones and fluvial pebbles, yielded numerous coarse pottery remains of protohistoric age, stone tools and slags, consistent with those from the 1983 excavation (see §3.2.5 for material culture analysis). The lower level (1303), also rich in charcoal, yielded a smaller quantity of the same artefacts, and rested directly on the bedrock. All in all, these two levels seem to fill in and partially cover an artificial working of the



Fig. 27 – Trench eta, 2023 excavations: the trench photographed from SW. In the foreground, upstream of the trench, R. 62. In the background, the top of the massif and R. 41 (Photograph: PR). / **Fig. 27** – Trincea eta, scavi 2023: la trincea fotografata da SW. Appena a monte della trincea, la R. 62. Sullo sfondo, la cima del massiccio roccioso e la R. 41 (fotografia: PR).

rock, made to create some sort of regular basin, or pit. The stone tools, the slags and the coaly soil suggest that this structure was related to metalworking. The slag and the grinding and percussion tools seem to indicate some fragmentation and smelting activity in the area, but the polished stone hammerhead also seem to indicate other types of more refined working in the area (Fig. 29, n. 12: *infra* for analysis). The absence of direct traces of firing and pyroclastic activity on the bedrock would seem to indicate that this structure, although associated with metalworking, was probably not a furnace in itself, but rather an auxiliary, accessory pit. Possible comparisons can be seen in the “Sulzbach-Moos” bog at the Mitterberg (Salzburg, Austria), where several wet beneficiation wooden boxes were found in the vicinity of the metalworking area (Stöllner 2019),

as well as in Rotholz in the Lower Inn Valley (Staudt et al. 2019: 282) and, finally, in the eastern alpine area of Italy during the Bronze Age (Bellintani et al. 2021: 306-310). After completing its documentation and taking two soil samples from the two charcoal-rich levels for possible further lab analyses, the trench was closed in accordance with a procedure previously agreed with the officer in charge of the Soprintendenza ABAP BG-BS.

3.2.5 The material culture.

As already mentioned, the reopening of the three trenches on the western plateau of Seradina I Corno has made it possible to shed new light on the old excavations and to clarify which of the numerous trenches visible on the ground belonged to which campaign. It also became evident that the vast majority of the material from the 1983 excavations came from a single trench, the one here called *eta*⁵⁴. In the present paper we will present the entirety of the material recovered during the 2023 explorations (Fig. 29, nn. 4, 7-9, 11-12, 14-15), which came mostly from the profile trimming of US 1302⁵⁵, together with a selection of artefacts from the 1983 excavation⁵⁶ (Fig. 29, nn. 1-3.5-6, 10, 13, 16), suitable for a better chrono-cultural framing of the context. The globular-bodied small mug with sinuous, S shaped profile and a ribbon-shaped handle on the shoulder, in coarse ware partially burned (Fig. 29, n. 1), finds plenty of comparison in the Polada culture artefacts in the Early Bronze Age northern Italy. It responds well to the typological analysis of M. Rapi⁵⁷ (2020: 43-52 and fig. 41 n. 4) and finds comparisons with the Lavagnone (Rapi 2007: 126-130, fig. 9, n. 4-5) and Lucone-site D (Baioni et al. 2022: 488, fig. 3B, n. 4), where it is dated to the Lavagnone 3 and Lucone 2 A-B phases, which in turn date to the Early Bronze Age I B-C (1985-1750 cal BC: de Marinis 2022: 422 and tab. 2). Similar comparisons can be indicated for the small pot or jug with a slightly folded rim (Fig. 29, n. 3), which resembles some jugs from Lavagnone, sector A, US 337 (Rapi 2020, 104 and tav. 17, n. 128) and is dated accordingly with the aforementioned globular mug. The carinated bowl with a short vertical rim and a mildly swollen edge (Fig. 29, n. 2) is in turn comparable to similar artefacts from the Lavagnone 3-EBA I C phase (Rapi 2007: 161, fig. 25, n. 105), or even the contemporaneous – or slightly later – phase II of Canà di Castelnovo Bariano, in Polesine, present-day Veneto (de Marinis et al. 2015: 286, fig. 5, n. 16). The truncated-conical jar with cord decoration and ribbon-shaped handle set directly on the cord is, in turn, comparable with artefacts from the same period in Lavagnone (Rapi 2007: 162, fig. 26, n. 118). More generally, the presence of smooth cords (Fig. 29, nn. 8, 9), sometimes with multiple inclinations (Fig. 29, n. 7) or with plastic handles directly attached, seems to be typical of the period, as it finds many comparisons in most of the known settlement sites. Also, the ribbon-shaped handle with central cord fits well in this line of comparison, finding similarities at the Lucone pile-dwelling (Baioni et al. 2022: 488, fig. 3, nn. 14-4).

It is worth noting that many of the ceramic sherds have been produced in the same coarse pottery and show frequent traces of fire exposure, sometimes to the point of corroding the outer surface (Fig. 29, n. 1), other times more limited, though present. During the trimming of the southwestern profile, a broken polished stone hammerhead has been also found (Fig. 29, n. 12; Fig. 30). This object belongs to a tradition that dates back to the earlier Copper Age, when similar tools, though usually squatter in proportions and with a sharp cutting edge, were called “iron-shaped” axes (“*asce a ferro da stiro*”: Casini 2003: 80). C. Iaia more recently studied

⁵⁴ Personal communication with the original director of the excavations, Umberto Sansoni, and with one of his former collaborators, Silvana Gavaldo, confirmed this conclusion. We would like to thank both colleagues for their collaboration.

⁵⁵ It was difficult to determine whether some of the artefacts also came from the upper part of US 1303. No significant difference was found in the material, so the context seems to be chronologically coherent in both levels.

⁵⁶ Also in this case, the different “cuts” operated during the excavation have yielded a material culture consistent in both chronological and cultural analysis.

⁵⁷ With a depth index of 1:3, the mug from Seradina I Corno is well aligned with the percentages of Lavagnone 3A (EBA I B), or even 3B (EBA I C): Rapi 2020: 51, figg. 46-48.

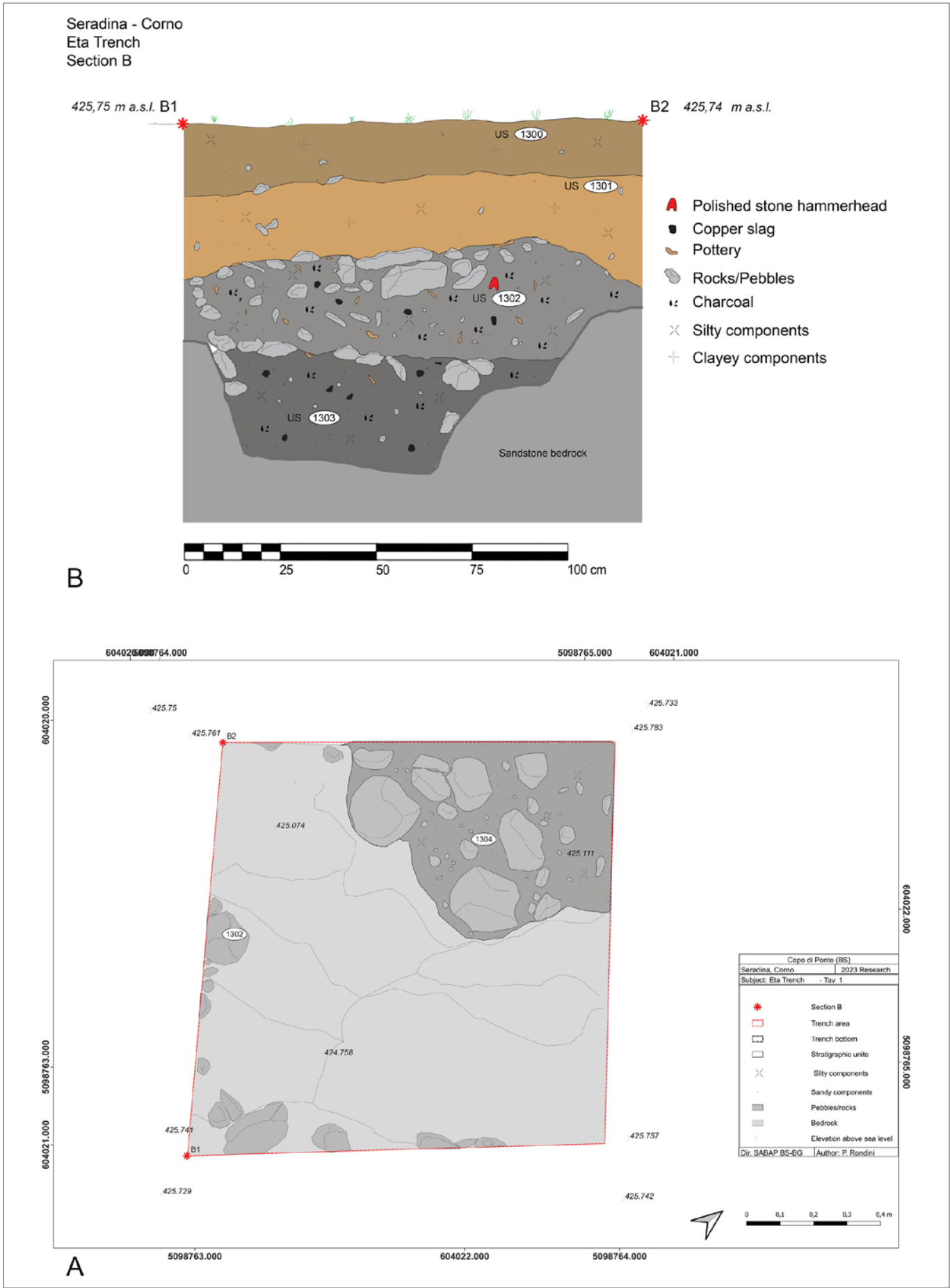


Fig. 28 – Trench eta, 2023 excavations. A: plan; B: section “B” (elaboration: PR) / **Fig. 28** – Trincea eta, scavi 2023. A. planimetria; B. sezione “B” (elaborazione: PR).

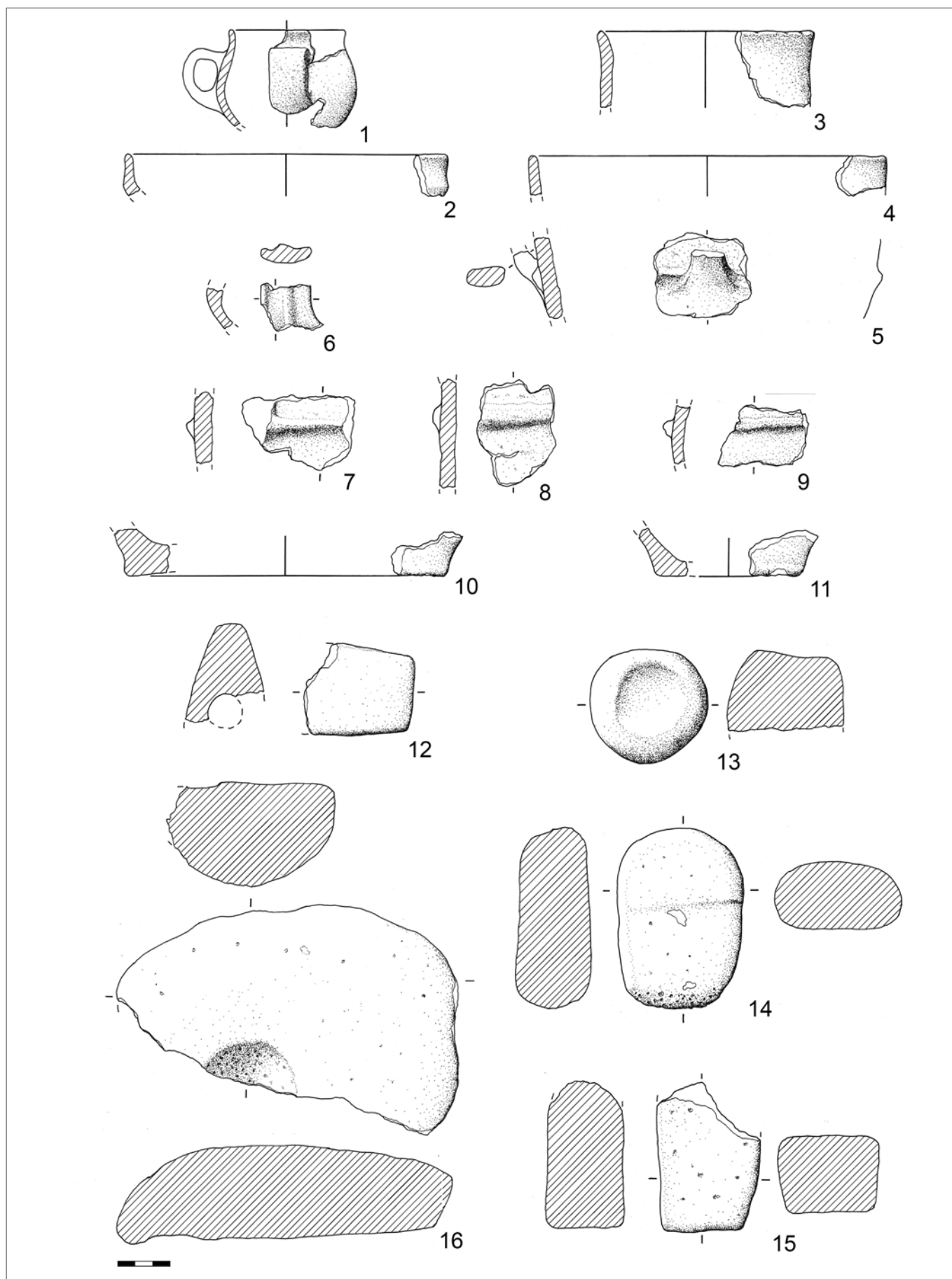


Fig. 29 – Trench eta, 1983 (nn. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 16) and 2023 (nn. 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15) excavations: material culture (1-11: pottery; 12-16: stone). Scale 1:3 (drawings: PR) / **Fig. 29** – Trincea eta, scavi 1983 (nn. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 16) e 2023 (nn. 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15): cultura materiale (1-11: ceramica; 12-16: pietra). Scala 1:3 (disegni: PR).



Fig. 30 – Trench eta, 2023 excavations: the polished stone hammerhead (photograph: PR) / **Fig. 30** – Trincea eta, scavi 2023: la testa di martello ad occhio in pietra levigata (fotografie: PR).

these instruments as part of the protohistoric metalworking toolkit, pointing out the characteristics that distinguish them from Eneolithic tools, which in turn were intended as weapons, including the

mostly central position of the eyelet for the handle, the absence of a true cutting edge (Iaia 2014: 67), generally slender proportions and smaller size. Most of the known specimens⁵⁸ come from the area north of the Po, often from early Bronze Age pile-dwellings such as Corno di Sotto (Desenzano, BS) or Isolone del Mincio (Volta Mantovana, BS), Canàr (Castelnovo Bariano, RO) or Lake Ledro (TN) and, less frequently, from Middle Bronze Age *terramare* (Villa Cappella, MN). The Seradina find is the result of a very fine polishing process that has significantly altered the raw material, a hard red-brown stone with large greyish inclusions⁵⁹. In addition, the outer surface of the artefact has a very particularly polished finish with fine reticulated cracks, as well as a brown colour that is slightly darker than that visible in the fracture. These elements lead to the hypothesis that the artefact has been directly exposed to fire, perhaps at high temperatures, but only further analysis will be able to verify this hypothesis.

Together with this, numerous active and passive percussion instruments (mallets, hammers, anvils, small anvils) and grinding artefacts (millstones, grinders), part of the instrumental apparatus typical of Bronze Age metallurgical sites, were found in both the 1983 (Fig. 29, nn. 13, 16) and 2023 (Fig. 29, nn. 14-15) investigations. The largest stone tool is an anvil broken into two pieces, made from a block of sandstone with a central cup mark (Fig. 29, n. 16). The object also appears to have been worked by grinding on both major faces and could well have been used as both a grinder and an anvil. Similar objects are usually found in metalworking areas and sites (Bellintani et al. 2021: 300; Poggiani Keller 2017: 124). Among the small anvils we can mention the one from the *Epsilon* trench, a small sandstone block with at least three sides modified with a central cup mark (Fig. 26, n. 3), and the one from the *eta* trench, a small pebble half broken with a concave surface (Fig. 29, n. 13), comparable to some crushing/grinding stone tools from the Mitterberg metalworking area in the Austrian Alps (Stöllner 2019: 179, fig. 3) and from the Transacqua Pezhe Alte US 303 (Bellintani et al. 2021: 300). Some percussion tools in local sandstone were also found (Fig. 29, nn.14-15), which can be compared with similar “pebble percussion tools” from the lake dwelling at Lavagnone (Casini 2003: 111, fig. 14, n. 60) or with some “double hammers with central groove” from Montale (Iaia 2014: 98, MD28). Several similar objects have also been recovered from the metalworking site of Malegno-via Cavour in Valcamonica (Rondini 2022: 121-122), where they were recovered in several waste pits and dismissed furnaces along with objects from both Bronze Age and Iron Age.

In conclusion, the ceramic material culture describes a site dated to the Early Bronze Age I B-C, perhaps with some more probability towards the later period, well aligned with the coeval productions of the Polada culture. The presence of several slags, possibly related to the production of copper⁶⁰, paired with the numerous stone tools and the evidence from the trenches *epsilon* and *eta* seem to indicate that this was a metalworking site.

4. Conclusions and perspectives (AM, PR)

All in all, the top of Seradina I reveals a clear and well-defined pattern of human presence. Rock art exhibits a noticeable low density, averaging just 14 figures per rock, and a limited thematic range focused on warriors and basic duel scenes. The chronological span is comparatively narrower than in other areas, with only a few images suggesting a potential activity during the 4th-2nd millennium BC, in contrast to a more pronounced presence in the 1st millennium BC. In this predominant phase, while a subset of images, such

⁵⁸ For a list with complete data on the material and contexts of discovery see Iaia 2014: 67-68.

⁵⁹ The petrographic study, which is also useful to speculate on the possible provenance of the stone, which, on initial analysis, appears to be non-local, is currently underway.

⁶⁰ For a study on the slag from Bronze Age alpine metalworking sites, see Reitmaier-Naef 2022. The slag from Seradina have been studied by R. Poggiani Keller and C. Giardino for a forthcoming study.

as the linear duellists, can be attributed to the early Iron Age, there is also a discernible shift towards the latter centuries of the millennium. This chronological alignment is particularly supported by the connection between the depictions of empty-bodied warriors and the pre-Roman inscriptions.

On the other hand, material culture reveals two distinct phases, encompassing the Early Bronze Age and the late Iron Age. The former is notably significant both in terms of quantity and quality, while the latter is indicated by a few pottery fragments and a ¹⁴C date. The presence of the Polada / pile-dwelling culture of the plain in the alpine area of Lombardy (Baioni 2017), or specifically in Valcamonica (Rondini 2022: 124-126), is not new but the context of Seradina I Corno stands out because it falls within a specific phase that has not been previously detected in the area. Another point of extraordinary interest is the undoubted metallurgical function of the site. We know that many of the protohistoric sites in Valcamonica are related in some way to copper production (Rondini 2022), and the data from Seradina I Corno now adds a new important piece of knowledge. In conjunction with that of the Dos dell'Arca site (Rondini et al. 2018), we can note that the metallurgical activity in Seradina preceded that of Dos dell'Arca by at least two centuries, anticipating both the cultural link with the Po Plain and the metallurgical function, two features that will become a marker of this portion of the valley.

In the light of these considerations, we can therefore establish two tenuous links between rock art and human presence at the site of Seradina I Corno. The first, and the most uncertain, is that of the Bronze Age. On the one hand, we are absolutely certain of a stable human presence - with a specific craft focus - at the site during the advanced EBA I, i.e. the first two and a half centuries of the 2nd millennium BC. On the other hand, we can mention the two linear figures engraved on R. 45B: if they were indeed reproductions of metal tools, we would be faced with a fortunate and significant case of expressive multimedia on the same site, mediating between the iconographic and material worlds. Unfortunately, their generality and representational simplicity is an insurmountable problem, and it must remain in the realm of suggestions. The second link is the one that connects the most represented phase of rock art, i.e. the Late Iron Age and the Romanisation phase, with the later occupation of the western plateau. This time we can mention several warrior figures, especially duellists with rectangular and empty bodies, but also a single, remarkable horseman and even a new inscription in pre-Roman alphabet. On the archaeological side, however, we have only a single ceramic fragment and a ¹⁴C measurement on charcoal from a levelling layer, and therefore no further consideration, especially on an interpretative level, can be made.

Despite the elusiveness of the relationship between rock art and context, which continues at this site, Seradina I Corno is undoubtedly of primary interest and deserves further research. Firstly, the entire rock art of the area must be documented, catalogued and analysed, as only a complete inventory of these often difficult to interpret signs can shed light on the human presence in the territory through the ages and on the peculiar thematic character expressed by each site, especially in the Capo di Ponte area. Secondly, and mostly on an archaeological level, new investigations are required to finally obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the place, of which we have had only glimpses and anticipations. In particular, it will be necessary to define the function of the structure found in the *epsilon* and, especially, in the *eta* trenches, as well as to try to identify other probable structures (furnaces or otherwise), in order to finally clarify the level of technology of metal processing present in Valcamonica during the Early Bronze Age.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere gratitude to Dr. Serena Solano and Dr. Cristina Longhi (SABAP Bergamo e Brescia) for their invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support

throughout the development of this research. We also acknowledge the municipality of Capo di Ponte for their collaboration and assistance in facilitating access to essential resources. Finally, we would like to thank the peer reviewer for the timely and stimulating set of observations that helped us arrive at the final version of this paper.

Bibliography

- Altheim F. & Trautmann E., 1937 – Nordische und italische Felsbildkunst. *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 3: 83-118.
- Anati E., 1965 – Stagione di ricerche: giugno-settembre '65: rapporto del Direttore. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, 1: 29-47.
- Anati E., 1966 – Rapporto del Direttore (per il 1966). *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, 2: 23-42.
- Anati E., 1982 – *I Camuni: alle radici della civiltà europea*. Jaca Book, Milano.
- Anati E., 1983 – Rapporto del direttore per l'anno 1983. *B.C. Notizie. Notiziario del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*. Vol. I, n.1: 9-28.
- Arcà A., 2016 – Maps in alpine rock art: cultivations and cultures, land plots and societies from Neolithic to Iron Age. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, 41: 7-32.
- Arruda A. M., 2017 – Boats carved on the Atlantic coast of the Iberian peninsula. Landscape, symbols and people. In: Betten-court A. M. S., Santos Estevez M., Sampaio H. A. & Cardoso D. (eds), *Recorded places, experienced places. The Holocene rock art of the Iberian Atlantic north-west*. British Archaeological Reports, Oxford: 193-207.
- Baioni, M. 2017 – I materiali archeologici dell'antica età del Bronzo. In: Baioni, M. (a cura di) – *Bione, Corna Nibbia. 5000 anni fa in Valle Sabbia*. Pubblicazione in occasione della Mostra, 17 settembre 2016, 26 marzo 2017, Bione, Pieve, Municipio, Sala Consiliare. Archeologia e Territorio, Volume 1. Salò: 120-134.
- Baioni M., Mangani C., Bona F., Gulino F., Longhi C., Martinelli N., Nicosia C., Perego R., Quirino T. & Redolfi Riva F., 2022 – Il sito D del Lucone di Polpenazze del Garda (BS): un breve quadro di sintesi. In: de Marinis R.C. & Rapi M. (a cura di): *Preistoria e Protostoria in Lombardia e Canton Ticino. Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche LXXII S2-2022*, Firenze: 479-493.
- Battaglia R., 1932 – Incisioni rupestri di Valcamonica. *Bullettino di Paleontologia Italiana*, 52: 69-74.
- Battaglia R., 1934 – Ricerche etnografiche sui petroglifi della cerchia alpina. *Studi Etruschi*, VIII: 11-48.
- Bellaspiga L., 1995 – Le iscrizioni nord-etrusche. In: Sansoni U. & Gavaldo S. (a cura di), *L'arte rupestre del Pià d'Ort: la vicenda di un santuario preistorico alpino*. Edizioni del Centro, Capo di Ponte: 177-183.
- Bellintani P., Silvestri E., Bassetti M., Cappelozza N., Degasperis N., Nicolis F., Pagan N. & Pearce M. 2021 – Fare Rame: quadro di sintesi su siti e strutture produttive della metallurgia primaria protostorica del Trentino. In: Bellintani P. & Silvestri E. (a cura di): *Fare Rame. La metallurgia primaria della tarda età del Bronzo in Trentino: nuovi scavi e stato dell'arte della ricerca sul campo*. Trento: 269-319.
- Bezzi J., 2021 – La roccia incisa n. 116 di Bial do le Scale, Paspardo. Contributi per lo studio dell'arte rupestre dello stile IV in Valcamonica. *Bulletin du Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique de Monaco*, 60: 81-88.
- Bossoni L., Roncoroni F., Montanari E. & Sigari D., 2016 – Vite 119 e La Bosca 006. Due rocce incise a Paspardo. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, 42: 67-78.
- Bradley R., 2020 – *A comparative study of rock art in later prehistoric Europe*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Casini S., 2003 – Manufatti in pietra dalla palafitta del Lavagnone (Desenzano del Garda, Brescia). *Notizie Archeologiche Bergomensi*, 11: 79-116.

- Casini S., 2012 – Le figure di armi della roccia 23 di Foppe di Nadro (Valcamonica): elementi per la cronologia delle incisioni dell'età del Bronzo. *Notizie Archeologiche Bergomensi*, 20: 243-253.
- Chippindale C., Quirino T., Marretta A., Ruggiero M. G. & Colella M., 2021 – “Pitoti dipinti”. Recovering the lost paintings of Valcamonica, Alpine Italy, with digital colour transforms: a new aspect to studying ancient European art. *Bulletin du Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique de Monaco*, 60: 89-106.
- de Marinis R. C. 2022 - La struttura cronologica dell'età del Bronzo in Italia settentrionale. In: de Marinis R.C. & Rapi M. (a cura di): *Preistoria e Protostoria in Lombardia e Canton Ticino. Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* LXXII S2-2022, Firenze: 415-424.
- de Marinis R. C. & Fossati A. E., 2012 – A che punto è lo studio dell'arte rupestre della Valcamonica. *Preistoria Alpina*, 46/II: 17-43.
- de Marinis R. C., Rapi M., Salzani L. & Spinelli G., 2015 – L'abitato dell'antica Età del bronzo di Canàr (Castelnovo Bariano, Rovigo). In: *Studi di Preistoria e Protostoria – 2 – Preistoria e Protostoria del Veneto*, Firenze: 279-288.
- Fossati A. E., 1991 – L'età del Ferro nelle incisioni rupestri della Valcamonica. In: La Guardia R. (a cura di), *Immagini di un'aristocrazia dell'Età del Ferro nell'arte rupestre camuna. Contributi in occasione della mostra a Milano, Castello Sforzesco*. Milano: 1-71.
- Fossati A. E., 1998 – La fase IV 5 (I sec. a.C.-I sec. d.C.) e la fine della tradizione rupestre in Valcamonica. *Notizie Archeologiche Bergomensi*, 6: 207-225.
- Fossati A. E., 2007 – L'arte rupestre a Paspardo, una panoramica tematica e cronologica. In: Fossati A. E. (a cura di), *La castagna della Valcamonica. Paspardo, arte rupestre e castanicoltura: dalla valorizzazione delle colture allo sviluppo della cultura, Paspardo 6-7-8 Ottobre 2006*. Comune di Paspardo, Paspardo: 17-34.
- Horn C., Potter R. & Peterzell M., 2023 – Water flows and water accumulations on bedrock as a structuring element of rock art. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 30/3: 828-854.
- Iaia C., 2014 – Ricerche sugli strumenti da metallurgico nella protostoria dell'Italia settentrionale. *Padusa*, L: 65-109.
- Ingravallo E., 1984 – Scavi archeologici a Seradina. *B.C. Notizie. Notiziario del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*. I/4: 21-22.
- Mancini A., 1980 – Le iscrizioni della Valcamonica. Parte I. Status della questione. Criteri per un'edizione e per un'interpretazione dei materiali. Edizione. *Studi Urbinati di Storia, Filosofia e Letteratura, Supplemento Linguistico n. 2*: 75-166.
- Mariotti V., 1999 – Il rilievo di Bormio tra storia e protostoria. Riesame stilistico e iconografico. In: Poggiani Keller R. (a cura di), *Il Convegno Archeologico Provinciale, Grosio 20-21 ottobre 1995*. Consorzio per il Parco delle Incisioni Rupestri di Grosio, Sondrio: 225-232.
- Marretta A., 2011 – L'arte rupestre del Coren di Redondo (Capo di Ponte, Valcamonica): novità e conferme dall'analisi integrale di un'area del versante occidentale. In: Anati E. (a cura di), *Valcamonica Symposium 2011. Arte e comunicazione nelle società pre-letterate*. Edizioni del Centro, Capo di Ponte: 285-293.
- Marretta A., 2014 – Capo di Ponte: le aree di Seradina I, II, III e il Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina. In: Ruggiero M. G. & Poggiani Keller R. (a cura di), *Il Progetto “Monitoraggio e buone pratiche di tutela del patrimonio del sito UNESCO n. 94 Arte rupestre della Valle Camonica”. Legge 20 febbraio 2006, n. 77, E.F. 2010*. Sestante Edizioni, Bergamo: 85-89.
- Marretta A., 2017 – Da Camunni a Romani: il ruolo dell'arte rupestre. In: Solano S. (a cura di), *Da Camunni a Romani. Archeologia e storia della romanizzazione alpina, Breno 10-11 Ottobre 2013*. Quasar Edizioni, Roma: 49-67.
- Marretta A., 2018 – *La Roccia 12 di Seradina I: documentazione, analisi e interpretazione di un capolavoro dell'arte rupestre alpina*. Edizioni del Parco di Seradina-Bedolina, Capo di Ponte.
- Marretta A., 2019 – Le tre *Forschungsreisen* in Valle Camonica (1935, 1936, 1937): inquadramento, metodi e dati raccolti. In: Marretta A. & Ruggiero M. G. (a cura di), *La Valle Camonica negli archivi storici dell'Istituto Frobenius: documenti e immagini (1935-37)*. Litos, Gianico: 43-64.
- Marretta A., 2022a – From the core to the periphery: notes on recent research in western rock art areas of Central Valcamonica. *Adoranten*, 2022: 85-102.
- Marretta A., 2022b – Le aree con arte rupestre di Seradina e Bedolina (Valcamonica, BS): ricerche 2011-2016. In: de Marinis R.C. & Rapi M. (a cura di): *Preistoria e Protostoria in Lombardia e Canton Ticino. Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche*, LXXII S2-2022, Firenze: 965-973.
- Marretta A. & Solano S., 2014 – *Pagine di Pietra: scrittura e immagini a Berzo Demo fra età del Ferro e romanizzazione*. Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia, Breno.
- Pauli L., 1973 – Ein latènezeitliches Steinrelief aus Bormio am Stilfser Joch. *Germania (Anzeiger der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts)*, 51: 85-120.
- Poggiani Keller R. (a cura di), 2017 – *MuPre. Museo Nazionale della Preistoria della Valle Camonica. Guida Breve*. Gianico.
- Priuli A., 1993 – *I graffiti rupestri di Piancogno. Le incisioni di età celtica e romana in Valle Camonica*. Società Editrice Vallecarnonica, Darfo Boario Terme.
- Prosdocimi A. L., 1965 – Per una edizione delle iscrizioni della Valcamonica. *Studi Etruschi*, XXXIII: 575-599.
- Radke G., 1962 – Neue Felsinschriften der Val Camonica. *Gymnasium. Zeitschrift für Kultur der Antike und humanistische Bildung*, 69/6: 497-520.
- Rapi M., 2007 – Lavagnone di Desenzano del Garda (BS), settore B: la ceramica del Bronzo Antico I. *Notizie Archeologiche Bergomensi*, 10 (2002): 109-185.
- Rapi M., 2020 – *Il complesso del Lavagnone 3. Scavi dell'Università degli Studi di Milano (1989-2006)*. Palafitte | Palafittes | Pfahlbauten | Pile Dwellings, Serie 2. Lavagnone. Volume n. 2.1, Quingentole.
- Reitmaier-Naef L., 2022 – *Die prähistorische Kupferproduktion im Oberhalbstein (Graubünden, Schweiz). Der Anschnitt*, 49, Buchum.
- Rondini P., 2016 – Dos dell'Arca (Capo di Ponte, BS). La ripresa dello studio, cinquant'anni dopo. In: Rondini P. & Zamboni L. (a cura di), *Digging Up Excavations. Processi di ricontestualizzazione di “vecchi” scavi archeologici: esperienze, problemi, prospettive*. Atti del Seminario, Pavia, Collegio Ghislieri, 15-16 gennaio 2015. Quasar Editore, Roma: 155-166.
- Rondini P., 2022 – *Protostoria delle Valli Lombarde. Vol. I: Insediamenti e materiali dalle province di Bergamo e Brescia*. Reditus – Studi di Archeologia, 2, Quasar Editore.
- Rondini P. & Marretta A., 2017 – Bridging the gap: rock art and archaeological context in the “Quattro Dossi” area (Capo di Ponte, Valcamonica, Italy). *Adoranten*, 2017: 1-19.
- Rondini P. & Marretta A., 2019 – Il sito protostorico di Dos dell'Arca (BS): la campagna di scavo e documentazione 2018 dell'Università di Pavia (Progetto Quattro Dossi – fase II). *Fold&r – Fasti Online Documents & Research*, 444: 1-38.
- Rondini P. & Marretta A., 2021 – Dos dell'Arca e l'area dei Quattro Dossi (Capo di Ponte): un aggiornamento. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, 45: 119-142.
- Rondini P. & Zamboni L., 2016 – Riscavare Verucchio. Problemi di metodo nei vecchi e nuovi scavi a Pian del Monte. In: Rondini P. & Zamboni L. (a cura di), *Digging Up Excavations. Processi di ricontestualizzazione di “vecchi” scavi archeologici: esperienze, problemi, prospettive*. Atti del Seminario, Pavia, Collegio Ghislieri, 15-16 gennaio 2015. Ed. Quasar, Roma: 105-118.
- Rondini P., Marretta A. & Ruggiero M. G., 2018 – Nuove ricerche archeologiche a Capo di Ponte (Valcamonica, BS): Dos dell'Arca e l'area dei “Quattro Dossi”. *Fold&r – Fasti Online Documents & Research*, 414: 1-28.

- Rondini P., Marretta A. & Brocca C., 2021 – The protohistoric site at Fondo Squaratti (Valcamonica, BS): rocks 2, 3 and the archaeological context. *Preistoria Alpina*, 51 (2021): 29-51.
- Sansoni U., 1984a – Corno di Seradina, 1983. *B.C. Notizie. Notiziario del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*. Vol. I, n. 2: 2-5.
- Sansoni U., 1984b – Recenti risultati nella ricerca sull'arte rupestre della Valcamonica 1979-1983. *Bullettin d'Etudes Préhistoriques et Archeologiques Alpines*, XVI: 63-82.
- Sansoni U. & Gavaldo S., 1995 – *L'arte rupestre del Pià d'Ort: la vicenda di un santuario preistorico alpino*. Edizioni del Centro, Capo di Ponte.
- Savardi E., 2007 – Le raffigurazioni di “capanna” nell'arte rupestre camuna. In: Anati E. (a cura di), *Valcamonica Symposium 2007: l'arte rupestre nel quadro del Patrimonio Culturale dell'Umanità. Darfo Boario Terme 18-24 maggio 2007*. Edizioni del Centro, Capo di Ponte: 433-450.
- Simoës De Abreu, M. 1984 – Corno di Seradina, Roccia 12, 1983. *B.C. Notizie. Notiziario del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*. Vol. I, n. 2: 5-8.
- Simoës De Abreu M. & Sansoni U., 1983 – Esplorazione, rilevamento e analisi delle rocce istoriate in Valcamonica. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici*, 20: 109-112.
- Simoës De Abreu M., Fossati A. E. & Jaffe L., 1988 – *Breve guida sull'arte rupestre di Dos Sotto Laiolo – Paspardo*. Cooperativa Archeologica “Le Orme dell'Uomo”, Nadro di Ceto.
- Staudt M., Goldenberg G., Scherer-Windisch M., Grutsch C., Lamprecht R. & Zerobin B., 2019 – The Late Bronze Age smelting site Rotholz in the Lower Inn Valley (North Tyrol, Austria). In: Turck R., Stöllner T. & Goldenberg G. (eds): *Alpine Copper II – Alpenkupfer II – Rame delle Alpi II – Cuivre des Alpes II. New results and Perspectives Prehistoric Copper Production. Der Anschnitt*, 42, Bochum: 279-298.
- Stöllner T., 2019 – Between mining and smelting in the Bronze Age – Beneficiation processes in an Alpine copper producing district. Results of 2008 to 2017 excavations at the “Sulzbach-Moos” – bog at the Mitterberg (Salzburg, Austria). In: Turck R., Stöllner T. & Goldenberg G. (eds): *Alpine Copper II – Alpenkupfer II – Rame delle Alpi II – Cuivre des Alpes II. New results and Perspectives Prehistoric Copper Production. Der Anschnitt*, 42, Bochum: 165-190.
- Süss E., 1956 – Nuove iscrizioni protostoriche in Valcamonica. *Commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia* 1955: 247-259.
- Valdez-Tullett J. & Robin G., 2021 - *Prehistoric rock art in Scotland: archaeology, meaning and engagement*. Historic Environment Scotland, Glasgow.
- Vidale M., 2022 – *Archeologia. Teorie, metodi, strumenti*. Carocci editore, Roma.