

The shelter Mandra di Dos Capel and the shepherds' rock inscriptions of the Fiemme Valley - Trentino, Italy



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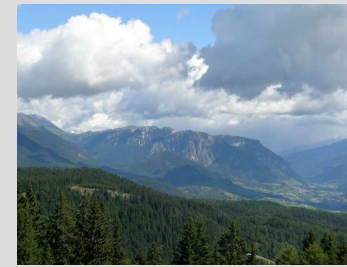


Fig. 1 The Monte Cornon in the Fiemme Valley.

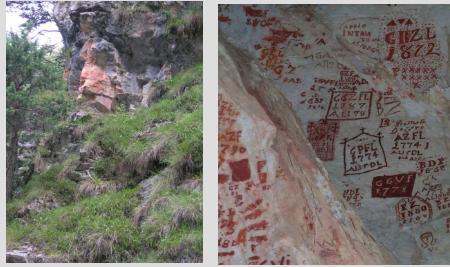


Fig. 2 Inscriptions along the Valaverta.

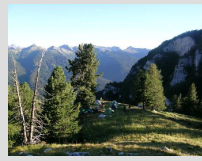


Fig. 3 The Mandra di Dos Capel



Fig. 4 The slope at the shelter



Fig. 5 The structure in the shelter

In 2006 the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina (San Michele all'Adige) conducted a survey in order to study the shepherds' rock inscriptions on the Monte Cornon in the Fiemme Valley (Fig. 1). Furthermore the project comprises an ethnographic research among the shepherds of the valley in order to find explanations for the phenomenon of the numerous inscriptions concentrated at Monte Cornon, between 1200-2000 m a.s.l. (Fig. 2). Some shepherds' shelterings underwent ethno-archaeological investigation. One of these, the rock shelter Mandra di Dos Capel (2030 m a.s.l.), is located above Ziano di Fiemme. It lies on the southern border of the Val Bonetta pastures on a terrace high above the Valaverta. Still today the area shows an open environment and is therefore suitable for foraging live-stock (sheep) and for overnight stays (Fig. 3). The site lies under a rocky protrusion in proximity of a steep slope (Fig. 4). The rock walls are covered by some inscriptions made by the shepherds using a local red ocre called "bol", which contrasts clearly with the white rock (Fig. 6-7). The sheltering contained a structure used as sleeping-place (Fig. 5) formed by 29 variously conserved wooden elements of different size. To the west of this structure the presence of a hearth could be recognized thanks to the blackened rocks and the sediment rich in charcoal (Fig. 8). The ethnographic research in the Val di Fiemme allowed to interview the last shepherd who frequented the shelter (Fig. 11). He told that the wooden roof had been made by his father at the beginning of the forties. At that time the structure itself was already existing and its author is unknown.

In July 2007 an archaeological excavation was made for investigating hearth and sleeping-structure in order to gather further information about the sheltering.

The deposit was excavated over an area of 2x4 m and for a thickness of 1 m until reaching the sterile soil. Two hearths (units 1-2 and 8) and some charcoal levels (units 12, 18 and 31) were found (Fig. 9). Furthermore a dry-stone wall was documented about 3 m away from the rear wall of the shelter. Its function was to prevent soil erosion (Fig. 10).

The anthropogenic finds recovered during the excavation (the sediment was sieved in fine fraction) are essentially metal objects, some wooden fragments and sporadic bone remains. The metal items were found in the upper units (1-2, 8, 12 and 13) and date to historical times: various nails (Fig. 12), probably related to the construction of the wooden structure, tools (a spade and a file), a rivet, wire and various metal plates. In the uppermost unit an Austrian coin from 1858 was found (Fig. 13).

The dendro-chronological analyses made on the wooden structure (CNRS/IVALSA laboratory, San Michele all'Adige-TN) show different phases of use and restoration. The oldest phase dates to 1776 and is interpreted as re-use of a preceding structure. The following restorations date to the end of the XIX century (1894, 1895, 1897), to the beginning of the XX century (1905, 1906, 1911), the following to 1919, 1920, 1923... and the last one to 1942-43 (Bazzanella et alii, *in press*). The two last periods of occupation confirm the information gained from the ethnographical investigation.

The C-14 dating made on charcoal particles recovered from the archaeological excavation revealed a surprisingly early use of the shelter, starting already from prehistoric times: the site was used during the Copper Age, the final Bronze Age and the early and late Iron Age (Tab. 1). The frequentations are discontinuous and short, maybe related also at that time to stays during high-mountain pasture activity.



Fig. 10 The dry-stone wall.



Fig. 11 The last shepherd of the sheltering.

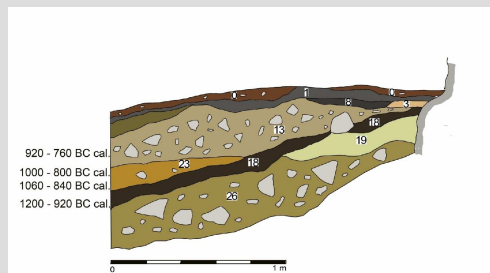


Fig. 9 The stratigraphy of the deposit in the hearth-area



Fig. 12 The nails.



Fig. 13 The Austrian coin.



Fig. 8 The hearth area.

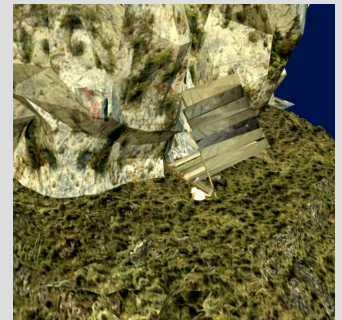


Fig. 7 The shepherds' inscriptions at the shelter

SAMPLE	UNIT	C-14 Age BP	13C (o/100)	CALIBRATED DATE	PROBABILITY
LT2670A	18	2872 ± 40 BP	-18.6 ± 0.4	1200 - 920 BC	95.4 %
LT2672A	23	2811 ± 53 BP	-18.5 ± 0.3	1060 - 840 BC	95.4 %
LT2673A	24	781 ± 35 BP	-19.7 ± 0.3	1185 - 1285 AD	95.4 %
LT2674A	17	3942 ± 35 BP	-20.9 ± 0.3	2570 - 2520 BC	13.7 %
LT3052A	23	2735 ± 50 BP	-28.6 ± 0.1	1000 - 800 BC	95.4 %
LT3053A	9	208 ± 50 BP	-25.4 ± 0.1	1530 - 1560 AD	2.8 %
				1630 - 1890 AD	77.1 %
				1900 - 1960 AD	15.6 %
LT3054A	10	2011 ± 50 BP	-27.0 ± 0.2	170 BC - 90 AD	95.4 %
LT3055A	13	2653 ± 50 BP	-24.8 ± 0.1	920 - 760 BC	95.4 %
LT3056A	14	2279 ± 55 BP	-24.6 ± 0.3	420 - 180 BC	95.4 %

Tab. 1 Ziano, Mandra di Dos Capel: Calibrated C-14 dates (CEDAD, Lecce)

References:

Bazzanella M., Bernabei M., Bontadi J., Belli R., Kezich G., Toniutti L., Wierer U. (in press) - *Le scritte dei pastori delle Pizancae in Val di Fiemme (Trentino): verso un'ipotesi interpretativa del graffitismo pastorale alpino*. Atti XXXIV Riunione I.I.P.P..
Vanzetta G. 1991, *Le scritte delle Pizancae e la "cava del bol"*, Manfrini, Calliano - Trento.