



Mesolithic settlement traces in the area of Latemar, Monte Agnello and Monte Cornon

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Reiterjoch/Pampeago Pass

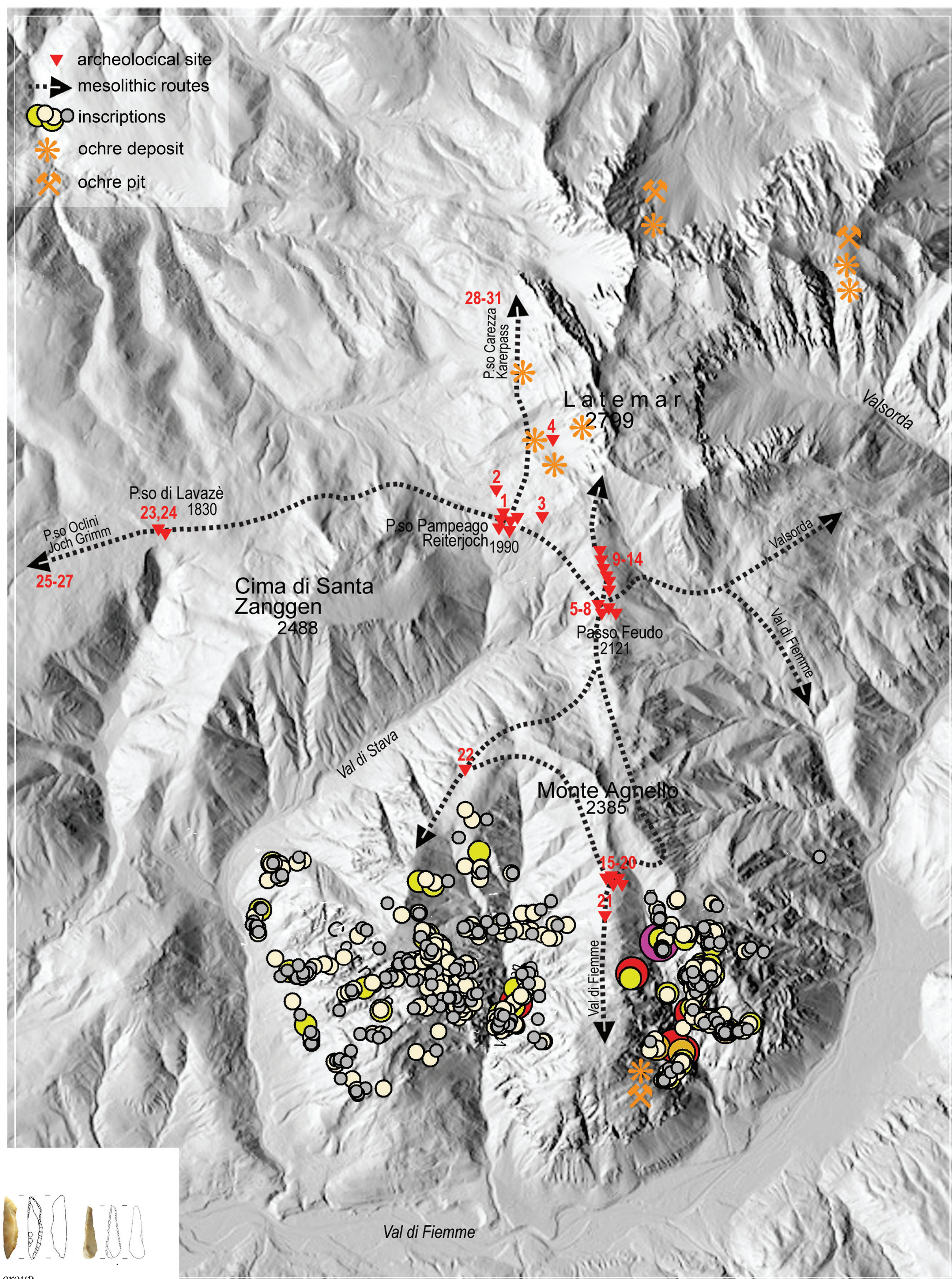
The slopes of Monte Cornón in the Fiemme valley (Eastern Trentino) were subject in the recent past to intensive use in a local economy based on forestry, tillage and grazing. Down through the centuries, the shepherds working in the area left thousands of inscriptions on the rock using the red ochre. The writings specifically make use of alphabetic signs and numbers, as a significant display of the acquired ability to write. There are initials, symbols, dates, names, tallies of livestock, animal figures and greetings. This habit of the solitary shepherds driving small flocks on their brief seasonal transhumance of tagging rocks with decorative inscriptions in a very methodical and conscious fashion is already well-known from many

other grazing contexts in the Alps, as Valcamonica or Mount Bego, and elsewhere. The ongoing historical-ethnographic and ethno-archaeological research of the ethnological Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina on the rupestrian sites of the Cornón massif aims to reveal the circumstances of pastoral life in the Fiemme valley over the last three centuries by studying the writings, and thus also to discover the particular socio-economic and cultural context which allowed the writings to emerge (Bazzanella, Kezich 2013). To date about 2681 rock walls have been discovered bearing the traces of one or more inscriptions, which can provisionally be numbered at around 30,000.



Natural deposit of ochre

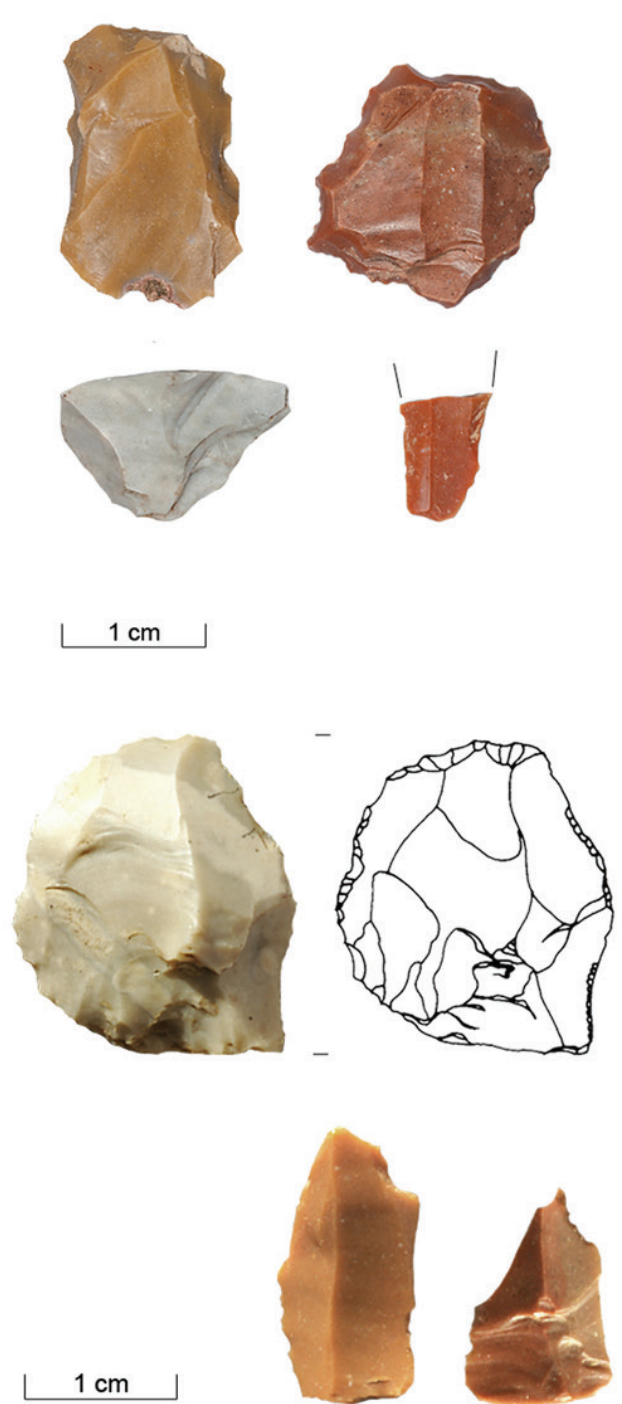
The Mesolithic presence in the area of the Latemar-Cornón Group is evidenced by the findings of Jochgrimm/Oclini Pass (map:25-27), from those of Lavazè Pass (map:23-24), of Reiterjoch/Pampeago Pass (map:1-4), of Feudo Pass (map:5-8), of Karerpass/Costalunga Pass (map:28-31) and of Monte Agnello - Monte Cornón (map:15-21). The position of these sites suggests the existence of two mobility directions for the mesolithic hunters groups. The first one, going from West to East, connects the Adige valley with the Latemar-Cornón, Veneto or the Lagorai Group (Dalmeri, Pedrotti 1994). The other going from North to South: from the Dolomitic area to the Fiemme valley and the Cembra valley.



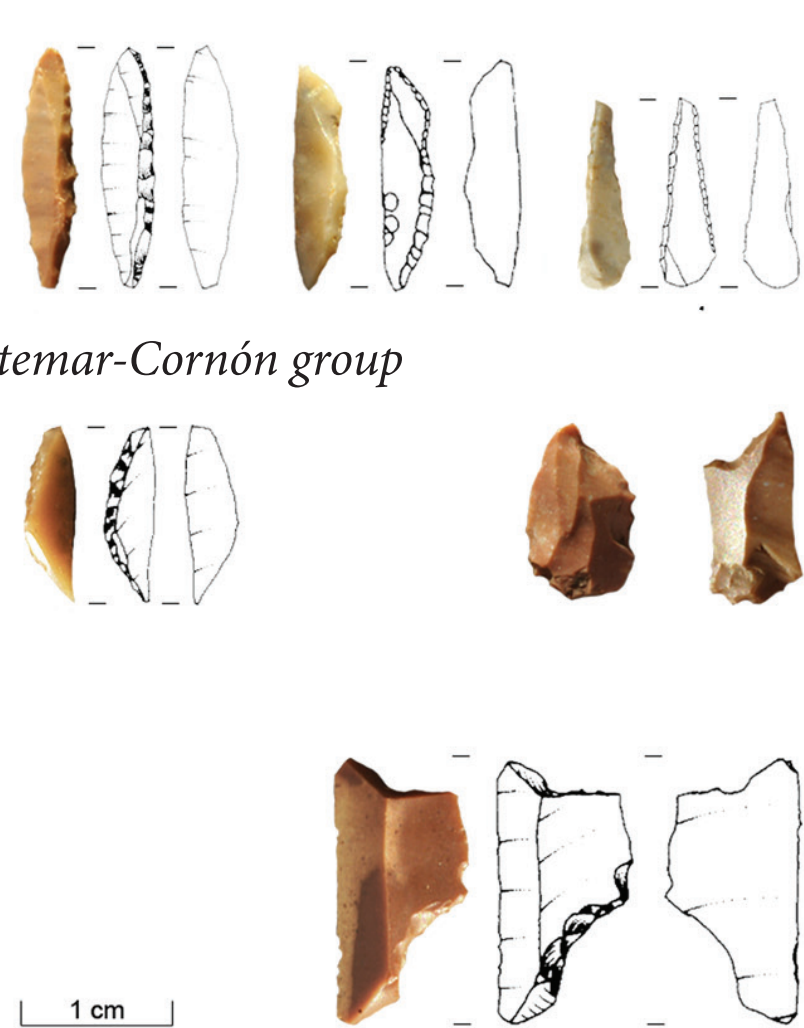
An ethnographic research conducted in 2007 brought to light two rock shelters, used as temporary seasonal refuges during the summer season. Excavations, conducted in the two shelters to confirm information given by the shepherds, revealed, below the historical levels, prehistoric/prohistoric occupations: during the Copper Age, the Late Bronze Age, the first and second Iron Ages, thus establishing the likely start of pastoral activity in the Fiemme valley during the Copper Age (Bazzanella et alii 2012; Bazzanella, Wierer 2013). On Monte Cornón the writings were made possible primarily by the significant local presence of the dye raw material: hematite outcrops are present throughout the area affected by the writings of the shepherds.

Many of the archaeological sites studied in recent decades in the area of Latemar, Monte Agnello and Monte Cornón evidence the area was first populated during the Mesolithic. There are signs of seasonal hunting camps or bases for groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers who pushed up into the mountains during the summer (Kompatscher, Hrozny Kompatscher 2013). The Reiterjoch/Pampeago Pass, with its numerous findings, can be considered as the most important seasonal camp of the entire area. The centrality of this place, an hour's walk from the Feudo Pass, a 3 hour's walk from Jochgrimm and a 5 hour's walk from the Karerpass/Costalunga Pass, indicates in fact the ideal place for a prolonged base camp. All other findings, as well as those of Feudo Pass, Monte Agnello and Cornón are to be considered as minor findings, due to episodes of stalking and occasional hunting.

In the Latemar-Cornón area the presence of mines and outcrops of ochre is indeed remarkable, as can be seen from the map. Other places of discovery of this material are much farther: in the Giudicarie valleys, on the Monte Baldo and on the Lessini Group (Guzzo, Perna 2007). The considerable presence of Mesolithic evidence can then be due to the over exploitation of wildlife resources also to the ochre, as was the case for the shepherds of the Fiemme and Fassa valleys. In order to make the most of every resource of the area these shepherds were found to travel the same places already travelled by prehistoric hunters.



Lithic industry discovered in the Latemar-Cornón group



Examples of shepherds' writings on the slopes of Mount Cornón

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