Alberto Marretta

# Enlightening
# a rock art masterpiece
## new research on Seradina I Rock 12 (Valcamonica)

The area of Seradina is undoubtedly one of the most important rock art sites in central Valcamonica and is well known since the start of research in the area. It occupies the lowest part of the mountain side raising west of Capo di Ponte and covers 11,5 hectares of rocky landscape and sparse wood, since 2005 partially included in the Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina. Among the 163 carved rocks of the park (Marretta 2014a) the big rock n. 12 stands out not only as the richest concentration of rock art inside the park but also as the largest decorated surface of the western side in Central Valcamonica and one of the biggest rocks in the whole valley.

"Discovered" in the early '30s (Battaglia 1932), the Seradina area was then divided by Anati in different sub-areas (Seradina I, II, III) with independent numbering of the rocks (Anati 1965a, b), abandoning the traditional site names that had already been identified by previous scholars. The sub-area known as Seradina I comprises the northern part of Seradina and is in turn organized into two distinct sectors: Seradina I Corno[1] and Seradina I *Ronco Felappi.* The sector called Seradina I Corno includes the entire rocky hill at the Northeast limit of the Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina and to the east of the road which crosses the area and which retains the historical name of "Strada della Greppa" (Fig. 1).

The engravings of Seradina I belong mainly to various phases of the Iron Age, with sporadic panels being possibly more ancient or clearly belonging to the modern era. Beyond the quite exceptional R. 12, noteworthy for their importance and frequency are the several armed humans (often duelling), some inscriptions in local pre-Roman alphabet (R. 6, 11 ), a large geometric composition of the "topographic" type (R. 57) and depictions of Roman *cornua* (R. 25).

Seradina, along with Bedolina, are the only two rock art sites included in the Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina. The exact quantification of the rocks pertaining

Fig. 1. Map of the Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina, with boundaries between sub-areas and location of carved rocks. The big red dot indicates Seradina I R. 12. Other rocks mentioned along the text are highlighted with smaller red dots.
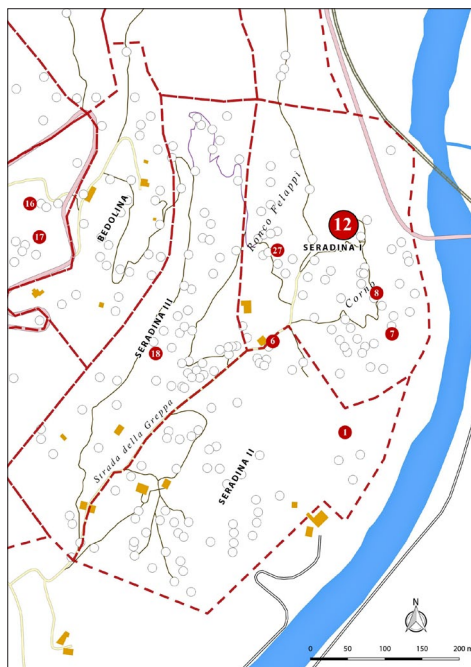
to the park was defined in the course of a recent project coordinated by Soprintendenza thanks to the exact GPS positioning of all the carved rocks of the two areas and the comparison with the official georeferenced boundary of the Park provided by the municipality (Marretta 2014a). The Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina includes 163 engraved rocks among the 226 known in the two areas. At the present date (2016) the whole of Seradina (inside *and* outside the park) counts 177 rocks—Seradina I has 60 rocks, Seradina II 57, Seradina III 60—and Bedolina 49 rocks.

Rock n. 12 of Seradina I is undoubtedly one of the largest and richest decorated surfaces of the western side and one of the biggest rocks in the whole valley. It emerges at the northern border of the Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina and is somewhat hidden by the hill called "Corno", which has its top just few meters south of R. 12. Due to its large size the surface has been articulated in different sectors since the beginning of research, though we could argue whether it is correct to consider it as a whole rock or more likely as an ensemble of smaller panels gravitating around the huge sector C.

Sector C alone in fact measures 16 mt. (top-bottom) x 13.5 mt. (side-side). It appears as a flat surface with moderate to severe slope from top to bottom (Fig. 2). The upper part in particular is almost flat, then starts gradually to slope down for few meters. It shortly flatten again approximately

at 2/3 of the way down and then proceeds to slope steeply down to the ground below. The rock, normally dark due to a thick algal film, appear of a delicate cyan-grey colour when cleaned. The surface, which shows moderate weathering, is characterized by a series of natural holes scattered especially in the upper part and by a porphyritic inclusion of about 20 cm width that runs from top to bottom along the northern side. The notable eroded portions, probably due to human intervention, are more evident in the upper part, especially in proximity of the most appreciated engraved scenes. Two long stripes of the surface show heavy polishing due to repeated sliding on the rock. The northern one in particular has caused the almost total disappearance of carvings, with many ones now barely visible.

## A new research season in Seradina

Fieldworks and studies in Valcamonica during the last 20 years have focused solely on the eastern rock art sites, like Campanine di Cimbergo (Sansoni & Gavaldo 2009) and Paspardo (Fossati 2007), or on minor areas (Gavaldo & Sansoni 2014; Marretta & Solano 2014). Thus it seemed necessary to restart proper research at least in some of the fundamental rock art areas of the western side. This idea lead in 2011 to the beginning of a systematic archaeological investigations inside the Archaeological Park of Seradina-Bedolina. The project, directed by the author with the support of the Capo di

*Fig. 2. Seradina I R. 12. Overview of the rock, by far one the largest carved panel known so far in Valcamonica.*
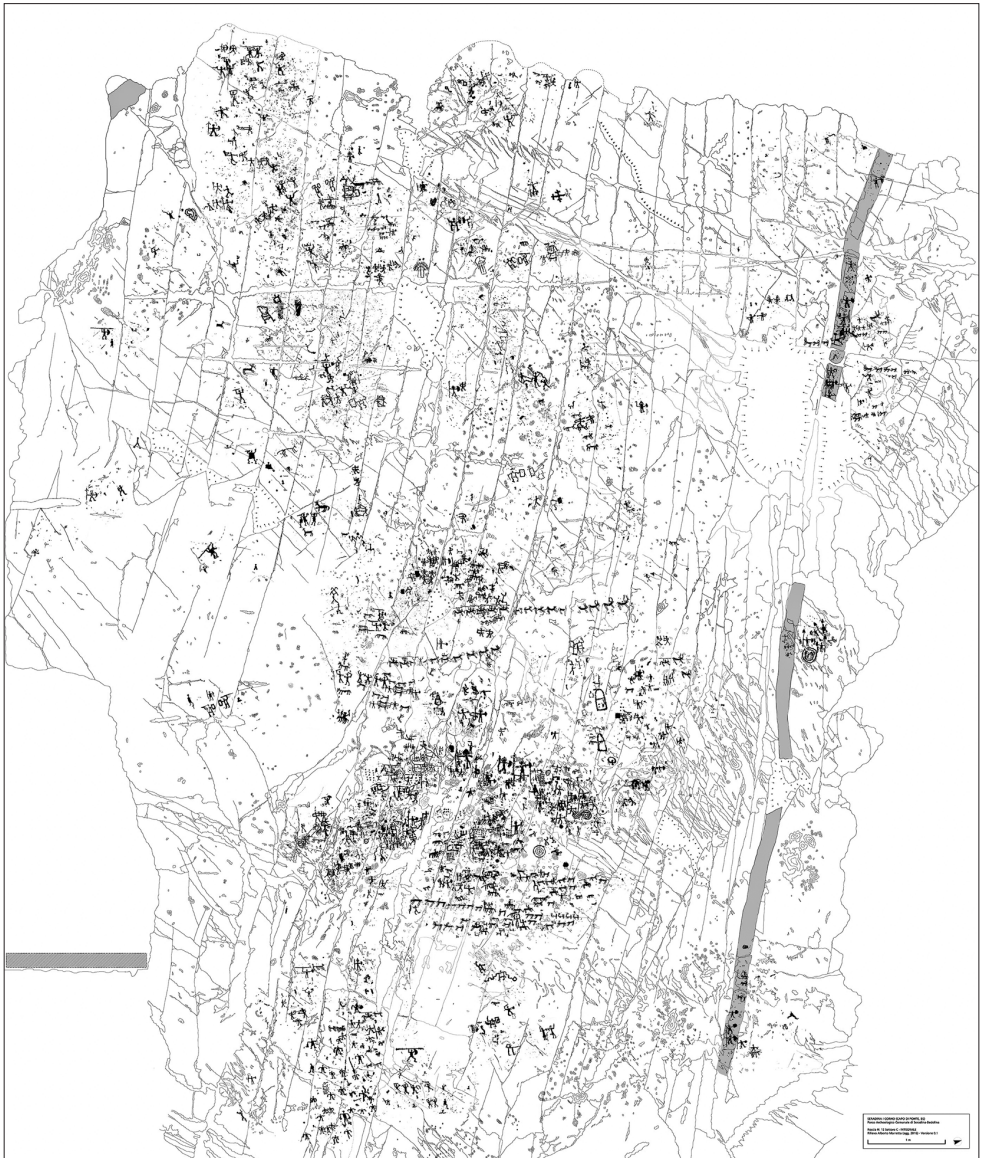
*Fig. 3. Seradina I R. 12. Full tracing of the images identified on the rock.*

Ponte municipality and coordinated by Soprintendenza Archeologia della Lombardia, aims at recording all the rock art known in the park and for now has led to the completion of the Seradina II area (57 rocks to be published in 2018). One of the short term targets of the project concerned also the complete recording and analysis of Seradina I 12, a significant effort considering the fact that sector C alone extends for more than 160 m² (the whole rock is 340 m² wide) and bears around 1700 images.

Rock n. 12 has been extensively investigated first by Anati in the 60's (Anati 1965a, b) and then during the CCSP fieldworks of the early '80s in the area (Simoes de Abreu 1984). Unfortunately the documentation has never been published and the access to the archives got problematic in recent years due to changes in internal policies. For this reason a new systematic tracing of the whole carved surface was started in 2012 and completed in 2015 (Fig. 3).[2] All the tracing were produced on transparent nylon sheet of "Cristal" type—i.e. perfectly transparent—of 0.20 micron thickness and 0.90 x 0.65 mt. size. On every sheet a scale and orientation (magnetic North direction) were recorded. Every sheet were then digitized through a digital camera and postprocessed in Adobe Photoshop. After various corrections (lens distortions, exposure adjustments, sharpen optimization etc.) the sheets were attached one besides the other in order to reconstruct the original 1:1 panel (Marretta 2014b).

The final full high-resolution image of Seradina I R. 12 includes 174 connected sheets and is around 6 GB big. The just completed catalogue has reached a total number of 1684 single images. A preliminary overview of the percentage by category can be seen in Fig. 4. The two categories "Geometric elements" and "Other" combined together cover as usual half of the iconography (46%), mainly due to the inclusion of dots/cup-marks along lines in the
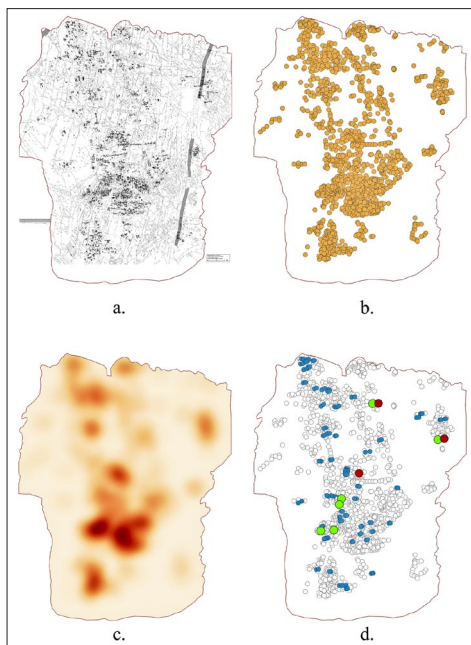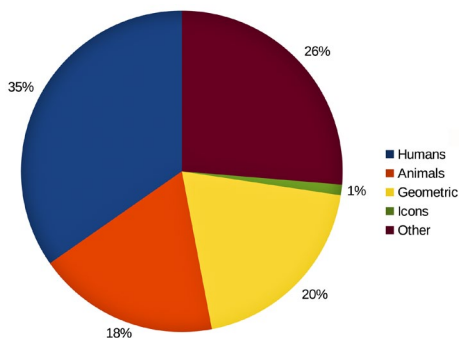


Fig. 5. Seradina I R. 12. Examples of GIS thematic mapping: a. tracing of images; b. images clustering as points; c. images clustering as heatmap; d. subjects highlighting: ploughing scenes in green, sex scenes in red, dueling warriors in light-blue.

former and "blobs" or undefined pecked lumps (grumi in Italian) in the latter. Human beings (35%) and animals (18%) fill the remaining half, being the "Icons" (i.e. footprints, houses, shovels, etc.) virtually absent (1%). The full tracing and the catalogue database are now part of a GIS project, which in turn can lead to interesting results in terms of spatial clustering and thematic distributions of images (Fig. 5).

## The analysis of R. 12: some preliminary archaeological considerations

R. 12 is marked by a combination of themes which makes it unique in the context of the local Iron Age. Since the full analysis is still in progress the following paragraphs will offer just an overview of a selection of subjects: the unusually long hunting scenes with horsemen and "solar" deer, the ploughing and sex scenes, the abundance of

Fig. 4. Seradina I R. 12. Graph showing the weight of macro-categories on the total amount of about 1700 figures counted so far.

Fig. 6. Seradina I R. 12. Archer with bow and arrow produced with thin scratched lines.

birds and, finally, the high number of duelling warriors.

As usual the vast majority of figures were produced by pecking the surface with an hammering tool. A series of images shows very fine pecking, which were probably the result of a metal chisel hit by a small hammer (indirect pecking). There are figures with body parts that were not pecked but just marked with scratched lines, like the legs of some animals, the horn of few chamois, the bow and arrow of some hunters (Fig. 6). An exceptional man with spear and shield was drawn with only thin scratched lines (filiform technique), but it is the only case known on the surface.

R. 12 often demonstrates a conscious plan to use some of the natural features of the surface in order to place, complete or mark in some way specific images. The most notable use of natural elements involves the precise placing of horizontal sequence of figures along deep glacial scratching, often using the internal roughness, opportunely enlarged, to place the body of horses, dogs, deer or birds.

## The horsemen and the noble hunt

The central part of the rock is occupied by a quite exceptional double sequence of spear

Fig. 7. Seradina I R. 12.
Detail of the central sector with the two long sequences of hunter-horsemen and dogs chasing stags.
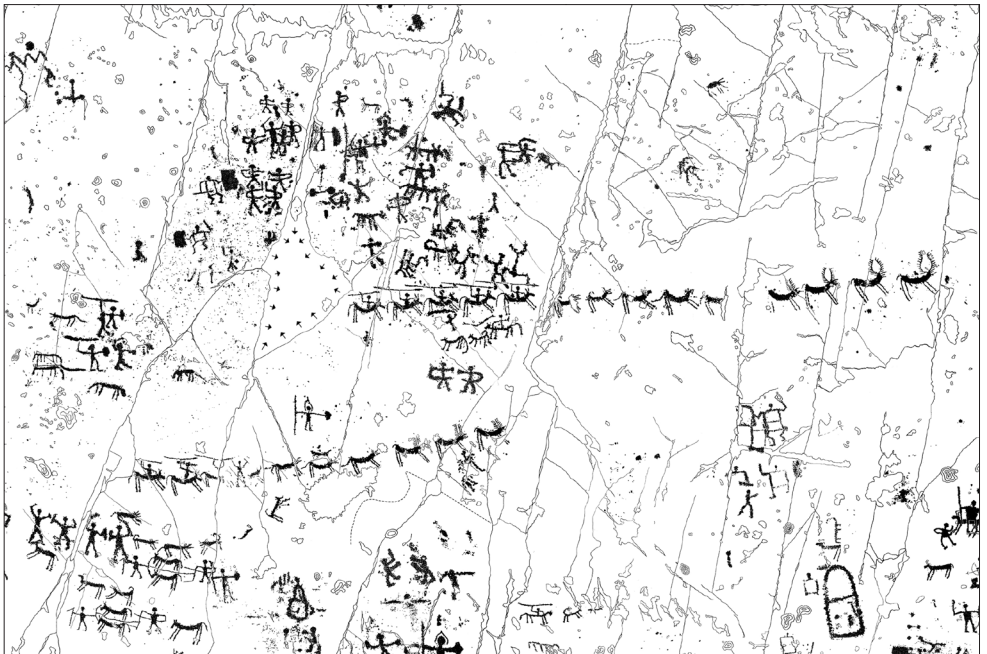
Fig. 8. Seradina I R. 12. Eastern sector with lines of stags, dogs and birds. Hunters, acrobatic horsemen and duels surround the main sequence, especially on the right side.

holding horsemen hunting stags and preceded by dogs (Fig. 7). Humans and animals proceed to the right (North) of the observer. The hounds are unusually represented with wide open jaws and tongues clearly visible, a detail that is sometime emphasized in the stags as well. The main sequence is arranged in this way (from left to right): five horsemen holding spears above their heads, five dogs, four stags. The dogs do not always show the typical curly tail, while the "solar" antler—instead of the straight ones—are reserved to the first three stags.

The minor sequence, just below and to the left of the main one, comprises three horsemen, three dogs and three stags, the latter having straight antlers. Between the horsemen and the dogs appears a very consumed human followed by a not-well-preserved animal, probably a dog. This second and shorter sequence is connected to two ploughing scenes below through a line of four dogs which starts just above one of the yoked animals and, with a strong bending, reaches the animal at the center of the procession.

The procession idea—i.e. this specific way of arranging sequence of figures in long horizontal lines, often accordingly to natural deep glacial scratching—goes on in a small panel in sector West and especially in the central portion of the great sector East (Fig. 8). Here a long sequence of aquatic birds, chasing dogs and stags moves from right to left (South) in respect of the observer. The overall impression is of more confusion: there are hunting horsemen here and there, but the standing acrobatic rider show up as well. Many dogs and birds surround the main sequence and seems to form a short sub-sequence above the four bigger birds to the right, where the dogs appear often facing each other or trapping a stag or a man between them. The "solar" antlers are absent and the body of animals, with very few exceptions, are straight instead of curved. This last detail is especially notable in the mounted horses, markedly different from the ones represented in the main processions of the central frieze.

The arrangements of figures in sequences is of course not unknown in Valcamonica but it has never been applied with

Fig. 9. Seradina I R. 12. Detail of the small sector located in the Northwestern corner: fighting couple with "assistants", archer hunting a big stag with "solar" antler, dogs chasing chamois.

this ambition and monumentality. Sort of "long" scenes are in fact rarely used for depicting hunts involving many actors, like in Seradina III R. 25 or in Pià d'Ort R. 7.

It is worth reminding that the hunting horseman theme is not uncommon in the rock art areas of the western valley side of Central Valcamonica but it is absolutely rare in the eastern sites, a fact that pushes toward specific spatial pattern for styles or pictorial concepts. In particular the hunter on foot (eastern side) versus the hunter on horseback (western side) has already been noted (Abenante & Marretta 2007) and seems to stress different aspects of the hunt: the killing moment for the former, the long chasing stage *before* the actual killing for the latter.

On the other hand the hunting horseman, single and even more in group, is an absolute rarity among the pictorial sources we have from Italy and Central Europe during the I millennium BC. It seldom appears in Situla Art, where it is usually substituted by the archer (Koch 2003, p. 353). It is very rare in Hallstatt materials too, with the few exceptions of the decorated vessels from Sopron and Kleinklein (Tarpini 2003).

On a small portion to the north-western end of the surface there are many small figures probably made by the same artist that operated in the Central and Eastern sectors (Fig. 9). This panel shows in fact a complete synthesis of the main themes of the rock: ploughing scene linked to sex

scene, sequences of hunters-horsemen and dogs chasing chamois and/or "solar" stags, hunting archers, fighting scenes with "attendants", tiny aquatic bird figures drawn in highly stylized geometric form.

The preferred and most spectacular preys are the stags with "solar" antlers, a graphic device which is very different from the one that can be found, for example, on Naquane R. 1, were the deer antlers are usually straight or just slightly concave. The typology—or stylistic variation—of the deer figure on Seradina I 12C is present only on just another rock of Seradina I (R. 7), where identical formal solutions were used for the dogs, for the many aquatic birds (see below) and for a fighting couple with "attendants" depicted on the panel.

## The mountain hunter: archers and chamois

Some of the games on Seradina I R. 12 are not deer but other animals similar to wild goats or chamois. This is another peculiar trait of hunting scenes of the western sites of Central Valcamonica, where sometimes also the ibex appear as prey, like in Pià d'Ort/Coren R. 7. Chamois are also the preferred target by hunters with bow and arrow (Fig. 10). Archers, as opposite to the horsemen, hunt singularly and in three cases on five chase chamois instead of stags, while the horsemen never attack chamois. This singular hunt against chamois is repeated by at least four cases in which one dog pursues one chamois. Three of these latter scenes are concentrated in the small

Fig. 10. Seradina I R. 12. Hunting scenes with archers and a horseman attacking chamois and majestic stags.

North-West panel. The chamois is normally depicted as the same size of hounds, while stags—especially when shown with solar antlers—are notably bigger than the pursuers.

The exceptional presence of five archers equals the number of archers—actually *running* or *kneeling* archers— hunting stags on Seradina III R. 18, while the other few examples are known from Pià d'Ort/Coren R. 7 (2), Seradina II R. 1 (1), Campanine R. 16 (3), Foppe di Nadro R. 36 (1). The singularity of the representations on R. 12, besides their overall rarity in Valcamonica rock art, resides in the precise choice of producing the bow and the arrow just with thin scratched lines, and thus avoiding the pecking technique.

Another peculiar trait involves keeping the archer in an almost standing position, while all the other Valcamonica representations depict him kneeling, as it is also common in Greek vase painting and in Situla Art (Zeller 1998; Fig. 14b). The situla from Nesazio with *naumachia* has a heavy fragmentary archer hunting a deer depicted in the lower frieze on the left of the ploughing scene (Mihovilić 1992). On the other hand standing, or just slightly bent forward, archers appear in a situla from Novo Mesto-Kapiteljska Njiva, tomb III/12 (Križ 1997), and on two vessels from Kleinklein (Tarpini 2003).

Instead of keeping both arms extended in front of the body, as in all the other cases

(Ligas 2012; Sansoni & Gavaldo 2009), on Seradina I R. 12 the archers have one arm grasping the bow extended in front of the body while the other one is kept behind the body turning downward and grasping the arrow as it was the moment of the maximum charge before releasing. The position of the arms is identical to the one of the ploughmen, a stylistic trait that strongly hint to a shared authorship for both icons.

## In pursuit of cosmic harmony: the ploughing and the sex scenes

Presently on R. 12 there are six complete ploughing scenes (Fig. 11, 12, 13), all partially reported in the past (Anati 1960; Battaglia 1932; Fossati 1991; Piombardi 1989). The animals pulling the plough do not show horns as in the iconography of Copper Age (Fossati 1994) and in the four upper scenes they are almost identical in shape to the mounted horses of the central friezes. Four ploughing scenes move from right to left (South) in respect of the observer, while the two and less visible cases at the southern border of the rock move from South-East

Fig. 12. Seradina I R. 12. Ploughing scene with hoe leader combined with sex scene.

Fig. 13. Seradina I R. 12. Detail of a sex scene. All the cases involve humans seemingly intent in hoeing (sowing?) the soil left behind by the plough.

Fig. 11. Seradina I R. 12. Exceptional double ploughing scene in the central sector: in both cases the ploughman prompt two horses with one hand while the other handle the plough. A human with hoe is leading in front of the animals.

to North-West, that is diagonally in respect of the main South-North base axis of all the figures. Ploughing scenes that use animals without horns are known also from Seradina I Corno R. 8, Seradina II R. 6, Seradina I Ronco Felappi R. 27, Bedolina R. 16, 17, Pià d'Ort R. 39,[3] R. 7, Naquane R. 57, Foppe di Nadro R. 29. The ploughing scenes of R. 12 bear a wealth of notable features, and for this reason they are worth and in-depth analysis.

The first striking characteristic is that the plough is *likely* pulled by horses. I say *likely* because this uniqueness must not be accepted cursorily, considering that the vague possibility of these animals being bovid without horns cannot be fully discarded. These ploughing horses could be in fact the first representations of horses in agricultural contexts known in Europe and have interesting implications on chronology, especially because before the invention of the horse collar and its spreading in Europe during the I millennium AD the horse power could not be fully exploited due to harness limitations to the breathing of the animal (Lefebvre des Noëttes 1931; Raepsaet 2008). For this reason oxen where largely preferred in ancient times to pull the plough, a fact well reflected also in the vast iconography of Greek and Roman times.

Furthermore the horse was of short size and thus unlikely suitable for working on hard soils full of pebbles as found in mountainous regions (De Grossi Mazzorin *et al*. 1998). This seems to point to one provisional conclusion: the horse *could* be attached to a plough in prehistoric times, but this solution was certainly not the ordinary way of ploughing because of the evident higher efficiency showed by oxen. For this reason the ploughing scenes of Valcamonica Iron Age, and especially the ones on Seradina 12, are likely depictions of specific ceremonial ploughing, effectively emphasized in their uniqueness not only by the ritual (?) presence of horses instead of oxen but also by the exceptional association with sex scenes and hoe handlers. The horses evidently have in this context a special meaning and express the willingness to mark

some sort of symbolic distance from everyday life and *actual* ploughing activities.

One of the crucial association on Seradina 12 is in fact the one between ploughing scenes and sex scenes. Cursorily discussed in the past (Sansoni 2004; Simoes de Abreu 1989) the sex scenes appear in three explicit occurrences, while a fourth possible case is disturbed by a crack of the rock. One of the three sex scenes is depicted just above the horsemen belonging to the long central procession (Fig. 7). This latter is the only one sex scene on the whole western side of Central Valcamonica not associated with a ploughing scene. The human being are much more schematic than the other examples, but the arrangement of the two figures and the presence of a hoe bearer bent forward makes the interpretation as a sex scene quite indisputable.

Ploughing scenes, and especially their coupling with sex scenes, have strong comparison within the coeval phenomenon known as Situla Art (Fig. 14). The ploughing appear in fact on the Certosa, Sanzeno, Nesazio and Montebelluna vessels (AA. VV. 1961; Mihovilić 1992; Teržan 2001). One remarkable common feature is that ploughing scenes occur almost always with the *symplegma*, the usual term in Situla Art literature for referring to sex scenes, unless we cannot assess it surely due to the fragmentary situation. On the other hand there are cases where the *symplegma* is not coupled with the ploughing, like in the exceptional Alpago situla (Gangemi 2012), in the mirror of Galassina from Castelvetro (Pizzirani 2009) and in the belt fragment from Brezje (AA.VV. 1961).

There are similarities but also marked differences between the Situla Art cases and the examples from Seradina: first of all the recurrence of horses attached to the plough in rock art—not only in Valcamonica but in other European sites too—is absolutely unique. Secondly the sex scene in Valcamonica closely follow the plough, the sex position is always from behind and involves a human being supposedly hoeing the soil. In Situla Art the *symplegma* takes place on elaborated beds, couches or thrones and is repeated with the man above the woman
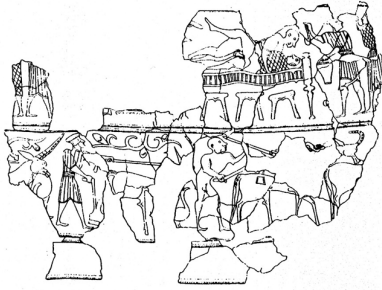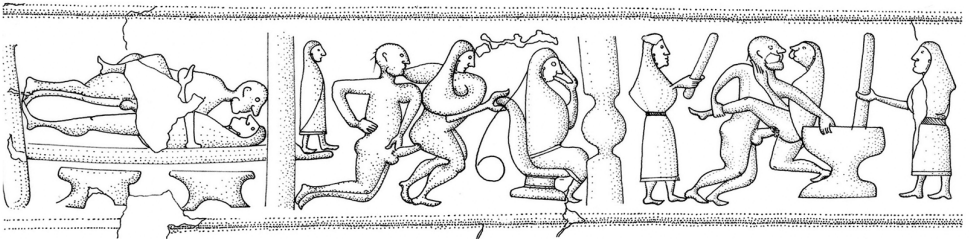
a.
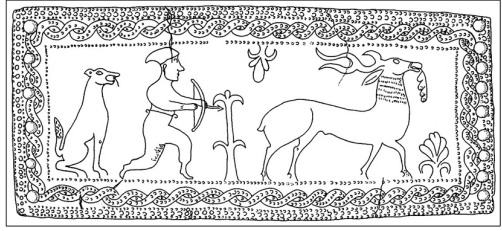


b.
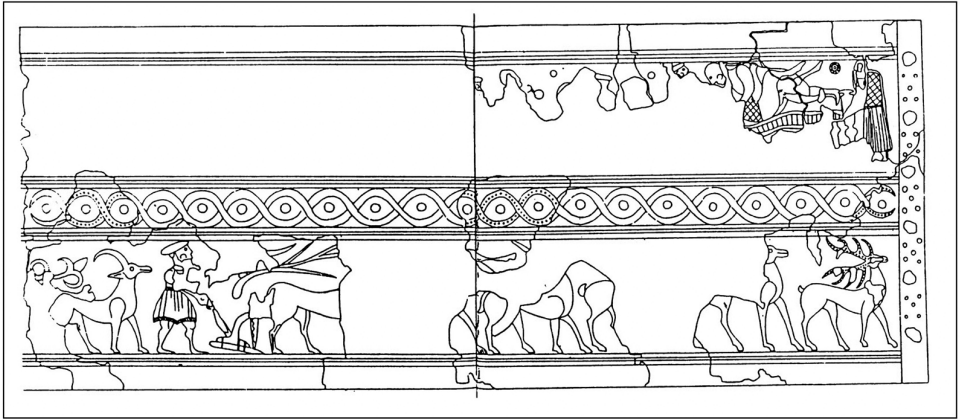


c.



d.

*Fig. 14. Situla Art comparison: a. detail of the Sanzeno situla (after Lucke & Frey 1962, Pl. 31, 67); b. beltplate from Mölnik (after Turk 2005, Fig. 45) ; c. the Montebelluna cist (after Capuis & Ruta Serafini 1996, Fig. 6); d. detail of the lower register of the Alpago situla (after Gangemi 2012).*

Fig. 15. Seradina I R. 12. Detail of a couple of birds. The geometric structure, emphasized by the rake-like tail, is typical of the Seradina I area.

quane R. 57) and ploughs alone (Naquane R. 35, Foppe di Nadro R. 43).

It is interesting to note that the sex scenes are, with few exceptions, a typical alpine theme of Situla Art (Gambacurta & Serafini 2012, p. 280). This fact is now strongly reinforced by the new findings from Montebelluna and, especially, from Pieve d'Alpago, where the sex theme rises to absolute protagonist of the decoration and, for the first time, culminates with a birth scene (Gangemi 2012). Objects decorated in the Situla Art style bearing the *symplegma* show definitely a concentration in the alpine region comprised between the Adige Valley and the Piave Valley. It is capital here to remind that all the metal vessels with ploughing and sex scene can be comfortably dated between the VI and the V century BC. (AA.VV. 1961; Sassatelli 2012).

In conclusion we can assume that, beyond the quite exceptional and still problematic use of horses/equids to pull the plough, the presence of humans with hoes and the spatial closeness of the ploughing and sex scenes are key features of the Valcamonica cases. The sex scenes in particular suggest that the hoe handlers could be women, though the only distinctive feature is the hoe itself. Does this mean that the human leading the animal is a woman too be-

(on bed) or the woman sitting and the man kneeling, the Alpago situla being the exception showing the sex act in many different position on the same frieze, including—for the first time in Situla Art—also sex from behind. Normally the *symplegma* occurs in higher parts of the situla and is somehow separated from the rest of the figures, especially when it happens on bed, while the ploughing scene is depicted in the lowest register usually next to a hunting scene. Finally in Valcamonica the two elements can also appear isolated, with a higher frequency of ploughing scenes alone (like Seradina II R. 6, Bedolina R. 16 and R. 17, Già d'Ort R. 39 and Già d'Ort-Coren R. 7, Na-

Fig. 16. Seradina I R. 7. Full tracing. The rock can be considered a condensed "twin" of R. 12 because of the absolute similarity in themes and pictorial style.



20 cm
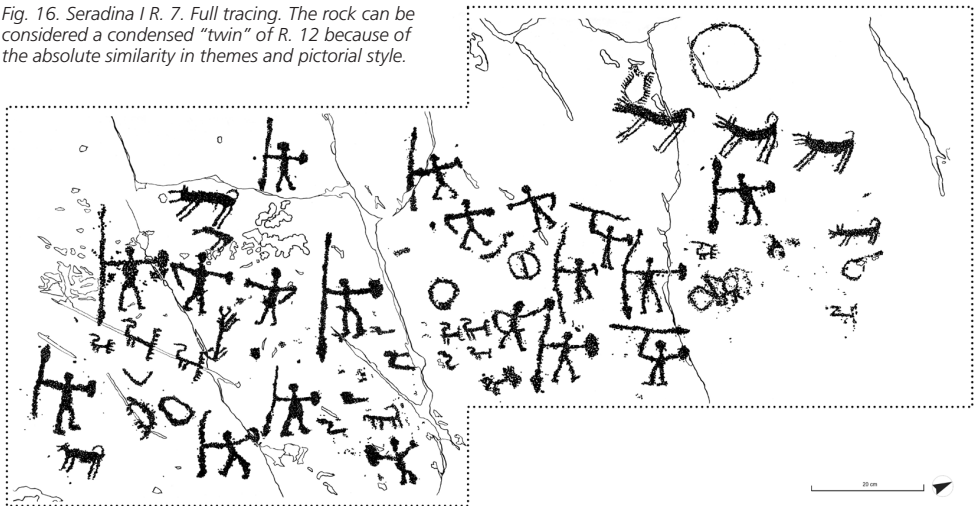
cause of the hoe? If it is the case we would end up not only with the first and only representations of women in Valcamonica Iron Age, but with images of women also involved in practical activities along others acting as the counterpart of sexual scenes.

## Birds, a link between the heavens

Another striking feature of R. 12 is the high frequency of birds. This rock, along with R. 7 (12 birds), makes Seradina one of the richest areas in Central Valcamonica concerning this subject, though the birds are usually almost completely absent in the other sites of the western valley and are on the contrary particularly frequent—in very different styles—between Foppe di Nadro, Naquane and Campanine (Marretta 2007).

On R. 12 there are 21 bird images, all of the same kind and already considered as aquatic animals by Raffaello Battaglia since 1932 (Battaglia 1932). The bird figure (Fig. 15) is drawn with a unique line that form the body and, with orthogonal angles, delineate a sinuous neck and a straight, long horizontal beak. The tail is emphasized in the shape of a vertical line with short horizontal segments coming out of it. Two short legs (without pawn) are often depicted. In few cases a winding line going parallel to the body and originating from the back of the head appear as well. About 1/4 of these images are simplified to just "S" lines, a sort of essential representation of the bird that find comparison, for example, in some



Fig. 18. Seradina I R. 12 Another example of duelling warriors, here with trapezoidal bodies and angular "turning arm".

vessels from Kleinklein (Tarpini 2003). This range from complete images to minimal, simplified ones is highly noticeable also on Seradina I R. 7 (Fig. 16).

Fifteen cases are clustered in the lower part of the big eastern panel. Outside this concentration the remaining six are found in couples in three distinct sector of the rock and are associated with hunting scenes. Nineteen images on twenty-one are oriented towards South. Considering that all the twelve cases of Seradina I R. 7 face South as well, we can assume this is not a random position and was chosen consciously.

As everywhere in Valcamonica where birds are depicted there is no interest in the flying capability. Wings are never highlighted, while beaks, tails and legs play the major role in characterizing the type and function of the animal. Seradina R. 12, with

Fig. 17. Seradina I R. 12. Fighting couple with linear bodies, short swords and small round shields.

Fig. 19. Seradina II R. 1. Complex superimpositions between different kind of duelling warriors. A footprint is barely visible in the centre of the crowding.

its little sibling R. 7, is no exception: birds precedes the hunter-horseman or surround the main action played by chasing dogs, running deer or chamois and fighting couples.

In the whole Valcamonica R. 12 is behind only Foppe Nadro RR. 6-7 and, again, Naquane R. 1 for number of birds (21 versus 30 and 26 respectively), although it must be taken into account that with the not distant R. 7, which shows a consistent group birds of the same type (12), this relatively small sub-area of Seradina reaches a record amount of 33 figures. Birds abundant in the eastern sites are nonetheless quite different from the ones on Seradina 12C (Marretta 2007).

## A central place
## for the fighting couple topos

The pair of almost identical human beings fighting each other is undoubtedly one of the main theme of the rock (Fig. 17). It is represented all over the surface in at least 60 occurrences, with a high preference for the schematic duellists with stick bodies armed with short swords and small round shields (36 couples). Duelling humans with rectangular or trapezoidal pecked bodies are present with 19 instances. Warriors with square not-pecked bodies (sometimes with flexed legs), rectangular shields, swords or spears are quite rare and definitely limited to the western half of the rock. These latter can be seen only in 5 duels.

This is the largest concentration of fighting couples known in Valcamonica. An easy comparison can be done with the area of Campanine, where a specific count for the whole area reaches only 51 duels on around 6700 prehistoric figures, 1500 of which are humans (Sansoni & Gavaldo 2009). This means that Seradina I R. 12 *alone* has more duels than the *whole* Campanine di Cimbergo, which counts one hundred rocks and a total of 9000 images!

Some schematic couples do not show the usual "turning arm" at the back of the body. In this case arms protrude from the front of the trunk as simple straight lines handling the typical small shield and sword.

Anyway, it must be noted that the "turning arm" feature is not confined to stick human beings but appear also in rectangular or trapezoidal trunks (Fig. 18). Ploughmen too, not just on R. 12 but almost in all the known cases, show the "turning arm".

The second major concentration of fighting couples in the surrounding areas is on Seradina II R. 1 (Fig. 19), although duels—especially the schematic ones–are common through all the rock art sites of the western side of Central Valcamonica. Here 16 duels are carved on a single surface, whereas the whole Seradina II (59 rocks at October 2015) counts 52 duels.

## Discussion
## and provisional conclusions

R. 12 constitutes an important novelty among the Iron Age rock art of Valcamonica. It expands the concept of "scene", the new pictorial device of the I millennium BC, into larger and much more complex narratives of unprecedented grandeur through the multiplication of single icons into exceptional sequences. Furthermore it combines the more diffused "nuclear" scenes, like the hunting or the duel, with other micro-narratives, like the ploughing or the sex scene, into much more structured and complex narrative programme, often spreading all over the big surface with an unusually well planned intention.

This complex use of sequences and scenes present also some interesting clues on the chronological side, as it apparently does not occur in the subsequent phase of Etruscan influence (Anati 2004; De Marinis & Fossati 2012). How is it possible that we face this evolved and unique "narrative" style in the Early Iron Age (according to traditional chronology) and not in the most obvious period of Mediterranean influence during the VI-IV centuries BC? Is it because all this stuff was the work of an isolated artistic genius carver? The whole pack of Seradina 12 peculiar imagery—processions of hunters-horsemen, "solar" deer, ploughing scenes, sex scenes, fighters with "attendants"—, according to A. Fossati (1991), must be attributed to Style IV 1, a phase datable

to the IX-VIII century BC (De Marinis & Fossati 2012). On the other hand, my proposal is that they should be likely dated between the end of the VII - beginning of the VI century BC, which is the accepted dating of the Kröll-Schmiedkogel mound and its decorated vessels (Tarpini 2003), and the V century, this latter being the core century for the examples of Situla Art illustrated above.

Anyway, there is quite strong evidence that on Seradina R. 12 operated a local "master", or a group of people closely sharing depiction rules and semantic arrangement maybe originally inspired by a single person. This "master" was probably also familiar with the metal decoration technique and aesthetics of the time, not only with the one found in Situla Art but also with the more traditional bronze decoration of Hallstatt and Golasecca diffusion (Marretta 2015).

The analogies between the highly consistent combination of subjects carved on R. 12 and the so-called Situla Art, which is a phenomenon spread in the Venetic, Raetian and Slovenian regions of the Middle Iron Age (VI-IV centuries BC) are noteworthy. Situla Art, which in turn got inspiration from Etruscan models (Sassatelli 2012), is marked by some identical themes, like the processions of armed people (sometimes on horseback), ploughing scenes, sex scenes, hunting, boxing/fighting, etc. One of the interpretation of this art speculate that it was implemented to celebrate local elites through the decoration of precious bronze containers, sometimes used (or re-used after generations) as urns for a noble deceased (AA.VV. 1961).

But on R. 12 there is an accurate and precise selection of themes from the wider range present in Situla Art: we have in fact just ploughing, sex, hunting and the local variant for the two-men fight. It is a depiction of the essential element of the ruling class in relationship to the cosmic forces and the transmission of power, a sort of hesiodean *Works and Days* rearranged to express local beliefs. Furthermore a clear stress on ancestral connections is also put, as the ploughing and the abundance of animals - especially in their regular, almost geometrical pattern in rows and columns filling the void of the living space - is clearly drawn from the Copper Age tradition of the decorated statue-stele, which have one of the most spectacular site at Cemmo-Pian delle Greppe, just few hundred meters from R. 12.

## Notes

[1] Sometime called also *Corno di Seradina,* especially in the reports of the early '80s. See for example Sansoni 1984

[2] I would like to thank Sara Rinetti, Simonetta Boldini, Nicole Forchini, Ingrid Belafatti, Tatiana Vielmi, Mariangela Piziali, Valentina Ligas, Francesco Ghilotti for the fundamental contribution to the tracing activity and the company Archeocamuni S.a.S. for the constant financial support.

[3] The animals are not present, but the ploughman can be easily attributed to the Iron Age due to stylistic features.

*Alberto Marretta*
*Direzione Scientifica*
*Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina*
*alberto.marretta@gmail.com*

## Bibliography

**AA.VV**. (ed.), 1961, *L'arte delle situle dal Po al Danubio, VI-IV secolo a. C.: Padova, Lubiana, Vienna*. Sansoni, Firenze.
**Abenante, D. & Marretta, A.**, 2007, La caccia immaginaria: rito e rappresentazione. In *Sentieri del tempo: l'arte rupestre di Campanine tra Storia e Preistoria. Atti della II giornata di studio sulle incisioni rupestri della Riserva Regionale di Ceto, Cimbergo e Paspardo. Nadro, 14-15 Maggio 2005,* edited by A. Marretta. Morphosis - Associazione Culturale, p. 97-110.
**Anati, E**., 1960, *La civilisation du Val Camonica*. Arthaud. Paris.

**Anati, E.**, 1965a, Stagione di ricerche giugno-settembre 1965: rapporto del Direttore. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* Vol. 1, p. 29-47.

**Anati, E.**, 1965b, Stagione di ricerche maggio-settembre 1964: rapporto del Direttore. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* Vol. 1, p. 16-20.

**Anati, E.**, 2004, *The civilisations of rocks: Valcamonica, a history for Europe*. Edizioni del Centro. Capo di Ponte.

**Battaglia, R.**, 1932, Incisioni rupestri di Valcamonica. *Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana* Vol. 52, p. 69-74.

**Capuis, L. & Ruta Serafini, A.**, 1996, Nuovi documenti di arte delle situle nel Veneto. In *Die Osthallstattkultur, Akten des Internationalen Symposius Sopron, Budapest 10-14 Mai 1994*, edited by AA.VV. Archaeolingua, p. 37-48.

**De Grossi Mazzorin, J., Riedel, A. & Tagliacozzo, A.**, 1998, Horse remains in Italy from the Eneolithic to the Roman period. In *Proceedings of the XIII International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, Forlì (Italia) 8-14 September 1996, vol. 6, tome I*, edited by Anonymous. A.B.A.C.O. Edizioni, p. 87-92.

**De Marinis, R. C. & Fossati, A. E.**, 2012, A che punto è lo studio dell'arte rupestre della Valcamonica. *Preistoria Alpina (Atti della XLII Riunione Scientifica: l'Arte Preistorica In Italia, Trento, Riva del Garda, Valcamonica, 9-13 ottobre 2007 - Sezione Arte Rupestre Postglaciale)* Vol. 46(II), p. 17-43.

**Fossati, A. E.**, 1991, L'età del Ferro nelle incisioni rupestri della Valcamonica. In *Immagini di un'aristocrazia dell'Età del Ferro nell'arte rupestre camuna. Contributi in occasione della mostra a Milano, Castello Sforzesco*, edited by R. La Guardia. p. 1-71.

**Fossati, A. E.**, 1994, Le scene di aratura. In *Le pietre degli dei. Menhir e stele dell'Età del Rame in Valcamonica e Valtellina*, edited by S. Casini. p. 131-133.

**Fossati, A. E.**, 2007, L'arte rupestre a Paspardo, una panoramica tematica e cronologica. In *La castagna della Valcamonica. Paspardo, arte rupestre e castanicoltura: dalla valorizzazione delle colture allo sviluppo della cultura, Paspardo 6-7-8 Ottobre 2006*, edited by A. E. Fossati. Comune di Paspardo, p. 17-34.

**Gambacurta, G. & Serafini, A. R.**, 2012, L'arte delle situle. In *Venetkens. Viaggio nella terra dei Veneti antichi*, edited by M. Gamba, G. Gambacurta, A. Ruta Serafini, V. Tiné & F. Veronese. Marsilio, p. 280-281.

**Gangemi, G.**, 2012, La situla della tomba I di Pieve d'Alpago. In *Venetkens. Viaggio nella terra dei Veneti antichi*, edited by M. Gamba, G. Gambacurta, A. Ruta Serafini, V. Tiné & F. Veronese. Marsilio, p. 283-285.

**Gavaldo, S. & Sansoni, U.**, 2014, Valcamonica: alcune riflessioni sulle nuove scoperte, 2009-2014. *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* Vol. 37, p. 19-30.

**Koch, L. C.**, 2003, Zu den Deutungsmöglichkeiten der Situlenkunst. In *Spuren und Botschaften: Interpretationen materieller Kultur*, edited by U. Veit, T. L. Kienlin, C. Kümmel & S. Schmidt. Waxmann, p. 347-367.

**Križ, B.**, 1997, *Novo mesto 4: Kapiteljska njiva, Gomila II in gomila III*. Dolenjski muzej. Novo mesto.

**Lefebvre des Noëttes, R.**, 1931, *L'attelage. Le cheval de selle à travers les âges: contribution à l'histoire de l'esclavage*. A. Picard.

**Ligas, V.**, 2012, Documentazione e analisi della roccia n.18 di Seradina III, Capo di Ponte - Valcamonica. *Preistoria Alpina (Atti della XLII Riunione Scientifica: l'Arte Preistorica In Italia, Trento, Riva del Garda, Valcamonica, 9-13 ottobre 2007 - Sezione Arte Rupestre Postglaciale)* Vol. 46(II), p. 139-142.

**Lucke, W. & Frey, O.-H.**, 1962, *Die Situla in Providence (Rhode Island)*. Walter de Gruyter.

**Marretta, A.**, 2007, Forma, funzione e territorio nell'arte rupestre camuna: il caso delle figure ornitomorfe. In *Valcamonica Symposium 2007: l'arte rupestre nel quadro del Patrimonio Culturale dell'Umanità. Darfo Boario Terme 18-24 maggio 2007,* edited by E. Anati. Edizioni del Centro, p. 277-292.

**Marretta, A.**, 2014a, Capo di Ponte: le aree di Seradina I, II, III e il Parco Archeologico Comunale di Seradina-Bedolina. In *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*, edited

by M. G. Ruggiero & R. Poggiani Keller. Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia, p. 85-89.

**Marretta, A.**, 2014b, Tecniche di incisione e metodi di documentazione dell'arte rupestre in area centro-alpina: una panoramica aggiornata. *Notiziario dell'Istituto Archeologico Valtellinese* Vol. 11, p. 7-20.

**Marretta, A.**, 2015, Trading images: exchange, transformation and identity in rock art from Valcamonica between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. In *Picturing the Bronze Age. Proceedings of the conference held in Tanum, 3rd-6th October 2012*, edited by P. Skoglund, J. Ling & U. Bertilsson. Oxbow Books, p. 103-117.

**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.

**Mihovilić, K.**, 1992, Die situla mit schiffskampfszene aus Nesactium. *Arheolo ki Vestnik* Vol. 43, p. 67-78.

**Piombardi, D.**, 1989, Le figure di aratro nelle incisioni rupestri della Valcamonica. *Appunti* Vol. 8, p. 5-6.

**Pizzirani, C.**, 2009, *Il sepolcreto etrusco della Galassina di Castelvetro (Modena)*. Ante Quem. Bologna.

**Raepsaet, G.**, 2008, Land Transport, Part 2: Riding, Harnesses, and Vehicles. In *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World*, edited by O. John Peter. Oxford University Press, p. 580–605.

**Sansoni, U.**, 2004, Arature e ierogamie: culti agrari e riti di fondazione nell'arte rupestre. In *Valcamonica Symposium 2004: nuove scoperte, nuove interpretazioni, nuovi metodi di ricerca. Darfo Boario Terme 8-14 settembre 2004*, edited by E. Anati. Edizioni del Centro, p. 387-402.

**Sansoni, U.**, 1984, Recenti risultati nella ricerca sull'arte rupestre della Valcamonica 1979-1983. *Bullettin d'Etudes Préhistoriques et Archeologiques Alpines* Vol. XVI, p. 63-82.

**Sansoni, U. & Gavaldo, S.**, 2009, *Lucus rupestris: sei millenni d'arte rupestre a Campanine di Cimbergo*. Edizioni del Centro. Capo di Ponte.

**Sassatelli, G.**, 2012, L'arte delle situle. In *Venetkens. Viaggio nella terra dei Veneti antichi*, edited by M. Gamba, G. Gambacurta, A. Ruta Serafini, V. Tiné & F. Veronese. Marsilio, p. 99-105.

**Simoes de Abreu, M.**, 1984, Corno di Seradina, Roccia 12, 1983. *BCNotizie - Notiziario del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* Vol. 1(2), p. 5-8.

**Simoes de Abreu, M.**, 1989, Note sulle scene d'accoppiamento sessuale nelle incisioni rupestri della Valcamonica. *Appunti* Vol. 8, p. 23-33.

**Tarpini, R.**, 2003, Klein Klein e Sesto Calende nel quadro della diffusione dell'arte delle situle. In *L'immagine tra mondo celtico e mondo etrusco-italico: aspetti della cultura figurativa nell'antichità*, edited by D. Vitali. Gedit Edizioni, p. 187-204.

**Teržan, B.**, 2001, Dolgoživ spomin: Prežitki halštatskega obredja v pustnih šegah na Slovenskem? *Arheološki Vestnik* Vol. 52, p. 207-219.

**Turk, P.**, 2005, *Images of life and myth*. Narodni muzej Slovenije. Ljubljana.

**Zeller, K. W.**, 1998, Auf, auf zum fröhlichen Jagen: Eine Bronzeschale mit Jagdfries vom Dürrnberg bei Hallein. Antike Welt Vol. 29(5), p. 403-407.