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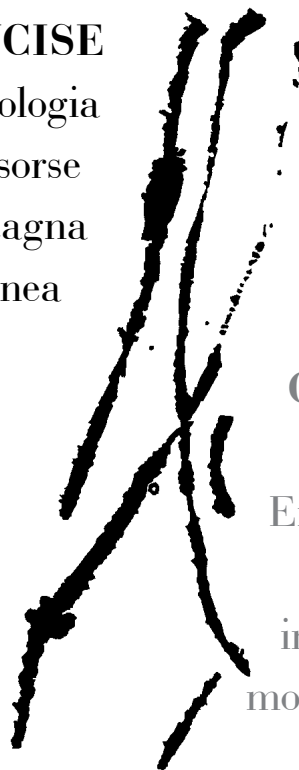
SOCIETÀ AMBIENTE PRODUZIONE

17

MONTAGNE INCISE

PIETRE INCISE

Archeologia
delle risorse
nella montagna
mediterranea



**CARVED MOUNTAINS
ENGRAVED STONES**

Environmental
resources archaeology
in the Mediterranean
mountains

a cura di Anna Maria Stagno

2013



All'Insegna del Giglio

ARCHEOLOGIA POSTMEDIEVALE



Montagne incise. Pietre incise

*Archeologia delle risorse
nella montagna mediterranea*

Carved mountains. Engraved stones

*Environmental resources archaeology
in the Mediterranean mountains*

Atti del Convegno
(Borzonasca, 20-22 ottobre 2011)

a cura di
Anna Maria Stagno



Università degli Studi di Genova
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8.

PER UN'ARCHEOLOGIA DI VERSANTE:
IL SITO DI *COSTA DEI GHIFFI* (BORZONASCA, GE)

FROM A MONOLITH TO A "SLOPE HISTORY"
AT *COSTA DEI GHIFFI* (BORZONASCA, GENOA)

A monolith and its environment. Slope archaeology at *Costa dei Ghiffi*: contribution to the research approach of the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History

Anna Maria Stagno*

«L'archeologia mancherebbe al suo principale scopo, come disciplina storica, se si fermasse al riconoscimento ed al confronto tipologico dei manufatti [...], senza cercare, cioè dietro ai manufatti gli uomini che li hanno prodotti e consumati in diversi contesti sociali e di qualità di vita»

Tiziano Mannoni, 1981

1. Introduction

During the 2008 August, at *Costa dei Ghiffi* (Passo del Bocco, Borzonasca, Genova), an engraved stone with an anthropomorphic figure was recognized in a forestry track of the common beech forest of the hamlets Vallepiana, Belvedere and Zolezzi (figg. 2-3). The monolith was evidently in a secondary deposition, having been used for the track roadbed. The discovery – in agreement to the Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Liguria (Cultural Heritage Minister, Liguria dept.), and thanks to the efforts of the Parco Naturale Regionale dell'Aveto within which the beech forest is located – has therefore generated the project 'Engraved Monolith on *Costa dei Ghiffi*' discussed here. This project shows how environmental and rural archaeology has been employed with the aim to collect all circumstantial evidence for the historical reconstruction of a mountain slope environment (or landscape ecology), in order to understand the primary deposition of the monolith, called M1¹. Investigations were not solely limited to the monolith itself, and information concerning the environmental and management transformations affecting the slope were collected so as to establish how the monolith arrived in the road (as secondary deposition) and where it was formerly deposited. In other words, in order to understand the meaning of this artefact, it was necessary to reconstruct the "history of the slope" where it was found, and to

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¹ The height of M1 is about 80 cm, its maximum thickness 35 cm and minimum 5 cm, and its maximum width 47 cm and minimum 12 cm (ROSSI, GATTIGLIA 2014 in this section of the volume).

look at the transformations in the environmental resource management systems that contributed to the depositional and post-depositional processes involving the monolith. Such an approach, known as 'slope archaeology', can make valuable contributions to the development of methodologies of the 'archaeology of mountain areas'².

2. LASA Research Approaches

This research was an excellent test for the multidisciplinary methodological approaches conducted by the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History (LASA) at the Università degli Studi Genova³. Such an approach has a long history of theoretical elaboration, since works concerning population geography and history of material culture

² International debates on archaeology of mountain areas have been particularly lively during recent years: e.g. I International Workshop on *Landscape Archaeology of European Mountain Areas*, ICAC – Institut Català d'Arqueologia Clàssica, Tarragona 4th-6th June 2008; *2eme Workshop International d'Archéologie du Paysage des Montagnes Européennes*, GEODE – Université de Toulouse II – Le Mirail (8-11 October 2009); Table ronde internationale de Gap *Archéologie de la montagne européenne*, 29.09-1.10 2008; III International Workshop on Archaeology of European Mountain Landscape, *Carved mountains. Engraved stones*, Borzonasca (20-22 October 2011), organized by LASA (University of Genoa), from which the present volume derived. These meetings can be seen as the maturation, at European level, of archaeological approaches suggested in LEVEAU *et al.* 1999 (in particular see WALSH 1999), where the potentials of the methodologies of environmental archaeology for the historical reconstruction of Mediterranean landscapes were underlined. However, some approaches were precociously promoted in the study of pastoralism (MAGGI, NISBET, BARKER 1991).

³ For a summary of the last twenty years of research see CEVASCO 2013; for a brief history of the development of LASA research approach see STAGNO 2013; MORENO 2013 and MONTANARI 2013 in the same volume.

during the 1970s⁴. In this period, geographers and historians of the University of Genoa (courses of *Historical Geography* and *Agriculture History*) have been carried out a fruitful collaboration with the archaeologists of the Gruppo ricerche dell'Istituto di Studi Liguri⁵, which has developed a peculiar approach to the archaeology of mountain areas (MANNONI 1970). Together with the researches on abandoned villages (*Sedi abbandonate*), these groups have conducted interdisciplinary researches into the archaeology of production, such as the excavation and examination of medieval glassware at Monte Leco, in the Genoese Apennines⁶, and have developed a specific interest in industrial and rural archaeology⁷.

However, whilst a great deal of research was devoted to the history of environmental resources, an approach that used them (mainly vegetation) as historical sources was lacking⁸. Such a research approach currently characterizes that of LASA, having been developed during the 1980s and 1990s with the help of international contacts. During the 1980s, theoretical developments in historical ecology encouraged researches to focus on environmental resources⁹. At the same time, contributions

from local history (via the “*microstoria*” experience of Edoardo Grendi) drew attention to the importance of ‘social practices’ in the management of the environmental resources (MORENO 1990; MORENO 1997; GRENDI 2000)¹⁰. During these years, through international collaborations and projects, a specific approach to the research of the practices of management and activation of environmental resources was developed. Drawing on the concept of ‘*fouilles géographiques*’ – used by the GEODE (University of Toulouse)¹¹ for the study of charcoal production sites (BONHOTE *et al.* 2002) – the research group has developed an original multidisciplinary approach to field surveys¹². The research not includes only historians, geographers and archaeologists interested in the history and management practices of environmental resources, but also naturalists (ethno-botanists and geobotanists) in order to reconstruct the (voluntary and involuntary) effects that such practices had on the vegetation. It is therefore possible to speak about an Italian peculiar approach to historical ecology¹³.

From the 1990s, these research methods were also enriched by environmental archaeology, especially through a stricter link with the archaeobotany, particularly for research on wetlands. During these years, the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History (LASA) was officially born (1995), thanks to an interfaculty agreement between the Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia and the Facoltà di Scienze MFN, led by Diego Moreno and Carlo Montanari. LASA focused research activities on the ‘archaeology of environmental resources’, or the historical characterization of rural landscapes and local productions through environmental archaeology¹⁴.

see MORENO, RACKHAM, PIUSSI 1982 and after MORENO 1986. For a first experiment of collaboration between botanists and geographers which will found LASA see MONTANARI *et al.* 1989.

¹⁰ It is important to highlight that English Local History also provided the historiographical background for the development of historical ecology in Britain during 1970's (RACKHAM 1986).

¹¹ *Géographie de l'Environnement*, UMR 5602 – CNRS of the University of Toulouse (<http://w3.geode.univ-tlse2.fr/>).

¹² Since 1992-1993 the research group started to formalize its activities, creating the Polo di Etnobotanica e Storia, for the participation to the European project *Les “produits de terroir” en Europe du sud. Caractérisation ethnologique, sensorielle et socio-économique de leur typicité. Stratégies de valorisation*, in collaboration with the *Laboratoire d'ethnobiologie* of the *Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle* of Paris (CEVASCO 1998).

¹³ POGGI 1997; CEVASCO *et al.* 1997-1999; MORENO *et al.* 1998; CEVASCO 2007.

¹⁴ This approach was specifically developed due to several collaborations with archaeologists from the Soprintendenza Archeologica and the Direzione Regionale per i Beni Culturali

⁴ Two monograph numbers the journal «Quaderni Storici» concerning Population Geography and Archaeology (QUAINI, MORENO 1973) and the History of Material Culture (MORENO, QUAINI 1976) can be considered the most important outcomes to the historical and archaeological debates derived from the collaboration between geographers and archaeologists. For the role of these theoretical developments, and in particular of the contribute of historical geography, in the growth of Italian post-classical archaeology and the birth of the journal «Archeologia Medievale» in 1974, see BLAKE 2011 and STAGNO 2014.

⁵ This group became the Istituto di Storia della Cultura Materiale, led by Tiziano Mannoni, at the beginning of the 1980s and developed a specific interdisciplinary ‘global archaeology’ research approach (FERRANDO, CABONA MANNONI 1981; MANNONI, FERRANDO, CABONA 1988).

⁶ See «Archeologia Medievale», n. 2, 1975, dedicated to the research on the Monte Leco glassware. Researches on archaeology of the production involved also historians of the Centro studi sulla storia della tecnica in Italia of the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche – CNR (National Research Council) – Genova. See various papers about post-medieval and industrial archaeology in the journal “Studi e Notizie” published by that Centre between 1977 and 1986 (http://polarcnr.area.ge.cnr.it/cataloghi/isem_ge/index.php?type=Publicazioni).

⁷ See various papers of D. Moreno and M. Quaini published in «Notiziario di Archeologia Medievale» between 1971 and 1974. Thanks to Tiziano Mannoni, «Notiziario di Archeologia Medievale» was born in 1971 as an informal journal and is still promoted by the *Istituto di Storia della Cultura Materiale* and published by SAGEP (<http://www.iscum.it/Iscum/publicazioni.html>).

⁸ See for example DE MAESTRI, MORENO 1975; DE MAESTRI, MORENO 1980.

⁹ For the historical approach to the study of terrestrial ecosystems RACKHAM 1980. For the first Italian developments

The central tenement of this approach is the study of the environment as a historical subject, built through social practices, which can therefore be historically reconstructed (MAGGI, MONTANARI, MORENO 2003; MORENO 2004a, 2004b). In fact, the aim of LASA research is the historical reconstruction of environmental resources management systems, of their effects on the environment itself (particularly on vegetation) and of their links with local society. This approach fits with a renewed interest in 'environmental issues' (INGOLD 2011) that social sciences (and also archaeological disciplines) have expressed in the last years. Research dealing with the reconstruction of environmental resources management systems from the perspectives of environmental archaeology and historical ecology represents an important development towards a new interest in the study of local space, rural settlements and rural archaeology.

Recently, on an European scale the development of research in environmental archaeology and historical ecology has played an important role in formulating the concept of historical rural landscapes (KRZYWINSKI, O'CONNELL, KÜSTER 2007; MORENO, MONTANARI 2008; AGNOLETTI 2010, 2013). At the same time, multidisciplinary research workshops on 'Landscape Archaeology of European Mountain Areas' centered on the themes relating to the high spatial and temporal resolution in the study of mountain areas environment or landscapes settlement, were carried out through the meeting and scientific exchange between different research groups¹⁵.

Within this framework, LASA researches aim to combine different approaches, looking for explanations of archaeological and historical ecology evidence and anomalies through identifying the relationships between different phenomena. All of LASA's research includes the use of many different series of sources. The research group, therefore, engages with and draws on the expertise of geographers, historical ecologists, archaeologists, historians, geologists, botanists, archaeobotanists¹⁶.

e paesaggistici della Regione Liguria (Italian Cultural Heritage Ministry), during the *Laboratori di Archeologia Montana-LAM* (MAGGI, MANNONI, MORENO 2004) and, above all, the Ligurian Wetlands Project (<http://storia.dafist.unige.it/zum/progettozoneumide/index.html>, GUIDO *et al.* 2013; CÉVASCO *et al.* 2013).

¹⁵ See footnote 2.

¹⁶ With a similar perspective to the archaeology of environmental resources promoted by LASA, post-classical and post-medieval archaeologists from different countries have chosen to deal with the perspectives of historical ecology and to study

3. Study Area and Research Development

The area where monolith M1 was discovered (*fig. 1*) is on the watershed that divides the Sturla (Borzonasca, Genoa province) from the Taro Valley (Santa Maria del Taro, Parma province), close to the *Passo del Bocco* (that divides these two valleys from Vara valley, Varese Ligure, La Spezia Province). Whilst these valleys have a long history of archaeological studies (especially for prehistoric and protohistoric periods), the watershed itself has been investigated significantly less¹⁷. Other carved monoliths have been found in the Taro valley: the (probably) Etruscan monolith of 'Monte Ribone' (*Comuni di Albareto and Borgo Valditaro*, Parma province)¹⁸ and the recently discovered Etruscan sandstone monolith near in the *Passo di Cento Croci*, most probably found in a post-depositional context¹⁹. Investigations were carried out near the area where the Regional Technical Map 1:10000 (2005) plots the place name the '*Costa dei Ghiffi*', within the larger area of *Cresta del Monte Ghiffi* in the portion of the slope immediately downstream of the ridge above the *Passo del Ghiffi*²⁰. The investigated area

environmental systems, such as the historical patterns of production (MILANESE 2004; QUIRÓS CASTILLO 2004; RENDU 2003).

¹⁷ Even if archaeological research nearby *Passo del Bocco* is not fully developed, it is possible to give an overview of the most important archaeological studies between Aveto, Sturla, Taro and Vara valleys: AA.VV. 2010; CAMPANA *et al.* 2014, in this volume; CAMPANA MAGGI 2003; GHIRETTI, SARONIO 2004; MAGGI 2004 (prehistory); MENNELLA 1989; CALANDRA 2003; GAMBARO 1999 (*Liguri* and Roman Period); MELLI *et al.* 2006; MANNONI 1983 (late Antiquity); DESTEFANIS 2003 (early Middle Ages); MANNONI 2003 (Middle Ages); STAGNO, TIGRINO 2012 (post-Middle Ages); MANNONI 1989 (all the periods) and various contributes in DEL LUCCHESI, MAGGI 1998 (prehistory); GAMBARI VENTURINO GANDOLFI 2004; DE MARINIS, SPADEA 2004 (Iron Age); MANNONI 2007.

¹⁸ The incision of Monte Ribone monolith is carved with Etruscan characters, and is probably referred to a funerary scope around the 5th-4th c. BC (GHIRETTI 2003, pp. 184-185 and GHIRETTI, SARONIO 2004, pp. 354, 359-360).

¹⁹ http://www.gazzettadiparma.it/primapagina/dettaglio/2/195243/Una_lapide_etrusca_sulla_via_dei_Monti_Liguri.html. The Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Emilia Romagna (Cultural Heritage Ministry, Emilia Romagna dept.) is doing the necessary checks and investigations for this discovery.

²⁰ The place name '*Ghiffi*' is derived from an administrative term of Germanic origin **wiffi* which means '*ciuffo di paglia messo come segnale*' and indicates a border ('*confine*') as other German terms (**marka* and **staffol*), even if it could be referred to different historical phases: **staffole* and **wiffi* seem to belong to the deepest Lombard layer of the Ligurian toponomastic phases while **marka* seems to be a term of more recent feudal spread; this hypothesis is suggested also by the areal distribution of the place names that continue the first Germanic bases, and by the historical documentation of the Germ. **marka*» (PETRACCO SICCARDI, CAPRINI 1981, p. 96).

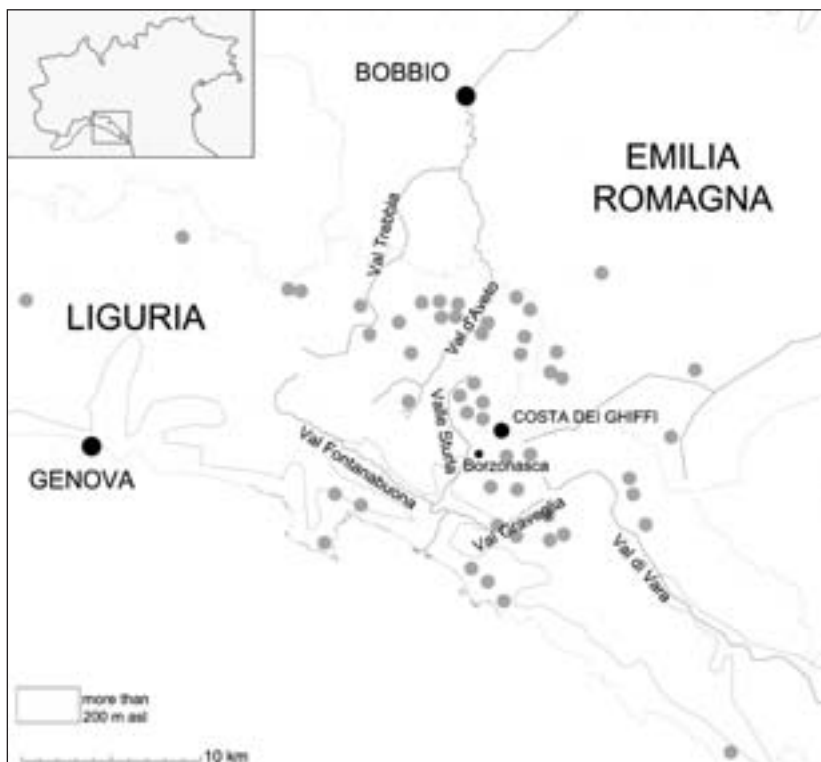


fig. 1 – Location map of the Costa dei Ghiffi site (in black), in the framework of the historical-archeological environmental sites investigated (in grey) by the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History (LASA) in the Ligurian Apennines.

slopes down towards the valley with a gradient from 40% to 33% SW to NE. The geological setting of the area is characterized by the M. Gottero Formation (*Arenarie del Monte Gottero*), consisting of sandstone alternating with middle and thick layers of siltstone and shale. The contact with the formation of *Argilliti delle Giaiette* is just SE of the ridge²¹. Locally the area is known as *Ciappun*, *Moggette* and *Vaccarezza*²². This area belongs to the historical common lands²³ of Sopralacroce Parish and today

²¹ For the definition of *Arenarie di Monte Gottero* and of *Argilliti di Giaiette* see *Carta Geologica Regionale, con elementi di geomorfologia*, 1:25000, 215.3 Borzonasca, geological survey 1:10.000, 2006). CEVASCO 2014, in this section of the volume.

²² The local place names were provided by Vincenzo Marré and his father, of the company EdilMarré of Tornolo (Parma), who provided logistical support for the recovery of the engraved monolith. In this occasion, it is a pleasure to thank them for their willingness.

²³ Common lands indicate a category of goods used by a community through customary law (meadows, grazing, woods, etc.). Their existence, the complexity of their different uses and the permanence of common rights on lands were crucial in shaping rural landscapes, so they are nowadays protected as natural heritage (Natural parks, Site of Communitarian Interest, see ROTHERHAM, AGNOLETTI, HANDLEY 2010a, b). Common lands are one of the most attended historical topics and has been long studied by social and legal historians, due to the complexity of their legal status, the conflicts linked to it and the changes connected to the end of the *Ancien Régime* (for a

is a common beech forest shared by the hamlets of Vallepiiana, Belvedere and Zolezzi in the Municipality of Borzonasca (fig. 2)²⁴. Investigations were

general issue INGOLD 2008 and MORENO, RAGGIO 1992 see also <http://www.thecommonsjournal.org/index.php/ijc>). Economists, anthropologists, geographers and environmental scientists have approached common lands as a part of the wide and complex issue of common goods and Common-Pool Resources (OSTROM 1990, see also DE MOOR 2012; for an anthropological perspective see AGRAWAL 2003). The archaeological background shows that the juridical status of uplands (and its changes) is rarely considered, and the presence of common lands is considered as a 'datum', without going into depth on the material effects of social and jurisdictional of common access rights.

²⁴ Until the end of the *Ancien Régime* this area belonged to the jurisdiction of the "Capitanato di Chiavari" of the "Repubblica di Genova", and this common beech forest was a part of common lands shared by the seven hamlets (*villè* in archival documents) of Sopralacroce Parish (within which Zolezzi, Vallepiiana, which includes also the hamlets historically called Castagneto and Zanonì, and Belvedere historically called Forca). On these common lands and their complex transformations between 19th and 20th centuries see STAGNO, TIGRINO 2012. Common lands of *Monte Ghiffi* were shared also by Pianazzo and Campeggi hamlets, which today are included in Parma province, Tornolo municipality (on the other side of the ridge) and historically were under the jurisdiction of Ducato di Parma till 1859. During 1937/1938, within the framework of a State action that aimed to solve the existing promiscuity, common lands shared by different hamlets were divided and attributed to the different hamlets by the Commissariato per la Liquidazione degli Usi Civici (Torino) (TIGRINO *et al.* 2013; BELTRAMETTI 2014). The common lands of Sopralacroce Parish were divided by the Geometrician Giuseppe

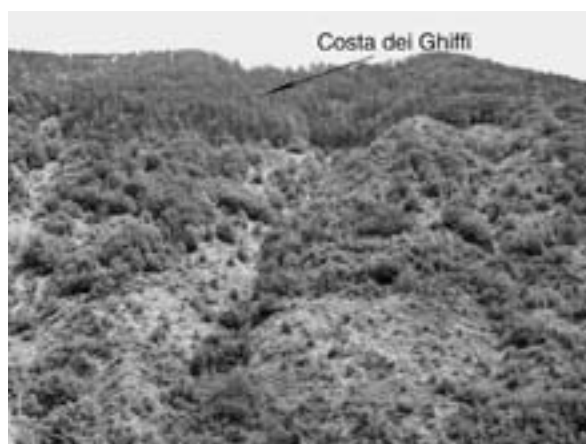


fig. 2 – Costa dei Ghiffi investigated beech forest slope.

carried out with the permission of the Comitato di Gestione dei Beni Frazionali (Management Committee of the Commons) of Zolezzi, Vallepiana and Belvedere hamlets²⁵.

A first opportunity for the investigations was the possibility of interviewing the builders of the forestry track where the monolith M1 had been found (fig. 3). The road was built in 2001 as a skidding forestry road²⁶. All the stone that constitutes the ballast where the monolith was found were taken from a single trench dug with a digger immediately above the discovery point. This information made it possible to limit the investigation in the area surrounding the discovery site. The exposed section derived from the trench is still visible, and it has been cleaned and documented during archaeological surveys (UT2S1), providing the first information on the environmental dynamics of the slope. Two brief campaigns of environmental and rural archaeology were carried out in July 2009 and in July 2011²⁷. The first campaign was dedicated to:

Torrero (*ibid.*), causing many protests by the Pianazzo and Campeggi inhabitants (BELTRAMETTI, STAGNO, TIGRINO 2014).

²⁵ It is important to acknowledge to Fulvio Questa, who in 2009-2011 was president of the Comitato di Gestione dei Beni Frazionali di Vallepiana, Belvedere e Zolezzi, for his willingness and the possibility to read the documents of the Archive of the *Comitato*.

²⁶ The digging of this part of the forestry road was performed by the father of Vincenzo Marré (EdilMarré, see foot note 22) in 2001. Mr. Marré is retired, but came back on the site during the LASA campaign to show the work he had performed.

²⁷ The investigations were carried out, under the scientific responsibility of Anna Maria Stagno, by Roberta Cevasco (historical ecology), Andrea Cevasco (geology-hydrogeology), Anna Gattiglia and Maurizio Rossi (rupestrian archaeology), Carlo Montanari, Bruna Ilde Menozzi (archaeobotany), Diego Moreno (historical geography), Claudia Parola (dendroecology), Anna Maria Stagno (rural archaeology), Silvia Fazzi (archaeology) and

a) the collection of preliminary data for the reconstruction of the context of primary position and subsequent post-depositional processes (archaeological surveys and analysis of exposed sections);
b) the acquisition of elements for the reconstruction of environmental processes and dynamics (historical ecology, geomorphological and archaeobotanical observations);

c) the stratigraphic excavation of the location of the monolith discovery site in the embankment of the road, its removal and recovery. The second campaign was devoted to the stratigraphic excavation of a potential quarry site identified during the survey and the conclusion of the historical ecology and geomorphological observations.

Fieldworks were performed at various different levels (fig. 4):

– Historical Ecology observations interested a wide surrounding area in order to document evidence in the vegetation of past environmental resources management practices, including dendroecological analysis for the reconstruction of the last two centuries of woodland management. The results of the fieldwork observations were compared with the reconstruction of the history of environmental resources management based on archival sources (historical cartography, historical photography, and forestry documentation) in order to validate interpretations and to formulate new hypotheses based on the link between different sources (CEVASCO, PAROLA 2014, in this section of the volume).

– Geological and geomorphological surveys were undertaken in the medium surrounding area in order to understand if the sandstone that constitutes the monolith came from the investigated area (see CEVASCO 2014, in this section).

– Archaeological surveys were carried out in a smaller area in the surroundings of the monolith discovery site. The investigations were focused on the evidences of possible quarry sites, and the observation of exposed sections along the slope, in order to reconstruct monoliths' depositional and post-depositional movements and to evaluate the opportunity to undertake further archaeological excavations (STAGNO, MONTANARI, PAROLA 2014, in this section).

– Archaeological and archaeobotanical investigations were performed in order to understand the

with the participation of Raffaella Bruzzone, Mariangela Guido, Chiara Molinari, Giulia Beltrametti, Davide Miozzo, Valentina De Santi, Simona Greco, Claudia Vaccarezza of the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History and of the PhD Course in Historical Geography of the Università degli Studi di Genova.

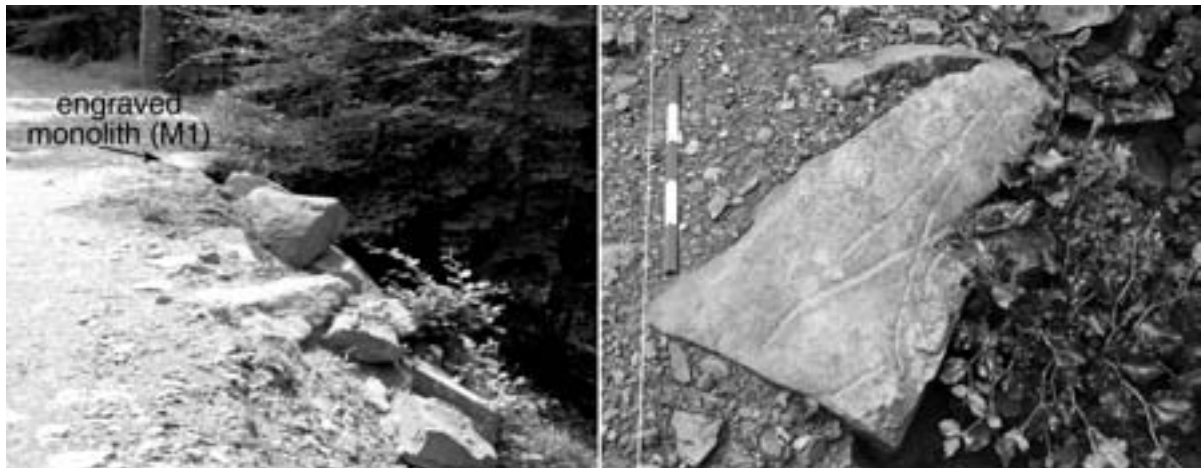


fig. 3 – Monolith M1 discovery site in the forestry track at Costa dei Ghiffi common beech forest.

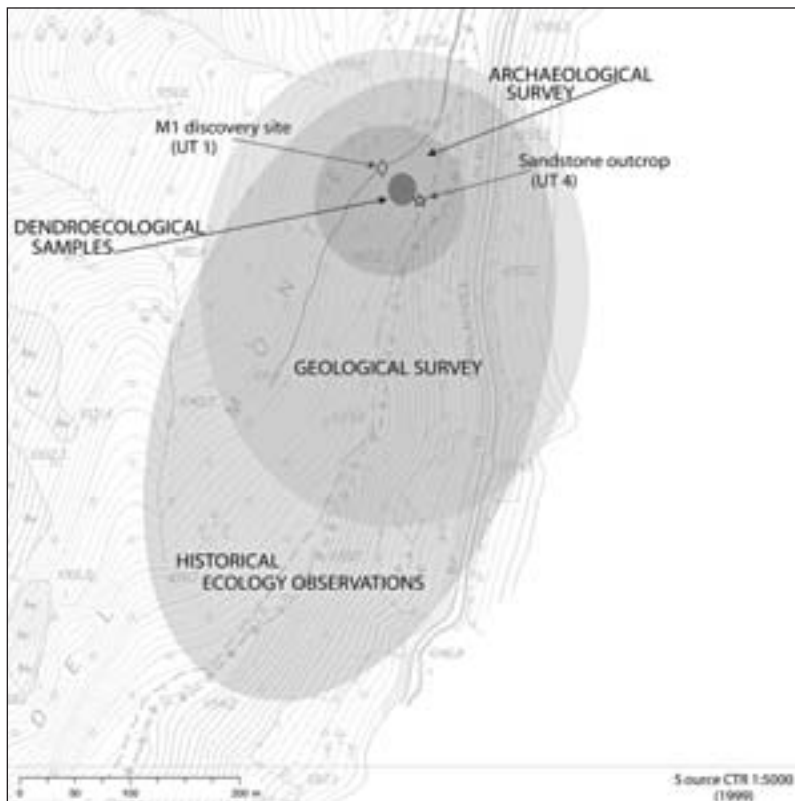


fig. 4 – Areal articulation of the fieldwork investigations carried out at Costa dei Ghiffi by LASA between 2009 and 2011.

specific historical processes through the archaeological excavation of the hypothetical quarry site, with the aim of verifying the provenience of the monolith (*ibid.*).

– Monolith M1 analysis were devoted to the identification of its material, stylistic and technical characteristics and to comparative studies (ROSSI, GATTIGLIA 2014, in this section).

4. Synthesis of the Results and Preliminary conclusions

The following contributions will explain the methodologies employed and the results of each element of the research. However, by means of a preliminary introduction to the contributions, readers may find the following synthesis useful.

Geological surveys made it possible to form a hypothesis on the local origin of the monolith and, in connection with the archaeological surveys, to identify a quarry area. Tests showed a general compatibility between a bank of sandstone and the monolith M1, and finally a particular compatibility between the engraved monolith and an outcrop identified during archaeological surveys (UT 4). Geomorphological observations showed as this outcrop is in the middle of a geomorphological anomaly that does not seem attributable to erosional processes due to running waters nor to gravitational phenomena, and maybe compatible with an action of quarry. Another circumstantial element for this hypothesis was derived from the ascertainment that dispersion of small and big stones with the same characteristics of the monolith were present only in this area (between the sandstone outcrop and the site where the monolith was discovered), but not in other parts of the slope. The surface of this dispersion was identified during archaeological surveys, and its consistence was observed in the two exposed sections documented along the slope. All these elements make it possible to suggest that the monolith M1, until it was re-employed in the forestry road, participated in the same post-depositional processes of dispersed stones which, in the primary, deposition were near to the outcrop, and probably were carved from the same outcrop.

Archaeological excavations at the bottom of the outcrop confirmed the presence of a quarry area, and identified two different quarry scars made during the roman period and the late antiquity (around the 2th C. AD, and around the 5th C. AD), as documented by the presence of fire places connected to quarry actions (¹⁴C dated). The settlement organization in the area during late antiquity is not well known. Only two permanent settlements have been studied in this area: Porciletto and Statale (MELLI *et al.* 2006; MANNONI 1983), but located at least 15 km far from *Costa dei Ghiffi*. This discover suggests a more strict settlement pattern, to be studied.

Historical ecology and dendroecological observations, crossed with the results of anthracological analysis, permitted the reconstruction of the history of the management of the slope and subsequent shifts; from beech and fir woodland (until early Middle Ages) to beech woodland (since the late Middle Ages) then to wooded grasslands and pastures by means of controlled fire (until the late 19th century), back again to beech woodland

in connection with charcoal production (until the 1930s), and finally to the recent coppiced woodland (actuo-ecology). The survey also made it possible to identify two charcoal burning sites; the anthracological analysis determined that in both cases the charcoal is that of beech. Besides this, for the most recent periods, dendroecological analysis on a 180-year-old beech tree deepened the chronology of the management of the area since 1840.

The technical and typological analysis of the monolith M1 showed that the engraving depth and the precision of the design suggest that the petroglyph was obtained by indirect percussion, using an awl and a mallet. The absence of hesitation also suggests that the engraver has followed a pattern previously drawn on the stone. The large size of the monolith (66 cm height) and the technique of execution (“undercut”) mean that we can compare M1 to the western alpine protohistoric (?) tradition of engraved monoliths.

The investigation employed different methodological tools and also textual sources, from which complementary information was derived. As demonstrated from the identification and investigation of the quarry site and the problem of the charcoal production, the results (intended as the historical reconstruction) depend on the cross dating of different sources. The explanation concerning the origin of the monolith necessitated the enlargement of the investigation to the whole slope and to test the suitability of different methodologies (particularly, geomorphological and geological analysis and archaeological investigation) applied to the same problem.

In a sense, a conventional archaeological investigation has been carried on the monolith discovery site (excavation of the discovery site, exposed section analysis, archaeological survey). Nevertheless assuming the mountain slope as an environmental archaeology context, the archaeological-stratigraphical evidence, itself, finds new relationship through the topographical location in the slope and S.U. position in the archaeological sequence. In this way, it was possible to reconstruct – and seldom establish a chronology for – the depositional and post-depositional processes that affected the monolith, and to understand something about its specific history and, above all, to reconstruct the environmental history of the slope, offering a first reconstruction of the practices that managed this area that, at least since the Middle Ages, was a common land.

However, many questions remain to be answered: Who used the quarry? For what purposes? When did the quarry open? Where was the settlement located in relation to the productive site? What relationship did the quarry have with the monolith M1? Has anybody carved the monolith in order to indicate the presence of the quarry, or was the quarry on a boundary area signed by the monolith? Within this framework, the fact that this area belongs to common-lands could be a key element in deepening the reconstruction of the history of medieval and post-medieval transformations, due to the frequent conflicts on common lands that everywhere have left archival documentations²⁸. Through an historical analysis that combines fieldwork and documentary research methods, the connection between social structures and material evidence of local practices can be highlighted, offering a non-linear reconstruction of common land management and precisely identifying social actors and social groups that have ‘activated’ this slope through the practices outlined above.

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²⁸ See for example RAGGIO 1992; CHARBONNIER *et al.* 2007.

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Abstract

The contribution shows the research approach of the Environmental Archeology and History Laboratory (LASA) at the Università degli Studi di Genova, in the case study which concerns the context of an artifact found in the *Costa dei Ghiffi* mountain slope (1100 m a.s.l., Borzonasca, GE). The Laboratory deals with historical reconstruction of systems and practices' management of local resources, their environmental effects and the networks which allow to put these practices in relationship with the societies which made them. The interest towards *Costa dei Ghiffi* site originates from a monolith with an engraved anthropomorphic feature, found in a secondary deposition along a forestry track. *Costa dei Ghiffi* investigation involves archeologists, botanists, historical ecologists, geologists, historical geographers and it sets up as a "mountain slope archeology" case study. From the analysis of actual geomorphological and vegetation features and through environmental archeology investigations, it has been possible to reconstruct in a circumstantial way not only the possible provenience of the monolith M1 (connected to sandstone quarry actions previous to the 5th century A.D.), and its depositional and post-depositional processes, but also to contextualize them in the history of the slope, and to reconstruct the history of the slope management, at least since the Late Antiquity.

Key words: carved monolith, environmental resources archaeology, social practices, multidisciplinary methodological approach, slope history.

Riassunto

Archeologia di versante a Costa dei Ghiffi: l'approccio di ricerca del Laboratorio di Archeologia e Storia Ambientale allo studio di un monolite inciso e del suo ambiente. L'interesse per il sito di *Costa dei Ghiffi* (Borzonasca, GE) nasce da un monolite su cui è incisa una figura antropomorfa (M1) rinvenuto in giacitura secondaria lungo una strada di manutenzione forestale. Partendo dall'indagine del versante di *Costa dei Ghiffi*, il contributo illustra l'approccio di ricerca del Laboratorio di Archeologia e Storia Ambientale (LASA) dell'Università degli Studi di Genova. Il Laboratorio si occupa della ricostruzione storica dei sistemi e delle pratiche di gestione e attivazione delle risorse ambientali, dei loro effetti sulla vegetazione e dei sistemi di relazioni che permettono di ricondurre tali pratiche alla società locale che li ha prodotti. L'indagine di *Costa dei Ghiffi* coinvolge archeologi, botanici (antracologi, dendroecologi, palinologi), ecologi storici, geologi, geografi storici e si configura come un caso di "archeologia di versante". A partire dall'analisi delle caratteristiche geomorfologiche e vegetazionali attuali, sono stati ricostruiti, in maniera indiziaria e almeno dal periodo tardoantico, non solo la provenienza del monolite (legato all'utilizzo di una cava di arenaria precedente al V secolo d.C.), e i processi deposizionali e post-deposizionali che lo hanno coinvolto, ma anche la storia della gestione del versante.

Parole chiave: monolite inciso, archeologia delle risorse ambientali, pratiche sociali, approcci metodologici multidisciplinari, storia di un versante.

MONTAGNE INCISE. PIETRE INCISE

Archeologia delle risorse nella montagna mediterranea

a cura di Anna Maria Stagno

Questo volume riprende una delle proposte fondanti dell'archeologia postmedievale italiana: l'archeologia delle risorse ambientali. A partire da oggetti concreti – le montagne e le pietre incise appunto – e attraverso punti di vista eterogenei, i contributi offrono un'ampia rassegna di metodi e percorsi di ricerca, ampliando la discussione a una riflessione sui paesaggi culturali e sui problemi della loro patrimonializzazione. Il volume si caratterizza per il taglio fortemente diacronico (dalla preistoria al XXI secolo) e il confronto tra discipline e procedure di ricerca. L'approccio non è nuovo per la rivista e, in particolare, rimanda al numero 6 (*L'approccio storico ambientale al patrimonio rurale delle aree protette*) che già aveva proposto alla ricerca archeologica "convenzionale" i temi dell'archeologia ambientale e dell'ecologia storica. Il monografico raccoglie i risultati dell'*International Workshop on Archaeology of European Mountain Landscapes* (Borzonasca, GE, 20-22 ottobre 2011), promosso dal Laboratorio di Archeologia e Storia Ambientale dell'Università di Genova e finanziato dal Parco Naturale Regionale dell'Aveto.

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