

UNESCO-ICOMOS joint reactive monitoring mission to the World Heritage site of the Rock
Drawings of Valcamonica (Italy), 9-13 September 2004

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Acknowledgements

The mission wishes to thank the different stakeholders for their assistance in organising the meetings and for sharing necessary information, in particular the Ministry of Culture of Italy, Regional Direction, Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia and the local scientific community including Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and Cooperative Archeologica "le Orme Dell'uomo".

Executive Summary

Following the Decision of the World Heritage Committee at its 28th session in 2004, a joint UNESCO - ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission took place to the World Heritage site of the Rock Drawings of Valcamonica (Italy) from 9 to 13 September 2004. The main aim of the mission was to assess the general state of conservation with particular reference to the management of the property, the infrastructure development in its immediate vicinity and the presentation of the site.

Having visited the site and considered the different viewpoints expressed by the stakeholders, the mission has come to the opinion that the state of conservation of the rock art was generally good. The mission, however, observed that a number of natural factors were affecting the rocks with rock art features and that the property as a whole should be better protected, amongst other things, by enhancing coordination amongst stakeholders, developing an integrated management plan for the property and reconsidering the regional strategy for infrastructure development. In addition, it is necessary to ensure better co-ordination and promotion of research initiatives from the institutions represented within the property.

1. Background

1.1. Description of the site and inscription history

Valcamonica is an approximately 80km long north-south oriented valley in Lombardia, Italy, situated two hours by car from Milan. The engraved zone (about 40km long) corresponds to the lower part of the middle valley, between the peaks of Concarena and Pizzo Badile Camuno. The valley presents a high concentration of rock art engravings – apparently more than 300,000 symbols and figures have been carved onto the rocks over a period of 8000 years with themes connected with agriculture, navigation, war and rituals. These engraved

figures were made on hard Permian sandstone that has been heavily polished by the Wurm glacier.

There are at least four protected areas in Valcamonica. Apart from the National Park of engraved rocks of Naquane at Capo di Ponte (The Parco Nazionale delle Incisioni Rupestri di Capo di Ponte) established by the Soprintendenza Archaeologica of Lombardy in 1955, there is a Regional Reserve established in 1982 which traverses three Municipalities (Paspardo, Ceto and Cimbergo) as well as the Luine communal Park (Darfo B.T.).

The Rock Drawings of Valcamonica site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979. As this was one of the earliest World Heritage sites, the nomination dossier does not follow the format expected for properties nominated in recent years and it therefore gives only rudimentary information about the property, in particular lacking management plans and an inventory of rocks.

1.2. Justification for and objectives of the mission

The ICOMOS international Rock Art Committee (CAR - Comité International d'Art Rupestre) has been concerned about the state of conservation of the Rock Drawings of Valcamonica and considers that the site was "Heritage at Risk" in 2000 and again in 2002-2003 (<http://www.international.icomos.org/risk>). The main concern was the negative impact of infrastructure development on the site.

Following further concerns expressed to the World Heritage Centre by local and international researchers, the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee examined the state of conservation report on the property (28COM.15B.73) in 2004. The World Heritage Committee considered a range of issues including the lack of definition of the boundaries, impact from infrastructure development such as high voltage power lines and roads, as well as the lack of a management plan and tourism management (walkway construction, lack of World Heritage signage and inadequate background information for visitors). Consequently, the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS to undertake a mission to the site, in co-operation with the State Party, to review the state of conservation of the property.

As a result, a joint UNESCO-ICOMOS mission to the site was undertaken from 8-14 September 2004 (See Annex I for the Terms of Reference; Annex II for the Schedule of the mission; and Annex III for a list of personnel consulted during the mission), during which one meeting took place at Soprintendenza in Milan and another with a representative of the Ministry of Culture in Valcamonica. The mission also had two site visits, firstly together with local researchers and then accompanied by representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Soprintendenza. The mission members also took advantage of an International Valcamonica Symposium: Prehistoric and Tribal Art (Boario Term, Valcamonica) which was being held concomitantly in order to meet researchers concerned with the rock art of the region.

2. Legal, Management and financial framework

There is a comprehensive legislative framework for the identification, establishment and management of protected areas in Italy. Even though 80% of the Valcamonica area is privately owned, all archaeological properties are under State protection according to Italian law.

Soprintendenza Archeological Della Lombardia is a governmental organisation under the Ministry of Culture of Italy, responsible for all archaeological activities in Lombardia province where the World Heritage property is located. Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, as indicated in the nomination dossier, is one of the main non-governmental institutions engaged in rock art research in the region. According to the Soprintendenza, a consortium was formed earlier in 2004 for the regional reserve to coordinate management matters amongst the three Municipalities and the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici.

According to the representative of the Ministry of Culture, approximately 70,000 Euro is allocated annually for the maintenance of the World Heritage property as well as there is adequate provision for purchasing lands surrounding the protected areas.

3. Assessment of the current situation

Given the high number of rocks with rock art features in the region, the mission concentrated its attention on the rocks most frequently visited by tourists and to those areas reported to be having problems, such as Rocks No. 1, 27, 50, 57 and Cemmo in the National Park as well as Bedolina and Serdina in the Regional Reserve.

The mission also had a meeting with the representatives of Soprintendenza Archeologo della Lombardia, Regional Direction for Lombardia, Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and local archaeologists.

3.1. Natural factors affecting the property

The general state of conservation of the rock surfaces and the visibility of the rock art images were good. The mission, however, learnt that a number of natural factors are affecting the state of conservation of the property, such as (1) red algae which may have originated from an iron factory in the valley at Boario and Breno, (2) acid rain, (3) general wind and rain borne deterioration.

Major conservation on the rocks was carried out 5 years ago. Some rocks, such as rock No 57 in the national park, have been affected by exfoliation and in such cases consolidation is necessary. Moreover, in order to remove deposits from rock surfaces, the regional authorities are apparently using the chemical called “Preventol” and occasionally metal brushes. It is important to conduct geo-chemical analyses to examine the effect of air and water quality on the rock surfaces as well as to monitor the extent of the red algae and exfoliation problems in the future. The mission also strongly recommends the authorities not to use chemicals and metal brushes but to explore alternative conservation methods instead.

3.2. Boundaries

There are currently no clearly defined boundaries for the World Heritage site of the Rock Drawings of Valcamonica, but the mission was informed that the national and regional authorities are currently working to define boundaries of the World Heritage property by the end of 2004. It is envisaged that these boundaries will include the National Park, the regional reserve and the Communal park, and there is a possibility that the area of the National Park may be extended to include an additional 2.5 hectares in the future. The buffer zone will also be established according to the relevant legislation concerning protected areas. The proposed

timing for this activity is fully in line with the forthcoming Section II of the Periodic Reporting exercise for the deadline of 2005, which gives an opportunity for the State Party to update site-specific information such as the boundaries and buffer zones.

3.3. Management Planning

The Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia has been requested by the Ministry of Culture to prepare a framework for a management plan for the National Park, the Regional Reserve and the Communal Park by the end of 2004. In Italy there is no legal obligation for developing a management plan but the Ministry of Culture plans to obtain the agreement of all stakeholders. The Management Plan will then be elaborated for it to be adopted by the end of 2005. This schedule is in line with the forthcoming Section II of the Periodic Reporting exercise which will be reviewed by the World Heritage Committee in 2006.

In accordance with the decision of the World Heritage Committee at its 28th session, the mission highlighted to the national authorities that the Management Plan needs to address a range of issues including conservation, monitoring, tourism management and research. Given the complex management mechanism involving national, regional and communal bodies, it is advisable to appoint a World Heritage focal point for the property, which will ensure smooth coordination between national authorities, different parks, scientific community and the World Heritage Centre.

3.4. Tourism management and walkways

According to the records provided by the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia, the National Park received between 52900 and 67500 tourists between 1999 and 2003. The mission considers that in general both the National Park and the Regional Reserve are coping with the number of tourists but certain aspects of tourism management could be improved.

Currently there are no official indications on the site that the property is a World Heritage site although there are some signposts on the national road passing through the property. The Soprintendente informed the mission that the national authorities are planning to install signage indicating the World Heritage status at the entrance of each park in the near future. On entering the National Park visitors receive a leaflet in Italian, which is intended to educate the general public on rock art etiquette, such as not to touch or walk on the rock surfaces. In the future, the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia plans to translate the pamphlet into English. At many of the major rocks in the National Parks there are information boards in Italian and English explaining the significance of the images depicted on the rocks, but the rocks in the Regional Reserve are less well indicated. Furthermore, some of the on-site information boards are cemented directly onto the rock face. The mission strongly recommends against the use of such intrusive methods in the future. In general, the site managers of the property should be encouraged to engage in activities to raise public awareness including visitor education on rock art etiquette and also to consider translating the information folders into French and German since visitors from those countries are frequent.

For many rocks at Luine, Nadro and Naquane thin wires or wooden fences are erected to direct tourist flows. Although these structures are rather simple and not aesthetically optimal, they are serving the purpose effectively. In addition, many major rocks have specially constructed walkways that go over or around the edges of the rocks. Most of these walkways are made of wood and they seem to be effective as they not only give enough viewing height for tourists but also serve to keep the tourists away from the rock faces.

The State of conservation report for the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2004 indicates that a wooden walkway at rock No 57, which is located in the National Park, was removed in 2003 to be replaced by a galvanized steel walkway drilled directly into the rock. The mission established that the rock in question is actually Rock No 27 in the Regional Park. While it is clear that a walkway is necessary for this particular rock, more than 11 metal struts support the structure. Many of the struts are in direct contact with the rock face and in some cases almost interfere with the rock images. Apparently the Municipality drilled these holes many years ago and the recent construction of the metal walkways re-used the existing holes. The construction of a walkway of this nature should take into account not only practical necessities but also the ethical and aesthetic requirements of international standards. The mission recommends the relevant Municipality to replace the current metal walkway by a wooden structure which is (1) fully reversible, (2) avoids direct contact with the rock surface, and (3) is closer in harmony with the surrounding landscape.

The official web site of the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia, under preparation at the time of the mission, provides basic information concerning the rock art of the area based on five tourist routes, details of the national park (e.g. access, opening hours, ticket costs) as well as rock art etiquette. This site also gives the opportunity to provide brail images of rock art to be printed out on special paper for the benefit of visually impaired people. This project was sponsored by the Minerva programme of the European Commission and Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali. The mission feels that the Italian regional authorities are to be commended for this effort in making the rock art of Valcamonica as widely accessible as possible for the general public and suggests that this initiative be introduced as good practice to those involved in other World Heritage rock art sites.

3.5. Research programme

The mission argues that research is one of the most important components of safeguarding measures for rock art sites, as apart from the obvious aesthetic aspects, the outstanding universal value of rock art becomes clear only when documentation and interpretation are carried out in detail. While the discovery of the rock art goes back to the 1930s, the establishment of Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici at Capo di Ponte in 1964 was the starting point for more systematic analyses on the styles, content and superimposition of thousands of engravings which subdivided the rock art into six main periods. Presently, a number of national and international researchers are actively involved in research which results in new discoveries of rocks with engravings every year as well as new interpretations of existing rock art images.

The mission met with representatives of the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia, Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and Cooperative Archeologica "Le Orme Dell'uomo". While these institutions independently conduct a range of research resulting in numerous publications, it seems that a coordinated research programme does not exist for the World Heritage property and the results of their work are not necessarily shared in an effective manner. The mission, therefore, recommends that a medium/long term research plan be established for the World Heritage site in coordination with all researchers acting in the property.

Furthermore, the mission is alarmed to be informed by concerned local researchers in early October 2004 that the Soprintendenza announced in a letter of 28 September 2004 that from then on it was only his office that would have a mandate to carry out rock art research in the World Heritage property. According to additional information provided to ICOMOS-CAR, it seems that the UNESCO-ICOMOS mission of September 2004 was one reason to justify this

claim. The mission does not support the monopoly of research by one institution; on the contrary it wishes to encourage development of a research programme for the World Heritage site involving a number of research institutions in a coordinated manner.

3.6. Inventory and information management

The inventory kept and updated by the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia principally registers at least 104 rocks with engravings in the National Park at Naquane and Cemmo. There has been an initiative to establish a database since 1997, which includes information on the descriptions of rock surfaces, photographic images, and positions of images with grid references as well as information on the state of conservation. The mission finds the database with the digital photos of the rock panels well-suited for its purpose, although the system in use seemed to be already outdated in some aspects. We are concerned that such a database could continue to become obsolete, given the rapid development of digital techniques. Furthermore, although the current system is well designated to record conservation matters of the panels, it does not seem to have the same potential regarding the artistic and aesthetic aspects of the rock art images. The mission therefore strongly recommends that the current database system be complemented by the application of more traditional recording methods such as plastic tracings and rubbings. In this regard, the mission has noted that the research institutions present in the property have very advanced skills in these traditional recording methods.

The information concerning these rocks will be made available to the public, through the creation of an official Internet site with financial assistance from Minerva Europe. The mission recommends that key information is translated into English and that the database is established as a conservation tool in such a way as to be able to trace through time the state of conservation of rock surfaces against appropriate benchmarks.

It seems that the inventory kept at the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia is not comprehensive and does not include information accumulated by other institutions such as the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and Cooperative Archeologica Le Orme Dell'uomo. The mission therefore would like to encourage cooperation amongst the researchers to share information and to establish a unified inventory for the World Heritage property. This should be facilitated by the fact that Centro Camuni di Studi Preistorici has played an official and important role in the development of the research and recording of the property all the time since its inscription in 1979.

While the inventory of rocks with engravings would substantiate the World Heritage property, it is important to note that such an inventory is not a definitive basis to define what makes up the site. Given the nature of the site, the inventory may be updated on an ongoing basis to take into account future discoveries within the boundaries of the World Heritage site. In this regard, future Periodic Reporting exercises, which give an opportunity for the State Party to officially submit information to the World Heritage Centre every six years, may be an appropriate way to review and update the inventory of the site.

3.7. Infrastructure development: Road construction

Valcamonica is a narrow valley through which traverses one of the major roads between Italy and Austria and the road network in the area is a dominating element in the landscape. The mission learnt from concerned local researchers that a zone protection of the area is not

always respected, as was the case for the construction of a tunnel between Capo di Ponte and Pescarzo in 1995. There are ongoing road constructions in the vicinity of the World Heritage property and it seemed that parts of the new construction might be routed in the immediate vicinity of the World Heritage property at Nadro and Zurla. The mission therefore requested the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia to prepare a document with maps indicating the existing road network as well as plans for future construction, to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre at their earliest convenience.

The mission was assured by the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia that due consideration is normally given to mitigate those rock art sites affected by the construction of roads or for rocks discovered to have engravings during construction. The river bottom where these roads are constructed is not considered to be part of the World Heritage site (although the boundaries are yet to be established), and therefore does not pose a direct threat to rocks with engravings. However, these roads (together with numerous power lines - see below) are negatively affecting the visual integrity of the site as well as the landscape context in which the rock art was created continuously over the past 8000 years. The introduction of motorways into an otherwise naturally hilly and undulating landscape not only interferes with the visitor experience from the aesthetic point of view but may also have consequences for the interpretation of the rock art which may call upon prehistoric concepts of landscape. The mission encourages the regional authorities to establish a development plan for the region taking into account the requirements of the World Heritage property.

3.8. Infrastructure development: Power line construction

Valcamonica is a region through which around 380,000 kilowatts of electric power are transported. There are at least 4 or 5 major international electricity lines originating in Switzerland as well as numerous regional electricity lines criss-crossing the entire landscape. These networks of electricity lines and supporting pylons significantly compromise the views into and out of the World Heritage site. In order to assess the situation fully, the mission requested the Soprintendenza Archeologica Della Lombardia to prepare a document with maps indicating the existing power line networks as well as plans for any future construction, to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre at their earliest convenience.

In some cases, the position of the pylons themselves may negatively affect the value of the World Heritage site. A pylon was once constructed directly on a rock panel with engravings at Bedloina in the mid-1990s. After intervention by the ICOMOS Rock Art committee, the position of the pylon was moved by about 10m. In that way the immediate threat of destruction to one of the most well known and an outstanding panel of the property was mitigated, but the negative impact on the visual integrity of the landscape still remains. More pylons exist within or in the vicinity of the World Heritage site, such as near Rock No 57 in the National Park and Cemmo, although these were erected well before the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List and many of these structures are apparently technically difficult to relocate.

The mission was informed that the regional authorities have a general strategy to elevate the electricity lines off the valley area, as illustrated by the case near Bedlina where the electricity line was raised some 300m away from the World Heritage property in recent years. Moreover, the national electricity company, ENEL (Ente Nazionale Energia Elettrica), has been transforming these electricity lines into underground structures. However, such an effort is not only time consuming and expensive but is also already encountering technical difficulties such as overheating.

Given that these electricity lines and pylons negatively affect the visual integrity of the World Heritage site, the mission strongly recommends the national and regional authorities to develop a regional strategy which aims to relocate or to concentrate the electricity lines, within the framework of legislation such as the law on landscape protection (1939).

3.9. Excavation at Cemmo and the implication of portable artefacts

The area around two boulders in Cemmo has been excavated by a number of researchers since the 1930s. The present excavations which started in 2000 have uncovered remains of a megalithic sanctuary characterised by walls, stella and bas-relief in various states of preservation. The new archaeological investigations have delayed the works necessary for the creation of the Parco Archeologico Nazionale dei Massi di Cemmo and the area is currently fenced off to the general public. The mission encourages the national authorities to keep the World Heritage Centre informed of the future developments concerning the creation of the park. The mission also wishes to bring to the attention of the national authorities that portable artefacts are beyond the scope of the World Heritage Convention when preparing inventories and defining the boundaries of the World Heritage site. This is particularly relevant for those Copper Age standing Stella which have been relocated from their original locations both in Cemmo and in the National Park.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Having visited the site and considered the different viewpoints expressed by the stakeholders, the mission has come to the opinion that the state of conservation of the rock art was generally good. The mission, however, observed that a number of natural factors were affecting the rocks with rock art features and the property as a whole should be better protected, amongst other things, by enhancing coordination amongst stakeholders, developing an integrated management plan for the property and reconsidering the regional strategy for infrastructure development.

The mission recommends:

- The Soprintendenza to conduct a geo-chemical analysis to examine the effect of air and water quality on the rock surfaces as well as to monitor the extent of the red algae and exfoliation problems on the rock surfaces;
- The Soprintendenza to evaluate the effect of the use of chemicals and metal brushes in their conservation work and to consider alternative conservation methods;
- The national authorities to define the boundaries and buffer zones of the site as soon as possible;
- The national authorities to develop a Management Plan with a view to managing the outstanding universal value for which the property was inscribed, in consultation with all stakeholders, notably national and regional authorities, the municipality and the local scientific community, and should include plans for conservation, monitoring, tourism management and research;

- The national authorities to appoint a World Heritage focal point for the property to ensure coordination amongst all stakeholders;
- The site managers of the property to engage in activities to enhance tourist experience and at the same time to raise public awareness including visitor education on rock art etiquette;
- The regional authorities to replace the metal walkway at Rock 27 by a wooden structure that will be in harmony with the surrounding landscape, using non-intrusive and reversible methods;
- The World Heritage Centre to introduce the use of brail to other World Heritage rock art site managers as good practice;
- The national and regional authorities to coordinate research programmes and to share the results with other institutions and researchers engaged in rock art studies;
- The regional authorities to establish a single inventory for the World Heritage site and to fine tune the existing database to serve as a conservation tool;
- The mission encourages the regional authorities to establish a development plan for the region taking into account the requirements of the World Heritage property;
- The regional authorities to consider rerouting the power lines in order to enhance the visual integrity of the property;
- The national authorities to keep the World Heritage Centre informed of the developments towards the establishment of the National Park at Cemmo.

Annex I. Terms of Reference

The World Heritage Committee at its 28th session requested (28COM15B.73) the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to undertake a mission to the World Heritage site of the Rock Drawings in Valcamonica (Italy), in co-operation with the State Party to review the state of conservation of the property.

In accordance with paragraph 68 of the Operational Guidelines, the mission was to conduct on-site visits as well as meetings with the relevant national authorities and other stakeholders. In addition to the general state of conservation of the property, the mission was to also consider the following issues:

- a) Definition of the boundaries of the core zone and its buffer zone;
- b) Management mechanism for the property;
- c) Progress made towards developing a management plan that addresses conservation issues, development control, tourism management and future rock art research;
- d) Clarification of the status of the infrastructure development in the vicinity of the property, including road construction and high voltage power lined;
- e) Update on the construction of walkways and other tourist routes;
- f) Issues concerning presentation of sites, such as World Heritage emblem and information for tourists;
- g) Any other issues that affect the World Heritage value of the property.

Composition of the mission:

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Annex II: Schedule of the mission

8 September 2004 (Wednesday)

AM:	Arrival in Milan
12:00 – 15:30:	Travel from Milan to Boario Terme, Valcamonica
16:30 – 20:00:	Opening session of the XXI Valcamonica Symposium
20:00 – 23:30:	Welcome dinner hosted by the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici

9 September 2004 (Thursday)

9:30 – 19:00	Sessions of the XXI Valcamonica Symposium
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10 September 2004 (Friday)

9:00 – 11:30:	Travel from Boario Terme to Milan
11:30 – 14:30:	Meeting with the Soprintenden
14:30 – 15:30:	Lunch hosted by Soprintendete Archeologo della Lombardia

11 September 2004 (Saturday)

9:30 – 19:00	Session of the XXI Valcamonica Symposium
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12 September 2004 (Sunday)

9:00 – 18:00	Site visit organised by the XXI Valcamonica Symposium
18:00 – 20:00	Reception hosted by the Mayor of Capo di Ponti

13 September 2004 (Monday)

12:00 – 18:00	Site visit organised by the Soprintendete Archeologo della Lombardia, accompanied by the representative of the Ministry of Culture and Direction Regional of Lombardia.
21:00 – 22:00	Meeting with Mr Angelo Fossati, local archaeologist

14 September 2004 (Tuesday)

9:00 -	Depart Valcamonica, Italy
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Annex III: A list of personnel consulted during the mission

Name	Organisation
Angela Maria Ferroni	Ministry of Cultural heritage and activities, UNESCO Office Tel: +39 06 58 434859/+39 328 9499821; Fax: +39 06 58 434454 Aferroni@dac.beniculturali.it
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