Grotta Mora Cavorso, from Protohistory to Present Times

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Mario Federico Rolfo,
Katia Francesca Achino,
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To the Cappa Family, Angelo “Nerone” Procaccianti and Elia Mariano, discoverers of the cave. To the almost ninety students that have worked hard with us, whether for just one campaign or for many years, allowing us to accomplish the goal of completing this long-lasting mission of archaeological investigation.

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FOREWORD

This book is a welcome contribution to the growing body of literature on cave use in later Prehistory and early History of Europe. It is important for several reasons:

First, it discusses the later materials to their full extent. Until relatively recently, surveys and excavations of caves in Europe have mainly focused on the Palaeolithic. However, above the Palaeolithic layers, many caves have deposits from numerous occupations throughout the later prehistory and early history, and some caves are in fact still in use. Early archaeologists and antiquarians often just discarded this later material, and even if it has been recorded and collected during more recent excavations it has often just been mentioned in passing in the site publications, which focus on the oldest materials. During later years, however, this has begun to change, and the archaeology of Grotta Mora Cavorso is an excellent example of an investigation that looks at the totality of cave use with equal attention to every period of occupation, from the Palaeolithic right up to the present day, and which also includes a targeted survey of new cave sites in the Aniene Valley. An important profit of this holistic approach is that it enables the authors to apply a long-term perspective, where changes in the use of the caves are studied, analysed, and set into a regional contextual framework.

Second, the approach is multidisciplinary. It has become increasingly clear that cave excavations represent unique opportunities to collect a variety of different in-situ materials. In many regions, caves are the only sites that have such materials for research, because open-air sites are more difficult to find and have more often been exposed to later human disturbances, such as intensive agricultural activities. And even if open-air sites are sometimes undisturbed and available, natural post-depositional processes may have led to poor preservation conditions for organic materials, whereas these are often preserved in caves and rock shelters. The potential of cave excavations is therefore not only to provide information on what went on in the caves themselves. They also give invaluable information on the wider economic, social, and ritual life in the societies of which they were a part. Unfortunately, however, the list of good cave sites is not very long, and this means that particular care needs to be taken. To generate as much

information as possible it is urgent that a whole battery of methods is mobilized when the decision is taken to excavate such sites. This has been done in Grotta Mora Cavorso. In addition to the classic archaeological methods of stratigraphic and horizontal studies and pottery and lithic analyses, the team has also applied an extensive radiocarbon programme, human and animal osteology, micromorphology, and DNA research. Adding to these natural scientific methods are methods from the social sciences. In the context of the contemporary use of the cave, interviews with older local people are employed, and there are interviews with students on their first sensorial experience in the cave, in order to give insights into how previous humans may have reacted and related to this dark and constricted space.

Finally, the results from these multidisciplinary analyses are important. The present volume on Grotta Mora Cavorso focuses on the latest use; the Proto-historical and the Historical Ages. For both these main periods, there are interesting patterns. Given its strategic location in the Aniene Valley it appears to have been used in several different ways, depending on political, religious, and cultural circumstances. During the Historical Age, the cave seems to have played a part in the regional transhumance system, it functioned as a refuge for travellers and soldiers, possibly also for hermits connected to nearby monastic institutions. This situation is like what is found in other parts of Europe during Medieval and Post-medieval times, where a "military horizon" can sometimes be identified and where caves were associated with Christian seclusive activities. The finds from the protohistoric period in the cave also resonate well with many other European finds; caves in this period were frequently used for funerary rites. What is particularly intriguing with Grotta Mora Cavorso is the variety of ritual practices connected to the funeral itself and the long-term continued use of the site as a ritual arena. The multidisciplinary data also contributes strongly to the ongoing discussion about the relationship between ritual and mundane activities at cave sites.

Knut Andreas Bergsvik
University Museum of Bergen, Norway

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Many names need to be mentioned in these acknowledgements, many people without whom Grotta Mora Cavorso and the Upper Aniene Valley would have never been given 'archaeological justice'. We hope we do not forget anyone, and we express our profound gratitude to each of you.

First of all, thanks to the Shaka Zulu Speleo Club of Subiaco; among them, our gratitude goes especially to Gabriele Catoni, Angelica Ferracci, and Giuseppe Bosso, for relentlessly supporting us in every survey and recent excavation campaign, and to Nerone and Elia, for teaching us how to be in a cave, how to feel it, and for helping us carry out every sort of practical task. We could never thank you enough for all that you have done without ever asking for anything in return.

We are grateful to the Sbaraglia Family, Enrico, Gabriella, and Maria Novella, for taking care of us for all these years with their presence, practical help, local promotion of our activities, and cakes!

Our gratitude also goes to the local administrations that have given us logistic support throughout the years, as well as to the *Parco Naturale Regionale dei Monti Simbruini*. Special thanks go to Rita Molinari, a bridge between the two institutions, who has always promoted our research in the area.

It would be impossible not to mention all the students, mostly from the courses of Archaeology and Biology at Rome "Tor Vergata" University but also from Durham University, that have taken part in all the many excavations, surveys and post-excavation campaigns with enthusiasm and interest.

Several professional collaborators have given their invaluable contribution to the research over the years, either from "Tor Vergata" or from other universities and institutions. We especially thank Mr. Leonardo Salari, expert zooarchaeologist, who has collaborated with us from the beginning, and Ms. Ivana Fusco, who has coordinated in the field for several years. In addition, Prof. Olga Rickards, Prof. Cristina Martinez-Labarga, Dr. Gabriele Scorrano, Dr. Francesco Messina and Ms. Daria Passacantando

deserve our gratitude for their key work on the osteological remains and the modern and ancient DNA; Prof. Gianni Zanchetta and his team, for the geological work carried out at the site; Dr. Daniela Mancini, for always being available on the field and outside with her invaluable archaeological skills and knowledge; Prof. Robin Skeates, for his enthusiasm, shared ideas and for our long-lasting collaboration on cave research in Latium; Dr. Valeria Trupiano, for collaborating on the ethnoarchaeological research; Prof. Antonella Canini, Dr. Angelo Gismondi, Dr. Gabriele Di Marco and Dr. Alessia D'Agostino, our trusted team of botanists that have added new information through innovation to our knowledge of the cave and the palaeoenvironment of the area.

We would like to thank the *Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per l'Area Metropolitana di Roma, la Provincia di Viterbo e l'Etruria Meridionale*, and especially the *Ispettori* Zaccaria Mari and Micaela Angle, for the archaeological permissions, scientific support and their trust that has allowed us to undertake our long-lasting research at the site and its surroundings.

We are grateful to Don Romano of the Monastery of Santa Scolastica in Subiaco for his hospitality in the early days of our excavation campaigns, and for the scientific support that he provided by opening the historical library and the museum stores for our archival research.

We would also like to thank the photographer Donato Passiatore and the illustrator Fabiana Benetti for contributing to the public dissemination of our work.

Finally, our gratitude goes to Prof. Knut Andreas Bergsvik for his acceptance in writing the preface to this volume, as well as to Dr. Jessica Beckett for proof-reading it. We also thank them for their priceless feedback.

CHAPTER I

GROTTA MORA CAVORSO AND THE ANIENE VALLEY CAVE SURVEY PROJECT: A DECADE-LONG JOURNEY

1.1 - Aims and objectives of the Grotta Mora Cavorso volume series

This volume series is the result of a decade-long research on one of the most important late prehistoric sites of central Italy, Grotta Mora Cavorso (Jenne, Rome). The aims of this work are manifold. First, we intend to provide a complete critical overview of this archaeological site in its context. This will be accomplished by offering a comprehensive analysis of the historically and archaeologically known evidence of the Upper Aniene Valley area, with a special, but not exclusive, focus on the Grotta Mora Cavorso (referred to as GMC hereafter). On the one hand, this will allow other scholars to incorporate a large body of new data into future research, both at the micro-scale level and the macro-scale level. For too long, there has been little interest and knowledge of the archaeology – and especially the prehistory – of this important region.

Secondly, we intend to enlighten the non-academic audience about a rather unexplored archaeological area, while helping local institutions make use of the published information to increase tourism here. The Upper Aniene Valley, which is partially included in the protected Regional Park of the Simbruini Mountains, is a naturalistic treasure, rich in rare and endangered wild fauna and flora, and boasts a wealth of forests, pure water springs, watercourses, and natural caves with impressive speleothems. It is also characterised by some of the most ancient and remarkable Late Antique and Medieval monasteries in Europe. Thus, the area is currently quite renowned for its trekking routes, as well as for its Medieval religious and artistic attractions, while prehistoric archaeology plays only a marginal touristic role for the moment. By making the results of our research internationally available, we hope to provide one more, crucial reason, to visit this wonderful area.

The last key aim of this series is to offer a working example of how a multidisciplinary and contextual approach can sensibly improve the understanding of archaeological sites. The results of our research on GMC and its context are proof of the fact that the integration of a wide range of disciplines, from hard sciences to social sciences, can lead to unexpectedly enhanced understandings of the history of a site. Therefore, we hope that similar holistic approaches will be adopted for future cave research in Italy and elsewhere, as too often cave sites have suffered being studied in isolation or in limited ways.

1.2 - Aims and objectives of Grotta Mora Cavorso - Volume 1

The first volume of this series is focused on the late Holocene phases of human occupation of the cave. The structure of this book and of the whole GMC Series proceeds backwards in time, much like an archaeological investigation. Therefore, the main aim of Volume 1 is to shed light on the role played by this site in Contemporary, Modern, Medieval, Late Antique and last, but not least, protohistoric times for the human groups living in or passing by the cave and its surroundings.

To do so, the book has been structured according to a chronological criterion and sub-divided by thematic sections. The first chapter intends to provide a multidisciplinary background of the Upper Aniene Valley and the ongoing cave research project, by looking at the geology, environment, history and especially the archaeology of this area, with a particular focus on the caves located and surveyed by the authors and co-authors. This will allow us to illustrate the relevance of a region that was previously considered archaeologically marginal in central Apennine Italy.

Building upon this contextualisation, Chapter II will show the incredibly rich results provided by the adoption of two still rarely used methods of research, i.e. ethnoarchaeology and modern DNA studies. These approaches proved indispensable for the research, as they led to the identification of valuable narratives related to the recent past of Upper Aniene Valley communities and GMC and helped clarify some archaeologically problematic issues.

Following this, the subsequent sections of Chapter II are aimed at exploring the meaning of the evidence retrieved in and around the cave dating from Modern and Late Antique times. The history and archaeology of these phases in the Upper Aniene Valley have so far been largely overlooked –

with a partial exception to the Middle Ages - and a comprehensive synthesis of studies in this topic is still lacking.

Chapter III is the core of the volume, as the protohistoric layers of GMC reveal the second most important anthropic phase of occupation of the cave, following the Neolithic one, and tell us a fascinating story of life, death, and rebirth that is worth an in-depth analysis. One of the primary aims of this section is indeed to describe the materials and methods used to reconstruct a long-lost series of events, in order to allow other scholars to understand the reasons for our interpretations and, hopefully, to enable them to formulate their own.

Another goal of this chapter is to show in detail the variety of disciplines involved in this research, so that every inference can be directly related by the reader to the piece of evidence that led to it, thus highlighting the importance given by the authors to the integration of hard and soft data couched within social theory.

The discussion at the end of this volume has multiple aims: first, to produce sound cultural, social, and economic interpretations of the human use of the cave and its surroundings, based on the multidisciplinary data collected over a decade. The second, and equally important, aim is to bring GMC and the Upper Aniene Valley into a much wider archaeological discourse, while finally dismantling the widespread perception of this region as peripheral and isolated from the coeval human dynamics taking place through time and space in central Italy and beyond.

1.3 - The Aniene Valley Survey Project (with the contribution of P. Ceruleo)

The Aniene Valley is 99 km long and can be geographically divided into three main sections. The Upper Aniene falls between the Ernici and the Simbruini Mountains up to the town of Subiaco. From there, the fluvial plain becomes wider (Middle Aniene Valley) and continues between the fluvial terraces at the bottom of the Ruffi and Simbruini Mountains, where it reaches the town of Tivoli. Lastly, the river opens to the ample Tiber Valley (Lower Aniene Valley), flowing into the Tiber north-east of Rome.

The Aniene Valley, a natural east-west border of the central Tyrrhenian zone, was once the only passage between the fertile Roman countryside and the inner Sabine, Marsica and Abruzzi areas for over 50 km. Due to its peculiar morphology and the favourable location, the Aniene river valley

and its surrounding valley systems (i.e. the Valle Empolitana, Valle del Licenza, Valle del Fiumicino and Piana del Cavaliere) have always represented a key transit and communication route between the Latium Plain and the inner Apennine area of the Sabine, as well as the Fucino and Marsica regions in the Abruzzi (Colonna, 1974, 275-346).

The Aniene Valley rose to prominence with the emergence of pastoralism and transhumance, a practice that, although improved by modern technology, is still widespread (De Cupis, 1911; Franciosa 1951; Gabba and Pasquinucci, 1979). The Aniene Valley appears to have been continuously and increasingly inhabited by humans since the Lower Palaeolithic, with a demographic boom after the Roman conquest. Naturally, most of the anthropic evidence has been identified along the Aniene River's shores and terraces, across the future Tiburtina Valeria Road.

Another strongly anthropized area was the plain surrounding the Acque Albule's water springs in the Lower Aniene Valley. This sulphurous marshland was a suitable habitat for many animal species and became an attraction for human populations as well, revealed by the presence of several prehistoric settlements.

Evidence of a well-defined route between the Fucino and the Latium Plain can be found from the 3rd millennium BCE on, with the funerary sites of Cantalupo (De Rossi, 1867), Marcellina (Sciarretta 1969), Camerata di Tagliacozzo (Pigorini 1888) and the intermontane Grotta Pila (Radmilli 1946-51) in the Sabine all dated to this phase. It is, however, in the 2nd millennium BCE that this route saw its peak importance: the shepherd-farmers of the inner mountain areas used this valley for their short or middle-range seasonal transhumance migrations (Barker, 1981; De Grossi Mazzorin 1995; Minniti, 2012), which would explain the spread of habitually, but discontinuously, inhabited settlements across the Aniene riverbed dated to the Late Bronze Age. When the highlands were covered in snow, those semi-nomadic communities (perhaps part of a larger human group living in more sedentary settlements) would move to the Latium countryside, returning to the higher and more florid pastures of the Aniene Valley during the summer (De Cupis, 1911). Despite the active trades that might have taken place in this area, pottery remains appear to be locally and poorly made, while metals are practically absent from the archaeological record. This might reflect a closed economy, due to certain hostilities between communities, which are well represented by the (still largely unpublished) hilltop settlements found in the Middle Aniene Valley. Such sites served to control and defend the surrounding transit routes, pastures,

and possibly even the cultivated fields. Not only did this portion of the Aniene Valley connect the Latium Plain with the Sabine and the Abruzzi, but it also connected the Rieti Basin with the Sacco Valley through the Acquoria ford to the town of Praeneste. Finally, it connected Veio and the Faliscan area to Capua and inner Campania, through the Fidene ford over the Tiber River, and across the route that later became the Via Latina and included the pre-Roman towns of Fidene, Gabii, Praeneste, Anagni, Ferentino, Fregellae, Aquino, and Cassino. The Rieti Basin and the ford of Passo Corese also lead to the Aniene Valley around the town of Mandela or Riofreddo through the Fosso del Rio Stream Valley, continuing up to the Orvinio Plain and down to the Licenza Valley. This was most likely a key itinerary at the time, given that several sites have been identified along it, including Grotta Pila, Percile, Mandela and Roccagiovine (Radmilli 1946-51, 74; Guidi 1979; De Rossi, 1867; Angle and Guidi 1995). The Turano and Salto Valleys both provided alternative itineraries towards the Tivoli-Sulmona route, connecting the Rieti Basin to the Piana del Cavaliere and the Fucino Plain. Several shorter or easier routes were also available towards the south, leading to southern Latium and Campania regions. Along one of these routes, the discovery of a Middle Bronze Age axe hoard at Grotta Morritana near the village of Rocca Canterano is notable (Peroni, 1971; Carancini 1979).

These southern routes, in turn, connected with others which lead to the Samnium, Molise, and Apulia regions, while the northern ones connected with the Umbria, Abruzzi and Picenum regions. The analysis of the routes and itineraries involving the Aniene Valley provides a useful idea of the importance of this area during the protohistoric and early historical times and the role it played in the human dynamics of central Italy. Furthermore, the analysis provides the necessary contextualisation to the archaeological evidence described further along.

Archaeological research in the Upper Aniene Valley, with a special focus on prehistory, started in the 19th century with the contributions of Luigi Ceselli, a natural science local enthusiast, who found the first flint tools in the area, although he often failed to record the location and context of these artefacts (Ceselli, 1866). The earliest systematic studies were carried out by Giuseppe Ponzi (1860; 1861; 1861-62; 1867; 1878), Gioacchino De Angelis d'Ossat (1896; 1897) and Carmelino Maxia (1950), who briefly mentioned archaeological finds in their reports, the most important of which are the flint arrowheads and polished stone axes recovered between Canterano and Subiaco. By the first half of the 20th century, studies on the Aniene Valley

were marginalised, with research focused on the Roman area due to the obvious political implications.

Graeme Barker resumed systematic research here in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing his studies on the relationship between landscape and society (Barker, 1981) and thus leading the way for economic-territorial investigations. In this context, several open-air and cave sites were discovered in the Aniene Valley and the first concise works on the protohistoric period of the area came to light through the investigations of Giorgio Filippi, Piero Ceruleo (1980; 1982; 2013; 2014) and Alessandro Guidi (Filippi and Guidi 1992). A slightly later work by Silvia Festuccia and Federica Zabotti integrated data from a systematic archaeological survey and existing knowledge from scholars and local enthusiasts (Festuccia and Zabotti 1992). More recently, Dr. Daniela Mancini (2012) has produced a remarkable topographic synthesis on the protohistoric sites of the Aniene and Sacco river valleys for her Ph.D. thesis, while also providing a chrono-typological contextualisation of the existing collections created in the last decades by local scholars and enthusiasts. Finally, recent research on the rock art of the Middle and Upper Aniene Valleys has been published by Tommaso Mattioli, focusing on the incisions at Morra di Colecchia (Mattioli 2006; 2007) (see Chapter 1.3.1).

Following the discovery of the archaeological site of GMC (Fig. 1-1 A), a multidisciplinary survey project began parallel to the on-site research, to record the pre-protohistoric human presence in the Aniene Valley's caves. This project has led to the discovery of archaeological remains, and in some cases of possible rock art, in several newly found and previously known caves (Fig. 1-1 B). In addition, partially published cave sites in the area were surveyed to contextualise fully the GMC within the Aniene Valley's human occupation dynamics. For each cave, a map and a profile were produced, and included a recording of its exact location and its position above sea level. Historical archaeological evidence in the surveyed caves has also been reported for the sake of completeness.

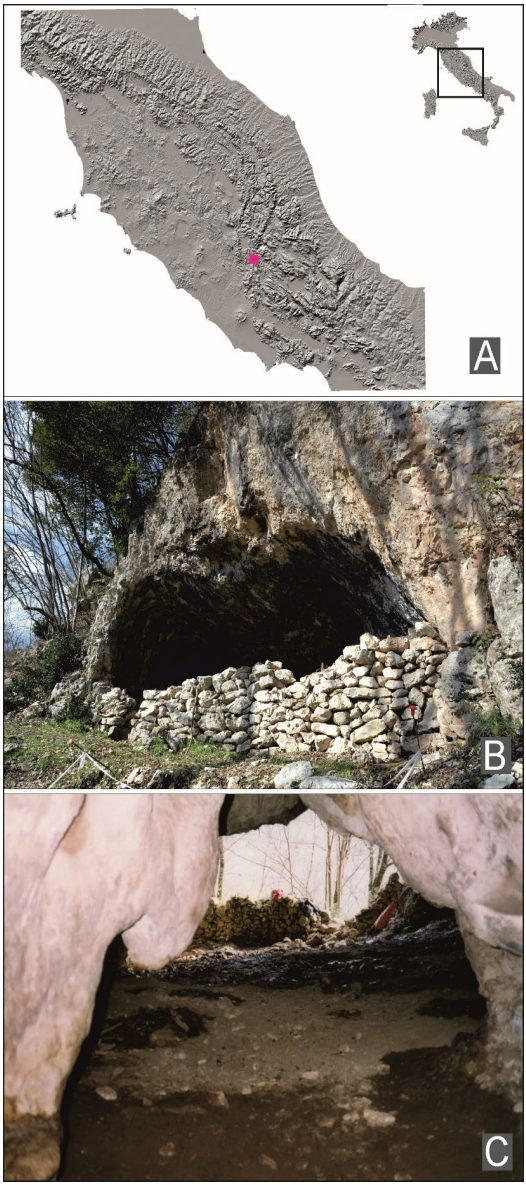

Fig. 1-1.A Grotta Mora Cavorso. A) Location of the cave in central Italy; B) External view of the cave's entrance; C) View of the Entrance Room from Dig B1 before the start of excavations.

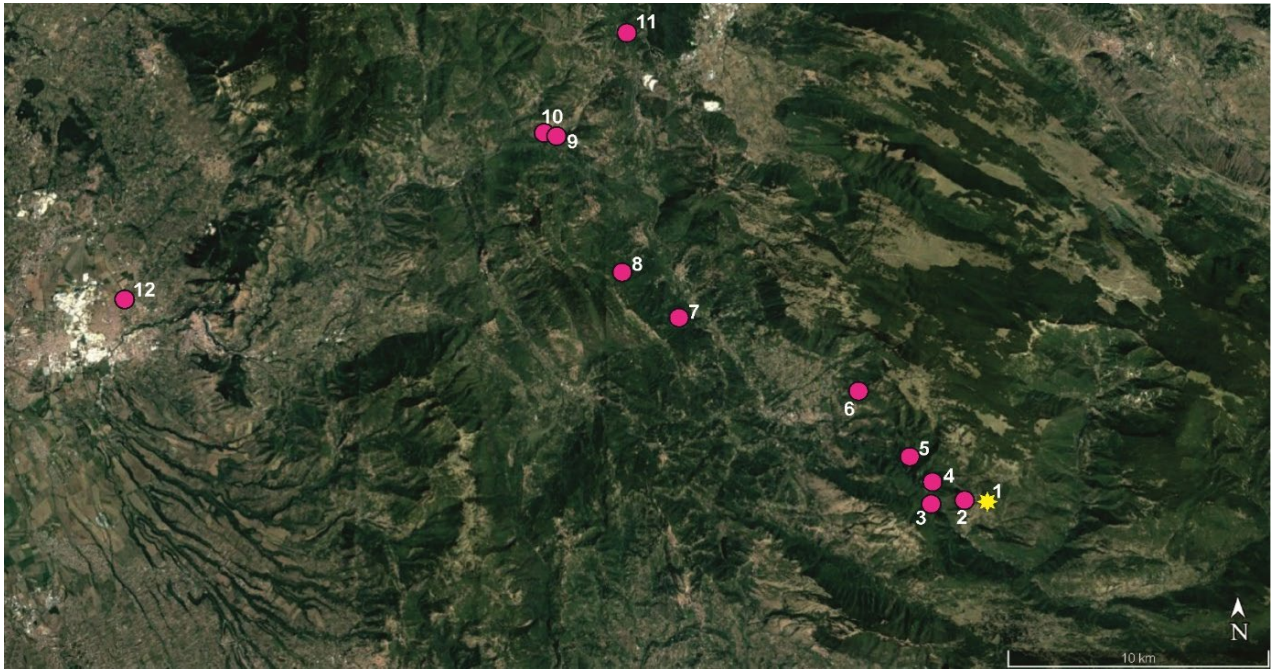

Fig. 1-1.B Spatial location of all the caves involved in the Aniene Valley Survey Project. 1) Grotta Mora Cavorso; 2) Grotta del Focone; 3) Grotta Gramaldoli; 4) Balze del Portellone; 5) Mora Gallina; 6) Grotta di Santa Scolastica; 7) Grotta Morritana; 8) Morra di Colecchia; 9) Grotta 1 and Riparo di Anticoli Corrado; 10) Grotta 2 di Anticoli Corrado; 11) Grotta del Convento di San Giorgio; 12) Grotta Polesini.

1.3.1 - Lower Aniene Valley

Grotta Polesini (41°57'34.23" N; 12°45'51.31" E) – Ponte Lucano, 65 m a.s.l.

The Grotta Polesini (Fig. 1-2) was discovered in 1953 by A.M. Radmilli (Radmilli, 1974), at the bottom of the waterfall in the Aniene Valley, in the town of Tivoli. It is found on the right shore of the river, near the Roman Lucano Bridge. Although at least five caves are known in this area, only Grotta Polesini and Grotta Stella have currently yielded archaeological remains, probably due to the Aniene's frequent floods.

The cave opens southwards and presents a 22-metre-long, 12-meter-wide external rock shelter which continues inside with a small chamber overlooking a small, shallow lake. The site location was certainly strategic, as it is found along the natural route (later the Valeria Roman road) connecting the Sabine and Marsica regions at the only ford point along the Aniene River (named Acquoria), linking them with the Roman Plain and the hills near the swamps of Bagni di Tivoli.

This cave presents one of the richest deposits found in Tyrrhenian central Italy, dating between the late Pleistocene (13-10ky BP) and the 3rd - 2nd millennium BCE. Human remains of at least 14 individuals, including four aged less than 15 years old, were found in almost all the archaeological layers, although they could not be associated with proper burials. Atrophic drilled deer canines were also recovered, many of which were decorated with notches, as well as *Ciclonassa*, *Dentalium* and *Columbella rustica* seashells. Ochre remains were also identified. Tens of thousands of lithic and bone remains were recovered in this cave, including over one hundred pebbles and bone fragments with zoomorphic and geometric incisions, making this site the richest in portable art examples for the Palaeolithic of Italy. One pebble found with the incision of a wolf is particularly significant, as the details of its hunt are accurately represented: 41 notches are incised, together with arrows, spears and harpoons hitting the animal, whose wounds are shown by small drills in the body. Another representation of a hunt scene is found on a fragmented deer coxal, which shows three hunters hitting an animal with spears. Finally, a flat stone was found decorated with burin incisions of a man likely being executed, represented by his leg being hit by arrows (Ceruleo and Radmilli 1980). This scene may represent an example of art which was created to preserve the memory of a real event. The study of the lithic industry led Radmilli to categorize the prehistoric remains in the "Romanellian" facies, also found in Latium in the deposit of Petescia

(Cittaducale, Rieti) and perhaps in the uppermost part of the deposit of the Grotta Jolanda (Sezze, Latina). Among the late Pleistocene faunal remains are numerous deer bones, as well as roe deer, wild boar, auroch, horse, and European ass (Radmilli, 1974).

Between 1950-52, Radmilli fully surveyed the travertine terrace area between the Acquoria and Lucano Bridges, finding at least 150 artefacts that he categorized as Late Neolithic, based on the small arrowheads recovered, which he compared to those found at the site of Le Caprine (Barocelli and Radmilli 1953, Radmilli, 1974).

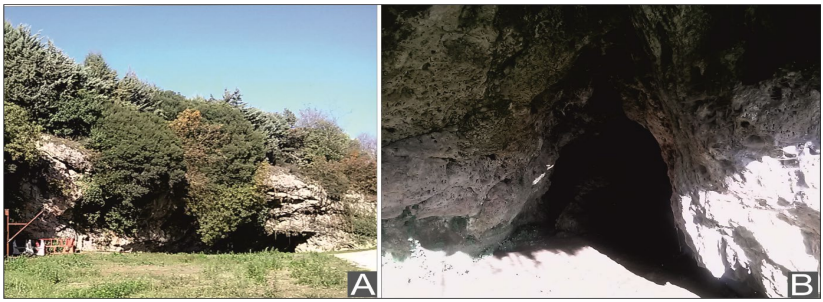

Fig. 1-2. Grotta Polesini. A-B) Views of the cave.

1.3.2 - Middle Aniene Valley

Grotta Morritana (41°56'51,38 N; 13°02'08.63" E) – Rocca Canterano, 700 m a.s.l.

At the end of the 19th century, a shepherd found a hoard of seven, mostly intact, bronze axes under a rock in the rock shelter of Grotta Morritana. Four of these artefacts are stored in the Pigorini Museum, Rome and are typo-chronologically referred to as MBA 1-2 (Montelius, 1910). Further 20th century investigations revealed the presence of several flint tools and an *impasto* cup referred to as EBA (Festuccia and Zabotti 1992).

Morra di Colecchia (41°58'04" N; 13°00'21" E) – Rocca Canterano, 834 m a.s.l.

The Morra di Colecchia cave is a dolmen-like structure formed by collapsed rocks, found in the Fiumicino Valley, 500 metres from the village of Rocca Canterano on the Ruffi Mountains and near a seasonal water stream, at about 820-850 m a.s.l. (Ceruleo 1982; Mattioli 2006) (Fig. 1-3). The area

is characterised by long-term human occupation (De Angelis D'ossat 1897). The structure yielded a boulder with 300 incised decorations, including checkerboard-fish bone graffiti, linear incisions, as well as tree-shaped, branch-shaped and phytomorphic motifs. The most prominent feature, however, is a "phi-shaped" red-ochre-painted man, along with other red and yellow coloured patches, that were well visible in the 1980s but have now almost disappeared. Comparisons can be found with a similar rock painting identified in 1936 at the Arnalo dei Bufali (Blanc 1939), although the latter is larger and without legs. The rock art is undated, as archaeological excavations have not been carried out, although a *terminus ante quem* could be found in the superimposition of Historical-Age inscriptions. Stylistically, the art might be considered prehistoric. At the bottom of the valley there are many more unexplored caves. A nearby one, 10 metres away from Morra di Colecchia, showed the remains of a "U-shaped" black painting, partially covered by the soil deposit of the cave.

Grotta 1a di Anticoli (42°00'59" N; 12°58'36" E) – Anticoli Corrado, 510 m a.s.l.

This cave opens towards the southeast near the village of Anticoli Corrado, 500 m a.s.l. on the slope of Monte Licino, before a small terrace that overlooks the Aniene Valley placed amongst other caves and rock shelters that are more difficult to reach due to the forested environment (Ceruleo 1982) (Fig. 1-4 A). Due to construction works on a nearby road many *impasto* potsherds, human bones and historical pottery have been recovered under a rock collapse. The remains are likely here due to a rockslide from up on top of the mountain, and therefore the original archaeological deposit is inexistent.

The innermost part of the site also shows bone fragments and charcoal, as well as poorly made flint artefacts and potsherds, cemented to the wall in the remaining concreted filling. The remains, although limited in quantity, could suggest a preliminary dating between the Final Neolithic and the early phases of the Bronze Age and a possible funerary use due to the human bones recovered.

Riparo di Anticoli (42°00'59" N; 12°58'36" E) – Anticoli Corrado, 517 m a.s.l.

A large rock shelter (10 m high and 20 m deep), dominating the Aniene Valley 200 m above the river, was identified just above the Grotta 1 of Anticoli Corrado (Fig. 1-4 B). Before a partial rock collapse, the walls of

this rock shelter presented incisions and paintings, first identified in the 1980s, and possibly connected with the remains found in the nearby cave (Ceruleo 1982; 2013; 2014) (Fig. 1-5 D-E). The first of these lost paintings consisted of a 20 cm tall, black (charcoal-drawn?) anthropomorphic figure with a rectangular body and lines indicating the limbs as well as, possibly, special clothing.

Recent analyses have identified incisions that might represent a deer head and a bovid above a series of horizontal, vertical, and transverse lines that often seem to point toward the same direction More charcoal drawings have also been recognised, partially covered by a carbonatic veil due to the stillicide and thus corroborating the hypothesis of an ancient dating for this art. The drawings seem to show three adjacent anthropomorphic figures and a smaller, isolated one further down the wall. Farther along the wall, there are two snake-shaped figures, one above the other. The first measures 30 cm high and 1-2 cm wide while the second is 20 cm high (probably continuing for 20 cm more) and 1 cm wide. These are followed by another anthropomorphic figure.

Archaeological investigations have not yet been undertaken and stylistic comparisons are limited, however the typology of the incisions could possibly belong to the so-called "Mediterranean artistic province" (Graziosi, 1972), dated between the late Upper Palaeolithic and the Mesolithic. The charcoal drawings could be roughly placed in the Neolithic-Metal Ages phase.

Grotta 2a di Anticoli (42°01'13.04" N; 12°58'06" E) – Anticoli Corrado, 455 m a.s.l.

A few hundred metres away from the rock shelter of Anticoli Corrado's, another cave opens above the Casal Romano water stream, 4-5 m wide and 10 m deep, whose entrance is partially blocked by a large boulder. Several animal dens and recent anthropic remains characterise this site (Fig. 1-4 C). Whilst clandestine excavations revealed the absence of archaeological evidence (the still visible stratigraphy of these digs shows a sterile deposit), a niche near the entrance preserves checkerboard-shaped incisions and incised concentric-circles, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures (Fig. 1-5 A-B-C). One of these consists of a headless and armless 11-cm-tall naked female figure with prominent buttocks and womb, represented in a three-quarter view. Such art could be compared with the common "Venuses" representing prehistoric fertility, especially those of the French, Spanish and