



# Downscaling Cosmological Landscapes: from Early to Mid-Holocene Rock Art in Northern Norway

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## SUMMARY

The rock art of northern Norway is well-known, not least due to the UNESCO World Heritage sites at Alta dating back to c. 5200 cal BC. It is perhaps less well-known that northern Norway also has earlier rock art dating back to c. 9000 cal BC. While the early phase of rock art is dominated by large, natural sized animals such as elk, reindeer, bear and whale in a naturalistic style, the later period in addition to animals have many humans, boats and geometric motifs. Although varying in size, the individual motifs are typically small (10-20 cm), and although identifiable to species the style is more schematic. The rock art now includes narrative scenes and compositions which display communal activities involving groups of people interacting, e.g. hunting and ritual activities. In this paper we will explore how the panels and motifs in the early and late period respectively relate to the landscape, and argue that there is a downscaling not just in the size of the motifs but also in the perception of the landscape. This downscaling is associated with changes in settlement and mobility patterns, from an early highly mobile mode of habitation to a semi-sedentary mode with increased regionalization.

## RIASSUNTO (RIDIMENSIONAMENTO DEI PAESAGGI COSMOLOGICI: L'ARTE RUPESTRE DELLA NORVEGIA SETTENTRIONALE DURANTE L'OLOCENE INFERIORE E MEDIO)

L'arte rupestre della Norvegia settentrionale è ben nota, non da ultimo per il sito Patrimonio dell'Umanità di Alta risalente al 5200 cal BC. circa. È forse meno noto nella Norvegia settentrionale si trova anche arte rupestre precedente, risalente al 9000 cal BC. circa. Mentre la fase iniziale dell'arte rupestre è dominata da raffigurazioni di grandi animali di dimensioni naturali come alci, renne, orsi e balene in stile naturalistico, nel periodo successivo oltre alle raffigurazioni di animali troviamo anche figure umane, barche e motivi geometrici. Anche se di dimensioni variabili, le singole figure sono tipicamente piccole (10-20 cm), e sebbene identificabili per specie lo stile è più schematico. In questa fase l'arte rupestre include scene narrative e composizioni che mostrano attività comuni che coinvolgono gruppi di persone che interagiscono tra loro, ad esempio attività di caccia e attività rituali. In questo articolo esploreremo come i pannelli e i motivi figurativi del primo periodo e di quello successivo si relazionano con il paesaggio, e sosteneremo che c'è un ridimensionamento non solo nella dimensione dei motivi, ma anche nella percezione del paesaggio. Questo ridimensionamento è associato a cambiamenti nei modelli di insediamento e mobilità, da una prima modalità di insediamento caratterizzata da una alta mobilità a una modalità semi-sedentaria con una maggiore regionalizzazione.



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# Rock art and landscape

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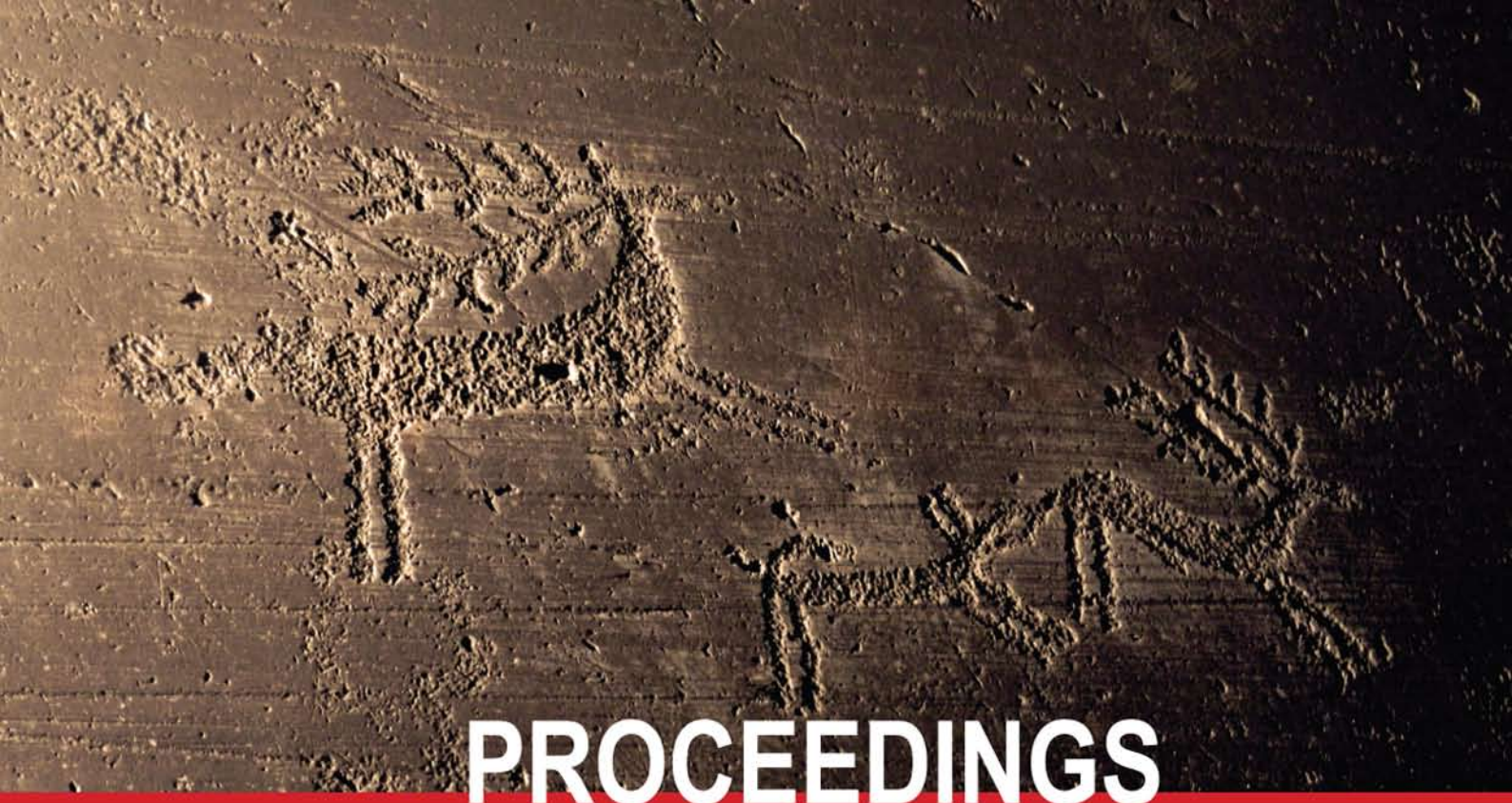
## RATIONALE

Landscape is an important aspect of rock art research, and the two are naturally entangled even today. Rock art sites have opportunities lost to many other archaeological sites. The fact one may still observe and interpret the images in its surrounding landscape. The sources of error are our modern experiences of the landscape and its lost relations in which they have altered. Even though, there are aspects of the landscape that could transcend and the panel surface itself still contain aspect that were very much present when the rock art was made.

In this way, we can interpret lost relations and landscapes in many ways and at different scales or levels. At the macro level; overall surrounding landscape, the location of the rock art panel in relation landscape features such as the sea, rivers, outcrops, mountains etc. Or at det micro level; the panel's topography, cracks or clefts, curving, orientation etc. and the placement of the figures according to such.

The landscape can provide us with information and contextualize important aspects with regards to interpretations according to our theoretical or methodological approach to the rock art.

In this session we want to enlighten this aspect of rock art research and encourage you to present different ways of seeing rock art and landscape as an important and intertwined duality.



# PROCEEDINGS

## XXVIII VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM 2021 ROCK-ART, A HUMAN HERITAGE



Città della Cultura - Capo di Ponte (Valcamonica)  
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*EDIZIONI DEL CENTRO*