

ISERNIA

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PALEOLITHIC

7

CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
DEL MOLISE

ISERNIA

The National Museum of Paleolithic



PALEO.IS

MUSEO PALEOLITICO
ISERNIA LAPINETA



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
DEL MOLISE



From discovery to the Museum

Identified with the acronym of Paleo.Is, the Museum is part of an Archaeological Park project created by arch. Benno Albrecht of Studio Associati Brescia, which includes a series of pavilions that can be used in a didactic-exhibition path, a project which was awarded the "Andrea Palladio International Architecture Award" in 1988. The construction of the large museum structure was carried out with the aim of welcoming, exhibiting and enhancing the huge amount of archaeological finds brought to light during the excavation campaigns conducted in the archaeological area of the "La Pineta" site, starting from 1979. The history of the Museum therefore intertwines with that of the aforementioned Paleolithic site, identified and reported during the excavation works for the construction of the Naples-Vasto highway in July 1978. In April 1999 the first pavilion of the relative architectural complex was inaugura-

ted and the excavations started the realization of the project and they allowed the systematic continuation of archaeological research under the scientific direction of prof. Carlo Peretto (University of Ferrara). The exploratory activity that affected the site is the result of close collaboration between the Department of Biology and Evolution (University of Ferrara), the University of Molise and the Archaeological Superintendence of Molise.

The "Isernia La Pineta" site

Over the years the archaeological activity has made possible the expansion of scientific knowledge and the inclusion of the "La Pineta" site in the framework of the reconstruction of the most representative sites for European Prehistory, making it an important reference for the methods of population in Italy, starting from the movement of the first human groups from Africa.



On page 4: The logo of the National Paleolithic Museum. Opposite: Detail of the paleosurface present on the site (Photo Mibact). Above: Aerial view of the "La Pineta" site. (Google Earth)



© Mibact

"La Pineta" has therefore been prepared to meet the needs of the most modern interdisciplinary investigations. The archaeological area is covered by a pavilion of about seven hundred square meters, equipped with fixed instruments for surveying and documentation, within which it is possible to conduct research for long periods.

The same pavilion is built to allow the visitor to attend the various stages of exploration even during excavations: identification and

isolation of the finds; restoration of materials on archaeosurfaces; manual and computerized documentation. The washing and screening sectors have also been organized to allow the collection of the smallest materials, such as the remains of freshwater fish, amphibians, water

Above and below: Reconstructive drawing of the probable view in the surrounding area "Isernia La Pineta" in the Paleolithic and Pre-historic "banquet" scene. Opposite: Visit to the excavations with a direct view of the Paleosurface.



© Mibact





© Milbact

birds and rodents of various species essential for the reconstruction of the ancient environment. The excavations and interdisciplinary studies of the deposits, explored for a thickness of at least six meters, allow us to draw an articulated picture of the sequence of natural phenomena that have affected the area from at least 600,000 years ago to the present day. Just starting from this phase of the Quaternary, in the lower Paleolithic, groups of hunters settled several times in a short period of time, perhaps in the order of a few seasons, on small areas emerged near or surrounded by humid environ-

Above and on the next page: Moments of the archaeological excavation work and data recording by professionals and students from different regions of Italy and different international contexts.

ments, sometimes invaded by sudden floods. Later the camp was buried by a thick blanket of alluvial sediments, resulting from the rapid erosion of the surrounding hills. This phenomenon was favored by the tectonic action that determined the elevation of the reliefs placed in the vicinity of the human settlement, allowing a faster washout of the same and therefore the deposition in the lower areas of sediments charac-



terized each time by powerful layers of clay, sands and gravels. In turn, the lifting of these hills as a result of the tectonic action, had been accompanied on several occasions by volcanic manifestations, which had resulted in the deposition of ashes and the consequent formation of

tuffs with layers of even tens of centimeters in thickness. Those natural phenomena determined the rapid burial of what was left by human groups, thus creating the most favorable conservation conditions of the ancient inhabited soils, now systematically explored.



The Paleosurface

On April 14, 2012, the section that houses a portion of about 65 square meters of the Paleosurface was opened to the public. The best known and rich in materials, called 3a, has been recomposed and exhibited in the Museum with the appropriately restored original finds. The Archeosurface is characterized by the presence of a high quantity of lithic artefacts and by abundant bone remains of different animal species, mainly attributable to large Herbivores, in particular Bison,

Elephant, Rhino, Megacero, Hippopotamus, Bear. Together with the part still explored in the excavation pavilion, they document the intense exploitation of the environment by groups of Prehistoric hunters of 700,000-600,000 years ago, for food and survival purposes.

Below: Reconstruction of the Paleosurface in the room dedicated to "Isernia La Pineta". Opposite: Bone remains of different animal species, mainly attributable to large herbivores. (Photo T. Paolone)





The Prehistoric tooth

The oldest find in Italy is a human remains found in the "La Pineta" site. It is a small milk tooth, in particular a lower incisor, which belonged to a child of about 5-6 years old and dated 586,000 years from now. The tooth, measuring just 7 mm, belonged to a child of Homo Heidelbergensis, who lived in Europe between 600,000 and 250,000 years ago and which gave rise to the Neanderthal Man and Homo sapiens.

The discovery confirms once again the importance of the "Isernia La Pineta" deposit as a reservoir of fundamental information for the reconstruction of a small piece of our evolutionary history.

Below: The tooth of the Prehistoric child found in Isernia. On the side, top: Interactive monitor; stamp and cancellation celebrating the Paleolithic Museum. Below: Reconstructive drawing of the evolution in the human species.





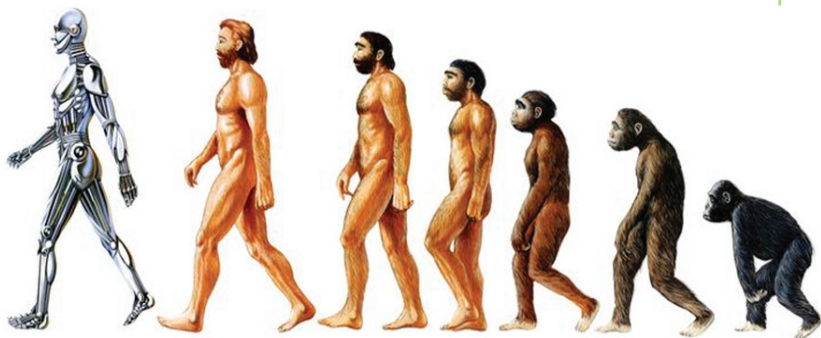
The stamp

On February 6, 1988, for the tenth anniversary of the discovery of the "La Pineta" site, the Poligrafico dello Stato Office issued a commemorative stamp worth Lire 500; in 2018, a philatelic cancellation was issued by the central Post Offices of Isernia, for the fortieth anniversary.



Multimedia

Inside the Museum there are multimedia supports in digital form that enrich the educational and recognition purposes of the cultural heritage and that allow interactivity between the Museum and the user. The visitor can immerse himself in the evocative and fascinating history in the discovery of the site and our origins, retracing the phases, using images, sounds and videos offered by a multimedia station, installed inside the room dedicated to the site of "Isernia La Pineta", a support for a better understanding of the site and its characteristics and peculiarities.



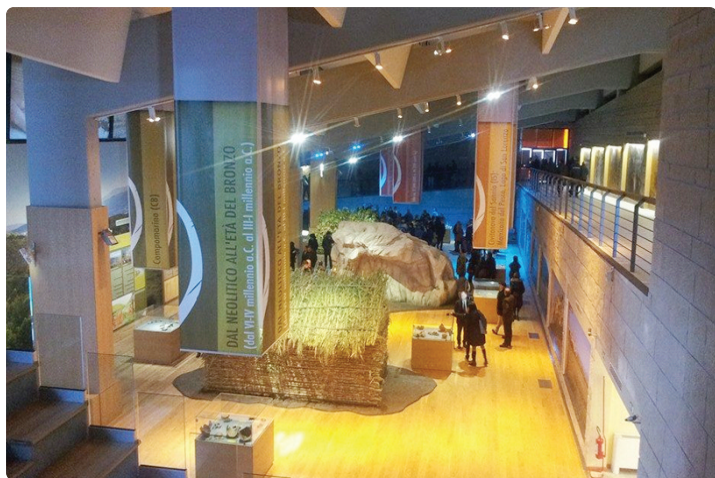
Prehistory in Molise

The layout of the second exhibition hall includes an exhibition itinerary that aims to highlight and communicate with the utmost clarity, for all possible users, the archaeological discoveries for the Pre and Protohistoric phase of Molise. The aim of the exhibition is therefore to present in a simple but scientifically correct way the salient phases of the evolutionary path made by man in hundreds of thousands years, from the Paleolithic to the metal age. The

exhibition route inside this large room is divided into three sections, each characterized by a different color to indicate a temporal scan of archaeological evidence covering a time span ranging from the lower Paleolithic to the upper, from the Neolithic to the Age of Bronze. The set-up is accompanied by large didactic panels and some scenographic reconstructions. Specifically, the three sections are structured as follows:



© Mibact



© Mibact



1. Lower Paleolithic

The first section of red color is dedicated to the lower Paleolithic with the materials coming from the archaeological excavations of "Colle delle Api" and "Guado San Nicola" (Monteroduni, IS), archaeological areas distant only 150 meters from each other and dated about 400,000 years from the present. The section is completed by the reconstruction of a typical Paleolithic hut.

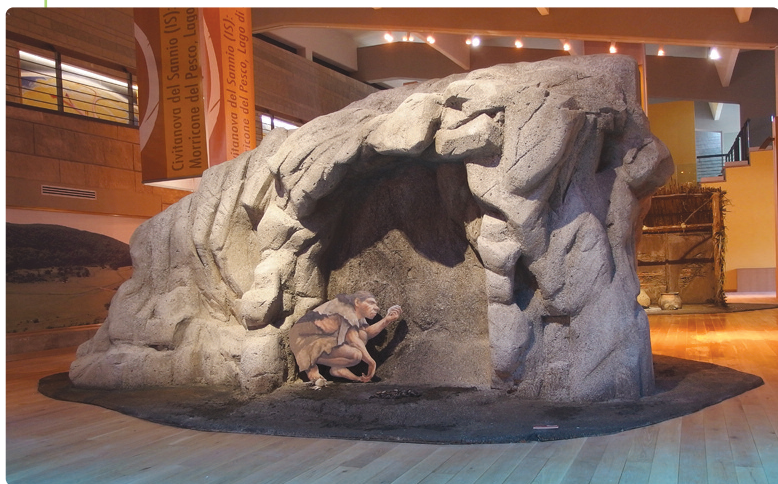
On this page and on the side: Preparation of part of the room in which there are didactic panels and reconstructions of typical Pre and Protohistoric "houses", some of which were found in Molise.

2. From the Middle Paleolithic to the Upper Paleolithic

with display of materials from the "Grotta Reali" site (Rocchetta a Volturno, IS) and from the "San Lorenzo" site (Civitanova del Sannio, IS). This section, highlighted by the other color, also displays a selection of stone materials collected during the survey activities carried out in the territories of upper Molise.

The preparation of this section revolves around the reconstruction of the large shelter of Morricone del Pesco with the first evidence of rock art in Molise.





© Key comunicazione

3. From the Neolithic to the Bronze Age

The third section, in green, shows the archaeological finds from the Neolithic period-Bronze Age, from the excavations of the Neolithic site of the Rocca di Oratino, from the "Village of Campomarino" and from the site in the locality Paradiso in Monteroduni, of which also you can observe a life-size reproduction of a large oval-shaped hut dating

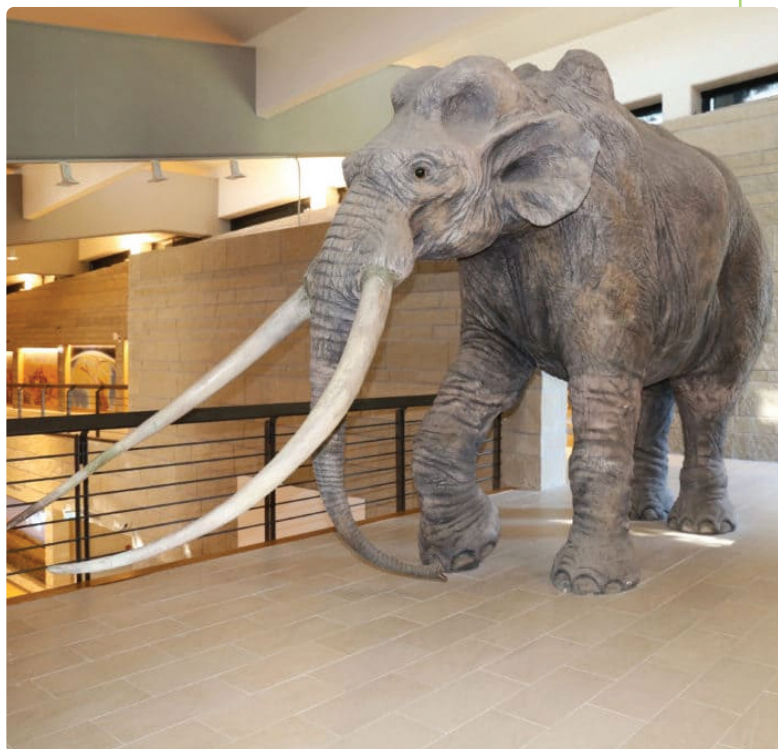
from the 12th century. B.C. The didactic panels supporting the exhibition section in this room have been designed for a different audience, in Italian and English for adults and in Italian for children. The texts accompany the visitor in the discovery of the Pre-Protohistoric characteristics of the Molise territory with specific focus on the archaeological sites presented in the windows.



© Key comunicazione



Opposite page: Reconstruction of the Neanderthal site of Grotta Reali. Bottom: Showcases and explanatory panels. On this page: The long corridor with, on the side, blow-ups of Prehistoric scenes. Bottom: The giant elephant that welcomes visitors to the pavilion.



The Prehistoric sites of Molise

In Molise, a little anthropized region of Italy, it is easy to find traces of the presence of primitive man. In the internal part of the region, the territory has in fact a morphological conformation which has allowed our ancient ancestors to assiduously frequent the entire territory. Occasional discoveries took place in Molise starting from the second half of the 19th century, when also by Luigi Pigorini (of whom he entered the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum of Rome) Paleontology became a science. Precisely in the Museum - as in those of Baranello, Agnone and in the Samnite

Museum of Campobasso - the old siliceous material found in Molise is preserved concerning the 14 municipalities in the province of Isernia and 23 in province of Campobasso.

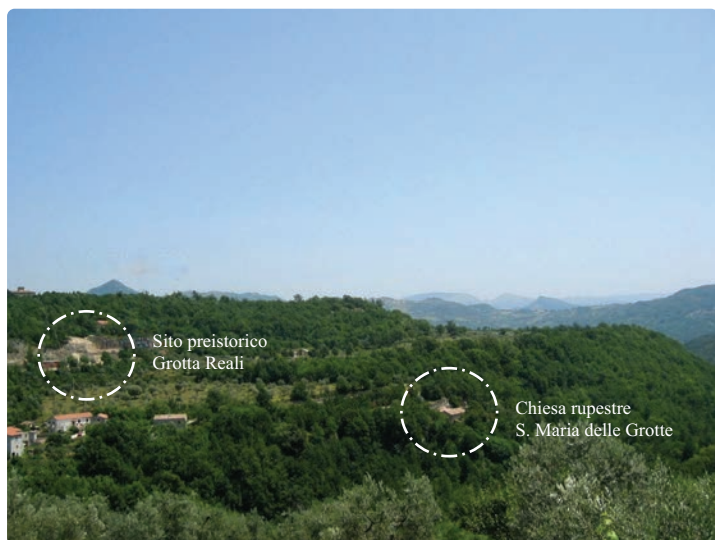
Grotta Reali

Rocchetta a Volturno

Between 33,000 and 40,000 years ago, late Neanderthal groups settled several times in the vicinity of the Volturno springs, in the territory of Rocchetta a Volturno. The area offered several advantages to the installation of base camps and bivouacs: presence of water, animals to hunt, flint for the production of tools and natural

ravines in which to find shelter. One of the many caves in the area, Grotta Reali, has returned important evidence of the presence of Neanderthals. Inside, they chipped the stone, slaughtered the hunted animals, lit fires.

It was probably a temporary station, rather than a stable settlement, given that the



cave, constantly influenced by percolation phenomena and by the presence of water veils on the wall, it was humid and therefore not very hospitable. Grotta Reali therefore returns one of the last moments of the existence of the Neandertal Man in Italy. The site was investigated under the direction of Prof. Carlo Peretto (University of Ferrara) with systematic excavation interventions, activated between 2005 and 2007. Grotta Reali would have been occupied by Neanderthal groups in a interruption and migration's period of the deposition of the tufa, probably during the last Interglacial period, in two phases separated by intervals of non attendance and reactivation in the sedimentation mechanisms.

The lake of San Lorenzo in Civitanova del Sannio

In the Montagnola area, towards the end of winter and throughout the spring season, in a large karst basin the beautiful ephemeral lake of San Lorenzo, more commonly called lake of Civitanova, is created with the waters of the thaw. This characteristic corner is part of the Prehistoric evidence that characterizes the Molise territory. Over the years, the site has taken on significant importance for understanding the adaptive strategies of Prehistoric communities to the mountain environment and it's located within a downstream system, at approximately 1,100 m above sea level, connected by hills which reach on average 1,200 meters, up to the maximum altitude of 1,422.2 m with

the "La Montagnola" massif, geologically characterized by karst rocks. This environment became continental around 35 million years ago, when geomorphological agents, led to the creation of inframontane basins. In a later phase, most probably in the upper Pliocene, the valleys are transformed into basins with river sedimentations and the carbonate versant evolves by disintegration, retreating. The area of the current lake of San Lorenzo in the course of the Quaternary is present precisely in the form of an inframontane basin; along its ridges, archaeological evidence of long-term frequentation has been documented. The lithic industry collected here is made up of two main sets of materials, in total approximately 1,670 artifacts, the first of which coming from surface collections from Mr. Bruno Paglione, who discovered the site; the second, from recent reconnaissances and a survey of inspection stratigraphic conducted by the Services of the University of Ferrara, in collaboration with the University of Molise. In summary, the research carried out in San Lorenzo has shown that research has played a role of primary interest for the community settled in the area since the most ancient Prehistory. Starting from the Middle Paleolithic, it was in fact frequented by Neanderthals. Subsequently, the area was intensely occupied, for carrying out practices related to pastoralism, by early Neolithic groups engaged productive activities. The certification on the site by the last Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, whose ability to adapt to mountain areas is well known throughout the European continent, is not certain.

Opposite page: Remains of Prehistoric fire inside Royal Grotta. Below: The location of the site not far from the Santa Maria delle Grotte church, on the municipal road that leads from Rocchetta a Volturno to Scapoli.



The Rock Paintings nel Riparo Morricone del Pesco

The presence of primitive man in the territory of Civitanova is attested by findings in the area of Lake San Lorenzo on Montagnola, but recent research coordinated by the University of Ferrara on the information of Mr. Guido Lastoria, brought in 2011 to the identification of cave paintings in the immediate vicinity of the Lucera-Castel di Sangro tratturo. In a shelter under the rocks of the Morricone del Pesco, rock carvings and engravings have been discovered, the latter of black

color, chronologically attributable, on a stylistic basis, to a period of time that probably ranges from the late Paleolithic up to more properly historical ages. The black paints and engravings are distributed in four main groupings. The overall number is difficult to establish due to their poor state of conservation, however at least four painted figures of animals are recognizable, which allow a chronological and cultural comparison with other European finds. Specifically, it is possible to trace back to a probable phase of the late Paleolithic a zoomorphic figure, drawn of a contour line, reduced dimensions, with pigment also inside the back which accentuates its naturalistic character. Other paintings, always on a stylistic basis, can be traced back to the Iron Age.

Opposite page: View of the Prehistoric site of Lake San Lorenzo on Montagnola in the municipality of Civitanova del Sannio. Below: The gigantic bulk of the Morricone del Pesco inside which the cave paintings of the photo below were found.



The Civic Museum of Stone in Pescopennataro

It is a museum on Prehistory, a reference for all those who intend to retrace history, The Pescopennataro Stone Museum is a practically inexhaustible basin of information on the Palaeolithic and Neolithic culture in the Alto Molise area. The section relating to the Paleolithic finds comes from the personal collection of Pietro Patriarca and Fortuna Ciavolino, who directly and personally followed both the preparation and the production of supporting information material.

The objects found are the result of a thirty-year campaign of discoveries, made up of research and passion, curiosity and interest in a land where a very important prehistoric community lived. The Museum houses over 1600 artefacts in flint

and limestone, evidence of a particularly refined lithic craftsmanship made of chipped stones and worked with great manual skill by hunters and shepherds. In addition to the production of stone artefacts dedicated to the supplying of the communities, the Museum also houses an important number of monilei in various sizes, testimony to the absolute vitality in this area of these communities. The flints of Pescopennataro in part are found in the archaeological site of Rio Verde, as well as the fossil finds under the local reliefs and all parts at different times, from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic. They have seen the evolution of stone in the many tools useful to man in his necessary struggle for survival and in his gradual conquest of the living environment.



The site of the Rocca di Oratino

The Bronze Age site of the Rocca di Oratino, identified with a stratigraphic essay in 1991 by G. De Benedittis, has been the subject of systematic excavations since the autumn of 2005, directed by the Superintendence for Archaeological Heritage of Molise, in collaboration with the Cattedra of Palethnology of the La Sapienza University in Rome. It is located on the right bank of the Biferno river, at the foot of a high rocky outcrop on the top of which there is a medieval tower dominating the river valley. On the SW slopes of this spur, a series of

small open spaces that are arranged at various altitudes, are present. Thanks to the research conducted on the largest plateau at approx. 540 m a.s.l., it was possible to verify the presence of a deposit referable to an advanced phase of the Subappennine. The attendance in more ancient periods is only hinted at by some fragments of decorated Apennine pottery, found both on the surface and in layer, and of perforated handles of the Apennine type, found in the vicinity of the excavation area and in the surface levels of the deposit, as evidence of a certain continuity of occupation in the site.

We also report the discovery of a proto-Apennine handle in an excavation context still to be defined.

During the 1970s, the Biferno Valley was the subject of intense reconnaissance work by G. Barker,

Opposite page: Details of the showcase of the flint and limestone artefacts found in the Museo della Pietra di Pescopennataro. Under: The bulk of the Rocca di Oratino, a Prehistoric site from the Bronze Age, not far from the Biferno valley floor.



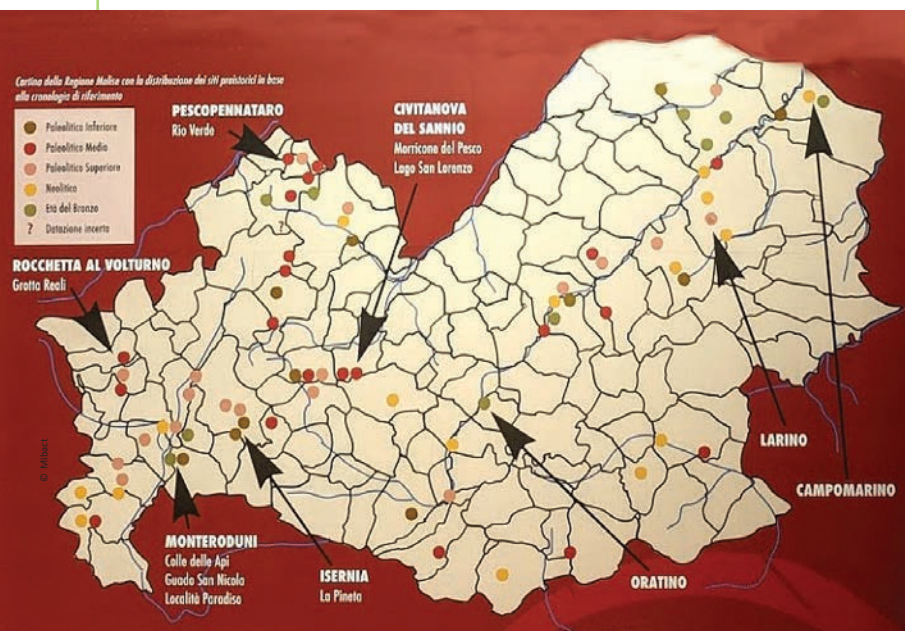
whose data was published in 1995. However, informations from excavated sites are still scarce: apart from the case of the Rocca di Oratino, the site of Petrella Tifernina and that of Masseria Mammarella (Guglionesi) have also been investigated by Barker. The Oratino site shows greater continuity of employment. The excavation area is approx. 110 square meters and it has been divided into sectors. The deposit related to the Bronze Age was partially compromised. The slopes of the fortress were in fact re-occupied both in the Hellenistic period, as evidenced by the presence of a fortification wall in polygonal work, and in the Medieval period.

Below: Map of the Molise Region with the distribution of Prehistoric and Protohistoric sites according to the reference chronology. On the next page: Excavations in the Prehistoric site in Località Fonte del Paradiso Monteroduni. Below: Arcora in Campomarino.

The other Protohistoric sites of Molise

The Prehistoric site in Paradiso di Monteroduni is arranged on two anthropic levels, separated by a formation of travertine, which seem to refer to an ancient and recent moment in the Subappennine.

The upper level, more widely explored and in turn covered by a further formation of travertine, shows a good conservation of the finds, largely crushed in situ. The discovery, before systematic research, of fragments of Dolii ceramics from the mixture, probably referable to the advanced phase of the Sub-Apennine Apennines, is interesting. Near Masseria Mammarella, in the municipality of Guglionesi, in 1974, the Graeme Barker team was involved in systematic excavations which brought to light a Protohistoric human settlement, consisting of five or six huts with common parts and occupying an area of approximately





150 square meters, located on the first terrace above the riverbed of the Sinarca stream. The excavations also returned pottery of different types and shapes (cups, bowls and storage vessels). Except for two short copper wires and an ornamental fibula, no other bronze objects were found, since at the time the circulation of this metal alloy was poor. The built-up area in Località Arcora in the municipality of Campomarino, is one of the very first examples of Proto-historic villages in the Molise coast. The dating of the settlement has not yet been established exactly, but it can be said that the va-

rious housing stages are provided by the Late Bronze Age - beginning of the Iron Age (around the IX century BC) - and the last at least in the VII century BC. The excavation area has been divided for convenience into two areas, conventionally called A and B, separated by a moat. Zone A is certainly older: traces of houses have been found that can still be traced back to the Late Bronze Age-early Iron Age. Zone B, which houses a single large structure, refers to a later phase, perhaps no longer Protohistoric but already of the Archaic Age, however not later than the seventh century BC.





Prehistoric lithic instruments found in the province of Isernia.

Info and Useful Numbers

National Paleolithic Museum of Isernia

Place of culture belonging to the Polo Museale del Molise

Via Ramiera Vecchia snc, 86170 Isernia

Tel. +39 0865 290687

pm-mol@beniculturali.it - www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it

Visiting hours / Opening times:

www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it/musei

Entrance ticket / Tickets

Full: € 4.00

Reduced: € 2.00

Guided tours and educational workshops

Me.MO Cantieri Culturali APS

museopaleois@gmail.com

memoisernia@gmail.com

www.museopaleois.it

Tel. 327.2803696

Publishing realization Volturnia Edizioni Piazza Santa Maria, 5 - Cerro al Volturno (IS)

Tel. 0865 953593 - 339 7909487 *www.volturniaedizioni.com - info@volturniaedizioni.com*

Map © Google maps. **Texts:** Antonella Minelli and extracts from the volume edited by Tobia Paolone **Molise Mitico**, Volturnia Edizioni, 2017. **Translations:** Translation.com **Layout, graphics and Photographs** Tobia Paolone and "altri Itinerari" Archive and where indicated are owned by Mibact, Polo Museale del Molise (Campobasso); Key communication; Antonio Priston.

Copyright © 2019 Chamber of Commerce of Molise and Volturnia Edizioni.

Edition promoted by the Molise Chamber of Commerce - Project **Discovering Molise**

President Paolo Spina - Referent Gemma Laurelli



TURISM^eCULTURA
www.visitmolise.eu



Polo
Museale
del Molise



www.comune.isernia.asitechspa.it



www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it

Project DISCOVERING MOLISE

- 1 The Museum of Mysteries and the Samnite Museum of Campobasso
- 2 MAB Unesco reserve "Alto Molise"
- 3 The Swabian Castle and the old village of Termoli
- 4 The archaeological Area of Altilia/Sepino
- 5 The monumental complex of San Vincenzo al Volturno
- 6 Agnone, the Museum and the Pontifical Foundry of Marinelli Bells
- 7 The National Museum of Paleolithic of Isernia
- 8 The churches, the castle and the historical centre of Campobasso
- 9

This publication is the property of the Camera di Commercio of Molise and the reproduction, even if only partial, requires express authorization.



**CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
DEL MOLISE**

Piazza della Vittoria, 1 - 86100 Campobasso

Sede secondaria: Corso Risorgimento, 302 - 86170 Isernia

Tel. +39 0874 4711 - camera.commercio@molise.camcom.it - www.molise.camcom.gov.it

PEC cciaa.molise@legalmail.it