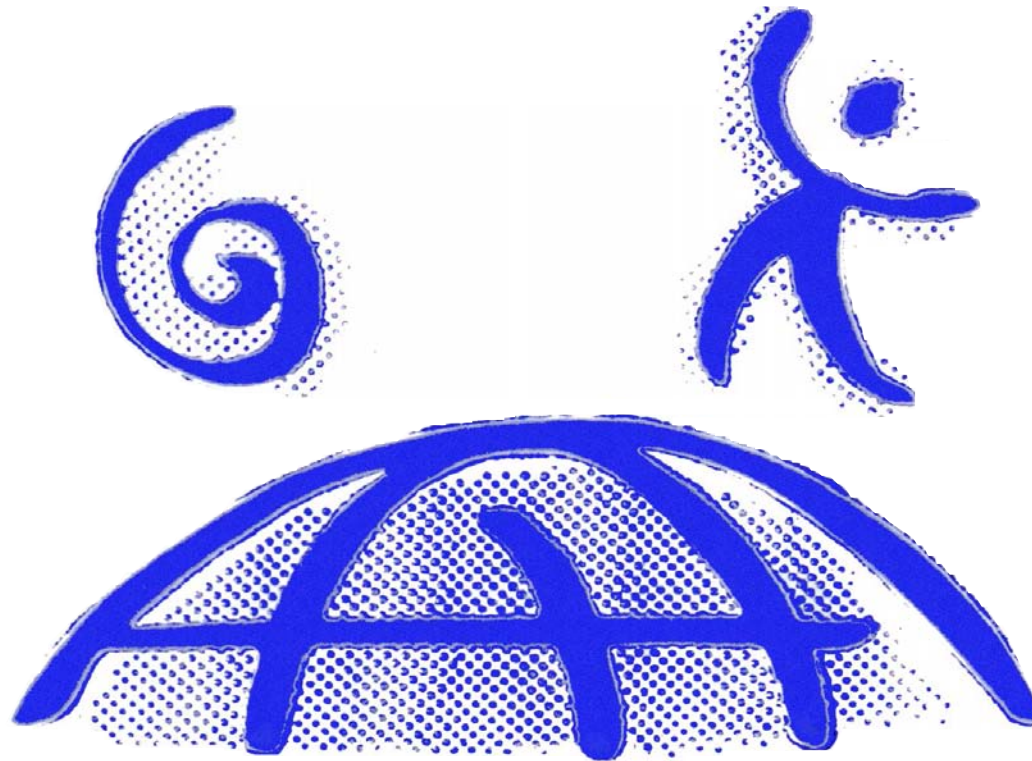
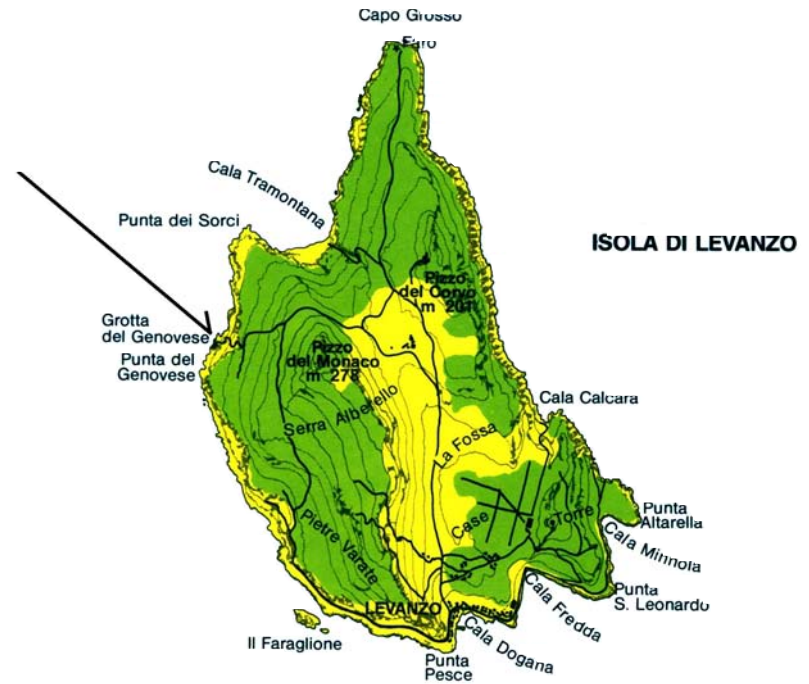
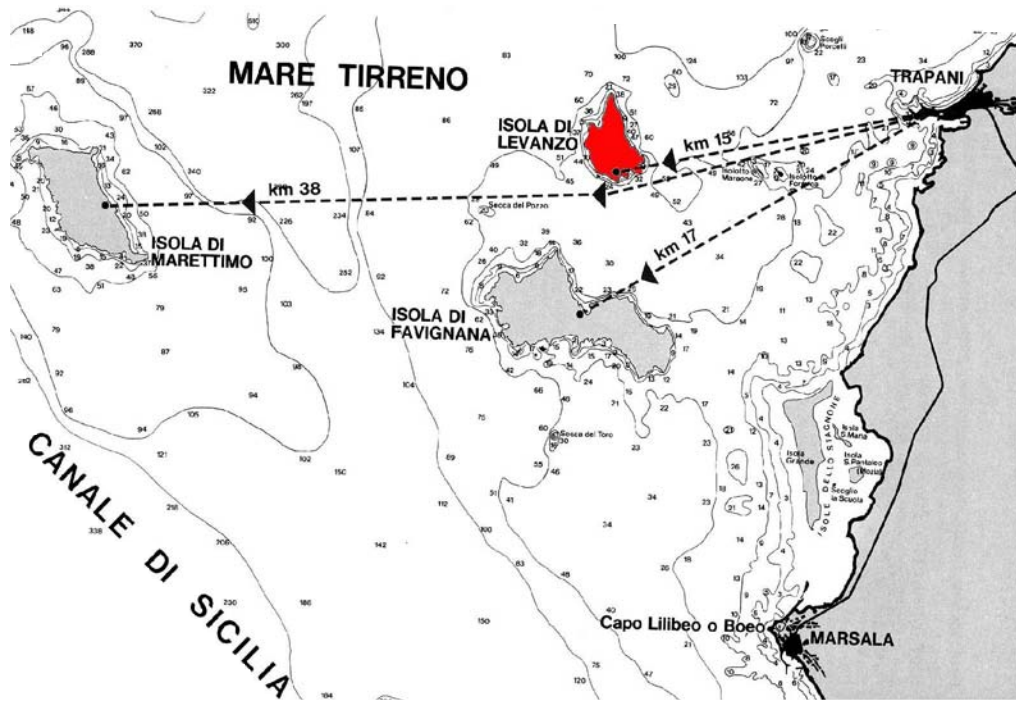


STONEWATCH

The World of Petroglyphs



Part 2
Grotto Genovese / Levanzo / Italy
Fotos and Text: Mario Berlussi



Sectional view of the Grotto Genovese:

- 1. entrance to the sea-side
- 2. the main hall

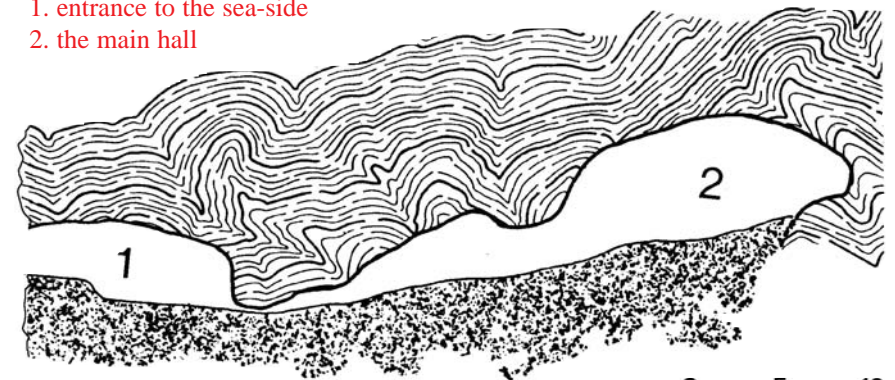
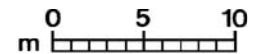


Illustration 1



The Genovese-Grotto at Levanzo

More easy to get to this grotto is the way over the sea - if the sea is friendly enough - than from the interior. But the excursion across the island is far more adventurous, because it is carried out on the back of mules. In any case, if over sea or over the land, it is recommended to ask for the permission at the attendant, Giuseppe Castiglione. Because only he has the key, and accompanies the visitors with his knowledge and his mules. Castiglione is living directly over the landing-place of the hydrofoil. Everyone knows him.

More than 10.000 years ago, when Levanzo has not been an island, but together with Favignana was connected with sicilian coast, there were deers grazing, bulls and cows with bent horns, equines and also wild boars. When the sea began to reign over the land, the deers vanished and the country was reasonably cultivated from people, which had discovered the secrets of the flora, and had used them to get over their hunger.

On the half way to Capo Grosso one has to leave the mulepath to the left. Over a minor path the way moves to Punta del Genovese. A sloping ground leads down to the sea and after about 30 more meters one can recognize the dark opening of the Grotta del Genovese. At the foot of a redly, ochre and violet spotted, 50 meters high vertical rockface, run through with stalactites and limestoneformations, one stands in the 8,5 m wide and more than 12 m high first chamber of the famous grotto (foto 1).

The area in which the prehistoric wallengravings and paintings can be found, lies at the end of a narrow and about 3 m long way, which could only be passed on the knees, to a spacious and totally dark hall, approximately 35 m long (ill. 1).

The discovery was made by chance by a painteresse in 1949 by the tip of a fisherman. She sent drawings of the rockpaintings to an archaeological institute in Florence. In the following year the studies and investigations of the grotto began.

At this undertakings the very fine scratchings had been found, which at first sight can be overseen very easily. Also excavations in the frontgrotto have taken place, which brought some important finds from the time of the rockpictures to light .

1952 further pictures were found: in 1953 the works had been finished. The engravings are with nearly 10.000 years older than the paintings. The most beautiful engraving, almost impressing in its security of line, is a deer-fawn, engraved at the entrance to the grotto.

The few visitors who entered the grotto before it was closed by a gate, damaged the head of the deer-fawn and left scratchings or their engraved initials in the rock.

On the northeastern rockface few figures are painted in a row, in black colour (foto 3). Lower on the same wall are the engravings, which can be seen only on closer inspection.

Other engravings are - below the paintings - on the northwestern wall. Some of them are carved with a strong line, others are very weak and can only be seen at good light (foto 5 - 8). In total here are 33 figures: 29 animal and 4 human figures. The animals represent 6 deers, 10 bovines, 12 equines and perhaps one feline animal.

The most beautiful picture from Levanzo, and for sure also one of the most interesting in the whole prehistoric art, is the one of another deer-fawn, which turns his head round. Created in just one carved line, it is a masterpiece, which reflects all the grace of movement and the elegance of the animals proportions, its youth, even its shy and frightened character (foto 4).

Other red deer is shown moving and grazing. One is shown belling, another with brenching horns, is moving upwards in a proud way. The equines (*Equus asinus hydruntinus*) similar to our donkeys, were at that time widely spread, and judged after the found bonedeposits, they had been hunted as meat- servants.

In the grotto one can recognize different sketches of equines: one with its foal, another moving up a hill, some more grazing or running somewhere, still another unmoved and attentive, with a raised head, as if having heard a suspicious noise. A very strong impression is given by the bovines, in special by the bulls. Under them a very big animal, from which is designed only the backpart of the body, shown at the moment when it is climbing over a little cow.

The male has its head hanging down and its tongue is coming out of his mouth. Another impressive example shows all his power in his running gesture and a third one is just outlined in a courageous frontal perspective. The bovines from Levanzo have all horns which are adjusted forward and not ending in a point. This concerns a characteristic in the art of the „Provincia mediterranea“, which gives the picture a special impression of power and awfulness.

Some of the pictures seem just to be created to give a look in detail at some special parts of the bodies, in different views, because only single parts of the bodies were shown: a head, a headless body (just to study the tension

of the body and the posture of the hind legs), possibly a climbing feline, also without head and front legs. Under a frightening bull's head with outcoming tongue and outsized horns, there are only shown the legs of a fleeing man, smaller than the animal's head. This gives the scene an exceptional vitality and dramatic.

Specially important is the engraving of a group of three human figures, evidently shown at a ritual dance. In difference to the animals, the humans are stylized in a naturalistic manner. The figure in the foreground shows a head and face totally covered by a mask, which reminds one of a cooking-hat. The sides of this mask are decorated with scratchings. Thin lines are falling underneath the mask on the upper part of the body; most probably a beard. This part of the body is also decorated with scratchings, or maybe one should speak of a tatoo (ill. 3).

This figure has no arms. At the waist there is a kind of a belt, who is designed in five horizontal grooves. The legs, just with a hint of feet, are in comparison to the body very short. At both sides of this figure two other figures are dancing: the left with the same mask-headgear, like the figure in the middle; but at this mask's back two lines like cords are coming out. This figure has both arms bowed away from the body. The left arm is decorated with two bracelets, designed in three lines each, and is ending in a stylized form of a hand. With a weary outline the body is shown as being in a wriggling posture.

The right figure, with raised arms, wears a mask with a bird's beak. Behind the head, over the right shoulder, one sees a lot of unsecure drawings, which could mean a kind of wing or crest. The slim upper part of the body ends in a narrow waist, with the legs only differentiated by their contour and not fully stylized.

This little group of humans can not only be created by chance. The engravings of the Addaura grotto, about the same age, also show some dancers and masks like birdheads.

The style of the Genovese-dancers is more simple but equivalent in his expression of the engravings.

To this group of the three engraved dancers has been added another figure, but which this time is designed in painting. It wears the same mask in form of a cookinghat. This figure seems to dance too, but as if suspended in midair, without a need to keep its feet in touch with the ground. Underneath this figure, a little bit to the right, is a second one in red color, which can not be recognized clearly as being human or animal.

The style of these figures makes one assume, that a very strong change took place in this culture, which can also be recognized in the changing from engraving to painting, which is now the technique for representations on the rocks.

Nevertheless the little red figure from Levanzo (foto 6) does not belong with all certainty to the cycle of the black paintings of the grotto. It concerns a moment of transition, a kind of parting from the epoch of hunters and from the stoneage-people.

How the colors, which were used in the grotto, have been produced, is unknown. The ingredients could be fat from animals and/or blood, or maybe a mixture of fat from animals with a substance gained from molluscs.



Foto 1. Entrance to the Grotto Genovese.

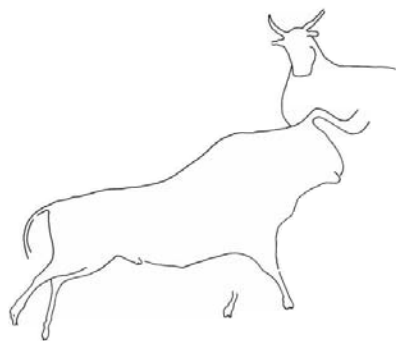
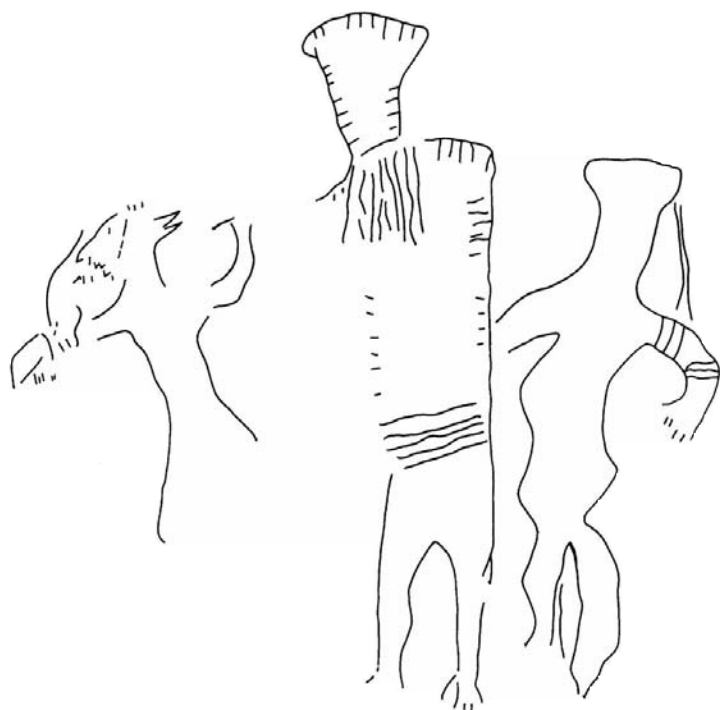
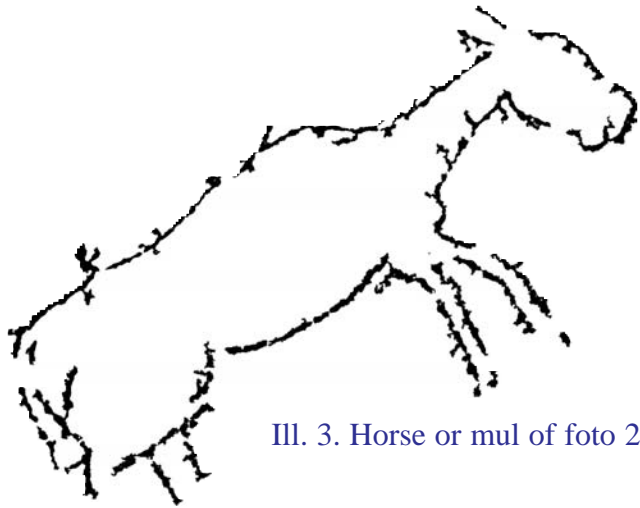


Illustration 2

The important motives



Ill. 3. Horse or mul of foto 2



Ill. 4. Fawn of foto 4



Foto 2. Engraving of a horse or mule



Foto 3



Foto 4



Foto 5. The lines of the engraving (III. 2) are hardly to be seen.

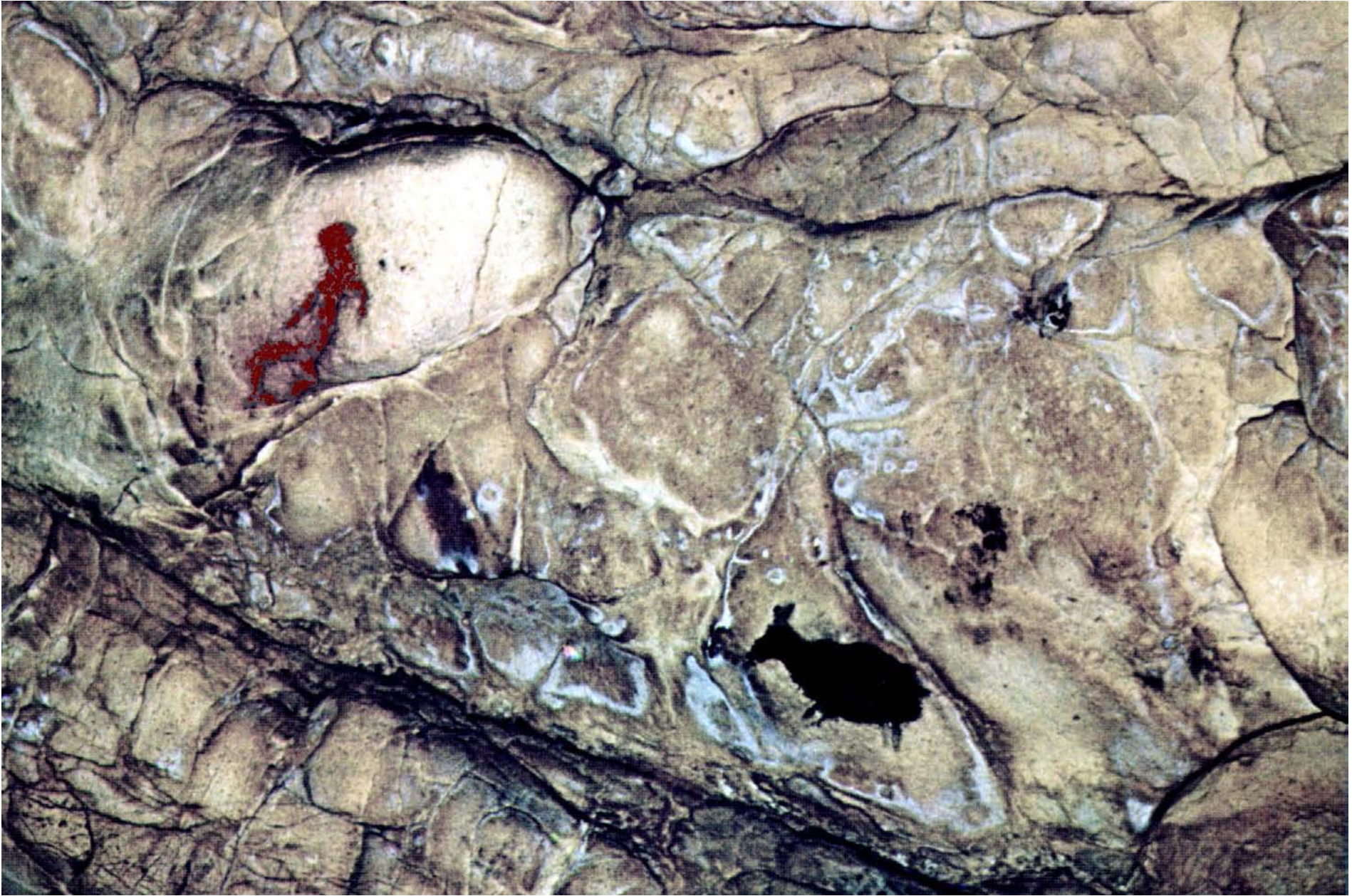


Foto 6. The little red figure



Foto 7



Foto 8