

Searching for Ancient Ancestresses in Italy

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Old Europe and Italy

- Marija Gimbutas coined the term Old Europe referring to the Neolithic, but we can extend the term Old Europe at least as far back as to the Upper Palaeolithic, because we find similar symbols, tools, materials, wall art and burials in places thousands of kilometres apart.
- Ancient Italic Ancestresses traces show that the hunter-gatherer societies of the Indigenous Past shared a common vision as regard as spirituality, behavioural patterns, values and symbols present throughout the European continent.

Together they represent the alphabet of
knowledge and values at the roots of the human symbolic world:
the gift of life, the gift of food rise from balance between human and
natural resources, bringing forth the promise of abundance

Key words/concepts are:

human world **contiguity with and dependence on** nature
(human vulnerability)

strong connection between human beings and the whole of Nature
(permeability of “kingdoms”/shamanism)

circularity of time linked to the cycles of life and death, to the movements
in the sky and on the earth (cyclical time)

the **search for balance** in all its forms and the **gift of abundance** as a result
(civilization of the Mothers)

Italy during and after the last Ice Age

(from Upper Pleistocene to around 12,000 years ago)



1. CAVES

Fumane Cave, Veneto

60,000-25,000 Neanderthal and Sapiens



- The image comes from the Aurignacian levels of Grotta Fumane, Veneto.
- Painted in red ochre, it depicts a human figure with a linearly developed body, horizontal arms and spread legs, two large horns on the triangular head identified as a mask, and at navel height two small lateral prominences.
- from the right arm hangs something, perhaps a four-legged animal or a ritual object.

Riparo Dalmeri, Trentino Alto Adige



Paglicci Cave 1, Puglia



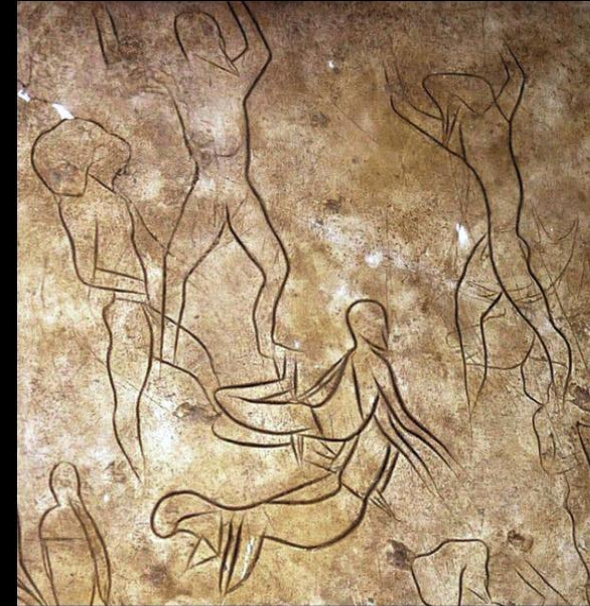
Paglicci Cave 2



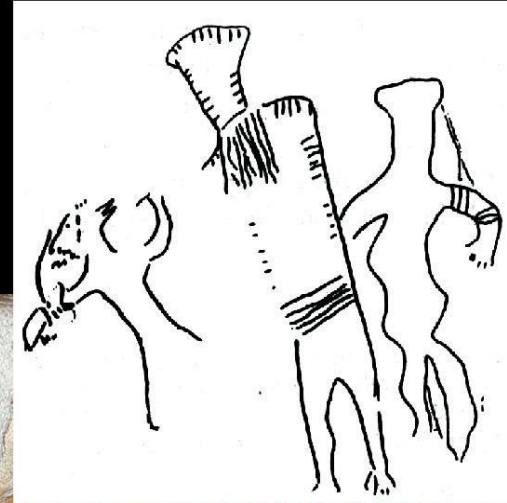
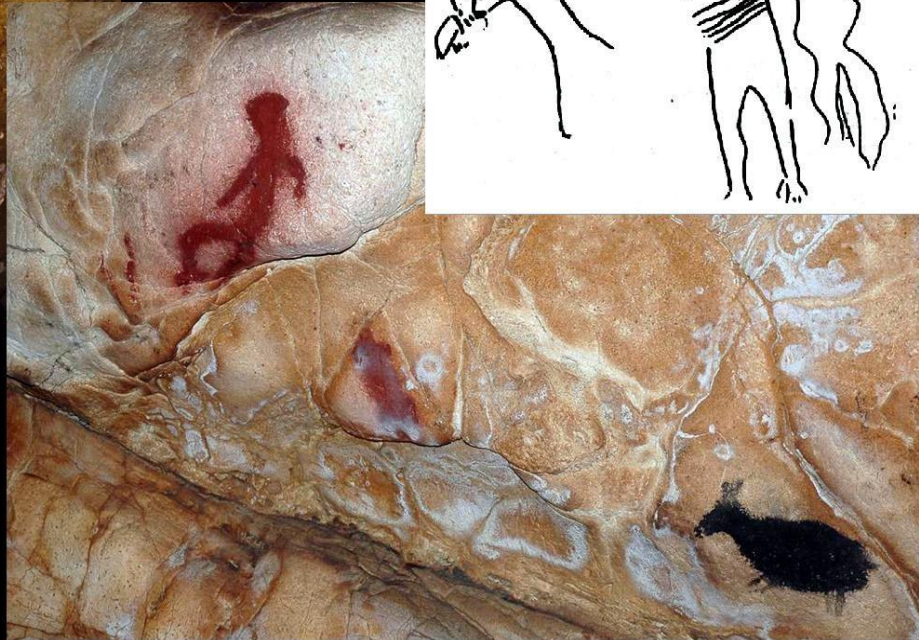
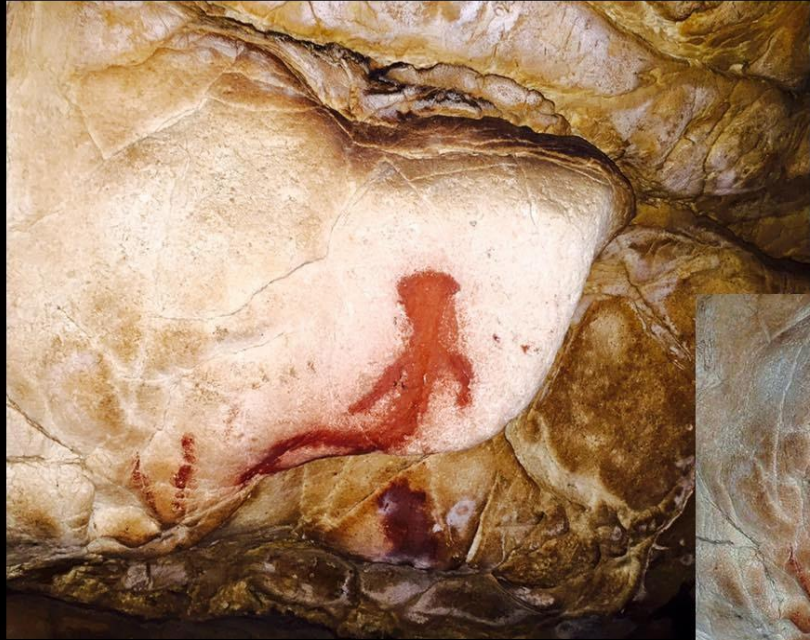
Romito Cave, Calabria Caviglione Cave, Liguria



Addaura Cave, Sicilia



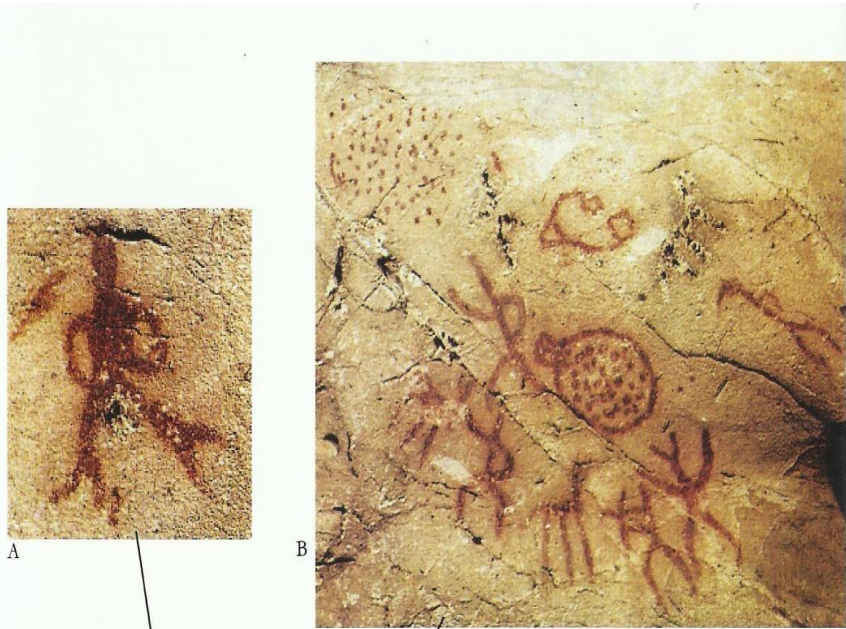
Grotta del Genovese, Levanzo, Sicilia, Upper Palaeolithic



More details from Genovese Cave

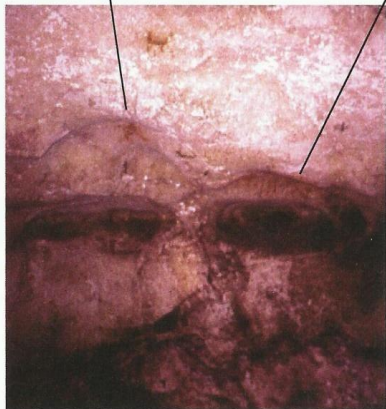


Grotta dei Cervi, Porto Badisco, Puglia, V – IV millennium



A

B

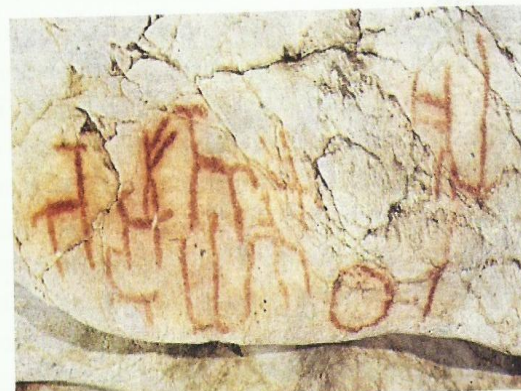


C

Fig. 7. A - La Donna-Pesce del Gruppo 16. B - La scena di caccia. C - La faccia nella pietra che ospita le pitture del Gruppo 16. (Graziosi, 1980)



A



B

Fig. 8. A - Un particolare del Gruppo 11. B - Il Gruppo 12. (Graziosi, 1980)

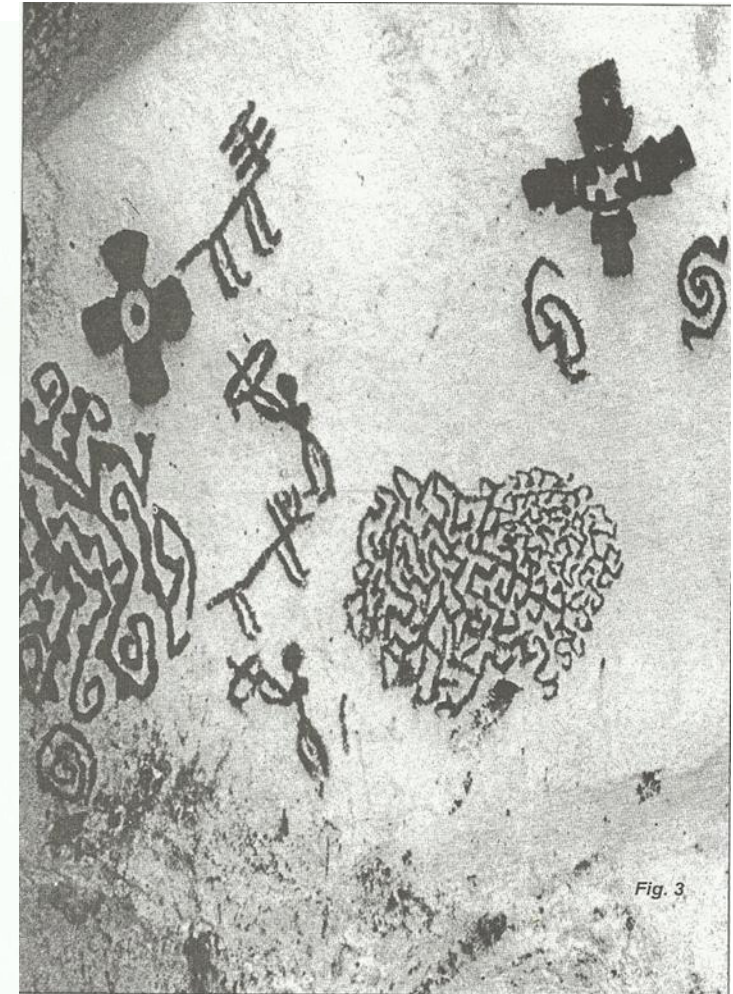


Fig. 3



2. BURIALS

1. The so called **Prince of Arene Candide**
2. **the Dame of Caviglione**, Liguria
3. **Delia**, the mother of Ostuni
4. **the Woman of Paglicci**, Puglia.



Delia, the pregnant woman of Ostuni

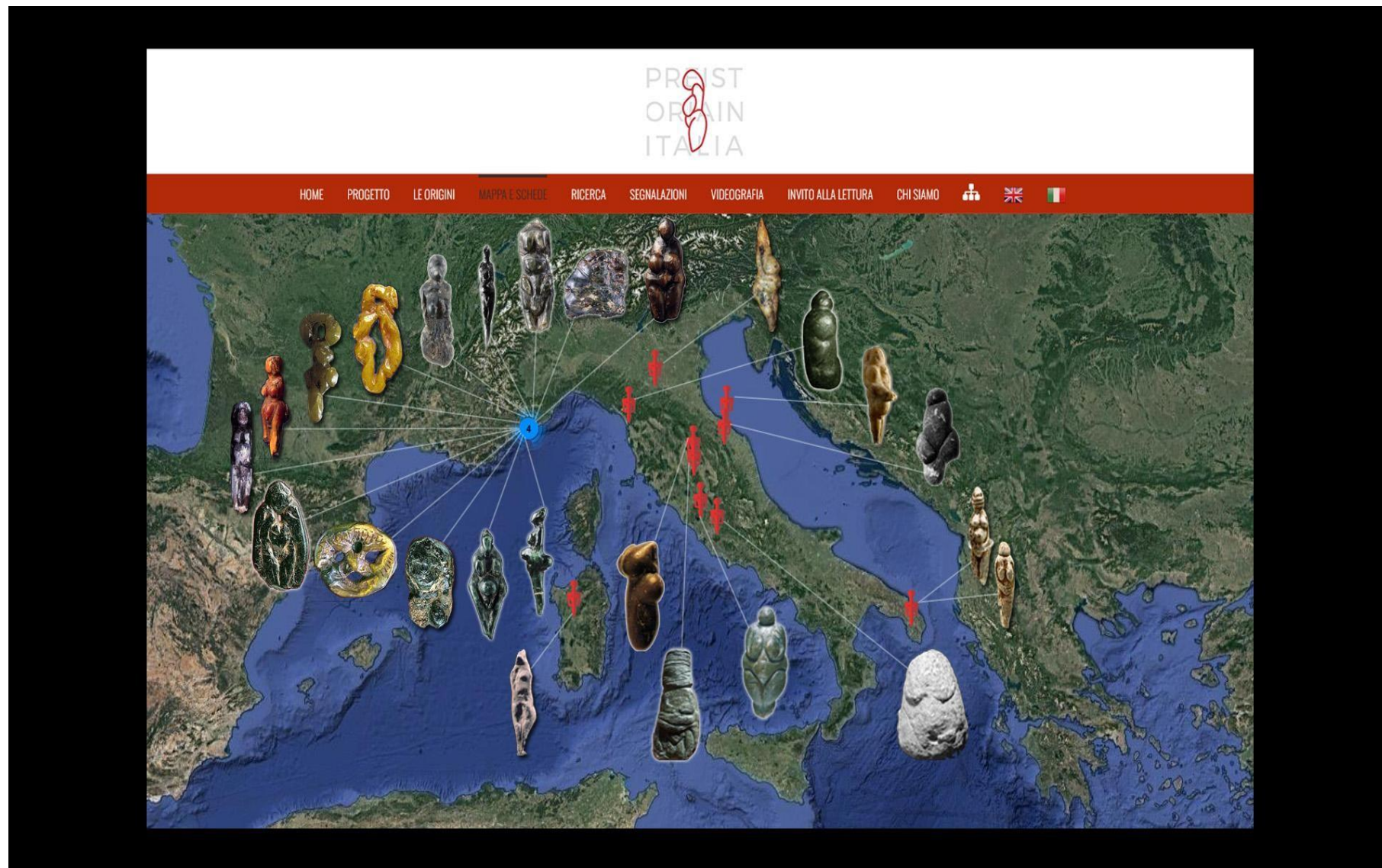
The skeletons of a woman buried between 25,000 and 20,000 years ago with the baby she was carrying were discovered in the cave of S. Maria d'Agnano (Ostuni, Puglia).

The cave has known various frequentations over the millennia, becoming a place of worship even in the Christian era.

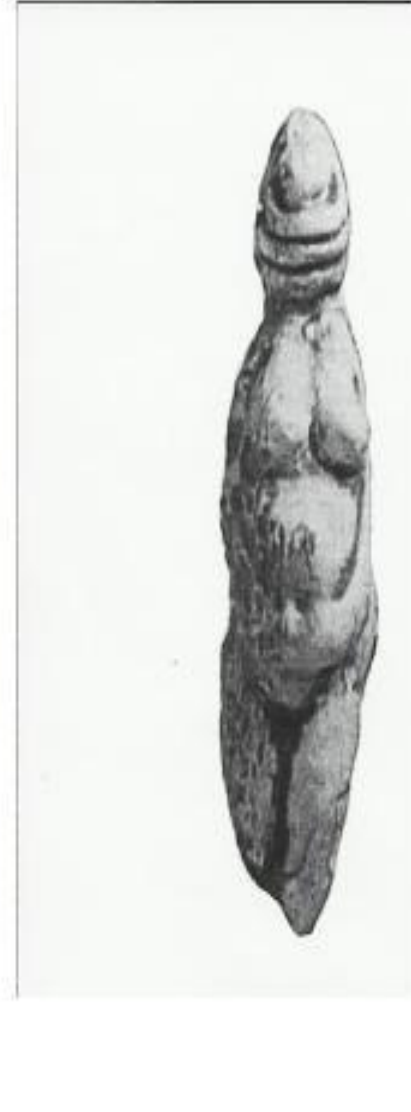


Delia, the pregnant woman of Ostuni

3. Italian Ancestresses



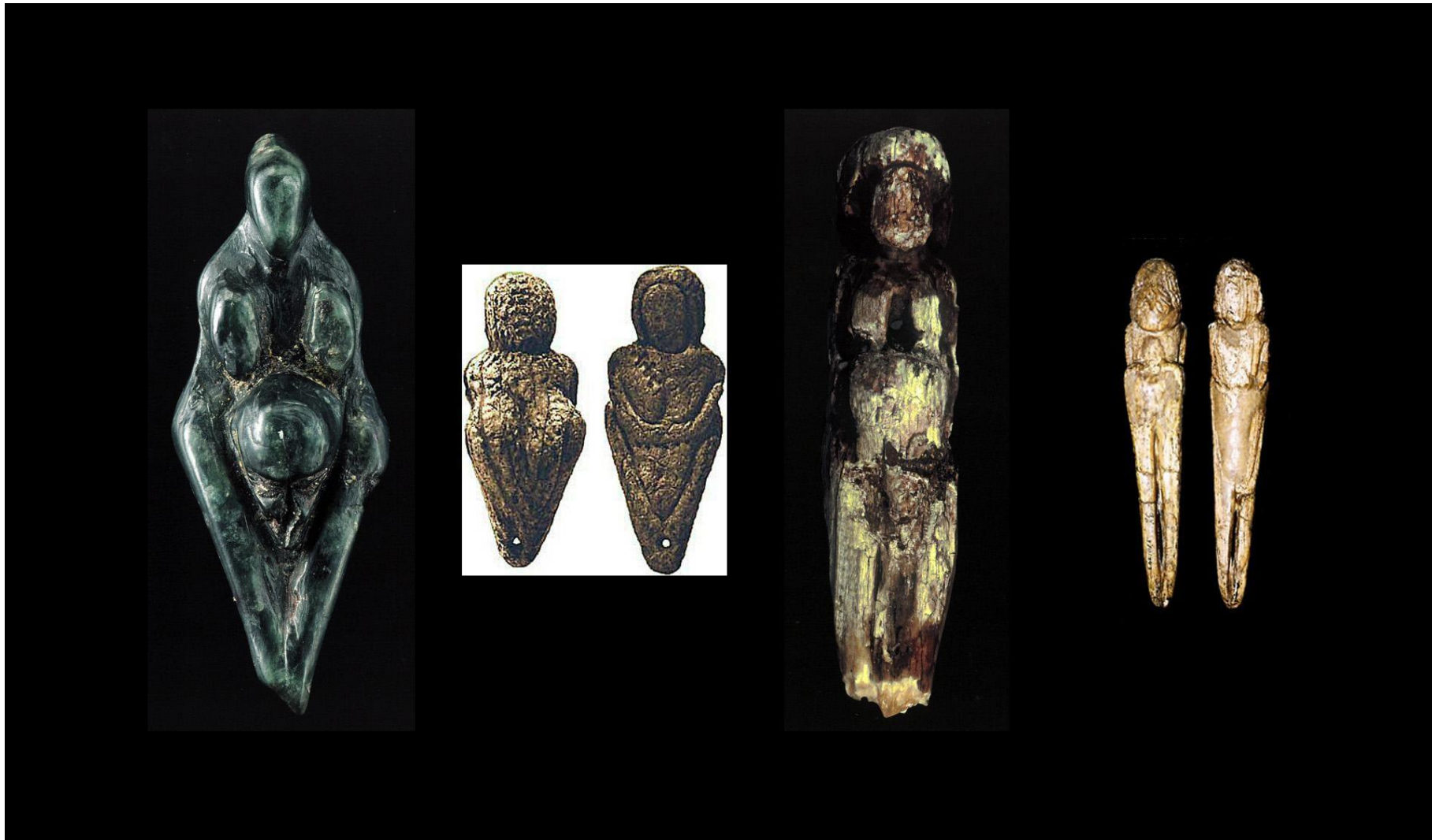
3a. Italian Palaeolithic Ladies



Lady of Savignano, Emilia Romagna
Lady of Parrano, Umbria



Lozenge figurines from Balzi Rossi Liguria, and Mal'ta, Siberia



Headgears again.

On statuettes from Parabita and Alimini, Lecce, Puglia.

The faces of Palaeolithic statuettes are always covered, leaving
no visible details



The Pebble of Tolentino,
Marche, Upper Palaeolithic
(about 14.000)

Painted pebble from
Ortucchio, L'Aquila.
Abruzzo, Upper
Palaeolithic
(13/11.000)



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Fig. 1 – ciottolo dipinto da Ortucchio (G. Di Paolo)

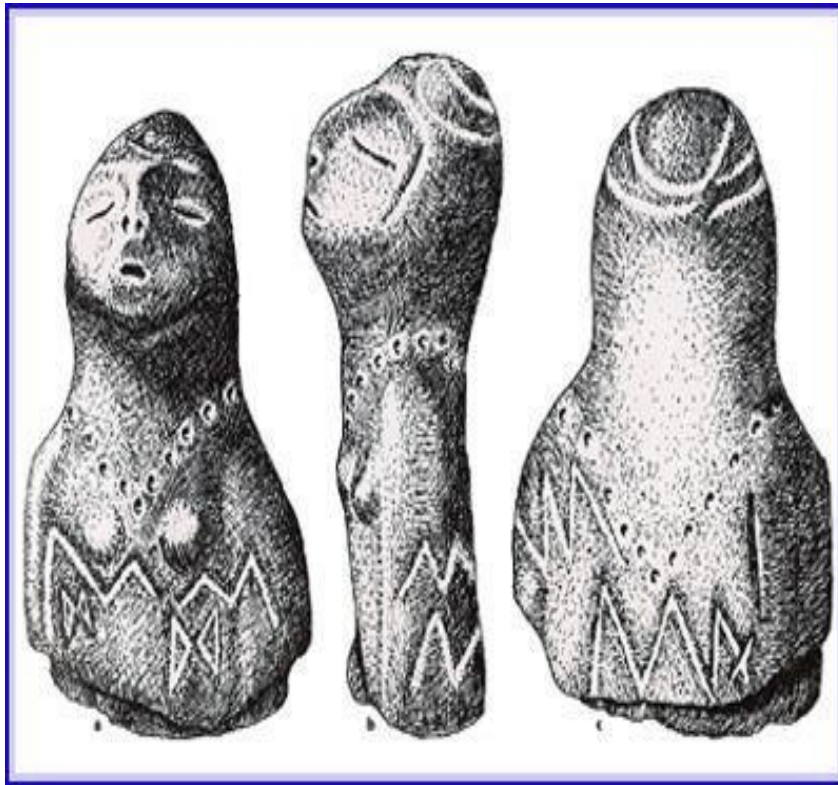


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3b. Neolithic statuettes



Passo di Corvo and Bovino, Puglia VI millennium



Gaban Statuette

The statuette - engraved on a bone plate and only 7 cm high - was found in 1971 at the Gabàn shelter, just above Trento.

It dates back to the early Neolithic period between VI and V millennium



Vicofertile, Emilia Romagna

Neolithic statuette found in a female burial from the mid V millennium (Square Mouth Vase culture).

PRIST
OF
AIN
ITALIA

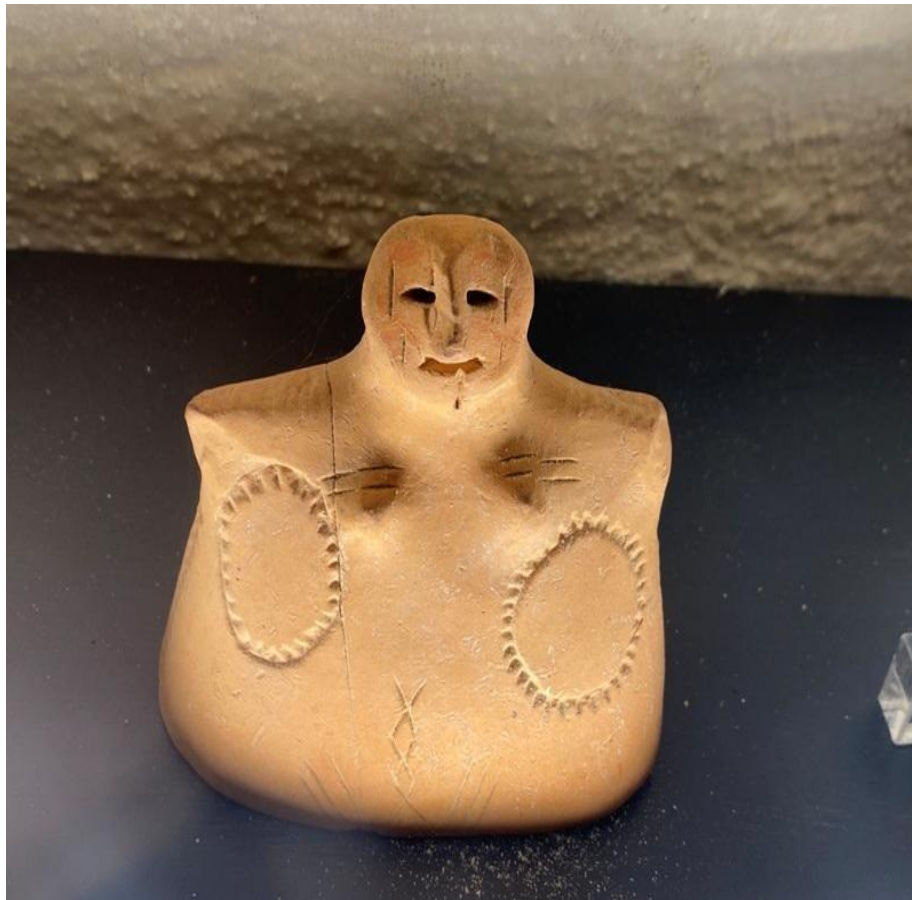




The **Double Goddess** of Piadena
Emilia Romagna
V millennium



Canne, Puglia, V millennium



stele or menhir, from 3.000



Massa Carrara stele



Neolithic **Earthenware** from Arene Candide, Liguria (left)
and **Stele** from Moncigoli, Massa Carrara
and Teglio, Valtellina (right)



Sardegna

one of the myriad Sacred Pits



Montessu site in Villaperuccio (3240-1600 bc)



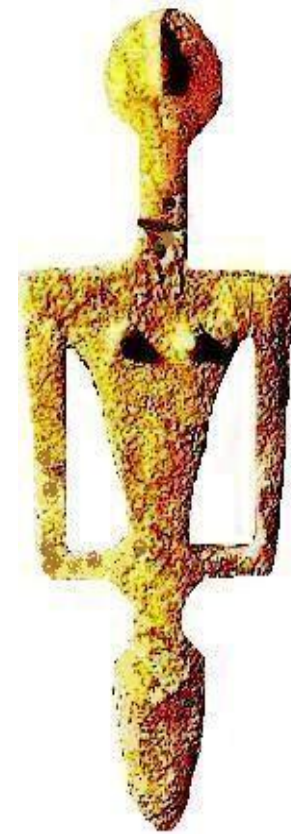
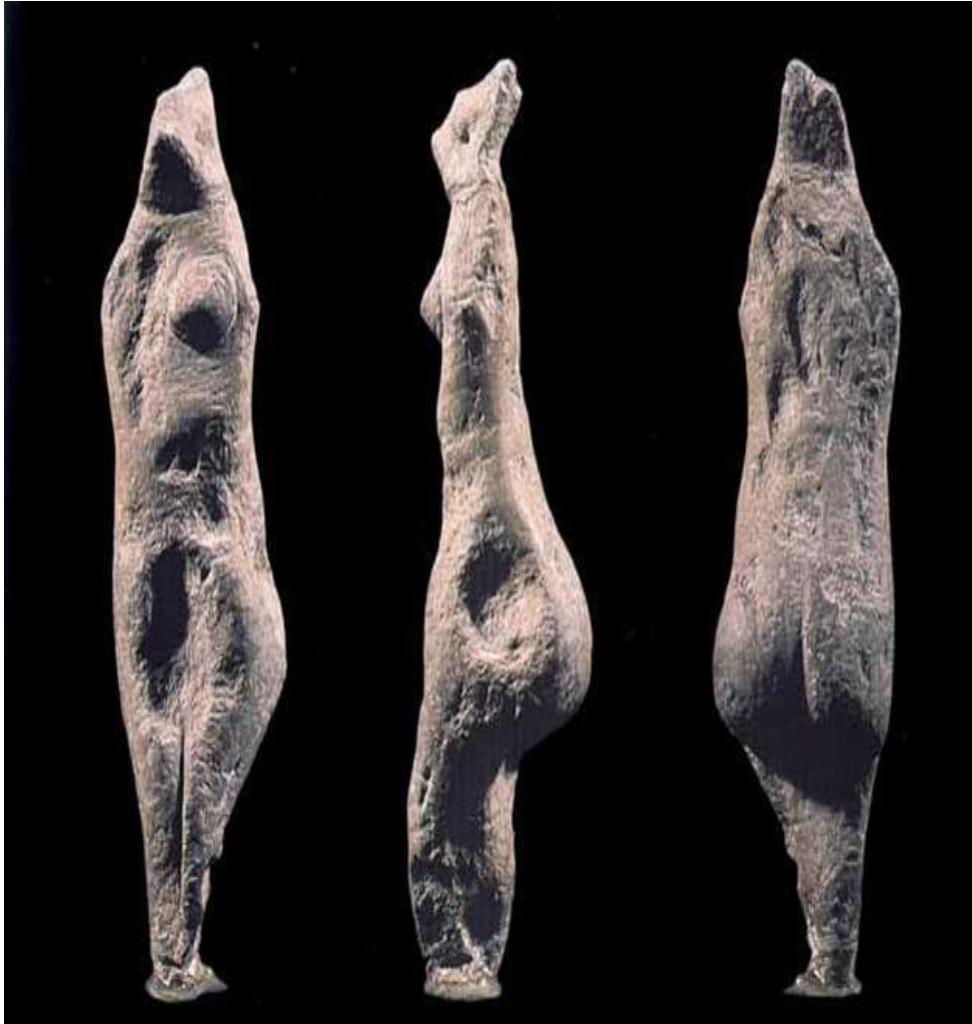
Pranu Muteddu- Goni (3200-2800)



Domus de Janas of Sa Pala Larga - Bonorva



Macomer, Nuragic sitting goddess, Decimoputzu ...



The Bronze People



Ritrovamento Sardegna, loc. sconosciuta
Esposto Museo Antichità, Torino; Museo Pigorini, Roma
Altezza 14 cm.



Ritrovamento Sardegna, loc. sconosciuta
Esposto Museo Antichità, Torino
Altezza 18,5 cm.



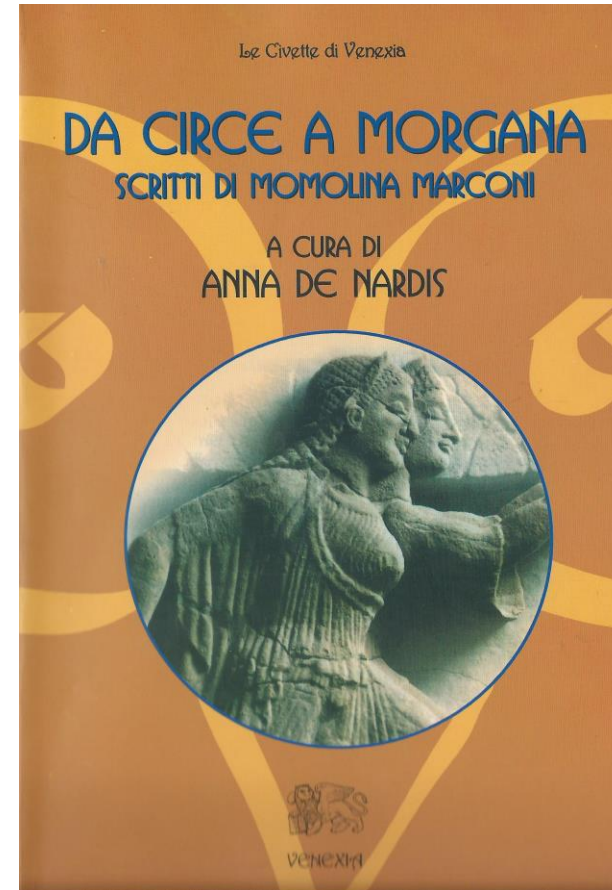
Ritrovamento Sardegna, loc. sconosciuta
Esposto Nationalmuseet Antiksamlingen, Copenhagen
Altezza 20,7 cm.



Ritrovamento Urzulèi (NU), loc. Sa Domu e S'Orcu
Esposto: Museo Archeologico, Cagliari
Altezza 10 cm.

4. Italic Goddesses in **Momolina Marconi** (1912-2006) books

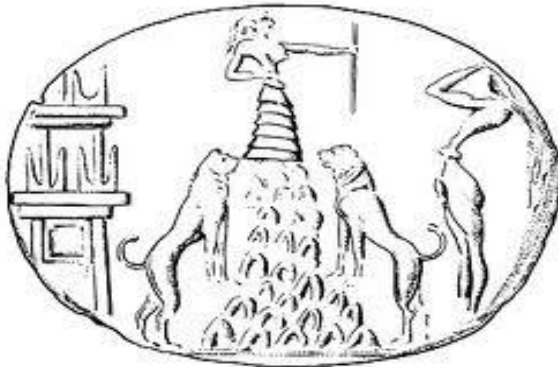
- *Riflessi mediterranei della più antica religione laziale*, 1939 in www.studiumanistici.uniroma2.it/files/_ITA_/Filarete/005
- *Da Circe a Morgana, Scritti di M. Marconi*, a cura di Anna De Nardis, Venexia 2009



The Great Mediterranean Goddess as POTNIA

- Potnia means She Who Can/ Lat. *possum*, Engl. *power*
- Marconi emphasizes a unitary female deity **throughout the Mediterranean area**, with different names but common characteristics.
- She identifies her **more recurrent forms**: the naked goddess; the goddess showing her breasts; the goddess who holds or breastfeeds; the bird goddess; the serpent goddess; the dove goddess; the potnia, goddess of plants and animals; the luciferous goddess.
- In the **Italic and Latin pre-Roman/Greek religion**, she finds the names and more defined functions for the following female deities: Fortuna, Bona Dea, Mater Matuta, Feronia and Diana (other autoctonous deities were Angitia, Marica and Reithia)
- Finally, **she traces** in the figures of the most famous priestesses and mages from antiquity to the Middle Ages (Circe, Medea, Morgana and the Lady of the Lake) **a close connection** with the Great Mediterranean Potnia of whom she claims they are direct manifestation.

The «goddess» POTNIA: images from Mediterranean world



Fortuna

She is the protector of human fertility and childbirth; she who is the **giver of gifts**, is often represented with the *cornucopia* (plenty of gifts) full of flowers and fruits.



Dea Fortuna, Lazio pre-romano.

Bona Dea

She was the Lady of plants and animals, dispenser of health and wellbeing (continuity from Palaeolithic gatherers to witches)

An *herbarium* or *hortus conclusum* was grown by her priestesses and wine was offered on her altar

Her cult was in the open air, in a grove surrounded by stones and containing a source of water, a kiosk with her image and a small house.

Serpents lived in her temples

Faunus was her *paredro*



Mater Matuta

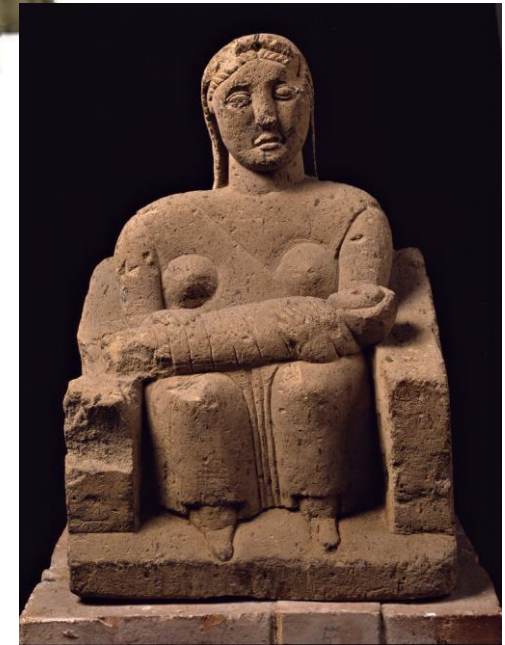
She was worshipped in Umbria, Etruria, Lazio and Campania as "**the Mother of the Morning Hour**", the first light that creatures see coming out of their mothers' womb.

In her sacred places, **votive offerings** in terracotta representing fruits, flowers, animals and **body parts** have been found to indicate her **protective and healing functions**.

Among the votive body parts in terracotta appear: breasts, arms, legs, feet, eyes, masks, baby figurines and even animal paws ...



Mater Matuta, V sec.
P.E.C., Firenze, Museo
Archeologico Nazionale



Mater matuta, VI-V P.E.C., tufo; entrambe le statue a Capua, Museo Provinciale Campano.

Feronia

She is the Lady of the **ferocious/wild animal life**, of the plants and of the medicinal herbs, who preserves intact all the characteristics of the ancient Mediterranean Potnia.

The Latin root *fero* also indicates “**a pregnant female**”

Feronia is a Sacred Virgo, not subject to marriage bonds, but accompanied by her **paredro Picus**, the **sacred woodpecker**, bearer of celestial fire connected to the fertile energy, but also knowledgeable of the places where rare healing plants grow.

An Etruscan Feronia



Artemide Feronia.

Diana

Diana's cult was essentially sylvester. She is the Queen of the Sacred Forests, and as **Diana Lucina**, she is the **goddess of the clearing in the wood**, primordial abode of the deity.

As **Diana Lucifera**, she brings the torches that illuminate in the night the forest, the animal and vegetable creatures she protects. She is also the Lady of the lake, of the trees, of the erected stones, of the pillars and of the sacred enclosures and of the medicinal plants.

Later on, she was associated with Bona Dea, as the protector of wheat, cultivated fields and farm animals.

And also with the goddess Luna as Artemis was associated with Selene, but they are both originally terrestrial and not celestial deities.

Her paredros are Virbio, the "young green man" (from the root *uerbos* derive *verga* and *verbena*, the sacred branch and grass) and Silvano "the wild man", adult or old, custodian of the horses of the Goddess;

and also appears Picus "the woodpecker", connoisseur of healthy herbs and of the secret place where peonies blossom.



Diana, ipogeo
di via
Livenza,
Roma,
IV sec.

And this Etruscan
Hera/Giunone is looking at
us, resisting, waiting for
a different world, again!

www.preistoriainitalia.it

Italian and English version

