Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 12, EGU2010-15482, 2010
EGU General Assembly 2010

Micropedological Study of Early Neolithic Deposit in Scaloria Cave (South Italy

Ivano Rellini, Marco Firpo, and Andrea Ciampalini
Territory and Research Study Department, University of Genova, Genova, Italy, rellini.ivano@dipteris.unige.it

The cave is located at about 1 km NE of Manfredonia (FG). The entrance is about 45 m above present sea level, it overlooks the actual coastal plain. Today Scaloria is a part of a widest karstic system. Scaloria cave was accidentally discovered in 1932 during the construction of an underground aqueduct. The first archaeological excavations were performed in 1978 by University of Genoa and Los Angeles, but in 2007 and 2008 an sampling programme was implemented to investigate the physical character of the cave and the stratigraphic succession. The geoarchaeological study was undertaken using a descriptive approach and so far has included a morphological description and the stratigraphic study of the site by micromorphological analysis. High priority goal is an understanding of the relationships between anthropic and non-anthropic dynamics, paying special attention to site formation processes. The new micromorphological observations of the anthropogenic layers opened a new dimension in the interpretation and assessment of cave use during the Early Neolithic in Puglia (Italy).
Data and the presence of occupation layers suggest that the interior of the Scaloria Cave was habited during the Early Neolithic, period of largest expansion of the Neolithic sites in Manfredonia Gulf inland. In addition, the presence of well preserved multi sequence of burnt remains (undistributed hearts), along with several other features, attests the use of this area as a household. In contrast, the upper and the deeper part of the cave don't preserve a clear stratigraphy, this fact suggests that the deposits had been frequently disturbed, but, according to the micromorphological evidences, the cave entrance is an area where dung was frequently accumulated and burnt. It is, thus, reasonable to think that this area was used as a pen (stabling of ovicaprines). These evidences, combined with the identification of archaeological findings (pottery, lithics, bones) suggest the existence of an associated settlement (permanent or seasonal).
Therefore, the micromorphological study sheds new light into the issue of the Scaloria Cave occupation during Neolithic. The relatively elaborated use of the cave space indicates that it was not only used as temporal place or for special uses (ritual, etc.), but could have functioned as seat of complete household.