

**Appendix 5. Interviews with Santo Tinè, Luigi Coppolecchia,
Giulio Perotti and Sergio Duda**

Scaloria Cave: Between Scientific Research and Speleological Adventure
by Eugenia Isetti and Antonella Traverso

Genoa, October, 2007.

Interview with Santo Tinè

Professor Tinè could you please resume the history of the Grotta Scaloria?

The cave was accidentally discovered in 1931 during the excavation for two large water pipes to convey water from the city of Manfredonia to the Gargano Peninsula My interest in the Scaloria Cave resumed in 1967 when, in a Manfredonia antiques shop, I found two vessels with the typical red painted decoration related to one Middle Neolithic facies which I had myself recognized and elaborated.

Those two vessels had been taken to the store by a young cave “lover”, Luigi Coppolecchia, whom I immediately contacted; we visited the cave together going to a depth of forty meters in relation to the entrance, which is where Luigi had recovered the two vessels. Here we saw many more vessels gathered in threes or fours around a big truncated stalagmite slightly embedded in the rocky bottom of the cave.

In order to have a more scrupulous study of these extraordinary finds, I asked the E. Boegan Speleological Group from Trieste CAI to come and carry out a plan of the upper and lower parts of the cave. Giulio Perotti contacted me and made an eight mm film which was later to [Fig. A4.1]

I revealed this discovery during a meeting on prehistoric religions in 1972(Tinè S. 1972) at the Centro Camuno, Capo di Ponte. My assumption of a water cult and of its ritual traces was welcomed by the participants and in particular by Marjia Gimbutas, a friend whom I had met during my “Harvard years “and who had always been interested in prehistoric religions. That evening whilst at dinner with Marjia we discussed doing a project together, making excavations not only in the Scaloria Cave, but also in one of the numerous Neolithic villages that the aerial picture had clearly evidenced on the Tavoliere in Puglia.

I proposed the extensive excavation of the Masseria Lagnano da Piede together with the Scaloria cave during a lesson at the University of California at Los Angeles with great success. Some students later went to Foggia with us to realize the project which needed funding; we shared our objectives: Marjia was to obtain funds in the United States while I was to have done the same in Italy.

Unfortunately, Marjia, who could have contributed greatly on the Scaloria water cult and on the excavation by direct ned to finish her work and to publish it; in January 2007 she contacted me in Genoa and together we have programmed the present monograph.

As the only survivor among the first Scaloria researchers (S. Tinè,1982) I reserved the right to coordinate and supervise the Scaloria material for study.

The direct study of the findings was left to Eugenia Isetti, who was to have co-worked with Marjia Gimbutas and Shan Winn (who sadly died prematurely), and Antonella Traverso.

Manfredonia, September 23rd 2007

Interview with Luigi Coppolecchia

When did you discover the existence of the Scaloria Cave?

I first went to the Scaloria cave in 1964, aged thirteen, I found a narrow hole below the aqueduct and entered the cave many times with a candle which kept extinguishing so I was only able to proceed a few meters at a time. I passed through the big chamber near the entrance finding some archaeological finds which immediately fascinated me, so, when I saw a small painted vessel beyond a narrow fissure among big stalagmites and stalactites, I decided to remove it using a hammer and chisel in the rock. After that I began exploring the lower part of the cave

How did you contact the archeologists?

Actually they contacted me. I had taken some vessels out of the cave and Professor Tinè, who came to see me with his wife, noticed one of them and we went into the cave together (Fig.A4.2).

[Fig. A4.2]

After some months Tinè asked me to work with the E. Boegan Speleological Group in carrying out the plan and systematic exploration of the deepest part of the Scaloria Cave.

Since then I have been in the cave often, I am fascinated by this underground ice colored environment; at a later date I also discovered the link between the Scaloria and Occhiopinto caves, which had until that time been considered as two independent hypogeic complexes. I dedicated this discovery to a friend of mine Enrico Davanzo who died in an avalanche, that is how it became known as "passaggio Davanzo".

Since then I never stopped loving archaeology.

Do you think there are many more things to be discovered?

There are so many galleries and passages to be explored; our work has only just begun.

Trieste, Aprile 2007

Interview with Giulio Perotti and Sergio Duda [B_Head]

How did you first hear of the cave?

We had worked with Santo Tinè several times in the exploration of the archaeological caves in Sicily. When in 1967 neolithic findings were discovered in the unknown lower chamber of the Scaloria Cave, Professor Tinè asked me to choose a group of people in order to explore the various galleries and to make a plan of them. The team came from Trieste where the study of the karst phenomena had started: all of them were members of Commissione Grotte E. Boegan, today the oldest Speleological Group in the world: they were Giorgio Coloni, Sergio Duda, Enrico Davanzo and myself (Fig.A4.3).

[Fig. A4.3]

What were your first impressions?

After passing through the short but narrow passage going down, we arrived in a wide area where we saw a large quantity of wonderful vessels, some of which were painted. It appeared that they had been placed there with great care. Almost all the vessels were placed below a stalactite while the related stalagmite had often been used to hold the vessels upright, stalagmites of more than a meter high emerged from many of them. Considering that the normal growing medium in our area is about 0.2mm a year, we concluded that the vessels had to have been placed there almost 5000 years before! Furthermore the floor was completely covered by sherds of pottery that were embedded in the concretion. This demonstrates that human ritual took place in the lower part of the cave over a long period of time.

How long did you work in the cave?

We worked for about a week, for 6/7 hours a day continuously; we had to carry out a plan of the cave placing the finds. Thanks to a small power line brought inside the cave, I decided to leave the others in the group to their works, while I made a movie with an eight mm camera, in order to document, as much as possible, what we had discovered. We made the plan placing the finds while, due to a lack of time, we were unable to trace the related cave section, useful to better clarify the hypogeum topography, but it was not possible to record the immense emotion we felt nor to explain our feelings to others.

Would you please describe the most impressive moment?

The last day, when I was alone with Mr Coloni (Fig. A4.4), we noticed human bones among some big rocks: they were the remains of an accident victim, it appeared that he had fallen from the upper levels; he had dragged himself to the wall and there he died with his back leaning against the wall, his broken legs outstretched and his hand over the wound. I filmed him with the camera before turning off the light, hoping that no one else would encroach upon his peace. Undoubtedly he died alone. I was not as impressed in discovering the small artificial basin that looked like it had been excavated the day before, or the large thin slabs of calcite floating on the bottom lake.

Have you ever been back?

Never, we wanted to remember it as we had seen it the very first time and not without its contents also because it would remind us of a friend, Davanzo, swept away by an avalanche some time later (Fig.A4.5).

[Fig. A4.4]

[Fig. A4.5]