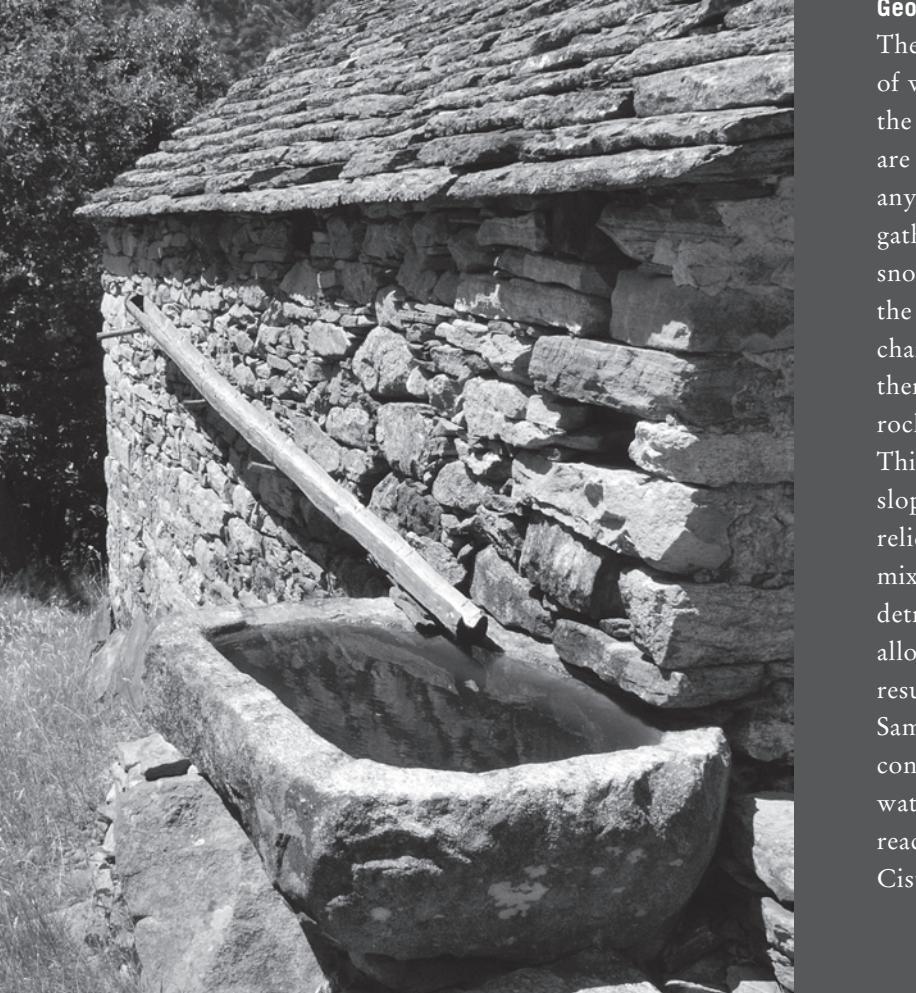


# Revöira.

itinéraire ethnographique  
Ethnographic Trail

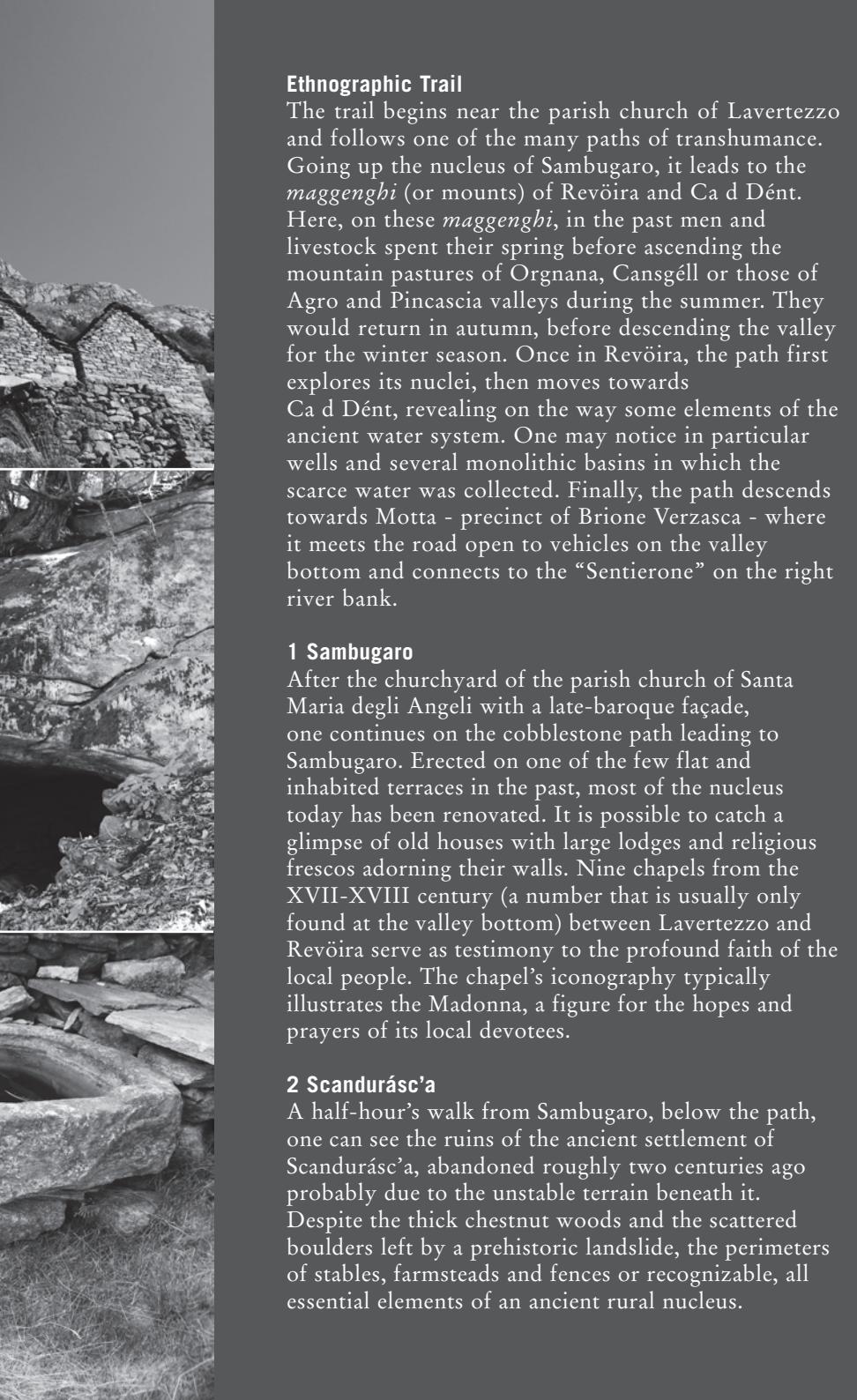


## The Art of Inventing Water: the water system of Revöira and Ca d Dén

One generally associates Lavertezzo with the image of the stone-bridge arched over the waters of Verzasca river. Its hard to imagine that part of the valley once suffered a dry spell. Yet, the center of this itinerary is an exceptional water supply plant: built on the valleys left mountainside, on Mount Revöira and Ca d Dén, it proved to be the solution to the chronic drought afflicting the southwestern flank of mountain Föpia (2106m), above Lavertezzo.

### Geology

The western flank of Föpia is marked by a general lack of water caused by a variety of factors beginning with the morphological attributes of the entire cliff, which are similar to a huge rocky triangle slanted without any concave surfaces allowing superficial water to gather. Rainwater and waters resulting from melted snow and ice thus flow quickly and widespread down the impermeable crystalline substratum, which characterizes the superior part of Föpia. The waters then infiltrate the detrital stratum at the bottom of the rocky faces at an altitude of approximately 1350 meters. This impressive mass of detritus occupies most of the slope, created by the progressive dismantling of the relief. Its constituent materials are a heterogeneous mixture of boulder fragments, accumulated landslide detritus, and glacial deposits, forming a permeable unit allowing the water to freely circulate inside it and resurface much later, below the valley (Aquino and Sambugaro springs). Locally, however, particular conditions exist, allowing the rise of subterranean waters to levels just below the surface that are reachable through small wells like those in al Mátro, ar Cistérna and Mött del Cisternign in Revöira.



### Ethnographic Trail

The trail begins near the parish church of Lavertezzo and follows one of the many paths of transhumance. Going up the nucleus of Sambugaro, it leads to the *maggenghi* (or mounts) of Revöira and Ca d Dén. Here, on these *maggenghi*, in the past men and livestock spent their spring before ascending the mountain pastures of Orgnana, Cansgäll or those of Agro and Pincascia valleys during the summer. They would return in autumn, before descending the valley for the winter season. Once in Revöira, the path first explores its nuclei, then moves towards Ca d Dén, revealing on the way some elements of the ancient water system. One may notice in particular wells and several monolithic basins in which scarce water was collected. Finally, the path descends towards Motta - precinct of Brione Verzasca - where it meets the road open to vehicles on the valley bottom and connects to the "Sentierone" on the right river bank.

### 1 Sambugaro

After the churchyard of the parish church of Santa Maria degli Angeli with a late-baroque façade, one continues on the cobblestone path leading to Sambugaro. Erected on one of the few flat and inhabited terraces in the past, most of the nucleus today has been renovated. It is possible to catch a glimpse of old houses with large lodges and religious frescos adorning their walls. Nine chapels from the XVII-XVIII century (a number that is usually only found at the valley bottom) between Lavertezzo and Revöira serve as testimony to the profound faith of the local people. The chapel's iconography typically illustrates the Madonna, a figure for the hopes and prayers of its local devotees.

### 2 Scandurásca

A half-hour's walk from Sambugaro, below the path, one can see the ruins of the ancient settlement of Scandurásca, abandoned roughly two centuries ago probably due to the unstable terrain beneath it. Despite the thick chestnut woods and the scattered boulders left by a prehistoric landslide, the perimeters of stables, farmsteads and fences or recognizable, all essential elements of an ancient rural nucleus.

### 3 The mounts (*the maggenghi*)

Following another ten-minute walk, after the remains of the old enclosing walls, one reaches Revöira. Extended over an altitude of about 850 - 1000 meters, the mount divides the five distinct nuclei, from bottom to top: al Mátro, Murisc, ar Cistérna, Mött dal Cisternign, and Scíma al Cört. Mount Ca d Dén instead occupies a wide terrace on the other side of the usually dry river el Cröis. Although many constructions have been long abandoned, it is still possible to recognize their original function: hay-sheds for the cattle and fodder, habitable farmsteads, rocks for coverage, delimitation walls, and reclaimed surfaces for cultivating cereals, potatoes and vegetables. Further impressive elements are the hollow granite boulders, located all throughout the slope. These basins (35 in total, amounting to a capacity of roughly 4800 liters) were used for gathering rainwater; the wells (6 in total, 3 of which are visible along the path) instead were used for capturing the scarce surface water. This ingenious system guaranteed the supply of water necessary for both household and livestock use.

### 4 Al Mátro

Between the stables in ruins, the first monolithic basins are visible. On the open space roughly 50 meters ahead, stands a four-squared structure covered by a stone roof and closed by a wooden door: the first well, which thanks to its overturned T-section kept out the animals, which could drink from the basin near the entrance. From here the route follows the path backwards until the deviation situated at the exit of Murisc, heading towards Ca d Dén.

### 5 Murisc

Despite the thick vegetation and the advanced state of deterioration of Revöira's second nucleus, some facades built with square cornerstones and heavy architraves still stand as testimony for the skilled craftsmanship in the art of building drystone walls.

A few meters below the signpost, in front of the ruins facing the river, it is possible to glimpse a granite mass partially chiseled on its surface. Based on its form we may deduce that it was intended to be a basin for collecting water. Exiting Murisc the path forks and continues to the right, up to the higher Revöira,

### 6 Ar Cistérna

Admiring Föpia's slopes, the impressive mountain above the *maggengo*, it is hard to imagine the difficulties faced while scything the grass on such a slant. Once the wild hay was gathered it would be carried down to the mounts below – like Odro

beneath Pizzo Vogorno, among others – by using a network of ropeways. These systems were employed up to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and parts of them have been preserved, such as the arrival station (*batüda*) on the northwestern flank of the nucleus. The name ar Cistérna derives from the well (*cistern* in local dialect) shaped like a reversed truncated cone missing a lid, situated by the adjacent row of stables. It is the biggest of the entire compound with a capacity amounting to about 12000 liters. A helicoidal staircase allowed its descent in order to obtain the necessary water, which was also used to supply the external drinking basin.

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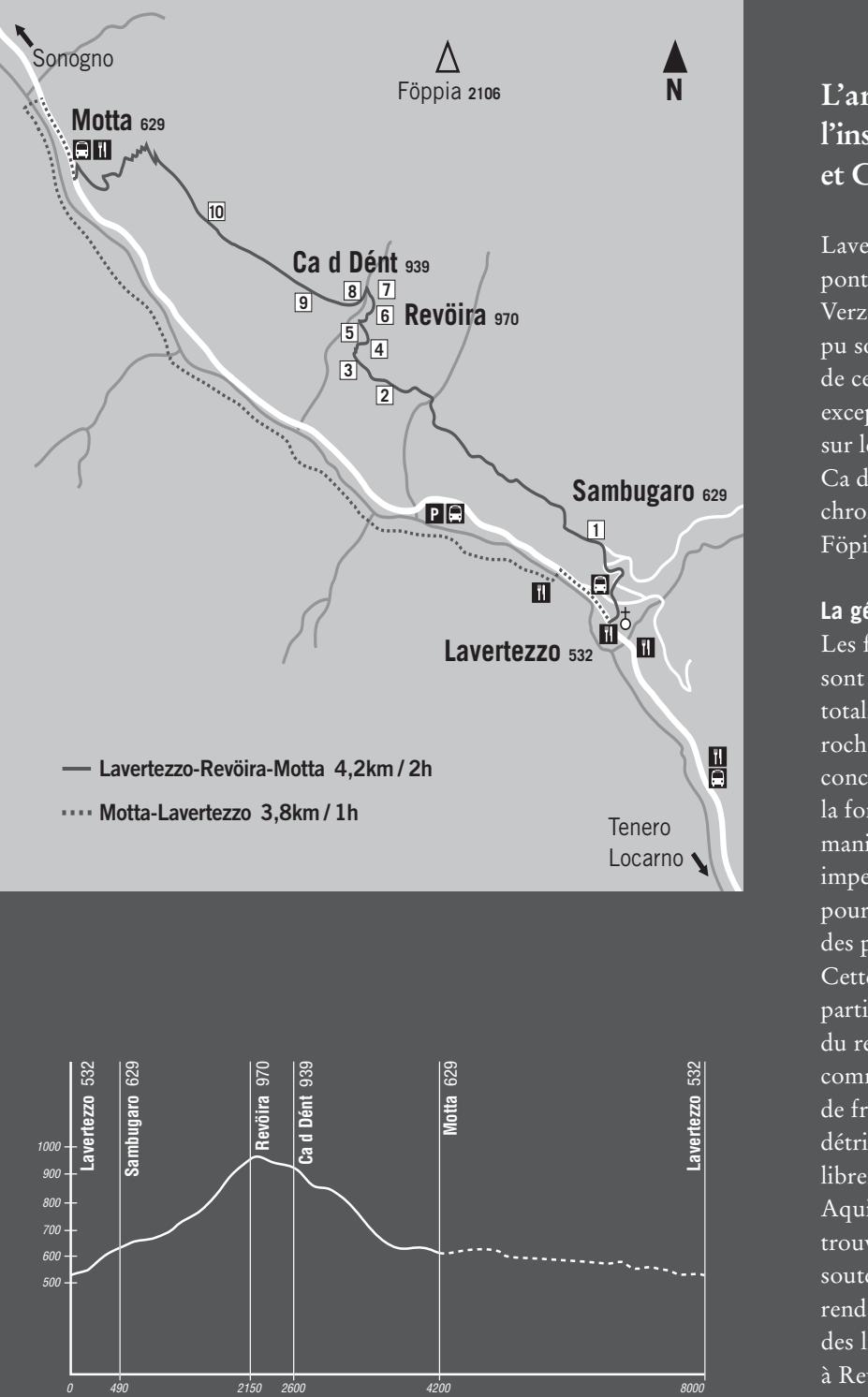
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We may in fact notice how they are situated next to the building beneath the eaves. A wooden duct carried the rainwater, which fell from the roof. Of particular interest are the two adjoining basins next to the remains of a building at the exit of the nucleus.

### 10 The plantation

Up to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the woods in Verzasca were intensely exploited for the production of coal and timber, which was sold at the valley bottom. This practice however made the slopes unstable as it deprived them of their natural protective layer. From Ca d Dén the route descends through a plantation mostly composed of beeches. This plantation dates back to the forties, when reforestation was necessary in order to protect the road below from possible landslides. After a good half hour the path ends as it reaches Motta, at the valley bottom.



## L'art de se procurer l'eau: l'installation hydrique de Revöira et Ca d Dén

Lavertezzo est généralement associé à l'image de son pont en pierre à deux arches enjambant la rivière Verzasca. Il est difficile de penser qu'une partie du val ait pu souffrir justement de pénurie d'eau. Le point central de ce parcours est pourtant une installation exceptionnelle d'approvisionnement hydrique: construit sur le versant gauche du val, sur les monts de Revöira et Ca d Dén, celle-ci permettant de faire face à la pénurie chronique d'eau le long du flanc sud-occidental de la Föppia (2106 m), la montagne dominant Lavertezzo.

### La géologie

Les facteurs déterminant cette pénurie d'eau générale sont multiples, à commencer par la morphologie de la totalité de la pente comparable à un énorme triangle rocheux abrupt et privé de forme concave permettant la concentration de l'eau de surface. Les eaux de pluie et de la fonte des neiges et du glacier coulent ainsi d'une manière diffuse et rapide sur la roche cristalline imperméable formant la partie supérieure de la Föppia pour s'infiltrer ensuite dans la nappe détritique au pied des parois rocheuses à une altitude d'environ 1350 m. Cette imposante masse de détritus occupe une grande partie du versant et résulte d'une dégradation progressive du relief. Cette masse est constituée de matériel très varié comme des blocs de pierre, amas d'éboulements et dépôts de fragments du glacier. Cet ensemble hétérogène de détritus est très perméable et l'eau peut donc pénétrer librement pour en sortir beaucoup plus bas (sources de Aquino et Sambugaro). Localement, on peut toutefois trouver des conditions particulières permettant à l'eau souterraine de remonter à des niveaux plus superficiels la rendant ainsi accessible par de petits puits comme ceux des lieux-dits al Mátro, ar Cisterna et Mött dal Cisternign à Revöira.



## L'itinéraire ethnographique

Le départ de l'itinéraire a lieu près de l'église paroissiale de Lavertezzo et suit en grande partie un des nombreux sentiers de la transhumance. L'on commence à monter à partir de la fraction de Sambugaro qui nous conduit aux mayens (ou monts) de Revöira et Ca d Dén. Jadis, hommes et animaux y séjournaient au printemps avant de monter, en été, sur les alpages de Orgnana, Cansgél ou sur ceux des vallées d'Agro et de Pincascia. Ensuite, ils y retournaient en automne avant de descendre en plaine pour la saison d'hiver. Arrivé à Revöira, le chemin zigzague entre les agglomérations rurales pour reprendre ensuite à Ca d Dén en dévoilant, chemin faisant, quelques éléments composant l'ancien système hydrique. On notera en particulier des puits ainsi que différents bassins monolithiques dans lesquels était recueilli le peu d'eau à disposition. Le parcours descend finalement en direction de la Motta, située sur le territoire de Brione Verzasca, où l'on rejoint la route carrossable sur le fond de la vallée reliant le "Sentierone" sur la rive droite de la rivière.

### 1 Sambugaro

Après avoir traversé la place de l'église paroissiale de Santa Maria degli Angeli, avec sa façade baroque tardif, on suit l'ancien sentier en pavés qui mène à Sambugaro. Construit sur l'une des rares terrasses, cette

### 4 Al Mátro

#### 2 Scandurásca

À une demi-heure à pied de Sambugaro, en aval du

châtaigneraies et de l'amoncellement de pierres dû à un éboulement préhistorique disséminé sur un replat, on peut encore distinguer les périmètres des étables, de petites habitations en pierre et de clôtures, à savoir les éléments essentiels d'une petite agglomération rurale d'autrefois.

### 3 Les mayens

Après dix autres minutes de marche, après avoir franchi les vestiges de l'ancien mur d'enceinte, on atteint Revöira. Étendue sur une bande située entre 850 et 1000 mètres d'altitude, cette montagne est divisée en cinq lieux-dits bien distincts, de bas en haut: al Mátro, Murisc, ar Cisterna, Mött dal Cisternign et Scima al Cört.