

The protohistoric settlements in the present area of Rovereto

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ABSTRACT - Analysing the protohistoric findings in the urban area of Rovereto, you can notice peculiar finding concentrations in specific zones, from which you can infer the presence of permanent human settlements during the considered periods, especially at Dosso Alto di Sacco (the only site stratigraphically studied), in the historic centre of Rovereto and in the area of Longariva (Sacco-S.Giorgio).

KEY WORDS: Rovereto, Settlement, Protohistory

PAROLE CHIAVE: Rovereto, Insediamento, Protostoria

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The intention of this work was to recover and re-order the large amount of data obtained by various researchers in different periods in order to try to reconstruct a general frame of the alluvial cone on which Rovereto is now situated.

Up till now the majority of researchers have never considered materials recovered in Rovereto in the 19th century as being useful for further studies on the exploitation of the territory

In the last century, as a result of urban works, the area around Piazza delle Oche, the vegetable patches of the houses towards the west, the road leading to Piazza Loreto, Via Paganini, Via delle Scuole Normali (a road that no longer exists which went from Piazza delle Oche to Corso Bettini and was demolished when Piazza Rosmini was constructed), along the Corso (Corso Nuovo, which is the present Corso Bettini), was very interesting for the numerous finds, which mainly represented Roman burials.

Only Paolo Orsi, the well-known archaeologist of the 19th century from Rovereto, realised that the Roman material recovered was mixed with other objects which preceded this period.

The most ancient proofs found on this territory date to the Neolithic and are concentrated in two precise areas of the cone. Two green-stone axes belonging to two tombs were also found in the 19th century near the ancient Franciscan Convent of S. Rocco (near Corso Bettini, at the foot

of a rock). The skeletons were not recovered, while the two axes, which were thought to have been lost, were found again among the Museum's materials, bearing the wrong place of finding. The other area is Longariva, on the extreme border of the Rovereto alluvial cone, in Riva all'Adige, a locality between Borgo Sacco and S.Giorgio. Some elements of the lithic industry were found during a superficial survey carried out in this area, which was probably near a settlement or more precisely an economical exploitation area. Some lithic material dated to the Bronze Age comes from this same locality.

The scarce information that we have on the period from the end of the Neolithic to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age consists of just one sporadic finding: a well-preserved flint dagger blade from "Balteri", a locality situated on the slope immediately above the historic centre.

The only site that was stratigraphically analysed is that of Dosso Alto-Borgo Sacco, which covers more phases of the Bronze Age.

Numerous protohistoric findings were recovered from the Roman necropolis area near Piazza delle Oche.

A Mercurago type dagger, with a simple base and two nails, dates to a much later period of the Early Bronze Age.

The Middle Bronze Age, however, is rich of samples. Two daggers, also with a simple base but

with three nails, come from the area of Piazza delle Oche. One is similar to the Cisano type and dates back to a very advanced phase of the Middle Bronze Age and the other, similar to the Isolone type, refers to a not very advanced phase of the same period. Two half-crescent shaped hilts of the Full Middle Bronze Age are from the same area, whereas an axe (*Absatzbeil*), typical of the widely diffused ones of Central Europe, is now preserved at the Ferdinandeum of Innsbruck and refers to the initial phase of the Middle Bronze Age. An octagonal sword, found on the bed of the Leno stream, in the exact position of the area considered in this research, is attributed to a final period of the Middle Bronze Age and is now in Vienna.

A scythe with a tongue-shaped hilt similar to the Uioara I-Kuchl type, which is now at the Ferdinandeum of Innsbruck, is also referable to the middle or the initial Recent Bronze Age.

An Allerona type sword with a tongue-shaped hilt, like the more ancient sample from the Leno stream, can be attributed to the Recent Bronze Age (XIII century BC), as well as the tip of an arrow with bronze wings found at Dosso di Castello in the year 1876, which has now been lost. Some unpolished, ribbed potsherds also found around the above-mentioned "Balteri" location are definitely datable to before the Iron Age. Another important object is a bronze band-shaped piece with a double spiral appendix, which had already been studied by Paolo Orsi, the use and significance of which remained unknown until now: it was probably an open re-hammered ring. This also comes from the centre of Rovereto and is assigned to the Final Bronze Age (XII-XI century BC), on the basis of a comparison to a similar object from tomb 15 of the Ascona (San Materno) burial ground.

With regard to the Iron Age, the most ancient period is only represented by very few findings, such as a large ribbed open and re-hammered fibula with a large decorated catch plate, assigned to HaD2 (575-525 BC) and a dragon fibula with perforated arc, common to burial goods of the VI century BC.

A fragment of a small bronze shaped plate modelled in relief in the *situlae* art style, probably found in S. Giorgio and preserved from 1881 at the Museo delle Antichità di Torino (cfr. GAMBERI, this volume).

The second Iron Age is represented to a greater extent. Several Certosa type fibulas come from Rovereto; the only two ones left are dated between the V and the middle of the III century BC. Paolo Orsi informs of the finding of two other fibulas, which had been lost, but were attributed to three main types. The first was prawn-tail shaped with six twirls and the second arch-shaped with saw edges both referring to the middle La Tène Culture, while the third cross-bow shaped one was a late La Tène model. An armilla with a prismatic section dates between V and II BC. Several coins, imitations of Massaliota ones, diffused in Trentino from the end of the III till the beginning of the I century BC definitely come from the Piazza delle Oche area. Even though all this material is out of context, it is possible to define certain areas that are characterised by a consistent and significant number of findings. The excavations of the last century were completely carried out without any scientific precision whatsoever. The objects found were shared by the finders and therefore it was difficult for the Museum to retrieve them. The aesthetic value of the objects owned by the Museo Civico di Rovereto was remarkable and must have certainly attracted much attention. It is therefore probable that the amount of material found in Rovereto was much vaster and we can suppose that this area was strongly characterised by human settlements even in the protohistoric period.

Finally, we would like to underline the difficulty in acquiring information in these areas which are now densely inhabited. This aspect which must be considered in order to avoid making mistakes in the reconstruction of ancient settlement models. Further planning of inspections of building excavations would increase our knowledge considerably.

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SUMMARY - In this article the protohistorical findings of the area of present Rovereto are considered. This research underlines concentrations of findings indicating lasting human settlements in some of the considered areas. First of all, Dosso Alto site (Borgo Sacco), the only site already known and stratigraphically researched, settled during the Bronze Age, then Longariva (Sacco-S.Giorgio), where many Neolithic and Bronze Age lithic tools have been recently found, and the area now corresponding to the northern side of the historic centre of Rovereto, in the surroundings of Piazza Cesare Battisti, with many findings dating back to the Bronze and Iron Age. Finally, we think it is important to consider the current deterioration of the urban subsoil when studying the ancient settlement models, that could otherwise turn out unreliable.

RIASSUNTO - In questo contributo si esaminano i reperti protostorici rinvenuti nella zona attualmente occupata dalla città di Rovereto. Da questo studio emergono delle concentrazioni di ritrovamenti che fanno pensare ad un permanente insediamento umano in alcune zone dell'area indagata. In particolare il sito di Dosso Alto (Borgo Sacco), l'unico già noto e indagato stratigraficamente, abitato in più fasi nell'età del Bronzo, la località di Longariva (Sacco-S.Giorgio), che ha recentemente restituito un gran numero di strumenti litici neolitici e dell'età del Bronzo, e la zona oggi occupata dalla parte settentrionale del centro storico di Rovereto intorno a Piazza Cesare Battisti, dalla quale provengono numerose testimonianze dell'Età del Bronzo e del Ferro. Vogliamo infine sottolineare l'importanza della considerazione dell'attuale stato di degrado del sottosuolo urbano nello studio degli antichi modelli insediativi, che potrebbero altrimenti risultare fortemente distorti.

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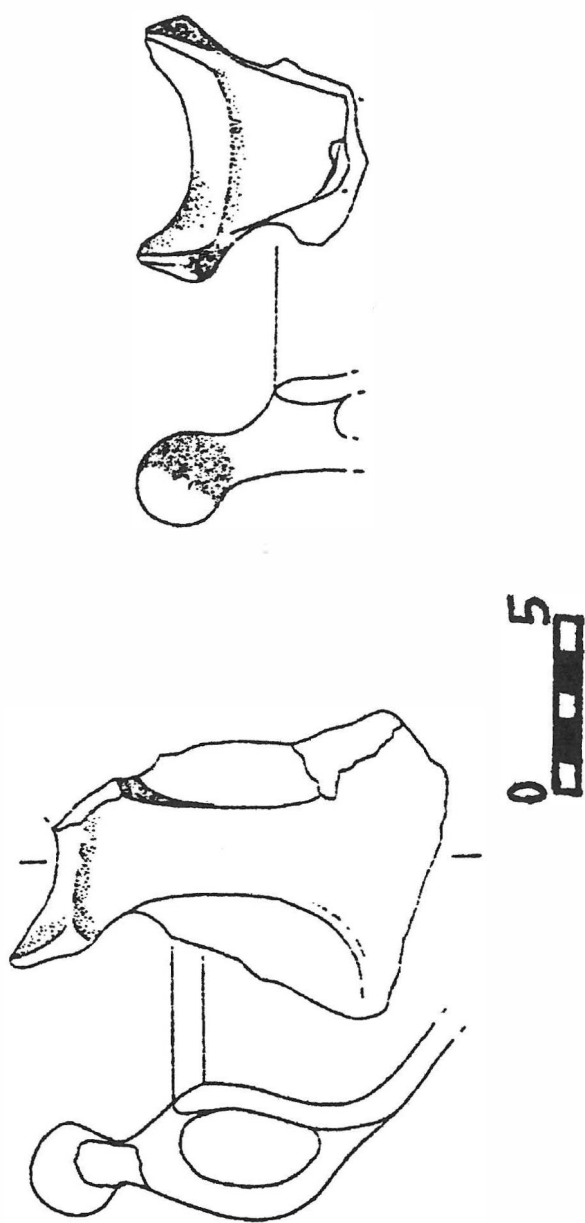


Fig. 1 - Two crescent-shaped hilts of the Middle Bronze Age discovered in the centre of Rovereto in the XIX century (drawings by U. Tecchiati)

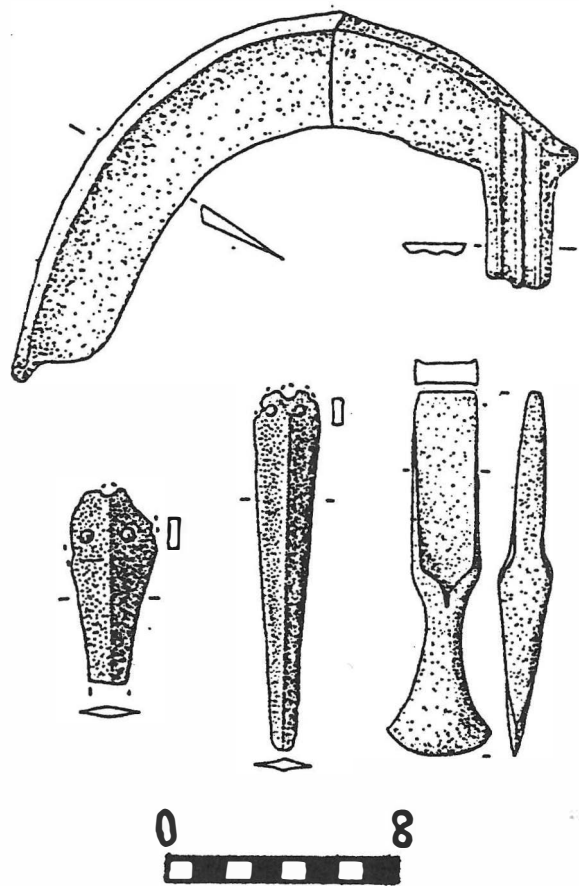


Fig. 2 - Metal findings of the Bronze Age from Rovereto (drawings by GRATL, 1977; BIANCO PERONI, 1994)

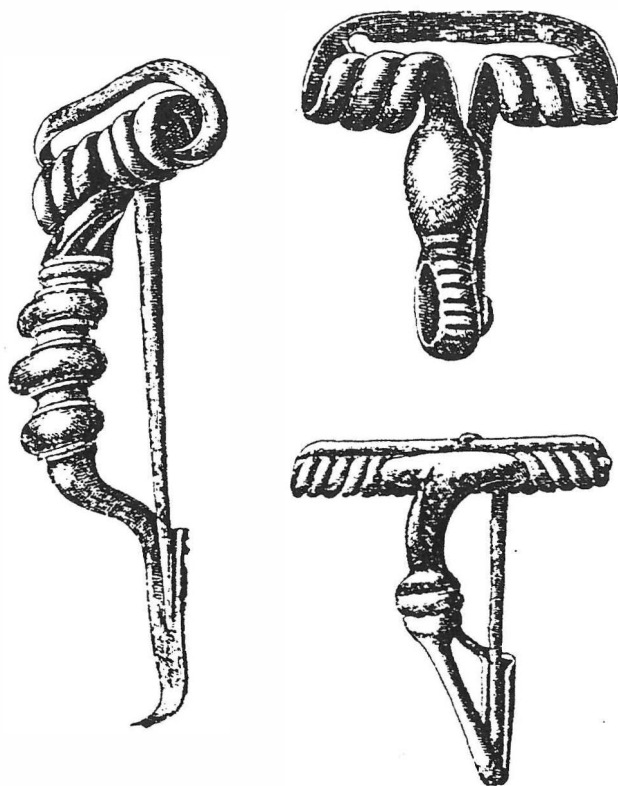


Fig. 3 - Fibulas found in the centre of Rovereto which have gone lost (drawings by Orsi, 1884)

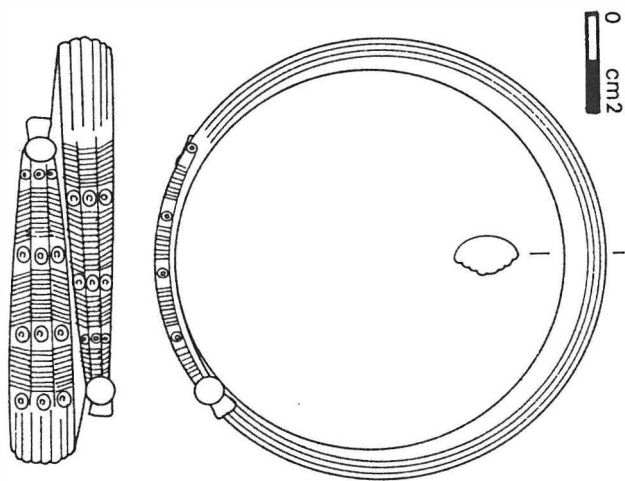


Fig. 4 - Armilla with prismatic section in bronze with apexes overlapping each other, with burin decorations with transversal lines and circles, V-II BC (drawings by Berlanda)

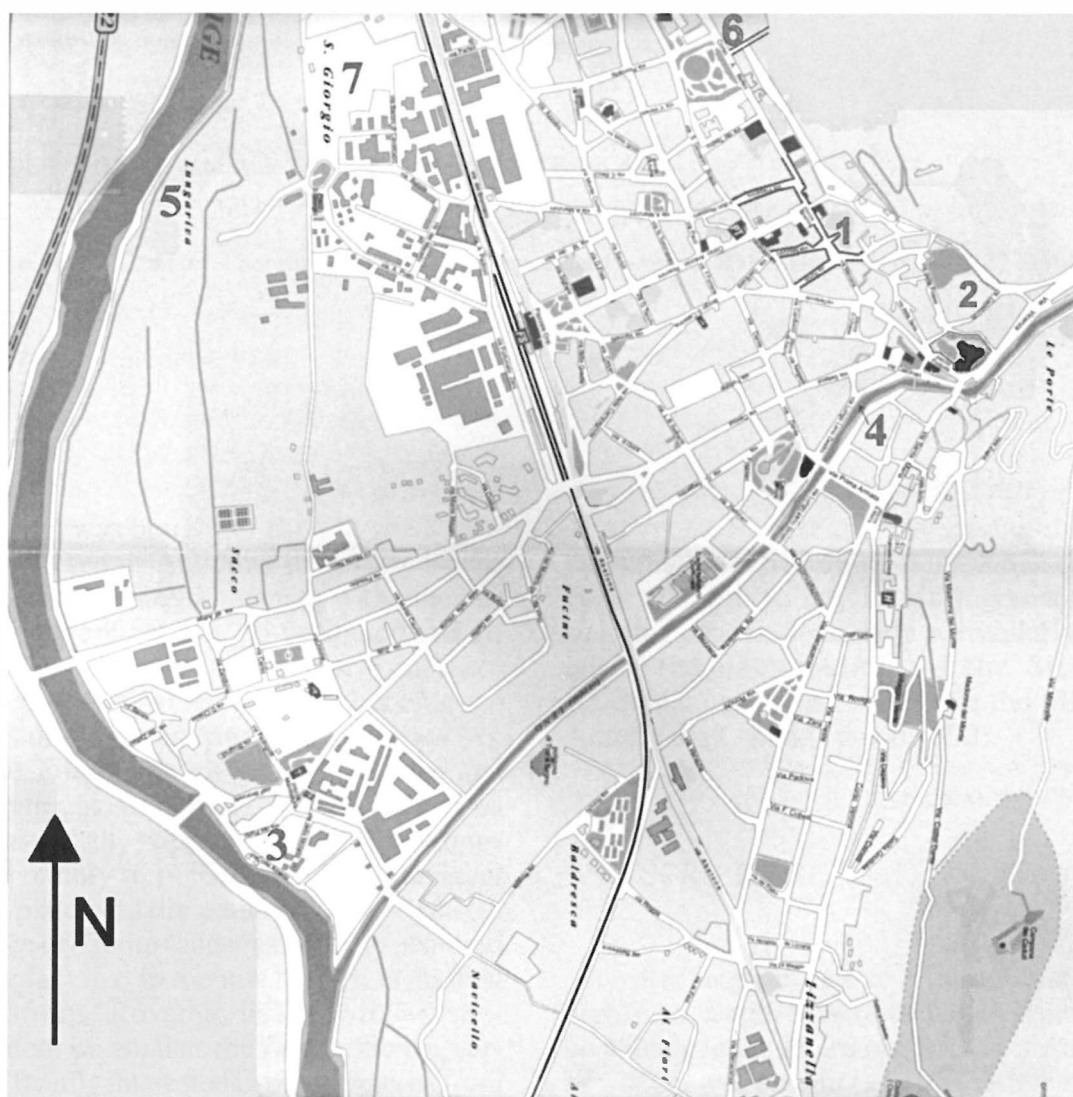


Fig. 5 - Area of archaeological findings in the present day area of the town of Rovereto.

- 1) XIX century streets of the findings as a result of roadworks.
- 2) Balteri and Dosso di Castello
- 3) Dosso Alto
- 4) Torrente Leno (the exact place of finding of the sword is unknown)
- 5) Longariva
- 6) Via Sticcotta
- 7) S. Giorgio (where the bronze plate originates from)