

Deposits of the Bronze Age on Colle Cornale (Bressanone-Bz): an example of a living quarter in a non-productive area

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ABSTRACT - A substantial anthropic layer, datable to the Middle Bronze age, was identified in November 1989 on the northern slope of Cornale di Sopra (Oberkarnol) in the municipality of Bressanone (Brixen). The layer was interpreted as the remains of a hanging wooden hut destroyed by fire. This interpretation is based on the complete lack of common/typically used structural elements, and the large quantities of "concolato" (a type of burned clay) and carbon found in the layer. The hanging hut was certainly an excellent adaptation of the constructive technique to the mountainous terrain, permitting the dwelling to be located on the steeper, shady slopes, thus leaving the flatter, sun-exposed areas for agricultural and grazing activities. Similar settlement modalities are found on the hills of Albanbühel, Plabach (Bressanone/Brixen), and Sotciastel (Val Badia/Gadertal).

KEY WORDS: Middle Bronze Age, Cornale (Bressanone, Bz), Non-productive area, Hanging hut

PAROLE CHIAVE: Media Età del Bronzo, Cornale (Bressanone, Bz), Aree improduttive, Capanna pensile

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In November 1989 (DAL RI & RIZZI, 1989-90a), in view of the construction of a new farm road a survey was carried out on the northern slope of the hill named Kirchbühel of Cornale-Oberkarnol (Fig. 1), on the hydrographic left side of the Bressanone basin (920m a.s.l.). On this occasion, a substantial anthropical unit (Fig. 2) dating back to the Middle Bronze Age was identified on the basis of ceramic findings. The complete lack of structural evidences which can be directly associated with this layer and, on the other hand, the presence of a considerable number of "concolato" (Hüttenlehm) and charcoal (Fig. 3) induce to think that it could be put down to the occupation of man and to a wooden hut, maybe "Blockhaus" type, which was destroyed by fire. Considering the steep slope it must have been a wooden hanging hut, built on a wooden base, raised up and supported by poles downhill and resting on the ground or digging into it uphill. The hanging hut was certainly an excellent adaptation of the constructive techniques to the mountainous terrain (to this very day similar constructions used as small barns or sheds can be

seen on very steep slopes; Fig. 4). It must be stressed that the northern, steeper, shadier and less sloping side of the hill was chosen to build the dwelling, probability so as not to use up precious space in flatter, sun exposed areas suitable for agricultural and pastoral purposes instead. This type of settlement on high ground with hanging huts built in places with little productive potentialities for the maintenance activities, is also found in other similar environments as for instance on the nearby hills of Albanbühel (DAL RI & RIZZI, 1989-90b) and of Plabach but also in more distant stations as Sotciastel in Val Badia (TECCHIATI *et al.*, 1993). In the above mentioned localities similar conformities were noted, even with regard to the ceramic remains, and a large amount of samples were investigated above all at Albanbühel. The findings of sporadic ceramic fragments from the Iron Age and a fragment of an arch-shaped fibula with oval and pearl-shaped decoration from III-II BC (Chart La Tene B), document that the area continued to be populated even during the first millennium BC.

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SUMMARY - In November 1989, a Middle Bronze Age substantial anthropic unit was identified on the northern slope of Cornale di Sopra-Oberkarnol (Fig.1-2) in the municipality of Bressanone-Brixen. The layer was interpreted as the remains of a hanging wooden hut which was destroyed by fire. This interpretation is based on the complete lack of common/typically used structural elements, and the large quantities of "concolato" (a type of burned clay; Fig.3) and charcoal found in the unit. Downhill the hanging hut was supported by poles, while uphill it was slightly dug into the ground. The hanging hut was certainly an excellent adaptation of the constructive technique to the mountainous terrain, permitting the dwelling to be located on the steeper, shady slopes, thus leaving the flatter, sun-exposed areas for agricultural and grazing activities (even today, small barns or sheds are being constructed in the same manner on very steep slopes for storage purposes; Fig.4). Similar settlement modalities are found on the nearby hills of Albanbühel and Plabach (Bressanone/Brixen), but also in Sotciastel (Val Badia/Gadertal). A certain conformity among the sites is also testified by similar ceramic findings. Some potsherds dating from the Iron Age and a fragment of a fibula, type La Tene B, document that the area of Cornale-Oberkarnol also continued to be populated throughout the first millennium BC.

RIASSUNTO - Nel novembre 1989 sul versante settentrionale del colle Cornale, nel comune di Bressanone, venne individuato un consistente strato antropico databile alla media età del Bronzo. L'interpretazione di tale strato come i resti di una capanna lignea di tipo pensile distrutta da incendio, si deduce dalla completa mancanza di evidenze strutturali e dalla notevole quantità di concotto e carboni presenti in esso. La capanna pensile costituiva sicuramente un ottimo adattamento della tecnica costruttiva all'ambiente montano, per poter situare le abitazioni sui pendii più ripidi e poco soleggiati e riservare le aree più pianeggianti ed esposte al sole alle pratiche agricole e pastorali. Simili modalità di insediamento si riscontrano sui colli di Albanbühel, di Plabach (Bressanone) e di Sotciastel (Val Badia).

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Fig. 1 - Colle Cornale-Oberkarnol, overlooking the entire Bressanone basin

Fig. 2 - The northern slope of the hill where a substantial anthropological layer containing ceramics of the Middle Bronze Age has been identified



Fig. 3 - Detail of the anthropological layer with large quantities of charcoal and concotto-Hüttenlehm



Fig. 4 - Example of a hanging wooden hut used as a storing shed for agricultural utensils