

A cooking pit from the Bronze Age at Velturmo (Felthurns), Alto Adige

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ABSTRACT - This paper discusses the structure of a pit designed for cooking animal parts during the Bronze Age. The cooking pit is located in the Tanzgasse area of the municipality of Velturmo/Felthurns (province of Bolzano/Bozen), an area of more or less continuous settlement from the Neolithic to the Upper Middle Ages. The pit consists of a several square metre wide, tub-shaped floorspace, and it is partly confined by vertical stone slabs for reverberation cooking. A smaller, but deeper hole in the centre of the pit is suspected to be the possible location for a pole to hang meat to be smoked. The cooking pit also contained "concolato" (a type of baked clay), remains of wooden elements coated with clay, broken stones, and a large quantity of charcoal.

KEY WORDS: Cooking pit, Late Bronze Age, Velturmo-Tanzgasse, Alto Adige

PAROLE CHIAVE: Fossa di cottura, Bronzo finale, Velturmo- Tanzgasse, Alto Adige

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The Tanzgasse area of Velturmo seems to have been an area of more or less continuous settlement from the Neolithic through to the Upper Middle Ages and the most important element there is certainly a place of worship dating back to the Copper Age (BAGOLINI, 1988). However, one particular settlement dating back to the Late Bronze Age (Luco Culture) is the subject of this paper.

In this period in Velturmo-Tanzgasse a vast settlement was identified, with wooden huts erected on rock beds along with numerous post holes of different shapes and dimensions. In particular, the presence of a wide pit was identified as probably being a cooking pit due to its structure and contents. This type of structure recovered in several excavations in this area has been interpreted in many different ways.

The pit is long and tub-shaped, not too deep and one of the sides is confined by vertical slabs of stone that are still in their original place. The other sides of the pit are daubed with clay that has turned red through heat. There is a narrower and deeper hole in the central part of the cooking pit. Both the pits contained a large quantity of charcoal and many

concolato fragments with one convex and regular side and another irregular and rough side. It is obviously the daubing of a wooden structure with a curved surface. The fact that no animal bones were to be found inside the cooking pit is a common factor in other similar structures found in the South Tyrol region considering that, once meat and bones had been cooked, they were eaten elsewhere.

It may even be possible that this particular structure was used to smoke pieces of meat in order to conserve it. If so, the pieces were probably hung on wooden posts the bases of which were protected by clay so as not to be burnt.

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SUMMARY - The Tanzgasse area in the municipality of Velturno/Felthurns (province of Bolzano/Bozen) is known as an area of more or less continuous settlement from the Neolithic to the Upper Middle Ages. It is a place particularly rich in archeological findings, the most spectacular discovery being a place of worship dating back to the Eneolithic. This paper, however, refers to the remains of a large settlement from the Late Bronze Age found in 1993-94, comprising wooden huts erected on top of rock beds in which numerous pits of varying size and shape were found. One particular pit was identified as a cooking pit for animal parts, according to its size, shape, and content. The pit consists of a several square meters wide, tub-shaped floorspace, and it is partly confined by vertical stone slabs for reverberation cooking. A smaller, but deeper hole in the centre of the pit is suspected to be the possible location for a pole to hang meat to be smoked. The cooking pit also contained "concotto" (a type of baked clay), remains of wooden elements coated with clay, burst stones, and a large quantity of charcoal.

RIASSUNTO - Viene considerata, qui, la struttura di una fossa per cottura di parti animali relativa ad un momento, all'interno dell'Età del Bronzo, racchiuso in un contesto ben più ampio, che va dal Neolitico all'alto Medioevo dell'area Tanzgasse nel Comune di Velturno in Alto Adige. La fossa si distingue in una parte ampia con uno specchio di lastre di pietra verticali per la cottura a riverbero ed al centro una parte più limitata e molto più profonda sospettata di essere la possibile sede di un palo per appendere porzioni ad affumicare. Contiene resti concotti della probabile ricopertura in argilla di elementi lignei, oltre che a pietre sfatte e molto legno bruciato.

REFERENCES

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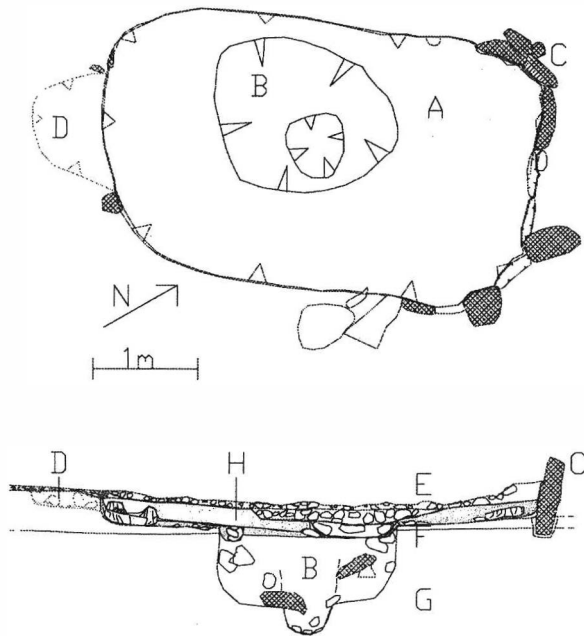


Fig. 1 - A) Cooking pit; B) Smaller, but deeper hole suspected to be the possible location for a pole; C) Vertical stone slabs for reverberation cooking; D) Another small former pit separated from the big cooking pit; E) Upper gravel bed containing ceramics of the Final Bronze Age ("Cultura Luco"); F) Older layers outside the pit; G) Fluvio-glacial gravel without finds; H) Content of the upper part of the pit (burnt wood and burst stones) (Drawing: Giuliana Marinelli Poli - Society of Archaeological Research, Bressanone)



Fig. 2 - The cooking pit containing burst stones and charcoal



Fig. 3 - The excavation of the pit reveals the two different components of the structure