

## The Early Neolithic of Villandro Plunacker: aspects of the lithic industry

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**ABSTRACT** - The Early Neolithic assemblage compiled during the excavation of Trench C at Villandro-Plunacker is discussed in this paper. The collection of lithic tools is mainly composed of unretouched blades and flakes but the presence of retouched instruments, such as burins, scrapers, borers, bowl winding-edged blades, microburins, and sickle blades should not be ignored. The Villandro Plunacker site can be fitted perfectly into the Early Neolithic industrial and occupation typologies of sites recovered along the Adige and Isarco Valleys.

**KEY WORDS** : Villandro-Plunacker, Settlement, Natural terrace, Early Neolithic, Gaban Group, Lithic industry

**PAROLE CHIAVE** : Villandro Plunacker, Insediamento, Terrazzo, Neolitico Antico, Gruppo del Gaban, Industria litica

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The village of Villandro can be found a few kilometres from Chiusa (BZ), half way up the eastern slope of Monte Villandro at an altitude of 880 metres and on the orographic left side of the Isarco river. In 1988, after preliminary surveys, archaeological excavations of a small 6x6 metre area, (trench C, see Fig. 1) were carried out on the southern borders of the great natural terrace, called Plunacker.

During the excavations, at a depth of approximately 90cm below the present top-soil, it was possible to identify, a consistent archaeological layer, the top part of which was interpreted as a Neolithic pounding and occupational level.

The Neolithic flint industry of the Villandro-Plunacker found between 1988 and 1989, originates from Trench C. Flint tools, (Fig. 2), which were characteristic of the Early Neolithic Age were found throughout the whole thickness of the layer almost 30 cm flint tools comprised of rhomboidal micro-liths, bowl-burins, lateral detachments, winding-edged blades, frontal scrapers, truncate blades, borers, arrowheads, retouched blades and many microburins.

Of paramount interest the findings were the presence of six fragments of sickle-blade, some of which were remarkable size, and a few fragments of polished green-stone and broken axes. The sickle-blades exhibited clear traces of silica glass.

It is important to mention that the quantity of narrow blades is extremely high.

From 594 whole and non-retouched artefacts it is clear, from scatter diagrams that the index is predominantly narrow blades. This confirms the dating given to the site.

In fact, narrow blades is typical of all the Adige sites in the Early Neolithic Age.

From the analysis of the lithic and ceramic industries referring only to the earlier anthropologic layers, the site can be associated with the "Gaban Group Culture" of the Trentino area. Similarities taken into consideration, such as flint flaking and ceramic production, both indicate how the multi-polar influences have distinguished the Neolithic process of the Trentino region and have similarly influenced the development of the Early Neolithic Age on the Villandro-Plunacker.

It is certain that from a global point of view

of the total number of findings recovered from the Neolithic layers of Villandro, an early type of lithic technology persists even at higher anthropological levels, which could possibly refer to the Middle Neolithic Age because of the ceramic typology. It is, therefore, possible that for 1500 years there was no development in the technique of flint flaking which was still influenced by the Late

Mesolithic Age "Castelnoviano", while ceramics were evolving into types which were typical of a more recent period (Square Mouth Pottery Culture). On the other hand, perhaps ceramic models, which have previously been associated with typical ones of the Middle Recent Neolithic Age, may have already been present in an earlier phase.

**SUMMARY** - Archaeological excavations of a small area (6x6 metres, "Trench C", see Fig.1) took place on the Plunacker natural terrace between 1988 and 1989 at Villandro (BZ). They resulted in the discovery of a consistent archaeological layer. More than 90cm below the top soil, it was interpreted as an Early Neolithic pounding and occupation level. Flint tools (Fig.2) characteristic of this period were found throughout almost 30cm of the layer. These included: rhomboidal arrow-armours, bowl-burins and winding-edged blades. Frontal scrapers, truncate blades, borers, arrow heads, retouched blades and flakes and numerous micro-burins were also recovered. Of paramount interest was the appearance of six mainly large fragments of sickle-blade covered by a silica gloss (associated with the cutting of grass-related plants) and of a few pieces of polished green-stone, the remains of broken axes. The laminate nature of the assemblage is illustrated in the scatter plots produced using 594 entire and non-retouched artefacts which demonstrates the prevalence of long and narrow blades. Such blades occur frequently on Early Neolithic sites in North-East Italy. The Villandro site, almost certainly associated to the Gaban Group, therefore fits perfectly into the Early Neolithic industrial and occupation typologies of the other sites discovered along the Adige and the Isarco Valleys.

**RIASSUNTO** - Uno scavo di piccole dimensioni (6x6m, trincea C, Fig.1) venne effettuato tra il 1988 e il 1989 in località Plunacker, Villandro (BZ). A più di 90cm dalla superficie, venne trovato un livello antropico attribuito al Neolitico antico e interpretato come piano di calpestio e di frequentazione. Erano presenti manufatti in selce (Fig.2) caratteristici di questo periodo e diffusi in tutto lo strato (circa 30 cm): armature romboidali, bulini ad incavi e stacchi laterali, lame a margine sinuoso, grattatoi frontali, lame troncate, perforatori, punte di freccia, lame ritoccate, schegge e numerosissimi bulini. Di grande interesse anche la presenza di sei elementi di falcetto, talora di grandi dimensioni, coperti da patine (generalmente attribuite al taglio di piante); presenti anche alcuni frammenti di pietra verde levigata, probabilmente i resti di asce spezzate. La natura laminare dell'industria è illustrata dai diagrammi a dispersione eseguiti su 594 manufatti interi e non ritoccati che dimostrano la prevalenza di lame lunghe e strette. Queste lame sono frequenti nel Neolitico antico dell'Italia nord-orientale. Il sito di Villandro, quasi certamente associato al Gruppo Gaban, si inserisce perfettamente nel quadro tecnologico del Neolitico antico così come nelle tipologie di occupazione degli altri siti scoperti lungo le valli dell'Adige e dell'Isarco.



Fig. 1 - General view of Trench C

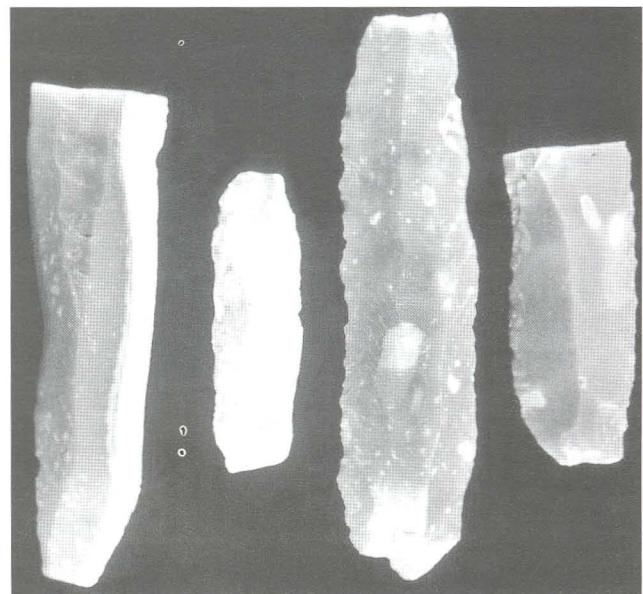


Fig. 2 - Flint tools