

A Luco Culture settlement in Via Monte Ponente, Bressanone

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ABSTRACT - Extensive excavations in Via Monte Ponente led to the discovery of a prehistoric settlement (Fig.1).The village was located on a slightly sloping hillside a few hundred metres above the bottom of the Isarco Valley. Two archaeological layers dated back to the Late and Final Bronze Age (Luco): the first layer contained a series of pole holes belonging to a burnt hut and the second layer probably represented an open area between the huts of the settlement. Underneath this layer there were older ones dating back from the Middle Bronze Age or the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. It is very interesting to note the change in the choice of the sites: from the Late Bronze Age onwards, settlements were founded directly at the bottom of the valley while higher and more sheltered places, like those occupied in the Early Middle Bronze Age, were of less interest.

KEY WORDS: Bressanone-Via Monte Ponente, Settlement, Late Bronze Age, Final Bronze Age, Cultura Luco (Laugener Kultur)

PAROLE CHIAVE: Bressanone-Via Monte Ponente, Insediamento, Età del Bronzo Recente, Età del Bronzo finale, Cultura Luco

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In 1994 extensive excavations in a residential development area in Bressanone in Via Monte Ponente, a few hundred meters North-West of the railway station, led to the discovery and to the partial destruction of a prehistoric settlement (Fig. 1).The village was located on a slightly sloping hillside a few hundred metres above the bottom of the Isarco valley. During the two week research undertaken by the Soprintendenza Provinciale ai BB.CC. of Bolzano, South Tyrol, it was possible to identify two archaeological areas. At a depth of four metres a first archaeological layer, stretching for approximately 10 metres, was found containing abundant charcoal (the remains of a burnt hut), potsherds from the Late-Final Bronze Age, and "concolato"(a type of burnt clay). On the borders of the excavations, at a depth of about two metres from the present ground, it was possible to locate a second layer containing numerous potsherds from the Late-Final Bronze Age (Fig. 2). This strata stretched for about 500 square metres and its thick-

ness varied from 11 to 60cms. Because of the urgent situation, research on this layer was only carried out on a very limited part of the area. This archaeological layer found in an opening between a few huts of the settlement, was probably a pounding area or might even have been used for farming purposes and dates back to the Late and Final Bronze Age; it also contains ceramics typical of the ancient Luco Culture (Fig. 3-5). Nevertheless, in some places the archaeological layer obviously dated further back in time (holes filled with charcoal and a reddish soil etc. were present), and roughly to the Recent Middle Bronze Age or to the beginning of the Recent Bronze Age. As a result of the acquired documentation there is no apparent continuity of events between the pre-Cultura Luco period and the Recent Final Bronze Age-Final Bronze Age.

In the southern zone the archaeological layers were thinner, obviously due to alluvial phenomena, but nevertheless, it was at this point that

it was possible to observe some structures (pole holes lined up along a straight parallel to the line of maximum inclination) covered by the remains of structured layers of concotto, scraped daub, fauna with many potsherds on top. This site was of great interest because work was carried out swiftly but mainly because of the choice of its whereabouts. In fact, even in the Bressanone basin, settlements were founded directly at the bottom of the valley of the river Isarco on the nearby low slopes. While in the Ancient and Middle Bronze Age settlement areas

tended to occupy non productive and sheltered spaces, in the Recent-Final Bronze Age, both productive areas, which had previously been cultivated, and living quarters were present in more sheltered open spaces, even though in some cases the typology of the settlement remained the same. The apparent change in strategic and security needs seems to coincide with a conventional geo-political system, generally accepted and approved of, that could imply a less competitive situation on the whole in the management of spaces and territorial resources.

SUMMARY - Extensive excavations in the Via-Monte-Ponente (Pfefferbergstraße) at the municipality of Bressanone/Brixen (province of Bolzano/Bozen) led to the discovery of a prehistoric settlement located on a slightly sloping hill side a few dozen metres above the current bottom of the Isarco (Eisack) Valley (Fig. 1). Two archaeological layers from the Late-Final Bronze Age were found: at a depth of four metres, the first stratum contained a series of pole holes, "concotto" (a type of burnt clay), and charcoal belonging to a burnt hut (Fig. 2). Furthermore, animal bones and potsherds from the Late-Final Bronze Age were found. At a depth of two meters, numerous potsherds from the Late-Final Bronze suggested a second archaeological layer. This stratum probably represented an open area between the few huts of the settlement and might have even been used for some farming. Directly underneath the second layer, holes filled with charcoal, and a reddish soil dating from the Middle Bronze Age or the beginning of the Late Bronze Age were found (Fig. 3-5). However, it is unclear whether this site was continuously populated throughout the Middle to Final Bronze Age. Of great interest is the change in the site selection over time: from the Late Bronze Age onward settlements were founded directly at the bottom of valley, while higher, more sheltered locations (as preferred during the Early and Middle Bronze Age) started to lose their attractiveness.

RIASSUNTO - Vasti sbancamenti in Via Monte Ponente a Bressanone (BZ) hanno portato al rinvenimento di un abitato preistorico, che occupava un versante in leggero pendio, sopraelevato di poche decine di metri rispetto al fondovalle attuale dell'Isarco. Lo scavo ha messo in luce due aree antropiche con stratificazioni del Bronzo Recente e Finale (Luco): la prima ha reso una serie di buche di palo appartenenti ad una capanna distrutta da incendio e la seconda invece costituiva probabilmente uno spazio aperto tra le capanne. Quest'ultima inoltre sigillava strati più antichi del Bronzo Medio o Recente Iniziale. L'interesse risiede nella scelta ambientale: a partire dal Bronzo Recente si assiste alla formazione di abitati posti direttamente sul fondovalle mentre, pur continuando, viene meno l'interesse per l'occupazione di alture meglio difendibili, già ben frequentate nel Bronzo Antico e Medio.



Fig. 1 - Northern part of the excavation. A thin charcoal layer originating from a burnt hut can be seen.



Fig. 2 - Details of a burnt area covered by strata from the Recent and Final Bronze Age

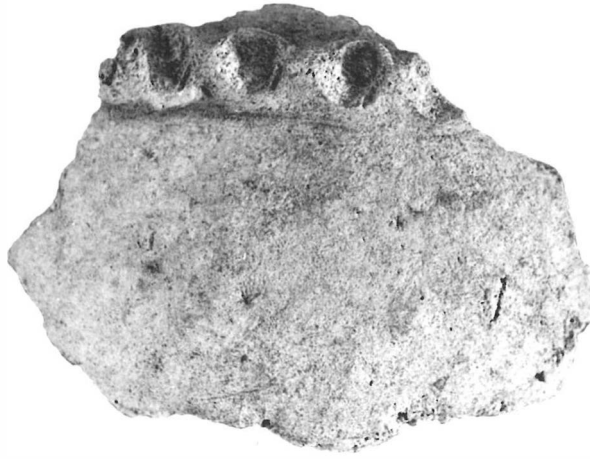


Fig. 3 - A few ceramic samples dating from the Middle Bronze Age or beginning of the Late Bronze Age

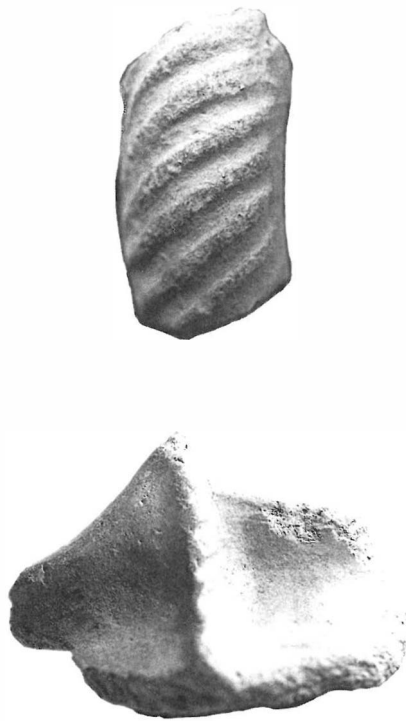


Fig. 4-5 - A few ceramic samples dating to the Final Bronze-Luco.