

Contacts between Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli during the Iron Age

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ABSTRACT - Recent researches carried out in the Northern Friuli and Northern Eastern Veneto enabled searchers to face the problem of transversal contacts in the Eastern Alps in protohistory. The data enable to extend the knowledge about such subjects as the artefacts exchange system (exp. metallic artefacts) in the Central and Eastern Alps region, and the exchange transactions between the plain and the Prealpine, Alpine, Transalpine area in the advanced Iron Age.

KEY WORDS: Iron Age, Northern Friuli, Eastern Alps, Transversal contacts, Metal artifact exchanges

PAROLE CHIAVE: Età del Ferro, Alto Friuli, Alpi Orientali, Contatti trasversali, Circolazione di manufatti metallici

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The subject matter regarding transversal contacts in the Alpine area during the Iron Age, and particularly between the Central Alpine area and the Eastern Alpine area has been dealt with in various ways, often indirectly, by many authors in the last thirty years: see Peroni's definition (PERONI, 1973) of the "Eastern Alpine component" in the "koinè adriatica" of the VI-V century BC, including forms "present in the Golasecca civilization, absent or almost in the Adige area culture, attested in the Alpine and piedmont regions (Hallstatt, S. Lucia), sometimes present in Slovenia and much further to the South, in the internal Balkan areas (Valle dell'Una, Donja Dolina)". See the distribution charts elaborated by LUNZ (1974) in which he underlines the exchanges of some types of domestic metal artefacts and the works undertaken on the distribution of some classes of materials spreading from the North Balkan area to the Central Alps (DE MARINIS & GUŠTIN, 1975). The recent studies on the Rhaethian world (Die Räter-I Reti, 1992), the synthesis of DE MARINIS (1988), the very recent systematisation of ADAM (1996) and MARZATICO (1997) and the punctual contributions of GLEIRSCHER, as well as the exhibition "Ori delle Alpi" in which objects coming from different Al-

pine sites, very distant from each other, were exhibited together. The fact that these objects are so similar that they could have been made by the same artisans, is food for thought. The recent revival of researches and archaeological valorisation in the Central-Northern Plavense area (material revision from Mel and Lagole, researches and new findings in the Belluno area, cf. RUTA SERAFINI, 1996) could supply further connecting elements between Northern Friuli-Northern Isonzo and Veneto (GAMBACURTA, in press).

We would like to supply a few data on the issue - regarding only the distribution of some types of metallic artefacts and building typologies - taken from recent excavations or from excavations which are still being carried out at the moment (Paularo), in Full and Late Iron Age complexes of North-West Friuli (Fig. 1). The territory - unknown from an archaeological point of view up till a few years ago and therefore represented by a blank space even on the more recent distribution charts - should represent the missing link in the relations which connected the pre-Alpine and Eastern Alpine valleys across to the Isonzo and Slovenia.

In the more ancient phases of the Iron Age (the Luco-Meluno Culture in Trentino-Alto Adige),

significant contacts had already been noticed between the Central Alps and the North Balkan territory (DE MARINIS & GUŠTIN, 1975). We shall however, take into consideration some reoccurring contacts, particularly in the period from the VI to V century BC, corresponding to the first phases of the Fritzens-Sanzeno Culture which have now been confirmed, in the piedmont and mountain areas of Friuli, both by settlement and also burial contexts and other elements of the advanced and Late Iron Age II.

We shall distinguish three areas: A) the northern part of the Livenza basin connected to the Piave valley by the Valcellina; B) the central part of the Tagliamento basin; C) the northern part of the Tagliamento basin (Fig. 1).

In the first area (A), the most significant complex is the Montereale Valcellina settlement (Late Recent Bronze-the Romanization Period). This settlement context of the V century BC has provided pottery with specifically local characteristics but influenced by the Veneto and North Etruscan cultures. As well as a few containers imported from the Veneto Plain and North Etruscan centres (cf. *Protostoria tra Sile e Tagliamento*, 1996), metallic materials are present too, thus helping to define the complex network of influence. Materials from Slovenia (Fig. 2:4) are combined to ornamental objects with Central Italic origins (Fig. 2:2) but are diffused in the Verona area (Gazzo) in the northern valley of the Adige river (see Vadena, tomb 4/1989 in AA.VV., 1997, cat. 706-733 and numerous decorated specimens with thin ribbing in LUNZ, 1974). Fibulae are also widely diffused but in varieties which are primarily diffused in the Alpine area (Fig. 2:3). The bovine protome pendant has similar comparisons in the Belluno area (AA.VV., 1997:554, cat.76) and at S. Lucia di Tolmino (MARCHESETTI, 1893, tab. XXIV, 36).

The Arzino valley (B), which connects the northern and central part of the Tagliamento valley, seems to collect northern and north-western type elements from the IV century BC onwards. The large dwelling with a corridor entrance (Fig. 2:5) at the top of fort Castelraimondo (Late Iron Age-Middle Ages), interpreted as a Raethian type house (SANTORO BIANCHI, 1992), has evident parallels with the large houses of Villanova. Some letters engraved on a coarse ceramic container are relative to the Raethian alphabet. Ceramic containers found in the sheltered dwelling of Flagogna (IV?-I century BC) datable between the IV and III century BC (Fig. 2:6) found in a house with a corridor entrance, show clear similarities with the Veneto-Raethian Vicentino Culture and the Raethian Trentino Culture.

Carnia (C) seems to fit in fully with the alpine circle, but shows significant wide-range contacts. The necropolis of Misincinis-Paularo, which, during excavations carried out from 1995 to 1997, yielded about a hundred tombs datable from the end of the VII to the III century BC and sporadic materials probably referring to destroyed tombs of III-I century BC, is the only burial context to be systematically excavated in Carnia (CORAZZA & VITRI, 1997). The ritual context - which has only partly been analysed - seems to have certain affinities with the Alto-Adige cemeteries (incineration tombs with a dense network, in an overlapping sequence, probably in groups of families, cf. Rasun-Nieder-rassen in TERŽAN, 1992), which continues through to the Romanization period (see VADENA & DAL RI, 1992).

The grave goods in which fibulae predominate, include objects of the VI-V century. These are mainly considered as being produced in the Central-Eastern Alps (Fig. 2:7-8) (see MARZATICO, 1997 on their diffusion, Fig. 8,34). In some cases some varieties are diffused almost exclusively in the Trento area and in the Verona area (EGG, 1992; MARZATICO, 1997, Fig. 173), like for example, the cutlass with curved tang (Fig. 2:9). There are also Golasecca type objects (Civiglio type fibula), objects that are datable to between the end of the VI to the IV century, mainly considered as coming from the South-Eastern Alps (Fig. 2:10-13) which are well documented at Caporetto and S. Lucia and in central Slovenia but also diffused right through to the Trento-Adige area (LUNZ, 1974, tabl.40,8; 76,5; 46,5; ADAM, 1996, types IX e XII, fig.14). Some only local objects are dated between the late VI and IV century BC, like the "Paularo type" fibula (Fig. 2:14), the diffusion of which is attested beyond the Alpine watershed of the Gail valley (Gurina) through to the confluence of the Drava and the Gail (Villaco) (GLEIRSCHER, 1995, abb. 4) and sporadically more towards North (Hallstatt: GLUNZ, 1997: 150, Fig. 35). The local types also include perforated belt clasps dated late V-beginning of IV century BC (which are now being restored and studied), which seem to infer early contacts with the Celtic transalpine culture.

The scarce material referring to later phases (III-II century BC), found up till now at Misincinis, fit in with the South Alpine community of the Iron Age II already described by ADAM (1996:269) which includes the ex-Golasecca area, the southern slope of the Italian Alps and the South-Eastern Alpine range, but which more or less consistently reveals transalpine influence. A fragment of an anthropomorphic mask is significant for the contacts with Trentino (Fig. 2:15). It is probably

part of a fibula with either a several globes or ribbed arc, the prototypes of which are probably to be found in the Ticino Culture (ADAM, 1996:190) and which are sporadically present right through to the Isonzo valley (GUŠTIN, 1991, tab.27, Fig. 42:5).

As for the period between the late VI and the beginning of the IV century BC, two main ambits of exchange transactions seem to be present: a pre-Alpine one and an Alpine one. The pre-Alpine one probably took the piedmont route and seems strongly tied to the Veneto, but also fits into a connection system with the Fritzens - Sanzeno Culture (Montereale, S. Lucia of Tolmino) particularly in the V century BC. The Alpine one was probably in early contact with Celtic transalpine cultures. The communication routes went through the main longitudinal valleys (Bût and Canale of Incaroio with the Monte Croce Carnico and Findenig Törl-Puarts passes, the Piave valley with access to the Monte Croce di Comelico and Mauria passes) but also systematically via the transversal valleys (Upper Tagliamento valley with access to the Mauria pass, the Gail valley, the Pusteria valley), probably reaching Slovenia via North (Sava valley) and reaching the Adige valley - the Non valley from the other side (see the evident contacts found with Sanzeno and Mechel). The North-South orientated valleys seem to form a connection (maybe to be included in the wider system of North-South connections described as the “amber

way”) between the two mentioned ambits, which respectively had to mediate the contacts with the transalpine world and the protocity of the plains.

Further analysis on how these cultural transmissions came about would be of great interest. Analysis of the dwelling and burial contexts would help to outline the internal social organization of the communities and analysis of the metal alloys would supply certain elements for the localization of production areas.

With regard to the following period, the Celtic La Tène type elements, still scarce in the areas taken into consideration, are rapidly increasing in various localities of Carnia (which are still in the process of being studied). The data are still insufficient in order to give an interpretative outline of the La Tène Culture in Northern Friuli. However, archaeological evidence seems to show the continuity of settlements and the persisting contacts with the Alpine areas further to the West (see the “Raethian houses” of Flagogna and Castelraimondo), above all in the more ancient phases and in the central part of the territory (B). At a later stage (beginning from the advanced III century BC) the presence in the Northern Friuli of groups of Danubian Celts, allocated on the highland or on sheltered sites (RIGHT, in press) seems ascertained. Contacts both with the Veneto world and with the cultural groups of the Central Alps are however not cut off.

SUMMARY - Recent researches carried out in the Northern Friuli and Northern Eastern Veneto enabled searchers to face the problem of transversal contacts in the Eastern Alps in protohistory. The author analyses some archaeological records from excavations in settlements and necropolis in Northern Friuli. The data enable to extend the knowledge about such subjects as the artefacts exchange system (exp. metallic artefacts) in the Central and Eastern Alps region, and the exchange transactions between the plain and the Prealpine, Alpine, Transalpine area in the advanced Iron Age (see exp. the spreading between Adige valley and Slovenia of anthropomorphic pendants with bird's heads and zoomorphic pendants, *alpine Zweiknopfibel*n and *Bandbogenfibeln*, *ostalpine Tierkopffibeln*, zoomorphic fibulae, Oppeano type knives). Also new building models documented from IV sec. AC (such as half buried houses, so called “Raethian houses”, some of which with small straight entrance passages or angled entrance passages) show that Northern Friuli is enclosed in the contacts system of Centro-Eastern Prealpine and Alpine region.

RIASSUNTO - Recenti indagini condotte nell'alto Friuli e nel Bellunese hanno riportato all'attenzione degli studiosi il problema dei contatti trasversali in area alpina orientale nella protostoria: si considerano in questa sede alcuni dati tratti da scavi condotti in Friuli in abitato e in necropoli (Montereale Valcellina, Castelraimondo, Flagogna, Paularo) che permettono di ampliare la problematica relativa ad alcuni temi, quali la circolazione di manufatti, in particolare metallici, nell'ambito alpino orientale e gli scambi tra pianura, area prealpina alpina e transalpina nelle fasi avanzate dell'Età del Ferro, in particolare tra VI e la fine del V secolo AC (vedi ad esempio la distribuzione di pendagli antropomorfi a teste di uccello e zoomorfi, *alpine Zweiknopfibel*n e *Bandbogenfibeln*, *ostalpine Tierkopffibeln*, fibule zoomorfe, coltelli tipo Oppeano); anche l'adozione, testimoniata a partire dal IV secolo di alcuni modelli abitativi (vedi in particolare le case cosiddette di tipo retico, per lo più seminterrate, in alcuni casi con ingresso a corridoio sia rettilineo che ad angolo), pare ancora rientrare nel sistema di contatti che comprende area alpina e prealpina centro-orientale.

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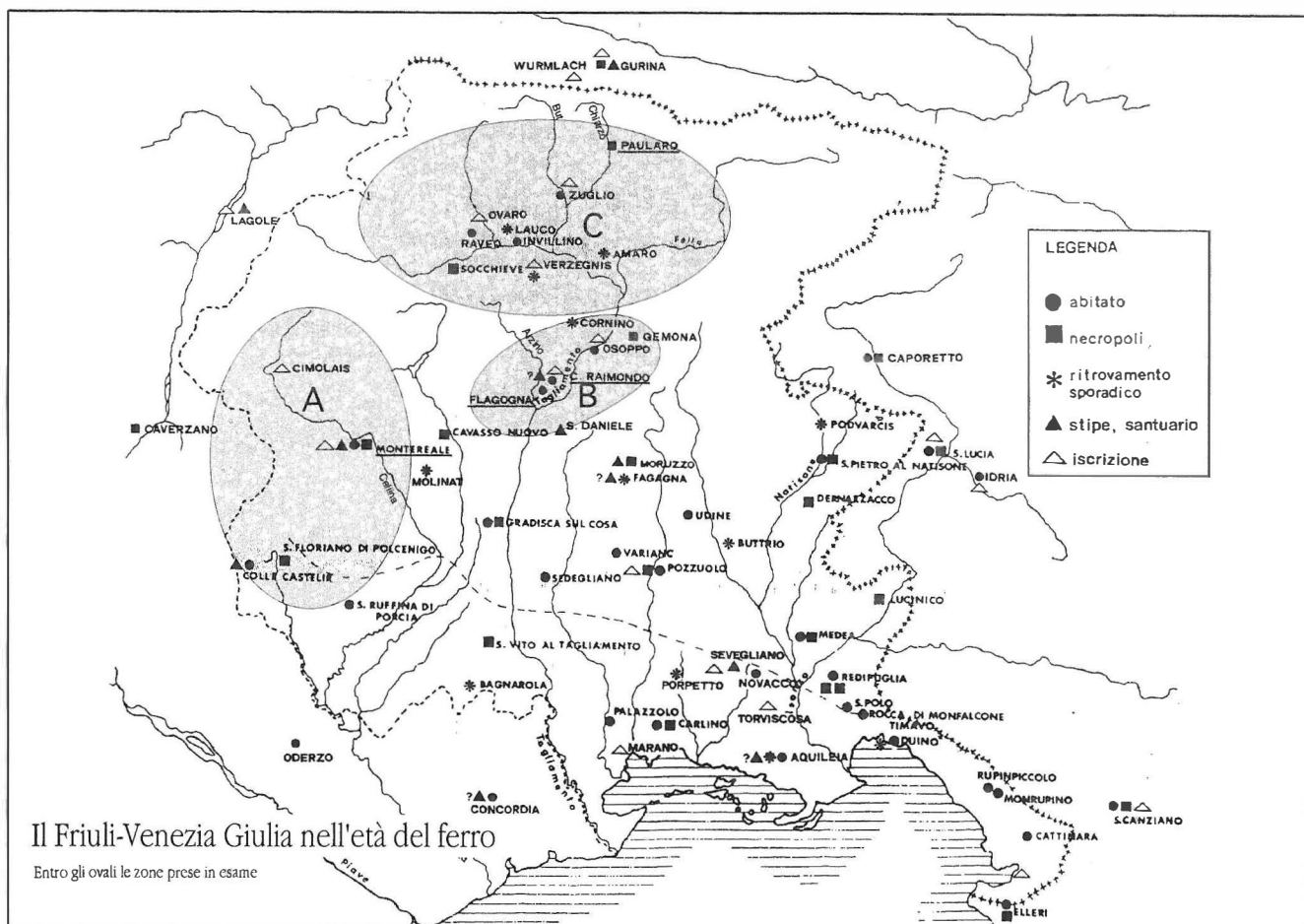


Fig. 1 - Friuli Venezia Giulia in the Iron Age, the localities are indicated and the three areas taken into consideration are outlined.

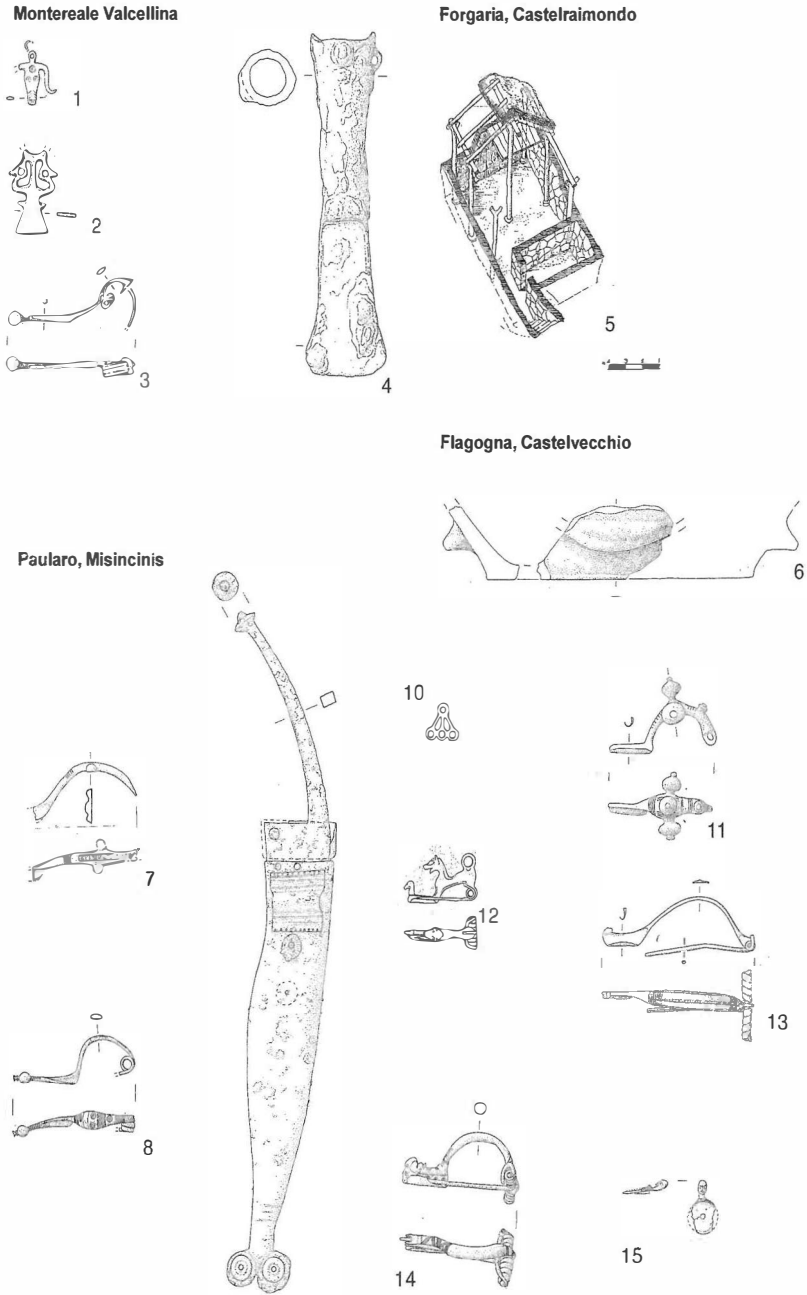


Fig. 2 - (Montereale Valcellina) 1) Bovine protome pendant; 2) Pendant plate with bird's heads; 3) Fibula with serpentine arc band with engraved lines; 4) Iron tube axe. (Forgaria, Castelraimondo) 5) Half-buried house with corridor entrance. (Flagogna, Castelvecchio) 6) Pan with tongue-shaped hold. (Paularo, necropolis of Misincinis) 7) Fibula with bar-shaped arc and lateral buttons (Alpine Zweikopffibel); 8) Castellir di Fisterre type fibula with flat bar arc (Alpine Bandbogenfibel); 9) Iron knife with curved iron tang and iron sheath with double eyelet ends (EGG, 1992; Oppeano variant); 10) Pendant with joined rings; 11) Fibula with animal head catch plate (Ostalpine Tierkopffibel); 12) Zoomorphic fibula with feline and bird; 13) Fibula with three-four buttons and double spring; 14) Paularo type fibula; 15) Fibula with anthropomorphic mask (Helmkopffibel)