

CROSSING THE ALPS

**EARLY URBANISM BETWEEN NORTHERN ITALY
AND CENTRAL EUROPE (900-400 BC)**



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AND CENTRAL EUROPE (900-400 BC)**

EDITED BY LORENZO ZAMBONI, MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ
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LEVERHULME
TRUST



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Published by Sidestone Press, Leiden
www.sidestone.com

Lay-out & cover design: Sidestone Press

Cover image: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege im Regierungspräsidium Stuttgart; Faber Courtial

Section images: Karsten Wentink

Back cover image: Museo Delta Antico Comacchio; InkLink

ISBN 978-90-8890-961-0 (softcover)

ISBN 978-90-8890-962-7 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-90-8890-963-4 (PDF e-book)

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Chapter 11

Coazze near Gazzo Veronese, on the Fringes of Veneto and Etruria Padana, NE Italy

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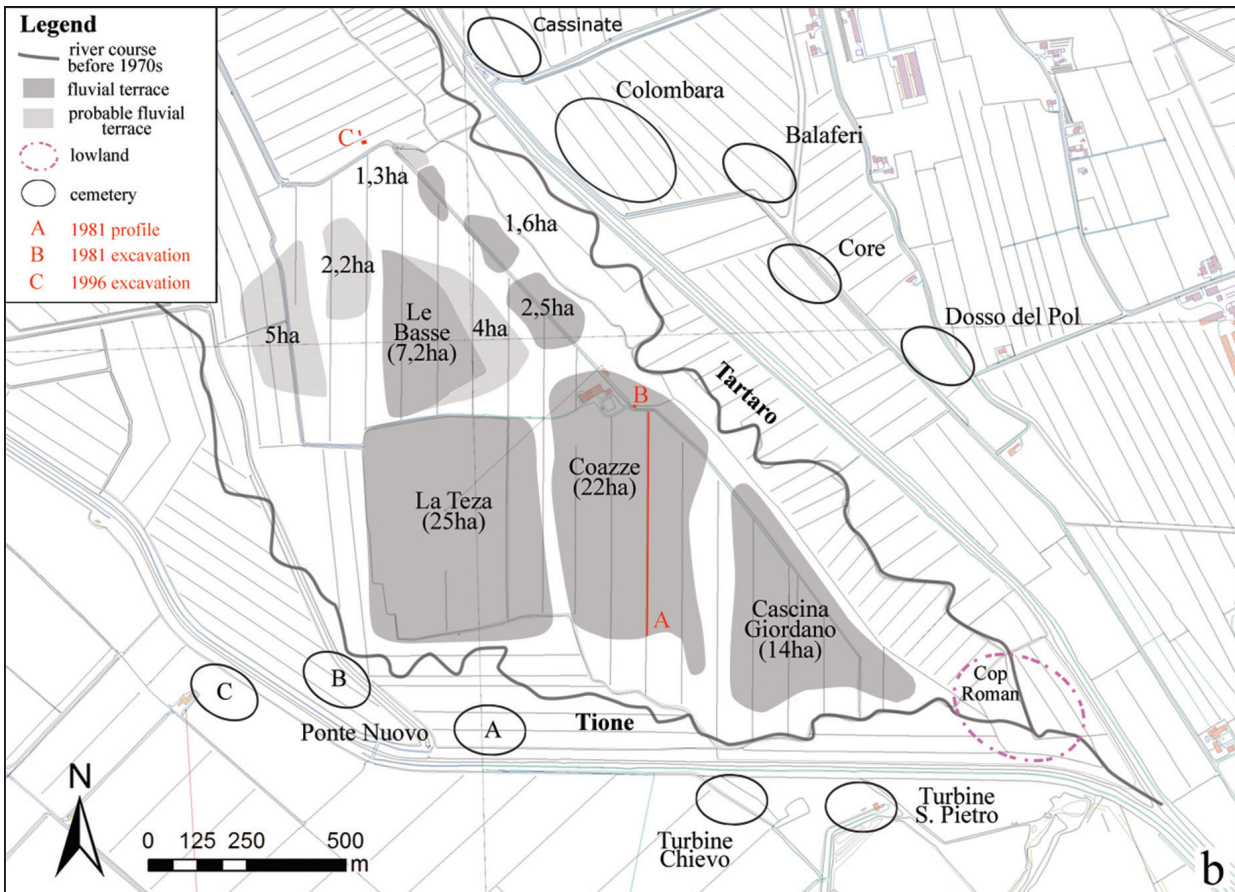
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The archaeological site of Coazze, near Gazzo Veronese (NE Italy) is located at the southwestern border of the Palaeovenetian territory, during the Final Bronze 3 and through the Iron Age. The systematic study of the finds resulting from almost 150 years of rescue and chance finds, planned excavations and surveys are allowing the proper definition of this proto-urban settlement, even if it has been hardly damaged by subsequent agrarian use. Its favourable geomorphological location, directly on the important riverine routes of the Tartaro and Adria Po Rivers, contributed to its relevant connective history, with testimonies of long-lasting contacts from the Alpine area to the Mediterranean, through deltaic emporia, such as Frattesina, San Basilio, and Adria. The relationship with the Etruscan sites founded in the Mincio Valley since the late 6th century BC, like Forcello, is particularly complex. Immediately before this period, between the end of 7th and early 6th century BC, there are clear signs at Coazze of the presence of a multiethnic community, in an expanding phase of the site, extending at least 61 ha. It is proposed that Coazze was then the crucial settlement of a polity that extended north-south along the resurgence rivers Tione and Tartaro. The asymmetric position of Coazze inside the polity is coherent with its role as a gateway community (sensu Hirth 1978). A crisis for the settlement is thought to have started in the 4th century BC, approximately at the time of the Forcello abandonment; the lowland area of Le Basse was in use during this phase, and the site continued to be involved in relevant trade and craft activities. The presence of Celtic materials in the 3rd to 2nd century BC is somehow still elusive. Coazze is an important case of a minor, but apparently independent town in the Palaeovenetian settlement network, with a peculiar history of interaction and connectedness.

Keywords: Coazze near Gazzo Veronese; Palaeovenetian culture; Iron Age; Etrusco-padana ware; Proto-urban; Multiethnic community; Gateway community.



Figure 11.1. a) Coazze and the main quoted sites; b) the site of Coazze at the confluence of the Tione and Tartaro Rivers; the different topographical units and explored areas are highlighted (illustration by F. Saccoccio).



11.1 Introduction

The settlement of Coazze,¹ municipality of Gazzo Veronese

¹ Locally named also “Le Coazze”. The toponym is properly attached to the main farm building and to its fluvial terrace.

(Verona Province, Veneto, Italy) has been known since at least 1876 (Goiran 1876), thanks to a long series of chance discoveries, often by amateur archaeologists, rescue excavations by the Verona Museum and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage Offices, and eventually, the Ga.Ve. survey project (Gonzato *et al.* 2015).

The size of the protohistoric settlement (fig. 11.1), extending through time over at least 60 ha, the distribution of the cemeteries, surrounding the settlement on almost every side, and the relevance of the finds, with evidence of extensive connections with neighbouring and more distant regions, point to the existence of an important centre, in the frame of the urbanisation process of Veneto during the Final Bronze and Iron ages (FBA-IA).² We qualify here Coazze as a case for a town smaller than the main centres of Este and Padova (Fogolari 1975), in the proto- and urban landscape of the Palaeovenetian³ culture, lasting from roughly the 10th to 5th/4th centuries BC.

11.2 Coazze and the urbanisation of Veneto

The urbanisation of Veneto is a process that was discussed at the present conference by Gambacurta (this volume), and whose characteristics have only recently started to be based upon precise and detailed excavations of settlements, as the main proto- and urban sites are often buried under thick stratigraphies, like in the case of the most important centres of Este and Padova (Mozzi *et al.* 2018). The study of chance finds and the careful control of building activities through rescue and planned excavations has resulted in significant knowledge of the ancient settlement layers, which can be connected to the study of the cemeteries surrounding them. In the major centres of Padova and Este, both settlements and cemeteries were in use from the Early Iron Age to the Roman period, a fact that has enforced the long-held perception of strong continuity as a crucial factor of the protohistoric development of Veneto (De Min *et al.* 2005; Peroni 1989; Ruta Serafini 2002).

In any case, to understand the birth and characteristics of the (proto-)urban phenomenon in Veneto, and the role of Coazze in this process, it is important to resume how we define a centre as properly ‘urban’, in the Venetian context.

A. V., F. S.

11.2.1. What do we mean by (proto-)urban in protohistoric Veneto

The evidence used to identify the growing complexity of Palaeovenetian settlements is mainly a by-product of their size, and of a teleological interpretation, ultimately leading to the historical Roman, medieval, and modern

towns, through settlement continuity typical of Veneto. In fact, few details are known of the local urban texture and real density, apart from that houses were arranged in orderly laid rectangular plots, defined by drainage channels, since at least the Early Iron Age (Bianchin Citton 2004; Salzani 2002), and that they were not tightly packed (De Min *et al.* 2005). This applies to both major and minor centres. Almost nothing is known of public buildings and infrastructure, apart from water management and fortification works. Sanctuaries are evident, in particular at Este, at least since late 7th/6th century BC, but often with scarce monumentality (Ruta Serafini 2002).

For a definition of (proto-)urban sites, we find it useful to quote the historical paper by V.G. Childe (1950), not just in his well-known list of elements that should characterise cities, but the general features of what we can call “urban”. Childe says that the ‘urban revolution’ is “*the culmination of a progressive change in the economic structure and social organisation of communities that caused, or was accompanied by, a dramatic increase in the population affected*”. Therefore, we should admit that a city is characterised by the adoption of social norms, warranting aggregate life by managing internal conflict, an increase of specialisation, and an increase in population that “*was mainly accounted for by the multiplication of the numbers of persons living together, i.e., in a single built-up area*” (Childe 1950, 3-4). The theoretical premise by Childe is definitely a Marxist one, both economically and organisationally, that we think can be maintained as fully valid for the birth of urban centres of Italy. In Italy, the influential proposal by R. Peroni (1989, 21) is consonant with Childe’s, and stresses the clustering of the population, the political nature of borders, a growing market economy, and the formation of a class society, even if in proto-urban centres architecture and formal institutions are not very evident or developed. The distinction between proto-urban and urban is a progressive matter of scale and institutional organisation, and thence we will often use the locution (proto-)urban.

These loaded characteristics fit properly with the fundamental transformations that we observe in the FBA and EIA1 Veneto, as: 1) since at least the early 8th century BC cemeteries displayed a strong continuity in use, apparently mirroring an enduring social structuration of the communities and 2) specialised and wide-scale production started in the same period, at the beginning of 8th century BC, as shown by Michelini (in press) in the case of Padova.

There are two further and connected aspects to be considered: the relation of the (proto-)urban centre with the surrounding settled landscape and the general Veneto settlement dynamics.

In protohistoric Italy, it has often been observed that the formation of populous centres, that are generally defined as proto-urban, is accompanied by a collapse of the surrounding dispersed settlement structure, with smaller

2 The period labels FBA and IA are used; phases FBA1-2-3 and EIA1 extend between about 1150 and 850 BC, but the precise chronological borders have still to be agreed upon (Bartoloni and Delpino 2005). The traditional calendrical dates are used since EIA2 = 8th century BC onwards.

3 The term ‘Palaeovenetian’ is here used. In Italy it has been mostly replaced by “Ancient Venetian”, because of the disturbing ‘palaeo-’ prefix for an Iron Age society, and in order to stress continuity from past to present, but this creates some confusion. The use of (Palaeo)venetic (*e.g.* Blake 2014) should be limited to the ancient language.

centres disappearing, rather suddenly, while the apparent nucleation of the population in or around the major centre takes place (Vanzetti 2002). This is a typical, rather general urban process (e.g. Pumain 1997), even in modern times, as population is attracted into the growing urban site. Whether nucleation in protohistoric Italy was caused by compulsion, or free choice, or a combination of both, we cannot say, and it could even change from case to case. In Veneto, the collapse of the settlement system has been noticed in the FBA or, following Leonardi (1992), starting in the 11th century BC, and lasting until the 8th-7th century BC, when a dispersion of satellite settlements starts again. This renewed dispersion would stem from (proto-)urban centres. Indeed, the progress of studies is resulting in a more complex situation of the Veneto settlement lattice.

As for settlement dynamics, the process of selection of the core sites of the Palaeovenetian urbanisation (and thence local State formation) was not coincident with the start of the nucleation process described above, but it resulted only later in the development of structured, long-lasting (proto-)urban centres. In fact, the most impressive sites emerging in the Early FBA, Frattesina and Montagnana, were abandoned or contracted toward the end of 9th century BC, when both Padova and Este gained dominance. Furthermore, at the same end of 9th century, the settlement at Este faced considerable reorganisation, moving from a location south of the Adige River to the “island” inside the Adige branches, whose courses were possibly modified by human action (Ruta Serafini 2002). At Oppeano, a settlement with an early growth in size in the Late FBA (Guidi 2010; Guidi and Salzani 2008; Saracino and Guidi this volume), the settlement is still growing during these early phases. During EIA1, Coazze eventually abandons the valley bottom location to move exclusively over the river terraces, as we shall see. That is to say, the genesis of a nucleated permanent power structure was not straightforward, but required instead some time in Veneto, with contradictions and possible conflicts (abandonment of some sites while other ones grew in size). Climatic-driven impacts, hampering the development of lowland sites, could stimulate this selection of suitable centres, which appear to us as basically human-driven.

Generally speaking, albeit Guidi (2010) stressed that the proto-urban phenomenon is as early as in Central Italy, it is since the 8th century BC that the Palaeovenetian settlement pattern acquired a proper nucleated structure, centred on sites that occupied up to 120 hectares (Capuis and Gambacurta 2015), a size similar to proto-urban sites in Central Italy (Pacciarelli 2001). By the early-mid 6th century BC, further changes in the continuous development of the Palaeovenetian centres marked the transition to a clear urban status, particularly evident in the use of writing, but also in the

widespread use of sanctuaries, as some of the features advocated in Childe’s list (1950, 9-16).

Most aspects of the Palaeovenetian proto-urban development are represented at Coazze: the growth in size; the change in social and economic/productive structure; the grave goods circulation pointing to a market organization; the urban changes occurring in 6th century BC. The trajectory of Coazze in the Palaeovenetian regional settlement pattern and its relations with the neighbouring Etruscan world, will help us to refine our comprehension of its role in the Veneto urban lattice.

A. V.

11.3 Natural setting and human transformations

The Iron Age settlement of Coazze is located precisely at the confluence of the Tione and Tartaro resurgence rivers, in the southern Verona province, close to the modern regional boundary between Veneto and Lombardia (fig. 11.1A).

The occupation of the Coazze site lasted at least from an advanced FBA (end 11th-10th century BC), through the Iron Age, until the end of the 4th-early 3rd century BC. It came to extend over a marshland (Cop Roman; Salzani 1976a),⁴ three fluvial terraces divided by erosional hollows (Cascina Giordano, Coazze proper terrace, La Teza), and a mixed morphological area (Le Basse) (Di Maria 2018-19; Gonzato *et al.* 2015, 512-513; Monti 2016-17; Saccoccio 2016).

11.3.1 Geomorphology and environment

In geological terms, the site and the confluence coincide with the southernmost outcrop of the so-called “main level of the Po plain” (hereafter: MLPP) (Marchetti 2002; Castaldini *et al.* 2019), a complex of sandy-clayey deposits that accumulated until Late Glacial Maximum, as a megafan (sandur) originating mainly from the Adige outflow, and adjacent to the western megafan of the Mincio River, deriving from the Garda moraines. The raised fans gradually sloped down toward the south/southeast and were subsequently incised and terraced during the final glacial and Holocene age by the courses of the Adige to the north and east, the Mincio to the west, and in-between them by the valleys of rivers originating from the Garda moraines and from the middle plain groundwater-fed spring line. The rivers Tione and Tartaro, joining at Coazze, change their directions from a NW-SE course to a mainly

4 The area of Cop Roman is characterised by a stratigraphic sequence, excavated in 1962, of which no description is known, but only the provenance of archaeological finds from 3 superimposed layers; the beginnings of the Final Bronze Age (FBA 1-2) seem to be missing, representing a chronological gap in the local sequence of Coazze, confirmed also by cemeteries and single finds: in the whole area the phase is not documented so far (Salzani 1976a).

W-E course, flowing toward the Adriatic Sea and ultimately join the then active Adria Po branch. This created a direct riverine connection to the Po Delta, an area characterised, since at least the Recent Bronze Age (RBA), by specialised workshops and trading posts with the Mediterranean Sea.⁵

The east-west course of the Tione and Tartaro Rivers coincides with a geomorphological limit, separating through a sort of shallow erosional scarp the MLPP terraces from the lowland area extending toward the main course of the Po River (Balista *et al.* 2016).⁶

The area of Gazzo Veronese, although located in the low plain, is characterised by rather stable flood conditions, as testified to by the remarkable settlement continuity through prehistoric,⁷ Roman, and medieval times, continuing into the present. Conversely, immediately to the east the *Valli Grandi Veronesi* (VGV) underwent swinging phases of settlement vs. flooding and abandonment: the patterned polity centred on Fondo Paviani during the Middle and Recent Bronze Ages (De Guio 2000) was abandoned during the Final Bronze Age, and during the Palaeovenetian period the area hosted only limited and marginal settlement (Balista *et al.* 2016).⁸ Reclamation of VGV occurred again in Roman times.

The specific location of Coazze benefitted from the stable regime of the rivers (Balista 2009), the defensive position naturally defined by the river confluence, and likely riverine boat communication. More uncertain are the soil, cultivation, and grazing conditions, which are dependent on the water table elevation and local

environmental data are lacking, so far. It is likely that the expansion of the settlement during the Iron Age was based on extensive agrarian resources in the higher reaches of the terraces located west, north, and east of Coazze and on wet lowlands, possibly also suitable for seasonal grazing and fodder production.

In fact, in the VGV, located to the east, the pollen samples from Ponte Moro suggest the coexistence of widespread deciduous broadleaved woodlands and cereal agriculture, horticulture, and plant tree cultivation over the raised terraces and of wet woodlands and wet meadow-pastures and peatlands in the lowlands (Balista *et al.* 2016). The regularity of the resurgence rivers could have provided water even during the dry spells of the Late Bronze Age (Cremaschi *et al.* 2006). After the end of the Terramara settlements of the VGV Polity (here not a sudden event as seen south of the Po River, but a process stretching through the Recent and Final Bronze Ages), flooding episodes characterized the Iron Age, before Roman Age reclamation (Balista *et al.* 2016).

In the Mincio Basin, the environmental study around the Etruscan site of Forcello (near Bagnolo S. Vito, Mantova Province: Ravazzi *et al.* 2013) confirms the presence of a rather thickly forested landscape of deciduous broadleaved woods during protohistory. The local evolution of the Mincio course, the major river flowing as emissary of Lake Garda to the Po River, is characterised by flow changes. A transition occurs from a marshy valley bottom that formed in the Recent and Final Bronze Ages,⁹ to a pond environment around the end of the Final Bronze Age and the formation of a proper lake (Lake Bagnolo) during an early phase of the Hallstatt plateau,¹⁰ before the Etruscan settling at Forcello. The lake lasted through all the Iron Age and until 17th century AD, with only a limited retreat in the Roman Age. The cause in the change of flow regime, from marsh to pond and lake, is seen in a northward migration of the Po River, or at least in increased crevasse deposits (Bruno *et al.* 2018), that would have taken place between the Final Bronze and the Early Iron Ages, thus hampering the Mincio water discharge. Climatic worsening since the end of the Bronze Age (Göschonen I glacier advance in the Alps, since ca. 1000-950 BC: Le Roy *et al.* 2015) has been seen as triggering such changes (Holzhauser *et al.* 2005; Ivy-Ochs *et al.* 2009; Ravazzi *et al.* 2013). More generally, authors in both west and east of Gazzo Veronese support the impact of worsening climate since late FBA, likely pushing conditions to become unfit for settlement in the valley bottoms.

F. S., A. V.

5 The most relevant sites are Campestrin, with a specialised RBA amber workshop (Bellintani *et al.* 2015), Frattesina, with eastern Mediterranean connections and multiple industries, among which glass was prominent, from Late RBA to EIA (De Guio *et al.* 2009), and the Adria port of trade from the 6th century BC (Bonomi *et al.* this volume). These specialised sites were likely connected to the Coazze area through the Tartaro-Adria Po branch (Balista 2019).

6 In this intermediate zone, the role of the Fissero River, flowing from close to the Mincio (and Mantova area) to the Tartaro River is uncertain, at that date (cf. Ravazzi *et al.* 2013).

7 Human presence in the area has been recorded at least as early as the Neolithic (Salzani P. and Salzani L. 2006), generally as pits truncated by agrarian activity. Both Early, Middle, and Late Neolithic, as well as different phases of the Copper Age (Salzani, L. 1996a; Salzani, P. 2005; Salzani, L. and Salzani, P. 2001) have been recorded in the Gazzo Veronese area, testifying the geomorphological stability, and the continuous activity by humans on the same soil surfaces, through pre- and protohistory, with scarce sedimentation on higher grounds. During surveys at Coazze, prehistoric materials (mainly flint and polished axes) have come to light. Since the Late Copper Age, and during the Bronze age, settlement seems to focus on lowlands and river valleys, like at Cop Roman, where evidence from the Bell Beaker, Middle, and Recent Bronze Ages is present (Salzani, L. 1976a; 1987a; 1996b).

8 The site of Perteghelle shows occupation in FBA-EIA and during 7th-6th century BC; a secondary flood deposit at Torretta contained moderately worn potsherds of 6th-5th century BC testifying some occupation (Balista *et al.* 1990).

9 Terminus post quem 3025±35 BP (Ravazzi *et al.* 2013), *i.e.* 1396-1131 cal BC; calibrated with Oxcal 4.3, 2 sigma max. interval.

10 2530±35 BP (Ravazzi *et al.* 2013), *i.e.* 799-541 cal BC; calibrated with Oxcal, 2 sigma maximum interval.



Figure 11.2. Top- Coazze in the 1816 Austrian cadastral map: in black, modern features (major channels, ditches); in colour, former features (cf. Legend); river courses as dating to the 1970s (illustration by M. Bertoldo). Bottom- elevation map of the Coazze area, 1 m contour lines (data: courtesy Consorzio di Bonifica Valli Grandi Veronesi, DTM 2013; illustration by M. Bertoldo).

11.3.2 Formation processes of the landscape and of the surface record

The Coazze site has been under cultivation continuously since at least the early 1800s, but likely since before (Bertoldo 2018-19). Its exploitation led to its discovery, while at the same time, significant agricultural transformations caused significant damage to the site and its environs: quarrying, cutting, levelling, as well as reclamation and regimentation of the river valleys of Tione and Tartaro have generated a heavily modified landscape. Historical cartography and modern geographic information systems can help to unravel its history.

The high quality Austrian land map and register of the Lombard-Venetian kingdom, dating to 1816, has been integrated into GIS with a series of aerial orthophotos spanning from 1955 to today,¹¹ thus making it possible to reconstruct the main infrastructure changes that the archaeological site has undergone (fig. 11.2).

In 1816, the Coazze terraces were emerging above the surrounding valleys, crossed by a clear network of small and major drainage ditches; a marsh extended in the northern part of the Tartaro valley, including “Le Basse” and along the remaining river valleys of Tartaro and Tione the land was left uncultivated. Two building clusters were present, the farm complex at Coazze and another building in the western part of “La Teza”. A country road led to Coazze coming from the north and included a bifurcation, ending in lower-lying lands close to La Teza. From Coazze a southern road ran across the Cascina Giordano terrace, almost reaching the terrace limit above the valley of the river Tione.

The first orthophotos are from the Italian Aerial Group (GAI) flights of 1955. Since then, a series of aerial photos allow for the reconstruction of the changes in the agricultural structure over the last 70 years, in a precise way. In 1955 agrarian divisions consisted of small land areas partitioned by many (about 40) shallow ditches and a number of country tracks, generally beside some major ditches. Cascina Giordano farmstead had been built, but the general pattern was still rather similar to more than one century before. By the 1970s,¹² the courses of the Tione and Tartaro had been regimented, and their discharge brought into the Canalbionco channel, located southwards and artificially inserted into a former course of the River Fissero-Tartaro. Additionally, ground levelling expanded the Cascina Giordano terrace toward the south. These works transformed the Tione and Tartaro from meandering rivers to straight channels, arable land expanded into the valley sides and the valley bottom settlement of Cop

Roman and the cemeteries in the lowlands started to emerge (cf. forward). By the end of 1970s, the agricultural plots over Coazze increased in size, drainage ditches were reduced to a total of 28 and the country roads to only 3: the access road, a track going east-west from Coazze to La Teza, and the southern road. At the same time, the Cascina Giordano building appears to have been demolished. This drainage simplification could be obtained thanks to the drier environment due to former regimentation works.

In 1981, after a change in land property, the Coazze terraces underwent a radical change, acquiring the agrarian structure which holds still today. The agrarian plots got a definite N-S axis, while formerly a NW-SE orientation prevailed, and were significantly increased in size: some became over 600m long. Drainage ditches were excavated anew, and reduced to about 20 in number, while the southern road, and its flanking channel disappeared. The Coazze farm was expanded and the access road moved eastwards by a few dozen metres, almost aligning it with a southward track running on the edge of the Tartaro Valley. The building in “La Teza” was demolished in 1990s (Bertoldo 2018-19).

Summing up, the agrarian transformations led to significant impacts on the site stratigraphy over time and therefore the ploughzone spread of archaeological materials cannot always be straightforwardly related to a subsurface local root-layer (Balista and Vanzetti 1990). In many cases, surface dispersions can derive from levelling and filling activities, which occurred during the agrarian transformations. The site interpretation is therefore particularly difficult.

M. B., F. S., A. V.

11.4. Discovery and debate

In 1763 a pair of bronze firedogs with lion head terminals and a bronze situla lid, certainly part of conspicuous funerary goods, dating to 5th-4th century BC (Salzani 1987a, 24) were recovered in the property of Ercole Giusti, Count of Gazzo Veronese. Later, in 1841, they were acquired by the Verona Civic Museum, and listed in its catalogue in 1865 (*Catalogo* 1865).

In 1868-1876 Vincenzo Giacometti, physician and prehistorian from Mantova, priest don Vincenzo Masè from Casteldario (Mantova), and Pietropaolo Martinati, notary and prehistorian in Verona, identified the Coazze site. This led to its presentation in the Verona Prehistoric Exhibition in February 1876 (Goiran 1876) and its listing in the archaeological map of the province. The site was afterwards investigated by other researchers, like Stefano De Stefani (in 1880-81), chemist, botanist, and prehistorian (Facchi 2005; Trevisan and Saccoccio 2015).

There is little evidence of further research conducted in the area before World War II. However, in 1929, research by the archaeologist Alessio De Bon left pictures of a now lost horse-shaped ceramic firedog with stamped

11 The aerial photos are available through the Veneto and Lombardia regions' websites.

12 A very important document is represented by the aerial photo “Regione Lombardia Tem. 1 (1980)” realised by CGR Parma and published in Tozzi and Harari (1990, fig. 32).

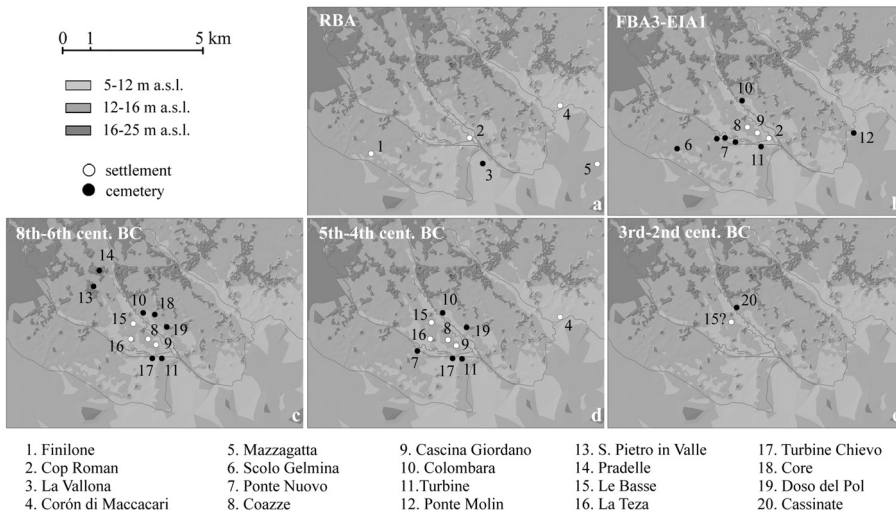


Figure 11.3. The evolution of the settlement pattern and cemetery areas around Coazze between the RBA and Late Iron Age (illustration by F. Saccoccio).

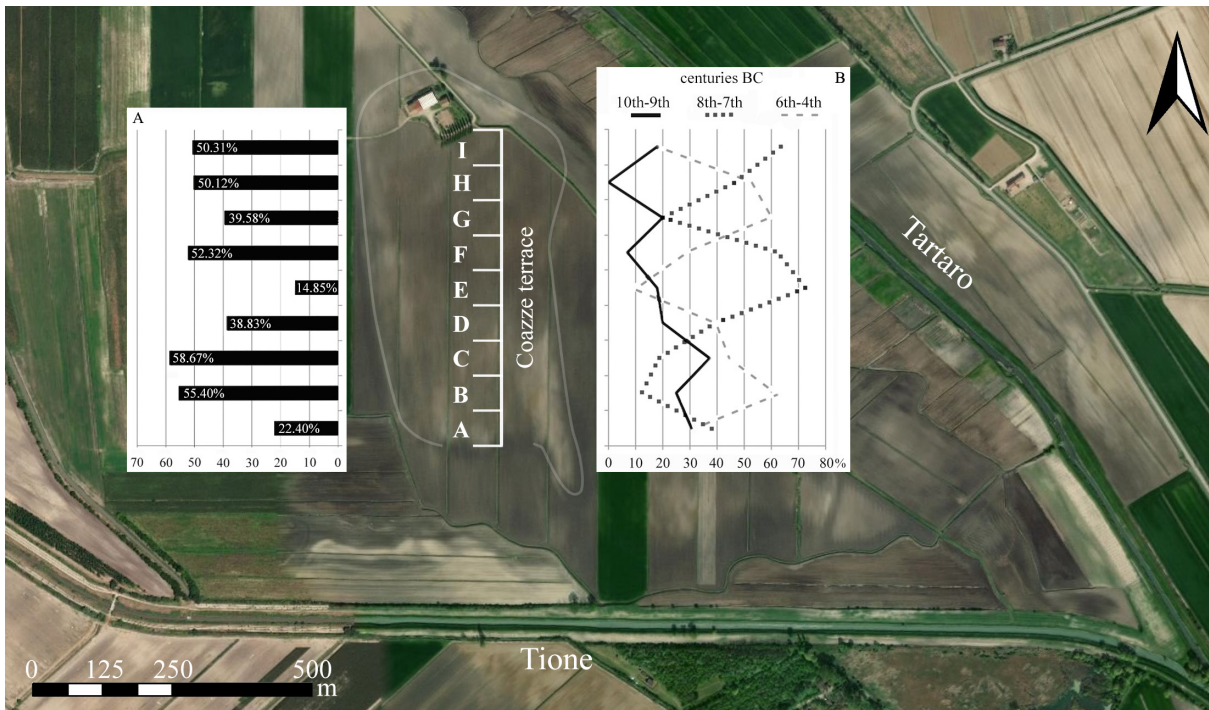


Figure 11.4. Site preservation and dating of the finds in the 1981 profile. The profile has been subdivided into 9 blocks (A – I) of ca. 60 m in length each. Bars on the left represent the percentage of the profile section hosting archaeological structures, per each block; the right line chart marks the percentage of archaeological structures divided by chronological period, per each block (after Gonzato *et al.* 2015, fig. 6; illustration by F. Saccoccio).

(stampiglia) decoration, showing connections with the northeastern Etruscan world, e.g. with Bologna (Salzani 1987a, fig. 14). In the 1930s the *Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Verona* led some research, as proved by box labels in the museum storerooms (Saccoccio and Biondani 2019, note 11). This is also the period of the excavations (1932) in the cemetery of Dosso del Pol, located east of Coazze (Saccoccio 2014-15; Salzani 1987a; 1988).

In the 1960s amateur archaeologists Bruno Chiappa and Franco Soriani started surface collections at Coazze and the nearby territory in cooperation with the Veneto Heritage Office (then *Soprintendenza Archeologica del Veneto*; Saccoccio 2014-15). In 1962, under the direction of Francesco Zorzi, the *Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Verona* explored the marsh area of Cop Roman in the Tartaro Valley, finding a stratigraphic sequence dating

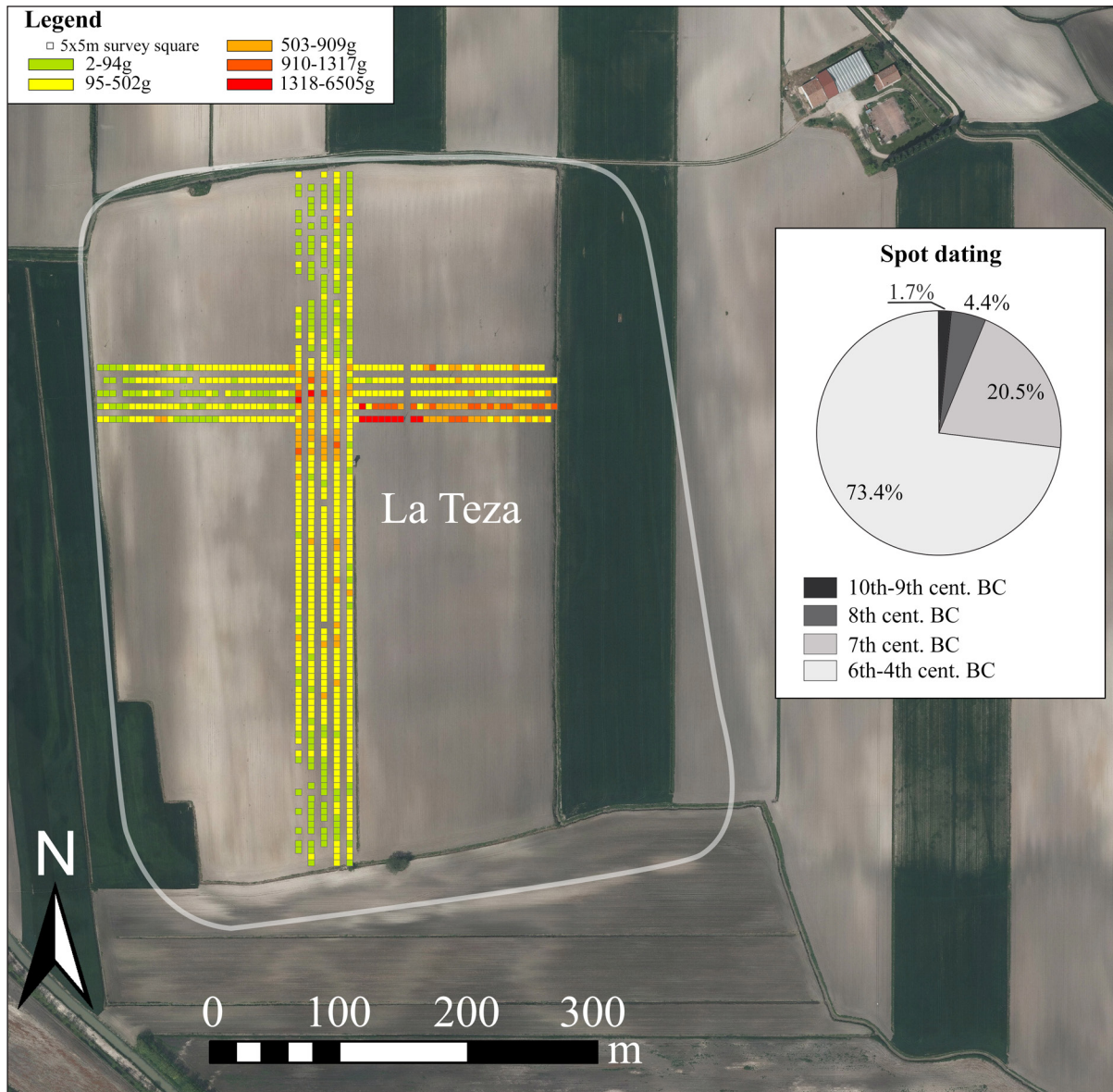


Figure 11.5. La Teza survey, 2015. Left- Preliminary results of the sampling collection, based on 5x5 m squares: quantity of cultural remains, as total weight, in grams. Right- Pie chart based on the spot-dating of 87 potsherds, showing increase in frequency by 7th century BC (illustration by F. Saccoccio).

from the Middle Bronze Age (15th-14th century BC) to the Early Iron Age (10th-9th century BC) (Gonzato *et al.* 2015, fig. 1; Salzani 1976a). In 1963, other box labels at the *Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Verona*, testify to excavations on the terrace of Coazze. Unfortunately, details of this have thus far not been published (Saccoccio and Biondani 2019).

From 1970s to 2000s, the local archaeological group of Gazzo Veronese surveyed, tested, and excavated in the settlement and in the nearby cemeteries, assisting the *Soprintendenza* in the control of landscape modifications due to agrarian and hydraulic works (Di Maria 2018-19;

Rizzetto 1979; Saccoccio 2014-15; Salzani L. 1976b; 1987a; 1987b; 2001; 2005).

In 1981, following the already described agrarian structural change, the most relevant stratigraphic research on the terrace of Coazze took place. The side wall of a major drainage ditch that had been newly excavated through the site, from Coazze farm southwards, on the proper Coazze terrace, allowed for the observation of a continuous profile measuring 560 m in length. Complete graphic and photographic documentation were recorded, and 7,475 finds collected. The complete record of finds has been recently studied,

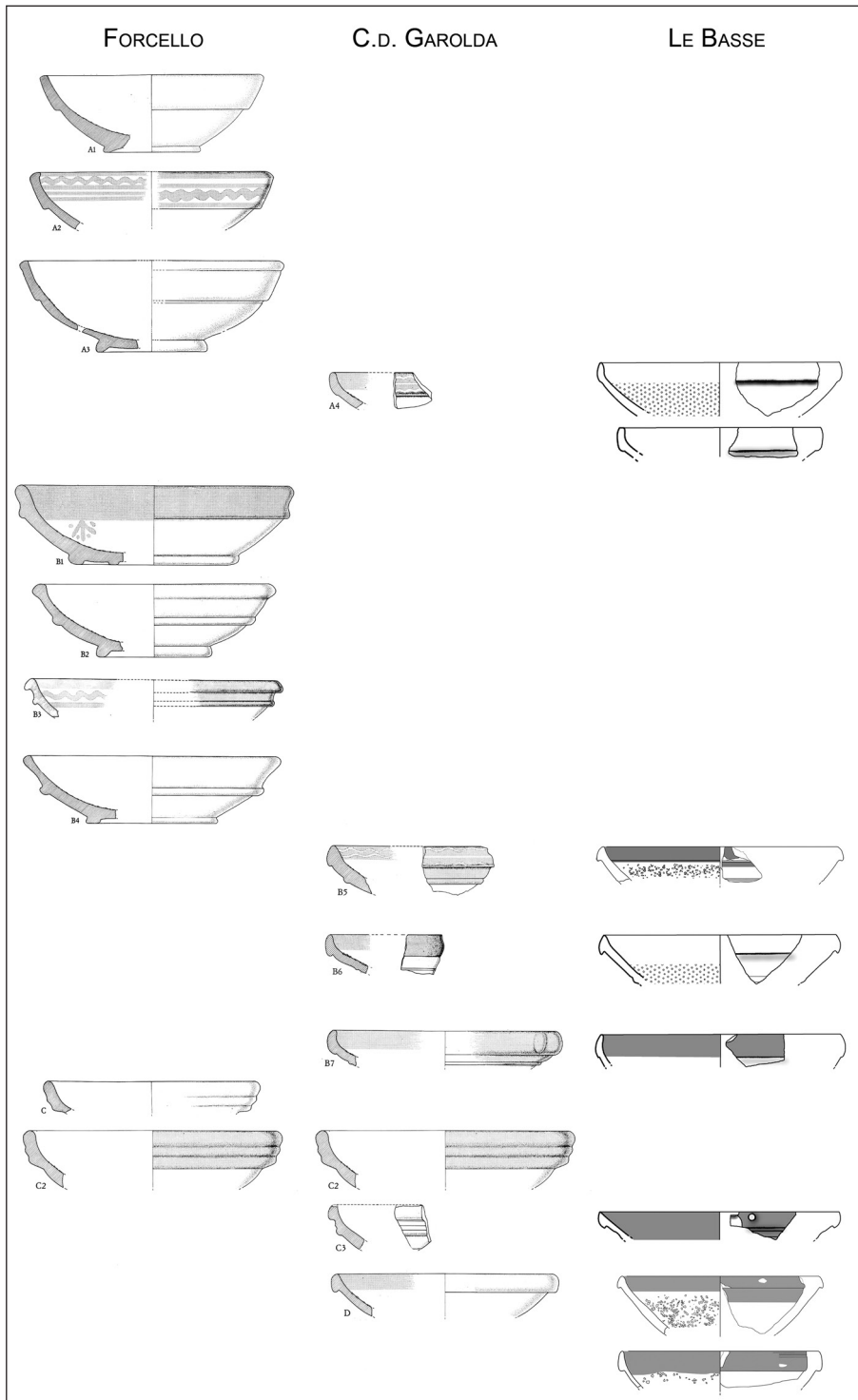


Figure 11.6. Typology of mortars, showing links between Castellazzo della Garolda and Coazze, and the differences with Forcello's pottery (Forcello after de Marinis and Rapi 1987; Castellazzo della Garolda after Casini *et al.* 1987; Coazze, original drawings by F. Di Maria, D. Monti; illustration by A. Vanzetti, not to scale).

providing the most accurate estimation for the site damage and its chronology of use (Gonzato *et al.* 2015; Saccoccio 2014-15; Salzani 1987a; Villari 1981).¹³

In 1996, following chance discoveries and surveys by local amateurs (Di Maria 2018-19), excavation in Le Basse lowland brought to light secondary evidence dating mainly to the 5th-4th century BC (Monti 2017-18).

Since 2014 the GaVe. project has begun a systematic archaeological study of the territory of Gazzo Veronese, involving the Veneto Heritage Office (now *Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Verona, Rovigo e Vicenza*), the University of Verona, working on Roman and medieval ages, and the University of Rome “La Sapienza”. The latter has been targeting the comprehensive evaluation of the settlement pattern of Coazze and its surroundings, through high intensity field survey (Bertoldo 2018-19; Di Maria 2018-19; Monti 2016-17; Gonzato *et al.* 2015; Saccoccio 2014-15; Saccoccio and Vanzetti 2016; Saccoccio *et al.* 2017; 2018; Vanzetti and Saccoccio 2015).¹⁴

L. S., F. S.

11.5 Development of the site

The study of archaeological materials from the different collections, surveys, and test excavations shows a diachronic evolution of the site and its surroundings, with changes in settled areas and size (fig. 11.3). Around Coazze, the raised fluvial ridges inside Tione and Tartaro Valleys, and the MLPP terraces beyond, are dotted by cemeteries, thus giving a remarkable image of the centrality of the settlement.¹⁵ The pattern of a (proto-)urban site surrounded by its cemeteries is typical of the Italian cases, as it happens in the early proto-urban centres of Southern Etruria, at the dawn of the Iron Age (or even in FBA3), or in Veneto, at Este or Padova (De Min *et al.* 2005; Pacciarelli 2001; Ruta Serafini 2002). Such a clustered distribution of cemeteries has usually been interpreted as reflecting a varied lineage and/or residential structure of the communities (Peroni 1989). The cemeteries fully correspond to site's occupation, and span from the (advanced) Final Bronze Age to the 3rd-2nd century BC.

11.5.1 Coazze through time

At the beginning of the Final Bronze Age (De Guio *et al.* 2015; Gonzato *et al.* 2015), no traces of settlement or graves are known within a wide area around Coazze, while they

are present in VGV. In the Cop Roman sequence, FBA 1-2 is marked by a gap in archaeological materials.¹⁶

In the FBA3-EIA1, a clear clustering of data around Coazze is visible on a regional scale, which corresponds to a typical trend of the earliest proto-urban sites of the Veneto region, Oppeano being the closest parallel (Guidi and Salzani 2008). Traces of occupation extend both in the Tartaro Valley site of Cop Roman and over the terraces of Cascina Giordano and Coazze proper, where data from the 1981 profile indicate a higher density of pottery from the southern part of the terrace, closer to Cop Roman (fig. 11.4). The extension of the site could reach up to 40 ha, but this is a maximum estimation, as both the size of Cop Roman is uncertain, and the average density of the settlement.

Since the 8th century BC, the Cop Roman lowland site is clearly abandoned, while pottery from the terraces of Cascina Giordano and Coazze is more abundant; it is particularly at Coazze that the central area of the terrace shows a pre-eminence of this phase in the 1981 profile study (Saccoccio 2014-15). It is possible that climatic factors had some influence in moving the settlement over higher terraces, but the choice is coherent with proto-urban development, in terms of compactness and natural defence. In the 1981 profile, at the southern end of the Coazze terrace, the possible remains of an embankment require further study.

Scarce materials from the FBA to 8th century BC occur also on La Teza terrace, but we can hypothesise that the real start to the occupation of this terrace began in the 7th century BC, as 2016 field survey has shown (fig. 11.5). At some point during the 7th century BC the site had therefore reached a size of at least 61 ha.

In the 6th to 5th (and maybe 4th, cf. further) century BC the settlement seems to be flourishing, as shown with the abundance of pottery dating to this period, among which the classical Palaeovenetian red-and-black painted ware is widespread (cf. further): Cascina Giordano, Coazze, and La Teza are occupied. In the 5th century BC, the nearby site of Corón di Maccacari shows the likely presence of a small rural hamlet most likely dependent on Gazzo, located inside an abandoned MBA embanked settlement (Salzani and Fredella 2004). At Dosso del Pol conspicuous graves of the 5th and 4th centuries BC are present (cf. further and footnote 18; Salzani 1987a; 1988). The time between the 5th and 4th centuries BC, in which the northern area at “Le Basse” also came to be settled, is somehow problematic, and will now be treated in more detail. In fact, scarce surface protohistoric pottery is present in the 700 m long stretch of land between Le Basse lowland and the main terraces of La Teza and Coazze. This intermediate

13 Luciano Salzani, as officer of the *Soprintendenza* worked with a small team including Alberto Zardini and geoarchaeologist Claudio Balista.

14 Luciano Salzani is working on the cemetery publications.

15 Dispersions of burnt bones, likely human and referring to cremation graves, occur in some surveyed areas, suggesting that the distribution of cemeteries could have also included part of the terraces of the Coazze area, in some phase of development.

16 The distinction between FBA1 and 2 is not straightforward in this area. A complete Allerona sword, from the Gazzo Veronese area, dates to the Late RBA/Early FBA (Salzani 1987a, 63).

area measures ca. 14 ha of terrace segments and 10 ha of lowlands and was apparently directly impacted by Roman Age road construction (Basso 2019; Saccoccio *et al.* 2017). The low density of the materials collected in this intermediate area do not clearly represent a settled area. Therefore, it is not clear whether Le Basse was a small separated spot, likely directly connected to the river Tartaro; its functional interpretation is also matter of discussion. The inclusion or subtraction of the area significantly affects the site's size estimation, from 61 to more than 70/80 ha.

F. S., L. S., A. V.

11.5.2 Le Basse

Le Basse is a lowland area (it was a wetland in the Austrian cadastral map with the Italian name itself meaning 'lowlands') that is characterised by *etrusco-padana* fine pottery, a ware particularly frequent in northern Italy between the end of 6th and 4th centuries BC (Mattioli 2011).

The pottery found in the 1994 surface collections and the 1996 excavation¹⁷ includes single *bucchero padano* sherds, a considerable quantity of *etrusco-padana* pottery (ca. 800 sherds; Di Maria 2018-19; Monti 2016-17) and complementary typical local earthenware (*impasto*) production: the *etrusco-padana* ware as fine drinking and tableware, the earthenware as kitchen and domestic ware. *Etrusco-padana* pottery, made of typically pale/orange levigated clay, with banded or solid red-orange, or brown paint, has been used as a marker to evaluate the 'Etruscanisation' of the Po Valley (Mattioli 2013) or Etruscan trade from the second half of the 6th century BC (Sassatelli 2008). In Veneto it appears toward the end of 6th century BC, apparently with the adoption of a selection of shapes (Monti in press). The start of local Palaeovenetian productions has been suggested, in later phases (Gamba and Gambacurta 1987; Mattioli 2011).

While the earthenware products (mainly jars) have shapes substantially shared by the Etruscan and Palaeovenetian world, the kitchenware does not match the Forcello products, and the *etrusco-padana* has better matches with the Castellazzo della Garolda assemblage than with Forcello. This is particularly evident in the so-called mortars, or grinding bowls, but also in common bowls (fig. 11.6).

The site of Castellazzo della Garolda (de Marinis 1999), 13 km west of Coazze, is located on a ridge on the eastern margin of the Mincio Valley. After a Bronze Age phase (Bianchi 2004), and abandonment, it was occupied as a Palaeovenetian site related to Coazze, likely in the early 8th century BC, and occupied until approximately the mid-5th century BC. A gap would partition this phase from

Etruscan reoccupation, occurring after the abandonment of Forcello, *i.e.* in an early phase of the 4th century BC, with an assemblage rich in *etrusco-padana* pottery (Casini *et al.* 1987; Frontini 1987). On the contrary, from Coazze, Cascina Giordano and La Teza only few dozen sherds of *etrusco-padana* were recorded (Saccoccio *et al.* 2016; 2017; Saccoccio and Vanzetti 2015; Vanzetti and Saccoccio 2014), matching well with Forcello, since its early phase H (dated to 530-520: de Marinis and Rapi 2007, 45). Accordingly, *etrusco-padana* pottery matching with the products found at Forcello, features in high status graves of the Dosso del Pol cemetery, on the fronting side of River Tartaro.¹⁸

The Palaeovenetian red-and-black painted ware is almost absent at Le Basse, but for one *situliforme* vase of a shape dated late (no earlier than 425 BC, cf. Bondini 2008, 315, fig. 6) and one rim, likely from a jar. Grey *cinerognola* ware is almost absent, while since the late 4th century BC it is expected to be a widespread product in Palaeovenetian and Celtic contexts (Bondini 2008).

A limited number of black gloss pottery sherds have also been recorded, dating between the end of the 5th and the 3rd century BC. Fragments of Corinthian B *amphorae* (variant B, following De Luca De Marco 1979, mid-5th to mid-4th century BC; cf. also de Marinis and Rapi 2007, 45, early 4th century BC) and Greek-Italic *amphorae* (4th-3rd centuries BC, Toniolo 1995) are also present (Monti 2017-18).

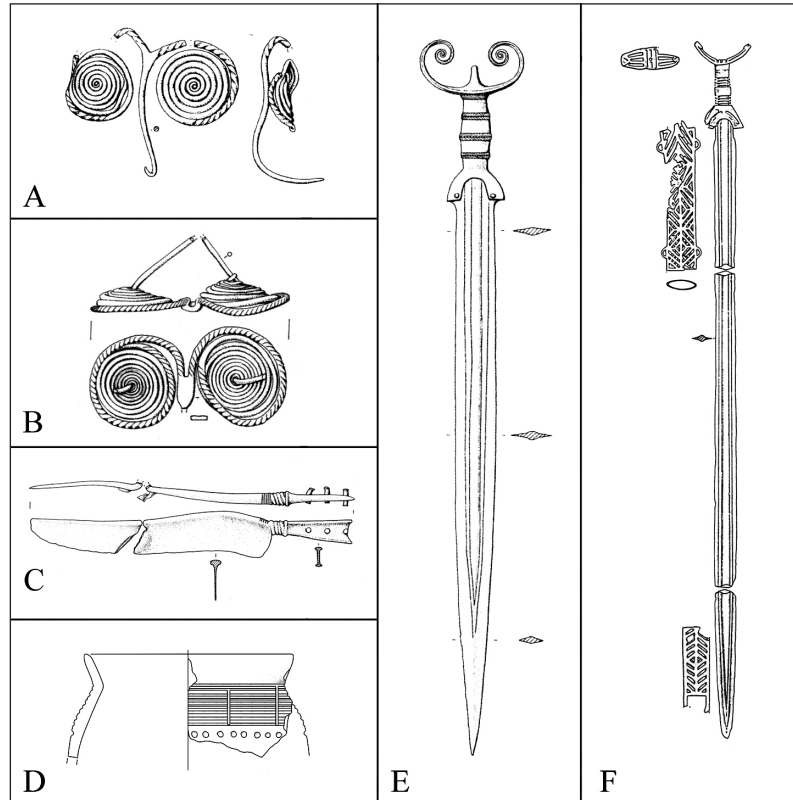
Surface collections by the local amateurs in the same area brought to light a relevant number of bronze *aes* specimens (*i.e.* small ingots), fragments of bronze ornaments (fibulae and pendants), and at least three "*fibulae simulacra*", that is unfinished and non-functional arches of leech-shaped (*sanguisuga*) fibulae, which have been interpreted as votive elements (Castelfranco 1882; de Marinis *et al.* 2016). They occur in relevant numbers (some hoards count a hundred or so *simulacra*, *e.g.* Monte San Zeno, Chaume *et al.* 2017) in the Golasecca area of the central-western Po Plain and Ticino, during Golasecca III A3 phase (mid-5th to 4th century BC), but two more come respectively from Castellazzo della Garolda, and Marzabotto House 1, in the hinterland of Bologna (de Marinis *et al.* 2016). The evidence from Le Basse could be votive,¹⁹ but, given the abundance of bronze

17 Cf. fig. 11.1. Unfortunately, the excavation only retrieved disturbed secondary contexts, without functional or structural associations.

18 A good example of associated grave goods is tomb 3/1980, likely dating to late 5th century BC, where *etrusco-padana* pottery occurs together with a classical Palaeovenetian red-and-black *situliforme* urn and, among other items, a small bronze situla, a red-figure Attic *glaux*, dating to around mid-5th century BC, an early openwork iron belt-hook of Celtic type, fibulae, and amber beads (Salzani 1987b; 2002). One of three *etrusco-padana* bowls had been restored in ancient times.

19 In fact, de Marinis *et al.* (2016) proposes a votive interpretation at Castellazzo della Garolda, where the context is characterised by *aes* and finished ornaments, similarly to Le Basse.

Figure 11.7. Finds reflecting connections with neighbouring and distant regions. A-B) Vadena-type pins from Colombara tb. 170 and Ponte Nuovo tb. 74 (scale 1:5); C) Vadena-type knife from Ponte Nuovo tb. 5; D) Luco/Laugen B pottery from Coazze, 1981 profile (scale 1:5); E) *antenne*-sword of Tarquinia type from Ponte Nuovo tb. A (scale 1:5); F) long sword from Core (scale 1:10) (after Gonzato *et al.* 2015; Saccoccio 2014-15; Salzani 2001; 2002; 2005; illustration by F. Saccoccio).



fragments from the area, they could also be metal scraps in an area of smelting workshops.

As for the interpretation of Le Basse, R.C. de Marinis (1999, 556-558) hypothesised it to be a sort of port-of-trade, existing in parallel with Palaeovenetian Coazze, but with a strong Etruscan character; he likely thinks of a trading enclave, with Etruscan residents.

Given the evidence, it is not easy to decide whether Le Basse site could reflect either a specific specialised trading post, characterised by metalworking,²⁰ used in parallel with the Coazze complex or -so far this seems more likely- a shrinking phase of the site, with a substantial abandonment of Coazze. Anyway, the continuity in use of the cemetery of Dosso del Pol during

4th century BC (Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini 2014) seems to mark a persistence of lineage groups.²¹

Finally, at Le Basse, materials dating to the 3rd century BC are sporadically present (such as black gloss pottery).²² In the cemeteries, at Dosso del Pol single 3rd century BC materials occur, out of context (Salzani 1987a); at Cassinate, north of Dosso del Pol and precisely on the other side of Tartaro in front of Le Basse, the latest pre-roman funerary cluster is located, dating to the 3rd-2nd centuries BC and apparently consisting only of graves reflecting a dominant Cenomane Celtic character. (Biondani 2018; Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini 2014; Rizzetto 1979; Salzani and Mazzetto 2004). A gap seems to exist between the 2nd century BC and the end

20 At Oppeano, Biondani (2017) has remarked on the association of *etrusco-padana* pottery (with characteristics similar to Forcello) and metalworking.

21 The interpretation of the shrinking of the site is different from what was formerly proposed (Gonzato *et al.* 2015); should this hypothesis be correct, the maximum size of the Coazze complex would have been about 61 ha, reached in 7th century BC, and lasting until the end of the 5th/beginning of the 4th century BC. The shrinking would have taken place more or less at the same time as Castellazzo della Garolda re-occupation, and the question of the ethnicity of the inhabitants could be relevant. Anyway, while at Castellazzo plenty of Etruscan inscriptions occur on pottery, at Le Basse only a few pseudo-*chi* marks occur, both realized before and after pottery firing, and scarce Palaeovenetian pottery is present.

22 In 2nd century BC, Romanisation of northern Italy took place, and the Coazze area eventually became rural, later to be crossed by the Via Claudia Augusta (Basso 2019).

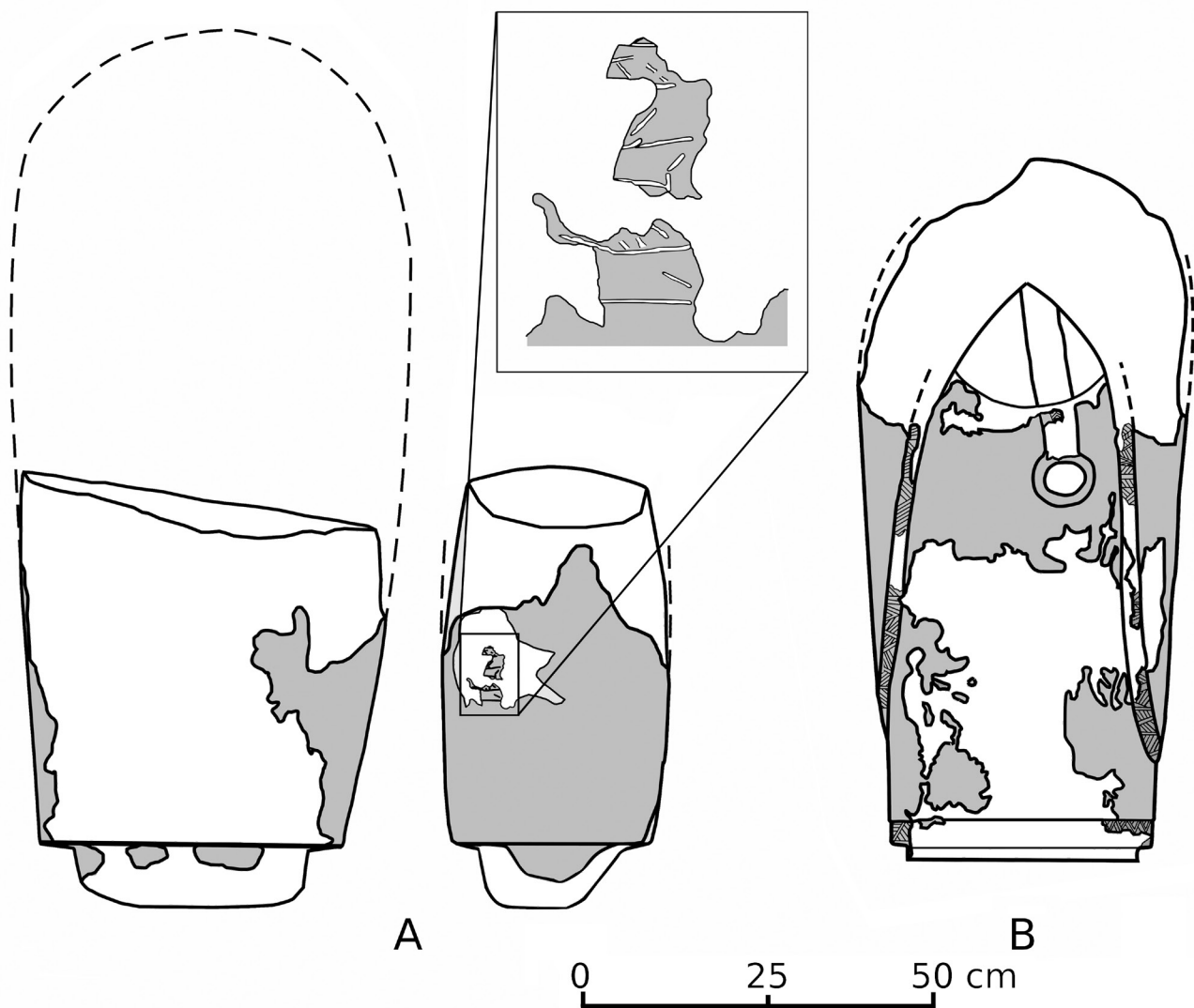


Figure 11.8. Statues A and B from Balaferi, showing the different size; statue B has some remains of finely carved clothing. Dark grey: preserved surface; White: abrasions and fractures. The inscription on statue A is highlighted (redrawn after Gamba and Gambacurta 2011, figs. 3, 5, 12; illustration by D. Monti).

of 1st century BC, when a major Roman road was traced, crossing the area between Coazze and Le Basse, on the way from Ostiglia and the Po River to Verona (*Via Claudia Augusta*, Basso 2019).

D. M., F. DiM., A. V.

11.5.3 Connections, power and identity

Connectivity has always been quoted as a crucial element of Coazze (e.g. de Marinis 1999; Salzani 1987a; 1987b), and it certainly has to be considered for the site interpretation. The site maintains a strong basic affinity with Palaeovenetian cultural aspects, at least until early

4th century BC. In FBA3-EIA1, objects like knives²³ and ornaments from cemeteries, as well as pottery from the settlement show connections with the Alpine area and the Adige Valley (Gonzato *et al.* 2015), i.e. a crucial mining area in Italy (fig. 11.7). A persistent connective axis has been proposed for sites on the Tartaro-Adriatic directory, like Fondo Paviani (in VGV) in the RBA and

23 Knives are not straightforwardly weapons, nor simple tools. Indeed, the Vadena-type, present at Gazzo (Ponte Nuovo tb. 5), with strong alpine and transalpine connections, has been convincingly proposed as a development of the Matrei type, rooted in Veneto-Trentino (de Marinis 1999). Another knife (Ponte Nuovo tb. A), of intermediate Hadersdorf-Este shape, confirms the alpine links (Salzani, L. 2005).

Early FBA and Frattesina (on the Adria Po branch) in the FBA-EIA1. Other possible connections point southwards (de Marinis 1999; Saccoccio and Biondani 2019; Salzani L. 2005), maybe through Bologna, and are based both on bronzes (*antenne*-sword of Tarquinia type from Ponte Nuovo tomb A; more generally, razor and fibula typology, e.g. fibulae from Ponte Nuovo tombs 57B, 61 and 71B and pottery decoration (e.g. *rosette* motif during FBA or Villanovan EIA decorations; e.g. tombs Colombara 34 and 143, Salzani 2001). Early connectivity of Veneto through Frattesina with Bologna and Tyrrhenian Etruria has been particularly stressed by Bietti Sestieri (2005).

The 8th-7th centuries BC mark a consolidation phase: the connections with growing centres of Etruria Padana are clear, but apparently less marked. Fibulae of the Mörigen family (e.g. tomb Colombara 138, Salzani 2001); pottery decorated with *stampiglia* impressions or incised geometric meanders recalling Bologna and Etruria Padana, as well as the *stampiglia* pottery firedog found by De Bon (Salzani 1987a); the long sword from Core cemetery, a unique specimen, so far, but recalling wider traditions (Salzani 1987a; 2002)

As for the early 6th century BC, we will discuss later the monumental statues from Balaferi and the double axe from Colombara tomb 2/1980. Later in the 6th and 5th centuries BC the strong connectivity is confirmed, likely mediated, in part, through the Etruscan *emporium* at Forcello: *etrusco-padana*, Attic black-figure and black gloss pottery; metal items from Dosso del Pol cemetery, like the abundant Late Hallstatt fibulae, or the *syrix* player figurine and bronze vases of Etruscan affinity (Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini 2014; Salzani 1976b; 1987a; 1987b; 1988).

The 5th-4th centuries BC (and also later) show further evidence of connectivity; the presence of fibulae *simulacra* and a pottery beaker from the minor site of Corón di Maccacari, reminiscent of typical Golasecca IIIA specimens, point to wider western connections; to this we can add *etrusco-padana* pottery again, black gloss pottery, and *amphorae*.

More generally, setting apart a fossil *Strombus* from Dosso del Pol cemetery, the high number of seashells found at Coazze highlights the connection with the coast, likely through the Tartaro-Adria Po route (Salzani 1976b, 170, 172, fig. 38).

As for the social and power structure at Coazze, we have some hints from funerary data: graves are arranged in groups, as typical of any cemetery of the period, likely reflecting a lineage structure (Salzani L. 2001; 2005; Peroni and Vanzetti 2006). Since the earliest phases, the presence of weapons in graves has not been insignificant, and a hierarchical organization, with a notable relevance attributed to some sword-bearing warriors, can be traced (tb. Ponte Nuovo A, EIA1; Core sword grave,

likely 8th century BC).²⁴ Some graves with spears have impressive associations of grave goods as well, e.g. tombs Ponte Nuovo 5 (FBA3) and 61 (EIA1) (Salzani L. 2005). This points to a complex organisation of top-level warriors.

After the 8th century BC, during the period of maximum expansion of the proto-urban settlement, and its flourishing in the 6th-5th centuries BC, we have no more such military hierarchical indications, a fact generally shared throughout the Palaeovenetian world, and we cannot be sure whether it reflects a social or a ritual change.²⁵ In any case, conspicuous burials endure, and relevant evidence from the early 6th century BC highlights the complexity of the power structure, connectivity, and likely ethno-cultural components of the Coazze community.

Fragments of at least four monumental statues were found in the cemetery area of Balaferi, between Colombara and Core, on the MLPP terrace east of Tartaro. The accurate study by Gamba and Gambacurta (2011) date them to the early 6th century BC. They are made of calcarenite extracted from the Parma-Bologna Apennine, in the Etruscan territories, and the only stylistic comparisons are in the Etruscan world. The best-preserved statue could be feminine and might be dressed in a Palaeovenetian fashion (fig. 11.8). Another, more massive, statue bears at least five letters of an inscription, likely in the Etruscan alphabet, older than any Venetic inscription so far known. While characters seem Etruscan, the text could not be referred to a precise language (Marinetti 2011). They might be funerary markers, although divine characters have also been considered (Gamba and Gambacurta 2011). In the contiguous cemetery area of Colombara, a bronze double-axe with a slender (broken) handle came to light as a grave good in a context dating to the early 6th century BC, as well (tb. 2/1980). The closest reference for double axes in this period are weapons, ritual objects, and insignia of the Etruscan world.²⁶ This combination of elements marks a strong, maybe even institutional, relationship with Etruscan personages, embedded in the local community. In this period, apparently the site of Forcello had not yet been founded, and the Etruscan presence had started at the end of 7th century BC along the Rivers Mella, Oglio, and Chiese, west of the Mincio Valley (de Marinis 1999). Nor had the

24 Tomb Ponte Nuovo 6, heavily damaged, was possibly connected to an important weapon-bearer as well (Salzani L. 2005, 14-16).

25 The presence of sheathed knives, generally associated with conspicuous graves of males, maybe warriors, suggests the enduring relevance of the military component (Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini 2014; Salzani 1988). La Tène B2 swords appear in the Cassinate graves, associated with fully Celtic attire (Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini 2014).

26 On the double-axe: Cherici (2008, 221), quoting the comparison with the Murlo frieze, roughly contemporary, where the double-axe is likely held by the underworld god, Hades (Briquel 2017, 121-122); Malnati (2003) proposed it to be booty taken from Etruscans.

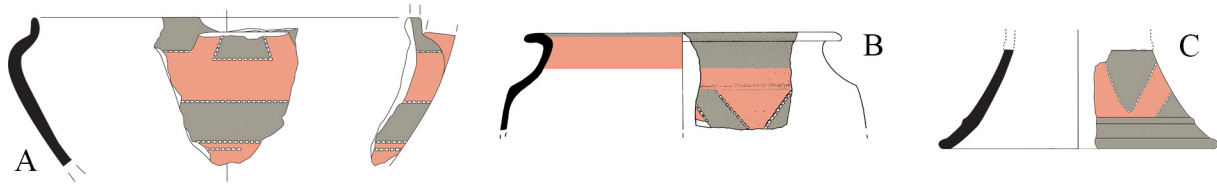


Figure 11.9. Red-and-black painted ware with Garolda-Coazze style, from: A) Coazze, 1981 profile; B) Isola della Scala-Palazzina; C) Castellazzo della Garolda (scale 1:5) (resp. after de Marinis 1999; Gonzato *et al.* 2015; Saccoccio and Biondani 2019; illustration by F. Saccoccio).

emporium of Adria been founded, although the Tartaro-Adria Po waterway could have been active, in reference to the early foundation of San Basilio (near Ariano Polesine, Rovigo), as maritime trading post, characterised by mixed Palaeovenetian and Etruscan elements (De Min and Iacopozzi 1986; Salzani and Vitali 2002).

A significant component for the definition of the peculiar network of Coazze is the variant of the red-and-black Palaeovenetian decoration (fig. 11.9) defined as Garolda-Coazze style (Gonzato *et al.* 2015). The thorough study of this style, characterised by a creative syntax of geometric and meander decorations, conducted by Saccoccio and Biondani (2019) has outlined a core area, between Coazze, Castellazzo della Garolda, Castiglione Mantovano, and Isola della Scala-Palazzina, while a more scarce presence at Oppeano (Salzani 2018) has been interpreted as a marginal influx, and a reflection of exchange or mobility. The floruit of this style was in the 6th-5th century BC, *i.e.* the moment of the maximum expansion of Coazze. This is in accordance with the many elements that point to Coazze as an autonomous major site of the westernmost polity of the Palaeovenetian world, including the above-mentioned sites, as it was strengthened by Saccoccio (2016) through an X-Tent model. Coazze was big enough to be the main site of a polity independent from Oppeano since its widening to at least 61 ha, since the 7th century BC. Indeed, these evaluations would need to consider more elements than simply size, as Coazze's role could have been relevant even earlier, but certainly the premises for 6th-5th century BC success and specific identity suggest the site autonomy had by that time been acquired.

F.S., A.V.

11.6 Conclusions

Our knowledge of the site of Coazze is still limited, but the evidence is growing, even if proper settlement excavations are nearly absent, and the site has been badly damaged by centuries of agriculture.

At present, its development as a (proto-)urban site is mainly recorded in terms of its size, its being surrounded by cemeteries in a typically urban way, by the presence of strong and multiple authorities, and lineage traditions.

The range of traffic and the likely definition of a territory of influence could have, through time, included smaller sites like Castellazzo della Garolda, Sorgà, Castion di Erbè, Castiglione Mantovano, and Isola della Scala-Palazzina. If the Garolda-Coazze style can be used as a marker of the polity, aside the X-Tent model based on site size, the polity would extend in a south-north direction, along the resurgence rivers. This makes it difficult to use the notion of “central place” in technical terms for Coazze, whose crucial role in the polity would be explained precisely by its connective status, linked to the Tartaro-Adria Po waterway. This suggests a definition of the site as a gateway community, *sensu* Hirth (1978, 38), serving a dendritic market network, hierarchically organised by the gateway community, whose location is on a decentralised natural connecting route (such as the Tartaro waterway): “*hinterlands look much like elongated fans, which radiate outward from their respective gateway*”, as in our case.

These characteristics represent a dynamic settlement rooted in the Palaeovenetian *milieu*, but open to interaction with other political and ethnic realities, such as *Etruria Padana*, with possible forms of mobility, interference, and multiethnic composition. This has been shown by the strong Etruscan connections at the beginning of the 6th century BC, including statues, writing, and possibly symbolic items, such as the double-axe. After the foundation of Adria and Forcello, in later 6th century BC, the role of the site was still strong, but likely reduced in scope.

The end of the settlement is still problematic, as it is not clear whether Le Basse settlement could mark a shrinking of the site, or whether the damage could have limited our knowledge of the last occupation phases at Cascina Giordano-Coazze-La Teza. In any case, the cemetery of Dosso del Pol still shows continuity in use, and the settlement maintained an attitude open to connectivity. Whether the local domain in the 4th century BC was still Palaeovenetian or Etruscan is difficult to say, given the prominence of *etrusco-padana* pottery together with the persistence of some Palaeovenetian characters. Eventually, the cemetery of Cassinate in the 3rd-2nd centuries BC, with its strong Celtic Cenomane characteristics, testifies a likely change in the nature of the site.

Therefore, the location of the Coazze settlement, at the edge of a raised drier landscape, but surrounded by marshes in the river valleys and facing southwards towards a major lowland, fits well with the description of a typical inland Palaeovenetian town given by Strabo (V, 1, 5), either “forming an island” or “being partly washed by water”, and connected to navigable rivers. Riverine connectivity must have played an absolutely fundamental role in the development of Coazze.

A.V., M.B., F.DiM., D.M., L.S., F.S.

Acknowledgments

The GaVe. project has been possible thanks to Simonetta Bonomi, Brunella Bruno, Gianni De Zuccato, Federica Gonzato and Vincenzo Tiné of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage Offices, through the years, as well as Patrizia Basso and Fabio Saggioro of the University of Verona. Mauro Campagnolo of the local *Gruppo archeologico* and many amateur archaeologists have provided information and support, as well as Matteo Bertolaso, owner of the Coazze area, Andrea Defanti (surveyor) and Gianfranco Marcomini (farmer). Claudio Balista has discussed with us about the 1981 profile explored at Coazze. The Municipality of Gazzo Veronese (Stefano Negrini – mayor – and Veronica Leardini – council member) has granted logistical facilities.

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