

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY

**REMAINS OF WOODEN BARREL STAVES:** In addition to the numerous structural elements already partially mentioned, the barrels (Fig. 38), which were unearthed during archaeological excavations, should be absolutely mentioned. These are seven barrels of different sizes made of larch wood, some of which have been nested inside each other. The heating process has sufficiently preserved the timber, so that we are able to specify the diameter of the barrels in centimeters (shown in Table 2) for the upper part (top) and lower part (bottom). In some places, the shape of the staves was still clearly visible, especially for barrel B.

The barrels were all aligned in the middle of the East wall. Their staves must have been fitted together with at least two hoops (the head hoops), but it is highly probable that there was a third hoop, the bilge hoop, which is normally placed halfway up the barrels.

The barrel hoops were sometimes fitted with notches at their ends. These were used to hold wicker bindings with the function of containing the staves. Along the north side of the building, the remains of a large vessel, also made of larch wood, known as a "vat", have been identified. It had a diameter of 120 cm at the top and 100 to 140 cm at the bottom (see Table 2).

Discoveries of wooden barrels are very rare, and not only in our region. The only other comparable case in our region dates back to the 4th century B.C.: that of the house unearthed at Bersaglio in the municipality of Nomi on the right bank of the River Adige, north of the town of Rovereto in the Province of Trento (Marzatico 1991). In his "Natural History" Book XIV, 132, Pliny the Elder states that wooden containers assembled by hoops were made in the Alps to preserve wine.



Fig. 39 Bressanone, Loc. Rosslauf: inhabited. The barrels at the time of excavation.



Admittedly, the author of this encyclopedia does not mention any particular people, but the French scientist Marguerite Gagneux-Granade shows, particularly in the light of the fortunate discoveries made at Rosslauf (: a district of the town of Brixen/Bressanone in South Tyrol), that she has no doubt that the inventors of barrels could not be the Etruscans, but the Raeti (Gagneux-Granade 2003; 2005), an Alpine people from North-Eastern Italy.

Considering that the oldest barrels known to date are those from Rosslauf, it is logical to assume that they were invented here, and for a good reason: the town of Bressanone ("Brixen" in German) enjoys a privileged location in terms of transport, as it is ideally situated at the crossroads of two important natural communication routes, namely the Isarco valley (: "Eisack" in German) to the south of the Brenner Pass (which connects the Austrian North Tyrol with South Tyrol in Northern Italy) and the Pusteria Valley ("Pustertal" in German) which connects Northern Italy to East Tyrol in Austria.

The foundation of Etruscan centers of domination and production in the Transpadana region after the mid-6th century B.C. and in particular the Etruscan expansion area of Forcello in the municipality of Bagnolo San Vito in the province of Mantua, which attracted a flourishing trade in wine from the Greek world (Raffaella de Marinis, 2005), may at the same time have posed the problem of its distribution and sale outside Padanian Etruria.

Given that Greek amphorae have been discovered at the Forcello excavation site, it's clear that their long journey ended here, but it is not conceivable that all the wine imported from Greece was consumed locally.

It is likely that wine was exported to the north, among other places, to be consumed by the ruling classes who could afford this and other luxury products. In view of these considerations, it's clear that the Raeti played a mediating role between the Etruscans, who populated the Transpadan plain between the Po and the Alps, and the Transalpine peoples.

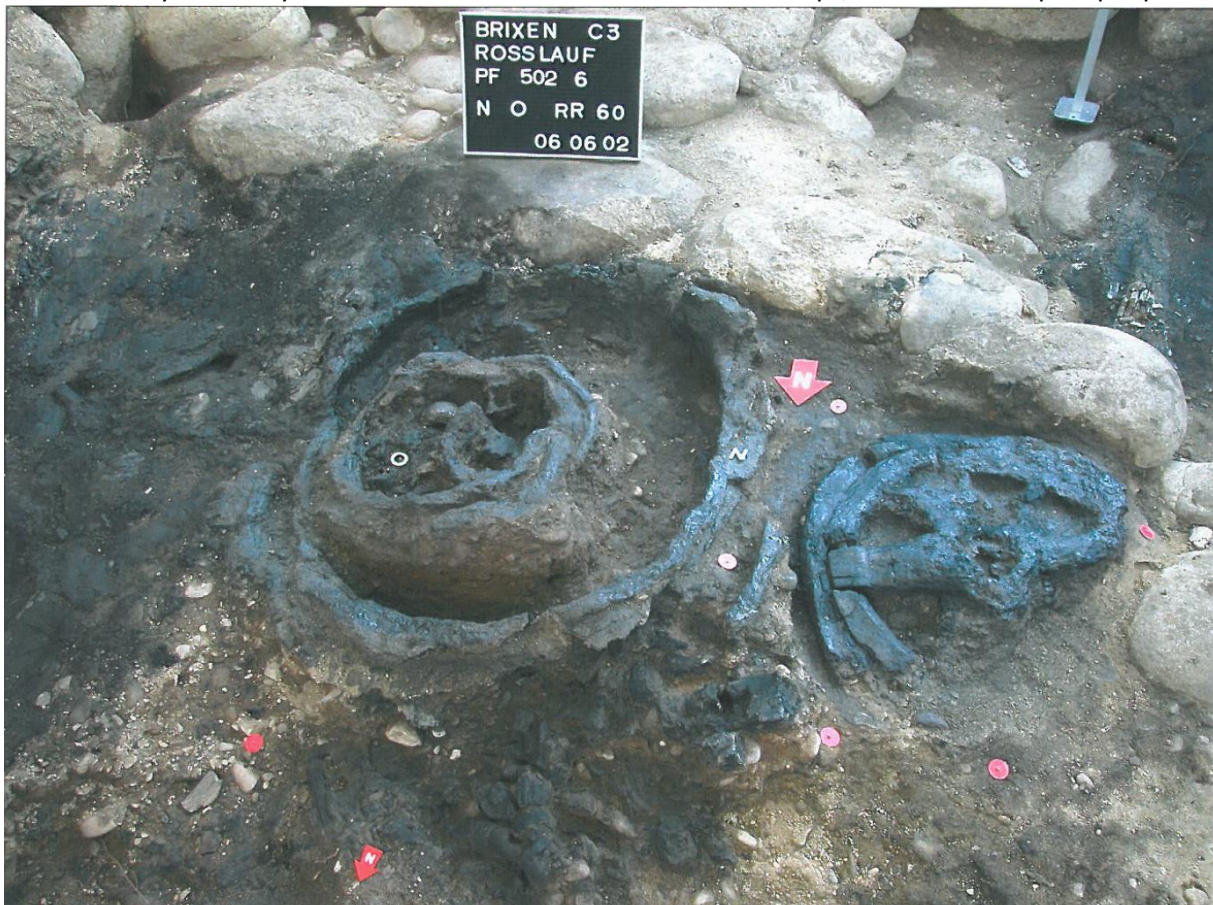


Fig. 39 Bressanone, Loc. Rosslauf: inhabited. The barrels and the wheel at the time of excavation.

It is also clear that the immediate response to this unprecedented commercial opportunity was the invention of the wooden barrel, which could be used to transport Greek wine from Etruria on the Po plain to the Bressanone basin, and from there across the Alps.

Given that in ancient times the river Adige ("Etsch" in German) was navigable all the way till Bozen, it is safe to assume that barrels from the Rhaetian territories were loaded onto rafts, which were dragged along the Adige river at least as far as the Bozen basin. From there, they were transported further north along existing roads. If the Etruscans of Forcello gave their wine and foodstuffs to Greek merchants (especially pork: scARPA 1988), what could the Raeti have given the Etruscans of Forcello in exchange?

It is still an open question, but thanks to the mediation of the Raeti, iron and copper from

the mining areas of the Alps could have been brought into the Padanian plain, where the Etruscans lived, and the Raeti could perhaps also have sold products such as raw wool and textiles produced with wool yarns, smoked and salted meat (above all mutton), and so on ....

These themes have already been dealt with extensively by the author and university professor Raffaele de Marinis as regards contacts between the Etruscans of Forcello and the Initimi peoples, and by Dal Ri as regards the penetration of Etruscan goods into the South Tyrol region, to which reference is made, if further details are required (Dal Ri 1988; de Marinis 1996; 2005; de Marinis, RAPI 2005, pages 203-212) (fig. 39).



Fig. 42 Bressanone, Loc. Rosslauf: inhabited. Detail of the crushed stones on the ground near the north-east corner of the cellar.