

THE EARLY BRONZE AGE SITE OF EIA (PARMA)

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a preliminary study of the archaeological materials from Eia (province of Parma), Strada Mulattiera and Strada Quaresima, which were excavated in September-November 2010 and in March-May 2011 by GEA s.r.l., under M. Bernabò Brea's scientific supervision - Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici dell'Emilia Romagna.

The site of Eia is located 2 km N of Via Emilia Ovest, between the rivers Taro and Parma (Fig. 1). The excavation revealed the presence, below an upper alluvial layer formed of silt and clay, of a clay layer showing traces of human occupation - 0.14 to 0.20 m thick, 0.65 to 0.70 m long, -1.40/1.58 m below the ground level - that contained several small concentrations of lithics and pottery, mostly in a chaotic disposition. Such deposit covers another alluvial clay typical of a marshy environment, which shows no traces of human occupation.

The site, formed of two sectors called Strada Mulattiera and Strada Quaresima, was excavated by trenches of 85-100 x 1 m. It yielded some structural remains: in particular, a hearth was excavated in the Strada Mulattiera sector, while a craft area with combustion traces and many post-holes, concentrated in three main zones, was found in Strada Quaresima. The difference between the two sectors, in terms of structural evidence, suggests that Strada Mulattiera was part of a peripheral area of occupation, while Strada Quaresima was a proper village sector. However, just one short-lived period of occupation has been recognized. The chronological and stratigraphic interpretation of the deposit has revealed quite difficult, due to the trenches' limits and to the post-depositional processes.

Pottery is fragmented and damaged, but preserved surfaces reveal traces of smoothing and sometimes even burnishing. From a preliminary examination, it was possible to recognize a peculiar association of open (Fig. 2, a), carinated (Fig. 2, b) and "S" profiled forms (Fig. 2, c). The handles are elbow-shaped, narrowing upwards or with a small peak (Fig. 3), and none of them shows an axe-like apex. A spindle-whorl, flat disc-shaped and with a middle hole, comes from the Strada Quaresima trench.

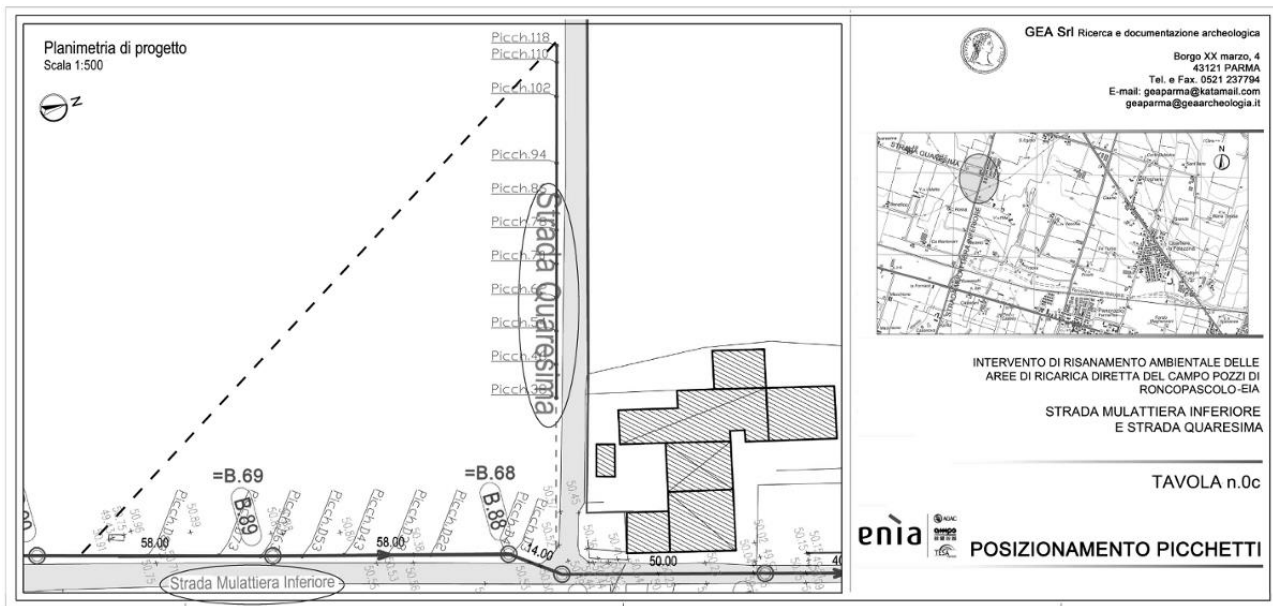


Fig. 1 - Site plan of Eia.

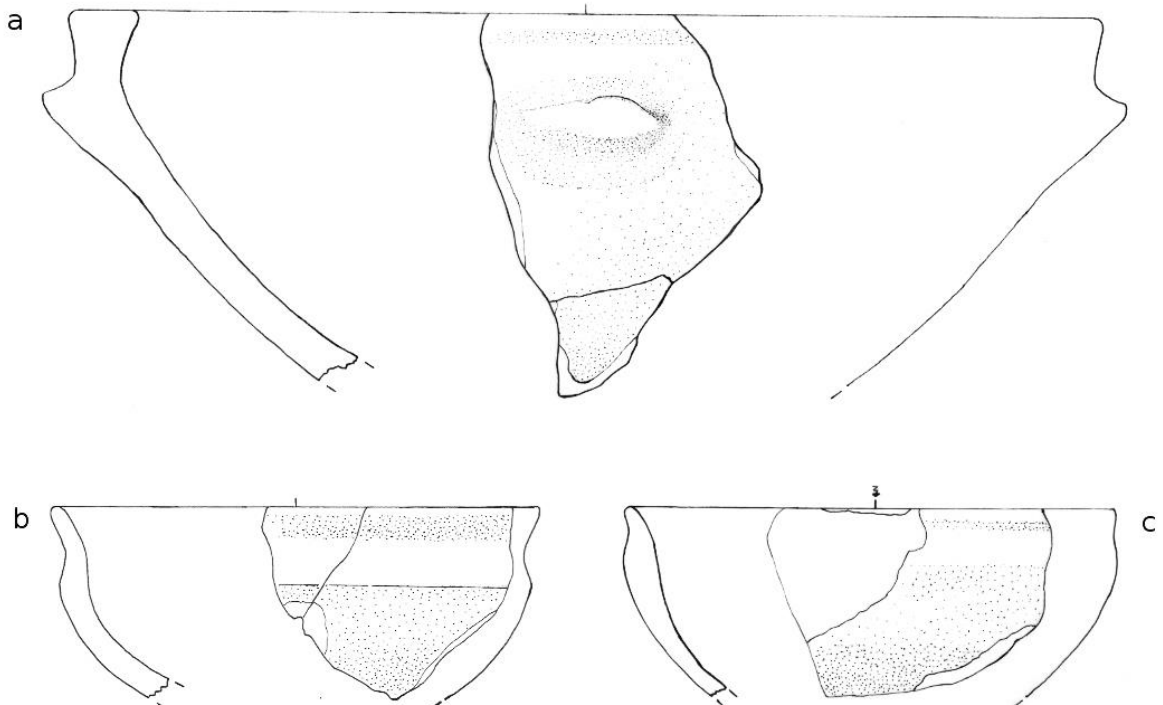


Fig. 2 - Open (a), carinated (b) and "S" profiled forms (c).

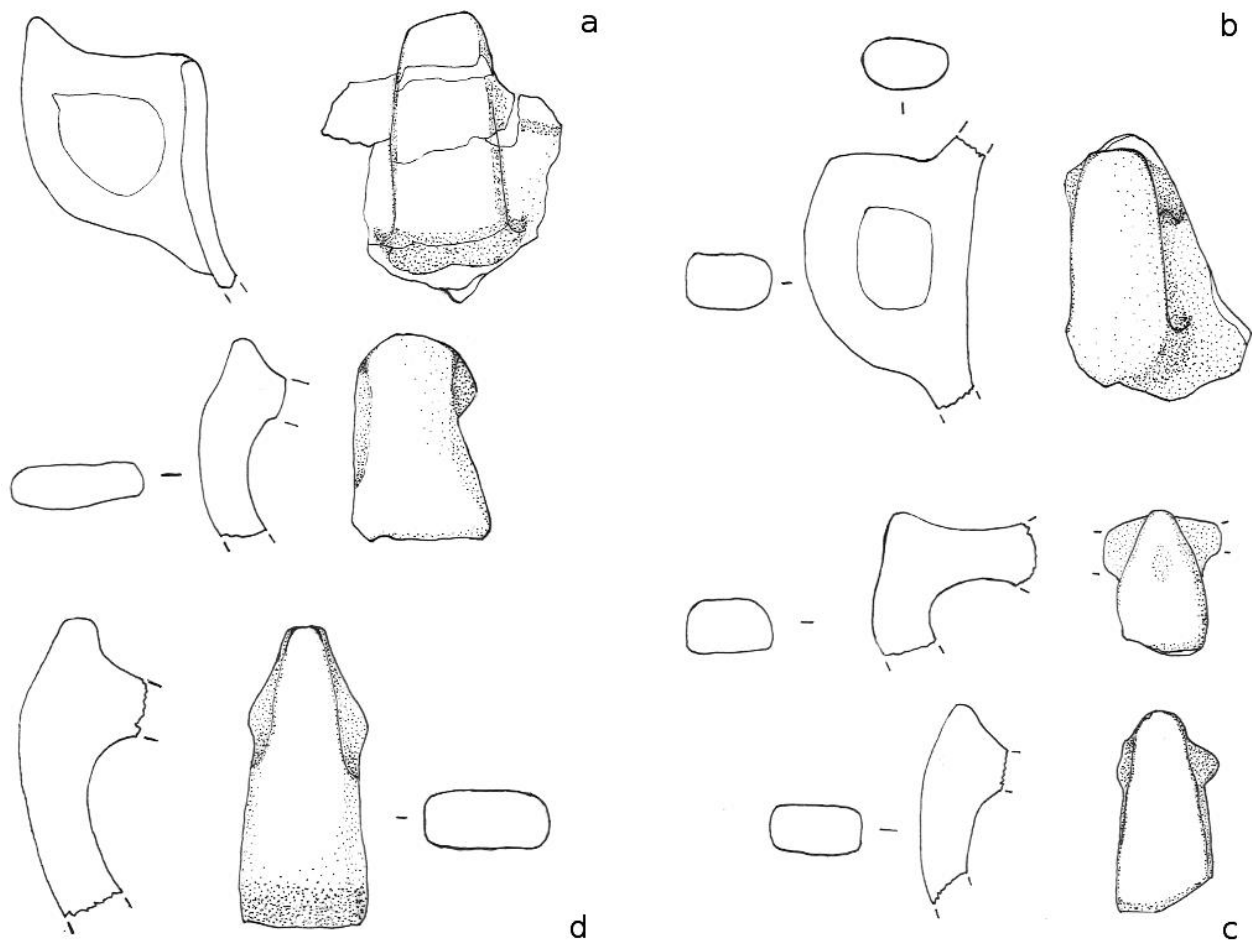


Fig. 3 - Handles.

Such ceramic evidence can be compared with the close funerary context of S. Eurosia - via Traversetolo (Parma), dated to the 19th cent. B.C. (Bernabò Brea et al. 2010). Some comparisons can be also made with the Polada culture settlements (during the transition from EBA I to EBA II) of Lavagnone (Rapi, 2002; Cazzanelli, 2002), Sommacampagna-La Palù (Longhi, 2001), and Ostiano-San Salvatore (Pia, 1987). The closer similarities are with that part of the Romagna territory that recalls central Italy and Adriatic cultural backgrounds, during the Late Bell Beaker and the EBA: Tanaccia di Brisighella Cave (Farolfi, 1976; Massi Pasi and Morico 1996), Provezza (Miari 2009b), Riolo Terme-via Ripa (Miari 2007), Forlì-via Ravegnana (Cattani et al. 2010), Faenza-Fornace Cappuccini (Morico, 1996), Banditi Cave (Pacciarelli 2009), Cattolica - Ravenna (Miari et al., 2009a), and Farneto Cave (Belemmi et al. 1996). Another cautious comparison can be proposed with the Late Bell Beaker sites of Castenaso, Stellina and via Tosarelli (Dal Santo et al. 2010), dated between the end of the 21st and the beginning of the 19th century B.C. It is worth to underline the presence, at Eia, of carinated forms associated more with archaic elements (i.e. elbow-shaped handles and with apex, that refer to the Late Bell Beaker tradition, but that aren't typical Bell Beaker artifacts), rather than more recent ones (i.e. ax-shaped lugs, EBA II – MBA I).

The amount of the lithics is small. Raw material is mostly local, available in the form of pebbles from local riverbeds. Three grey flint polyhedral cores and three arrowheads (Fig. 4) are worth noticing among knapped tools, while some polished instruments were also found, such as limestone abraders and polishers, fragments of handstones and 9 fragments of a grindstone.

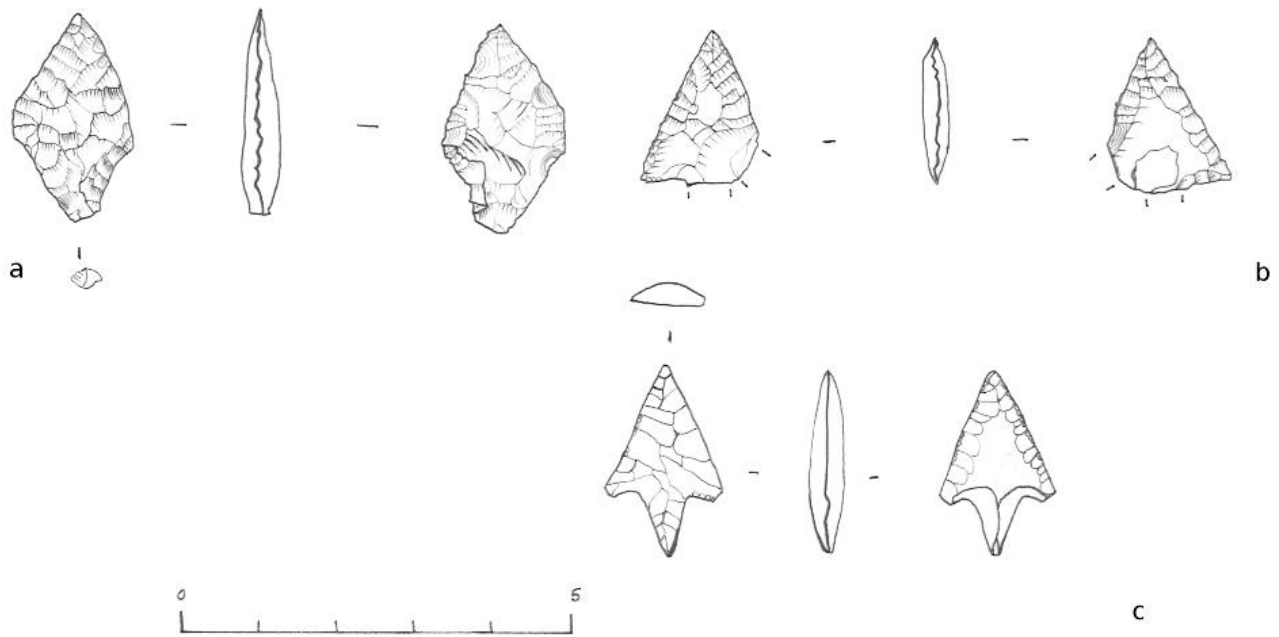


Fig. 4 - Lithics.

In conclusion, the site of Eia shows evidence of the occupation of a damp/marshy environment during the advanced EBA phase. Such datum has been essential in improving our general knowledge of the human settlement in the area of Parma during this particular period, also combined with further evidence coming from the sites of S. Eurosia - which was likely contemporary of Eia? -, S. Pancrazio and Beneceto.

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