

Zeitschrift: Archäologie Graubünden. Sonderheft
Herausgeber: Archäologischer Dienst Graubünden
Band: 5 (2016)
Heft: 1

Artikel: Cazis, Cresta : die Keramik. Text
Autor: Murbach-Wende, Ina / Zanco, Angela
Kapitel: Summary
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-871056>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 26.03.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Summary

Cresta hill is located in the municipality of Cazis at the foot of the Heinzenberg ridge in the Domleschg valley of Graubünden (canton of Grisons). It was settled during the Bronze and Iron Ages. The district forest warden Walo Burkart (1887–1952) discovered the site in 1942. During the first excavations in 1943/44 he recorded walls and hearths that had belonged to various Late Bronze Age phases of occupation. Burkart quickly realised that this was a settlement site of considerable importance. He convinced Emil Vogt (1906–1974), the then Curator of Prehistory and later Director of the Swiss National Museum to continue the excavations on Cresta hill. Under his management a team from the museum carried on the work in 13 excavation seasons between 1947 and 1970. The excavations covered roughly two thirds of the prehistoric settlement area.

In a rock crevice, the so-called central crevice, which measured approximately 70 metres in length, 7 metres in width and up to 6 metres in depth and which divided the hill north to south, the excavations reached down almost to the bedrock. They uncovered rows of houses that had belonged to at least 17 villages which had continuously been rebuilt on top of one another. Another rock cleft (the northern crevice) was located on the northern side of the hill and yielded settlement remains, which were only partially excavated. On the eastern flank of the hill (eastern trenches), the bedrock was just below the humus. The archaeological remains in this area were clearly sparser than in the central and northern crevices.

A dense sequence of archaeological layers had been deposited in the central crevice over the course of the Bronze and Iron Age occupations and it had gradually been filled

almost to the top. Thanks to the extraordinary location, the drystone walls, hearths and other installations of the buildings had been so well preserved that the shape, size and internal fittings of the majority of the houses could be recorded. In 2000, the features were comprehensively presented in a monographic publication by René Wyss which clearly demonstrated their importance for the settlement history of Graubünden (Wyss 2002).

The massive sequence of archaeological layers in the deep and narrow central crevice also ensured that the settlement waste was extraordinarily well preserved. Besides an abundant assemblage of utensils and tools made of bronze, bone and stone, 400 kg of pottery sherds and some 2000 kg of animal bone were also retrieved. The archaeozoologist Petra Plüss analysed some of the more than 300,000 bone fragments in order to study the composition of the livestock. The results of her examinations were published in 2011 (Plüss 2011).

This volume focuses on the Bronze and Iron Age pottery from Cazis Cresta. Each of the 17 settlement phases in the central crevice yielded a large number of potsherds. More than 12,000 fragments were recovered from the two to six-metre-high sequence of layers. Most of the finds assemblages from the individual settlement phases were mixed due to the repeated redeposition of settlement remains during the construction of new houses. That is why the vessel fragments from the settlement phases have been divided into pottery horizons KH I to KH IV. A selection of 1252 potsherds and 16 other ceramic objects are presented in the catalogue according to pottery horizon and settlement phase and are depicted on the plates.

Thanks to an earth deposit, which formed a clear division between the earlier settlement remains from the later ones in the northern section of the crevice, we were able to identify a pure assemblage of pottery dating from the initial stages of the Early Bronze Age, which was labelled as pottery horizon KH I. The settlement phases that were combined to form KH II covered the period of the advanced Early Bronze Age. KH III encompassed finds from both the advanced Early Bronze Age and from the Middle Bronze Age. Because of the intermixing it was not possible to make a clear distinction between the finds from both periods. KH IV, finally, comprised the vessels from the most recent settlement layers. The uppermost unit of layers exhibited the most intermixing and KH IV contains pottery from the Late Bronze Age to the end of the earlier Iron Age. Small pottery assemblages from the uppermost layers show that, after significant breaks, Cresta hill was also visited in the later Iron Age and during the Roman period.

A series of 32 radiocarbon dates from charcoal fragments and remnants of food on the vessels allowed us to ascertain an absolute-chronological sequence for the settlement phases and by extension for the Bronze Age pottery recovered. The Early Bronze Age dates show that settlement began in the 20th century BC. Pottery horizon KH I covers the period until approximately 1800 BC. The series of dates from pottery horizon KH II attests to uninterrupted settlement until the 18th century BC. The settlement phases of pottery horizon KH III yielded dates from between 1700 and 1200 BC. This wide variation confirms the intermixing of Early and Middle Bronze Age material already observed in the range of pottery. No dating was carried out on the most recent settlement

phases, which encompassed the period between the beginning of the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age and whose finds were combined in KH IV. Typological comparisons between the pottery from firmly dated assemblages that were retrieved from settlements and burials yielded more precise dates than would have been available from radiocarbon dating.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the entire range of pottery (forms, decorations, manufacturing techniques) it was possible to trace the development of the vessels, generally termed inner-Alpine Bronze Age pottery, from the Early Bronze Age to the end of the Late Bronze Age. The uppermost archaeological layers also yielded enough pottery to allow us to describe the range of vessels typically used in the earlier Iron Age in this region.

Put in simple terms, the finds from Cazis Cresta allow us to describe the inner-Alpine Bronze Age pottery as a range of vessels with a well-defined set of shapes and decorations. At approximately 95% the pots represented the main pottery form used over the entire history of the settlement. However, their proportions gradually decreased from KH I to KH III. Pots decorated with applied cordons also decreased from KH I to KH III in favour of undecorated specimens. The proportion of other vessel forms was no more than 10% and these continuously increased from KH I to KH III. Wall thickness measurements showed that vessel walls became thicker over time. The fabric, on the other hand, became more coarse-tempered from KH I to KH III.

Foreign forms, which can be seen as imported vessels, occurred sporadically in KH I and KH II. Decorations were almost exclu-

sively plastic (cordons, lugs). A Graubünden speciality were horn-like projections (*cornu*) on vessels from KH I.

The absorption of influences from areas north and south of the Alps from the Middle Bronze Age onwards led to a striking expansion of the range of shapes and decorations in KH III. At this stage of the research we can say that typical inner-Alpine Bronze Age pottery was distributed throughout the Alpine areas of Graubünden and the Ticino. The Rhine Valley at Lake Constance and the South Tyrol can be identified as contact areas in other pottery provinces. Judging by a few finds, the Valtellina valley can also be included in this list. The formal differences in the Alpine region were already quite pronounced here.

The forms and designs of the Early Bronze Age vessels in Graubünden were quite distinct from those in the neighbouring regions south of the Alpine ridge. Formal similarities, however, can quite clearly be seen between them and the ones from the Swiss Plateau. Isolated foreign forms attest to contact with northern areas further afield (Bavaria) from the advanced stages of the Early Bronze Age onwards. Inner-Alpine autonomy, however, continued beyond the end of the Early Bronze Age and into the Middle Bronze Age. The proportion of fine wares, for instance, remained clearly lower than in the areas further north. The number of foreign ceramic forms, both from the north (Tumulus Culture) and south (*Bronzo medio*) continuously increased. In the Late Bronze Age assemblages from KH IV, they eventually comprised approximately one third of the vessels in total, with pottery from the north being more abundant than that of the south. Whether this rise in the number of foreign forms was due to the

increased importance and control of the Alpine transit trade, to mining (copper) or to migrating groups of people, must as yet remain undetermined.

From the beginning of the Late Bronze Age onwards, Laugen-Melaun pottery attests to intensive contact with the South Tyrol/Trentino region, where this type of pottery originated from. Characteristic jugs and cordoned pots are frequently represented in the Late Bronze Age assemblages of the Engadin region and in northern Graubünden. This link with the South Tyrol/Trentino region continued to exist in the final stages of the earlier Iron Age. The southern canon of forms were joined by regional elements. Towards the end of the earlier Iron Age, more and more forms and decorations from the Golasecca region (Val Mesolcina, Ticino) were added to the range of ceramic vessels. These influences eventually resulted in the evolution of the Tamins-type pottery so typical of northern Graubünden.

During the Late Bronze Age in the Domleschg region, characteristic types of vessels from the central European Urnfield Culture were absorbed from the north. Cylinder-necked vessels and bowls were particularly popular. Richly decorated conical bowls, so typical of the Urnfield Culture, on the other hand, hardly ever occur in Graubünden assemblages. The adoption of northern vessel types continued throughout the earlier Iron Age. In contrast to the locally made Laugen-Melaun vessels, the quality of these ceramic containers suggests that they were imported from the Iron Age Hallstatt Culture in the north. The similarities with regard to the forms and decorations (incrustation, painted decorations) are so close as to preclude the possibility of local or regional production. Once the Tamins-type pottery with

its southern influences began to appear in the earlier Iron Age, the northern pottery imports ceased. The reasons, though as yet unknown, may have been connected to the now closer links with the southern valleys in the wake of the intensified trans-Alpine trade.

Only a small number of ceramic fragments dating from the later Iron Age were found on Cresta hill. The range of types recovered from sites with larger assemblages, however, clearly show that the Alpine Rhine Valley and northern Graubünden now differed markedly from the areas to the north and north-east. During the later Iron Age, the characteristic Tamins-style pottery evolved into the so-called Schneller-style pottery, which no longer exhibited any obvious links to the south with regard to its vessel forms or decorations.

In order to test the thesis that locally and regionally produced pottery as well as imported vessels were in use during the Bronze and Iron Ages at Cazis, 50 fragments from pottery horizons KH I–KH IV were examined mineralogically and petrographically by the mineralogist Angela Zanco of the University of Fribourg FR. The evidence gathered from the temper components pointed to local and regional production as well as regional exchange (market?). Imports from areas further afield could not be proved by means of the mineralogical and petrographical examinations. Long-distance imports, however, were clearly very different from indigenous wares, both with regard to their forms and decorations and in terms of their quality of manufacture.

Sandy Haemmerle, Galway (IRL)

