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Northern Adriatic coastal landscapes: Bronze Age Aquileia and its role in the making of Adriatic connectivity

The site of Ca' Baredi near to the Roman Canale Anfora, in the eastern coastal plain of Friuli, northern Adriatic, was strategically located between the Karst slopes to the east and the lagoonal system of the western Adriatic shores to the west. Founded at the mouth of a navigable river connecting the coast to the Alpine valleys, the site seems to have been the only long-term Bronze Age settlement in the area of Aquileia; it represents therefore the Bronze Age predecessor of the Roman colony as well as a landing place serving the cultural systems of the *castellieri* (hillforts) cultural environment of both Friuli and Karst with Istria. An ongoing research project coordinated by the University of Udine includes fieldwork activities aimed at both the archaeological investigation of the site and the exploration of the coastal landscapes of the northern Adriatic. Mainly consisting of low swampy plains, these landscapes played an important role in Bronze Age Adriatic connectivity by incorporating cultural flows from several different areas and facies, including, during the Middle Bronze Age, pile-dwellings, Terramare, Grotta Nuova, Slovenian and Croatian cultural groups and ending with Subapennine and early Urnfield components in the Late Bronze Age. Preliminary results obtained from recent fieldwork consist of the identification of six building phases encompassing three chronological horizons, founded on both stratified ceramics and 14C dates. Research has so far focussed on an outdoor service area characterised by several fireplaces, hearths and ovens, which seem to point to shared communal practices near to the river banks; interaction and exchange activities carried out in this area could somehow anticipate the role of Aquileia as an emporium in historical times.

