



Holocene pedogenesis at the Travo Neolithic site (Val Trebbia, Northern Italy): micromorphological aspects.

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The valley of the Trebbia river (Val Trebbia, Northern Italy) constitute a natural connection between the Liguria Coast and the Po Plain; for this reason the valley was intensively settled since prehistory, towards Roman and Middle Age Times, as attested by archeological evidences. The Travo site, located on a Late Pleistocene - Holocene fluvial terrace of the middle valley, date back to the Neolithic Age (V - IV millennium b. C.), when the first farmers and shepherds populated the area. The site was discovered in 1982 and, since 1995, it is excavated every year during the summer field season: at present, the operation is directed by Maria Bernabò Brea (Archaeological Heritage of Emilia Romagna, Parma, Italy) and Alain Beeching (CNRS, Centre d'Archéologie Préhistorique, Cap Valence, France). The settlement is about one hectare sized, and some huts, postholes, fireplaces, ovens, pits have been discovered, together with pottery fragments and lithic artifacts. The Neolithic remains are enclosed in a dark clayey deposit, overlaying the terrace gravels and the related brown soil, and underlying a colluvial slope deposit whose thickness increase slopeward. In the frame of geoarchaeological studies of the Travo site, more than 50 soil thin sections have been sampled from the archaeological layer, and from the lower and upper soils. The micromorphological approach allows: (a) the evaluation of the human impact on the environment (the stable surface of the fluvial terrace and related soil); (b) the detection of the site formation processes and the main human activities; (c) the identification of environmental changes and natural phenomena (mainly colluvium and vertisolization) which took place after the human occupation and lead to the burial of the site.