

The train arrives, a civilisation from 3000 years ago emerges

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The train arrives and, from the area surrounding Malpensa, a 3000-year-old history comes to light; the construction site of the new railway between the two airport terminals led to the discovery (during summer 2014) of **tens of tombs belonging to the Golasecca Culture**, almost doubling the number of **burials that have been known since the XIX century**.

To be precise, **tombs with ceramic and bronze grave goods** dated back to the XII-IX centuries BC, that is to say prior to Golasecca, were identified. “We found 80 new tombs that we can add to the already-known 45,” said **Barbara Grassi** of the Commission for Archaeological Heritage. The site for the railway has turned into an extraordinary occasion of archaeological research and study. Thanks to the specific funds of the contract, the tombs and the grave goods have been unearthed and are now in a laboratory in Faenza for restoration work, followed by some research.

The archaeological find is very important and up until now archaeologists have been particularly cautious and reserved, especially considering where the tombs were found: there were many in the construction site, which is a quite known area.

“**The last thing we needed was people nosing around,**” Grassi states. This is both for the protection of the discovery from unauthorized visitors and tomb raiders, and for safety reasons, since there were explosive devices from World War II underground. “Sometimes we would dig up these devices in the same place of the tombs.” Most of them were unarmful practice bombs, some others contained explosive charges. There were five real ones (“100 kilos each” according to engineer Giovanni Corbo of

Sea) just in the area of the future train station, and also some bullets here and there (like the one exploded last summer).

The number of burials that were found , aside from what the future studies will reveal, represents an exceptional occasion to tell the story of Golasecca Culture. This was a pre-roman protohistoric civilisation born and developed on riverbanks (starting from Ticino); rivers were actual ways of travelling when Europe still was covered in thick woods and impassable swamps. **Golasecca, together with Castelletto Ticino**, is already becoming a research and divulgation centre about the ancient civilisation; Malpensa, on the other hand, could become the new in situ conservation centre concerning archaeological discoveries. This is the idea suggested by Barbara Grassi and Cristina Cappellini, currently councilor for culture in Lombardy. **“The best solution is to keep in the area the findings,”** said Cappellini. “In my opinion it’s just right to have them here, so that they can represent a key point not only for history lovers but also for those who arrive to and depart from Malpensa.”

di Roberto Morandi Translated by Colombo & Franzosi (Reviewed by Prof. Robert Clarke)