

The successful spread of millets in Northern Italy

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Italy did not participate to the domestication of broomcorn and foxtail millet, even though the presence of few grains in Neolithic and Copper Age sites doesn't exclude a use and knowledge about these plants or similar ones.

The introduction of broomcorn millet cultivation occurred in Italy at the end of the 3rd millennium BC, probably during the early Bronze Age, as might show the sites of Canar di San Pietro in Polesine and Molina di Ledro (North-eastern Italy). The well-founded connection between these sites and the Danube-Carpathian sites could explain how millet reached Italy, probably through the Alps and the Adige's valley as suggested by the archaeological findings and the isotopic analyses.

It is during the Middle Bronze Age that there is the most abundant findings of broomcorn millet grains, especially in Emilia Romagna within the sites of the Terramare Culture. During the Recent and Final Bronze Age there is a decrease of evidences due perhaps to the low existence of archaeological sites from this period.

Data about *Setaria italica* are less certain and nowadays it is difficult to reconstruct the introduction and spread of this crop. In the Bronze Age the findings of foxtail millet are less frequent than those of *Panicum miliaceum*. The cultivation of this species will became particularly important during the Iron Age, as a staple crop for human consumption and animal feeding.