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Review of: The archaeology of Late Bronze Age interaction and mobility at the gates of Europe: people, things and networks around the southern Adriatic Sea, by Iacono F.

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Citation

Kelder, J. M. (2019). Review of: The archaeology of Late Bronze Age interaction and mobility at the gates of Europe: people, things and networks around the southern Adriatic Sea, by Iacono F. *Antiquity*, 93(369), 830-831. doi:10.15184/aqy.2019.69

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

FRANCESCO IACONO. *The Archaeology of Late Bronze Age Interaction and Mobility at the Gates of Europe. People, Things and Networks around the Southern Adriatic Sea*. New York: Bloomsbury; 978-1-3500-3614-7 \$102.60.

There is little evidence for complex societies in Southern Italy during the first half of the second millennium BC, and the overall impression is of a scatter of rural communities, exploiting the resources of the surrounding landscape whilst engaging in occasional barter and battle with neighbouring communities. This all changed markedly with the advent of the Recent Bronze Age (c. 1340 to 1120 BC) when the region witnessed several remarkable social changes including the appearance of a number of larger fortified centres among the hamlets of the preceding Middle Bronze Age period. During this time some settlements expanded and saw the erection of larger buildings; some of these, such as the large apsidal hut that was discovered at Broglio di Trebisacce, drew upon older local building tradition. Yet the presence of sometimes very large amounts of imported goods—most notably pottery from the Mycenaean world, but also material from the northern Adriatic and even from regions far to the east, including Cyprus—in association with such structures, suggests that this was not a purely local development, and that southern Italy had now joined the larger world of overseas trade and exchange.

The Archaeology of Late Bronze Age Interaction and Mobility at the Gates of Europe explores the modes of interaction that characterised these overseas connections, and how social contact and mobility effectuated changes in societies in the southern Adriatic (Apulia and, to a lesser extent, Calabria) during the Late Bronze Age. Its author, Francesco Iacono, paints a complex picture of the transformation of a relatively inward looking region of hamlets and fortified villages to one that, almost by accident it seems, became involved in an ever-expanding horizon of regional and supra-regional trade and exchange. The impact of these increasing connections on local communities, Iacono shows, was profound, not only on local traditions and the structure of society, but also on those of the visitors. These visitors included not only Aegeans—although they appear to have had a particularly strong impact on southern Italy in the Recent Bronze Age—but also people from the north, such as the Terramare area and the Dalmatian coast.

This may be a surprise, since the northern half of the Adriatic remained something of a *terra incongnita* even until Late Classical and Hellenistic times. Yet there are good indications for remarkably intensive connections across this part of the Adriatic from at least the Early Bronze Age on, with objects that are associated with the so-called Cetina culture (based along the Middle Dalmatian coast) appearing not only throughout Apulia but even in Campania, Malta, and mainland Greece. These maritime connections seem to have virtually ceased in the early 2nd millennium BC however, and regular maritime connections only resumed during the final phase of the Middle Bronze Age: the chronological starting point of Iacono's study.

There is much to commend this study. Iacono presents the reader with an array of fascinating material, highlighting how foreign influences may have impacted on local culture and society and how Apulian culture, in its turn, influenced the culture of visiting foreigners. Thus, stylistic features known from *impasto* pots are seen not only on locally made Aegean-style pottery at Roca, but also on Mycenaean pots found at major Aegean sites such as Tiryns and Phaistos. At the same time, various *impasto* vessels from Roca closely resemble pottery from

the Terramare area in northern Italy. In view of this study's aims, it is only logical that the social ramifications of such changes in material culture are extensively explored. Local responses to foreign influences appear to have been extremely variable. Whilst increased exposure to foreign influences, goods, and ideas promoted early forms of class differentiation at various sites in southern Italy and, especially, Sicily, other communities appear to have reacted in an entirely different manner. Thus, the local production of Mycenaean-style pottery at sites such as Roca points towards that community's apparent capacity to employ specialised potters, whilst the subsequent restricted use of these vessels during feasts may suggest the emergence of specific (perhaps kin-based) groups. But, arguing that the settlement's resources appear to have been devoted mostly to the construction of 'public buildings', such as a monumental cult building, or the expansion of the settlement's fortifications, Iacono suggests that the community at Roca remained, by and large, surprisingly egalitarian.

All of this is reasonable enough and it is interesting to see how Iacono takes the case of Roca, which thrived despite apparently not developing hierarchies, as something of a 'success story' that should be told in these modern times of increasing nationalism and populism. Sometimes however, the focus seems to rest somewhat too heavily on Marxist theory and too little on the material on which these theories must be based. This reader would have enjoyed more detailed discussions of some of these finds and their archaeological context. The ivory duck pyxis and an Aegean-type dagger that were found in the destruction layers of the Middle Bronze Age site of Roca (near Lecce in Apulia), for example, certainly merit more than the rather fleeting reference on page 78; especially since both objects are unique to the region. The same goes for the discussion of the site of Torre Santa Sabina; a burial mound near Brindisi that bears remarkable resemblance to burial practices in contemporary Albania, and includes various Aegean objects—including a so-called Vapheio cup. This reader is quite willing to believe Iacono when he argues that various other features at the site do not match Albanian (or, for that matter, Aegean) burial customs of the time, and that the site can therefore be assigned to local people, but would have enjoyed a more extensive discussion of these foreign features at the site—especially since, as Iacono himself argues (p.80), such imports are not normally found in Middle Bronze Age burial contexts.

These are minor points though, and do not detract from the scope and ambition of this modestly sized book. Despite occasional idiosyncrasies in spelling and phrasing, it is well written and clearly structured, and offers a wealth of archaeological data and new interpretations.

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