
Demographic dynamics, environmental changes and social developments in the Bronze Age (2200-1200 BC) of central Sicily

Giannitrapani Enrico*¹ and Iannì Filippo²

¹Arkeos - Servizi integrati per i Beni Culturali – Via Roma 504, Enna, Italie

²Arkeos - Servizi integrati per i Beni Culturali – Italie

Résumé

Recent researches carried out in central Sicily are producing a great deal of new data on the prehistory of this key area. One of the most important period evidenced so far is the Bronze Age. EBA starts at the end of 3rd millennium BC: during this phase is possible to witness a great development of settlements, due to a considerable population increase, also supported by favourable climatic conditions, as evidenced in the pollen sequence of Lago di Pergusa, an endorheic basin placed in the centre of the Erei uplands. Such a complex social formation is characterized by substantial domestic and funerary architectures, and a rich material culture. The Pergusa sequence indicates how this climatic phase ends abruptly between the end of 3rd and the beginning of 2nd millennium BC, with the start of a regime of increasing aridity. Following this dramatic climate change, during the EBA's final stages, there is a gradual decline in settlements, accompanied by a stylistic and formal impoverishment of the ceramic production. The communities living in this part of inner Sicily should experience now a progressive crisis of their social and economic structures, possibly determined also by the changed climatic and environmental conditions. The crisis reaches its peak at the middle of 2nd millennium BC, with the passage from the EBA to the MBA. There is now the definitive collapse of the social structures active up to that point. It is likely that this crisis has also been determined by the changed political conditions of central Mediterranean. It is in fact in this period that eastern and southern Sicily actively interact with the state societies of the Aegean and of eastern Mediterranean. This is clearly evidenced by the presence along the coasts of new settlements characterized by imposing architectures and the abundant presence of Mycenaean ceramics, probably occupied by new dominant groups, perhaps those "pre-urban aristocracies" already defined in coeval centres of central Italy, competing with local elites of inner Sicily, causing their disappearance or, at least, a sharp downsizing. At the end of 2nd millennium BC, a new crisis struck Sicily, due to the interruption of the Aegean contacts and the arrival in the island of Italic populations from the peninsula. In central Sicily there is now a new phase of settlement expansion, also characterized by numerous monumental necropolis with hundreds of rock-cut tombs.

Mots-Clés: Sicily, Bronze Age, settlement pattern, palaeoenvironment, social complexity

*Intervenant