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Tracking down the Orientalizing

The title of my paper is inspired by C. Ginsburg who has brilliantly shown that the methodical studies of little details can lead to the understanding of greater issues. As an archaeologist it seems appropriate to work with clues, and like Ginsburg I consider myself a hunter¹. Nevertheless, on this occasion I would like to present an overview of the state of the art, although it should be stressed that my contribution represents a work in progress.

As we have hunted objects to demonstrate long distance connections in the Mediterranean from East to the West², we have noticed and analyzed how the level of interactions was gradually increasing, but do we really understand their impact? Today it makes no sense to discuss the ethnic origin of the carriers and traders, be they Greeks or Phoenicians. I think that David Ridgway has aptly described the situation as “multinational entrepreneurial expansion”³. We have often talked about a “pan-Mediterranean *koine*”, while at the same time regional differences of the reception has been put forward⁴. I have felt a little guilty in assigning the Assyrian court-culture to an Etruscan reality⁵. The evidence has to be scrutinized still more. There is no doubt to me that the Iron Age culture, traditionally called Villanovan culture, belongs to the Etruscans. Neither can be doubted that the long distance connections are older than what is usually referred to as the Orientalizing period, ca.720-575. I am convinced that we have to extend this period, as I do not think it is sensible to use the term “proto-Orientalizing”, when considering the problems concerning “proto-Corinthian production”, which is an unlucky term invented by accident⁶. Has time not come to let conventional academic terms go? The Orientalizing has been termed a *koine* but many differences may still be detected from the various regional cultures, as has been rightly stated recently in an inspiring debate published by Corinna Riva and Nicholas C. Vella⁷. The term “Orientalizing” as well as the term “orientalization” have been challenged. Have we instead become fonder of Phoenicianizing?⁸ We are still far from understanding the complex reality of regional differences within the Phoenician world and beyond, and must be careful with our ethnic reconstructions. Indeed, the Orient has very aptly been called “a veritable

¹ GINZBURG 1979, 57–106.

² RATHJE 1979; 1980; 1984; 1990; 1992; 2005a; SCIACCA 2005, 395–409 with an exhaustive bibliography; see the paper by d’Agostino in this session.

³ Ridgway, cf d’Agostino this session.

⁴ RUBY 1999, 9–11.

⁵ RATHJE 1995.

⁶ RASMUSSEN 1991, 57.

⁷ RIVA, VELLA 2006.

⁸ GUBEL 2006.

metaphorical bazaar⁹. Nobody will, however, deny the connectivity of the Mediterranean and nobody can deny an impact from this bazaar. Do we have to abolish the term “Orientalizing”, as we can consider it to be out of date? In this case it is possible to avoid an outdated term as no card-house will fall down as a consequence, as would happen if you change chronology in one part of the Mediterranean and not all over. The period in case belongs to the Iron Age and can easily be labelled with numbers, although some people might be chocked, I prefer to be purist when dealing with chronology and periodisation. It is clear that neutral terms correspond better to our understanding of multicultural or hybrid societies.

As for chronology, our friend Albert Nijboer might seem rather strict in his periodisation of “proto-orientalizzante” (850-750/700) and “orientalizzante” (750/700-580), but he is certainly right stating that you cannot make your dating only from the finds of Greek pottery¹⁰. However, we will leave out the ‘battle of chronology’ and I shall not interfere but will refer to different traditional dating, with the consequence that the 7th century BC is included in our discussion. We need another session to elaborate an alternative. To me the ‘orientalizzante’ in Italy is a part of the Iron Age, in Italian the period called protostorico, that is ‘prehistory’, but this period is connected to historical realities far away.

In central Italy we are not stuck in the postcolonial debate¹¹, nevertheless, we must reflect on the fact that no ‘colonial’ settlements were placed in that area, that is north of Kyme in the gulf of Naples, the core area of the early Iron Age, a territory which was very attractive for its natural resources¹². The IA society of central Italy was highly stratified from an early date, a fact that must have been significant in relation to incoming people, invaders or not.

The impact from the eastern Mediterranean area is an early phenomenon in Italy, as demonstrated by the earliest finds are from 10th century BC found at Torre Galli¹³, but I shall concentrate on the later period as already stated.

A general problem must be stressed: We cannot always determine the actual centres of production of imported objects and it is quite difficult to distinguish if certain objects are imported or made by immigrant artisans, while it is sensibly easier to track down local emulation and inspiration¹⁴. So we are dealing with long distance trade and itinerant craftsmen who made objects and became teachers of new techniques, to mention a few: goldworkers, potters, sculptors, ivory carvers and architects¹⁵. These newcomers also transmitted tales and stories about foreign countries causing ideas to circulate. We are, however, not only dealing with immigrants and visitors from outside Italy - people from Central Italy circulated, travelled abroad and returned with new ideas that became cultural capital in the strategies for identity and power. The movements from abroad interact with the regional transmission of objects and ideas for instance in the form of gift-giving. What is important, is to discuss the multi-cultural space of the Mediterranean where we detect reception, reaction and transformation of ideas, perspectives and visions via the circulation of goods, raw materials, ideas and technologies, persons (apart from artisans, priests, physicians, musicians and bards have to be mentioned). In Italy much focus has been on the receivers of these objects, *in casu* the upper echelons of society. It is, however, relevant, to ask for the role of the artisans when discussing the transformation of habits and customs. For the time being, an ethnic discourse is very difficult when analyzing these foreigners. One must ask: where are the immigrants? And how many were they? How multi-ethnic were some of the centres like for instance Populonia and Vetulonia¹⁶?

I assume we are dealing with open societies and only the percentage of “aliens” escapes us.

So we are left with the discussion on the material and immaterial goods that reflects the connectivity of the areas in question. We still have to remember that many objects were perishable and have vanished so

⁹ RIVA, VELLA 2006, 1.

¹⁰ NIJBOER 2008, 429.

¹¹ See VAN DOMMELEN 2002; MALKIN 2002 and see his paper presented during this AIAC congress.

¹² BIETTI SESTIERI 2005, 21 fig. 6.

¹³ See the paper by Sciacca in this session.

¹⁴ SMITH 1998, 32; JACOBSEN 2007, in this work the production of Oinotrian-Euboean pottery by Greek potters is aptly discussed.

¹⁵ NIJBOER 1998, 20–22.

¹⁶ BOTTO 2002; BARTOLONI 2003, 48.

that only circumstantial evidence is left, to mention a few: textiles (garments and utilitarian), wooden objects, furniture, solid food, liquids (like for instance wine and perfumes) and spices not to mention animals like horses and exotic specimens¹⁷. Only occasionally do happy circumstances allow us to understand an enlarged reality, as for instance at the site of Verucchio where furniture and clothes have been preserved¹⁸. The 2008-season has even yielded horse burials, a fact that reminds us about import of these noble animals as well as adoption of a foreign practise.

I have argued that the overall idea of the banquet represents a cultural identity, certainly with regional differences¹⁹. The archaeology of feasting is a new trend to be followed as food and drink must be considered material culture²⁰. These substances have also been involved in trade and exchange and were used for gifts²¹. Feasting and drinking practices are, of course, effective in securing social ties and alliances; we must, however, also try to understand their connection to ceremonies that can be mundane or not.

The evidence of consumption and display must be scrutinized in order to understand the political and ritual nature of these phenomena. Thus we must make an effort in understanding the function of the objects and phenomena that are considered evidence of acculturation. We have to scrutinize the praxis of consumption.

As we all know, the evidence comes mostly from tombs of the upper echelons of society (always most visible in the archaeological record), especially from the so-called princely tombs. "So-called" because there are indeed too many princes, and we have not succeeded in presenting them in a hierarchical manner, and, alas, we have not yet been able to present all these persons neither in their local context nor in a systematic comparative analysis. We are indeed badly in need of proper publications.

Various syntheses have presented the foreign influences in Central Italy ever since the brilliant work by F. Poulsen nearly a hundred years ago²². We are now dealing with a rather large *corpus* of objects and their imitations, but, unfortunately not many databases or complete publications are available with the exceptions of finds from Osteria dell'Osa, Pontecagnano, Tarquinia and *Veii*, and not all the evidence has been published from the latter three sites.

In all cases the objects can be seen in connection to power, rank and status and the right placement is not always detectible, because the evidence is ambivalent. We are dealing with social distinction from material culture since emerging elite need symbols to hold power. In Table 1 I have listed some of the symbolic objects:

Power

Sceptre, axe, fan

Rank

Chariot, horse, weapons, dress (the actual textiles), furniture (e.g. thrones)

Status

Banquet equipment, food and drink

Exotic oils and perfumes

Tools for textile production

Personal ornaments made of precious and other metals, ivory, faience etc., seals

Some of these items might belong to more than one category, for instance a chariot could also be a symbol of power while tools for textile production could be a symbol of rank.

¹⁷ For textiles: GLEBA 2008, 7; wine: BOTTO 2004; perfumes: FRERE 2006; GRAN-AYMERICH 2008, 101–102.

¹⁸ STAUFFER 2002: textiles; VON ELES 2002: throne pl. II-III, footstool pl. XIV, 1–3.

¹⁹ RATHJE 2005a; 2005b.

²⁰ VAN DER VEEN 2008, 83 with references.

²¹ VAN DER VEEN 2003.

²² POULSEN 1912, 116–37.

A group of individuals defined itself and was defined by others as a higher ranking group. We have traditionally used this model reconstructing ancient communities from the cemeteries, however the finds from habitations of Populonia, Roselle, Ficana, Satricum²³, as well as multifunctional centres like Murlo²⁴, have also supported the evidence.

Here, we must insert the princely votive find from Tarquinia²⁵. Recent and ongoing excavations undertaken by the University of Milan have documented the very formation process of cult in the so-called area sacra at Pian di Civita. In this area various significant features and structures have been discovered: 1) a cavity together with a foundation trench from the oldest settlement, 2) the so-called area *alpha*, 3) the building *beta*, 4) the area *gamma*. The developments of cultic practices can thus be followed from prehistoric times down to the 5th century BC, when the sanctuary lost its significance.

Luckily, this excavation also dealt with palaeobotanic, palaeozoologic and osteologic material, so the vegetal and animal sacrifices have considerably widened the interpretation. Many remains of deer (*cervus elaphus*) - bones as well as antlers that have been worked - have been found in the stratigraphic contexts, which give evidence of cult. They were found together with ceramics, ashes, and burned earth in all phases of this cult-centre. Furthermore, remains of tortoise shell have come to light. It is feasible to suppose that the deity worshipped here must have been female, a mixture of a patroness of the animals and a deity of the hunt.

However, votive gifts connected to the cavity, which represents a liminal area between the upper world and the underworld; make us suggest that she has had a chthonic aspect, too. In the course of the Iron Age, the area was enlarged, and, although the offerings of deer and antlers (worked and not) continue, it was characterized by many finds of loom weights, spools, and other objects pertaining to textile production. The goddess must be seen as a protector of female activities. However, votive sickles made of antlers are found, too, and the excavator therefore suggests that the deity worshipped might also be a harvest goddess.

At the time when the structure *beta* was built in the 7th century BC, the eastern area was monumentalised with a complex measuring ca. 15.70 x 25 m, in which blood sacrifices presumably have taken place. The structure reflects a Levantine style of building with walls built *a pilliers* and the whole plan of the complex (a central *temple/altar* in a courtyard) is related to Near Eastern sacred buildings. 'Foreigners' have been present²⁶. Is this building the work of immigrant craftsmen? It is decidedly one of the most important buildings from the Orientalizing period and must enter the discussion of the interaction in the Mediterranean. It also raises the question about the role of the elite in the emerging sanctuaries. The famous votive deposit reflect symbols of the elite (formerly known from the tombs): the shield, the axe, the *lituus* placed in the ground during a ceremony as can be reconstructed from the ceramic finds in the pit²⁷, however it also shows the relation between the elite, *in casu* a man in power and the goddess. Maybe we should look to the Levant and further East to find comparative representations and stories about kings and goddesses. This deposit is certainly a manifestation of power and religion.

The bronze items from the deposit express different aspects of power: military (the shield), political (the axe) religious (the *lituus*). Thus, identity and recognizable distinction of the elite have been made explicit in another context than tomb and mortuary ritual.

In this connection I would like to mention the trident from Tomb of the Trident from Vetulonia, which has been convincingly ascribed to local production; nevertheless, this object seems to recall a local leader's adoption of a royal/priestly *insignia* with a special connection to the thunder god from the East (Urartu)²⁸. The religion of the early Etruscans is far from understood. Although the Etruscans were famed for being the most religious among men (Livy 5.1.6), religious manifestations have been rather overlooked for the Iron

²³ WAARSENBURG 2001, 184–87; ACCONCIA, BARTOLONI 2007, 23–6; BARTOLONI, BOCCI PACINI 2002, 199–202.

²⁴ EDLUND-BERRY 2006, 125–26; RATHJE 2007.

²⁵ BONGHI JOVINO, CHIRAMONTE TRERÉ 1997, pl. 125; for the site see BONGHI JOVINO 2000; for an analysis of the deposit with detailed references see RATHJE 2006.

²⁶ BONGHI JOVINO 1991, 180–83; 1999, 90–93.

²⁷ BONGHI JOVINO 1999; 2005a; 2005b, 315; RATHJE 2006, 107–13; SERRA RIDGWAY 2006, 198–99.

²⁸ CYGIELMAN, PAGNINI 2006, 72 no. 191; SCIACCA 2004, 275–77.

Age/Orientalizing period. Archaeology of ritual might be promising for analysis of the period in question. So let's now turn to some objects identified to be connected to rituals.

When discussing rituals, Sciacca has rightly stated that the oriental ribbed/fluted metal bowls are important because they represent such a large group in central Italy (328 specimens) and because they have been imitated both in metal and ceramic. As for the latter one could ask: is it a coincidence that many of the clay imitations are made of the red impasto we connect to Phoenician production as if to underline its foreign origin²⁹?

The Euboean cups have been nominated as the drinking cups par excellence for years, I have challenged this view by pointing at the polyfunctional hemispherical bowl made in various materials³⁰ and I am pleased to learn that Ferdinando Sciacca has accepted this challenge and intends to work on a proper analysis of these vessels, which must also be considered icons of the interconnections in the Mediterranean. The relation between these bowls and the ribbed bowls must certainly also be analysed. It is very significant that hemispherical bowls are among the earliest imports at Torre Galli³¹. Here I want to bring to attention the set up of the recently (1994) found Morelli tomb from the area of Chiusi, dated to the end of the 7th century and now reconstructed in the Museo civico archeologico delle acque at Chianciano Terme³². Here, we are dealing with a tumulus containing a chamber tomb "a tramezzo", that is: a room divided into two sections by a partition wall. In the left section was found a dressed bronze urn (canopic) with status of a warrior (shield, 2 lances) in front of which was placed a bronze table with 5 chalices and 4 high-footed cups in bronze; beside the table were found on the floor: 2 bronze *situlae* and furthermore 2 hemispherical cups made of impasto with metallic decoration (H. 8,0 Ø 8,5; H. 6,0, Ø 9,5)³³, as well as 10 small *aryballoi* and *alabastra* (all of Etrusco-corinthian production) and, last, a small *oinochoe* made of glass paste, the last items being the personal belongings of the deceased. In the right section 30 items of locally produced bucchero, including vessels for drinking, serving, pouring and ladling, as well as an impasto double vase and a pair of iron firedogs were found; the last item points to the deceased as *pater familias*. Interestingly, as noted by Minetti, the types of bronze and bucchero vessels are the same. From these findings, it is evident that we are dealing with two different ceremonies: to the left, the dead is represented at a drinking party and here we have to understand the significance of the two special impasto cups - are they for a singular drink? A special libation? The right space of the tomb is meant for a banquet with more participants and, outside the chamber one chalice and one olla might reflect yet another ceremony, perhaps the ceremony of closing the chamber? I have dwelt upon this extraordinary tomb, because it can give us an idea of what to search for, what to track down in tombs containing goods not so well-preserved, whether from excavations or from situations when we make effort to reconstruct the contents of tombs from old excavations. I believe that this complex situation is valid not only for the Orientalizing period in the traditional chronology but also for the earlier Iron Age, so we must provide some more componential analyses of funerary, as well as domestic and sacral contexts.

Acceptance, selection and hybridism are the key words in our understanding of the impact of the interaction between peoples in the Mediterranean area from East to West. What can illustrate this better than some objects from Matelica shown at the splendid exhibition "Power and splendour of the Piceni"³⁴? From the fossa deposito/ deposit trench of tomb 1 at Passo Gabella, a splendid drinking set belongs clearly to a collective ceremony³⁵. In this tomb, the objects connected to drinking were clearly placed together, while banqueting/sacrifice equipment was kept distinctly apart.

²⁹ SCIACCA 2005, appendix II, 218–234, for instance no. 25 from *Veii*, Casale del Fosso tomb 1086.

³⁰ RATHJE 1997, 203–204.

³¹ Sciacca in his contribution to this section. He also stresses the ritual functions of these cups.

³² MINETTI 2004, 546: period IIIA.

³³ MINETTI 2004, 184–85, no. 43. 6–8, fig 51, 1-2, pl. LXXIV, 493–94, fig. 126 A, table on p. 508. The whole tomb is treated 182–203, 416–18 and 526–27. Strangely, in the catalogue, p.184–85, the hemispherical cups are listed as having been found in the left section whereas in the analysis of the funerary contexts p. 418 they are mentioned in connection with the right section.

³⁴ SILVESTRINI, SABBATINI 2008.

³⁵ COEN, SABBATINI 2008, 187: cat. no. 188.

One subject has not been mentioned here: sculpture. The sudden appearance of large sculptured representations of human beings, beasts and fabulous animals, as has been found in funerary contexts in central Italy and Sardinia³⁶, need to be analysed very thoroughly as they clearly mark a new kind of *mise en scene* of certain individuals. All in all, personal identity of the individuals as well as the identities of groups on various levels (political, social, gender, ethnic, religious) must be analysed. When discussing the late Iron Age, it is important to understand if we are dealing with phenomena regarding only the elite or larger parts of society. The period deserves to be studied more systematically.

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³⁶ SERRA RIDGEWAY 2002; TRONCHETTI, VAN DOMMELEN 2005; see the paper by van Kampen to this congress.

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