

The Archaeology of Affluence



The Archaeology of Affluence

Surplus, Wealth and Society in the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Mediterranean

Proceedings of the International Conference,
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Cover: Black and white drawing by Fritz Blakolmer of the scene on the 'Harvester Vase' from Hagia Triada.
A pithos from the Early Minoan IIA settlement of Hagia Triada.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume represents the publication of the proceedings of the conference ‘The Archaeology of Affluence: Comparative Perspectives on Surplus, Wealth, and Social Organization in the Aegean, the Central Mediterranean and the Near East in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age’, held at the Department of History and Cultures of the University of Bologna from May 8–9, 2024.

In organizing the conference, our goal was to set up a scholarly event that would serve as a debate forum for scholars with different but intertwined academic backgrounds and subject fields, that is, central Mediterranean prehistory, the Aegean world and the Near East. The conference drew inspiration from the rising prominence of economic themes in ancient studies. On the other hand, we realized that these are typically focused either on the earliest phases of prehistory to make sense of the emergence of social inequality at the transition time from hunter-gatherers to farming communities, or on the Greek and Roman world, for which a complex array of non-archaeological sources is available. Conversely, the economy of Bronze Age and early Iron Age pre-state polities and early states apparently slipped into the background in the last years. Yet, recent comprehensive reconstructions, such as J.C. Scott’s *Against the Grain* (2017) and D. Graeber’s and D. Wengrow’s *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), pinpointed apparently divergent Bronze Age micro-stories to show how diverse the economic and social paths of the past were. The conference was intended as an opportunity to bridge such a gap.

Unlike terms such as ‘surplus’ or ‘wealth’, the conference centered on ‘affluence’, a concept resonant in anthropology and prehistory. That is why reference to Marshall Sahlins’ study “The original affluent society” was made explicit in the original call for papers. While recognizing its importance sixty years after publication, we also realized that, despite being widely debated by anthropologists, Sahlins’ challenging views on the association between social complexity, progress, and prosperity has had lesser impact in archaeological research. Several conferences and collective works on economic archaeology were organized in the last decade, that focused on agriculture, surplus, the management of resources, and exchanges; conversely, topics such as prosperity, abundance, and affluence, have been seldom touched upon. Against this backdrop, we saw value in revisiting economic dynamics in regions with varying social complexity that interacted from the late fourth through the early first millennium BC.

The conference proved memorable, featuring 29 scholars from diverse countries who presented case studies from Anatolia and Cyprus in the east to Crete, the Cyclades, Macedonia, and central and southern Italy in the west. This volume includes 17 of the 22 original papers, primarily on the Aegean and Italian peninsula, yet reflecting the event’s broad approaches and themes.

Special thanks go to Paul Halstead for his inspiring keynote lecture, which spurred a substantial essay herein. We also express deep gratitude to the Director and staff of the Department of History and Cultures, University of Bologna, for providing the prestigious San Giovanni in Monte Renaissance Hall and flawless organization. Editing began promptly post-conference and succeeded thanks to the contributors’ enthusiasm, proactivity and responsiveness to feedback (including critiques). We further thank those participants who were unable to submit papers and, ultimately, the volume’s anonymous external reviewers and Archaeopress editors for their constructive input and acceptance.

Santo Privitera
Francesco Iacono
Palmiro Notizia

Program of the Conference

Aula Prodi, Department of History and Cultures, Piazza San Giovanni in Monte 2, Bologna

WEDNESDAY 8TH MAY, 2024

Paul Halstead (University of Sheffield)

Surplus, scarcity and affluence: questions of definition, archaeological recognition and social change

Marcella Frangipane (Sapienza University of Rome, Lincei Academy)

Is the production of surplus per se an indication of 'affluence' and general prosperity in pre-state and early state societies in the Near East?

Simona Todaro (University of Catania)

Plain cups for central places? Meal distribution and the management of collective works in Crete at the end of the EBA: new perspectives from EM III Phaistos

Massimo Perna (University of Sassari)

On the footsteps of Enrica Fiandra. The cretulae: an elementary accounting system between the Aegean and Ancient Near East

Gabriele Giacosa (University of Bologna)

Prepared for better times: public storage strategies in early Iron Age Karkemish

Luca Girella (UniNettuno University at Rome)

Living with and without the kouloures: the meaning of a presence and absence in the Protopalatial and Neopalatial Crete

Barbara Montecchi (University of Florence)

The management of affluence at Late Minoan IB Agia Triada

Maria Emanuela Alberti (University of Florence)

Creating added value: the management of textile production in Minoan Crete (MM IB – LM IB)

Dario Puglisi (University of Catania)

The crocus gatherers of the Xestè 3 at Akrotiri: female initiations and management of affluence in Late Bronze Age I Aegean

Davide G. Aquini (University of Catania)

Silver and gold take turns. Investigating the dichotomy of affluence in Minoan jewellery

Emilia Oddo (Tulane University)

Affluence inside and out: built environment and regional organization of Neopalatial Knossos

THURSDAY 9TH MAY, 2024

Sergio Cesaratto (University of Siena)

The concept of surplus in contemporary economics and its application to ancient civilizations

Anastasia M.A. Vergaki (Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies)

Social inequality in Late Bronze Age Crete: origins, evolution, and the role of the multitude

Luca Bombardieri, Marialucia Amadio (University of Siena)

'Man shall not live by bread alone'. Exploring the socio-economic settings of Middle Bronze Age Erimi at the dawn of urbanisation in Cyprus

Francesca Porta, Jan Driessen, Joachim Bretschneider (University of Bologna, Université Catholique de Louvain, Ghent University)

Unravelling Pyla-Kokkinokremos: exploring the socio-economic structures of a late Cypriot settlement

Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw (MOLA London)

Corporeal ecosystems of affluence in Bronze Age (Minoan) Crete

Elisabetta Borgna, Assunta Mercogliano (University of Udine)

Affluence, resources and social growth in a long-term rural community of eastern Achaia: the Trapeza of Aigion, from MBA to the final LBA

Francesco Iacono, Maurizio Cattani (University of Bologna)

Affluent societies of the Bronze Age: uncoupling affluence and hierarchy in the Central Mediterranean 2000-1000 BC c.a.

Agostino Sotgia, Luca Alessandri, Peter Attema (University of Groningen, Sapienza University of Rome)

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