Making and Meaning in the Bronze and Iron Ages

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Chronology, Landscapes and Societies across Europe. Proceedings from the METALAGES2024 Colloquium (Florence, 23 October 2024)

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Editors' Foreword

The present volume, *Making and Meaning in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Chronology, Landscapes and Societies across Europe*, brings together a selection of papers presented at *METALAGES2024 – Chronological Methods and their Correlation in the Metal Ages*, held in Florence in October 2024. Co-organized by the UISPP Scientific Commission *Metal Ages in Europe and the Mediterranean* and the *Istituto Italiano di Preistoria e Protostoria*, the colloquium provided a platform for researchers across Europe and the Mediterranean to share new chronological data, methodological reflections, and interpretative insights into the societies of the Metal Ages.

While the thematic axis of the conference was dedicated to questions of chronology—its scientific foundations, its diverse applications, and the perennial challenge of correlating relative, absolute, and historical frameworks—this volume also reflects the breadth of work unfolding across the field. The papers gathered here capture not only advances in dating methods and typological studies, but also the richness of current archaeological practice, from the reconstruction of settlement networks and craft economies to the social meanings of material culture and personhood.

Chronological frameworks remain the structural backbone of prehistoric archaeology. Over the past decades, new tools—radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology, Bayesian modelling, and isotopic analyses among them—have refined our temporal understanding to an unprecedented degree. Yet, as the discussions in Florence reminded us, these advances invite as many questions as they resolve. Aligning laboratory chronologies with typological sequences and regional cultural schemes is not a straightforward process. Nor can the calibration of time be separated from broader interpretative debates about the tempo of change, human agency, and cultural connectivity. This volume thus situates itself at the intersection between technical precision and interpretative synthesis, where chronology becomes more than a scaffold for history—it becomes a field of inquiry in its own right.

At the same time, the contributions from the general session—reflected in the majority of papers in this volume—demonstrate the vitality and diversity of current research on the Bronze and Iron Ages. Studies included here span a wide geographical and thematic range: from gender and personhood in prehistoric societies to fortifications in Austria and coastal or submerged sites in Western Europe, and from the Mediterranean networks that shaped Iberian and Sicilian communities to the craftspeople whose work sustained ancient economies. Together, they highlight how questions of making—material production, landscape engagement, and cultural expression—intersect with those of meaning, the symbolic and social dimensions that give archaeological remains their interpretative depth.

In uniting these perspectives, *Making and Meaning in the Bronze and Iron Ages* reflects the spirit of the *METALAGES* colloquium series: collaborative, interdisciplinary, and grounded in the shared conviction that technical and theoretical advances must move hand in hand. As such, the editors hope that this collection not only captures a moment in current research, but also encourages new conversations across the boundaries of method, region, and discipline.

Lucía Ruano Posada, Dirk Brandherm and Luis Berrocal-Rangel