

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)**

Edited by
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and Luis Berrocal-Rangel



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

13-14 Market Square

Bicester

Oxfordshire OX26 6AD

United Kingdom

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80583-356-7

ISBN 978-1-80583-357-4 (e-Pdf)

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Contents

Editors' Foreword.....	ix
-------------------------------	-----------

Lucía Ruano Posada, Dirk Brandherm and Luis Berrocal-Rangel

Thematic Session: Chronological Methods and their Correlation in the Metal Ages

La cronologia dell'antica età del Bronzo tra Lombardia orientale e Veneto occidentale: dalle datazioni assolute dendrocronologiche e radiocarboniche alla tipocronologia dei materiali.....	3
--	----------

Marco Baioni, Federica Gonzato, Cristina Longhi, Claudia Mangani and Nicoletta Martinelli

Bronze Age dates from the archaeological site of Sa Osa – Cabras	25
---	-----------

Anna Depalmas, Carmine Lubritto, Rita T. Melis, Mark Pearce and Alessandro Usai

The Early Bronze Age settlement of Asparn-Schletz/Lower Austria. A site in the light of quantitative methods	42
---	-----------

Elisabeth Rammer

Dynamics of Bronze Age upland settlement in Ireland and Northern Britain in a comparative perspective: Irish results to date	54
---	-----------

Cherie Edwards

General Session: Current Research in the Metal Ages

<i>On ne naît pas femme : on meurt comme telle. Sex, gender and personhood in the Early Bronze Age</i>	79
---	-----------

Sabrina N. Autenrieth

New research on prehistoric fortifications in Austria – Results of the Dietenberg excavations in Styria	96
--	-----------

Florian Mauthner and Klaus Schindl

Underwater hillforts: Assessing the opportunities and challenges of flood-prone archaeological sites.....	106
--	------------

Pablo Paniego Díaz, Lucía Ruano Posada, Iratxe Boneta Jiménez and Timoteo Rivera Jiménez

Tanners and leatherworkers in ancient Iberian society (6th–2nd centuries BC). A social approach to production.....	126
---	------------

Pablo S. Harding-Vera

Exploring domestic economies through network analysis: The case of El Castrejón de Capote.....	151
---	------------

Lucía Ruano Posada, Luis Berrocal-Rangel, Pablo Paniego Díaz, Pablo Sánchez de Oro and Nerea Dacosta Menéndez

The ancient horizon in the Iberian world of the region of Murcia. The formation and emergence of a new culture through the reception of Greek pottery	170
--	------------

José Fenoll Cascales, Jesús Robles Moreno and José Miguel García Cano

Le dinamiche preistoriche dell'entroterra della Sicilia occidentale legate al Mediterraneo	183
---	------------

Angelo Vintaloro

List of Figures and Tables

La cronologia dell'antica età del Bronzo tra Lombardia orientale e Veneto occidentale: dalle datazioni assolute dendrocronologiche e radiocarboniche alla tipocronologia dei materiali

Figura 1. Curva dendrocronologica del Lavagnone confrontata con la curva GARDA 1, su cui sono evidenziati l'anello preso ad esempio e le due differenti datazioni derivanti dai due <i>wiggle matches</i> indipendenti.	5
Figura 2. Lucone di Polpenazze (BS). Ipotesi ricostruttiva del Settore 1 del Lucone D – fase LUD1a, ricavata dalle datazioni dendrocronologiche, con in evidenza la struttura più antica (in rosso) e la struttura più grande e recente (viola) con annessa passerella (in verde).....	6
Figura 3. Bande di Cavriana (MN) – ricostruzione della planimetria delle strutture su base dendrocronologica; a) ricostruzione del posizionamento dei pali a livello di infissione, estrapolata dal raddrizzamento dei pali inclinati, nelle aree di scavo 1981 (a destra) e 1983 (a sinistra); b) identificazione delle passerelle impiantate fra gli anni 1999 e 1994 cal BC; c) identificazione dei pali portanti un edificio, probabilmente abitativo, edificato nel 1980 cal BC; d) identificazione dei pali relativi a una probabile ristrutturazione dell'edificio, impiantati nel 1974 cal BC (elaborazione di N. Martinelli, grafica di E. Cavallo).	7
Figura 4. Date stimate dei Boundaries tra le tre fasi prese in esame dal modello Bayesiano. Sono riportati i risultati per le Boundaries 'Fine dell'età del Rame' (End Copper Age), 'Inizio Campaniforme' (Start Bell Beaker), 'Fine Campaniforme' (End Bell Beaker) e 'inizio Antica età del Bronzo/Cultura di Polada' (Start Early Bronze Age/Polada Culture (da Leonardi <i>et al.</i> 2015).	9
Figura 5. Via Decio Celeri, Lovere (BG). Sezione del deposito archeologico. Gli strati pertinenti all'antica età del Bronzo sono rappresentati dalle UUS 34, 33 e 30.	10
Figura 6. Via Decio Celeri, Lovere (BG). Materiali ceramici, in terracotta e in osso provenienti da US 33. Interessante la presenza di una tavoletta enigmatica (rielaborato da Poggiani 2000).	11
Figura 7. Modello statistico bayesiano proposto da E. Valzolgher sulla base delle date appartenenti alla 1 fase del Bronzo Antico di Monte Covolo – Villanuova sul Clisi (da Rapi 2013).	12
Figura 8. Lavagnone, Desenzano del Garda (BS). Materiali dagli orizzonti del Lavagnone 2 e 3 (da Perini 1988).	13
Figura 9. Lucone di Polpenazze del Garda (BS), Lucone D. A) materiali ceramici, in osso corno e metallici pertinenti alla fase LUD1; B) materiali ceramici, in osso corno e metallici pertinenti alla fase LUD2.	14
Figura 10. Tabella riassuntiva della cronologia elaborata da R.C. De Marinis con le connessioni con la cronologia centroeuropea (da De Marinis 2022).	15
Figura 11. Schema cronologico del Bronzo Antico elaborato da R. Perini con in evidenza le forme vascolari tipiche della fase formativa: a) da Monte Covolo – Villanuova sul Clisi (BS); b) da Ledro (TN); c) da Fimon (VI); d-e) Montesei di Serso (TN) (da Leonardi <i>et al.</i> 2015).	17
Figura 12. Grotta Altro Pianeta, Grone (BG). Forme ceramiche (1) con confronti per la forma con i livelli campaniformi di Monte Covolo (2), con la fase LUD1 del Lucone di Polpenazze (3-4) (elaborazione C. Mangani).	18
Figura 13. Tabella con le principali datazioni dendrocronologiche a disposizione e, in evidenza, le fasi del Lavagnone e del Lucone, corredate di datazioni dendrocronologiche (elaborazione M. Baioni su dati di N. Martinelli).	19
Figura 14. Oppeano (VR), Sito 4C. Forma ceramica biconica (4) con decorazione plastica rinvenuta nel livello di incendio della fase 1b che trova confronti al Lucone fase LUD1 (1), al Lavagnone (2) a Bande di Cavriana (3). (1 disegno M. Ravaglia; 2 da Rapi 2007; 3 fornito da A. Piccoli che si ringrazia).	20

Bronze Age dates from the archaeological site of Sa Osa – Cabras

Figure 1. Location of the study area in central-west coast Sardinia (a); distribution of archaeological sites in the Sinis and Tirso coastal plain area (b); schematic geomorphological map in the Tirso coastal plain (c). After Melis <i>et al.</i> 2017, modified.	26
Figure 2. Aerial views of the Sa Osa site during the construction of the Oristano – Cabras road (a-b); location of dated structures (c). Reworking by A. Depalmas (c).	28
Figure 3. Features in the Northern Sector. Feature β before excavation (a); feature χ_2 at the beginning of excavation (b) and pottery finds (c). Feature γ_1 (d) and a pottery selection with finds from US 526 highlighted inside the box. After Dedola <i>et al.</i> 2020 (b-c); after Casu 2017 (e).	29
Figure 4. Features in the Northern Sector. Shaft $\kappa\kappa$ under excavation (a). Shaft $\lambda\lambda$ under excavation and Final Bronze Age pottery finds (c). After Ortu 2022 (c).	31
Figure 5. Stratigraphic scheme for the Southern Sector by R.T. Melis.	32
Figure 6. Features in the Southern Sector. Shaft N under excavation (a); section of the shaft (b) and pottery finds (d). Shaft U under excavation (c) and pottery finds from US 433 (e). After Sanna 2011 (b); Serreli 2011 (d); Sebis 2020 (e).	33
Figure 7. Radiocarbon dates from Sa Osa, calibrated using OxCal v.4.4 and the IntCal20 curve (Reimer <i>et al.</i> 2020).	34
Figure 8. Calibration plot of the radiocarbon dates from Sa Osa, organised by feature; calibrated using OxCal v.4.4 and the IntCal20 calibration curve (Reimer <i>et al.</i> 2020).	36
Figure 9. Radiocarbon dates for well N modelled using the OxCal 'Combine' function (Bronk Ramsey 2009) and the IntCal20 calibration curve (Reimer <i>et al.</i> 2020).	37

Figure 10. Radiocarbon dates for feature κκ modelled using the OxCal ‘Combine’ function (Bronk Ramsey 2009) and the IntCal20 calibration curve (Reimer <i>et al.</i> 2020).....	38
---	----

The Early Bronze Age settlement of Asparn-Schletz/Lower Austria. A site in the light of quantitative methods

Figure 1. Position of Asparn-Schletz in Lower Austria (© atlas.noe.gv.at, Basemap).	43
Figure 2. P704, Section 35 (Photograph © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).....	44
Figure 3. Decorated sherd UF-19463.12057.2, P704 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich, Rammer, E.).	44
Figure 4. Pottery of the Early Bronze Age, line-decoration (UF-19463.11207), P630 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich, Rammer, E.).	44
Figure 5. Fragment of a bowl of the Únětice Culture (UF-19463.12057.12061.1), P704 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich, Rammer, E.).	44
Figure 6. Cylindrical loom weight UF-19463.11208, P630 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich, Rammer, E.).	45
Figure 7. Granting plate, UF-19463.3871, P354 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	45
Figure 8. Settlement burial of the early bronze age in pit 360, Section 21 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	45
Figure 9. Needle made of bone (UF-19463.3863), P360 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich)	46
Figure 10. Small pot, Únětice Culture (UF-19463.3754), P360 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich). ..	46
Figure 11. Pot with a barrel-shaped body (UF-19463.3894), P360 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	46
Figure 12. Ceramic bead (UF-19463.3834), P360 (Photograph © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	46
Figure 13. Settlement burial in pit 788, Section 37 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	47
Figure 14. Burl ring made of Bronze (UF-19463.13788), P788 (Photograph © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	47
Figure 15. Sherd of a pot of the late Early Bronze age (UF-19463.13801), P788 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich).	48
Figure 16. Sherd of a vessel with lugs on the inside, P704 (Drawing © Landessammlungen Niederösterreich, Rammer, E.).	48
Figure 17. Input mask of the image-database Montelius (Graphic: Stadler, P. and Rammer, E.).	49
Figure 18. Initial result of the Seriation on the finds and features of the Únětice Culture, including Asparn-Schletz (Graphic: Stadler, P. and Rammer, E.). https://doi.org/10.32028/9781805833567-3-Figure18	50

Dynamics of Bronze Age upland settlement in Ireland and Northern Britain in a comparative perspective: Irish results to date

Figure 1. Map showing the general location of the research area (upper), the research area of Ireland by Zones (IRE1-IRE7) and Northern Britain by Zones (NB1-NB7).	56
Figure 2. Radiocarbon dates for Ireland plotted by individual Irish research Zone (IRE1-IRE7).	58
Figure 3. All plotted radiocarbon dates for upland settlements within the research Zones in Ireland. Settlement hiatus seen at c. 2250–200 cal BC is marked by a circle. Dates into the EIA that fall on the Hallstatt Radiocarbon Plateau are marked by a square.	59
Figure 4. Plotted radiocarbon dates for IRE1-IRE7 shown by site type. Settlement hiatus seen at c. 2250–200 cal BC is marked by a circle. Dates into the EIA that fall on the Hallstatt Radiocarbon Plateau are marked by a square.	60
Figure 5. Graph showing the number of reliably dated pollen studies in Ireland by research Zone (IRE1-IRE7).	63
Figure 6. IRE7 research area with mapped locations of cited pollen studies located in IRE7 and table of pollen studies. Map created using ESRI ArcGIS Pro Word Topographic Base Map.	65

On ne naît pas femme : on meurt comme telle. Sex, gender and personhood in the Early Bronze Age

Figure 1. The gendering of objects and identities in archaeological research.	80
Figure 2. Burial sites creating the basis of this data analysis (DEM Source: Copernicus Land Monitoring Service; Populated cities, rivers, and lakes: Natural Earth Data; Sites of burials: see Figure 3).	82
Figure 3. LN-MBA burials with information on sex and/or age of buried individuals from the broader river landscape of the Rhine.	83
Figure 4. Network Analysis of female and male burials in the broader river Rhine region. $n = 48$; $n_{female} = 22$, $n_{male} = 25$; $n_{male \& male} = 1$; size of nodes represents degree% of node centrality (based on data from Figure 3).	86
Figure 5. Network Analysis of object categories buried by age classes in the broader river Rhine region. $n_{infans\ I/II} = 16$; $n_{juvenis} = 1$; $n_{adultus} = 28$; $n_{maturus} = 12$; $n_{senilis} = 3$; size of nodes represents degree% of node centrality (based on data from Figure 3).	87
Figure 6. Measurements and positioning of objects buried with young individuals (<i>infans I/II</i> - <i>juvenis</i>).	89
Figure 7. Measurements and positioning of objects buried with older individuals (<i>adultus-senilis</i>).	91
Figure 8. Comparison of object sizes buried with younger and older individuals in Singen am Hohentwiel.	92

New research on prehistoric fortifications in Austria – Results of the Dietenberg excavations in Styria

Figure 1. Location and surrounding area of the Dietenberg (Based on ALS-Data by BEV, Graphics: F. Mauthner).....	97
Figure 2. Topography and settlement structure of the Dietenberg (Graphics: K. Schindl).....	98

Figure 3. Examples of approach obstacles: 1. Dietenberg, Styria, Austria; 2. Michelstetten, Lower Austria (Graphics: K. Schindl).....	99
Figure 4. Trench through the main rampart (F. Mauthner).....	101
Figure 5. View on the approach obstacles from the main rampart (F. Mauthner).....	102
Figure 6. Lower part of the approach obstacles (F. Mauthner).....	103
Figure 7. Ceramic findings from 2023 excavation (Drawing: V. Vidoz, Pictures: F. Mauthner).	103

Underwater hillforts: Assessing the opportunities and challenges of flood-prone archaeological sites

Figure 1. Location of the study area: Middle Guadiana Basin.....	107
Figure 2. La Tabla de las Cañas hillfort: a) Low reservoir level; b) Medium-high reservoir level.	109
Figure 3. Excavation trench at La Tabla de las Cañas hillfort (2024), showing the different occupation phases of the settlement (Photo: Jesús Amazaes Calderón).....	111
Figure 4. Aerial photographs of La Tabla de las Cañas hillfort: a) American Flight Series B (1956–1957), b) Interministerial Flight (1973–1986), c) National Flight (1981–1996), d) PNOA 2011, e) PNOA 2018, f) PNOA 2022.....	112
Figure 5. a) Study area, and b) map of archaeological heritage affected by potential flood risk in the Middle Guadiana River Basin: 1) Salto de Sánchez Polo, 2) Archaeological site west of Cagánchez, 3) Puente Cagánchez, 4) Roman villa 1 and 2, gas pipeline, 5) Gámez House, 6) 17th-century bridge of Medellín, 7) Lozano mill, 8) Vegas de Martell, 9) Don Llorente, 10) La Majona, 11) Aceña mill, 12) La Habilla and 13) La Barca-Ventorillo.....	115
Figure 6. Archaeological sites affected by different APSFR return period zones.	115
Figure 7. Chronological classification of archaeological sites affected by APSFR return period zones.	116
Figure 8. a) Evolution of the 340-metre contour within the hillfort, b) evolution of the 342-metre contour within the hillfort and c) evolution of the 344-metre contour within the hillfort. Base: Most recent PNOA orthophoto.	117
Figure 9. Evolution of the topography of the necropolises at La Tabla de las Cañas. Necropolis A: a) contour lines based on CHG expropriation plan and b) contour lines derived from the model generated using third PNOA LiDAR coverage. Necropolis B: c) contour lines based on CHG expropriation plan and d) contour lines derived from the model generated using third PNOA LiDAR coverage. Necropolis C: e) contour lines based on CHG expropriation plan and f) contour lines derived from the model generated using third PNOA LiDAR coverage.	118
Figure 10. a) Photogrammetric flight over the interior of the hillfort and b) photogrammetric flight over the interior of the hillfort highlighting the structures.....	119
Figure 11. Comparison of documented structures in the hillfort of La Tabla de las Cañas, based on UAV data (2024) and GNSS survey (2022): a) contour lines based on CHG expropriation plan and b) contour lines based on 2023 LiDAR data. Base: Most recent PNOA orthophoto.	120
Figure 12. Comparison of water levels in the La Serena reservoir: a) Copernicus Sentinel imagery, 23 August 2024; b) Copernicus Sentinel imagery, 23 March 2025.....	122

Tanners and leatherworkers in ancient Iberian society (6th–2nd centuries BC). A social approach to production

Figure 1. Locations of the sites mentioned in the text. 1. Mas Castellar (Pontós, Girona); 2. Porqueres (Banyoles, Girona); 3. Los Villares (Caudete de las Fuentes, Valencia); 4. La Bastida de les Alcusses (Moixent, Valencia); 5. La Covalta (Albaida, Valencia); 6. El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia); 7. Collado de los Jardines (Santa Elena, Jaén), 6. Cerro de la Cruz (Almedinilla, Córdoba).	131
Figure 2. List of the tools mentioned in the text.....	133
Figure 3. Unhairing knives. From La Bastida de les Alcusses (Moixent, Valencia) – BA – (after Pla 1968); and from El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia) – CIG- (by the author).	134
Figure 4. Lunette knives. a) Tanged lunette knives; b) ‘U’ shaped lunette knives. From Los Villares (Caudete de las Fuentes, Valencia) – LV – (after Mata 2019); from La Bastida de les Alcusses (Moixent, Valencia) – BA – (after Pla 1968); from La Covalta (Albaida, Valencia) – CO – (after Pla 1968); and from El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia) – CIG – (CIG-13 after Cuadrado 1987: 437, no. 2295; CIG-1, 4, and 14 by the author); and from Collado de los Jardines (Santa Elena, Jaen) – CJ – (by the author).	136
Figure 5. a) Shoemaker knives; b) Saddler knives; c) Shears; d) Esparto needle. From La Bastida de les Alcusses (Moixent, Valencia) – BA – (BA-24, 40, 41, 42 and 43 after Pla 1968; BA-3 and BA-18 after Fletcher <i>et al.</i> 1965, 1969); from El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia) – CIG – (CIG-8 after Cuadrado 1987: 323, no. 1605; CIG-2 and CIG-20 by the author); and from Porqueres (Banyoles, Girona) – PO – (after Sanahuja 1971).	137
Figure 6. Awls. a) Pla awl-type; b) Manning Type 1; c) Manning Type 2; d) Manning Type 3 a; e) Manning type 3b; f) No evident type. Awls from Los Villares (Caudete de las Fuentes, Valencia) – LV – (after Pla 1968); from La Bastida de les Alcusses (Moixent, Valencia) – BA – (after Fletcher <i>et al.</i> 1965, 1969); from El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia) – CIG – (by the author); from Mas Castellar (Pontós, Girona) – MC – (after Rovira 2002); and from Cerro de la Cruz (Almedinilla, Córdoba) – CC – (after Vaquerizo <i>et al.</i> 2001).	139
Figure 7. Table condensing relevant information on the grave goods and grave features of the funerary assemblages mentioned in the text. Sources: Cuadrado 1987, De Prada and Cuadrado 2019.	145

Exploring domestic economies through network analysis: The case of El Castrejón de Capote

Figure 1. Distribution map of the archaeological sites mentioned in the text. 25 m DEM from the GMES RDA project (EU-DEM), and river courses layer from National 1:500.000 Base Map (BCN500 2015 CC-BY 4.0)	153
Figure 2. General plan of the site, showing the wall, excavated domestic structures, central sanctuary, and streets.	154
Figure 3. Cumulative plan of the western sector of Capote: Phase 3 (pink), Phase 2b (red) and Phase 2a (blue).	155
Figure 4. Selected ceramic forms documented at the site of El Castrejón de Capote (Phase 2a), representative of the repertoire used for the analysis.	156
Figure 5. MNI of ceramic vessels per room at the western sector of Castrejón de Capote (Phase 2a), classified by functional category: storage, production, service, ritual and undefined.	158
Figure 6. Co-occurrence of ceramic vessel types across rooms. The table presents the number of shared vessel types between each pair of rooms based MNI counts. The heatmap visualises these values, with warmer colours indicating a higher degree of similarity in ceramic composition. R software.	159
Figure 7. Network of rooms based on shared ceramic vessel types. Each node represents a domestic space, with its size reflecting degree centrality, and edges indicate the co-occurrence of vessel forms between rooms, with edge thickness reflecting the strength of the connection. Gephi software.	160
Figure 8. Co-occurrence of ceramic functional categories across rooms. The table presents the number of shared ceramic functions between each pair of rooms, based on MNI data. The heatmap visualises these values, with warmer colours indicating a higher degree of functional similarity between domestic spaces. R software.	161
Figure 9. Network of rooms based on shared ceramic functional categories. Nodes represent individual rooms, while edges indicate the co-occurrence of ceramic use types within those rooms. Edge thickness reflects the number of shared functions, and node positioning illustrates the degree of functional overlap across domestic spaces. Gephi software.	162
Figure 10. Co-occurrence of ceramic vessel types across rooms. The table displays the number of co-occurrences between each pair of ceramic forms across rooms. The heatmap visualises the same data, with warmer colours indicating more frequent associations between vessel types. Together, these representations highlight functional groupings and recurring activity sets in the ceramic assemblage. R software.	165
Figure 11. Network graph showing associations between vessel types that co-occur within the same room. Nodes represent distinct ceramic forms, and edges indicate co-occurrence relationships. Node size reflects degree centrality, and edge thickness corresponds to the strength of the connection. Gephi software.	166
Figure 12. Spatial distribution and density of ceramic vessel categories: a) Raw distribution map of storage (red) and service/tableware (blue) vessels, b) KDE for storage vessels, indicating concentrated zones of provisioning and accumulation, c) KDE for service/tableware vessels. GIS software.	167

The ancient horizon in the Iberian world of the region of Murcia. The formation and emergence of a new culture throw the reception of Greek pottery

Figure 1. Main sites cited on the text: 1. Necropolis of Calle Corredera (Lorca). 2. Los Royos (Caravaca de la Cruz). 3. Molinicos (Moratalla) 4. El Cigarralejo (Mula) 5. Bolbax (Cieza). 6. Cabezo del Tío Pío (Archena). 7. Cabezo del Agua Salada (Alcantarilla) 8. Cabecico del Tesoro (Verdolay, Murcia). 9. Santa Catalina del Monte (Verdolay, Murcia). 10. Cobatillas La Vieja (Cobatillas) 11. Castillejo de los Baños (Los Baños de Fortuna). 12. Coimbra del Barranco Ancho (Jumilla). 13. Loma del Escorial (Los Nietos, Cartagena). (Authors).	173
Figure 2. Greek imports in Murcia: 1. Necropolis of Calle Corredera (Lorca). 2. Los Royos (Caravaca de la Cruz). 3. Molinicos (Moratalla). 4. El Cigarralejo (Mula) 5. Bolbax (Cieza). 6. Cabezo del Tío Pío (Archena). 7. Cabezo del Agua Salada (Alcantarilla). 8. Cabecico del Tesoro (Verdolay, Murcia). 9. Santa Catalina del Monte (Verdolay, Murcia). 10. Cobatillas La Vieja (Cobatillas). 11. Castillejo de los Baños (Los Baños de Fortuna). 12. Coimbra del Barranco Ancho (Jumilla). 13. Loma del Escorial (Los Nietos, Cartagena). (Authors).	174
Figure 3. Imported material from 600–400 BC. 1. Fragment of Eastern Greek vase (575–530 BC) Sanctuary of La Luz (Verdolay). 2. Fragment of a tall-footed Droop-type kylix. Painter of the Rhodes Group 12264. Late 6th century BC. Necropolis Cabezo del Tío Pío (Archena). 3. Fragment of a tall-footed Droop-type kylix. Late 6th century BC. Settlement Cabezo del Tío Pío (Archena). 4. Red figures kylix. Painter of Bologna 417. c. 450 BC. La Loma del Escorial (Los Nietos). 5. Coral-red Kylix. 500–475 BC. La Loma del Escorial (Los Nietos). 6. Kylix-Skyphos of black figures. Haimon painter. Second half of the 5th century. Necropolis Cabezo del Tío Pío (Archena). 6. Kylix-Skyphos of black figures. Followers of Haimon. c. 400 BC. Tomb 20 of Necropolis Cabezo del Tío Pío (Archena). Credits: 1.1 Comino 2015; 1.3 Olmos 1983. Authors for the rest.	175
Figure 4. Imported material from 450/425–400/395 BC. 1. Outturned rim bowl (F22L/F2681M.). Necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños (Fortuna). 2. Oinochoe. Necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños. 3. Salero small bowl (F21/25AL./F2761aM.). Necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños. 4. Kantharos from the ST Class. Valentin type IV of Howard and Johnson, Los Molinicos (Moratalla). 5. Kylix of the Delicate Class I. Necropolis of the urban centre of Lorca. 6. Necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños (Fortuna). 7. Kylix inset lip (Castulo cup of Shefton). Necropolis of Cabecico del Tesoro (Verdolay, Murcia). 8. Bolsal. Necropolis del Castillejo de los Baños. (Authors)	176
Figure 5. Imported material from 450/425–400/395 BC. 1. Skyphos. Necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños (Fortuna). 2. Kylix-Skyphos. Necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños. 3. Kantharos. Necropolis of El Castillejo de	

los Baños. 4. Bolsal. Necropolis of El Cigarralejo (Mula). 5. Kylix from the Group of the painter from Viena 116. 6. Fountain bowl with turned rim (F22L./F2681M.). 7. Plato bowl with incurved rim (F21L./F2771M.). 8. Small Salero bowl with wide base (F21/25BL./F2711M.). 9. Bowl with turned rim (F22L./F2681M.). 10. Skyphos from the Fat boy group. n.º 5-10 come from the necropolis of Castillejo de los Baños (Fortuna). (Authors).177

Le dinamiche preistoriche dell'entroterra della Sicilia occidentale legate al Mediterraneo

Figura 1. Il Mediterraneo con i paesi che ebbero i rapporti più significativi a partire dall'Eneolitico.	184
Figura 2. Le Culture Eneolitiche siciliane (a sinistra), probabile fase iniziale della penetrazione neolitica in Sicilia (a destra).	184
Figura 3. Tomba della Cultura Eneolitica di Castelluccio.	185
Figura 4. Penetrazione neolitica in Sicilia (a sinistra), armi bronzee (a destra).	185
Figura 5. Vaso neolitico della Cultura di Serra d'Alto (a sinistra), ceramica della Cultura di Castelluccio (a destra).	186

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.

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