



## Book Reviews

### UPLANDS OF ANCIENT SICILY AND CALABRIA; THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LANDSCAPE REVISITED, EDITED BY MATTHEW FITZJOHN

London: Accordia Research Institute, University of London. 2008. 237pp, figs pb ISBN 978-1-873415 32 0 (£36))

Sicily and Calabria have not featured prominently in discussions of Mediterranean survey archaeology over the last three decades. However, that may well change as more information becomes available about several important projects inaugurated in recent years. Some credit for this must go to Matthew Fitzjohn, the editor of this collection, both for his personal contribution and for persuading several colleagues to provide him with reports on their fieldwork, which he has brought together in this volume. Whereas an earlier generation of field surveys often centred upon Greek coastal colonies, like Metapontum (Basilicata) or Himera (Sicily), in line with somewhat predictable interests in the hinterlands of city states, the editor's purpose here is to direct our attention to the comparatively neglected, if not too closely defined, 'uplands' of adjacent regions. In addition, he attempts to broaden and enliven the agenda by going beyond the usual technicalities, complexities and imponderables in the evaluation of the surface record. He includes reports on selected excavations and an occasional foray into questions of definition and perception in the archaeology of landscape. Although one might quibble about whether coastal zones are any better known or less deserving research areas than interior uplands, at least from a Sicilian prehistoric perspective, the volume has admirable, if fairly broad, aims. These are outlined in the editor's introduction (pp. 13-18) to the thirteen, mostly multi-authored, chapters.

Inevitably, contributions vary somewhat in scope, not least because of the contrasting nature of the projects discussed, some of which are still in progress. However, the menu is varied and most readers should find some items of interest. Despite a certain emphasis on prehistoric periods, the long chronological perspective of several contributions transcends traditional period specialization, whether prehistoric, classical, Medieval or later. This is one of the strengths and challenges of survey archaeology, well illustrated in the first paper (by Foxhall, Lazrus, Michelaki, Robb, Van Hove and Yoon) on the changing Calabrian landscapes of Bova Marina. Anyone expecting more on Calabria, however, will be disappointed. All the other papers are about Sicily.

The first results of new surveys along the Gornalunga-Margi and Upper Simeto valleys of eastern Sicily are efficiently summarized in two papers (by respectively: Albanese, Alberghina, Brancato, Procelli, Sirena; and Leone, Witcher, Privitera, Spigo), reflecting different methods and aims; a recurrent characteristic of surveys in Sicily, where UK or US staff have tended to favour field walking in transects, while others have adopted various expedient approaches. The next five chapters concern aspects of the Troina project, a mixture of survey and targeted excavation, notably of the Casa Sollima Copper Age site (directed by Malone and Stoddart). This was a sophisticated multi-disciplinary project, and some important results are presented here, including specialist reports on excavated lithics, faunal and botanical remains (by Pettitt, Corrado and Bending). It is not ideal, however, to have these detached from the rest of the relevant site data. One would also like to know what the 14C dates show. (The very meagre haul of 14C dates for Sicilian prehistory is a constant source of frustration.) Sturt's contribution nicely illustrates the potential benefits of a well researched computerised reconstruction of an excavated Chalcolithic building, though it suffers visually in a printed format without colour. Ayala and Fitzjohn (chapter 6) explain how the visibility of Sicilian survey data can be conditioned by erosion, which is very severe in the hilly or mountainous terrain around Troina, where relatively few prehistoric sites were found. This is a key article for Sicilian – one might say Mediterranean – upland survey archaeology. Walker then provides a review of Medieval documentary sources (9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century) for the Troina area, while Fitzjohn considers cognitive or experiential perceptions of landscape (as in his recent article in *World Archaeology*, 2007), concerns not so typical of Italian research agendas. As a thoughtful exploration of concepts and attitudes to landscape and an imaginative exercise in ethnographic research involving local people in a photo elicitation test, this is a stimulating centrepiece for the volume. I was interested to hear how some residents view their surroundings today, and amused to learn that the extraordinary rocky protuberance of Roccia Pietralunga was an obviously important natural place, but only in the minds of visiting archaeologists. Nevertheless, despite cautionary tales from Troina, one is still hoping to learn whether, or in what way, the data from other Sicilian surveys can be used to make generalisations, albeit rather impersonal, about historical trends or processes.

Tanasi's paper whets our appetite for a fuller publication of the Polizzello excavations, while the last four papers and projects, championed by Michael Kolb amongst others, report on new research in western Sicily, much of it affiliated to the Monte Polizzo project. Western Sicily is no longer the neglected area it once was. (Indeed, Spatafora's fine monograph of 2003 on Monte Maranfusa was a milestone.) A preliminary assessment of the aims and findings of the Salemi survey is followed by a more detailed account of excavations in a two-phase rock-cut chamber tomb (Copper and Late Bronze Ages) at Pitrazzi, and a stratigraphic sounding in the urban setting of Salemi, perhaps ancient Halikyai. The last short paper by Cooney and Kolb considers aspects of settlement design or, more broadly,

'urbanisation', as exemplified by the sites of Mokarta, Monte Polizzo and Salemi. This is a theme which would be well worth revisiting in depth on an island-wide scale and from a variety of perspectives, which would require another edited volume at least.

Obviously, this volume is not representative of *all* recent survey or 'upland' archaeology in Sicily, let alone in Calabria. It could not have been so and makes no such claims. A notable Sicilian omission, for example, is the Torcicoda project, with its unusual focus on recent historical periods (eg, Pluciennik *et al.* in *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 2004). Inevitably, perhaps, with the emphasis on preliminary and interim reports, this remains something of a holding operation and, despite the geographical proximity of projects, a slightly disjointed collection from a thematic standpoint. Nevertheless, it is a useful volume of papers. The main interest stems, perhaps, from the more developed fieldwork projects, but the new work promises well and, especially if it leads to more definitive and detailed publication, should help to stimulate interest in the Mediterranean's largest island. (One or two of these projects, like Bova Marina, also have very good websites: <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/~jer39/BMAP/>).

This is the 13<sup>th</sup> volume in the Accordia Specialist Studies on Italy series, which appeared soon after the retirement (from UCL) of Professor Ruth Whitehouse, a prominent founder member of the Accordia enterprise. Apart from the many scholars who have benefited personally from Ruth's help and advice over the years (as well as that of Accordia's director, John Wilkins), an international academic community must be hoping that this monograph series and the Accordia Research Papers have a long-term future. (In any case, it was great to see Ruth being honoured just recently by various contributors in the *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, 2008.)

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*The views expressed in this review are not necessarily those of the Society or the Reviews Editor*