
ERRATUM

Social Networks and Regional Identity in Bronze Age Italy, by Emma Blake, 2014. New York (NY): Cambridge University Press; ISBN 978-1-107-06320-4 hardback £65 & \$99; xiv + 325 pp., 41 figs, 15 tables – **ERRATUM**

Francesco Iacono

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In the above book review (Iacono 2016) published in 26.2 (pp. 372–4), several author's corrections were missed throughout. The press apologises for any confusion caused by this error.

The correct version of the book review follows this notice.

Reference

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Review

Social Networks and Regional Identity in Bronze Age Italy, by Emma Blake, 2014. New York (NY): Cambridge University Press; ISBN 978-1-107-06320-4 hardback £65 & \$99; xiv + 325 pp., 41 figs, 15 tables

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Discussion about regional identities is not new within the domain of Italian archaeology, where it has dominated much of the historical and archaeological approaches to the ancient peninsula (e.g. Ampolo *et al.* 1989). An undoubtedly interesting novelty of *Social Networks and Regional Identity in Bronze Age Italy* is the methodology adopted to pursue such an objective, which features the use of currently very popular network methods.

The book title is somewhat deceptive, as the focus of the main argument lies beyond the Bronze Age (BA), well into the Iron Age, up until the Roman conquest. Having later periods in mind has both positive and negative effects. On the good side, the will to consider the long-term openly endows a much wider perspective than that normally characterizing studies specializing in narrow chronological partitions. On the other hand, however, later textual sources can sometimes become a dangerous teleological lens through which to analyse the archaeological record of the Bronze Age. To her credit, the author is normally sufficiently cautious to balance this potential danger, keeping in mind the specificities of the BA framework studied.

The first chapter (pp. 1–33) introduces the main argument of the book and sets the stage for previous approaches, offering also a short background to later BA interaction. The second chapter (pp. 34–65) describes the methodological choices on which networks have been based. As in many other studies (e.g. Mizoguchi 2009), each site represents a node and a shared exotic object type represents a linkage between sites. The starting point is that exotica can be used to construct ‘local networks’ of interaction (p. 34). The methodological discussion is preceded by a paragraph on Mediterranean trade in the BA, which, although helpful, is not particularly up to date (pp. 34–42), i.e. does not take into consideration many important recent, and not so recent, studies, e.g. Borgna & Càssola Guida (2009); Jung (2006); van Wijngaarden (2002). This unfortunately influences some of the main chronological equivalences that are adopted through the book. LH (Late Helladic) IIIB is not Recent Bronze Age (RBA), but rather RBA starts in LH IIIB and ends in LH

IIIC middle, and this is when the Protovillanovan, or Final Bronze Age (FBA), starts. Such a relation was quite firmly established about 10 years ago and substantially confirmed by many (also recently: see Bettelli & Alberti 2014; Damiani 2010, 417–18; Jung 2006, 216; Vianello 2005, 104). This is not a chronological subtlety, as it remarkably affects the narrative which the author extracts from the analysis of the BA record, as we shall see (particularly for southern Italy). Moving to the process of selection of material to be included in the network, this is obviously a particularly thorny step. Items include a variety of object types (76 overall), but not local handmade ceramics, the most common material (the author suggests that the analysis of pottery ‘has been taken as far as it can go’ [p. 32] but often admits that this follows the same trends attested in the network, e.g. pp. 27, 170, 200). The categories are very selective and heterogeneous. The whole of Aegean-type pottery (whether locally manufactured or imported) represents one category and, at the same time, only specific types of pins and axes make a category each. Axe-types (p. 60) are particularly debatable as a category, since only winged axes have been included, thus neglecting other classes, which are well attested in southern Italy (e.g. shaft hole axes or socketed axes: see Bietti Sestieri 2010, 321, 346–9). Also, more broadly, reliance on the volumes of the series *Prähistorische Bronzefunde* as a main source of data leaves much to be desired. Although these publications are as detailed and comprehensive as possible at the moment of their issue, unfortunately some of the volumes are old (e.g. Bianco Peroni 1970) and should be integrated with more recent primary publications, something which does not always happen in this book (see, for instance, the case of the Pila Brancón hoard at Nogara, which is not discussed: see Salzani 1994). This may, to some extent, be understandable, given the large-scale long-term concern of the book, but it is nevertheless a limitation.

The third chapter (pp. 66–86) introduces some of the main theoretical themes of the book, such as ethnicity (pp. 68–71), viewed as determined by the reiteration of interaction (pp. 71–6), a thought-provoking proposal. In the opinion of this reader, however, the overall point is not entirely convincing, as it is based on an equation ‘shared exotic material culture = network = ethnic groups’, which *de facto* minimizes the importance of the activity of intermediaries (traders, travelling craftsmen and so on) and does not investigate the role of different groups within societies. As admitted by the author (p. 87), many of the materials selected for the study are, because of their precious nature, likely to inform us only about ‘exceptional’—read elite—activity, rather than those involving commoners. Network concepts adopted by the author to grapple with ancient

ethnic groupings include path dependence (which allows a later glimpse of historical developments through the analysis of archaeological evidence of earlier periods) and other measures derived from Social Network Analysis, the use of which in previous archaeological research is also reviewed (pp. 79–86).

Chapter 4 (pp. 87–112) presents a first survey of the overall networks capturing the RBA and the following FBA situation in continental Italy only. This is merely exploratory and confirms a role for material culture sharing and distance, as well as the existence of local sub-networks.

In the second part of the book, the author analyses four regional sub-networks covering much of the peninsula. Here the discussion of network patterns is normally rich and contextually grounded and offers interesting insights. An introductory description of main trends recognized through previous research is followed by a detailed analysis of what networks can tell us about such dynamics in the two time-slices selected, using also measures like ‘betweenness’ and ‘faction analysis’ (e.g. pp. 140–46). Finally, the later Iron Age situation (inclusive of linguistic data) is presented and compared to the results of the network analyses.

Chapter 5 (pp. 113–49) starts with analysis of northern Italy and, discussing the so-called collapse of the Terramare, suggests that sites that survived into the RBA were those less integrated in the Terramare network (pp. 122–9). Also FBA Veneto is examined as an example of a particularly tight regional network (pp. 129–36). Chapter 6 (pp. 150–81) examines west-central Italy and records a sudden increase of connectivity in southern Etruria during the FBA (p. 164) and the relative marginality of Latium (p. 178), although the findspot of Aegean-type pottery needed to connect these two areas, hypothetically postulated by the author, actually exists (Vaccina, near Rome; see Vagnetti *et al.* 2014, 39–40 with bibliography). The chapter on east-central Italy (chapter 7, 182–206) notes the linkages with the Terramare area and proto-Veneto (pp. 194, 197), as well as the role of the Apennines as facilitating rather than hampering communication (p. 206).

More problematic is chapter 8 (pp. 207–39, the last before the conclusions) on southern Italy. Here Aegean-type material, which has been used until this point as a proxy for local interaction (correctly, given that this material at this time is largely composed of local imitations: see Vagnetti *et al.* 2009), becomes an indicator of relations with the Aegean world by virtue of its maritime-oriented distribution (pp. 224–7), with the implicit assumption that any maritime-based activity had to be driven by non-local agents, even when Mycenaean palaces no longer existed (i.e. during much of the RBA and the FBA, according to the currently accepted chronology). Also, because of its selective nature, the dataset misses crucial phenomena such as FBA hoarding (Bietti Sestieri 2010, 329, 346) and important sites such as Trinitapoli (p. 47, briefly mentioned only by virtue of its ivory findings; see Tunzi Sisto 1999) or Roca (in the dataset only for Aegean-type pottery, but not for the metals; Maggiulli 2009).

Despite these shortcomings and the scepticism of this reader in its core argument, this book is to be commended, because it represents a bold attempt and one of the first to use network methodologies. Overall it is very rare to find analyses with clear objectives and methodologies, and ambitious enough to deal with a scale as vast as the one discussed here. This is particularly to be appreciated in a panorama such as that of Italian archaeology, where disciplinary partitions (both chronological and geographical) operate as powerful constraints. To conclude, this study demonstrates there is great potential for the robust exploration of patterns in the archaeological record of prehistoric Italy.

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