

Prehistoric landscape dynamics and social complexity in the Erei uplands (Central Sicily) between the 5th and the 3rd millennium cal. BC

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The Erei uplands are placed in the easternmost part of inner Sicily. It has been interested in the last decade by numerous research projects, including surface surveys and stratigraphic excavations, together with detailed geomorphological and bio-archaeological analysis. On the one hand, these researches allow to define how in the area has not been the geography of places to mechanically determine the history of this territory but that, instead, a more complex interconnection between environmental and social-economic factors have historically produced different landscape dynamics. On the other, the research conducted in particular on the Erei prehistory, is contributing to radically challenge the impression of site-less archaeology traditionally attributed to this part of inland Sicily. On the contrary, this area is characterized by complex cultural dynamics, activated by different groups of people, showing their own autonomous development within the larger Mediterranean cultural context, only apparently distant from inner Sicily, but easily accessible instead through a dense web of communication routes, formed by numerous mountain passages and wide river valleys. With this contribution an updated overview of the available data is provided, particularly for two key moments in the social and cultural development of the Erei: the first concerns the development of Neolithic communities and the transition to the following Copper Age (5th-4th mill. cal. BC), with dynamics that partly seem to contradict the consolidated framework for this period in the rest of the island, with a higher prevalence of economic aspects related to pastoralism, and communities that show a high degree of mobility than the more sedentary agricultural groups on the coast. The second considers the transition from the Copper Age to the Bronze Age (3rd mill. cal. BC), characterized by a considerable population explosion, a rich material production, together with developed household and funerary dynamics, evidence for the presence in this area of a socio-economic formation of considerable cultural and social complexity, comparable to other contemporary Mediterranean contexts.

