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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Book Review: Storia Militare, by Mauro Fiorentini

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This paperback volume comprises 48 pages with several unnumbered black and white illustrations and some colour illustrations. It is a monograph dedicated to the Picenian warriors, who lived mainly in Abruzzo and Marche (central east Italy) from the IX century BC until the romanization of the area (p. 5).

The author, after the introduction on the aims and the limitations of his work, starts explaining where and when the Picenian culture spread and what were its main

> Overall, this work represents the current situation in Italy regarding reconstructive work and archaeology. On the one hand, as the author points out, there is a grave lack of primary archaeological data publication. The situation is also made worse by the absence of an adequate material analysis strategy in academic studies, and the lack of a formal interpretative study of funerary contexts.

characteristics. He underlies the scarcity of archaeological studies especially on the settlements belonging to this Italic population. Then he explains his "experimental reconstruction" work, based mainly on archaeological artefacts found in a warrior tomb dating to the VIII-VII cent. BC in the Colle dei Cappuccini necropolis, Ancona. The scarce number of finds in this tomb, compared to other contemporary tombs, pushed the author to investigate the hypothetical presence of organic materials by replication. In the following sections, the author illustrates each piece of the equipment with detailed descriptions. For clothing, in the attempt of reconstructing the tunic, he used an original cloth woven with a traditional loom in the first half of the XX century, in linen. Some of the decorations of forthcoming clothing reconstructions will be made with tablet weaving based on archaeological examples from the Etruscan excavation of Verucchio and on other archaeological object decorations preserved in the National Archaeological Museum of Marche, although no chronological indication is given. Some "adaptations" of the archaeological finds and iconography from the period in nearby regions are justified with practical considerations (like the length of the mantle, based on a Nuragic example from Sardinia, but made longer to obtain more protection). His very honest description of the impressive reconstruction of the equipment goes on to describe the shoes (made on the base of Etruscan examples and to be fit for walking), the hat, the helmet (reconstructed with the help of modern techniques and contemporary ancient craft specialists), the kardiophylax, the belt, the shield (based on examples from Ireland), the spear (made with a modern iron bar which composition was unknown to the author "to avoid conditioning during the forging phase, so to work in an empirical way close to the ancient way", p. 15), the sword (with an interesting change in the suspension system to provide comfort), the little axe (absent in the archaeological record of the period, but attested a little bit later and useful for other activities), the slingshot (?) (reconstructed on the base of scarce if absent evidence for the archaeological record, but attested in other areas and typical of seminomads societies), the dagger (very common in the archaeological record and very complex manufacture, currently being reconstructed), the amber bead fibulas (reconstructed because it is attested in other tombs and was useful to understand the work implied), the lunular razor (in copper alloy sheet, the author used only the inverse forging as an original technique), the vitreous beads (only described in their archaeological context, no reconstruction given), the astonishing composite buckle in ivory, amber and bronze (made on an archaeological example from Matelica). Then he moves to describe bronze harpoons, which allegedly were

used in the Picenian warrior daily life and were attested in the Picenian tombs referred to above. They were made with the help of a Bavarian ancient craft specialist and tested by professional fishermen. Despite the spiritual life of the Picenian is scarcely attested in the written sources, the author tried to reconstruct some objects that were possibly used during the Picenian age and were recovered in upland sites in the form of figurines cut in metal sheets. In the spirituality section, the author also describes a site in the Conero Mountain with rock carvings. This monument has not been deeply studied, but the author recorded his clearing of the rock as well as some observations regarding the related rock carved features, such as basins and drains. The author argues this to be a religious site, although the belonging to the iron age seems unlikely without further examination. In analysing other daily objects, which allegedly belonged to the banquet evidenced in some archaeological artefacts found in tombs, the author describes his reconstruction of two ladles, one in metal sheet (bronze) and the other in pottery, inspired by archaeological examples from Fossa and Matelica. Finally, he describes his work in reconstructing some firedogs, spits and grills, inspired by artefacts from Ancona, Matelica, Campovalano.

In his final considerations on the reconstruction work, the author points out that some aspects of his work could integrate some gaps in the archaeological record, namely that the lack of defensive weaponry (like shields) in the tombs was due to them being made with organic materials. The marks on the sandstone used to refine the sword could be compared to archaeological material, and the foundry structure used for forging the iron objects returned some material similar to those which can be found in excavations, as well as the social role of the blacksmith in ancient societies. The main advantage of this reconstruction work was, in the author's opinion, the activities which could be performed in educational museums using the reconstructed artefacts.

The second part of the book deals with the war tactics which can be drawn from written sources, the archaeological record, comparative studies and the reconstruction work, although the author points out that this is a hypothetical possibility. Of great importance is the Picenian chronology given in this paragraph, that clarifies some of the dating of the reconstructed objects in the first half of the monograph. This chronological scan sees the historical and archaeological periods from the Picenian perspective underlying the relevant interactions with other civilizations and is used by the author to illustrate the changes in the weaponry attested in the Picenian context. Among the careful and insightful considerations, the author illustrates in this paragraph the possibility of the rise of a warrior class during the Picenian III (700-580 BC) as well as the heroic duel and the mercenary hypothesis later in time. The interaction with the raising of the Roman Republic is carefully explained with good critical analysis from a military perspective, giving highlights in the written sources quoted in Italian.

The last part of this work deals with the foundry used to forge the iron artefacts described above. It was reconstructed on the base of an excavated example from Poggio Civitella, Tuscany, dating to the VI cent. BC. This was chosen because it was almost complete and included a charcoal making site in the vicinity. Ethnographical studies by Eliade were also used to compare the social role of the blacksmith in ancient societies.

The final paragraph contains the acknowledgements and a specific bibliography.

Overall, this work represents the current situation in Italy regarding reconstructive work and archaeology. On the one hand, as the author points out, there is a grave lack of primary archaeological data publication. The situation is also made worse by the absence of an adequate material analysis strategy in academic studies, and the lack of a formal interpretative study of funerary contexts. The resources cited in this article are therefore mainly secondary sources and some of the supportive interpretations come either from very far or from rather dated ethnographic works. On the other hand, the reconstructive work was explicitly carried out as an attempt to obtain useful replicas but could have benefited from a careful literature survey on work done elsewhere. A relevant number of recordings were made during the reconstructive work (such as working hours, charcoal quantity and similar data) even if no clear methodology was utilized. The same observations can be made for the interpretation of the reconstructed foundry and its implications.

The second part of the work was better developed and gave a good critical review of the military aspect of the Picenian civilization in the wider archaeological and historical context. The reader may perhaps have benefitted if this paragraph was included in the introduction.

This work may also have benefitted from closer contact with other scholars and re-enactment groups across Europe. This could have enlarged the perspective and deepen the analysis, and include more than just John Coles' work in his bibliography when referring to experimental archaeology. On one hand it seems the author is aware of the difficulties in interpreting such a fragmented archaeological record, but on the other hand he succumbs to his own previous criticism of gender interpretation of the material culture of the Picenian area. I believe the aim of this publication, making people aware and interested of the Picenian material culture and civilization, is intertwined too deeply with the purpose of reconstructing the hypothetical equipment, and, even if the author demonstrates a very positive potential in acquiring methodological tools and good skills in ancient technology, the reader could be confused by the structure of the work.

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