

THE MARCHE REGION FROM LATE COPPER AGE TO EARLY BRONZE AGE, IN THE LIGHT OF EXTRA-REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

AUTHOR

Gaia Pignocchi

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Thanks to recently published researches, it is now possible to articulate the transition from Late Copper Age to Early Bronze Age in the Marche region. Despite the absence of radiocarbon dating, as well as the diversity of knowledge gleaned and limited research, the available data does illuminate some local aspects (Cazzella et al. 2013). These insights refer to chronologically different groups of communities, developing innovative elements in pottery production at various stages, this owing to interrelations with different areas and extra-regional groups.

Characteristic of the whole Copper Age period in the Marche are settlement contexts with *a squame* (scale pattern) or *rusticata* (encrusted) wares, which stretch back to the beginning of Early Bronze Age. In the Late Copper Age, in addition to the encrusted or “*a squame*” decoration, other decorative elements or distinctive handle shapes begin to appear, these deriving from, or influenced by, traditions in many of the peninsular regions, as well as the opposite Adriatic coast (i.e. Laterza, Bell Beaker and Cetina types).

Some of these sites evidence a particular horizon, which can be referred to as the later phase of Copper Age. This is characterised by the presence of Laterza type elements (high strap handles with cylindrical button type appendage and incised lattice-type decoration), in association with *a squame* applications and blunted elbow handles.

In the settlement of Ancona-Piazza Malatesta (Pignocchi and Landolfi 2013), some high strap handles are documented, with a button-type appendage on the top (Fig. 1.A, nn. 1-3), together with a fourth handle, of much smaller size on a convex sherd (Fig. 1.A, n. 4). Shapes include sub cylindrical jars (Fig. 1.A, n. 5), truncated conical bowls and a convex bowl with an “elbow” handle (Fig. 1.A, n. 11). Well represented in the coarse pottery is the *a squame* decoration visible in a band below the rim, with differences in the surface treatment. These treatments vary from single or multiple smooth, clay strips (Fig. 1.A, nn. 6-8), to a pizzicato (pinched), to plastic (Fig. 1.A, n. 9) or

barely visible scales

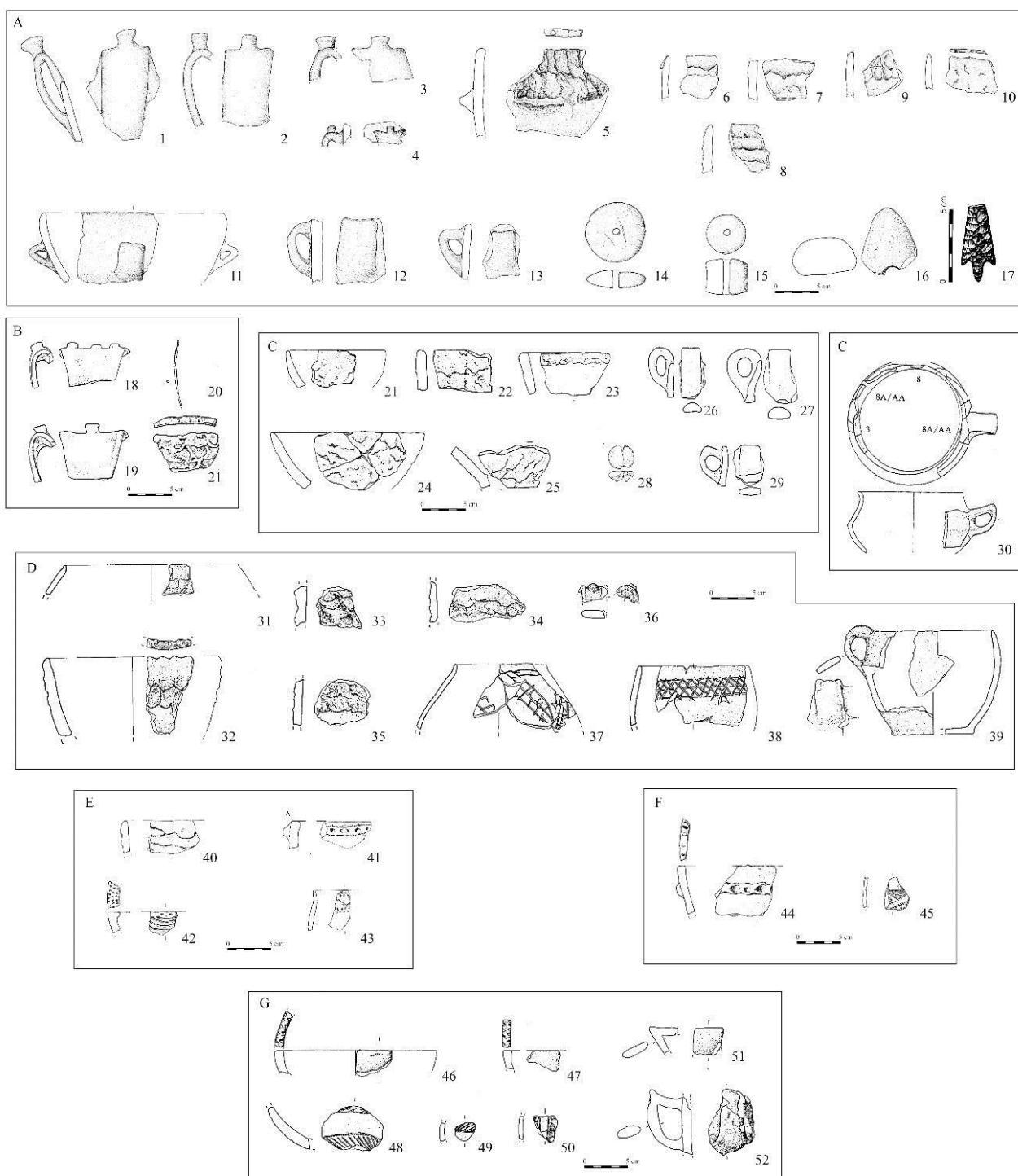


Fig. 1 – Late Copper Age: A (nn.1-17) Ancona, Piazza Malatesta (from Pignocchi and Landolfi 2013); B (nn. 18-21) Cingoli, Cervidone (from Lucentini 1996); C (nn. 22-30) Offida, Borgo Cappuccini (from Lucentini 1996); D (nn. 31-39) Muccia, Maddalena (from Manfredini et al. 2005); E (nn. 40-43) Sassoferato, area artigianale (from Foglini, et al. 2005); F (nn. 44-45) San Severino Marche, Collemontanari, Sant'Elena (from Landolfi et al. 2005); G (nn. 46-52) Novafeltria, Monte Ceti (from Baldelli et al. 2005).

(Fig. 1.A, n. 10). The impressions are found on the edges of the rims or, less often, on the wall below it. There are also a few ear-handles and blunt elbow handles (Fig. 1.A, nn. 12-13).

Amongst the ceramic artefacts there are also clay spindle whorls, mostly biconvex (Fig. 1.A, nn. 14) or disc-shaped, and a cylindrical weight similar to those found at Ortucchio (Radmilli 1981; Fig. 1.A, n. 15). The stone industry includes a tanged arrowhead (Fig. 1.A, n. 17) and a fragment of a stone axe-hammer (Fig. 1.A, n. 16).

Recovered from the surface at Cervidone near Cingoli (Silvestrini Lavagnoli 1985-1986), were pottery sherd with prominent and well imbricated scale pattern (Fig. 1.B, n. 21), as well as broad strap-handles similar to those of Piazza Malatesta (Pignocchi and Landolfi; fig. 4, nn. 1-3), such as the handle found with a single button on the top (Fig. 1.B, n. 19) (Lucentini 1996; Fig. 3.C, n. 9). Another type of handle recovered with three button type appendages on the top finds comparisons only in contexts outside our region (Fig. 1.B, n. 18) (Lucentini 1996; Fig. 3.C, n. 7). Other finds collected were a tiny metal rod (Fig. 1.B, n. 20) and flint foliates with bifacial, flat pressure-flaking.

At the site of Offida-Borgo Cappuccini (Lucentini 1996) sherds of “a squame” pottery with slight decoration have been recovered (Lucentini 1996, figs. 1-2; Fig. 1.C, nn. 21-25) including wares with clay strips under the rim, those with slightly raised, high strap-handles (Lucentini 1996, fig. 1, 2-4; Fig. 1.C, nn. 26-27) those with *a capoccchia* elevation (Lucentini 1996, fig. 1, 9; Fig. 1.C, n. 28), and those with an elbow handle (Lucentini 1996, fig. 1, 1; Fig. 1.C, n. 29). Also found were fragments of stone axe-hammers (Lucentini, 1996, fig. 1, nn. 23-24) and a tanged point (Lucentini 1996, fig. 2, n. 22).

The substantially homogeneous Late Copper Age pottery production of Offida-Borgo Cappuccini, is differentiated by a particular carinated bowl (Lucentini 1996, fig. 2, n. 1; Fig. 1.C, n. 30), attested both in Tuscany in various Florentine contexts of the second phase of the Early Bronze Age (Sarti, et al. 2001), in Emilia Romagna at Borgo Panigale (Catarsi and Dall'Aglio 1997, fig. 152, n. 2) and in the Tanaccia Cave of Brisighella (Cocchi Genick 2005, fig. 1, n. 4; Farolfi 1976, fig. 9, n. 6).

These finds may have their reference context in the Copper Age settlement of Maddalena di Muccia, which spanned the middle of the third millennium BC cal. (between 2800 and 2300 BC cal), in accordance with the available radiocarbon dates (4125 ± 60 and 3835 ± 45 BP uncal) (Manfredini et al. 2005). The continuation of the excavations on the plateau of Maddalena di Muccia has made it possible to identify a Copper Age phase of the settlement, characterized by the presence of jars and bowls with “a squame”(scale pattern), mostly located below the rim (Manfredini et al. 2005: 436, fig. 3, nn. 1,6,9-11; Fig. 1.D 31-35) and Laterza-type elements (high strap handles with a button type on the top and incised lattice-type decorative patterns) (Manfredini et al. 2005: 436, fig. 3, n. 2 and 4, nn. 1-2; Fig. 1.D, nn. 36-38).

These contexts, which share the presence of Laterza-type elements, are understood to be included in a network of exchanges and interrelations involving all regions of Central and Southern Italy, both Adriatic and Tyrrhenian (Pignocchi in press). The high strap handles with multiple buttons are present in a limited group and in many regions: Apulia (Grotta della Trinità) (Ingravallo 2002), Abruzzo (Cosentino et al. 2007, fig. 2, n. 11) Campania (Pontecagnano T.1497 - Bailo Modesti and Salerno 1998, fig. 57, n. 5), Tuscany (Buca di Spaccasasso and Selvicciola) (Cavanna 2007, pl. 10, nn. 46, 47; Arcangeli et al. 2008, fig 3, n. 4-5; Conti et al. 1995, 1996). The single-button high strap handles, on the contrary, despite their fragmentary nature, find generic comparisons in all Central and Southern Italy. The exception to this is a sherd of a bowl with rectilinear outline found in Piazza Malatesta, for which the best comparison, so far, is the intact vessel from the Copper Age burial cave of San Giuseppe in Elba Island (Grifoni Cremonesi 2001: 73, fig. 15, n. 7).

The incised, lattice-type decorative patterns found at Maddalena di Muccia, also present in many sites of Southern Latium (Anzidei et al. 2005, fig. 12, n. 19 and 13, n. 5), are distributed along the Adriatic

coast as far as the Po Valley, from the Grotta della Trinità in Puglia (Ingravallo and Orlando 1996, fig. 4, n. 2) to Roccascalegra in Abruzzo (Di Fraia 2003, fig. 4, n. 12) and to Emilia at Provezza of Cesena (Miari et al. 2008, fig. 2, n. 8).

Another group of sites in the Marche presents Cetina and Bell Beaker elements, locally modified and sometimes still inserted within the tradition of “a squame” pottery, for which we have no radiocarbon dating (Cazzella et al. 2013: 133). However, given the evidence of a gradual transition from Late Copper Age to Early Bronze Age, we could place them in the last quarter of the third Millennium BC cal, in correspondence with the dates available for other regions such as Tuscany and Emilia, where a greater spread of Bell Beaker wares is widely documented.

In the Marche, Late Copper Age settlements showing a limited impact of the influences of Cetina and Bell Beaker culture are sporadically distributed all over the region.

At Sassoferato-Area Artigianale, where excavations were carried out by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici delle Marche in 2001-2002, two separate settlement areas were found, one dating to the Middle and Late Neolithic periods, the other to the Late Copper Age (Silvestrini et al. 2005). Alongside sherds with *a squame* decoration (Fig. 1.E, n. 40) and with a finger impressed cordon placed just below the rim (Fig. 1.E, n. 41), a fragment of internally thickened rim, decorated on the flat edge by three rows of small impressed triangles, and by a pattern on the wall consisting of three small impressed triangles, bordered below by incised semicircular lines (Fig. 1.E, n. 42), was also recovered.

Both shape and decoration show a local elaboration of the repertoire of Cetina facies, that we also find in Bell Beaker contexts of northern Tuscany. The bowls with flattened rims decorated with small triangles, found on the opposite coast of the Adriatic in Cetina facies sites (Lo Porto 1996, fig. 4), are in fact a unique type of northern Tuscany (documented also in Emilia Romagna). A fragment of small olla with a short neck decorated with two rows of impressed points separated by a downward sloping incised line (Fig. 1.E, n. 43), despite not having any precise comparison, recalls Copper Age decorative patterns of both Adriatic and Tyrrhenian contexts (see Conelle d’Arcevia - Cazzella and Moscoloni 1999, pl. 61.25 phase B).

From a nineteenth-century collection of surface finds in the area of Collemontanari-Sant’Elena near San Severino Marche (MC) (Landolfi et al. 2005), a sherd with comb-impressed opposing triangles at the widest part of the vessel (Fig. 1.F, n. 45), is noted. This is in the specific style of the Bell Beaker culture and was found together with a few sherds with plastic cordons, which were either smooth or impressed (Fig. 1.F, n. 44).

Similarly, at the Monte Ceti of Novafeltria (PU) settlement (Baldelli et al. 2005), Cetina and Bell Beaker elements (Fig. 1.G, n. 46-50) were found in association with elbow-handled vessels (Fig. 1.G, n. 51-52), a combination which is also found in northern Tuscany and in Emilia Romagna at the end of the third millennium BC. Furthermore, bowls found with flattened rims decorated with small triangles (Fig. 1.G, nn. 46-47) are similar to those of Sassoferato-Area Artigianale, though the rims of these are less internally enlarged, and always refer to specimens of northern Tuscany.

In the Marche and in Italian Middle Adriatic area, the presence of elements related to Bell Beaker culture is therefore limited to isolated elements, often of uncertain attribution. This documents a more limited spreading of the phenomenon, which had little impact on local aspects, but which manifested in the form of a diffusion of models from the areas where innovations are much more marked.

At the end of the third millennium BC, a great renovation process started, driven by the decisive, although limited in the case of the Marche, contribution of the Bell Beaker culture, which led to the formation of the initial aspects of the Early Bronze Age in the region. This process is represented at the Monte Ceti of Novafeltria site which, due to its location at the border between Tuscany and Emilia

Romagna, was more easily reached by the influences coming from these areas and more open to the influences of Bell Beaker tradition.

In addition to material production, we ought also to take into account ideological aspects. However, in the period between Late Copper Age and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age in the Marche, funerary evidences are extremely scarce and insignificant, limited to the single case of the multiple inhumation of three individuals at Monte Ceti of Novafeltria (Baldelli et al. 2005). The extreme simplicity in the mode of burial seems to focus on a distinctive element, i.e. the choice of the context (a ridge or a rock shelter) that assumes a symbolic and sacral meaning.

Some peculiar aspects of Copper Age traditional ware (*a squame* and encrusted ware) seem not to cross the chronological border, while some others tend to develop in the Early Bronze Age (*sopraelevazioni a bottone* and particularly *anse a gomito* handles with button type appendage and elbow shape handles). In Early Bronze Age ceramic production attested at many sites appears to be more articulated in form and style as a consequence of a wider circulation of objects across the peninsula (Toscana, Emilia Romagna, Abruzzo, Puglia) and Adriatic area.

The vessels of Balza della Penna-Piobbico (tankards and jars with elbow shape handle) (Fig. 2.A, n. 1-2) (Baldelli et al. 2005, fig. 2, nn. 8-9), for example, have parallels with styles of the Early Bronze Age in Tuscany (Cocchi Genick 1998, types 74-75; Modeo and Sarti 2000, fig. 48, n. 2 for the profile, fig. 51, n. 1 for handle).

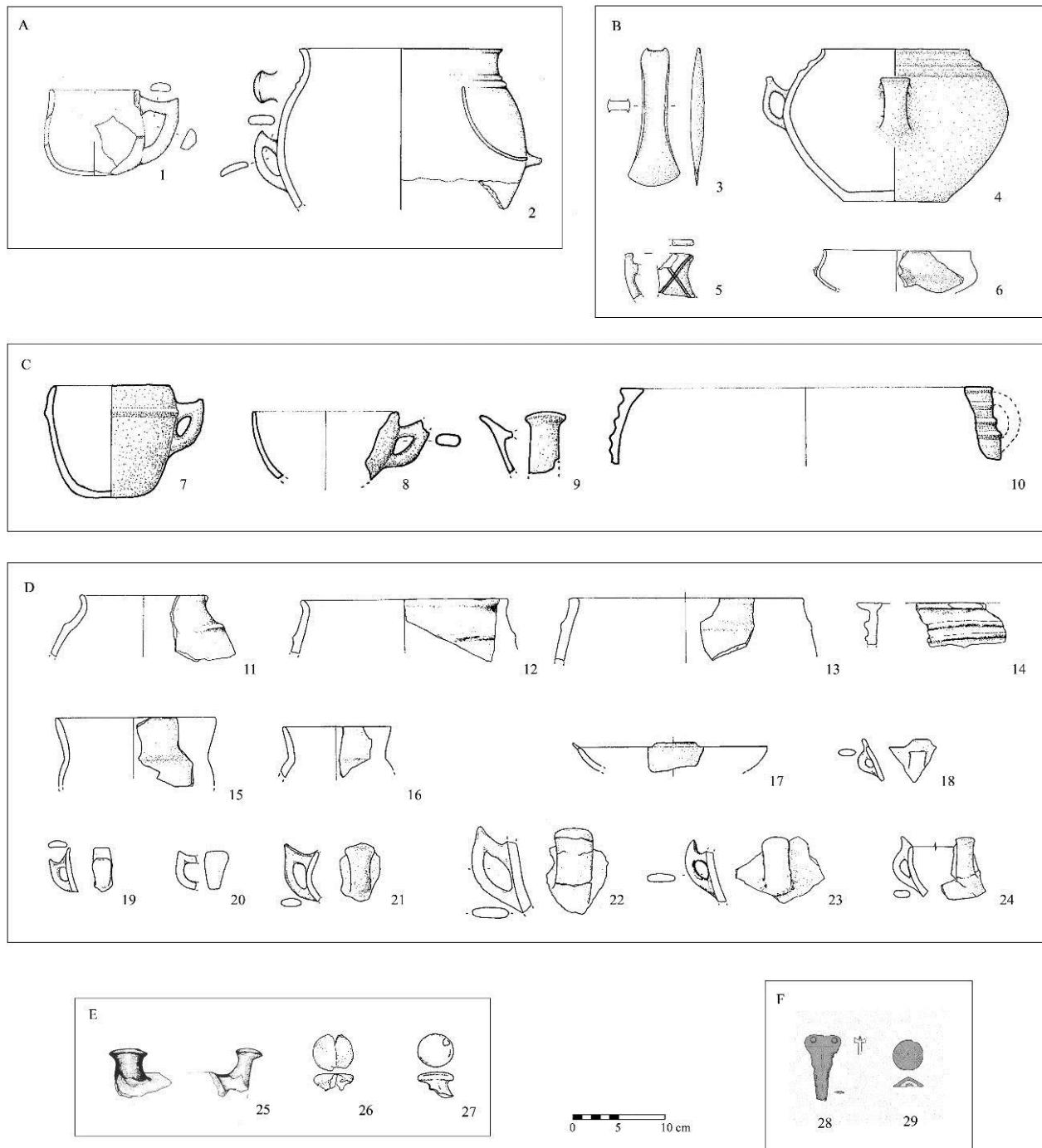


Fig. 2 – Early Bronze Age: A (nn. 1-2) Piobbico, Balza della Penna (from Baldelli, et al. 2005); B (nn. 3-6) Pieve di Carpegna (from Baldelli, et al. 2005); C (nn. 7-10) Sirolo, Ancarano (from Peroni 1971; Cocchi Genick 2005); D (nn.11-24) Castel di Lama, Forcella (from Lucentini 2005), E (nn. 25-27) Grotta dei Baffoni, Offida, Borgo Cappuccini, Castel di Lama, Forcella (from Lucentini 1997, 2005); F (nn. 28-29) Grotta della Beata Vergine di Frasassi (from Lucentini 1997).

The settlement of Pieve di Carpegna, of the beginning of the second millennium BC, was on the shoreline of an ancient lake (Baldelli et al. 2005, fig. 3; Fig. 2.B, nn. 3-6). The artefacts exhibit parallels with styles of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, but also with those of southern Italy. The flanged axe (Fig. 2.B, n. 3) was compared with those from an axe hoard of San Lorenzo di Noceto, in Emilia Romagna. The jar (Fig. 2.B, n. 4) is similar, in the shape of the body and of the handles, to one found at Cervaro Cave, near Lagonegro (PZ) in the Basilicata region, in a Copper Age context (Mieli et al. 2008, fig. 2, n. 2).

These inner settlements were, in addition to the coastal settlement of Ancarano near Sirolo, (BA2) involved in a circulation of styles (Fig. 2.C, nn. 7-10) with other regions (Toscana, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Abruzzo), but also with southern and Adriatic area (Cocchi Genick 2005, Fig. 1, nn. 1,3,5,7).

In the southern Marche settlement of Forcella-Castel di Lama (dated to the later phases of Early Bronze Age - Lucentini 2005) the ceramic production, which is more articulated in form and style (Fig. 2.D, nn. 11-24), has parallels in the Marche region with Balza della Penna-Piobbico and Ancarano, and with other regions, Veneto (Canàr), Tuscany (the Early Bronze age settlement near Florence and the Beato Benincasa Cave), Emilia Romagna (the Tanaccia Cave) and the Adriatic area (Puglia and Adriatic east coast) (Lucentini, 2005: 600). Some artefacts appear to still be influenced by the Laterza tradition (Fig. 2. D, n. 17), while other ceramic forms were already prefiguring types of the Middle Bronze Age 1 (Fig. 2.D, n. 24).

In the Early Bronze Age not many known sites are defined as cultic-funerary, for example located in caves in significant positions in the landscape which are clearly connected to symbolic and sacred meaning. A small number of materials of Early Bronze Age were found in the caves of Sentino Gorge (also called Frasassi Gorge) on the border with Umbria. The frequentation of the caves for funerary and cultural reasons increases significantly in Middle Bronze Age 1 (Lucentini 1997; Pignocchi 2014).

In the cave of Beata Vergine di Frasassi, a metal dagger and a glass paste button were found (Fig. 2.F, nn. 28-29), not apparently associated with human remains and interpreted by Lucentini (Lucentini 1997: 41) as part of a cenotaph, most probably dated to Middle Bronze Age 1 (Carancini 1991; Bianco Peroni 1994: 36-37, n. 273 dates the dagger to the advanced stage of the Bronze Age), as the glassy faience conical buttons with a “V” perforation at the base, present in central Italy, are dated to the Middle Bronze Age 1-2 (1650/1600 -1550/1500 BC; Bellintani 2011).

In the Baffoni Cave the handle with a knob (a protuberance known as *a capocchia*; Fig. 2.E, n. 25) dates to the Early Bronze Age. It is similar to other examples from the territory around Ascoli Piceno: Offida-Borgo Cappuccini (Lucentini 1996, fig. 1, n. 9; Fig. 2E, n. 26) and Forcella-Castel di Lama (Lucentini 2005; Fig. 3.A, n. 6; Fig. 2.E, n. 27), which are a variation of Laterza-type handles. A similar style also became a feature of the Polada culture in North Italy, where the strap handles were often surmounted by knobs.

A peculiar aspect in Marche in the Early Bronze Age is the depositing of hoards. These hoards testify the existence of widespread connections of metals, objects and styles which can be related to the emergence of elites and socially complex groups.

Dated to the early stages of the Bronze Age (BA1A) is the flanged axe hoard of Fermignano, in the upper valley of the Metauro, which at the time of discovery contained about thirty axes, now scattered amongst various museums (Pignocchi 2006; Catarsi and Dall'Aglio 1985). Both the types of axe and the composition of the metal (copper alloy produced from Fahlerz ores with high quantities of arsenic, antimony, silver and nickel) connect the hoard to the metal production of the Polada culture and to a few metal artefacts from the Adriatic coast (De Marinis 2006: 253). Contemporary with the axe hoard of Fermignano is the hoard of Acquaviva Picena in the southern area of the province of Ascoli Piceno. At the time of discovery the hoard contained twenty-nine flanged axes (Acquaviva Picena type),

many of which have now been lost (Lucentini 1987: 449). Very significant in relation to the question of contacts along the Adriatic coast is the presence of moulds for flanged axe type Acquaviva in the Puglia region (Di Iorio et al. in press).

Also probably part of a hoard were two axes dated to the central stages of Early Bronze Age (BA1B-C; De Marinis 2006: 253), found in an unknown site near Montegiorgio (FE), close to the middle valley of the river Tenna (Peroni 1971: 251, figs. 40, n. 6 and 57, n. 3). An axe hoard also came to light near Serravalle di Chienti close to the Altipiani di Colfiorito, on the border with Umbria, on an ancient sheep track used from prehistoric times until 1950.

The dagger hoard of Ripatransone, found in 1888 during agricultural work in loc. Castellano, a hill at a short distance from the Adriatic sea, contained 25 bronze hilted daggers dated to BA1B-C (2000-1800 BC) comparable with daggers from Adriatic and Tyrrhenian regions. Significant evidence of overseas contacts is derived from the presence of daggers of the type seen at Ripatransone, not only in the hoard in the Marche region, but also into the graves of the Cetina culture, on the other side of the Adriatic Sea (Bianco Peroni 1994: 54-55 nota 1).

The axe and dagger hoards are located on important routes along the main valleys in geographically strategic areas, which became important metallurgical districts in Early Bronze Age, and were connected to peninsular and overseas itineraries.

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