

Explorations and Explanations of a Bone Deposit in Roman Sicily

Knowledge of the ancient contact and exchange between cultural groups in the interior of Sicily suffers from a lack of archaeological research (Finley 1971). This contact and exchange was a large part of the ancient economy of the island, which played an important role in the wider Mediterranean economy. Investigations of archaeological sites may help define areas previously neglected. Gangivecchio, in the southeast region of the Palermo province, is one site worth investigation. Occupation of the site possibly dates from the Greek colonial period (7th to 6th centuries BC), through the Roman Empire, to the present, and the site contains archaeological evidence from both Greek and Roman cultures (Storey 2013). In the summer of 2014 I spent three weeks cataloging the materials from the 2012 excavation carried out by the University of Iowa and the University of Palermo. All materials came from parcel 19, which is thought to be the location of a Roman villa of the High Roman Empire. From the material remains it is clear that some form of animal processing happened at this site, on at least a moderate scale. Excavators have also theorized that this could have been a site of some ritual importance, even a sanctuary, perhaps to a fertility deity, which was common in ancient Sicily (Holloway 1991). Sanctuaries could often function as locations for trade and cultural exchange (Antonaccio 2011). If Gangivecchio were identified as a sanctuary, this would increase the site's importance as a center not only for trade and but also for cult practices in the area. If ritualized, the animal bones would have clues to sacrificial practices, in addition to economic and environmental information. This paper attempts to find an explanation for the bone deposit at Gangivecchio through an analysis of the bones themselves and their surrounding context, and through a comparison to other instances of animal processing at more thoroughly studied sites

in Sicily. This analysis will help indicate whether the function of this site was religious or secular, and how it fits into the bigger picture of the ancient Sicilian economy.

Bibliography

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