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GLI SCAVI NELLA CAVERNA DELLE ARENE CANDIDE: I, GLI STRATI CON CERAMICHE, by Luigi Bernabò Brea, pp. 364, pls. LXVIII. Bordighera (Istituto di Studi Liguri), 1946.

Arene Candide has long been famous in archaeological literature owing to the rich finds made there by Issel and other palaeontologists – notably the Englishmen Booke and Wall between 1864 and 1895. Happily their operations, which though very productive of relics fell short of modern technical standards, have left substantial portions of the archaeological deposit still undisturbed. By careful stratigraphical excavations between 1940 and 1942 Dr. Brea, in company with Prof. Cardini, was able to establish a reliable culture sequence for the first time in the Apennine Peninsula. The deposit described in this volume was 2.70 to 3.60 m. deep and, below stratum I (.70 to .90 m. thick), which was full of bits of rock fallen from walls and roof, consisted of white limestone dust, free from natural stones, but interrupted by thin veins blackened by organic matter. The observation of these occupation layers, which ran continuously across the whole section, originally a shaft 8.10 x 6.20 m., enabled the excavators to distinguish 28 layers above the more stony layer, where pottery first appeared. No strictly sterile layer separated the several strata, but some yielded far more relics than others. Brea ingeniously illustrates this point by giving the weights of sherds from each layer. The numbers of kilos fall progressively from 16,800 m. in layer I to 550 m. in layer 8 then rise to 8,300 m. in layer 12, fall thereafter to 1,100 m in layer 14, only to rise again to 32,300 in layer 21. Below this there is a rapid, but not quite continuous decline to 400 m., in layer 29. This tabulation justifies the author's division of the sequence into six main cultural periods, which is based on changes in pottery and other relics.

Layer 1 yielded Roman and Byzantine sherds mixed with the splinters of rock and is assigned to the Roman period. Layer 2, though Roman sherds were still found, contained chiefly hand-made pottery of the pre-roman Iron Age. Strata 3-8 form a series assigned to the Bronze Age on the strength of agreements in the pottery (mostly in sherds from the old unscientific excavations) with that from the terramare and lake-dwellings of the Polada group. Surprising in this context is a segment from a rotary quern found in situ in stratum 3 and an axe-handle (ansa ad ascia) from layer 7. A similar handle came from layer 9. In Aude, Helena assigns such handles to his énéolithique III.

Apart from this object the series 9-13 (culminating in 12) yielded plain round-bottomed pots of what is called in Italy the Lagozza type with pan-pipe lungs. It agrees in a general way with the plain Western pottery familiar from Cortaillod, Windmill Hill etc. But Brea, though he found no examples in his own excavation, assigns to the same horizon some flat-bottomed pots, which in Switzerland would be more at home in the later Horgen culture, two cranial amulets, likewise found before his excavations and the winged beads from Tana Bertrand. A priori the Lagozza culture in Liguria ought to be later than Cortaillod, but this unstratified objects do not prove it.

Below come the rich layers 14-24, characterized best by the curious square-mouthed vases long known from the site. In them were found also socketed ladles, clay pintaderas (of the Italian form much narrower than the Danubian, Balkan and Anatolian clay stamps), clay figurines and bracelets of Spondylus shell, all reflecting some sort of "Danubian influence" But, when decorated the pottery is now "engraved" – scratched after firing – a device familiar on the one hand in South Italy, Sicily, Malta and Sardinia and on the other in the South of France and at the Camp de Chassey, where it is associated with the local analogues of Lagozza pottery. But one such vase bears a spiral engraved and perhaps combines with excision in Rellini's "Apennine" style (Rellini regarded the latter as Bronze Age and subsequent finds suggest a quite late phase at that!).

Finally, from layer 20 came a single sherd with a stripe of white paint on the usual brownish clay ground. It may be a local product, but the neighbouring Caverna dell' Acqua produced a painted sherd certainly imported from the Ripoli region on the Adriatic side of the Apennines.

To the same horizon belonged six stone cists containing contracted skeletons and mostly dug down from layer 24 into the underlying deposit.

Already in layer 21 the excavators began to encounter sherds of rather rough pattern, incised or stamped with a shell-edge before firing or decorated with applied cordons. This "impressed ware" is alone found below 24 – but one vase thus decorated from 24 was square-mouthed. It characterizes the oldest Neolithic culture of Liguria as of Apulia and Sicily. The round-bottomed Ligurian shapes appear, however, less sophisticated than those of South Italy (which are often flat-bottomed) and seem to agree better with the cardial ware of the Iberian Peninsula and Morocco. Brea discuss the distribution of such impressed ware exhaustively. It must have reached the Ligurian coast from the south. Significantly obsidian too appear first in the earliest neolithic levels though it was imported in all subsequent periods and was presumably derived from Sardinia or the Lipari Islands.

Having described the relics level by level in the order adopted in this review in part II, the author discusses in part III the material from the major groups invoking also relics derived from earlier excavations and other Ligurian caves. Part IV finally deals with the place of Arene Candide in the general scheme of Italian and European prehistory and concludes with a chronological table. The reviewer has drown on all four parts but the conclusion. In the table the lowest levels are equated with E.M. I-II, Sesklo and Vinča I and put before Early Elladic or Danubian I. Absolutely layers 3 to 28 would represent nearly 2000 years. But in historical times Liguria was a barbaric backwater. Should we not allow for a comparable retardation in prehistoric times too ? Be that as it may, the excavations conducted with such scientific precision and published with a such commendable promptitude and completeness provide the fullest and most reliable culture-sequence yet available in the Western Mediterranean and thus provide a standard even for the regions outside Italy. The second part will be eagerly awaited for il will describe equally important Mesolithic and Paleolithic deposits including rich burials of both periods.

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