

Contestualizzare la “prima colonizzazione”:

Archeologia, fonti, cronologia e modelli interpretativi fra l'Italia e il Mediterraneo

Contextualising “early Colonisation”:

Archaeology, Sources, Chronology and interpretative models between Italy and the Mediterranean

E pluribus unum: The Multiplicity of Models

Franco De Angelis
University of British Columbia, Vancouver

One of the goals of this conference is to encourage dialogue between the usually very different theoretical and methodological positions used to interpret the earliest cultural encounters in “Italy” in the ninth to early seventh centuries BC. My title embodies how I intend to contribute to that goal. The Latin phrase “E pluribus unum” (or “Out of many, one” in translation) is one that has been used in various ancient and modern contexts on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. With this phrase I have a twofold purpose in mind: to establish a bridge between the various interpretative models that have emerged out of both the Old and New Worlds, and to suggest that out of this multiplicity of models we should work towards a coordinated approach that goes beyond any single discipline or scholarly tradition, as is increasingly being done in New World culture contact studies. To make this argument, I will divide my paper into two parts, saying something first about current practices and conceptualizations regarding method and theory, and how evolution out of them is absolutely required to move ahead, and then making some suggestions as to how we might proceed in the future.

I.

I begin with some observations on current practices and conceptualizations. In my view, one word still best describes the overall state of play: polarization. Polarization exists at two levels. It is evident at the level of interpretation, as in, for example, the debates between Italian and Dutch scholars in respect of the development of southern Italy in the ninth to seventh centuries BC. The debate continues in the recent series of articles published in *Ancient West and East*, where our distinguished colleagues Emanuele Greco (2011) and Douwe Yntema (2011) repeat pretty much what they have said over the last dozen years. To summarize their basic positions, the former favours a classical archaeological Greek approach, and the latter a prehistoric native approach, which also rejects the ancient Greek literary tradition as being completely invented history. Yntema sees no Greek superiority, and Greco argues for the restoration of the Greeks’ role. Polarization also exists at this second level. As I have remarked in my recent article in the *Römische Mitteilungen*, what seems to be at the root of this debate is an adherence to a particular set of disciplines, theories, and methods to the detriment of others (De Angelis 2010: 22 n. 5). This is what makes understandable the repeated restatement of previously aired views and positions by these two scholars.

But let us step back and ask ourselves what is at stake for our understanding of culture contact in “Italy” in the ninth to seventh centuries BC, if we continue proceeding in this way. Both sides in this debate have made very valuable contributions, and that should be recognized. But I

have serious reservations that this kind of back and forth pendulum-swinging is the way forward. What this debate says to me is that parts of different theoretical and methodological perspectives are useful in our understanding of the past, but no one perspective on its own is so completely useful to the detriment of others. There is no doubting, to put it another way, that, say, the post-colonialism and the Middle Ground have made valuable contributions in the last two decades. There is also no doubting that the study of prehistoric Italic archaeology has made a valuable contribution. There is no doubting that study of classical Greek archaeology and texts has also made important contributions. But none of these contributions can, however, represent a complete view of the past on its own and explain everything at one fell swoop. Instead, these contributions need to be brought all together into a single coordinated approach. Otherwise we are trapped in what Seth Godin (2011: 84-85), the media and marketing theorist, has recently dubbed the “Ism Schism”:

The easiest way to make noise within a community is to divide the tribe. Modernism, classicism, realism, impressionism—dividing things into schools of thought, or even warring camps—makes it easy to creation tension and thus attention.... If members of a tribe encourage schisms and cheers on the battles, is it any wonder that it's hard to create forward motion? When we're not in sync, power is dissipated.

This polarization of methods and theories is also shaped and distorted by the richness of the data for protohistoric Italy. At a practical level, as Michel Gras (2000a: 30) has noted, we need to be courageous to study this period of the Mediterranean, as it is extremely challenging to keep abreast of the latest developments for the Etruscans, Sardinians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and so on. Alessandro Guidi's (1998: 140) perceptive observation of 1998 that developments in the archaeology of later Italian prehistory have not impacted most foreign scholarship is as true today as it was then. Alas, the late David Ridgway (2004: 28) has said as much in the intervening years. A recent example of the problem is how the second, 2008 edition of the late Nicholas Coldstream's (2008: 480-81) *magnum opus* on Greek Geometric pottery makes no mention of the revolution in radiocarbon and dendrochronological dating emerging north of the Alps. The polarization of methods and theories discussed earlier is certainly not helped by the other parallel universe that we call Italian prehistory, a problem which is part of the highly parceled up and hence specialized intellectual landscape that characterizes the study of the ancient Mediterranean. Nevertheless, this problem too has to be overcome, if we are get ourselves out of the present predicament.

II.

Therefore, what is to be done? In asking this question, I turn to the second part of my paper. The first part of the answer, at least in my view, has already been proposed by other scholars, namely to treat our subject from the general perspective of frontier studies. I am certainly not alone in making this suggestion. For instance, Emanuele Greco (2011: 236) made it last year in his article in *Ancient West and East*; Mario Lombardo (1999) made it at the Taranto conference *Confini e frontiera nella grecità d'Occidente* in 1999, and of course Ettore Lepore and Moses Finley made it first at another Taranto conference back in 1968. That some scholars keep on saying, as time goes by, that frontier history is the best methodological tool to study our subject can only mean that it has not become standard practice. If Giovanna Ceserani's (2012) recent book on the history of scholarship on Magna Graecia is anything to go by, Ettore Lepore is not even mentioned in it. Such is his legacy in this area! As someone who was born and brought up in North America, it seems natural to me too to suggest frontier history as the theoretical and methodological way forward.

To adopt a frontier history framework, however, requires a revolution in our scholarly thinking and structures, as it currently happening in North America. Otherwise we are back to square, and like Sisyphus we roll the theoretical and methodological stone up the hill only to have it roll down time after time. In other words, hybridization needs to occur to create a third field, which is no longer Greek archaeology and history *tout court* and no longer Italic archaeology and history

tout court. Elements of all these approaches is surely need to respond properly to the cultural conjunction that occurred. In my chapter to the *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies*, I called in 2009 for the development of a contact archaeology as one of the future directions that could be taken in the study of ancient Greek so-called “colonization” (De Angelis 2009: 57). I am even more convinced of this need, after reading Albert Nijboer (2011: 294, 302-03) contribution to that group of articles published in the journal *Ancient West and East* that I have already mentioned. He too argues for the need to combine prehistoric, protohistoric, and classical archaeology into the same approach, and for the independent study and dating of the material of each group taking part in any contact situation (cf. also already Gras 2000b). We would not be reinventing the wheel in doing so, since the same challenges we face in the study of Iron Age Italy are also faced by scholar working on modern frontiers. As Tim Murray (2004: 1-2), an Australian archaeologist has recently noted, North America has been a battleground for these issues in the last generation (cf. already Thompson 1973). And in his recently edited collection of essays, he has taken the initiative in applying the theories and methods developed in that continent to other modern frontiers. Among the topics debated are the following. How do we take European-style historical documents against native oral tradition? How do we combine the material culture of diverse groups into a single historical reconstruction? And so on in similar ways that we too face in the study of ancient Italy between the ninth and seventh centuries BC.

As in North America, we will all have to divest ourselves from our respective disciplines and national scholarly traditions in order to achieve this goal. In Canada, which can well be described as one of today’s modern laboratories for understanding cultural contact, the discussion is more and more turning to facing up to the cold hard facts of the brutal realities of the cultural encounter and its legacies of the last two centuries. This poster seen on the screen at the moment is a recent example of a lecture given at my university earlier this year of very need for such a “reality check.” In Canada, this period of unsettling is seen as necessary before any advances can be made and is similar to the truth and reconciliation commission held in post-Apartheid South Africa. Of course, although we are studying cultural encounters that happened 2,500 to 3,000 years in the Central Mediterranean, passions and opinions similarly run high. Every side wants to have its voice heard and its evidence considered. We will do much to avoid speaking in oppositional terms of native Italians versus immigrant Greeks and of assigning the status of actors versus spectators to one or the other in the making of pre-Roman Italy, if we speak of “spect-actors”--to use the term coined by the late Brazilian playwright Augusto Boal (2000: xxi). Spect-actors participate as both spectators and actors and work together at the same time to create interactive and socially transformative theatre. This opens the door to a two-way historical process, hence to a deeper and more complex understanding of the cultural development of pre-Roman Italy. In other words, sometimes the side we support watches and at other times it is the one being watched.

But why should we unsettle the core of our respective foundations? Why is it worth doing so? I can suggest two reasons. The first is obvious: we will get more complex interpretations of the past. The second reason takes us outside our field per se to the wider world of cultural contact studies. In dealing with Italy in the Iron Age, we are studying what people outside our field would generally regard as one of the most important cultural encounters in world history. Relating our field to wider issues will only do us good, by showing the rest of the world that we have something to contribute in terms of data, methods, and theories that will certainly be of interest to them. As migration and diaspora studies mirroring current global realities continue to become the central concerns of the world in the 21st century, we want to make sure that we can contribute something meaningful to them, instead of getting left behind.

I would like to wrap up this second part of my paper by putting into practice what I am preaching and turn the focus to the theme of the early development of the cities developed by Greeks on the shores of southern Italy and Sicily. I will not in the first instance decide to use, say, a classical archaeological approach or to work within the Middle Ground framework to address this theme. Instead, I will seek to explain the physical development of Western Greek cities, using a

model that has never been previously used, to the best of my knowledge, in order to show that there is more to the arsenal of possible theory and method than the usual polarization.

The basic pattern of this physical development has been made once and for all crystal clear thanks to the work of Mario Lombardo (2009) and his collaborators in discussing “sub-colonization.” In most cases this occurred between the third and fourth generations after the original foundations. Various causes connected with the growth of the *oikos* and the community more generally have been advanced to explain this pattern, and here I would like to build on these already established observations. Let us begin by reminding ourselves of the pattern in question by turning to a concrete case study. I will draw on Archaic Sicily, which I know best, but the evidence here is typical of what was going on elsewhere.

Naxos, Megara Hyblaia, and Syracuse, the cities best known archaeologically on Sicily’s eastern coast, where the first phase of Greek settlement occurred, were established in rough terms in the second half of the eighth century. A century later, in the second half of the seventh century, they all have revealed a similar spurt in building programs and other artistic output that lasted two or three decades. A century later, in the second half of the sixth century, this pattern is repeated at these same sites and, it seems, at the lesser known other cities of Zankle, Katane, and Leontinoi. Of all these sites and time periods, the evidence is the fullest for Megara Hyblaia because of the extensive settlement excavations made possible by relatively very good conditions. The pattern is easily discernible: the building boom started in the mid-seventh century and was repeated in the mid-sixth century (De Angelis 2003: 35). Each of these patterns was also accompanied by important developments in art and power. The mid-seventh century saw growing social complexity and the commissioning of figured polychromatic pottery (De Angelis 2003: 52-63). The mid-sixth century witnessed more social complexity accompanied again by developments in art and power, evident both in the settlement and the cemeteries (De Angelis 2003: 63-65). The same basic pattern can also be observed for the other Sicilian Greek cities later founded on the southern and northern coasts. At Gela, Himera, and Selinous, all founded roughly in the first half or so of the seventh century, again within a century or so, a spurt in building programs and artistic output took place. The same also holds for Akragas founded traditionally in 580 BC; a century later this pattern is also attested there. For southern and northern Sicily, Selinous illustrates this patterning well. We can see this very clearly: the building boom that started in the mid-sixth century within a century of its foundation and involved monumentality that was politically motivated (De Angelis 2003: 135-37, 152-69). These are important developments. But our explanations for them are still not complete in my view; they are what one might describe as epiphenomenal.

Early city development in North American and other modern frontiers are becoming better and better known as a result of recent work. Thanks to the comparative perspective taken in the most recent of this work, as in for instance the volume edited by the Jared Diamond and his colleague James Robinson (2010: 7), there is little doubt that cities in dynamic frontier situations operate according to similar patterns and cycles that respect little cultural and ethnic lines. Let me illustrate this with the example of Vancouver, where I live. What these modern case studies tell us is that city development must also be set in the context of economic take-off theory, which acts as its engine. Economic take-off theory contributes two notable insights relevant to understanding this important transition between the third and fourth generations that we see in the early development of Western Greek cities. The first concerns the source of the economic take-off, and the second the timing of economic take-offs. According to the late Walt Rostow (1956: 27-28), the father of economic take-off theory:

Usually from outside the society, but sometimes out of its own dynamics, comes the idea that economic progress is possible; and this idea spreads within the established élite or, more usually, in some disadvantaged group whose lack of status does not prevent the exercise of some economic initiative. More often than not the economic motives for seeking economic progress converge with some non-economic motive,

such as the desire for increased social power and prestige, national pride, political ambition and so on. Education, for some at least, broadens and changes to suit the needs of modern economic activity. New enterprising men come forward willing to mobilise savings and to take risks in pursuit of profit, notably in commerce. The commercial markets for agricultural products, domestic handicrafts and consumption-goods imports widen. Institutions for mobilising capital appear; or they expand from primitive levels in the scale, surety and time horizon for loans. Basic capital is expanded, notably in transport and communications, often to bring to market raw materials in which other nations have an economic interest, most often financed by foreign capital.

Although Rostow sought to explain the development of the Industrial Revolution, his focus did not exclude the possibility that such economic development could have also occurred in earlier historical periods, right from the beginning of time (see his comments made in Rostow 1990: xxiii, 4-6). It could be argued that with the coming of Greeks to southern Italy and Sicily the processes for economic take-offs were set into motion. For, as outsiders, they knew well of Greece's needs, and they also provided the kind of "particular sharp stimulus" (Rostow 1990: 36) that economic take-offs need to be launched. Rostow (1956: 27; 1990: 8-11) also investigated the timing of economic take-offs, the second insight of interest here. He argued that such take-offs consist of three periods: the first is a long period of a century or so, during which the preconditions for take-off are established; the second is the take-off proper, which lasts for two or three decades; and the third is another long period of normal and relatively automatic growth. This "timetable" matches perfectly with that recently formulated by Lombardo and his collaborators in the context of "sub-colonization." It is only now, with the insights made visible by this theoretical model, that we should turn to the question of who the actors, spectators, and "spect-actors" were in the ninth to seventh centuries BC, and how their historical trajectories and identities were affected by these economic take-offs. In our debates we should bear these larger questions and processes in mind, instead of taking first a particular ethnocultural side or adopting a particular archaeo-historical approach. Both sides of the coin, so to speak, must be read in unison.

To conclude, what I am suggesting with this example and in my paper more generally is that we approach the cultural encounters in Iron Age "Italy" not by taking *a priori* a particular theory and method as the be-all and end-all to interpreting our subject, as has so often and still is today being regularly done. If we continue to act in this way, we will be like Sisyphus rolling the stone up the hill only to have it roll down again. Instead, we need to forge ahead with the creation of a proper contact history which uses all forms of evidence and takes every cultural side into the equation, or, put another way, to give theoretical and methodological life to the frontier history framework that we have often talked about as being the right one for our subject. Once we have done so, we can then turn to applying whatever interpretative models we like, testing their validity against our empirical base. This is what I myself have done in my article published in the *Römische Mitteilungen*; thus I know firsthand that this is a practicable suggestion. This is where the subject should be going in my view; others who work on frontiers in modern culture contact zones would readily agree. I hope that you will too.

Bibliography

Boal, A. 2000. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. 3rd ed. Trans. C.A. McBride and M.-O. Leal McBride.

London.

- Ceserani, G. 2012. *Italy's Lost Greece: Magna Graecia and the Making of Modern Archaeology*. New York.
- Coldstream, J.N. 2008. *Greek Geometric Pottery: A Survey of Ten Local Styles*. 2nd ed. Exeter.
- De Angelis, F. 2003. *Megara Hyblaia and Selinous: The Development of Two Greek City-states in Archaic Sicily*. Oxford University School of Archaeology Monograph, no. 57. Oxford.
- . 2009. "Colonies and Colonization. In *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies*, ed. G. Boys-Stones, B. Graziosi, and P. Vasunia, 48-64. Oxford.
- . 2010. "Re-assessing the Earliest Social and Economic Developments in Greek Sicily." *MDAI(R)* 116: 21-53.
- Diamond, J. and J.A. Robinson, eds. 2010. *Natural Experiments of History*. Cambridge, MA.
- Godin, S. 2011. *We are all weird. The Myth of Mass and the End of Compliance*. N.p.
- Gras, M. 2000a. "Fra storia greca e storia dei Greci." *QS* 51: 227-31.
- . 2000b. "Donner du sens à l'objet. Archéologie, technologie culturelle et anthropologie." *AnnalesESC* 55: 601-14.
- Greco, E. 2011. "On the Origin of the Western Greek *Poleis*." *Ancient West and East* 10: 233-42.
- Guidi, A. 1998. "The Emergence of the State in Central and Northern Italy." *Acta Archaeologica* 69: 139-61.
- Lombardo, M. 1999. "Tavola rotonda finale." In *Confini e frontiera nella grecità d'Occidente. Atti del trentasettesimo convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia, Taranto, 3-6 ottobre 1997*, ed. A. Stazio and S. Ceccoli, 743-49. Taranto.
- . 2009. "Da *apoikiai* a *metropoleis*. Dal progetto al convegno." In *Colonie di colonie: le fondazioni sub-coloniali tra colonizzazione e colonialism. Atti del convegno internazionale, Lecce, 22-24 giugno 2006*, ed. M. Lombardo and F. Frisone, 17-30. Galatina.
- Murray, T. 2004. "The Archaeology of Contact in Settler Societies." In *The Archaeology of Contact in Settler Societies*, ed. T. Murray, 1-16. Cambridge.
- Nijboer, A.J. 2011. "Teleology and Colonisation in Antiquity and in Recent Times." *Ancient West and East* 10: 281-307.
- Ridgway, D. 2004. "Euboeans and Others along the Tyrrhenian Seaboard in the 8th Century." In *Greek Identity in the Western Mediterranean: Papers in Honour of Brian Shefton*, ed. K. Lomas, 15-33. Mnemosyne Suppl. Vol. 246. Leiden.
- Rostow, W.W. 1956. "The Take-off into Self-sustained Growth." *The Economic Journal* 66: 25-48.
- . 1990. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. 3rd ed. Cambridge.
- Thompson, S.I. 1973. *Pioneer Colonization: A Cross-cultural View*. Addison-Wesley Module in Anthropology no. 33. Reading, MA.
- Yntema, D. 2011. "Archaeology and the *Origo* Myths of the Greek *Apoikiai*." *Ancient West and East* 10: 243-66.