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

Models of interaction between Greeks and indigenous populations on the Ionian coast:
Contribution from the excavations at Incoronata by the University of Texas at Austin

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The settlement known as Incoronata “greca” has long been recognized for its crucial role in the interpretation of Greek occupation of the coasts of Italy prior to the foundation of the great colonial poleis. Located a short distance from the Ionian coast, on the right bank of the Basento river, Incoronata “greca” is one of a number of hills that revealed the presence of a significant indigenous settlement dating from the ninth to the end of the eighth century BC. From the end of the eight-beginning of the seventh century BC, Greek presence on the site is also well established, long in advance of the foundation of Siris/Polieion by Colophonians and of Metaponto by Achaeans. In this paper the archaeological investigations on the south side of the eastern slope of the plateau undertaken by the University of Texas at Austin under the direction of Professor Joseph Carter, between 1977 and 1978 will be presented.

The scholarly debate has focused on defining the settlement phases preceding the establishment of the apoikia of Metaponto, and, in particular, has stressed the modes of interaction between the indigenous Oenotrian peoples and Greeks attested on the hill. The hermeneutic analysis is complicated primarily by the problematic nature of the archaeological evidence: namely, the difficulty of specifying the features and functions of the pits found on the plateau filled with indigenous and Greek pottery taken together with the absence of a precise chronology of the “colonial” pottery abundant on the site. Modern plowing operations have also seriously affected the state of preservation of the material evidence and compromised their possibility for comprehension.

The reconstruction of settlement dynamics of Incoronata has been well illustrated by A. De Siena, however, there are many aspects that merit further investigation. In the early Iron Age and throughout the ninth and eighth centuries BC, the ridge known as Incoronata-San Teodoro was occupied by an indigenous Oenotrian settlement articulated in small autonomous communities; these are organized in sparse areas of inhabitation and related burials located in different plains (Incoronata “indigena”, San Teodoro and Incoronata “greca”). At the midpoint of the eighth century BC a radical transformation occurred in the organization of the settlement: the articulation of scattered nuclei of huts disappeared and the population became concentrated on the isolated plateau of Incoronata “greca”. The new indigenous settlement had a different spatial organization marked by a greater concentration of housing that accompanied a complete reorganization of the surrounding areas. In association with the arrival of the Greeks on the Ionian coast, the presence of Greek pottery of the Middle and Late Geometric is attested on the hill. The end of the eight-beginning of the seventh century BC witnesses a series of changes: the Oenotrian settlement first registered the reception en masse of imported Greek pottery and of locally-produced pottery of
Greek tradition probably connected with the arrival of Greek merchants and artisans. At the same time there was a progressive decline in the use of Oenotrian ceramics; this moment is also notable for the introduction of new architectural forms such as rectangular structures with small dimensions sometimes provided with an underground chamber (the so-called oikoi). Around 640-630 BC there was another break caused by the brutal end of the settlement likely due to the arrival of the apoikoi concurrent with the foundation of Metaponto.

The study of the excavations by the University of Texas introduces significant new elements in the scholarly debate. The investigation returned a substantial body of documentary evidence that permits a number of important reflections on the indigenous and Greek interaction at the site; a new phase of frequentation has also been individuated on the Southeastern spur connected with the presence of an extra-urban sanctuary of Metaponto. The excavation has brought to light circular and oval pits and a rectangular structure similar to those discovered by the University of Milan. The pits have different shapes and sizes and diversified functions; the stratigraphic analyses of the deposits indicate that each one was filled in a single action and all are characterized by a mixture of indigenous and Greek materials. The significant presence of matt painted pottery and undecorated ware, however, excludes the possibility that the indigenous material is residual in nature. The analysis indicates that most of the Oenotrian pottery dates to the ninth and eighth centuries BC, but subgeometric examples are also common; the majority of the Greek pottery belongs instead to the seventh century BC. The earliest fragments of Greek material recovered date back to the LG I: they are part of the phase of contact between the Oenotrian population at Incoronata and the Greek world beginning in MG II. Proto-Corinthian ware is attested from the EPC to the LP-TR with a wide variety of both open and closed vessels. There are also ceramic imports from Eastern-Greece and the Peloponnese. Among materials in the Greek tradition, the most frequently represented class, exceptional both in number and in variety, is the “colonial” pottery that presents a stylistic and formal repertoire borrowed from different Greek fabrics; as has often been noted, this is the same cultural landscape that is found at Policoro. Imitation proto-Corinthian ware and Achaean-style pottery are also attested. The great vessels such as dinoi, craters, and stamnoi are characterized by substantial and complex figural motifs that echo Eastern Greek, Cycladic, and even Argive tradition. In contrast, drinking vessels, such as cups and kantharoi, suffer from a tired and repetitive “large-scale” production: these present a monochrome or linear decoration mostly inspired by proto-Corinthian and Achaean models. Among the latter types, the kantharos, in both globular and ovoid form, enjoys considerable popularity. Among the later types, the kantharos, in both globular and ovoid form, enjoys considerable popularity. The existence of a local fabric, already suggested by a ceramic waster and the matrix of a perirrhanterion with figured decoration excavated by the University of Milan, was confirmed by the discovery of a cup waster with a chevron pattern. The production is very consistent as shown by the fact that most of the material found at Incoronata seems to belong to a single local workshop.

In the same area a rectangular structure was also found, much like the so-called oikoi discovered by the University of Milan. The structure, which had two construction phases, is preceded by a large pit and it has dimensions of 5 m by 2.5 m; in its first phase it is carried out with mud brick walls on a stone foundation and the floor is made of a thin lens formed by sandy loam with clay content. The most recent phase of the oikos is built over the previous and obliterated it: despite completely collapsed walls, it is possible to reconstruct the line of the elevation. During the cleaning of the wall, an indigenous askos, dated to the LG period, in undecorated ware was recovered in excellent state of preservation. These data, together with the association of indigenous and Greek pottery dating to the seventh century, reaffirm the indigenous presence inside the settlement and, in particular, in the context of the oikoi. When the study will be completed, it will be interesting to verify the functional purposes of the Oenotrian and the Greek vases and to determine possible diversification within their intended use. It seems in fact that the majority of Greek ceramics attested at Incoronata are drinking vessels or pots for containing liquids; cooking ware is instead sporadic.
In addition to these data on the pre-colonial phase, the investigations conducted by the University of Texas yielded very significant insights regarding the period following the destruction of the settlement circa 640-630 BC: on the top of the hill the remains of an extra-urban sanctuary integrated into the settlement system of the Achaean colony of Metaponto were identified. The archaeological material shows a modest but continuous presence from the end of the seventh century to the first quarter of the sixth century BC. The monumentalization of the cult occurs only in the first half of the sixth century BC, probably around the second quarter of the century with the construction of a *sacellum*; it presents a second building phase at the midpoint of the sixth century. The evidence comes from two deposits containing numerous fragments of architectural terracottas and remains of the roof, in association with votive statuettes and pottery. The shrine is dedicated to a goddess characterized by a high *polos* with characteristics similar to that attested to S. Biagio alla Venella.