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Bronze fibula with three pinned-on rings from Crustumerium, Monte Del Bufalo burial ground, Tomb 153 (photo G.J.M. van Oortmerssen, RUG/GIA).

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LATE ENEOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE FUNERARY EVIDENCE FROM THE
SANT'ANGELO IV CAVE (NORTHEASTERN CALABRIA, ITALY)

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ABSTRACT: The earliest settlement evidence in the Sibaritide in northeastern Calabria comes from the complex of caves of Sant'Angelo near present-day Cassano allo Jonio, and dates from the Late Eneolithic (Copper Age) and the beginning of the Bronze Age. In cave IV, the pottery and skeletal remains indicate the presence of at least three burials dating to three different periods and showing cultural links with northern Sicily and southern Calabria. In this paper the funerary function of cave IV is considered from a chronological, cultural and functional perspective and analysed within the wider context of the Sant'Angelo cave complex, in order to assess the communities' changing perception of caves as places for funerary and dwelling purposes.

KEYWORDS: caves, Cassano allo Jonio, northern Calabria, Eneolithic, Bronze Age, funerary context, interregional links.

Since the 1990s, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology has been involved in research in the Sibaritide region in northeastern Calabria, where it has conducted excavations on the Bronze Age to Archaic site of Timpone della Motta at Francavilla Marittima (fig. 1) (Kleibrink 2006). The landscape-archaeological contextualization of this site by means of settlement and geomorphological surveys officially started in 2000 with the Raganella Archaeological Project (RAP), directed by P.A.J. Attema and P.M. van Leusen (Attema *et al.* 2010). My PhD

project on settlement dynamics in the Sibaritide during protohistory, carried out within this framework, focused on the typochronological and functional analysis of the 'impasto' pottery collected over 20 years by the project participants and the speleological group 'Sparviere', both at open-air sites and cave sites (Ippolito forthcoming: section 2).

The research carried out in the Sibaritide by the RAP did not reveal any evidence about the period of the Chalcolithic or Eneolithic and the beginning of the Early

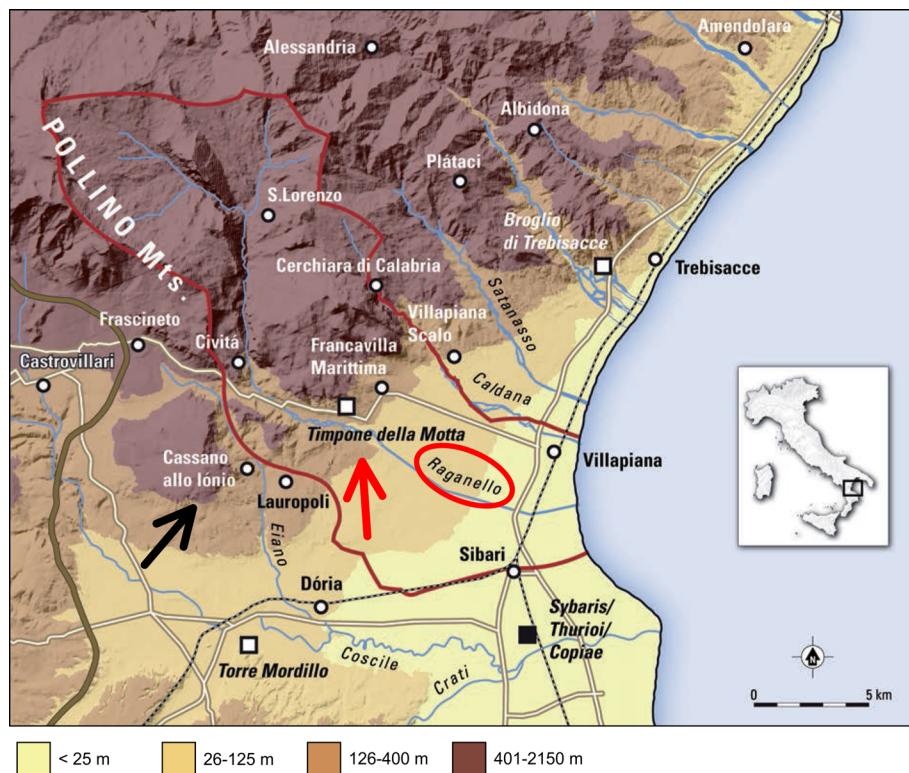


Fig. 1. Sibaritide, Calabria, Italy
(after Attema *et al.* 2010).

Bronze Age (EBA) at open-air sites, which corresponds with the results of previous research, carried out in the 1980s by R. Peroni and his team of the University of Rome (Vanzetti 2013: 12-19, and related bibliography). The only evidence predating the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) in this area comes from caves (with the exception of one Neolithic village, Favella, in the plain of Sybaris and sporadic Neolithic surface finds in surface surveys in the uplands) (Ippolito, forthcoming: section 1.2, footnote 4). So far, seventeen caves have been explored in the area northwest of Cassano allo Jonio (fig. 1). Geologically, this area consists of Mesozoic sedimentary rocks, mostly dolomites, and dolomitic and re-crystallized limestone, dark grey or blackish in colour, dating to the Triassic period (Gasparo 1979: 121-124). Among these are the caves of Sant'Angelo I, II, III, the Cave of Sant'Angelo IV (or Grotta dell'Antenato, after Kleibrink 2002: 213-219) and the Pavolella cave. I have had the opportunity to study unpublished material from caves II and IV. These caves are important as they have yielded pre- and proto-historical evidence from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age and therefore fill the chronological gap between the Neolithic period and the Middle Bronze Age (phase 2). This new insight has resulted from my study of the ceramic finds from Sant'Angelo cave IV, which I shall discuss below.

The cave site of Grotta Sant'Angelo IV was discovered by speleologists in 1998, and yielded the first material

evidence in the Sibaritide covering the period between the final Middle Eneolithic and the transition from the Eneolithic to the Bronze Age. Additionally, a particularly important object was found in this cave, representing the Rodi-Tindari-Vallelunga (RTV) culture, here attested for the first time in northern Calabria. Pottery and skeletal remains from this cave indicated the presence of at least three graves dating to three different periods and showing material cultural features known from contemporary contexts at sites along the northeastern Adriatic coasts. This suggests the existence of long-range cultural interactions, which so far have been rarely documented in the Sibaritide.

From the entrance of the Archaeological Park of Sant'Angelo, Cave IV is located to the left of caves I, II and III, behind a small ticket booth. It is possible to enter the cave by climbing the rock face for around 10 meters and passing through either of two very narrow entrances that are hard to find, as they are hidden by vegetation. However, the current entrances are not the original access points to the cave, which has partially collapsed as a result of the use of dynamite in a nearby quarry. We must assume that the archaeological find spots were originally deeper within the cave.

Post-depositional dynamics have greatly affected the location of the finds and in order to deal with each context separately it is important to explain where the finds were

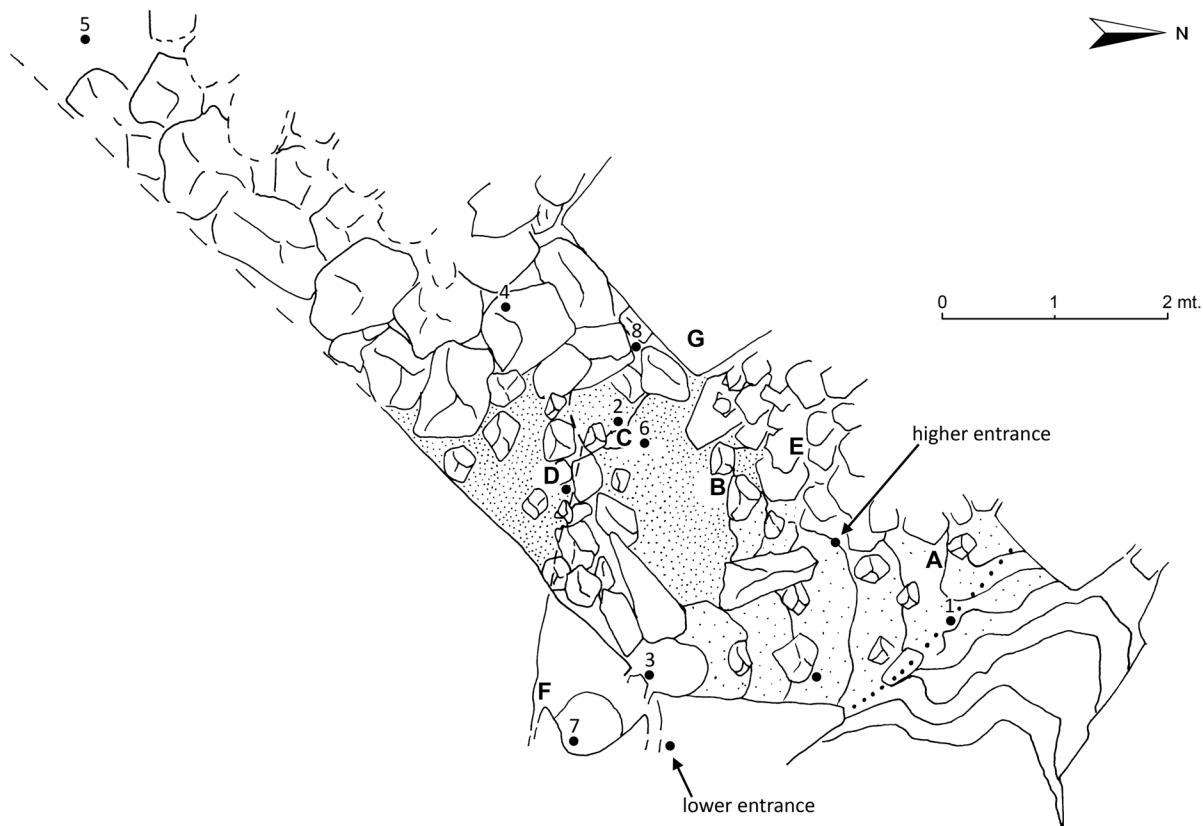


Fig. 2. Plan of the Cave Sant'Angelo IV (drawing A. Larocca, F. Ippolito).

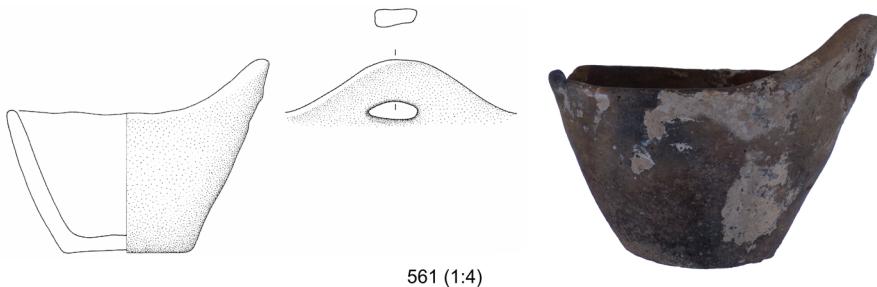


Fig. 3. Cluster 1, find 561 (Ippolito forthcoming, catalogue, no. 561).



Fig. 4. Cluster 2, find 562 (Ippolito forthcoming, catalogue, no. 562).

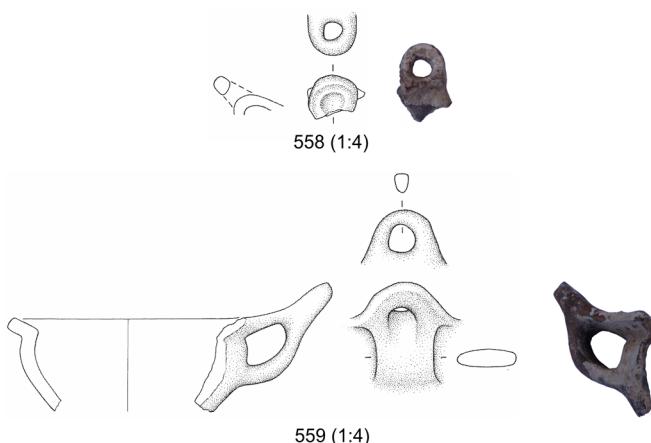


Fig. 5. Cluster 2, finds 558, 559 (Ippolito forthcoming, catalogue, no. 559).

exactly as discovered by the speleologists. I will therefore group the pottery and bones in four clusters according to the location where they were found (fig. 2).

Cluster 1 consists of only one complete vessel (fig. 3) found at point A (fig. 2). It is a truncated conical bowl similar to a Late Eneolithic bowl found in Sicily, at Panarea – Piano Quartara (Bernabò Brea & Cavalier, 1968, III, Tav. VII.3, inv. 1891).

Cluster 2 is an assemblage of vessels, bones and stones collected at point F (fig. 2). A large jar (fig. 4) was found broken and mixed up with long bones and a skull. This jar is very similar to vessels found in two tombs in southern Calabria, at Santa Maria di Montalto - Nicotera, dated to the transition from the Early Bronze Age to the Middle Bronze Age (Marino & Pacciarelli 1996: fig. 4.B1, 3, Tomb 21, Rodi-Capo Graziano 1-Palma Campania aspects). Other ceramics include three diagnostic fragments: two

sherds of a double-ring handle (fig. 5) which can be dated to the beginning of the MBA (Tinè 1964: fig. 10.1, Grotta di Sant'Angelo III, layer 1; Cocchi Genick 1995: Type 464A; Bartoli & Di Renzoni 2004: fig. 2.10, from Broglie di Trebisacce, Sector 10, MBA1B1-2), and a very peculiar bowl, almost complete, with an axe-handle (fig. 6). This kind of bowl represents the Rodi-Tindari-Vallelunga (RTV) culture, known from northwestern Sicily and central Calabria in the transitional period covering the end of the EBA and the beginning of the MBA (for the definition of this typological phenomenon and its distribution, see Procelli 2004; Ardesia & Cattani 2012 and Pacciarelli 2001). To date, this bowl constitutes an extremely rare RTV specimen and is the northernmost occurrence of this cultural expression.

Cluster 3 consists of pottery dating to a period between the second phase of the Middle Eneolithic and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age (Ippolito forthcoming,

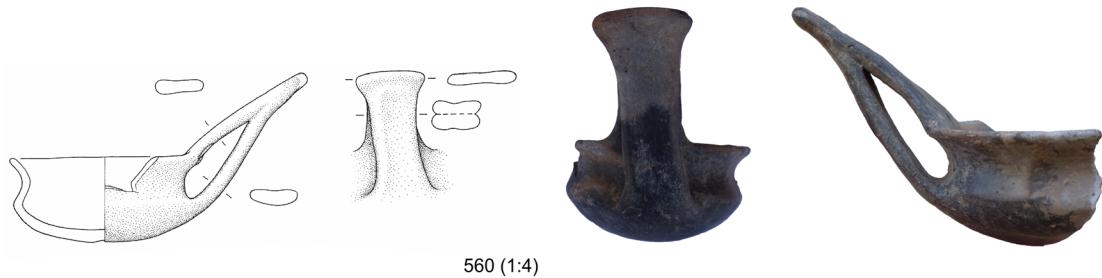


Fig. 6. Cluster 2, find 560 (Ippolito forthcoming, catalogue, no. 560).

tables. 82 a-b). It was collected at points B-C-D (fig. 2), together with a human tooth which belongs to an older adolescent individual and dates to around 4120 ± 35 BP, which corresponds to the second phase of the Middle Eneolithic (having cultural affinities with the Gallo-Colarizzi-Gaudio2 cultures). Typological links could be established with southern Calabrian sites and with finds from the area between Trieste and Istria, encompassing an area from the northeastern coast of Italy to the coast of Croatia.

Cluster 4 (point 1, fig. 2) comprises a fragmentary jug (Ippolito forthcoming: table 81) and a human femur. The jug is dated to the MBA2 on the basis of parallels found in Istria (Čović 1983: tav. XXXV.3), Trieste (Lonza 1981: tav. 23.5,8) and Grotta Manaccora, in Puglia (Baumgärtel 1953: fig. 6.2, Stratum III).

Typologically it is possible to identify three main periods of frequentation of the cave, confirmed by the radiocarbon dates in Tab. 1: the end of the Middle Eneolithic, the Late Eneolithic-Early Bronze Age, and MBA2. The human remains indicate the presence of a minimum of three individuals. Judging by the radiocarbon dating, a young individual (cluster 3) died at the end of the Middle Eneolithic. One burial (cluster 2) concerns an adult to whom the skull belongs. The speleologists reported that a skull and some long bones were found mixed up with the broken jar at Point F (fig. 2). Therefore, in cluster 2 we are presumably dealing with a secondary burial in a ceramic jar. Analogous examples dating from the Eneolithic and the EBA regularly occur in cave sites elsewhere (Leonini & Sarti 2006: 146).

The animal bones found at the Sant'Angelo IV cave (found at point G and, to a lesser extent, at points B-C-D) demonstrate that at least 1 sheep/goat, 1 pig, 1 bovine and 1 wild animal (boar or red deer) were brought into the

cave. Interestingly, it is possible to draw a comparison between the Sant'Angelo IV cave and funerary contexts in Sicily such as Grotta Ticchiara, the site of Ciavolaro and Piano Vento (Castellana *et. al.* 1997: 56-74). These analogies found in Sicily constitute a link between the two areas (Sicily and Calabria) represented by the northward spread of the RTV culture. This link, which at this stage is just indicated by modest evidence, might be further substantiated by provenance studies (isotope analyses) of the individuals whose remains were found at the Sant'Angelo IV cave. This could clarify whether we are dealing with movements of people or movements of goods or both.

According to the ceramic and bone finds, the cave was in use from the Middle Eneolithic until the beginning of the MBA, as a funerary site. The pottery finds, which consist of bowls, jars and jugs, have not yet been associated with specific functions, and vessels may have had multiple functions, including ritual ones. As the cave contains an RTV grave dating to the MBA2 (table 1, cluster 2), this might mean that the RTV culture, attested in Sicily from the end of the EBA, did not reach northern Calabria until the MBA.

The data also confirms that the Eneolithic custom of cave burial persisted into the early phase of the Early Bronze Age. Considering that collective depositions in caves were very common in the Eneolithic, the single depositions from the Sant'Angelo IV cave suggest that from the Early Bronze Age the funerary use of caves was the preserve of only some categories of individuals (Cocchi Genick 1999: 167-177; Bietti Sestieri 2010: 112-116). Such a change in funerary practice may reflect a change in social structure. The demographic growth of Early Bronze Age communities, due to the development of agricultural practices, may have led to selection of individuals, depending on social position, who merited a more complex funerary ritual, involving votive offerings

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates (Centre for Isotope Research, RUG).

Sample	Bone	Location	BP	cal. BC (1-sigma)	Period
Ant. 1	Human (tooth)-adult	Cluster 2	3080 ± 35	1405-1295	End of the MBA2
Ant. 2	Human (tooth)-young adult or late adolescent	Cluster 3	4120 ± 35	2860-2620	Middle Eneolithic - phase 2
Ant. 3	Animal (tooth)-pig	Cluster 4	3355 ± 35	1690-1610	End of the EBA-beginning of the MBA1

and banquets. This is suggested by the material remains in the form of animal bones and vessels with foreign typological features.

Where were the dwellings of these communities who buried their dead in the cave? Unfortunately, the area surrounding the karst system has not yet been surveyed to locate open-air sites. Nonetheless, we may attempt to place the Sant'Angelo caves in a macro-regional framework, as the scientific value of the finds from Sant'Angelo cave IV is many-faceted.

It seems that after the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age the Sibaritide region became characterized by a different settlement pattern, which led to the abandonment of cave sites and a proliferation of open-air sites (Peroni 1987: 67-69). Further environmental studies could perhaps shed light on the factors that from the second half of the Middle Bronze Age caused the changed use of the territory (Ippolito forthcoming: section 1.3). In the meantime, pottery typology is able to show that from the Eneolithic until the MBA2, the caves in the Sibaritide were frequented by bearers of a material culture widespread in the south of Calabria (and Sicily). For the first time, the Late Eneolithic displays cultural traits found at southern Calabrian sites, as attested by the sites on the promontory of Tropea (Pacciarelli 2011), while at the same time showing homogeneous typological characteristics occurring at Eneolithic sites as far as the north of Italy. Moreover, the presence of finds similar to ceramics found in northeastern Italian sites suggests the possibility of cultural interactions with the eastern Adriatic coasts, as already observed at the nearby Galleria dei Vasi of the cave Sant'Angelo II (see also Ippolito 2013 and Ippolito forthcoming).

Finds similar to those from the Sant'Angelo IV cave have only been discovered at cave sites. Indeed, the nearby cave of Sant'Angelo III reflects a similar chronology but, according to the archaeological record (Tinè 1964), it was not a funerary cave and can be interpreted as a dwelling cave. Another major difference is the late Middle Eneolithic phase detected at the Sant'Angelo IV cave, which is absent at the Sant'Angelo III cave. Considering also the Early Eneolithic pottery found at another cave in the Sant'Angelo karst system, named Grotta Pavolella, which is characterized by collective funerary depositions (Guerzoni 2004), it seems that Eneolithic people made selections of different settlement types. Indeed, after occupying Sant'Angelo caves II and III in the Middle Neolithic, in the Early Eneolithic (with ceramics in the style of Piano Conte) they buried their relatives in the Grotta Pavolella, and contemporarily inhabited the Sant'Angelo cave III, where ceramics in the Piano Conte style but unrelated to graves have been found. In the Middle Eneolithic, the Sant'Angelo IV Cave was in use, while Grotta Pavolella was abandoned. The shift between the Eneolithic and the EBA is shown at Grotte di Sant'Angelo II and IV, both of them in use until the very beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. Like

other funerary or votive caves in Central Italy (Negroni Catacchio *et al.* 2012: 598 and Guidi 1991-1992), which often were located in restricted areas on account of the local geology, they were in use during the same period, from the Eneolithic to the early MBA. Some authors suggest that these areas constituted ritual landscapes, visited by pilgrims coming from many villages (Negroni Catacchio *et al.* 2012: 595-604). I agree on the ritual aspect that the Sant'Angelo cave system may have had, because of its geological peculiarity, and I can agree about it being a site of pilgrimage during the beginning of the BA, but there seems to be something more.

According to the data from the Sant'Angelo caves, the complex undoubtedly had a cultural significance for contemporary society, but it is not yet possible to understand the different aspects of cultic behaviour. Compared with the Pavolella cave, Sant'Angelo cave IV shows how a funerary cave gained a sacred value as a place dedicated to ancestor worship. This interpretation derives from the social selection that the Sant'Angelo IV finds suggest when compared with Grotta Pavolella. Indeed, the latter cave is characterized by Early Eneolithic collective depositions while the funerary evidence from Sant'Angelo cave IV indicates that from the Late Eneolithic a selection of individuals started to be made (see also Rossenberg 2012: 167). This would imply a change in perception of caves and ritual practices that took place in the transitional period covering the end of the Eneolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age.

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