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978-0-521-10572-9 - Emerging Complexity: The Later Prehistory of South-East Spain, Iberia and the West Mediterranean

Robert Chapman

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Emerging complexity

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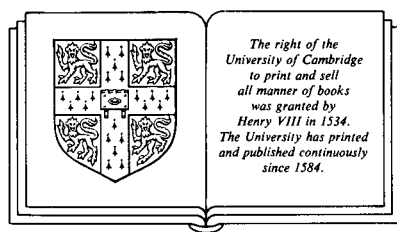
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ROBERT CHAPMAN

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For MARINA, SANA and VICENTE

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PREFACE

This is a book about the later prehistory of one part of Europe, the west Mediterranean, with the main attention devoted to three provinces in south-east Spain. These provinces are recognised by European prehistorians as containing one of the key sequences for the study of the emergence of more complex cultures in the third and second millennia bc. The emergence of these cultures is placed within the wider context of contemporary cultures in Spain and Portugal, and in other parts of the west Mediterranean. While aiming to understand the specific details of cultural change within south-east Spain, I am convinced of the need to place such localised analyses within a wider comparative context, and to examine the emergence of complexity as a general anthropological problem.

My interest in the prehistory of south-east Spain was aroused during my student days by reading Colin Renfrew's (1967a) critique of diffusionist explanations for the development of Copper and Bronze Age cultures in this area. Such an explanation had been expressed most recently in the English language in Beatrice Blance's Edinburgh doctoral thesis and in her subsequent publications (1960, 1961, 1964). Diffusionism also had a central role in the synthesis of Iberian prehistory published by Savory (1968). If, as Renfrew argued, diffusionist explanations were flawed, both theoretically and empirically, then there was considerable scope for research into the autonomous development of complexity. My research began with a doctoral dissertation (Chapman 1975) and my early views were published in a number of papers (e.g. 1978, 1981b, 1981c).

Research in the sciences is never the preserve of one individual. One of the most stimulating developments in research on the later prehistory of south-east Spain has been the emergence of conflicting interpretations of the archaeological record (e.g. Gilman 1976, 1981; Lull 1983; Mathers 1986). There are differences not only of theory but also of meaning given to the archaeological record. How much environmental change has taken place in south-east Spain since prehistory? What form and scale did subsistence intensification take in the Copper and Bronze Ages? How complex were later prehistoric cultures? The existence of different answers to these questions, as well as of different models for the emergence of complexity, highlights the need for new research. Thus I take the existence of different models as being a strength, rather than a weakness, and a stimulus towards research. What follows in this book is a detailed presentation of the archaeological record for the third- and second-millennium bc cultures of south-east Spain, with a close examination of the different models. This is a contribution to the growth of knowledge by exposing areas

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of ignorance or confusion. The book is also intended to be a contribution towards explanation: basically, how and why did more complex cultures develop in this area in the Copper and Bronze Ages?

Such questions are posed in the light of theoretical assumptions about complexity, and about explanation. These assumptions are stated in chapter 1, and reaffirmed at various points through the text. This enables me to make some critical points about particular areas of contemporary archaeology, and to place my research in a wider theoretical context. I hope that my work demonstrates the viability of an archaeology devoted to the archaeological record, to generalising, to comparative analysis, and to evaluation of ideas against the archaeological record, *without* the neglect of variation between different areas or sequences of cultural change.

Comparison, and the analysis of variability, also determine my discussion of other parts of Iberia and the west Mediterranean. Not only must our understanding of cultural change in south-east Spain be compared with that of the evolution of complexity in other parts of the west Mediterranean, but the scale and intensity of interaction *between* such areas requires independent and reliable measurement. Such interaction should not be assumed to operate constantly, nor to have been the main determinant of change throughout prehistory.

Comparative analysis within the west Mediterranean is now emerging as a feasible project, given the explosion of archaeological data during the last two decades. Not only can we now begin to document variability in intensification, complexity, interaction and other variables within the major part of Europe, but comparison with the more complex cultures of the east Mediterranean becomes more informative. This, in turn, should be useful for scholars working in areas such as the Aegean, with its famous Bronze Age civilisation. The rapid growth of data and research in the west Mediterranean basin allows us to strengthen the comparative approach which will place the emergence of the earliest European civilisation in a wider context.

In many respects, this book represents a kind of stock-taking for the later prehistory of the west Mediterranean, and a signpost as to the kinds of problems under study, and the data which need to be collected. Given the current rate of publication of new data, there is much that has appeared during the completion of the book that I have been unable to include here. However I do not think that my basic aims are affected by such omissions.

All radiocarbon dates are given in the standard half-life in radiocarbon years bc, and where rough calibrated dates are used they are given in years BC according to the Irish oak curve published by Pearson *et al.* (1986). Thermoluminescence dates are, of course, given in years BC. Dates which were derived by cross-dating from the historical chronology of the eastern Mediterranean are also referred to in years BC.

During the writing of this book, I have received invaluable help and support from institutions and individuals. My initial research was supported by a Major State Studentship from the Department of Education and Science (1971–4), the Vicente Cañada Blanch Senior Fellowship of the University of London (1974–5) and the Anthony Wilkin Fund of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge,

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and by my college, Peterhouse. Subsequently I have received grants from the British Academy and from the Research Fund of Reading University.

Colleagues and friends inside and outside Spain have generously exchanged ideas, offprints and books with me, and helped to increase my understanding of west Mediterranean prehistory. Those within Spain have been unfailingly generous, and their hospitality has been a continuous delight to me. For all their help I would like to make special mention of the following: Antonio Arribas, Martín Almagro Gorbea, Fernando Molina, Germán Delibes de Castro, Jose Arnaud, Vitor and Susanna Jorge, Iain Davidson, Richard Harrison, Antonio Gilman, Clay Mathers, Michael Walker, Beatrice Clayre (née Blance), Bill Waldren, Celia Topp, Jim Lewthwaite, Ruth Whitehouse, Lawrence Barfield, Patricia Phillips, Nigel Mills, and David Geddes.

During my research I have had the benefit of academic support from three individuals. David Clarke was my early mentor, and fired me with enthusiasm for archaeology and a respect for scholarship. As a research supervisor he was always stimulating, supportive and kind, and his early death (like that, more recently, of his wife Stella) left me unable to repay the many debts I owed him. John D. Evans has been a consistent supporter of my work and has made great efforts to help me in my fieldwork projects. Colin Renfrew provided the original stimulus for my research, as well as taking a keen interest in the progress of my work and career, and it was he who first suggested to me that I write this book. I thank him for his encouragement and constant exhortations!

My colleagues in the Department of Archaeology at Reading, Richard Bradley, Mike Fulford, Grenville Astill and Annie Grant, have provided exactly the right kind of atmosphere in which to pursue research: enthusiastic, energetic, sociable, thoughtful, and often irreverent! To them, and to the students who have tolerated my obsession with west Mediterranean prehistory, I express my sincere thanks. Our technician, Simon Smithson, prepared the basic figures. Gill Fewings helped me in the preparation and collation of the final manuscript. Pamela King has never failed to give secretarial support, often at short notice and always with good grace, in spite of her other commitments.

My wife Jan has supported and tolerated my research throughout, even though it has often meant my absence from home and family. Her skills as a typist and typesetter are constantly appreciated by me, and envied by others.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Cambridge University Press, and in particular Claire Davies Jones, Robin Derricourt, Kate Owen and Peter Richards for their patience.

While I was preparing this book, I was fortunate to begin collaboration with my friends Vicente Lull, Marina Picazo and Ma. Encarna Sanahuja on the Gatas project. Already this project is yielding important new data of relevance to the problems discussed in this book. These data are being published elsewhere, and I have made no mention of them here. The project itself has arisen out of our different interpretations of cultural change in the later prehistory of south-east Spain. One result of our collaboration so far has been a stimulating, and often vehement, debate about these

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interpretations, which has helped me to focus my own mind more clearly on the central issues. Vicente, Marina and Sana have also been generous, helpful and hospitable to me, and as a measure of my gratitude, and as a contribution to future argument between us, I dedicate this book to them.