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978-0-521-84241-9 - The Early Mediterranean Village: Agency, Material Culture, and Social Change in Neolithic Italy

John Robb

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# THE EARLY MEDITERRANEAN VILLAGE



What was daily life like in Italy between 6000 and 3500 BC? This book brings together the archaeological evidence on a wide range of aspects of life in Neolithic Italy and surrounding regions (Sicily and Malta). Exploring how the routines of daily life structured social relations and human experience during this period, it provides a detailed analysis of how people built houses, buried their dead, made and shared a distinctive cuisine, and made the pots and stone tools that archaeologists find. This book also addresses questions of regional variation and long-term change, showing how the sweeping changes at the end of the Neolithic were rooted in and transformed the daily practices of earlier periods. It also links the agency of daily life, and the reproduction of social relations, with long-term patterns in European prehistory.

John Robb has lectured on archaeological theory and the European Neolithic at Southampton University, and, since 2001, at Cambridge University. He has conducted archaeological fieldwork on Neolithic and Bronze Age sites in Italy and research on prehistoric Italian skeletal remains. He is also the editor of the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*.

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## P R E F A C E



This book has three audiences, to each of which it will seem unsatisfactory in different ways. Theoretical archaeologists in the Anglophone tradition may wish for the theoretical agenda to be pursued further and, perhaps, with less encumbering detail. Italian prehistorians, on the other hand, may lament the great mass of data on the Italian Neolithic that I have glossed over in the interests of synthesis and social interpretation. To each of these communities, I ask for tolerance, and, hopefully, to each I can offer some compensation. The theoretical archaeologist may appreciate the chance to see a theoretical agenda worked through systematically across the entire spectrum of archaeological data. For Italian prehistorians, I would hope to offer some interesting interpretations to pursue empirically, in places convergent with ideas arising within the Italian prehistory community. The third audience will be theoretically minded European prehistorians who share the author's desire to see prehistoric Europe neither reduced to one-size-fits-all theoretical frameworks nor left faceless and uninterpreted. To this audience, I can only say that the more ambitious a book is, the more likely it is to fall short, and nobody knows a book's limitations like the author.

This project has been in the making for about a decade. In that time, I have discussed aspects of archaeological theory and Mediterranean prehistory with many friends and colleagues. Many of them will disagree with the ideas and interpretations put forth here; many were unaware that their innocently offered piece of advice or information

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held great significance for this project as it gestated; all were generous with what they thought and knew.

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Many of my Italian colleagues, raised in a different archaeological tradition, will be bemused by my interpretations. Every tradition defines its own cardinal sins; Italian prehistory places more emphasis upon the particularity of data and less upon generalisation and social inference. I hope that this work will be read in a spirit of charitable tolerance and that it may even provide an idea or two worth being empirical about. In any case, I owe particular gratitude to the many Italian prehistorians I have met who have proven unfailingly generous with their time and knowledge, particularly Giovanni Boschian, Alessandro Canci, Alberto Cazzella, Andrea Dolfini, Alfredo Geniola, Alessandra Giampietri, Alessandro Guidi, Maria Rosa Iovino, Laura Longo, Brian McConnell, Francesco Mallegni, Laura Maniscalco, Giorgio Manzi,

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