Book Review

Tamar Hodos, *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age: A Globalising World c. 1100–600 BCE*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xxi, 318. ISBN 9780521199575. $110.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by **Prof. Peter A. J. Attema**, Groningen Institute of Archaeology, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands, E-mail: p.a.j.attema@rug.nl

https://doi.org/10.1515/etst-2023-0010

In the archaeological literature, the Bronze age is often dealt with from a "Eurasian" or at least macro-regional perspective. However, this seems much less the case with the Iron Age, in which regional approaches still prevail in the archaeological literature. With the relatively recent interest of archaeologists in globalization theory, connectivity, and cultural hybridity, the geographical perspective of the Iron Age has, however, significantly broadened. Iron Age cultures are no longer seen as isolated developments but, at least around the Mediterranean basin, are perceived today as interconnected. This insight, based on much new evidence, implies that the transition of the Iron Age into the global world of the Hellenistic era can no longer be presented as being solely brought about by Greek and Roman colonization as the only connectivity driver but, on the contrary, should be studied as the result of a much longer term cultural interaction that may be traced back to the Bronze Age.

In *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age, A Globalising World c. 1100–600 BCE,* the author Tamar Hodos indeed reveals the "Eurasian" dimension of the Iron Age in her detailed study of the interconnectedness of the Iron Age cultures of this period, taking into account the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea from the Levant (and the Syro-Hittite world) to Mediterranean Iberia, and from France, Italy, and Greece to Phoenician North Africa, Greek North Africa (Cyrenaica), and Egypt, with due attention to the islands of Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, and Cyprus.

Map 3.1 in chapter 3 reveals at one glance the main interest of the author: Mediterranean harbor sites. This term should not be taken to mean full-blown harbors but environmental settings where boats could come ashore without too much risk; i.e., bays and lagoons open to, but at the same time sheltered from, the open sea. The 62 sites Hodos discusses are indeed all located in or near such favorable settings and, as a consequence, were chosen by indigenous peoples and seafarers as suitable locations to engage in exchange and trade. Some of these sites—and it is certain that we have not recovered all of them—became veritable hubs in the evolving pan-Mediterranean trade network.

The archaeological record of the hubs discussed, featuring the local and imported material culture of sometimes faraway places, leads the author to see them

as indicators of a pan-Mediterranean globalization process that, according to her, is an overarching characteristic of the Mediterranean Iron Age. This view is supported by much recent research that is ably brought together.

As the book is meant to introduce students and scholars to the incredibly complex multicultural dynamics of the period in only slightly more than 221 pages of text, the author has chosen a straightforward structure, starting with an explication of the theoretical framework of globalization (chapter 1). This is followed by a chapter on chronology and historical aspects (chapter 2), Phoenician and Greek migration and colonization (chapter 3), contacts and exchanges with an emphasis of what was actually traded and consumed (chapter 4), aspects of urbanization (chapter 5), and a chapter called "Written Words" (chapter 6) on the importance of written language.

The volume ends with a chapter presenting conclusions on globalization during the Mediterranean Iron Age and a discussion of the merits of a globalization approach to further our understanding of the complex connections that we can distill from the archaeological record of the period, especially when viewed from such a broad, geographical perspective.

Let us start with what globalization theory, according to the author, entails within the context of the Mediterranean Iron Age (chapter 1). While globalization theory builds on twentieth century perspectives, such as that of Braudel's *longue durée* view, Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, and traditional colonialist perspectives—all of which already described and analyzed the Mediterranean as an interconnected world—Hodos's approach differs from those perspectives in that she embeds connectivity in a post-processional perspective, foregrounding human agency, middle ground and hybridization, as opposed to determinism, economic asymmetry, and the cultural superiority of colonial powers. Hodos rightly mentions the deconstruction of Greek and Roman colonization in the 1990s as having been instrumental in paving the way for the globalization framework that she applies, which has gone a long way in empowering indigenous communities in the discourse on colonialism. This important shift in perspective is fortunately not only theoretical in the book but based on the wealth of data generated by recent archaeological research of late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age coastal contexts. The advances in radiocarbon dating and cross dating of material culture working towards synchronizing regional chronologies allow the author to apply globalization theory within a relatively well-synchronized chronological framework. This, of course, is a sine qua non for situating connectivity in time, even if the accuracy of absolute and relative dates is surrounded by intense debate.

Below I move through chapters 2–6, which form the core of the book.

Chapter 2 informs the reader of the chronological diversity of the Iron Age beginnings and endings of the various cultures bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. This is partly due to the different criteria applied, from stylistic developments in

material culture to historical events. Therefore, the choice to focus on the period 1100–600 B.C.E. is a construct that does not respond to fixed beginnings and endings of the respective Iron Ages, and it is, rather, process on which the author focuses. During the various phases of the time frame between 1100 and 600 B.C.E., Phoenician and Greek seafarers gradually established a pan-Mediterranean exchange network that would evolve in the globalized world that Hodos seeks to describe, understand, and explain in this book.

Key factors in the globalization process were the already mentioned coastal settlements where interaction took place between overseas people and local communities. In the archaeological record, these settlements appear as small and, based on the mixed local and foreign material record, not exclusively belonging to migrants, as indigenous groups might be present there as well. It is especially in the period of the historical Greek colonization, as reported on in the literary sources and known from excavations of what scholarship has labelled "colonies," that we see a scale increase in the migration of people. We conveniently label the actors in this demographic process as Greeks and Phoenicians, but in reality they came from a range of polities in the Eastern Mediterranean lands.

This is the background for why Hodos labels chapter 3 "The movement of people." In this chapter, she distinguishes between migration and colonization while critically addressing the latter concept without, however, doing away with the term. She chooses not to characterize Greek and Phoenician colonization in terms of similarities and differences between the two in order to avoid stereotypes such as the opposition between agricultural colonization (Greek) and trading colonization (Phoenician). After all, both variants of movement were drivers of the Iron Age economy.

Economy is a theme that Hodos discusses in chapter 4, in which she characterizes the Iron Age as a period "of tremendous economic evolution" (96). This evolution would have started in the tenth century B.C.E. with the establishment of trade networks of both "regional and long-distance scale" (107), apart from elite exchanges. From the ninth century B.C.E. on she even speaks of wide-ranging bulk movement. This early movement of goods for commercial purposes is, in the eyes of the author, an important factor in the globalization process; she states that the use of a "common suite of goods reflects an identification of shared status" (108).

By the mid-eighth century B.C.E., a supply and demand system would have been in place in the Phoenician context (116). The map of Iron Age shipwrecks in Figure 4.6 and the discussion of their cargoes would indicate that such a system rapidly became (or all along was) a pan-Mediterranean phenomenon. The distribution and use of foreign pottery shapes, fabrics, and decorations led to local productions of similar forms.

Of this dynamic, the author presents two examples from indigenous Sicily—the class of trefoil *oinochoai* (adopted from a Greek shape) and the famous *krater* from Sabucina depicting Corinthian-style animals—stating that "viewing their distribution and reinterpretation through the lens of globalisation enables us to recognize the shared practices and localised differences in tandem, rather than oppositionally" (125). Apart from material culture, practices were also shared, notably those having to do with banqueting and feasting, and especially wine drinking (125–134). The chapter ends with a discussion of the trade in other commodities for which we have evidence, notably olive oil, grain, textiles, slaves, and precious metals.

In the conclusion to this chapter, the author discusses the topic of changing tastes in the early first millennium, referring to a case study on funerary gifts found in tombs from Lefkandi, meant to illustrate "how practice, identity and exchange collaborated within a globalising environment" (146). While interesting in itself, the reader would rather have expected the author to present a conclusion on the scale, nature, and role of contacts and exchanges, thereby drawing on the rich content presented in the chapter on the origins of the ancient economy.

Chapter 5 deals with urbanization as the preferred term over urbanism, as it shares its dynamic nature with that of globalization. It focuses on the development of urban environments and assesses similarities in planning and building practices as the result of increasing connectivity along the coasts of the Mediterranean basin.

The chapter starts out with a substantial discussion of the development of urban planning and building practices in the Levant and of the ample traits thereof found in coastal settings in the South of Spain, Carthage, Cyprus, Sardinia, and Sicily. Levantine influences in newly established settlements are linked to Phoenician presence and interaction with local populations, including instances of the adoption of building traits in indigenous settlements as well. The author contests (157) the common opinion on the opposition between the non-urban trading character of Phoenician settlements and urban Greek settler and agricultural colonization. As was true of the Greeks, the Phoenicians were also involved in agricultural production and manufacture, and operated "to serve local needs as much as longer distance ones" (161).

Interestingly, child burial in dedicated cemeteries called *tophets*, featuring specific rituals, is identified as a phenomenon of regional identity shared between Carthage, Malta, Sicily, and Sardinia, and not linked to the Levant, where it does not occur. The author sees the *tophet* therefore, as an expression of the urban character of Phoenician settlements, adding to the relevance of our understanding of urbanization as a social, political, economic, and physical phenomenon (162).

The discussion of the Greek world starts out with the concept of the *polis* and its antecedents during the Iron Age in Greece, emphasizing the significance of Lefkandi's *Heroön*, and presents examples of Early Iron Age Greek settlements in which formal

urban planning appeared (including, for example, at the settlement of Zagora on the island of Andros from the mid-eighth century B.C.E. onwards, and at Oropos, in northeastern Attica, at the end of that century). Such planning would have entailed the allocation of urban land plots to noble families as a result of increasing social stratification. The author describes how "settlement development among the various peoples of Sicily did change as a result of the arrival of permanent foreign settlers at the end of the 8th c. BCE," but that there was a considerable time lag before communities started "to adopt more formal urban elements that had been used in the Greek and Phoenician colonies, some since their foundations—rectilinear forms, orthogonal street patterns and substantial city walls" (170). The latter features appear later in the seventh and throughout the sixth centuries B.C.E., when widespread urbanization occured in the geographical context of Magna Graecia and Sicily, sparked by the development of Greek settler colonies to which indigenous settlements responded from their own cultural background and traditions.

In chapter 6, the author highlights writing on durable materials—vases, stone, metal—as evidence of connectivity. The chapter assesses the evidence for the dissemination of the alphabet as an important indicator of communication between different groups of people, starting with the development of the Northwest Semitic cuneiform alphabet, known from Bronze Age Ugarit in present-day Northern Syria. Subsequently, the author discusses the Phoenician alphabet, Cypriot scripts, and written Greek, and their diffusion in the Mediterranean as represented by inscriptions on single objects. The author notes that the "most prolific users of the written word were the Phoenicians, Etruscans, Iberians, and Sicilians" (205). This evidence matches that of their involvement in seafaring, long distance exchange, and commerce. Various examples illustrate how written language would have promoted connectivity, in the form of "poetic recording, mercantile transaction, expressing ownership, or even to facilitate mercenary military activity" (196). However, many other uses and contexts are known as, for example, in the religious sphere, where votive objects may carry inscriptions.

Conclusion, on the basis of the current evidence, it is "no longer possible to consider developments in one area of the Mediterranean without contextualising those changes within a pan-Mediterranean setting" (212). While the pace of change due to Mediterranean connectivity was not everywhere the same all around the Mediterranean Sea, and was certainly slower in inland as opposed to coastal settings, the author convincingly shows how the Mediterranean Iron Age overall was a period of widespread trade and exchange, and how this resulted in shared innovations in material culture expressions, settlement forms, and agricultural production as well as new forms of communication and social behavior. This complex dynamic is effectively captured within the broad theoretical framework of globalization, the underlying methodology of which is, according to this book, composed of a "bottom-

up approach of individual, localised case studies, and the top-down level of shared practices" (220). This approach was advocated by Peter van Dommelen in a paper in *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalization*, edited by Hodos (2017), and indeed proves fruitful in this rich and encompassing monograph on *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age*. The book is recommended to students, teachers, and researchers alike, as it provides an up-to-date and thus far unique overview of the connected Mediterranean Iron Age.