

Publication

Returning Heroes. Greek and native interaction in (pre-) colonial South Italy and beyond

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The cultural interaction between the native population of south Italy and the first immigrants from Greece and the Levant in the early first millennium BC has been exhaustively discussed in recent years. In most cases the debate has been focused on the native side of the encounter, on imports and imitations of Greek and Levantine products found in Italy and on the effects that these foreign goods and the ideologies attached to them had on the local population. Only rarely, however, has the question been asked of how the encounter affected the Greek and Levantine participants. New evidence from the necropolis of Francavilla Marittima, a pivotal point in the early trade and exchange network across the Mediterranean, reveals the adoption of Greek drinking and dining customs based on the notion of ritualized guest-friendship by the local elite as early as the third quarter of the eighth century BC. As Greek xenia functions on the basis of equal rank of the participants involved, it follows from this discovery that Greek aristocrats must have been present in the pre-colonial world from a very early time. In the second part of the paper the question is raised of the material evidence in Greece and the Aegean world for these early contacts with the native Italic population, focusing in particular on the evidence from Eretria, one of the leading powers in the early Greek exploration of the West.

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