

Argolid archaeology and village life in the Ancient Greek world.

MARK VAN DER ENDEN
LOUGHBOROUGH STUDENTS' UNION
markvanderenden@lsu.co.uk

Francesco Collura with contributions by Sergio Cascella, Emiliano Arena and Benedetto Caroccio, *Studia Calactina I. Ricerche su una città greco romana di Sicilia: Kalè Akté – Calacte*. pp. Vii+452, 16 color plates. 2016. Oxford: BAR International Series 2813. ISBN 978-1407314808 paperback \$144.00

The Tyrrhenian north coast of Sicily is in its eastern part, and apart from Tyndaris and Alaesia, archeologically far less explored than the south and east coast with its numerous Greek settlements. The new publication about Kale Akte is therefore very welcome. The city is located about 100 km west of Milazzo and about 60 km east of Cefalù, the ancient Kephaleodium. In the immediate vicinity are Halesa, about 20 km west, Apollonia (San Fratello) 20 km, Aluntium (San Marco d'Alunzio) 30 km and the villa of Patti Marina 60 km east.

Literary sources confirm its foundation for 446 B.C. by Duketios and a looting by Verres (pp. 11–18). After the 496 B.C. foundation of Tyndaris by Dionysios of Syracuse and the nearer Aluntium, which apparently developed in the course of the northern expansion of Syracuse in the 4th century BC, the Kale Akte was probably one of the places settled on the north coast of Sicily in this later phase.

In recent years Carmela Bonanno carried out excavations in the Roman and late antique districts following a Swedish project in Caronia Marina.¹ The present volume gives a broad overview of the archeology of the present-day town of Caronia on the heights and the coastal settlement of Caronia Marina as well as the surrounding area. The material was compiled by Francesco Collura, an economist and administrative expert, interested a lot in antiquity. The foreword by Professor Dario Palermo of Catania University (p. V) gives the book its scientific blessing as well as the publication in the prestigious BAR International Series in Oxford.

The history of the settlement site is traced back to far earlier times than the written sources allow

(pp. 49–68). The author gives a critical review of the published material and at the same time compiles his own inspections and observations. Because of this, he can make out two ancient settlements, one on the site of Caronia on the height above the coast, a second with a port on the coast at Caronia Marina. Between the foundation of Himera (648 BC) and of Kale Akte (446 BC), a smaller settlement between Himera and Messina must have been located here.

Collura is likely to exceed the borders of knowledge when he reconstructs an orthogonal road system on the steep hill of the Upper Town from limited remains, which he even compares with the urban planning of Solunt (pp. 120–123). Here, the plans and autopsy on site do not seem to reveal even right angles between the few excavated walls, apart from significant differences in level on the extremely steep slope, which are hardly suitable for such a grid shaped urbanistic system.

In the coastal town of Caronia Marina, the author bases his reconstruction on surface finds, sometimes of private land owners, and well-preserved cisterns on private land. The results are in agreement with those published by C. Bonanno in 2009 (see above). Some Greek ceramics prove a small settlement between the 6th and the 3rd century BC. There had been a more extensive settlement between the 2nd and 4th century AD, for which even a harbor was reconstructed and a wall stretch in the water off the coast was believed to be a mole. However, no geological studies have been done on the assumed erosion of the coastline, which therefore cannot be considered confirmed (pp. 187–232).

The author mentions three necropolises, one from late Antiquity to Byzantine times adjoining the coastal settlement and two near the Upper Town, which are mainly dated to the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. (pp. 233–250). These observations are primarily based on chance finds and finds on private land. The whereabouts of the finds, which are published in the book, are often not specified.

While the two settlements on the coast and on the mountain are already experiencing a decline after the 4th century AD, a possible repopulation of the height in the Arab period is not confirmed. There are, however, medieval majolica ceramics from the Norman–Hohenstaufen period and a Norman fort. The author also reconstructs the course of a fortification wall of the 12th–13th. century AD (P. 251–274), whose existence however remains questionable.

A chapter about the surrounding territory under the headline 'La Chora Calactina' mentions Bronze Age to Late Roman finds, including some Bronze Age settlement traces (p. 280 Figs. 4–6) and the mosaic of

¹ Bonanno 2009.

a Roman villa (p.300 Fig. 65). However, it is not clear by which methodology the sites were discovered, probably it is all about random finds. In addition, it remains difficult to localize the places named on the attached map (p. 305 f.). Also, the reconstructed, supposedly ancient, centuriation (p. 303 Fig. 66) is based on the current land distribution.

At the end of the volume some single finds from the area of Caronia are discussed. E. Arena analyzes a public inscription from the turn of the 3rd to the 2nd century BC. (pp. 351–372, SEG LIX, 1102). In addition, we are presented with the fragment of a sundial (pp. 373–378), Greek coins from the period between the 4th century BC and the 1st century AD (379–392) and some Italian Terra Sigillata (pp. 393–412). Finally come comments on the Archaic–Classical settlement on the Pizzo Cilona, south of Caronia (413–434). Some color plates are attached, but an index is missing.

In summary, one must pay the author respect, who is not a professional archeologist, for his passion for collecting material and the intensity of his researches. The analysis of the objects however, the urbanistic interpretations of the hilltop settlement of Caronia and the centuriation go well beyond well-grounded conclusions. Concerns must be registered also against the collection strategy. Neither in the urban centers nor in the territory was any coherent collecting strategy pursued, but it is always a matter of chance, while moreover it is not always clear where the finds are now stored. Collura nonetheless speak in the introduction of handing over new materials to the province of Messina.

Undoubtedly, this extensive, 450–page volume broadens our archaeological knowledge of the north coast between Alaesa and Capo d'Orlando, if of course, in a slightly systematic and difficult to verify way. Still, the book can be considered helpful, as much of the material has not been available in the literature so far. Not infrequently, however, the interpretations of the findings exceed the possibilities of interpretation in archeology. It therefore has to be questioned to what extent the results of the volume can really enrich archaeological knowledge and research in this stretch of coastline.

JOHANNES BERGEMANN
GEORG–AUGUST–UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN
jbergem@gwdg.de

Bonanno, C. 2009. *Kalè Akté. Scavi in contrada Pantano di Caronia Marina 2003 – 2005*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.