

**Christiane NOWAK, Bestattungsrituale in Unteritalien vom 5. bis 4. Jh. v. Chr. Überlegungen zur sogenannten Samnitisierung Kampaniens. Italiká Bd. 3. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2014, 200 S., 26 farb. Abb., 72 s/w-Abb.**

In the third volume of the Italiká series, Christiane Nowak publishes a slightly reduced version of her PhD thesis.<sup>1</sup> In this study, Nowak addresses changes in the funerary rituals in Campania during the fifth-fourth centuries BC. The presence of belligerent Samnite and related groups, such as Lucanians and Campanians, in Southern Italy is referred to by ancient, mostly Roman, authors such as Strabo and Plinius. Archaeologists have connected these references to changes in burials of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, found throughout Southern Italy. The funerary reorientation included often similar items or practices, such as bronze belts, bronze triple disc breastplates, painted tombs or locally produced ceramics and fibulae – items not usually associated with “normative” Greek funerary behaviour. Hence, many archaeologists’ correlation with the invading barbarian tribes mentioned in the written sources. In this book, Nowak seeks to scrutinise the textual and especially the archaeological evidence, i.e. the tombs of the fifth and fourth centuries BC in Campania and adjacent regions, that are affected by the “Samnitisierung” of the region. Her general conclusion proposes that there is no archaeological evidence to support the traditional, text-based scholarly hypothesis of a migration of a Samnite group into the area, which would have replaced previous populations. The argument is structured around eight chapters and a brief summary, a catalogue with find places, a bibliography, and almost 100 images, both colour and black and white.

The first chapter (Einleitung, p. 13-14) introduces traditional perceptions of the fifth century BC, with Southern Italy being war-torn and overrun by barbarian tribes, under whose incentive established burial rites were abandoned and remodelled, to include new objects that reflected their warlike nature, such as weapons, but also painted tombs. Nowak, however, relates this conventional scholarly idea of the existence of primordial, ethnic groups with fixed cultural and behavioural patterns to 19th century Romanticism. Current scientific understanding of ethnicity rejects such notions, and focusses instead on the construc-

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<sup>1</sup> See for reviews of the earlier Italiká volumes: M. Hörnes, Rez. zu N. Burkhardt, Bestattungssitten zwischen Tradition und Modifikation. Kulturelle Austauschprozesse in den griechischen Kolonien in Unteritalien und Sizilien vom 8. bis zum 5. Jh. v. Chr. Italiká Bd. 2. Wiesbaden 2013, GFA 18, 2015 (<https://gfa.gbv.de/dr,gfa,018,2015,r,03.pdf>) and B. Schweizer, Rez. zu E. Thiermann, Capua – Grab und Gemeinschaft. Eine kontextuelle Analyse der Nekropole Fornaci (570 bis 400 v. Chr.). Italiká Bd. 1. Wiesbaden 2012, GFA 16, 2013 (<http://gfa.gbv.de/dr,gfa,016,2013,r,45.pdf>).

ted and situational nature of ethnicity as part of a broad range of social identities that individuals subscribe to. As a consequence, Nowak argues that it is necessary to reassess the previous claims of an objective Samnite ethnic group which substituted or culturally influenced Greeks, natives and Etruscans throughout Southern Italy.

The second chapter (*Zielsetzung und Methode*, p. 15) outlines the goals and method adopted in the remainder of the study: a discussion on the problematic nature of the concept "ethnicity" will be followed by an analysis of ethnic attributions in ancient texts and text fragments concerning Campania and the Samnites. Next, the objects that are traditionally seen as "markers" of Samnite ethnic identity will be discussed, a chapter which will be succeeded by the actual discussion of funerary rituals in "Greek" Campania and native settlements in Campania. At the end, an analysis of Greek necropolises on the Ionian coasts, thought to have been involved in Samnitisising processes, will, as Nowak proposes, provide additional comparative material.

In this chapter, Nowak clarifies further some methodological choices that have been made in the study: the analytic method adopted is qualitative instead of quantitative, a choice which is reflected in the find catalogue in which a synthesis of finds is collected instead of a complete listing of all find places and contexts.<sup>2</sup>

The third chapter (*Das methodologische Problem der ethnischen Deutung*, p. 17-18) is dedicated to an examination of the methodological problems regarding traditional ethnic classifications. Adhering to recent sociological understandings of the constructed nature of group identities, such as ethnic identities, Nowak rejects the traditional primordial/essential notions of material culture or fixed behavioural patterns being equal to ethnic identity. Nowak briefly discusses previous archaeological contributions to the study of ethnicity, mainly Sian Jones' and Stephan Brather's work.<sup>3</sup> Based on the premises outlined in these scholars' work, Nowak sees reasons to question traditional archaeological perceptions of the Samnites. In line with Brather's conclusion, she finds it difficult to grasp

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<sup>2</sup> The study does include some quantitative analysis, however, presented as tables and graphs at the end of the book, together with the rest of the images: p. 145-166.

<sup>3</sup> S. Jones, *The archaeology of ethnicity. Constructing identities in the past and present* (London 1997); S. Brather, *Ethnische Identitäten als Konstrukte der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie*, *Germania* 78, 2000, 139-176 and S. Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexicon der Altertumswissenschaften* 42 (Berlin 2004).

the tribes that are mentioned in the ancient texts.<sup>4</sup> She underlines that the statements about the Samnites, made by ancient writers, need to be understood in their historical context: readers are presented with a constructed alterity instead of insiders' statements. As a result, Nowak claims that written sources are of limited value to understand burials, because the alterity of the sources was not expressed in funerary rites. Therefore, the author argues that it is necessary, in order to understand ethnic identity in burial rites, to assess what function the representation of ethnicity had. Drawing on Bruno d'Agostino's work on funerary ideology, she considers burial as a rite executed with an ideological "filter" of the burying group.<sup>5</sup>

In the fourth chapter (*Ethnifizierende Darstellungsstrategien in der antiken Überlieferung und in modernen Interpretationen*, p. 19-33), the author aims to disentangle ancient representations of ethnicity in Campania, and their modern interpretations. Nowak observes that statements about ethnic groups in Campania appear already in the 6th century BC, and thus predate the supposed Samnite take-over. For example, when Dionysius Halicarnassus discusses the battle of Cuma, he refers to ethnic groups, Greeks versus Etruscans. This is, in Nowak's view, a conscious strategy of ethnic labelling, which in the end serves only one purpose, that is, depicting the Romans as one group and as conquerors of the other Italian peoples.

The presence of Samnites and related tribes, such as Lucanians and Campanians, appears in Strabo. He dates the coming of the Samnites to the times of the earliest Greek colonisation in Southern Italy. Other ancient sources, however, date the Samnites to the fifth century BC. This means that there is no coherent tradition about the Samnites, let alone internal statements about what made them a people. Anticipating her final conclusion, Nowak argues that the Samnitising phenomenon is exclusively known from the written sources, and that there is no archaeological confirmation of the Samnites being a distinct group.

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<sup>4</sup> Brather questions the possibility of defining a people chronologically and geographically in a coherent interdisciplinary way. Every discipline, such as philology, history, archaeology, biology usually addresses an aspect only, such as language, territory, pottery, architecture, bones etc. without attempting to address the entire complexity of ethnicity. Cf. Nowak on p. 17, referring to S. Brather, *Ethnische Identitäten als Konstrukte der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie*, *Germania* 78, 2000, 139-176 esp. p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Nowak refers to d'Agostino 2000, but the reference is missing in the bibliography. It is unclear which of d'Agostino's contributions Nowak is referring to: d'Agostino's main contribution to theoretical funerary ideology would be: B. d'Agostino, *Società dei vivi, comunità dei morti. Un rapporto difficile*, *Dialoghi di Archeologia* III, 3, 1985, 47-58.

The sack of Capua and Kyme, at the hand of the Samnites, in the late fifth century BC occupies a central place in the historiography on the Samnites. However, Nowak points out that there is no archaeological evidence for a take-over by another ethnic group. Instead, she proposes to see the references to other ethnic groups as implying social strife, stasis and political unrest.

Additionally, Samnite wars in Southern Italy are mentioned in several written texts. Nowak correlates these references to changes in the ethnic representations of the populations of Southern Italy in the early imperial period, when the rise of a complex state system necessitated the development of a communal strategy. By depicting the Romans as victor over Italy, writers such as Plinius and Strabo achieved this goal. Ethnicity in these texts was then activated when ideology in their history or self-representation was addressed (p. 25).

In the second part of the fourth chapter, Nowak analyses the ancient representations and modern interpretations of the populations of Southern Italy. Apart from Greeks, Southern Italy is generally believed to have been populated by various ethnic groups, such as Oscans, Ausonians, Opicians, Samnites, Campanians, and Lucanians. Nowak briefly discusses for each of these groups the source and context of these references.

The chapter is closed with a summary, in which the author draws three conclusions regarding the written texts, that are important for the following analysis of archaeological objects and contexts. These conclusions touch upon the supposed kinship of Samnites, Lucanians and Campanians (which was a Roman invention), their primordial nature as a people (which did not exist) and the historicity of the phenomenon (chronologically very diverse). Based on an analysis of the sources, Nowak points out that there is no ground to consider the Samnites as a real group that invaded Campania.

In the fifth chapter (*Chorologie und Chronologie sog. 'Samnitischer' Materialgruppen*, p. 35-40), Nowak reviews the chronological and geographical distribution of object categories that are traditionally considered "markers" of the Samnites: bronze belts, bronze triple disc breastplates, and painted tombs. Given that the written sources on Samnites need to be questioned, similar conclusions may need to be drawn for the Samnite ethnic "markers". Bronze belts are an innovation, compared with earlier, heavier hoplite armour. They were part of a leather armour, which was much lighter and enabled horse riding. The belts consisted of a broad bronze strip with multiple hooks to close them. They could be ornamentally elaborated in various ways, as Nowak describes in detail in this section. The earliest belts appear in Peucetia and the Melfi re-

gion. The association of "Samnite" belts with tombs in which the body was laid out in a so-called Hocker position, very frequent among the Daunian populations, make Nowak doubt the ethnic value of the belts. Instead, she proposed to see them as a transcultural status symbol, used among Greeks and non-Greeks alike.

The bronze triple disc breastplates appear first in the fifth century. They consist of a front and a back plate, joined by bronze strips. The plates have the shape of three connected discs, and they could be decorated in various ways, as Nowak explores in this section. The breastplates have been found in Southern Italy and, more sporadically, along the Adriatic coast. The earliest come from Poseidonia or Pontecagnano, and date to the late fifth century BC. It is possible that a workshop was located at Poseidonia. The breastplates were quite widespread and cannot be related exclusively to Samnium or Lucania. They were used in different ways at different sites. Therefore, an ethnic significance cannot be attributed to this type of armour.

Next, Nowak discusses the occurrence of painted tombs, a phenomenon usually linked to the Samnites. However, the origins are to be found in the Greek colonies or Capua. Early examples are found in Greek and native Apulia and appear next in Poseidonia. Subsequently, the practice spreads to the rest of Southern Italy.

Summarising, at the end of this chapter, the material evidence or traditional "markers" of Samnite ethnic identity, Nowak concludes that these objects cannot be linked exclusively to one group: they were used at different times in the whole region. Rather, they are to be understood as transcultural elite objects and markers of status.

In the next three chapters, Nowak reviews the funerary evidence from the Greek colonies in Campania, of the non-Greek settlements of Southern Italy, and the Greek colonies on the Ionian coast, respectively. For each chapter, she adopts the same procedure for presenting the evidence: a short historical introduction is followed by a brief overview of excavations and previous studies. Next, the location and chronology of the necropolises is examined. This part is succeeded by a summary of funerary rites and tomb types. Significant attention is paid to the funerary gifts, which are discussed in separate entries each time: pottery, weapons, jewellery and fibulae, other gifts (mostly strigiles and mirrors) and tomb paintings (if attested). Each chapter closes with a summary, in which the evidence is reviewed and compared. The three chapters are con-

nected to a catalogue, presented at the end of the book, in which for each of the sites, the archaeological evidence is discussed succinctly.

The sixth chapter (*Bestattungsrituale in den griechischen Kolonien der tyrrhenischen Küste*, p. 41-63) is dedicated to the Greek colonies of Campania, Poseidonia, Kyme and Neapolis. Although Neapolis was never officially conquered by the Samnites as is posited for Poseidonia or Kyme, Nowak argues that there are good grounds for including it in the review: sources refer to a mixed Greek-native population, and previous research has drawn attention to the presence of non-Greek, Oscan names in inscriptions, which indicates a high degree of integration of native people or people with a native background in the colony. The evidence from Neapolis could provide, in Nowak's view, additional information to understand better the changes in funerary rites, that affect the other colonies.

After reviewing the evidence from Poseidonia, Nowak concludes that the funerary rites change after the mid-fifth century BC. Most striking are the objects (pottery, weapons, tomb paintings), which often display similarities with native settlements. However, innovations seem to have been locally induced and point to a changing desire to express social roles, such as a warrior identity or gender, in funerary rituals.

Funerary rites change in Kyme at the end of the fifth century BC: the stone sarcophagi and cremations are abandoned and the composition of the gifts changes (locally produced pottery, weapons in the fourth century). The occurrence of the olla could point to a native custom, which was adopted in the colony. But otherwise, there is no evidence to support the idea of the influx of new ethnic group.

Neapolis appears to differ significantly from the other colonies, but a segregation between Greeks and natives, expressed in funerary rites, is not visible. Weapons are not present in the urban necropolis.

In conclusion, Nowak states that the idea of Samnitising trends in the funerary rites in the three colonies are very diverse, date to different times, and that local preferences clearly existed.

In the seventh chapter (*Bestattungsrituale in den nichtgriechischen Siedlungen*, p. 65-78), Nowak discusses funerary evidence from indigenous settlements in Campania (Abella, Calatia, Capua, Eboli, Fratte di Salerno, Montesarchio, Nocera Superiore, Nola, Pontecagnano, Suessula, Vico Equense), the Agro and Siris Valley (Aliano, Armento Roccanova, San Martino d'Agri, Sant'Arcangelo, Latronico, Chiaromonte), the Vallo di Diano (Padula, Teggiano), the

Tyrrhenian coast (Rivello, Tortora), sites belonging to the Oliveto-Cairano culture (Oliveto-Citra and Cairano) and northern Lucania (Atena Lucana, Buccino, Baragiano, Baratto, Ruvo del Monte, Roscigno, Torre di Satriano, Serra di Vaglio). These various sites display a large variety of rites (both cremation and inhumation) and tomb types (pits, cists and various stone-constructed tombs, hypogea and various types of tile tombs). All sites witness a reduction in imported Attic pottery in the later fifth century and an increase in locally and regionally produced wares, apart from the sites of the Oliveto-Cairano culture, where Attic pottery was never popular. Weapons increase in the fourth century BC in Campania, the Agro and Siris Valley, the Oliveto-Cairano culture, and northern Lucania. They occur sporadically at the Tyrrhenian coast, but disappear from the Vallo di Diano. Jewellery is found in Campania, the Agro and Siris Valley, the Oliveto-Cairano culture and northern Lucania, but they decline or disappear completely in the Diano Valley and Tyrrhenian coast. Strigiles and mirrors are popular at most places, especially in the fourth century, but they were unknown at the Oliveto-Cairano sites. Mirrors appear to be also unknown in the Agro and Siris Valley. Tomb paintings are only known in Campania, but not elsewhere.

From the analysis, Nowak draws the conclusion that there is an enormous diversity between sites and that especially northern Lucania and the Oliveto-Cairano culture sites differ from the others. Changes in funerary rites occur, but are to be related to localised transformations in funerary display, and not to the influx of a new and coherent ethnic group.

The eighth chapter (Bestattungsrituale in den griechischen Kolonien der ioni-schen Küste, p. 79-91) is dedicated to the Greek colonies Metaponto and Heracleia, on the Ionian coast. Even though not strictly part of the Samnite conquests, they provide Nowak with additional information and comparative material. Bronze belts occur in Metaponto much earlier than in Poseidonia. The belts were deposited in graves with rites and objects that were not essentially different from other tombs in the necropoles, and therefore, they cannot be connected to an ethnic identity. Similarly, in Heracleia, the few weapons that are usually attributed to "foreigners" residing in the colony, should be read in social and status terms, rather than as ethnic markers.

The eighth chapter concludes with a section in which the evidence from the Greek colonies (from chapters six and eight) is compared: the so-called Samnite bronze belts occur in all colonies, in different quantities, at different times. Painted tombs appear in Metaponto and Poseidonia first, after the mid-fifth century. They are stylistically closely related to each other. Poseidonia witness-

ses important developments in tomb painting in the fourth century BC. In a later phase, painted tombs also appear in Kyme and Neapolis. The bronze triple disc breastplate is only known from Poseidonia. It is evident from the analysis, advocates Nowak, that the Samnite “markers” occur at different places, at different times – if at all, and they do not support literary statements about invading Samnite tribes. The changes witnessed in the burials of Southern Italy need to be seen as social formation processes and elite representations.

Nowak concludes the book with a brief summary (p. 93-95), which reiterates the various points made throughout the previous chapters. Another, slightly briefer summary in Italian constitutes the next chapter and concludes the text body of the book (p. 97-98).

Next follows a catalogue with 61 entries that summarise and situate the various necropolises discussed in the text. The sites are situated in place and time, the rites and tomb types are listed, as well as the various find categories. The entries include bibliographic references.

The book closes with a bibliography and, finally, all the images.

In this rather thin book, Nowak tackles one of the main historical problems of the late Classical and Hellenistic Southern Italian region, i.e. the supposed Samnite take-over of the area. She does so in a clear style and systematic manner. The thesis of the book, i.e. that there was no Samnite migration and that the ancient sources need to be seen as conscious strategies of ethnic representation, that the changes in funerary rites in Southern Italy are part of transcultural social formation processes and elite formation, is very convincing. The book is well-researched, well-documented, but without any fringes. The bibliography, images and catalogue facilitate the reader’s understanding of the argument which is being developed, and provide additional tools for further reading to those wishing to research a topic further.

From an Anglo-Saxon scholarly point of view, the book might seem slightly undertheorised, especially regarding ethnic identity and funerary ideology, but the work touches nevertheless upon the most important issues.<sup>6</sup> It can only

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<sup>6</sup> Recent contributions include for example: T. Insoll (ed.), *The archaeology of identities: a reader*. London, 2007; T. Derks/N. Roymans (eds.), *Ethnic constructs in Antiquity. The role of power and tradition*. Amsterdam 2009 (to name just very few examples). Theory of funerary archaeology has been amply discussed in the work of Chapman, Hodder, Morris and others. A recent comprehensive overview of scholarly approaches to funerary



be hoped that Christiane Nowak's work will receive the international reception it deserves.

Dr. Lieve Donnellan  
Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellow  
CLUE+  
Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen  
Vrije Universiteit  
De Boelelaan 1105  
NL-1081 HV Amsterdam  
E-Mail: [l.d.donnellan@vu.nl](mailto:l.d.donnellan@vu.nl)