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HERDS – Animal Husbandry  
and its Economic Role in the Development  
of Central Mediterranean Protohistoric Societies



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Istituto Italiano di Preistoria e Protostoria

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HERDS – Animal Husbandry  
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Edited by

Andrea Cardarelli, Giulia Recchia, Antonio Curci,  
Beatrice Demarchi, Claudia Minniti, Marco Pacciarelli

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This volume presents the results of the PRIN 2020 project “*HERDS Animal Husbandry and its Economic Role in the Development of Central Mediterranean Protohistoric Societies*”, discussed in advance in a dedicated International Workshop held in Rome, Sapienza University, Dipartimento di Scienze dell’Antichità, on the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> November 2025.

The volume is organised into three sections. The first is devoted to the results of the HERDS project, the second presents the case studies included within the project, and the third comprises further case studies discussed at the HERDS International Workshop.

Contributions are peer reviewed.

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RU UNIBo: Dipartimento di Storia Culture Civiltà, Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna, coordinated by Antonio Curci.

RU UNINA: Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, University of Neapols Federico II, coordinated by Marco Pacciarelli.

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The Herds project logo was created by Lorenzo Cardarelli





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## The Pile-Dwelling Settlement at Pieve di Carpegna (Carpegna, Pesaro-Urbino)

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The lacustrine pile-dwelling site of Pieve di Carpegna is situated within a small basin (c. 1.5-2 ha), now entirely peat-filled and buried. It was occupied between the Early Bronze Age and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. The site was identified during earthworks associated with the construction of basins for a hydraulic system serving a horticultural enterprise established over the area (fig. 1). The results of these initial discoveries were presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Scientific Meeting of the Istituto Italiano di Preistoria e Protostoria dedicated to the Marche region (Baldelli *et al.* 2005)<sup>1</sup>. Following this discovery, Dr Gabriele Baldelli (Soprintendenza Archeologia delle Marche) initiated a stratigraphic excavation to assess the preservation and extent of the archaeological deposits. This represented the first systematic excavation in the territory of Carpegna. The research, directed by Baldelli in collaboration with Andrea Cardarelli (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), was conducted in July 2005, with scientific support from Claudio Balista and Sara Tiziana Levi.

Prior to excavation, a detailed micro-topographic survey was carried out with 0.2 m contour intervals<sup>2</sup>. This survey suggests that the basin originally had an elongated NW – SE orientation, exceeding 200 m in length and with a maximum width of approximately 80 m. The excavation area is located near the centre of the basin, which appears to have been very shallow, probably not exceeding 4 m in depth.

The excavated levels correspond to the final phase of occupation, datable to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. Nevertheless, a stratigraphic section including underlying layers was documented, characterized by the presence of in-situ wooden piles (fig. 2). Two radiocarbon dates are available for this terminal phase, indicating that the settlement came to an end in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century BC, consistent with an attribution to Middle Bronze Age I<sup>3</sup>. The underlying deposits can therefore

<sup>1</sup> The comprehensive publication of the 2005 excavation is currently in preparation.

<sup>2</sup> The micro-topographic survey was conducted by Gianluca Pellacani.

<sup>3</sup> Two radiocarbon determinations are available: US 337, Phase 1 (seed), 27 July 2005, CEDAD code: LTL5174A: 3420 ± 45 BP, corresponding to 1879-1623 BC (95.4% probability)

be attributed to the Early Bronze Age, in agreement with the dating of certain finds recovered at the time of the site's discovery (Baldelli *et al.* 2005).

The ceramic assemblage has been studied by Luca Pellegrini (Pellegrini 2010) and is currently in the process of publication. The assemblage includes several handles with axe-shaped elevations, typically attributed to an early Middle Bronze Age 1 horizon (fig. 3) and finds the closest parallels in the contexts of Cattolica, Senigallia and Ancarano di Sirolo, dated between the Late Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age 1 (Miari 2009; Delpino 2014; Baldelli 2005). A few sporadic finds of uncertain provenance from the site may be attributable to the Recent Bronze Age, possibly indicating a later reoccupation of the area, in a location different from that investigated during the excavation. The faunal assemblage from the site is highly fragmented. A total of 147 bone fragments were recovered, more than half of which could not be identified to species level. A total of 82 remains were identified to species. Among domestic animals, cattle were predominant – a pattern also supported by the undetermined portion of the assemblage, over 60% of which could be attributed to large-sized animals. Pigs and caprines follow in frequency. The 38 remains confidently attributed to cattle represent at least four individuals, including three adults – one of which is female – and one subadult. The 21 pig remains belong to at least three individuals, including one adult male and two piglets slaughtered before the

age of four months. Fifteen caprine remains belong to at least two individuals: an adult female goat culled at around three years of age, confirmed by genetic analysis (Makarova *et al.*, this volume), and a subadult aged between one and 1.5 years. Among wild species, only wild boar is attested. Given the small sample size, the data are of limited statistical value for any meaningful reconstruction of the site economy.

Analyses of seeds and fruits were carried out on the site (Provesi 2017/2018). Fifteen samples, taken during excavations in 2003 and 2005 from ten different stratigraphic units, were sieved, representing a total of approximately 280 litres of soil. Approximately 4,600 seeds and fruits



Fig. 1 – Pieve di Carpegna. Excavation 2003. Jar with a slight developed axe-shape handle: EBA 2

*Pieve di Carpegna. Olla con ansa ad ascia poco sviluppata dai saggi di scavo 2003: EBA 2.*

and 1860-1646 BC (68.2% probability). US 338, CEDAD code: LTL5175A: 3392 ± 45 BP, corresponding to 1874-1545 BC (95.4% probability) and 1743-1631 BC (68.2% probability)



Fig. 2 – Pieve di Carpegna. Excavation 2005. The archaeological deposit with wooden piles.

*Pieve di Carpegna. Scavi 2005 il deposito archeologico con le palificazioni.*



Fig. 3 – Pieve di Carpegna. 2005 excavations. Funnel-shaped vessel: MBA 1.

*Pieve di Carpegna. Scavi 2005. Vaso ad imbuto: MBA 1.*

were recovered, well-preserved, mostly waterlogged (89%) and some charred (11%). Most of the finds (65%-43 taxa) belong to spontaneous plants, including weeds, wetland and woodland species, indicative of open forest, meadow, and highly anthropogenic environments (e.g., numerous nitrophilous species). Other finds (35%-18 taxa) come from plants with known or potential use, especially for food. Some were cultivated, including cereals (predominantly barley, followed by naked wheat and emmer), broad beans, and possibly grape. Wild fruits were also harvested, including Cornelian cherries, elderberries, blackberries, strawberries, plums, acorns, and hackberries. A small number of flax seeds were recovered, probably representing a textile resource rather than food. Overall, the assemblage shows the same food plant taxa that characterize Bronze Age sites in nearby Emilia-Romagna, for which numerous archaeobotanical analyses exist (Bosi *et al.* 2024; Carra 2013).

The Pieve di Carpegna pile-dwelling site presents several aspects of considerable interest. Its location highlights the attraction of wetland environments – even small ones – within the Apennine area for communities of the Early Bronze Age and the earliest phase of the Middle Bronze Age (the site is situated at 620 m a.s.l.). This provides further evidence for the tendency to establish settlements, often of long duration, in wetland or lacustrine settings – a pattern well attested in northern and central-Tyrrhenian Italy, as well as in the internal areas of the central Apennines, from the Early Bronze Age onwards. The presence of occupations in lacustrine contexts within the Marche Apennines represents a new occurrence. Notable connections with contemporary settlements in Romagna and northern Marche may indicate a specific archaeological facies, which has not yet been fully defined.

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I. THE RESULTS OF THE HERDS PROJECT

ANDREA CARDARELLI, GIULIA RECCHIA, ANTONIO CURCI, BEATRICE DEMARCHI, CLAUDIA MINNITI, MARCO PACCIARELLI, HERDS. Animal Husbandry and its Economic Role in the Development of Central Mediterranean Protohistoric Societies: An introduction . . . . .	7
ANDREA CARDARELLI, ANNA DEPALMAS, MARCO PACCIARELLI, GIULIA RECCHIA, LORENZO CARDARELLI, MELISSA VILMERCATI, Societies, Mobility, and Trade in the Central Mediterranean between the Middle Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (ca. 1700-700 BCE): An Archaeological Framework . . . . .	13
MATTEO CIANFONI, EMANUELE GROTTA MAFFIOTTI, ELENA MAINI, FABIO FIORI, CARMEN DOMINGUEZ-CASTILLO, ANA R. HORTAL, BRUNO MARTINEZ-HAYA, MARLISA MAZZOLA, ALBERTO COSIMO POTENZA, MIRIAM PUNZURUDU, ELEONORA SERRONE, FRANCESCA ALHAIQUE, EUGENIO CERILLI, BEATRIZ PINO URÍA, ANTONIO TAGLIACOZZO, AURORA CALDERONE, ANGELICA FIORILLO, LETIZIA SILVESTRI, SIMONE SATRIANO, JACOPO DE GROSSI MAZZORIN, ANDREA CARDARELLI, ANNA DEPALMAS, MARCO PACCIARELLI, GIULIA RECCHIA, MARCO ZEDDA, ANTONIO CURCI, BEATRICE DEMARCHI, CLAUDIA MINNITI, Herding Strategies and Economic Roles in Italy between the Middle Bronze and the Early Iron Ages: New Insights from Zooarchaeology and ZooMS Analysis . . . . .	75
CLAUDIO CAVAZZUTI, NICCOLÒ MORIN, ELENA ARMAROLI, SARA BERNARDINI, EDUARDO DI MARCANTONIO, ANDREA CARDARELLI, GIULIA RECCHIA, MAURIZIO CATTANI, FLORENCIA INES DEBANDI, WIEKE DE NEEF, ELISA PAOLINI, MARIALETIZIA CARRA, CLAUDIA MINNITI, ELENA MAINI, ANTONIO CURCI, BEATRICE DEMARCHI, EMANUELE GROTTA MAFFIOTTI, MARLISA MAZZOLA, CARMEN DOMINGUEZ-CASTILLO, ANA RODRÍGUEZ-HORTAL, BRUNO MARTINEZ-HAYA, LUIGI DALLAI, ANNA CIPRIANI, FEDERICO LUGLI, Animal Management Strategies in Bronze Age Italy. Integrating Isotopes, Zooms, Bioarchaeology and Land Use Modelling . . . . .	97
MARIIA MAKAROVA, ARIANNA CODATO, MARTINA JIRINA ORSONI, ADRIANA LATORRE, ALEXIA MAZZINI, EMMA PRANTONI, ELENA MAINI, ELEONORA SERRONE, MARLISA MAZZOLA, EMANUELE GROTTA MAFFIOTTI, LORENZO CARDARELLI, MATTEO CIANFONI, FABIO FIORI, CLAUDIA MINNITI, LETIZIA SILVESTRI, ANTONIO TAGLIACOZZO, BEATRIZ PINO URÍA, MARCO ZEDDA, FEDERICA D'AMICO, SILVIA TURRONI, DONATA LUISELLI, BEATRICE DEMARCHI, ANTONIO CURCI, ANDREA CARDARELLI, ELISABETTA CILLI, Benchmarking Biomolecular Preservation and Ancient DNA Recovery from Bronze Age Italian Livestock Remains: Preliminary Results from the HERDS Project. . . . .	133
ROSARIA AVELLA, ANDREA CARDARELLI, CLAUDIA MINNITI, MARCO PACCIARELLI, GIULIA RECCHIA, GIUSEPPE EGIDIO DE BENEDETTO, Milk-boilers of the Italian Bronze Age: from Archaeological Hypotheses to Analytical Evidence . . . . .	155

LORENZO FIORILLO, MATTEO CIANFONI, HALINKA DI LORENZO, GIORGIO FILIPPI, CLAUDIA MINNITI, PASQUALE MIRANDA, MARCO PACCIARELLI, ELDA RUSSO ERMOLLI, ANDREA CARDARELLI, Human Occupation of Apennine Grazing Landscapes: Archaeological and Environmental Indicators, and the Excavation at Monte Morra (Latium) . . . . . 173

ANDREA CARDARELLI, GIULIA RECCHIA, ANTONIO CURCI, BEATRICE DEMARCHI, CLAUDIA MINNITI, MARCO PACCIARELLI, ROSARIA AVELLA, CLAUDIO CAVAZZUTI, MATTEO CIANFONI, ELISABETTA CILLI, GIUSEPPE EGIDIO DE BENEDETTO, LORENZO FIORILLO, FEDERICO LUGLI, MARIIA MAKAROVA, The HERDS Project: Conclusions . . . . . 193

## II. CASE STUDIES INCLUDED IN THE HERDS PROJECT

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS OF THE HERDS PROJECT . . . . . 203

ANDREA CARDARELLI, PAOLO BELLINTANI, PAOLA SALZANI, Frattesina (Fratta Polesine, Rovigo). A Centre of Specialised Craft Production and International Exchange near the Po River Delta . . . . . 205

MAURO CREMASCHI, ANDREA ZERBONI, The Terramara Santa Rosa di Poviglio: Main Archaeological Features and Environmental Context . . . . . 210

MAURO CREMASCHI, ANDREA ZERBONI, The Protohistoric Settlement at San Michele di Valestra (Carpineti, Reggio Emilia): New Research 2017-2023 . . . . . 217

ANDREA CARDARELLI, FEDERICO ERBETTI, GIANLUCA PELLACANI, The Terramara of Baggiovara (Modena) . . . . . 222

ANDREA CARDARELLI AND FEDERICO SCACCHETTI, The Terramara of Gaggio (Castelfranco Emilia – Modena) . . . . . 225

MAURIZIO CATTANI, CLAUDIO CAVAZZUTI, LORENZO BONAZZI, MARIALETIZIA CARRA, FLORENCIA INES DEBANDI, ELENA MAINI, ALESSANDRO PEINETTI, Solarolo (RA), Via Ordiere. Bronze Age Settlement . . . . . 228

ANDREA CARDARELLI, CLAUDIO BALISTA, GIOVANNA BOSI, SARA TIZIANA LEVI, ELENA MAINI, LUCA PELLEGRINI, The Pile-Dwelling Settlement at Pieve di Carpegna (Carpegna, Pesaro-Urbino) . . . . . 232

WIEKE DE NEEF, ELISA PAOLINI, Montarice (Porto Recanati, MC): Discovery and First Excavations by Delia Lollini in the 1970s . . . . . 235

ELISA PAOLINI, LETIZIA SILVESTRI, AURORA CALDERONE, ANGELICA FIORILLO, SIMONE SATRIANO, La Crocetta (Tivoli): a Late Middle Bronze Age settlement along the Aniene River . . . . . 239

VALENTINA COPAT, The Giardino Romano on the Capitoline Hill: Evidence from the Late Bronze Age (Excavations 1999-2000) . . . . . 242

GIULIA RECCHIA, Coppa Nevigata (Foggia) . . . . . 245

MARCO PACCIARELLI, Torre Galli (Drapia, VV): from 1922-23 Paolo Orsi's Investigations to 2012-13 Researches in the Early Iron Age Settlement . . . . . 250

MAURIZIO CATTANI, FLORENCIA INES DEBANDI, FRANCESCO IACONO, ALESSANDRA MAGRÌ, ALESSANDRO PEINETTI, CARLO PERSIANI, Mursia. Pantelleria (TP). Bronze Age Settlement and Cemetery . . . . .	255
LUCA DORO, The Archaeological Complex of Sa Mandra Manna (Tula, Sardinia) . . . . .	259
ANNA DEPALMAS, Iloi (Sedilo, Oristano): the Nuragic Complex and Recent Archaeological Investigations . . . . .	265
ANNA DEPALMAS, Abini (Teti, Nuoro): the Sanctuary Complex and Associated Settlement . . . . .	268
ANNA DEPALMAS, Sa Osa (Cabras, OR): a Late Bronze Age Settlement in the Tirso Plain. . . . .	272
III. CASE STUDIES PRESENTED IN THE HERDS WORKSHOP	
Rome, Sapienza University 20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>th</sup> November 2025 . . . . .	277
ELISABETTA BORGNA, CLAUDIO CAVAZZUTI, SUSI CORAZZA, NICCOLÒ MORIN, SARA BERNARDINI, ANNA CIPRIANI, FEDERICO LUGLI, Subsistence Economy and Animal Management in the Bronze Age Lagoon Site of Ca' Baredi-Canale Anfora near Aquileia . . . . .	279
UMBERTO TECCHIATI, The Animals' Contribution to the Economy of Alpine Bronze Age Societies	295
FLORENCIA INÉS DEBANDI, MAURIZIO CATTANI, MARIALETIZIA CARRA, CLAUDIO CAVAZZUTI, ELENA MAINI, Experimental Archaeology and Simulation of Animal Resources and Derived Products in the Bronze Age . . . . .	311

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