

EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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Book reviews

Changing Lands in Changing Memories. Migration and Identity during the Lombard Invasions. By Irene Barbiera. *Biblioteca di Archeologia Medievale* 19. Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio. 2005. 189 pp. + 58 b/w figures, tables and maps. EUR 25. ISBN 88 7814 301 4.

This volume results from a Ph.D. completed in Budapest and awarded the 'Premio Ottone d'Assia' in honour of Otto von Hessen, a scholar particularly of Lombard metalwork and weaponry. Appropriately, *Changing Lands* focuses on the Lombards and seeks to compare the cemeterial images of these in both Pannonia (west Hungary) and north-east Italy – effectively tracking Lombard material culture, expression and identity in their documented migration from the Danube to the Italian peninsula in the 560s AD. Barbiera has been able to access the unpublished records (but not the actual excavation diaries) of another distinguished Lombard scholar, Prof. Istvan Bóna, who oversaw numerous excavations of Lombard, Gepid and Avar burials in Hungary; sadly Bóna died before completion of this new research. In presenting previously largely unpublished materials here, Barbiera is clearly serving us well; by writing in (generally accurate) English, she also makes accessible data otherwise only available in Hungarian, German or Italian. Hungarian scholarship remains underexploited by scholars further west.

There are eleven sections to the publication: core are the analyses of six burial grounds, three in each of the study regions (Hegykö, Szentendre and Tamási in north-west Hungary; S. Stefano di Cividale, Liariis and Romans d'Isonzo in north-east Italy, Friuli region); three short chapters provide a discussion of burial ritual (pp. 123–34), settlement strategies (pp. 135–42), and evolving identity (pp. 143–54). The whole is framed by an Introduction and Conclusions, the latter followed by tabulated Appendices 1–9 on the anthropology of the respective cemetery populations (gender/age) and the listing of artefact types in the burials at each (pp. 157–72). The text is supported by various basic site plans and charts, but it is unfortunate that there were almost no location maps for the sites, and no line drawings or photos of any of the artefacts or

burials discussed – such would have aided much in the describing and comparing and contrasting of dress items especially. (One might note also that text references for the most part fail to give relevant page numbers.)

The Introduction (pp. 5–10) outlines current debates in reading identity from burials and grave-goods. Barbiera stresses that the case studies ‘were selected exclusively on the basis of their chronology, location and completeness of documentation, ignoring the labels they were given on the basis of artefact types and styles’ (p. 8). They represent a range, however, with two, Liariis and Hegykö, perceived as ‘autochthonous’ rather than full-blooded Lombard; but none appear complete in terms of publication, records, artefactual analysis or excavation, which potentially make these not wholly secure guides. Each cemetery is considered for burial forms, funerary behaviours, material expressions and distributions (Barbiera puts good emphasis on gender in these), with an underlying goal to question whether the burials help chart a migration of people and practice from Pannonia into Friuli (this latter being the first stopping point and, arguably, one of the zones most heavily settled by Lombards).

The cemeteries contain between 40 and 200 burials, and for most anthropological determinations are made (Liariis is the weakest of the case studies; indeed its weak documentation does not make this a suited inclusion); all are dated predominantly on the basis of artefact types and comparisons, but with Romans and S. Stefano selected as they feature ‘Pannonian Lombard’ items suggestive of members who had been part of the migration in AD 568/9; meanwhile, Barbiera sensibly highlights that some artefacts in the Hungarian burial plots appear to post-date this moment and would thus argue against the traditional assumption of the wholesale quitting of sites such as Szentendre by the Lombards (pp. 143–7 discuss the act of ‘migration’). Barbiera considers for each site the distributions and appurtenances of artefacts as classified by gender and is able from these to recognize for the Hungarian examples largely ‘egalitarian funerary communities’, with age and gender determining artefact types and numbers (children do not gain ‘male’ or ‘female’ artefact groups until adolescence; female bow brooches may be a mark of marriage). There are useful indicators for weapon graves, into which spears appear to have been thrown as part of the funeral ritual; weapons are present but are not really displayed, and only at Szentendre was there a possible grouping of such male burials. In north-east Italy, by contrast, excluding the all too vague Liariis site, weapons and wealth are more readily in evidence within the cemetery organization: indeed, ‘invasion generation’ males (sometimes with an obvious associated female close by, more rarely with a female as central) appear in some instances to provide a focus to presumed family groupings; status

display may be strongest in the first two generations with a simplification (but not always) of materials and rite developing in time. Other interesting pointers emerge: artefact assemblages for children in north-east Italy are fuller than in Hungary (though at Liariis most child graves appear unfurnished); in Hungary the occasional Roman coin in graves was a 'male' artefact but in Italy these become 'female'; the unfurnished (and generally female) burials in the Lombard Italian contexts do not appear to be of low or servile class since they form part of specific cemetery groups and may instead denote individuals with different beliefs, people buried later when grave-goods had lost their role or perhaps they were people whose status was displayed through clothing alone (see pp. 86–7, 133, 153). In the discussion chapters, Barbiera carefully questions the implications of her findings: did the act of migration, the enhanced military role and the parcelling up of new land on which a large native population lived mould a modified Lombard society which finds reflection in the burials – a more stratified society, displaying strength and status below ground, but in time with the above ground and living spaces becoming the more important arenas? Or are the groups seen in the samples for Hungary and for Italy different? Might other cemeteries in Pannonia display the characteristics of status and kin grouping that we find reflected at Cividale? Do we need to impose an ethnic identity on the inhumed, since identity seems to be expressed in a variety of ways and clear badges of belonging are not being presented?

Clearly there is a need to expand this important study outward to draw upon other examples and sites (pp. 143, 156). In Friuli there exists an array of Lombard-period burial sites, some of which could be deemed more military (such as San Salvatore di Maiano) and where weapon graves appear more prominent and longer lasting (to contrast Barbiera's view that 'in Italy weapons were reserved only for a few men from the first generations of colonizers' – p. 128): are display mechanisms different between town, fort and country? Does 'grouping' by family dominate primarily in town contexts? How far can we perceive 'native' take-up of Lombard ideas? Relating cemeteries to their contemporary settlements is all important, but rarely achieved; in these case studies only Santo Stefano can be definitely assigned to a known site (pp. 135–42), although in this instance, Lombard-period archaeology within Cividale is limited to more burials or to later churches (with these burials and churches often associated); arguably, however, it will only be with large-scale excavation of a village or estate complex that we might be able to recognize evolutions of domestic structural display. In the meantime, further detailed and critical analyses of existing data such as presented in *Changing Lands* are essential to enhance and expand our understanding

of a major period of change in Italy, as elsewhere. What is unfortunate, of course, is that so many data have been lost through crude early excavation, loss of records, discarding of bones, and failures to publish adequately; one particularly hopes that other sites discovered by Bóna will soon also appear in print.

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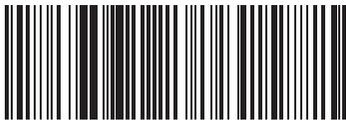
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