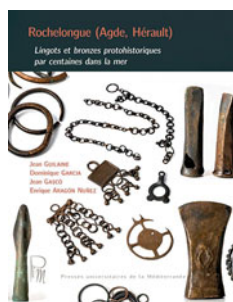


JEAN GUILAINE, DOMINIQUE GARCIA, JEAN GASCÓ & ENRIQUE ARAGÓN NUÑEZ. 2022. *Rochelongue (Agde, Hérault): lingots et bronzes protohistoriques par centaines dans la mer*. Montpellier: Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée; 978-2-36781-474-2 hardback €32.



In 1964, an assemblage of numerous bronze objects and copper ingots was discovered by André Bouscaras on a reef in the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 500m from the shore at Rochelongue in the south of France, between the Cape d'Agde and the mouth of the River Hérault. This handsome volume brings that find to publication. While of interest principally to specialists in Bronze Age metalwork—albeit that the find dates to the Early Iron Age—it will also be of relevance to readers concerned with archaeometallurgy, underwater archaeology and the western Greek colonies. The Rochelongue material belongs to a group of finds known collectively after a hoard from Launac (near Montpellier), and specialists may wish to have to hand a companion volume by the first three authors (Guilaine *et al.* 2017).

The finds from Rochelongue were recovered over four seasons, through to 1968, spread across an area of 350m<sup>2</sup>. The precise find location, however, can no longer be pinpointed. The core of the first part of the volume comprises an inventory detailing the nearly 1600 objects or fragments recovered, including approximately 850kg of copper ingots. Around one third of the objects are bracelets, while other personal ornaments—including pendants, brooches, belt-hooks and buttons—as well as tools and harness gear together comprise approximately 40 per cent. Of the very few weapons recovered, most are spearheads or arrowheads. Most of the tools are socketed axes, including an unlooped type named after the Rochelongue site. Nearly 70 per cent of the objects survive only as fragments; approximately 5 per cent show signs of use-wear, including many of the socketed axes and, in particular, socketed hammers.

Most of the copper ingots are plano-convex in form, weighing up to 7.3kg each, though a few are discoidal, and there are also pieces of spilt metal (*flancs de coulées*). Aragón Nuñez contributes a chapter on the metallurgy of these ingots (for an English version, see Aragón *et al.* 2022). This research identifies southern Iberia as the probable source of many of the Rochelongue ingots, which are distinct in composition from the ingots in other Launac hoards. In contrast, very few of the bronze objects from Rochelongue have yet been subjected to archaeometric analyses.

The second part of the book begins with a discussion of the regional cultural context, based on the sequence of cemeteries at Mailhac, Aude département, then the Western Mediterranean context and contacts with Etruscans, Greeks and Carthaginians. This is followed by a systematic discussion of the object typologies represented at Rochelongue, which are then compared with other Launac hoards, and the wider geographical distribution of the main

types set out. These include objects of regional origin from Languedoc; objects from elsewhere in France (mainly the Jura and the centre-west); objects from Iberia (mainly the north-east); and a few objects from Italy.

The authors then turn to chronology. Some types are not closely datable, others first appeared in the Late Bronze Age, during the tenth century BC, and continued into the Early Iron Age (after 800 BC), while many occur also in other Launac hoards dated to the seventh and early sixth centuries BC. Only a single flat axe was certainly out of fashion when it was deposited; this may be an Iberian piece from the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, around 1200 BC, rather than from the local Copper Age a thousand years earlier. The authors conclude that Rochelongue is later than any other Launac find, dating to between 575 and 550 BC. So, as in Britain, the production and use of copper-alloy objects did not cease at the nominal end of the Bronze Age around 800 BC.

Rochelongue was originally interpreted as a wreck. The authors discuss whether it may have been a kind of underwater sanctuary, similar to the interpretation of the famous find from the Ría de Huelva, Spain. But, guided by the quantity of objects from Iberia in the Rochelongue assemblage, they prefer the secular interpretation of a wreck—a cargo brought north in response to Greek and Etruscan activity in southern France, and lost on the coast.

## References

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