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**Tra Vicino Oriente Antico e Africa: il crocevia eritreo**  
**(Between Ancient Near East and Africa: the Eritrean crossroads)**

In the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., the 100-years-old paradigm exploited for reconstructing the ancient history of the southern Red Sea regions entered into a structural crisis. A perspective based on the assumption that the East African highlands were nothing but the terminal of cultural streams originated in Asia has been superseded by a different approach, suggested by fresh archaeological, epigraphic and linguistic documentation. According to this construal, in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC the Eritrean highlands were part of an interregional interaction area including the Tihama coast, the Nile Valley and the Ethio-Sudanese lowlands. Particularly, the material culture of the Ḥamasen region, dating to the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, is revealing the existence of a significant degree of social complexity, well before the Sabeian expansion.