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ROMAN COLONIAL LANDSCAPES: *INTERAMNA LIRENAS* AND ITS TERRITORY THROUGH ANTIQUITY

ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ
to those who step in same rivers ever different waters flow
(Heraclitus, DK22b12)

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological research is constantly evolving. This is true not just of methodology, but also – perhaps especially – of the questions methodologies address. Archaeological survey in Italy developed from the awareness that ancient remains scattered across the landscape were being threatened with significant destruction with the spectacular growth of urbanization.¹ Field-survey was the best way to record vanishing ancient settlement patterns. However, the amount of evidence collected has far exceeded its scope in both quantity and quality and, even in the initial stages, it was obvious that this new ‘ploughsoil assemblage’ had the potential to address wider archaeological and historical questions (e.g. Frederiksen 1970-71). Pioneering work was done in the *South Etruria Survey* organized by the British School at Rome (BSR), which paved the way for many more survey projects in Italy.²

Landscape archaeology, which is actively engaged with other disciplines (e.g. the natural sciences) and with ‘new’ technologies (e.g. GIS, geophysical prospection), has since become a fully established discipline and is making an essential contribution to illuminating the development of people and places throughout the Mediterranean.³ The questions the surveyors have raised have evolved with the development in its method. It has even been possible to revisit earlier fieldwork and frame it within new research perspectives. The BSR *Tiber Valley Project* (Patterson and Millett 1998) is an excellent example: benefiting from important advances in both urban survey (e.g. geophysics) and material analyses (e.g. distribution patterns), it has endeavoured to address important issues which have emerged in the decades since the *South Etruria Survey* was originally published.⁴

Debates move forward and new questions arise, but landscapes also evolve. Before the widespread introduction of mechanized agriculture in the 1950s ploughed them back to the surface, all but the most grandiose remains of the rural settlement of ancient Italy were practically invisible.⁵

¹ The scope was well-summarized by John Ward-Perkins (1961: 1): “The purpose of this series of notes being to record the extant or recently destroyed remains of antiquities within the several cities of South Etruria and their associated territories”. Compare with similar remarks by Lorenzo Quilici (1974: 11): “Da allora ho continuato a percorrere la regione, che ho visto man mano deperire ed inglobare in un’immensa periferia, che è tra le più squallide dell’infelice esperienza urbana di Roma”.

² On the role of the British School at Rome see Potter and Stoddart 2001: 10-23. There is no comprehensive list of projects to rely on, but an overview is provided by Patterson 2006: 72-88 and Launaro 2011: 103-145.

³ See the five volumes of the *POPULUS Project*: Barker and Mattingly 1999-2000; review by Cherry 2002.

⁴ Contrast Potter 1979 with Patterson, Di Giuseppe and Witcher 2004.

⁵ This awareness developed slowly over time as a much quoted – and perhaps by now abused – passage by Moses I. Finley (1977: 305) demonstrates: “The Graeco-Roman world [...] was a world of cities. Even the agrarian

The landscape is still a home to a large population and is a significant economic resource (e.g. urbanization, infrastructures): it keeps changing, but the scale of such change is often more rapid than the ability of archaeology to keep pace with it. Most importantly, this means that it is rarely possible to survey the same landscape twice.

These remarks serve to explain why the Faculty of Classics of the University of Cambridge, in collaboration with the British School at Rome and the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio*, has now launched the *Roman Colonial Landscapes* field project in the Lower Liri Valley (southern Lazio, Italy), its focus being the archaeological context of *Interamna Lirenas* and its territory. This region is certainly not *terra incognita* as the amount of earlier and current research makes abundantly clear (see below). However, it is precisely by building on this work that it is possible to introduce new approaches and hence address questions which are crucial to current debates.

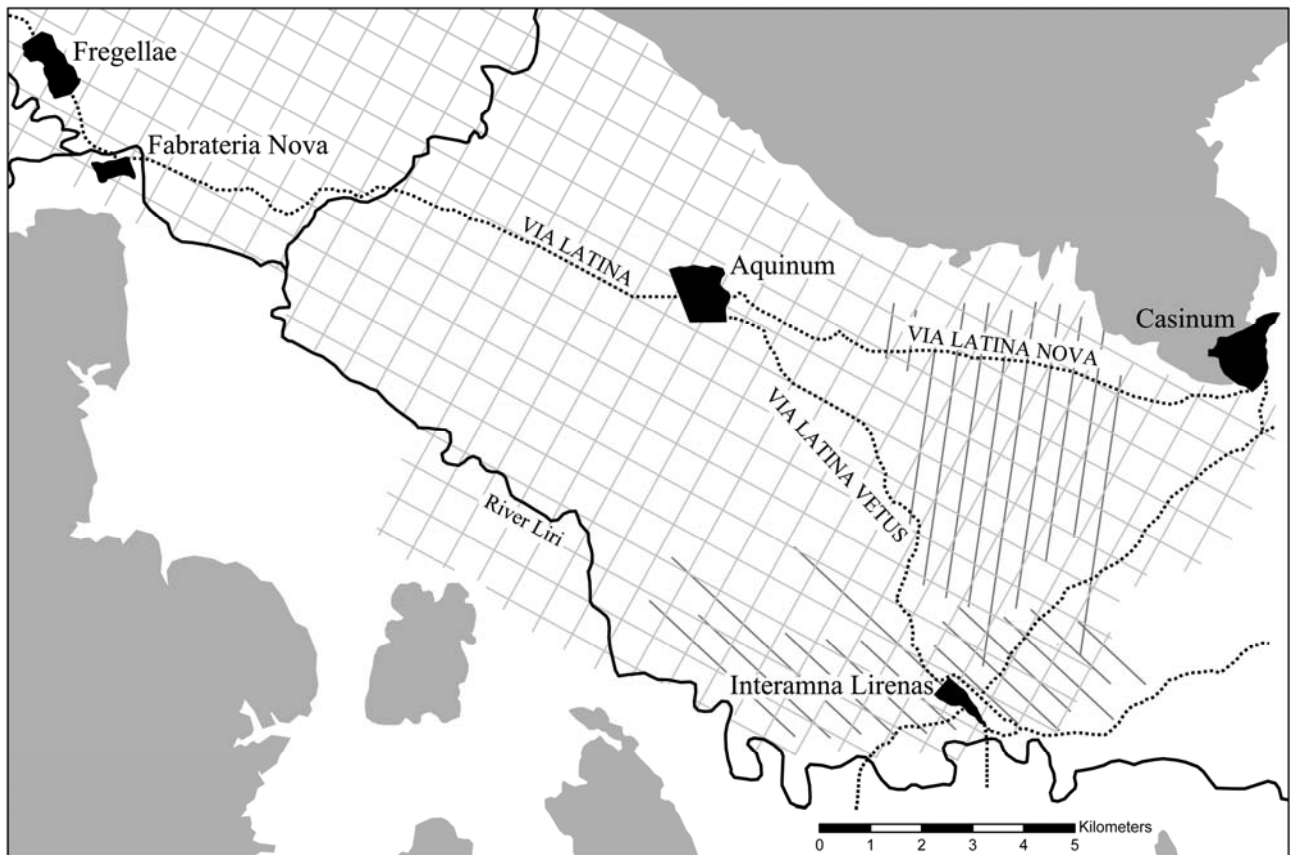


FIGURE 1. Ancient features across the Liri Valley: urban settlement, road network and field systems (*strigatio/scamnatio* and *centuriatio*) (dark grey = areas over 200 m AMSL)

Colonization is obviously a central issue in our analysis, especially as it underpinned various important territorial developments like urbanization, road-building and land allotment in the area between the fourth and first century BC. The area is traditionally seen as having played a key part in the development of Roman colonial practice in this crucial period. Consequently it exemplifies issues which extend well beyond the geographical compass of the Liri Valley. Moreover, it is increasingly recognized that Roman colonization was not an entirely one-sided process as colonizers had to negotiate specific relationships in particular local situations (e.g. religious cults, settlement patterns and material culture). This necessity to negotiate generated a tension on different scales of analysis (i.e. general vs. local), which can be better understood by contrasting the ‘colonial

population, always a majority, most often lived in communities of some kind, hamlets, villages, towns, not in isolated farm homesteads.”

period' with both what came before and what followed, adopting the long-term perspective which is the strength of landscape archaeology. As this essay will try to demonstrate, returning to *Interamna Lirenas* is not merely a repetition of a past effort, it is 'stepping into different waters'.

CONTEXT

The Liri Valley (Figure 1) lies about 100 km south of Rome, in the province of Frosinone, near its border with Campania. The river basin is part of an area known today as *Ciocciaria* and is best described as a wide sedimentary valley floor extending NW-SE and bordered by steep limestone mountains to both the north (Le Mainarde) and the south (Monti Aurunci).⁶ Throughout history, it has represented a natural inland corridor between central Lazio and Campania, running parallel to the route along the Tyrrhenian coast (from which it is separated by the Monti Aurunci range).⁷ This aspect is very evident today as the valley is the route of both the A1 motorway and of the ordinary and the high-speed railway lines. Hence it represents the primary connection link between Rome and Naples, between central and southern Tyrrhenian Italy.

This connective role was undoubtedly a significant factor in Roman expansion into the area. In contrast to the totally new *via Appia* along the coast (built 312 BC), in the context of the Roman operations of the second half of the fourth century BC, the *via Latina* formalized a much earlier route.⁸ The area was inhabited by the *Volsci* (NW) and the *Ausones/Aurunci* (SE), and later became the focus of the clash between Rome and the *Samnites* in their struggle to control Campania (Wightman 1994c: 26-27).⁹ The foundation of the Latin colonies of *Fregellae* (328 BC) and *Interamna Lirenas* (312 BC), both located along the *via Latina*, was imposed at the expense of earlier settlements¹⁰ and sounded the death knell of Samnite presence in the region.

The origins of *Interamna Lirenas* (also known as *Interamna Sucasina*) can be traced to its role as one bridgehead of southward Roman expansion (Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 7-8). Its name reflects its location: between two rivers (*Interamna*) near the River Liri (*Lirenas*) and the town of *Casinum* (*Sucasina*).¹¹ Although it had originally been assigned 4,000 colonists (Livy, *Ab Urbe condita libri* IX.28), its strategic role was lost after the Roman subjugation of southern Italy (completed in 270 BC) and the importance of *Interamna* ebbed considerably, and it was only mentioned in passing by ancient authors.¹² Like most Latin communities south of the River Po, it probably became a *municipium* around 90 BC, at which time its inhabitants would have been granted full Roman citizenship. The *Liber Coloniarum* (L 234 = C 182.36-37) mentions a triumviral intervention (i.e. the building of the city wall), which might also imply some partial re-arrangement of the rural landscape (Campbell 2000: 420-421 n.124), possibly as a consequence of the extensive *centuriatio* centred on *Aquinum*.¹³ By this time, this latter – as had *Casinum* – achieved greater prominence, evident from the new route of the *via Latina*, which ran directly between the two centres, effectively bypassing *Interamna*.¹⁴

⁶ A thorough presentation and discussion of the local geology and geomorphology is provided by Martini 1994.

⁷ But contrast this idea with remarks by Wightman (1994a: 30), who argues that "Conditions during the last two centuries before the Roman conquest [...] were inimical to traffic. The valley served as frontier rather than corridor, and while not of course hermetically sealed, was no highway".

⁸ Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 37-39; Wightman 1994a: 30-32; Coarelli 1998: 49-51; Ceraudo 2003: 442-443, 2004d: 29-30.

⁹ On pre-Roman settlement in the mountains south of *Interamna Lirenas* see Lauria 2010.

¹⁰ *Fregellae*: Coarelli 1998: 45-46. *Interamna Lirenas*: Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 8, 1949: 17; Carettoni 1948: 18.

¹¹ Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 11. Strabo (*Geographia* V.3.9) assumed one of the rivers to be the Liri, an assumption which makes little sense in terms of the local topography.

¹² A comprehensive list of relevant passages is reported in Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 47-49.

¹³ Concerning the nature, dating and extent of such a *centuriatio* see Chocquer *et al.* 1987: 127-130 and Chiocci 2004 (both with previous bibliography).

¹⁴ Ceraudo 2004d: 31-36. On the relationship between a *via Latina vetus* (passing through *Interamna*) and a *via Latina nova* (bypassing it) see Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 39-43 and Coarelli 1998: 50. Note that neither the old road

Following its probable abandonment at the time of the Lombard invasion (second half of the sixth century AD), a process of spoliation began and, with the exception of its SE tip during the Middle Ages, the site was never extensively re-occupied (Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 10-11). Today only a few poorly preserved standing structures survive, very pale reflections of the ancient city.¹⁵ The area is now occupied by a few farm-buildings and a series of arable fields whose boundaries and access tracks clearly respect elements of the ancient street system. De-contextualized architectural fragments and inscriptions are to be found scattered all over the site and its neighbourhood, providing evidence of several cults and – more specifically – the probable existence of a temple dedicated to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* (whether or not a *Capitolium*: Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 30-31). On the basis of the recovery of fragments of votive terracottas, an extramural sanctuary has also been tentatively located immediately to the north of the town (Hayes and Wightman 1984: 143).

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

The whole of the Liri Valley has been the focus of significant studies by various institutions.¹⁶ Excavations and geophysical prospection have been carried out at *Fregellae*, *Fabrateria Nova* and *Aquinum*.¹⁷ The same is true of (more or less) systematic field surveys across the valley,¹⁸ which have benefited greatly from the invaluable contribution of aerial archaeology.¹⁹ What is remarkable, however, is the relative under-representation of *Interamna Lirenas* in recent fieldwork, especially given the significance even recently ascribed to it as a relevant case study which could shed light on important issues like imperial urban development (Patterson 2006: 101-106) and colonial settlement (Pelgrom 2008: 347-349). As often happens, ‘new’ interpretations have to rely on ‘old’ data.

TOWN

Following a first topographic synthesis by Cagiano de Azevedo (1947), over the decades local enthusiasts re-awakened interest in investigating the urban area, which by then had been heavily impacted by the introduction of mechanized agriculture. Early unsystematic collections of archaeological finds from the ploughsoil provided data for the creation of the very first map of the distribution of dated potsherds across the site (Lena 1982: 68 Table II). As the spread of Black Gloss pottery was so much wider and denser than that of any other class of material, it was suggested that the town flourished in the Republican period only to stagnate and enter a decline in the Early Empire. The overall picture also benefited from the analysis and processing of aerial photographs by French scholars, who established securely that the current field boundaries were largely informed by the original Roman layout (Chocquer *et al.* 1987: 265; also Scardozzi 2004: 91-93.).

course nor *Interamna* itself is reported in the relevant parts of either the *Itinerarium Antonini* (302.1-304.4 ed. O. Cuntz 1929) or the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (*Segmentum V*).

¹⁵ These include some cisterns (one in *opus reticulatum* with an aqueduct feeding it) and a (probable) sewer. Outside of the urban area proper, the most relevant are a bridge on the road to *Casinum* (over the *Rio Spalla Bassa*) and what remains of a bath complex (immediately south of *Masseria Morra*). See Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 14-32; Lena 1982.

¹⁶ Both Italian (*Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio*, *Università degli Studi di Cassino*, *Università degli Studi di Perugia* and *Università del Salento*) and non-Italian (British School at Rome, *Centre de recherches d'histoire ancienne de Besançon*, *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*, McMaster University and University of Cambridge). To this list should be added the activities promoted by the local *comuni*.

¹⁷ *Fregellae*: Coarelli 1986, 1998; Crawford and Keppie 1984; Crawford, Keppie and Vercocke 1985; Ferraby *et al.* 2008. *Fabrateria Nova*: Beste *et al.* 2010; Ceraudo 2004c. *Aquinum*: Bellini 2007b; Bellini and Trigona forthcoming; Ceraudo 2004b, 2008; Nicosia and Ceraudo 2007.

¹⁸ *ager Fregellanus*: Crawford *et al.* 1986; Monti 1998. *ager Aquinas*: Bellini 2007a, 2008; Bellini and Trigona 2010; Ceraudo 2008. Lower Liri Valley: Bellini 2010; Hayes and Martini 1994.

¹⁹ Chocquer *et al.* 1987: 124-130, 263-268, 271-280; Ceraudo 2004a.

The Canadian project led by the late Edith M. Wightman produced a pioneering integrated interpretation of the urban development of *Interamna Lirenas* which, although based on a new set of surface collections, also obviously profited from earlier work (Hayes and Wightman 1984). The urban area was divided into twenty-six sectors of variable size (i.e. as defined by current field boundaries): diagnostic potsherds within each were then grab-sampled and their date ranges used to derive a dynamic view of occupation over time (Hayes and Wightman 1984: 137-138). The surface distribution did indeed conform to a picture of slow and irreversible decline, with the area of occupation contracting from about 30 ha in the second to first centuries BC to fewer than 10 ha by the first century AD (Hayes and Wightman 1984: 143-145). This view was in a way remarkable as it seemed at variance with a rich epigraphic record, mainly Imperial in date, which attests individual acts of public munificence as well as the existence of a lively urban community well into the fourth to fifth centuries AD.²⁰

However, closer scrutiny of the Canadian dataset could be taken to suggest a rather different reading of the very same evidence.²¹ Indeed, the total number of Republican Black Gloss potsherds (247) not only exceeds that of Early Imperial *terra sigillata* (91), or Mid- to Late- Imperial African Red Slip (60), but constitutes about 60 per cent of the total finewares collected and is almost equal to the total number of fragments of amphorae (ca. 275). If pots were people – and they are not (see Sbonias 1999) – this pattern would imply a Republican urban population which had declined by 64 per cent in the Early Imperial period and fallen even farther by Late Antiquity. Such a reconstruction makes the contrast with Imperial epigraphic evidence even harder to understand, but at this point two related issues should be noted. First, there is very clear evidence to demonstrate that the volumes of supply of ceramics varied considerably both through time and across the landscape.²² Although this issue has been explored for Gaulish *sigillata*²³ and African Red Slip ware,²⁴ it has not yet been examined in the context of either Black Gloss wares or Italic *sigillata*, although Roth's study of the former (2007) generally supports the contention that its production and distribution did vary in this way.²⁵ Such a finding sounds a sharp note of caution against rushing into any very direct reading of the evidence of the ceramic evidence from the Canadian survey. Second, in the absence of evidence of the volumes of pottery supply locally, it should be noted that, except where it has been possible to identify the precise form of a pot, the classes of Black Gloss and *terra sigillata* represent rather different chronological ranges: 290 and 160 years respectively.²⁶ Therefore, by rule of thumb, the former could have been almost twice as likely to end up into an archaeological deposit and therefore is roughly twice as visible archaeologically. Taking into consideration that the potters at *Interamna Lirenas* are likely to have begun producing their own Black Gloss fineware as early as 250 BC, whereas both *terra sigillata* and African Red Slip had to be imported (Hayes and Wightman 1984: 145), extreme caution is advisable and we should avoid placing too much reliance on absolute numbers of sherds *per se*. As these surface collections were not made systematically, even more circumspection about their interpretation is in order (Hayes and Wightman 1984: 138). Furthermore, a rather less emphatic shift between Late Republic and Early

²⁰ As remarked by Wightman and Hayes 1994: 38. We should note, however, that this local pattern needs to be calibrated against the background of increased epigraphic activity in the Imperial period. A comprehensive list of inscriptions is (again) provided by Cagianò de Azevedo 1947: 49-52, has now been supplemented by Kajava 1996: 191-96.

²¹ The following considerations are based on the original survey dataset presented in Hayes and Wightman 1984: 142 Table I and 144 Table II.

²² See originally Millett 1985, developed in Millett 1991. Many commentators have not appreciated that the original observations were concerned with locally produced wares, not the more widely traded finewares.

²³ Marsh 1981

²⁴ Fentress and Perkins 1989

²⁵ A systematic study of the volumes of production of Black Gloss ware and Italic *sigillata* is clearly a fundamental priority for future research.

²⁶ Black-gloss: 330-40 BC; *terra sigillata*: 30 BC – AD 130. See Launaro 2011: 86 Table 4.1.

Empire is perhaps also suggested by the relative proportions of Republican Dressel 1 and Early Imperial Dressel 2-4 amphorae.²⁷

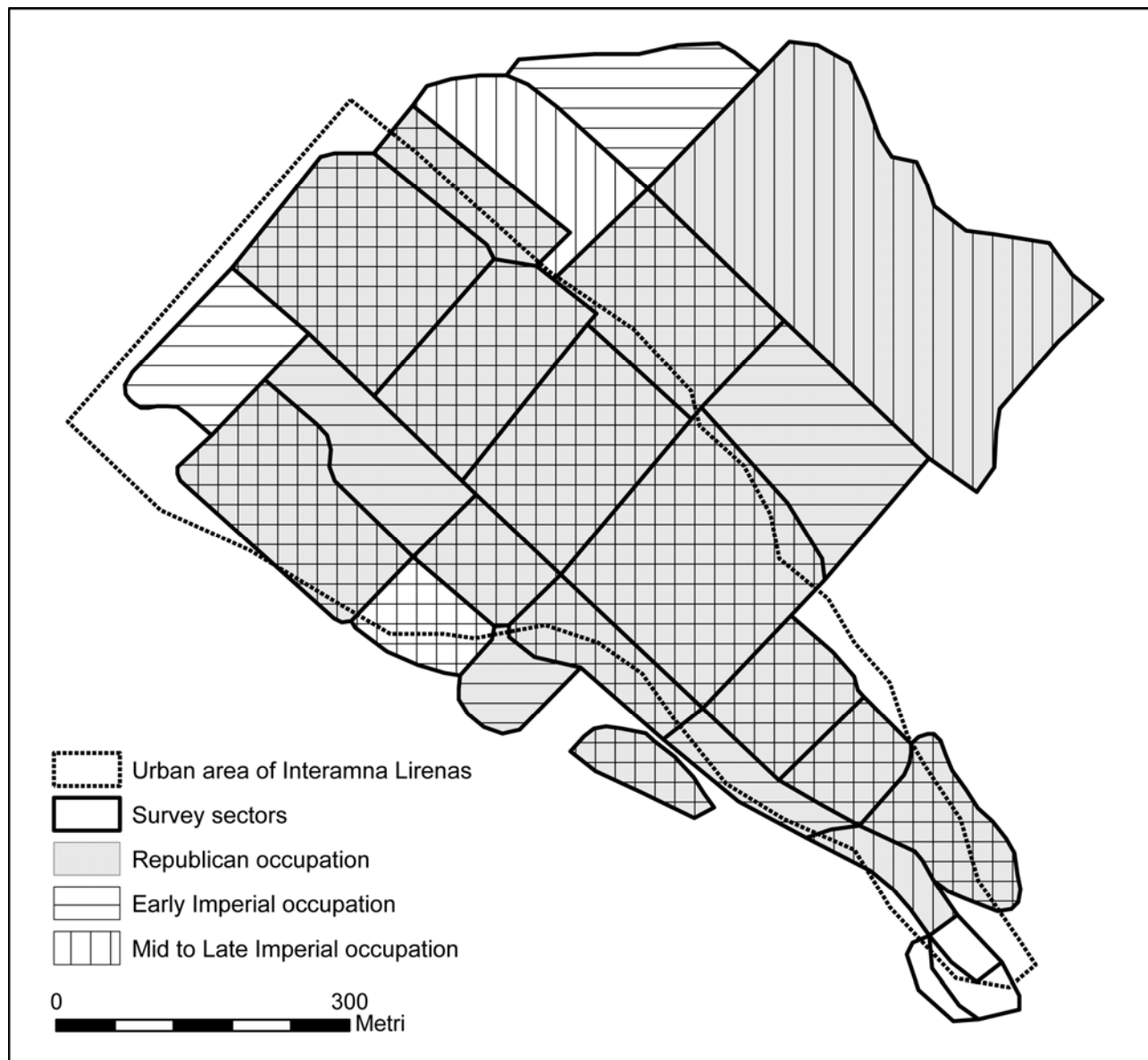


FIGURE 2. The presence of Roman fineware classes across the Canadian survey sectors as evidence of possible occupation at *Interamna Lirenas* (based on Hayes and Martini 1984: 137 Figure 1, 142 Table I and 144 Table II)

If numbers *per se* are of limited value, the overall presence of dated potsherds across the survey sectors might offer a better insight into urban development. Pottery classes have therefore been grouped into three main periods (Republic, Early Empire and Mid- to Late-Empire)²⁸ and their occurrence mapped (Figure 2). Remarkably enough, out of the twenty-six sectors, nineteen (73%)

²⁷ Notional data ranges are 150-30 BC / 120 years (Dressel 1) and 50 BC – AD 125 / 175 years (Dressel 2-4): see Launaro 2011: 86 Table 4.1. It is worth noting that the relevant Table (Hayes and Wightman: 144 Table II) conflates Dressel 1 and Dressel 2-4 amphorae of Campanian origin into one total figure (23), effectively inflating the actual number of Republican amphorae. If, only 5 of those 23 Campanian amphorae were Dressel 2-4, this would result in 18 (=23-5) Dressel 1 over 130 years and 24 (=19+5) Dressel 2-4 over 175 years, both yielding an average of 0.14 sherds per year.

²⁸ With reference to Hayes and Wightman 1984: 142 Table I and 144 Table II: Republic ('v. nera' and '[anfore] campane'); Early Empire ('terra sig.', 'Dressel 2-4 diverse', '[locali] Dressel 2-4'); Mid to Late Empire ('sigillata africana', '[anfore] africane'). Note that '[anfore] campane' in fact including some Dressel 2-4 (see n. 27).

produced Republican potsherds, twenty (73%) Early Imperial and seventeen (65%) Mid- to Late-Imperial ones; fourteen sectors (54%) produced pottery from all three periods. This evidence does not seem to suggest Early Imperial stagnation or a sharp decline into Late Antiquity. Taken by themselves, these considerations do not prove anything, except perhaps the fact that the evidence on which scholars have based their interpretation is – at best – rather impressionistic and at worst fundamentally flawed. It would make better sense of the other evidence available (e.g. imperial inscriptions) to assume a certain degree of stability (if not growth) in the urban development of *Interamna Lirenas* between Republic and Empire. This impression is reinforced when the possible triumviral (colonial?) intervention mentioned by the *Liber Colonialium* is taken into account.

TERRITORY

One topic closely related to Roman colonization is the question of the parallel development of urban and rural landscapes. The French contribution to reconstructing patterns of colonial development in the valley is certainly controversial (Quilici 1994: 130-131), but should not be dismissed out of hand. Building on an integrated reading of both aerial photographs and the *Corpus Agrimensorum*, the *équipe* of the University of Besançon endeavoured to look closely at how the Roman theory of land allotment intersected with the landscape evidence on the ground, concluding that the original land allocation (4th century BC) took the form of a *strigatio/scamnatio* – that is a system laid out in oblong parallel bands – rather than the more familiar chessboard-style centuriation (Chocquer *et al.* 1987: 124-125, 263-268).

PERIOD	SCATTERS	SITES		TOTAL
		MINOR	MAJOR	
Early Republic (300-200/150 BC)	6	11	15	32
Late Republic (200-1 BC)	52	31	12	95
Early Empire (AD 1-100)	25	28	17	70
Middle Empire (AD 200-300)	27	28	17	72
Late Empire (AD 300-600)	7	7	6	20

TABLE 1. Surface finds within the territory of *Interamna Lirenas* as recorded by the Canadian survey (based on Hayes and Martini 1994: 173-236; territorial definition as per Cagianò de Azevedo 1947: 38 Figure 3)

Consequently, the Canadian survey team of the territory of *Interamna Lirenas* was rather surprised by the remarkably low numbers of smaller rural sites dated to the earlier phases of the colony (i.e. mainly 3rd century BC) (Wightman and Hayes 1994: 36), especially in contrast to their presence in later periods (see Table 1) and given the extensive evidence of contemporaneous urban occupation (see above).²⁹ This is at variance with by the apparent existence of a *strigatio/scamnatio* (see above). Tentative explanations of this pattern have postulated a primarily urban population (Hayes and Wightman 1984: 143), lower levels of archaeological visibility (Wightman and Hayes 1994: 36) or a more nucleated settlement pattern made up of few, but fairly populous villages (Pelgrom 2008: 368). This putative initial discrepancy between urban and rural development would have gradually levelled out as both town and country have been assumed to have peaked archaeologically in the second to first century BC, only to commence a slow, irreversible decline in the Early Imperial period (Hayes and Wightman 1994: 36-38). As already discussed (see above), the evidence for urban development is open to debate – at least as much as the interpretation based on it.

A similar argument can be adduced for the surrounding landscape. The very limited recovery of early colonial farms (3rd century BC) might be a result of the comparatively low intensity of

²⁹ In contrast, pre-Roman phases are comparatively well attested (Wightman 1994b), although the density of sites does seem rather low, perhaps the result of the modest intensity of the survey.

coverage in the Canadian survey.³⁰ Moreover, it is also relevant that there might have been some clustering around the two main nucleated settlements in the area (i.e. *Interamna Lirenas* and a putative village to the west) and nothing in between (Pelgrom 2008: 348-349). However, given the likely role towns and villages played in supplying and distributing the categories of material culture which modern archaeologists have since largely relied on, it is also possible to explain this pattern as the result of decreasing archaeological visibility the farther the investigator moves away from the principal settlements. Furthermore, one needs to consider the fact that before the mid-third century BC Black Gloss pottery – the primary diagnostic evidence for this period – had to be imported from outside the region: the relatively higher number of sites from the second century BC could have been caused by a distortion of the dataset arising from the initiation of local Black Gloss production and hence its increased availability (see above). Again, all these observations are not meant to prove that the traditional interpretation are wrong, but merely to show that evidence produced by methodologies common in the 1970-1980s is not necessarily best suited to finding an answer to questions raised forty years later. In a nutshell, it is not just a matter of renewing the research agenda, but data suitable to addressing current questions has to be produced to complement, integrate and improve the existing evidence. These two interlinked aspects are the subjects of the following sections.



FIGURE 3. A view of the site of *Interamna Lirenas*.

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One characteristic makes *Interamna Lirenas* stand out among Roman towns in Italy: it was abandoned at the end of Antiquity, never to be reoccupied again or overbuilt by later phases (Figure

³⁰ The approach adopted by the Canadian team involved “archaeologist [...] spaced at intervals of 15-25 m, zig-zagging slightly” (Wightman, Hemphill and Hayes 1994: 3).

3) and, despite later spoliation and some probable plough damage, its buried archaeology is still likely to preserve a largely complete urban layout and intact stratification. This situation is not uncommon, but what makes *Interamna Lirenas* all the more remarkable is that it has almost never been the site of an excavation so it remains a virtually untapped archaeological resource.³¹ Furthermore, its surroundings in the valley are composed of an almost uninterrupted series of open fields (Figure 4), whose characteristics (e.g. geomorphology, ploughing practice) make them highly suitable for field survey. In other words, *Interamna Lirenas* and its territory have the potential to offer a unique window onto the past landscape, so good in fact that urban and rural archaeology can finally be approached in a fully integrated manner. This would be no little achievement and would make a cogent contribution to current debates (Millett 2010).



FIGURE 4. A view of the landscape across the Liri Valley (Monti Aurunci in the background).

ROMAN COLONIZATION

Recent years have witnessed some growing dissatisfaction with established views about Roman colonization in Italy and the concomitant beginnings of its re-appraisal (e.g. Bispham 2006; Bradley 2006).³² Whereas some earlier scholars focused on broad similarities and therefore assumed long-

³¹ One aspect whose peculiarity was already remarked on by Cagianò de Azevedo (1947: 21): “[...] mai infatti, non dico una campagna sistematica, ma neppure saggi sporadici sono stati eseguiti in quel luogo pur così promettente”.

³² See also contributions in this volume.

term uniformity in Roman colonial practice,³³ a new wave of studies, inspired by both a closer scrutiny of the evidence and current theoretical debates about identity, has put renewed stress on specific differences, chronological discrepancies and local influences.³⁴ What is especially being questioned is the nature and value of assumptions about Roman colonization and the ways these have created normative expectations in what has been read and excavated. Such assumptions do not take full account of the time factor: while Roman colonial practice is thought to have evolved through time, later literary evidence (e.g. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* XVI.13.8-9) seems to have led to the imposition of later assumptions on the understanding of earlier phases, thereby seeking regularities which might be illusory.

This possibility has been raised with explicit reference to a centralized, dirigiste view of colonization, which assumes that it emanated from Rome with the intention of reproducing the original political structures of that city and its underlying spatial layout. Interestingly, several pieces of evidence from earlier phases do not seem to be consistent with this hypothesis. These discrepancies are thought to pertain especially to religious aspects and the presence of temples dedicated to the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno and Minerva) as an intentional emulation of the *Capitolium* in Rome. Edward Bispham (2006: 113-22) argues that earlier colonization (until the late third century BC) had placed much more emphasis on other divinities – namely Hercules – as a useful vehicle for local integration (i.e. indigenous peoples and their cults) at a time when Roman success in Italy was anything but certain. This situation would have changed once Roman supremacy over Italy had been sanctioned by events, after which it would have been “unthinkable that a Roman colony should not have a temple to the Capitoline triad” (Bispham 2006: 122). Whereas previous scholarship has put much more emphasis on 338 BC (the dissolution of the Latin League) as a more crucial caesura in the development of Roman colonization (also Coarelli 1992: 24), this recent view of the evidence points to a significantly later date. What changes is the way the nature of (early) Roman imperialism in Italy is framed – and interpreted, especially in relation to indigenous peoples.

At the same time, the exploration of urban sites with the help of extensive geophysical surveys has also raised questions about the simple categorization of sites as colonies or otherwise. A good example is the survey of *Falerii Novi*, a site which although founded *de novo* after Rome razed *Falerii Veteres* in 243 BC is generally agreed not to have been the site of a colony at that period (Keay *et al.* 2000; Hay *et al.* 2010). Nevertheless, a close study of its primary grid suggests that it was divided into regular allotments not dissimilar to those identified at Cosa where these divisions are identified with the differential status of different groups of colonists (Millett 2007: 73-75) (Figure 5). However, at *Falerii Novi* it is also possible to see the way in which the plan of the town seems to have been influenced by the layout and sacred topography of its predecessor, *Falerii Veteres*, in a manner which appears entirely at odds with Roman traditions. Despite an historical rhetoric which emphasizes that the new town was built in a less defensible location than its predecessor,³⁵ it is evident that it was designed in such a way that the landscaping gave its walls considerable prominence, and their course does not reflect the urban grid but was built instead to mirror the plan of *Falerii Veteres*. Finally, the distribution of a series of temples around the peripheral road inside the walls seems to create a sacred route which literally connected the new town with the old (Millett 2007: 77-81). However these issues in understanding *Falerii* are resolved, the evidence surely casts doubt on common preconceptions about the exclusive regularity of colonial town planning, and indeed core concepts about Roman Republican urban planning in general.

³³ Focus of such a re-assessment is usually Salmon 1969 (standard work on the subject in English) and Brown 1980 (usually presented as an ‘archaeological counterpart’ to the former).

³⁴ The debate about ‘Romanization’ is explicitly evoked (Bispham 2006: 75). For the Republican phase of Roman expansion see especially contributions in van Dommelen and Terrenato 2007. For the vigour of the ‘identity/imperialism’ debate consider most recent contributions by David Mattingly (2010) and Martin Millett (2010).

³⁵ Zonaras 8.18; see Keay *et al.* 2000: 1-2.

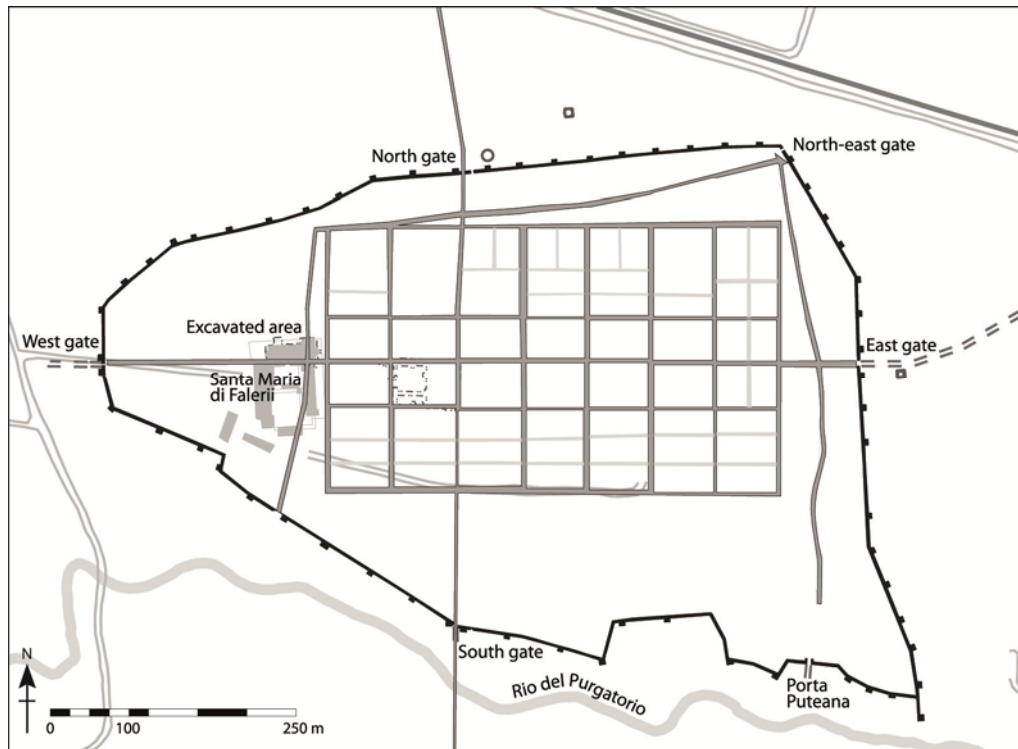


FIGURE 5. The layout of the Roman town of *Falerii Novi*.

Therefore, the Liri Valley does indeed provide a privileged observatory from which to engage with many of these issues. Both *Fregellae* and *Interamna Lirenas* were founded only 25 km and 16 years apart, in the decades immediately following the key date of 338 BC. The lay-outs of both towns were bisected by the *via Latina*³⁶ and the topographical positions they occupy are very similar,³⁷ and their foundations are linked to the same historical context: the southward expansion of Rome during the Samnite Wars (Wightman 1994c). Indeed a unitary plan (a dirigiste strategy?) might be seen to have been in operation here – as clearly suggested by Filippo Coarelli (1988: 39-41). Furthermore, the associated *strigatio/scamnatio* (see above) is generally assumed to have borne no relationship to previous settlement patterns (although these are almost unattested in past surveys across the valley floor – Wightman 1994b: 14). Therefore, it has often been taken to represent the quintessential mark of a new Roman landscape.

As yet no *Capitolium* has been identified at *Fregellae*, but one cult place has been tentatively ascribed to Hercules (Coarelli 1998: 61-62).³⁸ On the other hand, an early imperial (?) inscription from *Interamna* records the restoration of a temple to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* (see above), possibly a *Capitolium* (although the two things are not necessarily one and the same). What is remarkable is that local devotion to Hercules is also attested in two other inscriptions,³⁹ possibly hinting at the existence of some sort of sacred place or sanctuary to the god within the territory of the colony (for the existence of a *via Herculeana* see below). The local popularity of this cult is also implied by the presence at *Aquinum* of a specific religious *collegium*, the *cultores Herculis* (CIL X 5386). Although this local popularity might be interpreted as evidence of an earlier devotion to

³⁶ The *via Latina* constitutes the main axis of the urban layouts of both *Fregellae* (Coarelli 1998: 55-56) and *Interamna Lirenas* (Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 21-24).

³⁷ Both are located on relatively flat plateaus, bounded on two sides by steep slopes descending into adjacent river valleys, arguably betraying either their military origin in terms of control and defence of the area or a desire to occupy visible locations in the landscape.

³⁸ It is of uncertain (Republican) date and must not be confused with the other extra-mural sanctuary dedicated to Aesculapius (built in the 2nd century. BC).

³⁹ CIL X 5366 reports both inscriptions. Their description was significantly revised by Kajava 1996: 191-193 (also AE 1996 333-334).

Hercules as a ‘god of colonization’ (Bispham 2006: 113-117), it might be explained alternatively in relation to the role of such a god in a pastoral society (Coarelli 1998: 62). To sum up, several key elements in current debates are highly relevant to this area, specifically to *Interamna*, and therefore they certainly deserve further investigation.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

During the last few years the relationship between population density and settlement patterns has attracted considerable scholarly attention (e.g. Bintliff and Sbonias 1999; Osborne 2004). As noted above, inferring population levels from survey evidence is definitely a tricky exercise. In its efforts to move from site numbers to absolute population figures, the seminal paper by Robert Witcher (2005) describing the *suburbium* of Rome and its population has intersected with the wider debate on the population of Roman Italy.⁴⁰ Despite its consequent popularity (Wilson 2008; Yntema 2008; Fentress 2009; Attema and de Haas 2011), his approach suffers from several critical difficulties which mean that its conclusions cannot be accepted as definitive.⁴¹ The key debate hinges on whether the Italian free population between Late Republic and Early Empire was relatively small and in decline, or larger and rising. Given the coeval and unprecedented urban population growth (attested by the increasing number of towns), any decline in the free Italian population would have been matched by a similar decline in its rural component, readily supplanted by slaves (Hopkins 1978: 68-69 table 1.2). An examination of the relative trends for farms and villages (settlement types usually related to a primarily free population) extrapolated from twenty-seven survey areas across Italy reveals that more often than not their number actually increased between 200 BC and AD 100 (Launaro 2011b: 149-164). In the lower Liri Valley, this approach has shown that rural settlement in the area was also subject to such an increase (Launaro 2011b: 131-133). However, if *Interamna* was indeed shrinking, this later process might be taken to have mitigated – or even negated – any overall population growth in the area. In other words, *Interamna Lirenas* and its territory provide a key test case for the above interpretation – and the methodology which produced it – by looking at town and country in an integrated project and as part of the same landscape.

Any research on settlement patterns in Roman Italy cannot avoid engaging in the debate on the nature of what is called the ‘villa economy’, often equated with a ‘slave mode of production’, which has been assumed to constitute a universal norm.⁴² Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly evident that this equation is far from universally justifiable. Problems arise from how to categorize sites on the basis of the archaeological evidence, and how to relate these to the term *villa* as used in texts, but there is also a growing recognition that the architectural elaboration which characterizes villas is a matter of complex cultural choices not linked in any straightforward manner to any particular mode of production (Millett 2010). Not only was there a structural need for seasonal (free) labourers (Rathbone 1981: 15), but we also observe a chronological discrepancy between the peaks in numbers of villas and in volumes of Italian exports (Terrenato 2001: 26-27). More recently a debate has arisen about the evidence for slave barracks (Marzano 2007: 148-153). Taken in conjunction with the archaeological evidence for a growth in the numbers of farms and villages (and the underlying free population), these factors suggest a much more varied settlement pattern and economic system, whose character is currently very much open to debate. It seems clear that tenancy agreements constituted a much more widespread alternative to slave production than has usually been assumed (Launaro 2011a, 2011b: 170-77).⁴³ Although the ‘villa-economy’ is also generally related to intensive agriculture based on cash crops for Mediterranean export, researching

⁴⁰ A recent presentation of this most far-reaching debate is Scheidel 2008, to be integrated with Lo Cascio 1999. Also Launaro 2011: 11-50.

⁴¹ Detailed critiques of Witcher’s approach are provided by Scheidel 2008: 49-54 and Launaro 2011b: 55-70.

⁴² The foundational work on the subject is Giardina and Schiavone 1981.

⁴³ This is currently being researched by Alessandro Launaro as part of his British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (2009-12).

the town of *Interamna Lirenas* in an integrated study of its territory – some of it a *centuriated* territory for at least part of its history – provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the nature of the economy in a more differentiated landscape and thereby contribute to the more general debate. Previous Canadian survey work in the area has already suggested that this landscape was dominated by small farmsteads, interspersed with only a small number of villas and villages (Wightman and Hayes 1994: 36-39). To refine present understanding, a more complete knowledge of how the size and distribution of sites changes through time, how this relates to patterns of colonial land allotment and how settlements were linked to local and longer distance networks of production, distribution and consumption is required.

The area also provides a rare opportunity to investigate the utilization of a Roman landscape through a survey in the context of its centuriation. Past approaches to *centuriated* landscapes have treated land allotment from an idealised perspective, leaving the actual character of settlement in the individual landscape units unquestioned and largely uninvestigated⁴⁴. The results of the recent large-scale geophysical survey on the Isola Sacra also hint that the reality of land allotment on the ground might have run along rather less neat, clear-cut lines than those superimposed on small-scale maps might imply (Germoni *et al.* 2011: 238, figs 12.4-12.5).

LOCAL NETWORKS

In the last few decades, there has been a growing awareness of a critical limitation in the present understanding of archaeological assemblages, which is still too heavily reliant on particular classes of pottery, namely finewares and amphorae. Their broad distribution (all over the Mediterranean) and physical qualities have made them a most suitable diagnostic material by which to identify and date a wide array of archaeological sites. Unsurprisingly, sites at different levels of the settlement hierarchy and in different places with respect to the geography of distribution had a differential access to these products. This factor not only affects the chances of identifying less affluent or more marginal sites (the vast majority), but also shapes the interpretation of social and economic relationships across the landscape, generally over-emphasizing export-oriented production and long-distance distribution at the expense of less visible local consumption patterns (Witcher 2006: 49-52). This almost invisible network can only be identified if the very basic forms of material culture, by their very nature more common at all levels of society, such as locally-produced coarseware pottery are taken into account. Nowadays their high information potential is widely recognized,⁴⁵ although their analysis and classification still poses difficulties on account of their local distribution and a dearth of well-dated local sequences. The latter is primarily a consequence of the fact that such material has traditionally been overlooked in finds-processing from both survey and excavation.

Roman Italy is generally well-served by knowledge of the major classes of pottery. Production centres of both finewares (Black Gloss and *terra sigillata*) and amphorae throughout the Republican and Early Imperial periods are known, and local production sites are often well defined (Launaro 2011b: 89-91), even the lower Liri Valley probably produced its own Black Gloss pottery (see above; also Williams 1994: 161). In contrast to both earlier and later phases, this activity is likely to have impacted on the archaeological visibility of the Late Republican period – therefore it should be properly accounted for by calibrating finds quantification (see above). Moreover, as Italian products were eventually supplanted by provincial imports in the course of the second century AD, especially from Northern Africa, the situation changed. It has been established that African Red Slip relied on a different pattern of both production and distribution,⁴⁶ not always resulting in an even supply and ready accessibility across Italy. Hence, Mid- to Late-Imperial landscapes are also

⁴⁴ See now, however, the valuable contribution by de Haas 2011 on the Pontine region.

⁴⁵ e.g. Olcese 1993; Bats 1996; Santoro and Fabbri 1997; Cortese 2005. Also MacDonald 1995 and Hayes 2000 with specific reference to landscape archaeology.

⁴⁶ e.g. Fentress *et al.* 2004: 148-149; Launaro 2009: 29; Pasquinucci and Launaro 2009: 190.

likely to suffer from the problems of unreliable diagnostic evidence as outlined above. This is precisely the point at which the potential of coarsewares emerges as an aid to assist in illuminating the patterns of local and regional networks. Although it is necessary to be aware that the volume of their supply and use is also likely to have varied over space and time, it is reasonable to assume that it probably did so to a much lesser extent than did the finewares imported from the shores of North Africa.

Another aspect of this subject is communications. Although the *via Latina* has certainly not been overlooked, knowledge of the existence of secondary routes is the vital clue which would provide the best complement to ceramics in pursuing any investigation and understanding of local networks. Again, although *Interamna* seems literally to have lost its place along the main route through the Liri Valley after the construction of the *via Latina nova*, it still remained a point of convergence from both *Aquinum* and *Casinum*, providing a connection across the Aurunci mountains to the *via Appia* and the Tyrrhenian coast near *Minturnae*. Although this route is traditionally known as the *via Herculanea* (Cagiano de Azevedo 1947: 43-44), it had nothing to do with the road of the same name mentioned by Cicero (*De lege agraria*, II.36), a point made by Angelo Nicosia (2008: 209-211). Whether such an appellation is original (perhaps related to the presence of a sanctuary to Hercules along its route: see above) or a modern, erudite reconstruction remains open to debate. What matters most here is the probable existence of a secondary road network centred on *Interamna Lirenas*, whose discovery might shed pertinent light on the nature of production, distribution and consumption on a local scale.

METHODOLOGY

Now that the main issues have been addressed, the time has come to turn to the particular study of *Interamna Lirenas* and its territory. At the outset it is essential to discuss the methodology most suitable to succeed in this endeavour. The first prerequisite of our research strategy involves a thorough and systematic (re-)consideration of what is already known (both published and unpublished) and the second is the production/gathering of fresh evidence. In an area with such an impressive research tradition, it is impossible not to engage actively and constructively with all the actors involved – both now and in the past. In an examination of the past research, the expectation is that the different questions which can now be put will uncover a different landscape. However, only new fieldwork can provide the fresh evidence needed and, accordingly, three main tasks have been identified which will all be integrated within a single GIS: (a) a geophysical prospection and topographic survey of the whole site of the urban area of *Interamna Lirenas*; (b) an intensive field-survey of a representative area within its territory (*ager Interamnas*); and (c) a thorough analysis of the local material culture (especially coarseware and building materials) recovered from systematic surface collection. The settlement patterns so mapped will be complemented by a critical appraisal of linear landscape features (e.g. roads, ditches) as possible remains of Roman field-boundaries and land allotment schemes (tentatively identified as such by previous archaeological research). In the longer term, funding permitting, the aim is to develop an extensive programme of geophysical surveying to explore this rural landscape following the model of such survey work developed in northern England by Dominic Powlesland.⁴⁷ For the first time this would permit a large-scale empirical evaluation of settlement sites and land divisions in a *centuriated* landscape.

INTERAMNA LIRENAS

As already noted, virtually nothing certain is known of the urban layout of *Interamna Lirenas*. Earlier studies have outlined its extent and noted some of its features and suggest hypothetical reconstructions of the street grid. They have also intimated the identification of specific functional areas (e.g. productive quarters). Nonetheless, much better quality data are needed if the questions

⁴⁷ <http://www.landscape-researchcentre.org/>

set out above and, specifically, the concept of centralized direction in the establishment and planning of such colonies are to be tackled. Thanks to extensive excavation and some limited geophysical prospection, something is known of the plan of the contemporaneous centre of nearby *Fregellae*. It will therefore be illuminating to compare this and other mid-Republican colonial plans with that of *Interamna Lirenas*, highlighting differences and similarities in planning, and noting the presence or absence of distinctive building types such as the circular *comitium* or tripartite-cell temple. Thanks to a long history of successes in the study of urban Roman sites, a full coverage including geophysical prospection and a detailed topographical survey seem to offer the solution.⁴⁸

Compared to other possible techniques (like georadar or electrical resistivity survey), magnetometry is that best suited to produce an initial overall view of *Interamna Lirenas*, especially given the local geology and the nature of the known archaeological remains. It is a swift, efficient technique which works by measuring minor changes in the Earth's magnetic field, leading to the detection of different types of features including kilns, hearths, ovens, ditches and walls, especially when fired ceramic material or tuff have been used in their construction. The magnetometry will be complemented by the focused use of other geophysical prospection techniques either to investigate individual structures or to answer particular questions posed by the site. Results will be optimized when the prospection grid is laid out at an angle to the orientation of known archaeological features.⁴⁹ A precise survey of the micro-topography will complement the interpretation of the results of the geophysical survey, since the situation of individual buildings can be understood in relation to the local surface topography and the overall townscape can be appreciated within the scope of the broader topography. This latter fact means that aspects of the town planning will be better understood, especially in the context of phenomenological approaches.

The goal is to cover the whole intramural area (ca 30 ha) and, given the supposed existence of an extra-mural sanctuary – like that attested at *Aquinum* – which might shed further light on local political, social and cultural relationships as mediated by religion and cults (e.g. Stek 2010), it is also intended to survey the surrounding area.⁵⁰ This will be integrated with fieldwalking across the same areas. The analysis of the distribution of surface finds will provide evidence of the chronological development (e.g. changing size), and might also suggest the function(s) of specific sectors (as the Canadians have already done), or reveal differential distributions of specific artefacts (indicative of status or cultural choices). Such evidence will complement the results of the magnetometry, for instance, by showing the materials used in the construction of particular buildings. More specifically, it might also be possible to identify recurring patterns in the ploughsoil assemblage in relation to particular buildings identified through the geophysical survey, perhaps allowing an investigation of the very early phases of the colonial urban landscape. At this stage, limited test excavation can be used to provide data at a higher resolution. The reconstruction of different stages in the development of the urban plan should also contribute to the broader demographic debates, especially as it is sometimes suggested that many sectors within the walled area of Roman towns were actually devoid of buildings (de Ligt 2008: 147-154).

AGER INTERAMNAS

The issue of population leads to the contribution of field-survey and landscape archaeology. The general patterns which provide only very limited evidence of early settlement in the territory of a colony have been interpreted in several ways. One traditional explanation has ascribed its dearth to the nature of the evidence itself (i.e. weak traces of small farms), not very visible across the landscape (Rathbone 1981: 20-21; also 2009). A variation on this explanation is that smaller farms were less integrated into the pottery-using economy, and therefore intrinsically less visible in a survey than even marginally larger sites (Millett 1991). More recent contributions have suggested

⁴⁸ For comparative work see now Johnson and Millett 2012

⁴⁹ It reveals features parallel to the street grid more clearly.

⁵⁰ A similar approach was applied at *Falerii Novi* (Hay *et al.* 2010).

that the absence might instead reflect the original settlement pattern itself with an earlier colonial occupation phase which relied on a nucleated system of villages (hence the limited occurrence of isolated rural houses) (Pelgrom 2008).

This issue is fundamentally linked to the level of intensity and coverage of any survey. Field practice has confirmed that the more intensive a survey, the higher the numbers of sites recovered and this is especially true with reference to smaller sites (which might otherwise be heavily under-represented). However, any approach which utilizes very high intensity survey to counter these problems can only reduce the overall area covered, meaning that in this smaller sample area there is less likelihood that a nucleated settlements (like towns or villages) will be found as they are fewer and more widely spaced from each other than smaller sites. Ironically, despite being highly visible when surveyed, an intensive survey has a fairly high chance of missing them (Launaro 2011b: 154-155). Consequently, there is an unresolved tension between the resolution and scale of the analysis (e.g. Terrenato 2004), and, while some questions might be better answered by opting for one or the other, the ‘farms vs villages’ problem falls perfectly in between.

It would seem that the only way to address this issue is to undertake a new intensive field-survey (i.e. with walkers on parallel lines 5m apart covering the whole landscape), across a very sizeable transect across the landscape. This will facilitate the recovery of smaller sites and lower density concentrations (e.g. associated with pre-Roman and early medieval settlement), which might otherwise be missed, and will also allow an identification of those crucial – fewer and widely spaced – larger sites if they exist. In order to maximize recovery and to make the sampling of sites more consistent and better suited to comparative analysis, by and large only ploughed fields will be surveyed. Furthermore, if sites from lower levels of the settlement hierarchy and at the very margins of distribution networks are to be identified, special emphasis will have to be devoted to the study of regionally or locally produced coarseware pottery.⁵¹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this paper has been to explore the many issues involved in the study of Roman colonization from the point of view of settlement and landscape, and also to show how this field of study is continuously developing by identifying new questions and employing new data to address them. These factors have been taken into account in the design of a new field project, and fieldwork from the first seasons (in 2010-11) has adequately shown the feasibility of such an undertaking, not to mention the high potential of the methodology as applied to such research questions.⁵² One of the inherent strengths of the study area is that it allows a full integration of urban and rural landscape archaeology in a way which has rarely been achieved in the past. Even though such an approach was previously adopted by Canadian predecessors, their work preceded – and in this sense missed out on – fundamental developments in the practice of remote sensing and the use of Geographical Information Systems as well as important improvements in the study of material culture. By going back to *Interamna Lirenas*, it is hoped that the same spirit can be carried into the third millennium, acknowledging the fact that we are just part of an ongoing discourse and that ever different waters will keep flowing.

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⁵¹ This is facilitated by the fact that there is a growing literature on the subject and regional syntheses relevant to the area have since begun to appear (e.g. Bats 1996; Hayes 1994; Olcese 1993).

⁵² Preliminary results in Hay *et al.* 2012, forthcoming; Bellini *et al.* 2012, forthcoming. See also www.classics.cam.ac.uk/faculty/rcl/

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