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Centralisation, early urbanisation and colonisation in a regional context, dutch excavations and landscape archaeology in central and southern Italy

Introduction

In this paper three case studies are presented by way of introduction to a new Dutch research project on centralisation, early urbanisation and colonisation processes in three regions of Central and Southern Italy (fig.1)¹. The case studies are drawn from recent fieldwork by the Groningen Institute of Archaeology (GIA) and the Archaeological Institute of the Free University of Amsterdam (AIVU). Each case

illustrates the importance of the indigenous perspective as a starting point for the archaeological investigation of the spatial and societal transformations of Italic settlements and landscapes in the first millennium BC. Aim of the new project is a comprehensive multidisciplinary and comparative assessment of the socio-economic structure of the three regions represented in the case studies in order to investigate responses to and interaction with Greek and Roman colonialism on the regional scale. Following the case studies a brief introduction to the new project's methodology is given.

Case 1: Excavation and survey in the Sibaritide, Calabria: the indigenous sanctuary at the site of Francavilla Marittima

The first case presented here concerns the hilltop site of Francavilla Marittima in the Sibaritide. The site is currently being excavated under the direction of Prof. Dr. Marianne Kleibrink and her team of the University of Groningen together with the *Soprintendenza* of Calabria, while surveys are being carried out in the surrounding landscape (fig.2). During the 1960's an important sanctuary to Athena was excavated at the top of the hill, revealing various temple structures with a Greek ground plan (fig.3). It was then noted that, besides the stone temple structures, there were also deep postholes dug into the conglomerate bedrock. The debate whether wooden structures had preceded the stone structures has only recently been settled in favour of an important purely indigenous phase of the sanctuary before the Greek phase (Maaskant Kleibrink 1993 with references).

Buried beneath a thick levelling deposit, a sacred hearth/altar was uncovered that was in use from at least the 9th c. until the early 7th c. BC. Around the altar, which was simply an elevated part of the bedrock itself, indigenous

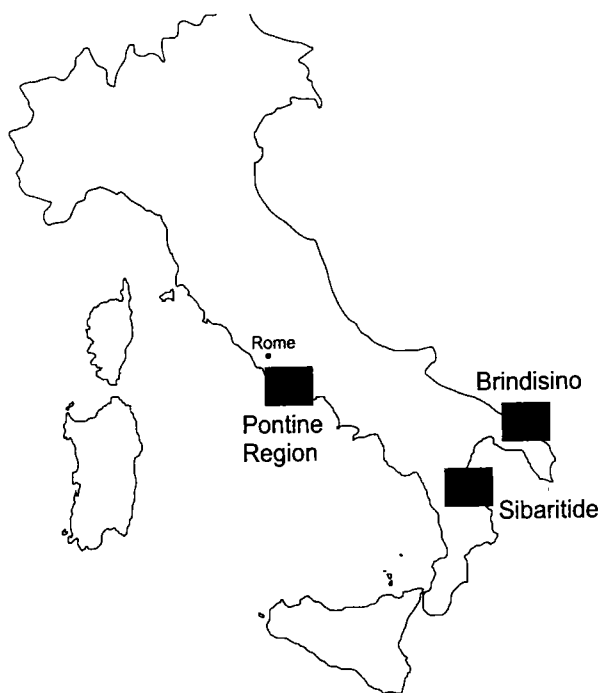


Fig. 1 Location of project areas

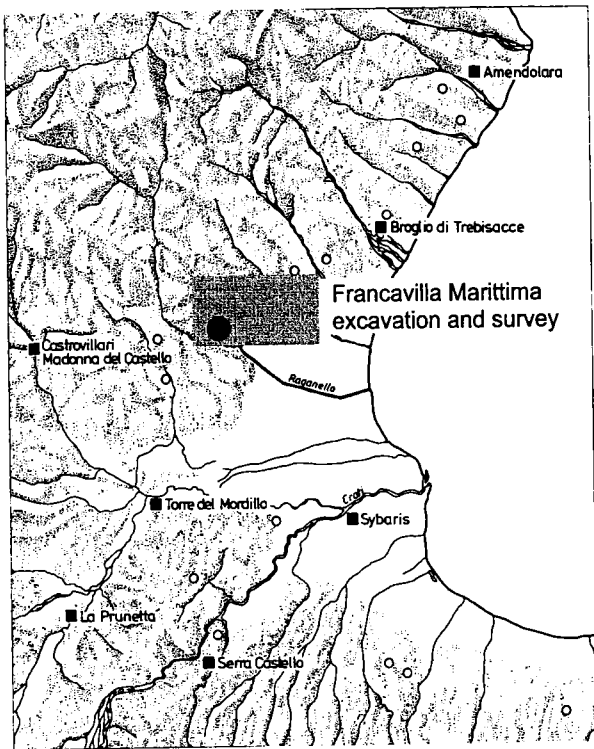


Fig. 2 Francavilla Marittima, excavation and survey area (Groningen Archaeological Institute). Note the location of other indigenous hilltop sites as Broglio di Trebisacce and Torre Mordillo and the location of the Greek colony Sybaris in the plain.

jewellery, loom weights and pots were placed alongside imported faience objects and scarabs. To the south of the altar a large ash heap accumulated, parts of which are still under excavation (fig.4).

The pottery found in these ashes exclusively consists of two categories of indigenous pottery: 1. *impasto* ware, for example large containers (the so-called *situlae*) as well as jars, mugs and bowls and 2. matt-painted ware, vases made by hand of depurated clay, well fired, and painted with a paste that contains ferro manganese powder. The matt-painted vessels, mainly bowls (*scodelle*), biconical jars and one-handed closed vessels (the so-called *atingitoi*), were painted during the Early Geometric period with 'a tenda' patterns and during the Middle Geometric period in the 'fringe' style. The 'a tenda' style is found over a large part of Southern Italy but the newly defined style, which we labelled the 'a frange' or 'fringe' style seems to be a local invention and is found only in the central Sybaris plain and its hinterland (fig. 5).

Together with the pot fragments many tiny parts of small bones came to light in the ashes. Because of the many cut marks on them these are clearly the remains of small pigs, goats and sheep which were eaten in honour of the deity. During recent campaigns it was discovered by stratigraphical analysis that the phase with the indigenous gifts actually precedes the phase with Greek goods dating from the 7th c. BC, and that we therefore have continuity in the cult. At some point in the 8th c. BC the altar was overbuilt

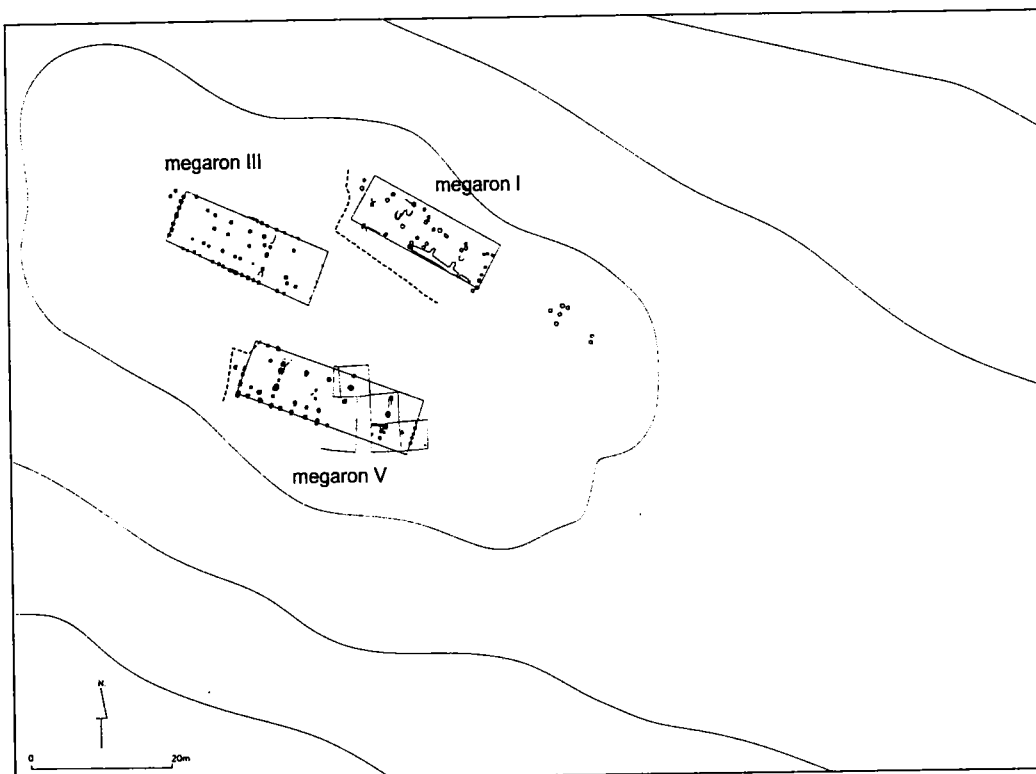


Fig. 3 Plan of temples I, III and V (7thc. BC) at the top of the hill (Francavilla Marittima)

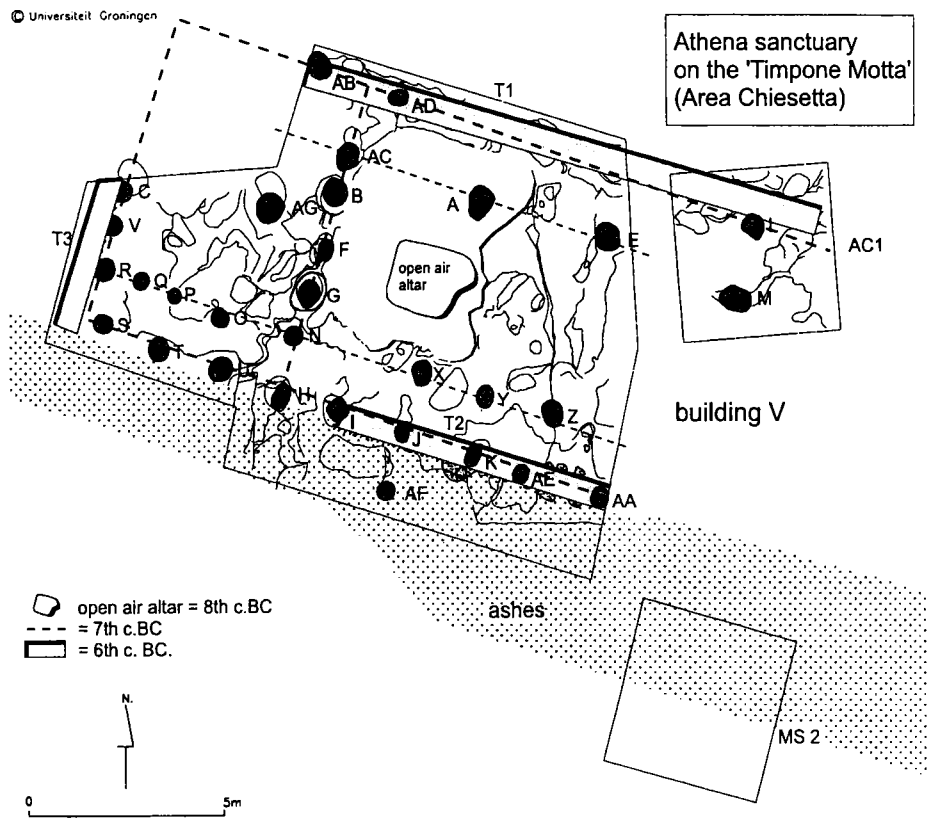


Fig. 4 Part of the plan of the sanctuary area excavated by M. Kleibrink at Francavilla Marittima (Groningen Archaeological Institute).

with a large temple with a so-called *megaron* plan, constructed with wooden posts. This newly discovered *megaron* V has its counterpart in *megaron* I and together these long buildings constructed with wooden posts flanked a third, central temple, *megaron* III (fig.3). The building technique of all these *megara* is indigenous, while the plan may derive from early Aegean temples. On the basis of this evidence it may be supposed that during the 8th c. BC traders or immigrants from the Aegean together with the indigenous inhabitants reconstructed the indigenous sanctuary in a monumental way with three temples constructed with wooden posts. The moment Greek colonists claimed the sanctuary as theirs can be dated around 650/40 BC when the posts were taken out of their holes and the entire area as well as the holes were covered with a deposit of yellow soil in which Greek colonial dedications were placed, mostly upside down, such as *hydriae*, drinking cups, *pyxides* and the like. The excavation team also found evidence for the existence of artificial terraces cut into the conglomerate bedrock. These carried indigenous dwellings with wooden posts.

Currently the team is uncovering an early Iron age hut feature on one of the lower plateaus. This feature fills the chronological gap between traces of Bronze age settlement that are under excavation and the 7th-6th c. BC 'urban' phase comprising a number of houses dating from the Greek colonial period (Attema, Delvigne, Drost and Maaskant Kleibrink, in press.).

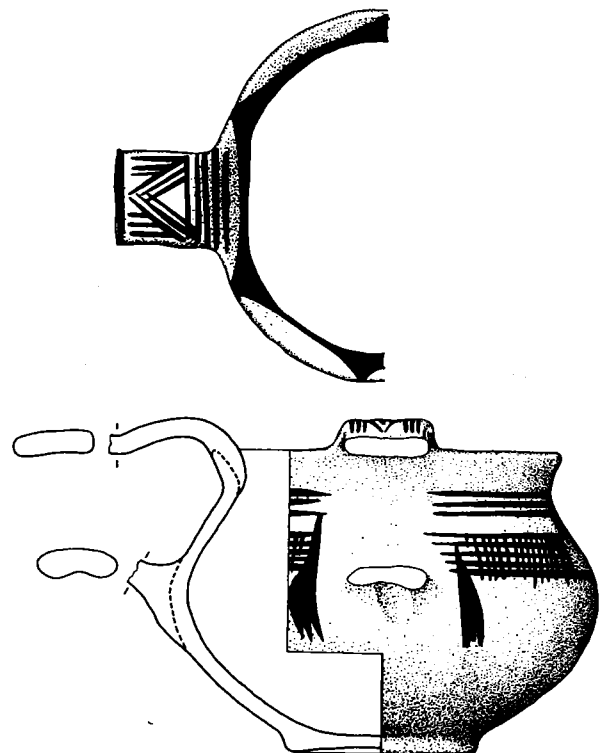


Fig. 5 Matt painted 'Fringe' style cup

This example illustrates that, long before the Greek colonisation the site at Francavilla already knew a thriving religious life sustained by a well-developed building technology and high quality artefacts. The sanctuary and, as it appears now, also the settlement, integrated the Greek element. This same picture has emerged from the re-examination of the Iron age Macchiabate cemetery belonging to the site of Francavilla, which only in a later stage showed the gradual adoption of Greek grave goods (Vink 1994).

In sum, Francavilla Marittima is one of the sites in the Sibaritide that show how, until recent times, the archaeology of Southern Italy has undervalued the indigenous hill-top settlements in favour of the colonies that were founded by the Greeks in the plains of Magna Graecia and which, in the beginning at least, would have been dependent on the indigenous economy (fig. 2). It also shows the need to adopt a landscape perspective. Landscape surveys, both those foreseen in the new project and those that have already been carried out, furnish information on the indigenous economy, its settlement patterns and land use (Haagsma 1996). This will enable an evaluation of the interaction between the native economies and the Greek merchant and settler colonisation.

Case 2: Settlement survey in Salento, Puglia, (fig. 6)

The second case study concerns the Brindisi plain, in the northeastern part of the Salento peninsula, the heel of Italy. In Salento one of the major research questions concerns the recent hypothesis of a pre-Roman urbanisation process. To investigate this hypothesis, the archaeological institute at the Free University of Amsterdam has been carrying out a research programme since the early 1980's, led

by Prof. dr. J.S. Boersma and Dr. D.G. Yntema, in close collaboration with the *Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità* of the University of Lecce. The programme entails, besides excavations, both off- and on-site surveys of vast landscape and settlement units. This research allows for the study of urbanisation as a differentiated process, both in diachronic and synchronic terms. It has already significantly contributed to the notion that in the Brindisino the process of centralisation and urbanisation was in essence internally driven and can be traced back at least as far as the early Iron Age, when most major Salento sites came into being.

Surveys as well as excavations indicate that the Archaic period was one of the major urbanisation phases, when socio-political centralisation can be shown to have led to a reorganisation of settlement and landscape. The relatively undifferentiated pattern of hut settlements in the early Iron Age Brindisi plains and hills developed, in the Archaic period, into a hierarchical and differentiated pattern centred around hillforts and formal sanctuaries. Of the hilltop sites, Oria is one of the most prominent. On the basis of these and other archaeological data we suggest that territoriality increased and that indigenous men of influence exploited settlement and religious space to enhance their prominence in an increasingly complex society. The study of technological innovation in pottery production and building techniques suggests that this was accompanied by economic changes; new and more stable settlements were laid out to accommodate the partial shift from pastoralism to agriculture, which, we argue, enabled the production of an agricultural surplus. This surplus was exploited for exchange with outsiders. Participation in these exchange networks allowed native

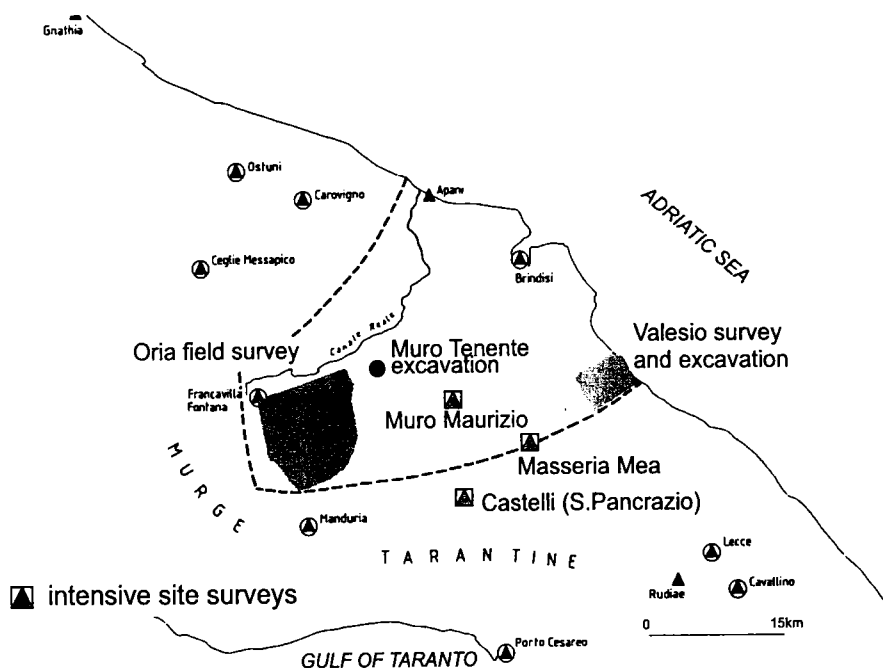


Fig. 6 Brindisino survey and excavation areas (Free University of Amsterdam).

men of influence to further enhance their status. The discovery of various rich tombs filled with precious Greek objects is a case in point. It is this social-economic aspect of the indigenous urbanisation process which has long been interpreted merely in the context of the diffusion of Greek material culture.

Both surveys and excavations point to the conclusion that these exchange networks widened and intensified towards the late 4th/early 3rd c. BC, just prior to the Roman conquest of the region in the second quarter of the 3rd c. BC. In this time of increasing internationalisation, again, participation in these networks was driven largely by autonomous native power strategies. These strategies may be seen as one of the mechanisms leading to an increasingly complex society, a complexity which is reflected prominently in the early Hellenistic changes in landscape organisation. Both inter- and intra-site patterns as revealed by our surveys and excavations suggest the emergence of a hierarchical settlement system with a high degree of differentiation. Dominant in this system are the old hillforts and sanctuaries, which had by then considerably expanded, and which can still be regarded as political, religious and economic centres for larger tribal units, underscoring the indigenous element in the urbanisation process.

Our detailed on-site surveys point out that many of the other villages also expand, such as the site of Muro Tenente. Like various other walled settlements in the region, our survey of this 50 ha large fortified site furnished evidence for an enormous increase in early Hellenistic surface artifacts (fig. 7). The same phenomenon is attested at the other



Fig. 7 Muro Tenente artefact density map of Apulian black gloss pottery indicative of site expansion in the Hellenistic period (4th c. BC).

major sites surveyed. As at Muro Tenente, it is accompanied by the emergence of monumental fortifications and of buildings which are likely to have served religious and other public functions. The fact that these are rather widespread developments in the early Hellenistic period suggests that, in this second phase of urbanisation, many formerly dependent social entities had seized a greater autonomy within the larger tribal structures. Contributing to this

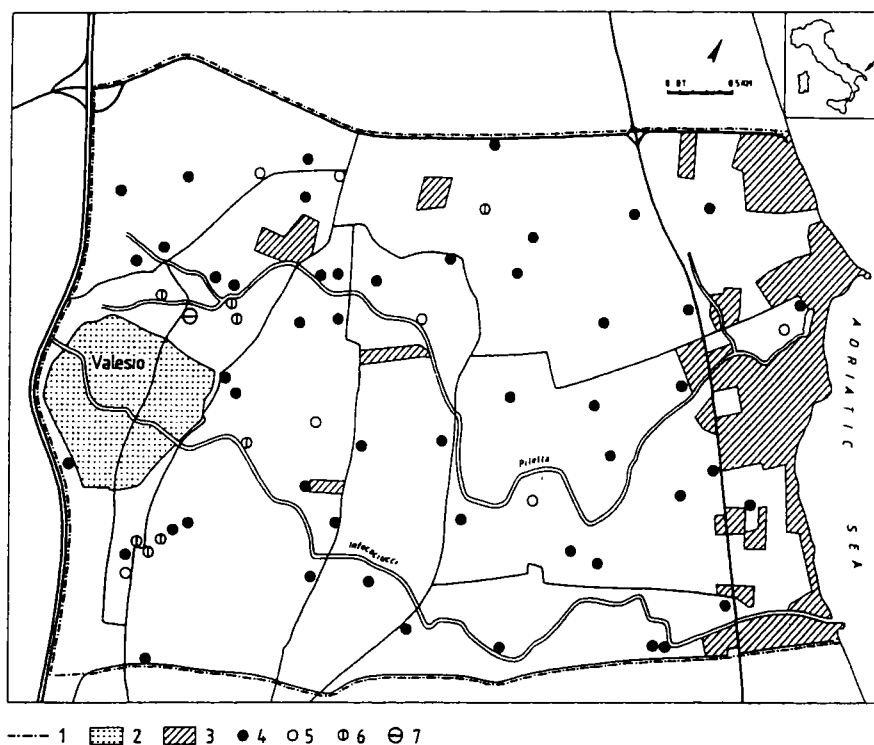


Fig. 8 Valesio survey transect. Sites with artefacts dating to the early Hellenistic period.

1. limits of the survey area
2. major walled site of Valesio
3. damaged or built over site
4. sites
5. probable sites
6. scatters of tiles and Graeco-Italic amphorae
7. sanctuary site

autonomy was the conversion into settled territory of previously marginally exploited landscape units. Our surveys indicate a wide distribution of farmsteads and hamlets over large parts of the region, including the limestone hills and the lagoonal coasts. With regard to the latter, the survey transect near Valesio is especially representative, showing a large number of such sites (fig. 8).

This example from the Salento area underscores the concept of the pre-Roman urbanisation of the Brindisi region as a complex differentiated process with strong indigenous roots. Below, we present a similar case from the Pontine Region in Central Italy, where research by the University of Groningen has shown that the process of Romanisation truncated the indigenous Latin process of early urbanisation.

Case 3: Survey in the Pontine region in Central Italy by the Pontine Region Project (fig. 9)

The Pontine Region Project (PRP) began in 1987 and has now seen 10 years of survey in various landscapes in southern Lazio. Surveys started in 1987 with extensively surveyed transect blocks that ran from the Via Appia to the Monti Lepini where the Romans founded their first colonies. These transects served to investigate the relation between the environment and the archaeology of three contrasting landscape units in the Pontine Region; the densely settled hilly volcanic area belonging to the system of the Colli Albani near present-day Cori (ancient *Cora*); the slightly inclined alluvial plain that stretches out below the Roman colony of *Norba*; and the once marshy area below present-day Sezze, ancient *Setia*, but already in pre-Roman times partly covered with colluvium. The pottery collected during this early surveys already indicated the profound impact of Roman colonisation on the archaic landscape.

A follow-up programme carried out between 1988 and

1991 comprised two intensive site surveys of proto-urban areas (fig.9: Cisterna, Valvisciolo) and one of a late Iron age *oppidum* (fig.9: Contrada Casali). In combination with the settlement excavations by the Groningen University at the protohistorical site of Satricum (Maaskant Kleibrink 1987 and 1992), the PRP surveys furnished insight into the urban and rural infilling of parts of the Pontine region in the late Iron age and Archaic period (see for Satricum also fig. 9).

Both surveys and excavations record profound changes in the settlement pattern starting at the turn of 6th c. BC. The abandonment of two of the larger protohistorical settlement areas on the fringe of the Pontine plain and the intra-site changes observed at Satricum were read as markers of a political and socio-economic transformation of the Latin Archaic society in this part of South Lazio which would eventually result in its romanisation (Attema 1993). From the settlement pattern it was clear that by the 4th c. BC the Pontine Region and part of the Sacco valley had become part of a new and enlarged territorial organisation dependent on Rome (figs. 10 and 11). A series of strongholds had been added to the settlements in the core area of Roman/Latin civilisation occupying both the occidental and oriental sides of the Lepine mountains. These settlements, which controlled the Pontine plain and the Sacco valley from the middle of the 4th c. BC onwards, held well-developed rural territories.

To investigate these changes in the light of historical process, a new survey programme was developed for the period 1994 - 1997 entitled 'Roman colonisation south of Rome, a comparative survey of three early romanized landscapes'. Field surveys were carried out in the catchments of three Roman towns focusing on the where and when of rural development in their catchments (fig.9: Lanuvio, Segni, Sezze). On the basis of the first results of these surveys, hypotheses are now being formulated regarding the territorial dynamics that caused the transformation of the Archaic Latin landscape into the Roman colonial landscape.

An important first observation is that the colonising process was far from uniform. The survey in the catchment of Sezze (ancient *Setia*), for instance, showed how this part of the Pontine Region had only been very sparsely settled in pre-Roman times. Roman colonisation of this area was most certainly of a pioneering kind and *ex-novo*. On the other side of the Lepine mountains, in the area that the Romans referred to as the New Lazio (*Latium Novum*), the colonial pattern was implanted on a much more developed pre-existent archaic infrastructure. In the Sacco valley well-developed Archaic settlements were recorded, indicating that early urbanisation had been taking place here (Cassieri and Lutazzi 1985, 1988). By contrast the PRP survey around Segni (*Signium*) and data collected by the local museum show that a rural infilling of the catchment of Segni started only in the 5th c. BC. The *Ager Signinus* with the central place *Signium* may thus be interpreted as the conscious modelling by the Romans of a new landscape, in which the

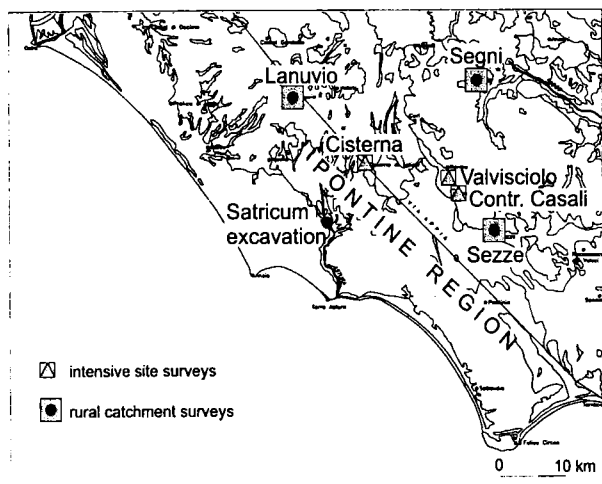


Fig. 9 The Pontine Region survey and excavation areas in Central Italy (Groningen Archaeological Institute).

CENTRALISATION, EARLY URBANISATION AND COLONISATION IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT, DUTCH EXCAVATIONS AND LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ITALY

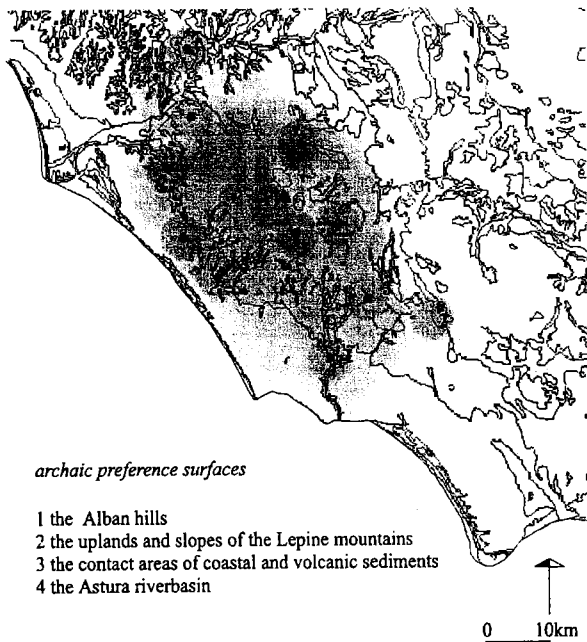


Fig. 10 The Archaic settled landscape: the Latin/Roman core area.

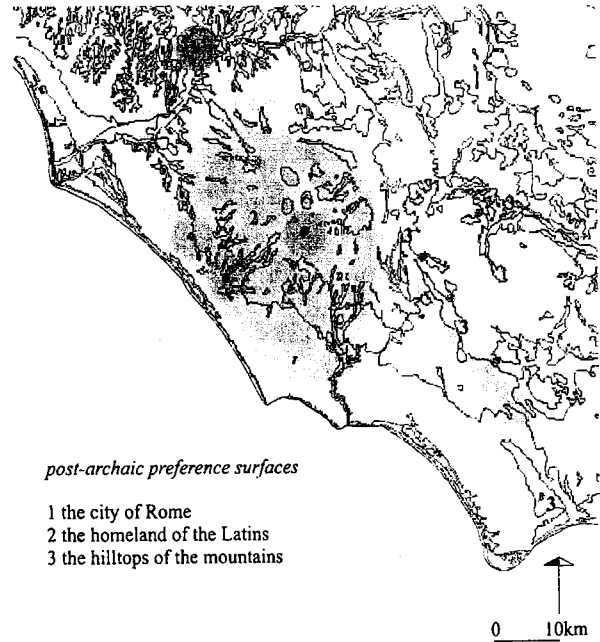


Fig. 11 The early Roman settled landscape. Note the new settlements on the hilltops of the mountains east and southeast of the Latin/Roman core area

political and religious points of reference were transferred from the valley to a dominant location in the Lepine hills.

Nearer to Rome, in the area of the Alban hills such a colonial impact cannot be discerned as clearly. The survey around Lanuvium shows that here the process was one of romanisation and acculturation of the existing Latin infrastructure, rather than the creation of a new colonial geography. Yet other regions in Latium Vetus, such as the area south of Cisterna di Latina where protohistoric Satricum is located, sank into marginal significance in Roman colonial geography.

Recent fieldwork of the PRP in these various landscape units has thus resulted in the notion that, strongly depending on time and place in the archaic landscapes of South Lazio, early Roman colonisation either brought or modified existing forms of early urbanisation.

Concluding remarks

The cases above demonstrate how important the indigenous perspective is in the study of centralisation, early urbanisation and colonisation processes in Central and Southern Italy and how regional cultures and landscapes underwent these processes at different points in time, in different ways, with different intensities and with different results. It is clear that the natural environment, technological level, subsistence and ideological strategies of the local populations and the degree of early external contacts and colonisation movements were all important influences on internal regio-

RESEARCH MODEL

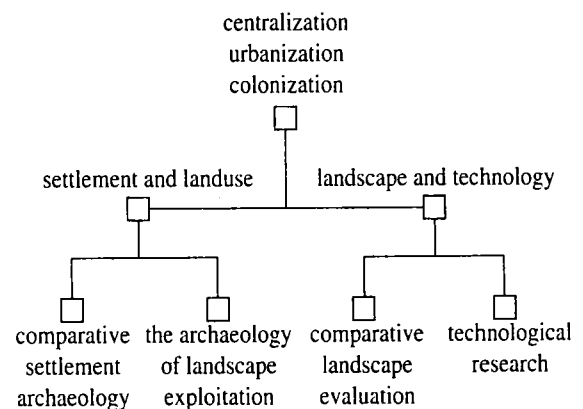


Fig. 12 Research model of the project *Regional Pathways to Complexity, landscape and settlement dynamics in early Italy* (Groningen Archaeological Institute and the Archaeological Department of the Free University of Amsterdam) with as its main research themes centralisation, urbanisation and colonisation processes in three Italian landscapes (Pontine Region, Salento, Sibaritide).

nal developments. The methodology of the Dutch umbrella project, *Regional Pathways to Complexity, landscape and settlement dynamics in early Italy*, that is now being developed by the Groningen Institute of Archaeology and the Archaeological Department of the Free University of Amsterdam is directed toward investigating the interaction bet-

ween these factors (fig. 12). Calibration and integration of the current archaeological settlement and landscape data in a Geographical Information System (GIS) based on ethnographic, historical cartographic and land evaluation data will facilitate comparative spatial analyses. These will be aimed at highlighting the changes in settlement and landscape organisation in the three regions, and at interpreting them in the light of the social processes central to the project in the vein of the case studies presented in this paper.

The discussion within the newly formed research group will focus on questions such as: what major changes in settlement behaviour and land use occurred? What changes in pottery and metal production can we detect? How did landscape organisation change, and what were the ecological consequences? What do these changes tell us about the character and intensity of the centralisation and urbanisation process and the influence of colonisation on the indigenous societies? How did this affect the social construction of the landscape and the ways in which the landscape was perceived? We believe this approach will bring us nearer to a total landscape archaeology that will allow us to take a first step towards a well-founded theory of centralisation and early urbanisation in the Mediterranean landscape of antiquity.

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Notes

1. The project's title is Regional Pathways to Complexity, landscape and settlement dynamics in early Italy. The research is supported by the Foundation for History, Archaeology and Art History, which is subsidized by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific research (NWO) for the period 1997-2001. At present the research team consists of P.A.J. Attema, P.M. van Leusen and E. van Joolen (University of Groningen), G.J. Burgers, B. Mater and F.A. Veenman (Free University of Amsterdam). The field projects that it builds on are the excavations of the protohistoric settlement of Satricum and the Pontine Region survey in Central Italy directed by respectively M. Kleibrink and P.A.J. Attema, both of the Groningen Institute of Archaeology (GIA); the Brindisino project is directed by D.G. Yntema and G.J. Burgers of the Archaeological Department of the Free University of Amsterdam (AIVU), the Francavilla Marittima excavation and survey in the Sibaritide in South Italy is directed by M. Kleibrink, surveys are supervised by P.A.J. Attema (GIA).
2. Thanks are due to the responsible superintendent dott.ssa. S. Luppino.

3. The project "Roman colonisation south of Rome, a comparative survey of three early romanized landscapes" was financed for a period of three years by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW, Amsterdam) and was carried out at the Groningen Institute of Archaeology.

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