This research project (2015-2018) aims to disentangle the complex relationship between Roman colonialism, elite investment in wine production and commerce, and the urban and rural landscape changes which these developments brought about. The research is confined to the territories of the Roman colonies on the central Adriatic coast and to the Republican phases of the Romanization of this part of Italy (3rd-1st centuries BCE). By combining original fieldwork, with focused studies of archaeological finds and the literature, the project aims to understand some of the complex processes triggered by the production and trade in wine in that period and region. Through the interplay of different methodological approaches within the disciplines of ancient topography, landscape studies and ceramicology, the project investigates the important role of wine in engaging Roman colonists and local peoples of Adriatic Italy in intricate webs of economic, cultural and political relations.

Evidence from artefact surveys and topographical research on the development of the immediate hinterland of Potentina during the second and first centuries BCE.

Aerial view with cropmarks of the Roman Potenza river bed and probable location of harbour facilities for maritime inland trade connected with the Republican colony and its hinterland.

Prospection evidence from the buried structures of the forum of the town of Trebis which was partly developed by Roman colonists in the second half of the first century BCE.

View on the Ghent University excavations on a wine amphorae production site south of Potentina (2007-2008).

Discovery via remote sensing of a colonialist Republican farm complex and amphora workshop on Colle Recanati (Porto Recanati) (2) geomatic survey (3) satellite imagery Several buildings (A, B, C, D) wells, possible ovens and pits can be distinguished. Surface artefacts suggest that this site, connected with the production of early wine amphorae, was active only during the second century BCE.

POTENZA VALLEY SURVEY project

The current project on the impact of colonialism is framed within the long term multidisciplinary research effort (since 2000) by a team from Ghent University, directed by Prof. Frank Vermeulen, within the Potenza Valley Survey (PVS) project. This PVS project contributes to the study of prehistoric and early historic settlement dynamics, and in particular on Roman Urbanization and its impact in the central Adriatic part of the Italian peninsula. It focuses on the integrated use of archaeological survey methods and other non-destructive techniques combined with more traditional approaches, such as excavation and historical topography. Especially the study of the urban layout and evolution of the colonial city of Potentina (founded in 84 BCE), and the inland towns of Nicina, Trebis and Septemperia, are state of the art examples of the intensive use of low altitude aerial detection combined with regular grid-walking, geomatic and geophysical survey, material studies, and excavation to investigate abandoned classical town sites. The integration of the valuable stratigraphic data from different excavations in the town areas, with the newly obtained survey data from urban centres and their territories, demonstrate that this work can be of crucial importance for our understanding of the Roman city dynamics in central Adriatic Italy and beyond.

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