

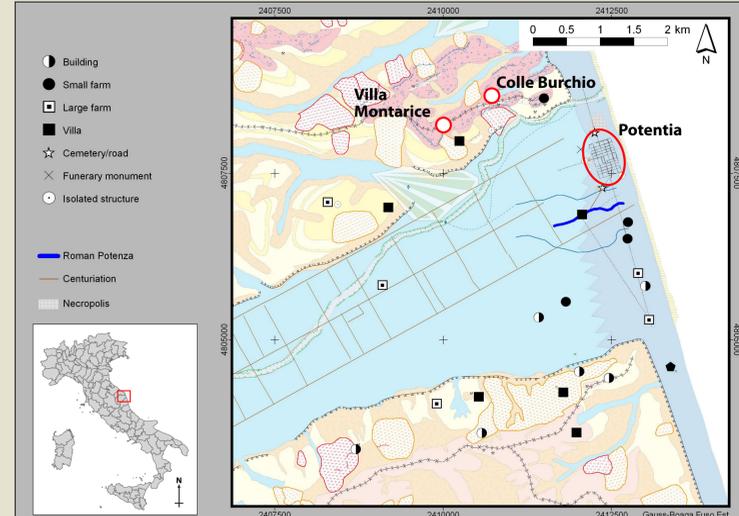
New observations on the first rural colonial settlements in the lower Potenza Valley (Marche, Italy) through survey and excavation

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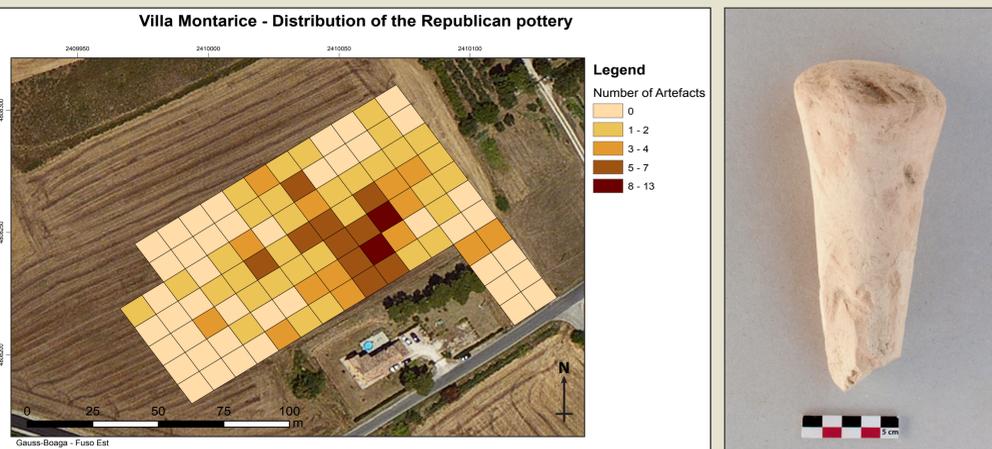
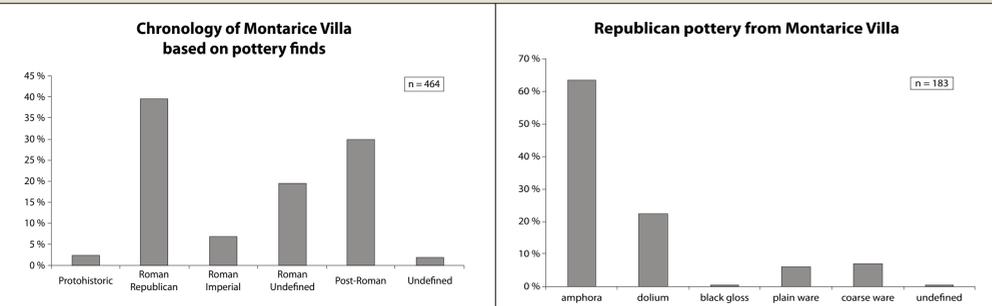
Introduction

Since 2002, Ghent University (Belgium) has been active in the lower Potenza Valley, some 25 km south of Ancona. Artefact surveys, geophysical surveys and aerial photography surveys have revealed an appreciable amount of Roman rural sites as well as a better knowledge of the city of Potentia itself, founded in 184 BC. The fieldwork was supplemented by excavations and studies of the archaeological material.

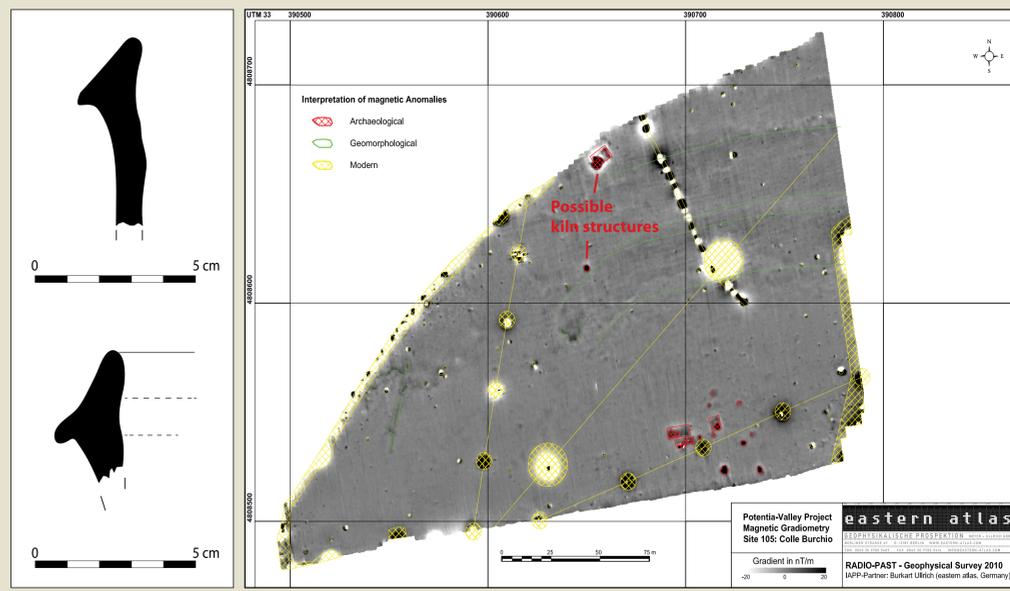
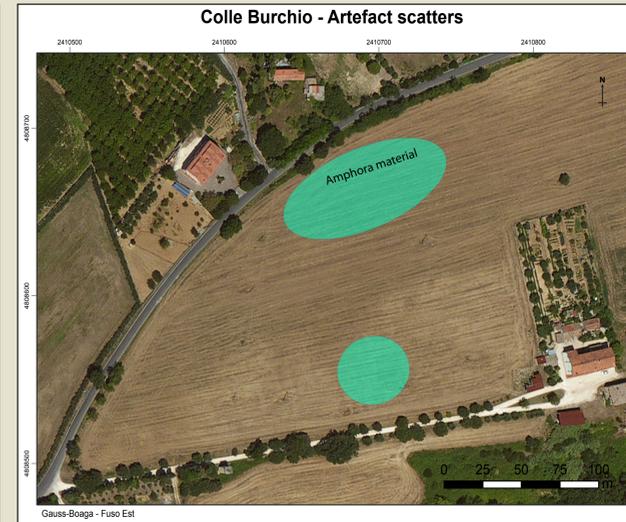
In 2012, a new research program focuses on the rural occupation of the hinterland of Potentia. Previously discovered sites were resurveyed and the material of these new and ancient surveys reconsidered using the chronological framework provided by previous excavations of the West Gate zone at Potentia. Among these sites, three of them turned out to be crucial for the study of the earliest Roman colonization of the area in the Republican period.



Villa Montarice



Colle Burchio



Conclusion

The sites of Colle Burchio and Villa Montarice are located at some 2 km NW of Potentia and deserve special interest. Colle Burchio is a workshop producing wine amphorae of the Greco-Italic type of the same typology and fabric as the fragments discovered near the Republican wall of Potentia. The chronology in the second half, at the latest third half of the 2nd century BC is confirmed by the peculiar typology of these locally produced amphorae that fits perfectly well in the *koinè* of amphora production in the Mediterranean at that time. The site of Villa Montarice appears to have been occupied from the late Proto-historic times, with an increased occupation in the Republican period. The surveys revealed there considerable amounts of 'Colle Burchio' amphora fragments, as well as a broad spectrum of the same coarse ware, dolia, Vesuvius pottery and Rhodian amphorae as noticed in connection with the aforementioned Republican city wall, and this brings us to the same chronology as in the first site. The presence of two architectural decoration elements (antefix) has maybe something to do with a residential part of Villa Montarice. Nevertheless, the bulk of the material combined with the nearly complete absence of black gloss pottery and the presence of a considerable amount of opus spicatum fragments and of a small limestone press basin point to an agricultural production site (wine growing?). This presumed function, the chronology, the presence of amphorae and other material in the same 'Colle Burchio' fabric and the limited distance of some 750 m make us believe that there is a strong connection between the two sites, so far that both of them could have belonged to the one and the same estate.