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*A Contribution to the Study  
Of Roman Rural Settlement in Marche*

## SOMMARIO

### Saggi e articoli

S. ANTOLINI, <i>L'altare con il clupeus virtutis da Potentia</i> .....	pag. 9
G. PACI, <i>Fanum Fortunae: note storiche ed epigrafiche</i> .....	» 29

### Note e relazioni

F. BRANCHESI, <i>L'insediamento abitativo di Piana dei Saraceni di Cingoli (MC)</i> .....	» 71
S. FORTI, <i>Nuovi esemplari di anfore tipo 'Grado I' da Urbs Salvia</i> .....	» 101
N. LUCENTINI, <i>Appunti sulla necropoli di Grottazzolina</i> .....	» 125
S.M. MARENGO, <i>Augustali e non</i> .....	» 143
G. PACI, <i>Fregio dorico iscritto da Senigallia</i> .....	» 153
L. VERDONCK - F. VERMEULEN, <i>A Contribution to the Study of Roman Rural Settlement in Marche</i> .....	» 161

### Schede e notizie

G. BALDELLI - C. GOBBI - P. MARCHEGIANI - G. PIGNOCCHI, <i>Catalogare il patrimonio archeologico: l'esperienza marchigiana</i> .....	» 233
L. INNOCENZI, <i>Tuficum. Annotazioni epigrafiche di Don Raffaele Ambrosini</i> ....	» 241
W. MONACCHI, <i>Due bifacciali dalla Provincia di Pesaro e Urbino nel Museo Nazionale Preistorico ed Etnografico «Luigi Pigorini» di Roma</i> .....	» 250
G. PACI, <i>Iscrizioni urbisalviensi nuove e ritrovate presso l'Abbadia di Fiastra</i> ..	» 257

### Bibliografia

#### RECENSIONI

Andrea Bacci, <i>La figura e l'opera</i> (E. GIORGI) .....	» 269
M. BUONOCORE, <i>L'Abruzzo e il Molise in età romana tra storia ed epigrafia</i> (G. PACI) .....	» 274
F. COLIVICCHI, <i>La necropoli di Ancona</i> (E. BENELLI) .....	» 278
L. LANZI, <i>Viaggio del 1783 per la Toscana Superiore, per l'Umbria, per la Marca, per la Romagna</i> (G. PACI) .....	» 282
M. LUNI, <i>Raffaello Fabretti 'archeologo' urbinato</i> (S. RAMBALDI) .....	» 289
AA.VV., <i>Beni archeologici della provincia di Macerata</i> , a cura di G.M. Fabrini, G. Paci, R. Perna (L. GASPERINI) .....	» 292

#### SPOGLIO DI PERIODICI

«Fasti archaeologici» (G. PACI) .....	» 295
---------------------------------------	-------

#### SCHEDE PER LOCALITÀ

Fossombrone (PU) (G. GORI) .....	» 335
Francavilla d'Ete (AP) (N. FRAPICCINI) .....	» 344
Fratte Rosa (PU) (M.L. CAVALLINI) .....	» 345
Frontino (PU) (W. MONACCHI) .....	» 350
Frontone (PU) (N. FRAPICCINI) .....	» 356
Gabicce Mare (PU) (L. IONI) .....	» 359
Gagliole (MC) (E. BIOCCHIO) .....	» 365
Genga (AN) (M. SILVESTRINI - G. PIGNOCCHI) .....	» 371
Gradara (PU) (D. SACCO) .....	» 387

#### SEGNALAZIONI

A cura di R. MAZZONI - G. PACI .....	» 391
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#### Cronache

Liliana Mercando (1932-2003) (G. DE MARINIS - P. QUIRI) .....	» 399
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LIEVEN VERDONCK - FRANK VERMEULEN

## A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF ROMAN RURAL SETTLEMENT IN MARCHE (\*)

### **Abstract**

*This article is a contribution to the study of the Roman countryside in the central Italian region of Marche. It discusses current knowledge concerning villas and other forms of rural settlement and synthesizes views on their character, location and chronological development. Results from sub-regional surveys are compared, while the still limited excavation data are shortly reviewed. The paper also presents the preliminary results of on-going systematic field survey by a team from Ghent University (Belgium) in parts of Central-Marche, in the valley and surrounding hills of the river Potenza. This long-term survey project is an interdisciplinary attempt to unravel the character and evolution under Roman dominance of the rural landscape of ancient Picenum.*

### **I. Roman rural settlement in the 'regione Marche'**

The military campaigns of the Roman army in 269 and 268 BC in the Adriatic area have profoundly changed the fate of the *Piceni* and the partly Celtic population living in the area which is now called '*Le Marche*' (1). The slow but

(\*) This paper results from work within the IUAP-framework project PIA V/09 'Urban and rural transformation in the western and eastern Roman Empire. Interdisciplinary archaeology of late antique and early medieval times' financed by DWTC-Belgium.

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(1) According to Augustus' division of Italy, today's Marche was part of *regio V (Picenum)* and *regio VI (Umbria et Ager Gallicus)*. This subdivision was founded on the 4th

profound Romanisation process that followed these dramatic events, brought deep changes in the social and economic tissue of the human societies occupying this region. It also meant the real introduction of urbanisation in this area and an, at least partial, reorganisation of the countryside. Although the latter was no doubt a slow process, that only really took off in late Republican times when Rome organised this region by dividing it in administrative districts, headed by an appointed prefect (2), it definitively changed the face of the rural landscape of Marche. Until a shift towards the closed economy of medieval times, rural occupation of the Marche was now for more than six centuries fully open to the rest of the world and at times well integrated in the more 'global' Roman economy. It goes without saying that such developments fundamentally influenced the structure and material appearance of rural settlement in the region.

The literary sources to document these patterns and evolution of rural settlement in Marche are very limited. In fact they only procure us with a very general picture, biased towards some economic aspects, such as the main products of the land. These sources suggest an economical system essentially based on small landholding, with a simultaneous use of public and pastoral land (3). The reorganisation of the region from the introduction of the *Lex Flaminia de Agro Gallico et Piceno viritim dividundo* in 232 BC onwards (4) and the consequent foundation of colonies, were important steps in the structuring of the rural territory, which before was based on a loose system of *pagi* and *vici*. Throughout the whole Roman period, it seems that intensive agriculture is conducted from a dense network of farms and small villages, whose location is bound to landscape types procuring the major farming products: excellent grain (for the sweet bread *panis Picentinus*), fruit (e.g. apples and pears), olives (especially big black olives), and predominantly in the Celtic northern part, oil and wine (5). Apart from a dense network of small familial landholding based on multifaceted agriculture and an essentially self-supporting economy, appeared from late Republican times onwards larger farms with specialized production (wine/olives) intended for sale. To make this economic model work, larger tracts of lands were needed and were more concentrated in the hands of fewer landholders, using land that formerly belonged to the *ager publicus*. Actions that partially counter-measured this evolution in *Picenum* and the *ager Gallicus* are the Gracchian reforms of the 2nd century BC (documented at *Auximum* and Ancona) and new agrimensorial operations during the periods of the triumvirate and the reign of Augustus.

century BC situation in which the border between the Italic *Picentes* and the Gallic *Senones* was situated in the area between Musone and Chienti (DELPLACE 1993, p. 1).

(2) PACI 1991, p. 11.

(3) FORTINI 1991, p. 95.

(4) MOSCATELLI 1985.

(5) See e.g. ALFIERI 1982; DALL'AGLIO et al. 1991, p. 70.

The collective use of the *ager publicus* was indispensable for the practice of important pastoral activities, essentially sheep herding for the production of milk, cheese and wool, in the Apennine regions (6). Still in the last century the collective use of undivided land ('le Comunanze') was a common practice in Marche. These areas, located in mountain regions, probably corresponded with that territory belonging to the people of Rome defined by the *gromatici* as *montes Romani*. During imperial times they became property of the emperor who secured their administration to a *procurator stationum privatarum per Tusciam et Picenum* (C.I.L. III 1464). Here local pastoral activities were organised, whereby the sheep, who adapt well to high temperatures and dry summer, descended to the valleys in winter. But also long distance transhumance, to Puglia and Maremma, was common practice since prehistoric times. The mountainous areas were also an essential source for the exploitation of wood (e.g. oak) and for feeding pigs.

It is clear that this very general picture, which emerges from interpreting the small number of written sources, can only be deepened by the intense use of material evidence. Although most archaeological work in the Marche region during the recent past was of good quality, there still is a hard felt lack of data about the precise character and evolution of rural settlement patterns. With the first part of this paper we would like to synthesize current archaeological knowledge about rural settlement in Marche under Roman dominance (7). This short *status quaestionis* should provide the guidelines for future, more focussed research in the field concerning the countryside of this part of Central Italy.

### The landscape background

The geomorphologic framework of the regione Marche is exemplary for the Adriatic side of Central Italy (Fig. 1). In the west two broad mountainous belts are present, with NNW-SSE orientation and altitudes up to 1500 m and more: the 'Umbria-Marche Apennines' and the 'Marche Apennines'. As these mountains are composed of limestone and marls, their crests are rounded and have a gentle aspect. The drainage network on the other hand has carved out deep, abrupt and narrow gorges. Between the mountain belts lies the 'internal Marche basin', a hilly zone between 300 m and 500 m altitude, composed dominantly of Quaternary sediments, such as slope-waste and river terrace material, with locally outcropping sandstones and marl. The zone east of the Apennines is called the 'peri-

(6) ALFIERI 1982; FORTINI 1991, p. 95. See also: GABBA 1979.

(7) This synthesis is partially based on a dissertation presented in 2002 at Ghent University: L. VERDONCK, *De Romeinse villa's in de Marche* (promotor F. Vermeulen).

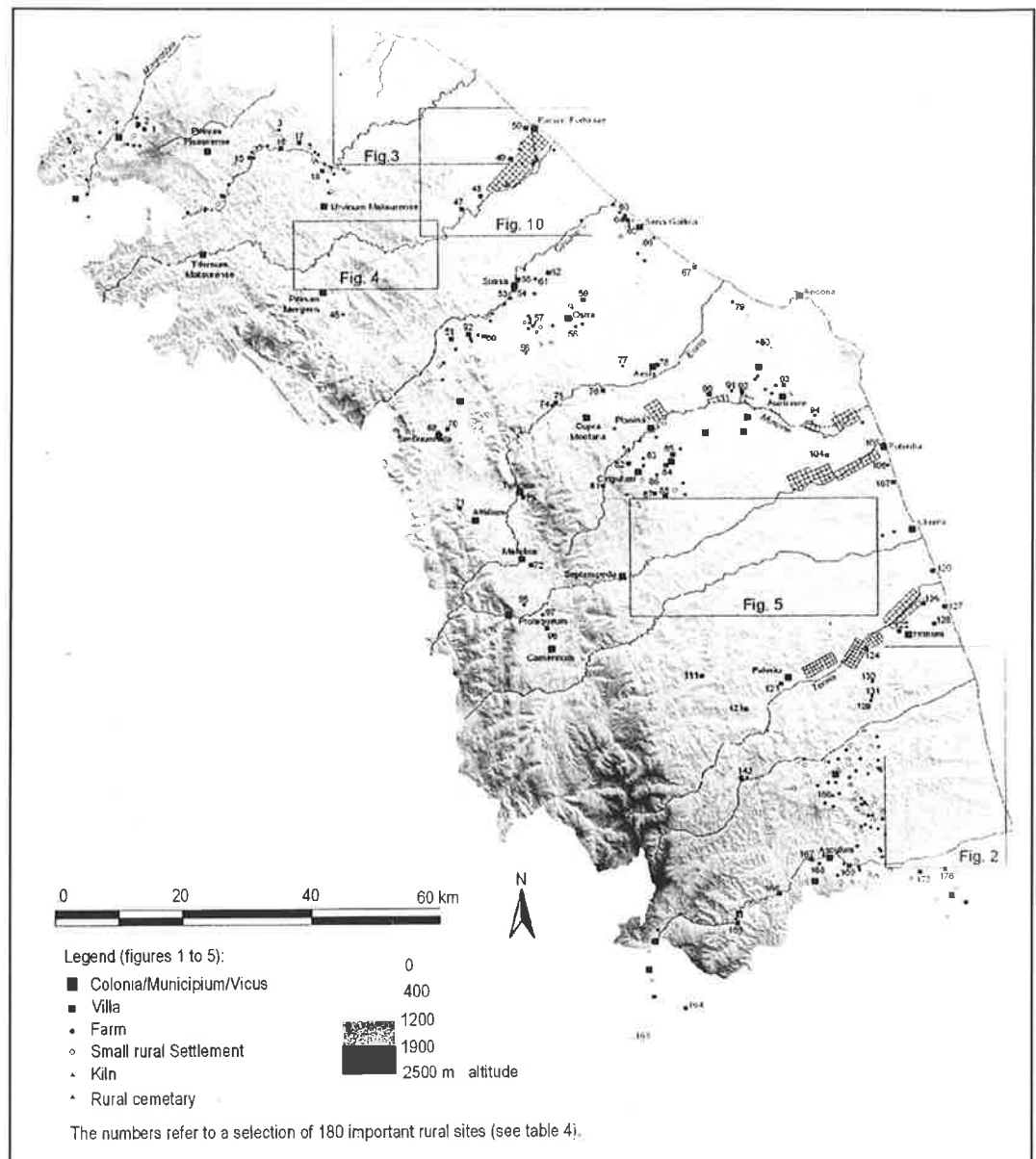


Fig. 1 - Roman rural settlement in the Marche Region.  
Five territories are examined in details in Figg. 2-5 and 10.

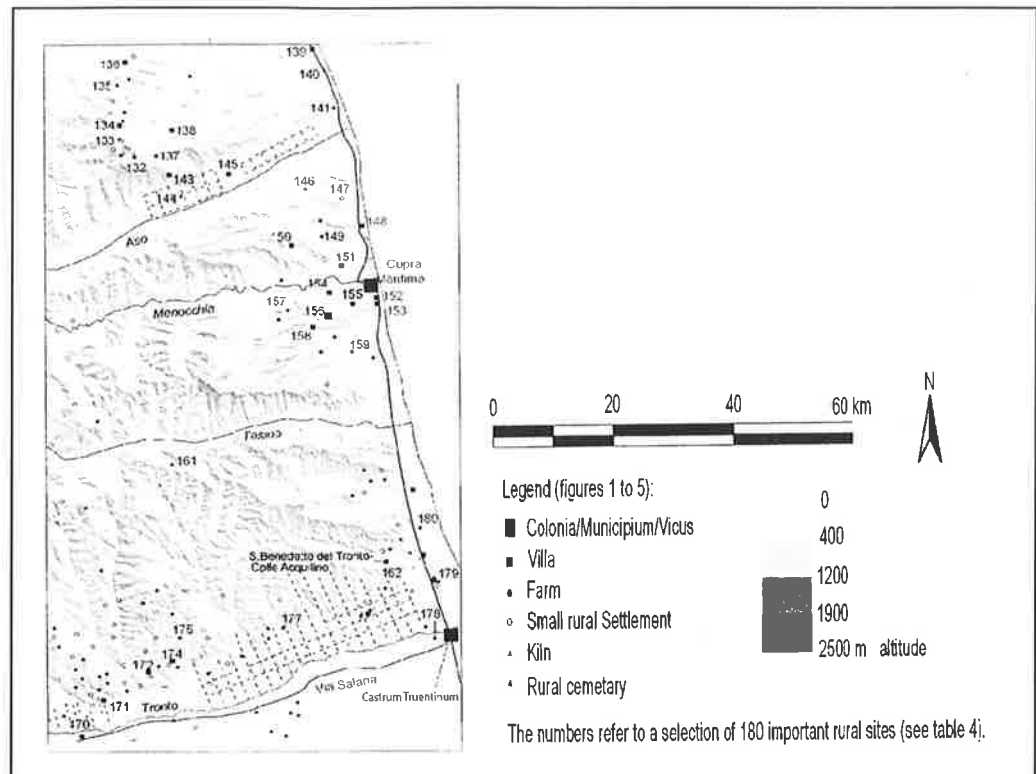


Fig. 2 - Roman rural settlement in the territory of Cupra Marittima and in the lower Tronto Valley (based on CONTA 1982, CIARROCCI 1999 and PASQUINUCCI et al. 2000).

called the 'peri-adriatic basin'. Similar to the internal Marche basin, this zone is characterized by hills. The slightly eastward sloping clayey, conglomeratic and sandy sediment layers are incised by the rivers, forming a comb-like pattern of WSW-ENE oriented interfluvies and valleys. The coastal zone, which can be defined as the zone below 50 m above sea level, is characterized by a coastal plain on thick layers of partly alluvial and partly marine deposits. This generally flat coast is interrupted by steeper zones only near the northern border with Emilia-Romagna (Monte S. Bartolo, 197 m), around Fermo and immediately south of Ancona (Monte Conero, 572 m).

The important differences in landscape, from southwest to northeast are well reflected in the climatic situation. The average January temperature is 3°C in the

Apennines and 8°C at the coast, in July this is respectively 21°C and 26°C. Circa only 100 days of rain are counted per year, especially concentrated in the autumn months, but regional differences between the mountain areas and the coast are impressive: circa 1250 mm per year during some 125 days of rain in the Apennines to sometimes below 700 mm during some 75 days along the coast (8).

Almost all larger rivers rise near the far western edge of the region and flow in a north-easterly direction. The river Tronto is the longest (116 km), the river Metauro has the largest basin (1406 km<sup>2</sup>). None of them are navigable deeply inland, but their valleys represent important natural transit corridors since Antiquity. They are narrow, with only limited erosion in the Apennine sector, but broaden in the hilly sub-Apennine sector, where they are bordered by a sequence of alluvial terraces. The oldest terraces were formed during the Pleistocene, as a result of alternating warm and cold climatologic phases. During cold phases with less vegetation much sediment from the bare hills was deposited in the plains. In the warmer phases vegetation prevented much of this slope erosion, which resulted in a deeper incision of the rivers into earlier alluvial sediment. Since later prehistory and the intervention of man in the natural vegetation cover, for purposes of agriculture, cattle breeding and the exploitation of woodland, new processes of erosion and sedimentation occurred. The reduction of processes of slope erosion from historical times onwards, has resulted in more recent deep incision of the river beds in these prehistoric sediments (9). Geomorphologic research into several river systems (e.g. of Misa, Cesano and Potenza) seems to indicate that many rivers developed into a one-bed system only from medieval times onwards (10). Such studies suggest that the valley landscapes of central and western Marche much differed in Roman times from today, with a valley bottom that counted several active river beds, bending from one side of the valley floor to the other and surrounded with close woodland vegetation. In many places agriculture would have been constricted to the hills and hill slopes. Yet there are enough indications that in several sub-periods of the Roman era also considerable parts of the valley floors were drained and taken into cultivation (see further). The Romans were possibly already flirting with the limits of sustainable land-use (11). The instability in late Roman times to early Middle Ages and consequent lower population density reversed the trend, provoking a re-growth of forests and an expansion of wastelands. Since then the exploitation of the land in the Marche region has experienced continuous fluctuations of deforestation and reforestation during historical times. Only since the 18th-19th century, the population expanded rapidly following improvements in

(8) BISCI - DRAMIS 1991, pp. 83-91.

(9) *Ibidem*, pp. 101-111.

(10) For Misa and Cesano see: COLTORTI 1991. See also recent fieldwork by a team lead by M. De Dapper (Ghent University) in the Potenza valley.

(11) FEDERICI 1987.



medical science, and a greater part of the land could be cultivated with the new agricultural techniques (12).

Although over 80% of the surface of the Marche region is still in use for agricultural purposes, land use has changed importantly in this area since the mid-20th century. The proportion of cultivated land has grown considerably. Partly as a result of mechanisation of agriculture and the deep ploughing of steep slopes, many higher grounds are now reached by the farmers. The alluvial plains too, that were before mainly covered by woods and meadows, were drained and more systematically cultivated. The traditional polyculture of the fields, with combinations of olive or vine growing with grains, are often replaced by monoculture in extensive open fields. The share of grain cultivation grew (some 58% of all agricultural land in 2000), at the cost of vine, olives and fruits (only 5%). Most grassland for pastoral use (9%) is now to be found in the upper parts of the hilly landscapes, just below or above the wooded flanks of the Apennines (19% of the surface) (13).

### Progress in settlement research

As stated, the systematic archaeological study of *villae rusticae* and other types of farms in Marche is still at its beginning. The presence of these is now mostly indicated by the somewhat scattered remains of walls, bases of presses, *dolia* for the collection of oil, cisterns of varying sizes and floors, mostly in tiles (*opus spicatum*) seldom in mosaics. A complete excavation of a farm, unfolding precisely its successive phases of occupation, still has to be undertaken (14) and some interesting on-going work in this respect awaits publication. Field surveys to reveal patterns of occupation in wider areas have up till recently been limited, and studies of toponyms and the historic-geographical analysis of ancient maps has only locally been applied.

The first studies about the Roman countryside in Marche date from the 18th-early 19th centuries, by Degli Abbati Olivieri in the surroundings of Pesaro (1737) and Brandimarte near Fermo (1815) (15). The number of 'archaeological excavations' gradually increased in the course of the 19th century, as can be deduced from finds of residential parts of *villae* at Treia-Votalarca and Osimo-Roncisvalle, or remains of wine presses at Offida (16) and many other discoveries announced in the *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*. Most of this early research was, as could be expected, directed towards the discovery of objects of art and remains of fancy ar-

(12) AGNATI 1995.

(13) PROVINCIA ANCONA, *Agricoltura e società*, <http://www.provincia.ancona.it/AgricolturaSocieta>, [March 23, 2003].

(14) Although the recent publication of the excavations at Osimo-Monte Torto (PIGNOCCHI 2001) comes very close.

(15) See: BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1984, pp. 55-57 ; CAMPAGNOLI 1999, p. 114.

(16) ACQUATICCI 1888, p. 170; MORETTI 1926, pp. 381-382; GABRIELLI 1879.

chitecture, such as mosaics. As little attention was paid to stratigraphic and contextual information, precise data of a chronological nature are often not available. Since the 50's of last century, some large scale projects using better methodologies where started on the villa/vicus of Amatrice-Torrita and the *villa suburbana* of Sassoferrato-S.Lucia, where research is still in progress (17). A series of smaller rural sites were studied by Liliانا Mercado and her collaborators from the *Soprintendenza Archeologica delle Marche* during the 60's and 70's. She almost completely excavated the structural remains of several Roman farms in Senigallia, S. Benedetto del Tronto and Potenza Picena, while sites in Pollenza and Pergola-Montesecco were partly revealed (18). In 1981 Mercado, Brecciaroli Taborelli and Paci published the first regional synthesis of rural settlement in Marche, including a very useful gazetteer of all sites known from earlier publications and archive documents conserved at the Soprintendenza (19).

Until then field surveys, which have the capability to look at the wider picture of rural settlement in an area, had only occasionally been conducted. The first survey projects started in the late 70's, within the territories of *Cingulum*, *Cupra Maritima* and *Asculum* (20), but they encompassed very large areas and were of a most extensive nature. Later work, finalised in good cartography, was often initiated at the archaeological departments of the universities of Bologna, Urbino and Macerata. We mention here surveys, mostly based on bibliographical research but followed up in the field, in the valleys of Misa, Nevola and Cesano (21) and work published within the framework of the *Forma Italiae* series around the Roman town of *Trea* (22). More intensive prospections were conducted in the 80's and early 90's in the valleys of the rivers Metauro, Foglia, Conca en Marecchia, and in the territories of *Urbs Salvia*, *Pausulae* and *Cluana* (23). In some of these study areas rescue excavations were done, such as at Cingoli-Moscusi, threatened by the water dam of Castreccioni on the river Musone, and at Cupra Maritima - S. Basso (24). The excavation of the late Roman villa of Colombarone was well integrated in the large scale field survey of the *ager Pisauensis* (1994-

(17) FACCENNA 1954; CONTA 1982, p. 98; MANCINI 1998.

(18) MERCANDO 1979, 1984, 1989.

(19) MERCANDO-BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI - PACI 1981. See also the later synthesis: MERCANDO 1989.

(20) PERCOSSI SERENELLI - SILVESTRINI LAVAGNOLI 1986; CIARROCCHI 1999; CONTA 1982.

(21) DALL'AGLIO et al. 1991.

(22) MOSCATELLI 1988a.

(23) LUNI 1993; ERMETI 1993; MONACCHI 1987, 1993, 1996, 1999; VETTORAZZI 1987; MOSCATELLI - VETTORAZZI 1988.

(24) PERCOSSI SERENELLI 1993, pp. 47-70; 1998, pp. 77-78, 102; FRAPICINI 2000, pp. 367-369.

1997), which means that today important parts of the most northerly province of Pesaro and Urbino are well studied (Fig. 1) (25).

Since the end of the 90's several systematic survey projects have started in the up till recently less intensively surveyed central and southern parts of Marche. A team from the University of Pisa works in the hilly area around *Firmum* (26), between the rivers Tenna and Aso, a team from Oxford operates in the upper Esino valley (27) and a Belgian team of Ghent University surveys the Potenza valley (28).

### Physical remains and character of rural settlement

The archaeological data assembled during the above mentioned field surveys procure us a first general and fairly objective idea of the diversity and hierarchy of rural sites in Roman Marche (29). Although we are well aware of the interpretative pitfalls of linking the surface observations from different teams, working in different landscape environments, to the interpretation of sub-surface archaeological remains, our own experience during the Potenza Valley Survey (see further) has confirmed the relatively high reliability of fieldwalking results in this region (30).

At the lower end of the scale most survey teams distinguished small scatters of Roman finds, generally not exceeding a few hundred m<sup>2</sup>. As these generally consist only of broken roof tiles, sometimes accompanied by small numbers of sherds of common pottery, they were identified as small country houses or very simple farm units belonging to larger estates. This category also comprises huts or simple houses, the '*casae*' and '*tuguria*' mentioned by Varro (31) and Columella (32), which constituted the dwellings of the poorest farmers, shepherds or seasonal workers dispersed in the countryside and were often only used for seasonal activities. An undistinguished (small?) number of them could also indicate

(25) CAMPAGNOLI 1999; DALL'AGLIO et al. 1997.

(26) PASQUINUCCI - MENCHELLI - SCOTUCCI 2000.

(27) Directed by J. Pearce.

(28) VERMEULEN - BOULLART 2001; VERMEULEN - BOULLART - MONSIEUR 200 ; VERMEULEN et. al. 2003. See part II of this paper.

(29) Observations based on the surveys shown on Fig.1. The simple hierarchy of sites proposed here does not take chronological differentiation within the Roman period into consideration.

(30) As the purpose of this synthesis is a first general approach to rural settlement in Marche, we consider this is not the place to discuss methodological issues about this matter, however important they are.

(31) *De re rustica* II, 10, 6-7.

(32) *De re rustica* XII, 1, 1.

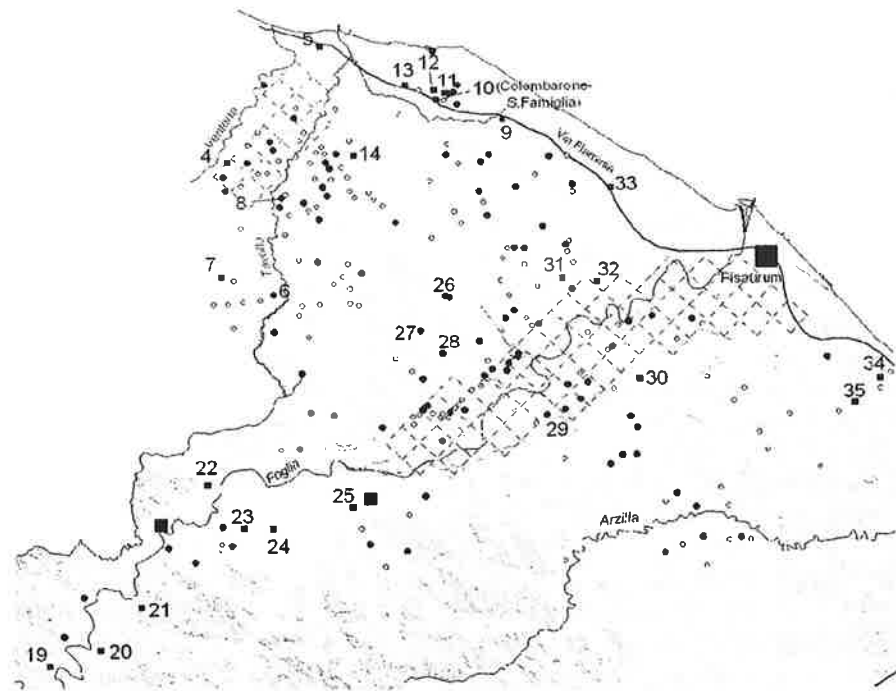


Fig. 3 - Roman rural settlement in the territory of *Pisaurum* (situated partly outside the present-day Marche-region), based on CAMPAGNOLI 1999.

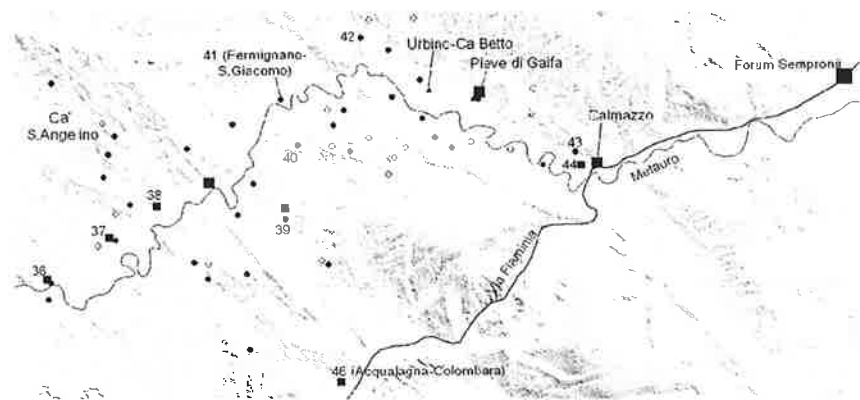


Fig. 4 - Roman rural settlement in the middle Metauro valley (based on ERMETI 1993 and MONACCHI 1993).

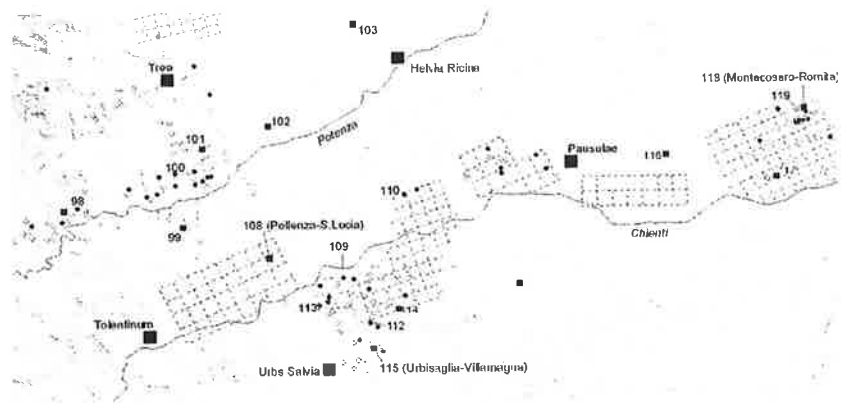


Fig. 5 - Roman rural settlement in the valleys of the Potenza and the Chienti (based on MOSCATELLI 1988, MOSCATELLI-VETTORAZZI 1988 and VETTORAZZI 1990).

larger sites which are much degraded by deep ploughing or by other forms of soil erosion. This first group represents some 42 % of all Roman sites discovered during the systematic surveys (33).

Somewhat higher in the ranking are artefact concentrations of some 500 to 2000 m<sup>2</sup>, generally displaying large quantities of building materials, such as roof tiles, bricks, worked stone, floor tiles (often fragments of *opus spicatum*) and pieces of *opus signinum* floors, in combination with a wide range of fine and common pottery (e.g. amphorae, *dolia*, kitchen wares). Such concentrations, which amount to 45% of all sites, should probably be interpreted as remains of fairly simple, small to medium sized farms. We would not yet apply the term 'villa' for them.

Only some 13 % of the sites extends over 2000 m<sup>2</sup> and contains, beside the materials of the second group, elements characteristic for a more comfortable or even luxurious form of habitation. Sometimes *tubuli* or parts of the *suspensura* of a hypocaust are found, or the existence of a *porticus* or *peristylum* is suggested by fragments of stone or brick columns. More often there are indications of the presence of mosaics and of walls with painted plastering or marble *crustae*. Often also the composition of the pottery assemblage is richer in fine

(33) We are aware that these percentages can only be general indications and that they need not be taken too strictly, considering all kinds of methodological difficulties. For a good discussion of this problem in the *ager Pisaurensis* see: CAMPAGNOLI 1999, p. 116.

and imported wares. The term 'villa' may probably be used here without restriction (34).

This simple hierarchic scheme of three types of rural sites agrees well with the results of a recent synthesis of the well studied rural settlements in the northern Adriatic region of Veneto (35). Here the author, working essentially with excavated sites, proposes equally a system of three types, more or less conform to the farm categories named by Varro. Taking into account characteristics such as structure, extent, decoration, complexity and functions she subdivides the excavated rural settlements of that region into:

- small farms and simple units; these sites do not show a neat subdivision in two functional parts and they often make use of perishable building materials such as wood and dry clay (36);
- well organised farms with a clear distinction between a productive part and a modest living part ('*villa rustica*' to Varro);
- large farms with a more important or richer living part and/or a more articulated or extensive productive part ('*villa urbana et rustica*' to Varro).

It seems clear that a majority of rural settlements in Roman Marche displays rather humble proportions and installations.

The site of Colle Aquilino, near S. Benedetto del Tronto, excavated in the early 70's, seems a good example of the first category (Figg. 2 and 6) (37). Only a layer of rough stones remained of the walls of this small farm (circa 20x18 m). There were no foundations, the walls were probably made of perishable materials and only earthen floors were discovered. Like the simple farms in Veneto we see here the plan of a building consisting of several rooms not organised around a courtyard. The discovery of an iron sickle and many grinding stones found in the region, suggest grain cultivation as a means of existence. Campana ware and early terra sigillata sherds date the erection of this small farm at the end of Republican times, possibly within the context of the colonisation movement of the 1st century BC.

(34) Some of these sites could however also be defined as larger agglomerations or *vici*, especially when they are centred along a major road. This category of semi-rural sites is still very ill-studied in Marche.

(35) BUSANA 2002. Compare also the situation in parts of neighbouring Emilia-Romagna, where the situation of rural settlements is better known than in Marche (see ORTALLI 1994).

(36) See also CAMPAGNOLI 1999, p. 117. Fired clay elements, such as brick and tile, were probably only used for roofs, foundations and bases of walls.

(37) MERCANDO 1979, pp. 166-179.

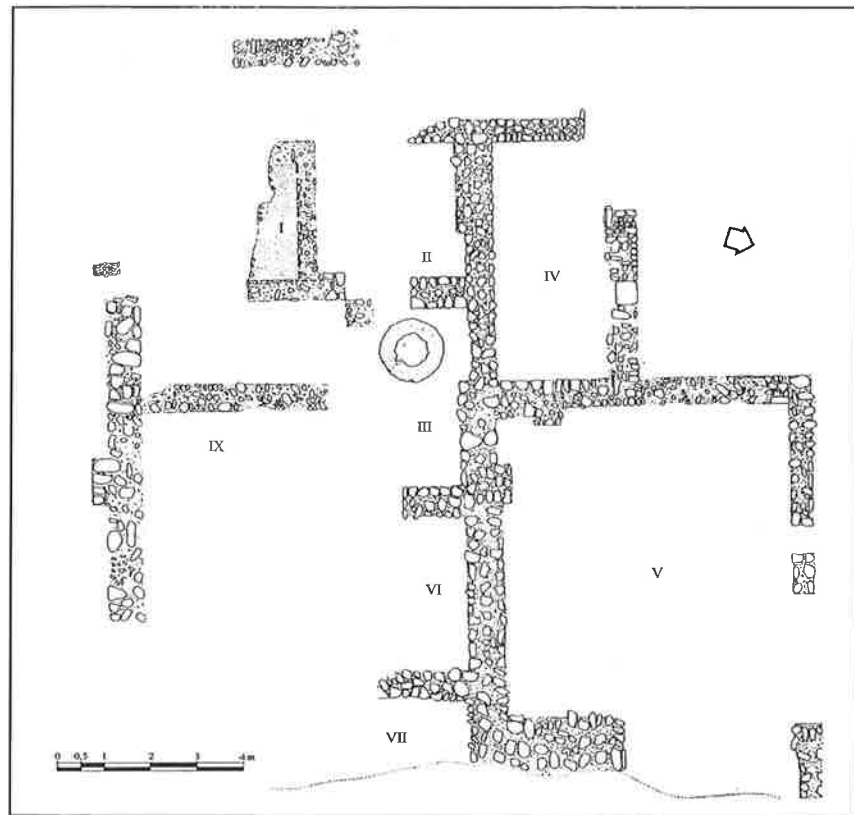


Fig. 6 - Plan of the small farm of San Benedetto del Tronto-Colle Aquilino (MERCANDO 1979, fig. 77).

Farms that were also concerned with the production and processing of wine, olives and oil were, it seems, often somewhat better furnished. Such is the case with the unit recently dug at Osimo-Monte Torto (Figg. 7 and 8) (38). This site, located on a southwards oriented slope overlooking the valley of the Musone, revealed only few Republican structures, but the 1st century AD complex (circa 70x40 m) is well preserved (Fig. 8). Like the farms of the second group in Veneto this building is organised around a courtyard. North of the courtyard (Fig. 7, 3) the excavators found the foundations of two wine presses (Fig. 7, 1), a treading basin (*calcatorium*) and fermentation vats. The area of the wine presses was separated

(38) PIGNOCCHI 2001.

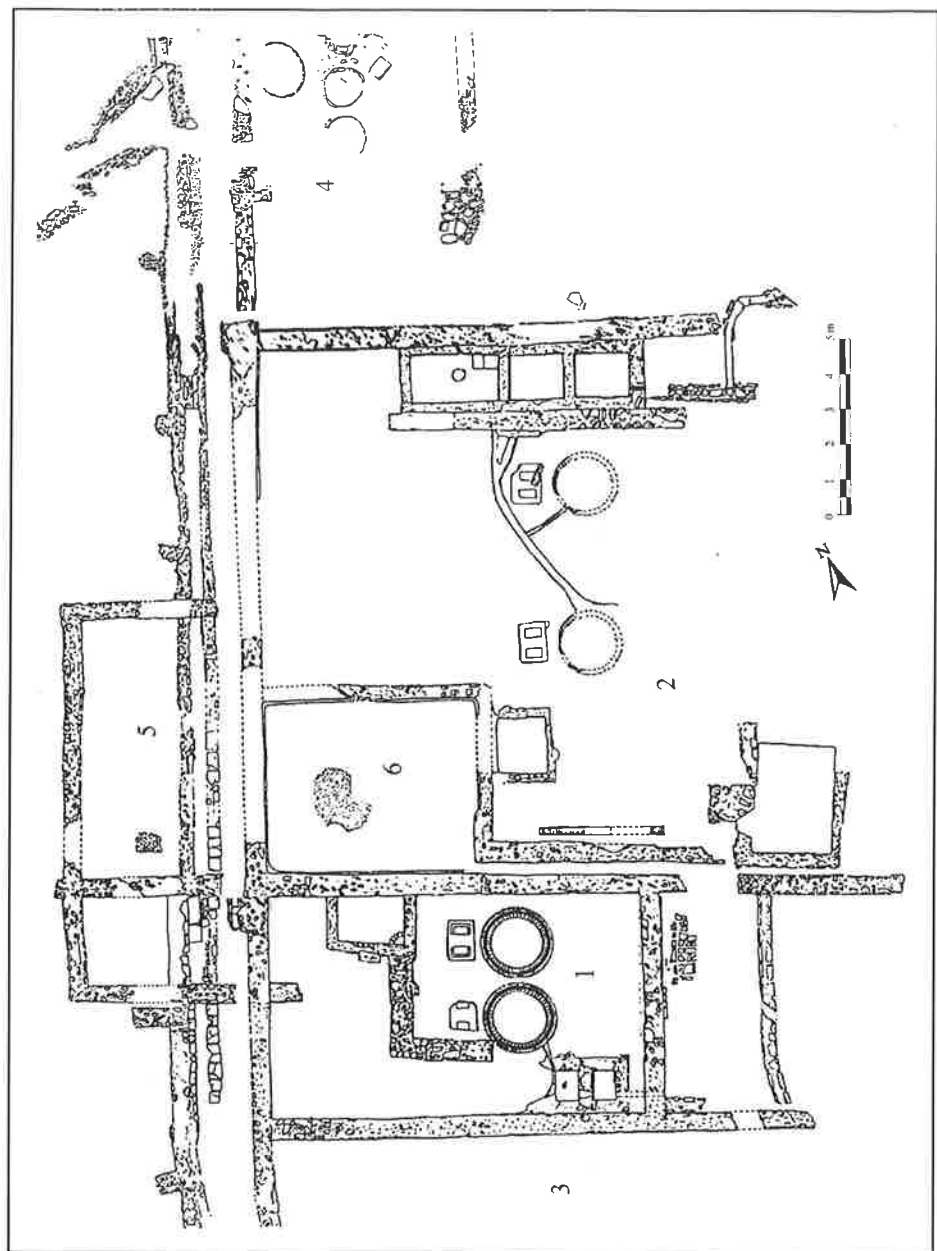


Fig. 7 - Plan of the wine and olive production site at Osimo-Monte Torto (PIGNOCCHI 2001, p. 49).



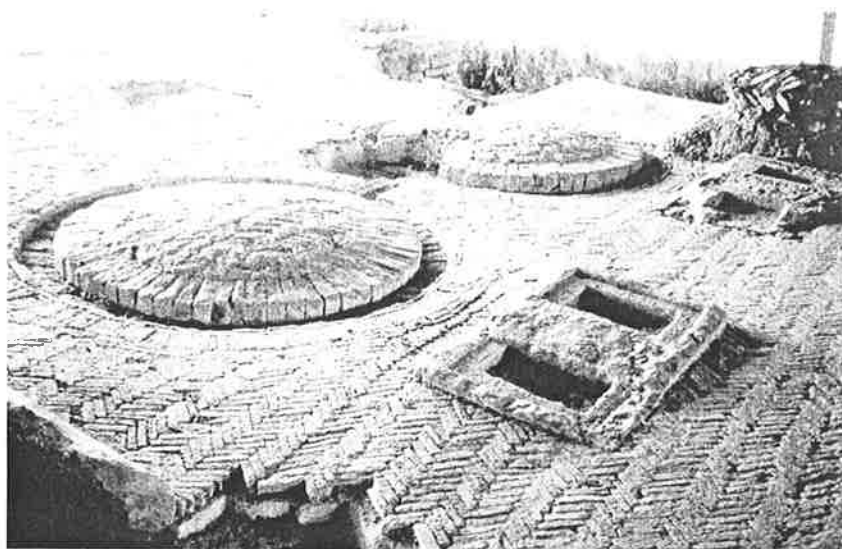


Fig. 8 - Wine press at Osimo-Monte Torto.

an inner wall from a space with a crushing mill for olives (*mola olearia*, Fig. 7, 6), two olive presses and a number of sedimentation sinks for the olive oils, in order to separate it from the pulp (Fig. 7, 2). The oil was then stored in a series of *dolia* (Fig. 7, 4) and at least part of it transported with amphorae. The mainly productive character of this site can also be deduced from the use of simple building materials. The walls are in *opus testaceum* and the floors made from *tegulae*, *opus spicatum* or concrete. As no living quarters were discovered here, it is possible that this was only a production unit, belonging to a larger estate. In the mid-4th century the site of Monte-Torto was partly turned into a potters' workshop producing '*fir-malampen*' in rudimentary ovens (Fig. 7, 5).

Elements of presses were found at many locations in Marche, especially near the southern coast (Fig. 9). Here they often seem to belong to larger 'villa' complexes, of our third category. At S. Michele in Villa Magna near *Cupra Maritima* three anchor blocks for wine presses (*lapides pedicini*) were discovered, near large quantities of pottery, remains of *opus spicatum* floors, *tesserae*, segments of columns and wall structures preserved above surface, spread over an area of almost one hectare. Part of an aqueduct and a cistern were also found near the site (39). These archaeological observations seem to confirm certain written sources like *Plinius*, which mention the production of quality wines in the area between *Cupra*

(39) CIARROCHI 1999, pp. 56-63.

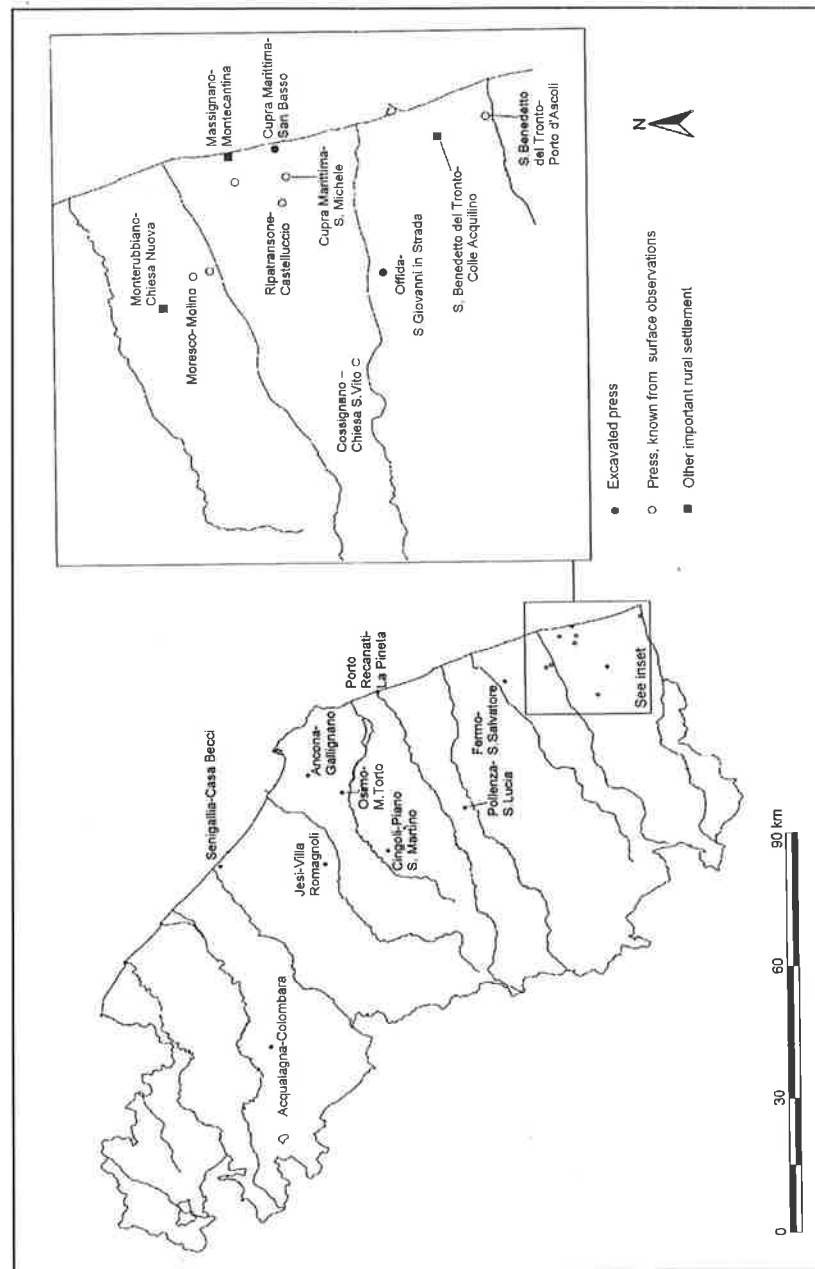


Fig. 9 - Remains of wine and olive presses in Marche (left) and in the south-east of the region (right).

*Maritima* en *Ostia Aterni* (Pescara) (40). Indications for a large scale export of wine from the late 2nd century BC onwards can be seen in the *amphorae* of type Lamboglia 2, which occur frequently on both coasts of the Adriatic, but also in the Eastern Mediterranean, Southern France and Spain. Together with the type Dressel 6a, the successor of Lamboglia 2 from the late 1st century BC onwards, these *amphorae* were essentially produced along the northern and central-Adriatic coast. In South-Marche and North-Abruzzo workshops were located in Fermo, Cupra Marittima, Cologna Marina and Potenza Picena (41). The economic success of this area during Late Republican and Early Imperial times, partly helped by the presence of important harbours such as the one at *Cupra Marittima* (42), can be measured from a series of surface indications for wealthy villas. Some of them still display structures above ground level, such as at Massignano-Montecantino, where five vaulted rooms were built against a hill overlooking the sea. They were the substructures of a small *villa maritima*, dated on the basis of the tile stamp *Faesonina* in the 1st century AD.

Some owners of larger estates diversified their activities and focused also on the exploitation of clays. Ovens for pottery, brick and tile are therefore to be found with relative frequency, such as at Urbino-Ca' Betto along the river Metauro (Fig. 10), where the foundations of a workshop with at least five ovens were excavated. Wasters found on the site point to the production of *tegulae*, brick, kitchen wares, thin-walled pottery and *amphorae* stamped *MAEA*. The latter date the workshop around the start of the 2nd century AD. A more regional distribution of products from this inland site seems likely (43).

So far not one complete plan of a real villa has been published. Ideas about the appearance of rich villas in the countryside of Marche rest totally on surface observations and the results of partial excavations. An example of the latter is Matelica-Fonticelle, where a thermal building was dug in 1988. Surface finds of black gloss pottery found on the site suggest a late Republican phase, but the thermal building itself, richly adorned with marble, is early Imperial. Mosaics with vegetal motives are of 2nd century date while occupation of the site might have lasted into the 4th century (44). Another rich villa, found at Fermo-Girola, is only partly known. This site of several hectares lies at the valley edge of the river Tenna, southwest of the town of *Firmum Picenum*. Detailed cartography of different categories of materials found during fieldwalking, supplemented with the excavation of trial trenches, helped in mapping several constructions. Most impressive was a residential zone (*pars urbana*), with *tegulae*, *tubuli*, Republican to late

(40) TCHERNIA 1986, p. 348.

(41) CIPRIANO - CARRE 1989; FORTINI 1998, p. 43.

(42) ALFIERI 1982, p. 101.

(43) LUNI 1987, p. 11; ERMETI 1993, pp. 48-49.

(44) VIRZÌ 1991, pp. 54-55.

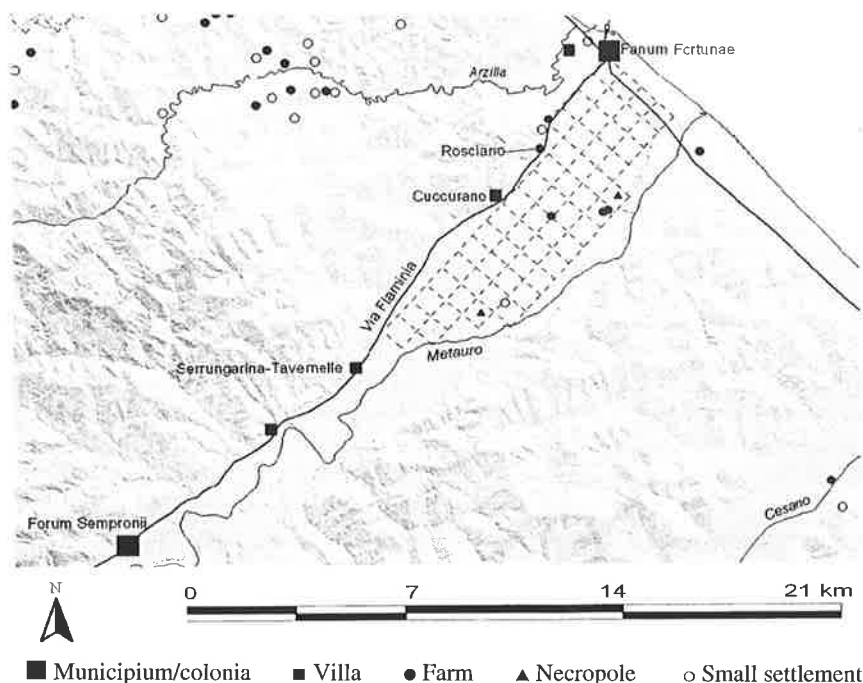


Fig. 10 - Roman rural settlement along the *Via Flaminia* between *Forum Sempronii* and *Fanum Fortunae* (VULLO 1992, fig. 2, modified).

Roman finé wares, glass finds, coins, stucco, *tesserae* and pieces of marble from *opus sectile* floors. East of this area a production zone with many amphorae, *dolia* and fragments of lead and iron was found, next to a funerary area. The identification of the owner of the villa could come from an amphora stamp *L. Livi Ocellae*, pointing at the family Livi Ocellae, that produced the later emperor Galba (45). This villa was far from unique in the region and only an example of the type of luxury residences the soil of southern Marche still hides.

### Distribution and spatial analysis

The field surveys of the past decennia were organised in almost all types of landscapes between the coastline and the foothills of the Apennines. With the exception of the mountain areas above 700 m, we can therefore rely upon a fairly

(45) PUPILLI 1994, pp. 66-9; BRANCHESI 2001, pp. 65-81.

representative sample to evaluate the distribution of rural sites in Marche. The exact percentage of this survey sample cannot be calculated, as most publications do not mention the precise extent of the terrain that was fieldwalked. Furthermore, we must stress that in most projects terrain observations were limited to controlling old finds and discoveries mentioned in the archaeological literature (46). Although this evidently prevents us from making precise calculations of site density over the whole region, it is clear that most studied areas show a fairly high density of discovered sites. A rural site density of one to two farm units per km<sup>2</sup> seems normal in many parts of the region. During times of prosperity, such as the 1st century AD (see further), some well studied areas (47) show densities up to five farm units per km<sup>2</sup>.

It is also evident that there were not only fluctuations in density throughout the whole period under study (see further), but also throughout the entire region. The density and thus location of farms in Marche seems much conditioned by the presence of landscape types favourable for the cultivation and production of the region's main agricultural products in Antiquity: cereals, olives, fruit, oil and wine. In accordance with prescriptions of the central-Italian agronomes Cato, Varro and Columella, farms and villas were often located on the slopes near the valley floor, not seldom halfway the slope. Terraces and stable slopes with a low inclination were certainly favoured. Results from survey work done in the *ager Pisaurensis* demonstrate this phenomenon quite well (Fig. 3) (48). This area can easily be subdivided in different zones, each exploited in a particular manner during Roman times. The rich alluvial soils in the valleys of the *Pisaurus* (Foglia), the *Crustumium* (Ventena) and the Tavollo, which were partly drained and centuriated, were most suited for cereal cultivation, with probably some raising of cattle in the wetter areas. On the slopes, olive groves and vineyards predominated, as these demand constant exposition to the sun and naturally well drained soils. The higher plateaus were well suited for pastoral activities, foremost sheep holding for the production of wool (49).

Most of the bigger villas in the valleys of Foglia and Ventena, near Pesaro, are situated on the lower slopes, often in the northern part of the valley with an excellent orientation towards South or East. This phenomenon can also be remarked in several other valleys of Marche, such as near the Tronto.

(46) It is one of the objectives of our on-going Potenza Valley Survey to eliminate this bias by systematic transect survey (see further).

(47) See e.g. the results of our surveys in the Potenza valley (chapter II).

(48) CAMPAGNOLI 1999.

(49) The Marche have produced many finds of loomweights, e.g. in Fermignano-S.Giacomo and Offida-S.Giovanni in Strada.

Where valleys were submitted to a system of normative land division (50) this had its effect on the density and distribution of the farms. The *centuriatio* southwest of Fano, in the valley of the Metauro, was created when Augustus founded the colony of *Fanum Fortunae* (Fig. 10), although an older system of land division might go back to the time of the Gracchi (2nd half 2nd century BC) or even to the *Lex Flaminia* (late 3rd century BC). The system covers some 28 km<sup>2</sup> and is based on units of 20 x 20 *actus* (circa 710 m) or 200 *iugera* (circa 50 hectare). The wider valley of the Metauro is quite well suited for such a normative system, but remains an exception in the hilly region of Marche. It is likely that in a centuriated plain like this, one to two farms per *centuria* occurred at some time, as can be observed in the valley of the Po (51). Excavations of such sites should clarify whether the orientation of such farm buildings concords with the axes of the land division.

In the narrower valleys, the land was often subdivided in strips with varying orientation that follow the course of the river and use different modules. Exemplary for this are the valleys of the river Chienti and its tributary the river Fiastra. The original system north of *Urbs Salvia*, dating from the 2nd triumvirate (circa 40 BC), is formed with lots of 20 x 20 *actus*. When the town was promoted to the status of *colonia* in Augustan times, a new land division with the same orientation, but now based on the 16 x 16 *actus* module, was created on top of this (Fig. 5). More to the east, near *Pausulae*, lots also had sides of 20 *actus*, while near *Cluana* 15 *actus* was the rule. Villas were situated here at some distance above the valley floor, near the edge of the area with the *centuriatio*. Such is the case of the site of Montecosaro-Romita, some 150 m high on a southwards oriented slope with a spectacular view on the Chienti valley.

Higher in the hills of the *ager Pisauensis* no major villas were found, but here a pattern of widely spread smaller farms predominates (52). Their high density seems to exclude the existence here of big property organised in *latifundia*, but it is almost impossible to deduce from the physical remains whether these smaller farms were independent. Such a topographic choice higher in the hills and even on hilltops is typical for an important segment of the farms in the Marche. Here a more specialised cultivation of wine, oil or fruits could be favoured and in some areas this could again give birth to the development of larger estates. The villa at Monterubbiano-Chiesa Nuova, situated on the crest of a hill between the rivers Aso and Ete Vivo, in southern Marche (Fig. 2, n. 134), is a good example of this. On the same crest a series of smaller farms were discovered, along an old Iron Age

(50) See especially: ALFIERI 1970; MOSCATELLI 1988b; MOSCATELLI - VETTORAZZI 1988, pp. 42-57; DALL'AGLIO 1989.

(51) DALL'AGLIO et al. 1991, p. 71.

(52) CAMPAGNOLI 1999.

road connecting *Firmum* with the valley of the river Aso (53). Another major villa-complex lies on the hilltop of Villamagna, some 2 km northeast of *Urbs Salvia*, overlooking the Fiastra. Rich building remains and a well preserved cistern underline its importance.

The typical undulating landscape of Marche, intricately cut by hundreds of small rivers and brooks, still allows that most of these large or simple farms in the hills had a small stream within their reach. Locations near a constant altitude of readily available natural springs, such as we could observe in the Potenza valley (see further), were also preferred.

Another prescription of the agronomes that may have played a role for the location of some villas is the nearness of important roads (Fig. 10). The role of roads as main element in the organisation of settlement and the economy of a region may not be underestimated (54). The most important road in the northern part of Marche was the *Via Flaminia*, which from 220 BC onwards connected Rome with the plain of the Po. On its way from the Apennines this connection follows the river Metauro to reach the coast at *Fanum Fortunae* (Fig. 4 and 10) (55). Along its trace in that valley several toponyms recall ancient estates, such as Rosciano (*Roscius*) and Cuccurano (*Cursius*), both situated on fertile and easy to plough alluvial fans formed by tributaries of the Metauro. It seems that a few villas along the *Via Flaminia* were in some periods also used as resting places for travellers. One of these sites still bares the toponym Tavernelle, indicating the presence of *tabernulae* or small shops. This is again in accordance with advice given by Varro (*Rust.* I, 2, 23) who writes that when a *fundus* lies on a crucial part of the road connection, it is preferable to establish a shop or a place for lodging and eating for travellers.

Another attraction for farms and especially larger villa estates is the coast. As has been emphasized above, we see clear concentrations of such sites near the Adriatic coastline, and especially on two types of locations. Some villas seem to prefer the higher slopes overlooking the coastal plain, a preference motivated by the attraction of the fine view. A group of villas in the coastal zone around *Cupra Maritima* seems to fall into that category (Fig. 2). Others, such as a series of sites in the Potenza valley (see further), are systematically implanted on the higher beach ridges that formed a parallel line with the Roman coast. In both cases, but certainly in the latter, important economic motives such as commercial activities and exploitation of resources of the sea, explain this type of site location.

Finally we remark that the concentration of rural sites in the immediate neighbourhood of cities is evident. As can be seen near a major town like *Urbs Salvia* (Fig. 5), it appears that the percentage of farms with a residential area of

(53) PASQUINUCCI - MENCHELLI - SCOTUCCI 2000, figg. 1-4.

(54) COARELLI 1988.

(55) LUNI 1989, pp. 29-58.

some importance is also higher here. Economic as well as social reasons are easily to be found to understand such a phenomenon.

### Chronological evolution

The Roman military victory over the Marche region, finalised in 268 BC, had immediate consequences for the local population: parts of the territory were confiscated and groups of *Piceni* were deported to southern Italy. Yet this did not provoke a complete breach with the pre-Roman Iron Age. The majority of the population was soon incorporated in the Roman State, first with an incomplete citizenship, from 241 or 233/2 BC onwards, with full rights. The installation of the Latin colony at *Firmum* in 264 BC was a major impulse for the Romanisation of a region that, apart from the centre at Ascoli, knew no real urbanised society (56). This progression was fiercely interrupted in the last decades of the 3rd century BC by the incursions of the Carthaginian armies, who used *Picenum* as a base for their attacks on the Roman State. The foundation of the colonies of *Potentia* and *Auximum* during the first half of the 2nd century BC meant a new impulse for the Romanisation process. Exact numbers of colonists are not known but in *Potentia* each new family received a piece of land of 6 *iugera*. Apart from these 'Roman islands' and their respective territories, essentially located in the coastal area (57), there was probably not much change visible in the rest of the conservative countryside until the 1st century BC. As elsewhere in Italy the end of the social war in 90 BC – which brought full citizenship to many Italic peoples – was a strong impulse for administrative reorganisation, urbanisation and deeper Romanisation of the region. The widespread urbanisation of major parts of *Picenum* and the *ager Gallicus* only occurred during the second part of the 1st century BC, when the 'imperialistic' system of *praefecturae* was abolished and a whole series of *municipia* were developed, that is real towns with their own territory and administration. Roads were further developed, such as several branches connected with the *Via Flaminia* in the northern and central area and with the *Via Salaria* in the South. Other important developments in that period are the assignation of land to veterans of the armies of Caesar, Marc Anthony and later Augustus within the territories of *municipia* (such as *Tolentinum*, *Truentum* and *Urbs Salvia*) and the foundation of new colonies at Ancona (losing its state of independent city), *Firmum*, *Asculum* and *Falerio* (58).

(56) PACI 1991, p. 9.

(57) This development shows many parallels with the early Roman expansion via the erection of colonies and the confiscation of land during the 3rd and early 2nd century in southern Etruria (CORSI 1998, p. 227)

(58) PACI 1991, p. 16 ; DELPLACE 1993, pp. 60-68.



An archaeological answer to the question what happened exactly in the countryside is still much awaited. Field surveys in several areas certainly confirm that there was no total break with *Piceni* times (Table 1). Not less than 6 out of 8 late Iron Age settlements in the area around Cingoli seem to continue during the Republic, while this is the case for almost half of the farms in the Metauro valley (59). Often this continuity is observed at sites with a very attractive landscape context, such as natural terraces and good water sources (60). Other areas, however, such as the valleys of the rivers Marecchia and Conca, saw the erection of many new farms in the course of Republican times.

Research area	Occupation in Late Iron Age	Occupation in Late Iron Age and in the Republic	New during the Republic
<i>ager Cingulanus</i>	8	6	6
Valleys of Marecchia and Conca	30	10	22
Middle valley of Metauro	24	11	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43</b>

Table 1 - Rural settlements from Late Iron Age to Early Roman in three survey areas.

It is probable that a small part of the new establishments came into being as early as the late 3rd century, when individual Roman citizens were granted land in the best parts of the landscape, within the framework of the *Lex Flaminia de agro Gallico et Piceno viritim dividundo* (232 BC). Many more started during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. The surface finds for the Republican period in Marche are however still hard to date more precisely. The most diagnostic pottery type for this period, black gloss ware ('vernice nera') (61), is predominantly produced in local workshops with only a regional product distribution, such as the one producing from circa 250 BC onwards at Jesi-Campo Boario (62). The conservatism of these workshops implicates a continuity of types, which were taken out of production much earlier in their original production areas of *Etruria* and *Latium* (63). As a re-

(59) ERMETI 1993; MONACCHI 1993; PERCOSSI SERENELLI 1998, pp. 46-47.

(60) LUNI 1993, p. 25.

(61) MOREL 1994, pp. 52-65.

(62) BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1996-1997.

(63) For example types Morel 3430 and 2982, which in *Etruria* do not occur after respective 300 and 200 BC, but were still produced in Jesi until respective 150 BC and the end of the 1st century BC. See: MOREL 1994, pp. 244 e 260-261; BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1996-1997, pp. 161 e 166.

sult of this, it is still hard to date survey sites in Marche in the early phases of Republican times. Most Republican farms are, therefore, only to be dated with certainty from the 1st century onwards.

It is also still difficult to approach the character and organisation of these Republican sites, as most are only known from a handful of survey finds and because excavations have not yet revealed many early contexts. Interesting data were, however, obtained during recent excavations at Acqualagna-Colombara (64). This site overlooks the valley of the Candigliano and lies only some 500 m away from the *Via Flaminia* (Fig. 10). In the course of the first half of the 2nd century a late Iron Age settlement was replaced here by a Roman villa, which itself was completely rebuilt after a fire somewhere at the beginning of the 1st century BC. A full investigation of the Republican phase of the complex was hindered by the presence of modern constructions, but everything points towards a large early villa (circa 1000 m<sup>2</sup>) with a simple infrastructure. The living quarters lay south of a porticoed courtyard. *Amphorae* and *dolia* with charred grain found east of these indicate the storage of agricultural produce. Interesting is also the presence of burnt remains of a loom. The walls were made with pinkish schist from the nearby Gola del Furlo and were carefully worked white limestone, while the entablature was probably made of wood.

It is not clear whether we should see this and other sites as examples of the introduction in Marche of a larger type of *villa rustica* partly based on slave labour. Like in areas near the Tyrrhenian coast this could be the start of major changes in a system based on the old autochthonous model of small properties held by free local peasants (65). In a first phase these big landholders could have been members of the local elites, later they were possibly foremost Roman or Latin newcomers.

As can be deduced from Table 1 the slow Romanisation of the countryside did not provoke a serious increase in the number of settlements during most of the Republican period. Stronger growth can however be clearly detected from the second half of the 1st century BC onwards (Tables 2 and 3). At first, this was partly a result of the allotment of property to large numbers of army veterans (see above), later the general economic prosperity from Augustan times onwards can be held responsible. Of the 398 dated rural settlement sites that we could assemble in our inventory, no less than 295 show signs of life in the Augustan period. In the valleys of the rivers Metauro, Marecchia and Conca several settlements seem to 're-vive' in locations with Iron Age occupation, which were seemingly interrupted in Republican times (Table 2). This 'discontinuity' could in a few cases be false, as the low number of surface finds can easily hide a period in a site's existence.

(64) VERGARI, M., *Villa rustica romana di Colombara (Acqualagna)*, [http://www.archeoprovincia.it/dettaglio\\_sito2.asp?ID=13](http://www.archeoprovincia.it/dettaglio_sito2.asp?ID=13), [23 March 2003].

(65) See e.g. for Etruria: CORSI 1998, p. 228 and CARANDINI et al. 2002.

Research area	Republican occupation	Occupation in the Republic and the 1st/2nd century	New in the 1st/2 <sup>nd</sup> century	Occupation in Late Iron Age and in the 1st/2nd century; no Republican finds
<i>ager Cingulanus</i>	12	9	1	0
Valleys of the Marecchia and the Conca	32	24	27	3
Middle valley of the Metauro	26	24	13	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 2 - Rural settlements during the Republic and Early Empire in three survey areas.

It is probable that this strong growth from the later 1st century BC onwards manifests itself mostly in small to medium sized farms, situated foremost in or along the centuriated plains and to a lesser degree in the hilly countryside. It is however too early to prove such a statement and we should wait for more refined analyses from survey data in completely covered pilot areas (66). Such an analysis should also include an assessment of the role of archaeological visibility of certain periods and the problems of dating the sites on the basis of surface finds.

	Total dated sites	Late Republic	1 <sup>st</sup> century	2 <sup>nd</sup> century	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	4 <sup>th</sup> century	5 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Total</b>	398	189	295	178	141	118	82
<i>vici</i>	14	12	11	9	8	6	5
villas	88	44	75	61	48	41	26
small farms	296	133	209	108	85	71	51

Table 3 - The general evolution of Roman rural settlement in Marche based on survey projects.

As table 3 clearly suggests, there seems to be a pronounced reduction of the number of rural sites after the 1st century AD. One third of all settlements occu-

(66) We hope to assess this better once more precise dates from the Potenza Valley Survey are available. See also CAMPAGNOLI 1999, pp. 118-119.

pied during the 1st century were abandoned in the course of the 2nd century, while half of them were out of use by the 3rd century. A further degradation is noticeable during the 4th and 5th centuries.

This general decline, can be seen almost everywhere in Italy (67), although some regions knew it only from the 3rd century onwards (68). Several excavation sites give further proof for this trend in Marche. Farms like the ones at Fermignano - S. Giacomo (69) and Senigallia-Casa Becci (70) were abandoned respectively in the later 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Still, again we should be careful with the numbers available from surveys. Fine wares seem to be less frequent on sites in Marche during the 2nd/3rd centuries, than the 1st century *terra sigillata* and the late Roman African slip wares - a result of the Mid-Imperial economic depression in the countryside? - and this is not compensated by good dating of most of the common wares (71). We cannot exclude, therefore, that this visible reduction of the number of sites was less dramatic in reality.

Table 3 clearly indicates that the number of villas diminished less than the number of smaller farms, provoking a rise of their proportion from circa 25% in the 1st century to circa 35 % in the 4th century. This could mean that the general reduction of rural settlements involved a concentration of the land in the hands of the owners of larger estates, while a whole series of smaller farms were abandoned. Although the Italian crisis was clearly felt, it seems that like in the Po-valley, but contrary to developments in the Tyrrhenian area, no massive shift occurs from small or medium-sized landholdings to huge *latifundia* based on slave labour. It is very probable that more land comes into the hands of fewer owners, but the existing pattern of rural settlements survives into Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, many farms, like most cities, become poorer. This decline forces many farms to produce less for the market and more within a closed economy, implying the production and handling of primary goods purchased elsewhere on the market. Some of the smaller settlements may have been recycled with a new function (production, storage...) by their new proprietors.

A possible example of the latter could be the villa of Pollenza-S.Lucia near Macerata. Excavations partly unearthed an *atrium* surrounded by a number of living rooms adorned with geometric black and white mosaic floors of early Augustan age. At a not well-dated moment in time a press and vats for the production and storage of olive oil were constructed in the rooms. This could mean that the residential functions were transferred to a nearby villa, while the complex was

(67) COCCIA - MATTINGLY 1995, p. 109.

(68) POTTER 1979, pp. 140-141.

(69) Only partially excavated settlement: ERMETI - MONACCHI 1993, pp. 79-84.

(70) MERCANDO 1979, pp. 110-131.

(71) For a similar observation in the area of Rieti see: COCCIA - MATTINGLY 1995, p. 117.

only used for production purposes. The site was finally abandoned in the 4th century (72).

Other small and medium-sized farms kept their residential function and even continued to flourish. This seems to be case with the settlement at Cupra Maritima-S.Basso, which was partly excavated in the period 1975-1987 (73). The oldest core, dated in the second half of the 1st century BC, comprises a production area with a well-preserved press inserted in a floor of *opus spicatum*. During the 1st/2nd century a *nymphaeum* was added and in the 4th century a small thermal complex (10x8 m) replaced the area for pressing the oil. The addition of this bath-house to a long occupied farm building probably demonstrates the gradual economic success of the owner (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11 - CUPRA MARITTIMA. San Basso:  
bath-house with underlying remains of a wine press.

Both examples, together with many indications from survey-work, show that like in Veneto (74), the economic crisis of the 2nd/3rd centuries was differently felt in the interior of Marche and in the coastal area. In the interior more sites seem to fall into decline. Some probably try to counter this for a while by changes in production, such as a shift from wine to cereals, which induces transformations in

(72) MERCANDO 1989, p. 40.

(73) FRAPICINI 2000, pp. 367-369.

(74) BUSANA 2002, pp. 227-243.

parts of the farm, as we saw in the example from Pollenza. Some sub-regions in the interior may have countered this economic decline more successfully than others, because their wine production was of better quality or because they were located near an important transport road. In the coastal area, however, there are less signs of this early decline. Here the larger market-oriented farms take advantage of their position in the contact zone between inland productions and land- and river routes, and maritime commerce and the resources of the Adriatic coast.

The statistics in Table 3 suggest in any case that an important part of the small and medium-sized farms in Marche survived into the Late Roman period, when their number still exceeded that of the villas. But also new investments in smaller, as well as in larger estates can be observed. More than one fifth of all rural settlements in Marche of late 3rd or 4th century date were never occupied before. The relative political stability since Diocletianus (284-305) and a certain economic revival of the Adriatic region are but two of the explanations for this phenomenon.

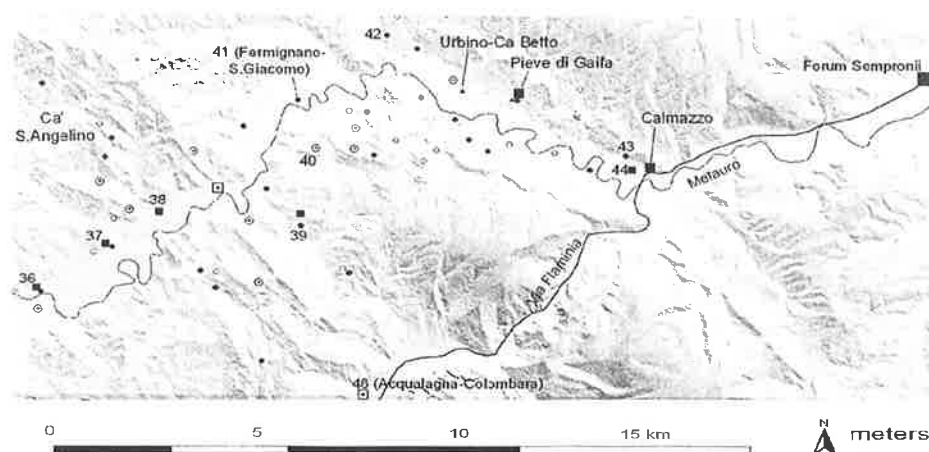
An example of a rich Late Roman villa was found under the S. Famiglia-church in Colombarone, in the centre of a wide area of surface finds (75). The site lies on a slope oriented to the southwest along the *Via Flaminia* (Fig. 3). Recent excavations uncovered here a residential area with a central courtyard and six rooms with mosaic floors dating from the late 3rd-4th century. Pottery, such as African Red Slip and amphorae of the type Late Roman II date several phases of the occupation until the 6th century. Traces of metallurgy indicate some shift towards production in one of these phases. Before the mid-7th century the building was disaffected and used for burial purposes, an activity which lasted into the 10th century.

The general situation of the region during the 4th/5th century seems, therefore, more flourishing than one would suspect. Nevertheless, growth of the large estates and survival of a good number of smaller farms do not compensate for a general decline. It is likely that large tracts of formerly exploited agricultural land were falling into disuse. Although we have to be particularly careful with the interpretation of Late Roman surface scatters – fine chronological classification of many regional wares is still at its beginning – it seems that this trend can be well observed in several parts of the valley of the Metauro. Areas like the ones around the *vici* of Pieve di Gaifa and of Calmazzo, or the hilly zone above 400 m altitude near Ca' S. Angelino show no traces of occupation anymore (Fig. 12) (76).

The situation after 476 and the establishment of Ostrogoth power in Italy remains very unclear. An important segment of Ostrogoth power established itself

(75) DALL' AGLIO et al. 1997, pp. 80-87.

(76) LUNI 1993.



#### Villas/vici

- Occupation from the Late Republic (2nd - 1st cent. BC) until the Early Empire (1st-3rd cent. AD)
- Occupation from the Late Republic until the Late Empire (4th-5th cent. AD)

#### Farms/Small rural settlements

- Occupation from the Late Republic until the Early Empire
- Occupation from the Late Republic until the Late Empire
- ◇ Roman (undefined)
- ▲ Pottery kilns

Fig. 12 - Rural settlement in the middle Metauro valley from Late Republic to Late Empire (after ERMETI 1993 and MONACCHI 1993).

in Emilia-Romagna, and especially around Ravenna, the Italian capital from 404 onwards, but also in the coastal areas of Marche and Abruzzo (77). A typical rich site of that period in Marche is the villa of Pergola-Montesecco, where partial excavations uncovered a well preserved mosaic floor (Fig. 13). Its resemblance with 5th and early 6th century mosaics in Ravenna, Faenza and Cesena points to artistic and cultural influences from Ravenna on the northern Marche area. The layer on top of the mosaic floor contained many fragments of later 5th century *African Red Slip* and *amphorae* of the African *Spatheion* type (78), a proof for still flourishing commercial contacts with Vandal North Africa. The ultimate decline of larger estates, such as the ones of Colombarone and Pergola, and no doubt of many smaller settlements coincides with the wars between Byzantines and Ostrogoths (535-554) and the subsequent invasion of the Lombards from 568 onwards. These devastating events provoked in Marche the progressive

(77) POTTER 1987, p. 211.

(78) MERCANDO 1984; QUIRI 1984.

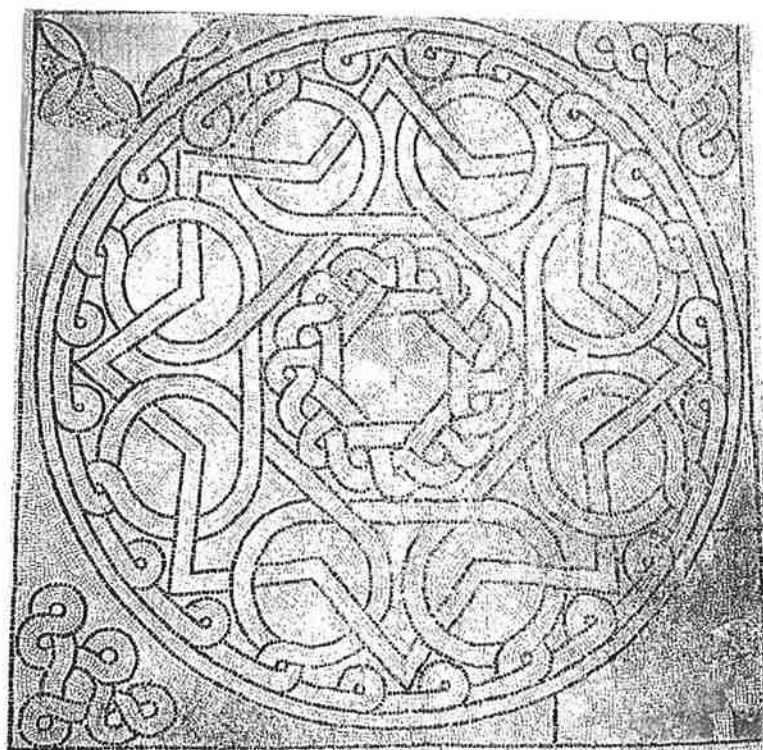


Fig. 13 - PERGOLA. Montesecco: fragment of the mosaic (MERCANDO 1989).

abandonment of infrastructures for water management, resulting in the development of marshes and the natural reforestation of the abandoned fertile agricultural land. Rising insecurity and political instability were also responsible for the downfall of many towns in the valleys, whose population gradually moved to the interfluvial hillcrests, preparing a new settlement pattern in Marche. Much new research is needed to evaluate what exactly happened on the rural sites during the phase of obvious decline and change that marked the period from the mid-6th to the late 7th century. Archaeologists still have to find out how at a certain moment many rural settlements and *villae* came to obliterate part of their buildings and modify the uses to which they had hitherto been put, and why others were definitively abandoned. The finer chronology of this process still has to be understood, as well as the precise reasons why these transformations took place: are the factors related to changes of ownership rights or to changes in the way the estates were worked and what is the relation with the decline of towns and with the organisation of religious life in the countryside?



**Table 4 – Characteristics of 180 important Roman rural sites in Marche:**

## Abbreviations:

**Nr** - Site number, corresponding with the numbers on the maps in this article, except for site nrs. 89 and 122 (not localized)

Elev – Elevation above sea level (in m)

**Lo - Site Location:** 1 = on the lower slopes, 2 = hilltop position, 3 = in the immediate neighbourhood of the coast (less than 1 km)

DC – Distance from the coast (in km)

**DT** - Distance from the nearest *colonia* or *municipium* (in km)

**Rep** – Occupation in the late Republican Period (2nd and 1st century BC)

**1 → 5** – Occupation in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th century AD

**Re – Research:** 1 = fieldwalking projects (with varying intensity), 2 = stratigraphic excavations, 3 = older excavations without stratigraphic data available

**Area (in  $\text{m}^2$ )** – If the data are obtained by fieldwalking the numbers between brackets represent the approximate area of surface spread

## Overview of the visible remains (not exhaustive):

### T – Stamped tiles

**Bri – Brick**

**NSt** – Natural stone

## Co - Stone Columns

**Cru** – Fragments of crustae

**WP** – Painted wall-plaster

HT – Remains of hypocausts or baths

## We - Well

**Pi – Water-p**

Ci - Cistern

**Tor - Torcul**

product

**Ki** – Kiln (pottery, building material)

**Floortype:** SE – opus sectile, Ti – tiles, MO – mosaics (or fragments), SI – opus signinum, SP – opus spicatum

## Ins – Inscriptions

### Fun – Funeral structures

**VN** – Vernice Nera (Black gloss)

**TW – Thin-walled ware**

**ITS** – Italian Terra Sigillata

**ARS** – African red slip ware

**TS – Medio-Adriatic Terra Sigillata**

## La - Lamps

Am - Amphorae

Dol - Dolia

## Coi - Coins

G - Glass

ME - Metal

**ST** – Stone objects (loom weights, mortaria...)

### Pottery and other finds (not exhaustive):

Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Re	Area	T	Bri	NS	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	TS	La	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography		
1	Pennabilli	Scavolino, Villa Calendi	750	1	34	9	x	x	x	x		2				x				x		x								x	x										x?	Monacchi 1999:71		
2	Pennabilli	Piancibara	455	1	35	11		x		x	x	2							x			x									x												Monacchi 1999:72	
3	Tavoleto	Ripamassana	515	1	22	11					x	x	2	(1350)																												x	Monacchi 1996:119	
4	S.Giovanni in Maringano.	Chiesa di Madonna del Monte	75	1	5	16	x	x				1															TL,MO				x												Campagnoli 1999:166	
5	Cattolica	Zona Mercato Orlfrutticchio	5	3	0	15		x	x	x	x	1	1450		x					x																							x	Graziosi 1967

Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Re	Area	T	Bri	Nst	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	TS	La	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography		
6	Saludecio	Casa Bernardi	75	1	8	15							2	(1200)			x									SP									x						Campagnoli 1999:167			
7	Saludecio	Casa Torini, Via ex-strada vicinale Monte la Pietra	70		8	16	x	x	x				2	(400)		x			x							MO, SP					x	x				x						Campagnoli 1999:166		
8	Tavullia	Strada Tavollio n. 1	35	1	5	14							2	(2500)	x	x										SP															Campagnoli 1999:156			
9	Pesaro	Siligata, Via Flaminia Vecchia nr. 6	55	1	1	9		x	x				2						x						x	MO, SP						x					x					Campagnoli 1999:137		
10	Pesaro	Colombarone Chiesa della S.Famiglia	20	1	2	11				x	x	x	1											x		TI,MO				x			x	x	x							Dall'Aglio et al. 1997		
11	Pesaro	Colombarone Campo da Calcio	30	1	2	11	x	x					2											x		MO					x											Campagnoli 1999:135-6		
12	Pesaro	Colombarone Villa Caroncini	45	1	1	11			x	x	x	x	2							x						MO,SI							x	x	x							Campagnoli 1999:134		
13	Gabicce Mare	Casa Badioli, Croce Vecchia	20	1	1	11		x					3		x			x			x					SI,SP			x													Campagnoli 1999:133-4		
14	Gradara	Via Gaggera n. 9	50	1	3	12		x					2		x				x							x				X												Campagnoli 1999:153		
15	Sasso-covaro	La Cellaletta	220	1	27	6	x	x	x	x	x	x	2					x													x												Monacchi 1996:117	
16	Sasso-covaro	Mezzuolo Nuovo	175	1	22	10	x	x	x	x	x	x	2	(5000)		x										SP					x	x				x	x						Monacchi 1996:118	
17	Audiere	Ca' S. Martino	215	1	22	13		x	x	x	x	x	2	(3500)				x																									Monacchi 1996:118	
18	Urbino	Schietti-Ca' Gulinò	155	1	22	5	x	x	x	x	x		2						x		x					TI,MO, SP						x	x				x	x						Monacchi 1987:256
19	Montecalvo in Foglia	Ca' Lucio di Casino del Sole	110	1	21	7	x	x	x	x	x		2							x						TI,MO, SI,SP							x	x				x	x					Monacchi 1987:249
20	Urbino	Palazzo Il	115	1	20	8	x	x	x	x	x		2													MO, SP						x						x	x					Monacchi 1987:257
21	Colbordolo	La Casaccia	180	1	18	9	x	x	x	x			2	(1200)			x									MO, SP						x												Monacchi 1987:257
22	Tavullia	Ca' Franca	?	1	14	13		x	x	x	x	x	2	(7000)				x								SE, MO, SP							x	x										Monacchi 1987:248
23	Colbordolo	Ca' Fraternita	85	1	15	13	x	x	x	x	x		2						x							MO, SP						x												Monacchi 1987:258
24	Colbordolo	Il Montale di Sotto	85	1	15	13	x	x	x				2													MO, SP																		Monacchi 1987:258

Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Re	Area	T	Bri	NSI	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	TS	La	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography	
25	Monte-Illabate	Apesella, Il Gualdo	65	1	13	14	x	x	x	x	x	x	2	(8000)			x				x						SP						x	x	x	x	x	x				Campagnoli 1999:161	
26	Tavullia	Casa Sarti	115	2	7	9							2	(2000)		x																										Campagnoli 1999:159	
27	Pesaro	Pozzo Alto - Palazzo Fazi	110	1	8	10							2	(3000)																												Campagnoli 1999:143	
28	Pesaro	Pozzo Alto - Via Lancisi n. 118-122	75	1	8	10	x	x					2	(1250)			x													x												Campagnoli 1999:143	
29	Pesaro	Villa Ceccolini - Via Lago Maggiore n. 178	35	1	8	8							2	> (2000)													SP															Campagnoli 1999:145	
30	Pesaro	Villa Ceccolini, Strada della Fabbrina	75	1	6	6							2			x	x										SI, SP															Campagnoli 1999:145	
31	Pesaro	Casa Campanara, Strada della Campanara	65	2	5	6							2	(700)		x	x					x					SP															Campagnoli 1999:141	
32	Pesaro	Campanara, Strada Prov. 423	30	1	4	5	x	x	x				1				x																									Campagnoli 1999:141-2	
33	Pesaro	Cattabrighe, Casa Cartella	50	1	1	5							2			x				x							SE, MO															Campagnoli 1999:139	
34	Pesaro	Trebbianico, Strada Panoramica Ardzio	30	1	1	5	x	x	x				2			x	x																									Campagnoli 1999:148	
35	Pesaro	Trebbianico, Fosso Sellore	40	1	2	5							2														SE, MO															Campagnoli 1999:148	
36	Urbania	Stazione di Urbania	240	1	40	10							2					x									Ti, MO															Monacchi 1993:60-1	
37	Fernignano	Casa Monte di Sotto	230	1	38	8	x	x	x	x			2	(2700)		x											SP																Monacchi 1993:64-5
38	Fernignano	Ca' Malacarne	230	1	32	7	x	x	x	x			2														MO																Monacchi 1993:73-4
39	Fernignano	S. Gregorio	280	1	34	6	x	x					2	(1000)			x										SP																Monacchi 1993:76-7
40	Fernignano	La Valle di Sopra	315	2	33	6	x	x	x	x	x		x	2		x																										Monacchi 1993:77	
41	Fernignano	S. Giacomo	180	1	32	5	x	x					1	6													SI																Ernelli - Monacchi 1993:79-84

Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Repl	1	2	3	4	5	Rel	Area	T	Bri	NS	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ANS	TS	La	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography	
42	Urbino	Ca'Baiduno di Sopra	200	1	30	5	x	x	x	x			2			x											Ti,SP			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			Ermeti 1993:50		
43	Fossombrone	Ca'Gentilini	180	1	28	7	x	x	x	x			2	(1950)												Ti,SP				x			x								Ermeti 1993:43		
44	Fossombrone	La Tornitura	135	1	28	7	x	x	x	x			2				x		x							SP					x	x	x								Ermeti 1993:41-2		
45	Cagli	Smirra, Caselle, Muracci	250	1	40	4							3					x								SI,SP															Gori 1990:263		
46	Acqualagna	Colombara	215	1	36	4	x	x	x	x	x	x	1	1000		x	x	x								x,SI		x													Vergani 2002		
47	Serrungarina	Tavernelle	85	1	16	16		x	x	x	x		1					x																							Vullo 1992:405		
48	Saltara	Calcinelli	65	1	13	13					x		3				x									MO, SP																Vullo 1992:402	
49	Fano	Cuccurano	45	1	6	6							3													MO															Vullo 1992:403		
50	Fano	Trave	15	1	1	2							3													MO,SI SP																Vullo 1992:405	
51	Pergola	Madonna del Merlino	400	2	32	12							2				x									MO															Stefanini 1991:3:46		
52	Pergola	Montesecco, Madonna del Piano	260	1	30	10				x	x	x	1	100				x								MO		x					x								Mercando 1984:185-199		
53	Castellione di Suasa	Pian Volpello, Zona Industriale	145	1	22	2	x	x					1				x									Ti,SI, SP																Stefanini 1991:3:53	
54	Castellione di Suasa	Pian Volpello	140	1	21	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	1	3000		x	x	x		x						SE,Ti, MO,SI SP		x		x		x	x	x	x	x						Dall'Aglio - De Maria 1988:73-156; 1994-95: 75-232	
55	Corinaldo	S. Isidoro, Casa Politi	130	1	19	0			x	x			1							x						MO															Stefanini 1991:101-2		
56	Arcavia	Montale, Conelle	155	1	27	8	x	x	x	x			1	150									x			GT,SI, SP						x		x	x	x					Mercando 1979a:92-109		
57	Barbara	Casa Tarducci	205	1	22	5							2				x									Ti																Bonora Mazzoli - Dall'Aglio 1991:54	
58	Osra	Collina	90	1	18	2							2					x																								Bonora Mazzoli - Dall'Aglio 1991:60	
59	Osra	Pianello, Sinigaglia	65	1	14	4							2													MO																	Bonora Mazzoli -

[illegible]

[illegible]

Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Re	Area	T	Bri	NS	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	La	Am	Dol	col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography		
91	Osimo	Casenuove, Monte Torto	150	1	17	7	x	x	x	x	x	x	1	2800		x	x							x	x	x	x	Ti,Sl, SP		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Pignocchi 2001		
92	Osimo	Villa Egidi	125	1	15	6		x	x			2	(4000)				x									Ti,SP															Gentili 1955:128-9		
93	Osimo	Roncisvalle, Strada del Crocifisso	60	1	11	2		x					3				x		x	x					x	SE, MO, SP															Gentili 1990: 26-7, 104-5		
94	Castelfidardo	S.Agostino	85	1	8	5		x	x	x	x	x	1	900		x	x						x		x	Ti,SP					x	x	x	x	x						Mercando 1979a:132-65		
95	Pioraco	Casa Moretti	475	1	59	3		x	x				2	(6000)			x													x											Vermeulen - Boullart 2001:14		
96	Camerino	Mergnano, S. Savino	460	1	56	3							3													MO															Mercando et al. 1981:338		
97	Camerino	Mecciano	415	2	56	5							2				x																								Vermeulen - Boullart 2001:13-4		
98	Treia	Villa Marguerucci	240	1	39	4		x	x	x	x	2	(7500)				x																								Moscatelli 1988:34-6		
99	Pollenza	Piccioni	185	2	34	7						2	(3500)																												Moscatelli 1988:25		
100	Treia	Ceccalori	210	2	34	4		x					2	(1300)																											Moscatelli 1988:24-5,39		
101	Treia	Valcerasa	250	2	32	4		x	x			3					x									MO		x														Moscatelli 1988:42-3	
102	Treia	Passo di Treia, Volalaria	180	2	29	5		x	x	x		3							x		x					Ti,MO																Bejor 1977:116-7	
103	Macerata	Villa Polenza, Cimarella	200	2	24	2						3					x		x						SE																Mercando et al. 1981:337		
104	Recanati	Pintura del Braccio	225	2	8	8						3									x					MO																Percossi Serenelli 1985:125,133-4	
105	Porto Recanati	La Pineta	5	3	0	0		x	x	x	x	1	2100		x	x			x				x		x	Ti,Sl, SP		x															Mercando 1979a:180-280
106	Potenza Picena	Fosso Pilocco	5	3	0	2		x				1	750													Ti			x													Mercando 1979a:281-96	
107	Potenza Picena	Volpini	25	3	0	5							1				x									MO																Mercando 1979b:35-6	
108	Pollenza	Cantagallo, S. Lucia	285	1	31	6		x	x	x	x	1														Ti,MO, Sl,SP																	Mercando 1979b:39-41
109	Tolentino	Abbadia di	150	1	28	4		x				2	(2000)			x				x																							Vettorazzi



Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Rel	Area	T	Bri	NSL	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	TS	Lb	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography				
		Fiasira, Bandini																																									1990:117			
110	Macerata	La Pieve	175	1	24	8							2	(2800)		x													x						x								Vettorazzi 1990:117			
111	San Ginesio	Passo S.Ginesio	400	1	38	11							3			x			x																								Paci 1990:91-3			
112	Urbisaglia	La Rimessa	195	1	28	3							2																						x								Vettorazzi 1990:114			
113	Tolentino	Opere Pie di Petrulo	250	1	29	3							2							x							SP																Vettorazzi 1990:115			
114	Urbisaglia	La Pignolarà	180	1	26	4							2			x											MO																Vettorazzi 1990:115			
115	Urbisaglia	Villamagna	300	2	28	2			x	x	x	x	2			x		x	x	x							MO.SI								x	x							Vettorazzi 1990:113			
116	Morrovalle	Massaccio	105	1	12	4		x	x				1							*							MO		x														Mercando 1979b:36-7			
117	Montecosaro	S. Maria a Pié di Chienti	40	1	8	6							2														MO																Delplace 1993:115			
118	Montecosaro	Romita	150	2	5	6							x	2	7500		x																										Moscатели - Vettorazzi 1988:50, nr. 16			
119	Civitanova Marche	Mandolesi	120	1	5	5		x						2	300		x																											Moscатели - Vettorazzi 1988:50, nr. 18		
120	Porto S.Elpidio	Ponte del Palo	10	1	0	7		x	x	x	x	x	1				x				x						x	SI		x															Pupilli 1994:87	
121	Perna S.Giovanni		650	2	33	8		x	x				3														MO																	Mercando 1979b:51		
122	Servigliano		?	?	?	?		x					3														SE																	Mercando 1989:39-41		
123	Falerone	Piane, La Grota	225	1	27	1		x	x	x	x	x	1	1750				x									MO.SI		x							x	x								Pupilli 1994:72-3	
124	Fermo	Girola	125	1	13	6		x	x	x	x	x	2			x			x								SE, MO, SP		x						x	x										Pupilli 1994:66-9; 1996:44-8
125	Fermo	S. Salvatore	200	1	8	2		x	x	x	x		3			x											SEM O.SP									x										Pupilli 1994:64-5
126	Fermo	S. Marco alle Paludi	50	1	3	5		x	x	x	x		3				x									MO																		Pupilli 1994:64		
127	Fermo	Capodarco, Bocca di Rivo	5	3	0	7							3													MO																		Mercando et al. 1981:343		
128	Fermo/Porto S. Giorgio	Capodarco, Bocca di Rivo S. Petronilla-S. Paolo	125	1	3	4							3													MO																				Pupilli 1994:57-8



Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Re	Area	T	Bri	NS	Co	Cr	WP	HT	We	Pl	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	TS	La	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography		
129	Petrilli	Papagnano	280	2	15	11		x	x	x	x	2	(> 1000)			x	x	x									SI,SP						x	x		x	x					Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355		
130	Ponzano di Fermo	S. Marco	225	2	14	9		x	x	x	x	2				x	x	x								SI							x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
131	Ponzano di Fermo	S. Marco, Costa Pescara	140	1	14	9		x	x	x	x	2				x	x	x							SI								x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
132	Monte-rubbiano	S. Rocco	410	2	10	8		x	x	x	x	2				x	x	x						SI									x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
133	Monte-rubbiano	Fonte del Lago	350	1	9	6		x	x	x	x	2				x	x	x						SI									x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
134	Monte-rubbiano	Chiesa Nuova	310	2	10	6		x	x	x	x	2	(> 2000)			x	x	x	x					MO									x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
135	Monte-rubbiano	La Pinturetta	140	2	9	5		x	x	x	x	2	(> 1000)			x	x	x						SI									x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
136	Fermo	Casa Fortuna	130	2	8	4		x	x	x	x	2	(> 2000)			x	x	x	x					MO									x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
137	Monte-rubbiano	Monti	385	1	9	8		x	x	x	x	2	(> 1000)			x	x	x						SI									x		x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
138	Monte-rubbiano	S. Gregorio	250	1	8	7		x	x			3				x			x					MO											x						Pasquinucci et al. 2000:355			
139	Fermo	Cognolo	35	1	0	8						3												MO																	Brecciaroli Taborelli 1984:66			
140	Fermo-Altidona	Torre di Palme, Cantiagallo, S. Biagio	10	3	0	9		x	x			1				x								x	SP										x							Brecciaroli Taborelli 1984		
141	Altidona	Aputina, Villa Montana	90	3	0	10		x				2												x											x							Pupilli 1994:60-1		
142	Comunanza	Monte Pasilo	500	1	37	18		x				1				x								SI,SP													x						Landolfi 1999:363-4	
143	Moresco	Molino, S. Maria dell'Ormo-Via Monte Fiore	260	1	8	9		x				2					x	x						MO											x								Pupilli 1994:78,125	
144	Moresco	Valdaso	85	1	8	10						2												x													x							Pupilli 1994:78-9

[illegible]

Nr	Municipality	Locality	Elev	Lo	DC	DT	Rep	1	2	3	4	5	Re	Area	T	Bri	NSI	Co	Cru	WP	HT	We	Pi	Cis	Tor	Kil	Floor	Ins	Fun	VN	TW	ITS	ARS	TS	La	Am	Dol	Col	G	ME	ST	Bibliography	
165	Acquasanta Terme	Pomaro, Massi	590	1	44	17							2			x	x	x	x	x						Ti																Conta 1982:122-3	
166	Ascoli Piceno	Cavaceppo, Villa Sacconi	235	1	36	9	x						3				x	x							MO																	Conta 1982:162	
167	Ascoli Piceno	Capignano	160	1	30	3							3												SE			x														Conta 1982:186	
168	Ascoli Piceno	Rosara, Pescara	260	2	29	2							3				x	x							SP																	Conta 1982:187-8	
169	Ascoli Piceno	Castagneti	115	1	25	3							3						x						SE																Conta 1982:200-1		
170	Mattignano	La Macera, Piani Morti	75	1	18	9							3												x	MO, SP															x	Conta 1982:285-6	
171	Castel di Lama	Colle Cese	110	1	17	10	x	x	x	x			2				x			x					x	SI		x													Conta 1982:224-6		
172	Castorano	Casale	150	2	15	13							3												MO																Conta 1982:230		
173	Ancarano		300		15	14							2												MO																Conta 1982:292-4		
174	Colli del Tronto	S.Cristina	180	2	13	14							1	30			x	x		x	x					MO															Profumo 1991:82-7		
175	Castorano	Pescola	160	2	13	14							2					x																							Conta 1982:233-4		
176	Contro-guerra	Torretta	280		12	17	x	x	x	x	x	x	2						x																						Conta 1982:289		
177	Monsampolo del Tronto	Comunanza	120	2	8	19							2																												Conta 1982:242		
178	S.Benedetto del Tronto	Porto d'Ascoli, S. Giovanni	5	1	2	1							2																													Conta 1982:416	
179	S.Benedetto del Tronto	Porto d'Ascoli, Via Torino	5	3	1	3							3				x	x	x						SP																	Palestini 1995:190-1	
180	S.Benedetto del Tronto	Via dei Lauri	15	1	1	5							2				x									SP																x	Palestini 1995:197

## II. The Potenza valley survey (PVS)

Since 2000 systematic survey work is being done in a well-defined area of Central Marche. This multidisciplinary geo-archaeological project, organised by the Department of Archaeology at Ghent University (82), aims to intensely study changes in landscape and occupation patterns throughout the whole valley of the river Potenza. Research activities focus on the period 1000 BC - AD 1000 and, therefore, the whole Roman period under investigation here falls within this scope. The intensive surveys of the Potenza valley include full coverage aerial photography in the whole ca. 400 km<sup>2</sup> wide area between the Apennine hills and the Adriatic coastline, as well as systematic archaeological fieldwalking in three well-chosen sample zones (83).

The reasons for choosing the Potenza region lie not only in its geographical diversity and agricultural suitability to do archaeological fieldwork and survey (Fig. 14). The valley, which links the Umbria-Marches Apennine mountains, near the Monte Pennino (1571m) with the generally flat Adriatic coastline just south of the Monte Conero, was during protohistory and early historic times an important passage way between the Tyrrhenian centres in Etruria, *Latium* and Campania and Adriatic central Italy. It was intensely used for transport purposes by the Picene and Umbrian populations who inhabited the area at least from the 9th century BC onwards. This process was activated between the 6th and the 4th centuries BC, when the Greek *emporía* of Numana and Ancona, located just North of the Potenza mouth, opened up the inlands of Marche to long distance maritime commerce. Not so much the Potenza river itself, but its valley remained an important corridor for political, economic and cultural contacts between both sides of the peninsula under Roman dominion. From the 3rd century BC onwards this Roman influence passed through it, using a southern branch of the famous *Via Flaminia*, with a spin off from the main branch at the Apennine site of Nocera

(82) This Belgian project is directed by Prof. Frank Vermeulen and the principal archaeological investigators include Patrick Monsieur, Catharina Boullart, Hélène Verreycke, Geert Verhoeven, Sophie Dralans, Julie Van Kerkhoven and Lieven Verdonck (Department of Archaeology, Ghent University, Belgium), while for geomorphological aspects Prof. Morgan De Dapper, Dr. Beata De Vlieghe and Tanja Goethals (Department of Geography, Ghent University) are responsible. The project organisation wishes to thank the Soprintendenza Archeologica per le Marche (Dr. G. de Marinis, Dr.ssa M. Silvestrini and Dr.ssa E. Percossi) for their active support of the project and Dr. U. Moscatelli of the University of Macerata for his participation in the field campaign of 2000 in the area of Camerino.

(83) The wide aims, methods and first results of this project have been dealt with in several articles in the journal «B.A.Besch.», see: VERMEULEN-BOULLART 2001, VERMEULEN-MONSIEUR-BOULLART 2002, VERMEULEN et al. 2003.

Umbra, leading through the Potenza valley towards the port of Ancona. During late Republican and Imperial times several Roman towns developed in or near the valley floor. At the river mouth the Roman colony of *Potentia* was founded in 184 BC. In the interior a series of *municipia*, namely *Ricina*, *Trea* and *Septempeda*, developed into cities from the 1st century BC onwards (84). In the Apennine part of the valley smaller roadside agglomerations of Roman origin, such as *Dubios* and *Prolaqueum*, developed in accordance with the *Via Flaminia* branch. During the turmoil of the end of the Roman West, the location of the region was again of importance, as it lay within the military contact zone of Lombards and Byzantines, within the then still flourishing Adriatic sphere. Especially the inland stretches of the Potenza valley seem to have suffered much and early from this geopolitical turmoil.

Due to the methodological choices made, with full coverage line-walking in restricted sample zones, the PVS-project is somewhat in contrast with most earlier archaeological surveys in the Marche region. Doing so, we aim to assess the full potential of the landscape for remains of rural settlement, and although registration of old discoveries and chance finds is also being done, it is by no means the major source of information. As can be seen in many other areas of Italy, with a comparable approach towards systematic field survey, the exponential growth of the number of sites in the zones concerned is overwhelming. However, as the fieldwork and especially the processing and dating of the huge numbers of surface artefacts collected in the Potenza valley sample areas are still in progress (85), we cannot yet present here a full picture of results concerning rural settlements during Roman times. At most and keeping in mind that these results are only preliminary, we can now draw the first conclusions about the topographic spread of the settlements and their relation to landscape features in two of the three studied areas: the **upper Potenza valley** and the **middle Potenza valley** zones (Fig. 14). A first attempt, will also be made to approach the typology, character and hierarchy of rural settlements in both areas, while for their chronology only a few general remarks are now possible. To present this information we will look individually at both sample zones, respectively located near the present day towns of Camerino and Treia.

(84) A detailed study on the urban topography and chronology of these towns is in preparation by Vermeulen and Verhoeven.

(85) Research in the field in the lower Potenza valley (near Porto Recanati) is still in full progress.

# PVS

## Important Roman sites

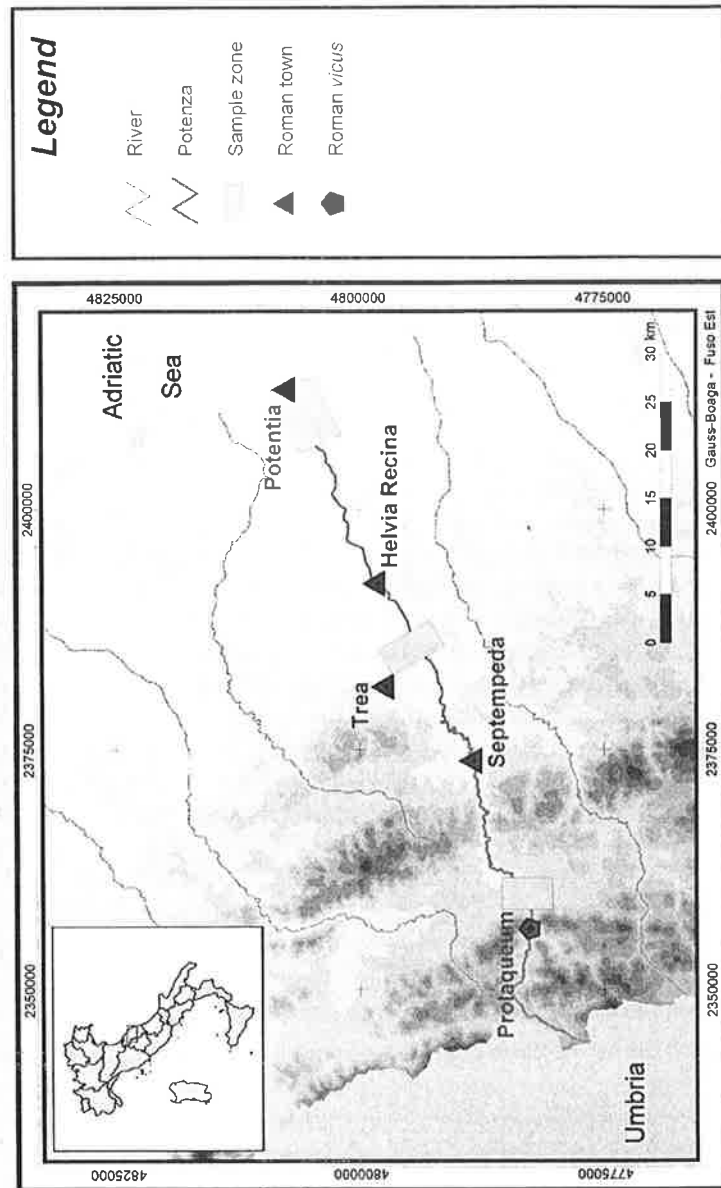


Fig. 14 - General location of the zones of systematic field survey in the Potenza valley.

## The upper valley

### The area

The sample area investigated during the September 2000 field campaign is situated in the upper Potenza valley in the region in between the municipalities of Pioraco, Castelraimondo and Camerino (Fig. 15). The chosen zone covers about 9 km<sup>2</sup>, lying at the foot of the Apennine mountains. It consists mainly (more than 80%) of agricultural land, used for wheat-growing and other crops with only small areas of grassland, some scattered vineyards and mostly small holdings. The steep edges of many of the gullies in this area are left to brush 'maquis' vegetation, with only tiny pockets of trees. The higher scarps of the hills, with their mixed wooded vegetation cover lie mostly outside our prospection area. Several perennial springs emerge more or less at the 400 m contour interval and bring water to the slopes. They feed torrents which eventually end in the Potenza river, which crosses our area centrally from west to east. Present-day human occupation is essentially restricted to several small villages and hamlets (e.g. Seppio, Mecciano, Mergnano, Brondoletto...), and other modern disturbance confined to a stone quarry and a small, but fast developing industrial zone near the Potenza river.

This sample area was no doubt of some importance in Antiquity. From the Potenza source westwards, it shows the first real broadening of the valley after the narrow Pioraco gorge, where the river leaves the mountainous Umbria-Marche Apennine ridge and enters an intermediate basin. The landscape is still very hilly, but here the Potenza valley offers for the first time enough arable land for widespread human settlement since prehistoric times. Due to its position in the intermediate basin the area is situated on the crossroads of two intramontane corridors. The first is the Potenza valley which is directed west east and which links the Apennine Mountains with the Adriatic coast. The second gives passage from the Colfiorito area in the south to the Esino valley northwards. They cross each other southwest from Castelraimondo (86). Both corridors played an important role in the (proto-)history of this region (87). In Roman times the zone lay probably within the spheres of influence (territories) of three habitation centres: the small town of Pioraco (*Prolaqueum*) to the west, and the cities of Camerino (*Camerinum*) to the south and Matelica (*Matilica*) to the north.

### Site density

Our line walking campaign in this area yielded up to 42 concentrations of Roman artefacts at the surface, quite evenly spread all over the surveyed landsca-

(86) BIOCCO 1997, p. 308.

(87) BONOMI PONZI 1992.

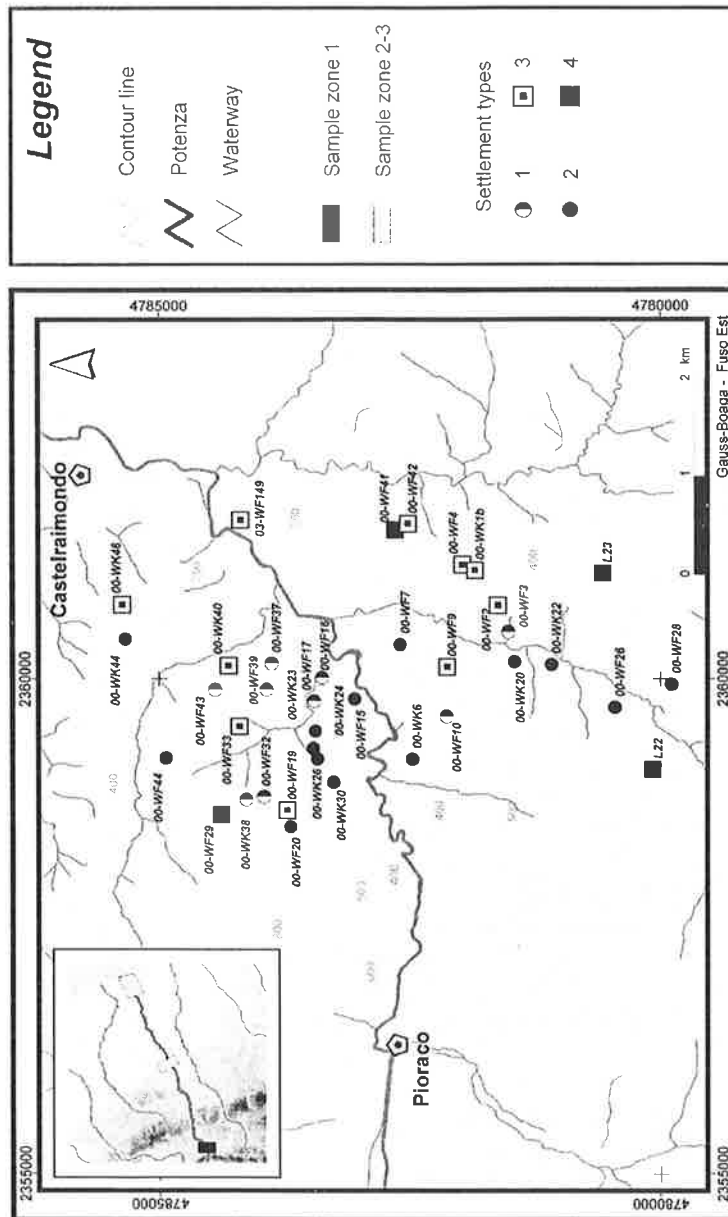


Fig. 15 - Distribution of Roman settlements in the upper valley transect (map design G. Verhoeven).



pe. In some cases it is clear that different concentrations on the same or adjoining large fields belong together. We then could often distinguish a main settlement area where household pottery, common building materials (tile, brick, local stone...) and in some cases even more luxurious products, such as glass, marble or mosaic *tesserae*, were found. In the immediate neighbourhood fine line-walking then revealed often one or more smaller surface concentrations, which mainly consisted of Roman building materials and should thus be interpreted as secondary buildings. Regrouping of the contemporary artefact concentrations in this way still leaves us with some 35 newly discovered Roman settlement sites, which, even if we account for some five only «probable settlements», is an explosive increase of the almost non-existing number of Roman settlements in the area known from regional inventories before our surveys (88). Accounting for the surface which was really field-walked in the upper valley zone, almost 3.2 km<sup>2</sup> (89), this means a very high density of some 11 settlement sites per km<sup>2</sup>. This figure is strikingly higher than the average site density encountered in earlier surveys in the Marche region (see above). The intensity of the field methods employed here is no doubt only part of the explanation.

#### Site location

When looking at the dispersion of Roman rural settlement in this perimountainous area, it strikes that there was a full use of the agriculturally valuable land for the installation of farms. If we take into account which areas ('fields') of the sampling zone were effectively surveyed in good conditions of visibility, it seems that the settlements were quite evenly spread over the Roman landscape. No empty zones occur. As we did not include the forested higher zones into our sample area, we cannot evaluate this part of the landscape, but here we can at least expect a much less dense pattern.

A first analysis of possible attractions for site location within the mostly undulating land of this intra-montane basin shows no specific preponderance. Still, some observations are possible. Almost as many sites were found north and south of the river, although there is a slight dominance of farms located north of the river and on slopes with an orientation to the SE. Although there is no specific concentration near the Potenza, quite a number of settlements were located at a distance of less than 500 m from its border. The same kind of positioning seems to apply regarding the relationship with two major brooks, flowing respectively from north and south into the Potenza. Locations on

(88) Only two not so well located Roman settlements from this area were registered in the gazetteer produced by MERCANDO-BRECCAROLI-PACI 1981.

(89) Omitted from the max. 9 km<sup>2</sup> research area are all terrains that could not be surveyed in September 2000, such as unploughed arable land, present-day housing areas, etc.

hilltops, higher hillsides or small plateaux with an excellent view towards the valley seem to be preferred, especially by the larger settlements, but is certainly not exclusive. Although a handful of farms lie within a few hundreds of meters distance from the Roman road in the valley floor (*Via Flaminia*), only one of them lies really immediately alongside it. As in protohistoric times (90), quite some settlements seem to cluster between the 375 and 405 m contours, an altitude with an abundance of springs.

### Typology

As the surface material discovered during our systematic surveys has only been preliminary studied it is still too early for the presentation of a definitive settlement typology. Much more intense pottery analysis is necessary, while also a correct and fine evaluation of the off-site materials is still awaited. Nevertheless, we will attempt here a first approach to classify the sites that have so far been interpreted as settlements and probable settlements. Elaborating this preliminary typology we have been careful not to stress too much the extent of the surface scatter as discriminating factor. In this hilly landscape, where much pottery and building material has secondarily been deposited down slope because of strong erosion, it is wise to be extremely careful with evaluations of site extent (91). Only in parts of the landscape where flat terrain prevails, such as in the valley floor or on high plateaux surfaces, these evaluations of size seem reliable. We must, however, also remark that we have been able to increase the reliability of such evaluations and measurements, thanks to intense aerial photography by our team over the area between 2000 and 2003. This oblique aerial survey from a low flying aircraft not only revealed the aspect of some of the rural settlements by giving away parts of their plan as crop marks in the grain, but also learned us much about the size and shape of settlement areas thanks to clearly detectable soil marks (in September/October) connected with observations of surface scatters of pottery and building materials in the ploughed fields (92).

More than simply with the size, this first attempt to establish a typology is also concerned with the character and quality of the finds. Although this now generally adapted approach is only fully applicable when keeping in mind which

(90) VERMEULEN-BOULLART 2001.

(91) This method would still work to a certain extent if most sites were only recently ploughed for the first time and if erosion phenomena would, therefore, have affected them only slightly, but this is obviously not the case in this area.

(92) For a review of some of the results from this aerial survey we refer to: VERMEULEN – VERHOEVEN - SEMEY forthcoming. See also VERMEULEN - BOULLART 2001, VERMEULEN – MONSIEUR - BOULLART 2002 and VERMEULEN et al. 2003.

periods we are dealing with (93), how large the sites are (94) and which peculiarities of the region must be accounted for (95), it procures us with a much more reliable division into settlement types. Together with size, and to a lesser degree with position in the landscape (96), an expression of the complexity of the plan of the settlement (97) and chronological factors (98), the character and quality of the surface finds permit a first subdivision of the settlements into four distinct types:

**Type 1** could be defined as a *small house unit* for people living in the countryside, in some cases probably only on a seasonal or very temporary basis. Some 9 sites out of the total of 35 could well belong to this category (99). At the surface these sites are recognised as small concentrations spread over circa 200 to 1200 m<sup>2</sup>, but most of them are smaller than 700 m<sup>2</sup>. They are distinguishable by the presence of simple building materials, such as fragments of roof tiles and uncut stones (river pebbles and local sandstone or limestone), and only very small quantities of pottery. As they behold almost no fine wares, precise dating is much obstructed. Most of these simple units lie quite some distance away from other settlements. They therefore, seem to be individual living sites, which does not exclude that their inhabitants could well have depended upon larger farms or villas.

(93) E.g. several types of richer materials, such as marble or window glass, are only being imported and used in rural contexts from certain advanced periods onwards.

(94) Larger sites with many finds have more chances of producing a wide diversity of building materials or pottery groups.

(95) An Apennine area like the upper Potenza valley in Marche has completely different building traditions, economic possibilities and cultural contacts than for instance a coastal area in Campania.

(96) A dominant position versus the landscape can explain a higher ranking of some sites.

(97) Certain surface scatters suggests clearly the existence of several building units, often with differing functions (habitation, storage ...). Aerial photography or other remote sensing techniques can offer additional information about the organisation of the settlements, in Roman context a very discriminating factor for establishing a hierarchy of sites.

(98) The extent and character of a Roman settlement can also be influenced by the sub-period in which it occurs. Republican settlements in a freshly conquered area, for instance, could be much smaller than their later Imperial counterparts.

(99) Are not included in this group: a series of small concentrations of Roman *tegulae* (and sometimes a few potsherds) found very near identified settlements of types 2, 3 and 4. These were considered outhouses or secondary buildings of these settlements. Some of them could also be tombs.

**Type 2** bears all the characteristics of a regular *farm*. With some 14 examples this type is the best represented. Concentrations of building materials and pottery are generally compact and are comprised between ca. 1200 and 2500 m<sup>2</sup>. The surface scatters do normally not show distinct areas of concentrations, representative for separate units within the settlement. More, but mostly simple architectural elements are present: roof tiles, cut or uncut stones (sandstone/limestone), sometimes brick. These sites display a normal variety of pottery, with fine wares as well as common wares. Most of these sites are of Early or Middle Imperial date, but some were already in use during the Late Republic or remained occupied in the Late Empire.

Flying in June 2002 over such a site in Castelraimondo, found during line walking in September 2000, revealed a very clear series of linear crop marks forming the plan of a small but well-organised and compact farm (100). On Fig. 16 we remark a compact rectangular building (circa 25x20 m) with a very symmetrical layout and several rooms centred on a central courtyard. On its southern side it may have had a portico overlooking the nearby river Potenza, situated only some 50 m south of the building. This discovery is important as it procures us not only an excellent proof of the reliability of the fieldwalking results, but gives us probably also the first complete plan of a Roman rural settlement in the central Marche region. The surface finds indicate here probably an Early Imperial date, but a re-survey could be needed to refine the chronology.

**Type 3** assembles a series of sites which could be called *large farms or simple villas*. This group is a bit more heterogeneous and problematic as the interpretation of their size and the association of separate units is made difficult by erosion factors present in this hilly landscape. Some 10 examples were found, but we do not exclude that further research on some of these sites could classify them differently, as belonging to type 2 or 4. It generally concerns quite large concentrations, most often between ca. 2500 and 4000 m<sup>2</sup>. In most cases several units can be distinguished within one settlement, some with more pottery and better building materials, others only consisting of roof tiles and very little or no pottery. This at least suggests a subdivision in living quarters and several types of outhouses for storage, cattle breeding and/or artisanal activities. Although these sites display more diverse building materials, such as roof tiles, cut or uncut stones (sandstone/limestone) and often brick and concrete, no real luxury architecture was observed. As with type 2 there is a normal variety of fine wares and common wares, but often these suggest long occupation.

One of these sites, displaying good crop marks observed during our aerial survey in the Spring of 2002 (Fig. 17) was found on the right bank of the River

(100) Site 00-WF15, located in the centre of the industrial area of Castelraimondo/Pioraco.

Potenza near the present day bridge that links the territories of Castelraimondo and Camerino (101). Two areas with settlement traces can be distinguished here: one indicates the presence of a rectangular building (circa 20x10 m), subdivided in several rooms, the other is an amalgam of irregular traces, probably of pits, cellars (?) and cisterns. Field survey confirmed the two areas of dense Imperial pottery and building materials (bricks, floor tiles, lumps of concrete...) respectively as a habitation sector and one for working and storage (*dolia*, *amphorae* ...).

**Type 4**, represented by only two examples in our survey, could be called *villa* site in the archaeological sense of the word (102). Taking into account that we are here in a hilly country, distant from the coast and major centres of economic activity, we should not expect huge villa sites of the type encountered in parts of *Latium* or *Campania*. Still, seen against the cultural and economic context of an Apennine region, at least a couple of sites show some characteristics of rural settlement of the highest rank. They were distinguished on surface level as very large concentrations, between at least 3000 and 6000 m<sup>2</sup>. The appearance of both sites is one of well organised rural settlement, with several concentrations of finds suggesting distinct sectors for different types of activity. These surface scatters contain a great diversity of building materials, such as roof tiles, well-cut stones (sandstone/limestone), brick, floor tiles and concrete, as well as some elements representative for a (still humble) display of wealth, like pieces of marble *crustae*, mosaic *tesserae*, and fragments of columns. They also group a greater variety of pottery wares than other sites in the area, with some more fine and/or imported products, such as *vernice nera*, *terra sigillata* and *amphorae*. This evidence demonstrates that both sites knew an important Republican phase and continued to flourish throughout Imperial times.

The first settlement of this type was encountered at the very edge of the small hamlet of Mecciano, within the municipality of Camerino. This Roman site (103), with its excellent location on a hilly plateau overlooking the Potenza stream, could not be fully mapped as it lies partly underneath the present-day houses. The part of this Roman settlement which we could investigate shows a very dense, wide and well delineated concentration near the top of the south-east oriented slope of the Mecciano plateau. Within this area we observed the presence of several buildings marked by dense scatters of building stones, *tegulae* and pottery.

(101) Site 03-WF149.

(102) This is not the place to go into the much debated opposition between villa-terminology as used by ancient writers such as *Cato* and *Varro*, and the use of the word *villa* by modern archaeologists. See e.g. CARANDINI-CAMBI 2002, COTTON 1983, MIELSCH 1990, PAINTER 1980 and ROSSITER 1978.

(103) Site 00-WF41.

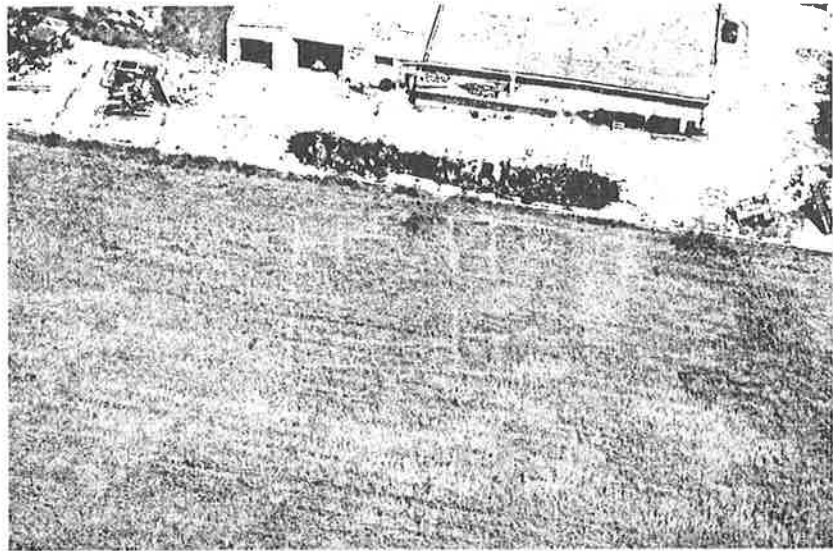


Fig. 16 - Aerial photograph of a site with crop marks, indicating a Roman farm with regular plan (site 00-WF15) in the upper valley transect (photo F. Vermeulen).



Fig. 17 - Aerial photograph of a site with crop marks, indicating a Roman farm with distinct functional sectors (site 03-WF149) in the upper valley transect (photo F. Vermeulen).

A second settlement site (104) with a villa-like appearance was recorded on a flat to gently sloping part of the generally west-east oriented slope at the foot of the Castel Santa Maria mountain, north of the Pioraco-gorge. Here we found a very large (100x60 m), also quite well delineated and very dense concentration of Roman artefacts. To the east the whole concentration area is well delineated by a talus of about 4 meters high. This talus, in which we discovered a huge block of limestone, could be reminiscent of the original terrace wall of the settlement. Within the more or less L-shaped area, which might represent two main buildings, some lines of stones suggest the *in situ* location of walls. Locally small cores of tile seem to indicate the presence of smaller secondary buildings. An old discovery of a fragment of a Roman column shaft at some distance down slope from this site could well be connected to the villa (105).

It is probable that the general area under investigation counted more sites to be considered villas. This is at least suggested by two old finds from literature located with less precision in the northern part of the municipality of Camerino, near the hamlet of Mergnano. One, at a place called 'Campo delle Erbe di Perito' on the foot slopes of Monte Primo, concerns the discovery of Roman brick wall structures, pieces of fine architecture, Late Republican to Late Roman ceramics and a stamped lead pipe, suggesting a villa with organised water management (106). The other was the chance discovery of parts of a mosaic floor and some terracotta water conducts at a site called at S. Savino (107).

This evidence for the presence of several villa estates near or underneath medieval based hamlets or small villages in this area, such as Mergnano, Mecciano (108) and Seano (109) leads to the interesting idea that some villa sites could in post-Roman times have evolved into (early medieval) villages, some of which might still exist today and even partly hide the ancient villa remains. Several place names still present in the area, such as those terminating with *-ano* and *-iano*, may indeed as is generally assumed be reminiscent of important former Roman settlement (110). The mechanisms for this gradual shift and the

(104) Site 00-WF29.

(105) Discovery made at Brondoleto, loc. Camporosso (MERCANDO-BRECCIAROLI-PACI 1981, p. 338).

(106) PIGORINI 1897 (our site L22).

(107) BOCCANERA-CORRADINI 1968, pp. 109-111 (our site L23). Several pieces of Roman architecture and sculpture collected in nearby houses were possibly also connected with this villa.

(108) See the site discovered by our team on the edge of Mecciano (00-WF41).

(109) During works on a house in 1961 several pieces of stone sculpture, such as a female portrait in Severan style and a male bust, were discovered here (BOCCANERA-CORRADINI 1968, p. 111). See also BIOCCHIO 1997, p. 308 and PERCOSSI SERENELLI 2000, pp. 50-52.

(110) MOSCATELLI 1993.

precise character of this form of settlement continuity still have to be studied with more detail (111).

### Chronology

Although in some cases a distinct date in late Republican, Early or Late Imperial phases can already be proposed for our 35 survey sites found in the upper valley transect, further pottery research is awaited before more precise chronological interpretations and exact counts per period are possible. Much of the dating evidence is still rough and should be checked and more thoroughly studied (112). Nevertheless, some preliminary remarks can already be proposed, taking into account that at least seven sites produced so few pottery finds that general dating in the «Roman period» is the most we can get out of them so far.

More than one third of all settlements (10 out of 28 datable sites) were occupied in the Late Republican period. These include sites of all types but the larger ones (types 3 and 4) are predominant. It is however not yet possible to evaluate whether the latter were already large size settlements before Augustan times, or that their expansion into large farms or villas is solely an Imperial development. Because, with the exception of one small site (type 1), they all continued into the 1st century AD, it remains hard to exactly delineate the inhabited space under the Republic. Even more difficult so far is to determine how many of these sites predated Roman developments in the area. Only two sites produced some evidence for a possible Iron age settlement on the spot, but it is likely that more sites knew already some form of occupation before the coming of Romans. It is perhaps not a coincidence that both sites are quite important, one is the villa at the foot of the Castel Santa Maria mountain (113), the other is a type 3 settlement with continuity into Late Roman times lying on a well located hill crest near Mecciano (114). It remains to be answered whether both sites are indications that at least some larger Republican estates grew out of establishments of the local elites.

(111) We must also consider that these hamlets have in fact evolved out of grouped settlements of the *vicus* type, whose occupants were in Late Antiquity, much dependant on the few large villa estates in this area.

(112) Ongoing detailed research of vernice nera pottery (J. Van Kerckhove) and Imperial and Late Roman wares (P. Monsieur, L. Verdonck, H. Verreyke) will produce these data in the near future. The authors thank these ceramologists for the use of preliminary dating evidence in this article.

(113) Site 00-WF29. Several surface scatters of probable Iron age pottery were discovered here, lying very close to a former natural spring (VERMEULEN-BOULLART 2001).

(114) Site 00-Wk1. The date of the pro-Roman finds is not well established.



Almost all sites (26 out of a total of 28) knew some occupation during the Early and Middle Empire. Almost two thirds of them were, it seems, never occupied before the reign of Augustus, which certainly indicates the boom of new rural settlements from that time onwards or at the latest in the course of the 1st century AD. This general picture of a flourishing rural community in large parts of the Potenza valley from the later 1st century BC onwards seems to agree quite well with the results of our city surveys on towns such as *Trea*, *Potentia* and *Ricina*, located in areas more downstream (115). These should also be confronted now with the image we get from the rural sites in these middle and lower-valley areas.

Finally some observations about the Late Roman period in this upper valley area should also be further confirmed. Less than one out of three settlements seems to survive into the Late Imperial era (8 out of a total of 26), and only one new settlement site (of type 1) appears in that period of decline. Although it remains to be investigated to what extent this sharp decline is not due to a lack of diagnostic materials, it suggests at least that rural settlement in the upper valley knew a real reorganisation by the 4th and 5th centuries. As almost all remaining settlements are of types 3 and 4, it seems that there was a real crisis of small landholding in favour of a regrouping of land into the hands of the inhabitants of larger farms and villas, an observation far from exceptional for developments in Late Roman rural Italy.

PVS	Late Republic	Early and Middle Empire	Late Empire
Upper Potenza Valley	10	26	9
Middle Potenza Valley	6	12	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>

Table 5 - Roman rural settlements in the upper- and middle Potenza valley survey zones.

### The middle valley

#### The area

The area of some 14 km<sup>2</sup> chosen for our September 2001 field campaign is situated in the middle valley of the Potenza, immediately east of Passo di Treia, in the municipalities of Pollenza and Treia (Fig. 18). The topography of this landscape, situated at some 30 km from the Adriatic shore, is moderately hilly. It

(115) VERMEULEN-VERHOEVEN, forthcoming.

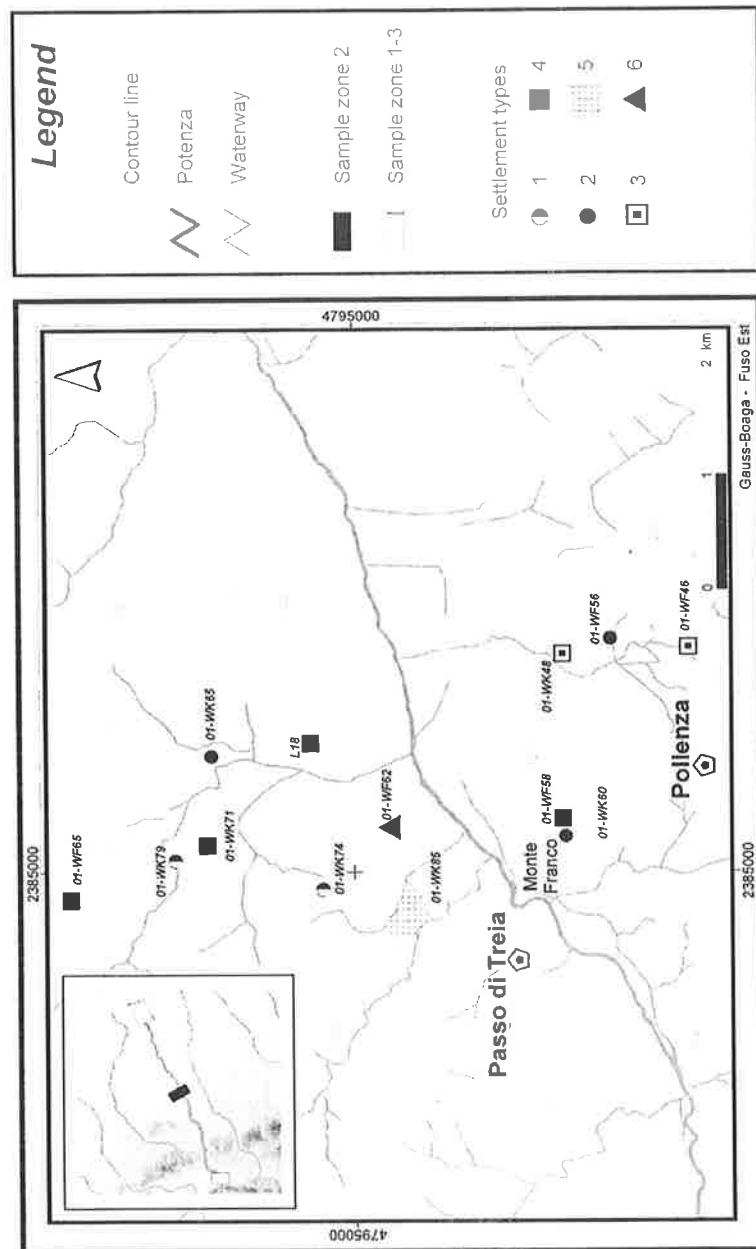


Fig. 18 - Distribution of Roman settlements in the middle valley transect (map design G. Verhoeven).

is situated between 250 and 350 m altitude and consists of dorsal ridges alternating with small and sometimes deeply incised secondary valleys, which are connected with the east-west oriented Potenza valley. The still very agrarian open landscape with dispersed rural units, groups its population mainly in several towns situated since medieval times on the hilltops overlooking the valley. The Potenza flows here through a narrowing of the valley formed by two axial hill-spurs of Miocene date, occupied by the medieval and modern centres of Treia (N) and Pollenza (S). On the south side the river is dominated by a very conspicuous promontory, the Monte Franco (or Francolo).

The presence of important Late Bronze Age and Piceni settlements in this zone, mostly known from their adjoining cemeteries (116), does not surprise at all when we take into account the strategic value of this particular area. On a dominant plateau immediately west of present day Treia lays the site of the Roman *municipium Treia*. Intensive survey in the region west of the pass by Moscatelli, whose conclusions have been published in the *Forma Italiae* series, has already highlighted the importance of the area in Roman times (117). We, therefore, decided to focus our fieldwork on the area east of the pass, so that both studies might become complementary. The whole core of the hinterland of Roman *Treia* in the Potenza valley could then be systematically approached. Recent research by Marengo indicates that the part of our survey zone north of the Potenza belonged to the territory of *Treia*, while the part south of the river might have belonged to the city of *Urbs Salvia* (118).

#### Site density

As could be expected from earlier work in the area around Roman *Treia* (119), immediately east of our survey zone, the Roman finds in the 2001-transect were particularly numerous. Our line walking campaign yielded some 30 clear concentrations of Roman artefacts at the surface, while much more off-site material of that period was found than in the upper valley transect (120). When examined closer, by leaving out some probably isolated agricultural buildings with no direct habitation function (121), and by grouping the concentrations as entities made up of several units, such as we did in the upper valley (see above),

(116) LOLLINI 1958, pp. 204-205; LOLLINI 1976.

(117) MOSCATELLI 1988a.

(118) MARENGO 2000.

(119) MOSCATELLI 1988a; BEJOR 1977.

(120) A planned GIS-based analysis of this off-site material will no doubt throw some light on other (non-settlement) aspects of the Roman use of the landscape.

(121) Distinguishable as small concentrations of Roman roof tiles, often without further pottery finds.

this results in some 11 distinct Roman settlement sites. Set against the one or possibly two settlements already known before the start of our fieldwork (see further), this means again a significant increase of Roman rural sites in the area. Accounting for the surface which was really field-walked in this middle valley zone, some 3,6 km<sup>2</sup>, this means a density of some 3 settlement sites per km<sup>2</sup>. This figure is in line with, or only slightly higher than, the average site density encountered in earlier surveys in the Marche region (see above). As, however this figure also includes a type of grouped settlement (see further) we must view these results in perspective.

#### Site location

The distribution of Roman settlements in the research area displays a more total use of the landscape, compared to the Iron Age situation here, when much habitation was focused around the promontory of the Monte Franco, near the valley pass (122). Although at first sight an even spread of Roman sites seems likely, at least four distinct patterns should be distinguished:

1. The lower terraces near the Potenza were certainly attractive for farmers because of their easy to work arable land and possibly the presence of meadows and water. Two sites discovered north of the river seem, however, foremost connected with the main road arteries, such as the Roman road in the valley bottom between *Septempeda* and *Ricina*, and a probable branch connecting this road with the *municipium* of Trea.

2. Some settlements show the same location pattern as a series of simple Iron Age sites that occupied the area before: a position on easy slopes with a clear vicinity to natural water supply in the shape of springs or torrents. At least five, generally smaller Roman farms, located north as well as south of the Potenza, display these characteristics.

3. A series of settlements, some clearly of the villa-type (see further) is located on or near hilltops or hilly ridges at some distance from the river. An orientation of such larger sites in order to get a fine view towards the valley is clearly favoured.

4. Finally a couple of Roman sites could well be connected with the Monte Franco hill and the natural pass, already a point of attraction in protohistoric times. The ideal view, nearness to the Potenza and possibly a control function could all have played here.

### Typology

In clear contrast with the results in the Upper Potenza valley, where a majority of the recorded sites should be interpreted as simple to medium-sized farms densely scattered over the landscape, the dispersed Roman settlement structure in this area shows greater hierarchy. If we apply the same criteria for elaborating our typology we obtain no less than six distinct types of settlement.

**Types 1, 2 and 3** are represented respectively by two, three and two examples. They display much the same characteristics of size, building materials and ceramic contents as their counterparts in the upper valley. Although their location in the middle valley zone, with better connections to trade routes and nearby town centres (*Trea, Ricina*), implies a somewhat larger variety of ceramic groups, they do not significantly differ from rural houses and farms in the Camerino area.

The proportion of sites of **type 4**, defined as villas, is obviously higher in this middle valley, as probably four out of a total of 13 sites belongs to this category (123). These settlements not only display a more extensive surface scatter with different units for habitation and other rural activities. They also show more imperishable building materials (such as floor tiles, bricks and well cut blocks of limestone and sandstone) and reveal much more imported pottery and whole categories of specific finds (coins, glass, lead and bronze artefacts...), indicating greater comfort, wealth and organisation.

Although the sample is small we recognise in this area a pattern of a wider, less dense dispersion of farms, dominated by these villas, and with several small scatters of isolated Roman finds (mostly building materials). This seems to indicate that, at least during part of the Imperial period these villa-sites were surrounded by large estates comprising only some secondary, isolated Roman structures, associated with agricultural activity. This pattern of villas, seemingly all well-situated on or near a hillcrest with a fine view over the valley, is already recognisable in some older finds from the survey area. Chance discoveries and observations at different times during the last centuries, with e.g. the discovery of a small thermal building on a ridge parallel to the Potenza at Votalarca and some significant finds on the even higher Colle Carbonari (124), produced the location of two probable villas before our project (125). At least two new villa sites can be added to this list now.

(123) This is 11 survey sites and two old settlement discoveries.

(124) BEJOR 1977. See also: MERCANDO 1979 and MERCANDO - BRECCIAROLI - PACI 1981.

(125) Due to the present-day occupation of both hillcrests by estates, we could only partly confirm these old discoveries (sites 01-WF65 and L18).

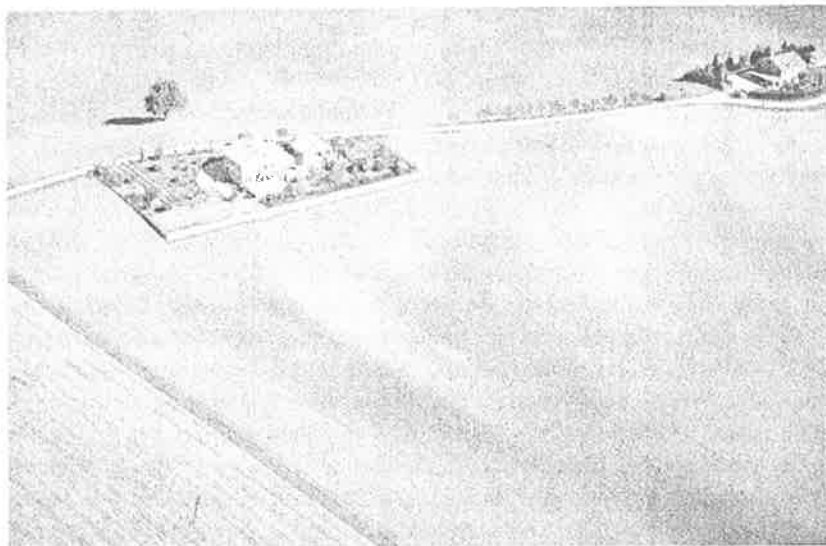


Fig. 19 - Aerial photograph of a site with soil marks of a Roman villa (site 01-WK71) located on a hill crest in the middle valley transect (Treia). Part of the cultural layer is ploughed down the slope (photo F. Vermeulen).

One is a site in the northern part of our survey zone in the municipality of Treia, where a very neat concentration of Roman artefacts was found on the crest of a hilly ridge just south of the Strada Vicinale Chiaravalle (126) (Fig. 19). The concentration consists of many fragments of fine pottery, a good number of roof tiles and several large worked and unworked blocks of sandstone. The artefact concentration is very well delineated and can be seen from a distance as a typical zone of greyish earth. Its main core of building materials has a southwest northeast axis and measures some 20x17 m, but other cores with building materials were found nearby. The greyish zone flows out in the southern direction of the lower slope, where colluviation has resulted in a very large concentration of Roman building materials and pottery. A fresh coin of Vespasian and a roof tile with the stamp SIC belong to the more important finds. This stamp is probably connected with the gens *Sicinia*, known from other epigraphic finds in the territory of *Trea* and elsewhere in March (127).

A second villa (128), in the territory of present-day Pollenza, was found just northeast of the main *Piceni*-settlement area at the foot of Monte Franco. It

(126) Site 01-WK71.

(127) MARENGO 2000, pp. 162 and 180.

(128) Site 01-WH58.

is represented by a very large Roman settlement zone, with dense remains of building materials and pottery. The core of this large site lies on a relatively flat part of the slope, which in Roman times was probably terraced, and which enjoys a great view on the pass, the river Potenza and the Monte Franco. This core can be divided into two distinct areas, probably representing two large buildings on a northwest-southeast longitudinal axis, with a length of some 80 m. Together with several probable outhouses, located south, east and maybe north of the main buildings, this site measures at least 5000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Next to these four types already encountered in the upper valley, two different types of settlement occur in this middle valley transect. They are both clearly connected with the Roman road network in the valley bottom.

**Type 5** is a kind of settlement not easily to be distinguished from normal farm sites in the area. It concerns a site found during field walking on the lower terrace immediately north of the Potenza (129). A circa 6300 m<sup>2</sup> large zone of pottery and building materials revealed intense occupation throughout the whole Imperial period here. A follow up of this discovery by aerial photography in September 2001 confirmed well the existence and exact position of the settlement zone (Fig. 20). In the ploughed soil we could easily distinguish discolorations of a large longitudinal building, possibly with portico, of some 40 by 15 m, positioned alongside and perfectly parallel with the equally well distinguishable trace of an ancient road. The latter is without any doubt the trace of the *diverticulum* of the Via Flaminia which runs in the valley floor parallel with the Potenza. To the east of the large building a smaller almost square building of some 10 m side was visible. It is not unlikely that we must associate this site with a function in connection with the road, such as a farm directly (130) selling to travellers or even a tavern or inn. To support this hypothesis we do not only rely on the very clear association of the building structures and the road, but also on the somewhat different composition of the pottery complex found here. At least striking is the clearly higher number of table wares, *amphorae* and lamps encountered in the surface scatter.

**Type 6** is on the whole not totally different from this roadside settlement, but in this case we suspect that we deal more with a kind of *vicus*. An area of at least some 12000 m<sup>2</sup>, alongside the modern road that links Passo di Treia with the hilltop town of Treia, displays a complex of surface scatters and pottery concentrations which should be considered as one large entity (131). This area

(129) Site 01-WF62 in Treia.

(130) We could bring in mind a passage of Varro (rust. I, 2, 23) who writes that if a *fundus* is located in a crucial area of land transport the owner should profit to include in his farm a shop and even rooms for lodging.

(131) Site 01-WK85. Part of this large site is covered by modern building structures.

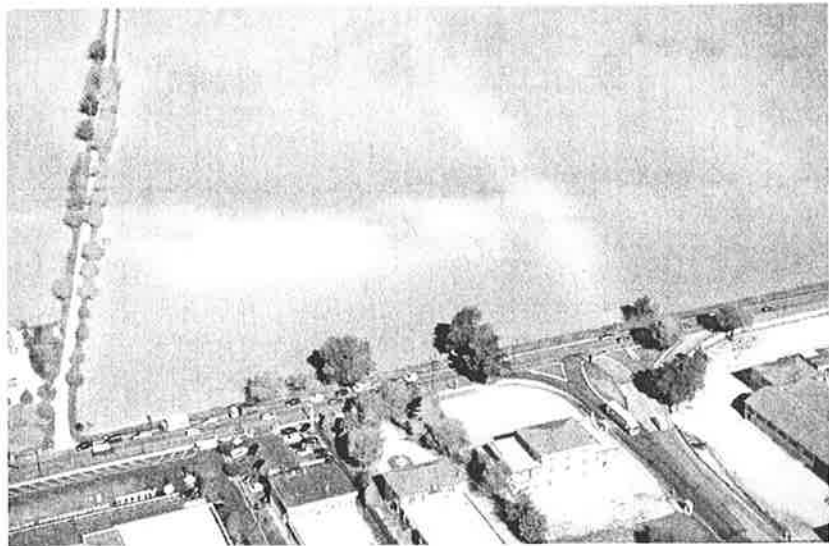


Fig. 20 - Aerial photograph of a site in Treia with soil marks of Roman buildings alongside the main valley road (site 01-WF).

revealed enough Iron Age pottery to suspect also some pre-Roman settlement, a supposition supported by the presence of Piceni burials immediately to the southwest (132) and the southeast (133) of the site. The Roman finds, suggesting continuous occupation from the Late Republic into Late Imperial times, are even more abundant. They are dispersed over several cores within this general area and comprise particularly high numbers of fine pottery wares (*vernice nera*, *terra sigillata*, African red slip...), and a wide variety of building materials, such as brick, concrete, terracotta fragments, pieces of lead and tiles of *opus spicatum* floors. Although farming activities or the storage of farming products could also have been functions of this large settlement, we presume that this small *vicus* was at least partly associated with roadside activities. The position of the settlement area near the strategically important pass and the Iron Age elite site on the Monte Franco, as well as on a possible bifurcation of the valley road leaving the main valley trace from this spot in a westerly direction towards the Roman *municipium Treia* (134), is a strong argument in favour of an interpretation as major road settlement.

(132) MOSCATELLI 1988a, p. 40.

(133) VERMEULEN-MONSIEUR-BOULLART 2002.

(134) This local road would connect the Potenza valley road and *Treia* via the narrow valley of the Río di Palazzolo.



### Chronology

In attendance of more detailed study of the pottery from the middle valley survey transect we can already propose some chronological indications (135).

Again it seems that a substantial part of the settlements (min. 6 out of 13 sites) were occupied in the Late Republican period. This seems particularly the case with the larger sites and the three villas which can be dated with more confidence: all suggest an evolution from pre-existing Late Iron Age settlements. The idea that these grew out of establishments of the local *Piceni* elites is certainly worth considering here, as this area around the Monte Franco is noteworthy for the presence of such pre-Roman elite groups (136). As we also remarked during a recent survey on the town site of *Trea* (137), Roman influence during Republican times came quite early to this area. More than 15 find-spots (sites and off-site) yielded fragments of black gloss ware (*vernice nera*), and the imports and regional imitations of this so-called Campanian ware can be dated from the 3rd to 1st century BC. Some of this material clearly supports an uninterrupted evolution from local *Piceni* farms into more substantial Roman estates.

Almost all sites knew occupation during the Early and Middle Empire. Only one Republican settlement ceased to exist, but it probably shifted to a nearby spot at the foot of the Monte Franco where the largest villa in the survey area was discovered (138). According to the many imports of fine wares, such as North Italian sigillata, and of amphorae from all parts of the Mediterranean, the rural as well as the roadside settlements flourished especially during the first two centuries of our era. The two roadside settlements, as well as four rural sites continued to be inhabited into the Late Empire. Again it seems that, with one exception, the smaller sites (types 1 and 2) suffered most of the Late Roman decline, but as is also visible in the nearby town centre of *Trea* (139) this decline was probably not so spectacular during most of the 4th and early 5th centuries.

### III. Concluding remark

In this paper we stated that systematic archaeological study of rural settlement in Roman Marche is still at its beginning. Much more fieldwork and especially excavations are necessary before we even start to understand the intricate picture and evolution of Roman period habitation in the countryside and its relationship to the development of town life in this Adriatic/Apennine region.

(135) See note 113.

(136) BOULLART 2003.

(137) VERMEULEN-VERHOEVEN forthcoming.

(138) Shift from site 00-WK60 to 00-WK58.

(139) VERMEULEN-VERHOEVEN forthcoming.

The *status quaestionis* presented here learns, however, that contributions to this topic from systematic field surveys can be of great value. The work done in several areas of the northern Marche and now also in the central Marche valley of the Potenza demonstrates at least one substantial aspect of Roman rural settlement history here and that is the importance of regional diversity (140).

Within a geographically compact area as the Potenza valley, surveys based on the same systematically applied methodology but done in two sub-zones with different landscape characteristics and cultural backgrounds, immediately show the importance of regional diversity. Characteristic for the upper valley, with its more mountainous environment and location at greater distance from major towns, is a very dense settlement pattern of small farms and estates. The positioning of these settlements does not differ so much from pre-Roman times and the development of major villas, established according to principles widespread in Tyrrhenian Italy, is very modest. This peri-mountainous area knew a somewhat delayed Republican rural settlement development, displays a very tight network of essentially simple to medium-sized farms during the Principate and shows a more pronounced regrouping of landholding in fewer large farms and villas during the Late Empire. The middle valley zone, characterized by a fertile undulating landscape and laying in the shadow of a Late Bronze and Iron Age elite centre and very close to the flourishing Roman town of *Trea*, knew a more typical Roman development. Settlement dispersion is less dense here, but a greater variety and hierarchy is to be observed, with a more important role for larger and more comfortable villa estates dominating the hills and valley slopes. The traditional, more ecologically determined settlement pattern of pre-Roman times, is partly superimposed by the major role of the road network, which attracted classic roadside settlements more intensely involved in economic movement. The different circumstances of this better connected area also created a basis for a less disorganised late Roman rural development, interacting with the survival of the road system and town life at the nearby centres of *Trea* and *Ricina*.

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(140) This point has also been made in the case of survey work in many other areas of Italy, such as recently in Molise (BARKER 1995).

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