

Novana, its territory and the Pisa South Picenum Survey Project II

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Si presenta in questa sede una sintesi dei risultati emersi dalle campagne 2014-2015 del Pisa South Picenum Survey Project II, relativo alle alte valli dei fiumi Aso e Tenna, nelle Marche meridionali. Dalle ricognizioni intensive effettuate nel territorio comunale di Amandola (Provincia di FM) è emerso un fitto popolamento rurale costituito da piccole fattorie, databili a partire dalla fine del III sec. a.C., e posizionate all'interno di una griglia centuriale. Questo territorio, con tutta probabilità viritim adsignatus a seguito della lex de agro Gallico et Piceno viritim dividundo del 232 a.C., doveva avvalersi di un polo di aggregazione sociale e amministrativa ubicato nelle vicinanze e ben collegato alla viabilità principale. La posizione strategica, un'accurata analisi dell'assetto centuriale e numerosi rinvenimenti archeologici permettono di identificare questa praefectura nell'area dell'attuale Comunanza dove possiamo localizzare l'antica Novana citata da Plinio (N.H., III, 11), un centro piceno che divenne, forse, un foro, e poi una praefectura ed infine un municipium.

Introduction

In 2012, after the publication of the results of the *ager Firmanus* Survey Project, which included the middle and lower valleys of the Tenna and Aso rivers¹, it was thought useful to continue the field research in Southern *Picenum*, focusing on the high valleys of the two rivers, at the foot of the Sibillini Mountains, in a large district considered part of the *agri Firmanus, Faleroniensis, Urbisalviensis* and *Asculanus*. This interest arose from the need to acquire knowledge about the inland piedmont landscapes in order to compare them with those of the low hills and the coastal strip. The aim was to reconstruct a more complete and reliable sub-regional frame, in accordance with the Ancients' perception of *Picenum* as being inhabited from the mountains to the plains and the sea².

Apart from these methodological aspects, the study of this area appeared even more interesting because N. Alfieri and more recently S. Bernetti had hypothesized that *Novana* might have been located in the inland territory of Ascoli³. A project envisaging a careful survey could thus have provided new evidence regarding the *vexata quaestio* of the exact location of this urban centre.

In January 2014 the Pisa South Picenum Survey Project II began⁴: on the basis of the results obtained from geological studies, all the available bibliography and the Archives of the Soprintendenza, it was decided that the first intensive survey campaigns would be conducted in the Amandola Territory (fig. 1). This decision was taken because in this Municipal District, as in the neighbouring one of Comunanza, there had been nu-

*A project financed by the University of Pisa and the Fondazione Cassa Risparmio of Fermo.

¹ MENCHELLI 2012.

² Strabo, 5. 4. 2.

³ ALFIERI 1982; BERNETTI 2009.

⁴ In September 2013 I had requested the Concessione di Ricerche from the Soprintendenza Archeologica delle Marche and moreover I had found the Fondazione Cassa Risparmio Fermo willing to fund this project; shortly afterwards Eleonora Iacopini won a Phd scholarship in Storia and Orientalistica from the University of Pisa for a research project closely linked with this subject E. Iacopini, *South Picenum Survey Project*. Affinamenti Metodologici ed applicazioni tecnologiche innovative per la ricostruzione dei paesaggi piceni, Supervisor prof. G.Salmeri.

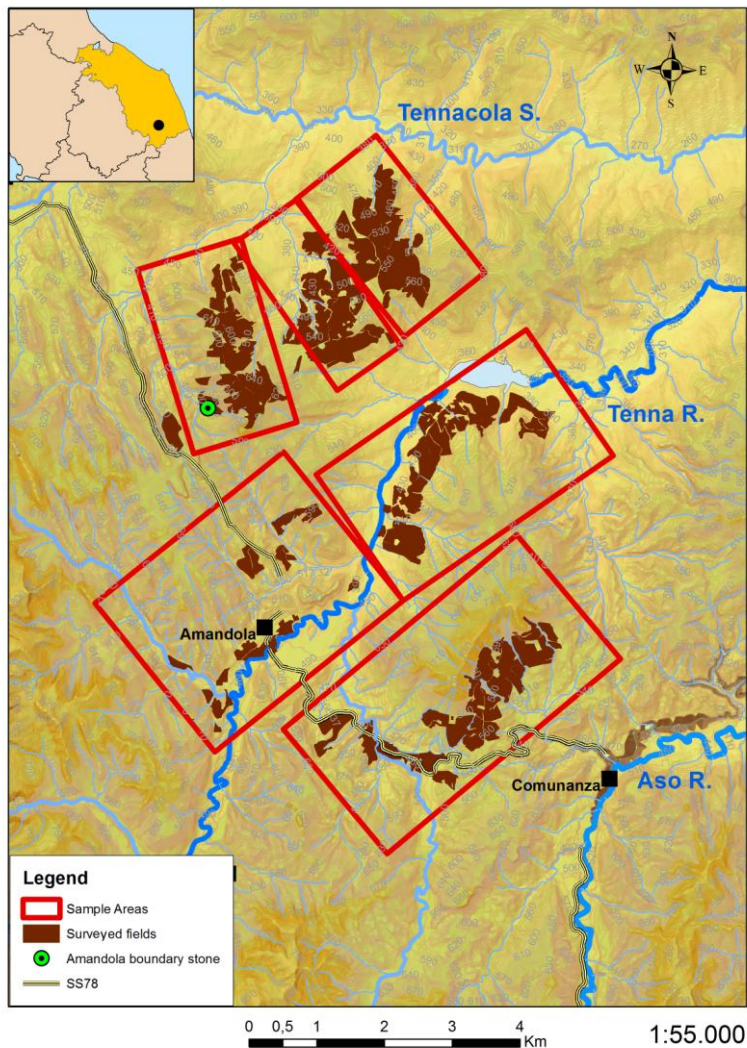


Fig. 1. The studied area.

merous archaeological finds and in the Amandola area, in particular, the presence of centurial limites and a *gromatic* boundary stone, carefully studied previously⁵, could constitute important elements for defining ancient landscapes.

Furthermore, *Novana* or at least part of its territory, as already mentioned, could have been located in this district: we know that it was a *municipium* only referred to by Pliny in a controversially interpreted passage (N.H., III,11). In our view, N. Alfieri proposed the most convincing reading of this passage inasmuch as it was in line with the most accredited critical editions; this reading was recently also adopted by R. König and G. Winkler⁶. The text would be as follows: *Cupra oppidum, Castellum Firmanorum et super id colonia Asculum, Piceni nobilissima. intus Novana. In ora Cluana*. Our interpretation is that in relation to the coastal centres of *Cupra* and *Castellum Firmanorum*, *Asculum* was beyond (*super*) *Castellum*⁷ obviously further inland⁸, and *Novana* even more so (*intus*): the latter clearly in a different location in relation to *Cluana*, another coastal town. Probably Pliny mentioned *Novana* in this

part of the text and not in the Augustan alphabetical list of the inland centres because the town, in one of the cartographic documents utilized, must have appeared in very close proximity to *Asculum*⁹.

Various revisions and interpretations of this text¹⁰ locate *Novana* in districts of the *ager Firmanus* (S. Elpidio a Mare¹¹, Monte Rinaldo¹²) or *ager Asculanus* and/or *Cuprensis* (Montedinove¹³, Carassai¹⁴), but these areas, for historical, topographical and administrative reasons, could not have included an additional *municipium* and its territory¹⁵, as shown by a further careful examination of these *agri* and their related centurial remains (see Iacopini, below).

⁵ It was not found *in situ*: BONVICINI 1978, Bonora Mazzoli 1987, PAGNANI 1987, MOSCATELLI 1991; SISANI 2015 see Iacopini, below, note 62.

⁶ KÖNIG, WINKLER 1988.

⁷ For this use of the term *super* see for example the Oxford Latin Dictionary (edited by P.G.W. GLARE, Oxford 1990), in the entry *super*. 5.

⁸ Ascoli's inland location must have been well known: see Strabo (5. 4. 2): *en te mesogaia*.

⁹ For Pliny's sources regarding this passage see ALFIERI 1982: 212-213.

¹⁰ For example ZEHACKER 1998 (231, 111, 2) justly underlines the contrasting relationship: *intus Novana. In ora Cluana*, but then proposes the version: *Asculum, Piceni nobilissima intus, Novana. In ora Cluana* because, apodictically, "*Novana n'est pas plus intus qu'Asculum*".

¹¹ BONVICINI 1951: 27.

¹² DELPLACE 1993: 184-185 e 226-227. G. PACI (2000b, 133) maintains that the *municipium* of *Novana* derived from this site, from where the inhabitants would have moved to Montedinove.

¹³ A location first proposed by PH. CLUVERIUS (1624: 741). A vast bibliography collected by MARENGO 1999 and BERNETTI 2009.

¹⁴ GALIÉ 1985: see *contra* PACI, ROSSI 1996-1997: 117-2003.

¹⁵ BERNETTI 2009: 101-104 and MENCHELLI 2012: 25.

In the high Tenna and Aso Valleys, in the inland territory North-West of *Asculum*, as already pointed out by N. Alfieri¹⁶, an anomaly in the urbanization system is evident, a lacuna in the poleographical organization which could be an indication of the presence of a town which subsequently disappeared. Moreover, the identification in this district of a byway of the Salaria which linked *Asculum* with *Urbs Salvia*¹⁷, constitutes a further element indicating the strategic importance of this piedmont area which in the vast territory between these two towns could hardly have lacked an urban settlement.

The project, its methodology and the fieldwork

The project is diachronic (in order to identify the succession of landscapes from Prehistory to the Middle Ages) and multidisciplinary, with a global¹⁸ or *total archaeology* approach¹⁹ envisaging the utilization of all the available sources (naturalistic, literary, archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, archival, toponomastic, remote sensing, cartographic and ethnographic). The project's overall approach is strongly based on processual archaeology principles²⁰, mainly evident in the field-work organization, the documentation and quantification procedures, and the GIS software data management. However, special attention is also paid to the post-processual rules, the qualitative and symbolic aspects of the landscapes, particularly marked in this area dominated by the Sybil's Mountains, where water cults (the *sanatio* ritual) are documented in the caves from the Republican period²¹ and sacred apparitions still constitute identity features for the local communities²². In brief, our aim is to reconstruct the *landscapes* as well as the *mindscapes*²³.

From the epistemological point of view, as a great deal of our research starts from the bottom, that is from the clods of ploughed soil, we would be inclined to adopt a bottom-up approach, namely fundamentally inductive, but, in order to avoid arbitrary generalizations we intend to process and discuss the collected data using a multi-scalar perspective (local-regional-Mediterranean), in a stimulating local/global dialectic, thus attempting to reconstruct the complexity of human events in this territory through the centuries.

As regards the field-work²⁴, the intensive survey is carried out in the ploughed terrains to identify the remains of ancient anthropic activities brought to the surface by agricultural machinery. These remains, mostly ceramics, are labelled as Topographic Units and classified as site or off-site assemblages²⁵: obviously the crucial point of topographic research is their interpretation and chronological-cultural-functional categorization. We think that it can be conducted in a reliable way by the surveyor who, benefitting from his subjective experience and skills, processes the data collected by means of careful and objective procedures²⁶.

In the 2014-2015 campaigns a total of 333 hectares of ploughed soil (with 4-5 m corridors between the operators) and 340 hectares of pasture land (with 8-10 m corridors) were surveyed. 90 hectares were covered by crops. The surveyed districts are within 6 sample areas (fig. 1) chosen because of their particular significance for the study of the centurial settlement patterns, given the presence of the known archaeological finds, starting from the Amandola boundary stone, the remains of some *limites* and Roman praedial place names. The forested mountainous districts have not been surveyed: sample areas of this landscape unit will be investigated in the 2016 campaign.

Of the Topographic Units, 83 have been classified as sites and 200 as off-sites, a very high percentage, much higher than had been recorded in the *ager Firmanus*²⁷, evidently determined by the hilly geomorphology

¹⁶ ALFIERI 1982: 206.

¹⁷ CONTA 1982: 426; ALFIERI, GASPERINI, PACI 1985: 37-39, fig. 8 ; DELPLACE 1993: 211, 227.

¹⁸ MANNONI 1985. T. Mannoni's innovative contribution to Landscape archaeology has recently been highlighted by numerous scholars: see BROGIOLO, GIANNICEDDA 2014.

¹⁹ DARVILL 2001.

²⁰ Regarding the excesses of both processual positivism and post-processual subjectivism see BINTLIFF, PEARCE 2011.

²¹ For example at Montemonaco: CIUCCARELLI, MENCHELLI, PASQUINUCCI 2005.

²² The shrine of the Madonna dell'Ambro in Montefortino, built in the 16th cent. in the place where the apparition of the Madonna to a mute shepherd girl occurred in medieval times, is still today the site of devout pilgrimages.

²³ Regarding this topic see ASHMORE, KNAPP 1999. Finally see ATTEMA, SCHÖRNER 2012.

²⁴ For the detailed methodology see MENCHELLI 2012: 15-18; MENCHELLI 2016 forthcoming.

²⁵ Sites and off-sites have to be studied as a whole to reconstruct the continuity and the complexity of ancient landscapes (BINTLIFF 2000; DE HAAS 2012).

²⁶ Naturally the criteria of subjective choices should always be thoroughly explained. On the necessary interpretative challenges see MENCHELLI 2012: 13-22; VOLPE, GOFFREDO 2014: 43.

²⁷ In this territory, which is characterized by lower hills and river valleys, the percentage of off-sites appears to be 58 %: Menchelli 2012: 18.

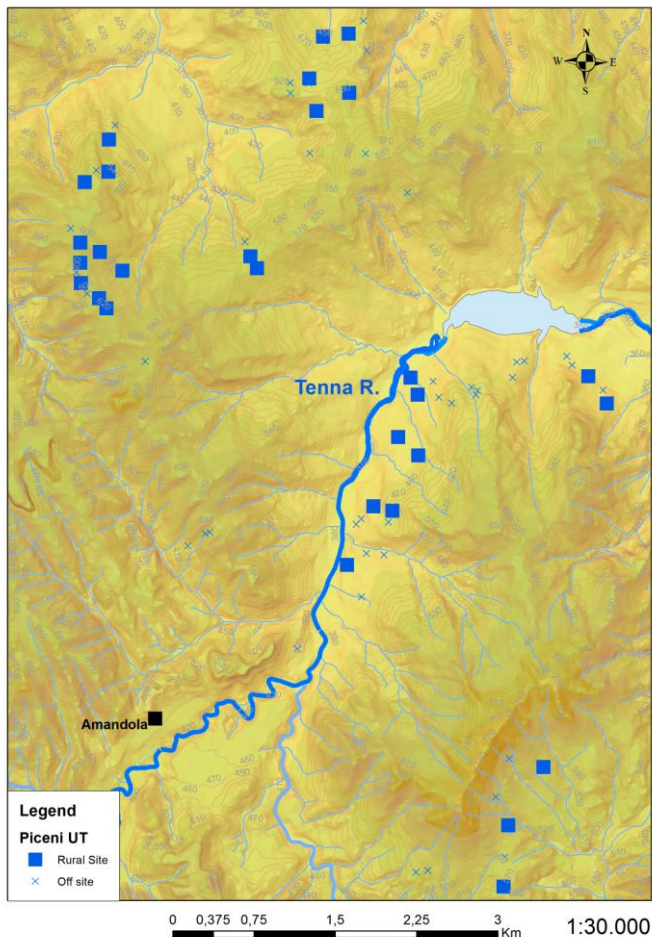


Fig. 2. The Picenian settlement patterns (7th-3rd cent. BC).

and natural and anthropic post-depositional processes, for example by erosion and ploughing which shift the ancient remains down the slopes.

Concerning the prehistoric period, from a preliminary analysis of the data it appears that 13 off-sites and perhaps 3 sites – documented by stone tools and cores of raw materials (nuclei) – were located along the hilly ridges and fluvial terraces, in line with what was observed in other Picenian territories²⁸.

As regards the settlement patterns in subsequent ages, it is obvious that, as in the rest of the region²⁹, starting from the 8th-7th centuries BC the territory was run by elites whose economic power is attested by precious objects cited in bibliographies (fibulae Montedinove type, dated 7th cent. BC. from Amandola³⁰, bronze brooch from Comunanza³¹) or in the Soprintendenza Archives³². Important Picenian settlements are also documented in the following centuries, as for example in the case of the Le Piane site where an exceptional bronze *deinos* (dated 5th cent. BC) was found. Its rim was decorated with applications of full-relief animal sculptures; the workshop is uncertain (Corinthian, Magno-graecan, Etruscan?), but in any case it bears witness to the importing of luxury products also in the inland territories³³.

During the surveys, instead, we only found highly fragmented sherds which can be approximately dated between the late Orientalizing age (late 7th cent. BC) and the 3rd cent. BC. We identified 71 Topographic Units of which 42 were interpreted as off-sites and 29 as sites (fig. 2). The latter appear to be small surface concentrations (5 x 7 m on average), consisting above all of building materials, (with a marked preponderance of curved tiles as against the flat ones), containers of different sizes, vessels for cooking and various purposes. All these items were manufactured in the typical Picenian *impasto*, characterized by progressive chromatic variations ranging from red on the surfaces to dark grey in the nucleus, due to the use of ferric clay and an uncontrolled firing process³⁴. In some cases fragments of clay plaster were also found. The majority of these sites (huts or houses)³⁵ (24 out of 29) also show the presence of Roman materials, clear evidence of the gradual nature of the Roman occupation of the territory.

The dense settlement pattern of the Roman period, moreover well suited to the centuriation grid (see below, E.Iacopini), is documented by 42 Topographic Units with finds dating from the 3rd-2nd cent. BC to the 1st cent. BC and some of them were also from the Imperial period (figs. 3 and 4). Judging from the materials found, most

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²⁸ VERMEULEN, BOULLART 2001: 9 for the Potentia valley; PASQUINUCCI, CIUCCARELLI, MENCHELLI 2005 for the *ager Firmanus*.

²⁹ Finally see CIUCCARELLI 2012a: 21-22 and the cited bibliography.

³⁰ NASO 2000: 153.

³¹ CIUCCARELLI 2012b, 52.

³² At Comunanza there is documentary evidence of necropolises containing metal weapons, difficult to be dated (see Iacopini, below).

³³ The *deinos* is now in the Museo Archeologico di Ancona: Naso 2000: 198-200.

³⁴ MENCHELLI, CIUCCARELLI, PASQUINUCCI 2011; CIUCCARELLI 2012a.

³⁵ For the relationship huts/houses (*casae* in Latin) see CIUCCARELLI 2012a: 92 and the cited bibliography.

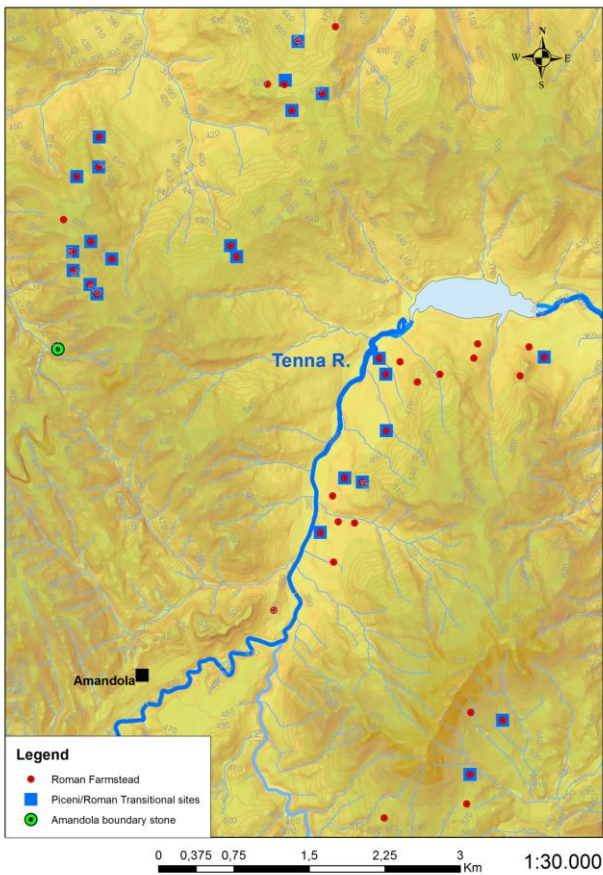


Fig. 3. The 3rd-2nd cent. BC settlement patterns.

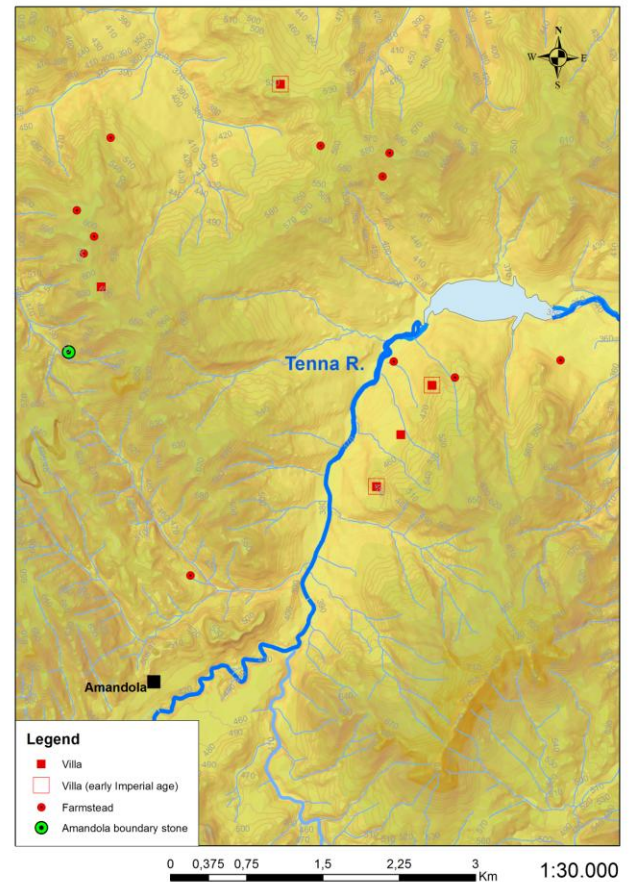


Fig. 4. The 1st cent. BC-2nd cent. AD settlement patterns.

of them were typical Roman farmsteads built in the Piceni region starting from the late 3rd cent. BC³⁶, whose tiles and vessels, even if fragmented, are clearly distinguishable from the Picenian ones on account of their typological (e.g. cutaway tiles)³⁷ and technical (ferric fabrics produced with a controlled firing process; carbonatic fabric for table/ storage vessels) peculiarities³⁸.

These rural sites, some of which could have been Picenian sites that remained in occupation, are characterized by small assemblages less than 25 x 25 m; the findings are of limited and highly standardized typologies (cooking pots; large straight-walled containers; *dolia*, common wares; locally produced thin-walled vessels). In some instances there appear to be examples of a transitional, experimental phase, derived from the contact between the two cultures, in a process in which the Roman colonists adopted local characteristics and the Piceni who remained there absorbed the Roman style, acquiring the conquerors' technological knowledge, in the general context of a rapid integration in the new state³⁹.

5 Topographic Units classified as *villae*, most probably dating from the 1st century BC, have been documented. They consist of larger assemblages (at least 70 x 80 m) which include more important and variegated findings in terms of both typology and provenance continuing until the early Imperial Age (black-gloss pottery; North-Etruscan and North-Italian terra sigillata; Latial-Campanian thin walled pottery; Aegean cooking ware). Among these five Topographic Units, there is the large villa in the locality of Le Spiazette (127 m N-S x 40 E-W); adjacent to it there was, to the South-West, a necropolis discovered in 2006⁴⁰ in which two stelae, a sar-

³⁶ For the *ager Firmanus* see MENCHELLI 2012: 50-51 and M.R.CIUCARELLI in CASCI CECCACCI, CIUCARELLI, DEMMA, VENANZONI forthcoming.

³⁷ The cutaway characteristic, which facilitated the meshing of the tiles in the roof, is considered typical of the Roman Army's construction methods: see MENCHELLI 2012: 62-64.

³⁸ See in general MENCHELLI 2012: 59-63.

³⁹ For the historical and administrative aspects: RAGGI 2014: 85-88.

⁴⁰ Cf. Arch.Sopr.Marche, Za 53/0Prot.1902 (3.02.2006)..

cophagus and a grave were found⁴¹. In this late Republican period, 5 of the pre-existing farmsteads would appear to have still been active, while 6 new ones came into being (fig. 4).

From this preliminary analysis of the Topographic Units, there would therefore seem to have been 3 chronological phases in the settlement patterns of this territory:

- 1) Picenian phase (late 7th-3rd cent. BC)⁴² (fig. 2).
- 2) Romanization phase documented by *centuriatio* and small sites with finds which were Piceni/Roman transitional or Roman or of Roman-derivation (late 3rd-2nd cent. BC) (fig. 3)
- 3) The subsequent phase of economic reorganization characterized by larger farmsteads or *villae* (1st cent. BC.- Imperial Age) (fig. 4) nevertheless always included in the centurial grid (see Iacopini, below). This reorganizational pattern was not very successful because only 3 *villae* have materials from the 2nd cent. AD and later the territory appears not to have been settled for agricultural activities.

The small farmsteads which document the Romanization process in this territory almost certainly would appear to have been the result of the application of *Gaius Flaminius's* Plebiscite of 232 BC: the *lex de agro Gallico et Piceno viritim dividundo*⁴³. In this district, which was traversed by strategically important roads, the Romans, as was their usual practice, made use of the *ager publicus* to carry out viritane land distributions in the centuriated territory.

In accordance with the results of the field-work (see Iacopini below) the literary sources suggest that the assigned properties were not particularly large⁴⁴, but the settlers could supplement the production of their farms by exploiting, through other activities (seasonal cultivations, livestock breeding, gathering wood, hunting and fishing), the broad sectors of the unassigned *ager publicus*⁴⁵, as for example in the case of the State-owned *Montes Romani*, documented in the nearby *Asculum*⁴⁶.

As in 216 BC., following the Battle of Canne, the *dictator M. Iunius Pera* had carried out an extraordinary conscription of the *cohortes ex agro Piceno et Gallico*⁴⁷, it cannot be excluded that in this territory as well there were colonists who could serve in the army.

The third phase in the settlement patterns, characterized by larger and richer farmsteads/*villae* judging by the survey results, can most probably be linked with the municipalisation process which starting from 90 BC invested the whole peninsula, and also *Picenum*, in different ways and times⁴⁸. As is well known, viritane allotments scattered throughout the countryside had to belong to a centre which would guarantee Rome's control, in the first place for carrying out *censi*, army recruitment and the administration of justice, as well as facilitating economic-social activities such as the periodic markets. In the Latin sources these centres were defined in different ways (*pagus*, *vicus*, *forum*, *conciliabulum*, *castellum*, *oppidum*), and those where there were *praefecti iure dicundo*, sent by the Urban Praetor to administer justice locally, were called *praefectura*⁴⁹. The latter in *Picenum* must have been numerous and long lasting, up to the mid-1st cent. BC, so that they would be able to provide Caesar with *omnibus rebus* when he marched through the region in 49 BC⁵⁰.

⁴¹ One stele made of Apennine limestone bears a 9-line mutilated inscription published by G. PACI (2010). The other, found during our field-work, only consists of three letters.

⁴² The fragmentary nature of the finds does not permit us to identify more precisely the chronology of the sites.

⁴³ About this subject, see the most recent studies: SISANI 2007: 129-139; MARENGO 2012; RAGGI 2014: 85-88. The wider interpretation which also included Southern *Picenum* and not only the *agro gallico piceno* (that is the *ager Gallicus* located in the Picenian region as understood by GABBA 1979: 161, note 3) had been supported, *inter alia*, by archaeological and epigraphic data collected in recent decades (cf. MOSCATELLI 1985).

⁴⁴ Concerning the land distributions to Scipio's veterans in 201 BC, Livy states that each of them received a *duo iugera* allotment for every year of military service. (Liv., 31.49.5). About this topic cf. SISANI 2007: 129-139.

⁴⁵ Regarding this subject, the following work is still of fundamental importance: GABBA, PASQUINUCCI 1979: particularly 23-24; GABBA 1985. For the juridical aspects of the exploitation of *pascua, silvae et montes* cf. CAPOROSI COLOGNESI 2011-2012.

⁴⁶ *Liber Coloniarum* II, 252, 21-27, and 254, 11-13 ed. Lachmann; GABBA, PASQUINUCCI 1979: 22-23; RAGGI 2014. For the economic system of the *saltus* see CAMPAGNOLI, GIORGI 2004: 190-194.

⁴⁷ Liv. 23.14.2-3.

⁴⁸ The bibliography concerning this subject is enormous: see LAFFI 1973 and LAFFI 2007. Particularly for the *Picenum* region SISANI 2007: 257-273; MARENGO 2012: 363 and the cited bibliographies.

⁴⁹ Fest. 262L: *praefecturae eae appellabantur in Italia, in quibus et ius dicebatur, et nundinae agebantur, et erat quaedam earum res publica, neque tamen magistratos suos habebant. In qua his legibus praefecti mittabantur quotannis qui ius dicerent.* See LAFFI 1973; HUMBERT 1978. Regarding the *vici, pagi* and other rural communities cf. TARPIN 2002; TODISCO 2004; SISANI 2007; SISANI 2011.

⁵⁰ Caes., Civ., 1.15.1: *Cunctae earum regionum praefecturae libentissimis animis eum recipiunt exercitumque eius omnibus rebus iuvant.* Concerning the *praefecturae* still in existence in Augustan times see SISANI 2007: 271-273 and MARENGO 2012: 365-371.

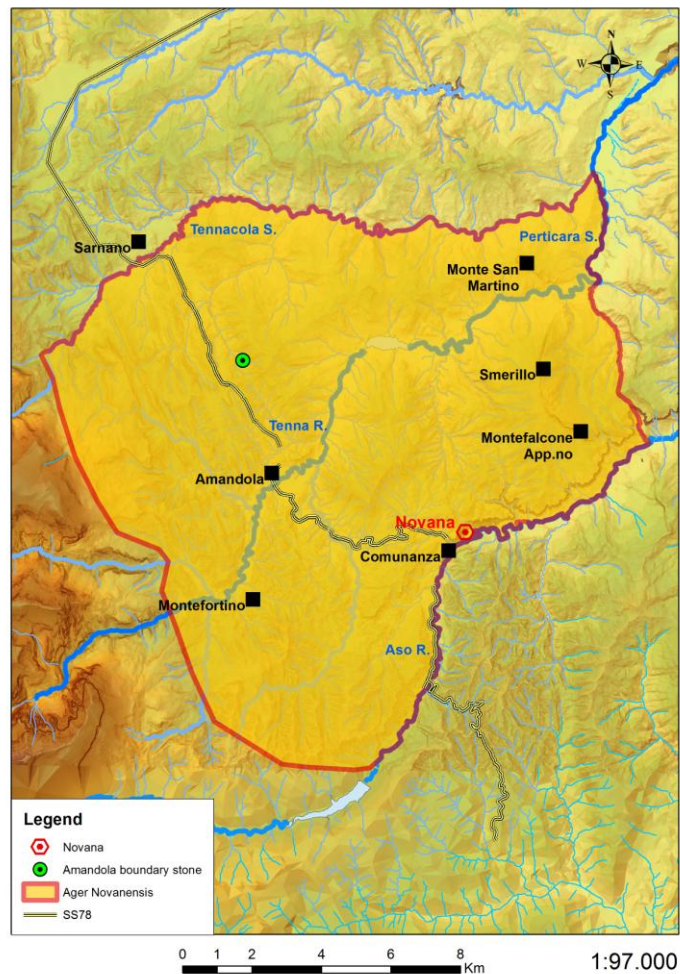
Fig. 5. Novana and the hypothesized boundaries of the ager Novanensis.

Also in the nearby *ager Asculanus*, for example, there is evidence regarding a *praefectus*, *Gnaeus Staius* who, apart from his other duties, was called on, about the mid-2nd cent. BC, to construct a road which from North of the town had to proceed towards *Falerio* and *Firmum*, at least on the basis of the site where the milestone referring to the magistrate was found⁵¹. It is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that also the territory settled by the farmsteads which we have surveyed (probably *viritim adsignatus* in application of the *Gaius Flaminius's* Plebiscite) must have been administered by a *praefectura*.

It would most likely have been located near this territory in the most suitable area for a settlement centre and therefore in the valley floor on a plateau on the left bank of the River Aso, at the intersection of important roads still used today (SP 78 from Ascoli to Macerata along the inland hills; SP 238 from the Sibillini Mountains to the sea).

Today this area is covered by the small town of Comunanza which a careful analysis of the centurial grid and the numerous archaeological findings (see Iacopini below) permit us to identify as the site of the ancient *Novana*, a Picenian centre which perhaps became a *forum*⁵², a *praefectura* and finally a *municipium* (fig. 5).

(S.M.)



The boundaries of the ager Novanensis

While studying the possible location of the *ager Novanensis* one cannot avoid analyzing the *municipia's* borders closer to it, *Asculum*, *Firmum* and *Falerio*, a subject which has been thoroughly examined by many authors.

Among these, P. Bonvicini in 1978⁵³, concerning the *Falerio* borders, believes that they were marked as follows: on the eastern side, from the Roberto ditch towards Fermo; to the North from the Ete Morto Torrent towards *Pausulae*; to the South from the Ete Vivo River to the *Novana* border; to the West with the Amandola foothill *praefectura*, which would have been, from Sarnano to Montefortino, in the *Falerio* jurisdiction.

With this subregional picture in mind, the author locates the *Ager Novanensis* between Montottone, Monsampietro Morico, Monteleone di Fermo, and considers it, to the East, bordering with *Firmum*, to the North and West with *Falerio* and the to the South possibly with *Asculum*, since he does not clearly specify either the territory's extension or its Southern border (fig. 6).

⁵¹ PACI 2000a: 343-349. For the finding of the milestone see CONTA 1982: 208-209. Regarding the course of the road see the recent work GIORGI 2014: 231-232.

⁵² According to S. Sisani the name *Novana* may be traced back to a *forum* of Gracchan times (2011: 570-571). For the nearby colonial settlement called *Pollentia* most probably in Gracchan times and afterwards *Urbs Salvia* see PERNA 2014.

⁵³ BONVICINI 1978.

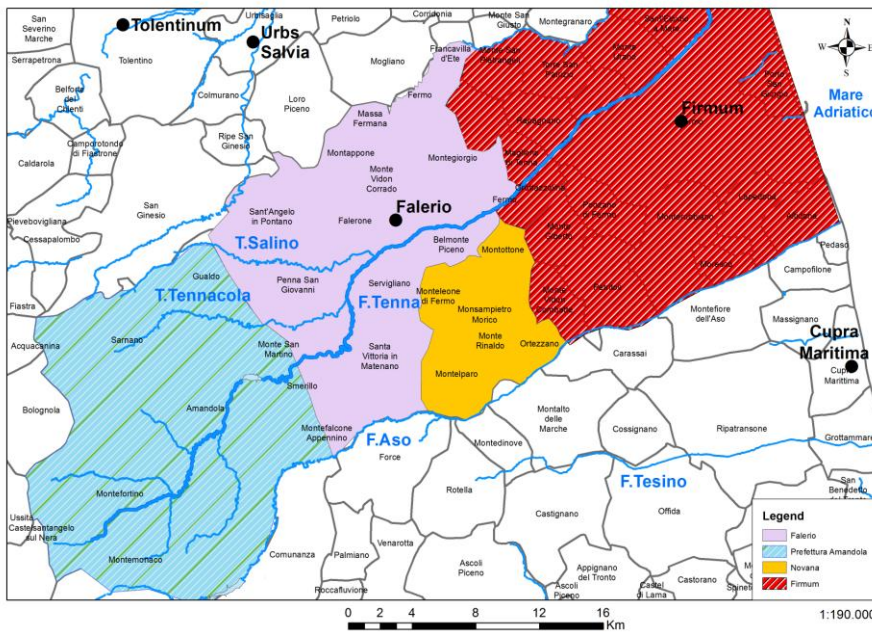
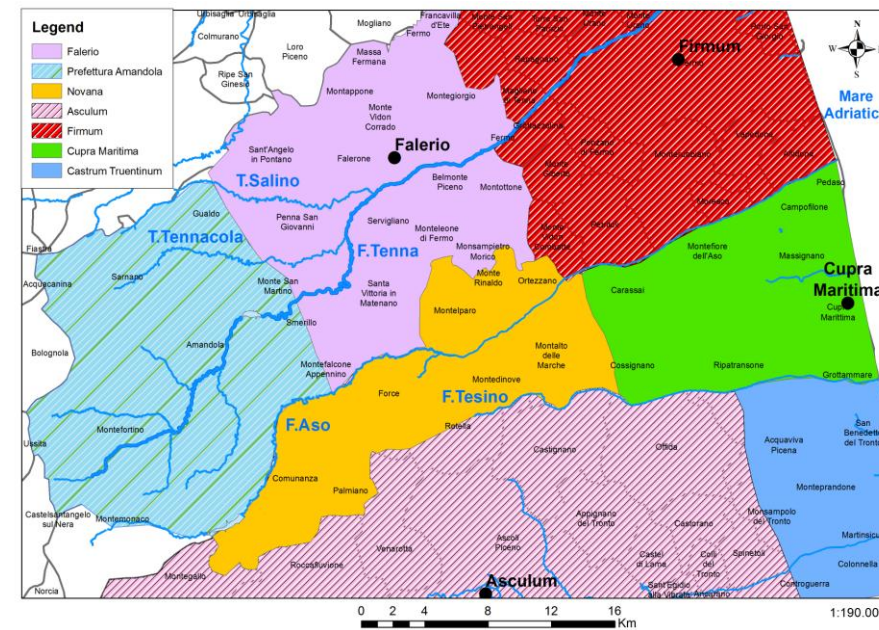


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of the municipal boundaries according to BONVICINI 1978.

Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the municipal boundaries according to DELPLACE 1993.

G. Paci dealt with this whole subject stating that *Novana's* first location was at Monte Rinaldo, where the well-known Hellenistic sanctuary was located, and that the town was later transferred to Montedinove⁵⁴. This thesis was also poused by Ch. Delplace⁵⁵, who considered the *Novana* territory as being bounded by the Indaco torrent to the South, Ortezzano to the West, the Apennines to the East and the Esino Torrent to the North (fig. 7).

This thesis, however, was at variance with G. Conta's analysis⁵⁶: she stated that the Ascolan territory included all the land South of the Aso River as has been confirmed by two important inscriptions found in Carassai and in Montalto, both of which mention the Fabia tribe. They constitute epigraphic evidence that considerably reduces the extent of the *Novana* territory thereby contradicting the Delplace reconstruction, since the given land is limited and is unusually shaped, as recently observed by S. Bernetti⁵⁷.



The latter, while disagreeing in general terms with the French scholar, accepts that the centuriation straddling the Aso River between Monte Rinaldo and Ortezzano belonged to the *Falerio municipium* and not to *Novana* as Ch. Delplace stated.

At this point the territory of *Falerio* appears to cover a total area of 241 sq km for P. Bonvicini, 275 sq km for Ch. Delplace and 329 sq km for S. Bernetti. If we then bear in mind that the first two authors add the territory of the so called "Prefettura di Amandola" to that of *Falerio*, the area belonging to this town becomes, respectively, a total of 527 and 561 sq km⁵⁸ (see fig. 8).

⁵⁴ See note 12.

⁵⁵ DELPLACE 1993.

⁵⁶ CONTA 1982.

⁵⁷ BERNETTI 2009.

⁵⁸ The first number refers to the territory of *Falerio*, while the second includes the "Prefettura di Amandola" territory.

Fig. 8. Reconstruction of the municipal boundaries according to BERNETTI 2009.

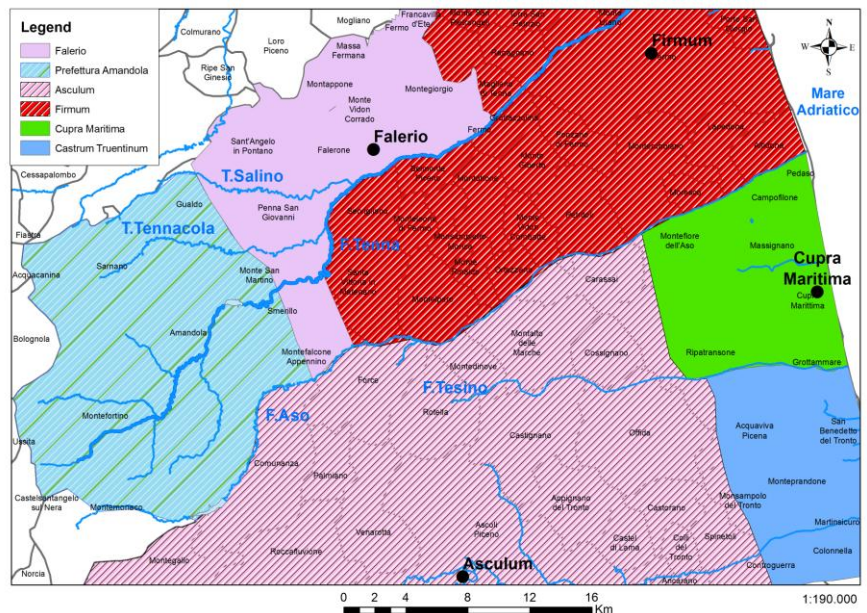
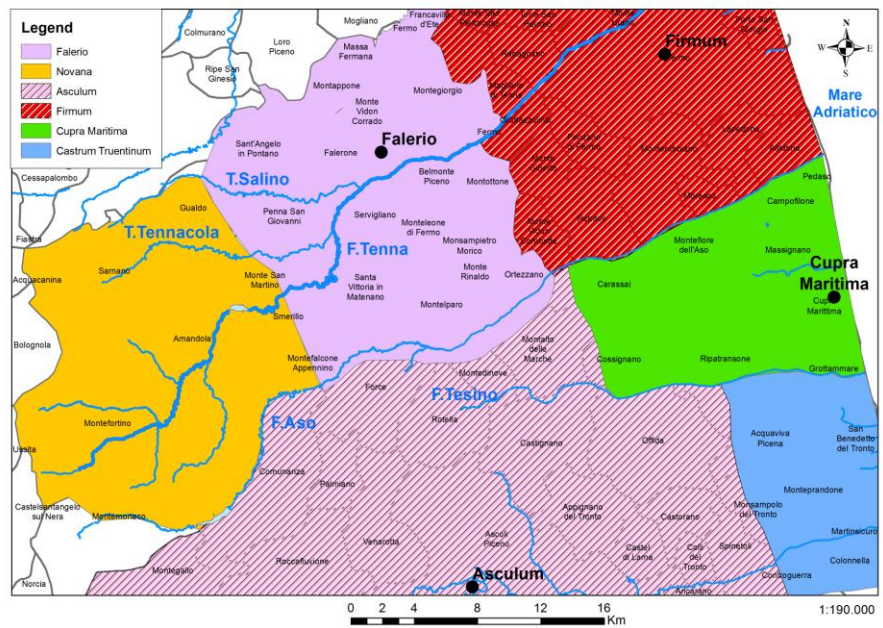
Fig. 9. Reconstruction of the municipal boundaries of Firmum (according to MENCHELLI 2012) and Asculum (according to Conta 1982). As regards Falerio we present the boundaries suggested by Bonvicini but excluding the area occupied by the ager Firmanus in Menchelli's reconstruction, while the so-called Prefettura di Amandola presents the area proposed by Bonvicini.

Finally, S. Menchelli has recently studied the issue of the *Firmum*, *Falerio* and *Asculum* borders⁵⁹ and has decidedly reduced *Falerio*'s territory on the basis of the study of *Firmum*'s *pertica*. She stated that the Fermo's borders were marked by the sea to the East; by the Ete Morto River in the North, by the Fosa Torrent and the Roberto ditch in the North West; by the natural border of the Tenna River between *Firmum* and *Falerio* in the West; by the Aso River, separating the *ager Firmanus* from the *Asculanus*, in the South (fig. 9). Therefore, according to this reconstruction the entire territory between the Tenna and Aso Rivers belonged to *Firmum*, while the *Novana* territory would have been located within the foothill area now part of the Municipalities of Amandola, Sarnano and Comunanza.

Accepting S. Menchelli's theory gave the initial impulse to my ongoing PhD research, whose main aim is to identify the *centuriato* in this district and at the same time to define the borders of the *ager Novanensis* in relation to the *Falerio*, *Firmum* and *Asculum* territories.

Centuriation and settlement patterns in the Ager Novanensis.

The main studies regarding the Roman centuriation in the area between Sarnano and Amandola were carried out by P. Bonvicini (1978), G. Pagnani (1987)⁶⁰ and U. Moscatelli (1991)⁶¹. On the basis of the *decussis* on the famous *Amandola* boundary stone⁶², P. Bonvicini, with regard to the *pertica* of the Falerian *Praefectura*,



⁵⁹ MENCHELLI 2012: 23-25.

⁶⁰ PAGNANI 1987.

⁶¹ MOSCATELLI 1991.

⁶² It was found in the locality Cese of Amandola in the 1950s. (ANNIBALDI 1955). Its text (D IIII K XI XIII) has been interpreted in various ways. BONVICINI 1972 said that the ordinal XI had been deleted or carved superficially. In many editions however the ordinal XI was simply omitted; see BONVICINI 1978, CONTA 1982.

maintained that the piedmont centuriation, having a 20 *actus* pattern⁶³, was oriented with inverted axes and the main *decumanus* parallel to the Apennines in a North-South direction, while the fourth *decumanus* passed through the site of Cese⁶⁴.

According to the author the area East of Cese was not subject to centuriation: he based his hypothesis essentially on the intersection of the two T-shaped axes on the *gromatic* boundary *stone* and on the geomorphological conditions on the Eastern hills which were considered unsuitable for centuriation. According to his reconstruction the main *kardo*, which coincided with the straight part of the SS 78 in the S.Ginesio municipality, was also the Southern border of the *Urbs Salvia municipium*⁶⁵.

G. Pagnani added to the Bonvicini thesis; in fact he basically accepted the orientation of the axes, their inverted disposition and the idea that the piedmont centuriation would have extended from the foot of the Sibillini mountains to the locality Cese and it would not have proceeded any further eastwards, even though he admitted that the eastern area must have been subject to the land distribution, since praedial toponyms, such as *Vesciano* and *Anniano*, were found. In his work, he offered a different and more precise location of the *decumani* and their inclination; even though he did not provide adequate cartographic support indicating the *limites*, he identified the right orientation and inclination of the centurial axes⁶⁶ and felt that the *limitatio* should be extended northwards beyond the Tennacola Torrent.

Furthermore, unlike Bonvicini, G.Pagnani tried to explain the double ordinal numbers associated with the K carved on the *gromatic* boundary *stone*. He believed that XI was the northward *kardo* number, while XIII was the southward one; moreover, the author believed that the land between the Salino Torrent and the Aso River was traversed by a total of 24 W/E oriented axes.

This thesis was rejected by U. Moscatelli, who highlighted the significance of the couple of coordinates of the ordinals on the *gromatic* boundary *stone*, namely D IIII K XI and he stated that number XIII must have had a different meaning, basing himself on two passages of the *Gromatici Veteres*⁶⁷, who gave a list of letters which could be carved on a *terminus*, either alone or in pairs, and whose sum indicated either the distance to the next *gromatic* boundary *stone* or the total length of the axis. U. Moscatelli accepted the latter, interpreting number XIII as the total length of the XI *kardo*, 4200 feet. He agreed that the centuriated area was located between the Sibillini mountains and the locality of Cese, but on the basis of the cartography⁶⁸ he identified two centurial grids (A-B) whose orientations, inclinations, modules and extensions were completely different from what had been hypothesized by the above-mentioned Authors.

According to his reconstruction the orientation goes back to the classical N/S for the *kardines* and E/W for the *decumani*; he based this theory on the following points:

- 1) As the centuriated area was far from any urban centre, Moscatelli, taking into consideration a passage of *Hyginus*⁶⁹, stated that the *decumanus* should have had an E/W orientation⁷⁰.
- 2) As he considered the territory between Amandola and Sarnano subject to *Falerio*, obviously its centuriation should have complied with the characteristics stated in the passage from the *Liber Colonialium*, in which the *decumani* are called *maritimi* (East) and the *kardines* are called *gallicis* (North). Therefore on the basis of this new orientation and his interpretation of the *decussis* U. Moscatelli does not consider that the area North of the locality of Cese was centuriated.

From this analysis of the published works, we can summarize the common points of the three authors under consideration as follows:

⁶³ Equal to 710.25 m.

⁶⁴ Monte della Rocca, Pian di Pieca, Vallato, Gabba, Gattari, the municipal road of Garulla, Paterno, Coletta, Cemetery of Montefortino, L'Incasso and finally La Rota.

⁶⁵ About this topic see also Campagnoli, DALL'AGLIO 1997.

⁶⁶ Sites crossed by *decumani*; D IV: the Church of S. Croce in Cardagnano, Casale, Pisarelli, Tennacola; D III: Carotondo, Vecciola di sopra, Vecciola di sotto, il Piano, Cardagnano, Ancona, Villaggio I Rustici, la Cupa; D II: Valcaiano, Sarnano, Marinella, Mucchi, Quadra, Canale di Pietra; D I: no reconstruction; DM: San Cassiano, Caldarella, Monte Morro, Collina, Madonna della pace, Sant'Angelo in Montespino. According to the author the centuria was 705 x 705 metres.

⁶⁷ LACHMANN, 17-25 p.309; LACHMANN, 14-30, 1-8: 358-359.

⁶⁸ Based on aerial photography and the current division of the fields.

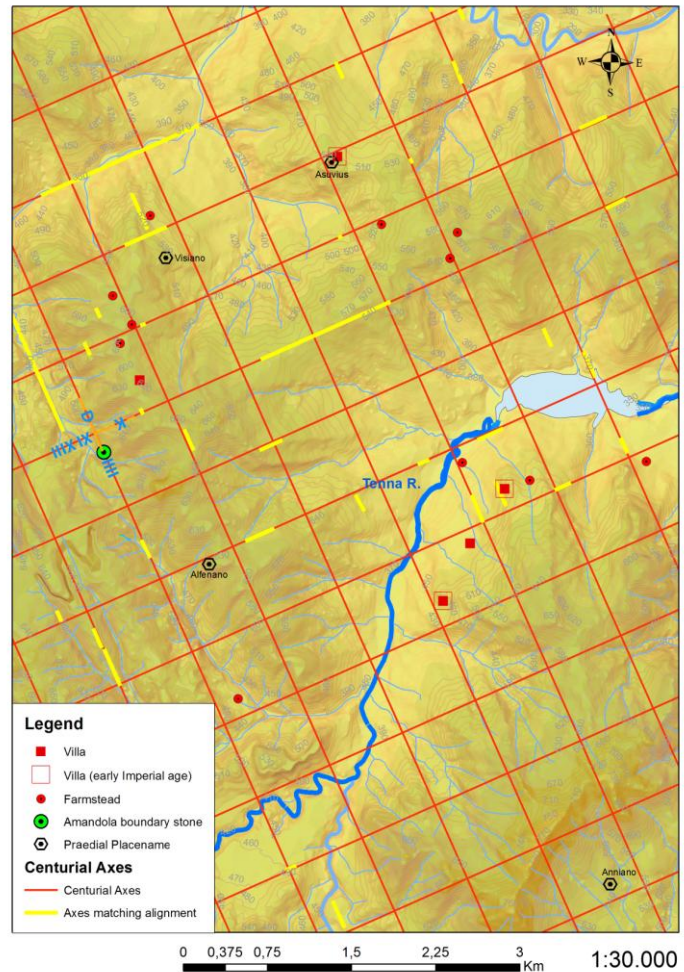
⁶⁹ *Hyginus Gromaticus, De limitibus constituendis*. CAMPBELL 2000: 152, 18-21.

⁷⁰ P. BONVICINI (1978: 56) on the basis of another passage of *Hyginus Gromaticus (De limitibus constituendis)*, CAMPBELL 2000: 136, 24-25), maintained that the *decumanus* was in a NS direction as the *Gromatici* could have planned it to be located along the main axis of the territory to be distributed.

Fig. 10. Part of the Amandola territory with the surveyed sites and the hypothesized centurial grid.

- 1) The centuriation was located between the Sibillini Mountains to the West and the locality of Cese to the East. The Eastern area of the latter had not been centuriated, both because of the interpretation of the *decussis* on the boundary stone and because of the physiographic characteristics of the district.
- 2) On the basis of the chronology of the boundary stone, the centuriation can be dated in the Augustan period. The centuriated territory belonged to *Falerio* because it was the nearest urban centre and also because the *gentes* documented in the district by means of epigraphical and toponymic evidence were subject to this city⁷¹.

As shown above, the interpretation of this boundary stone is very problematic. On the basis of the geomorphological peculiarities, the gromatic sources, the cartographic data and the survey results I think that the ordinal number XIII belonged to a specific *centuria* and not to the whole *Novana pertica*, and I interpret the orientation of the decussis as represented in fig. 10.



The cartographic study seemed an essential premise in order to test the above-mentioned theories.

I began my PhD research by obtaining all the available cartographic data and then analyzing them by means of a G.I.S platform. This work requires precise georeferencing, which is of fundamental importance for reconstructing the Roman *limitatio* of this area. In particular both modern cartography (geological, geomorphological and IGM cartography⁷², orthophotography) and the historic one (*Catasto Gregoriano*⁷³) were subject to mosaicking, georeferencing and vectorization. These operations were indispensable for a synchronic study of the changes in land use and to identify toponyms and alignments which have vanished from modern cartography. Consequently 1181 aligned elements (roads, property boundaries, torrents, canals) having NW/SE and SW/NE orientations have been identified⁷⁴.

Different centurial grids were overlaid on these elements in order to verify which module coincided to the greatest extent with the cartographic evidence. The 20 x 20 *actus* module (about 710 m) was the one which corresponded most closely with the alignments and also with the area where the boundary stone was originally located: it must have been fixed at the axes intersection on a sandstone plateau, about 150 m north of the site where it was found⁷⁵ (fig. 10).

⁷¹ BONVICINI 1978: 50. The author refers to the *gens Cardana* from Cardagnano and the *gens Servilia* from Servigliano.

⁷² Municipalities of Amandola, San Martino, Montefortino, Sarnano (1907, 1954 and 1996).

⁷³ Municipalities of Amandola, Sarnano, Gualdo, Comunanza. The data (roads, topography and divisions of land) have been stored and processed in a G.I.S. platform.

⁷⁴ The identification of alignments in the historic maps of the Municipalities of Monte San Martino, Montefalcone and Smerillo is in progress.

⁷⁵ The dense vegetation prevented the identification of the exact location of the gromatic stone.

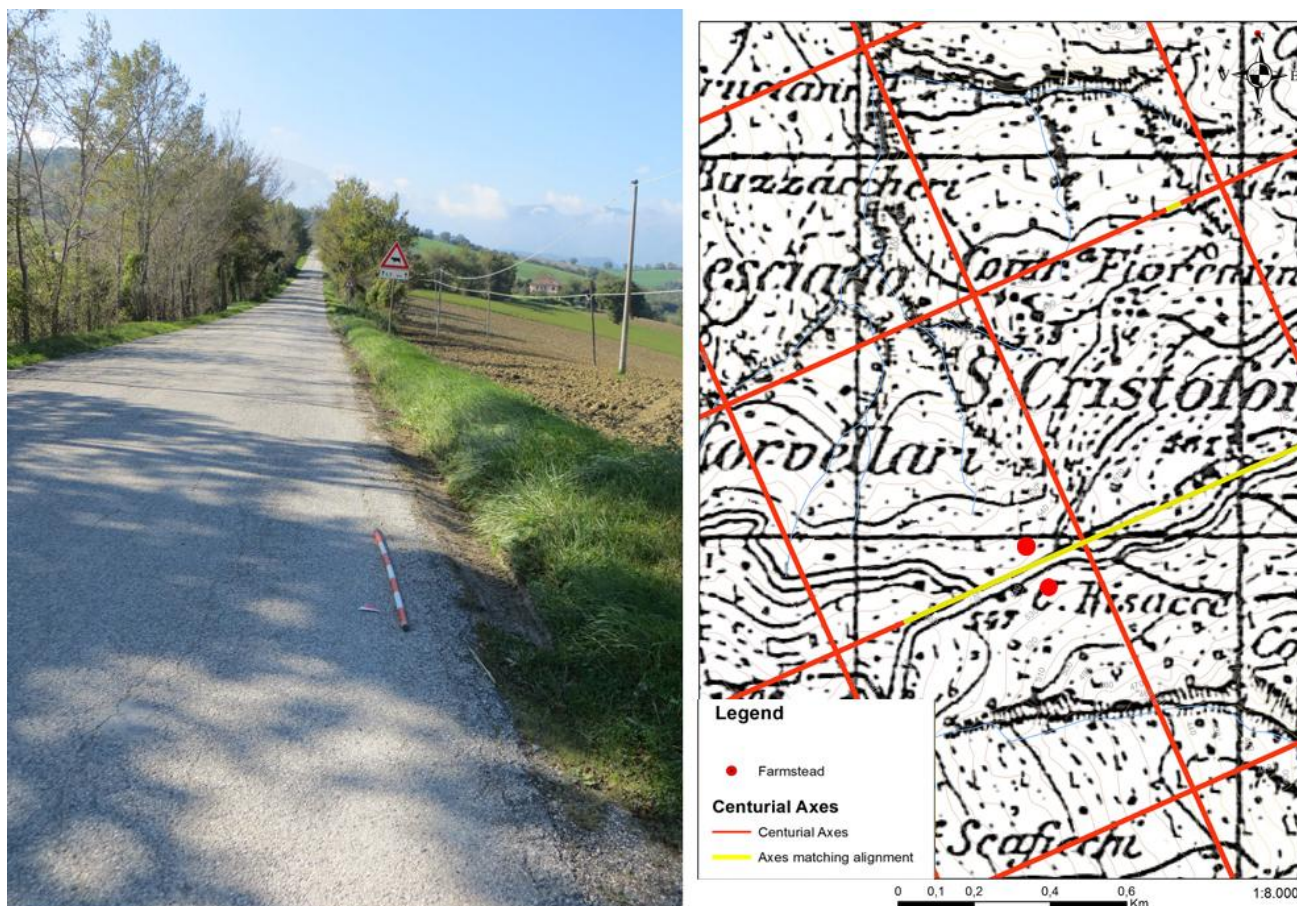


Fig. 11 Amandola, San Cristoforo (IGM 1907). An axis matching the centuriation grid. Photograph of this axis taken from the East (3 November 2014).

The general NW/SE orientation of the area corresponds with its geomorphological features, therefore many of the identified alignments cannot totally be attributed to the centuriation, but rather to the characteristics of the natural environment, above all the water drainage, which received a great deal of attention on the part of the Roman Gromatici.

In this centuriation grid, the Cardagnano-Rustici axis is extremely important, because it most probably corresponded with a part of the *via Salaria Gallica* that connected *Sena Gallica* with *Asculum*. This particular part was probably also used in the pre-Roman period⁷⁶ and at the moment it is a sector of the current SS 78, passing through *Urbs Salvia*, Macchie di S. Ginesio⁷⁷, Pian di Pieca⁷⁸, Sarnano, Amandola and Comunanza. This hypothesis can be further corroborated by interpreting the inscription of the Amandola *gromatic* boundary stone to the effect that the Cardagnano-Rustici axis should be the *V decumanus* and therefore one of the *limites* called *quintarii* or *actuaria* since they could have constituted *viae publicae*⁷⁹. Other well documented centuriation axes include the one passing straight through San Cristoforo, along whose sides we surveyed two farmsteads (fig. 11), and the Cerretana⁸⁰ and Rocca (in the Montefortino municipality) main roads.

⁷⁶ The site of Le Piane, where the bronze Dinos was found (see Menchelli, above), is only 800 m. from this track.

⁷⁷ A milestone, dating from the 4th century AD, on which the numeral II was carved, was found in the crypt of the Benedictine Abbey of Santa Maria delle Macchie, see GASPERINI 1980: 1041-1053.

⁷⁸ The Toponym (COLUCCI 1793, XIX Appendice Documenti n°1, a.996) might indicate a curve in the road. *Pieca* derives from the Latin word *Plica* = bend (PELLEGRINI 1981). The ordinal XII mentioned in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* could refer to the Pian di Pieca that is about 17 km from Urbisaglia (see GASPERINI 1980). XII are also the miles that separate Pian di Pieca from Amandola, from where perhaps a secondary internal road following the course of the Tenna River reached Piane di Falerone.

⁷⁹ *Hyginus Gromaticus, De limitibus constituendis*, CAMPBELL 2000: 135, 37.

⁸⁰ The toponym is mentioned in SASF, Codex 1030 n°1, (977 AD).

The cartographic research was complemented by a study of the archival material in order to find the toponyms⁸¹ useful in reconstructing the historical landscapes, paying particular attention to the Roman period. I have consulted published documents found in the Municipal Historical Archives⁸², in the Ecclesiastical Historical Archives⁸³, diplomatic codes published by eighteenth-century authors (Giuseppe Colucci, Ughelli) and other sources such as Gregory the Great's *Epistolae*, the *Codex diplomaticus Longobardus*, *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Rationes Decimarum*⁸⁴.

From these documents I was able to gather and record in a specially created database the numerous toponyms, relating to the area in question, which ranged from 598 to the early 1600s. Precise localisation is necessary to link sites with specific anthropic activities, such as a road place name with ancient land routes no longer in existence, or a praedial place name with a centuriated territory. A total number of thirty-one praedial toponyms were found, thirteen of which are confirmed by epigraphic evidence from *gentes* well known in the *V Regio*, such as Anniano, Alfenano, Ceciliano, Iuliano, Cammurani, and eight other toponyms having a gromatic origin: S. Maria della Meta, Arca, Arcelle⁸⁵, Meteme, Piobbico, i Mucchi, Butondoli and S. Nicola in Peticaria, documented since 1152⁸⁶ (fig. 10).

The toponomastic data confirm this grid hypothesis, as well as the location of some churches, tabernacles and crosses which symbolically maintained the Roman centuriation, replacing a *gromatic boundary stone* with a cross or a chapel⁸⁷ such as S. Pietro de Rovitulo⁸⁸, S. Maria de Bussonico⁸⁹, S. Ilario⁹⁰, S. Giovanni in Collicello, S. Lorenzo de Jonperta⁹¹ and Sant'Angelo in Montespino. The latter is an important and ancient parish⁹² of the Diocese of Fermo, located precisely at the intersection of two centurial axes and in its crypt there are many reutilized Roman architectural elements varying in typology, dimensions and chronology.

The excavations in the 1950s in this church did not bring to light ancient structures *in situ*, therefore various hypotheses about the origin of the artefacts have been put forward: from places of worship (of the *Lares Compitales*) situated at the intersection of the centurial axes, or, given the high stylistic level of some architectural elements, from luxury villas, or sacred buildings in the neighbourhood or from urban areas⁹³.

There are also several religious buildings not located at the axial intersections but alongside them, such as S. Giovanni Cardagnano⁹⁴, S. Maria a Meta, the San Donato Parish⁹⁵ and the SS Ruffino and Vitale Abbey. The San Donato Parish was alongside the via Salaria Gallica⁹⁶, while the SS Ruffino and Vitale Abbey is situated alongside the SS 210 which can correspond with the minor road that ran from Amandola towards *Falerio* and *Firmum*.

After establishing a hypothesis as to the position of this centurial grid, it was tested by field work: through a survey we identified many *limites*, evident on the cartography, on the terrain and the numerous Topographic Units with a wide chronological range, useful for reconstructing the settlement patterns of the area. As the cartographic and archive data presented above were at variance with previous research which did not envisage a centuriation east of the locality of Cese, in order to resolve this issue and test our centurial grid, the 2014 survey campaign concentrated mainly on the area comprised between the Tennacola Torrent in the North, the

⁸¹ I would like to thank Professor Maria Giovanna Arcamone for her very helpful advice for my research.

⁸² Municipalities of Amandola, Sarnano, San Ginesio, Camerino, Fermo.

⁸³ Diocese of Fermo, the Abbey of Piobbico, the Abbey of S. Croce, the Abbey of San Clemente a Casauria, the Abbey of Fiastra, the Imperial Abbey of Farfa.

⁸⁴ See also the *diplomata* of Charles the Great, Charles I, Ludwig II, Charles III, Guy and Lambert, Berengar I, Hugh and Lothar, Berengar II and Adalbert, Otto I, Otto II, Otto III, The *placiti* of "Regnum Italiae".

⁸⁵ ACS Pergamene n°15, (1272 AD).

⁸⁶ COLUCCI 1797, XXXI supplement: 4-5 n° II.

⁸⁷ CHOUQUER, CLAVEL-LEVEQUE, FAVORY 1993.

⁸⁸ The place name is documented in 977 (SASF, Codex 1030 n°1); This church is mentioned in a document of the Cod. Dipl. Am. N° 8 (1173 AD).

⁸⁹ The place name is referred to in 977 AD (SASF, Codex 1030 n°1).

⁹⁰ This church is mentioned in a document of Cod. Dipl. Am. n°45 (1263 AD).

⁹¹ These churches are cited in a document of the Cod. Dipl. Am. n°105 (1276 AD). Genepereto is documented in 977 (SASF, Codex 1030 n°1).

⁹² This church is referred to in 977 (SASF, Codex 1030 n°1).

⁹³ Rainini 2014, 92. The author proposes *Falerio*, which is 33 km from Sant'Angelo in Montespino, while Comunanza is only 8 km from this church.

⁹⁴ The church was mentioned in a document of the Cod. Dipl. Am. n°11, referring to the year 1182.

⁹⁵ San Donato and Sant'Angelo in Montespino, the only two parish churches that we know of in this area, are mentioned in the SASF Codex 1030 n°1 (977 AD).

⁹⁶ The Parish church has not yet been located, but the archive documents and the place name Pieve mentioned several times in the *Catasto Gregoriano* suggest the locality of I Rustici as a possible site, along the SS78 road.

Carogno Ditch in the N/W, the Carognetto Ditch in the West, the Friano Ditch in the South and the Amandola municipal border in the East. In the 2015 campaign we surveyed the entire area South of the Tenna River, from Madonna della Marnacchia in the East to Amandola and the area surrounding the SS 78 and Valegnara (fig. 1).

The Picenian and Roman settlement patterns were deeply influenced by the specific geological nature of these hills, formed by pelitic – sandstone sediments subject to the gully processes and wide-ranging morphological gravitational phenomena especially in the Monte Civitella area. Therefore the sites were mostly located on stable land along the ridges in higher positions or on the Pleistocene fluvial terraces alongside the Tenna river, while the other areas which were less suitable for settlement must have been excluded from centuriation and left as pasture or uncultivated lands.

On the basis of the survey data, out of 29 Picenian sites, 24 are characterized by materials which were Picenian/Roman transitional or Roman or of Roman derivation, dating from the late 3rd cent. onwards. These Picenian sites, which could have remained in occupation, and the Roman farmsteads have been found within the centuriation grid discussed above, mostly in the corners or along the main axes. The rural site distribution within the *centuriae*, even if not completely surveyed yet, is fairly concentrated (in some cases up to 5 farmsteads in the same *centuria*) therefore we can assume that most of the the assigned properties were not very large (see Menchelli above).

At least six other rural sites, which appear to be of a later date, are also located within the centuriation grid, in previously unoccupied areas; most probably they were connected with the municipalisation process, indicating that the *limitatio* continued to be used from the 3rd cent. B.C onwards, progressing from the *praefectura* to the *municipium*. Moreover there were five *villae* certainly still in existence in the early Imperial Age and remarkably large, such as the already cited Spiazette site and those found in the localities of Coriconi and San Lorenzo.

We can suggest that the centuriation must have been situated between the Tennacola Torrent to the North, the Sibillini Mountains to the West, the Perticara Ditch to the East and the Aso River to the South (fig. 5), hence extending, towards the East, well beyond the site where the *gromatic boundary stone* has been found, as confirmed by the numerous farmsteads surveyed in this area. As regards the nearby mountainous district, the toponyms *Piobbico* and *Valle tre Salti* could mark the border between the allocated land and the public areas: both sites are close to each other and located in areas, at the Sibillini foothills, unsuitable for centuriation. Etymologically Piobbico can be related to the *ager publicus*, and Valle tre Salti to the *saltus*, in its specific meaning of “uncultivated land because of the woods and where the sheep could graze”⁹⁷ hence land that was mostly collectively used, rather than the meaning, of an agrarian measurement unit, attributed to this term by the same Author⁹⁸.

The district to the North of the Tennacola Torrent raises a number of unresolved issues, as part of the centuriation identified in the municipal territory of Amandola goes beyond this border, as far as Pian di Pieca where there is another centuriation with a different inclination and orientation. Most probably this *limitatio* belonged to *Falerio*, but in any case this matter cannot be discussed in this paper. As far as the Eastern border is concerned, the *centuriation grid* coincides exactly with the Perticara Torrent, which is a place name that could derive from *pertica*. Nevertheless this area requires further research in order to define more precisely this *limitation*.

Regarding the chronology, the artifacts found in the rural sites within the centuriation grid can be dated from the late 3rd cent. BC up to the early Imperial period, therefore the *vexata quaestio* of the chronology of the Amandola *gromatic boundary stone*, in order to date this *centuriatio*, becomes an unimportant issue, as this stone could have been placed at the intersection of the existing centuriation axes during an agrarian reorganization in the Gracchan or Augustan periods⁹⁹.

As regards the orientation of the *centuriatio*, we agree with P. Bonvicini and G. Pagnani: it must have had inverted axes, with the *decumani* facing N/S and the *kardines* E/W, but, unlike these authors, we believe that the main axis did not lie along the Apennines but to the East of the *gromatic boundary stone*. According to our reconstruction¹⁰⁰ the *decumanus maximus* must have passed through the localities of Spiazette, Mulino

⁹⁷ Var., L. 5. 36.

⁹⁸ It is interesting to note the use of the term by Var., R. 1.10, “in order to define 4 *centuriae* “ *appellantur in agris divisis viritim publice saltus*”.

⁹⁹ The terminus has however been hypothetically included among the Gracchan boundary stones: *CIL* I (2), 2935, cf. SISANI 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Regarding the method for counting the number of *limites* cf. CAMPBELL 2000, 357, 491.

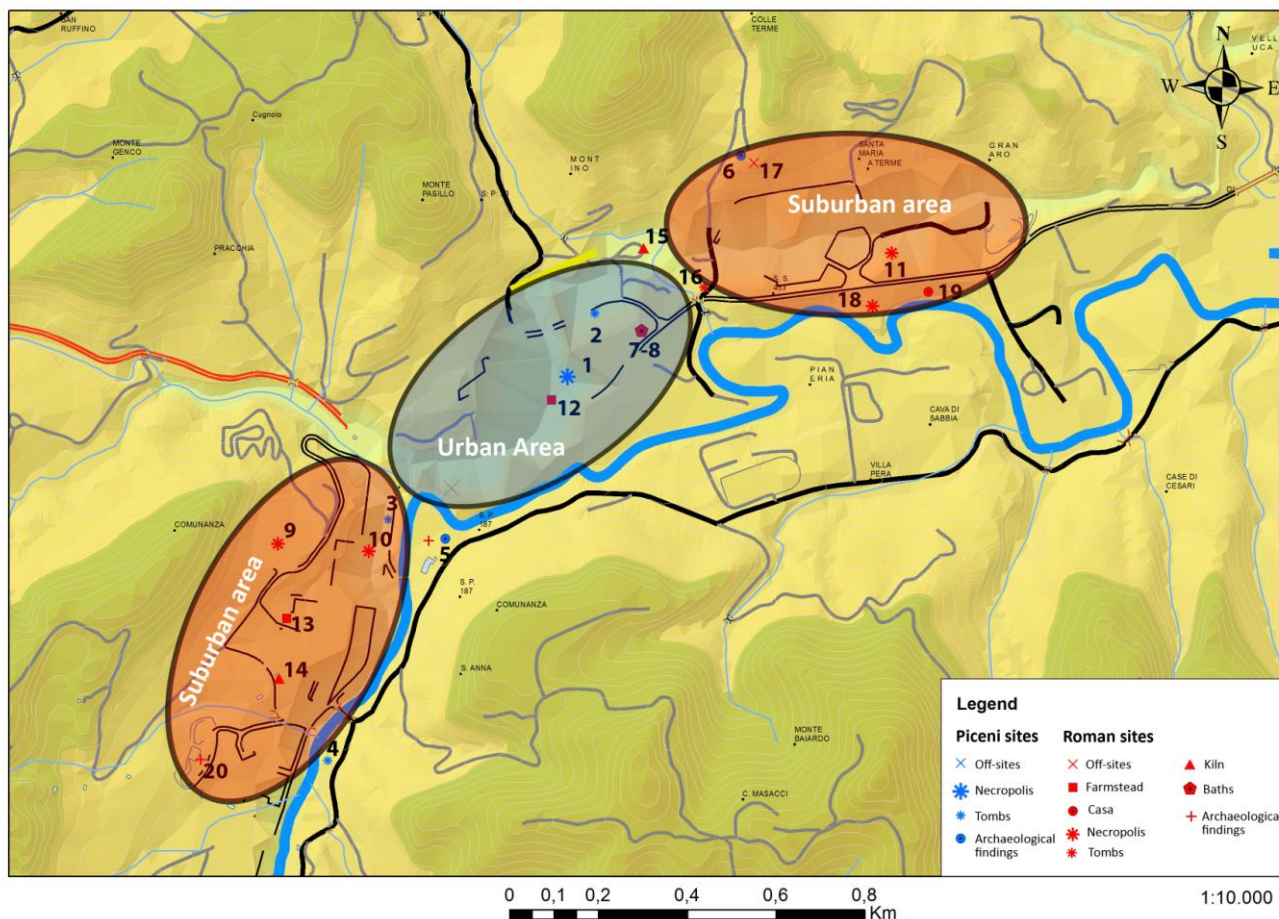


Fig. 12. Novana's remains. Picensi sites. 1-2) Necropolis: Monte della Manovra area; 3) Necropolis: Viale Dante; 4) Necropolis: Bivio Piane; 5) Bronze dagger; 6) Iron swords. Roman sites. 7) Baths; 8) Votive deposit; 9) Necropolis: Piane Sametro; 10) Necropolis: Piazza Garibaldi; 11) Necropolis: S. Maria a Terme; 12) Domus: Via Trieste; 13) kiln: Via Pascoli; 14) kiln: Acquasanta; 15) kiln: Colle Terme; 16) Iscription *CIL IX 05202*; 17) Building classified as Baths: Colle Terme; 18) Burials; 19) casa (small farmstead); 20) Archaeological findings evidence of a heated building (in particular tegulae mammatae).

Carnevale, San Lorenzo, Vallegnara, Comunanza, while the *kardo maximus* was aligned with Cerretana, S. Maria de Bussonico, San Benedetto and Comunanza. According to this interpretation, the ordinals carved on the *gromatic boundary stone*¹⁰¹ establish the origin of the *centuriation grid* in the area of the current small town of Comunanza, confirming that the site of the Roman administrative centre must have been located there.

Novana and Comunanza

This hypothesis is supported by numerous archaeological findings over the last 30 years which, studied in a topographical and diachronic perspective, enable us to reconstruct the ancient settlement, despite the unregulated building expansion of the 1980s.

A Picensi settlement in the area of Comunanza is documented by the very important necropolis found near Monte della Manovra¹⁰², consisting of seventeen graves having a bottom layer of gravel and white stones placed in a circle to protect the heads of the deceased who were young men with funerary goods (short swords and iron-tipped spears). Further findings relating to Picensi necropolises come from other localities: Bivio Piane¹⁰³, Via Dante¹⁰⁴, the city centre¹⁰⁵ and the hills facing the Aso River¹⁰⁶ (fig. 12, n°1-6).

¹⁰¹ As there are numerous theories about the ordinal XIII we have decided to discuss this matter on another occasion.

¹⁰² Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986, Cespi. Via Aldo Moro.

¹⁰³ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986, Cespi; the burial of a Picensi warrior (1961).

¹⁰⁴ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986 Cespi; two burials, one with specifically male goods (1940).

¹⁰⁵ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986, Cespi; a dagger was found in Via Raffaello Sanzio (1940).

¹⁰⁶ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica 27-8-1986 Cespi; two iron swords were found at Colle Terme (1960).

A Roman administrative centre – perhaps it was a *forum*, and a *praefectura* to meet the needs of the settlers who lived in the *ager viritim adsignatus* – was built in the area of this Picenian settlement, which was aligned with very important communication tracks. Many finds provide evidence for the material culture typical of Roman colonial settlements, in particular the black-gloss vessels, widespread both in the Picenian funerary contexts and in some unidentified late Republican sites distributed in this territory, such as a small cup that has been identified as from the *atelier des petites estampilles*¹⁰⁷. However it is easy to locate the very important votive deposit found in the Monte della Manovra area where small black-gloss cups were gathered (Morel s2720 and 2740 forms)¹⁰⁸.

The presence of this votive deposit¹⁰⁹ suggests that there must have been a nearby centre of worship perhaps associated with a health cult, since there was a sulphur spring in the area; this was probably also used by the thermal baths, recently excavated nearby and dated between the Republican period and the late Empire¹¹⁰. Not far from these finds, in Via Trieste, the walls of a *domus* equipped with bath rooms have been identified: its rescue excavations recovered ceramics including black-gloss vessels and Republican and Imperial coins¹¹¹. Roman necropolises have been identified in the locality of Piane Sametro and along the main roads in the Piazza Garibaldi area and in S. Maria a Terme; these last two consisted of tile-built tombs; in particular, in S. Maria, monumental tombs dating to the Imperial period have been found¹¹².

On the basis of these data it would be reasonable to assume that the site of *Novana*, overlying a pre-existing Picenian centre, was on the plateau delimited by the main roads, the via Salaria Gallica and the road connecting the Sibillini Mountains to the sea following the Aso River Valley. The concentration of the finds typical of an inhabited centre (e.g. thermal baths, a sanctuary, *domus*) and the distribution of the identified necropolises, enable us to locate the *Novana* urban area in the Monte della Manovra sector. Therefore the following should be interpreted as suburban findings: the *villa/farmstead* identified in via Pascoli with Republican and Imperial materials; the manufacturing sites in the localities of Acquasanta (kiln for coarse ware and bricks and tiles) and Colle Terme (kiln for bricks and tiles).

(E.I.)

Concluding remarks

On the grounds of the data presented above the territory between the Tennacola Torrent and the Aso River was most probably subjected to a viritane distribution and the pre-existing Picenian centre in the area of *Comunanza* became a settlement for the Roman colonists, perhaps the seat of a *forum* (in Gracchan times?)¹¹³, a *praefectura* and subsequently a *municipium* which we can identify with *Novana*, mentioned by Pliny but which later disappeared from every kind of source.

Many other Picenian towns did not survive beyond Antiquity¹¹⁴, but *Novana*'s destiny must have been determined very quickly during the Imperial Age, with a correlation between the lack of quotations about the town and the progressive disappearance of the rural settlement pattern, most probably due to strong structural changes in land use. In fact *Novana*'s function as the administrative centre for this territory dotted with farmsteads probably ended during the 1st-2nd cent. AD, very likely as a result of the activities of a few *gentes* who occupied large portions of the *ager publicus* for intensive livestock breeding. Therefore there was a crisis in the agrarian system based on the complementarity of the small allotments and the community use of the unassigned lands (actually the most profitable).

¹⁰⁷ CICALA 2010, 78-79, n.17, fig. 17, 331.

¹⁰⁸ CIUCCARELLI 2012a: 51-52.

¹⁰⁹ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica Marche ZA/64 /7 Prot. 2748 (17-04-1984; ZA/64 /9 prot. 3220 (10-05-1985; ZA/64 /9 prot. 3707 (18-03-1998).

¹¹⁰ Greater accuracy regarding the chronology and interpretation will be available when the excavation data are published.

¹¹¹ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica Marche ZA/64/5 prot.1186 (17-03-1977); ZA/64/3 prot.1639 (16-04-1977; ZA/64/5 prot. 1592 del 26-04-1977; ZA/64 /3 prot. 3045 (6-07-1978; Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica 27-8-1986, Cespi.

¹¹² Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica Marche ZA/64/8 prot. 5978 (27-09-1986). The presence of a necropolis is also documented by the discovery of a funerary inscription referring to the *gens Nonia*: CIL IX, 05202.

¹¹³ See notes 52 and 99.

¹¹⁴ *Potentia, Ricina, Trea, Septempeda, Cluana, Pasulae, Urbs Salvia, Beregra*: cf. ALFIERI 1983

Perhaps the protagonists of these changes included the *Caesii* as the toponym *Cisiano*, identified at the foothills of Mount Amandola¹¹⁵, can be significant evidence of their activity in this territory. This *gens* is epigraphically documented in the 1st cent.AD in several districts of the *Regio V (Ancona; Septempeda; Falerio; Cupra Maritima; Interamnia Praetuttiorum)*¹¹⁶ and is considered to have been engaged in large-scale livestock breeding¹¹⁷.

By continuing with this research, in a diachronic perspective, many aspects and topics dealt with in this paper could be studied in greater detail and developed further.

(S.M.; E.I)

Acknowledgements We would like to thank Prof. Giovanni Salmeri, for his valuable advice during the drafting of the text, and the students of the University of Pisa who, with intelligence and passion, participated in the surveys (A. Abriani, A. Alessandrini, T. Baronti, A. Benedetto, A. Bischof, F. Cerasa, L. Chiti, M. Colella, V. Guastella, L. Lazzaroni, V. Limina, L. Menini, I., Pallotta, M. Parini, A. Rappelli, S. Spryca, M. Stella, E. Tiralongo, A. Vuoso). Finally we would to thank Luigi Androzzi and Basilio Millozzi (Dinos Association, Amandola) and Stefania Cespi (Comunanza ArcheoClub).

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ABBREVIATIONS:

ACS = Archivio Comunale di Sarnano.

Cod. Dipl. Am. = Codice Diplomatico Amandola (edited by P. Ferranti 1891, Memorie storiche della città di Amandola, vol. II, Ascoli Piceno).

SASF = Fermo, Sezione di Archivio di Stato.

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¹¹⁵ It is documented since 1044: Cod. Dipl. Amandola n°1.

¹¹⁶ Respectively *CIL* IX 5911; IX 5594; IX 6417; IX 5315; IX, 5065 and IX 5080.

¹¹⁷ CENERINI 1985.

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