Landscape Archaeology in the Ager Telesinus: Scientific Results and Land-Use Planning

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Abstract
This paper is focused on the territories of San Lorenzello, Guardia Sanframondi and Cerreto Sannita (district of Benevento, Campania), in the eastern area of the Ager Telesinus, along the route to the Apennines mountains through the Volturno, Titerno and Calore valleys. The research is related to the Project of the Archaeological Map of the Northern Campania, coordinated by S. Quilici Gigli. This territory has important archaeological risk, as archaeological records testify, including hill-forts with polygonal walls, the town of Telesia, the necropoleis and the ruins of the villae in the suburbium. The current expansion of the survey to both the eastern and western sectors offers a larger point of view to analyse wide-ranging topics such as the pre-Roman settlement and the interregional roads. New data are emerging on the prehistoric and protohistoric ages in the territory of Guardia Sanframondi, in the wide alluvial area closest to the Calore River. In the territory of San Lorenzello and Cerreto Sannita, new data was been collected by the author on a settlement of the pre-Roman times in the zones overlooking the Titerno valley. Studies and surveys in this area have had operating implications. Maps of archaeological risk, based on the archaeological map of the Ager Telesinus, were produced, thanks to collaboration between the University, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici and the local Government, with the goal of creating a common strategy for land-use planning.

Keywords: Ancient Topography, Campania, Landscape Archaeology, Land-use Planning, Archaeological Risk Map

Introduction
This work, related to the Project of the Archaeological Map of the Northern Campania and coordinated by Stefania Quilici Gigli, is part of some of the activities of the Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage of the Second University of Naples [see Quilici Gigli, 2010; Quilici Gigli et al, 2014: 371-73]. It is focused on one sector of the Ager Telesinus, along the valleys of the rivers Volturno, Calore and the creek Titerno, still preferential routes from the coastal areas for reaching inland. In my previous studies, I focused on the western sector [Renda, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c], in the districts of Amorosi, Faicchio, Puglianello, San Salvatore Telesino and Telese Terme. This area is a wide plain with some hills on the eastern side, Monte Pugliano, Rocca of San Salvatore Telesino, Monte Acero and, beyond the Titerno Valley, Monte Monaco part of mountain chain of Matese. To the South, is Monte Taburno, fronting the Calore River. Viability is only possible through the river valleys due to the presence of mountains.

In the plain, the ruins of a Roman Telesia are located: there are still the remains of wonderful walls and some public buildings [see Quilici, 1966; Renda, 2010a; Simonelli & Balasco, 2005; Sommella, 1988: 131-32, 278-79] including the recently investigated amphitheatre [Stanco, 2012]. In 2012, I published my research on the territory of Castelvenere [Renda, 2012] in the eastern area of the Ager Telesinus. Currently, I’m still conducting surveys in this eastern sector, in the district of San Lorenzello, Guardia Sanframondi, and Cerreto Sannita. My report is focused on the first results.
The expansion of the survey offers the ability to analyse wide-ranging topics such as the pre-Roman settlement and the interregional roads. The new surveys in the investigated area improved the overall knowledge by 80%.

From Prehistoric to the Archaic period

New light is being shed on the prehistoric and protohistoric ages in the territory of Guardia Sanframondi. These areas are characterised by terraces perpendicular to the valley of the river Calore, currently rich in vineyards. The southern belt of the territory overlooks the river. In the wide alluvial area closest to the river, geological studies discovered some paleoalveos (Magliulo & Russo, 2005) (fig. 1), dated around 6000 years ago, documenting a different conformation of the area in ancient times. The first bas-reliefs were located directly on the river banks, unlike the current...
situation. Here is some evidence (fig. 1). Some lithic tools, including Paleolithic biface found at the end of the nineteenth century by A. De Blasio, anthropologist and expert of these territories, would suggest that this sector has been inhabited since the Paleolithic (De Blasio, 1961: 7). I identified pottery of the Early Bronze Age (Palma Campania Culture) on one of the first terraces overlooking the river (fig. 1). This evidence testifies to the interest in the area overlooking the river Calore in the Bronze Age. The topographical situation is a reminder of the Montetto settlement, in the western sector of the Ager Telesinus, where archaeologists explored a small village, dating from the Medium and Recent Bronze Age (Calandini et al, 2012; Renda, 2010c: 175-76).

However, the novelties are about the period between Iron Age and the sixth century BC: on the terraces next to the river I identified a lot of sites,
which testify to a widespread settlement (fig. 1). The most ancient sites, related to the early phases of the Iron Age, in Acquafredda, are further-away from the river valley. In my opinion, they testify to the existence of a little village, consisting of small units a few hundred metres away from each other.

In the more recent phases of the Iron Age there seems to be a shift toward the river, as evidenced by the sites in Cavarena, where the settlement seems to descend, on the basis of the findings identified, up to the Orientalising period. Immediately to the west of Cavarena, in the zone of Bosco Caldaie, between the territories of Castelvenere and Guardia Sanframondi, materials dating back to the eighth - fourth centuries BC and similar to objects found in the Ager Allifanus, were spotted by A. De Blasio (De Blasio, 1895; Renda, 2012: 195-97).

The occupation of the areas neighbouring the river reminds us of the western sector in the telesina valley, in the territory of Puglianello, where a small burial group was found, evidenced by a biconical vase and a carenated bowl dating between the tenth and ninth centuries BC (Renda, 2010b: 280; 2010c: 152-54). These objects are similar to models found on the other side of the Volturno, in the territory of Ruviano (Renda, 2004: 253-56). Here, I supposed the existence of a community in the area between the river and the hill of modern Ruviano. The presence of this continues until at least the seventh century BC and confirms the main importance of the river (Renda, 2004: 260-62; Renda & Salerno, 2011).

The Pre-Roman Age

In the territory of San Lorenzello and Cerreto Sannita, I collected new data on the settlement of pre-Roman times in the zones overlooking the Titerno valley, dating between the end of the fourth and the early second centuries BC. The area is close to four fortified sites, with walls in polygonal masonry, on the hills that define the telesina plain, on Monte Pugliano, Rocca of San Salvatore Telesino, Monte Acero and San Pasquale of Faicchio (fig. 2) (Piscopo & Renda, 2010: 61-67; Renda, 2010b: 282-89; 2010c: 204-10, 235-43, 260-69) (fig. 2). These sites have similar characteristics: they have excellent views, as the analysis of the viewshed shows, and visual connection. They control important routes and, thanks to natural springs, water resources are available.

It is difficult to date this complex system without excavations. Their topographical position is, no doubt, crucial to the control of the territory. In my opinion, this widespread control shows a single strategy, considering that the neighbouring areas show a similar situation: to the South, beyond the river Calore, the sites on Monte Taburno, to the north, the walls of the Ager Allifanus and beyond the river Volturno, the fortified sites of the territories of Cubulteria, Trebulad and Caiaitia. This strategy could be linked to military needs – maybe in the time of Second Samnite War, perhaps in the early years of this conflict, when literary sources document battles in the area (see Renda, 2010c: 101-102).

However, an early human presence on the hills cannot be ruled out. In the Ager Telesinus, the necropoleis testify the existence of populations in the area since the Archaic period. They are located at the slopes of the hills, near Faicchio, and in the zone between Monte Pugliano and Rocca of San Salvatore Telesino, where two rich necropoleis and small funerary groups have been identified (for a total of about 700 tombs) dating from the beginning of the fifth and fourth centuries BC (Di Maio & Fariello, 2006: 30-33; Fariello, 2007: 37-38; Renda, 2010b: 288; 2010c: 222).

In my new research, I recognised some fragments of coarse ware on the top of the hill of Colle la Sella, the mountain that overlooks the modern town of San Lorenzello, similar to fragments found in previous surveys (Lombardi, 1998) (fig. 2). Some of these are similar to ovoid jars dating between the seventh and early fourth centuries BC.

The presence of “coarse ware” on Colle la Sella is not to be underestimated, as it could testify to the presence of a higher site before the
war against Rome. The area is a two-hour walk along the south-eastern slope, less steep than the others (fig. 3). The remains of a street paved with large stones testify to the constant use of this route. This path is visible on the historical map dated 1883 by the Istituto Geografico Militare.

On the top, moreover, the peak seems artificially leveled and enclosed (fig. 3). Marks of this enclosure are visible along the southern and western slopes of the hill. Another alignment can be seen, immediately in the west. After the survey, I identified some marks, even if not evident, on aerial photographs. Supposing it is an enclosure, it could be related to the four fortified sites in the west? I am not sure about this, but its topographical position is worth our attention. From Colle la Sella, you command all the river valleys, telesina plain and the northern area (fig. 3, in the bottom right-hand corner) which is not visible from other fortified sites. Therefore, thanks to this little fortified site, visibility of the whole area increases, as the analysis of the viewshed, realised by ArGis 3D Analyst, shows.

The use of fortified enclosures next to larger centres is spotted in other areas of the Samnium. For example, in the neighbouring territory of Caiația, I studied a complex system of fortifications [Renda, 2004: 368-75]. It consists of the acropolis of Monte Santa Croce, the settlement in the nearby Monte Cognolo and the two enclosures [Monte Caruso and Monte Pizzola] technically similar to the remains of Colle la Sella. This system controlled, with the fortified sites of Caiația and Monte Alfano, the access through the Volturno valley to inland Samnium. The new data in the territory of San Lorenzello could testify to the importance of the Titerno valley, marked by some evidence of the fourth-second century BC fortifications of San Pasquale, Monte Acero

Fig. 3. The Colle la Sella: map of structures; the mountain from the South (top left); intervisibility between fortified sites (bottom right).
and, maybe, Colle la Sella. A passage through the Titterno valley might evocatively have existed since the Samnite period, monumentalised in the Roman period with the so called “bridge of Fabio Massimo”, with structures in polygonal masonry (Piscopo, 2010: 48-55; Rocco, 1996) (fig. 2).

The Roman Period

The importance of this route probably continues in the Roman period. Carrying on inland, on the eastern slopes of Monte Cigno, where a fortified site is reported (Caiazza, 2004: 262-68; Russo,
1991: 100-103), there is the area of the Madonna della Libera, in the territory of Cerreto Sannita (fig. 2). This area could be a crucial point for the local routes, visible from Monte Cigno and Colle della Sella. The church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, built at the end of the sixteenth century after a pestilence in place of a chapel (see Piscitelli, 2012: 297-308), was erected on a foundation, partly visible on the church façade, partly incorporated in the church structures (fig. 4). This consists of square blocks. A sort of balustrade, consisting of blocks with mouldings, lies here. In a photo of the early 1900, by D. Mastrobuono, a local scholar, this balustrade is visible, but not the foundation, which was recently brought to light through restoration.

These elements are not perfectly consistent with one another or together with the underlying foundation. The blocks with mouldings have different heights, recesses and size. They can be part of the same building, but, in my opinion, this current arrangement is not ancient. They must have been placed there, either at the time of the church construction, or during successive restorations, definitely before the twentieth century, as a photo of the early 1900 highlights.

Near the church, several large blocks testify to the presence of an important building in the surroundings. These ruins and the findings, now disappeared but documented by the old photos, including a Corinthian capital, seem to refer to a Roman structure. The topographical location of these remains is of particular interest: they are in a rural countryside, next to a natural spring, on a possible route to the interior, not far from the Roman Telesia. It is likely that the area, during the Samnite period, was already sacral and the Roman monumentalisation could be a confirmation. The existence of the architectural elements of a funerary monument, found in the neighbouring area and used as a fountain, could testify to the centrality of this sector in the local viability (Caiazza, 2004: 273; Renda, 2015; Russo, 1991: 100-103).

In the Roman period, the evidence increases in the valley of the river Calore. Since the Late Republican period a recovery of vitality is evident, in particular in the areas next to the river. Along the terraces overlooking the river, I identified some rural settlements, dating from the Late Republican period to the fifth century AD. Like in the Telesina area, the findings testify to the well-being of this zone also in the Late Roman Age, unlike the western sector of the Voltturno valley, where the evidence disappears. Along the river Calore there was the road from Teanum to Beneventum. In the territory of Guardia Sanframondi, in Starze, I recognised some Roman findings and, over the years, funerary elements have been recovered. Among them I want to highlight a fragmentary stone funerary cippus, now disappeared, that I found while analysing the documentation stored in the Archivio centrale dello Stato in Rome.

Case studies of Land-Use Planning

Studies and surveys in this area have had operating implications. Maps of the archaeological risk were produced, thanks to collaboration between the University, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici and local Government, with the aim of a common strategy for land-use planning, as in the case of Faicchio. The map of the archaeological risk provides an indication of the areas for possible study. We have identified three levels (see Quilici Gigli et al, 2014: 377-78): high archaeological risk (areas where the archaeological evidence is strong and shows good preservation); medium archaeological risk (areas with ceramic findings; areas next to archaeological sites/ancient roads and marks of centuriation); low archaeological risk (buffer zone; areas with destroyed findings). We have added the archaeological layers (sites, ancient roads, centuriation), in order to clarify the reasons for the choices.

In the territory of Faicchio, for example, thanks to these maps, it was possible to intervene on the project of a new road that would cross an area of high archaeological risk, where there are remains of a fortified site of San Pasquale, a necropolis, a Roman aqueduct and a medieval church.
Maps of archaeological risk have been prepared for some zones of the *Ager Telesinus* where public utilities will be carried out. For example, in the area around *Telesia*, I located areas with archaeological restrictions and added the data of the surveys, in order to highlight crucial areas and to evaluate appropriate interventions.

Maps of soil visibility are always attached. They are essential for the overall survey assessment and for a correct understanding of the results. Different levels of visibility have been identified and we have also considered temporary situations of poor visibility, for example, wheat fields. In these cases, we organised repeated walks in different periods of the year. In this way, it was possible to get further information. In the case of the territory of Faicchio, for example, in a wheat field we collect new data about a Roman rural villa when the wheat is harvested and the visibility is excellent (fig. 5).

**Fig. 5.** The territory of Faicchio: Map of soil visibility: the plain of Marafi with poor visibility (left); the same zone some months later (right).

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**References**


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