

## THE SANGRO VALLEY PROJECT

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### THE 2012 EXCAVATIONS AT SAN GIOVANNI (COMUNE DI TORNARECCIO, PROVINCIA DI CHIETI, REGIONE ABRUZZO)

In 2012 the Sangro Valley Project continued its excavations of a Roman domestic site at San Giovanni, with the intention of clarifying the function and date of the two structures (A and B) discovered in the 2011 season. Excavations in 2012 revealed a single-room Structure C (c. 5.96 × 3.37 m) situated between Structures A and B. The fieldwork is conducted by Oberlin College (USA) and is funded by its archaeological field school.

A *cocciopesto* pavement (4.84 × 2.4 m) fills the interior of Structure C, and a drain runs from the southwestern corner. The presence of the *cocciopesto*, a waterproof pavement, the drain and the thickened southern wall, all suggest that Structure C may have functioned as a basin or work surface. The C-14 analysis of a carbon sample taken above the *cocciopesto* pavement provides a date of Cal. AD 20 to 130 (Cal. BP 1930–1820).

A variety of architectural materials was recovered. These include tegula and imbrex roof-tiles, wedge-shaped bricks of a type used to construct columns, *opus spicatum* paving bricks, pieces of *opus reticulatum*, and *tubuli parietalis* that provide evidence of a hypocaust heating system in one of the nearby structures.

Large quantities of ceramic material, as well as glass fragments, iron slag, bone and small fragments of painted plaster were recovered also. The ceramic assemblage, including cooking-ware, water jugs, common- and fine-ware vases for food consumption, oil lamps, and the animal bones found are consistent with a domestic context and can be dated to the early Imperial period.

The dates provided by the C-14 analyses and diagnostic ceramics suggest that Structure C ceased to function in its original capacity at the end of the first century CE or the beginning of the second century CE. Its proximity to Structures A and B, as well as the use of similar construction techniques, suggest that all three structures should be viewed as part of a single complex. It appears to have been an early Imperial domestic or bathing complex that may have been reused in a later period. All the structures appear to have been systematically dismantled and their elements recycled, although the exact time of this dismantling is unknown currently. This recycling, along with the use of the field for modern agricultural purposes, makes it difficult to reconstruct a detailed history of the area.

Trench SG 3000 was put in to explore the dump of pottery and bone found in 2011 (C-14 analyses of two carbon samples taken from this deposit providing a date of Cal. AD 260 to 300 (Cal. BP 1690 to 1650) and Cal. AD 340 to 430 (Cal. BP 1610 to 1520)). Excavations in this area revealed Structure D, a complex series of foundations in dry-stone work that is consistent in appearance and construction technique to those seen in Structures A, B and C. The extent of damage in this area by ancient dismantling and modern ploughing makes it very difficult to determine the precise date or function of Structure D.

The 2011 and 2012 excavations at San Giovanni indicate that there was activity here from the late Republican to the early medieval periods. However, two major phases of construction and habitation are indicated by the radiocarbon analyses and ceramic typologies. Phase One belongs to the early Imperial period, especially the first century CE, and featured a domestic and bathing complex: Structures A, B and C. Phase Two can be dated to the late Roman period, between the third and fifth centuries CE, during which time Structure D was built, or remodelled, while Structure C had certainly ceased

to function in its original capacity, and the site continued to have a domestic function. Further excavations in this area are planned for 2013.

## THE 2012 EXCAVATION AND SURVEY WORK IN OPI (COMUNE DI OPI, PROVINCIA DI L'AQUILA, REGIONE ABRUZZO)

In 2012, the Sangro Valley Project began new fieldwork in the upper Sangro valley focused on the site at Prati San Rocco. This fieldwork is a collaboration between Durham University and Oberlin College, and is part-funded by the British Academy.

The area around the confluence of the Fondillo and Sangro rivers is archaeologically rich. To the west of the Fondillo is a large necropolis that has produced over 100 burials, predominantly of the sixth century BC. To the immediate east of the river, at Prati San Rocco, is a multi-period site that was investigated by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Abruzzo in 1995, 1998 and 2011. These excavations revealed a large courtyard structure dating to the Republican and Imperial periods, possibly a villa.

At the invitation of the Soprintendenza, the objectives of the 2012 fieldwork were:

1. to establish the extent and character of activity across Prati San Rocco;
2. to identify and sample pre-Roman deposits for palaeoenvironmental and micromorphological analyses and, specifically, to recover material that characterized Archaic and protohistoric activity such as domestic surfaces (micromorphology) and diet (flotation for plant macrofossils);
3. to investigate the wider landscape setting of the site.

In order to establish the extent of activity across the Prati San Rocco area, geophysical surveys were conducted. A resistivity survey (11 × c. 90 m transects) was used to establish the extent of activity across the plain, followed by 33 targeted georadar transects. A number of subsurface features was detected, extending across much of the central and southern parts of Prati San Rocco. In order to further investigate these features, and to identify and sample deposits for palaeoenvironmental and micromorphological analysis, two small trenches were excavated. Despite proximity to previous excavations, T1000 revealed no evidence for anthropogenic activity; T2000 revealed fragments of charcoal associated with *impasto* pottery, tentatively interpreted as a pot accidentally or deliberately broken as a result of heating on a small fire. Both trenches were characterized by water-borne deposits of sand, gravel and cobbles. Environmental and micromorphological samples were taken for laboratory analysis.

Pending specialist reports, our working hypothesis is that during the later prehistoric period, the Fondillo river was braided into many river channels that extended across Prati San Rocco. The depth of some of the geophysical anomalies suggests that they may represent palaeo-river channels; the deposits identified in T1000 and T2000 also are suggestive of former river-beds and flood events.

Human activity was focused initially on the edge of this wet area, along the foot of Monte Amaro and on an 'island' of raised, drier land in the centre of the plain. The latter remained the focus for activity into the Roman period (though was not necessarily occupied continuously). During the first millennium BC, climate change may have affected the size of the area available for settlement. Eventually, the construction of a flood protection wall, identified during the 2011 excavations, was needed in order to allow occupation to expand.

In order to set the San Rocco/Val Fondillo complex in its wider landscape context, survey work was undertaken in the area extending from Pescasseroli to the Scerto river/Casmosciara. Previous work during the 1990s surveyed the area between Opi and Villetta Barrea, mapping a number of discrete artefact scatters (Lloyd, Christie and Lock, 1997). However, whilst field walking is well suited to the conditions of the lower Sangro valley, it is less effective in the upper valley, where there are few ploughed surfaces available for inspection, and artefact scatters are extremely thin and discontinuous. Mapping discrete scatters of material also ignores the extensive evidence for terracing that covers most of the slopes up to c. 1,400 m. The 2012 survey therefore aimed to map and characterize the wider landscape with particular attention to terracing. Satellite images were used to identify and map terraces within a geographical information system. A series of transects was then walked across selected terrace systems (usually vertically up the valley side) in order to ‘ground truth’ the features identified on the satellite images. The locations of terraces were recorded with GPS and details of terrace construction and preservation were documented. The results indicate a wide variety of terrace types, presumably built for different purposes. Further work is needed to map, characterize and, if possible, date these systems; this work should include historic aerial photography, historical cartography and the excavation of small trenches across terraces to clarify structural details and to date them (via artefacts and/or optically stimulated luminescence dating).

Although this short season of fieldwork did not identify any pre-Roman deposits for sampling, it has recovered information with which to reconstruct the environmental context of ancient settlement at Prati San Rocco. The wider landscape survey has developed a new methodology to map and characterize the extensive surrounding terraces and field systems. This has combined the mapping of features from satellite imagery and ‘ground-truthing’ with transect surveys to refine knowledge of the number, location and character of terraces and field boundaries. A variety of distinct systems has been identified that is suggestive of differences in function and in the dates of construction and reuse.

Interim reports on the Sangro Valley Project can be found online at [www.sangro.org](http://www.sangro.org).

### Reference

Lloyd, J., Christie, N. and Lock, G. (1997) From the mountain to the plain: landscape evolution in the Abruzzo. An interim report on the Sangro Valley Project (1994–5). *Papers of the British School at Rome* 65: 1–58.

SUSAN KANE AND ROBERT WITCHER  
(Oberlin College; University of Durham)  
[s.kane@oberlin.edu](mailto:s.kane@oberlin.edu); [r.e.witcher@durham.ac.uk](mailto:r.e.witcher@durham.ac.uk)

## THE SEGNI PROJECT (COMUNE DI SEGNI, PROVINCIA DI ROMA, REGIONE LAZIO)

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In December 2011 the British School at Rome and the Museo Archeologico of the *comune* of Segni signed a three-year research agreement for a systematic programme of archaeological research in this town in the Monti Lepini.