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SANGRO VALLEY PROJECT: REPORT ON THE 2014 EXCAVATIONS AT ACQUACHIARA AND SAN GIOVANNI DI TORNARECCIO (PROVINCIA DI CHIETI, REGIONE ABRUZZO)

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The Sangro Valley Project (1994–; www.sangro.org) aims to explore through a range of interlinked disciplinary pathways the interaction between humans and their environment in the Sangro river valley, in the Abruzzo region of central Adriatic Italy, between 1000 BC and AD 300. The goal is to understand how a largely rural population was organized across the landscape, and how it articulated with more prominent aspects such as hillforts and sanctuaries in an area of the southern Abruzzo that was once part of the territory of ancient Samnium. In 2014 excavations were conducted in two different locations — Acquachiara and San Giovanni — on the southern slopes of Monte Pallano.¹

ACQUACHIARA

ACQ T11000

The re-opening of ACQ T8000 (excavated 2004–7), now ACQ T11000 (2014–), was planned with two aims: to clarify the stratigraphy of ACQ T8000 and to explore more fully the extent of the site, particularly its relationship to the modern agricultural terrace to the north.

ACQ T8000 has been interpreted as a pre-Roman agricultural processing area — an activity not previously documented in the region — with an exterior working space supported by terrace walls. Two phases were identified for ACQ T8000: Phase 1 (dated by C-14 to the early sixth century BC): the construction of the terracing and some floor surfaces; and Phase 2 (mid-sixth to early fifth centuries BC): the laying and repairing of a thick beaten clay floor over large parts of the terrace. These surfaces appear to have been used for the threshing of wheat and the preparation of food, based on the discovery of quern-stone fragments, an impasto cooking stand embedded in a burnt clay surface, and on the type of palaeoethnobotanical evidence collected. This interpretation was reconfirmed in 2014 with similar finds of a quern-stone fragment and several *fornelli* fragments.

Excavations in ACQ T11000 focused on three distinct zones adjacent to ACQ T8000. The most important discovery in 2014 was at the western end of ACQ T11000: a walled interior space with a paved floor (Fig. 1). The strata overlying this structure have not yet

¹ Illustrated preliminary reports from all seasons may be found at www.sangro.org.

been excavated fully, but large quantities of ceramics, bones and carbon were recovered. The ceramics are dated to the sixth–fifth centuries BC and consist of utilitarian coarse-wares (including fragments of *formelli*) and impasto, as well as painted fine-wares, black gloss and buccheroid. Of particular interest is the discovery of a fragmentary painted kylix. Two similar cups found in a tomb in nearby Carpineto Sinello in the Sinello river valley were assigned a date in the fourth century BC (Colonna, 1959: 282, figs 4–5), but at Acquachiara, a carbon sample taken from the same context as this new cup provides a C-14 date of no later than 400 BC (Measured Radio Carbon Age: 2400 ± 30 BP; 2 sigma calibration: Cal. BC 730 to 690 (Cal. BP 2680 to 2640) and Cal. BC 660 to 650 (Cal. BP 2610 to 2600) and Cal. BC 540 to 400 (Cal. BP 2490 to 2350).

The discovery of a clearly defined interior space at this site instigated a re-examination of the previous seasons' trench plans and photographs for ACQ T8000. This archival research shows that at least two phases of stone structures potentially can be reconstructed in ACQ T8000. The extent of this rare sixth–fifth-century BC domestic site and the reinterpretation of ACQ T8000's features will be clarified in future seasons. The stone-wall construction techniques uncovered in ACQ T11000 offer significant potential for reassessing Samnite architecture and rates of development, just as the refinement of the flagstone floor construction and the associated drinking vessel imply an unanticipated standard of living for the region.

SAN GIOVANNI

At San Giovanni in 2014, three adjacent areas were investigated (SG T9000, SG T10000 and SG T11000). These areas were chosen in order to confirm whether certain observations made during previous field surveys and geophysical resistivity survey corresponded with excavated archaeological deposits. Excavation will continue in two of these areas (SG T10000 and SG T11000) in 2015.



Fig. 1. ACQ T11000 — view of the walled interior space during excavation.

SG T9000

SG T9000, located in an olive grove that constrained its dimensions, was 16.65 m in length but only 0.61 m in width. Under a heavy deposit of colluvial soil, a series of anthropogenic layers was uncovered, all consonant with domestic debris of Roman Imperial date. These layers were densely packed with large amounts of roofing-tile and other ceramic building materials, large fragments of *cocciopesto* flooring, small amounts of intonaco wall-plaster, and a quantity of animal bone (particularly cow). In addition to utilitarian wares for storage and cooking, the ceramic assemblage includes fine-wares for serving and dining, lamps and unguentaria. The nature of the material from SG T9000 is similar to that found in a villa excavated in San Giovanni in 2011–13.

Because of the constraints of the surrounding olive grove and the consequent narrow width of the trench, a complete stratigraphic sequence in SG T9000 could not be obtained. A carbon sample from SG T9000 yielded a C-14 date in the late first century BC–first century AD (Measured Radio Carbon Age: 1990 ± 30 BP; 2 sigma calibration: Cal. BC 50 to AD 65 (Cal. BP 2000 to 1885)).

SG T10000

SG T10000 contained a lengthy segment of foundation for a wall (13.5 m in length \times 0.7 m wide) constructed of mortared rubble set into the clay subsoil (Fig. 2). The substantial dimensions and construction suggest that this wall was part of a very large and well-built structure. Unfortunately, due to erosion and agricultural working of the soil, much of the area surrounding this foundation wall has been damaged. The one surviving spur wall found this season indicates that more of this structure may be located to the east, an area that will be opened in 2015. Four terracotta tesserae suggest that there was a pavement associated with this structure. Ceramic finds include a range of fine- (black gloss, Italian *sigillata* and colour-coated ware) and coarse-wares, amphorae and a mortarium fragment that span the third century BC to third century AD.

At the end of the season in the north end of the trench, a plaster platform was uncovered along a deposit of ashy soil that contained impasto ceramics and animal bones, similar to a deposit found in SG T11000. An impasto handle from this deposit finds a parallel at the nearby bronze age site of Fonte Tasca (Archi) (Di Fraia, 2007: fig. 1). The relationship between this area and the foundation wall is still unclear. Further investigation of this area is planned for 2015.

SG T11000

SG T11000 was opened in order to assess the geological (and potential archaeological) consequences of the bi-directional erosion at a significant change of slope to the north of SG T10000. At a depth of 0.4 m, an archaeological deposit of bronze age material was uncovered, similar in content to a deposit located at the north end of SG T10000. Still not completely excavated, this deposit contained impasto, a spindle-whorl (with parallels in the nearby bronze age site of Fonte Tasca (Archi) (Di Fraia, 2007: fig. 3). A carbon sample from this deposit yielded a C-14 date consonant with an early–middle bronze age date for this area of central Italy: Measured Radiocarbon Date: 3420 ± 30 BP 2 sigma calibration: Cal. BC 1870 to 1845 (Cal. BP 3820 to 3795) and Cal. BC 1810 to 1800 (Cal. BP 3760 to 3750) and Cal. BC 1775 to 1660 (Cal. BP 3725 to 3610) (van Rossenberg, 2015).

The excavations undertaken during SVP 2014 have added both expected and unexpected new information to our knowledge of the history of human occupation in the Sangro middle valley. SVP excavations can now corroborate previous SVP survey



Fig. 2. SG T10000 — view of the wall during excavation.

data that indicate that Monte Pallano and its environs have had a continuous occupation from the bronze age (SG T10000 and SG T11000), archaic (ACQ T11000), and Roman and late antique (ACQ T10000; SG T1000–SG T4000) periods into modern times. These

data will contribute to the SVP's long-standing aim to explore through a range of interlinked disciplinary pathways the interaction between humans and their environment in the Sangro middle valley over time.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY AT SEGNI 2014 (COMUNE DI SEGNI, PROVINCIA DI ROMA, REGIONE LAZIO)

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In 2014 a final season of excavation was undertaken at Segni as part of the joint research initiative between the British School at Rome and the Archaeological Museum at Segni. The aim of the project is to explore the urban development of the Latin town of *Signia*, from its early foundation through to its hypothesized decline in the mid-Imperial period and re-emergence in the late antique and medieval periods. The previous seasons had explored the area around the Temple of Juno Moneta (San Pietro) on the acropolis and Piazza Santa Maria (Ceccarelli *et al.*, 2013; Ceccarelli *et al.*, 2014; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2013; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2014; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2015b), where excavation had revealed several rooms of a late Republican *domus* that may have faced onto the Forum, one of which, possibly to be identified as a cubiculum, had a high-quality polychrome mosaic (Cifarelli *et al.*, 2015a). Also revealed within the excavations were the possible foundations of the medieval cathedral of Segni, which had been destroyed in the seventeenth century and its position recently hypothesized by Federica Colaiacomo (2004). Initial investigations also had begun at a hitherto unstudied area on the acropolis known as Prato Felici (or Orto dé Cunto), immediately above the polygonal masonry town-wall gate of Porta Foca. The 2014 season focused upon determining the chronology, function and extent of the structure that had been revealed in part by the earlier seasons at Prato Felici, as well as trying to place the monument within the wider urban landscape of the acropolis.

The earliest phases of activity at the site of Prato Felici date to the Late Bronze Age and, after a long pause, to the late seventh century BC onward, as shown by a significant quantity of coarse-ware and bucchero recovered from several test-pits excavated in the 2012 and 2013 seasons (Cifarelli *et al.*, 2013: 380; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2014: 348). Whilst