

**THE BASENTELLO VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT, JULY–AUGUST 2014 (COMUNI DI GENZANO DI LUCANIA AND IRSINA, PROVINCE DI POTENZA AND MATERA, REGIONE BASILICATA)**

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During the summer of 2014 the Basentello Valley Archaeological Research Project continued its field survey within the Basentello watershed, which includes land within the territories of Genzano di Lucania and Irsina. The project consists of the excavation of a Roman villa, village and associated necropolis at the sites of San Felice (B020) and Vagnari, both of which were part of an imperial estate from the early first century AD, and an extensive regional survey to the west of these sites and the Basentello river in the territories of Genzano di Lucania, Irsina and Banzi (Fig. 1). The research goals of the survey include placing the imperial estate in its local context, to understand how it may have been integrated into local commercial and other social networks. This involves identifying diachronic changes in settlement patterns and associated population fluctuations, particularly from the Hellenistic to the medieval period, and, where possible, identifying site function. From 21 July to 13 August 2014, a single team of six field walkers covered an area of approximately 9 square kilometres (Fig. 2). Twenty-nine surface scatters (notionally, ‘sites’) were identified (see Appendix). The team concentrated its efforts on land between Monte Serico and the Torrente Fiumarella, including a broad plateau to the immediate east of Genzano di Lucania known as Piano Ceretto.

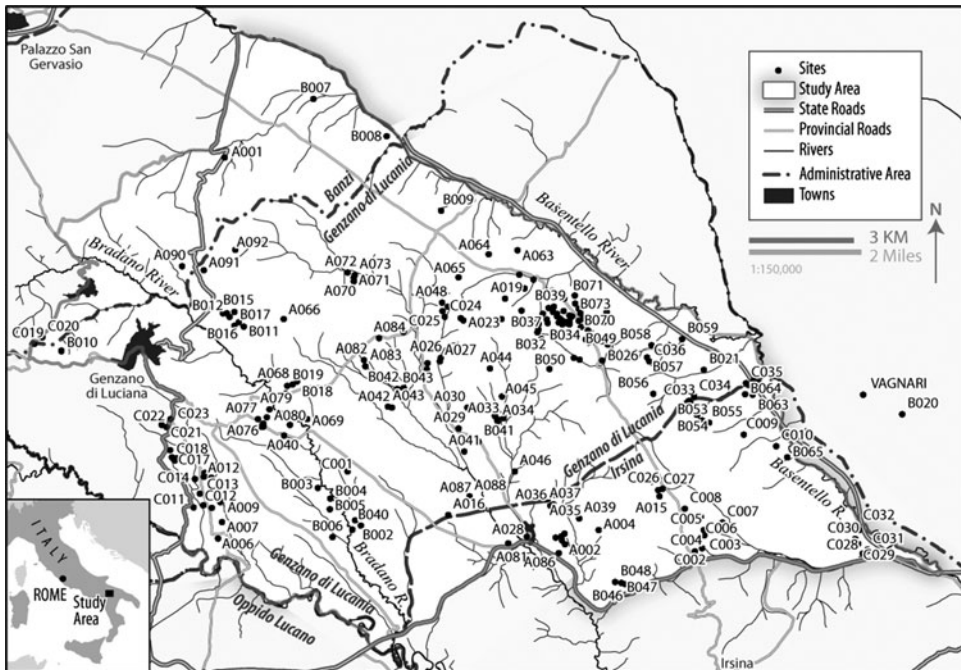


Fig. 1. The survey territory showing all sites documented from 2012 to 2014.



Fig. 2. Field walking in progress.

The chronological range of occupation represented by this handful of scatters is broad, from the late Neolithic through to the high Middle Ages (principally the eleventh century), as well as a significant amount of material datable to the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. We focus our discussion here on the material datable from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages. Of particular note is evidence for what appears to be the first substantial neolithic sites identified to date (sites A070, A071 and A072), located on the northeastern slope of Piano Ceretto. In general, these three scatters probably represent elements from the same site that have been subject to substantial erosion and downslope movement. Among the artifacts recovered are incised impasto cooking-ware, flint blades and quern fragments, probably indicating a settlement. Other, large multi-period sites have provided us with some neolithic material in the past, but only these sites have clear indications of habitation.

Our survey data continue to indicate that, during the Early Iron Age, particularly from the late ninth/eighth to the sixth centuries BC, residents in the survey zone were grouped into a single nucleated centre at Monte Serico (McCallum and Hyatt, 2014). Excavation of a portion of the site demonstrates that it began life as an agglomeration of apsidal wattle and daub structures that, starting in the sixth century BC, were generally replaced with buildings in stone (Ciriello, Cossalter and Sodo, 2009: 309–10).

The settlement pattern changed significantly starting in the late fifth/early fourth century BC, when occupation spread into the countryside around Monte Serico and elsewhere in the survey zone in the form of numerous small sites. These settlements are identified principally on the presence of black-gloss and grey-gloss pottery in surface assemblages, as noted in our report last year (McCallum and vanderLeest, 2014). This process appears to have continued until the late second or early first century BC. Little evidence relevant to this period, from the fifth to the second centuries BC, was found in 2014, although what few scatters we did encounter fit this pattern. In general, however, there does not appear to have been any major demographic decline as a consequence of the Samnite, Pyrrhic or Hannibalic Wars, which is an important finding and in keeping with the picture in the Upper Bradano valley (Fracchia and Gualtieri, 2011) and in the Ofanto valley (Goffredo, 2010).

Data from the previous two summers indicate that generally there was a decrease in the number of sites but an increase in the size of many of those sites that survived, starting in the Late Republican/Early Imperial period (mid-first century BC) through to the third century AD (McCallum and Hyatt, 2014: 176–8). This appears broadly similar to the process of agglomeration described generally throughout much of peninsular Italy at this time, and observed in the Upper Bradano by Helena Fracchia and Maurizio Gualtieri (Fracchia and Gualtieri, 2011: 24–7). Our survey data in 2014 do not contradict this finding, and indeed add one very large Imperial site to our total, A078/A079. This site is located on a relatively level plain above the river Fiumarella, in close proximity to a spring and within 1.5 km of two other relatively large sites that have a broadly similar occupation history (B003 and B018/B068).

There was a decline in the number of sites and also the density of artifacts at those sites still occupied through the late third/early fourth century AD (based on the presence of diagnostic sherds of African red slip ware C and D, as well as late Roman painted ware). Starting at this time (*c.* 400–25), there was a dramatic increase in the size and density of the largest sites from the Imperial period, including the aforementioned A078/A079. This trend continued until the late fifth/early sixth century AD, after which sites appear to have gone into decline, with few surviving beyond the seventh century. We noted this phenomenon in our report last year (McCallum and vanderLeest, 2014), and our results from 2014 conform to this pattern. The exact nature of this phenomenon is not clear. We speculate that these larger sites were agricultural villages, certainly indicative of a new and quite distinct settlement pattern, and also perhaps evidence for an alteration in landownership patterns.

We identified six scatters with material datable to the early to high Middle Ages (A063, A064, A065, A067, A077 and A079). The medieval material represents a tiny proportion of the assemblage of artifacts at four of these scatters, indicating that, if there was continued occupation of these sites beyond the seventh century AD, it was at a much-reduced level. Four of these scatters were also located at the base of Monte Serico, less than 1.5 km from the medieval village on the upper slope of the hill, which may indicate that these scatters are to be associated with agricultural and pastoral activities conducted by those

resident on Monte Serico. To date, the only substantial scatter with remains datable to the eighth through eleventh centuries AD within the study area is that found atop Monte Serico, in the immediate environs of a recently-restored eleventh-century castle. The evidence indicates that there was a relatively complete abandonment of the countryside, at least with respect to habitation, with most people resident in nucleated centres, much as was the case in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. The medieval site at Monte Serico is the sole example within our survey zone, but to it can be added the nearby centres of Bantia, Genzano di Lucania, Irsina, Mont Irsi and San Felice.

During the summer of 2015, we intend to survey an additional 25 square kilometres of territory, principally along the Basentello river to the north of Monte Serico and to the south of Genzano di Lucania, between the town and the Bradano river. This will give us a total of 100 square kilometres surveyed, or roughly 50% of our entire survey zone.

#### APPENDIX. Sites documented in July and August 2014.

Site	Number of collection units	Area of scatter (hectares)	Historical/archaeological period or century
A063	1	0.16	Medieval
A064	1	0.06	Medieval
A065	4	1.16	Classical, Hellenistic, late antique/early medieval
A066	1	0.26	Early Iron Age to Archaic, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries
A067	1	0.13	Hellenistic, late antique/early medieval
A068	5	1.28	Imperial, late antique, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries
A069	1	0.06	Hellenistic
A070	1	0.12	Neolithic
A071	2	0.33	Neolithic
A072	1	0.21	Neolithic
A073	1	0.08	Late antique/early medieval
A074	1	0.32	Neolithic, Imperial, late antique
A075	1	0.17	Neolithic, Classical, Hellenistic/Republican, Imperial, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries, twentieth century
A076	1	0.22	Late antique
A077	1	0.36	Neolithic, late antique/early medieval
A078	24	6.18	Neolithic, Hellenistic/Republican, Imperial, late antique, seventeenth–nineteenth centuries, twentieth century
A079	8	2.22	Imperial, late antique/early medieval, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries, twentieth century
A080	1	0.08	Late antique
A081	1	0.12	Neolithic, Classical, Hellenistic/Republican
A082	1	0.28	Late antique
A083	1	0.19	Late antique/early medieval, twentieth century
A084	1	0.06	Eighteenth–nineteenth centuries
A085	6	1.60	Classical, Hellenistic/Republican, twentieth century
A086	4	0.97	Late antique
A087	1	0.24	Late antique
A088	1	0.06	Late antique, twentieth century
A090	1	0.22	Late antique
A091	1	0.27	Archaic, late antique
A092	1	0.35	Imperial, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries

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