12

2015

IL CAPITALE CULTURALE

Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage

JOURNAL OF **THE SECTION** OF **CULTURAL HERITAGE**
Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism
University of Macerata

eum

Il Capitale culturale
Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage
Vol. 12, 2015

ISSN 2039-2362 (online)

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Registrazione al Roc n. 735551 del 14/12/2010

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icc@unimc.it

Editore
eum edizioni università di macerata, Centro direzionale, via Carducci 63/a – 62100 Macerata
tel (39) 733 258 6081
fax (39) 733 258 6086
http://eum.unimc.it
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«Il capitale culturale», XII (2015), pp. 45-66
ISSN 2039-2362 (online)
http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult
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Inspecting the transformation of Roman settlements in the Upper Potenza Valley (Marche region) across Late Antiquity and into the Early Medieval era

Francesca Carboni*

Abstract

The following analysis shows the changes occurred in the settlement patterns in the upper Potenza river valley (MC, Marche region) during the transition period between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. This analysis is mainly based on the results of a geo-archaeological project, which has been carried out by a team from Ghent University since 2000.

The review of the pottery collected during the field survey has allowed for a better-defined chronology of the last phase of occupation of the rural sites identified in the sample zone, located within an intermediate basin between the Umbria-Marche Apennines and a lateral dorsal ridge, in areas dominated by the hilltops of Monte Primo and Monte Castel Santa Maria. For some of these sites, it is now possible to ascertain a continuity of life up to the end of the seventh century and further into the Middle Ages.

* Francesca Carboni, Archaeologist, FWO Pegaus-Marie Curie postdoctoral fellow; Department of Archaeology, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat, 35, B-9000 Ghent, e-mail: francesca.carboni@ugent.be.

La presente analisi illustra le trasformazioni delle modalità insediative avvenute nel periodo di transizione fra la tarda antichità e il medioevo nell'alta valle del fiume Potenza (MC, Marche). Essa si basa sui risultati del progetto condotto con metodo geo-archeologico da un gruppo di ricerca dell'Università di Ghent, dal 2000. La revisione del materiale ceramico raccolto nel corso delle ricognizioni ha consentito di definire meglio le ultime fasi di occupazione dei siti rurali identificati nella zona campione in questione, posizionata all'interno del bacino intramontano posto fra l'Appennino umbro-marchigiano e una dorsale montuosa laterale, dominata dalle cime del Monte Primo e del Monte Santa Maria. Per alcuni di questi siti è stato, infatti, possibile accertare una continuità di occupazione estesa fino al VII secolo e oltre, in età medievale.

> Il passato è un po' come una montagna, la cui forma oggettiva, nella sua interezza, non è afferrabile da qualsivoglia prospettiva, ma che ogni punto di vista diverso contribuisce a costruire dalla propria angolatura, provvista di una sua parziale oggettività.
>
> H. Carr, quoted by L. Cracco Ruggini, quoting Edward, *Come e perchè è "esploso" il tardoantico*, «Studi storici, Rivista trimestrale dell'Istituto Gramsci», 45, 2004, p. 15-25.

This research is part of the long-term Potenza Valley Survey (PVS) project, directed by prof. Frank Vermeulen of the Department of Archaeology of Ghent University, with the aim of studying the urban and rural occupation patterns in the valley of the river Potenza (MC, Marche region), from prehistoric times into the Middle Ages.

The main results of the project have been published in many contributions, with a special focus on periods of first urbanisation and the Romanisation of the area as well as its further development in Roman times (ca. 300 B.C.-A.D. 500)[1].

As a result of the review of ceramic materials collected during the surveys, in view of a final publication, and in light of the most recent acquisitions of pottery markers that were recognized as typical of the period between the seventh and the ninth centuries, growing evidence now demonstrates the *longue durée* of many of the rural sites identified along the upper Potenza valley.

In the last few years, two Italian congresses particularly contributed to the knowledge of important excavation data otherwise undisclosed and to the comparison with well-dated contexts from different Adriatic regions[2].

[1] For the first report about the PVS survey in the upper Potenza valley, see Vermeulen, Boullart 2001. The archaeological map with the sites catalogues of the Potenza valley is published in Percossi Serenelli, Pignocchi, Vermeulen 2006.

[2] I am referring to the congress *Le forme della crisi. Produzioni ceramiche e commerci nell'Italia*

Furthermore, the recent publication of a thorough topographical research, which offers an archaeological and documentary description of the different settlement patterns that occurred along the upper and middle Potenza valleys between the fifth and the fifteenth century[3], as well as the constant updates about the progress of the R.I.M.E.M. project in the neighboring upper Chienti valley[4], have allowed us to insert our data in a wider and more detailed historical and geographical framework. It now seems possible a better understanding of the settlement dynamics that are of interest within the considered area, and the area's role as a buffer zone in the period following the Lombard invasion and the origin of the Duchy of Spoleto, when the *via Flaminia* and the related side roads assumed renewed importance, in association with the shifting boundary inside the region[5].

The geographical scope

The considered area coincides with the westernmost of the sampling zones investigated by Ghent University in the context of the Potenza Valley Survey project (fig. 1). Although not a real mountain area, it is located at the foot of the hilltops of Monte Primo and Monte Castel Santa Maria, where the valley widens beyond the narrow Pioraco gorge, through which the river, exiting from the Umbria-Marche Apennines, enters into an intermediate basin (fig. 2). This sample zone was not arbitrarily chosen. It is still indeed a very hilly landscape (between 300 and 500 m high), but here the Potenza valley shows for the first time, from the river sources westwards, enough arable land for widespread human settlement. The micro-region is situated on the crossroad of two intramontane corridors. The first is the Potenza valley, which, oriented east to west, links the Apennines with the Adriatic coast. The second one gives passage from the Colfiorito area in the south to the Esino valley northwards. Both corridors, which cross each other southwest of Castelraimondo, have played an important role since the proto-history of the region[6]. The later Roman roads, in fact, retraced the same natural communication routes, with some infrastructural arrangements, the tracing of adjustment paths and the opening of new connecting ways. At the western edge of the considered area,

centrale tra romani e longobardi (III-VIII sec.), organized in Spoleto in 2012 and to the congress *Economia e territorio nell'Adriatico centrale tra tarda Antichità e alto Medioevo (IV-VIII secolo)* held in Ravenna in 2014. See, respectively, Cirelli, Diosono, Patterson 2015 and Cirelli, Giorgi, Lepore, in press.

3 I refer to Virgili 2014.

4 Moscatelli 2014, with previous bibliography.

5 Dall'Aglio 2004, p. 91.

6 Percossi, Pignocchi 2006, pp. 20-22.

there is Pioraco, located in correspondence to the Roman center *Prolaqueum*, a *mansio* along the road site of the main *via Flaminia*, which, connecting *Nuceria* to *Ancona*[7], traversed the Potenza Valley until the Roman town of *Trea*. At the extremes of the important north-south passageway are situated the towns of Camerino, positioned on the dorsal between the Potenza and the Chienti valley, and Matelica, located in the northern side of the intermediate basin, alongside the Esino river. Both of these towns originate from the Roman *municipia Camerinum* and *Matilica*, respectively.

Rural settlements and towns between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages: the state of the art

The systematic survey in the upper-Potenza valley, combined with field-checks of crop and soil marks traced through aerial photography as well as using information from previous finds in the area, allowed the definition of 34 sites as non-problematic Roman "settlement sites," based on the presence of artifact scatters and classified within the site typology[8] (fig. 3).

The number of identified Roman sites characterizes this area as the one with the highest density pattern among the three transect zones of actually surveyed fields.

As well noted for all the respective territories, the concentration of rural sites often corresponds to the contact areas of different landscape types, such as the border zones between the valley bottom and the hill slopes, where the advantages of the natural environment could be used.

In this sense, in the upper Potenza valley sample area, the large Roman settlements were mainly situated around the ca. 375 m – 405 m contours, where inhabitants profited from the abundant water springs.

The study of the archaeological materials, even considering the possible variables that enter into the recognition of pottery types due to poor diagnostics for some historical periods, led to the insertion of the chronological dimension needed for a full understanding of site dispersion in Roman times. Summarizing the already published PVS project results, the most marked occupation of the territory has been detected from the first century B.C. to the second century A.D. In the third century, a sort of decline both of the existing settlements and in the creation of new rural units should have occurred. The fourth century seems to document an economic recovery, with a possible reoccupation of previous rural sites and a new intensive exploitation of the agricultural resources of this landscape, whose frequentation is testified until the second half of the fifth

[7] Itinerarium Antonini 310, 5-7; 311, 5 ; 312, 1-6.
[8] See Verdonck, Vermeulen 2004; Verreyke, Vermeulen 2009; Vermeulen, Mlekuz 2012.

century, on the basis of the latest imported ceramic evidence. The detection of pottery concentrations dated from the tenth century onward led to the discovery of three medieval hilltop sites (tab. 1).

In Roman times, the considered rural sites were located within the *municipales agri* of *Matilica* (north of the Potenza river) and *Camerinum* (south of the Potenza river).

The published data concerning *Matilica*, in light of the latest interpretation of the fate of Roman towns in *Picenum* during Late Antiquity, seems to testify of a substantial continuity of occupation for the urban center[9]. The town was a bishop's see between the forth and the sixth century[10]. A proper medieval core has been recognised within the medieval city walls, more or less corresponding to the Roman circuit. This focal area is located around the *pieve*, attested to since the thirteenth century on the *Civita* place. Earlier phases of frequentation, archaeologically documented inside or in connection with Roman buildings, have been attributed to the early Middle Ages and soon after the tenth century.

New stratigraphical data, available for *Camerinum* thanks to rescue excavations of urban archaeology directed by the *Soprintendenza Archeologica delle Marche*, follow the transformation of some zones situated inside the Roman walls from Late Antiquity to the present era[11]. They prove the topographical continuity of the city, which has been a bishop's see without interruption since the second half of the fifth century. The role of the town in the framework of the Duchy of Spoleto is an evidence for considering the urban center as the essential reference for the settlement organization of the territory.

The positive fate of the two Roman towns, even within the changed economic and historical conditions and the strengthening of the political role of *Camerinum*, is tightly linked to the substantial persistence of the surrounding road network.

Finally, the strategic position is an additional clue in favor of the continuity of life of *Prolaquaeum*, the last Roman center in the considered territory[12]. The archaeological discoveries in the area of the present urban center, only mentioned by the *Itinerarium Antonini* in connection with the side road *via Flaminia per Picenum ad Anconam*[13], describe a consistent settlement whose persisting importance seems demonstrated by the pieve, which is situated at the eastern edge of the ancient town in correspondence with the Roman baths. Although according to the available documentary sources, the church is attested for the first time only in the twelfth century, on account of the saint venerated

[9] For the state of the art of the current research on the three here considered urban centers, see Virgili 2014, pp. 28-29 and 35-38. About Matilica, see Biocco 2000 and Biocco *et al.* 2010.

[10] Lanzoni 1927, p. 489.

[11] See Silvestrini, Antongirolami, D'Ulizia 2014; Virgili, Melia 2015; Antongirolami, Frapiccini in press; Frapiccini, Virgili in press.

[12] Giuliodori 1993.

[13] Biocco 2008.

there, St. Vittorino, the origin of the place of worship seems to date back to the early Middle Ages[14].

New data from the Potenza Valley Survey project

The study of the pottery collected has revealed that one third of the Roman settlements detected in the upper Potenza Valley experienced a continuity of occupation until Late Antiquity (fig. 4).

The now available overall view allows for a significantly better understanding of the commercial traffic of Mediterranean products in the different zones of the region between the forth and the seventh centuries. The imported ceramics, in fact, reached the coastal colony *Potentia*, possibly through cabotage routes, which first connected the port of Ravenna to Ancona[15]. The comparison with the ceramic material gathered during the field surveys in the upper and middle Potenza valley shows the degree of penetration of these goods in the inland areas.

Concerning the pottery imported from North Africa, besides amphoras, lamps and cooking ware, the African Red Slip ware represents the better quantified class. If in the whole river valley the production D is predominant, the downward trend of the amount of ARS fragments is notable, proceeding from the lower to the upper valley, with fragments attestations amounting, respectively, to the 65.31, the 22.45 and the 12.24 % of the total number. The latest forms found in the coastal area, however, never arrived in the upper valley, where the most recent fragments of ARS collected dated to the fifth century. Even the imports of cooking ware identified during the excavations and the surveys carried out in the *colonia* of *Potentia*, which testify to a trade connection with north-eastern Italy (Po region) that lasted until the second half of the sixth century, did not penetrate the inland areas[16].

Compared with the catalogue of sites published in 2006, it could be ascertained that three of the rural Roman settlements occupied until Late Antiquity were frequented also during the early Middle Ages: one of them is located north of the Potenza river, in the north-eastern corner of the considered sample area, while the two others are situated southward, respectively within the actual municipality of Pioraco and Camerino. These settlements are all on hilltops or on high slopes areas, overlooking the valley below and in good visual relationship with the surrounding sites (fig. 5).

14 Virgili 2014, pp. 35-36; Del Lungo 2004, p. 165.

15 As last, see Carboni, Vermeulen in press.

16 For the detailed description of local and imported productions of cooking ware from Potentia, see Verreyke, De Paepe 2009 and Vermeulen, Verreyke, Carboni 2014.

Site nr. 69, Casa Matta (fig. 6)

This site is located north of the *Strada comunale di Brondoleto*, in the municipality of Castelraimondo, on a hill and eastwards-oriented slope along the *Rio Cimarolo*, at an altitude of around 390 m a.s.l., directly overseeing the Potenza plain. It was detected by a systematic survey conducted in 2000 by the PVS project team.

The site, which presents a perifocal articulation composed of five different concentrations very close to each other, extends on a surface of 3,000 m2 in total and has been interpreted as a rural settlement defined as Type 3 (large farm or villa) according to Vermeulen-Verdonck's classification[17].

On the basis of the pottery collected, mixed with building material (tiles, sand and limestone pieces), in the different outcrop areas, the occupation consisted of an area inhabited from the Republican and early Imperial period up to the fourth century A.D., as attested by the ceramic fragments found in the large upper concentration (nr. 69B). Just within this zone and the southern, probably colluviated concentration (site nr. 69E), there were abundant high medieval finds.

The settlement is located almost exactly at the middle point of a unique alignment, parallel to the stretch of road here traversing the Potenza valley, between the two hilltops sites nr. 53/78 (Casa Cammarello) and nr. 71 (Seano). Significant are the proximity and the connection reciprocal of the sites, as attested by the GIS viewshed analysis performed.

The first settlement was detected in a zone bordering a house on top of the hill westward (408 m a.s.l.), originally situated between the Brondoleto stream and the main road conducting to *Matilica*. Here two concentrations of pottery and stones, mostly pebbles, were found, located, respectively, at the two opposite sides of the modern house. They denote the presence of a long-lasting rural settlement, frequented since the Imperial time through medieval and post-medieval times.

The second site, revealed by a large outcrop returning only Medieval pottery (seventh to eleventh century), was located at the small hilltop hamlet Seano (420 m a.s.l.), inside the topographical basin limited by the Rio Cimarolo on the west side. It coincides with a dark greyish brown earth and contains numerous fragments of limestone blocks and rubble. The chance discoveries during works on a house in 1961, which brought a female portrait of Severan Age to light at this location, as well as a male bust, document a possible continued occupation of the site since Roman times[18].

[17] Verdonck, Vermeulen 2004, 179-181.
[18] Boccanera, Corradini 1970, p. 111; Mercando *et al.* 1981, p. 338, nr. 299.

Sites nr. 37 and 38, Le Caselle (fig. 7)

The site nr. 38 is located beside the *Rio* or *Selvazzano* stream in the municipality of Pioraco, on a hilly ridge at an altitude of around 400 m a.s.l. It was detected by a systematic survey conducted in 2000 by the PVS project team.

The settlement consists of a large concentration (2,400 m^2) of roof tiles and other building material together with a large amount of Roman pottery. This site, classified as Type 3 (large farm or villa), might extend more widely. It could be related to another large concentration (site nr. 37, 5,500 m^2), located northwards at the foot of a steep slope. The finds area was plausibly formed by an accumulation of material from the top of the hill, at the present occupied by the modern farm *Le Caselle*.

The ceramic fragments collected in both concentrations testify to the occupation of the sites in the following chronological ranges: first century B.C. through second century A.D., fourth to fifth century A.D., and seventh to ninth century A.D.

Site nr. 58, Mergnano S. Pietro (fig. 7)

This site is located on a south-west oriented slope, just at the north of the *Mergnano S. Pietro* hamlet in the municipality of Camerino. The settlement is at an altitude of 444 m a.s.l. It was detected by a systematic survey conducted in 2000 by the PVS project team.

The artifact scatter (ca. 4,000 m^2) spread over the field and consisted of building materials and Roman pottery from the first century B.C. to the fourth or fifth century A.D., and it has been interpreted as a Type 3 settlement (large farm or villa).

Within a concentration of sand and limestone, some proto-historic finds were discovered, indicating a possible proto-historic settlement. A fair amount of early medieval ware was also present. The favorable location of the considered sites, overlooking each other from the opposite side of the Rio or Selvazzano stream, explains the long frequentation attested since pre-historic times through Late Roman age and, in continuity, until the period comprised between the seventh and the ninth centuries.

South of the site nr. 37, the PVS project's investigations carried out in 2000 located two concentrations (sites nr. 60 and 61), the lowest of which (nr. 60) possibly consisted of colluviated materials, which came down from the top of the small hillock where site 61 was situated, at the altitude of ca. 390 m a.s.l., in locality Colle Maggio[19] Both concentrations returned potsherds dated from the tenth century.

[19] The site nr. 61 was located by Umberto Moscatelli.

Despite the three settlement clusters (sites nr. 60-61, nr. 37-38, nr. 58) seem to be located according to an evident connection in terms of visibility – each one being ascertained at the corner of an ideal equilateral triangle – at present there are no data supporting their contemporary occupation during the high Middle Ages.[20]

Finally, regarding the vitality of the whole considered micro-region in the high Middle Ages, it is significant to remark the presence, attested on documentary basis, of a church registered among the properties of Fiastra Abbey from 967 to 1118 A.D.: St. Angelo in Lanciano[21]. The church, to be placed in proximity of the modern hamlet Borgo Lanciano (Castelraimondo) or in coincidence with the nearby late medieval castle[22], is situated along the Potenza valley in a strategic point, in the vicinity of the cross-roads of the *diverticulum* of the *via Flaminia* and the north-south connection between Camerino and Matelica.

Some preliminary data about the pottery finds

North of the Potenza river, the evidence for a frequentation of the site nr. 69 during Medieval times is based on the outcrops of a good amount of common ware dated from tenth to eleventh century and later. Most of this common ware consisted of the typical pottery assemblage accounted for in this period in central Italy, thereby associating the regions of Tuscany, Romagna, Umbria and Marche in a common background of cultural, alimentary and economic traditions[23]. This association concerns the basket shaped cooking vessels so called "Paioli a cestello," as well as medium and large storage jars featuring an everted rim, strap handle attached to the rim and a possible spout on the shoulder[24].

[20] The most recent materials collected during surveys in the northern sites dated to the seventh-ninth century, while the ceramic vessels found in the concentrations located on Colle Maggio consist of the forms diffused only from the tenth century onward. Nevertheless, the survival of the Roman praedial toponym in the present denomination of Mergnano (San Pietro) village seems to suggest a continued site occupation.

[21] R.F. III, nr. 404 and R.F. V, Nr. 1318.

[22] Virgili 2014, p. 49.

[23] De Marinis 1999.

[24] A large quantity of this homogenous pottery assortment, testifying to a standardized and organized ceramic production integrated into an interregional market, was firstly brought to light at the excavations of Matelica (loc. Castellana) and of Sarnano (Mercando 1970, 394-434, Profumo 1990). Following discoveries, steadily increasingly thanks to stratigraphical excavations and survey investigations in the Marche region, led to point to a local production (Profumo 2004, p. 173). A fair amount of paioli a cestello were discovered in 2012 within the layers filling a medieval trench, come to light in Tolentino (MC), during the renovation works of the theatre Nicola Vaccaj: <http:/ www.archeologia.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/142/scavi/scaviarcheologici_4e048966cfa3a/333>, 12.11.2015.

Concerning the transitional period between Late antiquity and early Middle Ages, the extreme fragmentary state of the ceramic finds did not allow for the recognition of any fragment of the typical Lombard burnished pottery with stamped decoration.

Nevertheless, the detection of many potsherds possibly dated from the seventh to the ninth century are of particular interest. These fragments can be easily inserted in the category of "light clay unglazed ware" decorated with incised lines running in bands, as well as horizontal motifs sometimes taking a wavy form (fig. 8). Specifically, the fragments are of common pottery vessels, always collected in a highly fragmented state, for which little can be discerned from a morphological point of view, but that may offer more precise information in technical terms[25].

This kind of decoration is vastly attested to in the Mediterranean world, and particularly in Italy[26]. But beyond any generic formal comparisons, this group of light and moderately hard clay pottery is fully part of the specific class recognized on occasion in the study of Comacchio's stratigraphies[27]. Besides the typical combed decoration, these include mainly closed forms, mostly with two handles and generally dated from the end of the seventh to the ninth century A.D. Through the analysis of the fabric type, the fragments were assigned to the same group of a larger quantity of potsherds, consisting of handles, bottoms and fragments of walls without decoration that were otherwise unclassifiable.

It is important that future petrographical analysis establish the possible production site of the collected fragments of "light clay unglazed ware." At present, on the basis of autoptic considerations, the most convincing comparisons can be done with the vessels diffused in the Po region as well as with the ones coming from Rome and Latium.

If the origin of this kind of imported pottery were confirmed, it would be further evidence of the strategic and dynamic role of the upper Potenza valley's intermediate basin and of its road connections passing through the Umbria region, once this area became part of the Spoleto Duchy.

The presence of this pottery appears to be more significant in sites where the concerned fragments result to be the most recent potsherds identified, after the Late Roman pottery.

[25] The incising decorations, with bundles of wavy lines often associated with bands of horizontal lines, were engraved by a multi pointed tool. These decorations are almost always located on the shoulder of close vessels. The fabric is generally hard and well cooked, with a fine texture. The walls are relatively thin. The external surface is shaped accurately with few and regular lathe signs. On the surface of some fragments, a lightening effect is noticeable. It seems most due to a cooking effect than to a slip-coating presence.

[26] The comparisons panorama shows a formal link with Central Italy, mainly Latium, with the contexts of Ostia and Mola di Monte Gelato and Rome, as attested by the Crypta Balbi material. Some analogies occur even with the central and southern Adriatic area, with the vessels produced at Castellana-Piano Leone di Pianella (PE) and Otranto, fondo Militello. For more comparisons and referred bibliography, see Negrelli 2007, pp. 313-326.

[27] For the definition of the class, see Negrelli 2007 and 2012.

This is the case of the site nr. 58, detected next to *Mergnano S. Pietro* and of the site nr. 37 *Le Caselle*.

Conclusions

The considered cases allow for a better understanding of the evolution of the rural settlements in the upper Potenza valley between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, always taking into account the low visibility of the period in survey investigations.

A series of clues associated with the recognition of new pottery markers, possibly dating to the period between the end of African and Eastern imports and the emergence of new forms characteristic from the tenth century in central Italy, allows for the reconstruction of a scenario of substantial continuity within homogenous topographical contexts.

The data presented here may appear obvious, if they are evaluated in light of the geographical framework and the undoubted persistence of the urban centers in the territory where the investigated sites are located.

Generally, the economic criteria are the most significant when determining the continued life of a Roman town. As Chris Wickham stated, in the transition period under scrutiny, a strong impulse to urbanism was, simply, the choice that aristocrats, whose wealth derived from their activity as landowners, could exercise to live in urban centres.[28]

At present, however, it is difficult to assess the real modes of this continuity, both in urban and rural contexts, namely, the real living conditions and the population density. And, of course, we should be able to determine the differences that existed during different ages between cities, in this case *Matilica* and *Camerinum*, in terms of urban hierarchy, political significance and economic influence.

In the sample area coinciding with the upper Potenza valley, the PVS survey started with investigating the settlement patterns located in the countryside.

What is more and more clear is that studying the towns includes the study of the landscape with which the towns interact and *vice versa*. It means considering the "container" together with the "content"[29], since the survival of the cities and the economic endurance of their territory were mutually dependent.

This implies the necessity of overcoming the geographical framework represented by the "tout-court" river valley territory for focusing the attention on the relationship between town and countryside, from the countryside

[28] Wickham 2005, p. 594.
[29] Citter 2012.

perspective, such as the sustainability of the demographic growth of towns and the diachronic developments in the settlement chamber of which towns are part[30].

Archaeologically, a way to understand the change of rural settlement patterns in the upper Potenza valley during the considered transition period is to combine and compare the data produced through survey investigations in the rural sites with the ones that have merged (or will be brought to life) from the excavation of the stratigraphies related to the different phases of life at the concerned cities *Camerinum* and *Matilica*, as well as *Prolaqueum*. In those cities lived the main users of the imported vessels, there were, possibly, the pottery workshops of the local productions.

Only the matching of all the different frames can lead to the restitution of the picture in its complexity and to the comprehension of the destructuration process patterns that necessarily occurred in the rural settlements, as well as in the the urban centres, before their subsequent reconstruction, also in contexts of prolonged duration or even uninterrupted continuity.

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[30] Bintliff 2013. About the recall to the German historical geography or Landeskunde that showed, already by the 1930's, the necessity of pursuing demographic dynamics and settlement shifts at the micro-landscape or Siedlungskammer level, in order to comprehend historical processes on the ground, see Bintliff 2000 and Brogiolo 2005, for the Italian context. In the Marche region, a restitution of topographical scopes within which the sites hierarchy is redrawn in a framework of substantial continuity, between Roman times to Middle Ages, is offered by the results of the RIMEM project. See Moscatelli 2014, with previous bibliography. For a comparison with the ager firmanus, another sector of the region ruled by the Lombards, where the longue durée of the economic structures of the countryside is reflected in the political and administrative stability of Firmum, see Menchelli 2014 and Menchelli, Picchi 2015.

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Appendix *

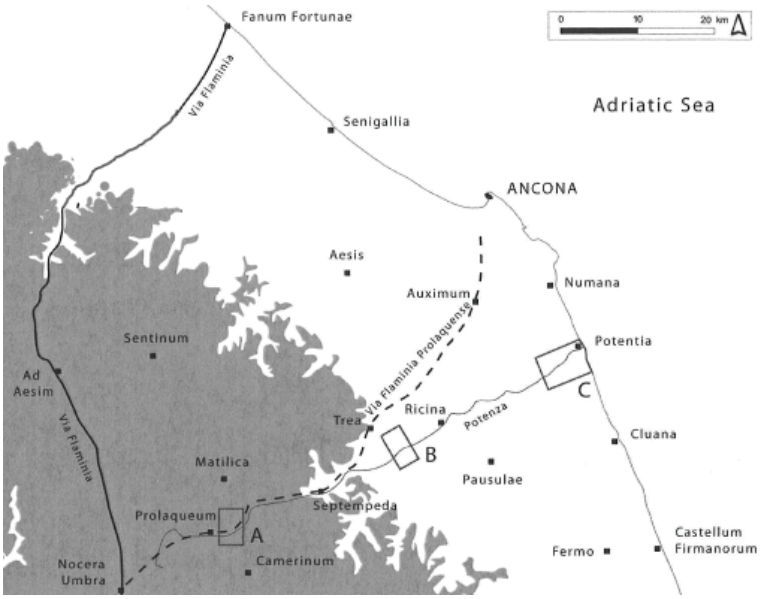

Fig. 1. Location of the PVS survey sample areas in the Potenza valley (A: upper, B: middle, C: lower valley)

Fig. 2. The upper Potenza valley beyond the Pioraco gorge. View of Monte Primo and Monte Castel Santa Maria, from the east

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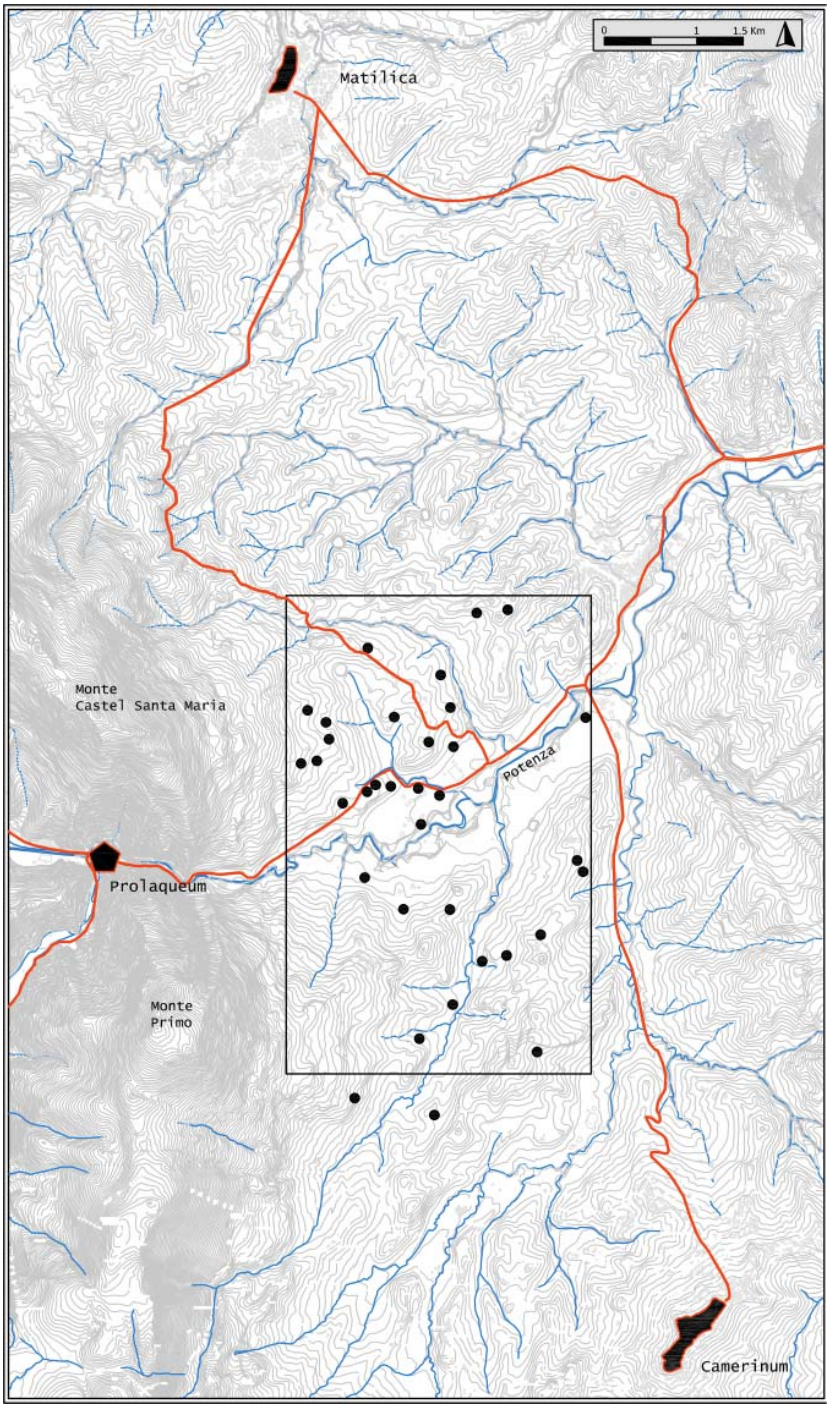

Fig. 3. The Roman rural sites detected by the PVS project in the upper valley sample area, located in the concerned geographical framework (Roman roads and urban centers)

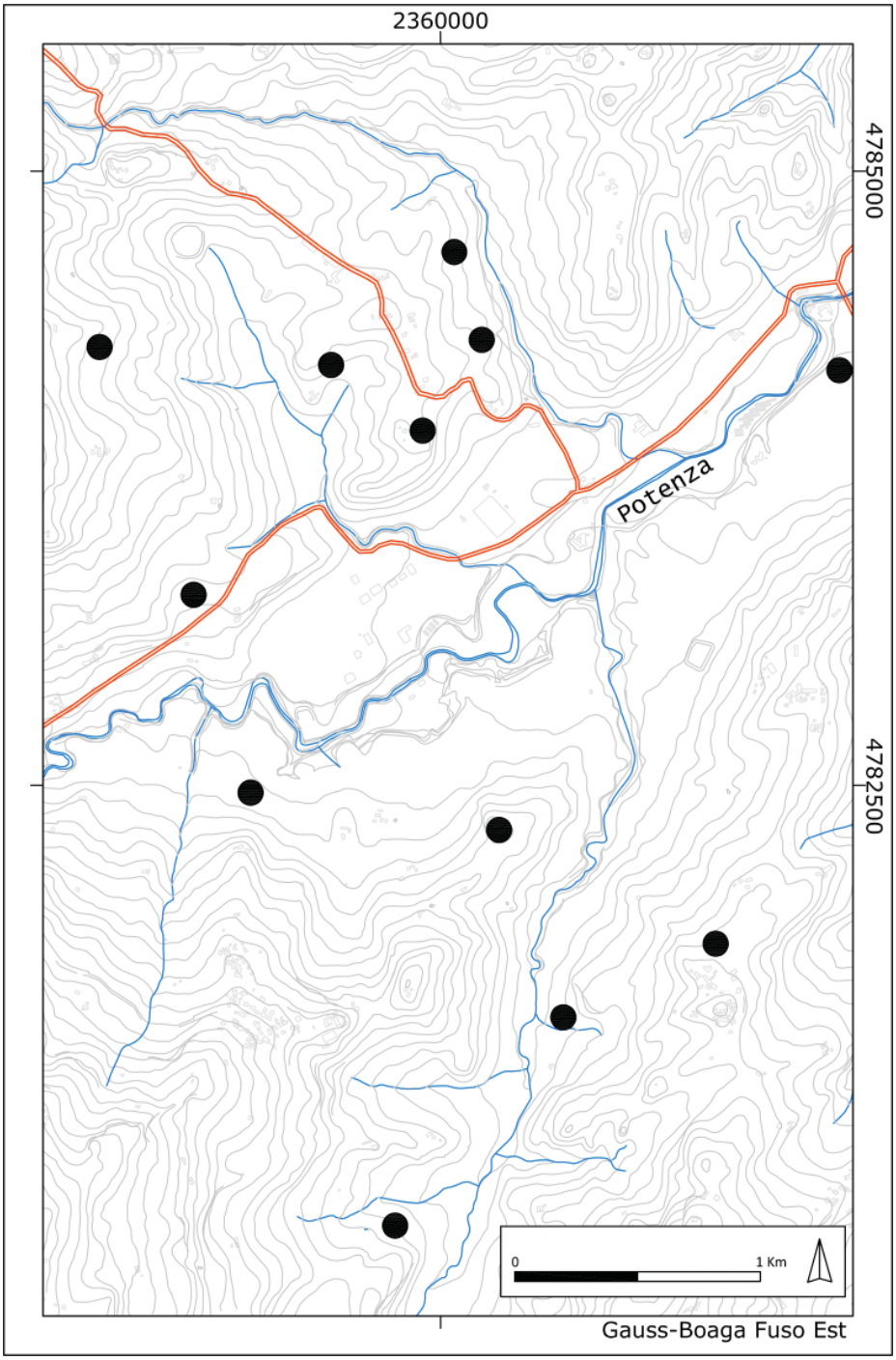

Fig. 4. The Late Roman rural sites detected by the PVS project in the upper valley sample area

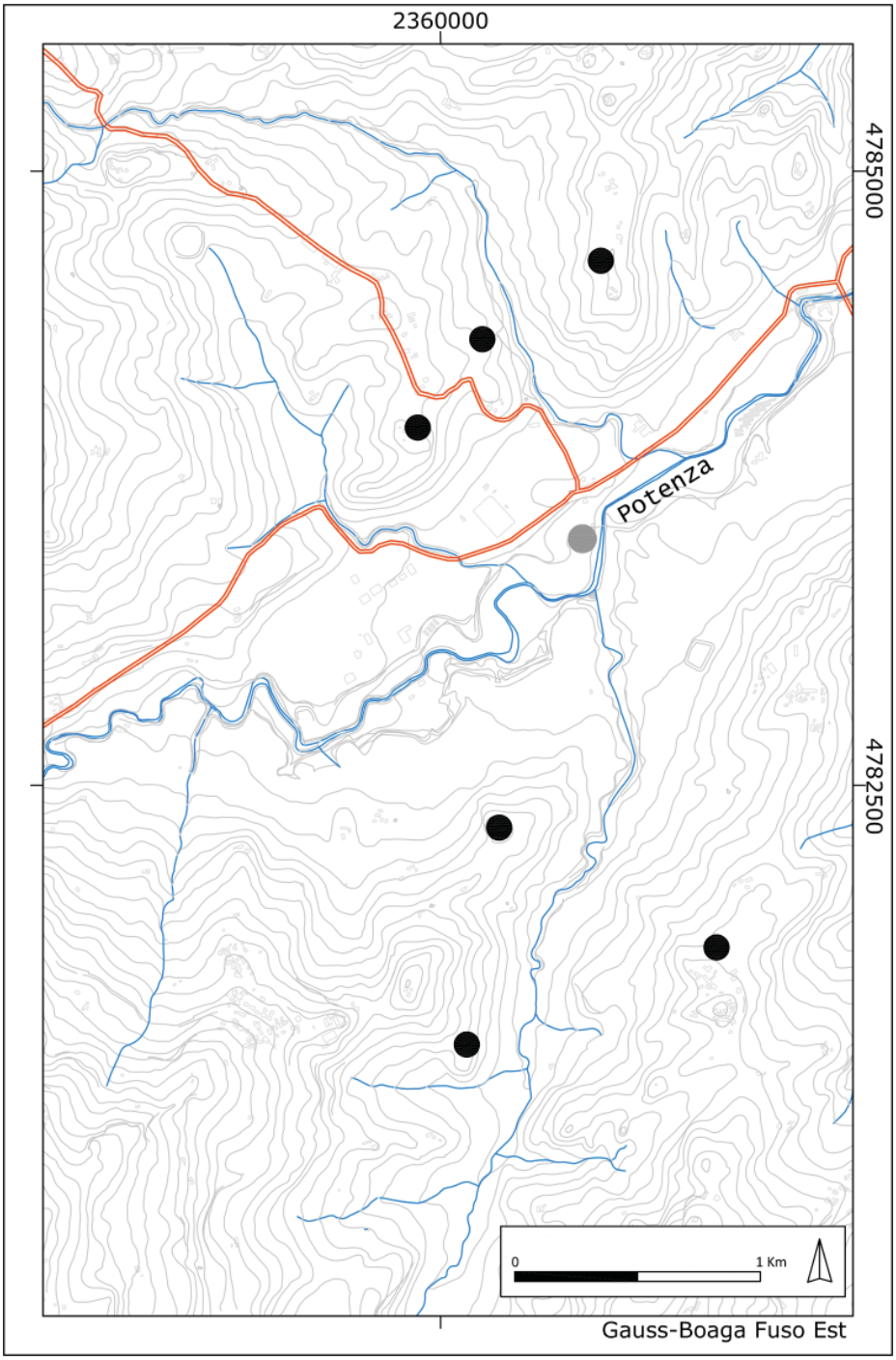

Fig. 5. Early Medieval and Medieval sites detected by the PVS project in the upper valley sample area. The grey dot indicates the possible location of St. Angelo in Lanciano church

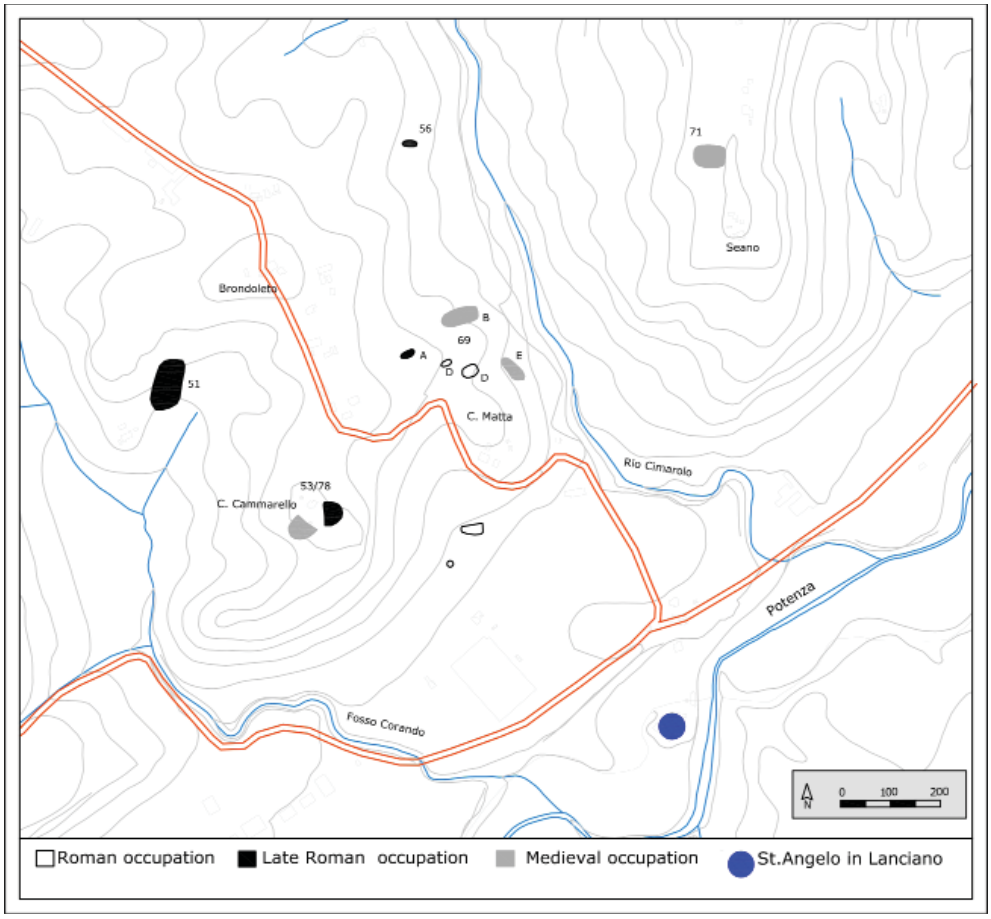

Fig. 6. Location of the Medieval sites in the Northern part of the upper Potenza valley sample area

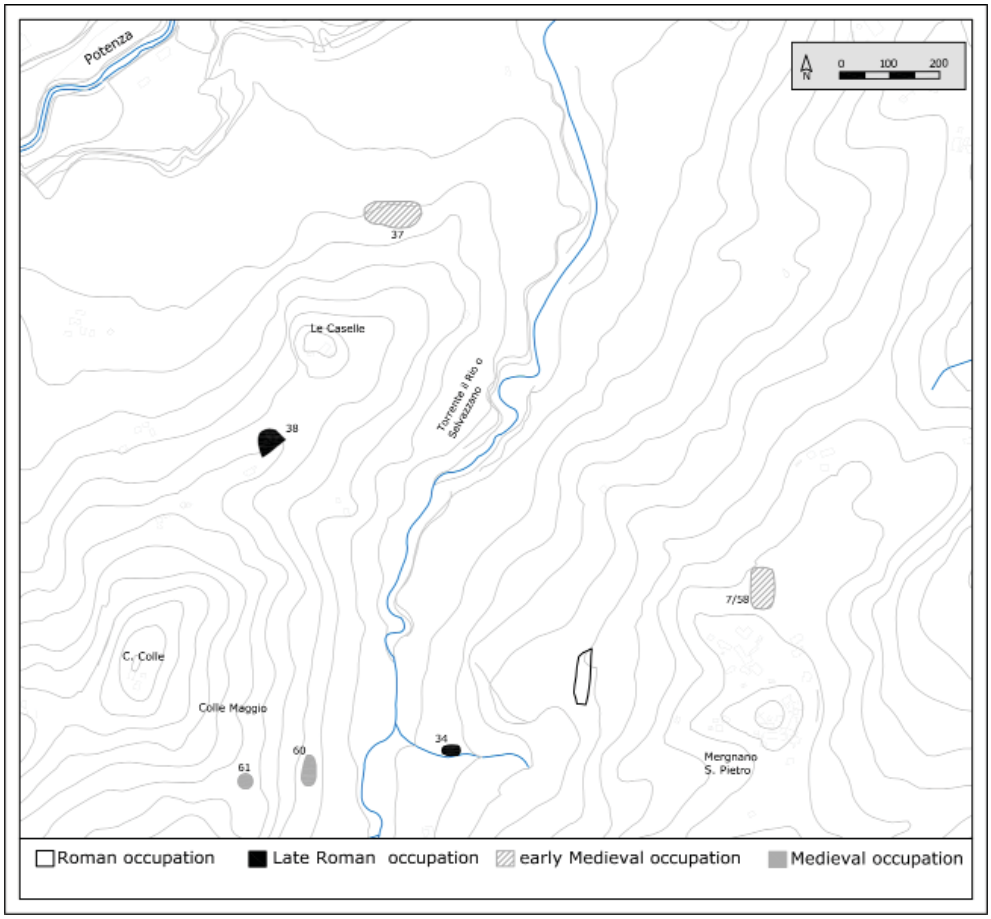

Fig. 7. Location of the Medieval sites in the Southern part of the upper Potenza valley sample area

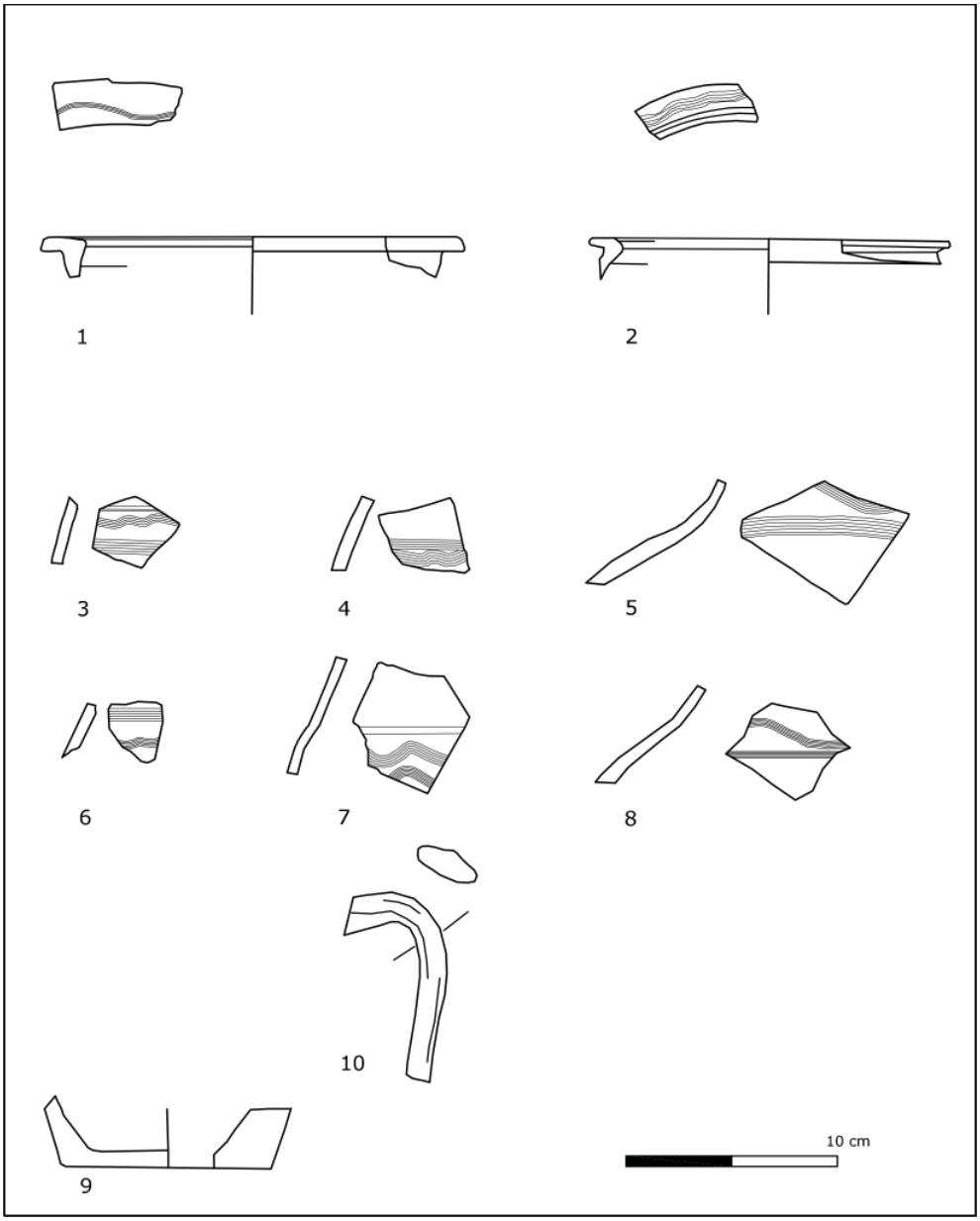

Fig. 8. Selection of pottery fragments (7th-9th centuries) from the upper Potenza valley sites

JOURNAL OF **THE SECTION** OF **CULTURAL HERITAGE**
Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism
University of Macerata

Direttore / Editor
Massimo Montella

Texts by
Ada Acovitsioti-Hameau, Viviana Antongirolami, Monica Baldassarri, Stefan Bergh, Anna Boato, Chiara Boscarol, Nicholas Branch, Paola Camuffo, Francesca Carboni, Francesco Carrer, Marta Castellucci, Annalisa Colecchia, Michael R. Coughlan, Alessandra D'Ulizia, Margarita Fernandina Mier, Serafino Lorenzo Ferreri, Vinzia Fiorino, Anna Gattiglia, Marta Gnone, Ted Gragson, Massimiliano Grava, Ana Konestra, David S. Leigh, Giovanni Leucci, Nicola Masini, Mara Migliavacca, Florence Mocci, Manuela Montagnari Kokelj, Carlo Montanari, Massimo Montella, Lionello Morandi, Umberto Moscatelli, Rosa Pagella, Eleonora Paris, Giovanni Battista Parodi, Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo, Enzo Rizzo, Francesco Roncalli, Alessandro Rossi, Maurizio Rossi, Dimitris Roubis, Enrica Salvatori, Gaia Salvatori, Fabiana Sciarelli, Francesca Sogliani, Ludovico Solima, Anna Maria Stagno, Michel Tarpin, Rita Vecchiattini, Sonia Virgili, Valentino Vitale, Kevin Walsh, Giuseppina Zamparelli.

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ISSN 2039-2362