

GIS AND PRE- AND POSTCOLONIAL INSCRIPTIONS IN THE *AGER FALISCUS*

This paper is based on my research project at Stockholm University on *The boundaries and territorial geographies of Archaic and early Roman central Italy*. The starting point of my interest in Italic and other inscriptions in pre-Roman Italy were my studies related to the Nepi Survey Project I led in the field near this ancient Latin colony (cfr. e.g. DI GENNARO *et al.* 2008). Since directing the *Remembering the Dead* excavation project at *Crustumerium*, I have been interested in cultural interaction in central Italy (e.g. RAJALA in press). Nepi, ancient *Nepet*, lies c. 45 km N of Rome and, during the Orientalising and Archaic periods (between the 7th and 5th centuries BC), it was on the boundary of the Etruscan and Faliscan areas.

In my recent studies, I have touched upon the importance of funerary rituals and tomb architecture as cultural markers, reflecting different group identities from the local to the regional level. Italic and Latin inscriptions in central Italy seem to add another dimension into the study of cultural identities and interaction in the Faliscan area, where different non-Latin languages were present and were replaced by Latin during the colonial rule. As an archaeologist, I am mainly interested in interpreting the cultural implications the past linguistic and material choices have. I need to understand the geographical and chronological distribution of inscriptions in different languages and different media, and the accuracy of locational data available in order to assess their power as archaeological evidence of different identities or situations. Geographic Information Systems allow visualizing different distributions, as well as comparing and analysing different associations with other materials or landscape features. In order to apply GIS tools and methodologies, a database of all relevant inscriptions is required.

I am currently building a research database including the Faliscan, Etruscan and Latin inscriptions from the Faliscan area (Fig. 1) published by BAKKUM (2009), and incorporating materials kept out from his *corpus*. The exclusions include all assumed numeric inscriptions, single letters and Greek inscriptions. Even if single letters do not convey language, they show that some people were literate or were faced with literary materials, whereas Greek deity names on pottery show that individuals encountered Greek language; lastly, numeric markings have cultural significance due to their association with building materials and black gloss production.

The need to understand the wider precolonial, colonial and postcolonial context of cultural interactions has led to the interest in putting different *corpora* of inscriptions together (e.g. CRAWFORD 2011), as far as it is conceivable

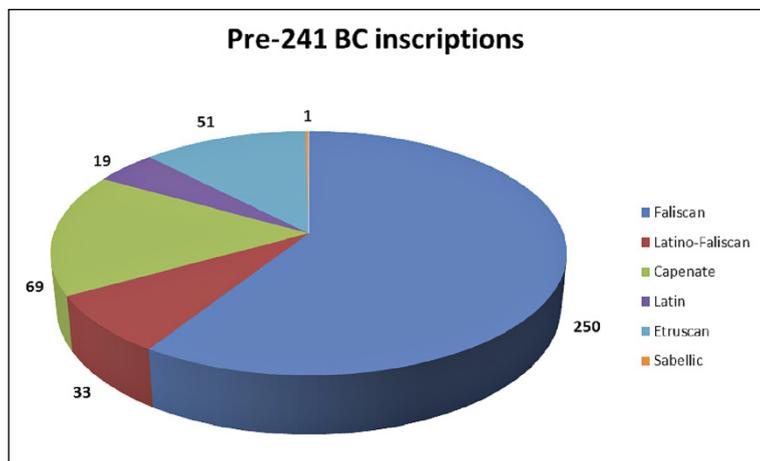


Fig. 1 – All inscriptions in different languages from the *Ager Faliscus* in BAKKUM 2009.

within a certain timeframe and the scope of different archaeological projects. I am developing a wider inscription database linked with other databases and data tables listing different potential boundary markers in central Italy. However, I am primarily interested in archaeological and locational attributes more than in the content of inscriptions themselves. Thus, instead of the texts of all inscriptions, their photographs or linguistic attributes, I am cataloguing attributes that may allow mapping distributions of different languages (or the uncertainty of their presence), find contexts and media across wider region.

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