Novana, its territory and the Pisa South Picenum Survey Project II

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Introduction

In 2012, after the publication of the results of the Ager Firmanus Survey Project, which included the middle and lower valleys of the Tenna and Aso rivers\(^1\), it was thought useful to continue the field research in Southern Picenum, focusing on the high valleys of the two rivers, at the foot of the Sibillini Mountains, in a large district considered part of the agri Firmanus, Faleroniensis, Urbisalviensis and Asculanus. This interest arose from the need to acquire knowledge about the inland piedmont landscapes in order to compare them with those of the low hills and the coastal strip. The aim was to reconstruct a more complete and reliable sub-regional frame, in accordance with the Ancients’ perception of Picenum as being inhabited from the mountains to the plains and the sea\(^2\).

Apart from these methodological aspects, the study of this area appeared even more interesting because N. Alfieri and more recently S. Bernetti had hypothesized that Novana might have been located in the inland territory of Ascoli\(^3\). A project envisaging a careful survey could thus have provided new evidence regarding the vexata quaestio of the exact location of this urban centre.

In January 2014 the Pisa South Picenum Survey Project II began\(^4\): on the basis of the results obtained from geological studies, all the available bibliography and the Archives of the Soprintendenza, it was decided that the first intensive survey campaigns would be conducted in the Amandola Territory (fig. 1). This decision was taken because in this Municipal District, as in the neighbouring one of Comunanza, there had been nu-

\(^1\) A project financed by the University of Pisa and the Fondazione Cassa Risparmio of Fermo.
\(^2\) MENCHELLI 2012.
\(^3\) STRABO, 5. 4. 2.
\(^4\) ALFIERI 1982; BERNETTI 2009.
numerous archaeological finds and in the Amandola area, in particular, the presence of centurial limites and a gromatic boundary stone, carefully studied previously\(^5\), could constitute important elements for defining ancient landscapes.

Furthermore, Novana or at least part of its territory, as already mentioned, could have been located in this district: we know that it was a municipium only referred to by Pliny in a controversially interpreted passage (N.H., III,11). In our view, N. Alfieri proposed the most convincing reading of this passage inasmuch as it was in line with the most accredited critical editions; this reading was recently also adopted by R. König and G. Winkler\(^6\). The text would be as follows: 

\begin{quote}
Cupra oppidum, Castellum Firmanorum et super id colonia Asculum, Piceni nobilissima. intus Novana. In ora Cluana.
\end{quote}

Our interpretation is that in relation to the coastal centres of Cupra and Castellum Firmanorum, Asculum was beyond (super) Castellum\(^7\) obviously further inland\(^8\), and Novana even more so (intus): the latter clearly in a different location in relation to Cluana, another coastal town. Probably Pliny mentioned Novana in this part of the text and not in the Augustan alphabetical list of the inland centres because the town, in one of the cartographic documents utilized, must have appeared in very close proximity to Asculum\(^9\).

Various revisions and interpretations of this text\(^10\) locate Novana in districts of the ager Firmanus (S. Elpidio a Mare\(^11\), Monte Rinaldo\(^12\)) or ager Asculanus and/or Cuprensis (Montedinove\(^13\), Carassai\(^14\)), but these areas, for historical, topographical and administrative reasons, could not have included an additional municipium and its territory\(^15\), as shown by a further careful examination of these agri and their related centurial remains (see Iacopini, below).

\(^5\) It was not found in situ: \textsc{Bonvicini} 1978, Bonora Mazzoli 1987, \textsc{Pagnani} 1987, \textsc{Moscatelli} 1991; \textsc{Sisani} 2015 see Iacopini, below, note 62.
\(^6\) \textsc{König}, \textsc{Winkler} 1988.
\(^7\) For this use of the term super see for example the Oxford Latin Dictionary (edited by P.G.W. Glare, Oxford 1990), in the entry super, 5.
\(^8\) Ascoli’s inland location must have been well known: see Strabo (5. 4. 2): \textit{en te mesogaia}.
\(^9\) For Pliny’s sources regarding this passage see \textsc{Alfieri} 1982: 212-213.
\(^10\) For example \textsc{Zehnacker} 1998 (231, 111, 2) justly underlines the contrasting relationship: intus Novana. In ora Cluana, but then proposes the version: Asculum, Piceni nobilissima intus, Novana. In ora Cluana because, apodictically, “Novana n’est pas plus intus qu’Asculum”.
\(^11\) \textsc{Bonvicini} 1951: 27.
\(^12\) \textsc{Delplace} 1993: 184-185 e 226-227. \textsc{G. Paci} (2000b, 133) maintains that the municipium of Novana derived from this site, from where the inhabitants would have moved to Montedinove.
\(^13\) A location first proposed by \textsc{P. Cluverius} (1624: 741). A vast bibliography collected by \textsc{Marengo} 1999 and \textsc{Bernetti} 2009.
\(^14\) \textsc{Galile} 1985: see contra \textsc{Paci}, \textsc{Rossi} 1996-1997: 117-203.
\(^15\) \textsc{Bernetti} 2009: 101-104 and \textsc{Menchelli} 2012: 25.
In the high Tenna and Aso Valleys, in the inland territory North-West of Asculum, as already pointed out by N. Alfieri\(^1\)\(^6\), an anomaly in the urbanization system is evident, a lacuna in the poleographical organization which could be an indication of the presence of a town which subsequently disappeared. Moreover, the identification in this district of a byway of the Salaria which linked Asculum with Urbs Salvia\(^1\)\(^7\), constitutes a further element indicating the strategic importance of this piedmont area which in the vast territory between these two towns could hardly have lacked an urban settlement.

The project, its methodology and the fieldwork

The project is diachronic (in order to identify the succession of landscapes from Prehistory to the Middle Ages) and multidisciplinary, with a global\(^1\)\(^8\) or total archaeology approach\(^1\)\(^9\) envisaging the utilization of all the available sources (naturalistic, literary, archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, archival, toponomastic, remote sensing, cartographic and ethnographic). The project’s overall approach is strongly based on processual archaeology principles\(^2\)\(^0\), mainly evident in the field-work organization, the documentation and quantification procedures, and the GIS software data management. However, special attention is also paid to the post-processual rules, the qualitative and symbolic aspects of the landscapes, particularly marked in this area dominated by the Sybil’s Mountains, where water cults (the sanatio ritual) are documented in the caves from the Republican period\(^2\)\(^1\)\ and sacred apparitions still constitute identity features for the local communities\(^2\)\(^2\). In brief, our aim is to reconstruct the landscapes as well as the mindscape\(^2\)\(^3\).

From the epistemological point of view, as a great deal of our research starts from the bottom, that is from the clods of ploughed soil, we would be inclined to adopt a bottom-up approach, namely fundamentally inductive, but, in order to avoid arbitrary generalizations we intend to process and discuss the collected data using a multi-scalar perspective (local-regional-Mediterranean), in a stimulating local/global dialectic, thus attempting to reconstruct the complexity of human events in this territory through the centuries.

As regards the field-work\(^2\)\(^4\), the intensive survey is carried out in the ploughed terrains to identify the remains of ancient anthropic activities brought to the surface by agricultural machinery. These remains, mostly ceramics, are labelled as Topographic Units and classified as site or off-site assemblages\(^2\)\(^5\): obviously the crucial point of topographic research is their interpretation and chronological-cultural-functional categorization. We think that it can be conducted in a reliable way by the surveyor who, benefiting from his subjective experience and skills, processes the data collected by means of careful and objective procedures\(^2\)\(^6\).

In the 2014-2015 campaigns a total of 333 hectares of ploughed soil (with 4-5 m corridors between the operators) and 340 hectares of pasture land (with 8-10 m corridors) were surveyed. 90 hectares were covered by crops. The surveyed districts are within 6 sample areas (fig. 1) chosen because of their particular significance for the study of the centurial settlement patterns, given the presence of the known archaeological finds, starting from the Amandola boundary stone, the remains of some limites and Roman praedial place names. The forested mountainous districts have not been surveyed: sample areas of this landscape unit will be investigated in the 2016 campaign.

Of the Topographic Units, 83 have been classified as sites and 200 as off-sites, a very high percentage, much higher than had been recorded in the ager Firmanus\(^2\)\(^7\), evidently determined by the hilly geomorphology

\(^1\) ALFIERI 1982: 206.
\(^3\) MANNONI 1985. T. Mannoni’s innovative contribution to Landscape archaeology has recently been highlighted by numerous scholars: see BROGIOLI, GIANNICEDDA 2014.
\(^4\) DARVILL 2001.
\(^5\) Regarding the excesses of both processual positivism and post-processual subjectivism see BINTLIFF, PEARCE 2011.
\(^6\) For example at Montemonaco: CIUCARELLI, MENCHELLI, PASQUINUCCI 2005.
\(^7\) The shrine of the Madonna dell’Ambro in Montefortino, built in the 16th cent. in the place where the apparition of the Madonna to a mule shepherd girl occurred in medieval times, is still today the site of devout pilgrimages.
\(^8\) Regarding this topic see ASHMORE, KNAPP 1999. Finally see ATTEMA, SCHÖRNER 2012.
\(^9\) For the detailed methodology see MENCHELLI 2012: 15-18; MENCHELLI 2016 forthcoming.
\(^10\) Sites and off-sites have to be studied as a whole to reconstruct the continuity and the complexity of ancient landscapes (BINTLIFF 2000; DE HAAS 2012).
\(^11\) Naturally the criteria of subjective choices should always be thoroughly explained. On the necessary interpretative challenges see MENCHELLI 2012: 13-22; VOLPE, GOFFREDO 2014: 43.
\(^12\) In this territory, which is characterized by lower hills and river valleys, the percentage of off-sites appears to be 58 %; Menchelli 2012: 18.
and natural and anthropic post-depositional processes, for example by erosion and ploughing which shift the ancient remains down the slopes.

Concerning the prehistoric period, from a preliminary analysis of the data it appears that 13 off-sites and perhaps 3 sites – documented by stone tools and cores of raw materials (nuclei) – were located along the hilly ridges and fluvial terraces, in line with what was observed in other Picenian territories.28

As regards the settlement patterns in subsequent ages, it is obvious that, as in the rest of the region29, starting from the 8th-7th centuries BC the territory was run by elites whose economic power is attested by precious objects cited in bibliographies (fibulae Montedinove type, dated 7th cent. BC, from Amandola30, bronze broach from Comunanza31) or in the Soprintendenza Archives32. Important Picenian settlements are also documented in the following centuries, as for example in the case of the Le Piane site where an exceptional bronze deinos (dated 5th cent. BC) was found. Its rim was decorated with applications of full-relief animal sculptures; the workshop is uncertain (Corinthian, Magno- graecan, Etruscan?), but in any case it bears witness to the importing of luxury products also in the inland territories.

During the surveys, instead, we only found highly fragmented sherds which can be approximately dated between the late Orientalizing age (late 7th cent. BC) and the 3rd cent. BC. We identified 71 Topographic Units of which 42 were interpreted as off-sites and 29 as sites (fig. 2). The latter appear to be small surface concentrations (5 x 7 m on average), consisting above all of building materials, (with a marked preponderance of curved tiles as against the flat ones), containers of different sizes, vessels for cooking and various purposes. All these items were manufactured in the typical Picenian impasto, characterized by progressive chromatic variations ranging from red on the surfaces to dark grey in the nucleus, due to the use of ferric clay and an uncontrolled firing process34. In some cases fragments of clay plaster were also found. The majority of these sites (huts or houses)35 (24 out of 29) also show the presence of Roman materials, clear evidence of the gradual nature of the Roman occupation of the territory.

The dense settlement pattern of the Roman period, moreover well suited to the centurial grid (see below, E.lacopini), is documented by 42 Topographic Units with finds dating from the 3rd-2nd cent. BC to the 1st cent. BC and some of them were also from the Imperial period (figs. 3 and 4). Judging from the materials found, most

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29 Finally see CIUCCARELLI 2012a: 21-22 and the cited bibliography.
31 CIUCCARELLI 2012b, 52.
32 At Comunanza there is documentary evidence of necropolises containing metal weapons, difficult to be dated (see lacopini, below).
33 The deinos is now in the Museo Archeologico di Ancona: Naso 2000: 198-200.
34 MENCHELLI, CIUCCARELLI, PASQUINUCI 2011; CIUCCARELLI 2012a.
35 For the relationship huts/houses (casae in Latin) see CIUCCARELLI 2012a: 92 and the cited bibliography.
of them were typical Roman farmsteads built in the Piceni region starting from the late 3\textsuperscript{rd} cent. BC\textsuperscript{36}, whose tiles and vessels, even if fragmented, are clearly distinguishable from the Picenian ones on account of their typological (e.g. cutaway tiles)\textsuperscript{37} and technical (ferric fabrics produced with a controlled firing process; carbonatic fabric for table/ storage vessels) peculiarities\textsuperscript{38}.

These rural sites, some of which could have been Picenian sites that remained in occupation, are characterized by small assemblages less than 25 x 25 m; the findings are of limited and highly standardized typologies (cooking pots; large straight-walled containers; dolia, common wares; locally produced thin-walled vessels). In some instances there appear to be examples of a transitional, experimental phase, derived from the contact between the two cultures, in a process in which the Roman colonists adopted local characteristics and the Piceni who remained there absorbed the Roman style, acquiring the conquerors’ technological knowledge, in the general context of a rapid integration in the new state\textsuperscript{39}.

5 Topographic Units classified as villae, most probably dating from the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC, have been documented. They consist of larger assemblages (at least 70 x 80 m) which include more important and variegated findings in terms of both typology and provenance continuing until the early Imperial Age (black-gloss pottery; North-Etruscan and North-Italian terra sigillata; Latial-Campanian thin walled pottery; Aegean cooking ware). Among these five Topographic Units, there is the large villa in the locality of Le Spiazzette (127 m N-S x 40 E-W); adjacent to it there was, to the South-West, a necropolis discovered in 2006\textsuperscript{40} in which two stelae, a sar-

\textsuperscript{36} For the ager Firmanus see MENCHELLI 2012: 50-51 and M.R.CIUCARELLI in CASCI CECCACCI, CIUCARELLI, DEMMA, VENANZONI forthcoming.
\textsuperscript{37} The cutaway characteristic, which facilitated the meshing of the tiles in the roof, is considered typical of the Roman Army’ s construction methods: see MENCHELLI 2012: 62-64.
\textsuperscript{38} See in general MENCHIELLI 2012: 59-63.
\textsuperscript{39} For the historical and administrative aspects: RAGGI 2014: 85-88.
\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Arch.Sopr.Marche, Za 53/0Prot.1902 (3.02.2006).
cophagus and a grave were found\textsuperscript{41}. In this late Republican period, 5 of the pre-existing farmsteads would appear to have still been active, while 6 new ones came into being (fig. 4).

From this preliminary analysis of the Topographic Units, there would therefore seem to have been 3 chronological phases in the settlement patterns of this territory:

1) Picenian phase (late 7\textsuperscript{th}-3\textsuperscript{rd} cent. BC)\textsuperscript{42} (fig. 2).

2) Romanization phase documented by centuriatio and small sites with finds which were Piceni/Roman transitional or Roman or of Roman-derivation (late 3\textsuperscript{rd}-2\textsuperscript{nd} cent. BC) (fig. 3)

3) The subsequent phase of economic reorganization characterized by larger farmsteads or villae (1st cent. BC.- Imperial Age) (fig. 4) nevertheless always included in the centuriat grid (see Iacopini, below). This reorganization pattern was not very successful because only 3 villae have materials from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} cent. AD and later the territory appears not to have been settled for agricultural activities.

The small farmsteads which document the Romanization process in this territory almost certainly would appear to have been the result of the application of Gaius Flaminius’s Plebiscite of 232 BC: the lex de agro Gallico et Piceno viritum dividundo\textsuperscript{43}. In this district, which was traversed by strategically important roads, the Romans, as was their usual practice, made use of the ager publicus to carry out viritate land distributions in the centuriated territory.

In accordance with the results of the field-work (see Iacopini below) the literary sources suggest that the assigned properties were not particularly large\textsuperscript{44}, but the settlers could supplement the production of their farms by exploiting, through other activities (seasonal cultivations, livestock breeding, gathering wood, hunting and fishing), the broad sectors of the unassigned ager publicus\textsuperscript{45}, as for example in the case of the State-owned Montes Romani, documented in the nearby Asculum\textsuperscript{46}.

As in 216 BC., following the Battle of Canne, the dictator M. Iunius Pera had carried out an extraordinary conscription of the cohortes ex agro Piceno et Gallico\textsuperscript{47}, it cannot be excluded that in this territory as well there were colonists who could serve in the army.

The third phase in the settlement patterns, characterized by larger and richer farmsteads/villae judging by the survey results, can most probably be linked with the municipalisation process which starting from 90 BC invested the whole peninsula, and also Picenum, in different ways and times\textsuperscript{48}. As is well known, viritate allotments scattered throughout the countryside had to belong to a centre which would guarantee Rome’s control, in the first place for carrying out censi, army recruitment and the administration of justice, as well as facilitating economic-social activities such as the periodic markets. In the Latin sources these centres were defined in different ways (pagus, vicus, forum, conciliabulum, castellum, oppidum), and those where there were praefecti iure dicundo, sent by the Urban Praetor to administer justice locally, were called praefectura\textsuperscript{49}. The latter in Picenum must have been numerous and long lasting, up to the mid-1\textsuperscript{st} cent. BC, so that they would have been able to provide Caesar with omnibus rebus when he marched through the region in 49 BC\textsuperscript{50}.

\textsuperscript{41} One stele made of Apennine limestone bears a 9-line mutilated inscription published by G. PACI (2010). The other, found during our field-work, only consists of three letters.

\textsuperscript{42} The fragmentary nature of the finds does not permit us to identify more precisely the chronology of the sites.

\textsuperscript{43} About this subject, see the most recent studies: SISANI 2007: 129-139; MARENGO 2012; RAGGI 2014: 85-88. The wider interpretation which also included Southern Picenum and not only the agro gallico piceno (that is the ager Gallicus located in the Picenian region as understood by GABBA 1979: 161; note 3) had been supported, inter alia, by archaeological and epigraphic data collected in recent decades (cf. MOSCATELLI 1985).

\textsuperscript{44} Concerning the land distributions to Scipio’s veterans in 201 BC, Livy states that each of them received a duo iugera allotment for every year of military service. (Liv., 31,49,5). About this topic cf. SISANI 2007: 129-139.

\textsuperscript{45} Regarding this subject, the following work is still of fundamental importance: GABBA, PASQUINUCCI 1979: particularly 23-24; GABBA 1985. For the juridical aspects of the exploitation of pascua, silvae et montes cf. CAPOROSSI COLOGNESI 2011-2012.


\textsuperscript{47} Liv. 23.14.2-3.


Also in the nearby ager Asculus, for example, there is evidence regarding a praefectus, Gnaeus Statius who, apart from his other duties, was called on, about the mid-2nd cent. BC, to construct a road which from North of the town had to proceed towards Falerio and Firmum, at least on the basis of the site where the milestone referring to the magistrate was found\textsuperscript{51}. It is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that also the territory settled by the farmsteads which we have surveyed (probably viritim adsignatus in application of the Gaius Flaminius’s Plebiscite) must have been administered by a praefectura.

It would most likely have been located near this territory in the most suitable area for a settlement centre and therefore in the valley floor on a plateau on the left bank of the River Aso, at the intersection of important roads still used today (SP 78 from Ascoli to Macerata along the inland hills; SP 238 from the Sibillini Mountains to the sea).

Today this area is covered by the small town of Comunanza which a careful analysis of the centurial grid and the numerous archaeological findings (see Iacopini below) permit us to identify as the site of the ancient Novana, a Picenian centre which perhaps became a forum\textsuperscript{52}, a praefectura and finally a municipium (fig. 5).

(S.M.)

The boundaries of the ager Novanensis

While studying the possible location of the ager Novanensis one cannot avoid analyzing the municipia’s borders closer to it, Asculum, Firmum and Falerio, a subject which has been thoroughly examined by many authors.

Among these, P. Bonvicini in 1978\textsuperscript{53}, concerning the Falerio borders, believes that they were marked as follows: on the eastern side, from the Roberto ditch towards Fermo; to the North from the Ete Morto Torrent towards Pausulae; to the South from the Ete Vivo River to the Novana border; to the West with the Amandola foothill praefectura, which would have been, from Sarnano to Montefortino, in the Falerio jurisdiction.

With this subregional picture in mind, the author locates the Ager Novanensis between Montottone, Monsampietro Morico, Monteleone di Fermo, and considers it, to the East, bordering with Firmum, to the North and West with Falerio and the to the South possibly with Asculum, since he does not clearly specify either the territory’s extension or its Southern border (fig. 6).

\textsuperscript{51} PACI 2000a: 343-349. For the finding of the milestone see CONTA 1982: 208-209. Regarding the course of the road see the recent work GIORGI 2014: 231-232.

\textsuperscript{52} According to S. Sisani the name Novana may be traced back to a forum of Gracchan times (2011: 570-571). For the nearby colonial settlement called Pollentia most probably in Gracchan times and afterwards Urbs Salvia see PERN 2014.

\textsuperscript{53} BONVICINI 1978.
G. Paci dealt with this whole subject stating that Novana's first location was at Monte Rinaldo, where the well-known Hellenistic sanctuary was located, and that the town was later transferred to Montedino-ve. This thesis was also poused by Ch. Delplace, who considered the Novana territory as being bounded by the Indaco torrent to the South, Ortezzano to the West, the Apennines to the East and the Esino Torrent to the North (fig. 7).

This thesis, however, was at variance with G. Conta's analysis: she stated that the Ascolan territory included all the land South of the Aso River as has been confirmed by two important inscriptions found in Carassai and in Montalto, both of which mention the Fabia tribe. They constitute epigraphic evidence that considerably reduces the extent of the Novana territory thereby contradicting the Delplace reconstruction, since the given land is limited and is unusually shaped, as recently observed by S. Bernetti.

The latter, while disagreeing in general terms with the French scholar, accepts that the centuriation straddling the Aso River between Monte Rinaldo and Ortezzano belonged to the Falerio municipium and not to Novana as Ch. Delplace stated.

At this point the territory of Falerio appears to cover a total area of 241 sq km for P. Bonvicini, 275 sq km for Ch. Delplace and 329 sq km for S. Bernetti. If we then bear in mind that the first two authors add the territory of the so called "Prefettura di Amandola" to that of Falerio, the area belonging to this town becomes, respectively, a total of 527 and 561 sq km (see fig. 8).

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54 See note 12.
55 DELPLACE 1993.
56 CONTA 1982.
57 BERNETTI 2009.
58 The first number refers to the territory of Falerio, while the second includes the "Prefettura di Amandola" territory.
Finally, S. Menchelli has recently studied the issue of the Firmum, Falerio and Asculum borders and has decidedly reduced Falerio’s territory on the basis of the study of Firmum’s pertica. She stated that the Fermo’s borders were marked by the sea to the East; by the Ete Morto River in the North, by the Fosa Torrent and the Roberto ditch in the North West; by the natural border of the Tenna River between Firmum and Falerio in the West; by the Aso River, separating the ager Firmanus from the Asculanus, in the South (fig. 9). Therefore, according to this reconstruction the entire territory between the Tenna and Aso Rivers belonged to Firmum, while the Novana territory would have been located within the foothill area now part of the Municipalities of Amandola, Sarnano and Comunanza.

Accepting S. Menchelli’s theory gave the initial impulse to my ongoing PhD research, whose main aim is to identify the centuriato in this district and at the same time to define the borders of the ager Novanensis in relation to the Falerio, Firmum and Asculum territories.

Centuriation and settlement patterns in the Ager Novanensis.

The main studies regarding the Roman centuriation in the area between Sarnano and Amandola were carried out by P. Bonvicini (1978), G. Pagnani (1987) and U. Moscatelli (1991). On the basis of the decussis on the famous Amandola boundary stone, P. Bonvicini, with regard to the pertica of the Falerian Praefectura,
maintained that the piedmont centuriation, having a 20 actus pattern, was oriented with inverted axes and the main decumanus parallel to the Apennines in a North-South direction, while the fourth decumanus passed through the site of Cese.

According to the author the area East of Cese was not subject to centuriation: he based his hypothesis essentially on the intersection of the two T-shaped axes on the gromatic boundary stone and on the geomorphological conditions on the Eastern hills which were considered unsuitable for centuriation. According to his reconstruction the main kardo, which coincided with the straight part of the SS 78 in the S.Ginesio municipality, was also the Southern border of the Urbs Salvia municipium.

G. Pagnani added to the Bonvicini thesis; in fact he basically accepted the orientation of the axes, their inverted disposition and the idea that the piedmont centuriation would have extended from the foot of the Sibillini mountains to the locality Cese and it would not have proceeded any further eastwards, even though he admitted that the eastern area must have been subject to the land distribution, since praedial toponyms, such as Vesciano and Anniano, were found. In his work, he offered a different and more precise location of the decumani and their inclination; even though he did not provide adequate cartographic support indicating the limites, he identified the right orientation and inclination of the centurial axes and felt that the limitatio should be extended northwards beyond the Tennacola Torrent.

Furthermore, unlike Bonvicini, G. Pagnani tried to explain the double ordinal numbers associated with the K carved on the gromatic boundary stone. He believed that XI was the northward kardo number, while XIII was the southward one; moreover, the author believed that the land between the Salino Torrent and the Asa River was traversed by a total of 24 W/E oriented axes.

This thesis was rejected by U. Moscatelli, who highlighted the significance of the couple of coordinates of the ordinals on the gromatic boundary stone, namely D III K XI and he stated that number XIII must have had a different meaning, basing himself on two passages of the Liber Coloniarm, in which the decumani are called maritimi (East) and the kardines are called gallicis (North). Therefore on the basis of this new orientation and his interpretation of the decussis U. Moscatelli does not consider that the area North of the locality of Cese was centuriated.

From this analysis of the published works, we can summarize the common points of the three authors under consideration as follows:

63 Equal to 710.25 m.
64 Monte della Rocca, Pian di Pieca, Vallato, Gabba, Gattari, the municipal road of Garulla, Paterno, Coletta, Cemetery of Montefortino, L’Incasso and finally La Rota.
65 About this topic see also Campagnoli, DALL’AGLIO 1997.
66 Sites crossed by decumani; D IV: the Church of S. Croce in Cardagnano, Casale, Pisarelli, Tennacola; D III: Carotondo, Vcciola di sopra, Vcciola di sotto, il Piano, Cardagnano, Ancona, Villaggio i Rustici, la Cupa; D II: Valcaiano, Sarnano, Marinella, Mucchi, Quadra, Canale di Pietra; D I: no reconstruction; DM: San Cassiano, Caldarella, Monte Morro, Collina, Madonna della pace, Sant’Angelo in Montespino. According to the author the centuria was 705 x 705 metres.
68 Based on aerial photography and the current division of the fields.
70 P. BONVICINI (1978: 56) on the basis of another passage of Hyginus Gromaticus (De limitibus constitutendi, CAMPBELL 2000: 136, 24-25), maintained that the decumanus was in a NS direction as the Gromatici could have planned it to be located along the main axis of the territory to be distributed.

www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2016-353.pdf
1) The centuriation was located between the Sibillini Mountains to the West and the locality of Cese to the East. The Eastern area of the latter had not been centuriated, both because of the interpretation of the *decussis* on the boundary stone and because of the physiographic characteristics of the district.

2) On the basis of the chronology of the boundary stone, the centuriation can be dated in the Augustan period. The centuriated territory belonged to Falerio because it was the nearest urban centre and also because the *gentes* documented in the district by means of epigraphical and toponymic evidence were subject to this city. As shown above, the interpretation of this boundary stone is very problematic. On the basis of the geomorphological peculiarities, the gro-matic sources, the cartographic data and the survey results I think that the ordinal number XIII belonged to a specific *centuria* and not to the whole Novana pertica, and I interpret the orientation of the *decussis* as represented in fig. 10.

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The cartographic study seemed an essential premise in order to test the above-mentioned theories. I began my PhD research by obtaining all the available cartographic data and then analyzing them by means of a G.I.S platform. This work required precise georeferencing, which is of fundamental importance for reconstructing the Roman *limitatio* of this area. In particular both modern cartography (geological, geomorphological and IGM cartography, orthophotography) and the historic one (*Catasto Gregoriano*) were subject to mosaicking, georeferencing and vec-torization. These operations were indispensable for a synchronic study of the changes in land use and to identify toponyms and alignments which have vanished from modern cartography. Consequently 1181 aligned elements (roads, property boundaries, torrents, canals) having NW/SE and SW/NE orientations have been identified.

Different centurial grids were overlaid on these elements in order to verify which module coincided to the greatest extent with the cartographic evidence. The 20 x 20 *actus* module (about 710 m) was the one which corresponded most closely with the alignments and also with the area where the boundary stone was originally located: it must have been fixed at the axes intersection on a sandstone plateau, about 150 m north of the site where it was found (fig. 10).

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71 BONVICINI 1978: 50. The author refers to the *gens Cardana* from Cardagnano and the *gens Servilia* from Servigliano.
73 Municipalities of Amandola, Sarnano, Gualdo, Comunanza. The data (roads, topography and divisions of land) have been stored and processed in a G.I.S platform.
74 The identification of alignments in the historic maps of the Municipalities of Monte San Martino, Montefalcone and Smerillo is in progress.
75 The dense vegetation prevented the identification of the exact location of the gro-matic stone.
The general NW/SE orientation of the area corresponds with its geomorphological features, therefore many of the identified alignments cannot totally be attributed to the centuriation, but rather to the characteristics of the natural environment, above all the water drainage, which received a great deal of attention on the part of the Roman Gromatici.

In this centurial grid, the Cardagnano-Rustici axis is extremely important, because it most probably corresponded with a part of the via Salaria Gallica that connected Sena Gallica with Asculum. This particular part was probably also used in the pre-Roman period and at the moment it is a sector of the current SS 78, passing through Urbs Salvia, Macchie di S. Ginesio, Pian di Pieca, Sarnano, Amandola and Comunanza. This hypothesis can be further corroborated by interpreting the inscription of the Amandola gromatic boundary stone to the effect that the Cardagnano-Rustici axis should be the V decumanus and therefore one of the limites called quintarii or actuaria since they could have constituted viae publicae. Other well documented centurial axes include the one passing straight through San Cristoforo, along whose sides we surveyed two farmsteads (fig. 11), and the Cerretana and Rocca (in the Montefortino municipality) main roads.

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76 The site of Le Piane, where the bronze Dinos was found (see Menchelli, above), is only 800 m. from this track.
77 A milestone, dating from the 4th century AD, on which the numeral II was carved, was found in the crypt of the Benedictine Abbey of Santa Maria delle Macchie, see GASPERINI 1980: 1041-1053.
78 The Toponym (COLUCCI 1793, XIX Appendice Documenti n°1, a.996) might indicate a curve in the road. Pieca derives from the Latin word Plica = bend (PELEGRINI 1981). The ordinal XII mentioned in the Tabula Peutingeriana could refer to the Pian di Pieca that is about 17 km from Urbisaglia (see GASPERINI 1980). XII are also the miles that separate Pian di Pieca from Amandola, from where perhaps a secondary internal road following the course of the Tenna River reached Piane di Falerone.
80 The toponym is mentioned in SASF, Codex 1030 n°1, (977 AD).
The cartographic research was complemented by a study of the archival material in order to find the toponyms useful in reconstructing the historical landscapes, paying particular attention to the Roman period. I have consulted published documents found in the Municipal Historical Archives, in the Ecclesiastical Historical Archives, diplomatic codes published by eighteenth-century authors (Giuseppe Colucci, Ughelli) and other sources such as Gregory the Great’s Epistolae, the Codex diplomaticus Longobardus, Liber Pontificalis and the Rationes Decimarum.

From these documents I was able to gather and record in a specially created database the numerous toponyms, relating to the area in question, which ranged from 598 to the early 1600s. Precise localisation is necessary to link sites with specific anthropic activities, such as a road place name with ancient land routes no longer in existence, or a praedial place name with a centuriated territory. A total number of thirty-one praedial toponyms were found, thirteen of which are confirmed by epigraphic evidence from gentes well known in the V Regio, such as Anniano, Alfiano, Cecilian, Iuliano, Cammurani, and eight other toponyms having a gromatic origin: S. Maria della Meta, Arca, Arcelle, Meteme, Piobbico, i Mucchi, Butondoli and S. Nicola in Perticaria, documented since 1152 (fig. 10).

The toponomastic data confirm this grid hypothesis, as well as the location of some churches, tabernacles and crosses which symbolically maintained the Roman centuriation, replacing a gromatic boundary stone with a cross or a chapel such as S. Pietro de Rovitulo, S. Maria de Bussonico, S. Iliario, S. Giovanni in Collicello, S. Lorenzo de Jonperta and Sant’Angelo in Montespino. The latter is an important and ancient parish of the Diocese of Fermo, located precisely at the intersection of two centurial axes and in its crypt there are many reutilized Roman architectural elements varying in typology, dimensions and chronology.

The excavations in the 1950s in this church did not bring to light ancient structures in situ, therefore various hypotheses about the origin of the artefacts have been put forward: from places of worship (of the Lares Compitales) situated at the intersection of the centurial axes, or, given the high stylistic level of some architectural elements, from luxury villas, or sacred buildings in the neighbourhood or from urban areas.

There are also several religious buildings not located at the axial intersections but alongside them, such as S. Giovanni Cardagnano, S. Maria a Meta, the San Donato Parish and the SS Ruffino and Vitale Abbey. The San Donato Parish was alongside the via Salaria Gallica, while the SS Ruffino and Vitale Abbey is situated alongside the SS 210 which can correspond with the minor road that ran from Amandola towards Falerno and Firmum.

After establishing a hypothesis as to the position of this centurial grid, it was tested by field work: through a survey we identified many limites, evident on the cartography, on the terrain and the numerous Topographic Units with a wide chronological range, useful for reconstructing the settlement patterns of the area. As the cartographic and archive data presented above were at variance with previous research which did not envisage a centuriation east of the locality of Cese, in order to resolve this issue and test our centurial grid, the 2014 survey campaign concentrated mainly on the area comprised between the Tennacola Torrent in the North, the...
Carogno Ditch in the N/W, the Carognetto Ditch in the West, the Friano Ditch in the South and the Amandola municipal border in the East. In the 2015 campaign we surveyed the entire area South of the Tenna River, from Madonna della Marnacchia in the East to Amandola and the area surrounding the SS 78 and Valegnara (fig. 1).

The Picenian and Roman settlement patterns were deeply influenced by the specific geological nature of these hills, formed by pelitic – sandstone sediments subject to the gully processes and wide-ranging morphological gravitational phenomena especially in the Monte Civitella area. Therefore the sites were mostly located on stable land along the ridges in higher positions or on the Pleistocene fluvial terraces alongside the Tenna river, while the other areas which were less suitable for settlement must have been excluded from centuriation and left as pasture or uncultivated lands.

On the basis of the survey data, out of 29 Picenian sites, 24 are characterized by materials which were Picenian/Roman transitional or Roman or of Roman derivation, dating from the late 3rd cent. onwards. These Picenian sites, which could have remained in occupation, and the Roman farms had been found within the centurial grid discussed above, mostly in the corners or along the main axes. The rural site distribution within the centuriae, even if not completely surveyed yet, is fairly concentrated (in some cases up to 5 farmsteads in the same centuria) therefore we can assume that most of the the assigned properties were not very large (see Menchelli above).

At least six other rural sites, which appear to be of a later date, are also located within the centurial grid, in previously unoccupied areas; most probably they were connected with the municipalisation process, indicating that the limitatio continued to be used from the 3rd cent. B.C onwards, progressing from the praefectura to the municipium. Moreover there were five villae certainly still in existence in the early Imperial Age and remarkably large, such as the already cited Spiazzette site and those found in the localities of Coriconi and San Lorenzo.

We can suggest that the centuriation must have been situated between the Tennacola Torrent to the North, the Sibillini Mountains to the West, the Perticara Ditch to the East and the Aso River to the South (fig. 5), hence extending, towards the East, well beyond the site where the gromatic boundary stone has been found, as confirmed by the numerous farmsteads surveyed in this area. As regards the nearby mountainous district, the toponyms Piobbico and Valle tre Salti could mark the border between the allocated land and the public areas: both sites are close to each other and located in areas, at the Sibillini foothills, unsuitable for centuriation. Etymologically Piobbico can be related to the ager publicus, and Valle tre Salti to the saltus, in its specific meaning of “uncultivated land because of the woods and where the sheep could graze” hence land that was mostly collectively used, rather than the meaning, of an agrarian measurement unit, attributed to this term by the same Author.

The district to the North of the Tennacola Torrent raises a number of unresolved issues, as part of the centuriation identified in the municipal territory of Amandola goes beyond this border, as far as Pian di Pleca where there is another centuriation with a different inclination and orientation. Most probably this limitatio belonged to Falerio, but in any case this matter cannot be discussed in this paper. As far as the Eastern border is concerned, the centuriation grid coincides exactly with the Perticara Torrent, which is a place name that could derive from pertica. Nevertheless this area requires further research in order to define more precisely this limitatio.

Regarding the chronology, the artifacts found in the rural sites within the centurial grid can be dated from the late 3rd cent. BC up to the early Imperial period, therefore the vexata quaestio of the chronology of the Amandola gromatic boundary stone, in order to date this centuriatio, becomes an unimportant issue, as this stone could have been placed at the intersection of the existing centurial axes during an agrarian reorganization in the Gracchan or Augustan periods.

As regards the orientation of the centuriatio, we agree with P. Bonvicini and G. Pagnani: it must have had inverted axes, with the decumani facing N/S and the kardines E/W, but, unlike these authors, we believe that the main axis did not lie along the Apennines but to the East of the gromatic boundary stone. According to our reconstruction the decumanus maximus must have passed through the localities of Spiazzette, Mulino

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97 Var., L. 5. 36.
98 It is interesting to note the use of the term by Var., R. 1.10, “in order to define 4 centuriae * appellantur in agris divisim victim publice saltus”.
99 The terminus has however been hypothetically included among the Gracchan boundary stones: CIL I (2), 2935, cf. SISANI 2015.
100 Regarding the method for counting the number of limites cf. CAMPBELL 2000, 357, 491.
Carnevale, San Lorenzo, Vallegnara, Comunanza, while the *kardo maximus* was aligned with Cerretana, S. Maria de Bussonico, San Benedetto and Comunanza. According to this interpretation, the ordinals carved on the *gromatic* boundary stone\(^{101}\) establish the origin of the *centuriation grid* in the area of the current small town of Comunanza, confirming that the site of the Roman administrative centre must have been located there.

**Novana and Comunanza**

This hypothesis is supported by numerous archaeological findings over the last 30 years which, studied in a topographical and diachronic perspective, enable us to reconstruct the ancient settlement, despite the unregulated building expansion of the 1980s.

A Picenian settlement in the area of Comunanza is documented by the very important necropolis found near Monte della Manovra\(^{102}\), consisting of seventeen graves having a bottom layer of gravel and white stones placed in a circle to protect the heads of the deceased who were young men with funerary goods (short swords and iron-tipped spears). Further findings relating to Picenian necropolises come from other localities: Bivio Piane\(^{103}\), Via Dante\(^{104}\), the city centre\(^{105}\) and the hills facing the Aso River\(^{106}\) (fig. 12, n°1-6).

\(^{101}\) As there are numerous theories about the ordinal XIII we have decided to discuss this matter on another occasion.  
\(^{102}\) Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986, Cespi; Via Aldo Moro.  
\(^{103}\) Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986, Cespi; Via Pascoli.  
\(^{104}\) Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986 Cespi; Via Raffaello Sanzio.  
\(^{105}\) Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica, 27-8-1986 Cespi; Via Raffaello Sanzio.
A Roman administrative centre – perhaps it was a forum, and a praefectura to meet the needs of the settlers who lived in the ager virtim adsignatus – was built in the area of this Picenian settlement, which was aligned with very important communication tracks. Many finds provide evidence for the material culture typical of Roman colonial settlements, in particular the black-gloss vessels, widespread both in the Picenian funerary contexts and in some unidentified late Republican sites distributed in this territory, such as a small cup that has been identified as from the atelier des petites estampilles. However it is easy to locate the very important votive deposit found in the Monte della Manovra area where small black-gloss cups were gathered (Morel s2720 and 2740 forms).

The presence of this votive deposit suggests that there must have been a nearby centre of worship perhaps associated with a health cult, since there was a sulphur spring in the area; this was probably also used by the thermal baths, recently excavated nearby and dated between the Republican period and the late Empire. Not far from these finds, in Via Trieste, the walls of a domus equipped with bath rooms have been identified: its rescue excavations recovered ceramics including black-gloss vessels and Republican and Imperial coins. Roman necropoli have been identified in the locality of Piane Sametro and along the main roads in the Piazza Garibaldi area and in S. Maria a Terme; these last two consisted of tile-built tombs; in particular, in S. Maria, monumental tombs dating to the Imperial period have been found.

On the basis of these data it would be reasonable to assume that the site of Novana, overlying a pre-existing Picenian centre, was on the plateau delimited by the main roads, the via Salaria Gallica and the road connecting the Sibillini Mountains to the sea following the Aso River Valley. The concentration of the finds typical of an inhabited centre (e.g. thermal baths, a sanctuary, domus) and the distribution of the identified necropoli, enable us to locate the Novana urban area in the Monte della Manovra sector. Therefore the following should be interpreted as suburban findings: the villa/farmstead identified in via Pascoli with Republican and Imperial materials; the manufacturing sites in the localities of Acquasanta (kiln for coarse ware and bricks and tiles) and Colle Terme (kiln for bricks and tiles).

(E.I.)

Concluding remarks

On the grounds of the data presented above the territory between the Tennacola Torrent and the Aso River was most probably subjected to a viritan distribution and the pre-existing Picenian centre in the area of Comunanza became a settlement for the Roman colonists, perhaps the seat of a forum (in Gracchan times?), a praefectura and subsequently a municipium which we can identify with Novana, mentioned by Pliny but which later disappeared from every kind of source.

Many other Picenian towns did not survive beyond Antiquity, but Novana’s destiny must have been determined very quickly during the Imperial Age, with a correlation between the lack of quotations about the town and the progressive disappearance of the rural settlement pattern, most probably due to strong structural changes in land use. In fact Novana’s function as the administrative centre for this territory dotted with farmsteads probably ended during the 1st-2nd cent. AD, very likely as a result of the activities of a few gentes who occupied large portions of the ager publicus for intensive livestock breeding. Therefore there was a crisis in the agrarian system based on the complementarity of the small allotments and the community use of the unassigned lands (actually the most profitable).

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107 CICALA 2010, 78-79, n.17, fig. 17, 331.
110 Greater accuracy regarding the chronology and interpretation will be available when the excavation data are published.
111 Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica Marche ZA/64/5 prot.1186 (17-03-1977); ZA/64/3 prot.1639 (16-04-1977; ZA/64/5 prot. 1592 del 26-04-1977; ZA/64 /3 prot. 3045 (6-07-1978; Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica 27-8-1986, Cespi.
112 Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologica Marche ZA/64/8 prot. 5978 (27-09-1986). The presence of a necropolis is also documented by the discovery of a funerary inscription referring to the gens Nonia: CIL IX, 05022.
113 See notes 52 and 99.
114 Leonora Iacopini – Eleonora Iacopini ● Novana, its territory and the Pisa South Picenum Survey Project II (E.I.)

www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2016-353.pdf
Perhaps the protagonists of these changes included the Caesii as the toponym Cisiano, identified at the foothills of Mount Amandola,115 can be significant evidence of their activity in this territory. This gens is epigraphically documented in the 1st cent. AD in several districts of the Regio V (Ancona; Septempeda; Falerio; Cupra Maritima; Interamnia Praetuttorium)116 and is considered to have been engaged in large-scale livestock breeding117.

By continuing with this research, in a diachronic perspective, many aspects and topics dealt with in this paper could be studied in greater detail and developed further.

(S.M.; E.I)

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ABBREVIATIONS:

ACS = Archivio Comunale di Sarnano.
SASF = Fermo, Sezione di Archivio di Stato.

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115 It is documented since 1044: Cod. Dipl. Amandola n°1.
116 Respectively CIL IX 5911; IX 5594; IX 6417; IX 5315; IX, 5065 and IX 5080.


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