

# Sangro Valley Project: Report on 2000 Season

## March Season

A three-person team went to Bomba for a week in March. Post-excavation work was carried out on pottery from the 1999 season until computer failure led to the suspension of this work. A methodology for updating the post-excavation database was tested. The normal delicate negotiations with the Soprintendenza Archeologica and with the comune of Tornareccio were conducted to ensure the smooth running of the summer season. In particular we had to ensure that our place in the Elementary School was not usurped by a troop of boy-scouts. Such things really have to be done face-to-face. In the end it proved impossible to get a Total Station operator and a machine in the same place at once; the planned GIS work is now pencilled in for summer 2001, since we have the firm offer the services of an operator.

## Summer Season

This year work was continued on the trench formerly known as MP 7000A, now renumbered MP 8000, now enlarged to the SE and SW (this trench had been left largely unfinished last year owing to poor weather at the end of the season). It soon became clear that we were not dealing with rooms within a single building, as had been supposed in 1999, but a number of phases involving an open area between walls, which appeared respectively in the NE and SW margins of the trench. The activity uncovered, and the major structures, are summarised here. A full stratigraphic report is in preparation.

### Phase 1

This phase is not represented by any surviving structures, but can be inferred from the dozen or so fragments of architectonic terracotta (see drawings) which were found in various sealed layers, and in upper soil contexts. These include more terracotta plaques; a fragment of terracotta drapery, perhaps from a life-size statue; possible fragments of metopal and frieze decoration, again in terracotta (one further piece of terracotta plaque, typologically different, was found in a test pit dug across the trackway, in the area of a seasonal spring mentioned by Dott.ssa Faustoferri; no structures were found in this small test pit). All terracottas were given to Dott. Sabatino Letta at the end of the season and are now in the care of the Soprintendenza in Chieti. It was to this cycle of decoration that the terracotta dolphin plaque found in the 1999 season (see 1999 report) belonged.

At least two more pieces of dolphin tile appeared in these contexts, allowing us to reconstruct a complete profile, which will greatly speed the search for parallels. This concentration suggests that they may all come from a

single sacred building originally built nearby (see below), dating to the mid-second century, no longer surviving (demolished by local or hostile action).

### Phase 2

A substantial terrace wall (wall A) was built on a NW-SE alignment. It appeared, contrary to what we had thought in 1999, that the construction of this wall was different from those in the Soprintendenza's area: in fact it was much more like a polygonal or 'cyclopean' wall than a normal dry-stone wall (for a rough comparison of technique see the surviving courses of the cella wall of temple B at Iuvanum). This wall proved to be at least 2 meters high as currently preserved; it was higher in antiquity: we have not yet excavated as far down as its foundations, and in addition the upper courses were lost due to damage in antiquity (see below). It was 1 meter thick (but at the SW end within the trench had been robbed out). The collapse or demolition of the upper part of this terrace wall meant that some of the fill of the terrace slid over the edge of the terrace, into adjacent areas (below, phase 3), and thus a fortiori whatever structure stood on it, should have now in part or whole collapsed and been washed downhill; foundations may yet remain.

The fill of the terrace was of earth and stone (but little or no ordinary tile), mixed with man-made debris. This proved, on investigation of the contexts in situ to be one large mass of pottery and other ceramic materials, including an inscribed loomweight ('A') and an (?)Oscan inscribed amphora handle, as well as fragments of the terracotta decorative elements mentioned above.

It seems hard to reject the thesis that the terrace, whose original size is uncertain, but may underlie visible anomalies in the terrain to the N, NW and SE of MP 8000, and thus have been quite extensive, was designed to support a substantial building. The fill of the terrace comprised inter alia two classes of material which we believe to be significant: (1) the terracotta architectonic elements mentioned above, including the dolphin cycle, of apparently mid-second century B.C. date; and (2) large amounts of Black Gloss pottery, especially open forms such as plates and bowls, particularly suited to votive offerings; also we should mention here the presence of miniature Black Gloss bowls, which are paralleled in votive contexts across Central Italy. The ceramic assemblage is 99% comprised of Black Gloss and course wares. One or two sherds of Italian Terra Sigillata can be interpreted without problems as intrusive into the rubble contexts of the terrace collapse. Thus the fill of the terrace can be characterised as re-utilised debris consisting of both broken temple decorations and quite possibly former votive deposits, both

consistent with a Hellenistic date. It should be noted that no votive statuettes have appeared so far. If this is a votive deposit, albeit re-deposited.

The re-use of old materials from temples and votive deposits in new developments of sanctuaries is widely attested in Tyrhennian central Italy from the archaic period onwards (above all Bouma, *Religion Votiva for Satricum*; Glinister, 'Sacred Rubbish', in Bispham and Smith (eds.), *Evidence and Experience* (forthcoming)); moreover most of the terracotta decorations from, for example, the earlier phases of the temple complex at Pietrabbondante (the 'Ionic' temple) seem to have been re-used as fill in the later temple B-theatre complex. We might therefore surmise an analogous development at Monte Pallano: a demolition of a Hellenistic sanctuary before the Social War, to make way for the expansion of the complex, with a bigger temple planned on a new and bigger terraced area. The demolished material from the old temple was to a large extent retained as sacred, and re-used as the fill of this terrace. It remains to be seen what became of the hypothetical 'new' temple, possibly planned before the Social War, as at Pietrabbondante, but in this case perhaps not completed; or alternatively robbed out from the Middle Ages onwards

### Phase 3

This phase sees the collapse of the upper part of the terrace wall (A), perhaps due to earthquake, or possibly to hostile action. The loss of fill from the terrace will inevitably have compromised any structures built upon it. The loss of the upper courses of the wall (A) caused the fill to spill out into the area immediately down slope. This was: a narrow corridor or alley, about two meters wide, bounded on the NE side by the terrace wall, and on the SW side by another, thinner wall on a slightly different orientation (wall B), which was already in existence by the time of the collapse of the terrace wall, but whose date of construction has yet to be established. This wall (B) was originally 1.5 m or more high, but was damaged and in part pushed over by the impact of the rubble from the fill of the terrace. The alleyway was almost completely filled by the rubble from the terrace fill. The rubble in the alley thus forms a single context, which we have yet to remove in its entirety. Its composition in terms of ceramics and terracottas was identical to that of the terrace fill still in situ: it is very hard to avoid the conclusion that they are effectively the same context, and would be represented in the final matrix as equivalent units, but we must await detailed stratigraphic analysis.

The dating of this phase of collapse is difficult at the moment; it is however anterior to the Roman phases which follow (below). It is for example possible to argue for a collapse in the period of the Social War, caused by hostile

action; no traces of burning have yet appeared. At any rate we suggest that the frequentation of whatever (temple or other) structure stood on the terrace ended before the end of the Roman Republican period.

### Phase 4

Some of the fill from the terrace (phase 2) in the period of collapse (phase 3) seems to have been carried over the wall (B) on the far side of the alley. The next archaeologically visible horizon is the accumulation of a very fine and well-aerated grey soil, whose consistency and contents (broken pottery, tile, glass, iron), suggest a garden soil, manured with ordinary domestic rubbish. There were no perceptible intervening deposits between the rubble from the terrace and this soil, and it is thus possible that the 'garden' soil was laid soon after the collapse of the wall (A) and the filling of the alley way. The finewares from this soil are Black Gloss, Italian Terra Sigillata and grey imperial Thin-Walled Wares, running into at least the Flavian period (as stratified finds from Iuvanum show); the glass is analogous to early imperial finds from Iuvanum. The Black Gloss, which is found in vast quantities across Monte Pallano, could be classed as a residual redeposition; or it could represent the earliest period of manuring of the garden. So two possibilities are open to us: that the garden is in use already in the early first century B.C., or that its use begins only in the mid to late first century B.C., with the appearance of the ITS sherds. The former seems to us preferable. At any rate, the collapse of the terrace wall (A) should be put before the middle of the first century B.C. at the latest, as it is sealed by this context characterised by ITS, but contains no ITS itself other than one or two residual pieces in the higher levels.

The garden is, we have assumed, related to a building not seriously explored yet, in the SW corner of the trench, from which we have two walls at right angles (C & D) - unlike walls A and B they were mortared. The date of the building is not known, we have provisionally classed it as Roman, and interpreted it *exempli gratia* as a domestic residence associated with the garden. The building represented by walls C & D was characterised by a noticeable charcoal layer on the inside; occupation may have ceased on a permanent basis after this fire (not yet dated), the burnt area was covered by what may be interpreted as roof collapse rather than colluviation.

### Phase 5

The subsequent occupation patterns have yet to be clearly understood. No later structures have yet emerged; the building to which walls C and D belong has an (as yet) unknown lifespan. One point of interest which emerged from the excavation of the upper layers of MP 8000 as a whole was the presence of ceramics which seemed to imi-

tate late antique forms. Local coarse wares with rim profiles very close to Hayes forms 99 / 103 (inter alia) were recovered, some of which were slipped red in such a way as to mimic the decoration of ARS 'D' ware (a ware made in the above form). Dr. John Hawthorne (Newcastle), an expert in African Red Slip Wares, has confirmed our identification of the profile as plausible. Possible late amphorae fabrics were found, including pieces of what may be Tunisian 'Keay form' amphorae, but which, in the absence of a diagnostic profile, cannot be identified anymore closely than as probable late second / early third century Tripolitanian wares (ARS 'A' of a similar or slightly earlier date (including a Hayes 14/16 bowl) was also recovered; if there were 'Keay form' amphorae they would date as late as the ARS 'D').

Assuming that the assemblage is correctly identified, we can point to at least ephemeral human activity on Monte Pallano, and perhaps hypothesise occupation, until the early fifth century A.D., which would be very exciting, and is a pleasing confirmation of our suspicions of the previous season. The imitation of ARS wares in local coarse fabrics suggests a breakdown in some of the patterns of trade in which Monte Pallano had been involved, and a rupture in communications between the internal upland regions of Italy and the rest of the Mediterranean world (the continuity of which in other areas has been strikingly demonstrated by the Crypta Balbi excavations in Rome). Such a situation can be paralleled in other parts of Italy.

### Conclusions

We believe, an important discovery has been made, which adds significantly to our knowledge of the topography of human settlement on Monte Pallano. One, and perhaps two, phases of a Hellenistic sanctuary have been identified, and its general location strongly suggested as being on the terrace whose wall (A) we have uncovered and is described above. More elements enabling us to reconstruct the sanctuary and the worship conducted there would certainly emerge with even limited further excavation. It is also very interesting that this area seems to have gone out of use as a sanctuary in the first century B.C., and its occupation seems to change from monumental to private in character. It may be at just this period of change in use in MP 8000 that the expansion of the nucleus now being investigated by the Soprintendenza occurs. Further investigation of this site seems to me to be a necessity in the short term (2001), and it is also my judgement that in the medium term this part of the site could be consolidated and brought within the planned visitor itinerary of the Monte Pallano archaeological park.

New excavations in September have brought to light what seems to be a votive deposit associated with walls to

the S of the central nucleus, above the former strada comunale. This may be the origin of the surface find of a piece of architectural terracotta found near the trench MP 6000 in 1996, and even of another piece re-used there as make-up for later building. Another sanctuary site might be situated on the broad terrace further north, overlooking the Fonte Benedetti, and a fourth has long been suspected on the La Toretta peak; sporadic finds of votive character are also associated with the Fonte Canalone spring closer to the main peak of Pallano; finally terracotta votive heads emerged from the 1970s excavations in the central area conducted by Cuomo and Pellegrino. The mountain assumes an ever more imposing religious character, the more we discover, and this seems to belong in the Pre-Roman, or pre-Social War period (the new deposit noted above, if such it is, is entirely composed of Black Gloss sherds).

John Lloyd hypothesised (JRA 1998) that Monte Pallano might be a pagus centre in the Iron Age and Hellenistic period: such a position is consistent with the emerging evidence for multiple sanctuaries on the mountain, which would have served the villages which ringed its flanks, and acted as point of reference in a political and military sense. The nature of habitation here remains unclear. Evidence is increasingly emerging from the Italian excavations for second century B.C. occupation levels, and Cuomo and Pellegrino have claimed fourth century B.C. destruction levels to have lain at the bottom of their soundings. The nature of any putative permanent settlement on Pallano must remain unknown, and needs to be considered in relation to the nature of the megalithic walls.

Of our other goals we have evidence which strongly argues for frequentation of the mountain top in the fourth and perhaps even fifth century A.D., evidence which also of itself suggests that at least some trade routes from overseas were no longer making their way up the Sangro Valley as far as Monte Pallano (contrast the situation at the palaeo-Christian monastery of S. Stefano in Rivo Maris, near the sea, which has produced Phocian Red Slip Ware pottery from the Levant and fragments of opus sectile paving in imported marble. The history of the area in late antiquity is of great interest: an Ostrogothic burial is suggested at Colle Zingaro on the other side of the Sangro by a splendid helmet, and Crecchio, between Monte Pallano and Chieti has produced striking evidence of the Byzantine occupation of the sixth century. Sixth and seventh century burials have been found this summer in a graveyard at Villalfonsina, in the Sinello valley, immediately to the south of the Sangro Valley. Only further post-excavation analysis will reveal whether we can construct any kind of pottery sequence for the stratified deposits, but the prospects are good, and some forms, rather than fabrics, may well prove to be datable, which would be valuable for the sur-

vey interpretation. There are now two coarse wares which are found on Monte Pallano alone, and presumably made there. Local ITS fabrics, again perhaps made on Monte Pallano, are an important addition to our picture of local economic activities. The discovery of a pottery kiln on the Italian excavation this summer offers exciting possibilities for study of the local ceramics industry. Moving later, it is possible that some of the Internal Red Slip Cookware from the survey assemblages is late, since it has affinities with out imitation ARS sherds in decoration. Finally a tile fabric series for the mountain has been established. Digital images of all form and fabric sherds, and of some finds, have been made, to create a digital archive, which *ceteris paribus* might be eventually made available online, after publication of the excavation.

### **Future Work**

The majority of the alleyway remains filled with rubble: more votive items and decorative plaques would certainly be recovered by further excavation of this context, which is also vital in order to be able to be more precise about the dating of the terrace wall. Further sondages behind the terrace wall to search for possible foundations would define the nature of the terrace.

The garden soil would repay sampling and sieving in order to retrieve archaeobotanic data. It would also be important to establish what, and how much of it, lies below the rubble layer under this soil.

The stratigraphic relationship between the garden and the walls C & D would be a useful object of investigation, in order to ascertain the date and purpose of the garden more closely.

It might be revealing to be able to produce a dated phasing for this house / building, but this seems a less important priority than those above.

In any case it seems to us that this area might be considered for protection by a temporary enclosure or fence, given its importance

### **Surface Investigations**

It has long been the aim of the Project to excavate a number of the site scatters found by John Lloyd's survey in the environs of Monte Pallano. This summer preparations began for an excavation season next year at the scatter 51/54 site at Acquachiarà. This, and 3 other sites suggested by Andy Wilson, were re-walked, to verify the presence, nature, and distribution of the ploughsoil assemblage: Sc. 17/41 (Fonte di Fontecampana); Sc. 65 (Bomba viaduct); and Sc. 82 (Vallecupa, located only thanks to the keen memory of Keith Swift). All sites have in common a dense concentration of Iron Age impasto pottery, recovered this summer in quantity at all sites except Fonte di Fontecampana (Acquachiarà had not even been ploughed, but was heaving with debris). The investigation of the rural archaeology of Samnium will be one important goal in upcoming seasons..

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