

Sangro Valley Project: Report on 2002 Season

Monte Pallano

Previous seasons work at this site had uncovered a large late second century B.C. terrace wall of substantial polygonal masonry, delimiting a broad terrace partly built up of architectonic debris consistent with a sanctuary of the late Hellenistic period. We presumed that the terrace itself had supported some now lost sanctuary structure. The terrace seems to go out of use in the late Republic, with rebuilding in the Augustan period and some sort of occupation down to the second century A.D. To the south a smaller wall almost parallel to the polygonal wall was uncovered, blocking off the latter from view; beyond this was a cobbled area and series of walls tentatively identified with a Roman house; the cobbled area was later covered by a series of tips containing debris as late as the late first century A.D.; a midden and collapse horizon abutting the 'house' had been associated with it.

This year work continued on the terrace investigated since 1999. The main aim was to link the first trench (MP 7000) with the main trench MP 8000, begun in 2000, in order to obtain a complete section right the way across our site. In addition, work left uncompleted last year (MP8300) was to be completed; and walls picked up by GPR and magnetometry in May 2002 were to be investigated.

The main trench linking the disparate work of previous years (MP 8700) was begun, but not finished. In the event, it was judged sufficient to attempt to link it to MP 8100 / 8200 / 8400, since their stratigraphic relationship to the pre-Roman polygonal terrace wall here was already known. In the event, while the excavation of the layers immediately abutting this wall to the north was not carried out, we now understand the phases of the construction of the terrace much better, having revealed a substantial *controtterra* within the terrace, which served twin purposes of structural stability and drainage. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the terrace was cut into in the Augustan period to create a series of small rooms, which we began to investigate; this resulted in considerable interference in the structure, and probably the extent, of the polygonal terrace wall. The relationship of Augustan structures and subsequent occupation and destruction horizons to the Hellenistic terrace still poses interpretative problems.

Another large trench was dug to the W. (MP 8900), aiming to cut the slope of the terrace on that side, and examine its formation. The situation is still substantially unclear, but a very large wall foundation at parallel to the direction of the slope was uncovered' the edge of the

trench also cut a burnt deposit, which seems later than the wall, which it is near; the deposit contained what we have been told it a burnt immature quince, perhaps suggestive of the cult of a deity such as Ceres on the site.

The walls identified by geophysics were explored by a small trench. One course of large stones survived, forming the corner of what would originally have been a small building; the broad foundations and the technique used, recalled third or second century B.C. walls from the area being excavated by the Soprintendenza. The floor or occupations surfaces had completely gone, and apart from one column style plaque with the bottom half of what is probably and Eros, little of interest was found associated with these walls. It is not known whether this building predates or postdates the construction of the terrace at its largest extent. Further work will be required to understand this.

MP 8300, begun in 2001, was finished, with excavation to natural. It seems now that the smaller of the two EW walls, that screening the polygonal wall, could have been built as late as the middle of the first century B.C., and further study of the pottery will shed more light on this. It is also clear that the polygonal terrace wall no longer survives in this area, as it should have been cut by this trench. What has happened to it will need to be examined by further excavation - it may have been robbed out, but no cut for a robber trench is apparent.

A number of architectural terracottas, particularly 'dolphin' motif revetment tiles, were found, as well as fragments of a terracotta moulding with Oscan letters cut underneath its cornice (perhaps, as has been suggested to me, remains of an altar). More remains in the layers not reached in 2002, which seem to represent the richest concentrations.

In summary, this season has produced more walls, and whilst sharpening the sequence in some areas, has produced as many questions as answers. Two things are abundantly clear. One is that the arrangement of the terrace, and its re-use in the Roman period, are much more complex than we had previously thought. Secondly, woodland clearance around our terrace has confirmed previous hypotheses that our terrace is merely the lowest in a series, and that religious buildings were disposed along the whole series of terraces. Extension of the Italian excavations has produced more Hellenistic debris consistent with cult activity, some of it unique, and this seems to confirm the presence of religious activity across a wide area. Our terrace held up a building, but it was not the / a temple, that much seems certain.

Acquachiara

Four trenches were dug in two fields here, continuing the previous year's stratigraphic investigations of rural habitation suggested for this area by John Lloyd's field survey. One, attempting to evaluate an anomaly shown up by geophysics, produced nothing; equally, two trenches dug against the tree-line to test the hypothesis that much of the ploughsoil assemblage was being, or had been, washed down-slope out of the trees on the slopes of Pallano, proved almost sterile. The fourth trench was sunk in a field recorded in the survey as producing only 'background noise' in terms of archaeological material. As in previous year, archaeological horizons were found intact below the depth currently affected by ploughing. In this case the make-up for a *cocciopesto* floor of an internal area was found, probably to be interpreted as a storage area in a rural farming complex, given the large number of *dolia* and amphorae discovered. There was no time to investigate below the floor; no walls were found associated with it, although the rubble spread over the floor was suggestive. There was little residual *impasto* or Black Gloss; of the little fine ware in the ploughsoil, the earliest was ITS, the latest ARS 'A', with a Hayes form 9 rim suggesting occupation at least to the end of the first century B.C. Remains of bronze tableware and semi-luxury floor paving suggest a residential building nearby. The *dolia* were marked with their carrying capacity in amphorae (17½, half the Ostian norm), suggesting a farming enterprise plugged into the world of commercial redistribution.

The find of a rural farming complex is significant in itself, but not unexpected. What is important is the way in which stratigraphic soundings did not, as expected, confirm (or, given the lack of a complete sequence, disprove) the substantial Iron Age occupation of the area, but instead demonstrated unexpected and not insubstantial occupation in the first century A.D.

Other work

Substantial progress was made in (a) the use of computer modelling to produce a 3-D terrain model of the terri-

tory into which Auto-CAD data on our trenches and other archaeological data could be dropped; (b) the creation through digital images of a 3-D model of one of our architectural terracotta. The expensive software and hardware would have come to little without the judicious employment of a fruit crate; (c) new study of the pottery, demonstrating the presence of Eastern *sigillata* and African amphorae amongst other unexpected data, from the Monte Pallano site.

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