

Sangro Valley Project: Report on 2003 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. The terrace itself was presumed to have supported some now lost sanctuary structure; and to have gone out of use in the late Republic, with rebuilding in the Augustan period and some sort of subsequent occupation down to the second century A.D. To the south a smaller, later, wall ran almost parallel to the polygonal terrace wall, 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 saw the completion of work on the terrace. We were able to obtain for the first time a complete section right across the site, from natural to topsoil. In addition, the relationship between a wall apparently on the terrace, revealed in the previous season, and the stratification of the terrace was explored, together with a structure found to overlie the polygonal terrace wall in the south-western corner of the site.

The trench (MP 8700) linking up the existing trenches to provide the section was finished. We now understand the evolution of the terrace much better: the substantial controtterra within the terrace now seems to have been originally a first terrace wall (picked up again further to the East) only later, with the expansion of the terraced area to the south being made to serve the double purpose of structural stability and drainage for the new terrace. The taphonomy of the terrace was better understood, with various tipping events of terracottas being revealed: it is hoped 3-D reconstruction can be brought to bear on this problem. It is now certain that no building stood on our terrace, which is only the lowest in a series running up the hillside: the walls thought to represent a building last year are in fact the continuation of the temenos wall, and understanding this has allowed us to posit a monumental entry to the terrace in the NE corner of the excavated area. It has also revealed the presence of sacrificial refuse being dumped, with other cultural debris, outside the temenos wall: it is possible, that unusually for a medium sized sanctuary, cattle in the prime of life may have been sacrificed here

Pottery study now suggests that there was a break in continuity between the late second century and the Au-

gustan period; at this point a series of small rooms, which seem to extend west towards the Italian area of the site, were built; in their westward extension some walls of these rooms truncate or rest upon the the polygonal temenos wall. The one room investigated in its entirety had an unusual (but not unparalleled) floor of tessellated terracotta cubes, with a carefully moulded plaster kyma at the base of the wall. These rooms, whose purpose is unclear, but may be associated with domestic habitation, seem, on the basis of the percentages of African and Oriental sigillata found not to continue long into the second century B.C., although sporadic frequentation of the area after this date seems probable.

Yet more architectural terracottas, particularly 'dolphin' motif revetment tiles, were found, bringing the total over 400 pieces; subsequent study suggests original use on a small to medium sized building; also, fragments of a perforated terracotta roof moulding with Latin and Oscan letters cut into it; more pieces of probable pedimental sculpture of high quality; and a first potnia theron antefix. Further terracottas undoubtedly remain to be excavated.

Besides the information on Black Gloss imports, pottery studies have shown the presence of imports from Daunian Painted Ware to Adriatic Greco-Italic amphorae (perhaps from Pharos) to Eastern Sigillatas of the imperial period. Tiles were also studied, with one sealed dump alone revealing more than thirty significant variations of flange and cutaway, suggesting a distinct lack of mass-production, but rather a series of independent small artisans working concurrently. Archaeometric studies are need here.

Further work would now focus on clarification of the terrace entrance area; the imperial occupation sequence; and the sampling of other terraces up the hillside.

Acquachiara

Two trenches were dug in a field here where a Roman structure engaged in commercial redistribution had been found previously, continuing the programme of stratigraphic investigations of rural habitation suggested for this area by John Lloyd's field survey. The trenches were aimed to investigate micro-terraces which were thought to indicate the extension of the building sampled in 2002. The terraces proved however to have very little soil depth, and to be due to the geomorphology of the bedrock. Our ideas about the extent of the rural building will have to be revised. One structure was found: a circular cut in the rock, with a shallow concave floor sealed in a good quality *cocciopesto*, and the vertical sides of the cut lined with carefully cut tiles of an unusual hardness and consistency.

This seems to have been a storage device, although for what is unclear; the ceramics almost certainly include imperial coarsewares, and the structure can be brought into relation with the imperial agricultural building just down slope. Furthermore, it seems that it was already in antiquity that the bedrock was cut back substantially to form a flat plateau into which this structure was inserted. More work is needed here.

Other work

All areas were shot in with an EDM and the data transferred into Auto-CAD for use in ongoing work aimed at virtual reconstruction of the ancient landscapes in the area. Both geological coring at Monte Pallano's Lago Nero, and recovery and analysis of a wide variety of ecofactual evidence, some of it undoubtedly from ritual contexts, was undertaken.

Conclusions

This is clearly a significant area, with successive phases of varied occupation, which we are now beginning seriously to integrate into the use of the wider landscape, in its economic and religious aspects over time. Important conclusions are beginning to emerge about the historical character of this area of Samnium in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods—to say nothing of the tantalising evidence provided by a fine Neolithic arrow head found lying on the natural below the Hellenistic debris.

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