

# Amiternum and the upper Aterno valley: a Sabine-Roman town and its territory

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The Roman town of *Amiternum*, c.90 km northeast of Rome in the heart of the Abruzzo, has, since 2006, been the subject of an urban research project led by the Institute of Archaeology of Cologne University. *Amiternum* lies in the original homeland of the Sabines, who came under Roman rule at the beginning of the 3rd c. B.C. During the subsequent process of Romanisation *Amiternum* developed into a significant regional centre, which controlled the upper Aterno valley and its important communication routes. From the time of the Late Republic this area was the end-point of a major transhumance route, apparently attaining great prosperity because of its vital rôle in the production of live-stock and wool. A wealthy upper class with a remarkably close relationship to the Roman senatorial aristocracy developed at an early date. The site is known for its well-preserved amphitheatre, but despite excavations in the 19th and early 20th c. the settlement structure and developmental history of *Amiternum* and its territories have received much less attention.

Over the course of four summer seasons between 2006 and 2009 a topographic survey and geoarchaeological analysis were carried out, visible structures (the amphitheatre and theatre) investigated and historical documents studied. Systematic geophysical prospection was conducted, which largely revealed the extent and structure of the settlement. Subsequent stratigraphic excavation yielded further information about several major structures, including a large *domus* south of the theatre, a basilica adjacent to the forum, and a sanctuary. A surprising picture has emerged from this study: although *Amiternum* apparently had a highly developed urban infrastructure, only a small number of houses, mostly very rich *domus*, have been observed. It seems that *Amiternum* was not a conventional Roman town, but rather a major regional centre for a population that lived scattered in neighbouring *vici* and *villae*. Is this pattern a reflection of specifically Sabine settlement traditions?

## General topography (M.H.)

The upper valley of the Aterno river is bordered on the northeast by the steep mountain ranges of the Gran Sasso d'Italia (2914 m) and on the southwest by Monte Sirente (2349 m) (fig. 1). In antiquity the valley was divided among clusters of settlements, the northernmost of which had *Amiternum* at its centre. The town controlled a territory of c.50 km<sup>2</sup> extending over a roughly triangular area between the modern towns of Pizzoli, L'Aquila and Civitatomassa. The valley floor, which lies at an average elevation of 650 m asl, is fertile agricultural land, the productivity of which is limited only by the harsh climatic conditions. It is surrounded by mountains, drained by small side valleys, and overlooked by steep slopes which have been adapted in places for agriculture by the construction of terraces, most of which have now reverted to woodland. Within the territory of *Amiternum* were independent settlements, the most significant of which was the *vicus* of *Foruli* (modern Civitatomassa) to the southwest. Other *vici*, at Preturo, Coppito, Cavallari and Pettino (*Pitinum*), lie mostly buried beneath modern settlements. It appears that in Roman times the valley was densely settled with farms and villas.

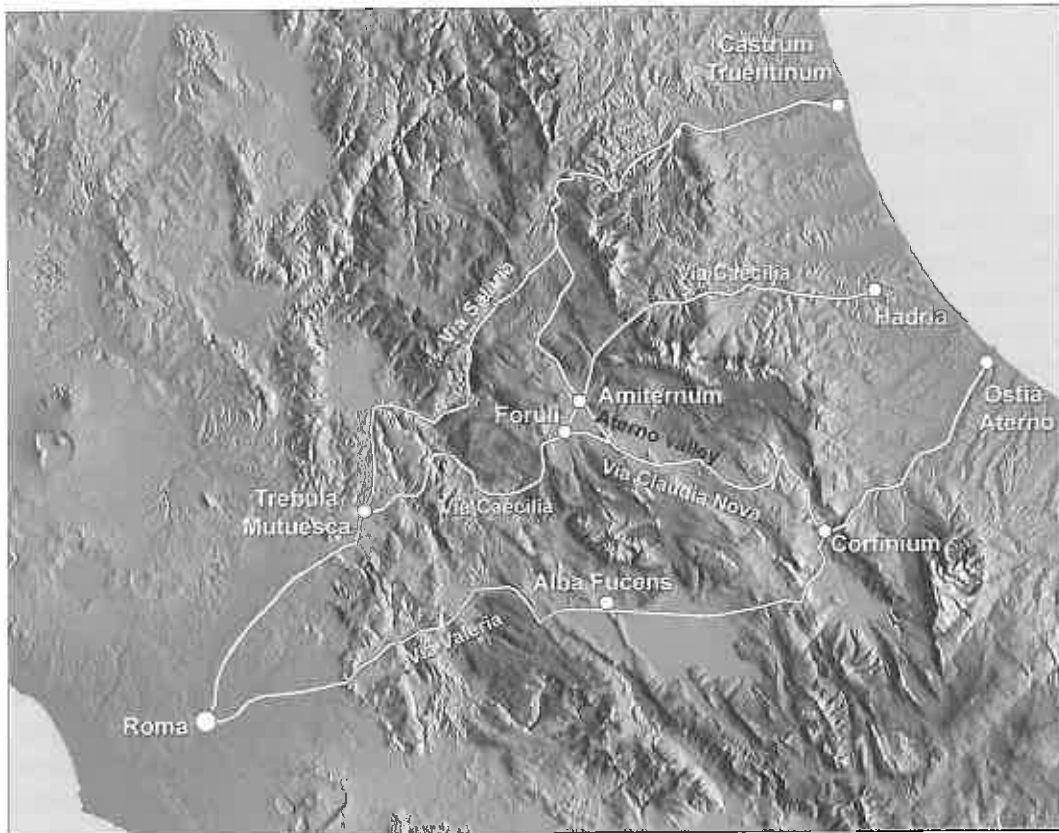


Fig. 1. Relief map of central Italy.

*Amiternum* occupied a strategic location in the narrowest part of the upper Aterno valley, near the modern village of San Vittorino (fig. 2). It appears that the earliest phase of the settlement developed on an easily defensible plateau, 50-80 m above the valley floor, on the site of the modern village. In the course of the Late Republic it was relocated to the valley west of the original site. The only remains of the settlement visible today are the theatre, the amphitheatre and a nearby *domus*.

From the earliest times the Aterno valley was an important route for traffic between the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic coasts. In order to facilitate this traffic, several roads were constructed after the Roman conquest of c.300 B.C. (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The oldest E-W route through the area was the *via Caecilia*, which ran in a straight line through the upper Aterno valley between *Foruli* and *Amiternum* and formed an important line of communication between Rome and Hadria. Initially intended to serve a strategic military function, it was constructed either shortly after the Roman conquest of the area (304-293 B.C.) or later by the consul and censor L. Caecilius Metellus (117-115 B.C.). (There is as yet no archaeological evidence for a more secure date.) The general course of the road is known thanks to modern maintenance work in the area, and the route is clear enough to be followed in places. The road does not pass through the earlier hilltop settlement of *Amiternum* but instead runs along the valley bottom c.1 km to the west, taking the most direct route from *Foruli*

1 S. Segenni, *Amiternum e il suo territorio in età romana* (Pisa 1985) 103-13. The identification of the *via Caecilia* has been questioned: S. Zenodochio, *Antica viabilità in Abruzzo* (L'Aquila 2008) 117-49.

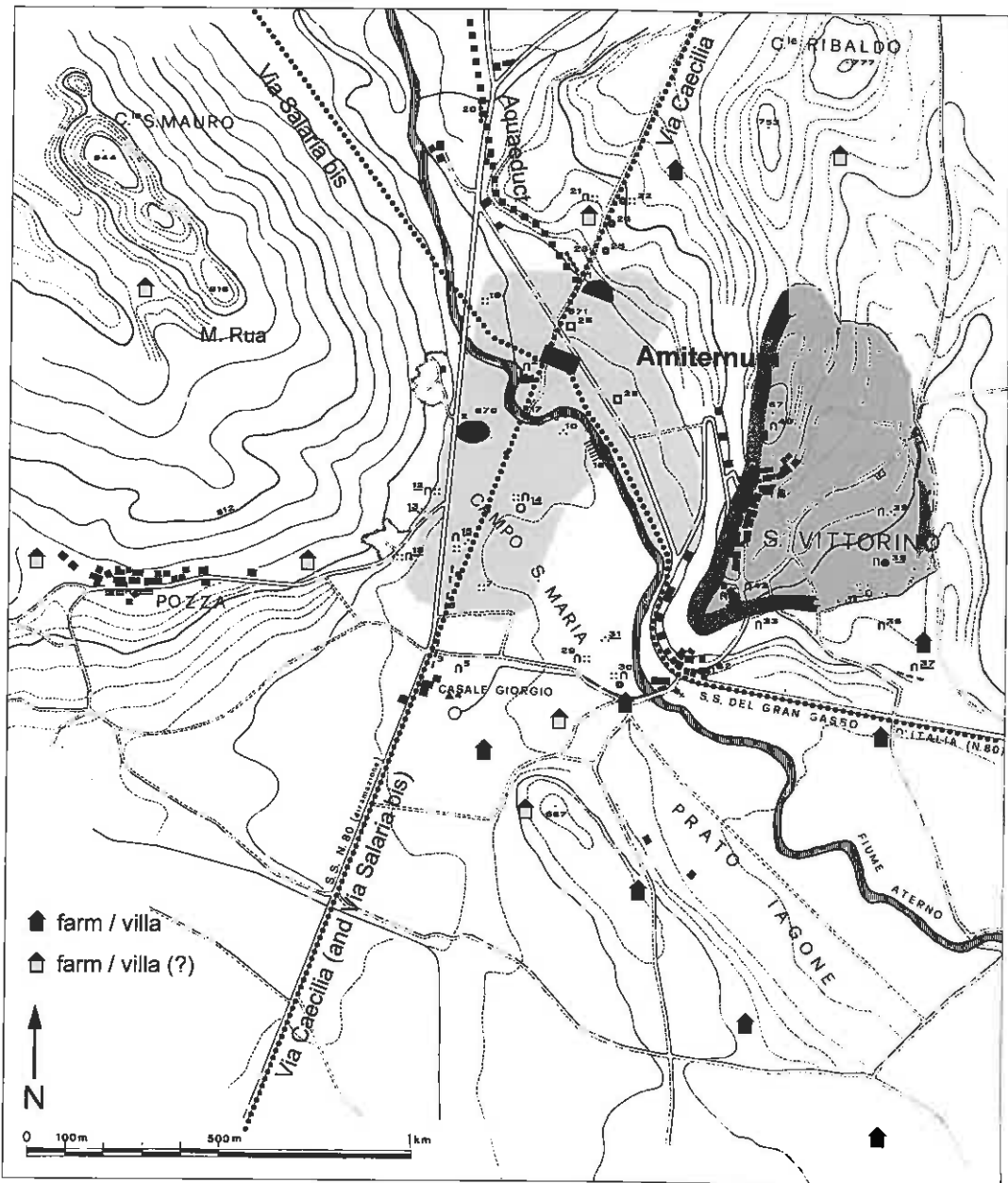


Fig. 2. General plan of *Amiternum* and environs (based on Segenni [supra n.1] fig. 18).

to Passo di Capanelle il Pago. This may have been a factor in the relocation of the settlement from the plateau to the valley below.

A second important thoroughfare was a branch of the *via Salaria*, which diverged from the main route at Antrodoco and entered the Aterno valley at *Foruli*. It continued via *Amiternum* up the northern Aterno valley and met the *via Salaria* at *Amatrice*. This was an important alternative route in winter. Indeed, the Aterno valley, together with the Valle Peligna to the south, forms the longest continuous route through the central Abruzzo. The valley was therefore of strategic importance as an alternative to the west-

ern coastal plain, a fact exploited by Hannibal in 211 B.C.<sup>2</sup> The route was also used for the annual cattle drive from Apulia through the lower and middle Aterno valley to *Amiternum* (see further below). The importance of traffic along this N-S route was apparently also a factor in the construction of the *via Claudia Nova* in A.D. 47, which brought about a shift in the transportation network to the benefit of *Amiternum*. From its western endpoint at *Foruli* the *Claudia Nova* ran south-eastward towards the Adriatic, following the middle and lower Aterno valley to the coast at modern Pescara (ancient *Ostia Aterni*). Although the precise course of the road through the territory of *Amiternum* is only partly known, the *via Claudia Nova* seems subsequently to have given a decisive impetus to the development of settlements in the southern Aterno valley, among them the *vicus* of *Foruli*. Originally overshadowed by *Amiternum*, it eventually developed into a prosperous town with wealthy *domus* and public buildings.<sup>3</sup>

### History of the site

The centre of the Abruzzo was settled by various mountain-dwelling speakers of Umbro-Oscan dialects by the 8th-7th c. B.C. at the latest. At that time the S part of the Aterno valley was the homeland of the Vestini, while ancient sources place the original home of the Sabini in the N part of the valley, whence they are believed to have spread gradually westward to the borders of Latium during the course of the 6th c. B.C.<sup>4</sup> According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cato put the original centre of the Sabines at a place called Testruna (so far unidentified), which he supposed to have been situated somewhere near *Amiternum*.<sup>5</sup> With the gradual expansion of Roman power into central Italy during the Third Samnite War, the Aterno valley came under Roman control. Livy records that *Amiternum* was taken against fierce opposition during the consulships of Sp. Carvilius and M. Atilius in 293 B.C.; he makes no mention of Testruna, but speaks of *Amiternum* as an *oppidum* held by the Samnites.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter a rapid process of integration and assimilation apparently took place, as result of which the inhabitants of *Amiternum* may have earned citizenship *sine suffragio* as early as 290 B.C.<sup>7</sup> In 241 B.C. the town was included in the newly-created *tribus Quirinus*. Inscriptions show that by the time of Augustus it had the status of a *praefectura* in *regio IV*, and was promoted to *municipium* only during the Early Empire, if at all.<sup>8</sup> It remained the most important centre in the upper Aterno valley, with several dependent *vici* nearby.

Although *Amiternum* is rarely mentioned by authors of the Late Republic and Empire, building and dedicatory inscriptions, as well as honorary decrees, bear witness to the

2 Ibid. 54-55.

3 The evidence is collected by Segenni (ibid.) 167-84. The site had not previously been investigated systematically.

4 Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 2.49.2, 1.14.6. For a collection of ancient sources on the Sabini, see J. Poucet, "Les Sabins aux origines de Rome: orientation et problèmes," in *ANRW* I.1 (1972) 48-135. On the Vestini, see A. La Regina, "Ricerche sugli insediamenti vestini," *MemLinc* 13 (1967-68) 363-446.

5 Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 2.49.2.

6 Liv. 10.39.1-2: *Amiternum oppidum de Samnitibus vi cepit*. This contradiction is usually explained by assuming that the Sabine town of *Amiternum* was occupied during that war by the Samnites. However, the identification of our *Amiternum* with the *Amiternum* mentioned by Livy is not unanimously accepted: for a summary of the debate, see Segenni (supra n.1) 50-52.

7 Vell. Pat. 1.14.6-7.

8 See Segenni (supra n.1) 59-70.

development of the settlement.<sup>9</sup> These sources also provide an insight into its political organisation. Until its promotion to *municipium*, *Amiternum* was the seat of a *praefectus*, assisted by a board of 8 local magistrates, which was apparently already established at an early date. After the change in the town's status, this board seems to have been replaced or joined by *duumviri* and *decuriones*, who met, according to one inscription, in a *curia Septimiana Augustea*.<sup>10</sup> The inscriptions also mention cults and religious officials of the sort normally found in Roman towns at this date,<sup>11</sup> as well as, more unusually, a college of *tresviri augustales* for the imperial cult.<sup>12</sup> The cult of Hercules is very well attested, as it is typical of settlements along transhumance routes.<sup>13</sup>

A remarkable number of inscriptions provide information about the wealthy municipal upper class, which in the Late Republic already included many members of the equestrian order and even the senatorial aristocracy. The best known of these is C. Sallustius Crispus, born at *Amiternum* in 86 B.C.,<sup>14</sup> but members of the Attii, Sallii, Vinii and other families also attained high positions in Rome from the 1st c. B.C. onward.<sup>15</sup> Even though these families concentrated their attention on the capital, they seem to have remained closely linked to *Amiternum* and contributed to its prosperity.

The epigraphic evidence suggests that, in spite of difficult political circumstances, the public life of the town remained active until the middle of the 4th c. A.D. Inscriptions bear witness to the renovation during this period of aqueducts and other buildings by the *ordo splendissimus Amiterninae civitatis*.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that in the 3rd c. *Amiternum* already had its own bishop, as it certainly did no later than the 4th c.<sup>17</sup> The town was hit by a devastating earthquake in 346/7;<sup>18</sup> thereafter it makes no further appearance in the written sources. It may have suffered along with the whole region during the Gothic Wars. At some point, presumably during the course of the 5th c., the much-reduced population, together with the bishopric, moved back uphill, creating a new nucleus around the church of the martyr S. Vitorinus<sup>19</sup> and bringing to an end the settlement in the valley.

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- 9 E.g. *CIL* I 1853 (aqueduct) and IX 4196 (baths); *Suppl. It.* 9, 36 (honorary inscription); see also Segenni (supra n.1).
- 10 *Suppl. It.* 9, 34 (= *AE* 1937, 119 and 120). It is not clear whether the duumvirate replaced the older octovirate or co-existed with it: Segenni (supra n.1) 65.
- 11 There is epigraphical evidence for the cults of Quirinus (*ILS* 3150), Mars (*CIL* IX 4502), Iuppiter Optimus Maximus (*CIL* IX 4349), Aesculapius (*CIL* IX 4512), Diana (*CIL* IX 4179); some inscriptions report officials such as a *ministra Salutis* (*CIL* IX 4460). See also Segenni (supra n.1) 71-73; E.C. Evans, *The cults of the Sabine territory* (Rome 1939) 103-29.
- 12 *CIL* IX 4212; further examples in Segenni (supra n.1) 73.
- 13 *CIL* IX 4183, 4498 and 4198.
- 14 E. Albino, *L'uomo Sallustio* (L'Aquila 1966).
- 15 Segenni (supra n.1) 83-89; ead., "I Sallii di Amiternum," *SCO* 41 (1991) 395-401.
- 16 *CIL* VI 1772 and IX 4181; *Suppl. It.* 9, 34 (= *AE* 1937, 119 and 120).
- 17 L. Pani-Ermini, "Contributi alla storia della diocesi di Amiternum, Furcona e Valva nell'alto medioevo," *RendPontAcc* 46 (1971-72) 257-74. On the Christianisation of Abruzzo in general, see M. Cecchelli Trinci, "Il paleocristiano in Abruzzo," in *Atti del V congresso naz. di archeologia cristiana*, Torino 1979 (Rome 1982) 563-73.
- 18 F. Coarelli and A. La Regina, *Abruzzo, Molise* (Roma 1984) 8. On the earthquake in general, with further references, see F. Galadini and P. Galli, "The 346 A.D. earthquake (central-southern Italy): an archeoseismological approach," *Annals of Geophysics* 47 (2004) 885-905.
- 19 L. Pani-Ermini, "Il santuario di S. Vittorino in Amiternum: note sulla sua origine," *RdA* 3 (1979) 95-105.

### Agriculture and transhumance

Little is known about the pre-Roman spatial organisation and patterns of land use favoured by the mountain peoples of Italy. The characteristic settlement types of *pagus* and *vicus* and the absence of large urban centres were presumably connected with their system of agriculture, which allowed small-scale private ownership of land, but at the same time attached great importance to the communal *ager publicus*.<sup>20</sup> From the 3rd to the 1st c. B.C. a profound change took place in agricultural production and land ownership, involving the sharing of land under private owners, together with the creation of large properties and numerous *villae rusticae* in the region around *Amiternum*.<sup>21</sup> These conditions are reflected in an inscription, possibly of Late Republican date, which pertains to the area north of the theatre and defines the outer borders of a vineyard and other plots of land with precise descriptions and measurements in feet.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that the whole agricultural area of *Amiternum* was divided up into small parcels in a manner suggestive of a modern land-register.

With the introduction of the *villae*, the intensity of agricultural activity probably rose as well. Along with the usual crops, we find references in the written sources to certain vegetables, among them turnips, which apparently responded well to the cool weather at this high elevation.<sup>23</sup> Inscriptions also testify to the importance of viticulture. Indeed, vines were still grown in the area, especially on the flat southern hillside of the theatre, until the early 20th c. In more recent times, however, the Aterno valley, with its relatively harsh climate, has been unable to compete with other wine-producing regions and viticulture has been abandoned. In antiquity it presumably served the local market.

Although this type of agricultural production would probably not have generated great wealth, the same cannot be said for other rural activities, such as the raising of live-stock and wool production. Indeed, it seems that as early as the 2nd c. B.C. *Amiternum* and the upper Aterno valley had already become the destination of one of the main seasonal cattle-routes from Apulia. The route spanned a distance of 200 km, beginning in the area of Foggia and following the Adriatic coast before turning up the Aterno valley.<sup>24</sup> This pattern of transhumance was well-suited for the breeding of cattle and sheep and the production of meat and wool. Most of the flocks were herded by slaves who spent the period from spring to autumn in the rich pastures of the Abruzzi, then returned to Apulia for the winter. Since we know that wool was produced at *Amiternum*, it may have been shorn there at the end of the summer grazing season. Inscriptions indicate that the local aristocracy was heavily involved in this lucrative form of migrational stock-farming and wool production. The Paccii, for example, owned a substantial amount of property at *Amiternum* as well as at *Luceria* in Apulia — in other words, at both ends of the route.<sup>25</sup> Another member of the local aristocracy was involved in a different aspect

20 E. Gabba and M. Pasquinucci, *Strutture agrarie e allevamento transumante nell'Italia romana* (Pisa 1979) 21-25.

21 Segenni (supra n.1) 75-96; E. Maróti, "The *vilicus* and the villa-system in ancient Italy," *Oikumene* 1 (1976) 109-24.

22 *CIL* I 1853.

23 Pliny (*NH* 19.77, 18.131) praised the turnips from *Amiternum* as the best in the Roman markets.

24 See Gabba and Pasquinucci (supra n.20) 92-182.

25 *Ibid.* 107-8.

of the livestock trade, purchasing Umbrian herds in order to sell them in S Italy.<sup>26</sup> All in all, it seems certain that income derived from this profitable trade contributed to the increased prosperity of the upper class and made possible the acceptance of its members into the equestrian order and the senatorial aristocracy.

The effects of transhumance on spatial organisation and land use in *Amiternum* and its territory have not yet been studied. At present it can only be assumed that the arable parts of the valley and the lower slopes were set aside primarily for cereal and wine production. (Parts of the hillside above a villa south of the town show some evidence of terracing that may be of Roman date.) The summer herding is likely to have been concentrated on the surrounding hills. This would have led to significant deforestation and the exposure of soils to erosion. An examination of deep deposits of colluvium at the sides of the valley, as well as other deep, dry colluvial fills nearby, suggests that much of the soil of the steeper hillsides, which would otherwise have been suitable for grazing, may have been structurally weakened and seriously thinned by erosion already by the Late Republican period. This in turn suggests that the clearance of the hillsides had already begun in the pre-Roman period. It is conceivable that the economic success of Roman transhumance led to pressure to increase the number of animals grazing on the vulnerable soils around *Amiternum*, to a point at which ground cover was depleted, plant productivity decreased, erosion increased and the land could no longer support such large flocks. This would have had a serious impact on the transhumance economy, at least for a time, and might have forced a reduction in land use and a shift in grazing patterns under the later Empire.

In late antiquity, a gradual process of de-urbanisation took place across the entire Aterno valley, which led during the Byzantine and Langobard periods to the abandonment of settlement areas and villas in the valley bottom.<sup>27</sup> As part of this process, agricultural production and property ownership must have changed once more. The rural economy, which had been supported by the existence of numerous private villas in the Roman period, will have been greatly reduced as a consequence of depopulation and the collapse of the market. Since herding routes were no longer secure, transhumance also ceased, perhaps leading to a recovery of the woodland.<sup>28</sup> During the course of the Middle Ages, much of what had previously been private property fell into the hands of

26 A. Giardina, "Allevamento ed economia della selva in Italia meridionale: trasformazione e continuità," in A. Giardina and A. Schiavone (edd.), *L'Italia: insediamenti e forme economiche* (Bari 1981) 92-93. These animals may have been led south via the Aterno valley in order to improve their quality and increase their wool production.

27 See A. R. Staffa, "Abruzzo fra tarda antichità ed alto medioevo: le fonti archeologiche," *ArchMed* 19 (1992) 789-853; id., "Riassetto urbano, trasformazioni territoriali, forme di acculturazione nell'Abruzzo bizantino (secc. VI-VII)," in E. Boldrini and R. Francovich (edd.), *Acculturazione e mutamenti: prospettive nell'archeologia medievale del Mediterraneo* (Florence 1995) 315-60; id., "Le campagne abruzzesi fra tarda antichità ed alto medioevo (secc. IV-XII)," *ArchMed* 27 (2000) 47-99.

28 Herding between Apulia and Abruzzo began again with the stabilisation of the political situation in the High Middle Ages, and it remained a constant feature of the economy of the Aterno region until World War II. This, together with a related intensification of agriculture beginning in the early modern era, led to an almost complete deforestation of the region. A regeneration of the woodland has only been observed since the 1950s and the beginning of industrialisation, which has led once again to rural depopulation and the diminished importance of farming and herding.

the church, to the benefit in particular of the Benedictine Abbey of Farfa, which owned a great deal of land in the upper Aterno valley.<sup>29</sup>

### Excavation history and previous scholarship

The ruins of *Amiternum* were used as a quarry for building materials until the end of the Middle Ages, but in the late 16th c. a more productive engagement with the monuments and the history of the site began.<sup>30</sup> It was a benefit that the amphitheatre was still visible, albeit as a ruin, and that the town was closely connected with the name of Salust, an author greatly esteemed during the Renaissance.<sup>31</sup> Prompted by the European demand for ancient objects, especially inscriptions and statues, the first intensive excavations took place in the 1830s.<sup>32</sup> Records are scarce and it is seldom possible to accurately locate these early excavations. In addition to the necropolis, it appears that work was conducted north of the amphitheatre and at the theatre. Objects from these excavations found their way onto the international art market and were subsequently scattered across Europe. A large marble statue of Cybele was carried across the Atlantic to Boston.<sup>33</sup> With the establishment of the Italian state and the gradual creation of an appropriate administrative body for the protection of monuments, the uncontrolled digging in and around *Amiternum* was reined in, and more attention was given to the occasional finds that occurred during construction works.

In 1878-79, in one of the earliest and most extensive campaigns of excavation at the site, the theatre, situated near the N edge of the town at the foot of the Colle Ribaldo, was completely unearthed.<sup>34</sup> From this point onward more and more information began to appear, including accounts of new finds at *Amiternum* and at the nearby sites of Pizzoli, Civitatomassa, Pettino, Preturo and Coppito.<sup>35</sup> Since World War II, excavations undertaken in connection with maintenance work and emergency repairs have produced additional evidence. Particularly worthy of note is the work of S. Segenni, published in 1985, which provided the first general overview of research on *Amiternum* and a summary of the results of earlier excavations at the site.<sup>36</sup>

There is as yet no archaeological proof of the existence of a pre-Roman settlement phase at *Amiternum* itself. Nevertheless, evidence is increasing to suggest that an Iron Age settlement existed in the vicinity of the later Roman town. The so-called Murata del Diavolo, the remains of several unusually large terrace walls of polygonal masonry located at the end of a deeply-cut gorge on the S slopes of Colle Busci, c.2 km east of

29 Cf. Segenni (supra n.1) 97-102, esp. 97 n.3.

30 Many inscriptions have been found built into the mediaeval churches of Preturo, Coppito and San Vittorino.

31 B. Cirillo, *Degli annali della città dell'Aquila con l'istorie del suo tempo* (Roma 1570); G. Pico Fonticolano, *Breve descrizione di sette città illustri* (Aquila 1582); S. Massonio, *Dialogo dell'origine della città dell'Aquila* (Aquila 1594).

32 The work is recorded chiefly in correspondence and other unpublished documents: Segenni (supra n.1) 136-40.

33 Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 99.340.

34 A. Leonsini, *NotSc* 1878, 39-40; id., *NotSc* 1879, 145-47 and 181-82; A. Ausiello, *NotSc* 1880, 290-96, 350-52 and 379-82.

35 The Marchese Niccolò Persichetti, for example, who worked as *Inspettore dei Monumenti degli Scavi* c.1890-1910, published c.100 reports of finds in the region: Segenni (supra n.1) 264-67.

36 Segenni (supra n.1).



*Amiternum*, have been known since the 19th c.<sup>37</sup> The date and function of the enclosure are uncertain, but the style of construction and unusual location suggest that it could have been a sanctuary complex similar that of Hercules at Sulmona.<sup>38</sup> Until recently, necropoleis of this era were unknown at *Amiternum* and in the neighbouring territories, in contrast to the southern Aterno valley, where abundant burials of the 8th-4th c. B.C. have been uncovered since the 1990s at Fossa and Bazzano.<sup>39</sup> In the summer of 2007, however, as a result of unpublished rescue excavations carried out by the Soprintendenza, Iron Age graves were discovered at Pizzoli, c.2.5 km northwest of *Amiternum*. Although the study of these graves is still in its early stages, their existence demonstrates the presence of an Iron Age settlement nearby. It is thought to have been located on the ridge at S. Vittorino, site of the earliest documented phase of the settlement of *Amiternum* itself, but no evidence to confirm this assumption has so far been found.<sup>40</sup>

As noted above, at some unknown point in time the early hilltop settlement of *Amiternum* moved to the floor of the valley, next to the *via Caecilia*. The oldest known structure on the lower site is the theatre, which has been dated to the Augustan period.<sup>41</sup> Whether activity at the older site on the hill continued at the same time is unknown. Over the course of the Empire the settlement in the valley underwent a great expansion: in the late 1st c. A.D. an amphitheatre was constructed, followed in the 2nd and 3rd c. by two aqueducts and a bath. Apart from the remains of a few unidentified walls, no other public buildings were known before the present survey was undertaken. Since the 19th c. an increasing number of grave monuments, inscriptions and other finds of a funerary nature have come to light on the periphery of the town, among them an Early Imperial relief of a *pompa funebris* now in the Museo Nazionale d'Abruzzo in L'Aquila.<sup>42</sup> Particularly spectacular are two Late Republican or Early Imperial funerary *klinai* with elaborate bone ornament.<sup>43</sup> The richly furnished necropoleis of *Amiternum* reinforce the image of an unusually wealthy municipal upper-class.

## Results of the current research project (2006-9)

### *Geophysics and geoarchaeology* (D.J.)

The Roman town was built on the banks of the Aterno river, where it emerges from a constricted upland valley onto a broader plain sloping gently down towards L'Aquila. Much of the town was constructed on pre-Roman river terraces, where the buried remains of ancient buildings lie close to the modern surface. Where the town extends

37 Segenni (supra n.1) 229-32 with references.

38 See F. Van Wonterghem, *Forma Italiae. Regio IV, 1: Superaequum, Corfinium, Sulmo* (Firenze 1984) 240-53.

39 See, *inter alia*, C. Serena, V. D'Ercole and G. Mieli, *La necropoli di Fossa*, vol. 1: *le testimonianze più antiche* (Pescara 2001); V. D'Ercole and E. Benelli, *La necropoli di Fossa*, vol. 2: *i corredi orientalizzanti ed arcaici* (Pescara 2004); V. D'Ercole and M. R. Copersino, *La necropoli di Fossa*, vol. 4: *l'età ellenistico-romana* (Pescara 2003).

40 Coarelli and La Regina (supra n.18) 19.

41 Segenni (supra n.1) 122-28; Coarelli and La Regina (supra n.18) 20.

42 See J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and burial in the Roman world* (Baltimore 1971) 46 fig. 11; Segenni (supra n.1) 191 no. 1 with references.

43 Now in the Capitoline Museum (Centrale Montemartini), Rome, and the Museo Nazionale Archeologico, Chieti: A. Pasqui, *NotSc* 1907, 145-51; C. Letta, "Due letti funerari in osso," *MonAnt* 1984, 80, no. 25.

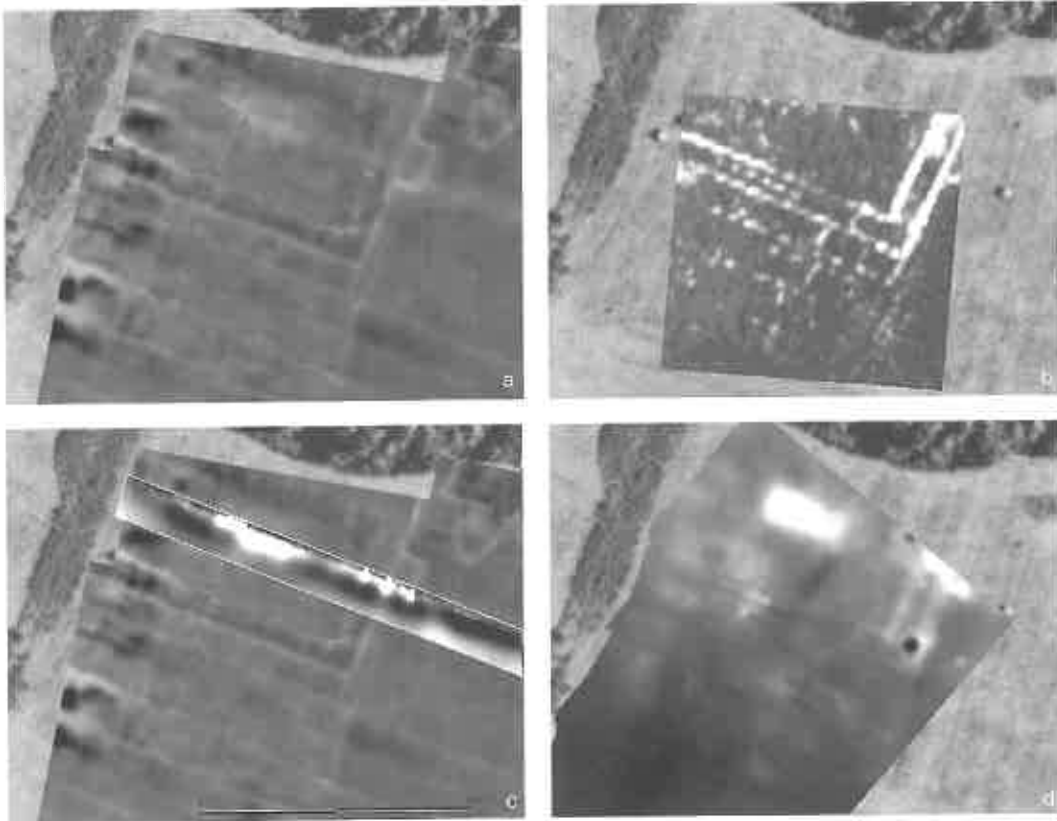


Fig. 3. Geophysical survey results in the centre of the lower settlement: a. Caesium magnetometry (light tones represent lower, dark tone higher magnetic field strength); b. Electrical resistance (light tones represent higher, dark tone lower resistance); c. Magnetometry with vertical electrical resistance profile superimposed (the ERT profile was recorded along the surface and represents apparent resistivity to a depth of c.1.5 m); d. Ground-penetrating radar time-slice (light tones represent coherent reflection from structures).

up the slopes of the steep limestone hills that enclose the valley, the remains have been partly buried by colluvium, deepened in places by displaced soil which apparently includes material dumped by earlier excavations. The deep alluvial and colluvial fills of the Aterno valley, its tributaries and the lower slopes around them have been tentatively dated to the pre-Roman Holocene on the basis of stratigraphy and preliminary optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dates. Thus the alluvial and colluvial fills around *Amiternum* may contain interesting sequences of deposits that record the complex interplay between the economies, land-use patterns and erosion histories of the Roman and pre-Roman periods. This is especially significant given the possibility of linking this evidence to the emerging picture of the economy and settlement history of *Amiternum* itself, as derived from historical records and excavations.

The Roman remains consist largely of limestone walls buried in soils derived from colluvium and alluvium, mixed with substantial amounts of ceramic *débris*. A strong contrast in magnetic susceptibility between the soil and walls has been demonstrated, both because of the naturally high susceptibility of the colluvium and because of the ceramic admixture. There is also a strong contrast in electrical resistivity, because the soil is naturally moist and clayey and the walls are often substantial, well-constructed and preserved to a considerable height. This makes the site an excellent candidate for

magnetic imaging. An extensive magnetometer survey of c.20 ha, using a 4-sensor Geometrics G-858 Caesium-Gradiometer on a measuring cart, has produced very useful results, although the clarity of the images varies with the nature of the soil and the components that have been mixed into it at different parts of the site (figs. 3a and 4).

Smaller areas of electrical resistivity survey, conducted with a Geoscan RM 15 ER with a 0.5 m-separation twin-electrode array, show the buried walls less clearly because of their depth (fig. 3d). An extensive programme of electrical resistivity tomography (ERT), conducted with a combination of 72-electrode Schlumberger and Double-Dipole arrays at inter-electrode spacing ranging from 0.2 to 2 metres, has been very successful in clarifying the location and depth of the walls, as well as their contexts within the natural deposits on the site (fig. 3c).

Ground-penetrating radar (GPR), using a GSSI SIR-20 with both 250 and 400 MHz antennas, has been unsuccessful in all but a few parts of the site, probably because of the depth of the remains, the relatively high electrical conductivity and the abundance of archaeological debris (fig. 3b). GPR survey has only proved effective at *Amiternum* where the remains lie very close to the surface, perhaps revealing the remains as patterns of variation in ground electro-magnetic coupling rather than as patterns of radio wave reflection.

The magnetometer survey results are similar to those obtained at other classical sites in the Mediterranean region, such as Ampurias, where limestone walls appear as negative magnetic anomalies against a background of more magnetically susceptible archaeological deposits.<sup>44</sup> It is notable, however, that the strong susceptibility contrast, the size, and the compact structure of the walls make it possible to detect buried buildings at *Amiternum*, such as the large *domus* discussed below, at unusual depths of up to 1.5 m. This has aided the selection of sites for excavation in places where it would not otherwise have been possible.

In a separate survey c.400 individual measurements of magnetic susceptibility were made at intervals of c.50 m across the whole of the ancient town and adjacent areas, using a Bartington MS2 instrument. Magnetic susceptibility survey detects ancient habitation because human activity (fire, the disposal of organic waste and the distribution of ceramic fractions) usually increases the ability of the soil to become magnetised. The interpretation of the results at *Amiternum* is complicated by the high susceptibility of some natural colluvial soils on the hillsides around the site.

Although the geophysical surveys carried out at *Amiternum* are not the most extensive ever conducted at a classical site, they are, taken together, among the most complete. They show in particular how effective a carefully-targeted combination of complementary methods can be in revealing and explaining traces of ancient buildings that still lie buried beneath the earth.

*The topography and urban development of the Roman town (M.H.)*

An extensive topographic survey, together with the magnetic susceptibility measurements described above, were carried out as part of latest research project. These have led to several new conclusions about the history and topography of the town. The most

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<sup>44</sup> X. Aquilue *et al.*, "Resultats del projecte de prospeccions electromagnètiques a la ciutat romana d'Empúries (L'Escala, Alt Empordà)," *Empúries* 52 (2000) 261-79.



Fig. 4. Results of the magnetometer survey superimposed over a corrected Quickbird satellite picture.

1. Theatre, 2. Theatre street, 3. *Domus*, 4. *Domus*, 5. Aqueduct, 6. *Via Caecilia*, 7. Forum, 8. Basilica, 9. Commercial building, 10. Street with shops, 11. River bankment wall, 12. Sanctuary, 13. Sanctuary, 14. Sanctuary(?), 15. Sanctuary(?), 16. Amphitheatre, 17. *Domus*, 18. Fortification wall of hill-top settlement(?).

important of these is that a greater distinction must be made between the earlier settlement on the hilltop and the later one in the valley (fig. 2). It is now clear that the settlement on the plateau of S. Vittorino extended much further to the east and north than previously thought. Visible structures and finds close to the surface show that the settlement stretched over an area of 500 x 700 m<sup>2</sup>, most of which, apart from the property occupied by the houses of the village of S. Vittorino along the W side, is free of modern development. The evidence also suggests that a circuit wall protected the settlement:

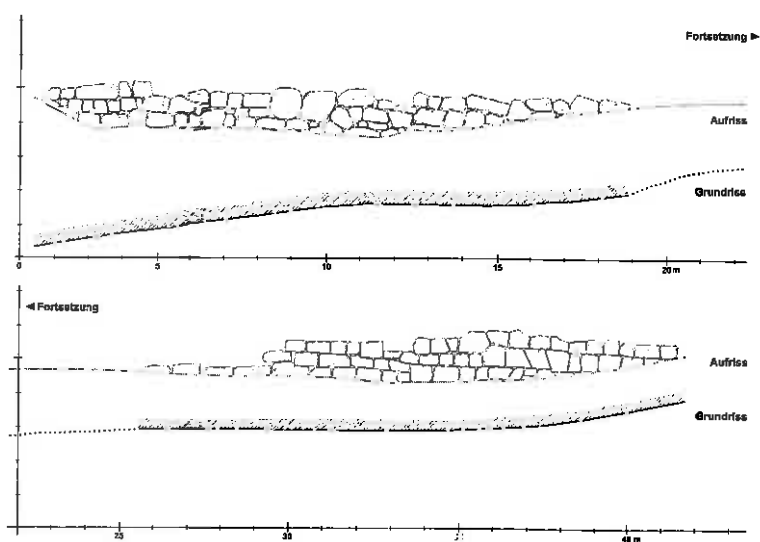


Fig. 5. Embankment wall next to the Aterno river.

large polygonal blocks, no longer *in situ*, have been found at various points on the S slope of the plateau, and geophysical prospection conducted near the edge of the slope immediately east of the church of S. Vittorino (fig. 4, no. 18) shows a strong linear anomaly, which can be interpreted as a massive fortification wall. The conjectural line of the wall may also be reflected by a drop in elevation of c.3-5 m along the entire E side of the supposed settlement, which contributed to the formation of a ravine in this location after the end of antiquity. The full area of the settlement has remained largely unexamined, although building remains and inscriptions have come to light since the 19th c.<sup>45</sup> In our survey, Campanian Ware was found on the surface, but hardly any Terra Sigillata — perhaps an indication of a relatively early period of use. It appears that an extensive settlement had developed on the plateau by the time of Roman occupation (i.e., 3rd c. B.C.) at the latest, but more precise information about its character and its chronology must await more widespread geophysical prospection and excavation.

In the case of the settlement in the valley, the surveys have likewise helped to determine the maximum extent of the inhabited area. The N limit of the settlement lay c.50 m north of the theatre and included the lower slopes of the Colle Ribaldo. To the south it extended almost as far as the Casale Giorgio, 1 km south of the theatre. No trace of fortifications has so far been found. Indeed, the settlement has no clear boundaries and the extent of the built-up area is not uniform: in the south most of the buildings appear to be situated close to the *via Caecilia*, while to the north the occupation extends over a broader area.

The most important natural feature is the Aterno river, which here flows NW-SE. The river delivers little water during the summer but floods in winter, causing considerable erosion of the steep banks, with consequent damage to some of the ancient buildings nearby. The banks of the river were, at least in places, reinforced in Roman times with stone embankments. Immediately west of the so-called Mulino Vecchio, for example, is a

<sup>45</sup> Collected by Segenni (*supra* n.1) 157-61. Recent repairs and construction work have brought to light further traces of the settlement, which remain unpublished.



Fig. 6. Detail of the results of the 2006-8 magnetometry survey in the area south of the Aterno.

42-m length of wall, originally c.3 m high and constructed of massive polygonal masonry (fig. 4, no. 11; fig. 5). Stylistic analysis suggests a construction date in the late 2nd or 1st c. B.C. The wall confirms not only that the Aterno still follows its ancient course, at least in part, but also that the earliest settlement on the valley floor developed between this point and the theatre. The *via Caecilia* from *Foruli* ran through the settlement in a generally N-S direction, entering at the southwest, near the site of the Casale Giorgio, and leaving at the northeast, immediately west of the theatre. Its course can be recognised on the ground, as well as in aerial photographs, as a straight line bounded by hedges and extending for several kilometres. Paving stones brought to the surface by ploughing have been found throughout the settlement along this line, and a portion of the road itself came to light in an excavation by the Soprintendenza (unpublished) c.80 m east of the amphitheatre. The road must have crossed the Aterno on a bridge, of which there are now no visible remains.

The magnetometer survey has revealed detailed plans of buildings in most parts of the settlement and provided important information about its general layout. The *via*

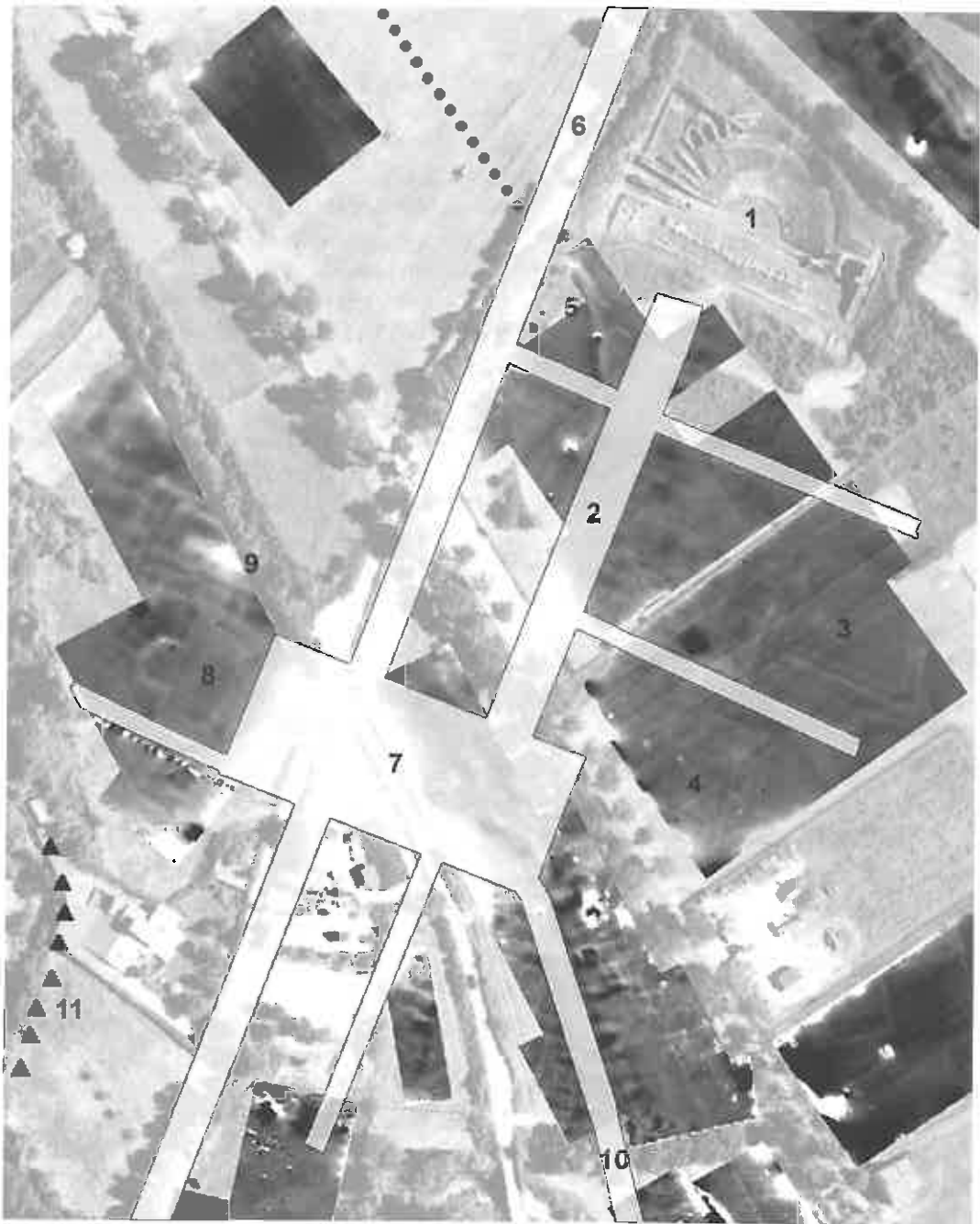


Fig. 7. Detail of the results of the 2006-8 magnetometry survey in the area north of the Aterno.

*Caecilia* formed the central axis with respect to which all known buildings south of the Aterno were oriented (fig. 6). Smaller streets met the main road at right angles, giving the impression of an orthogonal grid plan, but it remains to be seen whether the settlement was intentionally laid out on such a grid. At least in the S part of the town, there are no streets parallel to the *via Caecilia*, and only a single row of buildings appears to have been constructed on each side of the thoroughfare. Several major public buildings appear to be located along this main axis. Directly east of the amphitheatre, on the E side

of the *via Caecilia*, the magnetometer survey clearly shows a roughly square, open area surrounded by a portico measuring c.50 x 40 m (fig. 3; figs. 4 and 6, no. 12). In the middle of the E side a rectangular exedra can be seen. A massive, right-angled structure in the centre of the square, when excavated in 2009 (sondage 8), proved to be the *opus caementitium* core of a completely dismantled podium temple. To the north of the sanctuary the magnetometer survey revealed a spacious bath building, while to the south is a densely developed area which may have contained shops or a market building. Further east there is a long, narrow building with few interior divisions. Southeast of the amphitheatre, on the W side of the *via Caecilia*, is another open area that is currently being studied by the Soprintendenza (figs. 4 and 6, no. 13). GPR survey and subsequent excavation have revealed the existence of a small podium temple in the centre of the open area. To the south lies a large domestic building, which seems to have several shops on its street front and a large, open garden to the rear.

The magnetometer survey also produced detailed information about the part of the settlement that lies north of the Aterno (fig. 7). On the W side of the *via Caecilia*, midway between the river and the theatre, is a large structure with a plan that suggests a basilica, to which a smaller annexe, possibly a *curia* or a *sacellum* for the Imperial cult, has been attached (figs. 4 and 7, no. 8). (This building is discussed in greater detail below.) Immediately east of the basilica is the probable site of the forum, crossed from north to south by the *via Caecilia*. Another large, rectangular building, oriented E–W, abuts the N side of the basilica. It has an inner court surrounded by a corridor on at least three sides, with rooms or *tabernae* of similar size and shape opening off the corridor on the west and south. The plan suggests a building with a commercial function.

The magnetometer survey also produced detailed results further north, between the river and the modern L'Aquila–Teramo highway. South of the theatre is a street, c.15 m wide, which runs parallel to the *via Caecilia* (figs. 4 and 6, no. 2). Recent excavations conducted by the Soprintendenza have shown that a broad entrance leads from the street to the stage building of the theatre, a little to the west of its central axis. The continuation of an underground aqueduct that entered the town next to the theatre is clearly visible in the magnetometry image on the W side of this street, and has been confirmed by excavation c.100 m northwest of the theatre. On the E side of the theatre street, opposite the bath, is an unusually large building complex measuring 45 x 105 m (figs. 4 and 6, no. 3). This building, which has been identified as a large *domus*, is discussed in greater detail below. Adjacent to it on the south is a second, smaller *domus* (figs. 4 and 6, no. 4). The magnetometer survey showed clearly, however, that there are no further buildings east of this row of houses. Thus even in this area, where a second street running parallel to the *via Caecilia* did exist, the settlement did not develop beyond a single row of houses.

#### *The forum, the basilica and its annexe*

The basilica revealed by the magnetometer survey lies c.180 m south of the theatre, on the W side of the *via Caecilia*, with its long axis parallel to the road (fig. 7, no. 8; fig. 8). Its orientation was determined by the forum, which was probably situated immediately to the east. On the E front of the basilica, facing the forum, a portico 4–5 m deep has been recognized. The forum square was clearly defined by the survey, in which it appears as a large negative anomaly. It is possible that the pavement, or at least its bedding layer, is preserved. The E edge of the square cannot be located at present; it seems likely, however, that it extended far enough to have had an entrance on the theatre street.



The basilica measures c.40 x 25 m. The aisles had a clear width of c.5 m and the nave c.12 m. The foundations for the interior supports are clearly visible in the magnetometer survey as a rectangle in the centre of the building. Attached to the basilica in the middle of the W side is a rectangular annexe measuring c.12 x 10 m and terminating on the west in an apse. Comparisons with other known basilicas suggest that this might have served either as a *curia* for the town council or as a shrine for the Imperial cult.<sup>46</sup>

Two sondages were carried out within the complex: one (sondage 4) extending across the W aisle of the basilica from the inner foundations to the outer wall at its junction with the annexe, and a second (sondage 5) within and outside the apse of the annexe. The sondages confirmed the plan recorded by the magnetometer survey and showed that the walls, which had been preserved up to a height of 1.5 m, were dismantled down to the floor level and the marble decoration robbed sometime in the early modern period. Nevertheless, it was possible to establish that both the basilica and the annexe belonged to the same building phase and were constructed of relatively regular *opus reticulatum* with limestone facing and corners reinforced by hand-sized ashlar blocks. An unusual feature of the construction is the fact that the *opus caementicium* in the core of the walls consisted of hydraulic mortar; the annexe was likewise covered with a layer of waterproof plaster c.4 cm thick. It seems that a special effort was made to protect the building, which stood near the river, against flooding and water-damage. It is also remarkable that the exterior wall of the basilica (av. th. 0.50 m) was much less substantial than the massive wall of the annexe (th. 1.45 m). The former was probably covered by a wooden roof, while the latter might have supported a vault. Of the interior supports of the basilica only the foundations remain, on which is preserved the mortar bedding of a square base (1.05 x 1.05 m). Its position corresponds to that of a marble or limestone pier (width 0.60 m) on the other side of the aisle, at the junction of the basilica and the annexe, of which only the plinth is now preserved.

The annexe was open to the basilica along its entire E side; at least two columns would have been required to span the opening. The preserved mortar foundation indicates that it was accessible by a low step leading up to the higher floor-level in the annexe. In the centre of the apse a massive pedestal, 2.80 x 1.0 m, projects from the wall (fig. 9). Around

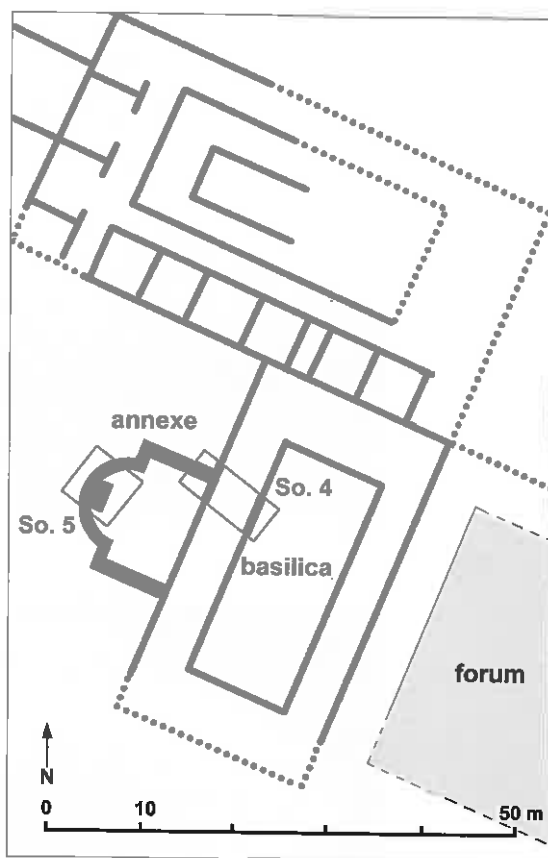


Fig. 8. Plan of the forum, basilica and annexe (based on magnetometer survey and sondages 4 and 5).

46 Similar plans are known from Iuvanum, Lucus Feroniae, Saepinum and Ordona: J. C. Balty, *Curia ordinis* (Brussels 1991) 308-14, 318-21 and 341-44.



Fig. 9. Basilica, apse of the annexe.



Fig. 10. Frieze from the base of the *aedicula* in the apse of the annexe.

it were discovered numerous fragments of a small marble *aedicula* with fluted columns and a curved pediment, as well as two fragments of a marble base decorated with a high-quality frieze of bucrania and garlands and an eagle (fig. 10). The decoration suggests a date in the Early Empire, perhaps Augustan. Fragments of the drapery of an over-lifesize statue, which must have stood on the base, were also found in the room.

The floor and walls of both the basilica and the annexe were decorated with variously coloured marbles, of which a few fragments were found *in situ* and many others in the fill. Preliminary ceramic evidence from beneath the floor in the basilica indicates a date in the Early Empire.

#### *The domus south of the theatre*

The *domus*, one of two detected by the magnetometer survey on the E side of the theatre street, lies c.70 m south of the theatre (fig. 7, no. 3; cf. fig. 11). It occupies an entire

*insula*, bordered on the west by the theatre street and on the north and south by narrower cross-streets. The E side, which does not lie at right angles to the adjacent sides, gives the *insula* a slightly trapezoidal shape. With a width of 45 m and an average length of c.105 m, the building covers an area of c.4725 m<sup>2</sup>. Attached to the E side of the *domus* was a very large open space (c. 50 x 90 m) surrounded by a wall, which might be interpreted as a *hortus* or vineyard.

The plan of the *domus* is clearly defined (fig. 11). It consists of an atrium complex (a-c) on the W side, with an entrance on the theatre street; a medium-sized, nearly square peristyle (e) in the centre of the block; and a much larger peristyle garden (f) to the rear. A row of shops (g) faces the cross-street along the S side of the atrium complex. Whether these belonged to the *domus* or were independent of it is at present uncertain, but the fact that the S limit of the large peristyle corresponds very closely with that of the shops tends to suggest the former.

The main entrance is located near the middle of the W side and is flanked on both sides by rooms. On the evidence of the magnetometer survey, the S room (h) appears to be a shop that opens onto the street. The *fauces* (a) are fairly narrow (barely 4 m) but unusually long (c.8.5 m). A square feature in the centre of the atrium, visible in the magnetometry image, has been confirmed by excavation to be an *impluvium*. On the N and S sides of the atrium are two open rooms, the *alae*, and four smaller, closed *cubicula*. Another room (c), measuring 5 x 7 m, is situated on the E side of the atrium, slightly south of the main axis. This room, which is open to the atrium across its entire width, can be identified with certainty as the *tablinum*. Flanking it on each side are more rooms (d), which appear to open onto the central peristyle (e) and are therefore surely *triclinia*. This characteristic plan of a *domus* with an atrium and two peristyles is well known from the period of the Late Republic and Early Empire. The size of the example at Amiternum is



Fig. 11. Plan of the *domus* south of the theatre (based on magnetometer survey and sondages 1-3).

unusual, however: even excluding the row of shops along the south, it is 1000 m<sup>2</sup> larger than the House of the Faun, the largest *domus* at Pompeii. This is, in fact, the largest urban house so far discovered in Roman Italy, and there can be no doubt that it belonged to one of the leading families of the town.

Three sondages were carried out within the *domus* in 2007 and 2008 (fig. 11). The first (sondage 1) was located at the entrance and included parts of the adjacent shops, the second (sondage 2) in the atrium between the *impluvium* and the northern *cubicula*, and the third (sondage 3) in the *tablinum* and part of the adjacent *triclinium*. They confirmed the structures recorded by the magnetometer survey and also revealed that the *domus* was built over the remains of older buildings on the same alignment (sondage 2; the walls of the earlier structure are visible in fig. 13). The *domus* itself seems to have been constructed as a single unit in the Early Empire. To this phase belong the surviving limestone walls, which stand nearly 0.80 m high. The pavements were renovated in the 2nd c., after which there followed additional, smaller modifications, especially in the area of the entrance. The building appears to have been destroyed by a single event: all three sondages uncovered roof-tiles, fallen walls and widespread fragments of collapsed wall-decoration. It may have fallen victim to the earthquake of A.D. 346/7, a suggestion perhaps supported by a coin of the period of Constantine, the latest identifiable one



Fig. 12. *Domus*, sondage 1: *fauces* (a) with threshold and adjacent *taberna* (h).



Fig. 13. *Domus*, sondage 2: atrium (b) and *impluvium* (with remains of earlier building visible north of the *impluvium*).

associated with the use of the building. It appears, however, that the *domus* was already abandoned by the time of its destruction. All three sondages revealed that a large part of the mosaic and marble decoration had been removed before the collapse of the walls and roof. Since no earth had accumulated over the robbed-out floors and the roof was apparently still intact, it seems that the abandonment took place shortly before the collapse. Simple structures with poorly constructed walls of *spolia* were later built above the fallen *domus*, making partial use of the remains of its walls and rooms (sondages 2 and 3).

In sondage 1, a monumental limestone threshold was found *in situ* at the entrance to the *domus*, set back c.3 m from the street front (fig. 12). The repairs to the threshold make it clear that, in this position at least, it belongs to the later phases of the building. The same is true of the remains of a simple mosaic floor, which respects the threshold and is cut by a late drainage channel. In the *taberna* south of the entrance, which was connected to the *domus* by a door in the back wall, an unusual number of coins (c.20) and a stone weight were found, suggesting that this was a site of commercial activity.



Fig. 14. *Domus*, sondage 3: *triclinium* (d), showing remains of marble revetment and polychrome mosaic pavement.

Sondage 2, in the centre of the atrium, revealed an almost complete *impluvium* (fig. 13). The floor of the basin consisted of large, polished limestone slabs, framed by broad limestone edging blocks with mouldings on the inner face. The square mouth of a cistern, filled with earth, was discovered at floor level just west of the *impluvium*, on axis with the entrance. A small drain from the W side of the *impluvium* supplied the cistern. The absence of columns around the *impluvium* indicates that the atrium had the form of an *atrium tuscanicum*. Extensive remains of the mortar bedding for a mosaic pavement were found on the N side of the atrium; in places small parts of the mosaic itself, with large white tesserae, still remain. Large pieces of painted plaster from the N wall were found lying on the remains of the pavement. The simple decorative scheme was divided into white and yellow zones. Both the mosaic and wall-paintings belong to the later phase of the *domus*.

The purpose of sondage 3 was to investigate the *tablinum* (c) and the southern *triclinium* (d). The elaborate decoration of the *triclinium* (fig. 14) included a fine, polychrome mosaic pavement, of which only badly damaged fragments of the border are now preserved. The walls were covered with large, colourful marble panels, of which part of the bottom row was preserved *in situ*, while the upper rows were found where they had fallen on top of the bedding for the mosaic floor, which had been previously removed. The workmanship of both the floor and the wall suggests a date sometime in the 2nd c. A.D. In the *tablinum* (fig. 15) the remains of two successive mosaic pavements, one on top of the other, were found. The earlier of the two, which is visible only in small parts, was composed of much finer tesserae than the later. Both floors were mainly white and bordered by simple red bands. The walls of the *tablinum* were painted in a simple scheme divided into three zones of red, yellow and green. The wall-plaster respects the later mosaic floor and thus also belongs to the second phase of decoration. Large gaps in the plaster at the corners of the *tablinum* facing the atrium indicate that corner pilasters, perhaps of marble, once stood here. A marble portrait statue was found in the SW corner of the *tablinum* (see below).



Fig. 15. *Domus*, sondage 3: *tablinum* (c), showing remains of wall-plaster and mosaic pavement.

*The portrait statue from the domus (C.M.)*

The most important find of the 2007 campaign is a male portrait statue, made of marble and slightly larger than life-size (figs. 16-18).<sup>47</sup> It was found lying where it had fallen in the SW corner of the *tablinum*, directly above the partially destroyed mosaic pavement and covered by fallen walls and roof-tiles. From the position in which it was found, it appears that the statue originally stood at the entrance to the *tablinum*, but fell backward during the destruction of the building, perhaps in the earthquake of A.D. 346/7. As it fell it broke into many pieces, most of which have been recovered, although the right thigh and arm, as well as parts of the plinth, are still missing. Because of later disturbances in the area, it is unclear whether the statue stood directly on the floor or on a pedestal.

<sup>47</sup> The following discussion is based on a portion of my M.A. thesis: C. Murer, *Beobachtungen zur kommunalen Selbstdarstellung im Aterno-Tal von der späten Republik bis zur hohen Kaiserzeit* (Berne 2008). I am grateful to K. Pittschen and M. Bergmann for advice on the dating of the statue.

The statue is made of rough, white crystalline marble, probably from the Greek islands. Its height is 2.09 m.<sup>48</sup> It represents a standing male figure clad in a *chlamys*. He holds a sheathed sword in his left hand, the point of which is directed upwards. The right arm rested on a marble spear, which was joined to the right shoulder by a bridge.<sup>49</sup> The weight of the body is supported on the left leg, which is reinforced by a tree-trunk, while the right leg is slightly bent. The face displays the individualised features of an older man, characterised by deep-set eyes with drilled pupils and crow's feet at the corners, pronounced wrinkles around the nose and mouth, and a creased brow. The forehead is framed by a fringe of wispy curls, which are only roughly represented at the back.

The style of the statue resembles that of late Hadrianic works.<sup>50</sup> The tree-trunk support points to a late Hadrianic or early Antonine date.<sup>51</sup> The *chlamys*, worn in this fashion, appears first in the 1st c. A.D.<sup>52</sup> The drilled pupils cannot be earlier than c.A.D. 130.<sup>53</sup> The hairstyle is Trajanic, but it is well-established that Trajanic styles continued to be popular into the Antonine period.<sup>54</sup> The stark realism with which the signs of age are depicted is characteristic of the same period,<sup>55</sup> and all of these criteria suggest a late Hadrianic or early Antonine date.

The statue falls within the tradition of "nude idealizing" portraits, used from the Late Republic onward by the upper classes, and later also by the emperor.<sup>56</sup> Other examples of private portraits of this type have been found in the vicinity of *Amiternum*, for example at *Foruli*, and demonstrate the local popularity of this form of self-representation.<sup>57</sup>

48 Left leg: h. 93 cm; torso: h. 88 cm, w. 47 cm; head: h. 28 cm.

49 This was confirmed during the campaign of 2008, when the right hand was found still gripping a fragment of the spear-shaft. The photographs published here show the condition of the statue in 2007.

50 Cf., e.g., a statue of Antinous in Rome (Banca Nazionale: P. Zanker, *Klassizistische Statuen: Studien zur Veränderung des Kunstgeschmacks in der römischen Kaiserzeit* [Mainz 1974] 97-98, pl. 74.1) or the 'Chigi Apollo' (Museo delle Terme, inv. 75675: *ibid.* 106-8, pl. 80.2-3).

51 F. Muthmann, *Statuenstützen und dekoratives Bewerk an griechischen und römischen Bildwerken* (Heidelberg 1951) 46, pl. 5, figs. 13-14 and pl. 10, fig. 21. The deep fissures in the bark are typical of Hadrianic and Antonine tree trunks: *ibid.* 38-40.

52 H. Sichtermann, "Das Motiv des Meleager," *RömMitt* 69 (1962) 43-51; C. Landwehr, "Konzeptfiguren: ein neuer Zugang zur römischen Idealplastik," *Jdl* 113 (1998) 159; A. Furtwängler, *Meisterwerke der Griechischen Plastik* (Leipzig 1893) 362.

53 K. Fittschen, "Kinderporträts und offizielles Porträt im 2. Jh. n. Chr.," in N. Bonacasa and G. Rizza (edd.), *Ritratto ufficiale e ritratto privato: atti della II conferenza int. sul ritratto romano, Roma 1984* (Rome 1988) 304; *id.*, "Ritratti maschili privati di epoca adrianea: problemi della loro varietà," *ScAnt* 7 (1993) 448.

54 *Ibid.* 463.

55 Cf., e.g., the portrait of M. Vilonius Varro in Copenhagen (Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, inv. 2286: H. R. Goette, "Das Bildnis des Marcus Vilonius Varro in Kopenhagen: zu den Basen von Porträtbüsten und zum Realismus flavisch-trajanischer Bildnisse," *Boreas* 7 [1984] 90), which is dated to the Trajanic period.

56 C. H. Hallett, *The Roman nude: heroic portrait statuary, 200 B.C.-A.D. 300* (Oxford 2005); C. Maderna, *Iuppiter Diomedes und Merkur als Vorbilder für römische Bildnisstatuen: Untersuchungen zum römischen statuarischen Idealporträt* (Heidelberg 1988); A. Dähn, *Zur Ikonographie und Bedeutung einiger Typen der römischen männlichen Porträtstatuen* (Marburg 1973).

57 E.g., the 'Foruli general' (Chieti, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 4428: M. R. Sanzi di Mino and L. Nista [edd.], *Gentes et principes: iconografia romana in Abruzzo* [Chieti 1993] 36-37, pls. 1-2), and a portrait of a male as a *diskophoros*, also from Foruli (Chieti, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 4429: *ibid.* 38-39, pls. 3-4; Zanker [supra n.50] 4, pl. 1.1).





Fig. 16. Portrait statue from the *tablinum* of the *domus*.



Fig. 17. Detail of the portrait statue.



Fig. 18. Head of the portrait statue.

The statue from *Amiternum* has close stylistic and iconographic similarities to other nude idealized portrait statues of similar date.<sup>58</sup> Also iconographically related is a portrait statue of the young Marcus Aurelius, likewise distinguished by the presence of spear and sword.<sup>59</sup>

Given the location of the statue in the atrium of a such a large and wealthy *domus*, it must represent an important member of the family, one who was presumably also a member of the municipal aristocracy.<sup>60</sup> Signs of weathering on the head indicate that the statue spent a long time standing in the open air. This suggests that it may first have been displayed outdoors in a public place and only later moved into the *domus*.

#### *The amphitheatre* (M.H.)

The study of the amphitheatre began in the 18th c. but an in-depth analysis of the structure has never been conducted. Using tachymetric measurements, a new plan was produced in 2006 (fig. 19); sections were also drawn by hand at certain points (fig. 20). This systematic survey of the building has led to some important conclusions about its construction history.

The amphitheatre is situated on the W side of the *via Caecilia* at the foot of the Colle San Mauro. It measures c.73 m x 63 m, its long axis oriented roughly E–W. The structure is relatively well preserved and survives to a maximum height of c.10 m on the W side. The elliptical arena measures c.45 x 30 m and is surrounded by a wall c.3 m high, which was originally encircled by a barrel-vaulted corridor supporting the lower podium. The seating (no longer preserved) rested on a series of 48 radial walls of *opus mixtum* covered by vaults of *opus caementicium*. Around the circumference of the building ran a gallery covered by a barrel vault (no longer preserved), which was supported on the exterior by 48 free-standing brick pillars decorated with half-columns. The arena was accessible through wide entrances at the E and W ends. Eight other narrow openings, some of which were later additions, allowed passage between the arena and the interior of the podium. Eight stairways, which were integrated into the crown of the supporting walls, provided access to the *cavea*. The number of rows into which the seating was divided is

58 E.g., a portrait statue from Ostra (Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, inv. 8938: Maderna [supra n.56] 201, no. D6; Dähn [supra n.56] 106, no. 82; J. Chamay, *Art romain: sculptures en pierre du Musée de Genève*, vol. 2 [Mainz 1989] 13-14, no. 14, pls. 25-26); an idealising statue of Antoninus Pius (Naples, Museo Nazionale, inv. 6078: M. Wegner, *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischer Zeit* [Das römische Herrscherbild 2.4; Berlin 1939] 135-36; H. G. Niemeyer, *Studien zur statuarischen Darstellung der römischen Kaiser* [Berlin 1968] 111, no. 117; M. Wegner, "Verzeichnis der Kaiserbildnisse von Antoninus Pius bis Commodus," *Boreas* 2 [1979] 109); and a statue of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina as Mars and Venus (Rome, Museo Capitolino, inv. 652: K. Fittschen and P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Kapitولينischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom: Kaiser- und Prinzenbildnisse*, vol. 1 [Mainz 1985] 69-70, no. 64, pls. 74-75; D. E. E. Kleiner, "Second-century mythological portraiture: Mars and Venus," *Latomus* 40 [1981] 537-38, pl. 23, fig. 8).

59 Formerly in London (Lansdowne House): Wegner 1939 (supra n.58) 179-80, pls. 16a and 17a; Muthmann (supra n.51) 30.

60 For honorary statues in atria, see W. Eck, "Ehrungen für Personen hohen soziopolitischen Ranges im öffentlichen und privaten Bereich," in H.-J. Schalles, H. von Hesberg and P. Zanker (edd.), *Die römische Stadt im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr.: der Funktionswandel des öffentlichen Raumes* (Cologne 1992) 360-63 and 376; H. I. Flower, *Ancestor masks and aristocratic power in Roman culture* (Oxford 1996) 205. On the local aristocracy, see Segenni (supra n.1) 83-89.

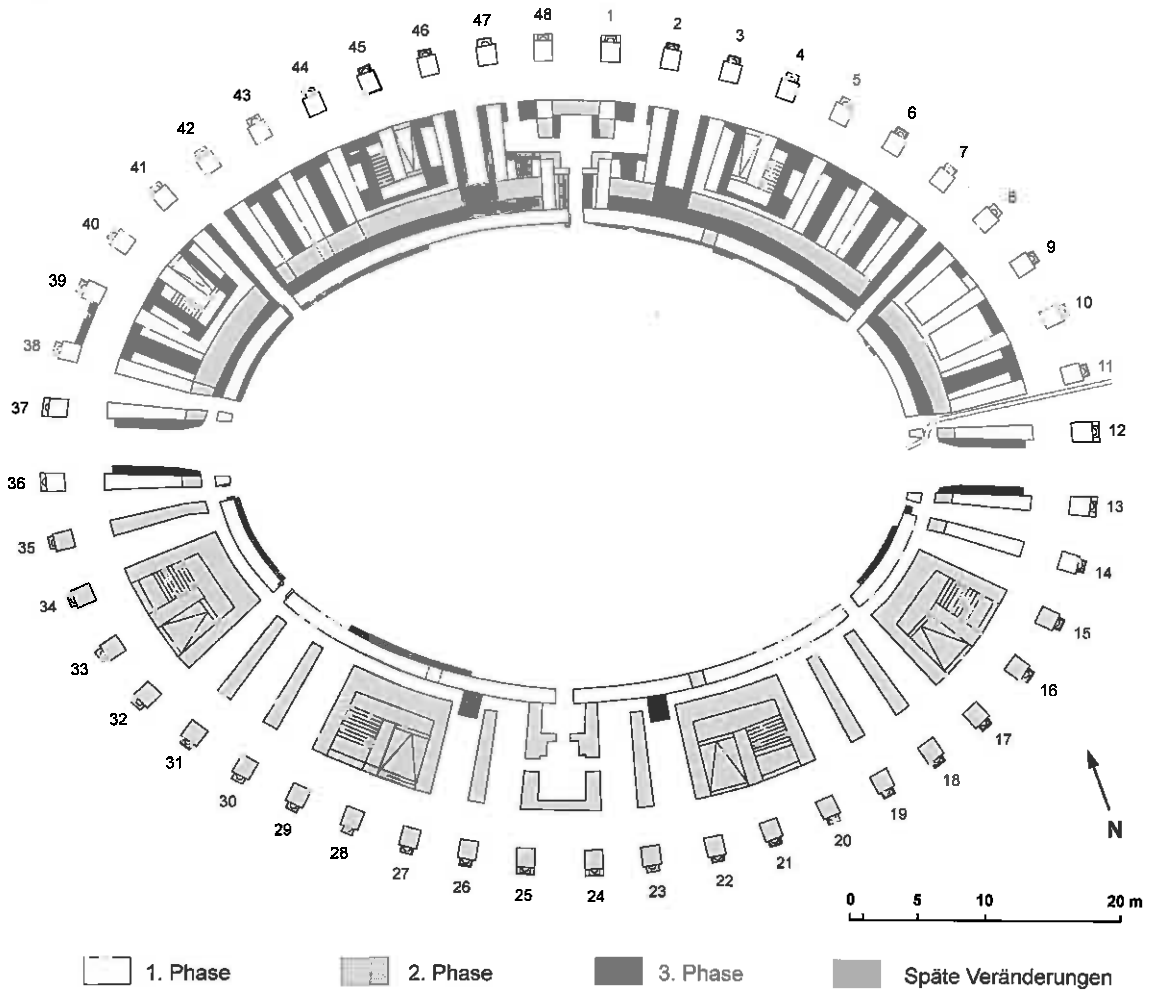


Fig. 19. Plan of the amphitheatre showing phases of construction.

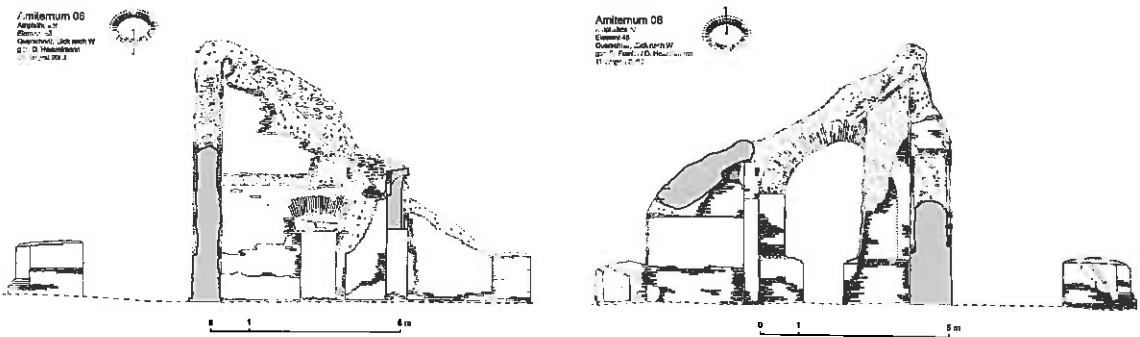


Fig. 20. Section of the amphitheatre (looking west) with supporting walls 25 (left) and 48 (right).

unknown. A GPR survey of the centre of the arena yielded no indication of subterranean structures.

The sequence of construction is easy to follow (fig. 19). In the initial building phase there were two stages of work, separated by a major redesign of the project. During the first stage the entire N half of the building was constructed, as well as the inner wall of

the S half of the arena. Before the construction of the S half of the *cavea*, however, there seems to have been a re-assessment of the plan, followed by changes and extensions made to the walls already in place. During this period the barrel-vaulted side entrances were narrowed, reinforcements were added to the walls, and an entrance on the N side was filled in. These changes were integrated into the new plans and followed in the S half of the building. It appears that, although the architect had a clear concept of the structure he wished to build, the execution of his plan was hindered by structural problems which compromised the stability of the building, and which were only recognised during the process of construction. Even after completion, the N half of the building appears to have required repeated stabilising measures. Many openings were closed and the existing barrel vaults were shored up with underpinnings during a subsequent phase. The stairways in the N half of the building were also reduced in size. At a still later stage, the remaining hollow spaces beneath the barrel vaults and the podium entrances were filled with *opus caementicium*, the stairways were radically reduced in size, and two narrower entrances were added. In general, it seems that from the start of the project the foundations of the N half of the amphitheatre were too weak, whereas the S half with its improved design required no later reinforcement. This largely empirical method of building offers some interesting insights into the Roman approach to architectural planning and construction.

#### **Conclusions: preliminary observations on the urban development of *Amiternum***

The original settlement, the earliest phases of which are so far undocumented, was located on the hill of S. Vittorino on the E side of the valley. In the late 2nd or early 1st c. B.C., the focus of activity shifted to the valley floor and the *via Caecilia*, which passed by the foot of the hill. The development was concentrated at first in the area between the theatre and the Aterno river, where flooding and erosion demanded elaborate defences, including flood walls to control the river and reinforce the banks. In the Augustan period, the settlement in the valley underwent extensive renovation, in the course of which many older buildings (represented by the remains beneath the theatre and the *domus*, for example) were abandoned and filled in. Together with the construction of new and unusually large residential buildings, the settlement experienced a remarkable public monumentalisation with the construction of the theatre, forum and basilica. Another major street, south of the theatre and parallel to the *via Caecilia*, was laid out to connect these groups of monuments. Southeast of the forum, by contrast, the shop-lined street changes direction to conform to the terrain, adopting the orientation of the river. In these peripheral areas no underlying town plan can be identified.

South of the river, for a distance of 300 m on either side of the *via Caecilia*, arose a dense development. The zone of development was remarkably narrow, however, and no streets parallel to the main thoroughfare were created. In this area at least two major sanctuary complexes have been identified with certainty, and two more are suspected. These sanctuaries, each consisting of a *porticus* with a central podium temple, are located on both sides of the *via Caecilia* with their façades oriented to the street. Towards the end of the 1st or in the early 2nd c. A.D., the amphitheatre was constructed, set back from this central axis. Between these public monuments are buildings with commercial functions and isolated large *domus*, although the latter remain clearly in the minority. The resulting picture is a strangely unbalanced one, with a disproportionately high number of public buildings and a correspondingly small number of residences.

During the 2nd c. the residential buildings experienced a further prestigious decorative phase, while no extensive evidence of such attention to public buildings can yet be demonstrated for the period of the High Empire. The buildings of the valley settlement remained in use until at least the first half of the 4th c. The large *domus* was totally destroyed shortly thereafter, perhaps by the earthquake of A.D. 346. Some degree of subsequent, primitive re-occupation has been observed, but it can be assumed that *Amiternum* was gradually relocated back to the hill of S. Vittorino, where the mediaeval town grew up in the area around the Church of the Martyrs.

These new insights into the urban structure of *Amiternum* have changed our understanding of the settlement considerably. It is possible that *Amiternum* was not a well-developed country town of medium size, as was previously assumed, but rather a partially-developed urban centre providing administrative functions and other services for a larger region. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why *Amiternum* remained only a *praefectura*, at least until the Augustan period, and why it was upgraded to the status of *municipium* at a comparatively late date, if at all. At the same time, some large, richly-furnished houses indicate the presence and influence of a wealthy upper class, which probably also explains the remarkable public and religious monuments. From the 1st c. B.C. onward, a significant number of representatives of this class rose to become members of the equestrian and senatorial orders. Epigraphic evidence shows that they not only had extensive land-holdings in the area of *Amiternum* itself, but also engaged in the lucrative livestock trade. It appears that *Amiternum* and the upper Aterno valley were a major destination for the transhumance routes from Apulia, and the intensive grazing of the surrounding mountain areas may, in turn, have been a crucial factor in the extensive deforestation of the region in Roman times.

Given the surprising character of its urban development, future studies of *Amiternum* must address the issue of peripheral settlement around the town. Rescue excavations, aerial photography and other evidence for *vici* and *villae* have already suggested that it was the centre of a dense population in the upper Aterno valley. It may be that specifically Sabine traditions are reflected in the settlement pattern of the region.<sup>61</sup>

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### Acknowledgements

The project, begun in 2006 at the University of Berne, moved in 2008 to Cologne University. It is supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation and conducted in co-operation with the Soprintendenza Archeologica per l'Abruzzo. In particular we would like to thank R. Tuteri for her continuous support. Thanks also go to S. Segenni, F. Galadini and V. Baiocco.

<sup>61</sup> A similar pattern may perhaps be observed at Forum Novum: V. Gaffney, H. Patterson and P. Roberts, "Forum Novum-Vescovio: studying urbanism in the Tiber valley," *JRA* 14 (2001) 59-79. Further investigation in the Sabine region is required to develop a more consistent picture.

