

Territory, city, and private life at *Suasa*

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Introduction (S.D.M)

Research on *Suasa* and its territory began exactly 20 years ago when the University of Bologna, with the Soprintendenza Archeologica of the Marche region, initiated an ambitious project aimed at the full excavation of the *municipium*, of which little was known. Excavations have been carried out within the framework of a research design to relate the history of the town with that of its *ager*. The survey of *Suasa*'s territory, combined with the annual excavation campaigns, employed non-invasive techniques, including geophysics which guided the laying out of the work. Much light has been shed on a town substantially lacking a written history, but much remains to be done. Our aim here is to present the research method and to take stock of the results to date.

The territory lies just north of one in the Potenza valley recently investigated by a Belgian team (see *JRA* 17 [2004] 57-82), which adopted a somewhat different methodology, and it may be of interest to read in parallel the formulation and outcomes of the two projects. The working methods differ but the results may be reciprocal and able to be well integrated. We believe that the genesis, transformations, decline and abandonment of a town (as well of its territorial context) cannot be understood without excavation conducted according to modern stratigraphic principles.

Peoples and the road network: the territorial framework (P.L.D'A.)

In 295 B.C., Rome defeated the Italian alliance and the Senones on what is now the Sassoferrato plain. The site of the battle was linked to the particular characteristics of the Umbrian-Marche Apennines, which are here divided into three ranges, separated by two wide valleys. Between the main range, which marks the boundary between the two regions, and the more easterly one, the San Vicino fold, which runs through the entire territory of the Marche, is the so-called *valle sinclinale camerte*, at the N end of which is the Sassoferrato depression. The *valle sinclinale camerte* is accessible from the area south of Camerino by passes, the most important of which are those of Colfiorito and Cornello. Opening into the valley rather like doors are the river valleys which, emerging from the main range, cut the San Vicino fold and head towards the Adriatic. Two main routes lead off the Sassoferrato depression towards the coast: the first is formed by the narrow Misa river valley; the second initially follows the Nevola and then, after its confluence with the Cesano, the right bank of the Cesano itself (fig. 1). From Sassoferrato it is thus possible to control the routes which connected the heart of the territory of the Senones. It is this which explains the events of 295 B.C.

For controlling the territory of the Senones the importance of the system centering on the *valle sinclinale camerte* and the Apennine valleys, especially that of the Misa river, is proven by the foundation, in c.280 B.C., of the colony of *Sena Gallica*. Senigallia was founded on the coast, within a strip of lagoon, at the mouth of the Misa, on a zone more elevated morphologically with respect to the surrounding area. The new colony was reachable by sea, as well as by land through the *valle sinclinale camerte* and through the Misa valley. In the 4th and 3rd c. B.C. the connection between the coast and the Apennine hinterland of the Misa valley is attested by two important archaeological contexts: the Montefortino necropolis, located at the mouth of the gorge of the Acquaviva stream to the east of the S. Vicino range, a tributary on the left side of the Misa, which here runs parallel and close to to the principal catchment basin; and the Civitalba sanctuary located on the opposite side, dominating the first tract of both the Acquaviva stream and the Misa.¹

1 On the other hand, the presence of the Proto-Villanovan settlement of Monte Croce Guardi di Arcevia and the Aeneolithic one of Conelle seems to point to use of this route during the previous centuries. The toponyms of San Donnino and San Martino, located on the opposite banks of the Misa, which cuts the San Vicino fold south of Arcevia, confirm the continuity of use of this route into the Middle Ages. See P.