

INDVSTRIA APIVM

L'archéologie : une démarche
singulière, des pratiques
multiples

Hommages à Raymond Brulet

Sous la direction
de Marco Cavalieri
en collaboration avec Éric De Waele et Laure Meulemans



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R. Schulz

Diagnostic Sherds in the Pisa South *Picenum* Survey Project (The Marches, Italy): some Remarks

Simonetta Menchelli*

Résumé

Cette contribution présente quelques cas d'étude relatifs à de la céramique récoltée lors de sondages menés dans le *Picenum* méridional. Une typologie et une chronologie précises des sites peuvent être proposées au moyen d'analyses qualitatives des tessons. L'étude attentive des céramiques permet en outre de reconstituer le processus de formation des *off-sites*. La faible densité des sites dispersés peut en effet fournir des données hautement instructives en matière d'occupation archéologique. Le but est de comprendre la provenance des trouvailles éparpillées et de déterminer si elles résultent d'activités humaines prenant place à la campagne ou si elles dérivent de sites et, le cas échéant, de quel type de sites.

The "Pisa South Picenum Survey Project" concerns the towns of *Asculum* and *Firmum Picenum* and their territories, in the Southern *Picenum* (South Marche).¹ In this paper some remarks will be presented deriving from the surveys carried out in the territory of *Firmum Picenum* (Latin colony in 264 BC), of which raw data have been almost completely processed, with the final aim of publishing two books detailing the Project.² *Ager Firmanus* extended between the Tenna and Aso river valleys (about 600 km²): this territory is occupied by a western mountainous area (outlying ramifications of the Apennines Monti Sibillini: 650 m a.s.l. average) sloping down in a Plio-Pleistocenic hilly sector (400-200 m a.s.l.), reaching the Adriatic littoral. The narrow and low coastal strip is mostly gravelly and sandy.³

Within *ager Firmanus* 145 km² have been surveyed with a high degree of archaeological visibility (mostly ploughed fields):⁴ the areas (fig. 1) to be walked have

* I am very glad to present this paper in honour of Raymond Brulet, a dear friend who can deduce historical data from ceramic sherds.

1 For the Project, co-directed by Marinella Pasquinucci and the present writer, (Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche del Mondo antico, Università di Pisa-Italy) see in general Pasquinucci, Ciuccarelli, Menchelli 2005; Menchelli 2009. The Picenum is the object of further Survey Projects: in the Potenza Valley (Vermeulen 2005; Vermeulen 2009 ed.), in the Esino Valley (Pearce, Pretzler, Riva 2005; Pearce, Pretzler, Riva 2009) and in various districts of the Region of the Marches (Moscatelli 1995; Moscatelli 1999; Giorgi, Lepore 2010).

2 M.R.Ciuccarelli, *Archeologia dei paesaggi piceni e romani nelle Marche meridionali. Dalla facies ascolana all'ager Firmanus (VI - I secolo a.C.)*; S. Menchelli, *Archeologia dei paesaggi piceni e romani nelle Marche meridionali. L'ager Firmanus dall'età tardo-repubblicana alla conquista longobarda*. Pisa 2012.

3 Regione Marche 1991.

4 For the field-work methodology see Menchelli 2008 and quoted bibliography.

been chosen because of their representative value for the different geomorphological contexts quoted above and/or historical aspects (e.g. the ancient road-system; the triumviral *centuriatio*; the location of *Castellum Firmanum*, the main harbour of *Firmum Picenum* reported by many literary sources).⁵ We apply the Processual archaeology standards both in fieldwork methodology and in artefact collection and documentation, as well as in the data management by means of Geographical Information Systems.⁶ Nevertheless, geomorphological, spatial, and quantitative evidence are integrated with qualitative and symbolic data, in order to reconstruct the complexity of the anthropic activities in this territory throughout the centuries.⁷ Applying this global approach, we try both to identify the relationships between the various landscapes which succeeded each other and stress the changing elements in the human societies.

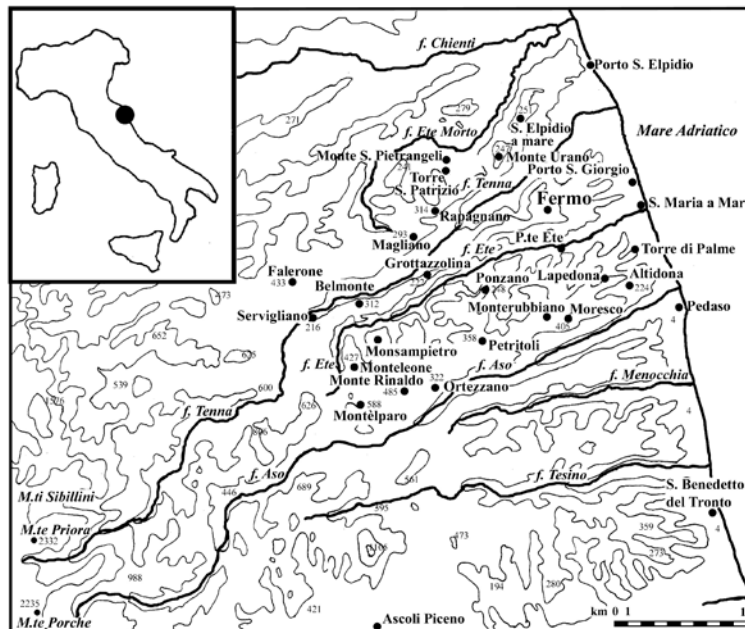


Fig. 1. The general study area.

In the *Ager Firmanus* survey 780 Topographic Units have been identified,⁸ 330 classified as sites and 450 as off-sites. This ratio between sites and off-sites is very clear evidence of the local landscape instability due both to geological and anthropic

5 Menchelli 2005.

6 Menchelli 2008 and quoted bibliography; Menchelli 2012.

7 Fundamental for this approach Bintliff 2006.

8 For Topographic units we mean any remains of human activity visible in the countryside. The related form to document this presence (*Scheda di unità topografica*: Ricci 1983) is one of the key symbols of Processual Archaeology in Italy.

agencies.⁹ Because of their geomorphological and lithological peculiarities, the hilly areas (Plio-Pleistocenic formations) are very susceptible to erosion, as usual in the Marche Region, and this process has been and continues to be aggravated by abundant and irregular rainfalls regime.¹⁰ River alluvia and human activities, mostly along the coastal strip and in the Aso valley, contributed to concealing or destroying (luckily not entirely !) many sites, therefore increasing the number of off-sites.¹¹

This sites and off-sites classification has been based on the findings (mostly ceramics) and their depositional and post-depositional factors:¹² therefore we try to provide careful analyses of all these elements in order to explain how we reached our individual interpretations, hoping to offer comparability criteria¹³ to scholars involved in this topic (fig. 2).

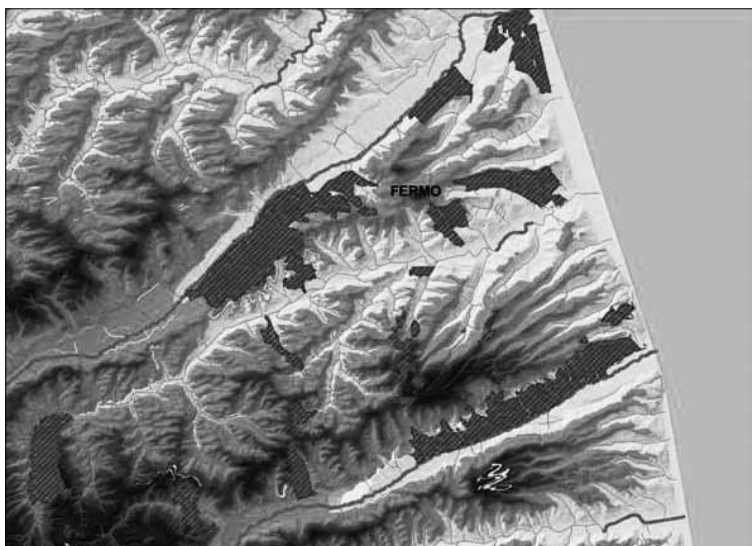


Fig. 2. The intensively surveyed areas.

In table 1 we present the typology and quantity of surveyed sites. Concerning the off-sites, as said above, the bulk of them were formed by natural transport and post-depositional disturbance;¹⁴ as they are mostly site-derived, a careful survey and study of scattered sherds can suggest from which typology of site they originated.

9 Bintliff, Snodgrass 1988.

10 Bisci, Dramis 1991, 107-109; *Regione Marche* 2007.

11 For example, in the coastal *ager Volaterranus*, surveyed by the same team with the same methodology, the off-sites are about 10% of the total Topographic Units (Iacopini *et al.* 2012).

12 Taylor 2000; Terrenato 2004.

13 See the suggestions by Alcock-Cherry 2004.

14 Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988, 507-508.

In particular, this paper therefore focuses on the ceramics found in the surveyed fields and their informative potential for reconstructing the *ager Firmanus* landscapes. For every ceramic class we also consider the differential sherds survival, determined by natural and/or anthropic agencies.¹⁵ We are aware of the stochastic nature of our surface collections, but just as these artefacts constitute the only available part of a missing total, they are worthy of being valued for their epistemological concreteness.¹⁶ Apart from the general utility of material evidence for dating contexts and for reconstructing economic and social trends,¹⁷ we intend to add some specific cases, documenting ceramics as useful tools for historical interpretation, to the scientific debate.

<i>Piceni</i> or Roman minor rural sites	123
Villas	50
Farmsteads	99
Villas or farmsteads	34
Kilns/amphoras store-houses	22
Tombs/Necropolis	6
<i>mansiones/vici</i>	6

Table 1: Typology and quantity of surveyed sites (total = 340 sites).

The ceramic classes¹⁸

Building materials

As is well known, some materials are particularly diagnostic for defining site typology: stone floor and wall slabs, mosaic *tesserae*, stucco and fragments of frescoes, stone columns, *tegulae mammatae* or *tubuli* for private bathing rooms characterize, in the *ager Firmanus* as everywhere, the most important sites from the hierarchic point of view, that is the “villas”.¹⁹ These items are diagnostic also when they are sporadic findings: for example in the coastal strip some modern, sumptuous country-houses have in their vicinity scattered object which can be interpreted as the last remains of a Roman villa concealed by the modern one. *Opus coementicium* blocks and *opus spicatum* bricks can belong both to the *pars rustica* in a major villa or to the productive sector of a farmstead.²⁰ Round bricks forming columns could also be evidence both of *villae* and farmsteads.

¹⁵ In general see Taylor 2000.

¹⁶ Similar opinion by Fentress 2000, 49.

¹⁷ See the discussion in Green 2006.

¹⁸ Concerning the quantification, for every Topographic Unit assemblage we apply the Estimated Vessel Equivalent method (Orton, Tyers, Vince 1993) with some integrations (that is items are counted considering not only the rims and bases of sherds but also the other fragmented parts showing technical features not documented in the other vessels) (see also Menchelli 2008).

¹⁹ For the settlement typology in our Survey Project see Menchelli 2012, 18-20.

²⁰ Wine and olive oil presses are further evidence of agricultural activities (Busana, D’Inca, Forti 2009; Van Limbergen 2011).

Bricks and tiles have a high differential survival in fields for their dimension and thickness, and because they are much too heavy and insufficiently attractive for the non professional visitors (“Sunday archaeologists” who pick up artefacts from archaeological sites uncontrolled by Research Units and Regional *Soprintendenze per i Beni Archeologici*). In fact plain and curved roof-tiles (*tegulae* and *imbrices* respectively) are the most plentiful findings in the *ager Firmanus* surveys: we collected about 3049 items useful for typological/functional and technical classification; about 3000 insignificant tiles have been counted but left in the field. Twenty fabrics have been identified, mostly of local/subregional production, but a few imports from Northern Italy are documented.²¹

As is well known, in Roman times two systems were applied for building roofs: by offset or by cutaway tiles.²² In the *ager Firmanus* some plain tiles (about 50) are particularly diagnostic as they retain the cutaway characteristic which facilitated their meshing when they were set one upon another in the roof. This covering system, widely documented in *Picenum*,²³ has been considered evidence of the Roman army building activities and of the Romanisation process:²⁴ the *ager Firmanus* tiles, coming both from Late Republican villas and Veteran farmsteads, confirm this reconstruction very well.

Amphoras

1751 amphoras have been collected; 45 fabrics have been identified, mostly from local-regional workshops but also imported from many Italian and Mediterranean regions:²⁵ 357 items were diagnostic enough to be typologized.

In the local/sub-regional production, we identified the following wine amphora forms:

Dressel 1	1 items
Lamboglia 2	53 items
Lamboglia 2/Dressel 6a	35 items
Dressel 6a	69 items
Dressel 2-4	15 items
Forlimpopoli type	33 items

According to these quantitative data we found 119 amphoras dated about mid I cent. BC-early II cent. AD (Lamboglia 2/Dressel 6a; Dressel 6a and Dressel 2-4), while there are only 33 items of the later Forlimpopoli types (dated II-III cent. AD).

These sherds are diagnostic for stressing the booming phase of the Firman, and generally Piceni, viticulture in late Republican-early Imperial times,²⁶ but they could

21 Pasquinucci, Menchelli, Scotucci 2000.

22 Shepherd 2006, 265.

23 In various contexts, both urban and rural (*domus*, *necropolis*, villas, farmsteads): (e.g. see Dall’Aglia, De Maria 1988, 138, fig. 28.1; Dall’Aglia, Di Cocco 2004, fig. 99; Brecciaroli Taborelli 1998, p. 25, fig. 24; figg. 39-40; Mercado 1974, 407-409, figg. 335-341; Mercado 1979, 184-185, figg. 99-101).

24 Shepherd 2006, 275-278.

25 Menchelli, Picchi 2012 forthcoming.

26 Pasquinucci, Menchelli 2002; Menchelli *et al.* 2008.

offer a biased perspective of the Firman landscapes, if not considered in a global approach including the analyses of all the available evidence. In fact, this strong decrease in local wine amphoras in the II-III cent. AD does not match the literary documentation (Piceni wines are quoted also in the late IV cent. AD²⁷) nor with the *ager Firmanus* survey results (the rural settlement patterns appear fairly consistent up to late antiquity).²⁸ Perhaps this scarcity of amphoras may be explained by the fact that since II-III cent. AD earthenware containers were no longer prevalent for local agricultural commodities: the use of wooden barrels, skins, baskets, sacks, already documented in the early imperial Picenum²⁹ most probably spread in the following centuries.³⁰

Considering all this evidence and hypotheses, we can reconstruct a less simplistic framework: the Forlimpopoli amphoras, like the other “anforette della media e tarda età imperiale”,³¹ are diagnostic of an epochal discontinuity in the Roman economy, as their smaller capacity, flat bottom and decreased distribution are evidence of changes in Italian wine production and trade, but in the *ager Firmanus*, as in many other Italian districts, the local economic system found the way and tools to maintain production and import-export activities, overcoming the “general IInd century crisis”.³²

Common and cooking wares

4464 items have been collected (of which 350 typologized) with a large variety of local and imported fabrics and forms.³³ As is well known, these vessels have a high informative potential not only for manufacturing and trading aspects but also for daily habits and social practices,³⁴ as they were used for the most various needs of Roman society and in particular for preparing, cooking and serving foods.

Some local pots and saucerpans imitating Campanian-Latial models dated IIIrd-IInd cent. BC have been found in plough-soil assemblages classified as farmsteads, which we can interpret both as late *Piceni* rural units and as farms of the Latin colonists starting from 264 BC.³⁵ Anyway these vessels are evidence of the acculturation phase in progress in the territory, well documented also by other kinds of material culture.³⁶ We also found these vessels scattered in the fields, forming off-sites clearly derived from Late Republican sites.

27 The *vina picena*, quoted by *Edictum de pretiis* (II,1), were still celebrated in the IV cent. AD (Ambr. *De Tobia*, 50; *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, LV, 5).

28 Pasquinucci, Menchelli 2006, 185-194.

29 Paci 2009.

30 Tchernia 1986, 287-293; Panella 2001, 196.

31 Panella 2001.

32 Discussion of this topic started with Patterson 1987, see recently Danckers 2011.

33 Picchi, Menchelli 2012 forthcoming.

34 Roth 2003, 35-45.

35 Picchi, Menchelli 2012 forthcoming.

36 For example the cutaway tiles quoted above; for Latial and Colonial votive artefacts see Ciucarelli, Menchelli, Pasquinucci 2005.

In the cooking ware the most documented forms are the pots (*aulae*) and pans (*patinae*): the co-existence of these vessels can be evidence of varied alimentary practices (by boiling in the pots; by browning in the pans), using different kind of foodstuff.³⁷ In particular the specific use of *patinae*³⁸ suggests a rich diet including, together with starchy food and legumes, a high consumption of eggs, cheese, fish and meat. This picture corresponds very well with the *ager Firmanus* agricultural prosperity and the wealth and variety of the present-day regional cuisine.

Dolia

247 *dolia* have been found in the surveyed countryside. As is well known, these large vessels are evidence of various activities:³⁹ production of wine (*dolia vinaria*),⁴⁰ olive oil (*dolia olearia*;⁴¹ *dolia amurcaria*)⁴² and pickles;⁴³ storage of wheat (*dolia frumentaria*)⁴⁴ and fruit (mostly pears, apples, grapes,⁴⁵ but also figs⁴⁶), dormice-breeding.⁴⁷ Considering all these uses, the items found are not as numerous as we could expect, and this scarcity of finds is confirmed by the fact that only 7 *dolia* covers have been found. Perhaps a bias in the *opus doliale* presence may be produced by modern farmers clearing the fields of stones and large pottery fragments which can damage their agricultural equipment. Moreover, we have to consider that *dolia* were long-lasting items: they were very expensive and therefore very rarely replaced even if damaged: in the *ager Firmanus* we found some broken *dolia* repaired with metallic cramps, as suggested by Cato.⁴⁸

Fine-wares

394 items of fine wares have been found including black-glazed pottery; thin walled pottery; Italian sigillata; African Red Slip; Phocian sigillata.⁴⁹

The informative potential of these vessels, even if they are scattered in the fields, is too well known to be referred to, but in order to filter out distortions in quantity and distribution, we must consider their low differential sherds survival.

37 Menchelli *et al.* 2010.

38 Hilgers 1969, 245-247.

39 Hilgers 1969, 171-174.

40 Cato, *agr.*, X. 4

41 Cato *agr.*, X. 4; Col. XII. 52. 14

42 Varro *r.r.* I. 61; Col. XII. 52. 5

43 *Muriam durum sic facito*: Col. XII. 6.1

44 Cato, *agr.*, X. 4; Liv. XXIII. 19. 8

45 Cato, *agr.*, 143. 3; Varro, *r.r.*, I. 37. 4; Col. XII. 44. 2; Col. XII. 44. 3; Plin., *n.h.* 14.16;

46 Col. XII. 17.1.

47 Varro *r.r.* III. 12. 2: *dolia ubi habeant conclusos glires*.

48 Cato, *agr.*, 39

49 Black-glazed pottery has been studied by M.R. Ciuccarelli; for the other wares see Menchelli, Carbone 2012.

Some of these wares, and in particular thin walled pottery, more than other ceramic classes may be completely destroyed by the fragmentation processes. Due to abrasion, black-glazed and terra sigillata sherds often lose their slip and become unrecognisable. Other factors militating against their presence percentage are produced by the “Sunday archaeologists” referred to above : fine wares are their favoured booty and this activity is evident mostly in the areas near the modern towns and along the main roads. Here we find large concentrations where the fine vessels are extremely rare in comparison with the quantity of the other sherds which are evidently considered heavier and less fascinating. The more difficult the archaeological sites are to reach, the less they are affected by this uncontrolled collection.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion we tried to stress the utility of pottery for reconstructing historical phenomena from survey results. In our opinion the ceramic epistemological potential can be very high, if thoroughly exploited, but in order to have trustworthy frames and statistical samples to be compared for large-scale analyses, a rigorous methodology has to be applied in elaborating survey data and in integrating the ceramic information with all the available sources.

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De l'Europe du nord-ouest à la Syrie, en passant par l'Afrique, l'Espagne et l'Italie ; de la préhistoire au Moyen Âge : la diversité des intérêts et des réalisations du Professeur Raymond Brulet, au cours d'une carrière de trente ans comme enseignant, chercheur, homme de terrain et entrepreneur culturel, force l'étonnement et l'admiration.

Cet ouvrage rassemble les contributions de vingt-six archéologues et historiens qui, au sein de leur spécialité, célèbrent l'une ou l'autre des multiples thématiques de recherche auxquelles Raymond Brulet s'est intéressé. De la poterie sigillée africaine aux cités portuaires italiennes, des méthodes de datation aux relevés topographiques, de l'histoire de la discipline aux sources de la Vie d'un saint médiéval, de l'art des fortifications à la cuisine romaine, c'est la carrière d'un chercheur d'exception qui se voit ici honorée.

