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JOHANNES BOERSMA

Oria and Valesio

Dutch archaeological investigations in
the Brindisi region of southern Italy

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INTRODUCTION¹

At the beginning of A.D. 334 a pilgrim from Burdigala (Bordeaux), capital of the *Provincia Aquitania Secunda*, returned home from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Having crossed the mainland of Greece and the Strait of Otranto, he arrived at Hydruntum (Otranto) in Salento, the heel of Italy, which was at that time part of the *Provincia Apulia et Calabria*. Along the Via Traiana 'Calabra' he travelled northwards, first to Lupiae (Lecce) and then to the harbour town of Brundisium (Brindisi). About halfway between the two he came to the road-station *mutatio Valentia*, where he found public baths in which to refresh himself, an establishment that he may have hardly expected to find there, considering the short and easy route of no more than 24 Roman miles (c. 35 km) separating the towns, both of which provided travellers with all the necessary conveniences (Fig. 1).² Several baths are known at Brindisi,³ and Lecce, a regional centre with a theatre and amphitheatre, was certainly no less well equipped.

At this point I leave the pilgrim from Bordeaux to continue his homeward journey alone, in order that I may present a succinct account of the programme of investigations that the Archaeological Institute of the Free University of Amsterdam has been carrying on since 1981 in the Province of Brindisi (Provincia Brindisi; the Brindisino), one of the provinces of the Regione Puglia. My sketch of the history of human settlement on two sites in the Brindisino, from the 8th century B.C. through the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, is based on the archaeological evidence that we have assembled in a series of field surveys and excavations.⁴

¹ This article is based on various reports published in the Netherlands and Italy that present the first results of our field surveys and excavations at Oria and Valesio, which were carried on between 1981 and 1989, under the direction of D.G. Yntema, Marijke Gnade, Patricia Lulof, and myself. I thank Dr Yntema for his comments and corrections. The drawings are by H.J.M. Burgers and D.F. Offers, Archaeological Institute of the Free University; the photographs, by G.-J. van Rooij and the Archaeological Institute of the Free University. V. Tosto corrected the English.

² For the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, see Gelsomino 1966.

³ Large public baths have been discovered at Brindisi in the area of San Pietro degli Schiavoni and near the Piazza Duomo; see B. Sciarra, L'attività del Museo Archeologico Provinciale 'F. Ribezzo' di Brindisi dalla sua istituzione, *RicStBrindisi* VIII (1975), 10; D'Andria 1979a, 324.

⁴ Interim reports of the Dutch investigations at Oria have appeared in *BABesch* 57 (1982), 213-216 (J.S. Boersma/D. Yntema), *BABesch* 62 (1987), 1-19 (J. Boersma/D. Yntema), and in *Archivio Storico Pugliese* XXXIX, Fasc. I-IV (1986), 3-26 (D. Yntema). See also Boersma/Heres/Yntema 1983; Yntema 1988b.

Interim reports of our investigations at Valesio have appeared in *BABesch* 60 (1985), 152-163 (J.S. Boersma), *BABesch* 61 (1986), 149-156 (id.), *BABesch* 62 (1987), 93-101 (id.), *BABesch* 64 (1989), 134-159 (J. Boersma/D. Yntema).

For further reports, see *Valisu, Rivista di Cultura Nostrana* 4 (1984), 24-28 (J. Boersma); *Valisu* 5-6 (1985), 16-24 (D. Yntema), 25-53 (J. Boersma); *Valisu* 7 (1986), 39-50 (id.); *Aleph*, attualità storia e immagine della città (Brindisi) 7 (1986), 33-37 (id.); *Archeo* 15 (1986), 6 (id.); Boersma 1986b, 203-212; id. 1988, 57-76; Yntema 1988a, 77-93; van Gulik/Bernhardt 1987, 103-108; *Hermeneus, Tijdschrift voor antieke cultuur* 60 (1988), 93-102 (J. Boersma).

THE BRINDISINO

The hinterland of Brindisi forms a geomorphological entity in the eastern part of the isthmus of Salento (Fig. 2), bordered by ranges of hills – the Murge Baresi in the north, the Murge Tarantine in the southwest, and the Serre Leccesi in the south. It covers an area of 600-700 km² and is traversed by a small river, the Canale Reale, and by several seasonal streams. The soil consists of fertile clayey sand.

Two modern main roads cross the region: the Strada Nazionale N7, called the Via Appia, which runs across the isthmus for a distance of about 60 km from Taranto to Brindisi, linking the Ionian Gulf with the Adriatic Sea, and the 'superstrada' N613 between Brindisi and Lecce, which continues farther south to Otranto. Both are successors of the two main routes through Salento in Roman times, the Via Appia and the Via Traiana 'Calabra', respectively, which in their turn had been preceded by roads built by the indigenous population. A network of secondary roads, some of which also go back to the pre-Roman and Roman periods, today link the other towns and villages of the region.⁵

Brindisi and Oria, the two principal town-centres in the region, find their origins in indigenous pre-Roman settlements. The former is situated on the Adriatic coast and provided with a splendid harbour; the latter lies on the isthmus, halfway between Brindisi and Tarentum.

So far, we have concentrated on two areas in the Brindisi region: the countryside around Oria and the urban zone of Valesio, halfway between Brindisi and Lecce. In 1989, we extended our investigations to the area between the two and conducted a control survey of some sites of Roman villas that had earlier been registered there.⁶

THE BRINDISINO IN LATE ANTIQUITY

In the 4th century A.D. the greater part of the hinterland of Brindisi belonged to the *ager brundisinus*, which centred on the town of Brundisium

For a general account of the site of Valesio, based on the results of the excavations of 1984-1986, see J. Boersma/D. Yntema, *Valesio, Storia di un insediamento apulo dall'Età del Ferro all'epoca tardoromana*, Fasano di Puglia 1987 (title and text also in English).

See also Joh. S. Boersma, *Salento, Porto d'Italia*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Lecce 27-30 Novembre 1986), Galatina 1989, 72-84; D. Yntema, Diffusione di alcuni elementi di origine balcanica nelle ceramiche matt-painted dell'Italia Meridionale, *Salento, Porto d'Italia*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Lecce 27-30 Novembre 1986), Galatina 1989, 85-92.

⁵ For the pre-Roman and Roman road networks in Salento, see Uggeri 1983 with earlier bibliography. For the Via Appia and its pre-Roman predecessor, see Uggeri 1983, 52-54 and 179-227. For the Via Traiana 'Calabra' and its pre-Roman predecessor, see Uggeri 1983, 55-60 and 265-290.

⁶ The history and development of habitation in the Brindisi region during the Hellenistic and Roman periods have been studied by G.-J.L.M. Burgers in his doctoral thesis *Brundisino, Zuid-Italië, Verandering en continuïteit in de bewoningsstructuur in de Hellenistisch-Romeinse periode*, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam 1989.

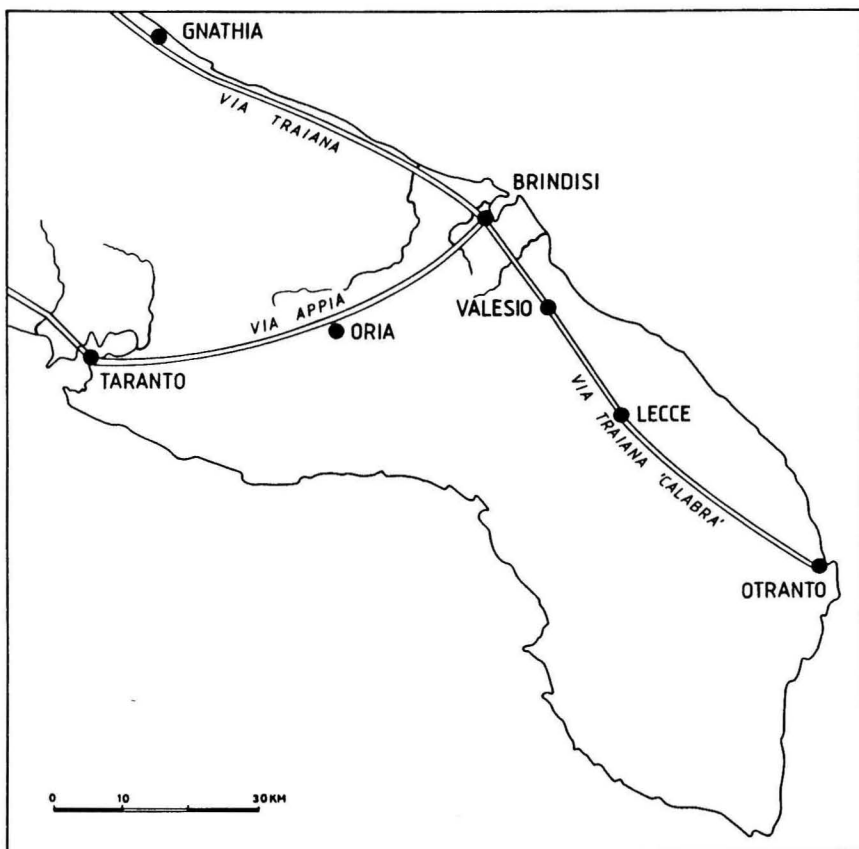


Fig. 1. Salento in the Roman Imperial period, with principal roads and sites.

(Brindisi). In the west, the *ager brindisinus* was bordered by the *ager uritanus*, whose main town was Hyria (Oria). Both had recently been incorporated into the *Provincia Apulia et Calabria*, the latter part of which occupied the present region of Salento in southern Apulia.⁷

The two main Roman roads through Salento met at Brindisi. From Tarentum came the Via Appia, which had been extended southwards from Beneventum (Benevento) at the beginning of the 2nd century B.C., as the result of Roman penetration into southern Italy. For centuries this was the main route linking central Italy with Greece and the Near East. The second, the Via Traiana, was built much later, at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. It also started at Beneventum, but ran directly to the Adriatic Sea where it turned and followed the coast to Brindisi; there, it continued farther

⁷ For the *ager brindisinus*, see Marangio 1975. For the *ager uritanus*, see Marangio 1980, 232-234.



Fig. 2. Map of Salento with principal archaeological sites.

south as the Via Traiana ‘Calabra’ to its terminus in Otranto. As remarked above, both were the successors of earlier lines of communication from the pre-Roman period: Brindisi had long been connected with Tarentum by a road over the isthmus, and with Otranto by one running south. Both had road-stations at regular intervals; one was the *mutatio* Valentia (Valesio).⁸

During the Roman Imperial period Brindisi was the administrative centre of the province and, owing to its location, also the hub of international traffic and trade. Having started as an indigenous Messapian settlement, it became

⁸ For the Roman road network in Salento, see note 5. Summaries in Pani 1979, 95-98 and D’Andria 1979a, 295-299.

a *colonia latina* in about 244 B.C., when a group of colonists from Central Italy were settled there.⁹

Hyria (Oria), situated on the western border of the Brindisino, was most likely accorded the status of *municipium* in the (early) Imperial period;¹⁰ and Lupiae (Lecce), on the region's southern border, received the title of *colonia* probably during the second half of the 2nd century A.D.¹¹ At a considerable distance from Brindisi were Gnathia (Egnazia)¹² in the north and Hydruntum (Otranto) in the south, both situated on the Adriatic coast. Tarentum (Taranto), a town of Greek origin that had long since lost its earlier political and cultural dominance, lay in the southwest.¹³

At present, little exact information is available about the presence of smaller settlements in the Brindisino during the Roman period, such as *vici*, *fora*, and *concliabula*. This holds equally for the pre-Roman period. On the other hand, many sites of Roman *villae* have been registered in the region, although these have not yet been closely examined.¹⁴

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

As we have seen in the foregoing, the infrastructure of the Brindisi region in the Roman Imperial period was based on the pre-Roman pattern of roads and settlements: the two Roman *viae publicae* followed the routes of existing roads over the isthmus and along the coast; Tarentum had started as a Greek colony; and Brundisium, Hyria, Lupiae, and Hydruntum grew from indigenous towns. But although strong local traditions were fundamental in shaping the region in Roman times, an interruption of the earlier pattern of settlement can also be noticed. Some major indigenous settlements, such as Muro Maurizio and Muro Tenente lying between Brindisi and Oria, had vanished by Imperial times, whereas others, among them Valesio, though still in existence, had taken on new forms. In addition, the distribution pattern of farmsteads in the countryside underwent important changes in the course of the Roman period.

The central theme of the Dutch investigations in Salento is the reconstruction and analysis of the processes that led to this pattern of continuity and discontinuity in the occupation of the region. For the most part, these processes seem to result from the integration of the Brindisino into a larger polit-

⁹ For a recent account of the foundation of Brundisium and the early history of the colony, see Uggeri 1988. See also D'Andria 1979a, 324-329.

¹⁰ For Oria, see Marangio 1980.

¹¹ For Lecce, see D'Andria 1979a, 329-330 with earlier bibliography, and F. D'Andria, *La pianta di Lecce antica*, *Studi di Antichità* 1 (1980), 103-115.

¹² For Gnathia during the Roman period, see D'Andria 1979a, 314-319 with earlier bibliography; A. Donvito, *Egnazia, Dalle origini alla riscoperta archeologica*, Fasano di Puglia 1988, 130-155.

¹³ For Tarentum during the Roman period, see D'Andria 1979a, 319-324 with earlier bibliography.

¹⁴ Marangio 1975, and see note 6.

ical and cultural orbit. Our attention focuses principally on the integration of the region into the Roman state between the 3rd and 1st centuries B.C. However, this period, while remaining our chief concern, cannot be disassociated from the earlier integration of the indigenous Messapian people into the Greek Hellenistic world. Lastly, we are also considering the influence of Antiquity on the shaping of Medieval Salento.

Archaeological investigations in the Brindisino have yet to reach the stage at which it becomes possible to present a detailed account of the history of the region for the periods under consideration in all their aspects: demographic, urbanistic, artistic, religious, economic, and others; for this, the archaeological evidence is utterly insufficient. Clearly, however, the archaeological data that are steadily being collected in excavations and field surveys, considered together with historical, literary, epigraphical, and numismatic sources, will greatly alter our understanding of the region's history and call for a major revision of older and more recent views, which have been largely based on literary and written historical sources.

Within the confines of this article it would be impossible to present a detailed report of all facets of archaeological exploration in the Brindisino during the past decades. I will therefore limit myself to a short, general survey which concentrates on our own work, while recognizing that its modest range and specifically archaeological character do not allow us to draw any final conclusions regarding the development of human settlement in the region around Brindisi during the pre-Roman and Roman periods.

THE CHOICE OF ORIA AND VALESIO

The two geographic areas of our investigations in the Brindisi region have not been selected haphazardly. Circumstances at Oria allowed us to undertake a series of field surveys, followed by small control digs. Both yielded data for a reconstruction of the pattern of occupation from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages, within a radius of 4 to 5 km from the town, measuring 67 km². The results of these field surveys have been considered against the background of what is known about the history of Oria proper, where archaeological exploration is necessarily only piecemeal, owing to the uninterrupted habitation of the town from the 6th century B.C. to the present (Fig. 3).¹⁵

In contrast, the site of Valesio, which has retained its agrarian character since the end of Antiquity, provided us with an opportunity to study the growth of an indigenous settlement into an urban centre, and its further development during the same centuries as at Oria (Fig. 4). The two areas complement each other. Unfortunately, much of the archaeological record at

¹⁵ The results of the field surveys at Oria will be published in the near future by D.G. Yntema. For preliminary reports, see Boersma/Yntema 1982; id. 1987a; Boersma/Heres/Yntema 1983; Yntema 1986.



Fig. 3. Oria seen from the south. To the left the Cathedral and the Medieval Castle.

Valesio has recently been destroyed by deep-ploughing and soil improvement.

Because of limitations of space, all aspects of the start, growth, and decline of the farmsteads in the countryside around Oria and of the settlement within the wall of Valesio cannot be given equal attention. I chose to focus prin-



Fig. 4. Aerial view of the central zone of Valesio, from the northeast. In the centre the excavation zone in *località* S. Stefano.

cipally on the periods that are of particular historical interest: the late Geometric and the Archaic periods, from the end of the 8th to the end of the 6th century B.C.; the Hellenistic period, from the last third of the 4th to the middle of the 1st century B.C.; and the late Roman period.

The late Geometric and Archaic periods are marked by increasing contacts between the indigenous population of the Brindisino and the Greeks. In the Hellenistic period the region became gradually incorporated into the orbit of the Roman state. And by late Roman times it had been integrated into the Empire for centuries, with Brindisi functioning as the pre-eminent port of Italy for communication with the eastern Mediterranean.

THE EIGHTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES B.C.

The manifold archaeological activities that the Istituto di Archeologia of Lecce University has carried on in close collaboration with several other institutes, both Italian and foreign, have resulted in a completely new perception of the first contacts between the indigenous population of Salento and the Greek world in the early Iron age.¹⁶

It has now become evident that as early as the end of the 9th century B.C., that is, long before the founding of the first Greek colonies on the Ionian Gulf, beginning with Taras (Tarentum) at the end of the 8th century, various Greek pottery shapes, including wine cups and those for the transport and storage of wine and olive oil (amphorae, hydriae, pithoi), were being imported from Greece into Salento. Wine and oil, at this time decidedly luxury products in the local context, were destined largely for the élite, whose prestige, in its turn, was enhanced by the purchase of such costly imports. Thus, the first stage of the relationship between the Greeks and indigenous Salentines accelerated the development of class distinctions within local society.

Besides wealthy Salentines, Greeks who had settled in indigenous villages would have been among the purchasers of imported Greek wine and oil. Evidence of such settlement, although dating from a later time, has been found at Tor Pisana, Brindisi, where the contents and burial rites of several graves point to the presence of a small Greek community there during the first quarter of the 7th century.¹⁷

During the 8th century the heel of Italy belonged to a large trading network which centered on the Strait of Otranto and included both coasts of the southern part of the Adriatic Sea: the west coast of Greece, with the island of Corcyra, and the east of Salento. Otranto was then the main Salentine

¹⁶ For a recent account of the archaeological research in Salento concerning this period, see *La Puglia dal paleolitico al tardoromano*, Milan 1979, 193ff.; D'Andria 1983; G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Magna Grecia, Il Mediterraneo, le metropoleis e la fondazione delle colonie*, Milan 1985; id., *Magna Grecia. Lo sviluppo politico, sociale ed economico*, Milan 1987.

¹⁷ For the Tor Pisana necropolis, see F.G. Lo Porto, *ASMG IV* (1964), 111-128. Additional bibliography in *La Puglia dal paleolitico al tardoromano*, Milan 1979, 364.

port, though not the only one, through which Greek products reached villages in the hinterland, for instance, Vaste in the south and Cavallino in central Salento, near Lecce.

In addition, strong contacts existed between Salento and the east coast of the Adriatic farther to the north (modern Albania). Pottery from this region, which was likewise imported into Salento, subsequently influenced the style of local production.¹⁸ In fact, the relations between the two regions had been firmly established for centuries, as the Messapians of Salento were ultimately of Illyrian origin.¹⁹

Oria and Valesio

Our field surveys in the countryside of Oria indicate that during the late Bronze Age (14th-13th century B.C.) habitation was spread over the tops of several hills in the east-west range, which rises above the plain and dominates the landscape. Later, the population began to draw together on the highest hill-tops in the centre of the range, some 40 m above the countryside, or 166 m above sea level.

At the end of the 8th century, the countryside became completely uninhabited. This development may have been encouraged by the foundation of Taras (Tarentum) on the Ionian Gulf, no more than a day's journey (30 km) from Oria. Indeed, the arrival of the Greeks on the west coast of the peninsula may well have posed a threat to the native population in the hinterland, as is suggested by the abandonment, at this time, of the indigenous coastal settlement opposite the new colony.²⁰ Evidently, the establishment of a permanent Greek settlement was a matter quite different from the presence of small numbers of Greek individuals in local villages or towns, such as Porto Saturo (Satyrion), on the Ionian Gulf south of Tarentum, and Brindisi on the Adriatic.²¹

During the 8th and 7th centuries, Oria had in all probability the character of a nucleated settlement composed of groups of huts inhabited by individual families, a pattern that is well known from other contemporary sites in Italy. The huts were built of wattle and daub, and most likely resembled those from the same period that have been excavated at other places in the peninsula, such as Cavallino, Otranto, and Vaste.²²

Also Valesio can be reckoned among the 8th-century nucleated settlements.

¹⁸ For the relationship between Albanian and 8th-century Middle Geometric matt-painted Salentine pottery, see Yntema 1985, 67-87.

¹⁹ Adamesteanu 1979, 193 with earlier bibliography; La Bua 1982, 174 with earlier bibliography.

²⁰ Adamesteanu 1979, 212; Yntema 1986, 10-13.

²¹ Adamesteanu 1979, 251-254.

²² For a general survey, see E.M. De Juliis, *I popoli della Puglia prima dei greci*, G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Magna Grecia, Il Mediterraneo, le metropoleis e la fondazione delle colonie*, Milan 1985, 159ff.

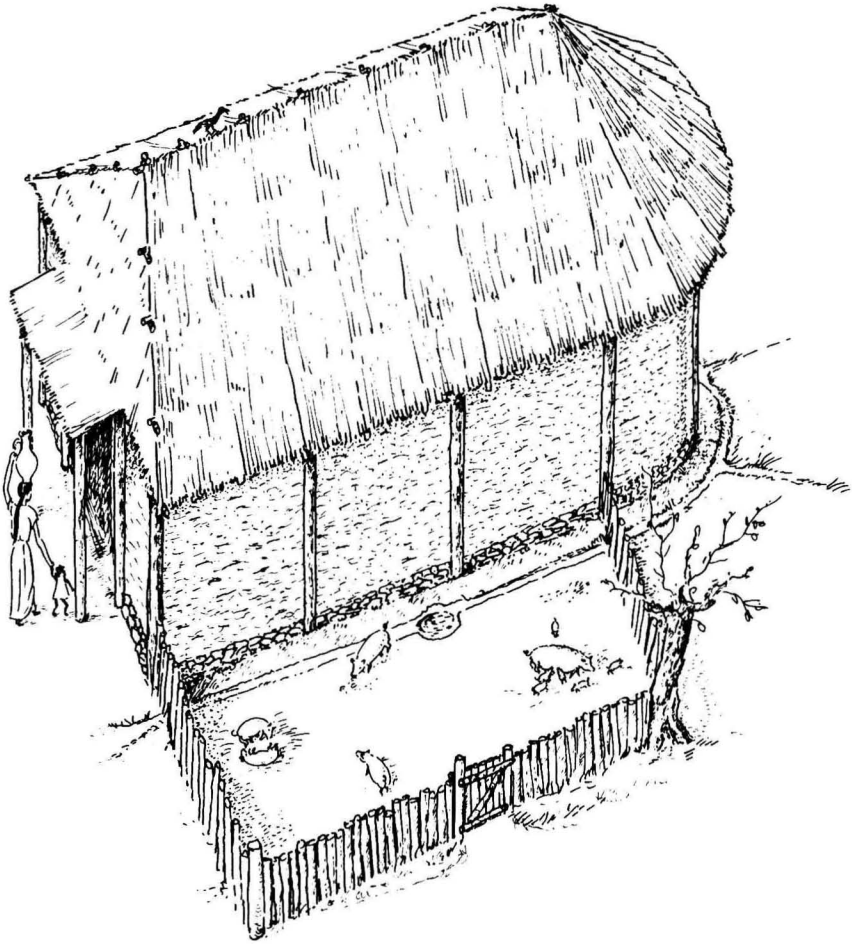


Fig. 5. Valesio. Schematic reconstruction of Iron-Age hut.

The excavations in *località* Santo Stefano, the centre of the urban area, combined with the evidence of the field surveys inside the ancient city-wall, reveal that a small settlement came into existence in Valesio during the first third of the 8th century. It extended along both sides of a stream traversing the area (the present Canale Infocaciucci).

The site was apparently chosen because of its elevated position overlooking the entire surroundings, at 26 m above sea level and only 4-5 km from the coast. Here too, the settlement consisted of groups of huts with walls of wattle and daub on a stone base, and either an ovoid plan or a straight front (Fig. 5). The village covered an area of no more than 8-10 ha² and comprised 30 to 50 huts housing a population of some 125-250 people (Fig. 6).²³

²³ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 31ff.; id. 1989, 136-138.



Fig. 6. Valesio. The settlement in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. Residential zone hatched.

Among the types of local Salentine pottery, matt-painted ware is the most interesting, because from the end of the 8th century its decoration began to show the influence of the patterns of Greek Geometric pottery. At Valesio, the earliest known matt-painted ware to betray Greek influence dates from the beginning or the first half of the 7th century.²⁴ This is not surprising, as Greek painted pottery, mainly Corinthian, reached Valesio as early as the middle of the 8th century, followed during the next century by Corinthian transport amphorae for oil and wine (Type A) and containers (pithoi).²⁵ One such container from the end of the 7th century bears a rare relief deco-

²⁴ Yntema 1985, 128-129 with Figs. 76 and 77; 438-439; Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 38-41.

²⁵ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 41-43; Yntema 1988a, 81-82; Boersma/Yntema 1989, 138.

ration on its border and must have been highly valued for its unusual, prestigious character.²⁶

At Oria, in contrast, imported Greek pottery from the 8th and 7th centuries is so far unknown. Greek pottery first reached the town only in the 6th century. This may be due to the comparatively greater distance of Oria from the coast.²⁷

The absence of Greek pottery in the hinterland of Tarentum suggests that this recently founded colony failed to extend its influence beyond its own territory (*chora*) during the first century of its existence, and that it apparently played no important part in the exchange of products with the interior of the isthmus. This is confirmed by the distribution of Greek vases in indigenous graves from the period, to within a limited radius of only 20 km from Tarentum.²⁸

Further, the absence of early Greek pottery at Oria seems to indicate that initially Tarentum also played no part in the relations between the Greeks and the greater majority of the natives of Salento. Evidently, Brindisi, Otranto, and other settlements on the Adriatic functioned as distribution centres. During the second half of the 8th century, Greek cups and transport amphorae began to arrive at Salento in considerable numbers.²⁹ A suitable, nearby landing-place for Valesio might have been the bay of Torre San Gennaro, 4.5 km to the northeast. In Salento, as well as in the rest of Apulia, a settlement in the hinterland was regularly linked with a harbour on the Adriatic coast during the 7th century. The hypothetical pair Valesio-Torre San Gennaro would fit this pattern.³⁰

The import of Greek pottery and products into the Brindisi region early in the second half of the 8th century shows that the same development then took place in northern Salento as had occurred at an earlier date in the southern part of the peninsula, namely the beginning of rather close contacts between the indigenous population and the Greek mainland. The precise nature of the relations that then existed between the Brindisi region and the rest of Salento is, however, still far from clear. It seems that Brindisi, as principal port of the isthmus, played a distinctly independent role in the region's

²⁶ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 43 Pl. VII; id. 1989, 138 with Fig. 8.

²⁷ D'Andria 1979b; id. 1983, 292; Pagliara 1983, 73.

²⁸ L. Moretti, Problemi di storia tarantina, *ASMG X* (1970), 32-33; Santoro 1988, 136ff. with earlier bibliography.

²⁹ Adamesteanu 1979, 251ff. with earlier bibliography.

³⁰ Uggeri 1983, 61-62 assumes the existence of a pre-Roman road between Valesio and Torre San Gennaro, while referring to the importance of the latter also during the Middle Ages. Part of the city-wall of Valesio was identified by means of georadar in 1986; then, also one of the gates was probably identified at the northeast corner of the town. A road starting at this gate may have led towards a harbour at Torre San Gennaro; Van Gulik/Bernhardt 1987, 106 with Fig. 5. Other pairs of settlements on the Adriatic coast and in the interior of south Salento are San Cataldo/Rudiae-Lecce, Rocavecchia/Cavallino, and Otranto/Vaste.

economy. Thus, the main points through which Greek products reached the inland settlements of Salento during the 8th and 7th centuries were the Adriatic towns of Otranto, Brindisi, and, between them, Rocavecchia, as well as Porto Cesareo on the Ionian Gulf. At first, the foundation of Tarentum on the west coast brought about no significant changes.

The increasing contacts with the Greeks may have been partly responsible for the reduction in the number of local pottery types during the 7th century. Conceivably, some vanished shapes were replaced by imported Greek wares of comparable function.³¹

The relations between the indigenous inhabitants of the peninsula and the Greeks during these centuries were largely limited to the exchange of goods. In fact, Greek society in southern Italy had at this time little more to offer, as its level of culture had not risen much above that of the Italic peoples. Greek settlements were barely distinguishable in character and appearance from those of the Salentines; like these, they lacked both monumental architecture and any concept of urban planning. The Greek alphabet, which had recently been introduced into the region, was slowly adopted in the Greek world and would at first have received little attention from the local population.

THE SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

The second half of the 6th century is characterized by an acceleration of urbanistic development in the Brindisi region. This resulted from growing contacts with the Greeks, particularly with the cities on the Ionian Gulf and on the coast of northwestern Greece, such as Taras (Tarentum), Metapontum, and Corcyra, where important processes of urbanization were then taking place.³²

Oria

At both Oria and Valesio an increase of Greek influence can be noticed at this time. At Oria a sanctuary dedicated to Damatra (Greek Demeter) developed during the first half of the 6th century on Monte Papalucio, a hill to the east of the town. Various kinds of votive offerings show that the sanctuary was frequented by all classes of the population. The votive offerings, as well as the ritual proper, which consisted of both libations and sacrifices, had a Greek character, demonstrating the extent to which the countryside of the isthmus had begun to be hellenized.³³

Also other indigenous sanctuaries of Salento have yielded evidence of

³¹ Yntema 1985, 132.

³² For a general account of the urbanization processes in Magna Graecia, in particular at Tarentum and Metapontum, see G. Gullini, *Urbanistica e architettura, Megale Hellas. Storia e civiltà della Magna Grecia*, Milan 1983, 207ff.

³³ D'Andria 1979b, 27-28; Pagliara 1983, 71-72; Yntema 1988b, 160.

comparable Greek rituals. Some were in or near the local inland settlements of Cavallino and Ugento; others were on the coast, for instance, at Rocavecchia, Porto Cesareo, and Leuca. Although these sanctuaries were presumably important in fostering relations between the indigenous population and Greeks from the 8th century onwards, their precise contribution to the acculturation processes of Salento is still insufficiently known.³⁴

Besides the sanctuary of Monte Papalucio, also Oria proper supplies us with evidence of cultural and urbanistic changes that took place during the second half of the 6th century under the influence of Greece and the Greek colonies. In 1983, a control excavation on the northwest side of the present-day town uncovered the remains of a house from the second half of the 6th century.³⁵ It stood originally in an Archaic residential quarter. Unfortunately, much had recently been destroyed in this area and only the faint traces of graves and other houses could be observed.

In contrast to the earlier huts at Oria, which had retained a prehistoric character, the sixth-century houses had floors of hard-packed earth and roofs covered with terracotta tiles of Greek type. Their walls must therefore have been built of more substantial material than wattle and daub, for instance, mudbrick or stone. An additional indication of change in 6th-century Oria was found on one of the hill-tops upon and around which the settlement was built: towards the end of the century it was surrounded by a wall constructed of isodomic blocks, in the Greek technique.³⁶

So far, Oria is the only indigenous site in the Brindisi region where signs of urbanistic development have been noticed. This includes the enclosure of what might conceivably be the town's acropolis by a wall, which isolated it from the residential quarter; the appearance of a regional sanctuary of Greek type in the intermediate area between town and countryside; and, lastly, the countryside itself, much like the *chora* of a Greek city, as a third element, which to judge from our field surveys, was not yet permanently inhabited. All this points to the introduction into Salento of Greek urbanistic concepts as they were then being worked out at Tarentum, Metapontum, and Corcyra. These determined how the Salentine villages gradually began to be transformed at this time, and gradually took on the appearance of true towns.

Urbanization on this scale would be unthinkable without the existence of a strong central authority. In this respect, the Messapian *dynastai* and *basileis* mentioned by Greek authors of the Classical period come to mind. It has even been suggested that Oria was in fact the main centre of authority for the whole region of Salento during the 6th and 5th centuries. Although this cannot be proved, it is noteworthy that the remains of what was called a pal-

³⁴ D'Andria 1979a, 263-269; Pagliara 1983, 78-79.

³⁵ Yntema 1986, 13-14; id. 1988b, 152 and 158-159.

³⁶ Andreassi 1981 dates the acropolis wall from the beginning of the 5th century; Pagliara 1983, 72-73.

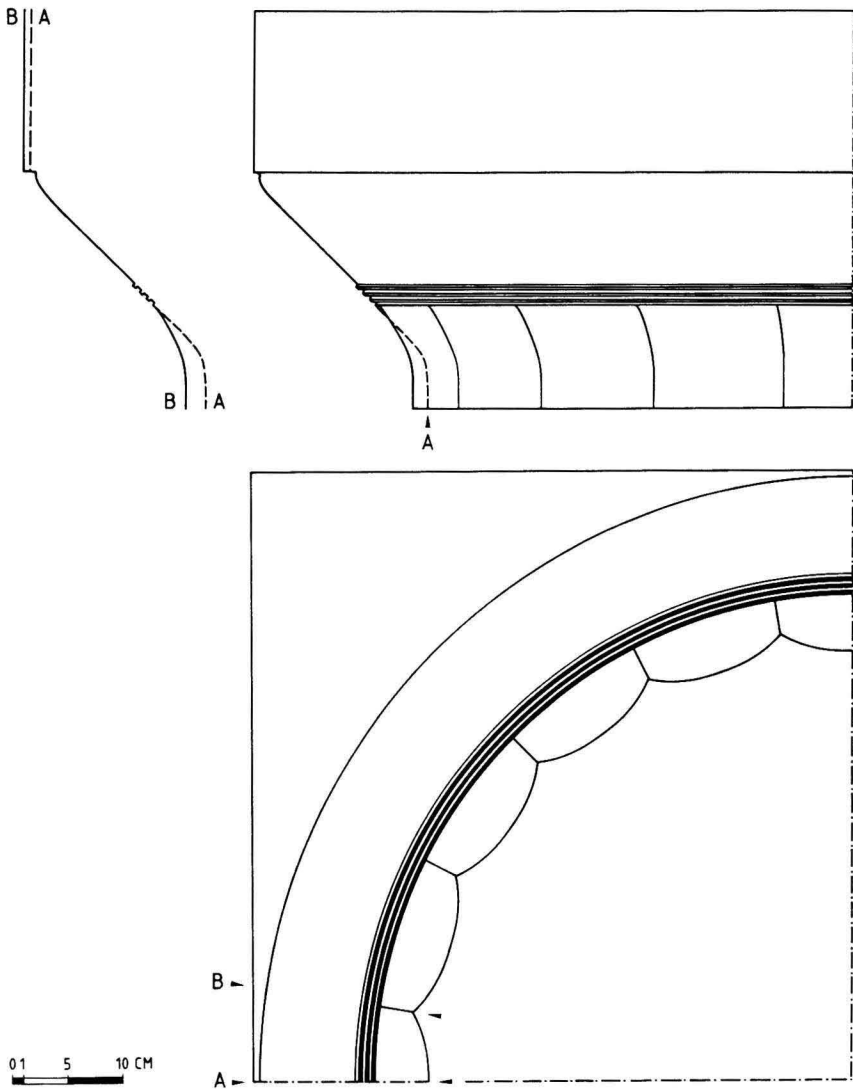


Fig. 7. Drawing of Doric capital from Oria, beginning 4th century B.C. (Oria, courtyard of the Palazzo Vescovile).

ace (*basileion*) could still be seen there as late as the Augustan period (Strabo VI.282). Undoubtedly, such a distinguished building would have well suited the new character of the former village.³⁷

From a somewhat later period, the beginning of the 4th century, are a Doric capital and column drum that have been discovered on the slope of Oria's

³⁷ La Bua 1982, in particular 170 ff.; Pagliara 1983, 74-75.



Fig. 8. Valesio. Late 6th-century wall with posthole, excavated in *località* S. Stefano.

highest hill, on the top of which stood a Medieval castle, Castello Svevo (Fig. 7).³⁸ Both pieces are of local stone (*carparo*) and worked in a purely Greek style. In view of their size, they can be attributed to a public building, which, if it had survived, would probably have been an impressive testimony to Greek influence on the town's architecture.³⁹

Besides these urbanistic and architectural changes, the occurrence of Attic black-figured pottery in the sanctuary of Monte Papalucio and in late 6th-century graves at Oria, though represented by only a few sherds, attests to the penetration of Greek culture on the isthmus of Salento. Tarentum and Metapontum are thought by some to have now played an important part in this process.⁴⁰

Valesio

A slightly later stage in the urbanistic development of the local settlements of Salento can be observed at Valesio. Here, a straight stretch of wall from the late 6th century was excavated in the centre of the ancient town.⁴¹ The wall has two facings of roughly cut calcarenite stone of local origin and a rounded posthole block at one end (Fig. 8). Its alignment and construction

³⁸ Boersma/Heres/Yntema 1983.

³⁹ See also D'Andria 1988, 685.

⁴⁰ D'Andria 1979b; Yntema 1986, 16.

⁴¹ Boersma/Yntema 1989, 138-140.

differ noticeably from the curved, loosely built bases of the walls of the 8th- and 7th-century huts, suggesting the presence of houses of rectangular plan which would derive from Greek domestic architecture. In addition, pieces have been found of 6th- and 5th-century mudbricks bearing traces of plaster and red paint, and of terracotta tiles, some of which were painted red. All this suggests strongly that the houses of this period were constructed of mud-brick walls on stone bases and roofed with tiles, entirely in the Greek fashion.

The pottery that can be associated with this late 6th-century building phase at Valesio indicates that the architectural remains come from private dwellings. They evidently represent a more advanced stage in the urbanization of the nucleated settlement than the mid-6th-century house excavated at Oria, provided, of course, that this house is indeed representative of the town's domestic architecture.

The building technique of the walls of the houses at Valesio is closely related to that of somewhat earlier houses excavated at another indigenous Salentine settlement, Cavallino, near Lecce. A sudden outburst of urbanistic activity can be observed in this town about the middle of the 6th century. A strong city-wall with gates and towers was erected, the streets were paved and lined with sidewalks, and the houses, consisting of courtyards and rooms, were constructed of walls that were most likely entirely of stone and roofed with tiles, which, as at Valesio, were painted red. The presence at Cavallino of public buildings, probably of a religious character, that were built or at least inspired by Greek craftsmen is attested by stone columns and terracotta roof decoration, which show the influence of the nearby island of Corcyra.⁴²

The increased variety of local pottery shapes and decoration reflects the growing differentiation of indigenous society in southern Italy during the 6th century.⁴³ Then, and particularly from the 5th century onwards, Greek authors began to refer to the peoples of Apulia as Daunians, Peucetians, and Messapians, in recognition of their distinct characters. The territory of the Messapians was Salento; thus, the inhabitants of the Brindisino had by then emerged from anonymity.⁴⁴

The gradual incorporation of the Brindisino and the rest of Salento into the Greek world, in other words, the process of the Hellenization of the region during this period, is further illustrated by the introduction and the adaption of the Greek alphabet to the Messapian language.⁴⁵ The actual presence of

⁴² F. D'Andria, Cavallino (Lecce): ceramica ed elementi architettonici arcaici, *MEFRA* 89 (1977), 525-578; D'Andria 1983, 292-293; D'Andria 1988, 660-661.

⁴³ See Yntema 1985, *passim*.

⁴⁴ Adamesteanu 1979, 193. For the Messapians, see La Bua 1982 and recently D'Andria 1988.

⁴⁵ L.H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford 1961, 282-284; G. Rohlfs, *Fra greci e latini nel Salento*, *Studi storico-linguistici in onore di Francesco Ribezzo*, Mesagne 1978, 205-218.

Greeks in Salento is revealed by Greek inscriptions.⁴⁶ For instance, from the name inscribed on a bronze hydria that was found in Valesio we can infer that a woman named Asika lived and died there, in the years round 550 B.C.⁴⁷ It should be borne in mind, however, that Greek formed no threat to the Messapian language, neither at this time nor during the Classical period of the next century. Messapian inscriptions, in comparison with those in Greek, are by far in the majority, and Messapian was spoken well into the late Republican period.⁴⁸

THE FIFTH AND THE FIRST HALF OF THE FOURTH CENTURIES B.C.

The historical development of the Brindisi region during this period cannot be treated at length, because the available evidence is still insufficient for a coherent and detailed account. The same holds also for the rest of the peninsula. This circumstance results from our inability to date very precisely the architectural remains and the pottery of both local and Greek-colonial manufacture. More accurate dating of the material becomes possible only from the second half of the 4th century B.C. onwards.

The close contacts between Tarentum and the Messapian hinterland led to vehement political conflicts during the latter 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries. For instance, the decisive defeat of Tarentum by the Messapians in 473 B.C. resulted in a democratic reform of the city's government. And at the end of the century, during the war between Athens and Syracuse, Tarentum and the Messapians again confronted each other, with the latter supplying a contingent of men to strengthen the Athenian fleet.⁴⁹

Oria and Valesio

In the 5th century the countryside of Oria was not yet permanently inhabited. This may be partly due to the difficult political relations with Tarentum.⁵⁰

No remains of public or private buildings from the 5th and the first half of the 4th centuries are known at Valesio. However, roof-tiles from this period have been found, and a Doric capital of local stone, which dates probably from the 4th century and belonged most likely to a public building; both are valuable evidence of Greek influence of local building-activities (Fig. 9).⁵¹

The mint of Valesio

In this context, the much discussed coin issue of Valesio should be men-

⁴⁶ Pagliara 1983, 77-78.

⁴⁷ Pagliara 1983, 64ff.

⁴⁸ For a recent summary, see Santoro 1988, 134-136.

⁴⁹ For a recent summary, see Santoro 1988, 131ff.

⁵⁰ Yntema 1986, 16; Boersma/Yntema 1982, 214; id. 1987a, 4-5.

⁵¹ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 60 with Fig. 21.

tioned. Six Messapian silver coins of different denominations (didrachm, tetrabol, and diobol) are traditionally linked with Valesio. They bear a legend in Messapian, VALETHAS or BALETHAS. The didrachm bears the image of a young man riding a dolphin (obverse) and a crescent moon with a dolphin (reverse) (Fig. 10); the tetrabol and diobol show a dolphin on the obverse and a crescent moon on the reverse.

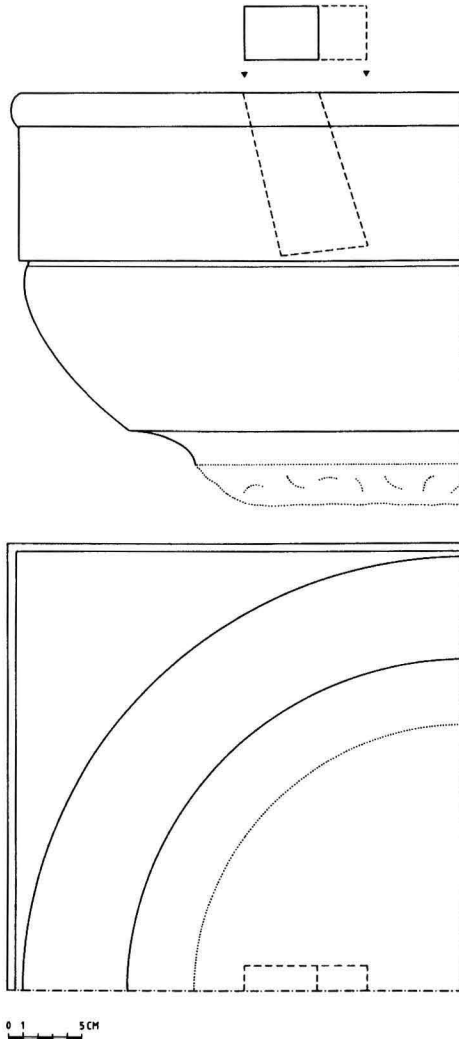


Fig. 9. Profile and lower side of Doric capital from Valesio, probably 4th century B.C. (Torchiarolo, Biblioteca Comunale).



Fig. 10. Plaster casts of obverse (right) and reverse (left) of silver didrachm attributed to Valesio. (Paris, Cabinet des Médailles; casts by courtesy of the Cabinet).

The coins have been dated from the second half of the 4th century B.C.⁵² However, in weight, as well as in design, they closely resemble the earliest Tarentine coin emission from the end of the 6th and the first quarter of the 5th centuries, which, to judge from coin hoards, was well known in the region. Quite possibly, the town (or territory) of Valesio started to issue silver coins after the example of those from Tarentum in as early as the 5th century, perhaps even in its first half.⁵³ If so, Valesio would be the only indigenous town of Salento to have minted coins of its own during the 5th century.

It seems improbable, though, that these coins were a regular emission; more likely, they were incidentally struck to mark a particular occasion, and would certainly not have been meant to compete seriously with the Greek coinage circulating in the region. Yet, it is striking that as early as the 5th century a local authority in the Brindisi region should have taken the initiative to strike silver coins based on a Tarentine model.

On the peninsula, silver coins of the Greek colonies appeared first on the isthmus of Salento. Of the 25 known hoards of Greek coins found at Salento, dating between the end of the 6th and the last quarter of the 3rd centuries B.C., eight were registered in the zone of Valesio, among which was one that consisted of the earliest series to be issued by a Greek colony at the end of

⁵² Stazio 1970a, 115-116; id. 1970b, 77-80 with earlier bibliography.

⁵³ This is based on the ideas put forward by J. Prins in his doctoral thesis *Geldcirculatie en inheemse muntslagen van Salento*, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 1988.

the 6th century.⁵⁴ The distribution of Greek coins in precisely this region at such an early date seems incompatible with the then unfriendly relations between the Greeks and the Messapians. Apparently, however, their differences did not prevent them from maintaining contacts of a more friendly kind, as is also demonstrated by the contemporary import of Greek pottery into the Messapian settlements.

We should, of course, be careful not to interpret the presence of Greek coins in 5th-century Messapian towns as evidence of the existence of an economy based on a monetary system. These coins must have still been valued principally for their silver content and prestigious character.

THE SECOND HALF OF THE FOURTH AND THE THIRD CENTURIES B.C.

Also during the 4th century political conflicts arose between Tarentum and the Messapians, which resulted, in 338 B.C., in the death of king Archidamos of Sparta, general of the Tarentine army, below the city-walls of Manduria.⁵⁵ In spite of this, the cultural supremacy of Tarentum became very evident at this time in the Brindisi region and in the whole of Salento.

Oria and Valesio

The field surveys at Oria have shown that during the latter part of the 4th and in the 3rd centuries B.C. the habitation pattern of the countryside underwent an important change. Then, small farmsteads of no more than 10-15 m in length (the sherds distributed over 30-50 m²) seem to have appeared, scattered sparsely over the countryside. Presumably, the agricultural workers, who had till then travelled daily between Oria and the fields, began to settle outside the town. The small necropoleis frequently accompanying these farmsteads indicate that, most likely, they were permanently inhabited (Fig. 11).⁵⁶

This sudden settlement of the countryside was probably favoured by a stable, political situation, in which Tarentum no longer posed a threat to the security of the isthmus. Moreover, the large number of farmsteads noted around Oria may reflect an increase of population.

The pottery used by both the farmers of Oria and the inhabitants of Valesio illustrates to how great an extent the processes of acculturation and Hellenization had progressed and penetrated into every level of Messapian society.⁵⁷ By now, the production of local pottery had become standardized in a large range of types and shapes.

Luxury pottery included black-gloss drinking cups and plates of Greek

⁵⁴ Stazio 1970b, 76-77; Travaglini 1982, 220.

⁵⁵ Santoro 1988, 134 with earlier bibliography.

⁵⁶ Yntema 1986, 16-18.

⁵⁷ Yntema 1986, 16; Boersma/Yntema 1987a, 5; id. 1987b, 76-93; id. 1989, 140 and 144-145.

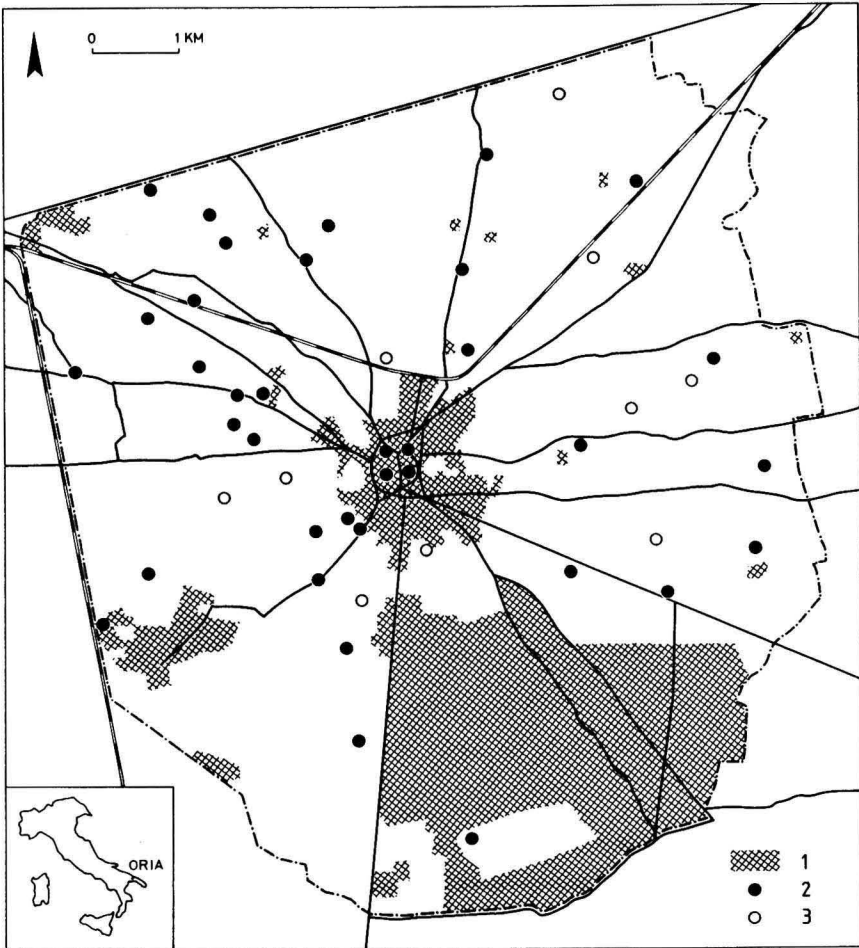


Fig. 11. Oria. Survey area with certain (2) and probable (2) farmsteads of the later 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. Damaged areas hatched (1).

shape, which were made in both Greek and indigenous towns. Another class consisted of ordinary household pottery with simple decoration (*ceramica a fasce*); this local product had undergone strong Greek influence, both in quality and shape. Finally, plain kitchen ware was also produced locally. Pottery production at Valesio is attested by a kiln from the end of the 3rd century, which was excavated together with wasters of black-gloss and other kinds of wares.⁵⁸

The pottery of the Brindisi region from the second half of the 4th century and through the 3rd was related by type and shape to pottery from the rest

⁵⁸ Boersma/Yntema 1989, 144.

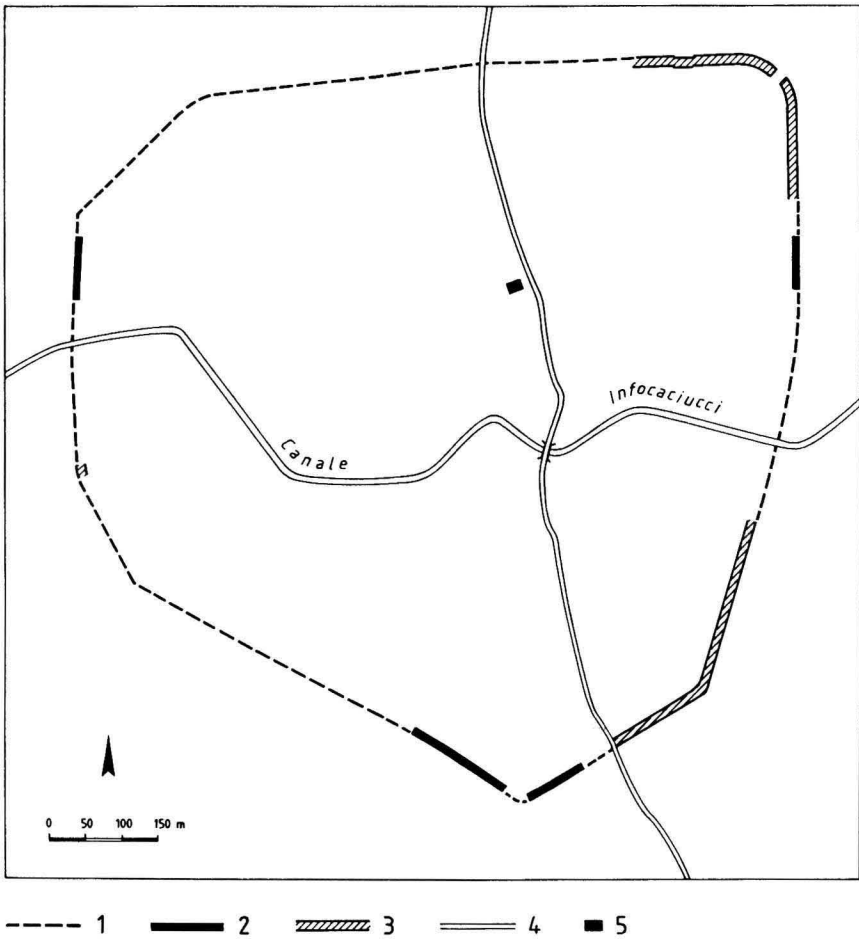


Fig. 12. Circuit of Messapian city-wall of Valesio. 1, established by aerial photography; 2, sections examined on the ground; 3, circuit confirmed by georadar; 4, modern road; 5, excavation zone in *località* S. Stefano.

of the Mediterranean, illustrating the advanced state of the region's integration into the international orbit of the Hellenistic world.

The influence of the Hellenistic world is also apparent in the urbanistic development of the towns. Unfortunately, the evidence for Salento is still meagre. The city-walls of several Messapian towns can probably be dated from the end of the 4th century. Among them is the city-wall of Oria, where at the same time the late sixth-century wall of the acropolis was rebuilt.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Yntema 1982, 119; D'Andria 1988, 691-692. For Oria, see Andreassi 1981, 466-468.

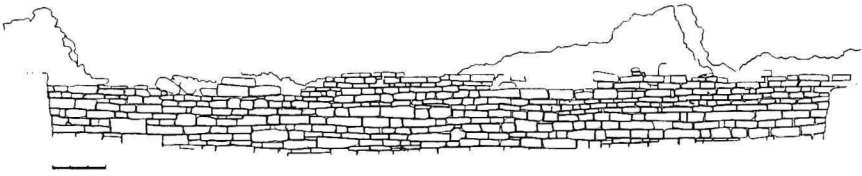


Fig. 13. Valesio, photogrammetric drawing of outer facing of the east city-wall, at *masseria Piccola*; length 27 m.

Also the imposing city-wall of Valesio, which extends over three kilometres and measures more than five metres in thickness, may have been constructed in this period (Fig. 12). This matter remains still unresolved because a trial dig carried on in 1985 along the outer facing of the wall uncovered little evidence for an exact dating. It revealed, however, that both facings of the wall were built entirely of stone, and that the blocks lying in front had fallen from the upper courses. The appearance of the outer facing recalls that of a Greek city-wall, because of the presence of many oblong blocks. These were hewn at a quarry in the centre of Valesio, on the north bank of the stream (Figs. 13 and 14). In contrast, the inner facing has a generally more irregular structure, composed of many small blocks of various shapes (Figs. 15 and 16). Clearly, the builders reserved their best technique for the outer facing, evidently with the intention of giving the wall a more distinguished appearance from outside the town.⁶⁰



Fig. 14. Valesio, detail of outer facing of the east city-wall, at *masseria Piccola*.

⁶⁰ For the city-wall of Valesio, see Boersma 1986a, 150-151; Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 54-59.

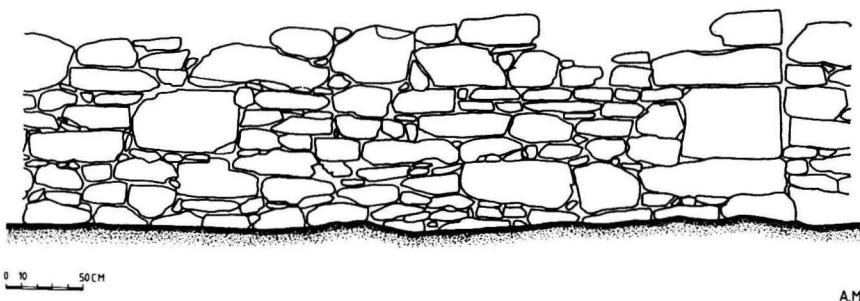


Fig. 15. Valesio, drawing of inner facing of the city-wall in the northwest (Drawing by Antonio Makariou).

Besides the city-walls, several architectural elements from the second half of the 4th and the 2nd centuries B.C. have been found at Oria and Valesio. These include stone blocks, Doric capitals and friezes, and terracotta antefixes, most of which belonged, in all probability, to public buildings (Fig. 17). At Oria, the location of such buildings is unknown; at Valesio, on the other hand, the area to the north of the stream may be assumed to have fulfilled some kind of public function, judging from the many architectural fragments found there.⁶¹

Another possibility is that some of these architectural remains come from the houses of the wealthy. The existence of a social élite in the Messapian towns during the (early) Hellenistic period is confirmed by the occurrence of subterranean chamber tombs (*hypogaea*) beside graves of simpler types. Comparable chamber tombs are known from several Apulian towns in Salento, among others, Lecce, Rudiae, Cavallino, and Vaste.⁶² In 1985, a block of local stone painted red was discovered at Valesio; this has been recognized to be part of a tomb door, indicating that a *hypogaeum* also existed in this town (Fig. 18).⁶³

So far, no ground plans of 4th-century houses have been preserved at Oria and Valesio, as well as elsewhere in Salento; but more information is available for the 3rd century, at least in regard to Valesio. The excavations in the town centre have uncovered the remains of the walls of houses dating from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 3rd centuries, and from round 275-175 B.C. These stood along two paved streets that apparently crossed each other more or less at right angles (Fig. 19).⁶⁴

⁶¹ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 60.

⁶² See J.-L. Lamboley, *Les hypogées indigènes apuliens*, *MEFRA* 94 (1982), 91-148, in particular 92-96 and 141-143.

⁶³ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 82-83 with Pl. XVII.

⁶⁴ Boersma 1986a, 156; id. 1987, 98-100; Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 64-67; id. 1989, 140-142.

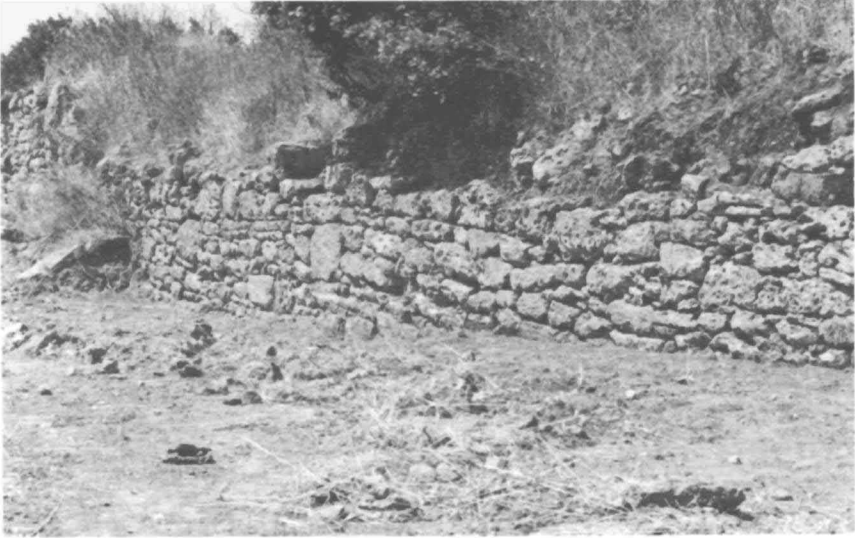


Fig. 16. Valesio, inner facing of the city-wall in the northwest.



Fig. 17. Terracotta antefix with head of Medusa from Valesio, Hellenistic period.

The only known parallels in the vicinity are houses in the Peucetian town at Monte Sannace, near Gioia del Colle, in central Apulia, where a residential quarter from the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. has been excavated inside the strong city-wall. The houses have irregular plans with a varying number of rooms, situated either before or around a courtyard. Other Hellenistic

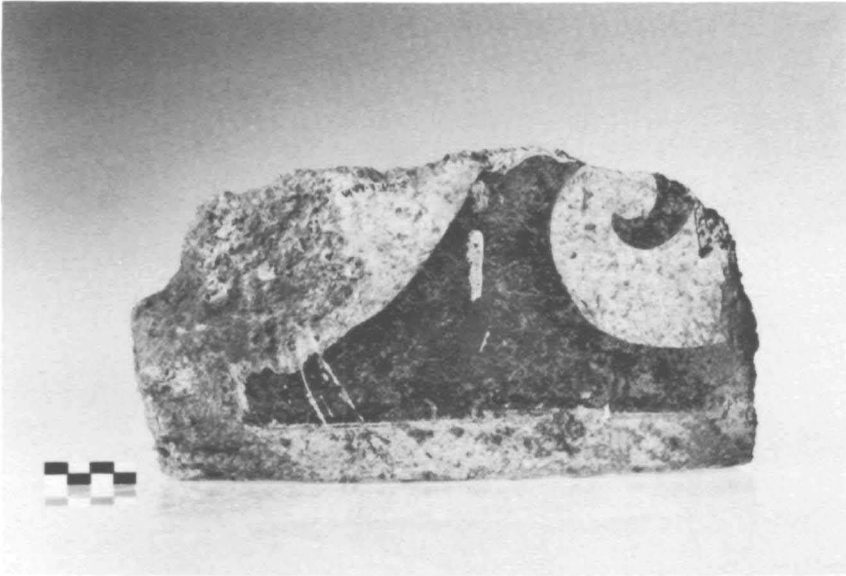


Fig. 18. Part of limestone door of chamber tomb from Valesio, late 4th-early 2nd century B.C.

houses have been found near the acropolis of the same town, but their plans are of a more regular Greek character, with peristyle courtyards. A square surrounded by buildings of monumental character, such as a stoa and a he-roon, stood on the acropolis.⁶⁵

As the excavations at Valesio are quite limited, we are unable to reconstruct the plans of the houses in their entirety. It seems, however, that the layout of the residential quarter was irregular, as in the lower town of Monte Sannace. Also, we can be fairly certain that the appearance of Valesio remained essentially unchanged between the 4th century and the first quarter of the 2nd century B.C.

Throughout the period houses were built in the same technique. Stone blocks of irregular size and shape formed the base; there were cut at local quarries, to the thickness of the natural structure of the stone. More regularly shaped blocks were placed at the corners (Fig. 20). The mudbrick walls were coated with plaster and painted, and the earth was packed hard to form a floor. For the roof, tiles were moulded of clay of varying textures and sometimes still painted red. These houses seem to have been frequently rebuilt, and in the process materials from previous structures were constantly

⁶⁵ For Monte Sannace, see B.M. Scarfi, Gioia del Colle - Scavi nella zona di Monte Sannace, *Mon.An* 45 (1961), 144-331; ead. Gioia del Colle, l'abitato peucetico di Monte Sannace, *NSA* 1962, 1-283; A. Donvito, *Monte Sannace*, Fasano di Puglia 1982, in particular 118-126; Yntema 1982, 118-126.

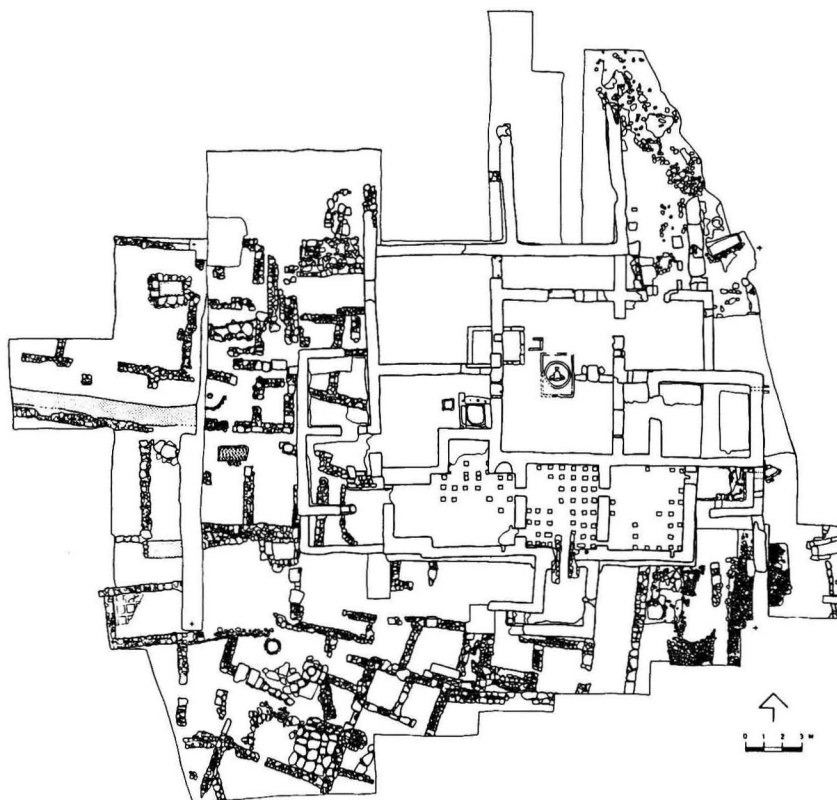


Fig. 19. Valesio. *Località S. Stefano*. General plan of the excavations (1984-1989).

being reused, with the result that the remains of most walls date from the later periods of the town's existence, the 3rd and early 2nd centuries B.C. The earlier periods are represented only by a single portion of a wall from the late 6th century, which has been mentioned above, and by a few walls of fine quality from the late 4th and the early 3rd centuries, which can be associated with the street running from east to west. Walls from the 5th and the greater part of the 4th centuries are lacking.⁶⁶

In comparison with the 8-10 ha of the Archaic settlement, the inhabited area of Valesio increased during the 3rd century to about 35 ha, covering approximately 50 per cent of the zone enclosed by the city-wall. A strip of land was left open directly inside the wall for burials; possibly, it also had some kind of agricultural function, or offered shelter to people and cattle coming from the countryside in times of danger (Fig. 21).

⁶⁶ Boersma 1987, 99; Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 60-67; id. 1989, 140-142.



Fig. 20. Valesio. *Località* S. Stefano. House-walls of the Messapian period, cut off by the Roman baths.

It is tempting to speculate on the size of the population of Hellenistic Valesio. This is, however, a hazardous undertaking, because apart from the approximated area of occupation within the city-wall, the urban structure and appearance of the town are to all intents and purposes unknown. The populations of Greek Classical or Hellenistic cities with a gridiron pattern of streets are usually estimated on the basis of six inhabitants per house, or some two hundred people per hectare; thus, the population of such a Greek city with a surface equal to Valesio's would total 7000 persons. But the irregular lay-out of Valesio, as revealed by the excavations, in combination with the evidence of the residential quarter at Monte Sannace, suggest that these numbers are not a reliable basis for an estimate of the town's population. Further, as most Messapian houses in towns probably lacked a second storey, six inhabitants per house seems too high. We can be certain that the population of Valesio was far less than 7000 persons, although it is impossible to say by how much.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See J.S. Boersma, *Goritsa: the Residential District*, *BABesch* 58 (1983), 78; H.R. Reinders, *New Halos, a Hellenistic Town in Thessalia, Greece*, dissertation Utrecht 1988, 186. The increase of the population of Valesio during the late 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. is also illustrated by the Messapian funerary inscriptions on the cover slabs or lateral slabs of the stone graves registered there. Of the 20 known inscriptions, 18 are dated between the Archaic and Hellenistic/Roman periods. Of these, at least 9, and possibly as many as 15 inscriptions date between the middle of the 4th and the 2nd centuries B.C.

The urbanistic changes that took place in the Messapian towns seem to have found no counterpart in the countryside. For instance, traces of a systematic parcelling of the land, as has been observed at Metapontum, are lacking at both Oria and Valesio,⁶⁸ and the old system of roads, which radiated from the centres of the towns into the countryside, remained in service through the Hellenistic and Roman periods. All indications are that the farmers stayed put on their land and were not encouraged to resettle in new patterns. This can be seen around Oria, where a relationship exists between the locations of the farmsteads and the modern tracks running through the countryside. These tracks, most of which have since been paved with asphalt, have undoubtedly a long history and may to some extent reflect the ancient road system.⁶⁹

From the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. events in southern Italy were determined by the political actions of Rome, which resulted in the capture of Tarentum in 272 B.C. Rome's involvement in the region then led to a series of conflicts with the Messapians, which were finally resolved by the foundation of a *colonia latina* at Brindisi in 244 B.C.⁷⁰ The installation of a group of Roman citizens from Central Italy in this Messapian harbour town, with its strategic location on the Adriatic Sea, implied the creation of a new administrative centre in Salento, which would have taken over Tarentum's position as political and cultural leader.

1 inscr. : Archaic period, or Classical period (444/3-400), or probably end 3rd cent. B.C.; *IM* 14, 111.

1 inscr. : Classical period (498/480-444/443), or 2nd cent. B.C./Roman period; *IM* 14, 19.

1 inscr. : Classical period; *IM* 14, 15.

1 inscr. : Classical period (2nd half 5th cent.); *IM* 14, 119.

1 inscr. : Classical period (444/433-400), or possibly 4th/3rd cent.; *IM* 14, 18.

1 inscr. : Classical period, or 1st half 4th cent.; *IM* 14, 21.

1 inscr. : Classical period, or 3rd cent.; *IM* 14, 110.

2 inscr. : Classical period, or 3rd/2nd cent.; *IM* 14, 14, 17.

4 inscr. : middle 4th cent.; *IM* 14, 117, 118, 122, 123.

1 inscr. : end 4th/beg. 3rd cent.; *IM* 14, 114.

1 inscr. : 4th/3rd cent.; *IM* 14, 13.

1 inscr. : 3rd cent., or Hellenistic/Roman period; *IM* 14, 22.

1 inscr. : Hellenistic/Roman period; *IM* 25, 15.

1 inscr. : 3rd cent., or 3rd/2nd cent.; *IM* 14, 113.

2 inscr. : undated; *IM* 14, 120; *CLM*, add nos.101-106bis.

Bibliography: Parangeli, O., *Studi Messapici*, Milan 1960, 124-133; Krahe, H., *Die Sprache der Illyrier*, II, Wiesbaden 1964 (C. de Simone, Die messapischen Inschriften, 59-89 and 119); Santoro, C., *Nuovi Studi Messapici* (epigrafi, lessico), I, Mesagne 1982, 87-96.

⁶⁸ For a general account of land parcelling at Metapontum, see D. Adamesteanu, *La Basilicata antica. Storia e monumenti*, Cava dei Tirreni 1974, 78-90.

⁶⁹ For the relation between the Hellenistic farmsteads and the modern road network around Oria, see Yntema 1986, Fig. 10. In general, Uggeri 1975, 99.

⁷⁰ Roman victories over the Messapians are mentioned for 267 and 266 B.C.; *Der kleine Pauly* 4, 1512 s.v. Sal(1)entini. For the foundation and early history of Brindisi, see recently Uggeri 1988.



Fig. 21. Valesio. The settlement in the late 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. Residential zone hatched.

One of the immediate effects of the Roman presence in southern Italy was that the Messapian élite became directly acquainted with the Roman world of Central Italy. Quintus Ennius from Rudiae and his cousin Pacuvius from Brindisi were certainly not the only Messapians to emigrate to Rome towards the end of the 3rd century. Ennius, with his knowledge of Greek and Latin, represented the international, Hellenistic cultural climate of Salento.⁷¹

At the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. another stretch of the Via Appia was built between Beneventum and Brindisi. By then, the latter had developed into the main base for Roman military operations in Greece and the Near East. Tarentum, despite the foundation of a Roman colony (*colonia Neptunia*) in 123 B.C., failed to regain its former position of leadership.⁷²

⁷¹ For Ennius, see *Der kleine Pauly* 2, 270ff.; for Pacuvius, see *Der kleine Pauly* 4, 400-401.

⁷² For Roman Tarentum, see D'Andria 1979a, 319-324 with earlier bibliography.

The Romanization of the Brindisi region progressed at a slow but steady pace, and was completed only in the 1st century B.C. The principal stages in this process were Rome's war against the Italian Allies at the beginning of the 1st century B.C. and, as a result, the granting of Roman citizenship to all the peoples of the Italian peninsula in 89 B.C.; the municipalization of the towns and their new status as *municipia*; and, eventually, the administrative reorganization of the peninsula under Augustus, by which the Brindisino became part of Regio II.⁷³

Coins excavated at Valesio help to illustrate the first stage of the process of Romanization in the Brindisino during the second half of the 3rd and the 2nd centuries B.C. Two thirds of the 164 silver and bronze coins that have come to light in the excavated area of *località* Santo Stefano till 1989 (9 silver, 98 bronze) can be linked with the 3rd- and 2nd-century habitation of the site. Of this total of 107 coins, 38 (7 silver, 31 bronze) were struck by the Greek colonies and Italian towns in Campania and Apulia during the 3rd century B.C. (a silver coin of Thurii is from the end of the 4th cent.); 44 bronze coins came from the mint at Brindisi, which, about 215 B.C., started to issue the bronze coinage that eventually became the dominant means of exchange in the Brindisi region during the first half of the 2nd century B.C.; and, finally, 2 silver and 23 bronze coins were issued at Rome, dating mostly from the first half of the 2nd century B.C.⁷⁴ The remaining coins found at *località* Santo Stefano are from the Roman Imperial (54), Byzantine (2), and Medieval (1) periods.

At present, the coins cannot be assigned to specific phases of the town's habitation. We hope that this will become possible after a study of the stratigraphical evidence. It seems reasonably certain, however, that the coins, the

⁷³ For the Romanization of the Brindisino, see Marangio 1975; recently C. Marangio (ed.), *La Puglia in età repubblicana*, Atti del I Convegno di studi sulla Puglia romana (Mesagne 20-22 marzo 1986), Galatina 1988.

⁷⁴ List of the 164 coins that have been excavated in *località* S. Stefano between 1984 and 1989. Greek colonial silver coins, end 4th-3rd cent. B.C.:

Thurii (2), Metapontum (1), Tarentum (4); total 7 coins.

Greek bronze coins, 2nd cent. B.C.:

Sicyon (1); total 1 coin.

Greek colonial bronze coins, 3rd cent. B.C.:

Syracuse (1), Croton (1), Tarentum/Heraclea (19); total 21 coins.

Italian bronze coins, 3rd cent. B.C.:

Campania (3 Neapolis, 1 Suessa), Italo-Punic (1 Croton), Apulia (1 Arpi), undefined (3); total 9 coins.

Brindisi, 44 bronze coins, end 3rd/2nd cent. B.C.

Roman Republic, 1 silver coin, 23 bronze coins, 2nd cent. B.C.; 1 silver coin, 1st (?) cent. B.C.; total 25 coins.

Roman Imperial period, 32 bronze coins 1st-3rd cent. (including 6 antoniniani); 22 bronze coins 4th cent.; total 54 coins.

Byzantine period, 2 bronze coins.

Medieval period, 1 silver coin.

majority of which (68) were struck at the mints of Brindisi and Rome, arrived and were lost at Valesio before the last century of the Republic. Roman bronze coinage served as the standard for the issues of the Brindisi mint. These coins show on the obverse the head of Neptune, an appropriate subject for a harbour town, and on the reverse a young man riding a dolphin, a motive which was adopted from Tarentine issues. By means of the latter, Brindisi demonstratively presented itself as the successor of Tarentum to authority in the region.⁷⁵

After 200 B.C. several Messapian towns, including Oria, also began issuing series of bronze coins. This practice, which probably continued till as late as the War of the Italian Allies, demonstrates the relative autonomy of these local towns, even after the region had been incorporated into the Roman state.⁷⁶ Valesio was not now among the towns that had their own coinage, which is understandable in the light of its history during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.

THE SECOND AND FIRST CENTURIES B.C.

The Romanization of Apulia after the second Punic War has been the subject of lively debate among ancient historians, who have concentrated chiefly on the agrarian development of the countryside and the possible introduction of large farming estates, or *latifundia*. In the past, historians had to rely on sparse historical and literary sources for Apulia, but these can now be supplemented by archaeological data. As a result, our picture of the region has become more varied and regional differences can be identified. Progress is, however, slow, and much more archaeological data and time will be needed before a detailed account can be given of the society and economy of Apulia, particularly the Salentine peninsula, after that part of southern Italy began to feel the effects of Roman expansionism.⁷⁷

Valesio

The presence of Hannibal and his army in Apulia during the last decades of the 3rd century seems to have had little effect on the lives of the Valesians.

⁷⁵ A monograph on the bronze coinage of Brindisi is being prepared by Adriana Travaglini. For the coins of Brindisi, see Stazio 1970b, 80-81; Uggeri 1988, 50.

⁷⁶ For the circulation of money in Salento in general, during the Greek and Roman Republican periods, see Stazio 1970a and 1970b, and Travaglini 1982, 218ff.

⁷⁷ For recent accounts of the political and economic development of Apulia and Salento, in particular after the Hannibalic War, see F. Sartori, *Le città italiote dopo la conquista romana*, *ASMG XV* (1975), 83-137, in part. 116-117; A. Marinelli, *Contributo alla storia della romanizzazione del Salento*, *RivStBrindisi VIII* (1975), 135-165; Pani 1979, 83-98; id., *Economia e società in età romana*, G. Musca (ed.), *Storia della Puglia I*, Bari 1979, 99-124; Sirago 1979; C. Delano Smith, *Western Mediterranean Europe. A Historical Geography of Italy, Spain and Southern France since the Neolithic*, London etc. 1979, 98-102; D'Andria 1979a; M. Pani, *I 'municipia' romani*, C. Marangio (ed.), *La Puglia in età repubblicana*, Atti del I Convegno di studi sulla Puglia romana (Messagne 20-22 marzo 1986), Galatina 1988, 21-45.

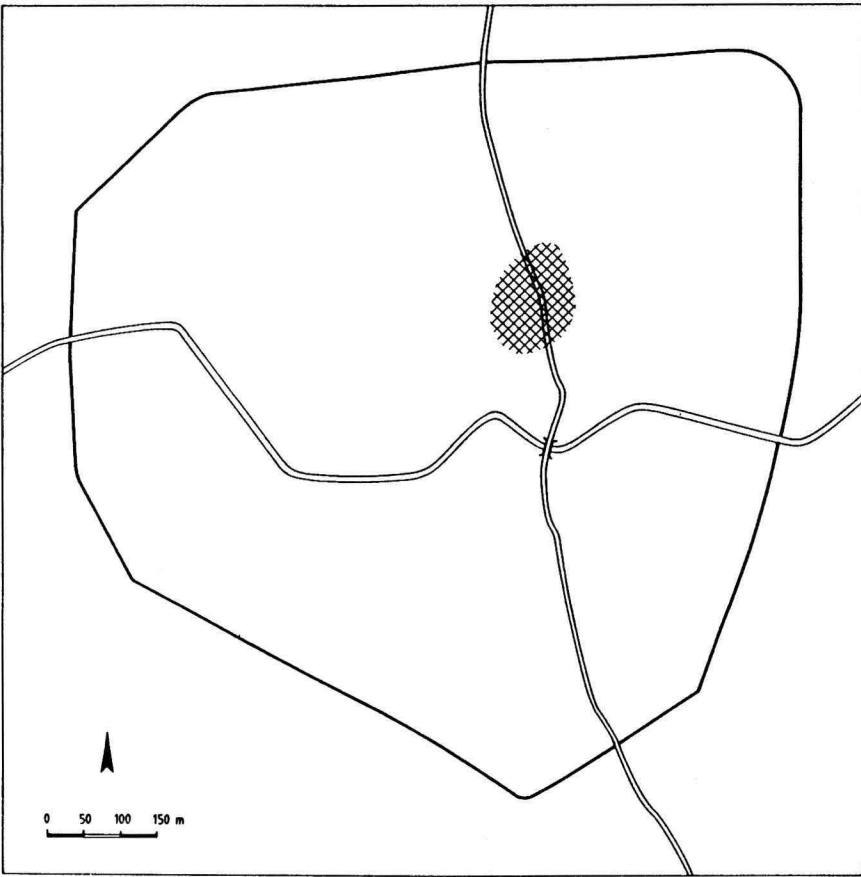


Fig. 22. Valesio. The settlement in the 2nd century B.C. Residential zone hatched.

Our field surveys indicate that although the residential quarter of the town was drastically reduced, this occurred no earlier than the first quarter of the 2nd century. Then, the urban centre of Valesio was for the most part abandoned, leaving a small inhabited area of at most 2 ha in the heart of the earlier town (Fig. 22).⁷⁸

The (gradual) reduction of the population might be explained in several ways. One cause, perhaps the principal one, was the growing economic importance of nearby Brindisi, which would have attracted people from the surrounding countryside. As remarked above, Brindisi was during the 2nd century the principal naval base of the Roman fleet and the base for military expeditions to Greece and the Near East. There was thus a constant demand

⁷⁸ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 94-95; id. 1989, 140, 144-145.

for accommodations and provisions for the thousands of men stationed in the town, sailors and soldiers alike, who manned the fleets and made up the legions. Further, a steady stream of officials returning to Italy or leaving for overseas destinations in the Roman provinces passed through the port. The concentration of so many people in Brindisi must have had a strong economic effect on the hinterland and greatly stimulated its agricultural production.⁷⁹

Another result of the close contacts between Salento and the Mediterranean was the development of Brindisi into an export centre for wine, olive oil, grain, and wool. In a well-known passage Varro describes the transport of these products to Brindisi during the 1st century B.C. The demand for containers in which to carry these products led to the establishment of factories for the manufacture of amphorae near the town as early as the second quarter of the 2nd century.⁸⁰

The growing importance of Brindisi as a political, military, and commercial centre may help to explain the decline of local centres in the hinterland, among which was Valesio. For example, Muro Maurizio and Muro Tenente, two Messapian sites of considerable size, were apparently also abandoned sometime in the Hellenistic period.⁸¹

Despite the almost complete abandonment of Valesio during the first quarter of the 2nd century, a new building was constructed shortly afterwards near the centre of the town, at the crossing of the two earlier roads that traversed the town from north to south and from east to west (Fig. 23).⁸²

Two sections can be distinguished in the ground plan of this late Republican building: a southern part consisting of several rooms grouped around a courtyard with a well, which were probably oriented towards the north-south road; and a second series of rooms oriented slightly differently, perhaps towards the east-west road. At this time, the roads no longer met each other, because the last stretch of the east-west road had been covered by a structure of one or more rooms and a pottery kiln.⁸³ In comparison to earlier Messa-

⁷⁹ See Uggeri 1988.

⁸⁰ For amphora production in the Brindisino, see recently D. Manacorda, *Per uno studio dei centri produttori delle anfore brindisine*, C. Marangio (ed.), *La Puglia in età repubblicana*, Atti del I convegno di studi sulla Puglia romana (Mesagne 20-22 marzo 1986), Galatina 1988, 91-108.

⁸¹ For Muro Tenente (Latiano), see *ASMG* IX (1969), 261-262; XI (1971), 495-496; XII (1972), 369-370; XIV (1974), 341-342. Like Valesio, Muro Tenente became a road-station (called *Scamnum*) during the Roman Imperial period. For Muro Maurizio, see the bibliography in Uggeri 1975, 99. According to Strabo's (VI.3.5) description of Salento, only Brindisi and Tarentum survived as towns of any substance (*poleis*) in the Augustan period, whereas the local towns had by then been reduced to insignificance (*polismatia*) (see Sirago 1979, 108). Cf. Tac. *Ann.* IV.27 who refers to *Brundisium et circumiecta oppida* as the area of the slave revolt of A.D. 24 (Sirago 1979, 113). For a general account of the situation in Salento during the Augustan period, based on written historical sources, see Sirago 1979.

⁸² Boersma/Yntema 1989, 142-144.

⁸³ Boersma/Yntema 1989, 144.



Fig. 23. Valesio. Late Republican building in *località* S. Stefano, from the southwest. Courtyard with well in the foreground.

pian houses, this 2nd-century building was entirely of stone; the courtyard was paved with stone slabs, and at least two rooms had floors made of square tiles (*sesquipedales*) surrounded by borders of terracotta tesserae.

Despite its rather unfavourable location among the ruins of the town, the building was well situated on the north-south road, which may have been the principal road through the earlier town. The advantage of easy accessibility would seem to have been the deciding factor when the location was chosen. Perhaps, the building should be identified as an early example of a *villa rustica*, which owed its existence to the increased economic activity

in the Brindisino. In addition, it may have functioned as a kind of road-station that catered to the needs of travellers on their way to and from Brindisi.

The courtyard-building at Valesio was only occupied till the beginning of the 1st century B.C. Why it was then given up remains obscure. Habitation on the site, however, did not entirely end and there are some indications that life continued there uninterrupted till as late as the 3rd century A.D.

Oria

In the 2nd century B.C. Valesio and Oria followed different courses. Whereas Valesio ceased to function as a proper town, Oria succeeded in remaining a regional centre of some substance, possibly with the status of a *civitas foederata*. Eventually, it even became a *municipium* (1st century B.C.).⁸⁴

The pattern of settlement in the countryside around Oria continued much unchanged during this period.⁸⁵ Although the number of farmsteads was reduced by half after the second Punic War, decreasing from 42 to 23, it is significant that all the existing farmsteads were situated on previously occupied sites (Fig. 24). Apparently, some farmsteads were abandoned; the remaining ones, on the other hand, grew markedly in size. This may well be due to the increased scale of the regional economy, which would have encouraged the development of larger estates.

Since our field surveys in the zone around Valesio have so far been limited to a strip of land between Valesio and the sea, no definite conclusions can yet be made about the character of the town's countryside. The preliminary results seem to indicate, however, that, as at Oria, the small farmsteads of the late 4th and early 3rd centuries decreased in number during the late Republican and early Imperial periods, whereas the remaining ones grew in size on previously occupied sites.

Although the increase of agricultural production and general prosperity in the Brindisino during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. seems unmistakable, there is no reason to think that the economy was based on estates of extremely large size (*latifundia*) that concentrated on the production of only one or two commodities (wine, olive oil). It would seem, instead, that at this time the *villae rusticae* in the Brindisino were still of rather modest size and had a diversified production.

That the Brindisi region was fully exploited in the late Republican and early Imperial periods is also confirmed by the impression one gets of the situation in the countryside between Oria and Valesio. Since we have not yet undertaken systematic field surveys in this area, our information is still quite

⁸⁴ For the status of Oria during the late Republican and early Imperial periods, see Marangio 1980. Oria was among the local Messapian towns with a Hellenistic bronze coinage of its own; Stazio 1970a, 118; 1970b, 84-85. Inscriptions from Oria testify to the existence of an *ordo decurionum* and of colleges of *augustales* and *haruspices*; Marangio 1980, 229-232.

⁸⁵ Yntema 1986, 18-21.

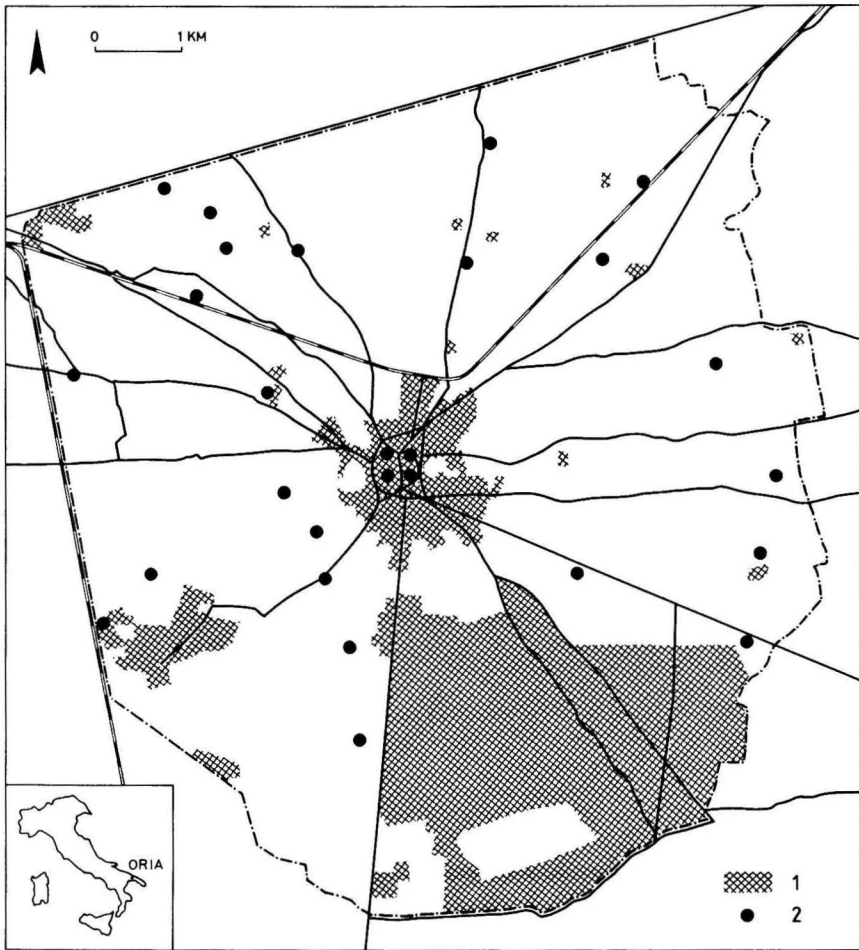


Fig. 24. Oria. Survey area with farmsteads (2) of the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. Damaged areas hatched (1).

vague and general.⁸⁶ It is certain, however, that Cicero could not have had the region of Brindisi in mind when he called Apulia '*inanissima pars Italiae*'.⁸⁷

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD

Ancient literary sources show that during the first centuries of the Roman Imperial period Brindisi was the unrivalled administrative and economic

⁸⁶ The basic study on the Romanization of the Brindisino is still the article by C. Marangio, *La romanizzazione dell'ager brindisino* (Marangio 1975).

⁸⁷ Cic. *ad Att.* VIII.3.4.

centre of Salento.⁸⁸ It was probably also the main cultural centre, a distinction which it may have shared with Lecce, the second most important town of Salento in the Imperial period.

The dominant position of Brindisi was confirmed at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. by the construction of the Via Traiana from Beneventum to Brindisi, and from there southwards to Hydruntum (Otranto).⁸⁹ The last stretch of road reflects the development of Otranto into Salento's second harbour, which, as Strabo points out, was an alternative to Brindisi as early as the Augustan period.⁹⁰ But in spite of Otranto's growing importance during the Imperial period,⁹¹ Brindisi always remained the leading town in the region. By no later than the early 4th century it had become an episcopal see, possibly the first in Salento.⁹²

Oria

The field surveys at Oria indicate that no essential changes in the settlement pattern of the countryside occurred till the middle of the 3rd century. Through the first centuries of the Imperial period the number of villas remained nearly constant, only to decrease in the second half of the 3rd century. By the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th centuries the 23 villas registered from the late Republican period had been reduced to 16, all of which were now large estates covering 200 and 300 m² (Fig. 25). A century later the number of villas had dwindled to 11, and between the second half of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries the countryside became entirely uninhabited. A few new settlements appeared only during the Normanno-Swabian period, all occupying the sites of late Roman villas.⁹³

Valesio

Fragmentary remains of a building reveal that the late Republican building with courtyard at Valesio was succeeded in the early Imperial period by a new structure, which stood presumably in the same area. Except for a carefully constructed well, no part of this building has been preserved, but many

⁸⁸ For Republican Brindisi, see Uggeri 1988; G. Carito, L'urbanistica di Brindisi in età repubblicana, C. Marangio (ed.), *La Puglia in età repubblicana*, Atti del I Convegno di studi sulla Puglia romana (Mesagne 20-22 marzo 1986), Galatina 1988, 173-179. For Imperial Brindisi, see R. Jurlaro, Primi dati sopra l'impianto urbanistico di Brindisi romano, *RicStBrindisi* XII (1979), 153-162.

⁸⁹ Uggeri 1983, 232ff. For the Via Traiana 'Calabra' between Brindisi and Otranto, see Uggeri 1983, 265ff.

⁹⁰ Strabo VI.281; Uggeri 1983, 57.

⁹¹ Uggeri 1983, 274.

⁹² A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* I-II, Leipzig 1915³, 248 and 262; cf. R. Jurlaro, I primi edifici di culto cristiano in Brindisi, *Atti del VI convegno internazionale di Archeologia cristiana* (Ravenna 23-30 settembre 1962), Vatican City 1965, 683; Gelsomino 1966, 205-206.

⁹³ Yntema 1986, 21-22.

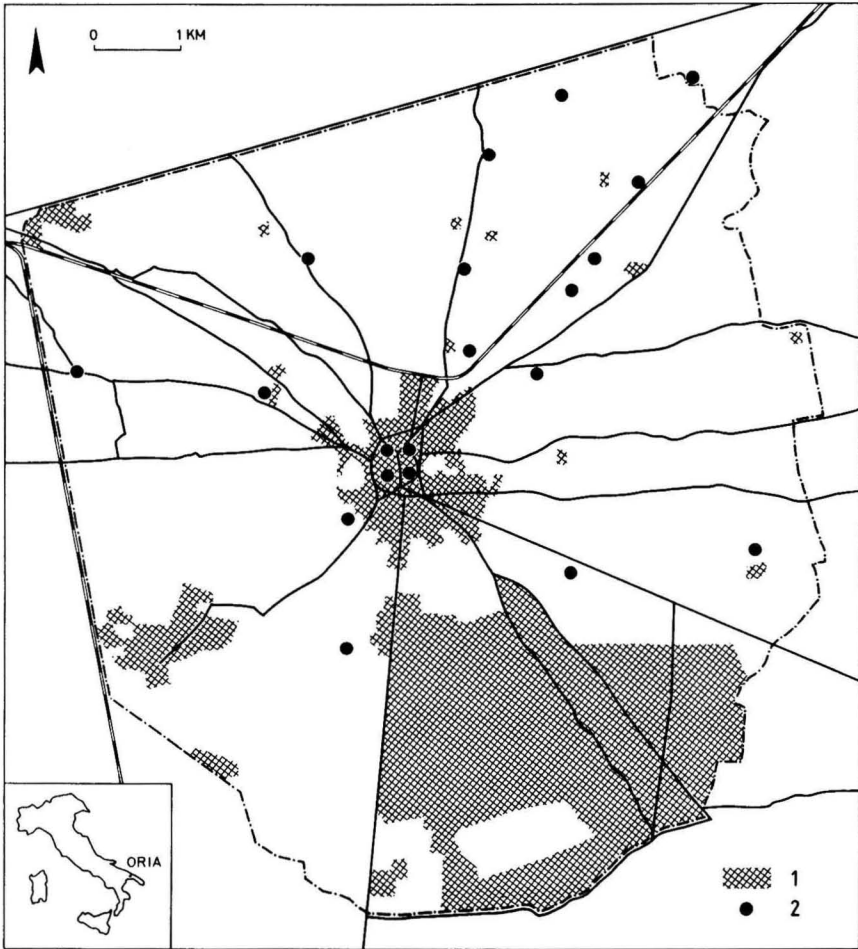


Fig. 25. Oria. Survey area with *villae rusticae* (2) of the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. Damaged areas hatched (1).

plaster fragments of walls and ceilings, some of them decorated with simple floral motives, and Italian and Near Eastern pottery from the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. point to the existence of a building on the spot.⁹⁴ In addition, the fresh condition of the painted decoration suggests that the building was demolished only shortly before the erection of a bath complex on the same site at the beginning of the 4th century.

Although the plan and character of this early Imperial building are unknown, one may venture to put forward the hypothesis that it had more or

⁹⁴ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 98; id. 1989, 145.

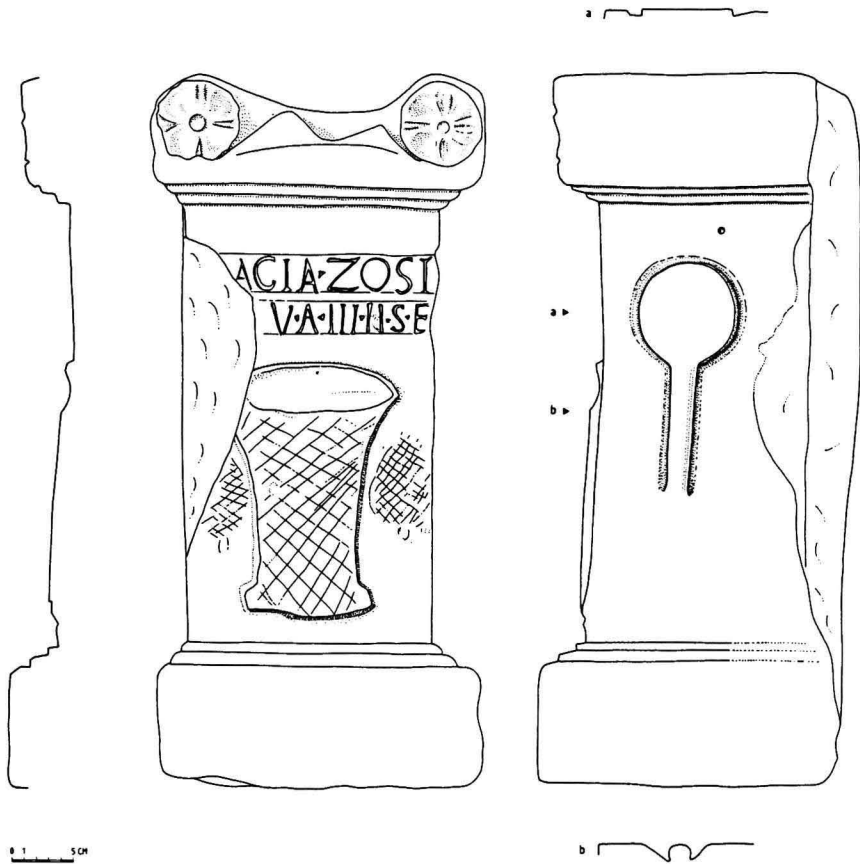


Fig. 26. Drawing of funerary altar of Magia Zosima from Valesio, probably 1st century A.D. (Brindisi, Museo Archeologico Provinciale).

less the same function as its late Republican predecessor. One of the building's inhabitants is probably known to us: the three-year-old girl Magia Zosima who was buried nearby; the altar on her grave was afterwards reused as filling in one of the rooms of the baths. She probably belonged to a family of Greek freedmen who had become members of the gens Magia (Fig. 26).⁹⁵

THE LATE ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD

At the end of the 3rd century the Brindisino was incorporated into the newly established province of *Apulia et Calabria* (Salento). Milestones from this

⁹⁵ Boersma 1987, 98; Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 101-103. C. Marangio's revised reading of the inscription, as proposed in *Epigrafi latine inedite dal Salento romano*, *Studi di Antichità*, 5 (1988), 211-231, is accepted here: <M> agia Zosi / <m> a v(ixit) a(nnis) III H(ic) s(ita) e(st). Marangio's date for the altar, the beginning of the 1st century A.D., is much earlier than the 2nd-century pottery context.

Itinerarium Burdigalense	BRUNDISIUM	XI	VALENTIA	XIII	CLIPÉAS	XII	AD DUODECIM	XIII	HYDRUNTUM
Tabula Peutingeriana	BRINDISI(um)	X	BALENTIUM	XV	LUPPIA		XXV		YDRUNTE(um)

Fig. 27. The Via Traiana 'Calabra' between Brindisi and Otranto.

period testify to the close attention that was paid to the Apulian network of roads during the period of Constantine.⁹⁶ The bath complex in the centre of the former town of Valesio, on the road between Brindisi and Otranto, may well have been built as part of a plan to improve the roads and facilities for travellers.

On the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a Medieval copy of a late Roman road-map, a road-station named Balentium is indicated between Brindisi and Luppia (Lecce), at a distance of 10 Roman miles from the former and 15 from the latter. In the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* the same place, here called mutatio Valentia, is said to lie 11 Roman miles from Brindisi and 13 from mansio 'Clipeas' (Lecce) (Fig. 27). These distances correspond roughly with those be-



Fig. 28. Valesio. Località S. Stefano. Remains of Roman baths, from the southwest (1985).

⁹⁶ Gelsomino 1966, 185 (the Via Traiana); Uggeri 1983, 189 (the Via Appia); 270-271 (the Via Traiana 'Calabra'). From a comparison of the *Itinerarium Antonini* from the later 2nd or early 3rd century (Uggeri 1983, 144), the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* from A.D. 333-334 (Uggeri 1983, 148), and the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, presumably from the middle of the 4th century (Uggeri 1983, 151), it can be deduced that the Apulian roads were provided with a new series of postal stations between the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries, and in A.D. 334, probably during the reign of Constantine the Great (Gelsomino 1966, 168-169 and 172).

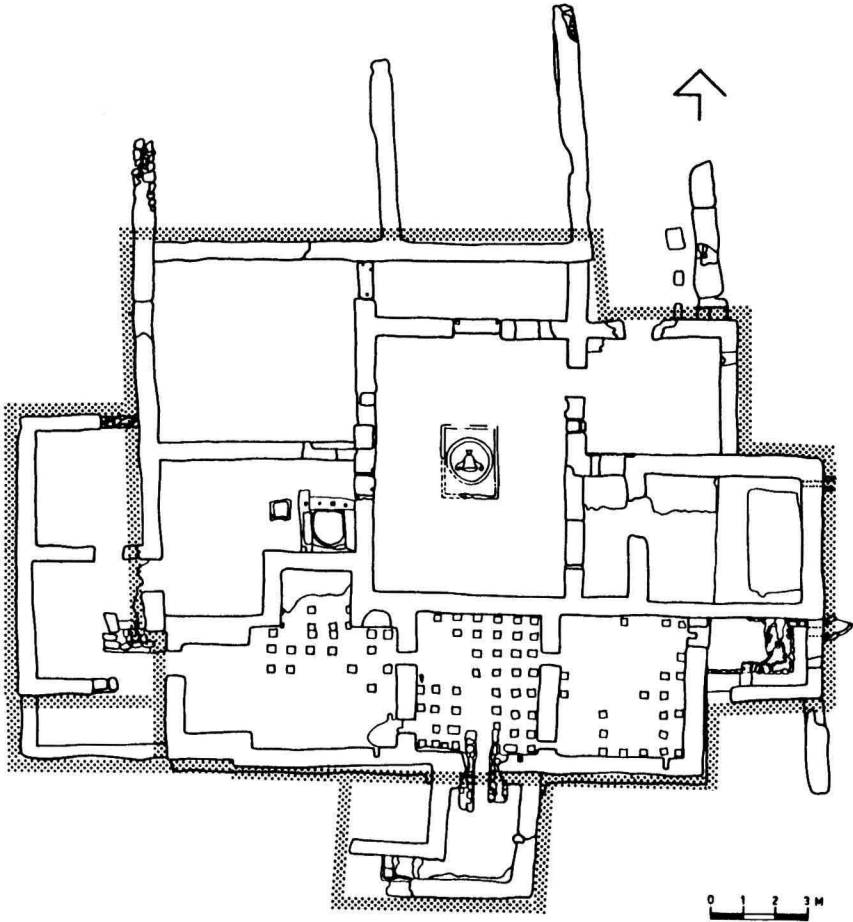


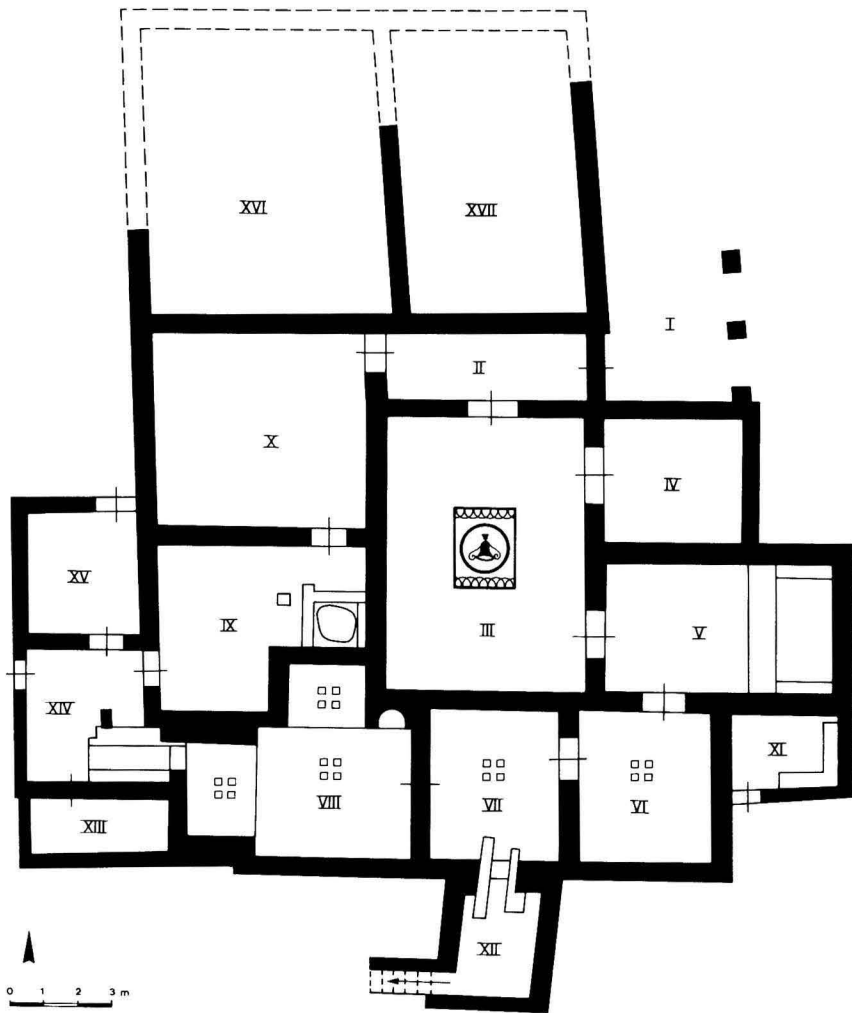
Fig. 29. Valesio. *Località* S. Stefano. Excavation plan of Roman baths. Circuit of foundation trench indicated in dotted lines.

tween the site of Valesio and the towns of Brindisi and Lecce, which suggests strongly that the bath-building that has been excavated in the centre of Valesio and the *mutatio* Valentia are identical.⁹⁷ This building can be dated by pottery found in its rooms from the beginning of the 4th century A.D. (Fig. 28).⁹⁸

At as early as the beginning of the 16th century, the regional humanist Antonio De Ferrariis (Galateo) associated the remains that were still visible or steadily came to light in the zone of Valesio with the ancient town of Bale-

⁹⁷ For the Roman roads in Salento, see Gelsomino 1966 and Uggeri 1983.

⁹⁸ Boersma 1985, 158; id. 1987, 94; id. 1988, 67.



□□ 1

Fig. 30. Valesio. Località S. Stefano. Reconstruction plan of Roman baths. 1, rooms with hypocaust.

sium,⁹⁹ which is also referred to as Valetium, Baletium, Balentium, or Valentia in ancient sources.¹⁰⁰ Today, the zone is called Valesio, or in dialect Val-

⁹⁹ Galateo 1558, 74. According to F. Ribezzo, *Nuove ricerche per il Corpus Inscriptionum Messapicarum*, Rome 1944, 114, Galateo concluded his observations at Valesio in 1510.

¹⁰⁰ Balesium: Pliny *NH* III.XI.101; Valetium: Pomp. Mela *Chor.* II.4.66; Baletium: *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia* IV.31, V.1; Balentium: *Tabula Peutingeriana* VII.1; Valentia: *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 609.8.

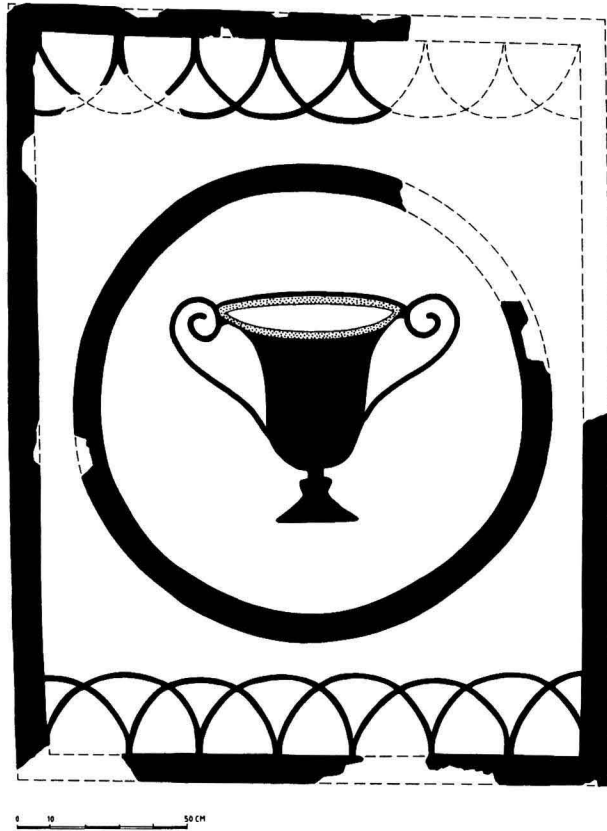


Fig. 31. Drawing of mosaic emblem with cantharus in the hall of the baths.

isu.¹⁰¹ The identification of the zone as the ancient town can be accepted as certain.

As remarked above, it is tempting to think that the two buildings that, from the 2nd century B.C., successively occupied the site near and below the later baths functioned as road-stations on the north-south route, which later became the Via Traiana. The continuity of human activity precisely on this spot, the only one to remain permanently occupied after the abandonment of the town, is indeed remarkable. The evidence of the *Itinerarium Antonini*, on the other hand, seems to contradict the theory that the buildings were real road-stations. In this source from the second century A.D., the

¹⁰¹ For Valesio, see Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie* VIII A.1, 160-162 s.v. Valet(i)um (with earlier bibliography); *Der kleine Pauly* 5, 1119 s.v. Valet(i)um (with earlier bibliography). For earlier finds, see L. Quilici/S. Quilici Gigli, *Repertorio dei beni culturali archeologici della provincia di Brindisi*, Quaderni dell'amministrazione provinciale di Brindisi no.11, Fasano di Puglia 1975, 106-109; Pagliara 1983, 64-71; Uggeri 1983, 55-56 and *passim*.

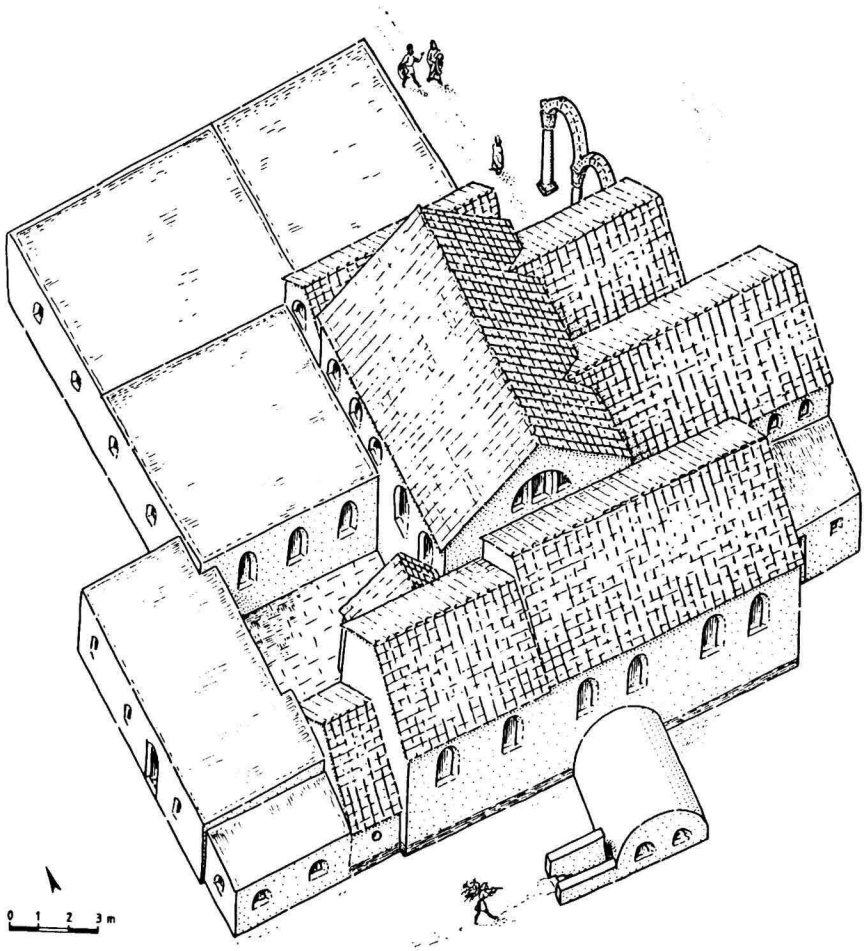


Fig. 32. Axiometric reconstruction of the Roman baths of Valesio.

very period in which the second road-station would have existed, no mention is made of such an establishment on the route between Brindisi and Lecce.¹⁰²

The excavated remains of the baths permit us to reconstruct the plan and shape of the structure almost in its entirety (Fig. 29).¹⁰³ Despite the rather modest dimensions (c. 28 m north-south × 25 m east-west), the building was equipped with all the necessary amenities and luxuriously decorated inside (Fig. 30).

¹⁰² Gelsomino 1966, 167-168 and 172-173.

¹⁰³ For earlier descriptions of the baths, see the interim reports in *BABesch* 60 (1985), 61 (1986), 62 (1987), 64 (1989); Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 110-143; Boersma 1988, 58-76.

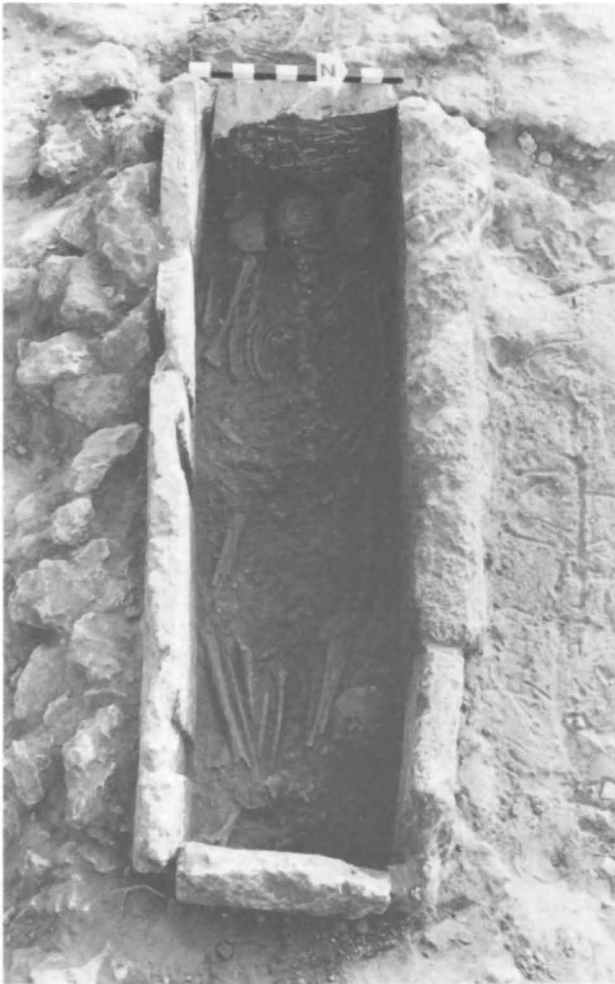


Fig. 33. Valesio. Località S. Stefano. Medieval grave with several skeletons.

In front, a portico and a corridor led to a large entrance-hall (8 × 6 m) that gave access to a dressing-room (*apodyterium*) and to the cold and hot baths (*frigidarium* and *caldarium*); two heated rooms (*tepidaria*) linked the baths. A pair of furnaces provided for a gradual increase of temperature from one room to the other. The walls of both hall and bathing-rooms were revetted with panels of multicoloured marble and paved with black-and-white mosaics. The emblem in the centre of the entrance-hall shows a drinking-vessel (cantharus), which in these surroundings would symbolize water rather than wine (Fig. 31).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ For the mosaic in the entrance-hall, see Boersma 1986b.

The baths were built of local stone, many blocks undoubtedly being reused material; a block-and-brick technique was employed at the corners of walls, doors, and other openings. Vaults, most likely of barrel type, formed the ceilings of the bathing-rooms and furnace-rooms; the other rooms probably had timbered roofs.

In addition, there were several service-rooms: a large one of unclear function next to the entrance corridor, a latrine, storage areas for fuel or the like, and, finally, two large isolated rooms, possibly to be identified as stables. The bathing and service areas were separated by a courtyard with a well, which supplied the baths and the latrine with water. The entire exterior of the building and the walls of some service-rooms were coated with plaster. Some traces of red paint have been preserved on the plaster from the exterior and the latrine (Fig. 32).

The marble panelling, and perhaps also the bricks and tiles, would have been transported from Brindisi, which was then the main depot and distribution centre of the region. Possibly, these baths were erected at the initiative of a magistrate of Brindisi, who sought in this way to acquit himself of the obligations of his office.

To judge from pottery finds, the baths continued to function for slightly more than a century. When the complex was abandoned in the first half of the 5th century, it was not demolished but allowed to fall gradually to ruins,¹⁰⁵ only to become a source of building material during the Middle Ages.

THE MIDDLE AGES

Regional Salentine humanists write that the Norman king William I, nicknamed the Bad (il Malo), ruler of Puglia and Sicily, destroyed Valesio in A.D. 1147.¹⁰⁶ Our surveys, however, have uncovered no evidence of a town having been destroyed at that time. Rather, they indicate that the area within the ancient city-wall was then uninhabited. Evidently, these reports about the destruction of Valesio are scholarly fabrications.

A more interesting reference to the site of Valesio has been preserved in a notarial act drawn up at Lecce in 1737. This states that in 1181 Count Tancredi of Lecce presented the monastery of Nicolò e Cataldo of the same town with landed properties (*feudi*) named Valisio and Galiano, together with all their inhabitants and buildings. Further, it notes three official reconfirmations of the transaction, first in 1494, and again in 1512 and 1517. The text of the act of 1737 indicates that for centuries the zone of Valesio had

¹⁰⁵ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 96-99.

¹⁰⁶ Uggeri 1983, 277-278 with earlier bibliography. A revised date of 1157 for the supposed destruction of Valesio has been suggested by N. Cicarese, *Precisazioni di un lettore, Valisu, Rivista di cultura nostrana* (Torchiariolo, BR) 4 (1984), 47; id., Guglielmo I° il Malo e Valesio, *Valisu* 7 (1986), 55-58.

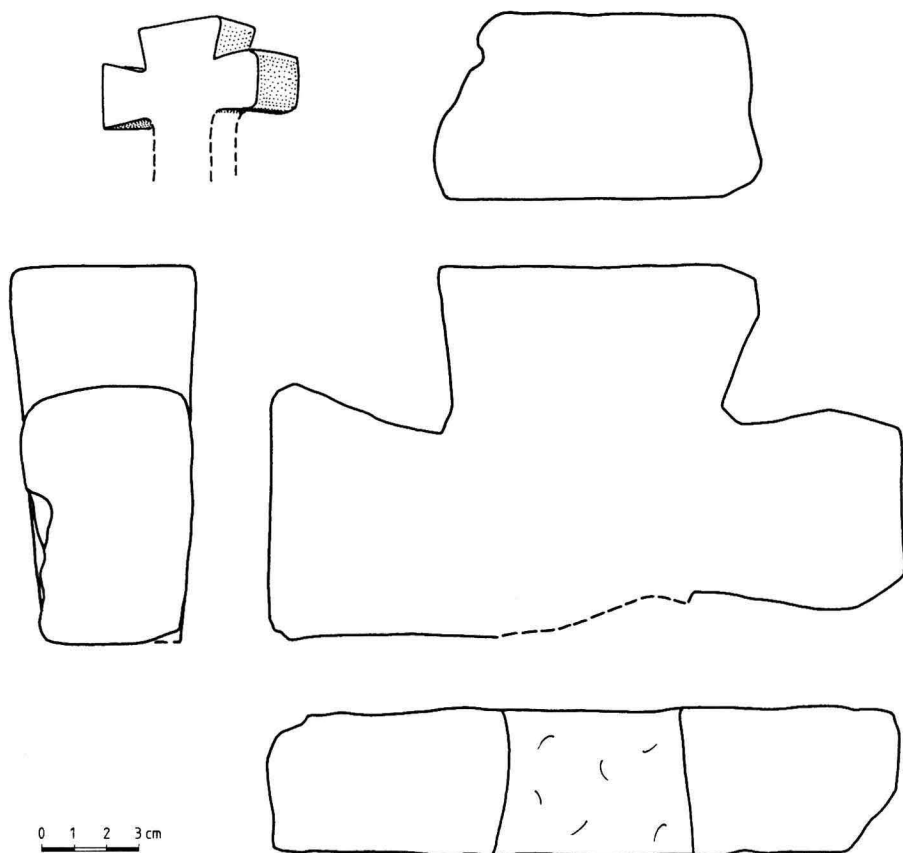


Fig. 34. Valesio. *Località* S. Stefano. Drawing of stone cross found during the excavations.

been used for agricultural purposes, a designation that it has retained till the present.¹⁰⁷

Our excavations have uncovered the remains of a building that was constructed partly within and partly to the west of the baths at the end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th, shortly after Tancredi's gift to the monastery. At the time of its construction sections of the baths, particularly the vaulted rooms, must have been largely intact. Most likely, the building was a fortified farmstead (*casale*).¹⁰⁸ Some of the graves of the *casale's* cemetery were dug through the floors of ancient rooms that had not been incorpo-

¹⁰⁷ The text of the notarial act of 1737 has been published by F. Ragione, Atto notar Sombriano Leonardo Carlo, *Valisu, Rivista di cultura nostrana* 2 (1983), 57-62.

¹⁰⁸ Boersma/Yntema 1987b, 144-148; id. 1989, 156-158.

rated into the new structure; other graves were situated outside the ruins (Fig. 33).

Comparable fortified farmsteads are known in various parts of Apulia.¹⁰⁹ Some grew into villages as the result of the synoecistic policy of the Angevins. Thus, two *casali* in the neighbourhood of Valesio developed into the villages of Torchiarolo and San Pietro Vernotico. Fortunately for us, the casale of Valesio was not transformed into a village but abandoned at the beginning of the 14th century.

In local oral tradition the area of the Roman baths is called *località* Santo Stefano, suggesting that at one time a chapel stood there. The discovery of part of a stone cross fits this tradition remarkably well. If a chapel existed, it may have first been built inside the *casale* (Fig. 34).

The Medieval walls of the *casale* have been preserved only below ground level. Of the Roman walls, only parts of the *frigidarium* have remained visible from the time of their construction to the present; sometime before the twentieth century, these were incorporated into a small farmhouse. This humble building has, in its turn, fallen to ruins, implying that the multifaceted history of habitation in the zone of Valesio has come to a definite end.

¹⁰⁹ R. Luciano, *Economia e società nell'alto Medioevo*, G. Musca (ed.), *Storia della Puglia* I, Bari 1979, 193.

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Abbreviations

ASMG: *Atti del convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia*

BABesch: *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving*, Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology

MEFRA: *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École française de Rome*

MonAn: *Monumenti Antichi dell'Accademia dei Lincei*

NSA: *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*

RicStBrindisi: *Ricerche e Studi*. Quaderni del Museo Archeologico Provinciale 'Francesco Ribezzo' di Brindisi

StEtr: *Studi Etruschi*

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