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Farms, villas, and villages in late roman Sicily: a subregional approach to the landscape evolution

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INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL
ARCHAEOLOGY
Faculty of Arts
Charles University

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Farms, villas and villages in late Roman Sicily

A subregional approach to the landscape evolution



Fabrizio Ducati

9 November 2022

Building D, 2nd floor, lecture room, Kampus Hybernská



Today, we will discuss

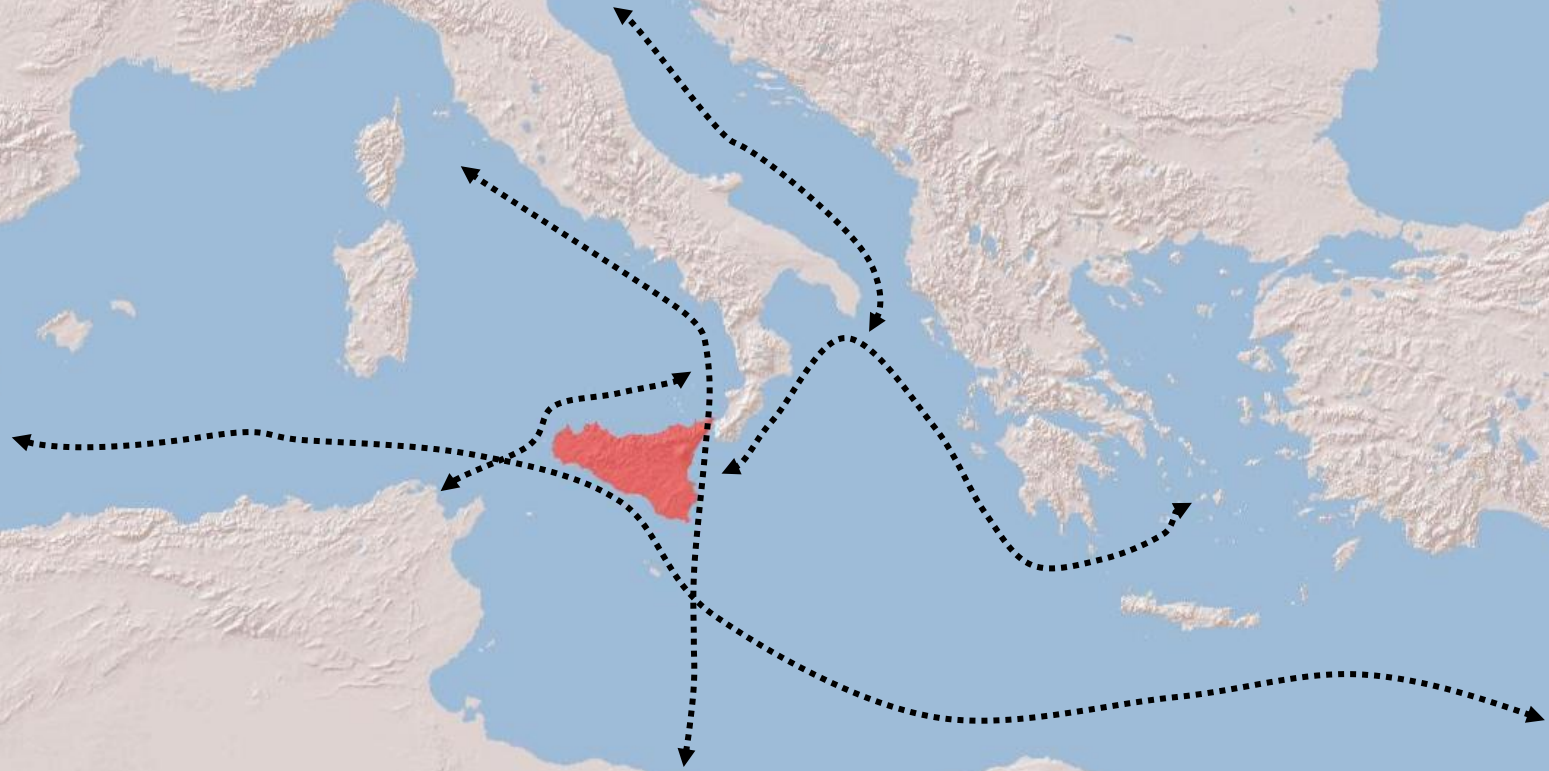
1. Sicily as Mediterranean linchpin during the Roman time
2. Cereals, wine, oil and much more: the wealth of Roman Sicily
3. Landscape in evolution
 - I. The crisis of minor rural settlements during the 3rd century AD
 - II. The rise of luxury villas during the 4th century AD
 - III. Sprawling agricultural villages between 5th - 6th centuries AD
4. Some conclusive remarks

Let's start

Chapter 1

Sicily as Mediterranean linchpin during the Roman time

Sicily is a Mediterranean crossroad



for goods, people and ideas moving along long-standing routes

It is a strategic island

Sicilian Channel: 145 Km
Strait of Messina: 3,14 Km

Strait of Messina



Sicilian Channel

It is a strategic island

● Rome

Carthage

● Syracuse

long contested by the great Mediterranean powers

Some meaningful events for Sicily before the Imperial age

241 BC: 1st Punic War ends. Western Sicily is under Roman control

211 BC: Fall of Syracuse. Sicily is totally under Roman control

210 BC: M. Valario Levino restores the 'provincia Sicilia'

42-36 BC: Civil war. Sicily sided with Sextus Pompey against Octavian

30 BC: Conquest of the Egypt. Sicily lost his role in Rome supplies

1st

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

7th

Then, a long period of peace and marginality

until the second half of the 3rd century AD

1st

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

7th

AD 261

slavish revolt in Sicily?

AD 332

Egyptian wheat is diverted to
Constantinople

AD 440

Start of Vandals' raids

AD 500

Western Sicily is annexed to the
Vandal Kingdom of Africa

AD 535

Belisarios' reconquers Sicily

Some crucial events

Chapter 2

Cereals, wine, oil and much more: the wealth of Roman Sicily





Wheat

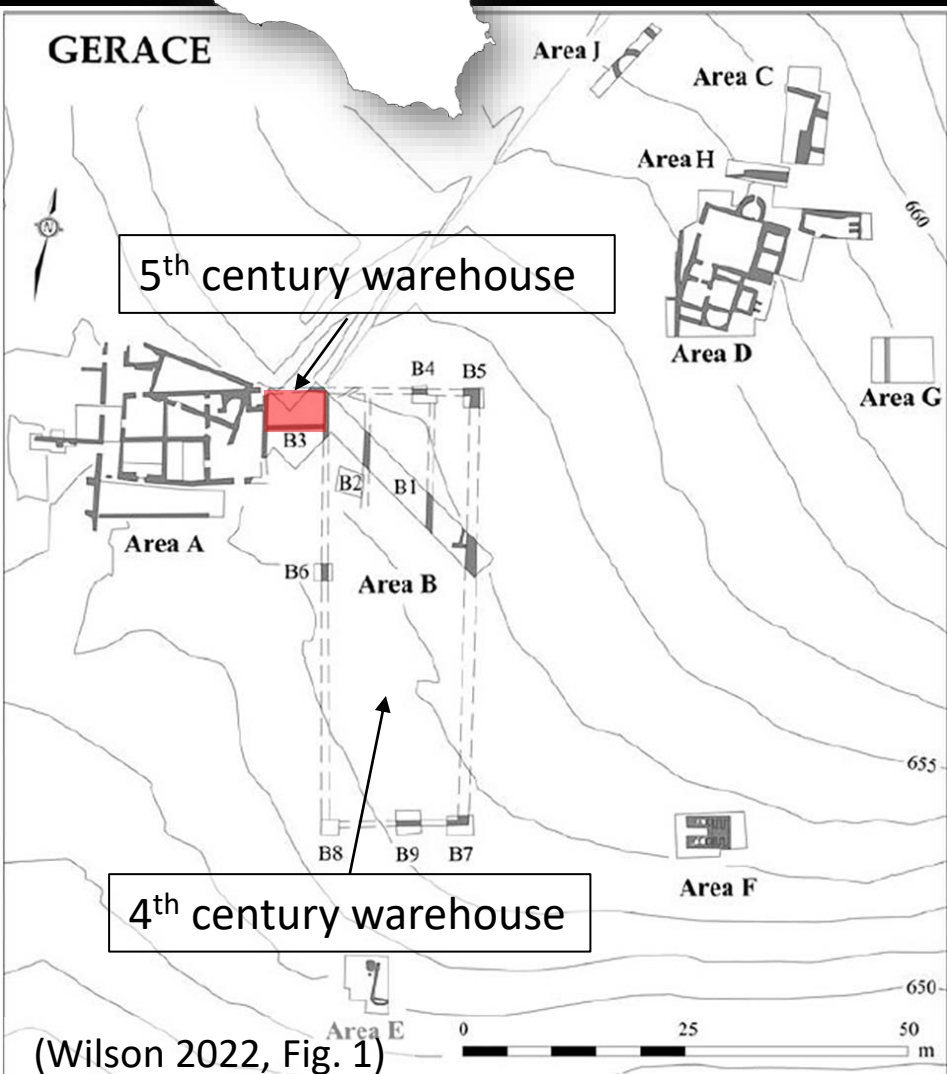




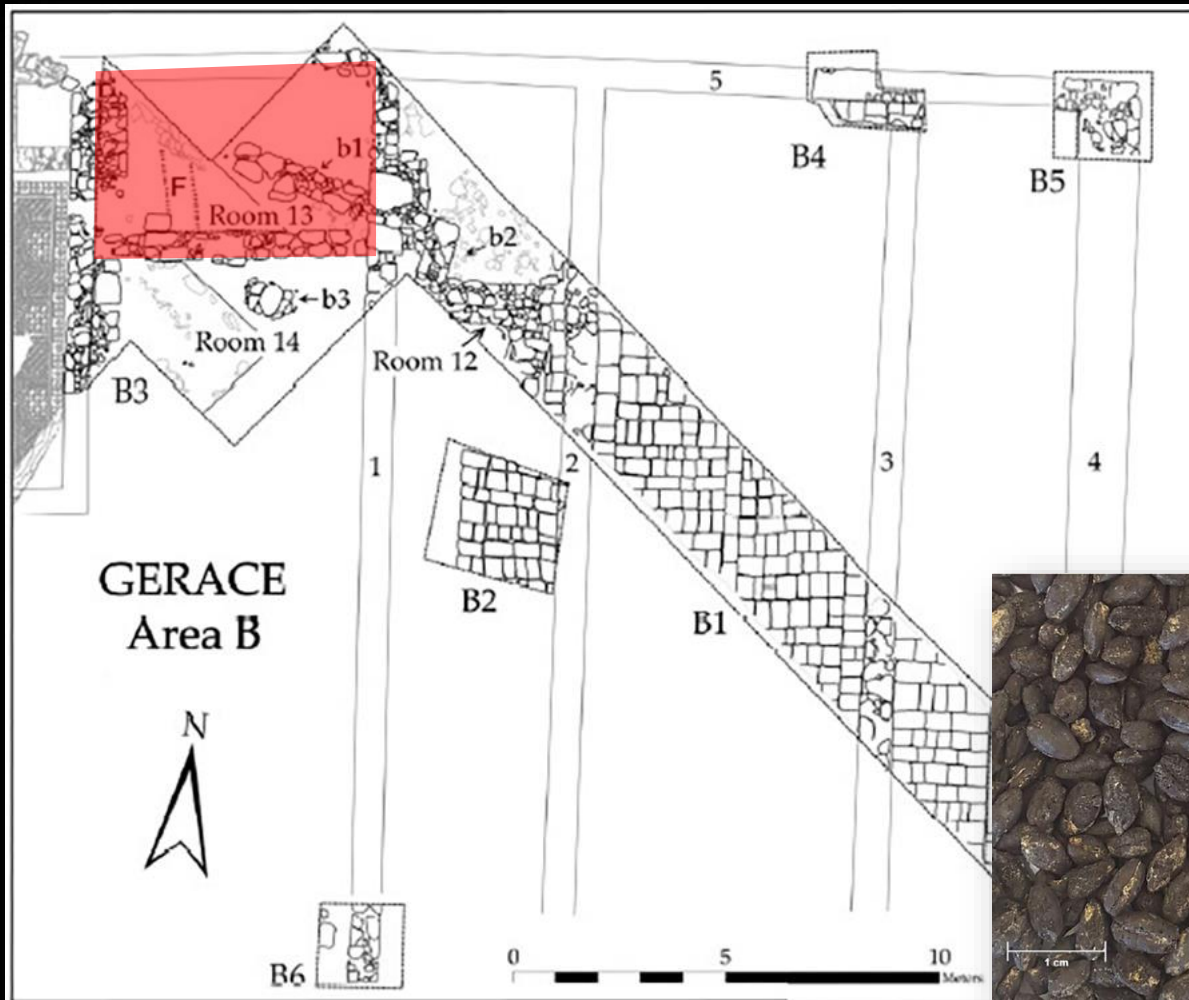
Gerace:

A small warehouse destroyed by fire after 450 AD

Gerace



(Wilson 2018, Fig. 4b, 11)



Charred seeds:

- Barley
- Wheat
- Broad beans
- Lentils
- Peas
- Chickpeas
- Grapes



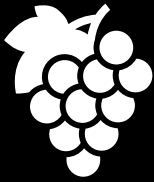


Wheat

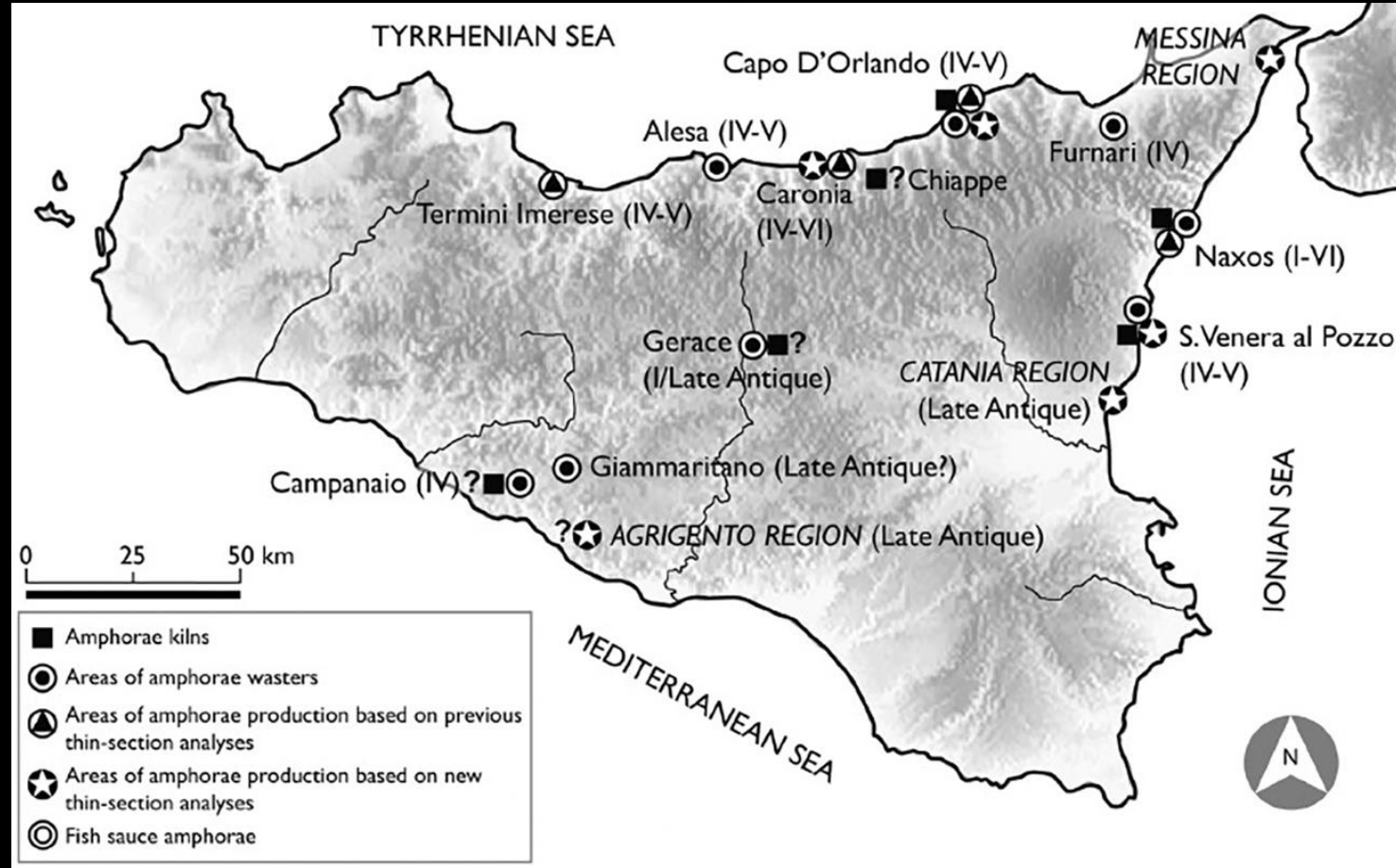
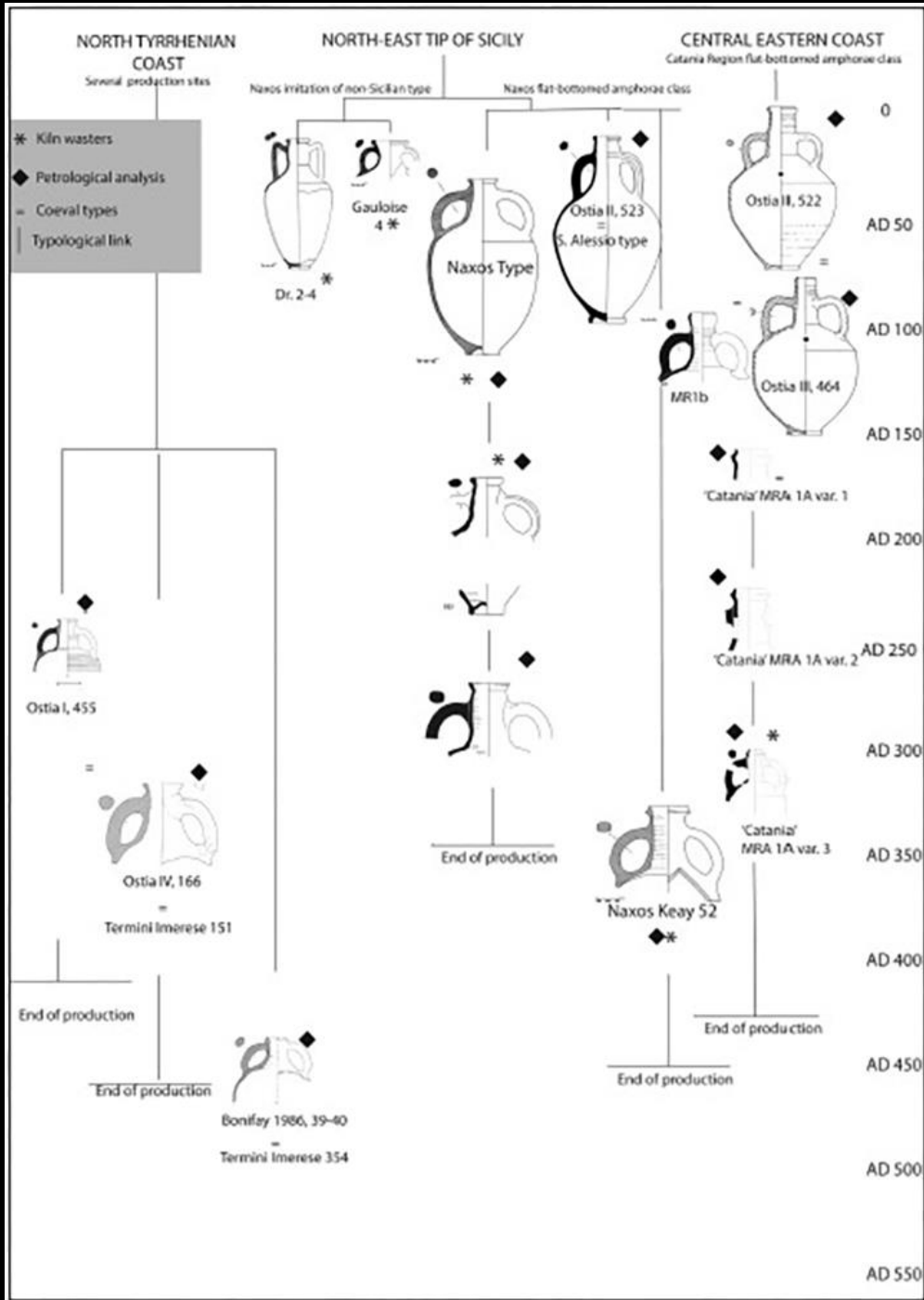


Wine

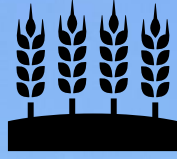




Sicilian amphorae workshops (1st - 6th century AD)



(Franco & Capelli 2014, Fig. 1-2)



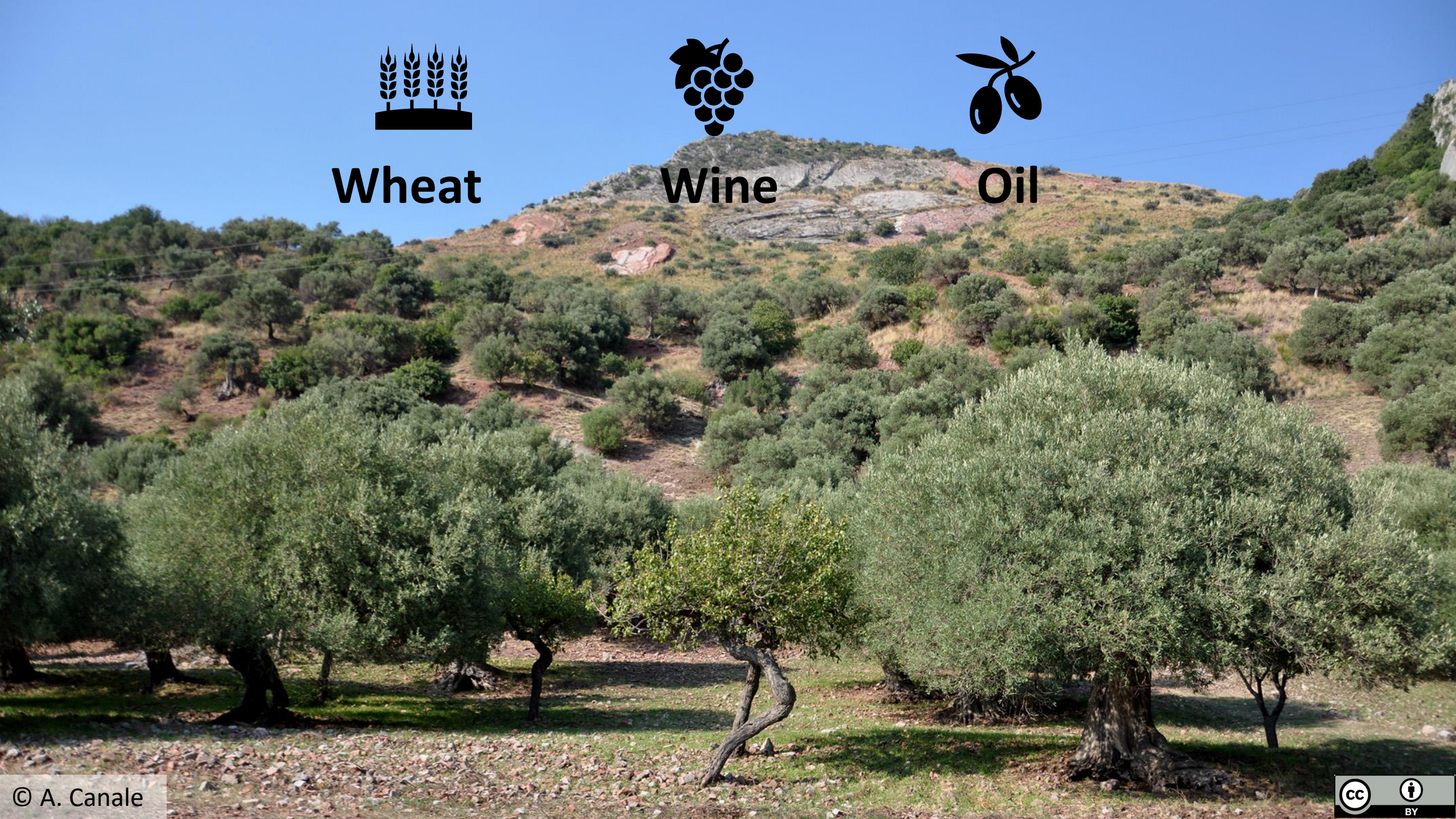
Wheat



Wine



Oil



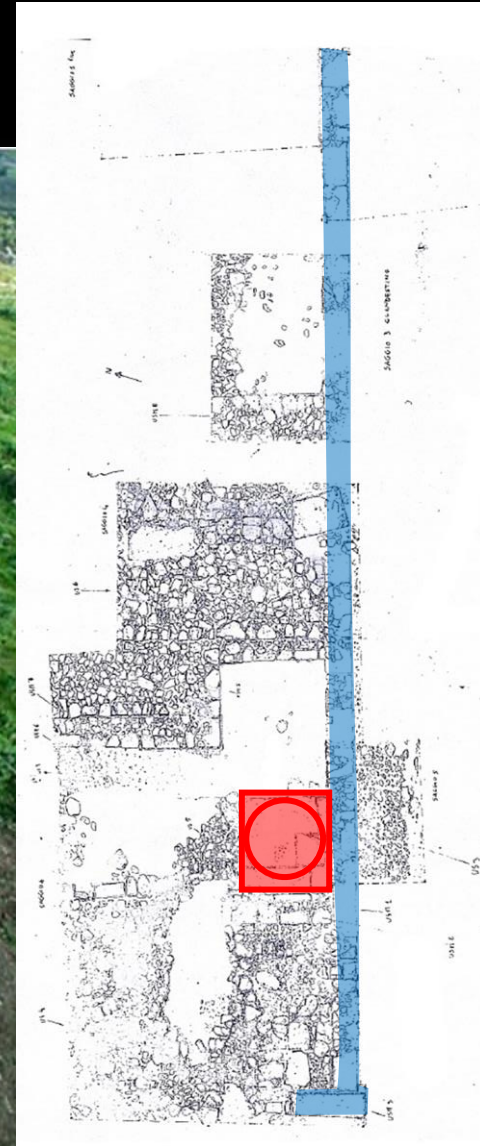
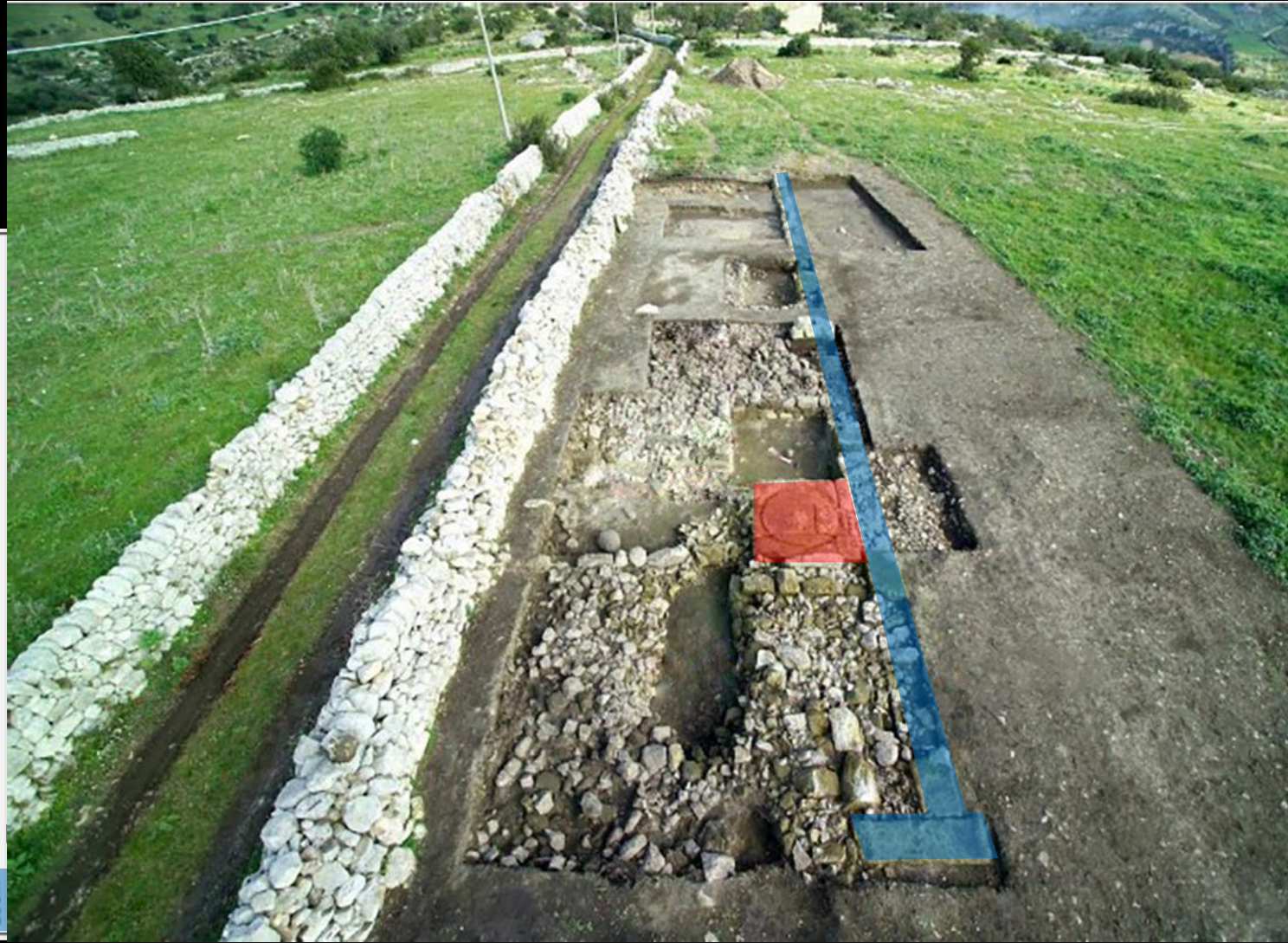


Oil industry in southern Sicily

The Roman settlement at Serra Ciarberi

Serra Ciarberi ●

Di Stefano 2018, Fig. 3-5



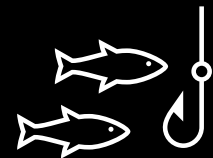
Early imperial age building



Hellenistic



BY



Fish industry at Porto Palo and Dressel 21-22 amphorae kilns at Alcamo Marina

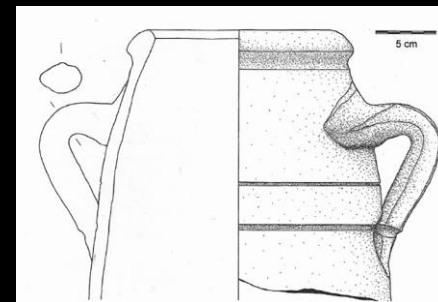
Alcamo Marina

Porto Palo

(Malfitana 2022, Fig. 2)



(Giorgetti 2006, Fig. 28, Tav. II, XIIIa, XIVb)





Minerals

Rock salt

*In Siciliam flumen est **Himeras**, quod, a fonte cum est progressum, dividitur in duas partes; quae pars profluit contra Etruriam, quod per terrae dulcera secum percurrit, est infinita dulcedine, quae altera parte per eam terram currit, **unde sal foditur**, salsum habet saporem*

Vitr. 8.3.7



Minerals

Rock salt

Sulphur

*in terrae autem reliquis generibus vel maxime mira natura est **sulpuris**, quo plurima domantur. **nascitur in insulis aeoliis inter siciliam et italiam**, quas ardere diximus, sed nobilissimum in melo insula.*

Plin. Nat. 35.63



Minerals

Rock salt

Sulphur

Gypsum
(lapis specularis)

*et hi quidem sectiles sunt, **specularis** vero, quoniam et hic lapidis nomen optinet, faciliore multo natura finditur in quamlibet tenues crustas. hispania hunc tantum citerior olim dabat [...] iam et cypros et cappadocia et **sicilia** et nuper inventum africa [...]*

Plin. Nat. 36.51

Tegulae sulphuris ANNIORVM from the hinterland of Agrigento and Roman quarry of *lapis specularis* at Grotta inferno

Grotta inferno

Agrigento



(Gullì et al. 2019, p, 163; Fig. 23-25)

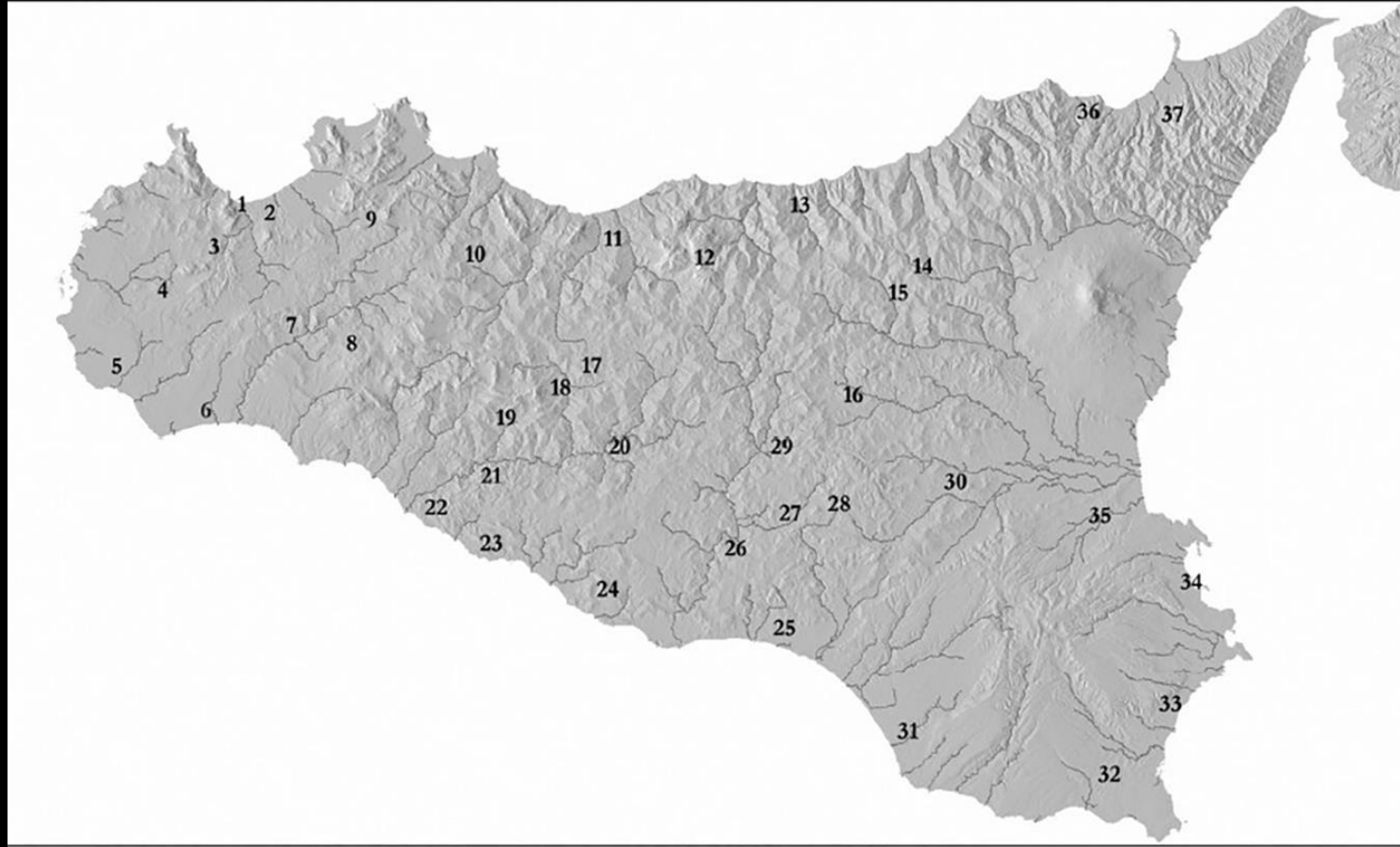
(Polito & Tripodi 2018, p. 26)



Chapter 3

Landscape in evolution
3rd-6th century AD

Some surveyed areas in Sicily

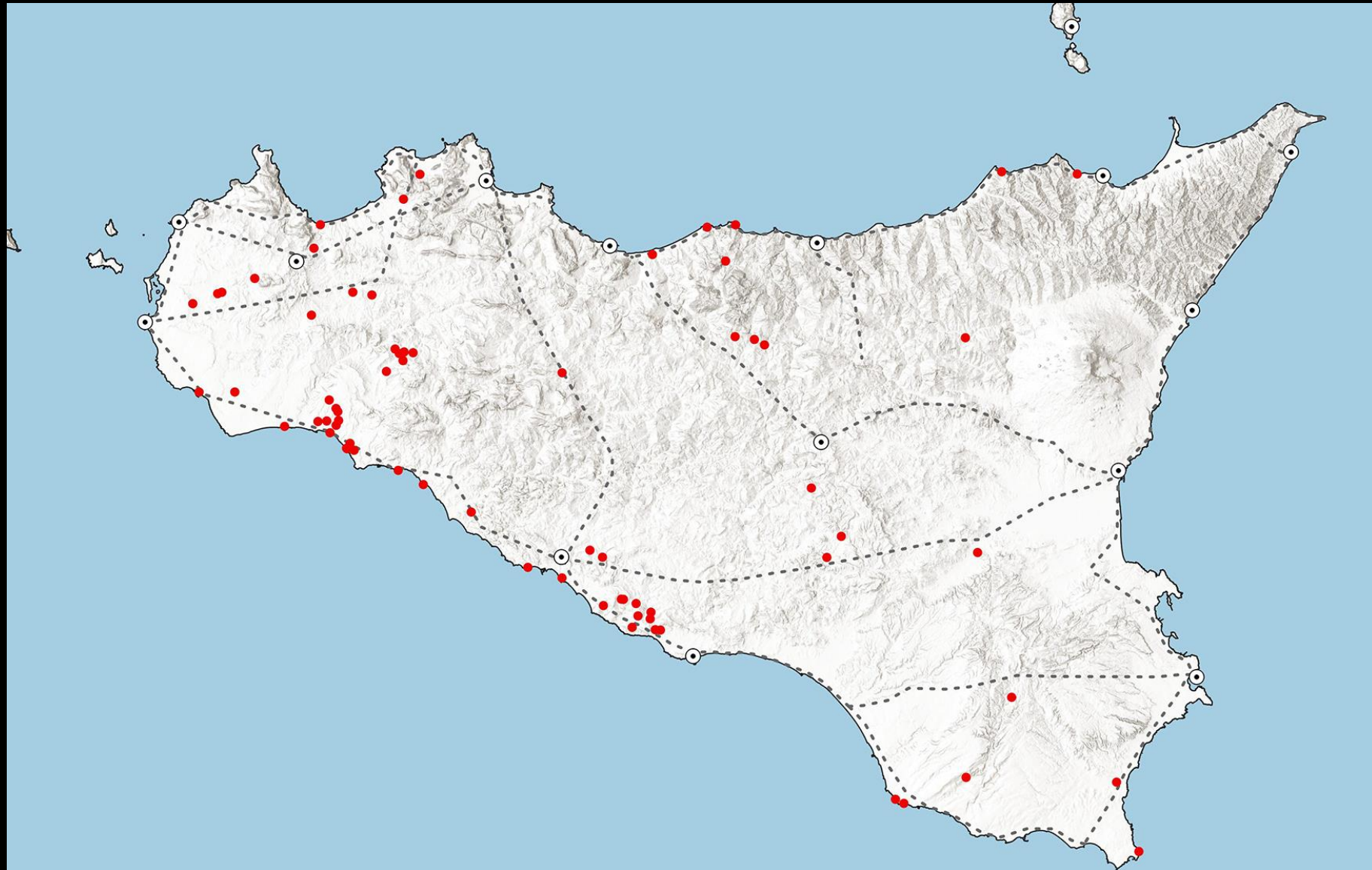


(Burgio 2017, Fig. 1)

1. Castellammare del Golfo; 2. Alcamo; 3. Segesta; 4. Salemi; 5. Marsala-Mazara; 6. Selinunte; 7. Salaparuta; 8. Entella; 9. Monreale; 10. Baucina; 11. Himera; 12. Madonie occidentali; 13. Alesa; 14. Troina; 15. Upper Simeto Valley; 16. Morgantina; 17. Lercara Friddi; 18. Castronovo di Sicilia; 19. Monti Sicani; 20. Medio bacino del Platani; 21. Basso bacino del Platani; 22. Eraklea Minoa; 23. Costa ad Ovest di Agrigento; 24. Cignana; 25. Gela; 26. Medio bacino del Salso; 27. Braemi; 28. Philosophiana; 29. Torcicoda; 30. Gornalunga-Margi; 31. Camarina; 32. Rosolini; 33. Cassibile; 34. Priolo; 35. Lentini; 36. Tindari; 37. Patrì-Rodì Milici

**A complex network
composed of settlements different in size and functions
in part existing since the Hellenistic period
that changes in space and time
with evident sub-regional differences**

F. Ducati (ongoing work): mapping rural settlements in late roman Sicily



F. Ducati (ongoing work): mapping rural settlements in late roman Sicily



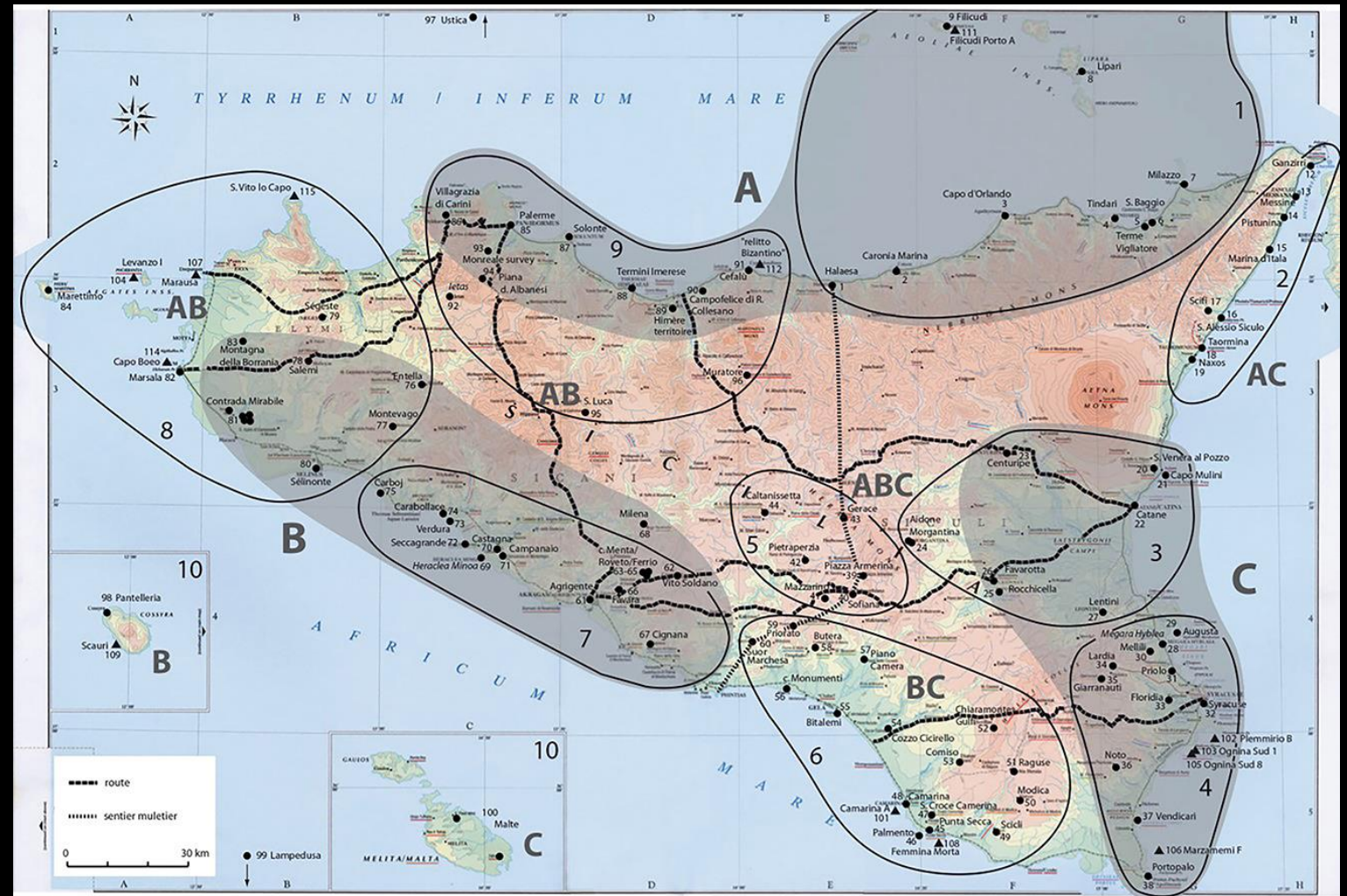


CASR project (2008-2016)

La ceramica africana
nella Sicilia romana

La ceramique africaine
dans la Sicile romaine

a cura di / sous la direction de
Daniele Malfitana e / et Michel Bonifay



Tomo / Tome I

Testo e Tavole
Texte et Planches

Three main distribution zone:

A: Generic supply is dominant (like Ostia)

B: Privileged contacts with Capo Bon (northern Tunisia)

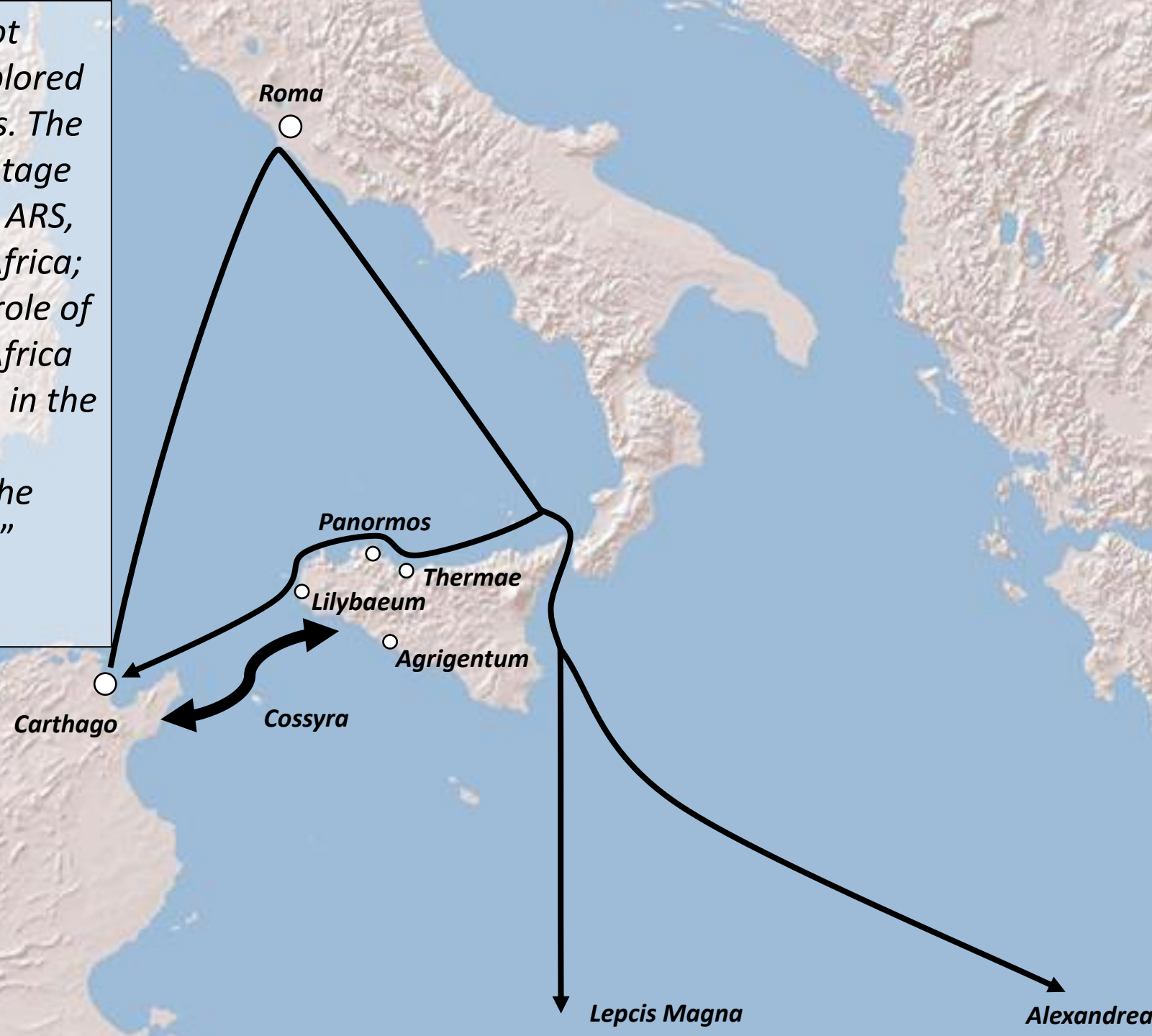
C: Diversified supply



BY

“Two mechanisms, which are not necessarily exclusive, will be explored here to explain these differences. The first is the potential role of cabotage as a distribution mechanism for ARS, given the proximity of Sicily to Africa; and the second is the potential role of Rome as an entrepôt between Africa and the western Mediterranean in the redistribution of ARS, given the pivotal role played by Rome in the economy of the Mediterranean.”

(Fentress et al. 2004)

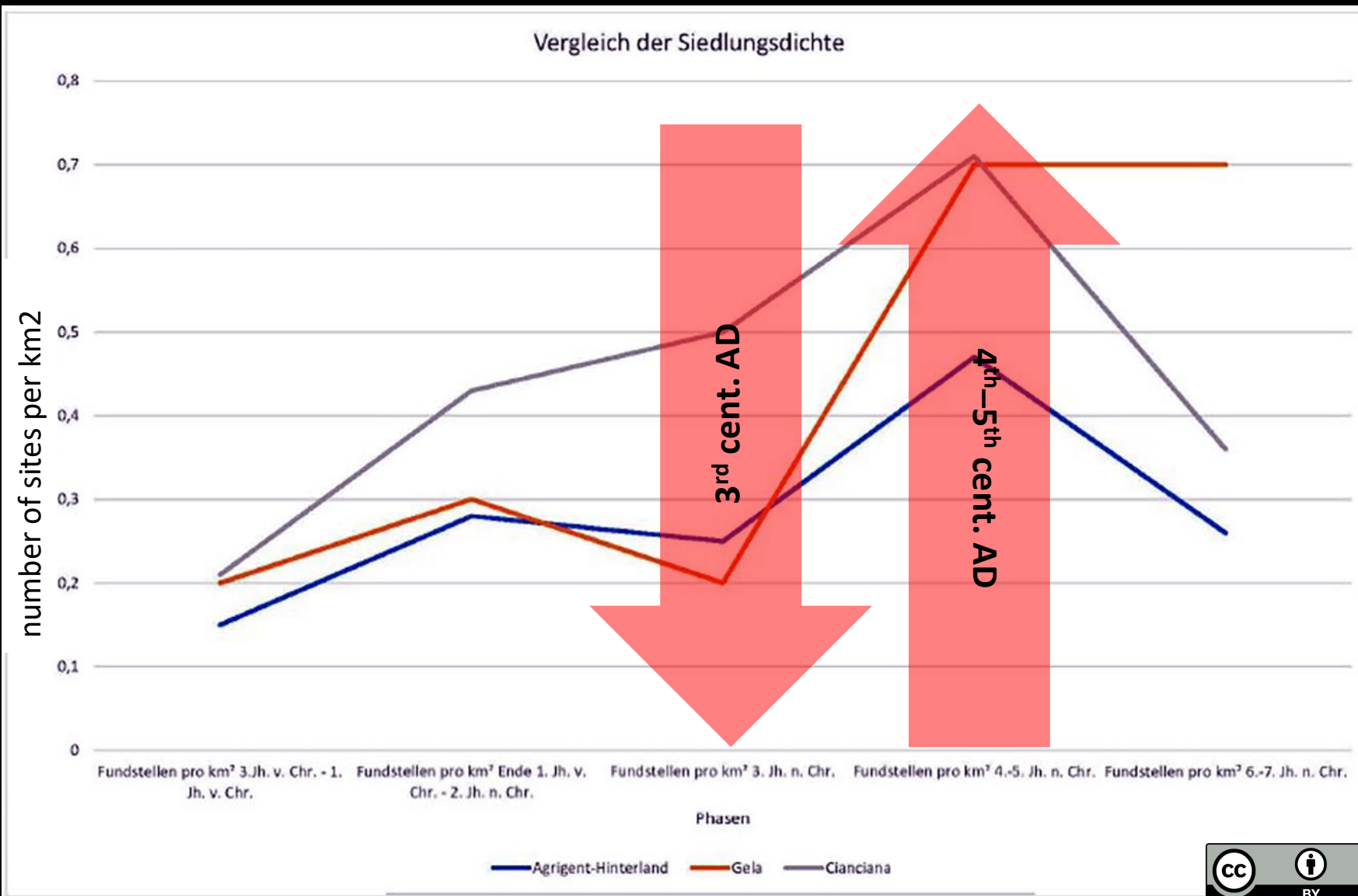
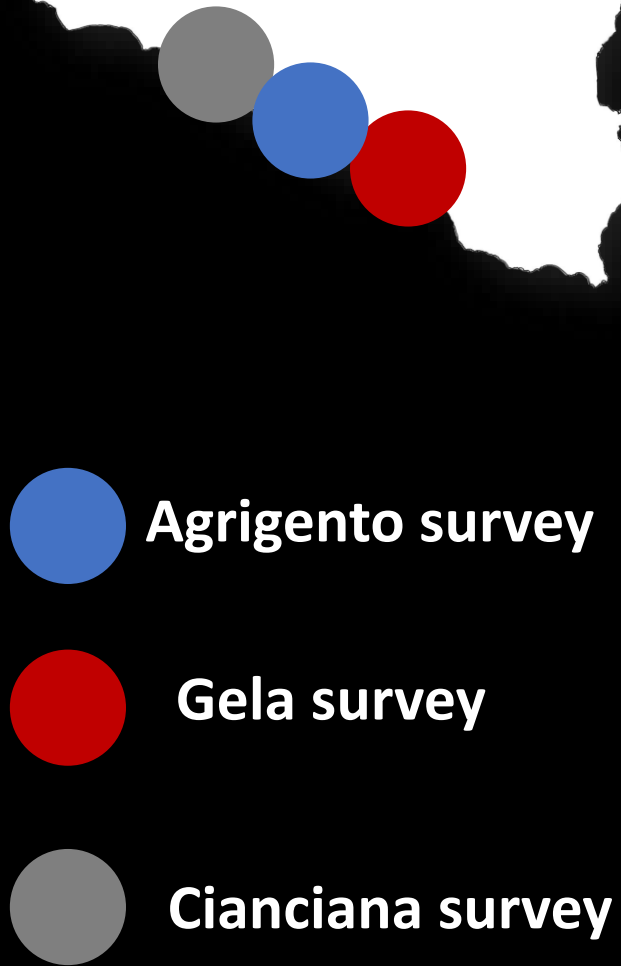


Transition I

the crisis of the minor rural settlements

3rd century AD

A comparison between the Agrigento, Gela and Cianciana surveys

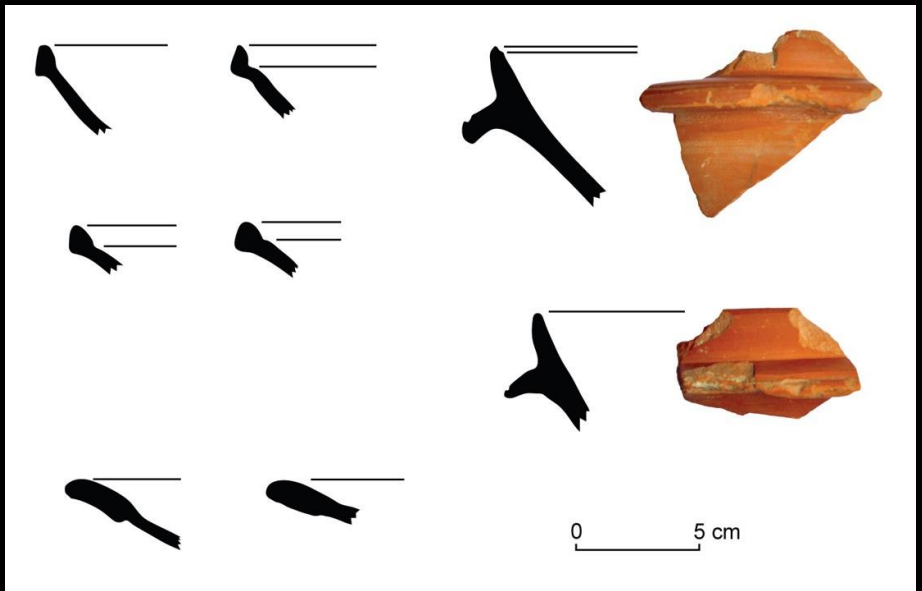


(Klug 2018, Fig. 4)

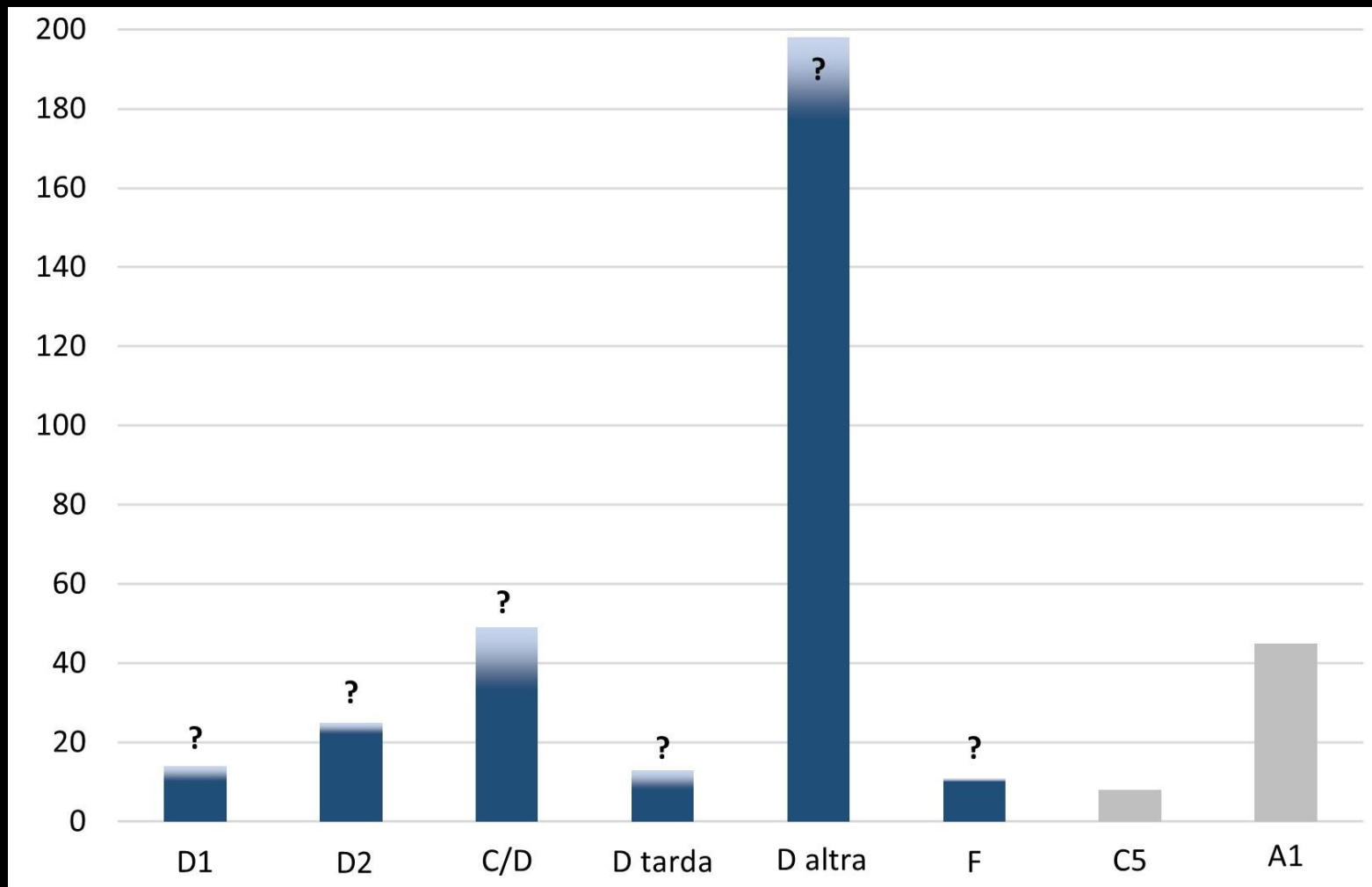


Cignana survey: African Red Slip wares (1st -7th centuries)

Cignana



(Ducati, in progress)





(Ducati, in progress)

Acknowledgement: Dr Maria Serena Rizzo (Parco Archeologico Valle dei Templi)

The Durruei seaside villa

(Polito & Tripodi 2018, p. 8, 16, 20)

Durruei



Planimetria generale della villa:

- 1 - *viridarium*
- 2 - portico con peristilio
- 3 - bacino
- 4 - *tablinum*
- 5 - *cubiculum* occidentale
- 6 - anticamera del *cubiculum* occidentale
- 7 - *cubiculum* orientale
- 8 - anticamera del *cubiculum* orientale
- 9 - *triclinium*
- 10 - anticamera del *triclinium* e ambiente di passaggio alle terme di Nettuno
- 11 - grande ambiente rettangolare
- 12 - prospetto monumentale sul mare con i pilastri di un arco a due forni
- 13-14 - ambienti di servizio delle terme di Nettuno
- 15 - *apodyterium* delle terme di Nettuno
- 16-17 - Ambienti di servizio
- 18-21 - stanze riscaldate delle terme di Nettuno e vani di servizio a Sud
- 22 - Cisterna
- 23 - *apodyterium* delle terme di Scilla
- 24 - *frigidarium*
- 25 - piscina del *frigidarium*
- 26-28 - ambienti di servizio delle terme di Scilla
- 29-30 - *tepidaria* delle terme di Scilla
- 31 - *caldarium*



Roman settlements in the hinterland of Palermo



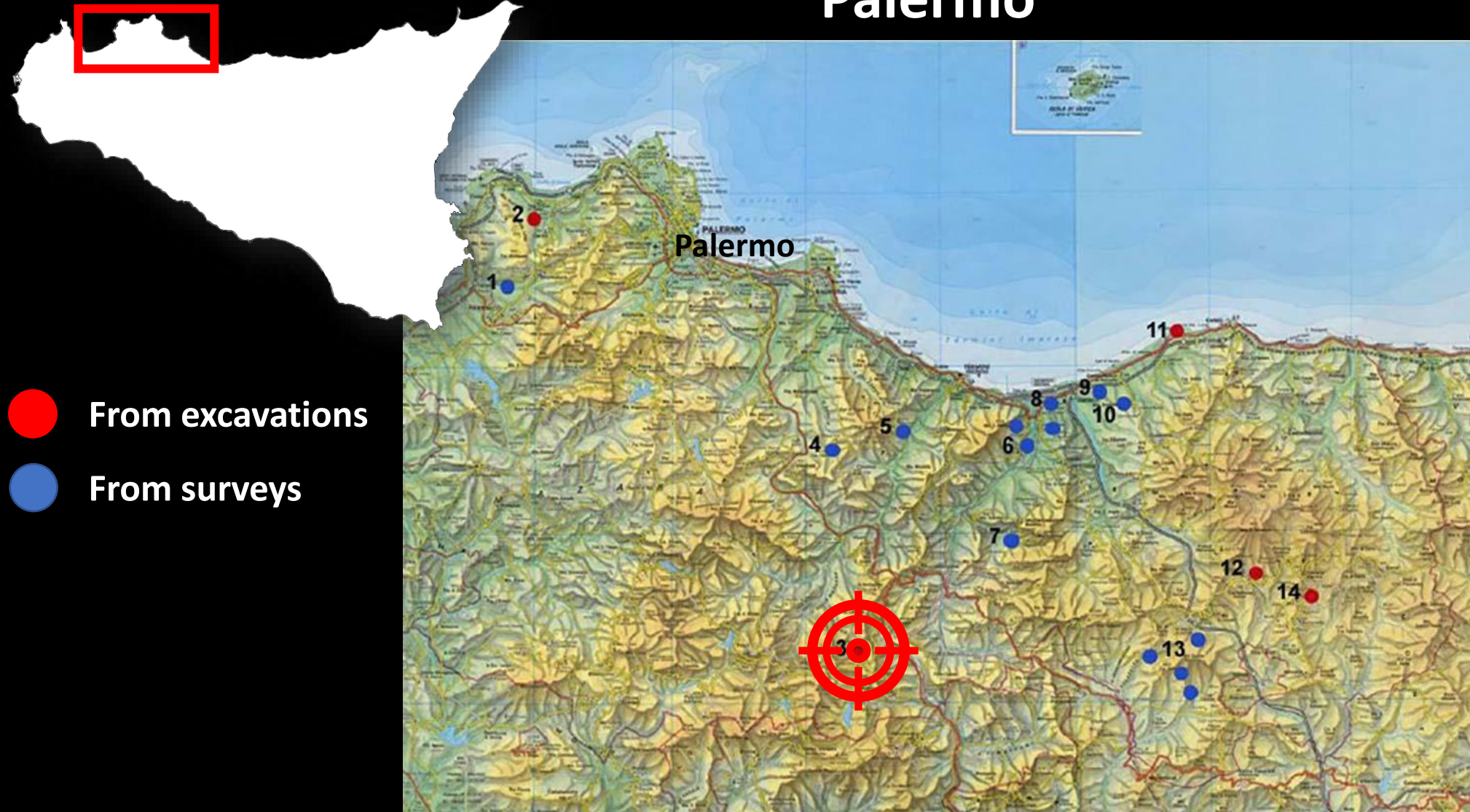
(Cucco 2016, Fig. 1)

The roman settlement at St. Marina



(Belvedere et al. 2016, Fig. 2, 5)

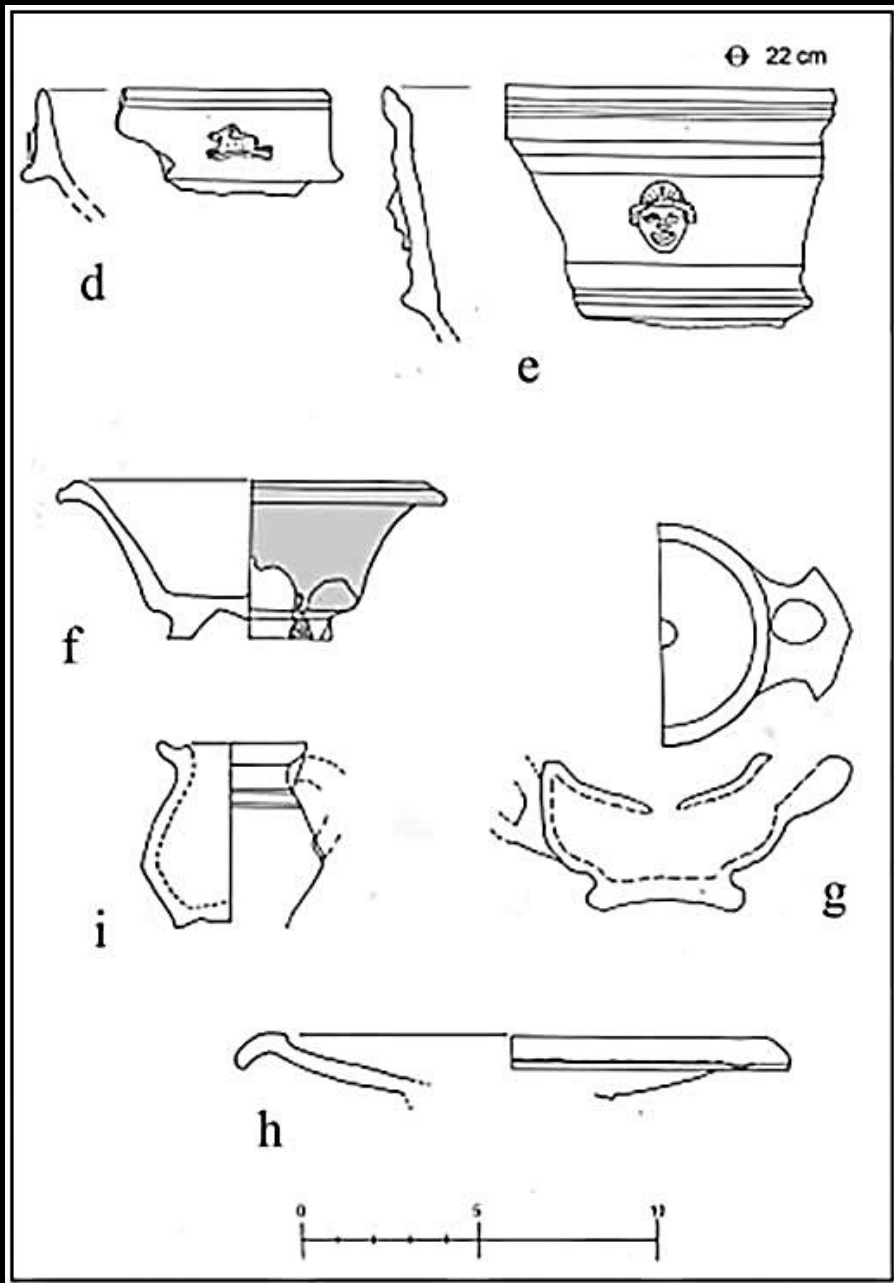
Roman settlements in the hinterland of Palermo



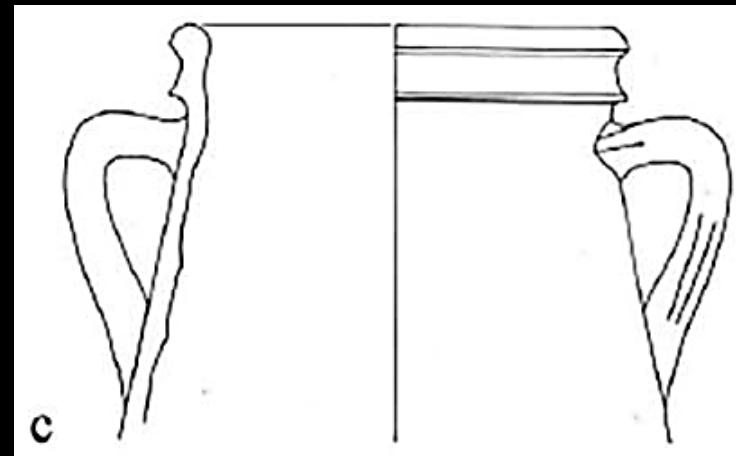
1. Namone; 2. S. Nicola; 3. S. Luca; 4. Balatelle; 5. Ciacca/Gurgo; 6. Ville della bassa valle del Torto; 7. Palisi; 8. Buonfornello; 9. Casa dell'Acquedotto; 10. Terre Bianche; 11. Costa Schiavo; 12. Muratore; 13. Susafa, S. Giacinto, Ciaramito, Tudia; 14. S. Marina.

Roman villa at St. Luca

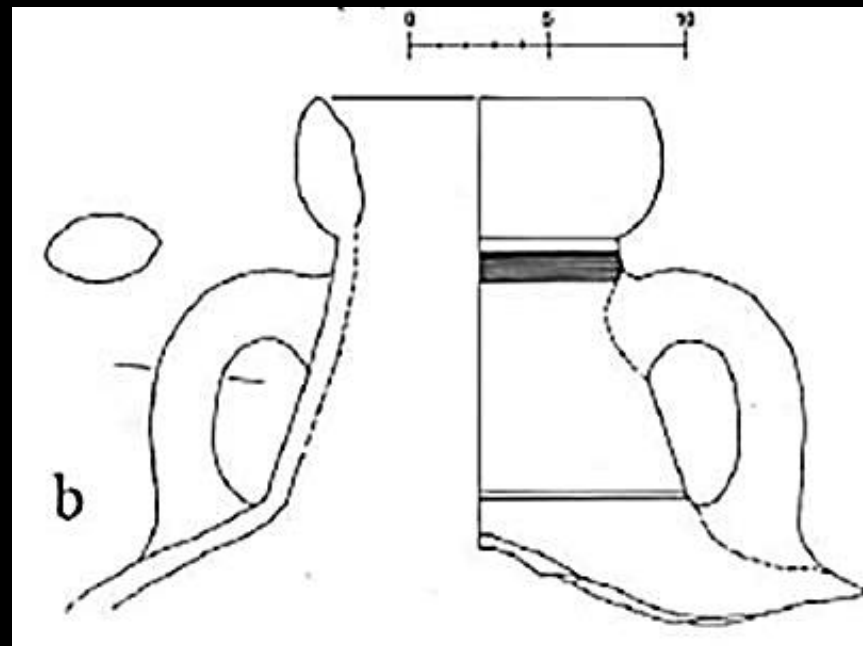




(Vassallo & Zirone 2009, Fig. 503-504)



Italian Sigillata, African Red Slip ware, and amphora Dressel 21-22 from the area of residential building

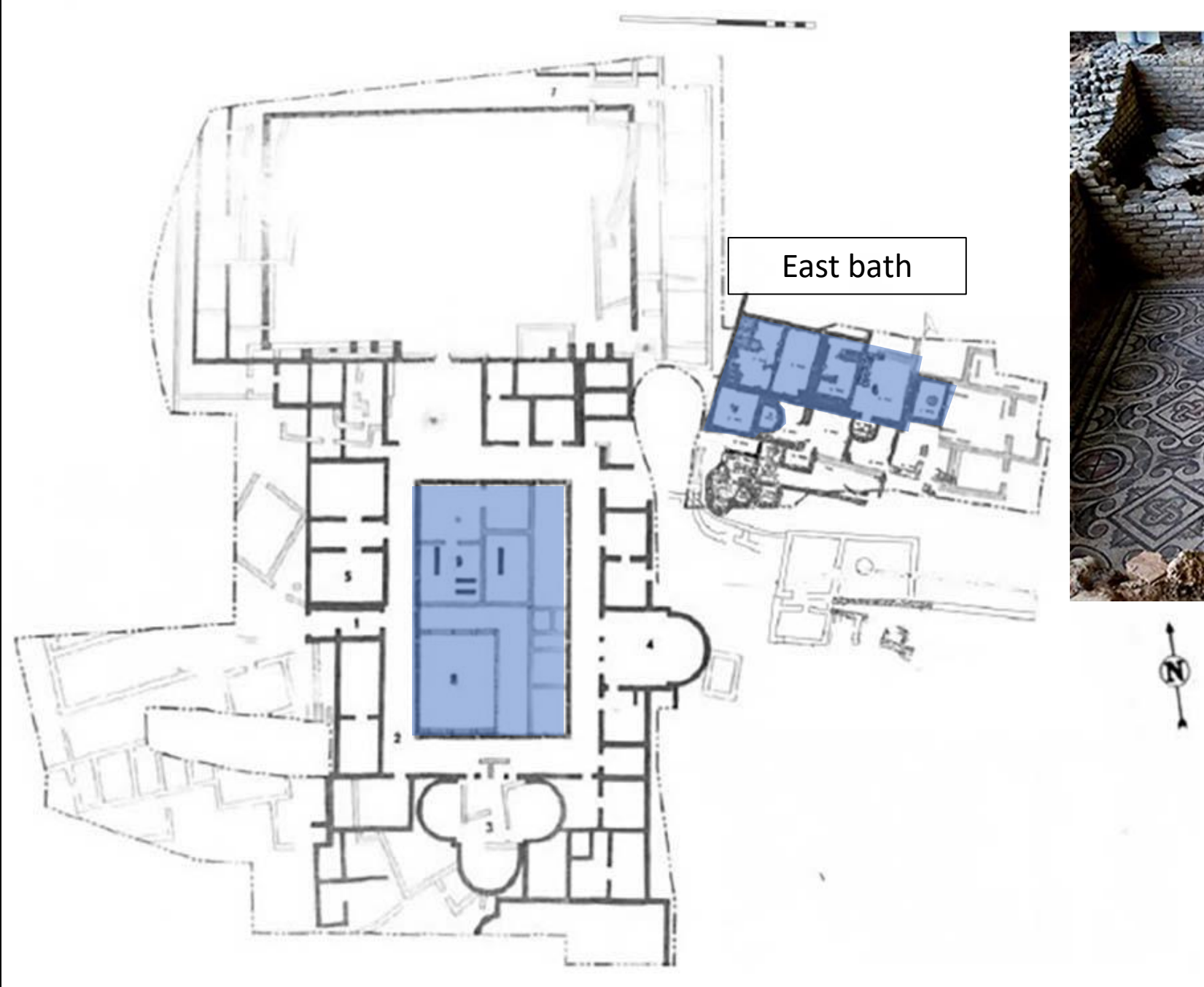


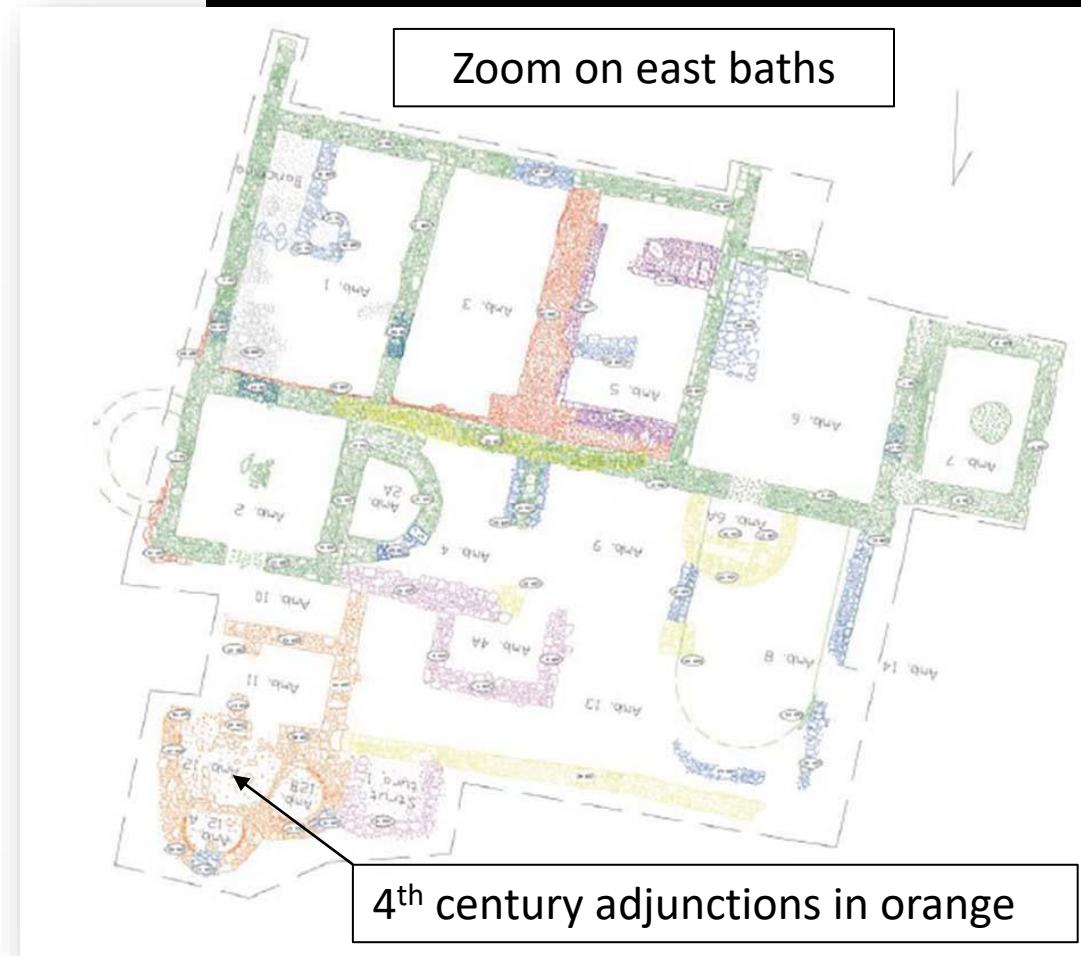
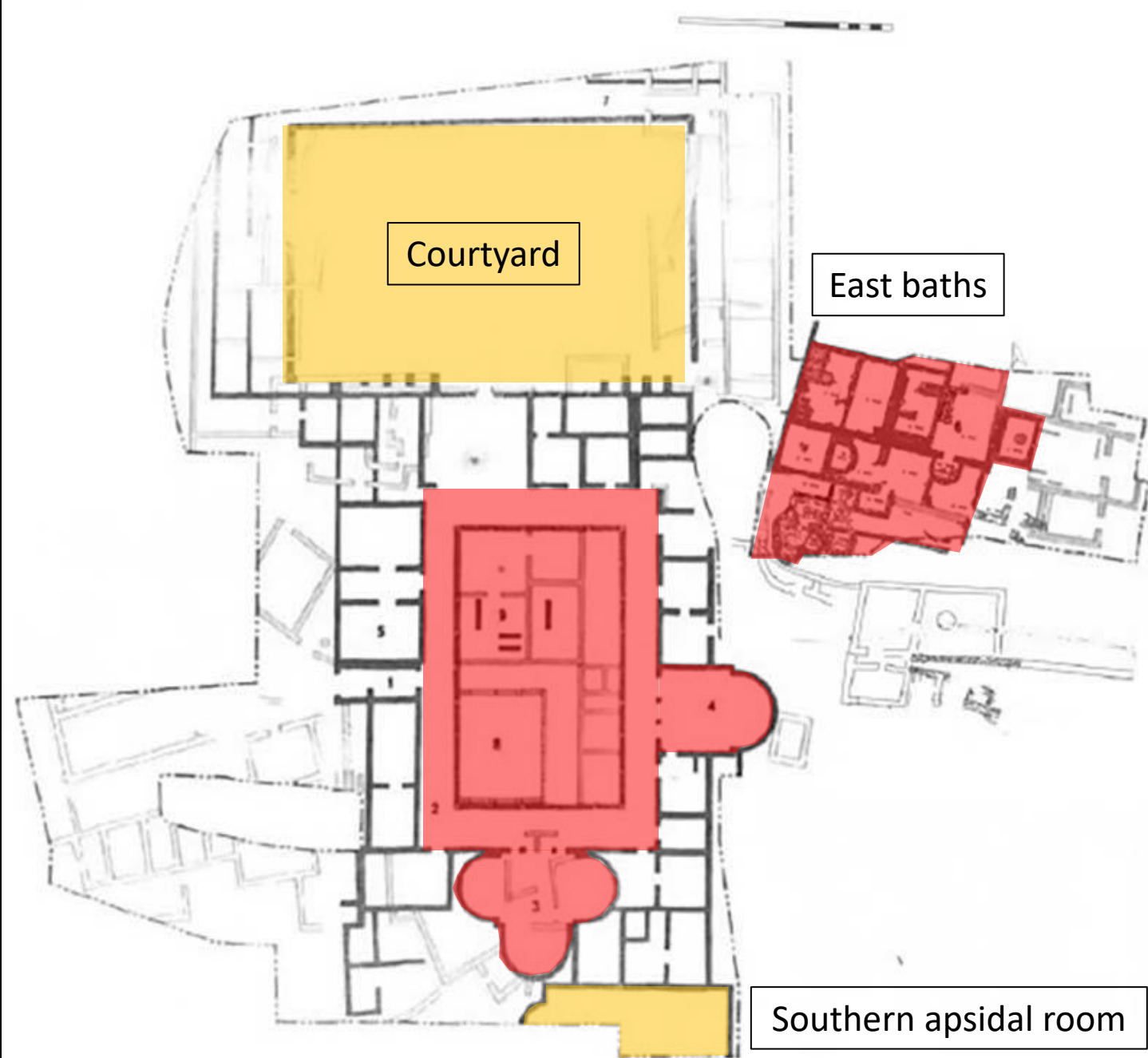
Late African amphora (Key 57) from the apsidal building

Patti Marina

Roman villa at Patti Marina





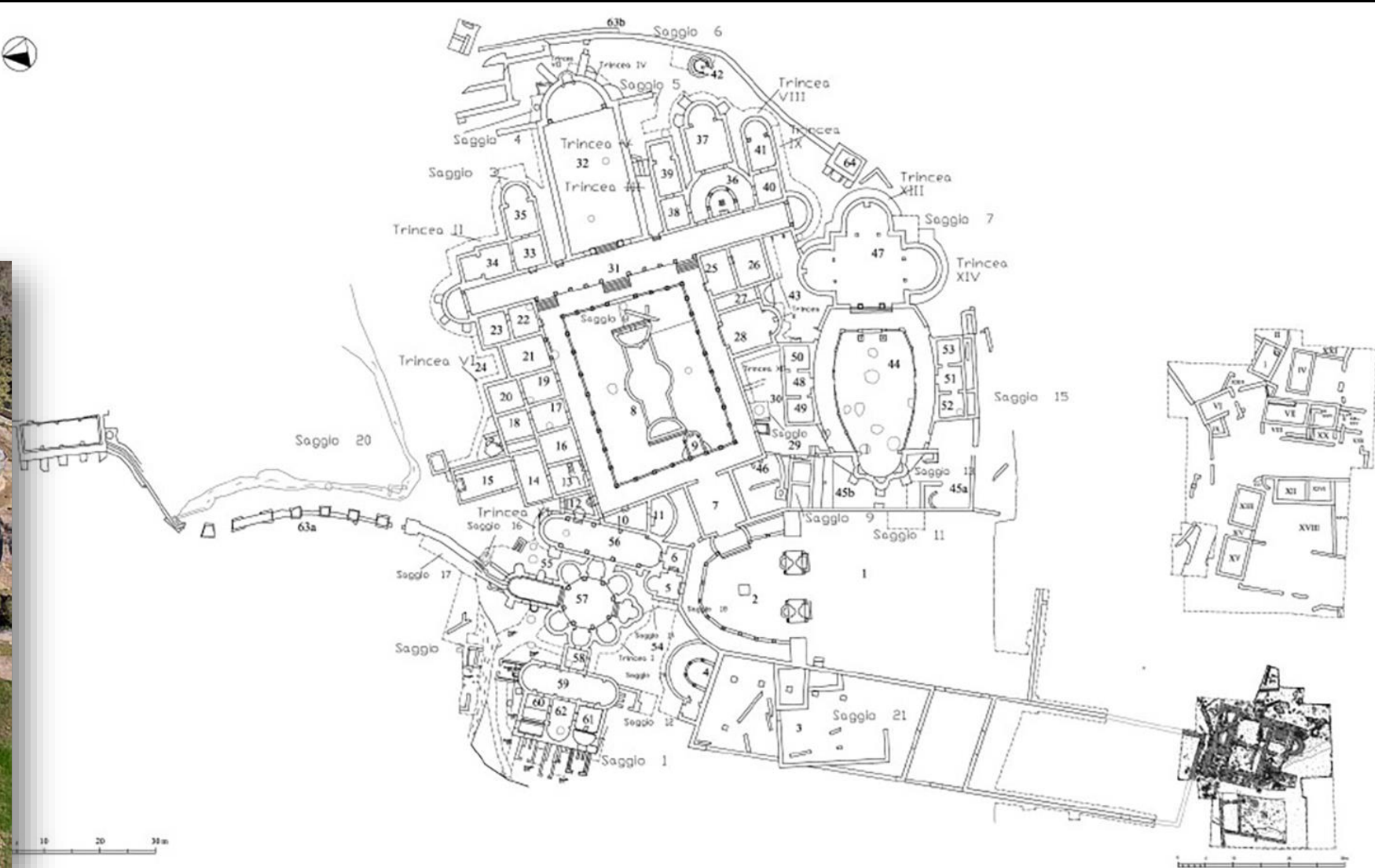


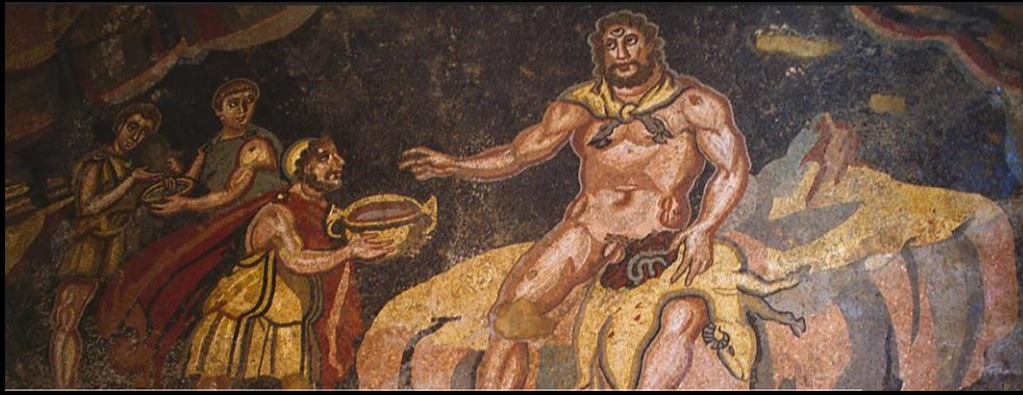
Transition II

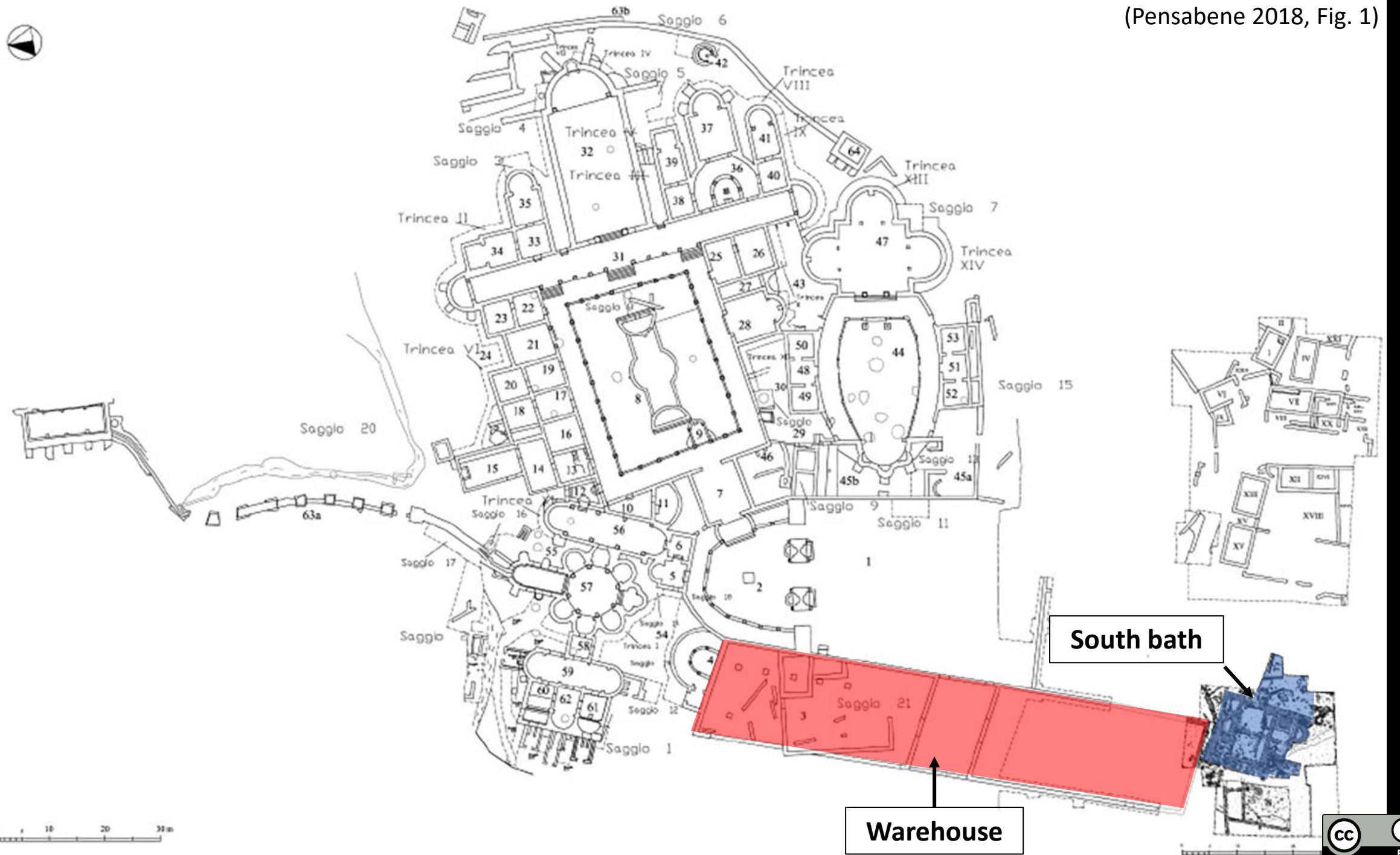
The rise of luxury villas
4th century AD

Villa del Casale

Villa del Casale







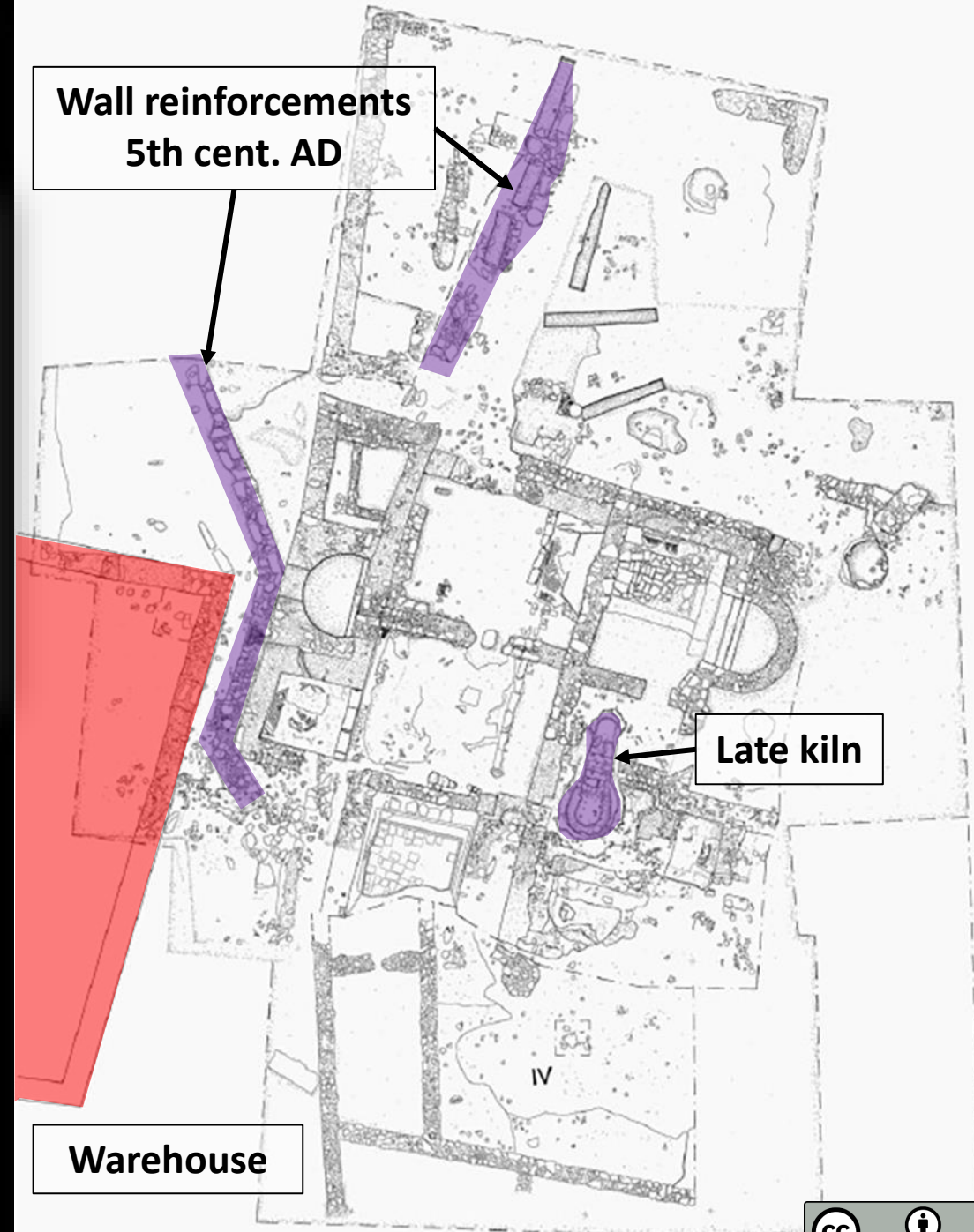
South bath

Warehouse

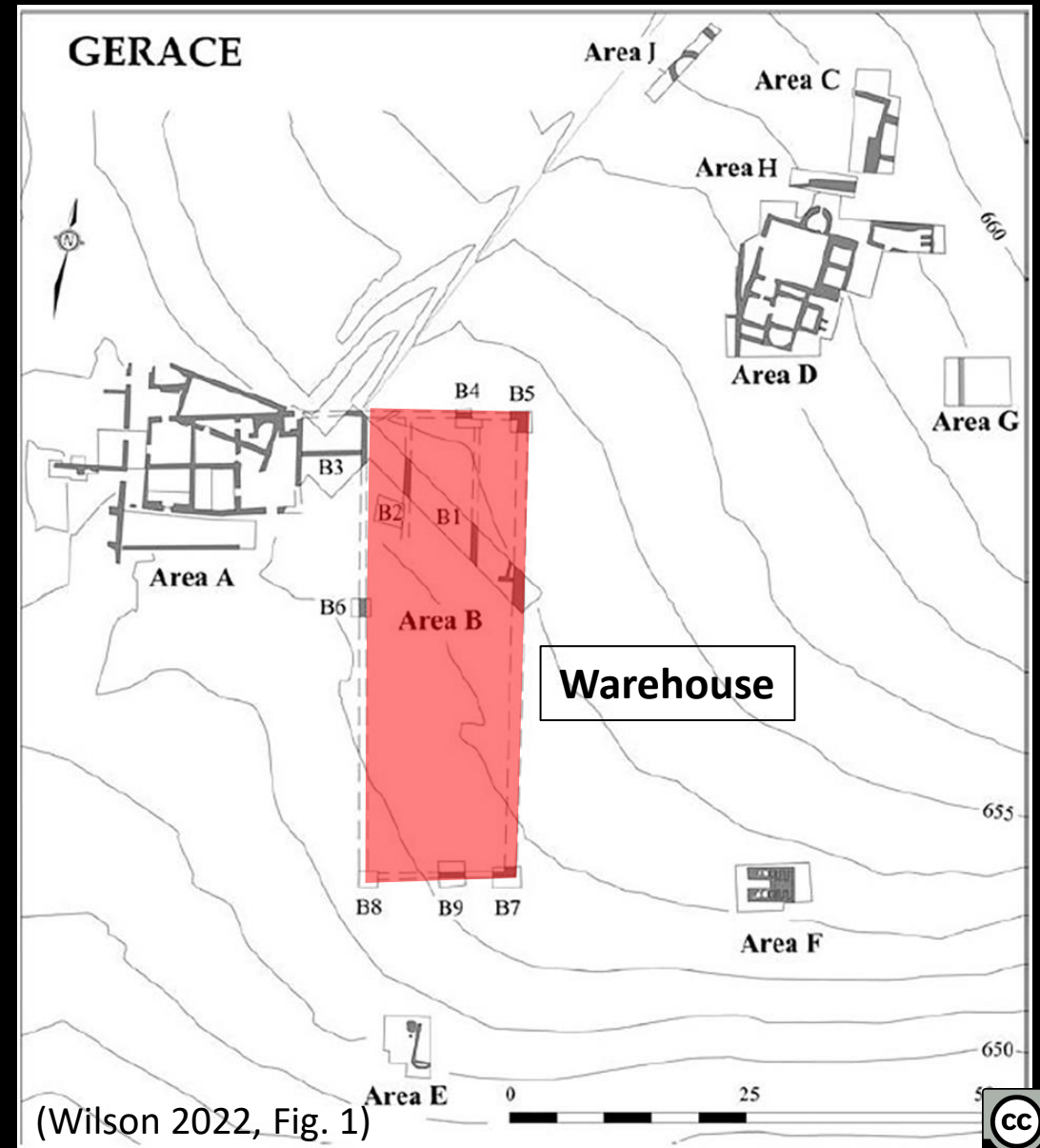
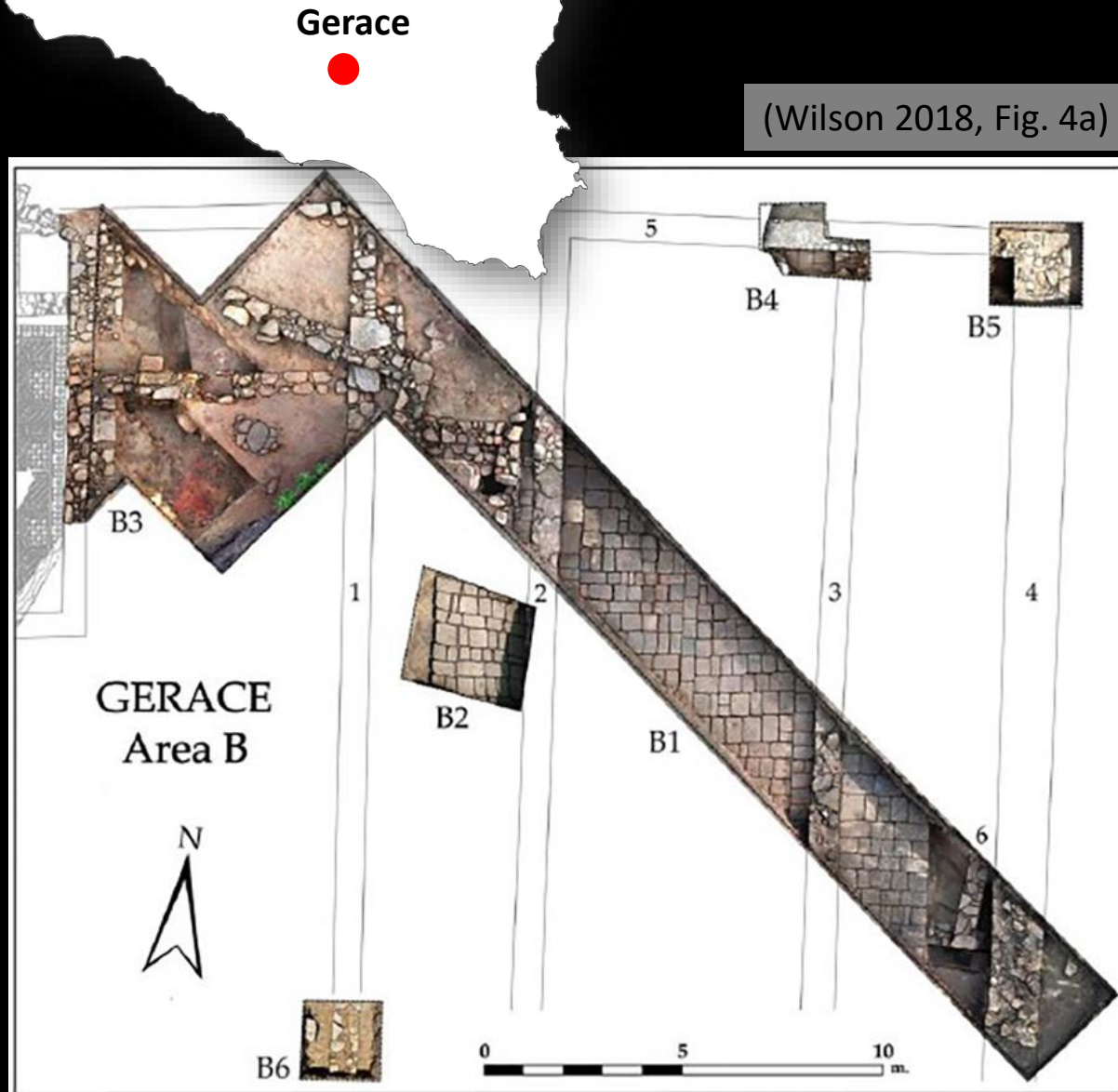


Capitals and columns reused in late walls

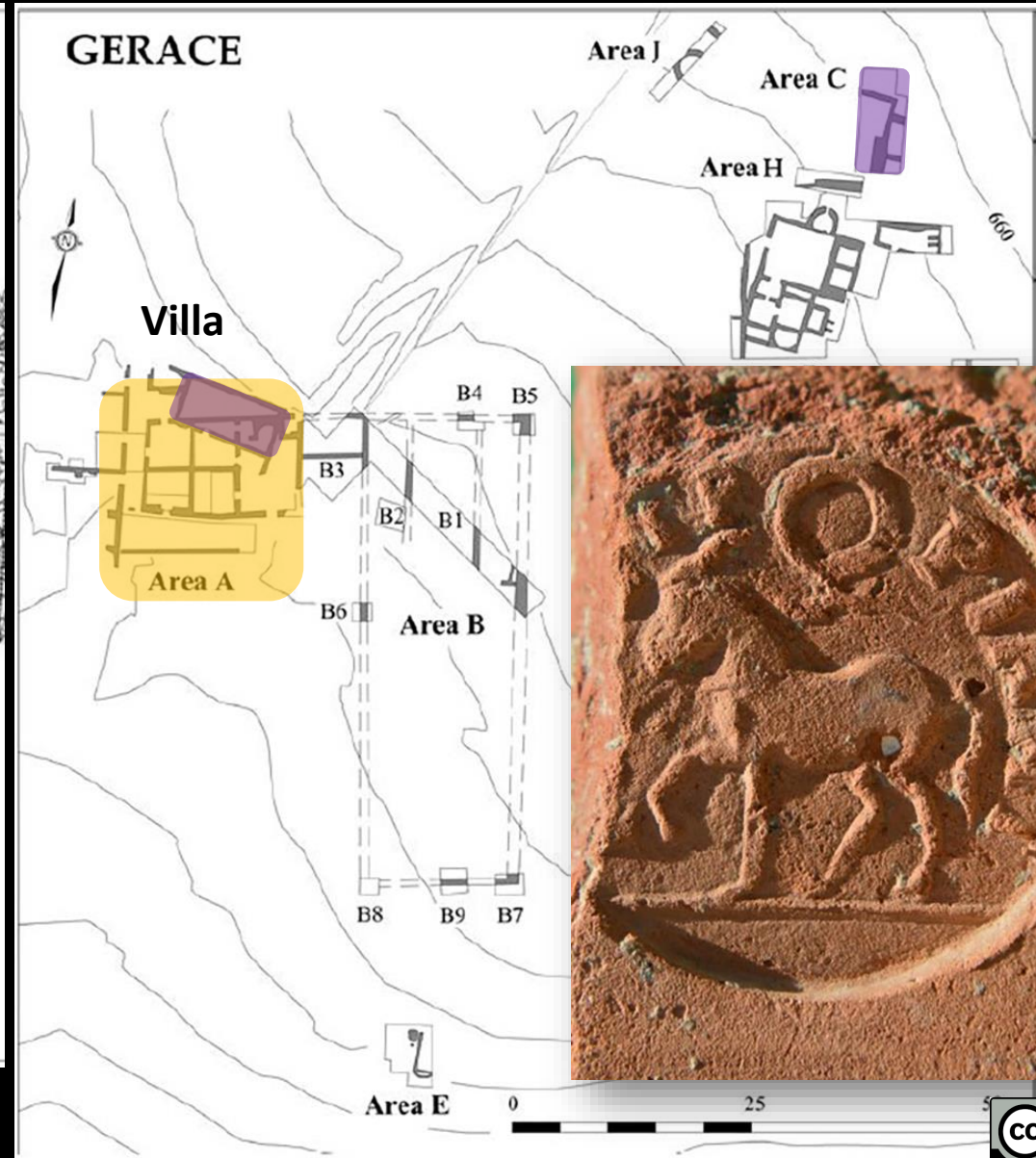
(Pensabene 2018, Fig. 2-4, Tav. I,3, Tav. II,10)



Roman settlement at Gerace

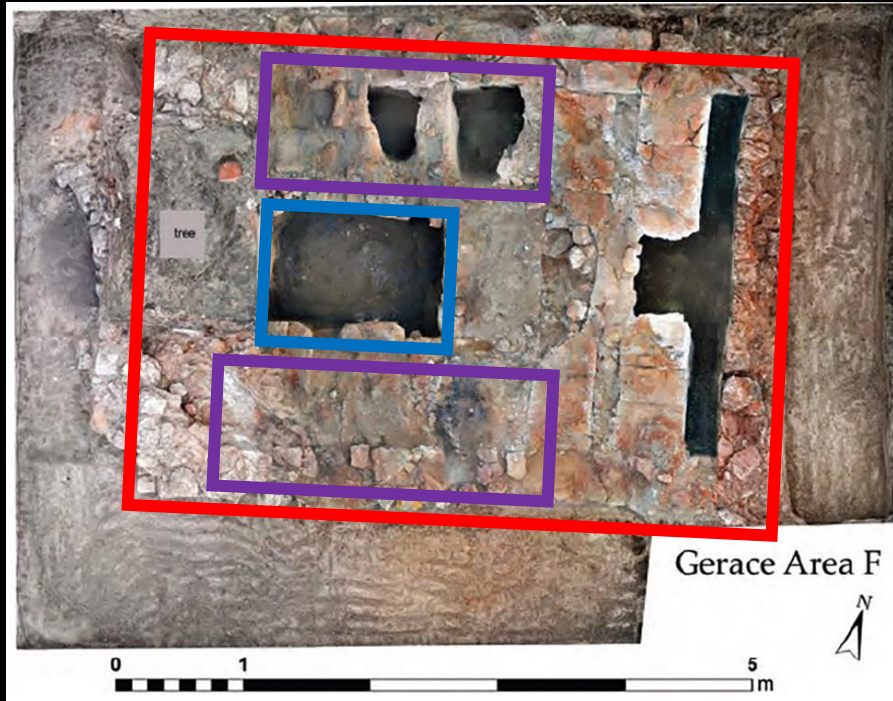


(Wilson 2022, Fig. 1)



(Wilson 2018, Fig. 6, 8d)

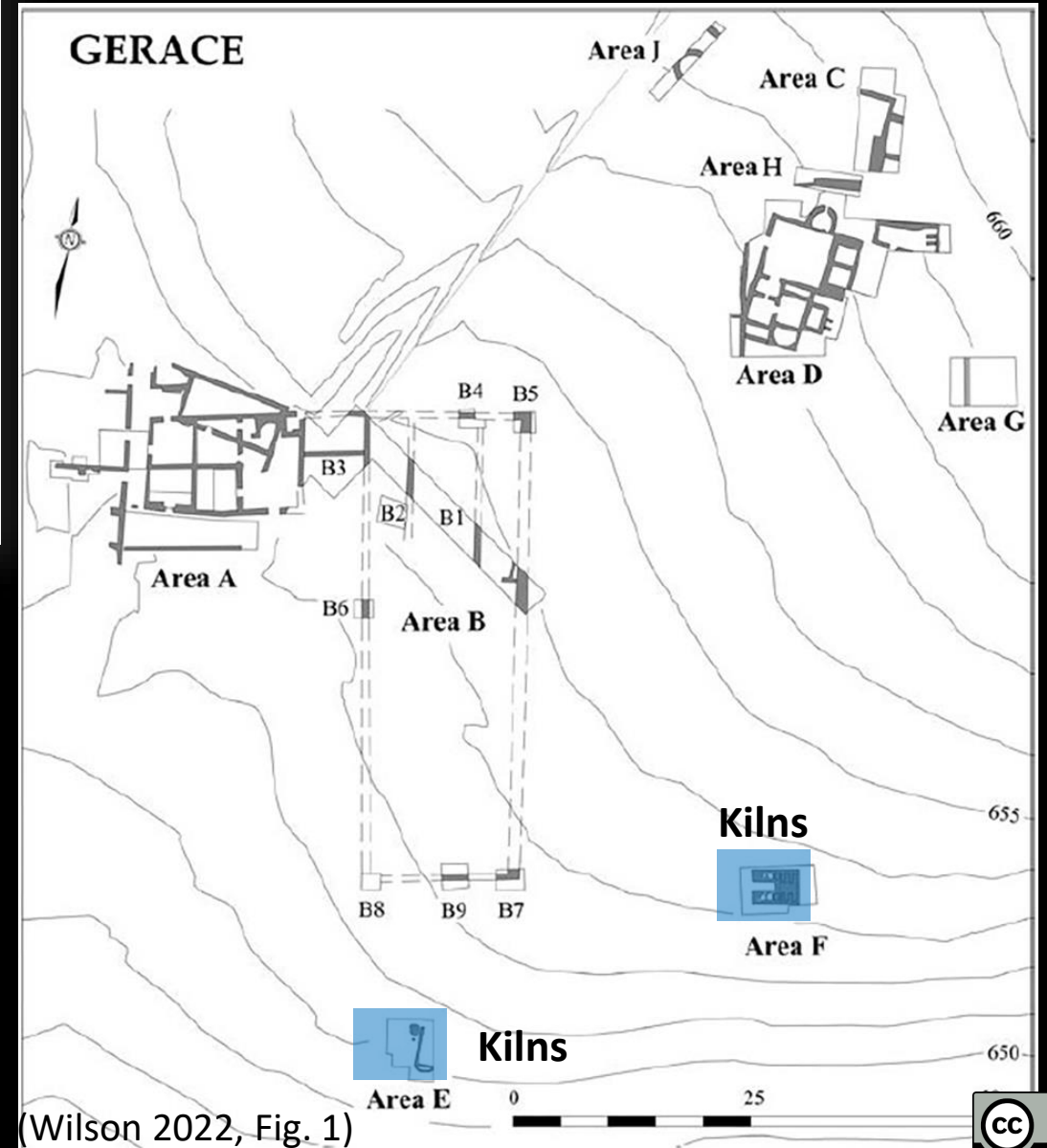
(Wilson 2020, Fig. 2)



5th cent. tile kiln (built after Philipianus' death)

5th cent. reduced kiln

6th cent. small kilns

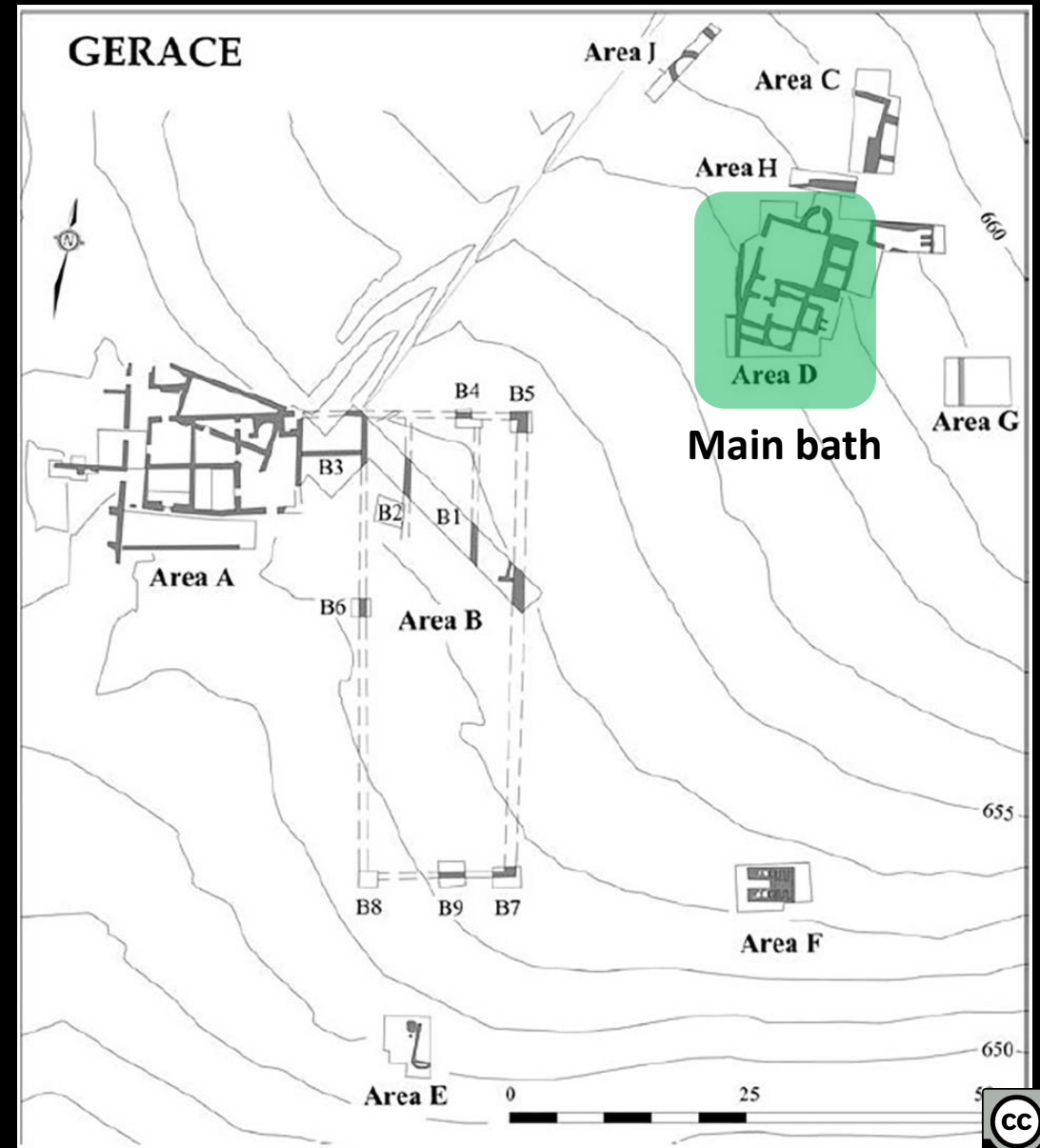
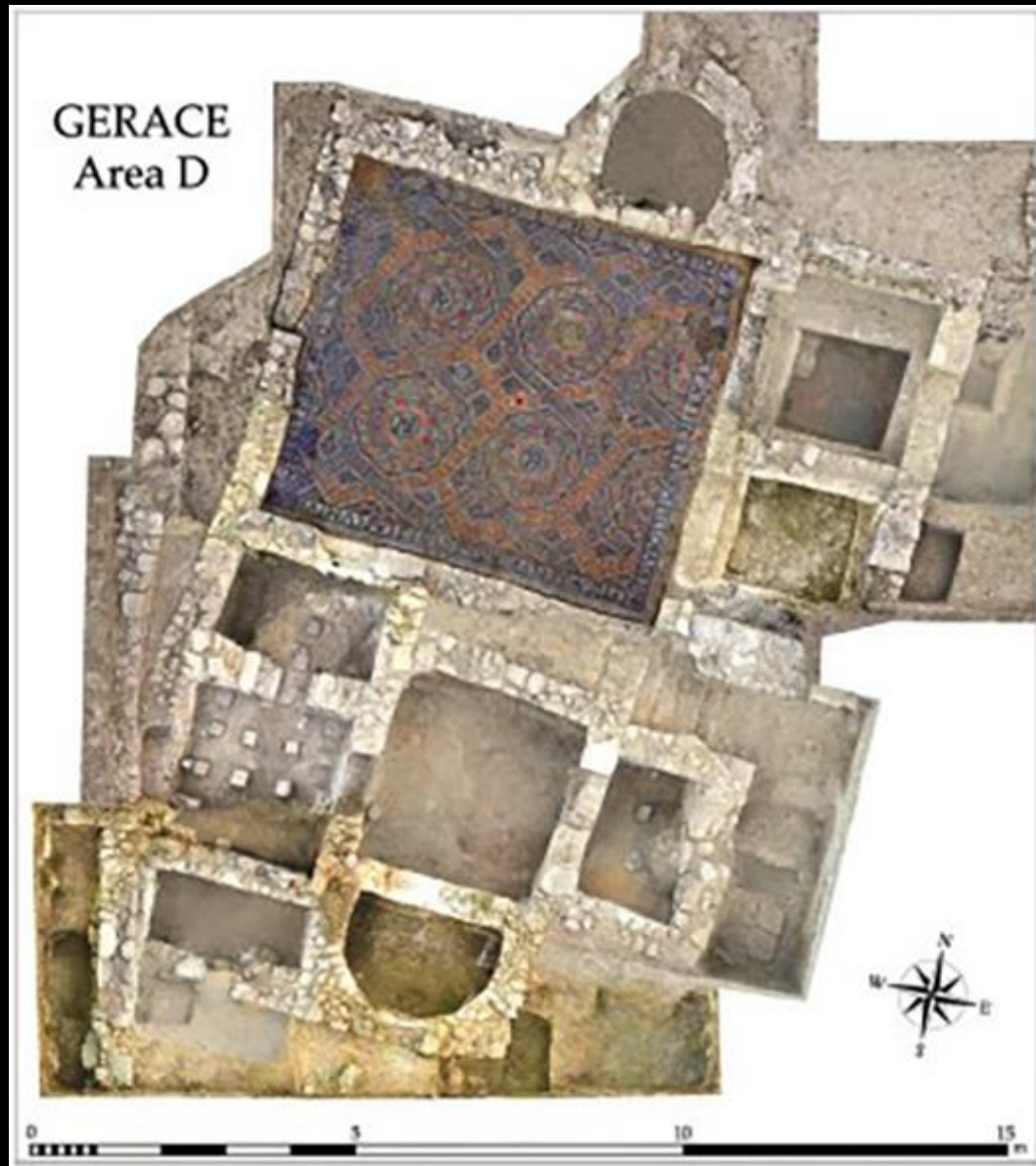


(Wilson 2022, Fig. 1)

(Wilson 2018, Fig. 12)



(Wilson 2022, Fig. 1, 34)

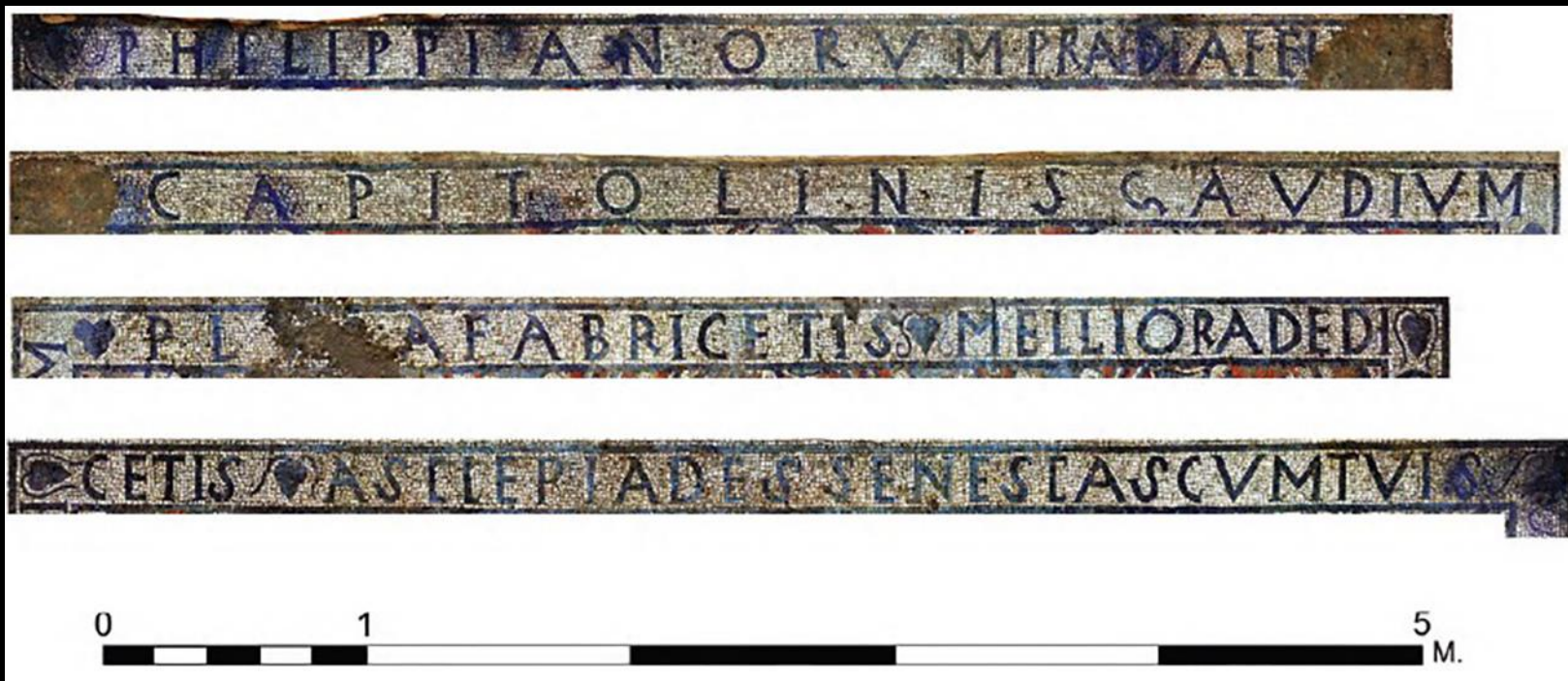




(Wilson 2018, Fig. 20)



(Wilson 2020, Fig. 24, 30-31)



PHILIPPIANORVM PRAEDIA FELI(cia) (palm branch)
CAPITOLINIS GAVDIVM
PLVRA FABRICETIS MELLIORA DEDI
CETIS ASCLEPIADES SENESCAS CVM TVIS

Proposed interpretation:

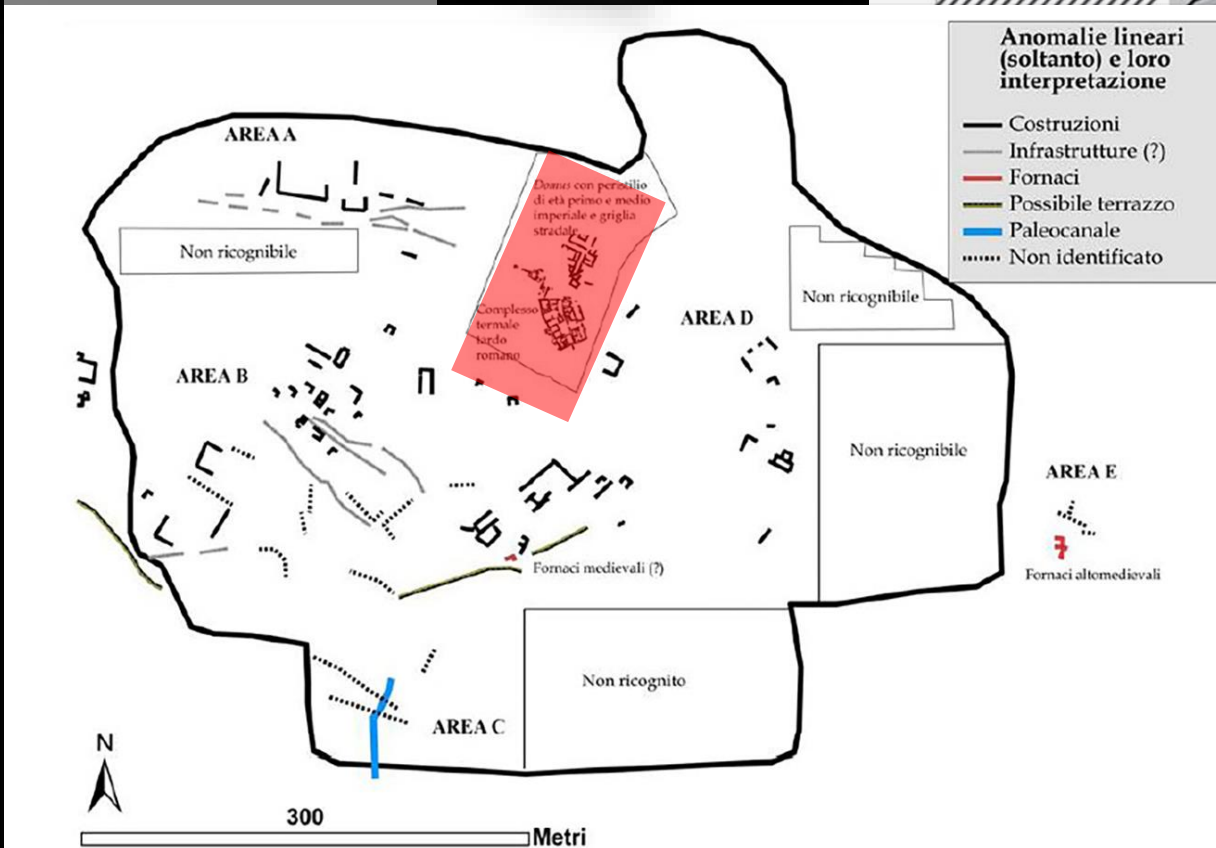
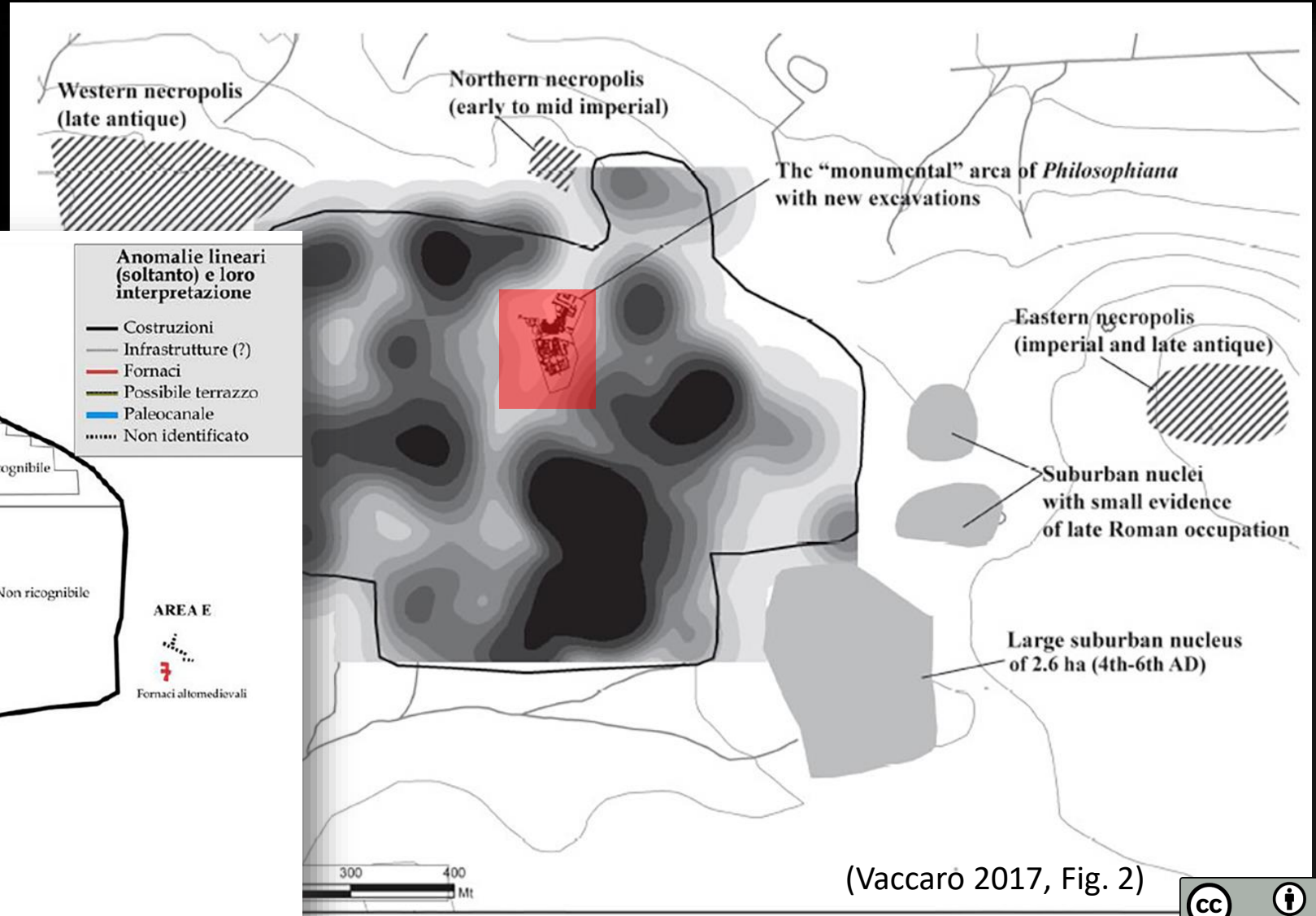
'[May] the estates of the Philippianorum prosper! Joy to the Capitoline [games]! May you build more things, dedicate better things. Asclepiades, may you grow old with your family'

Philosophiana *stationes nunc institutae*

Sofiana



(La Torre 2018a, Fig. 3)

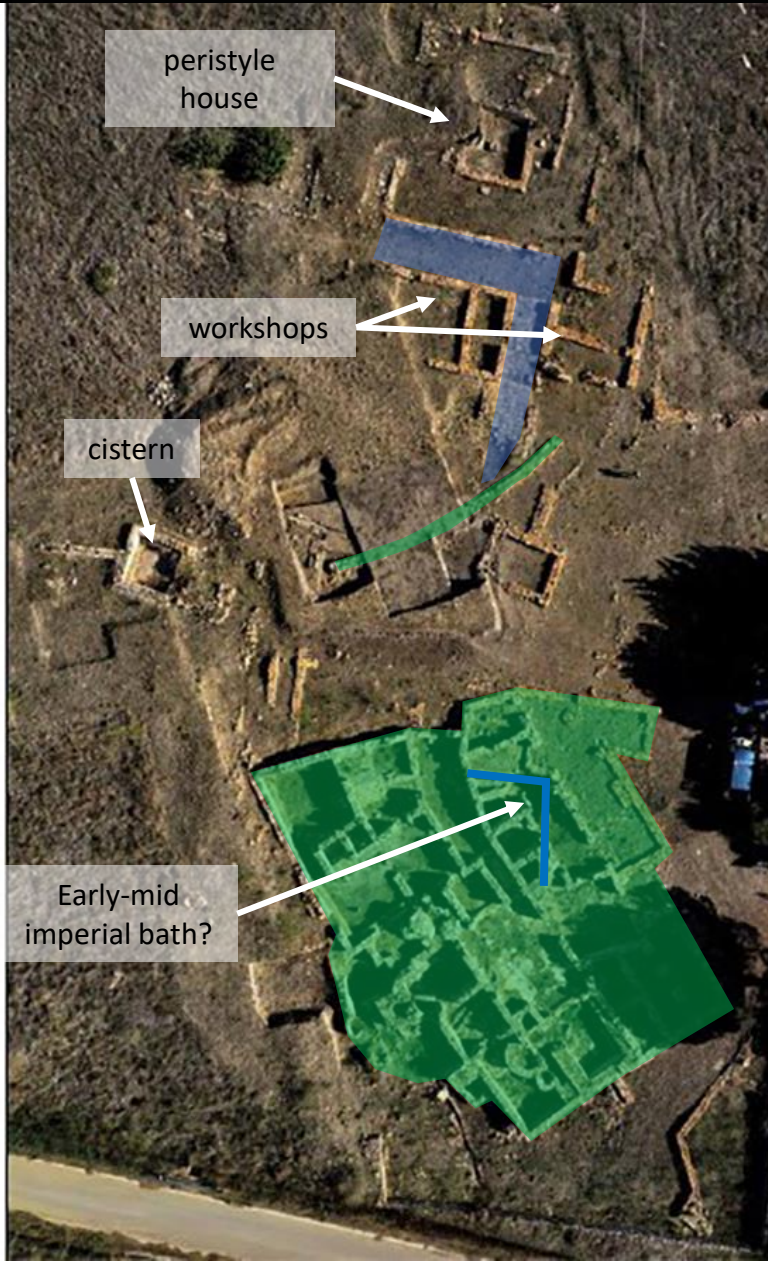


(Vaccaro 2017, Fig. 2)

The monumental area

(La Torre 2018a, Fig. 5)

(Vaccaro 2017, Fig. 3)



Filosofiana survey

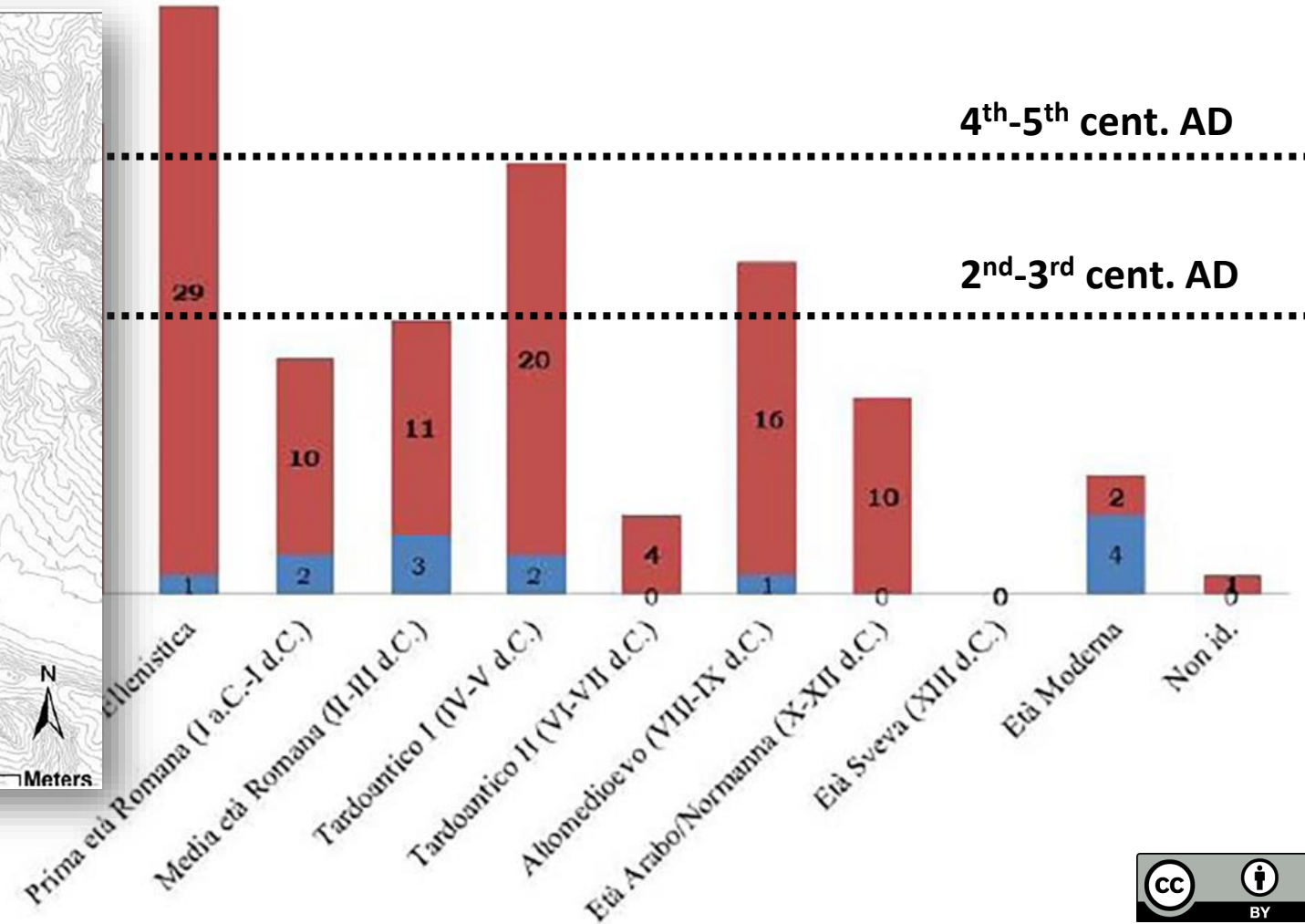
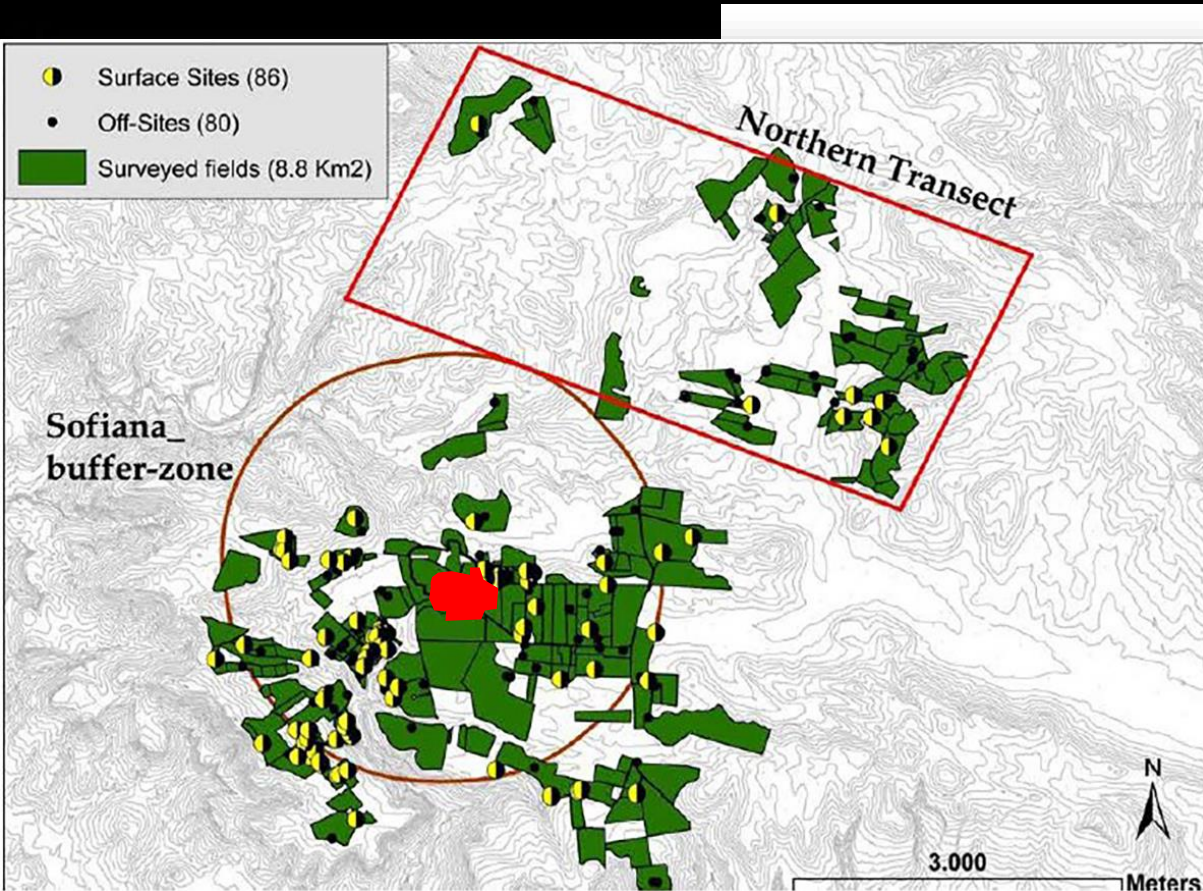
Number of sites according to chronology



North transect



Buffer zone around the site



(La Torre 2018a, Fig. 4, 6)

Transition III

Sprawling agricultural villages

5th – 6th centuries AD

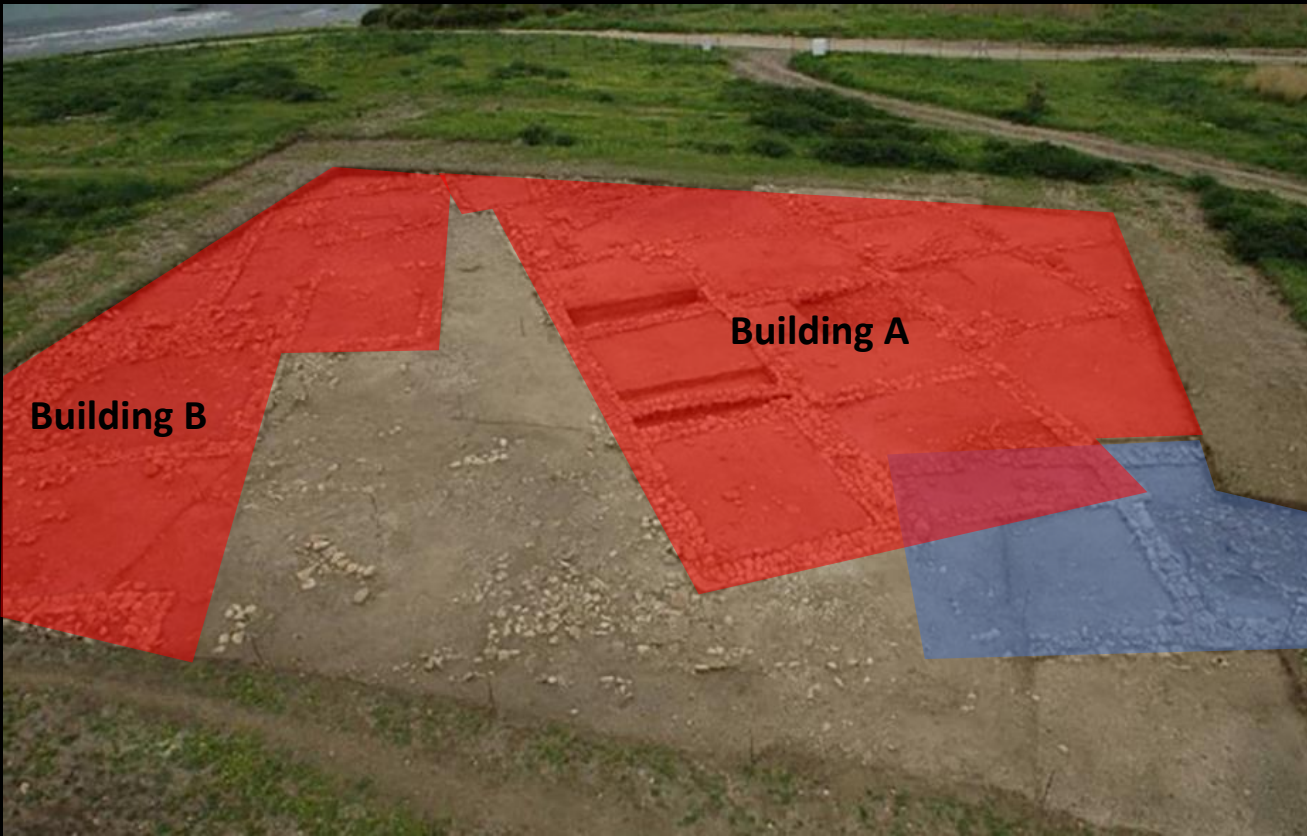
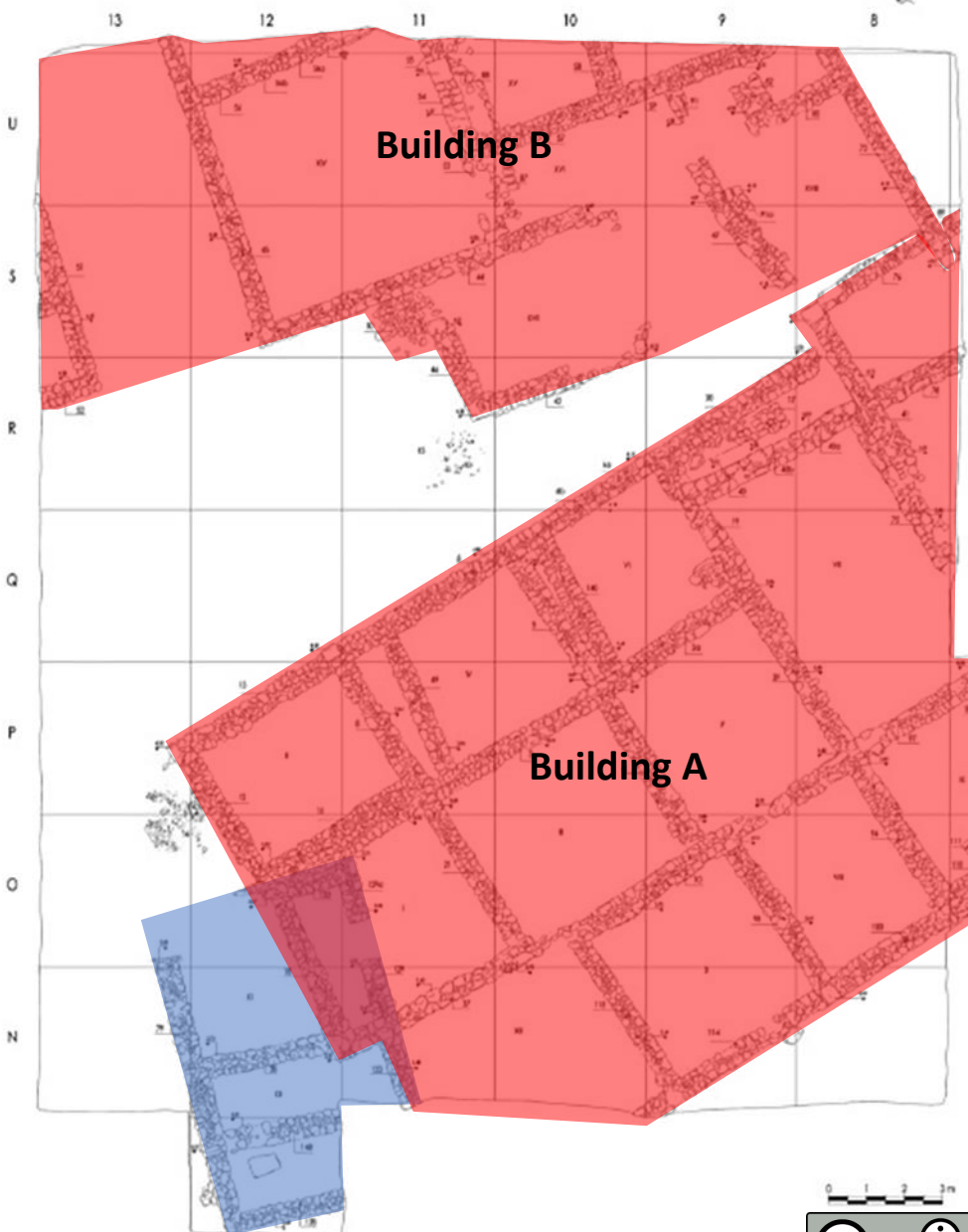
Carabollace

Carabollace

(Caminnecci 2010, Fig. 5-6)

SCIACCA (AG)
CARABOLLACE 2006-07

PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE LOWE
DDBDO Y. C.C.D.M.A.A.



Verdura

Verdura



(Rizzo 2014, Fig. 5)

(Parello, Amico, D'Angelo 2010, Fig. 2)



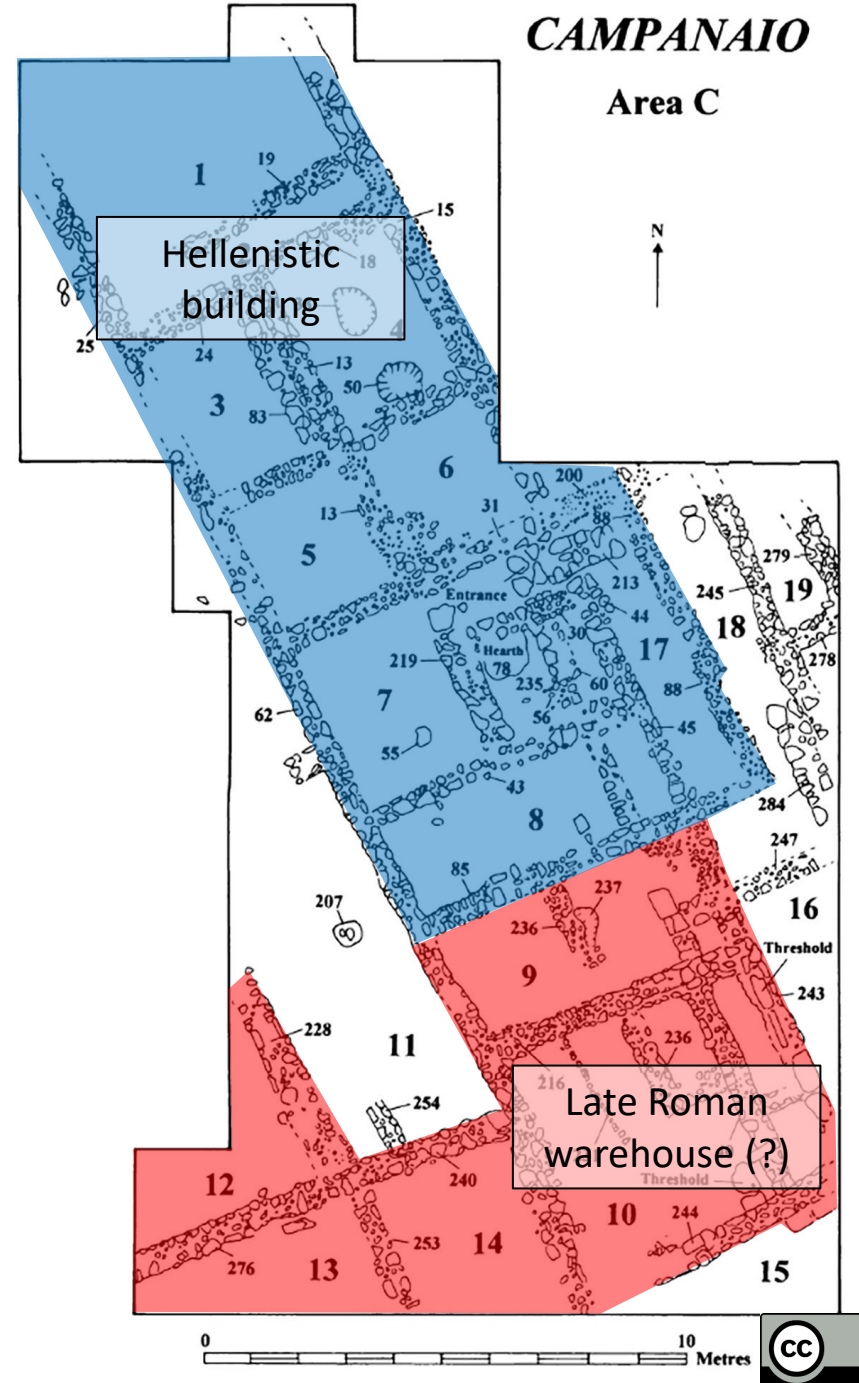
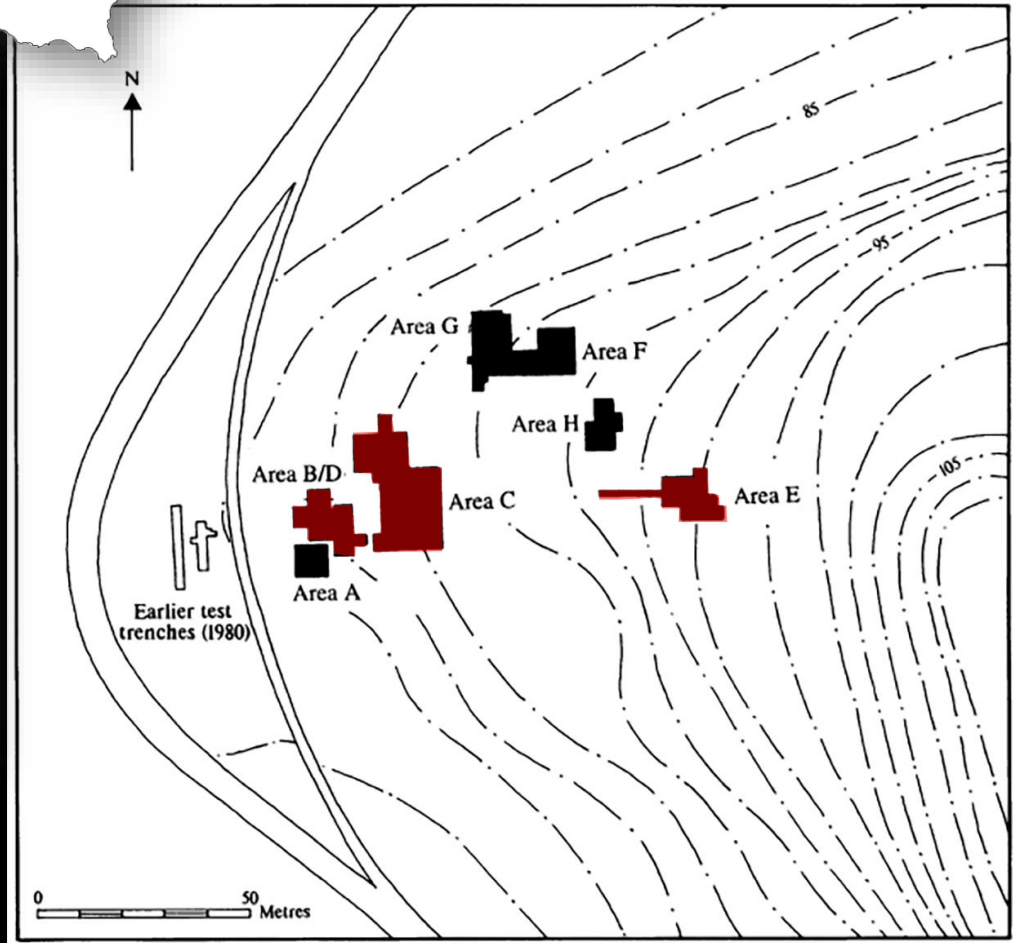
Campanaio

Campanaio

(Wilson 2000, Fig. 2, 5, 9)

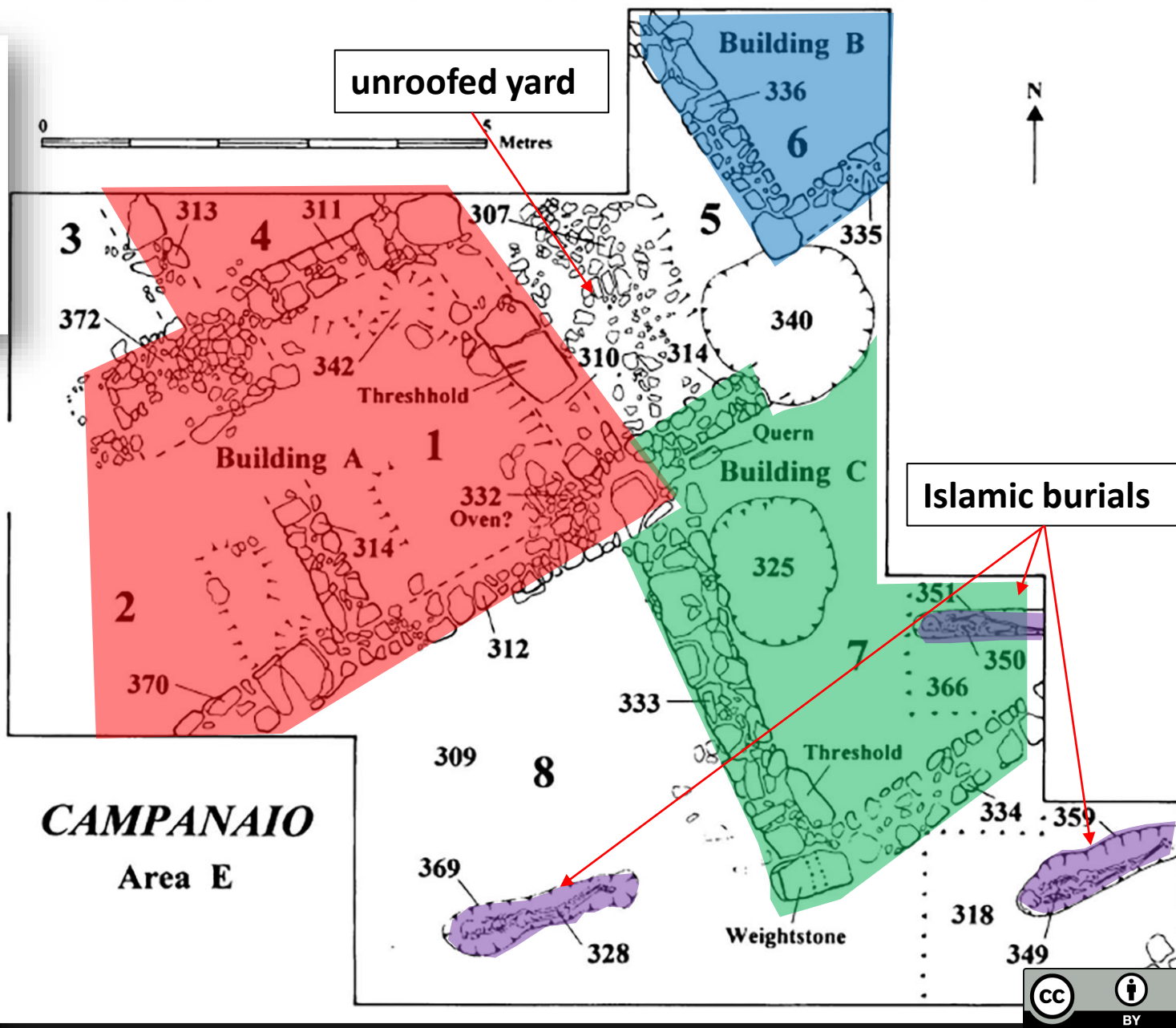
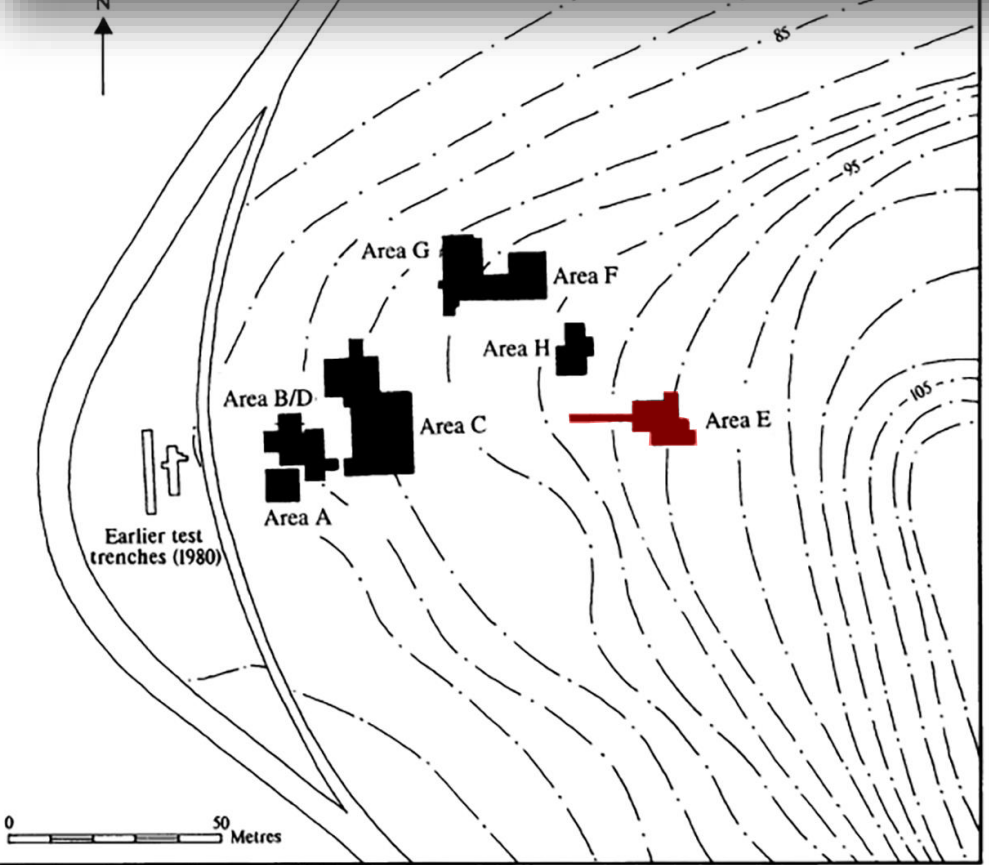
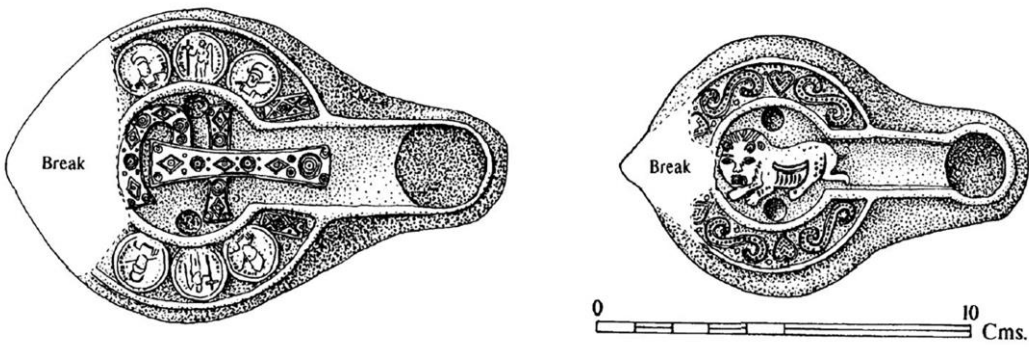


Smashed tiles and amphora deposit, 5th cent. AD, from Room 13



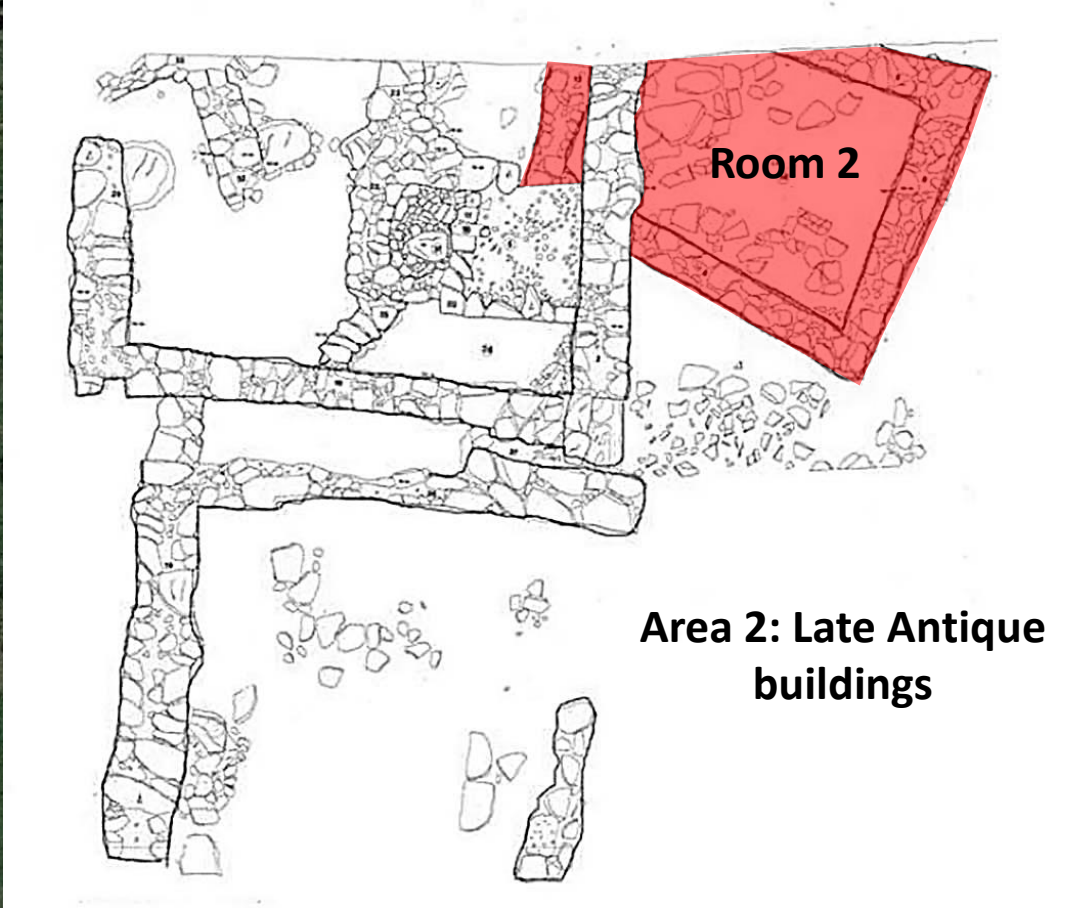
impressions of a gold coin of Emperor Theodosius II AD 430

(Wilson 2000, Fig. 2, 10, 11)



Muratore

Muratore

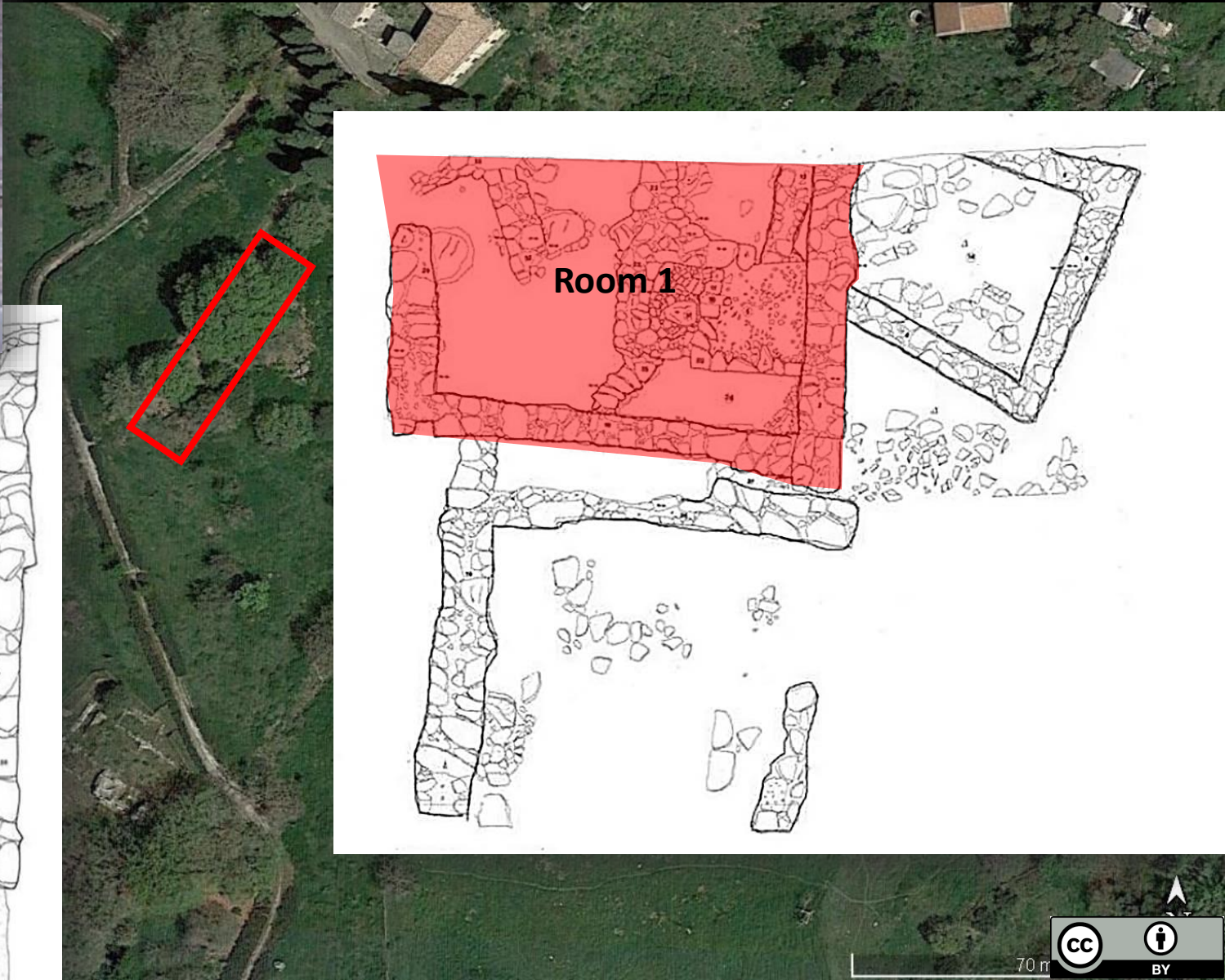
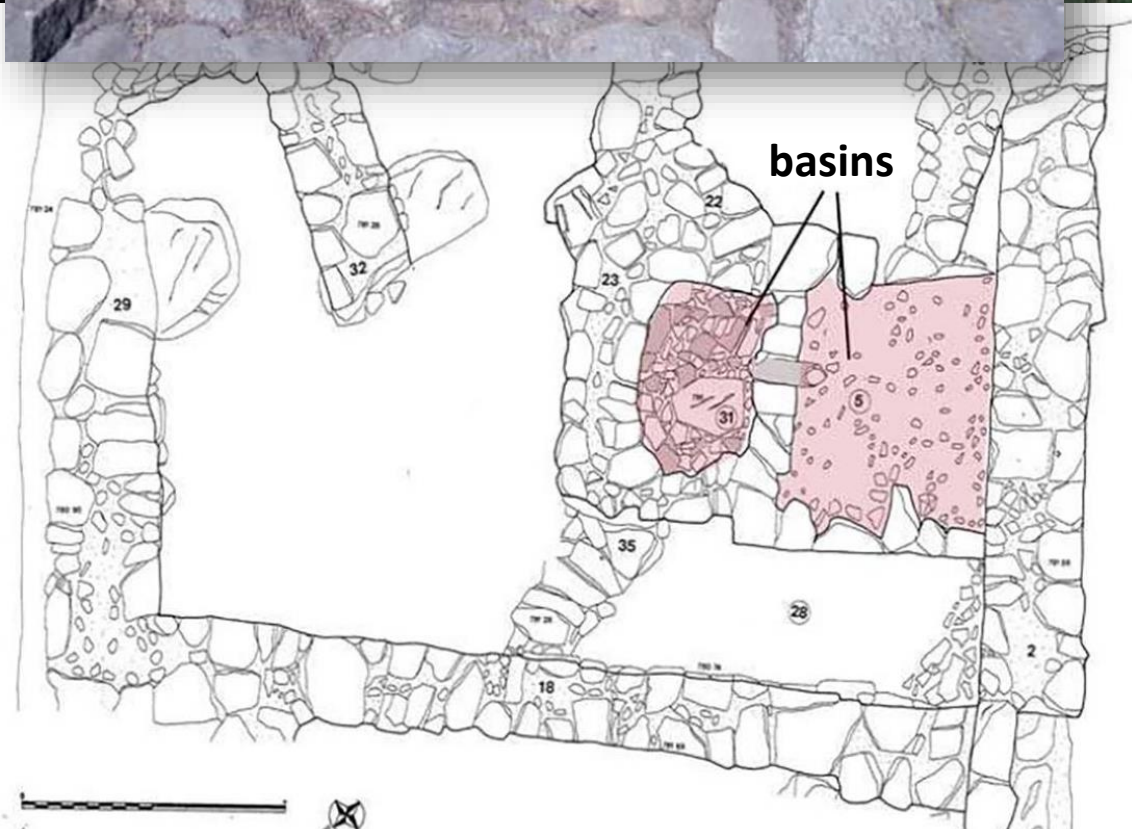


(Valentino & Vassallo 2016, Fig. 17, 19)

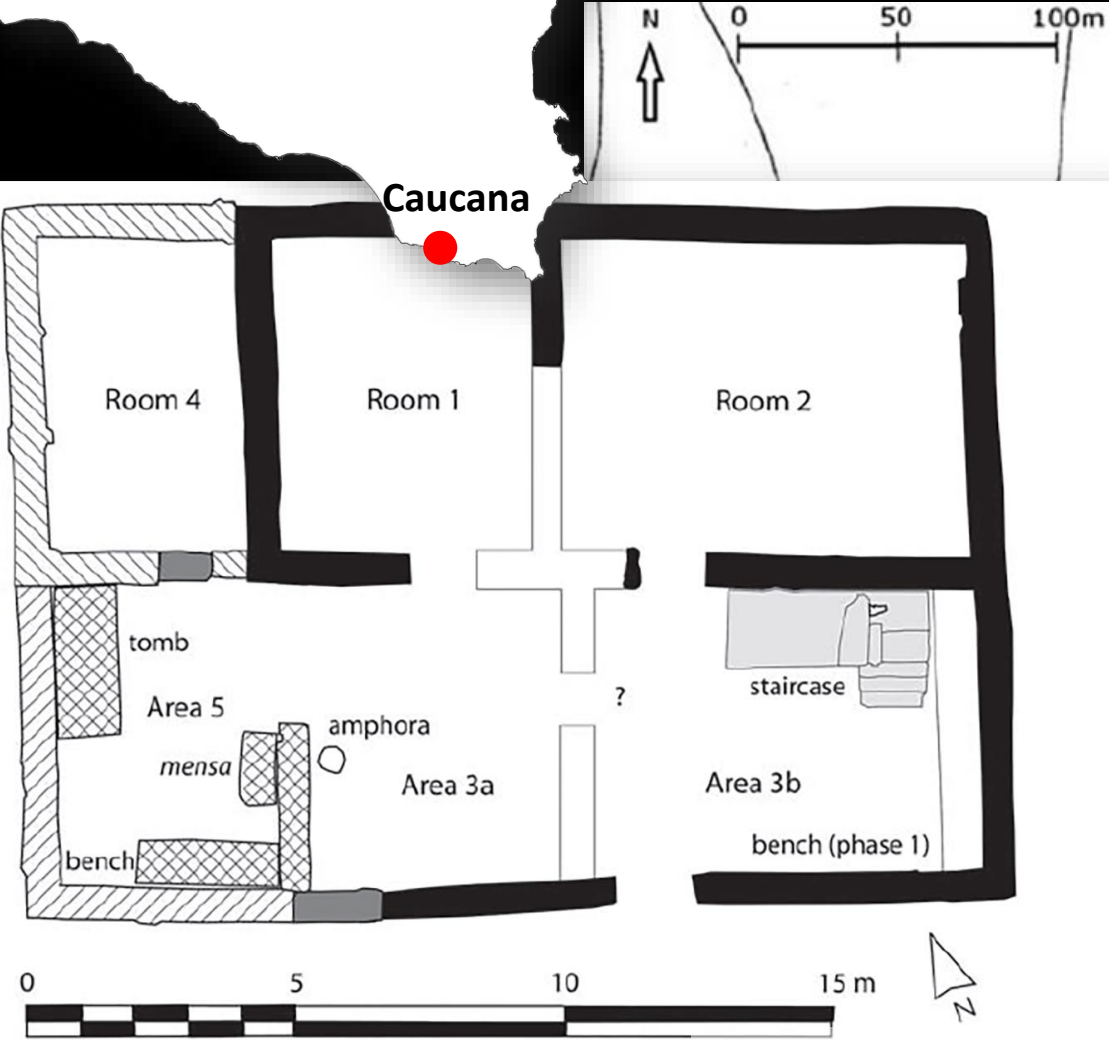
Area1: Imperial age bath?



(Valentino & Vassallo 2016, Fig. 17, 28-29)

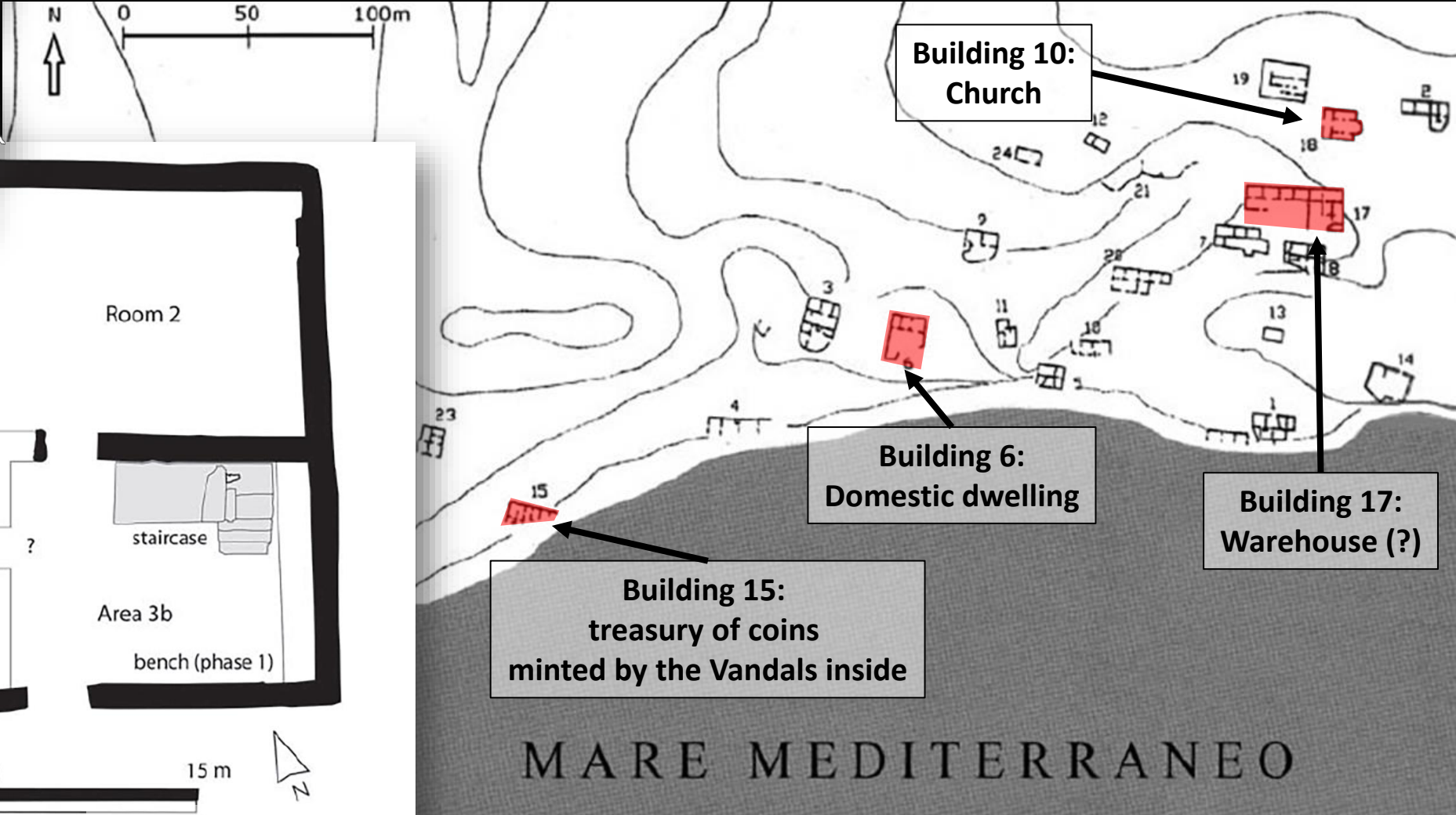


Caucana: a landing place in southern Sicily?



(Wilson 2011, Fig. 3)

- phase 1
- phase 2
- phase 3
- phase 4
- phase 5
- phase 6



Building 10:
Church

Building 6:
Domestic dwelling

Building 15:
treasury of coins
minted by the Vandals inside

Building 17:
Warehouse (?)

(Uggeri 2017, Fig. 4)



From Kaukana to Caputvada Belisarios' journey AD 533



[11] ταῦτα Προκόπιος ἀκούσας τῆς τε χειρὸς τοῦ οἰκέτου λαβόμενος ἐπὶ τὸν λιμένα ἐβάδιζε τὴν Ἀρέθουσαν, ἔνθα δὴ οἱ τὸ πλοῖον ὠρμίζετο, πυνθανόμενός τε τοῦ ἀνθρώπου συχνὰ καὶ διερευνώμενος ἕκαστα. ἐσβὰς δὲ ξὺν αὐτῷ ἐς τὴν ναῦν αἴρεσθαί τε τὰ ἱστία ἐκέλευσε **καὶ πλεῖν κατὰ τάχος ἐς Καύκανα.**

Some conclusive remarks

Main transitions

1. Crisis of minor rural settlements during the 3rd century AD
2. Big luxury villas during the 4th centuries AD
3. Sprawling agricultural villages between the 5th-6th century

What reasons might trigger changes and resiliencies in human settlement patterns on a local scale?

and other related issues

How to distinguish farms from minor villas, villages, workshops of different nature, service facilities for the *cursus publicus*?

Necessity of of a new protocol of analysis

Necessity of publishing old excavation reports and surveys

Necessity of broaden our knowledge concerning material culture

Thank you

And come to Sicily for visiting these sites

We need help for solving these and much more issues

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