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Elements of continuity and transformation in the circulation of local and imported ceramics in the city of Policastro Bussentino (Santa Marina, SA) between the 6th and the 2nd century BC.

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Abstract: The archaeological data of Policastro Bussentino (Santa Marina, SA), also supplemented by recent research undertaken by the University of Genova, provides evidence that since the Archaic period the settlement had taken on a pivotal role in controlling the most important trade networks along the coastal routes from the Gulf of Naples to the Messina strait. Furthermore, its port and the course of the nearby Bussento river guaranteed the smooth operation of the activities of a trade hub for the Diano valley, thus favouring a network of close relations with the sub-regional areas and the surrounding colonial settlements. Imported pottery arrived in Policastro by sea and was redistributed to the towns of the hinterland, while the latter and the colonies were producing imitation pottery instead. The structure of this commercial network remained substantially unchanged even during the subsequent phase of Lucanian occupation of the settlement and persisted until the foundation of the Roman colony of *Buxentum* in 194 BC, when new influences radically changed the social, cultural, and economic structure of the Gulf of Policastro.

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The archaeological data of Policastro Bussentino (Santa Marina, SA), also supplemented by recent research undertaken by the University of Genoa¹, provides evidence that since the Archaic period the settlement had taken on a pivotal role in controlling the most important trade networks along the coastal routes from the gulf of Naples to the Messina strait. Furthermore, its port and the course of the nearby Bussento river guaranteed the smooth operation of the activities of a trade hub for the Diano valley, thus favouring a network of close relations with the sub-regional areas and the surrounding colonial settlements (figs. 1-2).

Certainly, the area of the Gulf of Policastro was already populated in the 6th century BC by Oenotrian populations coming from inland who, at that

¹ The archaeological research in the area of Parco Pinto started in 2011 thanks to an agreement of technical-scientific co-operation between the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Campania, the Comune of Santa Maria and the association of professional archaeologists Etruria Nova Onlus. Since 2015, the continuation of the investigations has been directed by the Università degli Studi of Genoa under a ministerial concession. For a summary of the research see: SANTORO 2017, pp. 19-27.

time, began to move towards the coast in order to develop new commercial networks with the newly-founded Greek colonies (first Poseidonia, then Elea)². Thus, the indigenous settlements of Palinuro, Maratea, Tortora and Scalea sprang up near the coast. Evidence of the inhabitation of Policastro in this phase is attested by recent findings of pottery and other archaeological material that presumably suggests the existence of a little emporium serving as a marketplace for the exchange of goods from the Mediterranean Sea, which were then re-distributed along the river towards the hinterland³. This picture is defined in a more precise way by the presence of the most ancient indigenous production in the Oenotrian Sub-Geometric style, likely dated to the period between the end of the 6th century BC and the first half of the 5th century BC, which is evidently very similar to the material found at Parco Pinto, with styles recalling those that have been documented at the nearby Palinuro, Sala Consilina and Tortora. Two pottery fragments are typical of such production: a ribbon handle with purple-coloured ribbing, likely related to a little krater – kantharos of the type that was diffused at Sala Consilina but also at Tortora⁴ – and a side of a closed shape, perhaps a bottle or an *oinochoe*, decorated with a bichrome band with purple and brown colours (fig. 3, A1)⁵. Another specimen, discovered during the survey carried out by the University of Salerno, further confirms an indigenous presence in the area⁶.

² The phenomenon is so widespread that Emanuele Greco speaks of ‘indigenous colonisation of the coast’, cf. GRECO 1981.

³ Stephanus of Byzantium speaks of the Oenotrian town Πυξίς, though identifying it ἐνμεσογαία Οἰνώτρῳ.

⁴ MOLLO 2018, pp. 29-30, fig. 27.

⁵ For a general classification of the pottery categories in the area of the Gulf of Policastro see the summary with related bibliography in MOLLO 2018, p. 48.

⁶ DE MAGISTRIS 1995, p. 48.

In spite of the scarcity of the materials, barely enough to substantiate the hypothesis of the identification of Policastro with *Pixous* (the indigenous town remembered by the ancient sources and the well-known series of coins⁷, which implies a close tie with *Sybaris*⁸) the commercial liveliness of this centre is evident from the material found during the investigations of the last few years. A limestone stele in Oriental-Greek style dated to the 6th century BC, which has been identified as reused in the defensive wall of the town⁹, and amphoras of Corinthian and Chiot style (as Gualtieri and Fracchia have highlighted in their research¹⁰), arrived in Policastro by sea and were then redistributed towards the towns of the hinterland. The colonial pottery production, particularly the Ionic pottery (the one of Corinthian type too¹¹), was also attested by finds retrieved very close to the defensive wall¹² and likely arrived from Velia (fig. 3, A2)¹³.

⁷ A recent summary in Pallecchi 2016.

⁸ The coin, an incuse stater, is of Sybarite type as documented by, among other things, the representation of the backward-looking bull (for an analysis of the coinage series cf. TALIERCIO MENSITIERI 2001, pp. 127-130). A. Mele gives an institutional definition of the indigenous Oenotrian communities and, quoting the part in Strabo (VI, 1, 13 C. 263) which describes the Sybarite ἀρχη, splits those centres between the ones more dependent on Sybaris, like *Sirinos* and *Pixoes* (the *πολεῖς υπεκοί*, towns with second-class citizenship) and those possessing a wider autonomy (the so-called *Philoī*, like Palinuro and the Serdaioi), cf. MELE 2001, pp. 276-280.

⁹ JOHANNOWSKY 1992, pp. 177, 179.

¹⁰ FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2015.

¹¹ A *skyphoi* production imitating Corinthian types is reported at Velia near Porta Rosa (BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1983, p. 428), as regards the example from Policastro.

¹² Among the material found during the excavation directed by Bencivenga Trillmich, she reports the presence of two sides of closed shapes which are either decorated with black bands or reserved, and they are attributed to the Ionic production from Velia by her. These fragments are only visible in a black and white photograph (BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, p. 712, fig. 11; *ibidem*, pp. 718-719, fig. 26), which does not allow to clearly see the decoration but, if it is correctly attributed, it would document the presence of a class which is well-documented in the late Archaic contexts of the Gulf, in particular at Tortora and, above all, at Palinuro (MOLLO 2018, p. 28, nota 11).

¹³ As regards the furnaces at Velia see BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1983, p. 428, n. 22.

Although suffering from the scarcity of the evidence, the aforementioned description highlights the liveliness of this centre in relation to a local district that appeared very dynamic and well-structured in this period. The situation seems destined to change shortly afterwards, as the defeat of Sybaris inflicted by Kroton in 510 BC establishes a new organisational re-structuring for the majority of the indigenous centres of the gulf: Palinuro is annexed into the *chora* of Velia and, not long afterwards, Policastro was founded by the Chalcidian colony of Rhegium, led by the tyrant Micythus in 471/470 BC¹⁴. In this regard, the hypothesis formulated by Cordiano seems interesting: he believes that the foundation happened after a fight between the cities of Rhegium and Velia (in which the former defeated the latter), as suggested by inscriptions on two bronze weapons dated between the end of the 6th century BC and the mid-5th century BC, and dedicated to Zeus in the temple at Olympia¹⁵. Rhegium's interest in this part of the territory, previously documented by the Chalcidian pottery found at Sala Consilina, Padula and Palinuro¹⁶, seemed to be structured following the *symmachìa* with Taranto during the war against the Iapigyans in 473/472 BC¹⁷. With the foundation of *Pixous*, at a moment when the wars were still ongoing, Rhegium established a bridgehead with Taranto through the Diano valley in one of the most strategically important areas¹⁸, which *de facto* created a no man's land between the *chora* of Velia in the north and that of

¹⁴ The foundation of *Rhegium* is recalled in *Strabo* (VI,1,1), Pliny the Elder (*Nat. hist.*, III, 5, 72) and *Stephanus of Byzantium* (*Eth.*, Πυξοῦς).

¹⁵ CORDIANO 1996, pp. 111-122.

¹⁶ CORDIANO 1996, p. 118, n. 19.

¹⁷ The events regarding that battle are recounted by *Herodotus* (VII, 170, 3) and *Diodorus* (XI, 52).

¹⁸ MILLINO 2002, p. 217.

Laos in the south. Therefore, Policastro's foundation was tactically placed in an area characterised by strong commercial interests. At this time, the town already had a fortified wall (which had a base in schist and limestone, and an elevation in raw bricks), and it is likely that built-up areas were present within this wall, as suggested by the material found during the excavations carried out by Bencivenga Trillmich¹⁹. Significantly, a fictile head dated to this phase, which likely belonged to a votive deposit, closely resembles the Medmaean coroplastic production (dated to the second quarter of the 5th century BC), as suggested by Bencivenga Trillmich²⁰. As recounted by Herodotus, after the Tarentine debacle Miccythus was driven out of Rhegium in 467 BC, and Pixous prematurely fell into an abandoned state²¹.

The situation in the area of Policastro during the latter part of the 5th century BC is rather unclear: it is only at the end of the century that, following the Lucanian advance, there is a «real and genuine phenomenon of a new Italic installation», which found its first imposing expression on the Capitenali hill at Roccagloriosa²². From this period and until the beginning of the 2nd century BC, the local district revolving around this site, including the coastal area of Policastro, was subject to new transformations. All the Bussento river valley, up until the course of the Mingardo river in the north-west, formed a sort of corridor to the hinterland, which was widely occupied by small settlements and sometimes densely populated

¹⁹ Among the material found it is reported the presence of a Corinthian-style cover tile with likely a pentagonal profile (only the higher part is preserved), cf. BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 714, fig. 19; D'ANGIOLILLO, GASSNER 2017 with related bibliography.

²⁰ BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 718-719, fig. 29.

²¹ MILLINO 2002, p. 217.

²² FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2009, p. 123.

areas like the oppidum of Roccagloriosa²³ and the site of Laurelli Caselle in Pittari²⁴, all with specifically well-structured forms of inhabitation²⁵.

Towards the mid-4th century BC, Policastro is re-organised with a planned building scheme: the old defensive wall in schist/limestone is replaced by a formidable masonry wall in limestone blocks, with a base of pseudo-polygonal construction and clay for the elevation. Besides defining the urban space, this wall provided an effective defence against the continuous pirate raids and constant threats coming from inland²⁶. As regards the building structures within the wall, it is likely that they might have been organised similarly to those of the largest Lucanian centres²⁷. Even the harbour, probably equipped with permanent structures connected with the commercial activities in this phase²⁸, must have been rather busy as it represented an important hub between the area and several centres in Italy and in the Mediterranean²⁹. As observed in the tombs of Roccagloriosa, Punic amphoras, numerous Greek-Italic amphoras from the Bay of Naples and also material that attests contacts with Sicily reached the area³⁰.

The majority of the black-glazed pottery recorded for this period at Policastro is from local or regional production, with specimens that were

²³ For a bibliographic summary on the studies carried out at Roccagloriosa cf. FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2009, p. 138, n. 21.

²⁴ SERRITELLA, RIZZO 2019, with related bibliography.

²⁵ Significant is the positioning of the site of Caselle in Pittari along the road that reached the Diano valley, which marked a connection that remained uninterrupted over time.

²⁶ JOHANNOWSKY 1992, pp. 176-177.

²⁷ Domestic construction in this period is characterised by houses with a stonework base, often provided with wide courts in the most important homes, and placed along major road routes (for Roccagloriosa cf. note 21; for Caselle in Pittari cf. VISCIONE 2014).

²⁸ A survey in 1964 by Juliette De La Genière highlighted the presence, along the left bank of the Bussento river, of several building materials related to this period (DE LA GENIÈRE 1964, pp. 137-138).

²⁹ FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2015.

³⁰ FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2015.

most likely coming from Velia³¹: among the closed shapes, the most commonly found ones at the moment of writing, a fragment of a rim of a *lekythos*³², some fragments of *bombyloi*³³ (among them, one decorated in Gnathian style³⁴), and one foot maybe belonging to a *pelike* have been recorded³⁵. A small cup, which finds similarities with those at Velia but it is likely imported from Calabria³⁶ and a deep-shallow bowl *lekane* are counted among the open shapes (fig. 3, B1-6)³⁷. As suggested by Helena Fracchia, from the mid-3rd century BC and perhaps following the foundation of the Latin colony at Paestum, a gradual abandonment of the Lucanian sites can be observed: this was likely connected with a process of ruralisation which entailed the survival of only those inhabited conglomerated centres equipped with furnaces³⁸, like Mai and Celle di Bulgheria west of Roccagloriosa³⁹. A significant presence of Greek-Italic amphoras and

³¹ A recent summary on the production of the 4th-3rd centuries BC of Velia is in GASSNER, TRAPICHLER 2010.

³² Close to the Morel 5433 form (cf. MOREL1981, p. 1041, pl. 167). The item has been found during an excavation concerning a series of burials in the external area of the wall circuit (cf. MARELLI 2017, p. 29).

³³ A fragment of the bottom has been retrieved, unfortunately non-diagnostic, during the investigations carried out by the University of Genoa at Parco Pinto. The artefact seems similar to the Morel 7131b series and can be dated between the end of the 6th century BC and the beginning of the 3rd century BC (cf. MOREL1981, p. 402, pl. 200).

³⁴ The fragment, close to the Morel 7131a type, cf. BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 714-717, fig. 25.

³⁵ This is a fragment of a ring-shaped foot with a groove where it joins the belly. The type is similar to Morel 3683 and can be dated between the mid-4th century BC and the second half of the 4th century BC (cf. MOREL1981, p. 281).

³⁶ The artefact was dated ca 360-330 BC (cf. GASSNER, TRAPICHLER 2010, pp. 161-162, fig. 107, 16).

³⁷ Morel 4713 type; cf. BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 714-717, fig. 17.

³⁸ In this moment, among other things, the aristocratic houses at Roccagloriosa were destroyed by a landslide (cf. FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2015).

³⁹ FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2017, pp. 14-16. At Policastro the presence of some furnaces, of which we unfortunately possess only scarce news, is documented in the external area of the wall circuit and near the left bank of the Bussento river, in an area where there are maybe two furnaces (cf. JOHANNOWSKY1992, p. 175, n. 11; DE MAGISTRIS 1995, pp. 52-53).

numerous artefacts of Campanian A pottery together with regionally-produced wares is recorded for this period⁴⁰. Consistent with what is attested at Velia, black-glazed pottery of Policastro, most likely of local and regional production, is represented by drinking vessels but above all by open shapes: in fact, beyond some fragments of *skyphos*⁴¹, plates⁴² and small cups⁴³ are also recorded (fig. 3, C1-5).

Later, between the end of the 3rd century BC and the beginning of the 2nd century BC, the area of the Gulf of Policastro and its closer hinterland is affected by a gradual transformation with obvious changes in the methods of occupation and exploitation of the territory: the restructuring of the road system brings new vitality to the coastal centres, now connected to the wider Roman infrastructure system. The sites with existing furnace plants dated to the previous phase specialised in the production of Campanian A pottery⁴⁴ (the only Roman product), and there is evidence of a certainly dynamic pattern of settlement near the mouth of the Bussento river, in a

Remains of a furnace has been identified during the topographic examination of the Associazione Etruria Nova (whose data is currently in print) in the locality called Lupinata, in a site that can be viewed as a big farm. Among the findings, fragments of Italic sigillata and transportation amphoras are present.

⁴⁰ GASSNER, TRAPICHLER 2010, p. 169.

⁴¹ Among them, a fragment of a rim that Bencivenga Trillmich associated to the Morel 4363 type, attributing it to the first years of the 3rd century BC (cf. BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 712-713, fig. 14).

⁴² A rim similar to a Morel 1315a type was discovered during the excavation at Parco Pinto (cf. MOREL 1981, p. 104, pl. 21), while two other plates Morel 1544b1 e 2265c types were from the excavation directed by Bencivenga Trillmich (BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. pp. 714-716, fig. 22; *ibidem*, 712-715, fig. 17). The artefacts can be approximately dated to the 3rd century BC.

⁴³ Among those, the concave-convex small cup which was very diffused within the Lucan-occupied territory but little diffused in the Velia one (cf. GASSNER, TRAPICHLER 2010, p. 169, n. 36 with related bibliography). In Policastro's case see BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 712-713, fig. 16.

⁴⁴ FRACCHIA, GUALTIERI 2015.

phase immediately before the foundation of the Roman colony of Buxentum in 194 BC. Although scarce, the finds of black glazed Campanian A pottery present in the territory, often in association with the later production of the Greek-Italic amphoras⁴⁵, demonstrate the changes in the circulation and diffusion of pottery production and present clear evidence of the end of the Lucanian occupation of the territory in a clear way (fig. 3, D1-3). Romanisation did not happen immediately: after two failed attempts to populate Buxentum, a steady economic and settlement recovery only occurred after the annexation of the town to the *tribus Pomptina* and is more evident during the Augustan period⁴⁶.

Even though with limited material evidence, the above-outlined picture clearly shows: on one side, the cultural dynamism and subsequently the heterogeneity of trade in this part of the territory, which represented an easy connection with the internal market due to its geomorphological characteristics (crucial reference point of Greek interest); on the other, the role exerted by Velia as the main regional centre for the diffusion of goods up until the Romanisation of the area and a reference point for trade in the Lucanian period.

⁴⁵ Documented in the excavations directed by Bencivenga Trillmich and by Johannowsky, respectively (BENCIVENGA TRILLMICH 1988, pp. 711-715; JOHANNOWSKY 1992, p. 178).

⁴⁶ For a summary on the history of Roman colony see, most recently (SANTORO 2017, p. 20).

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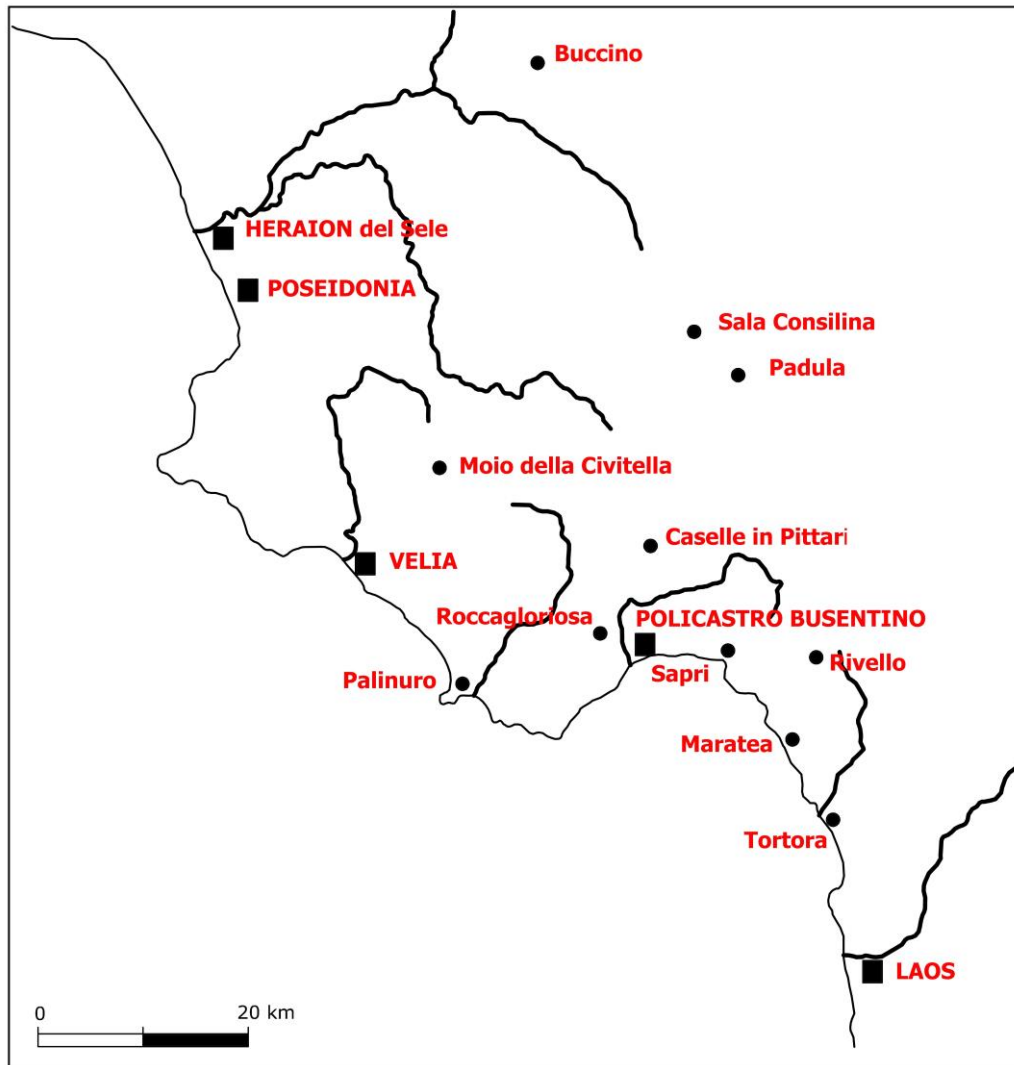


Fig. 1. Distribution of archaeological sites in the Gulf of Policastro. Local settlements are indicated by a circle, the Greek colonies by a square. (im. el. by Auth.).

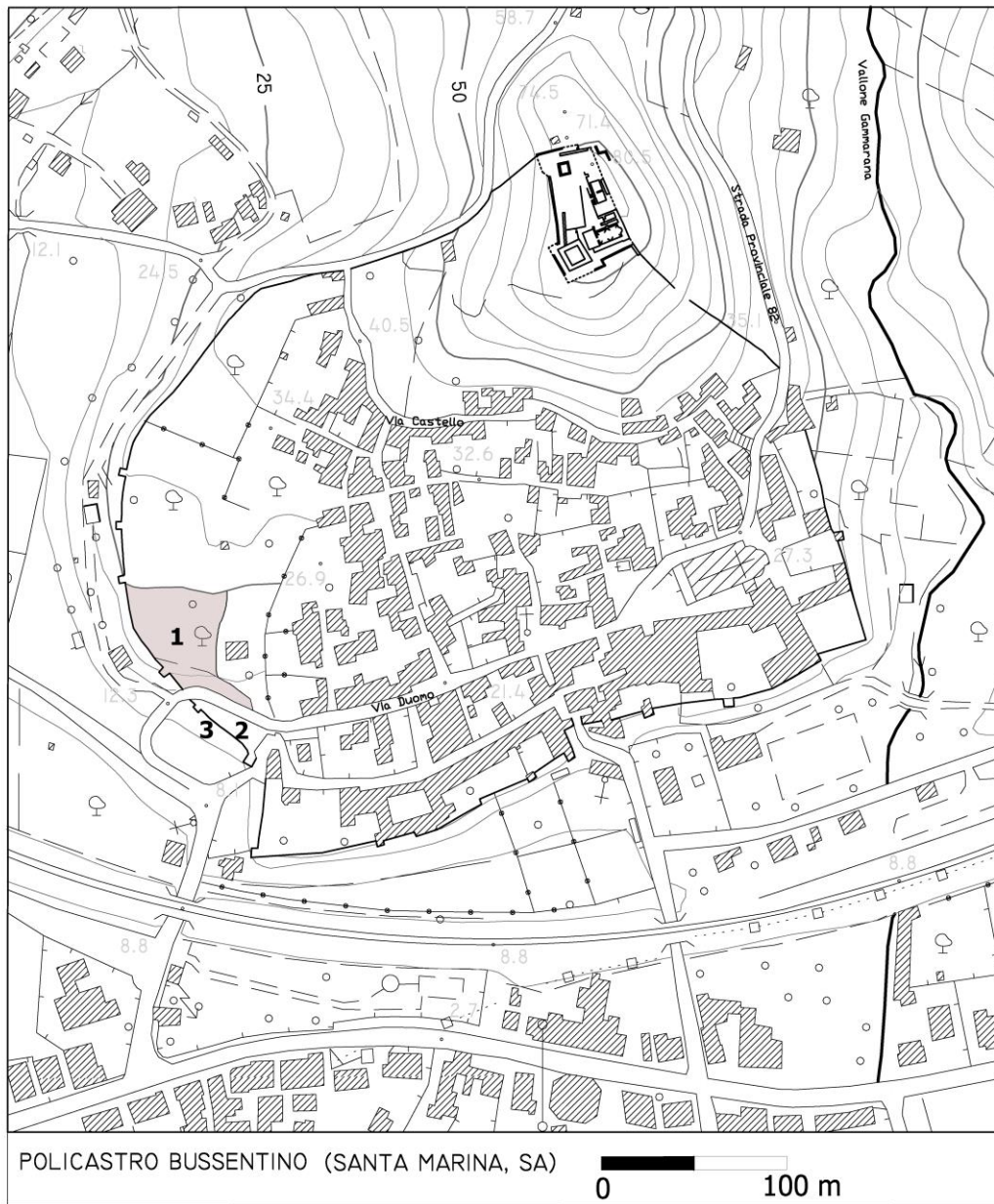


Fig. 2. Map of Policastro Bussentino (Santa Marina, SA). No. 1 indicates the Parco Pinto, where the excavation carried by the University of Genoa takes place. No. 2 indicates the area excavated by Bencivenga Trillmich in 1979. No. 3 indicates the area excavated by Johannowsky in 1987. (im. el. by Auth.).

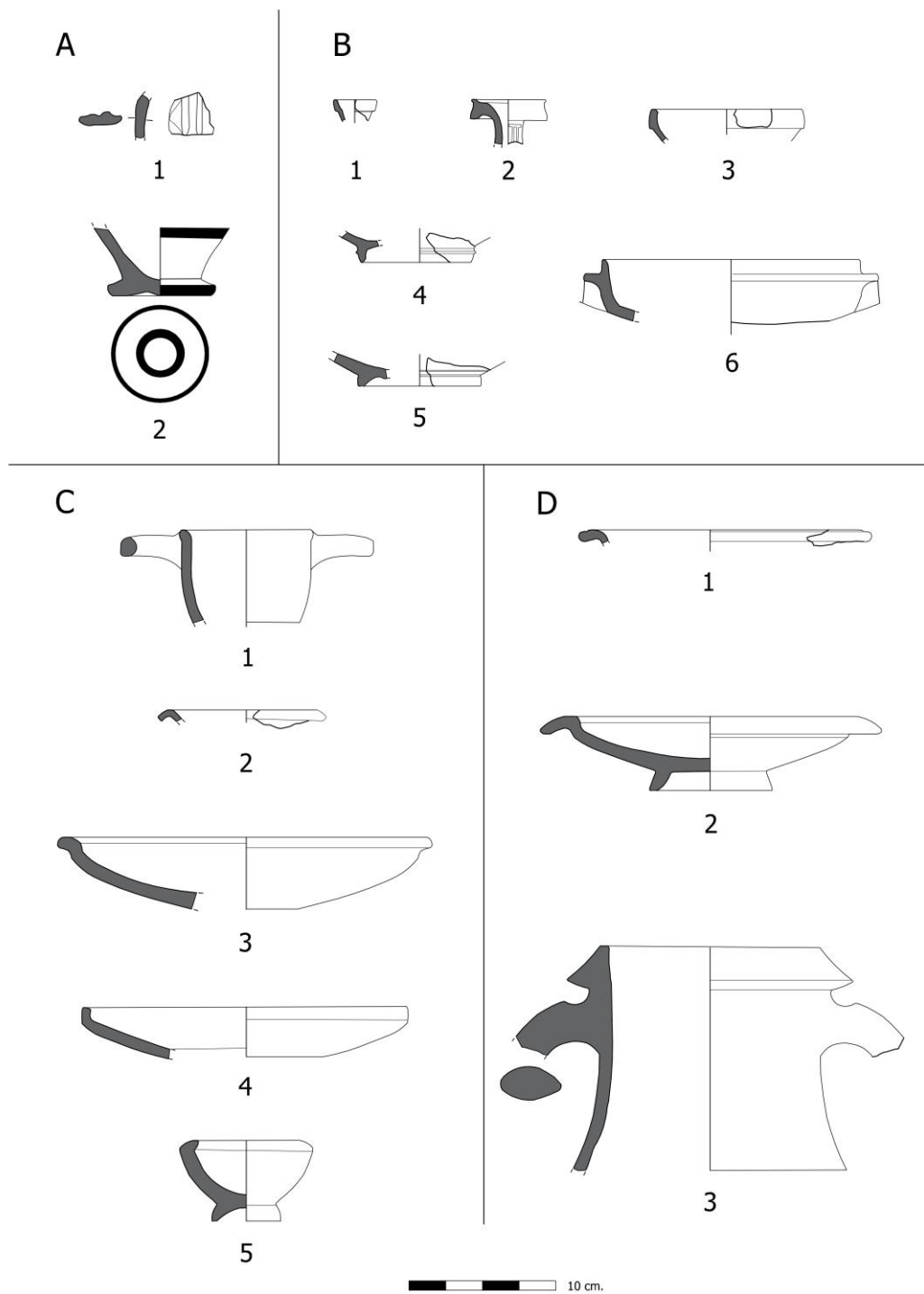


Fig. 3. Policastro Bussentino (Santa Marina, SA), pottery table (the letters indicate the chronological phase). (im. el. by Auth.).