

GREEK COLONISATION
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GREEK COLONISATION IN SOUTHERN ITALY:
A METHODOLOGICAL ESSAY*

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Any article intending to treat the vast movement which goes under the name of Greek colonisation cannot help but begin with a series of primarily terminological clarifications concerning long-identified key notions.¹ I refer principally to the term 'colonisation' itself, but also to the term 'colony', which derives from the Latin *colere*. This in turn relates to a phenomenon really very different from that which the Greeks intended by the term *apoikia*, literally 'home away from home'. The difference between these two meanings has natural consequences when we are discussing the Greek phenomenon: first of all the need to avoid superimposing modern interpretations gained from wholly different types of colonisation, be it Roman or more recent, on the Greek phenomenon.

The origins of the *apoikiai*, in effect, lie in political groupings: they often consisted of mixed groups, which, as we shall see, did not simply continue to reproduce their metropoleis abroad (save for certain social and cultural aspects at the very beginning) with the aim of exploiting new territories and opening new trade routes. The *apoikiai* tended rather to originate from crises in their *poleis* of origin and create new types of communities unrelated to those of their homeland. If we also consider the time at which these events took place (the first *apoikiai* date back as far as the middle of the 8th century B.C.), we cannot help but notice that the colonisers move to the West from a Greek metropolitan reality where the *polis* was still taking shape. Thus, rather than finding in the West a duplication of the mother city, we see a parallel evolution of urban societies taking place in both places.²

* Translated by Pierpaolo Finaldi.

¹ Finley 1976; Lepore 1981; Gabba 1991.

² Malkin 1994.

Taking into account the fact that literary sources belong to somewhat later periods, beginning with the fragments of Hecataeus and Antiochus of Syracuse (end of the 6th-third quarter of the 5th century, although the poet who composed *Odyssey* 6. 7–10 gives us the clearest and most ancient description of a Greek colonial foundation) it can nevertheless be surmised that colonial ventures were organised by the *polis* and within its aristocratic framework. This ensured the necessary means (ships and crews), including a leader for the expedition (the *oikist*), himself often a member of the aristocracy: he and his *hetairoi* formed the nucleus of the colonising force and would in turn become the aristocratic core of the new social structure which they would establish in Italy.

The rôle of the Delphic oracle, at least in these earliest expeditions, is still problematic. Delphi was considered an obligatory stop before leaving to the West, in order to gain both the consent of the oracle and the necessary information, although actually the sources of information tended to be provided by the *oikist*, who went off 'prospecting' various sites, returned home and then set out again with his followers. Fifth-century sources (in particular Antiochus) record foundation oracles, for instance the cases of Croton and Taras (Strabo 6. 1. 12; 6. 3. 2); however, whether Delphi was regularly consulted in the second half of the 8th century is still an unresolved question.³

Another problem, perhaps the greatest, is the relationship between the Greeks and the indigenous populations of the Italian peninsula, who seem almost universally to have possessed their own clearly defined territories and culture, which appear to have affected deeply their individual relations with the Greeks (see B. d'Agostino's chapter below in the present volume). We must, therefore, evaluate each case separately, and absolutely avoid making generalisations. However, one fact is certain: with the exception of the failed attempts to found colonies in western Sicily (first the expedition of Pentathlus of Cnidus, ca. 580 B.C., whose companions nevertheless proceeded to found a colony on the island of Lipari; and Doricus of Sparta at the end of the 6th century), all the others were successful, although with some difficulties caused by native resistance (*cf.* the well-known cases of Taras and Locri, but also the Antiochean traditions, reported in

³ Rougemont 1991.

Strabo 6. 1. 5, regarding the wars between the Metapontines and the Oenotrians over the demarcation of their respective territories).

The impact between Greeks and native Italians is one of the fields where archaeology has seen the greatest progress in the second half of the 20th century. Generally speaking, we must admit a remarkable assimilation of indigenous elements (first of all women—a point which has been the subject of many important studies)¹ by the new Greek communities. This explains the equally remarkable population explosions which the settlements witnessed in the first two or three generations. One can also suppose the use of natives as unfree labour. However, the most important effects take place in the indigenous communities themselves. The cultural transformation of the native peoples through various forms of Hellenisation plays a vital rôle in the history of Magna Graecia from the 5th to the 3rd centuries B.C. More accurate study of the archaeology of the areas around Sybaris may well indicate a new phenomenon: indigenous village communities (such as Francavilla and Amendolara) which seem to have been administratively autonomous and to have preserved their own customs, especially burial rites, even within the *chora politike* of Sybaris. These are, perhaps, the *hypokeoi* which Strabo describes (6. 1. 13).

The Origins of the Colonists and the Geography of Colonisation

As already stated, the complex events which took place around the Euboean settlements of Pithekoussai and Cumae opened the Greek colonial movement in the West (see also d'Agostino's chapter in the present volume). Hence the Euboeans, more precisely the Chalcidians, appear to have been the first Greek people active in this area, closely followed (according to the tradition which will be discussed below) by the rather vague group known as the Achaeans. Evidence for the involvement of Delphi during this early period comes from its geographical location, among other sources. The Euboeans had to cross the Gulf of Corinth to reach the West, while the Achaeans lived on the shores opposite Delphi.

¹ Graham 1980–81; Gallo 1983; Van Compernelle 1983.

After the Bay of Naples, Chalcidian colonial enterprises began on the two shores of the Straits of Messina (Rhegion and Zancle) and the coasts of eastern Sicily (Naxos, Leontini and Catane). We see at the same time settlements whose geographical position took particular advantage of trade routes (Pithekoussai, the cities on the Straits of Messina which had an insignificant agricultural hinterland) and those located in positions to exploit vast agricultural plains (Cumae and the cities of the Aetna valley in particular). I would like to mention the question about these two types of settlement, as debated in much of the 20th-century literature. On the one hand there are scholars who argue that the colonial ventures intended to bring trade to new areas (modernists); on the other, there are those who adhere to a more old-fashioned agricultural view of the ancient economy. The polarisation of the debate has made neither position tenable: both have produced anachronistic generalisations, difficult to defend. While apparently the principal motivation for colonial initiatives was the search for new territories to exploit, archaeological evidence has made it equally clear that trade and exchange cannot be ignored. It must be taken into account that such socio-economic distinctions depend on the sophistication of the societies practising them, and that modern definitions should not be forced on ancient processes.⁵ Within the sphere of Chalcidian colonisation, much attention has been given to the phenomenon of piracy as reported in ancient sources (Thucydides 6. 4. 5). The Chalcidian foundation of Zancle is a case in point, since it seems to open contacts with an area which would be heavily settled later. The original settlement, on the evidence of fragments of LG chevron skyphoi from Messina, would seem to be chronologically closer to the establishment of Pithekoussai than Cumae, assuming that the traditional chronology (in the process of revision) be accepted which places the island settlement earlier than that on the mainland.⁶

To date, archaeology has found little to confirm the historical record, but piracy, although a recognised form of *emporion*, cannot have been the entire basis of the city's economy. Neither Cumae,

⁵ The main work in this area remains Mele 1979. See also the debate between Bravo 1984 and Mele 1986 and other contributions published in *ANArchStAnt* new series 1.

⁶ Most recently, see d'Agostino and Soteriou 1998; d'Agostino 2000; Bacci 1998; 2000.

the city from which the *Lestai* left to found Zancle, nor Zancle itself depended entirely upon piracy. It is not by chance that Thucydides (6. 4. 5) tells us that the *plethos* (colonists) divided the land among themselves. Piracy, after all, is simply another way to trade, which depends on the exploitation of agricultural resources.

The tradition regarding Achæan colonisation raises even more problems, especially if recent (well-founded) revisions of the data are taken into account.⁷ Rigorous analysis of the written and archaeological sources concerning Achæa have made C. Morgan and J. Hall sceptical about the Achæan origins of such famous *poleis* as Sybaris, Croton and Caulonia (end of the 8th century), Metapontum (end of the 7th century) and Poseidonia (beginning of the 6th century). It would be easy to turn to *argumenta ex absentia*, since Achæa is a region little explored archaeologically (although the recent excavations at the sanctuary of Artemis at Ano Mazaraki⁸ have been a turning point, revealing many fascinating discoveries); yet it must be noted that no ethnic group in the West has a clearer identity than the Achæans. The highly distinctive features of the Achæan *polis* and *chora* structures are extremely specific, as is the sovereignty of Hera (the divinity to which the *apoikoi* were most devoted, and a sign of continuity from the Homeric Achæans), both elements which in the West cannot be interpreted as mere coincidences. It would be equally wrong to say that the Achæans in the West constructed their specific identity as a reaction against that of their traditional enemies, the Dorians of Taras. It will be necessary to return to this question,⁹ but in the meantime it is important to underline the trap into which some 'archaeological' observers fall: constructing a theoretical Achæan block which ignores the inevitable shades of grey that exist within such a unit.¹⁰

Two other Greek settlements are of primary importance: Taras (Fig. 1) and Locri, both cities whose origin and foundation were studied by S. Pembroke.¹¹ Particular importance was paid to the rôle of women in both foundation myths, giving significant consideration to the social function of women in Archaic society in general (with all its consequences for the history of Locri in particular).

⁷ Morgan and Hall 1996.

⁸ Petropoulos 1997 (with full bibliography).

⁹ Greco 1999; Mele 1997a b.

¹⁰ Giangiulio 1997, 422-4.

¹¹ Pembroke 1970.

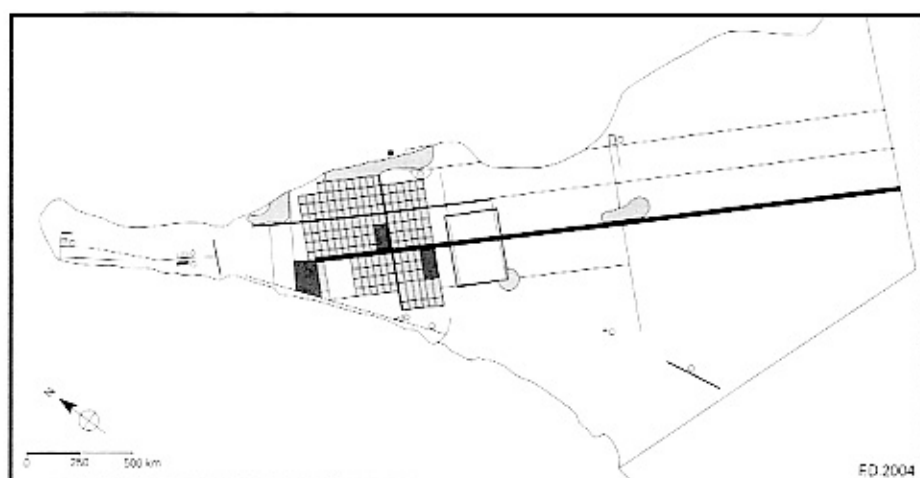


Fig. 1. Plan of Taras (centre: *agora*; west: *acropolis*) (after Ippolis 1989).

Despite the fact that a great amount of evidence has been lost owing to the rapid growth of the modern city and the destruction of much of the city's cultural heritage, the grave goods of the oldest necropolis of Taras (Protocorinthian aryballoi of the transitional type between spherical and ovoid [Fig. 2]) actually confirm the traditional chronology of this Laconian settlement (end of the 8th century) (Fig. 3). The foundation took place after a battle against the barbarous Iapygians, foretold by the Delphic Oracle. According to the previously cited fragment of Antiochus, the foundation of Locri should be dated just after that of Taras ('a little while after . . . Croton and Syracuse'—Strabo 6. 1. 7). According to Strabo, the Locrian colonists first stopped at Cape Zephyrion (modern Bruzzano) for three or four years, then moved on to the definitive location of the settlement in a place previously occupied by native Sicels.¹²

In the area between Sybaris and Metapontum, tradition sets another famous settlement, Ionian Siris, called Polieion by its Colophonian colonists (Strabo 6. 1. 14). In the last 30 years intensive excavation has yielded vast amounts of material from which to reconstruct not only the dynamics of the Greek settlement but also the complexities of its relationship with indigenous cultures.

¹² Musti 1976.



Fig. 2. Taras. Protocorinthian aryballos from the necropolis.



Fig. 3. Taras. Laconian cup from the necropolis.

The main site was the Incoronata, situated on the right bank of the River Basento near Metapontum. Its great importance has been proved by P. Orlandini's excavations and publications.¹³

From the very first seasons of excavation the huge volume of imported Greek and colonial pottery (the latter made in Western *ergasteria*) massed in the small *oikoi* (3m²) was striking. These were destroyed by fire around 630 B.C., *i.e.* at the time of the foundation of Metapontum. Research by A. Di Siena (of the Soprintendenza della Basilicata)¹⁴ has found evidence of an 8th-century village which predates the arrival of the Greeks. This is confirmed by the burial evidence from the 8th-century phase of the nearby necropolis on the hill.

The beginning of the 7th century saw one of the first great events in the area: the foundation of Siris-Policion, on the plateau between the Akiris and Siris rivers on the hill of Incoronata. In place of oval huts there are square *oikoi* with stone foundations and Greek material of the highest quality, of varied provenance and function. According to the publisher, the Ionian Greeks who colonised Siris-Policion destroyed the village on the hill and planted an *emporion* in its stead.

¹³ The excavations at l'Incoronata are being published in a series edited by P. Orlandini, *Ricerche archeologiche all'Incoronata di Metaponto* (Milan); volumes 1 (1991), 2 (1992), 3 (1995) and 4 (1997) have already been published. For a critical view, see Pelosi 1981.

¹⁴ Most recently, see summary by Bianco 1999.

Not all are in agreement with this interpretation of events. Some argue that the dating of indigenous material is too high, and a nearby local necropolis of the 7th century has led many to conclude that here, as at Siris itself, we encounter a case of large-scale integration of Greek *apoikoi* and the indigenous peoples, whose material culture underwent rapid changes.

Integration on such a scale should be attributed to the different nature of Ionian/Colophonian colonisation. The *oikisteis* of Siris, according to the *Etymologicum Magnum* (680. 11) were known as *Polis Emporos*. The destruction horizon of 630 B.C. shows us a kind of colonisation different from that of the Achaeans at Metapontum, for instance, where conflicts over land were common. Such conflicts are brought to our attention by fragments such as that mentioned from Antiochus of Syracuse (Strabo 6. 1. 15), who describes the war between the Metapontines and the Oenotrians for the division of the land. We must draw attention therefore to the profound structural differences between the Ionians of Siris and the Achaeans of Metapontum. Not by chance Pompeius Trogus informs us, in a summary of his work by Justinus (20. 2. 3), that the Metapontines, Sybarites and Crotoniates viewed the expulsion from Italy of the Ionians, whom they defined as *ceteri Graeci*, as the primary objective of a common policy.¹⁵

The end of the 7th century saw the first serious attempts to establish *apoikiai* in the Tyrrhenian Basin. Until then the northernmost Achaean enclave had been Metapontum, a settlement established by the Sybarites as a buffer between themselves and Taras, whom Strabo describes as being *εν πλευραίς* (6. 1. 15). Here we find a case of Achaean 'anti-Dorianism', which reproduced in the West the traditional Peloponnesian enmity between Achaeans and Dorians.

The necropolis of Gioia Tauro (ancient Metaurus) has yielded some interesting discoveries. The burials themselves and the grave goods are perfectly analogous, despite some years' difference, from those of Chalcidian Mylai, a colony of Zancle. This places the Chalcidian origins of Metaurus in a new light (Solinus 2. 1. 1). A related and significant occurrence is that the poet Stesichorus was claimed by both Metaurus and Himera as their own, each being a

¹⁵ An up to date review of the colonial events in this area of the Gulf of Taranto is now in Greco 1998b.

Chalcidian colony. The necropolis of Gioia Tauro is noteworthy, however, not only for its Chalcidian elements but also for the presence of non-servile indigenous burials (proved by the arms buried with the deceased). By the middle of the 7th century, we are faced with a settlement located at the edge of a vast agricultural plain. It would not be too fanciful to conjecture mixed Greek and indigenous management of the land as a large centre of crop production initiated by the Chalcidians from Zancle. From the middle of the 6th century the cultural setting changes considerably and the site seems to gravitate much more towards a Locrian sphere of influence. (Locri was responsible, between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th century B.C., for the foundation of two further colonies: Hipponium (Vibo Valentia) and Medma (modern Rosarno).) Further north, in the Bay of Lamezia, the written sources (and recent unpublished archaeological finds) allow us to locate Terina, whose foundation was due to a Crotoniate initiative, and nearby Temesa, the mining district mentioned by Homer (*Od.* 1. 184–186) close to the mouth of the River Savuto, in the territory controlled by Sybaris towards the end of the Archaic period. To Sybaris and its activities on the Tyrrhenian coast must be linked the foundation of Poseidonia (early 6th century), only a few decades after that of Metapontum. It is of note that both were located near to the rivers (the Sele and the Bradano) which in the Classical period served to demarcate the boundaries of Italia.

The events which led to the birth of Poseidonia, as told by Strabo (5. 4. 13) in an extremely condensed account, subsequently the subject of endless discussions, raises many questions on this later period of colonisation. We are informed that the Sybarites built a *τείχος* on the sea while the colonists settled *ἀνωτέρω*. Strabo's text is difficult to interpret: read diachronically, the *τείχος* would precede the arrival of the colonists and the foundation of the *polis*; read synchronically, the meaning would change totally. The first interpretation suggests that the Sybarites established a base from which they conducted their Tyrrhenian commerce before founding the *apoikia*; the second, that the military meaning of *τείχος* may be intended (defensive wall or fort), alluding to the armed contingent sent by the Sybarites to ensure the settlement of the colony in a hostile area facing the Etruscanising towns on the opposite bank of the Sele. The adverb *ἀνωτέρω* has also been the subject of various interpretations—not in itself, since its meaning is clearly 'further up', but rather in its cartographic inter-

pretation: in the Roman world maps were oriented south, while the Greeks (and Strabo seems to have used Greek sources) pointed their maps north. Thus the *τείχος* would have been located to the south of the city, in an area (Agropoli) not far from where the historical sources (Lycophron *Alexandra* 722 and *Sch.*) place the sanctuary of Poseidon, eponymous divinity of the new city.¹⁶

Two hundred *stadia* to the south of Poseidonia (just under 40km) was another famous Greek city, 'called "Hyele" by the Phocaeans who founded it, and by others "Ele", after a certain spring, but is called by the men of to-day "Elca"'. This is the native city of Parmenides and Zeno, the Pythagorean philosophers' (Strabo 6. 1. 1) (Fig. 15). This is surely the best known foundation in the West thanks to the long and detailed account given by Herodotus (1. 163–167), which can be integrated with the brief fragment of Antiochus quoted by Strabo (6. 1. 1), regarding the exodus of the Phocaeans.

In this case we are not faced with a 'normal' colonial foundation, but with the mass exodus (decreasing in size *en route* through various defections) of an entire city trying to free itself from Persian domination in 545 B.C. After a five-year sojourn in Corsica, and defeat in the Battle of Alalia at the hands of a joint Etruscan, Agyllan and Carthaginian force, the survivors reached Rhegion, where a man from Poseidonia correctly interpreted Pythia's prophecy and convinced them to remain in Italy.¹⁷ At this point in the narrative, Herodotus writes that the Phocaeans bought a city in the land of the Oenotrians, an event which has been the subject of some important reflections.¹⁸ This is no doubt an exceptional case, because both the Phocaeans buy and the indigenous Oenotrians sell the land where the new *polis* will arise. This episode is eloquent proof of the degree of sophistication reached by the indigenous community, organised to the point that it can impose such a transaction. Of equal interest is the rôle of the Poseidonian as mediator in the deal, insofar as his city had played a similar rôle as guarantor in analogous situations.

The 6th century concluded with no less fascinating events, in particular the migration of the Samians, fleeing the tyrant Polycrates around 530 B.C. They were welcomed into Cumae territory to found Dicearchia (a city whose name suggests a place where justice

¹⁶ Greco 1987.

¹⁷ Greco 2000.

¹⁸ See especially Gigante 1966.

rules), the city which the Romans would rename Puteoli (Pozzuoli) in the 2nd century B.C.

Urban Settlements and Territorial Organisation

The history of urban settlement is better understood when considered together with the problems of occupying and exploiting the resources of the *chora*. Town-planning in the Western colonies has suffered in the past from a certain amount of mystification and a rather frustrating underestimate of its importance; it still does. This has often stemmed from a tendentious use of archaeological evidence. It is therefore important to note that the study of the Greek city in terms of its own town-planning (a highly unsatisfactory term, since it does not do justice to the relationship of the Greek world with space) has been undertaken by many 20th-century scholars. Two works stand out: *Griechische Städteanlagen* by von Gerkan (1924) and *L'Urbanisme dans la Grèce antique* by Martin (1956; 1974). Martin had previously written a book I believe to be even more important and still extremely relevant: *Recherches sur l'agora Grecque* (1951). These scholarly investigations have provided us with a key to the interpretation of the Greek city, apart from the personal viewpoints and cultural baggage (even if of the highest quality) of scholars who based their suppositions on the data available in the first half of the 20th century. We now run the risk of placing the new pieces of the mosaic within an already fixed frame. It is now necessary, faced with so many new discoveries, to ask how far the old key to the map of the Greek city is still relevant or whether it must be completely redesigned.

The clearest instance of this is the indifference there has been in the past towards the *chora* of the city. The neglect of agricultural settlements (*komai*, *pyrgoi*, isolated farmsteads, etc.) and the fixation with what lies within the city walls, has led to the paradox that the history of Greek town planning has been written without reference to the majority of Archaic cities on the Greek mainland. Closer examination shows that modern study of the colonial phenomenon as a whole has always been heavily influenced by a negative prejudice based on the notion that the West was a provincial, backward and semi-barbarous area. A recent example is quite enlightening. In page 2 of his Introduction to *Le sanctuaire Grec* (*Entretiens XXXVII* of the Fondation Hardt), A. Schachter states that 'the investigation is also

limited geographically to the Greek mainland and the Aegean. The Western colonies present a different set of problems, not least those which arose from the need to adapt to a foreign milieu and to a developed local population.'

I do not question the good faith of the author, but it is possible to draw only one conclusion from his comments: if one wishes to study the Greek sanctuary in its pure form one should not go to those areas where this purity has been tainted. Thus we see a respectable academic of the 20th century express opinions not far removed from 2,000-year-old propaganda slogans such as *ekbarbarosthai panta!* Many other examples could be cited.

Let us return, however, to the city and the two epistemological pillars of its study. The first is that the Greek city was essentially a 'creation' of the 5th century, in particular of Miletus and the '*école milésienne*'; the second, that the art of city-building was just another manifestation of a flourishing Greek culture, freed from its barbaric masters by the successful outcome of the Persian Wars. The Archaic period would be simply a time of preparation, of timid experiments, among which are the dozens of colonial urban settlements whose 'regularity' is considered synonymous with simplicity. These colonies are called *Streifenkolonien* by the Germans, in order to stress their primitive nature which had nothing to offer to the Milesian architects, inventors of functionalism. The conclusion that Archaic Greek *poleis* were not functional cities seems too much. Would it not be better to learn from anthropological studies and so be a little less absolutist?

The problems relative to the birth and urban structure of mainland Greek cities are not within the remit of this piece, yet it cannot be denied that Greek colonisation was in a sense a great 'laboratory'. The Classical city derives, both in theory and in practice, from the experience accumulated in the previous two centuries. The model outlined by von Gerkan and all the studies undertaken after him is typically formalist. The classification of the urban form is based on the layout of the city and its relation to the *ethnos* that built it (the same approach used by those wishing to classify city walls, whereby polygonal stones are considered Italic while ashlar work is interpreted as Greek). Thus, an early city with a geometric plan laid out on an axial grid had to belong to a non-Greek tradition (it would belong to the Etrusco-Italic sphere of influence, depending on the *etrusca disciplina*, which adhered to a system of two intersecting main axes).

Therefore, when von Gerkan encountered the very regular grid of Selinus, he concluded that it must have been the city rebuilt after the destruction of 409 B.C. Assigning such an idea to the Archaic colony would not have been in accordance with his preconceptions.

Today, following many important studies, it is clear that the plan of Selinus belongs to the Archaic period, and must have been executed not long after the foundation of the city (as happens in almost all western colonial foundations, a couple of generations or so after the traditional date of the *ktisis*). Indeed, Selinus has now become a paradigm for those wishing to study the elements of an Archaic Greek city.

Thanks to the knowledge gained from Selinus, I believe, R. Martin (1974), discussing new archaeological data, opened a new chapter in the study of the *polis*; one which takes a more balanced approach to the evidence and which above all gives just weight to the potentially enormous amount that we can learn from previously neglected sources.

We should, after all, when reading general works by such scholars as those mentioned above, expect to have to take into account the contextual debates influential at the time of writing. If we have learnt anything from the lessons of the past, it is that such works, despite their flaws, should be treated with respect, conscious of the fact that it would have been impossible to progress without their contributions. As Hippodamus could never have thought of the 5th-century *polis* without the experience gained in the Archaic period, in the same way, we are able to speak today of Greek town-planning only thanks to the foundations laid by von Gerkan and Martin.

Our current knowledge of the structure of Archaic Greek cities and their territories allows us only to give examples, which must be understood not as definitive models but simply as preliminary paradigms to compare and contrast with new discoveries. Archaeology offers us a variety of models but also (sometimes) some skeleton guides to our studies: chief among these are sanctuaries, used by many colonial communities and especially by the Achaeans (Sybaris, Croton, Metapontum, Poseidonia) to control their territory and safeguard their rights to its use.

The debate concerning extra-urban sanctuaries have occupied many scholars of the 20th century (Fig. 8). The Achaean world in particular entrusted its famous Heraea (Croton to Cape Lakinion, Metapontum to the south bank of the River Bradano, and Poseidonia

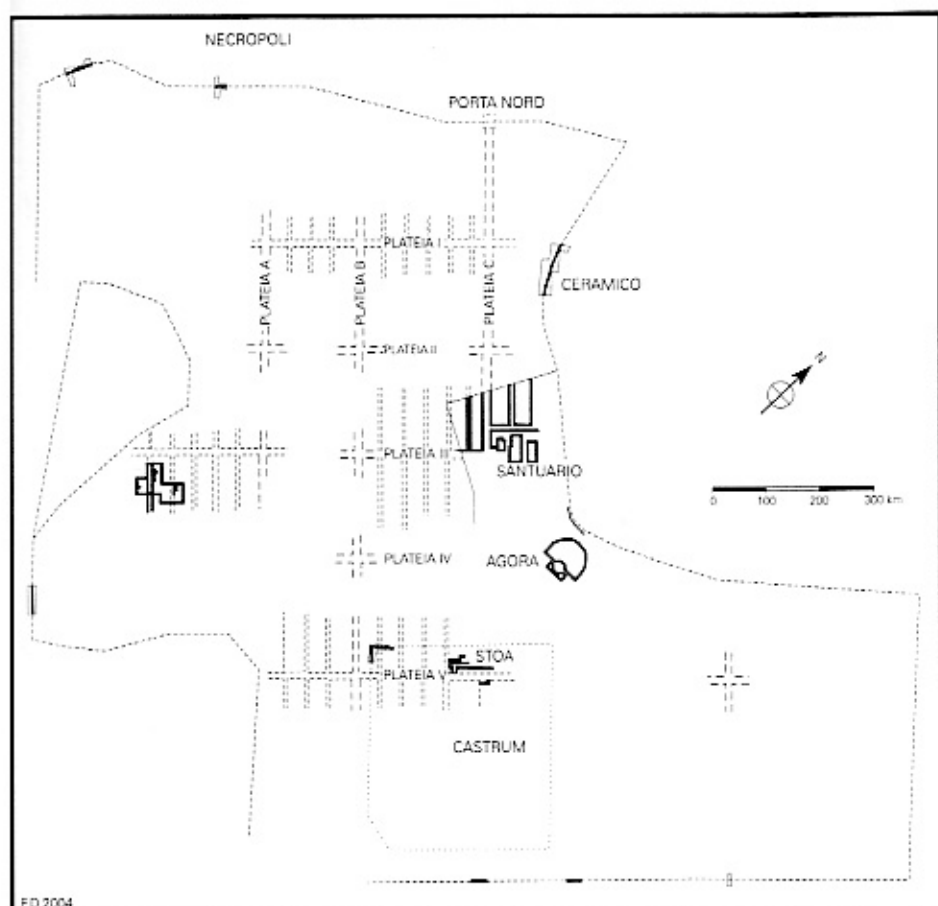


Fig. 4. Plan of Metapontum (after Mertens 1999).

to that on the River Sele) with the task of defending its territorial integrity: not by chance all these sanctuaries dedicated to Hera are placed on the *chora's* boundaries.¹⁹ The discovery that most of them were cult places already used by indigenous peoples or established by Bronze Age Greeks (during the period of contact with the Mycenaean world) led to the conclusion (based also on reliable archaeological evidence) that they date back to the very beginning of the colonial settlement. The contemporaneous building of the inhabited

¹⁹ Recent summary with full bibliography in Leone 1998.



Fig. 5. Metapontum. The Archaic *thymiaterion* from the sanctuary of Artemis (San Biagio alla Venella).

settlement and the sanctuary located in its *chora* demonstrates the need of the *polis* to place its territory under the protection of its patron deity (Fig. 5).²⁰

Only Taras maintained for a long time a system based on agricultural villages, until a great movement of the population into the city, datable to the second quarter of the 5th century.²¹ Most other *poleis* began as relatively large urban centres containing the majority

²⁰ Greco 1990a.

²¹ Greco 1981.

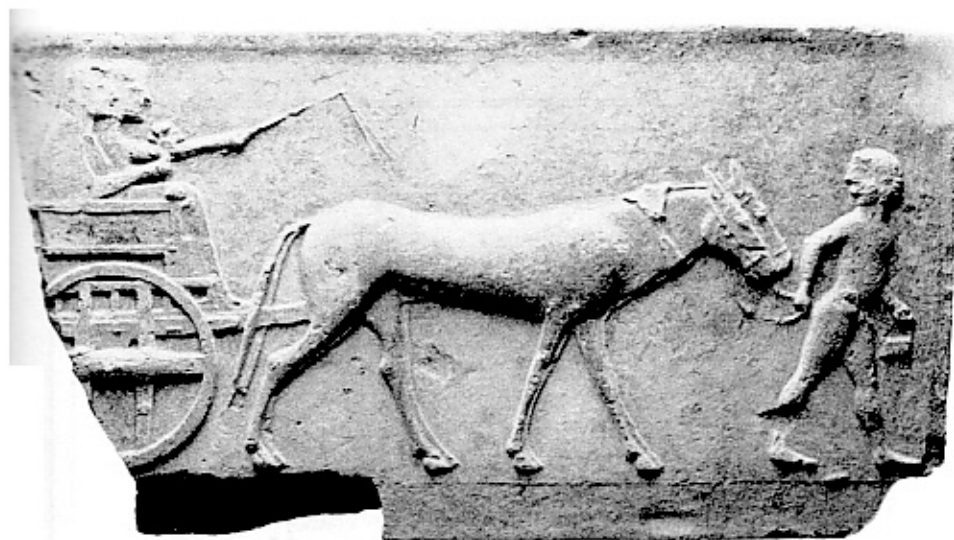


Fig. 6. Metapontum. The Archaic terracotta plaque from the urban sanctuary.

of the population. This explains their extremely precocious first steps (even when compared with their metropoleis) towards an organised system of town-planning.

At the forefront of these studies is the ongoing research at Metapontum and Poseidonia (Figs. 4–6). Both are located on flat areas of land, 145 and 120ha respectively. In both cases, recent research²² has shown that the urban area was divided into three parts from the outset: a sacred area (containing the one and only large *temenos*), a public space including the large *agora*, and a private area with blocks of housing (Figs. 7; 9). Already in the Late Archaic period both cities had defensive walls with stone foundations and upper parts built of mud-brick. The sheer size of the public spaces is striking, both the sacred spaces and the huge *agorai*,²³ in which buildings with circular ground plans have been identified (traditionally equated with *ekklesiasteria*), amongst the most original Western contributions to civilian architecture.

The occupation of the *chora* seems to have produced no conglomeration of buildings which could be called a *kome*; the dominant

²² For Metapontum, see De Siena 1998; 1999; Mertens 1999. For Paestum, see essays in Greco and Longo 2000.

²³ Greco 1998a.

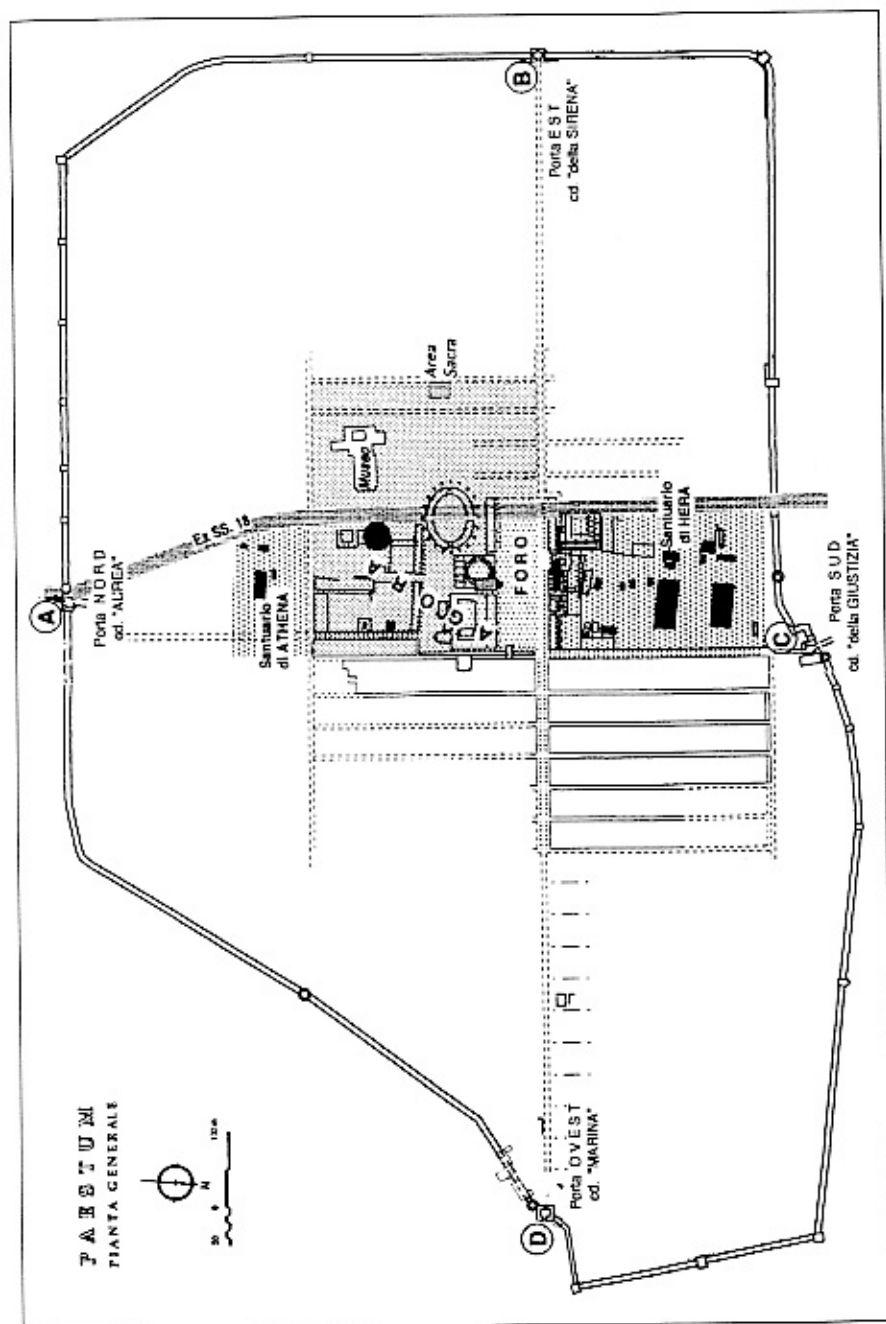


Fig. 7. Plan of Paestum (after Greco and Theodorescu 1987).

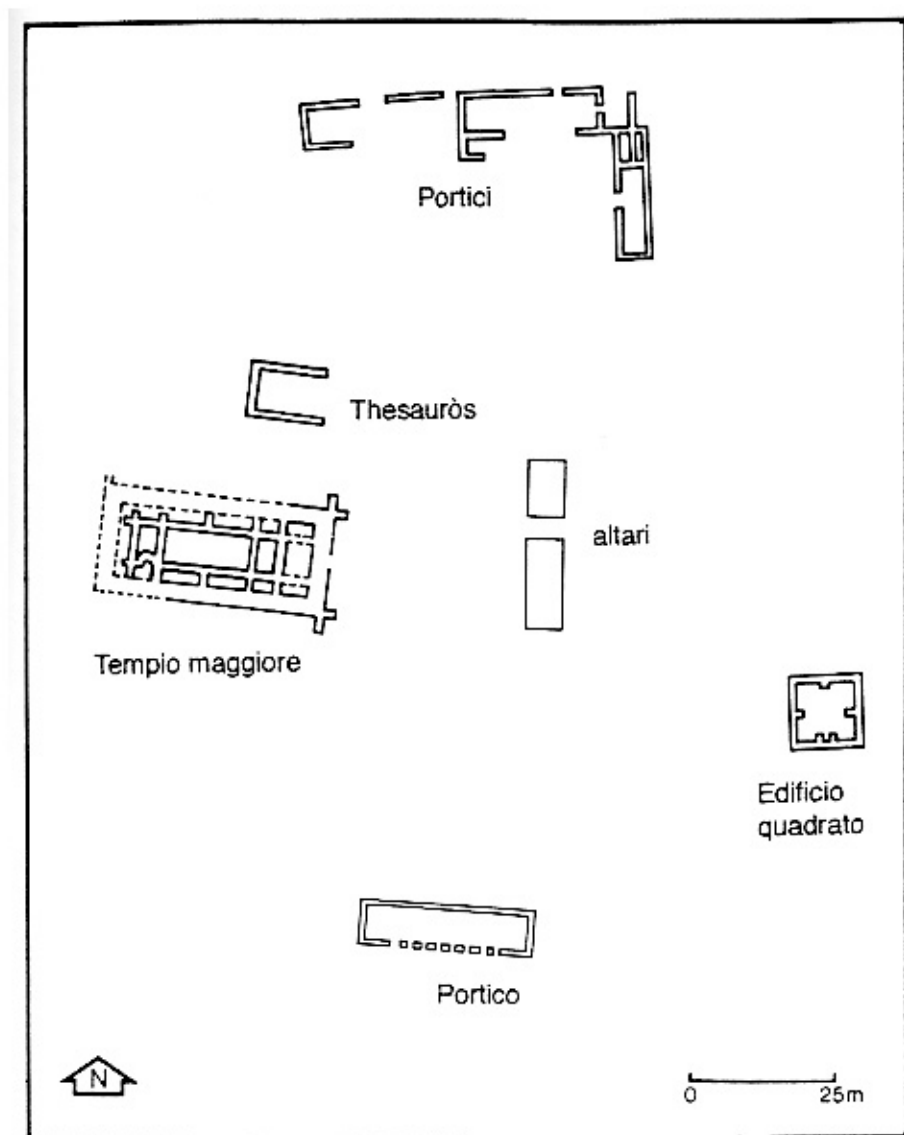


Fig. 8. Paestum. Plan of the sanctuary on the south bank of the River Silarus (after de La Genière and Greco Maiuri 1994).



Fig. 9. Paestum. The Late Archaic marble head.

form is that of the single family farmstead, which itself appears only in the Late Archaic period, and then but rarely. As far as we know, beforehand it was common to live in the city and go out into the *chora* to work the land. It follows that the production of cereal crops was most widespread because they require less close attention. The rapid growth of the urban settlement forced the colonists to face the



Fig. 10. Paestum. Bronze hydria from the *hieron* in the *agora*.

problems of 'designing' space. Once the sacred and public spaces had been demarcated, the residential areas were almost universally divided according to a simple system known as *per strigas*, consisting of three or four *plateiai* in one direction and a certain number of smaller orthogonal roads in the other. These were usually planned so that the *agora* and the intra-mural sanctuary were harmoniously integrated (Figs. 11-14). The distance between the major *plateiai* (ca. 300m) was responsible for the often elongated shape of the blocks; their width (about 35-37m) was the result of the orthogonal roads. The current state of our knowledge suggests that this simple plan was the fruit of a long process of development. Archaeology enables us to trace this process from the end of the 8th century (with the splendid example of Megara Hyblaea) until the emergence of cities



Fig. 11. Paestum. Attic black-figure amphora from the *heroon* in the *agora*.

built in every respect *per strigas* (the pattern followed by practically all cities known to us), which do not appear before the end of the 7th century.²⁴

The process of 'ethnic coagulation' of the indigenous Italic peoples, which had almost certainly begun a long time before, was accelerated by the arrival of the Greeks. The surviving traditional stories concerning the foundation of the colonies offer a very different picture of the occupation of Italy compared with what we see later. The Oenotrians occupied the area where we later hear of the Lucanians,²⁵ Brutti²⁶ (in modern Basilicata and Calabria) and Iapygians²⁷

²⁴ See essays by Gras and Treziny, 'Megara Iblea', 251-68; Allegro, 'Imera', 269-302; Jannelli, 'Ischia e Cuma', 303-20; Giardino and De Siena, 'Metaponto', 329-64; Longo, 'Poseidonia', 365-84. All in Greco 1999.

²⁵ Pontrandolfo 1982.

²⁶ Guzzo 1989.

²⁷ De Juliis 1988.



Fig. 12. Paestum. The Archaic temple of Hera (so-called 'Basilica').

(in Puglia where there were long-established and organised *ethne* with a culture highly influenced by long contacts with the coast of Illyria).

It is noteworthy that the few examples preserved in the historical record, when referring to these 'districts' (especially those in the vicinity of Achaean foundations), call the whole area by the name of the city considered to be the *basileion*, i.e. the residence of the *basileus* or chief. A good example is that of Pandosia in the territory which will later become the hinterland of Siris and Metapontum. The city was almost certainly located near modern Cosenza, as suggested by Strabo (6. 1. 15), in a region not far from Sybaris. Strabo himself provides us with a possible key to solving this problem when he says that Pandosia (near Sybaris) was at one time believed to be the *basileion* of the Oenotrians. If one considers the rather obvious meaning of the toponym—place which 'gives all'—it chimes well with a Greek *interpretatio* of an indigenous centre characterised by the presence of some kind of power, habitually represented by the Greeks in the word *basileus*, while the *basileion* was the place from where such power was exercised. Unfortunately, the site of Pandosia (famous also as the place where, during a siege, Alexander, king of Molossia, met



Fig. 13. Paestum. The so-called 'Temple of Neptune'.

his death in 331 B.C.—Strabo 6. 1. 15; Livy 8. 24) has not yet been identified. On the other hand there is good evidence to suggest that another Pandosia, whose existence is proved by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 16. 4) and the Tables of Heracleia (*JG* 14. 654. 12, 54, 113), was located close to Siris, to be precise, on the hill of San Maria d'Anglona, where excavation has brought to light some excellently stratified finds: not only the Hellenistic village of which the Tables speak, but also an 8th-century settlement which, notwithstanding some geographical movement, continued until the end of the 7th century. Some spectacular princely burials found at this site give archaeological support to the claim that the Greeks might have seen this place as one of the abovementioned indigenous *basileia*.²⁰ Thus we see a surely not uncommon example of the process by which the Greeks referred to the whole indigenous area by its seat of power.

Here we observe a single aspect of a greater phenomenon, namely the settlement of the Greek *polis*, its institutions and *paideia*, which speeded the process of 'ethnic coagulation' and emphasised the indige-

²⁰ D'Ambrosio 1992; Greco 1992, 34–40.



Fig. 14. Paestum. The *akkadianstrion*.

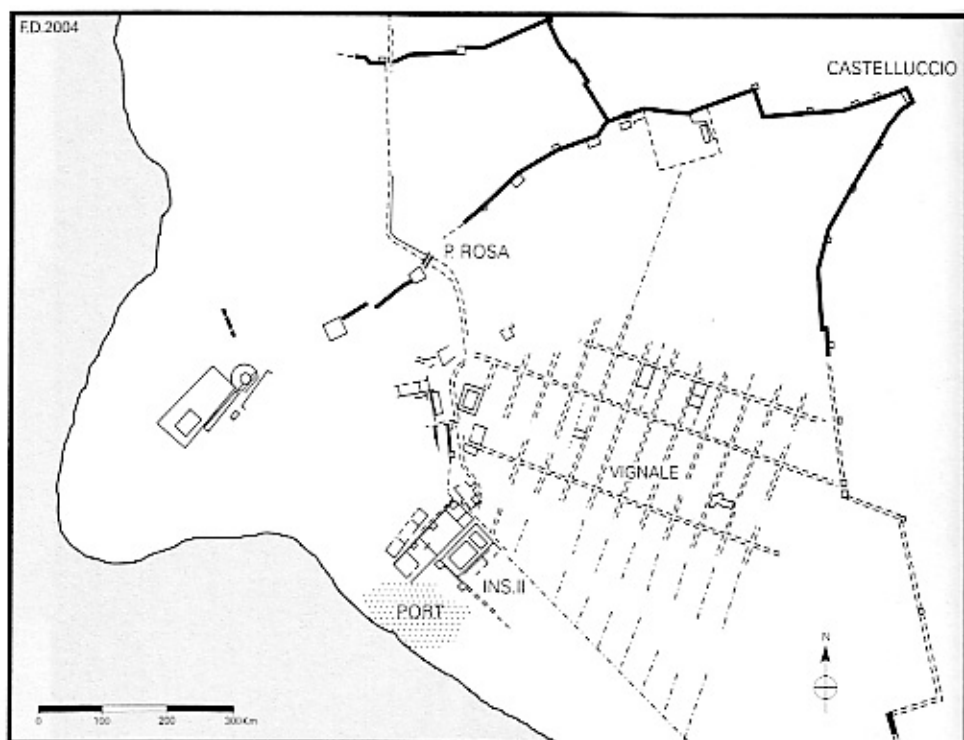


Fig. 15. Plan of Velia (after Krinzinger and Tocco 1999).

nous sense of ethnic identity.²⁹ Sybaris and its vast hinterland is one of the clearest examples of this process in Archaic Magna Graecia. Strabo describes Sybaris at the acme of its political expansion, at the centre of a huge federation including four *ethne* and 25 *poleis* (Strabo 6. 1. 13). In the years immediately prior to its fall, Sybaris was planning a large political, territorial and economic organisation. This far-reaching design, although never actually carried through, represents, as has been acutely observed, the greatest innovation in the history of Archaic Magna Graecia. This idea undoubtedly inspired Hecataeus' concept of 'Italia', a vast land covering the whole of southern Italy from Campania to Iapygia, almost prefiguring the modern concept of *Megalē Hellas*, whose origins have been justly recognised in the political projects of Sybaris.³⁰

²⁹ Mele 1997a; 1997b; Malkin 1998.

³⁰ Lepore 1980.

The influence of Sybaris has been duly noted, but it is more difficult to understand the mechanisms of the relations between the Greeks and the political powers of the surrounding communities. However, great help is to be found in the famous inscription discovered at Olympia in 1960 (whose meaning has recently been the subject of renewed debate).³¹ We read that the Sybarites and their allies (*symmachoi*) sealed a pact of eternal friendship (*philotas aeidion*) with the Serdaioi, having as its guarantors Zeus, Apollo, the other gods and the city of Poseidania (the Dorian form of Poseidonia). Attempts, really not very successful, to reconstruct the inscription's historical and geographical context are based on some fragments of Hecataeus quoted by Stephanus of Byzantium, concerning a number of Oenotrian inland settlements. Stephanus of Byzantium's *lemmata*, although transmitted in an abridged form and with all the problems posed by that tradition, remains the most important source of ethnic and toponomastic information.

Numismatics, moreover, offer us a contemporary historical evidence of considerable interest. Various indigenous centres used coins struck by Sybaris, a phenomenon which has been interpreted by some as proof of the presence of an almost 'imperial currency'.

Four issues of incuse coins, datable to the second half of the 6th century, are closely linked to Sybaris' mint: they use one of its favoured types showing a backward facing bull (except for the Palinuro coins which show the *episeimon* of a wild boar) and the Sybarite weight standard (the 7.85g stater), except for the SO series which used the 'Tyrrhenian' standard of 5.50g.³² It is likely that the coin with the legend PAL-MOL belongs to Palinuro, using both names for the site: the Greek name, Palinurus, which refers to the coastal promontory, well known to sailors, and the indigenous Molpa, referring to the settlement near the River Melpes which we know from Pliny (*NH* 3. 72). Correct interpretation of the double legend of the SIRINOS-PYXOES coins is more difficult, although the doubts about the equation of SIRINOS with Siris have been resolved. PYXOES is easily read as referring to the *ethnos* of the city of Pyxus (known to the Romans as Buxentum and today as Policastro Bussentino). More difficult still is the issue with the legends AMI-SO. AMI ought

³¹ Greco 1990b; Giangulio 1992.

³² Parise 1972; 1987.

to refer to the Aminci, but it is highly unlikely that these are the Aminci from Campania; SO could be linked to the Sontini mentioned by Pliny (*NH* 3. 98), who may have been located near the modern town of Sanza (although firm evidence is lacking). If this were true, it would explain the anomalous use of the Tyrrhenian standard: since this area was at the margins of Sybaris' sphere of influence, the coin of Sybaris would have been rendered more easily compatible with Etruscan currency. It is clear that the numismatic evidence cannot enlighten us on more than a select list of ethnic groups, none of them (except Siris and Pyxus) mentioned in the historical record, including Hecataeus/Stephanus of Byzantium. Nevertheless, the very fact that such issues of coins can be tied only to such select groups suggests a marked distinction between who made use of them and who did not.

It is, therefore, possible to begin to outline more clearly the structure of the so-called Sybarite 'empire': a complex organisation with the great Achacan city and its *chora* at the centre, surrounded by satellite communities. Each community had its own status, some—probably those nearest—completely subject to Sybaris and forming what Strabo termed the *plesion*, while others, although under the influence of Sybaris, enjoyed greater autonomy.

Our attention is thus drawn to some important discoveries in the Tyrrhenian Basin. Here we find some important suggestions for solving this complex question. The last decade of archaeological research in this *paralia* of the Tyrrhenian has provided us with a modest amount of evidence of use of human settlements in the reconstruction of the history of the Archaic period.

From the estuary of the River Mingardo, near Palinuro, to the Bassa Valle del Noce and continuing into the area of the Lao valley, an ever-increasing occupation of the coasts by indigenous peoples may be observed, commencing at the end of the 7th century and growing noticeably in the second half of the 6th century.

Besides Palinuro, which remains the most thoroughly excavated centre, indications of other culturally homogeneous centres have been found at Capo la Timpo di Maratea, Palestro di Tortora and the Petrosa di Scalea, along with traces of intermittent Archaic occupation of other lesser known and explored sites such as Sapri and Pyxus.

Given the close cultural similarity of the inhabitants of these coastal settlements to those further inland, the demographic movement could

simply be interpreted as a migratory flux from the interior towards the coast (which begins sporadically but develops into a mass movement in the second half of the 6th century). Palinuro has for a long time been interpreted as a projection of the Vallo di Diano, while the other settlements of the Noce and Lao valleys seem to exhibit notable cultural affinities with those further inland along the Agri and Sinni rivers. Attracted by the opportunities offered by trade with the Tyrrhenians, the indigenous peoples of the interior created an organised network of 'gateway communities', to use a term borrowed from American anthropology.

It is not difficult to imagine who controlled the commercial traffic along this particular coast throughout the period in question. After the foundation of Elea/Hyele, the Phocacans must have exercised a vital rôle in the area, regulating and carrying out the commercial action, of which the indigenous peoples who had flocked to the coast wanted a share.

Two critical elements for the development of the area—the well-organised, culturally open structures of the indigenous people, and the long-range commercial and other interests of Phocacan sailors—are joined by a third: Achaean political control. The 'imperial currency' may have been a clear symbol of the long reach of Sybaris, but the mediatory rôle played by Poseidonia within this system should not be forgotten. In the Olympia inscription we see the *polis Poseidania* fulfil the rôle of *proxenos*, both witnessing and guaranteeing the agreement between the Sybarites and their allies and the Serdaioi (who can probably best be identified as an Oenotrian group).

Poseidonia also, as we have seen, plays a similar rôle in the *ktisis* of Elea/Hyele. From the Olympia inscription it is clear that we should not confuse Poseidonia with the *symmachoi* of Sybaris, indeed these are referred to without mentioning their ethnic identity since they are fully subject to Sybaris' political system. Thus, the autonomous political status of the Serdaioi as of the other party to the contract (with a named ethnic identity) is at least formally recognised by Sybaris.

It is not within the scope of this piece to re-examine all the arguments concerning the geographical location of this otherwise unknown *ethnos*. Suffice it to say that it is likely to be within the Italic and, more precisely, the Oenotrian/Tyrrhenian area. This seems to be confirmed by a group of coins with the legend SER, some among which bear the legend SERD. The coins are silver with relief types

on obverse and reverse struck according to the Sybarite standard and datable on stylistic and technical grounds to the first decades of the 5th century, *i.e.* to the years immediately after the destruction of Sybaris (510 B.C.). This event effectively marks the end of the political system which had dominated the history of Magna Graecia in the Archaic period and ushered in a new era of great social and ethnic change.

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