

**SPACE, POPULATION, AND ECONOMY IN A FRONTIER
REGION: LIGURIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WESTERN
BYZANTINE PROVINCES (500-700 CE)**

by

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Abstract

This thesis constitutes the first comprehensive assessment of the north-western frontier province of Liguria in present-day Italy, from the Byzantine reconquest of the region in 553 until its surrender in 643/44 to the Longobards. The work, following an extensive review of archaeological data, both published and unpublished, integrated with the scarce textual sources available, ultimately reassesses the role of Byzantium in its westernmost domains, at times considered of marginal importance and largely disconnected from the broader Imperial system. The study goes beyond the recognized role of Liguria as a militarized frontier province, showing instead the complexity of a region still integrated into the Imperial economic and cultural network inherited from Rome and mediated by Byzantine rule. After an historical overview, subsequent chapters examine key topics such as the transformation of urban centres (Ch. 2), the landscape (Ch. 3), the economic and cultural aspects (Ch. 5), closely related, but not directly controlled, by the military sphere (Ch. 4). Most of these themes were part of the so-called “Byzantine variable”, a paradigm postulated by Enrico Zanini in 1998 to distinguish Imperial and Longobard domains across the peninsula. The combined analysis of these elements over the course of this work has led to a redefinition of the “variable”, reducing the role of urbanism, and introducing an ex-novo focus on rural landscapes. This new model, potentially applicable to other parts of Byzantine Italy as well as to the wider western Byzantine world, shows how, in spite of the growing cultural and economic fragmentation of the Mediterranean from which Liguria was not immune, the Byzantine presence helped preserve, at least for some time, certain distinctive material and cultural elements.

This model is structured to carry out a comparative analysis on urban (*Luna*, Genoa, *Albingaunum*, and *Albintimilium*), rural (Corti and Filattiera-Sorano), ecclesiastical (Noli) and military (Castrum Perti) sites. In the last chapter this is tested through a preliminary comparative analysis with Byzantine (Sicily) and non-Byzantine domains (Provence, Tuscany). This is an essential step to define the patterns of change and resilience which affected Liguria in this period. Such an approach considers the effective role the Eastern Roman Empire had in every part of the “variable”, distinguishing the direct and indirect consequences of the policies of Constantinople beyond its hypothetical area of influence. The results offer new insights into the Byzantine West during a time of critical changes throughout the Mediterranean.

To my parents

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List of abbreviations

ARSW: African Red Slip Ware

CIL: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

DSP: Dérivées-de-sigillées paléochrétiennes

EVE: Estimated Vessel Equivalent

ISCuM: Istituto di Storia della Cultura Materiale

Glossary

Archeologia globale: “Archeologia globale” or Global Archaeology is an archaeological methodology and concept first defined in Italy but the members of the ISCuM (Istituto per la storia della cultura materiale) in 1981. This definition defined a methodology imprinted on studying a site or a region without favouring a historical period over another but focusing on the medium and long changes, where archaeology can give its best contribution. It also underlined the necessity to avoid applying an order of importance over different sites or soil use on the base of their function. The final aim was to acquire all types of information (ways of living, producing, building, trading, etc.) from a study, considering all the historical periods equally. The methodology also stressed the necessity, when possible, to use non-invasive techniques and to recur to an excavation only when strictly necessary. Finally, the method privileged multidisciplinary studies and teams to surpass the traditional chronological, aesthetic, and functional barriers with which usually archaeology was practised at the time.¹

Burial “alla cappuccina”: a type of inhumation characterised by the use of tiles disposed in couples to form sections of a triangular roof which covers the burial. Sometimes, in Italian, the term is loosely applied to any inhumation or cremation where tiles enclose the human remains.

Enchytrismòs: a type of inhumation where the body, usually an infant, is deposited within an emptied amphora. Usually, the amphora has the neck, or the bottom cut away to facilitate the deposition. The opening is then closed by a flat stone or a reused tile. Sometimes pieces of multiple amphorae are used instead of a single element.

EVE (estimated vessel equivalent): a standard mathematical process used by pottery specialists to estimate the minimum number of vessels present in an assemblage composed by many sherds of pottery.

Variabile Bizantina: A concept developed by Enrico Zanini in 1998 to identify a series of elements that distinguished the Byzantine provinces from the Longobard ones. In his book,

¹ For a definition and evolution of “Archeologia Globale”: Mannoni 1994-1995.

Le Italie Bizantine, Zanini sustained that the Byzantine provinces of Italy, despite their differences, possessed some common elements that made them stand out from the Longobards parts of Italy. These elements comprised better preservation of the monumentality of the Roman city and its structure, a richer and more varied material culture where Mediterranean imports were still common, a monetised economy, and preservation of at least a basic form of Imperial administration and institutions.²

² For the definition: Zanini 1998, 2010.

Introduction

The Byzantine province of Liguria (553-643/4) was a coastal territorial entity in north-western Italy, often defined as *Provincia Maritima Italarum*, broadly corresponding to the borders of the modern homonymous region.¹ It emerged because of the effects of the Longobard arrival in Italy in 568-69, which broke many of the old Roman administrative divisions. Before that, the term *Liguria* was used to broadly identify all the north-western part of northern Italy, including Milan.² With the Byzantine reconquest of the Peninsula inaugurated by emperor Justinian in 535 and completed, after many struggles in 553, the region was briefly reintegrated in its late Roman form into the Byzantine borders, only to be quickly fragmented by the Longobards. The Imperial forces in north-western Italy were then confined to the strip of coast between *Luna* and *Albintimilium* (modern Ventimiglia), giving birth to a new geographical concept, which eventually became modern Liguria.

Historical sources for the province between Late Antiquity and the early 11th century are mostly limited to the Byzantine-Gothic Wars and the Longobard invasion, often circumscribed to certain areas, making it challenging to provide any political history of the region.³ The 6th century is probably the best-known period due to the narration of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars by Procopius and from the letters of Cassiodorus and Pope Gregory the Great.⁴ Therefore, trying to delineate a political history of the Byzantine occupation has proven to be problematic. This makes archaeology the key medium to exploit in order to gain a better understanding of Liguria, with all the inevitable limits that such an approach imposes. Data in this sense are available for most of the Roman and late antique cities (*Luna*, *Genoa*, *Vada Sabatia*, *Albingaunum*, and *Albintimilium*), from Byzantine forts (Castrum Perti), and diverse rural sites (Corti, Noli, and Capo Don), these often overlooked by scholars.⁵ Yet these data, after being at the centre of the debate in the 1970s and 1980s, contributing to the creation of the field of Byzantine and medieval studies in Italy, have remained isolated and despite some recent studies exploring specific themes, the potential

¹ The designation comes from the Anonymous of Ravenna ("*provincia Maritima Italarum, quae dicitur Lunensis et Vigintimili et ceterarum civitatum*") and has been applied many times by several scholars despite doubts about its borders and, even, its existence as an administrative region: Ravenna Cosmography IV, 26; see also: Christie 1990, pp. 233-234; Pavoni 1992, pp. 101-103; Greppi 2008, pp. 4-6.

² Balbis 1979, pp. 150-51.

³ Medieval charters, for example, only appear sporadically from 916, only to increase in number after 990: Balzaretto 2018, pp. 76-77.

⁴ Chapter 1, especially 1.4.

⁵ See, for example, Christie 1990, where only Noli is extensively treated.

of new research in the region remains untapped.⁶ This thesis will therefore provide a significant window into this critical period of change, discuss the variety and complexity of the historical and archaeological information available, and contextualise the province within the context of early medieval Italy and the Byzantine Western Mediterranean. The reason for the relative absence of Byzantine Liguria from the debates on Byzantine Italy lies not in the lack of archaeological sources but on the few comprehensive studies on the region, the dispersion of the available data, and the lack of wider, Mediterranean approaches. The reasons why I chose Liguria for this research is that of the several Byzantine Italian regions, Liguria is one among the few with a good archaeological background, a great potential for further research, and for the revision of older, often unpublished, data. This makes the province an ideal candidate for an extensive work of synthesis and contextualization, which has been attempted already for other regions (Sardinia, for example) but has been lacking here.⁷

An outline “state of play” of studies

The pioneers of research on Byzantine Liguria were the historians Piero Ferrari (1880-1958) and Ubaldo Formentini (1880-1958), who published two fundamental articles that started the debate on the history and archaeology of the Byzantine province.⁸ Formentini, in particular, was the mentor of Nino Lamboglia (1912-1977), one of the most innovative Italian archaeologists of the middle decades of the 20th century, who published other key works which shaped most of the future historical and archaeological debate in the region.⁹ With these three authors we can locate the origins of most of the *topoi* that are found in subsequent research, namely the recognition of a Byzantine *limes* as well as a method to identify sites on the basis of geographical characteristics, toponymy and often ambiguous geographical sources like George of Cyprus or the Anonymous of Ravenna.¹⁰

Lamboglia had a hectic career in regard to archaeological excavations, many of which were only published in short reports. Significantly, he pioneered the application of stratigraphic analyses. To help his activities he founded the “Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri” in 1937,

⁶ For older synthesis: Christie 1989, 1990; Murialdo et al. 2011; for thematic studies: Greppi 2008 (fortifications); Balzaretto 2013 (landscapes).

⁷ Spanu 1998; Corrias & Cosentino 2002; Muresu 2018. For an a major up to date Italian overview (where Liguria is omitted): Cosentino 2021.

⁸ Ferrari 1926; Formentini 1930, 1941.

⁹ For Lamboglia's role in developing Italian Archaeology: Lamboglia 1955i, Carandini 1985b; Varaldo 1999, 2000b; Zanini 2008; for Lamboglia's first substantial work on Liguria: Lamboglia 1933.

¹⁰ Gelzer 1890 [1970]; Schnetz 1940 [1990]. These will be further discussed in Chapter 3.2 and Appendix 1.

which promoted (and still promotes today) research and excavations across the region.¹¹ He was also interested, quite unusually for the period, in all archaeological phases, including the post-Roman ones, despite him being essentially a Classicist.¹² This interest in a “global” approach to archaeological sites resulted in him being the first Professor of Medieval Archaeology in Italy, at the University of Genoa from 1971.¹³ Another major figure was Luigi Bernabò Brea (1910-1999), Soprintendente in Liguria from 1940,¹⁴ who recognised for the first time late antique and Byzantine layers in the prehistoric cave of Arene Candide.¹⁵ These two figures created the a solid basis for the development of archaeology and medieval archaeology in the region, further helped by the creation in the 1960s of an autonomous Soprintendenza in Liguria, based in Genoa, with a growing control also in the field of rescue intervention in a panorama of increasing urbanisation after 1940s.¹⁶

In the same period, a new generation of archaeologists had emerged in Liguria, developing different research paths. The collaboration of Antonio Frova (1914-2007),¹⁷ a Classical archaeologist, and a team of British archaeologists (including Hugo Blake and Bryan Ward-Perkins) made one of the first discoveries of early medieval wooden houses in Italy, in the *forum* of *Luna*, dated to the Byzantine phase, as the material culture confirmed.¹⁸ At the same time, Tiziano Mannoni (1928-2010), like Lamboglia, experimented with new methodologies (archaeometry and building archaeology) and theories (“archeologia globale”).¹⁹ In 1969 he founded the “Centro Ligure per la Storia della Ceramica” which eventually became the “Istituto di Storia della Cultura Materiale” (ISCuM) in 1976.²⁰ He was also an active medieval archaeologist, one of the founders of the journal *Archeologia*

¹¹ On its role on late antique and medieval archaeology: Lamboglia 1971a; Varaldo 2001b.

¹² Some first works considered medieval history of Varigotti, for example: Lamboglia 1946a; 1962a; or the excavation of the Byzantine *castrum* of Campo Marzio: Lamboglia 1950g, 1951h. For his stratigraphic methods and his works on pottery studies: Lamboglia 1943, 1963f, 1950m. He was also the founder of the Italian underwater archaeology: Lamboglia 1934a, 1950h, 1952f, 1954a, 1952g, 1962c; Pallarés 1983, 1985a, 1998.

¹³ For the concept of “archeologia globale”: Glossary.

¹⁴ The Soprintendente in Italy is a public official of “Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali” with specific duties regarding the protection and promotion of the Cultural Heritage.

¹⁵ Bernabò Brea 1946; 1956. For a discussion of his and Lamboglia’s figures: Gandolfi 2003a. In general, the virtuous examples of these archaeologists in the term of methods field, were ignored if not criticised by most of their contemporary and stratigraphy became commonly applied only much later, in 1970s, after Carandini’s work in the Roman villa of Settefinestre: Carandini 1985a, 1991; Mannoni 2003; Barbanera 2015.

¹⁶ The Soprintendenza also started a more or less regular publication of at least short reports of their finds in two series: *Archeologia in Liguria: Serie 1 (1967-1986); Serie 2 (2004-2015)*.

¹⁷ The founder of “Centro Studi Lunensi” in 1976, on his figure: Cavelireri Menasse, Lusuardi Siena & Roffia 2013.

¹⁸ The excavations of *Luna* the 1960s and 1970s were fully published in two volumes, while a planned third remains unpublished: Frova 1973, 1977; for the Byzantine houses: Ward-Perkins 1981.

¹⁹ Mannoni 1994a, 1996; 1997; Mannoni et al. 1998.

²⁰ Mannoni 2003.

Medievale in 1974.²¹ His research was fundamental for the discipline but also for Byzantine archaeology, since he was the one who excavated the important Byzantine site of Castrum Perti, a type of site still unique in Italy and elsewhere.²² A series of investigations on Ligurian medieval castles, promoted by ISCuM, brought the discovery of other late antique and Byzantine sites, such as Filattiera-Sorano, Zignago, and Monte Castello.²³

After this first generation of scholars, the discipline has flourished with new generations of scholars, who have developed several fronts of research. Alessandra Frondoni, Silvia Lusuardi Siena, and Philippe Pergola, mostly contributed to the field of Christian archaeology.²⁴ The archaeology of ancient urban centres was carried out by archaeologists like Lusuardi Siena (*Luna*), Piera Melli (Genoa), Pergola (*Albingaunum*), Francisca Pallarés and Daniela Gandolfi (*Albintimilium*).²⁵ Minor and rural sites were the object of research by Enrico Giannichedda (Filattiera-Sorano and Lunigiana), who continued Mannoni's work, Carlo Varaldo (Savona), and Paolo De Vingo.²⁶ Marco Milanese and Giovanni Murialdo greatly contributed to the field of pottery studies.²⁷

At the beginning of the 1990s the amount and quality of data generated by the research provided the materials for the first syntheses on Byzantine and early medieval Liguria, prompting a new discussion around the Byzantine domination in the rest of Italy.²⁸ After the pioneering work of Formentini in 1941, based largely on topography and toponymy, Neil Christie's two articles on Byzantine Liguria published in 1989 and 1990, wrote the first work to rely on more solid archaeological evidence.²⁹ Surprisingly, few other works of synthesis after that were published for Liguria, the main exception being a joint article by Ligurian scholars which appeared in 2011, but reflecting the state of play in 2002.³⁰ Other general works included Greppi (2008) on the Byzantine fortifications and Balzaretto (2013), with a

²¹ One of his merits was the inauguration of the study of the medieval Ligurian pottery, a class of material previously poorly understood: Mannoni 1975.

²² Mannoni and Murialdo 2001.

²³ For the research around the castles: Bazzurro et al. 1974; Mannoni 1984, 2000; Mannoni & Murialdo 1990; for Byzantine sites: Giannichedda 1998a, 2010a; Cabona, Gardini & Mannoni 1978.

²⁴ Frondoni 1986b, 2003, 2013b, 2015b, 2018b; Lusuardi Siena 2007; Lusuardi Siena et al. 2011; Pergola et al. 2015a; Spadea Noviero, Pergola & Roascio 2018.

²⁵ Lusuardi Siena 2007; Pergola 2007; Melli 1996, 2017; Pallarés 1996; Gandolfi 2018°.

²⁶ Giannichedda 1998a, 2010a; Varaldo 1995a, 2001; De Vingo 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2017.

²⁷ Milanese 1993, 1995; Murialdo 2001a, 2001f, 2005a; Murialdo & Palazzi 2000; Murialdo et al. 1998, 1999.

²⁸ Brown 1984; Brown & Christie 1989; Zanini 1998.

²⁹ Christie 1989 and 1990; a synthesis, without the Byzantine focus, was also published by Gardini and Murialdo: Gardini & Murialdo 1994.

³⁰ Murialdo et al. 2011; not dissimilar to: Murialdo 2001m.

broader focus on the Middle Ages, and a special attention to ecological themes.³¹ Noticeably, none of those scholars specialised in Byzantine studies, while an overarching archaeological assessment of the region has not been produced in the last 20 to 30 years.

Nonetheless, a series of issues still need to be resolved or addressed. First, the knowledge of late antique potteries has notably expanded and refined over the last decades. However, sometimes the chronologies that these vessels provide us with a dating system far less precise than we would like, leaving many of our dates ranging, at best, within half a century of possible error. In parallel to this, the knowledge of the local ceramic productions, which from Late Antiquity will become more and more critical, is still in its infancy, with some productions relatively well known, such as the “vacuolate” of Lunigniana, or the common wares of *Albintimilium*, while others are still very obscure, like the production of central Liguria.³² Finally, there is the omnipresent problem of the lack of knowledge regarding most of the internal Ligurian areas, most of our data came from sites which are located within a radius of 10-20km from the coast. This is due to the nature of the landscape, which is mainly unsuitable to host large settlements, but also to the research agenda, which rarely considered the region’s most rural, internal, sectors.³³

Historians too were dealing with Byzantine Liguria. However, most of their works were focused either on controversial and obscure geographical sources, like the works of Conti or Petracco,³⁴ or instead including the Byzantine province in broader historical narratives, such as in Formentini’s work on Genoa, so that Byzantine Liguria was only a small section of the study.³⁵ Only a few scholars specifically targeted the Byzantine period, or parts of it, such as Balbis or Pavoni.³⁶ This was mostly due to the scarcity of the written sources available for the period of the Byzantine occupation which were never completely surveyed.

In parallel to these local, sometimes regional, works there was an international growth of interest, beginning in the 1970s, on themes regarding Late Antiquity, medieval, and Byzantine studies with archaeology taking a leading role in producing fresh data which were

³¹ Greppi 2008; Balzaretti 2013. In response to Balzaretti’s book: Benente, 2017; Tedesco 2017.

³² For a detailed discussion of this issue: Chapter 5.1.

³³ See, for example, the “tile stations” issue: Chapter 3.3.2.

³⁴ Giuliani 1930; Conti 1975; Petracco 2015, 2018a, 2018b; with a more archaeological perspective: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996.

³⁵ Formentini 1941; Pavoni 1992

³⁶ In general: Balbis 1979; on the Longobard conquest: Pavoni 1986, 1992 pp.107-108; Christie 1990; on the Christianisation of the region: Pietri 1987; Calzamiglia 1998.

integrated in new interpretations by both historians and archaeologists.³⁷ For Italy, this growing interest has focussed mostly on northern and central regions (mainly Tuscany), and only during the last two decades have other parts of the peninsula (the south for example), started to catch up with systematic research on the same themes.³⁸ A significant update was Zanini's work, *Le Italie Bizantine* (1998), which remains a useful manual for the Byzantine situation in Italy until the mid-8th century, which was followed, ten years later, by Cosentino's book on the history of the Byzantine occupation in Italy.³⁹ A comprehensive, fundamental, archaeological synthesis of the peninsula came with Christie's book *From Constantine to Charlemagne* in 2006.⁴⁰ However, the recent book, *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, which was a much needed update after Zanini's synthesis of 1998, did not include a dedicated section on Liguria, despite this region occupying a significant part of Zanini's work in 1998, especially regarding its fortification system.⁴¹ This might be a sign of the marginalization of the region in general but also of the significance of the Byzantine period in Liguria, which originally captured much attention due to important discoveries combined with the advancement in archaeological methodology, caused by the lack of new works on the region, able to underline the significance of the Byzantine occupation and offering new perspectives.

Research questions and methodology

Despite the research done since the 1940s, as is clear from the above discussion, Byzantine Liguria is missing a coherent and systematic archaeological synthesis and proper contextualization. A detailed and critical analysis of this region is of high value, since this is a territory which can provide important evidence for the nature of Byzantine Italy in particular and more generally of the Byzantine western Mediterranean. Some of the questions which stimulated this study came from a series of works inaugurated by Brown in the late 1970s and then developed by Zanini's book on Byzantine Italy.⁴² Zanini's idea implied that Italy, especially after the Longobard invasion, became a very fragmented reality, with marked regional differences between Byzantine and Longobard territories but also between the often physically separated Byzantine regions. This awareness meant that scholars looked

³⁷ As general reference: Cameron 1993a, 1993b; McCormick 2001; Ward-Perkins 2006; Wickham 2006, 2009.

³⁸ On the general debate and some specific case studies: Arthur 2002; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998b; Christie 2006; Cosentino 2008, 2021a; Francovich 1992; Francovich & Noyé 1994; Malfitana & Bonifay 2016; Muresu 2018; Spanu 1998; Wickham 1981; Zanini 1998.

³⁹ Zanini 1998; Cosentino 2008.

⁴⁰ Christie 2006.

⁴¹ Cosentino 2021a.

⁴² Brown 1978; Brown & Christie 1989; Zanini 1998.

for a “Byzantine model” or a “variabile bizantina” to distinguish the Byzantine regions from the Longobard ones.⁴³ Zanini collected a series of elements which appeared together only in the Imperial’s provinces and included: a higher continuity of the monumentality and structure of the Roman cities, accompanied by a continuity in construction techniques; the existence of an organised defensive systems based on Late Roman/Byzantine tactics; a continuity of site choices; a richer material culture than Longobard Italy, which accessed an international network of production and exchange; the survival of a monetised economy; and the existence of an administrative system still formally based on the Roman one.⁴⁴

Therefore, the first major objective of this thesis is to examine these postulated “variables” in Liguria, possibly to rule some of them out but also to suggest new ones, such as rural landscapes, differences in diet or migration patterns, which are now available through the study of isotopes in human bones. A particularly important part of these analyses would be whether there was the creation of a militarised “frontier” and how and whether it impacted on the economy, site distribution, and society of the region. The second, major objective is to define the characteristics of Liguria itself, which make it stand out not just as a Byzantine province, but also as regional entity in the middle of many across Italy and the Mediterranean.⁴⁵ Finally, I will discuss what kind of place Byzantine Liguria was through a series of questions. Is it possible to speak of a Byzantine identity? Or were the regional elements stronger? Was it a marginalised “frontier region”? Or was there more to see besides the fortification walls? What was the place of Liguria in respect of the “Corrupting Sea” and of Byzantium? What effects on Liguria did the definitive passage from a unified, Roman, Mediterranean, into a series of fragmented seas have? What happened after the expulsion of the Byzantine troops?

To confront these issues and questions I have applied a multidisciplinary approach in order to put on the table as many points of view as possible, with the aim of going beyond the regionalisms and sectorial approaches of the past, to explore Byzantine Liguria in its complexity. To achieve this vision, I have used both historical and archaeological sources to analyse the evolution of Roman cities in the region between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, the countryside, the fortification system, the economy, and society. Each of

⁴³ The concept originated in Zanini 1998.

⁴⁴ Zanini 1998, 2010.

⁴⁵ Horden and Purcell 2000, pp. 53-88.

these themes has its own history of studies, its subsections, and branches for which only the most pertinent studies have been selected to avoid an unmanageable bibliography. To integrate and support a first bibliographical survey of the available materials, I undertook a detailed study of the Soprintendenza's archives in Genoa,⁴⁶ and field trips to visit sites, museums, and deposits with unpublished archaeological materials. To better support and illustrate the work I have created a regional GIS with which I produced most of the maps presented in the thesis and the viewshed of Appendix 3. The bibliography has also been uploaded on Zotero, and will be available for future scholars and researchers.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised in five chapters and three appendices. The first chapter will provide an historical contextualisation of Byzantine Italy and Liguria followed by a discussion of all the historical sources available. The purpose of this section, constituting the first chapter, is not to privilege historical sources and interpretations over archaeological ones, but to provide a practical space for discussion and reference of this data for the rest of the thesis. This will include the fragments of Rutilius Namatianus from early 5th century followed by an overview of the Ostrogothic period sources and the letters of Cassiodorus. The sources for the crucial years of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars are dominated by Procopius with contributions by Agathias and Marcellinus Comes.⁴⁷ The period of struggle against the Longobard invasion is documented by the letters of Pope Gregory the Great and concluded by the accounts of Paul the Deacon and Fredegar on the Longobard conquest of the region.⁴⁸ Finally, in parallel to these more narrative sources, there is a series of geographical treatises, such as the works of George of Cyprus and the Anonymous of Ravenna, which have been much discussed in the past.⁴⁹ In this rapid overview, beside the political and military questions, I will discuss all the social and economic factors that can be deduced, especially from the letters of Gregory, on the daily lives of the inhabitants of the region under Byzantine rule, underlying aspects that have been usually overlooked.

The archaeological material will become the major focus of Chapter 2, with an analysis of the main urban centres of the region, derived from four of the five Roman *municipia* attested

⁴⁶ This was achieved towards a series of M3C study trips between 2017 and 2020, and a placement of three months between November and December 2020.

⁴⁷ Chapter 1.4.2.

⁴⁸ Chapter 1.4.3 and 1.5.

⁴⁹ See the discussion and bibliography in Chapter 3.2 and Appendix 1.

in Liguria: *Luna*, Genoa, *Albingaunum*, and *Albintimilium*. The combination of textual, epigraphic, and archaeological sources is at the core of this chapter which will show how, beside the material culture and the administration, the Byzantine impact on the Ligurian urbanism does not provide a valid element of distinction with non-Byzantine (Longobard) cities in northern Italy. The Ligurian towns maintained their administrative and economic role, but they seem to have lost most of their Roman “monumentality” and sense of division and use of spaces.

The countryside is the main topic of Chapter 3, which will divide, following the micro-regional perspective proposed by Horden and Purcell, Liguria into three areas (east-centre-west) and analyse each of them in its own context. Those are clearly different environments where hills and mountains are always present but with different roles. In the east, *Luna* and the Lunigiana benefitted from the presence of the large and fertile plain of the Magra river, the same was true for the west, even if with smaller (except for the plain of *Albingaunum*) but more regular coastal valleys. The centre instead, was dominated by mountains except for the area around Genoa and the val Polcevera. This geographical condition characterised the distribution of the Roman settlements and did similarly with the Byzantine ones, which, despite being reduced in number and with different forms (churches and villages instead of villas and *mansiones*) seem to have continued to follow the Roman organisation of the landscape.

Fortifications and the defensive system will be the core of Chapter 4. Beginning with an analysis of urban and coastal defences (Savona and Varigotti), which were crucial to sustain a region which was politically and militarily isolated by land, the rest of the chapter will examine the internal defences following the same geographical division as Chapter 3. A first section will be dedicated to the eastern Lunigiana and its fortified watch towers (Zignago and Aulla) and outposts (Filattiera-Sorano, Monte Castello, Castrum Aghinulfi), followed by Genoa and the Val Polcevera, only to conclude with the east, dominated by the prominent presence of Castrum Perti and the Area of Finale, but also with minor or similar *castra* (Campo Marzio and Varazze/San Donato).

Finally, Chapter 5, will deal with the many elements composing the regional material culture, this will initially be studied from an economic perspective of production and distribution of goods following international, regional, and micro-regional networks. This will provide a

perspective of how important the commercial networks still provided by the Imperial system were but at the same time, how part of them were already being substituted by different forms of regional and micro-regional productions, mostly overlooked by previous studies. The first part of this analysis will be mostly based on pottery finds, but I will also discuss the numismatic evidence, the local production of sarcophagi, and agricultural patterns. The combination of all these elements will help to characterise the Ligurian society, its habits, tastes, and traditions still well integrated into a Roman pattern, with some regional peculiarities.

In all these sections parallels will be made with other Italian and west Mediterranean regions which will help to contextualise Byzantine Liguria and allow it to be an informative source for understanding the world of early Byzantine Italy, and the fundamental changes that occurred across the Mediterranean in this period of the 6th to 7th century.

The thesis is accompanied by three appendixes. Appendix 1 contains a collection of inscriptions quoted in the text and the fragments of Rutilius Namatianus. Appendix 2 is a review of the references to the ancient geographical texts relevant for Liguria and some explicative maps. Appendix 3 displays the preliminary results of the cumulative viewshed analyses applied on the area of Finale which are used in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1

Byzantine Liguria: an Historical Perspective

1.1 Introduction

In this first chapter I will present a picture of the scanty historiographic sources available for Liguria mostly from the beginning to the 5th century, but especially between the reign of Theodoric (493-526) and the Longobard conquest of 643-644 with always an eye to the main historical events which revolved around the region. This choice does not represent the privileging of the historical sources in the interpretation of the data, but will simply provide an historical context for the region and an accessible point of reference for the rest of the thesis, which is mostly based on the archaeological evidence. In doing so I will firstly outline the main events which involved the region directly and caused the formation and subsequent destruction of the Byzantine province of Liguria. In a second section, I will outline the geographical sources, and, finally, I will present the bulk of the historical sources divided between the Ostrogothic, the Byzantine, and the Longobard period.

The sources used for this reconstruction are very heterogeneous, going from the lyrics of Rutilius Namatianus, to the geographical treatises of George of Cyprus and the Anonymous of Ravenna, to the Histories of Procopius or Paul the Deacon, and the letters of Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great.¹ Usually, Liguria attracted little attention, but it is mentioned when caught in major events, such the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, or the Longobard arrival into Italy. Often the lack of detail of the sources has left space for many speculations, sometimes completely unjustified, such as the theories of Byzantines strongholds which resisted until 728.² Before this work, the most complete exegeses of the Ligurian sources, were the ones of Christie, Greppi, and Balzaretti, each one with its own “limitations”: a section of an article in the first case, a military perspective in the second, and an ecological focus in the third.³ Otherwise, the province is usually discussed briefly in more general works, with a broader

¹ Chapter 1.4.1-3.

² Balbis 1979, p. 149.

³ Christie 1989, 1990; Greppi 2008; Balzaretti 2013.

perspective either on Byzantine, Longobard or early medieval Italy.⁴ A full and complete discussion of all the sources mentioning Liguria between the beginning of the 5th century and the Longobard conquest, has never been attempted.⁵ In this chapter I will analyse as many sources as possible and see what each of them can tell us regarding the situation of the Byzantine province, its inhabitants, society, and economy.

1.2 From the “Great” Liguria to Coastal Liguria: Fragments of “Histoire Événementielle”

This scarcity of sources and lack of centrality of the region, usually leaves little for the historians to deal with, outside of simply relating the dates of the main known events. The period is usually discussed rather briefly and with many doubts regarding how to fill the gaps of the historical narrative.⁶ This first section will be limited to a pure “histoire événementielle” of Byzantine Liguria. It is possible to divide the history of the province into three periods: the Ostrogothic kingdom, the Byzantine occupation, and the Longobard invasion. The first started with the military campaign of Theodoric, and then the assassination of Odoacer in 493. The second one started with the Byzantine invasion of Italy in 535, and more specifically with their first, ephemeral intervention in north-western Italy with the landing of Byzantine troops at Genoa in 538, even if the region was never really under control until the end of the war in 553. Until then, Liguria maintained its Roman ancient boundaries, certainly including a larger portion of north-western Italy and with Milan as its main point of reference for religious and administrative purposes. The last phase began with the Longobard arrival in northern Italy in 568-69 and their immediate occupation of Milan, leaving to the Byzantines, after a few years from the reconquest, only the coastal part of the region. It is in this time that the term Liguria gradually migrated in meaning from the Roman “great” Liguria of northern Italy to a fraction of its formal extension, relegated only to its coast. Byzantine Liguria was suddenly ended by the Longobard conquest of 643-44 marking the end of a Byzantine political and military presence in north-western Italy. As noted by Balbis, it is this crucial period between 553 and the definitive Longobard conquest of this last outpost of Imperial presence in the north-west in 643/4, that we see the formation of a first “regional

⁴ Such works quickly multiplied over the last decades with Liguria covering a more prominent role only in synthesis built by archaeologists: Cosentino & Zanini 2021; Christie 2006; Zanini 1998, pp. 234-244.

⁵ Some of the most complete discussions are in: Balbis 1979; Christie 1989, pp. 6-17; 1990, pp. 232-236; Pavoni 1992, pp. 55-148; Balzaretto 2013, pp. 1-11.

⁶ Pavoni 1992, pp. 87-108.

identity” different from the Roman one.⁷ The combination of Byzantine resistance and Longobard occupation broke a conceptual, geographical, link which was created in the time of the Republic, when north western Italy was simply the land of the Celtic tribes of the Ligures.⁸ A concept that survived in the forms of the Roman administration system for centuries until the Longobard conquest.⁹

1.3 Byzantine Liguria: a Geographical and Administrative Issue¹⁰

Since the literary sources for a history of the military and political events are rather miserly, many studies have focused on a geographical definition with a dense discussion around the creation and modification of the Roman province, from the ancient *Regio IX* of *Augustus* to the *Alpes Cottiae* and *Appenninae*, to the Byzantine *Provincia Maritima Italorum* cited by the Anonymous of Ravenna.¹¹ A great effort has been put in marking the borders of the late Roman province and in combining the list of places provided by the ancient geographers with ancient toponymy, contemporary settlements or archaeological sites, generating a variety of different opinions often in contrast with each other.¹² This at least, had the merit of generating the first debates around the space and organisation of Byzantine Liguria and stimulated some of the first archaeological research.¹³

What is certain is that during the administrative reform of Italy under Augustus, Liguria was *Regio IX*.¹⁴ This *Regio IX* comprised an area which included the modern region of Liguria and the southern part of Piedmont. This formed the base of all subsequent “Ligurias”, which saw their administrative borders changed over time but always in the context of north-western Italy. With the reforms of Diocletian (284-305) Liguria came to include the important city of Milan.¹⁵ The situation became more complicated during the late Roman period when there is not a real agreement around the borders of the province and the *Alpes Cottiae* but

⁷ He uses different dates (538-728), since he believes that isolated Byzantine outposts resisted the Longobards for longer, but the concept remains: Balbis 1979, pp.149-52; Pavoni 1992, pp. 99-100.

⁸ The first mention of the Ligures is in fragment of Hesiod quoted by Strabo where they figure together with the Ethiopians and Scythians as the older inhabitants of western Europe: Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.7.

⁹ Maras 2004.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion regarding the geographical sources: Chapter 3.2; Appendix 1.

¹¹ “...*provincia maritima Italorum, quae dicitur Lunensis, et Vigintimilii et ceterarum civitatum*.”: Anonymous of Ravenna, *Cosmography*, IV.29

¹² Conti 1975; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996; Christie 1989, 1990; Petracco 2015, 2018a, 2018b, Cosentino forthcoming.

¹³ Ferrari 1926; Formentini 1930, 1954.

¹⁴ “...*patet ora Liguria inter amnes Varum et Macram XXXI Milia passuum. Haec regio ex descriptione Augusti nona est*”: Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, III.49 (47-49 for all the administrative division).

¹⁵ On the changes and evolution of the province: Pavoni 1992, pp. 9-52.

still the basic element of Liguria meaning a large part of north-western Italy remained intact.¹⁶

The Longobard arrival broke any form of administrative continuity, except for the ecclesiastical one, forcing the Byzantines to reorganise themselves on the coast, probably around this phantomatic *Provincia Maritima Italorum*. The existence of this administrative district is debated since it is mentioned only by the Anonymous of Ravenna, but we can take it as definition of what was left of the Imperial domains in the region, which might have also included some island of the Tuscan archipelago and probably Pisa for a few years.¹⁷ The Longobards, and the Carolingians later on, seems to have done little to change the situation or to reunify the province with the rest of northern Italy. The evidence for a discussion on post-Byzantine Liguria is weak, since no real documentation is available until the mid-10th century.¹⁸ The occasional mentions of a *dux Liguriae*, Audoald, around 763 and of Ademar, *comes civitas Genuae*, in 806,¹⁹ suggest that the province existed in some form with Genoa as its capital, but nothing more.

1.4 Liguria through the Eyes of the Historical Sources

In this section we will start to examine the main textual sources for an historical narrative of the region between the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476) to the Longobard conquest of 643/644. These are mostly divided between Cassiodorus's letters for the Ostrogothic period, mostly dealing with administration issues; Procopius for the Byzantine-Gothic, during which coastal Liguria was only partially involved; the letters of Gregory the Great for the central period of Byzantine occupation, of much interest for us; and the laconic sources of the Longobard conquest of the region in 643-64.

1.4.1 War and Peace between 476 and the Ostrogothic Kingdom

Generally, northern Italy experienced the hardship of the 5th century invasions. However, there are no direct sources about the coastal area of Liguria. Some indirect evidence of insecurity came from the town of *Albingaunum*, which was refortified by Constantius III between 410-420 (before becoming emperor), according to an inscription.²⁰ However, it is

¹⁶ Balbis 1979, pp. 150-151; Pavoni 1992, pp.55-81; Greppi 2008, pp. 1-6.

¹⁷ Christie 1990, p. 233.

¹⁸ Musarra 2017; Balzaretto 2018. Also, little research has been done archaeologically: Varaldo 2004; Murialdo 2021.

¹⁹ Balzaretto 2013, pp. 98-101.

²⁰ For a detailed account and discussion of the inscription: Chapter 2.4.2; Appendix 2, n. 3

unclear if the reconstruction was prompted by a barbarian raid on the settlement, or if this was simply one of the many state interventions in securing a better protection for the region. Rutilius Namatianus, in his poem *De Reditu Suo*, describing his voyage by sea from Rome to his properties in Gaul, at the beginning of the 5th century, has survived in an incomplete version, interrupted at his arrival at *Luna*, which is still presented as a flourishing city with white walls.²¹ The recovering of two lost fragments of the poem in 1973 brought some new light on Liguria. The first fragment seems to describe the works on *Albingaunum* as in Constantius's inscription, while the second mentions a settlement with *horrea*, a tavern, and a winter military camp, which has been possibly associated with Genoa.²² Combining the two fragments with the survived section on *Luna* we have a picture of coastal Liguria spared from the hardship of war, where cities are active and well maintained and where the state infrastructure still functions. This is quite different from the Etrurian centres, like Cosa or Populonia, described by Rutilius as being in total abandonment.²³

In this time Liguria meant a larger geographical area, and if the coast was spared, the Po plain was probably not. The region was surely badly affected, at least in some areas, by the invasions which afflicted northern Italy during the 5th century. The king of the Visigoths are usually accused of having sacked some of the settlements on their way to Gaul, after they had sacked Rome in 410.²⁴ However, the sources do not provide any detail regarding the path taken by the Visigoth army, with some scholars suggesting a northern route towards the pass of the Col de Montgenèvre.²⁵ Nonetheless, the Visigoths are often held up for being one of the main cause of destruction over the 5th century and any archaeological layer containing significant traces of fire destruction and roughly datable to this century has been, at least one time, associated with them.²⁶ However, Coastal Liguria might have experienced some sort of protection since it was most significant for the maritime movement rather than the land one.

²¹ Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo*, ll.61-68.

²² There is not a strong connection however: Lamboglia 1978-78.

²³ Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo*, Cosa l.277-292; Populonia 399-414.

²⁴ Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, p. 8; Pavoni 1992, p. 83.

²⁵ This was a common theory at the beginning of the 20th century, and it has been repeated so far, but again the ancient sources are silent on the details of his journey: Barker 1911, p. 401; Bury 1923, p. 185; Salisbury 2015, p. 87.

²⁶ For *Albintimilium*: Lamboglia 1956a p. 144-152; Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 130-132; for *Albingaunum*: Lamboglia 1970a; for *Vada Sabatia*: Lamboglia 1955b, pp. 38-41.

After having suffered the hardships of war and an invasion during the 5th century, the region experienced a renewed period of peace during the reign of Theodoric (493-526), however, the overall condition of north-western Italy was not idyllic. From Cassiodorus *Variae*, it is possible to learn of several issues mostly due to famine and consequent unhappiness of the local population. The problem recurred over all the first part of the 6th century, with the first letters mentioning food shortages since 508-12 and then again in 533-37 when there were also tax collection problems.²⁷ In both cases, the state took the situation seriously, returning the corn already delivered to Ravenna to be distributed within the province,²⁸ or to sell grain stored at Pavia and Dertona at a fixed price.²⁹ Again, it is not clear how much of this situation affected the coast, or if these problems reflect the status of particular areas like Milan. More normal activities are attested for Dertona, with the construction of houses for the soldiers and their families in a protected area (507-8).³⁰ The coast is only mentioned in the case of the request, from the Jewish community of Genoa, to restore their roofless synagogue (507-12).³¹ Theodoric, who always applied a tolerant religious policy, granted them the possibility to restore the building but not to enlarge it or decorate it. Later, after another letter of requests, he granted the same community their old privileges.³² We know little about the Ostrogothic occupation of the province, even if many late antique buildings might have been constructed during this period or in the one immediately before (second half of the 5th and early 6th century). For sure the Ostrogothic reign represented a period of peace and stability in the area, if not prosperity despite the recurrence of famine which might have speared the coast, where supplies could easily arrive from abroad.

1.4.2 *The Byzantine-Gothic Wars (535-553)*

After a period of peace during Theodoric's reign, the Byzantine-Gothic Wars (535-553), impacted Liguria and probably reversed very quickly the condition of stability of the previous 20-30 years. The region became particularly important during the first phases of the conflict when Belisarius, who was pressing the Goths of Vitiges in central Italy, sent a small contingent of 1000 Thracians and Isaurians under the command of Mundilas to free Milan. This manoeuvre was encouraged by Datius, archbishop of Milan, and supervised by Fidelius

²⁷ For the tax problems: Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 11.16; 12.18. A third famine is recorded around 565 by Paul the Deacon: *History of the Longobards*, II.4.

²⁸ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 2.20.

²⁹ The first letter is addressed to a public official, but in this second case the responsible of the distribution was *Datius*, the archbishop of Milan: Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 20.27.

³⁰ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 1.17.

³¹ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 2.27; Marcenaro 1993a.

³² Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 4.33.

Felix, a nobleman from the same city, who became a fervent supporter of the Imperial cause and for that was nominated *Praefectus Praetorio*.³³ The troops disembarked at Genoa (538), described as a well situated port to access Gaul and Spain,³⁴ and took the via Postumia towards Milan bringing the boats with them, for at least 70-80km, to cross the Po River. After a first, successful, skirmish with the Gothic garrison of Pavia (*Ticinum*), Fidelius was killed. This compromised the mission since he was supposed to help Mundilas to raise support for the Imperial forces in the north. Despite the setback, the Byzantine forces were able to occupy Milan and several other cities nearby such as Bergamo, Como, and Novara. The Goths, however, could rely on the ambivalent policy of the Franks which, formerly allied of the Empire, sent a contingent of Burgundians (their vassals) to their (the Goths) aid.³⁵ A joint army of Burgundians and Goths, commanded by Uraias, nephew of Vitiges, besieged Milan, which was protected by only 300 Byzantine soldiers, since the others were dispersed in guarding the nearby cities.³⁶ Mundilas was able to hold the city with the aid of the civilians until 539 when, pressed by the famine and having lost the hope a relief from allied troops, due to the conflicts between Belisarius and Narses, which had arrived in the meantime to help the invasion, was forced to surrender. The soldiers were granted safe passage but, according to Procopius, all the male citizens of Milan, one of the largest Italian cities, were killed, and the women given to the Burgundians as slaves.³⁷

Later, in the same year, the Frankish King Theudebert, disregarding his pacts with both Byzantines and Goths, conducted a raid in northern Italy, in which Genoa was sacked. This is only briefly recorded by Marcellinus Comes, while the more detailed account of Procopius mention *Ticinum* (modern Pavia), as the main victim of the raid.³⁸ This leave a doubt on the truthfulness of Marcellinus, also because, a few years later, Genoa was again occupied by Byzantine troops. Apart from the Frankish raid coastal Liguria seems to have been spared the worst part of the war, since most of the conflicts were focused on other section of the peninsula. The coast, however, was probably strategic for the Empire, due to its important ports which could theoretically allow another manoeuvre on the same sort of the one

³³ The two men came to Belisarius in Rome when he was besieged by Vitiges and assured him an easy victory since the city was unguarded and promising support: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.vii.35-38; VI.xii.27-18.

³⁴ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xii.30.

³⁵ Procopius claimed it was a force of 10.000 men strong: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xii.38.

³⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xii.36-41.

³⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xi.20.

³⁸ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, 539.4. In the more detailed account of Procopius there is no mention of Genoa but only of *Ticinum* (modern Pavia) and of the rout of the Gothic and Byzantine armies taken by surprise by the Franks: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xxv.8-18.

attempted by Mundilas. It is with no surprise that Procopius mentions a Byzantine garrison, commanded by Bonus, holding Genoa in 544.³⁹ Nonetheless, this is the last mention of the region in the conflict, except for the surrender of *Luna* to Narses, which was one of the last strongholds still in Gothic hands at the very end of the war.⁴⁰ With the final victory of the Byzantines, there is virtually no mention of Liguria in the sources in the few years before the Longobard arrival in 568. It is also unclear how much the Byzantines were able to restore some forms of order and authority or to undertake reconstruction or restoration works of cities and infrastructures. Justinian proclaimed the *Pragmatica Sanctio* in 554, extending the eastern Roman law over Italy and formally reinstating the peninsula, even if only as a regular province, within the empire.⁴¹ In any case, this was mostly an ephemeral effort since it was soon compromised by the newcomers, the Longobards.

1.4.3 *The Longobard Arrival in Italy and the letters of Pope Gregory the Great*

Guided by their King, Alboin, the Longobards, arrived in Italy in the year of 568 or 569, quickly occupying most of northern Italy, including Milan where the archbishop fled to Genoa in an self-imposed exile in the face of the Arian and pagan newcomers.⁴² After the capitulation of Pavia, three years later, the Byzantine influence north to the Po evaporated very quickly. Despite some attempts from historians to depict a more gradual conquest of the western Po plain with possible resistance at Aquino or Tortona (ancient Dertona) there is no evidence in support of these conclusions.⁴³ It is possible that the Byzantines retreated along the more defensible coast, especially in the eventuality of some form of agreement with the Longobards for the control of northern Italy.⁴⁴ In his article, Christie rightfully points out that all the contemporary sources described either a migration or an invitation (from Narses), and are quoted in this way by later authors, like Paul the Deacon.⁴⁵ Only in the 9th century the word “invasion” is explicitly used by Agnellus.⁴⁶ In further support of this hypothesis I will add that, apart from the siege of Pavia, the first military operations of the Longobards in northern Italy were a series of unsuccessful raids in Gaul in the early 570s.⁴⁷

³⁹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VII.x.13-18.

⁴⁰ Agathias, *Histories*, I,11,6.

⁴¹ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Appendix VII.

⁴² Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, II.25.

⁴³ Pavoni 1986. Strangely Tortona, depicted by Cassiodorus as a walled city, is later described by Procopius in 540 as a city without walls: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xxiii.5.

⁴⁴ Christie 1991b.

⁴⁵ The version of the invitation is found in the *Liber Pontificalis* and later quoted by Paul the Deacon: *Liber Pontificalis*, 63.3; Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, II.5.

⁴⁶ Agnellus Ravennese, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 94.17-23.

⁴⁷ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, III.4-5 ad III.8.

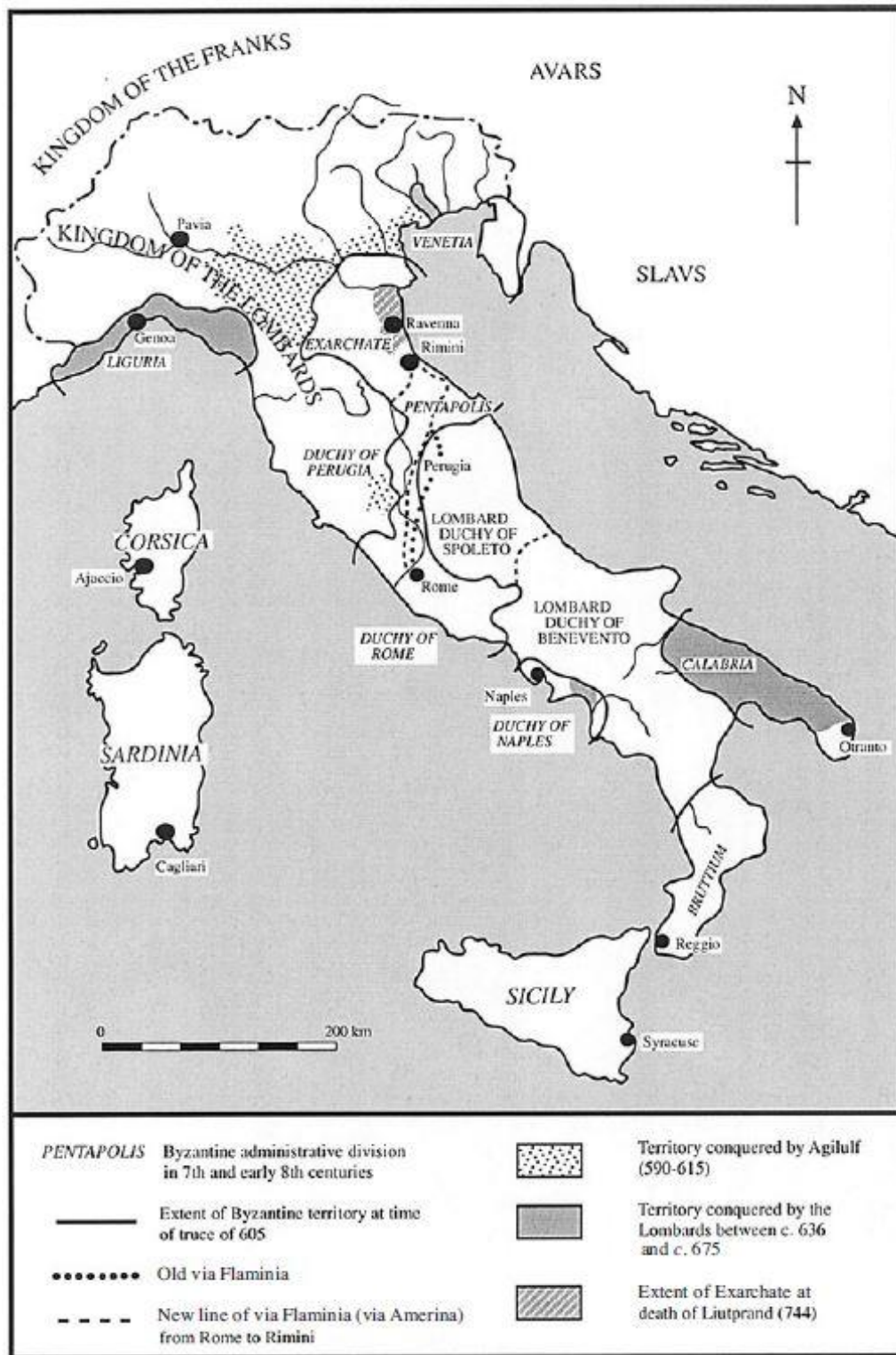


Figure 1.1) Byzantine Italy during the various phases of Longobard invasion.
(Source: Christie 2006, fig. 6, p. 43)

Those raids were carried out with the complicity of the pro-Byzantine *magister militum* Sisinnius (an Ostrogoth who joined the Imperial forces), who was still guarding the important Susa Alpine passes, connecting northern Italy with southern Gaul, for the Empire. Sisinnius let the Longobards use the passes freely, either under the threat of their probably superior

forces or as consequence of an agreement between Byzantines and Longobards.⁴⁸ It is probably not by chance that the Longobards started to seriously occupy Byzantine land in central and southern Italy only after the failure of these raids, having possibly realised that the Imperial lands were an easier prey for them than the Frankish ones.⁴⁹

On the Byzantine side the Longobard occupation is occasionally discussed by Menander Protector who underlines how the Empire was too busy on other fronts to really help Italy.⁵⁰ The only window on the local situation during the almost century long Byzantine presence in the region is in the letters of Pope Gregory the Great. The period covered by the correspondence with the bishops of Milan in exile and with the bishop of *Luna*, Venantius, is however short (591-603) but crucial. The Ligurian coast had become isolated from the rest of the Byzantine domains due to the fall of Etruria into Longobard hands around 572-74. This was followed by a short period of peace from 585, after the disastrous Imperial expedition of Baduarius (576), aimed at regaining control of the peninsula. However, the peace was often broken by both parties and it slowly, but constantly, tipped the balance of power in favour of the Longobards (Fig. 1.1).⁵¹

The letters of Gregory the Great are an invaluable insight, testifying the relative security that Byzantine Liguria was enjoying over the end of the 6th century, since military actions or threats are never mentioned, while for other parts of Italy the pope was often in communications with Byzantine officers or members of the clergy of communities struck by war.⁵² Most of the correspondence is devoted to issues regarding the administration of the church and some other subjects. The pope only wrote to the archbishop of Milan, residing in Genoa, and the bishop of *Luna*, with occasional insights into other spheres. Other bishops, under the jurisdiction of Milan, are named occasionally but their dioceses are rarely specified and the few times they are, they are in Longobard lands.⁵³

⁴⁸ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, III.8.

⁴⁹ For an overview of the Longobard presence in Italy: Christie 1998; Brogiolo, Marazzi & Giostra 2017.

⁵⁰ Menander Protector, 24.

⁵¹ Zanini 1998, pp. 51-100.

⁵² Two examples can be found in this chapter itself such as the case of the *magister militum* Aldio and the military actions against the Longobards in norther *Latium*, or the fate of the clergy of Fiesole (in Tuscany) forced to fled to *Luna* by a Longobard raid.

⁵³ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 4.02 (September 593), 7.14 (November 596), 9.224 (July 599), and 10.11 (May 600).

Gregory touches on problems with finance (taxes or loans) such as an issue with the revenues of the Milanese clergy in Sicily, which were collected by Rome (and supposedly passed by);⁵⁴ issues with estates between the churches of Milan and Rome;⁵⁵ the money (20 golden *solidi*) that Venatius, bishop of *Luna*, was instructed to deliver to the clergy of Fiesole (near Florence), who took refuge in the Ligurian town after their city was sacked by the Longobards, in order to rebuild their church;⁵⁶ or the abuses of the *praefectus* of the city, Vigilius, who apparently extorted money from the archbishop in exile.⁵⁷ However, this episode can also be interpreted as an example of the financial difficulties that such civil authorities were facing in sustaining their public activities within the cities. This last letter is also particularly interesting because is the first, and only attestation, as far as I am aware, of a civil authority for the whole of Byzantine Liguria, and is even more interesting that Vigilius was substituted (we do not know why) in 599 by a new *praefectus*, John, who came directly from Rome.⁵⁸ Liguria had been isolated from the other Byzantine domains in Italy but still the administration was able to appoint civil authorities from outside despite the Longobard encirclement.

Many letters are dedicated to the choice and the formalities regarding the election of the new bishops of Milan. For example, the archbishop Laurentius died in 593 and Constantius was elected in his place, Gregory was concerned regarding some formal practices and sent emissaries and letters to check that everything was in order. He even informed the exarch Romanus asking him to support Constantius if elected.⁵⁹ The same thing happen when Constantius eventually passed in the summer of 600 and Deusdedit was chosen in his place, not without an attempt of the Longobard King Agilulf to elect its own candidate, probably with the scope of bringing his important figure back to Milan, under his influence.⁶⁰

There is then a series of cases regarding the administration of the clergy with crimes to be punished, priests, deacons, and monks to be substituted, deprived of their ranks, or

⁵⁴ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 1.18 (August 591).

⁵⁵ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.187 (July 599).

⁵⁶ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.144 (May 599).

⁵⁷ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.104 (January 599).

⁵⁸ Pavoni identified Vigilius as a *praefectus urbi* and John as *vicarius* of the *praefectus*: Pavoni 1992, pp. 102-103. Brown suggested both as *vicarii* or agents of the praetorian prefect: Brown 1984, Iohannes (22), p. 264 and Vigilius (2), p. 280. Cosentino only mention John as *vicarius*, he suggested an identification with another Iohannes (Iohannes 192), *Praefectus praetorio Italiae* in 600: Cosentino 2000, Iohannes (167), p. 176.

⁵⁹ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 3.29; 3.30; and 3.31 to Romanus (April 593); in 4.01 (September 593) the election of Constantius is confirmed and the pope sent him his regards and a new *pallium*.

⁶⁰ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 11.06 (September 600); 11.14 (October 600).

reinstated.⁶¹ While not directly informative regarding the status of Byzantine Liguria, these letters are giving us a glimpse of the extension of the authorities of the bishops of Milan and *Luna*. The first one, even if in exile in Byzantine territory, was perfectly able to intervene in dioceses which were now under Longobard control and to travel to Ravenna to assist bishop Marinianus in a case involving a rebellious colleague from Salona.⁶² In particular, Constantius had several problems with some of his bishops, the one of Brescia for example, regarding the Three Chapter schism, which involved the Catholic Longobard queen Theodelinda (who supported the Three Chapters), who refused to take the communion from the archbishop until his involvement in the dispute was clarified.⁶³ The case of Theodelinda is particularly interesting because in one letter she seems to be residing nearby Genoa, shortly after the birth of her son, Adaloald (602).⁶⁴ This probably underlines a reconciliation with the archbishop of Milan and the role of Genoa as new diplomatic hub between the Catholic part of the Longobard court, the pope, and occasionally the Exarch. This was possible thanks to the movement of the Milanese diocese, one of the most important bishoprics in northern Italy, there. Already in 585, the archbishop Laurentius (residing in Genoa), was at the centre of the diplomatic negotiations between the Exarch Smaragdus and the Frankish King Childebert II, helping to coordinate the two allied armies against the Longobards.⁶⁵ This role of passing information was still active under Gregory, with some letters attesting how the bishop was keeping Rome update on what was happening in the north.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Several cases are treated like the one of the Milanese priest Magnus (3.26 – March 593), or the ex-abbot Amandinus and the ex-priest Vitalian who was sent in exile to Sicily (5.18 – November 594); a land disputes with a private citizen, Philagrius (9.235 - August 599); a consecration of a new bishop, Pompey, by Constantius without the papal approval (10.11 – May 600); property issues between the nun Luminosa and the church of Milan (12.14 – May 602); or the complaint of unjust treatment from bishop Theodore by the archbishop Deusdedit (13.31 – May 603). For *Luna* is firstly recorded an issue of Jewish landowners owning Christian slaves (4.21 -May 594); for other cases pope Gregory asked the archbishop Constantius to help Venantius (4.22 – May 594) and then instructed or advised Venantius himself over a series of cases like the one of the ex-priest Saturninus (5.5 – September 594; 5.17 – November 594; 5.18 - November 594), or the cases of Jobinus, deacon and abbot of Porto Venere (5.18 – November 594); finally, the petition of Adeodata who wanted to convert to monastic life against her mother (9.87 – January 599).

⁶² Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.150, 156 (May 599).

⁶³ The issue went on with several episodes, with the pope always defending Constantius with Theodelinda and supporting him against the accusation of some of his bishops: Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 4.02, 4.02 (September 593); 4.37 (July 594); 5.52 (July 595); 7.14 (November 597); and 9.187 (July 599).

⁶⁴ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 14.12 (December 603).

⁶⁵ Austrasian Letters, 46.

⁶⁶ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 4.2 (September 593); 10.12 (May 600).

For the bishop of *Luna*, Venantius,⁶⁷ the letters give us an interesting, but patchy, picture of his dioceses, with information regarding a church and monastery at Porto Venere,⁶⁸ a settlement for which we have otherwise no archaeological evidence, and of his control over some small islands of the Tuscan archipelago, like Capraia and Gorgona, which were possibly still in Byzantine hands at the end of the 6th century.⁶⁹ Venantius also founded a nunnery, dedicated to San Pietro and other martyrs, in one of its properties outside *Luna*, near the river Magra, where he installed ten nuns.⁷⁰ In a letter Gregory lists all the necessary objects and furniture this new community will need from the bishop and later he sent an abbe from Rome.⁷¹

Unfortunately, there is no information regarding the diocese of *Albingaunum* or the status of *Albintimilium* or other major or minor settlements in the province. However, a few insights on the organisation of the countryside and land properties can be obtained from a couple of letters. One of these is to Venantius, which informs us of Jewish landowners in *Luna* who were holding Christian slaves. Gregory urged the bishop to intervene in the situation, since Christians could not be slaves of Jews.⁷² This is the second mention of a Jewish community in Liguria, together with the one of Cassiodorus in Genoa and its synagogue (see above). Still, the letter, aside from the religious and legal matters, attest a class of private landowners at *Luna* (Jewish but also Christians) able to acquire slaves and to rent land to farmers well into the late 6th century. Something similar is also attested in a letter to bishop Constantius regarding another private, probably small, landowner, Philagrius, a blind man who appealed directly to the bishop of Rome for recognising the property of his vineyard around Genoa which was disputed by the local church. Beside the legal case this is a further attestation of private land property and of local production of wine, in this case probably on a small, family, scale. The text seems also to imply that there were other small landowners in Genoa. Finally, the son-in-law of Philagrius, was held unjustly (according to the blind man) by the bishop of Tortona, which should have been under Longobard control at the time. Many of these letters suggests that for most of the Italians, the political separation between Longobards and Byzantines was probably less divisive is than usually expected by previous scholarship, at

⁶⁷ On his figure: Ricci 2005.

⁶⁸ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 5.17 and 5.18 (November 594).

⁶⁹ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 5.5 (September 594) and 5.17 (November 594).

⁷⁰ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 8.5 (October 597).

⁷¹ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 8.5 (October 597); 9.115 (February-April 599).

⁷² Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 4.21 (May 594). This was based on a norm of the Justinian Code, extended to Italy to the *Pragmatica Sanctio*: Corpus Juris Civilis, 1.10, 2, pp. 62.

least outside the active scenarios of war.⁷³ This is further testified by the weak but active commercial exchanges which were happening across the borders.⁷⁴

The only direct mention of war in Liguria before the Longobard conquest is in the two letters where the *magister militum* Aldio is nominated.⁷⁵ In the past, Aldio was usually placed in the command of Lunigiana, especially of the city of *Luna* or the fortified village of Filattiera-Sorano.⁷⁶ However, there are several issues with this interpretation. First of all, Aldio is only called *magister militum* in the second letter of 599 (9.103), while in the first (2.27), of 592 he is defined as *vir magnificus*, implying a high-ranking member of the aristocracy and nothing more. They may not be the same person, but it could be possible that the *vir magnificus* Aldio might have joined the army between 592 and 599 and been provided with a rank suitable to his position. Secondly, the military action described in the first letter is clearly happening in northern Latium or south Etruria, since Ariulf is marching towards Rome where Castus, the commander of the garrison of Rome, is preparing the defences. In this context Gregory was worried that some troops he sent to aid the two Byzantine commanders Maurice and Vitalian could have been intercepted by the Longobards. Aldio in this case simply sent a letter to the pope informing him that the reinforcements have been received and that both commanders are well and alive. The geographic context around the border between Etruria and Latium is rapidly confirmed by a third letter (2.28), sent shortly after the first, where the pope passes information regarding the new position of Ariulf (now in Narni) to the Byzantine commanders, and asks Vitalian to check the loyalty of the people of Soana (modern Sovana in southern Tuscany) who are suspected to have deserted to the Longobards.⁷⁷ The second letter, however, is the more ambiguous. It is addressed to a bishop Venantius without specifying if he is Venantius of *Luna* or his homonymous bishop of Perusia (modern Perugia in central Italy). Here Aldio, this time appealed as the *magister militum* of the city, wants all the priests and deacons to be ordained so Venantius need to verify their fitness for the role. The text also mentioned the presence of pagans in need of conversion around the city, a picture that can fit with some areas of interior Lunigiana but

⁷³ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.234 (August 599).

⁷⁴ Like the soapstone vessels produced in the now Longobard Alps: Chapter 5.5.

⁷⁵ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 2.27 (June 592); 9.103 (January 599).

⁷⁶ Christie 1990, p. 234; Giannichedda 2010h, p. 258; for the fortifications of Lunigiana: Chapter 4.2.1; 4.4.1-4.4.7.

⁷⁷ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 2.28 (June 592).

also with other Italian regions.⁷⁸ Doubts regarding the presence of Aldio in Lunigiana were already cast in the past by other scholars,⁷⁹ and this analyses further confirm these suspicious. Moreover, there is no basis for sustaining, even in the more ambiguous second letter, any form of military action in the area, at least in 592, as has been done in the past,⁸⁰ but rather a normal case of civil administration of the region, either in *Luna* or *Perusia*.

Overall, the picture from the letters of Gregory the Great, depicts a region not directly threatened by war, which only comes to mind for the exile of the archbishop of Milan and the refugees from Fiesole. However, the unstable political situation between Byzantines and Longobards did not prevented him to move to Ravenna and to administer the part of his dioceses under Longobard control. On a smaller scale also the bishop of *Luna*, Venantius, was able to visit Rome and to receive gifts from the pope. The war, when mentioned, usually comes from outside Liguria, as for the refugees from Fiesole. For the rest, very little seems to have affected the normal business of the Ligurian churches, at least for the brief period covered by the letters (590-604). On a more normal scale, Liguria is populated by often undisciplined clergyman, urban *praefecti*, and aristocrats, but also small or medium private landowners, slaves, and nuns. The correspondence of Gregory is a heterogeneous mix of data, which are often not telling us what we would like to know or are omitting crucial information for the modern historian or archaeologist. Nonetheless, they are a rare, often very detailed, series of data which help us imagining some aspects of living in Byzantine Liguria, which would have been otherwise impossible to reconstruct, and which will not be available again until the 10th and 11th century, when archive materials will become available again.⁸¹

1.5 643-44 CE: Rothari and the Fall of Byzantine Liguria

After the death of Gregory the Great in 604, Liguria disappears again from the textual sources only to abruptly re-emerge with the sudden conquest of Rothari in 643-44. The news is not recorded by Byzantine chronicles but only by western sources, usually with few details.

⁷⁸ For Lunigiana see for example the case of the epitaph of Leodegar: Mazzini 1977; Giannichedda 2010h, pp. 254-268. On Liguria in general: Pietri 1987. For some aspects of the Christianisation of the Italian countryside Cantino Wataghin, Fiocchi Nicolai & Volpe 2007.

⁷⁹ Pavoni 1992, p. 65.

⁸⁰ This interpretation started with Ferrari and Formentini and survived until recently: Ferrari 1926, p. 105; Formentini 1930, p. 59.

⁸¹ Musarra 2017; Balzaretto 2018.

Despite attempts of several historians to reconstruct a more diffused capitulation of the region, with pockets of resistance either in *Luna* or in *Albintimilium*,⁸² the sources leave little doubt on its total and sudden capitulation. Rothari launched a vast military operation which was probably aimed at expelling the Byzantines from many of their north Italian domains attacking in a short period of time (but without a secure chronology) the Byzantine forces on multiple fronts. He captured the important fortress of Oderzo, near Venice, pushing the Imperial forces further towards the coast. He also attempted a direct attack on Ravenna, that was blocked in a bloody battle on the river Scultenna. The Longobards claimed it as a great victory, but it was probably a draw since their forces did not advance any further. However, the exarch Isaac was most probably killed or fatally injured in the battle.⁸³ In the middle of this large-scale offensive, Liguria was also captured with very little details from the sources. Paul the Deacon is more precise in the geography of the events, but does not offer details, simply recording the fall of all the Roman domains from *Luna* in Tuscany up to the border with the Franks. He then tell us of the capture of Oderzo and of the battle on the Scultenna giving the unbelievable number of 8,000 Roman casualties.⁸⁴ The version of the Frankish chronicler Fredegar is richer in details, listing for example the *ciuitates* of Genoa, *Albingaunum*, Varigotti, Savona, Oderzo (mixing it with the Ligurian cities), and *Luna*. He adds that Rothari left them in flames, destroyed the fortifications and ordered that the cities should be known as villages in the future. The inhabitants instead were deprived of their properties and enslaved.⁸⁵

Despite the speculation on the actual status of destruction provoked by the Longobard invasion, for which some traces might be archaeologically recognisable only in *Albingaunum* and Savona,⁸⁶ it is interesting to note the inclusion in the list of cities of Varigotti and Savona. These were two small coastal fortified settlements created or substantially strengthened by the Byzantine themselves and did not appear in the sources before.⁸⁷ After the Longobard conquest the region became quickly marginalised over the next centuries and needed a long period of recovery, illuminated only by fragments of sources. There are even doubts regarding its full integration into the Longobard and later Frankish kingdom since there is only two mentions of public authorities in the region (see above the cases Aduoald and

⁸² Balbis 1979; Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, p. 9.

⁸³ Note on epitaph.

⁸⁴ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, IV.45.

⁸⁵ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, 71.

⁸⁶ For *Albingaunum*: Chapter 2.4.2; for Savona: Chapter 4.3.1.

⁸⁷ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, 71. For the two settlements: Chapter 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

Ademar). Archival materials are completely absent until the mid-10th century where we start to see something for Genoa, and the monastery of Bobbio, which, as much as it is important, with its properties stretched to the Ligurian coast, was not based in Liguria itself.⁸⁸ As we will see in the rest of the thesis, the marginalisation was also evident from the perspective of the material culture, with the centuries comprised between the end of the Byzantine domain and the 9th and 10th century being the most difficult to read archaeologically.

⁸⁸ Destefanis 2002; Balzaretti 2018.

Chapter 2

A Byzantine Urbanism? Town Evolutions and Contents, 450-650 CE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the status of the four main Ligurian centres – *Luna* (modern Luni), Genoa (the capital), *Albingaunum* (modern Albenga), and *Albintimilium* (modern Ventimiglia) – between 450 and the end of the Byzantine occupation (Fig. A1.1). During the discussion I will explore a series of issues typically connected with the transformation of the Roman/Classical city between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages and ask how we can define these new centres. This phenomenon of modification is common for all the areas once occupied by the Roman Empire, despite some regional divergences, usually in the form of different chronologies, form, and scale. Phenomena of abandonment, transformation, and encroachment of public spaces are common. The Church emerged as a new polarising element in the cityscapes, with new buildings, stone- or brick-built, often richly decorated, being established in suburban as well as marginal intraurban areas. Finally, the militarisation (or remilitarisation) of urban centres is considered in the wake of a breakdown of Roman power and subsequent Byzantine securing of the Liguria territory.¹

Such changes affected much of the peninsula, although northern Italy was impacted more by some of these elements – notably militarisation – which is seen as central to the period of Byzantine rule. The extended control of the Ligurian cities poses the question of the role of Byzantium in their development. Despite a general lack of homogeneity in the evolution of the townscapes, the Byzantine presence is believed to have halted, at least partially, certain phenomena of urban change, while also providing some specific characteristics not seen in non-Byzantine centres, creating a sort of “variabile Bizantina” (“Byzantine variable”).² Some of these characteristics are: a higher degree of continuity of the

¹ The fate of the Classical cities has been at the centre of a vivid debate over the last decades. Just to list some of the major contributions: Rich 1992; Christie & Loseby 1996; Lepelly 1996; Ward-Perkins 1997; Brogiolo & Ward-Perkins 1999; Brogiolo, Gauthier & Christie 2000; Hodges 2000; Lavan 2001; Liebeschuetz 2001; Saradi 2006; Zavagno 2009; Leone 2013.

² For a specific picture on Italian urbanism: Ward-Perkins 1984, 2005; Christie 1995, pp. 145-182, 2006, pp. 183-280; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998b; Zanini 1998, 2010; Wickham 2005, pp. 591-692; Arthur 2006; Augenti

monumental Roman structures both public and private,³ than other non-Byzantine areas, and of the urban networks (which included, for example, control over the installation of urban necropoleis); extended use of stone and mortar building technology; and a richer material culture, still displaying an international connectivity, combined with a monetised economy. These are also expressions of a socio-cultural continuity present in both elites and commoners which remained integrated into the Imperial system.⁴

The chapter aims to examine the textual and archaeological evidence for each city, which were all also important harbours, and consider if and how change and resilience were present. I will apply a comparative approach to the Ligurian cities and with other Byzantine and non-Byzantine sites to identify, if possible, the “Byzantine variable”, and its regional characteristics.

It is necessary to highlight some problems regarding differences in the quantity and the quality of data available for each centre which heavily affect how well we can reconstruct the fabric of these centres. In this sense the two opposites are represented by *Luna*, now an abandoned, open site, and Genoa, a still densely urbanised centre with little space for expansion which led to the constant reuse of the same spaces. Between these two extremes are the cities of *Albintimilium* and *Albingaunum*, both still urbanised but less intensively than Genoa.

After this brief overview of the problems regarding contemporary understanding of the early Byzantine city and issues specifically pertinent to the Ligurian centres, I will examine the evidence for each of the settlements, starting from *Luna* and moving westwards to Genoa, *Albingaunum* and *Albintimilium*. I will deal mostly with questions regarding urbanism and urban administration, while other aspects of the social and material culture will be treated in Chapter 5. Regarding urban fortification, suffice to say that these are directly attested in all the centres, except for Genoa, which does have, however, indirect evidence; most probably these circuits were present before the Byzantine arrival, usually restricting the urban perimeter. However, a more detailed discussion of this evidence comes in Chapter 4.

2006. For regional surveys: Spanu 1998, pp. 17-18 (Sardinia); Arthur 2002 (Naples); Arcifa 2016 (Sicily). For the origin of the definition “variabile bizantina”: Introduction; Zanini 1998.

³ For a summary on the specific debate between continuists and catastrophists regarding the status of late antique cities in Italy: Ward-Perkins 1997.

⁴ Zanini 2010a.

2.2 Luna

The ancient Roman colony of *Luna* was abandoned in 1204 for nearby Sarzana. The Roman ruins have attracted the attention of scholars since the 18th century, and from the 19th century it saw much excavation, with a focus on its Classical phases.⁵ The maps and drawings of Matteo Vinzoni (18th century) (Fig. 2.1) were instrumental in understanding the city and its plan and in documenting many of the ruins before their irreparable loss due to robbing activities and agriculture.⁶ A resurgence of interest from the 1970s brought professional archaeologists, modern stratigraphic techniques, and a fruitful collaboration between British and Italian scholars:⁷ *Luna* subsequently became one of the pioneering sites for Medieval Archaeology in Italy.⁸ Since then the site has been transformed into an archaeological park and remains a focus of regular investigations.⁹

2.2.1 The Roman City

In 177 BCE Rome installed a fortified harbour on the eastern bank of the mouth of the river Magra.¹⁰ Set in a region now called Lunigiana, at the time of the colony this was disputed land with the local tribes of the Ligures.¹¹ The area was important for connections north and east to the Po plain and Emilia, but mostly for its harbour, duly used by fleets as Rome extended control into the western Mediterranean.¹² In the Late Republic and especially during the early Empire *Luna* became famous for its marble resources (*marmo lunensis*), especially under Augustus who chose it for his many projects in the capital.¹³ *Luna* had its own *forum* paved in marble, while its public Roman buildings and even private *domus* widely used the precious material.

⁵ For a history of the older excavations in the *forum*, the Capitolium, the amphitheatre, and the church of Santa Maria: Cini et al. 1979-80. For a literature review of the publication pre-1910: Sforza 1910. For other syntheses before the most recent excavations: Formentini 1928; Banti 1937; Conti 1967.

⁶ Varaldo Grottin 1988, 1995.

⁷ See Introduction.

⁸ Frova 1973, 1977. On the excavation carried out by Ugo Inglieri: Gervasini & Durante 2017. On the excavations before the 1970s: Frova 1973, pp. 1-28.

⁹ On the most recent research: Frova & Rossignani 1976; Cavalli Gherardi 1979; Frova et al. 1984; Lusuardi Siena et al. 1987; Durante 2001, 2010; Bini et al. 2012; Menchelli, Sangriso & Veronesi 2016. For a contextualisation: Lusuardi Siena, Sannazzaro & Perassi 2011; Durante 2003; Bandini 1999; Christie 1989 and 1990.

¹⁰ On the history of *Luna* and its foundation: Durante & Gervasini 2000, pp. 4-16.

¹¹ For the origin of the name *Luna*: Rossignani 1995.

¹² Varaldo Grottin 1996.

¹³ Pensabene 2012.

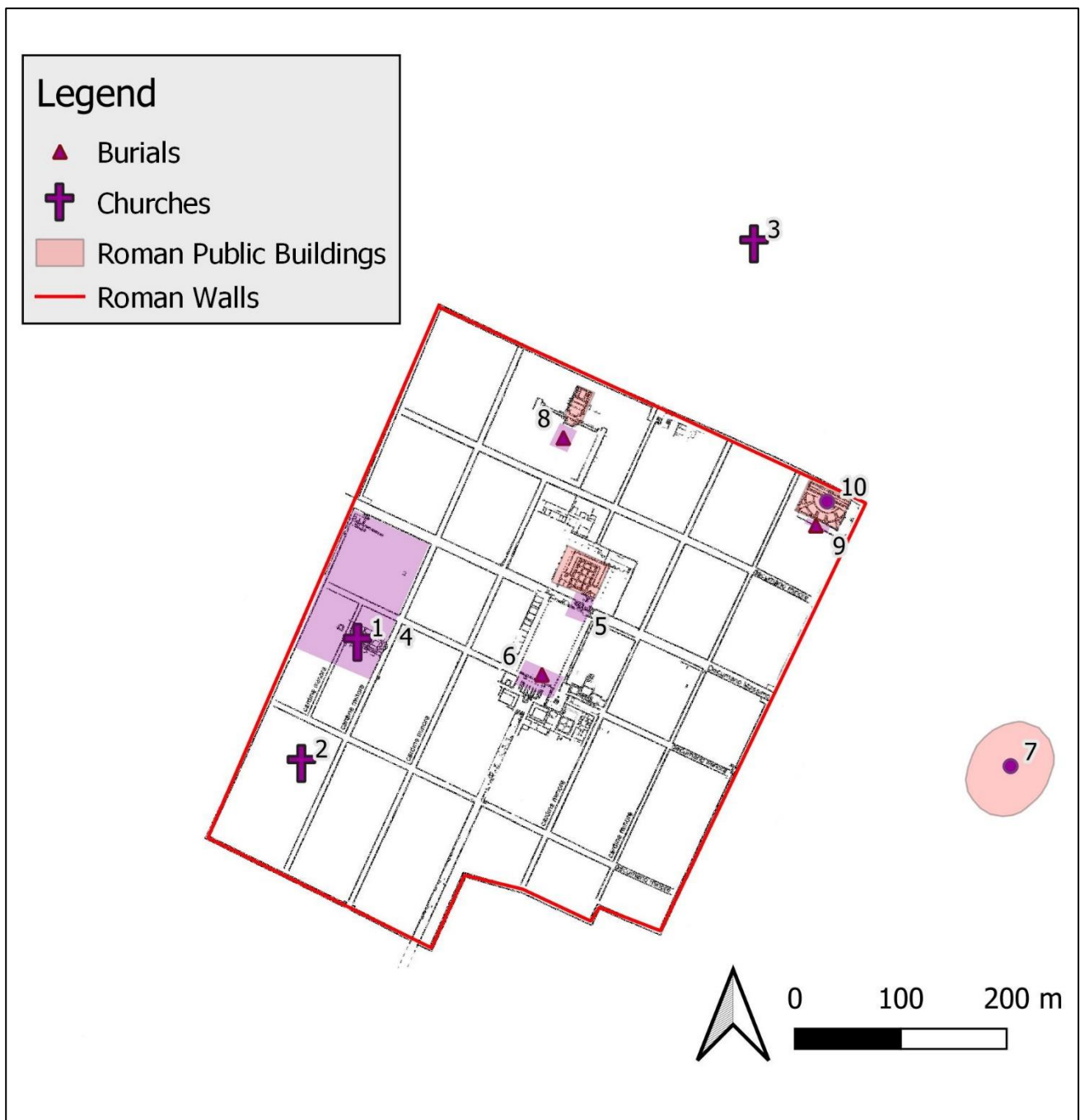


Figure 2.3) Byzantine Luna: 1) Cathedral; 2) Southern Church(?); 3) San Pietro's Church(?); 4) Episcopal quarter; 5) Byzantine houses and Capitolium; 6) Necropolis and workshops(?); 7) Amphitheatre; 8) Great Temple and necropolis; 9) Necropolis; 10) Theatre. (Source: Author)

The city plan, typical of a Roman colony, was already well understood in the 1960s via aerial photography and archaeological surveys, which traced the Republican walls and its four gates, enclosing an area of 22ha.¹⁴ The *cardo* and *decumanus* (an extension of the *Via Aemilia Scauri*) met in the *forum*,¹⁵ which was surrounded by temples, public spaces, *insulae* and *domus*, while a theatre lay in the north-eastern corner, not far from an extramural amphitheatre.¹⁶ Economic changes during the early empire and the arrival of imported, cheaper goods, must have impacted on local products, especially wine. Nonetheless, *Luna* was only just starting to exploit its rich marble quarries, facilitated by the presence of its natural port. Augustus sent new colonists to expand the centre and rich *domus* soon grew up. While *Luna* never seemingly expanded outside its city walls, probably due to a limited hinterland that did not allow such a growth, but it still developed into Liguria's largest city.¹⁷

2.2.2 The Late Antique and Byzantine City

Luna changed little in its plan and size until the 4th century.¹⁸ The texts are silent regarding possible barbarian raids during the late 4th and early 5th century, and in general, the city is rarely mentioned in the sources, though we have the brief description by Rutilius Namatianus in his poem composed in the early 5th century, which gives a positive description of the state of the city, recording, for example, its "snow white walls".¹⁹ We lack documentation both under the Ostrogothic Kingdom and even during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, when many Italian settlements are at least named by Procopius; however, Agathias does report the city as one of the last, together with Pisa, to surrender to the Imperial general Narses, at the close of the conflict.²⁰

Archaeology, meanwhile, attests some significant changes in the cityscape, notably a major earthquake, probably followed by a flood, which occurred during the early 4th century, as

¹⁴ Durante 2001, pp. 8-9 (general discussion), pp. 62-68 (western gate).

¹⁵ The road was built by Marcus Aemilius Scaurus in 109 BCE to connect Pisa to Genoa: Appendix 1, Fig. A1.3-4.

¹⁶ There is still no trace of an aqueduct or public baths. For a general vision of the Roman city and the excavation of its monuments: Frova 1973, 1977. For the most recent research: Durante 2001 and 2010; for the theatre: Frova 1980.

¹⁷ The few surveys conducted showed that the *Ager Lunensis* was probably not very productive due to the characteristics of the soil: Mills 1981; Delano Smith et al. 1986. Still, Pliny claimed that the wine from *Luna* was the best in Etruria: Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia*, XIV.8.68. On the dimensions of the Ligurian municipia see the comparison at the beginning of section 2.6.

¹⁸ Rossignani 1989.

¹⁹ *Luna* is briefly mentioned in one passage: *De reditu suo*, II, 63-68 "Advehimur celery candentia moenia lapsu; / nominis est auctor sole corusca soror. / Indigenis superat ridentia lilia saxis / et levi radiat picta nitore silex; / dives marmoribus tellus, quae luce coloris / provocat intactas luxuriosa nives."

²⁰ Agathias *Histories*, I.11.6.

recently documented in several sectors.²¹ These natural disasters impacted strongly on *Luna's* public structures, such as the *Capitolium* and basilica which were abandoned or at least saw no restoration. The *Capitolium* was, however, partially occupied by extensions to the nearby *domus dei Mosaici* which was restored after the calamity.²² Other private structures, such as the *domus Settentrionale* and the *domus degli Affreschi*, were not restored, with the former clearly robbed of valuable construction materials. The *domus di Oceano*, on the city's western edge, saw restorations around 400, with new frescoes and mosaics, and was transformed into a church in the early 5th century (see below).²³ Apparently, the earthquake exposed a critical situation, since the late Roman city then struggled, with only a few private owners able to rebuild their properties. But civic investment does come in the form of the Church: this marked the first, significant, shift towards the late antique and early Byzantine city form, featuring also revised defensive structures (added later),²⁴ and diverse forms of houses, which, combined, reveal a very different city from the Roman one.

2.2.2.1 Churches and Bishops

When Christianity first reached *Luna* is unknown, but its maritime connections and the local origin of Eutychius, who was pope in the late 3rd century (274-282), should be noted.²⁵ However, our first secure guide is from bishop Felix of *Luna* who attended a synod in Rome in 465.²⁶ After him we need to wait until 502-4 to hear of bishop Victor, attested in Rome.²⁷ However, the most important episcopal figure, due to the survival of his correspondence with Pope Gregory I, is Venantius (590-604), who headed *Luna's* church during the difficult years of the Longobard invasion of Tuscany and the consequent isolation of Liguria. He served the Archbishop of Milan in exile at Genoa.²⁸ The diocese of *Luna* controlled the eastern part of Liguria at least up to Porto Venere to the west. To the east, thank to Pope Gregory's letters,²⁹ we know that, at the end of the 6th century, *Luna's* bishop had authorities to a series of islands of the Tuscan Archipelago like Gorgona and Capraia. Potentially the

²¹ The effects of this natural disaster are evident in the destruction of a two storeyed house, recently excavated near the city's western gate: Durante 2001, pp. 62-81.

²² Durante 2001, p. 25; 2010, pp. 43-47.

²³ Lusuardi Siena 2007, pp. 126-27.

²⁴ Chapter 4.2.1.

²⁵ *Liber Pontificalis*, 28.1.

²⁶ Conti 1971, p. 7.

²⁷ For a fuller exposition of bishops, including figures known from the local traditions: Conti 1971.

²⁸ Chapter 1.4.3.

²⁹ Chapter 1.4.3.

bishop oversaw those fragments of the Byzantine domains left along the Tuscan coast, since both islands are more naturally close to Pisa, Populonia, and even Roselle in the case of Capraia. These were all old urban settlement which hosted episcopal seats but were lost to the Longobards between the end of the 6th and the early 7th century (with only Pisa possibly surviving as Imperial at that point).³⁰ Other Byzantine bishops attested are Basilius, who was probably Venantius' predecessor, Lucius (630), and Lazarus, who witnessed the Longobard conquest of *Luna* and Liguria in 643.³¹

All these bishops most probably resided in the cathedral of Santa Maria which is attested in documents only from the Carolingian period, but archaeologists were able to track its late antique origins.³² Despite the damage caused by the excavations of the late 19th century,³³ through examining those areas with remaining intact stratigraphy, Lusuardi Siena's team has delineated the cathedral's construction phases.³⁴ However, almost no materials have been published so far, leaving us mostly with structural and stratigraphic analysis, limiting our overall interpretation.

The first phase of the building is represented by the *domus di Oceano*, traced underneath *Luna's* cathedral. The *domus*, in its later phase, offers hints of a possible early Christian cult space, notably a room with masonry benches associated with a well and an exedra; this has been interpreted as a possible *cathacumeneum*, a place reserved for the catechesis of the worshippers.³⁵ The first church was built in the early 5th century, featuring an apsidal nave and two aisles which exploited pre-existing walls of the *domus*.³⁶ It was probably damaged by a fire, which required a major restoration of its southern and northern walls plus new internal adaptations, perhaps made to respond to a new liturgy.³⁷ A narthex, unless already present in the earlier phase, was added, together with a new mosaic floor. The style of the

³⁰ Letters quoted in: Chapter 1.4.3.

³¹ Basilius is usually dated to the 6th century. It is possible to date him before Venantius since the pseudo-numismatic emission entitled to a "Basilian church" are older than the ones of Venantius. Longobard bishops - Tommaso in 649, Severus 680, Lentecarius c. 700, and Filaredus 769 - are even more obscure. On this issue: Formentini 1928; Conti 1971; Lusuardi Siena 2007, p. 142.

³² Lusuardi Siena 1985, 1995.

³³ The site was explored by Paolo Podestà, who left no documentation, in several campaigns (1889, 1890, and 1897).

³⁴ Despite the long period of research, the site is only published in reports: Lusuardi Siena 1976, 1985, 1986, 1987, 2003; 2007; Lusuardi Siena & Sannazzaro 1984; Lusuardi Siena & Sannazzaro 1995.

³⁵ Lusuardi Siena 1987, pp. 293-94.

³⁶ For example, the first apse was based on the original exedra: Lusuardi Siena 1976, 1995.

³⁷ The chronology of the first church was established thanks to the reused inscriptions from the *Capitolium* found by Podestà, the latest one dating to the second half of the 4th century, while several copper-alloy coins, dating to the 5th century, are obliterated by burnt layers: Lusuardi Siena 1976, pp. 46-46, Perassi 2017.

mosaic, some epitaphs, and the use of *opus spicatum* in some of the walls point to a 6th century date for this second phase, corresponding to the Byzantine occupation.³⁸ The mosaic is especially important since it features an inscription from its donor, a certain Gerontius (Fig. 2.5),³⁹ whom Lusuardi Siena has identified one of the ten bishops of the province of *Tuscia Annonaria* mentioned in a letter of Pope Pelagius I in 557.⁴⁰ However, while this interpretation matches the stylistic date of the mosaic, it conflicts with Conti's interpretation of the source.⁴¹ The 6th century church reveals high investment for the standards of the time, in the form of marbles and mosaics, decorative elements which had become sporadic evidence in the region after the mid-5th century.⁴²

The cathedral became an important focus, since the older Roman civic buildings were apparently abandoned after the earthquake; its location in the north-eastern zone shows its shift away from the old Classical urban heart.⁴³ Interestingly, the erection of a wall, which roughly marked the borders of the two *insulae* into which the cathedral was sited, isolated the church, prompting ideas of a distinctive episcopal quarter or citadel (Fig. 2.4).⁴⁴ The cathedral saw constant maintenance until the final abandonment of *Luna* in 1204.⁴⁵ This was the building where the bishops of *Luna* oversaw their community and where they started to exercise a stronger, if not dominant, influence in the city public affairs until the abandonment of the settlement.⁴⁶

³⁸ For the burials outside the apse: Belli Barsali 1964.

³⁹ The Latin inscription was exposed in 1984 and first published in Lusuardi Siena 1985. An updated reconstruction is in: Lusuardi Siena 2007, p. 133; Appendix 2, n. 1. For a comprehensive study of the mosaics and their North African and Ravennate connections: Lusuardi Siena 1986; for the construction techniques: Sannazzaro 1987.

⁴⁰ Lusuardi Siena 1985, pp. 308-309.

⁴¹ The letter lists ten bishops of the *Tuscia Annonaria* without specifying their bishoprics. In Conti's interpretation *lustus* could probably be related with *Luna* based on an inscription found in a church at Avenza, not far from *Luna*: Mazzini 1920b; Conti 1971, pp. 13-14; Lusuardi Siena 1985, pp. 308-309.

⁴² As it will be shown through the chapter, this is probably the only luxury intervention surely datable to the 6th century in the region.

⁴³ Chapter 4.2.1.

⁴⁴ Lusuardi Siena 2007.

⁴⁵ The Cathedral had at least two other main phases: a Carolingian one (9th or 10th century), with the addition of an annular crypt which was later demolished – and a Romanesque one of the 11th or 12th century marked by a belltower. Even after 1204, it was used to consecrate the new bishops for at least a century: Lusuardi Siena 2007, pp. 146-152. On the early medieval Cathedral and city: Durante 2003; Lusuardi Siena 2008.

⁴⁶ Like Lucca, Pisa, or Genoa. For an historical synthesis: Bush 1991.

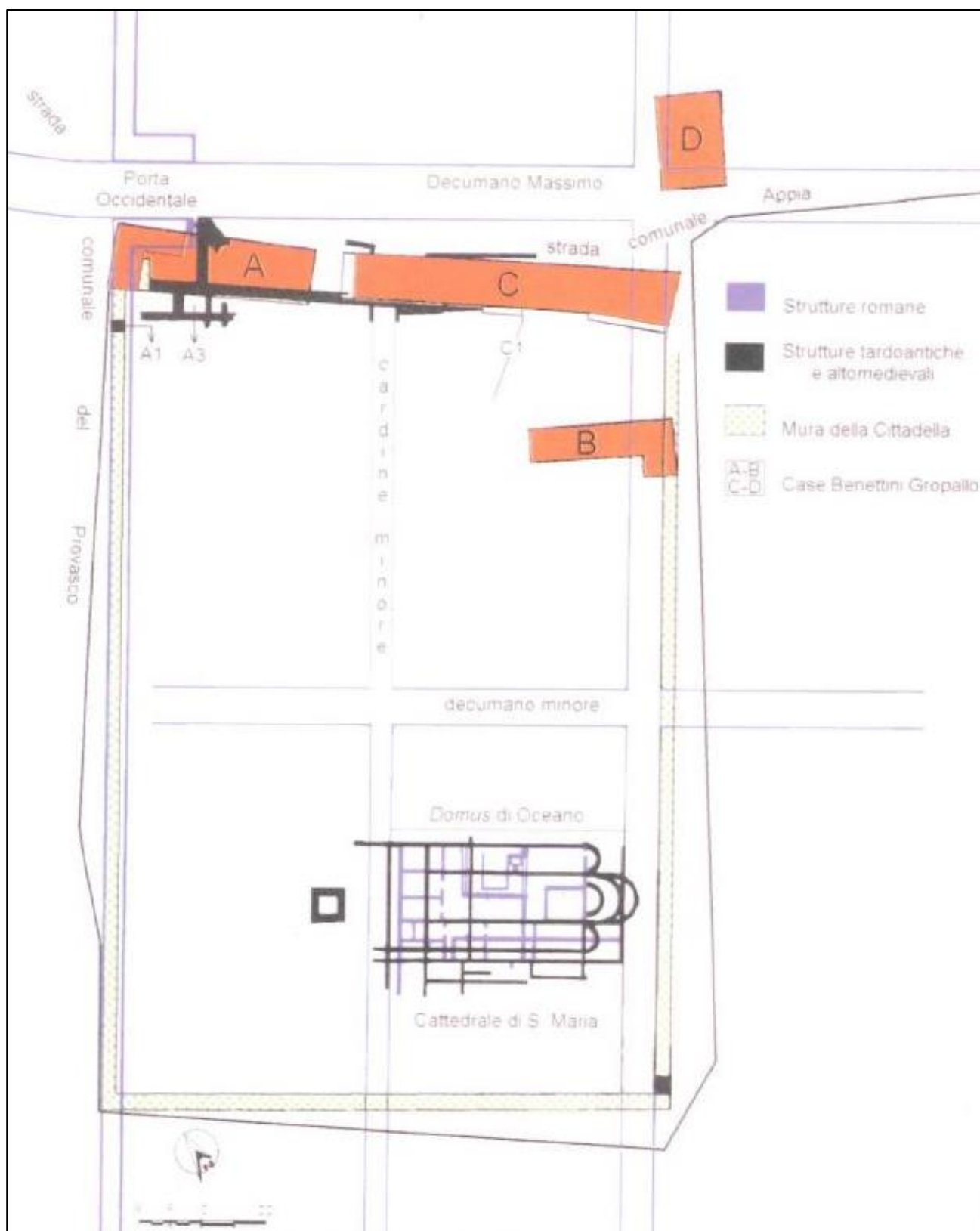


Figure 2.4) Luna: plan of the "Episcopal quarter" and cathedral. (Source: Lusuardi Siena 2007, tav. XII)

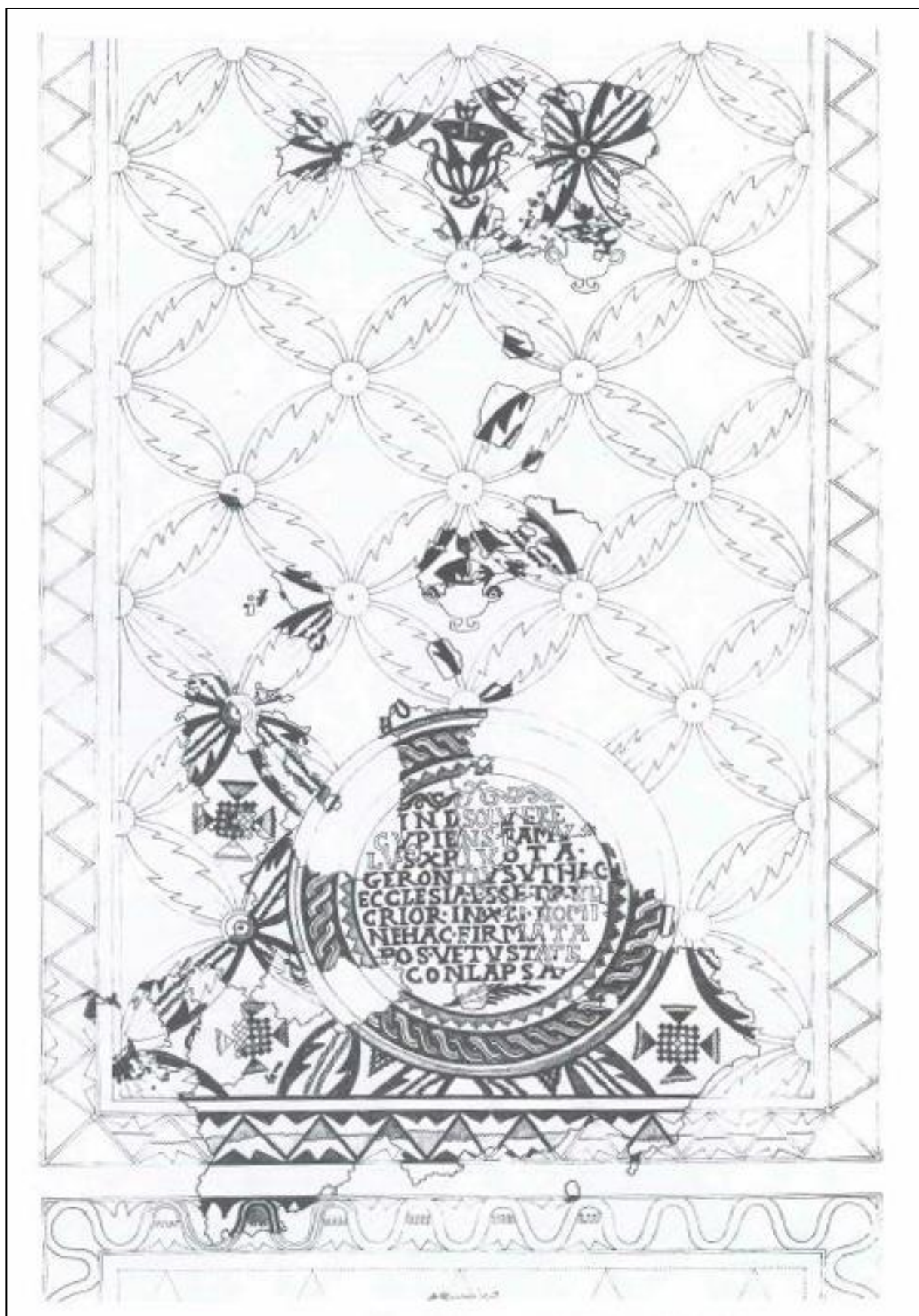


Figure 2.5) Luna: mosaic of Gerontius from the 6th century phase of the cathedral. (Source: Lusuardi Siena 2007, tav. XVII)

Besides the cathedral, we know from 10th century documents, of the existence of the churches of San Pietro and San Marco, neither of which have been archaeologically identified.⁴⁷ Compared to *Albingaunum* which featured five churches and Genoa, with at least three churches, given *Luna*'s greater size, we might expect additional churches existed here.

2.2.2.2 Living and Dying in Luna: Houses, Graves, Wells, and Pits

After the final abandonment of the *domus dei Mosaici* and the conversion of the *domus di Oceano* into the cathedral, minimal signs exist for any luxurious Classical-style private building. What seems to happen in *Luna* is a radical change in the local habits of habitation. At these point no *domus* survived as such while there is no trace of any intermediate form of habitations, such as the two stories house possibly destroyed by the 4th century event.⁴⁸

In the 1970s British archaeologists working in the north-eastern corner of the *forum*, identified the remains of two wooden houses of the 6th and 7th century (Fig. 2.6-7).⁴⁹ Another nearby structure has been dated between the late 7th and early 8th century, built using *spolia*.⁵⁰ Most of the *forum* had already been excavated without considering the post-Classical phases, so the hypothesis, sadly without solid archaeological support, that other sections of this zone were occupied by similar structures, used either as houses or workshops, cannot be confirmed. Commenting on this possibility, Ward-Perkins recalled how the bottoms of several post holes in other areas of the *forum* were noted, but not recorded as an indication of actual buildings.⁵¹ New evidence from more recent research around the *Capitolium*, on the northern side of the via Aurelia – which marked the northern edge of the square – revealed a line of post holes only a few metres from the “Byzantine houses”, potentially part of another structure (Fig. 2.7).⁵² The via Aurelia itself saw several phases of reuse, including reductions in width, yet stayed active at least until the 9th or 10th century with evidence of medieval structures, no better identifiable due to their limited

⁴⁷ San Pietro is usually located in a northern extra urban area, where old excavations revealed imposing structures built in *opus spicatum*; it can be potentially identified with the nunnery founded by Venantius. San Marco is marked on one of Vinzoni's maps (Fig. 2.1) in the city's southern zone: Lusuardi Siena 2007, pp. 123-124.

⁴⁸ Durante 2001, pp. 68-81.

⁴⁹ The *forum* was abandoned and deprived of most of its marble floor already in the 4th century: Ward-Perkins 1978a, 1978b.

⁵⁰ The Byzantine houses were dated to the 6th century based on finds (pottery and a coin of Justin II) and radiocarbon analysis of a small bronze kiln (640±80 CE): Ward-Perkins 1973, 1979-1980, 1981b.

⁵¹ Ward-Perkins 1987, p. 346.

⁵² Durante 2010, pp. 81-84.

conservation, adjoining the road.⁵³ All these findings contribute to the possibility that the ancient public quarter of the city, instead of being abandoned, remained (or became) active, even if not in any monumental fashion.⁵⁴ This is not an unfamiliar situation, with many other centres in the Mediterranean displaying similar patterns.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, other quarters are not as well known for the late antique and Byzantine phase, partially because they are still unpublished, but also because prior to the British intervention little or no attention was paid to these ephemeral later phases.

To gain an idea of the scale of *Luna*'s population during the Byzantine and earlier medieval periods we must largely rely on burials and inferences from wells and pits. In the 1970s, 41 intramural 'medieval' graves were detected and partially excavated but only one, near the ancient theatre, featured grave goods, notably two late 7th century Longobard-type combs.⁵⁶ All the known inhumations are generically dated to between the 6th and early 12th century.⁵⁷ Oddly, there is a complete lack of extramural necropoleis and funerary epitaphs, unlike at other Ligurian centres such as *Albingaunum*, Genoa or even *Albitrimum*. A preliminary classification of the burials was attempted by the British team, which identified four categories but, without the possibility of providing a real chronology, they only suggested a later date of one of the types.⁵⁸ The burials appear scattered around the town, but with a few concentrations, probably denoting family groups, in front of the Great Temple to the north, inside the remains of the Domus degli Affreschi (south of the *forum*), outside the theatre, and in the episcopal quarter.⁵⁹ Other, isolated graves appear scattered in several other locations.⁶⁰ New interventions have extended the numbers of burials around the theatre and the late antique baths.⁶¹ In the latter case the burial represented the last signs of activity identifiable after 'dark layers' filled the remains of a cellar. The lack of grave goods

⁵³ Durante 2010, pp. 24-27.

⁵⁴ The "Byzantine houses" also showed traces of simple workshop activities, such as metalworking and they sections of them were possibly used for sheltering animals: Ward-Perkins 1981.

⁵⁵ For other Italian examples: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998b.

⁵⁶ Ward-Perkins 1977, p. 664.

⁵⁷ There is no clear evidence for any intramural graves pre-dating the 6th century, while in other areas of Liguria they emerged quite commonly, especially of the "alla cappuccina" type. The date of 1204 was chosen as *terminus ante quem*, but since they likely kept the Cathedral in use for some ceremonies, we cannot exclude possible ongoing funerary activity.

⁵⁸ Simple pits, lateral mortared walls, walls in stone slabs and dry-stone walls – a later date for the type in walls with stone slabs has been suggested: Ward-Perkins 1977, pp. 664-670.

⁵⁹ Ward-Perkins 1977, pp. 668-669.

⁶⁰ Ward-Perkins 1977, pp. 664-670.

⁶¹ The small necropolis outside the theatre so far has eight burials, which postdate the abandonment of the structure and excavations of some pits and a post-hole: Berton & Castelli pp. 34-40. For the baths: Durante 2010, p. 47.

and of an anthropological and bioarchaeological study on most of the inhumations at *Luna* prevents a closer understanding of the population here between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages as well as the definition of secure chronologies for the necropoleis.⁶²

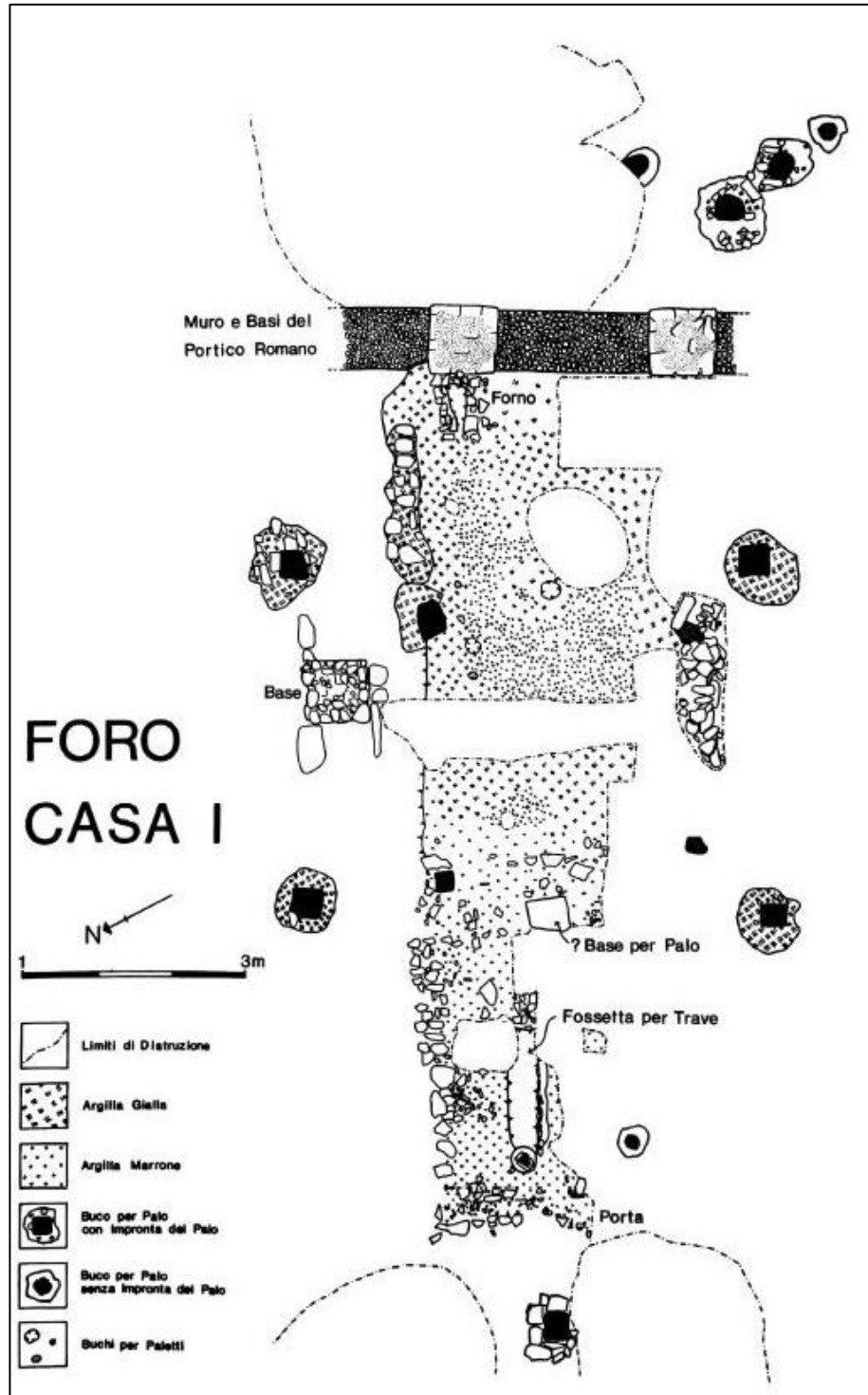


Figure 2.6) Luna: Plan of one of the Byzantine houses of the forum. (Source: Ward-Perkins 1978-80, p. 35)

⁶² The lack of bioarchaeological analyses prevent us from any further consideration.

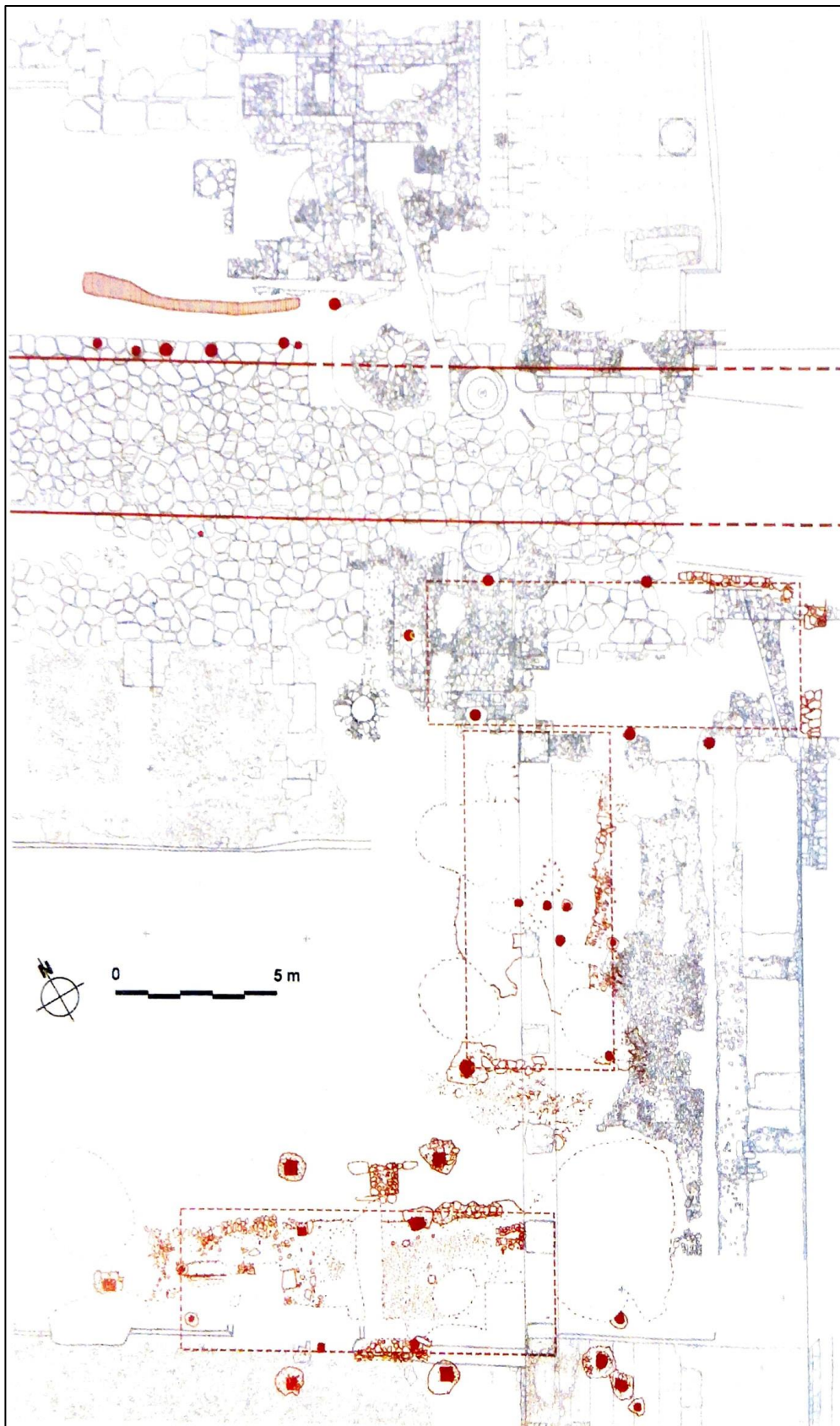


Figure 2.7) Luna: Plan of the north-eastern corner of the forum with Byzantine and early medieval houses facing both sides of the Roman road in front of the Capitolium. (Source: Durante 2010, fig. 139, p.83)

Similar dating problems apply to the ten wells so far identified across the city (Capitolium, *forum*, and *domus degli Affreschi*) and stratigraphically datable between the 4th and 12th century. Some could be an indication of the occupied areas after both aqueduct and sewers went out of use in the late 4th or early 5th century;⁶³ combined with the burial finds and the Byzantine-period houses, they are sufficient to confirm the *forum* and its surroundings as core settlement zones. Wells usually are very informative of site environment, food and finds, the high level of the aquifer has prevented any excavation at *Luna*.⁶⁴

Of the many rubbish pits and storage pits found across the townscape, some contained datable materials from the 6th up to the 11th century, but none have been properly published and they are almost impossible to relate to other elements of the Byzantine city because of the absence of details of form and clear stratigraphic context and connections.⁶⁵

Overall, one might argue that Byzantine *Luna* broadly respected the Roman organisation of road and spaces but otherwise was fragmented into different nuclei of activity and inactivity. The impossibility of dating most of the intramural burials leaves open the possibility of extra-mural cemeteries, especially if we postulate that many of the intraurban ones are post-7th century; these may, therefore, testify to a further phase of urban transformation. We must leave open the question of whether *Luna* in fact grew in the Byzantine period because of its new role as a frontier outpost and as the main point of reference to the entire Byzantine eastern front in Liguria; did this role also enrich the position of the local bishop, as might be indicated by the well-built and furnished church? At the same time, *Luna*'s past monumentality was by then irreparably lost, and this is confirmed by what happened after the Longobard conquest, which has left no evident signs of destruction, nor of renewal.

2.2.2.3 *The Question of the Port*

Pinpointing the original position of the port of *Luna*, noted by Classical sources for its extension and security, has long been a subject for historians, and now archaeologists and

⁶³ Some form of water supply must have still been in place to provide for the new private bath, which was part of the restored *Domus dei Mosaici*: Centro studi lunensi 1985, pp. 95-103; Coviello 2019, pp. 50-55.

⁶⁴ The only, unsuccessful, attempt that I am aware of happen in 1973: Ward-Perkins 1977, p. 671 note 17. Attempts during the dry season may yield better results. In general, on wells: Ward-Perkins 1977, in *Luni II*, pp. 670-671.

⁶⁵ At least one pit contained materials of the 7th and 8th centuries: Ward-Perkins 1977, pp. 633-637.

geologists.⁶⁶ Hypotheses focused on three options: at the Gulf of La Spezia, the mouth of the river Magra, and a series of small docks, like that of Ameglia.⁶⁷ Today there are enough data to site the port at the mouth of the Magra, which in Roman times formed a lagoon that slowly silted up due to the natural river activity.⁶⁸ A first survey in the late 1970s compared the data collected with a map produced by Ercole Spina in 1592 (Fig. 2.2), which shows the phases of coastal advance, with a significant one between 700 and 1500 CE.⁶⁹ Further geophysical and geological analyses demonstrated the presence of a lagoon 250m west of the city, and a smaller one perhaps to the east.⁷⁰ We lack, however, structural traces of any built port facilities – crucial surely for the trade in Carrara marble.⁷¹ What is relevant for the Byzantine phase is that the port was still usable, as attested by the quantities of goods reaching *Luna* by sea.⁷² The silting, according to Spina's maps, was still marginal during the 7th century, but increased significantly during the Middle Ages (Fig. 2.2), following further floods.⁷³ While this might have damaged *Luna* as a trade centre, we should recognise that after the Longobard conquest, *Luna* was outdone by the development of favoured centres such as Lucca and Pisa in north Tuscany and Genoa to the west.⁷⁴

2.3 Genoa

Genoa (*Genua*), despite its attested antiquity, lacks the typical monumental remains of the Roman urbanism. Prolonged and uncontrolled medieval and modern urban development, combined with a possible modest monumentality of the Classical city have contributed to

⁶⁶ Much of the confusion was created by the different interpretations of Strabo (*Geografia* V.2.5) and Pliny (*Naturalis Historia*, III.50), as summarised: Banti 1937, pp. 68-81.

⁶⁷ The small dock of Ameglia was probably a river port during the Middle Ages, on the western side of the Magra.

⁶⁸ This is well-known along most of the Tyrrhenian coast which, in antiquity, was dotted with lagoons and gulfs, such as Falesia, south to Populonia, or the *Lacus Priles*, facing Roselle. The rivers slowly filled them creating a marshy environment which eventually led to the appearance of malaria and many attempts at reclamation, until recent times: Bellotti et al. 1999; Bardi 2002.

⁶⁹ Possibly due to the environmental instability caused by human and natural factors in the 16th century: Delano Smith et al. 1986, pp. 123-141; also, by the cold-humid interval which struck this area during 7th and 8th century: Fazzini & Maffei 2000.

⁷⁰ The Universities of Pisa and Parma and the Soprintendenza conducted the study using test pits and geological surveys: Bini et al. 2013. For the various phases of the research also: Bini et al. 2011 and Bini et al. 2012.

⁷¹ Barnieri, Mannoni & Mannoni 1983; Mannoni & Mannoni 1983; Bini et al. 2013, p. 21.

⁷² Chapter 5.3.1.1.

⁷³ Delano Smith et al. 1986, pp. 123-141; Fazzini & Maffei 2000; Bini et al. 2012. The formation of a marshy area brought an increased risk of malaria, but this perhaps only became a real problem after the Byzantine phase, as it was for the Po valley or the marshes in southern Tuscany. It is worth reconsidering the impact malaria on the abandonment of ancient centres since it was probably a disease that always accompanied the inhabitants of such areas, as demonstrated by recent studies on Rosellae: Celuzza et al. (forthcoming).

⁷⁴ Bush 1991.

the loss of most of its pre-medieval features.⁷⁵ Predictably, this lack of Classical ‘visibility’ hindered attempts at reconstructing Genoa’s ancient form and directed studies mainly towards the golden age of the medieval mercantile Republic.⁷⁶ Stratigraphic excavations arrived in the 1950s, mostly prompted by urban developments and interventions.⁷⁷ Over the decades this has created an inevitable patchwork of information with some sites,⁷⁸ such as the Colle di Castello, revealing significant sections of the ancient settlement and others like Vico Colalanza only glimpses.⁷⁹ The growing role of the Soprintendenza has helped in conducting and monitoring rescue archaeological research at diverse sites from the 1960s.⁸⁰

2.3.1 Pre-Roman and Roman Genoa

Unlike *Luna*, Genoa was not a Roman colony but rather a Ligurian *oppidum*, and therefore originally lacked the traditional Roman grid, which was probably imposed after the reconstruction caused by a Carthaginian raid in 205 BCE.⁸¹ This regular plan is still partially visible in the medieval city centre.⁸² The Colle di Castello, where the *oppidum* flourished, was abandoned during the 1st century BCE in favour of a more manageable position, only to be reoccupied during the Middle Ages when defensive imperatives became important again.⁸³ Archaeologically, a few Roman *domus* have been located in several areas of the centre, but the only attested public buildings are the aqueduct, amphitheatre, and parts of a possible nymphaeum.⁸⁴ The *forum* is traditionally located by scholars in Piazza San Giorgio, since by 1204 the area was known as such, but archaeological proof is awaited.⁸⁵ The 4th century is usually considered a period of fortune for Genoa mostly due to the Diocletianic designation of Milan as a new capital in 284; this made Genoa the favoured choice to

⁷⁵ Post-war urban development was very destructive, with medieval quarters as well as the Roman aqueduct demolished without any documentation: Dofour Bozzo & Marcenaro 1990; Melli 1990d, p. 306.

⁷⁶ Manganelli & Melli 2014, p. 17; one of the best exceptions in this regard were the hypothetical maps proposed by Barbieri: Barbieri 1938.

⁷⁷ Lamboglia 1955h, 1958a; Lamboglia & Uzecchini 1960-1961; Grosso Paglieri 1994.

⁷⁸ Ricci 1996, pp. 17-26; Melli 1996b.

⁷⁹ For Colle di Castello and the *oppidum*: Andrews 1977, 1978; Andrews & Pringle 1978; Andrews, Pringle & Ward Perkins 1976; Milanese 1987, 1993. In vico Colalanza a small excavation for an elevator revealed a 5th century wall and a Byzantine coin of Maurice (582-602): Torre & Traverso 2015.

⁸⁰ On the urban excavations: *Archeologia a Genova* 1979; Melli 1989, 1990d, 1993, 1996, 2014; Gardini & Milanese 1979. However, some sites were destroyed or not properly investigated before their demolition, mostly Piazza Invrea and the medieval port: Mannoni 1994c; De Negri 1953, 1960-1961.

⁸¹ For Roman Genoa: Melli 1996a, 1996c, 2014, 2017.

⁸² Lamboglia believed that this plan was a consequence of a 9th or 10th century reorganisation of the medieval city, but as I will point out later, there is no reason to believe that the medieval plan itself was not based or inspired by the Roman one: Lamboglia 1939.

⁸³ On the programmed excavation of the pre-Roman *oppidum*: Fossati & Gardini 1976; Milanese 1987.

⁸⁴ For the aqueduct: Montinari 2014, pp. 140-144 and Melli, Buti & Ricci 1996; for the amphitheatre: Melli & Torre 1996, pp. 214-19.

⁸⁵ Melli & Torre 2014.

connect the Imperial seat with the Mediterranean. Consequently, the city was the only Western Mediterranean port to be named in the *Edictum de Pretiis*.⁸⁶ However, if Genoa prospered in the 4th century, this is not well reflected in the archaeological record: certainly *Genua* does not appear particularly imposing in terms of dimensions and monumentally according to several reconstructions and to the modest dimensions of the amphitheatre.⁸⁷ In the best-case scenario, the city was slightly larger than *Albingaunum* but significantly smaller than *Luna*, while, according to the most pessimistic reconstructions, it is the smallest one of the groups.⁸⁸

2.3.2 Late Antique and Byzantine Genoa

In Late Antiquity the city rarely appears in the sources. A fragment of the poem of Rutilius Namatianus is often interpreted as a description of the town in the early 5th century referring to winter barracks for soldiers, granaries, and an inn⁸⁹ – a rather depressing picture for a city which was supposedly important in this period. However, it is far from sure that the fragment refers to Genoa and not to another Ligurian coastal site, or that it contains only a partial description of the settlement. For the Ostrogothic period we have letters of Theoderic to Genoa's Jewish community, which, along with that of *Luna*, might have endured into the Byzantine phase.⁹⁰

During the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, Genoa is barely mentioned, yet its strategic position is emphasized by efforts of the Imperial forces to control it. A first expedition force disembarked there in 538 to march against Milan, although this operation resulted in a disaster and the city was sacked by Burgundians and Goths a year later; in 544 the port was again occupied by Byzantine soldiers under the command of Bonus.⁹¹ Despite the difficult situation and the scarcity of resources, the Byzantines considered the city important enough to keep a garrison there.

For their part, the Goths might not have invested in the city due to their lack of a fleet. No further details are provided, such as the scale of the damage caused by the Franks.

⁸⁶ Melli 2017, pp. 203-219; Pettirossi 2014, pp. 199-203.

⁸⁷ The compact amphitheatre has been compared to one in a military camp: Melli & Torre 2014, p. 136.

⁸⁸ Chapter 2.6.

⁸⁹ Appendix 2, *Fragmenta* A. For the attribution to Genoa: Bartalucci et al. 1975; Lamboglia 1976-78; Della Corte 1980; Mosca 2004a.

⁹⁰ Chapter 1.4.3. More widely, Jewish communities seem relatively common in coastal cities, such as in Naples: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V.viii.41; V.x.24-26.

⁹¹ Chapter 1.4.2; Chapter 4.2.2.

Byzantine authority is later testified by the presence of the *numerus felicitum Laetorum* in 591, and two *praefecti*. Additional proof of the city's strategic importance is the presence of the archbishop of Milan, who chose Genoa for his exile from the Longobard occupation of his original seat in 569, over the apparently richer and larger *Luna*.⁹² From Genoa he maintained the control over his diocese and his Sicilian estates, performed diplomatic duties, and kept up correspondence with Rome.⁹³ However, such letters make no mention of buildings or events in Genoa itself. The city was also active in the still flourishing commerce with southern Gaul and the few Imperial domains in the western Mediterranean; it may have been a key hub for redistribution of the *annona militaris* coming from Rome.⁹⁴

The problem remains of how to assess the physical image of late antique and Byzantine *Genua* through the rather meagre archaeological record. Below I assess the city's claimed 4th century prosperity, the role of the Church and of the Milanese clergy, the level of urbanisation, the necropoleis, and the many gaps in our interpretation.

⁹² A similar example was the one of Paul I, bishop of Aquileia (occupied by the Longobards in 568), who left for the still Byzantine Grado.

⁹³ See the numerous letters between Gregory the Great and the various archbishops of Milan: Chapter 1.4.3.

⁹⁴ Chapter 5.3.1.2.

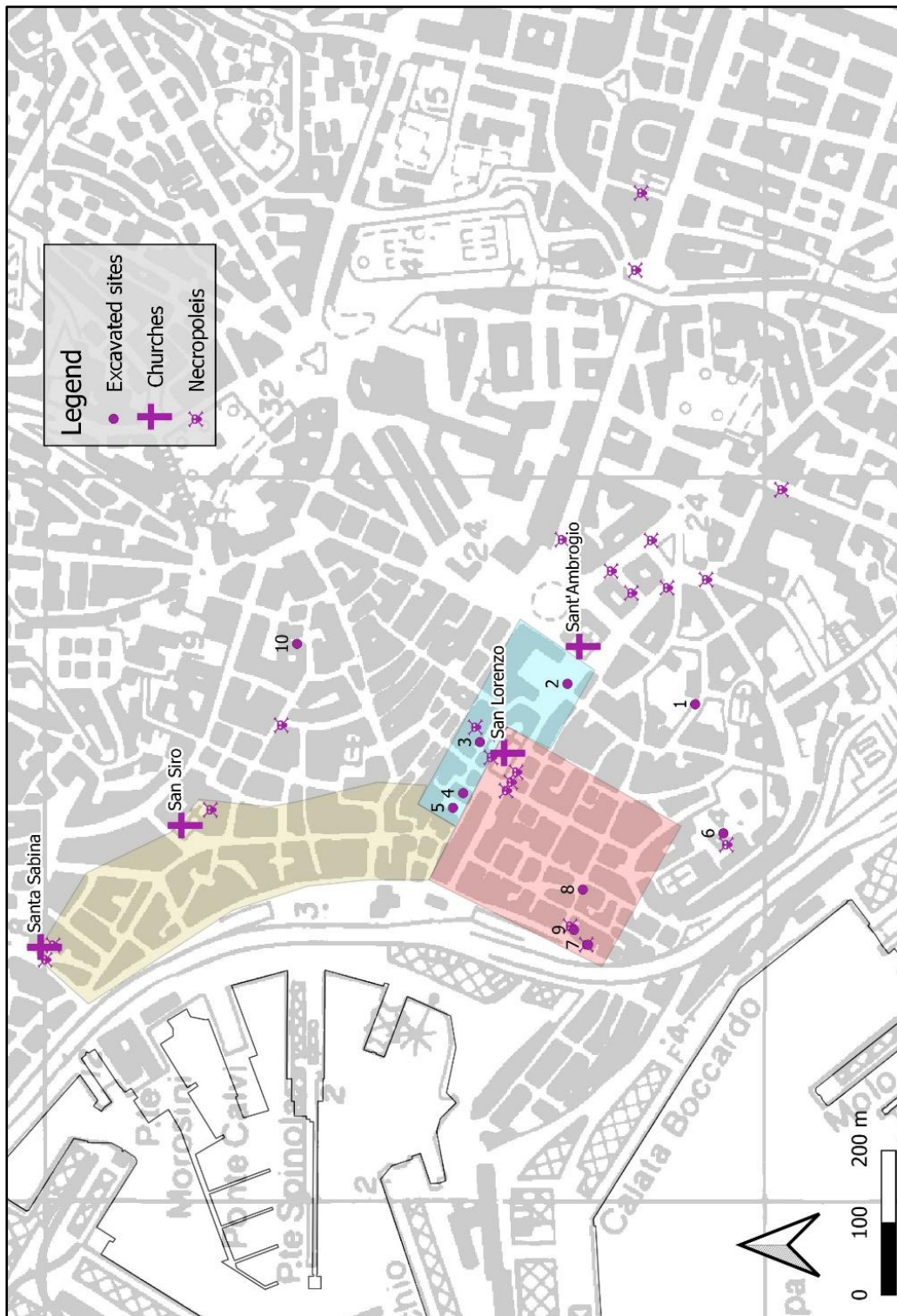


Figure 2.8) Map of Byzantine Genoa: in Red and Cyan the suppose perimeter of the Republican and Imperial city, in Yellow the possible extension of the suburbs. 1) Amphitheatre; 2) Piazza della Maddalena; 3) Cloister; 4) Scuole Pie; 5) Piazza Invrea; 6) Colle di Castello; 7) Mattoni Rossi; 8) Via San Bernardo; 9) Piazza Cavour; 10) Piazza Matteotti. (Source: Author)

2.3.2.1 Church and Bishops



Figure 2.9) Bishops of the archdiocese of Milan at the provincial council of 451. (Source: Marcenaro 1993, p. 68, fig. 14)

An argument in support of the importance of Genoa during the 4th century is that it is the first Ligurian city with an attested bishop. In 381, bishop Diogenes attended a council at Aquileia,⁹⁵ although he was probably not the first and its attestation is usually considered late compared with other centres of the region.⁹⁶ However, Genoa was only one of the secondary centres depending on the archdiocese of Milan and probably not the most

important. Nearby, early foundations were Pisa (313), Nice (314), and Vercelli (350), while a more diffuse network was formed between 371 and 397 with the appearance of episcopates in Turin, Aosta, Ivrea, Novara, as well as Genoa itself (Fig. 2.9).⁹⁷ So, while it is of course possible that there were a few bishops before Diogenes, a first attestation of an episcopal seat in Genoa at the end of the 4th century would not be particularly late compared with the general trend of the Roman province of Liguria and its nearby regions. Syrus is usually identified as the first bishop of the city, but his name comes from later hagiographic traditions and is strictly related with the problem of the first cathedral dedicated to him.⁹⁸ After Diogenes there is a gap of seventy years before Paschasius is cited at a regional synod called by the archbishop Eusebius of Milan in 451.⁹⁹ Epigraphic evidence for Christian clergy comes from a lost Greek inscription dated to either the 4th century or the 6th century, and the

⁹⁵ *Gesta Concili Aquileiensis*, 1 and 76.

⁹⁶ This theory probably originated in Pietri's article of 1987 and so far, repeated with few adjustments: Pietri 1987; Marcenaro 2013b; Frondoni 2013b, 2014, p. 215; 2016.

⁹⁷ Pietri 1987; Angeli Bertinelli 1999; Frondoni 2016; Marcenaro & Frondoni 2006. The very first evidence of Christianisation in Liguria is an isolated epitaph of an adolescent dated to 344 found in the area of Finale, but without further evidence it is of little use in establishing the existence of an organised clergy in the area: Mennella 1981-1982, 1986; Murialdo & Scarrone 1983; Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 34, pp. 77-79.

⁹⁸ Di Fabio 1998, pp.15-16; Angeli Bertelli 1999, p. 43; Marcenaro 2013b; Frondoni 2014, 2016.

⁹⁹ Another possible bishop is Eusebius, attested at a council in 465; however, this mention could also refer to the homonymous bishop of Siena: Angeli Bertelli 1999, p. 55.

epitaph of the sub-deacon Sanctulus, from the necropolis of Santo Stefano, dated to 444 or 493.¹⁰⁰

What is currently missing is solid evidence for an early cathedral. Potentially the first episcopal authorities used a *domus ecclesiae* while a first church was not built until the 5th century – in line with a wider pattern of intraurban church building in Italy and western Europe.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, the existence of a church dedicated to the figure of Syrus in a peripheral area of the city convinced many scholars that this was the original episcopal seat, which was eventually re-located to San Lorenzo, the present cathedral.¹⁰² This unusual transfer has been linked to the arrival of the archbishop of Milan in 569, fleeing the Longobards.¹⁰³ It is commonly believed that his arrival cost Genoa's own episcopal independence, since there are then no records of any Genoese bishop until 680, unlike the Milanese bishops who remain documented, such as through the intense correspondence with Pope Gregory the Great.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the displaced bishop of Milan absorbed the functions of the local bishop or else completely obscured his figure with his superior authority, basing himself in a different church than the original Genoese cathedral.

The church of San Lorenzo has in fact been traditionally connected with the Milanese clergy, usually regarded as their own foundation. This is archaeologically supported by a fine 6th century floor in *opus signinum* discovered under the modern floor of the present cathedral (Fig. 2.10), with pottery and thermoluminescence analyses confirming the date.¹⁰⁵ However, there is nothing to prove that the floor under the cathedral was related to a church, any attempt to connect it to an earlier apse discovered under the modern altar has failed, since the apse seems to be medieval.¹⁰⁶ San Lorenzo lies in the so-called *Brolium* quarter, an area marginalised between the late 3rd and early 6th century when it was used as a

¹⁰⁰ The fragment of Greek inscription was transcribed like “ἦλθε ἐν εἰρήνῃ” (you come in peace) and was accompanied by two crosses, Santi Amantini 1983, Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 26, pp. 63-65. For the first inscription: Mennella 1998, Angeli Berinelli 1999, Frondoni 2016.

¹⁰¹ Cantino Wataghin 2003.

¹⁰² Some opposed this hypothesis: Gambaro & Lambert 1987. Current scholarship is keener to support a movement of the seat to San Lorenzo: Di Fabio 1998, pp. 15-16, 2003; Frondoni 2014, 2016.

¹⁰³ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, II.25.

¹⁰⁴ In the letters there is never a mention to the local clergy or of the Genoese bishop, while several other bishops of the Milanese diocese are often directly addressed: Chapter 1.4.3.

¹⁰⁵ For the pottery: Gambaro & Lambert 1987. For the thermoluminescence test (500-530 ± 140): Cagnana, Mannoni & Sibilla 2001. An older apse, first exposed in 1932, has been recently reanalysed and attributed to a medieval phase, while a baptistry discovered under the actual one is of disputed date: Cagnana 1998; Di Fabio 1998; Melli 1998, 2003b; Frondoni 2014, 2016; Marcenaro 2015; for the apse: Melli & Torre 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Melli & Torre 2008.

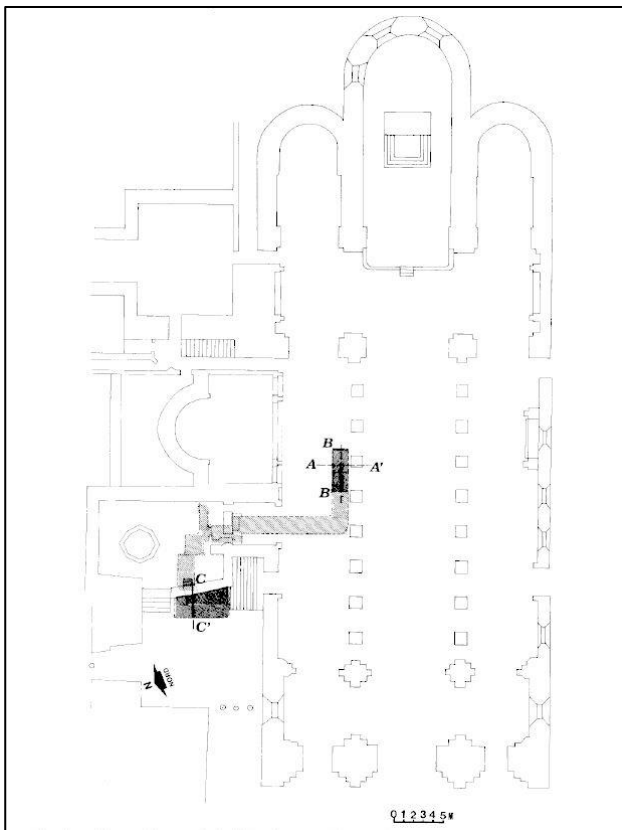


Figure 2.10) Genoa: Plan of the cathedral of San Lorenzo and the excavated areas. (Source: Gambaro & Lambert 1987, p. 212, fig. 2)

necropolis,¹⁰⁷ but later medieval documents attest properties of the Milanese church here. Nevertheless, the area was clearly reorganized in the 6th century – a date suggestively close to the period of exile of the Milanese clergy. The documentation, the nearby dedication of a chapel to Sant’Ambrogio, and mentions of an episcopal palace in medieval sources have indeed convinced many scholars of this Milanese connection.¹⁰⁸ In 599 bishop Constantius asked Pope Gregory to send some relics; these are believed to have been placed inside the chapel of Sant’Ambrogio but there is no real evidence for it, since Gregory does not specify the destination of the relics.¹⁰⁹ Finally, despite 10th century mentions of an episcopal palace no strong archaeological evidence

exists of an earlier phase of this building.¹¹⁰

San Siro, whose antiquity is mostly marked by the 4th or 6th century Greek inscription noted earlier, eventually became a funerary space, probably from the 6th century, since several sarcophagi in local stone (probably Finale stone) have been recorded during mainly undocumented works around the church.¹¹¹ One key piece of evidence in support of a 6th century building is the mention of a church of the “*beati confessoris Syri*” at Genoa in the

¹⁰⁷ A necropolis was established after the area was abandoned in the 3rd century: Melli & Taddei 1996, pp. 228-232; Melli 2003b, 2010, pp 314-315.

¹⁰⁸ Di Fabio 1998, 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.184. The letter is quoted by Frondoni 2014 and others. The relics of three saints were sent from Rome but the destination is not specified. The matter is so ambiguous that Martyn in his translation assumed, without evidence, that they were destined for Milan: Martyn 2004, p. 657, note 501. In general, many 6th century sources are often misquoted or not as specific as they are presented.

¹¹⁰ A 9th century fortified episcopal palace has been excavated in Genoa, located on the hill of Colle di Castello, with its first mention in the sources from 987: Cagnana & Roascio 2007, pp. 270-273.

¹¹¹ The date of the inscription is still debated as well as its interpretation: Mennella & Coccoluto 1995; Santi Amantini 1983. More recently on San Siro: Frondoni 2016.

Dialogues of Gregory the Great;¹¹² while, in 952, bishop Teodoro still called it “*sanctam matrem ecclesiam*”.¹¹³

A few other churches are attested at Genoa for this period, the best documented being the suburban Santa Sabina, perhaps originally set in a small, separate hamlet, near the main western road.¹¹⁴ The church was partially demolished in 1941, but during the works, older structures were observed though not documented.¹¹⁵ The first building is dated to the 6th century thanks to an associated necropolis with enchytrismòs and “*alla cappuccina*” tombs; one tile was inscribed with the Greek name (ΠΟΔΟ[...]). The Latin epitaph of Magnus *miles* (now lost), a Byzantine soldier of the *numerus felicitum Laetorum*, dated to 591, was also conserved inside the church and it is believed to have come from this burial ground.¹¹⁶

Another suburban church, dedicated to San Tommaso, located in the area called *Caput Arena*, was demolished in 1884.¹¹⁷ It was probably built over an older structure on the basis of several findings recovered in the area (burials “*alla cappuccina*”, Roman pottery, and a milestone of Constantine of 312-324). However, it is unclear how these mixed materials could point to a 6th-7th century church foundation.¹¹⁸ For other churches either attributed to the late antique and Byzantine period we lack archaeological information. The church of San Giorgio has been traditionally linked to a Byzantine foundation simply based on its dedication and its connection with the alleged Roman *forum*.¹¹⁹ Sites such as San Pancrazio, San Marcellino, San Sisto, Santa Fede, and Santa Sabina itself display Milanese affiliations in their dedications, which again suggested to several scholars a 6th century foundation based

¹¹² Valentine, the dissolute defender of the Church at Milan, was buried in the church, however, two devils came by night and dragged his unwilling body out of the burial, throwing it outside where it was discovered the day after. Gregory places the events during his own lifetime: Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 4.55. This is the only contemporary connection between the Milanese clergy and San Siro. Some letters of Gregory the Great are used to demonstrate that the church was used as their burial ground, but they simply record the death of the archbishop Laurence without specifying its resting place: Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 3.30. Frondoni used this same letter to sustain that also Deusdedit and Asterios were buried there: Frondoni 2014, 2016, pp. 1725. The real origin of this information is instead a much later document, the *Catalogus archiepiscoporum Mediolanensium*: Pavoni 1992, p. 104. However, the older manuscript is of the 11th century, copying original documents probably of the 8th and 9th century: Picard 1988, pp. 17-25 and 74-80.

¹¹³ Calleri 1997.

¹¹⁴ Lamboglia & Uzzecchini 1960-1961, p. 122.

¹¹⁵ The church was first transformed into a cinema and now hosts a bank: Cieschi 1942; Frondoni 1984.

¹¹⁶ Both inscriptions are lost. For Magnus, its epitaph reported the eight years of reign of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice: Appendix 2. n 2. For the graveyard: Lamboglia 1958a, Lamboglia & Uzzecchini 1960-1961, Christie 1990 p. 243; Melli 2010.

¹¹⁷ Di Fabio 1982, 1990.

¹¹⁸ Melli & Sciamanna 2010, p. 309 (Arch. in Lig. II); Melli & Bulgarelli 2004; for the burials: Gardini & Melli 1988.

¹¹⁹ Formentini 1941, pp. 117-18.

on the same arguments as pertain for San Lorenzo. However, except for Santa Sabina, there is no archaeological evidence in support of their late antique origins.¹²⁰ Genoa was dependent on the archbishop of Milan until 1133 when it obtained its own archbishop, those churches could have been founded at any point between the 6th century and their first written mention in 9th-11th century sources, without always have to look at the Milanese exile as the origin of everything.

Ultimately, what it is possible to say, amid the uncertainty of the available sources, is that probably two main 6th century churches were active in two marginal areas of the Roman city, San Siro near the western access, and San Lorenzo the northern one. San Siro is only visible from Gregory's story and 10th century medieval documents which attributed to it a special importance, plus the undocumented remains of a privileged necropolis with sarcophagi in local stone, a common feature for many important churches in Liguria during this period, especially baptismal ones.¹²¹ Assessing a precise foundation date and commission for San Siro with this data is, however, still impossible.¹²² The existence of a large building, probably a church, under the actual cathedral of San Lorenzo is archeologically attested, but apart from this the connection of the Milanese clergy with San Lorenzo and in general all the suburban area remains a hypothesis. The Milanese arrival might have generated some form of construction activity to host the refugees, which eventually might have led to competition with the local clergy when the exile became indefinite. However, the 6th century sources, so often cited to prove it, are usually misquoted,¹²³ while the information derived by later, indirect documents, are merely attesting Milanese properties in the area from the 9th-10th centuries.¹²⁴ Finally, a third extramural church, Santa Sabina, was present, even if it is mostly visible through its graveyard, which denotes a usage from a poorer section of the population, compared to San Siro, compatible with its location outside the city.

¹²⁰ Frondoni 2016, pp. 1732-33.

¹²¹ The documents preserved a sort of ambivalence and ambiguities between San Siro and San Lorenzo until 1066 when it became clear the dominant role of the latter: Di Fabio 1998, sheet 18; Frondoni 1998a, sheet 20. For privileged necropoleis in urban contexts see *Albintimilium*: Chapter 2.5.2.2; San Clemente at *Albingaunum*: Chapter 2.4.2.5; 2.4.2.6; for rural contexts the baptismal church of Capo Don and Noli: Chapter 3.3.3.

¹²² The sarcophagi, for example, are only broadly dated: Chapter 5.4.3.

¹²³ See notes 100 and 103.

¹²⁴ Pavoni 1992, pp. 104, notes 256-268; for a general picture of the Genoese documentary situation in the Early Middle Ages: Balzaretto 2018.

The picture for Genoa thus is very patchy, with no physical evidence of important religious building prior to the late 5th and early 6th century, despite being the first episcopal seats attested in Liguria at the end of the 4th century.¹²⁵ The three attested churches are, however, the only public buildings known for the late antique and Byzantine phase. Of them, very little can be said regarding physical appearance, with the partial exception of San Lorenzo where the extension of the *opus signinum* floor can be referred to a spacious building, which was however deprived the rich decorations that still characterised churches of supposedly minor centres (in status) such as *Luna* and *Albingaunum*.¹²⁶ The only sign of an elite presence are the stone sarcophagi attested in San Siro, suggesting some form of privileged class of believers attached to that building and by the legend narrated by Gregory. However, it is not possible to assume that they were the burials of the Milanese bishops, as the historical tradition wants them to be.

2.3.2.2 *Living and Dying in Genoa: Houses, Public Spaces, and Burials*

(i) *Houses and Public Spaces*

Just as Roman Genoa is known only by traces of a few *domus* with only a glimpse of its public buildings and even the general plan is obscure, so the archaeology of the late antique and Byzantine city is limited at best. The only public building known archaeologically, the extra urban amphitheatre, today located under Piazza delle Erbe, was transformed into an orchard between the late 4th or early 5th century.¹²⁷ The rest of the data, mostly relative to private spaces, are collected in a series of partially published urban excavation, the most important ones being Mattoni Rossi, Piazza Matteotti, and Scuole Pie.

The most important of the group is probably Mattoni Rossi, not far from the port, which represents one of the few cases with an uninterrupted stratigraphic sequence from the 1st century BCE to the present (Fig. 2.11). After a Roman phase, during the 5th and 6th century period some structures, probably houses, were constructed with stones, only to be

¹²⁵ For previous synthetises: Frondoni 1982; 1998b; 2014.

¹²⁶ For *Luna*: Chapter 2.2.2.1; for *Albingaunum*: Chapter 2.4.2.1-3.

¹²⁷ For an analysis of the amphitheatre and its surroundings: Melli & Torre 1996c, pp. 214-19; Melli & Torre 2014, pp. 128-139. This area was particularly fertile due the presence of an aquifer close to the stream Giustiniani. However, the lack of maintenance eventually transformed the area into a swamp, only resettled during the 11th-12th century: Ricci 1996, pp. 212-13.

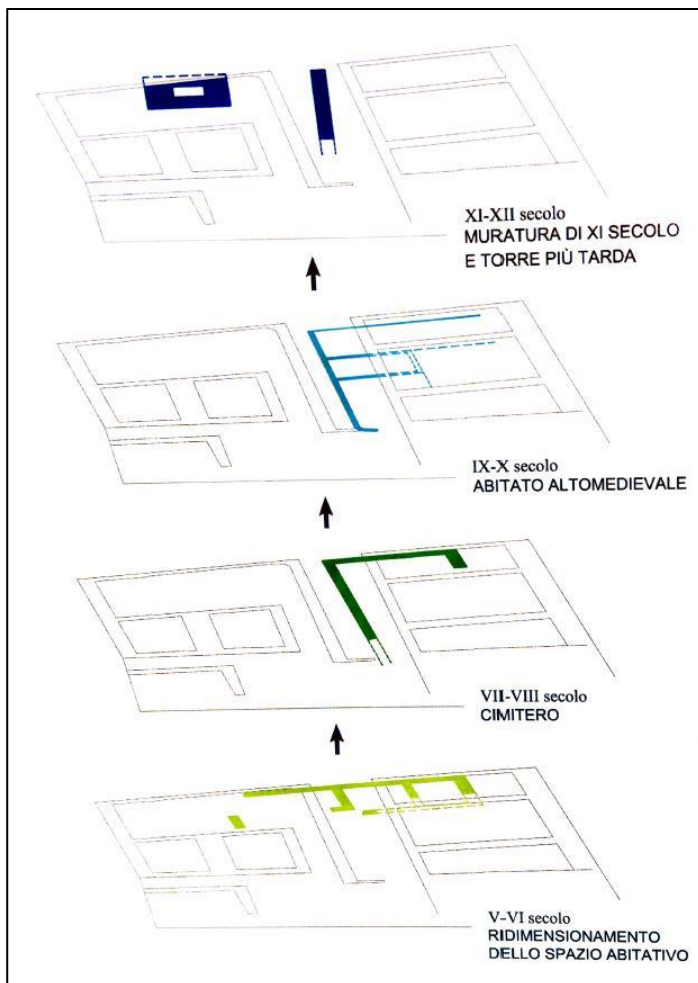


Figure 2.11) Genoa: late antique, Byzantine, and medieval phases of Mattoni Rossi. (Source: Torre 2014, p. 236, fig. 1)

eventually abandoned shortly after.¹²⁸ At this point, the floor level was raised in order to provide the foundation for a wooden household, connected with a couple of inhumations.¹²⁹ Many pottery finds and about twenty Byzantine *nummi*, representing several emperors from Justinian to Heraclius, were recovered during the excavation.¹³⁰ The area was subsequently dedicated to burials activities, which were still presenting materials of the 6th and 7th century.¹³¹ Only from the 8th-10th centuries the space was resettled.¹³²

In Piazza Cavour, a few metres west of Mattoni Rossi, some Roman collapsed structures, were covered by layers occupied by an infant grave probably connected with the 7th-8th century graveyard nearby.¹³³ Earlier

excavations in the same area exposed another Roman building, probably a fountain or a *nymphaeum*, constructed between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE, restored around the 2nd-3rd century, but then abandoned in the 4th century. An early medieval burial cut the Roman layers and was then covered by a series of dark organic levels.¹³⁴ From the small excavations in Via San Bernardo, about 50 metres south-east of Mattoni Rossi, Roman structures with the same alignment of Mattoni Rossi and Piazza Cavour were

¹²⁸ Materials for this phase included Keay 21, spatheia, and North African RSW C and D: Chapter 5.3.1.

¹²⁹ One infant buried in amphora (LRA 4) and one possible burial prepared in a bed of amphorae's fragments, which is the only thing that survived: Torre 2011-2012, p. 73.

¹³⁰ There was also an As of Domitian reissued by the Vandal kingdom: Arslan 2014. For a detailed analysis of the finds: Chapter 5.3.1.

¹³¹ It is possible that some layers of this last phase could have been removed by later activities.

¹³² In general on Mattoni Rossi: Melli & Torre 1996b, pp. 190-199; Torre 2011-2012.

¹³³ Barbaro et al. 2018.

¹³⁴ The area was resettled again around the 8th-9th century with new houses using the Roman walls as foundation: Grosso 1958-1959; Melli & Torre 1996a, pp. 172-76.

partially reused between the late antique and Byzantine phase.¹³⁵ The floor level was raised twice, the first time in connection with a posthole and some late antique materials, the second time with the addition of some new structures based on the Roman ones. While the first of these two phases can be dated to the 6th-7th century, the second is again related to the urban renewal of late 8th-9th century already observed in the previous examples.¹³⁶

In Piazza Matteotti, near San Lorenzo, the remains of a *domus* were uncovered during different excavations and while it is not possible to have a full plan, its different phases have been at least recognised. The *domus* was built during the late Republic and restored several times, but only in the late 3rd or early 4th century the occupants started to change its plan, subdividing the rooms into smaller spaces which showed different levels of maintenance.¹³⁷ This subdivision of a larger *domus* into smaller and poorer houses is a well-known phenomenon for many Roman cities of the north of Italy and elsewhere during this period.¹³⁸ Until the early 5th century most of the original Roman walls were still standing but by the end of this period the roof had collapsed denoting a moment of abandonment. However, between the 6th and the 7th centuries new walls were built over the ruins respecting the previous orientations.¹³⁹ Then, these structures were abandoned, leaving the area of Piazza Matteotti deserted until it was reused as necropolis in the 12th-13th century.¹⁴⁰ The contemporary Piazza Matteotti is near the so-called *Brolium*, exactly between the churches of San Lorenzo and Sant'Ambrogio. Despite being in a marginal position, compared to the Roman town, the area is supposed to have undergone some urban development thanks to the activities of the exiled bishops. What was left of the *domus* of Piazza Matteotti was restored during the 6th and 7th century, and several scholars connected this with need for accommodation for refugees, but, as noted before, the impact of the Milanese exiles on the urban landscape of

¹³⁵ A fragmentary capital (reused in a 15th century building), identical to another one found in Mattoni Rossi was also recovered, suggesting the existence of a Roman building of a certain status in the area.

¹³⁶ Melli & Torre 2015, pp. 200-202.

¹³⁷ One interpretation proposed was that the *domus* was divided in smaller houses in order to be rent and that the tenants were responsible for the maintenance, so a differentiation of the room status was associated by the occupant's possibilities: Cagnana & Melli 1996, pp. 272-277

¹³⁸ One of the first cases archaeologically explored was in Brescia: Brogiolo 1993, 2005. For some Byzantine examples: Gelichi 2021.

¹³⁹ This phase is dated by a single fragment of Hayes 99, which in its various forms cover the 6th century and the early 7th century: Cagnana & Melli 1996. Some scholars interpreted the reoccupation of the *domus* to host the Milanese refugees in an area near San Lorenzo and Sant'Ambrogio: Cagnana & Melli 1996, pp. 272-277, Frondoni 2016.

¹⁴⁰ For the excavation reports of the area: Tinè Bertocchi 1976b, p. 111; Melli 1990b. For a synthesis: Cagnana & Melli 1996, pp. 272-277.

Genoa is hard to assess. Nonetheless, this interpretation is interesting, but will need further confirmation by new researchers into San Lorenzo and Sant'Ambrogio.

Finally, the old excavations in Piazza Invrea and the nearby complex at the Scuole Pie, recently investigated are also relevant. The first is famous for its Roman mosaic floor destroyed during some works a few years after World War II. The mosaic was part of a bigger *domus* which could have preserved late antique or Byzantine layers, which are now lost.¹⁴¹ The more recent excavation conducted in very limited spaces at the Scuole Pie, revealed a dense sequence of activities. The ruins of a 3rd century house were levelled and probably transformed into a garden during the 4th century, while in the 5th century the area was settled again and covered by an *opus signium* floor, only to be finally transformed during the late 6th-7th century with the deposition of dark layers which covered all the structures. The limited nature of the exploration did not allow the archaeologists to develop a more elaborate interpretation, but the number of materials recovered (10,000 sherds), is striking compared with other small archaeological areas.¹⁴²

At the end of this exposition the picture of Byzantine Genoa is still evanescent, but it is possible to discern some very general patterns. The architectural remains of the settlement do not suggest the existence of an important, monumental, settlement. The 4th century, at least for the areas explored, contrary to the most common interpretations, was a period of crisis and transformation of the city, showing the typical late antique phenomenon of ruralisation and impoverishment of the urban network: the amphitheatre and the area of Scuole Pie were converted in a garden or ruralised, the fountain of Piazza Cavour was abandoned, and the *domus* of Piazza Matteotti was subdivided into smallest and simpler houses. Conversely, the 5th and 6th century show a recovery in most of the areas, except for the amphitheatre and Piazza Matteotti. Quarters previously abandoned were now resettled (Mattoni Rossi and San Lorenzo) and in the Byzantine phase the *domus* of Piazza Matteotti was reoccupied too. Only Scuole Pie was definitively reconverted. It is interesting to note that, where it is possible to see the reorganisation of the city which started in the 8th century, in most cases the new structures are reusing the Roman walls, suggesting that the supposed medieval regular plan, still discernible in the city centre, is more Roman than it

¹⁴¹ For the older excavation and a comment on the mosaic: De Negri 1952, 1960-61; Melli 1990c, 1996d.

¹⁴² Melli & Torre 1996, pp. 190-199; Torre 2011-2012.

was commonly believed.¹⁴³ Private lay constructions show a general continuation of plan and orientations with earlier Roman buildings. This partial recovery could be ascribed to the Byzantine reconquest in the sense that they stimulated some form of urban development and maybe a modest growth of the population due both the Milanese refuges (even if their real number is unknown) and the presence of a garrison, which could have amounted between 200-500 men.¹⁴⁴ However, it is possible to observe a progressive degradation of the building techniques with other signs of simplification common for the period, such as the wooden houses of *Luna's forum*, even if in Genoa there was still a use of more complex mixed techniques, also attested for .¹⁴⁵

(ii) *The Necropoleis*

Many suburban areas in the late antique and Byzantine town were used as graveyards. One, as seen above, was the necropolis associated with the 6th century church of Sant Sabina in the north-west suburbs but there were many others. The area around San Lorenzo, which was on the edges of the Roman city, after a short occupation with some houses, was transformed into a burial ground, in use between the late 3rd and the 7th century.¹⁴⁶ The current square in front of the cathedral was probably part of the same necropolis since several sarcophagi were discovered there during construction works in 1839.¹⁴⁷ The excavations that exposed the 6th century floor under the cathedral, intercepted other remains of this necropolis just outside the actual church.¹⁴⁸ Sections of a large necropolis between via Dante, via XX Settembre, via della Consolazione and Via San Vincenzo, on the eastern side of the town, have been discovered since 1887.¹⁴⁹ A late antique phase with enchytrismòs burials has been recognised followed by a medieval one that could be connected with the now demolished monastery of Sant'Andrea.¹⁵⁰ New burials were found on several occasions over the years. Particularly interesting are the finds of via San Vincenzo cemetery, which had infant burials directly cut into the Roman road, which was still used until the 4th century. Shortly after the road was covered by a landslide, new

¹⁴³ This was Lamboglia's thesis, usually uncritically repeated until today: Lamboglia 1933.

¹⁴⁴ For the garrison: Chapters 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 4.2.2.

¹⁴⁵ Similar processes have been noticed in both *Albingaunum* and *Albintimilium*: Chapter 2.4.2, 2.5.2.

¹⁴⁶ Gambaro & Lambert 1987; Lavazza, Melli & Taddei 1996, pp. 228-232; Melli 2003b, 2010.

¹⁴⁷ Faedo however, believes that some of the finds of the 1839 excavation might represent a medieval necropolis reusing older sarcophagi: Faedo 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Gambaro & Lambert 1987.

¹⁴⁹ Some of the first inhumations were described as aligned with a cobble road and made with Roman tiles, some even had weapons as grave goods: Cavalli 1990; Nicoletti 1993. Of this first finds almost nothing has survived, only burial (T. 99) preserves its human remains which are exposed in the museum of Pegli.

¹⁵⁰ Grosso 1912; Grosso 1929. No proper record have been preserved and the finds are now dispersed.

inhumations came to be placed on the new level of ground formed on top of the cobbles.¹⁵¹ Along Piazza della Maddalena and Via della Maddalena several interventions between the 1980s and 1990s, led to the identification of a very disturbed late antique and medieval necropolis, in an area previously used for agricultural activities.¹⁵² In total, twenty-six graves were recovered, divided in four phases on the basis of the stratigraphy: a first with inhumed individual, in enchytrismòs, and burials “alla cappuccina”, dated between the 4th and 5th century; a second, possibly Byzantine, which reused recovered and fragmented amphorae; plus other two medieval phases. The late Roman graveyard was probably connected with the upper Roman road leading from San Vincenzo to Piccapietra and Soziglia.¹⁵³ The medieval necropolis associated with the 8th and 9th century structures which started to re-occupy Colle di Castello, might show some early usage between the 6th and 7th centuries with the deposition of three infants associated with a fragment of inscription possibly datable between the 4th and 6th century.¹⁵⁴ Finally, occasional, and usually isolated, finds are recorded elsewhere within the city, like the single “cappuccina” grave at Salita della Noce (1954), or the enchytrismòs burial of via Fieschi (1973).¹⁵⁵ The location of the necropoleis it is helping in defining the borders of the settlement, especially for its eastern and north-eastern sections. The picture is the one of the urban spaces concentrated in the area supposedly occupied by the Roman town, with a possible extension along the northern coast reaching San Siro and Santa Sabina. The infiltration of necropoleis into the urban network was mostly kept under control, with burials approaching the core of the old Roman city, but only infiltrating it significantly in peripheral areas after they were abandoned – San Lorenzo or Mattoni Rossi – during the 7th century.¹⁵⁶

The surviving remains are too few and often too fragmented for a proper anthropological study on the population of the town between the Roman era and the Middle Ages. However, contexts like Mattoni Rossi have produced some interesting data. In this case, stress markers in the teeth of buried children, an indication of a poor diet or diseases, has been noted. These are, however, isolated data that only if combined with larger studies in Liguria

¹⁵¹ Gardini & Melli 1988, pp. 160-162; Gardini, Bellatalla & Bertino 1989.

¹⁵² Melli & Milanese 1984; Bellatalla, Bertino & Gardini 1989, pp. 378-384.

¹⁵³ Synthesis and materials: Gardini 1996b, pp. 328-339; also: Gardini & Melli 1988 pp. 169-170; for the road system: Melli & Bulgarelli 2004.

¹⁵⁴ Gardini 1996a, pp. 166-69; the three-letter inscription has been dated only with palaeography: Mennella 1996 p. 170; 1995, p. 68 n. 29.

¹⁵⁵ For these sporadic finds and for a first synthesis on the late antique and early medieval necropolis of Genoa: Gardini & Melli 1988.

¹⁵⁶ Gardini & Melli 1998

and in Genoa could generate a better archaeological and historical interpretations of the local population during the Byzantine period.¹⁵⁷

2.3.2.3 *The Port*

The port is Genoa and Genoa is its port. However, it is highly probable that no specific infrastructure was built in the natural inlet until the Middle Ages, as demonstrated by the excavations of the medieval harbour.¹⁵⁸ In Roman times the seashore was probably sufficient for the activities of loading and unloading ships – as for *Albintimilium* or Noli - or, if there were structures in place, they could have been in perishable materials or destroyed by later interventions. The excavations of the ancient port discovered its 10th century features, but the Roman and early Roman layers were barely exposed because of their depth, only a small portion of a Roman waterfront which were rich in pottery fragments was excavated.¹⁵⁹ Also the seabed was frequently drained from the Late Middle Ages. Those maintenance practices rarely reached the Roman and pre-Roman layers but destroyed late antique and early medieval ones.¹⁶⁰ However, underwater excavations were able to recover some intact sections with, but nothing has been found after the 7th century.¹⁶¹ One area, around 300m from the ancient coastline, was particularly rich in finds, and it is interestingly coincides with a space with calm waters where it was safe to anchor, suggesting that it was probably highly used for this purpose over the centuries.

2.4 *Albingaunum*

Albingaunum (once *Albium Ingaunum*) is located in the middle of the largest Ligurian plain, formed by the river Centa whose alluvial and erosion activities highly impacted the area especially after its course was diverted in the 13th century, affecting part of the Roman settlement.¹⁶² Here the contained urbanisation helped to preserve at least the shape of the

¹⁵⁷ Mullen 1996, pp. 395-412 and table at p. 411.

¹⁵⁸ Melli et al. 1996a.

¹⁵⁹ Melli 1996a, pp. 83-87.

¹⁶⁰ Grimaudo & Melli 2013, p. 180.

¹⁶¹ Melli & Sanna 2015, pp. 202-04.

¹⁶² In the 13th century the inhabitants cut a canal to provide water for workshops activities on the southern suburbs of the settlement, eventually the river naturally enlarged it and changed its course into this canal. The efforts of the inhabitants to contain the local rivers are well known from the medieval sources, a situation probably similar during the Roman period too. For an historical perspective: Zucchi 1938; for a geological one: Picazzo et al. 1994; Arobba et al. 2006.

ancient city and some of its monuments such as the Paleochristian baptistery, but unfortunately, the major urban archaeological projects are still mostly unpublished.

2.4.1 Pre-Roman and Roman Albium Ingaunum

As with most of the main Ligurian cities, the origins of Albenga lies in an *oppidum*, a centre of one of the Ligurian tribes, the *Ingauni*.¹⁶³ The location of the original settlement is still debated. However, when Rome conquered the region in 181 BCE it clearly invested in a settlement in the plain, following the regular scheme of a Roman colony.¹⁶⁴ This structure is still perceivable in the modern city centre, with its medieval walls roughly retracing the Republican curtain, as demonstrated by archaeological investigations.¹⁶⁵ Only two major excavations, “Scavo dell’Ospedale” and “Scavo Vaccari”, were conducted in the 1950s by Lamboglia and Grosso in two marginal sections of the settlement but are mostly unpublished (Fig. 2.12).¹⁶⁶

Like for Genoa, the Roman city centre is mostly unknown, the *forum* is supposed to lay near the episcopal palace, but this has never been verified.¹⁶⁷ The city developed outside the Republican walls during the Imperial phases. A vast bath complex is known on the southern side of the city, now under the waters of the River Centa, together with parts of an aqueduct a few metres upstream.¹⁶⁸ The Roman port, now fully silted up, is supposed to be nearby but no excavations have ever confirmed this.¹⁶⁹

On the western side of the city, again outside the Republican circuit, in the area called “ex-Standa”, a colonnaded courtyard, with a possible *sacellum* at its centre, was discovered during construction works and interpreted as some form of public building.¹⁷⁰ Finally another Roman structure, abandoned during the 3rd century, was fully excavated outside the

¹⁶³ Usually, the *oppidum* is located on San Martino’s hill based on its dominant position: Lamboglia 1973-1975; Spadea Noviero et al. 2018. A pre-Roman necropolis was found in the bed of the river Centa: Lamboglia 1934h, 1936a; Massabò 2008b.

¹⁶⁴ Gandolfi & Massabò 2007.

¹⁶⁵ Grosso 1956a, 1956d, 1957; more generally on the topography of the city: Lamboglia 1957a, 1970a; Spadea Noviero 1990.

¹⁶⁶ The maximum depth reached was 4m, corresponding to the Augustan era, since the constant presence of the water table compromised the exploration of the deepest Republican levels: Grosso 1956a, 1956d, 1957.

¹⁶⁷ Lamboglia was the one mostly supporting this hypothesis: Lamboglia 1957a and 1970a.

¹⁶⁸ The bath complex had probably two phases, a smaller one dated to the 1st century CE and a larger one of the 2nd-3rd century CE: Lamboglia 1934h, 1976a; Massabò 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004a, pp. 98-117, 2007; Bulgarelli & Torre 2015; Bulgarelli 2018a; Conventi, Massabò & Trigona 2019. For the remains of the aqueduct: Lamboglia 1952d; Massabò 2004; for burials discoveries: Grosso 1955.

¹⁶⁹ Arobba et al. (1997-1998); Arobba et al. (2006); Pallarés 2002; Massabò 2004.

¹⁷⁰ An area of 55x70m was excavated: Lamboglia 1936a, 1971b; Massabò 2004a, pp. 36-38.

northern walls, in via Milano, very close to a Roman necropolis which faced the ancient road.¹⁷¹

2.4.2 *From the City of Constantius to the Byzantine Town*

The late antique history of *Albingaunum* is marked by a supposed Visigoth raid at the beginning of the 5th century.¹⁷² The main arguments in favour of this event are the vague sources regarding the path followed the Visigoth army on its way towards Gaul, which might have impacted the coastal area or Liguria, and the fact that this supposed raid was shortly followed by the reconstruction works of Constantius (370-421), *magister militum* of the emperor Honorius in the 410s.¹⁷³

The intervention of Constantius is documented by an inscription which commemorates the reconstruction of the city.¹⁷⁴ The date of his intervention is usually placed shortly after the Visigothic sack of Rome, and surely before Constantius's reign (421), since the epigraph has his name deprived of the Imperial titles. Another fragment of Rutilius Namatianus seems to confirm the narration of the epigraphy describing a Ligurian city undertaking vast construction works sponsored by Constantius. In the fragment *Albingaunum* is never directly nominated but the similarities between texts are striking.¹⁷⁵ As with many panegyric texts, Constantius's inscription is vague and so it is difficult to assess the scale of the intervention and which parts of the city were involved and the same can be said of the text of Rutilius. However, repairs were certainly made to the walls as recognised in the two main urban excavation where a new late antique circuit substituted the Republican one and was later incorporated into the medieval fortifications.¹⁷⁶

As will be seen, from other smaller excavations, glimpses of the late antique city, confirming demolitions and reconstruction phases datable to the 4th century denote a generic continuity

¹⁷¹ The structure could have been related to the northern city gate: Bulgarelli, Angeli & Malfitano 2013; Bulgarelli 2018b. The necropolis are mostly located along the mains roads, like the one on the slopes of Colle San Martino following the road for Alassio, dotted with funerary monuments and possibly a church: Lamboglia 1934b, 1934h, 1936b, 1938a, 1950l, 1953c, 1973-1975; Grosso 1954; Massabò 1999b, 2004a pp. 118-145, 2008a; Massabò & Mennella 2005. Other burials are also near Pontelungo: Lamboglia 1934h, 1949d; Durante 1950.

¹⁷² The idea is firstly proposed by Lamboglia: Lamboglia 1935b, p. 6.

¹⁷³ He became emperor as Constantius III in 421 for a few months, marrying Galla Placidia.

¹⁷⁴ Appendix 2, n. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Appendix 2, *Fragmenta* B. Lamboglia proposed that Rutilius himself, who assisted when the works were carried out, could have inspired the text of the inscription: Lamboglia 1976-78. Later readings of the text added little to the debate: Della Corte 1980, 1985. See also: Bartalucci et al. 1975; Mosca 2004a; Celuzza 2015.

¹⁷⁶ Grosso 1956a, 1956d, 1957.

of the road network during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. What is apparently missing is a clear level of violent destruction which could be associated with the supposed Visigoth raid. It is possible that Constantius simply intervened in an important city which experienced a deep crisis during the 3rd century and needed public intervention for civil and military reasons. This can be suggested by the abandonment, during the 3rd century, of most of the extra urban spaces, such as the baths, the amphitheatre, and the structure of via Milano. The late antique city that the Byzantines occupied was, probably, already restricted inside the renewed defensive perimeter which marked the borders of the Republican settlement. The fortifications, however, were probably well functioning and the city was possibly hosting a *numerus*, commanded by the *comes et tribunus Tzittanus*, as attested by the epitaph of his wife Honorata, who died in 568.¹⁷⁷

2.4.2.1 The “Special” Role of the Church in Albingaunum

An important and still unsolved problem regards the foundation of the episcopal centre which is not mentioned either in Constantius’ epigraph or Rutilius’s poem.¹⁷⁸ On this basis some scholars have argued for a date after the first quarter of the 5th century. However, others have underlined that the gaps in the written sources does not exclude the pre-existence of an ecclesiastical organisation, as suggested by other sources.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the rich archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the city, make it unique in the Ligurian context, due to the numbers of finds which allow the reconstruction of a numerous and active clergy in the city, at least from the 5th century. Moreover, from the archaeological point of view at least five churches are known in *Albingaunum*, two of them intramural (San Michele, the cathedral, and San Teodoro) and three extramural (San Vittore, San Clemente, and San Calocero). The city was also provided with two baptismal fonts, the main one connected with the cathedral, and an extramural one in San Clemente. Of these buildings, only San Michele still stands, while the others have been traced via archaeological excavations.

¹⁷⁷ Appendix 2, n. 4. For the city defences: Chapter 4.2.3.

¹⁷⁸ However, Rutilius, a declared pagan, never mention churches in his text.

¹⁷⁹ See the discussion of the date in: Massabò 2005, pp. 76-77; Gandolfi & Massabò 2007, pp. 450-462; Frondoni 2013b, pp. 608-611.

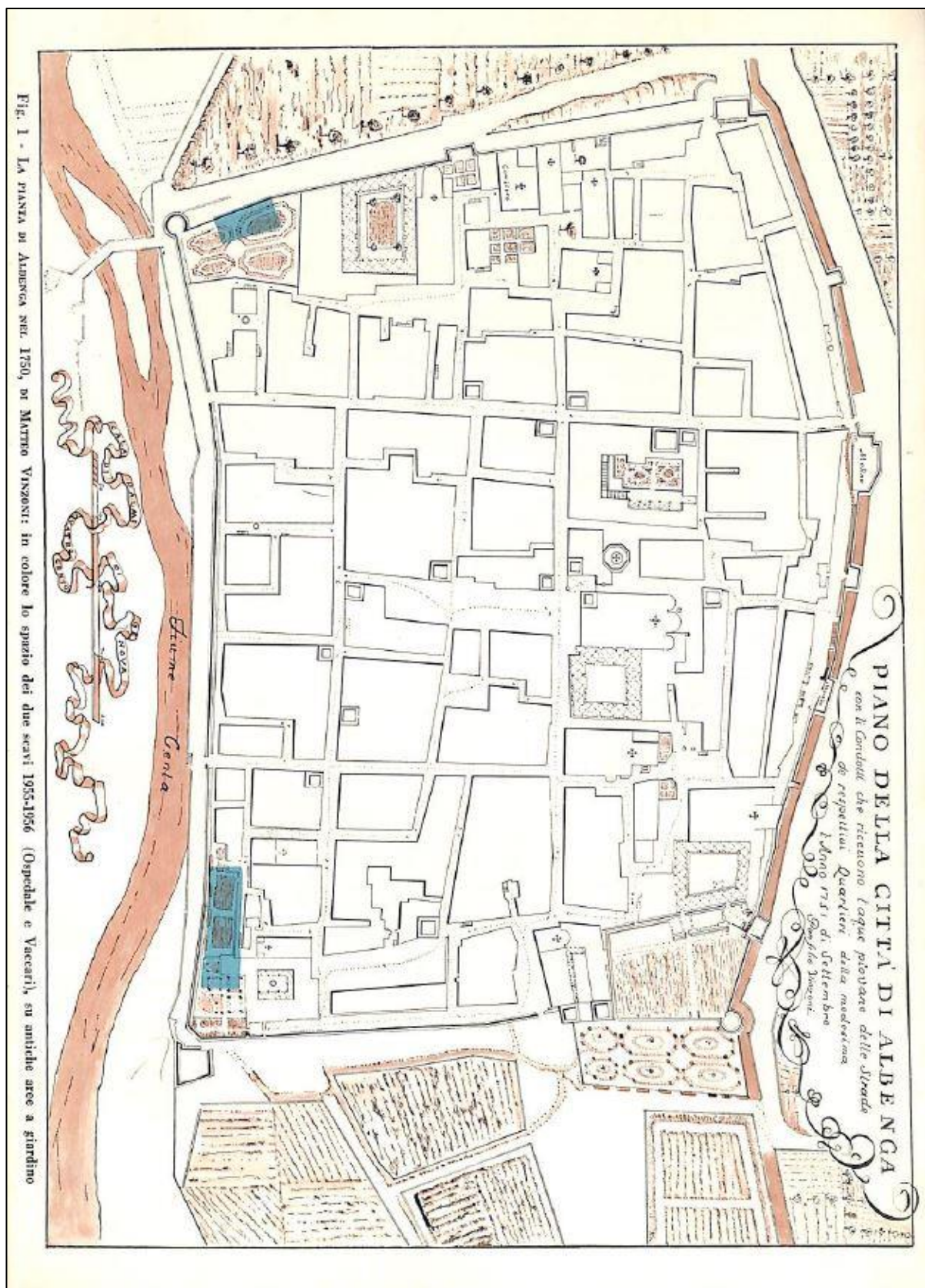


Figure 2.12) Lamboglia's urban excavations in Albingaunum (in blue): Scavo dell'Ospedale (down left) Scavo Vaccari (up left). (Source: Lamboglia 1970a, p. 27, fig. 1)

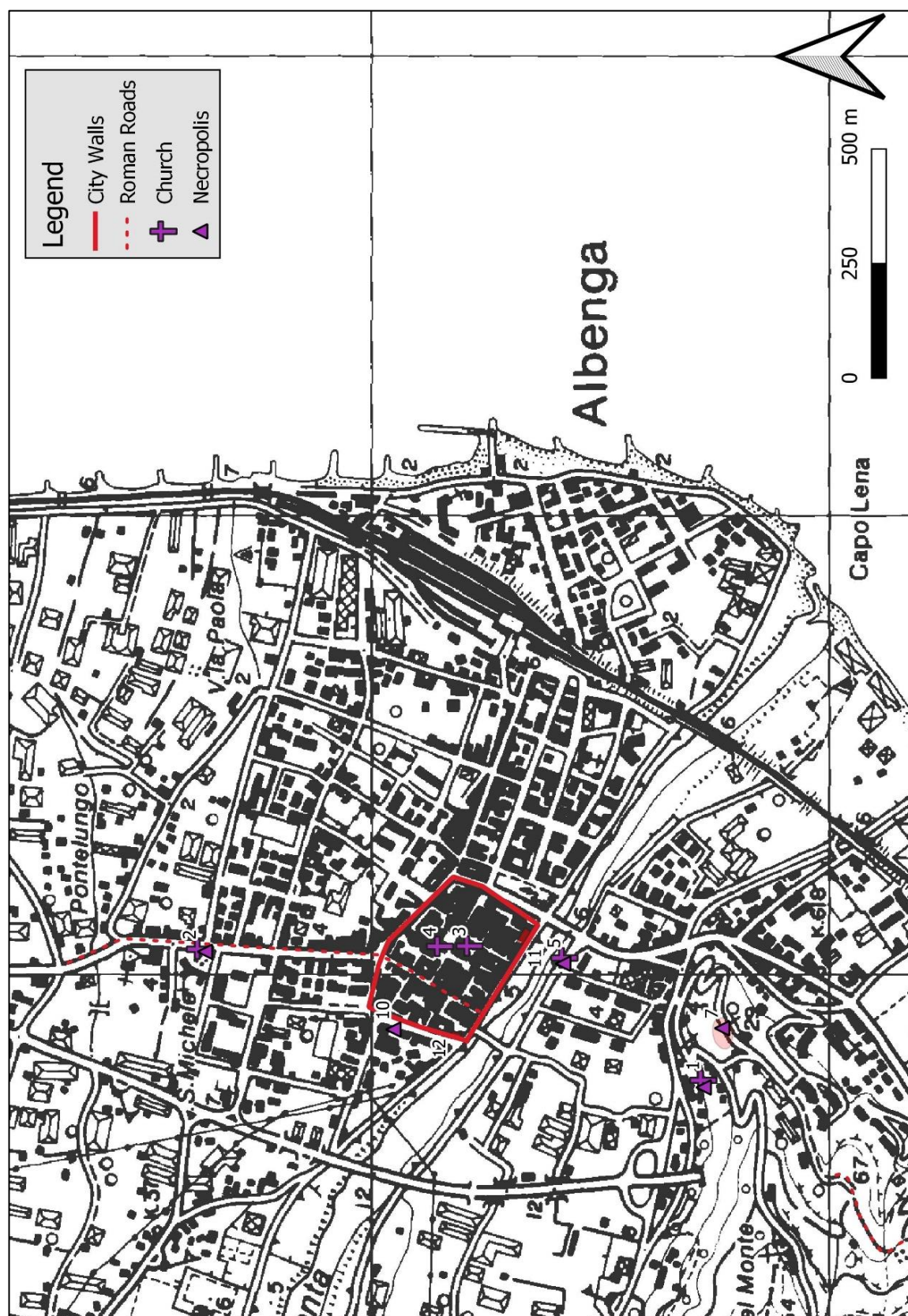


Figure 2.13) Albingaunum: 1) San Calocero; 2) San Vittore; 3) San Teodoro; 4) Cathedral of San Michele and Paleochristian Baptistry; 5) San Clemente; 7) Amphitheatre and necropolis; 10) Ex-Standa; 11) Scavo dell'Ospedale; 12) Scavo Vaccari. (Source: Author)

Written sources record *Quintius*, who joined a council in Milan in 451 against the Eutychian heresy, as the first attested bishop of the centre.¹⁸⁰ The presence of several other members of the clergy are transmitted by a rich epigraphic corpus. Bishop *Benedictus* is attested in an epitaph preserved in the “Palazzo Vecchio del Comune”, stylistically dated to the 5th century.¹⁸¹ Other mentions came from the epitaphs from San Michele such as the one of a *famulus (Dei o Christi?)*, a *Dei cultor*, plus the epitaph of *Donatus diaconus*, probably buried in 571; all stylistically assigned to the end of the 6th century.¹⁸² Finally, during the excavation of San Teodoro, a reused funerary epitaph of *Iustus Dia(conus)*, was stylistically dated to the 5th or 6th century.¹⁸³ Affiliation with Christianity was also displayed by the lay believers, who, from the first half of the 6th century, started to show their faith in a series of epitaphs. Two were recovered in San Vittore: the first (now lost) mentioned a certain *Maioranus* and is dated to 515;¹⁸⁴ the second has a direct reference to the consuls Symmachus and Boethius, in 522, sons of Severinus Boethius, senator and advisor to Theoderic, later executed for treason in 524.¹⁸⁵ Another 6th century epigraph with a Christian formula is the one of *Ancillae Tuae*, a fifty-year-old noblewoman, who died in 568.¹⁸⁶

From this analysis is clear that by at least the mid-5th century there was an organized Christian community in *Albingaunum* and that a century later the aristocracy was also converted and wanted to display it in their epitaphs. Lamboglia argued that this epigraphic wealth was connected to the Ostrogothic revival under Theoderic, which than continued with the Byzantines.¹⁸⁷ It is possible that after a 4th century crisis and Constantius’s intervention there was a period of recovery which coincided with a wider diffusion and affirmation of Christianity outside the main urban centres.¹⁸⁸ The 5th century is mostly characterised by members of the clergy, while the lay aristocracies, sometimes more reticent in their conversion, started to become visible again during the late 5th and early 6th century.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁰ Marcenaro 1993b, pp. 68-69.

¹⁸¹ ; Appendix 2, n. 5; Marcenaro 2006, p. 29

¹⁸² For the first one: Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 66, pp. 129-130; for the second: Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 44, pp. 99-100; Lamboglia 1965c.

¹⁸³ The epigraph has been found reused in an infant “alla cappuccina” tomb, under the church of San Teodoro: Massabò & Mennella 2008.

¹⁸⁴ Appendix 2, n. 6.

¹⁸⁵ Appendix 2, n. 7; for the case of Severinus and Boethius: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V.i.32-39.

¹⁸⁶ The inscription was briefly lost but fortunately recovered during the restoration of the “Palazzo Peloso Cipolla” in the city centre: Appendix 2. n. 8.

¹⁸⁷ Lamboglia 1956f, p. 229.

¹⁸⁸ See the discussion regarding the diffusion of Christianity in the Roman region of Liguria at the beginning of: Chapter 2.3.2.1.

¹⁸⁹ This does not imply any pagan revival, since it has been proven that paganism in its institutional form was well defeated by the beginning of the 5th century: Cameron, 2011, pp. 74-92.

Certainly, the Byzantine domination over the region helped the survival of the Roman tradition of funerary epitaphs, at least until the end of the 6th century. I think that the richness of the epigraphic tradition of *Albingaunum*, apart from the fact that most of the known churches have been excavated, was due to the supposed wealth of the settlement, thanks to its larger productive hinterland. This allowed the presence of a stronger aristocracy for the local standards, which, during the chaotic period of the late 3rd century, almost produced an emperor in the figure of the usurper Proculus, according to the *Historia Augusta*.¹⁹⁰ When members of the elites started to be converted to Christianity, they expressed their faith using the Roman epitaph tradition.

2.4.2.2 Intramural Churches



Figure 2.14) Albingaunum: Church of San San Teodoro after the excavations in Piazza delle Erbe. (Source: Gandolfi & Massabò 2007, p. 457, fig. 23)

The two known intramural churches, San Michele and San Teodoro, were studied and explored archeologically in very different ways and times. The first is still standing in its Romanesque form, while the other was demolished in the 16th-17th century until its recent rediscovery under Piazza delle Erbe (Fig. 2.14).

The episcopal seat of San Michele centred on the attention of the scholars from the beginning of the 20th century, especially its almost intact 5th century baptistery (Fig. 2.15),

¹⁹⁰ On the origins of Proculus: *Historia Augusta*, F. XII-XIII, 3, pp. 406-411; on his failed usurpation: *Historia Augusta*, P. XVIII.6-8, 3, pp. 372-75.

which was significantly restored in 1900-1901 and 1948-50.¹⁹¹ On both occasions the intention was to recover the “original” status of the monument, with little consideration for preserving later modifications. This allowed the recovery of the irregular octagonal plan of the building at the cost of the original late antique dome, misinterpreted as a 14th century addition, being imprudently demolished in 1901. Fortunately, the amphorae used to lighten the weight of the structure were preserved,¹⁹² which allowed to date the original dome to the late 5th or early 6th century.¹⁹³



Figure 2.15) Albingaunum: *Paleochristian baptistery*
(Source: Author)

An element of great significance in the baptistery is the mosaic preserved in the niche, which now hosts the altar. Its iconography has been interpreted as a clear declaration of orthodoxy and affirmation the Holy Trinity in opposition to the Arian doctrine. The Trinity is represented by the repetition of triple elements such as three circles and three Chi-Ro symbols surrounded by the twelve apostles depicted as doves (Fig. 2.16).¹⁹⁴ An inscription lists those saints whose relics were supposedly preserved in the baptistery. The list underlines the strong connections firstly with the Church of Milan and secondly with Rome, with space also for some local figures.¹⁹⁵ The composition of the

¹⁹¹ There is an extensive and often recurring bibliography over D'Andrade intervention, for a synthesis: Marcenaro 1993a, 2006; for specific studies: Marcenaro 1987a, 1987b, 1989; 2007b; for Lamboglia's works: Marcenaro 1993a.

¹⁹² This generated a debate with D'Andrae and De Marchi sustaining the 14th century dating of the demolished dome, later supported by De Angelis d'Ossiat: De Angelis d'Ossiat 1936. Whereas Verzone, a decade later, was the first to identify elements in support of the real antiquity of the structure: Verzone 1945.

¹⁹³ Lamboglia firstly dated the amphorae to the early 5th century; Pallarès proposed a mid-5th century date, while the most recent interpretation is based on our increased knowledge of these vessels: Lamboglia 1934g; Lamboglia 1956e, Pallarès 1987a; Gandolfi et al. 2010; Roascio 2018b. For a detailed discussion of the materials: Chapter 5.3.1.2.

¹⁹⁴ Palmarini 1987.

¹⁹⁵ For the text published by Toesca in 1912: Appendix 2, n. 9.

first line of the inscription and how to integrate the missing saints is uncertain.¹⁹⁶ There is however, some agreement on stylistically dating the inscription, and thus the rest of the mosaic, to the late 5th or early 6th century, in alignment with the amphorae of the dome.¹⁹⁷ A date also supported by the oldest sculptural elements survived in the baptistery.¹⁹⁸ Finally, excavations inside and outside the baptistery have indicated a previous, Roman, building, partially reused by the baptistery for its foundations. They also exposed two floor layers either interpreted as a first phase of the building followed by a renovation of the structure or the other way around, with the first floor used as a working space for constructing the building and the second as the actual first phase of the baptistery.¹⁹⁹ If there was a renovation phase which added the mosaic and probably the dome to an original baptistery, this has been usually connected, without many proofs, to the works of the archbishop Laurentius I of Milan (489-511) who commissioned several works in his dioceses.²⁰⁰ The problem behind all this controversy is the lack of the original dome.²⁰¹

An attempt has been made to analyse the surviving structures by Mannoni and Cagnana, who postulated a single construction phase but with two different techniques.²⁰² However, the detailed analysis conducted by Brandt, clearly demonstrated the substantial homogeneity of the works.²⁰³ Without the original dome there is space for speculation, however, all the dates proposed for the mosaic, the sculptures, and the amphorae point to the end of the 5th or the early 6th century, suggesting, in my opinion, a single and coherent construction phase for the building, which, without great modification, was still perfectly in use during the Byzantine occupation.

¹⁹⁶ For a synthesis on the debate: Marcenaro 1993a, pp. 174-182. For different interpretations: De Angelis d'Ossiat 1936; Musso Casalone 1963; Mazzoleni 1987; Février 1986. A further problem in the integration of the missing parts is that there is no documentation of the status of the mosaic prior D'Andrade restoration: Marcenaro 1993a, pp. 245-249; 2006, pp. 113-120.

¹⁹⁷ Marcenaro 1993a; Musso Casalone 1963; Mazzoleni 1987.

¹⁹⁸ Frondoni 1994.

¹⁹⁹ The first interpretation is supported by the archaeologists that conducted the works: Frondoni 2001b; Gandolfi & Frondoni 2007; Frondoni & Gandolfi 2010; the second one instead is a later reinterpretation of Brandt: Brandt 2011. Roascio proposed another version as well with a first phase for the building and a second one for the dome: Roascio 2018b.

²⁰⁰ Gandolfi & Frondoni 2007; Lusuardi Siena & Sacchi 2007.

²⁰¹ The re-examination of the conspicuous documentation produced by D'Andrade and De Marchi did not offered any assistance, and the only photograph available for the dome shows it when it was already demolished: Marcenaro 1993a; p. 279; 2006, p. 110, 2013a.

²⁰² Mannoni & Cagnana 1996; see also Roberti 1987.

²⁰³ The so called "muratura B", corresponding to the second construction technique recognised by Mannoni and Cagnana, was only present in external parts of the baptistry which were damaged by the addition of new structures, so it was not original, or it was damaged by the modifications: Brandt 2011; Brandt et al. 2014, 2016.



Figure 2.16) Albinganum: mosaic of the baptismal font and inscription. (Source: Author)

Also the cathedral of San Michele was heavily restored in several stages starting from 1948 and following the principles used in the baptistery.²⁰⁴ Based on the recovery of two fragments of sculpture stylistically dated to the 8th century and a fragment of an inscription mentioning an *episcopus* stylistically dated to the 5th or 6th century, Lamboglia postulated the existence of a late antique and early medieval

phase of the building.²⁰⁵ This was confirmed by the excavations conducted inside the cathedral where the remains of a late antique altar (5th-6th century), modified in the Longobard era, were found associated with two floors in *cocciopesto* which were dated by Lamboglia to the 4th and 6th century.²⁰⁶ However, these works are almost unpublished, and even recent re-examination, despite redating the first phase to the 5th century, has added few materials for a proper discussion.²⁰⁷ The building was further modified during the Middle Ages until it reached its current form.²⁰⁸

The church of San Teodoro, for which we know the dedication from late medieval documents was demolished in 16th-17th century. The site, now under Piazza delle Erbe, was rediscovered under controlled excavations displaying a simple single nave plan with a side chapel attached, probably with funerary functions. It was constructed on top of a wall

²⁰⁴ Lamboglia wanted to be a starting point of a renovation of the medieval city centre: Lamboglia 1948d, 1948b, 1949b, 1951e. A new approach, more respectful of all the phases of the structure was later imposed by the Soprintendenza when new works began in the mid-1960s: Lamboglia 1965c; in general: Marcenaro 1993-1994.

²⁰⁵ Lamboglia 1949b.

²⁰⁶ Lamboglia 1964e, 1966a.

²⁰⁷ A substantial publication on Albenga's cathedral in 2007 simply republished Lamboglia's article of 1966: Costa Restagno & Paoli Maineri 2007. For a reinterpretation of the excavation: Paoli Maineri 2007.

²⁰⁸ Some of these modifications were significant, such as the 9th century reduction of the building to a single nave and a new lateral apse: Paoli Maineri 2007.

demolished during the 4th century. Published in a short report, the few available data point to a first construction phase of the late 6th or early 7th century.²⁰⁹ If so, it would mean that San Teodoro is one of the few, if not the only, archaeologically attested church foundation under the Byzantine rule in Liguria. This interpretation is supported by its dedication to a typical military saint much venerated in the Byzantine world.²¹⁰ Under the first floor of the church was found one infant “cappuccina” burial, which reused the tile bearing the inscription *Iustus Dia(conus)*.²¹¹

2.4.2.3 Extramural, Funerary Churches

Archaeologists have located three other churches in the suburbs of, all associated with funerary functions and generally connected with communication routes: San Calocero, San Vittore, and San Clemente.

The first one, San Calocero, was discovered in 1934 and excavated in several phases.²¹² It was probably built over a Roman burial ground, reused in Late Antiquity and believed to be the resting place of Calocero, a local martyr.²¹³ The building has a plan of a three aisled church which was continuously used and transformed into a monastery during the Middle Ages. The long life of the monument saw many structural interventions which compromised the earliest phases of the building, only partially clarified by the most recent excavations.²¹⁴ The site in the 6th century appeared as small martyrial church with three naves, with the northern one in the form of a cryptoporticus, covering an underground space used as a burial space with inhumations “alla cappuccina”, sarcophagi in Finale’s stone and other typologies.²¹⁵ There was likely an initial focus around the grave of the martyr, with an increased presence of privileged burials in sarcophagi during Late Antiquity and the

²⁰⁹ The building has been dated based on the construction technique and the presence of fragments of amphora Keay 62A embedded inside the *cocciopesto* floor: Massabò & Mennella 2008.

²¹⁰ On the role of the military saint: Haldon 2016, pp. 1-19.

²¹¹ It is not clear if the inscription is a funerary one or a sort of seal. The infant burial looks like a degraded version “cappuccina” burial, with a mixture of stones slabs and tiles, which may indicate a later date (late 7th): Massabò & Mennella 2008.

²¹² Lamboglia started to work on the ruins in 1934 but extensive works were only conducted after World War II: Lamboglia 1934c, 1934f, 1947, 1972c. Pergola reopened the investigations between 1984 and 2014: Pergola 1987a, 1988a, 1989a, 1989b, 1990a, 1991, 1993; Roascio 2008; for a synthesis: Pergola 2010a; Pergola et al. 2015c.

²¹³ The identification of San Calocero is controversial since most of the textual sources available are late: De Francesco 1988 (more sceptical); Pergola 2010b (surer of the identification).

²¹⁴ Lamboglia 1947.

²¹⁵ Lamboglia identified the firsts late antique inhumation: Lamboglia 1947; more were excavated later, Pergola 1988b, 1990b; Frondoni 2010. For a detailed discussion on Finale stone sarcophagi and their production: Chapter 5.4.3.

Byzantine period.²¹⁶ A consistent group of liturgical furnishings (posts and slabs), dated to the late 6th century, was discovered inside the building and interpreted as a barrier which protected the martyr burial located in the central apse.²¹⁷ The date and style of the marble might point to a Byzantine intervention. The bema was renewed and provided with columns and an arch during the 8th century, possibly after a new *inventio* of the relics by the *abbas Marinaces*.²¹⁸

Other extramural funerary churches are San Clemente and San Vittore, set on two of the main routes into the city. Both have late antique origins and were still in use during the Middle Ages when they were reduced to small chapels, and eventually abandoned during the Modern era. The *longue durée* of the churches means they appear in several documents which provide a secure identification.

San Vittore was located along the Roman road coming from the north into the city, very close to the so called “Pontelungo”. This extra-urban area was already used as a necropolis by the Romans and the Christian community continued this tradition during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, dedicating the holy space to the Milanese saint.²¹⁹ The excavation between 1956 and 1958 revealed a single nave structure with a Palaeochristian phase, followed by an early medieval one. Lamboglia attributed its earliest phase to the 4th-5th century, shortly followed by the first graves comprising some common typologies for the period (“alla cappuccina”, tile boxes, and stone slabs); however, no sarcophagi in Finale stone were found, despite the survival of many epitaphs which should denote the presence of elite inhumations. Lamboglia published only two small reports, without any detailed analysis of the materials. Thus, the main elements for dating the archaeological phases and the graves are typology and the epigraphic evidence. The inscriptions point to an early 6th century phase to the graveyard, which was still used during the Byzantine period and enlarged on the western side.²²⁰ However, a fresh look at both the documentation and the archaeological material would likely produce a better understanding of the several phases of the complex.

²¹⁶ Pergola 1988b, 1990b; Frondoni 2010. The sarcophagi were also reused during the Middle Ages.

²¹⁷ Different reconstructions were proposed by Lamboglia and Martorelli: Lamboglia 1956c; Martorelli 1993. For the detailed analysis of the sculpture: Guiglia 2010; Martorelli 2010.

²¹⁸ The *inventio* is known from an inscription carved into an epistyle. The text has been partially damaged and so differently read and interpreted: Appendix 2, n. 10. On the later movements of the relics: Grosso 1956c.

²¹⁹ On the San Vittore cult and its connection with Milan: Calderini 1956.

²²⁰ For the excavation reports: Lamboglia 1956b, 1958f, 1963d; for a summary: Massabò 2004a, pp. 175-177.

On the other side of the town is San Clemente, just outside the Republican and late antique walls, in the area once occupied by the large Roman baths, facing the southern main road. The church was discovered and partially excavated during works undertaken to enlarge the riverbed of the Centa in the early 20th century, which preserved the site from destruction and provided a first plan.²²¹ New research conducted in the 2000s at both church and baths revealed a triple-naved church, surrounded by an extensive graveyard, and annex structures.²²² The earliest phase of the Christian structure, built in *petit appareil*, overlay the solid brick structures of the Roman baths, showing some similarities with San Vittore. The church is surrounded by a necropolis containing many privileged burials, as attested by several sarcophagi, with only one epitaph recently recovered.²²³ The most interesting discovery at San Clemente was a baptismal font, stratigraphically dated to the Palaeochristian era but subsequently reused for a burial.²²⁴ The font was built directly on remains of the Roman baths and, according to Massabò, is not clearly associated with any surviving structure of the building, even if it shares the same construction technique and level as the earliest phase of the church.²²⁵ The only other element to date it is a fragment of LRA1 recovered inside one of the walls, produced during the 5th-6th century.²²⁶ The typology of the font resembles other Ligurian examples like Noli, Finale, and Riva Ligure, all dated between the 4th and 6th century. New excavations by the Soprintendenza are ongoing which seek to redefine properly the architectural and archaeological phases of the church and baths.

Questions remain, such as why two baptisteries existed at *Albingaunum*. Massabò suggested that San Clemente's font could have been part of an original episcopal centre, outside the city walls, which was later moved inside.²²⁷ Marcenaro instead prefers the model where the two baptisteries, were contemporaneous, maybe serving two different groups, the orthodox and the Arians. He also suggests the possibility of an early Christian community,

²²¹ D'Andrae and De Marchi oversaw the operations: Massabò 2002a and 2004a, pp. 98-117.

²²² A full publication never appeared, only short reports exist: Martini 2007; Massabò 2002b, 2002c.

²²³ Some of the sarcophagi were reused for later burials until the 13th century as demonstrated by radiocarbon analysis. An enchytrismòs was recently recovered inside the fill of the Roman *natatio*, about 20m west to the church, possibly extending the area of the necropolis. Regarding the lack of inscriptions, it is possible that some may have been moved into the nearby San Calocero, even if one was recently found in new excavations in summer 2021 and is being studied.

²²⁴ The grave constructed inside the font was dated by C14 to 1071-1158CE: Massabò 2007 and 2013.

²²⁵ Massabò 2007. Unfortunately, a flood destroyed the font in 2016.

²²⁶ Massabò 2007.

²²⁷ Massabò 2002a.

between the end of the 4th and the early 5th century, organized, but without a bishop, using an extra-mural church provided with a baptistery.²²⁸ The Arian hypothesis is interesting but impossible to prove, while at the same time the presence of more than one baptistery is not so uncommon.²²⁹ In the end, the chronology is too vague to suggest an eventual precedence of one building over the other, while the presence of the baptistery alone is not sufficient to elevate San Clemente to the role of cathedral.²³⁰

Historical sources and archaeology suggest that probably most of *Albingaunum*'s churches were built after Constantius's reconstruction, possibly between 480-540. The number of churches here is significant, especially for a town which was not particularly large, and they all displayed the use of stone, mortar, and occasional decorative marbles (San Calocero and the baptistery) and mosaics (the baptistery). This can be an expression of its rich aristocracy (either religious, lay or military), as implied by the epigraphic evidence, who were still able to finance the construction of San Teodoro in the 6th century. The number and disposition of the buildings, however, mostly matching the pattern of the typical "civitas christiana" with churches (usually with funerary functions and dedications to martyrs) marking the main access points into the settlement.²³¹ We should recognise also limited modern urban renewal, enabling a better preservation of the archaeological evidence and the prolonged life of many of the churches well into the Middle Ages, which helped them survive in the documents. However, using the number of churches in *Albingaunum*, as proof of its centrality as an urban settlement and as a capital of the region, as proposed by Pergola, is not a solid base for interpretation.²³² In fact, most of the other Ligurian cities display at least three churches each, and possibly more with further research (Genoa in particular). The problem of numbers only arises with *Albintimilium* where no early Christian religious building are presently known.

2.4.2.4 Urban Network

Late antique *Albingaunum* could be viewed as a new town and renewed by the Imperial euergetism of Constantius. Tracing this renovated city has proved challenging for

²²⁸ Marcenaro 1993a, 2007c; generally on the diocese: Marcenaro 2003b.

²²⁹ For example, in Ravenna: Pergola 2007.

²³⁰ This has been amply demonstrated in the case of North Africa, for example, and the same is true for Italy: Duval 1989.

²³¹ Cantino Wataghin, Gurt Esparraguera & Guyon (1996).

²³² Pergola 2006, 2010a.



Figure 2.17) Albingaunum: Esagius of the eparch Theodoto (522-523). (Source: Massabò 2007, p. 464)

archaeologists,²³³ being mostly visible in a few fragments of the fortifications. Pre-Constantius phases seem to have been generally obliterated by the construction of new buildings and floors, possibly between the 4th and 5th century, while the road networks was maintained.²³⁴ In his “new town” Constantius respected the original borders of the Republican city, excluding the sectors which had developed during the Empire. They were never inhabited quarters per se, so this is not necessarily related to a demographic crisis, but testifies more to a change in the needs, cultural habits, and priorities (churches and defences) of the population. According to Constantius’s

inscription and the poetry of Rutilius, the new town was built according to the highest standards of the time, with ample use of stone for public and probably also private buildings. There has been a tendency to attribute any 5th century restoration or construction work to Constantius’s activity, as for the structures in both the sites of “Ospedale” and “Vaccari”, with the 5th century layers followed by a series of simpler structures, generically associated with the Byzantine and Longobard phases, although the status of the publication does not allow us to say more.²³⁵ Smaller and sporadic excavations inside the city centre revealed few other details, such the excavation of San Carlo, between “vico del Collegio” and “via Roma”, which exposed layers and structures of the 5th century.²³⁶ Here was also recovered a Byzantine glass weight of the *eparch* Theodoto (522-523), who was a public officer in Constantinople with functions related to coinage (Fig. 2.17).²³⁷ This is an odd find, because, in theory, it predates the Byzantine occupation of the region. A small trench (3x2,8m) inside the courtyard of the medieval episcopal palace uncovered a stratigraphy with substantial dark layers showing a ruralisation of the area between the 6th and 7th centuries and the 13th century.²³⁸ Finally, outside the main apse of the medieval church of Santa Maria in *Fontibus*, were discovered the remains of a solid Roman wall. This structure had at least two phases: one characterized by a floor in earthenware slabs, followed by a violent destruction and a

²³³ Pergola 1993-94, pp. 301-303.

²³⁴ Gandolfi & Massabò 2007.

²³⁵ Grosso 1956a, 1956b, 1957.

²³⁶ Lamboglia 1976b; Gandolfi & Massabò 2007.

²³⁷ It depicts the bust of the emperor Justin I (518-527) encircled by a Greek inscription: ΕΠΙ ΘΕΟΔΟΤΟΥ ΕΠΑΡΧΟΥ.

²³⁸ At 2,2m the aquifer prevented the archaeologists reaching the Roman layers at c. 4m depth: Bruno 1987.

restoration probably of the 5th century.²³⁹ This second phase is attributed to Constantius, with a suggestive indication of some form of destructive event predating it. The 5th century building remained in use during the Byzantine occupation and only showed sign of abandonment during the 7th century, when the area seemed ruralised with the presence of dark layers.²⁴⁰

What it is clear is that the areas remained settled continuously even if with different forms of houses, showing an impoverishment of construction techniques. Dark layers are sporadically documented, suggesting a transformation of some areas between the Byzantine phase and the Longobard one, but excavations overall have been too limited to properly evaluate the real impact on the urban tissue. Certainly, the Byzantines kept the fortifications and maintained some form of civil administration, revitalising the local elites, as perhaps suggested by the *esagius* of the eparch *Theodoto*, and more substantially by the presence of a *comes et tribunus*.²⁴¹ Ultimately, even if Constantius restored the city in a still monumental Roman way, for which we need more evidence, it seems that the Byzantines inherited a very different settlement from the so called “small regional capital” so often connected with the activity of the Roman general.²⁴²

2.4.2.5 Extramural and Intramural Necropoleis

Besides those at the funerary churches, there are other late antique necropoleis in *Albingaunum* apparently disconnected from religious buildings. On Colle San Martino, near an homonymous church which has never been investigated, some burials were discovered in 1955 and generically dated to the Middle Ages, but their typology is also compatible with Late Antiquity, while their association with the church is not confirmed.²⁴³ Close by are the remains of the Roman amphitheatre, which was reused as a necropolis after it became redundant in the Late Roman era.²⁴⁴ A re-examination of the materials dated this cemetery to the 5th-6th century combining the few diagnostic materials – a coin of Arcadius and a

²³⁹ The materials recovered with the restoration phase are few, but coherent, supporting a 5th century context. On the church: Gandolfi 2001.

²⁴⁰ Massabò & Gandolfi 1994-95.

²⁴¹ Appendix 2, n. 4.

²⁴² This term has been used by Pergola in the introduction to Marcenaro 1993a and in other occasions: Pergola 2006; 2010a; Mercenaro 2007c. *Albingaunum*, however, was never explicitly a capital, it was one of the main centres of western Liguria, it remained relatively small also during the Middle Ages, and never hosted fundamental authorities such as the archbishop of Milan.

²⁴³ Lamboglia 1955a.

²⁴⁴ The building was heavily damaged by erosion and by World War II activities: Lamboglia 1973-1975.

fragment of Keay 8B – with the grave typologies: simple structures in non-mortared stones and (probably) in amphora. Basic osteoarchaeological analyses have been conducted on 30 individuals coming from 12 of the 27 burials. They showed some common characteristics, such as a height slightly higher than the average Mediterranean of the time and hints of the frequent horse riding for the males, which led the anthropologist to suggest an allochthonous, maybe Gothic, origin.²⁴⁵ The hypothesis is disputed. The area of San Clemente and its second baptistery has been indicated as possible presence of an Arian religious community, potentially Goths. However, proving this archaeologically is challenging without further details, such finds of Gothic tradition or isotopic analyses attesting a foreign community.

The last extra-urban necropolis to be considered is the one called “ex-Standa”, outside the western city walls, replacing the Roman public building which became redundant during the 5th century. Archaeologists explored only half of the area, exposing a total of 55 enchytrismòs and burials “alla cappuccina”, some of them disturbed by a medieval ditch (beudo).²⁴⁶ The necropolis is still unpublished and most of Lamboglia’s report is focused on the Roman phase. Francisca Pallarés, who reviewed the materials of the 20 amphora graves, dated the it to 430-450.²⁴⁷ She recognised North African types such as Beltrane 63, Keay 19, 25b, 25s, and 59, and the Iberian Almagro 51.²⁴⁸ However, the report is very partial and with some problems: there are supposed similarities with the amphorae of the baptistery, but almost none of the typologies in the necropolis mentioned by Pallarés correspond with those from the baptistery, while it is not clear if the types of amphorae recorded in the study comprise the whole assemblage or are just a selection. Finally, the proposed date is too precise for the types of finds and, I would say, too early for the context, which could easily date to the last phase of the 5th century.²⁴⁹ No church has been discovered nearby; however, the homogeneity of the burials is striking, with only two inhumation types attested, which could be some form of social, cultural, or chronological

²⁴⁵ Probably only isotopic analysis will confirm this hypothesis. The height determination (average of 1,69 m with some individuals reaching 1,73 m, vs a Mediterranean average of 1,65 m) is interesting, but should be compared with other, contemporary, necropoleis in *Albingaunum* and Liguria to be more significant: Spadea et al. 2018. The so called “horse riding syndrome” is not universally accepted by the anthropologist as genuine consequence regular horse riding, especially without other associated data, such as horse burials or grave goods associated with horses and horse riding: Berthon et al. 2019.

²⁴⁶ Lamboglia 1971b.

²⁴⁷ Pallarés 1987a.

²⁴⁸ Pallarés 1987a.

²⁴⁹ For a new and more complete interpretation: Chapter 5.3.1.

indication. The lack of a church may point to non-Christian communities in the 5th century (ex-Standa). Other suburban areas, such as San Martino hill, which has seen few archaeological interventions, might reveal further aspects of the late antique and Byzantine city.

2.4.2.6 Urban Necropoleis

Late antique and Byzantine *Albingaunum* has only a few traces of an early intrusion of burials inside the city walls. The main evidence came from the cathedral complex and from nearby Santa Maria *in Fontibus*, where was recovered a reused sarcophagus in Finale stone walled up in the foundation of the church.²⁵⁰ The sarcophagus was decorated with a cross and an unusual circular symbol, possibly a reference to the Holy Trinity,²⁵¹ as in the mosaic of the baptistery. The area seems to have hosted a necropolis with several sarcophagi but there is little information apart from claims by Lamboglia that the sarcophagus came from this necropolis.²⁵² The cathedral itself seems to have been used for burials only from the 7th-8th century, with the lateral naves dedicated to this purpose.²⁵³ No other structured necropoleis are known inside the city walls, but sporadic and isolated infant “alla cappuccina” graves have been found among San Teodoro and outside Santa Maria *in Fontibus*.²⁵⁴ As discussed for other Ligurian cities this can be a sign of some form of ongoing public control over the management of the spaces within the late antique and Byzantine town, which was rich in extra urban necropoleis.

2.5 *Albintimilium*, *Bintimilion*, *Ventimiglia*

The Roman city of *Albintimilium*, set in the plain between the River Roia and Nervia, was abandoned during the Early Middle Ages and the settlement moved to the Cavo hill.²⁵⁵ Archaeological discoveries and research started in the 19th century when the area became urbanised again.²⁵⁶ Organised excavations started after World War I and involved several

²⁵⁰ Lamboglia 1937a.

²⁵¹ The interpretation of the symbol is, however, disputed: Quartino 1978, 1997-1998.

²⁵² Lamboglia 1937a.

²⁵³ Paoli Maineri 2007.

²⁵⁴ For San Teodoro: Massabò & Mennella 2008; for Santa Maria *in Fontibus*: Massabò & Gandolfi 1994-95.

²⁵⁵ Most of the ruins of the lower city were covered by a deep layer of sand during the Middle Ages: Denizot 1959; for the first discussion regarding the shifting of the city uphill: Lamboglia 1945. In general, on the topography of the city: Lamboglia 1953b, 1956d; Pallarés 1987b, 1996.

²⁵⁶ Girolamo Rossi (1831-1914) was the first to be interested in the archaeology of the site, followed by Piero Barocelli (1887-1981) who recorded the necropolis using a cataloguing system still used today on the site:

areas of the ancient site. Particularly, it became the experimental field for Nino Lamboglia, who started to apply here his stratigraphic methods, documenting also the post-Classical phases.²⁵⁷

2.5.1 *Origins: from Albium Intemelium to Albintimilium*

The ancient *oppidum* of the Ligure (Albium Intemelium) probably occupied the slopes of the *colle di Collasgarba* but moved into the plain between the rivers Roja and Nervia when a Roman *castrum* (180-150 BCE), and later *municipium* (89 BCE) was installed.²⁵⁸ The city had an asymmetric and irregular plan, especially on its northern side due to the nature of the landscape and was probably one of the smallest cities in Liguria, even if its eastern border is still unknown. The Republican town, provided with the traditional grid of roads and *insulae*, was protected by walls reinforced with circular towers. A phase of intense activity is documented during the 2nd and 3rd century with the demolition of part of the walls, the renovation of several private houses, the construction of the theatre, baths, and the renewal of the aqueduct.²⁵⁹ Excavations have concentrated on the western area of the city and south of the *decumanus maximus*. As for other Ligurian cities, several central elements of the Roman town are unknown, such as temples, basilicas, and the *forum*.²⁶⁰ A crisis can be discerned for *Albintimilium* by the early 4th century with the abandonment of the theatre.²⁶¹ Similar buildings for Genoa or *Luna* seem to have survived until the late 3rd or early 4th century too.²⁶² However, it is unclear if the city suffered from barbarian attacks during the 4th and 5th century, as Lamboglia suggested.²⁶³

2.5.2 *The Late Antique and Byzantine City*

For the Byzantine period, textual sources are almost non-existent: there is no mention of *Albintimilium* during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars or in Gregory the Great's letters, so the only available source is archaeology. It is clear how, after the 5th century, public buildings,

Rossi 1886; Barocelli 1923; Lamboglia 1938b, 1938c, 1964b; Pallarés 1963; for a history of the studies: Lamboglia 1948f, 1964b; Gandolfi 1996.

²⁵⁷ Pallarés 1993; Zanini 2008. For their application on the study of ancient pottery: Lamboglia 1950c, 1956a.

²⁵⁸ On the origins of *Albintimilium*: Lamboglia 1948e, 1950i, 1958b

²⁵⁹ Both the aqueducts began at the spring of a tributary of the river Nervia and reached the city on the north side, on colle di Collasgarba: Ricci 1984; more generally on the Roman town: Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 25-128.

²⁶⁰ Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 41-42.

²⁶¹ Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 64-65.

²⁶² Chapter 2.2.2.2, 2.3.2.2.

²⁶³ Possibly the Goths of Athaulf in 411-12, but such isolated burning layers cannot be securely attributed to a violent destruction. The same problem is valid for *Albingaunum*: Chapter 2.4.2.

including the aqueduct, fell out of use.²⁶⁴ Private spaces, like the *domus del Cavalcavia* and *domus di Libanore* were either in ruins or converted to smaller and simpler structures, according to Lamboglia.²⁶⁵ New landmarks should have emerged in the townscape, notably churches and defensive structures, according to the trend observable elsewhere, but there is little evidence of these. We must also remember that most of the northern and the entire eastern sides of the city are still unexplored, while some major infrastructure projects, mainly the railway and the new via Aurelia, destroyed or damaged the northernmost part of the settlement. Key questions for Byzantine *Albintimilium* regard its physical form and size. The form of the Byzantine authority in the city and when, and why was the Roman settlement was abandoned in favour of the Cavo hill, where the medieval town was erected?²⁶⁶



Figure 2.18) Byzantine Albintimilium: 1) Theatre; 2) Roman baths; 3) Decumanus Maximus; 4) Insulae Orientalis; 5) Porta Marina; 6) Late antique/Byzantine wall; 7) Northern Necropolis. (Source: Author)

²⁶⁴ Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 67-81.

²⁶⁵ Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 100-107.

²⁶⁶ On this subject there are several opinions: Pallarés 1987b, 1993, 1996; Christie 1989 pp. 20-21, 1990, p. 249; Palmero 1994.

2.5.2.1 Church and Bishops

Albintimilium is the only Ligurian city for which we do not have solid evidence for the existence of a late antique or Byzantine bishopric. The first attested bishop is *Iohannes*, in 680, present at a council of Pope Agatho.²⁶⁷ Before him, only a *presbiter*, *Martinus*, is remembered in a fragmented funerary epitaph stylistically dated to the 5th century.²⁶⁸ No other ecclesiastical authorities are otherwise known between the end of the Byzantine domination and the Carolingian era, with the possible exception of another bishop buried in the northern area of the Roman city, known through an early medieval epitaph recovered in 1865.²⁶⁹ However, the presence of a *presbiter* in the 5th century indicates a structured clergy long before 680, which is in line with the rest of Liguria. This should point towards the existence of at least a church if not an episcopal seat. But where was it located and when was it first built? The restoration of the Romanesque cathedral of Santa Maria on the top of the “Cavo” uncovered remains of a preceding structure dated to the Longobard-Carolingian period.²⁷⁰ Some decorative elements, stylistically belonging to the Longobard phase, were found reused in the Longobard-Carolingian one.²⁷¹ There is, however, no archaeological trace of a church before the 8th century, but both *Iohannes* in 680 and *Martinus* in the 5th century, were in need of some form of residence to exercise their activities. A letter sent to Girolamo Rossi by Giovanni Francesco Aproso in 1891 claimed the existence of a prominent church, dedicated to Mary, in the area of the ancient Roman town, but it was destroyed during the construction of the modern via Aurelia in 1836.²⁷² In this area a few fragments of liturgical decorations were found by Lamboglia during his excavations or reused in modern structures.²⁷³ Potentially the first episcopal church lay in the ancient town, prior to the permanent shift of the community to the hill. It is, however, also possible that, after the abandonment of the lower town, this church was still used for a period due to some form of emotional attachment, as is documented for *Luna*, where the cathedral continued to consecrate the new bishops, now residing at Sarzana, for more than a century after its

²⁶⁷ A list of possible bishops was compiled by Lanzoni but it is highly unreliable since it includes figures attested only by later traditions and not by contemporary sources: Lanzoni 1927, pp. 843-844.

²⁶⁸ Mennella 2014.

²⁶⁹ According to Rossi, the inscription was found at the bottom of a grave abutting to a thick wall: Lamboglia 1964c. More recently, Mennella and Gandolfi republished the text interpreting the name of the bishop as Datus who was probably in charge for six years between the 8th and the late 9th century according to stylistic criteria: Mennella & Gandolfi 2005.

²⁷⁰ Lamboglia 1951d, 1951i, 1971e; Pallarés 1969-70; Frondoni et al. 1998; on its restoration and nearby baptistery: Lamboglia 1950e, 1952a, 1959a, 1961a, 1964a, 1972d.

²⁷¹ Formentini 1936; Gandolfi 1969-70.

²⁷² The letter is dated to 05/08/1891.

²⁷³ Lamboglia 1972a.

formal abandonment in 1204. In this case, as I will show, the function could have been a funerary one. Finally, a late antique necropolis, is under investigation, possibly near the place where the inscriptions of *Datus* and *Martinus* were discovered in the mid-19th century (see below).

2.5.2.2 Houses and Public Spaces

Private *domus* and public buildings in the Roman townscape were mostly abandoned or reused for different purposes after the 5th century; however, traces can be recognised of spaces adapted for continued occupation. Excavations exposed areas still in use after the 5th century. The identification of late antique, Byzantine and Longobard structures has been facilitated by a detailed study of the construction techniques used in *Albintimilium*, which show a progressive change from *opus caementicium*, dominant during the Roman Empire, to simpler techniques using clay and ground as mortar and perishable materials mixed with reused stones, while only occasionally, and for specific structures, full stone walls, usually displaying the “spina di pesce” (*opus spicatum*), were employed.²⁷⁴ In the past, this technique was automatically regarded as “Byzantine”, however, studies at Milan (end of the 4th century until to the end of the 12th century) and other Ligurian evidence, suggest a wider chronology not solely identifiable with the Byzantines (Fig. 2.19-20).²⁷⁵



Figures 2.19, 2.20) Albintimilium: two different types of *opus spicatum* using pebbles and bricks from the area of Porta Marina. (Source: Autor)

The first area to be considered is the theatre, which had already lost its function during the early 4th century, when it was spoliated of its decorative marbles and used for other

²⁷⁴ Pallarés 1986.

²⁷⁵ However, for Liguria, we lack the level of detail which was available in Milan due to the status of the publications. For Milan: Greppi 2016, pp. 63-66

purposes.²⁷⁶ Rubbish pits with late antique materials and new walls, closing and dividing passages and spaces of the Roman building, probably for residential purposes, were discovered associated with different stratigraphic phases.²⁷⁷ The best documented areas are the eastern *parodos* and the eastern *parascenium*. Here Lamboglia identified two main phases, dated via ceramic evidence and construction techniques, to the 4th-5th centuries and 6th-7th centuries.²⁷⁸ The first phase is characterized by walls still in Roman style, even if they used clay instead of mortar; whereas the second one features dry stone walls.²⁷⁹ At least part of the *parodos* was used as a dump for construction materials, mostly tiles, but Lamboglia is not clear about this and gives no chronology for it.²⁸⁰ The eastern hemicycle has revealed structures and traces of a later reuse but it has been not published properly. Without plans of the different phases establishing the functions and connections between the post-Classical phases of the ruins of the theatre is not possible.²⁸¹ Burials were also recognised inside the structure, some of them cut into the Roman walls.²⁸²

Lamboglia uncovered the first tract of the *decumanus maximus*, where, as at *Luna*, several phases were recognised covering the Roman *basolato*, corresponding with the *via Iulia Augusta*, with traces of new structures facing each one of the new roads.²⁸³ In this case the Roman level was abandoned during the 5th century, but subsequently covered by at least three new surfaces between the 6th century and at least the late 7th century (or even into the Carolingian era) (Fig. 2.23).²⁸⁴ No specific dates or diagnostic materials are provided for any single layers; only the last level is dated as being prior to the 10th or 11th century because of the lack of later finds.²⁸⁵ In this area, known as *Cavalcavia*, it is also possible to observe a phenomenon of encroachment on the road. The connection between one of the smaller *cardines* and the *decumanus* was blocked by a building dated by Lamboglia to the 4th century and covered by later structures, on which no further details were offered.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁶ On the various campaigns: Lamboglia 1948a, 1949a, 1949c, 1950b, 1950f, 1950m, 1951a, 1953a, 1955g, 1957b, 1962b and 1963c. For a synthesis: Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, pp. 42-67.

²⁷⁷ Lamboglia 1951a; Gambaro, Gandolfi & Giomi 2018.

²⁷⁸ Lamboglia decided to preserve these fragile structures instead, which were removed only during recent restorations.

²⁷⁹ Lamboglia 1953a.

²⁸⁰ Lamboglia 1951f.

²⁸¹ Lamboglia 1952e, p. 60; Lamboglia 1953a, 1954c, p. 68.

²⁸² In the 19th century Rossi was the first one to mention them, more were found by Lamboglia and during recent restorations.

²⁸³ It seems clear how the Roman road was used as the *decumanus*, at it ran through the city, while for *Luna* there is still the doubt that the city was accessible towards a deviation from the main path.

²⁸⁴ Lamboglia 1964d, 1965b.

²⁸⁵ Lamboglia 1965b, pp. 73-74.

²⁸⁶ Lamboglia 1963c, p. 106; on the excavations of this area: Lamboglia 1949e, 1951b, 1963b.

Traces of reoccupation also appeared in the excavation of the so called “*insulae orientali*”. Their complex stratigraphy was exposed by Lamboglia in a long series of campaigns, showing signs of a 4th century renovation and reuse of older structures.²⁸⁷ Lamboglia attributed a series of walls in *opus spicatum* to the Byzantine phase, recognizing destruction levels which he immediately associated with Rothari’s invasion of 643/4.²⁸⁸ This direct connection of historical events with archaeological layers is not convincing since only a few structures seem to have been affected. Again, no proper publication was ever made.

Excavations occurred also around the area of Porta Marina, the southern city gate, which was still visible in the 19th century but was never recorded, now its precise location is lost. Martino’s recent excavations exposed a late antique phase of occupation in one area where Roman ruins were levelled in the 5th century to make space for new structures. One has been interpreted as a possible barracks in connection with a new curtain wall constructed in *opus spicatum*.²⁸⁹ Here, one of the *cardines* was still in use and preserved in its original form, until a total abandonment around the 7th or 8th century.²⁹⁰ This contrasts with what happened with the *decumanus maximus* and we can suppose a constant maintenance of this *cardo*, related to a more intense occupation in Late Antiquity. Lamboglia was the first to hypothesize a Byzantine *castrum* in this area, and the interpretation of the excavation given by Martino and Gandolfi seems to confirm his vision.²⁹¹ However, the evidence presented up to now is limited and confused. Clearly the area of Porta Marina was still active during the 5th and 6th century, but new excavations need to confirm the extension of the new fortifications and we need clearer elements related to the Byzantine phase to support an occupation after the mid-6th century, since most of the material evidence discussed (very little) seems to not surpass this date.

Smaller interventions across the lower city show some material concentration or sections of structures associated with the Byzantine and Longobard phases. Even if the data are too few for a proper interpretation, they represent elements of continuity in areas of the city

²⁸⁷ Lamboglia 1971d.

²⁸⁸ Lamboglia & Pallarès 1984, pp. 114-116.

²⁸⁹ For the excavation reports: Martino 1999; Martino et al. 2010. For the contextualization: Mennella & Gandolfi 2005, For the interpretation of the late antique terracotta decorations: Quartino 1997-1998.

²⁹⁰ Martino 1999.

²⁹¹ Lamboglia 1956a; Martino 1999; Gandolfi 2016a, p. 73, 2018a, p. 343-346.

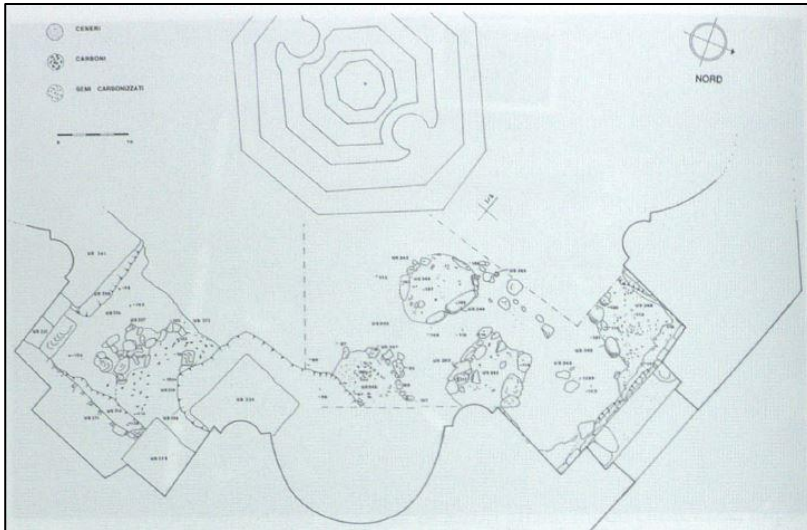


Figure 2.21) Albintimilium: excavations of the baptistery hearths.
(Source: Fusconi et al. 2001, p. 824, fig. 34)

which are less well explored like the northern and especially the eastern one.²⁹² The only clearly abandoned structure relates to the Roman baths, where no signs of reconstruction or occupation are attested.

Finally, regarding the settlement on colle di Cavo, the existence of Byzantine phase has been reinforced by recent finds (Fig.

2.22). As with Porta Marina, Lamboglia was one of the first to suppose an early movement of people onto the hill during the Byzantine occupation. Finds related to the Justinianic period have been attested here since 1776, with coins recovered around the monastery of the Canonichesse Lateranensi on several occasions.²⁹³ Further research in the same monastery exposed a necropolis “alla cappuccina”, attributed to the Byzantine occupation without strong evidence.²⁹⁴ Recently the remains of a 6th century structure, according to the materials, has been discovered in the monastery; but the building was eventually abandoned in the 7th century, possibly demolished during the 8th century, and later replaced by a graveyard.²⁹⁵

Research inside and outside the medieval baptistery beside the medieval cathedral of Santa Maria has revealed a level with hearths and postholes (Fig. 2.21). The context was rich in materials such as fragments of cooking wares, soapstone vessels and late amphorae, all datable to the late 6th and 7th century.²⁹⁶ Environmental finds, recovered from some of the fireplaces, especially caryopsis and seeds (1631 elements), revealed different types of

²⁹² See, for example, the two levels with materials from the 5th and 6th century exposed by Lamboglia between the *Officina del Gas* and the old hospital: Lamboglia 1965; or the trench opened in the northern area of the city in 2015: Gambaro & Giomi 2018. Finally, the small trench, one of the few in the eastern part of the city, in the area called *Garzo*, with layers rich with materials of 6th and 7th century: Pallarés 1996.

²⁹³ All these finds are now lost but the information was collected by Girolamo Rossi and published by Lamboglia: Lamboglia 1964c.

²⁹⁴ Martini 1945.

²⁹⁵ The excavation comprised just three small trenches. The late antique finds came from just one of the trenches (Area 1000) and a fragment of common pottery (VAL466) was broadly dated to 590±290 CE via thermoluminescence: Gandolfi et al. 1998

²⁹⁶ Fusconi et al. 2001.

cereals cultivated in the area, possibly with the intent of diversifying the production to protect against selective plant diseases. Legumes were also attested in small quantities, plus one sample of *Cannabis sativa L.*, used in the production of textiles and never attested before in Liguria.²⁹⁷ The abandonment level was destroyed by the construction of the baptistery and the necropolis associated with the Longobard-Carolingian cathedral.



Figure 2.22) Roman Albintimilium and the Cavo Hill where medieval Albintimilium developed. (Source: Author)

These contexts were interpreted as additional evidence for the location of a Byzantine castrum on the hill, usually identified as being under the medieval fortress of the counts of Ventimiglia, now occupied by the monastery of the Canonichesse Lateranensi. Formentini, was the first to argue for the presence of a castrum – supposedly *Kastron Bintimilium*, quoting George of Cyprus – suggesting an earlier movement of the city uphill and a reduction of its role from city to citadel.²⁹⁸ The ancient geographer is, however, misquoted, since he only mentions *Bintimilium*, without the addition of a castrum.²⁹⁹ This misinterpretation was passed through several scholars.³⁰⁰ While it is now clear that there was a settlement on the hill during the 6th century, its form and role is far from being understood, while the lower town was still occupied in various ways.

²⁹⁷ Arobba 2001.

²⁹⁸ This was repeated by Lamboglia: Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, p. 9.

²⁹⁹ George of Cyprus, *Descriptio Orbis Romani*, 531-553.

³⁰⁰ Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984, p. 9; Christie 1990, p. 249.

Following the excavations of the area of Porta Marina several scholars believed that the city contracted in the area to the south of the *decumanus maximus*, but this is contradicted by the material evidence. Some areas, such as the Roman baths and part of the northern quarter, were indeed abandoned but continuity on both sides of the *decumanus maximus* is testified in spaces such as the theatre, the *decumanus* itself, Porta Marina, the *Insulae Orientalis*, and the northern necropolis with its potential church (see below). In many other examples, Roman buildings changed their functions and public spaces were occupied while construction techniques became simpler, relying more on local traditions, previously hidden by Roman ones,³⁰¹ while stone-mortared walls were used only in specific buildings, such as the new curtain walls (*opus spicatum*). The unique characteristic of *Albintimilium* is the movement of part of the settlement, and then all of it, uphill. Many scholars present this as a decision of the Byzantine authorities.³⁰² However, this sort of movement was possible at other Ligurian centres such as *Albingaunum*, where the city remained in the plain. Potentially, the role of border city, facing both Franks and Longobards, prompted the Byzantines to establish a first garrison in a more defensive position than the Roman settlement. However, the archaeology, beside confirming 6th century activities is still too vague to define its functions. Today, it is no longer possible to sustain the argument of a contemporary abandonment of the lower town, which was still occupied at least until the mid-7th century and probably beyond.

2.5.2.3 Urban and Extra Urban Necropoleis

The Roman burial grounds at *Albintimilium* extended outside the western gate of Porta di Provenza, on both sides of the Roman road, whereas later necropoleis seems to have moved closer to the city borders and occasionally infiltrated them.³⁰³

The western extra urban necropolis was still in use in the area south-west of the theatre, where 46 graves of 3rd and 5th century date, based on the materials recovered in the associated levels, were uncovered. The typology of burials is highly varied, from

³⁰¹ Pallarés 1986; Martino 1999.

³⁰² Lamboglia & Pallarès 1984, pp. 8-9; Christie 1990, p. 249.

³⁰³ Pallarés 1962.

enchytrismòs, mostly used for infants, with tiles or stone-lined burials, and a lead sarcophagus.³⁰⁴

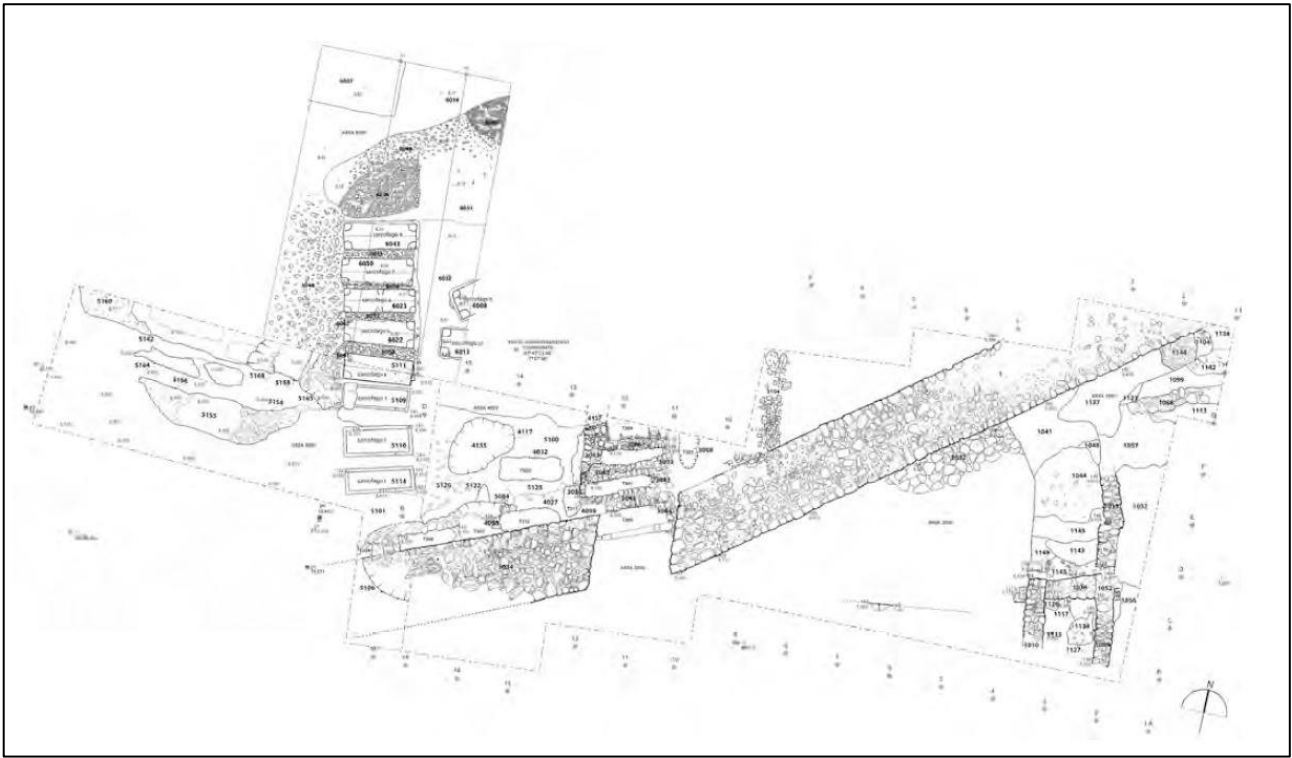


Figure 2.23) Albintimilium: northern necropolis outside the northern wall. (Source: Gandolfi 2018, p. 342, fig. 2)

A second discovery came into the northern walls. Here a significant and well organized late antique necropolis has been under excavation since 2002 (Fig. 2.23). So far, a total of 26 graves and 35 bodies have been identified and recovered. They are all part of a site in use from the 5th up to the mid-7th century according to the materials and burial typologies. Some of the inhumations directly abutted the city walls, which, by the 5th century, appear to be already abandoned in this area. The necropolis presents at least two main phases since most of the graves show post-depositional activities, with the extreme case of one sarcophagus which contained at least 15 individuals buried in different phases.

³⁰⁴ The excavation was conducted between 1989 and 1993: Bruno, Gandolfi & Martino 1990; Gandolfi 1990; Martino et al. 2008. For the lead sarcophagus dated to the 4th century: Arobba et al. 1999; Capitanio 1997-1998.

This graveyard also features fourteen sarcophagi in Finale stone.³⁰⁵ These are the only ones found in Ventimiglia, with the exception of the two at the cathedral.³⁰⁶ They seem to denote a privileged section of the necropolis, probably set around a central sarcophagus, stylistically identical to the others, but made from a lithotype typical of Provence.³⁰⁷ Most of the sarcophagi were reused for several individuals, possibly members of the same family; however, only bioarchaeological analysis will clarify such. There was an effort to identify a church nearby, probably the one mentioned in the letter addressed to Girolamo Rossi. Otherwise, it would be very unusual for Liguria to have this type of late necropolis away from a religious building.

Inside the city a first burial ground was located in the theatre, where an older funerary area, partially destroyed by the construction of the theatre itself, was re-occupied by a few burials during the 3rd century and soon after the structure became a focus for more burials.³⁰⁸ Rossi was the first to record some “very late” burials from the highest archaeological levels of the theatre; however, they were not documented and were generically attributed to the Byzantine or early medieval phase.³⁰⁹ Lamboglia discovered more inhumations, dating them to the 7th century in accordance with the stratigraphic layers. Some burials cut directly into the walls of the theatre, such as those discovered during restoration works in 1998, with no grave goods.³¹⁰ Dating them today, without a detailed stratigraphic connection is only possible via radiocarbon analyses.

The area of the baths, south of the theatre, was totally abandoned. Only an infant enthyrismòs testifies some form of new activity.³¹¹ The burial was dated to the 5th century based on materials in the layer under it (Keay 25.1, 25.2, and 52), and by an associated fragment of an inscription.³¹² At the core of the old Roman town, the second phase of the

³⁰⁵ For the excavation reports: Gandolfi 1984, 2003b, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2016b; for a synthesis: Gambaro & Gandolfi 2012 and Gandolfi 2016a and 2018a; for an analysis on the amphorae: Gandolfi et al. 2017.

³⁰⁶ Lamboglia 1971e; Pallarés 1969-70.

³⁰⁷ Further studies will be needed to see if this was some form of cultural deposition or if there were family links involved.

³⁰⁸ Pallarés 1988.

³⁰⁹ Lamboglia 1964c, p. 38.

³¹⁰ Martino et al. 2008, pp. 92-93.

³¹¹ For a new interpretation of the construction and abandonment phases of the complex: De Vingo et al. 2019.

³¹² The inscription is believed to be residual: Lamboglia 1958e. The grave was left in place by Lamboglia and excavated only recently: Gambaro et al. 2015. Oddly, the grave has two numbers: t.173 and t.191. A reexamination of Lamboglia's work in this area is undergoing by the University of Turin under the direction of Prof. De Vingo.

decumanus maximus was covered by several inhumations “alla cappuccina” dated to the 6th-7th century (Fig. 2.24).³¹³ Lamboglia interpreted them as Byzantine and as proof of the abandonment of the road, in favour of a minor *decumanus* (*decumanus A*), to the south. Since the path was reused at least three times it is plausible to deduce from Lamboglia’s laconic statements that the road was used as a necropolis for a period and then re-surfaced.



Figure 2.24) Albintimilium: Lamboglia's section of the excavation of the *decumanus maximus* with burials “alla cappuccina”. (Source: Lamboglia 1965b, p. 73, fig. 8)

The necropolis found under the convent of the Lateranensi nuns in 1943 was dated by Lamboglia to the 6th century and used as a proof for the Byzantine *castrum*.³¹⁴ However, “cappuccina” or tiles box burials are not only typical of Late Antiquity but continue well into the Early Middle Ages, as shown by the necropolis associated with the Longobard-Carolingian cathedral dated by Lamboglia and Pallarés to the 9th century, according to the stratigraphy.³¹⁵ The discovery of 6th or 7th century structures in the proximity of the necropolis has been used as an additional proof of their Byzantine date. However, there is no direct connection between the two excavations, while the documentation of the 1943 works is

³¹³ Lamboglia 1964d, 1965b, 1972b; and Pallarés 1988.

³¹⁴ Martini 1945; Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984.

³¹⁵ Lamboglia 1971e; Pallarés 1969-70.

insufficient for an attempt of post-excavation reconstruction.³¹⁶ So, at the moment, there is no way to prove the 6th century date of the necropolis of the Cavo.³¹⁷

Overall, the picture here is not dissimilar to other Ligurian centres, with burial grounds occupying some of the urban spaces like the theatre, though this was peripheral to the rest of the town, with smaller groups or single graves scattered inside the townscape and at least two extramural organized graveyards. The large necropolis with sarcophagi might be connected to a first episcopal church, or perhaps is related to a suburban funerary church, as at *Albingaunum*. This is the only necropolis which could certainly be dated to the Byzantine phase. Despite its richness, it remains the sole example for a city that “should” produce far more evidence. A possible explanation could be the partial movement of the community uphill, as supported by potentially Byzantine or late antique inhumation and structures on the Cavo, but the data is limited and, as in the case of the necropolis, not securely attributable to the same phase and to a specific form of settlement, like a *castrum*. However, the presence of an uphill settlement in contemporary with an active city in the plain can hint towards a more significant crisis, the causes of which need investigation.

2.5.2.4 The Port

Several scholars have hypothesised the existence of a fluvial port on the Nervia which, in the Roman period, ran further east than it does today. Some structures were exposed during a flood in 1863 and interpreted as Roman docks or intra-urban similar infrastructures.³¹⁸ However, given river changes, these could have been urban structures, as is the case for the Roman baths which now lie in the middle of the Centa River at *Albingaunum*.³¹⁹ In any case they are no longer visible, and no modern research has addressed the issue. Finally, the *Itinerarium Maritimum* – the second section of the 4th-6th century *Itinerarium Antonini* – classified *Albintimilium* as a *plagia*, which means, in the technical language used in the text, a simple beach with no infrastructure.³²⁰ This could explain the lack of evident artificial infrastructures, often unnecessary for the type of commerce and trade of the time.³²¹

³¹⁶ Not only Martini's article of 1945, but also the archival materials are insufficient. Moreover, the graves were destroyed in a misunderstanding between the archaeologist and the workers, and no skeletal remains were preserved.

³¹⁷ The skeletal remains seem to have been discarded.

³¹⁸ Lamboglia 1964c, p. 34.

³¹⁹ Chapter 2.4.1.

³²⁰ Chapter 3.2; Appendix 1.

³²¹ See the various alternatives used in Liguria itself at Noli, for example: Dell'Amico 2007.

2.6 Byzantine cities?

In this chapter I have synthesised the main characteristics of Liguria's Byzantine towns and the problems related to them. Despite differences in the history and in the way sites have been studied over the past decades it is possible to trace a general pattern of change and transformation. They all shared a Roman origin or imprint and a prominent maritime role as ports on the Tyrrhenian coast, a role that the Byzantines would emphasize for strategic use to the maritime routes.³²² However, with the exception of *Luna* which had an extension of about 22ha, about average for a Roman city, the others were far smaller, with Genoa between 8-12ha, *Albingaunum* 12-14ha, and *Albintimilium* 8-10ha.³²³ These are all small by Roman standards, a fact often forgotten when scholars discuss them and their lack of prominent monuments.³²⁴ Consequently, the late antique and Byzantine cities were also compact, probably smaller than average, but they preserved the status of cities.³²⁵ This is probably due to the maintenance of their ancestral role of reference points for people living in the small plains and valleys in the interior, representing the easiest access to the opportunities and goods of the Mediterranean routes. Nonetheless, the constraints of the Ligurian landscape did not allow for the formation of major settlements, except for *Luna*.

The Ligurian cityscapes changed significantly between the Classical and the Byzantine period. Despite the general maintenance of the road networks and of the regular pattern of city walls (*Luna*, *Albingaunum*, and, partially, *Albintimilium*), by the end of the 6th century, most of the typical Roman elements were either abandoned, destroyed, or put to a different use. At *Luna* after the earthquake of the 4th century there is little to suggest any maintenance of the public buildings around the *forum*, while the square itself was used to build wooden houses. At Genoa the amphitheatre was transformed into an orchard and one of the roads became a necropolis. The same happens for the theatre of *Albintimilium* reused for residential and burial purposes. Where archaeological evidence is available, we see the encroachment of public spaces such as the *forum* and *decumanus* of *Luna*, a minor *cardo* in *Albintimilium*, or Via San Vincenzo at Genoa. Public investment is only visible in the city walls (*Luna*, *Albingaunum*, and *Albintimilium*), most of these probably rebuilt before the Byzantine takeover. Typically, they encompassed a small portion of the settlement:

³²² Carile 2011; Cosentino 2018.

³²³ See, for example, the various case studies exposed in Zanker 2013.

³²⁴ I have found a tendency by Ligurian scholars to undermine the general limitations of these centres in terms of space, and so population, which is reflected in the smaller size and scale of their infrastructures.

³²⁵ For an overview on the changing definition between *civitas* and *castra* during the 6th and 7th centuries: Haldon 1999b.

sometimes the reduction was significant (*Luna*), while in other cases it was minimal (*Albingaunum*) or difficult to assess (Genoa and *Albintimilium*). The use of stone, mortar, and luxurious decorations (marbles, architectural sculpture, and mosaics) became limited to churches (*Luna* and *Albingaunum* at least) although a few important buildings such as San Lorenzo at Genoa, only had a cocciopesto floor. Churches and cathedrals, mostly built during the 5th century, became one of the most iconic elements of the Byzantine city in Liguria, and represent the principal monumental landmarks in the cityscape. Their distribution is, however, uneven. There are at least two and a nunnery in *Luna*, three in Genoa, five in *Albingaunum*, and maybe one in *Albintimilium*; this can be a consequence of multiple factors including the economic vitality of the city and those patrons who could have dedicated the buildings, so establishing some form of urban hierarchy.

The form of private housing gradually changed from the rich *domus* and Roman *insulae* into poorer structures which subdivided and reused the surviving Roman buildings and ended up in wooden or mixed structures (wood and stone) with clay used as bonding agent. Some differences can be traced when the archaeological data are more detailed. At *Luna*, for example, the houses seem to have been built mostly or entirely in perishable materials, while in Genoa, mixed techniques are documented, which still used stone foundations. A similar picture is available for *Albingaunum*. The density of the urban areas is also something to consider. In some cases, we can observe the formation of dark layers (Genoa and *Albingaunum*) even if it is unclear for what purpose (small gardens, ruralisation), due to the limited excavated surfaces. Nonetheless, Genoa in the late 5th and 6th centuries showed new phases of construction in areas previously abandoned, such as Mattoni Rossi and San Lorenzo. The presence of houses in the *forum* of *Luna* is also an indication of vitality, even if the status of the research does not allow to replicate this picture elsewhere.

Intrusions of burials into urban contexts seem to have been relatively limited until after Longobard occupation, even if the significant problems of dating of many inhumations prevent secure statements here. *Luna* is an exception, with only intramural burials known so far, but all of them can be dated to the post-Byzantine phase, since there are few elements for a more precise assessment. In the other centres instead, extramural funerary spaces, often accompanied by churches, seem to have become the norm. *Albingaunum* is the richest example, with four necropoleis, three provided with a church, but Genoa can offer a similar case (Santa Sabina) and *Albintimilium* too (western and northern necropoleis). In

most cases this control over the burial spaces was probably due to a combination of public authority (either civil or religious) and a still dense urban structure with no space for burials until the 7th century.

From this panorama of Byzantine urban landscapes in Liguria, despite differences and peculiarities, it is possible to say that Ligurian towns broadly behaved as other northern Italian centres, which were not under Byzantine control.³²⁶ The Byzantine “variable” postulated by Zanini is not evident, at least not in terms of urban and monumental aspects.³²⁷ For Byzantine Italy we should, probably, search for other factors, following Brown and Christie’s interpretation, looking at immaterial elements, such as the survival of municipal institutions and administrative figures, which are sufficiently well documented in Liguria.³²⁸ Beside the activity of bishops, exemplified in the letters of Gregory the Great for Genoa and *Luna*, and further supported by epigraphic evidence, Byzantine officials appeared in the funerary epitaph of the wife of a *comes et tribunus Tzittanus* at *Albingaunum*, two *praefecti* nominated at Genoa and a possible *magister militum* at *Luna*, again from Gregory’s letters.³²⁹ This presence of officials and of a centralised administration, was supported by local elites, weakened but still present, who kept behaving according to “Roman” standards, such as using sarcophagi and funerary epitaphs (Genoa, *Albingaunum*, and *Albintimilium*), jewellery (*Luna*), financed churches (*Luna* and most probably *Albingaunum*), and drew on foods and products of a Romanised society (wine, oil, garum). The final element to add to the construction of the “Byzantine variable”, is the material culture attested in all these settlements in terms of patterns of distribution of pottery and other archaeological materials according to regional and international networks and the development of local activities.³³⁰ Ligurian centres, despite differences in total quantities – not easily quantifiable since numbers are rarely given in the publications – denote a very similar pattern in the types and percentages of provenance of imported products.³³¹ In this

³²⁶ There might have been a difference in some construction techniques, with a better, and often occasional, preservation of more complex practices in the Byzantine areas, with mostly churches and city walls made in stone and mortar and not wood and clay: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998b; Christie 1995, 2006, pp. 275-276.

³²⁷ For the original concept: Zanini 1998. This was later expanded, incorporating further data: Zanini 2010a.

³²⁸ Brown 1984; Christie 2006, pp. 275-276. The work of Brown has been then expanded and completed by the two prosopographic volumes of Byzantine Italy: Cosentino 1996 and 2000.

³²⁹ Chapter 1.4.3.

³³⁰ Chapter 5.3.1.

³³¹ The question on numbers prevents us from saying if Genoa overall received more pottery than *Luna* or vice versa (which would be hard to establish even with fully published contexts). However, the data are sufficiently clear to establish that North African imports were always the vast majority over eastern ones, or that soapstone vessels from the Alps were omnipresent even if always in tiny percentages: Chapter 5.3.1, 5.5.

sense, the urban material culture is quite dissimilar to the Longobard one, even for coastal centres, such as those in Etruria.³³² It was similar to other Byzantine centres and to still highly Romanised coastal areas outside of Imperial jurisdiction, such as neighbouring Frankish Provence.³³³

The end of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars inaugurated a new era in Imperial urbanism with an almost complete halt to grandiose urban projects, which were otherwise well attested in the East Mediterranean in the first half of the 6th century. The creation and reestablishment of new and old cities was at the core of the policy of both emperors Anastasius and Justinian, the first often overshadowed by the second and by his panegyrist Procopius.³³⁴ Massive projects such as Justiniana Prima, Dara, Sergiopolis, or Zenobia were out of the question in Imperial Italy. The ideal of the Roman town, which was still perpetuated in the authors of the time and in the propaganda of emperors, kings, officials, not least Theoderic in Italy and later Narses, also evolved and differed between East and West.³³⁵ Dara, a massive city-fortress erected on the border with the Persian Empire at the beginning of the 6th century, needed to have walls, an aqueduct, churches, warehouses, market places, colonnaded roads, basilicas, and statues of the emperor, in order to be considered a city.³³⁶ Almost at the same time, the rhetoric of King Theoderic, so often presented as restorer of cities, was mostly focused only on town walls and palaces, with occasional mentions of aqueducts (usually for the major centres).³³⁷ After the death of King Theoderic (526), the two decades of war in Italy (535-553), and the catastrophic invasions on the Persian and Danube borders, the Byzantine Empire was in a much more insecure condition, with no funds for grand infrastructures and urban enterprises despite the propaganda and the perpetuation of Classical ideals. Having been conquered so late in Justinian's reign, Byzantine Italy was probably the region of the Empire which benefitted the least from Imperial euergetism.³³⁸ The weakened local aristocracy shifted its reduced resources towards church buildings and funerary practices, while the public authorities – basically the Church and the army – were occupied by building churches and monasteries, and fortifications respectively. Cases such Rome and Ravenna, where building activity was more intense and sophisticated, are

³³² Chapter 5.6.

³³³ Chapter 5.6.

³³⁴ Capizzi 1969, pp. 183-232; Cameron 1996, pp. 84-112.

³³⁵ Brogiolo 1999.

³³⁶ Crow 1981; Croke & Crow 1983; Whitby 1986; Zanini 1990; Keser-Kayaalp & Erdoğan 2017. For a full discussion on the sources: Carabia 2014-2015, pp. 11-27.

³³⁷ Theoderic: La Rocca 1993; Johnson 1988; Brogiolo 1999; Ward-Perkins 1984; Christie 2006, pp. 273-74.

³³⁸ Cosentino 2021b, pp. 29-40; Carabia 2024.

significant but exceptional in a panorama where the normal, or average, city was probably much more like the Ligurian examples than the great capitals.

In this sense, it is possible to place the Ligurian centres into a north Italian framework where the Byzantine presence is mostly perceived through the material culture rather than through the maintenance of any form of urban monumentality. In this perspective, we should probably talk of a north Italian model rather than a Byzantine/Longobard one. Let's look at the characteristics of an average north Italian Byzantine city, like *Ariminum* (modern Rimini on the Adriatic Sea). We can observe similar patterns to the Ligurian ones (even if on a different scale, Roman *Ariminum* was about double the size of Roman *Luna*). We can observe a restriction of the settlement within the city walls, with a reorientation of its centre towards the northern section of the Roman city. We can see an abandonment of the Roman public buildings, while the urban *domus* are reconverted into smaller and poorer spaces during the 5th century, with complete obliteration of the spaces and creation of new wooden houses during the second part of the 6th century and the early 7th century. Necropoleis infiltrate the urban framework, even if the phenomenon is generally contained. The only inheritance of the Roman city is the street network, still generally respected by the new buildings.³³⁹ A similar process, however, was also happening in the Longobard Brescia, another old Roman city more or less the size of Roman *Ariminum*. We assist to the reduction of the settlement and a selection of spaces in favour of the western section of the city where the cathedral and the ducal residence were established. We also see the conversion of *domus* and *insulae* in houses built with perishable materials or various mixed techniques. Finally, necropoleis infiltrated the urban framework together with workshops which occupied parts of the city once used for housing.³⁴⁰ The main difference between Byzantine *Ariminum* and Longobard Brescia is the more significant presence in the first one of imported materials from the Mediterranean, especially from the east as typical of the Byzantine Adriatic Sea, but also from North Africa, and southern Italy.³⁴¹ Another good example, geographically close to Liguria, is the city of Lucca, in northern Tuscany. Briefly held by the Byzantines (553-576), the settlement became the main Longobard stronghold in Tuscany. In this case, we observe the fragmentation of the urban settlement contained by the late antique walls in different foci, the cathedral for example, separated by open

³³⁹ Negrelli 2006.

³⁴⁰ Brogiolo 2006.

³⁴¹ Negrelli 2006, pp. 238-239 and 244-254.

spaces or necropoleis. Nonetheless, the city was hosting active metallurgical workshops still in the 6th century, which also infiltrated the urban space during Late Antiquity. Interestingly, the first period of the Longobard conquest does not seem to have influenced at all the late antique and Byzantine cityscape, which remained the same until more radical changes appeared after the 8th century.³⁴² The fact that the Longobard occupation changed little on the level of urbanisation is further proof of a more generic north Italian trend, which was little influenced by the Byzantine presence if not for the material culture.³⁴³

Ultimately, the Ligurian centres, despite their inequalities and some probably facing a deeper crisis than others (*Albintimilium*), are still definable as cities, not just because the sources say so, but because they continue to display the expected socio-economic roles. Their cityscapes were impoverished, simplified, and most of their monumentality – still praised in the 6th century sources – disappeared. But they remained defended central places, which kept a basic street plan, they performed market functions, displayed economic diversification, religious organisation, and a fairly dense population.³⁴⁴ This shows that we probably need to re-dimension the role that monumentality played in the definition of the “Byzantine variable” in urban contexts in Italy. Except for Ravenna, Rome, and possibly Naples, the presumed preservation of the architectural elements of the Roman past, is little attested elsewhere.³⁴⁵ For the coastal cities of Liguria their “Romanitas” or “Byzantine character” was maintained towards the political and administrative role which they retained within the Empire, the presence of the remains of a still Romanised aristocracy, and the full insertion into the productive and commercial Mediterranean Imperial networks.

³⁴² Ciampoltrini 2006.

³⁴³ For specific examples in this sense: Chapter 5.3.1 and 5.6.

³⁴⁴ For a list of essential points which characterised a city: Biddle 1976; discussed in: Wickham 2005, p. 592-593.

³⁴⁵ For discussion of similar cases in the Exarchate and Pentapolis: Gelichi 2021, p.374

Chapter 3

Changing Landscapes: Lands, Roads, Villages, Parishes

3.1 A Geographical and Methodological Introduction to the Ligurian Countryside¹

Liguria is a complex region, characterized by a territory constituted for the most part by mountains (65%) and hilly coastal plains (35%). The hard life that its inhabitants endured was noted by Diodorus Siculus, who referred to its bleak, stony landscape.² Between the mountains, a system of north-south oriented valleys and rivers runs perpendicularly to the coast, alongside few alluvial plains, the largest of which are those of the Magra River to the far east and the Centa River to the west. The natural land routes largely follow the north-south axes of the valleys, whereas the deep seabed enabled regular movement of vessels carrying goods of every kind along the Italian coast towards southern Gaul, eastern Spain and back.³ The mountainous nature of Liguria exposes it to a series of natural phenomena, easily exacerbated by human activities, most notably erosion due to intensive deforestation of the slopes which causes violent flooding in the plains. While the mountainous hinterland is characterized by a temperate continental climate, the flat areas of the coast maintain a Mediterranean climate that allows the cultivation of typical regional products such as olive trees and vines. Precipitations today vary significantly between the eastern and western parts of the region, with the east generally being rainier.⁴ Marked differences between the central-eastern part of Liguria and both its western and eastern ends can also be ascribed to geographical factors. Following the ecological approach to Mediterranean history proposed by Horden and Purcell,⁵ the territory of Liguria can be subdivided in three micro ecological areas: the eastern one with a valley-plain economy naturally gravitating towards

¹ Only the most important sites will be discussed in this chapter.

² Diodorus, *Biblioteca Historica* 5.39. Although probably derivative and not from personal observation, the description does give an idea of how the region was perceived in antiquity: Balzaretto 2013, p. 14.

³ Reynolds 1995, pp. 106-122.

⁴ Data from Arpal (Agenzia regionale per la protezione dell'ambiente ligure): <https://www.arpal.liguria.it/>

⁵ Horden & Purcell 2000, pp. 77-80; more in general pp. 123-172.

northern Tuscany and the communication routes connecting it to the Po River Valley; the compact block of hills and mountains running from the Gulf of La Spezia to Genoa, interspersed by few small flatland areas; and the western part featuring a more diverse environment consisting of small river plains, hills and mountains, more naturally connected to south-eastern Gaul. These three areas were unified politically by the Byzantine Empire, encompassing a territory not too different from today's region and with a similar ecology despite the obvious environmental and climatic changes that must have occurred over time. These natural factors influenced, to some extent, not only the type of society and economy that developed in Liguria over the centuries but also the archaeological research. It is an established fact that erosion and landslides have been the cause of significant damage to hilltop sites throughout the region, dragging protohistoric materials down into valleys or across slopes, covering Roman and late antique centres.⁶

Archaeological research agendas has been partly conditioned by these geographical differences. Lamboglia and those archaeologists who worked in western Liguria developed a more Classical approach to the wider coastal plain sites, studying those elements typical of the Roman landscape such as villas, *mansiones*, roads or *municipia*. In central-eastern Liguria, with its few coastal plains, the ISCuM and the "Gruppo di Ricerche di Genova", developed a more detailed archaeological methodology with an approach referred to as "Archeologia Globale" (i.e. Global Archaeology). This saw the study of contexts related to various chronological periods, as well as more ephemeral sites such as the inland "stazioni a tegoloni" (i.e. tile stations).⁷ There is, however, a lack of syntheses for the Roman phase, which will impact the results of any study which is attempting one for the late antique and early medieval one.⁸

In this chapter I will propose a reconstruction of the Ligurian countryside across Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, with a specific focus on Byzantine activities in the region. I will not document every find or site, but I will focus on the more significant ones, aiming to show how the late antique and Byzantine landscape was far from being a deserted place damaged by economic crisis, but reveals some level of activity and even prosperity, linking often to maritime foci. Section 3.2 first provides a rapid survey of the main

⁶ Mannoni 1970.

⁷ Mannoni was himself a pupil of Lamboglia and considerably broadened the latter's approach in the field of archaeological research: Mannoni 1994a, 1994b; Mannoni, Cabona & Ferrando 1998.

⁸ The only attempt to do so was a preliminary paper of Mannoni: Mannoni 1983b.

communications routes, these often limited by natural factors, offering a first overview of settlement distribution. After, in Section 3.3, I will examine rural site types in the three “micro-ecology” areas, each of which presents marked differences in the archaeological record.

3.2 Communication Routes: Roads and Ports

Traditionally, the Ligurian coast was a point of passage on the southern Tyrrhenian routes leading to southern Gaul and northern Italy. However, while there is a general understanding of the system of stoppage points and ports serving it, thanks both to written sources – such as the *Itinerarium Maritimum* - and archaeological evidence, the Roman road system remains much debated.⁹ The complex geographical layout of the region, characterized by mountains and valleys, most of which run in a north-south direction, has, arguably, made this line of research problematic.

3.2.1 Roman Networks

From textual sources and the evidence provided by milestones (*miliaria*) we know of the existence of several land routes. Two of the oldest roadways correspond to the *Aemilia Scauri* and the *Postumia*, both built in the 2nd century BCE during Roman expansion in northern Italy and southern France. The first connected Pisa to *Luna*, continuing westward through *Vada Sabatia*, *Dertona*, and on towards the Po Valley.¹⁰ The western part of this route was later incorporated into the *Iulia Augusta*, built around 13-12 BCE, which ran from Cremona to Genoa, linking the Ligurian coastland with northern Italy through the mountain valleys and the south of Gaul along the coast.¹¹ Related textual sources and archaeological evidence are scarce. If we compare the two main documents available to us, the *Itinerarium Antonini* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, two markedly different pictures emerge (Fig. A1.2).¹² The first and oldest seems to suggest a long inland deviation of the road passing northwards, from Genoa to *Dertona* (Tertona), then west via *Aqui* (Aqui Terme) and finally south again across *Vada Sabatia* (Vado Ligure) (Fig. A1.3-4). The second one illustrates the inland part of the *Itinerarium* but adds a coastal route west of Genoa, both converging on *Vada Sabatia* (Fig. A1.2).¹³ Scholars have long searched for tangible traces of Roman roads in Liguria

⁹ *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*, 501.6-503.4.

¹⁰ Strabo, *Geographia*, V, 1, 11.

¹¹ For a general overview on the Roman roads in Italy: Laurence 1999; for Liguria see the two volumes: Luccardini 2001; Aa.Vv. 2004; on the issues posed by the Roman roads: Mannoni 2004.

¹² *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*, 293.4-296.1.

¹³ Interestingly, in the *Tabula*, the centre of *Vada Sabatia* is depicted differently compared to Genoa and *Luna*: Appendix 1.

with little result, variously attempting to combine names provided by sources with contemporary settlements or archaeological sites. But evidence remains minimal. The eastern part of Liguria in particular, except for the road passing through *Luna* itself, and a few *miliaria* between *Luna* and Pisa, is almost totally devoid of material data.¹⁴ Likewise the area between *Luna* and Genoa has yielded very little evidence of settlements due to its complex geographical layout and jagged coastline; even during the Roman phase no major town was recorded in this long stretch of coastline. Potentially, ‘roads’ in this portion of territory took the form of simple mule tracks.¹⁵ More organized was the road leading to *Dertona*, an important Roman and late antique settlement located on the southern edge of the Po Valley, and a natural waystation on the route between Genoa and Milan.¹⁶ Ultimately the roadway best known archaeologically remains the *Iulia Augusta*. It was originally built under Augustus and later restored under Hadrian or Caracalla,¹⁷ features the vast majority of the 40 *miliaria* recovered across the region, oftentimes reemployed by different emperors. Later repairs are better attested for the *Narbonensis* tract, corresponding to modern-day France, with possible works carried out during the Tetrarchy and in the reign of Constantine.¹⁸ In Liguria only a fragmented *miliarium* from Varigotti and another milestone from Genoa attributed to Constantine, suggest a 4th century restoration.¹⁹ Western Liguria is where most of the numerous Roman bridges in the region are located and where sections of Roman flagstones have been documented outside some of the major settlements.²⁰

Regarding ports, the most important ones referred to in texts, corresponding to Roman settlements such as *Luna*, Genoa, *Vada Sabatia* (Vado), *Albingaunum* (Albenga) and *Albintimilium* (Ventimiglia), are all mentioned in our main source of reference: the *Itinerarium Maritimum*, a subsection of the *Itinerarium Antonini*.²¹ The *Itinerarium* also includes a number of other sites: *Portu Veneris* (Portovenere), *Segesta Tigulliorum* (Sestri Levante), and *Portu Delphini* (Portofino) between Genoa and *Luna*; *Portu Maurici* (Porto Maurizio) and *Tavia fluvius* (Taggia) between *Albingaunum* and *Albintimilium* (Fig. A1.1). This section of

¹⁴ On *miliaria*: Salomone Gaggero 2004; for Lunigiana: Gambaro & Gervasini 2004.

¹⁵ Mannoni 2004; for a more detailed analysis of the roads between Luni and Genoa: Gambaro & Gervasini 2004.

¹⁶ This is also possibly suggested by the *Itinerarium Antonini*. For an analysis of the road between Genoa and Libarna (on the way to Tortona): Menchelli & Pasquinucci 2004.

¹⁷ For a discussion on the attribution: Salomone Gaggero 2004.

¹⁸ Gervasini 1976-1978; Laurence 1999, p. 47; Martino 2001; Massabò 2004b; Salomone Gaggero 2004.

¹⁹ For Varigotti: Chapter 4.3.2; for Genoa 2.3.2.1.

²⁰ As in the locality of Latte near Ventimiglia.

²¹ For the Latin texts see: Appendix 1. The two texts, however, were probably not contemporary: Uggeri 2004.

the text is especially detailed, providing information on the type of ports and stoppage points present in each settlement. All the sites identified with the word *Portu* – such as *Portu Veneris*, *Portu Delphini*, and *Portu Maurici* - featured a natural harbour. Other settlements like *Luna* and *Tavia* were characterized by a *fluvius*, i.e. a river mouth secure enough for docking; *Albintimilium* by a *plagia*, namely a beach, leading to question the theory of a river port located at the mouth of the Nervia River; *Segesta* had a *positio*, a definition that can be read as an artificial dock. Apart from the Roman phases, no archaeological evidence of other ports and docks named in the *Itinerarium* exists, especially for the late antique and Byzantine periods. Nothing suggests a continuous use of sites such as *Portu Veneris* and *Portu Delphini*, while *Tavia* and *Portu Maurici* have provided some form of evidence in their vicinity, as shown later, although no evidence has been recovered from the hypothesised locations of their ports.²² In this sense underwater archaeology, pioneered in Italy in this very region, has confirmed port activities at *Vada Sabatia* until the 6th century and at Genoa until the 7th.²³ However, no shipwrecks referable to this phase are yet attested in Liguria. This is in strong contrast with high wreck numbers of Republican and early Imperial date in this part of the Mediterranean.²⁴ Archaeological research has instead documented a set of secondary docks and harbours which must have been common along the Ligurian coast even though they do not feature in any literary or iconographic source.

In the eastern part of Liguria, the Roman villa of Varignano, located on the western edge of the gulf of La Spezia, controlled a small harbour located in an advantageous position; likewise, the villa of Bocca di Magra, near *Luna*, possibly benefitted from its location at a river mouth and was in all probability used as a docking point. Only the villa of Varignano shows traces of occupation up to the 6th century, probably maintaining a maritime function until then.²⁵ The minor settlement of Noli, on the western side of Genoa, a few kilometres south-west of *Vada Sabatia*, featured a beach with a seabed that permitted the mooring of boats.²⁶ Other minor settlements were likely associated with maritime activities, such as the

²² For *Portu Veneris* the only evidence of a settlement comes from a letter of Gregory the Great (*reg.* 5.18), where a deacon and abbot of Porto Venere are mentioned, suggesting the existence of some form of settlement and structured community: Chapter 1.4.3.

²³ *Vada*: Sabatia Bulgarelli 2010; Bulgarelli, Dell'Amico & Occelli 2010; and Martino & Bracco 2010. Genoa: Melli et al. 1996, pp. 83-87; Carobene & Melli 2006.

²⁴ Such as the shipwreck of Albenga: Lamboglia 1952g, 1962f; Pallarés 1983; for other cases and more in general: Lamboglia 1961c; Pallarés 1985b; 1998; Gervasini 2010.

²⁵ Bertino & Bertino 1990; Gervasini 2008a.

²⁶ Bulgarelli 2018c, p. 55; on the geological features of the area: Valle & Vercesi 2018.

Roman settlements surrounding the late antique basilica of Capo Don and the villas of Foce and Bussana.²⁷

3.2.2 Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period

During the 5th and 6th centuries, the road connecting Genoa to Milan must have been in good condition if it was used by Mundilas and his troops in 537-38 during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars.²⁸ However, how much the Roman land routes were maintained is difficult to say given the lack of archaeological evidence. Excavations carried out on the outskirts of urban centres that have recorded sections ancient roads are rare and few present secure chronological footholds.²⁹ Best-known are those road sections located inside urban centres, in particular at *Albintimilium* and *Luna*, both of which displayed continuous use as main thoroughfares well into Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (see below).³⁰ By contrast, at Genoa, based on a portion of road documented in Via San Vincenzo, some sort of break is visible, being abandoned in the 4th century after a landslide covered it; the area was later reused as a burial ground.³¹ In all likelihood the importance of the north-south land connections gradually diminished following Longobard occupation of the Po Valley from the 580s-590s and that the perception of the roads may shifted from that of rapid and effective connections to that of potentially penetration routes for armies travelling in the direction of the Byzantine-controlled coast.³² Although the dangerous circumstances described by Rutilius Namatianus,³³ were possibly not always present, and his reference to the poor state of the roads may have been an overstatement to underline the danger of the wider situation (the sack of Rome of 410) the use of boats always offered the most rapid and cost-effective means of transport.³⁴ This must have been especially true for the mountainous Ligurian region. Notable were the still active maritime routes connecting North Africa to southern Gaul via the Italian Tyrrhenian coast and islands – as attested in the *Itinerarium Maritimum* – which saw a revival under Gothic and Byzantine domination.³⁵ The Byzantine authorities were especially interested in securing these seaway connections, and so likely prompted

²⁷ Chapter 3.3.3.

²⁸ Chapter 1.4.2.

²⁹ One example is the section of ancient road discovered near Camogli, east of Genoa, and still referred to as a Roman road although without any precise element that would date it to that period; the few recorded fragments of residual pottery seem to suggest a medieval date: Campana 2018.

³⁰ Chapter 2.2 and 2.5.

³¹ Chapter 2.3.2.2.

³² For the movement of peoples: Chapter 1.4.3, 1.5; for the commercial routes: Chapter 5.5.

³³ Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu Suo*, 37-42.

³⁴ For some examples: Trapero Fernández 2021; or the estimations from ORBIS: <https://orbis.stanford.edu/>.

³⁵ Frondoni, Geltrudini & De Vingo 2011.

the foundation or revitalization of several coastal settlements/bases such as Savona, Varigotti, and possibly Noli. In this sense these maritime centres, often fortified, acted as outposts and as places for the storage and redistribution of imported goods, these conveyed towards the inland forts and settlements via small-scale land routes.³⁶ At the same time, locally produced goods could have been transported to wider regional and interregional markets using the same commercial superstructure.³⁷

3.3 The Ligurian Countryside: Villas, Villages, Farms, Churches, and Caves

Roman Liguria could be said to have held a low-level system of villas and estates, these generally fewer and smaller in size than elsewhere in the Peninsula. We can trace a series of *vici* and farms dispersed throughout the landscape, especially across the hinterland hillsides and mountain slopes,³⁸ but often in connection with the noted road network. Coastal settlements such as the villa of Varignano may have had their own port but the vast majority of centres relied on the network of natural and artificial harbours as well as on the Roman roads. Signs of change in this system can already be noted during the 3rd century when several Roman settlements, such as the *mansio* of San Bartolomeo, the villas of Foce and Bussana and the farms traced in the hills around *Luna*, seem to have been definitively abandoned.³⁹ Abandonment, however, was not the only way in which the late (and post-) Classical Ligurian landscape changed; several factors were in fact at work. I will examine these sites and changes across the province, starting with the *ager Lunensis* and moving westwards, following the territorial subdivision outlined in Section 3.1.

3.3.1 The *Ager Lunensis* and Eastern Liguria

First, I will consider the principal archaeological evidence for the area between *Luna*, on the easternmost border of Liguria, and Sestri Levante, located almost mid-way between *Luna* and Genoa (Fig. 4.11). Over the last decades this territorial district has not provided, for Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period, a significant number of archaeological finds compared to the west; however, these are sufficient to attempt to generate a basic settlement model. Although it is an established fact that archaeological surveys provide a fundamental tool for

³⁶ Chapter 5.3.3, 5.5.

³⁷ Chapter 5.5.

³⁸ Gambaro 2008b.

³⁹ Surace 1984b; Delano Smith et al. 1986.

any attempt to reconstruct the development of past landscapes, no such work has been carried out since the British archaeological surveys in the 1980s. We rely more therefore on excavations that were regularly undertaken in the region, stemming from research projects – usually focused on *Luna* and the issue of the *limes* – and rescue archaeology activities directed by the Soprintendenza.

The territorial district is characterized by a fluvial plain formed by the river Magra, which attracted a set of typical Roman villas. At least two of these are well attested archaeologically, while a third was hypothesized by the British survey.⁴⁰ The first, located at the mouth of the Magra, was partly excavated in the 1960s although not adequately documented.⁴¹ A re-examination of the data and materials by Frova pointed to an end of its occupation before the beginning of the 5th century.⁴² Additional Roman material has emerged in other nearby excavations, although these fall outside the chronological range of this thesis.⁴³ These data may reveal that the western bank at the river's mouth was not settled in the post-Roman period, even if the port of *Luna*, set on the opposite bank of the Magra and classified as a *fluvius* in the *Itinerarium Maritimum*, was still active in some form or other. Written sources, however, mention a nunnery, probably located on the right bank of the river, founded by Bishop Venantius in 597 and engaged in the management and cultivation of fields in this area.⁴⁴ Moving upstream there was the presumed settlement of Aulla, on one side blocking the passage that connected the upper part of the Magra valley with the Po Valley district and the Emilian territory, while on the other the lower end of the valley where *Luna* is located.⁴⁵ This inland section of the valley hosted the fortified village of Filattiera-Sorano and the site of Monte Castello.⁴⁶ As we will see in the following chapters, political control over this part of Lunigiana is still an area of debate since evidence of a strong Byzantine presence north of Aulla is weak.⁴⁷ This is further confirmed by the last site to be considered for this area, namely Gronda-Luscignano, now within modern Tuscany. The site, located in a hinterland valley linked to the Garfagnana, was explored in the 1970s. A

⁴⁰ Delano Smith et al. 1986, p. 100.

⁴¹ Frova 1976.

⁴² Frova 1976.

⁴³ Ratti et al. 2013.

⁴⁴ The nunnery is described in these sources as being one Roman mile from the city of *Luna* towards the river and provided with two slaves and two oxen to cultivate the land around the nunnery: Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 8.5; Chapter 1.4.3. In another letter Jewish and supposedly Christian landowners with local properties and slaves are also attested: Chapter 1.4.3.

⁴⁵ For Aulla: Chapter 4.4.5.

⁴⁶ For a detailed description of the finds: Chapter 4.4.3-4; 5.2.1.

⁴⁷ The only main site being Filattiera-Sorano: Chapter 4.4.3; Chapter 5.2.1.

peripheral hamlet, possibly a village, its connection to the Byzantine lands in Liguria is far from certain. The site's rural character is confirmed by the discovery of hearths and huts built in perishable materials; it has been classified as a "tile-station", a category of late antique rural site typical of the central area of Liguria (Section 3.3.2). The material culture points to a Ligurian 'background', with "vacuolata" pottery, fragments of amphorae – one possibly of eastern Mediterranean origin – and other ceramic material that would date the context to between the 4th and 6th century. The late antique phase was subsequently buried by a landslide whose soils contained protohistoric material; the area was later reused as a medieval burial ground.⁴⁸ Despite being isolated from other important and well attested centres – the nearest being Filattiera-Sorano, Aulla, and Monte Castello – its marginal position in a mountainous region outside the presumed *limes* may be of significance for several reasons. Firstly, it might hint at similar rural sites in the area, possibly also nearer the coast and the Byzantine outposts; secondly, it informs us of the difficulty of recognizing sites such as these during survey work due to the geological nature of the region whereby a landslide might cover ancient layers. Thirdly, it tells us that, even if the site was not under direct Byzantine control, or had by then been abandoned, already during the late Roman Empire a local material culture was emerging in Liguria with regional and sub-regional differences, in all probability not bound by political boundaries or territorial divisions.

More consistent data were provided at the vast villa complex of Varignano Vecchio, set on the western edge of the gulf of La Spezia. After some initial, poorly documented work, from 1969 the site was systematically explored.⁴⁹ The villa is characterized by a natural port, well protected by winds and streams and with a vast adjacent paved area. Established already during the 2nd century BCE, today only part of the large-scale reorganization that took place in the 1st CE, following a pattern based on the typical Italic villa associated with oil production, is visible.⁵⁰ Partially published in short reports, Varignano was occupied at least until the 6th century.⁵¹ Not much is known of its later phases, however, since most attention was focused on the Roman phases. Nonetheless, some typical late antique component were recognised, such the subdivision of the north-eastern rooms into smaller spaces

⁴⁸ Gruppo di ricerche di Genova 1974b; Davite 1988.

⁴⁹ Bertino 1976.

⁵⁰ Gervasini 2008a.

⁵¹ Bertino 1976, 1984; Bertino & Bertino 1990.

reusing Roman materials.⁵² This new walls were built directly on top of the mosaic floor.⁵³ The late antique phase is marked by material culture which includes North African Red Slip Wares (ARSW) C and D, *sigillata lucente*, and DSP (Dérivées-de-sigillées paléochrétiennes) from southern Gaul; later 7th-century forms are absent.⁵⁴ Without more precise information and even a plan of the late antique structures, we cannot better define this settlement properly. However, the absence of contemporary coins and, apparently, of imported amphorae is noteworthy suggesting minimal trade through the harbour which must have played a key role during the earlier Roman period. The abandonment of the site in the 7th century was followed by a reoccupation for agricultural purposes in the 8th and 9th centuries.⁵⁵

Not far from Varignano is the site of *portu Veneris*, modern Porto Venere. Pope Gregory references how this site housed a religious community,⁵⁶ although no archaeological evidence has yet been recorded. An underwater survey noted several anomalies in the stretch of sea between the modern port and the island of Palmària, recovering finds attributable to three historical phases: 2nd century BCE – 1st century CE; 5th-7th century CE, as well as post-medieval phases, evidence that would confirm some form of maritime and commercial use of this area during Late Antiquity.⁵⁷

Additional finds were documented on the nearby islands of Tino and Tinetto. The latter are part of a wider phenomenon of eremitic monasticism that developed on various Tyrrhenian islands from the late antique period until the Middle Ages.⁵⁸ The Tino island hosted a medieval monastery, still preserved before the outbreak of World War II, dedicated to San Venerio.⁵⁹ According to a life of the saint, probably written during the 8th-9th century, Venerius settled on the island to lead a more secluded life, building a shelter and dying there sometime around 630; 90 years later, Bishop Lucius of *Luna* discovered the body of the

⁵² Bertino & Bertino 1990.

⁵³ Gervasini 2013b. Also, to note the discovery of a “cappuccina” inhumation at the settlement’s north-west edge: Gervasini 2013a.

⁵⁴ Bertino 1975-1976, 1976. For a detailed description of the materials: Chapter 5.3.2.

⁵⁵ Bertino 1976.

⁵⁶ He mentioned a religious community led by the deacon and abbot Jobinus there: Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 5.18 (November 594); Chapter 1.4.3.

⁵⁷ Gervasini 2010.

⁵⁸ For Liguria: Del Soldato 1995; Frondoni 1986a, 1995, pp. 9-11, 2007b, 2015b, 2018b pp. 78-80; and in general: Pergola, Mazzei & Severini 2003; Marotrelli, Piras & Spanu 2015; Susi 2016.

⁵⁹ On his cult: Susi 2005

saint and had a sanctuary built over his grave.⁶⁰ During the Middle Ages the monastery prospered, however, no study or restoration was attempted here until a first unsuccessful approach in the early 1900s. A first excavation and conservation campaign was conducted in the 1960s.⁶¹ Despite damaged archaeological deposits, a certain number of elements (some sherds and wall remains) seemingly attest a Roman or else late antique occupation of the site.⁶² Further investigations from the 1980s clarified various issues and confirmed the presence of an older church on the main island of Tino with building style compatible with late antique building techniques documented elsewhere in Liguria – such as at the baptistery at Albenga – and associated with archaeological layers featuring materials dated to the 5th and 6th centuries.⁶³ On the smaller island of Tinetto, beneath the remains of a small triple-apsed church, are traces of an earlier biapsidal construction phase with one nave, a Palaeochristian model common in Liguria, suggesting contemporaneity with the church on nearby Tino.⁶⁴ According to hagiographic sources,⁶⁵ Venerius lived on the island in isolation. The likely presence of two late antique churches on these islands might indicate either some form of cult was established soon after the saint's death or that some companions lived in proximity to the future saint. Again, according to the saint's life the churches provided night signals for ships navigating the dangerous stretch of coast. The importance of the cult of Venerius in this area is further testified by another church dedicated to him almost on the other side of the Gulf of La Spezia near Migliarina where traces of a possible late antique structure and necropolis have been recorded.⁶⁶ In addition, the gulf of La Spezia has provided a wealth of finds, even if the city of La Spezia itself has seen little study due primarily to the establishment of a major naval military base here that has removed any possible evidence of late antique and Byzantine phases. Occasional finds collected by local amateurs and scholars here include two sarcophagi in Finale stone and several Byzantine *folles* of which no further details are provided.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Vecchi 1990, 1995.

⁶¹ Frondoni 1995.

⁶² Cimaschi 1961, 1963.

⁶³ Frondoni et al. 1990; Frondoni 1995.

⁶⁴ As we will see later, another church of like plan is visible in the late antique phase of the monastic foundation on the island of Bergeggi, in western Liguria: Frondoni et al. 1990; Frondoni 1995; on this architectural typology in Liguria: Frondoni 2013a.

⁶⁵ Those sources came from a collection of 9th-11th century documents from Reggio Emilia, where the relics of the saint were translated in the Middle Ages. A more recent life of the saint is present in the 18th century *Acta Sanctorum: Acta Sanctorum* 1761.

⁶⁶ Conti 1971, p. 4; Vecchi, Del Soldato, Pintus 1990.

⁶⁷ Gambaro & Gervasini 2004, p. 138; Murialdo 2016.

Continuing along the coast the only other settlement known from the *Itinerarium Maritimum* is the *positio* of *Segesta Tigullorum*, usually identified with modern Sestri Levante, on the other side of a long, and sometimes difficult, part of coast that stretches for about 50 kilometres. The *Itinerarium Antonini* and the *Ravenna Cosmography* lists several centres in this area, with little correspondence with each other,⁶⁸ two of which – *Cebula* and *Rexum* – possibly near the coast, along with Montale and Framura, the latter featuring a medieval belltower built over an earlier military structure.⁶⁹ Some residual Roman materials have been recovered in Legino, halfway between Portovenere and Sestri Levante.⁷⁰ Regarding Sestri – supposedly the only other ‘urban’ centre of eastern Liguria during the Roman period – recent rescue excavations have revealed a marshy environment in the plain not far from the settlement’s two natural ports; the marshes are still documented during the 10th and 11th century when land reclamation activities began.⁷¹ Residual Roman materials were recovered in the deepest levels of the excavation, suggesting a landslide from the nearby hills where, supposedly, the Roman site of *Segesta* was located.⁷² The lack of diagnostic finds makes unlikely the existence of a major settlement in the area. More extensive environmental and archaeological surveys are required to better understand the history of *Segesta Tigullorum*.

For the hinterland the situation is no more encouraging. It is believed that the Roman road passed in the direction of the val di Vara, avoiding the difficult coastal area of the Cinque Terre.⁷³ In the valley, which descends towards the town of *Luna*, a number of sites have been recorded along the river Magra. San Maurizio is the closest to the Roman *municipium*, founded in the Early Middle Ages and featuring some Roman and late antique residual material.⁷⁴ Further inland, at Romito di Magra, the remains of a presumed Roman bridge were still visible in the river until a century ago, probably attesting to a crossing point towards the Gulf of La Spezia.⁷⁵ Further north along the val di Vara it is possible that the road split, one section going westwards and another branch reaching Aulla and the upper Magra valley towards Filattiera, Monte Castello and the Po Valley road network. The western road passed through the mountains, crossing the site of Brugnato in the area where the *stationes* of

⁶⁸ Appendix 1, Table 1.

⁶⁹ Conti 1960, pp. 32-33; Cimaschi 1965; Christie 1990, p. 253.

⁷⁰ Cagnana 2008; Bulgarelli & Vanali 2010a; Bulgarelli et al. 2013.

⁷¹ Bulgarelli et al. 2013.

⁷² Campana et al. 2018.

⁷³ Gambaro & Gervasini 2004.

⁷⁴ Delano Smith et al. 1986, pp. 136-139.

⁷⁵ Gambaro & Gervasini 2004, p. 128.

Boron and *in Alpe Pennino* were supposedly located according to the *Peutinger Table* and the *Cosmography*. By the 10th and 11th century Brugnato was a fortified episcopal centre with walls and towers. Excavations in and around the church, despite the damage caused by the 1950s restorations, uncovered the remains of two previous building phases with the first constituted by a late antique church with single nave and a lateral apse added at some point between the 6th and 10th centuries.⁷⁶ All the three phases of the church preserved their burial function, with the earliest composed of three or four plain earth-cut graves.⁷⁷ Another church dedicated to San Nicola is located about one mile from Brugnato. The chapel is known from a diploma of Charles III (881); however, an earlier phase with a construction technique similar to the second phase of Brugnato (6th-10th century) was recorded by archaeologists.⁷⁸ While a connection between the two churches is likely, it is impossible to say if this second foundation occurred during the Byzantine occupation or later. Certainly, by that time Brugnato had emerged as the main point of reference for the area and was a developed centre.⁷⁹ Brugnato, and possibly other similar settlements that we still ignore, might have replaced the Roman *mansiones* mentioned in the *Peutinger Table*.⁸⁰

Moving westwards, on the route converging on *Segesta Tigullorum*, only one settlement, named in some 8th century source and hypothetically located in Petra Corice, almost halfway between Brugnato and *Segesta*, is attested.⁸¹ In a parallel valley is a site that for the moment constitutes a *unicum* for Byzantine Liguria, namely the copper mine of Monte Loreto, first opened in protohistoric times, but featuring clear evidence of reuse between the 6th and 7th centuries.⁸² While the possible use and distribution network of this mine is still to be studied, the revival of mining activities in Liguria during this period of instability is striking. Potentially, revival may be attributed to military requirements but perhaps also more common needs such as a shortage of readily available metals. As we will see in Section 5.5, the ‘flourishing’ of metalworking activities during this period is in fact relatively well documented in the region.⁸³

⁷⁶ Frondoni 2008b.

⁷⁷ Frondoni 2008b.

⁷⁸ The diploma was addressed to Erimberto, Abbot of Brugnato, and dated to 2nd April 881: Mancusi & Cascarini 2015.

⁷⁹ It is not clear if Brugnato was a village in origin or if it attracted a series of scattered communities in forming a new settlement over the course of the Early Middle Ages.

⁸⁰ Appendix 1.

⁸¹ The settlement may have an earlier origin, although this can only be demonstrated with further excavations: Benente et al. 2010; for the Medieval sources: Destefanis 2002, pp. 69-70.

⁸² Maggi & Pearce 2005; Benente et al. 2008.

⁸³ See the case of Noli, for example: Chapters 3.3.3; 5.2.3.

This heterogeneous list of case studies anticipates a series of trends that will become more clearly visible in the western part of Liguria where evidence is, in general, more abundant.

(i) The few villas concentrated on the coastal plains clearly underwent a period of crisis, which led either to their complete abandonment (Villa di Bocca di Magra) or to a structural change and subsequent abandonment between the 5th and 7th centuries (Varignano Vecchio).

(ii) Conversely, the countryside appears still cultivated by landowners and new ecclesiastical estates, as demonstrated by Gregory's letters and the establishment of churches and monasteries along the coast (Tino, Tinetto, Porto Venere, the nunnery of San Pietro and possibly San Venerio at Migliarina).

(iii) Inland sites are instead rare and seem either connected to road networks, defence, or both. Sites such as Aulla, Filattiera-Sorano and Monte Castello clearly guarded inland passages, while churches such as Brugnato and San Nicola probably took on the role of the old *mansiones* of *Boron* and *in Alpe Pennino*. Gronda-Luscignano is an isolated example, probably a small village or group of farms, possibly representing another form of occupation of the countryside, better documented in central and western Liguria (i.e. the site of Corti and the so-called "tile stations").⁸⁴

(iv) Finally, the mines of Monte Loreto form an isolated but remarkable example of the revival of previously abandoned local mining activities. This picture fits well with the reorganisation of the different micro-regional economies of Liguria, oriented towards a local production of different goods that, prior to the late 5th century, would have been imported.⁸⁵

3.3.2 Central Liguria and the Question of the "Tile Stations"

The situation regarding the central part of Liguria, consisting of the territory around Genoa, is a complex one mainly due the lack of archaeological and textual data. This section will analyse the region that extends from Sestri Levante in the east and to Arenzano in the west. This area has always been problematic to settle due to its mountains, this resulted in a lack of any major settlement, apart from Genoa itself.⁸⁶ This reflects the geographical situation

⁸⁴ For the "tile stations" issue: Chapter 3.3.2; for Corti: Chapter 3.3.3; 5.2.2.

⁸⁵ For a detailed discussion: Chapter 5.5.

⁸⁶ For the roads: Melli & Bulgarelli 2004.

of this part of the region, lacking any substantial plains that might have accommodated another urban centre. While *Portu Delfini* – modern Portofino – appears in both the *Itinerarium Maritimum* and the *Antonine Itinerary*, no archaeological evidence has yet emerged that might allow us to understand the role of this coastal settlement. The location called *Turris*, mentioned in the *Ravenna Cosmography* and often associated with a fortified position, is traditionally located somewhere between Portofino and Sestri Levante.⁸⁷ Other localities mentioned in the *Tabula* and potentially placed between Sestri Levante and Genoa are *Ad Salaria* and *Rienna*, both still unidentified. Only two sections of possible Roman road are recorded: one in Rapallo and the other at Camogli, on opposite sides of the promontory of Portofino.⁸⁸ For our study period, on the same promontory, at the site of the medieval Abbey of San Fruttuoso di Capodimonte, excavations documented late antique residual materials which may suggest a religious foundation of this period.⁸⁹

The general lack of archaeological evidence for the late antique and Byzantine period between Genoa and Sestri Levante has even led scholars to (surprisingly) hypothesize an early Longobard occupation of this stretch of Ligurian coast, *de facto* splitting the supposed unity of Byzantine Liguria. This theory has been largely promoted by Giorgio Petracco, based entirely on toponymy.⁹⁰ Petracco has observed a series of toponyms from areas between Genoa and Luna, mostly from the internal valleys now bordering with Piedmont and along the 35 km of coastland between Levanto and Portofino. The many Germanic toponyms, in this stretch of coast, such as Grondona (1261), Costa Armani (1210), Campo Sculdasco (12th century), rio Bardi (1467), or Gambera (1467), convinced Petracco that the area must have surely been under Longobard control from the early years of the invasion. All the coastal toponyms he draws on derive from very late sources and are all part of the administrative, geographical, or military vocabulary. According to Petracco himself, they are fundamentally impossible to date in contrast with ethnic names that are usually associated with the immediate occupation of an area by a new group of settlers.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Christie 1990, p. 253, drawing on Balbis 1979, p. 173 and Conti 1960, p. 84; for the *Cosmography* see: Appendix 1.

⁸⁸ For Rapallo: Mennella 1990; for Camoglio: Campana 2018.

⁸⁹ Specifically, a fragment of Hayes 103b dated to the mid or late 6th century: Gardini 1977; Davite 1986; Bonora & Gardini 1990.

⁹⁰ Petracco 2015.

⁹¹ Petracco 2009.

If

we

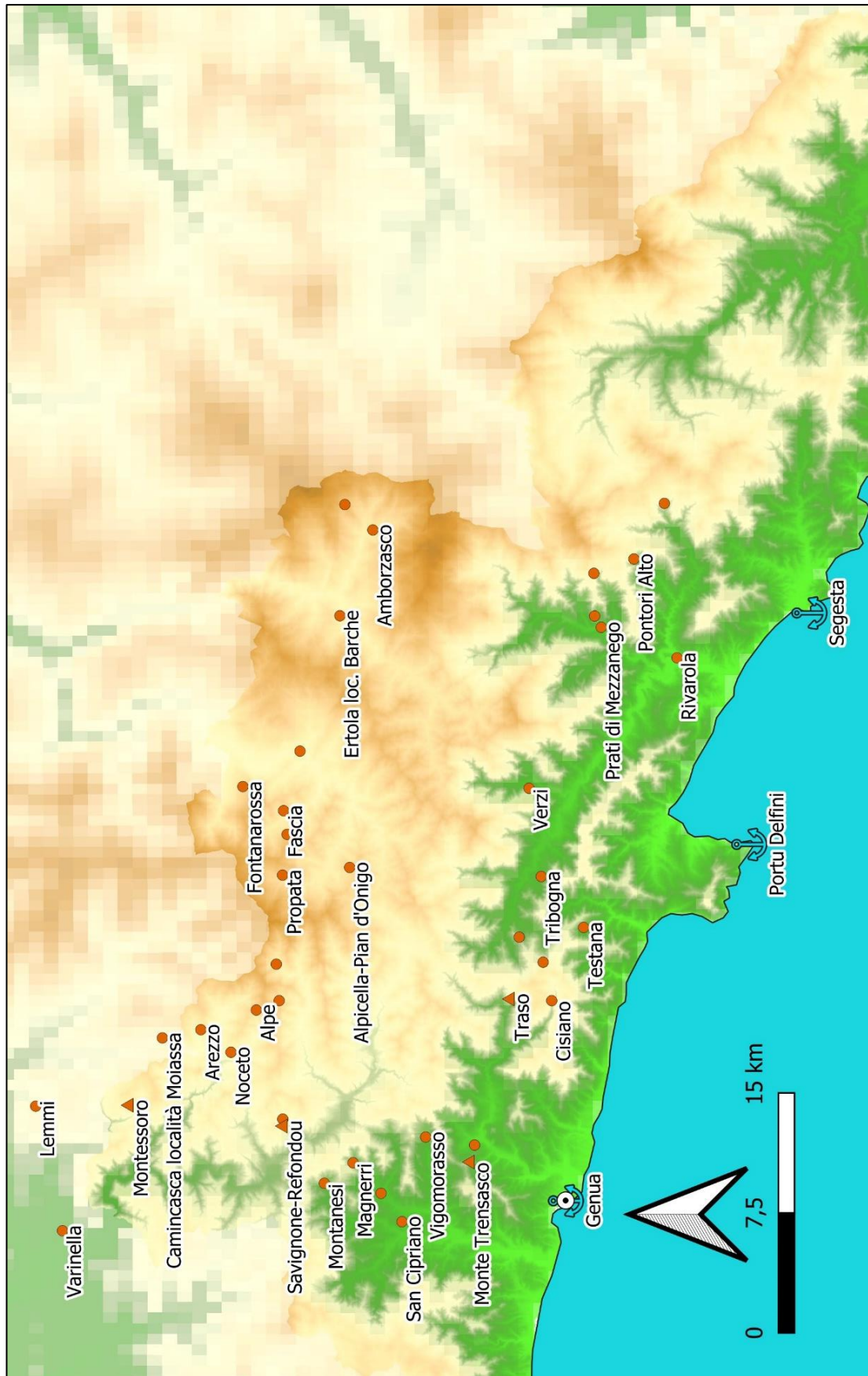


Figure 3.1) Distribution of "tile stations" in Liguria, showing both excavated (triangles) and non-excavated (circles) sites. (Source: Author)

collect the ethnic names mentioned by the scholar we can see that they are rare and concentrated in the most internal parts of the region. Beside this, it is not entirely clear why the Longobards would have been desperate to control one of the most inhospitable parts of the Ligurian coast, moreover, no archaeological evidence exists to support this thesis.⁹² Certainly no Longobard burials or stray grave goods of later 6th century date have ever been discovered in the area. In fact, Byzantine and even Roman finds are also rare, except for evidence from the mine of Monte Loreto and a few of 'tile stations' (see below).

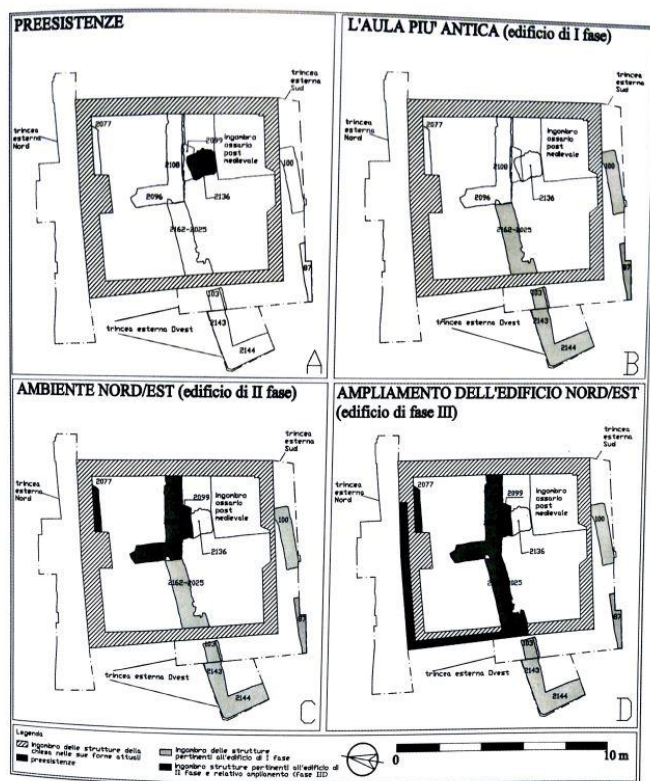


Figure 3.2) San Michele di Castrolino: phases plans, the earliest structure (30 sqm) is shown in Plan B. (Source: Frondoni, Geltrudini & Starna 2013, p. 147, fig. 1)

Furthermore, none of the sources at our disposal give even the slightest suggestion of such a territorial division, with the coast between *Luna* and *Albintimilium* always described as an unbroken Byzantine domain. There is little evidence to claim an early colonisation, nevertheless, this area appears to have been severely depopulated from Late Antiquity. An equally sustainable explanation for Petracco's legitimate questions could be that if Longobards after Rothari's campaign settled here, they probably found it easier to impose their toponymy in an almost deserted landscape than the more populous Ligurian regions.⁹³

In terms of roads, another main route in the area connected Genoa northwards with the Po Valley and Milan, passing through the Polcevera valley – the most important north-south routeway in Liguria, even though it probably did not see significant use, as already specified, after the Longobard conquest of northern Italy. This road is well represented in the *Tabula* with its two main centres at Libarna and Dertona in modern Piedmont, both of which have

⁹² Petracco 2015.

⁹³ Petracco's work certainly poses a legitimate question regarding the origins of these toponyms, but his conclusion is far 'beyond doubt' ("non lasciano dubbi") as he claims: Petracco 2015, p. 162.

revealed significant archaeological remains of Roman date but reduced for the late antique period.⁹⁴ This was the supposed route of the old *Via Postumia* as well as of the inland course described by the *Antonini Itinerarium*.⁹⁵ Even without a clear archaeological picture of the val Polcevera during its late antique phase, it is significant that it is the only place in central Liguria featuring a church that can be dated to this period, apart from those in Genoa itself.⁹⁶ San Michele di Castrofino is a small, unremarkable, structure of seemingly completely modern construction (Fig. 3.1-2). However, excavations since 2004 identified at least three earlier phases, one late antique/early medieval featuring walls bonded with clay of uncertain function, while the church featured burials both inside and outside.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, no exact date was established for the earliest phase; so far, the reused epitaph of the *diaconus Sabatinus*, stylistically dated to the 8th century, is the only *terminus post-quem* available.⁹⁸ Some scholars have hypothesized a Byzantine *castrum* in the area but with no real supporting evidence.

The area around Genoa is characterized by a distinctive type of site classified as “stazioni a tegoloni”, i.e. “tile stations”, given the sizeable presence of Roman tiles recovered during surface surveys (Fig. 3.1). These sites are easily distinguishable from medieval settlements where tiles are not attested. This common ‘tile station’ label encompasses a variety of potential attributions, ranging from isolated farms to scattered settlements to actual villages. After a first promising season of research inaugurated by Mannoni and the ISCuM, studies were almost completely abandoned apart from works in 1987 and 2012.⁹⁹ Despite such limited fieldwork, a basic pattern can be drawn. Elements in common among these settlements include an inland location, generally on hillsides between 400-600 metres amsl, no coincidence in location with major prehistoric sites, surface debris of Roman tiles and structural features made with simple techniques such as dry stone walls and clay binder.¹⁰⁰ Most of the excavated settlements feature two phases of occupation: an early Roman one

⁹⁴ Dertona is known from references in both Cassiodorus and Procopius to its Gothic garrison and as an important stronghold: Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 1.17; Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xxiii.5. For the *via Postumia* between Genoa and Libarna: Menchelli & Pasquinucci 2004.

⁹⁵ From Genoa the other stopping-points included *Libarium* (Libarna), *Dertona* (Tortona), *Aquis* (Acqui Terme), *Crixia*, *Canalico* and *Vadis Sabatis* (Vado Ligure): Appedinx 1.

⁹⁶ For a survey of the few known finds: De Vingo & Frondoni 2003.

⁹⁷ Frondoni, De Vingo, Geltrudini & Starna 2012.

⁹⁸ Frondoni & Starna 2008; Frondoni, Geltrudini & Starna 2010 and 2013; Frondoni, De Vingo, Geltrudini & Starna 2012; also the volume on the restorations: *La Pieve di S. Michele di Castrofino* 2011. Radiocarbon dating on the human remains might help better define the site phasing. On the epitaph: Mennella 1998, pp. 11-13.

⁹⁹ Mannoni 1983b.

¹⁰⁰ Davite 1987, pp. 4-12.

dated to between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE, followed by an abandonment, usually during the 2nd century, and reoccupation from the 4th century until the 6th century, after which they seem to have been permanently abandoned. A record of the “tile stations” was presented in 1987 by Chiara Davite; for this thesis I have carried out a digitization of the coordinates and core site information. Davite listed 37 sites, all located around Genoa and in central-eastern Liguria. Of these sites only three were archeologically investigated: Costa Bottuin on the hill of Trensasco, Savignone-Refondou and Traso. More than three decades on, only the site of Montessoro, excavated between 2009 and 2011, can be added to the original list.

Traso and Savignone were probably the two sites that initiated the debate on the nature of rural settlements in the Ligurian hinterland. The first, excavated in 1958, but only published in 1977, was a small rescue excavation that identified the remains of a possible structure with a main phase dated to the 1st century CE and related to a burnt layer rich in charcoal located at the bottom of what appeared to be a floor surface made of narrow local stones.¹⁰¹ According to local tradition, the nearby church of Sant’Ambrogio was founded by Milanese clergy exiled in Genoa during the Byzantine occupation; documents record the church first in the 11th century as a property of the diocese of Milan.¹⁰²

The site of Savignone-Refondou, another rescue excavation, lay near the old *via Postumia* and it was already well known to locals for its frequent archaeological discoveries. A long trench revealed two drystone walls related to two different structures, along with the remains of a posthole. Despite some residual 1st century CE material, the main occupation *facies* dates to the 5th and 6th centuries, but with common pottery extending into the 7th century, including *ceramica vacuolata*, some of which shows parallels with *Albintimilium* productions; there were also ARSW D types and 5th century amphorae fragments. A coin of Theodosius I (379-95) was also recovered.¹⁰³ The excavations here made it clear that the (Roman) tiles were probably not used as roofing elements but rather as floor coverings, for drains or as elements bounding hearths, being too few and too heavy for the walls of the stations to support them.¹⁰⁴ The village is mentioned in a legend, reported in 10th and 11th century sources, connected to the relocation of the relics of Sant’Agostino from Sardinia to Pavia

¹⁰¹ Milanese 1977; Davite 1987, sheet 31.

¹⁰² Milanese 1977, p. 322.

¹⁰³ Gruppo di ricerche di Genova 1974a; Fossati, Bazzurro & Pizzolo 1976; Davite 1987, sheet 10.

¹⁰⁴ Fossati, Bazzurro & Pizzolo 1976, p. 325.

during the reign of Liutprand (712-744). We hear that King Liutprand waited for the arrival of the relics while in the ruins of the abandoned village, after they had been unloaded at Genoa.¹⁰⁵

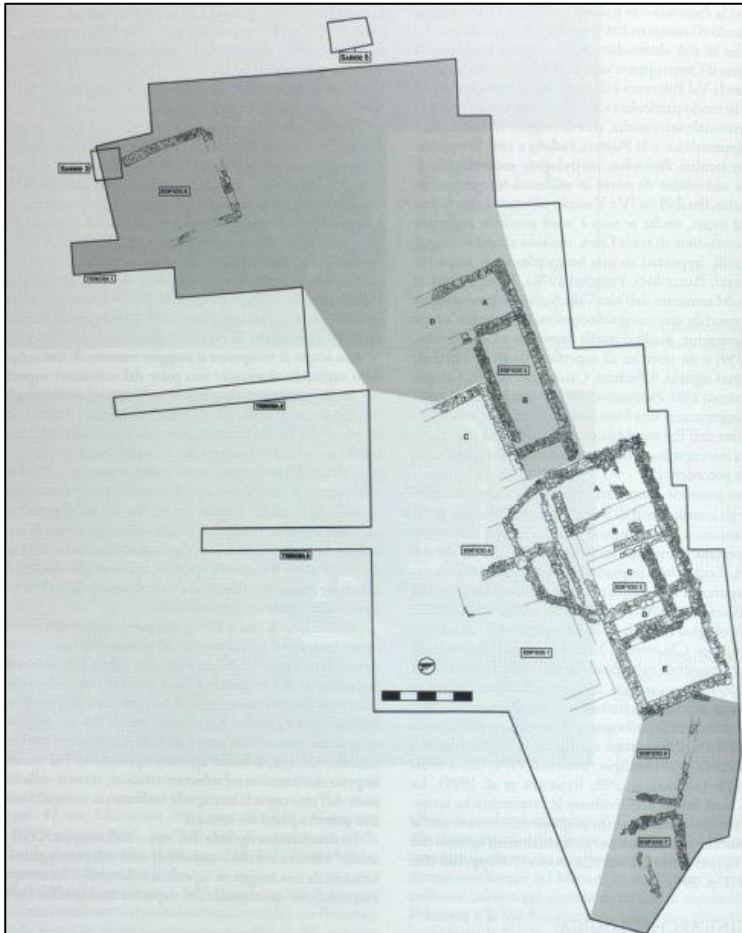


Figure 3.3) Montessoro: plan of the site and its phases (Negro Ponzi, De Vingo & 2021, p. 152 fig. 4)

The site of Costa Bottuin, located on the hill of Trensasco, was also partially explored during a rescue operation revealing two main occupation phases: one dating to the late Republican period, the other late Roman. While the construction technique was generally poor, a wealth of material culture was documented, including common pottery, a small percentage of *vacuolata* ware, amphorae – mostly North African, one fragment possibly from some type of LRA. Three coins were also recovered, the latest one of Claudius Gothicus (268-270). Test pits in another sector of the hill, Costa Bastia, revealed additional settlement traces, suggesting either

a larger complex or a shift over time.¹⁰⁶

The only research project targeted at systematically exploring a tile station was carried out by the University of Turin under the direction of Maria Maddalena Negro Ponzi between 2009 and 2011.¹⁰⁷ The site chosen was that of Montessoro (Fig. 3.1, 3.3), relatively near to the road connecting Genoa with Libarna, and located on the northern side of the Ligurian Alps. The almost complete excavation of the area revealed a complex settlement composed of eight rooms. Montessoro was first occupied during the 1st century BCE only to be

¹⁰⁵ Legè 1901.

¹⁰⁶ Davite et al. 1992a, 1992b.

¹⁰⁷ De Vingo & Parodi 2015; Negro Ponzi, De Vingo & Parodi 2013 and 2012.

abandoned in the early Imperial phase and reoccupied during the 4th century CE, showing various construction activities that were interrupted by a fire during the 5th century. The late Roman buildings were characterized by foundations in worked stone bonded together by clay while the upper wall portions were in perishable material, except for building 3; while some of the rooms had roofs made by tiles.¹⁰⁸ Not all the structures were occupied at the same time: structures 3 and 2 were contemporary, while 4 and 1 were erected sequentially in their place. The material culture is rich in coarse ware pottery of local origin but also features some imports, including an almost complete Keay 62.2 amphora; this helped to set the second phase of building 3 to the second half of the 4th– early 5th century.¹⁰⁹ Hints of metalworking activities have also been recorded, likely on a small, self-sufficient scale, while archaeobotanical analysis have provided evidence of the possible local cultivation of rye and spelt.¹¹⁰

As seen, different realities fall under the definition of “tile stations”, despite some common features. While only Savignone and Costa Bottuini have evidence of 6th century occupation (Fig. 3.1), it is worth considering the phenomenon more closely to understand the changes that took place in the rural settlements of Liguria and the role these centres played as part of the wider regional economy. According to Classical authors, Liguria’s hinterland saw intensive exploitation of its natural resources during Roman rule. In this regard, the break in occupation evidence between the 2nd and 4th centuries needs exploration, as does the 6th century abandonment. Perhaps settlement concentration in central Liguria might hint at some form of local response to the absence of a villa system in this part of the region caused by the lack of lowlands. If this so, the varied status of the “tile stations” might be a perfect example of a system of agricultural production based on farms and villages and connected with different forms of landscape exploitation both during the Roman and late antique phases. Clearly contacts with the coastal areas did exist, witnessed in the circulation of imported and locally produced goods such as amphorae, common ware pottery as well as coinage.

Thanks to the excavations at Montessoro, the activities that took place in these sites cannot simply be relegated to pastoral practices, of which there is almost no evidence, but clearly

¹⁰⁸ Negro Ponzi, De Vingo & Parodi 2012, pp. 155-158.

¹⁰⁹ Negro Ponzi, De Vingo & Parodi 2012, p. 161.

¹¹⁰ Negro Ponzi, De Vingo & Parodi 2012, pp. 171-172.

include agriculture and craftworking. Why then do these sites seem to disappear during the 6th century? Might there be a visibility issue for early medieval sites – i.e. do we lack finds to show continuity? – or are socio-economic reasons behind the abandonment of these inland sites? Was it a combination of latent economic uncertainty during Gothic rule and after the Byzantine ‘reconquest’? Were there environmental issues due to possible intensive use of marginal productive areas which had exhausted local natural resources? Seemingly the Byzantines did not positively contribute to the survival of the “tile stations” since about half of these centres were located far inland and possibly outside of their jurisdiction. In this sense it is possible that the disappearance of these rural sites could be connected to the development of relative no man’s land between the Byzantine coast and the Longobard-controlled Po Valley; such tile stations would thus have been in insecure or precarious positions. Genoa might have been more heavily relying on external imports rather than drawing on inland network of farms and villages which had, much earlier, supplied and supported the early Roman city.¹¹¹

Some preliminary conclusions regarding the distribution of these sites can be hypothesized thanks to the survey work carried out by Davite. Roughly 12 of these centres – including Savignone and Montessoro – can be associated with the N-S routes connecting Genoa to the Po Valley, passing through the Polcevera Valley and its branches. A smaller group of three – including Costa Bottuin – may be linked to these N-S routes, although their direct connection with Genoa might place them in some way as part of the city’s hinterland. Another substantial group of 13 – including Traso – are instead located east of Genoa, along an E-W trajectory, possibly associated with inland routes running parallel to the main coastal network. Lastly, 12 presumed sites lie in far-off inland locations, but are hypothetically connected with a number of secondary roads set between the coast and the mountains.

This brief reconstruction, which will require a more in-depth analysis in the future, omits at least two sizeable areas currently completely devoid of evidence: the first to the east, between the coastal and inland groups, and the second to the west, between the Polcevera Valley and Arenzano, this last completely lacking any form of coastal or inland evidence. The absence of these inland rural sites in other parts of Liguria may, of course, be related to historical and environmental causes, but we must keep in mind that the line of approach

¹¹¹ Chapters 2.3.3; 5.3.1; 5.5.

characterized by regular landscape surveys was for the most part promoted by the ISCuM, therefore reflecting the current state of research. While forms of differentiation and complexity are attested in eastern Liguria – with villas either developing into more simple settlements or else disappearing, villages, church foundations, necropoleis, and docks – the central part of the region appears to contain minor rural settlements, mostly located to the east and north of Genoa, but with little material culture, blurred archaeological evidence and almost non-existent signs of Christianisation. This might reflect the fragmented nature of the landscape lacking large plains and mostly comprising a hilly and mountainous countryside, at times ending almost directly at the sea. In this panorama the traditional Roman villa completely missed its natural environment, thus impeding any development. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that this part of Liguria was dominated by a rural landscape of scattered farms and villages, concealed under the definition of “tile stations”, and distributed along the valleys and the main communication routes.

In this setting there was no room for large, organised centres such as the Roman *municipia*, but only for a series of small coastal docking places, making this the most sparsely populated part of Liguria, except for Genoa and the Polcevera Valley. As noted in Chapter 2,¹¹² even Genoa may not have been a particularly large settlement, owing its fame or status more to its natural strategic position than to its urban scope.

3.3.3 Western Liguria: a Region in Transformation

Western Liguria, or *Liguria di Ponente*, in part reflects the situation of Eastern Liguria, but on a larger, more complex scale and with a clearer concentration of sites on the coast and its immediate vicinity. The coastline from Arenzano to *Albintimilium* gradually becomes more hospitable and much richer in fluvial plains, starting from that of Savona and *Vada Sabatia*, followed by the plain of *Albingaunum*, the largest in Liguria, and the smaller ones of Loano, Sanremo and *Albintimilium*. This coastal plain availability fostered the emergence of three main Roman urban centres – *Albintimilium*,¹¹³ *Albingaunum*,¹¹⁴ and *Vada Sabatia* – and supported a more complex system of satellite settlements in the form of villages, villas, *mansiones* and others. The *Tabula Peutingeriana* lists ten settlements from Genoa to *Albintimilium*, whereas just six are indicated between Genoa and *Luna*. The *Itinerarium*

¹¹² Chapter 2.6.

¹¹³ On the origins of *Albintimilium*: Lamboglia & Pallarés 1984.

¹¹⁴ On the origins of *Albingaunum*: Lamboglia 1976a.

Antonini is more balanced – five to six – only because it bypasses the section of coast between Genoa and *Vada Sabatia*, following an inland route. The *Itinerarium Maritimum* instead lists the three cities as well as the minor ports of *Portu Maurici* (Porto Maurizio) and *Tavia fluvius* (Taggia). This is also an area where Roman *via Iulia Augusta* is best documented via a series of *miliaria*, especially in the area of *Albintimilium*, along with several bridges of possible Roman origin in the Quazzola and Ponci valleys.¹¹⁵

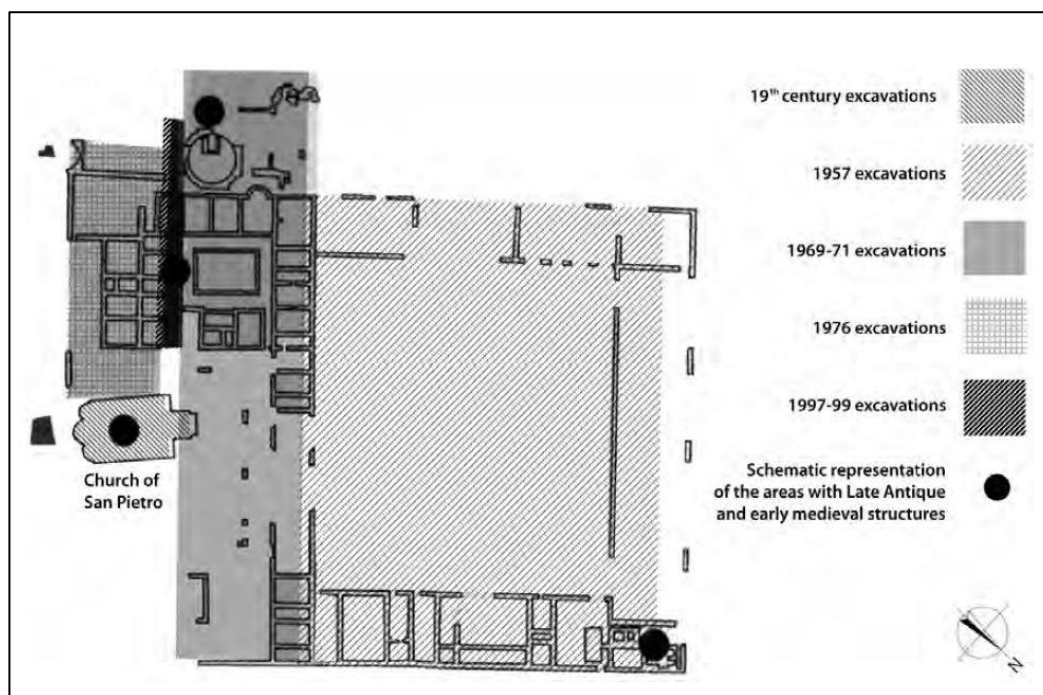


Figure 3.4) Albissola: plan of the villa with outlined (black) the late antique and medieval structures. (Source: De Vingo 2011, p. 223, fig. 12)

3.3.3.1 The End of the Roman Villa

A series of villas dotted the Roman landscape of western Liguria, all located near the coast or directly facing the sea. Moving from east to west we can list the following sites: the villa of Albissola (the old *Alba Docilia*), San Pietro in Carpignano (between Savona and *Vada Sabatia*), Sant'Ermite (in a valley behind *Vada Sabatia*), Corti (in the valley of the river Maremola, behind Pietra Ligure), baths which were possibly part of a larger complex at Loano, a *mansio* at San Bartolomeo al Mare, the two *villae* of Bussana and that of the Foce on the opposite sides of San Remo, a possible villa site located along the river Armea, and, lastly, the indirect and still uncertain evidence from Villa Eva and Villa Hanbury west of *Albintimilium* (Fig. 3.5-7).

¹¹⁵ Lamboglia 1952b, 1954b; Bulgarelli 1990, 2001; Bulgarelli & Landi 2004; Gandolfi & Massabò 2004.

Of these, the *villae* of Bussana and Foce, plus the *mansio* of San Bartolomeo al Mare and the site of Villa Hanbury appear abandoned already during the 3rd century.¹¹⁶ In Roman times Sant'Ermete was a wine production centre, while in Late Antiquity a necropolis is attested.¹¹⁷ A similar situation is recorded at Loano where the Roman bath complex investigated under Piazza Italia, in front of the church of San Giovanni Battista, was partially reused as a cistern and then as a necropolis, provisionally dated to the 5th-6th centuries.¹¹⁸ Massabò claimed a connection between the burials and the nearby church, only attested in sources from the Carolingian period.¹¹⁹ In the Armea valley Lamboglia recorded a series of tile-graves covering at least two phases which might signify some late antique occupation.¹²⁰ Further explorations revealed a series of structures with at least three construction phases, the last using medium size, clay-bonded river cobble walls lasting until the 7th century.¹²¹

Villa Eva was, in all probability, a flourishing Roman settlement with direct access to the sea and in a fertile countryside, ideal for wine production. Established in the 1st century CE it was still active in some form during Late Antiquity, even though no related structures have been recorded. However, a clear 5th century occupation is testified by North African amphorae and ARSW D products which are predominant compared to other production centres. It is, however, less clear if the site was still active during the 6th century.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Bussana: Lamboglia 1976f; Martino 1984; Gambaro & Medri 2008, 2010; Gambaro 2010a; Foce: Lamboglia 1963a, 1976f; Gambaro & Medri 2008; Gambaro 2008a, 2010a, 2013; San Bartolomeo al Mare: Gandolfi 1987-1988; Surace 1984b; Massabò 1990a; Villa Hanbury: Gambaro 2015.

¹¹⁷ Bulgarelli 2008a, 2010a, p. 99.

¹¹⁸ Del Lucchese & Massabò 2003; Bulgarelli 2004; Massabò 2008c; the area hosted also other minor sites: Massabò 2008d.

¹¹⁹ Massabò 2008c.

¹²⁰ Lamboglia assigned a comprehensive chronology between the 2nd and 4th century CE, but this will probably require a new examination: Lamboglia 1942, pp. 35-40.

¹²¹ The results are, however, very briefly published in: Martino 1998, pp. 206-209; Gambaro 2008a, pp. 184-185.

¹²² Documented materials include Keay 5/Africana Grande 2, Keay 25E, Keay 6/Africana Grande 2C and Keay 6.4; as for the ARSW, the only mention is one Hayes 80B: Martino & Bracco 2013.

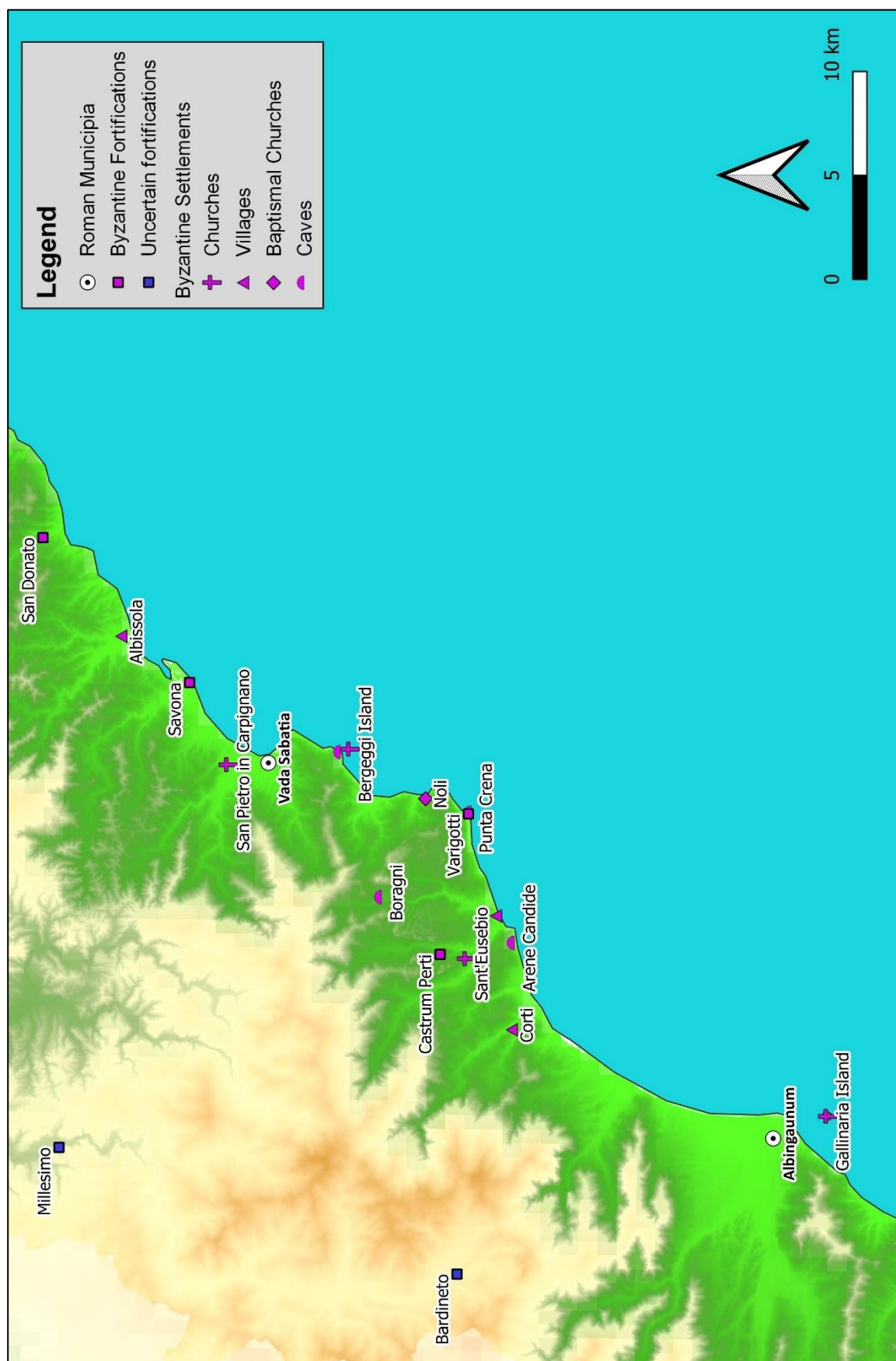


Figure 3.5) Main Byzantine sites between San Donato and Albingaunum. (Source: Author)

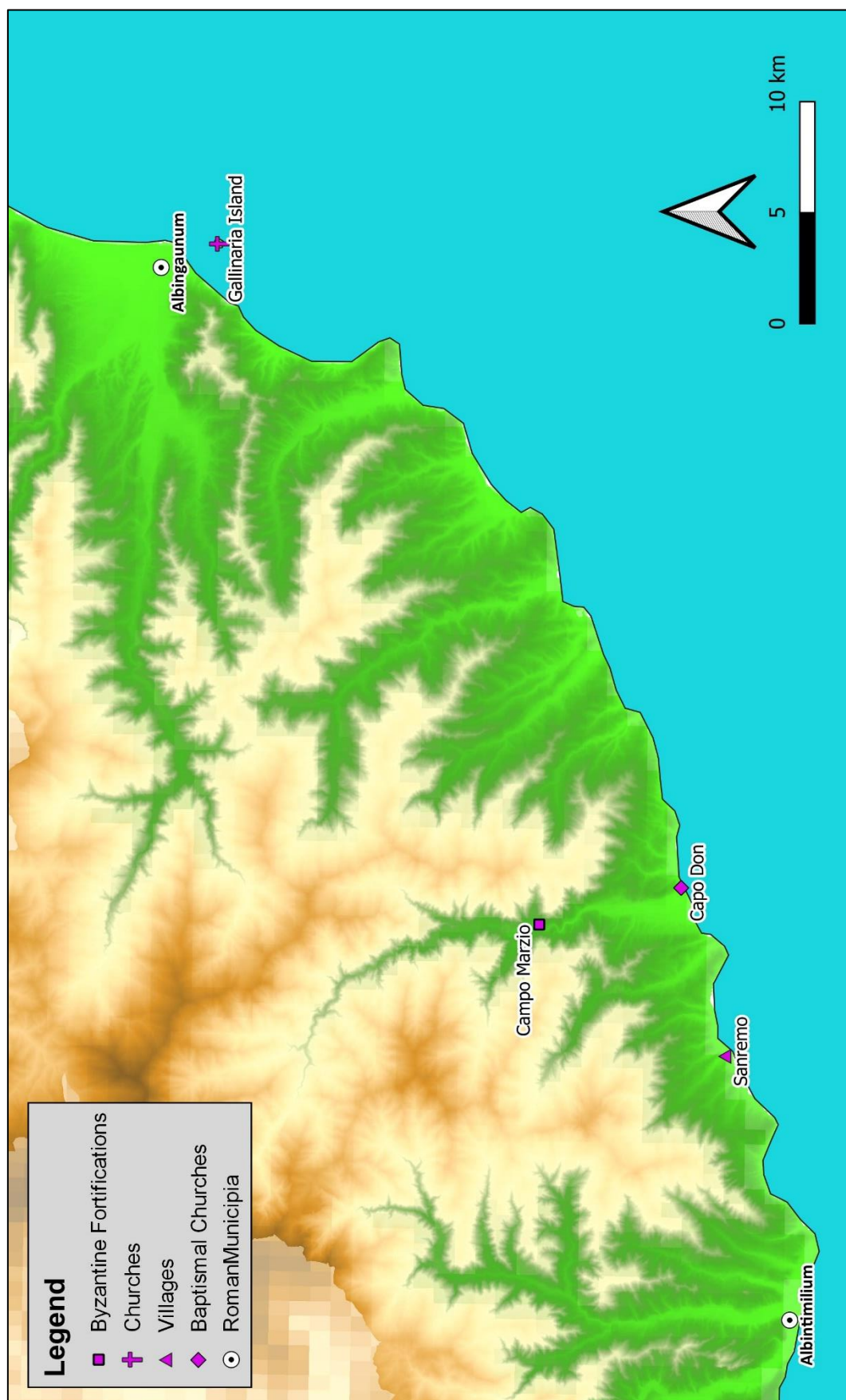


Figure 3.6) Main Byzantine sites between Albingaunm.and Albintimilium (Source: Author)

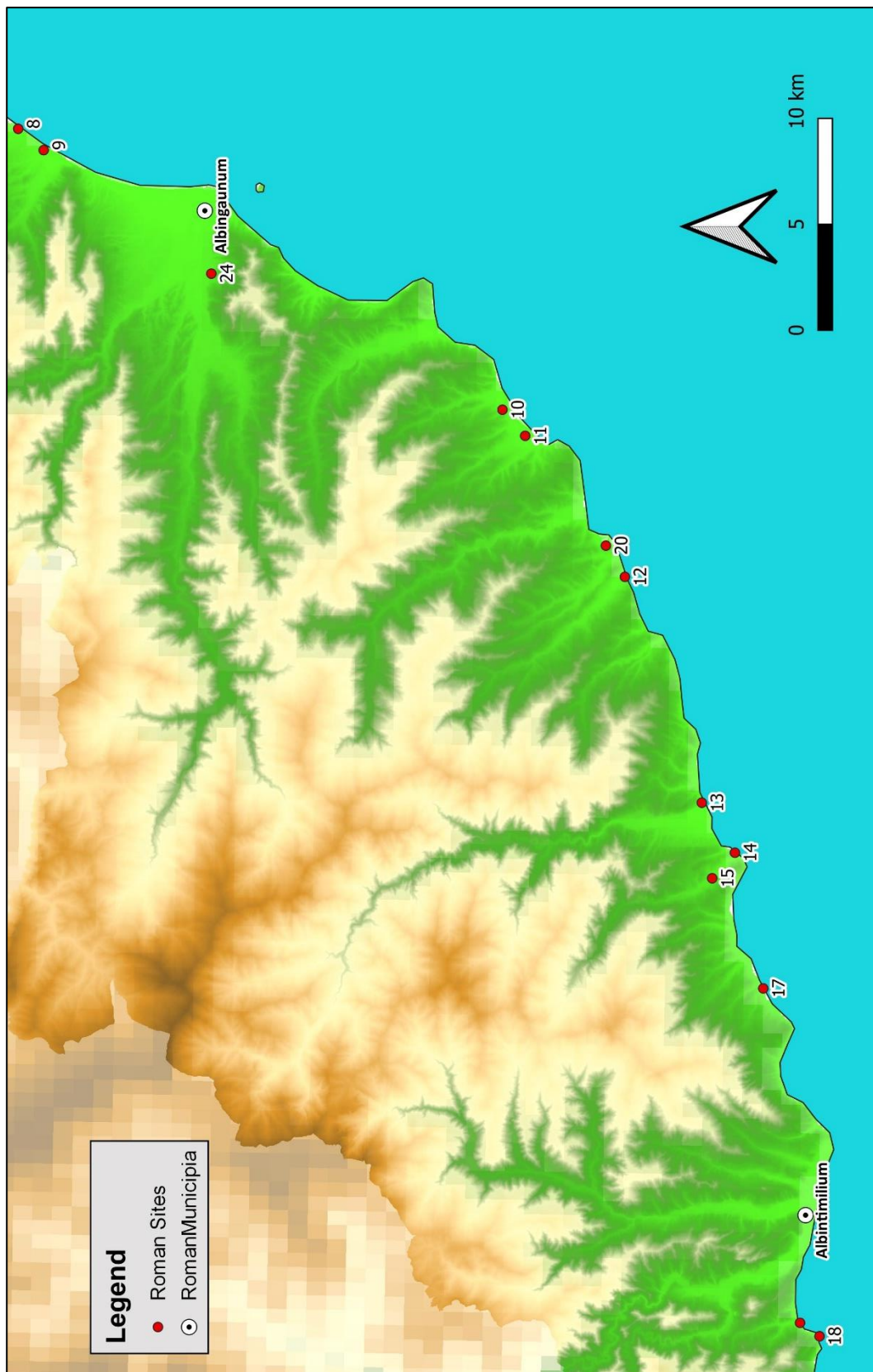


Figure 3.7) Main Roman sites between San Donato and Albingaunum: 8) Loano; 9) Pontasse; 10) San Bartolomeo; 11) Diano Marina; 12) Bocca di Magra; 13) Capo Don; 14) Bussana; 15) Armea; 16) Villa Eva (near 18); 17) Foce; 18) Villa Hanbury; 20) Porto Maurizio; 24) Lusignano. (Source: Author)

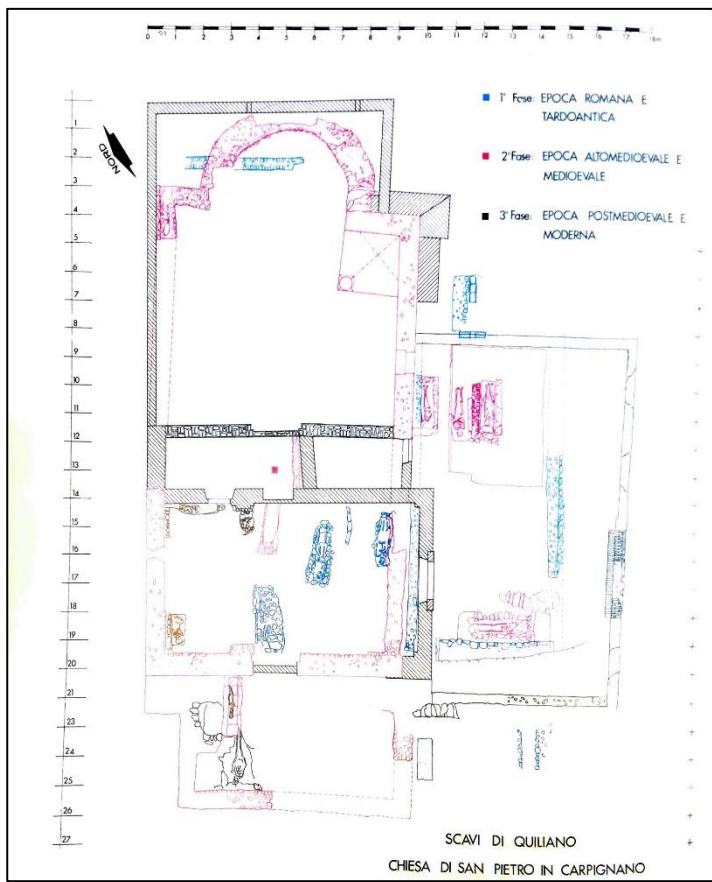


Figure 3.8) San Pietro in Carpignano: plan with phases.
(Source: Martino & Lavagna 1984, p. 160, fig. 203)

The sites with a clearer continuity into Late Antiquity are *Alba Docilia*, where a large villa has been known since 1800, San Pietro in Carpignano, and Corti, the latter pair discovered more recently. *Alba Docilia* was greatly damaged by earlier excavations, but a long series of recent campaigns demonstrated the survival of the settlement well into the 4th and 5th centuries with a possible extension to the 6th (Fig. 3.4). The use of *opus spicatum* is attested in several areas while 4th-7th century oil lamps have also been found together with ARSW D and DSP. More recently a possible late antique necropolis has been located, while a potential connection

with the medieval church of San Pietro, built on the eastern side of the villa, must still be verified.¹²³ An extension of the settlement has been sampled on the eastern side, c. 160 metres from the core of the villa, with further excavations showing dumps filled with material spanning from the 1st to the 6th century.¹²⁴ Traces of agricultural activities and terraces have meanwhile been documented at Via dei Ceramisti, about 1 km from the villa, on the other side of the river Riobasco, perhaps part of the productive area of the estate. In this case the main evidence points to the 2nd century CE with only a scattering of late antique materials in secondary deposits attesting some continuity.¹²⁵

The rural church of San Pietro in Carpignano, between Savona and *Vada Sabatia*, was first explored in 1977 with excavations inside and around the religious structure. The complexity of this site was clear from the first campaigns, when a large cistern dating to the Roman

¹²³ Tiné Bertocchi 1971, 1973-75, 1976a; Bulgarelli 2008b; Bulgarelli & Vanali 2010b; Bulgarelli, Geltrudini & Testa 2010.

¹²⁴ Bulgarelli, Geltrudini & Testa 2018.

¹²⁵ Bulgarelli 2015.

period was explored on the south side of the church (Fig. 3.8). The tank was reused as a burial area from Late Antiquity to the Modern Era, the earliest deposition dated between the 6th and 8th century.¹²⁶ A privileged burial was discovered in the north-west corner of the structure, reusing as a tomb pillow a lid from a previous Roman grave.¹²⁷ Additional structures were covered by the church, as well as other medieval inhumations and a sarcophagus in Finale stone. All these were difficult to date due to the general absence of diagnostic material.¹²⁸ The water tank also contained more recent structures, erected over the previous ones and featuring hearths; finds included a silver coin of Athalaric (526-534) and a Byzantine *exagium* (i.e. a monetary weight).¹²⁹ These have been interpreted as evidence of the prominent location of the settlement set at the junction point of the two main communication routes between Piedmont and the Savona plain.¹³⁰ Trenches in the nearby area of “Casa Gialla” uncovered another part of what has been clearly identified as a vast Roman *villa* abandoned during the 2nd century CE due to some form of traumatic event.¹³¹ This work allowed to recover a fragmented epitaph reemployed in the modern construction of “Casa Gialla”, integrating an earlier find.¹³² The two fragments feature an opisthographic inscription, originally a Roman epitaph, reused for the same purpose during the 7th-8th centuries. The reinterpretation of the medieval inscription now reads: “*Quies / Rachaldis Sigi/ et Auna</i>/t”.¹³³ This indicated a multiple burial of possibly two men and a woman (Rachaldis) with names clearly recalling a Longobard origin; it implies a continuous importance of the area during the Early Middle Ages, as was the case for nearby *Vada Sabatia*.¹³⁴ Carpignano clearly endured as some form of settlement during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, as testified by its material culture and necropolis. The construction of the first church, whose date is still debated, indicates that the location*

¹²⁶ Martino 1982, 1983.

¹²⁷ At this stage of research, the material culture did not go beyond the 5th century with some ARSW C (Lamb. 24/25): Martino & Lavagna 1984.

¹²⁸ The sarcophagus was reused for multiple burials, while only one skeleton was accompanied by an olla, cautiously dated to the 6th century: Bulgarelli 2003a; Bulgarelli & Torre 2010a.

¹²⁹ Bulgarelli 2003a, p. 172.

¹³⁰ Bulgarelli 2003a, p. 172.

¹³¹ Bulgarelli & Torre 2010b; Bulgarelli & Torre 2013.

¹³² For the first discovery: Mennella 1983.

¹³³ Mennella & Bulgarelli 2005; Bulgarelli & Mennella 2008. The previous interpretation, due to the partial status of the epitaph, proposed the presence of a Greek name Archadius, which pointed to a Byzantine background still during the 6th century, in contrast with the typological analysis of the letters that indicated an early medieval origin: Mennella & Varaldo 1983; Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, pp. 82-83.

¹³⁴ Mennella & Bulgarelli 2005.

continued as a central place, perhaps serving the local rural community or a nearby village, possibly comparable to Noli but on a smaller scale.¹³⁵

The last *villa* to note is Corti, excavated between 1993 and 1995 during rescue activities, which revealed the limits of a large Roman complex with a long continuity into the Early Middle Ages.¹³⁶ The site is located near the junction point between the rivers Maremola and Scarincio, only 1.5 kilometres from the coastal settlement of Pietra Ligure. Excavation comprised a narrow trench 200 metres in length, thus sampling only a small section of the settlement. The villa was established at the end of the 1st century BCE, peaking in the 2nd century CE, and included oil production facilities. Abandonment or contraction came between the end of the 2nd and the late 4th centuries when a village took its place. Its structures, made in stones and perishable material, were occupied until the 6th century. This was followed by another abandonment phase and then a burial area with simple graves dated to the 8th-9th century.¹³⁷ The documented material culture shows a clear shift in Late Antiquity towards North African imports with ARSW C and D and North African amphorae very well attested. Marginal regional and Mediterranean imports are represented by DSP, Eastern amphorae, and soapstone vessels; common and cooking wares are instead mostly local or regional.¹³⁸ Other finds testify metallurgic activities and animal husbandry.¹³⁹ This shows how Corti was far from an isolated impoverished village. The site of Corti is emblematic of the phenomenon of the abandonment and transformation of *villae* into villages, which seems to indicate a new phase of development in Liguria after the crisis of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Corti is even more important for its location inside a micro-region – the plain between Pietra Ligure and Borgio – that otherwise has shown little of the late antique and Byzantine period.¹⁴⁰ The site was firstly transformed into a village which kept its original location. However, by the end of the 6th century we see the first traces of floods and the formation of swamps which might have prompted the early medieval relocation of the site and its transformation into a burial area. The community might have moved to the nearby hill by this time. As noted, the nature of the excavations prevent further speculation.

¹³⁵ The first proto-Romanesque phase of the church is generally dated to the 11th century, but scholars dispute an early medieval or Palaeochristian structure: Bulgarelli 2003a; more in general Bulgarelli 2003b.

¹³⁶ The site is fully published in Massabò 1999a.

¹³⁷ Chiocci 1999. For more details on the construction techniques of the late antique village: Cagnana 1999.

¹³⁸ For numbers and details on finds: Chapter 5.2.2.

¹³⁹ Chapter 5.2.2; 5.4.1

¹⁴⁰ Murru 1999a.

3.3.3.2 Coastal Villages and Baptismal Churches

Of great importance in attempting to reconstruct the late antique and Byzantine coast and countryside, is the recognition of the two rural baptismal churches of Capo Don and Noli and their surrounding settlements, as detailed below.

(i) *Capo Don – Costa Balenae*

The site of Capo Don, located in the plain of the Argentina River near Riva Ligure, was known since 1839-40 when construction works for the new via Aurelia and the railway brought to light remains of antique structures and burials. The first (brief) archaeological fieldwork was led by Lamboglia in 1937 which located part of a Palaeochristian baptistery, which was immediately compared to that at *Albingaunum*, and an associated room featuring a sarcophagus in Finale stone. Lamboglia proposed an identification with the site of *Costa Balenae*, a *mansio* mentioned in both the *Peutinger Table* and the *Itinerarium Antonini*, between *Locus Bormani* and *Albintimilium*.¹⁴¹ From 1982 the site saw fairly regular archaeological campaigns, which revealed what, at the time, was almost a *unicum* in the region as well as the whole of Italy, namely a rural Palaeochristian church with both baptismal and funerary functions.¹⁴² The church was originally planned as a three-naved building with a single central apse, polygonal on the outside and circular inside, measuring 32x20 metres (Fig. 3.9). It also featured a narthex with an octagonal baptismal font at the centre.¹⁴³ The southern nave and part of the apse were destroyed in the road and railway works during the 19th century. The church's first phase is dated to the early 6th century, slightly later in date than the construction of the baptistery of *Albingaunum*, which probably controlled the church of Capo Don, while the style of the baptistery recalls later 4th century Ambrosian structures from Milan and northern Italy.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Lamboglia 1942.

¹⁴² Martino 1989; Pergola 1988c. For a history of the studies: Martino 2003.

¹⁴³ Martino 2003; Frondoni, De Vingo & Gambaro 2013.

¹⁴⁴ Pergola et al. 1989.

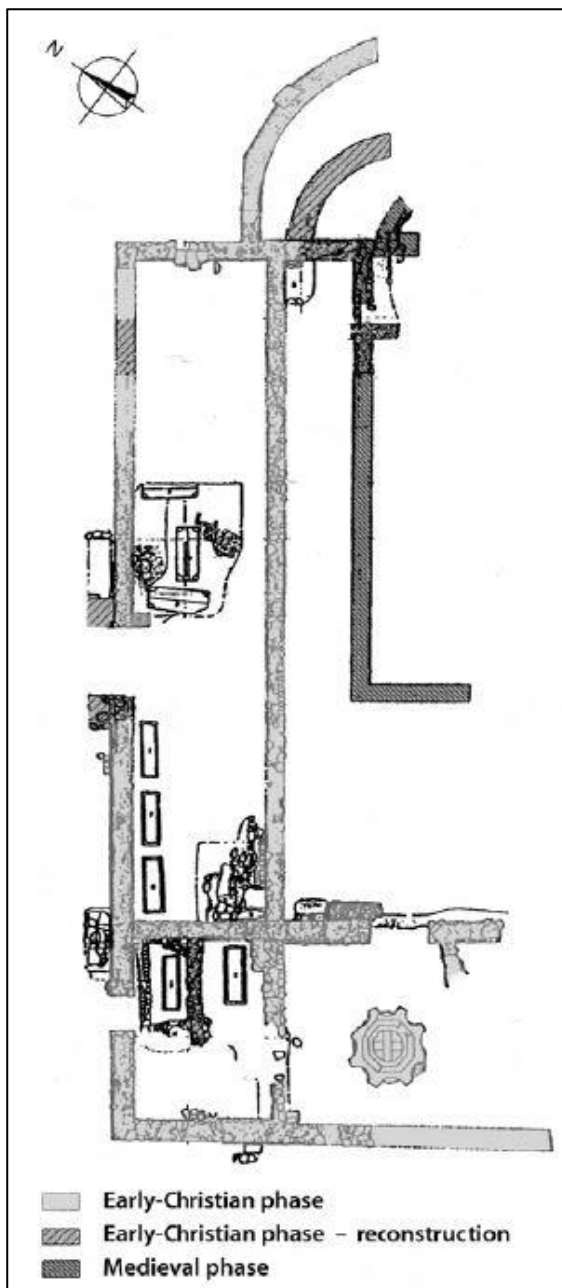


Figure 3.9) Capo Don: plan of the various phases of the building with the larger one being the late antique and Byzantine one (Source: De Vingo 2011, p. 221, fig. 9)

Perhaps shortly after the establishment of the church, its northern apse was closed-off and used for funerary purposes while the main entrance was modified, while the northern area of the narthex was furnished with a new access on its western side.¹⁴⁵ Despite fire damage and a roof collapse, documented from a small section of preserved stratigraphy in the western area of the narthex,¹⁴⁶ the church was still in use until the Late Middle Ages, albeit with a significant reduction in size during the 10th or 11th century.¹⁴⁷

While only few traces of an earlier Roman phase, usually identified with the settlement of *Costa Balenae*, were recognized during the excavations, recent work in a 70-metre radius around the church uncovered further Roman remains, the function of which is still unclear.¹⁴⁸ Was this a villa, village, or *mansio*?¹⁴⁹ Late antique phases have also been recognized as well as a road parallel to the northern side of the church and evidence for productive activities in its immediate vicinity. These include metalwork, glassmaking, and pottery,¹⁵⁰ thereby close affinities to the better known site of Noli (see below). The chronology and interpretation of the local community are substantiated by few

¹⁴⁵ See plans in: Gambaro & Cagnana 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Pergola et al. 1989; Gambaro, Cagnana & Montinari 2015. A new analysis of the apse may suggest an earlier origin of the circular structure which substituted the polygonal one during the Middle Ages: Frondoni, Testa & De Vingo 2013.

¹⁴⁷ Gambaro & Cagnana 2015, pp. 848-849; Pergola et al. 2015a.

¹⁴⁸ Gambaro 2017.

¹⁴⁹ On the Roman phases: Gambaro & Cagnana 2015; Gambaro 2018.

¹⁵⁰ Pergola et al. 2015a. The existence and memory of an older settlement at the time of the construction of the church are reinforced by the incorporation of an older structure with a floor in *opus signinum*, as an annex of the narthex.

materials remains, so far only used to date the various phases without consideration of possible social, economic, and cultural implications. The settlement connections, directly facing the sea and located near the old mouth of the river *Tavia* – modern Argentina – a dock mentioned as *fluvi* in the *Itinerarium Maritimum*, are documented by the wealth of North African imports, which become more visible in late 4th and 5th century Roman destruction layers (Tripolitan III/Dressel 41), with a peak from the 6th to the early 7th century, when North African imports represent the vast majority of extra regional products.¹⁵¹ Eastern imports also became significant and actually represent the majority of imported goods in the Early Middle Ages - late 7th-8th century – with types identifiable as LRA1 and LRA6.¹⁵²

Interesting evidence comes from the necropolis, strikingly consisting mostly of sarcophagi in Finale stone with single or multiple burials – up to a maximum of 19 individuals – arranged on two levels, of which only the uppermost has been explored. The sarcophagi are intermixed with few plain burials, randomly located outside the church.¹⁵³ This funerary role was prominent early on: one of the earliest burials located in the narthex was inside an early 6th century amphora. The use of sarcophagi suggests high status interments inside the church, despite several laws forbidding this practice – a hypothesis further confirmed by the recovery of a long epitaph dedicated by *Acilius* to his wife Maria, originally from an aristocratic family (*claro ueniens de stirpe parentum*) and who presumably lived during the 7th century, possibly when the region was still Byzantine.¹⁵⁴ While originally set in an upright position, possibly in front of a grave outside the church, the epitaph was reused to pave the floor of the small funerary room erected in the northern part of the narthex, when the north part of the nave was also closed and used for the same purpose.¹⁵⁵ Although *Acilius* may not have been a Byzantine military officer, as recently claimed,¹⁵⁶ his family were surely important local landowners, in a territory marked by numerous ex-Roman villas, these possibly attesting to an enduring landed aristocratic community.

¹⁵¹ Common materials are the amphorae Keay 61D and Keay 62, while for the tableware Hayes 105 is attested.

¹⁵² This picture is based on a brief synthesis of the material from the excavations between 1998 and 2002 and could very well be reversed or modified by the full publication of the archaeological finds: Frondoni, De Vingo & Gambaro 2013.

¹⁵³ Family connections between some of the burials have been proposed after having noted the presence of metopism (the persistence of the frontal metopic suture in an adult human skull) in at least four individuals, two of them - an adult female and an adult male placed into the same grave: Pergola et al. 2015a. Martino also suggested that the presence of metopism may indicate non-local individuals. This is a forced interpretation: the syndrome can be hereditary but can also emerge spontaneously, and so there is no need to suggest the arrival of non-allochthonous people to introduce the pathology: Martino 2003.

¹⁵⁴ Appendix 2. n. 11; Pergola et al. 1989, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵⁵ For the text: Appendix 2. n. 11. For a first interpretation of the text: Pergola et al. 1989, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵⁶ Pergola et al. 2015, pp. 346-347.

The plain of the river Argentina was important enough to be protected by a Byzantine *castrum* (Campo Marzio), guarding the main pass from the north. A connection with the Imperial economic and military system is therefore likely, along with the landing dock located not far from the river mouth. The rich countryside that survived until Late Antiquity brought investment, already in the Gothic period, for the construction of the baptismal church to manage the local community and possibly to promote the full Christianization of the area.¹⁵⁷ Despite its evident longevity, the church of Capo Don never appears in medieval textual sources. This has created an issue with its identification – now commonly recognized as the Roman site of *Costa Balenae* – and with the dedication of the church; local sources cite an early dedication to San Siro and another of San Pietro, but they are both too vague to be associated with the ruins.¹⁵⁸

(ii) *Noli*

If Capo Don offered a glimpse of an important rural settlement during Byzantine occupation, Noli provides an almost complete picture. Its potential was first shown during the vast and invasive restoration carried out by Alfredo d'Andrade on the church of San Paragorio after the earthquake of 1887. Lamboglia's interest in this building saw investigations in the 1970s which revealed a Palaeochristian baptistery below the medieval church.¹⁵⁹ Only in 1984 did regular campaigns begin, not only around the church but also in several parts of the modern settlement, mostly along via XXV Aprile and at the old railway station (Fig. 3.10-11).¹⁶⁰ This lengthy research campaign, accompanied by recent substantial publication, provides a rich dataset to explore. Noli, set in a small plain between *Vada Sabatia* and Varigotti, but difficult to reach by land, was settled from the Roman period, always maintaining some form of maritime function, as demonstrated by excavations carried out in via XXV Aprile.¹⁶¹ The

¹⁵⁷ Pergola et al. 2015b.

¹⁵⁸ Pergola et al. 1989, p. 45.

¹⁵⁹ Vavassori 1972; Lamboglia 1976d; Frondoni 1988.

¹⁶⁰ A final publication arrived in 2018: Frondoni 2018a; for previous reports: Frondoni 1992, 2008a, 2013c, 2015a; Frondoni, Geltrudini & Testa, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Frondoni, Parodi & Torre, 2010; for a history of the excavations: Frondoni 2018c.

¹⁶¹ Geltrudini, Testa & Starna 2007a.

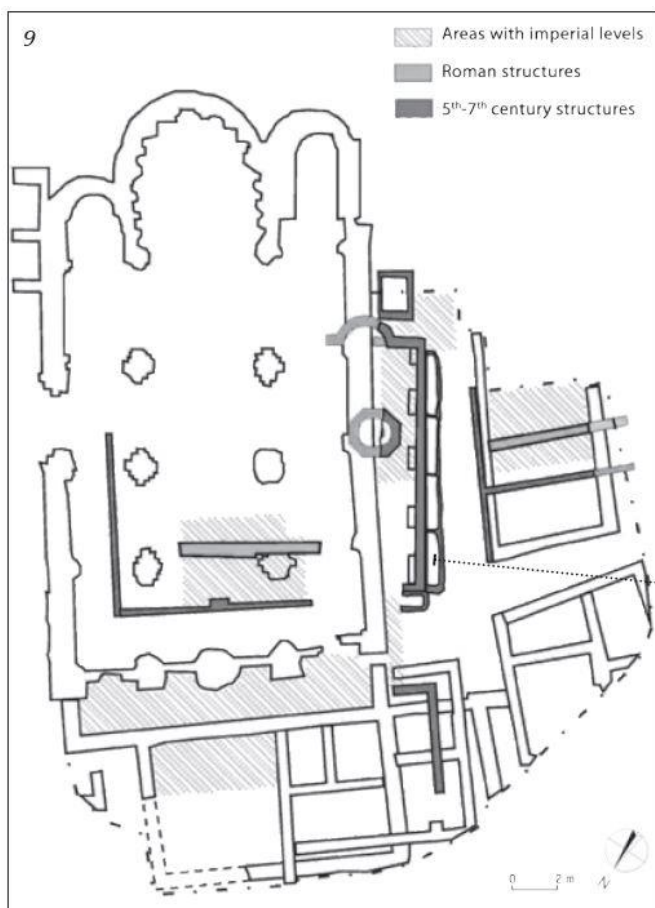


Figure 3.10) Noli, San Paragorio: plan of the medieval church, covering the structures of the baptistery. (Source: Frondoni, Geltrudini, De Vingo 2017, p. 245, fig. 9)

docks were located on the settlement's westernmost zone, where a building, possibly a warehouse, saw extended use, albeit in different forms.¹⁶² The Roman settlement was probably at the centre of the plain, where the church is now located, while its necropolis was on the eastern side, in the area of the former-railway station. About 40 burials have been documented, spanning the early Empire to 5th century.¹⁶³ The necropolis was in time overlain by a village, developing between the second half of the 7th century and the end of the 9th, when a vast fire, recorded across all the excavation areas and usually attributed to a Saracen raid, destroyed the whole settlement.¹⁶⁴

Archaeologists have hypothesized that the necropolis was then relocated nearer the church, in a sort of exchange of space

between the late antique and early medieval settlement.¹⁶⁵

Within San Paragorio a few traces of Roman features have been recorded, but the first Christian complex was built around the mid-5th century, the baptismal font on its southern side partially reusing earlier Roman walls (Fig. 3.10). The complete layout of this first phase has been compromised by the Romanesque building, but it is possible to recognize an apse related with the baptismal font covering an area of at least 110m². On its southern side a series of privileged burials appeared in the 6th century which remained in use well into the

¹⁶² Geltrudini, Testa & Starna 2007b. The hoard of 13 solidi (1 of Honorius, 11 of Valentinian III, and 1 of Petronius Maximus) was found in the late antique phase of this building (4th-5th century): Arslan 2007, pp. 53-56; some suggested it was a response to a Vandal incursion: Frondoni & Bertino 2008.

¹⁶³ Torre 2007a; Elefante 2007a, 2007b; Bulgarelli 2018c pp. 61-63.

¹⁶⁴ The remains of the fire were exceptionally well preserved and allowed a complete study of the wooden materials employed as well as the construction techniques, since most of the collapsed building portions were undamaged. On the village and the fire: Frondoni, Parodi & Torre 2006; Garibaldi 2007; Geltrudini, Testa & Starna 2007b; Parodi 2007; Geltrudini 2018b.

¹⁶⁵ Torre 2007a, p. 91.

Early Middle Ages, partly occupying an alley which separated the church from a structure used for metalworking activities. Several minor interventions are documented across the lifespan of the first church until it was completely obliterated by a new structure in the early 11th century.¹⁶⁶ As mentioned, the church was flanked by a large building (60m²) occupied by a smithy, which dates either to the second half of the 6th or the early 7th century; later – in the second half of the 7th century – the building was divided into three separate spaces used for specialized metal-working (Fig. 5.1).¹⁶⁷

The material culture recovered is typical of late antique Ligurian sites with North African ARSW, DSP products from southern Gaul, and other marginal productions are north Italian glazed wares and soapstone vessels covering the 4th and 6th centuries. Soapstone vessels were imported from the Alps between the 6th and the 11th centuries, while North African imports arrived as early as the end of the 3rd century, alongside rarer eastern amphorae. The commerce was still active in the Early Middle Ages, as attested by few globular amphorae.¹⁶⁸ This evidence, quantitatively relatively poor, but rich in variety, has been interpreted as the result of redistribution by land or sea via the major port of *Vada Sabatia*, directed towards secondary settlements.¹⁶⁹ However, little is known about the settlement of *Vada* in this phase, and the little we do know points to a steep decline. I do not see, however, how a coastal settlement, with a relatively good natural access to the sea, should not have functioned with some degree of independence – in other words, Noli itself was the direct recipient of goods coming from the sea.

Few other small finds were recovered, mostly from medieval layers, documenting weaving and spinning activities, even if no weapons or agricultural tools were recovered.¹⁷⁰ Only 47 coins were documented, including 13 *solidi* from a 5th century hoard, spanning the 2nd century BCE to 575 CE; after a hiatus, coinage reappears around the mid-8th century with a Longobard *tremissis* (712-749). Strangely, no Byzantine coins are attested.¹⁷¹ The only indirect evidence of Byzantine coin circulation can be hypothesized from a monetary weight recovered from the area in front of the church in a layer dated to the early 7th century.¹⁷² A

¹⁶⁶ Geltrudini & Taddei 2018, pp. 125-138.

¹⁶⁷ For the analysis of the stratigraphic sequence: Geltrudini 2018a; Geltrudini & Taddei 2018; for a detailed study on the workshop activities: Torre 2007b; Cucini 2018; Cucini, Riccardi & Tizzoni 2018.

¹⁶⁸ For more details: Chapter 5.2.3.

¹⁶⁹ De Vingo 2018d, p. 255.

¹⁷⁰ De Marchi 2018.

¹⁷¹ Bertino 2018.

¹⁷² Geltrudini & Taddei 2018, p. 150.

possible explanation for this absence can be that the late antique settlement has been only marginally explored.

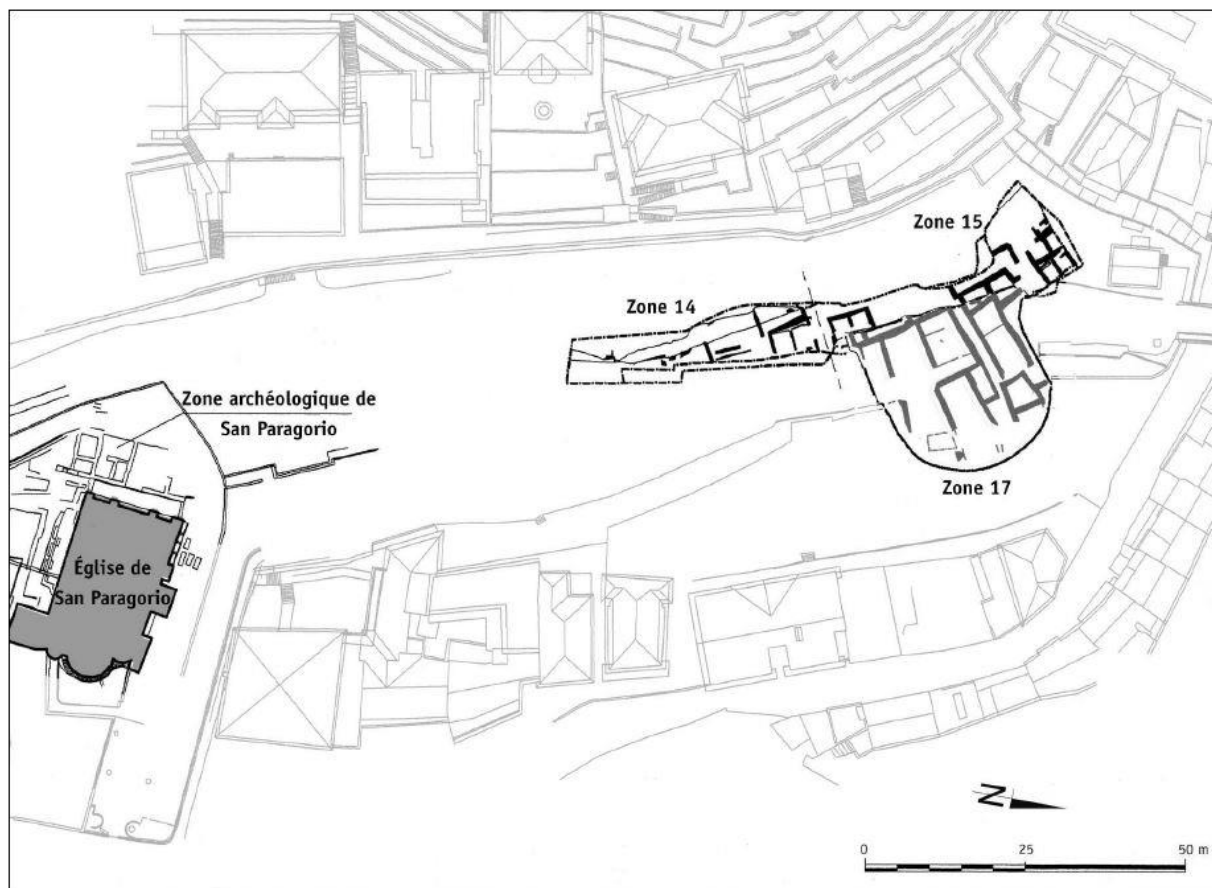


Figure 3.11) Noli: plan of the church and the medieval village (via XXV Aprile). (Source: De Vingo 2010, p. 93, fig. 3)

One key area of controversy is the status of the baptismal church, due to the recovery, during D'Andrade's restorations, of a fragmentary inscription mentioning a bishop, *Theodorus* or *Theodosius*, buried here between the second half of the 6th and the early 7th century.¹⁷³ The presence in Noli, a secondary rural centre, of an episcopal seat at such an early stage does not seem to fit with other Ligurian evidence. Other explanations such as the possibility of a visiting bishop from other dioceses who happened to die here by chance, or a bishop from Genoa or *Albingaunum* particularly devoted to the saint's relics who specifically asked to be buried at San Paragorio, are equally difficult to verify. Rural dioceses are not unknown in Italy – the best example being the site of San Giusto in Apulia – but for the time being the issue remains open.¹⁷⁴ A hypothesis in support of a local diocese, even if short-lived, is that *Theodorus* may have lived under Byzantine rule, indicating a specific

¹⁷³ Appendix 2, n. 12.

¹⁷⁴ Volpe 1998; 2006; 2009; Christie 2006 pp. 445-447.

interest of the new authorities in the settlement. This interpretation might be supported by the idea offered by Lamboglia that the name Noli originates from *Neapolis*, mentioned by George of Cyprus and indicating a Byzantine foundation, or re-foundation, of the settlement;¹⁷⁵ this hypothesis is reinforced by the name *Naboli* used in 11th-12th century sources.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the location of the *Neapolis* mentioned by George of Cyprus is still a matter of debate.¹⁷⁷

The settlement maintained a literate community, as testified by two other inscriptions recovered in the church. The first, reused for another burial, is the epitaph of *Lidoria*, a 64-year-old woman, referred to as *Domina*. It has been suggested that she lived during Byzantine rule but died when the region had already been taken by the Longobards, between 673 and 688. The main argument of this hypothesis is the lack of a consular or Imperial indication, while in all other aspects the inscription recalls the typical Roman style.¹⁷⁸ The last inscription, made using black sea pebbles, was found in front of the baptismal font; although significantly damaged, it may refer to a dedication of a sacred building or the fulfilment of an *ex voto*, both activities well attested in late antique churches including *Luna*.¹⁷⁹ Such a concentration of inscriptions in a minor rural site like Noli, comparable to urban centres, is striking, especially in its Byzantine phases since two out of three texts can be specifically attributed to the Byzantine occupation. The context is almost unique in Liguria and despite the considerable similarities with Capo Don, the articulation and continuity of the settlement are much more evident in Noli. Why, then, did this difficult-of-access coastal site attract the construction of a baptismal church where a bishop and other elites were buried? By comparison, the nearby plain of Spotorno could have offered a far richer and more extensive hinterland, but this lacked a protected harbour. Potentially, the fortunes of Noli were, at least in part, connected with activities related to ship repair, but no real supporting material evidence has emerged so far.¹⁸⁰ Quite possibly, its importance as a secure dock and harbour, not far from the fortified Varigotti, as well as its isolated location, made the site appealing to the Byzantines as a naval outpost. The construction of the church in the very last years of the Western Roman Empire, possibly funded by a wealthy donor, as the floor inscription might suggest, testifies to a community worthy of such attention, with

¹⁷⁵ Lamboglia 1973a.

¹⁷⁶ Lamboglia 1973a; Ferretti 2005.

¹⁷⁷ Conti 1975, pp. 31-32; Petracco 2018a, p. 49.

¹⁷⁸ Appendix 2, n. 13; Vavassori 1973; 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Appendix 2, n. 14; Mennella 2018.

¹⁸⁰ Potentially the metalworking was directly linked with shipbuilding.

connections and available resources to invest in privileged burials as well as access to imported materials. The Byzantines may have simply ‘stepped into’ an already developed situation, adding their own needs. The creation of workshops closely linked to the church from the second half of the 6th century may be a consequence of this control, although it is difficult to determine the authority that promoted these initiatives. The proximity of a religious structure, as at Capo Don, seems to point to the Church as a valid candidate, as it often merged administrative and, occasionally, military duties within Byzantine-controlled Italy.¹⁸¹

The excavations at Capo Don and Noli, which are even more invaluable if we consider their near-total absence in the written sources (only Noli appears in 1004),¹⁸² reveal two perfect examples of rural churches emerging as reference centres for already existing communities, both from a religious and administrative perspective, seemingly of heightened importance given the presence of a baptismal font, testifying to the active process of Christianisation in the zone, and also pointing to a more densely populated and richer countryside in this part of Liguria.

3.3.3.3 Churches, Minor Settlements, and Caves

The western Ligurian countryside was characterised by a variety of other settlement types, including simple rural churches, farms, and occupied caves. Most of these sites can be viewed as parts of a network of major and minor settlements and road systems, with a few exceptions.

Starting in the east, we can first observe the church of Santa Maria Maddalena, on the left bank of the river Arrestra, possibly located near a crossing point. Although the structure was demolished in 1850, 28 years later, one of the few examples of Byzantine sculpture in Liguria was recovered from its ruins, consisting of a pluteus fragment in Marmara marble, stylistically dated to the 6th-7th century.¹⁸³ The circumstances of this find and its complete isolation from any other late antique evidence in the area make contextualization of the marble and the eventual church quite difficult.

¹⁸¹ Gregory the Great had to appoint a *tribunus* as military commander for Naples, for example: Gregory the Great, *Letters*, II.4 (September 591 or August 592).

¹⁸² De Vingo 2018b, p. 107.

¹⁸³ Another one was found in Savona: Aa.Vv. 2012; Olcese 2015.

From the plain between Savona and *Vada Sabatia*, below modern Legino, a rural settlement has been traced. The site is not far from San Pietro in Carpignano and hosted farm/small villa involved in wine production which flourished until the 3rd century; at least one of its rooms was decorated with a mosaic floor.¹⁸⁴ During Late Antiquity the area seems to have suffered from swamp growth, with reclamation and agricultural activities recorded at least until the 5th-6th century.¹⁸⁵ A few hundred metres away a necropolis with tile graves has been exposed on several occasions since 1856 by flooding from the river Molinero. Limited fieldwork dated one of its phases to the 2nd century.¹⁸⁶ The burial ground might have a late antique phase; while further research could confirm the late antique foundation of the nearby church of Sant'Ambrogio. Here, in 1963, in front of the church, a burial area was identified but subsequently destroyed, while inside the building two earlier phases were recognized. The lack of proper archaeological investigation compromised the results made at that time.¹⁸⁷ Given its vicinity of the rural settlement of San Pietro in Carpignano, we might envisage a rural landscape reorganized by a community living in the vicinity and with resources to invest in new religious structures.

To the south of *Vada Sabatia*, almost halfway between the ancient Roman town and Noli, a third example of an island monastic settlement is attested. The small island of Bergeggi was surely occupied by a monastery at least by the 10th century, but there is some evidence of Roman occupation, based on surface finds.¹⁸⁸ Lamboglia excavated a church dubiously attributed to Sant' Eugenio and dated its remains to the 5th or 6th century, despite minimal evidence.¹⁸⁹ Restoration work, surveys and limited excavations exposed several graves associated with late antique material, possibly including some LRA amphorae, which might have been connected with the structure excavated by Lamboglia.¹⁹⁰ The cave site of Marina di Bergeggi is located on the small promontory in front of the island. Frequented since Prehistory, it provided evidence of late antique reoccupation of some kind, attested by pottery finds.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ Bulgarelli & Vanali 2010b, 2013; Bulgarelli et al. 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Bulgarelli & Vanali 2013.

¹⁸⁶ Bulgarelli 2010a, 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Bulgarelli 2010a.

¹⁸⁸ Bulgarelli, Frondoni & Geltrudini 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Lamboglia 1970b, p. 163.

¹⁹⁰ Frondoni 1990a.

¹⁹¹ Bulgarelli 2010a, p. 98.

Moving westward, passing Noli and Varigotti, one reaches the area of Finale, which has benefitted from a preliminary synthesis and shows a network of settlements, mostly indicated via their necropoleis.¹⁹² As we will see, this region was protected by *Castrum Perti* located 3 km inland to the north,¹⁹³ while on the coast to the east was the fortified port of Varigotti.¹⁹⁴ Roman and late antique settlements dotted the plain and its hilly hinterland. In modern Finale Marina, around the church of San Giovanni Battista, past excavations revealed parts of a necropolis. More recently a group of four graves, some in amphorae, were studied by Francisca Pallarés, confirming a chronology between the 4th and 7th centuries.¹⁹⁵ Whether the church dates back this far is uncertain, and it would be very interesting to understand the extent of the coastal settlement which probably served as the main redistribution base for construction materials and the production of sarcophagi in Finale stone. Late antique phases are attested for two churches in the interior: Sant Eusebio and San Calvisio. The former, not far from *Castrum Perti*, recently the subject of new excavations, had a Roman and late antique necropolis, with the church foundations contemporary with the late antique phase.¹⁹⁶ Likewise at Calvisio, a significantly damaged pre-Romanesque phase has been recently documented; this settlement related to the Roman road and the system of bridges located in the Ponci valley.¹⁹⁷

Finale is at the centre of the phenomenon of reoccupation of Prehistoric caves during Late Antiquity in Liguria. These have been for the most part explored over the past 2/300 years but mainly for their prehistorical phases, often leading to the destruction or poor documentation of more recent historical layers. One of the first archaeologists to acknowledge the existence of these later phases was Bernabò Brea.¹⁹⁸ Examination of earlier excavations led him to realize that the late antique occupation of Prehistoric caves was a common phenomenon in this territory. The best-known example is Arene Candide which shows an environment where imported amphorae seemingly represent the vast majority of the recorded vessels (78.4%).¹⁹⁹ The types of amphorae reflect a rich spectrum of North African imports up until the 6th century, while the 7th and the 8th centuries mark a passage to globular types of containers from the eastern Mediterranean. Arene Candide

¹⁹² De Vingo 2004, 2011c; Bulgarelli, Frondoni & Murialdo 2005.

¹⁹³ Chapter 4.6.1.

¹⁹⁴ Chapter 4.3.2.

¹⁹⁵ One of the amphorae was a Keay 62: Pallarés 1965a.

¹⁹⁶ Lamboglia 1957d; Bulgarelli & Torre 2008.

¹⁹⁷ Frondoni 1990c.

¹⁹⁸ Bernabò Brea 1946, 1956.

¹⁹⁹ Based on the estimated vessel equivalent: De Vingo 2017, p. 167.

also featured common pottery of local and Roman tradition, integrated with, and possibly substituted in part by, soapstone vessels during the Early Middle Ages, potentially indicating a change in diet due to the changes of some of the pottery forms.²⁰⁰ Other caves, however, displayed a different type of occupation, reflected by their material culture; for example, at the cave of Arma dell'Aquila located further inland, pottery finds are fewer and mostly consist of local common vessels.²⁰¹ The reasons behind the occupation of such marginal areas are debated, while a better understanding of the activities carried out inside the caves is almost impossible due to the past destruction of most of the archaeological deposits; while some could have seen occupation, others were perhaps just for storage or for animal sheltering; with the settlement being placed outside. Functions may have changed with time. Some dry-stone walls inside the cave of Arma dell'Aquila suggest a division of the space. A double burial found just outside the cave of Boragni, was viewed for decades as a Prehistoric deposition but a recent radiocarbon survey revealed its Byzantine-period chronology and gives a further indication of the possible presence of historic-era activities around the caves.²⁰²

While this phenomenon is documented in other parts of Italy and the Mediterranean, it also common in later historical periods.²⁰³ Several Ligurian caves show discontinuous activities lasting until the Modern Age. De Vingo has suggested reasons connected to barbarian invasions and insecurity, starting from the 4th and 5th centuries; however the continued use of these places for so many centuries argues against any short-term issues of insecurity, while the wide range of imports at Arene Candide hints at a regular and known community.²⁰⁴ Interesting is the chronological coincidence with the development of tile stations in central Liguria; perhaps this indicates new uses of the countryside and a development of marginal, hilly areas previously neglected in the Roman period.

The hinterland of *Albingaunum*, supposedly the richest in western Liguria, has yet to reveal any sign of a dense Roman or late antique occupation activity. Potentially the evidence for this is masked by multiple alluvial episodes of the frequent inundations of the river Centa, documented in the earliest phases of the city. The only evidence of a late antique and

²⁰⁰ De Vingo 2017; Chapter 5.3.2.

²⁰¹ De Vingo 2018a.

²⁰² Sparacello et al. 2019. It is interesting to note that the analysed skeleton suffered a violent death from a weapon injury to the back of the skull.

²⁰³ For a summary review of the north Italian caves and their historic data: Christie 1995; De Vingo 2017.

²⁰⁴ De Vingo 2018a.

Byzantine occupation outside the city in fact comes from the recent excavation of the medieval church of San Dalmazzo at Arveglio, located in a secondary valley and relatively far from the plain and from the island of Gallinaria.

The site of San Dalmazzo, only marginally explored in 2006 during restoration work, confirmed the local stories of an ancient foundation to the building. The first establishment of the church, which had at least two main reconstruction phases after that, overlay layers containing glass dated to between the 6th and 9th centuries, while the external necropolis associated to this phase is covered by colluvial layers with residual 6th and 7th century material.²⁰⁵

The island of Gallinaria hosts the fourth and last of the region's monastic insular settlements. Early excavations exposed a small religious building surrounded by a wall which also enclosed several graves, all dated without much certainty to the late antique period.²⁰⁶ Recent work placed the possible location of the medieval monastery under a modern villa, while establishing a use of the island at least from the late Republican era. A grave with tiles was also discovered, while a privileged burial in a sarcophagus, inside the cave of San Martino and dated to the 6th-7th century, as attested by some lamps, saw later, 14th century reuse.²⁰⁷

Another relatively well represented area, exploiting earlier work by Lamboglia, is the plain between San Bartolomeo al Mare and Diano Marina, west of *Albingaunum*, commonly identified with *Locus Bormani*, mentioned both in the *Peutinger Table* and in the *Itinerarium Antonini*.²⁰⁸ In front of the remains of the *mansio* of San Bartolomeo al Mare, excavations of the church of Nostra Signora della Rovere exposed two late antique walls associated with a *cocciopesto* floor and a hearth, and finds dating to the 5th and 6th centuries (North African amphorae, ARSW, and DSP).²⁰⁹ In the small square in front of the church four graves were excavated, of late antique or early medieval typologies (lithic boxes, enchytrismòs, and tile covers).²¹⁰ Further to the south-west, in the area of Diano Maria, the two churches of San

²⁰⁵ Frondoni & Geltrudini 2010a.

²⁰⁶ Lamboglia 1937b, 1958c, 1961c, 1963e.

²⁰⁷ Massabò 2003c; Bulgarelli, Dell'Amico & Roascio 2013; for an historical perspective: Penco 1963; Calzamiglia 1991.

²⁰⁸ Lamboglia 1957c.

²⁰⁹ Massabò & Gandolfi 1992.

²¹⁰ Lamboglia 1958d; Massabò & Gandolfi 1992.

Siro and Santi Nazario and Celso on the opposite sides of the river San Pietro, overlay previous Roman structures: that at San Siro was in use until the 3rd century, although it is unclear when the church was established; Santi Nazario and Celso seems to have been built around the 5th-6th century in an area rich in Roman and late antique finds.²¹¹ In 1957 Lamboglia recorded a Roman and late antique necropolis destroyed near the church, structures, and layers of the 4th and 5th century underneath the church itself.²¹² Rescue archaeology has meanwhile documented Roman and late antique structures from the area known as Campo Fiorito, while construction work at Rusciano-Turco revealed some inhumation tombs with tile coverings.²¹³

Continuing westwards, the settlement of Porto Maurizio lacks any relevant archaeology yet. An excavation at the mouth of the river Prino, where a Roman bridge was located, showed the remains of a 4th-5th century settlement.²¹⁴ Further inland, at Piani d'Imperia, during the construction of a pipeline, two excavation areas revealed elements of a Roman rural settlement, perhaps featuring 6th century reoccupation.²¹⁵

The last area to survey is that of Sanremo, which, as noted above, features the remains of at least three Roman *villae* (Foce, Bussana and Armea). While the *villae* were already abandoned during the Byzantine phase, apart possibly from Armea, the only trace of activity in this part of Liguria is represented by Sanremo itself. Work by Canepa in the 1940s discovered the remains of two apses of an earlier church with a different alignment from the modern one.²¹⁶ Further explorations by Lamboglia, hoping to find another baptismal font after Capo Don, showed no such structure was present in Sanremo, or at least not under the actual baptistery; a series of earlier structures were exposed, the oldest ones with the same alignment as the apses discovered by Canepa.²¹⁷ Further evidence of an early medieval church is represented by the recovery of a reused marble pillar during restoration work, stylistically dated to the 8th-9th century.²¹⁸ However, new excavations have revealed late antique pits inside the church along with additional elements possibly connected with

²¹¹ Gandolfi 2005, 2008.

²¹² Lamboglia 1948c, 1950d, 1957d, 1959b; 1963c.

²¹³ Lamboglia 1971c, 1973-75b; Massabò & Gandolfi 1992, p. 142.

²¹⁴ Gambaro 2010b.

²¹⁵ Martino 1998, pp. 198-200.

²¹⁶ Canepa 1949.

²¹⁷ Lamboglia 1951c, 1960a.

²¹⁸ For the discovery: Pallarés 1961; for a stylistic analysis: Frondoni 1994-95.

the early apses as well as a series of graves.²¹⁹ Despite the current absence of a baptistery, it is highly probable that Sanremo represented another important religious and rural centre on the scale of Noli and Capo Don, ideally placed at the centre of another small fluvial plain between *Albintimilium* and Capo Don.

3.4 A Deserted Hinterland?

As shown (see Fig. 3.1; 3.5-6; 4.11), the rural sites discussed in the chapter cluster chiefly on, or close to, a narrow strip of coastland, with occasional examples in the immediate inland, around the main plains or on the hilly areas connecting one plain to another. While part of this void is due to the longstanding research focus on Classical settlements along the coast or on prehistoric sites, the almost total absence of late antique archaeological finds in the inland areas of western Liguria is striking.²²⁰ A partial exception is constituted by a series of minor discoveries along the internal path of the *Via Iulia Augusta*. The first are the possible remains of the *mansio* of Crixia, depicted in the *Peutinger Table* and named in the *Itinerarium Antonini*, which, nevertheless, does not present any evidence beyond the 3rd century.²²¹ The excavated area was small and further research may reveal later phases. The site lies at the very border between Liguria and Piedmont, an area which was in all probability rapidly occupied by the Longobards or left as a no man's land at the time of the Byzantine occupation. Moving southwards, near the Protohistoric site of Casteirollo, a hoard of metal tools with no apparent connection to a settlement, containing several metal tools, mostly ploughshares, a small anvil plus a few fragments of pottery and soapstone, may belong to the 6th-7th century. The plough may be of a type imported into Italy by the Longobards and capable of working hardest soils.²²² Lastly, further south, at the beginning of another road leading to Cuneo in Piedmont, late antique materials occur as residual elements in the lower levels of the medieval castle of Cosseria.²²³

These are the few elements for rural occupation of the internal part of western Liguria, at least along the main communications routes. A different approach, such as the one applied to the central part of Liguria by the ISCuM, combined with a new research interest in the

²¹⁹ Gambaro 2008a. Part of these excavations are still waiting to be published while the skeletal remains will undergo radiocarbon analysis.

²²⁰ The activity of the ISCuM, more interested in rural and post-Classical sites, was historically focussed on central and eastern Liguria.

²²¹ Olivieri 1976.

²²² Del Lucchese, Piroto & Palazzi 2015.

²²³ Varaldo 1990b.

landscape as a whole, might generate more results allowing us to comprehend the dynamics of an area which represented the true frontier between two political authorities, outside the jurisdiction of the coastal Byzantine fortifications and apparently limitedly colonized during the first Longobard expansion.²²⁴ A good example comes from the bibliographical survey carried out by Balzaretto on the ecology of the internal Ligurian Apennine, mostly based on bioarchaeology, archaeozoology and the few early medieval sources available, such as the documents of the Longobard-Irish monastery of Bobbio. Although most of the evidence postdates the Byzantine, it is interesting to note a shift from wood pastures to grasslands, sometimes through controlled fire clearing. This seems to have occurred mostly from the mid-7th century, indicating forms of transhumance during the summer which might have involved the coastal areas as well, possibly used to stock the animals in the winter.²²⁵

3.5 Conclusions

The period of Byzantine domination in Liguria seemingly coincided with a phase of vast changes in the organization of the countryside. The end of the traditional Roman *villa*, which in Liguria never had a large-scale diffusion, was combined with the emergence of new realities and typologies of rural settlements providing for the different needs – both physical and spiritual – of the local populations. As noted in the introduction, despite the coherent picture that I propose in this conclusion, the absence of a regional synthesis for the Roman Imperial phase still limits a full understanding of the past.

The Mediterranean economy was in a state of flux, with the unifying power of the Roman Empire shifting eastwards and reorganizing itself.²²⁶ This reorganization was a combination of policies imposed by the central authority in Constantinople and local response to new situations. At the same time Christianisation, despite the various theological disputes, was making further efforts to spread from the cities to the surrounding countryside with the founding of churches, often sponsored by the local aristocracy who came to occupy many of the higher ecclesiastical positions. Both phenomena likely had significant impact on the Ligurian countryside, together with the negative effects generated by the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, even though coastal Liguria was only marginally affected.²²⁷ With the growing

²²⁴ Murialdo 2000a, p. 20.

²²⁵ Although I doubt that the wooden houses in the *forum* of Luna might have been used for this purpose, see the debate: Balzaretto 2013, pp. 13-33; Benente 2017, p. 205.

²²⁶ Loseby 2012.

²²⁷ The only documented military action in this region is the supposed Frankish raid on Genoa, which is only reported in one source: Chapter 1.4.2.

archaeological evidence available for late antique Liguria we can now better appreciate how local and international changes acted in shaping a different landscape compared to the previous Roman network of cities, roads, *villae*, *mansiones*, *vici* and farms.

The first and most obvious ‘victim’ of the new era were the coastal villas, already affected by the crisis during the 3rd century.²²⁸ In Liguria there is no sign of a Constantinian recovery of the *villae* during the 4th century, as attested in other northern parts of the peninsula, despite Imperial intervention on the roads. Villas, however, were not the only victims: the system of *mansiones* broke up, together with several minor sites, such as the farm excavated in the *ager Lunensis*.²²⁹ While for many villas the abandonment was complete and irreversible (Bocca di Magra, Foce, Bussana, Villa Eva and Villa Hanbury), some do show a slow transformation into villages and farms. The signs of these changes are best documented at Corti, but sites such as Varignano, Albissola, and Armea can all potentially be ascribed to this phenomenon. This transformation was accompanied by the emergence of a new form of landmark which combined a prominent religious position due to the presence of baptismal and funerary churches, which also functioned as residential and production foci (notably Noli, Capo Don, and probably Sanremo), in places set over Roman settlements. The *mansio* of San Michele del Trino near Vercelli might be a similar case.²³⁰ In all likelihood these were not simply coastal villages but administrative centres capable of exploiting local resources, using specialized workshops, and connected to international maritime trade routes. *Mansiones* or *stationes*, such as *Locus Bormani* and Capo Don-Costa *Balenae* or Brugnato in eastern Liguria, when not abandoned during the 3rd century, saw the implantation of churches. The locations which display this change were still presided by local communities, forming new points of reference throughout the countryside as well as for maritime and road networks, possibly still working as stopping points for travellers. The presence of funerary churches with a baptismal font was probably promoted by local bishops residing in the towns, but perhaps also by the local aristocracy, who in Liguria was still connected with the countryside, as attested by the number of epitaphs recovered and the privileged burials which feature almost exclusively around baptismal churches.²³¹ However,

²²⁸ For the early crisis of the villa system in northern Italy: Brogiolo 1996.

²²⁹ For the Ligurian *villae*: Balzaretti 2013; De Vingo 2011a, 2011c; for a wider picture of the disappearance of the *villae* in Italy: Francovich & Hodges 2003; Arthur 2004; Christie 2006 pp. 428-441; Lewit 2004; Brogiolo, Valenti, Chavarría Arnau 2005; De Vingo 2013.

²³⁰ Negro Ponzi Mancini 1999.

²³¹ The only “notable” example is the one of San Pietro in Carpignano where evidence of a privileged burial is limited to one individual and to one epitaph compared to the numerous specimens documented for both in Noli and Capo Don.

the lack of clear evidence of aristocratic residences in this period for Liguria and Italy remains an unsolved problem, unless we imagine that the economic efforts of these upper classes were directed only towards church dedications (and burials).²³²

Less important hamlets were marked by rural churches that usually lay in correspondence of the old Roman roads with access to the sea. These minor structures sometimes replaced the previous *mansiones* in the sense that they were built in their immediate vicinity, such as at Brugnato (located inland and future bishopric), San Bartolomeo al Mare and Diano Marina, suggesting a role of reference points in the countryside for scattered communities or villages of which no evidence has yet been exposed but which are suggested by the frequent presence of burial areas (San Pietro in Carpignano and Sant'Ermite can also be potentially ascribed to the same phenomenon even though their origin was probably connected to a Roman villa).²³³ In general the flourishing of rural churches and the consequent Christianisation of the countryside (in this case mostly the coast) in Liguria, began during the second half of the 5th century and continued throughout the Early Middle Ages, in time evolving into the system of the parishes or *Pievi*.²³⁴ Smaller religious sites are in general poorly documented, although a good parallel can be found in Tuscany at the site of Pava, though this shows a wealth in its burials in no way comparable with the Ligurian sites.²³⁵ This type of complexity and social stratigraphy in Liguria is only attested at sites such as Noli and Capo Don, featuring larger churches with baptismal fonts and connection with the local elites. This might reflect a form of hierarchy between sites, while the “simplicity” of the decoration and structure of the major baptismal churches compared with richer examples in central and southern Italy might testify to the status of the Ligurian aristocracy being generally poorer than the southern Italian one.²³⁶

On a minor scale, the small Ligurian plains were dotted by villages such as Corti and probably also Varignano and Albissola, plus many less definable settlements, mostly documented by the presence of ‘tile stations’, churches, necropolis, and caves. The relatively homogeneous distribution of the evidence across the flatlands of eastern and

²³² Benente 2017, p. 211.

²³³ For a Ligurian perspective: Corsi 2007. The uncertainty in this sense came from the usually small areas explored and from the difficulties sometimes to distinguish a small rural villa from a *mansio*. On this problem of identification: Corsi 2020.

²³⁴ Frondoni 2007b, 2018b; on the Ligurian baptismal churches: Frondoni 2001a.

²³⁵ Felici 2016 and previous bibliography.

²³⁶ On the status of the Italian aristocracy: Brown 1984, pp. 21-60; Barnish 1988; Cosentino 1996, pp. 21-86; Wickham 2005, pp. 155-168; Prigent 2021.

western Liguria provide an image of a relatively well populated countryside and certainly not a depopulated one, such as prevails in some areas of southern Tuscany or Latium.²³⁷ The vast majority of rural sites continued to remain on the coastal plains, close to the ports and roads and usually directly established atop earlier Roman settlements or in their immediate vicinity, without a marked shift from plain to hilltop (as occurred in some parts of central-south Tuscany, Languedoc, and probably parts of Provence).²³⁸ What seemingly occurs in Liguria is a shift from villa to village and, possibly, scattered homesteads in some areas, accompanied by a lessening in the number of sites. This picture is probably more coherent with what happened in some southern Italian areas (for example, Sicily), even if on a much smaller and poorer scale.²³⁹ What might seem odd, due to the political uncertainty of the period, was the crisis of the inland and hillside settlements which had reappeared around the 4th century (the so-called ‘tile stations’) only to vanish again by the 6th century. These upland sites, in the common imagination, provided locals with a safe haven due to their location, even if security was not the primary reason for their existence.

More complex is assessing the situation of the hinterland. If the militarized border with the Longobards was placed by the Byzantines not far from the coast, as considered in Chapter 4, what happened to the array of inland settlements attested by the “tile stations”? While minimal data are available for western Liguria, the picture that emerges in the central-eastern part of the region is one of reoccupation, starting in the 4th century, of internal areas abandoned during the first two centuries of the Roman Empire. The reasons behind this phenomenon are unclear, even though a general trend in the occupation of marginal areas has been recognized in other parts of the peninsula during the 4th century.²⁴⁰ Did the crisis of the villa system triggered a reorganisation of the productive landscape? Should we interpret this as a sign of demographic growth – possibly the only sign of economic expansion of the so-called 4th century recovery? Certainly, most of these inland farms were abandoned between the late 5th and 6th centuries – a trend that is hard not to attribute, at least in part, to the militarisation of the area and the transformation of the inland mountains into a frontier (or more likely a no-man’s land) between Byzantines and Longobards. On

²³⁷ Valenti 2004, pp. 65-81; Christie 2006, pp. 412-422; Molinari 2021, pp. 395-401. For a reinterpretation of the Tuscan data see the volume of Bianchi & Hodges 2018; in particular: Hodges 2018; Bianchi & Collavini 2018.

²³⁸ Chapter 5.6.

²³⁹ See the section on Sicily in Chapter 5: Chapter 5.6.

²⁴⁰ This was not a general trend, but was present, for example, in northern Italy: Francovich & Hodges 2003, pp. 38-43; more in general: Sfameni 2004.

arrival the Byzantines took control of the existing system and adjusted it according to their needs, focusing attention on the coast and the immediate inland regions; this possibly sparked a crisis in the interior or else sealed an already ongoing one. The investment in the settlement of Savona provided the micro-region with a new defended centre, since *Vada Sabatia* was going through a period of crisis and was also less defensible, while the creation of Varigotti provided the Finale Ligure zone with a fortified natural harbour. Alongside this clearer State-driven intervention, the regional economy and countryside were in a phase of reconstruction. The evident reopening of the mine of Monte Loreto and the establishment of metal workshops in Noli and possibly also at Capo Don, are some of the many indicators of new forms of exploitation of local resources, probably due to the difficulties in acquiring raw materials from beyond the region. However, the evidence is still too scarce to be properly rationalized. The presence of seals and monetary weights in some of the main rural centres (i.e. Varigotti, Noli, and San Pietro in Carpignano) are further signs of a vital centralized administration.

Ultimately, Liguria shows a pattern not too dissimilar to other Italian regions that were still under Imperial control (notably, Puglia, Sardinia, and Sicily) and that continued to survive in relatively good conditions during the 5th-6th century. Despite a decrease in the number of sites compared to the Roman period and a consistently small scale compared to other richer regions, the region's late antique and Byzantine countryside was not deserted. Byzantine influence is visible in the survival of late antique centres and the addition of semi-urban fortified coastal settlements and, as we will see, "internal" ones. A real shift towards the hills did not begin until the 8th-9th centuries with many sites maintaining their lowland position even during this time – San Pietro in Carpignano, Noli, and Capo Don. This phenomenon was caused by different issues, involved urban centres (at least *Albintimilium* and Genoa), and must have been probably connected with a new state of military insecurity of the coast due to Saracen raids; while throughout the Byzantine rule, coastal plains were likely the safest part of the region.

Economically, the Byzantine authorities enabled a constant flow of goods to the province's ports, subsequently redistributed to the immediate inland sites. Some goods, such as oil and wine, were not locally produced in large quantities as shown by the few available

archaeobotanical studies.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, common Mediterranean agricultural practices remain evident such as mixtures of cereals (usually the majority) and legumes. The only evidence of oil and wine production comes from Filattiera-Sorano and the letters of Gregory the Great, mentioning a small vineyard near Genoa.²⁴² Animal husbandry is clearly visible, also because of the easier recovery and study of animal bones, showing an overall predominance of sheep and goat over pigs.²⁴³ This demonstrates how the local population was able to sustain themselves or at least to locally contribute to the basic needs of their diet, while some products may have been mostly imported either in exchange for some form of raw local resource (wood, for example) or as a state tribute (*annona*).²⁴⁴ An increase in local production of pottery is attested, for example, in *Albintimilium*, which was able to trade its goods along the Ligurian coast.²⁴⁵ A similar phenomenon is recorded for Finale stone, substituting marble imports from *Luna* and the Mediterranean areas. In this case, the former international marble industry of the Roman colony was substituted by a much smaller production reduced to a regional market. Micro- and regional exchanges were also established with neighbouring regions such as the south of France and the Alpine region with the introduction of soapstone vessels, Gallic DSP and other products, all part of a much more regionalized and integrated economy.²⁴⁶ More complex – and overdue – would be a proper reconstruction of the natural environment, climate, and ecology of this period, but this would need sustained and specific studies.²⁴⁷

Overall, the Byzantine Ligurian countryside, following the oscillations of the Late Roman period with the contemporary expansion and abandonment of inland settlements, can be seen as changing into an organized economic system established along the coast and in its immediate vicinity, areas that were still benefitting from the Mediterranean *koine* of goods that the Byzantine Empire was still able to supply. At the same time, it was reorganizing itself into a more localized economy dependent on the products readily available in its own

²⁴¹ Chapter 5.4.1.

²⁴² For the date on Filattiera-Sorano: Chapter 5.2.1; for Gregory's letter: Chapter 1.4.3.

²⁴³ The only exception is Castrum Perti where proportions are reversed: Chapter 5.2.4.

²⁴⁴ The fact that vineyards might be attested in Lunigiana finds a parallel with Classic sources which claimed that the wine produced around *Luna* was of high quality: Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, XIV.8.68.

²⁴⁵ Chapter 5.3.1.

²⁴⁶ Balzaretti, Pearce & Watkins 20004; Balzaretti 2013, pp. 13-34; Chapter 5.4.1.

²⁴⁷ While data can be integrated with poor textual sources beginning in the Longobard period, suggesting the creation of high pastures at the expense of woodlands, for the Byzantine phase there is still too little evidence to provide an overall picture: Balzaretti 2013, pp. 13-34.

countryside and the micro-regional interaction between the different elements of its landscape as well as its near neighbours.

Chapter 4

The Defence of a Province: City Walls, *κᾱστρα*, and Watchtowers

4.1 Introduction

The idea of a Byzantine fortified frontier against the Longobards in Liguria was first postulated by Ubaldo Formentini and Pietro Ferrari in the 1920s and developed by other scholars, like Nino Lamboglia.¹ Yet any physical evidence of this '*limes*' was very ephemeral at the time, with the theory mainly based on ambiguous written sources such as George of Cyprus or the Anonymous of Ravenna, on toponymy, geographical assumptions, and arbitrary attributions of defensive sites to the era.² Formentini and Ferrari had both experienced the horrors of World War I, which may well suggested to them the idea of a sort of "trench warfare" between Byzantines and Longobards. This was reflected in their papers, with the idea of a sophisticated *limes*, active in terms of military operations and highly militarised on both sides. Here the word *limes* was still connected to the idea of a defined line marked by fortified settlements, a definition no longer acceptable.³

It was only from the 1970s that the fortifications of Liguria became one of the subjects of interest of the ISCuM group, and of Tiziano Mannoni in particular, who initiated a series of investigations around medieval castles to seek their origins and functions.⁴ Often no evidence emerged to sustain a Byzantine foundation, but occasionally, Byzantine occupational phases were discovered, based – unlike the earlier historians' hypotheses – on material evidence. Noticeably, a number of these naturally defended hilltops originated in later prehistory (in the late Bronze Age and Iron Age) and often preserved the indicative

¹ Formentini 1930; Ferrari 1926; Lamboglia 1939.

² For Liguria Ferrari 1926; Formentini 1930. Conti applied a similar methodology interpreting the Italian section of George of Cyprus: Conti 1975. The same method was used again recently in areas where the archaeological evidence is still lacking such as the section of coast between Genoa and Sestri Levante or the interior: Petracco 2015, 2018b. For a more modern approach on similar themes in northern Italy: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996. See also Chapter 3.2.1; 3.2.2.

³ Isaac 1988.

⁴ Mannoni 1984, 2000. This research line also led to the development of a Medieval Archaeology in Liguria with the aim of exploring the Ligurian experience of "incastellamento": Benente 2000b and in general 2000a.

toponym of Castellaro.⁵ Excavations across the period 1980-2010 at sites like Campo Marzio, Castrum Perti, Varazze, Filattiera-Sorano, Monte Castello, Zignago, and Aulla, have generated essential archaeological data to give insights into the frontier, its articulation, its possible personnel, and its connections with the coastal cities, where Byzantine soldiers and officers are attested in the epigraphic evidence.

New syntheses and analyses appeared from the later 1980s,⁶ placed Liguria in a wider model of Byzantine strategy in Italy, underlining the (then) higher level of relevant data offered in Liguria compared to many other parts of the peninsula.⁷ The new material evidence on the *limes* moved the discussion away from the rather arbitrary interpretation of the near-contemporary geographical sources, which referenced cities and *castra* held by the Byzantine Empire between the late 6th and 7th centuries, but with often problematic identifications – except for the main urban centres – which prompted an array of differing views.⁸ This is why, in an effort of synthesis and of referring only to “secure” archaeological data, I have mostly avoided the debate around these sources in this chapter, noting how many sites, such as Castrum Perti, do not appear in those sources at all.

These new data can help to insert Liguria into the debate on the nature of militarised frontiers in Italy and in the Byzantine Empire as a whole. Italy and, in general, the western Byzantine domains, never saw the degree of investment and complexity which characterised the eastern regions of the Empire, since the enemies who threatened these regions were traditionally seen as less capable of successfully besieging well-defended fortresses.⁹ Moreover, the Eastern Byzantine heartlands were far richer and populous, and more adept at collecting the resources for larger military infrastructures. The Italian peninsula was sheltered by the Alps and their *clusae*, which guarded the main mountain passes.¹⁰ The Longobard arrival broke this defensive line – unless they were in fact ‘invited in’ as *federates*¹¹ – while their violent expansion towards the south forced the newly constituted Po and Apennine frontier and transformed forever the peninsula into a patchwork of regions

⁵ The toponym is indicative of a fortification, but it is not related to any specific historical period.

⁶ Christie 1989, 1990; Greppi 2008.

⁷ Zanini 1998; Christie 2006, pp.281-399;

⁸ Conti 1967; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996; Petracco 2015, 2018; Cosentino *forthcoming*.

⁹ This was true in North Africa, the Balkans, and now also Italy. On North Africa: Pringle 1981; for the Balkans: Poulter 2007; Gandila 2018. Sources regarding barbarians and sieges: Strategikon, XI.

¹⁰ Christie 1991a, 2007; Gasparri 1995; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996; Poulter 2021.

¹¹ Christie 1991b.

under different political control (Byzantine or Longobard).¹² Italy was thus divided by a series of 'internal' frontiers, each one different in regards to geographical, political, demographic, cultural, and economic aspects.¹³ The persistence, albeit shrunken, of Byzantine control in Italy preserved some form of homogeneity inside their domains, such as the necessary creation of defensive lines, but regional characterisation became more evident and important. In Liguria the geographical element was probably the most evident and influential in developing local strategies, with some minor micro-regional differentiation. Here, the landscape was broken up by mountains and valleys, compressed in a few kilometres of land between the peaks and the sea, the *limes* was far from a distinguishable line of forts well away from the urban, civil, centres. In this context, every settlement in Liguria could be potentially considered part of the military make-up of the province, but only some were fortified, suggesting an effort to maintain a functional distinction between walled cities, *castra*, unprotected villages, and churches.

This chapter will consider how fortresses were erected in Byzantine Liguria to respond to new strategic issues posed by the Longobard invasion of 569 and their subsequent expansion and encroachments on Imperial lands, and how far they can be seen to have interacted with urban fortifications as part of a coherent system. Following an overview of the coastal-urban defences (Section 4.2), I will analyse the evidence for the *castra* of the interior and Byzantine foundations (Section 4.3-4.6). I will mostly avoid the debate around the identification of *castra* mentioned by the ancient geographers and toponymy, to avoid further speculation beside the ones already proposed, and to stick to the archaeological evidence. As we will see, the noted Ligurian micro-regional geographical differentiations (Chapter 3.1) did influence the forms of these military defences and their scale. Next, Section 4.7 debates the logistical problems – and tactical advantages – of Liguria's distinctive landscape articulation for the Byzantine military officials and troops based there. The concluding Section 4.8 provides an overview of the likely Byzantine defensive system in Liguria, showing how the coastlands were sheltered by an integrated system of fortified ports (most of these also urban centres), inland *castra*, and watchtowers controlling valleys and land communication routes (Fig. 4.1). We will see how far this was a populated inland landscape and how far we can estimate troop numbers.

¹² Zanini 1998, p. 226.

¹³ These were the five categories identified by Parker in its "continuum of frontier dynamics": Parker 2006.

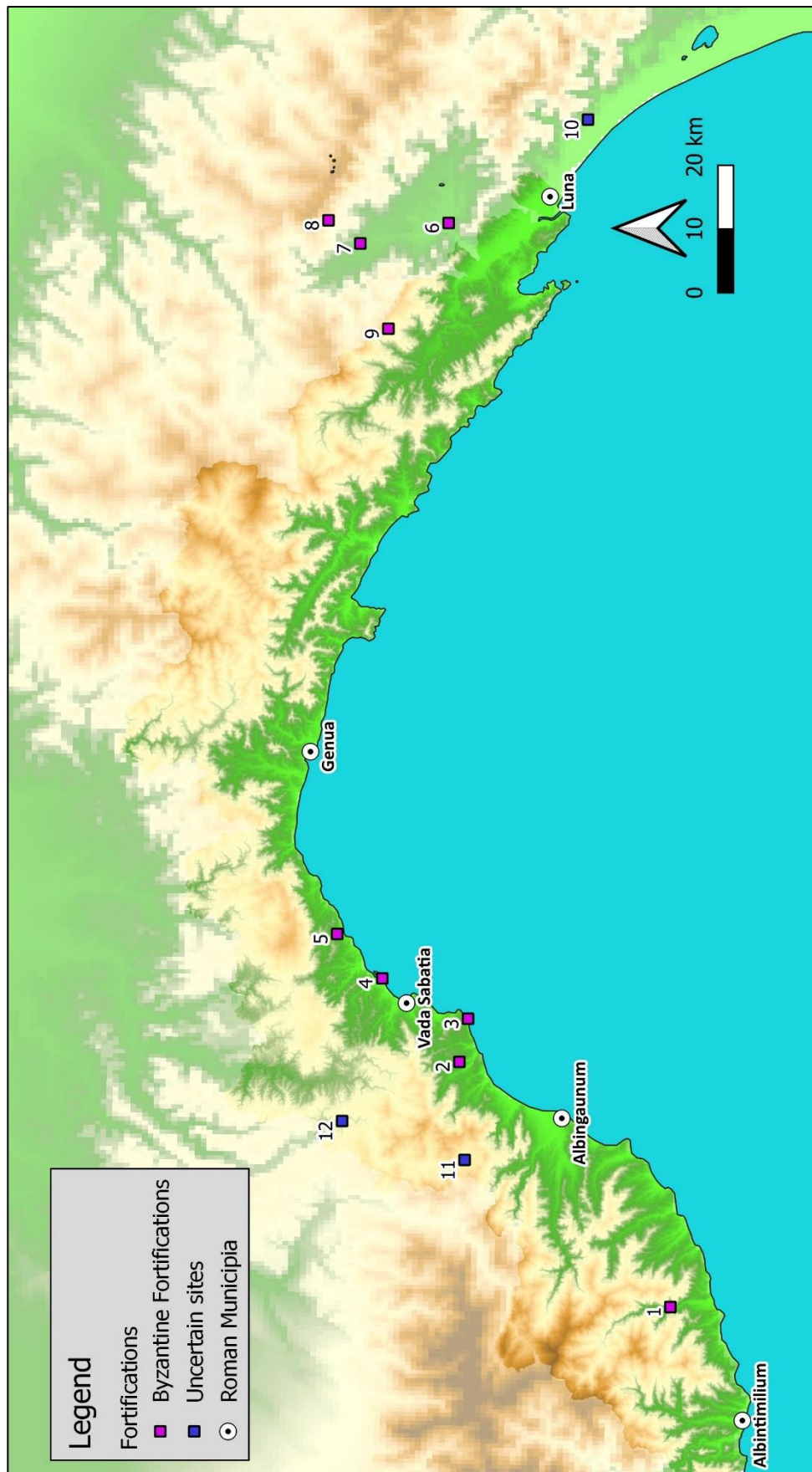


Figure 4.1) Byzantine Fortifications in Liguria: 1) Campo Marzio; 2) Castrum Perti; 3) Varigotti; 4) Savona; 5) San Donato; 6) Aulla; 7) Filattiera-Sorano; 8) Monte Castello in val di Caprio; 9) Zignago. Possible late antique/early medieval fortifications: 10) Castellum Aghinulfi; 11) Bardineto; 12) Millesimo. (Source: Author)

4.2 Defending the Coastal Cities

As discussed in Chapter 3.1, Liguria's coastal cities were all important ports and were sited along the *via Aurelia*. By the time of the Byzantine arrival, they already had some form of fortification, primarily town walls, although we cannot exclude internal citadels and refuges. Coastal Liguria seems to have been partially sheltered from the series of invasions which shocked central-northern Italy in the late 4th and earlier 5th centuries, or the sources are silent about it. Archaeologically we can see an effort in refortifying the cities with only Constantius' intervention at *Albingaunum* securely dated to c. 420.¹⁴ This was a response to the damage, or the threat caused by the Visigothic troops of Athaulf, who withdrew in 411 to Gaul after having raided Rome and southern Italy.¹⁵ While several scholars have taken for granted the sack of at least some coastal centres, no strong evidence exists to support this;¹⁶ in fact, Athaulf may have instead marched north via Turin, completely avoiding the Ligurian passes.¹⁷ Constantius' interventions at *Albingaunum*,¹⁸ could have simply been an effort to renew the defences of a town as was happening elsewhere in northern Italy especially.¹⁹

A more concrete threat to the Ligurian coastline came a century later during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars (535-553). This took the shape of possible Frankish raids in 539.²⁰ Perhaps surprisingly, Genoa is the only Ligurian settlement named in the Byzantine-Gothic Wars narrative of Procopius, who notes that it held an Imperial garrison in 544. Of the other towns only, *Luna* is mentioned at the very end of the War, when it surrendered to the Imperial general Narses (553).²¹ The documented record of garrisons and sieges at both sites attests active military defence works, but for the most part, there is little archaeology to illustrate

¹⁴ Ward-Perkins 1984, pp. 179-200; Zanini 1998, pp. 209-222; Christie 2006, pp. 319-324; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998b, pp. 59-76; for *Albingaunum*: Chapter 2.4.2.

¹⁵ Heather 1996, pp. 148-151.

¹⁶ Studying *Vada Sabatia* Lamboglia noted the existence of a destruction layer caused by fire in levels generically dated after the 3rd century. Beside the fact that fire does not equal necessarily to a military invasion, the connection with Athaulf is not self-evident. He also proposed a similar scenario in *Albintimilium* and since then the theory has been often repeated: Lamboglia 1955b, pp. 39-40; Christie 1990, p. 249; Pavoni 1992, pp. 82-84.

¹⁷ Chapter 1.4.1.

¹⁸ The transformation of *Albinganum* into a "small regional capital", without any specific evidence, has been suggested by Pergola: Chapter 2.4.2.

¹⁹ In Italy epigraphic sources on refortifications are not common, as it is for example for north Africa, still in many centres generic late antique fortifications are attested archaeologically. For the north Italian situation: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996; Brogiolo 2000; Christie 1992, 2001, 2006, pp. 284-299; Latimer 2010.

²⁰ Chapter 1.4.2.

²¹ Agathias, *Histories*, I.11.6.

these military upheavals (i.e. destruction levels). However, we can look at the evidence for city walls in these cities, whether, as for many other centres, they were maintained, modified, or improved during Late Antiquity, such as reducing the space they protected, and if the Byzantines had any impact in this process.

4.2.1 *Luna*

Due to its more isolated position *Luna* was probably the headquarters for the eastern part of Liguria, seemingly supported by a series of fortified settlements disposed around it. While Gregory the Great's letters attest the regular presence of a bishop, the military authority's presence is less secure, with the dubious case of the *magister militum* Aldio.²² As an isolated, frontline city, distant from any other Byzantine major settlement (about 100km from either Genoa or Bologna), with the temporary exception of Pisa (soon to be lost), *Luna* will have required strong defensive capability and a military force with a commander of note – if not a *magister militum* then at least a *comes* or *dux*.

Luna's first fortifications derived from the foundation of the Roman colony, but these became redundant and were partially robbed already during the early Empire, as revealed in excavations in the western part of the curtain and around the theatre.²³ Yet they did see some form of renewal: drawings and maps from the Renaissance to the modern era usually depict remnant town walls still clearly visible until modern agricultural developments. However, we do not know how much of the ruins visible in the 17th century corresponded with those of the Roman colony, or if they had a more complex history of restorations, demolition, and reconstruction that only an accurate structural survey could have clarified. The same thing is true for the “medieval” circuit wall, smaller and clearly distinguishable from the Roman one by the different construction technique and the large use of *spolia* described, at the beginning of the 18th century, by De Rossi, but for which no archaeological evidence has emerged so far.²⁴ Nonetheless, *Luna* must have had some form of built defence in Late Antiquity since it was one of the last Ostrogothic garrison points to peacefully surrender to Narses.²⁵ Nowadays the circuit line lies well under the ground, having been demolished or

²² Aldio was most probably based in central Italy: Chapter 1.4.3.

²³ Chapter 2.2.2.2.

²⁴ De Rossi 1776; Varaldo Grotin 1995.

²⁵ Chapter 1.4.2.

robbed out for construction materials; aerial photography and surveys have generated a precise plan of walls, gates, and roads, but do not clarify their history and chronology.²⁶

Of the city's four gates, only the northern and the western ones have seen any investigation.²⁷ The West Gate, corresponding to the north-western corner of the episcopal quarter,²⁸ has seen partial excavation, together with small sections of the main wall. Two phases of construction have been identified: a Republican one and one generically defined as late antique.²⁹ The internal circuit, which protected the cathedral (see below), was connected with the western gate and the *cardo maximus* which was still active and restored until the Early Middle Ages (Fig. 2.4), at least around the *forum*,³⁰ suggesting a continuous usage. These data suggest that the western gate too remained active during Late Antiquity. In the theatre zone test-pitting revealed two distinct construction phases: a sort of *agger*, filled with rubble, bricks, and earth, covered the abandoned Republican wall,³¹ already quarried on at least two occasions. The same *agger* also abutted against the still-standing walls of the theatre.³² A major collapse, probably caused by the 4th century earthquake, damaged this section of defences;³³ subsequently, some of the walls were demolished and new structures built, perhaps to prevent a subsidence into the theatre *ambulacrum*. The latest constructions, in *opus caementicium*, likely belong to the late 4th or 5th century date before the Byzantine occupation.³⁴

The area of the cathedral was defined and protected by another wall, probably erected during the 5th century, which reused a section of the western Republican walls, while the other three sides were built anew.³⁵ This enclosure, depicted in post-medieval plans, has been postulated by modern archaeologists as a fortified episcopal quarter, encompassing an area of about 1.4ha compared with the 22ha of the Roman circuit.³⁶ A gate and 43 m of

²⁶ In the southern part of the city, a section of 300m of city walls were exposed in 1957 by Ugo Inglieri and the Soprintendenza, but no documentation exists apart from some photographs: Frova in *Luni I*, p.27.

²⁷ The few data available for the northern gate from old excavations are outlined by Durante, Durante 2001, p.9.

²⁸ On *Luna* episcopal centre: Chapter 2.2.2.1.

²⁹ The façade of the late antique phase was built with large, recycled schists, while the core comprised broken bricks, rubble, and fragments of marble with little mortar: Durante 2001, pp.38-39, 62-63.

³⁰ Chapter 2.2.2.1.

³¹ The façade was mainly built with reused schists of different dimensions and occasionally bricks carefully wedged in to form regular rows: Berton & Castelli 2014, pp.43-49.

³² Berton & Castelli 2014, pp.46-48.

³³ For the effect of the earthquake in other part of the city, Chapter 2.2.2.

³⁴ Berton & Castelli 2014 pp. 56-58; for the necropolis Chapter 2.2.2.2.

³⁵ Durante 2001, pp. 30-45, 62-63.

³⁶ Durante 2001, pp. 30-45, 62-63.

its walling have been archaeologically examined on its northern side: the gate corresponded to a minor *cardo* which separated the two *insulae* which made up the area of the church complex; the wall was built mainly with reused schist and cobbles with a technique similar to *opus spicatum*.³⁷ No towers are evident in this ‘episcopal enceinte’, nor do we see evident reuse of any of the Republican ones. Given the limited thickness of the late antique walls at c. 0.8m wide, the impression is of limited ‘defensive’ utility, but mostly to mark out and control the access to the area.

Currently there is no archaeological trace of any Byzantine military citadel distinct from this hypothetical episcopal one, although such a structure is often connected by the scholars with the remains of the Great Temple in *Luna*’s north-western corner.³⁸ This suggestion mostly derives from drawings like Vinzoni’s 1752 plan (Fig. 2.1) where the Great Temple zone is labelled as “Castle”, depicting a tower encircled by a wall. However, archaeological interventions here revealed no trace of any fortification. In summary, we lack clear evidence to show any notable Byzantine defensive imprint – such as new towers – unless credence is given to the Great Temple ‘citadel’.³⁹ The lack of more complexes and imposing defences at a site without natural ones – *Luna* lay in the middle of a plain – may seem strange, yet this is a characteristic found in other Ligurian centres.

4.2.2 Genoa

Moving westwards, the defensive status of Genoa which was the most important port of Liguria and capital of the Byzantine province, remains wholly unknown: no evidence has yet emerged of any kind of military structure in the city until the 9th-10th century. As noted, Genoa was probably raided by the Franks in 539 and it hosted a Byzantine garrison in 544.⁴⁰ While the raid might hint at an exposed site, the Byzantine military presence in 544 and the threat of a siege from the Ostrogoths argues for a quite different scenario, with a city able to protect itself and reinforced by some form of fortification. However, only later, in the context of

³⁷ Durante 2001, pp.62-63, with plates IV and V (US 60). The same technique is visible elsewhere in the area; quite probably the extramural church of Saint Peter was built with this technique.

³⁸ For example: Lusuardi Siena 2007, p. 136.

³⁹ Nor are there traces of ‘typical’ characteristic Byzantine and late antique defensive features such as the use of triangular sections of walls as seen at Aquileia, or the presence of more sophisticated structures such as *proteichisma*. For Aquileia: Groh 2011; Marano 2012. A potential comparison for the Great Temple hypothesis is probably Cosa, whose small acropolis also offered some elevated ground as a tactical advantage: Fentress 2003, pp.72-91.

⁴⁰ Procopius, *Gothic War*, VII.x.14-18. The Byzantine commander, Bonus, is mentioned in a plot against Belisarius when Totila sent five men to deliver a forged letter to spy on Belisarius’ forces and make him believe that Genoa was under siege.

Longobard expansion, do we hear directly of a Byzantine garrison again, when the city hosted a *numerus*, a Byzantine military unit composed of maximum 400-500 men. This is testified by the lost epitaph of Magnus, *miles* of the *numerus felicitum Laetorum*, who died in 596.⁴¹ How long the unit remained in Liguria is unclear, since the same *numerus* is later mentioned in Ravenna.⁴² Finally, when Liguria fell to Rothari's Longobards, the chronicle of the pseudo-Fredeggar mentions "*muris civitatebus superscriptis usque ad fundamentum destruens*", implying the existence of some walls, even if this is almost a formulaic sentence potentially describing very little of the real situation.⁴³ Archaeologically, the first fortress known in Genoa relates to the episcopal palace on top of Colle di Castello, with a defensive wall broadly dated to between the 7th and 10th century.⁴⁴ Eventually, the city was properly encircled by a curtain wall during the 10th century, the first of many to come.⁴⁵

The usual hypothesis of a Byzantine citadel on Colle di Castello lacks archaeological support.⁴⁶ The hill, despite dominating the port, seems to have been a marginal place during the 5th and 6th centuries, featuring a few graves and rubbish pits.⁴⁷ If there was a duality of centres - hilltop citadel and an active part of the old Roman town - Colle di Castello was likely not part of this as has previously been suggested.⁴⁸ A Byzantine *presidium* has been postulated in the area of Santo Stefano, on the city's eastern edge, for its strategic control of the roads, but it too lacks again any archaeological support;⁴⁹ likewise the area of the church of Santa Sabina has been connected with a nearby garrison point without any real evidence beside the epitaph of Magnus.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, our sources indicate Genoa as the main Ligurian city, seat of the displaced metropolitan from Milan and of a *praefectus*, and we must expect some defences of note here.⁵¹ As noted in Chapter 2, meanwhile, we must stress that we know very little even of Roman Genoa and so tracing the late antique centre will be even more problematic, especially in a heavily urbanized modern context.

⁴¹ Christie 1990, pp.243; Chapter 2.3.2.1.

⁴² Brown 1984, p. 90.

⁴³ Despite its laconic the text of Fredeggar is the longer one at our disposal of the few narrating these events, Fredeggar, *Chronicon*, IV, 71.

⁴⁴ Gardini 1996a, pp.166-69.

⁴⁵ Cagnana & Roascio 2007.

⁴⁶ Cagnana & Roascio 2007, pp. 270-273; Chapter 2.3.2.1.

⁴⁷ Chapter 2.3.2.2.

⁴⁸ Christie 1989, p.24.

⁴⁹ Dufour Bozzo 1989.

⁵⁰ For Santa Sabina: Christie 1989, pp. 24, 1990, pp. 243; Chapter 2.3.2.1.

⁵¹ Chapter 1.4.3.

4.2.3 *Albingaunum*

With the demise of *Vada Sabatia*, *Albingaunum* became the first of the western Roman *municipia*, probably one of the most prosperous due to its position in one of the largest Ligurian plains.⁵² The Roman circuit and its late antique version were both found in Lamboglia's excavations, running parallel to each other, and encompassing an area of about 7.5ha.⁵³ The late antique walls, probably built by Constantius', also provided the foundation for the medieval walls.⁵⁴ However, Lamboglia's excavations were only published as short reports, with no specific detail on wall construction techniques, associated materials, and stratigraphy. Both the Republican and the late antique structures, if coterminous with the medieval fortifications, should encompass an area of 7.5ha, making *Albingaunum* one of the largest fortified cities in Liguria.⁵⁵ Noticeably, as for *Luna*, no towers, or other basic defensive features such as ditches or a *proteichisma* have been traced. In a recent article Roascio proposed that the remains of a late antique structure excavated in the city centre represented half of a polygonal tower (4,5x3m), part of a smaller internal circuit surrounding the cathedral zone. The potential borders of this circuit have been supported by the dubious suggestion that some medieval towers of the city centre could hid a late antique foundation.⁵⁶ Although appealing, offering a parallel with *Luna* and its "internal circuit", the evidence is overall still too ephemeral. *Albingaunum*, however, was probably the headquarters of the *comes et tribunus* Tzittani in 568, who was likely commanding at least one *numerus*;⁵⁷ his presence should recommend that the Byzantines ensured the viability of the city walls and were actively involved in the defence at least with the provision of troops.

4.2.4 *Albintimilium*

The situation of the westernmost of the Ligurian cities is again problematic. I proved how the city was not classified as a *castrum* after all, as suggested by Lamboglia and others.⁵⁸ George of Cyprus and the other geographers, always mention the site as one of the cities, and the archaeological evidence seems to suggest so.⁵⁹

⁵² Chapter 2.4.1.

⁵³ Chapter 2.4.2; 2.6.

⁵⁴ On the medieval fortifications: Costa Restagno 1993-1994, 1997-1998.

⁵⁵ This is still hypothetical because the city walls have been intercepted only in sections of the western and southern curtain, so the dimensions are estimated on their full correspondence with the medieval circuit.

⁵⁶ Roascio 2018.

⁵⁷ For the epitaphs of his wife: Appendix 2, n. 4.

⁵⁸ Chapter 2.5.2.2.

⁵⁹ Appendix 1; for the archaeological evidence: Chapter 2.5.2; 5.3.1.4.



Figure 4.2) Albitimilium: The “Byzantine” wall, with the application of opus spicatum, near Porta Marina.
(Source: Author)

Albintimilium presents two main problems: there is limited evidence for the old Roman town; and there is a possibility of an early shift of part of the settlement to the Cavo hill, where the medieval centre later flourished. Archaeologically, Republican period walls, which included a series of circular towers, were decommissioned already during the early Empire; even the western gate came to be obliterated by new structures.⁶⁰ The sole possible proof of a late antique fortification comes from the excavation of Martino around “Porta Marina” (Fig. 2.18) Here a wall (Fig. 4.2), constructed in part with *opus spicatum*, was associated with a building erected between the 5th and 6th century according to the material evidence.⁶¹ We can observe about half of a possible U-shaped tower or similar, which would be a *unicum* in the context of the late antique and Byzantine Ligurian urban defences. This fortification is still putative, however, and needs a new study to help define any Byzantine period role.⁶² In this same part of the city Rossi in 1884 mentioned the existence of a now lost city gate which was still partially standing in his time, but it is impossible to suggest any hypothesis on the phases of the gate.⁶³ The Republican western gate and its towers were obliterated already by the construction of the Roman theatre.⁶⁴ Finally, the northern city wall, at least in the area

⁶⁰ Lamboglia 1959c, 1960b, 1962b.

⁶¹ Chapter 2.5.2.2.

⁶² Martino 1999.

⁶³ Lamboglia 1964c, pp.47-48.

⁶⁴ Most of the data are still unpublished, living this just a hypothesis.

of the necropolis investigated by Gandolfi, was apparently abandoned already in the 5th century together with the few structures identified on the internal side and a secondary gate.⁶⁵ Regarding Ventimiglia Alta, no direct data exist to reveal any military function with regard to the hill during this period. Certainly, some type of settlement was active between the 6th and 7th century, but nothing pointing to a fortress yet.⁶⁶ It is possible that there was a first colonisation of this space, as a first movement towards a more secure position, potentially even encouraged by the Byzantine authorities which might have wanted a defendable harbour with a good view nearby, but the lower town was occupied and in use at least during the Byzantine phase.

4.3 Between *Castra* and Cities: Coastal Defences at Savona and Varigotti

To help secure the coast and maritime supplies and to fill gaps in the control of the coastal land route between the cities, the Byzantines exploited and defended a number of ports and promontories. Controlling a regular network of secure harbours was a crucial prerequisite for the local authorities, hence the creation of at least two new strongholds at Savona and Varigotti, with only the first previously occupied. This Byzantine investment in such sites fits neatly with the Imperial strategy of coastal control, applied since the beginning of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars.⁶⁷

4.3.1 Savona

Savona was the ancestral home of the *Liguri Sabazi* and sided with Carthage during the Second Punic War. Consequently, it was punished by Rome to such an extent that it disappeared from the sources until 648.⁶⁸ After centuries of silence, Savona appears in the list of settlements sacked by Rothari, probably causing its demise for a period, with a bishop

⁶⁵ Chapter 2.5.2.2.

⁶⁶ Chapter 2.5.2.

⁶⁷ Christie 1990; 2006, pp.369-380; Zanini 1998, pp.234-44.

⁶⁸ *Savo Oppidum Alpinum* in: Livy, *History of Rome*, XXVII,16; Lamboglia 1978.



Figure 4.3) Savona: main gate of the Genoese fortress of the Priamàr which covered the late antique and medieval settlement. (Source Author)

moving back to the nearby *Vada Sabatia*, only to return to Savona in the 9th century.⁶⁹ The site was on an easily defended promontory, the Priamàr, overlooking a natural harbour, which must have immediately attracted the attention of the Byzantines who fortified the settlement. *Vada Sabatia*, on the contrary, was ill-equipped from a defensive point of view and apparently experienced a severe crisis starting in the 5th century.⁷⁰ The archaeology on the

promontory has been heavily impacted by the construction of a large 16th century Genoese fortress which destroyed most of the medieval settlement, including the cathedral (Fig. 4.3). However, archaeological research since the early 20th century has been able to recover valuable information.⁷¹ The Priamàr evidently hosted a Byzantine settlement, which was established on an existing hamlet, as testified by the earliest phases of a late antique and Byzantine necropolis dated between the 4th and 7th century (Fig. 4.4).⁷² After a period of abandonment, probably as consequence of the Longobard invasion, an 8th-early 9th century hamlet was established on the necropolis, probably connected with the first known cathedral.⁷³

⁶⁹ Varaldo 1975b; 1979-80.

⁷⁰ Lamboglia 1955b, 1976c; Christie 1990, p. 252.

⁷¹ The first finds are from 1903, with some first stratigraphic exploration in the 1950s and again in the 1960s with regular campaigns: Poggi 1903; Restagno 1956, 1959a, 1959b; Lamboglia 1959d, 1978; Varaldo 2000, 2001a.

⁷² The necropolis, under the Loggia del Castello Nuovo, was composed by 87 burials mostly “alla cappuccina”, with lithic elements, and enchytrismòs: Lavagna & Varaldo 1989, 1990; Varaldo 1990a; Varaldo et al. 1994; Lavagna 2000.

⁷³ There are no proof for a Byzantine church yet on the Priamàr: Varaldo 1979-80; Varaldo et al. 1996; Varaldo 2000, pp. 22-44; Lavagna & Varaldo 2010.

Excavations in the plain facing the Priamàr, radically changed Lamboglia's first picture of the Byzantine site, so far imagined entrenched on the hilltop.⁷⁴ From the area of the *ex contrada San Domenico*, in the plain immediately in front of the promontory, a 31m long wall was exposed, with a road and buildings running parallel to it. They all belong to the same phase, which has been dated, according to the materials, to the Byzantine occupation and enclosed a settlement of probably 3 or 4 ha.⁷⁵ Byzantine Savona now displayed the form of a semi-urban centre, in response to the demise of *Vada Sabatia*, but also to the Byzantine military needs of a fortified port in the area. This is further testified by the role that Savona played in the Middle Ages since, after the 9th century, it became the sole urban entity of the area and was targeted and defeated by Genoa for the control of the region and punished for its resistance with the construction of the Genoese fortress in the core of the late antique and medieval centre.

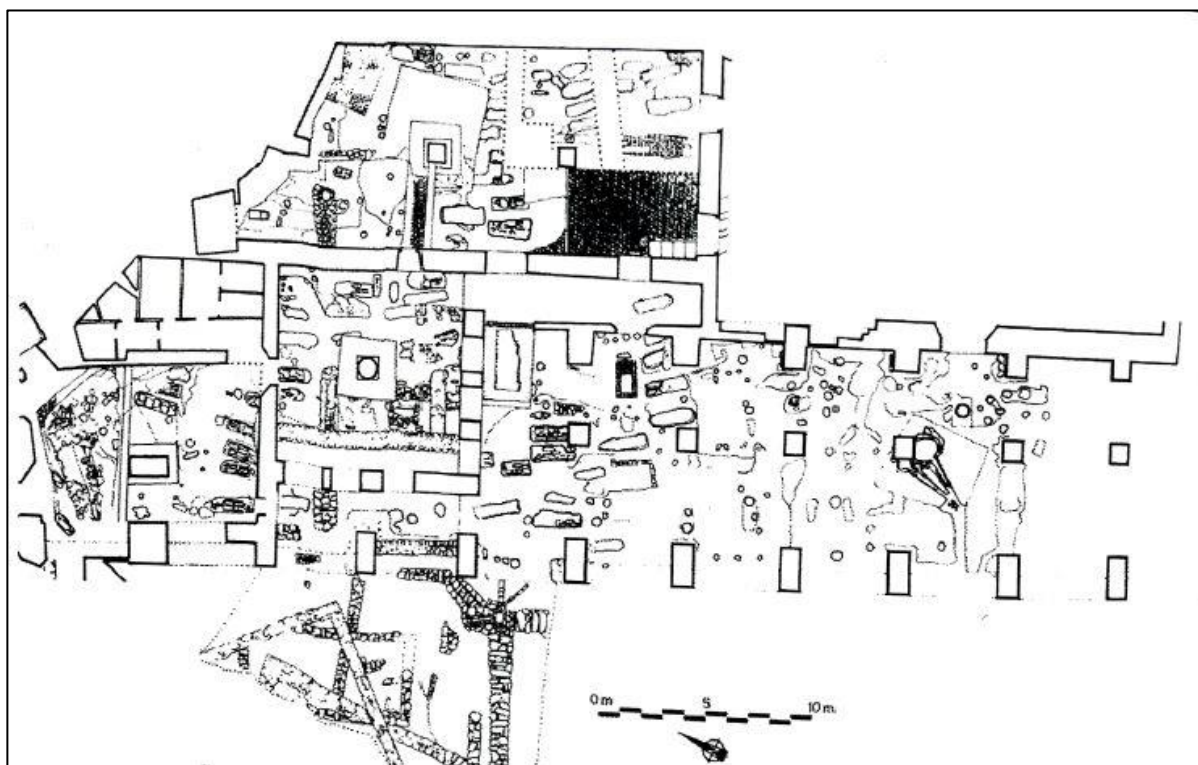


Figure 4.4) Priamàr: late antique and Byzantine necropolis of the Logge (Source Greppi 2008, tav. 14)

⁷⁴ Lamboglia 1978; Varaldo 1975.

⁷⁵ For more details on the materials: Chapter 5.3.2.

4.3.2 Varigotti

The other example under this category is Varigotti, another promontory protecting a natural small harbour from enemy attacks and against the most violent maritime storms, offering a very secure space for anchorage.⁷⁶ Ignored by all the sources and itineraries it only appears in the list *civitates* captured by Rothari in 643.⁷⁷ In the *Origo Gentis Langobardorum* the site is called “*civitates vel castra Romanorum*” which has led some scholars to debate the status of the settlement.⁷⁸ After the Longobard conquest, Varigotti then disappears again until the 10th century, when it is described as a fortified position, only to fall victim to Genoese expansionism which ordered the silting up of the port in 1348.⁷⁹ Lamboglia, grasped the importance of the site and protected it from construction, but never excavated it and he took for granted the Byzantine origins of the still visible fortifications. He, however, restored the nearby church of San Lorenzo, which he perceived as a complementary element of the settlement.⁸⁰ Modern excavations confirmed the medieval origin of the building in the 11th-12th century but only a sporadic late antique occupation.⁸¹

It was only in the 1990s that research inside the core of Varigotti revealed a medieval chronology for the visible ruins, starting from the 12th century (Fig. 4.6).⁸² However, several materials (ARSW, amphorae, and soapstone) suggested the existence of a Byzantine phase,⁸³ which was eventually confirmed by excavations which located a late antique/Byzantine wall and a small necropolis.⁸⁴ In the end very little is known regarding the internal organisation of the settlement, which at its best occupied a surface of probably 2-3ha. Varigotti never developed into a city but was still used as a fortified port well into the

⁷⁶ Mannoni 2005a, p. 16; for an overview on the settlement: Murialdo & Gagliardi 2005.

⁷⁷ Formentini was on the first to note the complete absence of the settlement from the Classical sources: Formentini 1947.

⁷⁸ Lamboglia 1946a.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of the sources: Murialdo 2005b, pp. 21-26; more in general on Varigotti as port: Giannichedda 1996.

⁸⁰ Lamboglia 1962a, 1976e.

⁸¹ Frondoni et al. 2000; Cagnana & Vecchiattini 2005; Palazzi, Parodi & Murialdo 2005. Older finds recovered sporadic element compatible with a late antique and Byzantine occupation, such as Justinian's coins and a “cappuccina” burial but with no associated structures: Formentini 1947; Lamboglia & Ugo 1952; Murialdo 2005b, p. 29.

⁸² Frondoni 2005, p. 62.

⁸³ Frondoni et al. 2000.

⁸⁴ The necropolis composed by three burials was also radiocarbon dated: Frondoni 2005.

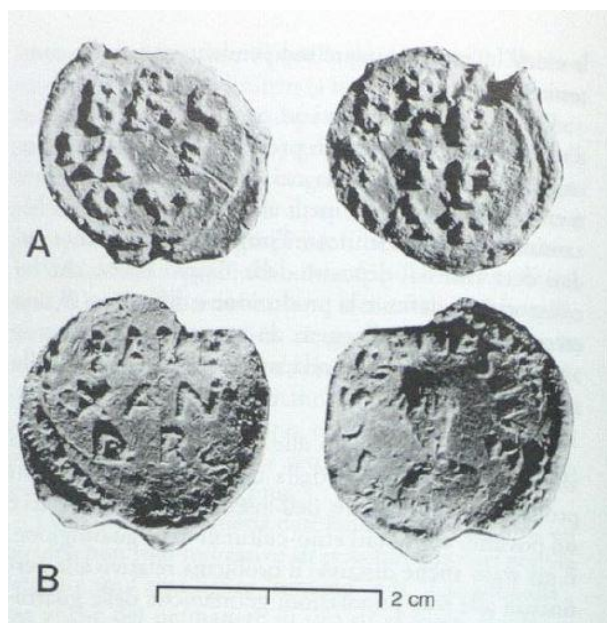


Figure 4.5) Varigotti: the seals recovered at Varigotti (Basilius above). (Source: Mannoni & Murialdo 2001, p. 765).

12th and 13th centuries.⁸⁵ It is significant that it is from here that we have the only attested Byzantine seal of the region, belonging to the *stratelates* Basilius, a high-military officer of whom we know nothing otherwise (Fig. 4.5).⁸⁶ While Varigotti may not have been the headquarters of the *stratelates*, it may have received his orders and hosted a small garrison commanded by an officer. Varigotti looks too small to be considered a town but too large for a simple *castra*, and, contrary to Savona, did not have a hinterland to rely on. It was, however, inserted into a wider defensive system with Castrum Perti (see below) only 6-

7 kilometres away, providing security from inland attacks on the settlements of Finale Ligure and Corti and guarding the Roman road, which supposedly bypassed Varigotti, following a path along the Val Ponci where several Roman bridges have been identified.⁸⁷ Varigotti's role was probably to safeguard the only secure natural port between Savona and Albingaunm (the site is halfway between them) since all the other anchorages were constituted by simple beaches, which were probably too exposed in the case of storms. Varigotti did not have the physical capacity of developing into a more complex reality, but it was functional to the needs of a Byzantine authority focused on the control of the maritime routes. Overall, the site might have been fairly similar to Castrum Perti, but it is still not possible to exclude a more significant residential and commercial role without further excavations.

⁸⁵ This is testified by new fortifications built on the promontory and by historical sources.

⁸⁶ The seal reads "+Basiliou +Stratelat". A Basilius with the same rank was at Constantinople between 550 and 650, while two *duces* are attested in Naples (661-666) and in Rome (725). Another seal, probably belonging to a religious authority (+Alexandr scs Genesius), was also recovered: Murialdo 2005b, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁷ Lamboglia 1954b; Bulgarelli 1990, 2001; Bulgarelli & Landi 2004; Chapter 3.3.3.

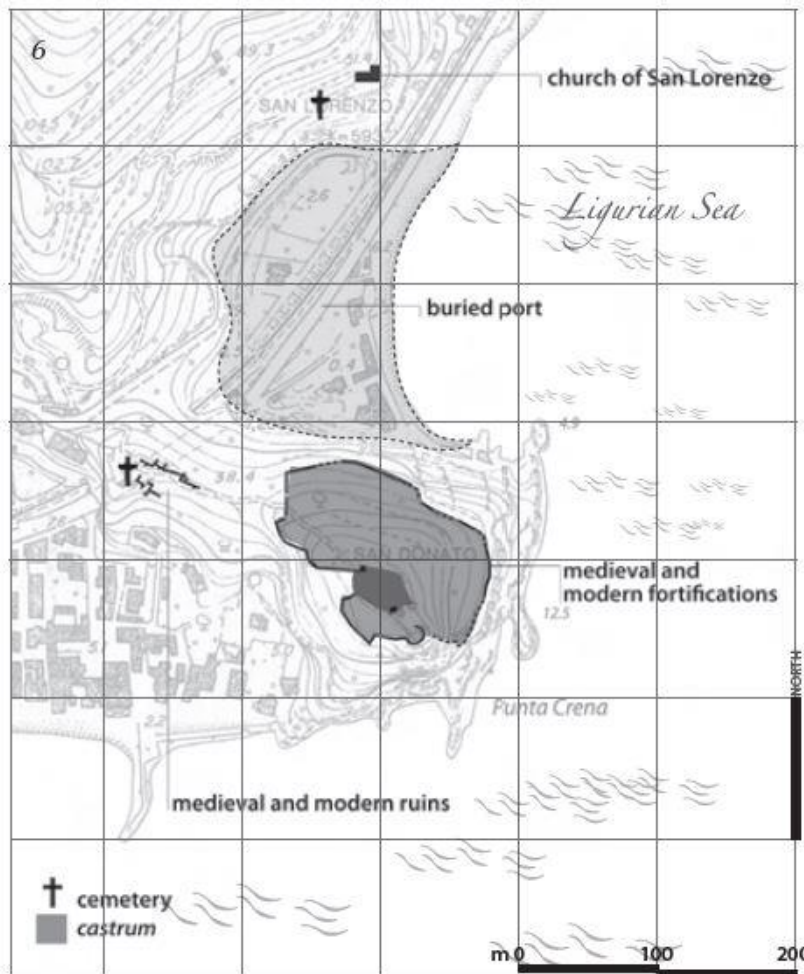


Figure 4.6) Varigotti: medieval fortifications. (Source: De Vingo 2011, p. 219, fig. 6)

In the end Savona and Varigotti shared a similar spatial conformation, they were both fortified, apparently lacked a church, but had necropoleis, and were in control of natural ports. The main difference was in the absence of an obvious urban structure for Varigotti, which did not have the space that could have hosted and supported a larger settlement. This fundamental point, however, had an impact only in the *longue durée* since Varigotti, having lost its defensive role, became a deserted hilltop, while Savona is one of the main centres of western Liguria. The Byzantines, however, were not

interested in modifying the settlement pattern of the region but needed secure ports to defend in order to maximise the advantage offered by their fleet in supplying what was left in their hands of the Ligurian hinterland. The sites were appropriate for these purposes and were chosen to be fortified. When war finally reached Liguria in 643, they deserved their space in the list of *civitas* and *castra* subjugated by Rothari, while other sites, such as *Vada Sabatia* and *Albintimilium*, were ignored. More sites like Savona or Varigotti could have been present in other coastal areas, such as Porto Maurizio, which have seen only minimal archaeological research so far, but which are also missing from the literary sources.

4.4 'Internal' Defence: Forts, Towers and 'Refuges'

In this section I will examine the series of fortifications that the Byzantines erected or reused in the interior of Liguria. Here, as elsewhere, we will see how the micro-geographical differences influenced the strategy adopted in the region, with differences between eastern, central, and western Liguria. Despite the advancement of research, however, we will also

see how entire regions, such as central Liguria, are still poorly known and understood from this perspective.

4.4.1 *Lunigiana, and the Eastern Liguria*

The eastern, Lunigiana region seems to comprise an almost separate section of the Ligurian landscape focused around the plain of the river Magra. While its eastern and northern borders are well studied, much less is known regarding the region connecting Lunigiana with Genoa.⁸⁸ This was partially due to the lack of substantial settlements, but also to the fact that limited archaeological research and rescue archaeology has been carried there.⁸⁹ A range of fortified settlements have been identified and partially excavated, mostly by the ISCuM, around the borders of the lower and higher Magra valley of the Lunigiana. The landscape that has emerged is one of defended villages, watchtowers, and refuges disposed around the city of *Luna* (Fig. 4.11). The list of sites, from west to east, comprises Zignago, Filattiera-Sorano, Aulla, Monte Castello and, possibly, Castrum Aghinolfi.

4.4.2 *Zignago*

The site was excavated in the 1970s within a wider project aimed at exploring a portion of the Ligurian landscape.⁹⁰ Zignago is located on the Castellaro hill (950m asl), at about 7km north of the late antique church of Brugnato,⁹¹ near the internal road going from the Lunigiana to Genoa. The late antique site was severely damaged by the construction of a (replacement) 11th-12th century tower with enclosing wall (Fig. 4.7). Dating of the first tower is based on the construction technique and the scanty material culture recovered in the excavations. The construction was made of roughly cut blocks of local stone built in dry-set, with traces of mortar found only in one of the corners. The material culture is almost entirely composed of fragments of local pottery of the type of “vacuolata di Luscignano”, datable to the 5th-6th century.

⁸⁸ Chapter 3.

⁸⁹ Still today this is a sparsely inhabited region, hence the lower number of sizeable construction projects and resultant rescue or rescue archaeological interventions.

⁹⁰ On the tower: Cabona, Gardini & Mannoni 1978; for a complete picture of the project: Mannoni 1976; Cabona & Crusi 1979; Cabona et al. 1985; Cabona et al. 1990; Bozzo 1990; Gambaro 1990.

⁹¹ Chapter 3.

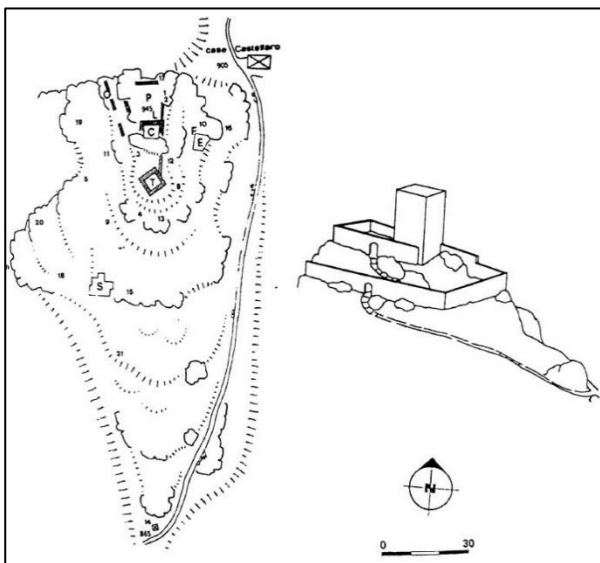


Figure 4.7) Plan and reconstruction of the watchtower of Zignago. (Source: Cagnana 2001a, p. 105, fig. 9.2)

Despite the restricted evidence, Zignago could be viewed as a small, fortified watchtower (8.3x8m with 1.5m thick walls), observing the nearby mountain pass of Cento Croci, the internal road between *Luna* and Genoa, and the one between Pontremoli and Levanto, while it could also have helped oversee the transhumant movement between the coast and the inland areas.⁹² Finds and building materials imply a presence of local unskilled labour, but the initiative surely came from the local authority at *Luna*, perhaps acting in an

emergency to plug some gap in control of the routeway, probably little used by now, and to shelter the communities living around Brugnato; the minimal material culture may even suggest it was not regularly occupied or certainly did not need to be included in the supply chain to larger defensive installations.

4.4.3 *Filattiera-Sorano*

The site of Filattiera-Sorano is a more complex case. It lies on a plain in the higher part of the Magra valley, at the foot of a hill, more than 30km from the coast. This was an important communication route between northern Tuscany and the southern Po plain. Systematic excavations were conducted by the ISCuM since the 1980s via trenches and test pits, exposing several sectors of the site and the interior of the medieval church.⁹³ The role of Filattiera-Sorano – a site often identified with the *χάστρον* Σωρεών of George of Cyprus – has been long debated.⁹⁴ According to Giannichedda,⁹⁵ too many scholars have exaggerated the site's status and role viewing it as a notable Byzantine fortress in the struggle against the Longobards and perhaps even the headquarters of a *magister militum*,

⁹² Cabona, Gardini & Mannoni 1978; Balzaretti 2013, pp.13-34.

⁹³ The results were published in two volumes: Giannichedda 1998a, 1998b, Giannichedda 2010a.

⁹⁴ The debate over the identification of the ambiguous elements of the *Descriptio* has brought the scholars to alternatively place the *χάστρον* in Tuscany (Sorano): Petracco 2018b, p. 23; Latium (Sora): Gelzer 1890, p. 28; Honigmann 1939, p. 51; Lunigiana: Conti 1975, pp. 48-49.

⁹⁵ Pavoni 1992, pp. 99-100; Christie, 1990, pp. 260-263; Zanini 1998, pp. 242-243.

such as the Aldio mentioned earlier.⁹⁶ In further support of this theory, the other toponym attested, Filattiera, may derive from φυλακτήριον, meaning fortified place, but also from the Latin *filictum*, a place rich in ferns.⁹⁷ Finally, the village lay at the base of the hill of Castelvecchio, a name suggestive of a fortification.

At Filattiera-Sorano a settlement emerged in the 5th century, on the ruins of an early imperial farm, which had been abandoned during the 3rd century. It took the form of a village of 10-15 ovoid huts built in wood with walls made with pressed clay for an average size of 15-20m² each. The huts did not display the characteristic basement, which were typical of north Italian structures introduced by Germanic immigrants, which maybe suggests a local origin.⁹⁸ They display multiple phases of use, reuse, and restoration, suggesting a medium or long occupation. The village was built just at the base of Castelvecchio's hill and it is on the slopes that some of the most interesting data came from (Fig. 4.8). This is the space where the early medieval pieve of Sorano was erected, but before that there was a wall, possibly a fortification, with a tower and structures abutting it. The wall, following the contours, was solidly built with strong mortared foundations. In front of it, the village was crossed by a 2m wide paved road of which at least 80m were exposed; this ran through both an *agger* and a palisade which protected the village's exposed sides. All these elements (wall, village, road, agger, and palisade) were active at the same time during the mid-6th century for a brief period of time, after which some survived for longer, while others, like the wall, were shortly abandoned.

At some point around 600, the stone wall was demolished, while a privileged grave was placed in the remains of the tower. Next came construction of the first church, to where possibly the body of the privileged burial was moved. A fragment of a femur was left in its original deposition within the tower and was radiocarbon dated to 586-680. The village remained inhabited but was slowly abandoned during the 7th century in favour of the modern Filattiera, which was located on a nearby hill.⁹⁹ Some ongoing site activities can be seen in the constant presence of the church, since rebuilt in its later medieval form and still used today. Associated finds recall Ligurian coastal types even if poorer in numbers. A small

⁹⁶ Chapter 1.4.3.

⁹⁷ Which is potentially more plausible if we think that the Greek name must have only a few decades to settle since the fortification did not survive for long: Giannichedda 1998a, pp.13; Zamorri, Ferrari & Angella 1980.

⁹⁸ Giannichedda 1998a, pp.31-37.

⁹⁹ For a detailed description of the various phases: Giannichedda 1998d, pp. 30-37; 2010b, pp. 25-53; 2010f, pp. 155-175.

group of North African imports have also been found alongside local products. Soapstone vessels – regular finds from the region and period – are attested, albeit in low quantities, but this still testifies to their wide circulation over political borders.¹⁰⁰ In terms of coinage, however, circulation seems to be interrupted already in the 5th century with the last Imperial emission still coming from Rome and Aquileia, without any evidence of the new Byzantine mints (Rome, Ravenna, or Syracuse) – a notable contrast with the nearby *Luna*.¹⁰¹

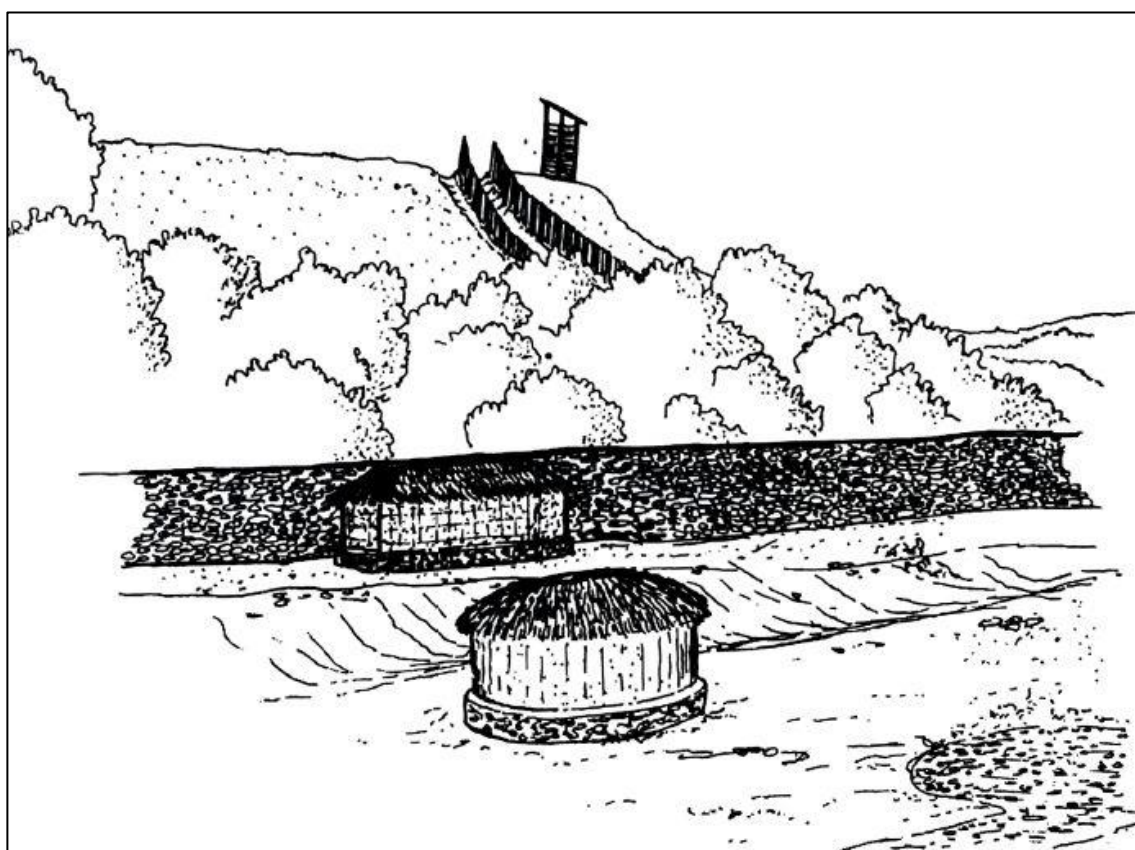


Figure 4.8) Filattiera-Sorano: hypothetical reconstruction of the village overlooked by Castelvechio's fortifications. (Source: Giannichedda 1998a, p. 10, fig. 1)

Castelvechio's hill, was an integral part of the complex. A trench and test pits on the very top of the hillock exposed part of a fortified space defined by a double *agger* with a wooden palisade and tower defending a space of no more than 800m². A single, likely short occupational phase was identified, while the scanty material culture was mostly composed of local pottery in the form of "vacuolata Luscignano". The archaeologists interpreted it as a sort of "entrenched camp" which could have been built either during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars or during the very first years of the Longobard invasion.¹⁰² The restricted extent of excavation at Castelvechio hinders our understanding, even if the site's functional

¹⁰⁰ Chapter 5.2.1.

¹⁰¹ Perassi & Saccocci 2010, pp.147-149; for *Luna* Chapter 5.4.2.

¹⁰² Cabona, Mannoni & Pizzolo 1984.

connection, chronologically brief, with the nearby village seems clear from the finds. The attempt to locate further evidence of late antique fortifications in the modern village of Filattiera, especially around San Giorgio's church, have proven fruitless, with only medieval occupation traced.¹⁰³ The inhabitants apparently moved from the plain to this nearby hill, which offered better protection, without completely abandoning the ancient pieve of Sorano.

A careful assessment of the archaeological data offers no real evidence of a specific characterization of the settlement – neither Byzantine or Longobard – while the structures discovered do not allow us to consider the site as a prominent element of the landscape.¹⁰⁴ The interpretation proposed by Giannichedda is the one of a system of forts forming a *clusa* in the higher valley of the Magra.¹⁰⁵ He argues against immediately imposing the straightforward narrative of Byzantine versus Longobards which is always brought up in Liguria facing finds of late antique fortifications.¹⁰⁶ While I agree with downgrading the role of Filattiera-Sorano, clearly not a *magister militum*'s headquarters, there is no reason to eliminate the historical interpretation altogether, depriving the site of its context.¹⁰⁷ Filattiera-Sorano was fortified in the middle of a century highly characterised by constant episodes of war between Byzantines and other forces (Goths and Longobards). The site displays two phases, one with stone defences and one in wood, and overlooked an important communication route. Whoever promoted the fortifications, was clearly responding to a need of security and control which can only be justified in this area under Byzantine-Gothic Wars and the Longobard expansion. If the first defence were erected to control a communication route or protected a local community or both, their maintenance, even if in simplified way, during the Byzantine-Longobard phase in an area dangerously near to a border is no coincidence. Clearly, the strategic upper Magra valley was an exposed area, and its settlements needed protection. More important contemporary sites, such as Noli and Capo Don,¹⁰⁸ were instead located just behind the Byzantine "*limes*" to which they delegated their protection, being both unfortified.

¹⁰³ Bullough 1956; Cabona, Mannoni & Pizzolo 1984.

¹⁰⁴ Giannichedda 2016.

¹⁰⁵ [Giannichedda 2010h, pp. 258-261.](#)

¹⁰⁶ Giannichedda 2016.

¹⁰⁷ For a picture of the "typical" Byzantine material culture in Liguria: Chapter 5.5.

¹⁰⁸ Chapter 3.3.3.2 (i)

4.4.4 Monte Castello in Val Caprio

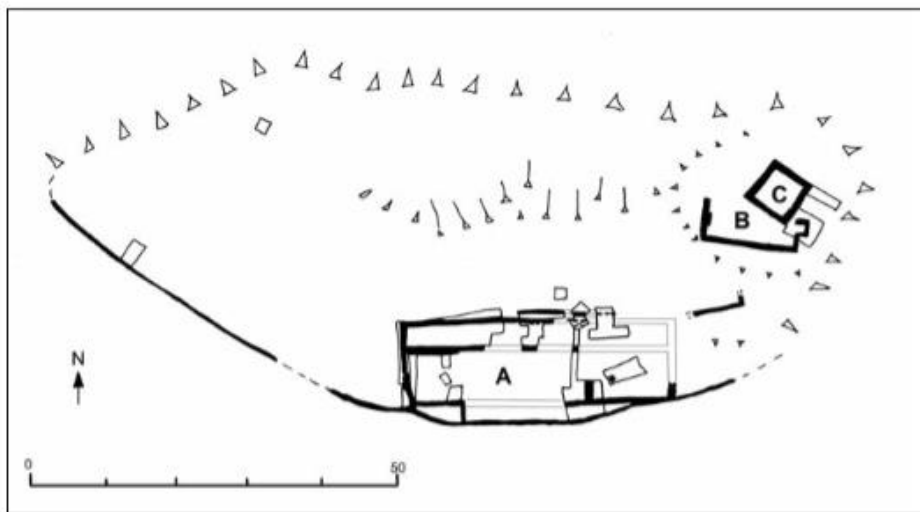


Figure 4.9) Plan of the site of Monte di Castello with wall and barracks (A), medieval church (B) and tower (C). (Source: Giannichedda 2010g, p. 214, fig. 286)

The site was originally studied by Formentini and Ferrari who attributed it to the Late Middle Ages,¹⁰⁹ but it was subsequently excavated with Filattiera-Sorano by the ISCuM, which identified a late antique origin.¹¹⁰ The site is located on a hill (875m asl) in a secondary valley which connects the upper Magra with north-western Emilia, via some trackways. Excavations exposed c.100m of a drystone wall protecting the hilltop on its most exposed side. Abutting the main wall, was a substantial rectangular building block – 36x12m – with the remains of a large fireplace at its centre, radiocarbon dated to c. 590 (410-675), while the finds' assemblage comprised mainly local common pottery (Fig. 4.9).¹¹¹ It was interpreted as part of system of fortification potentially connected with Filattiera-Sorano, and likewise short-lived.¹¹² Recent viewshed analyses proposed a possible connection between Filattiera and Monte Castello if integrated by another watchpoint where the toponymy Castellano is attested (3,5km from Gigliana), which could allow the visibility between the two settlements.¹¹³ The systems, could have been organised between the Byzantine-Gothic Wars and later being briefly used in the few years during which the Longobards were still confined in the Po plain. It could also have acted as a refuge for the (scattered) population of the valley. It is significant that the site was chosen to build a watchtower and a church in

¹⁰⁹ Ferrari 1926; Formentini 1930.

¹¹⁰ The research started in 1988 with various phases and some vibrant debate: Giannichedda, Priano & Vaschetti 1988; Ciampoltrini 1994; Giannichedda 1995.

¹¹¹ Giannichedda 2010g, 2010h, pp. 215-219

¹¹² Giannichedda 1998c, pp. 9-15; 2010g; 2010h, pp. 258-261.

¹¹³ Ponticelli 2017-2018, p.72.

the Middle Ages, implying a good strategic position both for the scattered inhabitants of the mountains and for its security.¹¹⁴

4.4.5 Aulla



Figure 4.10) Aulla: base of the tower.
(Source: Giannichedda 2016, p. fig. 21)

Aulla lies at the convergence of a series of valleys after which give access to the lower Magra valley and *Luna* (13km away). Its position is suited for blocking the access to the coast from north and east. There have been recent excavations at the site (now a village) under the church of San Caprasio, which exposed both an earlier phase of the church, probably early medieval (7th or 8th century), and the foundation of a solid tower – 7x7m and 1,8m thick walls – built with carefully squared ashlars and mortar (a rarity in Byzantine Liguria) (Fig. 4.10). Despite the lack of associated materials, a fragment of charcoal recovered from the mortar was radiocarbon-dated to 535-660,¹¹⁵ predating the first phase of the church.

This almost perfectly fits with the Byzantine period of occupation of the area making this discovery quite interesting for potentially redefining the defensive system in favour of a strategy closer to the coast, which could be easily resupplied by the fleet, as shown for the rest of Liguria (see below). Future excavations may elevate Aulla's role, especially as its location is strategically more significant than Filattiera-Sorano for guarding the access to the lower Magra and *Luna*.¹¹⁶

4.4.6 Castellum Aghinulfi

This medieval castle occupies a hilltop overlooking the river Tascio, at the south-eastern border of Lunigiana. It is first mentioned in a *diploma* of the Longobard King Aistulf in 752

¹¹⁴ Giannichedda 2010, p. 226.

¹¹⁵ After this thesis was submitted and discussed new radiocarbon dating results became available suggesting a medieval (11th century) date of the tower, which would be more in line with its constructions technique. The tower would be part of contemporary system of fortifications for which still little is known archaeologically. This will, of course, invalidate most of the assumptions regarding the role of the settlement under the Byzantine rule, even if the strategic potential of its location should encourage further research on the matter. For the new date see: Boggi & Giannichedda 2021, pp. 183-196.

¹¹⁶ Giannichedda 2016, pp. 161-165.

and again in 764 without further details.¹¹⁷ The *castrum* has been associated, without real evidence, with χάστρον Εὐορίας, one of the *castra* of the *Descriptio*, namely.¹¹⁸ An autoptic analysis of the surviving structures in the 1980s seems to point to an original late antique polygonal tower and a possible circuit heavily impacted by several medieval and modern additions.¹¹⁹ However, other similar structures in Lunigiana (the tower of San Giorgio near Filattiera, for example) have been usually been proved to be medieval rather than late antique. Radiocarbon analyses on the mortar of the lowest level of this tower have confirmed this dating, providing an 11th century date.¹²⁰ The early Longobard attestation is an element of interest but there is no solid evidence for a Byzantine or an earlier 5th century phase as suggested in the past.¹²¹ It would have been useful for *Luna* to have an outpost guarding its southernmost border, which was facing the emergent Longobard duchy of Lucca, but there is simply no evidence to identify it with *Castellum Aghinulfi*.

4.4.7 Discussion: The Lunigiana “Limes” Reviewed

The absence of any detailed historical narrative on the circumstances of the Longobard invasion prevent us from the level of accuracy necessary to analyse the strategies adopted by both sides in microregional areas like the Lunigiana. The Byzantines who, more than the Longobards, were used to fortified borders, are usually identified as the builders of most of the fortifications, indeed a potential fortified Longobard frontier, has never been considered in Liguria. Archaeology offer the certainty of physical evidence, but it is often too vague for the standards of historical reconstructions, especially in a period rich of sudden changes. However, for *Luna* and the Lunigiana, the available information already generated several hypotheses which can be now reviewed in the light of emerging new data and interpretations.

¹¹⁷ The first mention, of dubious authenticity, is edited in the *Codice diplomatico Longobardo*: Brühl 1973, III.1, nr. 26; for the second one: Barsocchi 1971, V.II, nr. 86; for a discussion of the sources: Nobili 1985. The castle is not mentioned again until 1055: Nobili 1985, p.179.

¹¹⁸ Conti 1975, pp. 38-40; Dell’Aglia 1985. Other scholars have placed the same χάστρον at Brindisi (Puglia): Gelzer 1890, pp. 86-87; Eboli (Molise), Honigsmann, 1939, p. 51; Oria (Puglia), Petracco 2018b, pp.18-19.

¹¹⁹ The bibliography is wrongly quoted in Greppi 2008, p. 60, suggesting the existence of archaeological excavations, which, at my knowledge, never occurred at the site: Baudone, Bernardi & Milano 1985.

¹²⁰ Petracco 2018, p. 19.

¹²¹ Baudone, Bernardi & Milano 1985.

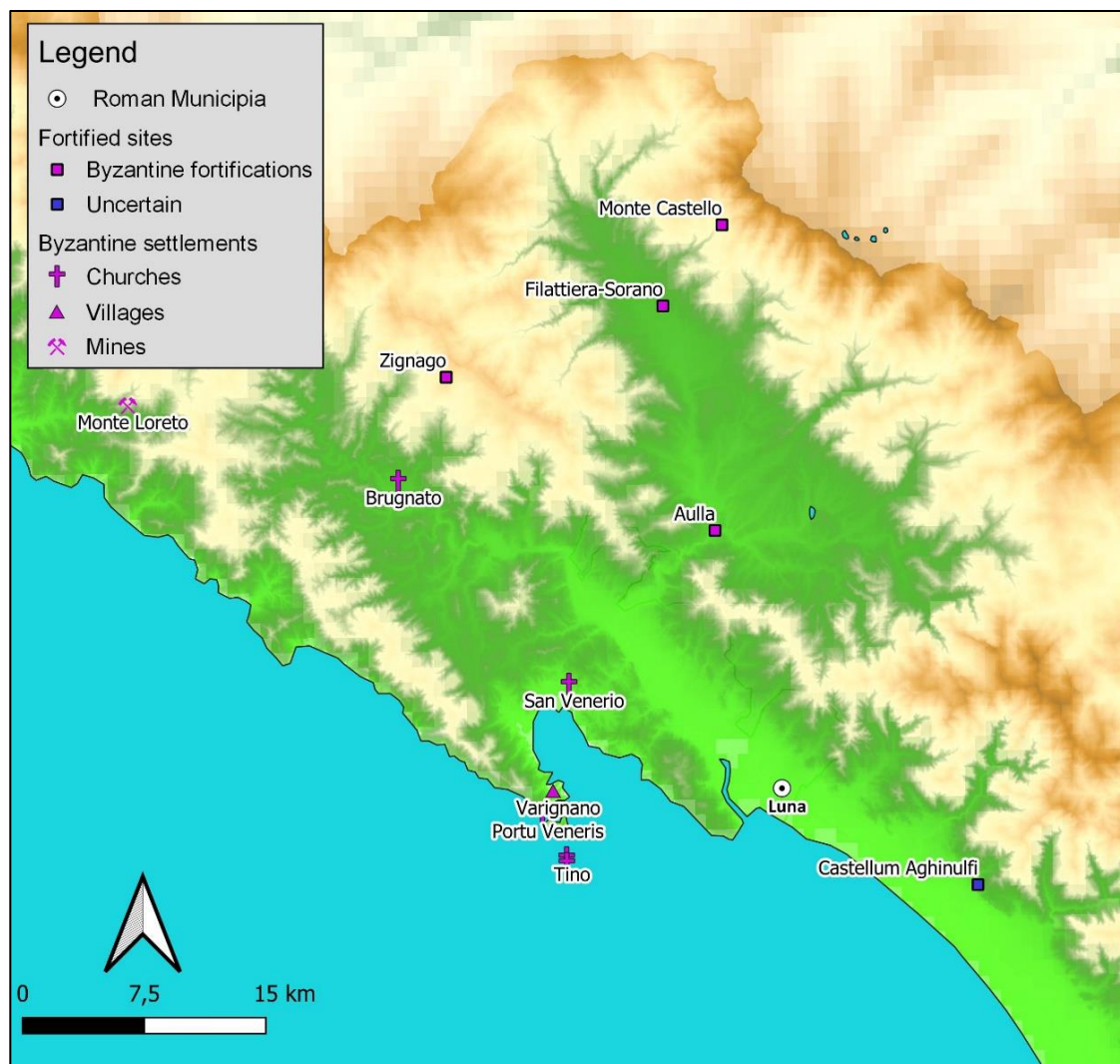


Figure 4.11) Luna and the fortified settlements of Lunigiana. (Source: Author)

The discovery of the tower at Aulla, within a day's march from the city, guarding a major access point for the lower Magra valley, is clearly downsizing the role of Filattiera-Sorano and Monte Castello in our interpretations. Hopefully, the excavations will reveal more information regarding this site in the middle of Magra valley. The area of Filattiera-Sorano, which has received great attention in many works due to its proper excavation and publication, after a closer look at the archaeological evidence, does not allow us to promote it as the main bulwark of the region, given the archaeological material as has been done in the past.¹²² Moreover, its chronology suggests an abandonment of its defensive role by the end of the 6th century, more than forty years before the Longobard capture of Liguria.¹²³ If

¹²² Christie 1990, pp. 260-263; Zanini 1998, pp. 240-242; Giannichedda 1998d, p.31.

¹²³ The conquest of Lunigiana is also postponed by some historians to the reign of Grimoald (662-671) based on the presence of several coins of Constans II in the city or other weak elements: Balbis 1979; Petracco 2018b, p. 13.

we combine the fortifications of Filattiera with Monte Castello in Val di Caprio, it is highly possible that the two sites shared a similar chronology and history. Viewshed studies showed how Filattiera and Monte Castello are not directly in sight of each other, even if with the addition of a smaller guard post on the nearby hill of Castellano they could.¹²⁴ They may have formed a coherent system of different fortifications aimed at controlling the communication routes in the area both during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars and the very first years of the Longobard invasion.

However, after the fall of Tuscany in the mid-570s, there was no real need for the Byzantines to keep controlling an internal land route aimed at connecting two areas of Italy – northern Tuscany and the Po plain – which were now lost to the Empire. In this case, it is possible that rather than denoting part of a Byzantine fortification network for the protection of *Luna*, they can represent the relics of an Apennine system of fortified settlement which was ideally forming an uninterrupted line from *Albintimilium* in the west to Ravenna in the east, which became quickly redundant. In this sense the interpretation of Filattiera-Sorano as part of a *clusae*, intended as a network of fortified places, may work, it was not, however, designated to completely obstruct the passage into the upper Magra valley.¹²⁵ Other nearby sites belonging to the same system have been identified in Monte Pietra Nera and Roccamurata to the north, Pietra di Bismantova to the north-east, and Castelvechio and Castelnuovo in the Garfagnana valley.¹²⁶ Almost none of these sites has been subject of a proper archaeological investigation, so it is hard to confirm the hypothesis and to propose a date for a Longobard conquest. For the upper Magra, the absence of elements of Longobard material culture does not suggest an early occupation of the area by the Germanic tribe but also Mediterranean elements are scarce. The region could have easily become a no man's land: on one side the Longobards did not seem interested in colonizing it, at least not during the first decades of the invasion; on the other it was deprived of its strategic significance for the Byzantines since its roads only led into enemy controlled territories and were too far from the coast to be easily supplied. In this sense, the second, simpler, phase of constructions in Filattiera, could have had represented a local response of the population of the valley to a growing insecurity after the retreat of Imperial troops to the coast.

¹²⁴ This is, however, very hypothetical without direct verification on the ground. For a full discussion on viewshed analysis in Lunigiana: Ponticelli 2017-2018.

¹²⁵ For this interpretation: Giannichedda 2010h, pp 258-261; 2016, p. 147.

¹²⁶ Roccamurata and Pietra di Bismantova have been hypothetically identified with *χάστρον Κάμψας* and *χάστρον Βισμάντω* of George of Cyprus: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996, pp.11-34. Castelnuovo in Garfagnana too has been associated with *χάστρον Νωβώ*: Formentini 1939, pp. 172-4; Christie 1990, pp.255.

Lastly, the isolated watchtower of Zignago, was an outpost for the road between *Luna* and Genoa and for the site of Brugnato. This is the only known defensive structure in the area, but this does not allow us to say that the rest of the land between Zignago and Genoa was already under Longobard control, as claimed by Petracco.¹²⁷ We already saw in the previous chapter that the nature of the difficult landscape of this region offered few spaces for large settlements.¹²⁸ The only significant elements to protect here was the road, the small harbours used for cabotage, and the mines of Monte Loreto. All of them must have functioned with a minimum investment of men and resources due to the hardships of the landscape, which had been thinly populated since Roman times.¹²⁹ It is possible that future research, especially on the main costal settlements, would bring to a better understanding of this mountainous area and possibly the localisation of further inland sites.

4.5 Genoa, the Central Liguria, and the Val Polcevera

As Chapter 3 showed, central Liguria and the area around Genoa is lacking in significant evidence for any form of late antique or Byzantine fortification, although admittedly there has been less attention from local archaeologists on the Byzantine-Longobard period.

We saw already how Genoa was not only the capital of the Byzantine region after the Longobard invasion, but it was also crucial for the logistical, economic, and military system of the Empire. Genoa was the preferred door to Milan and the Po plain during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars and the natural refuge of its archbishop when the city was occupied by the Longobards. So why is there no evidence of defences either for the city and for its hinterland? It is possible that the response lies in the val Polcevera, the main artery of communication with the Longobard north and Milan. In this case, the only “evidence” of occupation, beside a small group of unexplored tile stations, is the area around the church of San Michele di Castrofino.¹³⁰ Here the toponymy suggests the presence of a fort, which has been attributed to the Byzantine occupation without further evidence. Research around the church showed the presence of a late antique or early medieval, but no survey or further exploration has been conducted, leaving these data isolated in the landscape.¹³¹ Another

¹²⁷ A detailed discussion of the issue is present in Chapter 3: Chapter 3.3.2.

¹²⁸ Chapter 3.3.2.

¹²⁹ Chapter 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

¹³⁰ On the “tile stations” issue and San Michele di Castrofino: Chapter 3.3.2.

¹³¹ Chapter 3.3.2.

reason for the lack of archaeological evidence could be related with the high level of unchecked urbanisation, especially in the lower part of the val Polcevera, closer to Genoa, where I would expect the highest concentration of sites. This could have damaged or permanently covered under modern structures most of the potential evidence.

Other important centres are further north, such as Dertona (modern Tortona), which hosted an Ostrogothic garrison before and during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars.¹³² It lay on the other side of the Ligurian Alps, making it an easy candidate for an early Longobard conquest. It is unclear why the centre, fortified under the Ostrogoths, was later (540) recorded as unfortified.¹³³ A bit closer to Genoa, but still on the other side of the Ligurian Alps was the ancient city of Libarna, depicted in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and mentioned in the sources as one of the most important centres on the *via Postumia*. However, no clear Byzantine evidence has yet emerged.

The only picture we can draw of Genoa and its hinterland is one of a regional capital without countryside, without any satellite settlement supporting it or guarding its borders, at least after the early 6th century when most of the internal “tile stations” settlements were abandoned.¹³⁴ Either something extremely dramatic happened in order to remove all the networks composed by these settlements, or we simply have to look for them with a renewed archaeological research and different tools, such as more sophisticated survey techniques and more open area excavations.

4.6 Castrum Perti and the Western Ligurian “Model”

Chapter 2 and 3 showed that western Liguria was probably the richer and more densely populated part of the region due to the presence of several alluvial plains which hosted three of the five Roman *municipia*. This is reflected in a higher density and variety of sites, which also includes fortifications. The coast was dotted with fortified sites – *Albingaunum*, *Albintimilium*, Savona, and Varigotti – with the last two clearly emerging under the Byzantines. They were integrated by a series of fortified inland settlements to shelter the richer coast from a direct attack, or at least to delay the invaders just long enough to prepare a coastal defence. It is here that the archaeologists excavated a site which can be

¹³² Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 1.17.

¹³³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.xxiii.5.

¹³⁴ Chapter 3.3.2.

considered as the archetypal of the Byzantine *castrum* in the region: *Castrum Perti*. Beside Perti, at least two more fortified spaces were also located – San Donato and Campo Marzio – but they are not as nearly well known as the latter.

4.6.1 *Castrum Perti and the Finale Area*

Located between Savona and *Albingaunum*, *Castrum Perti* defended the area of Finale Ligure. The site is located on top of a hill 287m asl, 3.5km from the sea, at the core of the region of Finale, a zone rich in finds related to both Roman and late antique epochs. The first mention of *Castrum Perti* comes in a 1162 document of Frederik I, confirming some landed properties to the marquis of Savona. Originally, the medieval church of Sant'Antonino and visible remains of a castle, led the scholars to date it the 10th century.¹³⁵ It was only with the excavations between 1982 and 1998 that the site's Byzantine origin was recognised.¹³⁶

What emerged from the excavation was that *Castrum Perti* was a perfect model of medium-sized (about 1,26ha) late antique fortification,¹³⁷ with a marked Byzantine material culture (Fig. 4.13).¹³⁸ All the structural remains, except for the church, belonged to two main construction phases, closely set between the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th. The first phase consisted of two walls blocking the northern and southern accesses of the hill, exploiting the natural contours dividing the internal space into two terraces; the other sides were too steep to be approached by an enemy and so were not further fortified. Shortly after, the southern wall was enlarged with the addition of a third structure which almost doubled the extension of the curtain, replacing a palisade. The materials recovered from the excavations suggested a late 6th century date for the first phase, and a late 6th or early 7th century date for the second one.¹³⁹ The northern wall (Fig. 4.13: point 1) was built using

¹³⁵ Lamboglia 1935a, 1970b, pp. 122-132.

¹³⁶ The project around *Castrum Perti* was part of a larger exploration of the area which included several other sites as Castello di Orco, San Bernardino, and Varigotti, with a growing attention to the late antique phases: Murialdo 1992b; Frondoni 1997-1998.

¹³⁷ According to the classification of north Italian fortifications proposed by Cagnana *Castrum Perti* is a Class III settlement (1,0-2,5ha), just under the Class IV, which includes the largest fortification complexes such as Castelseprio or Monte Barro: Cagnana 2001a, p.104.

¹³⁸ On the comparison with other similar north Italian sites: Cagnana 2001a, pp.101-117; for the definition of a Byzantine material culture in Liguria: Chapter 5.5.

¹³⁹ Murialdo 2001b, pp. 95-100.

opus certum without courses for a thickness of about 0.71m with at least five buttresses reinforcing it and probably sustaining a series of vaults for a rampart.¹⁴⁰ It featured a tower on its western flanks, guarding the main gate, which is the largest (6.70x5.20 x 5.80 x5.60m for a surface of about 32m²) and best-preserved element of the *castrum*, displaying two



Figure 4.12) *Castrum Perti*: Detail of the tower with *monofore*. (Source Author)

monofore (Fig. 4.12; Fig. 4.13: point A). The first internal wall of the fortress showed more attention with the use of *opus certum* but with an attempt to create a regular pattern, while it was also thicker (1.22m) (Fig. 4.13: point 2). However, it only displayed one small projecting tower at its southern end (Point D). The second internal wall integrated the first one composing a sort of fortified double rampart in the middle (Point B), which gave access the highest, internal part of the hill. The construction technique was slightly simpler, while the thickness was reduced to 0.95m. This second phase wall had also a small projecting tower in the middle (Point E: 2.32x4.80x3.40m for about 7m² with walls 0.6m thick) (Fig. 4.13: Point E).¹⁴¹ The mortar as well is very homogeneous, with only minor differences between the first and the second phase,

suggesting a very close relation in time with the structures and the use of similar workers.¹⁴² The construction material was local Finale's stone, with a quarry clearly located nearby.¹⁴³ The site also sheltered a series of small houses, built behind the second phase curtain at the beginning of the 7th century (Fig. 4.13: point F). They were constructed with a stone foundation and a wooden structure, displaying several phases of use, including fireplaces and remains of small artisanal activities.¹⁴⁴ This evidence, combined with the material

¹⁴⁰ In this case the thickness of the wall plus the vaults was of 1.20m: Murialdo 2001 c; Frondoni & Benente 2001; Murialdo & Bonora 2001a.

¹⁴¹ Murialdo 2001d; Murialdo, Palazzi & Parodi 2001. For the general picture: Murialdo 2001b; Cagnana 2001b; for the specific Areas see bibliography quoted above.

¹⁴² Cagnana 2001d; Ricci 2001, p. 217.

¹⁴³ The visible quarry, however, has been probably used for the construction of the medieval church: Mannoni & Ricci 2001.

¹⁴⁴ Murialdo & Bonora 2001b; Cagnana 2001c.

culture, suggested a constant presence of inhabitants in the *castrum*, not only confined to the category of soldiers as we will better see with the material culture section (see below).¹⁴⁵

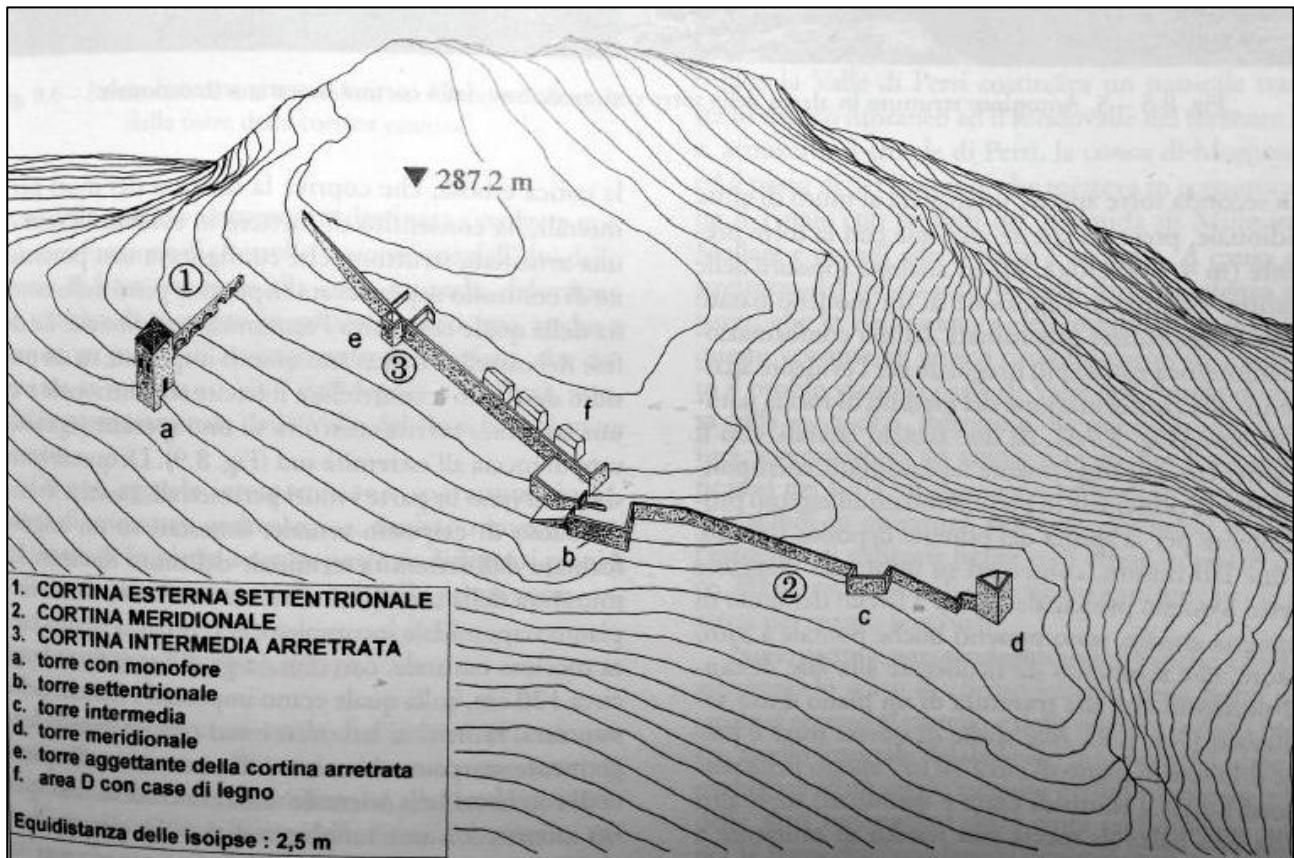


Figure 4.13) *Castrum Pertii*: reconstruction plan with the three different curtains (numbers) and excavation areas (letters). (Source: Murialdo 2001b, p. 94, fig. 8.4)

All these data point to the presence of a coherent project with the involvement of an authority with the technical and financial abilities to organize such an enterprise, soon after the arrival of the Longobards in Italy. Of course, without the aid of any historical source is hard to identify it, but we can suppose a military one, probably based in one of the coastal cities, with a collaboration with local religious authorities. The important church of Noli lay just 7,5km away, while also Finale Ligure, may have hosted a community around a religious centre for which only some late antique burials are attested so far.¹⁴⁶

Despite its significant structural remains, however, the striking element of the *castrum* is represented by the material culture, which includes a rich and variegated presence of imported material from North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁴⁷ This is unique for a

¹⁴⁵ Chapter 5.2.4.

¹⁴⁶ Chapter 3.3.3.

¹⁴⁷ For detailed overview: Chapter 5.2.4.

site of this kind in Liguria and the rest of northern Italy.¹⁴⁸ The large amount of amphorae were comprised of 80% African imports, a 13% of Eastern ones, while Red African Slipware D and its imitations covered all the 6th and early 7th century.¹⁴⁹ Local materials were present in the form of common pottery locally produced or imported by nearby regions, such as *Albintimilum* or the soapstone vessels from the Alps.¹⁵⁰ A total of ten Byzantine coins were recovered on site: nine fractions of the silver siliqua and one half-follis, datable between Justinian (from 540-552) to Heraclius (610-641). Their significance is not just in their presence, but in the material, silver, usually associated with soldiers pay.¹⁵¹ Monetary weights, mostly found in urban and ecclesiastical contexts in Liguria,¹⁵² may suggest that the site had a function of custom and exchange, due to its role of frontier “outpost”.¹⁵³

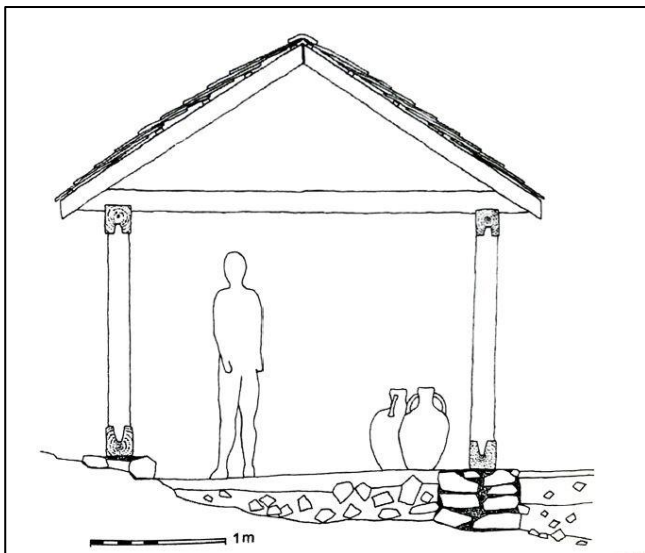


Figure 4.14) *Castrum Perti*: reconstruction of one of the “houses” of Area D (Point F on the map). (Source: Cagnana 2001c, p. 201, fig. 17.3)

What is striking in this context is the relatively small number of elements related to military life, usually confined to typical soldiers’ belts, and a few arrow heads.¹⁵⁴ The typologies show a mixture of elements from the Mediterranean world and the Germanic-Longobard one, typical of the late antique armies.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, they are mixed with objects usually associated with Roman women, such as brooches and hair-pins, which perhaps indicates the presence of women and families in the *castrum*.¹⁵⁶ A possible suggestion from

Murialdo was that *Castrum Perti* was originally guarded by a foreigner garrison which eventually took root in the settlement and mixed with the local community.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless,

¹⁴⁸ Chapter 5.6.

¹⁴⁹ Chapter 5.2.4.

¹⁵⁰ For the details: Chapter 5.2.4.

¹⁵¹ Arslan, Ferretti & Murialdo 2001; Arslan 2001, pp. 239-254; Chapter 5.4.2.

¹⁵² Chapter 3.5; 5.4.2.

¹⁵³ Arslan, Ferretti & Murialdo 2001, pp. 237-38.

¹⁵⁴ De Vingo & Fossati 2001c; 2001e

¹⁵⁵ De Vingo & Fossati 2001c.

¹⁵⁶ De Vingo & Fossati 2001d; Murialdo 2001e. Procopius described a similar situation in Ostrogothic fortresses in the *Alpes Cottiae* with soldiers living with their families: *History of the Wars*, VI, XVIII, 28-29.

¹⁵⁷ Murialdo 2001e. This is a phenomenon that was more than common in all the late Roman army and affected both the units of *limitanei* and of the mobile army: Christie 2006, pp. 300-308.

these kind of objects were common for all the Imperial army and it is difficult to use them as an ethnic discriminant. More probably, if these were troops who originally came in Italy with Belisarius or Narses, they were not Italics in origin, but after being stationed in the peninsula they mingled with the local population, while new recruits were also mustered locally.¹⁵⁸ A better picture of the inhabitants of the *castrum* could be obtained from the discovery of an associated necropolis, which is lacking now.¹⁵⁹

Castrum Perti represents an exceptionally preserved fortification with which to interpret the nature and shape of the Byzantine military effort in Liguria and in Italy. The *castrum* protected the area of Finale, which we examined in the previous chapter, provided with an integrated network of settlements: churches, caves, *necropoleis*, and fortifications. This is a good sample of a portion of landscape, probably the best at our disposal in Liguria, to see how coastal and internal sites interacted in the Byzantine province from a military point of view. The area comprised at least two ports: Noli, a religious unfortified centre; the fortified natural harbour of Varigotti; while there was a third docking area in Finale Ligure itself.¹⁶⁰ Finale would also have been the perfect point for the collection and redistribution of the locally carved stone, protected by the presence of *Castrum Perti*.¹⁶¹ Smaller rural settlements dotted the hills and caves all around Finale including minor church foundations (Fig. 4.15).¹⁶² It is quite clear that an area with natural resources – stone but possibly also wood and metals – and which was densely settled was protected by at least two main fortifications, one on the coast and one inland, controlling at the same time the old via *Aurelia* and maritime communication. A preliminary study using cumulative viewshed analyses conducted on Castrum Perti and its neighbouring sites showed how the fortification could have easily communicated with Finale, using the church of Sant Eusebio as a proxy, and potentially with Noli and *Vada Sabatia* with the addition of a watch post on one of the eastern hills. Varigotti, instead, was impeded from having a good view of the interior and of the east, but was potentially in direct view of *Albingaunum*, the main urban centre of the area, 20km away.¹⁶³ This further confirms the systematic nature of the Byzantine fortifications of Finale, integrated and not in substitution of the previous settlement pattern.

¹⁵⁸ Zuckerman 2004, pp. 170-171; Ravegnani 2005; Prigent 2021.

¹⁵⁹ Archaeological proof of the cohabitation of soldiers and civilians emerged from the analysis of the bones from the necropolis of the 4th-5th century *castra* of Sirimione: Bolla 1996; Christie 2006, p. 343.

¹⁶⁰ Chapter 3.3.3.2.

¹⁶¹ On the Finale's stone industry in Late Antiquity and during the Byzantine phase: Chapter 5.4.3.

¹⁶² De Vingo 2004, 2011c; Chapter 3.3.3.2; 3.3.3.3.

¹⁶³ For the viewshed analyses: Appendix 3.

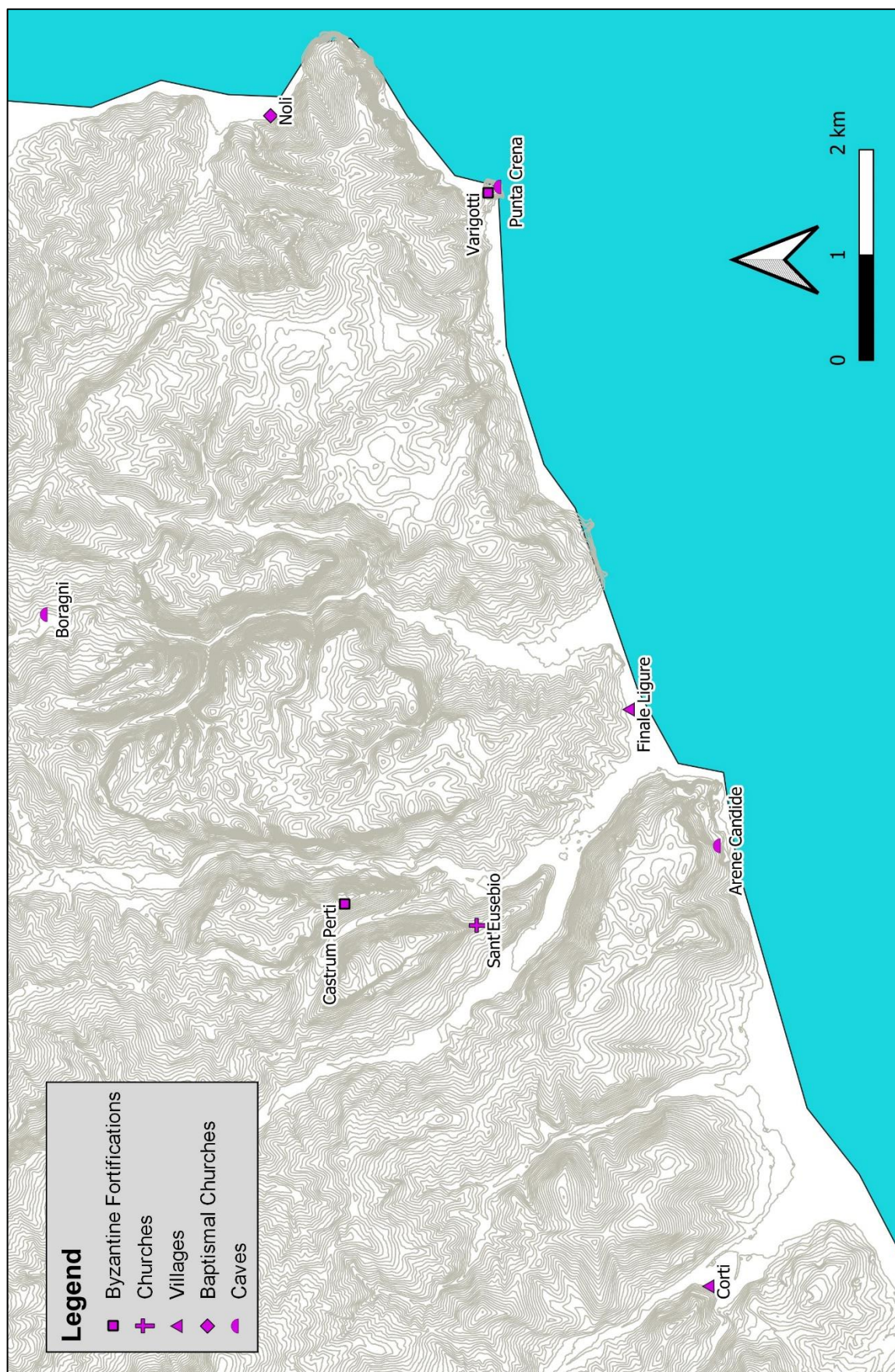


Figure 4.15) The micro-region of Finale Ligure and its Byzantine sites. (Source Author)

4.6.2 Varazze – San Donato

Varazze is the first significant site west of Genoa. The area is believed to have hosted the Roman *statio* of *Ad Navaliam*, however the only archaeological evidence for an ancient human occupation came from the nearby site of San Donato.¹⁶⁴ The site is located at about 1km from the coast and similarly to Campo Marzio (see below), it was built on the bend of a river, the Teiro in this case. The toponym of Pian di Banda, possibly from *bandon*,¹⁶⁵ a Byzantine military unit, is also attested in the area, as for Monte Castello in val di Caprio.¹⁶⁶

The construction of a medieval church (12th-13th century), plus modern activities, compromised the original stratigraphy in several places. The few archaeological interventions at San Donato exposed a solid wall, which could be dated using stratigraphy and its construction technique (*opus spicatum* and *opus certum*) to the 5th or 6th century.¹⁶⁷ Inside the wall the remains of a quadrangular tower were exposed, built with irregular ashlar but with an attempt to regularize the rows and abundant mortar, with a technique similar to Campo Marzio and *Albingaunum*.¹⁶⁸ However, all these structural finds are not integrated by any associated archaeological material which would have strengthened its attribution to Late Antiquity by the archaeologists who excavated it. The dedication to San Donato, is ascribed to the Longobards of the period of Grimoald (662-671), which may suggest a reoccupation after the Byzantines were expelled from the region but there is no real evidence for this connection.¹⁶⁹ The lack of further information in the area prevent us a full comparison with *Castrum Perti*, however, the settlement was also guarding the end of a valley which give access to the coast, with the closest known settlement being the villa of Albissola (6km), while Savona was 11km to the west and Genoa 30km to the east. It is possible that Varazze was guarding the right flank of Savona and working as a connection point with the capital.

¹⁶⁴ For the identification with *Ad Navaliam*: Christie 1990, p.252; for its insertion in the road network: Conti 1986.

¹⁶⁵ *Bandon*, like *numerus*, was another word used in the Byzantine army to denote a military unit: Formentini 1930, p. 55.

¹⁶⁶ Christie 1990, p.244.

¹⁶⁷ Surace 1984a; Frondoni & Geltrudini 2008; 2010b.

¹⁶⁸ Coccuto & Ricchebono 1974; Greppi 2008, pp.24-26.

¹⁶⁹ Grimoald duke of Benevento, had a special connection with the saint when he marched in northern Italy with his army: Coccuto & Ricchebono 1974, p.21.

4.6.3 Campo Marzio and the Protection of the Valle Argentina

This hilltop *castrum* on a bend of the River Argentina (or Taggia) about 6-7km from the coast, represents, for the moment, the westernmost site of this kind in Liguria. Scarcely attested by the medieval sources with a first mention in 979, it was the subject of some attention from Lamboglia in the early 1950s.¹⁷⁰ He wanted to excavate the site extensively but only managed small interventions which are still unpublished. A wall, with at least two towers, encircled the hill, on top of which the small church of San Giorgio is located. Lamboglia dated the complex to the late antique or early medieval phase, while the dedication of the church reinforced his idea of a Byzantine foundation (Fig. 4.16).¹⁷¹ A simple necropolis with graves cut in the rock and covered in stone slabs was associated with the church. Small dry-stone houses with fireplaces have also been located in some areas of the hill. Late antique amphorae and soapstone vessels have been reported; one deposit was at the bottom of a 2 metres deep test pit on the northern side of the hill. Some burned layers also suggested a violent destruction of the site, which has been associated with Rothari's invasion.¹⁷² In 2008 a small intervention redocumented part of Lamboglia's work, in particular the excavations of the western tower, obtained some new data on the castle. While very few early medieval materials have been recovered, it is possible that the fortifications in their actual state could be medieval (10th century maybe), while older structures have been exposed under the foundations of one tower, probably a hint of an earlier, possibly Byzantine origin. Finally, a new plan of the complex was produced.¹⁷³ However, without the publication of the materials and new archaeological research it is difficult to come to a definitive judgment on the site. The location of the *castrum*, however, seems typical of other Byzantine forts, and it is perfect to block the already narrow passage which gave access to the plain of Taggia, with its fluvial port of *Tavia fluvius* and Capo Don.¹⁷⁴ In the end, the situation of the Argentina valley might not have looked too different from Finale and *Castrum Perti*, with a fortified site overlooking a settled plain with a port, only on a smaller scale.

¹⁷⁰ [Lamboglia 1950g; 1951g.](#)

¹⁷¹ The idea that every church dedicated to San Giorgio in Liguria might have had Byzantine origin was quite rooted in many local scholars of the past century and applied also to Genoa: Chapter 2.3.2.1.

¹⁷² Lamboglia 1950m, 1951g. Other burned 5th century layers in *Albingaunum* and *Albintimilium* were also associated with invasions or destructions by Goths or Longobards without any strong support: Chapter 1.4.1.

¹⁷³ Gambaro et. al. 2013, pp. 108-110.

¹⁷⁴ The port is attested in the *Itinerarium Maritimum*: Appendix 1; Chapter 3.2; for Capo Don: Chapter 3.3.3.2 (i).

**Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici
della Liguria**

Università degli Studi di Genova

Cattedra di Archeologia Medievale
Insegnamento di Archeologia del Mediterraneo medievale

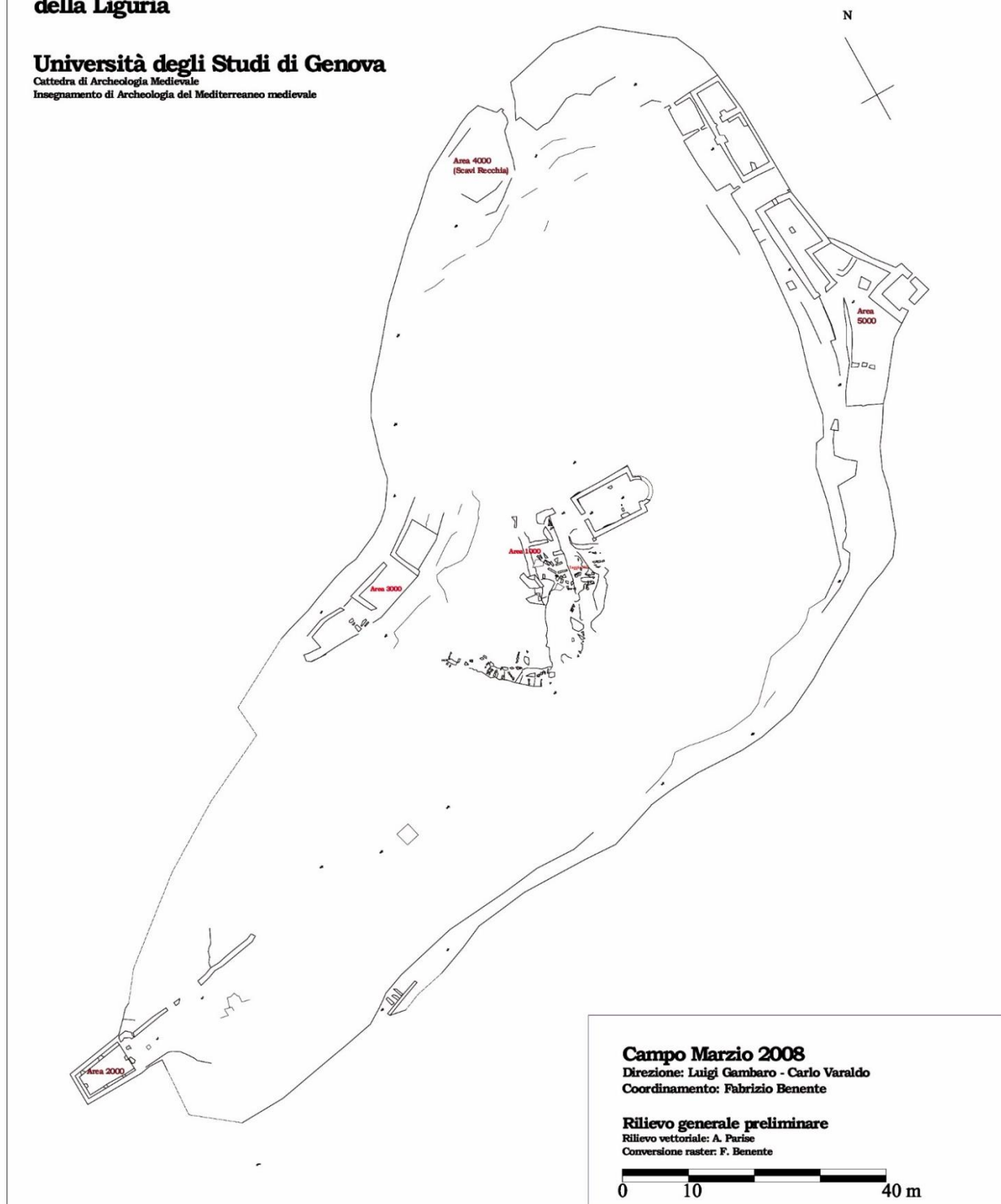


Figure 4.16) Campo Marzio: plan of the structural features after the recent investigations. (Source: Soprintendenza archeologica belle arti e paesaggio per le province di Imperia e Savona)

4.6.4 The Western Ligurian “Model”

After this overview of the main sites of western Liguria, it is important to note how here the Byzantines limited their efforts to a very restricted area, never settling their main garrisons more than a few kilometres inland. The only traces of possible inland outposts in western Liguria are two watchtowers, at Bardineto and Millesimo, with some vague late antique association in the technique and material culture which suggested to some scholars a possible Byzantine origin.¹⁷⁵ What seems to emerge is a combination of coastal protected harbours securing reinforcements and supplies, alternated with undefended coastal settlements, usually marked by important churches with baptismal functions – Noli and Capo Don – while inland a few *castra* blocked and guarded the main communication routes, with a special attention to the north-south passages, but never too far from the coast. The complex nature of the landscape certainly did not facilitate communication with sites far from the coast, so this could have been a practical choice, to easily secure supply and support to the garrisons. This, however, meant that fortifications and civil settlements were very close to each other, bringing the “frontier” almost directly on the people that was supposed to protect. The fortified settlements clearly had a pure military role, since their arrival did not seem to have modified at all the previous distribution of the population in the landscape, which remained settled in their coastal hamlets.

4.7 The Logistics of a Coastal-Mountainous Province

The coastal section of Liguria which for almost a century remained under the control of the Byzantine forces, became, *de facto*, a militarized region. The sudden Longobard invasion and its almost immediate land separation from the rest of Byzantine Italy seems to have triggered a prompt response in the local authorities. This took the form of an emergency reorganization of the area and a possible voluntary retreat to the most defensible and replenishable coast, which may have brought about the creation of the so-called *Provincia Maritima Italorum*.¹⁷⁶ The events of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars clearly showed how coastal settlement were more defensible and supportable by the intervention of the Byzantine fleet, which met almost no resistance from either the Ostrogoths or later the Longobards.¹⁷⁷ Usually, these were temporary situations where the city or the fortress remained isolated and surrounded but were able to resist for months or even years with the appropriate

¹⁷⁵ Christie 1990, p. 258.

¹⁷⁶ Or not, on the debate around the meaning and chronology of this term: Christie 1990, pp. 232-236; Pavoni 1992 pp.74-81; Greppi 2008, pp. 1-4.

¹⁷⁷ Carile 2011; Cosentino 2018.

support.¹⁷⁸ But, in this case there was a whole region in this situation, which maintained the control over the most favourable and productive lands, the fluvial plains, which must have provided some degree of autonomy in furnishing basic resources (food, mines, and quarries at least). It is more difficult to establish who controlled the mountains from which a variety of other goods, including woods and the derived products of animal husbandry, were more likely to come, or to which extent they were still inhabited after the collapse of the “tile stations”.¹⁷⁹

Since the Roman conquest in the late Republic, Liguria fully benefitted from the *Pax Romana*, being well behind the borders of the Empire. The question of security came back during the crisis of 4th and 5th century, when northern Italian cities and the Alps saw an increased remilitarisation in the form of new urban circuits and forts near the Alpine passes.¹⁸⁰ Coastal Liguria experienced some forms of militarisation already in the 5th century, such as the case of Constantius at *Albingaunum* or the mention of military *horrea* and a winter camp by *Rutilius Namatianus*.¹⁸¹ However, the coast seems to have been only marginally influenced by this phenomenon, and arguably was relegated to a support role, with only *Albingaunum* being certainly refortified. Nonetheless, by the end of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars all the old Roman *municipia*, except for *Vada Sabatia*, were probably protected. However, a diffused militarization of the countryside, as in the Byzantine period, was something completely new. To keep tight the control of the area, the Byzantines installed a series of military units. However, high-ranking military figures such *magistri militi* are barely attested in Liguria, especially if we rule out the figure of Aldio, previously placed in Lunigiana.¹⁸² Most likely Liguria was overseen by a series of medium-rank officers, including figures such as the *comes et tribunus* Tzittanus at *Albingaunum*, commanding single military units (*numeri*), based in at least some of the main urban centres (*Luna*, Genoa, *Albingaunum*, and possibly *Albintimilum*). While the remains of urban fortifications do not offer, as for other parts of northern Italy, a coherent picture due to their poor survival and investigation, defences were surely in place in at least four coastal centres: *Luna*,

¹⁷⁸ See the case of the siege of Ancona during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VIII.xxiii.9-42; or the one of Druiys (modern Otranto): Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VII.x.7-12

¹⁷⁹ Chapter 3.3.2.

¹⁸⁰ On cities: Christie 1992; 2006, pp.324-347; Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998, pp. 59-76; for the *castra*: Brogiolo & Gelichi 1996, pp. 11-34; for some fortresses: Brogiolo & Lusuardi Siena 1980; De Marchi 2013 (Castelseprio); Bierbrauer 1987, 1988 (Invillino); Brogiolo & Castelletti 1991, 2001 (Monte Barro).

¹⁸¹ For *Albingaunum* Chapter 2.4.2; for *Rutilius Namatianus*, Chapter 1.4.1.

¹⁸² Chapter 1.4.3.

Albingaunum, Savona, and Varigotti.¹⁸³ Of these, the last two (Savona and Varigotti) were probably Byzantine in origin, while the others were inherited by them and possibly implemented or reorganized.

This will establish a number of at least five coastal centres which, either for their defences archaeologically attested, or for the presence of officers, necessitated of a garrison: *Luna*, Genoa, Savona, Varigotti, and *Albingaunum*. It would be natural to imagine that another contingent too would be ideally placed in *Albintimilium* despite the lack of solid evidence. As attested by the *Strategikon* a *numerus* should be comprised between 200 and 400 men.¹⁸⁴ It is possible to imagine main units of 200-400 men distributed in three or four cities, while smaller contingents of 50-100 men could have been deployed in the minor settlements such as Savona and Varigotti. This would count for 1,300-1800 men only for the coastal cities and major settlements. Of the series of *castra* we have a clear picture only from *Castrum Perti*, with a possible garrison of 30-50 men.¹⁸⁵ A similar number could be proposed for *Campo Marzio*, while *San Donato* could have been about half the size (15-25 men).¹⁸⁶ No real data are available for *Aulla* and there must have been at least a few more sites that we know nothing about, especially for the area of *Albintimilium* and Genoa which looks completely deprived of defences. Finally, watchtowers such *Zignago*, for which we can imagine a few other exemplars, were placed along the main roads, and were usually guarded by no more than 10-15 men. We can therefore imagine a picture of about six *castra* between larger and smaller one accounting for other 120-300 soldiers and about other 100 for the towers and other activities. Liguria was not a priority and Byzantine Italy lacked manpower after the Longobards invasion. I believe that a maximum number of 1500-2200 men to defend the province, which is what the above assessment represents, is plausible.¹⁸⁷ As happened in many cases in this period, civilians could have been integrated in the defences of the cities, but we just have no information for Liguria.

The use of cavalry in the region would have been probably impractical due to the complexity of the region, while the lack of plains would have prevented its mobility, and major strength,

¹⁸³ On the contrast between material evidence and sources in the fortified landscape of late antique northern Italy: Ward-Perkins 1984, pp. 191-92.

¹⁸⁴ *Strategikon*, I,4.

¹⁸⁵ Similar pictures can be derived from the Ostrogothic fortress of *Augustana* (*Augustani clusuris*), probably near Aosta, was guarded by about 60 men, Christie 1991a, pp.424-25; from the original source Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 2,5.

¹⁸⁶ Christie 1990, p. 244.

¹⁸⁷ Ravegnani 2009, pp.17-27.

but it would also have been problematic for forage. In the end, it is plausible to imagine that most of the Byzantine forces were composed by infantry in its various forms (light, heavy, or archers). The navy should have played a central role, even in the simplest duty of moving troops along the coast. While we can of course imagine its existence and presence, we wholly lack information about it, if the metal workshop of Noli was not connected with shipbuilding activities; even if it was, it is impossible to say if it was for the fleet. Surely, the cabotage routes were active, the most tangible example could be represented by the distribution of the Finale stone sarcophagi, which covered all the Ligurian coast.¹⁸⁸

Bearing in mind that we still have a partial picture, the combination of coastal settlements and inland *castra* (usually located a few kilometres from the coast) formed, especially in western Liguria, a network where coastal fortifications (cities or not) were alternated with internal ones at an average distance of 20-15km from each other. Only in the case of Castrum Perti and Varigotti do we have a coastal fort and an inland *castrum* very close to one another, maybe testifying to the exceptional importance of the Finale area. The inland *castra* usually guarded some of the passages through the Ligurian Alps, which were the natural defences that sheltered the region, offering one of the main strategical advantages for the Byzantines, combined with the sea. However, many of these valleys and passes did not display any form of protection. The situation was slightly different for *Luna* and the Lunigiana where, even if the actual border was placed around Aulla and not Filattiera-Sorano, as I believe, the Byzantines were conditioned by the topography of the Magra valley, to place their fortifications slightly further away from the coast.

4.8 Conclusions

After decades of research, the extreme fragmentation and ambiguity of the textual sources has been partially compensated by archaeological data. What we can see now is a coherent effort to secure the wealthier and more defensible coast while abandoning the interior. The fortifications of Byzantine Liguria were a mixture of inherited structures erected in response to the growing insecurity which surrounded the late Roman Empire and new ones in response to the Longobards' entrance into Italy. The first group was aimed at sheltering the main centres from occasional raids which penetrated the Alpine *clusae*.¹⁸⁹ The second was possibly constructed in an emergency during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, but the main bulk

¹⁸⁸ On the sarcophagi in Finale's stone: Chapter 5.4.3.

¹⁸⁹ On the Alps defences see Christie 1991a, 2006, pp.324-348.

of new defences was imposed after 568-9. In this scenario, this was not a frontier that evolved from a previous system – like the one on the Danube,¹⁹⁰ for example – the Ligurian border was built *ex novo*, together with other Italian “frontiers” which emerged after the Longobards’ appearance.¹⁹¹ The strategy behind the organisation of the border was following broadly some of the traditional late Roman standards with walled cities and strongholds but on a less organised level, with some of the cities apparently left to defend themselves on their own, without the support of advanced positions (*Albintimilium*, and *Albingaunum*). Nonetheless, the authorities put an effort to provide a military outpost – either a walled city, a fortified port or an inland *castrum* – every 20-15km, at least in western Liguria, or to provide for the watching of the main access points to the Byzantine coastland for Lunigiana in the east. This is possibly a reflection of the Byzantine policy of adaptability and pragmatism often adopted in Italy and its different landscapes.¹⁹² The 5th and 6th centuries are still a phase where there is some form of distinction between fortified settlements and cities, even if the elements of differentiation are less and less evident with ambiguous cases such as Savona. However, we are not already in the state of generalized disappearance of the traditional concept of *limes* which struck the Byzantines in several areas from the beginning of the 7th century, and where the defences were based on *castra*, which combined the once distinguished civil and military functions.¹⁹³

This militarization, in a context of crisis of manpower and financial resources, materialized in a mixture of local and allochthonous construction techniques, with plans and structures sometimes following imported traditions (*Castrum Perti*, *Aulla*) while in other occasions employing regional ones (*Filattiera-Sorano*, *Zignago*, *Monte Castello*). The newly constructed *castra* also tended to display some of the complex and refined elements of defences, such as towers, fortified ramps, and similar. At the same time, cities only seem to show walls, with only one possible tower attested in *Albintimilium*. This could be a gap in our research around towns or a further sign that the Byzantine effort was focused on the new *castra*, while the emergency of financial restrictions imposed the use of more elaborate elements only when considered extremely necessary. As is the case for most of the locations of the main settlements and roads, the presence of fortifications in Liguria was

¹⁹⁰ For the Danubian frontier: Poulter 2007

¹⁹¹ Christie 1998, pp.69-102; 2006 pp.369-382; Zanini 1998, pp. 225-209; Cosentino 2008.

¹⁹² Zanini 1998.

¹⁹³ Zuckerman 2004, pp.161-164.

highly conditioned by the geography of the region and its inherited characteristics.¹⁹⁴ *Castra* and forts are denser where civil settlements are. However, they seem to follow a logic of guarding and blocking the north-south valleys and the east-west coastal road, especially if they lead to important centres such as Campo Marzio with Capo Don or Castrum Perti with the area of Finale. The significance of some of the points selected in the landscape is confirmed by the recurrence of their occupation over periods when there was a need for defence and control, such as in prehistory – Castrum Perti – or in the Middle Ages – Campo Marzio, Aulla, Zignago, and Monte Castello in val di Caprio. Of course, this system does not look complete and there are still substantial gaps, or exceptions such as the area of *Albintimilium*, which was also bordering with the Franks, or the region comprised between Genoa and *Luna*, where the lack of archaeological evidence induced some scholars to suppose an early Longobard occupation.¹⁹⁵ Only new surveys and excavations will illuminate these gaps, helping us to complete the Ligurian puzzle.

We know very little of the type and quality of the troops assigned to protect the region and it is possible that, after an initial arrival of eastern Byzantine soldiers, some of whom fought in the last years of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, the recruitment of replacements might have become increasingly local, as happened over time in many other Italian regions.¹⁹⁶ Troops, of course, were moved from one part to another of Byzantine Italy if needed, as attested by the *numerus* of Genoa, later redeployed at Ravenna, but contingents from the east quickly became a rarity in Italy. Emblematic is the call for help of two missions of the Senate of Rome to Constantinople in 578 and 580, which were sent back almost empty handed.¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, a flow of supplies, mainly from Byzantine North Africa, reached the Ligurian coast, with some well-furnished centres such as Castrum Perti.¹⁹⁸

A significant point is that the new forts did not affect, in most cases, the distribution of the population in the region. In most cases, the foundation of new *castra* did not correspond to a significant movement of populations to hilltop sites or to the abandonment of old centres. Castrum Perti, our best example, was probably permanently settled by a small community

¹⁹⁴ For an overview: Chapter 3.1.

¹⁹⁵ See the discussion in: Chapter 3.3.1.

¹⁹⁶ On the fragmentation of the Italian “*limes*” which mirrored the regionalisation of recruitment: Zanini 1998, pp. 225-285; for the regionalisation of the army and the *numerus*: Brown 1984, pp. 97-99; Prigent 2021, pp. 145-146.

¹⁹⁷ Chapter 1.

¹⁹⁸ Chapter 5.5; 5.6.

of soldiers and their families, but this did not mean the disappearance or relocation of major rural settlements in the same area, such as the village of Corti, the religious centre of Noli, Sant Eusebio or Finale. The same can be said for Campo Marzio, which did not impact the community living at Capo Don, near the old Roman port of *Tavia fluvius*. Even Filattiera-Sorano was only relocated to a more defensible hill between the end of the 7th or early 8th century, after the definitive Longobard conquest of the region. The Byzantine authorities generally lacked the will or simply did not see the advantages of a radical landscape reorganisation, preferring the old Roman model based on *villas* and *mansiones* in the plains along the coast, now transformed into a system of villages and rural churches.¹⁹⁹ Very different was the situation for example, in Longobard Tuscany, where there was an evident movement of the rural sites in hilltop settlements.²⁰⁰ The new fortifications in Liguria mainly served military purposes, granting the physical and psychological security for the inhabitants of the countryside to proceed according to their traditional ways and simply becoming one of the elements of a more complex landscape. Slightly different was the situation of cities such as *Vada Sabatia* or *Albintimilium*, which faced a more profound crisis of their urban network associated with the general difficulties of the urban centres between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The process of abandonment of their ancient Roman position had only just begun during this phase and was fully accomplished only a few centuries later (at the end of the 7th or in the 8th century).²⁰¹

To conclude, some other, minor points can be underlined for the Ligurian Byzantine frontier. Firstly, Liguria does not look like a particularly active border in terms of military operations, with entrenched garrisons occupied in conquering and losing positions, as was suggested by scholars of the 1920s and sometimes contemporary ones.²⁰² Secondly, the political border was not a synonym for an impregnable barrier. The first element is probably better explained by making comparisons with other parts of Italy contested between Byzantines and Longobards, such as Abruzzo or the area around Ravenna. In Abruzzo, the research conducted by Staffa showed how the constant pressure of the Longobards led to violent destructions of settlements and episcopal seats, sometimes meaning their extinction, combined with several redefinitions of the frontier over the time.²⁰³ Something similar

¹⁹⁹ Chapter 3.5.

²⁰⁰ Chapter 3.5.

²⁰¹ Chapter 2.6.

²⁰² Ferrari 1926; Formentini 1930.

²⁰³ For Abruzzo: Zanini 1998, pp. 256-260; Staffa 2005; for Ravenna: Zanini 1998, pp. 244-256; Gelichi 2021, pp. 360-386.

happens in the territories around Ravenna, where cities and castra were conquered and lost many times, or razed to the ground as Oderzo in 643-44, forcing the Byzantines, to reorganise their defences into a new centre: *Heraclia*. The issue is well explained by the constant example of material exchanges between the two sides of the border such soapstone vessels, produced in the Longobard Alps, which represent a small but constant presence on almost any Ligurian late antique and Byzantine site. Weights for exchanging coins are present in both cities – *Luna* and *Albingaunum* – and frontier outposts – *Castrum Perti* – attesting again forms of commercial exchange.²⁰⁴ Other perishable goods, which have not survived in the archaeological records, must have been passing through the “border” as well. This was not related only to objects and goods but maybe even animals for the typical transhumance activities active in the region. People were able to pass too, at least through the privileged channels of the church, with farmers or servants of the bishops moved from the Byzantine Genoa to the Longobard Tortona, or with the archbishop of Milan (in self-imposed exile to Genoa since 568) perfectly capable to administer his dioceses in Longobard territory or to travel to Ravenna if needed.²⁰⁵

The lack of any significant archaeological evidence for the inland Ligurian regions from the late 5th and early 6th century can be interpreted as a fact that neither side was interested in controlling those remote and difficult areas, which became a form of “buffer zone” between the two powers. It can also be that past archaeological research might have missed more ephemeral forms of settlement, which must have looked very hard to distinguish if imports from the coast stopped reaching them.

The frontier acted as a deterrent for the Longobards, who were occupied in settling the rich and easily conquerable lands of the Po valley and Tuscany. Liguria was a mountainous landscape and mainly valuable for its commercial routes with southern France, in which the first Longobards were probably little interested. When its military strength was seriously put under test by Rothari, who was probably not very interested in the gain of the enterprise but in undermining, if not eliminating, Byzantine power in northern Italy, the system collapsed. The apparent ease of the conquest could have been aided by the lack of reinforcements after the battle of the Scultenna, or it is possible that the Ligurian garrisons were called to

²⁰⁴ For details on the regional networks of exchange in Liguria: Chapter 5.5.

²⁰⁵ Chapter 1.4.3.

defend Ravenna and were decimated in the battle or moved to more sensible fronts.²⁰⁶ The chronology and dynamic of the events are far from clear, but the result was that the Ligurian defensive system collapsed, with most of its *castra* slowly abandoned during the Early Middle Ages or integrated into defensive system which responded to completely new logics.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Chapter 1.4.3.

²⁰⁷ Benente 2000a.

Chapter 5

Economy and Society of a Frontier Province

5.1 Introduction: Past Studies, Issues, and Prospects

This chapter analyses the economic aspects of Liguria as a frontier province at the westernmost edges of the 6th century Byzantine Empire. Due to the lack of textual sources, most of the evidence is based on archaeological data - mainly pottery, coins, small finds, and a few specialised products such as sarcophagi in Finale stone. After a historical and methodological introduction on the subject, this chapter will assess the available data by first discussing a number of detailed case studies illustrative of different types of settlements and materials. These key works will form the reference models for what is known of other late antique and Byzantine Ligurian settlements, so as to produce a coherent picture of the evidence. The presentation of these data is necessary to lay the foundation from which to discuss a series of crucial issues concerning this apparently isolated Byzantine province. Topics such as the nature of the political boundary and the extent to which it was a barrier in other senses; the socio-economic development of the region, possibly influenced by its isolation and Byzantine military and administrative presence; and the definition and applicability of the term “frontier economy” to the Ligurian context will be discussed. A question that will be asked along the way is how valid it is to refer to the area as ‘isolated’ since maritime connections are so prominent. The chapter will end with a discussion of the “Ligurian model”, comparing it with other regions in the Tyrrhenian area such as Tuscany, Sicily, and Provence, asking whether and to what extent the Byzantine presence influenced the region.

To address the issue of economy and society, and how these influenced one another in Liguria, archaeology is crucial. The scarcity of textual sources offers only vague glimpses of Ligurian society during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine occupation, and focuses mainly on cities such as Genoa and *Luna*, high-ranking figures, and clergy.¹ While pottery constitutes

¹ For a detailed analysis of the sources: Chapter 1.

only a part of the ancient economy and material culture and often, as in the case of amphorae, does not even represent the real object of trade but only vessels for much more valuable products (such as oil and wine), its ubiquity makes it an important guide.² Of some commercial value were the fine potteries that often accompanied the amphorae, especially the North African ones, the export of which was made economically viable primarily because they travelled as ‘free’ supplementary products of the much more valuable traded foodstuffs.³ Many other traded products are largely lost in the archaeological record due to their perishable nature (i.e. textiles, spices, foodstuffs, wood).⁴ Once on land, the contents of the amphorae could be transferred to new, usually perishable containers (i.e. skins, wooden barrels) to facilitate transport inland.⁵ In Liguria we should expect donkeys or mules to have been the means of transportation for traded goods and supplies in many areas due to its geographical characteristics.⁶ Products such as soapstone vessels from the Alps, which are ubiquitous, though in smaller quantities, must have benefited of some form of land or river trade, along with other perishable materials.⁷ Finally, local production of common and cooking ware pottery surely circulated alongside the international trade infrastructure, both locally and regionally. What has survived archaeologically represents a fraction of what was produced and traded. Nevertheless, it remains a reference point for trends, patterns, consumers, and markets. Whenever possible, other forms of evidence such as coins, faunal remains, and small finds will be used. However, these are often too few or have seen limited publication compared to the more common pottery evidence.

In Liguria, pottery and economic studies have long focused on the period between the Roman and the medieval phases, begun by Lamboglia with his work at the Roman site of

² Twede 2002.

³ Our knowledge on the economic mechanisms of the Late Roman Mediterranean is greatly enriched by the constant flow of publications on Late Roman ceramic productions, especially in the western Mediterranean. A very partial selection on pottery finds comprises: Hayes 1972 (for ARSW); Keay 1984; Saguì 1998; Bonifay 2004; Piéri 2005 (for amphorae); the regular publication of the proceedings of the Late Roman Coarse Wares (LRCW) conferences since Gurt i Esparraguera, Buxeda i Garrigós & Cau Ontiveros 2005. These studies and finds have stimulated a lively debate on the nature of the Mediterranean commerce between substantivists (more in favour of a state-driven economy linked with the cultural and social characteristics of the Roman Empire) and formalists (in favour of broadly applying modern economical rules to the past). Again, a very selective bibliography includes: Carandini 1983, 1986; Reynolds 1995; McCormick 2001; Wickham 1988, 2005; Whittow 2015; Vera 2020.

⁴ For a perspective on this issue and a discussion on other traded goods: Mundel Mango 2001.

⁵ Illustrative of these procedures and of the existence of these containers are the works on North Africa by Marlière & Torres Costa 2007. More recently the discovery in France of almost fully intact late Roman wooden barrels: Mille & Rollet 2020.

⁶ Mannoni 2004.

⁷ On the production of such materials see the volume: Fantoni, Cerri & De Vingo 2018; for their distribution in Italy and Liguria: Murialdo 2016; Cortelazzo 2018; Santi, Riccardi & Renzulli 2018; for Liguria Chapter 5.4.3.

Albintimilium, followed by Mannoni with one of the first publications on medieval vessels for Liguria and Italy.⁸ Mannoni's influence was crucial in the development of a scientific approach by way of archaeometric analysis, in particular thin sections and petrography, a pioneering technique for Italy at the time which left a solid legacy in the region.⁹ After Mannoni, studies on late antique and medieval pottery multiplied due to increased attention by archaeologists and the compilation of typological works, enabling the identification of typologies that had hitherto been almost unknown. In particular, studies of North African amphorae and Red Slip Wares were crucial to the reconstruction of the commercial network of the late antique western Mediterranean.¹⁰ This new interest in Late Antiquity, coupled with Mannoni's approach, gave rise to numerous studies on both imported materials (African amphorae and ARSW, for example) and the common, locally produced coarse ware pottery, which under Byzantine rule experienced a period of revival. Despite a still unclear picture and open questions, the study of these materials in Liguria is quite advanced compared to other Mediterranean regions.¹¹ However, more sites are needed to better understand typologies and distribution networks of these regional products which, in Liguria, were present alongside the more typical Roman products and often developed from pre-Roman models.

Finally, it is worth noting the function of coarse and common wares, not only for cooking but also for food storage and other purposes. Thanks to the petrographic tradition begun by Mannoni, we know the existence of at least three or four areas of production for these materials in Liguria. They are all present since the Roman or even pre-Roman times, always in marginal quantities, outcompeted by the finer, and probably cheaper, Roman products. One atelier was securely established in *Albintimilium*, as attested by the recovery of many finds and by discarded elements suggesting the presence of nearby kilns. The finds of *Albintimilium* are the only ones that have been the subject of a detailed investigation. This allowed us to trace their distribution in other Ligurian areas, such as *Castrum Perti*, and extra Ligurian regions, such as Provence.¹² The other relatively well-known industry is composed by the "ceramiche vacuolate" of Lunigiana. These potteries are characterised by the presence of holes ("vacuoli" in Italian) in their fabrics and are typical of eastern Liguria.

⁸ Mannoni 1968.

⁹ See the article collected in the volume: Mannoni 1994d.

¹⁰ In Liguria local scholars developed the study of late medieval productions such as the ones of Savona, which was an important production centre in the Middle Ages: Varaldo 2012.

¹¹ Internal Spain for example: Grassi & Vigil-Escalera 2017; or Sicily: Malfitana & Bonifay 2016, pp. 25-28.

¹² Olcese 1989, 1993.

No clear production centre has been identified in this case, but they are generically attributed to Lunigiana due to petrographic analyses. This is also the area where the finds are concentrated, even if they have been recorded in northern Tuscany and central Liguria as well.¹³ Other production areas identified, thanks to petrographic analyses, are the area around Genoa and the region of *Vada Sabatia*-Savona where a small production of late antique glaze wares is attested.¹⁴ It is interesting to note how any micro-region in Liguria started to display its local productions when supplies from abroad dwindled. Over the 6th and 7th centuries, those products became more common until they represented the only type of pottery available during the Early Middle Ages. Their regional redistribution, usually limited to neighbouring micro-regions, could help us understand the nature of local markets and exchange routes which run parallel to the international trade network. At the same time, having a better knowledge and chronology of those products could finally guide us through the otherwise very obscure post-Byzantine phases in Liguria.

Despite methodological advances and many synthetic articles involving micro-regions or specific typologies of pottery, there are still very few sites whose excavated material evidence has been entirely published, often using different criteria of quantifications and analysis from each other. This is a real issue for data comparison. It is important to know if North African amphorae are present or not at a site, but it makes a considerable difference to know the ratio of fragments attested compared to other materials.¹⁵ Furthermore, procedures such as weighing the finds and calculating the EVE (estimated vessel equivalent) are only sporadically applied.¹⁶ Less problematic is the tendency of publishing according to typological criteria, with only sporadic references to the association with other materials and contexts. This is crucial for understanding the contexts of use and abandonment of such materials in the societies that used them.

Over the past twenty years, a series of excavated sites have seen full publication, providing at least a group of archetypes for some categories of settlements against which we might broadly compare the remaining evidence. For rural contexts at least two are available: the fortified village of Filattiera-Sorano in the eastern Lunigiana and the village of Corti in

¹³ Ratti Squellati 1987; Giannichedda & Castillo 2000; Benente, Codovilla & Pastorino 2004.

¹⁴ Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; Murialdo et al. 1998.

¹⁵ On the role and importance of pottery quantifications in archaeology see, for example: Orton & Hughes 2013, pp. 203-218.

¹⁶ Orton & Tyres 1990.

western Liguria;¹⁷ *Castrum Perti*, constituting the perfect case study for a military site;¹⁸ and *Noli* which offers insight into a rural religious complex.¹⁹ More complex is the status of the old Roman cities whose ceramic assemblages have seen limited publication. The only partial exception is *Luna*, published in the 1970s, and followed by some more recent work in the early 2000s. This is an essential step in a context where other urban contexts are known only in a very patchy and incomplete form.²⁰ In this case, however, the 1970s publications need to be revised, at least for the post-Roman evidence, due to the poor knowledge of those materials at the time.²¹ The only other case study roughly comparable with an urban settlement is *Savona*, however most of the data was recovered from the late antique and Byzantine necropolis, not from the settlement.²² Of rural sites very little is known except for the ones mentioned above. The coast is generally better understood, since it was the area with the largest and richest sites, while inland settlements are more scarce and smaller (the so-called “tile stations”), and are generally poorly investigated, as discussed in Chapter 3.²³ Finally, if pottery has been adequately studied up to a certain point, far less has been done beyond the boundaries of dating and economy.²⁴ Approaches such as “household archaeology” are still limitedly practised outside of Prehistory, despite some notable examples in the general field of Classical archaeology.²⁵ These approaches focus on the internal relationships of single settlements, thus operating on a microscale, with greater attention on the human perspective in order to understand broader themes such as social or demographic change.²⁶ While it is impossible to readjust this approach to a micro-scale, it is feasible to draw out some general trends for the region.

¹⁷ For *Filattiera-Sorano*: Giannichedda 1998a, 2010a; for *Corti*: Massabò 1999a.

¹⁸ Mannoni & Murialdo 2001.

¹⁹ Frondoni 2018b.

²⁰ Chapter 2.

²¹ Frova 1973, 1977; Durante 2001, 2010; Chapter 2.2.

²² Varaldo 1992, 2000.

²³ Chapter 3.3.2.

²⁴ As shown for example in Vroom 2011.

²⁵ Peacock 1982.

²⁶ For examples in the Classic world: Hingley 1990; Ault 2000. For an early Byzantine case: Costa 2015/2016.

5.2 The Key Sites

5.2.1 A Fortified Village – Filattiera-Sorano²⁷

Filattiera-Sorano is the easternmost of our key settlements and also the furthest away from the coast (circa 30 km) but was sited along an important land communication route between the Po plain and northern Tuscany, with secondary branches towards Emilia (Fig. 4.11). Nonetheless, some imports from the Byzantine-held coast reached the site: North African vessels, for example, are present though not at levels seen in coastal settlements. Only 119 fragments of ARSW D tableware are attested, whereas a similar but coastal site, Corti, featured more than double this number, despite being a much smaller excavation (see below).²⁸ Imports mostly concentrate in the phases between the late 4th and 5th centuries with forms such as Hayes 50B, 63, 67, 73, 76, 79, 64.4, and 80B.²⁹ Later products, more indicative of the late 5th and early 6th centuries, are represented by Hayes 99 cups and large dishes compatible with Hayes 87 and 104.³⁰ Only one specimen of Hayes 109, typical of the early 7th century Byzantine phases in Liguria, has been recovered in one of the surface layers.³¹ New forms, still compatible with the late 5th – early 6th century such as Hayes 61B, 80A, 91B1, and 93-94-98, plus a fragment with a Hayes 138 decoration were recovered in the excavation of the road which was crossing the village and the northern sector of the area.³² Fine tableware is also marginally attested by a few scattered fragments of DSP in two recognisable forms from southern Gaul (Rigoir 1 and 15) and generically attributed to 5th century phases.³³ Late antique glazed ware (23 fragments) have been documented and attributable to the late antique phase with a number of cooking vessels similar to the ones found in *Luna*. As will be shown in the rest of the chapter, this is a class often present but never in significant quantities, especially for Lunigiana, and it is usually considered an elite or special product, seemingly from around Savona.³⁴

Regional coarse and common wares are better attested for Filattiera-Sorano with more than 7000 fragments recovered across all phases of the settlement, mostly used for food storage.³⁵ In this case 1183 fragments belong to the late antique phase (phase IV). Most of

²⁷ For a detailed description of the settlement: Chapter 4.4.3.

²⁸ Excavation at Corti comprises of a simple trench: Chapters 3.3.3; 5.2.2.

²⁹ Gambaro 1998a, pp. 109-113; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 178-179.

³⁰ Attested also in Marseille: Bonifay & Pelletier 1983.

³¹ Gambaro 1998a, pp. 109-113; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 178-179.

³² Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, pp. 127-28.

³³ Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, pp. 128.

³⁴ Gambaro 1998a, p. 113; Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, pp. 128; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, p. 179.

³⁵ Giannichedda 1998e, pp. 114-116.

this pottery is formed by the local “ceramica vacuolare” or similar, usually cooked in their final phase in a reducing atmosphere to increase surface water resistance. The large typological disparity (an overwhelming majority of pots over bowls in a ratio of 20 to 1) suggests that they were mostly used for storage and cooking. The best comparisons are with the materials from *Luna* and Refondou-Savignone, which are, however, only generically dated.³⁶ Typical late antique cooking vessels, such as soapstone products, are recorded (15 fragments), mostly relatable to a 6th century phase, showing contacts with both the central and western Alps.³⁷

The common wares of Filattiera-Sorano are a variegated group including different forms and origins. A first group is composed of regional products with fabrics attributable to the area of Lunigiana and northern Tuscany. They are already attested in phases prior to the formation of the village (phase V and VI, late 2nd and 4th century) with about 550 fragments, but for the most part during the late antique phase itself (phase IV, between the 5th and 6th century) with almost 1150 finds, dropping significantly during the early medieval phases of abandonment (275 sherds). Late Antiquity is also the period which displays the greatest variety of fabrics and consequently of interregional and regional contacts, as confirmed by the increased number of local production centres in Liguria (see below). The forms vary from cups, bowls, pots, pans, jugs, and small amphorae, with this last category circulating in marginal quantities in several coastal sites including *Luna* and *Albintimilium*. The general complex largely recalls the area of *Luna* and Pisa with a possible persistence of certain late Roman forms into the 5th and 6th century.³⁸ North African common pottery, which usually disappears by the 5th century, is still present, in Filattiera-Sorano with about 115 fragments attested for the 5th and 6th century (phase IV) when it would have been more common, according to other excavations, during the previous periods.³⁹ Further excavations revealed a rich context of common African pottery (440 fragments), but only five are securely attributable to the late antique phase.⁴⁰ This is an anomaly for Liguria, since usually this kind of materials are rare after the 5th century. Archaeologists believed that a large imports of

³⁶ Giannichedda 1998e, pp. 118-123; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 179-181. For Refondou-Savignone: Chapter 3.3.1.

³⁷ The first excavation in Filattiera-Sorano only discovered soapstone vessels in 7th and 8th century layers: Giannichedda 1998f, pp. 165-67; new evidence confirmed their presence also in the Byzantine phases: Giannichedda 2010c, pp. 134-35.

³⁸ Chiocchi & Grasso 1998, pp. 130-145; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 181-183.

³⁹ Gambaro 1998b, pp. 148-154.

⁴⁰ Attested forms are the dishes/lids Hayes 182, 195 and Ostia III, fig. 267, the bowl Lamboglia 9A, and the pot Hayes 23A: Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 184-185

these class during the 5th century in Lunigiana, might have enhanced the presence of this class in 6th century layers, but it is difficult to prove with only one case study. It is also possible that at a rural site, common pottery forms, either imported or locally produced, might have seen greater use than the more refined ARSW tableware.

Finally, transport vessels or amphorae constitute a group of 1310 fragments of which only 420 are attributable to the late antique phase.⁴¹ Most are non-diagnostic and their origin has been partially tracked using petrography. About 49 fragments are North African in origin, including a fragment of Keay 60A, while a fragment of Keay 23 originates from Lusitania.⁴² Another 33 fragments, belonging to two amphorae, are probably of Eastern provenance. Some Iberic products are attested by the fabric, but since typology is not identifiable it is impossible to understand if they are residues from previous phases, when they were more common, or if they were limited imports of the 5th and 6th century, as attested at other Ligurian sites.⁴³

The late antique village was apparently well provided with glassware, especially cups, of which about 200 fragments, almost corresponding to as many objects, have been recorded for phase IV, largely outnumbering any other phase. Forms such as Ising 134 are common together with a few Ising 111. These and other indications have led archaeologists to hypothesize the existence of a local glass workshop, supplying village demand.⁴⁴ The same could be said for metalworking due to the presence of several pieces of slag from phase IV (5th-6th century).⁴⁵ Further clues derive from the construction phase of the first church, from which a series of small crucibles were recovered, used in the production of lead or jewellery and comparable with finds at both *Castrum Perti* and, further afield, *Monte Barro*.⁴⁶

In conclusion, at *Filattiera* we have a rural settlement far from the coast whose material culture is dominated by local or regional products, influenced by some imports, mostly during

⁴¹ Bellatalla & Biagini 1998, pp. 155-158; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 185-186; Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, p. 132.

⁴² Bellatalla & Biagini 1998, pp. 155-158; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 185-186; Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, p. 132.

⁴³ Bellatalla & Biagini 1998, pp. 155-158; Biagini & Giannichedda 2010, pp. 185-186; Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, p. 132.

⁴⁴ Giannichedda 2010e, p. 187; Giannichedda 1998g, pp. 168-172; Giannichedda & Riccobono 2010, pp. 135-36.

⁴⁵ Maybe small reparations: Giannichedda 1998h, p. 191

⁴⁶ Giannichedda 2010d, p. 145.

the 5th and 6th century. These imports were probably reaching the settlement due to its position along a notable road rather than to any *annona* system or military garrison, as previously proposed. However, given to the presence of series of elements (fortifications, a church, workshops, and imports), the site probably represented one of the main aggregation points of the upper Magra valley. From certain aspects it can be seen as an impoverished and more isolated version of Capo Don or Noli, without the prestige and probably the “administrative” function signified by the presence of a baptismal church.⁴⁷

5.2.2 A Coastal Village – Corti⁴⁸

The site of the Roman villa of Corti, which developed into a late antique and possibly early medieval village, lies a few kilometres west of Finale Ligure and Castrum Pertii, in the most inland section of a small river plain (Fig. 3.5). The site saw limited archaeological work in the form of a long trench, possibly intercepting a marginal area of the settlement. Results, however, are particularly significant since most of the other Roman Ligurian villas are limitedly published, especially their later phases.

Corti experienced a crisis during the 3rd and 4th centuries but was resettled around the year 400 with houses featuring stone and pebble foundations and perishable material walls.⁴⁹ After at least two occupation phases the site of Corti was abandoned and reused as a burial area between the 7th and the 9th century.⁵⁰ Its material evidence is significant as it testifies the economy of a marginal rural site, which maintained close contacts with the coast, just 1,5km distant, as well as the road system. Corti was also near the area of Finale Ligure, one of the richest in terms of late antique finds and settlements (Fig. 4.15).

During Late Antiquity, Corti received a certain amount of ARSW (336 fragments), of which the great majority (73%), are of the latest D type covering the late 5th and 6th centuries. The imports of ARSW D are mostly composed of bowls and cups (65%) in the forms of Hayes 91 and 99 with 31 fragments each. The Hayes 99 has several variants which extend from the oldest and more numerous of late 5th and early 6th century to the latest and rarest of the late 6th and early 7th century. Another relatively common form is the dish/bowl Hayes 103

⁴⁷ For Capo Don and Noli: Chapter 3.3.3.

⁴⁸ For a detailed description of the settlement: Chapter 3.3.3.

⁴⁹ For the details and bibliography: Chapter 3.3.1-2.

⁵⁰ For the full publication: Massabò 1999a; for the Roman phase: Massabò 1999d; for the late antique one; Murru 1999a.

(10 fragments) of full 6th century, plus minor quantities of Hayes 67, 87A, 93-94-98, Ostia III and Fulford 92 or similar. Decoration styles are attested by E(i) and E(ii) with a hare (Hayes 153), a cross (Hayes 321), and the figure of a saint (Hayes 234).⁵¹ Another fine ware import at Corti comprises eight fragments of DSP, mostly produced between Languedoc and Provence, but also Spain and Switzerland, between the second half of the 4th and 7th century. They confirm the frequent, but numerically small, presence of these imports in many Ligurian sites, attesting forms of regional trade with southern Gaul.⁵² Some fragments of “*sigillata lucente*” are also attested”.⁵³ A very small group of fine wares is constituted by five fragments of “*ceramica a vernice rossa italica*”, a sort of late imitation of ARSW, mostly diffused in central Italy, especially in along the Apennine, but also in coastal centres such as Roselle.⁵⁴ The Corti fragments have been dated to the late 4th and 5th century, but other products could reach the 6th and possibly 7th century.⁵⁵ For the time being this is probably the earliest evidence of such products in Liguria and, together with the DSP fragments, would strengthen the hypothesis of the existence of a Tyrrhenian interregional exchange system of locally produced pottery supplementing, in minor quantities, the diminished North African imports. Another minor presence is the late antique glazed pottery of the 5th- 6th century, probably produced in the area around Savona or in western Liguria.⁵⁶

However, the bulk of finds in Corti is represented by coarse wares mostly of local or regional origin with a total number of 2120 fragments for all phases. Analysis of the fabrics revealed 17 different typologies of clay, of which only 6 are late antique. Some fabrics seem to be a direct continuation of previous productions, in particular fabric 11 which may represent a local, non-Roman, tradition attested in few forms and numbers from the 1st century with a similar fabric (fabric 3), which then became more common and diffused over the 5th and 6th century. Fabric 12 appears to be of better quality and directly connected with the contemporary productions of *Albintimilium*. Several forms are comparable with products from the westernmost Ligurian town but also with some pottery identified in the late antique necropolis of Perti, while a number of domestic amphorae of the 5th-6th century have parallels in *Luna* (form 47 and 48).⁵⁷ A rise in local production is apparent after the 5th century

⁵¹ Gandolfi 1999b.

⁵² Delfino 1999b.

⁵³ Delfino 1999a.

⁵⁴ For Corti: Puppo 1999; for other attestation for example in Tuscany: Vaccaro 2014.

⁵⁵ Puppo 1999.

⁵⁶ Pastorino 1999a.

⁵⁷ For Corti: Chiocci & Ferraris, 1999; for Perti: Murialdo et al. 1998.

with reworked and simplified Imperial models, with influences also from Lombardy. Most forms are closed such as pots for cooking boiled or roasted food, while tableware is almost absent, testifying some changes in local dietary habits.⁵⁸ Soapstone cooking vessels are also well attested in Corti with 91 fragments from 6 different lithotypes (61% from the north-western Alps and 24% from the central ones). They are for the most part attributable to the 6th-7th century and further attest the network of regional markets that emerged in the late antique Mediterranean.⁵⁹ These local and regional wares almost entirely substituted the North African cooking vessels, which became quite rare at Corti after the 4th century.⁶⁰

Finally, transport vessels demonstrate a shift during Late Antiquity in the main source of wine, oil, and fish sauces, which originally came from Spain, but from the late 4th century were imported from North Africa.⁶¹ In total, 1564 fragments (only 58 of which diagnostic) of North African products have been recognised at Corti, beginning with elements of Africana I and II and other products of the late 4th and early 5th century. From the 5th and until the 7th century large cylindrical amphorae are attested in the forms of Keay 27B, 35 A, 55A, 60 A, 62 A, Q, and G, and fragments similar to 60 or 62. Eastern imports are mostly represented by 3 fragments of LRA 1, one fragment of LRA 2 plus another partial specimen reused in a burial, and 11 sherds attributable to either LRA 1 or 2. In general, most of the recovered materials are attributable to the post 4th century reoccupation phase, confirming a shift in imports from Iberia to North Africa.⁶² It is significant to note how a variety of imports from the Mediterranean network was still accessible to a small and in all likelihood marginal site such as Corti, probably favoured by its proximity with Finale.

Glass materials are rare but feature some 5th-6th century forms of Isings 106 and 111.⁶³ Coins are not attested after the 4th century, while metal objects are rare.⁶⁴ However, there are traces of the existence of a metalworking area signified by the presence of slag (25kg) in 5th- 7th century layers.⁶⁵ It is possible that, as for Filattiera-Sorano, the village of Corti provided, at least partially, for its own needs in term of metalworking.

⁵⁸ Chiocci & Ferraris 1999 pp. 144-145.

⁵⁹ Gandolfi 1999c.

⁶⁰ Gandolfi 1999b, p.120.

⁶¹ Grasso 1999.

⁶² Grasso 1999.

⁶³ Pastorino 1999b.

⁶⁴ Murru 1999b.

⁶⁵ Piccardo, Stagno & Stagno 1999.

Despite the limited nature of the excavated area, the level of detail provided by the full publication is of fundamental importance in helping characterise one of the few excavated rural coastal sites of late antique and Byzantine Liguria. Notable is the continuous provision of at least some basic goods such as North African dishes, wine, oil, and fish sauces; at the same time, we observe the development of a series of local and regional networks which involved the large exchange of coarse wares, integrated by minor quantities of fine wares from the south of France and central Italy along with soapstone vessels from the Alps. Finally, the presence of local workshops is indicative of a more localised production for daily needs and possibly also for some form of local exchange, though only the excavation of the forge could eventually confirm this. However, I do not feel comfortable calling the economic activities at Corti in Late Antiquity “subsistence”, since this definition is, in my opinion, improper. The nature of the site does not appear as either military or ecclesiastical, so it is reasonable to assume that it exchanged imported goods with its own products, rather than receiving these as a form of gratuitous subsistence – an hypothesis further supported by interregional trade which was beyond the reach of Imperial administration. The absence of coins could be explained by barter exchange practices but also by the limited area excavated. Moreover, the nearby presence of *Castrum Perti* and the settlements of the Finale area might indicate some form of interdependence, whereby the village provided food and other kinds of supplies in exchange for other goods. Nonetheless, this does not imply that any surplus could not have been sold in exchange for goods. The problem lies in the fact that we do not know the social set-up of the village of Corti, whether it was the property of some local landowner, the Church or if the site became a village of independent farmers.

5.2.3 *A Rural-Ecclesiastical Settlement – Noli*⁶⁶

Noli, on the easternmost edge of the area of Finale (Fig. 3.5), is so far the best Ligurian example of a rural, coastal, ecclesiastical centre at our disposal thanks to prolonged archaeological research and complete publication, at least for the area of the church. The excavations brought to light the remains of a late antique and early medieval village which included a baptismal church and a metal workshop. Noli seems to have prospered during Late Antiquity, with the Byzantine occupation testifying to the importance of the site and the attention given by authorities, whereas the Longobard invasion seems to have had little impact on it. This is, however, only partially reflected in the material culture.

⁶⁶ For details on the settlement: Chapter 3.3.3.

The typical North African RSW are present in only 122 fragments during late 5th and 6th centuries and divided between Carthaginian (majoritarian) and other Tunisian materials.⁶⁷ The first are the most numerous and varied, with examples of Hayes 61 B3, 91 A-B, 91 C, 99 (the most common), 109 A-B, 87 C/109, 91 D, and Fulford 74,4. The Tunisian productions are attested only in the forms of El Mahrine 18, Hayes 103A-B, and 104B. Several specimens also display Christian decorations in the form of crosses and birds.⁶⁸ DSP from the area of Marseille is also attested in the form of few, poor quality fragments, covering mostly the period between 370-500.⁶⁹ Late antique glazed pottery produced between *Albintimilium* and Savona is attested by 19 fragments, datable mainly to the 4th and 6th centuries. Later imports of Forum Wares (from the late 8th century) are noteworthy, though these are attested by only two fragments from the baptistery area.⁷⁰

Coarse wares are mostly composed of closed forms used for cooking, such as pots, but also containers for liquids, *mortaria*, bowls, and other common typologies, covering a period from the late 4th to the 7th century with the late antique productions largely outnumbering the earlier Roman ones.⁷¹ According to typological analyses, there are comparisons with materials from several parts of Liguria such as *Albintimilium* and *Vada Sabatia*-Savona, Filatteria-Sorano and *Luna*. In Noli, a fragment of Longobard pottery has been recovered, probably a cup, constituting one of the few Ligurian finds of this elusive category.⁷² Cooking vessels from North Africa, as for many other Ligurian sites, is minimal and seems to have not survived the 5th century, being substituted by local production and imported soapstone vessels.⁷³ This last typology of materials is represented by at least 20 vessels, covering a vast chronological range, from the 6th to the 12th century, involving mostly large cooking pots and cups.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ However, Imperial A productions are attested by 40 fragments alone, denoting an improvement for the late antique and Byzantine phase: Gandolfi & De Vingo 2018, pp. 201-202.

⁶⁸ Gandolfi & De Vingo 2018.

⁶⁹ De Vingo 2018b.

⁷⁰ So far, these are the only attestation of Forum Ware in Liguria: Gandolfi 2018b.

⁷¹ Vitali 2018a, p. 171.

⁷² Unfortunately, only some indication regarding the diagnostic elements are provided: Vitali 2018a, pp. 175-182; for a brief overview of this pottery class: De Marchi 2003.

⁷³ Gandolfi & De Vingo 2018, p 213.

⁷⁴ Frondoni & Vitali 2004; Vitali 2018b, pp. 273-275.

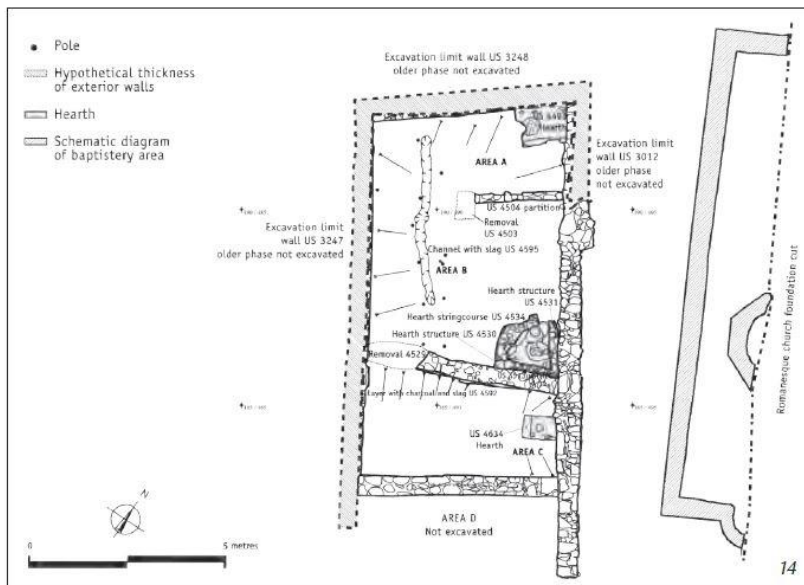


Figure 5.1) Noli: plan of the forge and its various phases. On the right the remains of the late antique baptistery. (Source: Frondoni, Geltrudini, De Vingo 2007, p. 247, fig. 14)

Regarding transport vessels, the typical North African products are dominant during Late Antiquity (885 fragments), starting as early as the 3rd century and continuing over the 7th. Amphorae such as the Keay 25 arrived during the 5th century replacing the older Africana 3/Keay 25 and continued until the 7th century, as did the Keay 8B, while Keay 62 (usually connected with the Byzantine presence in the west) is well

attested in several variations.⁷⁵ Iberian amphorae are less attested (360 fragments) with only some typologies reaching the 6th century such as Keay 13A and possibly Keay 23.⁷⁶ Eastern imports, as usual, are less common (130 fragments), even if at Noli they perhaps display a greater variety of forms with LRA 1, 2, 3, 8, and one fragment of a rare Egyptian LRA 7. Fragments of Eastern globular amphorae are also present in the later decades of the 7th-8th century, attesting some form of weak continuity of imports even during the Early Middle Ages.⁷⁷

An important aspect in Noli is the presence of a production complex for the working of metals (Fig. 5.1). The building was established between the 5th- 6th century and kept active with several modifications until a fire destroyed it in the 9th century, together with the rest of the settlement.⁷⁸ Its proximity to the church suggests a direct control by the religious authorities.⁷⁹ Oddly, glass was very rare, at least for the published areas.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ De Vingo 2018d, pp. 239-251.

⁷⁶ De Vingo 2018d, pp. 235-239.

⁷⁷ De Vingo 2018d, pp. 251-253.

⁷⁸ The archaeologists believed it was a Saracen raid, which, however, did not prevented the settlement to recover and prosper in the Middle Ages: De Vingo 2018b, pp. 106-107.

⁷⁹ For more details on the forge: Chapter 3.3.3.2 (ii). For the connection between churches and production area see also the case of Capo Don: Chapter 3.3.3.2 (i).

⁸⁰ Ubaldi 2018.

Noli has been classified as a “minor” settlement which probably received its imported goods from a major redistribution centre, perhaps from the area of *Vada Sabatia* or Finale Ligure.⁸¹ However, the settlement may also have acted as a small “independent” dock and secondary maritime stoppage point, in use since the Roman period. Indeed, during the Middle Ages it was famous for the production and leasing of ships.⁸² The site could have provided services such as metal tool or ship repair, but also natural resources such as wood, with oak seemingly quite common in the area before the 9th – 10th centuries, its disappearance attributed to over-exploitation.⁸³ Finally, the settlement was important enough to host a church and baptistery, both elements suggesting the existence of a solid community and of some form of aristocracy capable of investing as well as acquiring goods from other areas.⁸⁴ So far this is the best evidence in Liguria of a prosperous non-state driven community, possibly linked to a private estate (either ecclesiastical or lay) or of a more complex and stratified community.

5.2.4 A Byzantine Fortress – *Castrum Perti*

This *castrum*, located on a hill a few kilometres from the coast and still constituting a *unicum* in Liguria and in Italy,⁸⁵ was designed to protect the area of Finale Ligure (Fig. 3.5). The fortress was built in two phases between the end of the 6th and the early 7th century. Following the Longobard conquest, secondary activities are attested on the hill during the Early Middle Ages until the site was completely abandoned in favour of Castel Gavone (11th or 12th century).⁸⁶ The findings show that the *castrum*, despite its hilltop position, was supplied with a variety of imported goods, showing its high level of connectivity.

North African tableware (ARSW D) are strongly represented with 1038 fragments, of which half are diagnostic, for at least 108 vessels (EVE).⁸⁷ Regarding forms, the Hayes 99 C bowl

⁸¹ De Vingo 2018d, pp. 254-255.

⁸² Dell'Amico 2007.

⁸³ For the archaeobotanic analysis: Motella de Carlo 2018.

⁸⁴ The presence of an elite is reinforced by the two 6th and 7th century epitaphs of a bishop and of the Domina Lidoria: Appendix 2, n. 12-13. The marginal presence of more “exotic” products such as the rare Egyptian wine amphora would also be significant in this sense.

⁸⁵ The closest and only example is probably the *oppidum* of St-Blaise in southern France: Démians d'Archimbaud 1994. On the exceptionality of the *Castrum* see also the comment of Wickahm: Wickham 1999, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁶ For a detailed description of the structures: Chapter 4.6.1.

⁸⁷ As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, this is one of the few cases in Liguria in which more complex mathematical analyses, such as the EVE (estimated vessel equivalent), have been carried out: Murialdo 2001.

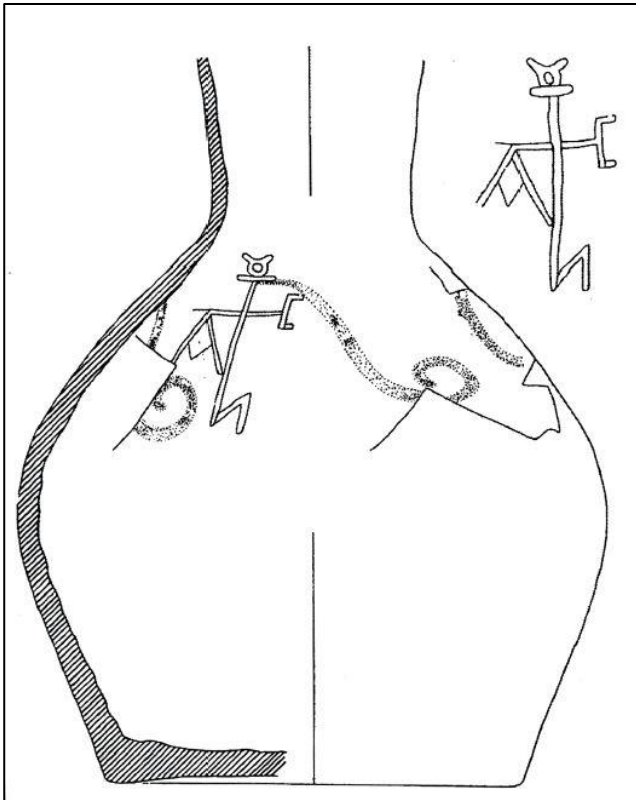


Figure 5.2) *Castrum Pertii*: vessel with Greek monogram. (Source: Murialdo 2001h, p. 356, tav. 29)

and its variant is one of the most diffused, dating to the late 6th and early 7th century; combined with Hayes 80B/99 they are the main vessels of this class attested in the *castrum*. Other mid-6th and early 7th century forms include ARSW in the form of Hayes 100, 101, 94-108/Fulford 50 and 70, 104, and several variants of the large dish Hayes 105. Hayes 91D, Fulford 74.5, and 82.3 are also attested, albeit in marginal numbers. One of the most recent products is the Hayes 109 dish with some late variants which date after the mid-7th century. Closed forms for liquids like Fulford Closed Forms 2 are very rare (5.6% in total), testifying to a preference towards common forms from North Africa or from local productions

centres.⁸⁸ Fine ceramic from southern Gaul, such as DSP, is not attested in the *castrum*, possibly due to the fact that the middle of the 6th century was a period of decline for such materials, or of site typology, with DSP mostly circulating in cities or centres where elites were present. The rarity of late antique glazed pottery, 78 fragments (EVE 11 vessels, constituting 0.6% of the pottery recovered), can be explained in similar ways (type of settlement and chronology). Interestingly, despite the vicinity of the known production centres (Savona) petrography suggests an origin in either central Italy or the Aegean.⁸⁹ Other fine ceramics are constituted by North African common wares, present in a few open forms and many closed ones which are accompanied by ARSW imitations covering the period between the 6th and 7th century.⁹⁰ There is also a notable presence of other mixed fine ware products with fabrics which are difficult to link to a specific workshop. One of these vessels features a Greek monogram which could be read as “ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΟΥ” (Fig. 5.2), a name also attested in southern Italy and in the Agorà of Athens, but it is difficult to say if this was the mark of an owner or producer.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Bertolotti & Murialdo 2001.

⁸⁹ Murialdo 2001i.

⁹⁰ Murialdo 2001h, pp. 342-343.

⁹¹ Murialdo 2001h, pp. 356.

Coarse wares comprise a mixture of local productions and imports with fine pottery from *Albintimilium*, Savona, and *Albingaunum*. Only 11% of the finds are imported from outside the region, mostly from areas of the Western Mediterranean but also from the East (1 fragment of Fulford 35).⁹² This is significant in comparison with the rest of northern Italy, where imports such as these are entirely absent also in later periods (12th century for example).⁹³ Local products show a simplification of forms and techniques, in a context where about 60% of pots comprised coarse cooking wares.⁹⁴ Some late antique glazed forms were also used for cooking, even if their numbers are really marginal.⁹⁵ More significant is the presence of soapstone vessels: the excavations recovered 56.5kg (EVE 129, at least) most of them from the western Alps (91.1%) with forms covering the 6th and 7th centuries, while a few vessels of Central Alpine origin might even be late medieval.⁹⁶

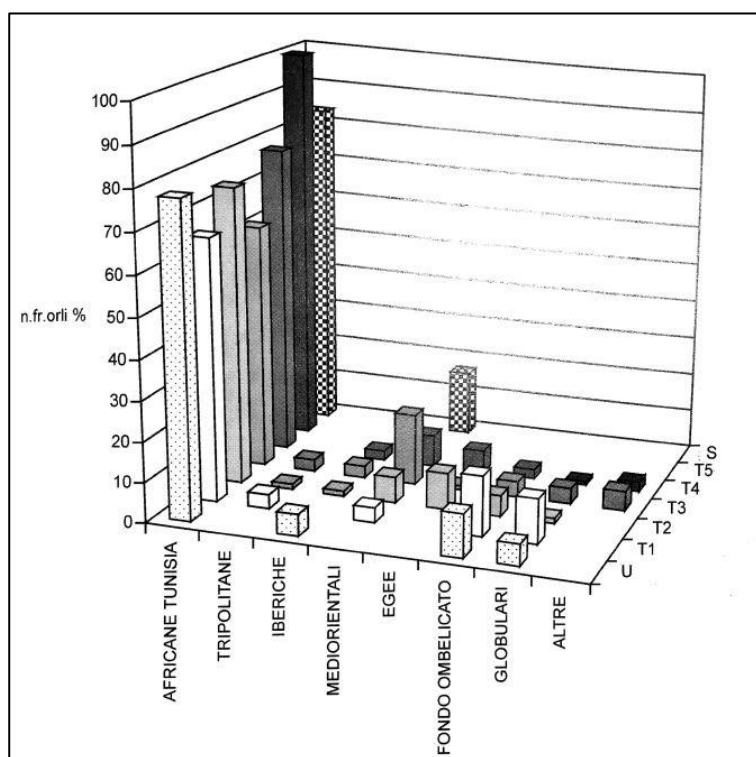


Figure 5.3) Castrum Pertii: rims of amphorae distributed per phase and provenance, showing the constant predominance of the North African products (Source: Murialdo 2001f, p. 281, fig. 25.5)

Amphorae of 6th and 7th century date are by far the most common typology of pottery at the site, surpassing any other in number of fragments (1637 in total). The overwhelming majority (80%) are North African imports, followed by Eastern and Iberic ones (Fig. 5.3). Of the African group, more than 40% are represented by *spatheia*, while 38% are large cylindrical containers. Some of the oldest forms include Keay 61 and 62 with several variants, underlying the Byzantine presence at the *castrum*, plus Keay 57. Tripolitan amphorae are also marginally attested in the

⁹² Other forms include Fulford hand-made 20.1, 20.3, 24, 32; Sant' Antonino 5 and 7.

⁹³ Chapter 5.6.

⁹⁴ Murialdo 2001i.

⁹⁵ Murialdo 2001j.

⁹⁶ Parodi & Palazzi 2001.

forms of Carthage 59, Sant' Antonino 28, and Keay 89, some of which decorated. The great *spatheia* group is also quite varied and mostly referable to North African elements according to petrography, such as some elements of Keay 26G. Products like LRA 8/*spatheia* are quite widespread also in sites of inland Corsica and northern Italy, reflecting their transportability.⁹⁷ In addition, a series of typologies have been classified directly at Castrum Perti. However, the content of these amphorae is still a matter debate. Medium cylindrical amphorae, such Keay 8A, became particularly evident during Heraclius's reign, at least for Castrum Perti, including types such Carthage 62, Keay 50, and Keay 26. They are usually seen as a sort of development or continuation of the *spatheia*. Eastern vessels are the second largest group of amphorae, mostly in the form of LRA 1B (wine or oil), 3, and 4 (wine). These 6th-7th century amphorae originate from Syria, western Turkey, and Palestine and were well known in the western markets during Late Antiquity.⁹⁸ Rarer are the Egyptian LRA 7 (for wine), which are attested, unusually, in some quantities at Castrum Perti.⁹⁹ Very marginal (1 or 2 fragments each), but significant for their provenance and chronologies, are the LRA 2 in the 7th century variation C from the Black Sea and the 7th-8th century Aegean Saraçhane 20. Finally, we can also see the presence of several globular amphorae "*a fondo umbonato o ombelicato*" from North Africa. They mark a radical change in the production of amphorae which occurred during the 7th and 8th century, usually accompanied by Hayes 105 and 109.¹⁰⁰ In the *castrum* there are mostly attested in the latest levels of the houses dated to the mid-7th century, but also in the abandonment layers of the second half of the 7th and possibly early 8th centuries. Distinct but chronologically similar are the late globular amphorae or "early medieval globular amphorae", mostly recorded after the abandonment of the settlement, with forms such as Crypta Balbi 2 or Sant' Antonino 49, reinforcing the hypothesis of some continuity of trade either from southern Italy or the Aegean area over the late 7th and early 8th century, but opening the question of who resided at a Castrum which had lost its defensive role with the Longobard conquest.¹⁰¹

The excavations also recovered numerous glass fragments (3330 for 170-200 EVE), mostly belonging to Ising 111 cups, datable between the 6th and 7th centuries, with very few other forms such bottles. Areas C and D (the houses), especially outside the buildings, constitute

⁹⁷ Murialdo 1995; Murialdo 2001f.

⁹⁸ Murialdo 1995; Murialdo 2001f.

⁹⁹ Murialdo 2001f.

¹⁰⁰ On this phenomenon: Zanini 2010b.

¹⁰¹ Murialdo 1995; Murialdo 2001f.

the richest findspots, associated with food consumption and domestic use. It has been noted how the forms seem to be very similar to each other during the first phases of occupation, denoting few production centres, while they tend to diversify later, suggesting origins in North Africa, northern Italy, and Liguria itself. Some glasses are also imported from the Merovingian area in this period.¹⁰² Also made of glass are 18 fragments of Ising 134 lamps, mostly from area D, which integrated other specimens.¹⁰³ Clay lamps are attested in about 265 fragments (for 21-38 individuals), mostly of the North African type Hayes 2/Atlante 10 (82%). Very few are the imports from Southern Italy, which became an alternative production centre until the 8th century, while only 1 exemplar is possibly of eastern origin.¹⁰⁴

The *castrum* potentially featured a mixed community, not just a male, military one, which involved the presence of basic jewellery (including a few reused Roman gems), tools for spinning, and decorative elements perhaps signifying the presence of women, carpentry and wood-working.¹⁰⁵ Metallurgical activities are attested by a few small crucibles probably used for the production of small objects or repair work.¹⁰⁶

The wealth of data recovered at Castrum Perti make it a fundamental and unique site to understand the Byzantine presence in Liguria and Italy in general during the 6th and 7th centuries. It provides first-hand evidence of the presence of soldiers, well supplied by the state, and the activities of a public authority which was capable of investing in infrastructures.¹⁰⁷ The residents benefited also from local resources and products.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, it testifies how the *castrum*, despite its mixed population, had a purely military function, which was integrated in the pattern of villages, caves, and churches. It did not constitute a major aggregation point able to significantly modify the pre-existing settlement network.

5.3 Economy and Society in the Rest of Byzantine Liguria

Publications regarding pottery and economic reviews of late antique and Byzantine Liguria are not rare, but they tend to take on the form of summaries of certain classes of materials,

¹⁰² Falcetti 2001a, pp.403-54.

¹⁰³ Falcetti 2001b, pp.467-72.

¹⁰⁴ Bertolotti, Murialdo, Parodi 2001.

¹⁰⁵ De Vingo & Fossati 2001a; Murialdo, De Vingo & Fossati 2001; Murialdo 2001k.

¹⁰⁶ Mannoni & Cucchiara 2001.

¹⁰⁷ Murialdo 2001a, 2001m, pp. 763-769.

¹⁰⁸ Murialdo 2001g; Chapter 5.4.2.

with limited detail compared to the four sites presented above. However, combining the scattered publications and using key sites as guides, some wider comparisons can be drawn and discussed. This section will outline the cities first as (potentially) major economic foci and then consider the minor rural settlements.

5.3.1 *The Urban Centres*

Firstly, we need to consider that all the main urban settlements in Liguria were also the principal ports, so these should provide more information regarding the different materials in circulation and their origins. These centres benefitted from privileged access to imports or trade goods while also functioning as a point of reference for any local products to be exported along the maritime routes. This ancestral role of the Ligurian ports was never lost, despite the greater complexity of the late antique world, where the state and army, for example, could strongly influence the movement of products, alongside the Church and merchants.¹⁰⁹ Finally, cities were also home to most of the elites, notably the religious authorities, and part of the military administration which were probably the first recipients of these goods.

5.3.1.1 *Luna*

The excavations and materials from *Luna* have been extensively published in the 1970s, at a time when attention and the knowledge of the post-Classical phases of a Roman settlement in Italy was still low.¹¹⁰ Further excavations were published in reports, articles, and a few syntheses, adding much to the knowledge of the settlement, but relatively little to its material evidence.

African RSW D are present at *Luna*, but in small quantities, especially if compared with the abundance of type A from the Imperial phase. In general, along with some 4th and 5th century elements, there are some later typologies compatible with the 6th and 7th centuries, such as Fulford 37, Hayes 87 C, 91 C-D, 93, 94, 98 B, 99, 103 B, 104 A-C, 102, 105, and 109 (only two fragments). The richest area seems to be the one of the Byzantine houses, which is, however, unpublished. A possible explanation for this lack of material is that many of the

¹⁰⁹ On this debate see the bibliography cited in Chapter 5.1.

¹¹⁰ For the amphorae for example, the Eastern ones were generically recognised but there was still not the knowledge for a proper classification: Blake 1977; Gandolfi 1986b. In general, a re-examination of the 1970s data would be very useful.

most recent layers were damaged by agricultural activities or were unrecorded during earlier excavations.¹¹¹

Other materials are attested, but too poorly known for a proper discussion are late antique glazed pottery, common, and coarse wares, including “*ceramica vacuolata*”, and soapstone vessels which, with the exception of the glazed products, became predominant after the Byzantine phase.¹¹² Despite the lack of quantifications, specific typologies, and chronologies, we might recognise a coherent pattern in the material assemblage with other Ligurian sites, in the sense that these types of locally and regionally produced ceramics are a constant everywhere and with often similar proportions, such as the extreme marginality of late antique glazed pottery. For the “*vacuolata*”, *Luna* and the Lunigiana were perhaps the main production centres, with a distribution mostly internal to Lunigiana and the neighbouring regions of northern Tuscany (Garfagnana for example), while the penetration towards central Liguria is also attested, including around Genoa, but in minor quantities.¹¹³

Finally, African amphorae reached *Luna* in the forms of Keay 8A and B, 27B, 33, 35B, 36, 50, 56, 57B, 59, 60, 61, 62, mixed with low quantities of Eastern products such as Keay 67, LRA 1, 2, 4, and possibly two fragments of LRA 5/6 and 7. Iberian amphorae are the rarest with only Keay 79A-B, probably from the Balearic Islands.¹¹⁴ Only Keay 62 were recorded from southern Italy, albeit in very small numbers.¹¹⁵ Finally, some peculiar vessels are the late Roman *unguentaria* of the 6th and 7th century found in context with other small *spatheia*, usually interpreted as luxury products from the east, where they were extensively attested.¹¹⁶

The inhabitants of *Luna* were still capable of acquiring a range of products, including some luxury ones (or considered so), such as the contents of the late Roman *unguentaria* or of the Keay 79 from the Balearic Islands, and other more common products at least with the same variety of typologies of many other Ligurian centres. Local and regional networks were also still active, with a dominance of the local “*vacuolata*” over the other Ligurian productions, combined with goods from neighbouring regions (Etruria and the Alpine areas, for example). Presumably the site’s episcopal status, its relative wealth – reflected in the

¹¹¹ Gandolfi 1998; Lusuarsi Siena, Murialdo & Sfrecola 1991.

¹¹² Blake 1977; Ward-Perkins 1976, p. 30.

¹¹³ Fossati, Bazzurro & Pizzolo 1976.

¹¹⁴ Murialdo et al. 1999; De Vingo 2005, 2014; Tinterri 2014.

¹¹⁵ Murialdo et al. 1999

¹¹⁶ Lusuardi Siena, Murialdo & Sfrecola 1991

restoration of the cathedral with mosaic and marble fittings in the 6th century – alongside a class of landowners, as attested by Gregory's letters,¹¹⁷ attracted traders and was at the base of the imports.¹¹⁸ Certainly the military would have also contributed as a catalysing element for goods, but their presence is not clearly distinguishable. It is also noticeable that *Luna* is the Ligurian centre with the richest numismatic evidence (see below).¹¹⁹

5.3.1.2 Genoa

As we have seen Genoa, the capital of the province, is not well-known archaeologically and two of the most important excavations here, Scuole Pie and Mattoni Rossi, are de facto unpublished, despite each having produced about 10,000 sherds of pottery.¹²⁰ The same is true for some of the works inside the San Lorenzo cathedral and other urban excavations.¹²¹ However, overall, information regarding pottery circulation at Genoa can be garnered from archaeological reports, brief articles treating single typologies across Liguria, and some partially published necropoleis.

Imports of ARSW D have been found in most of the sites with a late antique phase. One of the richest contexts in terms of numbers of forms is probably Scuole Pie, even though this could be influenced by the status of the publications. In general, it is possible to see some earlier forms such as the dishes Hayes 50B, 61A, 64, and 87A, or the bowls 53B still circulating with late materials. More typical of the 6th century are dishes/bowls such as Hayes 103A or 104A and the bowls 91C and 99. Finally, large plates like the Hayes 105 can extend the chronology up to the mid-7th century.¹²² From other excavations we can add the bowl Hayes 91 and the dish 101 (Mattoni Rossi), or the late form of bowl Hayes 107 typical of the 7th century from San Lorenzo.¹²³ Other fine wares are attested in the form of 2 DSP fragments and pieces of "sigillata lucente" from Gaul (San Lorenzo), plus a few sherds of rare Phocean RSW from the east (Mattoni Rossi).¹²⁴ Other rare products are late antique glazed pottery (Mattoni Rossi, Scuole Pie, and Piazza Matteotti) with fabrics suggesting

¹¹⁷ Chapter 1.4.3.

¹¹⁸ Chapter 2.2.2.

¹¹⁹ Chapter 5.4.2.

¹²⁰ Melli & Torre 1996b.

¹²¹ For a detailed description of all the sites: Chapter 2.3.2.

¹²² Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; Storti 1996, pp. 294-95.

¹²³ Mattoni Rossi: Pastorino et al. 1996, pp. 200-210; Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; San Lorenzo: Gambaro & Lambert 1987; Bruno & Lavazza 1996, pp. 241-242. San Lorenzo is the only case where some form of quantification is available. 98 fragments of RSW have been counted of which half are of the later D production.

¹²⁴ Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; Bruno & Lavazza 1996, pp. 241-242.

different origins such as North Africa, *Albintimilium*, eastern Liguria, the Po valley and possibly the east Mediterranean.¹²⁵

Common and coarse wares are even harder to track since they are almost completely unpublished, however, some sites seem to show certain peculiarities. At Scuole Pie, for instance, these materials constitute no more than 2% and lack the typical western Ligurian productions (some possibly produced in the Val Polcevera where workshops were active since the 4th century BCE).¹²⁶ This is a difficult anomaly to explain without a better understanding of the area and the city of Genoa in general and can also be ascribed to the partial status of the publication. At San Lorenzo the picture resembles what we saw in the previous sections, with a significant number of common and coarse wares, both local and imported from North Africa.¹²⁷ The soapstone vessels from the Alps are only mentioned in small quantities at Mattoni Rossi, showing a general origin from the western Alpine regions.¹²⁸

North African amphorae reached Genoa from the 2nd century CE alongside Iberian ones (especially from *Baetica*), slowly becoming predominant from the 4th century with the arrival of some cylindrical types such as Keay 25 (via San Vincenzo and Via Dante) and 27B (San Lorenzo and Piazza della Maddalena).¹²⁹ At San Lorenzo, for example, there is a peak of African amphorae during the late Empire (3rd-5th centuries corresponding with layers 6 and 5) with a continuation during the 6th century, even if not with the same numbers.¹³⁰ Typical 5th and 6th century imports are the *spatheia* accompanied by large and medium cylindrical amphorae such as Keay 25, 35B, 38, 55, plus Keay 62A and Q (generically also at Mattoni Rossi), and 61A, usually associated with the Byzantine occupation phase.¹³¹ From the cloister of San Lorenzo come also the small 6th and 7th century *spatheia* already known from *Luna* and *Castrum Perti*.¹³² Eastern imports are few and mostly represented by the forms of

¹²⁵ Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; Gardini & Melli 1992.

¹²⁶ Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998. It is not clear at all if the production in Val Polcevera was still active during Late Antiquity.

¹²⁷ Bruno & Lavazza 1996, pp. 241-242.

¹²⁸ Pastorino et al. 1996, pp. 200-210; Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998. Mattoni Rossi is the only site where they are mentioned, although this does not mean that they are absent in the rest of Genoa.

¹²⁹ Via San Vincenzo: Bruno 1996, p. 320; San Lorenzo: Gambaro & Lambert 1987; Bruno & Lavazza 1996, pp. 241-242.

¹³⁰ Gambaro & Lambert 1987.

¹³¹ All these amphorae are attested in the excavation of Scuole Pie, while the Keay 62 is also attested at Mattoni Rossi: Bruno 1996, pp. 320-21; Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998.

¹³² Bruno 1996, pp. 320-21; Bruno & Lavazza 1996, pp. 241-42.

LRA 1 (Mattoni Rossi, Scuole Pie, Via Dante/Via XX Settembre, and Via San Vincenzo), LRA 3 (Via Dante), and LRA 4 from Gaza (Scuole Pie and Mattoni Rossi).¹³³ Even more marginal are Iberian productions, such as Keay 19 (Scuole Pie) and Almagro 51 (San Lorenzo) or Italian vessels like the Keay 62 from southern Italy (Scuole Pie and Via XX Settembre) and the amphora di Empoli from Etruria (Via XX Settembre displaying the seal VICEN).¹³⁴

Genoa seems to broadly fit the picture displayed by some of the key sites examined above but it also had some local characteristics. As the principal port of the region, it received goods from many areas of the Empire, and it was inserted into a network of local and regional contacts with neighbouring regions outside the Imperial domains, reflected in imports from southern Gaul, the Alps, and some areas of Spain. Besides this, there was also the regional network of local production of common and coarse wares which, unfortunately, still await an adequate level of attention to aid discussion, including, for example, the distribution of workshops in Val Polcevera or in Genoa itself.

5.3.1.3 *Albingaunum*

Despite its importance as both city and port, *Albingaunum* is rather poorly known archaeologically, since most of the materials from the main urban excavations, including the “Scavo dell’Ospedale” and “Scavo Vaccari”, remain unpublished.¹³⁵ This is even more troubling considering the importance that has been attributed to the centre, given Constantius’ intervention in the early 5th century, although we struggle to find tangible traces of this.¹³⁶

¹³³ Mattoni Rossi and Scuole Pie: Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; Via XX Settembre: Melli 1996e, pp. 318-319.

¹³⁴ Scuole Pie: Biagini et al. 1996, pp. 290-303; Biagini, Melli & Torre 1998; San Lorenzo, Gambaro & Lambert 1987; Bruno & Lavazza 1996, pp. 241-242; Via XX Settembre: Melli 1996, pp. 319-20. For a synthesis on amphorae imports in Liguria: Murialdo et. al. 1999, 2005a; De Vingo 2005; 2014; Tinterri 2014.

¹³⁵ Chapter 2.4.2.4. For the only brief, and inadequate, publication on the materials: Grosso 1958.

¹³⁶ Chapter 2.4.2.



Figure 5.4) *Albingaunum*: Some of the amphorae recovered from the roof. (Source: Author).

The only context fully discussed in several papers is that of the 27 amphorae recovered from the vault of the city's baptistery, which are representative of the different influences on Liguria during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period (Fig. 5.4). A group of 17 of these vessels derive from North Africa: five of these are from Zeugitana with Keay 35A (oil), 62, and 61B; two Keay 8B (oil) are probably from

Byzacena; while three Keay 32/Nador 225 are from Algeria. Five other amphorae are generically assigned as North African, such as two Keay 62Q, and three Keay 26/Spatheoin 2A. Eastern imports are attested only by one LRA 1A, while there are 7 Iberian amphorae in the form of Keay 23 (5) and Almagro 51 A-B.¹³⁷ While the North African products remain dominant in this case, the proportions between Eastern and Iberian are inverted, possibly due to the chronology of the baptistery (late 5th or early 6th century), but also due to the randomness of the sample. Other elements derive from the necropolis of the "Ex-Standa" from where only some typologies are known, such as the North African Beltrane 63, Keay 19, 25B, 25S, and 59 and the Iberian Almagro 51. This very partial picture seems to point to a 5th century context as suggested by Pallarés; however, a complete study is needed for a more precise interpretation.¹³⁸ Further amphorae have been recovered in other funerary contexts: a Keay 62A came from an infant burial from San Teodoro;¹³⁹ while a possible Keay 62 was recovered during an emergency excavation inside the *natatio* of the Roman baths in front of the church of San Clemente.¹⁴⁰

A glimpse of other forms of imports in *Albingaunum* came from two synthetic works on ARSW D and Phocian imports in Liguria. The African tableware of the 6th century reached *Albingaunum* with Hayes 80B/99, 85, 89B/90, 91 C-D, 99, 102 (plus variants), and 110. Later products covered the 7th century, such as Hayes 104 B-C, 105, 106, 107, and with the large

¹³⁷ This composition came from a reinterpretation of the works of Lamboglia 1952c, 1956e and Pallarés 1987a, combining data from: Murialdo et al. 1999; Reynolds 1995; Gandolfi et al. 2010; Roascio 2018b.

¹³⁸ Pallarés dated the necropolis to 430-450 but as already pointed out Chapter 2 (2.4.2.5) I believe it is far too narrow a chronology to use with amphorae: Pallarés 1987.

¹³⁹ Massabò & Mennella 2008.

¹⁴⁰ Unpublished.

dish 109 particularly well attested.¹⁴¹ A few fragments of Phocian RSW have been recorded in both “Scavo dell’Ospedale” and “Scavo Vaccari”. In the first case 2 fragments of Hayes 3 C-D came from a context of the end of the 5th-early 6th century associated with ARSW D (Hayes 91 A-B and 99) and North African amphorae (Keay 25C, 25E, 35B, 36, and 55A); while another fragment of Hayes 10a was recovered in a more recent layer (end of the 6th-early 7th). For the “Scavo Vaccari” 3 fragments of Hayes 3 (2 of D-F and 1 generic) were recorded in a Byzantine layer (end 6th-early 7th century) in a context with ARSW D (Hayes 87 A-B, 91 C, 99, 105, and 109), DSP (Rigoir 4 and 18), North African (Keay 8B, 25G, 61, 62), Eastern (LRA 1), and Italian amphorae (Keay 62).¹⁴² The publication, even if partial and without quantification, of these two types of materials, combined with the generic overview on the ARSW D is particularly important for *Albingaunum* since it enables preliminary ideas of the richness of forms and materials still reaching the town during Byzantine rule. However, too little is known of the local and regional productions to help fully contextualise *Albingaunum* in the north Tyrrhenian and Ligurian system. Finally, only a few recorded fragments of DSP and south Italian amphorae add to our understanding of the regional networks.

5.3.1.4 *Albintimilium*

Lamboglia’s excavations at *Albintimilium* represented a milestone for the study of Roman pottery; however, the late antique and Byzantine phases here remain blurred due to the lack of publications of related materials.

We can certainly recognise that ARSW D, despite a contraction in imports starting during the second half of the 5th century, continue to arrive. During this phase, which lasted until the early 6th century, cups and dishes such as Hayes 84, 85, 86, 87 A-B-C, 89B-90, 91C, 93-94, 98, and 80B/99 were imported in the city. During the 6th century we can see a resurgence in imports with forms such Hayes 102-103 A-B, 104 A-B, 99 A-B, and 91. Finally, Hayes 91 C-D, 99 C, 106, 107, and 110 reached the centre during the 7th century.¹⁴³ Rare fragments of Phocian RSW were documented in the theatre (1 Hayes 3B-C associated with Hayes 59, 61, 63, 79, Fulford 31), the insula V (1 Hayes 3 found with Hayes 98B, 99, and

¹⁴¹ Gandolfi 1998.

¹⁴² Gandolfi 1999a.

¹⁴³ Gandolfi 1998.

104A), and the insula I (1 Hayes 1D).¹⁴⁴ DSP from Gaul is marginally attested in the forms of Rigoir 2, 3, 4, and 18.¹⁴⁵

Albintimilium is particularly important for producing its own common wares, which were studied by Olcese in one of the more extensive and complete regional studies. At the same time, this is one of the few attestations of an urban workshop in Liguria. Local ceramics were always produced in small quantities in *Albintimilium*, but from the 4th century they became more significant and were exported along the coastline.¹⁴⁶ *Albintimilium* vessels are attested in most Ligurian coastal sites but also in southern Gaul, some west Mediterranean islands (Balearics, Corsica, and Sardinia), and Etruria, suggesting the existence of regional networks at least partially disconnected from the state redistribution system and of a class of local entrepreneurs still active in the region.¹⁴⁷ Soapstone vessels, used for cooking and other activities, were imported mostly from the western Alps in minor quantities from the 5th century, peaking in the 6th, and are attested in several areas of the city, especially the theatre (40% of the finds).¹⁴⁸

Some information regarding imported amphorae can be found in several synthetic works which involved these typologies in the region. Very generically it is possible to state that some imports were still reaching the settlement as for the North African Keay 25A, 55A, 56C, 61Q, and 62, or the Eastern LRA 1, 2, and 4. Iberian products are either not attested or go unmentioned in the publications.¹⁴⁹ This probably made *Albintimilium* the town with the lowest variety of imported amphorae in Liguria.¹⁵⁰ However, since ARSW D imports are in line with the other Ligurian centres and since they usually accompanied amphorae, the problem is potentially attributable to a lack of publications.¹⁵¹

5.3.2 *Minor Sites*

The picture drawn for our key sites and cities reveals a sort of general pattern, at least for the coastal settlements: imports are characterised by a dominance of North African products

¹⁴⁴ Gandolfi 1981.

¹⁴⁵ Gandolfi 1986a, p. 288.

¹⁴⁶ Olcese 1989, 1993.

¹⁴⁷ Olcese 1989, 1993, p. 148.

¹⁴⁸ Circa 100 fragments have been published from the 1938-1986 excavations: Gandolfi 1986a.

¹⁴⁹ Murialdo et al. 1999; De Vingo 2005, 2014; Tinterri 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Chapter 5.3.3.

¹⁵¹ More data will be available from the publication of the materials of the northern necropolis: Gandolfi, Bonifay & Capelli (forthcoming).

tableware and amphorae, accompanied by occasional Eastern and south Italian vessels. Iberian amphorae persist, probably a sign of the survival of forms of private trade, especially for specimens from beyond the still-Byzantine Balearic Islands (at least until the 10th century). Parallel to the North African route are a series of local and regional productions with their own areas of influence and distribution networks. This is reflected in the poorly known material assemblages of the rural coastal sites (mostly still unpublished). Marked differences with the urban centres are evident in the quantities of materials recovered, usually lower, and the range and typologies of products which reached these sites, more limited compared to the major centres. Since most of the data is unpublished, the few materials mentioned in the publications are usually easily identifiable imports such as ARSW, amphorae, soapstone, and occasional DSP. There is almost no information regarding the impact of local and regional products, which, according to what we know from the case studies examined early in the chapter, was usually significant if not dominant in certain cases.

For eastern Liguria, for example, generic information comes from later phases of the villa of Varignano, where ARSW is attested in few forms such as Hayes 58A, 59A, 61A, 67, and 91C, accompanied by some fragments of “*sigillata lucente*” and DSP.¹⁵² Also in the east, the mine of Monte Loreto, located about 10km inland from the minor dock of Sestri Levante, revealed the presence of late antique/Byzantine amphorae, probably reused for other purposes, alongside ARSW D and soapstone.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, settlements more than 20km away from the coast, in an area of uncertain political control, such as Filattiera-Sorano and Gronda-Luscignano, show a significant presence of local (especially “vacuolate”) and regional materials with limited imports, which nevertheless still find their way to the inland valleys until the 5th century, with less evidence for the 6th and the 7th centuries.¹⁵⁴

A similar image emerges for the few known sites of central Liguria. Besides Genoa, inland sites, mostly unexcavated, received few imports until the 5th century, while clear traces of the 6th and 7th centuries are rare. Of the three published sites only the village of Savignone-Refondu and Costa Bottuin had some possible 6th century imports in the form of North

¹⁵² On the villa: Chapter 3.3.1; for the materials: Bertino 1975-1976, 1976. No information is provided regarding transport vessels.

¹⁵³ Benente & Piombo 2003.

¹⁵⁴ For Gronda-Luscignano: Chapter 3.3.1.

African and Eastern amphorae and ARSW D.¹⁵⁵ The site of Montessoro, by contrast, survived only until the 6th century, receiving some products from the coast, such as a Keay 52.2 from southern Italy.¹⁵⁶ Here, the local common pottery, probably partially produced in the val Polcevera, always represented the vast majority of finds.

Finally, western Liguria features a far richer and more complex situation with a greater number of sites and variety of materials. Important coastal centres such as Savona, Varigotti, and *Vada Sabatia* show strong Mediterranean contacts. Finds recovered at Varigotti included ARSW D (Hayes 91 D, 99C, 104 A and 105), and amphorae (Keay 8A, 62B, 61D, 62A-D-E-F, Finale A 1.4a, A 1.5), plus soapstone vessels compatible with Byzantine occupation.¹⁵⁷ Eastern imports are present in the form of only one exemplar of LRA 2 reused in the nearby necropolis of San Lorenzo.¹⁵⁸ For Savona, some materials are known from the necropolis such as North African amphorae Keay 11A/Tripolitana 3, Keay 3B/Africana 1B, Keay 25 in several variants (B, C, G, J, K, and Q), 26F, 55, 61, 8, Ostia IV, and Eastern LRA 1. They were combined with ARSW D (Hayes 99 and 104C), late antique glazed pottery, soapstone, and common and coarse wares.¹⁵⁹ From the excavations in Palazzo della Loggia other fragments of North African amphorae cover three different periods: Keay 34 for the late 4th and 5th century; Keay 8B, 71, and 55 for the late 5th and 6th century; and Keay 61, 62, and 8A for the late 6th and 7th centuries.¹⁶⁰ They were also accompanied by ARSW D (Hayes 87A and B, 91, B99, 100/101, 104A, B, and C, 109), late antique glazed pottery, and DSP.¹⁶¹ Materials from Contrada San Domenico, where the so-called “Byzantine wall” was found, are even more detailed: here, the 4683 recorded pottery sherds revealed forms of ARSW D such as the cups Hayes 99C, and 101, and the dish Hayes 105, with less numerous Hayes 93B, 94, 98, and 107, representing 1.2% of the total ceramic assemblage. More numerous (68,1%) were the North African amphorae in the forms of Keay 56B, 61 (B-C-D), 62 (G-I-N), which were the most common, along with Keay 25 and 26, which are rarer also compared with other Ligurian sites. Eastern ceramics are attested by LRA 1, LRA 2, and Keay 53A from Syria. The rest is a mix of common pottery of local and regional origin (more or less 20%), late antique glazed pottery (0.6%), and

¹⁵⁵ The materials are published very generically, without providing clear identifications: Chapter 3.3.2.

¹⁵⁶ Chapter 3.3.2.

¹⁵⁷ Frondoni et al. 2000; Murialdo et al. 1999.

¹⁵⁸ Murialdo et al. 1999; Tinterri 2014.

¹⁵⁹ Lavagna 1998; Lavagna & Benente 1992; Lavagna & Varaldo 1989, 2001a, 2001b; Murialdo et al. 1999; Varaldo 1990a; Varaldo et al. 1994; Gandolfi 2000a, 2000b; Chapter 4.3.1.

¹⁶⁰ Murialdo et al. 1999; Murialdo & Palazzi 2000.

¹⁶¹ Gandolfi 2000a, 2000b; Benente & Lavagna 2000.

soapstone vessels (0.9%).¹⁶² Of the common ceramics most are local, with only a minor percentage imported from North Africa, while the most diffused form is, once again, the bowl.¹⁶³

Regarding minor and rural settlements, some of the earlier Roman ones (villas, *mansiones*, and *stationes*) show signs of continuity, but of only a few, such as Corti and Alba Docilia, has data regarding finds been published. At Alba Docilia, a series of fine imports were documented, including North African RSW D and DSP from Gaul, in the same contexts with local products.¹⁶⁴ Villa Eva, at the westernmost border of the region, still received North African products, such as African RSW D (Hayes 80B) and amphorae (Africana Grande 2/Keay 5, Keay 25E, Africana Grande 2C/Keay 6, and Keay 6.4), at least until the full 5th century.¹⁶⁵ Further data was recovered from a survey of rural sites in western Liguria which identified at least 10 locations (out of a total of 54 archaeological sites) which were still receiving ARSW D (San Lorenzo Appio, San Pietro Camporosso, Punta delle Scaglie, Sanremo's baptistry, San Siro, Villa della Foce, Campo Marzio, Rocca di Drego, Capo Don, and the mouth of the River Prino). The finds are usually quite scarce, often represented by a single fragment per typology.¹⁶⁶ The same survey was conducted for imported amphorae; only eight sites were recorded (Piana di Latte, San Lorenzo Appio, Monte Santa Croce, Sanremo's baptistry, Monte Bignone, Punta delle Scaglie, Pian del Re, and Capo Don).¹⁶⁷ Despite some sites featured both ARSW D and amphorae, most only display one of the two products. This can be a reflection of the survey methodology which inevitably yields only a very partial picture of the potential buried contexts. Nonetheless, the data does suggest that, at least in a radius of few kilometres from the coast, a few North African products could still reach minor sites, despite their location (whether hill or plain). These are, however, surface collections, full excavations might change the picture significantly.

New forms of settlements appeared during Late Antiquity, such as the ecclesiastical ones, either as isolated rural churches or more organised baptismal churches (Noli and Capo Don), with villages and workshops. While Noli has been discussed before, for Capo Don the material evidence is still mostly unpublished. The site was receiving imports from North

¹⁶² Murialdo et al. 1999; Varaldo et al. 1996; Lavagna 1998.

¹⁶³ Lavagna 1998.

¹⁶⁴ For Corti: Chapter 5.2.2; for Alba Docilia: Annetta & Bulgarelli 2001; Chapter 3.3.3.1.

¹⁶⁵ Martino & Bracco 2013; Chapter 3.3.3.1.

¹⁶⁶ Gambaro 2008b, pp. 1440-1445.

¹⁶⁷ Also, here, most of the finds are one fragment per site or little more: Gambaro 2008b, pp. 1440-1443.

Africa already in the 4th century, before the construction of the church, such as Tripolitana 3/Dressel 41; however, the peak of African imports was in the late 5th and 6th centuries, when the church was already established. In this case amphorae such as Keay 61-61D have been recorded with ARSW D (Hayes 105). Unusually, if compared with the rest of Liguria, more recent layers are characterised only by Eastern imports in the forms of LRA 1 and 6, a result of the partial status of the publication and limited excavated areas.¹⁶⁸ At Sanremo, while the material and structural evidence is minimal, at least some fragments of Hayes 61 B and Keay 62 have been recorded.¹⁶⁹ Minor ecclesiastical centres might also acquire some imports. As seen in the area of Finale where amphorae were recovered at the pieve, the baptistery, and the necropolis, North African amphorae are once again the most common, such as Keay 8A, 13D, 36A, 61D, 62 (Q-A-D), and the spatheia 26; there are also Eastern imports LRA 1, 2 and Robinson M273; Iberian ones (Dressel 23), and some from Etruria (*anfora di Empoli*).¹⁷⁰

The reoccupation of caves is a well-known phenomenon in western Liguria even if only a handful of materials have been published. Arene Candide, in the Finale Area, is the best-known case. Here, late antique layers contained several imported items such as amphorae Keay 55A, 56B, 26G, and several variants (A-D-Q) of Keay 62 constituting 59.5% of amphorae fragments. Only one Iberian vessel is attested in the form of Keay 29/Vegas 42 with decorations, while there are no Eastern Mediterranean materials. African RSW D is also present (Hayes 91C, 98A, 99C, and 105), along with soapstone vessels and glass Isings 111.¹⁷¹ Punta Crena, beneath the promontory of Varigotti, is another example of a coastal cave featuring Mediterranean products.¹⁷² However, moving inland, the number of imports diminishes considerably. At Arene Candide, a cave placed directly on the coast, they represent the 78.4% of the vessels attested, while at the cave of Arma dell'Aquila, a few kilometres inland, local materials represent the majority. The role and function of these reused caves is still debated: some were for sheltering livestock, but in cases with a significant presence of amphorae, they might have served as cellars or storage areas.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Frondoni, De Vingo, Gambaro 2013.

¹⁶⁹ Gambaro 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Pallarés 1965; Murialdo et al. 1999.

¹⁷¹ Murialdo 1993-94; Murialdo et al. 1999; Pastorino 1997; Chapter 3.3.3.3.

¹⁷² Mannoni 2005.

¹⁷³ De Vingo 2017, 2018a. On the caves see also: Chapter 3.3.3.3.

5.3.3 *Tracing Production and Distribution: an Outline Analysis*

From a sample of ten sites (four cities, plus Filattiera-Sorano, Corti, Noli, Castrum Perti, Varigotti, and Savona), vessels such as the Keay 61 and 62 amphorae (and their variants), as commonplace North African imports, are attested respectively in nine (Keay 62) and seven (Keay 61) locations and are thus suggestive of a strong connection with Byzantine (military) presence and the *annona* (Table 1 and 2). Previously this role was held by vessels of Keay 25, immediately earlier in chronology, and the Keay 8A and B, again typical of the Byzantine occupation, both present at five or six sites. Of the Eastern products, the LR 1 and 2 are by far the most common (seven and six sites), followed by LR 4 from Palestine (four sites). Castrum Perti hosted the largest variety of typologies from the eastern Mediterranean, although this distinctive assemblage cannot be easily explained, unless with some specific connection – perhaps between community and commodities. African RSW D are another by-product of the Byzantine international market with some forms, such as Hayes 104, 91, and 99 attested in almost all the case studies, while other forms are less common. For both amphorae and ARSW there is a significant difference between cities and countryside in terms of typological variety.

This is still true, and probably even more significant, considering that most of the city finds have seen limited publication, in comparison with rural sites such as Corti, Noli, or Filattiera-Sorano, fully (or almost) edited. In general, for rural contexts ARSW are attested with a minimum of 7 – 8 typologies (Varigotti and Corti) to a maximum of 10 (Filattiera-Sorano, and Noli). Urban settlements, instead, display a minimum of 13-14 varieties (Genoa and *Luna*) to a maximum of 20-30 different forms (*Albingaunum* and *Albintimilium*).¹⁷⁴ The same can be said for the amphorae, where rural sites usually do not surpass 10 typologies, versus cities displaying 15 (*Albingaunum* and Genoa), or even 20 (*Luna*) or 28 (Savona) forms. In this sense fortified settlements such as Savona or Perti (19 types) seem to have received some special attention in terms of food supplies, especially compared with a more limited differentiation of ARSW, probably more requested in civilian contexts. Lesser imports such as Iberian and South Italian products are, again, more common in cities or key ecclesiastical sites such as Noli, likely testifying to specific patterns of circulation connected with the aristocracy (possibly the clergy). Establishing other forms of differentiation based on the

¹⁷⁴ In the case of *Albintimilium*, with a least 30 types, this is probably due to the original study of Gandolfi specifically dedicated to this class of materials, later completed with corrections and updates: Gandolfi 1981; for a reassessment: Reynolds 1995, p. 22; Gandolfi 1998.

amount and quality of data available is probably risky. Filattiera-Sorano, our only inland site, shows a pattern not too dissimilar to Corti regarding ARSW, but then the situation is completely different when we look at the amphorae, with only two or three typologies attested, even if this is partially due to the poor preservation of the finds and the scarcity of diagnostic material.

	Luna	Genoa	Albingaunum	Albintimilium	Filattiera-Sorano	Varignano	Corti	Noli	Varigotti	Savona	Castrum Pertii
ARSW											
50B		x									
53B		x									
58A					x						
59A					x						
61A		x			x						
61B					x			x			
64		x								x	
67						x	x				
80A					x						
80B			x	x						x	
84				x							
85			x								
86				x							
87				x				x			
87A		x	x	x			x			x	
87B			x	x							
87C	x	x		x							
89			x	x							
90			x	x							
91		x	x	x		x	x		x		
91A			x				x				
91B			x		x					x	
91C	x	x	x	x	x					x	
91D	x		x	x				x			
93	x			x			x				
94	x			x			x				x
98	x			x			x				
99	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	
99A				x							
99B				x							
99C				x				x			x

	Luna	Genoa	Albingaunum	Albintimilium	Filattiera-Sorano	Corti	Noli	Varigotti	Savona	Castrum Pertii
North African Amphorae										
Beltrane 63			x							
Carthage 59										x
Carthage 62										x
3B									x	
8									x	
8A	x							x		x
8B	x		x				x		x	
11A									x	
19			x							
25		x					x			
25A				x						
25B			x						x	
25C									x	
25G									x	
25J									x	
25K									x	
25Q									x	
25S			x							
26				x						x
26G										x
26F									x	
27B	x	x				x				
33	x									
32			x							
34										
35A			x			x			x	
35B	x	x								
36	x									
38		x								
50	x									x

5.4 Not just Pottery

While we can only guess the nature of the perishable materials which have not survived in the archaeological record but were certainly produced and traded (for instance the actual contents of the amphorae), there are other materials beside ceramics which have survived and that were integral parts of the local economic system. In this section, I consider those more frequently recorded and studied, such as those related to food production and consumption, coins, and, finally, the industry of Finale stone.

5.4.1 *Agriculture and Animal Husbandry*

Evidence of food production – agricultural and animal - is, in the absence of relevant written sources, only available through the lens of archaeozoology and archaeobotany which have been applied patchily in Liguria. As with the ceramic, some of the best data come from the key case studies examined in Section 5.2.¹⁷⁵

The general picture for agriculture is quite restricted. Evidence of cereal and legume cultivation has been found at Filattiera-Sorano where several species of *Triticum* (almost 6000 caryopses) were recovered, with lesser traces of barley (and possibly sorghum).¹⁷⁶ They are accompanied by legumes such as broad beans, vetch, and peas; olive trees and grapevines are rare, possibly attesting the consumption of the fruit rather than the production of wine and oil.¹⁷⁷ In Castrum Perti only a few specimens were recovered attesting to cereals such barley and millet but, unusually, no legumes.¹⁷⁸ More consistent were finds of fruit consumption such as peach, blackthorn and grapevine, while the olive remained a marginal element.¹⁷⁹ Chestnut is documented for *Luna* and Filattiera-Sorano but not at Castrum Perti.¹⁸⁰ For the Finale area, charcoal analyses have shown a diminished presence of oak in favour of the more easily grown hornbeams and conifers, probably indicating extensive exploitation of the oak woods which benefitted other faster growing species.¹⁸¹ However, data, as shown by Balzaretti's work, is mostly comparable with prehistory, the Middle Ages,

¹⁷⁵ For a broad approach on the ecology of the Apennine: Balzaretti 2013, pp. 13-34.

¹⁷⁶ Biasotti 1982; Rottoli & Negri, 1998.

¹⁷⁷ Biasotti 1982; Rottoli & Negri, 1998.

¹⁷⁸ Arobba & Murialdo 2001.

¹⁷⁹ In this case, olives seem to have been eaten rather than transformed in oil, suggesting an importation of this product: Arobba & Murialdo 2001, p. 637.

¹⁸⁰ Rottoli & Negri 1998, p. 207.

¹⁸¹ Castiglioni 2001.

or with internal areas which had little in common with the coastal environment (see discussion below).¹⁸²

Animal husbandry, traceable via faunal remains, is attested in all the considered sites despite the general poor preservation of the remains. At Filattiera-Sorano more than 50% of the finds are attributable to the phase of the village and attest a generic balance between sheep/goats and pigs, with very few bovines and horses, these last possibly used for heavy work duties.¹⁸³ At Corti and Noli instead sheep/goats were predominant during Late Antiquity, followed by pigs, while bovines and other species were again marginal. At Corti most of the livestock was bred for meat and butchered within the first 2-3 years of life,¹⁸⁴ while at Noli all the species were butchered as adults. Noli is also one of the few settlements with traces (even if scarce and poorly preserved) of shellfish, fish, and chickens.¹⁸⁵ Castrum Perti and Savona show instead an opposite trend with a majority of pigs.¹⁸⁶ For Castrum Perti the data are 52% of swine against a minority of sheep goats (32%) with only a marginal presence of bovines (possibly even overrepresented by a higher preservation rate of their bones), and some fish (mostly indicated via fishing equipment such as hooks) and game are documented.¹⁸⁷ In both cases the pigs were killed young for the meat, while sheep/goat were used for the milk. The predominance of pig might could be connected with the presence of soldiers and with the long tradition of pork meat used in the *annona*; however, it could also be due to different local practices, or with a still incomplete process of shifting from one form of husbandry (pigs) to another (sheep/goat). Overall, the situation in Liguria during the Byzantine period was quite varied compared with other parts of central and southern Italy where pig had, for the most part, already been substituted by sheep/goat.¹⁸⁸

The data reveals a typical combination of cereals and legumes for agricultural practices across Liguria, which ensured higher protection against selective plant diseases or parasites. Traces of olive trees and vineyards are scarce, despite some evidence of the

¹⁸² For a review of this data and bibliography: Balzaretti 2013, pp. 13-34.

¹⁸³ Giovinazzo 1998; Bisio 2010a, 2010b.

¹⁸⁴ Difrancescantonio 1999.

¹⁸⁵ The continuity of occupation at Noli allowed also to see the reverse of proportions between sheep/goats and pigs during the 7th and 8th century, when the latter once again became dominant: Marazzo & Spinetti 2018.

¹⁸⁶ This seems to be also the case of data from the *forum* of Luna, for which we have only a brief note in: Ward-Perkins 1976, p. 32.

¹⁸⁷ Giovinazzo 2001; for the fishing tools De Vingo & Fossati 2001b; for Savona Villari 2000.

¹⁸⁸ Arthur 2007.

latter in Gregory's letters;¹⁸⁹ this might explain the imports of those products indicated through the amphorae, while local agriculture was more for self-sufficiency. Animal husbandry was widely practiced, probably including some forms of transhumance, revealing a phase of passage from the pig-dominated culture of the Roman Empire to a sheep/goat one. Other activities, such as fishing, are hard to detect in the archaeological record, but in all probability featured regularly in the local diet, especially on the coast. Isotopic analyses carried out on human remains could improve the picture as to the composition of the local diet and environment as well as the forms of production, importation, and consumption of food in the region.

5.4.2 Numismatic Evidence



Figure 5.5) Luna: *tremissis* of Justin II (565-578), mint of Ravenna. (Source: Durante 2010, p. 64, fig. 117)

With a constant flow of goods across the region for the whole Byzantine period, forms of monetary exchange continued at various settlements. However, the evidence for this is not uniform and comes with some important differentiations between micro-regions and site types. Of the various centres which have yielded numismatic evidence, *Luna* has the

best documentation for the 6th and early 7th centuries, with about 60 coins dating to the Byzantine occupation, especially the period between 552-643, with a sporadic continuity into the 9th century (Fig. 5.5). The finds cover all the types of issues (gold, silver and copper-alloy) and include several mints, Italian (Ravenna, Rome, and Syracuse) but also from other part of the empire (mostly Carthage, Constantinople, Salona, and Antioch). After the reign of Justin II (564-582) Constantinople is basically the only mint attested outside the peninsula after. The number of gold coins, in proportion with other typologies, is anomalous since they represent about a sixth of all the finds, while usually the proportion favours lower issues.¹⁹⁰ This might be indicative of the high status that the city had, with a solid presence of commercial activities supported by local aristocrats (lay or ecclesiastical) and landowners.¹⁹¹ A significant group of these coins has been recovered in old excavations and was part of

¹⁸⁹ Chapter 1.4.3.

¹⁹⁰ The data is not altered by hoard finds, since the only hoard discovered in *Luna* contained four golden coins: Durante 2010, pp. 65-67.

¹⁹¹ Bertino L.M. 2003a; Fusconi 2010; Lusuardi Siena, Sannazzaro, Perassi 2011, pp. 294-316; Bertino 2015; Perassi 2017. *Luna* was also the only city with a possible local mint between the late 7th and possibly 9th century: Bertino 1994-95, 1997; Bertino L.M. 2003b.



Figure 5.6) Genoa: 20 nummi of Justinian I (540-541) from the area of Mattoni Rossi. (Source: Arslan 2014, p. 231, fig. 12)

private collections, most of them now lost. Only a small group of $\frac{1}{4}$ of *siliquae* has been recognised.¹⁹² Most of the others have been recovered in modern stratigraphic excavations between 1967 and today. Only a small group of six coins have been recovered from a small hoard,¹⁹³ while the rest all come from various parts of the city, mostly the forum, the theatre, and the cathedral.¹⁹⁴ There are at least two *solidi*, six

tremisses, seven $\frac{1}{4}$ of *siliquae* or half *siliquae*, while the rest is a mix of mostly *folles*, half *folles* and some occasional *decanummus* or *pentanummus*.¹⁹⁵ Additional evidence to validate the existence of trade and coin circulation is the 10 monetary weights recovered in various sectors, but mostly in areas still occupied during Late Antiquity such as the *forum* and the cathedral (Fig. 5.7).¹⁹⁶

Of other urban centres, we can only note Genoa, where the site of Mattoni Rossi displayed a Domitianic emission re-coined under the Vandals, and some *folles* and *nummi* of Justinian (Fig. 5.6) and Maurice.¹⁹⁷ However, for Genoa, only copper-alloy finds are attested and only in one excavation as yet. Otherwise, as for other centres,¹⁹⁸ 4th century coins are recorded in several sites, and in a small hoard recovered near Porta Soprana.¹⁹⁹

Outside the urban sphere, Castrum Perti is the only site with significant evidence, namely ten coins and five monetary weights covering the period between Justinian (from 540-552)

¹⁹² Lusuardi Siena, Sannazzato Perassi 2011, tab. I, pp. 296-297.

¹⁹³ Durante 2010, pp. 64-65.

¹⁹⁴ Lusuardi Siena, Sannazzato Perassi 2011, tab. I, pp. 296-299.

¹⁹⁵ Lusuardi Siena, Sannazzato Perassi 2011, tab. I, pp. 296-299; to be integrated with Durante 2010, pp. 64-65.

¹⁹⁶ Perassi 2000; Lusuardi Siena, Sannazzato, Perassi 2011, pp. 304-309.

¹⁹⁷ For the Domitianic emission: Pera 2000; at least one half of a *folles* of Justinian was minted in Constantinople and one 10 nummi of Maurice in Ravenna: Pastorino et al. 1996, pp. 208-210; see also: Pera 1996.

¹⁹⁸ See for example the evidence so far published for *Albintimilium*: Bertino 1999.

¹⁹⁹ Melli & Bruno 1996, pp. 318-326; Arslan 2014.

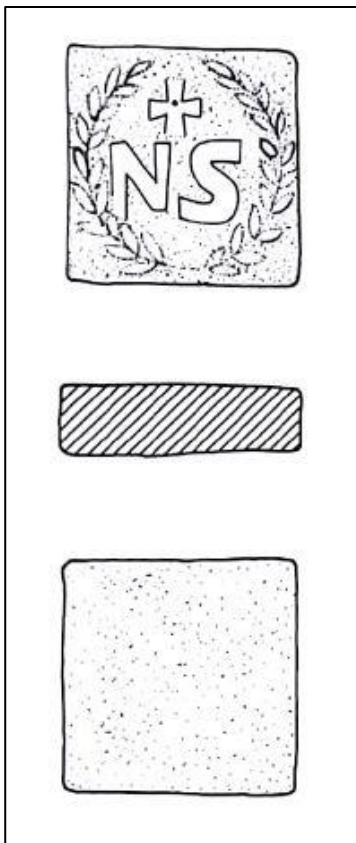


Figure 5.7) Luna: copper-alloy monetary weight. (Source: Perassi 2000, p. 65, fig. 7)

and Heraclius (610-641). Here the proportion is in favour of silver, with 9 specimens of silver *siliquae* and one copper-alloy half of a follis. Silver was still used to pay the Byzantine troops following a long-established Roman tradition, reinforcing the presence of a local garrison. The coinage of the 9 *siliquae* is considered more approximate, possibly from a non-identified western Mediterranean mint or a temporary military one.²⁰⁰ The presence of monetary weights, corresponding to fractions of the *solidus* (half and one third) meanwhile has been interpreted with interregional trade and customs services along the border that the fort guarded.²⁰¹

Noli, despite little evidence of Byzantine coins, has to be mentioned, since it saw a weak but constant monetary presence until 575, followed by a gap until the mid-8th century.²⁰² This sudden absence during an apparent period of prosperity of the settlement is hard to explain, especially given discovery of a hoard of 13 golden *solidi* dating to the second half of the 5th century.²⁰³ The only clue of some form of monetary exchange

during the Byzantine phase is a reduced weight corresponding to the value of 21 *siliquae*.²⁰⁴

Otherwise, evidence of an active monetary system is hard to trace. For *Albintimiulim* we have some information regarding golden coins of Justinian recovered in old excavations (now lost), while newer finds might be still unpublished.²⁰⁵ In *Albingaunum* the only published evidence came from a glass weight.²⁰⁶ In most contexts, such as for Corti, Noli, and Filattiera-Sorano it is safe to say that from the 5th century there was a sharp decline of new monetary issues. In Noli and Filattiera-Sorano 4th century copper-alloy coins were potentially circulating in the 6th century, even if most of the finds seem to originate from earlier layers.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁰ Arslan, Ferretti & Murialdo 2001; Arslan 2001; Arslan 2003.

²⁰¹ Arslan 2001.

²⁰² In total 47 coins are known in Noli covering a period between the 2nd BCE and 575 CE: Bertino L.M. 2007a, 2007b, 2018; Arslan 2007, 2018.

²⁰³ Arslan 2007.

²⁰⁴ Arslan 2018.

²⁰⁵ Lamboglia 1964c, p. 32.

²⁰⁶ Perassi & Saccocci 2010.

²⁰⁷ For Noli: Perassi & Passera 2010.

Finally, sporadic, decontextualised finds of Byzantine *folles* are attested in the area of La Spezia, from the few finds rescued by the construction of the modern arsenal.²⁰⁸

Overall, we might argue that any ongoing monetized economy was centred on the main trade and urban centres; some of the money undoubtedly connected to the financial needs of the Church. Coins in forts like Castrum Perti relate to military presence and paid wages, with military cash presumably then to be spent in urban and port markets. Finally, the lack of coins elsewhere indicates, likely, forms of barter economy.

5.4.3 Finale Stone Industry

One specialist Ligurian industry involved the carving and distribution of stone from Finale (Fig. 5.9). An industry revolving around this specific limestone was active already in the Roman period, possibly from the 1st century CE, with some evidence for its use in road and bridge constructions as well as for inscriptions.²⁰⁹ During Late Antiquity, the stone was used as building material, as seen at Castrum Perti, but more striking was the production of sarcophagi in Finale Stone – an industry which probably began in the 5th century and continued during the 6th and probably early 7th centuries (Fig. 5.8).²¹⁰



Figure 5.8) Albingaunum: Sarcophagus in Finale stone. (Source: Author).

The typology of sarcophagi is not exclusive to Liguria, but is extensively diffused in southern Gaul, along the Rhône's valley, northern Italy, and the Adriatic area. However, most of the sarcophagi discovered in Liguria are made of this local stone, which, to our knowledge, is not found outside the region. The only known area where quarries are attested is the one of Finale

Ligure from where the products were shipped along the Ligurian coastline. The majority of

²⁰⁸ Gambaro & Gervasini 2004, p. 138.

²⁰⁹ Murialdo 2016, pp. 252-254.

²¹⁰ Murialdo 2016.

the finds are in the vicinity of the quarries, but many reached as far as *Albintimilium* to the west and some to the gulf of La Spezia to the east, the only major centre where they are not attested being *Luna*.²¹¹ In this regard, the Ligurian network of redistribution was quite extensive, with sarcophagi travelling up to 100-120km by sea, while similar industries in Gaul had a maximum radius of 40km.²¹²

This new form of regional production used simplified models of the Roman period, substituting the marble industry which has been in decline in the western Mediterranean since the 4th century. The flourishing local caves of white “marmo lunense” (from *Luna*), faced a slow decline from the late 3rd century, stopping entirely during the 5th century, a result of competition from other quarries and a general crisis of the market.²¹³ At this point, only the reuse of older materials was still attested until the reopening of the industry during the Middle Ages, when it was known as “marmo di Carrara”.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, there was local demand for stone sarcophagi, imitating the Roman tradition, which started, not surprisingly, shortly after the crisis of the *Luna* industry. However, the lack of epitaphs and anthropological analysis on the inhumations does not allow a more secure assessment of the social status of the potential buyers.²¹⁵ Funerary practices can somehow point to family graves of rural elites with both multiple deposition (up to 19 individuals) and single or double burials.²¹⁶ Imports of sarcophagi from outside the region are attested only in one case at *Albintimilium* with a sarcophagus probably from Gaul, apparently placed in a privileged position in the middle of a group of several others of local (Finale) origin.²¹⁷

²¹¹ For an overview of Ligurian privileged burials of this type: Frondoni 2010.

²¹² Murialdo 2016, p. 273; Delahaye & Périn 1991.

²¹³ Paribeni & Segenni 2014, pp. 307-315; Pensabene 1998, 2002, 2013.

²¹⁴ Franzini 2005-2006.

²¹⁵ In general, on the use of Finale stone Murialdo 2016.

²¹⁶ All hypothesis should wait for some form of validation through anthropological and/or archaeometric analyses.

²¹⁷ Chapter 2.5.2.2.

The presence of this industry, which later disappeared, at least for the sarcophagi, during the Longobard occupation, is still a sign of active workshops of specialised artisans which were able to produce both construction materials and “luxury” products, even if in simplified forms compared to earlier Roman products. These works benefitted from the continued existence of a regional trade network capable of conveying them to the far corners of the province, across the same routes covered by local and imported pottery.²¹⁸ The absence of systematic petrographic analyses has hitherto prevented the recognition of Ligurian sarcophagi outside the region, but if they could reach La Spezia, about 120km away, they could have easily arrived also in Nice or even Cannes in Gaul. For the moment, the only local product which seems to surpass the maximum radius of diffusion of the sarcophagi seems to have been the *Albintimilium* vessels.

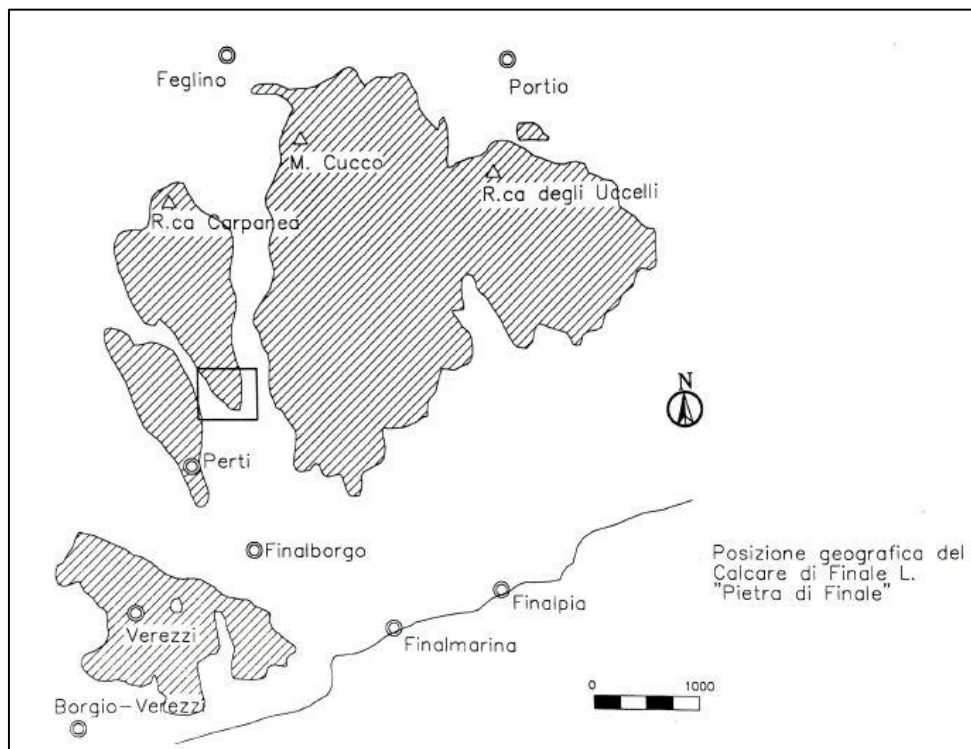


Figure 5.9) Finale: geological formations of Finale stone (Source: Mannoni & Ricci 2001, p. 212, fig. 19.1)

²¹⁸ Cities seem to generally have attracted these products but rural sites such as Capo Don and Noli, as we saw, were also well furnished, with even isolated finds in minor sites such as Andora: Lamboglia 1934e.

5.5 Defining the Economy and Society of a Byzantine Frontier Province

What, therefore, does all this information tell us of Byzantine Liguria? Was this a well-supplied and well-connected territory? Was it 'favoured' by state systems of supply given its military role? Can we see fluctuations in it? Does archaeology show the cities as the foci of import and redistribution?

Liguria was located along the ancient Tyrrhenian maritime trade route, in use well before the Roman Empire. Despite changes in political powers, populations, and traded products, it was not easy to break such a natural communication route between North Africa, the Tyrrhenian islands, the western Italian coasts, southern France, and the Iberian Peninsula (Fig. 5.10).²¹⁹ Coastal Liguria remained at the centre of the route, despite the disruptions, wars, and change of powers, such as the Vandal conquest of North Africa or the establishment of the Visigothic Kingdom in Spain. The region saw an uninterrupted flow of imports from the African provinces from the 4th century onward, with a general reduction in this production, especially in the 5th century, and a revival in the 6th, usually connected with the Byzantine reconquest. North Africa was also the hub where Eastern products arrived to be redistributed across the western regions.²²⁰ The inverse path instead, starting in Spain, was dramatically diminished, especially after the 5th century, with only some small, decorated amphorae (Keay 79/Vegas 42) and Almagro 51 still reaching Liguria, probably through private trade networks. Despite this constant flow, the numbers and typologies of materials which were travelling from North Africa did diminish compared to the late Imperial phase. Cooking vessels, for example, seem almost to disappear after the 5th century, substituted by local productions. Nonetheless, the reduced exportation of wine, oil, and fish sauces might have caused the establishment of new productive centres, for instance in southern Italy, from where the wine amphora Keay 52 was exported in small quantities. Likewise, Etruria began to produce wine, exported inside the Anfora di Empoli, even if it seems that most of the production was concentrated regionally and in Rome. The trade, however, seems to have not survived the 5th century, and probably ended with the Byzantine-Gothic Wars.²²¹

²¹⁹ On the nature of the North African production between Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period: Bonifay 2004, pp. 477-486; 2013; for the Western economic system: McCormick 2001, pp. 83-114; Wickham 2005, pp. 720-759.

²²⁰ Carthage and few other coastal centres received significant quantities of Eastern imports, even if it was probably Carthage that redistributed them: Bonifay 2013.

²²¹ Cambi 1989; Cantini, Boschian & Gabriele 2014; on its distribution in Liguria: Bulgarelli et al. 2018.

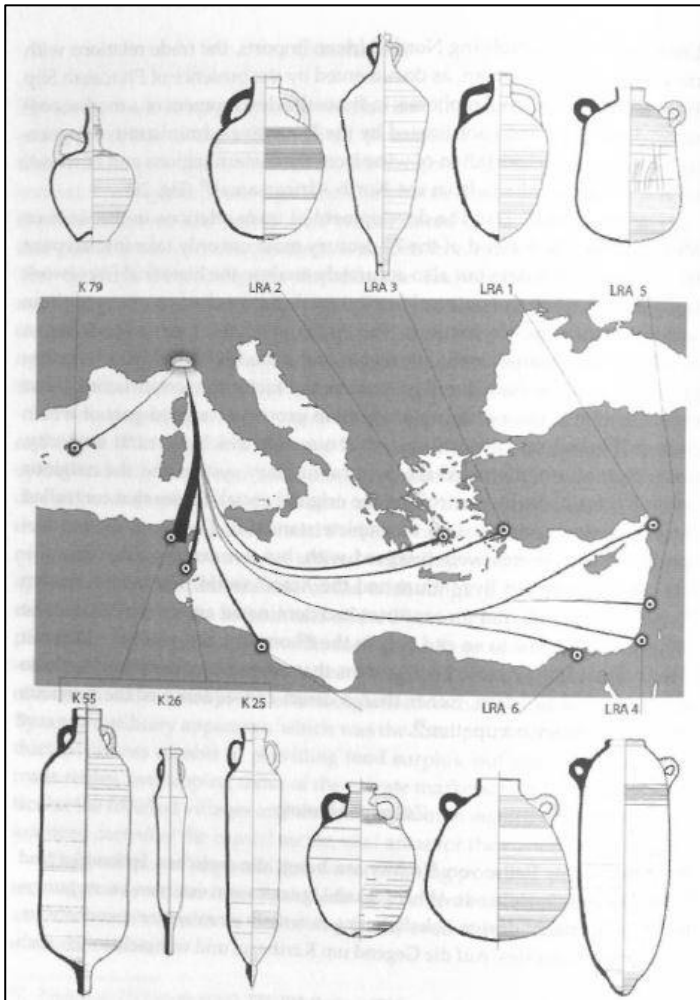


Figure 5.10) Areas of imports of Mediterranean amphorae in Liguria. (Source: De Vingo 2014, p. 300, fig. 20)

However, the Tyrrhenian route was not the only one, as from the late 5th century at least, it is possible to observe the development of regional and local markets which were independent or parallel to it. For regional trade the best case is the one of soapstone vessels, probably travelling by land along with other products.²²² Other imports came from southern Gaul in the form of fine tableware (DSP), integrating the diminished ARSW. It is worth noting that both productions are marginal, with soapstone possibly present in a larger number of sites, even if such materials have not always been systematically published, so it is possible that at least the site distribution could include more examples. Other imports are represented by forms of common and coarse wares which mostly came in

minor-medium quantities from neighbouring regions (Etruria and the Po plain), and only occasionally from North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean (in these cases following the traditional routes). Liguria itself, after the halt of cooking pottery from North Africa during the 5th century and in general with less external sources available for common and coarse wares, intensified the already existing local productions, previously obscured by the Imperial and late Imperial pottery.

In the region, thanks to a diffused use of archaeometry, it is possible to see at least three or four production areas, with a mixture of centralised and diffused productions. Despite the lack of excavated kilns, there are clear indications of an urban workshop in *Albintimilium* which was exporting locally and regionally. The same thing can be supposed for the area of

²²² The details of their distribution networks are, however, under discussion.

Vada Sabatia and Savona where glazed pottery was produced even if there is still doubt on the precise location of the workshops. The situation regarding the Val Polcevera, Genoa, and central Liguria, where the presence of local workshops in the valley outside the city has only been hypothesized, is still obscure. In eastern Lunigiana, instead, the industry of “ceramiche vacuolate” could be related to smaller diffused workshops, probably located away from the urban centre of *Luna*. Despite this, the “vacuolata” vessels were occasionally able to reach the internal areas of central Liguria, as in the case of Savignone, and some regions of northern Etruria. Most of these vessels were traded locally and in neighbouring regions, but some, as for the ones produced in *Albintimilium*, reached a wider network. This emergence of local production centres is mirrored by the establishment of a new series of local workshops, especially for metalworking, both in cities (*Luna*) and in the countryside (Noli, Corti, Filattiera-Sorano, and possibly Capo Don and Castrum Perti). Old mines, like the one of Monte Loreto, were probably reopened.²²³ Among the cities, the jewellery workshop at *Luna* and *Albintimilium*’s pottery kilns, are the only evidence of urban workshops.²²⁴ In the countryside religious centres such Noli or Capo Don seem to have attracted artisans around the churches, which might have included the working of several materials and not just metals (probably glass for Capo Don or wood for Noli). However, data is still limited and mostly indirect with only one excavated workshop, the forge of Noli. The origin of such phenomena is best explained by the lack of external provisions following the disruption of the late Roman chain of redistribution of goods or diminished capability of the old production centres.

From this synthesis it is possible to build a picture which is valid for the whole province. After the 5th century the range of imports was mostly limited to a few kilometres’ radius from the coast, with the only major exception of Filattiera-Sorano, where imports were nevertheless marginal. There was also a reduction in rural sites’ number, with only some of the ancient Roman settlements still inhabited, as discussed in Chapter 3. On the other hand, the coastal settlements that survived showed a remarkable similarity in consumption patterns with a ceramic assemblage composed mostly of dominant North African amphorae, followed by Eastern, Iberian, and southern Italian amphorae; ARSW D tableware, some RSD from Gaul; and local and regional common and coarse ware productions for cooking, eating and other daily purposes (often representing a significant part of the pottery assemblage); integrated

²²³ Mining activities could have happened also in Noli but a late antique phase is still to be confirmed.

²²⁴ For *Luna*: Sannazaro 1997.

with glazed vessels locally or regionally produced; and imported soapstone vessels both in small quantities. What does change is the quantity and variety of products received which marked the presence of some privileged centres such as cities, military *castra*, and religious complexes. Cities were still the expression of a greater variety of needs, and they were hosting elites capable of increasing the market request for luxury or exotic products. Towns generally display a greater variety of amphorae both in typologies and their origins. This is probably a recognition of their status, which is visible even through the very limited urban excavations. Rarer imports, like the Phocaean RSW, have been recognised only in urban centres and Varignano, again underlying a form of general differentiation between towns and rural centres or more simply a reflection of the richer markets present in the cities.²²⁵ The same can be said for the sarcophagi which are well attested in the western Ligurian towns, sometimes also in ecclesiastical sites such as Capo Don and Noli. Some products might have had a specific clientele such as the late Roman unguentaria diffused at *Luna*, believed to contain luxury goods for lay or ecclesiastic elites. Other goods, such as the contents of south Italian amphorae, could have reflected some form of relation between regions, such as the Sicilian estates of the Milanese bishops exiled in Genoa. However, for the time being they are too sporadic and have not seen in-depth study to confirm such hypothesis. Coin circulation was severely reduced and remained active only in towns and military settlements (Castrum Perti).²²⁶ This could be a sign that the main coastal centres were working as the main markets and probably redistribution centres. The presence of coins where soldiers were stationed is consequential to their status of paid men which on one side shows a working 'state machine' able to mint and deliver coins, despite the difficulties posed by the Longobard occupation, and on the other an increased purchasing power of the persons living in these settlements, probably in part behind the wealth of finds at Castrum Perti. Military sites were also the recipients of particular provisions (*annona*) which might be exemplified by the diffused presence of Keay 61 and 62, which appear in most of the settlements with a supposed military presence.²²⁷ The case of Castrum Perti is peculiar for the quantity of finds, which are unusual for a non-urban centre, denoting a privileged status deriving from its defensive role and by the presence of a garrison. How

²²⁵ Gandolfi 1999a. This is a picture that might change with the increased knowledge on this class of materials and the re-examination of older excavations, but seems to follow the general Italian trend, also in need of an update, presented by Martin: Martin 1998.

²²⁶ For the urban centres however the marked differences between Genoa/*Luna* and *Albintimilium*/*Albingaunum* can also be the result of the poorly published materials of the last two sites.

²²⁷ They are however very common also in southern Gaul, which was not occupied by Byzantine troops: Bonifay & Pieri 1995.

much the *annona militaris* was influencing the province is however hard to say in terms of amount of imported goods.²²⁸ The Byzantine army of this period was still supplied by the state which, however, was no longer able to provide for all of the soldier's needs. State supplies were often integrated by local acquisition of products as legal instruments which allowed the army to collect goods for its immediate sustain. These contributions, provided by local farmers and citizens as a sort of payment in advance of their taxes, were then detracted or reimbursed from the levy of the province.²²⁹ For Liguria, however, there is no documentary evidence regarding the use of these systems. From the archaeobotanical finds we know that the region was producing several varieties of cereals and legumes, while animal husbandry of sheep/goats and pigs are well attested.²³⁰ This can suggest a scenario, except for wine and oil, of a precarious self-sufficient agriculture, which was, however, as for most Mediterranean regions, not exempt from periods of famine.²³¹ According to Cassiodorus, Liguria (in the Roman sense which included Milan and a vast section of northern Italy) suffered a severe, albeit temporary, food crisis in the years 508-12 and 533-37, a few decades before the Byzantine occupation.²³² The addition of 1500-2200 soldiers (if there were ever so many),²³³ spread along 250km of coastline might not have significantly impacted on local resources, especially if centres such *Castrum Perti* became themselves part of the production chain. Anyhow, if famine were to occur, food could have been easily dispatched from Sicily, North Africa and any other province nearby as was usually done in the Empire.²³⁴ What was surely missing in Liguria at this time was oil, wine, and fish sauces, which were not locally produced, or at least not in large quantities. It was necessary to import these fundamental ingredients which represented a symbol of Roman lifestyle and were at the core of the chain of support to the army and to the still "Romanised" population.

²²⁸ For forms of local supplies of the Byzantine army toward the *embole* and other systems: Haldon 1999a, pp. 139-141, Vera 2010; for the role and impact of the *annona* on the Roman and late antique market with opposite positions: Carandini 1983, 1986, Carrié 2012, Vera 2010, 2020 (for a marked driven economy); Wickham, 2005, pp. 694-708; McCormick 2001, pp. 83-119 (for a more statist approach); for an overview on the debate: Whittow 2015.

²²⁹ One of this form was for example the *embole*: Haldon 1999a, pp. 139-141.

²³⁰ In Italy as a whole food habits regarding meat started to change in this period, with pigs, which constituted a fundamental part of the Roman diet, now severely reduced or completely disappeared in several areas (Rome and Naples for example) in favour of sheep/goats, a shift accompanied with a change of cooking vessels which passed from closed forms to open ones: Arthur 2007. However, Liguria seems to lie in a sort of grey area where archaeozoology and pottery finds still show a mixed situation without a clear predominance of an animal or the other: Chapter 5.4.1.

²³¹ On the instability of the Mediterranean ecologic system: Horden & Purcell 2000, pp. 56-58 and pp. 77-80.

²³² Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 2.20; 20.27. On the recurrences and effects of famines in this period: Stathakopoulos 2004, pp. 35-86.

²³³ Chapter 4.7.

²³⁴ A system that was applicable also during war times as exemplified in many episodes of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.vii.1-8; VII.vi.15-16; VII.x.7-12; see also note 213.

Liguria, thanks to the Byzantine occupation, maintained its original lay and ecclesiastical elites, which were still practicing a 'Roman' style of life, using sarcophagi originating from a Roman tradition, funerary epitaphs, no grave goods, promoting the construction of churches (sometimes embellishing them with decorated and inscribed mosaics such as in *Luna*), eating in ARSW dishes and bowls, seasoning food with fish sauces, drinking wine, and using oil. The clergy remained strongly pro-Byzantine until the very end, refusing the Arian Longobards until it was clear that no Byzantine aid would come from northern Italy and Liguria was finally lost.²³⁵

5.6 Liguria in Context

Liguria was politically isolated after the second wave of Longobard invasion which involved the conquest of Tuscany by the end of the 6th century. However, its borders were clearly open to the market, with both state and private demand involved. Some imported goods such as soapstone and DSP, even if they were only a marginal presence, were produced outside the Imperial borders and were certainly not supplied by the Byzantine administration, while local pottery was probably exported by private entrepreneurs in the nearby regions. Even if these categories of material were not massively traded, they are a secure testimony of the existence of forms of private regional and interregional exchange which developed, probably benefitting the structures, guaranteed by the Empire, of the trade network with North Africa.²³⁶ Much more complex is to assess which and how many of the goods still produced in Imperial provinces (North Africa, southern Italy, the eastern Mediterranean and some Iberian regions) were the fruit of a civil/military *annona* or of a private market. Or to put it another way, how much the Byzantine presence influenced the local market and the presence of foreign goods. To answer this question, it is beneficial to look beyond Liguria and try to understand how other neighbouring regions behaved in this regard.

²³⁵ This is not to say that there were no changes in society, if we look at the houses for example, the few data available point to a general abandonment of the Roman house in favour of more precarious constructions (huts or similar): Cagnana 1994; Chapter 2.2.2.2; 2.3.2.2; Chapter 3.3; Chapter 4.6; on the subject of social status in Byzantine Italy see also: Zanini 2007.

²³⁶ Even if the trade with North Africa was not completely state driven, the Imperial administration was still guaranteeing an infrastructural and security basis for its existence as successfully demonstrated by Whittow: Whittow 2015.

Northern Italy, a region that was “never fully part of the Roman world-system”,²³⁷ for example, experienced a drastic reduction of imports both in amphorae and ARSW despite some form of recovery due to the elevation of Milan to the status of Imperial capital during the late 3rd-4th centuries. Moreover, the imports seem to have been mostly influenced by the Adriatic Sea network, which was focused on the eastern Mediterranean, rather than the western Tyrrhenian routes. Eastern products are generally more common, especially on the coast and in fortified sites such as Invillino, while the situation in the interior is much poorer from this point of view.²³⁸ The Byzantine presence in the Po plain was probably too ephemeral and short-lived to have generated any form of significant change. What can be seen for the north is a rise of locally produced vessels classified under the terminology of common and coarse wares, with a general simplification and reduction of forms and typologies, a situation not too dissimilar from the same classes produced in Liguria.²³⁹

More pertinent to Liguria and to the Tyrrhenian route is the situation of Etruria. Here the coast seems to still be receiving a certain number of imports during the Ostrogoth kingdom, with Theodoric even concerned to maintain the navigability of the Arno River for commercial purposes.²⁴⁰ The region was indeed producing significant quantities of wine exported regionally and inter-regionally and stored in the Anfore di Empoli. North African productions integrated with local ones, dominating the market (the Keay 25 being one of the most common as for Liguria), followed by Eastern and Iberian imports. The possibility of penetration in the interior, however, was heavily conditioned by transportability and by the status of the settlements. The Arno valley, connecting Pisa to Florence was still a preferential route which, however, seems to have dramatically fallen out of use during the 5th century.²⁴¹ Marginal areas such as southern Tuscany saw a drop of imports in the interior after the years 580-590, where only some centres were still receiving and possibly redistributing a small flow of goods such as the city and episcopal seat of *Rosellae*. After the late 6th century, corresponding with the Longobard conquest, imports are only marginally attested in ports.²⁴² In Pisa and in its surroundings the situation is similar. The passage from the 6th to the 7th century is marked by a drastic reduction of imports both inland and on the

²³⁷ Wickham 2005, p. 731.

²³⁸ On the presence of imported production in northern Italy: Auriemma & Quiri 2007; Quiri 2017. For an overview on the Adriatic commerce: Cirelli 2017; Gelichi 2017.

²³⁹ Brogiolo & Gelichi 1998a.

²⁴⁰ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 5.20.

²⁴¹ Genovesi 2014, especially fig. 2-5-6. The cause of this has often been associated with the Byzantine-Gothic Wars which probably also halted wine production export connected with the “anfora di Empoli”.

²⁴² Vaccaro 2014.

coast.²⁴³ The available evidence seems to point to a sharp break, at least compared with Liguria, around the period of the Longobard conquest, which it is possible to assume corresponded also to a change in most of the local elites and consequently cultural habits. After the conquest of Etruria, any form of Byzantine state support vanished, while at the same time the new aristocracies were probably expressing different needs and interests which did not involve significant imports of North African products. These two first comparisons seem to point to a role of the Byzantines as mere perpetuators of the Roman style of life which involved military garrisons and a local populace which expected to be supplied with certain products. Coastal settlements, however, or settlements with a particular status (fortifications, ecclesiastical centres), were still participating, even only at a low level, in forms of international trade even if outside the Byzantine controlled areas.

On the contrary, Sicily, a province under firmer Byzantine control, shared a series of similarities with Liguria. The island preserved its prosperity, its grain production, and its large estates, which were slowly passing from the hands of the lay aristocracy to the ones of the Church or the Emperor.²⁴⁴ It was mostly sheltered by the devastation of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars and due to its wealth, was controlled by the Empire more closely than other Italian regions.²⁴⁵ Sicily was at the centre of the Mediterranean routes and the recent research on its late antique material culture has begun to shed light on a series of relevant issues.²⁴⁶ The island saw a reduction of imports from its neighbour North Africa during the 5th century probably due to the Vandal occupation. The Byzantine reconquest restored most of the trade but some productions, like North African cooking wares, ceased to be imported.²⁴⁷ This can help us to draw some general similarities with Liguria. As Liguria, North African amphorae and ARSW, especially in the west of the island, represented the majority of imports, accompanied by few Eastern and Iberian vessels.²⁴⁸ Despite a closer control from the authorities, Sicily saw the emergence of regionalisms with an increased difference between

²⁴³ For Pisa: Costantini 2014; Bruni, Abela & Berti 2000. For Portus Pisanus and other coastal settlements Pasquinucci, Alessi & Bianchini 1998; Genovesi 2010, 1014.

²⁴⁴ A phenomenon usually connected with the disappearance or conversion of the great *villas* during the 5th century: Arcifa 2017.

²⁴⁵ For a summary about the island and its issues: Molinari 2019 (general picture); Arcifa 2016 (cities); Malfitana et al. 2016, pp. 49-54; Moncada 2018 (pottery).

²⁴⁶ Most of the new research has been resumed in two crucial publications: Malfitana, Poblome & Lund 2006; Malfitana & Bonifay 2016.

²⁴⁷ Cacciaguerra 2010, 2015.

²⁴⁸ In western Liguria North African imports could reach 70% of the finds: Caminneci 2010; Facella et al. 2012; Rizzo & Zambito 2012; for the eastern imports: Moncada 2018; for the general picture: Malfitana et al. 2016, pp. 41-55.

the western (more in contact with North Africa) and eastern part of the island (where eastern products were more common), accompanied by the proliferation of local production centres.²⁴⁹ Sicily was richer and more complex than Liguria and it remained under Byzantine rule for a longer period, but many patterns and issues are similar. They imported the same products in similar proportions, they established local industries of common and cooking wares to supply the deficiencies and express new cooking habits, and they still possessed a Romanised population who demanded those products and was able to purchase them. Like for Liguria, tracing the presence of the elites became harder after the disappearance of the villas and clear luxury markers. The coast was generally more easily reached by imports, even if inland sites could sometimes be very well connected and supplied. Finally, the halting of the traditional imports of North Africa between the 7th and 8th centuries brought about a dominance of local products which are hard to date and recognise, a phenomenon which in Liguria already happened with the Longobard conquest in the mid-7th century. With Sicily, of course, we must apply a different scale, but the general trends are very clear, being a Byzantine province on the Tyrrhenian route was still guarantee for a certain lifestyle, landscape organization and economy. Nevertheless, phenomena of localisation and desegregation were active even in the richer of the provinces.

The evidence from southern Gaul appears very similar to the Ligurian case. The problem here is that Provence was a territory outside the borders of the Empire and was no longer a frontier since the Ostrogoths donated it to the Franks in 536-37. Ostrogothic garrisons, Arles in particular,²⁵⁰ were still in need of supplies during the reign of Theodoric. This need, however, ceased when power passed to the Franks. In southern Gaul, however, there was a strong presence of local “Romanised” elites, despite Ostrogothic and Frankish occupation.²⁵¹ Sites such the port-city of Marseille or the oppidum of Saint-Blaise (very similar to *Castrum Perti*) show a strong connection with north African and eastern imports on levels comparable to the Ligurian ones, at least until the Longobard raids of the early 570s. The only major difference with Liguria is the predominance of eastern productions instead of African ones during the 5th century, a picture which was reversed a century later (even if in Marseille Eastern goods were still around 19-30% during the 6th century).²⁵² While

²⁴⁹ For example, in eastern Sicily during the 7th century: Cacciaguerra 2010, 2015.

²⁵⁰ Famous is the case of the Frankish siege in 507-508, after which the Goths reinforced their defences there, Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 3.32, 3.34, 8.10; *Life of Caesarius*, I.28; Jordanes, *Getica*, 58.

²⁵¹ Wickham 2005, pp. 168-203.

²⁵² For Marseille: Loseby 1992; Bonifay & Pieri 1995; for Saint-Blaise: d'Archimbaud 1995. For a general overview: Wickham 2005, pp. 746-748.

for Etruria it is possible to argue that what little trade remained after the Longobard invasion was private and what was lost was state sponsored trade, the situation of southern Gaul might point to a more complex picture. Several factors need to be considered to determine the nature of Ligurian economy and society, such as local economic development, the presence of available markets, the social composition and cultural “affiliation” of the locals, demography, and the presence of the army. In this sense Provence could simply have had a wealthier and “traditional” population, thanks to a richer countryside compared to the Ligurian one. Liguria still displays a developed economy with local production activities of foodstuff, animal husbandry, workshops, and mining activities. Etruria, on the contrary, seems to have faced a greater crisis than the Ligurian and Gaulish regions. In southern Tuscany ancient cities such as Rosellae, Populonia or Cosa, show very little activity, already at the beginning of the 5th century,²⁵³ with only Pisa probably withstanding comparison with centres like *Luna*, Genoa, *Albingaunum* or Marseille. A richer and more populous region, such as Provence, with still several active cities means larger markets and need for exported materials, especially if the dominating cultural habits remained mostly the Roman ones and the elites too were highly “Romanised”. All these factors might explain the richness of imports in southern Gaul and Liguria. The survival of the Imperial political control over the Ligurian coast enabled the local aristocracies to remain in control and to continue their affairs and lifestyles, the same for the local population. The main difference with Gaul is the presence of Byzantine soldiers which was a bonus in the sense that it stimulated the construction and occupation of new sites such as *Castrum Perti*, *Campo Marzio*, *Varigotti*, and *Savona*. The army also needed logistical support which was provided at least by a series of goods not produced in the region and which were part of the overall Roman diet (oil, wine, and fish sauces). Plus, the salaried army was also revitalising the monetary system since they were still paid in coin which must have been spent locally. The general poverty of the region in comparison with its wealthier neighbours is further underlined by the near end of visible material culture during the post-Byzantine period compared with areas such as Tuscany (which recovered from the crisis) or Provence until the 12th century.

At the end of this analysis, we saw how the Byzantine presence was fundamental to maintain the high level of imports into Liguria during this period compared to non-Byzantine regions or areas where the Romanised aristocracy was now weaker or had entirely disappeared.

²⁵³ Sebastiani 2004-2005; Citter & Vaccaro 2003.

The reasons, however, are firstly social and cultural, since Byzantine control allowed the survival of local elites, which would have been mostly substituted by Longobard ones in case of an earlier conquest. These aristocrats had every reason to maintain strong political and economic bonds with the Byzantine Empire, where they still had possessions (the land of the Milanese archbishop in Sicily for example), interests as well as cultural and religious affinities. Secondly, the presence of the army (even if in all probability quite small) was a further stimulus for imports and the local economy, even if we need to be cautious in attributing to them the cause of most of the trade. Outside of *Castrum Perti* and similar settlements, in urban centres and rural sites, the number and impact of soldiers was probably not that significant to be archaeologically detectable. In this sense I think that the application of the term “frontier economy” to the whole region, suggesting that all or most of the economy revolved around the army’s needs, is reductive. There was a “frontier economy” in the sense that the garrison’s presence stimulated the microregions which surrounded them, but which were also part of a wider context that was still the product of urban and rural activities driven by local lay, ecclesiastic, and now military, Romanised, elites. Thirdly Byzantine political control, and in this case the army, was of crucial importance, as it guaranteed a period of stability of about 80 years which was probably the greater stimulus for the economy. In these years there was clearly space for investment, reorganisation, recovery, and some growth for the region, ending in the abrupt collapse in the aftermath of the Longobard invasion. Only at this point it is possible to see a clear diminution of imports, on the level that struck Etruria 50-60 years before, the result of a combination of factors: the extinction or contraction of the old local elites; the withdrawal of the Byzantine army and its network of fortresses and supplies; the crisis of the Byzantine Empire under pressure of the Arabs, affecting the entire chain of production and distribution from east to west. The few imports which still reached the region can be now fully attributable to forms of private exchange surviving amidst the ruins of the Imperial superstructure which was now fully disrupted for the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to offer a comprehensive synthesis of the history and archaeology of the Byzantine province of Liguria using a multidisciplinary approach to formulate a model and develop a methodology that could be re-employed in future studies. The use of the Ligurian ‘archetype’ to revise a series of hypotheses concerning the nature of Byzantine rule in Italy (the so-called “Byzantine variable”) and the supposed marginality of the Western provinces compared to the Eastern ones was a necessary step in the course of this work.¹ Despite the limits imposed by the nature of the sources and the regional differences of the western Byzantine territories, the results obtained demonstrate the validity of the methodology and its potential use for a broader application in the western Mediterranean.

6.1 Anatomy of a Frontier Province

When the Byzantines reached Liguria in 538 (completing their conquest of the region in 553) they inherited a system very much derived from the earlier Roman one, the origins of which could still be seen in what remained of the network of *municipia*, roads, villas, *mansiones*, and harbours, but influenced by the significant changes that characterised late antique Italy. The Ostrogothic “Indian summer” (493-535),² despite contemporary propaganda, seems to have done little to halt the shifts that cities and rural settlements were experiencing across the peninsula, as assumed in the past.³ The reign of Theodoric represented a moment of peace and stability, possibly delaying certain processes of change in economy and society which were, nevertheless, aggravated by the events of the Byzantine-Gothic Wars. In this setting the Byzantines, while formally announcing the restoration of past ancient glories were, in reality, barely able to maintain a precarious *status quo*.⁴ The arrival of the Longobards in 568-69 significantly changed the situation, with vast areas of northern and

¹ On the Byzantine Variable: Introduction.

² Brown 1984, p. 5.

³ For a critical review of Theodoric’s building policies: La Rocca 1993; for a more traditional approach: Johnson 1988; more generally: Heather 1995.

⁴ Chapter 1.4.2.

central Italy falling rapidly under their rule. These newcomers had little interest in maintaining Roman traditions and preserving what remained of the diminished local aristocracy. In this sense, the preservation policy of the Byzantine Empire helped establish a line of demarcation between the Imperial and Longobard territories. The sum of characteristics that defined the Imperial domains is often referred to as the “Byzantine variable” and is composed of several elements that have been analysed in this study.

6.1.2 *Cities. Between Past Responsibilities and New Forms*

A first element of the variable was that the Byzantine administration was still based on the Roman administrative and economic tradition which in turn was centred on cities.⁵ Urban centres continued to constitute a crucial element of landscape control during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, deliberately preserved in the aftermath of the conflict. Compared to the smaller settlements, of the five Roman *municipia* four (*Luna*, *Genoa*, *Albingaunum*, and *Albintimilium*) show traces of a civil (*Genoa*), military (*Albingaunum*), or religious (*Luna*, *Genoa*, *Albingaunum*) authority or of more complex commercial and economical activities. Even in *Albintimilium*, where no such signs have been recorded, an elite still survived, promoting, as in other major centres, the import of goods and the continuation of production activities carried out in local workshops.⁶ However, there was no apparent Byzantine policy aimed at preserving their monumental aspects. Even fortifications, attested in most of these centres, had either been established before the arrival of the Byzantines and improved during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars by one faction or the other. What was maintained was the administrative role, the privileged seat of the elites, and a prominent economic position facilitated by the maritime element that characterises all urban sites across Liguria. This was the real Byzantine impact, which, on a smaller scale, mirrored the general trend in the much larger and wealthier cities of the Eastern Empire.⁷ As demonstrated by Zavagno, even in the East monumental features became less relevant and were limited primarily to churches and fortifications, whereas the private residences of the elite lost all distinctive features. The urban fabric appeared more fragmented, but the cities still housed impoverished aristocrats who helped stimulate a more regionalised production while at the same time preserving the administrative, fiscal, and religious characteristics of the centres in what appeared as a ‘new’ Byzantine city that in its general scheme corresponded to that of Liguria.⁸

⁵ On the role and importance of urbanisation in the empire: De Ligt & Bintliff 2020.

⁶ Chapter 2.5; 5.3.1.4.

⁷ Chapter 2.6.

⁸ Zavagno 2009, pp. 153-171.

6.1.3 A “Roman” Countryside

The rural centres, mostly established over previous Roman villas and *mansiones*, though decreasing in number, seem to have remained substantially linked to the system of land management and administration of the previous centuries. The new hamlets, (composed of rural churches, at times featuring baptisteries), villages, and caves, continued to be present in the coastal plains along land and maritime communication routes. Traces of a hierarchal partition, probably a result of private (lay or ecclesiastical) investments, can be seen in the presence of rural baptismal churches. These structures, acting as points of reference for the local population, combined a number of semi-urban religious, economic (workshops and redistribution of goods), funerary (necropolis, with privileged burials and epitaphs), and possibly administrative functions.⁹ In general, the Byzantine administration encouraged such forms of continuity, forcing the relocation of settlements only on a few occasions such as Savona and, in part, *Albintimilium*, which were fully completed during the 8th and 9th centuries, well after the end of Byzantine occupation.¹⁰

A more complex undertaking consists in assessing the fate of the inland regions, where the so-called late antique “tile stations” (farms and small *de facto* villages) entered a period of deep crisis at the end of the 5th century, appearing as completely abandoned by the 6th century.¹¹ The recording of this type of hamlet mostly in central Liguria, coupled with a total lack of data for the western part of the region, further complicates this task, especially if we consider that the causes of such abandonment may have been not only political (the creation of a no-man’s-land between the Byzantine and Longobard territories), but also related to social, economic, as well as climatic changes, for which more exact archaeological data is necessary. The role of the Byzantine administration in the preservation of the previous rural system has usually been overlooked, and appears to have been crucial in Liguria, especially in light of the events that took place after the Byzantine phase with the relocation of many centres (i.e. Corti, Filattiera-Sorano, *Albintimilium*, Noli, Capo Don).

⁹ Chapter 3.

¹⁰ For Savona: Chapter 4.3.1; for *Albintimilium*: Chapter 2.5.

¹¹ Chapter 3.3.2.

6.1.4 Defence and Control

A clear element of Byzantine intervention in the region can be seen in the militarization of the landscape that took place outside the city walls. Byzantine authorities first secured the coast, fortifying natural ports such as Savona (which was already settled) and Varigotti (probably founded *ex novo*) to protect vital sea routes for the supply of food and troops. This was followed by the creation of a network of *castra* and watchtowers across the hills of the interior, occupying strategic positions along roadways and passes with direct access to the coast. The Ligurian “*limes*” was not an impregnable barrier of fortified structures and soldiers, but rather a series of outposts guarding some of the richest and most densely populated areas (i.e., Finale or the Lunigiana).¹² Cities, which were not usually protected by these outposts (except for *Luna*), became part of this network.¹³ Towns and *castra* formed a horizontal system of fortified settlements, one every 20-30 kilometres circa (considering the gaps in the currently available archaeological record).¹⁴ The creation of a more traditional form of frontier with advanced fortifications supported by cities was not possible or even considered in Liguria. Here Byzantine control was usually limited to the coastline, with a maximum radius of 10-15 kilometres from the sea (except for Filattiera-Sorano). A key element that must be considered is that Byzantine *castra* never constituted centres of power. These sites did not attract elites or significant population nuclei except for local garrisons and their families, and once they lost their role as bulwarks against the Longobards they were either abandoned or remained active as secondary, and ultimately unsuccessful, settlements (Castrum Perti and Campo Marzio). The great exception is Savona, which featured an almost urban character, eventually developing into the main city of its micro-region, completely overshadowing the Roman *municipium* of *Vada Sabatia* (again, as with *Albintimilium*, this process was not complete until the 8th-9th centuries).

6.1.5 The cultural elements of a Byzantine province

The last element to consider is the effect that the Byzantine presence had on the society and economy of the region. The decline of certain imports from North Africa, such as cooking and common wares, led to the creation of a number of local ceramic industries (at *Albintimilium*, in the territories of *Albingaunum*, at Savona, and in the Lunigiana) which, by the 5th and 6th centuries, were well-established, exporting products throughout the region

¹² Chapter 4.4.1.

¹³ Chapter 4.2

¹⁴ Only the areas between Campo Marzio and *Albingaunum* and Varazze-San Donato and Genoa do not respect this “rule”: Chapter 4.7.

and beyond.¹⁵ These ceramic wares feature extensively in contexts across Liguria, at times comprising the majority of the recorded evidence (such as in the case of Filattiera-Sorano), thus attesting to a shift in balance between long-distance imports and locally produced goods in favour of the latter. Forms of private regional exchange appear frequently in the archaeological record of Liguria, albeit in limited numbers, taking the form of goods imported from southern Gaul (DSP), the Lombard Alps (soapstone), Iberia (amphorae), and the Southern regions of the peninsula (amphorae). In all likelihood these represented a by-product of state-driven long-distance trade routes (except for the soapstone), which allowed small quantities of locally produced goods to travel across Imperial and non-Imperial regions. In contrast, most of the finds documented in settlements closely linked to the coast and the Byzantine system are made-up of imports from the Imperial network, the latter consisting in the production and redistribution of goods originating from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Amphorae are probably the most widely recorded form of imported product with a predominance, in terms of quantity and types, of North African products. Forms such as Keay 61 and 62, followed by Keay 8 A-B, are especially well attested in most of the analysed sites and usually attributed to Byzantine control and the *annona*. Originating from secondary regional networks and related either to religious contexts or private trade, Keay 52 amphorae from southern Byzantine Italy are attested in cities, while the Iberian imports are again, and for the most, documented in urban or religious centres (such as Noli). North African Red Slipware (ARSW), though numerically modest, is ubiquitous, especially forms such as Hayes 99, 91 and 104, featuring at almost all the sites, and of Hayes 109, present in about half the centres. Phocian Red Slipware from the coast of Asia Minor was instead quite rare and has so far mostly been recorded in urban centres. It was probably an exclusive product for the elites and the most active urban markets. Cities, coastal centres of importance (Noli), and Castrum Perti, are in fact the sites where the greatest variety of vessels has been documented. While this is especially true for African Red Slipware with amphorae, however, the situation appears as more blurred since a heterogeneous assortment of typologies was recorded at Castrum Perti, curiously with a greater variety of Eastern products than in urban centres, possibly the result of its military, state-controlled, status.¹⁶ Most data is still very much influenced by the level of study and the state of publication of the sites, this last tilting strongly in favour of non-urban settlements. It is likely that a revision and full publication of the results of urban archaeology could better define the

¹⁵ Chapter 5.5.

¹⁶ Chapter 5.2.4.

differences between products circulating both inside and outside the urban environment. From this preliminary picture it appears that the cities were still able to attract more “exotic” forms of products such as Iberian and Southern Italian amphorae or Phocian tableware, indicating some form of privileged status combined with a greater number of recorded finds in general. Military sites were the second category of privileged settlements as they were still clearly supplied, at least in the case of *Castrum Perti*, by some form of *annona*, and the soldiers paid in silver coins; the latter otherwise features exclusively in urban centres.¹⁷

The region’s access to goods from the Byzantine Mediterranean network can be attributed in part to the presence of the army, but as evidence from neighbouring Provence has shown, other factors were at work as well. The indirect consequence of Imperial control over Liguria allowed the impoverished aristocracy and population to continue a way of life that had begun in the Roman period. Although the Ostrogoths did not fully endorse a general revival of Roman traditions, they did not interfere with those that they found when they arrived in Italy. The Byzantines followed this policy, even attempting to promote some form of recovery of the senatorial aristocracy. The aristocracy of Liguria was not replaced by a less “Romanised” Longobard one, thus allowing the survival of a series of practises and customs at all levels of society. It was not only the desire and need for wine, oil, *garum*, and high-quality tableware, but also the preservation of funerary practices which expressed the status of the deceased not through grave goods but rather through (locally produced) sarcophagi and epitaphs. Other forms of “Roman” cultural elements are reflected in the organisation of the landscape, still centred on lowland areas and the sea, the importance of cities (even if deprived of their monumental features), coin circulation (although limited), and the need for an efficient and organised system of defence. Finally, the great landowning elite (few of whom probably still resided in Liguria at that time) had an interest in maintaining their ties with the rest of the Empire and their other holdings, as in the case of the archbishop of Milan who resided in Genoa but also held lands in Sicily.¹⁸ These are all cultural elements that were allowed to continue as a result of the Byzantine occupation. Other changes that were endemic, or would soon become so, in the rest of the Empire, such as the radical transformation of cities, the changes in diet (with a decrease in the importance of pig in favour of sheep and goats), or the increasing importance of locally produced vessels (often closely tied to dietary factors) continued.

¹⁷ Chapter 5.4.2.

¹⁸ Chapter 1.4.3.

6.2 Searching for the “Byzantine Variable”

Returning to the ‘variables’ described in the introduction of this thesis, the Byzantine character of Liguria emerges quite clearly along with other more marked regional trends. However, while some elements of the ‘variable’ turned out to be as expected from the outset of this work, others require careful reconsideration. Monumentality and the survival of a “Roman” urban structure, for example, does not appear anymore to be a valid form of differentiation between Byzantine and Longobard cities. This is something that, with the clear exception of Ravenna and Rome, began to emerge with the development of urban archaeology, not only in Liguria but also in other parts of Byzantine Italy, such as the areas originally part of the Pentapolis and the Exarchate.¹⁹ In this sense, the focus should shift from the continuity of the Roman city, its organisation and structures, to the preservation of administrative, economic and social functions as well as the material culture, the latter taking the form not of lavish aristocratic residences or basilicas but of more mundane objects such as pottery, coins, seals, burials, and inscriptions.²⁰ The few monumental elements that survived in Liguria, at least as far as current evidence is concerned, are exclusively related to the religious sphere, such as churches and ecclesiastic buildings, and even in these cases only few displayed significant decorative elements after the end of the 5th century (the cathedral of *Luna* for example).

Other components of the revised ‘variable’, such as the management of the countryside, are in need of a more in-depth analysis. In Liguria this aspect has been generally ignored or overlooked by scholarship, albeit with some notable exceptions.²¹ Similarly, in the general debate over the Byzantine presence in Italy, little has been done until recently.²² Liguria, in this sense, shows a marked level of continuity of site location, where the major factors of change are the emergence of settlements (from villas to villages and churches), and their subsequent decrease. However, the policy of preserving the overall structure of the landscape can be, at least in part, attributed to the culturally Roman local aristocracies, with forms of continuity in the practices of land management, despite some clear changes in ownership (great swathes of land passed to the Church). The latter now played a major role alongside the state and the aristocracy, which in coastal Liguria was probably always

¹⁹ Chapter 2.6.

²⁰ For a similar approach on the eastern cities: Zavagno 2009.

²¹ Mannoni 1983b; Balzaretto 2013; De Vingo 2010, 2011c; in general: Chapter 3.

²² Chapter 3.5.

relatively poorer than in other areas of the peninsula such as Sicily or Campania. It is difficult to establish who was behind the foundation of rural churches, if bishops or private donors; still, it is possible to see from the 5th century a growing influence of Christianity in the region with a definitive affirmation during the 6th century. Some centres, like Noli and Capo Don, might have been the centres of reference for ecclesiastical estates, traces of which can be found in Gregory's letters. Again, some limited forms of commerce, such as the Keay 52, might be related to estates owned in Sicily by the Church of Milan as well as in other parts of southern Italy.

The construction of new fortified structures and the strategic policies behind their creation were characteristic features of the variable. Traditional elements of Roman defence strategy were applied, although with some simplifications, such as the building of new defensive works in cities and the creation of guarded outposts along major routes. However, little is known, for example, about the army (only two names of soldiers and one military unit) to attempt to speculate on the level of influence the military had on local communities, even though it is possible to imagine a gradual militarisation of society as in the rest of Byzantine Italy. Another direct consequence of the military presence was the arrival of goods intended specifically for their support. However, with the exception of fortified sites such as *Castrum Perti*, it is difficult to assess the impact the army actually had on the overall picture of international imports in Liguria. This was likely very small, considering the limited number of soldiers stationed in the region.²³ Troops either 'disappeared' within the mass of the civilian population, especially the urban one, who imported or received similar products, or were concentrated in specific types of settlement (*castra*), with little impact on the distribution of the population across the landscape.²⁴

Finally, the flow of imported (amphorae and ARSW) or locally produced (sarcophagi and epitaphs) goods stimulated by the Roman cultural background continued throughout the whole phase of Byzantine occupation. The State provided coins for soldiers while supporting commerce in the cities, also attested by the presence of monetary weights in towns (*Luna* and *Albingaunum*) and on the border (*Castrum Perti*). This stream of products from North Africa and the heart of the Empire in the East was integrated by small regional exchanges with the Franks in nearby Gaul, but also the Visigoths in Spain and the Longobards in

²³ On numbers: Chapter 4.7; 4.8.

²⁴ Chapter 5.5.

Northern Italy. Thus, Liguria appears as a region perfectly integrated in the commercial system of the Western Mediterranean, where ancestral sea routes connecting North Africa with southern Gaul and Iberia were still traversed by Imperial fleets and private merchant vessels. The constant state of warfare with the Longobards did not prevent the movement of people (at least clergymen and their retinues) and goods across borders. Gregory's letters are a unique example of how the Ligurian aristocracy (the clergy in this case) was well able to travel and maintain relationships not only with other regions of Byzantine Italy, but also with areas of the peninsula under Longobard rule, as well as neighbouring Gaul.²⁵

This international picture was counterbalanced by the growing presence of local pottery, stone, metalworking, and probably glass workshops that clearly emerged in several parts of the coast, creating their own distribution networks at least partially dependent on the international infrastructure provided by the Empire. This was the first sign of an increased regionalisation and breaking up of markets which had previously been dominated by the products and trade policies of the Roman State, as well as a step towards a more fragmented Mediterranean typical of the later medieval period, when the "Mediterranean system" broke down completely. In Liguria this fragmentation was reflected in the political break up of the region, until Genoa reunited most of it in the late Middle Ages.

In conclusion, the Byzantine province of Liguria displayed a variety of elements that can be ascribed to the "variable" and that the province can help define for the rest of Italy. The monumental urban landscape lost its importance, but the cities continued to exist as administrative and production centres, generally displaying a richer and more varied material culture than in rural contexts. This was also the case outside of Liguria and has been described in scholarly work on the topic. The countryside, previously neglected, constitutes a specific Byzantine feature, and should be included within the variable. The same can be said for the role of the state-driven economy of the Byzantine provinces, usually seen as strongly conditioned by the army and the *annona*. However, when confronted with neighbouring regions such as Provence, characterised by a strongly Romanised society under Frankish rule, its impact must be reconsidered. This new perspective could help us see the issue in a new light, taking into consideration other aspects of the variable, such as the cultural one and the preservation of the local aristocracy,

²⁵ Chapter 1.4.3.

not just as separate elements but rather as part of a system of closely related and mutually contributing factors. Despite this much-needed reassessment, Liguria ultimately fits the profile of a Byzantine Italian province, with its own peculiarities, dictated primarily by the nature of its landscape (a mountainous hinterland interspersed by valleys directly connected to the coast or isolated in the interior). Yet, the striking similarities with Merovingian Provence force us to reconsider at least some of the elements of the “Byzantine variable” within a broader *koine* of late Roman culture that was still active even beyond the political boundaries of the Empire.

6.3 Some Remarks on Unresolved Issues and Future Lines of Research

Despite the research carried out in the past three decades, there are still a number of unresolved questions on Byzantine Liguria that beg answering. A first issue concerns the state of past research, in particular the work of Nino Lamboglia, which would require a complete re-evaluation especially in light of new material knowledge and better analytical tools. The archival work conducted for the purpose of this work has been partially inserted in the present thesis, but much more needs to be done.²⁶

Regarding past and new research themes, the first issue concerns the question of the Ligurian hinterland. Most of the data presented in this thesis, in fact, originates from sites located within a 10-20 kilometres radius from the coast, while almost nothing is known of its hinterland apart from general occupational trends like the phases of the so-called “tile stations”. However, the imbalance of studies throughout the region (collected systematically only in the central part), and the methodology of data recording, mostly surveys, leaves numerous gaps in the archaeological record. Without a wider range of contexts and more accurate excavation data, which should also include archaeobotanical and archaeofaunal studies to understand possible changes in climate and agricultural practices, it would be difficult to provide a coherent explanation of the abandonment of such sites in central Liguria or whether there was any correlation with the Byzantine-Longobard presence.

In spite of some promising steps taken by Tiziano Mannoni in the use of hard sciences for pottery studies, a wider application of archaeometric and bioarchaeological techniques is

²⁶ A preliminary step was to select and verify a series of key case studies which will be analysed in the future but requiring the involvement of a team experts in materials as well as the necessary funds to carry out radiocarbon and other forms of analysis.

still very much absent. This prevents access to a wide range of information regarding climate, the environment, the exploitation of natural resources, the dating of chronologically ambiguous contexts, and so on. The absence of bioarchaeological study procedures applied to the numerous late antique, Byzantine, and early medieval burial grounds documented across the region is leaving out large quantities of still untapped data.²⁷ A systematic mapping of these burial sites and the location of their human remains has been initiated by the author of this thesis in order to begin a re-evaluation of the material and assess its potential.

In this regard there are not only chronological questions that might finally be answered, but also information regarding diet, health, social status, and migration patterns that would contribute greatly to our understanding of the historical development of the region. Combining more accurate dates with the movement of people could, for example, allow us to see the degree of influence that foreign groups actually had during periods of migration such as the Gothic invasion, the Byzantine occupation, and the arrival of Longobards. Dietary evidence could be combined with data from both locally produced and supposedly imported wares, offering a clearer picture of the region's economy, the social status of its inhabitants, and the differences with the neighbouring Longobard provinces.

Finally, other aspects involving the immediate post-Byzantine phase will require more careful attention, a period that has been studied primarily through the limited number of elements of Longobard influence documented in the region. Very little is known of the history and material culture of the 7th and 8th centuries, and even the early Carolingian Age appears as rather obscure.

6.4 Byzantine Liguria: Successful Management or a Series of (Un)fortunate Events?

With its limited agricultural output and rugged landscape, Liguria does not appear at first glance as a key province for the Empire to control, leading some scholars to wonder what the Byzantines had to gain from it. This is a simplistic approach that fails to consider a number of elements. For nearly a century, Liguria survived the Longobard threat thanks to the resilience of the Imperial administration and combination of other factors. In the first few

²⁷ The approach so far has been purely typological: Martino 1998.

years after the Longobard arrival in Italy, Byzantine policy was to try to maintain its previous territorial gains. Moreover, Liguria was less marginal than was normally thought. In terms of resources, it was not a breadbasket like other regions such as North Africa, Sicily, or Egypt, but it was still rich in other natural resources like forests, marble (the production of which was, however, abandoned), and metals. More than that, Liguria was strategically located along some of the most important trade routes of the Western Mediterranean, connecting North Africa with southern Europe and especially Gaul. These routes were still active, and control of the region's ports was essential to maintain the flow of goods to Provence and Iberia. From a political point of view, the Byzantines would have lost a direct channel of communication with the Merovingian court when they gave up (probably intentionally) Northern Italy.²⁸ However, the Franks, after their ambiguous behaviour during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, became decisive allies in containing the Longobard expansion. Liguria, until 643-44, was the outpost of Imperial power in the region closest to the Frankish lands, allowing rapid communications with the Merovingian Kingdom by land and sea thanks to the authority of the Archbishop of Milan residing in Genoa.²⁹ The Archbishop's very presence in the Ligurian urban centre was a political statement of defiance against the Longobard occupation of Northern Italy, which the Byzantines and some others in the peninsula (at least at first) expected to overturn. Finally, from a military point of view, control of the Ligurian ports opened the possibility of a direct invasion of Northern Italy from this front, as had occurred during the first years of Belisarius in Italy. The fact that such an operation never took place was rather a sign of the lack of resources which the Byzantine army stationed in the peninsula – whose limited numbers were concentrated in Ravenna and Rome – constantly suffered.

For the Longobards Liguria probably held little appeal. At first the newcomers had few concerns with maritime routes or the Imperial system of redistribution, seeming much more interested in occupying fertile lands, often confiscating them from the local aristocracies.³⁰ The vast Po Valley or the hills of Tuscany were far more attractive than the harsh Ligurian soil. The region was also difficult to invade by land, bounded by mountains and guarded by Byzantine outposts.³¹ For the Longobards there was no immediate gain in conquering it, and

²⁸ Chapter 1.4.3.

²⁹ Chapter 1.4.3

³⁰ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, II.31.

³¹ The Romans themselves found it difficult when they launched a series of campaigns in the mid-Republican period.

the effort was probably perceived as disproportionate when other more sensible objectives were still in Byzantine hands such as Rome or Ravenna. It was only when Longobard power was much stronger and more stable that King Rothari attempted a coherent plan of invasion aimed at reducing Byzantine influence in Northern Italy. With the knowledge available to us, it is hard to define the Longobard King's strategies and the steps he took in his military expedition. Yet, the lack of any apparent form of resistance, in a province that the Byzantine authorities tried to protect from the beginning, may be because the army was engaged in eastern and northern Italy, in defence of Oderzo, Ravenna, and the Pentapolis. Ultimately, the Longobards may have wanted to eliminate a potential threat to their western flank. They also brought the "rebellious" archbishop of Milan in line during a moment of weakness created by their direct attack on Ravenna. However, they seem to have had little interest in the region and Liguria always appeared to be poorly integrated in the rest of the Kingdom, receiving almost no attention, again underscoring the fact that, political and strategic reasons aside, the Longobards mostly did not know what to do with the Ligurian ports. This combined with the crisis of Mediterranean trade, relegated the area to the backwaters of history for the next two centuries.

In the end, the Byzantines attempted to maintain their control over the Ligurian coast for as long as possible, employing a series of standard measures derived from their experience with fortified borders, described in principle in their military manuals. The state of affairs during the mid-7th century and in general the priority given to the crisis in the East undermined their efforts. Ultimately it was more a lack of resources than military organisation and defence that determined the collapse of Byzantine Liguria, having been attacked at a time of weakness of the army stationed in the peninsula and of the Imperial power in general. Not even the superiority of the Byzantine fleet, supposedly capable of supplying isolated garrisons, could have contributed to the war effort if there were too few men available from the start. Nonetheless, the evidence presented in this thesis shows that Liguria, while not one of the richest provinces of the Empire, was far from marginal. Rather, it was well integrated into the socio-economic system promulgated by the Constantinopolitan policy in the West, displaying similar patterns of change and resilience of other Byzantine, and sometimes non-Byzantine (such as Provence) territories that in one way or another continued to remain under the cultural sphere of influence of the Eastern Roman Empire.

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Appendix 1

This appendix will present, in chronological order, the geographical sources so often used and debated by the scholars regarding Liguria, its toponyms, and places. Since they constitute mostly lists of names and distances in Roman miles (1480m ca), I felt no need to provide a translation. Presenting the text together will facilitate their comparison and comprehension, which I further integrated with two tables showing similarities and discrepancies between them. The plates from the Barrington Atlas at the end of the appendix also offer a further comparison in term of where some of the sites have been located by the scholars.

Itinerarium Antonini Augusti (3rd-early 4th century)

This is the oldest of the itinerary that we are going to examine in this list. It was probably compiled between the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century and comprise a series of *itineraria* (routes) and distances withing the Roman empire. Liguria is represented under the section of the Via Aurelia (293-296). The path represented here follows the coast from Pisa to Genoa, to then going inland until *Dertona* (modern Tortona) from where the Aurelia bends westwards reaching *Vada Sabatia* after a few stops. This path completely ignores the coastal settlements between *Genua* and *Vada Sabatia* which are, instead, represented in other sources like the Peutinger Table or the Anonymous of Ravenna.¹

“Pisae mpm XVIII, Papiriana mpm XII, Lune mpm XXIII, Boaceas XII, Bodetia mpm XXVII, Tegulata² mpm XII, Delphinis³ mpm XXI, Genua mpm XII, Libarium mpm XXXVI, Dertona mpm XXXV, Aquis mpm XXVIII, Crixia mpm XXX, Canalico mpm X, Vadis Sabatis mpm XII, Pullopice mpm XII, Albingauno mpm VIII, Luco Bormani mpm XV, Costa Balenae mpm XVI, Albintimilio mpm XVI, Lumone mpm X, Alpe summa mpm VI (huc usque Italia, abhinc Gallia).”

Itinerarium Maritimum (3rd-early 4th century)

The *Itinerarium Maritimum* is a sort of appendix to the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*, presenting a series of Mediterranean maritime routes and the distance between their main

¹ For the most recent edition: Löhberg 2010.

² Sestri Levante (?).

³ Portofino.

harbours. Liguria is presented in the route which connected Rome to Alres (501-503). The text used a technical language to clearly distinguish the various typologies of natural ports (*portu*), artificial docs (*positio*), fluvial anchoring (*fluvius*) or beaches (*plagia*).

“...a Pisis Lune, fluvius Macra, mpm XXX; a Lune portu Veneris mpm [...]; a portu Veneris Segesta, positio, mpm XXX; a Segesta portu Delphini, mpm XVI; a Genua Vadis Savadis, portus mpm XXX; a Vadis Savadis Albingauno, portus, mpm XVIII; ad Albingauno portu Maurici, mpm XXV; a portu Maurici Tavia, fluvius, mpm XII; a Tavia Vintimilio, plagia, mpm XII; a Vintimilio Hercle Manico, portus, mpm XVI...” (Fig. A1.1)

Peutinger Table (mid-4th century/12th-13th century)

This exceptional document is a medieval copy (12th-13th century) of an original road map of the Roman empire (now lost), possibly dated to the half of the 4th century. In this map we can examine the Ligurian coast and its main sites, with only *Luna*, *Genua* and *Vada Sabatia* depicted as main settlements. Many of the westernmost sites corresponds with the ones of the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*. The internal path is also represented, but the *Tabula* adds a coastal road with a few sites not mentioned in the *Itinerarium*.⁴

Luna, *Boron*, *in Alpe Pennino* (XIII), *Ad Manilia* (VI), *Ad Salaria* (XV), *Ricina* (VII), *Genua* (here the road divides with a branch going north towards *Libarna* and *Derton* and another moving westwards) (XXVII), *Ad Figlinas* (XIII), *Hasta*, *Flumen Labonia* (VII), *Ad Navalía* (XII), *Alba Docilia* (X), *Vico Virginis* (VIII), *Vadis Sobates*, *Flumen Lucus* (XXIX), *Albingauno* (XV), *Locu Boramns*, *Costa Bellene* (XVI), *Albintimilio* (VIII), *in Alpe Maritima*. (Fig. A1.2)

From *Genua* the road moving northwards reached *Libarnum* and *Dertona*, on the edges of the southern part of the Po plain. *Dertona* was controlling an important crossroads of roads, leading north towards *Turin* and *Milan* and west, towards *Vada Sabatia*:

“*Genua* (XVI), *Libarnum*, *Dertona* (XXVI), *Aquis Statelis* (XXII), *Crixia* (XX), *Calameo* (XII), *Vadis Sobates*”

Anonymous of Ravenna: Ravenna Cosmography (7th century)

Probably compiled at *Ravenna* using other sources, the text is divided in five books and records the name of places from *India* to *Ireland*.⁵ Here the Ligurian *civitas* are listed in the

⁴ In general, on the map: Talbert 2010.

⁵ Mosca 2004b.

series of settlements facing the *Mare Gallicum* (IV.32.25) starting from Pisa and moving towards north-west:

*Item iuxta Mare Gallicum est civitas que dicitur [...] Pisat (Pisa), Fossis Paparinis, Taverna Frigida, Lune (Luna), Pullion, Bibola, Rubra, Corneliium, Bulnetia, Boron, Bexum, Turres, Stacile, Apennina, Ad Muniala, Ad Solaria, Ricina, Genua, Ficlinis, Nabalia, Alba Decelia, Vico virginis, Batis Sabatis (Vada Sbatia), Albinganis (Albingaunum), Luco Vermanis, Costa Ballenis, Avinctimilio (Albintimilium), Alpe maritima, ubi iuxta litus Maris Gallicis completur Italia.*⁶

The series is repeated with some variations in book V (V.2.5-21):

Pisis (Pisa), Folis Papirianis, Taverna frigida, Lune (Luna), Pulio, Bigola, Rubra, Cornelia, Cebula, Minetia, Boro, Bexum, Turres, Stateile, Aspiniana, Amonilia, Ad Solarium, Recine, Genua, Ficclinis, Asta, Navalía, Alba Vicilia, Vigo virginis, Batis Sabbatis, Albingano (Albingaunum), Loco Germanis, Costa Balleni, Advigintimilio (Albintimilium), Albi maritana. A civitate que dicitur Regio Iulii circa ipsum litorem maris usque civitatem que vocatur Alpe maritana [ubi iuxta litus maris Gallici completur Italia,] sunt civitates centum undecim et suppuntantur miliari mille.

George of Cyprus: Descriptio Orbis Romani (7th century)

In the complex text of George of Cyprus, some of the Ligurian settlement are easily identifiable in the list of the Ἐπαρχία Οὐρβικαρίας, one of the six provinces (*Eparchie*) in which Italy is divided in his description. For Liguria this are Genoa, *Luna*, and *Albintimilium*. In his description of any province he always starts with cities, leaving the *castra*, when present, at the end. For the Οὐρβικαρίας he begins with Rome, listing other 10 civil settlements, and 9 military sites:

Ἐπαρχία Οὐρβικαρίας.

Ῥώμη, Βριτίων, Μικαυρία, Λούνη, Νεάπολις, Γάραντα, Βιντιμιλίω, Γενούης, Σιπόντος, Πόρτου Ῥώμης, νῆσος Κεντουκέλλε, κάστρον Εὐορίας, ἔνθα ὁ ἅγιος Λουκιανός, κάστρον Ἀμάλφης, κάστρον Γεπτέων, κάστρον Τιβερίας, κάστρον Νέπης, νῆσος Κωμανίχεια, κάστρον Μούλιον, κάστρον Κάμψας, κάστρον Σωρεῶν, κάστρον Σούσας, κάστρον Ἰλβας, κάστρον Ἀνάγνια.⁷

⁶ Text taken from: Schnetz 1940 [1990].

⁷ *Descriptio Orbis Romani* 531-553.

Some *castra*, like κάστρον Βισιμάτω, κάστρον Βενέρης, κάστρον Ταβιά, and κάστρον Βαρακτηλία are instead listed in the Ἐπαρχία Ἀννωναρίας,⁸ together with Ravenna, but sometimes attributed to Liguria.

Guido of Pisa: *Geographica* (12th century)

Guido is a medieval geographer who extensively used the work of the Anonymous Ravennate for his own work and his list is very similar. Starting from Pisa:

Fossis Papirianis, Taberna frigida, Lune (Luna), Pulium, Bibonia, Rubra, Cornelium, Vulnecia, Biron, Bexum, Turres, Cilicie, Appennina, Ammonilia, Ad Solaria, Ricina, Genua, Ficlinis, Navalia, Alba Delicia, Vico virginis, Vatis Sabbatis, Albingaunum, Loco Vermanis, Casta Ballenis, Avintimilium (Albintimilium), Alpe maritima, ubi iuxta litus maris Gallici completur Italia.

Comments

In the past scholars who have dealt with Liguria have usually tried to demonstrate the connection between toponyms and archaeological sites with dubious success, except for the most obvious cases (cities usually), which led to different and often opposite interpretations. More useful, in my opinion, is to try to see patterns of continuity and change in these sources, still bearing in mind the possible fortuity of how our texts are come to be (copyists mistakes or the use of different sources or personal preferences of the authors for example). For Liguria we have at least two main pictures, the one of the *Itineraria* and the one of the *Tabula* and of the Anonymous, and a third, very partial one, from the abused George of Cyprus.

All the sources agreed on the main five Roman *municipia*, even the long-diminished *Vada Sabatia*, still quoted by Guido in the 12th century, who instead ignores the much more important (in the Middle Ages) Savona. The two major differences between the *Itineraria* and the *Tabula* are represented by the lack of a land route between *Genua* and *Vada Sabatia*, ignored by the *Itineraria* but present in all the other sources. The second difference is instead represented by the list of toponyms between *Luna* and *Genua*.

For both these points, the *Tabula* seems to represent our “braking point”. The map is the first one to add the land route between *Genua* and *Vada Sabatia*, while still faithfully representing the internal road described the *Itineraria*. Moreover, it is also completely

⁸ *Descriptio Orbis Romani* 623-626.

changing the toponyms between *Luna* and *Genua* (Table A.1). For the addition of the coastal path, it is possible that the Tabula was simply more complete in its representation than the *Itineraria* rather than hint to undocumented new infrastructures efforts in the area. However, the changes in the eastern part of the region are more significant and longstanding. In the Tabula there are no mentions of the secondary docks nominated in the *Itineraria*, while all the inland sites (*Boaceas*, *Bodetia*, and *Tegulata*) are substituted by new ones (*Boron*, *in Alpe Pennino*, *Ad Manilia*, *Ad Salaria*, and *Ricina*). Interestingly, the Anonymous of Ravenna, and Guido who copies him, never fails to cite all the new sites of the Tabula across eastern, central, and western Liguria, while adding several new ones. This can hint to some form of transformation, during the late Roman Empire, for that part of Liguria (especially between Porto Venere and Genua), which is still mostly unknown to us. At this point it is highly possible that the Tabula or a similar document, was used by the Anonymous for its compilation, rather than the *Itineraria* or that the toponymy of the region was so changed that the *Itineraria* were now redundant.

In this scenario, the alien figure is George of Cyprus, who is compiling an administrative, rather than purely geographical, text. The complexity, and sometime obscurity, of the logic behind the composition of his text is hard to entangle, especially for Italy. However, the administrative nature of its work has attracted the interest of many scholars, trying to illuminate the obscurity of 7th and 8th century Byzantine Italy. Certainly, George does not display, even remotely, the level of details of the other sources, at least for Italy. For Liguria, its only use is relegated to the mention of three cities (*Luna*, *Genua*, and *Bintimilio*), while the *castra* usually attributed to the province are usually of dubious identification and open to various interpretations.

In the end, more than trying to match archaeological sites with long lost toponyms, these sources can be more useful in identifying period of changes, and variation in settlement density from different areas in different periods.

Itinerarium Antonini Augusti	Itinerarium Maritimum	Peutinger Table	Anonymous Ravennese 1	Anonymous Ravennese 2	George of Cyprus	Guido of Pisa
Lune	Lune	Luna	Lune	Lune	Λούνη	Lune
Boaceas						
			Pullion	Pulio		Pulium
			Bibola	Bigola		Bibonia
			Cornelium	Cornelia		Cornelium
				Cebula		
			Rubra	Rubra		Rubra
			Bulnetia			Vulnecia
				Minetia		
	Portu Veneris					
		Boron	Boron	Boro		Biron
			Bexum	Bexum		Bexum
			Turres	Turres		Turres
			Stacile	Stateile		Cilicie
				Aspiniana		
		in Alpe Pennino	Appennina			Appennina
		Ad Manilia	Ad Muniala	Amonilia		Ammonilia
Bodetia						
Tegulata						
	Segesta					
		Ad Salaria	Ad Solaria	Ad Solarium		Ad Solaria
		Ricina	Ricina	Recine		Ricina
Delphinis	Portu Delphini					
Genua	Genua	Genua	Genua	Genua	Γενούης	Genua
		Ad Figlinas	Ficlinis	Ficclinis		Ficlinis
		Hasta		Asta		
		Ad Navalía				
		Alba Docilia	Alba Decelia	Alba Vicilia		Alba Delicia
			Vico Virginis	Vigo Virginis		Vico Virginis
			Nabalia	Navalia		Navalia
Vadis Sabatis	Vadis Savadis	Vadis Sabates	Batis Sabatis	Batis Sabbatis		Vatis Sabbatis
Pullopice						
Albingauno	Albingauno	Albingauno	Albinganis	Albingano		Albinganum
	Portu Maurici					
Luco Bormani		Locu Boramns	Luco Vermanis	Loco Germanis		Loco Vermanis
Costa Balenae	Tavia	Costa Bellene	Costa Bellenis	Costa Belleni		Costa Bellenis
Albitnimilio	Vintimilio	Albintimilio	Avictimilio	Advigintimilio	Βιντιμάλω	Avintimilium
Lumone						
Alpe summa		in Alpe Maritima	Alpe Maritima	Albi Maritana		Alpe Maritima

Table A.3) List of toponyms for different sources with Roman municipia highlighted in red. (Source Author)



Figure A1.1) Location of the Ligurian ports named in the Itinerarium Maritimum. (Source: Author)

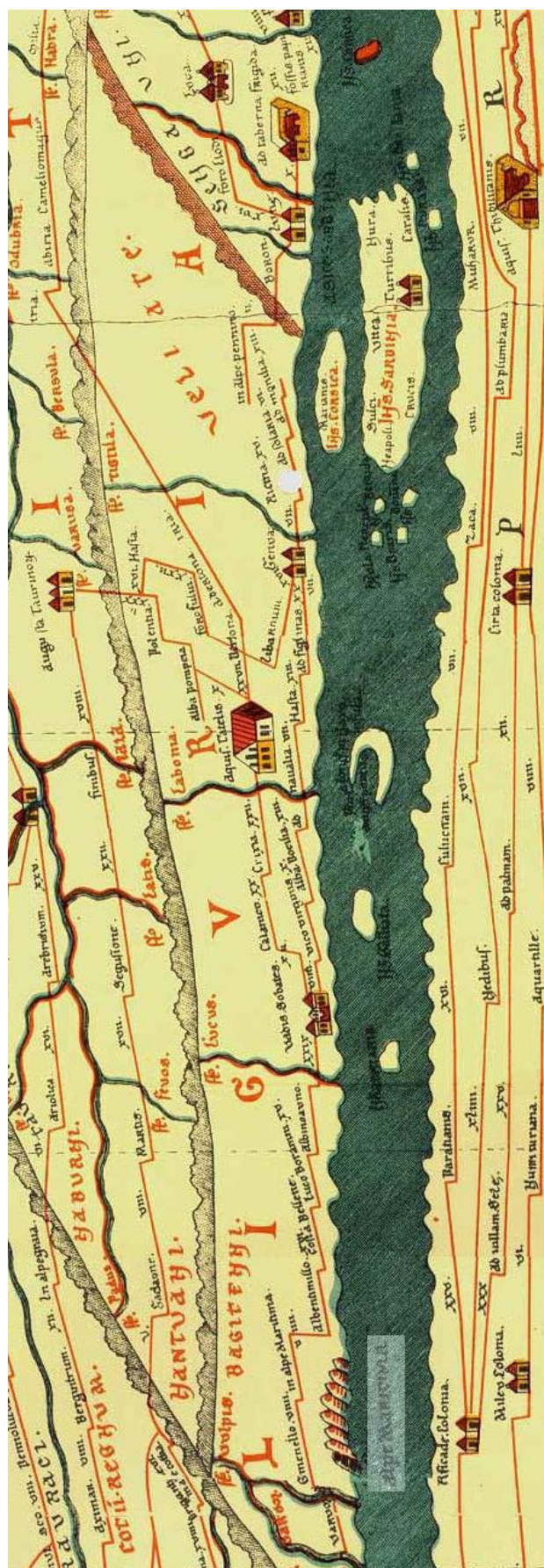


Figure A1.2) Tabula Peutingeriana: section of the Tabula depicting Liguria

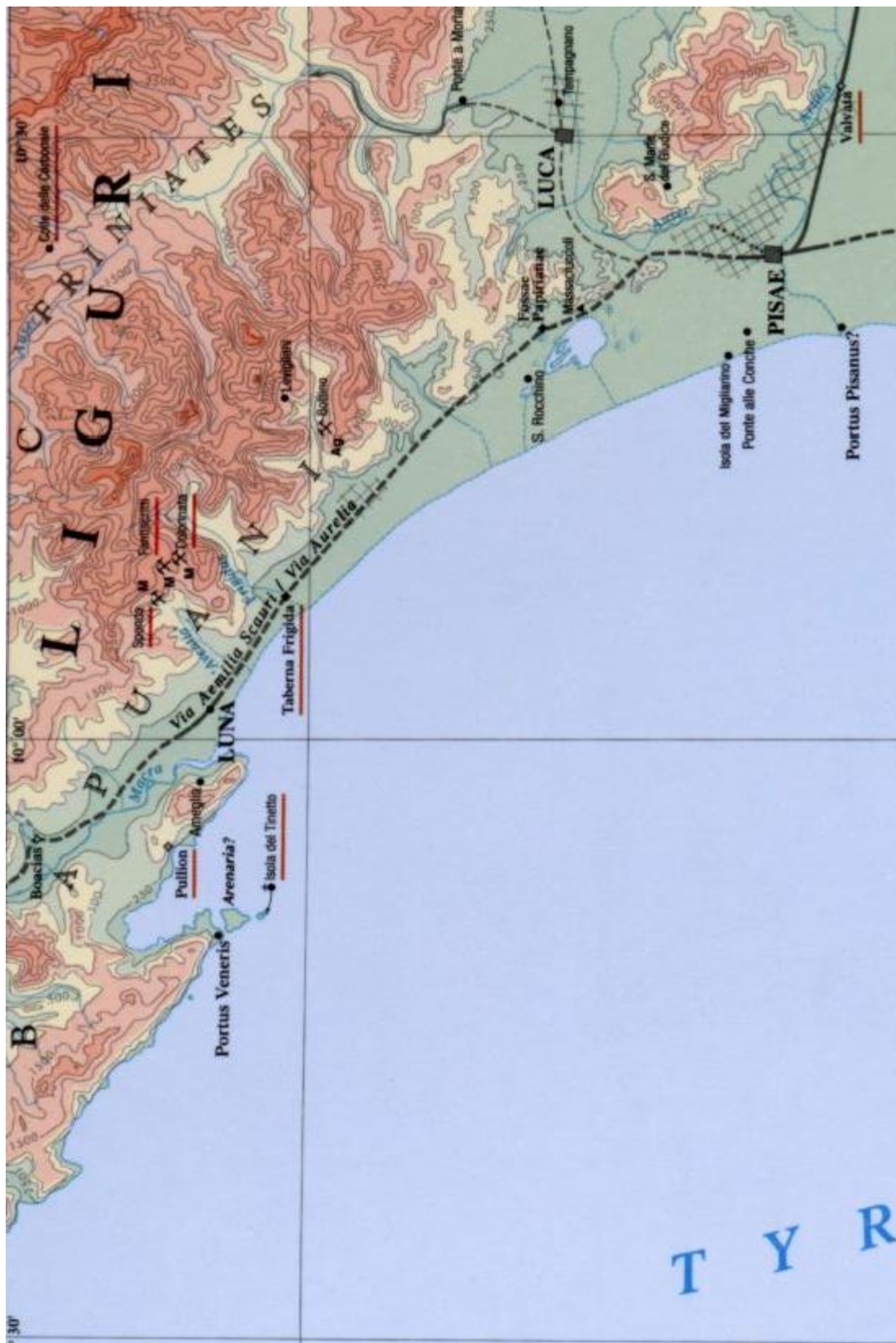


Figure A1.4) Detail of Lunigiana. (Source Barrington Atlas, tab. 41)

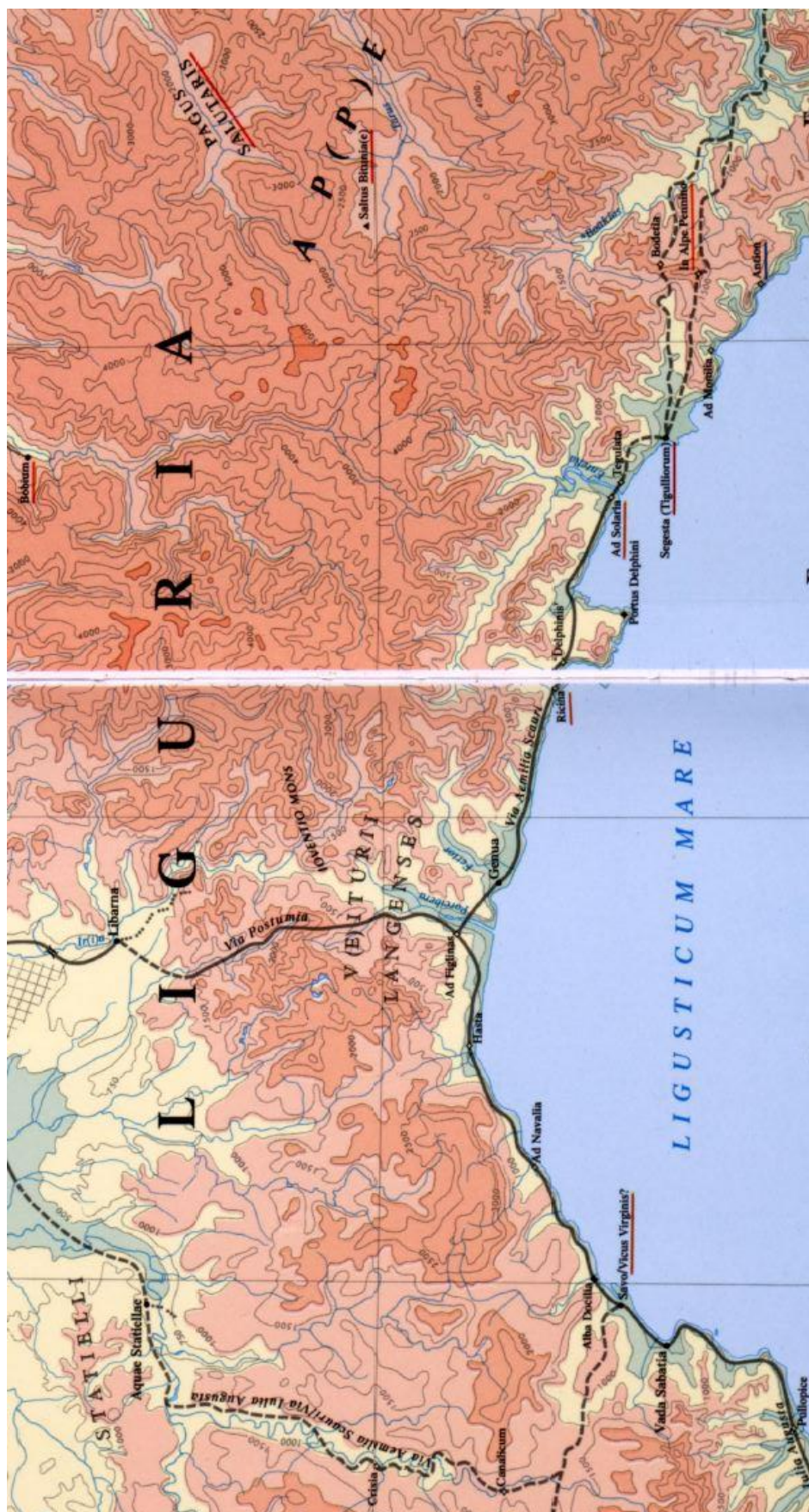


Figure A1.5) Detail of Liguria. (Source: Barrington Atlas, tab. 39)

Appendix 2

This appendix is divided in two parts. The first brings together most of the inscriptions cited in the text to enable accessible consultation of the original Latin and an English translation and comment. This is not a full record of the whole epigraphic evidence of Liguria during the 6th and 7th century, but a necessary selection.¹ The second section provides the texts and translations of the two *fragmenta* of Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu Suo* (c. 415), which are allegedly describe Genoa and *Albingaunum*.

LUNA

1 Gerontius

*I[n] N[omine] D[omini] [sol]v[ere]
[c]upie[ns] famu
[l]us XP[I] v[ot]a
Geron[t]us ut h(a)ec ecclesia esset pu[l]
c(h)rior in XP[I] nomi
ne hac firm[ata]
pos(uit) vetusta[te]
conlapsa*

“In the name of the Lord, Gerontius, servant of Christ, eagerly paid so to enhance the splendour of this church in the name of Christ, [and] in this way he halted the collapse (of the church) because of its age.”

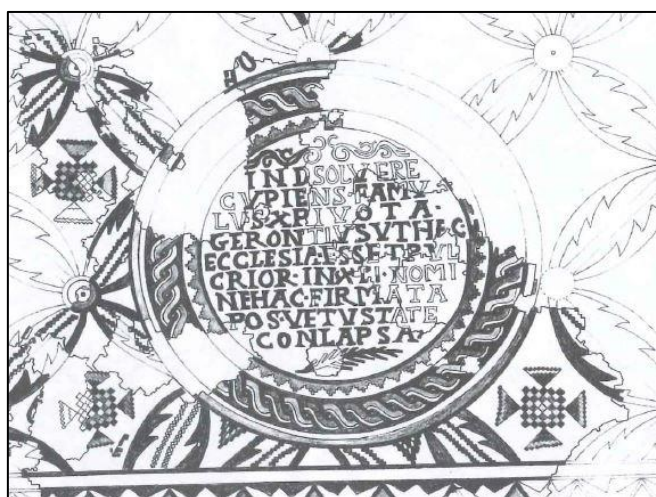


Figure A2.1) Luna: A reconstruction of the Gerontius inscription. (Source: Lusuardi Siena 2007, tav. XVII)

This inscription was found on the 6th century mosaic floor the cathedral of *Luna* and attest the presence of a donor, Gerontius, of otherwise unknown identity. The expression “*famulus Christi*” has suggested that Gerontius was a member of the clergy, even a bishop. A bishop with this name is attested in a letter of Pope Pelagius I of 557, however, his seat is not mentioned, and the connection is not straightforward.²

GENOA

2 Magnus Miles (CIL, V, 7771)

+ *Hic requiescit in pace b(onae) m(emoriae) Magnus mil(es) nom(eri) felic(ium) Illyic(ianorum) (?), qui uixit in saecvulo ann(os) pl(us) m(inus) XXXV; dep(ositus) est sub*

¹ In this sense the most complete work so far is: Mennella & Coccoluto 1995; Schivo 2000.

² On this debate: Conti 1971, pp. 13-14; Lusuardi Siena 1985, pp. 308-309 and 2007, p. 133.

*d(ie) VII id(us) aug(ustas) imp(eratore) domino nostro Mauricio Tiberio p(er)p(etuo)
Aug(usto) anno octavo, indictione octava +++*

“+ Here rests in peace the soldier Magnus, of good memory, of the *numerus felicium Illyricianorum* [or *Laetorum*], who lived more or less 35 years; he was deposited in the ground on the 7th August 590, during the eight year of the reign of our perpetual Augustus Maurice Tiberius +++”

The inscription, now lost, was found inside the church of Santa Sabina, in one of the suburbs of the Roman and Byzantine city. Around the medieval building several burials “alla cappuccina” have been excavated in the past and the inscription has been usually attributed to one of these burials. It names a soldier, Magnus, of the *numerus Illyricianorum* or *Laetorum*, probably the garrison the city, who was buried there in 590.³

ALBINGAUNUM

3 Constantius (CIL, V, 7781)

*Constanti virtus studium victoria nomen
dum recipit Gallos constituit Ligures
moenibus ipse locum dixit duxitque recenti
fundamenta solo iuraque parta dedit
cives tecta forum portus commercia portas
conditor extructis aedibus instituit
dumque refert orbem me primam protulit urbem
nec renuit titulos limina nostra loqui
et rabidos contra fluctus gentesque nefandas
Constanti murum nominis opposuit*

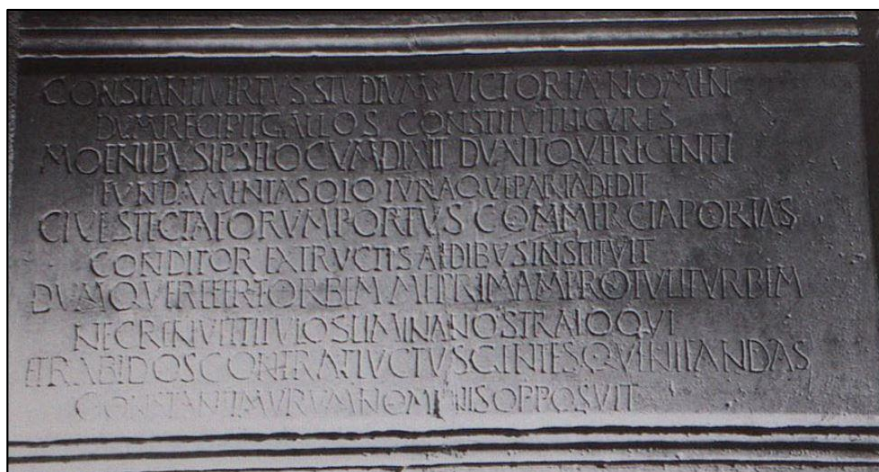


Figure A2.2 Albingaunum: Constantius' inscription. (Source: Lamboglia 1966b)

“The valour of Constantius, his commitment, the victory, the name, while he recovered Gaul, [and] re-ordered Liguria. He himself recommended the place for the walls and on new land traced out the foundations and proclaimed the laws. Founder (of the city) he raised the

³ Lamboglia 1958a; Mennella & Coccoluto 1955, n. 27, p. 66.

houses, the citizens, the rooves, the forum, the trading at the port, the city gates. While he rebuilt the world, he raised me (*Albingaunum*) as the first city and did not forbid this inscription on our threshold and against furious waves and nefarious people the walls, with Constantius' name, oppose them."

When this inscription was set up, in the early 5th century (410-420), Constantius was not yet emperor (Constantius III) but was one of the generals of Honorius, operating in northern Italy and southern Gaul. His restoration of *Albingaunum* is usually interpreted coming after a Visigothic raid that affected the city. While this is plausible, the passage of the Visigothic army along coastal Liguria and via *Albingaunum* is not certain.⁴ Constantius might have simply wanted to reinforce the defences of the city in his wider operations. Re-fortifications of northern Italian towns was not uncommon and had already started a century before.⁵ The text is too formulaic to properly comment on the nature of the reconstruction. The mention of houses, the *forum*, and the port is significant, but it lacks any context and could have been limited to basic restorations. The only clear element that emerge in the text are the city walls, explicit in lines 3-4 and 9-10. According to the text Constantius devised the project himself, testifying to a precise interest in the military aspect of the enterprise.

4 Honorata (CIL, V, 7793)

+ Hic requiescit in pace b(onae) m(emoriae) Honorata clarissima et /
p(ia) f(emina), coniunx Tzittani com(itis) et trib(uni), quae uixit in hoc saec(ulo) /
ann(os) XL depos(ita) est sub d(ie) kal(endas) febr(uarias) ind(ictione) prima imp(eratoris)
et cons(ulis) /
d(omini) n(ostri) Iustini p(er)p(etui) Aug(usti) anno tertio +++ /
rogo te, per D(o)m(inum) om(ni)p(otente)m et I(hesu)m X[p(istu)]m Nazrenum ne me tangas
nec sepulcrum meum /
uiolis: nam ante tribunal aeterni iudicis mecum causam dicis ++



Figure A2.3) Albingaunum: Epitaph of Honorata, wife of Tzittanus (Source: Marcenaro 1993, p. 74, fig. 19)

"Here rests in peace Honorata, of good memory, a *clarissima* and devout woman, wife of Tzittanus *comes* and *tribunus*. She lived in this era for 40 years and was buried on the kalends of February, in the first indiction, in the third year of the reign of the emperor and consul, our lord eternal Augustus, Justin (Justin II). +++"

⁴ Chapter 1.4.1.

⁵ Chapter 4.2.

The inscription was displayed, with *CIL*, V 7794 (see below), on the wall of Palazzo Peloso-Cepolla in Albenga and recovered by Lamboglia in 1954.⁶ It attests the presence of Honorata, a noblewoman (*clarissima*), wife of a Byzantine officer (*comitis et tribuni*), Tziattanus, who died in *Albingaunum* in 568, very close the Longobard arrival in northern Italy.⁷ Tzittanus was probably in command of the city garrison at the time, giving us the only example of a military officer (almost) securely based in the region.

5 Bishop Benedictus

[hic quiescit d]omnus/
[sanc(tae) m(emoriae) nom(ine) Be]nedict
/tus, Albingaunensi]s epis(copus), /
[qui rexit in sa]nct[i]/
[tate eposcipatu]m fi/
delis in (Christo) ann(os)--- ; de]p(ositio) e[ius]/
[---] P [---]

This very fragmented epitaph seems to attest the resting place of Benedictus, perhaps bishop of *Albingaunum*, but its reconstruction is very hypothetical and based on similar texts. The inscription was found reused in one of the medieval walls of the cathedral. The date of this epitaph has been disputed but most scholars placed it between the end of the 5th and the 6th century.⁸

6-7-8 The aristocracy of *Albingaunum*

6 Maioranus⁹

Depositio Maio
rani pos(ita die) VIII k(a)l(endas)
Ilulias. Coiuro
per Cx(ristu)m ne
apereas l[o]
cum istu[m]
Florentio v(iro) c(larissimo) c(onsule)

7 Marina¹⁰

[...] + [...]
[deposit]us sub d(ie) VIII id(us) mai[as---]
[...] v(iro) c(larissimo) cons(ule) er Marina, quae vi
[xi]t anno VII, deposita sub diae
VIII kal(endas) Nocembre Symmaco et Boe
tio girmanis vv.cc. (viris clarissimis) consolibus
Adiure te, pir Xp(istu)m, ne apereas
locum istu.

⁶ Lamboglia 1934d.

⁷ Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 43, pp. 97-99.

⁸ Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 49, pp. 106-107.

⁹ Lamboglia 1956b; Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 41, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰ Lamboglia 1958f; Mennella & Coccoluto 1955, n. 42, pp. 95-97.

8 *Ancillae tuae* (CIL, V, 7795)¹¹

[...] + [...]
[...Domin]e misertus [...]
[...]*mae, ancillae tuae* [quae]
[vix(it) p(lus) m(inus) anni(is) L, recess(it) die
[...]*indict(ione)* [...]
[C]oiuro vos omnes, qui nunc
[et q]ui venturis estis per D(ominu)m Patrem
[et] Filium Domin)i et S(an)c(tu)m Sp(iritu)m et S(an)c(tos)
[ut] hoc sepulcrum nullus
[viola]re praesumat.

This group is an example of lay epitaphs of the 6th century aristocracy of *Albingaunum*, with the first two (6-7) recovered during excavations at the church of San Vittore, and the last (8) of unknown origin. The first one is of Maioranus (6), who died during the consulship of Florentius (515). The second one (7) mentions a couple, the male, whose name did not survive, was buried with Marina (7) in the year of the consulship of Symmacus and Boethius (522), the senators famously executed by Theoderic at the end of his reign. Finally, (8) a noblewoman (*ancillae tuae*) was buried somewhere in the city, most probably during the second half of the 6th century, according to Mennella and Coccoluto.¹²

9 *Albingaunum*: Baptistery

[...] (nomi)namus
quorum hic reliquiae sunt

Stefani S. Iohannis Laurenti Navoris Protasi
[...] *evangelii* [...] *Felicis Gervasi.*

“[...] (we) name those whose relics are here.

(S.) Stephen, S. John, (S.) Lawrence, (S.) Nabor, (S.) Protasius
[...] the evangelist [...] (S.) Felix, (S.) Gervasius”



Figure A2.4) Baptistery of Albingaunum: detail of the mosaic with inscription. (Source: Author)

¹¹ Lamboglia 1965d; Mennella & Coccoluto 1955, n. 48, pp. 104-106.

¹² Mennella & Coccoluto 1955, n. 48, p. 106.

This text from the mosaic of the baptistery references the relics of the saints presumably housed in the building. The saints are listed in the last two lines. In the first one the names of Stephen (*Stefani*), John (*Iohannis*), Laurence (*Laurenti*), Nabor (*Navoris*), and Protasius (*Protasi*) are easily readable. The second line is probably connected to the first in the sense that specifies that Iohannis is actually St. John the Evangelist, with the word *evangelis* just under his name; while the other saints mentioned in the line forms famous couples of saints with the ones of the first line, such as: Nabor and Felix (*Felicitis*) or Protasius and Gervasius (*Gervasi*). This is displaying a connection with both Milanese (Lawrence, Gervasius and Protasius) but also Roman saints. However, the text, as the whole mosaic, received a radical restoration at the beginning of the 20th century, for which we have no documentation regarding its previous status, and it is highly possible that part of the text was renowned, integrated, and reinterpreted.¹³ The extra detail is provided by Toesca who, was still able to read, in the 1910s, the letter SCS on the left of the main mosaic and FECIT on the right.¹⁴

10 Abbas Marinaces (CIL, V, 7794)

+ *Hec tibi ego Marinaces v(ir) [venerabilis abbas (?)] [...] ium quot [te]gitur tua membra | marteres chr(ist)l inclide i [...] anime nostre cod tibi ego | Marinaces v(ir) v(ene)r(abilis) abb(as) [...] rio tem[plum?] m [...]nnovavi.*¹⁵

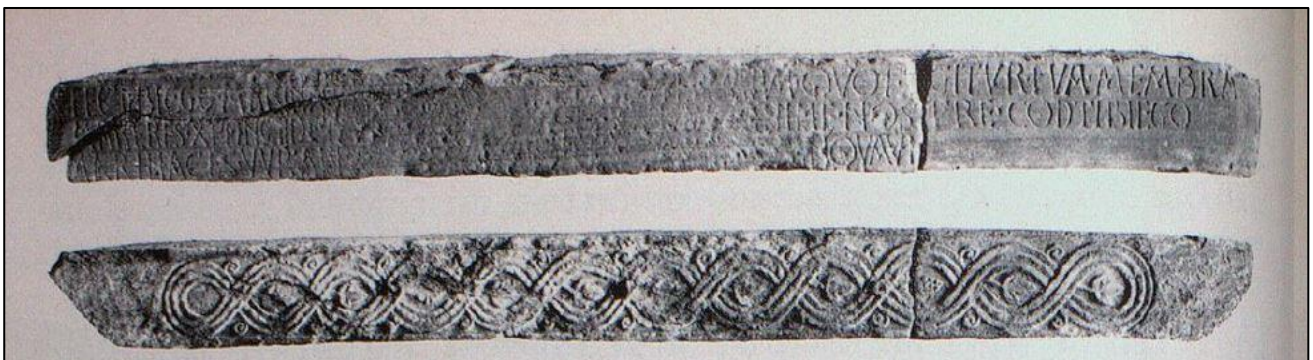


Figure A2.5) Albingaunum: inscription of the Abbas Marinaces (Source: Lamboglia 1956c, p. 82 fig. 1)

This interesting inscription, reused together with CIL, V, 7793, in one of the medieval palaces of the city, has been dated to the 7th or 8th century and most probably comes from the extramural church of San Calocero.¹⁶ The inscription was carved into an epistyle, part of a liturgical barrier, likely reused as threshold at some point. The interpretation of the text has proved problematic since most of the central part of the text is illegible due to abrasion. In the text the Abbot Marinaces (*vir venerabilis abbas*) is said to have rediscovered the relics (*tua membra marteres*) of the saint (Calocero) and provided an appropriate space for them to be hosted in the church (*rio tem[plum?] m [...]nnovavi*).¹⁷

¹³ Marcenaro 1993b, p. 130; Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 40, pp. 91-94.

¹⁴ Toesca 1912, pp. 21-27.

¹⁵ The text here presented is that proposed by De Francesco, building on two different readings proposed by Lamboglia and CIL: De Francesco 1988.

¹⁶ Lamboglia 1956c.

¹⁷ Lamboglia 1956c; Grosso 1956c; De Francesco 1988.

CAPO DON

11 Maria (?)

++ *hanc quis ing
rederis septam, si n
osse cura [e]st
id loci qua[e] lae[t]
ant(ur) cuiq(ue) sint hone
rata membra se
pulcr(o), huic pagi
ne uersu<s> pe[r]cur
rere Acilius docit.
hic quiesce[t] in pa
ce b(onae) m(emoriae) [M]aria, claro
uniens de stirpe pa
rentum, cui t[ri]b(us) ann(is),
trib(us) tantu<m> li[c]uit
dulci esse coniun/cat marito, quem
inuida mors XVII
etatis anno trans
acto dulce priua
uit iuguale d(e)p(o)s(ita) est
s(u)b d(ie) IIII kal(endas) ianuar(ias)
ind(ictione) XIII.*

A funerary epitaph of a woman, possibly called Maria, from a noble family (*claro de stirpe parentum*). She was the wife of Acilius, who dedicated the inscription and died in January when she was seventeen. The text is mostly formulaic, with threats against any potential profanation of the burial. The inscription has been stylistically dated within the Byzantine occupation of Liguria but noting more precise has been proposed since the *indictione* alone is not sufficient to identify the year.¹⁸

NOLI

12 Bishop Thedorous (or Theodosius)

+ *hic requiesci[t] b(onae) m(emoriae)
Theodo[---, qui]
vixet in [hoc sae]
colo pl(us) m(inus) [annos ---],
eg[i]t ep(iscop) at [us annos],
XII d(e)p(ositio) eius [sub die (?)]*

“+ Here rests Theodo...who left a good memory of himself, who lived more or less...years...he was bishop for 12 years. He was buried on the day...”

¹⁸ Pergola et al. 1989; Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 58, pp. 119-121.

A funerary epitaph recovered from the restoration the church of San Paragorio in 1889-1890. In this case the text presents the name of a man, Theodorus or Theodosius (line 2), who was probably a bishop, based on the two letters *ep* in the middle of line 5. It has been stylistically dated to the late 6th or early 7th century.¹⁹

13 Domina Lidoria

+ I(n) n(omine) D(omi)ni ic re
 quiescet in pa
 ce B(onae) M(emoriae) d(omi)na Lidoria,
 qui vixet in oc seculo
 annus pl(us) m(i)n(u)s LXIII et de
 bost(a) XIII d(i)e m(ense) Maio ind(ictione) p(ri)m(a).
 Coniuro p(er) padrem et filium
 et Sp(iritu)m S(an)c(t)u(m)
 cot se
 pulcrus est
 e non de
 violet
 ur, quia
 neque
 aur(o)
 neque arg
 ento ic de
 positum
 non est ++

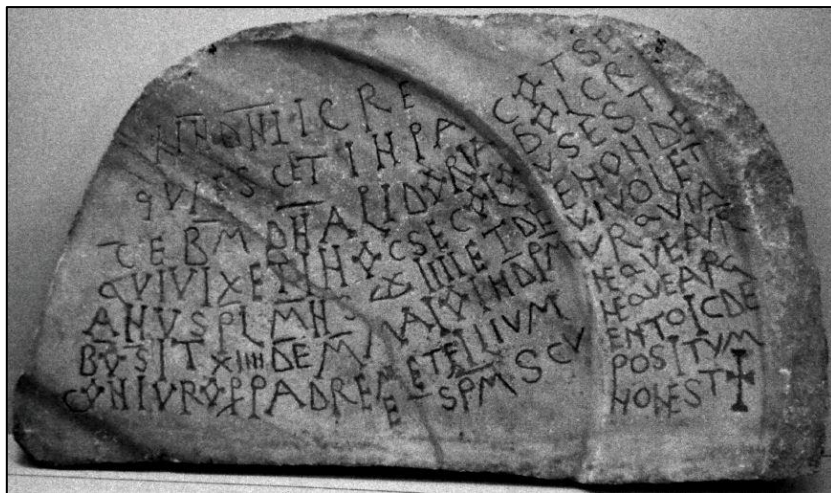


Figure A2.6) Noli: Domina Lidoria. (Source: Vavassori 2018, p. 302, fig. 1)

“+ In the name of the Lord, here rests in peace the *domina* Lidoria, of good memory, who lived in this century more or less 64 years and was buried in the 14th day of May, during the first indiction. I beg to aver in the name of Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that this tomb will not be desecrated since there is no gold or silver in it.”

¹⁹ Mennella & Coccoluto 1995, n. 38, pp. 83-85; Mennella 2018.

A funerary epitaph found reused in the church of San Paragorio, Lido di Ostia was a noblewoman,²⁰ probably residing locally. The text is not dated precisely by the inscription, but according to several scholars, the style of the text puts it between the end of the Byzantine occupation of Liguria and the Lombard conquest of the region (c. 650).²¹

14 Floor of the baptistry

+++ /in nomine do]min(i) om[ni]potentis (?) ---] ra / ----

Inscription on the floor beside the baptismal font of San Paragorio. It is badly damaged, but it is possible to read “*in nomine Domini*”, an expression often used in the dedication of churches or ex voto.²²

Rutilius Namatianus, *De Redito Suo*: fragments

Fragmenta A – Genoa (?)

Jes litata Ceres
Jae mos est frumenta reponi
nub Jiferos horrea tuta Notos
Jhiberna Ligustica miles
mJedium lanea terga suem
Jlo dives propola ministrat
vJenditus aere focus
Jli pretio promptaria Bacchum
fJluit gratus odore cadus
Jpraesentia Marcellini
niJhil dulcius esse potest
pJrotector saepe tribunus
Jfuit nuper honore comes
Jllo custode fuerunt
Jli praedo sagatus erat
Jitat meractor avarum
Jtant monstra minora can[
Js vitanda calumnia lites
J..<na>ufragiis²³

“...it is a custom to store corn in the granaries safe from the (rain) bringing south wind...The soldier, in the Ligurian winter quarters...the fleecy backs... The inn-keeper (in the inn where) the hearth stretches...serves wine at a (low) price from the cellar... the pleasantly smelling wine-jar... The presence of Marcellinus, of which nothing can be sweeter. A defender, often a tribune, and recently an honorary count...under whose protection they were (safe from)

²⁰ For a general picture on the powerful women of Byzantine Liguria: De Vingo 2016.

²¹ Lamboglia 1976d; Vavassori 1973, 2018.

²² Mennella 2018.

²³ Latin text: Fo 1992, p. 54.

the brigand with the military cloak...the merchant...lesser monsters...malicious accusations causing trouble..."²⁴

This lively scene of drinking in an inn with his friend Marcellinus, is the more uncertain of the two recovered fragments of Rutilius. Some scholars have suggested a connection with a setting in Genoa,²⁵ but the text could refer to any minor or major Ligurian settlement due to the lack of any geographic detail. It is interesting, however, to note the stated presence of military winter camps, officers, and granaries, denoting nearby activities of the army. This was, after all, during Constantius' intervention in the area (see below), which re-established some order, for a period at least.

Fragmenta B - *Albinganum*

*Junt in propungacula rupes
Jl meritum machina tollit
Js Tyrias mirari desinat ar [ce]s
Amp]hionium saxa secuta melos
Jmeos Neptunia Troia labores
Jlaudis habe frustra tridente[
Je novae consul Constantius ur[bis
.tium consiliumque dedit
belli]gerum trabeis thoraca secu[
JLatii nominis una salus
Jinvictaque pectora curis
Jetit Martia palma[virum
Je.mo collegae amplectium[r
r]edeat iam geminatus hono[s
Js sortitus hiatum
.ssem grandia gesta loqu[i
Jeritis verborum l...referr[e
q]uam quod solver lingua qu[eat
Jhostilibus ille receipt²⁶*

"...Rocks (piled up) to make ramparts...the crane lifts...Let (the world) cease to marvel at the citadels and the stones which followed the music of Amphion...Neptune's Troy...labors...praised in vain... The consul Constantius gave the new city (his name), hospitality, and help; he who (donned) the consular robes (instead of) the breast-plate. (Constantius), the one salvation of the Latin name (shines forth), unbeaten by any amount of responsibility. The honors of war (no longer call him). Let the honor, now repeated, return. (It had not been) my lot (to have poetic) utterance to tell of these great achievements... to return a mean (reward) for such merits, (meaner) than that which...to discharge...He received from hostile..."²⁷

On the attribution of this fragment to the description of the works sponsored by Constantius in *Albinganum* there are few doubts. The name of the city it is not mentioned directly, but the similarity with the text of the inscription (discussed about n. 3; *CIL*, V, 7781) is obvious.

²⁴ English translation with minor edits: Malamud 2016, p. 79.

²⁵ Bartalucci et al. 1975; Lamboglia 1976-78; Della Corte 1980; Mosca 2004a.

²⁶ Latin text: Fo 1992, p. 56.

²⁷ English translation: Malamud 2016, p. 79.

The text, however, only mentions the works and the machines involved for placing stones on the walls and tells us very little about the real nature of the reconstruction, while it mostly praises Constantius' figure and his merits both as general and as a civil administrator.

Appendix 3

Experimenting with Cumulative Viewshed Analyses in the Finale Area

Viewshed analyses or intervisibility is a common type of GIS automatic determination to assess if pairs of points are intervisible. The analyses are usually obtained using a raster digital elevation model (DEM), projecting a line-of-sight from the viewpoint to the target. If the elevations of all the map cells are below the line-of-sight, the two points are considered intervisible; or, on the contrary, they are not.¹ Despite the limits that these types of analyses can present,² I believe they can be a valuable source of information for specific case studies, such as fortifications systems or beacons, where visibility and intervisibility played a crucial role, being probably partially behind the reasons deciding the location of these sites.³

The aim of these analyses was to assess the intervisibility between well-known fortified sites such as Castrum Perti and Varigotti, and the surrounding landscape that they were protecting. Since the area of Finale is one of the best-studied places within the region and with a high density of sites, it was probably the best-case study for a work of this kind. The aim was to try and discern the logic, if there was one, behind the location of these new fortresses, and if it was based on privileged observation points, able to control specific sectors of the landscape, or if it followed other reasons such as the presence of exceptional natural defences or if tried to combine multiple factors. After visualising the main known sites on a GIS, I have proceeded to create two different sets of points, one for Castrum Perti, based on its well-known plan, and one, more hypothetical, for Varigotti.

The analyses have been carried out using the function incorporated with GRASS in QGIS, using a DTM file, provided by the databases of the Regione Liguria, of a resolution of 10m, from which also the contour lines of the map have been calculated.⁴ The frame of reference used is “*Monte Mario Italy Zone 1*”, while the maximum radius applied was 30km. The analyses of Castrum Perti has been based on a set of nineteen points representing the natural borders of the settlement imposed by the slopes, the main tower with monofore, and the walls (Fig. A3.1). For Varigotti, I based the analyses on only thirteen points following the

¹ Conolly & Lake 2006, p. 226.

² Wheatly & Gillings 2000.

³ A good example in this case can be Kay & Sly 2001.

⁴ <https://geoportal.regione.liguria.it/>

natural slopes and supposing the existence of at least a tower at the centre of the promontory. All the points had a viewing elevation above the ground of 1.75m, against an equal offset elevation (Fig. A3.3). For the main tower of *Castrum Perti*, the only one of which we know the height, I have used 7m and 8m of elevation, against an offset of 1.75m; while for the walls and the supposed tower of *Varigotti* I have used a hypothetical 5m level.

The results confirmed some already known factors, such as the strategic control of *Castrum Perti* over the easternmost of the two major north-south valleys accessing the area of Finale, and a good view on a minor one passed in the middle of the other two. The other main artery, the westernmost passage, was not visible without the aid of an intermediate settlement. This was the settlement with the late antique church of *Sant Eusebio*, which was about 1.2km away, in the direction of the coast (Fig. A3.2, 3.4). This church is located only 250m from the medieval castle of *Castel Gavone*, which succeeded *Perti* in the later Middle Ages probably because of its more accessible position, the excellent control over the two main valleys and a better view of the sea, which was almost obscured from the Byzantine *castrum*. The advantage of *Perti* over *Castel Gavone* was probably a more inaccessible position in case of assault. Unless we consider the possibility of other intermediary sites on the top of some hills, in particular, *Bric Care* (hill 2) to the east, only visible with the aid of the main tower, some of these hilltops could have potentially communicated better with the area of *Noli*, and *Vada Sabatia*, which was otherwise completely obscured to view of both *Castrum Perti* and *Varigotti*.

Varigotti had little access to the area of *Finale* but had an excellent view of the sea, especially to the south and east, while the north was blocked by the promontory of *Capo Noli*. However, past the cape of *Arene Candide* to the south-west (an area with prehistoric caves reoccupied in late antiquity) the coast from *Pietra Ligure* to *Albingaunum* (20km away) was perfectly visible from the site. A guard looking south-west would have been able to see *Albingaunum*, 20km away. The addition of a potential 5m tower did not seem to have had any significant impact on the viewer. According to the locals, on days when the visibility is excellent, it is also possible to see the island of *Corsica* from the promontory. Interestingly, the settlement of *Finale* was not directly visible to either of the fortifications, if we consider the church of *San Giovanni Battista*, where traces of a late antique necropolis have been found, as the location also of the village. If the settlement was extended to the west, there was a chance of direct visibility without the aid of an intermediary site such as *Sant Eusebio*.

To conclude this brief overview, I believe that the choice of *Castrum Perti* as fortified site was a compromise between the security of the position, which allowed the Byzantines to economise on the fortifications to be built on the site, avoiding the need to build complete circuit wall, and visibility. After all, the already existent church of Sant Eusebio could have done the work of a proxy in case of necessity. It would be interesting to see, with further analyses and field survey, if some of the nearby hills could have been suitable for hosting a watchtower, especially for improving the connection with the north-eastern area of Noli and Vada Sabatia, and consequently Savona, the other main coastal fortification erected by the Byzantines. For Varigotti the combination of secure port and excellent maritime point of view was definitively a good case, with the addition of the possibility of a direct vision of *Albingaunum*, the main urban settlement of the area headquarters of a *comes*, and a large trait of coast in between.

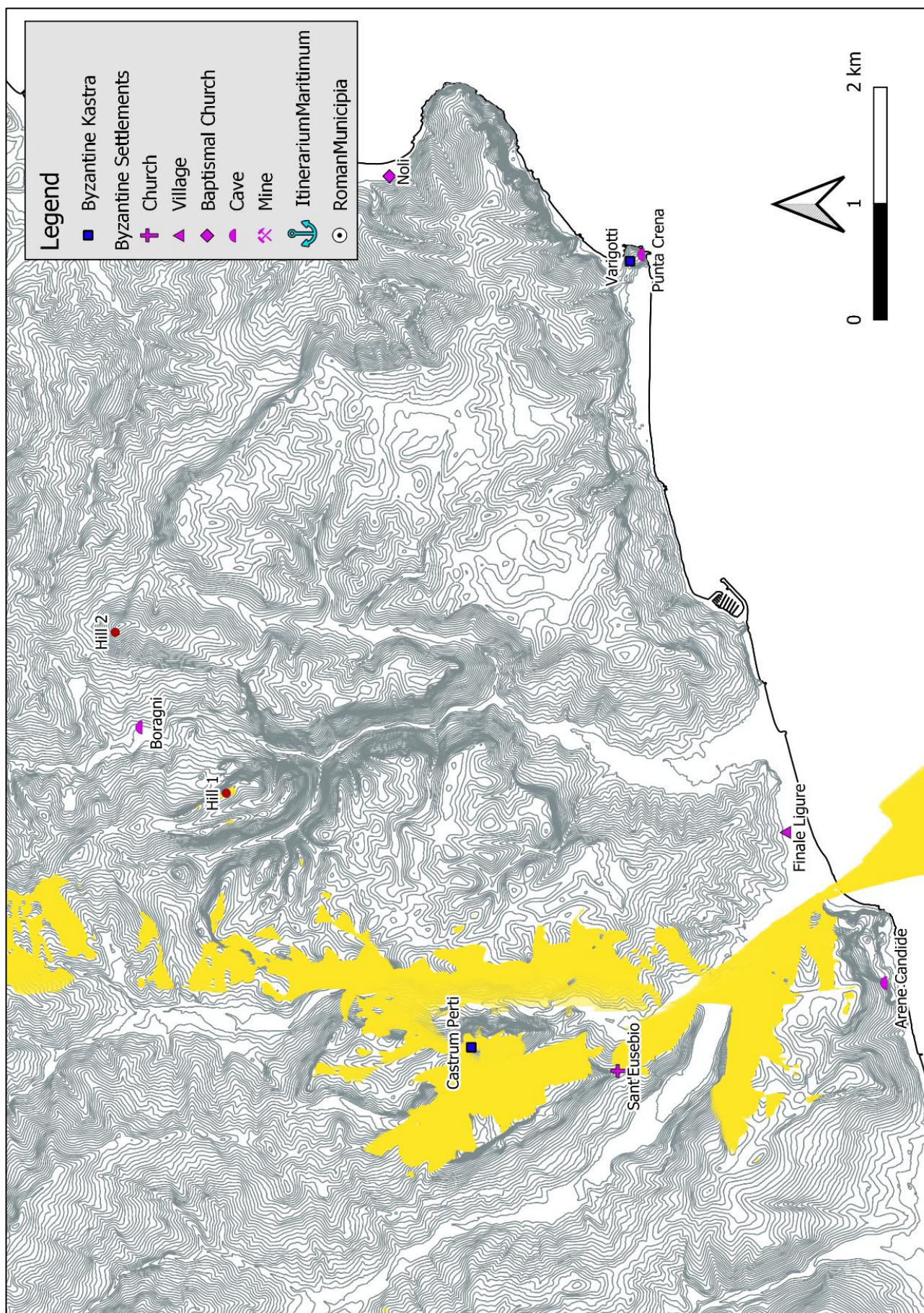


Figure A3.1) Castrum Perti viewshed from main tower (8m above ground). (Source: Author)

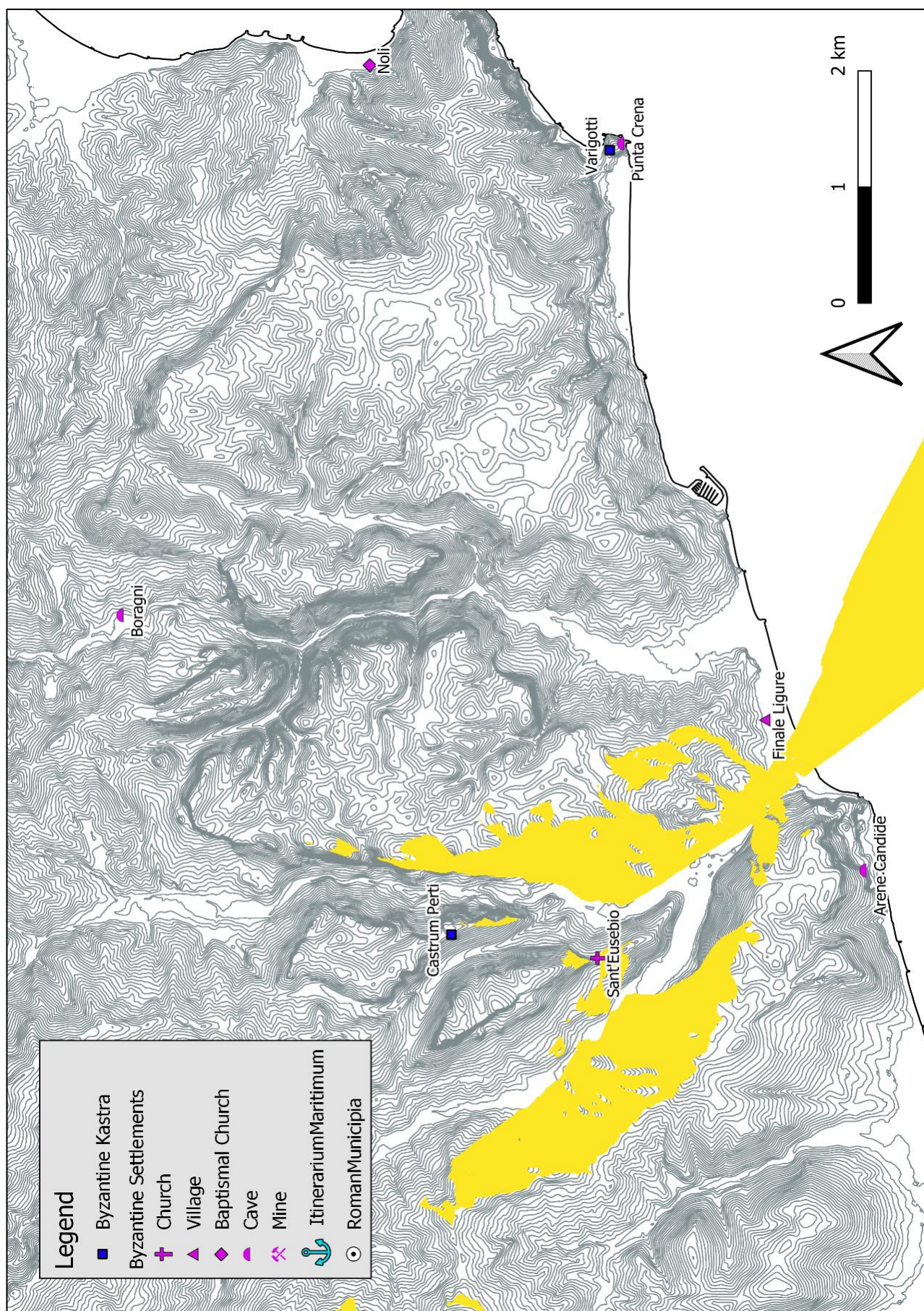


Figure A3.2) Sant'Eusebio viewshed from 1.75m above ground. (Source: Author)

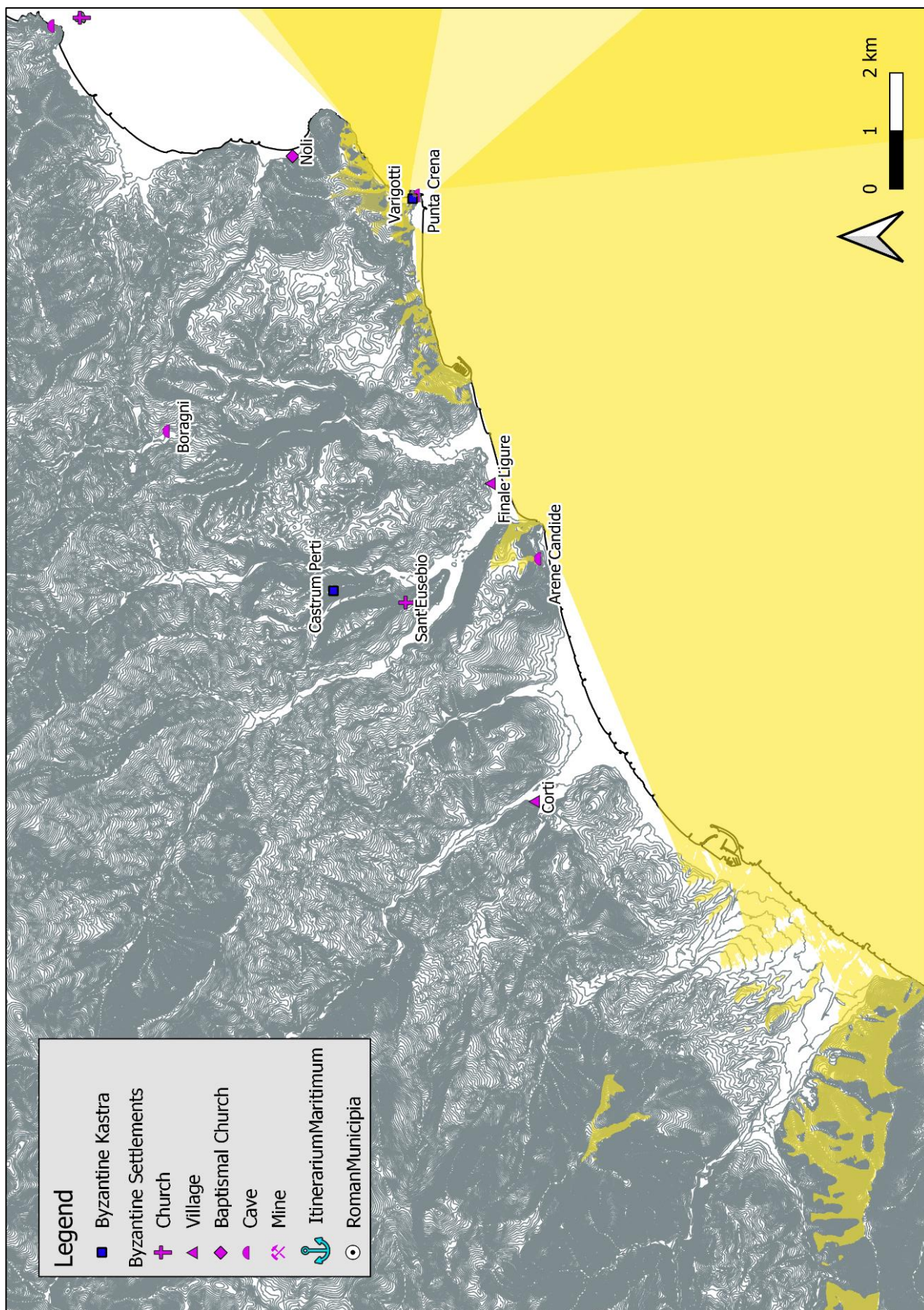


Figure A3.3) Varigotti viewshed from 1.75m above ground. (Source: Author)



Figure A3.4) Castrum Perti: south-west view towards Castel Gavone and the church of Sant'Eusebio. (Source: Author)

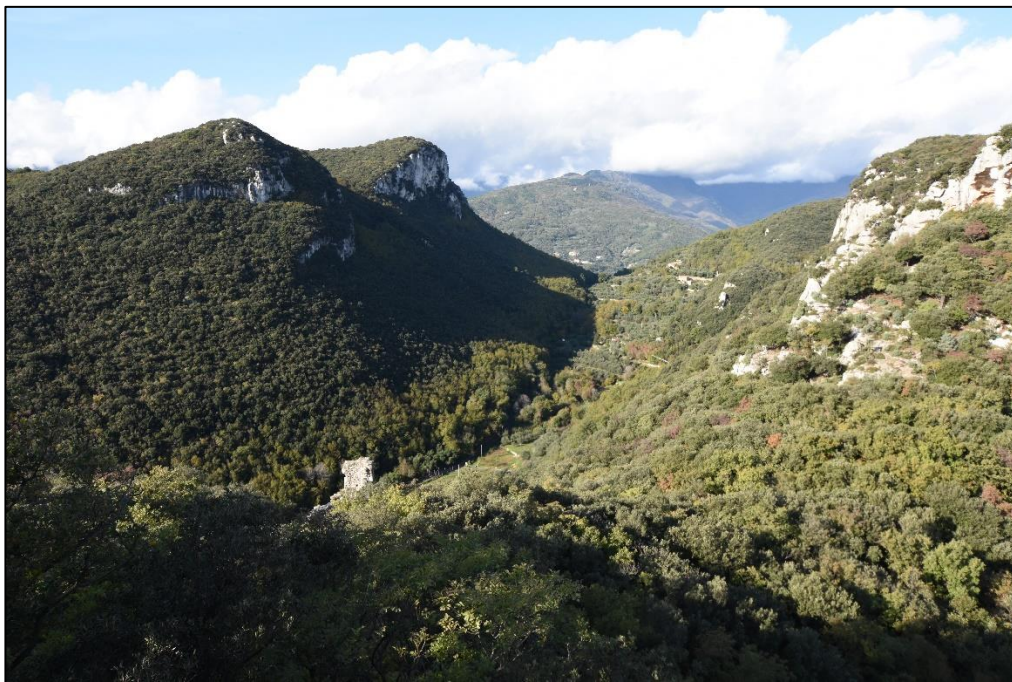


Figure A3.5) Castrum Perti: view of the north-western valley from the "torre con monofore". (Source: Author)



Figure A3.6) Castrum Perti: view of the north-eastern valley. (Source: Author)