

NEW DATA ABOUT A 'MONASTERIUM' IN THE CAPUA TERRITORY*

NICOLA BUSINO

UDC: 726.71(450.723)"09"

Review

Manuscript received: 30. 10. 2016.

Revised manuscript accepted: 07. 02. 2017.

DOI: 10.1484/J.HAM.5.113742

N. Busino

Dipartimento di Lettere e Beni Culturali

Università della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

Via Raffaele Perla, 81055 Santa Maria Capua Vetere

Caserta, Italia

nicola.busino@unicampania.it

Archaeological researches have been led since 2013 at Monte Santa Croce, a small settlement not so far from the early medieval city of Capua, on the Volturno turn. The community – referred to as a monasterium by the written sources – was settled at the end of the Xth century by the Lombard aristocracies of Caiatia and got developed in the Norman Age, as the little cenoby was donated to the Benedictine monastery of Saint Laurent ad Septimum: this last large monks' complex was situated in the town of Aversa (southern part of ager Campanus), the main site from where Normans programmed their expansion to most of Campania region since the end of XIth century. According to archaeological data, Monte Santa Croce's monasterium probably declined at the beginning of modern age.

Keywords: Early Middle Ages, monastery, cell, Capua, Lombards, Normans, Campania

MONTE SANTA CROCE PROJECT: AN INTRODUCTION

The Monte Santa Croce settlement (Piana di Monte Verna, Caserta) overlooks by North the *medium* Volturno valley (fig. 1), before the river reaches the fortified area of Sicopoli and then the town of Capua. The little community

is located on a small cliff (580 meters above the sea level) which is the southern strip narrow (a panhandle) coming from the Trebulani mounts, one of the most important mountain chain in this part of northern Campania (fig. 2). The whole area has been already investigated in 2009, but since 2013 the Department of Letters and Cultural Heritage



Fig. 1 - Monte Santa Croce area (Google Earth image).

* First, I would like to thank professors Gabriele Archetti and Miljenko Jurković, the whole organizing committee for inviting me to attend this important Colloquium. These data have been already presented in some other circumstances, i.e. N. BUSINO, *Ricerche archeologiche a Monte Santa Croce (Piana di Monte Verna, Caserta). Dati storici e prospettive di ricerca*, in P. Arthur, M. L. Imperiale (ed.), *Atti del VII Congresso nazionale di Archeologia medievale (Lecce, 9-12 settembre 2015)*, Firenze, 2015, p. 44-49 and N. BUSINO, *L'insediamento di Monte Santa Croce a Piana di Monte Verna (Caserta)*, in C. Ebanista, M. Rotili (ed.), *Territorio, insediamenti e necropoli fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Napoli, 2016, pp. 603-614. This time I will present a more mature synthesis.



Fig. 2 - A wide overlook on the Volturno valley by North (2014, N. Busino).



Fig. 3 - Place status in 2012: the monastery by South (N. Busino).

of Second University of Naples has been leading new digs, together with archaeological Superintendence and local authorities, and field surveys in the neighbourhood¹.

First phases of the occupation of the hill date back to the Hellenistic or Pre-Roman Age. This chronological layer is well documented by remains of a double surrounding wall, built in half *opus poligonalis* style. Recent studies² have focused on chronological questions together with a general view on the pre-medieval occupation of this area, based on fortified villages in the surrounding hilltops dating back

to the IV century BC: these fortified agglomerations are characterized by the same surrounding walls as Monte Santa Croce. The pre-roman one had three gates: the southern one has been probably re-built during the medieval occupation of the hill. As I said before, the calcareous blocks of pre-Roman walls are in half *opus poligonalis* style, maybe II or I type³: they had been probably extracted in a small quarry on the northern slope. The abandonment of the hill should be surely connected to Romanization processes of the whole surrounding territories, as the occupation models focuses on valley bottoms in parallel with desertion of upland contexts⁴.

The hill of Monte Santa Croce was populated again in post-classical age: remains of the new settlement consisted in two heavy parallel walls which defined a rectangular room with some arch gates. These structures were clearly built in a different technique from the *opus poligonalis* of the ancient walls: indeed, the stones were smaller than the surrounding walls and they are built with grey mortar. These last ones were the remains which have been dug up in 2009: in other words, the explorers were looking for the Hellenistic walls and discovered the medieval settlement, moving the recent ground until the post-antique levels (fig. 3).

The rectangular room has been identified as a worship hall with a unique nave, a transept, three apses and a hypogaeal crypt.

MEDIEVAL WRITTEN SOURCES

The little monastery is well-known from several written sources offering an important framework between the end of Xth and the beginning of XIIth century⁵. It is a documentary set which is the only survival of a file concerning *Caياتia* (the nearby ancient and medieval centre): the whole dossier had been probably preserved by the monks of Monte Santa Croce, before it was moved to Montecassino in the middle of the XVIth century; as it arrived at the famous monastery, the folder should have been destroyed in a fire⁶. The remaining

¹ Archaeological researches at Monte Santa Croce have begun thanks to an idea of dr. Antonio Salerno, now Director of archaeological Museums of *Allifae* and *Telesia*: then, he followed the excavations with deep interest, sharing impressions and giving suggestions to the daily work. That is why I wish to thank him for all. My gratitude goes also to Marcello Rotili, who encourages the research with suggestions and follows the results with deep interest.

² G. RENDA, *Il territorio di Caiatia*, in *Atlante Tematico di Topografia Antica*, XV (suppl.), fasc. 1, 2004, p. 239-423, p. 369-374, 401-403.

³ G. LUGLI, *La tecnica edilizia romana*, I, Roma 1957.

⁴ The abandonment of the valleys floor, at the end of the Roman Age, has been deeply examined in the last thirty years researches (M. ROTILI, *Archeologia e storia dell'insediamento fra tarda antichità e medioevo*, in U. Criscuolo, L. De Giovanni (ed.), *Trent'anni di studi sulla Tarda antichità: bilanci e prospettive*, Atti del Convegno internazionale, Napoli 21-23 novembre 2007, Napoli, 2009, p. 329-353).

⁵ Written sources analysis is published in N. BUSINO, *Ricerche archeologiche a Monte Santa Croce*, op. cit., p. 44-46.

⁶ It is what Ottaviano Melchiorri – a XVIIth century local erudite scholar – tells us about the file (O. MELCHIORRI, *Descrizione dell'Antichissima città di Caiazza: nella quale si tratta dell'origine, e principij di detta Città [...]*, Napoli, 1619).

eight papers⁷ are currently quoted into questions concerning the history of *Caiatia* medieval diocese⁸.

So, according to the written sources, the hill of Monte Santa Croce was the location of a small cenoby founded in the last quarter of Xth century: about the monastic complex foundation, we have a couple of extremely important documents. The first one, composed at Capua in 982⁹, is the *comes Landulfus IV's* testament in which he gave some of his properties to a certain *Dardanus*, the old abbot of Monte Santa Croce: in that list we have also a county church, with its own pertinences, and a county land property. About the identity of *Landulfus IVth*, among the numerous *comites* with the same name in the North of Campania, he should be identified as the *comes of Caiatia*¹⁰ instead of that of Capua¹¹: but anyway, it is true that there are some family bonds among the Lombard *comites* in this part of northern Campania. The second document, written in the Episcopal palace of *Caiatia*¹², is a kind of license granted by the bishop *Stephanus* who keeps the small monastery out of every obligation coming from the bishop and out of every due Episcopal tax. Furthermore, the paper quotes openly *Landulfus* as the founder of the monastery, which was named *vocabulo Sancte Crucis*¹³: if we proceed to a deeper analysis of the text, we can deduce a sort of restoration of a more ancient building (as we can read in *a nobo fundamine solidavit*), to which the *monasterium* has been addicted (*monasterium inde contruxit*). The Episcopal *preceptum*, moreover, forbids anyone to establish private *horatoria* without Episcopal license: we can deduce that it was common that not-religious or laic authorities were used to build up worship edifices, as *Landulfus* made, in the local territories¹⁴.

So, summing up written data, we can say the monastery of Monte Santa Croce as a comital foundation dating at the last quarter of Xth century. Lombard *comes Landulfus* provided to the starting land properties, which he took from his personal possessions. Now, it is possible to match written early medieval data with archaeological ones, as we will see below.

As for the following centuries, about the Normans arrival in South Italy at the end of XIth century¹⁵, we learn that the little monastery of Santa Croce with its possessions and jurisdiction was absorbed by another Benedictine foundation, the abbey of Saint Lawrence *ad Septimum*, which lays South of Capua¹⁶. We have license documentation by Norman princes of Capua (Jordan Ist and his son Richard IInd) who granted in 1087 the Santa Croce monastery to Saint Lawrence, whose abbot was Ugone¹⁷: the donation should be interpreted as the purposes of the new Norman arrivals to extend their power from their basis (South of Capua) to the North¹⁸.

The papers show that this property transfer will provoke a deep and long-life dispute between the Saint Lawrence abbot and the *Caiatia* bishop, who did not recognize the Benedictine cenoby as the owner of the Santa Croce *monasterium*. We can observe the great conflict through a 1097 document (ten years after the initial donation), drawn up in Capua by the prince Richard II, which reaffirms the Saint Lawrence property (whose abbot was Guarino) of Santa Croce¹⁹: unfortunately, both 1087 and 1097 documents do not specify the land ownership of the cenoby, so we cannot compare the early medieval endowment to the XIth century one.

After 1097, abbot Guarino continued to have serious difficulties to assert Saint Lawrence rights on the Santa Croce *monasterium* and his properties, as we argue by a Pasquale II's judgement, pronounced in 1100 in the bishop's palace in Salerno²⁰: in the presence of pope, cardinals, bishops and other monasteries' abbots, he denounces the *Caiatia's* bishop misappropriation by way of violence actions (*ecclesia Sancte Crucis, que sita est in territorio Caiazano quam ipse presul [Costantinus] invaserat*). The interesting sentence, furthermore, connects the Santa Croce's suit to the Gregory VIIth Reform, because it clearly alludes to the prohibition from laic subject to offer private churches (*Eigenkirche*)²¹: the text, by the way, quotes a precedent unknown verdict about the Santa Croce's property which had been pronounced by Urban II (Pasquale II predecessor), a strong supporter of

⁷ The papers have been published again in 2010 by L. Esposito (ed.), *Documenti per la storia della diocesi e contea di Caiazzo (ante 599-1309)*, Napoli, 2010 (documents n. 15, 16, 18, 27, 32, 36, 40, 45): they were previously included in *Regii Neapolitani Archivii Monumenta* (Napoli, 1849-1857).

⁸ P. F. KEHR (ed.), *Italia pontificia*, vol. VIII (*Regnum normannorum - Campania*), Berlino, 1986 (1^a ed. Berlino 1935), p. 271-272.

⁹ L. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 74-78.

¹⁰ *Caiatia* (Caiazzo, Caserta) was a Medieval town, placed not too far from the little cenoby: the Medieval site was built on the remains of a Roman *municipium*, also mentioned as *Caiatia*.

¹¹ L. R. CIELO, *I Longobardi nel medio Volturno: il gastaldato-comitato di Caiazzo*, in *Samnium*, LXXIV, 3, 2001, p. 203-226, p. 218-219. That identification is shared by A. DI MURO, *Le contee longobarde e l'origine delle signorie territoriali nel Mezzogiorno*, in *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, CXXVIII, 2010, p. 1-69, p. 21-24, n. 104.

¹² L. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 80-81.

¹³ *Landulfus (...) comes pro amore Dei et redemptione anime sue a nobo fundamine solidavit et (...) vocabulo Sancte Crucis edificare fecit et monasterium inde construxit* (L. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 80).

¹⁴ This is the well-known question about private oratories (see below n. 21).

¹⁵ As regarding questions connected to the Normans' arrival in South Italy, see E. CUOZZO, *Intorno alla prima conte normanna nell'Italia meridionale*, in E. CUOZZO, J. M. MARTIN, *Cavalieri alla conquista del sud. Studi sull'Italia normanna in memoria di Léon-Robert Ménager*, Roma-Bari, 1998, p. 171-187.

¹⁶ This is probably an Early Medieval complex, later developed by Normans (L. MELILLO FAENZA, D. JACAZZI, P. ARGENZIANO, *Il sito di San Lorenzo ad Septimum sulla via Campana. Permanenze sincroniche e modificazioni diacroniche*, in C. Gambardella, M. Giovannini, S. Martusciello (ed.), *Le vie dei mercanti. Cielo dal Mediterraneo all'Oriente*, Napoli, 2009, pp. 211-252.

¹⁷ L. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 94-96.

¹⁸ E. CUOZZO, *L'unificazione normanna e il regno normanno-svevo*, in G. Galasso, R. Romeo (ed.), *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, vol. II, 2, Napoli, 1989, p. 597-825, p. 611-613.

¹⁹ L. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 105-109.

²⁰ EADEM, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 113-114.

²¹ About private churches in South Italy, see G. VITOLO, *Vescovi e diocesi*, in G. Galasso, R. Romeo (ed.), *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, III, Napoli, 1990, p. 75-151. More over, Pasquale Testini has brilliantly explained the whole private oratories beginning phenomenon in the rural areas at the end of the Ancient period



Fig. 4 - Numismatic evidences from Monte Santa Croce: Louis XII (1462-1515) 'sestino' (G. Liuzzi).

illud concilium in quo venerabilis Gregorius septimus papa decrevit et preceptum dedit.

Even if the papal arbitration, only six years later (1106) the dioceses recognized Saint Lawrence's property: it is what we know by a bishop Peter's precept, with the consent of Robert Ist, comes of Caiazzo²². The subject should have become very complicated if the *episcopus* felt necessary to underline that *inhumanum extimavimus, si vestre iuste petitioni non acquiesceremus*. Three years later (1109), Robert Ist ratified the episcopal concession through a *praeceptum concessionis et confirmationis* in which he confirmed to Alberone, Saint Lawrence ad *Septimum's* abbot, the property of the *monasterium Sancte Crucis quod est in territorio Calatie cum omnibus suis pertinentiis*, together with land

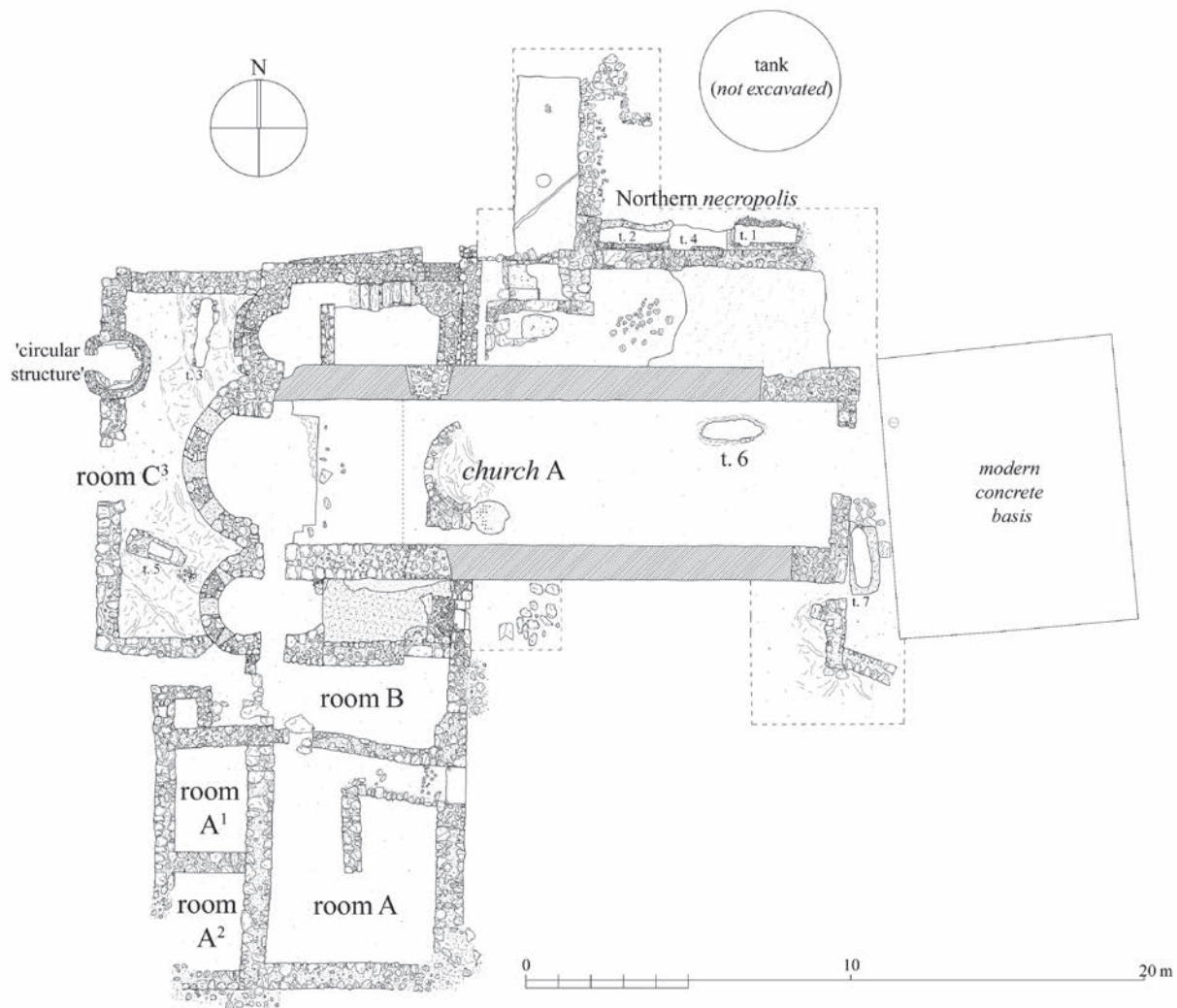


Fig. 5 - Cell plan (A. Farina 2016).

the Gregorian Reform. According to Pasquale II's judgement, although Santa Croce was a private foundation, the gift was effective because the cenoby had been offered by Norman princes (according to reports) before the Gregorian precept. However, the temporal circumstance was not clear if it had been necessary to claim two Saint Lawrence's monks for testifying that Santa Croce was obtained *ante*

possessions in North Campania²³. According to the written data, the cenoby possessions entities are indicated quite generically: this could be a trace of rare changes since the first early medieval foundation.

All that is what we know from the written sources about Monte Santa Croce between the end of Xth and the beginning of XIIth century. We do not have any information after

(P. TESTINI, «Spazio cristiano» nella tarda antichità e nell'alto medioevo, in *Atti del VI Congresso nazionale di Archeologia cristiana. Pesaro-Ancona, 19-23 settembre 1983*, I, Firenze, 1986, p. 17-35).

²² L. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 120-122.

²³ EADEM, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 127-131.



Fig. 6 - The hypogeum under the transept (N. Busino).

this chronological limit and throughout the Late Middle Ages. We have to wait until 1561 to find out in an inventory concerning Saint Lawrence properties²⁴, the hint to a *beneficium sanctae Crucis* from *Caiatia*: for sure it is a weak information that does not assure us about the occupation of the monastery, but the information matches quite well with some numismatic evidences coming from the dig (fig. 4) dating at the first half of XVIth century.

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

New archaeological excavations (2013-15) have focused on the church. It was built directly on the natural calcareous conglomerate, which had been shaped to this purpose. It is a single nave building with a transept and three apses of which the central is bigger than the lateral ones (fig. 5)²⁵. The nave, without internal partition, is more than 20 meters long and 4, 60 wide; the presbytery must have been raised because of the presence of three hypogeal different chambers (fig. 6). The transverse body is not a real transept, because the



Fig. 7 - Hypogeum's right plume remain: it suggests the presence of a vault (N. Busino).



Fig. 9 - North transept stairs to reach the hypogeum (N. Busino).

central nave is clearly divided from the lateral branches by perimeter walls: in other words, the inside perception was a single room with a raised presbytery. Actually the so-called transept is a connection between the upper levels of the church and the bottom ones.

The covering of the central hypogeum was probably a vault, as we can see in lateral remains (fig. 7), so the presbytery floor was clearly at a higher level than the nave one. The hypogeum was about 140 centimetres down regarding the internal level of the nave (fig. 8): it was connected to the church by a path which developed throughout the transept. The corridor started from the northern door (from the church), went down a seven steps stair in the right branch (fig. 9) then came to the central room with wall paintings, before moving in the left room and getting out to the southern rooms outside the church. Beside to not clarified ritual practices, comprehension of the function within the central room is still uncertain, although we can say that central hypogeum is the more handsome sector, because of the dimension of this space and for inside decorations (as we will see below).

²⁴ A. MIOLA, *I beni della Badia di S. Lorenzo d'Aversa (parte I)*, in *Archivio storico campano*, I, 2, 1889, p. 231-250, p. 234.

²⁵ The planimetry of the medieval church and reoccupation dynamics look like what we know for another settlement in South Italy, in the region of Molise: this is the hilltop settlement of Carovilli (Molise, Isernia). Here we have the rests of an ancient Italic sanctuary *podium* (second half of second century BC), on which a three apses church with a single nave and a transept (but without hypogeum) was built during the Middle Age; a little cemetery has been found in the surroundings of the church (eight graves with an ossuary). The medieval settlement chronology is fixed between Early Middle Ages and XIIIth century (see for archaeological interpretation of medieval phases S. PIETROBONO, *Contributo per la conoscenza del Molise in età medievale. Il feudo di Bernardus de Calvello (Carovilli)*, in C. Ebanista, A. Monciatti (ed.), *Il Molise medievale. Archeologia e arte*, Firenze, 2010, pp. 35-45).

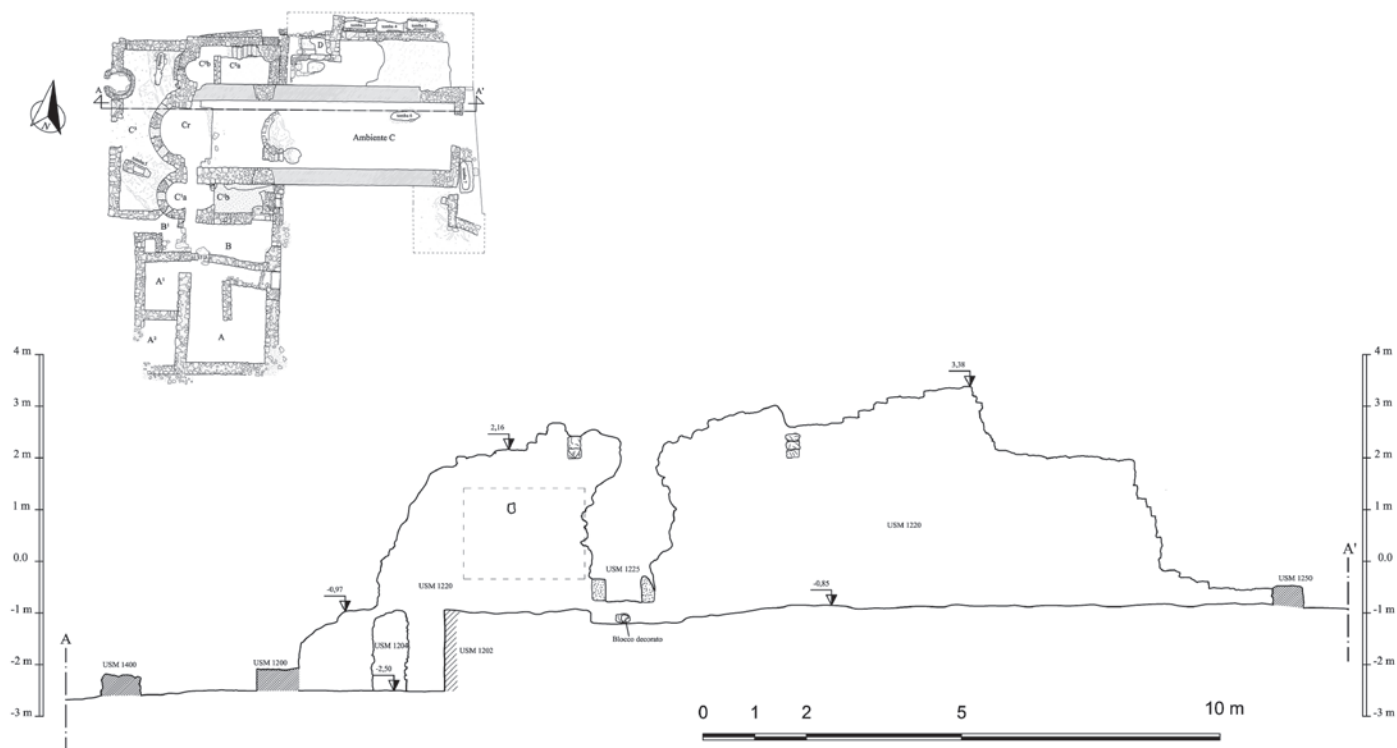


Fig. 8 - Church's cross sectional drawing (A. Farina, 2016).



Fig. 10 - Pavement's preparation layer up the main nave (N. Busino).



Fig. 11 - South perimeter wall of the medieval church (N. Busino).

Archaeological excavations have revealed some part of the preparations' layers of the internal nave floor (fig. 10): it was a slight reddish level under the terracotta paving (which

it is not *in situ* anymore). The internal of the church should have been dressed up by wall paintings: we rescued some fragments during digs.



Fig. 12 - One of the wedge-shelves on the internal perimeter wall (N. Busino).



Fig. 14 - Early medieval apse remains discovered up to the nave of the medieval church (N. Busino).

The structure consists of thick walls (108 centimetres about) composed by two external faces and internal conglomerate (*emplecton* technique) with a grey mortar and brick fragments which fill and regulate the gaps of the external façade. Some part of the wall is conserved for 4 meters high. The thickness of the perimeter walls (fig. 11) is probably a proof of the heaviness of covering, maybe a vaults system, of which we have six wedge-shelves inside the nave (fig. 12) which seems to be functional to four different spans at least. The thickness of lateral walls is clearly bigger than the one of the main façade (barely 50 centimetres) on which we can see a lack probably due to the chief portal.

As I said before, the main hypogeum had a parietal painting which consists into a big panel with a red and blue frame (fig. 13). On the right, we can see – on a wood stand – a human figure in profile with a red long shirt and a light green cloak (fig. 13a). On the left hand below, within two red stripes, we can recognize a painted white epigraph with a cross (fig. 13b). The text probably talks about the building customer: the red stripe are 4 centimeters thick, that blue 7 centimeters; capital letters are 5-7 centimeters high; the cross arms are 4 centimeters (vertical) and 3 centimeters (horizontal). Although the hard interpretation, we can distinguish *ego ia[ceo?] (...) in ius (h)umilis a(...)*.

This was the building which was believed the one built by *Landulfus IVth* and quoted by early medieval sources. During the excavation campaign 2014, we discovered a more



Fig. 13 - Central hypogeum parietal paintings (N. Busino).



Fig. 15 - A case of reuse: painted plaster under the floor level of the medieval church (N. Busino).

ancient structure in the middle of the main nave (*church A* at fig. 5). It is an apse built on geological layer, with different structures typologies from the main church: it is composed by calcareous blocks, light mortar and an internal tuff block row (fig. 14) of which we have negative traces of some tuff block on the mortar. Accuracy of structure technique is to be explained – I think – with the high level of the customers and with the presence of stones workers and their construction site directly at the settlement.

This early medieval body was demolished as the new one changed completely the profile of the holy building. So, the ancient apse must be matched to the Xth century last quarter



Fig. 16 - Early medieval wall segment under the perimeter wall of the medieval church (N. Busino).



Fig. 17 - Early medieval pavement fragments (N. Busino).



Fig. 18 - The 'plan circular structure' recognized to the west of the medieval church (N. Busino).

complex, which was founded by the Lombard *Caiatia comes*, *Landulfus*. According to remains, it is a one apse building, clearly smaller than the second church. Maybe the earlier edifice has been dismantled for re-using the blocks within the new building: we can see a fragment of painted plaster under the level of the second church floor (fig. 15). This object suggests a couple of considerations, that is the reuse



Fig. 19 - Tile bottom of the structure with a thin mortar layer (N. Busino).

of more ancient stones in the new building, than even the early church was perhaps fulfilled by painted plaster. Other parts of the early medieval structure have been discovered in 2015, beneath the perimeter walls of the more recent church (fig. 16) and a little part of the early medieval floor was still *in situ* near the apse (fig. 17).

If the early edifice can be referred to the early medieval phase, I am tempted to refer the second plant (unique nave, transept, hypogaeum and three apses) to the Normans period, therefore in the first part of XIIth century, when Monte Santa Croce monastery was included into Saint Lawrence properties. As supporting this idea, we can consider the diffusion of a model of holy building plant in this period (a single nave, transept and three apses), as the Normans came in Southern Italy²⁶.

Besides the three apses it has been recognized a rectangular room (room C₃, fig. 5) which had been assembled after the church's structures, as it is arguable by the wall standing against the apses' ones.

A plan circular structure has been also recognized outside the worship building, covered by the main wall of the chamber C₃ (fig. 5). The circular construction was composed by brick and *dolia* fragments, tuff little blocks and calcareous ones (fig. 18). On the tile bottom we recognized a thin

²⁶ Other than the Saint Lawrence plan in Norman age (L. MELILLO FAENZA, D. JACAZZI, P. ARGENZIANO, *Il sito di San Lorenzo*, op. cit. (n. 16), we have other local *exempla* of Norman church architecture, i.e. the nearby monastery church of Saint Salvatore Telesino (F. MARAZZI, *Il chiostro sepolto: indagini geofisiche e architettoniche presso l'abbazia del Salvatore a San Salvatore Telesino (Benevento)*, in *Associazione storica del Medio Volturno*, n.s., II, 2013, p. 293-322, p. 299-300).



Fig. 20 – Room A on the southern complex (N. Busino).



Fig. 22 – North necropolis, coverage details of tomb nr. 2 (N. Busino).

mortar layer (fig. 19), so it is conceivable a usage as basin to produce mortar or, according to its shape (circular plan with a bell profile), a furnace although we did not discover any burnished traces in the surroundings: maybe, we can consider the structure as a furnace before being transformed into a basin for mortar mixing.

THE MONASTERIUM STRUCTURES: FIRST DISCOVERIES

Archaeological 2015 campaign consisted in exploring the rooms on the southern side of the church, to which some of them were directly linked. The main space is a rectangular room (room A) with 80-cm thick walls: it has two gates on the north and west side; another one has been relieved to the east border which goes outside (fig. 20). Incomplete excavations make the interpretation of this room still uncertain: we think about a common or a representative room, or something similar. A small warehouse should be the room on the west part (room A¹): it is a small dimensioned space in which it has been uncovered *amphorae* or big pottery containers for conserving food and liquids.

NECROPOLIS

In the church's surroundings were found a few tombs with no goods. The first group was composed by three graves, sited at the north of the holy building (fig. 21); they had a brickwork coffin and a coverage with four large worked tuff



Fig. 21 – North necropolis (N. Busino).



Fig. 23 – Room C³ tomb.

blocks (fig. 22). Two of them were in good state, the third one had been open. Two other tombs have been revealed on the west side of the church (fig. 23), near the apses: they have been discovered without coverage (maybe tile coverage because of still visible traces) and brickwork box. In 2015 campaign, another tomb came up near the main façade of the medieval church.

The bodies were organized in supine position, sometimes with superior limbs bent above the basin. It is quite clear that the tombs on the northern side of the church had also reduced burial which covered the main one.

Compared to the previous cases, tomb nr. 6, discovered into the main nave (fig. 24) and realized by carving the geo-



Fig. 24 – Tomb nr. 6 up to the nave of the medieval church (N. Busino).

logical layers, poses problems for interpretation because it seems not coherent to the second church (Norman period): as matter of fact, we do not have any other graves along the nave and this bare in not perfectly aligned with the axis of the church. So, the hypothesis is that the grave should be linked to the early medieval phase (Xth century): if interpretation is correct, I wonder if the grave – placed outside the precedent church – cannot help to indicate the façade position of that building²⁷.

To the present research *status*, burials in the northern sector of the church can be interpreted as the medieval cemetery of the *monasterium* in the Norman phase, because we can see a rational deads' space with reduction burials, which is a trace of a continuous usage of the tombs. Other graves (room C³) seem to be displaced irregularly in the surroundings of the church: that is why we should interpret it as a second phase, in which the *cenobium* with the monks did not probably exist anymore except for the only church.

POTTERY: SOME PERSPECTIVES

Some preliminary considerations about ceramics, which are underway²⁸, are focused on medieval table vessels (fig. 25). These objects have been discovered in association with other ones dating to the first Modern Era. On holding archaeometric data, it looks that XIIIth-XIVth table ceramics from Monte Santa Croce are formally comparable to some objects coming from the surrounding areas and suggest local common markets and trades which provide to regional

settlements (villages, castles, religious centres, etc.)²⁹: as matter of fact, we do not have (until now) any archaeological traces about inside pottery factories and we are tempted to keep out this hypothesis.

About common ceramics, some objects give indications about the usage of the south-side rooms, as has been said previously for the room A¹.

Excavations have even revealed a sort of 'ground noise', represented by the residual black paint vessels, coming of course from the pre-Roman settlement.

The higher potential of ceramics studies matches to the daily life of the settlement and its study improves the late medieval story of the *monasterium*, a phase without any written documentation.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS IN PROGRESS

Although Monte Santa Croce 2013-15 excavations were partial, a few preliminary conclusions can be stated.

Now we have a sort of materiality of what the written sources call *monasterium Sancte Crucis*, discovering a kind of little agglomeration which is more properly classifiable as a small cell than a real cenoby. This is a real contribution to the knowledge of this kind of smaller contexts³⁰, for a chronological framework, the Early Middle Age, which are dominated by the excellent examples like Montecassino or San Vincenzo al Volturno, the exception but not the rule. The uncovered early medieval remains (*church A*, fig. 14) upsets what we knew about the worship building, but there is still a lot of work for understanding proportions and nature of the settlement for this phase. On the contrary, the XIIth century church is more evident: it could contain about less than a hundred of persons, a number which maybe includes the community of the monks and other person from the surroundings.

As for the political aspects, if we consider, for the Early Middle Age, the relationship between a private comital foundation and the Episcopal local organization, we can assert that *cura animarum* meant a real political control of the area: that is the reason of the deep conflict between the Episcopal power by one side and the secular one on the other, with civil authorities which tended to found church and Episcopal ones that tried to block it. As we know, the little Monte Santa Croce cell was a private foundation through which the Lombard county of *Caياتia* wished to

²⁷ The idea about the existence of a unique apse and nave worship building in Early Middle Age at Monte Santa Croce is also corroborated by the Saint Vito or Saint Nicola church on Tifata frontal mountain (to the South). Field surveys *in loco* have detected a small one-nave building (7,40 x 12,60 meters) with an apse and a later added narthex; the apse and the interior shows some traces of painted decoration. The church is founded on a powerful bench and it is dated to the Xth century and, together with some other structures (including a *castrum*), it is believed to be part of a small conurbation which reoccupied the hill, covering a precedent Archaic or Late Archaic settlement (see S. QUILICI GIGLI, *Il santuario di Diana Tifatina e il contesto topografico*, in *Atlante Tematico di Topografia Antica*, XV, 6, 2012, p. 9-190, p. 150-158).

²⁸ Some preliminary reports in N. BUSINO, G. LIUZZI, *La ceramica da Monte Santa Croce (Piana di Monte Verna, Caserta): indicatori cronologici e sociali di un complesso religioso di area campana*, in M. FERRI, C. MOINE, L. SABBIONESI (ed.), *In&Around. Ceramiche e comunità. Secondo convegno tematico dell'AI ECM3, Faenza, 17-19 aprile 2015*, Firenze 2016, p. 178-181; G. LIUZZI, *La ceramica da Monte Santa Croce (Piana di Monte Verna, Caserta)*, in C. EBANISTA, M. ROTILI (ed.), *Territorio, insediamenti e necropoli fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Napoli 2016, p. 615-634.

²⁹ G. LIUZZI, *op. cit.* (n. 28), p. 620-622.

³⁰ This research tries to cover partially the lack of knowledge about religious architecture in South Italy between VIth and XIth century (F. MARAZZI, *Edilizia religiosa cristiana nell'Italia meridionale fra il IV e l'XI secolo. Lo stato degli studi e le prospettive di ricerca nell'ambito del progetto del Corpus architecturae religiosae Europae*, in *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 11 (2), 2012, p. 155-166, p. 161.

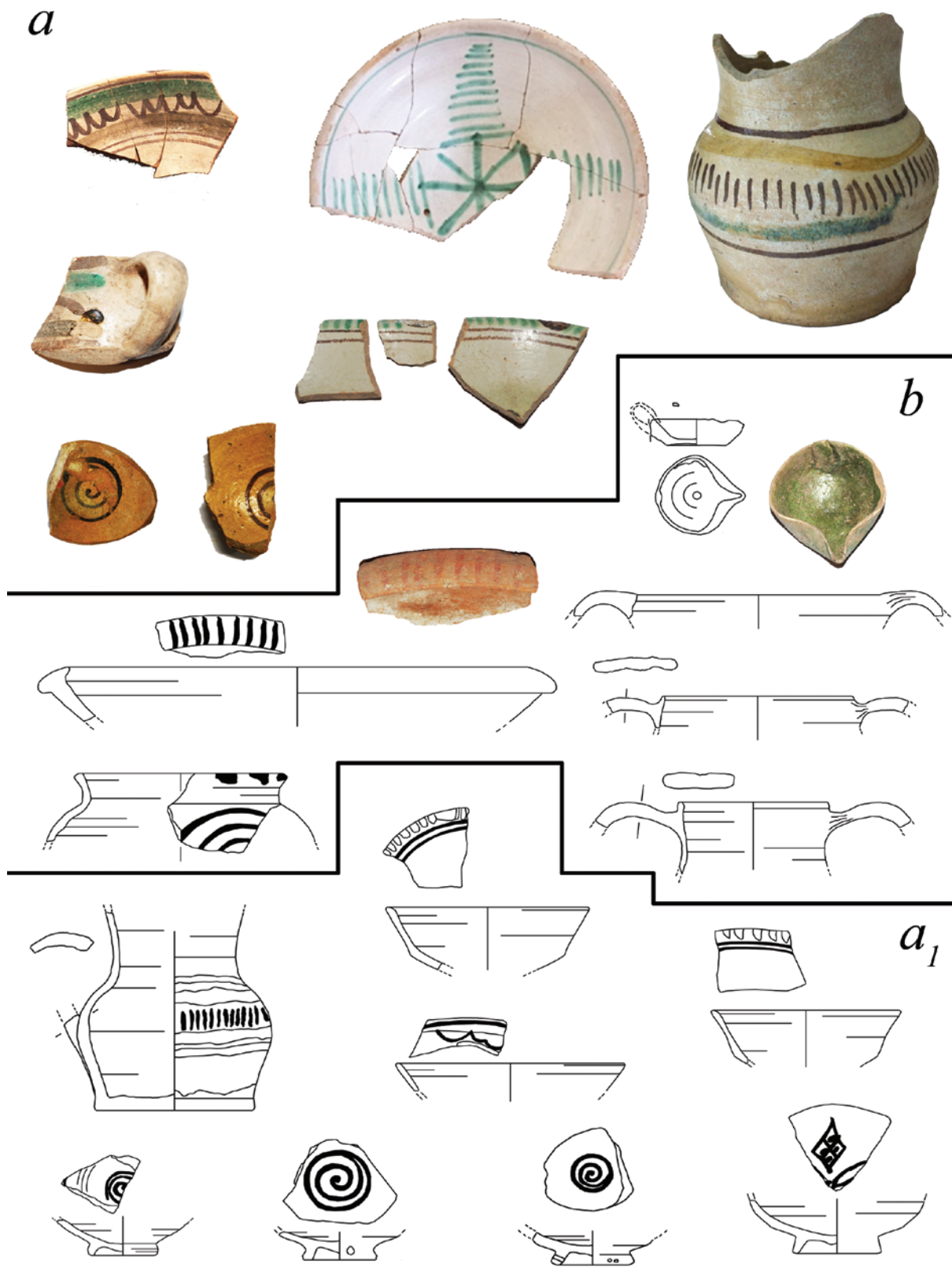


Fig. 25 – Ceramics from Monte Santa Croce: a, a₁ – medieval table vessels, b - common vessels (G. Liuzzi, N. Busino)

stabilize at the end of Xth century: indeed, I wonder if we can consider it as a real landmark of the west border of county. In other words, the cell give substance to that process which Nicola Cilento explained us as *Landersherrschaften* in the late Lombard Age in South Italy³¹: maybe the sense of a topographical marker could also explain the toponym

Sancta Crux (Saint Cross), rather than connect it to some devotional relics.

About late medieval phase, the so-called Monte Santa Croce *monasterium* does not seem to have any impact on the local organization of the area, probably because of its isolated position and its low material consistency (for now, we do

³¹ N. CILENTO, *Le origini della signoria longobarda di Capua*, Roma, 1966; N. CILENTO, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, Milano-Napoli, 1966.

not have any archaeological data about settlement's enlargements except for the church). So, it is hard to say something concerning its weigh about managing local *cura animarum*, on which, in any case, there should have been the episcopal predominance: after all, beyond first half of XIIth century, written data seem to disappear and the archaeological documentation is the only way to keep telling the story of the cell.

In the end, few words regarding the definitive abandonment of the area, another question without any kind of data except for archaeological ones: discovered pottery classes and numismatic evidences suggest the first half of XVIth century as the *terminus post quem* for the abandonment hill settlement.