

# Boundaries Archaeology: Economy, Sacred Places, Cultural Influences in the Ionian and Adriatic Areas

## Introductory Notes

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It is well known that the Adriatic-Ionian area represents a privileged space for the study of commercial and cultural exchange between those who lived along the opposite shores of the sea. This meeting of cultures generated mutual influences and cultural osmosis in various ways and times, linked to different historical and geographical contexts, but sometimes with similar results.

Recent archaeological research allows us to assume that sanctuaries and sacred places are suitable contexts, in which these phenomena can be analysed. These spaces act as gathering places and cultural mediation centers involved in economic and political interests. Sanctuaries are also very closely connected to urban genesis, to the occupation dynamics of lands and to relations between town and country. This is obviously a very broad subject that presents complex definitions according to the various historical periods and the geographic specificities of each territory.

The contributions collected in this panel are focused upon research in the Adriatic-Ionian area. The case studies of the Adriatic area are located on the western shore and in particular in the area of the *ager Gallicus* and of Picenum, with a particular focus on the period that precedes and witnesses the structuring of the Roman domination of this territory (3<sup>rd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). The case studies in the southern Adriatic and Ionian area instead focused on Apulia and the area of Illyria and Epirus between the Archaic era and the beginning of the Roman age (4<sup>th</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century BC).

In some periods these territories were borders from a political view point of view but from even earlier acted as cultural boundaries. An example of this can be seen at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC with the military conquest of the Piceno area and the *ager Gallicus* by Rome, which was preceded by commercial contacts that led to the process of cultural osmosis. Whilst not present in the literary sources, these phenomena are visible in the archaeological record which has begun to recognize these dynamics through the analysis of the material culture in its archaeological contexts. In the following period (3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) the study of material culture also allows us to recognise some persisting older phenomena and the adoption of new customs. These developments can be an expression of cultural and political identity. A few decades later, similar dynamics can also be observed in the Illyrian and Epirot areas when the Roman domination expands to the other side of the Adriatic (3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). However, Illyria and Epirus were frontier regions for a long time, peripheral areas compared to the Classical Greek culture. (A.G.)

### The middle-Adriatic area

The study by Francesco Belfiori takes into consideration the role played by some sanctuaries located in the current regions of the Marche and northern Abruzzo between the third and the second century BC. These places are considered as hubs of a network that first prepared the expansion of Roman domination and then allowed for the cultural osmosis between the newcomers and the Adriatic populations. The focus of the study is mainly on the votive clay materials and architectonic terracottas but also on some impasto ceramics characteristic of the pre-Roman tradition such as *pocola deorum*. The well-known *lucus Pisauensis* is also part of this trend. It has previously been the subject of important studies but has recently been revisited by Francesco Belfiori to analyze the votive clay materials. Other places, located further south, are taken into consideration such as the sanctuary of Monte Rinaldo and the sanctuary of Colle dell'Annunziata in Asculum (both in the Picenum region) as well as the sanctuaries of Pagliaroli di Cortino, Colle San Giorgio and Basciano (in the *ager Praetuttianus*).

In some examples these are sites that have already been examined in specialist literature, but now they are the subject of a significant re-discovery following recent archaeological excavations. This is the case of the sanctuary of Monte Rinaldo, on the southern border of the territory of Firmum, Picenum, and of the Sanctuary of Asculum, the ancient *civitas caput gentis* of the Pikentes. On the basis of the latest archaeological findings, and above all thanks to the study of the material culture of architectural decorations, it seems that both sanctuaries played a decisive role in the cultural and economic development of the territory in the early stages of Romanization.

At the sanctuary of Colle dell'Annunziata in Asculum it is possible to identify the monumental development of the sacred area, first built in perishable materials, such as the *aedes*, which was subsequently then transformed into a sanctuary built according to the form of the Hellenistic architectural tradition (from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century BC). Parallel to the architectural development it is also possible to witness the continuation of the of the Picenean tradition at this sacred area along with the acquisition of the characteristic repertoire of the Roman world. It has been observed that this dynamic could reflect the acquisition of new Roman cultural and economic customs and models by a still formally autonomous Picenean community.

A similar trend can also be observed at the nearby sanctuary of Monte Rinaldo, recently the subject of a new systematic project led by Enrico Giorgi, Filippo Demma and Stephen Kay. The architectural development of the Hellenistic sanctuary is similar to Asculum, Pagliaroli and Colle San Giorgio (3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). The study of material culture also shows a process of cultural assimilation, but with the difference that there may have been the sharing of cult forms linked on the one hand to the new Latin settlers and on the other to the surviving Picenes. The role that this site may have played in the management of the economy of this border territory between the Latin colony of Firmum and the city of Asculum, an ally of Rome, is also fundamental. (G.L.)

### **The Adriatic-Ionian area**

In terms of the southern Adriatic area and the northern Ionian coast, the study by Cecilia D'Ercole provides a formidable interpretation of the role played by some places of worship in the contact between the two opposite sides of the sea. The paper first considers the archipelago of the Tremiti Islands, traditionally linked to the heroic cult of Diomedes, finally located on the Dalmatian island of Palagruza. In this sense, the Tremiti Islands, together with the Island of Palagruza, are considered as a unique archipelago and a form of bridgehead between the two Adriatic shores. According to D'Ercole, this would be the basis of the traditional location of Diomedes' sanctuary among the Apulian islands. The paper then focuses on the sanctuary of Dodona and in particular on the tablets found at the sanctuary. In these inscriptions it is possible to recognize some distinctive words connected to maritime trade. After a careful analysis of the texts and other historical and archaeological questions, we can conclude that the oracle of Dodona played an important role also for trade in the Adriatic-Ionian region, with particular reference to Epidamnus, to the Gulf of Corinth and to some sites of Sicily and the western Mediterranean (between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC).

The study of Nadia Aleotti, Anna Gamberini and Lorenzo Mancini is dedicated to the Sanctuary of Asklepios in Butrint, the only sacred place in Chaonia whose material, spatial, and cultic features are sufficiently known. However, only its middle-to-late Hellenistic and Roman stages have been extensively investigated, focusing firstly on the role of the Asklepieion as a political and self-identity point of reference for the koinon of the Prasaiboi and then on the modifications of the complex from the foundation of the Augustan colony onwards. The origins of the cult and the earliest stages of the sanctuary, instead, are much more uncertain. Their traditional dating to the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC relied mostly on the alleged chronology of the ceramics found by L. M. Ugolini in 1929 in a votive deposit, and to the role of Corcyra in the transmission of the cult during the late Classical and early Hellenistic period. If this latter relationship is certainly plausible, the paper focuses instead on the votive deposit, in order to give the most accurate dating of its earliest phase and try to understand its link to the origin of the place of worship. The new dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and no more to the early Hellenistic period (late 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), then provides new food for thought on the earliest phases of both the cult and the sanctuary. The main contribution of the paper of Nadia Aleotti, Anna Gamberini and Lorenzo Mancini is to have isolated these materials definitively from the assumed dating of the early phase of the sanctuary. This dating is based on the dedicatory inscription of the theater (dated by P. Cabanes between 232 and 168 BC) and on the assumption that, due to its irregular arrangement, the theater would be dated later than the sacellum. In the absence of stratigraphic data, the idea of an early Hellenistic phase of the sacellum has traditionally been linked to the supposed contemporary chronology of the votive deposit as well as to the role of Corcyra. These new data thus show that the reading of the sanctuary, and in particular its early phases, is more complex and certainly needs further investigation.

Moreover, these materials have not only been studied from a chronological point of view, but their reassessment has led to important considerations about their role in the specific worship of Asklepios, as well as about the impact of the presence of the sanctuary in the regional material culture, stressing the differences between objects from this sacred context and those for other urban regional contexts, suggesting the well-known phenomenon of a production dedicated to the sanctuaries.

The final paper of Atalanti Betsiou presents an iconographic study of the bronze coinage of Dyrrhachium dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Through this study, Betsiou considers the implication of the traders of Dyrrhachium (*negotiatores* and *mercatores*) in the politics of the city. This is shown through the Greek inscriptions on this coinage which reveal that the city retained its Greek identity even after 44 BC. (E.G.)