to the memory of
Tim Potter

in recognition of his great contribution to our
understanding of the archaeology of the Italian landscape

BETWEEN TEXT AND TERRITORY
SURVEY AND EXCAVATIONS IN THE TERRA OF SAN VINCENZO AL VOLTURNO

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BEYOND PIRENNE'S SHADOW? LATE ANTIQUE
SAN VINCENTO RECONSIDERED

Kim Bowes

Paging through the stack of publications produced by the San Vincenzo Project is like pushing one's way through a crowd. The pages of these reports impress not only by the magnificence of the site and the sweep of encompassed history, but equally for the great lists of names that accompany each contribution. Surely if one counted the archaeologists and historians, students and professors, who have lent their minds and backs to enlightening this particular corner of the 'Dark Ages', their names would run into the many hundreds, if not thousands. There is one name, however, that is not mentioned in any author list, although he was present at every moment of the project's development and his presence permeates every page. That name is Henri Pirenne.

The Belgian historian, dead some 50 years before the project saw its inception, was the San Vincenzo Project's muse. The project's stated aims, nothing less than the elucidation of the transition from a classical to a Carolingian economy, traced their genealogy to Pirenne's masterpiece, Mahomet et Charlemagne. Published posthumously in 1937, Mahomet et Charlemagne describes the transition from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages in terms not ethnic or religious, but economic. Pirenne shifted the monumental changes that transformed classical cities into medieval castra off the shoulders of Germanic invaders and the nascent Christian Church, claiming that a classical economy, and thus a classical world characterized by long-distance, seaborne trade, remained intact until the later seventh century. Only then did the culprits appear on the horizon in the form of the Arab invaders, severing trade-routes and with them the arteries that sustained that most classical of institutions, the city. Only then were the Frankish kingdoms of the north able to gain their real ascendancy over a world now deprived of pan-Mediterranean vistas (Pirenne 1937). Pirenne's conceptions of what we now call the 'transformation of the Roman world' gained immediate fame, and engendered immediate controversy. 'The Pirenne thesis', as his collective model came to be called, was criticized for being too 'urbino-centric', failing to give due credence to the real engine of the classical and early medieval economy, the countryside. Similarly refigured were his images of a purely eastern-looking Islam, replaced instead by a notion of a nearly-Mediterranean 'Umayyad culture that was itself hijacked by internal fissures and whisked off to a new destiny in Baghdad (Brown 1982: 68-70).

But of all the pieces of Pirenne's masterful machine, that which has been most fidgeted over is undoubtedly the problem of timing, and it is on this field that the Belgian historian and the tiny site in Molise were destined to meet. Pirenne had drastically overestimated the health of the late and even Imperial Roman economic system; Pirenne's rival, Max Weber, had placed the 'beginning of the end' in the post-Antonine period, and subsequent economic historians have tended to accept the notion of a high Imperial fracture, and thus a much weakened fifth- and sixth-century economic edifice (Weber 1891; Finley 1985: 176). However, it was a pair of archaeologists who delivered the coup de grâce to Pirenne's seventh-century 'grand moment', namely Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse. Their 'sequel' to Pirenne's Mahomet et Charlemagne, Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe, drew together the archaeological evidence accumulated over a half-century's work throughout the Mediterranean, particularly a select, but impressive, series of large-scale field surveys. The results obtained were decisive: in the West, it was the mid-sixth, rather than the seventh, century that saw the macro-economic ruptures described by Pirenne, and thus it was not Mohammed, but the Emperor Justinian, who presided over event-punctuated economic change (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 20-33).
The archaeological data that supported this shift, however, were still scanty, based largely on a few large-scale field surveys unaccompanied by clarifying excavations. A serious challenge to the Hodges and Whitehouse model was to be found in the work of Pierre Toubert, who, like Pirineo, insisted on the continuity between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, here in the case of rural settlement, and dated the transformation of the classical landscape to the tenth century, in the age of Charlemagne (Toubert 1973). The San Vincente Project was thus founded as a kind of neo-Pirineo laboratory: a lonely valley, far from Roman roads or major cities, whose isolated geography would render it particularly sensitive to economic innovation; a continuous, more or less homogeneous monastery, complete with textual documentation in the form of the ChroniconVoltumense, which seemed to describe the revival of a whole landscape under the distant but just figure of Charlemagne himself.3 The field survey and subsequent excavations in the monastic terrain published in this volume are but one aspect, then, of a project whose agenda was begun in pre-war Belgium. It was not only San Vincente, however, that shared this Pirineo genealogy. Hodges and Whitehouse’s trim volume rescued Pirineo from what Peter Brown described as a ‘frail spark’ (Brown 1982: 66), and famed it to a dazzling flame, one that has warmed the burgeoning field of late antique archaeology, particularly its Italian strand, for the past twenty years. This flame has not been fed by the details of Pirineo’s model, much of which, such as the incorporation of the countryside and the adjustment of decline’s chronology, had been altered well before Hodges and Whitehouse’s Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe appeared. Rather, it is the framework on which Pirineo hung the ancient world’s end, and the data formulated to test this framing, that has persisted. The data at which fine-wares and amphora ceased to be imported to the West, the final fate of the late antique countryside and, above all, our continued fascination with the ‘survival’ of cities, remains the Mediterranean over. Excavations projects with late antique research goals of similar to those of San Vincente now dot the Italian landscape. Thanks to the multiplication of these projects and late antique-focused field surveys, we are amassing an ever growing body of data on the late antique economy. There is no doubt that Pirineo would feel proud. Most of the subjects around which this burgeoning academic industry have circled are

ones that Pirineo not simply formulated, but framed as central to the larger question of how we should define late antiquity. Even our disagreements remain essentially Pirineo in cast; where before we had the Pirineo thesis and the ‘Germanists’, now we have ‘continentalists’ and ‘catastrophists’, but the bases of debate, particularly the fate of cities and long-distance trade in the late antique west, remain remarkably constant (Ward-Perkins 1996; 1997).

Peter Brown’s aforementioned critique of Pirineo included more, perhaps more prophetic observation; in one magnificent sweep, Mahomed, Charlemagne both overturned earlier ethnocentric historiographic tradi-
tions, and rebuilt latancy on completely different terms; in so doing, it immediately rendered itself unnecessary. It is now possible, Brown pointed out, to get by quite nicely without having read Pirineo’s masterwork at all (Brown 1982: 64). So quick was scholarship to recognize the inherent genius of what Pirineo tried to do that it ruined to the tinkering only fiddling with barely a cent’s glance at the machine itself. It may be that the time has come to do exactly that. That is, it may be that the enormous amount of data we have gathered in the attempt to answer questions of Pirineo or neo-Pirineo genealog-

y is beginning to suggest that these are not the questions we should be asking. The data thus begin to point beyond the decline (or not) of cities, the decline (or not) of long-distance trade, to other frameworks and other questions entirely.

As one of the early historians of neo-Pirineo theory, it would seem appropriate, then, that San Vincente, particularly late antique San Vincente, serve in an experiment in extra-Pirineo thinking. It will become obvious immediately, however, that many of the data continue to tell old stories. The landscape history of the upper Volturno valley lies largely within well-trodden neo-Pirineo paths, and the problems of settlement patterns and chronology remain relevant and instructive. It is the most recent excavations in the Republican vicus of San Vincente and the recent publication of the small finds that, when paired with the field-survey data, sketch a new kind of picture. This picture is one in which long-distance trade plays only a minor role, in which the wealth of material culture might be divorced from systematic ‘economic zones’, and in which ‘cities’ and ‘countryside’ fade as meaningful categories in inquiry in the face of individuals and institutions engaged in their decon-

struction. This picture, along with its component parts, has been suggested by other scholars in other contexts

The fecund laboratory of San Vincente permits these pieces to coalesce and, in their coalescing, point the way to a different kind of late antique economy, beyond the shadow of Pirineo.

SETTLEMENT AND TERRITORIAL: FAMILAR STORIES

The field survey carried out by Peter Hayes in the territory of San Vincente during 1980 and 1981 was one of the earliest surveys aimed specifically at the problem of late antique discontinuity. Did dispersed Roman settlement patterns continue through the early Middle Ages, or did the point of rupture come much earlier, in late antiquity itself? As both the preliminary reports and the final results as published in this volume make abundantly clear (Chapter Two, Hayes 1985a; Hayes 1985b; J. Patterson 1985b: 219–21), the survey resoundingly supported the latter hypothesis and pro-
vided little or no evidence for the former. The survey was carried out in five areas, the Rocchetta plain around San Vincente itself, the Valle Pocrina, an area from Coll to Forcelli, Castelvecchio, and the Filignano/Pantano basin. The early Roman (first century BC–first century AD) settlement pattern in each of these areas was much the same; a carpet of small sites (under 0.5 ha), spread at regular intervals along the edges of the fertile valley bottom, interrupted by the occasional site of larger size. Very few of these sites produced significant amounts of fine-wares, and when they did, there was only a narrow range of forms. The only sites to have produced evidence of luxury materials was the large site at Montaquila. However, given that the marble bust and other marble pieces found here came light only after excavation, it may be that this material poverty may be somewhat exaggerated. The areas around Castelvecchio produced a slightly higher density of sites, while the Pantano basin area was somewhat more sparsely settled, but these micro-
regional variations, due largely to differences in soil fertility and ease of market access, represented small deviations from the general homogeneity norm. The Volturno valley during the early Roman period was generally poor, owing to its relatively isolated location, but its carpet of evenly spread, small farm sites display-

ed the classical Roman settlement pattern found everywhere, from neighbouring Campania to the coasts of Spain. The collapse of this pattern came at some point in the second century. Of the 62 sites occupied during the early Roman period, only eleven survived through

the middle Imperial period.4 Thus, the most precipi-

tous ‘decline’ in the Volturno valley settlements came not during late antiquity, but at the height of the Pax Romana. The result, a more thinly spread, version of dispersed settlement, is identical to that of the height of the Imperial period, was essentially the same as that which would endure throughout late antiquity. Indeed, the number of sites with identified middle Roman occupa-

tion is identical to the number of sites with identified late Roman occupation. This phenomenon of second-

century abandonment has been observed in areas from southern Gaul to Etruria, and is, at this stage in landscape studies, old news.5 Smaller and medium-sized sites seem universally hitherto have such large sites, leading some scholars to describe the decline of the free tenant at the hands of aristocratic land-grabs, a trend probably exacerbated by the trade imbalance between Italy and her Spanish and north African provinces.6 Archaeologists’ relatively greater preoccupation with late antique abandonment, which is rarely as preci-

cipitous, over this, the real collapse of what the same archaeologists typically define as a ‘classical settle-

mint pattern’, is something. If one applied the same caution that historians brought to the earlier abandonment patterns as has been applied traditionally to those of late antiquity, one would be forced to admit that some part of Romanitas ended in the second century.

The eleven sites in the San Vincente Survey that survived the vicissitudes of the second century and produced late Roman pottery, maintain with one exception, the same settlement topography as their earlier predecessors, that is, the fertile lowland valleys continued to form the nexus of settlement. As with most areas of the Roman West, the survey found no indication of a radical topographic shift to upland sites, no panicked withdrawal to small hilltops con-


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tion, the possible reoccupation of the Sanmate hilltop site at Colle Sunt’Angelo during the sixth century, occurred for very different reasons that will be discussed presently; that is, the fertile lowland valleys continued to form the nexus of settlement. As with most areas of the Roman West, the survey found no indication of a radical topographic shift to upland sites, no panicked withdrawal to small hilltops con-


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a possible late Roman/early medieval site was located above the valley-floor Roman villa and just below the medieval hilltop site. However, as the reanalysis published in this volume indicates, the late Roman materials found on the mid-slope terrace were most likely residual and the previously identified early medieval ceramics probably date to a later period (Patterson 1989: 122). Thus, the hypothesis of mid-slope migration during the Roman period still awaits definitive proof. A more minor form of site migration might be read from the survey evidence, however. At the site of San Vincenzo itself, late Roman occupation shifted within the site, occupying, in this case, a small rise on the opposite side of the river from the Imperial vicus. A similar, although smaller-scale, shift may be detected within the villa site of Vaccarercchia. Such small-scale changes, or ‘micro-shifts’, have been documented in other Roman-period surveys in other parts of the Mediterranean (Lagand and Pellicer 1994), and, closer to home, perhaps at San Donato near Fara (see below). Their significance is unclear, although they are often, as at San Vincenzo, associated with the construction of nearby churches.  

A second thread of continuity between the high and late Imperial periods would seem to flow itself in the settlements’ relative size. Of the ten sites to have produced late Roman wares, six were sites of 0.5 ha or larger, that is, the larger, so-called ‘villa rustica’, sites. Indeed, only two sites of greater than 0.5 ha failed to produce late Roman material. Just as in high Imperial studies, the image of the ever-larger, ever more powerful late antique landowner grabbing land from the small proprietor is evoked to explain this trend, and the model has reached near-canonical status in late antique land tenure studies. However, at San Vincenzo, as in many other cases, such conclusions might be slightly premature, if not an outright misapplication of the survey evidence. The San Vincenzo Survey did map a number of small and large-area surveys, but did not map the location of ceramic grains within individual sites, so we cannot gauge the extent of the late occupation and thus know if these sites continued to maintain their size. The mere presence of late Roman wares in a large site such as Vaccarercchia does within individual sites, so we cannot gauge the extent of the late occupation and thus know if these sites continued to maintain their size. The mere presence of late Roman wares in a large site such as Vaccarercchia does not mean much about the size of these settlements in the late antique era, and it is possible that the micro-shifts, as described above, or a combination of phenomena that can be determined only from excavation. Without knowing the actual extent of the late Roman site, the model can do is to note the preferential occupation of large sites by late antique groups, a stop short of claiming the continued maintenance and dominance of large estates.

In this context of site size, the site of San Vincenzo itself is worthy of some comment. By far the largest site in the valley in any period, the site maintained the trend of large-site continuity seen in the other, so-called ‘villa-rustica’, sites. While we shall have much more to say on the nature of the site during late antiquity, the new excavations in the vicus area make clear that late Roman San Vincenzo was probably somewhat, if not greatly, reduced from its mid-Imperial predecessor. Even in its reduced form, however, it probably continued to be the largest site in the valley area, and was the only site in the survey (with the exception of Colle Sant’Angelo) to have produced evidence of occupation past the mid-fifth century. Even more remarkable, as we will have occasion to discuss further on, it not only persisted, but actually witnessed new construction throughout the fifth and into the sixth centuries. It was the only site in the valley to use imported or regionally-produced pottery in any quantity after the fourth century, and one of only two sites, the other being Colle Sant’Angelo, to have produced later fifth- to seventh-century coins. San Vincenzo, then, was not only the largest site in the area by the mid-sixth century, but it may have been one of the only sites still active in what has become a sprinkling of neighbouring villages. A brief word might be added here on the site discovered during Frederick Baker’s transhumance survey (see Chapter Two). This small site was located at the edge of good grazing land in the La Ferruccia area on the edge of the Monti Carpineti, but it produced nothing but pre-modern materials. A series of limited excavations indicated that the site was occupied continuously from the early Imperial period through to the early-mid fifth century. The discovery of what appear to be pen walls led the team to consider this to be a site involved in pastoral, perhaps transhumant pastoral, activities. Traditionally, the great transhumance routes along the central Apennines are believed to have disappeared by the mid-fourth century, and current scholarship has tended to stress the multiple other uses of alpine/valley ecosystems besides long-distance transhumance. The presence of imported wares and glass on the Monte Mare site presents a material profile similar to, if not wealthier than, those of other valley-floor sites and further points to a local, rather than long-distance, pastoralism. Such a locally-based pastoralism, combined with other activities such as valley-floor farming as one element of a non-specialized subsistence regime, might well explain the unusual longevity of the site.

The most notable lacunae in the San Vincenzo Survey were the very sites that it set out to discover, namely those of the seventh and eighth centuries. No sites of this date were found, nor did the hilltop excavations at Colle Castellano and Vaccarercchia produce any traces of such occupation. Only in the latter ninth century did the Impianto di Menella, Colle Santa Maria, and Vaccarercchia emerge in their most natal form, and not until the tenth and eleventh centuries did settlement in the valley once again produce any significant material traces. We shall discuss the potential problems with our readings presently, but for now it is important to picture the Voltumno valley in late antiquity as the survey team has painted it, starkly empty, seemingly populated only by small groups leaving only faint or undetectable traces upon the landscape. Like Paldo, Tato and Tasso, the founding monks of San Vincenzo, the survey found an early medieval landscape, of silva densissima, que habitat, in contrast to the other landscape studies of the seventh or eighth century. The story told by the survey evidence naturally has been amended in its details by the recent excavations in the valley itself, and in its overall conclusions by the survey of the neighbouring Sangro valley, all carried out since the San Vincenzo Survey was completed. The most significant addition to the Voltumno archaeological map is the Roman villa site at Monasterodonori near Ischia, currently being excavated by Letizia Pani Ermini. The excavations have revealed the first floor to be found in the valley which, like the Montaquila excavations, suggest that the original picture of extreme material poverty was slightly exaggerated. The site also produced a number of late Roman graves dates to the sixth-seventh centuries by presence of Lombard-style metalwork. These graves mark the first and only presence of Lombard-style materials in an area that, in sharp contrast to the surrounding Lombard-rich valleys of the Abruzzo (Stafà 1994, 1997), had failed thus far to produce evidence of Germanic material culture.

If the picture provided by the San Vincenzo Survey were to be seriously challenged, it would be the Sangro Valley Survey, directed by Neil Christie and the late John Lloyd, that would provide the corrective (Lloyd, Christie and Lock 1997). The project, underway since 1994, was an intensive survey of three areas along the upper Sangro valley, located some 50 km to the south of the crow flies to the northeast of the Voltumno valley. The Sangro valley, in its Janus-faced upland-valley climate and topography, its separation from the coastal lowlands and isolation from major transportation routes, forms an excellent parallel to the Voltumno valley. Yet rigorous survey with larger teams and five seasons of work behind them has none the less produced essentially the same general picture of Roman and late Roman settlement as that sketched by the San Vincenzo Survey. Generally poor Roman sites, dominated by local rather than imported ceramics, declined sharply in the second century, leaving a depopulated landscape. The uplands were hardest hit by this second-century depopulation, and the valley lowlands the nexus of mid- and later Imperial settlement. As at San Vincenzo, virtually no traces of the later sixth through eighth centuries have been found. This picture of near-complete early medieval abandonment is consistent with the oft repeated and now by many has prompted no small amount of controversy. The charge has been repeatedly levelled that early medieval sites would be located in places missed by the San Vincenzo Survey, namely hilltops, and that these sites would have used non-descript, possibly handmade ceramics poorly understood by archaeologists, or have been aceramic and thus undetectable at survey level (Moreland et al. 1995: 221). John Moreland has in the last ten years instigated the Farnica Survey, the Salento region challenge to the ‘agro deserts’ picture painted by San Vincenzo, and although his results have not been published fully, it would seem that in the site of San Donato he has discovered the missing link (Moreland et al. 1993: 197-216). Prior to a stone-built, later eighth-century settlement associated with the growing Farfa monastery, Moreland discovered a series of post-built structures that produced late sixth-century to seventh-century ceramics. Con- tinuity, the watchword of Moreland’s model, would thus seem to be proven at San Donato — continuity through the sixth and seventh centuries, although sites of this period, according to Moreland, shifted to upland and hilltop sites, but continued in coincident with the Lombard occupation; and continuity through the early Middle Ages, contra Toubert’s proposed
rapture of the tenth century, as the incastellamento period at San Donato seems to have occurred on a site occupied since the twilight of antiquity.

Undoubtedly the discoveries at San Donato will force many archaeologists who had given up hope of finding the sixth through eighth centuries back into the field to search their sites for signs of occupation. Undoubtedly Moreland is right, and as archaeologists learn from his perseverance and modified field methods, more of these sites will be and indeed are being discovered.22 Whether or not such sites should be used as ammunition in the 'contributists' arsenal, however, when their radically different 'sociology' and topography mitigates the 'sameness' of simple occupation, seems worthy of healthy debate. The more pertinent argument here, however, is whether Moreland's discoveries force a re-evaluation of the San Vincenzo evidence. It may be that they do not, for the simple reason that Farfa is in the Sabina and San Vincenzo is not. That is to say, for all its shared Caroline heritage, Farfa developed in a radically different geographic milieu. Tied to Rome by the Tiber, the wealthy Imperial villas, with their mosaics and frescoes, stand in stark contrast to the poor Volturno; and while the region suffered depopulation, the number of such sites either remained in occupation, or were reoccupied during the sixth century (Moreland 1986: 337–8; 1987: 413–15). In short, the Farfa area experienced a different version of Romanitas, both in its occupation of the territory and in the number of such sites either remained in occupation, or were reoccupied during the sixth century. The new settlement was set half-way up a small rise and began with the construction of a tower-like residential building, rectangular in plan with thick foundations that must have supported two or more storeys. Large quantities of household rubbish collected around the walls, attesting to its residential function. Additional walls and another tower-like building were added to the site at the mid-century, when two churches were constructed adjacent to the tower, cutting the aforementioned rubbish heap (Hodges and Mithen 1993: 128; Hodges, Coutts and Mitchell 1993: 115). The South Church seems to have been built over a Republican building, possibly a temple, and was laid out as a single-aile building, with an unusual open-air pseudo-ambulatory between its single aisle and the hill-face beyond. To the west, a small narthex was expanded, and there seems to have been a church's initial construction. The church was littered with graves, most of which contained multiple, probably family, burials, and it is likely that the building served exclusively funerary functions (Hodges and Mithen 1993). Other liturgical activities may have taken place, but there seems to have been a second church, the so-called Crypt Church, set to the north of the first, also possibly over a Republican temple (Hodges and Mitchell 1993). While the iconographic and structural details of this church were obliterated by later modifications, it, too, seems to have been a single-aile structure, slightly smaller than the church, and preceded by a carved cornice. Other elements of San Vincenzo's late antique phase have come to light in more recent excavations, but the towered residence and two churches undeniably formed the heart of the complex, one that endured until the third quarter of the sixth century, if not slightly later (Hodges 1993b). The end of the settlement seems to have been quiet one; while the Byzantine and Lombard wars raged on the coasts, San Vincenzo seems to have sunk gently into oblivion. A few late graves, both in the towered residence and the funerary church, are the latest indications of human presence on the site until the appearance of Pastro, Tato and Tavo in the mid-eighth century. Throughout its late Roman phase, the wide range of ceramics and glass, as well as its excess of 120 bronze coins unearthed from the site's graves and waste heaps, paint a picture of relative material abundance, a picture in stark contrast to the other sites found in the field survey.

San Vincenzo's late flourishing typically is viewed as one ray of a dim light that showed briefly in the mid-fifth to early sixth centuries in Italy, and then went out forever.23 This light was unusually bright in southern Italy, where field survey and excavations in the region have revealed the products of both Levantine and North African markets scattered throughout a still-active countryside.24 The story of San Vincenzo's flourishing, however, has little to do with this story of mid-fifth- and sixth-century long-distance trade. In fact, the imported African tiles were made up their way into the rubbish heap of the early fifth-century tower. But after the mid-fifth century, as is true of most of the sites in the nearby Biferno valley and coastal area, these imports were reduced or stopped altogether (H. Paterson 1985b: 83–9, 101–2; 2001: 299).25 As with so many other sites in central and southern Italy, however, the cessation of imports and seemingly the severance of pan-Mediterranean ties had absolutely no effect on San Vincenzo. The site carried on flourishing, and, indeed, the so-called South Church was built at this time. Imported fine-wares were quickly replaced by ceramics of regional manufacture, the so-called Venetian wares and burnished wares from the area. Some glass, particularly the many lamps found on the site, may also be of southern Italian manufacture (Stevenson 2001: 211; cf. Small and Buck 1994: 107–8). Other sites, such as San Giovanni di Bielle, produced a very similar picture; like San Vincenzo, imported ceramics were drastically reduced after about 460, as seemingly were imported glass vessels (Freed 1983; Small and Buck 1994: 86–7, 107–8). Like San Vincenzo, San Giovanni saw its largest building projects carried out after all material ties to the larger Mediterranean world seem to have vanished from the archaeological record (Small and Buck 1994: 75–121). Romanitas, in the form of fine stone buildings, well-made vessels and, at San Giovanni, mosaics and baths, could carry on very nicely without long-distance trade, which in certain areas was simply swapped for middle- or short-distance exchange with little or no deleterious effects.26 There is little new in these observations: ceramic specialists' dogged persistence in identifying local and regional typologies has persuaded us of the importance of mid-distance trade. The phenomenon has long been recognized as a symptom of the regionalization of the late antique world, as a stop-gap that filled lacunae in filtering Mediterranean trade-routes, or, in southern Italy, as a result of Imperial tribute-collecting policies, or, of course, to sell their products locally and contribute the cash proceeds.27 At places like San Vincenzo and San Giovanni di Ruoti we catch a glimpse of a fully and richly functional classical world, complete with monumental architecture and well-defined, if sometimes indefinable influx of Mediterranean-rich blood. It is a glimpse of a world that might have been, a world in which a rural Romanitas might have persisted within a contentedly inward-looking world of local concerns.

San Vincenzo and San Giovanni di Ruoti set the preservative effects that middle-distance trade and regional markets might have on a founding rural landscape, we should take heed of just how far these effects actually reached. In fact, they reached no further than San Vincenzo itself. That is to say, the material wealth experienced by San Vincenzo during the fifth and first half of the sixth centuries was restricted to the immediate settlement. The field survey detected no constellation of sites around it, no smaller farms or villas dotting the Rocchetta plain. Only one site can be linked tentatively to the late antique settlement, and this was neither a farm nor villa, nor even located nearby, and we shall have more to say on it later. This seeming failure of the San Vincenzo settlement to contribute anything to the economy of the upper Volturno valley stands in direct contrast to the one site whose material profile has provided such extensive evidence; namely San Giovanni di Ruoti.28 During both phases of its fifth-century existence, San Giovanni stood at the centre of
a thriving estate, in a landscape peppered with similarly thriving estates (Small 1991; Small 2001: 51-2; Small and Buck 1994: 22). Two villages, possibly homes of the estate's coloni, continued to thrive throughout the villa's life, and produced the same regional painted ceramics found at San Giovanni itself. This corner of Basilicata, then, was carrying on much of what had for most of the High Empire, and San Giovanni was simply one cog in an economic machine of the type cited by those who speak of a fifth-century trade apparatus. Not so with San Vincenzo. In the quietly subsiding landscape of the upper Volturro, San Vincenzo's fifth- and sixth-century ceramics, glass and coins are an aberration.

These kinds of 'aberrations' are not completely unprecedented, although it is critical to recognize that large-scale, de novo rural building projects are rare indeed in mid-fifth-century Italy. Some of these few projects, like San Giovanni di Ruoti or the newly-discovered site of San Giusto in Apulia, with its expanded villa and two large churches and baptistery, seem to have formed part of or even created a bustling rural landscape (Volpe 1998; see also below, pp. 297-8). But these southern sites, part of this southern trade machine, are very different in function and context from those of the struggling centre and north. Mid- to late fifth-century occupation in the central area in north comprises largely of villas transformed into industrial spaces or multi-family housing or huts.20 Sites with greater material pretensions are rare. The obvious exceptions are certain of the northern castelli, such as Monte Barro Basso, namely the so-called Castelli (1991: 175-7); Bregli 1994b: 220-1), sub-urban and rural projects tentatively associated with the court of Theodoric. While these sites, like San Vincenzo, left no thriving hinterland in their wake, their construction and their material wealth stemmed from an earlier and larger scale, namely the collapse of the Theodorian (La Rocca 1992). San Vincenzo's wealth remains, thus far, anonymous. This isolated injection of capital might appear most familiar, however, to students of late antique cities; the fifth-century public building, the shrine built to a newly anointed domus, even a bath complex, built rapidly and often poorly, make an occasional appearance in central and northern Italian cities (Broglio 1992; La Rocca 1992; Broglio 1994a; Broglio 1994b; Celuzza and Fentress 1994: 610; Broglio 1999: 107-8). These efforts are not accompanied by an 'urban renewal' in their immediate area, and are usually labelled 'prestige projects', seemingly in recognition that, simply by their construction, these buildings had fulfilled their function (Broglio 1987: 29; 1999: 105-6).

In an early article on San Vincenzo, when it seemed that the site at Visciano itself might have had a late Roman phase, Hodges applied the revamped tenets of central-place theory to San Vincenzo and its area, concluding that it represented a tightly bound, regional network (Hodges 1985b). Later articles have continued to identify San Vincenzo as some kind of 'central place' (Arthur and Patterson 1994: 431). It is difficult to envisage exactly what 'place' San Vincenzo is at the centre of, what 'network' it can be said to tie together. The question arises as to whether we should see San Vincenzo and related 'lightning strike' sites as a smaller cog in the fifth-century economic machine, or if they might be better considered under a different rubric. Pienze pieced together his persistently ticking engine of late Roman economy with Syrian merchants, shadowy figures who knit together the holes rent by invasions and trade-route diversions.21 Yet, as Brown has pointed out, the Syrian merchant, just like Monte Barro's nameless lord, or even the occasional wealthy villa owner, vanishes as soon as he is asked to bear any real economic burden (Brown 1982: 77-8). These figures seemed to have poured capital into occasional rural building projects, yet their largest never tickled down into anything resembling a rural economy. By attributing projects like San Vincenzo to a functioning later sixth-century 'central place' economy, we are not simply chasing so many Syrian merchants?

The alternative is to think in terms of an injection of short-lived resources, inward looking rather than outward, nodal rather than systematic. The alternative is to join up the unlikely team of Ian Hodder and C.R. Whittaker and to see San Vincenzo not as evidence for structures, but as evidence for agency, namely the structurally unpredictable actions of an individual or institution that we might call 'tied trade'. Tied trade is a familiar concept to early medieval historians, recalling the emporia of the North Sea and the wil of the Gallic coast, where kings and bishops sent out and received their negotiares, dependent mercenary guilds that controlled all manners of goods and foodstuffs, not for market, but for court and church. Whittaker detected these negotiares and their bosses in late antique sources and, if Michael Hendy is correct, Valentian III's exchequer laws would have made them a particularly common fixture in fifth- and early sixth-century Italy (Whittaker 1985; Hendy 1992). It would seem that San Vincenzo represents an excellent, on-the-ground example of this 'economy of agency'. In its regionally atypical material wealth and glut of fifth-century coins, combined with its isolated location and empty hinterland, the hand of an interventionist agency shines through.22

A contemporary image of just such a stem, interventionist hand is Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux, vividly described by Venantius Fortunatus (Fortunatus, Carmina 118, 19, 20). Leontius's villa restoration projects were not the unselfconscious continuation of an agricultural otium enjoyed by rural aristocrats from Pliny to Ausonius. In the middle years of the sixth century, living in the countryside meant constant labour, work whose efforts were directed not towards feeding bodies and fat harvests, but porricos and baths, a built statement of renovatio and Romanitas. For Leontius, rural life was a project whose aims were achieved simply through the re-erction of fallen walls and whose 'economy' was driven by the currency of one man's single-minded energy (Geoge 1992: 109-13). Leontius is the economy of agency personified, and, as will become even clearer presently, it is precisely such a 'Leontian' force that we might well picture at work in San Vincenzo.

* CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVES*: TYPOLOGICAL DISINTEGRATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY

If indeed San Vincenzo is a local, and even regional, aberration, if its relatively wealthy material culture is divorced from the ebbing economic currents of central Italy, why should this be the case? Why should this 'lightning strike' have hit this isolated central Italian valley, of all places? Each of these questions circles around a more fundamental problem that we have thus far avoided, namely, what is San Vincenzo in the late antique period? Since the discovery of the towered residence on Monte Barro,23 various examinations, including the essays in this volume, have labelled the site a villa. The site does contain some villa-like aspects; it has a residential element at the centre of a tightly defined area, and, as Oliver Gilkes has suggested in this volume, it is even possible that the second church might have served as a reception area (above, p. 127).

The fact remains, however, that these 'indicators' are not convincing enough to claim that, from what we know of late Roman villas, San Vincenzo is, again, an aberration. Its free-standing, rectangular tower form is, as far as I know, wholly unparalleled among late antique residences of the western empire. As the excavators have discerned already, the closest parallel is the villa at Le Mura di Santo Stefano in Eturia, but 300 years separate this high imperial structure, which is additionally accompanied by a complement of other residential quarters, from the San Vincenzo tower, which seems to have lacked other residential annexes (Whitehouse 1982; van der Noort and Whitehouse 1992: 78-80). If San Vincenzo were a rural estate, and its churches thus were villa churches, one would expect to find some evidence of aristocratic or privileged burials in the South Church. One tomb (no. 40), set behind the main apse in the pseudo-ambulatory and next to a possible reliquary, would seem to be a likely candidate (Hodges and de Miro 1993: 180). On closer examination, however, the tomb was wholly unremarkable and, like the other tombs, held the bones of several individuals, two women, a man and two children. Aside from its position, tomb 40 was no different from the other South Church graves; modest, probably family inhumations, containing the bones of a hard-working, undernourished peasant population (Higgins 2001: 426-8). The glass lamps, coins and occasional jewellery found in and among these graves suggest a return to the material of fashion and the tower rubbish heaps. The trace of a dominus is thus not easily identifiable.

The most troubling problem, however, is not the form of the so-called villa, but its genetics. Originally, this volume has argued that San Vincenzo replaced a villa belonging to the high Imperial period located on the opposite bank of the Volturro, in which turn had replaced a Samnite/Republican vicus (Hodges 1997: a: 45-52). Gilkes and Mood's excavations, however, have shown the high Imperial villa to have been a chimaera, and that the Imperial-period settlement was likely also of vicus or other agglomerative form (see Chapter Four). This settlement, whose exact size is still unknown, but which probably occupied 4 ha, straddled the eastern banks of the Volturro and seems to have consisted of modest yet comfortable houses, and perhaps with a small piazza at its northern extreme (Hodges 1984: 332). The fate of the west bank in this period is still unclear, but perhaps built upon by many as two temples were set here in the Samnite/Republican period. This vicus, then, was probably quite sizeable, with perhaps some modest public facilities. If even some of the many Roman inscriptions espoused in the latter monastic buildings derived from this vicus its...
The vicus seems to have persisted through the fourth century, at which point it was supposedly replaced by a later rural ‘villa’. To my knowledge, the annals of archaeology have produced no vicus or other kind of secondary agglomeration that was later transformed into a seignorial villa, although the opposite evolution is quite common (Leveau 2002). This kind of conversion, from agglomerative settlement of individual families to a new aristocratic residence, simply does not seem to have occurred in antiquity. This troubled genealogy, combined with the lukewarm evidence for villa morphology, suggests that late antique San Vincenzo may well be an agglomerated settlement as well. While the new excavations in the vicus indicate that at least portions of its fabric were destroyed in the later fourth century, it would seem some parts remained or were reconstructed. A small, late Roman house of morter-built construction was discovered in trench SS3, in the northern area of the earlier vicus (Hodges 1984: 722; see also Chapter Four). A numerus of Justinian was also found in this area, as was a possible sarcophagus, reported by Pantoni (Hodges and Roveri 1998: 245). This, it now seems likely, that the late Roman settlement was not confined to the west bank, as previously thought, and that parts of the vicus area continued or were rehabilitated in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The real problem with reinterpreting San Vincenzo as a late Roman vicus is not, however, the state of the archaeological evidence, although one who could certainly wish for further excavations to firm up these hypotheses. More troubling is the fact that we know so little about Roman vicī in Italy generally, and virtually nothing at all about late antique vicī. What we do know is that the term ‘vicus’ is highly problematic as a label applied to archaeological sites, as the term ‘vicus’, like so many other Roman terms, may carry appropriate legal criteria and assumptions about Roman origins that may or may not be applicable to the site in question (Drinkwater 1985: 54; Whitaker 1990; Leveau 2002). The preferred terms ‘secondary agglomeration’ or ‘seigniorial’ to avoid the baggage of officialdom, and encompass a whole range of sites, from small, unplanned aggregations to large settlements with street grids and public facilities.25 Indeed, one scholar has objected that the group thus encom-

passed is unified only by our own ignorance as to its constituents’ function and meaning (Milling 1995: 29). This is not necessarily true across the board, as the relatively greater prominence of small towns in Roman Gaul, the Lowlands, Germany and Britain has resulted in a relatively better understanding of the northern variant of the problem, but the world of Mediterranean small towns remains under-explored. There are some points of light in the small town wilderness, however. A few roadside agglomerations have seen comprehensive excavation. Work at Calatone (Beadricatum) in Lombardy and Torrita di Siena in Tuscany have revealed relatively sophisticated settlements containing low-end housing, as well as some public amenities such as colonnaded porticos and piazzas (Pasi Pitcher and Sena Chiesa 1990; Pasi Pitcher 1996; http://www.archeo.unis.it/ Web_Torrita/home_page.htm). Both sites had important, albeit not grand, late antique phases.26 Slave or coloni villages associated with large villas have also seen some exploration, although little general theorization (Whitaker 1990: 115).27 Examples include the villages near San Giovanni di Ruoti, known only through field survey, and side village of Sophiana, probably the statio Stephaniana, which may have served the villa of Piazza Armerina (Adamasteanu 1963; Small and Buck 1994: 19-22). While this relationship between villages and villas is one to which we shall return, it must be admitted that neither the roadside nor the villa-linked village offers a particularly compelling comparison with San Vincenzo. San Vincenzo did not stand on any important road, nor is there any evidence of a great, late Roman estate nearby.

Better comparisons are to be found closer home, in the Biferno valley. For a long time, it seemed that the small towns or villages of the Samnite areas were a relic of pre-Roman settlement patterns, and early studies tended to sound the death-knell of villages, presumed to be bastions of Samnite culture, with the Samnite Wars and resulting spread of villa-based settlement (Salmon 1967: 317-18). However, survey in the Biferno valley has shown villages flourished during the first centuries of Roman rule, that is, during the third through first centuries BC (Lloyd 1995b: 190-1, 197-200). In the lowlands around Larinum, a group of villages, some of which had metamorphosed into proto-villae, were municipia, continued to thrive during the high imperial period, although in the upper valley the evidence for village life is less plentiful. San Vincenzo is thus the obvious and important exception, as it continued to be in the late Imperial period when many of the lower-valley villages continued in occupation, while upper-valley settlements of all kinds dwindled away (Lloyd 1995a: 225, 227-32). These lower Biferno villages are known largely from field survey, and thus distinguishing ‘aggregated settlement’ from ‘villa’ remains as contentious as it is at San Vincenzo. Excavations at the site of San Martino in Pensilis, a 7 ha site that may be ancient Claterna, produced a series of houses on different alignments thought to be a vicus (Lloyd 1995a: 229). Nearby San Giacomo degli Schiavoni, the probable site of Uscosium, covered 16 ha and included a cistern, pottery-kilns of the late fourth to early fifth centuries, mosaic tesserae and other signs of a wealthy community (Lloyd 1995a: 229-30).

The problem of distinguishing these villages from villas is illustrated most pointedly at the site of Santa Maria Casalpiano. While the excavators have termed the remains ‘villas’, baths, mosaics and frescoes a villa, an inscription dedicated to the [la[ubus] c[aestac[ius] or house gods of the cottage-dwellers’ might suggest other the dwellings of the villa workers, or perhaps a villa dominated by a magister pagi whose house produced the mosaics and frescoes (Lloyd 1995a: 230).

Given what we may see in the proliferation of agglomerative settlements in the lower Biferno valley, their longevity and their occasional opulence, it is possible that San Vincenzo was a sole surviving equivalent. The town research would be envisaged readily as the residence of a privileged inhabitant, with other denizens occupying the probably shrunken, but still functional Imperial village. Given that the locus of the village had shifted to the west bank, it seems likely that the remaining population on the east bank would have moved upstream with it. This east bank nucleus would have focused around the late Roman house and the coin finds, adjacent to the Poite della Zingara, a bridge, building or construction may in fact date to this time. Why the village centre would have shifted to the far bank and why, indeed, San Vincenzo should be the only remnant of village culture in the upper Volturino, are questions we shall take up presently.

None the less, while reallocating San Vincenzo from ‘villa’ to ‘village’ relieves some of the awkwardness of the former label, it may simply be ignoring what is truly interesting about the site, namely its resistance to Romanisation.28 The difficulty in categorizing San Vincenzo highlights, if we care to admit it, the difficulty in categorizing all kinds of late antique sites, from villages to cities. The now-ubiquitous sight of a Roman villa, cut up into multi-family houses or a cluster of huts, or revamped into agro-industrial space, is often filed under the formless term ‘transformation’ – but how does this ‘transformed villa’ differ, in either material or sociological terms, from what students of Dadley’s ‘medieval world’ would comfortably call a village? Likewise, the many cities of central and southern Italy, such as Luni, Herdonia, Roselle and Cosa, whose material fabric(s) had been decaying since the third century, and which had a fifth-century commercial revival, which saw a few huts and a church, how do they, indeed, differ materially from a village? From a purely material culture standpoint, the difference between a late Roman villa, many late Roman villas and a late Roman village is, as Gershwin would have described it, the difference between ‘potato’ and ‘potatoes’. That is, the breakdown in the material signposts for categorical distinctions, a breakdown that is one of the hallmarks of late antiquity, means that it is only man-made, cognitive boundaries that separate one site from another. This is as true for us as modern archaeologists, whose categorization of a site as villa, city or village depends on any large degree of our interests and training, as it was for ancient residents of the same spaces, who likewise employed a wide, and quite theoretically inconsistent, range of terms to describe these places. The shifts in meaning of words like ‘villa’, the rising popularity of other words, such as ‘castrum’ and ‘praetorium’, are linguistic signs, even a changing landscape, but a changing perception of that landscape. Despite valiant efforts to find some patterning in the appearance and meaning of these terms, their usage seems to have been determined largely by individual choice. Choice might also mean a lack of a sense of settlement terminology, point to both the disintegration of clear material categorical markers, and to the rising importance of non-material markers shaped by individual choice, experience and memory. Thus, what begin to distinguish different sites are categories cannot dig up, and thought categories become as or more important than material categories.

Where we have left Firenze’s world of cities behind. The real importance of the radical economic changes
that rock-cut fifth-century Italy was not so much the \textit{decline} or \textit{survival} of cities, particularly central Italian cities, but that their \textit{survival} or \textit{decline} was no longer really measured in material terms at all. If a site like San Vincenzo, with its single, well-constructed residence, probable agglomeration of settlement, two churches and a fine haul of regional pottery, glass and coins, produced virtually the same or more \textquoteleft{prosperous\textquoteleft\textquoteleft} archaeological footprint as a real \textquoteleft{city\textquoteleft\textquoteleft} like Luni, then \textquoteleft{city\textquoteleft\textquoteleft} was no longer an entity defined by economics, and thus the problem of trade, and the problem of city survival, have become like chalk and cheese.

Students of late antique cities have begun to recognize this, and have pointed instead to the other \textquoteleft{markers\textquoteright} that might have said \textquoteleft{city\textquoteright} to a late antique person, namely, the presence of a secular administration, or, most frequently, the presence of a bishop.\textsuperscript{22} The identification of this latter \textquoteleft{marker\textquoteright} of urbanism is based on the assumption that the episcopate was principally an \textquoteleft{urban\textquoteright} entity. It might be time to re-examine this assumption. For if this most important marker of urbanism might turn out, like so many other markers, to have been shared with \textquoteleft{rural\textquoteright} entities, we not only have further evidence for the disintegration of categories in late antiquity, but might actually catch our institutions, namely the Church, wrestling with a category-less world.

\section*{BISHOPS WITHOUT CITIES}

It is in this context that some other \textquoteleft{abnormalities\textquoteright} of San Vincenzo\textquotesingle{s} material culture are relevant, namely its unusual coin sequence, its ties to one particular neighbouring site and its weighty Christian presence.

The coin evidence from San Vincenzo is in many ways even more atypical than its ceramic profile: if the site was located at the mouth of the Biferino river, or near Venafro, the presence of 114 fifth- and sixth-century coins would not be so surprising, even given the sparse distribution of such coins in south-central Italy (Arslan 1983). But San Vincenzo is located in what is a coastal site, and the later fifth and sixth centuries were, by all accounts, a watershed period, when much of the Italian peninsula eased away from coined economies and when coin circulation seems to have contracted greatly (Arslan 1994: 498–502).\textsuperscript{23} Just how erratic coin use had become is illustrated most graphically at San Giovanni di Ruoti, a booming fifth- and sixth-century site, with both fifth- and sixth-century coin (Reece 1997). The heavily coined environment of San Vincenzo would thus seem to call for some comment.

Reconstructing a coined economy at San Vincenzo is not, however, as problem-free as 114 coins would seem to suggest. The vast majority of these coins was found outside late antique contexts, in early medieval floor make-ups. Of those coins found in their late antique habitat, the very great majority was found in funerary contexts, that is, in or around tombs.\textsuperscript{24} None the less, even the scarcey evidence at hands provides provocative clues. The coins from San Vincenzo are all low-denomination, bronze coins and the great majority is unidentifiable \textit{nomini} of fifth- to sixth-century date. Of these twenty identifiable coins (only 18\% of the total) include those of Valentinian III, Theodosius II, Marcian, Leo I and/or Zeno, Odacce/Theodicus, Atalarius, Justinian and Baduila, again bronze \textit{nomini} with the exception of two \textit{pantanomini} and a 20 \textit{nomini} (Rovelli 2001).\textsuperscript{25} In general, the profile as a whole is very similar to the few coastal Italian boards of this period, which are often composed solely or largely of \textit{nomini} with widespread dates and origins (Arslan 1994: 502, 510–12; Rovelli 2001: 386). Even so, the San Vincenzo collection shows a bit more variety than would be expected even in the more centrally located or coastal sites, particularly in its inclusion of five Byzantine coins (25\% of the identifiable coins) predating the sixth century (Hodges and Rovelli 1998: 246). Thus, the coin evidence is remarkable both for its more rare presence and its unusually broad geographic haul. It is even more remarkable because this broad geographic profile came about of its usual accompaniment, namely imported ceramics. Indeed, imported ceramics are temporarily to vanish from San Vincenzo around the time that most of its identifiable coins appear, in the middle years of the fifth century, that is, the time that the site seems to have secured its long-distance trading ties. It is possible, then, that coins are coming to San Vincenzo through a medium other than trade.

We have already commented on the general absence of late antique, particularly later fifth- and sixth-century, styles from San Vincenzo in the upper Volturno valley. We also mentioned in passing one exception to that rule, an exception that also produced mid-to late-sixth-century coins. That site is Colle Sant\textquotesingle{Angelo, set on a hilltop overlooking San Vincenzo, and the valley around (see Chapter Seven). Judging from the remaining architectural fragments, the first construction on the site seems to have been a small Samnite structure, perhaps a temple. Over this site, a small, single-staged, apsed building was constructed at some point in the fifth or sixth century. Two \textit{nomini} of Justin II (567–78) were discovered in its apse. Given its location and form, the building seems to be a church, although, interestingly, it assumes the same north-south orientation as the hilltop. North-south orientation is not unknown in church buildings that assume the orientation of previous structures, particularly temples.\textsuperscript{26} Owing to its possible pagan genealogy, and its location (on a hilltop overlooking the Roman roads and transhumance routes to points south), it is suggested in this volume that the site was one of the early shrines of Saint Michael, established along the pilgrimage routes to the Church\textquotesingle{s} shrine at Monte Gargano (see Chapter Seven). In order to accept this attribution or not, the site\textquotesingle{s} cultic function and the presence of coins would seem to demonstrate a certain link between it and the bustling site of San Vincenzo in the valley below.

If San Vincenzo\textquotesingle{s} coins are unusual, and its one \textquoteleft{satellite\textquoteright} site is found not to be an agricultural site, but a tiny, hillside church, what are we to make of the church presence at San Vincenzo itself? While Gilk\textquotesingle{e}s article in this volume suggests the possibility of the larger, so-called Crypt Church was not a church at all but an audience hall (p. 127), the current state of evidence is far more suggestive of a religious function. The building shares the same west-east orientation of the South Church, as well as the same basic architectural form, although unlike the former, its apse is of U-shaped form. This apse form would be highly unusual in triconch or aula architecture, but, as already noted above, was found in fourth-century Roman funerary and religious buildings. Thus, the site seems to have had two churches, probably contemporary. It is also possible that these churches were functionally distinct. The South Church produced no evidence of an altar in its late antique phases, although this may have been destroyed by the early eighth-century painted altar, and no other evidence of liturgical furnishings, such as chancel screens, came to light. The South Church thus seems to have served solely funerary functions during this time, thus it seems logical that everyday liturgical services were accommodated in the Crypt Church.

The double-church phenomenon in late antiquity remains, despite much study, an enigma. Double-churches are found in regional patterns, and are particularly common in northern Italy, France, and the Adriatic region (Sodini and Kolokotsas 1984: 255–312). San Vincenzo falls between these groupings, one of only three double-churches found in southern Italy.\textsuperscript{27} Earlier scholarship held that liturgical functional divisions, particularly the liturgy of catechumens and martyr cult, were responsible for the construction of double-church complexes, but that certainty has been replaced with caution and an emphasis on individual site circumstances (Caillet and Duval 1996; Duval and Caillet 1996). The creation of a separate funerary, burial church, as may exist at San Vincenzo, seems quite rare, although it has been noted at a group of Dalmatian churches (Chevalier 1996) and elsewhere, notably in the recently-discovered Apulian church of San Giuliano (Volpe 1998).\textsuperscript{28} As a general rule, rural churches tended to efface the boundary between funerary and the regular eschatological liturgy that urban churches strove to keep separate, leading to San Giuliano and San Vincenzo a distinctly metropolitan flavour. Indeed, double-churches most often served as epis- copal seats; in Italy, all but one double-church complex are episcopal, with the Italian versions of the phenomenon trends to be found in one (Cantino Wataghin 1996). The unusual \textquoteleft{ambulatory\textquoteright} in the South Church, primitive though it may have been, was likewise an architectural peculiarity of the greater martyr church, located, like San Vincenzo, fuori le mura, Sant\textquotesingle{Agnes fuori le mura and San Vincenzo in Rome (Krautheimer 1986: 52–3). Finally, the western orientation of both churches was, by the mid-fifth century, also somewhat unusual, an anachronism again hearkening back to Roman martyr basilicas.\textsuperscript{29}

The many oddities of late antique San Vincenzo, its coin profile, its link to the even odder site of Colle Santa Caterina, its from San Vincenzo\textquotesingle{s} funerary architecture, combined with the now-likely possibility that the site was a village, rather than a villa, all point to something more than a modest rural complex. Indeed, they point back at an older, discarded hypothesis, one now worthy of a dust-off and re-examination. Lorenzo fuori le mura, Sant\textquotesingle{Agnes fuori le mura and San Vincenzo in Rome for modern scholarship, the rural bishopric remains a shadowy entity. Bishops, we assume, were creations of the city, and its mock-urban character and papal prohibitions against rural bishoprics would seem to support these assumptions.\textsuperscript{30} The proliferation of rural bishoprics in north Africa is thus seen as the exception that proves the rule, and the more likely explanation of this intimate connection with the local urban context (Camps 1979).\textsuperscript{31} As an earlier generation of scholars took care to note, however, the
western episcopate encompassed all kinds of settlement types, from thriving regional capitals, to vicies, castellae and even villae, warning that rural bishops could not be dismissed as occasional oddities, the unassuming consequences of dogmatic controversy. As archaeology sketches in the details of the late antique countryside, the role of rural bishops is very likely to increase further. While this is not the place to offer a detailed study of the phenomenon, certain indications suggest that central and southern Italy, the area that provides the model for the urban-based episcopate, may have had a significant, perhaps even predominant, rural cast.

The rural episcopates of south-central Italy fall into one of two categories, the most significant of which is linked directly with the decline of cities.\(^{46}\) The small municipia of central and southern Italy fared far worse than their northern cousins, and when archaeological evidence permits a glimpse of their circumstances, it seems that many, if not most, of the civitas capitals of the early Imperial period suffered a decline in population and disintegration of their urban fabric by the third century (Ward-Peck's 1988: 16). If the well-excavated cities of Luni, Herdonia or Cosa are any indication, the fifth-century visitor would have found few traces of the remains of mansions and houses set among the debris of Imperial-period public buildings. The disintegration of the previously dense urban networks seems to have produced various episcopal residences. The most common was to use the decayed city as an episcopal center, often regardless of whether Aquileia eventually branded itself secular.\(^{47}\) If Derecske was right, the bishopric of Little Lindisfarne, or the Via Labicana, encompassed both of these phenomena. Originating in the fourth century, the bishopric seems to have been established in the Labianca, shifting to the martyr shrine of Saints Peter and Marcellinus during the fifth century, then back to a ruined Labican and finally to Tuscum (Duchesne 1892: 497–502).\(^{48}\)

Even imperial estates might be named episcopal sees. Recent excavations in the extraordinary site of San Giusto, south of Lucera, have illuminated what seems to have been just such an estate episcopate, the seat of the episcopus Carinianensis (Volpe 1998: 332–8; 2001). The site, a deserted residence, given over largely to wine and wool production, and a large church complex, including, like San Vincenzo, a double-church, a large baptistery, plus a bath and habitation complex. The site saw its heyday during the mid-fifth to mid-sixth centuries, although it probably persisted into the seventh century. Epigraphic and textual evidence place a large imperial estate, the Salus Carinianensis, in this area, and an analysis of the grave goods suggests that adult and child skeletal evidence, along with enigmatic inscriptions, perhaps did produce a rural bishop in a rural setting, an interesting series of linguistic gymnastics, that Sanism was in fact Aesernia (modern Ischia) (De Benedittis 1991: 327).

Surely, the most conspicuous of the toponyms Saximne refers to the province, rather than just the site; the correct one. None the less, given the small size and isolated location of the San Vincenzo vicus, is it not possible that the site had a generic toponym defined by its nature and antiquity as a small monastery that could be commonly described as a saximne?\(^{49}\)

Certainly, the popularization of monasticism would also support an episcopal attribution. Patrology's early studies of the Roman inscriptions of San Vincenzo concluded that, while the seat was set at the border between the territories of Velurnus and Aesernia, it was probably Aesernia that it properly belonged (J. Patterson 1985b: 218; also Chapters 9–10). While the provenance of some inscriptions has been in question, the fact remains that members of the Aesernia-based families made a frequent appearance in the San Vincenzo inscriptions, and it is probable that Paterson's Aesernian attribution should stand. Interestingly, Aesernia does not seem to have had a bishop under late antiquity.\(^{50}\) On the other hand, if the responsibility for churching UPPER VOLTURNO valley fell instead to the agglomeration at San Vincenzo, possibly known as Saximne. However, we accept the admirably lucid tie linking the still-homeless Marcus Saximnus with San Vincenzo. Archaeology has been quite successful in uncovering previously unknown bishoprics, such as a possible example unearthed at Metaponto (Lattanzi 1995: 111–27). Indeed, the material record alone might just support the idea of a bishopric, without textual confirmation. As we have described already, the church architecture at
San Vincenzo contains several urban overtones. The South Church ambulatory and the functionally divided double-church system are elements rarely found in rural complexes, while the double-church form is particularly characteristic of episcopates. The discovery of the rural episcopate at San Giusto, likewise with a functionally divided double-church, demonstrates both the porosity of the type and its persistent association with episcopal contexts. The topography of fifth-century San Vincenzo also carries with it a sense of church-oriented domination. Set mid-slope on a hill, rather than in the earlier village centre, the church and particularly the multistoried tower would have formed an insistent presence not only over the village, but over the whole Rocchetta plain. The same goes for the mountain-top Colle Sant'Angelo, possessed of a similar coinage and set so as to suspend Christian presence over the valley below and, most importantly, over the roads leading into that valley. Similarly, the one, or possibly two, temples underlying the churches at San Vincenzo, as well as the possible temple at Colle Sant'Angelo, seem to betray a centrally-sponsored effort to bring the rural population into the Christian fold. Temple conversion is still quite rare in the mid-fifth century, and the band of an interventionist episcopal agent as opposed to sporadic or local action, would seem to be at work. One is reminded of another, less successful, episcopal effort to supplant pagan cults in another lonely valley, namely Vigilius of Trent's intervention in the Val di Non.

Finally, there is the surprisingly common coin collection and the site's material culture generally. We have noted that this collection comes without evidence of long-distance trade or a thriving local economy. Like the coin profile, the site as a whole has the character of a lightning strike, its thriving material culture dropped inexplicably into a poor, empty valley. Like so many other episcopal foundations of the later fifth and sixth centuries founded in seemingly dwindling landscapes, San Vincenzo has the feel of a creation spawned not by local energy, but an outside force with an outside agenda. An agency, either institutional or individual, would seem to be at work, and the Church is a likely candidate. The Church is a potentially important piece usually left out of models of the late Roman economic puzzle. Yet as Whitaker has shown vividly, episcopates carried with them a heavy economic stick, injecting foodstuffs and capital into the cities they served by commanding internally-generated resources, such as ships and supplies (Whitaker 1983: 167–9). However, their regenerative reach was limited to supplying their own massive bureaucracy and assisting the poor, and their participation in a 'market' economy, when such a thing existed in late antiquity, would have been limited. Those resources, the philanthropic by-products of tie-trade, could also be readily directed to the churches and people of the countryside (Brown 2002: 51). The dozens of nummi, then, may thus have entered the valley through episcopal hands, paths that may have dispersed urban-derived Church funds to the poor, hard-working peasantry that lay in the South Church's reach. This injection of coin did not last, of course, nor did the great episcopal-making experiment of the fifth century. As suggested above, the rapidly spread network of south-central Italian bishoprics would seem to have been an artificial creation, seriously crippled from its inception by shrinking or at least dispersing populations. As the web of urban, quasi-urban and rural bishopdoms fell apart during the sixth century, so, too, San Vincenzo gradually lost its population and sank into obscurity.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite its attractiveness, the appellation of rural bishopric just that of villa or village, encounters its own resistance. Principal among these are the absence of a baptismal font, and the fact that the Sannite, Republican or Roman-period San Vincenzo appears nowhere in the relatively abundant topographic information on Sannitum. Most bishoprics were set into settlements that have left some trace in the textual record, whereas late antique San Vincenzo was, in sharp contradiction to its early medieval successor, a territory without a text. Other options might thus be considered, such as an admixture of the villa and village theories. What one might call 'seignorial vici' are blanketed with even more obscurity than rural bishoprics, although the textual sources, particularly those from north Africa, speak for their existence (Whitaker 1990: 115; de Ligt 1993: 156-65; Banaji 2001: 172–3). The seignorial villa can be defined as an agglomerative settlement owned and occupied by a dominus. As no site specifically identified as a seignorial villa has ever been excavated, we can imagine that such a site would have the combined archaeological footprint of a villa and a village, that is, a residence of some pretentions set near or within a secondary agglomerated villa. It has even been suggested that Sulpicius Severus's villa-monastery Primaclacum, with its two churches and baptistery, was actually set in a vicus, and if so, it might closely resemble San Vincenzo. Primaclacum also raises the possibility that late antique San Vincenzo was, like its famous Carolingian cousin, a monastery. A monastery's archaeological footprint would differ little from that of a villa, a village or a rural bishopric. Indeed, a monastery is thought to have existed somewhere in the upper Volturno valley during the lifetime of Gregory the Great (De Benedictis 1991: 325).

With these nagging problems, we again find in San Vincenzo a primer for a post-Pirenian world. Like a number of sites unearthed in recent years, such as San Giusto or Monte Barro, San Vincenzo gestures to a world beyond Pirenne. Combining qualities of the city, the villa and the village, it resists easy categorization and in so doing, pulls away the comfortable supports of long-distance trade and episcopal presence upon which Pirenne and his many followers have rested the definition of the city and, thus, Romanitas. Here, instead, is international exchange made moot and systemic economies replaced by the carefully aimed resources of individuals or institutions. Here, too, may be one institution, namely the Church, responding to a changed world. Gelasius might have agreed with Pirenne that the Church preserved Romanitas, but the Belgian historian would scarcely have recognized the urban/rural stage upon which the energetic pope carried out his part of the drama.

REFTES

1. I am most grateful for the help and advice of Peter Brown, Danny Cullen, Karen Finocch, Richard Hodges, John Mitchell and, most especially, Adam Gutscher, whose ideas are to be found throughout.

2. To be fair, Pirenne would undoubtedly have agreed, as did his young acolyte, Marc Bloch. See, among else, Duby (1974: 4).

3. For the project's goals, see the introduction of Hodges (1997a: 7–11).

4. This court includes the transeptal site at Monte Mare (see Chapter Two).

5. On Etruria, see Potter (1979: 140–2); on the Albanian valley, see Attolini et al. (1983); for southern Gaul, see Mau (1999: 106–14).


7. For instance, at Loupian, Languedoc (Pelliot 1989: 125); Torre de Palma, Portugal (Meloskey and Hale 1996); Saint–Julien–en–Comminges, Haute-Savoie (Colardelle and Colardelle 1995); perhaps even Pieve di Malamè, Lombardy (Carver, Massa and Brogliato 1982).

8. Beginning with Jones (1964: II, 773–8) and Finley (1985: 99–102), although significantly, neither historian insisted on the death of the prosperous peasantry as part of this process. Banaji's (2001) model of a more variegated, yet still hierarchi- cal, rural settlement is a welcome change, but, despite his claims, it is only documented in the Roman East.

9. New studies in the region include that of Barker and Grant (1991); for possible evidence of long-distance transhumance at the end of the empire, see Gamay (1985: 204).

10. The ninth-century phases were identified by Helen Patterson in an unpublished reassessment of the San Vincenzo pottery, with the exception of Colle Castellano (Patterson 1989: 177– 8).

11. The desert forest, whose lands held the hidden dwellings of thieves and beasts; CV I, p. 111.


13. For instance, the mid-seventh-century village at Poggiobello (Valenti 1993: 563–8).


17. On the state of the field in central and southern Italy, see: Arthur and Patterson (1994). In contradiction, Liebeschuetz (2001: 384–4) maintained the Pirenian belief that the
32. In the face of the rationalization of the city, Bregoli (1964: 53) noted that while the cityscape may have become "non troppo lontano da quello rurale ... e ne degnitatis tuae, ombre demograficamente ... per il circuito delle mure ... e per la presenza dell'antistasi civile e eclettica".

33. This notion has been challenged by Banfi (2001), although, tellingly, Italy plays virtually no role in his proposed monetization.

34. On the coins, see Rovelli (2001). Her catalogue total of 112 coins are said to be divided on the east bank: one in the vicus excavations detailed by Gilkes and one found by Pannari (1980: 159). Only thirteen coins (11% of the total) were found outside church-funerary contexts. Ten coins, 27, 28, 34, 38, 39, 41, 46, 51, 66, 78, 104, 107, and of these, ten were found in a stratum near the Crypt Church that seemed to be part of the tower residence waste heap, but which mingled uncomfortably with a late Roman tomb (nos. 27, 28, 34, 38, 39, 46, 51, 66, 78, 104, 107) (Hodges, Counters and Mitchell 1993: 121). This leaves only three coins (3%) to have originated in definitively non-funeral contexts.

35. Only five of these identifiable coins (4% of the total) came from possible late antique contexts, namely the nummi of Justinian and Basiliscus (nos. 104 and 107) from the problematically occupied layer near the Crypt Church; a nummus of Valentinian III from the residential tower (no. 26) and two nummi of Tullus and Justinian found on the east river-bank in the vicus area.

36. For example, the converted villa-towns at Milav (Heulinh 1984) and São Cubadate (Alcange, Eisten and Mayer 1992). Vans (1989: 307) suggested that, in Italy, urban pagan temples often remain unchanging in orientation.

37. On the late antique phases of the city, see Orlandini (1983). For local repercussions, see Falla Castelluccia and Mancini (1992: 509) on the conversion of temples in the cult of Saint Michael.

38. These are San Giusto, the cathedral of Naples, and San Vincenzo itself.

39. Interestingly, the southern of the two churches in many Dalmatian contexts seems to have been chosen for funerary use (Chevalier 1996: 158). The northern church at San Giusto was assigned funerary functions.

40. Non-episcopal, double-church complexes are more common in Ravenna (Chevalier 1996).

41. On the scope of east-west orientation in the fifth century, see Kriehneither (1986: 93).

42. See the Council of Sirmium, canon 6, where the bishops prohibited the "gruus" and "speror" rituals; in the Council of Laodicea, canon 37, they are named as simply "gruus" and "speror". Interestingly, Pope Leo (Epistula 12.10 (ed. Thiel)) would require Mauritian bishops to desist ordaining bishops in rural "castella" at the sea side as the first rural bishops appeared in Italy (Thiel 1968).

43. Also see the association of rural bishoprics with Neotution (Chadwick 1972: 2). Kronen (1954: 152) suggested that these are the rural bishops derived as much from the 'municipalization' of lesser sites that had begun already in the Severan period, a process that left most subsequent episcopal sites already classed as municipia.

44. For an excellent early précis of the situation, see Leclercq (1997). For a list of some rural bishops in Gaul, see Pieter (1982: 744-5).

45. For instance, the site of Andria-les-Bains in Aquitaine may be a rural bishopric, uncovered by archaeology (Vielhers-Treilkour 1970; Daval and Lesca-Sigei 1995). The most important discovery however is the site of San Giuliano, in Apulia: see below.

46. Illustrating remarks on this subject have been made by Ornano (1989: 55); "... per intendere, quelli dei solci della civili et del decadimento degli insediamenti urbani, cui corrosi-pende la massima propagazione della nuova fede.

47. If the large basilica dates to the Constantinian period as thought, the later, rural episcopal at San Giovanni di Pranna may seem to have been established in the sixth century. For additional thoughts, see Dobrog (1994: 13).

48. The phenomenon is also suggested in the case of Roselle (Colonna and Foresta 1994: 66).


50. Lanzi (1922: 85-6) offered some disagreement.

51. Gelatius, lib. 19 (Thiel 1868: 493-4), in speaking of a new basilica, "... illud debitum suntuo intentione disquisiti, quis, id est, cujusvis civitas ex usu religiosus incipit basilica qua munper fabricas est fundatrix, baptizavitrici incolarum, sed cujus cognationem sub annua devotione conservavit. Non eum terrae nullius aliquibis convenit usus, sed illud facere deiocolum, quod superioris continent, ut constet communi, a qua fuerint laviaci regememorae purare".

52. Rinnelli (2005: 190) blamed the collapse on the Lombard invasions, while Civitacldice (1994) cited the Gothic Wars. On the problem in Campania, see Calvi (1963); now, see Vinolo (1990: 85-6).

53. Banfi (1995: 133-4) considered then discarded the idea that the site was a private episcopal estate.

54. See Lanzi (1923: 172) for full bibliography and argument. On the arguments for Saepinum, see Lanzi (1923: 172) and the (ed. a. c.).

55. The medieval monastery is described as being in locus Summum or bene Summam (J. Patterson 1854: 150-2).

56. On the absence of a bishop in Assemia, see Lanzi (1923: 244) and Duchesne (1905: 97-100). Aquilano (1998: 35) assumed it must have been a bishopric, but offered no evidence.


58. This is generally true across the board. For example, Wickham (2001c: 18)mapped the Church and the aristocracy together as obsessed landowners, but allowed the Church no independent economic role, while Veas (1986) used largely Church sources to describe his vision of land tenure, but never

marked out the Church's specific institutional economic role. Jones (1964: II, 894-410) was an exception.

59. Volpe (2000: 3) has made the intriguing suggestion that the episcopalats at San Vincenzo and San Giusto may have sponsored nudanea, or periodic markets, explaining both sites' large coin hoards. If this were true at San Vincenzo, one would expect to find the same coin hoards at that market, including some of the regional ceramics, spread through sites in the valley.

60. The proprietary rights of salini over vicin in Italy is illustrated by an inscription from near Lake Gardo (Gasperini 1996).

61. Paulinus of Nola, Epistulae XXXI, XXXI. I. On the identification of Primaucula as a village, see Goffe (1947: 274-6, n. 28). See also PL 51, 872D. Pinti (1986: 785 n. 50) disagreed, but identified the site instead with Montebarone, a site he believed to be a vicus but which has subsequently emerged to be a vicus!