

ARBËRESHË MIGRATION IN THE SIBARITIDE (CALABRIA, SOUTH ITALY): LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY, PAST MOBILITY AND PRESENT-DAY COMMUNITY IDENTITY

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Since the early 1990s, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology has carried out surveys and excavations in the Sibaritide (Calabria, South Italy) with a strong interest in the study of mobility based on changes in material culture and settlement patterns related to Bronze Age Aegean, Greek and Roman presence. In a newly planned archaeological project, the authors aim to open a window on the multicultural interaction in the landscapes of the Sibaritide from the mediaeval to the modern period, particularly related to the arrival and enduring presence of Arbëreshë communities. The project will start out in the summer of 2023 with an archaeological survey of the landscapes surrounding the Arbëreshë villages of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita where the Groningen Institute of Archaeology already conducts excavations of Bronze Age sites. The local Arbëreshë communities will be involved in the project through participatory practices and ethnographic listening. This approach will help us to trace the history of migration and the strong sense of place of the contemporary Arbëreshë people within a shared process of knowledge production. With our new project we hope to support an inclusive long-term narrative of the cultural encounters in the Sibaritide in which the local landscape is valued as heritage conceptualised in archaeological and ethnographic terms, but also in the stories and memories of the local communities.

Introduction

Within the framework of the multi-year archaeological research program in the foothills and uplands of the plain of Sybaris in Northern Calabria, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology (GIA) has documented material traces of cultural contacts and migrations from the Bronze Age onwards.

Knowledge about the nature of interaction between newcomers and local communities has been gained both in the archaeological surveys of the Institute's Raganello Archaeological Project and in the excavations carried out at the archaeological site of Timpone della Motta under the umbrella of the International Francavilla Project¹. This interaction oftentimes led to profound

changes in settlement and land use practices during protohistory and the classical period. In this paper we explore how the aims and results of our current landscape archaeological surveys and excavations can be embedded in the longer-term narrative of the multicultural social and economic history of the Sibaritide. Specifically, we want to open a window on the multicultural interaction of past communities in the landscapes of the Sibaritide which includes such interactions in more recent episodes. While our work has so far generated knowledge on the study of socio-economic developments and cultural interaction from the Neolithic to the Roman period, it has had little attention for the archaeology of the mediaeval to modern periods. As in the ancient past, also these periods saw significant changes in settlement and land use, in the Sibaritide most notably related to the arrival and enduring presence of Albanian communities as the result of the early-modern Arbëreshë migration.

In a newly planned archaeological survey project, to be carried out in the foothills of the Pollino Mountains in the province of Cosenza around two settlements of Arbëreshë origin, we will include the changes in settlement, land use and material culture linked to the early modern Albanian migrations and place them in the archaeological narrative of the *longue durée* of cultural encounters in the landscapes of the Sibaritide and

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¹ The International Francavilla Project includes the independently financed research programmes of the University of Groningen, the Danish Institute in Rome and the University of Basel, on landscape archaeology, excavations in the sanctuary and settlement of Timpone della Motta and the Macchiabate necropolis respectively.

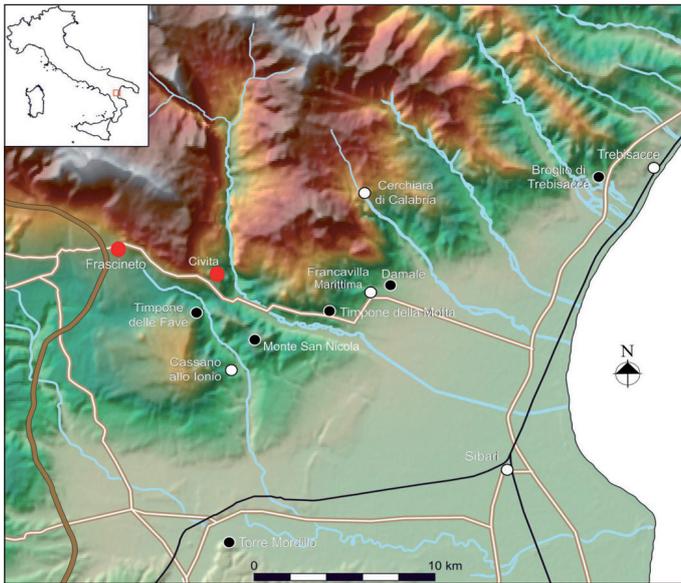


Fig. 1. Location of the villages of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita.

its hinterland from the Bronze Age to the present-day. The settlements concerned are Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita – the latter including the hamlet of Ejanina/Purçilli. To achieve this aim, we will actively engage with these Arbëreshë communities.

Arbëreshë Communities in the Sibaritide

The villages of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita – where the GIA already conducts fieldwork – are characterised by the presence of Arbëreshë communities (Fig. 1). The Arbëreshë, also known as Albanians of Italy or Italo-Albanians, are an Albanian ethnolinguistic group², mostly concentrated in scattered villages across South and Central Italy, that settled in the Kingdom of Naples in several waves of migration between the 15th and the 19th century AD (Mastroberti 2008). Nowadays, the province of Cosenza has one of the highest concentrations of Arbëreshë communities. The presence of Albanians in this region is thought to date back to mediaeval times, but significant incoming flows of people are documented from the mid-15th century, especially after the death of the Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu in 1468 and the subsequent

conquest of Albania by the Ottomans (Mastroberti 2008). The Albanian migrants are reported to have arrived in the plain of Sybaris and to have moved inland in search of geomorphological areas similar to their lands (Cruciani 1986: 263). According to the scarce historical sources, the earliest Arbëreshë communities lived in harsh conditions. They occupied the least fertile areas with scarce means of subsistence and were isolated because of their different language and religion. As a result, they were often forced to move between different temporary settlements (*Provincia di Cosenza* 2012: 11-12; Barone, Savaglio, Barone 2000; Zangari 1941). Starting from the 16th century, the living conditions of some of these communities seem to have improved thanks to the migration of some Albanian aristocratic families that had already established networks and military alliances with the Aragonese Crown (*Provincia di Cosenza* 2012: 13). In general, however, the

Arbëreshë communities lived in worse conditions and enjoyed less legal rights than the rest of the local population, being marginalised by feudal and religious authorities (Mastroberti 2008; Barone, Savaglio, Barone 2000). It is reported how Arbëreshë families settled in the feud of Bisignano – in the middle valley of the river Crati, where they cleared forests and tilled uncultivated areas, worked on the reclamation of the marshy plain of Sybaris to cultivate mulberry trees for silk production and carried out basic agricultural and pastoral activities (Capalbo 1990: 43; *Provincia di Cosenza* 2012: 13-14). A comparable situation is known to have existed in the feud of Castrovillari in the Albanian settlements of Frascineto/Frasnita, Eianina/Purçilli, and San Basile/Shën Vasili, where Arbëreshë families harvested mulberry and broom for textile production³. These products had an important role in the local economy (*Provincia di Cosenza* 2012: 44-46). The formation of stable Albanian settlements gradually led to the granting of land use and hereditary rights by the local feudal authorities (Barone, Savaglio, Barone 2000: 41-47).

During the long process of migration, exchange, and integration with the autochthonous people, the Arbëreshë have maintained a remarkable degree of cultural and ethnic identity, despite increased integration with the Italian population

² It is officially recognised and safeguarded by the Italian state according to Legge 15 dicembre 1999, n. 482 *Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche*.

³ On broom fibres used for textile production in Calabria see Mirizzi 1993 and in Languedoc see Olivier 2005.

and high emigration rates over the last seventy years (Mirizzi 1993; Harrison 1979). Arbëreshë identity is still vibrant and reaffirmed in daily life (Fiorini *et alii* 2007; Bolognari 2014). For the Arbëreshë communities of Civita and Frascineto, the Albanian language and history, the traditional crafts, the Byzantine religious rites and other aspects of Arbëreshë traditional culture indeed still form an integral part of their daily life and identity. The Arbëreshë of Calabria still show a strong genetic affinity with south-Balkan populations (Sarno *et alii* 2016)⁴. Remarkably they appear in recent genetic studies as outliers in the Italian genetic background, showing that there was little admixture up to the mid-20th century (Sarno *et alii* 2016; Boattini *et alii* 2011; Fiorini *et alii* 2007).

As stated in the introduction, we intend to incorporate the study of Arbëreshë immigration in our planned landscape archaeological project around the municipalities of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita. Our aim is to place the presence of the in the wider framework of mobility and cultural exchange in the Sibaritide from the Bronze Age onward. In the landscapes surrounding Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita we expect to find material traces of the Arbëreshë communities just as from other episodes of foreign presence. Below we will go briefly into the presence of Mycenaeans, Greek and Roman people that in various ways had already left their mark on the landscape and material culture of the Sibaritide. By taking a *longue durée* archaeological perspective, we intend to promote a comparative view on and discussion of past mobility and present-day community identity.

Mobility and Cultural Exchange in the Sibaritide from the Bronze Age to the Roman period

Material evidence for Bronze Age mobility of Aegean groups and cultural exchange with local communities in the Sibaritide has been investigated profoundly in the archaeological studies by Renato Peroni and his colleagues in the settlements of Broglio di Trebisacce (Peroni, Trucco 1994) and Torre Mordillo (Trucco, Vagnetti 2001). In recent years, new evidence for Aegean presence in the Sibaritide comes from the excavations of

the settlement of Timpone della Motta, located along the Raganello river. This site has a long excavation history to which Italian, Dutch, Danish and Swiss scholars have contributed. It covers the period from the Middle Bronze Age to the end of the Archaic period and has also yielded evidence for cultural exchange of Greeks with local groups during the Early Iron Age, before the Archaic Greek settler presence at the colony of Sybaris (Attema *et alii* forth.). Timpone della Motta is also well-known for its interaction with the Greek colony of Sybaris (Guzzo 2012).

Landscape archaeological surveys in the area by the GIA go back to 2000 when the institute began to systematically investigate the surrounding landscape within the framework of the Raganello Archaeological Project (Attema *et alii* forth.; Attema, Ippolito 2017; Ippolito 2016). The results of these surveys have led to detailed insight in the settlement history of the foothills between Cerchiara in the north and Lauropoli in the south, as well as that of the Raganello valley leading upland into the Pollino park. With respect to the theme of this paper, a relevant observation done in GIA's fieldwork is the presence of material culture that can be linked to the Aegean Bronze Age, more specifically the Mycenaean civilization (Attema *et alii* forth.; Ippolito, Attema forth.a; van Wijngaarden 2002). In the archaeological record of the well-known settlements of Broglio di Trebisacce (Peroni, Trucco 1994), Timpone della Motta (Attema *et alii* forth.) and Torre Mordillo (Trucco, Vagnetti 2001) fragments of imported Mycenaean as well as Italo-Mycenaean pottery occur. We found that throughout the foothill zones fragments of so-called *doli cordonati* – locally manufactured pithoi with Aegean technology – appear associated with local impasto pottery (Ippolito, Attema forth.a). These changes in material culture reflect profound changes in the local communities both in social and economic terms. While Mycenaean cups and amphorae indicate new ways of consumption, likely of wine, linked to new forms of ceremonial behaviour, the scattered presence of *doli cordonati* may indicate new forms of land use, possibly oleoculture. These changes are related to the interactions between the local population and Aegean people, some of whom may have settled among the local population, leading to direct technological and cultural transfer. Technological changes in the manufacturing of pottery and changes in the pottery repertoire are good indicators for processes of cultural interaction (Attema, Ippolito forth.b).

Evidence for interactions during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age comes from the

⁴ This is the case of Calabrian Arbëreshë (especially those living in the Pollino area), while Sicilian Arbëreshë have shown a higher rate of admixture with Italian population and some genetic affinities with Greek populations (Sarno *et alii* 2016).

excavations of the site of Monte San Nicola (Civita) (Van Leusen, Ippolito 2021) that yield impasto shapes showing Aegean-Levantine features characteristic of the protogeometric period (9th century BC) (Ippolito, Van Leusen forth.). Again, this may represent a possible instance of the presence of craftsmen from the Aegean who settled in a local community, a situation promoting technological transfer and changes in material culture shared between the local population and newcomers.

In the advanced Early Iron Age, we witness a new phase of interaction with the Aegean world. At Timpone della Motta, the excavations of the Danish team have brought to light evidence for the presence of pottery from Euboea and also for local hybrid productions (Jacobsen 2007; Jacobsen, Handberg, Mittica 2008-2009; Jacobsen, Handberg 2012). This happened in a phase preceding the Achaean presence of Greek settlers in the plain where, at the end of the 8th century BC, the Greek colony of Sybaris was founded. The phase of the Greek settler colonisation in Sybaris brought widespread change in material culture, not only regarding pottery but also architecture. At Timpone della Motta, Greek influence is reflected in the lay-out of the sanctuary dedicated to Athena and the presence of much Greek imported pottery (Kleibrink, Jacobsen, Handberg 2004). Furthermore, Greek settler colonisation brought new forms of land use with it. In the Hellenistic period villages and farmsteads appeared in the foothills of the Sibaritide. Such new forms of settlement and land use penetrated the inland as well and is characteristic of the Hellenistic landscapes of South Italy (Oome, Attema 2018). What followed was Roman colonisation, which implied once again a period of profound cultural and demographic changes that in the inland of the Sibaritide is reflected in the rise of the villa landscape. Again, new forms of land management were introduced, and new forms of architecture, infrastructure, and material culture. The elaboration of legacy data that is in progress⁵ reveals a distribution of Roman villas (2nd c. BC-3rd c. AD) in the area of present-day Castrovillari in the hinterland of the Sibaritide, and that of Frascineto/Frasnita (De Rossi *et alii* 1969; Taliano Grasso 1994; Di Vasto 1995; Carafa 2019). Here, remains of Roman roads have been identified that can possibly be linked to the major road from Rhegium to Capua (Taliano Grasso 1994). The net result of this long history of interactions was the

formation of a multicultural urban and rural population in the Sibaritide and in its hinterland that continued to evolve in the following periods, with the Albanian migrations representing yet another important phase of cultural interaction deserving archaeological attention.

Research Plan

In the new landscape archaeological project, we intend to survey the landscapes around Frascineto/Frasnita and Civita/Çifti in an intensive manner, systematically collecting and documenting all material remains from the past in order to document traces of settlement and land use from prehistory to the present. For the first time, we will include the early modern and modern period in the *longue durée* of settlement in the Sibaritide, with a specific interest in the Arbëreshë migration and integration. In this paragraph we discuss our three main objectives. Two of these directly concern the Arbëreshë people and their history. The first objective is purely archaeological and relates to documenting changes in land use, the prevailing rural settlement pattern and characteristic material culture that can be related to the episodes of immigration, in the same way as we investigate these aspects for the earlier periods, but now also adopting an ethnographic perspective. The second objective relates to the involvement of the present-day Arbëreshë community in the research and dissemination process by implementing a strategy for community engagement. Our third objective is theoretical and methodological and aims at the integration of ethnography and landscape archaeology to conceive and study the landscape as a continuously evolving cultural process (Hirsch 1995) of the complex interaction between memory, identity, and place (Stewart, Strathern 2003). Below we detail these three objectives in relation to the Arbëreshë migration and integration in the Sibaritide.

1. Documenting changes in material culture and land use related to Arbëreshë immigration and identity

To address this first objective, we will expand our study of the *longue durée* of settlement evolution and cultural exchange in the Sibaritide in first instance with a landscape archaeological survey in the territory of Frascineto/Frasnita that will incorporate past Arbëreshë presence in the landscape (Fig. 2). We will conduct this survey alongside our excavations at Monte San Nicola in the Arbëreshë communities of Civita/Çifti (Van

⁵ This research is currently being undertaken by Martina C. Parini, PhD student at the Groningen Institute of Archaeology.

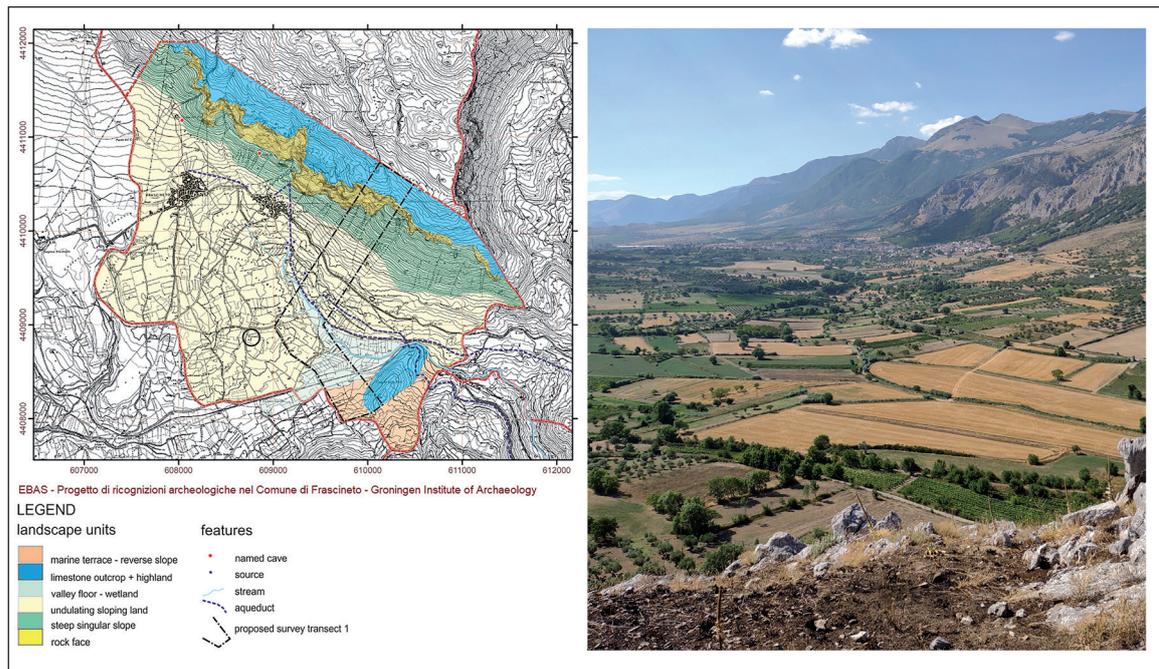


Fig. 2. The first proposed transect in the survey area around Frascineto/Frasnita (on the left) and part of this area seen from the protohistoric site of Timpone delle Fave (on the right). (Map by F. Ippolito and M. van Leusen; photo by M. de Vos).

Leusen, Ippolito 2021) and at Timpone delle Fave in the municipality of Frascineto/Frasnita. The planned landscape archaeological survey aims to document, apart from protohistoric to classical remains, also mediaeval to subrecent traces, including those related to Arbëreshë practices of land use and use of material culture. Such evidence may provide a first identification of possible specific traits and result in an assessment to what degree Arbëreshë material culture and practices differentiate from the local background. Mediaeval and post-mediaeval pottery production is, however, still poorly studied in the region⁶ and there exists no specific research on Arbëreshë ceramics yet. We therefore want to produce a first understanding of late mediaeval to subrecent pottery in the Sibaritide, a tradition that should include the Arbëreshë ceramic productions in the region, which then can be compared with pottery assemblages from Puglia (Arthur 2005) and Albania (Tagliente 2002). More in general, landscape archaeological investigations are fundamental to reconstruct the local landscape and material culture of the region at the time when the earliest Albanian migrants arrived. Hopefully our planned research will pro-

vide the first archaeological evidence of their economic activities and settlement organisation in the territory. Within the long history of mobility in the Sibaritide, these data will become part of a wider picture increasing our understanding of the cultural encounters in the region over time and yielding information on the settlement choices of newcomers, their impact on the landscape, and their relation with local populations.

2. Local embedding and crowd-sourced activities

Thanks to a multi-year presence in the area, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology has acquired knowledge of the local landscape and its archaeological potential and established a considerable degree of collaboration with local authorities and community members who support the research projects and aid with logistical aspects of the fieldwork. The encounter and the knowledge exchange between archaeologists and the wider community has proven to be an integral part of the archaeological discipline⁷ (Marshall

⁶ Coscarella 2008: 165-166; Coscarella, Roma 2012; Papparella 2014; Lazrus 2014: 72.

⁷ For an overview of the current state of Italian public and community archaeology see Ripanti 2019: 65-9; for the Italian legal framework on public participation in archaeology see Benetti, Santacroce 2019; many examples of community-based archaeological projects in Italy are collected in Volpe 2020. We point out the project by

LISTEN	DESIGN	COLLABORATE
<p>INTERVIEWS WITH ARBËRESHË CITIZENS ON:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONTEMPORARY ARBËRESHË IDENTITY • SENSE OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE • INTEREST IN DEEP PAST OF THE REGION • OPINION ON OUR PROJECT 	<p>MEETINGS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS ON:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SURVEY DESIGN AND RESULTS • DEFINING OF COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES • DEFINING OF ADDITIONAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS 	<p>CROWD-SOURCED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPEN DAYS WITH LOCAL GUIDES • WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS • YEARLY PUBLIC SEMINARS ON AIMS AND RESULTS

Fig. 3. The table outlines the main steps of a possible strategy to engage with the Arbëreshë people. This includes ethnographic listening, collaborative research design, and crowd-sourced activities.

2002; Skeates, McDavid, Carman 2012; Moshenska 2017b), particularly when involving descendant communities and people living in the vicinity of the fieldwork area (Atalay 2012; Agbe-Davies 2014; Thomas 2017).

The recent theoretical debate highlights, however, some challenging and controversial aspects of community-based practices in archaeology and heritage management (Wylie 2019) that we will have to take account of. Particularly, scholars have dealt with ethical implications and political entanglement of community-based practices (González-Ruibal 2018) and have called for a more radical redefinition of the role of both communities (Waterton, Smith 2010) and experts (Schofield 2015; Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos 2009). Being aware of both the weaknesses and the benefits of participatory practices, we believe that the local embedding should be a fundamental part of our project for two main reasons. First, because we will investigate an area characterised by a direct connection between the history and the sense of place of a living community. Second, because this approach will stimulate us to rethink our role as experts and to avoid a top-down approach towards an uncritically defined community. The current critical approach will help us

Chesson *et alii* (2019) in San Pasquale Valley (Southern Calabria), for the proximity to our research area and for its valuable ethnographic approach.

to create a transdisciplinary and transcultural participatory space, by adopting community practices and practising ethnographic listening (Chesson *et alii* 2019; Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos 2009). Figure 3 (Fig. 3) outlines a possible strategy to engage with the Arbëreshë people, with as main components a research design and dissemination process that includes collaboration with local institutions, interviews, and crowd-sourced activities.

Firstly, we will investigate how our local collaborators perceive their identity, landscape, and cultural heritage, as well as their opinion on our project. Then, we will actively engage with the local community through the collaboration with local authorities and cultural organisations – such as the local museums (*Museo Etnico Arbëresh* in

Civita/Çifti and *Museo Comunale delle Icone e della Tradizione Bizantina* in Frascineto/Frasnita), the natural park *Parco del Pollino*, and the centre of experimental archaeology *Amigdala* in Frascineto/Frasnita. We will discuss and define together the principles, the main activities, and the expected outcomes of engaging with the community. One of the main issues we expect to face is whether the Arbëreshë community – which migrated relatively recently in the Sibaritide – will relate also to the deep past of their territory investigated by the project. In these two steps, we hope to start understanding how the current perception of the landscape, the cultural heritage, and the history of migration shape and influence the contemporary communal and individual identity of the Arbëreshë people.

Furthermore, we aim to enhance the community archaeology dimension of the project, stimulating the local community to join open days as well as workshops and to take on an active role in valorising the landscape archaeological and ethnographic heritage of the area. Also, we plan to implement educational activities for Dutch students in collaboration with local experts and associations. On the one hand, this would expose our students to the logic and practice of community engagement that may become an integral part of their fieldwork education. On the other hand, it will give us and our students the opportunity to hear about the Arbëreshë traditions and the local territory directly from the inhabitants, as we

want to learn about Arbëreshë traditions and their meaning in every-day lives.

In sum, the local embedding and the community outreach will allow us to avoid a one-way transmission of knowledge. Instead, we aim at co-producing knowledge with the local community (Chesson *et alii* 2019; Smith, Ralph 2020) in order to produce a positive impact both on our research and on the local people. We want our project to have a meaningful social relevance for the Arbëreshë and to support a sustainable development of the area through the valorisation of its heritage and the collaboration with the people who owns it, in accordance with the principles of participation defined by the Faro Convention (*Council of Europe* 2005) and enhancing the role of the local landscape as «a key element of individual and social well-being» (*Council of Europe* 2000: 8).

3. Combining ethnography and archaeology

We expect that the often-poor living conditions of the Arbëreshë communities over the centuries – especially at the time of their arrival in the Sibaritide – produced a limited amount of archaeological and structural evidence which may be hardly visible and elusive in the landscape. Nevertheless, the archaeological inference could be supported by other kinds of sources that generally come into play in historical archaeology. For instance, archival research has been successfully applied to landscape archaeology and combined with survey data by Lazrus (2014) in Southern Calabria. More generally, ethnographic approaches have been variously applied to landscape archaeology (Lane 2008). In our case study, we are able to draw on the notion of *direct historical approach* (Orser 2017: 63; Lane 2008: 4): the living traditions of the present-day Arbëreshë, as well as distinctive cultural traits, could be a valuable source of knowledge to reconstruct the Arbëreshë culture of the past.

While we already quite regularly paid attention to ethnographic observations relating to rural settlement, animal husbandry and arable farming of the sub-recent periods (De Neef, Larocca, Attema 2021; Attema, Larocca, De Neef 2019), ethnography so far was not systematically incorporated in our research design. We expect that the crucial transformation of Southern Italy after the 1950s, along with the high emigration that has impacted the villages in the mountainous areas of the country – including those of the Arbëreshë – caused a substantial loss of traditional ways of life and culture. However, the enduring presence of culturally differentiated Arbëreshë communities is still an extremely valuable source of information that

should be studied and valorised. Also because it can be considered as a tangible example of cultural encounter that can help understand what the process of migration implies and how relationships between newcomers and local populations may take place over time. We are aware of the complexity of the contemporary Arbëreshë community of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita and of the ongoing social changes impacting the local population (e.g. ageing, depopulation, loss of traditional culture). So, we do not presume to explain the Arbëreshë past and migration through the uncritical observation of the present-day community. Instead, we aim to understand the relation between the contemporary community and their history, material culture and local landscape. This entails a multi-temporal research based on the critical engagement with our collaborators through a collective process of learning, listening and self-evaluation⁸.

As stated, we will base our project on the understanding of the landscape as a cultural process. This involves the examination of landscape as produced through local practice and defined by an ever-changing relationship between places, perceptions, and values (Hicks, McAtackney 2007; Hirsch 1995). Thus, the landscape becomes a form of codification of history itself, a history that may be reconstructed by the means of the archaeological and ethnographic approach. A case in point is the spatial feature of *gjitonia*, a conglomerate of private houses that shares a public open space (square, courtyard, widening) where social and productive activities of the household cluster take place (Mirizzi 1993: 230-1). This form of settlement organisation is a typical feature of the polyfocal villages historically inhabited by the Arbëreshë. One of the best examples is Civita/Çifti itself (Gattuso *et alii* 2019) (Fig. 4). The *gjitonia* shows how traditional values, common practices, and individual experiences were encoded in and reflected by spatial organisation and how it is still possible to recognise them both in structural evidence and settlement organisation and through ethnographic observation. Far from being just mere records of past lives, landscapes are

⁸ Critical reflection on traditional ethnoarchaeology and proposals of alternative practices can be found in Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos 2009 and Castañeda, Matthews 2008. Relevant recent applications are the work by Anagnostopoulos, Kyriakidis, Stefanou (2022) in Crete and, again, the work by Chesson and colleagues (2019) in Calabria, especially for the remarkable application of ethnographic listening and intellectual service.



Fig. 4. The close-knit houses of Civita/Çifti.

instead contemporary entities with a deep temporal dimension, embedded in living practices. They are sites of memory open to contestation and constant redefinition of which archaeological research is part (Lane 2008: 242; Hicks, McAtackney 2007: 16). Thus, archaeological ethnography will be fundamental to place ourselves, as scholars, within this complex palimpsest and to obtain memories on the relationship between identity and landscape, both through the living memories and experiences of the Arbëreshë community and through the critical comparison between their living traditions and their past material culture.

Concluding remarks: Landscape Archaeology, Mobility and Memory

Landscape archaeology and ethnographic research in tandem can offer a framework to study the long-term history of mobility, migration, and cultural encounters in the Sibaritide and in its hinterland. In fact, foreign presence, such as ours since the 1990s, may be seen as part of such encounters. Our experiences over the years within the framework of the surveys and excavations of the Raganello Archaeological Project and also our

recent ethnographic research in the Pollino highlands within the framework of the Pollino Archaeological Landscape Project (De Neef, Larocca, Attema 2021), offer a good point of departure to incorporate the history of the Albanian diaspora in our research aims and to embrace this topic to enforce the strong sense of place emanating from the villages of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita. Indeed, in the project we want to reconstruct and to enhance the history of settlement and land use in the landscapes surrounding these villages, and to support the local stewardship of this multicultural heritage.

Memory and place have been recognised as two crucial elements of individual and collective identity, whose interaction is encoded in the landscape (Steward, Strathern 2003). Indeed, in the literature it has been widely recognized how much people attach perceptions and values to the landscape defined as a multifaceted and multi-temporal palimpsest⁹. The sense of place and the embeddedness in the local landscape is the way in which people construct individual and collective meanings and memories, so that their territory becomes a form of codification of history and identity itself. It often serves as a crucial marker of continuity with the past, as well as a reassurance of identity in the present. The sense of place and embeddedness with the local landscape acquired through daily experience and historical memory connected to the territory make us perceive the local place as a form of “heritage, conceptualized in fabric, stories, and memories” (Schofield, Kiddey, Lashua 2012: 302). Thus, everything that is within the perceived boundaries of that territory, including what is below the soil, becomes part of the community ownership or, in other words, a constitutive part of identity. In our case study, that deals with a migrant community that is still differentiating itself from the rest of the population, this notion is particularly important. Based on the conversations and the long-lasting collaboration with the inhabitants of Civita/Çifti and Frascineto/Frasnita, we observed a strong curiosity for the past of their local landscape. Contrary to our initial expectations, they showed a strong interest also in the protohistoric past of the area investigated in our previous projects. Even if that period is not directly related to their history, it is

⁹ Among the vast literature on these themes see: Schofield 2015; Schofield, Kiddey, Lashua 2012; Lane 2008; Lazari 2008; Hicks, McAtackney 2007; Steward, Strathern 2003; Hirsch 1995; Tilley 1994.

an integral part of what has become their territory over centuries. Indeed, we believe that the Arbëreshë perceive their territory as a fortress, an area to be maintained and valued in order to reaffirm their distinctive identity. Indeed, the Arbëreshë community feels attached to the past of their territory not because of any genealogical or ethnical claims, but as the result of a long process of stewardship of the landscape, which they have inhabited and managed for centuries. Through this project – combining landscape archaeology, ethnography, and community engagement – we aim to explore the reasons and the specificity of the Arbëreshë’s multifaceted interest towards their local place. Indeed, this interest shows how dynamic and diverse the interaction between place, memory, and identity can be and how much the local landscape can be used as a framework to build and strengthen community history and sense of belonging.

Notably, landscape archaeology has been argued to be one of the most effective approaches to study and enhance the dynamic palimpsest of interactions that characterise contemporary landscapes (Fairclough 2002), as it can support the understanding of the landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (Council of Europe 2000, Art. 1), in accordance with the definition of the European Landscape Convention. With our new project we hope to add a time dimension to this by creating an inclusive long-term narrative in which places are valued as heritage (Schofield 2015), conceptualised in archaeological and ethnographic terms, but also in stories and memories. Starting from the archaeological record, these stories and memories will be placed within the continuous history of cultural encounters in the Sibaritide – and in a broader sense of the entire Mediterranean basin.

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