

Controlling the *Chora*. Topographical Investigations in the Territory of Locri Epizephyrii (southeastern Calabria, Italy) in 2013-2015

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Three previously undocumented Greek sites have been identified at contrada Palazzo (Cittanova), at località "Coculédi" and at contrada Bregatorto (Antonimina), as a result of topographical surveys conducted in 2013-2015 by the Foundation for Calabrian Archaeology and the University of Kentucky on the Dossone della Melia, a high plateau on the western borders of the chora of Locri Epizephyrii. All three sites are located near the most direct overland route from ancient Locri to the Tyrrhenian coast, which traversed the plateau c. 4 km to the south of the Passo del Mercante (the main pass on the Strada Provinciale 1 di Gioia Tauro e Locri). The presence of a military installation at contrada Palazzo, on the western edge of the plateau, has been inferred from finds of re-used Greek materials. A lookout tower at this site would have allowed the Locrians to guard a trail leading to the plateau from the Tyrrhenian coast and to keep watch over the chora of Medma, Locri's closest Tyrrhenian sub-colony. The functions of a Greek masonry structure at località "Coculédi", a site on the eastern edge of the plateau, cannot yet be determined. A nearby site, at contrada Bregatorto, was occupied by a fortification similar to the Locrian fort on Monte Palazzi (Grotteria) and may have been the main control point on this overland route between c. 500-300 B.C. These findings point to the existence of a defensive network guarding the borders of Locri's territory and strategic routes linking the eastern and western coasts of Calabria.

Introduction

Archaeological investigations conducted by American teams between 2005-2010 on the summit of Monte Palazzi near the Croceferrata Pass in south-central Calabria cast new light on a Greek mountain fort of Locri Epizephyrii that functioned as a control point from the late Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods. This fortification was constructed on the right bank of the Fiumara Allaro, the main geographical and political boundary between the territories of Locri and Kaulonia, identifiable with Strabo's *Sagra* River. It guarded the Locrian borderlands against invasions by Kroton and Kaulonia and kept an overland route leading to the Locrian sub-colonies of Medma and Hipponion under surveillance. Similar fortifications were built by the Greeks of Rhegion and Kaulonia at Serro di Tavola (Sant'Eufemia), San Salvatore (Bova Superiore), and Monte Gallo (Placanica). Each of them was occupied in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., a period of intense interstate rivalry in Magna Graecia, which continued into the first half of the 4th century¹. Information from literary sources (Thucyd. 3.99; 3.115.7) also indicates that the Locrians had forts near their territorial boundaries. This suggests that permanent fortifications were essential to the defense of the Greek colonies in the toe of Italy from early on². M.T. Iannelli's and G. Cordiano's surveys, in particular, have found evidence that Kaulonia and Rhegion protected the borders of their territories with a line of outposts³. The study of these fortifications could therefore provide new insights into Greek territorial organization and borderland processes in southern Calabria⁴.

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¹ See WONDER 2012: 129, 132-140; DE SENSI SESTITO 2011: 31, 34; DE SENSI SESTITO 2014: 21-27, 29, 36-42.

² VISONÀ 2013; VISONÀ 2016.

³ IANNELLI 2011: 402-405; CORDIANO 2014b: 33, 46-47; INSOLERA 2014: 114.

⁴ Cf. GIANGIULIO 2001: 333, n. 3 and PARKER 2006.



Fig. 1. Satellite map of southern Calabria showing the location of sites investigated in 2013-2015. 1 = Monte Gallo; 2 = Monte Granieri; 3 = Monte Gremi; 4 = Monte Palazzi; 5 = Passo della Limina; 6 = Passo del Mercante; 7 = contrada Palazzo; 8 = località “Coculédi” and contrada Bregartorto. Computer-aided visualization by J.R. Jansson and L.F. Chapman.

Locri bordered with two rival city-states (Rhegion and Kaulonia) and with its two Tyrrhenian sub-colonies, unlike other Greek polities in southern Italy⁵. The presence of a thriving indigenous settlement at Castellace in the middle Petrace River Valley, which was a nexus for contacts with both the Tyrrhenian and the Ionian coasts of Italy from the 6th to the 3rd centuries B.C., may have been an additional matter of concern to the Locrians⁶. The geomorphology and longitudinal extension of the Locrian *chora* allowed for several possible points of entry from the north, west and south. Hence, it is conceivable that the Locrians could have established a system of territorial defense based upon a series of control points. Situated on the outskirts of the *chora* within a few hours' distance from the *asty*, relatively small, yet protected by massive wall circuits, these fortified sites would have commanded strategic positions in the vicinity of important trails and mountain passes. Their occupants were lightly armed *perípoloi* ('patrolmen'), who watched the main routes into the Locrian heartland and sent advance warning to the city in case of enemy movements in the borderlands⁷. The topographical investigations conducted in 2013-2015 by a team from the Foundation for Calabrian Archaeology and the University of Kentucky aimed to test this model and to identify other sites similar to Monte Palazzi along the borders of the Locrian *chora*⁸.

New Greek Sites in the Borderlands of Locri Epizephyrii

A starting point in the research strategy was to understand Monte Palazzi's "landscape context"⁹ by targeting nearby mountaintops for visual inspection to determine whether they might have been occupied by indigenous groups, or by the Locrians (Fig. 1). The surface find of a Greek roof tile fragment by a goat herder on Monte Gremi (1,241 m), at a distance of 2.5 km to the east of Monte Palazzi, hinted at the possible presence of a Greek settlement on this mountain¹⁰. However, field checks of Monte Gremi's summit and of Monte Cannali

⁵ Cf. OSANNA 1992: 210-214 ; FISCHER-HANSEN ET AL. 2004: 274.

⁶ SICA 2008; SICA 2009: 249-256, 273-275.

⁷ Cf. CHANIOTIS 2008: 104-107; FACHARD 2012: 251-253, 263-273; 279-280.

⁸ For satellite images of the Locrian *chora* and of Locri's sphere of influence on the Tyrrhenian coast see VISONÀ 2010: 1, 10, Figs. 1 and 18.

⁹ This phrase is used by FRENCH 2014: 339.

¹⁰ VISONÀ 2016: 246, n. 91.

(1,054 m) and Monte Granieri (856 m) – at 4 and 6.5 km to the northeast and southeast of Monte Palazzi, respectively – yielded no traces of prehistoric or ancient frequentation. A Locrian outpost on Monte Granieri would have dominated the middle course of the Fiumara Allaro and of Kaulonia's stronghold on Monte Gallo (780 m), but the apparent lack of sources of water may have made this hilltop unsuitable for long-term occupation. Repeated surface inspections at the Passo della Limina (822 m), c. 10 km to the southwest of Monte Palazzi (Fig. 1, no. 5), were equally inconclusive, even though this pass may have been a key node on a presumed overland route along the Torbido River Valley that would have been controlled by the Locrians¹¹. The discovery in 1914 of a large hoard of Greek coins “in the territory” of S. Giorgio Morgeto, a town on the Tyrrhenian side of the Limina Pass, could indicate that this pass was used by ancient travelers¹². Furthermore, the absence of fortifications on Monte Limina (888 m) – the highest point in the area – does not preclude the possibility that a Locrian outpost existed elsewhere near the pass¹³. Intersignaling by fire or smoke signals between Monte Limina and Monte Palazzi (1221,51 m) would have been feasible without any permanent structures, although S. Fachard has pointed out that “*L’intervisibilità entre deux points fortifiés ne suffit pas pour supposer une ligne de communication visuelle par signaux*”: in his view, signaling with torches or smoke was practiced within distances between 1 and 5 km¹⁴.

From the results of these reconnaissances it may be inferred that certain routes and passes were kept under surveillance by the Locrians depending on various considerations, including their strategic importance in case of warfare and the seasonality and frequency of their use in peacetime¹⁵. Moreover, constructing and maintaining mountain forts that were closely spaced would not have been cost-effective. These military installations were not designed to withstand an attack by a large opposing force, and could be easily circumvented¹⁶.

Topographical investigations also encompassed the Passo del Mercante (‘the Merchant’s Pass’), the main pass on the Strada Provinciale 1 di Gioia Tauro e Locri (S.P. 1), c.10 km to the southwest of the Piano della Limina on a high plateau (known as the Dossone della Melia, or dorsale tabulare) linking the Aspromonte massif to the Serre uplands to the north¹⁷. A natural gateway between the eastern and western coasts of Italy, at an elevation of 967 m, this pass is believed to have been used continuously at least since the 16th century (Fig. 1, no. 6)¹⁸. It has even been argued (partly because of the discovery in 1878 of a hoard of c. 600 archaic Greek coins near Cittanova, a town on the Tyrrhenian side of the Passo del Mercante) that the route through this pass was used in classical antiquity¹⁹. Its landscape setting, which resembles that of the Croceferrata Pass near Monte Palazzi, and its strategic implications (made apparent by a WW II pillbox dominating the approach to the pass) thus suggested that it could have been a Locrian control point. But the current road through the Passo del Mercante (the S.P. 1, formerly known as the Strada Statale 111) was built in the third quarter of the 19th century²⁰. This may explain why inspections of the immediate surroundings of the pass in 2007 and in 2012 did not yield any finds of archaeological interest²¹. Only in 2013, thanks to new information provided by an officer in the Italian Forest Service²², could the presence of Greek cultural material be documented at c. 4 km to the south of the Passo del Mercante. Subsequent field checking in this area led to the identification of three sites at contrada Palazzo, località “Coculédi”, and contrada Bregatorto (Fig. 1, nos. 7-8).

¹¹ For the valley of the Fiumara Torbido see *Carta Topografica d’Italia* (F. 590), sez. I, *Gioiosa Iònica*, ser. 25, ed. 1/A, IGMI, Firenze 1998 (scale 1: 25 000). Cf. GIVIGLIANO 1994: 273; VISONÀ 2010: 9; VISONÀ 2016: 246, n. 96.

¹² See IGCH 1948 and PUTORTI 1914: 211-212. There is no mention of this hoard (which may have been buried c. 300 B.C.) in TALIERCIO MENSITIERI 2008.

¹³ The remains of a 16th-century circular tower overlooking the Torbido River Valley (Torre di Carditto), c. 3 km to the southwest of Monte Limina, at an elevation of c. 800 m, are illustrated by CARBONE 2005b: 69-76. For old and recent archaeological finds on Monte Limina and its environs see VISONÀ 2013: 15-16; VISONÀ 2016: 246, n. 93-94.

¹⁴ FACHARD 2012: 273. Fachard believes that mobile units (scouts and horsemen) who had an intimate knowledge of the territory could transmit messages more effectively than fire or smoke signals.

¹⁵ BILINSKI 1962: 83-84, pointed out that “*Lo studio delle vie greche nell’Italia meridionale deve prendere in esame anche la possibilità dell’esistenza delle varie vie che cambiavano il loro percorso secondo le stagioni. Esse erano diverse in estate o in inverno, avevano diverso percorso di andata o di ritorno poiché era importante la posizione del sole in faccia o alle spalle.*”

¹⁶ Cf. FACHARD 2012: 254, 265-267.

¹⁷ LACQUANITI 1950: 20-26; cf. RASO 2001b: 46.

¹⁸ RASO 2001a: 15-18; RASO 2001b: 35-40, 55-56; cf. TALBERT 2000: 46. The name of this pass, which is reminiscent of its “*persistente funzione commerciale sino ad età recente*” (COSTABILE 2007: 23), probably predates the 18th century: see VISONÀ 2016: 250, n. 100.

¹⁹ RASO 2001b: 34. For this hoard (IGCH 1889), which may have been buried c. 470-460 B.C., cf. GIVIGLIANO 1994: 273 and TALIERCIO MENSITIERI 2008: 320.

²⁰ RASO 2001b: 33; VISONÀ 2016: 250.

²¹ VISONÀ 2012: 16, n. 68.

²² Sovrintendente Pasquale Mammona, a resident of Piminoro (Oppido Mamertina) who told P. Visonà about the presence of architectural remains at contrada Palazzo, had blocked an attempt to illegally harvest the trees surrounding the ruins and to bulldoze the site.

That conspicuous architectural remains existed at contrada Palazzo near the Piano Melia (a small plain within the boundaries of the Comune of Cittanova), on the western side of the Dossone plateau, was already known, even though this site's name is not found in recent topographical maps²³. As a place-name, the word "Palazzo" ('palace') is commonly associated with the presence of ancient ruins in Calabria and elsewhere in southern Italy and Sicily, e.g. at Monte Palazzi²⁴. A document dated July 12, 1815, lists a "pantano del Palazzo" ('Palazzo's marsh') as a node on a trail from the town of Casalnuovo (= Cittanova) to an ancient 'Consular Road' that ran along the Dossone²⁵. The presence on the Piano Melia of "ruderi antichissimi, chiamati "la Caserma", " ('very ancient ruins, known as "the Barracks") that may be those at contrada Palazzo, is also mentioned in a short story published in a Cittanova periodical in 1927. Projectile points and potsherds were said to have been found in this place²⁶. The topographical details supplied by the unknown author of the story rule out the possibility that "la Caserma" be identified with a guard post that was built in the early 1700s near the contrada Omo Morto, where the Passo del Mercante was then located²⁷.

Different historical interpretations of the structures at contrada Palazzo were offered by Domenico Raso (an independent scholar from Cittanova, now deceased) in an article and a book published in 1987 and 2001 respectively²⁸, and by Carla Carbone in a volume edited by A. Picone Chiodo in 2005. Raso argued that the ruins belong to a Roman "posto di presidio stabile... or una casermetta" ('a permanent military outpost'... or 'small barracks') built on a site that he believed to have been fortified by the Romans in 71 B.C., during an episode in Spartacus' *bellum servile*, whereas Carbone has claimed that they belong to a late antique or early Medieval fortification²⁹. Neither dating was based upon archaeological evidence from the site.

Palazzo's ruins occupy the eastern side of a thickly wooded ridgetop flanked by two streams converging into the Vallone Lo Stretto. At an elevation of 935 m above sea level, the site would have commanded a fine view of the Gioia Tauro Plain and the Tyrrhenian coast. The most impressive architectural remains include portions of two parallel walls of a building extending c. 27 m from north to south and of uncertain width. Both the masonry technique of the walls, consisting of regular courses of mostly medium-sized stones and tile fragments bonded with mortar³⁰, and their thickness (70 and 80 cm), point to a recent dating. Although these were known to previous observers, no one had noticed the presence of a large (32 x 60 cm) block of granite, which appears to have been re-used, in the western wall (Fig. 2) and of numerous Greek roof tile fragments embedded in the masonry (Fig. 3). Other Greek pantiles found in the soil around the walls in the 2013 and 2014 surveys are similar to those from the Locri excavations; they are datable from the late archaic to the Hellenistic periods (Fig. 4, a-b)³¹. The dating of the cover tiles is uncertain³². In addition, an iron implement found beneath the

²³ See *Carta Topografica d'Italia* (F. 590), sez. IV, *Taurianova*, ser. 25, ed. 1, IGMI Firenze 1998, ed. 1/A (scale 1: 25 000) and *Aerofotogrammetria Cittanova* 1994. UTM: (n) 4241450; (e) 597975. GPS data: 38° 18.51 N / 016° 07.19 E (6.05.2014, at 17:30; elevation 935 m).

²⁴ For the frequency of this place-name see e.g. IANNELLI 1989: 705; RASO and SPANÒ 2002: 15-16; KNAPP ET AL. 2007: 487, n. 16; SPANÒ 2010: 70, 128, 129, n. 52; 130; VISONÀ 2010: 3, n. 8. Cf. BACCHELLI 1942: 238-239: "[...] una famiglia di contadini, alloggiata in quel che chiamano il Palazzo, rovine dell'Abbazia, che fu, dicono, una stazione di crociati e di pellegrini [...] sulla via di Monte Sant'Angelo e di Santa Maria di Siponto." ('a family of peasants, living in what they call the Palace, ruins of the Abbey, which was, they say, a station of crusaders and pilgrims [...] on the road of Monte Sant'Angelo and Santa Maria di Siponto.')

²⁵ MUSTICA 1991: 12-13; cf. RASO 2001b: 51-52. According to CARBONE 2005a: 48, contrada Palazzo was known until recently as "Pantano Palazzo" because of the presence of marshes.

²⁶ A.B.C.1927: 9: "Sui piani di Milea (sic!), da poco oltrepassato il Passo del Mercante, a tre ore circa da Cittanova [...] ove, le indagini storiche degli studiosi locali vogliono porre una cittadella locrese, la Meleia che guardava le vie di comunicazione commerciale di quella fiorente città con le colonie di Ipponium e Metauria. Su quelle quattro mura a fior di terra si sbizzarrirono la fantasia e l'avidità popolare per lungo volger di secoli [...]. Certo è che i locresi di buono non ci lasciarono nulla, ed i cercatori non ci trovarono altro che qualche cuspid e il solito cocciame fittile del quale se ne trova un po' dappertutto nella Piana." The relevant passages in the story are: 'On the plains of Milea [probably an error for: Melia] a little after the Merchant's Pass...' and 'treasure hunters found only some projectile points and the usual fragments of pottery that one finds nearly everywhere in the [Gioia Tauro] Plain.'

²⁷ See RASO 2001b: 55. According to Raso, the ruins of this guardpost, which was manned until the early 1800s (when the French army of Napoleon I occupied Calabria), were still visible in 2001.

²⁸ RASO 1987: 83-84, 86-87, 96; RASO 2001b: 103-109; PICONE CHIODO 2005. G.M. Genovese's mention of "una sorta di fortificazione male individuata e [...] ancora peggio datata" ('a sort of fortification poorly identified and [...] even less convincingly dated') at "Piano Melia" in a thesis completed in 1987, is unhelpful: see GENOVESE 1986-1987: 215.

²⁹ See RASO 1987: 96; RASO 2001b: 107; CARBONE 2005a: 54, quoting MINUTO 1998. Raso's interpretation of these structures has been accepted acritically by GENOVESE 2012: 50. Cf. STRAUSS 2009: 148-149.

³⁰ According to CARBONE 2005a: 54, the longer wall at contrada Palazzo was built "con pietrame irregolare a secco" ('dry-built with irregular stones'), whereas Raso correctly noted that these walls were constructed "a regola d'arte, apparentemente cementati e con la faccia a vista assai regolare" ('very well built, apparently with mortar and with a very regular facing'): see RASO 1987: 83. FTIR and XRD analyses of a sample of the mortar, which were conducted by C. Corti and L. Rampazzi, have revealed the presence of calcite, quartz, silicates (feldspars and phyllosilicates), and of probable but unidentified organic matter.

³¹ Fig. 4a: Munsell of paste 10YR 7/4; height of flange: 6.28 cm; width of flange at base: 5.37 cm; thickness of pan: 3.43 cm. Fig. 4b: Munsell of paste 5YR 7/4 - 6/4 and 10YR 8/3; height of flange: 5.66 cm; width of flange at base 5.9 cm; thickness of pan: 2.96 cm. Cf. NOTARIO 1992: 321-322, 324, types D2, E1, E3-E4, X1, X3, and Pl. XCIV, nos. 12, 17-19; VISONÀ 1999: 359-360, Fig. 362.



Fig. 2. Contrada Palazzo seen from the southwest in 2013. Remains of the western wall with large granitic block in the bottom course.



Fig. 3. Contrada Palazzo 2014. Detail of the western wall (seen from the southwest) with Greek pantile fragment embedded in the masonry.

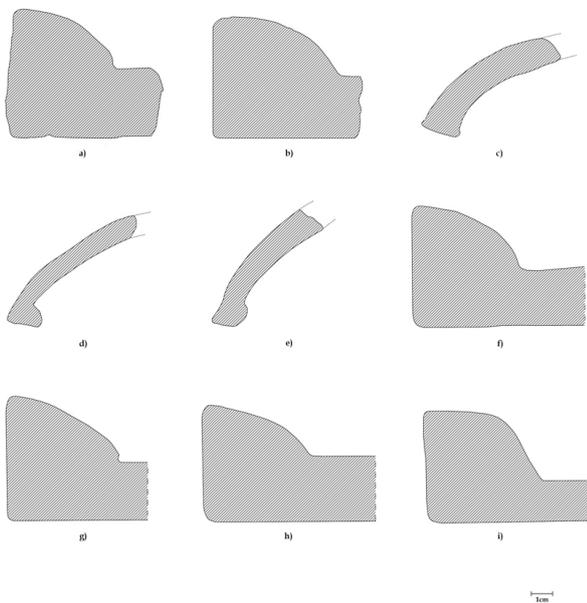
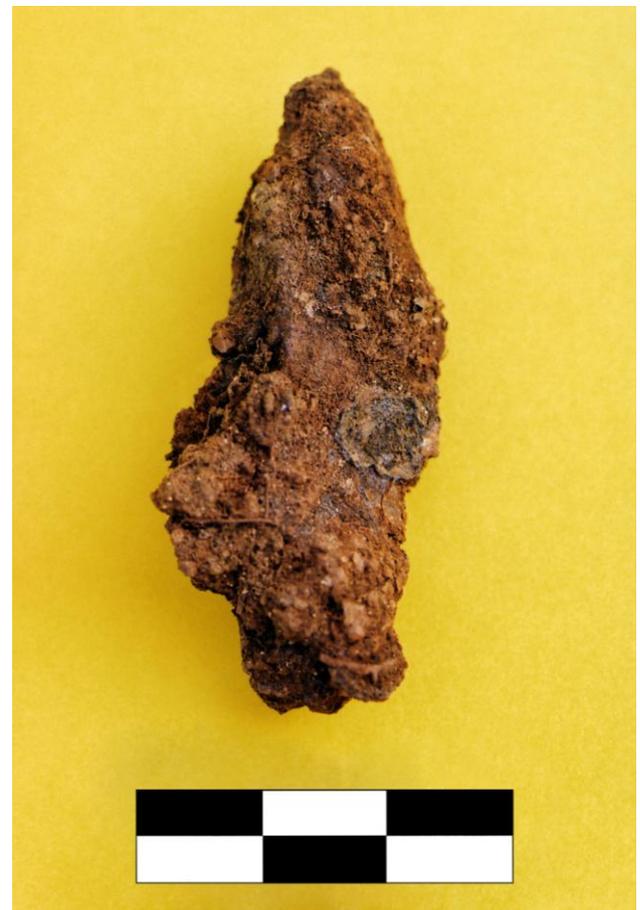


Fig. 4. Greek roof tiles from contrada Palazzo (a-b), contrada Bregartorto (f-g), Monte Varraro (h-i). The dating of the cover tiles c-e from contrada Palazzo is uncertain.

Fig. 5. Contrada Palazzo 2013. Iron (javelin?) point broken at base. Length: 5.42 cm; max. width 2.4 cm; shaft has quadrangular section (6.7 – 7.7 mm). Weight: 31.66 g. Photo by P. Visonà enhanced by L.F. Chapman.



turf is identifiable as a javelin point (Fig. 5). This kind of projectile is akin to examples from Monte Palazzi, presumably datable between 550-250 B.C., and recalls the finds of “*qualche cuspidè*” (‘some projectile points’) mentioned in the story about “*la Caserma*”³³. The evidentiary value of these materials is considerable, for it supports the possibility that the site was occupied by the Locrians. Contrada Palazzo’s dominant position, overlooking the upper course of the Torrente Serra (a stream which merges with the Razzà past Cittanova) and the

³² Fig. 4c: Munsell of paste 5R 4/6 – 3/6; thickness at finished end: 1.67, decreasing to 1.2 -1.3 cm; Fig. 4d: Munsell of paste 10YR 6/4; thickness: 1.35 cm decreasing to 1-1.12 cm; Fig. 4e: Munsell of paste 10YR 6/4; thickness: 1.56 decreasing to 1.05-1.39 cm.

³³ See above, footnote 26 and cf. VISONÀ 2010: 16, Fig. 34 ; VISONÀ 2013: 5, Fig. 9.

chora of Medma, the sub-colony closest to Locri, would have certainly made it suitable for a lookout. Significantly, the oldest trail from Cittanova to the Dossone plateau was the so-called “*Meda*”, which “*attraverso il torrente Serra-Razzà e il passo di Scarpa della Pietra [...], porta al piano Zomaro, proseguendo poi verso lo Jonio Locrese*”, ‘via the Serra-Razzà stream and the Scarpa della Pietra pass [...], reaches the Zomaro plain, and then continues towards Locri’s Ionian coast’, according to Raso³⁴. It would therefore have been important for the Locrians to guard this potential invasion route into their homeland, particularly during the war against their Tyrrhenian sub-colonies in 422 B.C. (Thucyd. 5.5.3). The Greek roof tiles and some cut blocks from contrada Palazzo may have come from a small military installation (possibly a watchtower, since the available space seems too cramped for a fort) in close proximity to the ruins, whose functions and occupational history cannot be fathomed without remote sensing and ground truthing.

The search for an ancient Greek fortification at contrada Bregatorto (a wooded area within the boundaries of the Comune of Antonimina)³⁵, c. 800 m to the southeast of contrada Palazzo, was inspired by descriptions provided by Raso. Information obtained from the Italian Forest Service also indicated that a site similar to contrada Palazzo and ‘overlooking Locri’, existed across the Piano Melia, on the eastern side of the Dossone plateau. Raso only referred to a “*bella fortificazione trapelante dal terreno a Bracatorta*” (‘a handsome fortification protruding from the ground at Bregatorto’) in his 2001 book. He also claimed that the “*modesta altura di Bracatorta*” (‘Bregatorto’s low hill’) was fortified by the Locrians against the Brettians, their Italic foes, between the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. A Locrian outpost at contrada Bregatorto would have guarded a pass, because the main mule-trail which led from Locri to the Tyrrhenian coast across the Dossone plateau ran by this place³⁶. Raso described the site more clearly in a contemporary article³⁷, and he mentioned a structure “*con i resti di una torre circolare... a Bragatorta sopra Antonimina*” (‘with the remains of a round tower... at Bregatorto above Antonimina’) in an article written jointly with Enzo Spanò in 2002³⁸.

The second Greek site after contrada Palazzo was located in 2014. Antonimina’s Mayor Antonio Condelli later identified its place-name as “Coculédi” (Fig. 6)³⁹. Our first surface inspection hoped to locate the Bregatorto site described by Raso and the ‘handsome fortification protruding from the ground’ that he had mentioned in 2001. The “Coculédi” site lies at 400 m to the south of contrada Bregatorto, however. Good light con-

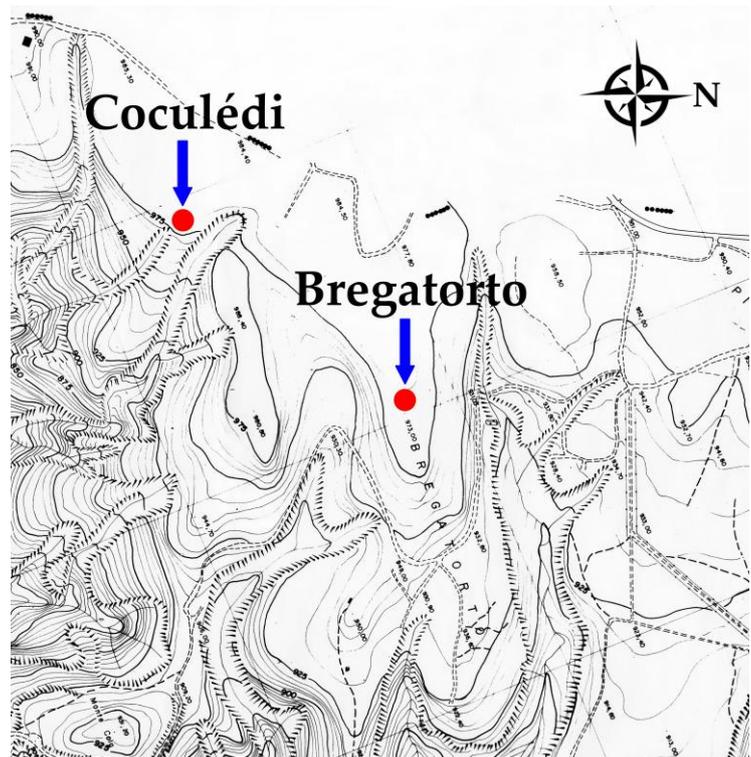


Fig. 6. Location of località “Coculédi” and contrada Bregatorto in Aerofotogrammetria Antonimina 1987. Courtesy of Comune di Antonimina, Ufficio Tecnico.

³⁴ RASO 2001b: 33 and 25 (for a photograph of the Torrente Serra riverbed).

³⁵ For contrada Bregatorto see ROHLFS 1974: 28 (Bracatorto) and ESPOSITO 2012: 18 (Bregatorto). The spelling Bregatorto is used in the *Aerofotogrammetria Antonimina* 1987 and in the *Carta Topografica d'Italia* (see above, footnote 23). Raso (who used the spelling Bracatorta) believed that this place-name means “fortified plain” and refers to the Greek fortification that existed at this site. See RASO 2001b: 105, n. 7. See also Catasto Regionale, foglio 3, particella 6 (Bregatorto).

³⁶ RASO 2001b: 101 and 105.

³⁷ RASO 2001a: 18: “*la collina fortificata di Bracatorta, ... in vista dello Jonio, le cui mura a doppia lista e le cui torri rotonde trapelano ancora dal terreno; il pianoro posto accanto e del quale la collina è un prolungamento continua a chiamarsi ancora oggi “Piano Melia”*” (‘the fortified hill of Bregatorto, overlooking the Ionian sea... whose double-faced walls and round towers still protrude from the ground; the nearby plain, of which the hill is an extension, continues to be called “Melia Plain” to this day’).

³⁸ RASO and SPANÒ 2002: 16.

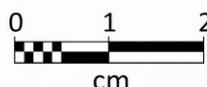
³⁹ For the meaning of this place-name, see the remarks by RASO 2001b: 201-202: “*si chiama così perché vi passava la via dove canta il cuculo*” (‘it is so named because the trail where the cuckoo-bird sings passed by this site’). According to Mario Raso (D. Raso’s brother), this name may derive from “*cóccola*” = “*pietra rotonda*” (‘pebble’) or “*castagna cotta*” (‘cooked chestnut’). GPS data: 38° 18.21 N / 016° 07.21 E (17.05.2014, at 13:30; 985 m). For “Coculédi”’s location see Catasto Regionale, foglio 3, particella 3 (L’Acqua di Maria).



Fig. 7. Località “Coculédi”, 2015 photo. Cut granite block.



Fig. 8. Località “Coculédi”, 2015. Commonware strap handle (possibly a basket-handle) with a slight twist and central groove. Hellenistic. Munsell 10YR 7/3. Preserved length: 5 cm; width 2.6 cm; thickness 1-1.2 cm. Data and image by J.E. Knapp.



ditions allowed a scatter of Greek roof tile and pottery fragments to be detected on a small terrace overlooking the Ionian sea. Thickly clad with beech trees, at an elevation of 985 m, the “Coculédi” site appeared undisturbed. The terrace covers a surface of c. 900 m² and is flanked by a gully on the northern side and by a steep slope on the eastern side, which affords a clear view of Tre Pizzi, a group of three mountain peaks towering above the Fiumara Portigliola.⁴⁰ There are no natural defenses on its western and southern sides. Subsequent inspections revealed the presence of cut blocks of granite (Fig. 7) of various sizes (up to 24 x 31 x 43 cm), and the remains of a dry-built stone wall, at least 1 m wide, oriented northwest-southeast at 120° along the northern side of the terrace. Traces of a parallel wall along the southern flank of the terrace indicate that a substantial enclosure or building occupied the entire area of the terrace. Fragments of pantiles and ceramics found on the eastern slope suggest that the site may have been affected by sheetwash erosion⁴¹, or by landslides. Surface foragers and roaming livestock may also have contributed to the horizontal dispersion of roof tile and pottery fragments (Fig. 8). The site’s location, and the fact that the architectural features were barely visible above ground, thus seemed to fit the observations made by Raso in 2001⁴².

Isolated finds of archaeological material extended beyond the terrace and across an adjacent clearing, measuring over 300 m north-south by 33 to 93 m east-west, an area which was used for pasture until the 1960s, when a forest of black pine (*Pinus nigra*) was planted⁴³. It was forested until 2008 (as could be determined by satellite photos) and has since been re-planted with young conifer trees, and fenced off; it is almost entirely overgrown today⁴⁴. Even if ground visibility in 2014 was relatively poor and never exceeding 20%, other seemingly cut blocks of granite (dimensions: 39 x 38 cm, 43 x 23 cm to 52 x 25 cm) and additional fragments of pottery, ranging in date from classical antiquity to the present, were seen in this clearing (Fig. 9). The diagnostic potsherds comprise a very worn black gloss everted rim (Fig. 10, a) and an incomplete fineware rim that could not be identified⁴⁵, the rim of a Hellenistic commonware vessel (Fig. 10, b)⁴⁶, and two non-descript, undatable

⁴⁰ A marine reconnaissance conducted by a team from The Foundation for Calabrian Archaeology in 2015 on a fishing vessel that sailed from Roccella Jonica to Capo Bruzzano, along the seaward side of the Locrian *chora*, has found that Tre Pizzi was the most distinctive landmark for the site of Locri. Otherwise the coastline is rather featureless. Even the estuaries of the Fiumara Portigliola and Fiumara di Gerace are not clearly visible to sailors coming from the north or the south. The Greeks understood geography as “*la terra vista dal mare*” (‘the land seen from the sea’), i.e. from a ship-to-shore perspective, according to BRANCACCIO 1991: 17.

⁴¹ HILL 1998: 258.

⁴² Raso mentioned “*lo stato di quasi totale infossamento dei resti soprattutto a Bracatorta*” (‘the remains [are] almost entirely buried, especially at Bregatorto’): see RASO 2001b: 100.

⁴³ Information from M. Raso (interviewed on 11.06.2015).

⁴⁴ These measurements were taken in 2014 by J.R. Jansson using a Simmons LRF 600 Rangefinder.

⁴⁵ According to L. Toniolo, the rim in Fig. 10, a is an “*orlo estroflesso di bottiglia... in ceramica a vernice nera di produzione locale*” (‘an everted rim of a bottle...of locally made black gloss pottery’); cf. BITTI 1989: 170, no. 58 (400-350 B.C.). Munsell of the incomplete fineware rim, outer side: 2.5Y N3/ (very dark gray), 10YR 5/6 (red); inner side: 2.5Y N2/ (black), 2.5YR 5/6 (red). These sherds were located at c. 25 m from the terrace.

⁴⁶ L. Toniolo has described it as an “*orlo di grande contenitore*” (‘a rim of a large vessel’). Cf. MANZO 1989: 329, no. 398 (4th and 3rd centuries B.C., lasting possibly until the beginning of the 2nd century B.C.).



Fig. 9. Località “Coculédi” 2014. Red pinflags mark surface finds in the clearing directly opposite the terrace site.

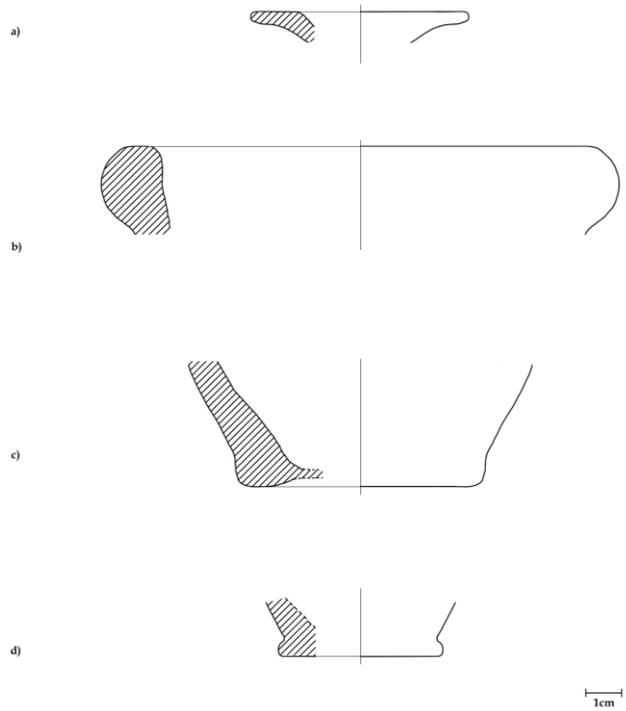


Fig. 10. Località “Coculédi” 2014. a) everted black gloss rim, Munsell 7.5YR 7/2, diam. 6 cm; b) rim of Hellenistic commonware vessel, Munsell 7.5YR 7/4, diam. 12 cm; c) commonware base, Munsell 5YR 7/3, diam. 7 cm; d) commonware base, Munsell 7.5YR 6/4, diam. 4.6 cm. Drawings by L. Toniolo and J.E. Knapp.

Fig. 11. Località “Coculédi” 2014. Chert burin (?). Munsell (R) 5YR 6/1 and 5YR 4/1. Length: 2.64 cm; width at base 2.76 cm; thickness 0.72 cm.

commonware bases (Fig. 10, c-d). Some lithic utensils made of different types of chert, including possibly a burin (Fig. 11), two cores (Fig. 12), and a flake that may be utilized, were among the finds. Their wide distribution at a considerable distance from the terrace attests to a prehistoric frequentation not previously documented at this altitude, and in this locale⁴⁷. A platform gun flint from an 18th-century or Napoleonic era firearm (Fig. 13), and the presence of an inscribed boundary marker still *in situ* across the clearing from “Coculédi” (Fig. 14), are evidence of more recent human activity and land use in the area⁴⁸. Two identical boundary stones, one of which was stolen between the summer of 2014 and the fall of 2015 (Fig. 15), were also found to the north and south

⁴⁷ J. Robb has pointed out that ‘there is good evidence of Neolithic habitation sites up to about 800 m or so, but above this, only axe finds and one or two pieces of obsidian are known’ (E-mail communication on 4.08.2014). See ROBB 2004: 177.

⁴⁸ For the gun flint see SOLINAS 1970; WOODALL ET AL. 1997; WOODALL and CHELIDONIO 2006: 222. GPS data of the boundary marker at “Coculédi”: 38° 18.24 N / 016° 07.16 E (19.05.2014 at 10:30; 984 m). For the lettering of the inscription (to be read as CA (or possibly G A, according to A. Buonopane, E-mail communication on 3.07.2014), see BREVEGLIERI 1995: 46. Buonopane has tentatively suggested that “La forma particolarmente squadrata delle lettere fa pensare a un’epoca moderna (XVI-XVIII secolo e, forse, anche oltre.” (‘The particularly squarish form of the letters points to a modern era (16th-18th centuries and, possibly, even later’). Disputes about the use and boundaries of Antonimina’s public lands are documented in 1809 and 1811: see ESPOSITO 2012: 22-25.



Fig. 12. Località “Cocolédi” 2014. Chert cores. Left: Munsell (R) N6 – N5. Dimensions: 2.27 x 1.32 cm. Right: Munsell (R) 5YR 2/1 and 5YR 4/1. Length: 4.15 cm; width at base: 3 cm; max. thickness: 1.55 cm.

Fig. 13. Località “Cocolédi” 2014. Gun flint. Munsell (R) 10YR 6/2. Length: 2.98 cm; Width: 2.16 cm; thickness: 8 mm.



Fig. 14. Località “Cocolédi” 2014. Stone boundary marker in situ. Munsell (R) N6. Height above ground: 76 cm; width: 25 cm; thickness: 11 to 13 cm at top. Dimensions of letters C or G: 6.84 x 6.45 cm. Width of letter A: 5.3 cm; length of diagonal strokes: 8.2 cm (left), 7.5 cm (right).

Fig. 15. Stone boundary marker in situ to the south of località “Cocolédi”, 2014. It was stolen before October 2015.

of this marker: satellite photography has shown that all three stones follow an alignment that must represent a centuries-old land subdivision⁴⁹.

Some jarring discrepancies between Raso’s accounts and the geomorphological and archaeological features of the “Cocolédi” site, however, prompted further investigations. Although Raso had mentioned a fortified hilltop, “Cocolédi”’s terrace shows little, if any, military potential, because it is naturally protected only on its northern flank. Arguably, no threat could be expected from the slope on the eastern side, which faces the Locrian *chora*, yet the western and southern sides have no natural defenses. Surface inspections yielded no traces of the ‘double-faced walls’ and ‘round towers’ described in Raso’s 2001 article. Yet, Raso (who had also

⁴⁹ Information from J.R. Jansson. GPS data of the original location of the stolen boundary stone: 38° 18.05 N / 016° 06.88 E (7.06.2014 at 11.40; 992 m). Another boundary stone inscribed with same letters was located to the north of “Cocolédi”’s marker at 38° 18.63 N / 016° 07.54 E (5.06.2014 at c. 19:25; 960 m); it was taken to Antonimina’s City Hall for safekeeping, because it had been pulled out of the ground.



Fig. 16. Contrada Bregatorto, October 2015. The Greek fortification's eastern wall.

written about “Coculédi” in his book, indicating that it was a wooded area)⁵⁰, had consistently referred to contrada Bregatorto as the site where a fortification was located. The accuracy of his information could not be verified in 2014, partly because the name “Coculédi” is not found on maps. Both the topographical setting and the characteristics of the architectural remains at “Coculédi” also seemed to be more in keeping with those of a small frontier sanctuary rather than a fortification. The location of the “Coculédi” site on Locri’s western horizon, coinciding with the visible limits of the Locrian *chora*, would support this possibility. Standing on prominent positions near the borders of a Greek city’s territory, frontier sanctuaries identified the outer limits of its domain and marked the boundaries between a “wild” and a “civilized” landscape, and between nature and culture⁵¹. They thus served both political and religious functions.

New surface inspections in 2015, which began at Piano Liso (another small plain c. 600 m to the north of contrada Bregatorto) sought to understand the topography of a broader area of the plateau and to verify the presence of a fortification. Notable finds at Piano Liso consisted of a fragment of volcanic basalt possibly from an ancient grindstone (dimensions: 25 x 30 cm), which was embedded into a cobblestone pavement, and two isolated sherds of pottery, including a fragment of a cookpot handle, that cannot be closely dated⁵². A ‘large structure built with stones and bricks bonded with mortar’, which Raso had seen at contrada Bregatorto and illustrated (without a scale) in his 1987 essay⁵³, was identified on the right side of a dirt road leading from Bregatorto toward Monte Cola, precisely where he had said it was located. But the masonry of its walls cannot be ancient, and their function remains enigmatic⁵⁴. A subsequent visit to Monte Cola (931.2 m), c. 600 m to the south of contrada Bregatorto, yielded only a fragment of cover tile of uncertain date from the northwestern slope of this hill. Nonetheless, the summit of Monte Cola could have been a lookout point to the Greeks, as it affords a sweeping view of the Locrian *chora* from the acropolis of Gerace to the mountain Tre Pizzi. One of the easiest and most direct routes from Locri Epizephyrii to the Tyrrhenian coast would probably have passed by Monte Cola, which is a landmark and a dividing point for trails to the Dossone plateau⁵⁵. After Monte Cola was inspected, field checking of the area to the northeast of località “Coculédi” allowed another Greek site to be identified at contrada Bregatorto itself.

This third site lies at only 400 m from località “Coculédi” and occupies an elongated terrace ringed by beech trees, at an elevation of 973 m (Fig. 6)⁵⁶. It is protected by steep slopes on three sides and appears undisturbed. The only approach to the terrace is from the west. Substantial remains of three perimeter walls, enclosing a trapezoidal area that may exceed 1,300 m², are visible above ground along the northern, eastern, and southern sides of the terrace. The eastern (Fig. 16) and southern walls, which measure c. 38 m and 43 m re-

⁵⁰ RASO 2001b: 201.

⁵¹ DAVERIO ROCCHI 1988: 55-57; DE POLIGNAC 1995: 33-41; LEONE 1998: 14, 15 and 26-27; PEDLEY 2005: 11-12 and 46-53; CHANIOTIS 2008: 109.

⁵² GPS data of basalt block in cobblestone pavement: 38° 18.54 N / 016° 08.26 E (5.06.2015 at 12.06; the elevation at 884 m may be unreliable).

⁵³ RASO 1987: 85. This structure, consisting of two parallel walls, is illustrated on p. 89.

⁵⁴ According to C. Carbone, the longer wall is 5.10 m long and up to 1.90 m high; its width tapers from 1.12 m at the base to 0.53 m at the top. Its upper portion consists of courses of bricks and stones bonded with mortar, representing a later building phase. Carbone has proposed to date this structure between the 6th and the 8th centuries A.D.: see CARBONE 2005b: 56. In June 2014 a resident of Antonimina said that these or other ruins at contrada Bregatorto were known as “*li muredi dei vagni*” (‘the walls of the baths’). G. Murdaca, a 53-year old driver at Antonimina, interviewed in June, 2014, said that according to stories told by his father, “*a Bragatorto una volta c'erano i briganti*” (‘outlaws once lived at Bregatorto’). For a similar legend about Monte Palazzi see KNAPP ET AL. 2007: 493, n. 18.

⁵⁵ Our team followed the ridge road from Monte Cola all the way to the Fiumara Portigliola on the valley floor in 2015. A trail from Antonimina to contrada Bregatorto also goes by Monte Cola: see RASO 2001: 191 and 202.

⁵⁶ GPS data: 38° 18.36 N / 016° 07.64 E (17.10.2015 at 11:30; 973 m). UTM: (n) 4240560; (e) 598725. The terrace points towards the Ionian coast at 120°.

spectively, are possibly the best preserved⁵⁷. Both their masonry, which consists of dry-packed, unmodified cobbles and roughly hewn stones (resembling the construction technique of the ramparts of the late archaic fort on Monte Palazzi), and the ubiquitous presence of Greek flanged pantile fragments (Fig. 17, top; Fig. 4, f-g), corroborate an identification of this complex as an ancient fortification. Samples of these roof tiles show close similarities to those found at contrada Palazzo, the first Greek site located in the 2013-2014 surveys⁵⁸. Their dating tentatively suggests that this site was occupied between the late 6th and the second half of the 4th centuries B.C. After a preliminary inspection of the site was completed, Mario Raso visited contrada Bregatorto and confirmed that this was the fortification described by his brother, Domenico, in 2001 and 2002⁵⁹. No remains of the round tower or towers mentioned by D. Raso were in evidence in 2015, however. A large outer structure seemingly parallel to the eastern wall, which would have faced the Ionian coast, may represent the feature he referred to in 2001 as “*mura a doppia lista*” (‘double-faced walls’)⁶⁰. The relationship between the “Coculédi” site and this fortification also needs to be explained⁶¹.

The finds from contrada Palazzo and from two adjacent sites at “Coculédi” and contrada Bregatorto have important implications for our understanding of the defense of the Locrian *chora*. It would have been possible to send warning of an impending threat from contrada Palazzo to the fortification at contrada Bregatorto, which does not command a view of the Tyrrhenian littoral, even though it lies at a higher elevation. A messenger could have covered the distance between these two sites (c. 800 m) in a short time. Signals could also have been sent from either “Coculédi” or contrada Bregatorto (or perhaps from Monte Cola) to Locri. It seems unlikely that the Greek materials found at contrada Palazzo were simply transported there in recent times from contrada Bregatorto (or località “Coculédi”) to be re-used. Clearly, a Locrian lookout was needed on the western rim of the plateau. Without it, the stronghold at contrada Bregatorto could have been easily overrun by an invading force reaching the top of the plateau from the Tyrrhenian coast⁶².



Fig. 17. Fragments of Greek pantiles from contrada Bregatorto (top) and Monte Varraro (bottom) 2015. Upper left: Munsell of paste 10YR 7/3 – 6/3. Height of flange: 5.6 cm; width of flange at base: 5.5 cm; thickness of pan: 2.75 cm. Upper right: Munsell of paste 2.5Y 7/3. Height of flange: 5.8 cm; width of flange at base: 5.4 cm; thickness of pan: 2.7 – 2.95 cm. Lower left: Munsell of paste 5YR 7/4 and 10YR 7/3 (core). Height of flange: 5.55 cm; width of flange at base: 5 cm; thickness of pan: 3.1-3.15 cm. Lower right: Munsell of paste 10YR 7/3 – 6/3 and 5YR 7/4 (core). Height of flange: 5.25 cm; width of flange at base: 5.25 cm; thickness of pan: 1.9 cm.

⁵⁷ These preliminary measurements were taken in 2015 by J.R. Jansson using a Simmons LRF 600 Rangefinder.

⁵⁸ Cf. NOTARIO 1992: 322, types E1, E3; Pl. XCV, 17-18. Some small fragments of cover tiles have also been seen inside the fortification at contrada Bregatorto.

⁵⁹ According to M. Raso (interviewed on 11.06.2015), D. Raso stumbled upon the site while he was looking for mushrooms with his brother in the month of September, “after 1987”. M. Raso pointed out that the terrace was then covered with underbrush.

⁶⁰ See above, footnote 37.

⁶¹ Only an isolated scatter of small Greek pantile fragments (dimensions: 5 x 8 cm, 10 x 15 cm) was found between località “Coculédi” and the fortification at contrada Bregatorto. GPS data: 38° 18.38 N / 016° 07.51 E (8.06.2015 at 10:05; the elevation at 996 m is unreliable).

⁶² During most of the year, lightly armed troops could have travelled from the Gioia Tauro Plain to the Dossone plateau in a relatively short time via the Torrente Razzà-Serra and the pass at contrada “Scarpa della Pietra”, since the reverse journey from this pass takes only an hour, according to Raso. For the presence of a spring and ruins at this location see RASO 1987: 87 and 96; RASO 2001b: 87-88. The trail

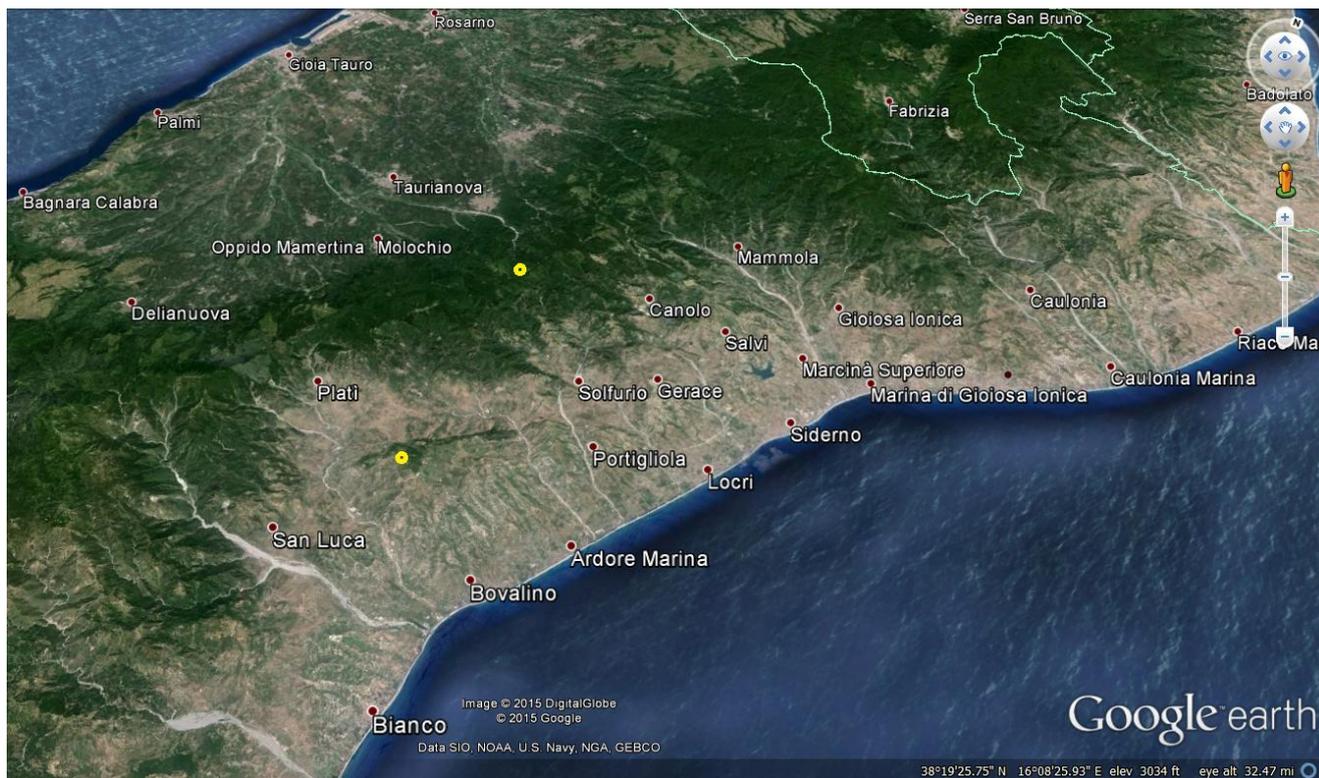


Fig. 18. Satellite map showing the location of Monte Varraro (left) and contrada Bregatorto (right) marked in yellow. Computer-aided visualization by J.R. Jansson and R.F. Chapman.

Furthermore, the concentration of Greek sites at c. 4 km to the south of the Passo del Mercante indicates that an older overland trail traversed the Dossone plateau in their vicinity rather than where this pass is located today⁶³. If so, the fortification at contrada Bregatorto would have been the main control point on the most direct route from Locri Epizephyrii to the plateau (via the Fiumara Portigliola and the Fiumara di Antonimina to Monte S. Mauro and Monte Cola), and from the plateau to Locri's Tyrrhenian dominions. The placement of the "Coculédi" and Bregatorto sites at the outer limits of the Locrian *chora* suggests that they could also have been boundary markers.

Controlling a territory as diverse as that of the Locrian *chora* was probably not limited to the borderlands. Strategically important locations near the border region, mid-way between the sea and the mountains on Locri's western horizon, would have been guarded as well. Thus, numerous surface finds of Greek pantile fragments from the ruins of a Byzantine monastery at contrada "Previteju" on Monte Varraro, a naturally fortified hilltop in the Comune of Benestare, c.16.7 km to the south of contrada Bregatorto (Fig. 18), may be indicative of a Locrian presence at this site. The dating of these materials ranges from the late archaic to the Hellenistic periods (Fig. 17, bottom; Fig. 4, h-i)⁶⁴. Rising at 655 m above sea level, the summit of Monte Varraro offers an unrestricted view of the Fiumara Careri leading directly to the Ionian coast (and to a presumed coastal road to Locri), and of a route through Plati to the Petrace River Valley and the Tyrrhenian coast⁶⁵. Large troop move-

called "Salita Mella" takes 45 minutes from the Casino del Granduca (a dilapidated mansion c. 1.5 km to the west of contrada Palazzo) to Cittanova, according to Luigi Abramo, a Cittanova resident (interviewed on 7.06.2015).

⁶³ The Passo del Mercante's original location was at some distance to the north-west of the S.P. 1, near the Contrada Omo Morto. See above, footnote 27.

⁶⁴ For these architectural remains on Monte Varraro (also known as Monte Verraro), see MACRÌ 2014 and cf. MINUTO 1977: 342 (I owe this reference and the spelling of "Previteju" to G. Frammartino). For the profiles and dating of the pantiles see NOTARIO 1992: 322, types D3 and E4; PI. XCV, 14, 19. Some Greek pantiles were re-used for the base of the altar of the monastery's church.

⁶⁵ GPS data: 38° 11.75 N / 016° 06.87 E (6.06.2015 at 18:20; 655 m). Cf. CATALDI 1975: 95 and BARRA BAGNASCO 1996: 240, n. 14.

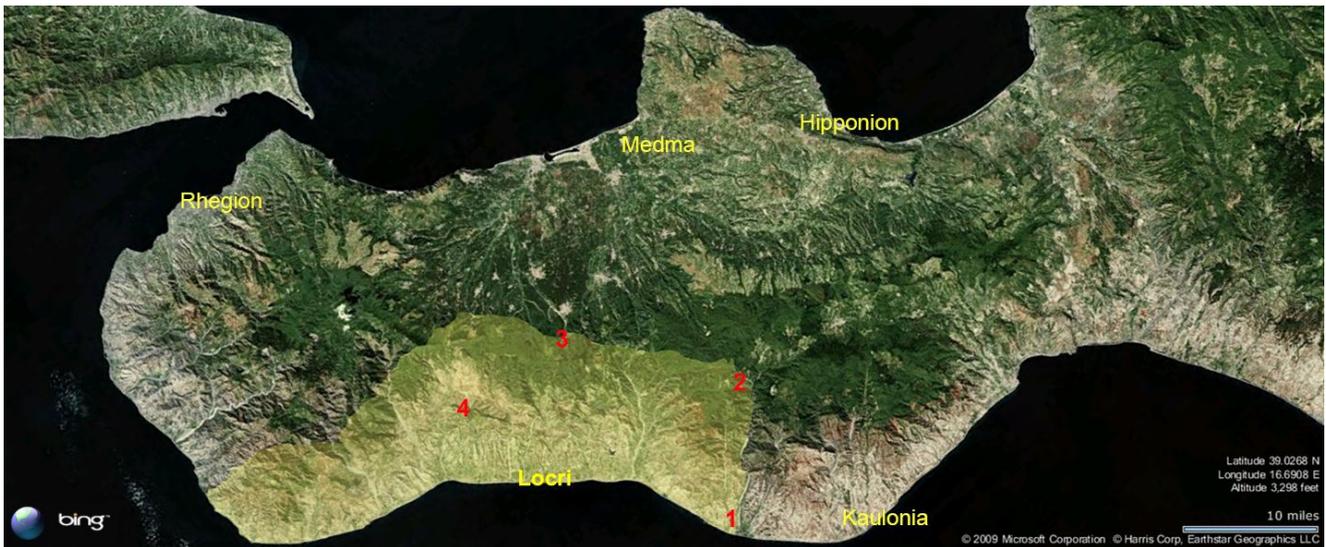


Fig. 19. Location of Torre Camillari (1), Monte Palazzi (2), contrada Bregatorto (3), and Monte Varraro (4) in relation to the boundaries of the chora of Locri Epizephyrii (highlighted pale green). Computer-aided visualization by J.R. Jansson and L.F. Chapman (from VISONÀ 2010: 1, Fig. 1).

ments originating from the west and from the south would have been visible from this high perch. If indeed Monte Varraro was used as an observation post by the Locrians, it could have monitored both access routes⁶⁶.

Conclusions

The topographical investigations conducted in 2013-2015 have located three previously undocumented Greek sites along the western borders of the Locrian *chora*. They may now be added to Torre Camillari and Monte Palazzi, two outposts on the northeastern flank of Locri's territory (Fig. 19). Their concentration near a major overland route between the eastern and the western coasts of Italy shows that the Locrians guarded their territory from multiple control points and also maintained surveillance over the Gioia Tauro Plain and the *chora* of Medma, their closest Tyrrhenian sub-colony. Two of these sites (at contrada Palazzo and località "Coculédi") left a small archaeological footprint and their specific functions cannot be defined at present without further research. The largest site (at contrada Bregatorto) was occupied by a fortification, whose features recall those of the Locrian fort on Monte Palazzi and which may have been in use between c. 500-300 B.C.

These findings underscore the potential value of an integrated research approach combining satellite imaging, fieldwalking, and close interaction with local informants as precursors to terrestrial remote sensing and targeted excavations. They also suggest that more Locrian fortified sites and control points can be expected to be situated along the southeastern border of the *chora*, where Rhegion was an enemy to be reckoned with throughout the late archaic and classical periods.

⁶⁶ In an undated essay on the history of Bovalino, a coastal town to the south-east of Benestare, D.A. Morisciano (1816-1909) wrote that "... alla n[ost]ra montagna denominata, "Serre di Furraina", venuti Uffiziali del Genio, per vedute strade greche, constataron con certezza, l'esistenza in tal luogo di strada rotabile, da buoni tratti ancor rimasti non solo, ma quel, ch'è più chiaro, rinvennero le vestigia pure delle case di posto di guardia, o caserme." ('after officers of the Army Corps of Engineers came to our mountain known as "Serre di Furraina" and saw Greek roads, they realized that a road for wheeled traffic must have existed there, because some decent stretches of it still remained. More remarkably, they also found the remains of the guard posts houses, or barracks.')

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