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XVI, 2025/Supplemento 1



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XVI, 2025/Supplemento 1

LA STRADA E LA CITTÀ

GENESI E TRASFORMAZIONE DAL RAPPORTO TRA VIABILITÀ E IMPIANTI URBANI NEL LAZIO E IN CAMPANIA
TRA ETÀ ROMANA E TARDA ANTICHITÀ

Atti della Giornata internazionale di studio, Cassino, 18 aprile 2024

a cura di

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ISTITUTO CENTRALE PER L'ARCHEOLOGIA

THE ROMAN ROAD SYSTEM AND THE TOWN-TERRITORY RELATIONSHIP: THE CASES OF *ALLIFAE* AND *TELESIA*

GIUSEPPINA RENDA*

Riassunto

L'articolo esamina la relazione che le città di Allifae e Telesia, in Campania settentrionale, intrattengono con la rete viaria del territorio durante il periodo romano, con particolare riguardo alla connessione tra i due centri e la via Latina. Nel caso di Allifae, la via Latina si inserisce perfettamente nel reticolo centuriale. Entra in città, divenendone l'asse principale, sul quale si allineano monumenti significativi, tra cui il teatro, del quale viene analizzata la particolare collocazione. Per quanto concerne Telesia, la sua conoscenza è limitata dall'assenza di indagini stratigrafiche, ma la struttura urbana può essere parzialmente dedotta grazie alle tracce da aerofotointerpretazione e dai pochissimi scavi, che hanno messo in evidenza alcuni assi viari. Non sembra vi sia connessione tra rete viaria urbana ed extraurbana. Le porte che si aprono nelle mura fungono da cerniera di transizione, consentendo l'inserimento degli assi extraurbani e della stessa via Latina all'interno della città.

Parole chiave: Allifae, Telesia, via Latina, sistema stradale romano

Abstract

The article examines the different relationships between the cities of Allifae and Telesia in Northern Campania and the Via Latina, the main Roman road of the territory. In the case of Allifae, a strong correspondence emerges between this extra-urban axis, the centuriation, and the internal road layout. The branch of the Via Latina enters Allifae, becoming its main axis and maintaining this role over time, its importance highlighted by significant monuments along it, such as the theatre with its peculiar orientation. In contrast, the understanding of Telesia is limited due to the lack of stratigraphic investigations. The urban structure can be partially inferred from aerial photos and excavations, which document divergent road axes. No clear connection appears to exist between the urban and extra-urban road networks. In this context, the city gates appear to play a crucial role as transitional elements, mediating the insertion of external routes into the urban space. The comparison highlights two different models of interaction between roads and settlement.

Keywords: Allifae, Telesia, Via Latina, roman road system

INTRODUCTION

The cities of *Allifae* and *Telesia*, in northern Campania, display distinct patterns of interaction with the principal road network of the region¹. During the Samnite period, the area was densely inhabited, with numerous fortified settlements on the hills overlooking the Volturno and Calore rivers (fig. 1), in addition to farms, necropoleis, and small rural sanctuaries. The distribution of these sites allows for the reconstruction the complex road network of the middle Volturno valley. In the Roman period, settlements were organised

around a road axis extending from *Teanum* towards the river. This route is attested in the *Itinerarium Antonini*, in the description of the section *A Terracina Benevento* (121, 8-12; 122, 1-3) and in the section *Praenestina. Ab Urbe Beneventum* (304, 3), part of the longer Via Latina. By comparing these two case studies, this paper seeks to contribute to the broader debate on the organisation of ancient landscapes, with particular emphasis on the interplay between routes, urban layouts, and territorial frameworks.

In the Roman period, *Allifae* and *Telesia* were traversed by this important road axis connecting them with Rome, which defined their function as transit hubs, where other regional and interregional routes also converged. By comparing these two case studies, this paper seeks to contribute to the broader debate on the organisation of ancient landscapes, with particular emphasis on the interplay between routes, urban layouts, and territorial frameworks.

¹ I would like to sincerely thank Cristina Corsi and Frank Vermeulen for their invitation, which enabled me to participate in this prestigious conference and prompted a re-evaluation of the relationship between the road system and the cities of *Allifae* and *Telesia* from a different perspective. A huge thanks also to the Organizing Committee, namely Cesare Felici, Roberta Sollo, and Caterina Paola Venditti, for their professionalism and patience.

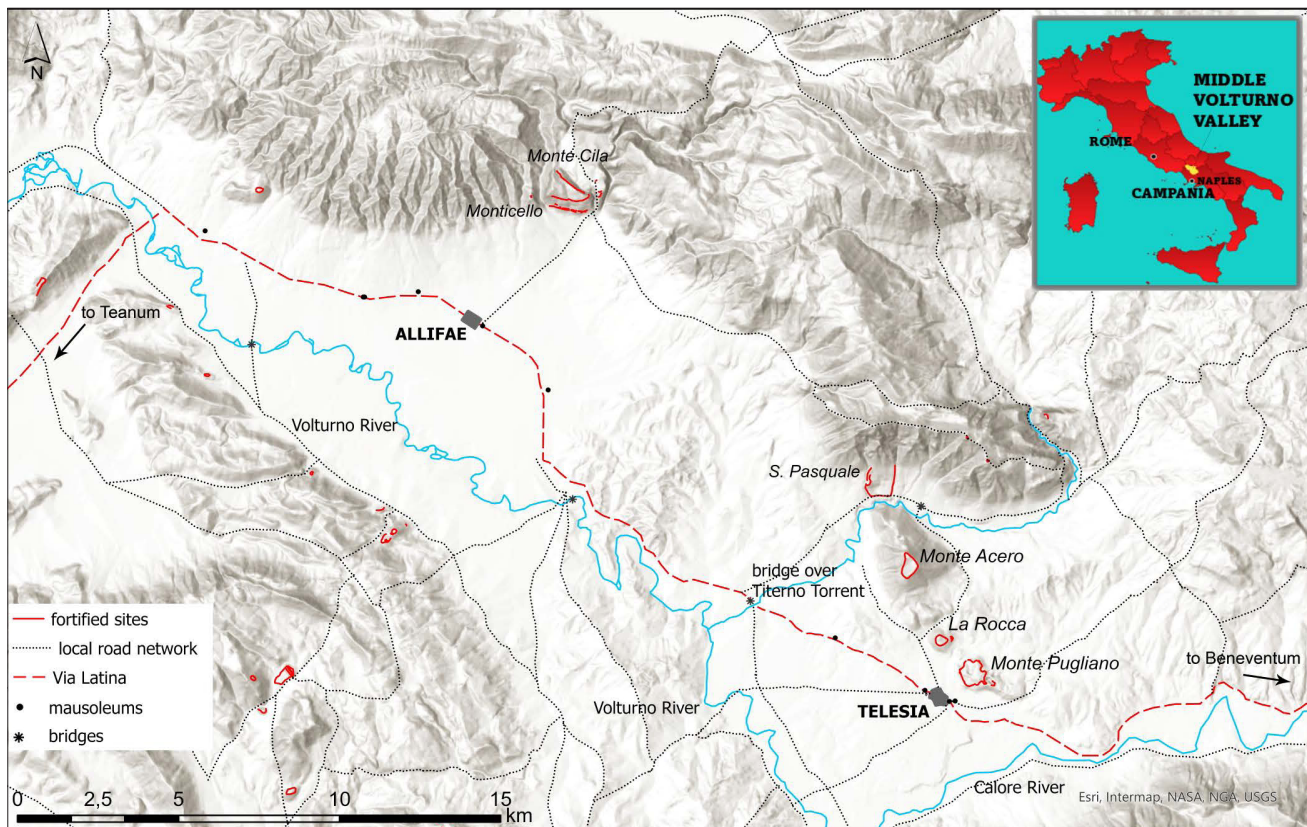


Fig. 1. The middle Volturno valley in northern Campania between *Allifae* and *Telesia* in antiquity (image by G. Renda).

Allifae, the Territory and the Roman Road System

The relationship of *Allifae* with both the primary and secondary road networks is especially significant. The Roman town developed in the alluvial plain of the River Volturno (fig. 1), close to the slopes of the Matese mountain range, occupying a rectangular area of just under 21 hectares, enclosed by walls constructed in *opus caementicium* with facing in *opus incertum*.

To the east it is bounded by the River Torano, which flows southwards into the Volturno. The choice of location was likely linked to the road axis ascending from the river valley to the high mountain plateau via the steep slopes of Mount Cila (fig. 1), a shortcut providing access to the Molise side of the Matese while avoiding the lengthy foothills route².

This route was already in use in pre-Roman times, as evidenced by the settlement associated with the

necropolis of Serra S. Croce in S. Gregorio Matese, the complex fortified settlement of Monte Cila, which controlled it, and the smaller site of Monticello (fig. 1). It also provided access to the sacred area of Capo di Campo on the Matese plateau³. In the area facing this route, at the foot of Monte Cila, lie the large necropoleis of Conca D'Oro, Croce S. Maria, and Cimitero, together with further evidence from Via Scafa and S. Vittore⁴, likely relating to pre-Roman *Allifae*, which is mentioned repeatedly in literary sources from the time of the Second Samnite War onwards⁵.

Its precise location remains uncertain. In the urban area of *Allifae*, beneath the *domus* of Mercorio-Filippelli and Rea-Amato, dated to the mid-1st century BC, earlier structures with differing orientations have been identified. However, they provide no elements for secure dating and, as Floriana Miele observes, may relate either to rural settlements or to the earliest

² With regard to this path, see SORICELLI 2013, pp. 85-86; TAGLIAMONTE 2015a, p. 166 nt. 12, 171, with full bibliographical references to earlier works; RENDA 2021, pp. 292-294. On the necropolis of Serra S. Croce, see TAGLIAMONTE *et al.* 2023. For the site of Monticello, see NATALI 2020, pp. 103-112. For Monte Cila, see CONTA HALLER 1978, pp. 59-69; OAKLEY 1995, pp. 49-51; TAGLIAMONTE 2015b, pp. 23-24.

³ SORICELLI 2013.

⁴ NATALI 2023, pp. 20-22, 26-35, with earlier works.

⁵ It was mentioned for the first time in LIV. VIII, 25, 4. The literary sources refer to TOCCO SCIARELLI 1984, pp. 173-174; MIELE 2002, pp. 18-22. Recent reviews in DI MAURO 2022, pp. 10-11; NATALI 2023, pp. 23-24.



Fig. 2. *Allifae* (Alife-Caserta). Detail of the area surrounding the ancient town (outlined in red) in an Esri satellite image (credits: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics and the GIS User Community): the deviation of the Via Latina (arrow) and the regular layout defined by road axes, field boundaries, and drainage ditches (image by G. Renda).

houses of the Roman colonists⁶. Two further walls forming a corner were uncovered in 1907 during an excavation along Via G. Alferio, beneath structures dating to the late Republican or early Imperial period, yet no dating evidence can be traced back to the pre-Roman period⁷.

The identification of structures in rubble masonry and extensive spreads of surface material west of Alife, dated to the mid- to late Republican period, has led to the hypothesis that the pre-Roman settlement was situated north-west of Roman *Allifae*⁸, not far from the necropoleis, although further confirmation is required. Despite these uncertainties, and in light of the discussion at hand – namely the relationship between settlements and roadways – the remains in question all fall within the area traversed by the mountain route and at its intersection with the foothill route along the Volturno valley, thereby underlining the role of roads as catalysts for settlement.

The route that runs at the foot of the mountains was incorporated into the Roman *diverticulum Teanum-Allifae-Beneventum* and remains one of the principal axes of local traffic. In the territory of *Allifae*, the Roman road can be reconstructed on the basis of sections of its gravelled surface that have been

uncovered⁹, together with the numerous *mausolea* that lined the route¹⁰ (fig. 1).

Particularly noteworthy is the junction of this road in *Allifae*. About one kilometre from the city entrance, the road turns towards the south-east to reach the gate opening along the western side of the walls (fig. 2). This deviation appears to have existed since Roman times, as suggested by the recessed position of the funerary monument incorporated into the chapel of the *Madonna delle Grazie*¹¹, and it persisted over time: it is recorded in historical cartography of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from Rizzi Zannoni's *Atlante del Regno* to the *Carta del Regno* of the Ufficio Topografico Napoletano. The latter likewise depicts the *mausolea* lining the route.

In other instances, changes of direction are often connected with the town entrance: for example, the junction of the Via Appia in the nearby centres of the Campanian plain, such as *Capua* and *Calatia*, where the deviation of the road marks both the entrance to and exit from the city. By contrast, the change of direction recorded in *Allifae* occurs before entry into the urban area and enables the road to integrate fully into the orderly grid of roads and paths, still well

⁶ TAGLIAMONTE, MIELE 2002, pp. 197-198; MIELE 2007, pp. 185-189.

⁷ Cfr. DELLA CORTE 1928; MARROCCO 1981, pp. 47-48; MIELE 2007, p. 187.

⁸ STANCO 2010; NATALI 2016.

⁹ MIELE 2007, p. 203; CALAZZA 2011, pp. 86-87; MATALUNA 2012, p. 45.

¹⁰ SCHWARZ 2002, pp. 141-142, M1-M3, tav. 50,3; ISABELLA 2007, pp. 69-78; MIELE 2007, pp. 206-213, with earlier works; JOHNSON 2009, pp. 50-52, fig. 27; EBREO 2011; MATALUNA 2012, pp. 20-22.

¹¹ FINELLI 1928, p. 99.

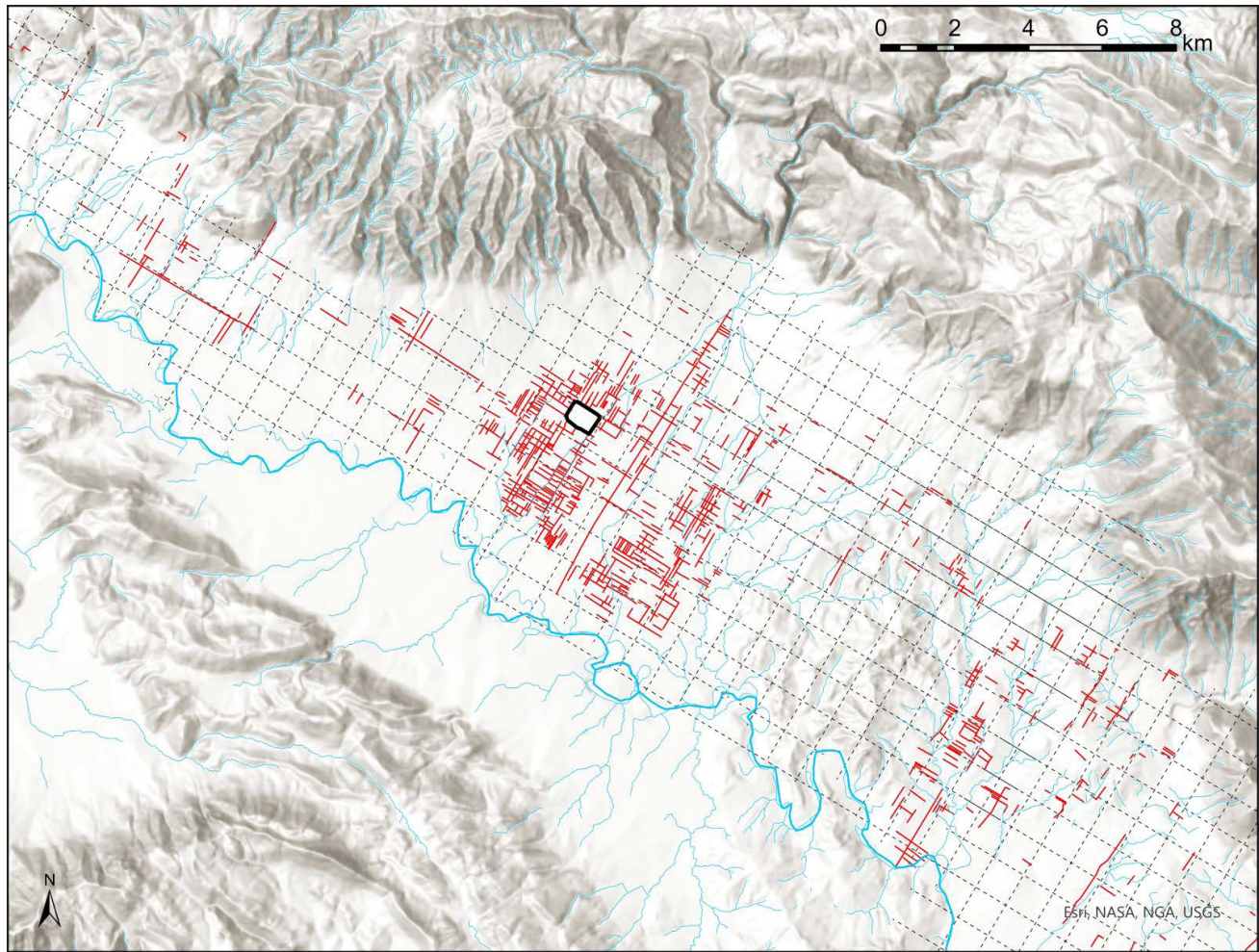


Fig. 3. *Allifae* (Alife-Caserta). The traces of the *limitatio* of the *Ager Allifanus* identified in the Alife plain, with a reconstruction of the 20-actus module (image by G. Renda).

preserved in the agricultural landscape, perpetuating the ancient agrarian division of Roman times (fig. 2). A comparable situation is observed at *Aquinum*, demonstrating the strong influence that the *limitatio* could exert on roadways¹². The *limitatio* of the *Ager Allifanus* was identified by Ferdinando Castagnoli¹³. In his reconstruction, subsequently adopted by other scholars¹⁴, the grid has a module of 20 *actus* and also encompasses the urban area. Owing to the concordance of orientation between the city and its territory, he linked the example of *Allifae* to that of *Luca*, which in turn was compared with centres along the *Via Aemilia*¹⁵. Castagnoli hypothesised that the

urban centre lay close to the presumed intersection of the *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus*, in accordance with one of the layouts recommended by the *Gromatici* and exemplified in a well-known vignette from the *Codex Arcerianus A*, the earliest surviving manuscript of the *Agrimensores*.

This raises a crucial question: why does the road axis deviate precisely at this point? Examination of the traces identified in the Alife plain reveals a high concentration in the immediate vicinity of Alife (fig. 3). On the eastern side, a discontinuity is apparent in correspondence with a series of articulated hills, which also posed problems for traffic, while to the west of Alife the boundary seems to coincide with the point of deviation, as though this marked a limit, difficult to interpret in the present state of knowledge.

The evidence suggests that this may have constituted the western boundary of the *pertica* of *Allifae*, given that traces west of this line are rather scarce (fig. 3). To support this hypothesis, the centuriation grid should be projected from the point of deviation

¹² On the *limitatio* of *Aquinum*, see CASTAGNOLI 1956a, pp. 376-377; CHIOCCI 2004, pp. 43-74; MURRO 2010, pp. 17-21; BELLINI *et al.* 2012. See CERAUDO 2004-2007 and CERAUDO 2023 on this section of *Via Latina*.

¹³ CASTAGNOLI 1956a, p. 376 and tav. IV.

¹⁴ CHOUQUER *et al.* 1987, pp. 156-159; TAGLIAMONTE, MIELE 2002; MIELE 2004, p. 189. SORICELLI 2019 proposes a re-examination.

¹⁵ CASTAGNOLI 1956a, p. 376. On the relationship between centuriation and cities, see REGOLI 1986, p. 103.

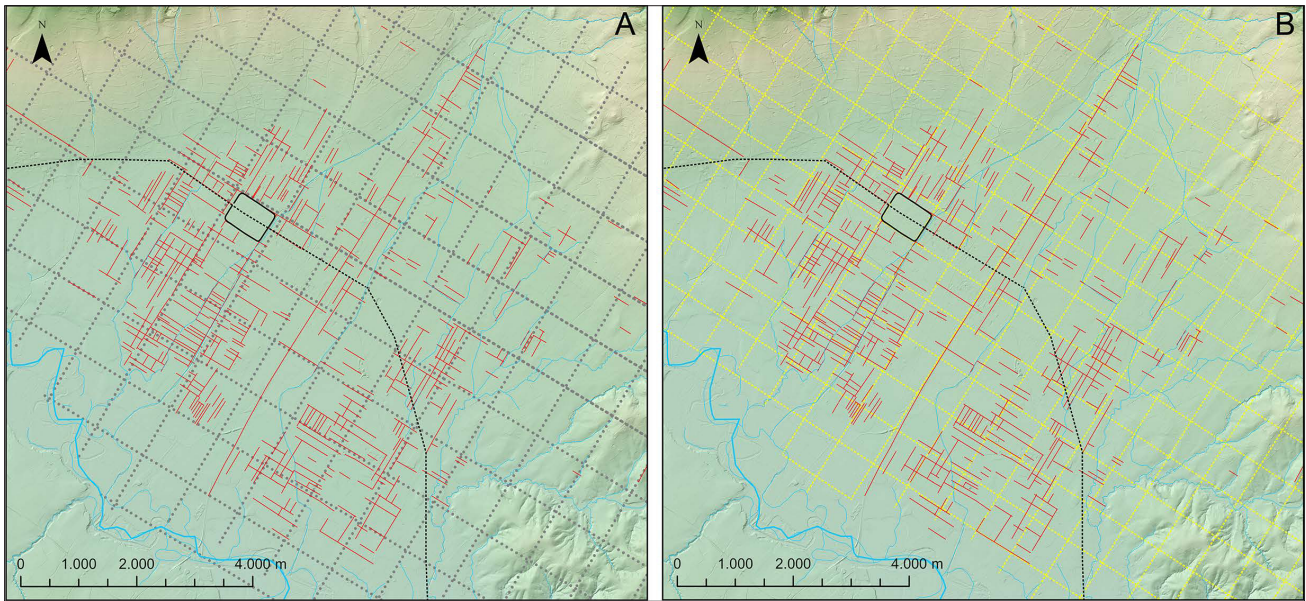


Fig. 4. *Allifae* (Alife-Caserta). Reconstruction proposals for the *limitatio* of the *Ager Allifanus*, using modules of 20 *actus* (a) and 15 *actus* (b) (image by G. Renda).

of the road. This arrangement would create problems with a grid based on a module of 20 *actus*, as previously hypothesised (fig. 4a), whereas it appears to function with *centuriae* using a module of 15 *actus* (fig. 4b). In this scheme, *Allifae* would approximately occupy the entire width of a *centuria*. Moreover, by extending this grid across the territory, it would also encompass the road axis leading towards the mountains, which would fall within the centre of a *centuria*.

This should be regarded as a working hypothesis, suggested by the possible presence of the same module in other areas of the middle Volturno valley¹⁶.

The chronology of the *centuriatio* of the *Ager Allifanus* remains a matter of debate, as does the question of whether the foundation of *Allifae* was contemporary with it. The close consonance between city, road, and territory is undeniable and appears to reflect a unified project. Various authors place the establishment of the colony in the Triumviral period, on the basis of information from the *Liber Coloniarum*, the absence of inscriptions prior to the mid-1st century BC, and the dating of the public structures discovered thus far, while others propose a chronology in the Sullan period¹⁷. The latter view rests on the presumed chronology of the city walls, which is now largely questioned, as emphasised by Stefania

Quilici Gigli¹⁸. She noted that the parallels previously drawn with the Alifan walls, once dated to the Sullan era, have now been reassigned to the 2nd century BC. The available data remain discordant. Structures predating the very few *domus* investigated thus far in the urban area are attested¹⁹, but the absence of dating evidence does not permit us to determine whether they belonged to an earlier settlement, to the first houses of the colonists, or to rural buildings. It does not appear conclusive that the limited number of *domus* currently known, none dated earlier than the mid-1st century BC, confirm the Triumviral foundation of *Allifae* in accordance with the testimony of the *Liber Coloniarum*. In other colonial contexts, such as *Cosa*, private houses appear to have been built two generations after the erection of the city walls²⁰, bearing in mind that the foundation of a colony was a lengthy process²¹.

What can be stated with certainty is that the colonial intervention was transformative. Roads, cities, canals, and fields were integrated into an orderly and coherent whole, including the road that signalled entry into this new order of things.

URBAN PLANNING AND INTERNAL ROADWAYS IN *ALLIFAE*

The branch of the Via Latina entered *Allifae*, becoming its principal axis and retaining this role over

¹⁶ See RENDA 2025, pp. 167-169 with bibliographical references to earlier works.

¹⁷ A summary is provided by CAMODECA 1990, pp. 123-124; MIELE 2002, pp. 22-23; TAGLIAMONTE, MIELE 2002.

¹⁸ QUILICI GIGLI *et al.* 2015, pp. 83-87.

¹⁹ See nt. 6-7.

²⁰ FENTRESS 2012, p. 312.

²¹ MUZZIOLI 2001.

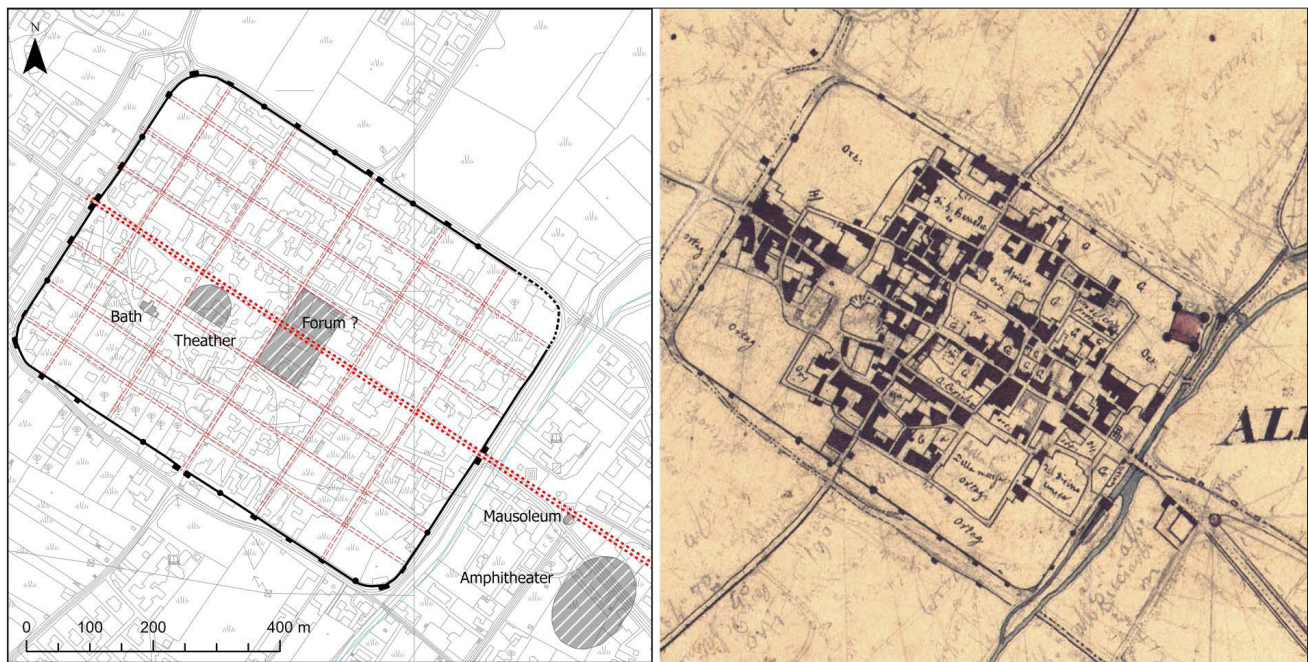


Fig. 5. *Allifae* (Alife-Caserta). Left: reconstruction of the town grid (red dashed lines) derived from the modern map of Alife and based on previous studies, showing the main road axis and the monuments mentioned in the text (image by G. Renda). Right: detail from a field sketch (1834-1860) depicting the city walls and towers recorded at the time. These same elements of the city walls are included in the reconstruction on the left.

time. The regular grid layout²² that characterised the settlement in antiquity is still recognisable today (fig. 5), with some slight displacements, as documented by the discovery of several sections of paving stones at an average depth of about 2 metres²³. The main road had a carriageway approximately 6 metres wide, while the widths of the other streets ranged from 5,40 metres (on the north-east/south-west axes) to 4,40 metres (on the perpendicular axes). The roads were provided with earthen sidewalks and *crepidines* constructed of limestone blocks laid in shear. In some places, the underlying sewage system was also exposed, with a double-pitched tile covering.

Along the main axis were aligned the baths, identified beneath the crypt of the Cathedral, the theatre, and a paved area identified as the *forum*, overlooked by *tabernae* and a building interpreted as a *curia*²⁴. Paolo Sommella included the scheme of *Allifae* among the examples with «moduli costanti

condizionati da una viabilità principale»²⁵, a theme particularly relevant to the subject addressed in this study. He emphasises that the differing widths of the *insulae* do not obscure recognition of the programmatic plan, originally intended to include 300-foot blocks, which he believed were measured from the *cardo* of the *centuriatio* immediately to the west²⁶. This, in his view, also explains the slight westward displacement of the intersection of the two main roads. The block measurements, which are not homogeneous, must have been adjusted during implementation: the narrower width of the western half produced tighter blocks along the belt adjacent to the walls, while wider blocks are observed in connection with the central sector of the city, perhaps enlarged to accommodate the insertion of the *forum*.

A distinctive feature is the position of the theatre, almost at the centre of the urban area. The remains are no longer visible, but they were described in the second half of the 18th century by Gianfrancesco Trutta, who wrote: «...ve ne restan due ordini, uno a vista di tutti, particolarmente dalla parte di Settentrione, ed Oriente, o sia dalla banda della piazza del Vescovado; l'altro sotto le rovine dell'ordine superiore, ma che si vede dalla parte di Oriente, e mezzo giorno, dentro

²² See CASTAGNOLI 1956b, p. 93; SOMMELLA 1988, pp. 117-118, 129-130, 248; MIELE 2002, pp. 22-23. There remain some doubts about the identification proposed by PAGANO 1985, pp. 175-176 concerning the boundary marker.

²³ On the excavation, see MIELE 2002, pp. 29-30, 32-35. For the variations in the level of the trench, see CAIAZZA 2002, p. 23; MIELE 2002, pp. 29-30; TAGLIAMONTE, MIELE 2002, pp. 196-197.

²⁴ With regard to the monuments, see POZZI 1990, pp. 526-527; MIELE 2007, pp. 194-195; STANCO 2016-2017; PEDRONI 2019, pp. 18-19.

²⁵ SOMMELLA 1979, pp. 108-109.

²⁶ This reconstruction would fall apart if a grid with a 15 *actus* module is taken into account.



Fig. 6. *Allifae* (Alife-Caserta). Left: remains of the theatre in a 19th-century field sketch. Right: the area of the theatre in a 2024 Google Earth satellite image. The curved alignment of modern structures enclosing its remains is clearly visible (image by G. Renda).

le case di un particolare Cittadino»²⁷. These remains were documented in a field sketch survey (*minuta di campagna*) prepared by the Ufficio Topografico Napoletano in the mid-19th century (fig. 6). They were eventually incorporated into modern buildings by the late 19th century²⁸. It is noteworthy that part of the theatre's remains remained visible within the town for centuries²⁹. Today, the location of the theatre can be discerned in aerial and satellite images by the curved alignment of modern structures enclosing its remains (fig. 6). Its construction dates to the final decades of the 1st century BC³⁰, a period in which the theatre had become an integral element of the urban *panoplia* of Roman cities³¹. According to Sommella, the area designated for the theatre's construction had already been set aside during the planning stage, given the small size of the town³². Enrico Angelo Stanco reconstructs the *scaena frons* with an external diameter of 56 metres and a height of 13 metres³³.

In Stanco's reconstruction, the theatre would be tangent to the intersection between the main road and an axis oriented north-east/south-west. This road would have separated it from the adjacent baths, a proximity observed in several cities, such as *Vibo Valentia*, *Adria*, *Arretium*, *Mevania*, *Ferentum*, *Faesulae*, and *Ostra*. Substantial renovations were carried out in Late Antiquity, with the partial deactivation of the theatre: a 1989 excavation brought to light structures belonging to a bath complex inserted into the theatre's *cavea*³⁴.

It is also worth noting that the orientation of the *cavea* facing the main road axis, while not anomalous, is relatively rare. Considering only theatres built on substructures, parallels can be found in cities such as *Luca*, *Potentia Picena*, *Augusta Taurinorum*, *Augusta Praetoria*, *Luna*, and *Mediolanum*, although in these cases the theatres occupy peripheral urban sectors, close to the city walls. A pattern more closely comparable to that of *Allifae* is found in *Ostia*, *Placentia*, *Ostra*, *Mevaniola*, and *Ariminum*. In *Eporedium* too, the theatre is centrally located at the intersection of the two main urban axes, which are not exactly orthogonal – thus serving as an urban connector or dynamic junction³⁵ – a configuration likewise observed at *Augusta Bagiennorum*.

²⁷ TRUTTA 1776, pp. 29-30.

²⁸ FINELLI 1928, pp. 90, 92; MARROCCO 1981, pp. 48-49; STANCO 2016-2017, pp. 199-205.

²⁹ Concerning the state of Roman theatres in the continuously inhabited towns, see MIGLIORATI 2004-2005.

³⁰ STANCO 2016-2017, pp. 234-236.

³¹ On this argument, MIGLIORATI 2004-2005, pp. 555-556 and MIGLIORATI 2020, pp. 6-7.

³² SOMMELLA 1988, p. 130.

³³ STANCO 2016-2017, p. 234.

³⁴ On this argument, see STANCO 2016-2017, pp. 211-212, 234.

³⁵ See MAGGI 1994, pp. 42-43.

Giuseppina Pisani Sartorio and Paola Ciano Rossetto proposed that the south-west orientation of the *cavea* may have been intended as protection from winds blowing from the Matese mountains³⁶. This orientation might also have been influenced by the longer exposure of the seating to solar radiation, as has been hypothesised for the theatre at *Mevaniola*³⁷. Vitruvius, however, strongly advises against southern orientation (VITR. V, 3, 2). It cannot be excluded that this positioning was influenced by the geological and geomorphological conditions of the terrain, given the impact such factors had on the construction of such buildings, as highlighted in other cases by Luisa Migliorati³⁸. Certainly, this layout facilitated access to the seating areas, which most likely took place through the *ambulacra* beneath the *cavea*, adjacent to the roads³⁹.

The theatre occupied a privileged position, as demonstrated by its close relationship with the main road axis and its proximity to the *forum*, situated slightly to the east (fig. 5). The impact of the monument on the urban milieu of the small *Allifae* is undeniable, reflecting its significance not only culturally but also socio-politically, as a vehicle of imperial propaganda⁴⁰.

Located along the main east-west axis, though outside the city, was the second performance venue: the amphitheatre⁴¹ (fig. 5). Its layout and size, together with the presence of a large funerary *mausoleum*, clearly emphasise the straight course of the ancient road, as opposed to the deviation followed by the modern road. This structure was likewise built in the Augustan period and underwent significant renovation in the Claudian period. The amphitheatre was situated south of the road axis, in close connection not only with it but also with an external road running parallel to the southern side of the city walls. Lorenzo Quilici and Stefania Quilici Gigli attributed to this route the function of a bypass, enabling swifter transit without entering *Allifae*⁴².

After leaving *Allifae*, the Via Latina continues into the Alifan plain, with its only clear reference being the bridge-viaduct over the Titerno torrent (fig. 1). Beyond this, the road continues towards *Telesia*, and its course can be reconstructed from remains and paths recorded in historical cartography⁴³.

TELESIA AND THE ROAD NETWORK

Telesia presents a markedly different case. The settlement stands on the slopes of Monte Pugliano (fig. 1), a low hill that hosted a large fortified settlement during the Samnite period⁴⁴. It is first mentioned in relation to its conquest by Hannibal in 217 BC⁴⁵. The location of the pre-Roman settlement remains uncertain. The presence of several communities – attested by four major fortified centres and associated necropolis areas – suggests a more complex scenario than that of the late Republican period, when *Telesia* alone played a central role⁴⁶.

The *Liber Coloniarum* records at least two interventions of *centuriatio*: one during the Triumviral period and another in the Augustan period⁴⁷. Several scholars, however, consider an earlier foundation of the colony possible, dating it to the Sullan or Gracchan period⁴⁸.

The roads leading to the city can be identified through the gates opening in the city walls⁴⁹ (fig. 7), a *unicum* in the context of Roman fortifications. Both the dating of these city walls and that of the colony's foundation remain uncertain⁵⁰. The branch of the Via Latina coming from *Allifae* is thought to have entered from the north-west, on the basis of the reconstruction proposed in light of the location of the Titerno bridge⁵¹. Lorenzo Quilici suggested that the most likely entrance of this road was through the northern gate, which he placed in correspondence with the current road system. An excavation by the Archaeological Superintendency located this gate south-east of the modern road, and its position appears more consistent with a route coming from inland *Samnium* rather than with the Via Latina. In my view, this road entered *Telesia* via the north-western gate, which was emphasised in the late Republican period by the presence of the amphitheatre. The other two preserved gates are situated along the south-eastern side: the southernmost served a route leading directly to the Volturno valley and *Capua*, while the *via Allifae-Beneventum* exited through the eastern gate.

³⁶ PISANI SARTORIO, CIANCIO ROSSETTO 1994, p. 373.

³⁷ ORTALLI 1994, p. 285.

³⁸ MIGLIORATI 2004-2005.

³⁹ See GROS 2001, p. 318 and MIGLIORATI 2004-2005, with examples.

⁴⁰ MIGLIORATI 2020, p. 13.

⁴¹ SORICELLI, STANCO 2009; STANCO 2012, pp. 31-32.

⁴² QUILICI, QUILICI GIGLI 2010, pp. 174-176.

⁴³ For the Roman bridge, see RENDA 2010a, pp. 113-116. For the *via Allifae-Telesia*, see RENDA 2010b, pp. 300-303; RENDA 2021, p. 285.

⁴⁴ With regard to the fortified site of the Monte Pugliano: RENDA 2017 and RENDA 2023a.

⁴⁵ For the literary sources, see RENDA 2010a, pp. 102-105; D'HENRY 2011, pp. 376-377.

⁴⁶ RENDA 2019, pp. 218-222.

⁴⁷ LIB. COL., 238. For the centuriation of the *ager telesinus*, see RENDA 2010b, pp. 306-311 and RENDA 2020, p. 143.

⁴⁸ Regarding the scientific debate, refer to RENDA 2010b, pp. 292, 294, 306-311.

⁴⁹ QUILICI 1966; RENDA 2010b, pp. 300-306.

⁵⁰ QUILICI 1966; RENDA 2023b, pp. 40-46.

⁵¹ RENDA 2010b, pp. 300-303.

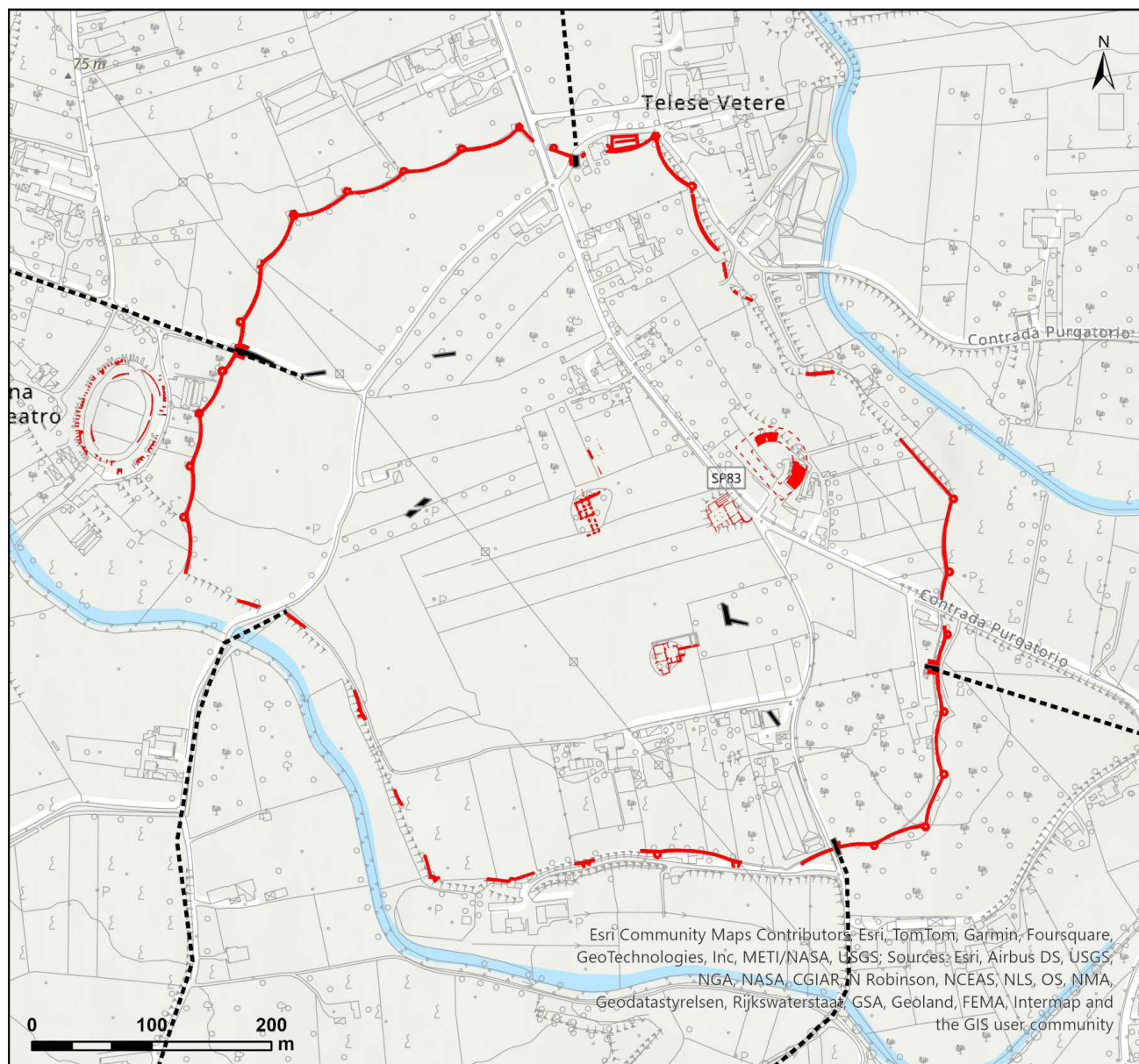


Fig. 7. *Telesia* (S. Salvatore Telesino-BN). Map of the ancient town showing the visible remains (in red), the uncovered road segments (in black), and the reconstruction of the extra-urban road network (black dashed lines) (image by G. Renda).

The extremely limited knowledge of the city's urban grid prevents a thorough assessment of the connection between the extra-urban and intra-urban road networks, and even renders reconstruction of the city plan itself problematic. Essentially, two proposals have been put forward.

The first was advanced by Lorenzo Quilici (fig. 8a), who reconstructed a regular town grid composed of blocks measuring 300 x 120 Roman feet, based on the predominant orientation of some visible buildings and on traces identified through aerial photographic

interpretation⁵². Quilici dated the colony to the Sullan period, taking into account the technical peculiarities of the fortifications. Giulio Schmiedt and Sommella revisited this hypothesis⁵³, partly endorsing Quilici's view. Sommella suggested that the blocks measured 300 x 240 Roman feet, and both scholars argued that the proposed layout – lacking the two main axes intersecting at the centre – was more consistent with urban forms prior to the 1st century BC and more closely aligned

⁵² QUILICI 1966, pp. 97-101.

⁵³ SCHMIEDT 1970, tav. CVIII; SOMMELLA 1988, pp. 131-132, fig. 38. CARFORA 2003, p. 430 and fig. 775 proposes a development of the *insulae*, including the areas close to the urban walls.

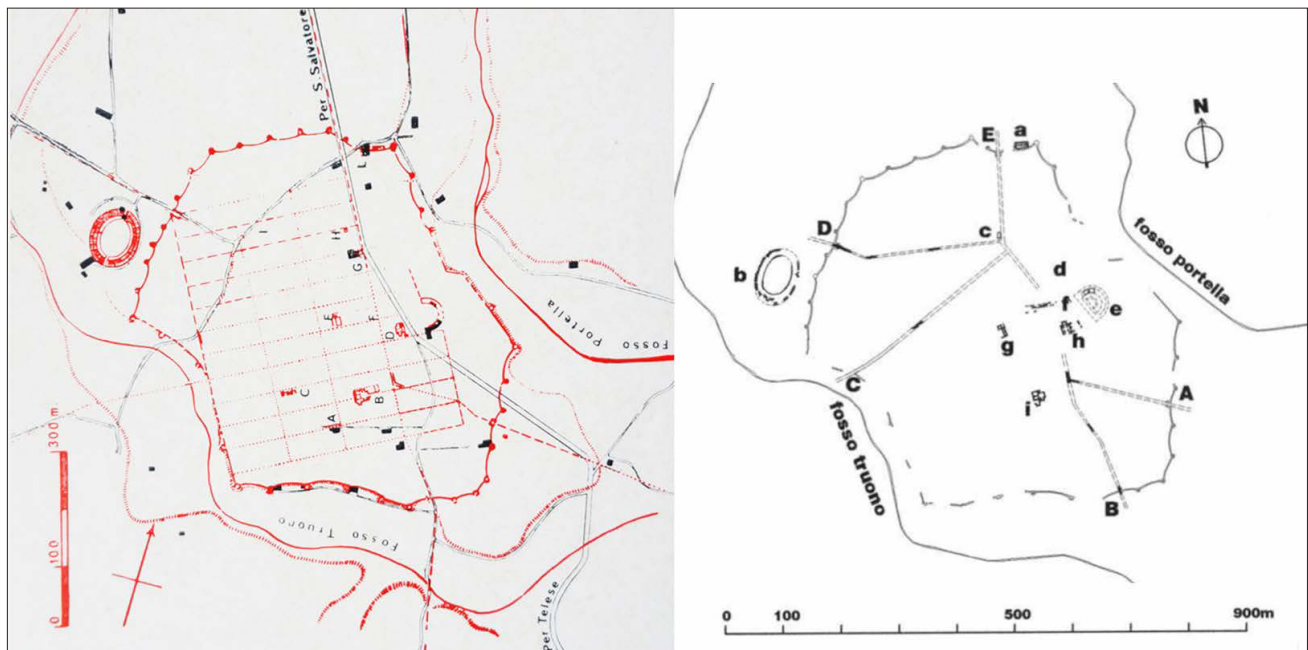


Fig. 8. *Telesia* (S. Salvatore Telesino-BN). Left: reconstruction of the town grid from Quilici 1966, p. 88, fig. 3. Right: reconstruction of the town grid from Simonelli, Balasco 2005, p. 261, fig. 2.

with the so-called Hippodamian type. They also emphasised the disjunction between the reconstruction of the internal road axes and the city wall gates, which they considered later than the hypothesised urban grid.

A substantially different approach was advanced by Alfredo Balasco and Antonietta Simonelli⁵⁴ (fig. 8b). Their reconstruction is based on the road axes uncovered during excavation, which display differing orientations and indeed complicate interpretation of the urban scheme. The extensions of five identified roads – four paved with limestone flagstones – appear to converge on a single point. According to their reconstruction, two roads were connected with city gates, thus suggesting a relationship between the urban and extra-urban road systems. On the basis of the limited published information, three small sacred areas of the pre-Roman period were located along these roads, two of which were closely linked with the axes leading to the eastern and south-eastern gates⁵⁵. According to the two scholars, this detail may indicate that these routes already existed in the Samnite period. As supporting evidence they cite a small stretch of road carved into the tuff, uncovered south of the so-called *Terme Sabiniane* in 1974. Various pavement layers of this road have yielded materials dated between the 4th and 2nd

centuries BC, testifying to its antiquity⁵⁶. At the current state of research, the two proposals are not necessarily mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the excavated road axes, their orientation, and their connection with the extra-urban road network suggest ancient paths. However, no stratigraphic data have been provided to establish whether these roads remained in use throughout the city's history, apart from the segment south of the so-called *Terme Sabiniane*⁵⁷.

On the other hand, reconstruction of the urban plan cannot disregard the substantial traces of regularly orientated structures identified through aerial documentation across almost the entire urban area⁵⁸. Crop marks are evident in the north-western sector, just south of the city entrance of the *Allifae-Beneventum* road. In Google Earth satellite images from 2018, crop and soil marks can be interpreted as road axes, defining the western and northern limits of a city block, within which several subsurface structures can be discerned (fig. 9). The road marking the western boundary of this block is also visible in Bing Maps imagery from 2024, which shows its continuation to the south and west, not far from a small postern gate. Additional crop marks, probably related to subsurface structures, streets, and buildings with the same orientation, are evident in

⁵⁴ SIMONELLI, BALASCO 2005, p. 245 nt. 5.

⁵⁷ SIMONELLI, BALASCO 2005, pp. 245-246 nt. 5.

⁵⁸ Concerning the crop and soil marks, see Quilici 1966, pp. 97-98; MASTROIANNI 2015; MASTROIANNI 2019.

⁵⁴ SIMONELLI, BALASCO 2005, pp. 244-246, 261.

⁵⁵ SIMONELLI, BALASCO 2005, p. 245; D'HENRY 2011, p. 379.



Fig. 9. *Telesia* (S. Salvatore Telesino-BN), north-western sector. Left: crop and soil marks in Google Earth satellite images from 2018. Right: crop marks visible in Bing Maps imagery from 2024.

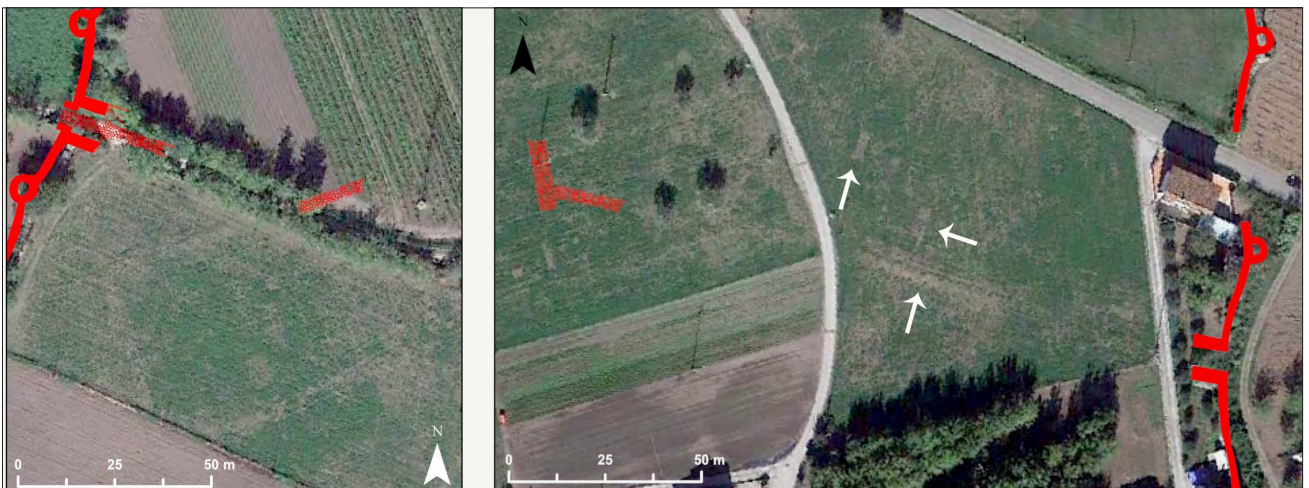


Fig. 10. *Telesia* (S. Salvatore Telesino-BN). Left: plan of the north-western gate and road (based on original drawings by A.F. Porto) overlaid on a Google Earth satellite image. Right: location of the excavated road segments (from SIMONELLI, BALASCO 2005) overlaid on a 2018 Google Earth satellite image, showing crop marks related to the road exiting from the eastern gate (image by G. Renda).

aerial photography. In the absence of stratigraphic excavation, no definitive chronology can be proposed for these traces, which may be presumed to belong to a phase of urban structuring in the Roman period.

This urban grid appears unrelated to the extra-urban road system: the Via Latina entering the city, still preserved, is independent of the block delineated by the anomalies to the south (fig. 10). By contrast, a series of roughly rectangular traces seem to suggest the presence of buildings aligned with the road. On the basis of the available evidence, it may be

hypothesised that the two identified road systems reflect different phases in the city's history, and that some axes of ancient origin – linked with sacred areas and important extra-urban routes – may have been preserved within the ordered layout imposed on the city at a later, undetermined date. The orientation of the *via Allifae-Beneventum* does not appear to have changed. Only the sections near the gates are known: the stretch entering from the north-western gate is still partly visible, while the portion exiting the eastern gate can be recognised as a crop mark with an oblique

orientation, along which further subsurface structures appear (fig. 10).

The question also remains whether the city walls were constructed after the regular urban grid. The fortification, which I have recently dated to around the mid-1st century BC, appears to have been constructed over a long period, as attested by three pairs of *praetores duoviri* mentioned in inscriptions relating to the construction of the towers. Its complexity and the high number of towers suggest a major financial undertaking for such a small town, likely carried out gradually. The placement of the gates indicates a close relationship with the extra-urban road network rather than with the internal streets. Likewise, the continuation of most of the excavated roads shows no correlation with the city gates.

CONCLUSION

The relationship that *Allifae* and *Telesia* maintained with the road network and the Via Latina – the principal road axis of the region, linking both towns to Rome and the Tyrrhenian area through the junction at *Teanum Sidicinum* – is fundamentally different.

In the case of *Allifae*, there is a clear correspondence between this extra-urban axis and the internal road layout. The road entered the city, and its importance was emphasised by its greater width compared with other axes and by the presence of major monuments along it, such as the theatre with its distinctive orientation, the *forum*, and the *amphitheatre*, located just outside the eastern gate. Knowledge of *Telesia*, on the other hand, is limited by the absence of stratigraphic investigations, which prevents an accurate reconstruction of its *forma urbis*. Its urban structure can only be partially inferred from aerial photographic interpretation and a few excavation trenches, which have documented the existence of axes diverging from one another and from the interpreted traces. The apparent disjunction between urban and extra-urban roads is mediated

by the city wall gates, which function as transitional hinges, channelling the main roads of the surrounding territory into the city. The most prominent element in the road structure of the Telesian territory remains the Via Latina. The amphitheatre, as in *Allifae*, is located outside the urban area, in close connection with the gate through which this road entered the city.

A cross-reappraisal of ancient literary, cartographic, and aerial-photographic sources, considered alongside the archaeological record in order to clarify the relationships between roads and urban centres, has produced several observations that diverge from previous scholarship. In the case of *Allifae*, the marked inflection executed by the Via Latina approximately one kilometre before the city's entrance, apparently intended to conform to the orientation of the centuriation, raises the question of why such an abrupt change occurs precisely at that point. It is proposed here that this deviation may indicate the western boundary of the Allifan *pertica*. From this perspective, Castagnoli's reconstruction of the centuriation, which assumed the canonical 20 *actus* module, is reconsidered in favour of a grid with sides of 15 *actus*, a solution that appears more consistent with the city's placement within the centurial lattice. In this view, the road functions as the primary armature around which the city, its fields, and its public monuments (theatre, forum, amphitheatre) were deliberately organised.

Conversely, the synthesis concerning *Telesia* and the divergent urban reconstructions invite a reconsideration of current approaches to the reconstruction of the ancient urban grids, which we too often crystallise at a single historical moment, thereby failing to account for the multifaceted life of a city.

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