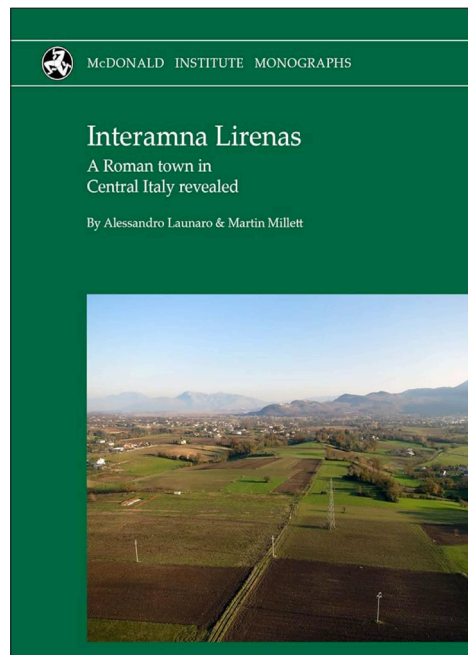


Book Review

Launaro, Alessandro and Martin Millett. 2023. *Interamna Lirenas: A Roman town in Central Italy revealed*. McDonald Institute Monographs. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; 978-1-913344-11-5; Open Access.

Interamna Lirenas: A Roman town in Central Italy revealed, co-authored by Alessandro Launaro and Martin Millett with others contributing, presents a thorough report of recent geophysical surveys conducted at the Central Italian site of Interamna Lirenas. This investigation also justifiably calls for the re-examination of smaller towns in Central Italy, hoping to enhance and adjust previous narratives concerning the lifespan of similar sites. The preface of the volume introduces this research in context. It is a part of a larger project at Interamna that has been previously published and will be published on later in the future, hence this is not a terminal report (p. xi).

The first chapter ('Setting-out on a journey') explores the relationship between Interamna and the theoretical models of small Roman colonies of the mid-Republican period, including Cosa, Alba Fucens, Fregellae and Paestum. The authors are correct to point out that the generalizing image of the foundation, layout and urbanization processes of these sites relies on 'selective excavation, mostly centred around the monumental structures' (p. 3). The achieved aim of this work is to propose an alternate method of studying ancient Roman towns: to look at the body of evidence as comprehensively



as possible through geophysical and non-invasive techniques in conjunction with previous archaeological data.

Chapter 2, 'Introducing Interamna Lirenas', provides a short introduction to the location and landscape of Interamna, followed by a discussion of early, potentially non-Roman materials associated with the site (p. 5–6). The authors then shift to the ancient literary sources that discuss Interamna and the surrounding region, with particular emphasis on the role of the town in the Samnite and Punic Wars (p. 7–10). Focus then moves to the history of archaeological research at Interamna, outlining earlier excavations and hypotheses. The literary evidence and previous research are later returned to in the penultimate chapter (Chapter 5).

Chapter 3, 'The urban survey: methodology', is especially enlightening with respect to the level of discussion provided for the use of fluxgate gradiometry and GPR surveys, the software and hardware used in data acquisition, and their workflow of processing raw data (Figure 3.8). This discussion is not overly technical and easily comprehensible by those moderately familiar with geophysical survey and the physics necessary to conduct such research.

Chapter 4, 'The urban survey: results', provides a substantial overview of detailed interpretations of the geophysical surveys. In the first sections, the authors present a thorough summary of how they interpreted the data into what is presented in section 4.1.4: the 'Description of *insulae*'. This '*insula-by-insula*' discussion of various 'Building Units (BU)' (p. 39) and their interpretations based upon the results are a significant contribution to the understanding of Interamna and a template for future publications presenting site-wide surveys. There are 40 (I–XL) delineated *insulae* in the town, all of which are discussed to the extent possible based on the data. The organization of the *insulae* is easy to follow, as their descriptions appear in designated numerical order. Color-coded plans of the site, complete with street names, alphanumeric designations and building unit numbers with corresponding bracketed numbers in the text are presented on full pages. There is one *insula* that appears to have the incorrect figure number (*Insula* VIII references Fig. 4.10 but appears in Fig. 4.11), but the utility and legibility of these visualizations vastly outweighs a minor, and easily manoeuvrable, typo. After the discussion of each *insula*, the authors transition to a discussion of the 'Systematic surface collection' (4.2) performed throughout the site. Accompanying the methodological approaches to this survey are seven Kernel Density maps that detail the distribution of activity evidenced by the collected finds (Figures 4.21–27). Most maps pertain to the six chronological divisions of the site (Periods I–VI, each lasting 150 years beginning from 350 BC) and the maps in addition to the text clearly illustrate the program of activities in the *longue durée* of Interamna.

The penultimate chapter (5: 'Interamna Lirenas: biography of a town') synthesizes discussions presented in Chapters 1–4. This endeavour highlights the necessity to question initial interpretations of the site. Particular attention is paid to recent scholarship on the foundation of mid-Republican colonies in Central Italy (p. 83–85). The interpretations so minutely dissected in Chapter 4 are summarized into sections broadly discussing the types of public buildings at Interamna (5.1.2): residential structures and what the ratio of larger to smaller domestic plots might mean for the early inhabitants of the intraurban areas of the site (5.1.3), potential population estimates (both in the mid-Republican period (5.1.4) and in later centuries (5.2.4)), and the journey of Interamna from a 'colony to municipium' (5.2).

The final chapter (Chapter 6: 'Conclusions') is a short synthesis of what this research illustrates and future endeavours. Of note is the final sentences of this section, '[a]lthough techniques are likely to improve and new approaches (for instance large-scale systematic coring) could complement the work already complete, we believe the results presented here comprise a major step forward in the archaeology of Roman urbanism' (p. 108). This reviewer agrees with this statement. The work presented in this volume is a primer for how to shift from past, incomplete investigations of small to medium Roman sites towards a wider perspective to gain better insight into the urbanization of Roman towns.

In sum, this volume is a much-needed example of how to present geophysical and archaeological survey data. The explanations of the geophysics are easily digestible, and the full-colour figures are very well-produced and substantially referenced throughout the work. Multiple appendices that conclude the volume detail the 'Building Units' in each *insula* (their location, interpretation and area; Appendix 1), the 'Collection Units' complete with counts of different artifacts found in those units (Appendix 2), and a list of the finds (Appendix 3) including find spot, part identification, bibliographical references and overseas production, where applicable. It is this reviewer's hope that future site-wide surveys of Roman towns will follow in the footsteps of this volume.

Allison Smith
Department of Classical Studies
Indiana University Bloomington
aes19@iu.edu

