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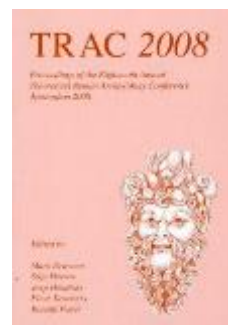www.trac.org.uk

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The Natural Will: Community in Roman Archaeology

Robert Wanner

Introduction

Roman archaeology tends to divide into two extreme scales of study: the individual in studies of identity, and global processes in studies of politics and economy. What is frequently missing is the point between the two, the social fabric that connects the individual to these broader processes. A focused study of community can bridge between these concepts and reveal dynamic social forces in play at local, regional, and potentially global levels. In this paper I attempt to do two things: first of all, to trace the genealogy of studies of community in social sciences and archaeology, and identify its strengths and weaknesses as it stands; and second, to develop a more robust means of exploring community in archaeology, using a case study from the Kasserine Survey in Tunisia.

Studying Community

Numerous scholars have touched on the fundamental distinction between community and society, but it was the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) who introduced an empirical, problem-oriented conceptual framework for understanding human relationships. He offered a methodological framework for studying what he called *Gemeinschaft* (usually translated as 'community') and *Gesellschaft* (translated as either 'society' or 'association'). Tönnies argued that 'human wills stand in manifold relations to one another... the relationship itself, and also the resulting association when concieved of either as real and organic life – this is the essential characteristic of the Gemeinschaft; or as imaginary and mechanical structure – this is the concept of Gesellschaft' (1963: 33). While following a long-standing tradition of organising social entities into two distinct categories, he did not place *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* in opposition to each other; rather, he placed them as the extreme limiting aspects in a continuum. Whilst the neo-evolutionary character of this model favours a flow from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, it is also notable that both of these exist as willed creations of humans, *Gemeinschaft* deriving from a Natural Will (*Wesenwille*), *Gesellschaft* from a Rational Will (*Kürwille*). Thus, whilst this model exhibits structuralist tendencies, certain characteristics undermine this: first, the fact that *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are not inherently dualistic; and second, that their existence depends on human agency, or will. Tönnies' work had an influence on his contemporaries, including Émile Durkheim, and for a time these ideas were viewed as facts of nature in sociology and anthropology (Durkheim 1889, cited by Redfield 1955; 1956; Cahnman 1973: 240–248).

Dissatisfaction with the practical application of ideal models led to some dissenting lines of research, but the basic components of Tönnies' model were unaltered. American anthropologists Wolf (1955; 1956; 1988) and Mintz (1954; 1956) argued that any social system was part of an infinitely more complex world-system, and that no community could truly be isolated, minimising internal dynamics of maintinence and ways in which external forces are altered beyond the confines of the community. Contrary to this, Hawley (Hawley 1950) developed an ecological approach which grounded its every aspect in locality. The ecological approach,

although deterministic in character, has had a powerful impact on how communities have been studied in anthropology and archaeology (cf. Ingold 1993).

Inspired by the modern usages of the word in the increasingly polarised Cold War atmosphere, social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1986) and political scientist Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) proposed a model for 'imagined' or 'symbolic' communities that severed the community from locality, and even interaction among members. The framework for understanding relationships became in many ways more important than the relationships themselves. Cohen (1986) argued that community was a symbolic framework for thinking about and conveying cultural difference, most apparent when members stand at the boundaries. The idea in many ways became synonymous with identity, prioritising distinction from others and marginalising distinction within.

Criticism of the imagined community, without centre, structure, or space, led Cohen himself to qualify a number of his arguments (2000; 2002). Sociologists and anthropologists criticised the emphasis on symbolic boundaries and the neglect of empirical commonalities (Amit 2002a; Herzfeld 1997). The focus of study in a community, they argued, should be on its symbolic core, as sometimes the practices of members are not defined within the boundaries (Howell 2002). Furthermore, modern communities often strive for place-making, not boundary-making (Gray 2002). While factors in these symbolic communities such as shared place and face-to-face interactions are neither necessary nor sufficient, they are never unimportant, and this acknowledgement has led to more fully developed studies.

Refocusing on the relationships themselves, the social network approach has gained popularity in recent years, conceptualising communities as structures composed of individuals linked to each other by interdependencies. Some of the most influential advocates are Granovetter (1973; 1983), Walzer (1994), and Putnam (1995; 2000), the latter of which drew his 'bonding' and 'bridging social capital' from an earlier work by Gittell and Vidal (1998). Community members in this context do not need to agree on common goals, attributes, or localities, as long as they regularly interact. Within this model is a vision of community which incorporates both structure (the network itself), and agency (the individual nodes). However, social networks as outlined in many modern works clearly hark back to the structuralist organisation of *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* (Table 1).

Table 1: Similarities between paradigms for studying community.

Structural Functionalist Approaches		
Tönnies (1887):	*Gemeinschaft*	*Gesellschaft*
Durkheim (1893):	Organic solidarity	Mechanical solidarity
Redfield (1955):	Folk Society	Urban Society
Social Network Approaches		
Granovetter (1973):	Strong ties	Weak ties
Walzer (1994):	Thick communitarianism	Thin communitarianism
Gittell and Vidal (1998):	Bonding social capital	Bridging social capital

In summary, Tönnies' organisation and characteristics of community and society have shown amazing resilience throughout a century of academic investigation. Tönnies appreciated primordial conceptions of community as both real and imagined relationships; however, whereas Tönnies favoured a typological distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, in social network approaches these ideas are used to describe the quality of social relationships, a distinction in texture (thin vs. dense) rather than type. Later academics have re-focused their research on different aspects of community well-known even in Tönnies' time. Cores, boundaries, and networks are all important to some degree, but people generally find what they are looking for. We should not be so keen to apply a singular or universal concept.

A New Model for Studying Community

I propose the following as an approach to studying this social phenomenon in archaeology (Fig. 1). First of all, I suggest using the term 'community' to refer to types of social networks that share common interactive and individual practices and have some kind of symbolic core and symbolic boundaries. Although I am aware of some limitations with this definition, I am more interested in *how* we study community than pinning down a precise, inflexible definition.

While the social network model offers some of the most productive discussions on community, that does not mean that symbolic cores and boundaries cease to matter. People need touchstones, whether they are activities, locations, or artefacts, to make these relationships meaningful and create both inclusion and exclusion. The tendency of the community to exclude or include, taken along with the total quality of social relationships within, are most useful in the consideration of how communities operate.

Instead of a continuum, I place the four characteristics of community, strong and weak interaction, and symbolic boundaries and cores, into quadrants, creating a two-dimensional view. From the previous research outlined above, we can identify characteristics of communities in which there is a preponderance of certain elements at the expense of others. For example, Cohen's explanation of change in the structure of communities uses as a case study post-colonial French Africa: 'when *structural* bases of the boundary are dismantled or become anachronistic – French colonialism lacking the racial segregation of its British counterpart – they are replaced by cultural bases expressed symbolically' (Cohen 1985: 81). Whilst before these communities were more defined by their boundaries, they had to change and rally around a common symbolic core to survive the post-colonial world. In terms of the second dimension of community, face-to-face interaction or strong links, is undeniably important in the many small, local communities studied by anthropologists such as Redford (1955; 1956) in the earlier part of this century. However, as a foil to this, Howell (2002) emphasises in his study of adoptive families in Norway that regular face-to-face interaction and shared locality are not necessary or sufficient, and that shared experience can easily replace these factors, creating relationships that are weaker but no less real.

First of all, the community with strong links focused on a symbolic core, frequently a local community sharing living space and political structure, is characterised by a high level of integration, and inclusive nature, mutual respect among members, and shared values refracted through a symbolic core, such as Redford's 'little community' (1955; 1956). A community of weak links with a strong core is characterised by a common interest, and is characterised by

agreements between members, a highly inclusive nature, and bonding through shared experience, such as Howell's adoptive families in Norway (2002). These communities are usually focused on some type of activity or concern rather than a shared world-view. A strongly-linked community focused on symbolic boundaries, frequently communities which have developed with intention from within or without, are characterised by solidarity, loyalty among members, a highly exclusive nature, and socially-defined homogeneity. These communities are the result of planning, such as religious or ethnic communities which are intentionally separated from non-members, such as Cohen's examples in colonial French Africa (1985: 81). Finally, a weakly-linked community promoting symbolic boundaries is focused on common interest and mutual support among members and an exclusive nature. This is usually formed in reaction to a common threat, as Anderson's (1983/1991) nations. Certainly, as in any model, no community will fit perfectly into this template. However, the advantage to this model is that we can utilise the established social network methodology to classify communities while at the same time considering how they are formed and bound together.

Definition

		Core	Boundary
C o n n e c t i o n s	Dense	Solidarity Mutual respect Inclusive Shared values E.g. local community	Solidarity Loyalty Highly exclusive Social homogeneity E.g. intentional community
	Thin	Common interests Agreements Highly inclusive Shared experience E.g. community of interest	Common interests Support Exclusive Responsive E.g. nation

Figure 1: A new model for studying community.

Community in Archaeology

The definition, characteristics, and importance of community have never been fully agreed upon in archaeology. While its frequency has increased in archaeological literature over the past decades, it is in danger of becoming a term which means everything and nothing. Faced with losing the term altogether, it is important to note the reasons why studies of community are still relevant in archaeology. First, studies of communities matter in the present, and while modern usages cannot always be applied to the past, studies of topics such as this serve to justify and reinforce the idea that our discipline is relevant in the present. Second, usage of the term 'community' is unlikely to ever go away in research, and so we should continue to refine what we mean. Finally, no matter how we define it, the study of community focuses on human interaction, and this cannot help but generate useful information about archaeological change. As stated in the introduction, a focused study of community goes some way toward bridging

structure and agency when investigating archaeological change. I now highlight some of the most important archaeological studies of communities, pointing out strengths and weaknesses in each, with the aim of bridging the theory I have just described with practical methodology.

Within Roman archaeology, Stephen Dyson's *Community and Society in Roman Italy* (1992) is explicitly modelled on Tönnies' constructs. He focuses on the operation of the communities within a broader context and one symbolic core (Rome), but criteria for inclusion and exclusion are missing. Goldsworthy and Haynes' volume, *The Military as a Community* (1999), highlights the Roman army as an occupational community. Whilst the volume's editors prefer a symbolic approach (Goldsworthy 1999; Haynes 1999a; Haynes 1999b), the social network approach is also utilised (Allason-Jones 1999; Alston 1999; Wilkes 1999). A contemporary paper by Simon James (1999) argued that distinct communities of soldiers were social networks affected by regionality and locality, yet linked together by imperial systems of command and control. Although there are benefits to these analyses of a common social phenomenon at different scales, this also highlights the lack of consensus on the how the term should be defined in archaeology.

New World, historical, and industrial archaeologists have often conceived of communities as groups of houses or households and natural human adaptations, and thus requiring face-to-face interaction (Deagan and Koch 1983; Johnson and Earle 1987; Schwartz and Falconer 1994; Fletcher 1995; Kolb and Snead 1997). The stimulus for many of the current discussions of community in archaeology was Marcello Canuto and Jason Yaeger's volume, *Archaeology of Communities* (2000). In the introduction the authors offer a theoretical and methodological framework for an 'archaeology of communities' (Yaeger and Canuto 2000: 12). Their community relies on mutual interaction for its continued existence; therefore social interaction within the community is emphasised, and the symbolic core is de-emphasised. Methodologically, Canuto and Yaeger propose studying communities through identifying interaction in micro-regions through spatial analysis, techno-material studies, and demographic studies, focusing on lasting structures which unite successive instances of community rather than short-term structures. Canuto and Yaeger favour a social network approach to community, but do not neglect the important associated aspect of identity, arguing that social interaction constitutes community identity.

While archaeologists cannot get away from the fact that ancient communities were sustained through interaction, this has not eliminated discussion of symbolic cores and boundaries. Fokke Gerritsen's work (2003; 2004) on the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region in the Bronze Age shows how change derives from both the way local communities define themselves, and from long-term demographic and environmental factors. Bernard Knapp's (2003) article on the mining community of Bronze Age *Phorades* draws from previous archaeological research on communities as well as from modern ethnographic research. He argues that *Phorades* was a local community centred on mining activity rather than location – a single nested industrial component (activity area) of the regional community, on a temporary or seasonal basis as external demand dictated. Papers published from the 6th Conference of Italian Archaeology at Gronigen (Attema *et al.* 2005) expand on the work of Gerritsen and Knapp, taking a view that communities consist of claims made through daily practices and inscribed through symbols. Gerritsen and Knapp admit that communities are deeply rooted in space, 'even if they are not *of* a place' (Van Dommelen *et al.* 2005: 56). C.J. Smith's paper (2005), for example, takes on an 'imagined Roman community', shaped through sacrifices and religious practices in the *curiae,* wherein the meaning of 'Rome' was stated and contested. While heavily dependent on locality, this model also fully considers the importance of interaction and symbols.

Archaeological studies of community have tended overwhelmingly to embrace models which derive from structural functionalism, though discussion of symbols and boundaries has not wholly been excluded. It is easy to see why: social networks are both qualifiable and (seemingly) quantifiable, and their study has an established methodology. Nevertheless, by integrating consideration of symbolic aspects into the social network approach we can come to a greater understanding of relationships. Social networks explain the 'how' in archaeology: how the community is maintained, how it may be changed, how it may break up. What is missing, and what the symbolic approach can provide, is 'why': why people participate in practices together, why these communal practices change, and why they stop.

Some Suggestions for Methodology

Combining the best aspects of these approaches, I suggest actively searching for four elements of community in archaeology: 1) interactive practices that control and reinforce interaction; 2) evidence for practices at the household or individual scale, which show evidence for voluntary identification with the community; 3) centres of symbolic value, whether natural features, activity areas, or built structures, which indicate place-making; 4) and finally evidence for symbolic boundaries, which mark a distinction between individuals in the community and those without. None of these indicate the presence, absence, or form of community in and of themselves. However, considered together they may offer clues to the nature of social interaction and change.

The first element, interactive practices, may be identified from evidence such as communal spaces, communal funerary practices, food sharing, religious gatherings, settlement nucleation, and water collection points. Shared individual or household practices may be found in architectural expression, such as techniques, structure, orientation, utilisation of technology, resource acquisition, and religious dedications. While the symbolic elements are more ambiguous and open to interpretation, they need not be impossible to grasp. For a symbolic core, holding the community together, we might look to local monuments, natural features in the landscape, and activity centres, common focal points for community activities. For symbolic boundaries, we might investigate constructed territorial markers like walls, fences, or ditches, or spatial distance from other populations. Marked differentiation in material culture between and within settlement areas also may clearly indicate not simply differences in identity or culture, but the physical demonstration of community memberships.

A temporal dimension is visible as we look at how the practices themselves change over time. If their location changes, or the architecture framing them changes, this is an indicator that the way people understand their relationships changes as well.

Case Study: The Kasserine Survey

To illustrate the archaeological applicability of the study of communities, I now utilise an example from the Kasserine Survey in the Tunisian hinterland, conducted by R. Bruce Hitchner of the University of Virginia and his team from 1982 to 1989. The purpose of this survey was 'to reconstruct the society and economy of the region around the Roman towns of Cillium (mod. Kasserine) and Thelepte' (Hitchner 1988: 7). An inscription from the nearby Djebel Selloum
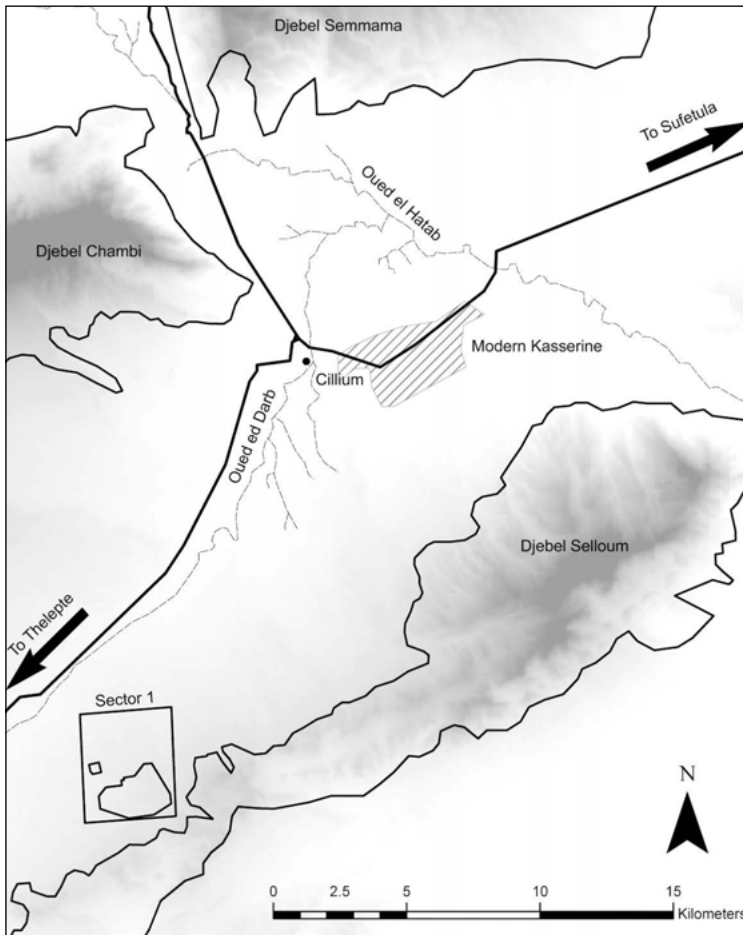
Figure 2: Kasserine Survey area.

attributes this region to the a tribal group named the *Musuni Regiani*, the name implying some connection to Numidian royalty (*CIL* VIII, 23195 = *ILS* 9393).

I focus on Sector 1 of the survey, located on the broad plateau of Bled Rechig, bounded on its southern and eastern edges by the limestone ridge of Djebel Selloum, marking the limits of high-quality arable land (Fig. 2). The team did an intensive survey of approximately 500 hectares of this area which contained seven settlements with numerous features, out of the 21 that they identified in all of Sector 1. All of the constructed remains, and many of the burial groups, in the Bled Rechig are oriented northeast-southwest, implying the possibility of surveyed land division.

KS1-223 and -225, large *opus africanum* complexes occupied from the second to sixth centuries clearly served some kind of central administrative function for the entire area (Fig. 3). This interpretation is based on their monumental forms, achieved in the late first or second centuries, and the presence in each complex of four olive presses with the capacity for processing
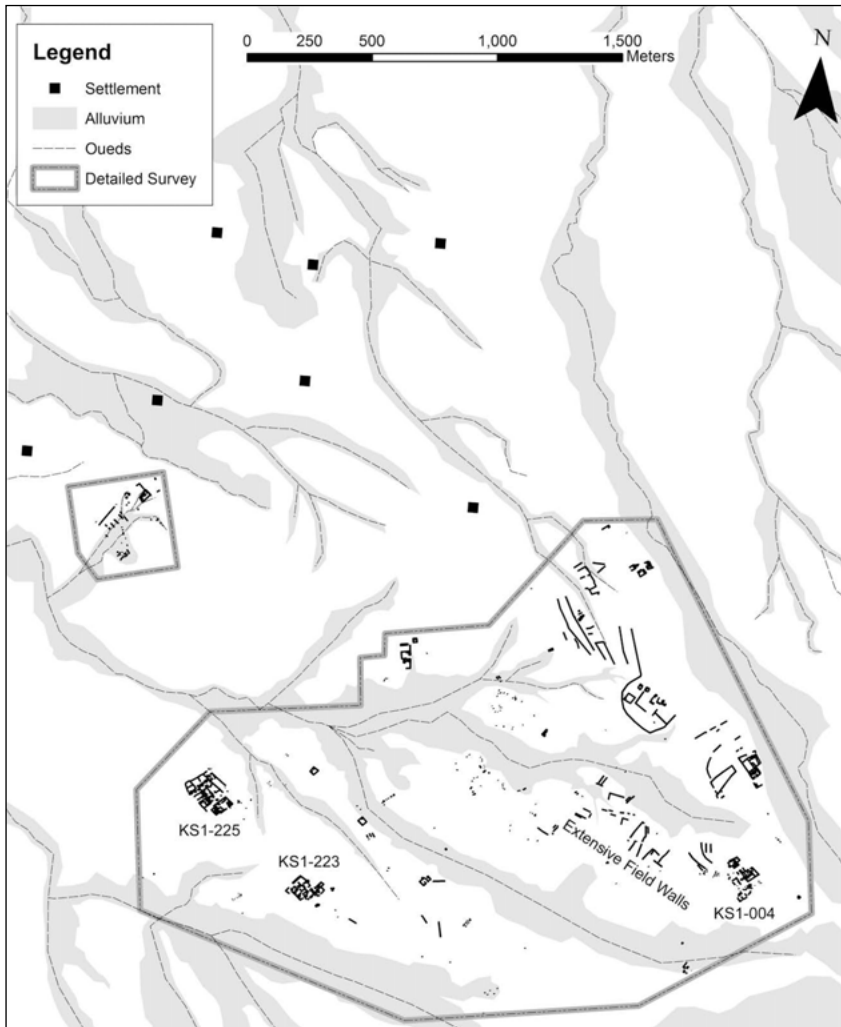
Figure 3: Sector 1.

olives from an area at least 40 hectares in extent, but more likely 100 to 400 hectares (Hitchner *et al.* 1990: 255). Extensions to both KS1-223 and -225 are certainly a product of the accumulation of agricultural wealth and general settlement nucleation that occurs across North Africa. Also notable is that these are the only two settlements in Sector 1 where coins were recovered. The highly functional nature of these complexes and the absence of living quarters of any obvious status suggest that these served as industrial centres, not elite dwellings.

   Another large site, KS1-004, is situated at the highest point of an intersection of two modern seasonal migration routes through the Djebel Selloum (Fig. 3). The tracks leading from the passes intersect in a narrow depression immediately to the east of the site, and Thelepte and multiple valleys are observable, and so it is strategically well-situated to observe seasonal movements

between the Kasserine-Thelepte valley and the immediate passes through the Djebel Selloum. It also contains numerous large enclosures (most likely for animals), a possible observation tower, and a relatively small living area compared to the extent of the activity area. Based on its size, form and location, this site may be interpreted as a rural market.

The construction of both small and large courtyard farms is fairly uniform throughout the plateau, and throughout the survey. They typically consist of a square or rectangular enclosure with entrances flanked by orthostats, constructed in *opus africanum* or rubble masonry. The limestone range to the south, the Djebel Selloum, was utilised for construction materials. Many of the buildings seem to have a common architectural origin in a simple courtyard structure which may have been constructed in the early Imperial period. Courtyard farms appear to have grown and expanded by the means of constructing other courtyards attached to the original farm. These characteristics point to a common architectural language in this locality. The overall structure and the spatial relationships of dwellings in the survey demonstrate that the inhabitants preferred living in unique and separate residences utilising large amounts of arable land. These courtyard farms generally appear in the second century and increase in number through the fifth century. In the later fifth and sixth centuries, there is a dramatic reduction in the occupation of smaller farms (under 0.5 ha), and a move towards larger rural settlements. This occurs in other surveys across North Africa, though usually earlier (Barker *et al.* 1996; Fentress 2001).

The livelihood of the population here was clearly focused on oleoculture and oil production. The majority of the inhabitants were oriented toward self-sufficient farming; the inhabitants of KS1-223 and -225 toward maximising short-term olive oil production. The olive presses at those two buildings could have easily accommodated the harvest from the entire area. Nevertheless, evidence for single presses at five courtyard farms throughout the Bled Rechig indicate that these occupants were also interested in processing their crop.

Field wall water and soil retention systems dominate the ridge tops of Bled Rechig. The KS-014 system, to the north of KS1-004, for example, forms a series of artificial terraces set into the ridge, designed to take advantage of landscape drainage patterns. To the west of KS1-004 runs another complex series of field walls along the length of the *oued* or dry river bed (Fig. 3). In both of these cases, it is unclear which residence, if any one in particular, was the beneficiary of these extensive irrigation systems.

Cisterns and wells were found in lowland areas where rainwater runoff was limited. One area in particular contains ten wells in immediate proximity, next to a small farm, with a cistern just further down the oued (Fig. 4). Although some are clearly associated with particular sites, many of these were probably shared by multiple local residents.

The Roman period cemeteries in the Bled Rechig, containing burials covered with stone slabs, are all oriented northwest-southeast, and thus it is fairly certain that they were designated after land had already been surveyed and settlements had been established. The cemeteries on the Bled Rechig are all associated with the larger farm complexes (Fig. 5). They are located generally at the top of sloping ground, in visible areas to the west of larger settlements.

Monumental tombs are also present on the plateau (Fig. 5). Four are associated with KS1-004, and four more are in the area of KS1-223 and -225. A group of three near KS1-004, interpreted as a family group, is located at an intersection of seasonal migration routes and near to the potential marketplace (Hitchner 1988: 21).

Two large groups of cairn graves are located along the edges of the Bled Rechig, only a short distance from the intersection of modern seasonal migration routes through the Djebel Selloum
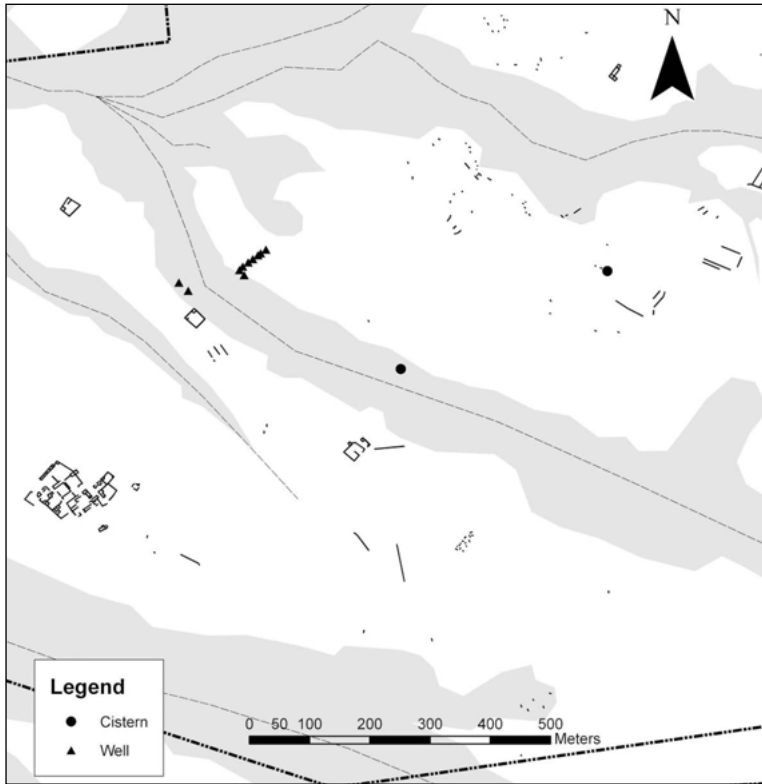
Figure 4: Water collection points.

(Fig. 5). It has been suggested that these tombs belong to a pastoral population that predates the Roman period (Hitchner *et al.* 1990: 44; Hitchner 1994: 35), but it seems that these burials were still visible and visited in the Roman period, if not after, as ceramics from around some of these cairn graves dates to the second century. While some (probably later) buildings appear to have encroached onto this area, these burials are intentionally separated from other cemeteries which are associated with farms. Three libation tables amongst these burials, which cannot be precisely dated, indicate that at some point this area assumed a sacred function (Fig. 5). Furthermore, it is notable that two stone steles were located in the survey, one near an oued and another amongst field walls, interpreted as boundary markers. Both of these markers appear in locations which appear to delimit the area of the highest concentration of cairn graves (Fig. 5).

The Bled Rechig as an Estate Community

The evidence for communal burial, monumental construction, arboriculture, olive oil production, a marketplace, coinage, and irrigation works all indicate that people living in the area were interacting and participating in activities as a group. Clearly there was a hierarchy of power, but there is also evidence for shared interest in livelihood and productivity for the locality. This evidence indicates the existence of a community. Many of these communal activities were
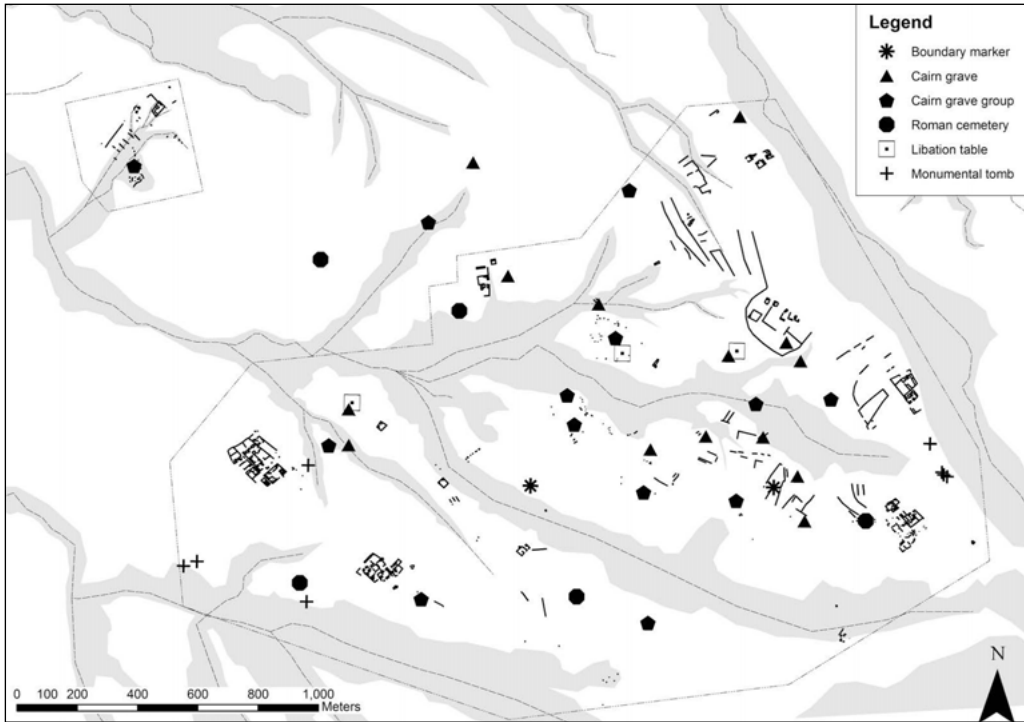
Figure 5: Tombs, cemeteries, libation tables and boundary markers

practiced on an infrequent, temporary, or seasonal basis. The labour to construct the irrigation works at the Bled Rechig must have been organized and agreed upon by a number of inhabitants, and their upkeep and repair would require a significant investment of labour from a number of individuals. Nevertheless this type of interaction would not have occurred on a day-to-day basis. Planting and harvesting the trees also were not daily activities, and nor is there evidence that burial was a ceremonious and communal occasion. Taxation, which is implied by coinage at two of the largest settlements, is also only a seasonal ordeal. Centres of water collection and the market, then, are some of the only regular areas for multi-lateral interaction.

The distinct feature of the pre-Roman landscape, the crossroads to the east of the Bled Rechig and the bands of cairn graves running alongside the oued, clearly served as some kind of symbolic marker. The three libation tables situated in the area of the cairn grave cemeteries were most likely features of Roman date, but this may indicate some pre-Roman religious significance as well. While we are lacking significantly in evidence for pre-Roman settlement, it is likely that settlement density was probably rather low, and certainly not monumental as in the Roman period. Thus it is likely that the Africans used these burials as reference points for communal activity and identity. This limited evidence points to a loose community united only by weak ties, but more inclusive than exclusive, as there are no indications of constructed pre-Roman boundaries or territorial markers.

In the Roman period, the early monumental constructions of KS1-223 and -225 served as a symbolic core of the agricultural activities which held the community together. The symbolic

value of olive presses, also representative of these activities, may help explain their installation, perhaps unnecessary, at some of the courtyard farms. Over time, farming activity and even settlement begins to encroach on the cairn grave cemetery, possibly eroding some of its power as a focal point. Furthermore, cemeteries begin to gravitate toward the larger settlements. Whilst we cannot rule out that tribal affiliation was still important, these monumental structures express central control over local settlement territory rather than shared identity. Monumental tombs and boundary makers also serve as symbolic marks of territoriality. The four prominent tombs near to KS1-004 served a multitude of functions: reinforcing association between those who lived there, expressing exclusion to travellers passing by or stopping to trade, and reminding people who journeyed away of the ties that bind them to each other and to this place. Thus, the Roman period estate incorporated more defined rules of who could belong to the community, although within was a socially heterogeneous grouping of individuals, who built different sizes of courtyard farms as individual wealth allowed. The transformation of the community probably has to do with a number of converging stimuli: the introduction of Roman rule and the olive tree, the threat of outsiders moving in, and increasing economic connectedness over long distances.

By the sixth century, in an uncertain time, the individuals move together into large centres, thus forming more opportunities for face-to-face interaction and encouraging stronger connections in a time of increasing uncertainty. Shared space for the inhabitants of this community becomes more intensive and regular in these large farms, until eventually these large farms constitute the community, and boundaries become even more defined.

A major shortcoming of using survey evidence to argue for community is that the precise extent of settlement in this area is unknown. While this is clearly a case in which locality (e.g. land suitable for arboriculture, nearby limestone resources, distance from stable water resources) affects community, it does not define it. It is, rather, common activities – though on an infrequent basis – which define the members and juxtapose them with others such as the citizens of Cillium and the semi-nomadic pastoralists frequenting the area. Space occupied becomes less of an issue.

Hitchner (1995) has noted the similarities between the archaeology of the Bled Rechig and the description of the Djebel Mrata, in south-eastern Algeria in the fifth century, mentioned in the *Albertini Tablets*. The interpretation of the Bled Rechig as an estate is based on the central, monumental buildings and their substantial pressing capacity, the uniform orientation of structures and graves, and the irrigation works that closely resemble descriptions in the *Albertini Tablets*. Based on this argument, the fields at the Bled Rechig were most likely worked according to the *lex Manciana*, a late first century land tenure law promoting the development of uncultivated lands on estates in North Africa. The land was worked by the tenant-farmers or *coloni*, who resided in the courtyard farms. If we follow Ørsted's (1994) model of the lease system, the tenant-farmers paid their shares after the harvest to the owner or his representative, then registered his/her own share rent based on the size of the yield. In return, the estate owner paid them with small-denomination coins. The *Albertini Tablets* also reveal that a minority of these *coloni* in the late fifth century could read, write, and use documents to record their practical legal affairs, and so it is likely that some played an active role in this negotiation (Conant 2004). The tenant-farmers would then spend these coins in the rural markets, such as KS1-004, to purchase consumer goods. The expansion of cultivation, also per Ørsted's (1994) suggestion, may have represented the general interest of the owner of the estate as well, since it meant preventing foreigners from

settling there. Systematic and organised the North African estate system was, but it also required active participation, interaction, and communal practices. For example, from a particular rural inscription in North Africa, we know that tenant-farmers restored with their own funds buildings which had collapsed (*CIL* VIII, 587 = *ILS* 5567). This historical interpretation fits well with that outlined above, and the Bled Rechig may be interpreted as an estate community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to emphasise that while Tönnies' organisation of social systems is no longer explicitly utilised, many of the characteristics of *Gemeinchaft* and *Gesellschaft* are still apparent in social network approaches. This approach may be augmented by taking into consideration symbolic cores and boundaries. This provides a conceptual framework for communities which are both actualised and imagined, and are visible archaeologically. Roman archaeology may benefit a great deal from applying this approach to field surveys and excavations to understand the stories of social interaction in between the global and the individual.

School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester

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