Chapter 3

Samnium: The Sacred Construction of Community and Architectural Forms

In the preceding chapters the developments in Central Italy after the Roman conquest have been questioned from the perspective of cultural change: difficulties with the interpretation of material culture as an indicator of romanisation have been noted (Chapter 1). Also, the central importance of religion and cult places for the expression of communal identities has become clear; for example in Capua with Diana’s deer, or with the Roman Capitolia in urban centres (Chapter 2).

Many of these themes of cultural change, material culture, and the role of religious places can be tested, or illustrated in the case of Pentrian Samnium. The role that sanctuaries assumed in this mountainous area during and after the Roman conquest is conspicuous, and so is their material aspect. As shown here, Pentrian Samnium forms an exquisite example of the role that sanctuaries could assume in the reinforcement of Italic identity in relation to the changed situation after the Roman conquest. Moreover, it will be argued that the adoption of different cultural elements or architectural ‘styles’ can be seen as a corollary to this specific process, rather than as an autonomous ‘spread’ of these models because of their presumed ‘intrinsic’ cultural values. In order to present this case study on the ‘sacred landscape’ of Samnium in its wider context, a short review of the research history and ideas on Samnite society will follow.

**Samnium: Research History**

Amongst Italy’s inland regions, Samnium has long held a privileged position in modern research, interest being stimulated early on by Livy’s vivid account of the Samnite Wars. The territory inhabited in antiquity by the Samnites Pentri, one of five subgroups considered to have made up the “Samnites”, forms the heartland of ancient Samnium. The area largely occupies modern upland Molise and part of South Abruzzo. In antiquity the mountainous landscape formed one of the most impervious and (at least from a Central-Tyrrhenian perspective) remote areas of Central Italy, hard
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to access by land and with none of the limited advantages of the Adriatic coastal area,\(^1\) which was occupied by the Frentani. The historical sources on the Samnites Pentri are relatively abundant. In the Greek and Roman sources, the belligerent Pentri are depicted as the major obstacle on Rome’s route to absolute power over the Italian peninsula, from the fourth century to the Social War. Their geographical position and historical role have helped to create an image of the area as the ‘core-region’ of Samnite culture and resistance to the spread of Roman dominion. The Pentri are also relatively well known through the material record.

The ubiquitous hill-forts and sanctuaries have always constituted the most visible elements of the Samnite landscape and have therefore attracted – and dominated – scholarly interest. The ample archaeological knowledge on Samnium is due to a remarkable interest from Italian, regional and Anglo-Saxon side.\(^2\) The Soprintendenze of Abruzzo and Molise have, starting with the pioneering studies, especially those by La Regina in the 1960s and 70s, disclosed much of the archaeological material. The results have been published in various contributions and especially in a series of exhibition catalogues.\(^3\) Furthermore, various predominantly British field survey projects have added invaluable information about the ancient patterns of settlement.\(^4\) Most famous is the Biferno Valley project directed by Graeme Barker through the 1970s, a benchmark project in Mediterranean archaeological research, and especially renowned for its application of a long term perspective.\(^5\) Scholarly research of Samnite culture has met modern interest in the construction of a local or regional identity for the relatively underdeveloped and depopulated region of Molise, for which purpose Samnite ‘resistance’ to the Roman hegemony has been paralleled with (desired) local attitudes to politics in Italy and the European Union.\(^6\) Local interest resulted in the activities of archaeological clubs and other amateurs mainly published privately or in regional journals.

The classical work *Samnium and the Samnites* by the Canadian Edward Togo Salmon\(^7\) is fundamental, but is to a considerable extent outmoded by recent archaeological data as well as developments in historical and historiographical research. With regard to the historical framework, the works of Marta Sordi and more recently Tim Cornell are important, since they have questioned the traditional chronologies and character of the Samnite wars.\(^8\) As to these, it could be asked whether the military actions actually deserve the name ‘Samnite Wars’. The usual subdivision into three or four Samnite Wars is a modern invention, dating back to Niebuhr’s *Römische Geschichte* (1833),

\(^1\) Cf. D’ERCOLE 2002.
\(^2\) Samnium, occupying a central place in Central-Italian research, is well represented in general studies on Central and South Italy: cf. CRAWFORD 1981 for literature up to 1981, and up to 1996 CURTI, DENCH and PATTERSON 1996. See also STEK 2006.
\(^4\) See the overview in PATTERNSON 2006a, 80-82.
\(^5\) BARKER 1995.
\(^6\) DENCH 1995, 4-10; see the introduction in SIRAGO 2000.
\(^7\) SALMON 1967.
\(^8\) Esp. SORDI 1969; CORNELL 2004.
whereas ancient authors refer to one ‘Great Samnite War’ from 343 to 290 BC. Cornell suggests that the actions referred to may rather have consisted of a series of rather independent military actions.\(^9\)

But particularly archaeological knowledge has expanded tremendously since 1967. If the first systematic research starting in the 1960s did not at first permit an integrated narrative to complement Salmon’s more historical approach, the situation has changed in recent years with data coming from the Soprintendenza’s long-term and rescue excavations, as well as other projects in the wake of the general reappraisal of Italic archaeology. The most recent and comprehensive general study on Samnite history, culture and socio-political organisation is the work by Gianluca Tagliamonte entitled *I Sanniti: Caudini, Irpini, Pentri, Carricini, Frentani*, carefully integrating historical, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological material.\(^{10}\)

**MODERN AND ANCIENT VIEWS**

The prevailing Graeco- or Romanocentric views of both ancient and modern historiographic traditions have certainly helped to establish an image of a backward Samnite culture. Salmon also generally tends to depict Samnites as a fierce, stubborn and valiant mountain tribe, and shows sympathy for their struggle against the Romans.\(^{11}\) Notwithstanding this partisan element, one may find that Salmon did not break free from the historical framework and preconceptions provided by Livy. He stresses the opposition between Romans and Samnites quite heavily, and in the end his Samnites are not very dissimilar from the Livian *montani atque agrestes*.\(^{12}\) A fatalistic element in Salmon’s work, which sees the final Roman conquest as an inescapable and perhaps even a not undesirable event, has been pointed out,\(^{13}\) a conception that fits well into the unification paradigm outlined in Chapter 1.\(^{14}\)

In her important work *From Barbarians to New Men* Emma Dench highlights and deconstructs these conceptualisations of the peoples of the Central Apennines and Samnium proper.\(^{15}\) She shows how certain preoccupations have influenced the depiction of these peoples in antiquity. The importance of portraying the enemy negatively, for instance, accounts for Livy’s somewhat contradictory assertions on both Samnite primitivism and *luxuria*. Even more interesting are the changes in the Roman perception of the Italic peoples as they, once under Roman rule, were invaluable for the supply of manpower. In the case of Samnium, post-Sullan ideology

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10 TAGLIAMONTE 1997.
11 As Martin Frederiksen stated in a review in 1968 (FREDERIKSEN 1968, 224): “indeed, Professor Salmon has almost changed into a Samnite himself. His heart clearly warms to the majestic landscape of the Apennines; and when he turns to write of the long struggle between Samnium and Rome, he becomes frankly and engagingly partisan.”
13 DENCH 2004.
14 Interestingly, we may distinguish a certain development in Salmon’s view of Roman domination, since, departing from a ‘partisan’ position in his 1967 work, via his *Nemesis of Empire* lectures, he ends up with his strongly pro-Roman *The making of Roman Italy* of 1982 (SALMON 1982).
15 DENCH 1995.
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seems to have structured the emphasis on abandonment and rurality after his military actions. In the late Republic and Augustan age, then, the ‘foreignness’ of Samnite culture is instrumentalised to enhance the moral excellence attributed to the Sabines by raking together both Samnites and Sabines in the neologism ‘Sabelli’. In this way, an ‘Italic’ ideal is invented by combining Sabine piety and Samnite bravery.

With regard to modern views, Dench has more recently shown how various factors have contributed to the ‘anti-classical’ image of Samnium. Livy’s account on the Samnite Wars and the archaeologically most visible mid-Republican period were most important in the evocation of an anti-Roman and anti-classical image. This view was enhanced by the disciplinary divide between archaeology and history. The lack of discussion and cross-fertilisation between Barker’s landscape research and more classical studies can for example be explained by this disciplinary divide.

ECONOMY AND PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT

The general image of ‘backwardness’ discussed above has influenced ideas on the economy and patterns of settlement in Samnium. Modern studies may have over-emphasised the importance of pastoralism for Samnite economies. Recent studies tend to balance this pastoralist vision with evidence for risk-spreading mixed farming. More attention to the Iron Age communities, that apparently shared in Italic networks on a larger scale than formerly assumed, as well as an increasing interest in Greek-Hellenistic elements in Samnite culture, have contested the alleged isolation of Samnium. From the third century BC on, many Italic people apparently joined in the Mediterranean trade networks, and it is thought that Samnium benefited from these enterprises. Yet, there can be no question about the distinctive character of ancient Samnium, with its particularly late urban development, thereby deviating firmly from Graeco-Roman ideas of civilisation. We must not overestimate the relatively poor material culture of the Iron Age. After all, it cannot compete seriously with the Tyrrhenian or even neighbouring ‘peripheral’ Samnite regions such as internal Campania, if not understood within different societal frameworks.

The standard idea of the Samnite landscape can be summarised as ‘dispersed villages and farms around hill-forts and rural sanctuaries’ The Samnites have often been described as a tribal society, based on a pagus-vicus pattern of settlement, in which pagi (territorial districts) would include one or more vici (villages or hamlets). From an archaeological point of view the still visible hill-forts and sanctuaries have attracted most attention. Hill-forts, mostly built up in polygonal walling, are spread throughout the whole Central Apennines. Due to a lack of excavation data, often their date and

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16 Dench 1995.
17 Dench 2004.
18 Especially the scale and forms of transhumance (the seasonal moving of the herds) have been discussed at length. Central to this discussion is the applicability of evidence of later periods (mostly Roman imperial or even early modern) to earlier times (cf. Chapter 4 for discussion).
21 Cf. Chapter 4 for a description and Chapter 6 for detailed critique of the pagus-vicus system.
function within the ancient pattern of settlement remains troublesome. It is not clear whether they were permanently inhabited or served only as temporary refuges for the people living in the valleys.\(^{22}\) The small sample of excavated hill-forts yielded evidence for at least semi-permanent habitation in all cases.\(^{23}\) The West-Lucanian hill-fort of Roccagloriosa has been investigated exemplarily with a combination of excavation and field survey in the territory.\(^{24}\) Often Roccagloriosa is evoked as a model for hill-forts within Samnite society.\(^{25}\) According to this model, local elites from within the walls controlled a community living dispersed in the direct territory of the hill-fort.\(^{26}\) Hill-forts would thus have assumed a centralising role in the formulation of institutional and political structures.\(^{27}\) To give weight to this central role, Gualtieri has argued for a ‘vicus-pagus-oppidum system’, a variant of the pagus-vicus system with more emphasis on the hill-fort or oppidum.\(^{28}\)

The question remains, however, whether this West-Lucanian model may be used to complement our knowledge of the more internal zones of Samnium. Regional differences remain essential and interpretations must in first instance depend on the actual local data. Settlement developments in Lucania and Samnium differ substantially, also chronologically. The well-documented site of Roccagloriosa risks overshadowing other less investigated sites in inland Samnium, dominating the interpretation of the latter. Arguably, for other Samnite hill-forts, we should adopt the admirable methodology applied at Roccagloriosa, rather than the actual model of settlement organisation encountered there.\(^{29}\)

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22 Cf. Oakley 1995 for discussion.
26 The inclusion of hill-forts within pagi is, however, firmly part of the traditional concept of the pagus-vicus system, cf. e.g. Kornemann 1942b, 2321: “Jeder pagus enthielt auch ein oder mehrere oppida. Zum offenen Gau gehörte als Zufluchtsort die Gauburg.” Cf. Kornemann 1942a, 710: “Wie pagus der Gau, so ist oppidum in der kleinsten Form die Gauburg, in grösseren Dimensionen dagegen die Stammes- oder Volksburg. Pagus und oppidum, Gau und Gauburg, sind die beiden wichtigsten Glieder altitalischen Siedelns.” (note the terminology reminiscent of Nazi ideology adopted here).
27 In this regard a fragment of a bronze plaque with an inscribed lex, thought to derive from a public building near the central gate at Roccagloriosa, is relevant: it mentions magistrates, and other formulae seem reminiscent of Latin leges. Gualtieri dates it to the first half of the third century BC (the late date around 130 BC initially proposed by Tocco 2000, 224 must be erroneous; see Gualtieri 2000).
28 This system would have formed an “embryonic form of territorial ‘city-state’”: Gualtieri 2004, 46.
29 Stek 2006, 405-406.
If the evidence for Samnite hill-forts is already meagre, other types of settlements have unfortunately been even less investigated. Although as noted the general image of Samnite society is one of dispersed villages and farms, and field surveys have revealed relatively high densities of rural settlements, only very few of them have been object of excavation. Amongst them are the farmsteads at Matrice and Cercemaggiore, dating to the third century BC onwards. The excavation and complete publication of a small Samnite village or hamlet at Capracotta by Ivan Rainini as yet stands alone. Relatively much attention has been paid to the sanctuaries, and the available evidence furnishes a fairly clear picture of these sanctuaries. In the following, the development of Samnite sanctuaries and their possible relation to developments in Samnite history and society will be roughly outlined. The sanctuaries of Pietrabbondante and S. Giovanni in Galdo will be discussed in more detail because of their status as the most ‘typical’ Samnite sanctuaries in modern literature. Whereas the first would represent the Samnite ‘federal’ or ‘state’ sanctuary, the latter allegedly represents a typical small Samnite sanctuary.

Samnite Sanctuaries: New Forms and Tradition

The remains of monumental sanctuaries form the most conspicuous part of the archaeology of the Hellenistic period in Samnium, and therefore, have attracted much of the scholarly attention devoted to this region. This modern view is probably biased in favour of sanctuaries because of scholarly traditions, disproportionately preoccupied with monumental architecture. However, this situation reflects at least in part an ancient preoccupation with sacred places too. The few well excavated remains of domestic and funeral contexts of the same period appear rather poor when compared to the relatively opulent temples. Apparently in this period the ancient inhabitants of Samnium invested more readily in their sacred places than in, for instance, sumptuous funerals, houses, or profane public buildings.

In order to gauge this importance, a diachronical perspective is useful. Before the fifth century BC there is no evidence for cult places of any substance, but rich graves occupy a prominent position. Cult places become visible in the archaeological record from about the fourth century BC, and their heyday is after the Samnite Wars in the late third and second centuries BC. Graves almost disappear from sight and reveal a standardisation in grave gifts unfamiliar to the earlier period. In sum, a shift of focus away from graves to sanctuaries is evident.

Generally, sanctuaries do not yet appear in monumentalised form until the third century. At some cult places votive objects and weapons are deposited. Weapons of

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31 Rainini 1996.
32 Although the publication of the excavation data is often rather brief: primarily in short contributions in catalogues or guides. See on research on Samnite sanctuaries infra and Chapter 4.
33 E.g. Tagliamonte 2004, 104-105; cf. similar ideas on the shift of focus from different contexts in D’Ercole 2000.
foreign origin have been found at the sanctuary at Pietrabondante. Part of the weaponry can be dated as early as the late fifth century BC. They have been interpreted as a communal dedication, booty being offered and displayed in the sanctuary after battle (*spolia hostium*, perhaps even a proper *congeries armorum*), but probably reflect different rituals on an individual level as well. In light of these finds, in this period Pietrabondante may already in this period have been serving as a symbolic central place.

The Samnite Wars ended in 290 BC with an unequal treaty for the Samnites. After the Roman victory, the pattern of settlement changed dramatically: in 263 BC the Romans placed the Latin colony Aesernia in the middle of Pentrian territory, and later a *praefectura* was established at Venafrum, the important passage to Campania. At Aesernia in this time apparently a three *cellae* temple was built: perhaps indeed a *Capitolium*, symbolising and propagating an urban way of life and ‘Romanness’ (cf. Chapter 2). It is also during this period that Samnite cult places are structured more solidly. At the locations of sanctuaries which presumably had formerly been open-air cult places, cult buildings were erected. The best example of this development is the sanctuary at Pietrabondante.

Excavations at Pietrabondante began in 1857 under the Bourbons. In the 1960s and 1970s systematic research has been carried out by La Regina, which was recently resumed. The results have been published in various contributions.

In the course of the second half of the third century BC this sanctuary assumed monumental forms. To that time, the so-called ‘Ionic temple’ can be dated. It consisted of a temple and some smaller structures, judging by the architectural remains that have been found. This temple probably occupied the space later taken by the theatre-temple complex.

La Regina suggests that the form of this earliest sanctuary reflected the * locus consaeptus* mentioned by Livy when describing a Samnite military rite performed at Aquilonia in 293 BC, in the course of the Third Samnite War (Livy...
10.38; cf. Introduction). This time-honoured Samnite ritual, which was central to the formation of the legio linteata (the elite soldiers of the Samnite army), took place in a square sacred area of 200 by 200 feet, which was boarded off and covered all over with linen cloth. According to La Regina this would match the dimensions of the theatre and the frontal alignment of the later Temple B. At the end of the third century BC the ‘Ionic temple’ was destroyed.

In the second quarter of the second century BC, a new temple (Temple A) was built. It was set on a podium (17.70 x 12.20 x 1.65 m), and was probably prostyle and tetrastyle, with a single cella. Several Oscan inscriptions mentioning magistrates indicate that this temple was the focus of Samnite political life during the second century BC. Parts of the building were dedicated by magistrates, and especially the gens Staia appears to have been active here. The most intriguing inscription is however Vetter 149, dated to the second century BC, which mentions safinim sak, referring to a sak[araklum] or in any case a sacred dedication, and thus apparently defining the sanctuary as that of the Samnites as an ethnic group (cf. infra). The most grandiose architectural enterprise was the theatre-temple complex known as Temple B, which must have been built shortly before the outbreak of the Social War (fig. 3.1).

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42 Liv. 10.38.5. La Regina 1976, 226: “E in effetti lo spazio occupato dal teatro, ed esteso fino all’allineamento frontale dei due basamenti adiacenti al tempio B, corrisponde nella forma e nelle dimensioni alla descrizione liviana.” [55m = 200 Oscan feet (0,275)].
43 La Regina 1976, 226-229; Coarelli and La Regina 1984, 234-239: according to La Regina by Hannibal.
44 Ve. 152; La Regina 1976, 233; La Regina 1989, 361.
45 Sak[araklum] or sak[arat] has been read; RIX 2002, 83 prefers sak[arat]. Cf. e.g. Ve. 150. Cf. also bibliography in the following note.
46 Untermann 2000, s.v. ; cf. Vetter 1953 no. 149, on p. 109: “Das Wort safinim scheint auf die Tätigkeit des Stifters als Bundesbeamter hinzuweisen,” criticised by Lejeune 1972 who argues for an interpretation as féderal Samnite sanctuary, interpreting safinim as an ethnic: “C’est donc le temple A qui, à la date de notre texte, est qualifié de safinim (*sabhyom) ‘samnite’. Cet ethnique, on le sait, fournit (concurrentment avec viteliù) la légende figurant au revers des émissions monétaires fédérales osques au temps de la Guerre Sociale (Ve. 200 G2)” (100-101). La Regina interprets the inscription as a testimony to the ‘state’ character of the sanctuary: Coarelli and La Regina 1984, 241: “Vi compare infatti menzionato il nome del Sannio (Safinim), che rivela esplicitamente la funzione politica e religiosa che il tempio, e quindi l’intero santuario di Pietrabbondante, svolgeva per lo stato sannitico.” Cf. pp. 171-172: “Soprattutto sull’incomprensione di questo modello (scil. the “nomen tribale dei Pentri”) si fondano ricostruzioni ingiustificate, come ad esempio una lega di città sannitiche o il carattere federale di un santuario.” On the question of ‘state’ or federal organisation, cf. n. 68 and discussion infra. The important point here is that in any case a connection is made between the sanctuary and the notion of a ‘Samnite’ identity.
Fig. 3.1. Pietrabbondante, Temple B with theatre and Temple A (adapted from SANNIO 1980, 166 fig. 32).

G. Staatis L. Klar, member of an important Samnite family, seems to have been responsible for the construction of part of the podium. The tetrastyle temple, with a podium measuring 35.75 x 23.10 x 3.57 m, presents a plan with three cellae (rather than a single one with alae), and the building was flanked by two lateral porticoes. The building had a long pronaos, and in the middle of the front of the podium a flight of stairs has been made which leads up to the podium. Two altars stand in front of the podium aligned with the central and eastern cellae, and it seems legitimate to reconstruct a third one aligned with the western cella. The theatre, with impressive polygonal walls on the outside and elegantly decorated with amongst other things telamones on the inside, was built shortly before the temple, and occupies the space in front of it.

In sum, this sanctuary, where weapons were already deposited from the fifth to fourth centuries BC onwards, flourished in the period after the Roman victory in the Samnite Wars, from the third century BC right up to the Social War. It was located away from the colony at Aesernia and apparently constituted a ‘traditional Pentrian’ cult place.

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47 Ve. 154; Pocc. 18. Cf. LA REGINA 1976, 233 with discussion on 244; COARELLI and LA REGINA 1984, 253-254; LA REGINA 1989, 338.
Pietrabbondante represents by far the most imposing complex in Samnium. Other sanctuaries appear to have been frequented from the fourth or third centuries BC on, with a subsequent phase of monumentality mostly dated to the second or early first centuries BC, although sometimes earlier as well. The best known examples are Schiavi d’Abruzzo,\(^{49}\) Vastogirardi,\(^{50}\) Campochiaro,\(^{51}\) S. Pietro in Cantoni,\(^{52}\) Quadri,\(^{53}\) Atessa,\(^{54}\) and S. Giovanni in Galdo.

The sanctuary at S. Giovanni in Galdo, Colle Rimontato, was frequented from the late fourth century or early third centuries BC on (cf. Chapter 5), but only monumentalised at the very end of the second or the beginning of the first century BC. A terminus post quem of 104 BC is provided by coins under the pavement of the central sacellum. This sacellum was located within a square precinct (ca. 22 x 22 m; cf. fig. 3.2).

\(^{49}\) La Regina 1976, 230, 237; Coarelli and La Regina 1984, 269-273; La Penna 1997b and La Penna 1997c.

\(^{50}\) Morel 1976; Morel 1984; Coarelli and La Regina 1984, 257-259; Pagano, Ceccarelli and D’Andrea 2005.

\(^{51}\) Campochiaro 1982; Coarelli and La Regina 1984, 202-209; Capini 1991a; Capini 2000; Capini 2003.

\(^{52}\) Matteini Chiari 1994; Matteini Chiari 2000; Matteini Chiari 2004.

\(^{53}\) La Penna 1997a.

\(^{54}\) FabbriCotti 1997.
This area is protected on three sides by a retaining wall; the space between this wall and the precinct walls is about one metre at the back of the sanctuary and 1.30m at the sides. Within the precinct, two lateral porticoes were located at the West and East sides, each 4 m wide. Columns supported the porticoes whereas the back part of the porticoes may have been closed off. The centre of the back wall of the precinct a sacellum was placed. It stood on a high podium (7 x 7.50 x 1.54 m) which is preserved rather well, presenting a profile typical of many Samnite sanctuaries (fig. 3.3), see for example Temple A of Pietrabondante. The plan of the sacellum cannot be made out anymore, but a tetrastyle reconstruction has been suggested. The sacellum was paved with a red signinum floor decorated with white mosaic tesserae; the mosaic is currently exhibited in the Questura of Campobasso. Apparently no permanent stairs were foreseen for the sacellum; the podium continues on all three sides. This feature has led La Regina to suppose that it was no real sacellum, but rather a thesauros, perhaps containing a statue.

55 COARELLI and LA REGINA 1984, 295; cf. ZACCARDI 2007, 95-96 proposing six columns on each side.
56 See ZACCARDI 2007, 95.
57 COARELLI and LA REGINA 1984, 296-297; “probabilmente una statua o un donario importante ivi dedicato per intervento dello stato o per munificenza di qualche magistrato.” COARELLI 1996 suggests that the precinct was destined for some sacred initiation rites, and presumes that the precinct wall continued also at the front, closing off the sacred area. Here, only foundation walls on a lower level have been found however, and this reconstruction has been recently dismissed by ZACCARDI 2007, 70.
Monumentalisation: Wealth, Politics and Architectural Forms

As noted, the sanctuary of S. Giovanni in Galdo is part of a larger phenomenon of monumentalisation of cult places in especially the second century BC. In a period during which both private and secular public buildings appear to be unostentatious or non-existent, these grand temples must have caught the eye. Why was so much invested in the Samnite cult places?

WEALTH

Different ideas have been developed to explain the widespread construction of sanctuaries in the late third and second centuries BC. Most popular (and at the same time the most generic) is the thesis that connects the construction of sanctuaries to the economic profits made by Italians within the Roman imperial system. Especially the opening of the eastern Mediterranean markets is considered to have been of great importance. Citing the Italic negotiatores or mercatores active on Delos has almost become a topos.\(^{58}\) The possibility of the Samnites participating in the Mediterranean trade network has been seen as a favour granted by the Romans, who punished the Italic groups that defected during the Hannibalic War, but rewarded those that had remained loyal.\(^{59}\) Indeed, some members of apparently the same families that were active in the construction works of the sanctuaries are attested epigraphically on Delos, although the identification is not sure.\(^{60}\) The economic prosperity of Italians abroad is often presented as an ‘explanation’ for the appearance of the lavish Samnite sanctuaries.\(^{61}\) Characteristically, in this view the architectural form of the temples would have been shipped together with the riches to Italy.\(^{62}\) It should be stressed,

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59 According to La Regina, “Tale notevole fioritura edilizia … deve collegarsi all’aiuto offerto a Roma dai Samnites Pentri durante la guerra annibulica, ed ai conseguenti benefici che dovettero derivare loro, a differenza di altre popolazioni che subirono un trattamento punitivo. Sotto tale prospettiva si giustifica anche la partecipazione di Samniti alle lucrose attività commerciali e finanziarie aperte da Roma nel Mediterraneo orientale, così ben attestato a Delo”. La Regina 1976, 229. See also e.g. La Penna 1997a, 68. However, see Torelli 1988c, 60 on building activities in general, with the idea that these in Central Italy received a “forte battuta d’arresto” by the Roman conquest in the third century, “fino alla ripresa generale dell’economia italica nella seconda metà del II secolo a.C”.

60 Staii are for example attested at Delos; La Regina 1976, 229-230. See Gaggiotti 1983, esp. 138 and 146-147 fig. 2a.


62 E.g. Gaggiotti 1983, 138, on ‘il Sannio pennino’: “In seguito all’apertura dei ricchi mercati orientali, in particolare Delos, cui parteciparono largamente mercatores, soprattuttio laziali e campani, confinirono nelle regioni di origine ingenti capitali, parte dei quali furono impiegati nella ristrutturazione di vecchi santuari o nella costruzione di nuovi, per i quali si adottarono soluzioni architettoniche e planimetriche importate anch’esse dalle zone di tradizione culturale ellenistica nelle quali i mercatores stessi si erano trovati ad operare.” (underscore TS). This idea is echoed in Patterson 2006b, 611-612: “Italian communities benefited from this influx of wealth collectively … exploiting the commercial openings made possible by the Roman conquest of the Aegean. Indeed, the building of monumental sanctuaries seems to have been particularly characteristic of this period in Latium and the adjacent territories … modeled on Hellenistic sanctuaries such as those at Kos, Lindos, and Delos itself. Even the Samnite sanctuaries of the central Apennines – Pietrabbondante, S.
however, that the accumulation of wealth does not automatically lead to the erection of a temple, and also a direct architectural influence from the eastern Mediterranean is much more complicated.\textsuperscript{63} 

Other economic factors have been highlighted as well; another hypothesis connects the construction of sanctuaries in Samnium to the economic profits made by large-scale transhumance instead of trade in the East.\textsuperscript{64} But wealth should in my view be seen in the first place as a \textit{conditio sine qua non}. In the process from wealth to temple there were active choices to be made. Also, it is seldom specified how the acquired wealth would have been funnelled into the construction works, i.e. through direct private investments, or rather through communal funding. It is certain that the names of a restricted group of families recur in the inscriptions found in the sanctuaries, but it is often unclear whether they acted on their own behalf or on behalf of the community as a whole in an official capacity.\textsuperscript{65} This scarcity of evidence precludes in any case all too direct comparisons with the situation in Rome, where most mid-Republican temples can be linked to competing \textit{gentes}, apparently without much state intervention.\textsuperscript{66} It should also be pointed out that in Rome a variety of public buildings for diverse political and social functions was close at hand, whereas in Samnium sanctuaries virtually form the exclusive focus of attention. Even if a decisive role for elite individuals would be accepted, the basic question remains why they chose to construct or embellish sanctuaries, and not other structures. Why was it – to remain in the economic vocabulary – profitable to invest in sanctuaries? If status is achieved by the grace of an audience, the inevitable answer is that sanctuaries apparently had an important function within society. In this way, even considering the argument that wealth was the ‘reason’ for the monumental building of sanctuaries, we end up with questions about the \textit{audience} envisioned by the rich \textit{negotiatores}, and therefore with questions about the role of the sacred place in society, also before its monumentalisation.

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Giovanni in Galdo, Vastogirardi and others – were rebuilt in Hellenistic style in the same period … both the resources needed to build the sanctuaries and the architectural inspiration for their design came from the East"; cf. also e.g. LA TORRE 1989a, 145 and esp. CALIÒ 2003.

\textsuperscript{63} Cf. also \textit{infra}.

\textsuperscript{64} LLOYD 1991a, 184-185 and DENCH 1995, 121 for this suggestion. Cf. Chapter 4 on the relation between transhumance and sanctuaries.

\textsuperscript{65} Evidence is rich for Pietrabondante, cf. e.g. Ve. 151 mentioning the dedication of Temple A by a \textit{meddix tuticus}, but also many dedications by persons without mentioning their official capacity are found. Less abundant is the evidence for other, smaller sanctuaries, especially when brick stamps mentioning state officials are dismissed as evidence for their direct intervention in the construction (corpus in RIX 2002, 83-91). Cf. DENCH 1995, 121: "it is as well to admit that we simply do not have good epigraphic evidence to answer conclusively questions about the extent to which building was actually funded by individuals or by communities as a whole," with n. 37: "It is worth emphasizing the fact that there is little positive evidence for the funding of parts of the rural sanctuaries in Samnium by individuals."

\textsuperscript{66} Esp. ZIOLKOWSKI 1992 for this view; but cf. ORLIN 1997.

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POLITICS

A more specific interpretation of the monumentalisation of sanctuaries can be found in the socio-political realm. For several large sanctuaries in Italy a political function has been posited, similar to the Latial Jupiter Albanus sanctuary and the Etruscan *fanum Voltumnae*. Sanctuaries have been linked directly to the supposed political organisation of the Italic peoples, which has resulted in the widely used term ‘federal’ (or even ‘state’) sanctuary. For example, the sanctuaries of Mefitis at Rossano di Vaglio, for the Lucani, and in the Val d’Ansanto for the Hirpini, as well as the sanctuary of Marica at the mouth of the Garigliano for the Aurunci, have been considered as such. That the sanctuary of Pietrabbondante also functioned as an important sanctuary for the Samnites (Pentri) has long been acknowledged. It would have constituted the political centre of the Samnites in their particular political configuration (as ‘tribal *nomen*, *populus*, or *toute*; cf. Chapter 4). Here, the Samnites would have held their political meetings, the sanctuary being the focus of the people under arms.

This military and political function seems to be supported by the only deity documented at the site with certainty. On a late second century or early first century BC dedication on a bronze sheet, which perhaps can be connected to Temple B, *Vikturrai* or *Victoria* appears. She is actually a very ‘Roman’ goddess, and makes her first appearance here in Oscan territory, although she possibly reflects an Aphrodite Nikêphoros of earlier times (who, however, is not directly attested). The abundant finds of weapons from the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, as has been noted, might attest to the political and military importance of the sanctuary in earlier periods already.

Moreover, the socio-political dimension of the sanctuary is documented explicitly by the already mentioned inscription which seems to identify the sanctuary as belonging to (the) *safinim*; a sanctuary of ‘the Samnites’, perhaps here restricted to the Pentri and reflecting a conscious appeal to their Samnite / Sabine tradition. If the earlier socio-political role of Pietrabbondante must remain somewhat hypothetic, at least in the

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67 Cf. e.g. AMPOLLO 1993; ZEVI 1995; BRIQUEL 2003.
68 For discussion of the political organisation (‘federal’ or ‘statal’) of the Samnites, see Letta 1994 and the contributions by La Regina, e.g. LA REGINA 1989.
71 “esso è il santuario del popolo in armi”: LA REGINA 1989, 422.
72 Pocc. 16; Sa. 24. LA REGINA 1966, 275.
73 Cf. Chapter 7 on the *vicus Supimum*, with discussion on her ‘Romanness’.
74 On the cults, cf. COLONNA 1996, 121-128. The identification (cf. *infra* n. 90) with *Cominium Tuticum = Touxion* is decisive here, since from this place Q. Fabius Maximus Garges would have transferred a statue of this goddess to Rome during the third Samnite War (Ps.-Plut. *Parallela minora*, 37b).
course of the second century BC the sanctuary could adopt a strong political and perhaps even ethnic connotation. In general, one should be careful with the application of ethnicity in archaeological and historical research, and in fact many examples of so-called ‘ethnic’ or ‘tribal’ sanctuaries are exclusively defined as such by outsiders (mostly modern and sometimes ancient writers). But the recognition of an ethnic role for the sanctuary of Pietrabbondante can withstand criticism. In theoretical literature, the fundamental importance of the ethnic definition by the involved group itself (‘emic’) in this process, rather than assertions by others (‘etic’) has been highlighted. And this is exactly what the safinim inscription seems to be: a reference to the perceived old Samnite / Sabine roots by the Pentri themselves. The historical framework within which this development has to be understood can be reconstructed fairly well. It is tempting to see this process of self-assertion in relation to the antagonism between Romans and Samnites on the eve of the Social War. This antagonism is best illustrated by the well-known parallel / opposition between the Roman she-wolf and the Italian calf (viteliu – Italia), to which, in the case of the Pentri, the association with the Samnite bull, the leading animal during the ver sacrum that would have led the Samnites from the Sabines to their new homeland, seems to have been added. On coins from the Italian allies minted in the period of the Social War, the Italian or Samnite bull is depicted as trampling or even raping the Roman she-wolf (fig. 3.4). Interestingly, an analysis of the animal bones from the sanctuary revealed a preponderance of cattle in the animal sacrifices performed at Pietrabbondante.

Fig. 3.4. Coin struck by the Italian allies, showing the Samnite bull goring the Roman she-wolf (SYDENHAM 1952, pl. 19 no. 628).

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76 E.g., for archaeological applications, JONES 1997; and esp. HALL 2002 on the distinction between cultural and ethnic identity.
78 Hellanicus FGrH 4, F111 = Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 1.35.
80 BARKER 1989, also in relation to other sanctuaries such as Campochiaro and Colle Sparanise.
This development, in which a community strengthens its symbolic boundaries at a time when the structural base of the community is threatened, is in line with the social anthropological theories referred to in the first two chapters. Moreover, in this process religion and cult places are symbolic markers par excellence. In sum, a better documented case of ‘resistance’, both cultural, political and military, to Roman power does to my mind not exist in Italy. Supported by ample historical, epigraphical and iconographical evidence, we can discard the reservations that one may have against ‘resistant’ interpretations in general, perhaps over-popular in postcolonialist theory.

Once this specific connotation of the sanctuary at Pietrabbondante is accepted, as seems legitimate at least for the period leading up to and during the Social War, questions of style and substance can be posed.

**STYLE: ‘EXTERNAL’ CULTURAL ELEMENTS AND MODELS**

Is there a relation between the cultural elements or models adopted in the monumental sanctuary of Pietrabbondante and its specific function within Samnite society? Different provenances of the architectural elements of the sanctuary have been suggested, and often its ‘eclecticism’ has been stressed. As noted earlier, there exists the general (and not merely metaphorical) idea that cultural models were shipped from Delos and other places in the East together with the resources for constructing the temples. More precise commentators have emphasised the influence from Latium and especially Campania (and thereby ‘indirect’ eastern influence).

The closest parallels come from Campania: the cornice of the podium of Temple B has an almost exact parallel in the sanctuary of Fondo Patturelli near Capua, and the theatre and its decorations have parallels at Pompeii and Sarno. According to Hans Lauter, these theatres clearly belong to Great Greek theatre architecture, and this formal similarity would indicate that the Samnite theatrical performances were of

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81 COHEN 1985; cf. also e.g. GRAVES-BROWN, JONES and GAMBLE 1996.
82 Cf. BROWN 1996; see Chapter 1.
84 E.g. GAGGIOTTI 1983, 138; PATTERSON 2006b, 611-612 (both quoted supra n. 62); cf. also CALIÒ 2003.
85 La Regina (LA REGINA 1976 and LA REGINA 1989) points to Campanian parallels, but also emphasises the originality of Temple B; TORELLI 1983, 242: “Nelle aree meno evolute, i secoli IV e III coincidono con una definitiva urbanizzazione (area umbro-picena) o con la prima monumentalizzazione delle strutture centrali – i santuari -, dell’habitat paganico (area sannitica): anche qui non si mettono in evidenza tipi edilizi particolari, dal momento che le forme architettoniche sono tutte senz’eccezione derivate dalle zone etrusco-laziali e campane.”
86 This is not the place to enter the debate, but the date of the monumental phase of the sanctuary at Kos, for example, is important in respect to the alleged influence on the construction of several Latial sanctuaries.
87 See LA REGINA 1976, 225 fig. VI. It is generally dated to the later second century BC, but without hard evidence. At the sanctuary a building inscription has been found which dates to 108 BC, but the relation to the podium is unclear (cf. COARELLI 1995a, 379).
88 LAUTER 1976, with discussion (esp. the contribution of Coarelli on pp. 422-423); LA REGINA 1976, 233; cf. in general NIELSEN 2002.
Greek tradition rather than Latial. The axiality and planimetric lay-out of the temple-theatre complex, on the other hand, recalls similar combinations of half round stairways in front of the actual temple buildings in Latial sanctuaries such as Gabii and Tivoli (fig. 3.5).

This resemblance has even been thought to recall the curia-comitium model (fig. 3.6). Perhaps most striking however, is the presence of a three cellae plan in Temple B. This feature has been generally interpreted as a ‘Roman’ or ‘Latin’ ‘influence’: the importance attributed to the model of the Capitoline temple has been discussed in Chapter 2. It has been seen there that the model is thought to have spread by way of the Roman urban centres, especially colonies, which proudly boasted Capitolia within their city walls. As noted, in the Latin colony of Aesernia installed in the Pentrian territory in 263 BC a three cellae temple of the third century BC has been recognised, perhaps indeed the Capitolium of the colony. It is, in sum, not to be excluded that the three cellae model in Pietrabbondante was indeed inspired by the Roman / Latin model. Unfortunately, the deity or deities venerated at Pietrabbondante remain unknown, apart from the already mentioned dedication to Vikturraí, who need not have been one of the principal deities. In any case, no triad to fit the three cellae has been documented.

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89 LAUTER 1976, 418: “Diese formale Übereinstimmung dürfte aber auch implizieren, dass die Aufführungen der Samniten nach der Art der griechischen Aufführungen ausgelegt waren, und im Gegensatz zum latinischen Brauch das Nebeneinander skenischer und thy melischer Darbietungen aufwiesen.”

90 COARELLI and LA REGINA 1984, 254; LA REGINA 1989, 303-304, 421-422; COARELLI 1996, 4-7. Related is the proposal to recognise the place Cominum or Cominium Tuticum in Pietrabbondante (LA REGINA 1989, 420-422; COLONNA 1996, 128; TAGLIAMONTE 2002-2003 (2004), 119). On the ‘Roman theatre-temple’ or ‘cultic theatre’ in general cf. HANSON 1959; NIELSEN 2002, esp. 180-196. For discussion of the problem see now TAGLIAMONTE 2007, esp. 56-57, who dismisses the connection with the curia-comitium model, but links (pp. 65-66) the scheme at least partly to Roman influence, radiated from Campanian cities such as Teanum Sidicinum and the Roman colony of Minturnae (for the three cellae temple).


92 See n. 37.

93 Although it should be emphasised that little is known about ‘traditional’ Samnite cult places. The sanctuary at Casalbore, loc. Macchia Porcara might be an example, but seems rather to consist of a central cella with alae, and here architecture and planimetry in any case do not reflect the ‘Tuscanic’ model.
The question is what the adoption of a design scheme, such as the *comitium* model, or the ‘Capitoline’ Etrusco-Italic temple with high podium and three *cellae*, actually entailed. Regrettably, too little is known about Samnite society to establish whether these features would have been regarded as typically ‘Latial’ or ‘Roman’. If that were indeed the case, it would suggest the conscious appropriation or reinterpretation of elements perhaps perceived as ‘hostile’. Somewhat differently, the adoption of the models can be seen as an emulation strategy,\(^{94}\) constructing a symbolic language.

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\(^{94}\) Emulation of the Roman model is advocated by La Regina (COARELLI and LA REGINA 1984, 252, 254); cf. COARELLI 1996, 16: “Non è certo un caso se, nella sua ricostruzione immediatamente precedente la guerra sociale, il tempio principale di Pietrabbondante, ricostruito a tre celle e con tre
similar to that of Latium, including Rome, and put to use to convey a proper message. The result is in any case an original creation, not a slavish copy or clumsy hybrid.\textsuperscript{95} Both explanations, which are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, can find support in the use of other images in different realms in this period.\textsuperscript{96} I have already mentioned the well-known antagonism between Rome and Samnium expressed by the emblems of the she-wolf and the bull; the Roman imagery of the she-wolf is effectively distorted by the concurrent image of the Samnite bull goring the Roman animal.\textsuperscript{97} This interaction in symbolic language can be discerned on other occasions as well. The insurgence of the allies resulting in the Social War is described in the sources as a pernicious conspiracy, and an interplay with the famous Samnite oath of 293 BC seems probable.\textsuperscript{98} That the Italic allies indeed swore an oath is documented on a coin struck at Corfinium –in the course of the revolt renamed ‘Italica’ – where soldiers are depicted taking the oath.\textsuperscript{99}

The interesting point here is that the image recalls the oath sworn by Aeneas and Latinus, depicted on golden staters at the moment that the (Trojan) Romans needed their Latin allies very hard during the Hannibalic invasion.\textsuperscript{100} On the Social War coin, the Roman model is appropriated and used against Rome. In this context the adoption of the Roman goddess Victoria – in Oscan \textit{Víkturraí} – evoked at Pietrabbondante most probably in hope of a victory over the Romans,\textsuperscript{101} suggests the same process. Although the architectural aspects of the sanctuary are perhaps less explicit and therefore more difficult to interpret, there is no reason \textit{per se} to think that the underlying processes leading to the adoption of these models was fundamentally different from that of the images just evoked. The models adopted had no intrinsic significance, but acquired this significance in the process. The only way to try to understand what significance could have been attributed to them, is by trying to reconstruct the ideological frameworks within which the building was conceived. No explicit evidence survives that informs us on Pentrian conceptions of the three \textit{cellae} temple or the \textit{comitium} model. But it appears from the ideological framework reconstructed from other sources, that the adoption of what modern authors have called ‘Roman’ or ‘Latial’ cultural models can, in the case of Pietrabbondante, demonstrably \textit{not} be equated with acceptance of Roman rule or ways of life.\textsuperscript{102} A situation that with less contextual

\begin{itemize}
\item altari, si ispirò al modello del tempio capitolino”; cf. also TAGLIAMONTE 1997, 189: “evidentemente [come] esito di processi di acculturazione e di emulazione competitiva”; TAGLIAMONTE 2007, 68.
\item Cf. LA REGINA 1976, 234: “il grande tempio di Pietrabbondante ... è l’unico esempio di architettura templare nel Sannio in cui, oltre a motivi formali riconducibili all’uno o all’altro ambiente da cui derivano, sia possibile riconoscere la personalità e la fantasia di un architetto nella originale elaborazione dello schema di tradizione italica.”
\item Cf. STEK 2004.
\item SYDENHAM 1952 no. 628.
\item ROUVERET 1986.
\item By Q. Pompeadius Silo; FELLETTI MAJ 1977, 129-130.
\item SYDENHAM 1952 nos. 69, 70; FELLETTI MAJ 1977, 129-130, 159 n. 3; BURNETT 1998, 169.
\item Thus PROSDOCIMI 1989, 540.
\item STEK 2004; STEK 2005a; STEK 2005b. Cf. also on ‘emulation’ \textit{supra} n. 94.
\end{itemize}
evidence (e.g. only the planimetry) could perhaps have appeared as rather ‘romanised’, actually hides an entirely different reality than that qualification seems to imply.

TRADITIONALISM IN SAMNITE SANCTUARIES?

Apart from these various influences from ‘outside’, elements of traditionalism have been recognised as well. As noted, La Regina has pointed out that the area occupied by the earliest sanctuary at Pietrarbondante measures probably 200 by 200 feet, thereby recalling the Samnite locus consaepptus where the legio linteata was formed according to Livy (10.38). The area later occupied by the theatre and the foremost part of the temple apparently respected these measurements, although the temple itself did not fall within this precinct. That the legio linteata is probably more than just legend seems to be supported by the discovery of a fragment of mural decoration from the area of Cumae, in which an image of the linen legion has been recognised. The painting dates to around 300 BC. Although this does not, of course, prove the reliability of the size of the sacred area Livy gives, it seems at least that he was informed. Even if it is not entirely sure that Livy actually refers to a sanctuary proper, it suggests that there indeed existed ancient traditions (ex vetusta Samnittium religione; ex libro vetere linteo) which prescribed the form of places where rituals were performed. The size and form of the sanctuary of Pietrarbondante may in this case represent more than just an analogy. In a recent study, Pietrarbondante has, on other grounds, been identified with Livy’s Aquilonia. If correct (which remains difficult to prove), this means that the traditional sanctuary at Aquilonia / Pietrarbondante was to some extent respected by the later construction phases.

At any rate, the appearance of the early sanctuary at Pietrarbondante would have been that of a sacellum in the centre with lateral porticoes, set within a precinct. This is basically the same scheme that is found in the sanctuary of S. Giovanni in Galdo. Here, a rectangular precinct encloses a small sacellum with two lateral porticoes. Apparently, this is the same model that is applied in the last construction phase at Pietrarbondante with Temple B, the temple representing the sacellum flanked by two lateral porticoes. This would thus represent “una sicura memoria degli originari santuari samnitici” of the type known from Livy, whereas the buildings and decoration would constitute “l’evoluzione del modello originario, arricchito con elementi introdotti dalla diffusione dell’ellenismo in ambiente italico”. It should be admitted

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103 LA REGINA 1976, 226.
104 Cf. COARELLI 1996, who believes Livy’s description to be, in the end, a trustworthy ethnographic description.
105 VALENZA MELE 1996; CAPUTO 2000; MOORMANN in prep.
106 SISANI 2001a, but cf. LA REGINA 1989, 421.
that this hypothetical reconstruction of a traditional scheme in Samnite sanctuaries, although suggestive, rests on little evidence. Elaborations of this thesis should consequently be treated with caution.\textsuperscript{108} But if this interpretation is correct, it could help to explain the reasons for the development of small monumental sanctuaries in the second century BC such as S. Giovanni in Galdo. Although in every single situation local circumstances will have been important, the apparent harking back to ancient ‘Samnite’ traditions may suggest that at least one of the sentiments at play was indeed the affirmation of a Samnite consciousness on the eve of the Social War, just as is documented for Pietrabbondante at this time. However, it is important to acknowledge that this possible ‘harking back’ to ancient customs is no simple traditionalism, but rather the eclectic use of traditional elements for contemporary purposes. In the words of the social anthropologist Anthony Cohen, “it is a selective construction of the past which resonates with contemporary influences”.\textsuperscript{109}

Conclusion: The Construction of Community

The example of the Samnites Pentri presents an interesting illustration of the problems involved in the interpretation of material culture as well as the role of sanctuaries within ancient society. In Samnium, a largely non-urbanised area, sanctuaries occupied a privileged position in society. The Samnites fought wars against Rome. Only after their surrender in the third century BC were sanctuaries embellished in monumental forms. This has been explained as a result of economic prosperity, but instead this seems to be a precondition. At least for the central sanctuary at Pietrabbondante a connection with the political and military organisation of the Samnites can be demonstrated. Widely-spread Hellenistic cultural forms, and perhaps even elements that could have been regarded as ‘Roman’ or ‘Latin’ in this context, are apparently employed to serve proper purposes and were given a new meaning, which is at direct variance with any straightforward notion of ‘romanisation’ or ‘hellenisation’.

Although one should be cautious in using terms such as cultural resistance, sometimes applied too readily, there are strong indications in the case of the Pentri to support such an approach. The ideological framework as it appears in legends and images indicates an antagonism between Rome and Samnium, communicated in a common imagery. Indeed, the adoption of what moderns call ‘Hellenistic’, ‘Latin’ and ‘Roman’ elements at Pietrabbondante are not to be interpreted as ‘self-romanisation’, but rather as the choosing of building materials for the construction of a Samnite Pentrian identity in

\textsuperscript{108} And I have to make a retraction here with regard to a paper in 2003 (STEK 2005a), in which I may have over-schematised and extrapolated the development discussed here.

\textsuperscript{109} COHEN 1985, 99.
specific historical circumstances. In other words, there was cultural change, but without loss of local distinctiveness.
The monumentalisation of the sanctuary of Pietrabbondante on the eve of the last insurrection against Rome can be seen to represent the symbolic expression of a community that defines itself as ‘Samnite’, at the very moment that this sovereign identity is threatened by outsiders. Perhaps similar incentives played a role in the development of smaller Samnite monumental sanctuaries. Supposed ‘traditional Samnite’ elements in some sanctuaries could support such an interpretation. The enhancement of the ‘sacred landscape’ of Pentrian Samnium could thus perhaps be seen at least in part as a reaction to the changes that Roman dominance brought with it; a case of ‘constructing’ the community, strengthened by the harking back to perceived ancient proper traditions, in which cult places and religion play key roles. This ideological aspect of sanctuaries as reconstructed from epigraphical, historical and, to a lesser extent, archaeological evidence constitutes only one side of the coin however. The impact and meaning of these cult places cannot be ascertained without knowledge of the communities that actually interacted with them.
Indeed, another crucial point that becomes clear is that the socio-political messages conveyed by the monumentalisation of these cult places – whether this should be ascribed to economic prosperity, to a growing ethnic consciousness, or anything else – cannot be understood without knowing who the intended audience was. Who visited these sanctuaries? For whom were they constructed or embellished? In order to further our understanding of the role that sanctuaries, large and small, fulfilled within this discourse, it is essential to understand the local functioning of the cult places. It is with these local functions that the next chapters will be concerned.