



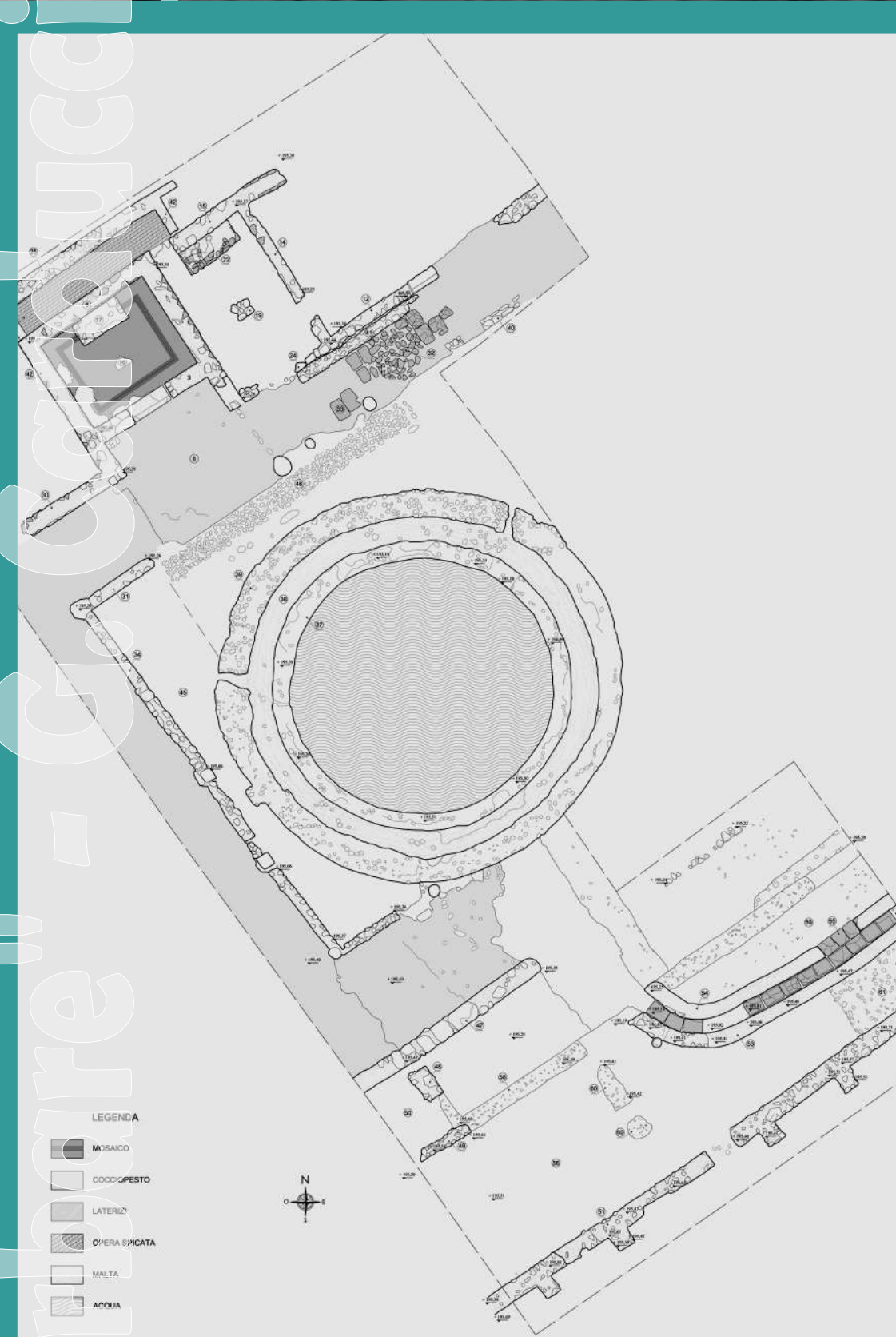
Soprintendenza  
Archeologia  
Belle Arti e Paesaggio  
dell'Umbria

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Parco Fluviale Storico Archeologico del Clitunno | Teverone | Timia

# AISSILLO THE SANCTUARY OF WATERS

Archaeological site at the Aisillo resurgence  
(2nd century B.C. - beginning of the 4th century A.D.)

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Planimetria dell'area indagata - Rilievo M. Albanesi - Archivio SABAP Umbria

The town of Bevagna was built on the remains of the Roman Mevania, at the confluence of the Clitunno, Teverone and Topino rivers along the eastern edge of the Valle Umbra, a valley located in the central part of the region along the Apennine mountains. The alluvial valley is marked in the stretch north-east of Bevagna by numerous pools of water with a characteristic circular profile; among these, the best known are the Aiso - or Abisso - and the Aisillo.

The hydrogeological structure of the area and its particular shape identify the resurgences as "sinkholes", chasms originated by rising pressurised fluids that, combined with erosive processes, cause the collapse of the structure and form the small lakes. The ABAP Superintendency of Umbria conducted three excavation campaigns, between 2005 and 2010, at the Aisillo Fanelli (approx. 500 m south-east of the Aiso), which brought to light part of a cultic complex distributed around a distinctive element which, from its origins, must have had a sacred connotation: the resurgence itself.



Veduta aerea del sito archeologico - 2010 - Foto R. Lopparelli



Il Portico, restauri - 2010 - Foto M. Albanesi - Archivio SABAP Umbria

The spring, which is 5 m deep, was embellished in the form of a circular basin, consisting of two concentric *cocciopesto* structures with an internal diameter of 8 m. The artifact is thus located in an emphatic position: the centre of a single-nave portico with a *cocciopesto* floor brought to light in its northern, eastern and southern stretches. Three rooms were discovered on the northern side, two of which, with a single entrance in the centre of the side facing the pool and aligned with a basement resting against the back wall, are identified as *sacella*. The westernmost one stands out, with its mosaic floor of limestone *tesserae* in white flake framed by a band of red flake. The finds date the sacred complex to the periods between the 2nd century B.C. and the beginning of the 4th century A.D.

Aside from restorations, probably from the Late Antique period, the extant structures seem to refer to the same construction phase (late 1st century B.C.), in which the complex underwent a monumentalisation that probably redefined its layout.

A survey carried out along the north side of the basin has demonstrated the existence of a cobblestone ramp: it is set at a lower level than the portico, which might pertain to a republican phase to which some architectural terracottas with a mythical battle scene, probably a *gigantomachia*, can be attributed.

CREDITS  
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## IDENTIFICATION OF THE CULT

The identification of at least two shrines allows us to hypothesise the worship of several deities, according to a widespread practice in Roman sanctuaries. This is suggested by the finds of fragments of terracotta statues from the Republican period, two female figures and at least one male figure. Pliny the Younger's famous letter (VIII, 8) referring to the sanctuary of the god Clitunno, located at the eponymous springs, is helpful in this regard: the presence of small lakes originating from underground springs connected by a network of streams and the dedications to several deities allow us to draw relevant analogies with that of the Aisillo.

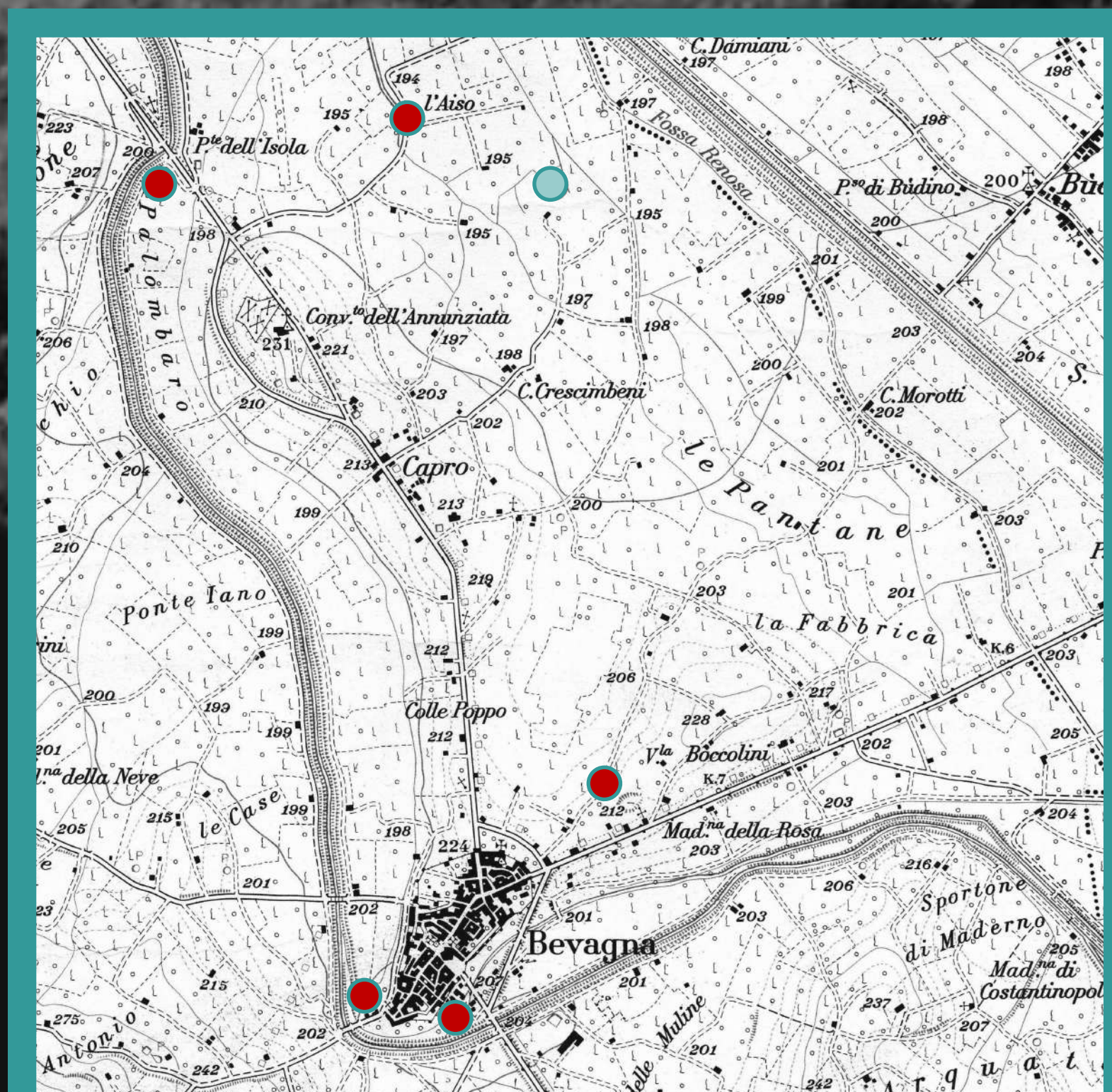
As to *Mevania*, the existence of two places of worship - the pre-Roman Aiso, recalled by the discovery of a small bronze statue of a warrior from the Archaic period (6th-5th century B.C.), and the Roman one of the Aisillo - serve as a reminder of what Pliny wrote: "there are scattered around many shrines and as many divinities, each one has its own special cult, its own name, and some also have their own source; in fact, in addition to the source of the Clitunno, which is like the mother of all the others, there are minor ones, each having their own separate source".

The name of these deities, however, is still elusive. The goddess *Valetudo* could be one hypothesis, as she is well documented in Bevagna by inscriptions dedicated by members of her college, either because she was linked to the sphere of health and springs, or because she was connected to the sphere of *virtus* and military activities; the latter is exemplified by the *ex-votos* from the imperial period which consist of a silver plaque depicting a trophy and a lead gladiator's head.

Area archeologica in condizioni di naturalizzazione - 2022 - Foto M. Berzetta  
Evidenze archeologiche affioranti sotto il velo superficiale dell'acqua spinta dalla piezometria di falda della risorgiva

## RIFERIMENTI BIBLIOGRAFICI

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"O tu che pasci i buoi presso Mevania caliginosa" da "Odi Bevatina"

BEVAGNA E IL SISTEMA DELLE OPERE INFRASTRUTTURALI TRA VIE D'ACQUA E DI TERRA - AREE MONUMENTALI