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Citation

Götz, L. C. (2020, December 15). *Kolonie, Kontakt, Kultur: Eine Analyse materieller Kultur römischer Kolonien in der Mikroregion von Suessa Aurunca, Minturnae und Sinuessa*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/138675>

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Issue Date: 2020-12-15

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Roman colonisation in Central Italy represents a key element of Roman expansion in the mid-Republican period that played an important role in the formation of material culture and cultural identity. These regionally diverse processes are evaluated differently within archaeological and historical research. According to the traditional view, as put forward by E.T. Salmon, the colonies and their hinterland are subject to centralized power by Rome in a hierarchical model and primarily military reasons come to the fore in the 4th-3rd century BC. Differences in socio-political, economic, religious, and cultural developments are explained by the division of colonies according to Roman and Latin citizenship. Therefore, traditional conceptions are based on dichotomous interpretive patterns contrasting Roman citizen colonies and Latin colonies, Roman and indigenous groups, and urban and rural spheres. However, such a suggested and idealized image of a uniform structured Roman presence and homogeneous Roman culture of the colonies is decisively deconstructed by modern research approaches. Instead, they emphasize the relevance of heterogeneous developments – a fundamental paradigm change with profound impact on the perception of Roman culture, colonisation, and Romanization in the mid-Republican period.

Following these new research perspectives, the present work investigates the separation of Roman citizen colonies and Latin colonies within a micro-region. For this purpose, the inter-colonial contacts and interactions of Suessa Aurunca, Minturnae and Sinuessa are brought into focus – three neighbouring colonies with different citizenship status, which are founded in the liminal area of southern Latium and northern Campania at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 3rd century BC. The revised interpretation of both historical written sources and archaeological data convincingly demonstrates that these colonies intentionally and in various ways adopt pre-Roman Auruncan structures. Based on ceramic, numismatic, and epigraphic analyses, the reciprocal developments become evident that form a local, i. e. colonial material culture and identity, which takes Roman, but also non-Roman influences into account. Furthermore, the urban centres of the colonies together with their hinterland illustrate complex interrelations and complementary settlement patterns. Both economic and cultural factors as well as spatial and individual-related connectivity have a far stronger impact on these colonies than the traditional research view postulates, and thus provide the basis of the active integration in supra-regional commerce and production networks. As a result, the divergent developments in Suessa Aurunca, Minturnae and Sinuessa cannot be attributed monocausally to their jurisdictional status but can rather be explained in a multi-variate way – as intentional, variable, and dynamic reactions to local-regional characteristics. In addition to recent conceptions, the present work argues for a heterarchical model that depicts the multi-layered interactions of the colonies with Rome and non-Roman groups as well as within the micro-region in a more differentiated and thus more comprehensive way.