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Aemila Scauri Aurelia: A Territory Through a Road

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Abstract

Can a road, with its branches, be considered sustainable and be so important for a territory that it has always influenced its evolution and that of its inhabitants over the centuries?

The main purpose of the research is to clarify how a road, via Aemilia Scauri - Aurelia, can become a symbol of culture and social identity of a territory, the Tigullio, through the centuries and millennia, investigating the visible material remains of the Roman and of medieval times. The Tigullio land is a part of Liguria in the so-called Levante Ligure, east of Genoa; enclosed between the sea and the mountains, this strip of land overlooks the Golfo del Tigullio which is part of the Ligurian Sea. Its landscape is predominantly mountainous, a feature that has always influenced the inhabitants, settlements, and roads.

A complex study due to the paucity of archaeological finds, destroyed or buried under centuries of reconstruction, and the almost total absence of quotations from ancient scholars. Other problems are related to the lack of memories of the inhabitants of the area as they are mostly unaware of their historical past.

Few ancient structures to understand how a road can be defined as important and sustainable for the people who have inhabited the area over the centuries, it is necessary to retrace the ancient route, identifying the few signs of the past that are still visible.

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Keywords

Aurelia route; Aemilia Scauri; Tigullio; Liguria; Ligurian Roman Period; Ligurian Middleage

1. Introduction

Can a road, with its branches, be considered so sustainable and so important for a territory to influence its evolution and that of its inhabitants over the centuries?

The main purpose of the research is to clarify how a road, via Aemilia Scauri- Aurelia, can become a symbol of culture and social identity of a territory, the *Tigullio*, through the centuries and millennia, investigating the visible material remains of the Romans and of medieval times. A complex study due to the paucity of archaeological finds, destroyed or buried under centuries of reconstructions, and the almost total absence of quotations from ancient scholars but not for this reason impossible to define, at least in some main features. Other problems are related to the lack of memories of the inhabitants of the area as they are mostly unaware of their historical past and tourist use, given the lack of adequate dissemination systems. Digging deeper you can discover that the testimonies of the past are still to be investigated, hidden by centuries of reconstruction and oblivion.

Tigullio is a territory that is part of *Liguria*, in Italy, in the so-called *Levante Ligure*, east of Genoa (See figure 1); enclosed between the sea and the mountains, this strip of land overlooks the gulf of the same name, part of the Ligurian Sea, and is predominantly mountainous, a feature that has always influenced the life of the inhabitants, the settlements

and the road system. Geographically speaking, this territory is bordered to the northwest by the promontory of *Portofino* and to the southeast by *Punta Manara*, in the municipality of *Sestri Levante*; conventionally those territories are also included because for historical, cultural, and social reasons have had relations and exchanges with the Tigullino district and therefore *Moneglia*, the *Fontanabuona* valley, the *Sturla* valley, the *Graveglia* valley and the *Petronio* valley. Starting from the east we find the bays of Moneglia and Riva and the two of *Sestri Levante*, overlooked by the *Petronio* valley; a small promontory and a long, narrow coastal strip separates this municipality from the *Entella* plain, overlooked by *Lavagna* and *Chiavari*. The river, which also crosses the municipalities of *San Salvatore* di *Cogorno*, *Leivi*, and *Carasco*, originates from the confluence of three streams: the Graveglia and the Sturla, which wind along the homonymous valleys, and the Lavagna, through the Fontanabuona valley. To the west of the plain, there is another barrier of mountains, which separates the Fontanabuona valley from the sea and is overlooked by the small town of *Zoagli*. The northern corner of the gulf is occupied by the city of Rapallo and, towards the southwest, on the slopes of Mount *Portofino*, *Santa Margherita Ligure* is located first and, subsequently, *Portofino*, on the tip of the homonymous promontory. The imaginary line that separates the Tigullio from the municipalities of the Genoese area passes from the *Ruta* di *Camogli*, the pass of the *Portofino* mountain, to the small cove of *San Fruttuoso* (Gotta, 1990. Bottari, 1996).

Like the rest of the region, *Tigullio* remains rather isolated today. In the past, it was traded by ship, with cabotage

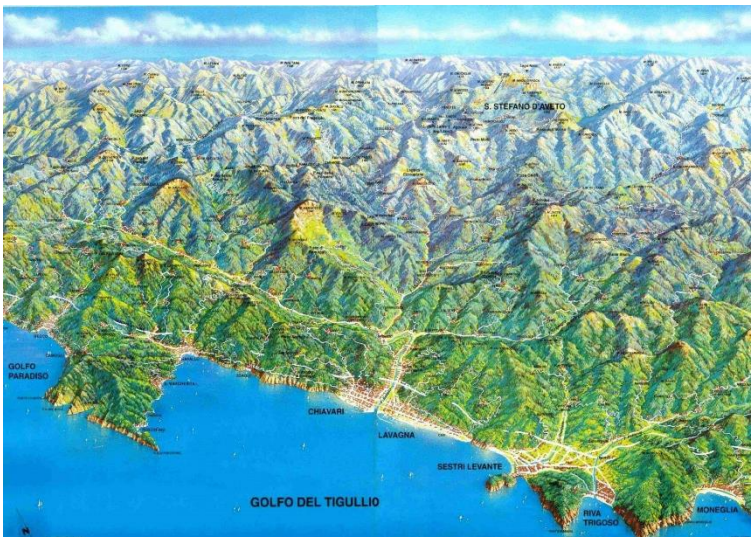

Figure 1: Map of Tigullio (Credits from https://www.teleradiopace.tv/)

routes calling at the gulfs and harbors of the area already in ancient times. Furthermore, its complex geography must be considered, with the mountains overlooking the sea and the few rivers and torrential valleys that are often marshy.

The "fortune" of *Tigullio* lies in the fact that the coast, or at least the central area that revolves around the *Entella* river valley, is connected to the internal valleys, which lead towards the Apennine passes or wind parallel to the coastline. The two main current communication routes that cross the territory and the region from east to west are the motorway, active since the Second World War, and the *SS1 Aurelia*; the stretch of this second road that runs through the *Tigullio* is between the *Bracco* pass, to the east, and the *Ruta di Camogli*, to the west; various secondary roads branch off along the route, both towards the sea, such as the one that leads to Moneglia or Santa Margherita and Portofino, and towards the mountain, such as the routes that follow the valley of the Entella or Petronio rivers. The Via Aurelia, in its current appearance, was traced between the 18th and 19th centuries. and connected to the wider road axis of the Route Imperiale Paris-Rome (See Figure 2). The latter, rectified and adapted, has always been the only way through the territory; always used since the Middle Ages, it appears to be the direct descendant of the ancient Roman road axis, from the late Republican - Augustan era, which crossed *Liguria* from *Luni* to Genoa, to reach the border with France.

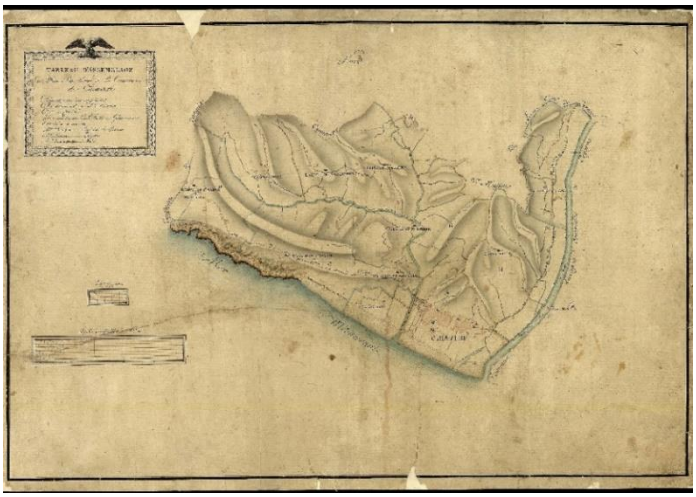

Figure 2: Overview Table of the Parcel Plan of the Municipality of Chiavari. Department of the Apennines. Municipal District of Chiavari. Canton of Chiavari. 30 Mais 1809. M.r Naylies.

1.1. Brief history of the road network in Tigullio

Land routes twisted along the coast and inland in pre-Roman times when the first "castellari" began to arise; they were fortified high-altitude centers that often continued to be used in subsequent periods. Most of these sites have disappeared today; the only one investigated is the *Castellaro detto di Uscio* (Maggi, 2015, 147 – 160). located at 721 m on *Monte Borgo*, on the border between the municipalities of *Rapallo*, *Uscio*, and *Avegno*, a crossing point of two ridges, and which was discontinuously frequented between the Neolithic (5500 BC approximately) and the Roman Age. Nowadays we can only assume the existence of other "Castellari" from ancient residual toponyms, such as the *Castellaro* localities in *Rapallo* and *Zoagli*, or still on Mount *Castello* between Sestri Levante and *Riva Trigoso*; others disappeared, such as the one that was supposed to be in *Chiavari* (Maggi, 1990, 354). There are also evident traces of mineral and stone extraction in the area, such as two extensive copper mines in the hinterland of *Sestri Levante*, in *Libiola* and in *Monte Loreto* that had been used from the 4th millennium b.C. to the 20th century (Campana, 1998, 138 – 141. Lavaggi, 2000. Benente, 2003, 254 – 255. Maggi, 2015, 133 – 139. Benente, 2020, 43 – 46), and various quarry and mines areas around the *Entella* valley and Graveglia valley, where slate had been extracted (Gotta, 1990, 15 – 16. Palacios, 2005, 115).[1] All these sites were to be connected by a system of tracks, leading along ridges and river valleys to the sea (Mannoni, 2007, 9).

Figure 3: Necropolis of Chiavari, reconstruction (Photo taken by the author)

There is little information on the 9th-8th century period, the passage between the recent Bronze Age and the Iron Age, but it is clear that Liguria and Tigullio must have been affected by the passage of people, goods and ideas from the Greeks, Phoenicians, and above all Etruscans, who moved in search of new markets, through sea and land routes. In 1958, in *Chiavari*, during the excavations of the foundations of a building in today's *Corso Millo*, a vast Ligurian necropolis was discovered (See figure 3): it extended into the marshy ground on the banks of the *Rupinaro* stream. Nino Lamboglia was called to excavate and he dated the burial ground to a period between the eighth and seventh centuries. B.C. The various burials, in slate lithic boxes, were arranged on the sand dunes that extended to the foothills of the hills; however, the settlement annexed to the necropolis has never been found, probably being located along

the highly urbanized slopes of the hills behind. Iron and copper artifacts were found inside various burials, the raw metal came from the ancient mines mentioned above. Other artifacts came from various cultures, including those of *Golasecca*, *Halstatt*, Greek, Etruscan, and Phoenician, which testify the plurality of contacts and the vitality of the site, which must have had a landing place in the roadstead at the mouth of the stream (Lamboglia, 1960, 91 – 220; 1976, 89 – 90. Bernardini, 1985, 179 – 187. Giannattasio, 2007, 64 – 77. Benente, 2014. Maggi, 2015, 179 – 183). This testifies not only to the presence of commercial routes along the coast but also towards the Apennine passes and northern Italy.

It is not known with certainty when the first contact with the Roman world began, but it is probable that supplies were landed in the area to counter Hannibal during the II Punic War, while it is certain that in 179 BC. the entire Ligurian coast was now under the control of Rome. In this period the authors begin to speak of the *Tigullii*, one of the five peoples of maritime *Liguria*, who inhabited the territory that takes its name from them, *Tigullia*.[2] During the Roman colonization, the relationship between routes and landscape was determined by the will to transform and control the territory; the layouts were reused and joined up with the more ancient routes of the Ligurians to penetrate the valleys, and also "Roman cities are preferably built in open valleys and at the mouth of the main communication routes with the interior" (*Lamboglia*, 1946. Mannoni, 2007, 40). In a region characterized by a succession of hills, mountain peaks, and small plains, the route usually follows the line that separates the coastal plains and the hills behind, in a coveted position due to the availability of water, from the few areas suitable for agriculture and proximity to natural landings, but often must follow the peaks of the hills or the most difficult slopes; from the line start the roads which, overlapping the ancient layouts of the Ligurians, reach the internal areas and the passes. In 109 BC. the censor *M. Aemilius Scaurus*[3] decides to continue the ancient route *via Aurelia* (Bonora, 2000, 18 – 27)[4] and connect the colony of *Lunae* to that of Genua by tracing a new road, which takes its name: the *via Aemilia Scauri*, name replaced in a short time by the more famous *via Aurelia*. This communication route crosses the entire territory from east to west, from the *Bracco* pass to the *Camogli* route, with various branches towards the sea and the mountains, and will be the basis of the road system of the following centuries and millennia (Bonora, 2000, 34).

Figure 4: Tabula Peutingeriana (Credits from https://www.tabula-peutingeriana.de/)

A valid testimony of this route is obtained thanks to the quotations that bring us back to the maps of the Roman era, such as the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (See figure 4) and the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti et Hierosolymitanum*, and some authors such as Pliny the Elder. Starting from the east it is located *in Alpe Pennino*, which has been identified as the *Passo del Bracco*, proceeding westward there are *Ad Monilia*, the current *Moneglia*, and *Segesta*, today's *Sestri Levante*; subsequently *Tegulata*, never identified, and ad solaria, which could be identified in *Zoagli*. Finally *Portus Delphinis*, or *Portofino*.[5] These quotes provide us with a fairly rough run of the road.

Unlike other parts of the peninsula, in *Liguria* the discontinuity due to the fall of the Western Roman Empire is less felt, since after the reconquest of Italy by the Byzantines in 538 and until 643 the region was firmly in the hands of the Eastern Empire, being part of the *Provincia Maritima Italorum*. The road network was maintained by Byzantine administrators until the Lombard conquest of King *Rotari* (Bonora, 2000, 40). During the Lombard period and the subsequent Carolinian period, several monasteries were founded at strategic points along the road routes, such as *San Nicolao* on the *Bracco* pass or the abbey of *Sant'Andrea di Borzone* in the hinterland (Bonora, 2000, 44). These foundations contribute to the resumption of movement and trade, which is joined by the resurgence of communities located along the coast and in the hinterland. The roads are reinforced, but it will be only with the Republic of Genoa in the XII century. that the road system will be strengthened, re-establishing a unitary route throughout the region (Bonora, 2000, 48). (See Figure 5)

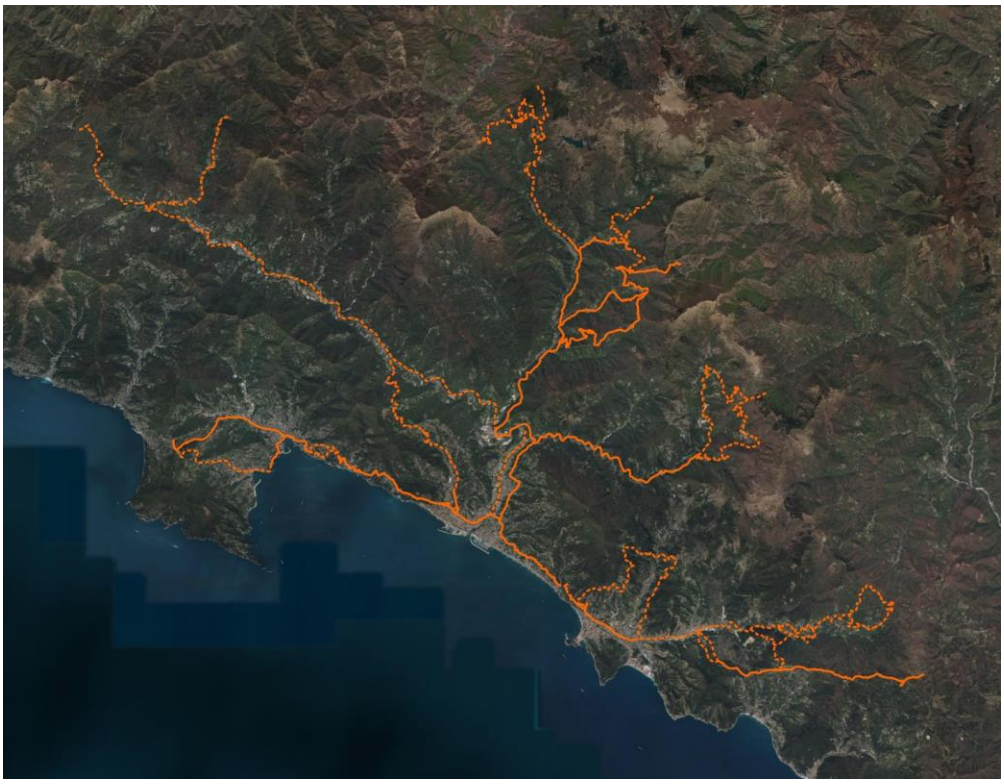

Figure 5: The road network system of Aemilia Scauri (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

2. The coastal road

The eastern route (See Figure 7. A.A.V.V., 1999, 89. A.A.V.V., 2000, 160) enters the territory of Tigullio in *Alpe Poenina*, a toponym that could refer to the highest pass in the area, which can be traced back to today's *Passo del Bracco* (today located at 615 m above sea level); the only sign of a medieval layout passes about a kilometer further north, at an even higher point, at 792 m, where the hospital complex of *San Nicolao di Petra Colice* (See figure 6) remains as evidence of the ancient attendance (Gambaro, 2001, 75 – 83. Benente, 2008. Benente, Campana, 2008). The settlement is close to *Monte Pietra di Vasca*, which may have been part of the ancient *Petra Corice*, mentioned in written sources starting from the eighth century. The site is therefore central to the ancient road network, which can be reconstructed based on historical cartography. The archaeological excavations conducted by *Leopoldo Cimaschi* between 1956 and 1959, the interventions carried out by the Superintendence for the Archaeological Heritage of *Liguria*, and the excavation campaigns conducted by the International Institute of Ligurian Studies between 2001 and 2008 brought to light a complex consisting of a church, some annexed rooms, a cemetery area, and a large hospital building. The visible part dates back to the XII – XIII century. until the 16th century, when it was abandoned. Below the medieval levels, more ancient chronological horizons have been found, with materials from the Campania area, dating back to the III – I century. BC: these finds, as well as a coin of the II century. B.C. and black-glazed ceramic, confirm the hypothesis that this area was already used in pre-Roman times, perhaps as a *mansio* (Mannoni, 2007, 207). In addition, the underlying layers preserve post holes from the Copper Age (IV – III millennium BC). The image of a strategic place emerges with buildings used for worship and hospitality. Due to the regular and constant construction technique, some sections of the path have been attributed, to a road from the Roman era.

Figure 6: San Nicolao di Petra Colice (Photo taken by the author)

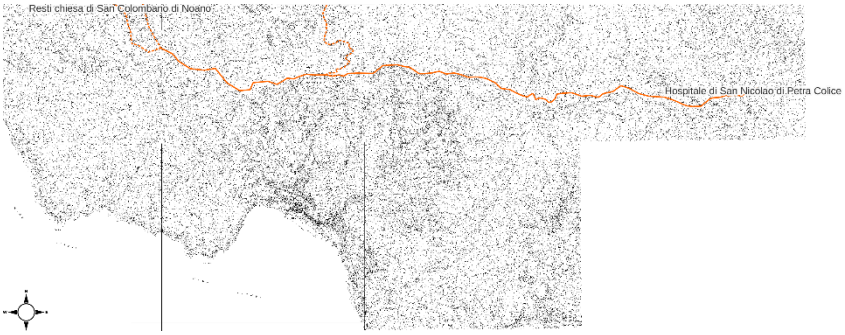

Figure 7: The road of Bracco (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

The track, witnessed (what has witnessed? The track? If it is, then this whole sentence should be engraved after "The track") from the mule track which today is commonly called "Muntâ di povei" (Mannoni, 2007, 206), deviates from the current *Aurelia*, continuing along the ridge to intercept, at the height of today's hamlet of *Lemeglio*,[6] the road that led *ad monilia*, the current *Moneglia*. The parish of this town, dedicated to the Holy Cross, already existed since 1033 and in 1143 it became a parish church, a sign of the importance and antiquity of the place. The road then continues towards *Casarza Ligure*, deviating from today's route and an indication of this older route could be found in the remains of the early 11th-century church. of *San Colombano in Noano*, arriving at the locality of *San Lazzaro*, where there is evidence of a medieval hospital with a lazaret (Mannoni, 2007, 206). Traces of the road are lost up to *Sestri Levante* (See Figure 8).

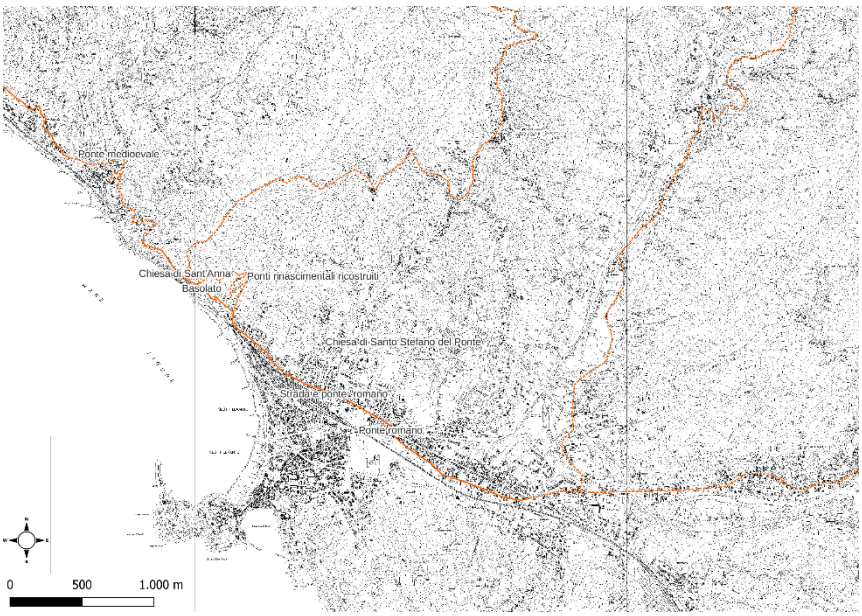

Figure 8: The road system through Sestri Levante (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

In the ancient Segesta Tigullorum, the road itinerary probably continued along a route that is still recognizable thanks to the current toponyms of *via "Antica Romana Orientale"* and *"Antica Romana Occidentale"* which follow the route even if they have moved slightly over the centuries (A.A.V.V., 1999, 88 – 89). The *Gromolo* torrent, halfway between the two roads, is overcome thanks to the so-called "Roman bridge", a 16th-century structure with an arch, which could have been built on a previous one. In the area of today's N. Mandela Park, traces of Roman occupation of the 2nd and 3rd century AD have been found.[7] Another hypothesis is that the road passed further north, next to the ancient parish church of *Santo Stefano del Ponte*, which according to some scholars dates back to the Paleochristian period, although the first attestations are found only in the 11th century. It is not known where the ancient Roman city stood, but it is probable that it could have been reached via a detour. The oldest building in Sestri Levante is located on the peninsula and is the church of *San Nicolò*, built in the 12th century, around which the medieval village developed (Mannoni, 2007, 179 – 180). Beyond the *Gromolo* torrent, next to the church of the *Madonnina del Grappa*, there is part of an ancient paved route, closed between two low walls, which leads to a small bridge, also called "Roman" (See figure 9); from some investigations, it has been established that some beats underlying the paving stones date back to the 17th – 19th century. and there is no certainty of pre-existing buildings (Campana 2015, pp. 210 – 212).

Figure 9: The “Roman bridge” (Photo taken by the author)

Figure 10: Rocche of Sant’Anna (Photo taken by the author)

Figure 11: Basilica of Santo Stefano (Photo taken by the author)

The road continues up the high coast of the *Rocche di Sant'Anna* (See figure 10), dividing itself into two different routes: a direct one and a more tortuous one, through the *Fico* valley (Bottari, 1996, 85 – 86. Mannoni, 2007, 207). The first is paved in some sections[8] and dates back to the Middle Ages (according to a legend it was built in the fifth century by a French knight, who also built the little church as a votive offering to *Sant'Anna*, to protect it from a fall), while the second crosses the different streams with small bridges from the Renaissance period. Both lead to the small monastery of *Sant'Anna* whose building started in the XIII century at the behest of the *Fieschi*, of *Lavagna*. This building is located on the top of a pass, a strategic point that separates the coast of *Cavi* from the plain of *Sestri Levante*. The certainty of the Roman origin of the road will never be found, but it is probable that an older road system continued to be used in the Middle Ages. The road continues along the coast and descends towards today's *Cavi Borgo*, where the hospital of *San Lorenzo di Besanzo* was mentioned in the 12th century. Following the upstream you come to another bridge, also called the "Roman bridge", a "donkey's back", presumably medieval and continuing west. At the height of the modern cemetery, there must have been a stretch that joined today's *Via Romana*, which is linked up to the panoramic road above, which is none other than the ancient route of the *Aurelia*.

In Roman times, the whole coast up to the beginning of the alluvial plain of *Entella* was high and rocky without beaches and the road had to pass along the hills overlooking the sea.[9] *Via Tigula* and the subsequent *via Tedisio* are the only possible roads that can be hypothesized as ancient. Arriving in *Lavagna*, the road continues straight towards the Entella River (See Figure 12); nothing is known of the ancient history of this town, even if the greatest clue comes from its name which in Roman times had to be translated as *Lavania*.[10] The *Aurelia* passed next to the ancient Basilica of *Santo Stefano* (See Figure 11). The oldest bibliographic data on it dates back to 1637 and is from the *Chiavarese* historian and annalist *Agostino Busco*, who recounts that the church was built in the 5th or 6th century. A.D. In the eighth century. it became a parish church and in 1060 a collegiate church, the first among those outside the walls of Genoa. The oldest parts are the apse and the presbytery, but nothing is known of the plan of the ancient building or, in general, of pre-existing structures, since the building stands on the first extension of the hills towards the sea, the hypothesis is that there could be some place of maritime signaling, given that at least as regards the Roman era and the High Middle Ages the sea almost reached the area (Viarengo, 2008, 350). From the analysis of ancient and modern maps, as well as from satellite images, it is clear that *Lavagna* has expanded towards the sea and the hills starting from the first nucleus of clearly medieval buildings built along the road.[11]

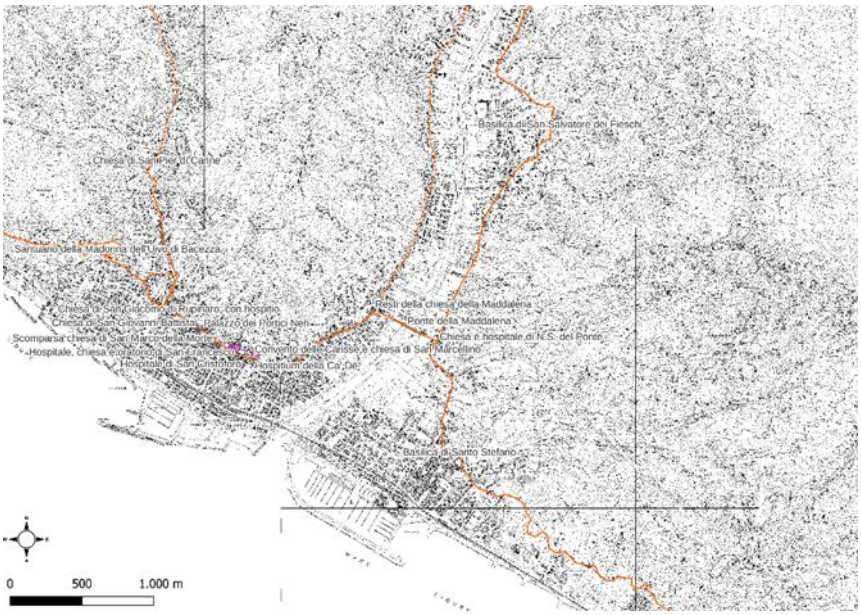

Figure 12: The road system through Lavagna and Chiavari (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

The route turns sharply north and, skirting the western slopes of the hills arrives at the *Ponte della Maddalena* (See figure 13. Raffo, 1992. Bottari, 1996, 86 – 89. Mannoni, 2007, 209), the only bridge crossing over the *Entella* river until the end of the 18th century; the distance between the *Basilica* of *Santo Stefano* and the bridge is approximately one Roman mile (1.48 km). Just in front of the bridge, there is the Sanctuary of *Nostra Signora del Ponte*, dating back to the 13th century. and built by Pope Innocent IV (*Sinibaldo Fieschi*) to replace a chapel, known as the *Madonna sul Ponte*, which was located in the center of the bridge itself. The structure of the latter (Corallo, 1982, 26. Cagnana, 2006, 322 – 323. Mannoni, 2007, 169, 210 – 212). extended across the riverbed with almost thirty arches, for a length of 250 m; the current appearance is the work of successive rearrangements and modifications starting from the thirteenth century and today only about fifteen arches remain visible, of which only five cross the river. In the Middle Ages, this structure was known as a pons maris. As is well known, the Entella River (Bottari, 1996, 86 – 89. A.A.V.V., 1999, 72 – 73)[12] was navigable in the Middle Ages up to *San Salvatore di Cogorno* and for this reason the arches have a span of 9 m and a height of 7 m, to allow the passage of boats. The building was strongly desired by the *Fieschi* family and started in 1210 by *Ugone*;[13] archaeological investigations in the early 2000s however found that only the 4th pylon from *Lavagna* dates back to the 13th century. Even if some authors have hypothesized the presence of an older bridge than the medieval one, there is no certainty of a previous crossing, which could have been a simple ford (Bottari 1996, 89 – 93).[14]

Figure 13: Ponte della Maddalena (Photo taken by the author)

Having now reached *Chiavari* (See Figure 12. A.A.V.V., 1999, 71 – 72),[15] before speaking of the ancient route, we must briefly address the problem of the evolution of the coast. At the time of attendance at the necropolis, between the eighth and seventh centuries. BC, large sand dunes extended in front of the slopes of the hills, while the mouths of the *Entella*, further upstream, and those of the *Rupinaro* torrent formed large lagoons, which could be used as a shelter in cabotage routes. During the Roman era, the situation changed, even if the nature of the ancient landscape is still controversial: above all it is not clear whether there was a flat coast in front of the rocky slopes between the two rivers. In the Middle Ages, the situation changed again and the coast reformed thanks to the contribution of river sediments, while the city also expanded towards the sea (Del Soldato, 1987, 54 – 56).

Figure 14: Via Ravaschieri (Photo taken by the author)

Figure 15: Church of San Giacomo di Rupinaro (Photo taken by the author)

Crossing the *Ponte della Maddalena* you arrive at the homonymous medieval church, which today can be seen, in its lower part, incorporated into a more modern building, dating back to the construction of the bridge. Furthermore, a hospital and a public well were built, a sign of the importance of this road axis. The antiquity of the area is also testified by the disappeared church of *San Siro*, built in the 5th century, and that of *San Michele* built between the 6th and 7th centuries (Casini, 1980, 31. Lamponi, 1987, 99 – 101). In the Middle Ages, the *via Aurelia* continued along the current *via Piacenza* and the subsequent via *Entella* (Viarengo, 2021, 65)[16] and probably also in Roman times the road system followed this direction, but it has never been established. *Clavari* was born and raised along this road axis, which continues straight up to *Corso Millo*; the first area of the city is the *Borgolungo*, today *via Ravaschieri* (See figure 14), which expands starting from the XII century, even if *Carlo Garibaldi*, in 1853, says that already in the IX century. the extension of the village was considerable. *Via Entella* has always been nicknamed *Capoborgo* and here there are buildings dating back to the 13th century: the convent of the *Clarisse* with the church of *San Bernardino* (Benente, 2006, 321 – 322), which overlapped, incorporating and destroying the ancient hospice of Ca' Dé (house of God), the hospital of *San Cristoforo*, which was destroyed, and the convent complex with the church and oratory of

San Francesco (See figure 16; it is important to note that the distance between these complexes and the *ponte della Maddalena* is approximately one Roman mile, 1.48 km. Casini, 1980, 47 – 50). In short, a small neighborhood outside the 13th-century walls (Casini, 1980, 35 – 55. Ragazzi, 1982, 24. Garbarino, 2022, 25 – 35, 105 – 111). The oldest area, which is still found along the primitive road (Giomi, 2008, 346 – 348. Fravega, 2012, 192 – 196),[17] is evidenced by buildings such as the palace of the "Portici neri", which was built in the early Middle Ages and underwent alterations until the eighteenth century, the disappeared church of *San Marco della Morte* (Viarengo, 2021, 54) in *Piazza Verdi*, from the end of the 12th century, and the church of *San Giovanni Battista* whose construction started in 1181, as reported by an inscription inside the building (Viarengo, 2021, 51. Garbarino, 2022, 81 – 85).

The western district of *Chiavari*, known as *Rupinaro*, developed along the eastern bank of the stream of the same name. In this area there is the oldest church in the city dedicated to *San Giacomo* "*dell'Arena*" (See figure 15), since the sea arrived here in the 18th century; according to the nineteenth-century historian *Carlo Garibaldi*, the building, with the attached hospital, dates back to 876, a period in which the whole area must have already been covered up with sand (Casini, 1980, 33). The toponym *Rupinaro* derives from ruin, but there are at least two theories regarding its origin: for the first, it would derive from *Ruina - Rovinale*, due to the floods of the stream; for the second, from the ruins of an ancient High Medieval village built around the church and destroyed at an unspecified moment around the 11th century (Ragazzi, 1982, 24. Viarengo, 2021, 33 – 34. Garbarino, 2022, 35, 32). This village, according to the hypothesis of *Lamboglia* and *Garbarino*, would have been born from the ancient Roman *Chiavari*, which stood around here, as evidenced by the findings of the necropolis of *Corso Millo* (agricultural preparations, such as walls, and a stretch of road); fascinating but unsubstantiated theory (Garbarino, 2022, 12).

Leaving the *Rupinaro* district, the road continues westward, but the route becomes incomplete again in the first section and it is uncertain whether the route continued straight towards the hills, crossing the *Rupinaro* torrent with a ford or an ancient bridge (probably of medieval origin) or deviated first towards the north, passing next to the ancient necropolis, at least in Roman times. In support of this second hypothesis, toponymy helps us: the place of *Bacezza*, which indicates the district above the area in question, according to the historian *Tiscornia* (1936) derives from "bacina", basin or lagoon; therefore it is probable that the sea almost reached the foot of the hills (Occelli, 2015, 22). Continuing along this probable route, you cross the Rupinaro Valley, arriving at *San Pier di Canne*. The parish is very old and is mentioned in a document of 980, concerning the appearance of the miraculous picture of *Bacezza* (see below), with the name of *San Pier di Clavari*, a title of paleo-Christian origin (Lamponi, 1987, 142. Occelli, 2015, 24). The ancient road system was more internal than the current one and is evidenced by a small crëusa (mule track), which descends *via Lertora* (Campana, N., Decree of Cultural Interest 2016).[18] Furthermore, again *Tiscornia* (1936), recounts that in 1718, following excavations for the construction of the new bell tower of the church of *San Pietro*, at a depth of a few meters, hardware and wood were found, "the last relics of ancient ships" (Occelli, 2015, 22.). It can be deduced that in Roman times there could have been a bridge or a ford along the *Rupinaro* stream in this area.

Whatever the layout, on the opposite bank of the Rupinaro and at the height of the church of *San Giacomo* there is only one road that can be nominated for the role of ancient *via Aurelia*, the current *via Descalzi*. In its first part, this appears with a narrow and steep mule track, and then it joins *via Romana Antica* (a clear toponym). In its last stretch, the ancient medieval (and perhaps Roman) road deviated from the current road and cut through the *Grazie* hill parallel to the coast, to then rejoin the modern *Aurelia* (see map. Occelli, 2015, 50). Towards the sea, there is the modern district of *Saline*, an area where salt has been produced since the Recent and Final Bronze Age, according to the studies of some finds from the necropolis (Del Soldato, 2021).

In this stretch of the route, just beyond the ancient detour, there is the sanctuary of the *Madonna dell'Ulivo* di *Bacezza* (Gennaro, 2004), where a church was built in 936 following a miraculous event (Casini, 1980, 33 – 34),[19] mentioned in a document drawn up in Genoa in 980, which attests the presence of an agricultural village. The interesting fact is that this sanctuary is 1 Roman mile (1.481 km) away from the hospitia of *San Francesco* (See figure 16) and the *Clarisse*, as is the next sanctuary from this one, of *Nostra Signora delle Grazie*, and so on those of *Rovereto*: all places in which is attested the development of small villages, neighborhoods, churches, and hospitals.

A sequence too singular to appear random and it must be remembered that at every mile the Romans placed a stone with the distances inscribed. The current *via Aurelia* is identical in layout to the ancient one, up to the Sanctuary of the *Madonna delle Grazie*, where the current road passes through a tunnel, while the ancient one ran just below the sanctuary. This place of worship has a Romanesque layout, with no trace of older elements, and was rebuilt in the fifteenth century (Ragazzi, 1982, 117 – 122. A.A.V.V., 1999, 81).

Figure 16: Oratory of San Francesco (Photo taken by the author)

Continuing, the route undergoes a new variation, since in ancient times it crossed the villages of *Sant'Andrea di Rovereto* (fraction of *Chiavari*) and *San Pietro di Rovereto* (fraction of *Zoagli*), both toponyms of early Christian origin which suggest wild places. The church of *Sant'Andrea* dates back to 1143, while the church of *San Pietro* could date back to the 10th century,[20] even though the only certain mention is from 1197. More interesting than the building itself is the find found inside: an inscribed Roman cinerary urn (Sbarbaro, 2014, 18). *Angelo Della Cella* (Memorie di Chiaveri, 13 – 14), between the 17th and 18th centuries, recounts that during excavations to expand the church the urn carved in *Luni* marble was found and it was reused as a stoup. The urn, decorated with ram heads, festoons, and fruit, bears the following inscription, datable between the 3rd and 4th centuries. A.D.: C SEXTIO SPEC / TATO TESSERARIO / COH I PR P V C TITIUS / MARCELLINUS BE / TRIB COH EIUSDEM / B M (CIL 05, 07740. Casini, 1980, 24 – 27. Mennella, G., Supplementa Italica, 03, 1987, p. 232; 22, 2004, p. 183.).[21] Thanks to this inscription we have the certainty that already in antiquity there was a necropolis and perhaps a small village.[22]

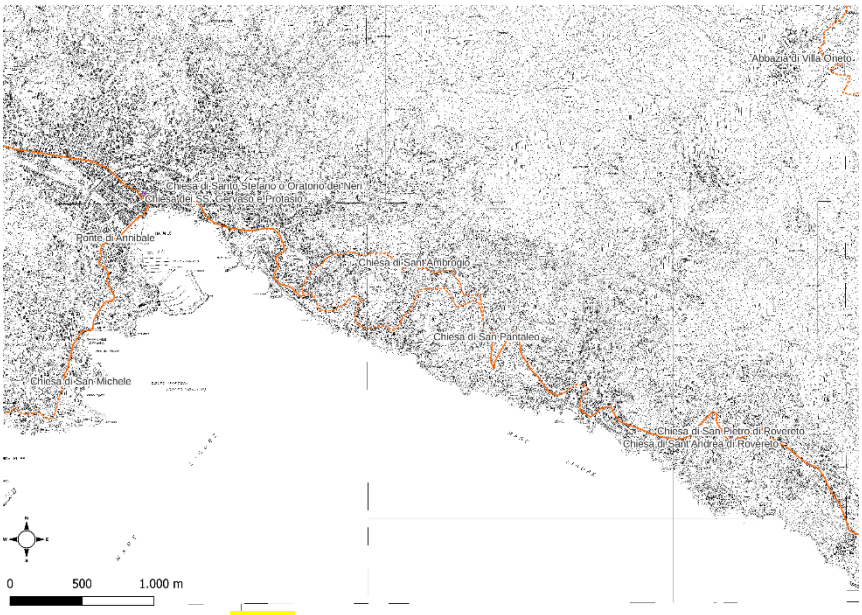

Figure 17: The road system through Zoagli and Rapallo (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

Figure 18: Church of San Pantaleo (Photo taken by the author)

Continuing along the route (See figure 17), you come to a crossroads, which leads to the ancient *via Romana* Levante and which leads to the small town of *Zoagli (ad Solaria* in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*), which became a fief of the *Fieschi* in 1158. The road continues as *via Antica Romana* and after crossing the Napoleonic *via Aurelia*, it joins the steep *via Scauro*, which goes up the ridge of *loc*. *Castellaro* (rather significant toponyms), which was inhabited at least from the Iron Age, but probably also in earlier times (Martino, 2021, 213 – 214).[23] On the top of the ridge, there is a paved section of the ancient road (Unknown author to check. Mannoni, 2007, 212.) and the ancient church of *San Pantaleo* (See figure 18. Sbarbaro, 2014, 71 – 72. Rotta, 2019, 217), built in the 12th century. by *Comacini* masters on a previous building (evidenced by a brick portico with pointed arches), with an adjacent hospital which has now disappeared. It is also interesting to note the dedication to Pantaleo, absent in the area, a purely Byzantine saint, who could hand down an older story (Mannoni, 2007, 210).[24] A little beyond this church there is also the one dedicated to *Sant'Ambrogio*, which a document attests for the first time in 984, although it probably dates back to the period in which the Lombard bishops fled the Lombard invasion and took refuge in *Liguria* (568 – 645. Sbarbaro, 2014). Next to the church, there must have been an ancient watchtower, reinforced in 950 by the viscounts of *Lavagna*, which must be identified as the *Castrum Rapallinum* mentioned in a deed of 1187 as perched on a hill overseeing the traffic of the Roman road (Sbarbaro, 2014, 54 – 55); it can thus be deduced that the ancient road passed just below the hill. Furthermore, between the two buildings is the small cove of *Marina* di *Bardi*, an interesting toponym of Lombard origin.[25]

The road rejoins the modern *Aurelia* and continues towards the next city, *Rapallo* (See figure 17. A.A.V.V., 1999, 80 – 81), which, like *Chiavari*, was also born around the main road axis. The ancient road passed next to the fifteenth-century chapel of *San Rocco* and then cut towards the sea: in 1985 via Avenaggi a stretch of the cobbled road came to light, with stones connected in dense succession and bonded with mortar, according to the ancient technique of "rissêu".[26] The simple technique does not allow the street fragment to be attributed to a Roman era, but neither does it exclude the possibility that it is the remaking of a previous support (Mennella, 1990, 287 – 288). The fact that emerges is that the road had to pass through this area. The medieval mule track that crosses the hills and leads to Valfontanabuona also starts from this area. Continuing along the road you arrive at *Rio San Francesco*. Here, in 1210, we have the attestation of a hospital novo de Rapallo dedicated to *San Cristoforo*, perhaps older, and managed by women; Arturo Ferretto, a historian of the early twentieth century, recalls that the hospitaller bore the name of *Pontius*, a title that refers to the custody of a bridge, now destroyed (Mannoni 2007, 164).

The seaside village of *Rapallo* expanded to the sides of the ancient Roman road system, but the exact location of the ancient city is not known: the first settlement dates back to 700 BC. following the discovery, in 1911, of an ancient tomb in the current district of *Sant'Anna* (further upstream along the *Boate* valley) during an excavation to extract clay to supply the nearby kilns. Although the excavations were followed and studied by various historians of the time such as Arturo Ferretto and Arturo Issel, the modern expansion of the city has not allowed the exact location to be established; moreover, the materials found, of presumed Etruscan or Greek origin, were subsequently lost following a flood in 1915 (Letter from the Honorary Inspector of Monuments and Objects of Antiquity and Art regarding the finds, 1915. Circolo Amici Sant'Anna, 2006, 10. Rotta, 2019, 85. Vanali, 2022, 211.). A little downstream from the aforementioned locality, a small relief has the typical morphology of a perched pre-Roman settlement, and the locality is called "Castellaro". Although no archaeological investigations involving the area under examination have been

carried out, it is nonetheless of particular interest both from a toponymic point of view and from a morphological point of view: the site is suitable for hosting a perched settlement nucleus of pre-roman.

Figure 19: Church of Santo Stefano (Photo taken by the author)

In the city center, two churches compete for the role of the oldest religious building in the city. According to the main historical sources of the city, the church of *Santo Stefano* (See figure 19. Barni, 1983, 33. Bacigalupo, 1999. Rotta, 2019, 205 – 206.), today the "dei Neri" oratory,[27] was the first Christian religious building to be built in the Rapallo area, but the date of its foundation is not known: the current structure can be referred to the end of the XII century. and attributable to the *Magistri Antelami* (Benente, 2023, 20 – 25), active in *Liguria* from the 11th century. The first document, datable to 1143 - 1145, informs us that in the division of the tithes of the olives *Santo Stefano* is second only to the parish church.[28] The latter is recognized to be the church of Saints *Gervasio* and *Protasio* (Benatti, 1994. Rotta, 2019, 58 – 62, 207 – 208), which, being dedicated to two Milanese saints, is linked to the arrival of fugitive Lombard ecclesiastics.[29] However, the primitive church would be that of *Santo Stefano*, a protomartyr saint, whose cult was widespread in the Late Ancient period. Next to the *Basilica* of the Milanese Saints, medieval sources (12th - 13th century) recall the existence of a religious building dedicated to *Santa Maria*, with a portico in front of the strata, of which there are no material traces (Rotta, 2019, 207).

Figure 20: Cenobio di San Tommaso (Photo taken by the author)

At this point the ancient and medieval road divided into two branches which both reached the pass on the *Portofino* promontory: one pointed inland, the other towards the coast. The first follows the right bank of the *Boate* torrent and crosses the *Sant'Anna* district, where, following the flood of 1915, sections of arches and presumed Roman buildings were seen emerging from the river (Letter from the Honorary Inspector of Monuments and Objects of Antiquity and Art regarding the finds, 1915). The road continues north and arrives at the confluence of the *San Pietro* and *Santa Maria* streams, which form the *Boate*, where it crosses the first across the ancient and destroyed *Paglia* bridge (Rotta, 2019, 235). To the east it continues along the course of the *San Pietro stream* and arrives in the small village with the

same name where there is a bridge with two arches (Rotta, 2019, 235), rebuilt in the Modern Age, but of clear medieval origin; then it continues towards the *Serra* and *Giasea* passes. The main road network continues along the valley of the *Rio Santa Maria* and arrives at the "Ponte Nuovo" (Rotta, 2019, 235), humpbacked and dating back to the Middle Ages, on which three branches converge which lead respectively to the monastery of *Valle Christi*, the *Cenobio di San Tommaso* (See figure 20) and the leper hospital of *Bana*. On the left bank we find the monastery, founded before 1161 by the Benedictine nuns of *San Tommaso* in Genoa and abandoned in 1597; today the stone walls with some columns still stand (Bacigalupo, 1999. Rotta, 2019, 213 – 214). Just beyond the "Ponte Nuovo" is the thirteenth-century monastery of *Valle Christi* (Schiaffino, 1999. Baratta, 2005, 178 – 181. Rotta, 2019, 215 – 216): the abbey, built in French Gothic style and composed of a single nave, first belonged to the Cistercian nuns and then to the *Clarisse* of *Sant'Agostino*. In 1568, with a papal bull from Pius V, the monastery was deconsecrated, abandoned by the nuns, and used for residential and agricultural purposes. Today the bell tower, the apse, the transept, and the convent buildings are still standing. The last building in the area is the leper colony of *Bana* (Bottari, 1996, 83 – 85. Vallini, 1998 – 1999. A.A.V.V., 1999, 79 – 80. Mannoni, 2007, 209 – 216. Rotta, 2019, 229), from the 15th century. and dedicated to *San Lazzaro*. More interesting, however, is the still visible stretch of road. This is made up of small pebbles arranged in an orderly manner, to create an accurate pavement from the Roman era, with medieval remakes. Furthermore, the toponymy is interesting: the term *Bana*, attested from 1222, would refer to the Lombard haribann (the place where the army is summoned) or to the Germanic *ban* (road). The road that starts from the *Santa Maria* torrent has demonstrated its antiquity thanks to some excavations in 2016, which have identified, below the modern road system, some stretches of ancient renovations (Campana, 2022, 210 – 211). The route continues towards the top of the mountain and recalls its antiquity in the toponym that distinguishes it: *via Romana*.

Figure 21: "Hannibal's Bridge" (Photo taken by the author)

Returning to *Rapallo*, the other previously mentioned branch continues along the coast. After passing today's course of the *Boate* torrent, one arrives at the so-called "Hannibal's Bridge" (See figure 21. Barni, 1983. Mannoni, 1996, 29 – 32; 2007, 165, 212. Rotta, 2019, 237 – 238), humpbacked, very high, which despite the name appears to be from the 11th century,[30] probably built by the *Magistri Antelami* (Benente, 2023, 20 – 25) and not passable by carts. The road may have been commissioned by the Genoese government around the 12th century. to streamline the coastal road system, it continues along the coast until it crosses the ancient town of *San Michele di Pagana*, where the "millennial" church that gave the town its name is located (Acordon, 2005. Rotta 2019, 211 – 212). The toponym dates back to the High Middle Ages, to the Byzantine and Longobard domination: these populations saw in *San Michele* a protector of the people; moreover, the second toponym, "Pagana", was read as an adjective identifying the Lombards, as Arians, therefore heretics. In today's building, you can no longer see the original traces and, despite the Baroque and neoclassical renovations, it dates back to 1133, a date found on a plaque inside the single nave, which proves the renovation of the church. The road continues towards the top of the Portofino Promontory, passing next to the Romanesque church of *San Lorenzo della Costa*, and joins up with the *via Romana* which starts from the locality of *Bana* and arrives at the *Ruta* pass.

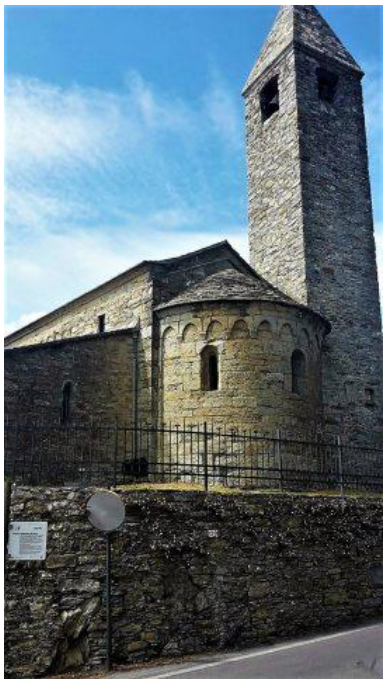

Figure 22: San Michele Arcangelo di Ruta
(Photo taken by the author)

Capite Montis, today's pass of *Ruta* (toponym for "road". A.A.V.V., 1999, 78 – 79), has always represented the natural border between different geographical areas and influences, between *Tigullio* and the Genoese area. On the top of the pass is the millenary church of *San Michele Arcangelo di Ruta* (See figure 22. Bottari, 1996, 79 – 82. Parodi 1996. Rotta 2019, 209 – 210), today dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but originally to the patron saint of the Byzantines and Lombards. The first document in which the church is mentioned, *Sancto Micheli de Rugo*, dates back to 1192, but the foundation could be much older, given the strategic position on the pass and along the ancient Roman road; a funerary epigraph dated to 490 AD was also found next to the building and it was dedicated to Blessed John. The complex must have also comprised a hospice, the *Hospital de Rua*, attested from 1191, of which no trace remains; today remains the Romanesque stone building, with two naves, from the 11th century, the work of *Antelamic* workers.

3. The streets of the valleys

3.1. Val Petronio and Val Gromolo

In *Casarza Ligure* there is a crossroad that leads towards the inside of the *Petronio* Valley (See Figure 23 and 25. Figone, 1998).[31] The continuous attendance of this during the centuries is essentially linked to the valley, which constitutes a natural route from the coast to the hinterland, practicable both at the bottom of the valley and on the hillside; following this direction we can arrive, going past Missano, up to the Velva crossroads: from here it is possible to reach the *Bracco* pass to the south, and *San Pietro Vara* to the east,. From San Pietro Vara we can choose the direction: towards the coast or *Varese Ligure.*

Varese Ligure is an important intersection because we can reach *Passo Cento Croci* and enter Emilia Romagna, Passo del Gottero to go to Emilia or Tuscany, and *Passo del Bocco* to go North, in the direction of *Bobbio*. It was probably the importance of this communication route that motivated the early interference of the powerful abbey of *Bobbio* along the Petronio valley, documented since the eighth century. In this context, Missano constituted for the monks a sort of gateway to control the territory and traffic, with the building of the church of *Santa Maria Assunta* and the important abbey of *Connio* (both from the 10th – 12th century BC).

After passing the eighteenth-century town of *Casarza* (the medieval village is not known where it was located) you can enter the territory of *Castiglione* Chiavarese. Today the road climbs steeply, following several bends, but during the Middle Ages, the main road proceeded along the *Petronio* stream, while the secondary one proceeded halfway up the hill. There is immediately a crossroads that leads to the ancient quarries of *Monte Loreto* (of which we have spoken previously), next to which stands the small village of *Masso*, with the ancient church of *San Michele* (Vincolo

SABAP-GE.), mentioned in a diploma of Charlemagne in 774, when the sovereign donated the territories of the valley to the abbey of *Bobbio*.

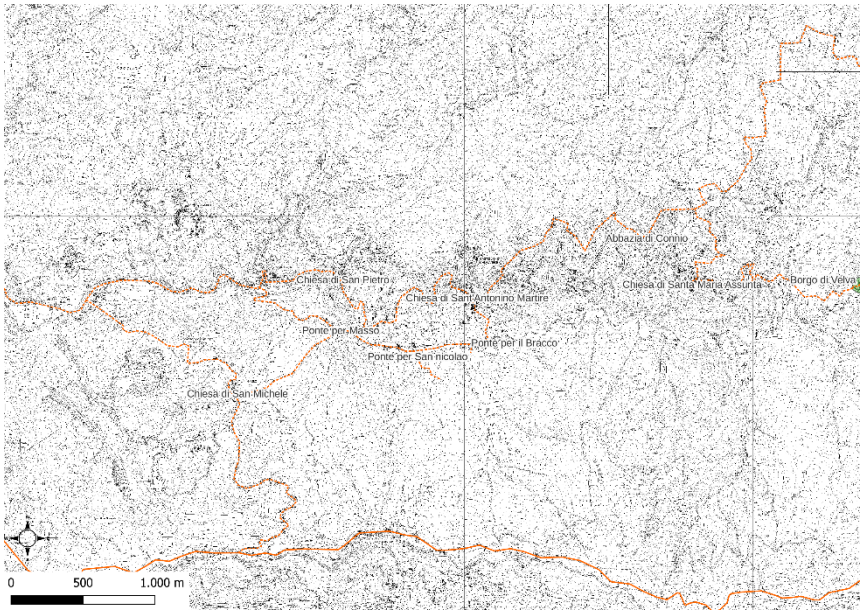

Figure 23: The road system of Val Petronio (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

From *Castiglione* the road forked and one of the stretches followed the long stream where three bridges of clear medieval origin can still be seen:[32] the first is humpbacked and with a double arch and leads to Masso as seen in Figure 24); the second has three arches and leads to *San Nicolao*; the third is once again a single humpbacked arch and also leads towards the *Bracco* pass (Mannoni, 2007, 182).[33] At this point, the road disappears completely, except for a last stretch below the village of *Velva*, where a bridge with two arches is visible.[34]

Figure 24: Bridge to Masso (Photo taken by the author)

Nowadays the road halfway up the slope is difficult to find, but it must have touched the various localities where religious buildings and surveillance towers had been attested since at least the 11th – 12th century, such as the tower and the church of *San Pietro* in *San Pietro di Frascati*, or the church of *Sant'Antonino Martire* in *Castiglione*. Continuing, we arrive at the three oldest villages in the valley: *Conio*, *Missano*, and *Velva*.

The small village of *Connio*, ancient *Conio*, is the testimony which has remained unchanged over the centuries, of a rural village, of which we have news from the early medieval period, as the site of a Bobbiese monastic cell (difficult to date, but always around the X - XII century), and which during the Middle Ages and in the Modern Age assumed the function of a fundamental stop along the commercial road that connected *Sestri Levante* with *Varese* and the *Po* valley lands.[35] This township controlled the transit of the area. The ruins of the religious building, invisible from the road due to the vegetation, consist of walls and the bell tower. *Missano*[36] (See figure 25) was the gateway to the center of the valley for the monks of *Bobbio*, important both for the control of the territory and of traffic and where the church of *Santa Maria Assunta* was built (10th – 12th century. Mannoni, 2001, 58 – 61. Benente 2008. Mammola, 2017, 114 – 115). A first mention of the village of Missano can be found in the papal bull "Officii nostri" of Alexander

III of 16 March 1162, where it is indicated as a possession of the Benedictine Abbey of *San Fruttuoso* di "*Capodimonte*".

Veleura is the ancient and medieval *Velva* (See figure 25. Associazione Culturale VELEURA), the last village before the pass; various hypotheses have been made on the origin of this name: the most reliable seems to be the one that connects the medieval toponym veleura with a word of Phocaean origin, *Elea*, which became *Veleia* and then *Velva*, with the meaning of "source" and would fit perfectly into the place full of springs. This toponym was used until the late Middle Ages. Even if we do not have direct attestations, from what can be read in the Carolingian diploma of 774 it can be assumed that *Velva* constituted a settlement of a certain importance already starting from the VI-VII century, therefore following the Lombard rule. The historic center of *Velva* represents one of the best-preserved testimonies of a medieval rural village in the Ligurian hinterland:[37] located in the frieze of the provincial road but not crossed by it, it has maintained the whole internal road network exclusively for pedestrians and made up of stepped alleys with a cobbled bottom, which winds through arcades, squares and rest areas, offering the visitor a picture of what was the use of public spaces in relation to the life of a traditional community.

Figure 25: Val Petronio with Missano and Velva in the background
(Photo taken by the author)

As far as the *Gromolo* valley is concerned, the situation is more complex: the access was occupied, on the right bank of the stream, by two settlements perched along the slopes of Mount *Castello*: the fort of *Carmelo* and the village of *San Bernardo*.[38] According to local historians, the road had stretched inland already in Roman and pre-Roman times through the area of *Fossalupara* (*luparia*?) to reach the copper mines of *Libiola*.[39] In the valley, there are two small villages with the same name: the older Libiola, along the ridge below the mines, and *Santa Vittoria di Libiola*,[40] on the valley floor; their toponym is strongly connected to the extraction of copper (Lavaggi, 2000, 30).[41] In the area of Libiola, located under the current chapel of *San Pietro*,[42] passes an ancient path linking the sea and the high roads of the Ligurian mountains which crosses the *Rio Cattan* via a bridge that has always been called "*Roman*". The path crossed the Gromolo stream in the area called "*Balicca*" (where traces of a medieval settlement can be found to defend the passage), went up to the vault of the villages of *Loto* (*Lotus*), and continued to *Cascine* (*Cassine*), *Costa Rossa* (*Terra Rubra*) and joined the road that went through the fortresses of *Sant'Anna*. This route could have been linked to the sea to bring the mineral extracted from the mines and could date back to pre-Roman times. On the contrary, the road that went up the *Gromolo* stream passed through the current Moggia pass and continued towards the *Graveglia* valley.

It is not a consular road but an ancient ridge path, certainly also used to transport minerals from the Libiola mines towards the valley. A clue about the Roman nature of the ancient bridge could be given by the fact that Roman bridges had a round arch, like that of *Libiola*. Regardless of this, it is certain that the path is at least from Roman times, if not even pre-Roman. As proof of the antiquity of the *Libiola* area and of the fact that its large territory has been inhabited for millennia, near the upper part of the *Gromolo* stream there is a mountain that the locals have always called Castellaro. Certainly, the perched and somewhat hidden position and the presence of water sources nearby must have made it an ideal defensive settlement for the populations of the ancient Ligurians.

3.2. The Entella Valley

The roads that went up along the *Entella* valley crossed both banks of the river (See Figure 26), but on the *Chiavari* side the layout becomes cumbersome and it is probable that the modern road overlaps the ancient one. The few data derive from some sporadic discoveries of Roman materials upstream of the church of *Santa Margherita di Caperana* and from the toponym of this area which could refer to an ancient Etruscan form, cape, with the meaning of vase, basin, or valley (Occelli, 2015, 23).

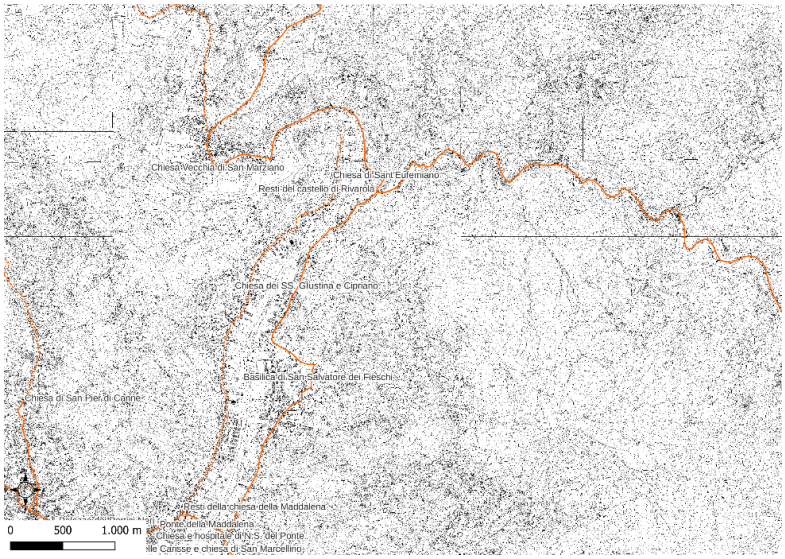

Figure 26: The road system of Entella Valley (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

The blackboard side is more legible: after the Sanctuary of *N.S. del Ponte* the route continues towards the mountains and the modern road follows almost the entire route. Arriving in San Salvatore, the medieval heart of the *Fieschi* dominion, the Napoleonic Land Registry of the beginning of the 19th century and the local historical memory can be of some help, since the road indicated as *chemin du S. Sauveur* follows the route of the so-called Roman road (Arobba, 2021, 223). In the middle of the small town of *San Salvatore*, on the top of a low hill that governs the valley, there is the central nucleus of 13th-century buildings. of the *Fieschi* family, with the basilica of San Salvatore and the noble palace (Ragazzi, 1982, 26. I luoghi del cuore FAI). The basilica is the only building made entirely of slate in the world (Palacios, 2005).[43]

The road continues behind the buildings as a path. At the crossroads *via Podestà*, between 2017 and 2018, materials from the Imperial age and walls and pottery from late antiquity were found, indications of a Roman occupation and a possible still unknown settlement (Arobba, 2021, 223). The route continues winding along the slopes of the mountains (unlike the modern one, built in the Napoleonic age, which runs along the river bed), passing under the 12th-century church. of the saints *Giustina* and *Cipriano* di *Panesi*, and then arrives at the entrance to the Val Graveglia. At this level of the river, the roads on both banks appear to run parallel; along the right bank you cross the medieval village of *Rivarola*,[44] surmounted by the hill of the same name: here in the 12th century was built a castle (Benente, 2001; 2006 B) with the contribution of Genoa which wanted to enter the *Tigulline* trade routes. The archaeological investigations of 1996 also identified along the slopes of the hill, below the castle, a site from the Roman Imperial age, a clear sign that control of this passage was already important in this era (Benente, 2019).

Figure 27: Excavation of San Marziano (Photo taken by the author)

The plan of the road is partly lost, but there might have been a single road axis on the left bank. Above this side of the river, in *loc*. *Paggi*, in the tenth century the *Fieschi* was built. a castle, destroyed in 1133. After the great bend of the river you arrive at the plain of Carasco, a toponym probably referred to the waterway (Fiore, 2007, 16 – 17).[45] From some documents dating back to 888, with King *Berengario* I, and to 972, with Emperor Otto I, the possessions of the abbey of *Bobbio proved to be* in the territory of *Carasco*. Here the "old church" of *San Marziano* (See figure 27),[46] Saint of *Tortona*, was founded, probably between 943 and 963.[47] After several changes of ownership, first to *San Michele della Chiusa*, between the 11th and 12th centuries, and then to the *Fieschi* basilica, in 1254, the church was destroyed in 1664 by a flood. The remains of the apse and some pavements are visible inside the nineteenth-century home of the parish priest (Benente, 2021, 111 – 113). Continuing along the road, which has now become a single one we arrive at the church of *San Pietro di Sturla*, a strategic point and perhaps the site of a medieval settlement,[48] located at the confluence of the *Lavagna* and *Sturla* streams, which form the *Entella*, and their respective valleys: *Val Fontanabuona* and *Sturla*.

3.3. Val Graveglia

Along the opposite bank of the Entella, in the area of *Rivarola*, where the ancient church of *Sant'Eufemiano* is located, there is the confluence with the Graveglia stream. In 2016 archaeological excavations testified a use of the site starting from the end of the 10th century. A.D., with a burial necropolis and the construction of the first church in the 11th century, which was modified and enlarged in the following centuries (Campana, 2021A, 111 -117). Here begins the *Graveglia* Valley (See Figure 28),[49] characterized by the presence of rich stone and mineral mines.

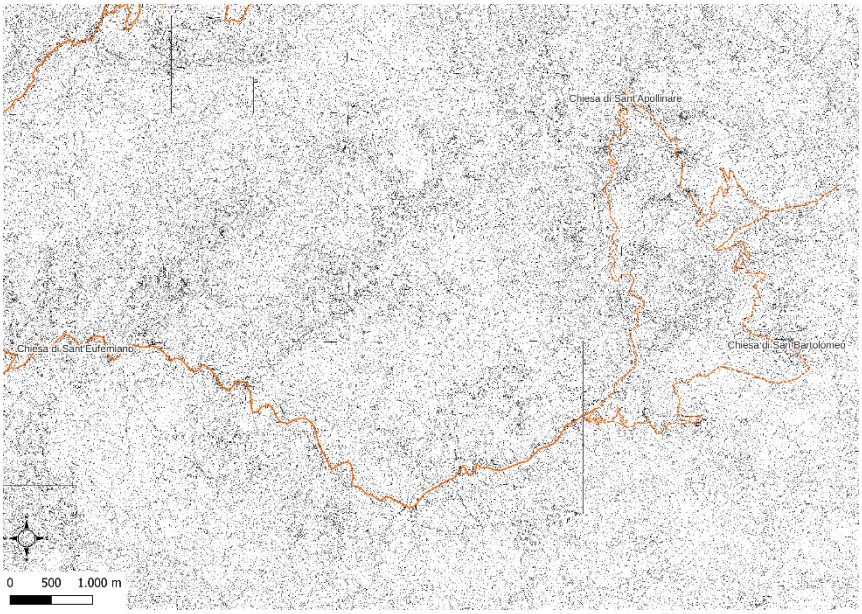

Figure 28: The road system of Val Graveglia (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

Figure 29: Church of Nascio (Photo taken by the author)

In the Middle Ages, the road had always proceeded in the valley floor, while the villages, perched on the slopes, were protected by towers and castles such as in *Prati di Ne*[50] and *Zerli*.[51] Below this village, there is a crossroads, but the ancient road might have proceeded towards Nascio (See Figure 29), where the remains of a castle destroyed by Genoa in 1033 are found. Nearby is the hamlet of *Cassagna* where once stood a place of worship dedicated to *San Michele* and of uncertain dating in the locality of "*La Crocetta*". Further on we arrive in *Statale*, where between 1994 and 1996 archaeological excavations investigated one of the so-called "tile stations" of the Roman era,[52] characterized by the large presence of fragments of winged tiles. This locality was populated between the 2nd and 3rd centuries. A.D. (large rustic building) and between the 4th and 6th centuries (seasonal occupation and stripping of the building. Benente 2014, 161 – 169). Still in *Statale*, the church of *San Bartolomeo* dates back to the 11th century. Continuing along the road we arrive at the *Biscia* pass.

The other road that passed through Nascio proceeds towards *Reppia*, a medieval hamlet in the valley, where there are still houses from this era and where there is a church with a very ancient dedication to *Sant'Apollinare*, saint of *Ravenna*, whose existence is confirmed in the possessions of the abbey of *Bobbio* in 972. Continuing along the road we rejoin the one coming from the state road and arrive at the *Biscia* pass, the gateway to the *Val di Vara*, and the passes that lead to *Parma*.

3.4. Valle Sturla

Continuing from *Carasco* along the Sturla stream, the route is quite simple to follow, as it has always followed the valley floor (See Figure 30). After the first hamlet of *Terrarossa*, a toponym of probable Roman origin,[53] we arrive at *Mezzanego*, a municipality made up of various hamlets and of very ancient origin. The original name of the municipality could be *Vicus mezzanicum*, referring to the fact that the territory was located between two roads, one below the coast and one at the bottom of the valley, and is connected to the small town of *Semovigo*, or *Summus vicus*.

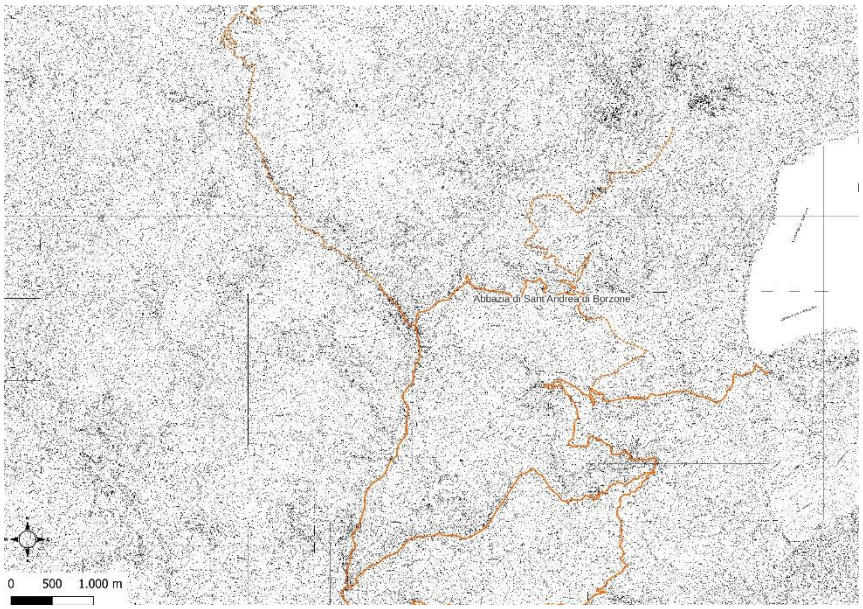

Figure 30: The road system of Valle Sturla (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

Numerous finds from the Roman and Late Ancient periods have come to light since the 1970s, both along the valley and in the hamlet of *Semovigo*. The most important discovery is undoubtedly that of the so-called "tile station" of the *Porciletto*,[54] which is located halfway up the hillside between the main valley and the one that leads to *Semovigo*. In this location were found artifacts from a period starting from the sixth century. BC, includes the first imperial era and reaches the Late Antiquity; in Roman times the production of bricks is attested.[55] From *Semovigo* we can reach the *Bocco* pass, which has always been one of the most important passes of the *Tigullio* because it leads to *Emilia*. Going back to the main valley, there is *Borgonovo*. Dating to a later period, here starts the main road which leads to the *Bocco* pass, along the *Mogliana* valley.

The route continues along the valley floor and enters the municipality of *Borzonasca*,[56] which has always been an important crossroads, in which there was a customhouse in the Middle Ages (A.A.V.V. 1999, 75), located between the older road that leads to the *Bocco* pass and towards *Parma* and the one that leads to the *Forcella* pass and leads into the *Aveto* valley, the highest area of Eastern *Liguria*, where there is the important route for *Bobbio*, seat of the abbey of *San Colombano*. This second road has always been fundamental for trade and *Bobbio*'s influence on the area, even though numerous passes were probably used along the ridge in ancient times. The valley that deviates towards the *Bocco* pass is archaeologically more interesting today, since the road that climbs it along the southern ridges leads to the ancient abbey of *Sant'Andrea di Borzone* (See figure 31. Brusco, 1968. A.A.V.V., 1999, 73 – 74. A.A.V.V., 2001; 2003. Alessio, 2011 – 2012), also a dependency of *Bobbio*. At the time of the "Gothic war", in the first half of the 6th century, the Byzantines erected a defensive bulwark which was the seat of a military detachment.[57] When and by whom, on the ruins of the Byzantine fortress, the church with annexed monastery with the title of *Sant'Andrea* was built continues to be a cause of uncertainty and historical discussion.

Two documents, although historically controversial, would attest to the presence of a nucleus in Borzone in the early Middle Ages: the first dates back to 774, the year in which Charlemagne, delimiting the jurisdiction of the monastery of *Bobbio*, mentions *Borzone*, and the second dates back to 972 when the emperor Otto I reconfirmed the jurisdiction of *Bobbio* expressly citing "the monastery and the villa of *Borzono*".

Figure 31: Abbey of Sant'Andrea di Borzone (Photo taken by the author)

A certain document that mentions this monastery is instead a bull dated 11 April 1120 by Pope Callistus II (1119-1124) which confirms its possession by the Abbey of *San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro* in *Pavia*. The circumstances whereby the name of the monastery of *Borzone* does not appear in the ancient *Bobbiesi* documents and the papal bull mentions Borzone together with other dependencies received by the *Pavia* abbey would suggest a backdating of its erection by a few centuries, that is the first half of the eighth century, by King Liutprand. Dating back to 1145 is an agreement stipulated between the Fieschis and the Consuls of Genoa in which explicit reference is made to the "*Curia Borzoni*", with which the powerful family, based in the current *San Salvatore*, sought to reinvigorate the complex.

In 1184 the monastery passed to the Benedictines from the patrimony of the church of Genoa, which had come into possession of it in an unspecified time, and between the 12th and 13th centuries, it was completely rearranged. Then the route had to continue along the ridge towards the pass, but today it has completely disappeared; the one that can be traveled even today is very ancient and can be retraced to a pre-protohistoric route, as evidenced by the imposing "Megalithic face of Christ".[58] Continuing, we arrive at the ruined church of *San Martino di Licciorno*, from the 11th century, and going on along the ridge we can return to the *Bocco* pass.

3.5. Val Fontanabuona

The road starts from *Carasco and* runs along the *Lavagna* stream, through the village of *San Colombano Certenoli*, ancient *Bembelia*, where according to the legend the monks of *Bobbio*, accompanied by *San Colombano*, built a church.[59] At this level of the valley you meet the road which from *San Pier di Canne* crosses the town of *Leivi*;[60] on the highest pass are the remains of the tetraconca church called "*Oneto* Abbey" (See figure 33. Garbarino 2022, 18), typical of Byzantine architecture (perhaps 6th - 7th century) and rebuilt several times.[61] Here there was also a *hospital*, the remains of which can be seen around the main building. This road has always been attested as the "salt road" towards northern Italy and it crosses the *Fontanabuona* valley (See figure 32).

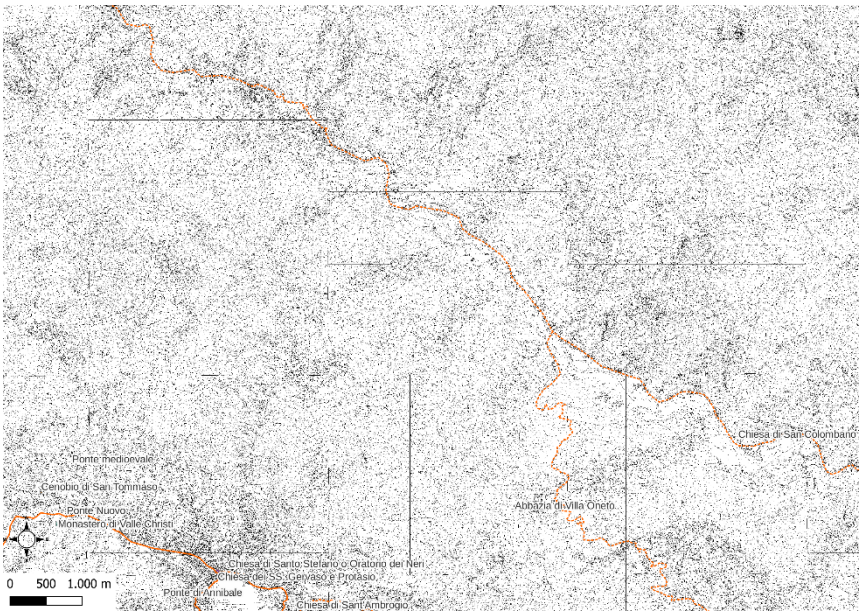

Figure 32: The road system of Val Fontanabuona (Map created by the author with QGIS software)

In the locality of *Calvari*, on the left bank of the *Lavagna* stream, there is the locality of *Castellaro*, a toponym referring to the ancient pre-Roman Ligurian settlements. Continuing in this direction we arrive at *Orero*, an ancient village built on the "salt road" for *Piacenza*, controlled by *Bobbio*. At this point we can walk across *Cicagna*, the most important village of the valley, formerly known as *Plecania*,[62] whose history coincides with the formation of the baptismal churches built in the 12th century. The parish church no longer exists, but in the center of the village, guarding the valley, there would be a perfect place for an ancient castellaro. Continuing along the valley we arrive in the ancient *Moconesi*.[63] The road crosses the stream in *Terrarossa* thanks to a medieval bridge. Crossing the small village of *Neirone* (Spinetta, 2004), the road forks: on one side it passes through the village of *Roccatagliata* (A.A.V.V., 1999, 76. Cagnana, 2015, 23 – 35), site of a Fliscan castle, and leads towards *Piacenza* crossing the *Portello* pass; the other road leads through the territory of *Lumarzo*,[64] where there must have been a Roman settlement, never found, leading to the *Scoffera* pass and from here to Genoa or *Piacenza*.

Figure 33: Oneto Abbey (Photo taken by the author)

4. Conclusion

Ligurian roads have very ancient origins. The dominion of Rome in the territory marks the construction of the first road network to connect the *Urbe* to Genoa and the coast to the hinterland. This road system was new, but not innovative, as it was superimposed on the very ancient network of paths that crossed the whole territory in pre- and proto-historic times. Traces of these interventions are still recognizable today in some city toponyms, for example, *ad Solaria* and *ad Monilia*, in the memory that is kept in the naming of some streets, such as the various *Antiche Romane* or *Aemilia Scauri*, or the still visible remains, such as the so-called "tile stations" of *Statale* and *Porciletto*.

Figure 34: Entella River (Photo taken by the author)

After the fall of the western part of the Roman Empire and the brief period of the Ostrogothic Kingdom, the area passed under Byzantine rule, which ensured the continuity of road maintenance. During the sixth and seventh centuries, the first monasteries and hospitals began to be established in various strategic points, such as *San Nicolao di Petra Colice* or the church of *San Michele* of *Ruta*. An emblematic building of this period is the abbey of *Sant'Andrea di Borzone*, which was constructed as a guard post between the *regio Maritima* and the lands of northern Italy conquered by the Lombards. The arrival of these people marked a clear break with the past and the roads began to be maintained no longer by a state power but by the various city and monastic communities. The case of *Chiavari* is emblematic because both to the east and to the west, along the foothills, various *hospitals* were set up and villages arose in the surroundings: just think about the *Rupinaro* district (whose year of birth is still today reason for debate) or the others that arose around the monasteries of *San Francesco* or *Bacezza*. In all the towns of *Tigullio*, there is a historic center whose certain period of aggregation, in the absence of previous remains, is precisely the High Middle Ages.

In the thirteenth century. the situation began to change, as the area was divided into two zones of influence: to the east of the *Entella* River (See figure 34) the *Fieschi*, to the west the Republic of Genoa; both the powerful families of *San Salvatore* and the Republic began to rearrange and strengthen the road system, the tracks were rebuilt and expanded to allow a greater traffic. Castles were built at various strategic points, such as in *Rivarola*, and villages were fortified, such as *Rapallo* and *Chiavari*, the easternmost bulwark of Genoa against the advance of the *Fieschi*.

However, more capillary control also means unification and the most evident case is the construction of the first bridge over the *Entella* river, that of the *Maddalena*, which united the two areas of the *Tigullio*.

Leaving aside the various renovations, the situation did not change until the Modern Age: most of the roads continued to be used, but some routes fell into disuse, such as the road along the *Petronio* stream or the road that led to *Passo del Bocco* passing next to the *Borzone* Abbey. The real turning point came with the construction, between the 18th and 19th centuries, of the modern *Via Aurelia*, which was part of the wider road axis of the *Route Imperiale Paris-Rome*; this followed a straighter path, piercing the hills and passing through the new alluvial plains that did not exist before, such as the one formed at the mouth of the *Entella* river, between *Chiavari* and *Lavagna*. The road was born as a sort of filiation of the ancient Roman and medieval *Via Aurelia* and from this moment on it became the backbone of the territorial road system; still today it is heavily trafficked and used in parallel with the most modern motorway.

Following the analysis of the main communication routes of the *Tigullio* past, it emerges that most of them are still used today: in some cases, today's route still follows the path of thousands of years ago. This is mainly due to two reasons: the first is that buildings and villages arose along the existing routes which have not undergone radical transformations over the millennia and have survived the historical changes; the second is that the particular conformation of the Ligurian territory, mainly mountainous, does not allow many alternatives. In the past, this could be considered a sort of "forced" sustainability, while today its merits can be guessed. The oldest road system, which represents a large part of the Ligurian layouts, has a minimal impact on the landscape since it is the road that adapts to the territory and not the latter which was radically modified, to be bent to the needs of the population. The turning point comes from the Napoleonic era, when heavier interventions began to be implemented, which upset the existing balance (for example, the new tunnels under the *Rocche di Sant'Anna*, between *Lavagna* and *Sestri Levante* or those of *Zoagli*), even though the necessity cannot be denied. The opening of the motorway, which took place in the 1950s, allowed faster travel but also changed the appearance of the territory.

One question remains open, that concerning the distance of 1 Roman mile among some medieval buildings: starting from the *Basilica* of *Santo Stefano* there is the hospital next to the Maddalena bridge, the monasteries of the Poor Clares and *San Francesco*, *Nostra Signora dell'Ulivo in Bacezza*, the *Madonna delle Grazie* and *Rovereto*. It is difficult to imagine that such a particular distance is the result of chance, but in the current state of studies, there is no way to have an explanation, since the Romans would have placed only a milestone at such a distance.

Appendix

[1] As will be seen later, the historical etymology Tigullii also derives from the use of slate for architectural purposes. Pliny in the Naturalis Historia (book XXXVI, paragraph 167) speaks of a clear stone that is cut with a saw; in the Historia of Livy (book XLI, chap. 19) and in the Italia Antiqua of Cluverio (book V, chap. 10) appears the name of a local tribe, the Lapicini, whose etymology has been correlated to lapis. In this period localities called claparia also began to appear, where slabs of slate (clapae) were extracted or worked. Claudius Ptolemy placed Tigullia between Portus Delphini and Segesta Tigulliorum. Pomponio Mela with the term Tigullia indicates a settlement, but not the place where it is located, nor in what era its construction took place.

[2] The etymology of the term Tigullii according to Nino Lamboglia could derive from a pre-Roman base similar to and parallel to that of the Latin tegmen (cover) or tegula; this hypothesis could support the theory that only the Tigullii, among all the Ligurians, covered their roofs with stone tiles, presumably slate, which is abundant in the area.

[3] The first stretch up to Vado Ligure was built as a continuation of the Via Aurelia, which from Rome reached Pisa and then Luni; the second stretch up to Arles, in France, was traced by Augustus between 13 and 12 BC, taking the name of via Iulia Augusta; however, it was already known in its entirety as via Aurelia in the imperial era.

[4] Road built in 241 BC. by the *censor G. Aurelio Cotta* or in 200 BC. from his son, the consul *G. Aurelio Cotta*, up to *Caere* and subsequently lengthened several times up to *Lunae*.

[5] The other cities are never mentioned, but there are various hypotheses on the etymology of the names: *Lavagna*, from *lavania* or slate; *Chiavari* from *claparia* (slate slab); *Rapallo* the most controversial could derive from rea *palus* (unhealthy marsh), *rapulum* (turnip) or *rapatum* (reed bed).

[6] This fraction of *Moneglia* is mentioned in the *tabula Alimentaria*, found in 1747 in the *Piacenza* area with which the emperor Trajan, who died in 117 AD, linked various estates, towns and villages for the benefit of the orphans of *Velleia*, including *Lemmelius*.

[7] Various amphoracei, including a Baetic Dressel 2 form, African sealed tableware and bricks.

[8] The paving stones are made up of flakes of local schist and in the most impervious areas the rock has been cut upstream, almost certainly over the centuries the paving stones of the roadway have continued to be replaced.

[9] At least until the 18th century, as shown by *Vinzoni*'s cartography, only this road existed, which led from *Lavagna* to the east.

[10] Clear reference to the probable extraction of slate or blackboard already in Roman times.

[11] As will be better seen later on for Chiavari.

[12] "Intra Siestri e Chieveri s'adima

[13] *una fiumana bella, e del suo nome*
lo titol del mio sangue fa sua cima" (Dante, *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio XIX*). Much discussed passage of the Comedy in which Pope Adrian V (1205 - 1276) speaks of the river that gave its name to his family, the *Fieschi di Lavagna*, and this provides proof that at least in this era the river was known as Lavagna and not like Entella, a name of uncertain identification. The first attestation of the name *Entella* for the river is found in Claudius Ptolemy, who in Geography III 1, 3 mentions the Ἐντέλλα ποταμοῦ ἐκβολαί («mouths of the river *Entella*»), placing them east of Genoa.

[3] As evidenced by an inscription placed on the external wall of the *Maddalena* church.

[4] Among these Lopes Pegna and Riparbelli.

[5] Regarding the toponymy cf. above.

[6] This was modernized in 1208 by the Consuls of Genoa.

[7] Some excavations carried out along via Ravaschieri and via Raggio have testified that the ancient medieval street level was at a lower level of almost 2 m.

[8] During some excavations, a wall from the 1st – 2nd century was found next to the ancient church. A.D.

[9] A weaver from *Rovereto* (fraction of *Chiavari*) on his way to the seaside town found a small picture depicting the Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus on an olive tree. Again according to local stories, the farmers of the area, already in the previous nights, also saw a glow at the level of the olive grove. It was therefore decided to build a chapel, in which to keep and venerate the presumed miraculous image. The icon is painted on a table-mounted canvas, in dark colors on a gold field, which represents the Madonna with a brown face, with the Child on her left arm, in an affectionate and maternal attitude. The style could be said to be Greek, like that of the *Madonna del Ponte*, both due to the Greek custom of placing the Child on the left, and because in the early days in Liguria it was the Greeks who painted, on a gold background.

[20] According to a notarial document, citing the landed properties of the Genoese churches in the *Tigullio* area, a primitive place of worship, *Sancti Petri*, is mentioned in 984, which could actually indicate the Genoese church of *San Pietro*.

[2] C(aio) Sextio Spectato tesserario coh(ortis) I pr(aetoriae) P(iae) V(indicis). C(aius) Titius Marcellinus be(neficiarius) trib(uni) coh(ortis) eiusdem b(ene) m(erenti). To Caius Sextius excellent enrollee of the 1st praetorian cohort (of the Legion) Pia Vincitrice (or Vindice) Cazio Tizio Marcellinus tribune beneficiary of the same cohort". The inscription can refer to two different legions: to Legio VI Hispana Pia Vinctrix, active between 68 and 197 or more probably to Legio III Augusta Pia Vindex, active between 43/40 BC. at the end of the IV – beginning of the V century. A.D., which in 193 received the nickname of "Faithful Avenger" from the emperor Septimius Severus.

[22] The modern road, which passes under the village of San Pietro, crosses two tunnels, which according to popular tradition date back to the Roman period.

[23] The excavations of 2016 established the presence of settlements from the Iron Age thanks to the presence of numerous finds.

[24] FAI, i luoghi del cuore. https://fondoambiente.it/luoghi/chiesa-di-san-pantaleo-zoagli?ldc

[25] It could derive from the name *Bardus*, *Pardus* widespread in the early Middle Ages, or from a nickname generated by the Longobard origin of the progenitor.

[26] Pebble in Genoese.

[27] In 1634 the *Mortis et Orationis* confraternity, known as “dei Neri” due to the color of the capes, was established there.

[28] Another official document that confirms its presence is a deed of sale dated July 1155 where a certain *Benedetta* sold half of a house located "*ab ea parte quae est versu Sanctum Stephanum*".

[29] A problem regarding the consecration of this church is given by a plaque, datable to the 17th century, which recalls the event, which however indicates a date subsequent to the actual construction: 11 or 12 October 1118. In this period Pope Gelasius II, on his way to France, consecrated the cathedral of *San Lorenzo* in Genoa on 10 October (certain and documented fact), or the day before. A rather strange fact in itself, both due to the distance between the two cities (about 30 km), and due to the fact that the pope, arriving from Tuscany, would have had to go back. In addition, the plaque was positioned five centuries later, so it can be thought that the consecration of the church was intended to be attributed to a pope, who probably passed through *Rapallo* at that time or, as has been suggested more recently, it was intended to adjust the date of consecration in order not to bypass Genoa.

[30] Legend has it that during the Second Punic War Hannibal passed through it with elephants, on his way to Rome. The oldest document in which the building is mentioned is a notarial deed dated 7 April 1049: a certain *Rainaldo* signs a donation of some land adjacent to the bridge in favor of the Genoese church of *Santa Maria di Castello*.

[31] Toponym of probable Roman origin.

[32] The bridges were rebuilt following the flood of 1852, which damaged or destroyed them.

[33] Unfortunately there is no other bibliography concerning these bridges.

[34] Only the pylons are original from the modern era.

[35] To date, the village no longer exists and only the ruins of the abbey church can be recognized. They represent a building erected in 1663, mentioned in a document dated March 24, 1664, on the initiative of a local notable, *Carlo Castiglione*, who, with the archbishop's authorization, had the right of appointment of the Abbot.

[36] Roman predial to be referred to the Latin noble family *Messius*.

[37] The typology of the buildings in "exposed stone" allows us to read the evolution of the structure of the settlement starting from the most ancient nucleus, certainly from the early Middle Ages, characterized by masonry in squared and chiselled ashlars, on which they were then grafted successive phases of expansion, reflecting the different demographic and historical situations.

[38] In *San Bernardo* the homonymous church was previously dedicated to *San Quirico* and could date back to between the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century. There is no bibliography regarding these places.

[39] Vd. cap. 1.

[40] The origins of the settlement could date back to the 11th century. with the building of the church by the Benedictine monks of *Piacenza*.

[41] The toponym *Libiola* would seem to derive from the Greek *λέβης* (Latin *lebes*) a basin or boiler in copper or bronze, which was used to heat and store water. The name of this container, lebes, is also attested in *Liguria* in some medieval notarial documents.

[42] The original church of *San Pietro*, the first parish in the valley, could date back to the 7th century. Some finds from this era are kept in the museum of the parish of *Santa Vittoria*.

[43] Slate is a particular stone whose properties have been known by man over the millennia and thanks to its elasticity, resistance to bending, reduced porosity, it does not freeze and does not deform even when subjected to heat (exceptional fire resistance given the very low expansion coefficient) makes it a unique building material in the world. The slate trade has always been of great importance for the *Tigullio* area. Until the twentieth century, along the slopes of Mount *San Giacomo* (behind *Lavagna* and *San Salvatore*) and still today in *Val Fontanabuona*, there were large quarries of this material, which was already used in pre-Roman times (see the Necropolis of Chiavari), and especially since the Middle Ages (a first document of sale of slate *abbadini* dates back to 1176). The slate roads descended from the slopes of Mount *San Giacomo* and along the course of the *Lavagna* torrent in *Val Fontanabuona*, to then reach the sea along the *Entella*.

[44] Toponym to refer to the proximity to the river bank.

[45] The toponym Calasco is found for the first time in the Breviarium de terra Sancti Columbani, drawn up at the end of the 10th century. in Bobbio: "Filii Silveradi de Calasco tenent p(ra)tu(m) I in tasiola et in aliis locis, un(de) debent dare fictu(m)". The transition from the original Calasco to the Carasco form, which corresponds to the local karasu or kaàsku, is completely linear: in the Ligurian dialects the intervocalic l is transformed into r and disappears in Genoese. The meaning is not entirely clear, but there are two hypotheses: - it derives from the Latin calare, to descend, as an adjective substantiated in -asco; - derives from the portmanteau of "Car" (head) and "Asco" (stream), in reference to the geographical position of the territory on which it developed.

[46] For further information on the history of the church see Fiore, 2007.

[47] When a certain *Giseprando* was bishop of *Tortona* and abbot of *Bobbio*.

[48] Settlement not yet studied.

[49] Latin toponym: from the popular *grava* area; from an original **Graulīā*, possessions of **Gravilios*.

[50] It is the municipality of *Val Graveglia* and its toponym could derive from the Latin *nemus* to signify the probable presence of natural and wild woods.

[51] Where is a medieval castle.

[52] The other investigated is in *Porciletto*, in the *Sturla* valley, which will be discussed later.

[53] *Terra Rubra*.

[54] Very common toponym in *Liguria* in the Modern Age.

[55] All of this information can be found at Benente 2014, 171 – 182.

[56] A somewhat obscure toponym that would seem to refer to the stream (*-asca*) and to the abbey of *Borzone* (vedi *infra)*.

[57] The scholar C. Brusco also proposes an older tower, from the 4th – 5th century. A.D.

[58] The engraving is considered one of the largest rock sculptures in Italy and Europe and could date back to the Paleolithic. A local legend states that once a year the monks of the nearby abbey went in front of the sculpture to venerate it, considering it a miraculous face of Christ.

[59] There is a record about it in the *Bobbio* abbey, dating back to the 10th century.

[60] Among the various hypotheses on the origins of *Leivi*, the most accredited is the one that makes the name derive from that of an ancient Ligurian tribe, the *Laevi*, founders of *Pavia*, which from *Ticino*, in pre-Roman times, would have extended its influence up to Tyrrhenian. The settlement, perhaps for commercial purposes, of a "bridgehead" a short distance from the sea can in fact be reliably attributed to the members of this tribe.

[61] The small church is located in a locality known as "*nel pagano*", a rather ancient toponym.

[62] *Plecania* and again *Chicaglia* to then end up in *Cicagna*. There are two hypotheses to find the etymology of the name: the first would like the name of *Plecania* to be a corruption of *Plebs amnis* (the parish church of the river par excellence, which is still called *Agna* in dialect today); the other, less probable, has it that *Plecania* derives from *Plebania*, since in ancient times, being *Cicagna* the only parish of the whole *Fontanabuona*, it was called by the *Fontanini* la *Plebania*, almost the parish par excellence, from which *Plecania* derived.

[63] The toponym, with the meaning "house of *Moco*" or "*dei Mochi*", refers to the possessions of a Romanised Ligurian family; the name is attested for example in the bronze tablet of Polcevera, dating back to 117 BC, where a *Moco Meticanio* is mentioned, representative of the Genuati in the dispute with the *Langatii* object of the sentence.

[64] The toponym *Lumarzo* derives from the Latin *Locus Martius*, i.e. "grove - field of Mars": this has led us to think that in the current municipal area there was a temple, with an adjoining grove, consecrated to the Roman god of war.

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