

Excavations at Villa Magna 2010

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The final season of this series of excavations aimed at completing sites B, the site of the church and monastery, and F2, within the atrium of the baths, took place in the second half of June 2010; further exploration clarified the plan of the baths to the south of the *cella vinaria*. Over June and July, the post-excavation research in the laboratory aimed to complete all the catalogues, with a view to comprehensive publication within a reasonable amount of time¹.

Site B (Mon)²

Last year's excavations had completed the investigation of those portions of the monastery found within the confines of site B, as well as the majority of the tombs related to the monastic (10th-13th century) and later phases. We thus aimed at revealing the earlier levels throughout the site. Roman levels here were an extensive paving of white limestone partially revealed last year. This surface appears to belong to a great court lying to the south of a large *porticus duplex* structure visible in the geophysical survey, a building which we assume to have been the imperial residence, whose south facade is found just inside the north section of the trench, and can be traced through the width of the half of the trench (fig. 1). A door, 1.45 m wide, is found in what appears to have been the centre of this façade. The building was faced with marble, traces of which are left in the cement coating the masonry. However, the door itself is too narrow to allow us to believe it was the principal access to the building, which must have existed elsewhere. The surface outside the door, consisting now of a clean yellow clay running up to the pavement 5.10 metres to the south, is what remains of a portico. Three plinths run parallel to the façade which probably supported columns or piers and



Fig. 1. View of the excavation, showing the extent of the Roman paving revealed. The arrow at the bottom left indicates the marble-clad wall of the imperial building (C. Goodson).

¹ Generous support for the project came, again, from the 1984 Foundation and the Banca di Credito Cooperativo Anagni. We are grateful, as ever, to the proprietor, Rodolfo Cesaritti, and to Gioacchino Giammaria. Interim reports for previous years can be found in *FOLD&R*, numbers 68, 96, 126, 169.

² The excavation of this area, under the direction of Caroline Goodson, was carried out by Margaret Andrews, Abigail Baker, Giuseppe Castellano, Michael Martins, Megan McNamee, Andreana Piluzza, Serena Privitera, and Giorgio Rascaglia with the help of Mark Pinkerton and Edward Jones. The cemetery excavation was supervised by Corisande Fenwick, with Luciano Bruni, Sam Cox, Rachel Heslop and Erika Nitsch. Here, as elsewhere, we benefitted from a large number of volunteers from the Liceo Dante Alighieri at Anagni, coordinated this year by Roberto Mataloni.

a roof, and the area under it must have been paved, though this was subsequently removed. The limestone paving outside the portico is similar to that of the road excavated in site D, though made of smaller (20-30 cm) white pavers set into a yellow clay makeup. Cuts in the pavement reveal that its yellow clay makeup was at least 1.20 m deep, and, like that beneath the winery, almost entirely devoid of finds, although several scraps of first-century AD *sigillata italica* were found³. The single feature earlier than the pavement is a deposit revealed by a later cut, which contains a fragment of a column placed on a square base and encircled with a layer of mortar. This was covered by one of the paving stones, and was clearly not originally visible. It is evidently not *in situ* (the column is only roughly propped up on the base) and is difficult to interpret; the layer of mortar recalls late Republican and early-Imperial *atria* with columns plastered up to dado height, and it seems just possible to imagine that the column originally belonged to an earlier villa somewhere nearby, buried deliberately during the construction of Villa Magna. Two fragments of *sigillata italica* found inside the mortar would date the earlier structure to approximately the reign of Tiberius⁴. The second-century paving of the court, perhaps deliberately rustic in appearance, remained in use for the next five centuries; as subsequent buildings were added or removed, the paved surface was cleaned and preserved.

The apsidal building

The next building phase entailed the construction of a large apsidal building in *opus latericium*, whose foundations were revealed below those of the church (fig. 2). Material from its construction trench dates this securely to the last half of the third century⁵. Although its foundations were only fully revealed along the west front, around the northwest corner and at the apse, there seems little doubt that the later church follows the same lines as this structure, giving us the original size, shape and orientation. We have no evidence for the original function of this building. It occupies a commanding position in the centre of the court, although at a 20° angle to that of the facade of the residential block and its portico - this latter may have been built at the same time as the apsidal building. The only known entrance to the building was on the centre of the west side. Like that of the portico, the interior floor is missing within the area examined (the chapel on the northwest corner), having been disturbed and removed by later activity in the church.

At some point in the fourth or fifth century, three tombs were built in the northwestern corner of the apsed building. They were cut into the clay packing underneath the building in the west-east orientation typical of Christian burials, and lined with reused marble slabs and bricks. Outside the building to the west, a short, wide wall was built to the north of the door: this was presumably one of two such walls, the other being hidden below subsequent buildings. Two masonry tombs were then cut into the ground level, abutting the foundations of these walls and flanking the door. Later robbing and subsequent burials removed any traces of burial within them. Another masonry tomb was found intact, oriented north-south and abutting the facade of the building to the south of the door. Finally, an enigmatic structure aligned with the front door was inserted in a large cut in the white pavement, roughly rectangular in shape, oriented east-west. Some 60 centimetres below pavement level four short walls made of spoliated chunks of *opus signinum* abut a mortar construction that lines the whole cut at this level. Although the whole might be interpreted as a soak-away drain in the centre of the court, covered with a grate, an alternative explanation would regard the structure as an elaborate support of a large sarcophagus, subsequently robbed out. Such an important, axial burial might be regarded as re-

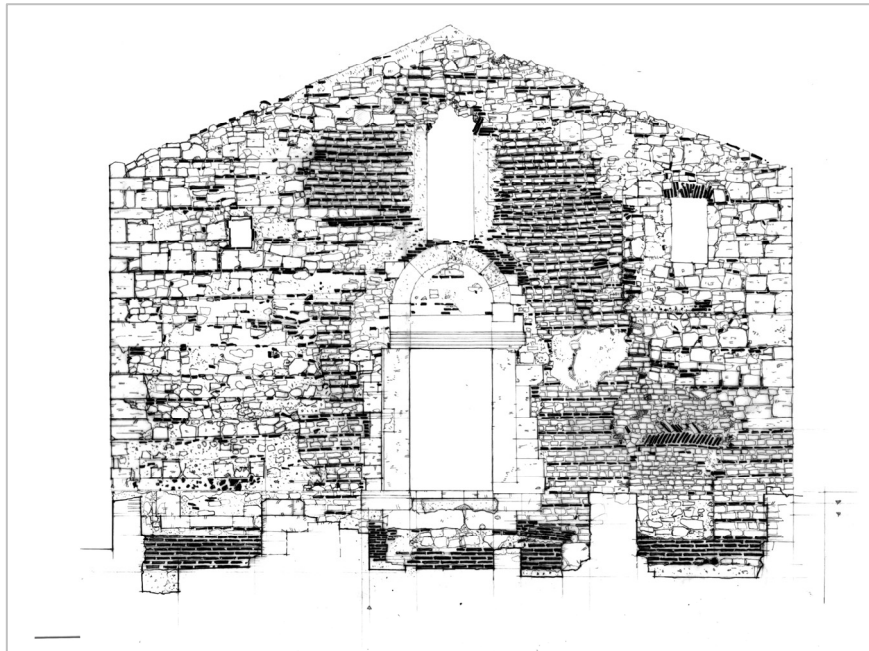


Fig. 2. Elevation of the church facade, showing the remains of the building in latericium below it (N. de Pace).

³ Fragment of unidentified cup stamped by (L.) OCTA(VIVS) PROCVLVS, dating to the first or very early second century AD.

⁴ Forms *Conspectus* 5.1.3; 22.4.1, identified by Paola Umbri.

⁵ Joining fragments of Dressel 14 amphorae identified by Mihaela Ciausescu and sherds of ARS C.



Fig. 3. The holes left by the robbing of the dolia in the portico of the sixth-century courtyard. Note the imprint of the base in the hole under the scale.

courses. Two rectangular doors were built on either side of a central door, and it is probable that the doors visible in the masonry of the north and south sides date to the same period. Coins of Justinian, a few sherds of sixth-century ARS and amphorae were recovered from contexts near the church, but the bulk of the dating evidence for this phase comes from the area of the portico. Here, a wall was built just east of the old doorway, extending south as far as the stylobate of the portico. To the west of it, a preparation of soft grey mortar was laid. This was then cut by at least 8 holes designed to house large *dolia* in two rows parallel to the facade of the building. The holes measured ca. 2 m in diameter and were as much as 1.10 m deep (fig. 3). A ninth pit, smaller with a diameter of around 70 cm, was cut shallowly at the east end of this subdivided area of the portico. At least one of these *dolia* was mortared into the hole, as the imprint of its base shows⁷. A further clayey paving was then laid around them, running up to the shoulders of the *dolia*. There seems no doubt that this represents the conversion of part of the portico around the court and church into a *cella vinaria*, replacing whatever structure(s) served that role between the abandonment of the winery at the *casale* in the middle of the third century and the sixth century⁸.

The reconstruction of the apsed building as a church and the conversion of the portico into a winery represent substantial building works in this period, centered on the heart of the old estate in front of what may have been the imperial residence. It seems to follow a period of abandonment: in fact, there is no pottery or coins from anywhere on the site that necessarily date to the period between 470 and 550. At site D, this period is marked by the collapse of the slave barracks and we have no evidence that site A was occupied between the end of the third century and the sixth century. Villa Magna may have been abandoned during this time and only reoccupied at the end of the Greco-Gothic wars, at which point the apsidal building was in sufficient disrepair to warrant wholesale reconstruction. The scale of the intervention is impressive, and it is hard to imagine that it did not emanate from the fisc, presumably in the form of an imperial procurator or other official who set about re-establishing the estate as an economic centre, collecting rents and taxes from the immediate area.

At some time later, perhaps very shortly after construction, a narthex was added to the front of the church. This was delimited by walls in *opus vittatum* identical to and abutting those of the church, with doors in the centre of the north and south sides, and a wider opening to the west, perhaps spanned by columns. The narthex floor, of beaten earth, remained at the level of the court pavement, but quickly began to be enhanced by spoliated marble slabs covering tombs, especially to the south.

It is not entirely clear how long this last imperial (?) use of the building continued. Coins of Justin II (AD 565-578) are found at site D, as are an impressive amount of sixth- and seventh-century amphorae and coarsewares. There is evidence of people living in roughly made structures at site D and in the substructures to the east side of the

⁶ The lamp fragment was identified by Birgitta Hoffman.

⁷ Although the *dolia* were all robbed out, in one case the broken fragments of a *dolium* with very similar clay body to those in the early imperial winery at the *casale* was recovered.

⁸ A large fifth-century *cella vinaria*, with 26 *dolia* in all, is recorded at the villa San Giusto: this use continues into the sixth century: Volpe 1998, 63-66. Examples of sixth-century *cella vinariae* are cited in Chavarria-Arnau 2007: 126-129.

lated to the conversion of the building into a church, a change that is also suggested by the other six burial the find within the building of fragments of a glass-hanging lamp⁶.

Sixth-century constructions

A major construction phase in the sixth century transformed this area. This entailed the dismantling of the apsidal building down to its foundations. No destruction deposits were found, a fact that suggests a significant removal operation, taking out any traces of stratigraphy down to the level of the paving of the court, which clearly remained in use. The resulting structure, a church, followed the plan of the earlier building, but was constructed in *opus vittatum*, with courses of squared blocks of local *tartara* stone alternating with brick string



Fig. 4. The northernmost Grubenhaus. The arrows indicate postholes. (E. Fentress).

The feature must be interpreted as a *Grubenhaus*, sunken-floored building, built over a hollow which could have been used for storage or simply damp-proofing.

A similar building was found outside the portico, about 8 metres to the south. This was oriented north-south with a width of some 2.50 x 2.70 m; again, its full length was obscured by the section. Slightly deeper than the first, it showed no sign of the packing against the walls of the cut. Instead, two deep and wide postholes were found just within the cut, evidently for the support of the roof. The irregular floor was certainly not used for occupation, and, like the first building, the floor must have been wooden planks covering the hollow. The fill of this cut was almost free of finds, with the exception of a large number of white paving stones which appear to have been pushed back into it at the moment of its destruction: perhaps these originally formed a foundation for walls in *pisé*. They would have been



Fig. 5. The northernmost Grubenhaus, section. The arrows indicate the *pisé* walls on which the wooden flooring was placed.

winery, excavated in 2009.⁹ The end of this phase appears to have come with the collapse of the portico, tiles from whose roof fill the holes left by the robbing of the *dolia*.

Sunken-floored buildings

A large rectangular cut was then made in the resulting surface, aligned with the remains of the portico, 2.25 by at least 3.8 m and .60 m deep (fig. 4). Its length cannot be determined, as it runs beyond the western section of the trench. Against the long sides of the cut, a clay packing .40 m high seems to have formed the support for a wooden floor, while a number of small postholes suggest wooden wall supports (fig. 5). The relationship between this building and the back-filled *dolium* cut in front of it is not entirely obvious: three postholes are found at the exterior of the cut, and suggest that the surface of the backfill, slightly lower than the surrounding ground level, formed a sort of porch in front of the structure.

removed from the courtyard surface at the time of the original construction and placed around the edges of the cut.

These two sunken-floored buildings deserve some comment. Probably dating towards the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the seventh, they are particularly substantial and early examples of the type¹⁰. There has been much debate as to its origins: originally associated by Italian scholars with the Lombard conquest of Italy, they are now known to have had a much wider distribution throughout Eastern Europe, and could have emerged through any number of channels, from returning auxiliaries to conquering armies¹¹. They do

⁹ FENTRESS, GOODSON AND MAIURO 2009.

¹⁰ A sunken-floored building of a similarly seventh-century date was excavated at Brescia (BROGIOLO 1993: 92-95) while another is claimed for Poggio Reale at Poggibonsi (VALENTI 1996).

¹¹ Sunken-floored buildings have in recent year been found particularly in the north of Italy, and indeed in most of Europe, with varying chronologies: For debate on the question of their origins BROGIOLO AND CHAVARRIA ARNAU 2008: 102-108, who argue forcibly for external origins; VALENTI 2004; for the argument that they are indigenous developments (and a lone example from

seem to signal a change in the nature of the occupation of the site, which may perhaps have comprised several such buildings within the area of the court, forming a village grouped around the monumental church, partially delimited by the ruins of the imperial buildings to the north. It is tempting to relate this phase to the various defensive structures for which we have evidence. One of these was seen on Site D: a long, shallow ditch, with traces of a palisade to the west of it, and, perhaps, the remains of defensive tower. This certainly dates around the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, as the pottery from its fill attests. Closer to the sunken-floored buildings a rough wall built of sizeable boulders abuts the northwest corner of the church. The compound it delimited was probably entered through a gate, subsequently blocked, between it and the facade of the imperial residence, which appears to have remained at least partially standing until the construction of the monastery. However, we cannot be certain of the date of this wall: the associated surface – the first to actually cover the white paving – contained a single fragment of unidentifiable glazed pottery.

The excavation of the cemetery and the surrounding area revealed a few graves that certainly post-dated the narthex and pre-dated the foundation of the monastery. These were particularly evident within in the area to the north of the narthex, where they were cut into surfaces subsequently covered by the construction layers of the monastery. The graves are later than the dividing wall, and stratigraphically later than the sunken-floored buildings, which seem to have gone out of use fairly quickly, without any significant build-up of stratigraphy around them: indeed, there is no late seventh- or eighth-century pottery from this part of the site, which may have been deserted at that time apart from occasional use of the church. The burials may be related to the earliest traces of reoccupation in the substructures in Site A, the casale, dated by early Forum Ware and globular amphorae to the first half of the ninth century¹².

Site FII¹³

The baths

The aim of this campaign was to complete the excavation of that part of the bath complex begun in 2008. The presence of an 'atrium' between the monumental corridor/stair and the round heated room was confirmed, and two sides of the stylobate for a portico revealed, with traces of a fine white mosaic pavement (fig. 6). The open space defined by the courtyard was also floored with white mosaic and its walls veneered with white marble, a scheme which recalls that of the stairs and risers of the imperial stair excavated in 2007¹⁴. Traces of a fistula running from the corner of the room to its centre suggest the presence of a central fountain, while a drain opening in the same corner must indicate the run-off from periodic cleaning. The walls of the stylobate are so high as to exclude passage from the porticos into the courtyard itself, and it is not impossible that the whole was filled with water running off from the fountain, to give a sort of shallow *nataio* or ornamental pool.



Fig. 6. The atrium of the bath complex, showing the trace of the fistula leading to the centre of the room (E. Fentress).

To the south, a corridor separates the atrium from a very large room, which appears to measure 8.9 m by 12.01 m or roughly 30 x 40 RF. This is perhaps best interpreted as the *frigidarium* with, perhaps, space for an *apodyterium* to the east, where another entrance to the corridor may have lain. The western side of the complex was occupied by the series of service rooms investigated last year: the beginning of a stair giving access from the south corridor was observed. Almost nothing remains of the decoration of the baths, but work on last year's material allowed the reconstruction of the sumptuous marble veneer of the corridor (fig. 7).

Puglia) ARTHUR, FIORENTINO AND LEO IMPERIALE 2008, In Bulgaria and Romania they are ubiquitous in all periods, as they are standard in all 'Slavic' cultural areas: see for example early examples found at Nicopolis ad Istrum: POULTER 1995: 168-74, fig.65.

¹² We are grateful to Alessandra Molinari and Giorgio Rascaglia for these identifications.

¹³ Marco Maiuro undertook the general direction of the site. The extensive examination of the Roman baths was carried out by Andrea Di Miceli with Raffaele Laino, while the excavation of the medieval stratigraphy within the atrium took place under the supervision of Darian Totten, with Roberta Ferritto, Federica Pollari and Ismini Miliareisis.

¹⁴ FENTRESS *et al.* 2007.

A chance find to the east of the corridor throws some light on the circulation within the area. A subsidence observed by Raffaele Laino proved to be a window onto a previously unknown corridor, parallel to the imperial corridor 3 m to the east. The vaulted roof was intact for 13.5 metres, although the depth of the fill precluded any more detailed exploration. Its restricted width seems to suggest that it was a service corridor, but we remain in the dark as to its origin and destination.

Abandonment and reoccupation

The earliest layer covering the surface of the atrium was a thick black loam with numerous fragments of Forum Ware, together with globular amphorae, confirming last year's findings in FI, and demonstrates a reoccupation in the first half of the ninth century. The lack of any substantial destruction deposit below this seems to suggest that the building was still standing to this period. The subsequent layer, however, consists of a massive deposit of destruction material, which must represent the definitive removal of the Roman structures. Occupation resumed immediately thereafter, with a series of middens containing domestic refuse. These were covered by the first of the series of huts, unfortunately truncated by the creation of the nineteenth-century garden. The earliest hut had a beaten-earth floor, which heat rendered pink in colour in some places, and, like all the subsequent buildings, a substantial hearth. A few post-holes relating to it were traced. A second floor covered the first, suggesting that oc-



Fig. 7. The marble veneer of the imperial corridor, reconstructed by D. Booms. To the right, the surround of the door into the atrium of the baths.



cupation continued for some time, indeed a series of structures was excavated in 2009. Subsequent buildings on this site were discussed in the previous interim report¹⁵. Postholes over the roof of the newly discovered service corridor suggest that the hut village extended at least that far east, and a small extension showed traces of further postholes beyond it. However, the presence of a masonry wall running east-west from the vault gives us our first evidence for stone building in the medieval village, clearly at the end of the sequence. Still further east a long stone wall 0.60 m wide is hardly substantial enough to have served as a fortification, but it may have delimited the inhabited area, and prevented the passage of animals (fig. 8). No pottery later than the thirteenth century has been recovered from this area, which may suggest that at least this part of the village was abandoned at that time.

Fig. 8. The 'boundary wall' of the medieval village: it was traced for over 60 m (E. Fentress).

¹⁵ FENTRESS, GOODSON AND MAIURO 2009.

Water Supply: the Cisterns and site E

The examination of the southernmost cistern, begun last year, was completed and it was recorded.¹⁶ A trench inside the northernmost chamber, cistern A, revealed that the cistern was approximately 4.80 m high, from the floor to the top of the vault, and built, like the winery, in *opus mixtum*. Along its north wall at least four vertical cuts in the masonry suggest the position of double *fistulae*, whose plaster negatives were found in the bottom of the trench. These probably served for the distribution of water from the complex to the rest of the estate, making cistern A its *castellum divisorium* and explaining its somewhat anomalous position with respect to the three east-west chambers to the south. The source of water for the supply of these cisterns was not identified with certainty, but the water table was likely tapped at the same height (12 m above the floor of cistern A) as a modern well located 345 m southwest of the cistern complex. The manner of moving this water to the cisterns and filling them is also unclear. According to M. Mazzolani, local farmers told of an aqueduct running to the west of the modern road in the general direction of the well, although she never found it¹⁷. The likelihood that there was an aqueduct somewhere in this vicinity is very high; it is suggested by a large mass of vegetation to the southwest of the cistern.

The survey of the large eastern set of cisterns was completed by Nick de Pace. From the masonry it appears that this was built later than the southern set, probably to serve a new bath complex elsewhere on the site, perhaps towards the end of the second century. It may also have served a building at site E, between sites B and D, which was investigated this year by Marco Maiuro with a group of students from the Liceo Dante Alighieri and interpreted as a fountain. The structure, known in the last century as the 'Fontana Romana', has now been badly defaced by the insertion of an electricity tower and the cutting of the access road, but its original form, with statue niches, is evident on early photographs (fig. 9). The excavations revealed that the floor originally stood at least a metre above the existing road. Under this ran a large drain, which probably channelled water down the hill to the east.



Fig. 9. The 'Fontana Romana', site E, in an early photograph.

¹⁶ The excavation was carried out by Ismini Miliarexis, with the help of Giorgio Rascaglia.

¹⁷ MAZZOLANI 1969: 138.



Fig. 10. Royal Air Force photograph 51_279_4123_193753_0, courtesy of the Aerofototeca.

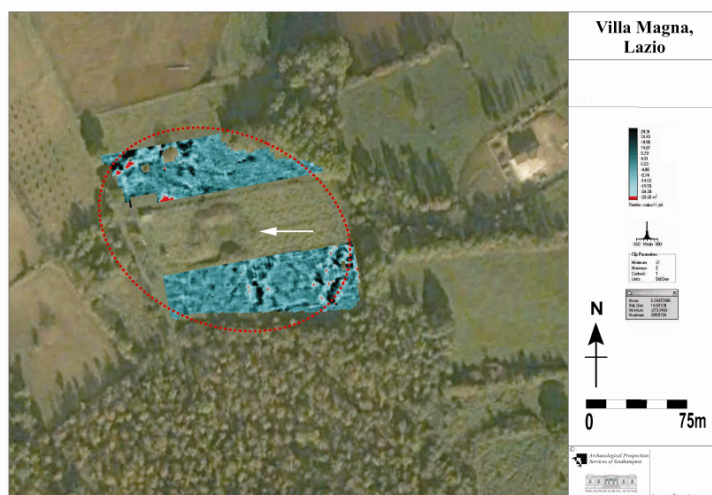


Fig. 11. Survey by magnetometry of the area of the presumed amphitheatre (Sophie Hay and Gregory Tucker).

A possible Amphitheatre

After the excavation season closed we acquired the complete collection of air photographs of the area in order to make a start on the larger landscape history for the publication. The RAF photograph, taken in 1943, did not add anything to our knowledge of the immediate area of the excavations, except for the placement of a small German camp at the northern end of the imperial residence¹⁸. However, some 500 m to the south of the casale we observed the unmistakable form of a Roman amphitheatre (fig. 10) some 120 m across its long dimension. Subsequent photographs show the area ploughed out and divided into three fields: it lies very near the probable source of the villa's aqueduct. On-site investigations showed that the middle field was now uncultivated, and characterized by a massive dump in the centre, some 5 m high and 30 m in diameter, evidently derived from field-clearance. A rapid geophysical survey of the two remaining fields was suggestive but inconclusive (fig. 11). The presence of an amphitheatre at the villa, especially on such a huge scale, is very surprising indeed, and remains to be confirmed by test trenching and, perhaps, further geophysical survey.

Laboratory post-excavation work

Physical anthropology

The excavation of the cemetery, completed this year, produced, in all, 499 Human Remains Units, many of them partial. These have now been catalogued, aged, sexed, and measured by a team led by Francesca Candilio, assisted by Rowan Brixey (pathologies) and Sam Cox (infants and juveniles), as well as a number of volunteers¹⁹. The skeletal material is now stored in Anagni in the hopes that funds will become available for the examination of stress markers. Erika Nitsch, as part of her doctoral research, has carried out stable isotope analysis of collagen from 59 adult ribs from Villamagna, and compared these to three Roman sites from central Italy (the catacomb of St. Calixtus, the Velia and Isola Sacra at Ostia²⁰, fig. 12). Individuals from these cemeteries generally have a higher isotope ¹⁵N than those at Villamagna. There is also a slight increase in isotope ¹³C for these three sites. This could be indicative of dietary differences between the Roman and Medieval period, with more high trophic level food (i.e. animal protein or fish) being consumed during the Roman period. However, this could also be the result of isolated environmental factors affecting Villamagna, which must be examined by local comparison, for instance, with the nearby Roman site of Casale del Dolce. Individuals from that site do not show the same characteristic isotopic pattern as the other three Roman sites. More data from faunal remains from Villamagna will be analysed to determine whether this difference is environmental, or dietary.

¹⁸ The German encampment visible on the photograph is remembered by older individuals, and one foxhole was excavated in the second year on the east side of trench BII.

¹⁹ Guido Guarato, Annarita Taraborrelli, Amanda James.

²⁰ CRAIG 2009, PROUSE 2004, RUTGERS 2009.

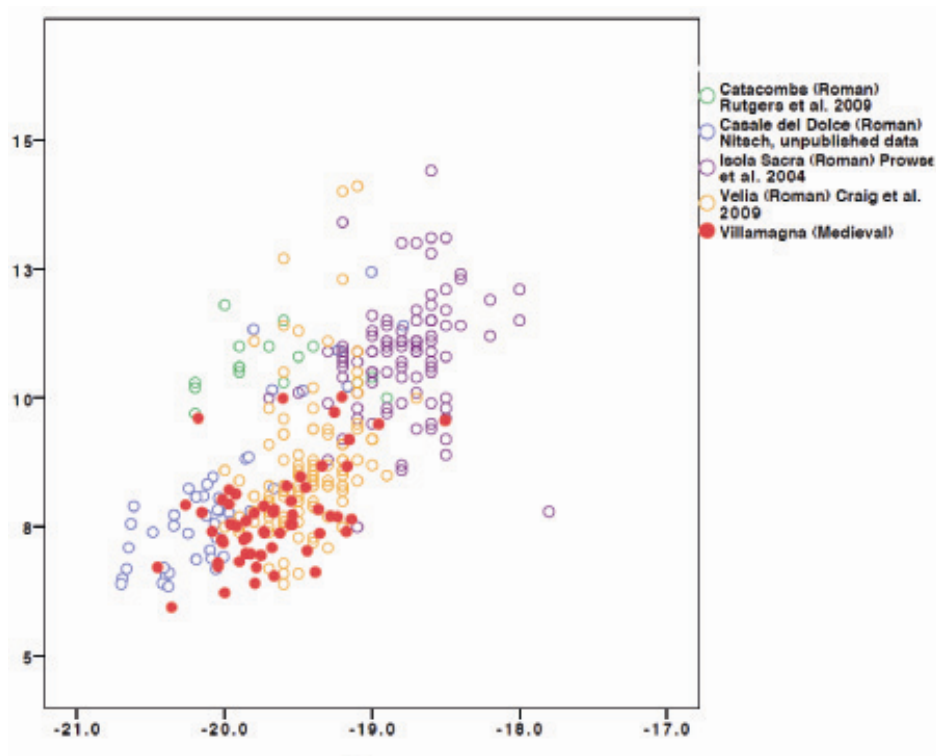


Fig. 12. Carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios for Villamagna and comparative sites.

Finds Processing

Tyler Franconi managed the finds and coordinated with the specialists studying them. The team studying the Roman pottery is headed by Mihaela Ciausescu, with studies of the lamps being carried out by Gioia Gaianigo, the African Red Slip Ware by Candace Rice, the italic *sigillata* by Paola Umbri, the late Roman pottery by Darian Totten, the Roman glazed wares by Ilaria De Luca and the medieval material by Giorgio Rascaglia under the supervision of Alessandra Molinari. These studies are nearly complete and will not require further reference to the pottery itself, which has been catalogued and stored by the Soprintendenza. The small finds, too, have been catalogued, by Beatrice Cernuta (the winery), Ryan Ricciardi (the finds from the slave barracks) Tyler Franconi (querns and agricultural implements) and Archidio Mariani (finds from the cemetery) and drawn by Erika Range, who was also responsible for the drawing of the glass and much of the pottery. After the season, the glass was studied by Birgitta Hoffman. The painted wall plaster was studied by Roberta Ferritto and Federica Pollari, Ann Kuttner completed her documentation of the sculpture from the villa, while Dirk Booms and Megan McNamee catalogued the Roman and Medieval architectural fragments from the villa and the monastery: finds this year added considerably to our knowledge of what appears to be an otherwise invisible eighth- or ninth-century phase in the decoration of the church. The environmental material, particularly the seeds, is under study by Kevin Williams. All of these catalogues will appear as a searchable web-based supplement to the publication of the project. Work towards the publication was also carried out by Nick de Pace, whose documentation of the church, reconstruction drawings of the area of the monastery in all its phases, and of the villa as a whole will be used both in the final publication and in smaller, more popular, accounts of the villa.

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