

***Pars fructuaria*. New Data from the Excavations of the Theodoric's Villa (Galeata FC – Italy): the Artisanal and Productive Plants of the Urban-Rustic Villas of the Romagna Apennines**

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The Late Republican Age Rustic Villa

Before the excavations begun in 1998 by the University of Bologna, the site of Galeata was known to the scientific community as the so-called “palace” of Theodoric. Archaeological investigations conducted in 1942 by the German Archaeological Institute of Rome in collaboration with the Superintendence of Antiquities in Bologna discovered this site.¹ The University of Bologna conducted archaeological excavations here for twenty years, and the University of Parma joined the project in 2016. The data collected during this time not only modified previous interpretations of Theodoric's residential complex, but also clarified the Roman phases of the site (fig. 1).²

The excavations in Galeata confirmed the presence of an urban-rustic villa, previous to Theodoric's one, which remained in activity from the end of the 1st century BC at least until the beginning of the 5th century AD. However, thanks to the excavations of 2015 and 2016, it was possible to recognize the existence of a Republican settlement prior to the urban-rustic villa;³ this was a rustic farmhouse or a villa, with a production atelier, dating from the 2nd century BC to the middle of the 1st century BC.⁴ In addition to a series of masonry structures found in the strata underlying the Roman Imperial remains, two recently discovered furnaces date to this phase, together with their attached accessory compartments (fig. 2).

The first furnace (US 3052) consists of a single-channel with a circular *praefurnium* located at the eastern side, and a baking chamber in the western half. In particular, some raw ceramic fragments attributable to olle,⁵ found in the filling of ashes and coals of the *praefurnium* and in the firing chamber, date the abandonment of the structure to the 2nd century BC. To confirm the proposed dating, a bronze asse emitted in the 2nd century BC came from the levels of trampling outside the furnace.

The position and orientation of the second furnace (US 3032) shows that it was built when the previous structure was still visible, perhaps because of the need to replace it with a larger construction. The furnace has a rectangular shape and a single-channel, with a semicircular *praefurnium* located to the east; the western half has a combustion chamber with a vitrified brick top that ended with a vertical wall. Only the part dug into the ground is preserved, while the upper part that constituted the cooking chamber has been lost. Inside, the filling layers preserved large lumps of vitrified clay with ceramic fragments transformed by heat (fig. 3). These come from the last production of the structure and perhaps are evidence for the sudden structural collapse of the

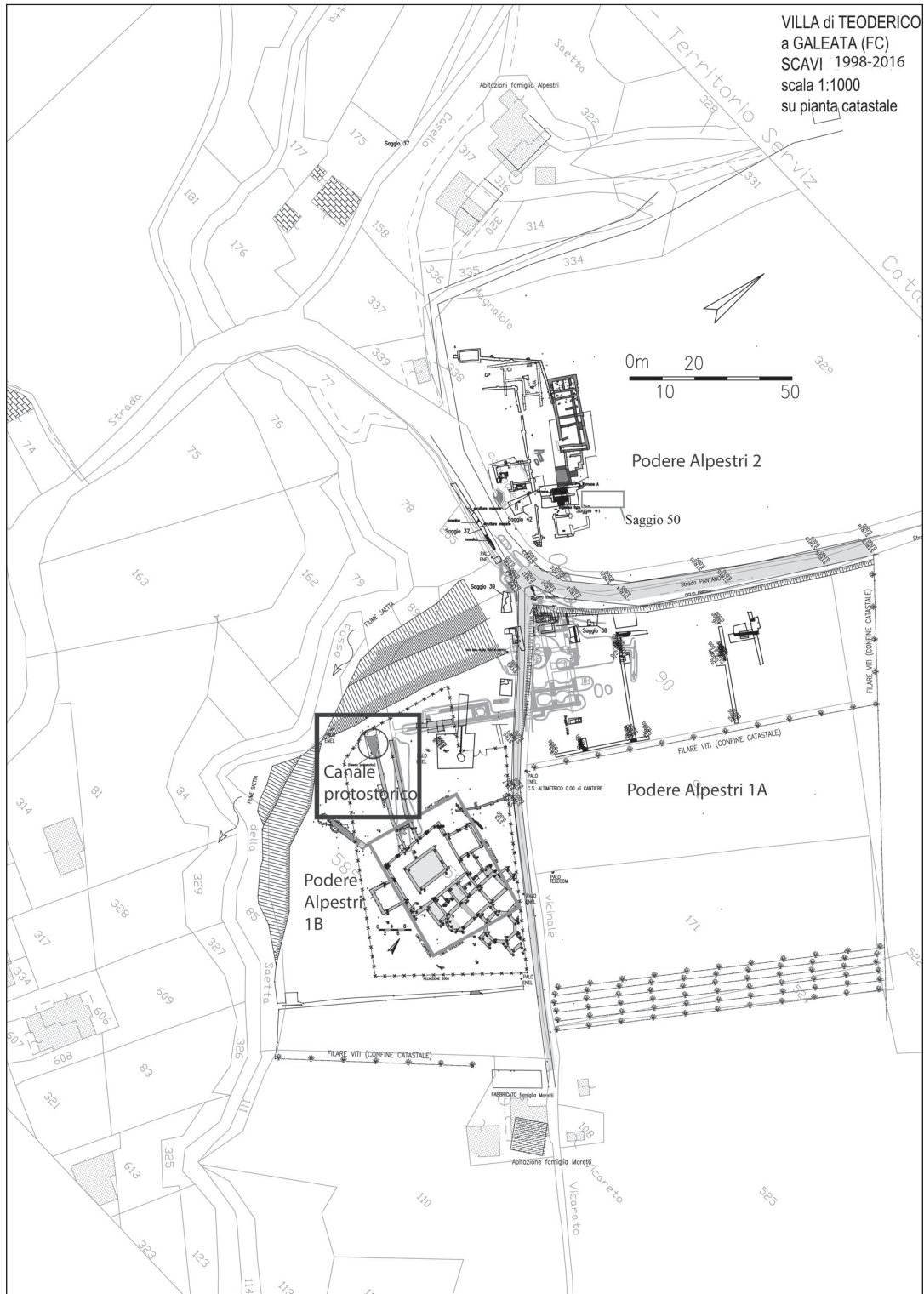


Fig. 1: Plan of the structures found in the archaeological site of the villa of Theodoric.

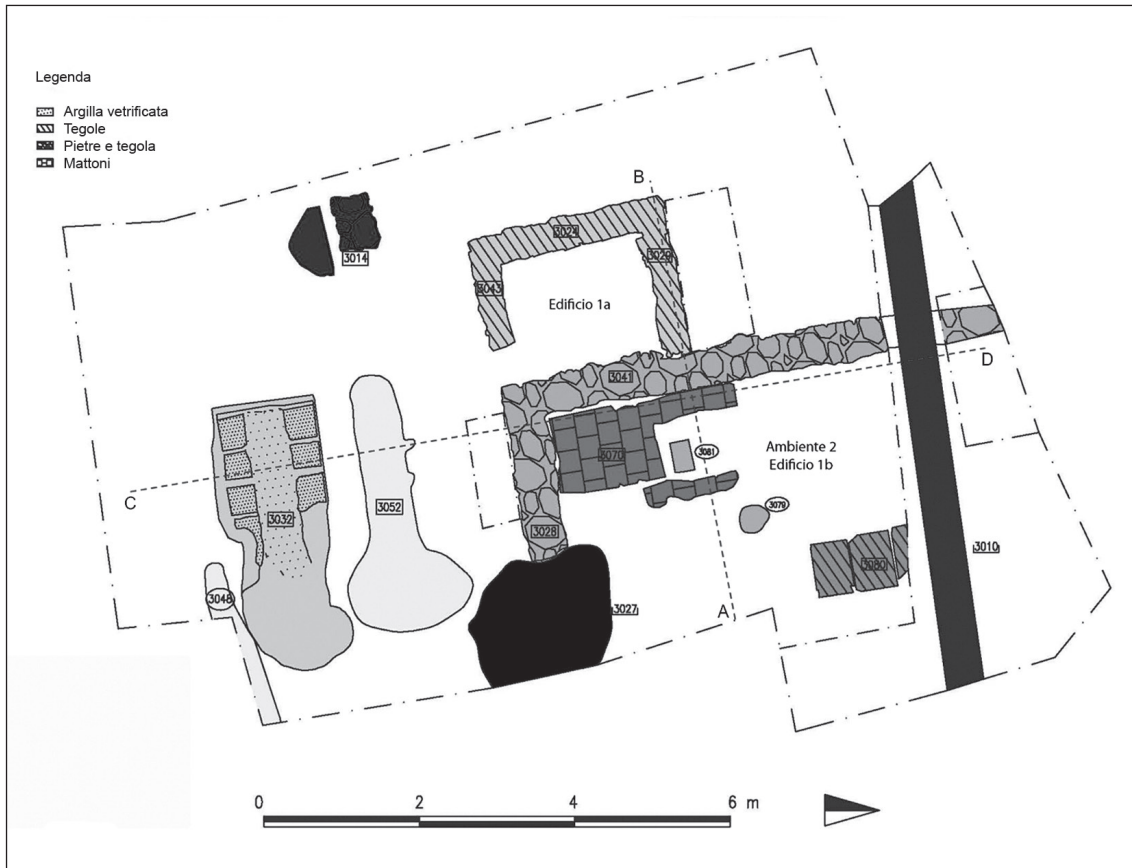


Fig. 2: Plan of the Roman structures found in 2015.

baking chamber and its consequent abandonment. Conglomerate blocks with ceramic fragments are being studied.⁶ However, from an initial analysis, it seems that common acroma ceramic vases were inside the conglomerate fragments. These were completely enclosed and had evident malformations due to their excessive exposure to heat.

In particular, it is important to draw attention to a fragment of a loop belonging to a jug and a very deformed fragment of the hem of an olla. Based on the materials found, the abandonment of the furnace occurred towards the middle of the 1st century BC or, within the third-quarter of the same century, but before the construction of the subsequent urban-rustic villa. According to the data from the excavation, it is probable that the second furnace and its annexes already were unused for some years when a new warehouse (edificio 1b) was built in the sector which belonged to the Augustan age urban-rustic plan. This new building partially covered an area that served as an accessory space (edificio 1a) for the second furnace.

The data produced by the excavation confirms the hypothesis of a rustic villa with a productive function, which is proved also by the vast extension of the settlement in the 2nd–1st century BC. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reconstruct most of the plan of



Fig. 3: Lump of vitrified clay with ceramic fragments transformed by heat.

the rustic settlement, because the constructions of the subsequent period covered the Republican structures almost entirely.

With regard to the ceramic materials from the late Republican age, it is interesting to note that the excavation of the two furnaces demonstrated the coexistence of non-wheel thrown ceramics, especially olle and dishes, with common pottery or black glazed pottery. This material came from absolutely sealed layers and is datable between the 2nd and the 1st century BC.

The new discoveries in Galeata suggest that the dating of raw ceramics deserves greater attention, as they are often attributed to the protohistoric age, especially in the case of pieces out of context. Some forms, for example the olla, seem to be produced with similar characteristics for a very long time, as demonstrated by the discoveries at Galeata. In the case of Galeata, raw ceramic is present consistently in a greater percentage compared to other types of ceramics until the end of the 2nd century BC, if not until the middle of the next century.

Considering this, the villa offers an image of the settlement of the population in the territory of Galeata between the end of 2nd century BC and the second half of the 1st century BC. This is at the stage when the town hall of *Mevaniola* develops. The recently dis-

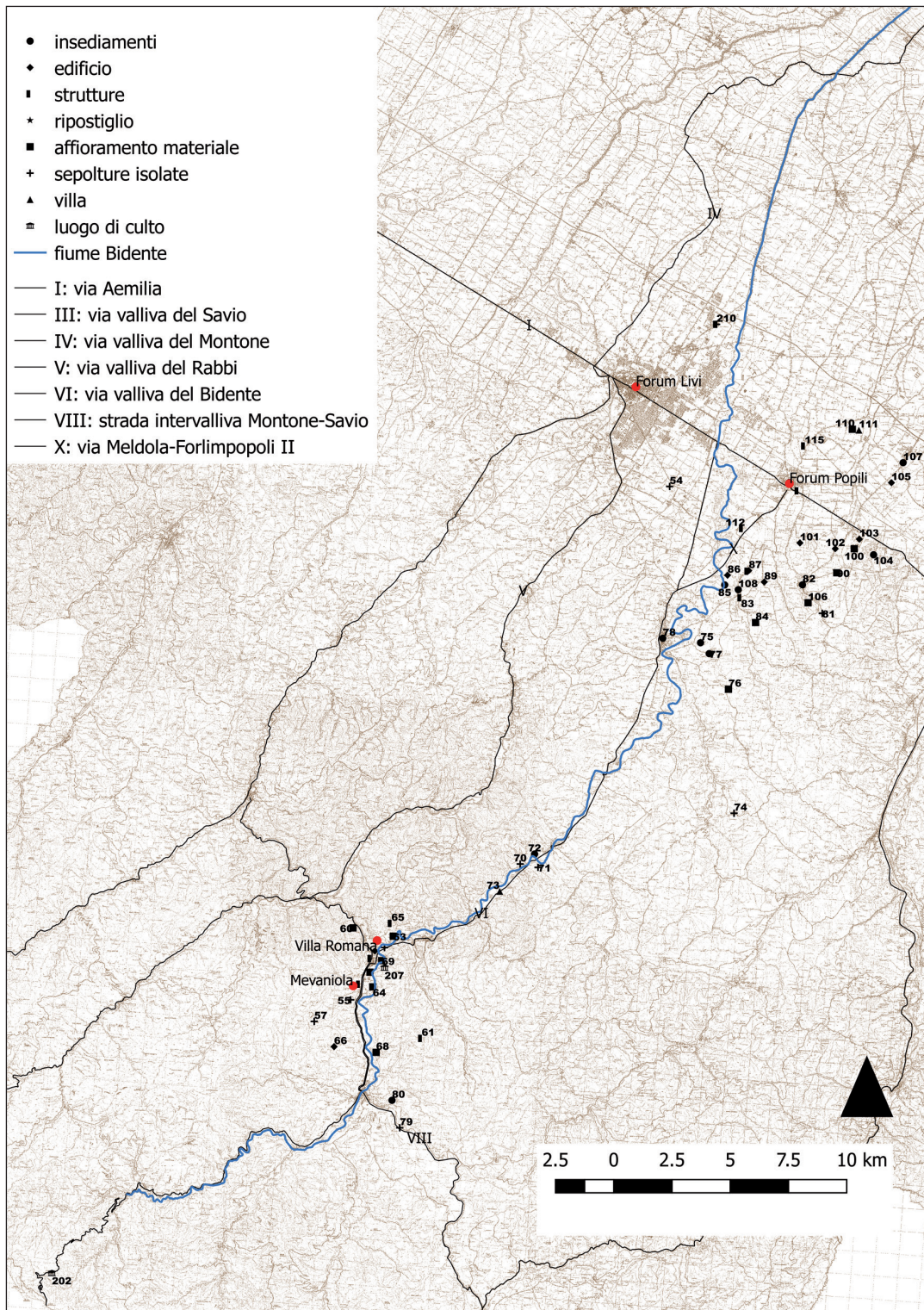


Fig. 4: Archaeological map and road systems of the Bidente valley in the Roman period.

covered rustic villa is attributed to the rural system of the *municipium*. Although little is known of the phases and distribution of the settlement before the establishment of the *municipium* of *Mevaniola*, it is clear that the rustic villa and the city are part of the same system. This is evident in their dislocation along the left bank of the river, which are placed according to the traditional distributive trend along the best exposed terraces of the valley to the detriment of the steepest and most inaccessible sectors.

Similar to Galeata's situation in the Bidente valley is the case of the nearby valleys of Savio and Rabbi: thanks to their Umbrian origin, the evolution of settlements and population in the three valleys follows similar criteria. These common Umbrian origins survived for a long time, as shown by the Augustan administrative reorganization, which attributed these valleys to the *Regio sexta Umbria*.⁷

The rustic villa of Galeata provides clues, therefore, to the history of the population of Umbrian matrix within the high Apennines in the early stages of the Romanization, which developed along the main axis of Roman penetration towards the north, the Adriatic coast, and Rimini.⁸

A complex that is geographically closer to the situation of Galeata comes from Fiumana in Val Rabbi, where there is a villa characterized by a series of environments with a clear distinction between the *Pars rustica* and the *Pars Urbana*. This complex seems to arise in the early 2nd century BC (given the presence of black glazed pottery), and survives at least until the 4th century AD.⁹

In the valley of the Bidente, there are about twenty-three sites of the Roman age identified to date: three are characterized by a pre-Roman occupation and five are attributable to the Republican age. With the exception of the urban settlements, they mostly consist of rural structures that exploited the territory between the 2nd century BC and the end of the 1st century BC. These rural structures are scattered in the territory, and sometimes are organized in *vici*, like Cusercoli, Meldola and Bertinoro. Thanks to the powerful road network documented for the Apennines of Romagna, the sites were probably linked to a mountain economy that had a productive dimension that was more than local. An example of this comes from the urban-rustic villa of Nespoli near Civitella di Romagna.¹⁰

The Republican phase of the rustic villa of Galeata includes the numerous rustic housing units built with poor building techniques and a layout traditionally open to the exterior, as well as the presence of artisan ateliers.¹¹ The territory was characterized by the vast presence of similar settlements, distributed in *vici* and *pagi* connected to the urban road.¹²

A. M.

The Urban-Rustic Villa of the Imperial Age (End of the 1st Century BC–Early 5th Century AD)

On the site where the imposing residence or *palatium* of the king Theodoric would be built, a large villa of the urban-rustic type was constructed in the last decades of the 1st century BC. Its buildings entirely covered the structures of the late Republican settlement. This is not a single or random case, but was a widespread phenomenon. Many of the large urban-rustic villas of the Augustan or high Imperial age, located in the Apennine valleys of Romagna, were built over a previous farm or rustic villa of the Republican age.

Based on the study of the ceramic finds related to the phases of abandonment of the Republican building, it is entirely plausible that at least the production atelier of the settlement was abandoned towards the middle of the 1st century BC, or in any case within the third quarter of the same century. It is also obvious, according to what emerged in the investigated sectors, that the buildings of the end of the 1st century AD completely replaced the previous ones. The construction of the Eastern warehouse demonstrates this,¹³ as it obliterated the last of the late Republican furnaces. Subsequently, the constructions of Theodoric erased most of the remains of the Augustan villa.¹⁴

The construction of the urban-rustic villa is dated with certainty to the beginning of the Augustan age, thanks to stratigraphic data.

On the basis of current knowledge, the new urban-rustic villa developed in a different way, extending over the whole area of Saetta and Poderina in Galeata. The size of the complex was undoubtedly remarkable, since only the *pars fructuaria* sector covered an area of at least 5,000 m². The production sector (fig. 5) is very important for interpreting the historical events of the entire villa. Although the last excavation campaigns gave us in-depth knowledge of the *pars fructuaria*,¹⁵ the same cannot be said of the urban sector of the villa. This part still is largely unknown and probably is covered by the most prestigious sector of the *palatium* of king Theodoric.

While knowledge of the architectural remains of the *pars urbana* of the Roman villa is still very limited, there are no doubts about its existence and the consequent attribution of the context to the type of urban-rustic villas. In fact, the Romagna area contains many of these settlements, both in the Bidente valley and in the twin valleys of the Rabbi and the Montone. In the Romagna Apennines, perhaps the most suitable comparison with the urban-rustic villa of Galeata is that of the villa of Fiumana.¹⁶ This is located in the valley of the Rabbi, in the Apennine area on the border with the Bidente valley.

Excavation only partially revealed the complex, which had a series of rooms and buildings distributed on terraces, similar to the *pars fructuaria* and the *pars urbana* of the villa. The structures found, attributable to the *pars urbana*, comprise a room with a four-sided plan, with corners ending in large circular niches, probably paved with mosaic and with a dome cover. It is plausible that in the building there was a nymphaeum or a thermal bath, as a testimony to the high quality of the complex.

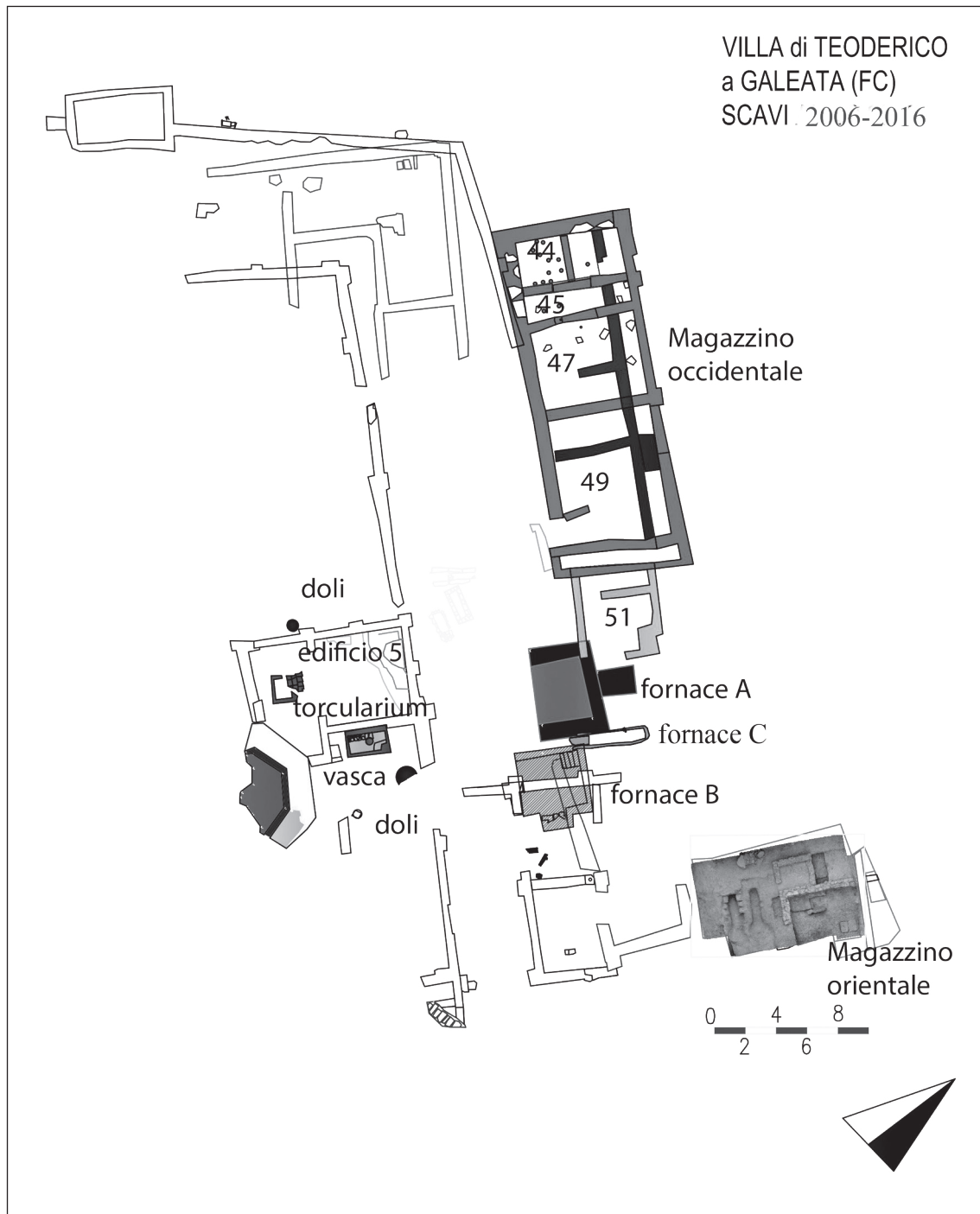


Fig. 5: The *pars fructuaria* of the urban-rustic villa.

Other villas of the urban-rustic type have been identified in the area of the Romagna Apennines. In the Bidente valley are the villas of Nespoli¹⁷ and Meldola;¹⁸ in the Montone valley are those of Rocca San Casciano, Località Calboli,¹⁹ and Podere Fiume,²⁰ and of Dovadola, in the locality of Fondi Vigula²¹ and San Varano; in the Lamone valley is the villa of Brisighella, in the locality of the Casale.²²

Returning to the case of Galeata, two furnaces (furnace A and furnace B) were built to produce, at least in part, the brick material necessary for the construction of the urban-rustic villa and perhaps also the large containers (the *dolia* and amphorae), used in the productive area of the complex.²³ These furnaces were of a considerable size, and were located in the middle belt of the Podere Alpestri 2, coincident with the central sector of the ancient *pars rustica* and *fructuaria*. Both furnaces were found in an excellent state of preservation, with the walls of the cooking chamber and the perforated top still intact.²⁴ According to the Cuomo di Caprio classification, they are similar to typology II/b,²⁵ characterized by a rectangular combustion chamber²⁶ and central corridor (fig. 6).

Over time, the building of the urban parts of the villa coincided with the short life of the two furnaces, as did the various elements of the *pars rustica* and *fructuaria*. The



Fig. 6: The furnace A, seen from the south.

destruction of the two furnaces mentioned above and, probably, of others not yet identified, allowed construction to continue of the vast productive sector. The *pars rustica* and *fructuaria* of the villa included, in the Podere Alpestri 2, a central compartment focused on the processing of grapes, with a subdivision of the rooms in *torcularia*, *doliaria*, and wine cells. The presence of tanks for processing grapes and *doli* leaves no doubt about their function (fig. 7). The north-west and north-eastern sectors contained the warehouses.

The framework that emerges from the partial excavation of the production pavilion of the Roman complex is that of a rural villa, the central nucleus of a large *fundus*. Its economy seems to be centered on the production of wine and the manufacture of tableware, amphorae, and bricks for sale and trade on a large scale and to meet the needs of the small community that lived within the villa. Among other things, historical sources²⁷ note that Romagna was an area of great wine production between the 1st and the 3rd centuries AD.²⁸



Fig. 7: A compartment of the *pars fructuaria* of the villa. We identified a tank for processing wine and the remains of a *dolium*, on the right.

These data, together with the discovery of various fragments of wine amphorae and grape residues recognized among the many archaeobotanical remains collected,²⁹ offer strong clues as to the specialization of the villa. This evidence is even more suggestive than the typological analysis of the tanks found, that could be used in a similar way both for the processing of the wine and oil.

According to the archaeological documentation concerning the productive sector, the complex prospered, without interruption, from the Augustan age until the middle years of the 3rd century. At this time, the entire *pars fructuaria* of the villa underwent the same fate: the complete and definitive destruction of all its structures, probably due to a vast fire.³⁰

Traces of a violent fire are present throughout the area; the warehouses (fig. 8),³¹ wine cells, and the tanks have clear traces of ash, coal, and burned wood. Despite having limited data, due to the lack of excavation at the urban parts of the Roman villa, it is probable that at least the most prestigious sector of the house continued to exist. A small burial ground developed among the ruins of the old *pars fructuaria*.³² Continuity of life



Fig. 8: Some rooms in the western warehouse, with evident traces of a fire.

in the villa, even with a drastic downsizing of its productive capacities, could explain the subsequent, integral requalification of the entire *pars fructuaria*; this is datable, on stratigraphic data, to the beginning of the 5th century AD.

The restructuring of the entire productive sector of the Roman villa indicates a radical change in its production system. The available data are still partial, but in some areas of the renewed *pars rustica* it is possible to recognize stables or shelters for livestock instead of the earlier wine cells, warehouses, and furnaces. This confirms the exhaustion of a productive activity based on vine processing and probably on the cultivation of cereals, with instead the emergence of a new economy centered perhaps, at least in part, on the growing, processing, and production of timber.

R. V.

Notes

¹ Fuchs 1942, 259–277; Krischen 1943, 459–472; Jacopi 1943, 204–212. For a summary of the results of the excavations by the University of Bologna on the site of the villa of Teoderico in Galeata, see Villicich 2014, 241–250.

² Excavations at the site of the villa of Teoderico in Galeata were conducted from 1998 to 2016 by the University of Bologna, directed by Prof. Sandro De Maria and co-directed, regarding the field activity, by Riccardo Villicich. Alessia Morigi of the University of Parma joined from 2016. From 2018 the excavation was in concession to the University of Parma and was directed by Alessia Morigi, who shares the scientific responsibility with Riccardo Villicich. For a summary of the results of the excavations by the University of Parma on the site of the villa of Teoderico in Galeata, see Morigi – Villicich 2017; Morigi – Villicich 2018, 401–446; Villicich et al. 2019, 267–288; Morigi – Villicich 2019a; Morigi – Villicich 2019b, 169–192; Morigi – Villicich 2020, 1–26; Bocchia et al. 2021, 129–155; Bersani – Saviane 2021, 219–240; Rinaldi – Gregori 2021, 241–258; Milanesi 2021, 259–304; Gamberini 2021, 305–316; Casacci 2021, 317–366; Morigi – Villicich 2021, 79–128; Porta 2021, 471–498; Morigi – Villicich forthcoming a; Morigi – Villicich forthcoming b.

³ The sporadic presence of structures and materials dating back to the late Republican age already was detected during previous excavation campaigns: above all, these were in the lower levels, under the Villa Teodoriana and the villa of the Imperial age. However, the few data acquired on these phases, until the excavations of 2015, never allowed the excavators to frame the habitation corresponding to that period in an effective way.

⁴ The results of the excavation campaigns in 2015–2016 are published in Morigi – Villicich 2017.

⁵ Inv. 290–293.

⁶ The ceramic materials found in the excavation campaigns of 2015–2016 are being studied by Anna Gamberini. The author thanks her for the advances.

⁷ Plin. *nat.* III, 114.

⁸ Brizzi 1995, 95–109; Williams 2001, 91–101; Ravara Montebelli, 2006.

- ⁹ Prati 1982, 313; Prati 2000, 484; Battelli 2004, 103; Assorati et al. 2006, 117 f.; Tarroni 2012–2013, 116–128.
- ¹⁰ Pippo 2015–2016, BI CVR 5.
- ¹¹ Giordani et al. 1994; Ortalli 1996; Ortalli et al. 2000; On settlement typologies, see Ortalli 1994.
- ¹² Sabattini 1974, 295–301; Morelli 1995, 9–17.
- ¹³ Morigi – Villicich 2017, 33–53. In this regard, see, below, the contribution of Elia Rinaldi.
- ¹⁴ Villicich 2014, 241–250.
- ¹⁵ Morigi – Villicich 2017.
- ¹⁶ On the villa of Fiumana, see Bermond Montanari 1971, 51–73.
- ¹⁷ Maioli 1990, 272.
- ¹⁸ Maioli 1990, 270 f.
- ¹⁹ Tarroni 2012–2013, 149.
- ²⁰ Tarroni 2012–2013, 149.
- ²¹ Tarroni 2012–2013.
- ²² For all these villas, see Morigi – Villicich 2017, 106–108.
- ²³ A third furnace, furnace C, is later than the first two.
- ²⁴ The western-most furnace (furnace A) was discovered in 2012, while the one immediately to the East (furnace B) was found in 2013. See Morigi – Villicich 2017, 35–41; Villicich 2012, 5.
- ²⁵ Cuomo di Caprio 1971, 371–463.
- ²⁶ Sometimes even square or trapezoidal.
- ²⁷ Strab. V, 1, 6–7, 213; Tac. *Hist.* III, 8.
- ²⁸ For the cultivation of the vine, the most famous areas are those of *Faventia*, *Caesena*, and *Forum Popili*. Tchernia 1986, 159–169.
- ²⁹ Villicich 2009, 184–192.
- ³⁰ Morigi – Villicich 2017, 67–72; Villicich 2012, 7.
- ³¹ On the Western warehouse, destroyed by a fire in the mid-third century, see Morigi – Villicich 2017, 67–82 and Villicich et al. 2015, 75–87.
- ³² Morigi – Villicich 2017, 69–71.

Image Creditis

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