Archaeology and landscape in central Italy: papers in memory of John A. Lloyd

Edited by Gary Lock and Amalia Faustoferri

Archeologia e territorio nell’Italia centrale: in ricordo di John A. Lloyd

A cura di Gary Lock e Amalia Faustoferri

Ministero per i Beni e le Attivita Culturali,
Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell’Abruzzo

University of Oxford School of Archaeology
Monograph 69

Cinzia Morelli, Andrea Carbonara, Viviana Forte, Rosalba Giudice and Paola Manacorda

ABSTRACT

This is a preliminary report on excavations between 2000 and 2002 carried out prior to large commercial development in the area crossed by the ancient Via Portuensis to the west of Rome, strategically important in antiquity for the control of salt and the River Tiber. A series of excavated structures are described, both residential and workshops including kilns. A large amount of pottery and coin evidence shows that this landscape was heavily occupied during the mid-Republican period, especially in the 3rd century BC, but was then abandoned probably due to flooding. There was smaller scale re-occupation in the late 2nd century AD.


SOMMARIO

Questa è una relazione preliminare sugli scavi effettuati tra il 2000 ed il 2002 in previsione dell’uso a scopi commerciali dell’area ad ovest di Roma attraversata dall’antica Via Portuensis e strategicamente importante sin da epoche remote per il controllo delle saline e del fiume Tevere. Vengono descritti i risultati degli scavi, che hanno messo in luce una serie di strutture di tipo sia residenziale che produttivo, ivi comprese alcune fornaci. Una grande quantità di ceramica e monete dimostra che questo territorio era densamente occupato in epoca medio-repubblicana, in particolare nel III sec. a.C., e fu poi abbandonato a causa probabilmente di inondazioni. Nel tardo II sec. d.C. si registra poi una rioccupazione dell’area, ma in scala ridotta.
INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICAL AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

Cinzia Morelli

The new archaeological evidence presented here concerns the territory crossed by the ancient Via Portuensis located to the west of Rome close to Fiumicino, Figure 1. In the last ten years, a series of excavations, directed by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Ostia, has concentrated on this area. These are in advance of large commercial development, in particular the Autoporto-Commercity complex built in the 1990s at Quartaccio and the adjacent area of the Nuova Fiera di Roma, and to industrial and residential building, to the west of the Nuova Fiera di Roma work prior to the Piano Particolareggiato I.23 is underway. Thus it has been possible to extensively investigate vast portions of the landscape either side of the modern Via Portuense, between the River Tiber and the Rome to Fiumicino motorway. Much excavation is still in progress at the time of writing and this paper is a preliminary report on the years 2000 to 2002 only, the work was directed by Dr C. Morelli with the invaluable help of her assistant P. Da Roit.

The geology of the area is typical of the Tiber delta plain. Above the characteristic layers of a marshy environment, a layer of peat radiocarbon dated to 4280±60 BP, and an overlying layer of grey-blue silt containing fresh-water gastropods, is a layer of silty sand, yellowish in colour and the result of the highly dynamic alluvial action of the Tiber. All of the archaeological structures excavated lie above this last layer with the exception of the workshop in area no. 5, see below, which rests directly on the grey-blue silt and, unsurprisingly, is the oldest structure identified to date. The occupation levels of the Roman period were obliterated by an enormous low energy alluvial event characterised by a layer of silt that varies in colour from brown to dark grey. Above this are successive alluvial layers, and then those relating to the reclamation of the area, datable to the period after the unification of Italy (Biglieri 1896; Lugli and Filibeck 1935: 267; Ministero Agricoltura e Foreste 1947: 181-185; Parisi Presicce and Villetti 1998).

The excavations are located on the right bank of the Tiber, Figure 2, an area which in antiquity was delimited by the course of the River Galeria to the east and the Tyrrhenian sea to the west and corresponds to the area in which the ports of Claudius and Trajan were developed in the Imperial period. Controlled by the Etruscans and belonging to the city of Veii, this territory was the focus of long disputes between the Veientines and the Romans. According to the Livian tradition, the Romans, under king Ancus Marcius, conquered the Silva Maestia situated on the coast near the Tiber and also belonging to Veii. Therefore, according to Livy, in the regal period Rome already controlled the lower course of the Tiber at whose mouth was founded, again according to tradition, the city of Ostia although the debate concerning its foundation and the nature and location of the Archaic settlement is ongoing (Martin 1996; Zevi 1996; 2001a; 2002).

In antiquity this territory was of strategic importance, both because it was partly formed by the Etruscan coastal salt marshes, and because its possession permitted the control of the principal route for the transport of salt and other goods towards the
interior, namely the river Tiber. The presence of the salt marshes, located on the right bank of the river (Lanciani 1888), fed by a large lake of brackish water behind the dunes, guarantied the control of the salt trade, a commodity of primary importance, indispensable above all for the conservation of foodstuffs (Camporeale 1997; Giovannini 2001). The monopoly of this trade was not only an important source of wealth but also an instrument of power over the populations of the interior, in particular the Sabines, who depended on this salt for their sustenance (ibid: 38). It is not a co-incidence that the bitter conflicts between Veii, to whom this territory belonged, and Rome are considered by some scholars as a ‘salt war’ (Giovannini 1985; Camporeale 1997). In fact, after the conquest of Veii by Camillus in 395 BC, as recounted by Livy\(^3\), the Etruscans attempted three times, in 390, 356 and 353 BC, to regain the salt marshes but were driven back each time. After 353 BC, the Etruscan salt marshes, together with those of Ostia, were used by the Romans for the entire Imperial period, with the result that the area took the name of Campus Salinarum Romanarum\(^4\).
Figure 2. The ager portuensis with the location of archaeological features: A = Aqueduct of Portus; P = Via Portuensis antica; 1–6 = Areas of archaeological investigation described in this paper. (Carta Tecnica Regionale, Fogli 373160, 374130, 386040).

The complete conquest of the ager portuensis by the Romans and its pacification seems, therefore, to coincide with the conquest of Veii and the foundation of the castrum of Ostia (Zevi 2001b: 12, 18 n. 16). The foundation of Ostia confirmed definitive control of the mouth of the Tiber by the Romans and, therefore, of the Mediterranean commerce that had contributed to the greatness of Veii in the preceding period (Camporeale 1997: 198; Zevi 2001a: 5–6; Zevi 2002: 19–24). The connection between Rome and the salt marshes was continued by an extremely ancient road route, the Via Campana, which ran along the right bank of the Tiber following its course (Ashby 1927: 19–31, 219; Platten and Ashby 1929: 561; Nibby 1837: 598–601; Tomassetti 1900: 5–7, 19, 25–29; Tomassetti 1977: 303; Scheid 1976; Radke 1981: 108–110; Petriaggi 1991: 75; Petriaggi et al. 1995: 361; Petriaggi et al. 2001: 145). This road constituted a segment of the important commercial axis that continued to the north west of Rome in the Via Salaria along which the salt reached the populations of the interior.

The construction of the Claudian port, located c. 2 km to the north of the mouth of the Tiber and begun in AD 42 and completed by Nero, and the later Port of Trajan (Mannucci 1992; Zevi 2000; Giuliani 2001; Verduchi 2001) made clear the inadequacy of the Via Campana. This road was therefore supplemented from the 1st century AD by a new road, the Via Portuensis, which connected Rome to the great new port from which it took its name (Nibby 1827: 7–11, 18, 22–29, 56, 90; Tomassetti 1900: 5–7, 11, 19, 25, 33, 49; Tomassetti 1977: 303–496; Ashby 1927: 219, 227; Platten and Ashby 1929: 566; Scheid 1976; Radke 1981: 110; Petriaggi 1991; Petriaggi et al. 2001). The course of the road, which diverged from the Via Campana a little outside the
Aurelian wall, ran entirely along the right bank of the Tiber but with a more rectilinear course than Via Campana, which it rejoins at Ponte Galeria near the 11th milestone. Regarding the area of interest here, located to the west of the modern settlement of Ponte Galeria the route of the Via Portuensis has been identified at several locations, it runs at some distance from the Tiber, to the north of the modern Via Portuense, and then turns southwards crossing the course of the modern road at about the 17 km marker. From this point onwards, the ancient Via Portuensis runs between the modern road and the Tiber, reaching the walls of the city of Portus at Stalla Buoi (Pellegrino and Bedello Tata 1985). The road runs on a causeway with walls of opus quadratum in tufa or opus reticolatum, supported in the latter case by external buttresses, suggesting that it crossed areas liable to become marshy owing to the impermeability of the clay soil and to the periodic flooding of the Tiber.

In the ancient landscape another very obvious element must have been the aqueduct that provided the water supply for the city of Portus and the imperial port from the natural springs that still exist today beside the hill of Casale della Chiavichetta, just to the east of Rio Galeria. From here, having crossed the Rio Galeria, the aqueduct ran in an almost straight line towards Portus, flanking the Via Portuensis for some of its length. It has been identified in Quartaccio (Petriaggi et al., 1995: 369–372) and in Longarina, and is currently being excavated in the area of the Nuova Fiera di Roma. The Aqueduct was probably already built by the Claudian period and heavily rebuilt in the Trajanic period and its base is still preserved today, constructed in a single concrete casting with a facing in opus mixtum. In contrast, the raised sections, represented now only by collapsed material, were piers supporting brick-faced arches above which was the channel (Nibby 1827: 25–26, 89–90; Tomassetti 1977: 437).

At least two cisterns found in the 1990s were connected to the aqueduct, one in Quartaccio (Petriaggi et al. 1995: 370–372), and another at about 20 km along the Via Portuense adjacent to the modern carriageway which is rectangular with internal pilasters and external buttresses but as yet unpublished. These may have served as points for access to water and supplied a territory that, despite being subjected to the flooding of the Tiber and characterised by a geological substratum of impermeable silt and clay, was inhabited from at least the mid Republican period.

The evidence for the ancient use of the area of Portus is completed by the concentration of tombs found in the last ten years and related to both the communications network and to recently identified settlements. In addition to the large mausoleum of the late Republican period brought to light in the 1990s in the flood bed of the Tiber at Quartaccio (Vittori and Vori 1999; Petriaggi et al. 1995: 364, 366–367), there are simpler tombs containing cremations and inhumations, at times covered with roof tiles, or within amphorae, datable mostly to the mid Republican period.

Within this wider framework which in antiquity was etched on the landscape through the infrastructure of roads and ports, are located a series of recent archaeological discoveries as a result of extensive excavation campaigns, the preliminary results of which are presented here.
AREA 1 (FIGURE 2)

Andrea Carbonara

The building exposed here is oriented north-south and has a more or less rectangular plan divided into three different sized rooms built in *opus quadratum* around a larger central L-shaped space, Figure 3. A fifth room abuts the outside of the northern wall, this was constructed with dry-stone walls in which fragments of roof and coping tiles, and ceramics were reused and is very similar to another building identified in the 1990s a little to the south-east (Petriaggi et al. 1995: 363–364). The *opus quadratum* comprises tufa blocks of various dimensions, at least two about 2m long, some showing holes and sockets for transportation and *ferrei forcipes* settings, only the first two courses survive. Due to the poor state of preservation, and the complete absence of collapsed material, it is difficult to reconstruct the upper levels of the walls and the roofing of the rooms although there is no evidence for a wooden framework typical of this period and the small amount of roof tiles suggests not all of the rooms were roofed. Some small fragments of red-painted plaster indicate wall covering. The evidence for the interior floors is also scanty although they were probably beaten, set directly on the natural soil and composed of chips of tufa mixed with terracotta and ceramic fragments. The few areas preserved, however, do demonstrate a certain solidity and robustness. Outside the building a less compact and less substantial beaten floor has been identified, along the external walls and used as a pavement.

![Figure 3. The building excavated in Area 1.](image)
Also outside the building, together with scattered ceramic material, three pits were found, the first situated at the south-west corner of the building. It was filled with a clayey soil in which fragments of roof tiles and ceramic material, black-gloss ware, coarse ware and amphioreae, were mixed together and the remains of a leucitic trachyte grindstone. The second pit, at the north-east corner of the building, also contained fragments of roofing and coping tiles, and pottery, in addition to numerous fragments of dolia and a fragmentary amphora of Greco-Italic type. Both pits, which cut through the yellowish mud-sand layer, also disturbed preserved activity surfaces. The material found in the third pit, outside the north wall, deserves special attention. It had an elongated rectangular form, with sides sloping inwards, rounded corners and a base with an undulating surface and may have been an enlarged natural hollow used as a dump for ceramic material at the abandonment of the building. Its fill contained abundant ceramic material of particularly high quality, black-gloss ware, cups, lamps, a skyphos, utilitarian pottery and coarse ware, jars, bowls, cups, bowl and other lids, pans, perforated jars, single-handled jugs and cups, loom weights of rectangular or disc form (Celuzza 1985: 69, pl.17, n.2), large containers, basins and dolia and numerous amphorae of Greco-Italic type, in addition to clay askoi and a little altar of the 'hourglass' type (Roma Medio Repubblicana 1973: 80, n.56, pl.19). Noteworthy, finally, are some fragments of one or more black-gloss central-boss paterae of Calene production with stamped decoration (Morel 1981: type 2170), and at least two cup bases, again black-gloss ware, with letters scratched on the external walls.

From an initial and superficial analysis of the ceramic material it is possible to date the settlement to the mid-Republican period, more precisely the end of the 4th to the 3rd century BC, this is also supported by the wall construction technique and other finds. The poor state of preservation of the building makes it difficult to conjecture its function but some evidence, such as its lay-out, the presence of painted plaster, some cores of molten lead suggesting craft activity, and its proximity to another rural building, make it likely that it was for habitation.

AREA 2 (FIGURE 2)

Paola Manacorda

The building excavated in this area comprises two separate non-communicating rooms, orientated northwest to southeast and probably representing two different phases of occupation. The southern room, Room I measuring 5 x 7.5m, is delimited by blocks of tufa, of which a single course is preserved. Access was from the western side, where one of the two doorposts which marked the entrance remains, there are no traces of the flooring. Within the room, four amphorae were found set into the ground arranged along the western side, one of which was in line with the entrance. It is unlikely that these were used as silos and possible that they served as a rudimentary system for reducing humidity within the structure, made necessary owing to the sandy, silty nature of the ground. Outside Room I, and concentrated close to the walls, was
an activity surface consisting of a beaten earth floor containing fragments of ceramics and amphorae. In a second phase Room II was added to the northern side of Room I, measuring 3.66 x 4.11m. Part of the east and west walls have survived composed of small bedding blocks of reused tufa, laid in a rather disorganised fashion without mortar. Room II was entered from the eastern side and only a small part of the original floor survives against the eastern wall and composed of fragments of roof tiles.

To the south of these two rooms, at a distance of 10.9 m and 12.2m respectively, there is a small rectangular structure, 1.06 x 1.3m, of reused tufa surrounded by a beaten earth floor. The floor is better defined than that around Room I and its constituents, mainly bricks and roof tiles, are of larger dimensions including a tile fragment stamped VICONI and dated to between AD 193 and 212 (Steinby 1977: n.1100, 322). The surface of the floor has small drainage channels oriented north-south, and it also contains reused cubilia of tufa suggesting that it is contemporary with the building of Room II and, therefore, dated to the second phase of the settlement.

The material recovered during the excavation confirms the two phases. The first is dated to between the 3rd and the beginning of the 1st centuries BC by numerous fragments of black gloss ware, including a small patera (Morel 1981: type 2144 a1) and coins including two denarii datable to the 2nd century BC (Crawford 1974: n.250 and n.254) and an as of 90 BC (ibid: n.342/7b). The second phase can be dated to the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd century AD by the tile stamp mentioned above. The break in continuity between the two phases is supported by the lack of any material from that period and the complex, therefore, was first built in the mid-Republican period and abandoned at the beginning of the 1st century BC, perhaps as a result of a flood, evidence for which was found below the earth floor of the second phase. It was not until the end of the 2nd century AD that limited re-occupation of the site occurred.

AREA 3 (FIGURE 2)

Paola Manacorda

The work in this area is still in progress at the time of writing although so far a room has been identified, measuring 4.5m square and delimited by corner pilasters made from tufa blocks 0.6 x 0.65m in section, Figure 4. One course of the walls survives, also in squared tufa blocks with occasional gaps filled with small blocks of tufa and fragments of brick. Another room is suggested to the south by two fragments of parallel walls built in small blocks and abutting the first room.

Floor levels from the first phase of occupation have yet to be identified although the second phase has an extensive beaten floor with brick fragments resting on a layer of flood silt, 8 to 12cm thick that covered the structures of the first phase. This deposit filled the two rooms and partly obliterated their external walls, it also extended outside the rooms and covered over three small channels made from fragments of ridge tiles and amphorae.
The material from this area confirms the two phases of occupation separated by a long period of abandonment as in Area 2, together with evidence of a flood probably responsible for the ending of Phase 1. Coins datable to the 3rd century BC have been found, including one from a Campanian mint which is datable to 275–250 BC, as well as coins of the period between the end of the 2nd and the 4th centuries AD, including one of AD 190 (Mattingly and Sydenham 1930: 431, n.571) and two bronze coins of the 'felicitum temporum reparatio' type, datable to AD 348–361. As in Area 2 then, there is clear indication of abandonment due to flooding and much later re-occupation which involved the creation of extensive flooring to make the area useable.

AREA 4 (FIGURE 2)

Viviana Forte
At the time of writing, systematic excavation of this area had not begun so this initial summary is based on exposing the top levels of the archaeology only. A thick concentration of fragments of roof tiles, including ridge tiles, and ceramics has been chaotically deposited in varying densities, and in part it covers two orthogonal structures formed by the alignment of roughly squared tufa blocks, Figure 5. These structures seem to constitute the southern and western limits of a large area filled in with fragments of roof and ridge tiles, including numerous examples of intact roof tiles. This concentration reduces in density towards the east where a small room delimited by little blocks of tufa mortared together, has been identified. Preserved within the room is a fragment of
flooring with a beaten surface including brick fragments, the entrance into the room appears to be marked out by two roof tiles laid one over the other.

In the south-eastern area, a rectangular basin was found measuring 3 x 2.40m although the northern and western sides were broken in antiquity. It was bounded by small walls of river pebbles set in place without mortar, a few centimetres of which were preserved in elevation. Around the basin, and surviving in places, is a beaten pavement of brick fragments with a small drainage channel on the eastern side built in the same technique.

The material from the uppermost levels of the building seems to indicate a mid-Republican date. Noteworthy amongst the finds is a lead steelyard weight in the form of an amphora weighing one pound (Romualdi 1989: n.201, 161), it is very similar to one found in Area 2.

AREA 5 (FIGURE 2)

Rosalba Giudice

In this area, a small basin (a vasca) type kiln was found, measuring 2.1m long, 0.7m wide and surviving to a height of 0.32m, Figure 6. Only the lower part of the structure is preserved, together with two adjacent pits hollowed out in the natural clay and separated by a course of fired clay. The larger pit is identifiable as the combustion chamber indicated by exposure to fire evident on the walls, the smaller pit could have
been for the collection of surplus combustion products. Both of the pits were full of ash mixed with charcoal, although the absence of kiln debris makes it impossible to estimate what the kiln was used for.

Remains of the roof and firing shelf were absent in situ, although it is possible that remains of the later can be recognised among the material found in a nearby hollow in the ground a little to the east of the kiln. This natural depression, measuring 8.8 x 3.7m and 0.52m deep, was filled with clayey soil, turned dark through the presence of charcoal fragments. Within it were, in addition to ceramic\textsuperscript{10} and brick fragments, numerous lumps of fired clay containing the remains of plant fibres, probably the remains of the firing shelves and make-shift roofing which would have been renewed as necessary\textsuperscript{11}. The associated material dates the kiln to between the second half of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd century BC.

The ground around the kiln is a silty-clay and must have been prone to water-logging in antiquity owing to both rain water and rises in the water table, a problem that was partially solved by a nearby north-south channel that directed water away from the kiln area. The channel was originally natural, 1.5m wide and V-shaped, but became blocked by alluvium although run off was reactivated by the digging of a new, smaller channel that ran within the older one, 0.6m wide with a stepped profile. In the fill of the latter was found a range of material deposited by the water thus dating its active life to around the 4th century BC, including small cups of the ‘workshop of the miniature vases’ (Schippa 1980: type n.67 and n.372; Morel 1981: type 2784 a4 and 2983 e1), a carinated small cup (Morel 1965: type n. 3) and a cup fragment (Morel 1981: type 2753 d2). To the south, the natural channel flowed into another water course which
ran at right angles to it and is reminiscent of the drainage systems discovered on the Aemilian plain dating to the Iron age onwards (Ortalli 1995).

Both channels seem to have been destroyed by a high energy alluvial event, the traces of which are recognisable in the consistent sandy deposit which overlay the entire area and also sealed the settlement. Later and on top of this flood level, c. 170m to the north-west of the kiln a surface was laid composed of ceramic fragments, in particular from amphorae, deposited with no apparent order. Finally, immediately below this floor, a badly preserved burial was discovered without grave goods and laid supine although the skull was completely smashed.

AREA 6 (FIGURE 2)

_Viviana Forte_

Another structure associated with craft production was found here, it also had two distinct phases of use separated by a flood which obliterated the earlier structure. The later phase centres on another kiln, measuring 1.54 x 1.28m and oriented east-west, again the lack of refuse material means that the use of the kiln is unknown, Figures 7 and 8. The structure comprises a shelf formed from four fragmented bricks, delimited on the longer northern and southern sides by fragments of roof tiles fixed vertically.

*Figure 7. The second phase kiln in Area 6.*
in the ground. On the eastern side of the shelf is a small quadrangular firing-chamber 0.5 x 0.6m, with a perimeter made from brick fragments set vertically, and a floor formed by a brick laid horizontally. The firing-chamber is surrounded on three sides by a semi-circular mound of clay containing many fragments of amphorae, bricks and ceramics, probably the remains of the roof.

The clear traces of burning on the shelf of roof tiles in front of the firing chamber, together with a charcoal rich layer surrounding the kiln, suggest that the shelf is the combustion chamber and that the firing-chamber also acted as a draught chimney, as is typical of this type of horizontal kiln (Cuomo Di Caprio 1972–73). A useful comparison, despite the structural differences, can be found in the kiln discovered at Leprignano, where the fire was lit not in the combustion chamber but rather in the praefurnium, so that only the more oxidising flame could enter the firing chamber (Cozza 1907).

Cut into the surface contemporary with the kiln were pits filled with blue clay very similar to the natural in that area, these are probably working pits connected to activities linked to the kiln. Only in a few cases was the clay pure, otherwise it contained numerous fragments of amphorae and ceramics, in addition to traces of molluscs and charcoal. Also of this phase are the numerous Graeco-italic amphora necks randomly scattered in the soil as well as projecting from the ancient ground surface.
Their function, given the muddy nature of the ground, is probably for drainage as is known from many other cases (Finocchi 1984; Buora 1998). This second phase is well dated by contained material to the first half of the 3rd century BC\textsuperscript{12}.

As noted above, the first phase is separated from the second by flood material and a break in occupation. The main focus of this phase was also a kiln, measuring 0.9 \times 2.2\, m, located in the south west of the excavation area and very similar to the second phase kiln although it had been systematically dismantled. In fact only faint traces of it remained, an impression of the brick shelf in front of the firing chamber, and the praefurnium as a small pit marked by clear traces of burning although nothing to suggest what was being fired in it. Near the kiln were two hearths of irregular shape with ash and charcoal and the characteristic reddish colouring of the earth owing to the exposure to fire. Patches of the laid surface related to this phase of occupation are predominantly of marine stones of various dimensions and tile fragments closely packed probably to act as drainage and consolidation for the silt and clay ground which was vulnerable to waterlogging.

Preliminary analysis of the material found so far suggests the first phase of this workshop establishment can be dated between the end of the 4th and the first half of the 3rd century BC. As shown above, the second phase is also dated to the first half of the 3rd century suggesting that the flood which separates them was a violent but short lived event, after which the structures were immediately rebuilt.

CONCLUSIONS

Cinzia Morelli

Briefly summarising, based on the spatial distribution and structural characteristics of the data so far it seems that the structures in Areas 2 and 3 can be interpreted as small settlements engaged in productive or commercial activity. This is supported by the proximity of another settlement c. 200 m to the south east of Area 1 at Quartaccio, excavated in the 1990s (Petriaggi et al. 1995: 363–364) and by the discovery of lead weights in Areas 2 and 4 as mentioned above, although Area 4 has not yet been fully excavated so the character of the structures is not known. In Area 1, by contrast, we can perhaps recognise a residential building, consisting of four rooms organised around a central space of large dimensions and characterised by beaten earth floors and wall plaster. It is worth mentioning that c. 600m east of Area 4 another residential building was found in 1997 during the laying of methane pipes along the Via della Corona Boreale, although it remains unpublished. All of the buildings uncovered are structures in opus quadratum in tufa blocks, or in small blocks of the same material set in place without mortar and all have been subjected to systematic robbing, a fate also suffered by sections of the aqueduct of Portus in this area. Consequently, it is difficult to estimate either the upper structure of their walls or roofing systems.

On the basis of the initial analysis, it seems that all of the buildings belong, at least in their first phase, to the mid-Republican period with a concentration of material
from the 3rd century BC and rare examples from the second half of the 4th century. Noteworthy is the abundance of black-gloss ware attributable to the atelier des petites estampilles, as well as some sherds of special interest like the umbilical patera of Calene production found in Area 1. Coins are present in large numbers, especially in Areas 2 and 3, and also confirm continuous occupation through the 3rd century BC, as at nearby Quartaccio (ibid.), and into the first years of the 1st century BC in Area 2. In Areas 2 and 3 the buildings were reoccupied after a long period of abandonment, between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD, as shown by the numismatic evidence and a brick stamp of this period. The latest evidence of activity at the sites is a coin found in Area 3 datable to the middle of the 4th century AD and after this date it seems that the settlements were permanently abandoned.

Besides the structures focussed on commercial activities, Areas 2 and 3, and the residential building in Area 1, there were two structures organised around kilns, Areas 5 and 6. In Area 5 was a basin type kiln while in Area 6 two kilns of horizontal type were identified as two successive phases of the same structure. Both workshops were operating in the first half of the 3rd century BC, even though the kiln in Area 5 seems to have been established in the second half of the 4th century BC. Particular attention was paid in these two areas to draining the ground around the kilns, by means of amphorae or drainage channels, which must have been liable to water logging, probably due to periodic rises in the water table rather than flooding of the Tiber.

In conclusion, the picture that emerges from the archaeological investigations of the last few years is that of a landscape that was widely occupied in the mid-Republican period. This was probably due to the proximity of the salt marshes, and the presence of the two most important arteries of communication between Rome and the sea that crossed the area, the Via Campana and the River Tiber. In this lively mid Republican phase the kilns, workshops and residential complexes show very little evidence for agricultural and pastoral activity, a fragment of millstone in Area 1 and a dulia silo at the nearby settlement at Via della Corona Boreale. Striking too, is the variety and quality of the black-gloss ware circulating in the locality, together with fragments of Faliscan ceramics in Area 5, and a coin attributable to a Campanian mint in Area 3.

This phase of intense activity is followed by a long period of silence in which the settlements seem to be abandoned, or at any rate only sporadically occupied. None of the areas described here have produced material belonging to the period between the beginning of the 1st century BC and the end of the 2nd century AD. Paradoxically, in the Imperial period, while the Roman port complex created by Claudius and Trajan is established and grows, the countryside around Portus seems to become depopulated. The completion of the great public works connected with the ports, such as the aqueduct and the new Via Portuensis, correspond with an impoverishment of settlement with only sporadic reoccurrence of some mid Republican sites in the late imperial period.

This phenomenon of depopulation of the more eastern area of the Ager Portuensis has been set within the broader process of decline of small land holding throughout Italy from the end of the Hannibalic War (ibid: 373). Nevertheless, the profound transformations caused by the construction of the Claudian port, and the later Trajanic one,
are not to be underestimated. The new coastal focus would depend on the landscape of the Imperial period as it developed along the north-south axis corresponding to the coastal road linking Ostia and Portus, the Via Severiana.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The test trenches in the area of the Nuova Fiera di Roma were made possible by the economic support of the Società Lamaro and the helpfulness of Ing. C. Toti. The excavations were carried out by the Società Erma, with the participation of Drs. A. Carbonara, F. Colantoni, H. Marchetti, P. Poli, F. Accurso, E. Celluprica (drawing), A. Arnoldus-Huyzendveld (geomorphology) and M. Letizia (photography). The research in the area of PPL23, financed by the Consorzio SPI, whose president Dr. Monteleone we would like to thank in particular, was carried out by the Società Land with the collaboration of Drs. V. Forte, M. Giacobelli, R. Giudice, and P. Manacorda, as well as R. Leonardi, G. Sgrigna, P. Zambianchi (geology), D. Gasseau (drawing), M. Letizia (photography) and Geom. P. Marzianonio. The coins are being studied by Dr. E. Spagnoli, whom we thank for the provisional data that she has made available to us. A particular thank you is extended to the Superintendent, Dr. Anna Gallina Zevi for the continual interest with which she followed the excavations, and for directing the scientific work. The volume editors would like to thank Lori-Ann Touchette for the initial translation of this paper into English.

REFERENCES

Bernardini, P. 1986, La ceramic a vernice nera dal Tevere, Museo Nazionale Romano. Le Ceramiche V,1, Rome.


NOTES

1. On the right bank of the Tiber, under the dominion of Veii, were located the Septem Pagii whose conquest by the Romans was attributed to Romulus (Dion. Hal. II 55), following the tendency of ancient historiography to backdate later events.


4. The salt marshes were utilised over a long period and are mentioned in numerous documents at least down to the end of the 15th century, with the names of Campus Maior, Campus Salinarius, and Campus Salinus Maior; whence the name of the 19th century Tenuta di Campo Salino. In addition to the references cited above see also Nibby 1827: 29; Nibby 1848: 367–369; Tomassetti 1900: 5, 12, 52–58; Ashby 1927: 31 and 219.

5. It is difficult to agree with the hypothesis of Scheid (1976) and Petriaggi (et al. 2001) that the Via Campagna, after the construction of Via Portuensis, was used as a tow road. It seems very improbable that a road which was important in the Republican period ran alongside the Tiber, quite apart from the consideration that a route along the river would deviate too much from the salt marshes which it served. It is rather more probable that after reuniting at Ponte Galeria, the two roads had, at least in part, a similar course (Platner and Ashby 1929: 566).

6. The Via Portuensis was identified in 1996 to the north of the 16.5 km marker on the modern Via Portuense, along Via Sabbadino, during the laying of the Magliana to Fiumicino methane pipeline. South of the modern Via Portuense in Quartaccio another stretch of the road, 21.7 m long, was identified in 1992–96 (Petriaggi et al. 1995: 368–369; Petriaggi et al. 2001). Most recently, in 2001, the ancient road was once again identified immediately north of the 17 km marker of the modern Via Portuense (Serlorenzi 2002).

7. In 1973 in la Longarina at 19.7 km along the modern Via Portuense and to the south, the remains of the ancient road were exposed for a distance of 80 m flanked by the Aqueduct of Portus. The road was very similar in detail to those stretches excavated extensively in subsequent years.

8. The Via Portuensis is currently being excavated between Quartaccio and the Roma to Fiumicino Autostrada as an evaluation for the construction of the Nuova Fiera di Roma, between 16.4 and 17.5 km along the modern Via Portuense. The ancient route has been identified by trenching for a total of about 1 km.

9. Also cups attributable to the atelier des petites estampilles (Bernardini 1986: 196, pl. 55, n.12; id., 205, pl.60, n.21; Morel 1981: type 2783h); paterae (‘fish plates’ Morel 1981: type 1124); lamps (Roma Medio Repubblicana 1973: 221, n.324, pl.49; ibid: 222, pl.49); a skyphos (Morel 1981: type 4331 a1).
10. These included numerous fragments of black gloss ware, including a patera (Morel 1981: type 54), a small olpe (ibid: type 99), an oinochoe a cartoccio (ibid: type 495), a small cup attributable to the atelier des petites estampilles (ibid: type 2647 b1). In addition were found fragments of a small plate of genucilia type (Pianu 1980: n.100), also a fragmentary cup datable to the 4th century BC, decorated on the inside with the heads of a satyr and a panther facing each other (for the satyr type, see Pianu 1980: 74, pl.47, fig.48 a), that can be traced back, perhaps, to Faliscan workshops. Comparisons with the internal decorative elements of ivy corymbs and berries are found in the group of Faliscan cups (ibid: 79, pl.49, fig.50b), whereas the external decoration composed of eggs and small tongues in black gloss recalls similar elements used on vases of the Caeretan group (ibid: 29, pl.17, fig.18).

11. An interesting analogy, structural and functional, is seen in the kiln of the ‘basin’ type found at Montericco di Imola. This kiln does not have traces of the usual perforated fixed shelf and roof and the discovery of the remains of reed lathwork in a depression near the kiln, together with ceramic fragments and rocks, seems particularly significant (Von Eles: 1985). A typological comparison is also possible with the kiln found at Luvanum, where the absence of the remains of a perforated shelf and roof has resulted in the hypothesis that a wickerwork trellis spread with clay was utilised as a moveable perforated shelf and that the roofing was provisional, recreated every time the kiln was used, from a mixture of ceramic fragments and clay (Ciacio: 1990).

12. Of note is the abundant presence of Black Gloss ware, including a sherd of a carinated cup (Morel 1981: type 2542), a cup (ibid: 2922 a1), a small jug (ibid: 5226) and some cup bases attributable to the workshop of the petites estampilles (Morel 1969: fig. 5, n.4, n.7, n.17, n.19, n.45; fig.6, n.19). The coins include a uncia datable to 275–250 BC (Crawford 1974: series 18/6) and a sextans attributable to 280/276 BC (ibid: series 14/5).