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### Recent Archaeological Work in the Territory of Castiglione del Lago

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# **BOLLETTINO DI ARCHEOLOGIA ON LINE**

**DIREZIONE GENERALE ARCHEOLOGIA, BELLE ARTI E PAESAGGIO**

**XIV, 2023/Supplemento 1**

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## **RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK IN THE TERRITORY OF CASTIGLIONE DEL LAGO (PG)**

*Dal 2015 il Progetto Archeologico Regionale del Trasimeno (TRAP) conduce ricerche nel territorio di Castiglione del Lago (PG). Nato dalla collaborazione tra ricercatori italiani e americani, insieme con il Comune di Castiglione del Lago, il progetto intende portare alla luce il patrimonio archeologico del territorio, in particolare di epoca romana, e renderlo accessibile al pubblico. La ricerca ha tre componenti: lo sviluppo di un GIS storico del territorio, lo scavo di siti selezionati e l'istituzione di un nuovo museo archeologico a Castiglione del Lago. Il lavoro presenta una serie preliminare di mappe GIS che indicano la storia dell'insediamento nella regione, cui segue una sintesi dei primi quattro anni di scavo presso il sito di Villa Gioiella-Vaiano. La villa, di età romana, fu occupata dal II secolo a.C. alla fine del III o all'inizio del IV sec. d.C. Gli scavi si sono concentrati sul complesso termale e su un grande edificio che si propone di identificare come un ninfeo.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Trasimeno Regional Archaeological Project (TRAP) was initiated in 2015 as a collaboration between The Umbra Institute (Perugia, IT), DePauw University (Greencastle, IN, USA), Intrageo (now Associazione Acqua), and the Comune di Castiglione del Lago<sup>1</sup>. This comprehensive research program has several aims: to document and map the distribution of human activity in the territory of Castiglione del Lago from the prehistoric to the Medieval period; to understand better the Roman history of the region, in particular the transition from Etruscan to Roman influence; and to foster a partnership with residents of the Comune of the Castiglione del Lago in order to make the cultural heritage of the region accessible to the public. To achieve these goals the project is developing a Geographic Information System (GIS) for the region that combines published data with local knowledge of sites, conducting strategic excavation at select Roman sites, and designing a new archaeological museum in Castiglione del Lago.

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<sup>1</sup> TRAP is grateful for the support of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio dell'Umbria, represented by Giovanni Altamore (2015-2017) and Paola Romi (2018-present), and the members of ArceoTrasimeno in Castiglione del Lago.

## MAPPING THE TERRITORY

Encompassing a narrow plain along the western side of Lago Trasimeno, the territory of Castiglione del Lago extends from the border with Tuscany on the north to the plain of Tresa on the south (*fig. 1*). The western limits of the territory extend from Lago di Chiusi on the southwest and Lago di Montepulciano on the west along a series of low hills that form the eastern boundary of the Val di Chiana. Since antiquity, these hills have marked the watershed between Lago Trasimeno to the east and the Val di Chiana to the west. Moreover, from Villastrada to Petrignano this high ground has served as a ridge road connecting *Clusium* (Chiusi) to the territory of Cortona<sup>2</sup>. Down in the plain, Lago di Chiusi and Lago di Montepulciano are remnants of the Clanis River, which in the Etruscan and Roman period was navigable and ran from the Arno River to the Tiber River, connecting with the latter just south of *Velzna/Volsinii Veteres* (Orvieto)<sup>3</sup>.

Archaeological remains in the territory have been documented since the 19<sup>th</sup> century but only a few sites have been scientifically excavated, recorded, and studied, most notably the archaic tombs at Villastrada and the Hellenistic necropolis near Gioiella. Nevertheless, there are dozens of known sites in the region.

Previous efforts to map references to archaeological discoveries in the region include: R. Bianchi Bandinelli's 1925 synthesis of archaeological research relevant to the Etruscan period in Chiusi and its territory; W. Pagnotta's 1984 publication on the antiquarium in Castiglione del Lago with an inventory of known archaeological materials and sites; G. Paolucci's 2002 article on the topography of the western side of Lago Trasimeno; and A. Renzetti's 2011 article on settlements in the Trasimeno region from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Since previous exploration was not always documented, some of the references in those publications are difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint on a map. Nevertheless, using a Geographic Information System (GIS) we are making an effort to record as many sites as possible along with relevant information, such as site type and chronology (*fig. 1*). Our GIS also includes more recent, chance discoveries that have been documented by the ArcheoTrasimeno group in Castiglione del Lago. As part of our research, we have interviewed members of ArcheoTrasimeno and, in some cases, those local contacts have been able to show us precisely where some archaeological finds were discovered, contributing to the overall map of the region. The GIS allows us to visualize and analyze the history of settlement in the region, the relations between the topography and human activity, and to identify possible gaps where settlement is likely to have occurred but where we do not as of yet have any data. This paper presents a series of preliminary maps. However, we emphasize that this is a work in progress and not all the locations recorded in our GIS have been verified on the ground.

The earliest evidence for human occupation in the territory comes from the shoreline of Lago Trasimeno to the south of Castiglione del Lago (*fig. 2*). At Panicarola-La Lucciola, ceramic materials, stone tools, and fragments of boat models indicate occupation from the Neolithic (see *fig. 2*)<sup>4</sup>. In the same area, a Late Bronze/Early Iron Age cemetery was excavated by the Soprintendenza Archeologica dell'Umbria in 1968-69, 1971-72, and 1977<sup>5</sup>. Scattered prehistoric finds have also been noted to the north of Castiglione del Lago around the area of I Bertoni<sup>6</sup>.

The first Etruscan presence in the territory of Castiglione del Lago is known primarily from tombs, most of which have been discovered accidentally and subjected to limited scientific exploration. Beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the evidence demonstrates a distinct shift in

<sup>2</sup> RENZETTI 2011, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Lago di Chiusi was mentioned by STR. V, 2, 9 and both features were mapped as lakes as early as 1551; see RICASOLI 1551 survey on which each is marked as "Chiaro".

<sup>4</sup> DE ANGELIS *et al.* 2014, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> FERUGLIO 1973 and PAGNOTTA 1984, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> ARCHEOTRASIMENO 2011.



1. THE TERRITORY OF CASTIGLIONE DEL LAGO WITH KNOWN SITES INDICATED (elaboration P. Foss, ArcGIS)



2. PREHISTORIC SITES IN THE TERRITORY OF CASTIGLIONE DEL LAGO (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)

activity away from the shore of the lake to the western part of the plain and the low hills stretching from I Poggi to Petrignano, a shift that corresponds to the rising influence of Chiusi (*fig. 3*). The exceptions are a tumulus at Badia and a tomba a ziro at Pucciarelli in the southern part of the Castiglione del Lago plain<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> RENZETTI 2011, pp. 237-244; PAOLUCCI 2002, pp. 165-166; cf. also PAGNOTTA 1984, p. 40.



Researchers have long noted that this phenomenon continues in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and that settlement in the plain of Castiglione del Lago is conspicuously absent during the Archaic Etruscan period (*fig. 4*)<sup>8</sup>. On the south, Archaic chamber tombs have been found at Villastrada, Collelungo, and Bruscalupo. Along the ridge road, there is another chamber tomb at Gioiella and to the northwest, heading down into the river valley, more than 80 tombs have been identified at Laviano<sup>9</sup>. Badia, where several chamber tombs dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. have been identified, is, again, an exception, perhaps because it continues to be a significant location connecting Castiglione del Lago with the route to Chiusi. It is in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. that we have the first indications of a settlement at Castiglione del Lago itself. Finds from Petrignano also indicate the presence of an Archaic settlement, as well as tombs from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. Renzetti and others have suggested that the lack of activity in the plain reflects a conscientious effort by Etruscan Chiusi to surround strategic points, including agricultural territory. Chiusi's growing influence in the region is seen in the extent to which cinerary urns of the Chiusian type are found at Gioiella and Pucciarelli<sup>10</sup>. Of course, the absence of activity in the plain itself may simply be due to lack of archaeological research in the area. However, our GIS shows that Hellenistic and especially Roman remains have been documented in the plain (see below) suggesting that the absence of Archaic materials does reflect a lack of activity in the plain itself.

At the beginning of the Classical era, we see the Trasimeno region clearly situated in the system of *polis* control that began to emerge in the 6<sup>th</sup> century with Chiusi exerting its influence over the west side of the lake, Cortona over the north, and Perugia over the east. Two settlements in the Castiglione del Lago region stand out during this period: Bruscalupo and Paciano, which is just outside the modern boundary of the territory (*fig. 5*). Based on materials recovered from tombs, both sites appear to flourish in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., but both also disappear in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Renzetti has postulated that, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., on the west side of Trasimeno we see a consolidation of settlements that were first established in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The so-called 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. crisis witnessed elsewhere in Etruria does not seem to have affected this part of Etruscan territory. On the other hand, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. there does appear to be a rupture in the equilibrium between city and countryside as settlements known from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. cease to be occupied. This can, of course, be attributed to several external factors, such as the passage of the Gauls through the region in 391 B.C. and the growing hostilities between the Romans and the Etruscans. Nevertheless, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Castiglione del Lago and Petrignano continued to be occupied, no doubt due to their respective strategic locations in protecting access to the plain from the north. Moreover, the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. brings the first clear evidence of a rural sanctuary in the region. At Casamaggiore, located along the western ridge just north of Gioiella, a cache of five bronze statuettes was discovered in 1902 by a local landowner. The statues, two male and three female, all have the same inscription in Etruscan indicating that they were dedicated to the goddess *Cel*<sup>11</sup>. Thus, the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. settlements at Castiglione del Lago and Petrignano along with the sanctuary at Casamaggiore form a triad controlling the territory in the north end of the plain. Based on the evidence from the necropoleis, in particular, Gioiella, Vaiano, and Bruscalupo, the region appears to flourish once again in the late Hellenistic period.

<sup>8</sup> RENZETTI 2011, pp. 240-241.

<sup>9</sup> PAOLUCCI 2002, pp. 175-176 and Appendix I.

<sup>10</sup> RENZETTI 2011 p. 241 suggests that Chiusine control of the area north of Lago di Chiusi began in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., reaching its peak in the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. BRUSCHETTI 1997, pp. 10-23 also has a historical overview.

<sup>11</sup> The precise location of the sanctuary was never recorded and, unfortunately, by the 1930's the five statues had disappeared into the art market. For the discovery and subsequent disappearance of the statuettes from Casamaggiore see PAOLUCCI 2002, Appendix II. For more on the significance of the cult of *Cel*, including potential connections to other Etruscan cult activity around Lago Trasimeno, see COLONNA 1976-77 and BATINO 2003.



3. TOMBS AND NECROPOLEIS IN THE TERRITORY OF CASTIGLIONE DEL LAGO FROM THE 7<sup>TH</sup> TO THE 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES B.C. (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)

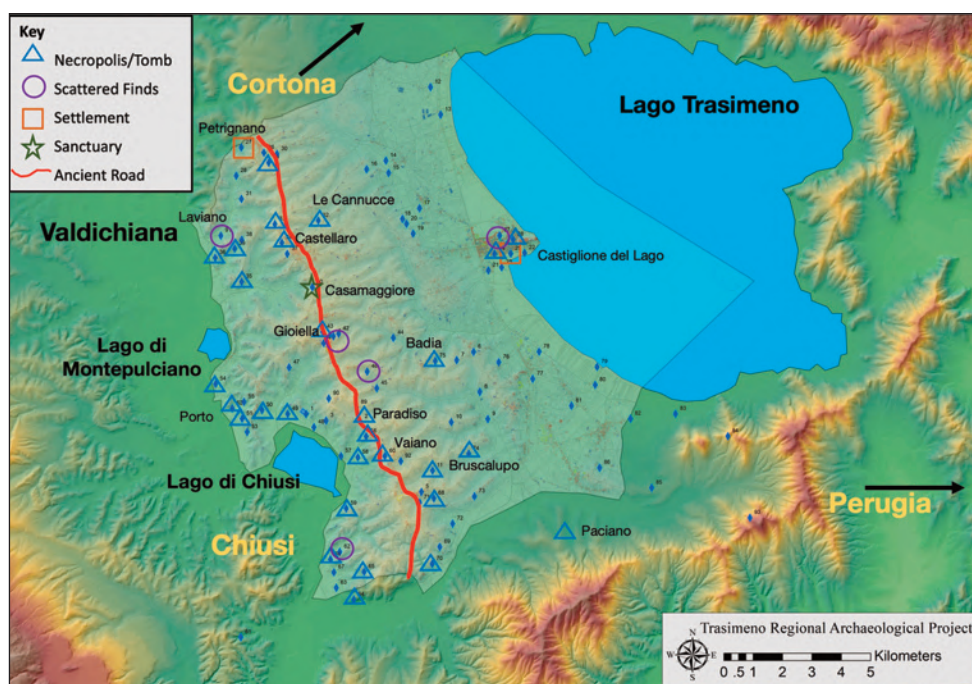


4. THE TRASIMENO REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT GIS: SITES DATING TO THE ETRUSCAN ARCHAIC PERIOD (6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY B.C.) (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)

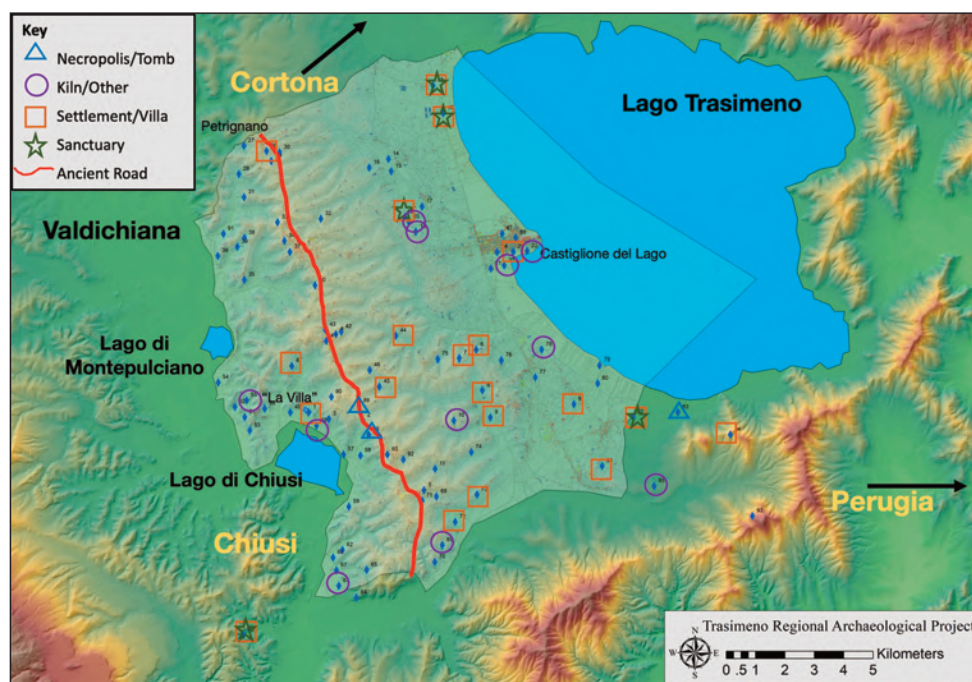




5. THE TRASIMENO REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT GIS: SITES DATING TO THE ETRUSCAN CLASSICAL PERIOD (5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY B.C.) (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)



6. THE TRASIMENO REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT GIS: SITES DATING TO THE ETRUSCAN HELLENISTIC PERIOD (4<sup>TH</sup>-2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURIES B.C.) (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)



7. THE TRASIMENO REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT GIS: SITES DATING TO THE ROMAN PERIOD (2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY B.C. TO 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY A.D.) (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)

Roman activity in the territory is known from materials visible on the surface of many fields both in the plain and on the slopes of the western hills (*fig. 7*). In addition, chance discoveries during ploughing or other work have been noted by the ArcheoTrasimeno group and some of those discoveries are in the local antiquarium, albeit without secure provenance. In contrast to the Etruscan period, which is known primarily through funerary contexts, the Roman evidence indicates a wide range of domestic contexts, from villas to small settlements to kilns. While the Romans continued occupation of settlements that had been inhabited in the Etruscan era, such as Castiglione del Lago and Petrignano, they also expanded to locations that had previously been unoccupied, representing an intensification of land use. However, until TRAP was formed in 2015, there had been no scientific or systematic investigation of any Roman site in the region. The research agenda of TRAP includes excavating select Roman sites in order to better understand the nature of Roman occupation in the territory, the mechanisms for controlling and exploiting the land, and how the local culture was influenced by external developments, first in the shift from Etruscan to Roman control of the territory and then due to changes brought about by the empire. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., changes in the environment due to the silting in of the Clanis River forced inhabitants to abandon their settlements and move to higher ground. From late antiquity to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, there is little evidence of activity outside of Castiglione del Lago itself.



## EXCAVATION OF THE GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA SITE

The first site excavated by the TRAP team is a Roman villa located between the modern habitation centers of Gioiella and Vaiano. The site, which has been under modern cultivation for more than half a century, is well-known to local residents (“La Villa” on *fig. 7*). Moreover, it is located just to the south and below Poggio Santa Maria, the location of an Etruscan tumulus, and just to the west of a visible Roman cistern, which was documented and published by Walter Pagnotta<sup>12</sup>.

The remains of the Roman villa are found on a southern facing, low hill overlooking Lago di Chiusi with the town of Chiusi visible in the distance. As noted above, Lago di Chiusi is a remnant of the Clanis River, which would have flowed past the villa in antiquity. This positioning would have provided the Roman occupants of the villa with access to the Tiber River and, from there, to the markets of Rome. Today, the hill’s gentle slope obscures the Roman terracing. The landowner reported to us that, in the 1950’s, they moved a lot of soil in order to fill in the central part of the site and regularize the fields for agriculture. During the Roman phase, we presume that there were three terraces: one at the top of hill where there is a possible cistern (reported by the landowner, but unexcavated for now), a middle terrace occupied by a series of structures facing south over the Clanis River, and a lower terrace where the bath complex is located. A surface survey conducted by the TRAP team in 2015 indicated that the site was first settled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and was occupied at least until the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.<sup>13</sup> Based on the density and distribution of materials from the survey, excavations were focused on the east and southeast side of the hill, the area of the lower terrace, and the “central area” (*fig. 8*). Evidence uncovered in the first three seasons of excavation (2016-2018) give the impression that the Gioiella-Vaiano Villa was a “typical” rural villa primarily dedicated to agricultural production and perhaps serving as a pleasant country estate for someone from Chiusi or Perugia. In 2019, however, the picture changed when it became clear that the central building, which we had initially identified as a production and storage facility, was in fact a monumental *nymphaeum*. The scale and decoration of that building suggests that the owners of the villa, at least in the Imperial period, were either local elites who had designed their villa for entertainment and who were well aware of the fashions of Roman luxury residences, or a wealthy family from Rome with connections to the Imperial court.

After four seasons of excavation, it is possible to identify five general chronological periods in the life of the villa:

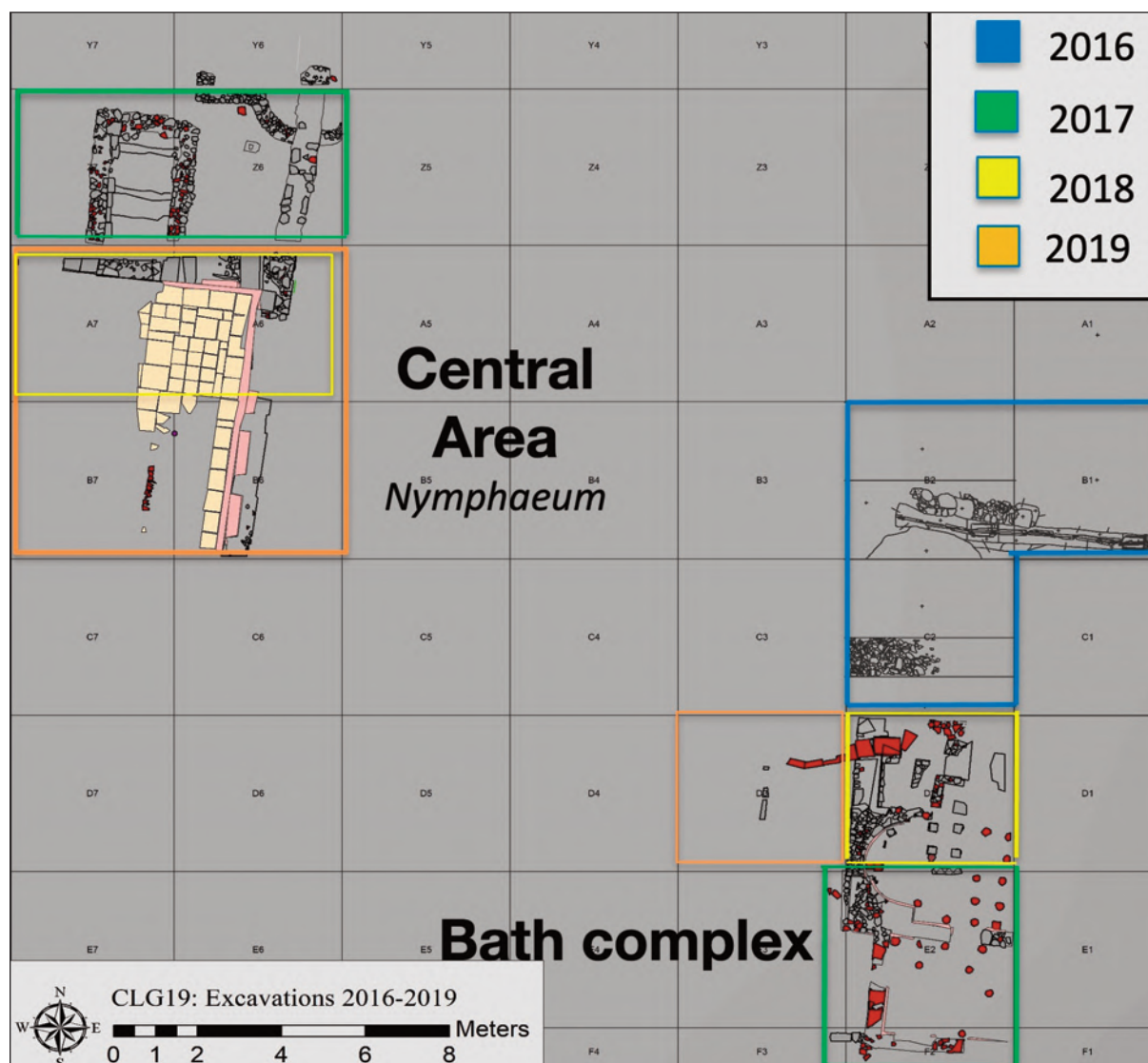
- 1) initial occupation in the late Republican period;
- 2) a renovation and elaboration of the villa in the Imperial period, probably in the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., perhaps due to new owners taking over the property;
- 3) reuse of Imperial-era structures in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., primarily for agricultural and industrial work;
- 4) a long period of abandonment with occasional activity;
- 5) modern activity that results in significant re-distribution of building debris across the site and the infilling of the central terrace.

Based on investigations so far, the Republican phase of the villa is represented by fragments of black glaze pottery recovered from the 2015 surface survey and mixed fills across the site, and remnants of early floors, i.e., *opus signinum*, that were reused in the bedding for the tile floor of the Imperial-period *nymphaeum* (see below).

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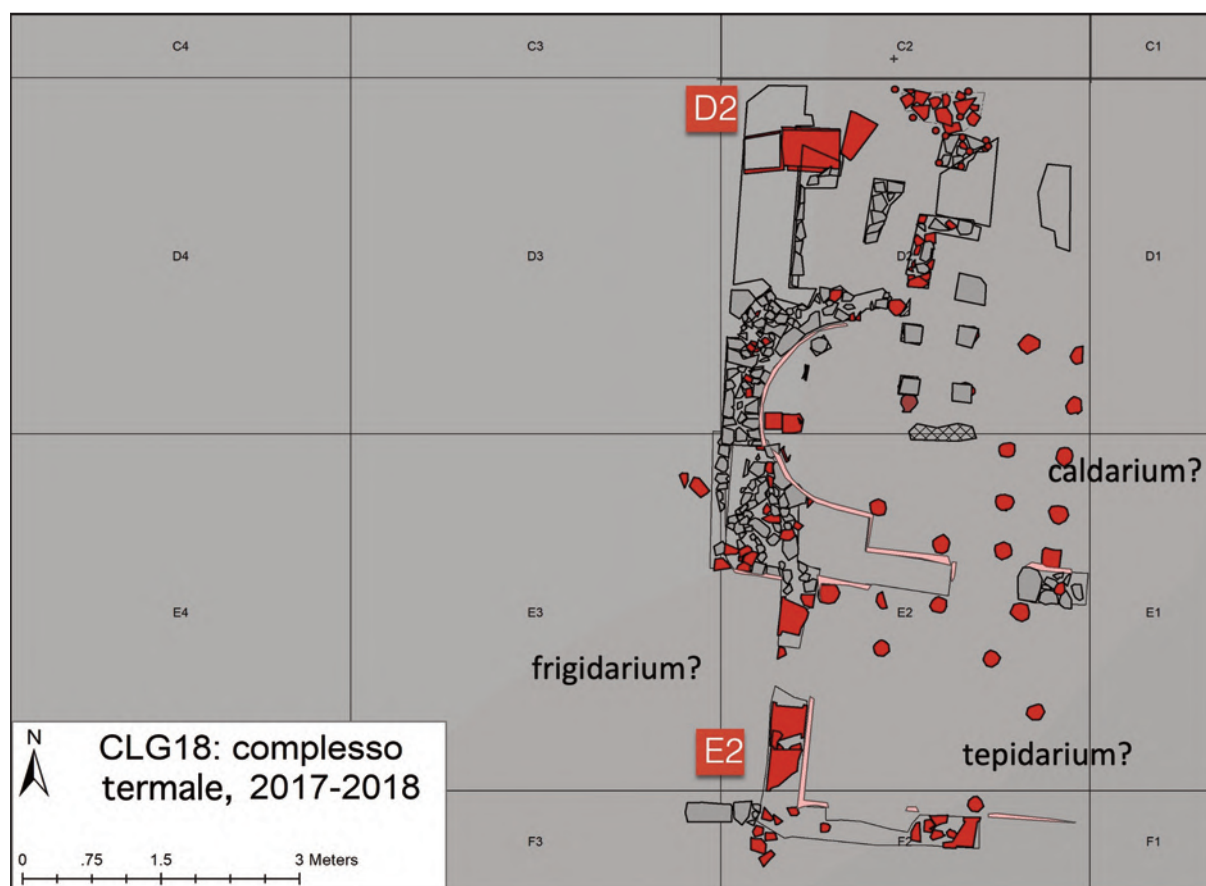
<sup>12</sup> PAGNOTTA 1984, p. 69, tavv. II-III.

<sup>13</sup> BEVAGNA *et al.* 2016.



8. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. STATE PLAN 2016-2019 (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)

The villa appears to have been renovated and elaborated in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. The bath complex, to the southeast on the lower terrace, may have had a Republican-era phase but decorative materials recovered from the fills suggest it was rebuilt or renovated in the Imperial period. On this side of the site, the hill slopes down rather sharply towards a modern irrigation ditch and the ancient remains are very close to the contemporary surface; as a result, only the hypocaust sub-structures of the bath complex are preserved (*fig. 9*). On the east side of the complex, two rooms are clearly defined. The room on the south is rectangular, while the one to the north has an apse on the west wall. A small gap in the wall between the two rooms suggests that air was able to flow between them and there is a small section of the mosaic floor preserved at this juncture. Pieces of mosaics recovered in the debris as well as thousands of individual tesserae indicate that the floor was decorated in a black and white geometric pattern. The density of collapsed building materials made excavation of these structures challenging and we were not able to clear all the debris from the north end of the building.



9. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. STATE PLAN OF THE BATH COMPLEX (elaboration P. Foss and R. Schindler, ArcGIS)

However, a channel extending from the north wall of the apsidal room suggests that the stoke hole for heating the hypocaust might have been to the north. If this was the case, the north room would have been the *caldarium* and the south room the *tepidarium*. The presence of the apse, which may have held a basin or small tub for water, would support this theory. A third room to the west of the *tepidarium* may be a *frigidarium*, but aside from the edge of the wall, that area remains unexcavated.

In both of the rooms with preserved hypocaust supports, the walls are lined with a layer of fine pink *cocciopesto* (fig. 9). The construction of these “walls” is also notable as it appears that the builders cut directly into the natural sediment, which in this part of the site is compacted sand, and then lined the exposed sand directly with the *cocciopesto* (fig. 10).

Although nothing of the superstructure remains, numerous pieces of window glass were recovered from the south side of the building, between the *tepidarium* and possible *caldarium*, suggesting that there were south-facing windows, allowing the room/s to be warmed by the sun, even in the winter, and offering bathers a view of the Clanis River and Chiusi in the distance. Moreover, pieces of decorative, colored marbles from a variety of sources indicate that the bath complex was refurbished in the Imperial period at a time when the owners had the connections and resources to import precious materials from around the empire. At some point the bath house was abandoned and the mosaic floor collapsed. Later, a wall was built against the outside of the apse of the *caldarium* and a drainage system oriented from west to east was constructed with re-used pan tiles (fig. 10). The precise function of that drain is unknown. There is, however, another drain to the north (see fig. 8, area excavated in 2016) that was also constructed using pan tiles. It seems apparent that there was a need to move water away from the central area of the villa and down the eastern slope.

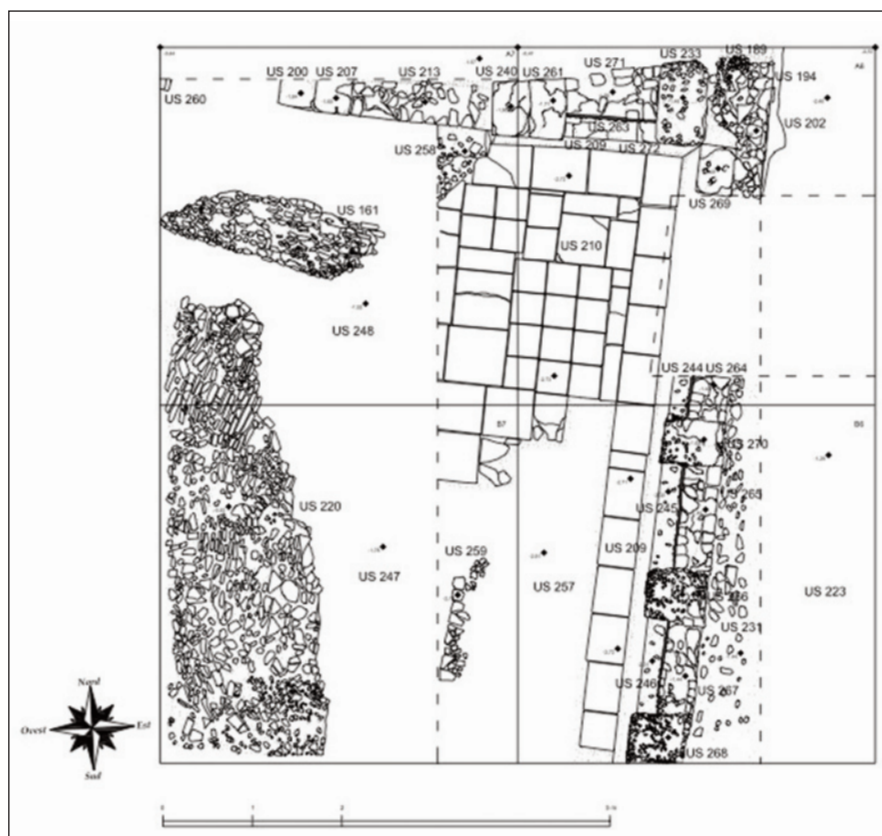




10. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. VIEW OF WEST OF OPERATION D2, THE BATH COMPLEX (photo S. Spiganti)

It is likely that those drainage systems were connected to the management of the monumental *nymphaeum* in the central area (see *figs.* 8 and 11). Without a doubt, this is the most impressive feature on the site. An early Imperial period project, this structure combines Roman concrete construction techniques with the Imperial-period fascination for the control and display of water. Due to the infilling of the central terrace by the contemporary landowners, the structures on this part of the site are much better preserved than on the lower terrace. At the end of excavations in 2019, the last archaeological campaign on the site, the eastern half of the building and the full extent of the north wall had been uncovered (*fig.* 12). The interior width of the *nymphaeum* is 6.30 meters, and the length is at least 8.50 meters, but the southern limit has not yet been determined. The building itself is oriented north to south and, if it were open on the front, that is, the south side, perhaps with a portico, it would afford a lovely view across the Clanis River towards the city of Chiusi. This is the same orientation as the bath complex (*fig.* 8).

The “floor” level of the *nymphaeum* consists of a tile pavement cemented into a low, thick *cocciopesto* wall, forming a water-proof basin (*figs.* 12 and 13). This tile pavement is best preserved on the north side and directly along the east wall. However, the tiles are missing to south and in the central part of the excavated area. While the north edge of the pavement appears broken, on the east the line is clean, suggesting two possibilities: the tiles were carefully removed at some point or they were never there in the first place. Above the *cocciopesto* basin, the walls are formed by a series of alternating pilasters and niches (*fig.* 13). On the east side of the building, there are at least four niches and a fifth is likely just to the south of the excavated area. On the north side, one niche has been exposed on the east and there is probably a second on the west. Between those two niches, in the very center of the north wall, a stairway descends from the terrace above. Assuming that the structure was symmetrical, there should be another five niches on the west (unexcavated) side of the building, totaling 12 niches, which would be an auspicious number for a Roman building.



11. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS: DETAILED STATE PLAN OF THE CENTRAL AREA *NYMPHAEUM* (drawing S. Spiganti)



12. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. VIEW NORTH OF THE EAST SIDE OF THE *NYMPHAEUM* (photo R. Schindler)





13. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. VIEW OF THE NICHE AND PILASTERS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE *NYMPHAEUM* (photo R. Schindler)

The back wall of each niche is surfaced with plaster into which is embedded small, rough limestone cobbles and blue *tesserae* made of glass paste (*pasta vitrea*), which would have reflected light from the water in the basin below (fig. 14). The intent of this decoration was to give the appearance of a “natural” grotto wall. This would have contrasted with the “artificial” decoration of the pilasters, which were surfaced with a base layer of cement and then decorated with painted plaster in solid colors (red, yellow, white, and black). Although there are a few places where the painted plaster appears to have slipped off the walls and accumulated against the pilasters, none of the painted pieces are preserved *in situ* and it has not yet been possible to reconstruct a full decorative scheme.



14. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. DETAIL OF NICHE COMPOSED OF SMALL PIECES OF LIMESTONE PLASTERED TOGETHER WITH BLUE-GLASS *TESSERAE* SET BETWEEN THE STONES (photo S. Spiganti)

Part of that decorative scheme would have included the stairway that descends into the basin from the north (fig. 15 and see the plan, fig. 8), although its function is somewhat mysterious. Large well-cut ashlar blocks are placed on either side of the stairway forming risers that could have supported wooden planks for steps. However, if this was an actual staircase connecting an upper terrace to the *nymphaeum*, those descending it would have been led directly into the pool. Another possibility is that, as part of the elaboration of the building and the artificial control of water, the stairway was actually a waterfall. Similar such designs, albeit on a smaller scale, are known from Pompeii, for example in the Praedia of Julia Felix<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> See PARSLOW 1989.





15. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. VIEW NORTH OF THE STAIRWAY DESCENDING INTO THE *NYMPHAEUM* (photo S. Spiganti)

Altogether, the decorated niches and pilasters, and the water features would have projected an elaborate display that combined nature and art in a manner typical of *nymphaea* found in the richest villas on the Bay of Naples. Indeed, there is no structure in central Italy parallel to this. Several questions remain regarding the design and construction of the building, such as the architectural layout of the unexcavated southern side and the function of the stairway. Most problematic, however, is the configuration of the basin itself. The top of the basin wall is directly below the niched walls and the top of the basin forms the “floor” of each niche, causing us to wonder how people would have entered and walked around in this structure, or if they were meant to do so at all. One possibility is that there was a raised platform in the center of the structure that was later removed. This could explain the absence of tiles in the central and southern part of the building. A parallel for this design can be found in the *nymphaeum* of Claudius’ villa at Baiae, which, in addition to a raised central area for dining, also has a series of niches along the walls<sup>15</sup>. Further excavation is needed to clarify some of these questions.

After its initial construction and use phase, the *nymphaeum* building and the surrounding area went through several modifications, which may be associated with both a change in the building’s purpose and a shift in the overall function of the villa. The first change to the *nymphaeum* occurred when the wall of the *cocciopesto* basin was cut into at the bottom of the stairway (fig. 16). It should be noted that this may, in fact, have been done to construct the stairway and that that feature has nothing to do with the building’s original use as a *nymphaeum*. Unfortunately, the stratigraphic relationship between the bottom of the stairway and the top of the *cocciopesto* basin is not yet known because they meet exactly on the line of the excavation section and the two areas were excavated in different years.

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<sup>15</sup> TOCCO SCIARELLI 1983.



16. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. DETAIL OF THE NORTH WALL OF THE *NYMPHAEUM* (photo R. Schindler)

At some point later, the building itself goes out of use but remained accessible. Moreover, the superstructure must have remained intact for a long period of time. During this time, we see evidence of deliberate dumping of debris. From the fill at the bottom of the stairway we recovered a assemblage of ceramics, particularly cooking wares, that comprise almost complete vessels (*fig. 17*). This same level also contained 100's of pieces of painted plaster that had accumulated as the wall decoration deteriorated. At an even higher stratum, very close to the modern ground level, two enormous pieces of collapsed concrete appear to have been part of the vaulted ceiling of the original building (*fig. 11*). The size and weight of those concrete features prevented us from excavating in the western half of the building. It seems, however, that the original structure remained intact for a long period of time. Another indication of its continued significance on the site is a late wall that extends from the northeast corner of the *nymphaeum* on the same north south line. This wall (see *fig. 8*) was constructed of poured concrete and may have served as a retaining wall. There are no structures to the north of that wall, suggesting the limit of the central terrace.

Analysis of the ceramics recovered from the Gioiella-Vaiano Villa is ongoing. In 2018, Giancarlo Santarelli published a preliminary report on the stamped sigillata for his tesi di laurea at the Università degli studi di Perugia<sup>16</sup>. Regarding the coarse wares from the site, in 2019, we initiated a ceramic petrography project to analyze the varieties of clays and tempers used, as well as the firing techniques. We are currently in the process of analyzing more than 250 thin sections from selected sherds.

<sup>16</sup> SANTARELLI 2018.





17. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. VIEW EAST OF OPERATION A7; COOK WARES AND OTHER CERAMICS DUMPED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRWAY (photo R. Schindler)



18. GIOIELLA-VAIANO VILLA EXCAVATIONS. EXAMPLES OF STAMPED TILES: L.ATTALIANI (photo R. Schindler)

Among the other materials recovered, the stamped tiles are notable. We now have five examples with the name L.ATTALIANUS (*fig.* 18). This name does not appear to be attested among the published brick stamps from Italy. The intriguing cognomen with the ending “-ianus” suggests that Lucius, or one of his ancestors, changed his name, perhaps to denote a change in social status, such as being adopted<sup>17</sup>. Thus, Attalianus may have been a new Imperial period owner of the villa responsible for the construction of the *nymphaeum* and perhaps connected to the Imperial family, or he may have simply been a tile manufacturer.

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<sup>17</sup> BRUUN, EDMONDSON 2015.



Investigations of the Gioiella-Vaiano Villa continue and we intend to return to the site when it becomes feasible again. In the meantime, as our research agenda aims to explore the variety of Roman activity in the Castiglione del Lago region, TRAP has begun projects at two other sites. In 2022, we excavated at Ranciano, just a few kilometers to the southwest of Castiglione del Lago. A magnetometry survey conducted there in November of 2021 indicated the presence of at least four kilns, as well as a large structure that may have been a workshop and/or storage facility. In 2022, the TRAP team identified one limekiln that dated to the Medieval period, as well as a possible structure of late Roman date. However, excavations were cut short when we encountered part of a World War II munition<sup>18</sup>. As of 2023, TRAP is excavating another Roman Imperial site on the southern slope of Castiglione del Lago itself.

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<sup>18</sup> For a summary of the 2022 campaign at Ranciano, see SCHINDLER 2022.

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