



www.otium.unipg.it

OTIVM.
Archeologia e Cultura del Mondo Antico
ISSN 2532-0335 DOI 10.5281/zenodo.5720396



No. 11, Anno 2021 – Article 6

The Roman *Municipium* of *Urvinum Hortense*. Preliminary data and reflections on local pottery*.

Niccolò Cecconi ¹✉
University of Perugia

Benedetta Sciaramenti ²✉
University of Perugia

Abstract: After introducing the history of the Umbrian *Municipium Urvinum Hortense*, and briefly examining the archaeological evidence and the site's topography, this contribution presents the results of an investigation concerning two aspects of craft production in the ancient Roman city. The first concerns the exploitation of raw materials, in particular the rock vein and clay of the hill where the city was erected. The second regards the formal aspects and the specific ways in which locally produced ceramic artefacts were used, all discovered during the excavations conducted by the University of Perugia between 2017 and 2019.

Keywords: *Urvinum Hortense*, pottery, ceramic production, Roman Umbria.

¹✉ Address: Università degli Studi di Perugia, Dipartimento di Lettere-lingue, letterature e civiltà antiche e moderne, Via dell'Aquilone 7, 06123 – Perugia, Italia. Email: n-cecconi@hotmail.it

²✉ Address: Università degli Studi di Perugia, Dipartimento di Lettere-lingue, letterature e civiltà antiche e moderne, Via dell'Aquilone 7, 06123 – Perugia, Italia. Email: benedetta.sciaramenti@unipg.it

* The materials published in this article come from the ongoing archaeological excavation of *Urvinum Hortense* (Collemancio di Cannara - Pg), Scientific Direction of G.L. Grassigli (Full Professor - Classical Archeology - UniPg) granted to the Municipality of Cannara, prot. 16005 del 10.06.2019, by the *Soprintendenza ABAP - Umbria* and the *Direzione Generale ABAP*.

The papers published in this volume were presented at the session n° 162 “Culture contacts in Western Mediterranean Sea during the Roman Age. Pottery as cultural marker between traffics and local productions” of the 25th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) - Beyond Paradigms (Bern 4-7 September 2019), organized under the scientific direction of Prof. Marco Giuman, Dr. Ciro Parodo and Dr. Gianna De Luca (University of Cagliari. Department of Humanities, Languages and Cultural Heritage. Cittadella dei Musei, Piazza Arsenale 1, 09124 Cagliari, Italy).

1. **URVINUM HORTENSE: HISTORY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

At approximately 400m from the little village of Collemancio (Cannara), in the Perugia district, are still visible the monumental ruins of the Roman *Municipium of Urvinum Hortense*.¹ The site, which was first explored in the late 19th century, then in the 1930s and 1980s, and in the years from 2000 to 2015, is yet the focus of archaeological investigation (fig. 1).

The area, now called ‘La Pieve’, is located on top of two levelled hills, more than 500 meters above sea level, and covers almost 60 hectares, about half within the supposed layout of the city walls.

The two main hills, both aligned in direction north-south, are bounded to the east by the slope that descends towards the rivers Topino and Sambro. The course of the hilly formation provided the *Municipium* with a favourable and protected position, which ensured it a controlling role in the Tiber valley.

¹ For the etymology of the name *Urvinum Hortense* see PLIN. *HN.* 3.114; STRABO. 5.2.10. The *poleonimo Urvinum* derives from the theme *urvo-*: ‘furrow of the plow’ and seems to correspond to the term ‘city’. The adjective *Hortense*, on the other hand, suggesting the green aspect of the settlement, was adopted to make a distinction between *Urvinum Hortense* and *Urvinum Metaurense* (Urbino). Compare also SISANI 2006, p. 81 with bibliography.

The presence of springs, by now dried up but nevertheless still evident in some toponyms (Fonte Salceto, Fontebrava, Fontaccia and Santa Maria delle Fontanelle), was also a decisive factor for the urban centre to be developed, and in general for the settlement fortune of the area.

According to some ancient testimonies the Umbrian valley was characterized from an important lacustrine basin formed from the waters of the Topino, of the Sambro and of the Clitunno. Propertius, in particular, describes the southern and eastern slopes of the middle Umbrian Valley, and mentions a *Lacus Umber*², of uncertain extension (fig. 2).

The grandiose work of drainage of the lake basin, instead, can be dated back to the republican period, considering the contemporaneous construction of the *Via Flaminia* in 220 BC and the foundation of the Roman *Municipia* of *Forum Flaminii*, *Trebiae* and *Mevania* in places previously occupied by the waters of the lake.

In this period, moreover, the plain down the hill where *Urvinum Hortense* stood was characterized by copious amounts of streams, which made the area particularly suitable for agriculture, breeding and craft production.

The evidence of a real urbanization of the site, however, can be chronologically referred to the imperial age, or to the period when the city was given the title of *Municipium* in the *Regio Sexta*, during the political and territorial reorganization promoted by Augustus.

To this period of rearrangement of urban spaces can be related the erection of large buildings for both public and private use. Between the end of the 1st century BC and the middle of the 1st century AD numerous structures have been constructed: a recently discovered *nymphaeum* (fig.

² PROPER. *El.* 4.1.24.

1.20)³, an amphitheatre, whose presence is certified by prospections and aerial photos⁴ (fig. 1.4), a theatre, whose realization is proved by an epigraphic document datable to the Julio-Claudian age⁵ (fig. 3), an imposing road, perhaps the *cardo* of the urban system, flanked by an enormous tank with two chambers⁶ and by a monumental structure, about 30m long and divided into three naves by pillars, formally referable to a large public granary⁷ (figs. 1.19 and 4).

The research conducted by the University of Perugia in recent years, have also allowed to restore the chronology of the building of the temple that overlooks the plateau of the southern hill (fig. 5).

During the investigation of the foundation pits, in fact, sealed and overpainted pottery has been discovered, produced not before the Augustan age⁸. The monumental building, dated so far between the end of the 3rd and the 2nd century BC, would seem, therefore, to have been erected when the city became a *Municipium*, with a celebrating purpose.

To the same period belongs also a *domus* located in the western side of the hill, where were brought to light rooms with wall paintings of Antonine age. In this room there is also a well preserved partition of the ceiling with the bust of one of the *Horai*: the Winter⁹.

³ For some preliminary information on the building, see GRASSIGLI *et alii* 2020.

⁴ On this subject see MATTEINI CHIARI 1992; *EAA* s.v. «Urvinum Hortense» (D. Manconi); TOSI 2003, p. 390; ZUDDAS 2012, p. 108.

⁵ Recent find published in GRASSIGLI, SCIARAMENTI 2020.

⁶ See BARBIERI 2002 with bibliography.

⁷ For some preliminary information on the building, see GRASSIGLI *et alii* 2020.

⁸ For the study of the imported pottery in this context see the contribution of CIAFARDINI, GRASSIGLI in this issue.

⁹ The identification of the Winter in the image coming from the so-called 'Domus delle Stagioni' has recently been postulated by SCIARAMENTI u.p.

Further north, a vast thermal complex was also discovered with a canal system, a peristyle, as well as hot and cold baths. The complex, probably built in the 1st century AD, seems to have undergone a reorganization in the 2nd century AD¹⁰. The realization of a large polychrome mosaic with Nilotic scenes in the *frigidarium* can also be ascribed to this period (fig. 6).

To the last phase of life of the settlement can be reported the construction of a church, dedicated to S. Maria, with a small necropolis and construction phases chronologically framed between the 6th and 13th century AD (fig. 7).

B. S.

2. GEOMORPHOLOGY OF THE SITE

Regarding the architectural features of the buildings, it can actually be noted that the techniques used are the polygonal, the victorious, and the brick one. For the realization of the first two was used material that did not come from quarries far from the site, but directly from the rocky bank on which the city was built.

The hill on which *Urvinum Hortense* rises, in fact, is made of a limestone that was well suited for roughing and crafting. It is therefore possible to suppose that in order to build the city it was necessary to mellow and to smoothen the hilly surface originally characterized by asperities that would not have conformed to the need to create an orderly urban plan.

The area was then transformed into an open-air quarry, on which the monuments of the new municipal city were subsequently planted, after careful levelling operations.

¹⁰ MATTEINI CHIARI 1992.

Signs of workmanship and lithotomy were recognized at the 2018 excavation campaign in the bench outcropping on the surface (figs. 7-9). Of interest in this matter is the construction of the road base, which had been directly laid down on the bedrock (fig. 9).

B. S.

3. LOCAL POTTERY

The aforementioned activities can be related to the exploitation of the clay bank that covered the rocky hill.

During the stratigraphic excavations carried out in 2018 and 2019, it was possible to verify that the rocky bank is covered with a layer of yellow and very purified clay, almost devoid of inclusions¹¹ (fig. 7). This clay was used to produce pottery. During the excavations, indeed, in addition to the usual import productions, (amphorae, *sigillata italica*, black-gloss, thin walled etc...¹²) pottery fragments referable to jugs with a handle set on the everted rim, without decoration, and with a yellow and very purified paste were discovered. The colour paste is compatible with the clay of the hill bank (figs. 10 -11).

This characteristic paste has no comparison with those discovered in the neighbouring areas of Assisi, Amelia, Trevi, Spello, Scoppieto, Perugia, Spoleto etc. It would seem to be a peculiar production of *Urvinum Hortense*.

Some aspects make these artefacts interesting:

¹¹ For some preliminary information on the excavations see: Fasti-online reports: http://www.fastionline.org/excavation/micro_view.php?fst_cd=AIAC_312&curcol=sea_cd-AIAC_9872 and http://www.fastionline.org/excavation/micro_view.php?fst_cd=AIAC_312&curcol=sea_cd-AIAC_10307

¹² See the paper of CIAFARDINI, GRASSIGLI in this issue.

1) The correspondence between the pottery's paste and the clay of the hill bank. This correspondence would seem to indicate a link between the exploitation of the area that, during the construction of the city, and the removal of clay for craft purposes.

2) The morphology. This type of vases is well attested in the Umbrian territory, in particular between the end of the 1st century BC and the end of the 1st century AD in Gubbio¹³, Baschi¹⁴ and Assisi¹⁵.

3) It is possible to observe that the yellow paste jugs have been founded only in the vicinity of the temple area.

These artefacts, indeed, were not found either in the area of the bath complex, not in the area of the warehouse, not in the area of the *nymphaeum*, and not close to the tank, but exclusively in the vicinity of the sacred area and more precisely close to the structures west of the temple (figs. 12-13).

In particular, the artefacts come from four contiguous topographic units, all closely connected to the sacred area (figs. 13-14):

A) A large space devoid of structures, immediately west of the temple, where, in the Middle age, a church and some burials were placed.

B) A fountain on the western side of the temple podium.

C) A small hypaethral room located at the north-western corner of the temple, north of the aforementioned fountain and near a road junction.

D) A circular platform, with a diameter of 2 m, made up of thick slabs of limestone, bordered by a *cocciopesto* curb. The platform was placed in a hole in the rocky bank 1 m deep, under the hypaethral room (figs. 14-15).

¹³ MATTEINI CHIARI 1995, p. 284.

¹⁴ BERGAMINI 2008, pp. 272-274.

¹⁵ MATTEINI CHIARI 2002, pp. 77-84.

This structure was devoid of traces of periodic wear and was probably buried immediately after an exceptional ritual operation. However, its memory had been preserved thanks to the construction of the hypaethral room located exactly above.

The indications, therefore, suggest that it is a sacred preparation, connected to the monumental construction of the temple and the surrounding rooms (hypaethral room and fountain)¹⁶.

Of particular interest is the discovery, above this platform, of the upper part of a small altar with volutes (fig. 16), and the purified yellow-paste jug, probably used for ritual actions (fig. 17).

Based on the data, it is possible to hypothesize that peculiar vascular forms were produced in *Urvinum Hortense*, in particular jugs, made with clay extracted directly from the rocky bank, was used on the occasion of religious events. These jugs, indeed, may have been used for libations, as the discovery of one of them, close to the altar, would seem indicate.

In the Italian context, the sacred use of the jug as a *praefericulum*, or as a ritual vessel for sacrifices¹⁷, is widely attested, even in more ancient times¹⁸.

Alongside these characteristic forms of *Urvinum Hortense*, there are other ceramic products, made with clays extracted in peripheral areas of the urban settlement.

¹⁶ See GRASSIGLI *et alii* 2020 for some preliminary information on the structure.

¹⁷ See COLONNA 1991-1992, p. 91

¹⁸ The use of locally manufactured ceramic products, made exclusively for ritual use, is found in the panorama of central-southern Italy, particularly in the Hellenistic and proto-imperial age. At Veio, in the votive basin near the main temple, a huge deposit was found composed, for the most part, of Hellenistic 'olpette' of 'depurata acroma' produced locally (See AMBROSINI 2009 and AMBROSINI 2012). Some of these artefacts show votive inscriptions that would seem to indicate their exclusive use for ritual activities carried out in the sacred area. A similar older context has been found in S. Cecilia in Anagni, Casale Pian Roseto in Veio and in *Satricum* (See CARANDINI *et alii* 2007, p. 458).

As previously highlighted the valley of *Urvinum Hortense* was crossed by several streams, which certainly would have favoured the establishment of workshops for pottery production.

The presence of numerous clayey veins would have facilitated this type of activity. The soils of the valley, however, differ in quality from those of the hill. They are dark brown and reddish in colour and very rich in inclusions of limestone and quartz.

This type of paste is well attested in the common ware identified during the excavations of *Urvinum Hortense* and has been used both in purified pottery, for heterogeneous tableware, and for fire ware, mainly pots (figs. 18-19).

Unlike the yellow and purified ceramic made with clay from the hill, these forms are more numerous, less fine, distributed throughout the site and mainly in the warehouse area and at the bath complex.

N. C.

4. CONCLUSION

After the examination of the data, it was possible to highlight that a limited number of vases (mostly jugs), produced with the fine and yellow clay of the hill, had been used in limited contexts referable to the sacred area.

On the other hand, for the production of common and fire ware, it was preferred to use other clay quarries, less purified.

Further investigations in the area will be able to verify these hypotheses, provide new and more precise information on this class of pottery, and propose a broad and articulated picture of the exploitation of the hill of *Urvinum Hortense*.

N. C.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

AMBROSINI 2009: L. Ambrosini, *La cisterna arcaica con l'incluso deposito di età ellenistica. Scavi Santangelo 1945-1946 e Università di Roma « La Sapienza » 1996 e 2006*, Roma 2009.

AMBROSINI 2012: *Le olpette in ceramica acroma depurata nei contesti votivi: il caso del santuario di Portonaccio a Veio*, in *MEFRA* 124.2, 2012, pp. 345-376.

BARBERINI 2005: C. Barberini, *Un nuovo rilievo della chiesa di Santa Maria di Urvinum Hortense*, in *Atti dell'Accademia Properziana del Subasio*, Serie VII, 10, 2005, pp. 7-42.

BARBIERI 2002: M. E. Barbieri, *La forma urbana di Urvinum Hortense*, in L. Quilici, S. Quilici Gigli (eds.), *Città dell'Umbria, Atlante Tematico di Topografia Antica*, XI Suppl., Roma 2002, pp. 8-59.

BERGAMINI 2002: M. Bergamini, *Antiquarium Comunale di Baschi*, Perugia 2002.

BERNARDI, COMODI 2001: M. Bernardi, P. Comodi, *Ceramica a vetrina sparsa in Umbria. I materiali dello scavo di Urvinum Hortense (PG): studio archeologico-archeometrico*, in *Archeologia medievale* 28, 2001, pp. 225-239.

BINAZZI 1986: G. Binazzi, *La chiesa di S. Maria ad Urbinum Hortense*, in *RACr* 62, 1986, pp. 139-155.

BIZZOZZERO 1933: G. C. Bizzozzero, *La zona archeologica di Collemancio, "Urbinum Hortense"*, in *Bollettino della Regia deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria* 30, Perugia 1933.

BIZZOZZERO 1976: G. Bizzozzero, *Origini e vicende di Cannara e dintorni*, Foligno 1976.

BRADLEY 2000: G. Bradley, *Ancient Umbria. State, culture, and identity in central Italy from the Iron Age to the Augustan era*, Oxford 2000.

CARANDINI *et alii* 2007: A. Carandini, M. T. D'Alessio, H. Di Giuseppe (eds.), *La fattoria e la villa dell'Auditorium nel quartiere flaminio di Roma*, Roma 2007.

CIPICIANI 2006: M. L. Cipiciani, *I marchi su terra sigillata italica di Urvinum Hortense*, in *AnnPerugia* 35, 2004-2007, pp. 49-70.

CIPICIANI 2006: M. L. Cipiciani, *I bolli su terra sigillata italica di Urvinum Hortense*, in MENCHELLI, PASQUINUCCI (eds.), Pisa 2006, pp. 93-102.

COLONNA 1991-1992: G. Colonna, *Altari e sacelli. L'Area Sud di Pyrgi dopo otto anni di ricerche*, in *RendPontAc* 64, 1991-1992, pp. 63-115.

COSTANTINO *et alii* 2002: F. Costantino, P. Comodi, G. D. Gatta, P. F. Zanazzi, M. Matteini Chiari, *Studio della provenienza e dei processi di cottura di reperti fittili romani dell'area di Cannara-Collemancio (Perugia) attraverso l'analisi Rietveld*, in *Atti 82° Congresso Nazionale della Società Italiana di Mineralogia e Petrologia* (Cosenza, 18-20 settembre 2002), in *Plinius* 28, 2002, p. 118.

DE MEO 1985: F. De Meo, *Urvinum Hortense, aspetti geografici*, in *BFoligno* 9, 1985, pp. 367-368.

DONNINI 2006: L. Donnini, *Nuovi frammenti di anfora recanti bolli, graffiti e titoli picti dagli scavi di Urvinum Hortense*, in MENCHELLI, PASQUINUCCI 2006, pp. 87-92.

FALOCI PULIGNANI 1885: M. Faloci Pulignani, *L'Odeporico dell'abbate Don Giuseppe Di Costanzo*, in *Archivio Storico Marche e Umbria* II, 1885, pp. 510-702.

GRASSIGLI, SCIARAMENTI 2020: G.L. Grassigli, B. Sciaramenti, *La nuova iscrizione del teatro di Urvinum Hortense. Dalla dedica al reimpiego*, in *Epigraphica* 82, 2020, pp. 189-201.

GRASSIGLI *et alii* 2020: G.L. Grassigli, B. Sciaramenti, N. Cecconi, E. Ciafardini. P.V. Rubio, *La rinascita di Urvinum Hortense*, in *Archeo* 427, 2020, pp. 38-53.

MANCONI 1985: D. Manconi, *La zona archeologica di Collemancio di Cannara*, in *BFoligno* 9, 1985, pp. 355-358.

MANCONI 1987: D. Manconi, *La zona archeologica di Collemancio di Cannara*, *BFoligno* 11, 1987, p. 395.

MATTEINI CHIARI 1995: M. Matteini Chiari, *Museo Comunale di Gubbio. Materiali archeologici*, Perugia 1995.

MATTEINI CHIARI 2002: M. Matteini Chiari, *Raccolte Comunali di Assisi. Materiali archeologici. Cultura materiale, antichità egizie*, Perugia 2002.

MATTEINI CHIARI 2006: M. Matteini Chiari, *Lacus UMBER. Ricerche di superficie nella media valle umbra. Il territorio compreso fra Asisium, Hispellum e Urvinum Hortense*, in MENCHELLI, PASQUINUCCI 2006, pp. 77-86.

MENCHELLI, PASQUINUCCI 2006: S. Menchelli, M. Pasquinucci (eds.), *Territorio e produzioni ceramiche. Paesaggi, economia e società in età romana. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Pisa, 20-22 ottobre 2005)*, Pisa 2006.

NISSEN 1864: E. Nissen, *Urvinum Hortense. Lettera al sig. prof. Rocchi a Bologna*, in *BdI* 11, 1864, pp. 241-249.

MERCURELLI SALARI, ANNIBALI 1998: P. Mercurelli Salari, F. Annibali, *Cannara Collemancio e l'antica Urvinum Hortense*, Cannara 1998.

SENSI 1985: L. Sensi, *Nuovi documenti epigrafici da Urvinum Hortense (Collemancio di Cannara, PG)*, in *BFoligno* 9, 1985, pp. 369-375.

SISANI 2006: S. Sisani, *Umbria Marche*, Roma 2006.

SISANI 2009: S. Sisani, *Dirimens Tiberis? I confini tra Etruria e Umbria*, in F. Coarelli, H. Patterson (eds.), *Mercator placidissimus. The Tiber Valley in antiquity. New research in the upper and middle river valley (Rome, 27-28 February 2004)*, Roma 2008, pp. 45-85.

SQUILLACE 2018: D. Squillace, *Il mosaico pavimentale a soggetto nilotico di Collemancio. Elementi topografici, vecchi dati e nuove considerazioni sull'iconografia dei personaggi figurati*, in C. Angelelli, C. Cecalupo, M.E. Erba, D. Massara, F. Rinaldi (eds.), *Atti del XXIII Colloquio dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio e la conservazione del mosaico (Narni, 15-18 marzo 2017)*, Roma 2018, pp. 109-119.

TOMASSONI 1989: S. Tomassoni, *L'archivio del Comitato per la difesa dei monumenti e del paesaggio di Cannara (Inventario)*, Cannara 1989.

TOSI 2003: G. Tosi, *Gli edifici per spettacoli nell'Italia romana I*, Roma 2003.

ZUDDAS 2012: E. Zuddas, *Supplementa Italica. Nuova serie. Regio VI. Umbria. Urvinum Hortense (Collemancio - I.G.M. 131 IV NO; Bastia - 123 III SO; Spello - 131 IV NE)*, Roma 2012.

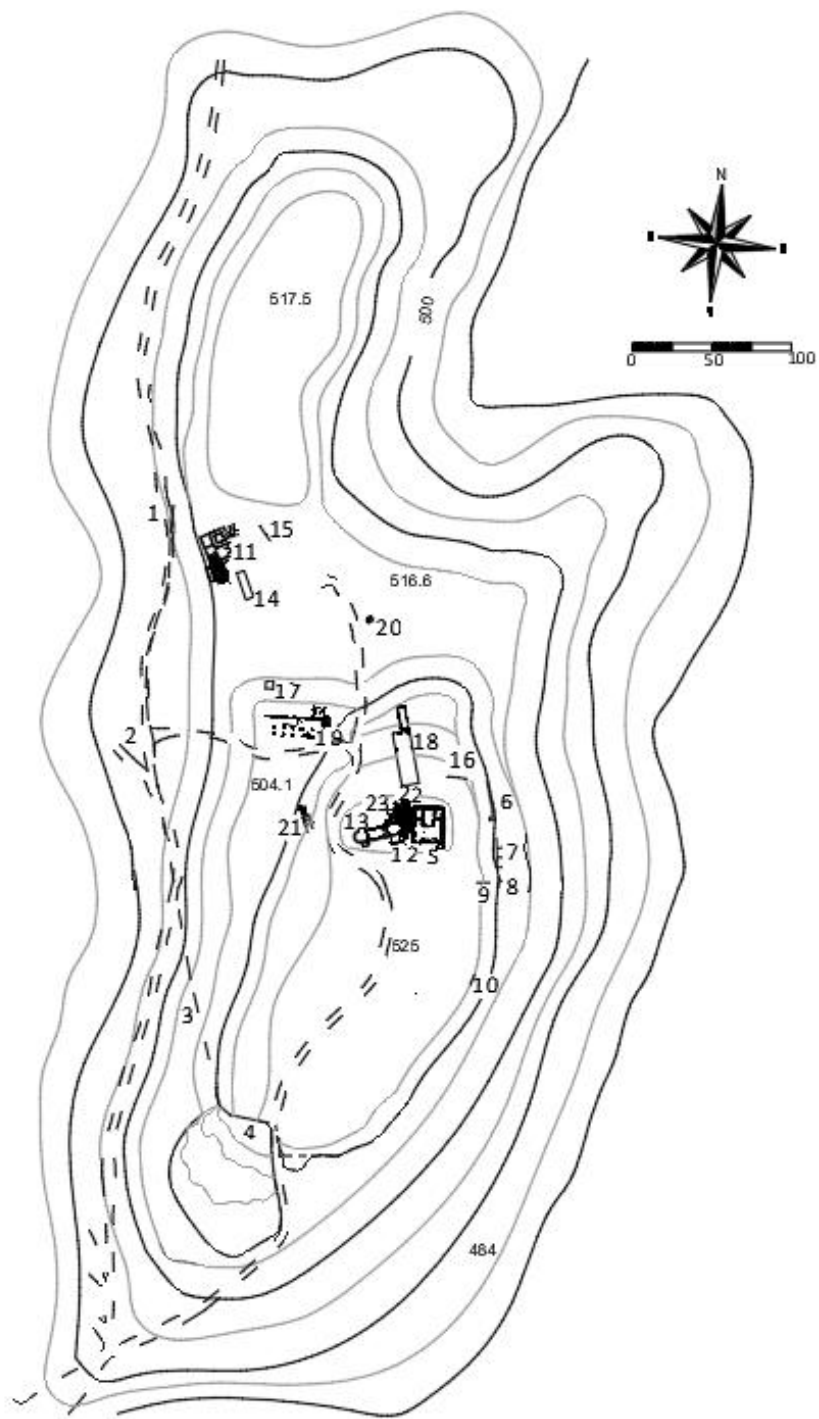


Fig. 1. *Uroinum Hortense.* Topographic map. 1-3: walls; 4: amphitheatre; 5: temple; 6-10: walls; 11: bath complex; 12: street axis; 13: church of S. Maria; 14: tank; 15-16: terrace; 17: roman buildings; 18: two-chamber tank; 19: warehouse; 20: *nymphaeum*; 21: house (im. el. by Auth.).

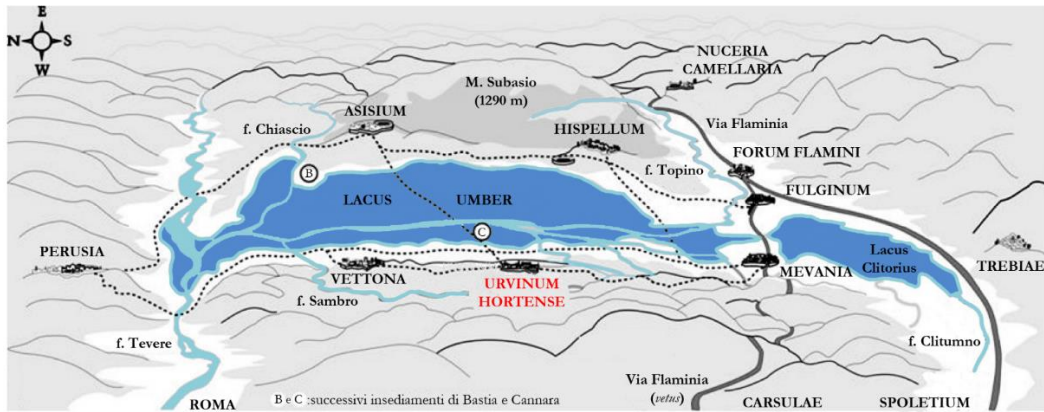


Fig. 2. Hypothetical reconstruction of the *Lacus Umber* (from MERCURELLI SALARI, ANNIBALI 1998).



Fig. 3. Epigraph mentioning the theatre (from GRASSIGLI, SCIARAMENTI 2020).

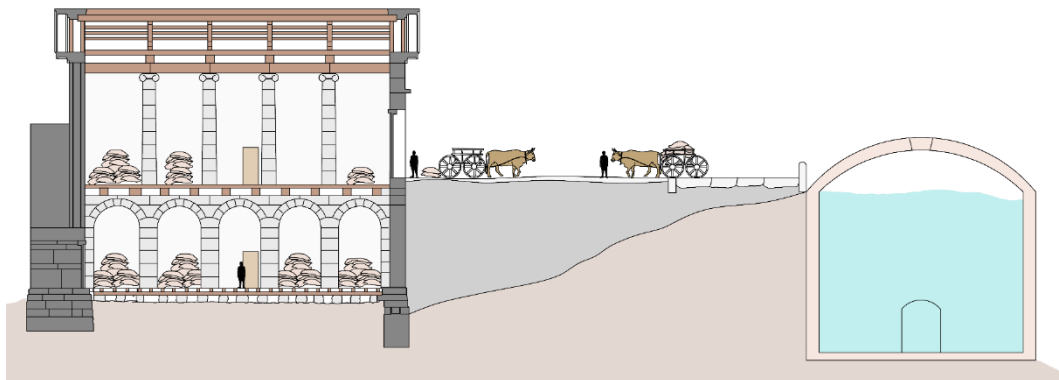


Fig. 4. Section (west-east) of the warehouse, street and two-chambers tank (im. el. by N.Cecconi).



Fig. 5. Temple (im. el. by N.Cecconi).

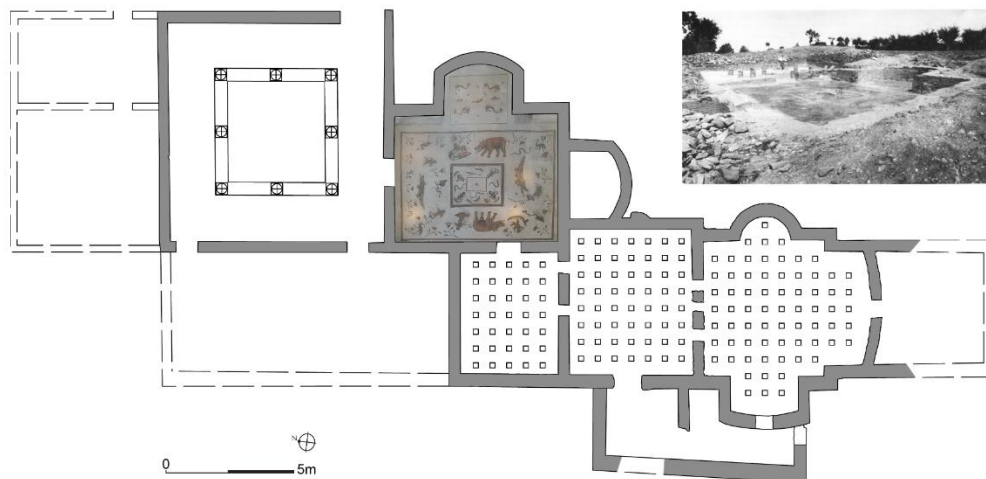


Fig. 6. Bath complex (im. el. by N. Cecconi).

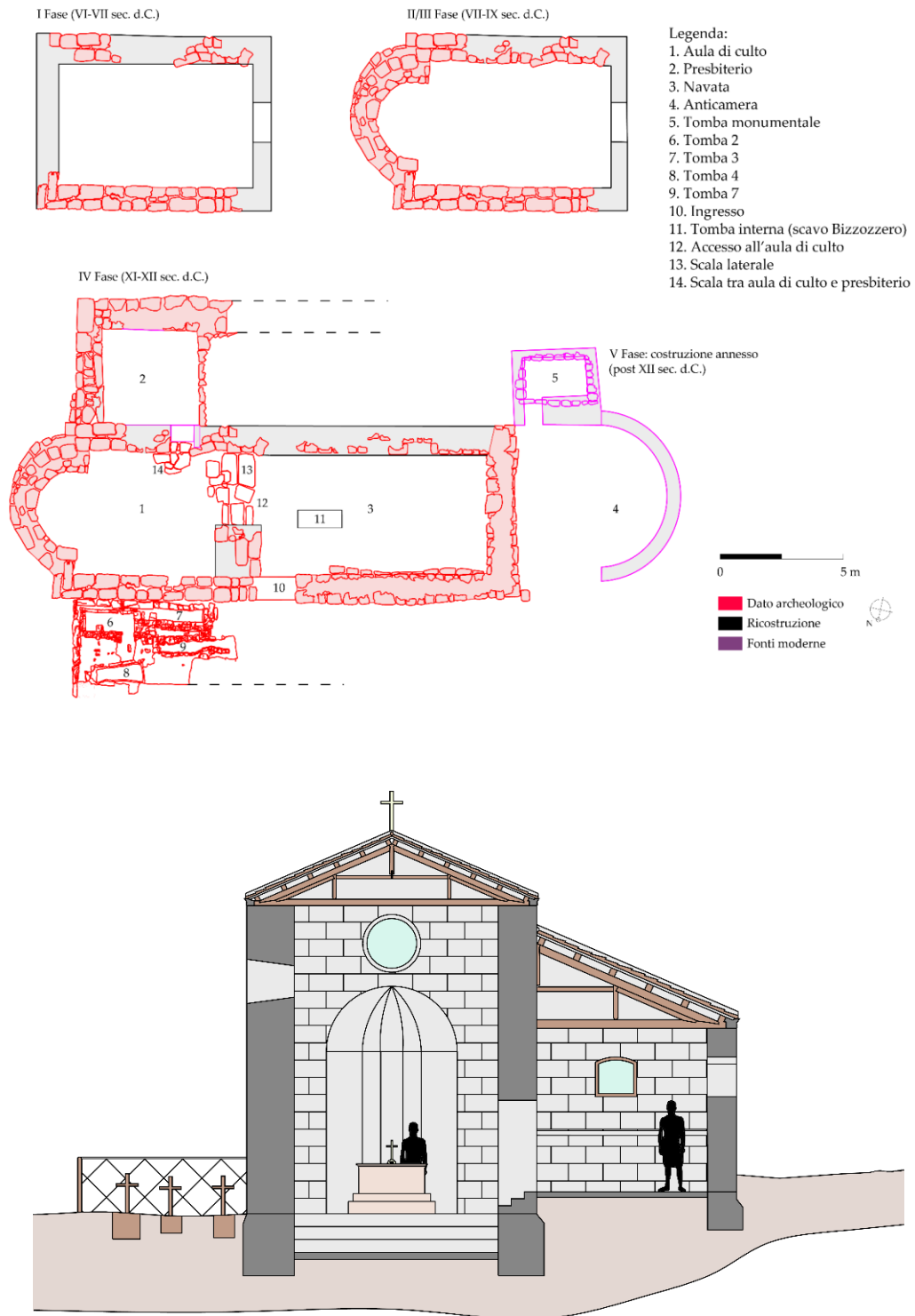


Fig. 7. Church of S. Maria. Planning and reconstruction of phase IV (im. el. by N. Cecconi).



Fig. 8. Area west of temple. Layer of pure yellow clay, above the bedrock and below layer of brown earth (ph. el. by Auth.).

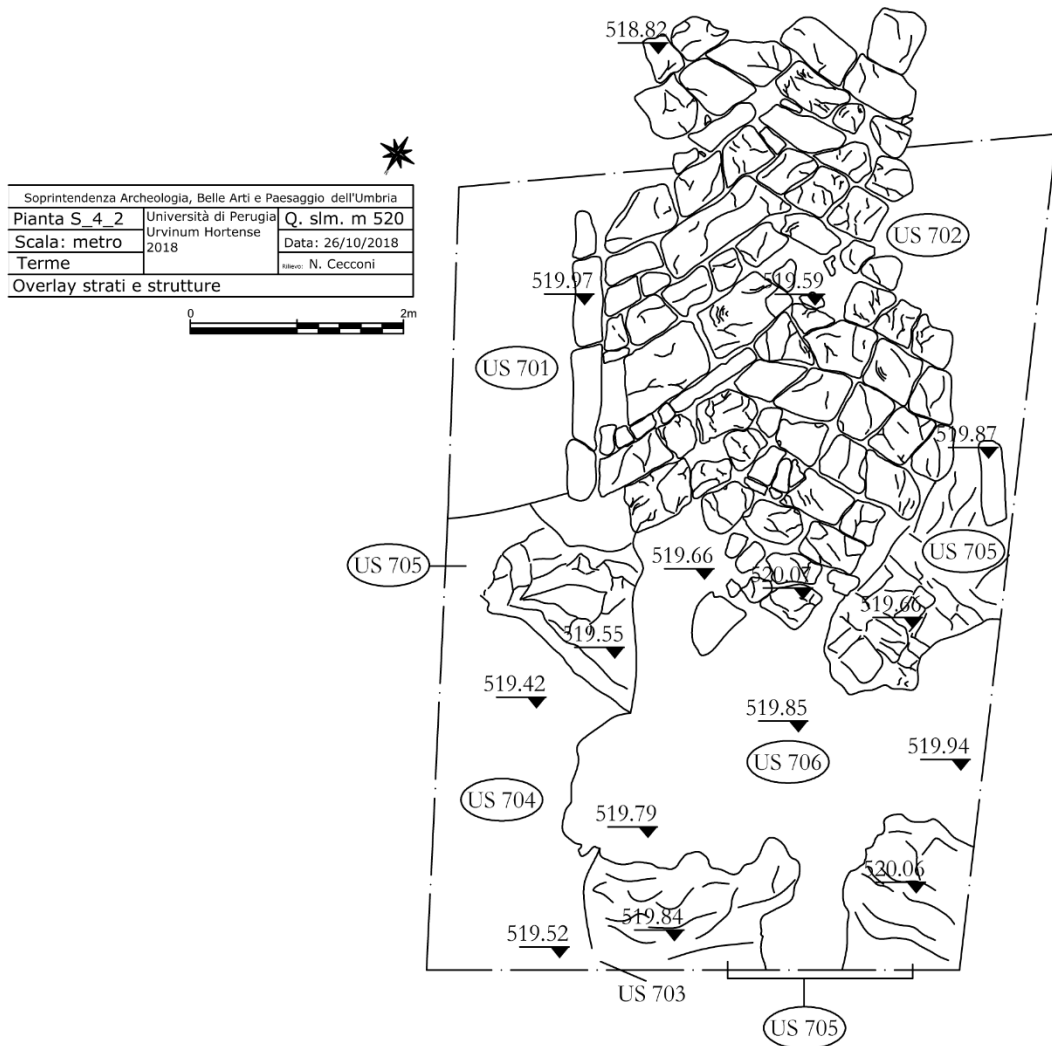


Fig. 9. Plan showing the relationship between the street (US 702) and the bedrock (UOSS 705-706) (im. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 10. Fragments of yellow and depurated paste pottery (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 11. Yellow and purified paste jugs. Fragments and reconstructive drawing of the *Urvinum Hortense* type (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 12. West area of the temple (im. el. by N.Cecconi).

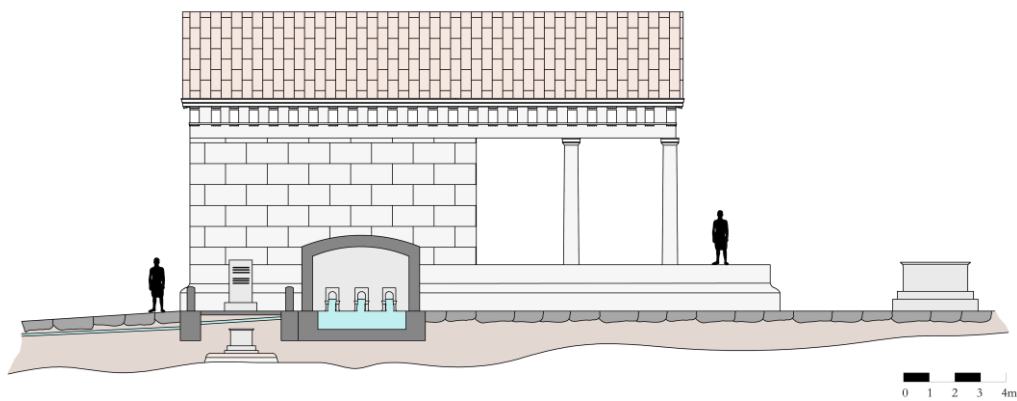


Fig. 13. Temple; fountain; hypaethral building and underlying platform. Western elevation with north-south section (im. el. by N.Cecconi).



Fig. 14. Photogrammetric view of the circular platform (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 15. Circular platform (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 16. Upper part of the altar found above the circular underground platform (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 17. Fragments of the jug found on the *cocciopesto* curb of the platform (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 18. Ceramic fragments of poorly purified clay (ph. el. by Auth.).



Fig. 19. Ceramic fragments of poorly purified clay (ph. el. by Auth.).