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Structures of Power: From Imperial Villa to Monastic Estate at Villamagna (Italy)

Elizabeth Fentress and Caroline Goodson

ABSTRACT: In early medieval Italy, some medieval settlements were anchored on ancient Roman sites which may have provided authority and legitimacy for their post-Roman inhabitants. The current paper examines the broad phenomena of use and reuse of an ancient imperial site, through the case study of the recently excavated site of Villamagna, near Anagni in Central-Southern Italy. This site provides new information about the life of an imperial villa over the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods and the influence that ancient legacies had on the shape of later use of the site. We will argue that the ancient estate of Villa Magna, founded in the second century, remained an imperial property through the seventh century and was transferred to the papacy at some point before the ninth century. The history of the estate between the late fifth and the twelfth century is described, and the evidence for changes of ownership is discussed. The use of some of the villa's physical structures, the maintenance of its agricultural terrain and the remains of its architectural materials to project power over the landscape of Southern Italy can be seen as a case of imperial ownership, over time, providing an unbreakable stability and anchoring a centre of power even through very changed historical contexts.

The post-Roman landscape of Italy was dominated by the hulking remains of ancient structures and the looming spectre of ancient imperial grandeur. The strategies by which ancient villas have been reconfigured for new, medieval purposes have been studied extensively over the past decades.¹ Research has revealed the value placed on late Roman villas in the development of ecclesiastical networks, for example.² As the phenomenon of reuse is currently understood, however, there is usually a distinction drawn between urban reuse of architecture, topographic associations and ancient building materials (*spolia*) for the purposes of asserting new political authority³ and rural reuse of buildings for 'squatting', burial, industrial or agricultural production, uses which may have

¹ Francovich and Hodges 2003, Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau 2005, Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau, and Valenti 2005; Christie 2006.

² Chavarría Arnau 2005, Bowes 2006.

³ See, for example, on Rome Carocci 1993, 170; Ellis 1998, 61–76; Carocci 2010, 160–2; Goodson 2011 and for an overview, Christie 2006, 208–27.

capitalised on the stability afforded by standing walls and road systems, but which hardly invoke the ideological values and symbolic capital of ancient grandeur.⁴ This distinction between rural and urban is no longer helpful in examining the variety of opportunities ancient legacies applied to medieval sites, because both ideology-driven appropriation and pragmatic reuse existed simultaneously in many contexts, and because different kinds of ancient legacies and medieval realities existed within the same site, and even at the same moment in time. In what follows, we focus on a single site in Central-Southern Italy, Villamagna, in order to demonstrate the longevity of an imperial legacy on the Italian landscape both in political and economic terms. The processes of manipulating inheritance described here are not unique to this site, but rather typical of many early medieval rural settlements which capitalised on the infrastructural and structural legacies of an ancient investment in a place.⁵

Excavations at the site of Villamagna were carried out between 2006 and 2010 under the auspices of the British School at Rome, the Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici del Lazio, and the University of Pennsylvania. The objectives of the excavation were to understand the history of ancient imperial villa, known in antiquity as ‘Villa Magna,’ over the *longue durée* and to clarify the nature of its ownership and economy between its foundation in the second century, probably by the Emperor Hadrian, the donation of its land to the monastery of S. Pietro in Villamagna in AD 976, and its final abandonment around 1400. The property is vast and what we know of it inevitably partial; however, the three areas of the villa which we investigated shed important light on its history. This contribution concentrates on the history of the site from the sixth century through the central Middle Ages and views the evidence from the important new site through the themes of power and place. We are particularly interested in the question of the ownership and management of the land: clearly the estate was always a centre of power, but whose? The emperor, the fisc, the church, and local landlords are each possible in various periods, and it has been our task to discover whether power over the landscape remained in urban hands, or devolved to a more local level, how the place fit into imperial networks or a reduced, regional profile. In both cases, the lessons from the site show the importance of the legacy of Roman landholding patterns and structures in the creation of wealth and authority in the Middle Ages. In what follows we will describe each major phase and its relationship to the central themes of this volume and larger patterns of power in rural landscapes with particular attention to the models of other parts of Italy.

⁴ On which, see Lewit 2006, Christie 2006, 451–96.

⁵ The Byzantine section was principally written by Fentress, the Medieval by Goodson.

Villamagna lies at the base of the Lepini mountains, a small mountain range between the Apennines and the Mediterranean Sea, some 60 km south of Rome. The site is rich with natural springs and a river, the Sacco, runs below it. The villa whose ruins dominate the site was built in the early second century, and stayed in imperial hands into the third century at least.⁶ In the late tenth century, a group of nobles from Anagni gave land of the *fundus Villa Magni* and two other *fundi* to a monastery of S. Pietro located on the same *fundus*, endowing the monastery with a core piece of agricultural property.⁷ A series of charters and court records from the eleventh through to the thirteenth century speak to a small rural monastery with properties in the area of the original *fundus*, which increased through pious donations. It became a rival power to the local aristocrats, embroiled in regional and papal politics of the central Middle Ages, culminating in the suppression of the monastery in 1297 by Pope Boniface VIII.⁸ After the death of the monastery, the village of estate workers endured at least for a little while, as the cemetery was densely used in the fourteenth century. It was later fortified in the fourteenth century and then abandoned; it is referred to as a *castrum dirutum* in 1478.⁹ A church of S. Pietro, the abbey church of the monastery, still stands at the site, with an early-modern portal crafted from an antique entablature, inscribed in antiquity as [...O VILLAE MAGNAE...].¹⁰

There has been no previous scientific archaeology at the site and no major antiquarian study in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries; no known ancient statuary is linked to Villamagna, and only a few inscriptions are recorded. The documents of the monastic archive, transferred to the Archivio capitolare of Anagni, are well known. They report not only the local properties of the monastery, including the *incastellamento* of the nearby hill of Monte S. Giuliano, but also a narrative of conflict between the monastery, its villagers and local lords, regarding property rights and work obligations.¹¹

Essentially, three sites were excavated (Fig 1). The first of these, at Site A, was a winery on a vast scale, comprising reception spaces, baths and, at its heart, a winery combined with a banqueting hall, where the *vendemia* was celebrated in style (Fig 2).¹² This complex was abandoned around the middle of the third century, and the *dolia* were removed to some unknown location. It was reoccupied in the early middle ages. Dozens of postholes from medieval wooden structures were

⁶ On the Roman phases of the villa, see Fentress and Maiuro 2011. On the medieval phases, Fentress and Goodson 2012. The final publication of the site is now in press: Fentress, Goodson and Maiuro, forthcoming.

⁷ ACA, Arm. I, fasc. XI, n. 552 [B] (Flascassovitti 1994, doc. 1).

⁸ Some relevant documents from the ACA are published in Flascassovitti 2007.

⁹ Bull of Sixtus IV, ASV, Reg Vat 598, f. 265. These are discussed in Motta 1979–82, 100, n. 32.

¹⁰ *CIL* 10.5909, V, p. 982. On the entablature, see Fentress and Maiuro 2011, 337.

¹¹ Flascassovitti 1994 and 2007; Toubert 1973, 322–23.

¹² Fentress and Maiuro 2011.

identified in excavation, though few of them have material or floors to permit dating. To the south of the structure, an early medieval village of wooden huts developed.

The second, Site B/C was located just south of what appears, from the geophysical survey, to have been the imperial residence of the villa (Fig 3). Of this we recovered only the front of the lower storey, an arcaded cryptoporticus with a small door leading into the interior of the building. In front of it a piazza paved with limestone pavers extended south of the façade of the building for at least 17m, and probably as much as 25m. To judge from the plan of the villa which emerges from magnetometry, the piazza served as the centre of the complex of buildings. Along the edge of the piazza, the building is fronted by a structure that must originally have been a portico, transformed somewhat later into arcading. In the fourth century, a brick-built apsed structure, with a porch, was built into the piazza at 5 degrees to the imperial building. Measuring 23.70m by 12.30m, it was initially interpreted as a church, but the absence of pavement and the rather early date make it more likely to have been a large *cella vinaria*, on the form of the apsed one at Passolombardo. The typology of the building indeed relates to the passage of Palladius, who wrote of a '*cella vinaria.... Ut basilicae ipsius forma.*'¹³

The third, Site D, was a barracks, built along a paved road running east–west towards the imperial residence (Fig 4). Built in the first half of the third century, just before the winery was abandoned, the building comprises two blocks of rooms, each ten rooms long, separated by a narrow alley onto which the rooms face. To the south of them a portico lines the road. However, there is no access to the portico from the rooms in the block: indeed, the only communication between its rooms is via the alley, which has a drain running down the middle. The northern block is two rooms wide, with, again, openings only onto the alley. Rooms in both blocks have a hearth or a *dolium* set in the floor, or both, as well as various other vessels and querns. The domestic nature of the individual rooms, the large quantity of objects associated with women, generally hairpins and needles, the absence of military equipment or any notable number of amphorae, and the presence of infant burials under the floors has led us to identify the building as slave barracks, built along one of the roads leading to the central portion of the villa in the mid-third century AD. Use of the barracks continued until somewhere between 450 and 470.

The building had certainly collapsed by the last quarter of the fifth century, when its masonry walls fell on the abandoned rooms. It seems most likely that it collapsed from a structural weakness and subsoil slippage, indicated by cracks along the building and a pronounced folding in the road. The absence of late fifth- and early sixth-century pottery is common to the villa as a whole, and it

¹³ Palladio *Opus Agriculturae* I, 18; For Passolombardo, Ricci 2005.

seems probable, given the general availability of this pottery elsewhere, that the whole site of the villa was abandoned around this time, and remained unoccupied for around a century.

THE BYZANTINE PERIOD

Renewed investment in the site is signalled by the reconstruction of the apsed building, now certainly a church. The brick walls, perhaps after suffering some damage, were evenly razed down to foundation level and rebuilt in a regular *opus vittatum mixtum* with two courses of tuff blocks for each course of brick. Over the entrance portal were three small arched windows: the sides of the two lateral windows are still preserved in the masonry on either side of the existing door. Two subsidiary doors flanked the central portal (Fig 5).

The date of this reconstruction can be roughly established from material dating to the middle of the sixth century, including several coins of Justinian I. The church was not the only structure renewed in this period. The pavement within the cryptoporticus below the presumed imperial residential building was removed to well below the level of the foundations, and a short wall was constructed across its width, perhaps linking the façade to one of the piers, thereby shoring up the roof and subdividing the length of the cryptoporticus. To the west of this wall at least nine *dolia* were set into the portico, in a double row parallel to the façade, under the roof (Figs 6 and 7). Eight of these were very substantial, measuring at least 1.5m deep and 1.5m in diameter. All were subsequently robbed, although two were broken in the process, leaving their fragments among the abandonment rubble. We do not, of course, know how large this storage space originally was: the available space to the west, based on the geophysical survey, would have allowed as many as another eight pairs of *dolia* to the west of it. The placement of the *doliarium* in this section of the cryptoporticus blocked the only door into the lower storey that we know, but this does not necessarily signify that the building remained unoccupied.

We also found evidence for a contemporary reoccupation within the barracks block at Site D, where the block along the road appears to have suffered less than the northern block in the fifth-century destruction of the building (Fig 8). The road was cleared of debris, patched and filled where earth movement had created a deep crease in the terrain. The portico was apparently rebuilt, its original floor cut away to below the foundations of the walls. In it was found a row of rooms with walls composed of roughly mortared rubble and chunks of reused masonry. Although their position along the road might suggest a use for shops, the occupation seems domestic in character. Numerous coarseware vessels, both here and in the alley to the north, indicate a fairly intensive occupation. Plentiful small finds, again consisting largely of needles and hairpins, also argue for domestic

occupation. This reoccupation involved substantial reconstruction of rooms in stone, but remained rather simple; perhaps we are again looking at housing for workers on the agricultural estate.

A curious structure to the west of the reoccupied barracks, partially built over their ruins, is a rectangular building defined by robber trenches where its walls were removed; these measure 8.23m × 17.50m. At its north end was found the bottom of a tank, or cistern, built onto a rough foundation and bisected by a shallow channel draining into the room to the south. Although initially we had seen this building as a defensive structure, there is no real evidence for such a use; the tank, which can be reached from a step, might most plausibly be interpreted as part of an installation for wine-pressing, with a press to the south of it. The central channel seems to lead to the south, and there is no explanation for such a channel in the context of a water cistern or a *fullonica*. Pottery of the sixth and seventh centuries, particularly *spatheia* 3A amphorae, suggests a remarkably late example of a wine-pressing facility. Like the *cella vinaria*, this would indicate a continuity in the use of the estate for intensive wine production.

In the seventh century, occupation of the barrack rooms built into the portico along the road came to an abrupt end, as they burnt down sufficiently violently to cover the smashed pottery inside them with a thick layer of ash. Charred traces of beams or planks from the roof cover the floors of the rooms on the portico. Whether this destruction was the result of military activity or an accident we do not know – it is not a period in which war is attested in this area – but it certainly resulted in the final abandonment of the building. This event was followed by the cutting of a ditch, which crosses the site diagonally, running southeast-northwest. As much as 2m wide and 1.5m deep with a U-shaped profile, the ditch cut through the destruction layers associated with the barracks buildings, at an angle to them. It also cut the road, suggesting that it was intended to impede an approach to the ridge from the east (Fig 9).

DISCUSSION

The reoccupation of the site in the sixth and seventh centuries may thus be sketched out as a period of revival, with new investment in the old imperial estate, with the construction of a church in an older structure and the creation of the *doliarium* on the piazza in front of it. This impressive storage structure was almost certainly intended for wine, continuing the vocation of the estate since its inception. The piazza served as the centre of the estate, as it had done in antiquity, although now the dominant structure will have been that of the church, with administrative and storage buildings to the north and perhaps the south, possibly even occupying the old imperial residence. The centrality of wine storage to this reinvestment must be considered to some extent as display, emphasizing the

dominance of the villa over the vineyards of the surrounding countryside, whether the wine was produced directly by the estate, or collected as rent from tenants or as taxes. Housing for workers seems to have been located to the east, along the road, following the earlier pattern of use for this area. We know nothing of the rest of the estate, although there are a few sherds of sixth-century pottery in the substructures of the imperial-period winery. There seems no doubt, however, that the estate was still centrally controlled, with resources available for major building, and that workers were available to run it. Coins are relatively plentiful: there are five *pentanummi* of Justinian, as well as a gold *tremissis*, while at Site D there are five coins of Justin II (AD 565–78).¹⁴ The question remains, whose estate was it?

There are essentially three possibilities: the fisc, with the property returned to imperial control after the Justinianic reconquest; the church, assuming that the estate had left the fisc at some point in the previous centuries; and a private landlord, who could have held an emphyteutic lease on either a fiscal or church property or acquired the property in some other way. As no direct evidence is present for any of these possibilities, deciding between them risks pure speculation. The estate may have been part of the group of papal estates in the area that formed the *Patrimonium Labicanum* by the time of Gregory II (715–31), but there is nothing to prove it.¹⁵ However, we cannot ignore the strong element of continuity between the estate of the fifth century and that of the sixth, nor the apparent coincidence of the date of the reoccupation with that of the Byzantine victory over the Goths, a date that seems to be confirmed by the relatively large number of coins of Justinian I, including the high-value *tremissis*. Although the presence of a very substantial church of the sixth century might imply that the estate was already in ecclesiastical hands, it appears not to have had a baptistery, and thus may not have served as a community church. It may, thus, have been built as a private church by whoever was responsible for the site in that period, perhaps an imperial procurator. A parallel might be the richly equipped and endowed church built next to the *praetorium* of the *massa* Cornutiana of Flavius Valila near Tivoli, at some point before AD 471. Domenico Vera argues that that was staffed with clergy and attracted the peasants not only of the estate but also of the surrounding area.¹⁶ At the imperial villa of S. Giusto in the fifth century there were two huge churches, one of which was specifically a funerary church.¹⁷ However, at S. Giusto the funerary church was secondary to a large ecclesiastical complex complete with a baptistery, assumed to have

¹⁴ De Magistris reports the find of a gold coin of Justinian in 1667 at Villamagna. See the letters of Mons. Gio. Bissaiga, chamberlain of Alessandro VII to Bishop of Anagni, Mons. Castiglioni, transcribed in Ambrosi De Magistris 1889, 199, n. 1.

¹⁵ On the patrimony of the church in this area Marazzi 1998, 126–7.

¹⁶ ‘Charta Cornutiana,’ ed. Duchesne in *LP*, CXLVI–VIII; Vera 1999, 1020.

¹⁷ Volpe 1998, 312–324.

been the seat of a rural diocese.¹⁸ The lack of the subsidiary liturgical structures at Villa Magna and the presence of episcopal sees at Anagni and Segni from the late fifth century seem to argue against such an interpretation.¹⁹ It thus seems probable that, as in many areas of the western empire, it was the estate, not the bishopric, which sponsored the first Christian buildings in the countryside.²⁰

Although we know nothing of the fate of the imperial residence in the northern sector of the site,²¹ in the sixth and seventh centuries it sat at the centre of a still-working villa, with an apparently centralized administration that continued to command a substantial labour force and invest capital in building. All this seems to point to the reconfiguration of the estate under a new administration, which would have relied on both the transmission of the archives of the *res privatae* and local knowledge of the estate and its fields -- indeed, there is nothing to say that its cultivation had ever been discontinued. For this reason we lean towards the idea that Villa Magna continued to be a fiscal property, run by an agent of the imperial house, someone like the *conductor domus regiae* we find at Lucera at the end of the fifth century.²² Villa Magna would then have been one of the various *fundi iuris publici* under the control of the *comes privatarum*.²³ It is not impossible that the estate was turned over to the church, but it seems unlikely in the context of the contemporary -- certainly rhetorical -- lament from Pope Pelagius of 556 that papal estates were so desolate that no-one could revive them, and that peasants were desperately scarce.²⁴

If the church and portico were the centre of the building complex, which was the centre of a vast agricultural parcel, we still do not, of course, know whether the wine in the *doliarium* at Villa Magna came from grapes produced directly by the labour of the estate, or whether the grapes came from rents from the various *fundi* the estate controlled, or even from taxes from the larger area. The latter solution would imply that the estate was in some way a *praetorium* controlling the management of the area as a whole, a solution that seems unlikely given the proximity of both *Signia* and *Anagnia* (Fig 10).²⁵ However, the newly built housing in the old barracks looks very unlike the

¹⁸ On other instances of the construction of churches on estates Vera 1999, 1020 no. 114; Volpe 1998, 335, on Primuliacum.

¹⁹ Flocchi Nicolai 2008, 33. For the first bishop of Anagni, Gams 1873, 663. Segni follows in 494: Gams 1873, 725.

²⁰ Bowes 2007. Another parallel may be found in the late Roman estate to which was added the basilica of S. Cristoforo *ad Aquilam* near Ravenna: Tassinari *et al.* 2008. Here the church was added on to a late-Roman banqueting hall. The estate seems to have continued as the site of a periodic market, while the banqueting hall was in use until the seventh century.

²¹ The only indication that it might have been less than richly decorated in this period is a late floor in *opus signinum*, glimpsed inside a later cut just within the wall of the structure.

²² This individual is mentioned in a letter from Pope Gelasius I of 493–4: Volpe 1998, 326–7 and 3378; for the *fundi iuris publici*, CIL VI 8401 and Tomassetti 1910 (1976) I, 133.

²³ For the *comes privatarum* mentioned by Gregory the Great (*Epp. Ep.* xiii, 26) Foresi 2003 and Brown 1984, 124.

²⁴ *Ep. Pel.* 4, in *Pelagii I.*

²⁵ For discussion of centres such as the *Praetorium Laverianum* for the administration of the *res privata* De Fino 2006 and Rosafio 2006 for the imperial administration in general. This administrative sense of the word ‘*praetorium*’ seems more plausible than the vaguer ‘defended villa’ suggested by Sfameni (2006) for S. Francesco and S. Giovanni di Ruoti,

scattered structures that we might expect for *coloni* or *servi quasi coloni* exploiting the dispersed *fundi* of a *massa*. They seem to be the lodgings of estate workers, whether slave or free, living close to the centre of the estate. The structure bears some resemblance to how we might imagine the Egyptian *epoikia*, which housed workers fixed to the estate in *kellae*.²⁶ The major difference between the reoccupied building and its Roman predecessor is that there was now free access between the rooms and the street: indeed, the rooms seem to have been built along the street specifically to exploit it.

A parallel to the revival of the imperial estate at Villa Magna can be found at Cosa/Ansedonia.²⁷ Here an imperial estate located on the coast to the south of Cosa had been abandoned in the middle of the fifth century. Sometime later the arx of the Republican colony, which had been abandoned some 300 years previously, was occupied by a granary, stables, and other buildings. A fragmentary inscription mentioning a *[Ne]apolis*²⁸ suggests some imperial intervention, perhaps the fortifications which were constructed on the site after the burning of the granary. On the site of the old forum some 150m away a little community of houses clustered around a church built into the ruins of the Roman basilica. There is no sign here of an elite residence (and indeed, the presence of one is also uncertain at Villa Magna), but it seems plausible that the site represents the successor to the earlier estate, serving as a centre for the collection of rents, and, perhaps, taxes. The little village might have lodged workers directly involved with the farming of the estate. Like Villa Magna, Ansedonia seems to have had access to extra-regional supplies, as the large amounts of African imports show.²⁹

We cannot be sure how long the revived estate of Villa Magna continued in this form. At some point a narthex was added to the church, implying a substantial rebuilding which replaced much of the façade. A sherd of the seventh-century African Red Slip form Hayes 109, residual in a later layer, certainly implies occupation in the seventh century at the centre of the estate. As we have seen, the destruction of the re-occupied barracks seems to have occurred during that century. This would suggest that the destruction of the barracks might be related to undocumented Lombard incursions in the area in the middle of the seventh century -- although a domestic fire is always possible.

although the *massa Cornutiana* of Flavius Valila had a *praetorium* at its centre ('Charta Cornutiana', ed. Duchesne, in *LP*, p. cxlvi), Vera 1999, 1019). Lavan would restrict the term to governors' palaces (Lavan 2001, 40), based on the Eastern Mediterranean. It is worth considering that the terms may have had different meanings in different parts of the empire.

²⁶ On *epoikia* Wickham 2005, 275, n. 29; Rosafio 2006, 339; Sarris 2006, 178.

²⁷ Fentress 2003, 72–86.

²⁸ AE 2003:638; Fentress 2003, 80–86.

²⁹ Sagui 2002; Fontana 2003, 309.

Although hardly impressive, the ditch provides evidence for some effort to fortify the site subsequent to the destructions of the barracks. It is unclear whether there were further fortifications uphill from the ditch: we have not found any trace of them.³⁰ The fortification of the site with the ditch also seems to imply imperial control over it: Brown notes that there are no instances of private landlords fortifying their estates.³¹ Indeed, the plentiful *spatheia* themselves, as North African imports, are surprising this far inland, and seem to indicate that Villa Magna had access to extensive extra-regional trade networks well into the seventh century.³²

Its economic role might go a long way towards explaining its apparent importance in the Byzantine period. One of the open questions about Italy in the period of Byzantine rule is how much of the taxes raised in Italy went to Constantinople and for how long this pattern of taxing Italy persisted.³³ Justinian's Pragmatic Sanction reinstated the tax system, and profits returned to Constantinople, with the conquest. Arguably, this system was still in place in about AD 725, when Emperor Leo III (717-41) raised the level of taxes on the Roman church.³⁴ But it ended there. Agents of the emperor, or regional collectors, seem to have been the most powerful figures in the landscape of southern Italy until that time.³⁵ Thus the large-scale agricultural estate of the Roman emperors carried on as such, following the cultural changes and political transformations of the late Roman period. Villamagna's proximity to Rome, in addition to its late imperial agricultural productivity, appear to have provided it stability in unstable times.

RURAL ESTATE, URBAN CONNECTIONS

One of the principal questions in our mind when we began the excavation at Villa Magna was what relationship this estate had to the papal state as it formed in the seventh and eighth centuries and how the rural estate of Villamagna might have served as an agent of urban (papal) authority in the territory. After the Lombard invasions of Italy and the formation of the Lombard duchies in Northern and Southern Italy, the countryside around Rome, the Agro Romano, remained closely tied to the city in terms of land ownership and management. The society of early medieval Rome was dominated by the papacy and these men also shaped the territories around the city. Although Villamagna was 40km outside of the Agro Romano, in some ways it appears to have followed the patterns of areas closer to Rome. Viewing the site in the light of those patterns may help to explain

³⁰ A similarly shallow ditch is found at Castelvecchio, at Filattiera in the Lunigiana: Cabona, Mannoni and Pizzolo 1984.

³¹ Brown 1984, 45.

³² Sagui 2002.

³³ Costambeys 2009, 110

³⁴ *Ibid*; LP I, 403; cf. Theophanes, a.6217. On in-kind taxation Prigent 2006; Delmaire 1989, 689.

³⁵ Volpe 1998, 326–7 and 337–8.

the history of the site in the early middle ages, for which we have no documentary evidence and very little archaeology. From the tenth century the documentary evidence is stronger and the archaeological remains include new buildings, burials and changes in material culture.

In the areas that we excavated, there is limited evidence for the occupation of the site of Villamagna in the eighth or early ninth centuries, but what evidence there is points to high-status occupation with connections to Rome or Naples. Traces of early medieval occupation are present both around the church and in the abandoned *cella vinaria* of the early imperial villa. In front of the church an extensive layer of thick dark soil extended over the remains of the paved courtyard and the now-destroyed *doliarium* in the portico. The deposit was consistently black in colour and included charcoal, several fragments of worked metal and pottery, including pieces of globular amphorae and Forum Ware pitchers and chafing dishes of the ninth century. There was little evidence of kitchen rubbish or burned surfaces within this black earth; it may be that it was brought to the site and deliberately deposited, perhaps for cultivation, in the ninth century. Certainly by the tenth century the church was burying the dead there. The Byzantine-period church was used into the early Middle Ages; indeed its interior was kept very up to date with the trends of the Roman Church and the rest of Italy. Reused in later buildings are several pieces of carved marble liturgical furniture. These panels of white and grey marble were carved on one or both sides in a technique and in motifs that were very common in the late eighth and early ninth century, part of trend in liturgical furniture that may have accompanied a standardisation of liturgical practice in the same century.³⁶ Carved panels, *plutei*, formed chancel barriers about a metre high, curved panels were used for *ambones*, and other panels or architraves were *ciboria* or screens across the presbyteries of churches; all of these pieces of furniture were dedicated to the delineation of spaces for liturgical use by priests or monks (Fig 11). The interlace knots and vegetal patterns were standardised and seem to have been consistent across Italy throughout the period; the fragments at Villamagna attest to the church's refurbishment in the late eighth or ninth century in the latest style.³⁷ The Roman *cella vinaria*, abandoned and despoiled in the third century, was reused as a residence in the ninth century. Another few fragments of Forum Ware chafing dishes and pitchers, dating from the mid-ninth century, were recovered from earthen floors and rubbish dumps. The floors of the vaulted substructures of the *cella* were raised some 20cm over the Roman floor level by layers of rubble and earth. An internal service staircase was blocked up, perhaps in an effort to restrict the ground level entrance to the complex, and one

³⁶ On this type of carving see Paroli 1998; *Corpus della Scultura Altomedievale*.

³⁷ The fragments from Villamagna resemble, in technique and motifs, the contemporary panels at the cathedral of Anagni (Mengarelli 2006) and one from the Forum Romanum, perhaps from the church of S. Adriano and perhaps datable to the end of the eighth century, Stella Arena 2001, cat no. IV.3.6, (491–2), though there has been little convincing work determining a chronotypology of this carving.

vaulted room made use of a masonry channel in the wall for a bread oven. On the main floor, several of the Roman-period walls were still standing and some of the smaller rooms, though stripped of pavements and marble revetment, were apparently reroofed. Postholes follow along the lines of the walls, indicating that a new roof was supported on posts, probably covered with thatch or wood rather than with Roman roof tiles (Fig 12). Upper elevations of walls may have been added to the ancient masonry ones, with the posts acting as corner supports. The floor surfaces here were removed by later building activity, and the absence of preserved occupation surfaces (removed in post-medieval building works) from this structure on the main floor level frustrates our reconstruction of the building. The postholes, some silos, and the wide trench made when a large late wall that formed the eastern side of the building was removed give a limited sense of how the building took advantage of the raised podium of the Roman structure, limited access by blocking stairs, razed and walled off the large open rooms to enclose an occupation in the vaults and the smaller western rooms.³⁸ Outside this reused building, the small atrium of the Roman bath filled up with dark earth, including rubbish and broken pottery from the ninth century. Like the liturgical furniture, pottery from this phase attests to Villamagna's connections to Rome and larger Mediterranean networks. Amphorae with a round globular body, like those found in the dark earth near the church, are typical of wine or oil transport containers made in the Mediterranean in the late ninth and early tenth centuries; kilns have been identified in Misenum, at Ischia, and in Puglia and Calabria.³⁹ Petrographic analysis of samples from Villamagna indicates a central Italian, Tyrrhenian provenance for the amphorae.⁴⁰ Globular amphorae made in Campania, in particular, have been found along the western Mediterranean coastal cities, including Sicily.⁴¹ The presence of these amphorae at Villamagna in ninth-century contexts indicates that the people at this site had access to this commercial network, either through Naples, or, much more probably, Rome. Forum Ware, the glazed fine ware of the ninth-century table, enjoyed a long existence at Villamagna, continuing into the tenth and later centuries alongside the less refined Sparse-Glazed Ware. The material from the ninth century has the characteristic forms of pitchers and individual chafing dishes where a bowl held stewed meats or sauces warm over a coal placed in the base (Fig 13). While it was once thought that Forum Ware was made predominantly in Rome, it is now clear that it was made contemporarily in several places in central Italy; petrographic study of the clay body from Villamagna's Forum Ware

³⁸ The pottery from this area was the subject of a tesi di laurea: Rascaglia 2010. Rascaglia is continuing work on the medieval pottery of Villamagna for a tesi di specializzazione.

³⁹ Romei 2004, 278–311 esp. 279–83, with relevant bibliography.

⁴⁰ Capelli, pers. comm. These comments are based on Giorgio Rascaglia's report on the material and discussion with him.

⁴¹ Paroli 1996, 121–42. Paul Arthur has argued that these transport containers come from sites under papal control: Arthur 1993.

indicated four different geologic profiles, some made in Rome or Naples, and one that might have been made locally.⁴²

The presence of ninth-century Forum Ware in conjunction with globular amphorae attests to Villamagna's cultural connection with the centres on the coast, probably of Rome, as well as its exchange relationships. Not only were people at Villamagna consuming imported wine/oil but they also were eating at tables laid in a cosmopolitan fashion, and redecorating the church to follow new conventions for liturgical furniture, and possibly also standardised liturgy. Individual chafing dishes were part of a cosmopolitan lifestyle of Rome, which were in many ways mirroring the contemporary courtly culture of Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean.⁴³ Recent work on glazed pottery has emphasised the cultural interactions, eastward and westward, between Byzantium and central Italy that these forms and glazes represent.⁴⁴ Roman individual chafing dishes with a thick lead-based glaze were emulating examples from the Aegean and Constantinople⁴⁵ and within the central Italian countryside in the ninth century, this particular dish form has been found at large monasteries and churches with direct papal connections, *domuscultae* and in important towns in the hinterlands of Rome.⁴⁶ For this period, social status and elite consumption were closely linked to the Roman church, and so too are these sites.

Papal Properties

In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Roman church held lands in two different ways: one took the form of directly administered estates, the profits of which fed the church and its faithful in the city. In central Italy there were farms owned and administered by the papacy and the income was channelled into the city and distributed through ecclesiastical charity networks. The *Domuscultae* named in the *Liber Pontificalis*, such as the *Domusculda Capracorum* (S. Cornelia), are examples of these estates for which we have clear evidence in the eighth and ninth centuries.⁴⁷ They are archaeologically recognisable as walled complexes with stone-built churches and coins and pottery from Rome. These church-run farms were directly linked with the papacy and its system of distributing charity in the city and financing urban churches: the *domusculda* with 'the estates, farms, homesteads, vineyards, olive-groves, watermills and everything pertaining to it should remain for the

⁴² Capelli, pers. comm.

⁴³ On sources from outside Rome referring to the 'haughty, effeminate, and semi-Greek' character of Romans' in this period, see Brown 1988, 40.

⁴⁴ Romei 2004; Paroli et al 1999. I would like to thank Enrico Cirelli for this reference. For the theoretical frame by which I am understanding the change in culture related to the change in pottery, see Pluciennik 1997.

⁴⁵ Paroli 1992.

⁴⁶ For example, Farfa: Moreland 1987; Patterson 1992.

⁴⁷ On the *Domuscultae*, see Marazzi 1998, 235–61. On S. Cornelia (*Domusculda Capracorum*), see Christie 1991; Christie 1995.

use of our brethren Christ's poor for ever'.⁴⁸ The wheat, barley, and pigs of the estate were brought to Rome, and the poor received bread, wine, and broth dispensed from a soup kitchen the Lateran Palace in Rome.⁴⁹

The second way that the church held lands was indirectly, with the land let out in emphyteusis to be managed and worked for three generations, for the payment of a rent. For example, ca AD 820 Pope Paschal I transferred ownership of a hostel in the city of Rome with 'farms, homesteads, and estates, tenants and houses, and households ... for the support and fitting up of the lamps and for the monks' needs and remuneration...'; this kind of donation is hardly unique.⁵⁰ Rome and the area around it are well known for the paucity of original property documents prior to the tenth century, so this pattern of landholding is posited on the basis of later records reflecting Late Antique vocabulary of land parcels and tax-collection and thus suggesting a certain continuity from the earlier middle ages.⁵¹ A few passages from the *Liber Pontificalis*, such as that quoted above, make clear how the *domuscultae* system worked, and the same procedures of acquisition and ownership may well have applied to other ecclesiastical properties for which we lack explicit testimony.⁵²

The church originally came into possession of properties through pious donations including popes' donations of family lands, such as Hadrian's estate *Capracorum*, and purchase. Pope Gregory II (715–31), for example, purchased a *fundus* near Anagni.⁵³ Other possessions formerly in the imperial fisc came to be clearly in papal hands by the early middle ages. Two of the known *domuscultae* are located on former imperial estates.⁵⁴ Certainly by around the year AD 800, the papacy considered itself the rightful owner of all lands that had previously been imperial properties.⁵⁵ The consolidation, whether by shifting lands from family to papal ownership, direct purchase, or acquisition of former imperial estates seems to have concentrated blocs of lands in Lazio, and these efforts relate to the military and economic needs of the papacy as it refined its leadership of the papal state.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ A passage from the 'Vita hadriani,' describing the foundation of the *domusculta Capracorum*, provides detailed information about the organization and management of this kind of estate: *LP*, c. 54 (p. 502), discussed in Marazzi 1998, 239–40. Translation in Davis 1992, 149.

⁴⁹ *LP*, 'Vita hadriani,' c. 54 (502).

⁵⁰ *LP*, 'Vita paschalis,' c. 18 (57); Translation in Davis 1996, 18. See Goodson 2010, 186–7.

⁵¹ Costambeys 2009, 92–119.

⁵² So suggests Marazzi 1998, 261–2, in particular for the area between the Pontine marshes and the Roman hinterlands, p. 250.

⁵³ This is reported in an eleventh-century canon law collection of Deusdedit, discussed in Marazzi 1998, 226–7.

⁵⁴ *Domusculta Lauretum*, on which see Marazzi 1998, 248–9, and the *domusculta* at *Antius*, Marazzi 1998, 250.

⁵⁵ *Das Constitutum Constantini*, on which see Fried 2007; Goodson and Nelson 2010.

⁵⁶ Marazzi 1998, 260.

The area around Anagni was certainly within the zone that interested the papacy of the early Middle Ages as it sought to define the boundaries of its territory through direct or indirect control (Fig 14). Leo IV (847–55) gave some curtains and lamps to the cathedral, an otherwise unremarkable gesture of papal beneficence towards a cathedral with whose bishop and congregation the pope had – or wanted to have – good relations.⁵⁷ Letizia Pani-Ermini hypothesised that these might have been given in acknowledgement of Anagni’s assistance in the building of Leo’s new walls around the Vatican after the Arab attack on St Peter’s in AD 846, a project which used corvée labour from the papal territories.⁵⁸ Certainly, this pope concentrated his gifts in the area around Rome and Southern Lazio in particular; in addition to Anagni, he gave gifts to the monasteries of Subiaco, S. Silvestro al Soratte, and the cathedrals of Fondi and Terracina.⁵⁹ A fragmentary inscription now in the cathedral of Anagni, carved on liturgical furniture similar in technique and motif to those at Villamagna and certainly dating to the ninth century, commemorates the donation of gifts from a bishop Rumaldus (ca 820-47) to the cathedral, including a reference to possessions given by a pope Leo, either III (795-816) or IV (847-55).⁶⁰ The inscription is fragmentary and it is not possible to trace the lands; it is however clear that at least one late eighth- or early-ninth-century pope owned lands in the area.

In sum, it appears the papacy took over some portion of the former imperial fisc. There is good evidence from the late Roman period that Villamagna had remained in the imperial fisc. The presence of high-status materials, including the liturgical sculpture from the church and the chafing dishes of Forum Ware, indicate that Villamagna enjoyed a commercial connection with the Western Mediterranean, probably through Rome and there was a strong papal interest in maintaining positive relations with the area and indeed owning property around Anagni. This evidence cumulatively suggests strongly that the estate of Villamagna stayed fiscal and became a papal estate, perhaps even run directly by the Roman Church. It appears to have been a centre of papal power in the territory by virtue of its Roman history, its material remains and probably its agricultural value as well.

We cannot demonstrate with full certainty that the papacy owned Villamagna in the ninth century, but if this were the case, which seems probable, it would help to explain not only the presence of high-status urban material culture on the site in the ninth century, but also the apparent

⁵⁷ *LP*, ‘Vita Leonis IV’, c. 76 (vol. II, 125). Another inscription, presently in the Museo of the cathedral, appears to record a donation from Pope Paschal and a third inscription fragment now in the façade of the Duomo names S. Pudenziana, one of the saints translated by that pope to a Roman church, Goodson, 2010, 328. On these inscriptions, Mengarelli 2006, 69.

⁵⁸ Ermini Pani 1992, 529. A passage of the *Liber Pontificalis* makes clear that the circuit of walls was built by teams working in turn, *LP*, c. 70 (vol. II, 123).

⁵⁹ This pattern of evergetism has been noted by Marazzi 2000.

⁶⁰ ‘...arum qui in tui(s) kasalis positi sunt quot d(ominus) n(oster) Leo P(a)p(a) in... /’.; *Monumenta Epigraphica Christiana* I, pl. XLV, 2, 3 and 4; On the dating, see Gray 1948, 107–113; Ermini Pani and Giordani 1978, 63–95, 88–90 including transcription.

integrity of the estate. The document of AD 976 recording the donation of the property to the monastery uses the terminology of the late Roman estate: *fundi* with *casae* and *casalia*, so land blocks with inhabited farms. The land where the abbey was built, next to the church, is the *fundus Villamagnae*; that parcel of land preserves its ancient toponym. Whatever the size of the estate in the Roman period, the lands enumerated by the tenth-century document include two *fundi* in addition to the *fundus Villamagnae*, suggesting lands which accumulated to a considerable amount. As with any medieval property document, we cannot know the size of the land parcels listed, though the boundaries for some of the parcels are natural geographic features, which give the impression of a sizeable piece of land that had not been subdivided over centuries, running from the base of the Lepini toward Gorga to the south and Sgurgola to the southeast, across the valley of the Sacco towards Anagni.⁶¹ Chris Wickham has shown that in most wine-producing parts of Central Italy (and also in grain areas) there was a vibrant market for small pieces of land, from the beginning of our documentary record in the eighth century.⁶² He has recently made clear that in the Agro Romano, however, there was very little division of land and thus there were very few means for rural people to improve their individual wealth. The land was owned by the churches of the city, which controlled tenancy.⁶³ An estate was farmed locally and the profits went to Rome, or to the Roman aristocratic landlord who held the land for three generations, at which point it returned to the church that owned it.⁶⁴ This had the effect of preserving an estate's shape, while also feeding the income to Rome. Elsewhere in Italy, agricultural land was predominantly in the hands of individual laymen. It was passed on by inheritance, and was bought and sold in an active market, so that by the eighth century or so, the formerly orderly Roman landscape of estates was fragmented into varied parcels of multiple owners, even peasant owners, who worked the parcels of land that had previously been part of a large estate.⁶⁵ In the Agro Romano, however, the shapes of the land parcels, in *fundi*, were directly inherited from Roman parcels, and the pattern of management was a development of Late Roman changes in legal practice, and the separation of *ius* (*proprietas* or *dominium*) and possession of land.⁶⁶ The power was in Rome, in Roman churches (which were part of the papal administration and run by clerical aristocracy), managed for a few generations by lay landholders and farmed locally. There are no castles in the early medieval documents and archaeology of the area around Rome until the mid-tenth century.⁶⁷

⁶¹ For discussion of the toponyms, see De Minicis 1979–82.

⁶² For Tuscany, see Wickham 1994; For the Agro Romano, Wickham 2009.

⁶³ On the 'near total absence of rural elites,' see Wickham 2009, 185.

⁶⁴ On this system of emphyteusis, see Marazzi, 1998, 221–18.

⁶⁵ For this characterization see Wickham 2009, 187.

⁶⁶ Wickham 2008, 8–9; Lenzi 2000, 13–66.

⁶⁷ Toubert, 1973, 883–912.

Though further away from Rome than the Agro Romano, Villamagna nonetheless may have followed that model until the late tenth century, when it was clearly in the hands of lay aristocrats. The disintegration of papal authority in the area around Rome at the end of the ninth century, a period of Arab attacks and temporary settlement even in the Sacco valley, may have occasioned the weakening of Church-governance outside the Agro Romano, though clearly many other sites stayed possessions of Roman churches well into the twelfth century. As the papacy and Roman politics came to be dominated by one family after AD 900, and the power of the Carolingian emperors diminished and subdivided, so too the ability of the pope to wield power over the city and its hinterlands slowly diminished. It may be at this point that Villamagna moved to private hands, sold off or otherwise acquired by the *nobiles* of Anagni.⁶⁸ The suggestion that Villamagna passed from Imperial fisc, to Byzantine fisc, and then to papal hands is conjectural. Given the available evidence, textual and material, this is our best guess as to the ownership and management of the estate before the tenth century.

A PRIVATE MONASTERY ON THE ESTATE

A parchment document written in a twelfth-century hand records the donation of lands to the monastery of S. Maria and S. Pietro in Villamagna, located on the '*fundus Villamagnae*', by four *nobiles* of Anagni in the year AD 976.⁶⁹ The manuscript is a copy of what we presume to be a tenth-century original; there is an original tenth-century document recording a property donation of AD 979 to the monastery which certainly had been founded by that date.⁷⁰ The creation of a monastery on private lands and its endowment with properties to provide income for the institution is hardly unusual in the tenth century. There is no evidence that the founders maintained an interest in the lands after endowing the monastery, and indeed, the rural monastery of Villamagna became the primary landholder in the area from the late tenth century onwards. It amassed properties through dozens of donations, from the inhabitants of Anagni, Sgurgola, Gorga, and Frosinone – all nearby rural localities, which increased the agricultural diversity of the lands and income of the institution. The community of the estate, centred around the abbey church, included monks and the *homines*, men who owed allegiance to the abbot of the monastery and provided military services or agricultural duties alongside rent while living on a conceded them by contract. The monastery further extended and asserted its authority by creating satellite communities, including the fortified hamlet

⁶⁸ For the period see Wickham 2000 and especially Toubert, 1973, 960–1024.

⁶⁹ ACA, Arm. I, fasc. XI, n. 552 [B] (Flascassovitti 1994, doc. 1).

⁷⁰ ACA, Arm. I, fasc. XI, n. 553 (Flascassovitti, 1994, doc. 2).

(*castellum*) the hill of Monte Giuliano in AD 1028, where vassals of the monastery were given plots for houses and gardens in exchange for a small rent and an oath of fealty.⁷¹

The church, nearly five-hundred-years old by the time of the monastery's foundation, formed the nucleus of the site. The masonry walls of the church were repaired at various points over this period but it maintained its late-Roman basilica form. A major construction effort walled off the space to the north of the church: two parallel walls run north from the northern wall of the church and narthex for at least 12m: 15.65m apart, both are about 50cm thick in rubble masonry with hard grey mortar. The western wall is reinforced by two buttresses on its west side (Fig 15). The standing remains of what we have interpreted as the residential block of the second-century villa and the piers defining its southern side, were razed to foundation level within the area defined by the new walls and to 0.90cm high outside it. The new medieval wall on the west side apparently originally bonded with an E-W wall, running near the northern limit of excavation and just to the south of the Roman building; this wall was robbed out at a later date leaving a scar. To the north of it may have been constructed the residential spaces of the monastery, while the space to the north of the church, defined by the two north-south walls, was apparently open to the sky, and constituted the *claustrum*.⁷² This was floored with a beaten earth surface over clay, and had at least one substantial hearth along the west side. There are few dating elements: the construction technique is generically post-Carolingian, and the wall post-dates the dark earth with ninth-century Forum Ware, but predates surfaces including twelfth- and thirteenth-century pottery. These walls appear to be the first steps towards the building of the monastery by segregating a part of the area around the church from the laity. Though later rebuilding of the church walls obscures the earlier doors and windows, it is likely that there was a separate entrance from this walled area into the basilica, for the use of the newly established monastic community. Later interventions and the limits of our trench make it impossible to know whether there were residential and other buildings inside the monastic enclosure or what form they might have taken, though we assume that there was a communal dormitory and some arrangement for cooking and eating.⁷³

In the western end of the enclosure, parallel with the area in front of the church and the narthex, there were graves. A single tomb lined with upended limestone paving stones and other large blocks of stone housed three adult males between 20-49 years old and one adult of indeterminate age and sex; the bones were pushed down against the sides of the tomb to make room

⁷¹ (twelfth-century copy) ACA, no. 507 [B] (Flascasovitti, 1994, doc 5).

⁷² '*Claustrum*', in medieval texts, referred both to the roofed area of the 'cloister' and also to the confines of the monastery and the monks' state of being segregated and enclosed within the community, Meyvaert 1973.

⁷³ We assume communal buildings because we assume that the monks of S. Pietro in Villamagna followed the Rule of Benedict or something similar, though only later documents, e.g. the Act of Suppression in 1297, specify the monastery to be Order of S. Benedict.

for subsequent burials. A row of earthen graves contains one twelve- to eighteen-year-old female, one twenty-five- to thirty-five-year-old female, a twenty- to thirty-year old male, and three sub-adults of indeterminate sex, one aged six to eight, and the others between thirteen and sixteen. A tomb lined with reused marble contains an adult male, aged forty to fifty years, and another tomb with reused stone sides has a sub-adult aged fifteen to twenty years. These are all buried in the conventional W–E orientation of Christians; none of these individuals had any grave goods buried in the tombs. It may be that many more burials were located here, but subsequent construction has removed them. Contemporary burials (from the period 950–1200) located inside the church, in the area in front of the church façade and to the north (outside the enclosure) included many more women, infants and occasional items of personal adornment. The preponderance of males inside the enclosure suggests that the priests, monastic brethren, and oblates were buried inside their compound and the laity – with two exceptions – were buried outside. The distinction between these two groups, probably lay and religious, was thereby underscored in the locations of burial; the rural community was not alike in death. The vocations and ordinations of the ecclesiastics meant that their bodies were kept apart from those of the laity, though monks’ prayers were offered both for their brethren and for the lay dead.⁷⁴

The two young women buried inside the monastic enclosure may have been patrons or donors of lands to the monastery or otherwise privileged members of the community who had specified their desire to be buried within the monastery, perhaps specifying special prayers for their souls. In monasteries with better-preserved archives than Villamagna, documents record that benefactors often stipulated their place of burial as part of an endowment, and other laypeople’s requests to be buried within monasteries was accompanied by gifts of chattels or lands.⁷⁵ As a rural monastery church, S. Pietro in Villamagna provided many of the sacramental functions of a parish church to the lay locals, dependents of the monastery.⁷⁶ In a community like that of Villamagna, where the abbot of the monastery was the lord of the lands worked and rented by the villagers, the interactions between lay and religious men was both in terms of their lord-tenant relationship and in terms of the *cura animarum*. One of the important pastoral roles of the ordained monks was to perform masses and say prayers for the lay dead, often in terms specified in contracts. These contracts became more specific and the liturgy of the dead became more elaborate from the eleventh

⁷⁴ Gilchrist and Sloane, 2005, 60–5. As Meyvaert points out there is much evidence describing the burial of monks and clerics in the ‘*claustrum*’, worthy of its own study. He cites English evidence in Lehmann-Brockhaus 1955–60, nos. 173, 2560, 2573, 2587, 2605, 2624, 2672, 2772, 3210, 4224, 4961; Mayvaert 1973, 58 n.10. Italian monasteries where separate monastic cemeteries have been excavated include S. Michele alla Verruca; Francovich and Gelichi 2001.

⁷⁵ Postles 1996. For reformed churches in France, see: Poeck 1981. Further discussion of burial places between parish and monastery in McLaughlin 1994, 121–5.

⁷⁶ Hubert 1968, 471–87; Constable 1982.

century.⁷⁷ The topographic organisation of the cemetery divided as it was between areas within the church, within the monastery and the open yard in front of the church articulated in physical reality the social distinctions among the community.

VILLAGES AND VILLAS

The hierarchical social distinctions such as difference in place of burial in different parts of the site – church, monastery, and churchyard – were also apparent in housing and material culture. While some of the *homines* of Villamagna went to live in a new castle on Monte Giuliano in the early eleventh century, other people were living on the land adjacent to the site of the early-medieval high-status residence, the ancient winery.⁷⁸ A series of wooden buildings with beaten earth floors, hearths, and silos was excavated to the south of the Roman building, covering the much deeper remains of Roman buildings located there. Another series of huts was identified on the above-ground floor of the ancient Roman building, over top of the remains of the early medieval residence. Whereas the earlier medieval residence had made use of the standing masonry walls, shaping the rooms around the existing orthogonal spaces, the later wooden houses were round or oblong and ran over top of the walls, which had been razed at this point. The new huts were free-standing wooden structures supported with wooden posts and roofed with light material like thatch. We have not been able to definitively reconstruct a building from the postholes within the perimeter of the Roman building. No medieval floor surfaces have been preserved and the extant postholes permit reconstruction of two rectangular long houses, or several round huts, but we cannot be sure which -- if either -- reconstruction is correct (Fig 16). The sequence of buildings whose floors were actually excavated suggests that huts in this area were replaced every thirty years or so into the thirteenth century, each generation presumably needing a new wooden house. The material culture of these huts was qualitatively different from the earlier medieval residence: the later huts had very little imported pottery and few finewares; the majority of the pottery was coarseware with a petrological profile using mixed elements that could have come from a number of places in the area.⁷⁹ There were spindlewhorls, querns and hand knives attesting to domestic production.

The animal remains from the huts at the winery also shed light on the difference between the medieval residence of the earlier middle ages and those of the later period.⁸⁰ The preponderance of the animal bones comes from pigs, which is common for medieval Italy; many of the documents

⁷⁷ Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1994). 144–65.

⁷⁸ ACA n. 507 [B] (Flascassovitti 1994, doc. 5); Toubert 1973, 322–3.

⁷⁹ C. Capelli, pers. comm.

⁸⁰ The faunal remains have been studied by Emily Holt, upon whose report these comments are based.

from Villamagna specify among the annual rent payments a *spallam porci* for those who had pigs.⁸¹ Whereas cattle bones were a major primary source of meat for consumption in the ninth century, they were less prevalent in the later period, replaced by medium-sized animals, especially pigs, and small mammals and birds. Among the bones for which an age at death is clear, the ovo-caprids and cattle of the later phase were raised primarily for their meat but attention was also paid to their secondary products like milk. While the number of animals represented by the small quantities of bones discovered make firm models difficult, the juxtaposition of our findings with those of other sites is nonetheless revealing. The pattern of consumption at Villamagna: more large animals in the early middle ages and fewer later on; more pigs and small mammals in the later middle ages, describes a change in the period between the high-status occupation and the village of huts. This pattern is not echoed at, for example, Cencelle, which was founded as a papal farm and remained a small village until the fifteenth century; there pigs remain the major source of meat throughout the middle ages, with cattle remaining constant and hunted animals rising in importance.⁸²

The developments of Villamagna into the twelfth century and beyond take us beyond the subject of this book, though many of the concerns that shaped Villamagna and its relationship with the lands around it remain constant: the tensions between the authority of Rome, at once present and distant, and local institutions like the bishopric of Anagni and neighbouring lords. After decades of battles, appeals to the pope, sentences, and further battles, the monastery was suppressed by Boniface VIII and the properties annexed by the bishopric of Anagni, though they quickly moved into the hands of Boniface's own family, the Caetani, the dominant clan of ecclesiastical-aristocratic barons in the area.⁸³

THE POWER OF PLACE AT VILLAMAGNA

The topography of the Villamagna, both generally and in the microcosm of the churchyard, articulates the hierarchies of the community. The monumental and increasingly ancient church became the topographic nucleus; where the previous villa had spread across the terrain, the church planted in the centre of the villa's buildings became a new anchor. The Imperial villa and its structures conditioned later settlement both as a physical entity and as a juridical one. The remains of the Roman buildings were used both as quarries for new ones and as structural elements. The major sixth-century investment in a masonry church reused building materials from the earlier Roman

⁸¹ See, for example, ACA n. 398 [B], testimony of Mathias Riccardi, *vassallus monasterii*, (mid-thirteenth century) and testimony of others in the same document. Flascassovitti 2007, doc. 143.

⁸² Minniti 2009. On the importance of hunted animals at elite sites, see Valenti and Salvadori 2007.

⁸³ On the late phases, see Carocci 1997; Motta 1979–82.

buildings, while the early medieval papal representative used the ancient walls and vaults of the *basis villae* as a raised platform on to which he fitted his new, defended residence. A century and a half later the imperial residence was reoccupied by the monastery, where the builders similarly adapted the existing structures. The imperial buildings themselves contained the memory of the power that it once had over the landscape, and their reoccupation in the middle ages implies a conscious use of that power. The terminology of landholding and the toponym of Villamagna itself are direct descendants of the imperial-era past, and the structures of the landholding as well as the large-scale viticulture carried on, *mutatis mutandis*, into the early Middle Ages. This rural estate benefitted from continuous ownership in the imperial period and then under the papacy. The apparent cohesion of the imperial estate may owe its preservation to the proximity to Rome and the papacy's landholding, but the specifics of its use, and the manipulation of the Roman buildings, reflect a very specific series of choices by its successive owners. A prominent focus in the surrounding landscape, easily visible from Anagni, it provided a rural pole which at key moments appears to have counterbalanced the emerging castles of the local nobles, though by ca 1300, the long-lived integrity of the estate's lands around the ancient villa structures was ruptured and succumbed to fragmentation in response to local politics.