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GIOVANNA R. BELLINI, ALESSANDRO LAUNARO, NINETTA LEONE,
 MARTIN MILLETT, LIEVEN VERDONCK AND FRANK VERMEULEN
 (Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Province di Frosinone, Latina e Rieti; Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge; Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge; Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge; Department of Archaeology, Ghent University; Department of Archaeology, Ghent University)
giovannarita.bellini@beniculturali.it; al506@cam.ac.uk; nl343@cam.ac.uk;
mjm62@cam.ac.uk; lieven.verdonck@ugent.be;
frank.vermeulen@ugent.be

POMPEII: PORTA NOLA NECROPOLIS PROJECT (COMUNE DI POMPEI, PROVINCIA DI NAPOLI, REGIONE CAMPANIA)

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The 2016 international fieldschool at the Necropolis of Porta Nola (Pompeii) continued research into various aspects of the necropolis. This was achieved primarily through a series of targeted excavations, but also through material analysis, conservation and the study of cremations, in particular of two Praetorian soldiers excavated in 1970s.

Following the excavation in 2015 of the tomb of Marcus Obellius Firmus, an anonymous *schola*-type tomb and the burials alongside the city wall (between Porta Nola and Tower VII) (Kay *et al.*, 2016), in the 2016 season the focus was a rectangular structure opposite Porta Nola and the area to the north and west of the tomb of Marcus Obellius Firmus.

The low rectangular structure alongside the *schola*-type tomb of Aesquillia Polla measures 6.4 × 6.39 m, and was cleared of the AD 79 eruption layers in 1908 (Spano, 1910: 393). It occupies a prominent position opposite Porta Nola. The early excavation found no trace of any burials, and instead recorded a large dump of mixed material including coins, bottles in glass and terracotta, a bone hairpin and a fragment of *pasta*

vitrea. Given the lack of cinerary urns, Spano hypothesized that the walled area formed a funerary garden for the adjacent tomb of Aesquillia Polla. Subsequently there has been considerable debate concerning its function, including interpretation as a *bustum*, or a burial area, or the hypothesis that the structure was simply incomplete and/or not used in antiquity.

The aim of our new excavation was to clarify the purpose of this structure. Following the removal of layers dating to the previous exploration of the structure (which included the burial of a dog), the excavation revealed several large deposits of construction material, used to artificially raise the ground level beneath the building. Whilst a floor level was identified by the new excavations (at a greater depth than Spano's excavation), no cremations were recorded within the structure, perhaps suggesting that the construction was chronologically quite late and the structure was not used before the eruption of AD 79.

The excavation of an area immediately to the north and west of the tomb of Marcus Obellius Firmus followed the 2015 work inside the monument. In that phase, we identified a second burial overlooked by earlier exploration (De Caro, 1979). The aim of the new excavations was to contextualize the stratigraphy within and below the tomb, as well as to understand the role of a tufa wall built 5 m to the north of the tomb. The wall was initially exposed by the excavations of 1908 and was interpreted as demarcating the *pomerium* of the city. This hypothesis was later challenged, following the discovery of a gateway in the wall and a beaten-earth road leading from the basalt road that runs around the city. The structures were interpreted as possibly forming part of the *pagus* set aside for the tomb of Obellius Firmus, who belonged to one of the most powerful families in Pompeii at the time of the AD 79 eruption.

Following the clearance of a shallow level of topsoil and some *lapilli*, a series of deposits was recorded that contained the clearance of material from inside an *ustrinum*, including fragments of a funerary bed, burnt bone, ash and charcoal. Furthermore, immediately to the north of the tomb of Obellius Firmus, at a depth of 0.77 m, an *ustrinum* cut into the ground was discovered, and this will be excavated in 2017. To the west of the tomb a further stretch of the beaten-earth road was exposed, which led from the basalt road through the small gateway. Alongside this road was discovered what appeared to be a burial (Fig. 1) with an uninscribed marble funerary stele with a circular cut placed vertically, supported by pieces of tufa, immediately under which was a glass unguentarium. However, excavation of the cut below revealed no traces of a burial or funerary goods.

Both areas therefore seem to show preparations for activity that never took place — perhaps because of the eruption —, and remind us of the real nature of urban life.

In 2016 the analysis of the cremations from the necropolis of Porta Nola focused on the burials of two Praetorian soldiers. These had been discovered by the excavations in the 1970s (De Caro, 1979) but were not subject to osteological analysis. The first of these was the burial of Lucius Betutius, as revealed by the funerary stele that recorded his rank as a praetorian soldier of the II cohort, in which he served for two years. This would suggest an age of 22, and the anthropological analysis of the cremated bones, specifically the morphology of the pubic symphysis and the femoral head, indeed confirmed that he was a robust man, aged about twenty years.

The second cremation was discovered behind the burial of Lucius Betutius further up the slope towards the city walls. The cremation urn was discovered at a greater depth and had been disturbed by the later burial (De Caro, 1979). The anthropological study revealed a male individual, aged about 30 years. Due to his mature age and physical



Fig. 1. An apparent burial alongside a beaten-earth road leading away from the city, west of the tomb of Obellius Firmus. (Photo: S. Kay.)

activity during his eleven years of service, some of his bones showed pathological characteristics, such as the formation of enthesiophytes in the pelvis. This may have been caused by the micro-trauma of repetition action, and it is interesting to note that this is a pathology that often affects archers in modern times.

Finally, our conservation work continued at the necropolis, with the cleaning of the interior of the tomb of Obellius Firmus, and the consolidation and conservation of the artefacts recorded by the excavations.

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STEPHEN KAY, LLORENÇ ALAPONT MARTIN AND ROSA ALBIACH
(*British School at Rome; Ilustre Colegio Oficial de Doctores y Licenciados en Letras y Ciencias de Valencia y Castellon, Departamento de Arqueología; Museu Valencia de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat, MuVIM, Diputació de Valencia*)
s.kay@bsrome.it; llor.alapont@gmail.com; rosa.albiach@dival.es

SANGRO VALLEY PROJECT: REPORT ON THE 2016 EXCAVATIONS AT ACQUACHIARA AND SAN GIOVANNI DI TORNARECCIO (PROVINCIA DI CHIETI, REGIONE ABRUZZO)

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The Sangro Valley Project (1994–; www.sangro.org) aims to explore through a range of interlinked disciplinary pathways the interaction between humans and their environment in the Sangro river valley, in the Abruzzo region of central Adriatic Italy, between 1000 BC and AD 300. In 2016 excavations were conducted in two different locations — Acquachiara and San Giovanni — on the southern slopes of Monte Pallano.

ACQUACHIARA

ACQ T11000

In 2016 ACQ T11000 (2014–) was reopened with the aim of exploring the relationship of the new walls and structures revealed in 2015.

Work in the central portion of ACQ T11000 continued to clarify the phasing of a series of monumental terrace and retaining walls located on the south side of the site. These walls would have been visible from the ancient road in the valley below, where the Atessa torso, a funerary sculpture similar in type to the Capestrano warrior, was found. The necropolis in which it was displayed has yet to be located, but it was not far away from the site of Acquachiara.

Excavations in 2016 proved that Structure C is associated with the latest phase of the site (fifth century BC). Its northwest–southeast orientation is suggestive — in the Archaic Abruzzo, this orientation is most often associated with tombs and temples.

The 2016 season also saw the completion of excavations of a hut, first discovered in 2015, containing the remains of an oven and grinding-stones. A cache of unprocessed cereal grains was discovered on the edge of this structure in 2015. Known parallels for similar huts in central Italy are mainly of eighth-century BC date, but the ceramic vessels, including fine-ware painted kylikes, and the loom weight found on the floor of the hut all date to the sixth to fifth centuries BC. While the founding of the hut likely pre-dated the construction of the largest extent of the terraced podium, the finds within it suggest that the hut remained in use (possibly changing its role) through the considerable expansion in extent and material expression of the Acquachiara complex over time.