

## II. TOWNS AND HINTERLAND

### ROMAN TOWNS IN THE MIDDLE AND LOWER TIBER VALLEY

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#### 1. Research objectives

The Roman Towns Project aims to study the full range of Roman urban settlements in the lower and middle Tiber valley by means of systematic survey. Our strategy has been to use topographical survey, geophysics and systematic surface survey on a site-by-site basis, undertaking the survey of one major and one minor site each year. The intention is to publish the results of each survey as soon as possible after completion of the fieldwork, and to draw together the results from the survey as a whole in a final volume at the end of the project.

There is little doubt that the project has been successful in achieving its broader strategic aims, investigating a full range of settlements from road-side stations to major towns and a port, and covering a chronology that extends from the sixth and fifth centuries BC through into the sixth century AD. Methodology, however, has had to adapt to circumstance. The sheer size and complexity of some of larger sites have made it difficult to pair the survey of one minor and one major site each year.

#### 2. Data collection and analysis

Our underlying methodology of integrating systematic surface collection and geophysics has, in general, proved a very cost-efficient means of understanding the layout of large Roman urban sites. At the same time, while successful, it is less efficient for some of the smaller sites. Experience has reinforced our belief that there is no ideal combination of methods that fits all sites. The geomorphology, topography, degree of preservation and cultural background of all the sites was very different and meant that a tailor made strategy had to be developed for each. This was true for both geophysics and surface collection. Compare, for example, the clarity of the geophysical and surface collection results from Falerii Novi and Capena. Another key issue has been scale of analysis – compare Portus and Forum Cassii or Seripola. Alternatively, Vignale was one of the few sites that lent itself to phosphate analysis. Otricoli stands in contrast to all of these – with a highly complex contemporary landscape within which post-Roman geomorphological change may mask buried Roman structures at considerable depth.

Other aspects for consideration include the need for relatively small field teams, as well as well-trained specialists for post-processing the results; as well as the importance of contracting local expertise for dealing with the ceramics and other finds.

#### 3. Results and conclusions

##### *i. Falerii Novi*

The use of volcanic building materials generated extremely clear results. These tell us a lot about the density of occupation within a major Roman town, and the relationship between public buildings. Systematic surface survey proved very effective at defining chronological and functional variation at the micro level.

#### *ii. Vignale*

Survey revealed a range of enigmatic sub-surface features. These raise interesting questions about the layout and landscaped character of a major Faliscan sanctuary.

#### *iii. Capena*

This is a badly disturbed site. However, it sheds light upon the impact of Roman urban planning and landscaping on a major indigenous settlement.

#### *iv. Seripola*

Geophysical survey failed to provide very clear results. However, they point to the settlement being larger than hitherto thought, with the presence of a possible public building.

#### *v. Otricoli*

A site where post-Roman geomorphological change and contemporary landuse make it difficult to understand. Too early for clear results – but so far they suggest that much of the lower-lying area was filled with monumental buildings, and that the main residential areas may have been further up the hill towards Otricoli.

#### *vi. Forum Cassii*

This was difficult to survey on account of contemporary land-ownership divisions, and considerable medieval disturbance in some areas. However, the survey has revealed very clear traces of the Via Cassia and adjacent structures in some areas.

#### *vii. Portus*

The main complications here were the sheer scale of the site and, in some areas, access for survey. Notwithstanding this, geophysics was very successful in uncovering very large areas quickly – particularly in the flat area between the hexagonal port of Trajan – now a lake - and the Tiber. Rapid systematic surface survey proved very effective at tracing the major contours of ceramic concentrations.

### **4. Future research directions**

- Completing the survey of Otricoli, the extramural area of Falerii Novi and a small part of Forum Cassii
- Publishing a thematic book based on the results – as foreseen in the results

### **5. Publications**

Keay, S. and Millett, M. (1998) Roman towns in the Middle Tiber Valley. *Papers of The British School at Rome* 61: 258-259.

Keay, S., Millett, M., *et al.* (2000) Falerii Novi: a New Survey of the Walled Area. *Papers of The British School at Rome* 68: 1-93.

Millett, M. and Keay, S. (2000) Survey work at Portus 1999. *Papers of The British School at Rome* 63: 401-402.

Millett, M. and Keay, S. (2001) Tiber valley towns Project 2000. *Papers of The British School at Rome* 69: 410-413

Simon Keay (2001) Gateway to Rome. *British Archaeology* 57: 20-23

Keay, S., Millett, M., *et al* (in press) New approaches to Roman urbanism in the Tiber valley. In H. Patterson (ed.), *Approaches to Regional Archaeology in the Middle Tiber Valley (British School at Rome Archaeological Monograph)*. London, The British School at Rome.

## **6. Forthcoming Publications**

Monograph on Portus in 2003/2004

Seripola and Bacchanas in Papers of the British School at Rome 2004

Forum Cassii and Vignale as two separate articles in Papers of the British School at Rome 2005

Otricoli as a monograph in 2006

Falerii extramural in Papers of the British School at Rome 2006