

A Forgotten Roman Settlement in the Veneto. University of Kentucky Geoarchaeological Investigations at Tezze di Arzignano (Vicenza, Italy) in 2012

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The results of a geophysical survey at località Valbruna near Tezze di Arzignano (VI), in Italy's western Veneto, cast new light on a Roman site that has never been systematically investigated. Conspicuous remains of houses possibly belonging to a large Roman settlement were uncovered in this area in 1795 and 1882 after major river floods. Among a series of buried anomalies revealed by gradiometer and GPR data, a rectangular wall-like feature (corresponding on the surface with a cluster of roof tiles and mosaic tesserae) has been interpreted as a portion of a Roman building. Another significant anomaly has been tentatively identified as an ancient roadway. Several small, pit-like anomalies found at a lower depth than these installations have affinities with prehistoric features but cannot be conclusively explained without further testing. There are indications that this building, whose size and functions could not be determined, may have been located near a burial ground outside the main settlement. The dating of the pottery recovered from the survey area suggests that the site was continuously occupied from the final phase of the late Iron age until the 3rd century A.D.

Introduction

The Agno Valley extends for 32.09 km in a north-northwest to south-southeast direction from the headwaters of the Agno River at Passo di Buse Scure to Tezze di Arzignano, a village to the north-west of Vicenza, in Italy's Veneto region (fig. 1). Only near Tezze, where two small tributaries (the Arpega and the Restena) join the Agno to form the Guà River, does the valley widen beyond 2 km from east to west (fig. 2)¹. Sporadically frequented along its length from the Mesolithic to the end of the Iron age, this enclave has yielded numerous Roman materials



Fig. 1. The Agno River Valley. From ZANON 2002: 124. Computer-aided enhancement by L.F. Chapman.

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¹ See MILIANI 1939: 42-46; 53-58; FABIANI 1920: 13-14; ZANON 2002: 115-116. For the names Agno, Arpega, and Restena (first attested in 1179, 1282, and 1288, respectively) see CHILESE 2003a: 26; CHILESE 2003b: 404-407; CHILESE 2009: 564-568, 621-622 and 634. "A Tezze, a partire dal punto di confluenza con il Restena, l'Agno cambia la denominazione in quella di Guà", according to ZANON 2002: 115 (following MILIANI 1939: 46).



Fig. 2. Satellite view of the Agno Valley at Tezze di Arzignano (in the foreground) on July 7, 2000. Courtesy of Google Earth. Visualization by J.R. Jansson.

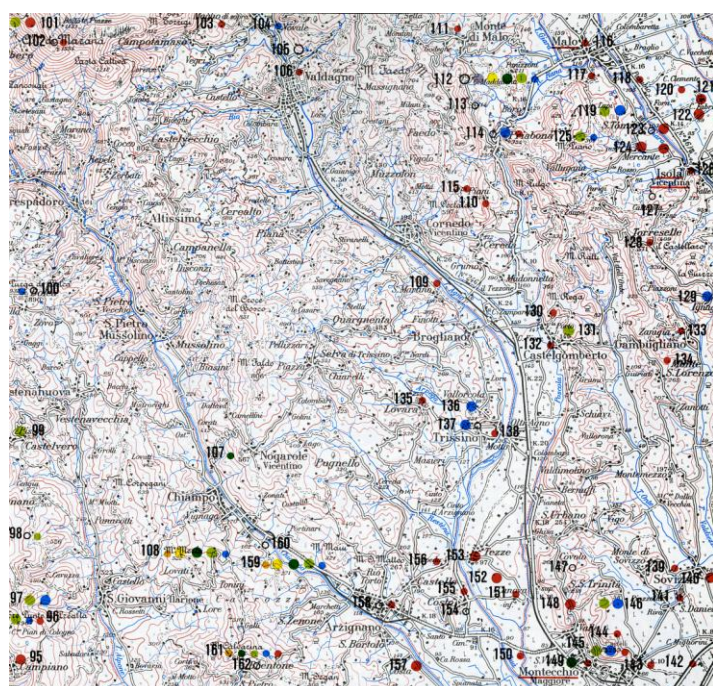


Fig. 3. Distribution of archaeological sites in the Agno-Guà Valley from CAV II: 97. Roman sites are color-coded in red.

and has been continuously inhabited since the 13th century A.D. (fig. 3). The extent to which it was settled in Roman and late antiquity, however, is still unknown².

Scant information from Latin epigraphic sources has led scholars to hypothesize that the *Dripsinates*, an indigenous people, lived in the lower Agno Valley and had their main settlement in the vicinity of Trissino, a small town 3 km to the north of Tezze, whose name has preserved the *Dripsinates*' root word. According to the historian and topographer P. Fraccaro, they were among the *Latini iuris Euganeae gentes* mentioned by the Elder Pliny (NH 3.133) and occupied the mountainous hinterland to the northwest of Vicenza at the beginning of the Empire³. Their name has also been linked to the enche of Celts, who interacted with local Raetian and Venetic populations in this liminal corner of the neto from the end of the 5th century B.C. onwards⁴. Inscriptional evidence indicates that the *Dripsinates* may have acquired political autonomy by the 1st century A.D., as did other indigenous communities in northern Italy. Their citizens were enrolled in the *Collina* tribe (whereas the Roman citizens of *Vicetia* and its territory belonged to the *Menenia* tribe), and

² MIGLIAVACCA 2002. For a glance at the distribution of the prehistoric and Roman sites known in the Agno Valley by the late 1980s see CAV II: 21 and 97, F. 49; for early Medieval settlements see FORNASE 2000, CHILESE 2009: 631-633, and FORNASE 2012: 12, 17-21.

³ FRACCARO 1957 (followed by TALBERT 2000, I: 589 and Map 40). S. Maffei first proposed in 1732 that the *Dripsinates* were among the dwellers of the "Valle di Trissino", as the Agno Valley was named until the late 19th century (CHILESE 2003a: 41; cf. TESSARI 1884: 45, and CHILESE 2009: 633). See also GARDUCCI VELO undated, Fasc. IV, p. 36, n. 8 ("i *Dripsinates* a Trissino e nella val d'Agno").

⁴ Thus CHILESE 2003b: 483-484 and CHILESE 2009: 634. Chilese believes that the word Tezze is also of Celtic origin. G. Da Schio claimed that the *Dripsinates* were Celts: "i *Drepsinati* [...] sono Galli tra quelli che furono seguaci dei Romani"; see DA SCHIO 1863: 68 and 104. For the presence of Celts at nearby Montebello Vicentino see RUTA SERAFINI 1997: 545-546; GAMBACURTA, RUTA SERAFINI 2001: 188-189; BONDINI 2005; GAMBARI, BONDINI 2013: 158.



Fig. 4. Distribution of Roman rural sites in the Agno-Guà Valley to the south of Tezze. From PELTRIN et al. 1987: 25.

a *civitas Dripsinatium* existed in the 2nd century A.D.⁵. An Imperial appointee of equestrian rank, known from a post-Trajanic inscription (CIL V, 4484), was an overseer of local affairs and a *patronus* of the *Dripsinates*, suggesting that their community was of some importance⁶. Yet, no major site of the *Dripsinates* and no distinctive features of their material culture have been identified thus far. Excavations at Trissino between 1981-1994 yielded the remains of a hilltop Iron age village which may exemplify the settlement pattern in the area until the beginning of the 'Romanization' period⁷. This site was continuously occupied from the 5th to the early 1st centuries B.C. and is believed to have functioned as a nexus for economic exchanges between the Raetians and the Veneti. But its cultural and political identity in the last phase of habitation (the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.), when it may also have boasted a frontier sanctuary, remain uncertain. Other indigenous hillsites in the piedmont zone to the north and west of Vicenza appear to have been generally abandoned at this time⁸. Since the investigations conducted at Trissino were focused upon a small area of the Iron age settlement, and their findings have not been fully published, it is not known at present whether the site survived under the Empire.

Remains of Roman structures come predominantly from the southern end of the Agno Valley, a floodplain at 100 m above sea level extending southwards from Trissino⁹. Archaeological materials attributable to Roman farm buildings have been found at several sites to the south of Tezze (fig. 4), indicating that the lower part of the valley

⁵ RIGONI 1987: 149; TOZZI 1987: 132. Cf. MAGGI, ZACCARIA 1999: 15.

⁶ This observation was made by S. Lora. See CRACCO RUGGINI 1987: 220-221 and 230-232.

⁷ RUTA SERAFINI 1984: 768-769; MIGLIAVACCA 2002: 194-197; MIGLIAVACCA 2003. For a recent definition of "*romanizzazione*" as "*il processo attraverso il quale si consuma nel tempo l'incontro tra cultura indigena e cultura romana*", see CRESCI MARRONE 2011: 95; cf. CRACCO RUGGINI 1987: 209-220; DI FILIPPO BALESTRAZZI 2013. But see the caveats of MATTINGLY 2010: 284-290 and cf. BUTTI RONCHETTI 2004.

⁸ See DE GUIO et al. 1986; DE GUIO 1987: 116; RIGONI 1987: 149; CAPUIS 1993: 100, 192, 259; MIGLIAVACCA 2002: 195-196; cf. MAGGI, ZACCARIA 1999: 14. For a Celtic import at Trissino, see RUTA SERAFINI 1997: 546, fig. 6. The bronze figurine from Trissino illustrated by DE BON 1937: 50, fig. 99, and DE BON 1942, fig. 45 (opposite p. 139) is probably a modern forgery, according to M. Bolla.

⁹ For Mediterranean floodplains see the remarks by BROWN 1997: 237-248.



Fig. 5. Funerary inscription for Vaternia Calpurnia Sabina (CIL V, 3118) in the Church of SS. Fermo and Rustico near Castelgomberto (VI). From FORNASE 1994: 36, Fig. 2; reproduced by permission.

was settled from the late Republican period to late antiquity¹⁰. Land use in this locale is still agricultural today, although farmland is increasingly being lost to industrial and commercial development along the main north-south corridor. In contrast, most Roman artifacts found to the north of Tezze consist of decontextualized coins and grave-stones¹¹. The northernmost epigraphic find is represented by three fragments of “*pietre laterizie*”, each bearing the stamp *TERENI · C · F ·*¹², that were found at Cornedo Vicentino in 1833. Although the description of this stamp is incomplete, it may have belonged to roof tiles produced by *M. Terentius C(aii) f(i)lius*, a *teglarius* of the late Republican period or the first half of the 1st century A.D.¹³. Only 4 out of 16 Latin inscriptions known hitherto from the Agno-Guà River basin were found to the north of Tezze¹⁴. These include a funerary dedication by a *procurator Augusti* of the 2nd century C.E. (CIL V, 3118), which was lost after the Renaissance and has turned up in 1992 in the Church of SS. Fermo and Rustico near Castelgomberto, c. 1.5 km to the northeast of Trissino (fig. 5). A 2nd century A.D. funerary altar from Lovara, known since the 19th century (CIL V, 3211), has also been rediscovered recently in the gardens of the Villa Trissino-Marzotto at Trissino¹⁵ (fig. 6).

¹⁰ See PELTRIN *et al.* 1987: 25, fig. 1; RIGONI 1987: 150-151; MENEGAZZI 1990: 88, fig. 1; BRUTTOMESSO 2010: 46-49; POSSENTI 2011: 431.

¹¹ CAV II: 119-120, 123-125, F. 49, nos. 103, 106, 109-110, 130, 132, 135, 138; VISONÀ 2006: 1088-1089. Finds of Roman coins ranging in date from the 3rd to the 5th centuries A.D. at località Basto al Campetto (Recoaro Terme), a saddle at the southern end of the Catena delle Tre Croci mountain range, have not been fully explained by ASOLATI 2009.

¹² See STECCHINI undated, loose leaf; GONZATI undated: 89, “3 pezzi di cotto dissotterrati in Cornedo nelli cosiddetti nove Campi”. This information was provided by S. Lora, who is preparing the epigraphic corpus of the Agno-Guà River basin for publication. A fragmented Latin inscription originally found at Valdagno in 1964 belongs to the early 17th century, *contra* MIGLIAVACCA 2002: 199.

¹³ BUCHI 1987: 154. A fragmented tile stamp of this *teglarius* comes from the Carlotto estate at località Valbruna, near Tezze di Arzignano: see NORI 1987: 127 and CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2007: 675 and 677.

¹⁴ Information provided by S. Lora. See FORNASE 1994: 20-29; FORNASE 1996; FORNASE 2003; cf. CRACCO RUGGINI 1987: 221, 229, n. 97, 254.

¹⁵ See VISONÀ, LORA 2014.

The ancient settlement at Valbruna

Lack of a systematic study of the Roman finds has prevented thus far a comprehensive reconstruction of the pattern of occupation of the Agno-Guà River basin between the so-called ‘Romanization’ period and the arrival of the Lombards in the 6th century A.D. Yet, while “*il modello insediativo [...] appare di tipo rurale, con prevalenza di piccole e medie proprietà agricole*”, as A. Menegazzi pointed out¹⁶, there are indications that a large Roman settlement existed in the area known today as Valbruna, to the north of Tezze (fig. 4). Until the end of the 18th century, only Roman tombs and funerary inscriptions had been known from the environs of Tezze. The gravestone of the freedman *M(arcus) Laberius Graecus* (CIL 5, 3177), which was recovered in 1586 and is now in Vicenza’s Museo Archeologico and Naturalistico di S. Corona (inv. no. EI 99), is the earliest documented site find; it is datable to the 1st century A.D.¹⁷ Remains of Roman buildings at Valbruna were first described by eyewitnesses after catastrophic flooding of the Agno River in 1795 and 1882 brought them to light¹⁸.



Fig. 6. Funerary altar from Lovara (CIL V, 3211) in the gardens of the Villa Trissino-Marzotto at Trissino (VI). Illustrated by permission.

According to the Abbot G.B. Garducci Velo (1752-1819), the author of an undated manuscript in Vicenza’s Bertoliana Library (see APPENDIX 1), the 1795 flood laid bare – at a depth of c. 1.5 m beneath the ground surface – substantial remains of burned out houses that extended over 686 meters east-west by 514 meters north-south¹⁹. Their main walls ran in a north-south direction and were intersected by other walls at right angles. The ancient settlement, which was located “*a settentrione del villaggio e nei poderi specialmente dei Fratelli Carlotti*” would have covered an area of approximately 35 hectares. Coins said to range in date from Julius Caesar to Justinian were found inside the buildings. Regrettably, the manuscript did not provide a map of the site. Doubts about the veracity of Garducci Velo’s description were raised in 1850 by G. da Schio, who knew about the content of his manuscript and referred to “*Vico Prunella ossia Valbruna*” as “*un sogno del Velo?*”²⁰. However, overbanking of the Agno River in September 1882 at Cusago, a place in the vicinity of today’s Valbruna²¹, also led to the discovery of ancient architectural remains that were scattered over c. 6 hectares; these were inspected by Italian authorities (see APPENDIX 2). Even though their exact topographical location was not recorded, additional finds of Roman materials (including coins datable from Augustus to Commodus) and of disturbed Roman tombs were noted. The flooded area was identified by the local toponym *Strada fonda* (meaning ‘Sunken Road’), which is still used in the abbreviated form ‘Strafonda’ to designate the fields on

the northernmost edges of the Carlotto estate at Valbruna (fig. 7)²². From the ‘few artifacts’ that could be examined, the engineer F. Molon (who filed a report for *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*) inferred that a “*centro abitato*” had existed there between the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. Additional finds from uncontrolled excavations at Valbruna in the Fall of 1882 were described by G. Zaupa, a local priest (see APPENDIX 3).

¹⁶ MENEGAZZI 1990: 89.

¹⁷ BARBARANO 1762: 56; see CRACCO RUGGINI 1987: 245, n. 156. The gravestone was re-used as a sink. Finds of Roman cultural materials have not been reported from Tezze itself, which was settled in the late Middle Ages. Digging for foundations and cellars has produced only “*ghiaia pulita*”, according to F. Bertinato, a local resident (interview on 27.01.2013).

¹⁸ Flooding episodes increased dramatically after the process of deforestation which began in the 16th century: see MILIANI 1939: 67-70; ZANON 2002: 120-123; cf. FABRINETTI 1997: 38-40, 49-57; FABRIS 2002: 37-45, 278-285, 332; TRIVELLI 2003: 196.

¹⁹ All measurements are computed following the 1855 *Prospetto dei pesi e delle misure usitati della provincia di Vicenza col ragguaglio a sistema metrico*, reproduced in FRANZINA 1980, table opposite p. 340 (*pertica di 6 piedi* = 2.144 m; *pie di oncie 12* = 0.357 m). For the life and works of G.B. Garducci Velo see RUMOR 1908: 297-300 and FRANZINA 1980: 568-569. Garducci Velo’s manuscript was published (with some changes) by MORSOLIN 1883: 22-23.

²⁰ DA SCHIO 1850, f. 216. Quoting Garducci Velo’s own words, da Schio remarked that “*nessuna di queste infinite forme [di vasi] fu raccolta dagli antiquari di allora*”. Garducci Velo’s measurements point to “*un perimetro superiore a quello di Verona e Vicenza*”, according to PIZZATI 1982b: 142. For the site size of Roman Vicenza cf. MARCHINI 1979: 22 (c. 560 x 500 m) and RIGONI 1998: 462.

²¹ For the flood of 1882, which reached Tezze, see NORI 1987: 41-44; FABRIS 2002: 278, 282-285; ZANON 2002: 122. Tezze was flooded again in 1953: see FABRIS 2002: 332. For the toponym Cusago, which first appears in 1453, see CHILESE 2003b: 31; CHILESE 2009: 595. Today’s Via Valbruna was known as ‘Strada Comunale di Cusago’ until the early to mid-1900s. The earlier name can still be read on the cadastral map of the Comune di Arzignano, Sez. E, Foglio 29, illustrated in ZAV 1987: 163, 24 008 04.

²² This information was provided by G.B. Carlotto (interview on 22.07.2011).

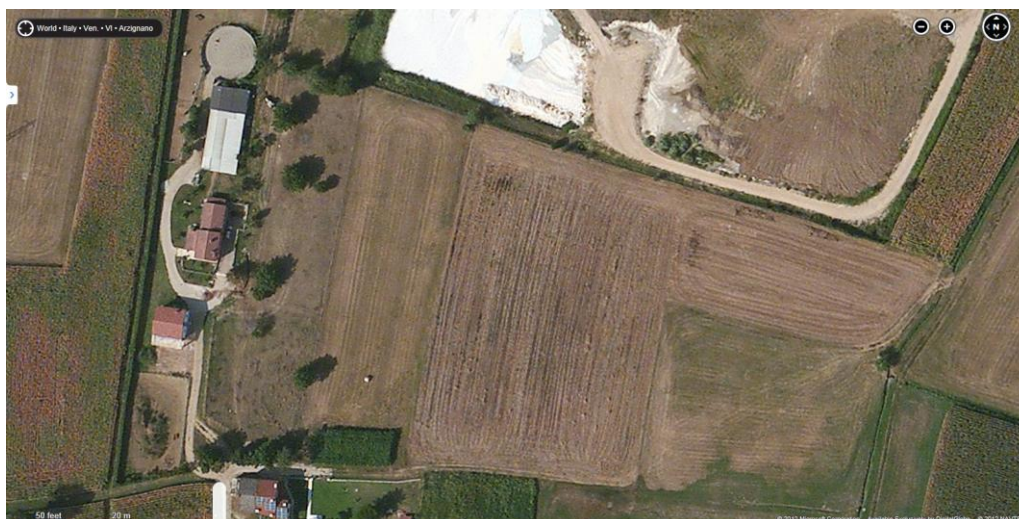


Fig. 7. 2012 satellite view of the 'Strafonda' area (in the foreground, taken before the University of Kentucky's geophysical survey. Courtesy of Digital Globe and Microsoft Corp. Visualization by J.R. Jansson.

It is not known whether the structures unearthed in 1795 and 1882 were destroyed or backfilled²³. Although there is anecdotal evidence that some ruins were still extant after WW II²⁴, no Roman walls are visible today at Valbruna, a lush *campagna* encompassing nearly 50 hectares, which has remained largely rural and is currently subdivided among a few landowners. Conflicting interpretations about the nature of the Roman settlement have been proposed²⁵, and fewer remains have come to light in the 20th century, particularly since flood protection works built between 1907-1927 have made the Agno River less dangerous²⁶. Nonetheless, other sporadic finds of Roman burials were reported both from 'Strafonda' and from Valbruna in 1928-1929, in 1938, in 1961, and in 1968²⁷. The *R. Soprintendenza alle antichità del Veneto, della Lombardia e della Venezia Tridentina* also conducted excavations at 'Strafonda' and Valbruna between December 1928 and January 1929, and in 1938; they have not been published²⁸. In the last fifty years, furthermore, archaeological materials have been unearthed in an estate owned and operated by the Carlotto family (one of Valbruna's oldest families of resident farmers)²⁹, directly to the south of 'Strafonda', in a property to the west of it, and as far as 500 m to the north of the 'Strafonda' area³⁰. As a result, a trapezoidal sector of c. 500 m² on the northern edges of Valbruna, including the Contrada Verlatto and most of Carlotto's land, has been placed under *vincolo archeologico* (protective restrictions) by the State (fig. 8)³¹. The finds from the Carlotto estate include Pre-Roman and Roman pottery, Roman roof tiles, fragments of bronze, glass, worked bone, molded and painted plaster, which are now in the Museo di Archeologia e Scienze Naturali "G. Zannato" at Montebelluna

²³ Cf. FRANZONI 1975: 6, "Tutto andò disperso in breve tempo" and ZAV 1987 (above, footnote 21): "Situazione dello scavo: reinterato." The ruins "di una antica casa con impiantito a mosaico e con le tracce di volti a mattoni, che sembravano accennare ad antichi acquedotti" were visible "a Tezze" in the late 1800s, according to MISTRORIGO 1929: 9.

²⁴ This information was provided by F. Bertinato in July 2012.

²⁵ Cf. DE BON 1942: 116: "un abitato rurale del primo secolo dell'Impero"; CAV II, 1990: 128, F. 49, no. 153.1: "molti edifici romani disposti all'interno di uno spazio rettangolare di circa km 2 di lato", and DE FRANCESCHINI 1999: 209, no. 147: "probabile villa con parte residenziale". There is no evidence for the presence of a *castrum* at Valbruna, *pace* PIZZATI 1982a: 3, 7-9, and PREVITALI 1983: 93. MENEGAZZI 1989 and BUSANA 2002 do not mention this settlement.

²⁶ FABRINETTI 1997: 52-57.

²⁷ For the tombs found in December 1928 and January 1929 see MISTRORIGO 1929: 7-8, 13-15; one of them (a child burial) was seen by L. Cora Perin (interview on 13.07.2013). For the tomb found on 26.03.1938 see ASAV and Verbale, *Legione Territoriale dei Carabinieri Reali di Verona, stazione di Arzignano*, no. 101 (21.04.1938); for the tombs found in 1961 see CAV II, 1990: 128, F. 49, no. 153.1; for the tomb found in late December, 1967, see letter of 27.01.1968 (ASAV). See also PIZZATI 1982a, fig. 8.

²⁸ The 1928-1929 excavations were limited to an area of c. 10 m² and were interrupted by frigid temperatures and snow: see MISTRORIGO 1929: 13, 17-18. Information on the 1938 excavations was provided by G.B. Carlotto, an eyewitness (interviewed on 18.07.2012 and 17.01.2013).

²⁹ The Carlotto family has lived at Tezze since the 15th century according to MANTESE 1985, I: 283, n. 54; the late G.B. Carlotto's estate presumably represents what is left of the "*poderi... dei Fratelli Carlotto*" mentioned by Garducci Velo. For "*località Carlotto*" and "*Via Strafonda*" also see MISTRORIGO 1929: 7.

³⁰ PIZZATI 1984: 6-13. A bronze figurine of Mercury (height: c. 12 cm ?) comes from a gravel quarry (possibly the "*cava Romio*") to the north of Valbruna: see PIZZATI 1982a, fig. 4 and cf. BOLLA 2002: 79-81 and 97, fig. 1, no. 22 (but with winged boots), and BOLLA 2009: 76-79.

³¹ This area is highlighted in ZAV 1987 (above, footnote 21); cf. MIGLIAVACCA 1994: 196, no. 34.

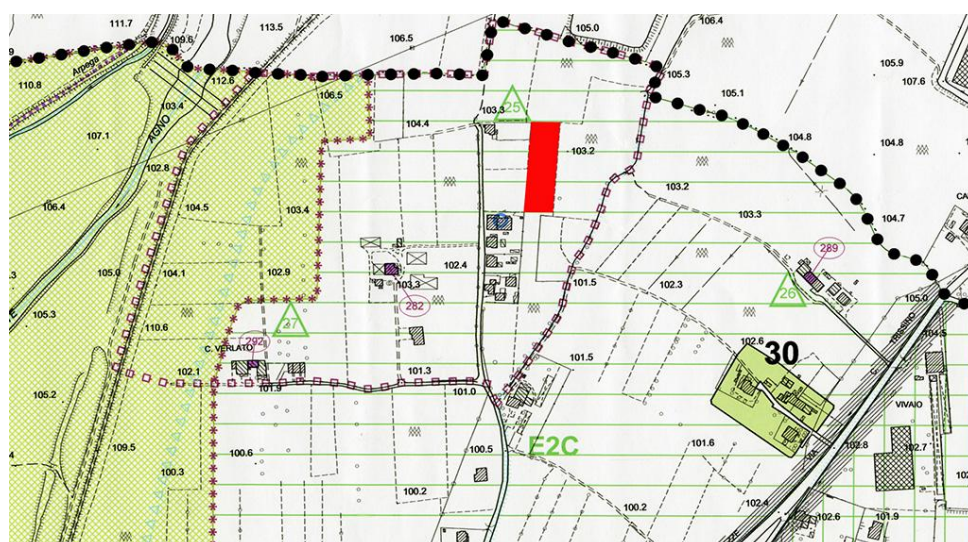


Fig. 8. The sector under vincolo archeologico and the area of the 2012 geophysical survey (highlighted in red) in Arzignano's Carta Tecnica Regionale, scale 1:5000 (visualization by L.F. Chapman).

Maggiore, the closest archaeological repository³². In addition, at least 155 osteological elements have been recovered, representing a MNI equal to 9 individuals of both genders (3 subadults, 1 adolescent, and 5 adults), faunal remains of domesticated animals (including dog and pig), and burnt fragments of deer antler with saw marks³³.

The Tezze Archaeological Project

The concentration of finds with a broad chrono-cultural range in the Carlotto estate – the only parcel of farmland at Valbruna where scientific fieldwork was permitted – provided the opportunity for an investigation aimed at identifying the presence of buried archaeological features through non-destructive geophysical techniques³⁴. Since a targeted excavation was not feasible, an integrated remote sensing approach combining magnetometry and GPR offered the best prospects for finding any extant traces of the ancient settlement. An analysis of the pottery retrieved from the ploughzone and from the subsoil was also expected to yield information about the occupational span of the site³⁵.

The area selected for the 2012 survey was an active field (fig. 9), measuring approximately one third of a hectare (120 m north-south x 30 m east-west), which had long been a source of archaeological finds³⁶. Most of the material culture assemblage rescued by the landowner was said to have come from this field³⁷. The site had moderate surface expression: systematic fieldwalking after the harvesting of a wheat crop in 2010 yielded only eroded fragments of Roman pantiles and large-sized limestone mosaic *tesserae* datable after the mid-2nd century A.D. (fig. 10)³⁸, as well as a few non-descript sherds of modern crockery and glass fragments. The *tesserae* were clustered on the eastern side of the field, near a spot where the gradiometer and GPR would subsequently locate part of a rectangular shaped structure. In contrast, limited fieldwalking in 2011 in an adjacent cornfield to the north, within the 'Strafonda' area, produced fewer surface finds. These consisted of eroded fragments of 18th-century pottery (*casseroles con vetrina bruna*)³⁹, slag, and chert (fig. 11). No archaeological materials were found in the fields extending further to the north, where the excavation of a large basin, now filled with dust from marble quarries, has

³² See CAV II, 1990: 128, F. 49, no. 153.2; select finds are illustrated by NORI 1987: 126-128. For the Museo "G. Zannato" (which was inaugurated in its present location in 1983) see BONETTO 2009: 376-378.

³³ Data provided by P.A. Rasia, who is studying the osteological remains for publication.

³⁴ This project was conducted under the aegis of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Veneto.

³⁵ Cf. HAY *et al.* 2006: 149-150, 155; VERMEULEN 2006: 81-82; MILLET 2000.

³⁶ This field lies in the northwestern half of parcel 18 in the cadastral map (see above, footnote 21). GPS data: 45° 32.65 N / 11° 22.22 E, elevation 101 m (27.07.2011 at 16:00 PM).

³⁷ Information by G.B. Carlotto (interviewed on 17.01.2013). Carlotto pointed out that, although all the pottery found in this field was broken, it had never been displaced (interview on 16.07.2012).

³⁸ This dating for the *tesserae* has been suggested by S.J.R. Ellis.

³⁹ Information provided by L. Toniolo. The grip of an 18th-century "*scaldaletto*" (similar to VERONESE 1992: 134, fig. 4, no. 15) was found in a field to the southwest of the Carlotto estate in 2011. GPS data: 45° 32.56 N / 011° 22.35 E, elevation 101 m (09.07.2012 at 15.55 PM). This information was provided by P.A. Rasia.



Fig. 9. 2012 satellite view of the field where the University of Kentucky's geophysical survey was conducted (image taken before the survey). Courtesy of Digital Globe and Microsoft Corp. Computer-aided visualization by J.R. Jansson and L.F. Chapman.



Fig. 10. Località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano, 2010. Surface collection from fieldwalking in the area targeted for the 2012 geophysical survey.

Fig. 11. 'Strafonda' area north of località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano, 2011. Surface collection from fieldwalking.

obliterated all evidence of buried horizons⁴⁰. This landfill is visible as a white T-shaped area in a 2000 satellite image of Tezze (fig. 2, at center top).

The University of Kentucky's survey was conducted in early July, 2012, under dry conditions, after four 30 m x 30 m grids were laid out on the targeted field, a level, rectangular plot of soil with an approximate north-south axis, consisting of fine silt-loam sediments (fig. 9)⁴¹. Two different instruments were used to collect near-surface geophysical data, a Geoscan FM256 Research Fluxgate Gradiometer and a Malå GeoScience RAMAC Ground Penetrating Radar unit equipped with a 500 MHz antenna (fig. 12)⁴². In both the gradiometer and the GPR data, significant anomalies were apparent. Some of them represent modern features, such as the farm roads at the top and bottom of the gradiometer plot (fig. 13), which mark the northern and southern bounda-



Fig. 12. Località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano, 2012. GPR survey in progress.

⁴⁰ There is anecdotal information that Roman materials including at least two 2-meter long inscribed stones were bulldozed into this landfill in the early 1980s.

⁴¹ All the data on the results of the geophysical survey were processed by G.M. Crothers and D.L. Handshoe. The survey was begun after the harvesting of a crop of alfalfa. G.B. Carlotto grew wheat, soy, and alfalfa (in this sequence) in this field between 2010 and 2012. For rainfall and temperature in this locale see ZANON 2002: 110-114 and CERATO 2009: 132.

⁴² For this methodology and its application see CAMBI 2003: 86-89; GAFFNEY *et al.* 2004; PIRO *et al.* 2005; JOHNSON 2006; STRUTT 2006; FINZI *et al.* 2007; JORDAN 2009; KEAY *et al.* 2009; OSWIN 2009: 43-59, 97-136, 141-143, 171-179; QUESNEL *et al.* 2011. Cf. also GHEDINI, BUSANA 2002.

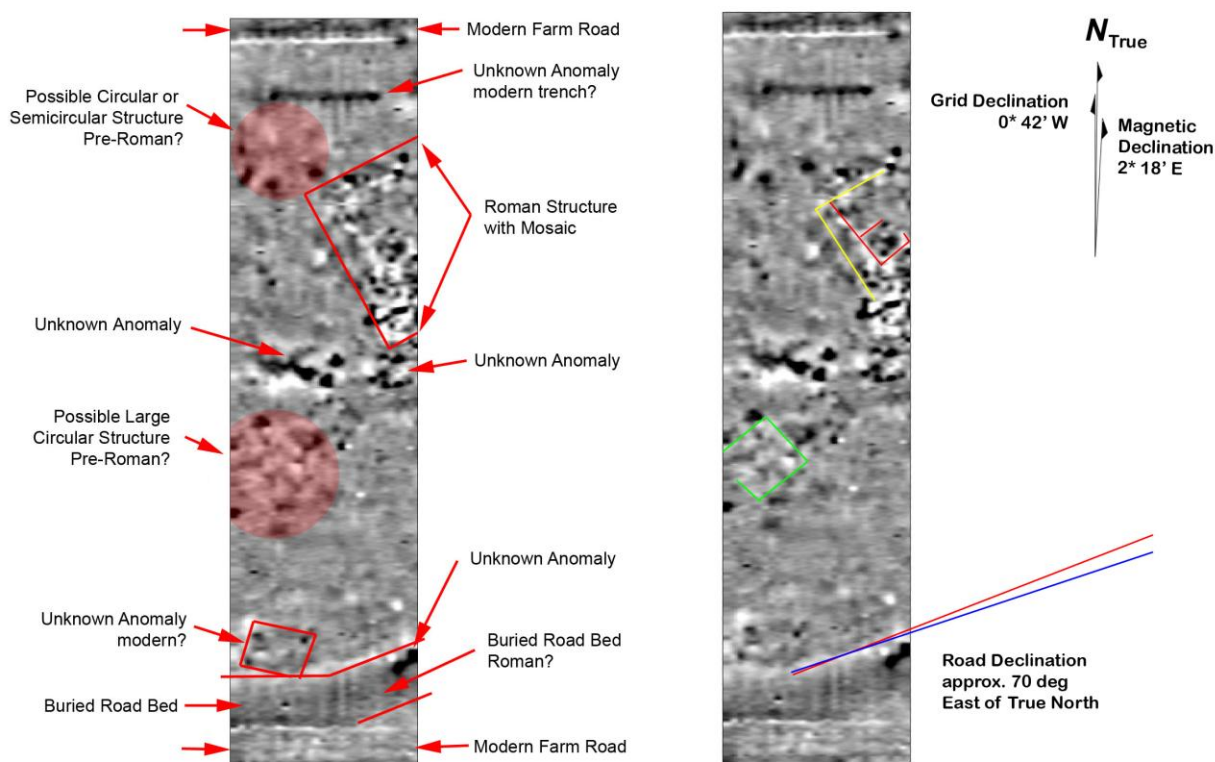


Fig. 13. Località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano. Gradiometer plot of the geophysical survey area. Computer-aided visualization by G.M. Crothers and D.L. Handshoe.

ries of the survey area and are visible on the surface of the field. Several other anomalies are enigmatic: they include two large features at the center of the field that have been tentatively interpreted as concentrations of ferromagnetic objects, or perhaps roof tiles⁴³. However, at least four areas within the survey block revealed the presence of buried archaeological features.

The first area of interest, represented by a rectangular structure (outlined in red on the image on the left, in fig. 13), corresponds on the surface with the scatter of Roman roof tile and mosaic *tesserae* observed during fieldwalking in 2010. Two possible structural anomalies within this area are discernible in the gradiometer and GPR plots. The first one (outlined in red in the image on the right, in fig. 13) appears to be an approximately 14-m long wall with two adjoining perpendicular walls forming a square room of approximately 5 m x 5 m. This structure is buried at a depth ranging between 120 and 140 cm, according to the GPR data; its dimensions and architectural layout recall those of Roman farm buildings excavated at Brendola, Isola Vicentina, and Sovizzo⁴⁴. The second structural feature (outlined in yellow) consists of two perpendicular, wall-like anomalies measuring approximately 12 and 17 m in length, respectively. Their depth also ranges between 120 and 140 cm. The first possible structure is oriented at 40 degrees west of true north, whereas the second one lies at 33 degrees west of true north. It is unclear whether this could represent two different building episodes or whether the outer feature is a foundation trench, or perhaps an installation (such as a conduit)⁴⁵.

Another area of interest is on the southern boundary of the survey area. It is overlain by a modern farm road at the edge of the field, which obscures a portion of a buried feature. This anomaly, indicated by high magnetic flux density readings, is approximately 5 to 7 m wide from north to south and runs approximately east-west across the survey block, between 69.5 and 71 degrees east of true north, possibly making a slight 18- to 20-degree turn from

⁴³ The landowner feared that these anomalies could be live ordnance left behind by the British troops who were camped near his farm during WW I. However, according to PIZZATI 1982a, fig. 8, no. 6, their camp was located in a field in the 'Strafonda' area, corresponding to parcel 318 in the cadastral map.

⁴⁴ Cf. DE FRANCESCHINI 1999: 212-214, 221-222; BUSANA 2002: 264-266, 298-299; 358-363; RIGONI *et al.* 1994: 204-205, 209. See also BUSANA 2013: 138-142.

⁴⁵ In August, 2003, a wall oriented 346° (to magnetic north), 40 cm wide, was uncovered by G.B. Carlotto in this area of the field and may belong to the structure located in the geophysical survey. It was built with cobblestones and tile fragments bound with mortar, and it was preserved to the height of nine courses. For the masonry technique, cf. CERATO 2012: 225 (fig. 149, 5), 227-228.

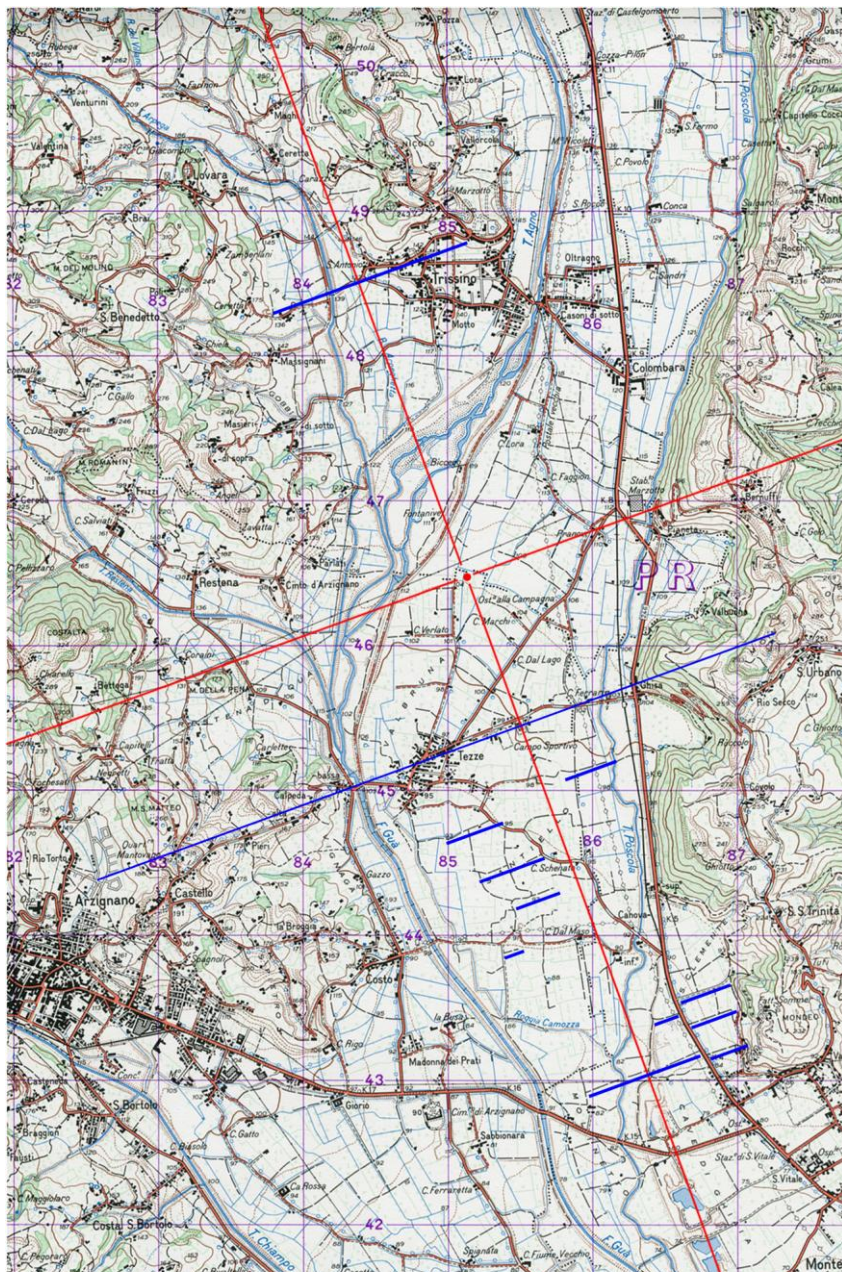


Fig. 14. Alignments in the Agno-Guà Valley (shown in blue) based on the east-west orientation of the possible road revealed by the geophysical survey (shown in red). The red dot marks the location of the survey area. Computer-aided visualization by G.M. Crothers.

true east-west. The GPR data indicate that it is buried at a depth of between 60 and 80 cm. A possible interpretation of this linear feature is that it may be a road bed; it is uncertain whether a ditch or a wall ran along its northern edge. Unfortunately, since only a short section of this feature has been recorded, its orientation over a longer distance cannot be determined. A comparison of this possible road alignment with the presumed structural alignments in the first area, representing a substantial building, shows that the two features vary by 13 to 20 degrees from the orthogonal. However, Roman rural settlements in the Veneto are occasionally linked to irregularly aligned roadways⁴⁶, and though these measurements remain tentative, they support the observations made by Garducci Velo about the general orientation of the Roman buildings uncovered by the 1795 flood. Thus, if the approximate 20 degree deviation of the possible road from the true north orthogonal is real, it could still be an ancient grid orientation.

Superimposing this orientation on the current topographic map of Arzignano has revealed a series of alignments at seemingly regular intervals (200 to 250 m?) to the south of Tezze that may be based upon an ancient subdivision of the agricultural land in the valley floor (fig. 14). In this image, the lines of an orthogonal grid emanate from the orientation of the possible road, which is approximately parallel to the road (shown in blue) running eastward through Tezze from the town of Arzignano to the fraction of Ghisa, and to several smaller farm roads and property boundaries in the Guà River Valley (all shown in blue). It is also perpendicular to the course of the Guà River to the south of Tezze, where the valley floor is widest. Similar alignments to the south of the towns of Arzignano and Montec-

chio Maggiore (see above, fig. 4) have been explained in relation to the *Via Postumia*, the main east-west Roman road across the Po Valley⁴⁷. The proximity of our site to this roadway, which probably ran by Montebello Vicentino (11 km to the south of Tezze)⁴⁸, must have favored the growth of a Roman settlement at Valbruna. “*La viabilità romana costituì un fattore aggiunto di sviluppo*”, as G. Bandelli has pointed out⁴⁹. While the grid is speculative, it suggests that this settlement may also have been tied to a comprehensive subdivision of the floodplain. In fact, there is room for at least three centuriation units of 20 x 20 *actus* in the immediate environs of Valbruna. But there is no archaeological evidence that they existed, despite an evident “gap” in the known centuriation system in the area

⁴⁶ Cf. BRUNO, CAVALIERI MANASSE 2000: 78-79.

⁴⁷ PELTRIN *et al.* 1987: 24-25; cf. BONETTO 1998: 252-254.

⁴⁸ Cf. CAV II, 1990: 160-161, F. 49, nos. 334.8 and 335. Recent controlled excavations in the environs of Montebello have uncovered traces of a 9-m wide paved roadway (information provided by E. Bruttomesso). Cf. TOZZI 1987: 139; ROSADA 1998: 242-243.

⁴⁹ BANDELLI 2007: 21; cf. MENEGAZZI 1990: 90 and MIGLIARIO 2010: 100-102.

between the Valle d'Ilasi (to the east of Verona) and the *ager* of Vicetia⁵⁰. Local scholars already noted that “*le tracce abitative affiorate a livello di campagna nell'ampio territorio compreso fra Arzignano e Montebellio Maggiore risultano inserite nelle aree nelle quali persiste il regolare allineamento dei campi. Viceversa, le aree che non manifestano tale caratteristica (la zona a nord-ovest di S. Vitale, la destra idrografica dell'Agno-Guà tra Montorso e Montebello, il bacino del Brendola, ecc.) dovrebbero costituire le parti di territorio rurale che più frequentemente, nel corso dei secoli successivi alla caduta dell'impero romano, sono state sconvolte dalle esondazioni dei corsi d'acqua*”⁵¹. Traces of an ancient parcelization of the rural landscape are less likely to have been preserved to the north of Tezze because of the greater erosion and deeper fluvial deposits caused by the action of three overbanking streams.

The last two areas of interest are two sets of circular to semi-circular features of high magnetic flux density, at circa 35 m from each other (highlighted in pink in the plot on the left in fig. 13). Four or five such anomalies are arrayed in an arc of approximately 12 m in diameter on the north side of the survey block; five to six similar anomalies comprise a circle of roughly 15 m in diameter on the south side. The individual features measure c. 1 to 2 m in diameter. There is also a very faint indication of a possible square-shaped feature within the southern circle (shown in green in the image on the right in fig. 13), measuring approximately 10 m². It is oriented roughly 43 degrees west of true north and its alignment is similar to that of the main Roman structure. The GPR data show that, unlike the feature interpreted as a possible roadbed (fig. 15 left), both sets of anomalies are buried at a depth ranging between 160 and 200 cm. Also at this depth is a series of pit-like features, measuring from 50 to 150 cm in size, which are adjacent to the circular set of anomalies in the southern end of the survey block (fig. 15, right).

At present, and without ground-truthing, the origin of these anomalies cannot be determined. All of them lie at a lower depth than the presumed road and the Roman rectangular structure. It is possible, however, that the two largest anomalies may represent modern disturbances. There are indications that ‘three or four skeletons with dislodged tombstones’ were found in the northern half of the field in ‘1950/1960’, and that an ‘exploratory excavation’ yielded ‘walls and mosaic floors’ in the southern half of the field in 1978⁵². The landowner also excavated in the middle of the field, to a depth of 1 m, in the mid- or late 1960s⁵³. Therefore, the stratigraphy of the deposit may already have been compromised.

That the two largest circular features may be prehistoric seems improbable, even though a chert blade fragment found in topsoil during the University of Kentucky's geophysi-

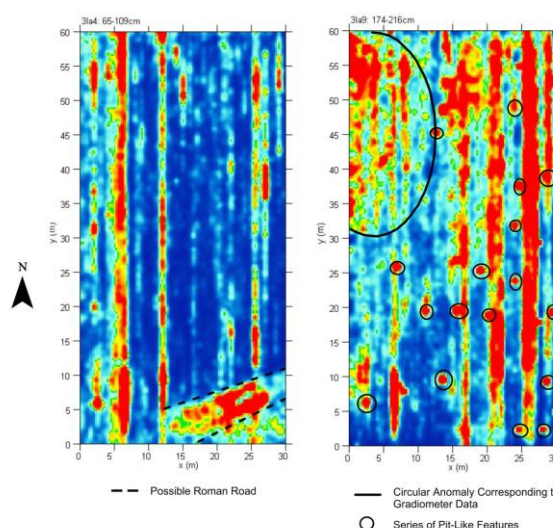


Fig. 15. Località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano. GPR plots of the southern half of the survey block. Computer-aided visualization by D.L. Handshoe.



Fig. 16. Chert blade fragment found during the geophysical survey at località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano, in 2012. Montebellio Maggiore, Museo di Archeologia e Scienze Naturali “G. Zannato”. Drawing by J.N. Carlson; computer-aided enhancement by L.F. Chapman. Published by permission of MIBACT. No reproduction is allowed.

⁵⁰ Cf. BOSIO 1984: 16-17 and MENEGAZZI 1984; see also (in general) ROSELAAR 2008: 52.

⁵¹ PELTRIN *et al.* 1987: 24. The toponym ‘Campi storti’ to the south of Trissino (where a ‘Via Campi storti’ still exists) has been interpreted as “tracce di antica centuriazione romana” by CHILESE 2009: 587. In the same general area, the toponym ‘Val Bona’ is linked to the legend of a fountain in which the reflection of a lost city could be seen, and to the finding of threshold blocks and window sills at a depth of 2 m, mentioned by CHILESE 2009: 635-636. According to BRUTTOMESSO 2011-2012: 47, “Ad est di Trissino vi sono molte tracce di paleoval-vei direzionati verso il centro della valle. Il toponimo ‘Campi novi’ o ‘Pranovi’, presente, identifica infatti quest’area di parcelle con un proprio orientamento e verrebbe associato alla pianificazione agricola di un letto d’inondazione abbandonato.”

⁵² PIZZATI 1982a, fig. 8, nos. 2-3.

⁵³ Information provided by G.B. Carlotto (interviewed on 18.07.2012 and 01.17.2013) and by E. Negri (interviewed on 05.06.2013). A sestertius of Maximinus I was found by G.B. Carlotto in August, 1968, probably in this field: see VISONÀ 1984: 22, no. 29.

cal survey suggests that this area was frequented in the late Neolithic or the early Bronze age (fig. 16)⁵⁴. Much smaller sub-circular features, interpreted as the remains of Neolithic shelters, are known from settlements of the Fiorano Culture excavated at Savignano near Modena and at Le Basse di Valcalaona in the southern Veneto, and from Colognola ai Colli, to the east of Verona⁵⁵. Traces of “*unità abitative del tipo probabilmente capannicolo a pianta ellissoidale seminterrata*”, datable to the second half of the 10th and to the 9th centuries B.C., and circular structures (diameter: 2.4 to 2.8 m), datable between the 5th and 2nd centuries B.C., have also been found at Montebello Vicentino and S. Ambrogio di Valpolicella⁵⁶. Nonetheless, a series of regular pits slightly over 1 m in diameter, interpreted as bins for the storage of foodstuffs, and as refuse pits, was found outside the presumed Neolithic dwellings at Savignano, and there is evidence that circular pits of various sizes were used for different functions at several sites in the Veneto from the Neolithic to the early Iron age⁵⁷. These *comparanda*, and the presence of a few fragments of pre-Roman pottery among the finds from the Carlotto estate, do not preclude the possibility that the pit-like features detected by the GPR may have cultural significance. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to conduct any testing or coring to determine the nature of these anomalies, and we could not expand our survey into the adjacent fields to provide greater horizontal coverage⁵⁸.

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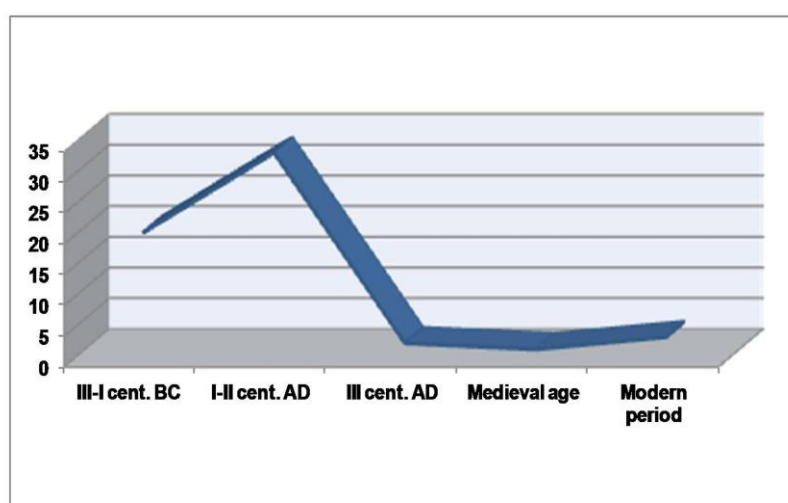


Fig. 17. MNI-based quantification of the pottery from the Carlotto estate at località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano. Diagram by L. Toniolo.

The pottery from the Carlotto estate at Valbruna

The decontextualized sherds found in the Carlotto estate range in date from the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. to the modern age and comprise the only sample of pottery currently available from Valbruna. They originated for the most part from the same field where the geophysical survey was conducted⁵⁹. Their relatively sharp breaks also suggest that they were not rolled around and eroded by alluviation. Body sherds (53.65%) and coarse ware handles (17.14%) make up most of the ceramic finds; there are relatively few rims and bases (29.21%). The interpretation of this material is hampered not only by its poor condition, but also by the dearth of published *comparanda* from this corner of the Veneto. Examples of imported fine wares and of

transport amphoras that could yield reliable chronological markers are exceedingly scarce. Nevertheless, comparisons with pottery finds from nearby sites in the *ager* of Vicenza, and from Padua, Verona, and the Venice area, have proved useful to identify the coarse wares made locally, which comprise 61.75% of this assemblage⁶⁰.

Three horizons stand out (fig. 17). The pre-Roman *facies* is documented by relatively few sherds datable to the final phases of the Late Iron age and to the ‘Romanization’ period. Locally-produced coarse and cooking wares

⁵⁴ GPS data: 45°32.61 N / 11° 22.36 E, elevation 100 m (11.07.2012 at 14.55 PM). Length: 3.4 cm; width: 2.1 cm (proximal) x 1.8 cm (distal); thickness: 0.5 cm. Munsell: between 10YR 6/2 (pale yellowish brown) and 5YR N6 (light gray). Data provided by J.N. Carlson. Cf. CHELIDONIO, MOTTES 1994: 81, fig. 1, no. 2.

⁵⁵ BAGOLINI 1987: 73-74; SALZANI 1992: 101-102.

⁵⁶ DE GUIO 1987: 100; BROMBO 2012: 161-162.

⁵⁷ Cf. BAGOLINI 1987: 73 (Savignano); SALZANI 1989: 144-146 (Gazzo Veronese); SALZANI, CHELIDONIO 1995: 53-55 (Nogara); BIANCHIN CITTON 1996: 100-101 (Roncade); TINÉ *et al.* 2012: 102-103 (Vicenza, Dal Molin); SALZANI 1987: 112-113 (Mozzecane); BIANCHIN CITTON 1989: 231-234, 252-253 (S. Martino di Lupari – Castello di Godego); GAMBACURTA 2011: 124-125 (Oderzo).

⁵⁸ Threats of physical violence against the American team by anonymous local residents, reported by G.B. Carlotto, caused the abrupt termination of the University of Kentucky’s geophysical survey after three days of actual fieldwork. There is anecdotal information that other ancient structures were located in the field outside the northeastern corner of parcel 18 in the current cadastral map. In 1910, G.B. Carlotto’s father found “*i mattoni per fare un camino*” in this field, known as “*il Campo Rosso*” (information provided by G.B. Carlotto, interviewed on 22.06.2010). Remains of buried structures to the east of the Carlotto estate were visible on infrared aerial photos seen by E. Bruttomesso during the preparation of his *tesi di laurea* (information provided by E. Bruttomesso on 07.06.2013).

⁵⁹ See above, footnote 37. In June, 2010, G.B. Carlotto asserted that topsoil was brought to his farm ‘long ago’ and that sand was taken out. Topsoil was needed because the soil was very thin ‘in front of his farm’, where there was gravel at a depth of 30 cm. However, in an interview on 01.17.2013, Carlotto stated that soil was never brought into the field where the geophysical survey was conducted. This field lies c. 150 m. to the north of the Carlotto farmhouse.

⁶⁰ For the use of this term here, see the remarks by MILLET 2000: 218-219.

make up the bulk of the pottery datable to the early Empire (1st and 2nd centuries A.D.). A few fragments of fine wares and amphoras can be assigned to northern Italic productions, but a *mortarium* fragment is of central Italian provenience. Only two diagnostic sherds from imported vessels belong to the mid-imperial period (3rd century C.E.). After this horizon, there is a hiatus in the ceramic record until the present day.

a) *The pre-Roman facies*

A small number of potsherds can be assigned to the so-called 'Romanization' phase datable between the second half of the 3rd and the mid-1st centuries B.C. The foothill area near Tezze seems to exhibit strong Venetic cultural hallmarks at this time, although Raetian influences, exemplified by the so-called "*Gruppo Magrè*"⁶¹, can also be detected. The best marker for contexts of the 'Romanization' is the "*ceramica grigia*"⁶², a grey ware which was widely used across the Po Plain from the end of the 4th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D. and is represented by two diagnostic fragments. Both of them belong to vessels produced in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., when this ware had a coarser fabric and a limited typological repertoire and was widely distributed across northeastern Italy. A moulded rim of a bowl is datable between the end of the 3rd and the 1st century B.C. (fig. 18, 1; I.G. 365266); a poorly preserved ring foot (fig. 18, 2; I.G. 365269) also belongs to a bowl. The type of moulding of this rim is clearly related to prototypes developed in the main Venetic "*siti planiziari*" ('lowlands sites'), such as Este, Vicenza, and especially Padua⁶³. The presence of grey ware at Valbruna as well as at Trissino and Montebello Maggiore (c. 3 km to the southeast of Tezze) thus highlights the cultural links between the lower Agno Valley and these centers in the plains⁶⁴, although the fabric of our sherds hints at a local production (possibly in the piedmont zone).

The mingling of different cultural traditions is documented by the fragments of common ware, most of which come from vessels with everted, olive-shaped rims (fig. 18, 3; I.G. 365251) and shoulders decorated with a horizontal sequence of incised notches (fig. 19; I.G. 365252/1). Their coarse fabric (which breaks with a hackly, irregular fracture and tends to flake since it was fired at low temperatures) is typical of the pre-Roman pottery from Trissino and Montebello Vicentino⁶⁵. Several variants of common ware vessels with a similar fabric were produced by workshops near Montebello Vicentino between the end of the 5th and the 3rd century B.C., and they had an extensive distribution during the 4th century.⁶⁶ The general geometry of their form finds *comparanda* in the Venetic centers of *Altnoi/Altinum* and Padua, but the Venetic prototype was developed and re-elaborated in a distinctively local style. The notch decoration, in particular (which also occurs on *dolia* with large, thickened rims slightly curved inwards)⁶⁷, is well known from the pottery finds from Montebello Vicentino, Bostel di Rotzo, and the prealpine area in general; its chronology ranges from the 4th – 3rd centuries B.C. to the 'Romanization' phase⁶⁸. This type of vessel gradually acquired a thicker rim (fig. 18, 4; I.G. 365255) and continued to be produced until the 1st century B.C.⁶⁹.

Among the finds from the site is a fragment of a so-called "*vassoio a coppelle*" (fig. 18, 5; I.G. 365252), a tray with circular indentations hollowed out of the base of the vessel itself. Fragments of this type of container, which is characteristic of the Venetic repertoire, have been found frequently in the *ager* of Vicenza: some of the earliest examples come from a context of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. from Monte Palazzo di S. Tomio di Malo, and from an Iron age house of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. excavated at Montebello Vicentino⁷⁰. Other examples datable between the 4th-1st centuries B.C. are known from Brendola, Costabissara, Creazzo⁷¹, and Vicenza⁷². These vessels were produced in the Venetic area as well between the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C.⁷³, and they were still in use at *Altnoi/Altinum* between the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.⁷⁴. Fragmented "*vassoi a coppelle*" have also been found at Padua in contexts of the second half of the 2nd century / mid-1st century B.C.⁷⁵. Therefore, even if the poor condition

⁶¹ LORA, RUTA SERAFINI 1992; see also MARZATICO 2013: 146-147.

⁶² CASSANI *et al.* 2007.

⁶³ The phrase is by LEONARDI *et al.* 2011: 278. For the rim cf. GAMBA, RUTA SERAFINI 1984: 50, no. 405. For the ring foot (which seems to be "*umbonato esternamente*", according to S. Lora) cf. GAMBA, RUTA SERAFINI 1984: 15, fig. 1, no. 6, and 39-40, fig. 8, no. 280.

⁶⁴ Cf. MIGLIAVACCA 2003: 37; RUTA SERAFINI 1984: 767; BRUTTOMESSO 2010: 41-42.

⁶⁵ It usually has a sandwich-like appearance, with a reddish color on the outer surface (Munsell 2.5YR 4/6) and a darker core (Munsell 5YR 4/2). Large fossil inclusions, large white and grey rock inclusions, and medium-size quartz used as temper are also characteristic of this fabric. Cf. MIGLIAVACCA 2003: 27-28 and LEONARDI *et al.* 2011: 260.

⁶⁶ RUTA SERAFINI 1996, fig. 37 (from Vicenza); CAROLLO *et al.* 1997: 63 (from Santorso).

⁶⁷ For examples of similar *dolium* rims from Trissino, see MIGLIAVACCA 2003: 27-28 and 56, pl. 5, nos. 21-22.

⁶⁸ Cf. LEONARDI *et al.* 2011: 262, fig. 21, no. 7 (from Montebello Vicentino); LEONARDI, RUTA SERAFINI 1981: 20-22, fig. 17, no. 34; 36-37, fig. 33, no. 163 (Bostel di Rotzo); see also RUTA SERAFINI 1984: 765. MIGLIAVACCA 2003: 36 includes "*olle decorate sulla spalla da fasci di solcature orizzontali*" among the typical productions "*dell'area alto-vicentina e lessinea*."

⁶⁹ See GAMBACURTA 2007, fig. 35/185.

⁷⁰ LEONARDI *et al.* 2011: 267-268, fig. 24, no. 55; 280. The "*vassoio a coppelle*" may have been used as a "*lucerna a fuoco libero*".

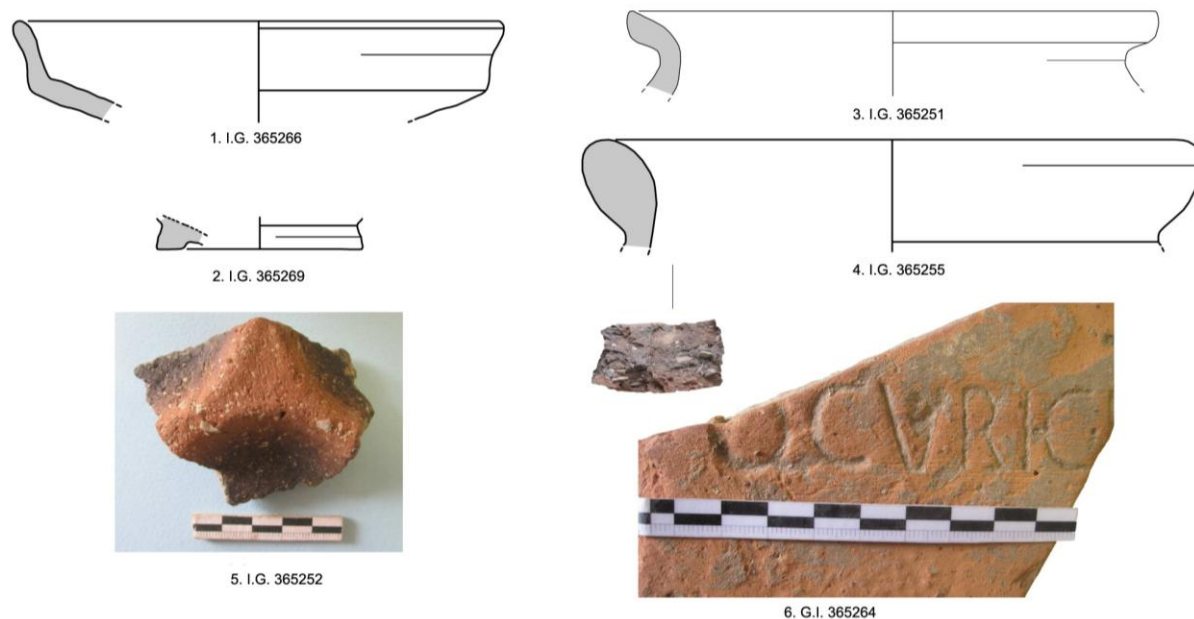
⁷¹ VALLICELLI, VIGONI 2012: 124-125, fig. 4, no. 4. For an early example from Padua see GROPPPO 2013: 239-240, no. 3.2.24.

⁷² BRUTTOMESSO 1983a: 20, fig. 7, no. 4.

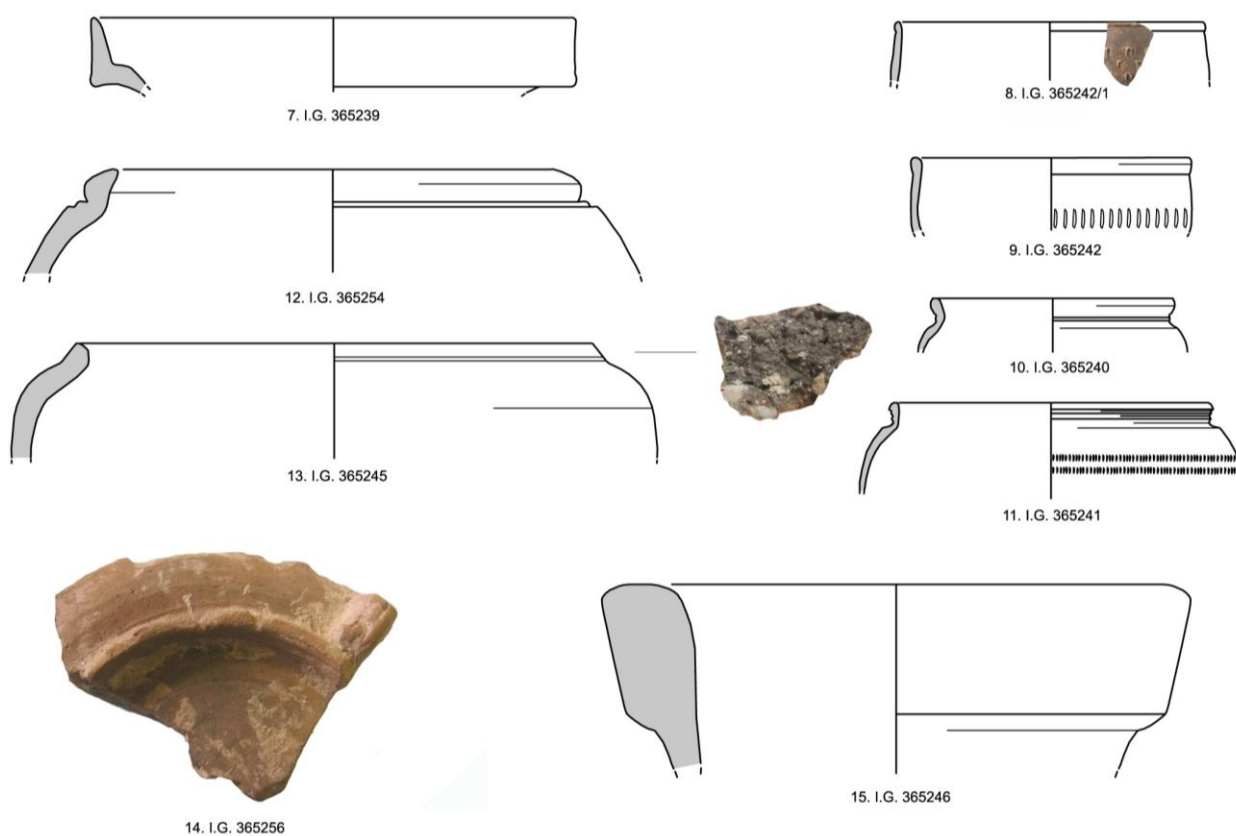
⁷³ For the contexts at Meolo and Musile di Piave see CROCE DA VILLA 1996: 90, no. 35 and D'ISEP 2005: 174, fig. 2, no. 9, and 176.

⁷⁴ GROPPPO, PUJATTI 2009: 62, fig. 8, no. 28.

⁷⁵ GAMBA, GAMBACURTA 2006: 157; cf. LEONARDI *et al.* 2011: 267.



Pre-roman phase



Early imperial period

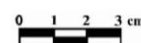


Fig. 18. Pre-Roman and Roman pottery and tile stamp from the Carlotto estate at località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano. Montecchio Maggiore, Museo di Archeologia e Scienze Naturali "G. Zannato". Photographs and drawings by L. Toniolo. Published by permission of MIBACT. No reproduction is allowed.

of our fragment prevents it from being dated more narrowly, its occurrence at Valbruna is noteworthy. On the whole, both the “*ceramica grigia*” and this artifact corroborate the possibility that the late Iron age occupants of Valbruna had contacts with Venetic groups from the lowlands, and especially from Padua, who may have been involved with this piedmont area as a gateway to the mining district in the upper Agno Valley⁷⁶.

b) The early imperial period

Most of the pottery that can be assigned to the early Empire is datable to the 1st century A.D. / beginning of the 2nd century A.D. The fine wares are represented exclusively by Po Valley *sigillata*, such as the plate *Conspectus* 21 with a plain vertical rim (fig. 18, 7; I.G. 365239), which was made from the Augustan period until the late Tiberian or the early Claudian period⁷⁷. In the Po Valley the production of these plates seems to have begun slightly later (under Tiberius), and to have continued until the end of the 1st century A.D. A fragment of *Firmalampen* (fig. 18, 14; inv. 365256) hints at this chronological horizon but cannot be dated more precisely, since only the lamp's shoulder is preserved. Although it is uncertain when this lamp began to be made, it had a long typological evolution and lasted until the Antonine age⁷⁸. *Firmalampen* are very common in the *ager* of Vicenza, as can be inferred by the examples bearing the stamp FORTIS from the necropolis of Cava Silma at Isola Vicentina⁷⁹, and from Rosà⁸⁰.

Twenty sherds from Carlotto's estate can be attributed to thin-walled ware made in northern Italy and include both examples with grey fabrics (20%) and with pale-orange fabrics (80%). Thin-walled grey ware was produced in the 1st century A.D. and reached its *floruit* between the reign of Claudius and the Flavian age; it gradually went out of circulation in the 2nd century. These grey productions are characteristic of northern Italy. The type of vessel with this fabric that occurs most frequently is a deep bowl with a small rounded rim and a straight wall, usually decorated *à la barbotine* or with strigillations, corresponding to the type Marabini XXXVI⁸¹. This was widely distributed in the northern Italian area and is also among the pottery found at Valbruna⁸². However, it is difficult to find close comparisons for the fragments of bowls from our site, since the type Marabini XXXVI (more a 'typological family' than a consistent type of vessel) comprises a broad range of varieties that have never been studied in detail⁸³. A sherd (fig. 18, 8; I.G. 365242/1) can be attributed to one of the most common and simple variants of this type, featuring a small rounded rim offset by a groove from the walls of the vessel. This fragment has a rather coarse *barbotine* decoration consisting of motifs in between lunettes and pine scales⁸⁴. Similar bowls were produced from the Augustan age and the reign of Tiberius to the first quarter or the first half of the 2nd century A.D., peaking under Tiberius or Claudius and the Flavians.

The thin-walled ware with pale brown-orange fabrics, on the other hand, is represented at our site by beakers or bowls with rouletting decoration (fig. 18, 9-11) for which no close comparisons have been found in the standard catalogues. Some of them share the same typological repertoire of northern Italian coarse wares: the beaker in fig. 18, 11 (I.G. 365241), in particular, is akin to one of the most common types of jar, but has a finer fabric, thin walls, and a red coating.



Fig. 19. Fragment of common ware vessel with incised-notch decoration from the Carlotto estate at località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano. Montecchio Maggiore, Museo di Archeologia e Scienze Naturali “G. Zannato”, I.G. 365252/1. Photograph by L. Toniolo; computer-aided enhancement by L.F. Chapman. Published by permission of MIBACT. No reproduction is allowed.

⁷⁶ For mineral resources in the upper Agno Valley see MANTESE 1966: 25-26, 30-31; TRIVELLI 1991: 18, 70-71; FRIZZO 2002: 81-82; DEMO 2004: 75-81. Cf. RUTA SERAFINI 1984: 769; BOARO 2001: 170; MIGLIAVACCA 2009: 108-110; DE GUIO, MIGLIAVACCA 2012; MIGLIAVACCA 2012-2014: 6-8, 10-11.

⁷⁷ See *Conspectus*: 88-89, Form 21; cf. CIOTOLA 2011: 165-166.

⁷⁸ S. Loeschcke proposed a date of c. 75 A.D. for this type of lamp: see LOESCHCKE 1919: 268-270. However, a dating close to the mid-1st century A.D., or even in the early Julio-Claudian period (from Tiberius to Claudius) has been suggested by FARKA 1977: 323-324. On present evidence, a dating near 60 A.D. seems plausible: see PAVOLINI 1981: 167, and LARESE, SGREVA 1996: 251-253.

⁷⁹ PETTENÒ, VIGONI 2008: 106, fig. 7, no. 14.

⁸⁰ PETTENÒ *et al.* 2002: 74.

⁸¹ Cf. RICCI 1985: 322, decorative motif 163, pl. 104, no. 7.

⁸² Cf. RICCI 1985: 134-135, pl. 25. For its distribution in Lombardy and for finds at Brescia, see TASSINARI 1998 and MORANDINI 1999: 67. Cf. also CIOTOLA 2011: 169.

⁸³ A reorganization of the type Marabini XXXVI for the pottery made in the Bay of Naples area has been proposed by FAGA 2010.

⁸⁴ Cf. RICCI 1985: type 233 and pl. 108, no. 13.

Only two diagnostic sherds of early imperial amphoras made in the northern Adriatic region have been recovered⁸⁵. The best preserved one is an early example of a Dressel 6A amphora (fig. 18, 15; I.G. 365246), datable to the end of the 1st century B.C. / beginning of the 1st century A.D. An evolution of the Lamboglia 2 amphora that characterized Adriatic contexts of the second half of the 1st century B.C., it probably contained wine. Another sherd, very fragmented, can be attributed to a northern Adriatic Dressel 6B, an amphora with a funnel-shaped rim that was common in the second half of the 1st century A.D. This type of amphora was produced in northern Italy and in Istria, and it is frequently found in northern Italy from *Mediolanum* to *Altinum*; it may have been filled with oil or other food-stuffs⁸⁶.

All the common wares have a coarse fabric resembling that of the pottery made during the 'Romanization' phase, which suggests that the same sources of raw materials continued to be exploited under the early Empire. The technology and firing techniques used to produce these vessels also remained traditional. Their typological repertoire, however, is fully Roman and finds close comparisons in archaeological contexts across northern Italy. Chronological markers are provided by vessels with an everted moulded rim with single or double grooving and a globular body that is usually decorated on the shoulder (fig. 18, 12; I.G. 365254), which are generally datable from the 1st century A.D. to the beginning of the 2nd century, but continued to be produced until the 4th century A.D. in some contexts. In fact, this type of vessel belongs to a typological family that exhibits slight morphological variants from site to site. In the *X Regio* it has been found at Ca' Tron and in the Verona area⁸⁷; the variety of fabrics points to different production centers that are still unknown. It is also common in Lombardy (especially in contexts datable between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D.)⁸⁸, at Modena⁸⁹, and at *Albintimilium*⁹⁰. Another type of common ware vessel from Valbruna with a simpler rim and a globular body (fig. 18, 13; I.G. 365245) belongs to the same chronological horizon and shares the same fabric and area of distribution within the *X Regio*, and beyond its boundaries⁹¹.

The only imported vessel datable to the first two centuries of the Empire is a poorly preserved rim of a *mortarium* of central Italic provenience, similar to Dramont D2 (Joncheray type 2). Its yellow-pinkish fabric (Munsell 7.5 YR 7/6) with large inclusions of mica and quartz is distinctive. This implement has a very large and thick rim (often stamped), a big spout, a shallow body, and a flat base; it was produced from the mid-1st century A.D. to the Antonine age. The occurrence of a *mortarium* made in central Italy among the Roman materials from our site suggests that the lower Agno Valley was tied to a regional network of trade under the early Empire, since this type of vessel is found across the entire *X Regio*. The main harbor in the Veneto through which these *mortaria* reached the interior of the Po Valley was probably *Altinum*, which has yielded a large number of them⁹².

Two stamped tile fragments in the assemblage can also be assigned to the late Republican period or to the first half of the 1st century A.D. One of them, bearing the stamp QCVRICF, *Q(uinti) Curi C(ai) F(ili)*, was recovered to the west of the Carlotto estate in 1982 (fig. 18, 6; I.G. 365264)⁹³. The products of this tile maker are disseminated across the western and north-western *ager* of Vicenza⁹⁴, but they have also been found to the south of the city and beyond its territorial boundaries in the *ager* of Este⁹⁵, the *ager* of Padua⁹⁶, and the northern branch of the Po River delta⁹⁷. Another tile fragment found in 1976 (in a plot of land to the south of the field where the geophysical survey was conducted) bears the stamp L SATRI, which is known hitherto only from Valbruna (fig. 20; I.G. 365264/1). *Lucius Satrius* may have been one of the tile makers who met the demand of a niche market in this piedmont zone, as the *gens Satria* seems to have operated several small workshops that supplied tiles to various areas of northeastern Italy, including the territory of *Vicetia*⁹⁸.

⁸⁵ The amphoras of the 1st century A.D. found in the Veneto were produced mostly in the Adriatic region. Relatively few examples come from the eastern Mediterranean: cf. CIPRIANO 2003 for *Altinum*, CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 1999 (for Padua), and PESAVENTO MATTIOLI 1998: 313 (for Verona).

⁸⁶ BRUNO 2003: 85-87; CIPRIANO 2009; MAURINA 2011: 197-199.

⁸⁷ See ROSSI 2008: 48-49, fig. 8, no. 5; cf. BIONDANI 1998: 93 (from Verona); BIONDANI, CORRENT 1996: 77 (from S. Michela Extra); CALZOLARI 1996: 87, 90-91, 127, pl. 6, no. 1 (from the southern *ager* of Verona); SALZANI, BIONDANI 1999: 162, fig. 6, no. 34 (from Santa Maria di Zevio).

⁸⁸ OLCESE 1998: 151-152. For finds of this type of pottery in Milan, see GUGLIELMETTI *et al.* 1991: 192-194.

⁸⁹ See CORTI, TARPINI 1997: 120-122, 131, 143, fig. 6, no. 2, and CORTI *et al.* 2002: 241, fig. 6 (*Mother Group 4*).

⁹⁰ OLCESE 1993: 106-109.

⁹¹ For examples from Costabissara and Ca' Tron see VIGONI 2005: 99-100, fig. 5, no. 11; ROSSI 2008: 48, fig. 8, no. 6. Cf. CORTESE 2003: 72.

⁹² MARITAN 2009.

⁹³ CAV II, 1990: 128, F. 49, no. 153.2. Possibly another example of this stamp was found in the 1928-1929 excavations in the same area: see MISTRORIGO 1929: 13 and 16. For the dating, see BUCHI 1987: 153-154. MUNSELL: 2.5YR 6/8.

⁹⁴ An updated list of finds of this tile stamp in the territory of Vicenza is in CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2007: 676.

⁹⁵ See GAMBIN 2007: 24 (from Barbarano, environs); CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2007: 638 (from S. Martino di Venezze).

⁹⁶ CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2003: 39-40.

⁹⁷ MARINI 2008: 131.

⁹⁸ CAV II, 1990: 128, F. 49, no. 153.2. MUNSELL: 5YR 6/6. The tile stamp of *Manius Satrius* is known from finds at Vicenza, Brendola, and S. Martino di Venezze (CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2007: 677 and 640); that of *Caius Satrius Up(ilio?)* comes from Padua and its territory (CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2007: 662, 664, 666, 674). The stamp of *Satrae Didymes* has been found on bricks and tiles from the territory



Fig. 20. Fragment of roof tile with stamp of L(ucius) Satrius found in the Carlotto estate at località Valbruna, Tezze di Arzignano, in 1976. Montecchio Maggiore, Museo di Archeologia e Scienze Naturali "G. Zannato", I.G. 365264/1. Photograph by P. Visonà; computer-aided enhancement by L.F. Chapman. Published by permission of MIBACT. No reproduction is allowed.

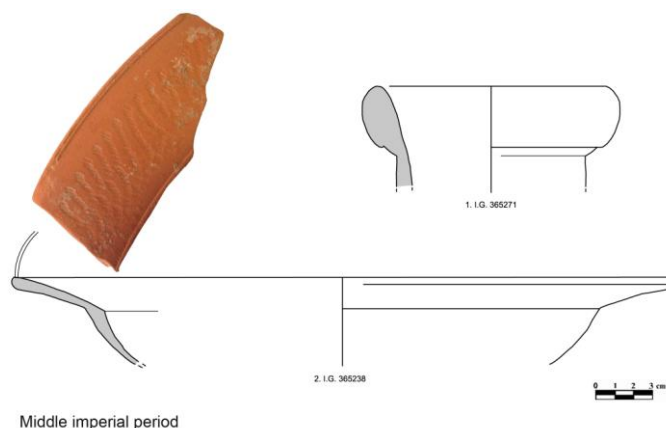


Fig. 21. Roman pottery (3rd century A.D.) from the Carlotto estate at Tezze di Arzignano, località Valbruna. Montecchio Maggiore, Museo di Archeologia e Scienze Naturali "G. Zannato". Photograph and drawings by L. Toniolo. Published by permission of MIBACT. No reproduction is allowed.

c) The mid-imperial period

In contrast with the relative abundance of sherds datable to the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., very few data are available for the mid-imperial period from Valbruna – as is the case for the rest of the region. The fine wares are represented by a fragment of African Red Slip of production C (= ARS C) made in central Tunisia and attributable to the type Hayes 45A (fig. 21, 2; I.G. 365238). It belongs to a thin-walled bowl with a large everted rim with two grooves and feather rouletting, and a shallow body. This type of vessel was dated by J.W. Hayes between 230/240 and 320 A.D. and is rather uncommon in the *X Regio*, where ARS C occurs frequently but is exemplified by the bowls similar to Hayes 50⁹⁹. Another significant fragment is a rim of *Africana IIA* (*Africana grande*) variant A3¹⁰⁰, an amphora with a distinctive almond-shaped rim and a slight "gradino" before the neck (fig. 21, 2; I.G. 365271), which was used probably for transporting wine. It was made in the Tunisian *sahel* in the mid-3rd- or in the second half of the 3rd century A.D., when Tunisian productions began to play a major role in the supply of the Adriatic area¹⁰¹. In previous centuries, imports from this region of Africa had been quite modest, but at this time of general crisis for the production of grain and wine for the internal market, these commodities were increasingly imported from Byzacena and the Syrtes region of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The presence at Valbruna of both ARS ware and an amphora from Tunisia seems to indicate that our area was embroiled in the economic changes that affected northeastern Italy in the 3rd century.

L.T.

Conclusions

The geophysical survey conducted by G.M. Crothers' team at the site of Valbruna in 2012 has revealed the presence of buried structures presumed to belong to a Roman building irregularly aligned with a seemingly ancient road. These results substantiate 19th-century reports about the discovery of extensive remains of Roman houses in the environs of Tezze di Arzignano. However, the survey has not revealed the presence of a village or an urban grid. While the magnetometry and GPR data come from a limited area and are highly preliminary, they show that the site does not appear to be pluri-stratified. There is some evidence that it was frequented in prehistory, however. In addition, multiple, pit-like anomalies found at a lower depth than the Roman installations find comparanda with prehistoric features, although their origin cannot be interpreted without further investigation. The building's total dimensions

of Concordia (CIPRIANO, MAZZOCCHIN 2007: 656 and 658). A tile stamp of *Marcus Terentius C.f.* has also been found in the Carlotto estate: see above, footnote 13.

⁹⁹ See MASSA 2003: 132-133.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. BONIFAY 2004: 109, fig. 58, and 111 (type 22).

¹⁰¹ For the amphoras of this period from *Altinum* see FERRARINI 1993: 163. African amphoras have also been found at Costabissara: see VIGONI 2005: 98-99, fig. 5, no. 2; cf. BRUTTOMESSO 1983b: 20-21 and BUCHI 1987: 156.

are uncertain and its functions also remain problematic, despite the fact that the surface finds of mosaic tesserae seem consistent with its identification as a *villa*. Finds of Roman tombs in its vicinity raise the possibility that it may have been situated near a burial ground on the outskirts of the settlement uncovered in 1795 and 1882, whose exact location remains elusive.

L. Toniolo's study of the pottery suggests that the site was continuously occupied from the 'Romanization' phase in the late Iron age until the 3rd century A.D. and that Valbruna's occupants continued to rely on local ceramic productions under the Empire. Although the largest number of potsherds belongs to the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.¹⁰², the overall quantity of imported wares appears to have been relatively small throughout the same period. A reduced level of economic activity may perhaps be inferred from the dearth of sherds datable after the Severan period¹⁰³. Nonetheless, this area was seemingly well integrated within a regional network of trade and redistribution even in epochs of prolonged warfare, such as the mid-3rd century. It is not known at present whether the site was destroyed and abandoned in the wake of the conflicts in which the Veneto was involved between 249 and 260 A.D.¹⁰⁴. If the remains do belong to the *pars urbana* of an isolated farmstead¹⁰⁵, the building's demise would fit the general pattern of abandonment of Roman *villae* in this period.

The data gained from the Tezze Archaeological Project warrant further research and have implications for an understanding of the pattern of settlement in the lower Agno Valley under the Romans. Even though the location of the ruins brought to light in the late 18th and 19th centuries is still unknown, there are indications that a nucleated settlement existed on the valley floor. The likely presence of a village or "*centro vicanico*", presumably with its own *ager*, in this corner of the Agno-Guà Valley would point to a more complex organization of the countryside than a mere subdivision of the agricultural land into rural estates¹⁰⁶. A Roman settlement in the environs of Tezze di Arzignano would have been well positioned to exploit valuable natural resources¹⁰⁷, and to serve as a node for commercial exchanges with Vicenza and Verona, the closest 'central places' on the *Via Postumia*¹⁰⁸. Its inhabitants may have included and probably interacted with the descendants of the pre-Roman population that had lived in the piedmont since the late Iron age.

APPENDIX 1

G.B. GARDUCCI VELO, "Rovine della così detta *Valbruna* (Vico Prunella)", in *Epoche, e Memorie dell'antica, e moderna Vicenza*. Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, Vicenza, MS 2686 (Gonzati 21.11.3), Fasc. V: 31-34.

"In Valle di Trissino, nel tenere delle Tezze d'Arzignano, a settentrione del villaggio, e nei poderi specialmente dei Fratelli Carlotti si trovò nel 1795, per accidentale esondazione del fiume Agno messa improvvisamente a giorno larga estensione di rovinati ed arsi edifici, e considerabili macerie d'antico Luogo o Vico. Quattro piedi circa sotto il livello ordinario de' campi si scoprono tali ruine. L'estesa maggiore è di levante in ponente, occupando in tal direzione una linea di più di 320. pertiche; mentre dal mezzodì al settentrione non si prolungano che 240. Il che viene a formare più d'un miglio di circuito, e dimostra ch'era Vico, o Borgata non mediocre, e di qualche considerazione. La base de' fondamenti posa sopra uno strato di argilla vulcanica nerastra sottoposta immediat.e agli ammassi delle ghiaie sopra accumulate dalle alluvioni del torrente.

I muri ne son composti o di gran breccie di strato calcareo bianco; o di ciottoloni di sasso nero basaltino (sic), o di lava vulcanica misti a sassi calcarei fluitati. Il cemento durissimo è di calce, ed arena calcarea grossa. La lor grossezza in base

¹⁰² A sample of Roman pottery from Valbruna seen by J.W. Hayes in 1984 was datable mainly to the 1st century A.D.: see VISONÀ 1987: 201, n. 62.

¹⁰³ The coin finds also taper off after the second quarter of the 3rd century, to which a sestertius of Maximinus I and a bronze of Gordian III from Viminacium can be assigned: see above, footnote 52, and VISONÀ 2000: 68-70. An AE 4 with SALVS REIPUBLICAE also comes from Valbruna: see VISONÀ 1984: 42, n. 10. A fragmented handle of a *Blechkanne* (similar to Bolla IIb1) with traces of repair, datable to the 3rd century, was found to the north of the Carlotti estate in the early 1980s; it is in a private collection. Cf. BOLLA 1989: 97-98, 107 and pl. L, figs. 15-18. For these bronze bottles, see also CASSANI 2002: 511-515; CASTOLDI 2002: 289-290.

¹⁰⁴ See CRACCO RUGGINI 1987: 259-260. Farms in northern Italy were generally small and produced mainly grain and wine for local markets, according to ROSELAAR 2008: 163, n. 609. The buildings uncovered in 1795 were burnt ("*arsi*"), according to Garducci Velo (APPENDIX 1). The architectural structures unearthed in the Poscola quarry (c. 2 km to the southeast of Valbruna), in which a 5th century A.D. burial of an eastern European horseman was deposited, also probably belong to an abandoned or destroyed farmstead; ved. POSSENTI 2011: 431.

¹⁰⁵ See n. 25 above.

¹⁰⁶ See MENEGAZZI 1990: 90: "*dalla seconda metà del I sec. a.C. si va organizzando nel territorio un modello insediativo il quale, pur non arrivando mai ad aggregazioni in centri organizzati, certamente utilizza più razionalmente ed intensivamente delle fasi precedenti gli spazi pianeggianti*". However, cf. MAGGI, ZACCARIA 1999: 14-15 and REALI 2004: 72-73.

¹⁰⁷ For clay deposits and sources of limestone and marble, see FABIANI 1930: 71-82, 86, 89, 93, 95. Cf. also above, footnote 75, and BONETTO 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. the remarks by MALKIN 2011: 20-45; RIVERS *et al.* 2013: 127-132.

è dai due piedi, e mezzo fino ai quattro e mezzo¹⁰⁹. La direzione dei maggiori corre da settentrione a mezzodì, e viene intersecata ad angoli retti da quella dei minori, i quali vanno da levante a ponente. Le stanze sono di varia grandezza; di 12 di 15. ed anche di 30. piedi¹¹⁰ Vi si osservan qualche arco di porta, e sotterranee cavità profonde, e capaci. Quelle stanze che sonsi potute vedere allo scoperto, veggionsi tutte pavimentate di un mastico, o terrazzo durissimo, non composto di breccie marmoree, ma di sassolini fluitati di vario colore. Vi ho trovato quantità di bei marmi, i quali sembran de' monti circumvicini. Tra l'altre riflettei parecchie piastrelle di un marmo fino, variegato di rosso, e bianco, che servivano forse all'intarsio delle pareti, o dei pavimenti, vasi di terra cotta d'infinita forme, e terre diverse; urne e pentole da cucina, ed alcune anche arse dal fuoco, e coperte di fuligine; èmbrici antichi, con cornice, e lavori; immensa congerie di carboni, e di ferro fuso; ossa umane; lastre di cristallo bellissimo; coperchi, e vasi marmorei; cannoni di piombo; pezzi di bronzo fuso, ed anche lavorato, di cui uno conservo, che sembra esser frammento di statua colossale; parecchie monete di Giulio Cesare, Giustiniano, e di Tasio Rufo Triumviro, una, che qui si riporta, e che parimenti conservo; pezzi d'intonaco di calce, ed arena finissima somigliante alla marmorina fatta di scagliola. Tra gli altri si distinse uno dipinto a guazzo di bella tinta rossa, detta dagli antichi rùbrica colle sigle WPL (NB: in ligature). Ciò potrebbe aggiunger luce alla corruzione del nome di codesto Vico o Pago ne' barbari tempi. Poiche (sic) scrivendosi così V. Pruna cioè (sic) Vicus Prunarum, o Prunorum, o Prunellus, fu letto ignorantemente dai rozzi Vallis Bruna; di cui rimane ancor fama nella tradizione, e nei Cronisti. Essendovisi trovate monete di Giustiniano; (sic) pare che codesto Vico sia stato arso, e fino ai fondamenti atterrato dai barbari, i quali al tempo di quest'Imperatore invasero l'Impero di occidente. Pare, che vi passasse per mezzo una strada Vicinale della Postumia, la quale venendo dai colli Veronesi per Celere, Illasio, Castel Quirino, e Zermeghedo, di quinci usciva per Val di Alonte, per Subizzo, Creaazzo (sic), il Monte della Maddalena, e giungeva a Vicenza dalla banda di settentrione -----"

APPENDIX 2

G. FIORELLI, "Arzignano", in *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* 8, 1883: 11-12.

In Cusago alle Tezze, frazione del comune di Arzignano nella provincia di Vicenza, le recenti inondazioni resero necessari, da parte dei privati, alcuni lavori di sterro e di riporto, che misero in luce parecchi oggetti di antichità, i quali furono raccolti dal curato del luogo, rev. G. Zanpa (sic)¹¹¹, che ne fece parola nel giornale *Il Berico*, esagerandone forse l'importanza. Ma l'ispettore di Vicenza ing. Francesco Molon, che unitamente all'ispettore locale sig. P. Zuffellato si recò sul luogo delle scoperte, compilò su di esse la relazione che qui trascrivo.

"Nella vallata del Guà, e precisamente dove questo fiume corre fra le colline di Arzignano e quelle di Montecchio Maggiore, in occasione delle passate inondazioni le acque rompendo l'argine sinistro, si aprirono un varco al sud verso Tezze di Arzignano, e scorsero lungo una vecchia strada assai depressa, detta la Strada fonda.

I danni che ne seguirono reclamarono alcuni lavori, che posero a giorno parecchi oggetti archeologici non solo, ma pure gli avanzi di vecchie mura, sparse qua e là in un'area che potrebbesi calcolare a sei ettari circa.

La precisa ubicazione di tali mura corrisponderebbe alla prolungazione dell'asse della Vallata ad occidente, detta della Restena, e precisamente dove questa ha il suo sbocco al piano.

Gli oggetti archeologici rinvenuti sono di trovamento sporadico, sparsi nel terreno rimaneggiato, nè si trovarono, come si dice, sul posto entro monumenti o sepolcreti.

Fra questi si notano molti frammenti di vasi vinari, di anfore e di vasi comuni di argilla abbastanza fina, due perle in succino nero incise a fettucce oblunghe, una lucerna comune, ed una coppa da offerte in argilla a fondo nero decorato a tinta rossa, il frammento di una coppa in ferro e poche monete di Augusto, di Domiziano, di Traiano e di Commodo. Si rinvennero inoltre alcuni lacrimatoi. Si trovarono pure frammenti di ossa umane sparse nel terreno rimaneggiato.

Fra i vasi fittili è degno di nota un orciuolo con manico in alto, quasi in aderenza all'orlo, simile ai vasi comuni dell'età romana.

Ciò però che torna di qualche interesse è la scoperta di avanzi di antiche costruzioni, ad una profondità non maggiore di circa un metro, costituite di ciottoli in cemento di calce viva come si usava dai Romani. Tali ruderi appartengono a quanto sembra ad abitazioni antiche, scoprendovisi talvolta pavimenti a battuto finemente eseguito. Tracce di vòlte sotterranee accennano a condotti di acque, che potrebbero far sospettare la preesistenza di un fabbricato ad uso termale, e ciò verrebbe giustificato dalle traccie di un locale quadrato, dove si trovarono frammenti di una pietra refrattaria, che potrebbero indicare l'esistenza ivi di un piccolo calidarium. Dalle asserzioni dei proprietari limitrofi sembra però, che non mancassero tombe a lastre di pietra ai lati della Strada fonda, le quali nondimeno furono da tempo esplorate e manomesse.

Dai pochi oggetti che si osservarono sembra potersi giudicare, che quivi fra il terzo e quarto secolo dell'era cristiana fosse un centro abitato. Il quale secondo le tradizioni raccolte dall'illustre Maccà fu denominato Valbruna¹¹², nome forse nato dal trovarsi questa stazione di fronte alla valle della Restena tutta di neri tufi e di basalti".

¹⁰⁹ According to the metric system (see above, footnote 19), wall thickness (at base) ranged from 89.25 cm to 160 cm.

¹¹⁰ Room sizes ranged from 4.28 m to 5.3 m to 10 m.

¹¹¹ Probably don Giuseppe Zaupa, a priest who witnessed the 1882 flood and reported on the finds from Valbruna: see MANTESE 1985, Tomo II: 718 and ZAUPA 1883.

¹¹² G. Maccà did not mention the ruins uncovered at Valbruna in his discussion of the Roman antiquities from Arzignano and Tezze: see MACCÀ 1813: 31-38, 41-42, 46.

APPENDIX 3

G. ZAUPA, "Relazione storica sul Comune di Arzignano, del 24 dicembre 1882", in *Guida amministrativa della città e provincia di Vicenza per l'anno 1883 compilata per cura del segretario comunale di Arzignano Rosa Francesco*, Arzignano: 16-17 (reprinted in NORI 1987: 13-14).

[...] Intanto i proprietari dei fondi cominciarono a scavare delle fosse per seppellirvi la ghiaia trasportata dall'acqua e nella località del Cusago vicino a quella di Valbruna si rinvennero degli oggetti che ci confermano l'esistenza della necropoli di Valbruna. E qui sarebbe da dire alcun che di questa Val-Bruna che da alcuni vuolsi esser stata una antica città di questi luoghi. Ma le conghietture sono ancora troppo vaghe ed incorte (sic). Un'attuale contrada però di Tezze detta delle Mura, ed un'altra detta del Borgo, la località surriferita dove si fanno gli scavi – detta Valbruna – sepolcri di cotto fatti a foggia di croce che scavando si trovano assieme di coppi romani (sic)¹¹³, lumiere, calamai, bottiglie di diverse foggie e grandezze, tegami in cotto ed in bronzo di forma elegantissima, pezzi di marmo Pario, ed una filo-granata intera trovata testè al collo d'uno scheletro umano, non sono è vero indizii ancor tanto certi da fondarvi sopra la esistenza d'una antica città, ma pure svegliano il desiderio che vengano continuate o per meglio dire spinte le indagini.

Non puossi però negare che gli Arzignanesi non si stettero a tanta novità indifferenti, che anzi vollero si continuassero gli escavi, e perciò furono eseguiti tre assaggi in una località dove la tradizione dei borghigiani ammettea si dovessero fare, e si rinvenne alla profondità di un metro sotterra il tetto d'una casa compostodi un terrazzo dello spessore di m. 0,30, i cui muri sporgenti al di sopra di esso un 20 centim. coperti di coppi romani servivano come di merlatura. Lì vicino si ebbe ad osservare altro fabbricato, le cui pareti sono a marmorina, e vicini a questo quattro muri paralleli tra loro colla differenza che i due di mezzo, uniti agli esterni, sono un po' più bassi a guisa di gradini colla distanza l'uno dall'altro di 40 centim.

Oltre agli oggetti sovraesposti, altri si rinvennero, coll'aggiunta di cinque scheletri umani l'uno dall'altro separate; l'ossa però di ognuno erano tutte unite e non erano sotterra che dai 35 ai 50 centimetri; locchè dà a conoscere che furono o annegati, quegli uomini, ovvero salvati dall'onde sulla cima delle case, dove sen perirono di fame. Quando poi sia accaduta questa innondazione in (sic) non vel saprei dire: solamente vi dirò che la città di Val-Bruna esistea ai tempi del primo imperatore di Roma Cesare Augusto, e questo lo si deduce dalle monete testè trovate, dove si legge la presente iscrizione: DIVUS AUGUSTUS PATER. [...]

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¹¹³ Here Zaupa may be quoting the historian F. Barbarano (1596-1656), who described the church of Madonna dei Prati (c. 1.8 km to the south of Tezze), as follows: "s. Maria di Nale, anticamente detta di Val Bruna, come si chiamava la Valle di Dressino, per la terra Val Bruna, ivi vicina. Qui è un'immagine della B.V. Miracolosa, spesso cavando (sic) nel circuito si trovano opere di Mosaico, e già non molti anni si trovarono alcuni sepolcri fatti di pietra Cotta in forma di croce, di modo, che seppellivano i morti con le braccia stese, come se fossero Crocefissi." See BARBARANO 1762: 62.

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