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## MONTE RINALDO. THE 2018 EXCAVATION IN THE AREA OF THE WESTERN PORTICO (COMUNE DI MONTE RINALDO, PROVINCIA DI FERMO, REGIONE MARCHE)

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The sanctuary of Monte Rinaldo rises in the Augustan Regio V (*Picenum*) which now corresponds to the southern Marche, between the territories of *Firmum* and *Asculum*. The architectural complex, established in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC in an area already frequented in antiquity, comprises a Tuscanic style temple (Building B) and a shrine (Building C), located at the centre of a square enclosed by a portico.

Since 2016 new archaeological research has been undertaken by the University of Bologna in partnership with the British School at Rome and since 2017 excavations have been undertaken following the grant of an excavation permit by the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio delle Marche (Belfiori and Kay, 2018; Demma *et al.*, 2018; Giorgi *et al.*, [Forthcoming](#)).

A second season of excavation was undertaken in the summer of 2018 and focused on two areas: the area of the shrine (Building C) and an extensive area to the west ([Fig. 1](#)) where it was presumed lay the western portico (Area 4).



Fig. 1. Plan of the 2018 Monte Rinaldo excavations (Plan. F. Belfiori).

Several trenches were excavated inside Building C as well as outside the external perimeter wall, whilst areas previously the subject of excavation (Demma, 2018) were also cleaned. It was possible to identify several phases of the reworking of the structure, of an uncertain date, together with the remains of a collapse dating to the late Imperial period, before the surviving walls were reused for burial purposes. The new excavations have allowed a better contextualisation of the information gained from the study and revision of the documentation of the old excavations which also permitted the rediscovery of material still in place. In terms of an overall evaluation of the stratigraphy, in most cases the investigated areas of the shrine were heavily disturbed by the old excavations.

It was therefore decided to open a new excavation in the western part of the archaeological area (Fig. 1, Area 4). Whilst no structures are visible on the surface, given the general plan of the complex it equated with the location of a side portico, mirroring the eastern side with the *tabernae*. In the generally accepted architectural reconstruction of the original development of the sacred complex, it is hypothesised that the temple lies at the centre of a square bordered by a *porticus triplex*, with the central portico to the rear of the complex and two side porticos. The previous excavations had revealed the eastern side with a sequence of rooms which opened onto a portico supported by pillars, alongside the rear portico which was reconstructed in the 1950s. The presence of third wing of the portico to the west derives from the excavation diaries of Laura Fabbrini (from the 1960s), who identified part of the extension of the rear wall, much of which had been removed in antiquity.



Fig. 2. The Augustan building with reused architectural fragments from the portico of the sanctuary.

The full extent of Area 4 was sealed by a deep layer of mud and silt (Fig. 2), around 2 m in depth. This covered an extensive rich organic layer that sealed much of the area, which was abundant in carbon and deposits of ash, from which was recovered a large quantity of black gloss pottery, coarseware (in particular kitchen ware) and numerous fragments of animal bone. The material was often in isolated contexts and mostly in its original position, seemingly as though intentional ritual deposits. The lenses of ash and charcoal contained within them animal bones and other objects, also metallic, which were covered with one or more overturned black gloss cups, nearly complete or intentionally broken. These deposits lay on a thick layer of compact material (pebbles, gravel and lime) mostly brought to light in the eastern sector of the excavation and interpreted as a levelling of the slope prior to the construction of the monumental sanctuary. Currently it is unclear whether this compact layer was functional solely for the construction of the western portico or for the entire sacred complex. The material deposited above this layer, a preliminary analysis of which suggests a ritual function, suggests a *terminus post quem* of the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, the moment at which it is hypothesised that the sides of the portico were constructed. As previously noted, a large robber trench was also identified along the western edge of the excavation, which suggests the destruction of the portico in antiquity. Above the levels of collapse and destruction of the western portico, a new level was identified which used the underlying layers for new buildings which themselves reused building material taken from the destruction of the earlier structure.

The full plan and the exact extension of this structure is unknown, as the building extends further uphill beyond the western limit of the 2018 excavation trench.

Currently a single room with a quadrangular form has been identified, approximately 8 m wide in an east-west direction and visible for a little more than 3 m in a north-south direction. In front of this room to the east lies a further structure, yet to be fully excavated, which has internal dividing walls. The structures are orientated on a similar alignment to the sanctuary but lay further to the west and therefore outside the sacred area. The walls are constructed with a mixed technique, indicating that they may belong to different phases. A common characteristic of the walls of this new building is the constant, systematic and massive reuse of building material belonging to the robbing of the sanctuary structure. Among the reused material, of significance are the numerous architectural terracottas (Fig. 2), identified as those belonging to the portico.

To the north of the new building, along the central axis of the area of excavation, a longitudinal orientated structure was discovered, lying on an east-west orientation for the full extent of Area 4 (13 m). The structure is composed of a sequence of vertically positioned tiles, placed next to each other on their long side, possibly to line a channel belonging to the previously described structure. The pottery, currently being studied, allows a preliminary date to be suggested for this new structure of the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, or indeed of the early Augustan age.

The abandonment and subsequent destruction of the building can be dated to the mid-Imperial period, possibly not much later than the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Within the room, above the beaten-earth pavement, was the collapse of the structure and the tiles of the roof. Traces of this phase are also apparent outside the structure where a stratigraphic sequence was discovered which has a stratigraphy referable to the abandonment of the complex, covered by a further destruction layer possibly the result of a fire.

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