

data will contribute to the SVP's long-standing aim to explore through a range of interlinked disciplinary pathways the interaction between humans and their environment in the Sangro middle valley over time.

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY AT SEGNI 2014 (COMUNE DI SEGNI, PROVINCIA DI ROMA, REGIONE LAZIO)

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In 2014 a final season of excavation was undertaken at Segni as part of the joint research initiative between the British School at Rome and the Archaeological Museum at Segni. The aim of the project is to explore the urban development of the Latin town of *Signia*, from its early foundation through to its hypothesized decline in the mid-Imperial period and re-emergence in the late antique and medieval periods. The previous seasons had explored the area around the Temple of Juno Moneta (San Pietro) on the acropolis and Piazza Santa Maria (Ceccarelli *et al.*, 2013; Ceccarelli *et al.*, 2014; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2013; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2014; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2015b), where excavation had revealed several rooms of a late Republican *domus* that may have faced onto the Forum, one of which, possibly to be identified as a cubiculum, had a high-quality polychrome mosaic (Cifarelli *et al.*, 2015a). Also revealed within the excavations were the possible foundations of the medieval cathedral of Segni, which had been destroyed in the seventeenth century and its position recently hypothesized by Federica Colaiacomo (2004). Initial investigations also had begun at a hitherto unstudied area on the acropolis known as Prato Felici (or Orto dé Cunto), immediately above the polygonal masonry town-wall gate of Porta Foca. The 2014 season focused upon determining the chronology, function and extent of the structure that had been revealed in part by the earlier seasons at Prato Felici, as well as trying to place the monument within the wider urban landscape of the acropolis.

The earliest phases of activity at the site of Prato Felici date to the Late Bronze Age and, after a long pause, to the late seventh century BC onward, as shown by a significant quantity of coarse-ware and bucchero recovered from several test-pits excavated in the 2012 and 2013 seasons (Cifarelli *et al.*, 2013: 380; Cifarelli *et al.*, 2014: 348). Whilst

the material appears to have been washed down the slope and not related to a specific area of habitation within the excavation area, it is a first stratigraphic indication of the frequentation of this area of the acropolis. The evidence from the excavations is of particular significance when considering the occupation of *Signia*, as, according to the sources, it was established as a colony by Tarquinius Superbus and later strengthened in 495 BC (Livy 1.56.3; Dionysius Halicarnassensis 4.63).

The 2014 season confirmed the preliminary results of the 2013 excavation, which had revealed a single structure, a cistern or large pool (Fig. 1.A), which dominated the central area of Prato Felici. The pool appears to have been constructed after the mid-second century BC in an area where some religious activities were performed from at least the late Archaic period, as demonstrated by a significant number of architectural terracottas and votive material of the mid-Republican period. These include the head of a votive statue and a black-glazed bowl fragment with a stamp depicting Hercules's club discovered immediately below and around the structure. The pool measures 36.7 m in length, 12.62 m in width and 2.5 m in depth, with an estimated capacity of around 1,157 m<sup>3</sup>. Built in *opus signinum*, it is possibly one of the earliest examples of this construction technique (which has its origins in Segni). The floor of the pool, which is composed of a fabric of medium- to small-sized fragments of limestone and sporadic fragments of tile and pottery, is 0.4 m thick and has a raised border that abuts the internal edges of all four walls. The construction of the structure dates to within a significant phase of building activity in Segni, when the town was one of the most active centres in Lazio in the late Hellenistic period. The pool was later modified with the insertion of an internal unmortared wall, excavated only in part, the function of which is unknown (Fig. 1.B). Material evidence suggests that the structure was then abandoned until the tenth century AD, when a small hearth was constructed in the southeast corner. Research will now focus on how the pool functioned and, above all, on its role within the wider system for the distribution of water in *Signia*, as well as whether it formed part of a larger architectural complex.

The excavation was also extended to the north and brought to light, above a short stretch of polygonal masonry, a dry-stone structure built using blocks of limestone (Fig. 1.C), below and adjacent to which was a floor formed of tufa blocks with a channel that ended in a circular cut, formed from a single block of the same material. This structure seems to have been deliberately sealed after the last quarter of the third century AD, perhaps for sacred or votive reasons, as placed directly above the circular feature was half a black-glazed bowl, dating to around 265 BC. Also included in this deposit were numerous architectural terracottas, as well as around 100 kg of roof-tiles (in a deposit measuring 1.3 × 0.77 × 0.55 m). The structure and its associated material have strong similarities with a series of rooms found during rescue excavations in 2009 by the Soprintendenza Archeologia del Lazio e dell'Etruria Meridionale a short distance to the north. It is therefore possible that this represents a new urban quarter previously unknown in this part of the town in the mid-Republican period.

Immediately to the east of the third-century BC wall was a long structure with a series of different construction phases (Fig. 1.D), the function of which appears to have been a terracing wall running north–south along the slope. Perhaps associated with this was an area of bedrock that had been quarried significantly for limestone blocks. The final phase of activity in this area saw the construction of a further wall, with a rounded moulded top, perpendicular to the terracing wall (Fig. 1.E).

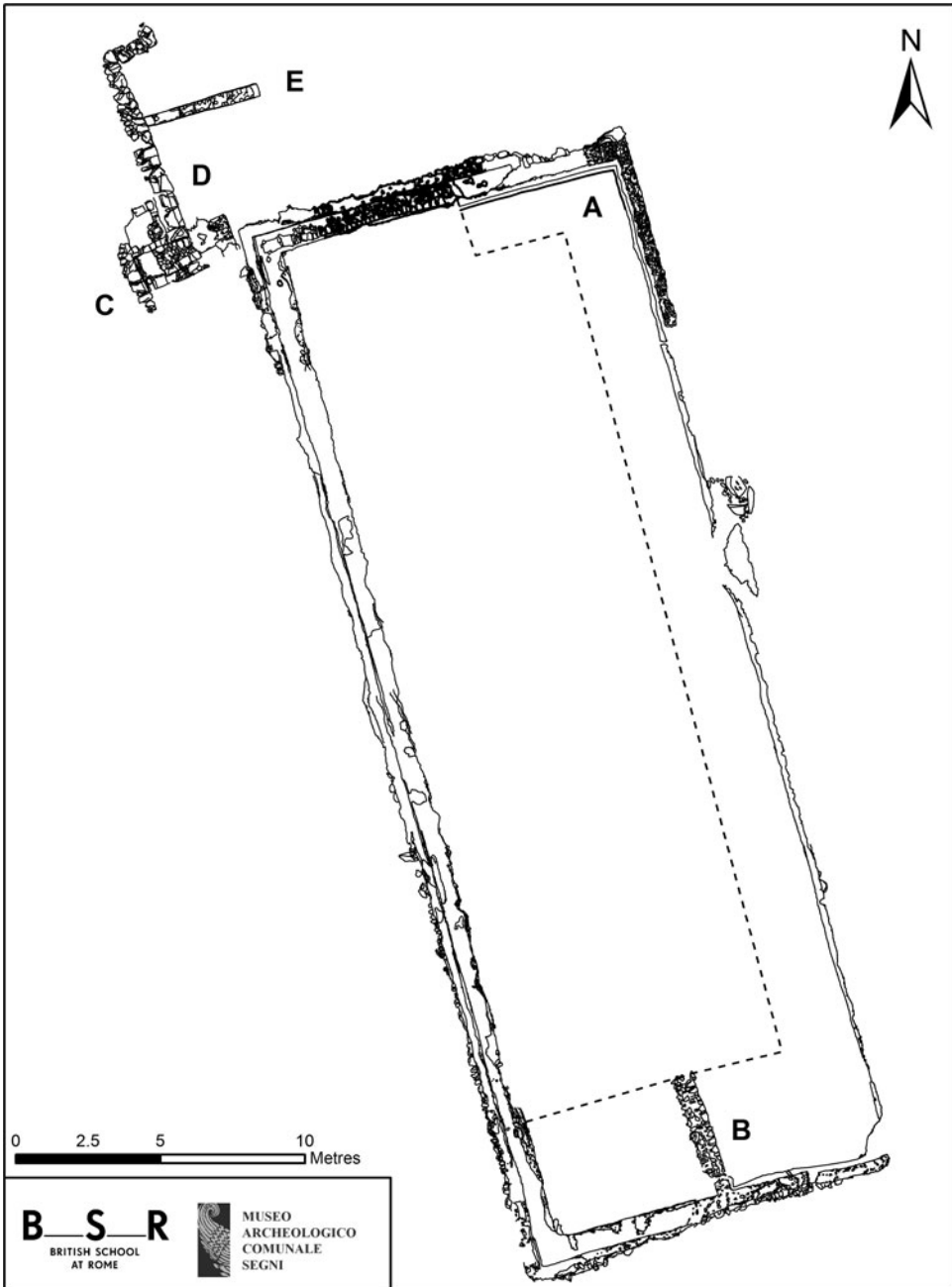


Fig. 1. Plan of the structures excavated at Prato Felici (Segni).

A small test trench was opened 10 m from the pool (to the west of C on Fig. 1) to investigate whether there were further associated structures, as indicated by the earlier ground penetrating radar survey. The upper levels of the excavation revealed a building dating to around the eighteenth century and in particular a small tank (Fig. 2), plastered on all sides, from which numerous fragments of pottery were recovered. A



Fig. 2. The small tank excavated in the tes trench 10 m west of the pool at Prato Felici (Segni).

preliminary study of a Gregorian cadastral map of the area from 1819 indicates the absence of buildings in the area; however, in a manuscript of Gregorio Lauri, dating to the beginning of the eighteenth century, he recorded the area around San Pietro as having numerous buildings associated with agricultural activity. Immediately beneath this structure the excavation revealed a drain measuring 0.40 m in width with a depth of at least 1.2 m, constructed in a similar style to the polygonal town walls of Segni.

The research in Piazza Santa Maria continued in 2014 through the examination of the bones from a number of burials that had been excavated the previous seasons. The remains of ten individuals were examined, all of which were incomplete due to later disturbance of the piazza. The preliminary analysis revealed an interesting pattern in wear at the head of the femur on several female skeletons, often an indication of horse riding. Furthermore, one skeleton is of a middle-aged woman who had suffered from a broken leg which had healed badly, probably leaving her with a limp.

The extensive excavations at Prato Felici have produced fundamental new information about the origin of *Signia*, providing the archaeological evidence for the existence of a settlement before the late sixth century BC as reported in the sources. Moreover, it has been possible to determine important phases of the town in its greatest period of development, influenced by the monumental Hellenistic architecture, of which the pool forms an important part. Finally, it is possible to put forward the hypothesis of the decline of Segni in the late second century AD, its subsequent flourishing from the fifth century AD onward, with the establishment of a bishop's seat and a Byzantine fortress, and its importance in the medieval period.

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