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ENRICO GIORGI AND STEPHEN KAY

(*Department of History and Culture at the University of Bologna; British School at Rome*)

enrico.giorgi@unibo.it; s.kay@bsrome.it

EXCAVATIONS OF THE NECROPOLIS ON THE ROMAN IMPERIAL ESTATE AT VAGNARI (COMUNE DI GRAVINA IN PUGLIA, PROVINCIA DI BARI, REGIONE PUGLIA)

doi: 10.1017/S006824622000015X

The site of Vagnari is located approximately 12 km west of the modern city of Gravina in Puglia. Survey and excavations at the site since 2001 have revealed the presence of a settlement with multiple phases of occupation dating back to the second century BC (Carroll, 2019), with the main period of occupation during the Imperial period. The majority of previously excavated burials in the necropolis date to the second and third centuries AD.

Ongoing excavations in the necropolis continued in the summer of 2019. We focused our excavations in two areas adjacent to trenches excavated in previous seasons (Fig. 1). The large northern trench (8 m east-west, 6 m north-south) contained a total of nine burials, the tops of which were visible after approximately 30 cm of topsoil was removed. Most of the burials were the characteristic ‘*alla cappuccina*’ structures fashioned from a series of *tegulae* placed over the deceased in an inverted ‘V’ shape. Modest grave goods found with the deceased were typically deposited around the legs and feet. Three burials in this trench showed evidence of disturbance and reuse in antiquity, indicated by damage to the original burial structure, clusters of disarticulated bone in one area of the burial, and then reinforcement of the burial with large quantities of stone and mortar (Fig. 2). There was also evidence for burial of two individuals in the same interment event. F351 contained the remains of an adult female with the skeleton of an infant interred on the right side of the skeleton.

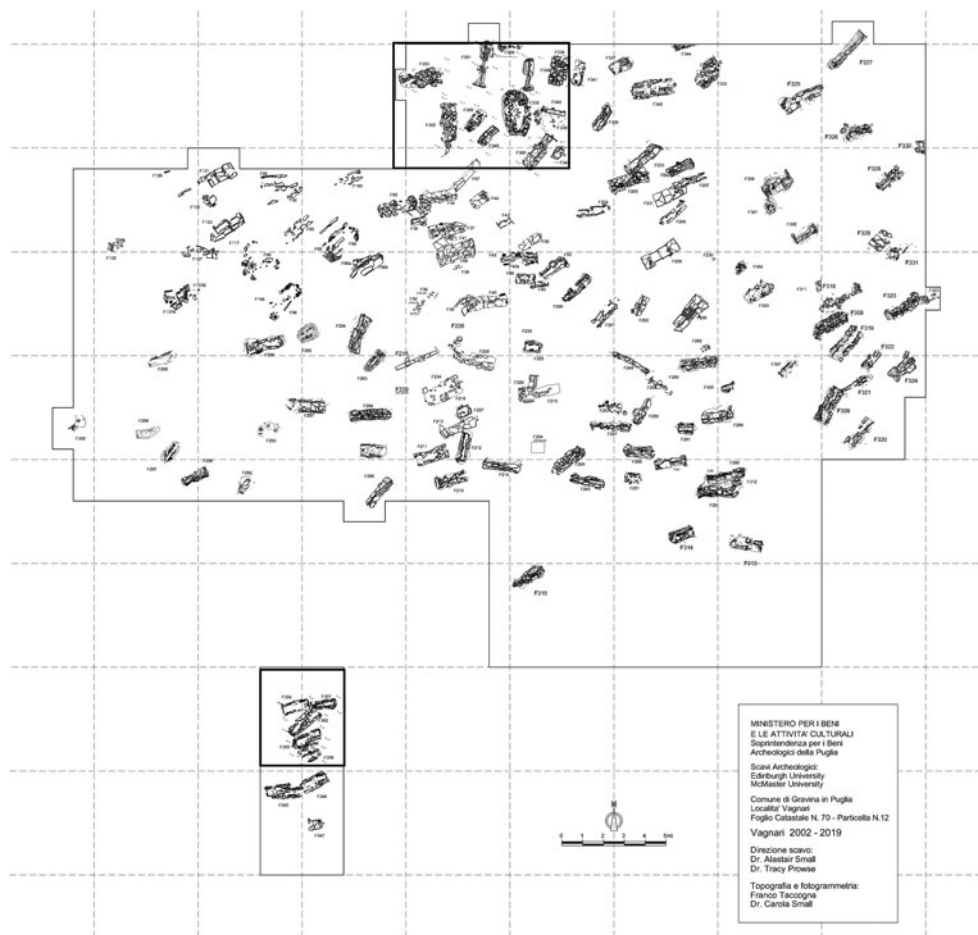


Fig. 1. Map of the Vagnari Necropolis with 2019 trenches outlined in bold

The smaller trench in the south part of the site (4 m east-west, 5 m north-south) contained five poorly preserved *cappuccina* burials damaged by modern ploughing and two pit inhumations. The number of skeletons recovered from the south trench was eleven, due to the fact that three additional skeletons were found interred immediately outside the *cappuccina* tombs, and one of the burials contained the remains of a subadult (i.e., <15 years of age) and infant interred concurrently in a ‘*casa in laterizio*’ burial. There was also evidence of burial disturbance and redeposition of remains in this part of the cemetery, as the disarticulated remains of one skeleton (F361) were found clustered between two *cappuccina* burials (F362 and F355). The other notable aspect of the burials in this part of the cemetery is that all but two of the skeletons recovered were infant (<1 year) or subadult remains.

Most of the burials in both areas of the cemetery contained a small number of modest grave goods, typically ceramic vessels, lamps, iron objects (e.g., blades, nails), and some items of personal adornment. Definitive dates of the burials await further analysis. Ongoing bioarchaeological analysis of the skeletal sample from the Vagnari cemetery is investigating diet, mobility, activity, and health of this rural Roman population.



Fig. 2. Burial F352 after removal of an outer layer of large stones and tile fragments, with disarticulated skeletal remains at the south end of the burial. The second inhumation was later found underneath the in situ *tegulae* fragments.

Acknowledgements

The excavation was carried out with a permit granted by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo to Tracy Prowse, facilitated through the British School at Rome, and with the invaluable assistance of Dott.ssa Stefania Peterlini. Survey of the site and essential technical support was provided by Franco Taccogna (Gravina), restoration of the metal objects by Tonia Petrafesa (Gravina), and pottery analysis by Dr David Griffiths (UK). The team is grateful to numerous organisations and individuals for their support of the project, and especially to: the land owner of Vagnari, Dott. Mario de Gemmis Pellicciari; the British School at Rome; the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città Metropolitana di Bari, especially Dott.ssa Francesca Radina and Dott.ssa Marissa Corrente from the Centro Operativo per l'Archeologia in Bari; and the Fondazione Ettore Pomarici Santomasì, Gravina in Puglia. The 2019 excavation team included Dr. Liana Brent (University of Pennsylvania); Dr. Marissa Ledger (Cambridge University); and students from McMaster and other Canadian universities.

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TRACY PROWSE
(Department of Anthropology, McMaster University)
prowset@mcmaster.ca