The Roman villa of Villamagna is located within the boundary of the colony of Pollentia-Urbs Salvia, about 1.5 km northeast of the Roman city. From 2000 and between 2007 and 2010, the University of Macerata and the Soprintendenza Archeologia per le Marche conducted the first excavation campaigns here. In 2017, the University of Macerata re-started archaeological excavation activities, focusing initially on pars Rustica (2017-2018). Then, it gradually moved to pars Rustica (2019-2021) to investigate the productive structures of the villa.

People lived around the Villamagna complex for about six centuries (1st century BC – 6th century AD). Following the abandonment of the Roman estate, the plateau continued to be populated until the 18th century (1422). Since 2011, almost the entire villa’s perimeter has been brought to light, but portions of the complex to the north and west remain missing. The occupied area was approximately 40,000 m².

PARS RUSTICA

The pars Rustica consists of an ample space (10 x 16 m) divided into three naves by two rows of pillars. In the southern section of pars Rustica, a complex of underground rooms including a vaulted cellar and a square area still not excavated. To the west, there is another room whose pavement preparation suggests that it may have contained presses (now absent). In the northern section, there is a corridor, a cistern and a well.

Inside the big productive room, identifiable as a production and storage area, we have recognised four phases

FIRST PHASE

At first, we imagined this ample space with a large basin in opus spicatum surrounded by coarse cocciopesto kerbs and a complex of four tanks on the perpendicular side. The bottoms of all four tanks are covered in cocciopesto. Interestingly, a channel connects the last two tanks, but we are not sure what was produced. The most natural hypothesis are oil and wine. The wine was undoubtedly the product processed in the first tank. The main hypotheses are the production of a fruit wine and/or wine with an increased alcohol content thanks to the fermentation of fruit sugars.

Both the basin in opus spicatum and the complex of four tanks have on one of their short sides a large dolium defossus. These suggest that the tanks and dolia were used simultaneously in some processing, maybe for processing grapes.

SECOND PHASE

At least two rows of dolia characterise this phase on the central-northern side of the room, where maybe up to ten dolia were located. Of these, superficial and smaller than those defossus, we have the remains of only two. Of the other eight, only the pits of spoliation remain.

Then, we no longer use the basin in opus spicatum and, covered by a layer of soil, we found the bottom parts of two dolia. The semi-circular rupture of the short side of the tank suggests the presence of a third dolium. Another dolium is added almost to cover the dolium defossus near the complex of the four tanks.

THIRD PHASE

Later, the western corner is destroyed, perhaps to create an access passage. In this third phase, the room seems to change its intended use. A spoliation pit is filled with ceramic material and brick, while the central one is with the waste material of a furnace/orge. Although the type of production of the furnace/orge is not yet clear, one particular characteristic is evident: one of the preparatory layers consists of numerous hips and endocarps of Olea europaea (olives) and pericarp of Juglans regia (walnuts). These items highlight the presence of vines in late antiquity and the use of only fruits to increase the caloric value during combustion.

FOURTH PHASE

The area, before its abandonment, was occupied by a burial ground with ten graves, particularly in its central northern part.

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