

Gabii through its Artefacts



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Cover: Opaque Red Ware Bowl (Δ 1611) (p. 11); ring key Δ 1864, SU 7030, Area H (p. 67); marked loom weight from Gabii (p. 24); coin Δ 2818, helmeted head of Minerva (p. 50) [Photo by S. Ness]; coin Δ 1299, diademed head of Venus (p. 58) [Photo by E.C. Robinson]; anatomical votive fragment of a left ear, A 457.864 (p. 98) [© Christian Decamps]. Back cover: Anatomical votive of an eye, A 467.1674 (p. 99) [© Christian Decamps].

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Prefazione al volume

Il volume *Gabii through its artefacts* si inserisce nel solco dei numerosi contributi che stanno interessando negli ultimi anni alcuni aspetti relativi all'antica città latina di Gabii, editi da parte dell'University of Michigan-Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, attivi dal 2007 presso il sito della Soprintendenza Speciale Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio di Roma dapprima con indagini non invasive, poi per mezzo di una concessione di scavo tuttora in corso presso l'area urbana dell'antico centro latino.

Questo studio in particolare, si concentra su un aspetto che passa spesso in secondo piano nelle trattazioni archeologiche, ma che invece risulta fondamentale per impostare qualsiasi indagine relativa alla cultura materiale delle popolazioni del passato: lo studio dei materiali archeologici, che costituiscono uno dei "prodotti" principali delle attività di scavo.

In tal senso il lavoro coordinato da Laura M. Banducci e Mattia D'Acri, dell'équipe del *Gabii Project*, riveste una grande importanza per l'Area Archeologica di Gabii sotto vari punti di vista, raccogliendo innanzitutto contributi provenienti da tutte le attività in corso presso il sito dell'antica città latina e costituendo un indispensabile aggiornamento per quanto riguarda alcune classi di materiali riferibili a quasi tutte le fasi di frequentazione dell'abitato, rinvenuti durante le indagini della Soprintendenza Speciale di Roma, dell'Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, dell'University of Michigan-Kelsey Museum of Archaeology e del Musée du Louvre.

Prosegue in questo modo la riuscita formula di sintesi già testata con il *Bollettino di Archeologia Online* (Andreotti, Bochicchio 2022), vale a dire riunire in un'unica pubblicazione i risultati provenienti dagli studi dei vari enti di ricerca che negli ultimi anni stanno contribuendo a gettare nuova luce sulle fasi di frequentazione di quello che è una degli abitati più importanti del Latium vetus, prima dell'ascesa di Roma.

La collaborazione tra le varie Istituzioni attive a Gabii, sottolineata dalla recente stipula di due protocolli di studio congiunto relativi all'area urbana e al cosiddetto Foro Hamilton, è uno degli obiettivi che la Soprintendenza Speciale di Roma si è posta nella sua quotidiana azione di tutela del sito, al fine di rendere l'Area Archeologica un polo della ricerca archeologica nazionale e internazionale, sfruttando appieno le particolari caratteristiche intrinseche di Gabii, il cui territorio come noto non è stato interessato, a seguito del progressivo abbandono nel Medioevo, dalle trasformazioni urbanistiche che in altri luoghi hanno progressivamente intaccato le peculiari caratteristiche del suburbio romano.

Grazie ai dati raccolti e pubblicati negli ultimi anni, provenienti da indagini in settori "strategici" dell'antico abitato, Gabii sta dunque diventando sempre di più un luogo paradigmatico per il panorama archeologico italiano, che l'impegno della Soprintendenza Speciale di Roma e la proficua collaborazione tra i vari enti di ricerca impegnati sul campo stanno consentendo di tutelare e valorizzare al meglio, restituendo progressivamente l'area alla pubblica fruizione e inserendola definitivamente nei circuiti di visita dell'Istituto.

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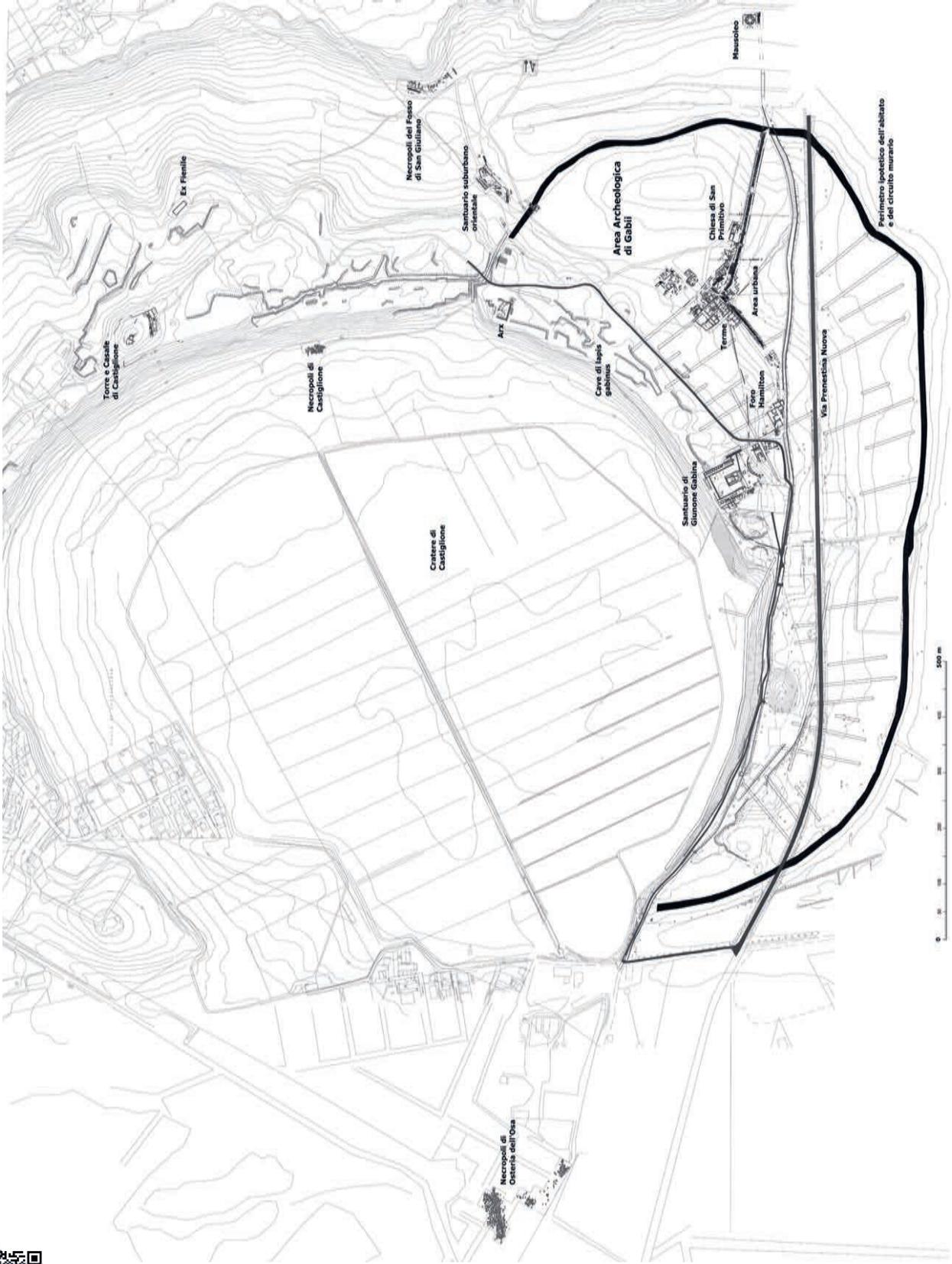


Tavola I - Area Archeologica di Gabii e sue pertinenze, planimetria aggiornata a cura della SSABAP Roma

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Tales from Gabii. Studies on material culture and beyond

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The city of Gabii, located 18 km east of Rome, was an urban centre which for most of the 1st millennium BCE evolved in parallel with peers like Rome; but unlike Rome, the occupied area of the site shrunk significantly in the 1st century BCE as its inhabitants re-located elsewhere. The nature of the sloping volcanic landscape means better-than-average preservation of Gabii's architecture, stratigraphy, and artefacts. Excavations at the site have recovered thousands of objects and different types of materials: from pottery to plaster, tokens to tools, and many others. These are crucial for the reconstruction of the life of the town.

Although the published and forthcoming final excavation volumes aim to fully catalogue these materials,¹ many classes of artefacts would benefit from a further synthetic approach and detailed specialist attention which can place them into dialogue with broader trends in Roman archaeology. This book is a collection of papers that provide new insights about the Latin city and its role in a broader Italian context. It includes studies of distinctive materials from the pre-Roman to Imperial period. The papers ultimately share the common goal of offering new stories about the inhabitants of Gabii told through their artefacts, enriching the stories told through the study of the site's landscape and built remains.

History of work and publications

There have been many very fruitful projects at the greenfield site of Gabii. The first known excavations were by the Scottish antiquarian, Gavin Hamilton (see Ortiz, this volume) in the 18th century. Gabii was also included in the regional surveys carried out by the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma and the Istituto di Topografia Antica dell'Università di Roma.² Investigations around the standing remains of the temple *cella* were undertaken by the Spanish School at Rome, which ultimately coined the structure the

“Temple of Juno Gabina.”³ This excavation helped to establish Gabii as a fascinating centre of the archaic and republican period with unique contributions to the study of temple decoration and ritual deposits of these periods.⁴ The Iron Age necropolis at Osteria dell'Osa, outside the city of Gabii but probably associated with the contemporary settlement, was investigated and published under the direction of Anna Maria Bietti Sestieri.⁵ This project was crucial for the understanding of family structures and funerary culture in Latium as well as providing an essential reference volume for Iron age artefacts from the 600 investigated tombs.

These projects have been followed by a flourishing of activity in more recent years by the Soprintendenza Speciale di Roma and several different teams from Italian and foreign institutions working in different sectors of the site. Starting in 2006, excavations of the sanctuary outside the Eastern walls of Gabii, the “Santuario Orientale,” were undertaken by the Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata and the Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni Archeologici di Matera in order to complete earlier investigations from the 1970s.⁶ The city's archaic fortification walls have been investigated by a team from Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.⁷ Both projects produced important discoveries not only about Gabii itself but also about archaic Latium, offering new evidence of religious activities and fortification techniques.

Volume aims and structure

Here we present studies from three ongoing excavations at Gabii. The aim of this volume upon its inception was to showcase the rich artefactual record of the site. We aim to consider artefacts outside the ceramic report and small finds catalogue format in terms of both the wide variety of materials and the possibilities

¹ OPITZ, MOGETTA, TERRENATO 2016; BANDUCCI, GALLONE 2021; and also, MOGETTA 2020.

² GUAITOLI 1981a, GUAITOLI 1981b, GUAITOLI 1981c, QUILICI 1988.

³ ALMAGRO-GOBREA 1982.

⁴ DUPRÉ 1982, PEREZ BALLESTER 2003.

⁵ BIETTI SESTIERI 1992a and BIETTI SESTIERI 1992b.

⁶ FABBRI, MUSCO, OSANNA 2012; on the materials previously excavated see MANCINI, PILO 2006 and ZUCHTRIEGEL 2012a.

⁷ HELAS 2016; HELAS, LECCE, TRÄDER 2019.

for unique individual stories.⁸ We wish to present an honest account of the highlights and limitations of our recovered materials. We have also aimed to look beyond the materials we have excavated at Gabii and to connect our materials and the site to the research being done elsewhere in Italy and in the Roman world.

We are interested in moving beyond a solely “representational” approach to Roman objects.⁹ The papers presented here have a mix of approaches. Many of the individual papers make an effort to be sensitive to excavation context and formation processes where warranted, and to consider assemblages with the most up-to-date methods and theoretical perspectives available. Approaches include archaeometric analyses, spatial approaches, artefact life history approaches, statistical approaches, and archival approaches. Thus, different scales of analysis are also undertaken, where individual objects are focused on as well as whole groups or assemblages.

This book is divided into three sections corresponding to Gabii’s three ongoing excavation teams. This allows for a brief explanation of the history of work and spatial context of each project before their respective articles. The nature of the occupation of Gabii means that these three excavations work in significantly different chronological periods and have differing scopes and goals. Despite these differences, the overall purpose of these projects is to better understand the city and its inhabitants and to ensure the full publication of excavated materials.

Opening the volume are a series of papers coming from the Gabii Project, an excavation first emerging from the University of Michigan and now involving the collaboration of scholars from a number of different anglophone universities. Mattia D’Acri’s paper on a relatively newly-defined class of republican pottery, *vernice rossa opaca* or opaque Red Ware, critiques the emergence, function, and typology of the ware in light of new data from the site. Christina Cha’s examination of trapezoidal loom weights from across the site is in line with recent approaches to textile tools incorporating both a spatial and an epigraphic component, as she considers clusters of weights which may have been used together and considers makers’ marks as part of these tools’ individual manufacture.

Matthew Harder’s paper on the spatial distribution and density of finewares at Gabii project incorporates ceramic data from the Gabii Project excavations, the published Temple of Juno materials, and historic field surveys in the region. Shannon Ness and Elizabeth Robinson’s paper also undertakes a spatial analysis

of the numismatic finds from the Gabii Project excavations. The clusters of coins they observe reveal discrete activities from several periods in the life of the city. Both papers encourage us to read the site in terms of waves of rhythms of use and occupation, rather than through a model of emergence and decline. This model of the occupation of the site was recently suggested in a paper from the Gabii Project.¹⁰ These two papers also remind us of continued habitation at Gabii in the Imperial period, a period which has not received much emphasis, yet was hinted at by earlier investigations by the local *Soprintendenza*.¹¹

Continuing the theme of the richness of evidence from the Imperial period is Brittany Proffitt’s reading of a ring key from Gabii and how it can represent later Imperial female status at the site. Zoe Ortiz’s reconstruction of the sculptural program of the porticoed space within the so-called “forum” excavated by Gavin Hamilton brings to the fore the importance of the city in the Julio-Claudian period. Ortiz’s paper can be combined well with Marjolaine Benaich and Martin Szewczyk’s contextual description of the sculptures within the Louvre Museum’s collection which follows.

In the selection of papers by the Louvre excavation team, Isabelle Hasselin Rous presents unpublished terracotta fragments from the recent excavations around the temple of Juno Gabina which finds an overlap with Valeria Ducatelli’s paper on the terracotta fragments from the Tor Vergata excavations. Furthermore, Benaich and Szewczyk’s chapter is a thorough analysis and contextualization of the Louvre’s Julio-Claudian statues excavated at Gabii in the 18th century.

Following Marco Fabbri’s introduction to the Tor Vergata/Soprintendenza project come seven papers focused on different classes of material from the excavation of the *arx* at Gabii, the oft-called *Regia* or tripartite building, as well as the *Santuario Orientale*, and section of the fortification wall. Paula Ghigliardini, Rocco Bochicchio, and Laura Protani’s papers on the *impasto*, *impasto rosso*, and *bucchero* materials showcase the richness of the occupation of the tripartite complex. The *impasto* forms attest to the occupation of the site as early as Latial Period II (perhaps as early as the 9th century). Bochicchio’s study of the *impasto rosso* pottery observes both the similarities between the vessels at Gabii and other sites in *Latium Vetus* as well as highlighting the various instances of artisanal experimentation. The *impasto rosso* and Protani’s *bucchero* study establish the chronology of the building’s destruction at the end of the 6th-beginning of the 5th century BCE.

⁸ e.g., ALLISON 1997.

⁹ VAN OYEN, PITTS 2017.

¹⁰ SAMUELS *et al.* 2022.

¹¹ MAIERINI, MUSCO 2001.

Valeria Ducatelli thorough treatment of the terracotta figurines recovered at both the *arx* and similar ones from the *Santuario Orientale* emphasizes the continued ritual interest in the *arx* even following the tripartite building's dis-use and burial.

The continuity in the interest of the *arx* area into the republican period is also clearly demonstrated through the materials discussed by Rocco Bochicchio, Pamela Manzo, and Fabrizio Alessandro Terrizzi. Their three chapters on the *amphorae*, stamped tile, and coins from around the outskirts of the covering of the earlier archaic tripartite structure inform the continued exploration of this area in the ongoing excavations.

Overall, the papers bring together pockets of activity around the site as seen through the artefacts. The various loci of ritual deposit activity, various phases of the destruction of re-construction into the Roman period and the many ways in which individuals were

present on the site are only some of the information we can gather and infer from the papers presented. The wide variety of materials from many different types of depositional contexts each provide vignettes attesting to the lives of the people at Gabii over many centuries. Together the chapters in this volume enliven the Gabines' behaviours: their concerns about personal and economic security and status, their productive activities and trade connections to other towns, their aesthetic, their political affiliations and aspirations.

This book also demonstrates the value of cross-project collaboration and these projects' commitment to publishing materials from the site. The communication between these different excavation groups has already inspired further collaboration among them. It is our hope that these disparate groups will continue to be able to collaborate in both the archaeological storerooms and in the field. It is clear that continued work will only reveal more about daily life at Gabii.