

METTE MOLTESEN

J. RASMUS BRANDT

EXCAVATIONS AT LA GIOSTRA



"L'ERMA" DI BRETSCHNEIDER

EXCAVATIONS AT LA GIOSTRA

A MID-REPUBLICAN FORTRESS OUTSIDE ROME

BY

METTE MOLTESEN J. RASMUS BRANDT

“L’ERMA” DI BRETSCHNEIDER

ROME MCMXCIV

ANALECTA ROMANA INSTITUTI DANICI, SUPPL. XXI

Accademia di Danimarca, 18, Via Omero, I-00197, Rome

Lay-out by J. Rasmus Brandt. Typography and photocomposition by Otto Steen Due

Printed by Fotocomposizione Cristal

© 1994 "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Rome

ISSN 0066-1406

Published with the support of grants from:

Statens Humanistiske Forskningsråd

Moltesen, Mette

Excavations at La Giostra : a mid-republican fortress outside Rome / by Mette Moltesen, J. Rasmus Brandt. - Rome : «L'Erma» di Bretschneider, 1994. - 184 p., [3] c. di tav. ripieg. : ill. ; 29 cm - (Analecta Romana Instituti Danici. Supplementum ; 21)
ISBN 88-7062-873-6

CDD 20. 937.6

1. Scavi archeologici - La Giostra (Roma)

I. Brandt, J. Rasmus

The journal ANALECTA ROMANA INSTITUTI DANICI (ARID) publishes studies within the main range of the academy's research activities: the arts and humanities, history and archeology.

Intending contributors should get in touch with the editors, who will supply a set of guidelines and establish a deadline. A print of the article, preferably accompanied by a disk containing the text in Dos-ascii format should be sent to the editors, Accademia di Danimarca, 18 Via Omero, I-00197 Roma, tel. (06) 32 00 951, fax (06) 32 22 717.

Contents

Preface	7
I. General topography by J. Rasmus BRANDT	9
The physical topography	9
The human topography	11
La Giostra	18
Notes	29
II. La Giostra in modern cartographical and historical studies by J. Rasmus BRANDT	33
Politorium, Tellenae, and Ficana	33
Apiolae and Mugilla	42
Notes	45
III. The excavations by J. Rasmus BRANDT	49
Excavations along the fortification walls	49
Excavations in the central part of the fortified hill	64
Notes	79
IV. Catalogue of the finds by Mette MOLTESEN	81
Architectural terracottas	81
Tiles	84
Mould-made terracottas	85
Loom-weights	86
Painted pottery	88
Black glazed ware	96
Black glazed ware with stamped decoration	107
Domestic ware	116
Other artefacts	132
Some considerations on the catalogued finds	134
Notes	136
V. Interpretations of the architectural remains	139
The fortification walls by Mette MOLTESEN	139
An urban plan by J. Rasmus BRANDT	145
Notes	151
VI. A Roman fortress and its historical context by Mette MOLTESEN	153
The date of the fortress	153
Topography and strategy	153
The castrum at La Giostra and its relations to Ostia	156
The first Samnite war	157
The Latin war	157
The second Samnite war	158
The third Samnite war	158
La Giostra	159
Notes	159
Appendices	161
I. Plan of the hill drawn with the topometer	161
II. Analysis of the mortar lining of the fortification wall	161
III. Carbon 14 date of mortar	161
IV. Electromagnetic measurements at La Giostra	162
The illustrations	163
Bibliography	165
General index	175

This book is dedicated to the memory of
Søren Skovgaard Jensen

Preface

The development by a consortium, the "Colli Fioriti", of a number of villas around the site of La Giostra in the mid 1970ies prompted the Soprintendenza archeologica di Roma to wish for an investigation of the site and its remains in order to obtain a preservation ("vincolo"), and restrict further building activities. This "vincolo" was enforced on the hill itself after the first season of investigations, but did not prevent further constructions or destructions on the site.

The "Comitato per l'archeologia laziale" and the then soprintendente Professor Gianfilippo Carettoni addressed themselves to the Director of the Danish Institute in Rome, Professor Søren Skovgaard Jensen, who had shown interest in undertaking a minor Danish project alongside the larger Italo-Nordic project at Ficana.

I was given the task of investigating the remains at La Giostra and I was lucky in having the then assistant director of the Norwegian Institute Dr Rasmus Brandt to collaborate with me from the very start until the present publication, for which I am truly grateful. His vast experience of excavating and the fact that he has been living in Rome following the development of Latin archaeology at close hands has been of invaluable help to our project.

The permission to excavate was granted by the soprintendente Professor Adriano La Regina, who facilitated our work in every respect, and the inspector of the area, Dr Alessandro Bedini, followed our progress with great interest. The work force was provided by the firm of Di Piero who are specialized in archaeological field work, and with whose employees we have had an excellent collaboration.

The three excavation campaigns 1976, 1977, and 1978 were sponsored by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, who have also supported some of the funds for the graphical work, as have Gads Fond and Novo's fond as well as the Norwegian Institute in Rome.

Funds for my own work in Rome have been given by The Danish Research Council for the Humanities and the Ny Carlsberg Foundation, and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek and its director, Mr Flemming Johansen, have graciously given me leave of absence.

A scholarship for a month's stay at the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin has been of great value to me in my research for this publication for which I thank the president of the DAL.

As every archaeologist with projects in foreign countries will know it can be exceedingly difficult to finish a project which demands ones presence for more than shorter periods of time. The material from the excavations have been taking up space in the Danish Academy in Rome for many years for which I have met great patience with a succession of directors: Dr Kjeld de Fine Licht, Professor Tage Nielsen and the present Director, Professor Otto Steen Due, to whom I am sincerely grateful. A profound gratitude is due mag. art. Karen Ascani, the heart and soul of the Danish Academy, for unfailing support through all the years.

The participants in the excavations were: Tobias Fischer-Hansen (1976), Hjørdis Nielsen, Ingolf Thuesen and Peter Åberg (1977), Christel Ebsen (1978). The gridsystem was laid out for us by Steen Karlsson. The plans were made by Kjeld Kjeldsen and Kjeld de Fine Licht, and the archaeological material drawn by Elisabeth Stenius and Thora Fisker. Our English has been

revised by Hanne Carlsen and Peter Spring who are, however, not responsible for our linguistic peculiarities.

I have had the opportunity of discussing the problems concerning the early boundaries of Rome and the questions of border fortresses with many competent colleagues and friends: Lorenzo Quilici, Fausto Zevi, Michael Crawford, Jens Erik Skydsgaard, Ricardo Mar and with my husband Tobias Fischer-Hansen. First and foremost I have discussed every element with my co-author Rasmus Brandt with whom

I have had an excellent collaboration, though we have not always agreed completely on every matter.

The funds for the publication have been defrayed by The Danish Research Council for the Humanities, and the Danish Institute in Rome has benevolently included our work in their series of monographs as a supplementary volume of the *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici*, for which we are very grateful.

Mette Moltesen

I

General Topography

The physical topography

The fortified hill of La Giostra lies about 14 km. southeast of Rome, near the foot of the Alban Hills, about midway between the Via Appia Antica and the modern Via Ardeatina, level with Ciampino Airport. The hill lies on one of the many ridges of volcanic rock spreading out like long tentacles from the Alban Hills into the Roman Campagna, all formed in the middle Pleistocene period.

The ridge is about 3.5 km. long and drops gradually in height from about 150 m. a. s. l. where it leaves the Alban Hill massif to about 115 m. a. s. l. where it ends some 500 m. beyond the fortified settlement. The ridge itself is composed of hard grey basalt¹ and is rather flat on top with low but steep edges running into small spurs on either side giving it an uneven outline in plan (figs. 1–2).

The surrounding hills are composed of tufa, often with thick overlying layers of pozzolana.² The large variety of volcanic stone and sand present in these hills, lithic material much used in all kinds of building activities both in ancient and modern times, has also created the conditions for extensive quarrying. Most quarries are easily identifiable on air-photographs, some are also signalled on the ordnance survey maps in 1:25,000 issued by the Istituto Geografico Militare (IGM).

About 1,800 m. to the northwest of La Giostra, for example, on the other side of the Rome–Naples railway-line, a “Cava di Tufo”, where pozzolana was quarried till only a few years ago, is indicated on the map in fig. 4. On the air-photograph from 1943 in fig. 1 more quarries can be distinguished. At the tip of the La Giostra ridge are two large quarries of basalt, no longer in use. Further to the south-

west, beyond the Casale La Giostra, can be seen nearby two more, also abandoned. We are unable to tell whether any of these quarries was in use in Roman times, but it is worth noticing that from their appearance the yellow brown tufa stones used in the fortification walls and in the buildings of the settlement at La Giostra have many characteristics in common with the tufa in the quarries just mentioned.³

While the hard basalt hill of La Giostra has presumably kept much of its original shape, the surrounding hills of soft tufa and pozzolana sand have been markedly eroded. The erosions are due partly to natural processes, partly to human actions, especially in the form of deforestation and agriculture, and have given the hills around La Giostra a gently undulating appearance.

The hills are intersected by shallow valleys, at the bottom of which run small rivulets. They all run in a northeasterly or easterly direction from the foot of the Alban Hills towards the Tiber south of Rome. One of these tributary systems feeds into the Tiber just outside EUR. It is composed of three main branches that all join before they meet the large river.

The northern branch is called the Fosso delle Cornacchiole and starts at Fontana dei Monaci on the eastern side of the Via Appia, a couple of kilometres northeast of Frattocchie, crosses the ancient road under Ponte Cipollaro,⁴ and continues more or less parallel with the road, before gradually taking a more easterly direction. It crosses the modern Via Ardeatina at Casale di S. Cesareo, from which point it changes its name to Fosso della Cecchignola, runs under the old farmstead that gave it its new name, before it disappears into the large modern dams in the centre of Rome's



Fig. 1. Air photograph of La Giostra (in the centre of the photograph) and the fortified settlement of S. Maria delle Mole (in the top right-hand corner) taken by the Royal Air Force, Aug. 26, 1943; cf. fig. 4.

EUR suburb. It reappears to the southwest of the suburb and joins the two other branches of the waterway system just before it crosses the Via Ostiense.

The southern branch is composed of two ramifications: to the south the Fosso di Rio Petroso, which starts south of Frattocchie, to the north the smaller Fosso della Castelluccia, which starts under the old farmsteads of Falcognano. They meet at Valleranello just before they cross the modern Via Laurentina and change name to the Fosso di Vallerano.

The middle branch is also composed of two ramifications. They both start to the west of Frattocchie, run on either side of La Giostra and meet at Tor Pagnotta. The northern course is called in its upper part Fosso di Fioranello,

in the lower part Fosso di Fiorano,⁵ taking its name from two large, old farmsteads in the area. The southern course is called Fosso del Divino Amore named after the nearby sanctuary. When the northern and southern courses join, they change name first to Fosso di Tor Pagnotta, later to Fosso di Acquacetosa, passing under the hill of the same name.

The Fosso di Acquacetosa and Fosso di Vallerano meet just after they cross the modern highway, the Via Cristoforo Colombo, on the southern outskirts of EUR. Soon afterwards they join the Fosso della Cecchignola before all three merge and flow into the Tiber.

In post-Renaissance topographical studies the northern and southern branches of this water system acquired some importance. They



Fig. 2. Air photograph of the same area as in fig. 1 taken presumably in the mid 1980s (La Giostra: off-centre bottom; S. Maria delle Mole: centre top); cf. fig. 4.

were supposed to start either from the fountain of Aqua Ferentina (today called Fontana dei Monaci) at the foot of the Alban Hills, one of the sacred places where the Latin tribes used to meet (northern branch),⁶ or from the emissary of the Alban Lake, at a place called Le Mole (southern branch).⁷ Therefore on maps pre-dating the early 19th century the two branches are often referred to as respectively Aqua Ferentina and Rio/Fosso Albano (cf. fig. 6),⁸ while the middle branch, of primary interest for the present study, is normally omitted.

From La Giostra there is an excellent view both of the Alban Hills (fig. 3) and across the Roman Campagna. Because of the northeasterly orientation of the watercourses and the gradual descent of the hills in the same direc-

tion, on clear days one can see as far as Rome, where the towering landmark of St. Peter's is easily recognizable. This fact, combined with the solid rock of which the hill of La Giostra is composed, may well have played an important role in the choice of the site for the fortified settlement.

The human topography

The hill of La Giostra is surrounded by a series of low hills with old farms scattered over their flanks. To the north, on the nearest hill lies the Casale Fioranello, and to the northeast along the Via Appia the Casale Fiorano. To the southeast, less than two kilometres away, are the low hills of S. Maria delle Mole, where, on a narrow ridge, some scholars would like to situate the

ancient Latin town *Apiolae* or *Mugilla*.⁹ About two kilometres beyond this lie *Frattocchie* and the site of the Latin town of *Bovillae*. To the south, hidden by some low hills, are the two farmsteads of *Falcognano di sopra* (or *vecchio*) to the east of the modern *Via Ardeatina*, and *Falcognano di sotto* (or *nuovo*) to the west of the road. Finally, to the west lies the hill of *Castel di Leva* and the sanctuary of *Divino Amore*.

A modern road runs under the north side of the hill of *La Giostra*, leaving the modern *Via Ardeatina* just after it has crossed under the ringroad ("*Grande Raccordo Anulare*") and joining the *Via Appia Nuova* at the entrance to *Ciampino Airport*. About 700 m. to the west of the hill runs the *Rome–Naples railway* which crosses the road on a large, arched bridge in brickwork.

As mentioned above, *La Giostra* was positioned between the *Via Appia* and the modern *Via Ardeatina*, with easy access to both roads. This latter road could possibly be identified with the *Via Satricana*, the ancient road to *Satricum*, while the ancient road to *Ardea*, now obliterated, ran further to the west.

The *Via Ardeatina* presumably left *Rome* through a gate in the part of the *Aurelian wall* that was destroyed in the 16th century by the building of the bastion of *Sangallo*. It passed by the *Forte Ardeatino* and the church of *S. Annunziatella*, picked up the modern *Via Ardeatina* just before it crossed the modern *Via di Vigna Murata*, then deviated from this course again and passed by the *Casale Smeraldo*, *La Torraccia*, *Torre della Castelluccia* in the direction of *Zolforata* and *Ardea*. Today large parts of this road, especially in the area of *Tenuta di Castelluccia*, have vanished, but according to contemporary maps it was apparently still serviceable in the early parts of the last century.¹⁰

The *Via Satricana* started at "*Domine quo vadis?*", just outside the *Porta di S. Sebastiano*, where it left the *Via Appia* and continued by *Castel di Leva* and *Falcognano*.¹¹ On 17th century and later maps it was occasionally referred to as the *Via di Conca*,¹² taking its name from a village not far from the ancient *Satricum*. A deviation road passed by *La Giostra*, leaving the modern *Via Ardeatina* just after *Casale*

Bel Poggio. From here it ran across the low hills of the *Tenuta Cornacchiole*, crossed the *Fosso di Fioranello* just under the farm of the same name (where the railway-line also crosses the rivulet), passed the *Casale La Giostra*, and joined the modern *Via Ardeatina* again just before it reached *Falcognano* (fig. 4).¹³

Another important road started at the Latin town of *Gabii*, where it picked up a network of roads from southern *Etruria* and northern *Latium*. It skirted the foot of the *Alban Hills* via *Ad Decimum* on the *Via Latina* to *Bovillae* (*Frattocchie*), and from here it ran towards the towns in the *Pontine area*, *Satricum* and *Antium*. The modern *Via Nettunense* follows more or less the same route in this southern part of its course.

De Rossi has also traced a long series of smaller secondary roads in the area, of which only a few are of interest to the present study. One road left the *Via Satricana* just before *Casale di S. Cesareo*, passed to the east of the farm and ran more or less parallel to the *Via Appia* up to the fortified settlement at *S. Maria delle Mole* (cf. figs. 1–4).¹⁴ The road was crossed by three smaller roads between the *Via Appia* and the *Via Satricana*. The first left the *Via Appia* at *Casal Rotondo* with a course parallel to the modern *Rome–Naples railway* and picked up the *Via Satricana* deviation road just before it crossed the *Fioranello rivulet* below *La Giostra*.¹⁵ The second left the *Via Appia* at *Casale Fiorano* and cut across the hill of *La Giostra* just to the northwest of the fortified settlement.¹⁶ The third road left the *Via Appia* a couple of hundred metres further on at *Casale Palombaro* and crossed the hill of *La Giostra* about 400 m. to the southeast of the settlement.¹⁷

Most of these roads are difficult to date. Normally the dating of roads is associated with the date of the centres that they connect. Assuming that the fortified settlement at *La Giostra* was identical with *Tellenae* or some other early Latin town, some scholars have been led to believe that the roads converging on the town must be of *Iron Age* date.¹⁸ The recent excavations have shown that the settlement cannot be dated before the second half of the fourth century BC, which means that the dates suggested



Fig. 3. View of the Roman Campagna and the Alban Hills from La Giostra. In the background, in the left half of the photograph, in front of the first line of houses, can be seen the low fortified hill of S. Maria delle Mole. In the foreground blossoming asphodels.

for some of these roads will have to be revised. This may also be the case with the roads converging on the fortified hill at S. Maria delle Mole, that could be of the same date as the fortress at La Giostra.¹⁹

In this area southwest of Rome De Rossi identified a large number of sites that may once have been Roman farmsteads. According to his field surveys, early and middle Republican sites are few, the great proliferation starting only in late Republican times and lasting through the Imperial period.²⁰ For the area around La Giostra De Rossi indicated that it was especially exploited in the first century AD.²¹ Some of the Roman villas continued to function all through Antiquity into the Middle Ages and even up till

the present day, like, for instance, Falcognano vecchio, Fiorano and Castel di Leva.

No descriptions from Antiquity of the land between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina are preserved. It may originally have been covered with large forests interspersed with areas for grazing. The growth of Rome put considerable pressure on the area and it was gradually turned into arable land. The presence of the many villas bears witness to this. The distribution of farms and of land in Roman times may therefore not have been essentially different from what can be observed in the non-urbanized parts of the Campagna today.

In periods of depopulation in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages the open fields of

the Campagna in this area may at times have been overgrown, but apparently not enough to create large new forests. In general the property documents from this period refer to fields, meadows, and pastures (*campis*, *pratis*, *pas-cuis*), presumably comprising most of the land. At times we also meet properties with rushes (*canapinis*), and some with forests (*sylvis*), though of limited extent.²² References to vineyards and olive groves (*vineis*, *olivetis*) add up to a picture of the Campagna, which may give an indication of how the land was cultivated in post-Roman times.

On the map by Eufrosinio della Volpaia (1547) (fig. 5) and on the one by Giovanni Battista Cingolani (1692)²³ (fig. 6) the landscape between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina appears open, presumably mainly used for grazing and some restricted cultivation, perhaps interspersed with thickets of undergrowth. For proper forests we have to look to the Alban Hills and the coast.

A similar picture of uncultivated land, though good for grazing, is presented to us in a series of documents and books from the 17th to the 19th century.²⁴ In the present century, however, the land has again been brought under the plough, and with the use of agricultural machinery vast areas are now under intensive cultivation, mainly of wheat; vineyards and olive groves are few and far between.²⁵ Some land is still used for grazing, though the raising of sheep, a tradition practised in the Roman Campagna for thousands of years, is about to vanish completely. Only some 15 years ago herds of sheep visited La Giostra frequently in the winter months; now they are very rarely seen.

The distribution of the land today goes back to the formation of the farmsteads, or "casali", created by the great Roman families in the 15th century, when a repopulation of the territory took place after centuries of feudal strifes. Eufrosinio della Volpaia in his map of 1547 was the first to present some of these new farms with names (cf. fig. 5).²⁶ On this map the area where La Giostra ought to be situated is surrounded by four large farms. Starting from the south and proceeding westwards they are Castel de Lio (= Leva, or the location of the sanc-

tuary of Divino Amore), C. di Sa. Prasedia, Fon. Fiorano, and Falcognano. In 1660–1661 Pope Alexander VII had a cadastre made of all properties around Rome, a cadastre which formed the basis for Giovanni Battista Cingolani's renowned map published in 1692 (cf. fig. 6).²⁷

The first to discover the settlement at La Giostra was the Italian topographer Antonio Nibby, who in 1824 claimed that it lay inside "il tenimento di Falcognani".²⁸ However, a century later another great expert on the Roman Campagna, Giuseppe Tomassetti, included the ancient ruins in his description of the Fiorano farmstead. From Cingolani's map it cannot be established which of the two scholars is right; the position of La Giostra ought to be somewhere between the two last letters in the word (*TEN*)UTE, in the border area between the two properties 218 ("Fiorano, Fioranello, e Cornacchiola, Santiss. Nuntiata, e M. della Purificazione") and 233 ("Falcognano, del sig. Marchese Riccardi", i.e. Falcognano vecchio). However, if we compare Cingolani's map with the "Sezione topografica del Censo" of 1863 (fig. 7) we will notice that the boundary lines between the two large farms are the same.²⁹ The Censo map also includes the ruins of "Antica Giostra", which appear just within the boundaries of the Fiorano property — a boundary line now marked with stone fences and a high wire fence erected across the ridge of La Giostra, about 100 m. beyond the southeastern, or upper end of the ancient settlement (cf. figs. 1–2).

The farmbuildings of Fiorano rest on the foundations of a Roman villa, perhaps dating to the early second century AD.³⁰ The large farm, divided and subdivided, belonged through the Middle Ages successively to a series of rich monasteries, such as *Cellanova* (i.e. San Saba on the Aventine Hill), San Paolo fuori le mura, Santa Balbina, and the Istituto dell'Annunziata e Purificazione,³¹ though private persons also figure among the many owners. One of these farms, for example, was Fioranello, standing on the hill facing La Giostra to the north, separated from Fiorano perhaps as early as the late 14th century.³² In the cadastral map of 1660 the Istituto dell'Annunziata figured as the owner of



Fig. 4. Map of the area around La Giostra with the ancient road courses drawn in (from De Rossi 1967 and 1979; maps at the back). The squares drawn in sepia show the areas covered by the air photographs in respectively fig. 1 and fig. 2.



Fig. 5. Eufrosinio della Volpaia. Detail of map of the Roman Campagna 1547 (from Ashby 1914).



Fig. 6. Giovanni Battista Cingolani. Detail of map of the Roman Campagna (*Topografia geometrica dell'Agro Romano*, 1692) (British School at Rome).

La Giostra

The name of the hill known as La Giostra may refer to the walls that surround it. The word derives from spoken latin *iuxtare* (to be close, *iuxta*) via the ancient French word *joster* (to reunite) or *joste*, which refers to the Medieval and Renaissance practice of jousting.⁴² The name of Giostra was used about several monuments in the Roman Campagna; according to Nibby the circus at Bovillae was called so,⁴³ and according to Tomassetti the arches of a Roman aqueduct, the "Archetti di Torrenova" on the Via Prenestina, carried the same name.⁴⁴ In the first case the name referred to the ruins of an arena; in the second case the arches may have created an image of a circus or the like in people's minds. It may well be therefore that the visible fortification walls at our La Giostra were thought in former times to be the oblong perimeter of an ancient Roman "Tilt Yard"⁴⁵ or even circus,⁴⁶ thus giving the hill its name.⁴⁷

The ruins of the ancient settlement were first discovered in 1824 and brought to the knowledge of the scholarly world by Antonio Nibby some years later (1827), when together with his English friend and topographer William Gell he put the place on the map.⁴⁸ In his book on the Roman Campagna first published in 1837 Nibby gives a long description of how he came to know about La Giostra and of his first visit, which involved tramping across the fields from the Via Appia,⁴⁹

"Ora vengo ad esporre le ragioni che mi portarono a ravvisare il sito di questa città negli avanzi esistenti entro il tenimento di Falcognani, denominati la Giostra, avanzi che furono scoperti la prima volta da me nelle escursioni archeologiche dell'anno 1824 ai 19 di giugno colla scorta di uno scolare di archeologia, Martinelli, da morte immatura rapito ai suoi, agli amici, ed alle lettere. Or egli ito alla caccia in quella contrada mi avvertì essersi imbattuto in certi avanzi ragguardevoli di mura di pietre squadrate, che egli non sapeva a che attribuire, e che dal nome di Giostra, che avea la contrada, e dalla forma oblonga della pianta poteva supporre che fossero gli avanzi di un qualche circo. Erano fresche le ricerche fatte sul circo bovillense, che pure avea il nome di

Giostra, quindi sopra queste notizie si fece una gita per la via appia, e dopo avere esaminato i monumenti, che la fiancheggiano, giunti circa all'ottavo miglio, ammirammo un bel sepolcro di forma quadrata.... Ivi noi deviammo a destra prendendo per direzione una torre de' tempi bassi posta sull'alto del colle [Torre Appia?]. Osservammo però, che troppo presto avevamo deviato dall'Appia, onde in altre visite, che ivi feci dopo, deviai immediatamente al casale di Fiorano, dove seguendo la convalle sottoposta si giunge dopo due miglia circa pel Fontanile detto di Fiorano alle rovine indicate.^[50] Continuando però la narrazione di ciò che fu allora operato, nell'avvicinarsi alla torre sovraindicata fu osservato che la parte bassa di essa è costrutta di mattoni ed è opera del secolo XII. la parte superiore poi è di opera saracinesca grossolana del secolo XIII: presso di questa a sinistra è una sostruzione costrutta di piccoli poliedri di selce. Dalla torre seguendo una direzione obliqua verso mezzodì scendesi in una valle ampia ed aperta, e quindi scavalcasi una fimbria della lacinia vulcanica, sopra la quale sono i ruderi del *Castrum Florani* de' tempi bassi: di queste fimbrie tre successivamente salimmo e scendemmo prima di giungere a quella, che domina immediatamente la valle solcata dal fosso delle Frattocchie [Fosso di Fioranello?], e sopra la quale è la casetta detta di Fiorano [Casale Fioranello?]: ivi, senza conoscerlo, ci trovavamo in faccia alla lacinia, sulla quale erano le rovine che cercavamo, ma in luogo di andare direttamente ad esse per mancanza di guide, e perchè il buon Martinelli, che ci accompagnava era pervenuto a quelle rovine dal canto opposto, cioè da Falcognani, scavalcammo la lacinia medesima ed il fosso allora asciutto [Fosso di Divino Amore?], che va influire in quello antecedentemente indicato, salimmo una fimbria della lacinia susseguente, donde il Martinelli riconosciuta la deviazione, giacchè le rovine apparivano di prospetto, ripassando il fosso, giungemmo ai piedi della collina, sulla quale erano le rovine cercate.

All'aspetto di quelli avanzi, alla pianta, che presentano, ed alla costruzione riconobbi immediatamente, che non appartenevano nè ad un circo, nè ad un edificio, ma ad una città de' tempi più antichi del Lazio; e dapprincipio mi

venne in mente Apiolae;^[51] ma poscia ulteriori visite ed ulteriori ricerche mi hanno determinato a ravvisarvi Tellene ...”⁵²

Nibby and his friend apparently left the Via Appia by the Torre Appia and crossed the fields more or less along the trail of the later Rome–Naples railway–line. They first crossed the Fosso di Fioranello below the farm of the same name, climbed the next hill on which the Casale La Giostra lies, crossed the Fosso di Divino Amore, at which point they discovered their mistake and returned to the hill of La Giostra with the ancient ruins, and thus approaching it from its western and most easily recognizable side (fig. 8, cf. also fig. 4).

After this long introduction Nibby goes on to describe the hill and immediately observed how the irregularly shaped volcanic ridge had been cut to accommodate the rectilinear walls built of rectangular blocks of tufa which in the NW were preserved to the height of 7 courses.⁵³ The settlement was placed lengthwise on the ridge, and cuts in the rock at either short side left only a narrow isthmus–like entrance via two gates to the fortified plateau (cf. figs. 1–2, 9).⁵⁴

The walls along the northwest (fig. 10), northeast,⁵⁵ and southeast sides run more or less straight; along the southwestern side, however, they have an irregular course. Halfway down this side they make an indentation, at which point Nibby claimed there was another entrance. On the inside to the right of this gate he observed “un pozzo antico circolare di 2 piedi ed un quarto di diametro fasciato internamente di peperino che conserva circa 16 piedi di profondità; ma che può credersi in parte ingombro: in esso veggonsi praticati i fori per appoggiarvi i piedi per iscendervi; il recinto ivi è sconvolto...”.⁵⁶ This pozzo or well is no longer visible and no attempt was made to find it in the course of the excavations.

Nibby also thought (admitting, however, that he could not point to ancient remains) that the settlement extended further to the northwest and to the southeast along the ridge, the fortified area only being “la cittadella” which occupied the centre of the settlement. Nothing seems to support this idea. Before our ar-

rival at the site in 1976, in the southeast, less than 100 m. from the fortification walls, a wide foundation trench had been dug, presumably for a house. It was devoid of ancient remains, nor could any traces of occupation or of constructions be distinguished in the sides of the trench. At the opposite end outside the walls may be seen another wall, composed of tufa blocks and some irregular pieces of basalt, running along the side of the hill for some 50–60 m. This, however, has nothing to do with the walls of the ancient settlement, but is a continuation of the fence observed along the northeast side of the fortified area, and visible for a short stretch on Ashby’s photograph of the hill (see fig. 10).

At the southern end of the plateau Nibby also saw a Roman villa⁵⁷ which consisted of a large hydraulic construction placed in the wide cavity cut in the rock outside the walls by the fortress builders (fig. 11).⁵⁸

In a large rectangular structure placed at right angles to the natural hill four distinct building elements placed on various levels can be distinguished (fig. 12). At the foot of the hill to the southwest is a rectangular basin which Nibby thought served as a fish tank (“peschiera”). The basin lies at the foot of four badly preserved barrel-vaulted rooms. Nibby must have seen them in a better condition than they appear today, as he could establish their widths and depths, both “circa 14 piedi”. He could only see the top of these rooms, as also the English priest P.P. Mackey some 75 years later when he photographed the third room from the north (fig. 13). Later, this room, in an undocumented excavation,⁵⁹ was cleared of its accumulated debris and the large masses of masonry from the collapsed vault. At the foot of its rear wall was uncovered a small barrel-vaulted channel (fig. 14), which is connected with a circular cistern behind.⁶⁰

The cistern, interpreted by Nibby as a “piscina”, measures about 21.4 m. in diameter. It has double walls forming an “intercapedine” which is connected with the channel just described (figs. 15–16). The centre of the cistern is occupied by a circular chamber (diam. 9.75 m.), and between this and the outer walls the cistern is sectioned into 12 identical wedge-