

Thinking Global – Acting Local: Inscribed Objects from Excavations at the Villa del Vergigno
(Tuscany, Italy)

The Villa del Vergigno is a large *villa rustica* located 20 km west of Florence. The first investigations at the site, conducted between 1989 and 1994, uncovered a 55 x 15 m structure with sixteen rooms and a bath complex, four kilns, and a grape/olive press. In 2013, the University of Wyoming, Sistema Museale di Montelupo Fiorentino, and Cooperativa ICHNOS reopened the site to excavate the “agricultural” area outside of the Villa, and analyze and catalog approximately 200 unstudied boxes of materials found in the excavations of the early 1990s.

The materials from the first excavations of the 1990s that were later processed in 2015 through 2017, together with the objects uncovered during the excavations of 2013 – 2017, amount to approximately one hundred objects that are stamped, incised, signed, or in some way marked with a name, title, or decoration. The purpose of this paper is four-fold: to provide an broad account of these marked objects; to categorize the types of artifacts that are stamped, incised, or decorated; to align the types of markings within a historical chronology as it relates to this region of northern Etruria; and to offer preliminary interpretations of the artifacts in respect to their provenance.

Broadly, the objects discussed in this paper comprise: approximately 20 local coarseware ceramic objects of various typology, 20 *terra sigillata* plates/bowls, 20 Black Gloss plates/bowls, 24 coins, and 3 tile with *sigla*.

When discussing these objects, there are several important points to consider about the Villa del Vergigno. Though this villa is not large, it was located in a geographically significant and advantageous location for long-distance trade. The site sits on the confluence of two rivers, The Vergigno and the Pesa, with the latter feeding into the Arno River. This location gave the

Villa del Vergigno the ability to export inland as well as west to Pisa and the Tyrrhenian Sea. Inland, the Villa del Vergigno is a mere 20 km from Florence, while the port at Pisa gave it access to markets and goods from across the Roman Empire. This gave the Villa both simple access to nearby markets and allowed for easy engagement in much longer distance trade using both waterways and roadways. Residents of the Villa were clearly taking advantage of this position to improve their economic fortunes as evidenced by the objects discussed in this paper. This also is reflected in several phases of renovation on the Villa del Vergigno, each improving the size and comfort of the estate as it prospered.

Prior analyses of the site have suggested that the Villa's first phase of occupation dates to the last two centuries B.C.E. and first century C.E. It is possible that the site's foundation was part of the episodes of Roman colonization of Fiesole and Florence between 82 and 30 B.C.E., yet ceramics in the foundation trenches of the Villa's earliest walls and amphora suggest an earlier foundation date to the middle or late second century B.C.E. The area for wine production is also datable to the site's initial phase.

Then, later in the life of the Villa during the second century C.E., there is a reworking of the "residential" area that enlarged the bath complex. At this time, the "agricultural" sector saw its peak in production of wine, domestic ceramics, and amphorae. An analysis of the stamped *terra sigillata* found in the first and second phases indicates that the regional trade network for finewares in the mid-Arno Valley shifted from Arezzo to Pisa during the middle of the first century C.E., well after the establishment of new workshops at, and despite the Villa's proximity to, Pisa.