

Sant'Omobono: an interim *status quaestionis*

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The church of Sant'Omobono sits above one of the highest human occupation sequences in the city of Rome. Some 3.5 m of sediment lie between the earliest known Bronze Age occupation lens and the base of the foundations of the early 6th c. B.C. temple, a further 13 m above which lies the floor of the present church, reconstructed in A.D. 1482.¹ The site was sacred to the goddesses Fortuna and Mater Matuta for more than a millennium, before one of their temples was converted into a church of San Salvatore, rebuilt many times and eventually rededicated to Saints Anthony and Omobono. The archaeological remains were discovered by chance in 1936, when the dense neighborhood surrounding the church was demolished to make way for new Fascist infrastructure. The site was spared from further construction, and excavations continued sporadically through the latter half of the 20th c. This work was carried out by a diverse cast of archaeologists employing an equally diverse range of methodologies and field practices, though none of this work has been fully published. Since 2009, the Sant'Omobono Project, a collaboration between the University of Michigan, the Università della Calabria, and the Sovrintendenza Capitolina of the Comune di Roma, has continued this research with the goal of understanding and publishing whatever possible from the earlier excavations and bringing updated methodologies to bear on the site. While preparations for comprehensive publication are ongoing, the present article summarizes the main occupation and construction phases at the site as understood after 6 years of work by the project.²

Topography and the earliest history of the area

The so-called “area sacra di S. Omobono” lies at the SW foot of the Capitoline hill, just east of the Tiber Island, at the intersection of the present Via Petroselli and Vico Iugario (the ancient *Vicus Iugarius*), and is flanked on its S and E sides by the brick-faced Uffici Tecnici di Ripartizione V of the Comune di Roma (fig. 1). In antiquity, the site lay at the N end of the Forum Boarium and east of the Forum Holitorium.

Long before extensive human intervention in the area, the site lay in a low position along the Tiber, whose banks would have wandered somewhat with respect to its modern course.³ A program of percussion coring directed by one of the authors (A. Brock) has revealed evidence of pre-Archaic human activity at the site (fig. 2 in color).⁴ Prior to this

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- 1 The apex of the church's cupola lies c.30 m above the base of the Archaic temple's podium.
 - 2 The history of investigation at Sant'Omobono will not be addressed since it has been treated in detail elsewhere: N. Terrenato *et al.*, “The S. Omobono sanctuary in Rome: assessing eighty years of fieldwork and exploring perspectives for the future,” *Internet Archaeology* 2012. See also P. Brocato, “Archeologia a S. Omobono tra passato e presente: metodi e intenti,” in *id.* and N. Terrenato (edd.), *Nuove ricerche nell'area archeologica di S. Omobono a Roma* (Arcavacata di Rende [CS] 2012) 13-26.
 - 3 A. J. Ammerman and D. Filippi, “Dal Tevere all'Argiletto: nuove osservazioni,” *BullCom* 105 (2004) 16-17; A. Ammerman, “Adding time to Rome's *imago*,” in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (edd.), *Imaging ancient Rome* (JRA Suppl. 61, 2006) 307; *id.*, “Looking at Early Rome with fresh eyes: transforming the landscape,” in J. DeRose Evans (ed.), *A companion to the archaeology of the Roman Republic* (Chichester 2013) 170-72.
 - 4 Supplementing and running concurrently with the deep trench excavations undertaken by