

Investigating the “Villa degli Antonini” at *Lanuvium*

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The archaeological site known as the “Villa degli Antonini” lies in the SE sector of the Alban Hills within the modern *comune* of Genzano di Roma and some 1.5 km north of the ancient urban center of *Lanuvium* (Lanuvio) (fig. 1).¹ It is c.400 m south of the *Via Appia* between that road’s 18th and 19th milestones (it seems to have been connected to the *Via Appia* by a side road traceable in historic aerial photographs and of which a section is still preserved) and c.1 km south of the rim of the volcanic lake of Nemi, from which the ground slopes gently down towards the coastal plain of Latium. To the west and east are two scoria cones, Monte Due Torri and Montecagnoletto, the latter of which was once separated from our site by a N-S valley c.100 m in width. Substantial remains of walls of brick-faced concrete, today recognized as part of a bath complex, are visible above ground c.500 m south of the line of the *Via Appia* (now the Via Emilia Romagna) and immediately west of the Viale del Lavoro which leads to an industrial zone (Zona Artigianale) developed during the 1970s-80s immediately south of the ruins (fig. 2). The Roman vestiges have always remained visible although partially covered with earth and vegetation; they were documented in engravings by Josephus Vulpus in 1732 (fig. 3) and by Carlo Labruzzi in 1789.² Since the beginning of the 18th c., the site has been commonly identified with the villa at *Lanuvium* referred to by the *Historia Augusta* as the birthplace of Antoninus Pius in A.D. 86 and of Commodus in 161, and as the site of beast-killing exploits by the latter.³ This identification rested particularly on the discovery in 1701, in an area perhaps lying between the *Via Appia* and the baths, of a series of white marble portrait busts of the Antonine dynasty with Alexander Severus, then acquired by Cardinal Alessandro Albani and now in the Musei Capitolini (fig. 4).⁴

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- 1 N. Cassieri and G. Ghini, “La cosiddetta villa degli Antonini al XVIII miglio della via Appia,” *ArchLaz* 10 = *QuadaAEI* 18 (1990) 168-78 (focused on the baths), provides the only archaeological treatment of the site prior to the start of our project. For a more general overview, see L. Attenni and B. Premutico, “La villa degli Antonini,” in V. Melaranci (ed.), *Genzano di Roma: la città, i monumenti* (Genzano di Roma 2001) 242-51. M. Lilli, *Avanzi di edifici antichi negli appunti di R. Lanciani* (Rome 2001) 38-42. Modern urbanization, especially the construction of housing, has somewhat altered the geomorphology of the area, which today can best be read in historic aerial photographs.
 - 2 J. Vulpus, *Vetus Latium profanum*, V (Padova 1732) tab. VII; C. Labruzzi, *La Via Appia illustrata ab urbe Roma ad Capuam*, preserved in BAV, Vat.lat. 14931 f.0127r; T. Ashby, “Dessins inédits de Carlo Labruzzi,” *MEFR* 23 (1903) especially 401, nos. 40-41.
 - 3 SHA, *Ant.P.* 1.8: *Ipsè Antoninus Pius natus est xiii kal. Oct. Flavio Domitiano xii et Cornelio Dolabella consulibus in villa Lanuvina*; SHA, *Comm.* 1.2: *ipse autem natus est apud Lanuvium cum fratre Antonino gemino pridie kal. Sept. patre patruoque consulibus, ubi et avus maternus dicitur natus*; and *ibid.* 8.5: *appellatus est etiam Romanus Hercules, quod feras Lanuvii in amphitheatro occidisset. Erat enim haec illi consuetudo, ut domi bestias interficeret*. On the epigraphic evidence for the familia Caesaris being present at *Lanuvium*, see M. Maiuro, *Res Caesaris: ricerche sulla proprietà imperiale nel Principato* (Bari 2012) 256-57; *EphEp.* 9 (1913) 602, 605 and 614-15, referring to *vigiles*, have often been cited for a likely imperial presence at *Lanuvium* under Septimius Severus.
 - 4 P. Baldassarri, “Ville imperiali e arredi scultorei: i ritratti dalla villa degli Antonini nell’ager *Lanuvinus*,” in M. Valenti (ed.), *Residenze imperiali nel Lazio* (Frascati 2008) 101-15. Cf. M. Papini, “L’ozio è rivelatore: le ville degli Antonini e gli arredi statuari,” in G. Ghini, A. Palladino, and M. Rossi (edd.), *Sulle tracce di Caligola: storie di grandi recuperi della Guardia di Finanza al Lago di*