

# Housing slaves on estates: a proposed *ergastulum* at the Villa of Rufio (Giano dell'Umbria)

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In the framework of archaeological surveys conducted in 2002-3 for the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Umbria around the *Via Flaminia*, the Società Cooperativa Kronos discovered the site known as the "Villa of Rufio" (the name comes from an inscription dedicated to Caius Iulius Rufio). After 4 excavation campaigns (2003-6) the monumental character of a large villa was established, and in 2007 a team from the University of Alicante led by the first-named author began fieldwork,<sup>1</sup> focusing on the analysis of agricultural and commercial production patterns through an examination of the type of manpower in use during the Augustan era. The site lies in the village of Giano dell'Umbria (Perugia), in the foothills of Gualdo Cataneo-Montefalco of southern Umbria (fig. 1). To the north is the Roman town of *Mevania* (Bevagna), to the south the Martani mountains, at the foot of which lies *Mansio Ad Martis* (Massa Martana). The villa's immediate surroundings are shaped by the basin of the Puglia river which defines a natural area that possibly delineates the villa's *fundus*. The villa is strategically situated beside the *Via Flaminia*, 1.5 km from its junction with the *Via Tuderte*. A little farther on are centres with access to the river, such as *Tuder* (Todi), 15 km distant from the villa, or *Ocriculum* (Otricoli), 50 km distant.

The inscription (fig. 2) discovered in the villa probably gives the name of its *dominus* or owner.<sup>2</sup> It includes a simple formula C(aio) · IVLIO RVFIONI/NOBILIS L(ibertus) POSVIT.

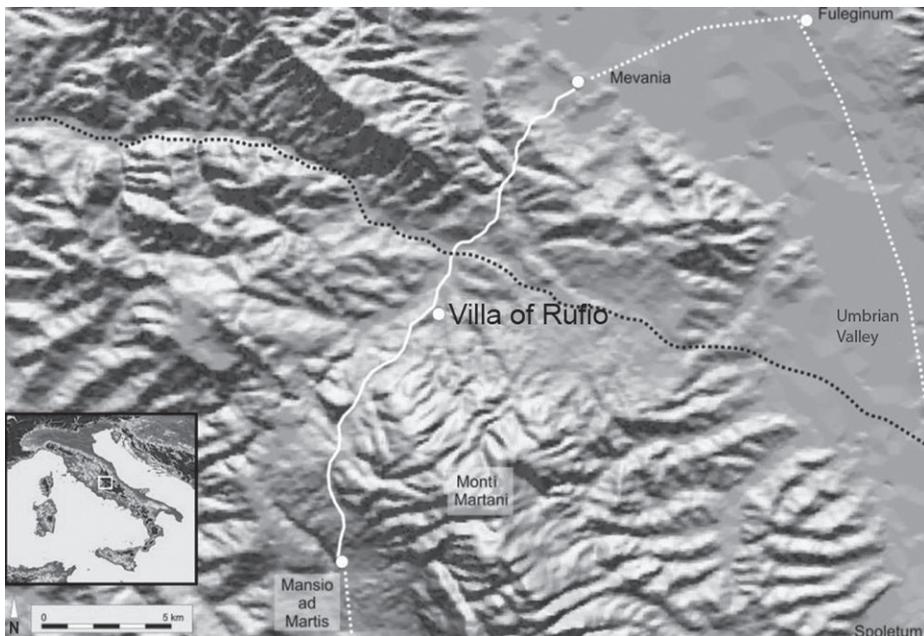


Fig. 1. The Villa of Rufio in the context of Roman centres of southern Umbria and the main routes.

- 1 Cf. J. Molina Vidal, "La villa romana: de las fuentes escritas a la creación del concepto histórico," in V. Revilla Calvo, J. R. González Pérez and M. Prevosti Monclús (edd.), *Actes del simposi: Les vil·les romanes a la Tarraconense*, vol. I (Barcelona 2008) 37-48.
- 2 F. Llidó López and J. Molina Vidal, "Caius Iulius Rufio propietario en la vía Flaminia, entre Suetonio y la epigrafía," *Epigraphica* 74 (2012) 75-82.