

A new Roman brickstamp from Etruria

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Along with other unidentified brickstamps of familiar form (rectangular field, one line of text; *in tabula ansata*; horseshoe-shaped; *in planta pedis*), the Roman villa at Campo della Chiesa has yielded a number of copies (reportedly dozens) of a previously unattested type. The excavator, M. Del Chiaro, provided a photograph and brief description of the new stamp in his initial report of the excavations undertaken during the summers of 1987 and 1988;¹ in view of the importance of the find for the building-history of the site, it has seemed opportune to attempt to set it more fully into its historical context. The dimensions of the stamp are reported as 6 x 7 cm.; all copies are said to have been found on roof-tiles.

P·A NI
*aquila adversa alis expansis ss. respiciens,
serpentem cristatam et barbatam
unguibus utriusque pedis tenet*
LI·P F

P. Anili P.f.

The text records the name of a man associated with the production of the brick. Probably the landowner on whose property the claypits were located, P. Anilius may also have organized the manufacturing process; but whether or not he was the owner of the villa at Campo della Chiesa is, on the available evidence, impossible to say. The discovery of large quantities of bricks stamped with his name in the excavated portions of the structure shows only that the brickyards with which he was associated were active (perhaps flourishing) when those parts of the villa were built — or repaired. None of the stamps thus far discovered at Campo della Chiesa is attested elsewhere, and our knowledge of brick production in the region is not so complete that the discovery of a new stamp, even in quantities, in a particular structure can by itself be taken to establish ownership of the building in question.² Where the evidence is thin, isolated finds are liable to acquire disproportionate weight, and greater than usual caution is necessary in interpreting their import. If a number of bricks stamped with the name of L. Arruntius Stella (none are known) were to turn up on the site of a Nomentan estate, we might on such grounds wrongly suppose that the villa belonged to him rather than to his client, the poet Martial, to whom on one occasion, at least, Stella is known to have sent a supply of roof tiles.³ Of course, the villa might indeed have belonged to Stella, but the mere presence in the structure of brickstamps bearing his name would not provide sufficient grounds for arriving at that conclusion. The same situation applies in the case of P. Anilius and the villa at Campo della Chiesa.

That a P. Anilius P.f. owned brickyards in the area is by no means unlikely: the *gentilicium* is rare but well attested in the vicinity, and other brick-manufacturing installations are known to have been active in the region already during the 1st c. B.C.⁴ Of only six other known Anilii, three appear in epitaphs of early imperial date from northern Latium; three others are attested in inscriptions (two epitaphs, one a

1 JRA 2 (1989) 115-16, fig.8; cf. id., *Archaeologia* 28 (1989) 3; *Archaeology* (September/October 1989) 58-61.

2 Compare the careful discussion by D. Manacorda in A. Carandini (ed.), *Settefinestre: una villa schiavistica nell'Etruria romana* 1 (Modena 1985) 104-6, of the possibility of assigning ownership of the villa at Settefinestre to the L. S() (possibly L. Sestius) whose initials were stamped, along with the figure of a boar, on bricks found throughout the building.

3 Cf. Martial 7.36.1-4: cum pluvias madidumque lovem perferre negaret / et rudis hibernis villa nataret aquis, / plurima, quae posset subitos effundere nimbos, / muneribus venit tegula missa tuis (sc. Stella). For Martial's *Nomentanum*, cf. also 6.43.4, 7.31.8, 9.18.2, 10.48.19, 10.94, 12.57.27.

4 For brickmaking and ceramic works in the Albegna river valley and the *ager Cosanus*, see E. Papi, in A. Carandini (ed.), *La romanizzazione dell'Etruria: il territorio di Vulci* (Milano 1985) 191-94, with references to earlier literature.