

# JOURNAL OF ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY

VOLUME 27 2014

\* \*

REVIEW ARTICLES AND LONG REVIEWS  
AND BOOKS RECEIVED

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

# A major study of imperial estates in Italy

Alastair M. Small

MARCO MAIURO, *RES CAESARIS. RICERCHE SULLA PROPRIETÀ IMPERIALE NEL PRINCIPATO* (Pragmateiai 23; Edipuglia, Bari 2012). Pp. 482, Tables. ISBN 978-88-7228-655-5.

This book has been badly needed. Archaeological excavations and field surveys carried out in the last 20 years in various parts of Italy have produced a wealth of new evidence for villas and *vici* on imperial estates and have thrown light on their economic function. Recent epigraphic discoveries have added considerably to our knowledge of the distribution and organization of imperial properties in Italy. Two recent conferences have been concerned with these topics;<sup>1</sup> but until now there had been no work of synthesis. That want is to a large extent supplied by the present volume, in which Maiuro analyzes the policies followed by the officials of the imperial *patrimonium* in accumulating and administering its vast and multifarious portfolio of properties. The analysis is founded on the scholarly assessment of a large mass of evidence. It is well-organized and written in lucid Italian.

The origins of the study go back to the author's doctoral thesis, written at Trieste and Clermont-Ferrand II (CNRS). He then moved to Columbia University, where (as he tells us in the preface) he came under the influence of American and more general Anglo-Saxon academic culture and learned new ways of asking questions, which led him to revise the structure of the book (in fact, it combines both scholarly traditions). He also became involved in the excavations of the imperial villa at Villa Magna near Anagni, directed by E. Fentress, with whom he is preparing the final publication.<sup>2</sup>

This is a major contribution to the subject of imperial estates which should be on the shelves of any scholar interested in the economy of Roman Italy, but it has some limitations which are not apparent from the title. It is concerned primarily with imperial possessions in the Italian peninsula. The author draws on evidence from other parts of the empire (principally Egypt and *Africa Proconsularis*) only where it can be used to elucidate the state of affairs on imperial properties in Italy; and even within Italy he limits his study to properties which were agriculturally productive or connected with brickworks, timber production or maritime trade. He excludes the smaller islands, in spite of their importance as imperial residences or prisons, and says nothing about the emperors' ownership of mines and quarries. He is not primarily concerned with the internal organization of the *patrimonium/res privata*, although he uses as sources of data H.-G. Pflaum's study of equestrian procurators<sup>3</sup> and P. R. L. Weaver's *Repertorium* of slaves and freedmen.<sup>4</sup> The book has no illustrations, their absence explained by the need to keep the cost of publication down, but this reduces the usefulness of the book as an archaeological resource. There is a large bibliography and a full index of literary, epigraphic and papyrological sources, but the analytical index is limited to emperors and significant themes. There are no indices of geographical or personal names even though the book is full of references to individuals and places. One has to thumb through the pages to find them, aided by the Table of Contents. While I have noticed a few minor errors in citation,<sup>5</sup> there is nothing so grave as to undermine confidence in the general reliability of the book.

---

1 D. Pupillo (ed.), *Le proprietà imperiali nell'Italia romana: economia, produzione, amministrazione* (Florence 2007), contains 20 articles on a variety of topics, thematic and regional. A. M. Small (ed.), *Beyond Vagnari: new themes in the study of Roman South Italy* (Bari 2014), includes several studies of imperial properties, and of the ideology of imperial estates and their rôle in the overall pattern of landholding in Italy.

2 See preliminary reports in *FOLD&R* 2006-10; also E. Fentress and M. Maiuro, "Villa Magna near Anagni: the emperor, his winery and the wine of Signia," *JRA* 24 (2011) 333-69.

3 H.-G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris 1960-61).

4 P. Weaver, *Repertorium Familiae Caesarum* ([www.uni-koeln.de/philfak/ifa/altg/eck/weaver.htm](http://www.uni-koeln.de/philfak/ifa/altg/eck/weaver.htm)).

5 Vagnari is in Apulia, not Lucania (295), and the tile-stamps found there read Grati / Caesaris, not Gratti / Ti(beri) Caesaris (326). The reference should be to Small, Volterra and Hancock 2003, not "Small – Small 2003".

The work is divided into three parts. Part I (“La terra e i Cesari”) deals with the limits of the literary sources, the social norms and legal regulations affecting testamentary bequests, the policies followed by the emperors in accepting legacies, the treatment of the goods of those condemned for major capital offences, the circumstances in which properties might be sold by the *fiscus*, the attitudes of the land-owning classes towards their properties, and the distribution of property within the population of Italy. Part II (“Il patrimonio imperiale in Italia”) is concerned with Italy’s geographical characteristics, the regional or sub-regional nature of its economy, the uneven distribution of imperial properties in the peninsula, and the implications of this for the administration and economic exploitation of the imperial estates. Part III is a gazetteer of imperial properties micro-region by micro-region, with lists of literary and epigraphic sources, and notes on archaeological reports. Much of the data consists of inscriptions (mainly funerary) of imperial slaves and freedmen, with Maiuro offering a *caveat* (76-78) on the difficulties inherent in using this material as evidence for the presence of an imperial estate in the vicinity of the findspot of the stone. He does not aim to present all the data, omitting instances which appear to be peripheral or to have no bearing on the question of the emperor’s landed property. Six appendices deal with related topics which could not be discussed at suitable length within the main text.

There is no room here to review the numerous points of detail treated by the author or the individual entries in the catalogue. I shall concentrate on the major themes that merge into a coherent and broadly convincing argument. The widespread perception that the imperial *patrimonium* grew vastly after the time of Augustus as a result of the expropriation to the *fiscus* of the estates of rich senators who were condemned for treason or other serious capital offences is largely mistaken. The *bona damnatorum* were generally sold at auction, and the proceeds (over and above what went to *delatores*) were paid into the *fiscus*, where they might be used to finance various expenditures. The sale of confiscated land helped to satisfy the recurring demand for real estate among the Roman aristocracy. In the rare cases in which emperors before Septimius Severus incorporated confiscated properties into the *patrimonium*, this was done in accordance with an overall policy regulating the type of property in which the emperor had a special interest.

The widely-held idea that the *patrimonium* expanded partly by absorbing what remained of *ager publicus*<sup>6</sup> is also incorrect. Public land remained common in Italy well into the Imperial age;<sup>7</sup> although imperial procurators came at some point to collect the *vectigalia* from public land (discussed in detail on 111-20), ownership of the land remained formally distinct. The distinction was still valid in the Severan period when Ulpian distinguished between the *res publicae*, which *de iure* could not be alienated, and the *res Caesaris*, which could. The only opportunity the emperor might have to annex public land in Italy was when a colony was founded and land was allocated to veterans presumably by a *lex* under which the *auctor divisionis* might assign land to him.

There is next to no evidence for the emperor acquiring property by purchase. The normal circumstance in which estates entered the imperial *patrimonium* was by inheritance. It was common practice among the Roman aristocracy to leave bequests to the emperor (and indeed to each other), but there were well-understood circumstances in which the emperor would or should accept such legacies. Bequests of gold or coin were usually acceptable, and they were expected from individuals who had been enriched by gifts from the emperor or his predecessors; but bequests of landed property were expected only from the emperor’s intimate *amici*, and from his relatives, including his relatives by marriage. Emperors were not, however, supposed to disinherit their heirs, male or female, and ‘good’ emperors (my phrase) refused

6 E. Lo Cascio (*Il Principe e il suo impero. Studi di storia amministrativa e finanziaria romana* [Bari 2000] 111-220), for example, argues that there was a progressive blending of the remains of *ager publicus* and the imperial *patrimonium*.

7 Argued more fully by F. Millar, *The emperor in the Roman world* (London 1977) 621-23.

bequests which might result in the impoverishment of the testator's children. These points are illustrated by significant examples, some of which are discussed at length. Agricola is an interesting case. There is no evidence that he was an *amicus* of Domitian, but he nevertheless named the emperor as heir to half his estate although he had a daughter living; his son-in-law Tacitus implies that the fact that he felt obliged to do so was indicative of the tyranny of Domitian's régime, but Maiuro points out (53) that there is no evidence that Domitian accepted the bequest.

Many childless aristocrats sought to transmit their patrimonial estates, family traditions and cults to the next generation by testamentary adoption, and such provisions were normally respected by the emperors, many of whom had acquired the principate themselves by just such means. Some childless senators, however, chose to name the emperor as sole or principal heir, and nothing prevented him from accepting such inheritances. The Younger Pliny is a case in point: he died childless, and must have named Trajan as heir to at least part of his property since brick-stamps show that his properties at Tifernum Tiberinum passed into the imperial *patrimonium* after his death (208).

Testamentary adoption apart, childless males less than 25 years of age, and females less than 20, were prohibited by the Lex Papia Poppaea of A.D. 9 from accepting legacies left to them by anyone outside their immediate families. Any such bequests were claimed by the *fiscus*. Making several assumptions regarding the average age of marriage, life expectancy and infant mortality, Maiuro attempts to calculate the proportion of the population which might have been affected by the law, and concludes (58) that an enormous number of men in the flower of life must have been considered *orbi* (i.e., childless) under the terms of the law. Without proper statistical data, the argument cannot be pressed, but it has value in emphasizing the importance of these acquisitions to the *fiscus*; it is likely, however, that such legacies were normally in money or gold rather than in land.

The main source of legacies must have been the freedmen of the *familia Caesaris* (70-80). As patron, the emperor was entitled to a portion of his freedmen's property upon their death, and this too was regulated by the Lex Papia Poppaea. The richest among the emperor's freedmen, with property worth more than 100,000 sesterces, forfeited between a third and a half to the emperor on their death unless they had three legitimate children living at the time (four in the case of women). Here too Maiuro calculates the statistical probabilities involved based upon several assumptions, and concludes (72) that the *fiscus* will have been able to appropriate half of the heritable wealth of between 10% and 15% of imperial freedmen, as well as part of the possessions of almost all imperial freedmen with a salary of more than 100,000 sesterces *per annum* (*centenarii*). Not all freedmen affected will have held high positions; some may have made successful careers on the side as businessmen or money-lenders, like those recorded in the archive of the Sulpicii who were involved in money-lending at Puteoli (74), and others may have acquired land, like those who committed their *fundi* under the alimentary schemes at Veleia and Ligure Baebiani. Since imperial freedmen seem most likely to have held land near to the properties where they were employed, this practice will have had a clustering effect, adding to the totality of imperial landholdings in the administrative regions of the *patrimonium*.

With certain limitations, the *fiscus* also acquired a right to the properties of those who died intestate, or those whose wills were for one reason or another deemed illegitimate. The importance of legacies in general to the *fiscus* was so great that the equestrian office of *procurator hereditatum* was created to deal with them. Other properties might be acquired by the *fiscus* in settlement of debts, though this must have been more common in the provinces where individuals might be in arrears of taxes. But, Maiuro argues, it is unlikely that most of the properties that accrued to the emperor in any of these ways passed into the *patrimonium*. In most cases, when a property came to the *fiscus*, the decision would probably be made to sell it, especially if it was small or did not fit easily into the existing administrative structure — if, for instance, it was situated in an area where there was no existing procuratorial administration, or if its economic function was not one with which the imperial administration was deeply involved. There must therefore have been policy guidelines, or at least traditions, understood by the administrators of the *fiscus*, as to what kind of estate should be incorporated into the *patrimonium*.

Maiuro rejects the distinction, originally made by O. Hirschfeld,<sup>8</sup> between luxury villas and productive properties. The great villa of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius at Villa Magna near Anagni had impressive wine-producing installations adjoining the imperial residence, and Maiuro evidently believes that most, if not all, imperial residences had some productive or commercial functions. In rural estates some villas located on imperial properties were relatively humble structures, unlikely ever to be visited by the emperor. The villa at S. Felice, linked to the imperial estate at Vagnari, is an example.<sup>9</sup> There were imperial properties in all the Italian regions, but the evidence (carefully assessed by Maiuro in Part III) indicates that they were much more frequent in some than in others, being especially concentrated in the *Suburbium*, the central Tyrrhenian area, the interior of *Regiones II (Apulia et Calabria)* and IV (*Samnium*), in the *Sabina* and the Tiber valley, and in the N Adriatic area from Ravenna to Istria (174). The reasons for this were clearly economic, linked to the emperor's involvement in the production and marketing of specific commodities: wine (especially in the *Suburbium*, the Tiber valley, the N Adriatic), oil (especially around Istria), wool (Apulia, Samnium, the Po delta), wood (the Tiber valley, where the *fiscus* controlled wharves from which the timber was floated: 206-9 and 228) and bricks (Tiber valley, N Adriatic: 206-7, 321-4, 334 and 342). The concentration of estates in these areas was so great that regional administrative centres were set up under equestrian procurators, with their own record-offices, piecemeal but beginning in the Flavian period (173-74), with *tabularii* responsible for maintaining the records. We know of a *regio Padana, Vercellensium, Ravennatium*; a *regio Ariminensium*; a *regio Statana et Falerna*; a *Regio Picen(a)*, and a *regio Calabrica*. These *regiones* had nothing to do with the Augustan regions: they were fiscal subdivisions of the *patrimonium*.

The maritime properties of the central Tyrrhenian area receive special prominence in Maiuro's analysis. He dismisses the idea that these were merely luxurious resorts. Many had massive harbours, storage facilities, and cisterns going far beyond the needs of the villa or the local community. They might be dismissed as examples of imperial overbuilding, comparable to Tiberius' Villa Iovis on Capri, or Nero's villa at Subiaco, but in Maiuro's view they had a more serious purpose, serving the needs of navigation by cabotage on which Horden and Purcell have set so much emphasis.<sup>10</sup> Several harbours rebuilt by Trajan on the Tyrrhenian coast between Centumcellae (Civitavecchia) and Ostia, probably on imperial properties, would have supplemented the imperial harbour at Portus and served as ports of call for ships bringing grain from the arable lands opened up under Nerva and Trajan in western Numidia and Mauretania. They needed to follow a more westerly route than ships from *Africa Proconsularis*, passing closer to Sardinia than Sicily, and reaching the Italian coast considerably north of Ostia (195-202).

The complex regional administration of the *patrimonium* has a bearing on the vexed question of the alienability of imperial properties.<sup>11</sup> In principle, the *res Caesaris* could be alienated, and there is abundant evidence to show that properties were frequently sold by the *fiscus*, or by procurators acting for it. But according to Ulpian (*Dig.* 30.1.39.7-10), properties which had entered the *patrimonium* were not normally sold:

Si vero Sallustianos hortos, qui sunt Augusti, vel fundum Albanum qui principalibus usus reservit, legaverit quis, furiosi est talia legata testamento adscribere. Item campum Martium aut forum Romanum vel aedem sacram legari non posse constat. Sed et praedia Caesaris, quae in formam patrimonii redacta sub procuratore patrimonii sunt, si legentur,

8 O. Hirschfeld, "Der Grundbesitz der römischen Kaiser in dem ersten drei Jahrhunderten," *Klio* 2 (1902) 45-72 (especially 60-70) and 284-315.

9 M. McCallum, H. vanderLeest *et al.*, "The Roman villa at San Felice: investigations, 2004-2010," *Mouseion* ser. 3.11 (2011) 25-108; M. McCallum and H. vanderLeest, "Research at San Felice: the villa on the imperial estate," in Small, *Beyond Vagnari* (supra n.1) 123-34.

10 P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The corrupting sea: a study of Mediterranean history* (Oxford 2000).

11 For the view that they were frequently sold, see D. J. Crawford, "Imperial estates," in M. I. Finley (ed.), *Studies in Roman property* (Cambridge 1976) 40-44; Millar (supra n.7) 175.

nec aestimatio eorum debet praestari, quoniam commercium eorum nisi iussu principis non sit, cum distrahi non soleant.

Rather loosely translated, the passage reads:

If someone were to bequeath the gardens of Sallust, which belong to the Augustus, or the estate at Albanum, which serves the needs of the *principes*, he would be thought to be insane for writing such bequests into his will. Similarly it is not possible to bequeath the Campus Martius or the Roman forum, or a temple. And supposing that the estates of Caesar which have been recorded in the *forma patrimonii* under the procurator of the *patrimonium* were to be bequeathed, no evaluation should be made of them either, because they cannot be sold without the order of the *princeps*, since they are normally not alienated.

The meaning of the citation has been much debated<sup>12</sup> — it has even been regarded as corrupt or contaminated by some scholars — but Maiuro argues that it should be taken at face value. When a property was added to the *patrimonium*, it was registered by the procurator in the *forma patrimonii*, and could only be sold on the explicit instruction of the emperor. In the writings of the *Agrimensores*, the term *forma* regularly means “map” (whether on wood, bronze or parchment<sup>13</sup>) that could be consulted in a *tabularium*,<sup>14</sup> and the passage would seem to imply that the procurator kept a map of all imperial properties registered in one or other of the imperial *tabularia*. Maiuro discusses this possibility, but he strangely rejects it (91) in favour of a vaguer notion of a complex of norms by which the procurator managed the imperial property. Whatever the case, the passage indicates that, once a property had been formally registered by the procurator of the *patrimonium*, it would be difficult (though not legally impossible) to alienate it. The sales authorized by Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax were exceptional measures needed to restore the finances of the *fiscus* in urgent circumstances.

The imperial *patrimonium* grew rapidly in the 1st c. A.D., much less so in the first three quarters of the 2nd c. The reluctance of most of the 2nd-c. emperors to incorporate more land is likely to have been caused by the difficulties of administering the vast holdings of the *patrimonium* without expanding the procuratorial system to breaking point. Like many private landlords, they switched increasingly from running estates directly with *vilici*, slaves, and casual free labour, supervised by a procurator or his representative, to a system of renting out land to free *coloni*, thereby reducing the burden on the procurators while conforming to the prevailing theory of land-management.

The possibilities inherent in this arrangement must have become apparent by the late 2nd c., when there was a marked shift in policy. Commodus initiated a new phase of incorporating estates confiscated from rich senators into the *patrimonium*, and this was followed by Septimius Severus, who annexed the estates of the supporters of Clodius Albinus and Pescennius Niger. The acquisitions were so vast that they led to a complete overhaul of the administrative structure with the creation of the *res privata* in place of the *patrimonium*. At the end of the Severan period, the property of the *fiscus* was diffused everywhere, even if unevenly, and the rôle of the emperor in owning land and provisioning the army and Rome was enormously reinforced (215). The new policy involved a further re-organization of the administrative regions (326-28).

The problems of administering the imperial estates must have been still further aggravated by the virtual breakdown of central government in the central decades of the 3rd c. The imperial administrators responded by offering *coloni* long-term contracts which gave security of tenure to the tenants and provided a more reliable rental income for the *fiscus* (108). They developed into the emphyteutic leases of the Late Empire which were heritable, and, in theory at least, acted as an incentive to the *colonus* to maintain the buildings and improve the land.<sup>15</sup>

12 Notably by Hirschfeld (supra n.8) 311-13.

13 Cf. Siculus Flaccus, *De condicionibus agrorum*, 120.23-4, in B. Campbell, *Writings of the Roman land surveyors* (London 2000): *formae varias appellationes accipiunt. quidam <in> arbore<i>s tabulis, alii in aeneis, alii in membr<an>is scripserunt.*

14 Agennius Urbicus, *De controversiis agrorum*, 44.30-31, in Campbell *ibid.*

15 A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1964) 417-18; D. Kehoe, *Law and the rural economy in*

The policy simplified the administrative burden, but it led over time to the tenancies becoming the *de facto* properties of the emphyteutic tenants.<sup>16</sup> Maiuro does not explore this theme further, no doubt because it opens up problems of the Late Roman colonate which lie outside the defined period of his study.

Similar attempts to resolve the problems of administration can be seen in the arrangements made by the *fiscus* for the management of the emperor's brickworks. Maiuro discusses the evidence at some length in Appendix 6. By the end of the 2nd c., the emperor owned most of the brick-producing estates in the *Suburbium*. Analysis of the brick-stamps reveals some strange features in the organization of the production, especially in the 2nd c. when many brickworks passed into the *patrimonium*. In the second quarter of that century, most brick-stamps of *privati* from the Tiber valley record the name of the *dominus* who owned the *praedia* on which the bricks were made, of the *officinator* who operated the kiln, and of the slave who made the bricks. But in some stamps from imperial brickworks only the *officinator* is named, and in others only the *praedia Caesaris* or *figlinae Caesaris* are mentioned, without the *officinator* (389-90). Some prolific *figlinae* appear to cease production soon after passing into the *patrimonium*. How the evidence should be interpreted depends to a large extent on the vexed question of the rôle of the *officinator* and the nature of the contract which he made with the *fiscus*. Maiuro summarizes the rival arguments, concluding that his rôle and his status in society changed over time. Whereas in the 1st c. A.D. some *officinatores* were slaves, by the 2nd c. most were free-born. The form of contract which they made with the *fiscus* may have varied, becoming more complex. By the middle of the 2nd c., rich or high-ranking *officinatores* could rent entire brickworks from the *fiscus*, taking on all responsibility for the production and marketing of the bricks. The emperor no longer had any direct involvement in the business. The bricks produced were the property of the *officinator*, who may have had no obligation to record the fact that the brickworks were on an imperial estate (this would, in any case, be more or less obvious once the ownership of brickworks had become concentrated in the *patrimonium*). Such *officinatores* may have felt no need to record their own names. On this interpretation, the organization of brick production on imperial estates mirrors that of agriculture. To reduce the burden of administration, the *fiscus* had recourse to new forms of rental contract which brought in a secure income while disengaging the imperial staff from management of the business.

Similarly with the production of olive oil. The great maritime villa of Loron (Istria),<sup>17</sup> a major centre of oil production with its own amphora kilns, passed to Domitian. Amphora stamps show that it remained in imperial hands until Hadrian, after which they cease. The cessation indicates not the alienation of the land from the *patrimonium*, or the end of oil production (the amphora kilns were still in use in the 4th c.), but a change to a new mode of administration in which the oil production and marketing were contracted out to *conductores*. The oil was no longer, therefore, the property of the emperor.

Maiuro is less concerned with the impact of imperial ownership on the Italian economy. Nowadays, we can dismiss as nonsense Tenney Frank's assertion, that "imperial ownership incurred all the evils of absentee landlordism, of supervision of agriculture by inexperienced court favorites, of over-cropping and consequent neglect and deterioration of the soil and economic decay";<sup>18</sup> D. P. Kehoe's assessment that it is not possible to say whether the state's policy in maintaining control over imperial estates represented the most economically efficient

---

*the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, MI 2007) 51-55 and 114-15.

- 16 On this topic, see now N. Purcell, "No two characters seem more inconsistent than those of trader and sovereign' (Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, V, 2, I). The problem of Roman imperial estates," in Small, *Beyond Vagnari* (supra n.1) 265-76; D. Vera, "Imperial estates in Late Roman southern Italy: land concentration and rent distribution," *ibid.* 285-93.
- 17 F. Tassaux, R. Matijašić and V. Kovačić, *Loron (Croatie). Un grand centre de production d'amphores à huile istriennes (Ier-IVe s. p.C.)* (Bordeaux 2001).
- 18 T. Frank, *An economic survey of Ancient Rome*, V (Baltimore, MD 1940) 85. Cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *The social and economic history of the Roman empire* (2nd edn., Oxford 1957) vol. I, 345.

allocation of resources, in the sense of maximizing production, is altogether wiser.<sup>19</sup> But there is still need for a fresh assessment of the impact of the growth of the *patrimonium* on the local communities in the peninsula. The senatorial aristocracy generally retained links of patronage with the cities of their origin; if their properties passed to the emperor, those links would be broken. Trajan at Lucus Feroniae and Hadrian at Gabii carried out public building works after inheriting properties in those areas (noted by Maiuro on 236), but the broader question of the connection between imperial properties and benefactions needs fuller investigation. So too does the question of the significance of imperial rescripts asserting that *coloni* on imperial estates should not be called upon to perform *munera* in *municipia* to the disadvantage of the *fiscus*.<sup>20</sup>

The development of *vici* on imperial estates must also have had a profound impact on neighbouring cities.<sup>21</sup> When Claudius petitioned the senate for the right to hold *nundinae* on his estates (Suet., *Claud.* 12.2), he must have envisaged their development as local economic centres which would bring in additional revenue in the form of market dues to the *fiscus*. At Vagnari<sup>22</sup> and the *Vicus Falacrinae*<sup>23</sup> the *vicus* and the villa formed two well-separated centres on the estate with different economic and social functions. This was perhaps the normal pattern on large properties. Recent work at the *Vicus Augustanus*<sup>24</sup> confirms that imperial *vici* had an important economic and social function, approximating to that of cities, but they had minimal structures of community organization and remained firmly under the control of the emperor. There must have been many of them. They acquired added importance in the late-antique period as minor centres of administration, notably on the vast imperial estate near the northern end of the Tavoliere (Apulia), identified by G. Volpe as the *saltus Carminianensis*.<sup>25</sup>

One of the functions of *vici* was to provide burial-grounds for the local population. In some cases, as at Luzzi<sup>26</sup> and Voghenza (*Vicus Habentia*),<sup>27</sup> the only excavated evidence for the imperial *vicus* comes from the cemetery. The inscriptions from Voghenza throw some light on the mixed nature of the community of slaves, freedmen and *ingenui*.<sup>28</sup> At Vagnari, the osteological analysis by T. Prowse and her colleagues of the skeletal remains from burials of the late 1st to 4th c. is throwing light on the human population, which was adequately fed and enjoyed

19 Kehoe (supra n.15) 50.

20 *Digest* 50.1.38.1: (Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus) *rescripserunt colonos praediorum fisci muneribus fungi sine damno fisci oportere, idque excutere praesidem adhibito procuratore debere*; 50.6.5.11: *Coloni quoque Caesaris a muneribus liberantur, ut idoneiores praediis fiscalibus habeantur*. But imperial policy in this matter was not consistent: Millar (supra n.7) 180; Kehoe (supra n.15) 85-86.

21 H. F. Pelham's observations ("The imperial domains and the colonate," in *Essays by Henry Francis Pelham* [Oxford 1911] 275-99) on *vici* on imperial estates are still useful.

22 A. M. Small, *Vagnari. Il villaggio, l'artigianato, la proprietà imperiale* (Bari 2011). For the villa on the nearby site of San Felice, see supra n.9.

23 F. Coarelli, S. Kay and H. Patterson, "Investigations at Falacrinae, the birthplace of Vespasian," *PBSR* 76 (2008) 47-74.

24 A. Claridge, "Il vicus di epoca imperiale nella tenuta di Castelporziano: indagini archeologiche 1984," in M. G. Lauro (ed.), *Castelporziano I. Campagna di scavo e restauro 1984* (Rome 1986) 69-75; "Il vicus di epoca imperiale: indagini archeologiche nel 1985 e 1986," in M. G. Lauro (ed.), *Castelporziano II. Campagne di scavo e restauro 1985-1986* (Rome 1988) 61-73; "Il vicus di epoca imperiale. Campagne di ricerche 1987-1991," in M. G. Lauro (ed.), *Castelporziano III. Campagne di scavo e restauro 1987-1991* (1998) 115-36.

25 G. Volpe, *Contadini, pastori e mercanti nell'Apulia tardoantica* (Bari 1996) especially 181-87; id., *San Giusto. La villa, le ecclesiae. Primi risultati degli scavi nel sito rurale di San Giusto (Lucera): 1995-1997* (Bari 1998) 328-38.

26 P. G. Guzzo, "Luzzi. Località S. Vito (Cosenza). Necropoli di età romana," *NSc* 1974, 448-84; M. Paoletti "La necropoli di S. Vito," in A. La Marca (ed.), *Archeologia nel territorio di Luzzi: stato di ricerca e prospettive* (Soveria Manelli 2002) 77-112.

27 M. Bandini Mazzanti et al., *Voghenza: una necropoli di età romana nel territorio ferrarese* (Ferrara 1984).

28 M. Bollini, "Le iscrizioni funerarie," *ibid.* 255-63; R. Rossi, "Appendice epigrafica," *ibid.* 264-67.

a reasonable state of physical health, though engaged in hard physical labour. It consisted in part of immigrants from outside the region (whether slave or free).<sup>29</sup> These topics are avenues for further research.

Much of what Maiuro has to say is familiar, but there is also much that is new, especially on the importance of inheritance from members of the *familia Caesaris* in building up the *patrimonium*, on the limitations imposed on the acceptance of properties into the *patrimonium*, and on the reluctance of the emperor to alienate properties once they had been formally included. Maiuro's analysis draws attention to the geographical organization of imperial estates, the specialized nature of their economic organization, and the ingenuity of the procurators in developing policies of land-management that reduced the burden of administration while guaranteeing a secure revenue to the *fiscus*. All this implies a degree of sophistication in management and economic planning that is utterly at variance with the minimalist view of the ancient economy asserted by M. I. Finley 40 years ago.<sup>30</sup>

aandcsmall@tiscali.co.uk

University of Edinburgh

---

29 T. L. Prowse, "The human skeletal remains," in A. M. Small and C. M. Small (edd.), "Excavation in the Roman cemetery at Vagnari in the territory of Gravina in Puglia 2002," *PBSR* 75 (2007) 150-62; T. Prowse, J. L. Barta, T. E. von Hunnius and A. M. Small, "Stable isotope and mitochondrial DNA evidence for geographic origins on a Roman estate at Vagnari (Italy)," in H. Eckardt (ed.), *Roman diasporas: archaeological approaches to mobility and diversity in the Roman empire* (JRA Suppl. 78, 2010) 175-98; T. L. Prowse, C. Nause and M. Ledger, "Growing up and growing old on an imperial estate: preliminary palaeopathological analysis of skeletal remains from Vagnari," in Small, *Beyond Vagnari* (supra n.1) 111-22.

30 *The ancient economy* (London 1973).