

Tor Marancia and Centocelle: a comparative context

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Abstract

This paper appraises the architectural plans and wider functional context of two late third century villas at Tor Marancia and at Centocelle in the environs of Rome. The villa at Centocelle had an impressive peristyle and adjoining apsidal hall that invite comparison with imperial palaces elsewhere, for example the great apsidal halls at the palace of Constantine, Mediana and at the palace of Galerius, Gamzigrad. Tor Marancia, south of the Via Appia Antica, has a peristyle courtyard, an apsidal hall and a quatreconch hall adjoining the peristyle. Both villas thus incorporate classical elements of the late antique villa plan, and the paper considers these in a comparative context and more particularly by reference to late Roman villas in the Danube-Balkan region. The villa at Tor Marancia is a large scale structure with extant staircases and a profusion of smaller interconnected rooms and halls capable of accommodating not just a private dwelling but also, for example, an administrative or agricultural centre. The paper considers whether Tor Marancia had a public as well as a private function and whether it may have been incorporated within the imperial system of agriculture and administration near Rome.

Introduction

This paper discusses the architectural development and function of two late Roman villas from the *urbs* of Rome, at Tor Marancia and at Centocelle. During the course of recent research, published as my doctoral thesis, *Late Roman Villas in the Danube Balkan Region* (BAR-IS 1064) Oxford 2002, comparative consideration was given to the development of the Roman villa plan in Italy and in other Roman provinces. This included a comparative discussion of the two late Roman villas at Tor Marancia and at Centocelle in the *suburbium* of Rome. These sites were examined within the broader context of the late Roman villa. In my study, they served as examples of the adoption and development of architectural elements of the late Roman villa plan including the combination of the peristyle, the apsidal hall and the triconch or quatreconch hall.

The purpose of this paper is to take a closer comparative look at the recorded evidence for these two villas with a view to considering:

- Whether either or both may, in a manner similar to certain other important and large-scale villas notably in the Danube-Balkan provinces, have been incorporated within the imperial system of administration near Rome.
- Whether the plan of these villas provides any clear indication of their use, either as agricultural or senatorial villas or both.

The choice of these two villas for discussion is to some extent selective, as this conference shows that there are many other and better-published examples of large-scale villas in the *suburbium* of Rome. Furthermore, the con-

clusions that can safely be drawn from the secondary evidence must necessarily be qualified as tentative. However, I hope to demonstrate that the immediate context of these villas as important structures in the countryside close to Rome, as well as the wider comparative context, goes some way towards assisting in their interpretation.

The distinctiveness of the Urbs of Rome

It is necessary to recall two important points in seeking to interpret the archaeological record of the *urbs* of Rome from the Roman era. The first is that the landscape of the *suburbium* resulted from geological and volcanic activity whereby the action of many rivers and streams created deep furrows which resulted in the undulating landscape. This made for very fertile lands outside the city walls stretching radially for up to 8 kilometres, and these were intensively cultivated in antiquity (Pliny *NH*, xix, 50: *ex horto plebi macellum*).

The second point is that the area around the city of Rome was distinct from the Roman countryside in general because, although outside the city walls, it was an inherent part of Rome itself and benefited from that status and was protected as such. It might be expected therefore, that villas in the *suburbium* of Rome would be dedicated in part to agricultural production, at least during the early empire, and that they would probably not need to be fortified to the same extent as villas in more remote parts of the empire.

A further observation at the outset would be that even if the large residences or complexes found dominating this landscape around the city of Rome did not have a

primarily agricultural purpose, or that they may in some cases by virtue of senatorial or imperial ownership have had a different status to the typical Roman villa in the countryside, nonetheless they should still be called ‘villas’. The difficulties of defining the term ‘Roman villa’ have been discussed at length elsewhere including in my own study and while in Latin the word villa can mean both a farm and a country house, and that its primary association would indicate that the villa had an agricultural purpose, although it is generally agreed that this is not strictly necessary. My own working definition of the Roman villa is as follows:

“A place in the country owned by a Roman or Romanised landowner normally (but not always) associated with farming, in most cases comprising a single residence with some expression of Roman elements and more often than not with connotations of luxury or relaxation, standing either on its own or at the heart of a complex of more functional buildings and integrated into the social and economic environment of the Roman world.”¹

Visual Evidence

Although both Centocelle and Tor Marancia are now effectively hidden from view, there is a relatively well-preserved visual record of the suburbs of ancient Rome. The role of the *suburbium* as market garden for the city seems to have continued into the medieval period and beyond as important lands and buildings passed into and remained in the ownership of a concentrated number of landowners.² Glimpses of the suburbs are featured in the background of some of the medieval maps of Rome, one of the earliest is by Fra Paolino da Venezia 1323 with the well known depiction of the Vatican lands as deer park. Occasionally Roman ruins are plotted as viewpoints in the landscape. These maps together with others from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as G.B. Piranesi’s *Vedute di Roma*, 1778; reprint 1974, serve as a visual record of the monuments at this time.

The importance of the eighteenth and nineteenth century record is better underlined by the archaeological inventory established by work of certain Italian scholars such as Luigi Biondi and English scholar Thomas Ashby. Biondi recorded the excavation of the villa at Tor Marancia in his work *I Monumenti Amaranziani illustrati*, in an appendix to *Museo Chiaramonti*, III, Rome, 1843. In the early twentieth century, Thomas Ashby recorded the area around the villa at Centocelle in his important topographical study ‘*La villa dei Flavi cristiani “ad duas lauros” e il suburbano imperiale ad oriente di Roma*’, Rome, 1928.

Tor Marancia

Tor Marancia lies between the Via Ostiense and the Via Appia Antica to the south of the catacombs of Domitilla at the crossing of the Via Ardeatina and the Via delle Sette Chiese, in an area largely built upon today. The excavation work was carried out between April 1817 and April 1823. A large villa made up of two adjacent buildings was unearthed. The buildings as recorded lay about 750 metres apart. Two lead plaques *fistulae* (CIL XIV (14) 7459) record the names of two noble women *Munatia Procula* and *Numisia Procula* dated to the second century A.D. There are other suggestions that a woman of imperial descent *Flavia Domitilla* owned this land.³ A temple of Dionysius was also discovered close by the villa.

Bartolomeo Nogara described the mosaics from the villa of Munatia Procula in his work *I mosaici antichi di Roma* (Rome, 1910). Black and white figurative mosaics decorated several rooms. The sea motif and the figure style date the mosaics to the second century A. D. The mosaic displayed images of Ulysses and a siren and Triton and sea creatures.⁴ Statues of Abundance, Bacchus, Venus and a torso of Diana were also found among the ruins. Some wall paintings dated to the third century A.D. also survive and are held in the Vatican Museum.⁵

The architectural plan of the villa has a peristyle, an apsidal hall on the short axis, and a quatreconch hall which adjoins the peristyle. Staircases suggest the presence of an upper level. In this it incorporates the classical elements of the late Roman villa plan, that is the peristyle, the quatreconch and apsidal hall. This would suggest that this plan dates to a later period than the mosaics and represented a second phase of construction (*Fig 1*).⁶ In particular, the use of black and white figurative mosaics is typically second century A. D., whereas it would be unusual to find this combination of architectural elements in villa buildings earlier than the third century A. D.

The villa also has another more unusual feature of a profusion of smaller interconnected rooms and halls, which would have been capable of accommodating a large number of occupants. These rooms were arranged around two intersecting access corridors forming a cross and in many cases they also allowed for access between the smaller clusters of rooms. Being located on the lower level of the building, they could have been servants’ quarters but it is also possible, particularly having regard to certain comparative evidence of known administrative quarters of similar construction in other large Danube-Balkan villas such as Spalato (Dalmatia, Croatia) and Mogorjelo (Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina) that they had a larger administrative or agricultural function (see below *Figs. 6 & 7*).⁷

³ Lanciani 1892, see chap. VII, note 17.

⁴ For a discussion of the mosaics see Clarke 1979, 74.

⁵ To view details of the Vatican collection see Farina 1985, 49.

⁶ Mielsch 1987, 86.

⁷ For Diocletian’s Palace at Spalato see Wilkes 1986, 69. For Mogorjelo see Dygge & Veters 1966, 11–62 and Duval 1989–1990, 253–259; for further discussion of Danube-Balkan villa plan typology see Mulvin, 2004, 385–406.

¹ Mulvin 2002, 3.

² Calzolari 1984, 2–19.

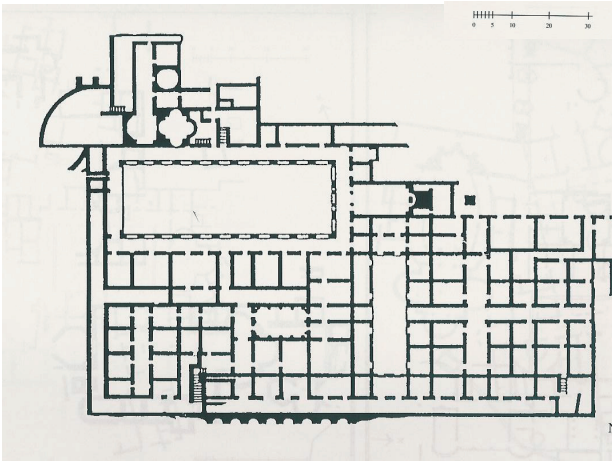


Fig. 1. Tor Marancia, Rome, Ground Plan (redrawn after H. Mielsche, *Die römische Villa, Architektur und Lebensform*, München 1987, p. 860, fig. 58).

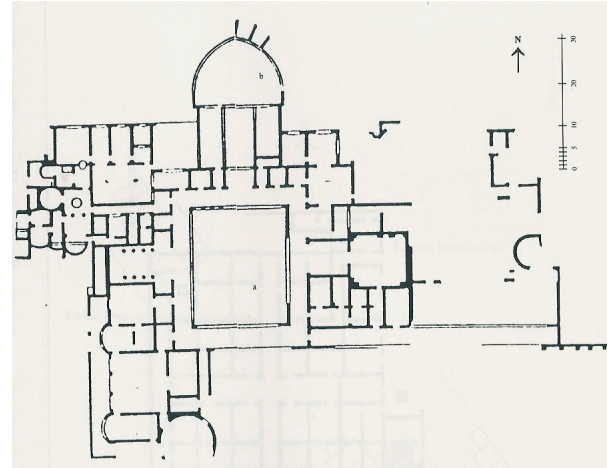


Fig. 2. Centocelle, Rome, Ground Plan (redrawn after H. Mielsche, *Die römische Villa, Architektur und Lebensform*, München 1987, p. 92, fig. 69).

Centocelle

Thomas Ashby classified the monuments in the immediate area of the villa at Centocelle as falling into three groups: the Prenestina group included fragments of Gordian's exedra and the tomb at Tor Schiavi; the Labicana group comprised of the area from Tor Pignattura to Centocelle; and the Tuscolana group was an area of monuments between the via Tuscolana and the via Latina.⁸ More recently the area of Centocelle was zoned as an archaeological park that runs south of the Via Casilina, the Via di Centocelle, Via Papiria to the Viale P. Togliatti. It covers about 300 hectares (Fig. 2). Recent excavations already discussed by our colleague Rita Volpe elsewhere in this volume have unveiled details of at least six other villas: (Villa di Via Sommariva, La Villa delle Terme, Villa di Pietralata, la Villa della Piscine, Villa di Via Lizzani, Villa di Torre Spaccata) dating from the first century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.

The villa near Centocelle on the Via Latina has large-scale dimensions and impressive peristyle and apsidal hall invite comparison with imperial palaces elsewhere, for example the great apsidal halls at the palace of Constantine, Mediana (Moesia Superior; Serbia) and at the palace of Galerius, Gamzigrad (Moesia Superior; Serbia).⁹ The plan of the villa had a peristyle with a large adjoining apsidal hall. The width of the peristyle is 27m. It has an apse width of 25 m and apsidal hall length of 30 m, which represents a very large-scale structure. On the evidence of recent excavations, as yet unpublished, it may be that the apsidal hall was added during a later building phase and that it may have had a different configuration to that revealed in the 1925 plan.

These dimensions are larger than any found in the Danube-Balkan region including the three imperial pal-

aces.¹⁰ The villa that has elements that come closest in size are the great apsidal hall at Mediana with apse diameter of 13 m and length of apsidal hall at 26.5 m and the peristyle at 30 m wide (Fig. 4). At Mediana the plan is strictly symmetrical with a peristyle at the centre of the plan. Adjacent to the apsidal hall was a smaller structure which has a hexagonal central area with two rectangular niches and one semi-circular niche opening from it. This has been called a *nymphaeum* but it could possibly be a small dining area.

The villa identified as the imperial palace at Gamzigrad has a number of buildings with peristyles at the centre of their plan. The north wing comprises a series of three peristyles, leading to different apsed reception halls (Fig. 5). To the north of the main residence there was a large apsidal room. Gamzigrad has two apsidal halls measuring respectfully 15 m and 17 m. The triconch and quatreconch halls are linked by a round room.

Comparative Discussion

Function: imperial distribution relates to Tor Marancia

There are examples of villas in the Danube-Balkan region where the fortification of villa complexes may be directly attributable to imperial intervention in the region in the fourth century. This was to guarantee food supply most notably to the military serving on the River Danube.¹¹

In Pannonia, the construction of large villa sites with fortified perimeters adjacent to the main road, where the entire complex combines a residence with farm and outbuildings including large grain stores, is particularly

⁸ A detailed account is available in Ashby & Lugli 1928, 159, 160.

⁹ See the gazetteer of late Roman villa sites surveyed Mulvin, 2002, 73–105.

¹⁰ For further discussion on comparative villas: Mulvin, 2002, 47–55.

¹¹ The notion that the scale and uniformity of these villas suggests they had an imperial function as state granaries has been discussed elsewhere: Mócsy, 1974, 303–307, Toth, 1989, 31–40, Christie 1994, 303–305 and Mulvin 2002, 34.

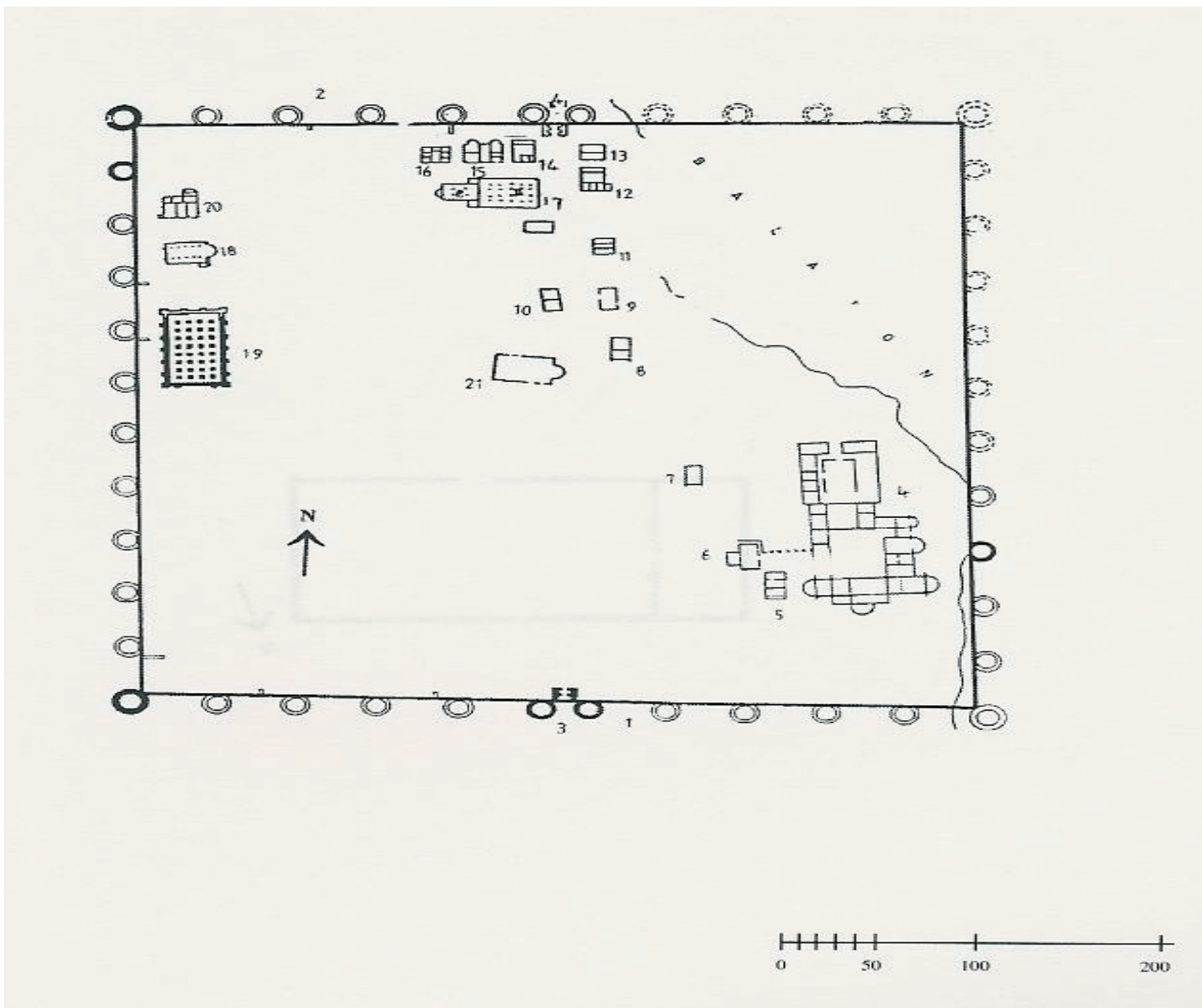


Fig. 3. Above: Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, Pannonia Superior; Hungary (redrawn after M. Biró, "Roman Villas in Pannonia", *ActaArchHung* 26, 1974, p. 47, fig. 24). Also Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, Pannonia Superior; Hungary. To the left bottom: view across the grain store, building 19 facing north-west.

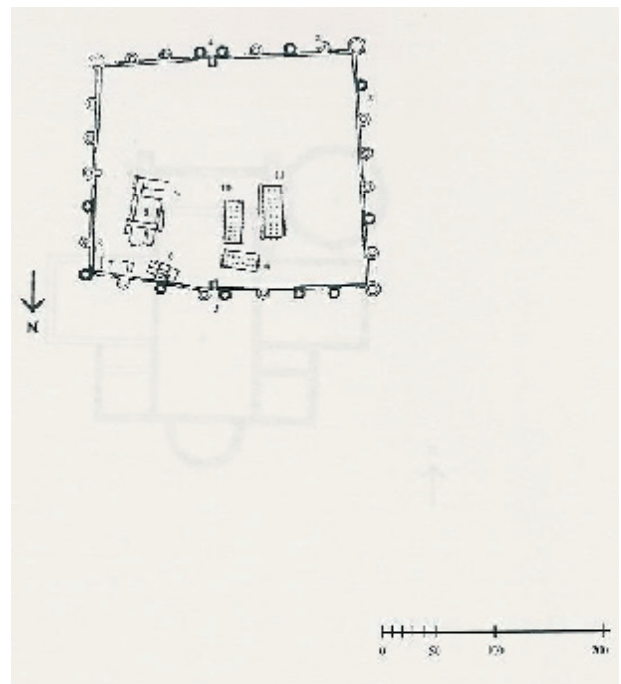


Fig. 4. Ságvár-Tricciana, Pannonia Inferior; Hungary (redrawn after E. Tóth, "Die spätromische Festung von Iovia und ihr Gräberfeld", *Antike Welt* 1, 1989, p. 32, fig. 2).

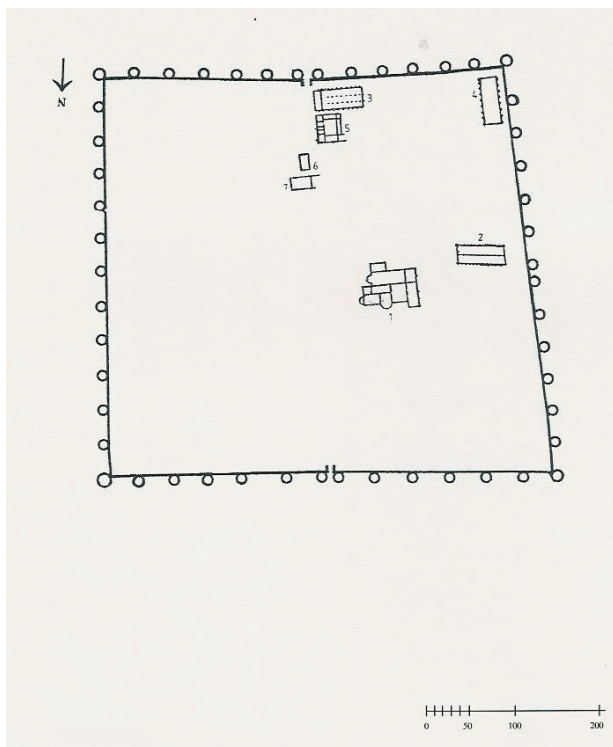


Fig. 5. Alsóheténypuszta, Pannonia Superior, Hungary (redrawn after E. Tóth, "Die spätrömische Festung von Iovia und ihr Gräberfeld", *Antike Welt*, 1, 1989, p. 32, fig. 3).

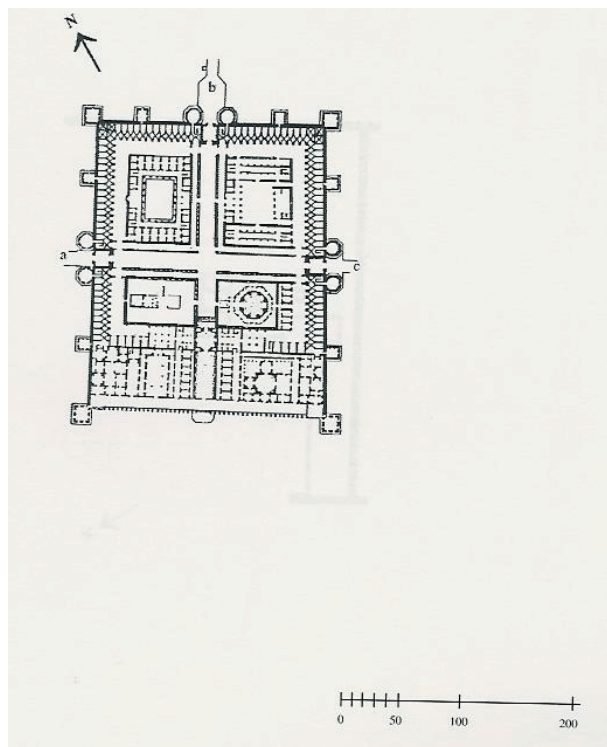


Fig. 6. Diocletian's Palace, Spalato, Dalmatia; Croatia (redrawn after J.J. Wilkes, *Diocletian's palace at Split. Residence of a retired Roman emperor*, Sheffield 1986, reprinted Oxford 1993, p. 59, fig. 9).

evident during the fourth century for example at Keszthely-Fenekpuszta (Fig. 3), Ságvár-Tricciana (Fig. 4) and Alsóheténypuszta (Fig. 5) and An imperial edict found at Ságvár-Tricciana (A.D. 379) (*Codex Theod.* xi, 36, 26) provides evidence of imperial activity here during this time. The similarity in the fortifications with the large round towers and straight walls between these villa complexes is notable. When viewed together these buildings could be considered as having been fortified to protect large quantities of grain, and possibly operated as centralised depots with a degree of imperial control.

The imperial palace at Gamzigrad had a similar emphasis on perimeter fortification, and the presence within the palace complex of two grain store buildings emphasises the capacity of the imperial residence for self-sufficiency.¹² Similarly, the imperial palace of Diocletian at Spalato, although in some respects an exceptional example as a fortified complex, it combines public, administrative and private residential buildings with a similar emphasis on imperial self-sufficiency.

At Spalato, the presence of the quatreconch hall adjacent to the apsidal reception hall should also be noted. The rigidity and order of the plan, with rectangular rooms side-by-side and contained within fortified walls, may be compared to the fortified building at Mogorjelo (Dalmatia, Croatia). It is suggested that Mogorjelo was linked to Diocletian's Palace as a form of refuge or supplementary residence building for the emperor.¹³ Mogorjelo has a similarly well-ordered plan, enclosed in defence walls

with engaged corner towers and three gateways. The arrangement of the residential quarters along the southwest wall of the building, with the service rooms arranged around the other three sides of the internal walls, was an efficient use of space and light. The rectangular rooms placed along the interior walls at Mogorjelo could suggest that these rooms were used for stabling animals on the ground floor with the upper floor dedicated to farm management. At both Spalato and Mogorjelo, the form of these small rectangular rooms placed side-by-side with doorways opening out onto the central space is found also in use in other examples of Tetrarchic military architecture.

Likewise at Tor Marancia the separate area with a series of closely interconnecting rooms may have been a public or administrative area, as is suggested above for similar rooms in the Danube-Balkan villas. In particular, while the larger rooms closer to the peristyle are more likely to have been devoted to sleeping quarters or other private uses, there still remain a large number of smaller closely-knit rooms, forming the warren of rooms in the south east quadrant of the ground floor of Tor Marancia. In a building of this scale located on valuable lands close to the city of Rome and forming part of the important social and economic fabric of the *suburbium* of Rome, there is a possibility that these rooms were devoted to the administration and operation of the estate. In the absence of any positive indication that they were used for industrial or storage purposes, the similarity of this plan with administrative quarters in other large fourth century villas such as Spalato and Mogorjelo supports a conclusion that

¹² For Gamzigrad, see Srejovic 1983, 31–45.

¹³ Wilkes 1993, 75–77.

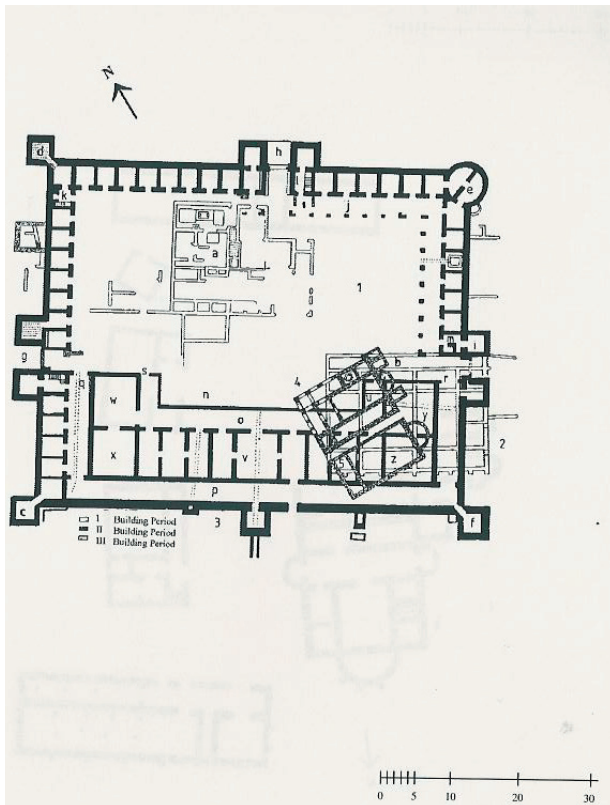


Fig. 7. Mogorjelo, Dalmatia; Bosnia/Hercegovina (redrawn after N. Duval, "Mogorjelo, camp ou palais?" *Starinar* n.s. 40-41, 1989-1990) (Belgrade 1991) Fig. 1, p. 256). Also Mogorjelo, Dalmatia; Bosnia-Hercegovina (Photo author's own).

these rooms in the villa at Tor Marancia may have had an administrative function.

It is true that Tor Marancia, unlike the Danube-Balkan examples to which I have referred, was a private estate. Nonetheless, the villa is known to have been owned by persons who were had connection to the imperial family and therefore, quite possibly, to the imperial administration. Furthermore, the need for a place to conduct the orderly business of the estate including rooms to which the public might have had access would apply equally to a large private domain in its interactions with the market as to a villa forming part of the imperial system for supporting and supplying the Roman army in the provinces.

Form: Typology: peristyle triconch plan

In Roman villas the necessity of entertaining and conducting administrative affairs under the one roof was usually answered by maintaining a clear distinction between public and private space. Columella (*De Re Rustica*, 1, 6, 1) states that the size of the villa and the number of its parts should be in proportion to the whole enclosure and that the property should be divided into three parts: *pars urbana* – a large residence for the owner, family and friends to reside in either as a retreat from the city or as a permanent dwelling separated from the working part of the villa; *pars rustica* – the farming and/or industrial part of the complex, including quarters for the overseer, slaves and livestock, being a profitable organisation supplying produce for the villa itself and then to the local markets and usually affording to pay taxes levied by Rome; and *pars fructuria* – the store house for winter supplies and surplus. Often, the combination of a peristyle courtyard and a *triclinium* could be used for entertaining while other parts of the villa were detailed for agriculture or administrative functions.

In later antiquity for some villas such as those for example at Tor Marancia, an outer courtyard with adjoining rooms was the "public space" whereas an inner peristyle became a private space with larger more spacious reception facilities for intimate guests. The profusion of smaller interconnected rooms and halls which would have been capable of accommodating a large number of occupants were likely servant's quarters or administrative quarters with a public function. The apsidal hall could serve the dual function of receiving guests and as a dining hall either taken on its own or with any adjacent dining chamber or *triclinium*. For example the apsidal hall at Gamzi-grad was linked by a peristyle to a separate triconch and quatreconch dining chamber (Fig. 8). Equally, the palace identified as that of Constantine at Mediana has a large apsidal hall and adjacent triconch dining hall (Fig. 9 & Fig. 9a).

Such is the case likewise with Centocelle where the apsidal hall could function as both reception hall and dining area. At the imperial level the larger size reception rooms would have accommodated the appropriate grandeur of scale of such gatherings, but so too, more generally, the presence of a grand reception hall is an essential element in many late Roman villas. Heavy symbolism was attached to the apsidal hall framing the Imperial throne. The apsidal hall becomes the room in an imperial palace where consultations, recitations, meetings and lectures were conducted.¹⁴

This emphasis on the reception hall is complemented by the development of the *triclinium* (*tri-kline* or three couches) that first appeared as a rectangular room with three couches. With the development of the apse as a

¹⁴ For more detailed discussion of the function of the apsidal dining hall, the triconch hall and comparative examples of other fourth century provincial villas such as Piazza Armerina, where these architectural elements are present, see Mulvin 2002, 40-43; Lavin 1962, 1-29 and Tamm 1963, 17-60.

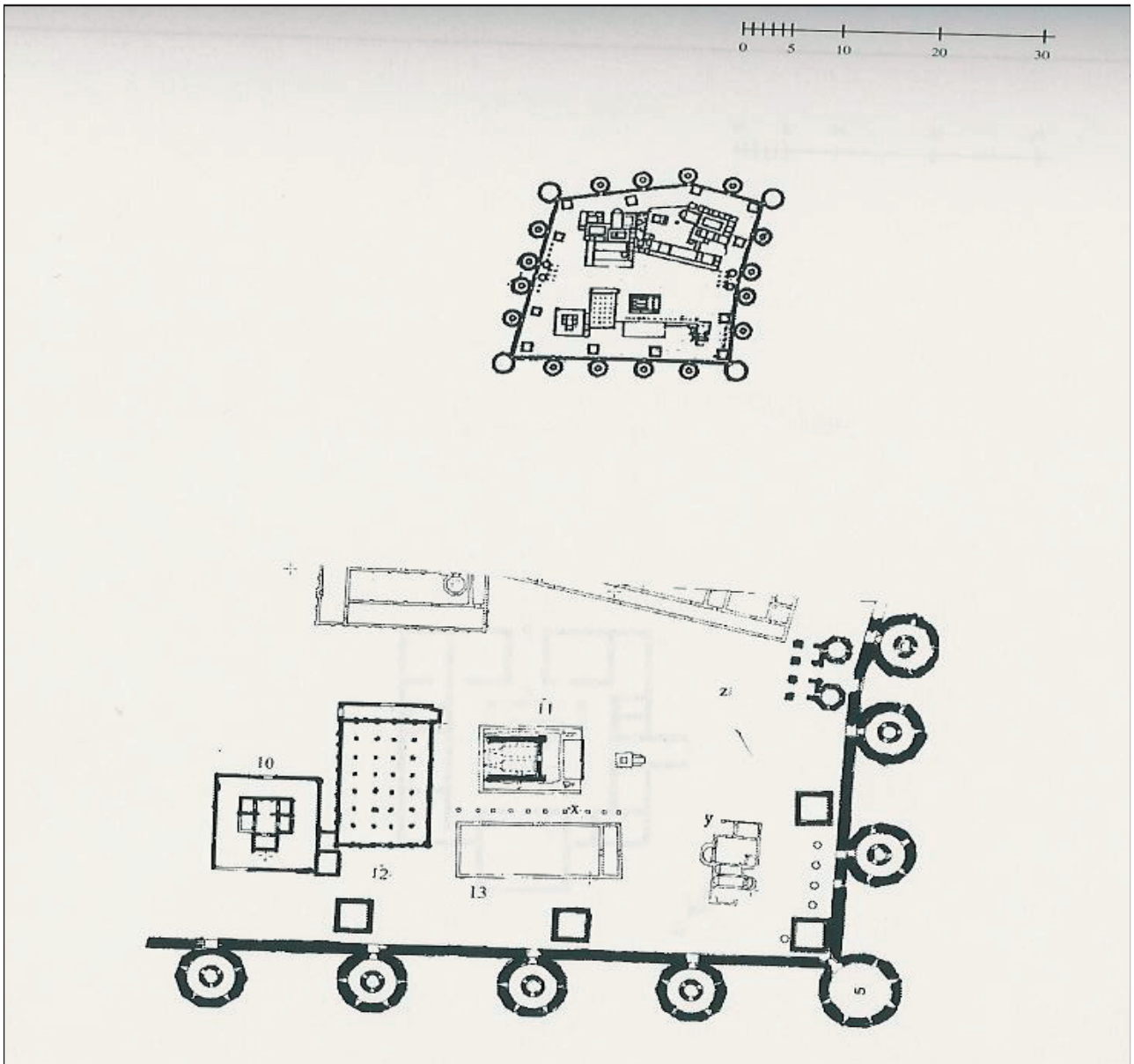


Fig. 8. Gamzigrad, Moesia Superior; Serbia (re-surveyed and redrawn after D. Srejovic, (ed.), *Roman imperial towns and palaces in Serbia, Sirmium, Romuliana and Naissus*, Belgrade 1993). Also Gamzigrad, Moesia Superior; Serbia, apsidal hall (Photo author's own).

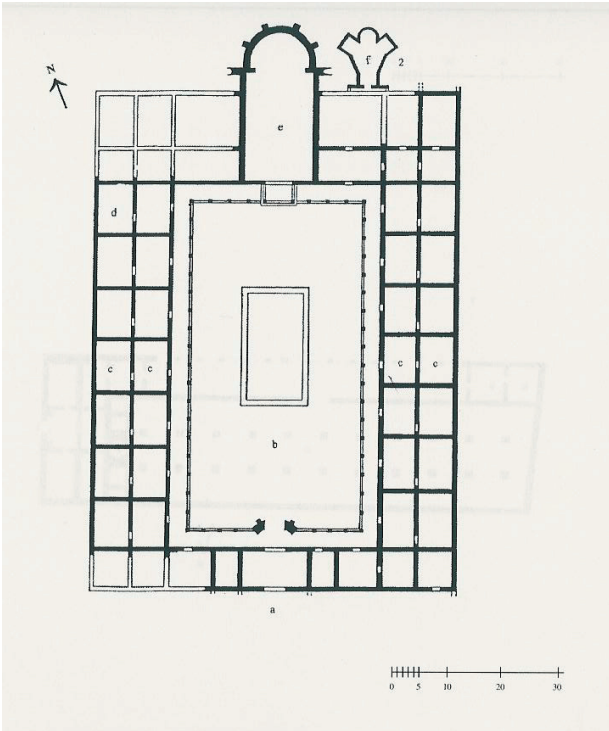


Fig. 9. Mediana, Moesia Superior; Serbia Ground Plan.



Fig. 9a. Mediana, Moesia Superior, Serbia view of Reception Hall and Apsidal Hall.



Fig. 10. Hadrian's Villa, Tiburum, Stibadium, View from the Scenic Triclinium (Photo author's own).



Fig. 11. Cercadilla, Cordoba, Spain; Multi-apsed Hall (Photo author's own).

decorative aspect to a hall from the second century, the rectangular couch was widely replaced by a semi-circular couch, the *stibadium*, which fitted into the apse. It is at all events accepted that the *stibadium* couch became popular as an indoor feature from the third century, and that it was housed usually in the apse. By way of innovation, the assembling of three exedra to contain the *stibadium* was first seen at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli. In the example of the Scenic *Triclinium* at Hadrian's Villa, an imperial dining hall of immense proportions, the dining group were framed by a huge semi-domed apse and enjoyed uninterrupted views of the Great Canopic pool (Fig 10). In this example the *stibadium* circles the curve of the apse and is surrounded by water on all sides. The large hemicycle at Centocelle could have been similarly used as a *stibadium* which confirms its use as a feature of mainstream Roman villa architecture.

The quatreconch as seen at Tor Marancia, becomes another characteristic element of late Roman villas. In particular, the combination of the apsidal hall and the tri-

conch dining hall is familiar from the imperial palaces at Spalato (triconch); Gamzigrad (which uses the form of both the triconch and the quatreconch; and at Mediana (a variant consisting of an adjacent rectangular/apsidal chamber, possibly a *nymphaeum* or small dining area). There are also incidences of multi-apsed dining rooms for example the recently discovered example at Cercadilla, Spain (Fig. 11).¹⁵

In summary, therefore, the villas in Tor Marancia and Centocelle exhibit features typical of developments in villa architecture during the fourth century A. D. As important villas close to the centre of the empire, they were influenced by imperial design, and in turn they may well have formed part of the body of architecture that influenced the design and construction of villas of this period elsewhere in the empire including the comparative examples discussed here.

¹⁵ Marquez *et al.* 1992, 1039–1047.

Conclusion

In this brief comparative excursus the evidence of form has been used working from the only remaining evidence in secondary sources, in these two villas and have suggested that the scale and form of one Centocelle, and the detail and arrangement of Tor Marancia are such that they reflect two of the main conclusions that I drew from my own comparative study of Late Roman Villas elsewhere and in particular in the Danube-Balkan region.

The first such conclusion is that certain of the larger villas either in the countryside or in the *suburbium* of the main cities, particularly Rome, served more than a domestic or private purpose and may well have been formally incorporated into the alimentary supply network of the Roman system of administration. Tor Marancia, on the basis of its ownership, location, scale and form presents itself as a suitable candidate for inclusion in this category of villa. Unlike certain of the others identified in the comparative evidence, it does not appear to have been specially fortified, but it should be borne in mind that its location close to Rome allowed for greater security than more remote villas in the countryside.

The second point, this time relating to both villas under discussion, is that the evidence from my own comparative study and other studies is that there was a notable shift towards a formal arrangement of rooms to include the apsidal hall, and the triconch hall associated with the peristyle among the more important villas of the second and third century A.D. This in turn was very probably influenced by Imperial architectural developments, which had a remarkable reach throughout the Roman provinces especially in the Danube-Balkan region where there were three imperial palaces.

From this perspective it is no surprise to find that these large scale and evidently important villas at the heart of the *urbs* of Rome were planned around these elements. Although the villa at Centocelle does not have a triconch or quatreconch element, the scale of its apsidal hall and peristyle arrangement places it firmly within the mainstream of late Roman villa architecture. The plan of Centocelle is however more consistent with an earlier plan type, for example Hadrian's villa dating from the second century. In addition, unlike the villa at Tor Marancia, whose profusion of rooms suggests a public function, the recorded evidence for Centocelle is more consistent with a purely private function.

At neither site is there recorded evidence of any adjoining complex of storage facilities or indeed of fortified perimeter walls. On one level, this might provide a strong indication that these lands were not devoted to important agricultural activities requiring the storage of produce and its protection from outside threats. In particular, in the absence of such evidence or of any contemporary literary source, the possibility cannot be ruled out that these buildings were entirely domestic or senatorial. However, as a matter of probability I think it very likely that they had an agricultural purpose too. These villas in the *suburbium* of Rome are not located in remote areas re-

quiring the protection of scarce resources destined for the Imperial army. Furthermore, if I am correct about Tor Marancia being a later complex dating from the fourth century and therefore after the construction of the walls of Rome in 270 AD, it would have been natural and almost required for it to incorporate some element of protection against raiders as well as for it to make some provision for self-sufficiency. The outbuildings and perimeter walls, if any, have not been unearthed, but there is a clue, suggested by the presence of the nearby temple, that the complex of buildings there extended to a much wider area than the excavated field.

A final point, which relates more closely to the theme of the conference, arises from the consideration that although these villa complexes were each integrated into the special socio-economic environment of the *urbs* of Rome, that environment changed over time from one of relative security to one of relative insecurity. Developments in the late Roman villa plan associated with new architectural innovations were therefore accompanied by more pragmatic innovations dictated by the need for greater security and greater self-sufficiency. Although not reflected in the archaeological record, it is difficult to imagine how villas of this scale could have functioned and survived without making provision for these needs.

Following the fall of Rome in the early fifth century, the system that supported these villas and largely gave them definition was no longer functioning, and if the pattern of occupation seen elsewhere in the empire was replicated here one might speculate that these villas could have become the heart of communal settlements with an expanded number of outbuildings and some outer perimeter fortification.

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