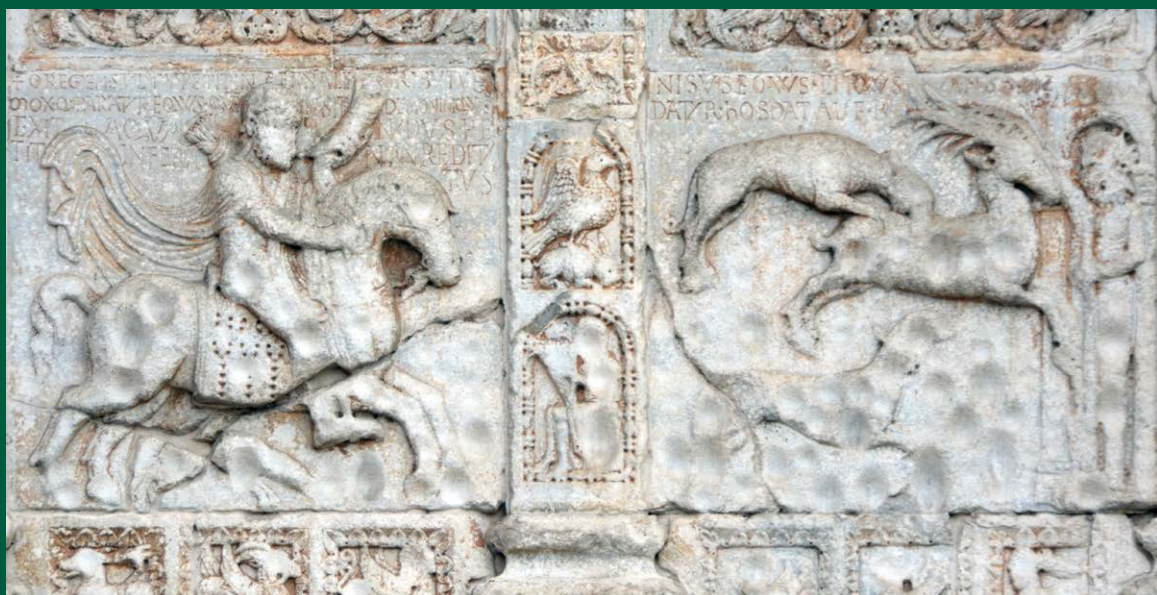# BETWEEN OSTROGOTHIC AND CAROLINGIAN ITALY

Survivals, revivals, ruptures

edited by
Fabrizio Oppedisano

Reti Medievali E-Book

43

Ruling in hard times
Patterns of power and practices of government
in the making of Carolingian Italy

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Front cover: Nicholas and workshop: *Theodoric hunts in hell*, c. 1100-1150 (Verona, facade of the basilica of San Zeno). Photo credit: Fabio Coden, by permission of the Ufficio per i beni culturali ecclesiastici, Diocese of Verona (17 Jan. 2023).

Ruling in hard times.
Patterns of power and practices of government
in the making of Carolingian Italy

Project Coordinator Giuseppe Albertoni

1. *Networks of bishops, networks of texts. Manuscripts, legal cultures, tools of government in Carolingian Italy at the time of Lothar I*, edited by Gianmarco De Angelis, Francesco Veronese, 2022

2. *Between Ostrogothic and Carolingian Italy. Survivals, revivals, ruptures*, edited by Fabrizio Oppedisano, 2022

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5. *Patterns of power and practices of government in the making of Carolingian Italy*, edited by Giuseppe Albertoni, Gianmarco De Angelis, Stefano Gasparri, Fabrizio Oppedisano, forthcoming

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Abbreviations

AE = L'Année épigraphique
CCCM = Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCM = Chronicon Moissiacense Maius
CCSL = Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CDS = Cross Database Searchtool
ChLA = Chartae Latinae Antiquiores
CIL = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CIMAH = Corpus Inscriptionum Medii Aevi Helvetiae
CSEL = Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
CSHB = Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
EDCS = Epigraphische Datenbank Clauss-Slaby
EDH = Epigraphic Database Heidelberg
EDR = Epigraphic Database Roma
FSI = Fonti per la Storia d'Italia
ICI = Inscriptiones christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores
ICUR = Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo
ILCV = Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres
InscrIt = Inscriptiones Italiae
LLT = Library of Latin Texts
LP = Liber pontificalis
MGH = Monumenta Germaniae Historica
      AA = Auctores antiquissimi
      Capit. = Capitularia regum Francorum
      Conc. = Concilia
      Fontes iuris = Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi
      LL = Leges Langobardorum
      Poetae = Poetae Latini medii aevi
      Epp. = Epistolae III-VIII (Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi)
      SS = Scriptores in Folio
      SS rer. Germ. = Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
      SS rer. Lang. = Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum, saec. VI-IX
      SS rer. Merov. = Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum
MHP, SS = Monumenta historae patriae, Scriptores
MLW = Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zum ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert
NGML = Novum glossarium mediae Latinitatis ab anno DCCC usque ad annum MCC
PIB = Prosopografia dell'Italia bizantina
PL = Patrologia Latina
PLRE = The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire
RF = Regesto di Farfa
RIS = Rerum Italicarum scriptores.
RS = Regesto di Subiaco
RT = Regesto di Tivoli
SC = Sources Chrétiennes
SupplIt = Supplementa Italica. Nuova Serie
SPV = Le antiche carte dell'archivio capitolare di S. Pietro in Vaticano

The Centres of Public Power
Between the Cities and the Countryside
in the Light of the Recent Archaeology
(Italian Peninsula, Late 5ᵗʰ-9ᵗʰ Century)

by Federico Cantini

The paper aims to illustrate, especially through the results of recent archaeological studies, the articulation and forms of the centres of public power between the Gothic and the Carolingian periods, in the dialectic between the city, as a seat of the institutions and their protagonists, and the countryside, which contains the production centres and the natural resources. We will consider the Italian territory, with a focus on Tuscany, and propose some comparisons with the rest of Europe. An architectural, artistic and topographical resilience emerges. It is probably the consequence of the continuity of a series of elements: the public ownership of particular urban and suburban areas and palaces, as well as of rural strategic sites; the use of languages and models of the Late Roman aristocracy, and the economic impoverishment of the early medieval rulers.

Early Middle Ages; 5ᵗʰ-9ᵗʰ Century; Italy; Tuscany; Public Power Centres.

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1. *Introduction*

In this paper, I propose to look at the seats of public power across the Gothic and the Carolingian age, with a focus on the following points: 1) the layout of the architecture, in terms of its intended purposes (political/administrative, residential, cultural, religious) and in terms of the resilience of models. I am looking more specifically at the *palatia*, *praetoria*, *curiae*, and royal and queen's courts, leaving aside the bishops' palaces and the monasteries, whose relevance I fully recognise but plan to address in a future paper; 2) the locations: urban, suburban and rural; 3) the resources invested in buildings, in renovating or reusing them, in connection with the way the institutions accumulate them; 4) the dialectic between the contemporary urban and rural architectures within the remit of the *Publicum*, mostly in early medieval times.

I shall then continue according to a chronological plan, with a short introduction about the Imperial age, and shifting geographically from the North to the South of Italy. Many of the public structures are mainly known from the written sources or non-stratigraphic excavations. This is partly why my Department funded a project involving new archaeological surveys of the seats of power in Pisa, Lucca and Volterra, which I shall describe just before the conclusions.

2. *Late Antiquity*

Dealing with seats of power means speaking first and foremost of palaces[1]. In the early medieval period, the word *palatium* is a legacy of the Roman world, which originally meant the central area of the Palatine Hill, the emperor's residence. The urban planning of that area began during the Flavian age, with Domitian's works creating a wide architectural complex for residential and official purposes (audiences, the *salutationes* for which the royal hall was intended, privy councils, most likely held in the adjoining apsidal hall [*basilica*], and banquets in the *cenatio Iovis*), as well as places of worship (the tem-

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[1] Uytterhoeven, *Housing in Late Antiquity*, pp. 33-38.

ple of Heliogabalus-the Sun God is a third-century addition[2]; S. Anastasia, on the western slopes of the hill, dates to the fourth century)[3].

From the Tetrarchic age, the *palatia* multiplied, following the distinction between the capital and the emperor's residence, so that an itinerant form of power came into being (Nicomedia-Diocletian, Milan/Maximian, 284-286; Trier/Constantius Chlorus, 293; Thessaloniki/Galerius, 299; Ravenna/Honorius, 402): a phenomenon which foreshadowed what happened in the early Medieval period. The *palatium* is wherever the incumbent emperor resides for some time: it's no coincidence that such a term was never used for the Spalato palace, which Diocletian chose as his place of retirement in 305. The new buildings, often located on the edges of the city centre, typically stand on several floors (Ravenna), have many rooms, even apsed or polylobed, sometimes opening around a circular hall, and often asymmetrically connected to each other by interior routes and looking out onto semi-circular peristyles. On the other hand, the relations between the *palatium* and the circus, the exclusive place where the emperor met his people, remained the same as in Domitian's age, as also shown by the emperor's palace in Constantinople[4].

As well as in imperial palaces, public power was exerted in other places too: in the *praetoria*[5] and in the city's *curiae*.

Sources about the former speak of places where multiple purposes were still in place, though in smaller areas than in the imperial palaces: residential (for governors, their families, concubines, servants and other attendants), official (public ceremonies, known as *salutationes*, were held there until the fourth century, as were banquets where new relationships were built), political (the emperor's letters were read there), administrative (taxes were collected and public works were managed there), judicial and "religious" (they housed exclusive places of the imperial cult). So many different purposes account for the architectural forms taken by such complexes, often overlooking the fora (as in Constantinople, Athens, Gortyna, Antioch, Carthage and maybe Tarragona), sometimes arranged around an inner peristyle (Cologne, Sitifis, Caesarea Maritima: Fig. 1), with a large surface (Gortyna, 29X35 m; Dura-Europos 31X32 and 23X25 m; palace of the Giants in Athens, 29.40X37.80 and 19.60X2,40 m: Fig. 2), with private sections with triclinia and baths, occasionally decorated with mosaics, and public sections with rooms for the courts (Caesarea, Gortyna, Ptolemais) and the *secretarium*, small temples in the courtyards, stables, prisons and torture chambers, as well as rooms for the many *officiles*, usually overlooking an open space in the street (Caesarea Maritima). Between the third and fourth centuries, when many taxes were also paid in kind, such complexes must have had storage areas for food, fodder and other goods. This is what their large vaulted halls, which could be up

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[2] Cantino Wataghin, *Le sedi*, pp. 106-114.
[3] Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, p. 400.
[4] Cantino Wataghin, *Le sedi*, pp. 120-122.
[5] Uytterhoeven, *Housing in Late Antiquity*, pp. 38-39.

to 30 metres long and often placed underneath and underpinning the reception hall, are believed to have been (Caesarea Maritima)[6].

Two Italian examples of fifth-century *villae-praetoria*, management structures which could take on public functions, show us architecturally more compact and taller solutions, with apsidal rooms on the first floor, towers, often holding staircases, baths, stables and possibly places of worship, as in S. Giovanni di Ruoti in Basilicata (Fig. 3) and Quote S. Francesco in Calabria, two complexes that were still inhabited until the seventh century[7].

As to the *curiae*, the growing tax burden imposed on the cities, first documented in the late second century and especially in the age of Constantine[8], and the responsibility for tax collection, placed in the hands of the local elites, gradually led to the abandonment of such buildings, usually rectangular in shape, with or without steps on two or three sides, with outdoor porticoes, sometimes erected next to a basilica[9]. A much longer occupation must have been enjoyed by the Roman *Curia*, which, already rebuilt under Diocletian and Maximian after the fire in AD 283, was most likely restored under Praetextatus (367-384) and again in 412, after the Sack of Rome[10]. While public buildings were sometimes preserved, their actual functions had, to all intents and purposes, shifted to the private residences of rich senators, such as that of consul Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, where the Codex Theodosianus was presented to the senate (438)[11].

3. *The Gothic era (late 5th to mid-6th century)*

In the Gothic period, the royal cities of Verona, Pavia and Monza, where Theoderic built new palaces, were added to the imperial capitals Rome, Milan and Ravenna[12].

By then, public power seemed unable to maintain the large imperial palatial complexes in their original form. In Rome, the restorations of the Palatine in the Gothic era[13], as well as the restoration of the fora and the *curia* (502-527)[14], were part of an urban landscape that, between the fifth and sixth cen-

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[6] Lavan, *The praetoria*; for the palace of the Giants in Athens now see Baldini, *Il Palazzo*; for Gortyna see Lamanna, *Note preliminari*.
[7] Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, pp. 406-409; Sfameni, *Le villae-praetoria*. On the difficulty of identifying a structure as a *praetorium* only on the basis of architectural and planimetric elements, without an epigraphic testimony, see: Baldini Lippolis, *Palatia, praetoria ed episcopia*; Spanu – Zucca, *Il cursus publicus*; Brogiolo – Chavarría Arnau, Villae*,* praetoria *e* aedes, pp. 227-228.
[8] Lo Cascio, *Il potere*; Biundo, *Le vicende*.
[9] Lavan, *Public Space*, pp. 750-751.
[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 751 and 755.
[11] Machado, *The Aristocratic*, p. 37; Santangeli Valenzani, *Spazi privati*, p. 199.
[12] Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, p. 234.
[13] Augenti, *Il Palatino*, pp. 17-45; Royo, *Le Palatin*.
[14] Lavan, *Public Space*, p. 755.

turies, typically hosted ruins, vast landfills, occasional burials and necropolises, like the one found in the "Barberini Vineyard", which maybe already associated with a Gothic church (S. Maria in Pallara?)[15]. The same happened in Milan: between the mid-fifth and sixth centuries, the northern part of the *palatium* was plundered, black soil settled in it, and burials, huts, wells and silos were put up. Only the southern portion of the complex remained standing, perhaps as a home for government officials, at least until the VII century[16].

In Ravenna, renovations were carried out on the palace that likely belonged to Honorius (395-423) and Valentinian III (425-455)[17], a complex occupying about 10 hectares, plus the circus and the imperial mint (*moneta*): a second apsidal hall and a trefoil-shaped building acting as a *triclinium*[18] were built, and in the early sixth century Theoderic added a place of worship, S. Martino in Ciel d'Oro[19] (Fig. 4). Moreover, in the countryside around Ravenna, Theoderic himself had the so-called "palazzetto" of S. Maria in Palazzolo built, a palace opening onto a quadrangular courtyard, with corner towers and an outdoor baths[20].

We have no archaeological records about Pavia or Verona, but the events resemble very much those we observed in other cities. In Pavia, capital of the Kingdom in the 520s, the king's renovation probably aimed at reusing an earlier public estate north-east of the city centre, adding a hall or at least embellishing the official hall with a mosaic of the king on horseback, mentioned by Agnellus in the ninth century[21].

All that remains of the Verona palace is just an eighteenth-century illustration from an original of the third quarter of the tenth century (Raterian Iconography) which shows it as having two towers and being located near the theatre[22].

4. *The period of the Lombard Kingdom (mid-6th to mid-8th centuries)*

In the age of the Lombard Kingdom, kings kept moving between the palaces of Milan, Pavia, Verona and Ravenna[23]. The tendency to reuse earlier building complexes, provided with churches, did not abate. Unfortunately, it is

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[15] Augenti, *Il potere*, pp. 199-200; Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, pp. 400 and 402.
[16] Cerasa Mori *et al.*, *Milano*.
[17] Cirelli, *Ravenna*, p. 80.
[18] Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, p. 399; Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi*, pp. 283, 286-288.
[19] Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, pp. 400-402; Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi*, p. 291.
[20] Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi*, pp. 297-298; Brogiolo – Chavarría Arnau, Villae*, praetoria e* aedes, pp. 234-235.
[21] Ward-Perkins, *From classical Antiquity*, pp. 159-160; Hudson, *Pavia*, p. 261; Bougard, *Les palais*, p. 187; Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, p. 233; Majocchi, *Pavia città regia*, pp. 27-28; Lomartire, *Un irrevocabile*, p. 460.
[22] La Rocca, *Verona*, pp. 260-261 and 268; on the *palatium* see also Lusuardi Siena, *L'origine dell'archetipo*.
[23] Bougard, *Les palais*, pp. 181-182; Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, p. 235.

mainly the written sources that give us a glimpse into these palatial complexes, while the archaeological sources are pretty non-existent, except for Ravenna, and the seats of public power of Brescia, Cividale, Monza and Salerno.

In Milan, Agilulf, who advocated a programme of "Romanisation and Christianisation of royal Lombard power", wanted to be crowned in the city's circus in 591, acclaimed by the *exercitales*[24].

Nevertheless, the northern part of the late Antique palace, originally covering about 11 hectares, was abandoned and the area was occupied by huts and black soil (seventh century). The southern part, on the other hand, was likely to have been kept in use, while two churches were added to the complex between the middle and the third quarter of the eighth century (S. Giorgio and S. Sisto)[25].

In Ravenna, some minor work in the palace of Theoderic was first attributed to the Byzantines, then to the Lombards. Between the middle and the end of the sixth century, the former made new mosaic floors and built a corridor, then added a room in the courtyard in front of the royal hall, and in the mid-eighth century the latter built a fountain in the midst of the courtyard with adjoining halls and a few small rooms right behind the outer wall[26]. The circus too was allegedly used until the mid-seventh century[27].

The Lombards are also likely to have made use of the Verona palace. Occupied during the first stages of the conquest, Verona was the favourite city of Alboin, who wanted to be buried in the palace, while Authari turned it into a royal residence again, after the interregnum (574-584) and until 590[28].

The same must have happened in Pavia, which became a capital under Arioald in 626, and where the palace of Theoderic was provided with a chapel dedicated to Christ the Saviour under the reign of Liutprand (712-744)[29]. Workshops, where precious fabrics and valuable metals were worked, as mentioned in the ninth and tenth centuries, may have been there as early as the Lombard period, while a palatine *schola* had probably been opened in Cunincpert's reign[30]. In those years, the big necropolis of *ad Perticas*, where King Hildebrand was elected in 740, stood out as an important place of power (Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, VI, 55)[31].

In Brescia, which had become the royal residence in the last 20 years of the rule of Desiderius, a palace (*curia ducis*) was built over a public building

[24] Augenti, *Luoghi e non luoghi*, p. 20.
[25] Lusuardi Siena, *Milano*, p. 222; Lusuardi Siena, *Topografia*, p. 147; David, «…Palatinaequae arces…», p. 18; Augenti, *Luoghi e non luoghi*, p. 28; Cerasa Mori *et al.*, *Milano*.
[26] Cirelli, *Ravenna*, p. 143; Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, p. 404; Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi*, pp. 84-85 and 289.
[27] Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi*, p. 291.
[28] Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, pp. 235-236.
[29] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, VI, 58; see Ward-Perkins, *From classical Antiquity*, p. 168.
[30] Gasparri, *Pavia longobarda*, p. 53; Lomartire, *Un irrevocabile,* p. 467.
[31] Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, pp. 235-240.

(perhaps a *horreum*, also public), most probably during the Gothic era, inside a contemporary extension of the walls: it was a large building, with two wings looking onto the courtyard, which at the time of the Lombard Kingdom was provided with an arcade and a projecting body, acting as a monumental gate (Fig. 5)[32].

In Cividale, a late Antique palace was chosen as the residence of the duke of Friuli, the remains of which have been unearthed in piazza Paolo Diacono. The building had an apsidal hall, stucco work and *opus sectile* floors, built no earlier than the second half of the fifth century, maybe when the city was chosen as the capital of the region. Between the sixth and the seventh centuries, after some time when some rooms were repurposed, the complex was presumably refurbished and provided with new rooms, until, in the mid-seventh century, it became the burial place of a Lombard nobleman, now the so-called tomb of Duke Gisulf[33].

Queen Theodelinda had a palace built as her summer residence in Monza too, on top of one of Theoderic's complexes. Some areas, with semi-circular rooms most likely dating back to Late Antiquity and then reused, belonged to that palace, frescoed with scenes from the history of the Lombards, and placed next to a basilica dedicated to saint John the Baptist[34]. Unfortunately, the stratigraphy, destroyed in 1992, has become lost, so that the dates of the structures cannot be established with certainty; a tower built of spolia survives next to the church, presumably a part of the complex[35].

In Corteolona, near Pavia, Liutprand founded, on family land, where the king had at first planned to build thermal baths, a suburban palace (*domicilium*) and the church and monastery of S. Anastasio[36], richly decorated with pillars, mosaics and precious marble imported from Rome[37]. The archaeological records reveal a little more about Salerno, where the duke and *princeps* Arechis II (758-787) installed a *curtis* in the middle of the city, over the remains of a bath of the first-second century AD, probably located near the port. The duke's palace was built with spolia, and included a palatine chapel, built over the remains of the old *frigidarium*. The marble which composed the pieces of the *opus sectile* was also Roman, even on the walls (with a chequerboard pattern of porphyry and gilded glass pieces) decorating the interiors of the chapel, also embellished with frescoes and an epigraph with gilded bronze letters on Oriental marble slabs, spread out across the four sides of the room. The floor of the chapel was made of marble and white Palombino limestone, with hexagonal tiles resembling those of the Tempietto di Cividale, S. Maria *foris portas*[38], the

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[32] Brogiolo, *Brescia altomedievale*, pp. 55-65; Brogiolo, *Die Paläste*, pp. 134-135.
[33] Barzocchini – Colussa, *Indagini archeologiche*; Vitri – Villa – Barzocchini, *Trasformazioni urbane*, p. 108.
[34] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 21-22.
[35] Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, pp. 237-238.
[36] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, VI, 58.
[37] Bougard, *Les palais*, pp. 182-190; Brogiolo, *Capitali e residenze*, pp. 242-243.
[38] Pizzo – Miazzo, S. Maria foris portas.

baptistery of S. Giovanni in Castelseprio and S. Sofia in Benevento, though in the Salerno palace such hexagons were inlaid with red and green porphyry. The complex stood on two floors, with the second floor surrounded by a loggia on three sides, inspired by Late Antique and Gothic palaces; on the fourth side, the palatine chapel stood with its single- and double-lancet windows (Fig. 6). According to a tenth-century chronicler, the palace also had a grand staircase and a golden throne, where the prince had received Charlemagne's ambassador[39]. In addition, the complex, equipped with a bath[40], was surrounded by fencing that enclosed the appurtenances and the *abitacula servorum*[41].

Unfortunately, we have no archaeological records of the palace in Benevento[42].

The examples I have briefly described confirm a tendency to reuse Roman and Gothic places of power, even in the Lombard period. Such a phenomenon may be explained in multiple ways, the first being the need to legitimise recently acquired power through relating it to "Antiquity". Even popes followed this, as shown by John VII who had an episcopal residence built right on the Palatine, probably inside the *Domus Tiberiana*; the same pope, in the early eighth century, had an ambo built in S. Maria Antiqua and had its walls frescoed[43].

But another factor that must have affected these choices was most probably the reduced financial resources of the new kings, certainly compounded by the disappearance of the Roman tax collection system by the mid-seventh century, replaced with gains from pillages, tributes and, above all, the rent from the land managed through the royal courts (ruled by dukes and gastalds), first and foremost the court of Pavia, with its *palatium*. Such a system of collection of resources was not easy to keep under control, as the many abuses perpetrated by *actores* and gastalds, against which Liutprand drafted a legislation, seem to hint at[44].

Archaeology helps us identify some royal officials living in crucial areas, such as the *illustres et magnifici viri* Ansvald, Rodchis and Arichis, in whose graves, unearthed south of Bergamo, we found the signet rings, most likely used to mark the border-crossing permits. Significantly, the ring of the royal official Arichis was found in the large Late Antique villa of Palazzo Pignano, within the octagonal peristyle[45].

Just as in the cases of urban and suburban palaces, the reuse of buildings that had some importance in the Late Antique period, located in strategic places, often at crossroads, seems also to prevail in the centres that were in charge of controlling the exploitation of the land.

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[39] Peduto, *Quanto rimane*, pp. 258-266; Peduto, *Consuetudine ed evoluzione*.
[40] Fiorillo, *Salerno medievale*, pp. 63-65.
[41] Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, p. 434.
[42] *Ibidem*, pp. 423-425.
[43] Augenti, *Il Palatino*, pp. 56-58; Augenti, *Il potere*, p. 202.
[44] Gasparri, *Le basi economiche*, pp. 80-81.
[45] Lusuardi Siena – Casirani, *Trezzo e le terre*, p. 133.

A case in point might be Capiate, near Lake Como in northern Italy, where the *casa tributaria* mentioned in 745 and owned by the *vir magnificus* Rottopert of Agrate was possibly located in a tower-shaped building, which can be dated between the third/fourth and tenth centuries, converted from an arcaded building, probably from the Late Antique period[46]. In Castelseprio too, the monumental significance of the *castrum* must have helped to maintain it constantly inhabited, from the mid-fifth century all through the Gothic, Lombard and Carolingian eras, when it was mentioned as the seat of a gastald and a margrave[47].

In the Duchy of Benevento, and especially in the Gaio Fecline, which must have been one of Arechis II's fiscal estates, the villa of Faragola was used again, probably as a management centre (Fig. 7): the *cenatio* was still used, new rooms were built, some with *opus signinum* floors, while others were fitted out as kitchens and warehouses. In the second half of the century, iron, glass, copper, and clay began to be worked to make pottery and bricks, and bone began to be carved, with sheep and goats bred for meat and wool. The vitality of the centre never abated, not even after a fire in the eighth century: cereal grain crops were extended, goats were bred for wool, and a new building with rooms laid out around a courtyard was erected north-east of the main sector of the villa, maybe by reusing the barns of the Late Antique complex[48].

5. *The Carolingian era (mid-8th-9th century)*

During the Carolingian period we still find clear references to the architectures of imperial power, both in the Italian palatial complexes (Milan, Pavia, Verona, Ravenna, Rome and Mantua) and across the Alps.

Apsidal (Ingelheim[49]) or multi-apsidal official halls (Aachen [780-804][50]: Fig. 8; Lateran, Pope Leo III, circa 800-802[51]) were still used, while rectangular ones were less common (Paderborn, 775-776[52]: Fig. 9). The raised halls (Aachen) did not look like an early medieval innovation either, since they already featured in some fifth-century *villae-praetoria*. The same could be said of the towers, often intended merely to accommodate the stairs that led to the upper floors (Aachen[53], Lateran [741-752][54], Milan [?]), with two towers documented in the eighth and twelfth centuries[55]).

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[46] *La* Curtis *di Capiate*; Carminati – Mariani, *L'Isola Comacina*.
[47] *Castelseprio e Torba*; De Marchi, *L'alto medioevo*, pp. 223-224.
[48] Turchiano – Volpe, *Faragola e le proprietà*.
[49] Lobbedey, *Carolingian Royal*, pp. 141-143.
[50] *Ibidem*, pp. 130-134.
[51] Augenti, *Le sedi del potere*, pp. 12-13; Augenti, *Tutti a casa*, p. 128.
[52] Lobbedey, *Carolingian Royal*, pp. 143-147.
[53] *Ibidem*, p. 131.
[54] Augenti, *Le sedi del potere*, p. 10.
[55] Lusuardi Siena, *Milano*, pp. 217-218; Bougard, *Les palais*, p. 188.

Similar assumptions could be made about the porticoes and corridors, some on two floors (Aachen), which connected the halls to the palatine churches (Aachen, Frankfurt [first half of the ninth century]) or to the living quarters (Aachen). If anything, we notice that the layout had been simplified, often into straight lines (Aachen, Frankfurt)[56], though such an assumption is undermined by the doubt that the excavation may have dug out just part of such complexes.

Some particularly monumental designs of the porticoes, such as the semi-circular one in Ingelheim (Fig. 10), also seem to resemble the fifth-century palaces of the imperial governors of Constantinople[57] and even more closely that of Cercadilla (293-305: Fig. 11), in Cordoba, which looks just slightly larger (109 metres in diameter versus approximately 90 metres)[58], though the official areas are differently laid out, i.e. in a radial pattern along the sigma-shaped portico.

The association of court-church kept recurring, developing into more or less grand forms in the Carolingian age, as in Aachen and Paderborn[59], and so did the search for extremely valuable and ancient materials, usually spolia from Italian palaces. In Aachen «columnas et marmora» from Rome and Ravenna[60] were installed in the palatine chapel, and an equestrian bronze statue of Theoderic was carried from Ravenna in 801, then probably placed in front of the large portico west of the courtyard, between the large hall and the church[61].

Sadly, we know very little about the palatial complexes of our peninsula in the Carolingian age, only occasionally mentioned by the written sources. They had raised floors (*salaria*) and porticoes and arcades (*laubie*), even large ones which could accommodate as many as 50 people, as in the Carolingian palace built near saint Peter's by Charlemagne or Lothar[62], and/or connected to the gardens, populated by exotic animals, as in Pavia, where *pavonarii* have been documented since Hugh's time[63]. In Pavia a palatine school was probably still running, most likely within the palace[64]. The royal capital also reveals, even though the specimens date to slightly later times, the existence of the manufacture and trades of luxury goods associated with the palace (cloth-of-gold robes, 835-839)[65], which brought to the city, in the form of tributes, large amounts of goods, especially foodstuffs, which account for the presence

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[56] Lobbedey, *Carolingian Royal.*
[57] Baldini Lippolis, *L'architettura residenziale*, pp. 30-32; Daffara, *L'edificio di Güalane.*
[58] Hidalgo Prieto, *Aspetti dell'interpretazione*; Hidalgo Prieto, *Cercadilla.*
[59] Lobbedey, *Carolingian Royal.*
[60] *Vita Karoli*, 26.
[61] Falkenstein, *Charlemagne*, pp. 247-248; Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, p. 426.
[62] Bougard, *Les palais royaux*, p. 186; Augenti, *Le sedi del potere*, pp. 9-10.
[63] Hudson, *Archeologia urbana*, p. 24; Settia, *Pavia carolingia*, pp. 104-105 and 107; Bougard, *Les palais*, p. 187.
[64] Settia, *Pavia carolingia*, pp. 113-114.
[65] *Ibidem*, pp. 114-115.

of mills, documented since the tenth century and often run by the royal monasteries[66]. The *palatium* had also attracted a city market, patronised by Venetian merchants as early as the ninth century to sell Eastern goods[67], while the Chamber received the gold, obtained on behalf of the royal *fiscus* from the rivers of northern Italy, and the Saxon silver used by the coiners in the mint[68].

Under Lothar, the rural royal courts become increasingly important as stopovers along the imperial routes as well, sometimes mentioned as palaces (Auriola, Marengo, Corteolona, Sospiro et Gardina). A *caminata* used by Berengar (late ninth century) to hold a *placitum* was mentioned in Corteolona, where a palace had been built by Liutprand[69].

6. *Central-Northern Tuscia: Lucca, Pisa, Volterra and San Genesio*

As mentioned, since 2019 our team has been working at an archaeological survey in the areas and centres of public power of Central-Northern Tuscany, with new excavations in Pisa and San Genesio (PI), and a review of old researches in Lucca and Volterra (PI).

In Lucca, a royal court (since 754) and a queen's court have been documented (from 840) in the city centre, along with the ducal court of the marquis (from 847), adjacent to but out of the walls (Fig. 12), along the western side. The royal district stood out for its *palatium quod est sala imperatoris* (1055)[70], that seventeenth and eighteenth century scholars reported as being in piazza XX Settembre[71], and two churches: S. Pietro *in Cortina* (814?, 856) and S. Maria *in Palatio*, with a distinctive porticoed design[72], mentioned in 1137 as «S. Maria q.d. Palathese»[73], and destroyed in 1807[74]. Just north of it and near the church of S. Giusto (1040)[75] stood the mint (*moneta*)[76]. In addition, the royal palace had a garden in a suburban area near the church of S. Pietro *Sumualdi* (763), donated by King Aistulf (749-756) to Auripertus, a painter. The few archaeological records available of the area tell us about an apsidal construction underneath the Cassa di Risparmio (formerly Palazzo Gigli), which might point to the existence of an official hall[77], maybe associated with the early medieval court or to some rich Late Antique building,

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[66] *Ibidem*, p. 117.
[67] *Ibidem*, p. 119.
[68] *Ibidem*, p. 118.
[69] Bougard, *Les palais*, p. 190.
[70] Belli Barsali, *La topografia*, p. 507; Schneider, *L'ordinamento*, p. 224, note 25.
[71] Belli Barsali, *La topografia*, pp. 507-508.
[72] For this type of church in Pisa see Redi, *Pisa com'era*, pp. 372-379.
[73] Belli Barsali, *La topografia*, pp. 507-509 and 540, Addendum n. 70; Schneider, *L'ordinamento*, p. 224.
[74] Belli Barsali, *La topografia*, pp. 508-509, note 172, and 540, Addendum n. 70.
[75] *Ibidem*, Appendice I, n. 63, p. 540.
[76] Matraia, *Lucca*, p. 28, nn. 97-98; Schneider, *L'ordinamento*, p. 225; Vanni, *Lucca,* p. 798.
[77] Belli Barsali, *La topografia*, p. 508, note 171.

when the area between piazza S. Giusto and piazza S. Giovanni might have played a public role, as suggested by the finding of two fourth-century imperial dedications in piazza S. Giovanni and in piazza XX Settembre, as well as a third-fourth century mosaic floor in the area of Palazzo Gigli. A rereading of the excavation carried out in piazza S. Giusto in 2009 made us aware that some Late Antique buildings had been in constant use, as suggested by the fact that they had been repurposed, at least since the mid-eleventh century, into the premises of the mint, as proven by the finding of lots of cupellation crucibles and other ironworking and copperworking manufactures[78]. Then, some luxury crafts could be related to the area of the royal court, as in Pavia, such as silk weaving, revolving around the female monastic community of S. Pietro *in Cortina* (or *Bellerifonsi*) which, until the mid-ninth century, was a coordination centre for the tax assets granted to the papacy by Aripert II and Liutprand[79]. Then, the economic role played by the court seems to be suggested by the markets mentioned since 1060 at the Church of S. Maria *in Palatio* and S. Pietro, near which a weapons manufacturer lived too[80].

In the meantime, in the Arno Valley, along the way that connected Pisa to Florence, and on the San Genesio site (PI), where a *mansio* must have probably stood in Roman times, a stone tower was built in the seventh century, surrounded by specialist ironworks and bronze metalworks, as well as earth and wood houses: the centre, which still received coins from Rome and Ravenna, might have been connected with Lucca's having control over the area and the roads[81].

In Lucca, in the Carolingian period, the role of a centre of power was taken over by the *ducalis* court of *dux* Adalbert (mentioned as a *mansio* in 915 and as a *palatium* from 964)[82], a building with a *sala illa terrestile* (853), a *caminata* (873), a *solario* (941) and a *laubia longanea* that accommodated the chapel of S. Stefano[83]; the church of S. Benedetto was also first mentioned in 941, in the area where the church of Crocifisso dei Bianchi now stands. West of the palace was the *pratum Marchionis* (1087), with the church of S. Donato (760)[84] and the church of S. Maria *Ursimanni*, founded in 722. The wealth and luxury of Adalbert's court, patronised by many *milites elegantes*[85], was even mentioned by Emperor Louis III, who said: «Hic rex potius quam marchio poterat appellari; nullo quippe mihi inferior, nisi nomine solummodo est»[86]. A

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[78] Cantini *et al.*, *Nuovi dati sull'area*.
[79] Tomei, *Il sale e la seta*, p. 23; Tomei, *Il potere del dono*, p. 214; Bianchi – Tomei, *Risorse e contesti*, p. 157.
[80] Tomei, *Il sale e la seta*, pp. 29-30.
[81] Cantini, *Forme, dimensioni*, pp. 511-512; Cantini, *Powers in Transition*, p. 74.
[82] Belli Barsali, *La topografia,* pp. 509-511; Schneider, *L'ordinamento*, pp. 228-229, note 45.
[83] Belli Barsali, *La topografia,* pp. 509-510 and 539; Tomei, *Il potere del dono*, p. 210.
[84] Belli Barsali, *La topografia,* pp. 534.
[85] On the aristocracies in and around Lucca between the ninth and the tenth centuries, see Tomei, Milites elegantes.
[86] Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, II, 38-39; Tomei, *Il potere del dono*, p. 212.

test excavation carried out between via S. Paolino and piazzale Verdi in 2005 unearthed some pebble walls, sometimes rough-hewn, bonded with mortar in regular rows, assumed to have been part of a sixth-century public complex, probably built after the Byzantine reconquest of the city, and then used by the Carolingian marquis as his palace[87].

Contemporary with the ducal court of Lucca was that of San Genesio in *vico Wallari*, also part of Adalbert II's possessions, where the excavations unearthed the remains of a site where a pottery kiln, some oil presses, mill-stones, winepresses and mills, probably originally located on the nearby river Elsa, were all gathered together next to the parish church. Significantly, the centre stands along the roads that connect the royal courts in and around Lucca with those of the Arno Valley[88] (Fig. 13).

As to Pisa, a first, indirect mention of the royal court during the Lombard age is an early eighth-century one to a royal official (*Maurezo canavarius domini Regis*)[89]. Later, just one *sala olim Aganoni comiti* (858) is documented in the Carolingian age as hosting a *placitum*, probably the place that had once (*olim*) acted as the court of law of Hagano, count of Lucca[90], and arguably located in the royal court. The latter is mentioned in 941, when a *placitum* was held by Marquis Hugh, in the presence of King Hugh and King Lothar, in «civitate Pisa, ad curte domnorum regum (...) subtus vites que topia voc[atur], infra eadem curte»[91]; another placitum must have been held in that court in 967 («Pisis in sala domni imperatoris, in porticho ipsius sale»)[92]. The mention of the city, unless it is merely a political-institutional connection, might point to its being located within the walls, arguably where the church of S. Pietro[93], which in 1027 was known as in Corte vecchia, used to stand [94]. Such an assumption is also supported by the fact that the church of S. Sisto (in Cortevecchia), founded in 1087, regained a sort of public *status* and became a genuine *Staatskirche*[95].

It is precisely in the area of Corte vecchia that we started an extensive excavation in 2020 (Fig. 14). So far, we have reached the Roman strata in some places only, but the information we collected, even from the waste, showed us an interesting sequence of settlements, affected by some of the phenomena that I have previously described in relation to the other public complexes. A building with an *opus scutulatum* floor, frescoed walls and probably black

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[87] Ciampoltrini, *La città di San Frediano,* pp. 54-55.
[88] Cantini, *La gestione della produzione.*
[89] Volpe, *Pisa e i longobardi,* pp. 387 and 392-393; Conti, *Il presunto ducato*, p. 170, note 55; Renzi Rizzo, *Pisa, Lucca*, pp. 41-42.
[90] Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni*, pp. 229-231, with note 50.
[91] Tolaini, Forma Pisarum, p. 53; Garzella, *Pisa com'era*, p. 86, note 145.
[92] Tolaini, Forma Pisarum, p. 53.
[93] Redi, *Due corti*, pp. 221-225.
[94] Garzella, *Pisa com'era*, p. 59 and note 3; Garzella, *Il tempio di S. Sisto*, pp. 189-191.
[95] Ronzani, *La 'chiesa del Comune'*, p. 507; Garzella, *Pisa com'era*, pp. 189 and 193-194; Cotza, *Storia, memoria.*

and white mosaics was erected in the Roman settlement in the late Republican age. So far, the remains of such a complex have only been dug out of a small area inside a medieval chest tomb and a core drill, so we expect the next excavation campaign will help us understand the layout, extent and timeline of the site more thoroughly. However, the finds that have been unearthed so far suggest that the area and the complex must have been inhabited all through Late Antiquity until the sixth century, a time that seems to mark a break, and the collapse of the covering of the building. In the seventh century, the latter began to be refurbished and was then constantly inhabited until the tenth century, as proven by the ceramic finds (soapstone, Samian ware, amphorae – Keay 25.1, Spatheion type 1, Keay 62Q, LRA1, 2 and a likely Bag Shaped A-, Forum ware and Red painted ware).

In addition, the building is flanked by the church of S. Pietro, maybe even as early as some time between the eighth and ninth centuries, which is the period to which the fragment of a frame decorated with pillared arches, which might have been part of the pergula of the church, as shown by a few parallels with the Lateran basilica, has been dated. What is left of the church of S. Pietro is part of the façade of the southern wall, which is made of large, square calcarenite ashlars, the size of which is sometimes compatible with the Roman foot, and which might have been, therefore, reused. Some glass paste mosaic tesserae with gold leaf, found in layers dating back to later times, might be Late Antique or connected with the early medieval complex, as well as a crucible with specks of gold: while awaiting the results of thermoluminescence dating, we can only argue that, if the crucible was a medieval piece, it might prove that luxury goods used to be produced in the area, while, if it dated to the eighth century, it might be associated with the mint, probably located in the royal court, that coined gold tremisses for Pisa in between Liutprand and Charlemagne[96].

In the case of Volterra, a re-reading of Cristofani's excavations of the acropolis showed that the area of the Hellenistic temples must have been constantly inhabited from Antiquity to the tenth century, as proven by a wealth of ceramic finds[97]. This suggests that, between the Byzantine and the Carolingian periods, when two gastalds are mentioned, i.e. Alchis in the late seventh century[98] and Ramingo in a document of 782[99], the acropolis may have been the city's nerve centre, located right behind the *cardo maximus*, acting as a sort of backbone, and over the area that had presumably been planned for the episcopal church as early as the fifth century[100], and that of the Roman forum (where the church of S. Michele was built)[101].

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[96] For an overview of the surveys and a description of the results of the 2020 excavation campaign see *S. Sisto Project 2020.*
[97] This paper is in press: for a preview see Cantini – Belcari – Fatighenti, *Un progetto di archeologia.*
[98] Augenti, *L'iscrizione di Alchis*, pp. 742-743 and note 12.
[99] Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni*, p. 241.
[100] About the bishops of Volterra see Ceccarelli Lemut, *Cronotassi dei vescovi.*
[101] Schneider, *Regestum Volaterranum*, p. 26, n. 73.

We would then be dealing with a situation that has, after all, a parallel in Populonia. In relation to that city, Gelichi recently suggested an early medieval reoccupation of the acropolis that, in the second half of the ninth century, must have been associated with the takeover of the city by Hildebrand II, the ancestor of the Aldobrandeschi family, who had just taken over the comital title (857?)[102].

7. *Conclusions*

Gothic and Carolingian seats of power were grafted onto imperial public buildings (or more generally on publicly-owned spaces), mainly urban ones, with additions and restorations, and adopted architectural models deeply influenced by Late Antique palaces and *praetoria*.

Then, two phenomena happened, which led to the break-up of this sort of resilience between the sixth and seventh centuries. The first one was a hiatus: the abandonment of the *curiae*, which did not survive the Gothic era, as shown by the Roman *curia* itself, converted into the church of S. Adriano in the seventh century (630)[103], or, to a lesser extent, that of Florence, of which we only know through some allegedly Late Antique restoration[104]. The second phenomenon is a simplification: the transition, in the first half of the seventh century, from a tax collection system to one based on the collecting of rent from the land depleted the financial resources of the seats of power, most of which still revolved around monumental complexes from the imperial age, renovated in the Gothic period, shrinking their surface and layout, though using the same language as that of the Roman age. Most of them were still urban *palatia*, often standing on two floors, with loggias, *opus sectile* decorations, frescoes (Monza), mosaics (Theoderic's *palatium* in Ravenna), monumental epigraphy in gilded bronze (palace of Arechis II, 758-787, in Salerno), apsidal halls with arcades in front (defined as *laubie* since the ninth century), sometimes reduced to pergolas and often used to hold placita, chapels, towers, especially after the tenth century (Verona), grand staircases and thrones (Salerno). Subsequently, the geography of the rural seats of power was also affected by the importance gained through military control over the roads and menagement of the land and its resources. Whenever feasible, people invested in palaces again (Corteolona), in Late Antique-style villas (Faragola) or in centres that had been home to *mansiones*, erecting new stone buildings (mainly tower-shaped ones) (San Genesio) when no earlier walls were left standing.

Sometimes, the choice of the place on which to build a public complex was also affected by the ruler's personal preferences, to judge by what Einhard

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[102] Gelichi, *Prima del monastero*, pp. 362-367.
[103] Meneghini – Santangeli Valenzani, *I Fori Imperiali*, p. 121.
[104] Cantini, *Forme e strutture*, p. 329.

said when he reported that one of the reasons Charlemagne chose Aachen was its hot springs, into which he loved to plunge and to invite «non solum filios (…), verum optimates et amicos, aliquando etiam satellitum et custodum corporis turbam (…)»[105].

What looks like a new development, however, perhaps as early as the Lombard period, certainly in Carolingian times, is the concentration of first-class manufacturing centres and markets near the seats of power, thriving remarkably well around the *palatia*, which became the only places where specialist craftsmen could still find customers, merchants could meet wealthy buyers, and rulers came across trades on which they could levy profitable levies.

[105] *Vita Karoli*, 22.
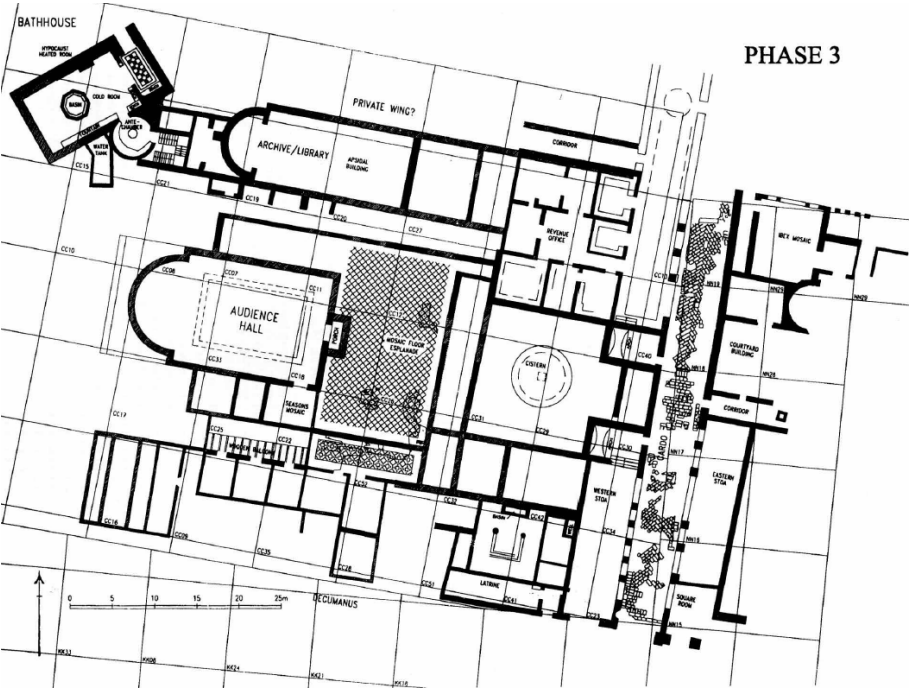
Fig. 1. *Praetorium* of *Cesarea Maritima* (from Lavan, *The praetoria*, fig. 4, p. 44).
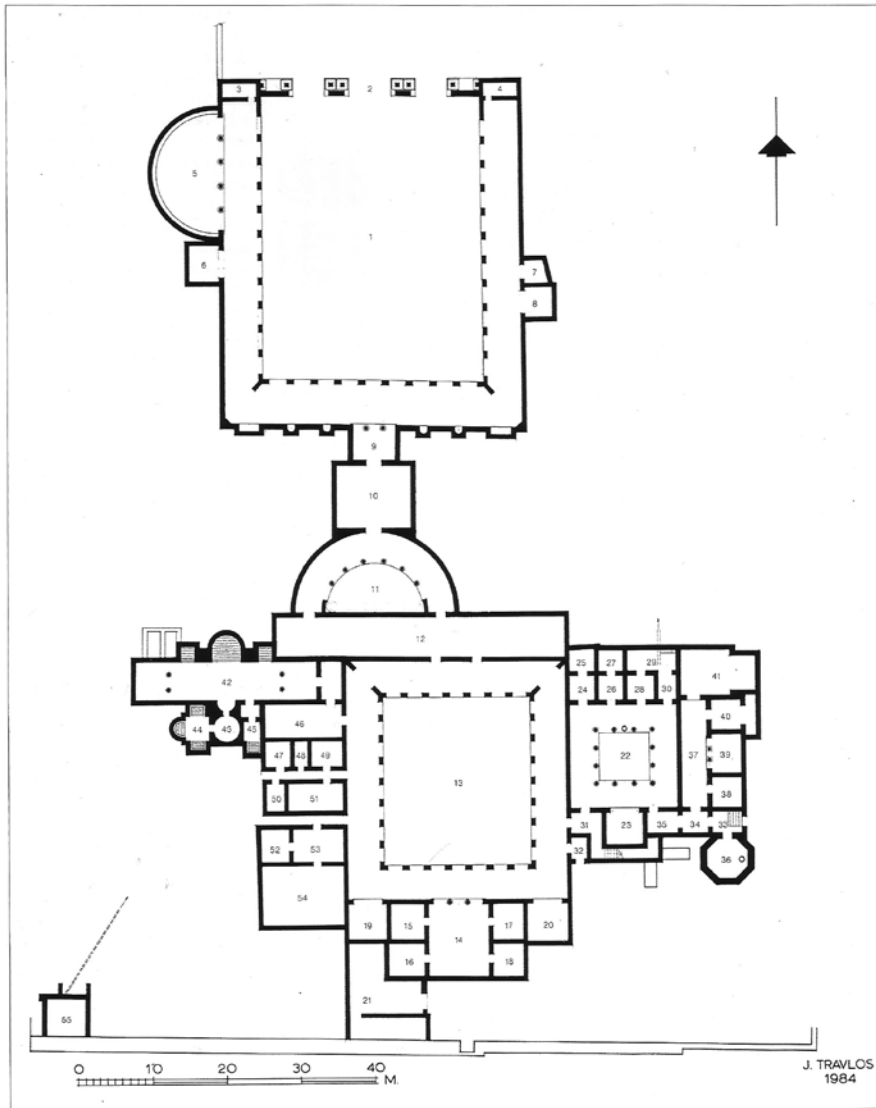
2. - Atene, Agorà, Palazzo dei Giganti, planimetria (da Thompson 1988).

Fig. 2. Athens, palace of the Giants (from Baldini, *Il Palazzo dei Giganti*, fig. 2, p. 95).
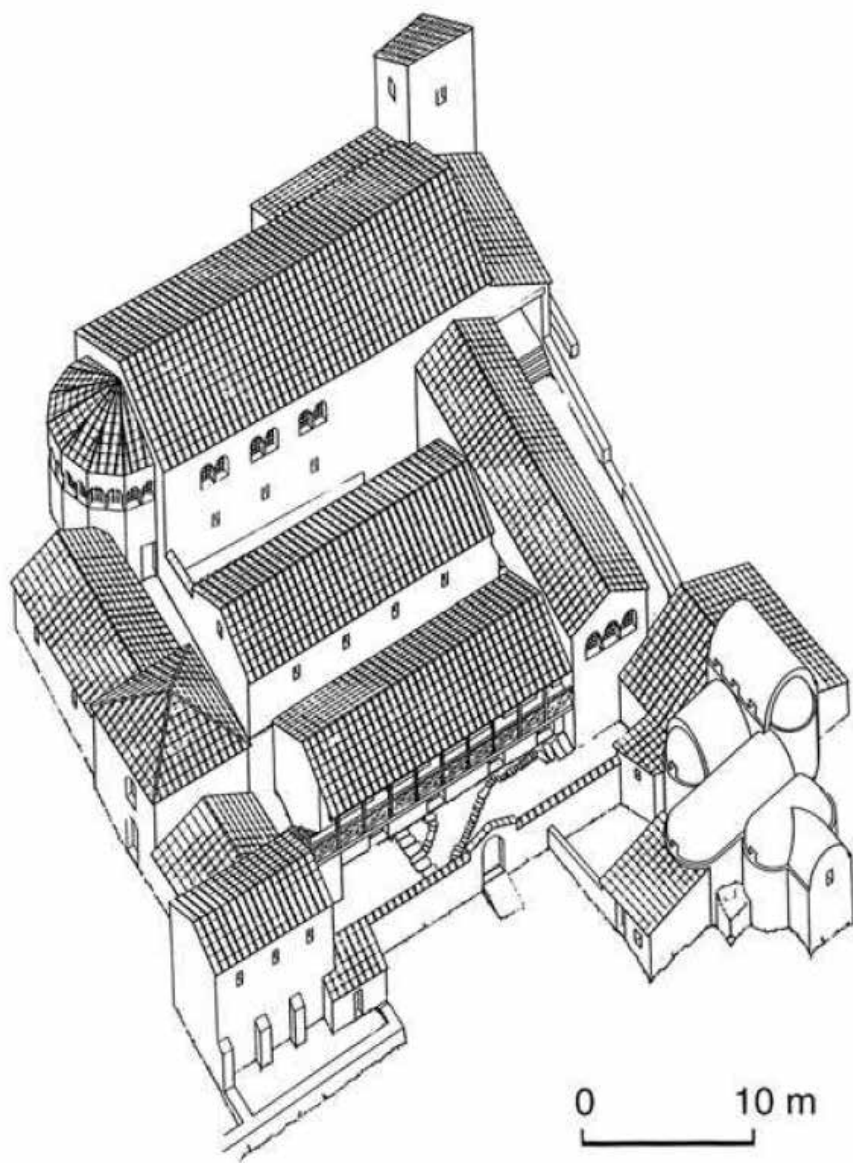
Fig. 3. S. Giovanni of Ruoti (from Sfameni, *Le* villae-praetoria, p. 610, fig. 2).
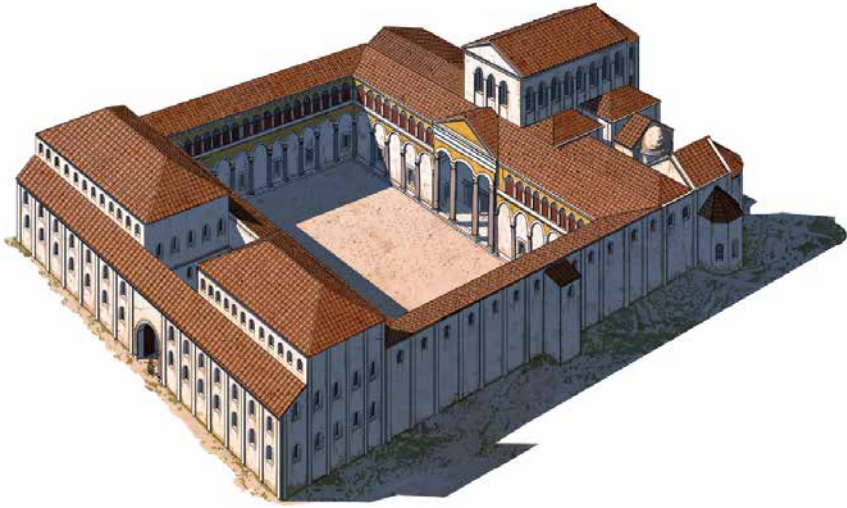
Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the imperial palace of Ravenna (from Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi del potere*, fig. 3, p. 284. Reconstruction by G. Albertini).
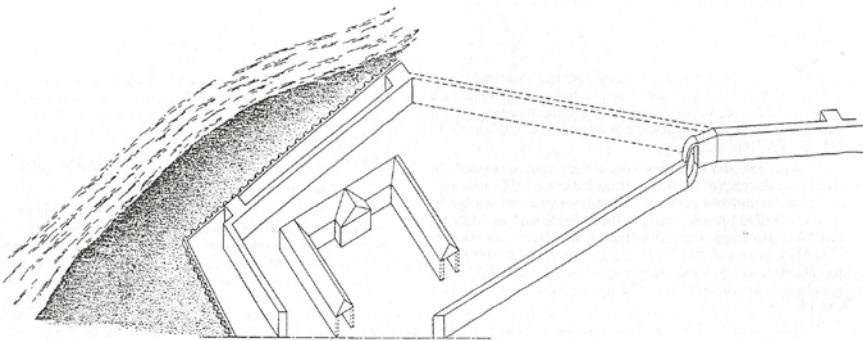
Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the palace of the *curia ducis* of Brescia (from Brogiolo, *Brescia altomedievale*, p. 61, fig. 44).
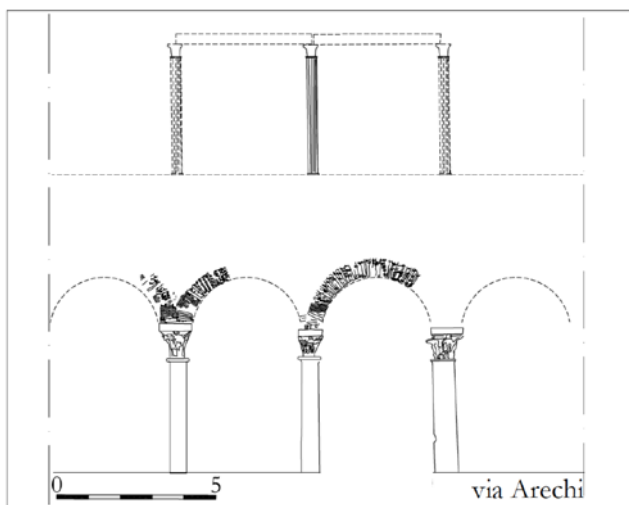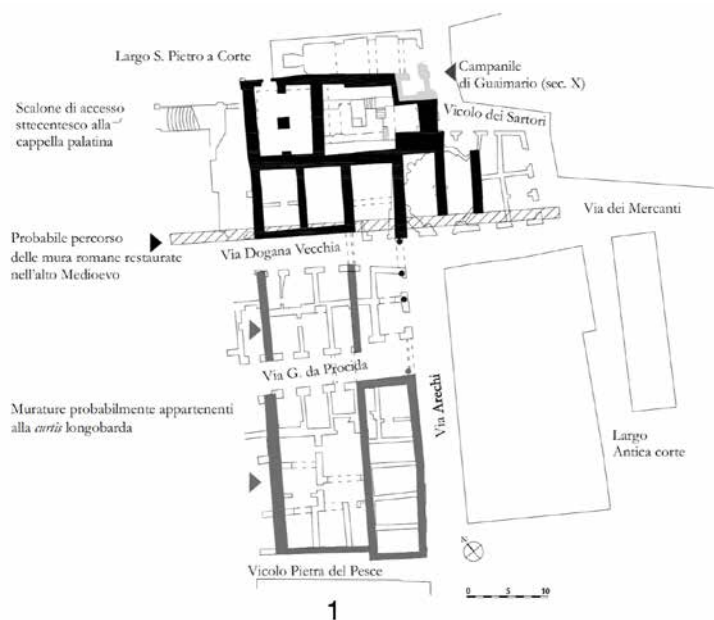
Fig. 6. 1. Plan with structures (in black and grey) of the Arechis II's *curtis*; 2. reconstructive elevation of the Arechis palace (from Peduto, *Consuetudine ed evoluzione*, tav. 2).
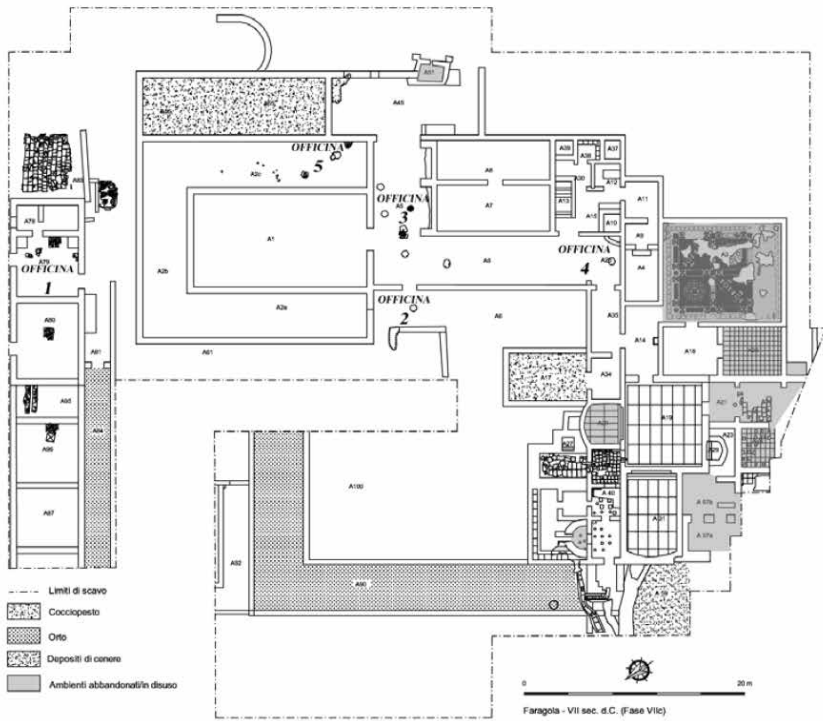
Fig. 7. Faragola in the 7th century (from Turchiano, Volpe, *Faragola e le proprietà*, p. 272, fig. 5).

Fig. 8. Reconstruction of the palace of Aachen, c. 830 (from Wamers, *Carolingian Pfalzen*, p. 151, fig. 2).
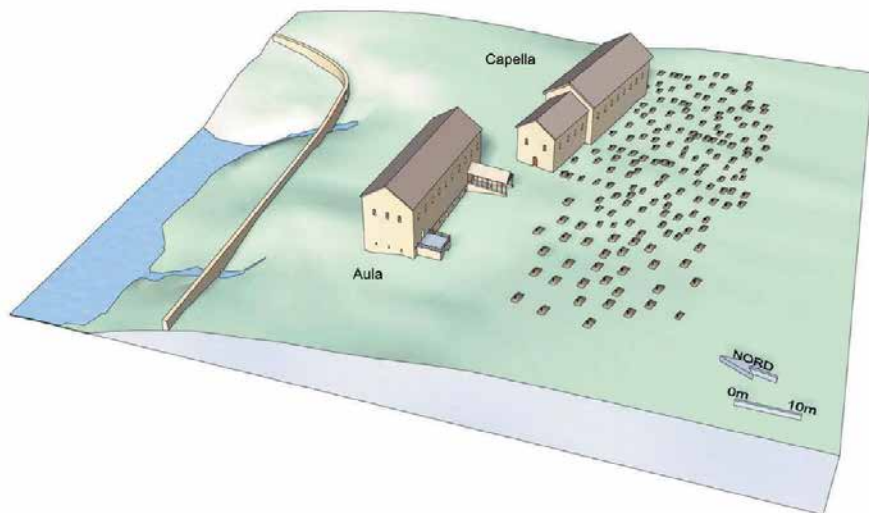
Fig. 9. Reconstruction of the palace of Paderborn, 775-776 (from Wamers, *Carolingian Pfalzen*, p. 157, fig. 10).

Fig. 10. Reconstruction of the palace of Ingelheim, c. 800 (from Wamers, *Carolingian Pfalzen*, p. 157, fig. 9).

Fig. 11. Reconstruction of the palace of Cercadilla (from Hildago Prieto, *Cercadilla*, p. 510, fig. 4).
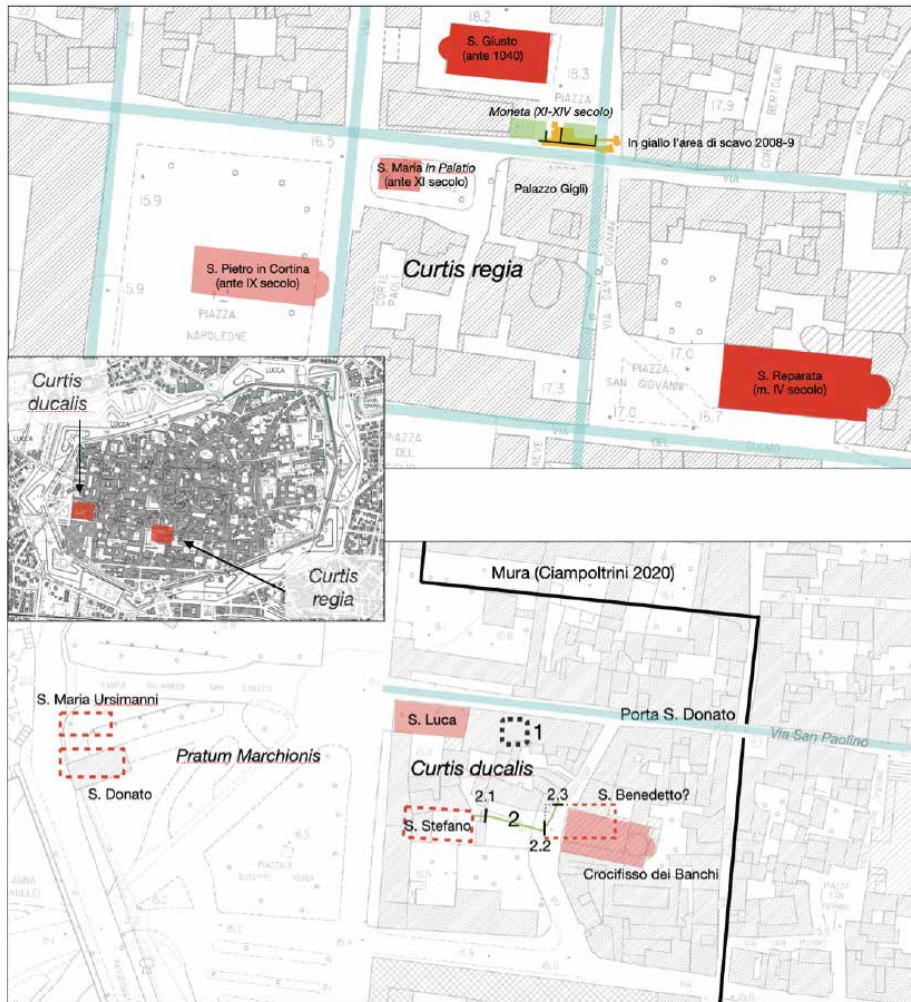
Fig. 12. The areas of the *curtis regia* and *curtis ducalis* of Lucca (from Cantini *et alii, Nuovi dati sull'area*, p. 407, fig. 1).
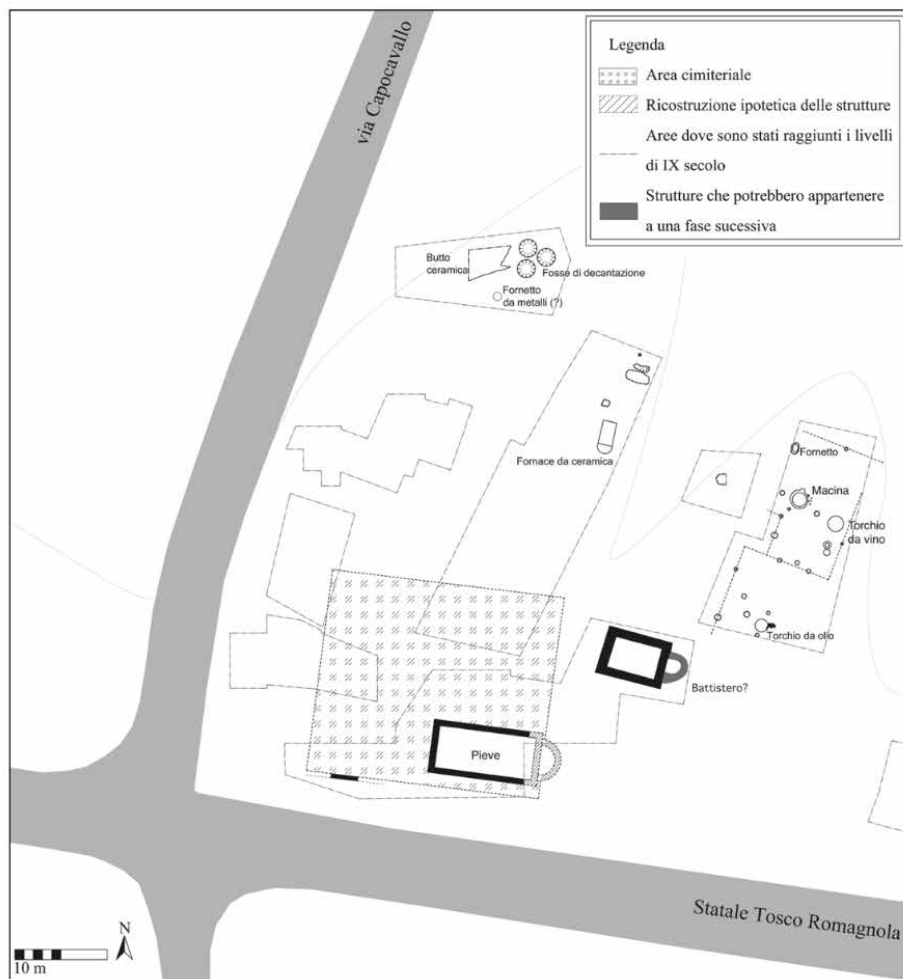
Fig. 13. The *curtis* of S. Genesio (from Cantini, *La gestione della produzione*, p. 277, fig. 2).
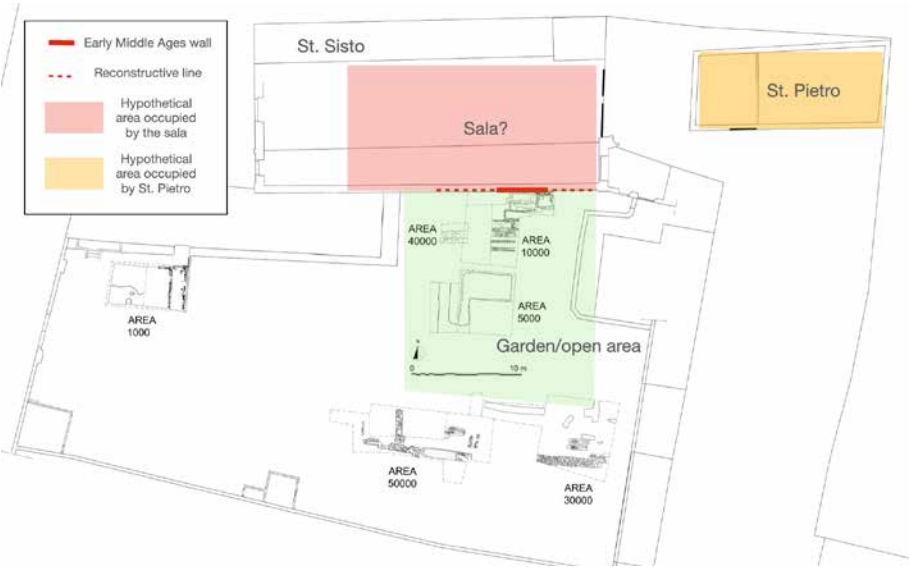
Fig. 14. Hypothetical reconstruction of the *curtis regia* of Pisa, based on the results of the archaeological excavation 2020-21.

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