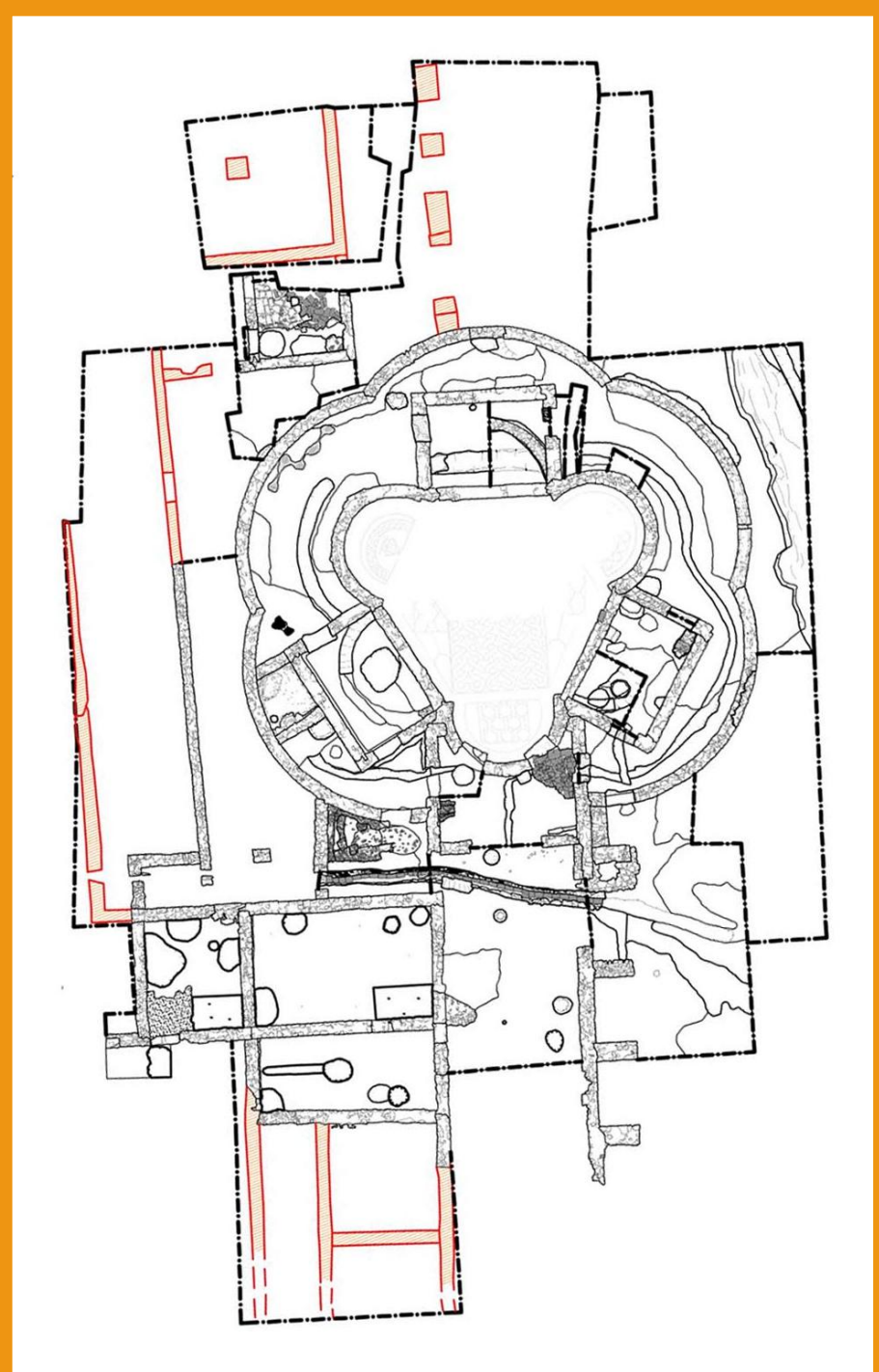


AMPHORAE ON THE ROMAN VILLA AT AIANO - TORRACCIA DI CHIUSI (SAN GIMIGNANO - SIENA - ITALY)

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Plan of the Roman villa at the end of the sixth excavation campaign, summer 2010.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

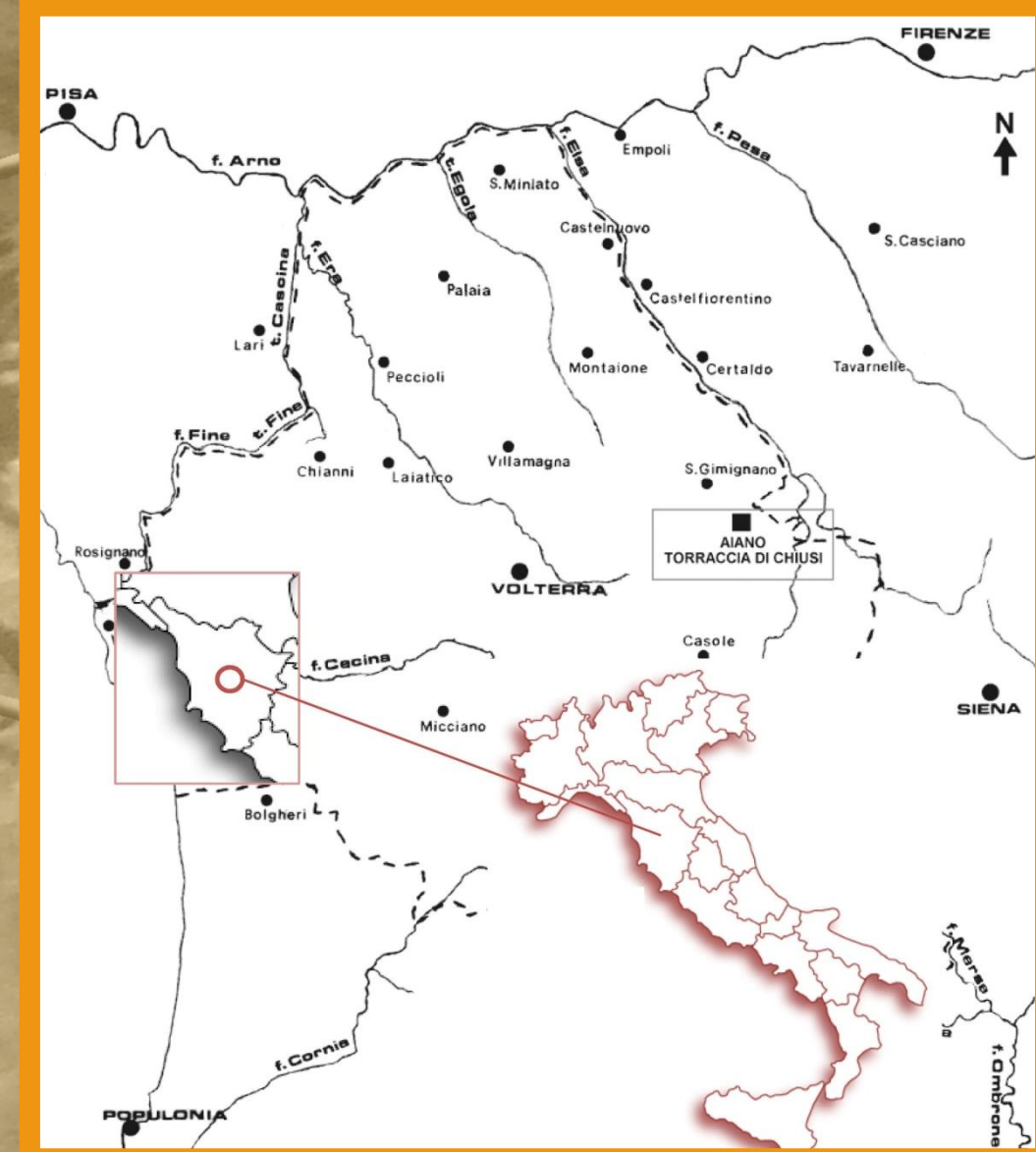
The year 2010 saw the sixth season of excavation for the Belgo-Italian mission investigating the site of Aiano-Torraccia di Chiusi. In the area of San Gimignano, Valdelsa, located in the heart of Tuscany, a residential building with pavilions has been identified. This monumental *villa longinqua* witnessed continuous activities and various occupations from the late IIIrd and the beginnings of the VIIth century A.D.

For the time being, the first construction phase is difficult to define (if not based on stratigraphy) because of a succession of complex wall sequences. However, it is probable that this phase was followed up by a renovation / expansion project: shown by the current excavations, a six-cusped room with a large vestibule access and an *ambulatio* surrounding the room was planned during the first half of the IVth century A.D.

For reasons still unclear, this project was not completed. It was only during the last quarter of the IVth century that the complex formed by the six-cusped room, the *ambulatio* and the vestibule was achieved with significant structural changes, including the transformation of the six-cusped room in a trefoil room with a floor made of stone-based cement with geometric decoration.

From the late Vth and especially during the VIth century A.D., the decorative apparatuses of the villa were totally removed for the use of their raw materials; small kilns for glass and metal production (gold, copper-based alloys, iron) and a ceramic kiln were implanted in areas previously dedicated to a residential function.

During the beginning of the VIIth century, the area was abandoned. This has been attested by the collapse of walls and roofs. Due to the strong erosion affecting the archaeological deposit, this period is poorly documented. Despite this fact, it appears that the villa developed a funerary function as indicated by a grave found in the structure.



Position of the villa at Aiano-Torraccia di Chiusi in the landscape of northern Tuscany.

CERAMIC CONTEXT

The ceramic assemblage from Aiano-Torraccia di Chiusi includes coarse ware (*acroma grezza*), depurated ware coated with red / brown slip (*ceramiche rivestite di rosso*), depurated ware, semi-depurated ware, oil lamps, amphorae and *opus doliare*. In addition, fragments of African terra sigillata and soapstone refound in much smaller quantities. Some residual elements and fragments of extraneous origin (a fragment of Volterranean Kelebe dated from the early decades of the IIIrd century B.C., several black-glaze potteries from IVth-IInd B.C., and shreds of protohistoric *impasto* ceramics and rare small fragments of Italian *terra sigillata*) were observed in several stratigraphic layers. Consequently, further reflection is needed regarding the phases of activities in the area before the establishment of the villa and, more specifically, about the role that this villa played in the last stage before its abandonment at the beginning of the VIIth century A.D.

The most important part of the ceramic material comes from the period between the second half of the Vth and the beginning of the VIIth century A.D., and more extensively between the middle of the Vth and the mid-VIth century A.D. Precisely at this time, the villa was plundered and several rooms were reallocated for the production of different goods.

AMPHORAE

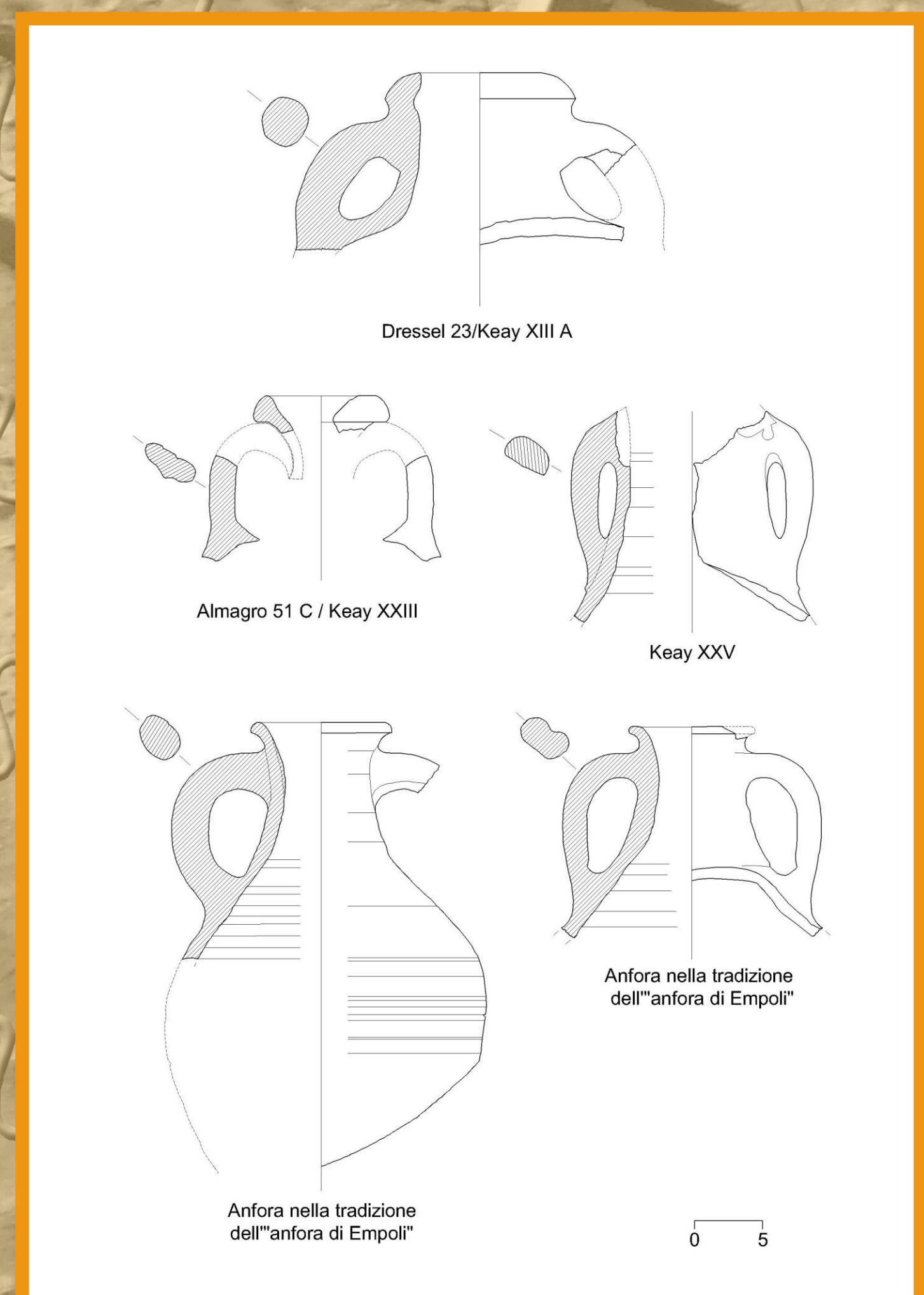
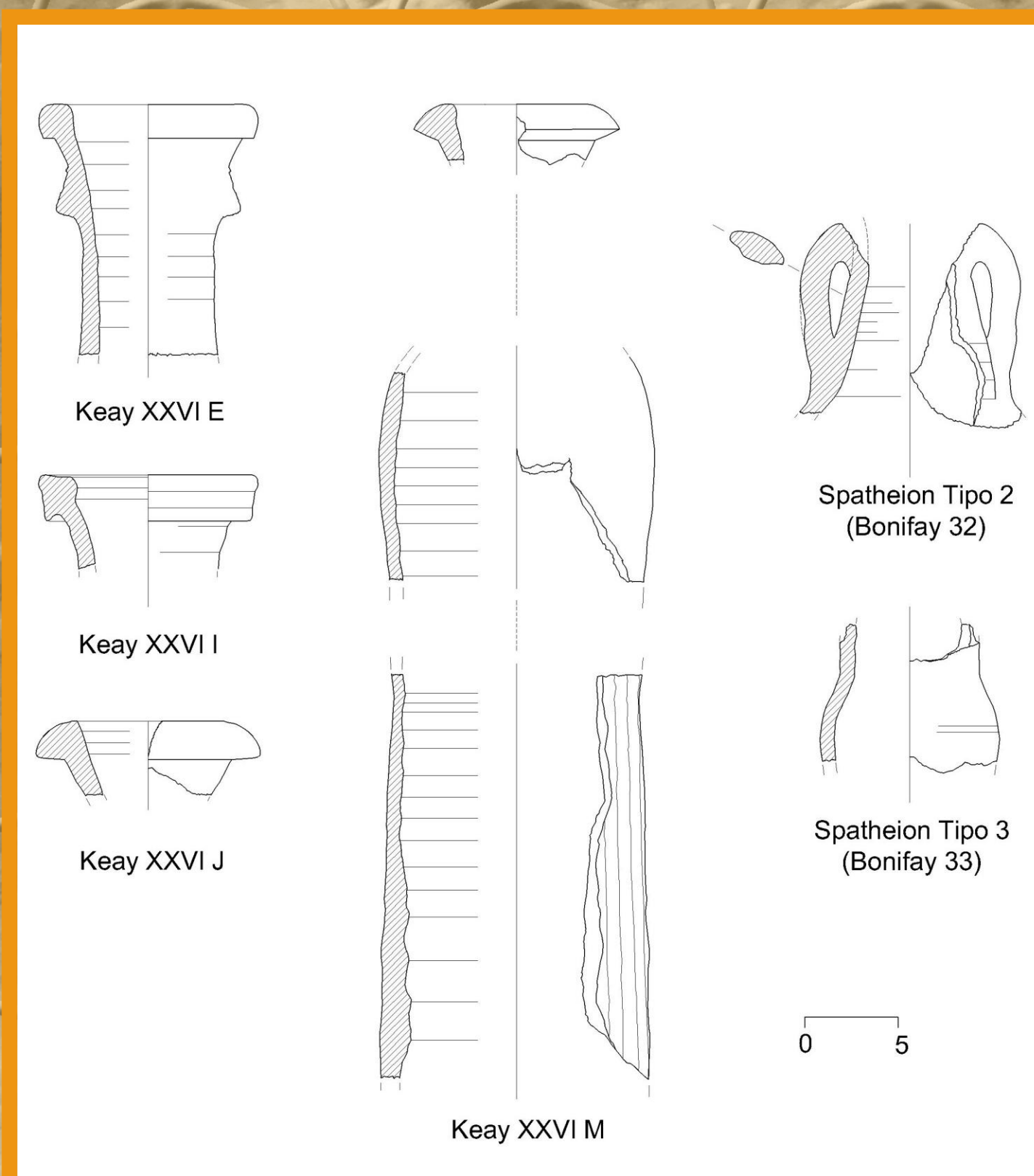
Containers dedicated to foodstuffs transport were found in small quantities at the site of Aiano-Torraccia di Chiusi, slightly less (2-3%) than other ceramic classes. Due to successive rearrangements in the site, these containers were fragmented and dispersed. Notwithstanding intensive efforts made to identify and, where feasible, to reconstitute these objects, a number of fragments were impossible to classify due to the lack of specific traits. Preliminary results of an on-going study concerning amphorae discovered during the three first excavation campaigns (2006-2008) are presented hereunder.

The most frequent type observed belongs to the *spatheia* (type Keay XXVI/Bonifay 31) produced between the end of the IVth and the second half of the Vth century A.D., depending upon their different variants (Keay E, I, J, M). This period corresponds to the second monumental phase of the villa. Nevertheless three fragments pertain to the artisanal reorganization of the villa: a *spatheion* of the Bonifay 32 amphora (second half of the Vth – first quarter of the VIth century A.D.) and at least two fragments of the Bonifay 33 amphora («*spatheia* miniatures», second half of VIth and VIIth century A.D.). This amphora type was produced in Tunisia from the IVth to the VIIth century A.D. and was spread in the whole Mediterranean area, from the Black Sea to the Danubian *limes*. These containers were dedicated to different foodstuffs (wine, oil and olives, fruits and vegetables).

Remaining productions are attested only by few examples, making any statistical analysis inappropriate.

One of these fragments is ascribable to the **Almagro 51C/Keay XXIII** amphora. Produced in the Iberian Peninsula between the first half of the IIIrd and the mid of the Vth century A.D., this type was dedicated to the transport of fish derived food and was spread along the West Mediterranean coasts and in *Germania*. Another item, corresponding to the **Dressel 23/Keay XIII A** group, was used as oil containing amphora. This type was originally made in *Hispania Baetica* from mid-IIIrd to mid-Vth century A.D. and is attested in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Algeria. A third item could be assimilated to the **Africana III/Keay XXV** amphora, produced between the IVth and mid-Vth century A.D., but the lack of rim does not allow us to attribute it to a more precise variant. Finally, two amphorae referring to the last occupation phase of the site, differing by clay and morphology, were found to have been influenced by the Empoli amphora tradition.

The field of area covered by these amphora data suggests that, at least from the Vth century A.D., the villa of Aiano-Torraccia di Chiusi was involved in an interprovincial commercial flow (Iberian Peninsula and North Africa). Nevertheless, during the last period of occupation, reduced exchanges occurred mainly with Tunisia and on an interregional basis.



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