

BACKDIRT

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COTSEN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT UCLA

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Changing
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FRONT COVER: Graduate students Brandon Keith (UCLA) and Mia Evans (University of Kent) use geophysical methods to investigate the remains of the Church of San Giovanni di Dustria, near Turin, Italy, in September 2022.

BACK COVER: Anya Dani, director of community engagement and inclusive practice as well as a lecturer at the UCLA/Getty Interdepartmental Program in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage, works on ancient pottery. (Photograph by Peter Ginter, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology.)

ABOVE: After years of online meetings, Moupi Mukhopadhyay, a graduate student in the conservation of cultural heritage, presents "Understanding Pigment Composition in Kerala Temple Murals Using Non-Invasive Imaging Techniques," the first of our hybrid (both in-person and online) Wednesday Talks (formerly Pizza Talks), on October 12, 2022.

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Industria (Monteu da Po), Italy

Hans Barnard¹ and Willeke Wendrich²

A research project at the Roman city of Industria (modern Monteu da Po), postponed for several years because of the Covid-19 pandemic—which hit northern Italy particularly hard—was at last initiated in September 2022.³ Industria was founded during the first century CE as a typical Roman city to replace the Ligurian settlement of Bodincomagus (mentioned by Pliny the Elder, *Natural History iii*, 122), its location most likely chosen because of its proximity to the confluence of the Dora Baltea, coming down through the Aosta Valley, and the river Po. Around the same time, and only about 30 km (20 miles) to the west, the Roman city of Augusta Taurinorum (modern Turin) was founded to replace the Ligurian settlement of Taurasia, near the confluence of the river Po and the Dora Riparia, coming down through the Susa Valley.

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3. “The Valleys of the Shadow of Death,” *Economist*, October 31, 2020, p. 77, www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/10/31/italian-towns-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-are-doing-better-now.

Industria was
founded during the
first century CE

Under patronage of the Avillius family, the city flourished during the first and second centuries as an industrial town, as reflected in its new name, processing metal ores brought down from the Alps. Originally from Padua, near Venice, the Avillius family had made a fortune in trade across the Aegean Sea, with their main base at the Cycladic island of Delos, and looked to diversify their assets. Initially attracted by possible gold deposits in the Alps, they ultimately settled on exploring the much larger copper deposits and on the production of bronze ingots and objects.

At the time of the founding of Industria, the Roman Empire was at the height of its expansion and power, resulting in an increased exposure to foreign cultures and religions. This was certainly the case for the internationally connected Avillius family. Prominent examples in

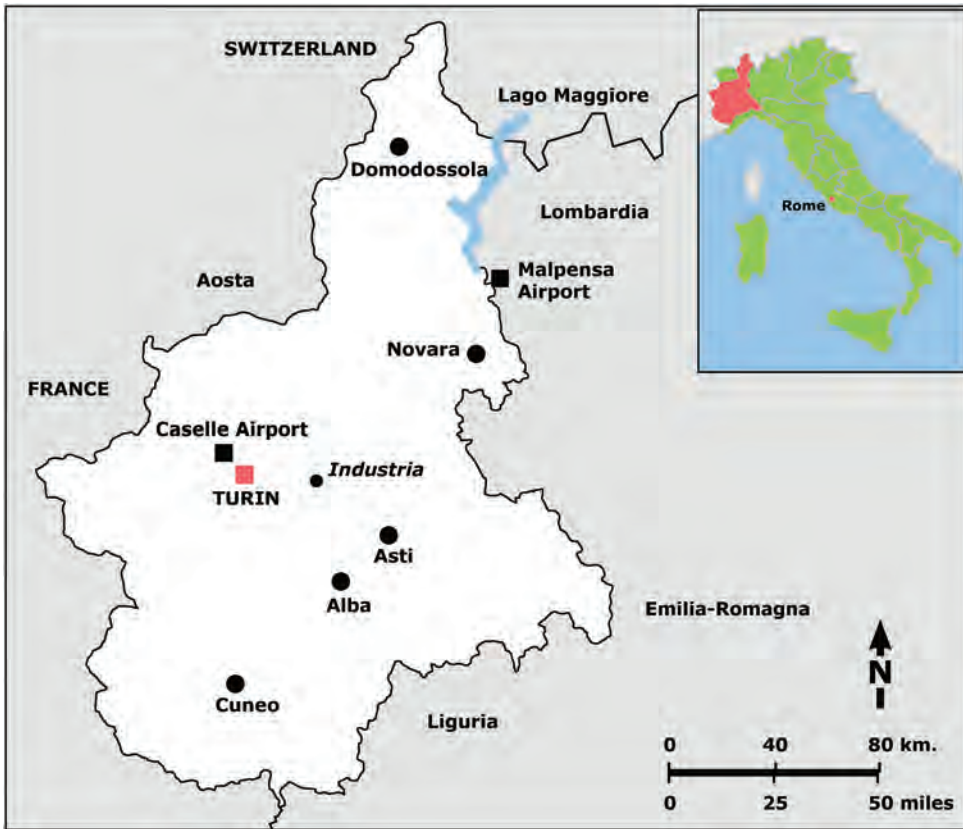


Figure 1. Map of Piemonte, northern Italy, with the location of the Roman city of Industria (previously Bodincomagus; modern Monteu da Po) indicated.



Figure 2. Satellite image of Industria in northern Italy. The road pattern dates to Roman times. The ruins of putative temples to the Egyptian deities Isis and Serapis are visible north of a single-track railroad.



Figure 3. Community outreach was the main focus of our first field season, postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rome of the resulting fascination with cultures farther east include the pyramid (tomb) of Gaius Cestius (circa 18–12 BCE), statuary of Hadrian and his companion Antinous in remarkable Egyptianized style (circa 135 CE; originally in Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli and now mostly in Room III of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum in the Vatican Museums), eight Egyptian obelisks moved to Rome between around 10 and 350 CE, five obelisks carved in Italy in Egyptian style between around 25 and 275 CE, and the first century CE Bembine Tablet of Isis (Mensa Isaica), now in Museo Egizio in Turin. In Industria, this trend and the influence of the Avillius family seem to have resulted in the two main temples of the city being dedicated to the Egyptian deities Isis and Serapis

After reaching its peak in the second and third centuries CE, the fortune of Industria changed when the river Po slowly moved away from the settlement and Roman economic structures changed. During the fourth century CE, the bronze industry came to an end, and the inhabitants abandoned the city, with many moving into the foothills of the Monferrato Mountains farther south. Most of the Roman building materials were removed to be used elsewhere, and the remains of the city slowly disappeared under orchards and agricultural fields.

During the fourth century the bronze industry ended



Figure 4. Willeke Wendrich (left) discusses research strategies with codirector David Walsh of the University of Newcastle.



Figure 5. Hans Barnard (right) sets up a total station with the help of UCLA graduate student Brandon Keith.



Figure 6. Francis Leung (University of Kent), Brandon Keith, and Vittorio Scolamiero (Politecnico di Torino) collect resistivity and high-resolution GPS data.

In the course of the eighteenth century, the dukes of Savoy, based in nearby Turin, developed an interest in Industria, seeing another opportunity to increase their cultural and intellectual standing and with that their political influence among the noble families of Europe. In 1745 Charles Emmanuel III sent his librarians Giovanni Paolo Ricolvi and Antonio Rivautella to investigate the site. They returned to Turin with many ancient artifacts, which became part of the growing collection of the Savoy family. These are now kept in Museo di Antichità in Turin. In Napoleonic times (1798–1814), the site was purchased, excavated, and studied by Count Bernardino Morra di Lauriano. More excavations, as well as protection and presentation of the ancient remains, were performed between 1981 and 2003, mostly under the direction of Elisa Lanza and Emanuela Zanda of the University of Turin. Federico Barello and Alessandro Quercia of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio published additional insights, overviews, and reconstructions (Barello 2012; Zanda 2011).



Figure 7. Lorenzo Teppati (left) of the Politecnico di Torino and Willeke Wendrich inspect drone imagery in real time.

Large areas remain unexcavated and understudied

Much of the archaeological attention on the site focused on the center of the city, with its temples and other public buildings, also because many of the ancient remains are below privately owned land. Large areas thus remain mostly unexcavated and understudied, including living quarters, industrial facilities, and cemeteries. This leaves many details of the economic and technological function of the ancient settlement unclear. This holds true for details about the daily life and religious practices of the common inhabitants of the city. After visiting the site several times with students of the summer teaching program in Museo Egizio and in close cooperation with the local authorities, we developed a project to reinvestigate the site,⁴ focusing on areas outside the protected center of the ancient city. This obviously required significant communication with the local community to reach consensus on the meaning and value of the ancient remains. The name of the project—Comunità Antiche e Moderne a Industria (Ancient and Modern Communities at Industria)—reflects this focus.

Of prime importance for the success of our interaction with the local population and authorities is our collaboration with local archaeologist Anna Lorenzatto, who also participated in our project in Shire, Tigray, Ethiopia.⁵ The scientific research is partly executed by scholars from the University of Newcastle, with which Romanist and codirector David Walsh is affiliated, and a geophysical surveyor of the University of Kent in Canterbury. During our first field season we were joined by graduate students Mia Evans and Francis Leung of the University of Kent, as well as Brandon Keith and Matei Tichindelean of UCLA. We were also briefly joined by a survey team from the Politecnico di Torino, directed by Fulvio Rinaudo, which created orthographic photographs of the site and a digital elevation model. All our work was performed with the permission and cooperation of the Direzione Generale Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio, Ministero della Cultura.

4. See *Backdirt* 2017, pp. 68–69, and *Backdirt* 2019, pp. 10–15.

5. See *Backdirt* 2015, pp. 48–53, and *Backdirt* 2019, pp. 54–59.

Conversations took place with the local community

Our first season comprised an intensive topographical and geophysical survey of a triangular piece of land, measuring 8,100 m² (2 acres), just north of the ancient city center. This preserves the remains of the Church of San Giovanni di Dustria, which was active from the fourth to the twelfth century. Both the magnetic and earth resistance data revealed a subterranean semicircular feature associated with several compacted surfaces. The alignment of these structures was 11° east of north, which is consistent with the street plan and Roman structures nearby. Another set of structures appeared to be aligned 14° east of north, which is consistent with the standing remains of the church. Apart from these structures, we saw several discrete areas with ferrous materials, which could be modern, as well as one area that had once been subjected to high temperatures.

During the collection and processing of these data, informal conversations took place with many representatives of the local community, including those living near the site, passersby, and the mayors of the two nearby communities (Monteu da Po and Lauriano). On September 24, 2022, after the project ended, we presented our preliminary results to the local community during the eighth Tramonto a Industria festival in Monteu da Po. We spoke along with Anna Lorenzatto, after introductions by Valentina Barberis and Alessandro Quercia. Our presentation was received well; two articles on the project ran in a local newspaper. The owners of the restaurant where we ate lunch every day were aware of the ancient site and have now decided to embrace it by designing a cocktail named Industria. Our experiences and first results provide us with great hopes for future field seasons, and we strive to continue our research with as much involvement of the local community and our graduate students as feasible.

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Figure 8. The authors, together with local archaeologist Anna Lorenzatto (not pictured), presented their work and preliminary results to the community during the eighth Tramonto a Industria festival in Monteu da Po on September 24, 2022. (Image courtesy of Mauro Facciolo, La Vita Casalese.)

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