

TRASTEVERE DURING AUGUSTAN AGE

The *Regio XIV Transtiberim* of Augustan age, occupied the right shore of the Tiber and included the Vatican northwards, the Trastevere quarter southwards, eastwards the Janiculum Hill and the Tiberina Island westwards. The area coincided with the alluvial valley created by Tiber dregs along the right shore which was delimited by two small rivers flowing from Vatican and Janiculum Hills; the former (ascribable with the current moat “Valle dell’Inferno” today “Valle Aurelia”), delimited the *Regio* northwards whilst the latter (whose name is unknown) did southwesterly. The area between the slope of Janiculum and the Tiber should have been characterized by a rural landscape with temples, springs, rivers, swamps and cultivated lands which at the time of Rome’s birth, was included into the *ager Romanus*.

The king Numa Pompilius (716-672 b.C.) should have been buried at the foot of Janiculum Hill, near the sacred area devoted to *Fons*, god of the springs, where today is found the Ministry for Education, University and Research.

The *Lucus Furrinae* i.e. the forest where the celebrations in honour of *Furrina* –probably a nymph– took place, is found in the current Villa Sciarra. According to the tradition Ancus Marcius (640-616 a.C.) should build the first wooden bridge on the south of Tiber Island (*pons Sublicius*) and strengthen the Janiculum Hill.

At the first mile of the *via Campana*, Servius Tullius should have founded the shrine of *Fors Fortuna*, identified by Coarelli with the circular building inserted into the quadrangular element which occupies the lower left angle in the sheet 28 of the *Forma Urbis*. During the first Republican age (509-396 b.C.), the occupation of the right shore of the Tiber by private citizens should be related to the farming thereof, as it seems to demonstrate the *prata Mucia*, ascribed to Mucius Scaevola and the *prata Quinctia* owned by Cincinnatus which can be localized northwards of the later *via Aurelia* in the area of Porta Settimiana in front of the military harbour (*Navalia*) on the opposite shore. The driveability around which the first urbanization process of the Trastevere area developed, was centered on two ancient roads headed at Sublicio bridge: the *via Campana* which moved towards the salt mine at the Tiber’s mouth and was included into the *via Portuensis*, after the built of artificial harbours of Claudius and Trajan; the *via Aurelia* which probably traced an ancient etruscan road. The other travel axis, connecting Trastevere with the Vatican was the *via Septimiana*, today *via della Lungara*.

In 291 b.C. started the building of a temple dedicated to Aesculapius, god of medicine, on the Tiber Island, in the place suggested by the snake, the goddess sacred animal, which the legation received as gift in Epidaurus (Greek), after the plague which hit Rome in 293 b.C. When the ship came close to the island, the snake threw itself into the water and disappeared within the island. The shrine is usually located within the area of St. Bartholomew church from where another altar belonging to imperial age dedicated to Aesculapius and an inscription remembering votive donations from the second half of I sec. b.C. During the first century b.C, this island sector was decorated with a ship’s prow bearing Aesculapius image on a 1:1 scale. In the late Republican age a larger urbanization project was carried out especially on the connection structure.

The censor Aurelius Cotta, in 241 b.C., made probably some works on the road connecting the bridge Sublicio to Janiculum Hill, which was named after him, *Via Aurelia*. The road was attached to a new bridge, the first by stone, the bridge Aemilius (*pons Aemilius*), currently the ponte Rotto. The Tiber Island was connected to the dry land by means of two bridges, Ponte Fabricio on the left shore, built by Lucius Fabricius -roads' curator- and Ponte Cestio on the right shore, built perhaps by Gaius Cestius, praetor in 44 and 43 b.C. In 55-54 b.C. censors Marcus Valerius Messalla and Publius Servilius Vatia Isauricus, made the first public circumscription by stumps of the area around the river shore. In this area, along the hill foot and on the shore, suburban villas were built with luxurious gardens, the so-called *horti* not straightforwardly traceable, as the *horti Cassiani*, *horti Clodiae*, *horti Lamiani* and *horti Siliiani*. Among them there was also the private property of Caesar (*horti Caesaris*), probably in the area between Piazza Mastai and the first mile of via Campana. Here he celebrated his triumph in Spain by two public banquets and here stayed Cleopatra during her visit to Rome. When he died, the gardens became property of Roman population. During Augustan age (27 b.C.-14 a.C.) the urbanization of the right shore went on whose consequences were the river obstruction by rubbles and drains and its shores were invaded by private constructions. To remedy at these phenomena, two new stumps delimitations were carried out: the first in 8b.C. and the second in 7-6b.C. By using the alluvial valley, the emperor made build an artificial lagoon devoted to naval battles the *Naumachia Augusti* which was inaugurated in 2 b.C. on the occasion of the dedication to the Temple of Mars Ultor. The construction should occupy part of the Caesar's *horti* next to the shrine of *Fors Fortuna* along the via Campana. The naumachia was probably rectangular, as seems to be confirmed by a *Forma Urbis* fragment of severian age, sheet 28c. It should be divided in two sectors, one along the Janiculum Hill to housing the spectators and the other made by the lagoon. A small artificial island was in the middle of the pont connected to the shore by a wooden bridge. The ships used for such a entertainment acceded to the naumachia by a canal which connected it directly with the Tiber. Where the via Campana crossed the canal it must be a mobile bridge which could raise, if necessary. To feed the basin, Augustus made an aqueduct built, *Acqua Alsietina*, coming from the *Alsietino* lake, the current lake of Martignano. As his nephew, Lucius and Gaius Caesar, died (2 and 4 a.C.), Augustus dedicated the two sacred youngs, the wood next the naumachia (*nemus Caesarum*). The *naumachia Augusti* was restored by Tiberius and continued to be used under Nero, Tirus and perhaps Trajan, while under Alexander Severus (222-235 a.C.) it was by the time abandoned.

Most probably some sailors from Ravenna fleet, detached in Trastevere, *castra Ravennatium*, were devoted to the functioning of the artificial lagoon. A building in the fragment 33 of the *Forma Urbis Severiana* was proposed as their headquarter, at about 50mt from the naumachia. It was a building formed by two narrow courtyards around which 34 rooms are facing. On the north of Tiber Island, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa made a bridge built -*pons Agrippae*- the current Ponte Sisto, perhaps to connect his properties of Campus Martius with those on the right shore.