



Municipality of Vasanello



**Agricultural University of Vasanello**

**friday 18 november 2022 - ore 16:30**

**THEY INTERVENE**

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**BOOK PRESENTATION CONFERENCE**

# **Il Lago Vadimóne si trovava a Vasanello**

A fascinating journey through time full of twists and turns, a real mystery where "the culprit" cannot be missing, the great puppeteer who with an incredible coup de théâtre in the mid-nineteenth century managed to move... even a lake!

**Albatrós**







## Inscrutable plots

Igino Vestri Mayor of Vasanello



History knows how to weave truly inscrutable plots, with a thousand variables that can direct it one way rather than the other. The butterfly that flaps its wings in Mexico and ends up causing an earthquake in China comes to mind. Cause-effect, in short, and so in any place a quiet, very normal, not to say anonymous day like many others suddenly ends up in the annals *because that very day it happened that...*

In this case, it is the subject of this book, in 309 and 283 BC. two pitched battles of extraordinary impact were fought for two civilisations: the Roman one, triumphant in both and therefore destined to become what we well know, and the Etruscan one, defeated and therefore in its twilight as the latter was definitively absorbed by the City. The common denominator of these battles is not so much the historical fact, but the fact that they were fought in the same place: near Lake Vadimone, a body of water never identified with certainty.

And here we are in Vasanello, a splendid Cimino village of which I am honored to be mayor. This town is mostly known for its baronial castle, once the residence of Giulia Farnese, but also for Palazzolo, an ancient settlement perched on the *limes* of the *Byzantine Corridor*, for its centuries-old tradition in ceramics, for its beautiful Romanesque churches and for two monumental fifteenth-century frescoes attributed to Piermatteo d'Amelia. There is more, obviously, but no lake... so what does Vadimone have to do with it?

It has more to do with it than you think, more than I myself have ever believed, although quite certain that near the term "Poggio del Lago", here in Vasanello, there must have been some kind of invasion in ancient times, otherwise how could the toponym be justified? It has to do with it to the point that when you get to the end of this book you will ask yourself, I really want to go out on a limb: "But how could anyone believe that lake was somewhere else if everything, absolutely everything places it in Vasanello?"

The research work and the incredible puzzle put together by Loppi are, I guarantee, unsettling, it emerges that it is rarely Fate that weaves inscrutable plots but rather, as usual, the irrepressible deceitful nature of humans.

I know Ardelio well, we have been friends for a long time and no matter how much I like him, I confess that sometimes I thought he was exaggerating with this "Vadimone a Vasanello" story. Yet, having reached the last page, I realized that the one who exaggerated, on the contrary, however, was the one who for years dismissed "his ravings about him" with a shrug of the shoulders and a smile. Luckily this book has arrived and now there is only one way to make up for lost time: to do everything possible to ensure that the historical data that locates Lake Vadimone in Vasanello is restored.

Delete the word parochialism, this is about justice and love of history.







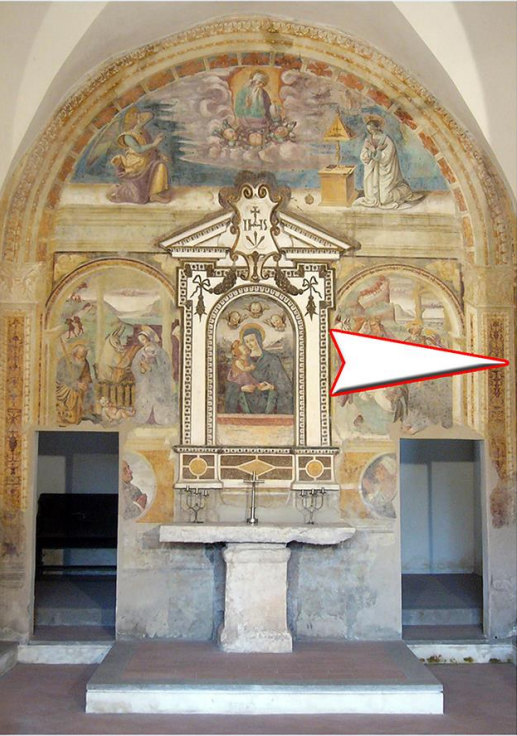
Ancient chronicles hand down that two of the bloodiest and most crucial battles in the history of Rome were fought near **Lake Vadimóne**: the first in **309 BC. against the Etruscans alone, the other 26 years later, in 283, against a coalition of Gauls-Boii and Etruscans.** This was the last time that an Etruscan army moved against the City: from that moment on, the Tyrrhenian civilization was definitively incorporated into Rome.

**It is above all this fact that makes it extraordinarily important to understand where the Lake was located: considering, however, the very limited elements provided to us by the classical authors, after centuries we continue to fight... but this time with blows from the bell tower to establish its real location!**

It would now seem "completely established" that it is the small sinkhole located in the Piana di Lucignano, in the territory of Orte (VT), **but the many clues that I have collected in over twenty years of studies place it instead at about ten kilometers from there, close to the town of Vasanello, a town better known as Bassanello until 1949.**

Vasanello  
Lazio  
Province of Viterbo





**Madonna and Child**  
Anonymous author,  
fresco, late 15th century,  
Church of the Madonna delle Grazie,  
Vasanello

Nowadays, however, in this town **only a fresco representing** it and a vast basin with a very significant toponym remain to commemorate the presence of a lake: **Lake Hill**. In any case, I was not satisfied with these important references: to decree it for the first time definitively it was a geologist, Antonio Mancini, honoring my book with his precious contribution.

But here's the crucial question: "Okay, in Vasanello there was a lake: but who says it was actually the Vadimóne?"

**It is this question that I aim to answer with this essay.**

**Lake Hill**  
Photo of  
Paolo Lannaioli





Anyone who hears about Lake Vadimóne for the first time is immediately struck by a dilemma: how to pronounce it? In most cases we find it written without any accent, so as good Italians we decide according to how it sounds best to our ears. However, there are those who write it with an accented ì, therefore Vadìmone. I like the diction of Francesco Cherubini's 1825 Latin-Italian Vocabulary: **Vadimōnis Lacus. Lake of Vadimóne, now Bassanello in Roman.** In the essay I therefore opted for the acute accent on the ó, also because, **this is above all the reason why I like it so much**, Cherubini also says another significant thing: that is, where until 1825 this lake.

Then, within a few years, poof! It disappears from the then village of Bassanello to reappear a few kilometers away, **in the Lucignano Plain in the Orte area**: stuff that would make even Houdini die with envy!

uliers.  
legonte, nobile

e, il Portatore,  
Camp. di Roma  
, f. nell'Ancon.  
fiume Aufente =  
Ufentina, una

nell'alta Ungher.  
di Germania.  
Domestico  
tino.

b. in Germania.  
um ad Rhenum  
a.  
ra, b. nel Lazio.

ante ad Ulubra.

is: m. Ulisse, re  
zia e saggezza.  
che Olissipo. V.  
Umbria, Umbro.  
i Umbri.

prov. d'It. che  
va parte della  
nitane, l'Urbi-  
Spoletano.

\*Uxēntum, i. n. Ugēto, città in Terra  
d' Otranto.

## V

\*V abræ, arum. f. pl. o Vabrīncum, i. n.  
Vabres, città di Francia.

Vacca, æ. f. Vacca, fiume in Port. e c. in Af.  
Vaccēsis, c. Cittadino di Vacca, c. in Af.  
Vacūna, æ. f. Vacūna, Dea dell'ozio.

Vacūnālis, e. Della Dea Vacūna.

Vada, ōrum. n. pl. Wageningen, cast.  
ne' P. B. = Vada, villaggio nel Genov.

Vadicāsses, ūm. m. pl. I Vadicāssi,  
pop. antichi della Gallia che abitavano  
l'attual Nivernese, prov. di Francia.

Vadimōnis Lacus. Lago di Vadimóne,  
ora di Bassanello nel Romano.

Vadumsabatūm. Vadosabdzio, ora Vado  
o Vari, porto in Riviera di Genova.

Vagēnni e Vagiēnni, ōrum. m. pl. Va-  
giēnni, pop. della Liguria mont. che  
abitavano, credesi, il Saluzzese attuale.

\*Vagrīa, æ. f. Wágrīa, paese di Germ.

\*Valgrīa, æ. f. Walcheren, is. ne' P. Bassi.

Valdonus, i. m. Il Valdano, ora il  
Walpo, fiume in Ungheria.





Before revealing who was the author of this amazing magic, **in which however two people are involved, one of whom, although decisive, is completely unaware**, I want to briefly retrace the stages of the path that led me to be so categorical in stating that **Lake Vadimóne is instead, more likely, to be identified with the basin which is now dried up in the locality of Lake Hill, in Vasanello, and not with the pool of the Lucignano Plan in the territory of Orte: a locality in which, thanks to the disappearance of the Vasanello lake , at the end of the 19th century the Vadimóne was dragged by force with the exclusive intention of ennobling the genealogy of the city more than it already is.**





The small body of water in the Lucignano Plain, about 40 meters in diameter, is a sinkhole: that is, a sinking that occurs when, due to an underground cavity of natural or anthropic origin, the surface layer collapses of the land. In Italy the phenomenon is better known as a sinkhole, which however is different as it involves a sinking, in karst areas, due exclusively to the presence of soluble rocks. Both phenomena, in any case very similar, were well known since ancient times: Pliny the Elder, Vitruvius, Julius Obsequente, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Titus Livy and others wrote about them.

**We can therefore affirm that Pliny the Younger, nephew of the aforementioned the Elder, whose letter is considered "the smoking gun" of those who located the Vadimóne in Orte - we will get there shortly -, was anything but naive and knew a lot the phenomenon well: therefore, if in his epistle he refers to the small sinking of the Lucignano Plain, he would never have called it a lake.**

**It should also be highlighted that this sinkhole is located in a bend of the Tiber: BE CAREFUL BECAUSE THE TIBER IS FUNDAMENTAL IN THIS STORY**



Nowadays, the sinkhole of the Lucignano Plain is surrounded by worked fields and therefore, obviously, it appears to us as the perfect stereotype of an ancient battlefield. Let's try to take a leap back in time: what do you think, more than two thousand years ago would you have seen the same landscape? Of course not, in front of you there would have been an immense marshy area scattered, as far as the eye could see, with tangled reed thickets up to and over six meters high: exactly as it is still today in quite a few places, such as the not far away Gallese Scalo, where right in front of the train station there is a perfect temporal bubble of what the Tiber Valley must have been like at the time of the battles. Thus today's perfect battlefield was transformed into a nefarious place, a swamp with invisible holes and quicksand where the only way to see beyond one's nose was to equip oneself with stilts at least as high as the surrounding reeds. Hell for the infantry, but can you imagine the cavalry? I don't know about you, but I personally think it highly unlikely that sensible leaders could have pushed armies to clash in such a place: and not once, mind you, but on two occasions. **Something that doesn't add up.**







What then is the "certainty" of some that this is precisely the scenario where the two clashes took place based?

The workhorses of the Lucignano Plane Theorem are two:

1) the aforementioned epistle of Pliny the Younger, which describes the Vadimóne as the scene of the famous battles to his friend Gallus. It's rather long and wordy but I'll spare you, I'll just tell you **that the description fits perfectly to the sinkhole in question, I assure you, including the smell of sulphurous waters that actually still emanates from it today.** In short, the temptation to consider this pool to be the body of water described by Pliny is great.

2) The other "evidence" is an excerptum, that is, a fragment of a lost book by **Dio Cassius** found in 1827 in the Vatican Library by the great Jesuit philologist Angelo Mai. Here's what it says: ***Dolabella attacked the Etruscans who were crossing the Tiber with weapons, so the river overflowed with blood and corpses, and the Romans who were in the city knew the outcome of the battle from the flow of the river before from the news.***

Damn, from bad to worse: Vasanello is quite far from the Tiber...



## Letter from Pliny the Younger to his friend Gallus *Epistles*, Book VIII, 20

As I repeat in this epistle, Pliny seems to describe the sinkhole in the Lucignano Plain. However, those who cite it to stick the Vadimóne in the territory of Orte **biasedly leave out a fundamental passage which in reality excludes it in an incontrovertible way**: *“the lake flows into a river, which after showing itself to view for a while, dives underground and flows highly hidden.”*

Given that the sinkhole is located in one of its bends: what could this river have been if not the Tiber? Which, however, does not appear to have ever flowed underground, while Lake Vasanello, as we are about to see, dried up precisely because of a canal for irrigation use which, *after being visible for a while, flowed underground into tunnels, obviously flowing , highly hidden.*

Not only that, is it possible that Pliny generically **called the watercourse considered sacred by the Romans "a river"**? And that, indeed, he never mentions the Tiber despite the length and accuracy of the letter in question?

I could continue with another element covered in the epistle, also crucial according to the supporters of the sinkhole, **namely the reference to the Amerini Hills**, but we will return to it shortly and you will see what a surprise: **believe me, this "smoking gun" makes water from all parts.**







## Excerptum of Dio Cassio

Angelo Mai, *Excerpta Vaticana*, Tomo II, pag, 536, excerptum 26, Typis Vaticanis, Rome, 1827

The key element of the fragment of the lost book of Cassius is obviously **the Tiber**. It is therefore normal that fans of the sinkhole consider it crucial for drawing water to their mill: **in fact it is located in a bend of the river, while Lake Hill, in Vasanello, is a few kilometers away.**

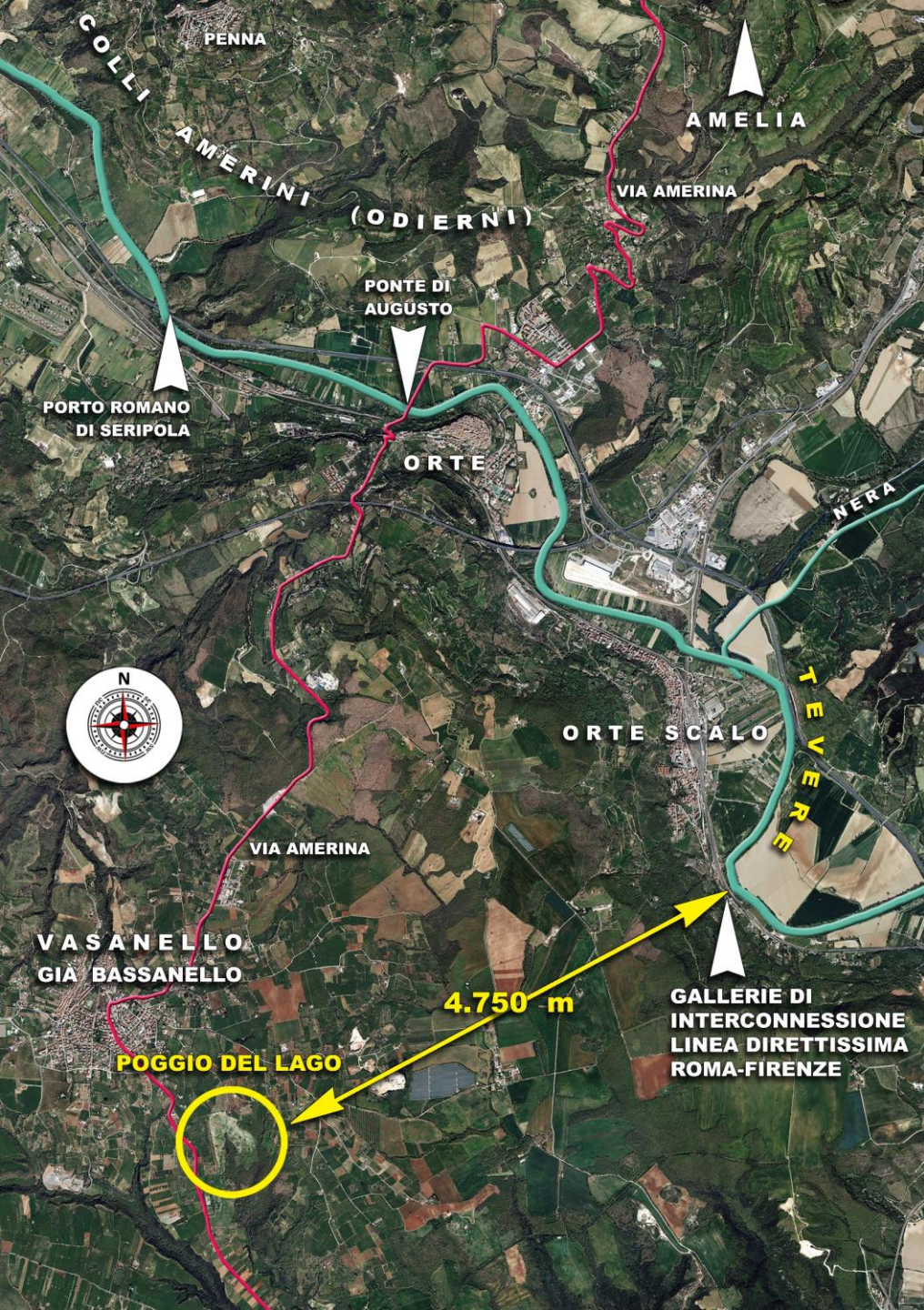
The point is that starting with **Polybius**, the first to talk about this lake with reference to the battle of 283 BC, and then **Titus Livy** regarding that of 309, **then all their epitomes in cascade, well no classical author ever talks about the Tiber: curious, don't you think they were referring to a body of water practically attached to the river?** The fragment in question, written four centuries after the battle of 283, **is the only exception.** Therefore, returning to the Tiber, **does Cassius' single reference make more noise or rather the deafening silence of all the others?** Including **Seneca**, who in his *Naturales quaestiones* places the Vadimóne near *Statonia*, a city that, like Shangrillà, no one knows where to look. In short, if Seneca was referring to the sinkhole in the Lucignano Plan, why, besides not even mentioning the Tiber, does he bring up the mythical Statonia when the ancient Orte is less than five kilometers away? **Nothing, apart from Cassius, no classical author ever mentions the Tiber, much less Orte.**





We will probably never know how Cassius managed, four centuries after the second battle of the Vadimóne, that of 283 BC, let's remember between Rome and a coalition of Gauls-Boii and Etruscans, **to find information totally unknown to anyone else who understood the city of having won by the number of enemy corpses dragged there from the Tiber.** As you will see in the book, I have long been tickled by the doubt that, if only he among many classical authors, some of whom are chronologically much closer to the two battles, not only mentions the Tiber but even identifies it as the final theater of the battle to which he refers , **well I have long been tickled by the doubt that Cassio had actually invented this episode.** It would not be the first time, as we well know, that a historian exaggerates or even invents a narrative to please the powers that be. However, even if it remains a mystery, you will agree, that only he handed down such a sensational fact as mountains of corpses floating right into Rome, **as I continued with my work I convinced myself that perhaps he didn't invent anything.**





Therefore, Cassio's fragment says *that Dolabella attacked the Etruscans at the crossing of the Tiber etc.*, but does not mention Vadimóne; however, we know that it refers to the battle of 283, because on that occasion **Publius Cornelius Dolabella was the consul who led the legions against the Gauls-Boii and the Etruscans**. In all likelihood the lake was therefore mentioned but not in the few lines that have come down to us: **not in that fragment**.

**Where do I want to go?** Simple: it is certainly possible that the battle of 283 really ended on the banks of the Tiber, **but not necessarily that it began there**. The dynamics of a pitched battle is roughly divided into three phases: the first clash, more or less lasting; the progressive retreat of one of the sides; and finally the hasty course of those who seek them. But it's not like the referee blows his whistle and everyone goes to the locker room. In short, history is full of examples of "fights" that started in one point and ended many tens of kilometers away: whoever took them ran away and whoever won followed them.

**Do you understand now where I'm going?** The battle may certainly have ended along the Tiber, **but only because the Boii-Etruscan coalition was fleeing from the place where the battle had begun**.

**And where did it start?** Around a smelly pool a few hundred meters away, or near a lake that has now disappeared a few kilometers away? **Do you know how far Lake Hill is from the Tiber as the crow flies? Just 4,750 meters, less than five kilometers... a walk. This is why, although it mentions the Tiber, the Cassius fragment in no way demonstrates that the battle began and ended in the Lucignano Plain.**



# Cartographic excursus

Before examining the elements supporting the **Vasanello Theorem**, let's take a look at where the ancient cartographers placed the Vadimóne.

**Hieronimo Bellarmato - *Tusciae*, 1573 (Vasanello)**



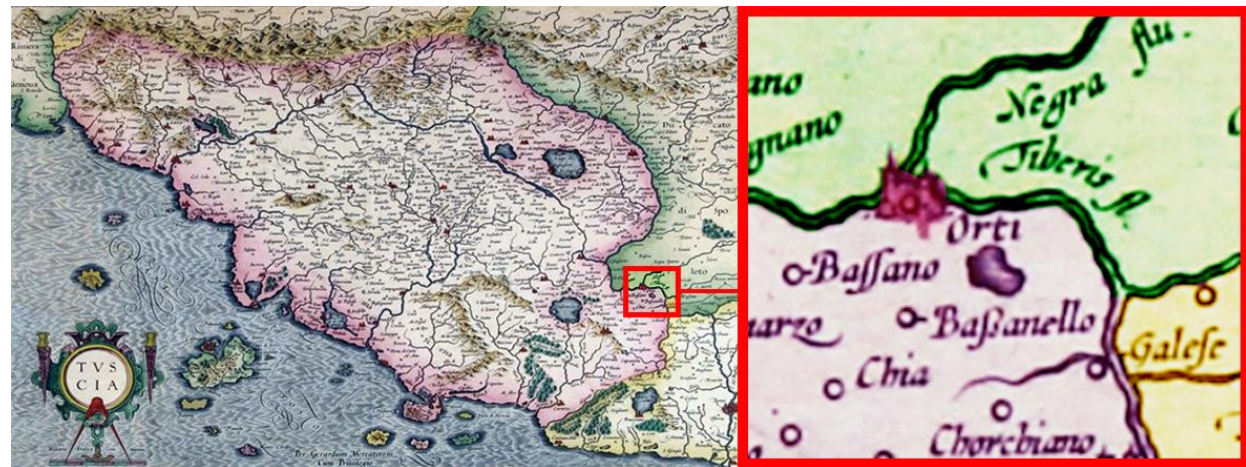
**Ignazio Danti - *Etruria*, 1581 (Vasanello)**



**Abraham Ortelius - *Tusciae Antiquae*, 1584 (Vasanello)**



**Gerardo Mercatore - *Tuscia*, 1589 (Vasanello)**





Antonio Magini - *Patrimonio di S. Pietro, Sabina ecc.*, 1604 (Vasanello)



Johannes Jansonius - *Patrimonio di S. Pietro, Sabina ecc.*, 1636 (Vasanello)



Cornelio Di Guglielmo Blaeu - *Campagna di Roma ecc.*, 1648 (Vasanello)



Philippe Briet - *Patrimoine de St. Pierre, Rome ecc.*, 1653 (Vasanello)





Innocenzo Mattei - *Tavola del Distretto di Roma, 1674* (Orte)



Giacomo Cantelli - *Patrimonio di S. Pietro ecc., 1690* (Orte)



Cornelio Danckerts - *Status Ecclesiasticus et Ducatus ecc., 1690* (Vasanello)

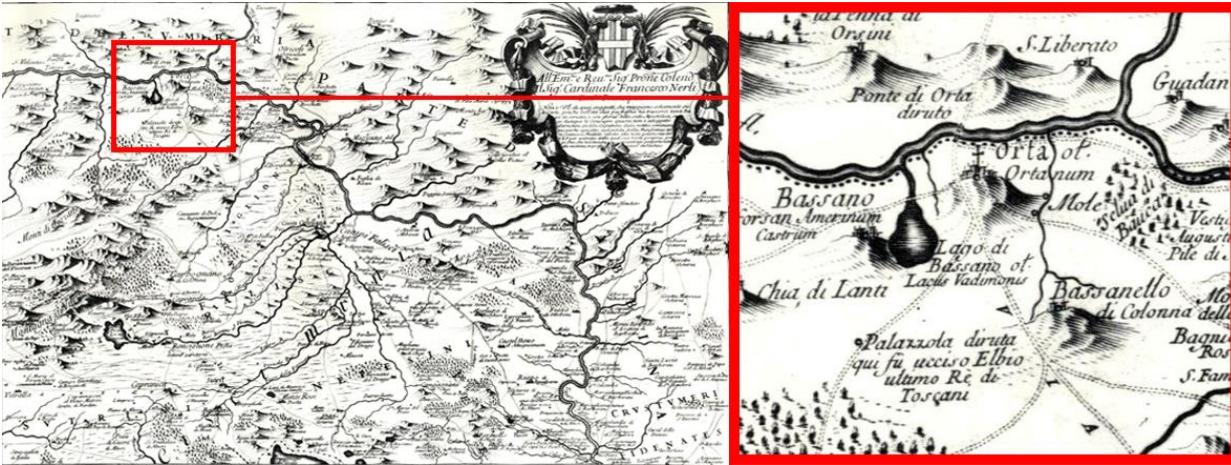


Jhoannes Honigh - *Toscana inferiore ecc., 1690* (Orte)





Giacomo Filippo Ameti - *Lazio e Patrimonio di S. Pietro ecc.*, 1696 (Orte)



Jean-Babtiste Nolin - *Etats de l'Eglise ecc.*, 1700 (Vasanello)



Petrus Schenk - *Ecclesiae Status ecc.*, 1703 (Vasanello)



Francois Halma - *Latium, Campanje en Samnium*, 1704 (Vasanello)





Guglielmo Delisle - *Regionum Italiae ecc.*, 1711 (Orte)



Johan Babtist Homman - *Status Ecclesiastici ecc.*, 1720 (Vasanello)



Matteo Seuttero - *Patrimonio di San Pietro*, 1740 (Vasanello)



Giovanni Domenico Campiglio - *Provincia di Sabina*, 1743 (Orte)





**Anonymus - *Campagna di Roma, Patrimonio di San Pietro e Ducato di Castro*, 1787 (Vasanello - Orte)**

This map can be considered of extraordinary importance since it is the only one that represents both the sinkhole of the Lucignano Plan and the now disappeared lake of Bassanello/Vasanello.



**Ex Libris Trimalchionis - *Maps ancien Italy*, 1800 (Vasanello)**

This map is also very important as, in addition to placing the Vadimóne in the territory of today's Vasanello, it identifies this same town as the Castellum Amerinum of the Tabula or Carta Peutingeriana. Not only that, the road that crosses it, in a straight line towards Orte, is the Via Amerina.



The 22 ancient maps reported in the essay locate Lake Vadimóne in Bassanello/Vasanello or in the Lucignano plain, in the territory of Orte. They are not the only ones in existence, but certainly the most significant. **Purely by way of statistics, 15 of them place the lake in Vasanello, 6 in the Piana di Lucignano, and only the penultimate one by an anonymous author reports both bodies of water, without giving them a name.**





Yet, despite the overwhelming dominance of Vasanello expressed by this collection of ancient geographical maps, they should not be considered "evidence" in support of the Vasanello Theorem: **they are not**. And do you know why? Simple: they demonstrate that there was certainly a lake in Vasanello, but we already knew this, **however as regards the attribution of the name given to the lake they are only the result of suppositions, whether they say Vasanello or Orte or whatever other location**.

You see, the information of modern cartographers and authors derives from that passed down by classical authors. Well, as we saw a little while ago, starting from the first to hand down the two battles near the Vadimóne, namely Polybius and Titus Livy, and all those who followed them, **no one had the faintest idea of where they found this blessed lake**. From both Polybius and Livy we can certainly deduce that it was somewhere in Etruria, even if not too close to the Tiber, mind you, otherwise someone among many would certainly have mentioned it, but no one exactly he knew where. **It was in Etruria, that's all**.

This explains the reason why modern historians and cartographers, starting from the Renaissance, have gone to great lengths to place it left and right: **it could in fact have been any puddle north of Rome falling within the band of Central Italy traditionally known as Etruria**.





**But then how can you, and above all you, Ardelio, be so sure that Vadimóne can be identified with the now disappeared lake of Vasanello?**

To answer this question it is necessary to narrow the area to a very specific area of Etruria otherwise there are at least fifteen potential candidates. **Is it possible to do this with a finally objective method?** Yes, it is possible thanks above all to Titus Livy who was the first to tell us the battle of 309 BC, and here the candidates become very few.

I will not stay here to retrace his long narrative, which from the march to defend Sutri besieged by the Etruscans, will lead the consul **Quinto Fabio Massimo Rulliano** to climb Mount Cimino and cross, first among the Romans, its Dark Forest until he swarms with the legions in the plain below in pursuit of the Etruscans up to Perugia. This happened in 311 BC, nothing to do with the first battle of Vadimóne, which took place two years later, **but which was generated precisely by those events and fought and won in that territory by the dictator Lucius Papirius Cursor**: historians agree on this.

We have therefore narrowed the area **to a place between Sutri and the Tiber Valley, and then not far towards the north-east**, since, having crossed the river, we are no longer in Etruria but in the territory of the Umbrian tribes.



**How many lakes are there, or were there in Roman times in this area?** Three: Lake Monterosi, the now disappeared Lake Vasanello, and, if we really want to call it a lake, the sinkhole of the Lucignano Plan. This narrows down the candidates considerably.

**As for Lake Monterosi**, brought up like Vadimóne in the 15th century by the great humanist from Forlì **Flavio Biondo** in his Italia Illustrata, **once again historians agree in excluding it**: given the proximity to the City, even if in 309 B.C. Cassia didn't exist yet if things had gone badly for Cursore, the reinforcements would have arrived too quickly anyway.

This leaves only "our" two candidates: **Lake Bassanello-Vasanello and the Lucignano Plane sinkhole.**



**Lake of Monterosi**





Before illustrating to you what leads me to affirm that the Vadimóne is to be identified with the Poggio del Lago basin, in Vasanello, **let's recap what has been said to exclude that it could be the sinkhole of the Lucignano Plan.**

- 1) In Roman times the Ortana Valley was a swamp unsuitable for pitched battles.
- 2) Apart from Dio Cassius, no classical author ever mentions the Tiber, in a bend of which the sinkhole is located.
- 3) Dio Cassius mentions the Tiber, **but not the Vadimóne**, he only says where the battle of 283 had its epilogue. It is therefore not possible to establish whether it began and ended near the Tiber, or whether it began elsewhere and ended along its banks. **But be careful because Cassius does not write that Dolabella clashed with the Etruscans, an appropriate term at the beginning of a battle, but that he attacked them as they crossed the Tiber, using a verb that is more suited, you will agree, to the epilogue of a chase.**
- 4) In his letter Pliny describes Lake Vadimóne in detail, but does not mention the Tiber, instead he writes: *"... the lake flows into a river, which after showing itself a little to the eye, dives underground and flows highly hidden."* This sentence incontrovertibly excludes the sinkhole since the Tiber has never flowed underground. The reference "a river" is also really too generic to refer to the waterway considered sacred by the Romans. Furthermore, Pliny knew very well the phenomenon of sinking and called the pool in question a "lake".





Ardelio Loppi with  
Paolo Lannaioli,  
author of the  
splendid aerial  
images of Lake Hill  
taken with a drone

# The Vasanello Theorem

The main elements that lead me to identify Vadimóne as the disappeared lake of Vasanello are three.

Incredibly, as we have seen, two of them are precisely the same ones heralded as "smoking guns" by supporters of the Lucignano Plan Theorem: **namely the excerptum of Dio Cassius and the famous letter of Pliny the Younger to his friend Gallus.**

To add to the enormous inconsistencies of these alleged "queen proofs" in favor of the Ortano sinkhole, there is then a book, *Acts of Martyrdom of the Glorious San Lanno*, published in 1794 by the canon **Don Ermenegildo Costanzi**. Well, in addition to explaining how Lake Vasanello dried up, this precious writing tells us an ancient legend according to which the bell tower of the church of San Salvatore, in Vasanello, **was built over the tomb of the last Etruscan king, Elbio , who died in the territory of this country in 283 BC, in the second battle of Vadimóne!**



DILUCIDAZIONE - ISTORICO - CRITICA  
DEGLI  
ATTI DEL MARTIRIO  
DEL GLORIOSO  
**SAN LANNÒ**  
PROTETTORE DELLA TERRA  
DI BASSANELLO.  
DEDICATA A SUA ECCELLENZA  
IL SIGNOR  
**D. MAFFEO BARBERINI**  
COLONNA DI SCIARRA  
DUCA DI DETTO LUOGO  
DALL' ABATE  
**D. ERMENEGILDO COSTANZI.**



IN ROMA 1794.  
NELLA STAMPERIA DI PAOLO GIUNCHI.  
*Con Licenza de' Superiori.*

## ***Acts of the Martyrdom of the Glorious San Lanno - 1794*** **Don Ermenegildo Costanzi**

Considering the presence of an ancient body of water in Vasanello as established, both from the toponym Poggio del Lago, and from the fresco that portrays it, **but above all from the geology**, as regards this aspect I want to limit myself to focusing on what Costanzi says about the drying up of this ancient basin: [...] *since, having been called a diverted lake, as can be seen from the tunnels, which still remain, the bed of said lake today forms a green prairie.* [...]

In short, as the geologist Antonio Mancini also explains to us in his contribution to the essay, evidently not having significant spring sources and perhaps, indeed, above all the contribution of rainwater, the lake has dried up due to the intensive irrigation of the fields. In fact, in the locality of ***Cunicchio*** (dialect for tunnel) south of Poggio del Lago, after having been duly channeled for about two hundred metres, the roaring waters of the lake **disappeared underground through tunnels.**



This canal still exists as it collects the wastewater from Poggio del Lago, but, obviously, since the lake no longer exists, nowadays it is just a couple of meters wide. In ancient times it was much more, but as the draft decreased over time, it would not have seemed true to farmers to gain meters and leave just enough for the rainwater to flow from the basin.

It is not far-fetched to believe that at the time when the lake still existed, the canal could exceed ten meters and the Romans, as is known, called even simple ditches rivers: **the so-called *Allia River* provides a good example, famous as such but precisely only a ditch even in historical times.**

In his letter to his friend Gallus, **without ever mentioning the Tiber**, describing the Vadimóne Pliny the Younger says: [...] *The lake flows into a river, which after showing itself to view for a while, dives underground, and flows highly hidden;* [...] Doesn't this description fit perfectly with what has just been said? What else should an occasional visitor like Pliny have written following the canal - **a river** - which literally disappeared swallowed by the earth?

But Pliny can wait a little longer.





## The tomb of Elbio, the last Etruscan king

Here is what Costanzi writes about this: [...] *Elbio, or Elvio, the last king of the Tuscans (Etruscans) killed in the last decisive battle given to him by the Romans, near Lake Vadimone, nowhere else do I find him really dead than in Palazzuola (Palazzolo), now ruined, no more than a good mile from Lake Bassanello [...]*

And again: [...] *There exists in the said land (of Vasanello) an ancient mausoleum, in the form of a squared tower, composed of a mixture of white and dark stones, with its cords of suitable bricks. This very high tower today serves as the bell tower of one of the parish churches of that place, under the title of Santissimo Salvatore. There is a constant tradition that the said tower is an ancient tomb erected for an illustrious person who died there, according to my imagination, in the last war and battle which the Romans gave to the Etruscans, near Lake Vadimone, which I will show later, not far from the said tower, which is about half a mile away. [...]*





Before delving into the tomb aspect, let's see what is known about this elusive Elbio. Let's say first of all that no classical or modern historian talks about him: **did he ever exist?** Of course it would be difficult to continue talking about it if it were only the fruit of Costanzi's pen, but fortunately this is not the case. Although, rather than a king of the entire Etruscan nation, non-existent as this people was divided into independent city states, it is more correct to believe that he was the leader of one of these city states.

At the end of the 3rd century BC. the powerful Etruscan enclave of Arezzo was particularly reluctant to accept compromises with Rome, so it is very probable that in 283 the allies of the Gauls-Boii on the occasion of the second battle of Vadimóne were precisely the people of Arezzo: in fact Costanzi speaks of *king de' Toscani* and this seems to confirm it.

**But where did Costanzi get this information if no historian talks about Elbio?**







Innocenzo Mattei *Tavola Top. Distretto Roma*, 1674



Giacomo Cantelli *Patrimonio di S. Pietro ecc.*, 1690



Giacomo F. Ameti *Lazio e Patrimonio S. Pietro*, 1696



Giovanni D. Campiglio *Provincia di Sabina*, 1743

Historians don't talk about it but some of the cartographers we saw a little while ago do, first of all in 1674 **Innocenzo Mattei** in his Topographical Table of the District of Rome, where next to **Palazzolo**, the archaeological area of Vasanello, writes: "**Here Elbio was killed last king of Tuscany.**" It is not known where Mattei in turn obtained the information, but after him three other important cartographers wrote the same thing: **Giacomo Cantelli**, **Giacomo Filippo Ameti** and **Giovanni Domenico Campiglio**: it is also very bizarre that all four locate the Vadimóne in the Lucignano Plain.

Returning to Costanzi, we now know that nothing has been invented about Elbio: **but does the legend handed down about his tomb have any basis in truth?**

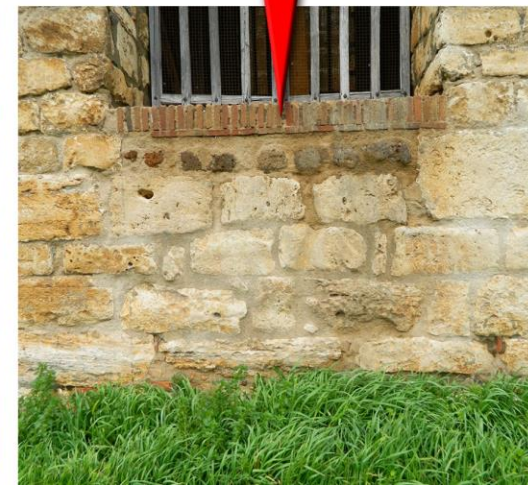


Well, in 1909, during the restoration work on the bell tower of San Salvatore, struck by lightning and therefore one step away from coming down, a massive travertine sarcophagus was found under its foundations: which demonstrates, at least, that an important figure was indeed buried down there. But unfortunately all trace of that sarcophagus had been lost.

In February 2021 I spoke about this legend to **Stefano Alessandrini, GAR archaeologist and expert at the Court of Rome**: curious, he asked me to accompany him on site. After examining the base of the bell tower, **he told me that there was no doubt that it had been built on a pre-existing structure**. Not only that, but with disarming naturalness he indicated what was the door, obviously walled up with similar stones, but still clearly visible on the eastern side. He then explained to me how important the legends, as well as the limnonyms - **toponyms referring to lakes, Lago Hill** - are in being able to find something where the passage of time has mercilessly erased every evident trace.

### Bell tower of San Salvatore (12th century)

Below, the eastern side which clearly highlights the "displacement" of the base with a pre-existing structure: in the center the walled door





## laStoria

Il ritrovamento di un sarcofago sembra destinato a suffragare la leggenda che lo vuole sepolto a Vasanello

# Sulle tracce dell'ultimo re etrusco

di **Ardelio Loppi**  
VASANELLO

Il sito archeologico di Palazzuolo si trova a meno di due chilometri da Vasanello, verso nord. È noto soprattutto per il ritrovamento, nei suoi pressi, di una rara fornace di ceramica nota come Terra sigillata italiana, le cui forme e decorazioni derivano direttamente dalla Ceramica Aretna. Non è tuttavia per questo che tra gli intellettuali del 17esimo secolo il sito ottenne per la prima volta una notevole ribalta. Fu ad opera di un cartografo, Innocenzo Mattei, che nella sua Tavola topografica del Distretto di Roma (1674), inserì appunto Palazzuolo scrivendoci sotto: "Qui fu ucciso Elbio ultimo re di Toscana". Non è dato sapere dove Mattei attinse questa informazione, eppure identico riferimento è in seguito riportato da altri cartografi: Giacomo Cantelli (Patrimonio di San Pietro, olim Tuscia Suburbicaria - 1690), Giacomo Filippo Amati (Lazio e Patrimonio di San Pietro - 1696) e Giovanni Domenico Campiglio (Provincia di Sabina - 1743).

Ma chi era questo fantomatico Elbio? Ce lo dice nel 1784 il canonico vasanellese don Ermenegildo Costanzi nel suo *Arti del martirio del glorioso San Lannoe Elbio*, o sia Elio, ultimo re de Toscani (Etruschi) ucciso nell'ultima decisiva battaglia data dai Romani, presso il Lago Vadimone, non altrove lo trovo realmente morto che in Palazzuolo (Palazzolo) Esiste in detta terra (di Vasanello) un antichissimo mausoleo, in forma di torre riquadrata, composta di un misto di pietre bianche, e scure, co' suoi cordoni di adattati mattoni. Questa torre ben alta serve in oggi per campanile di una delle chiese parrocchiali di detto luogo, sotto il titolo di

**Lago Vadimone**  
Elbio sarebbe morto qui nella battaglia del 283 avanti Cristo

**Il Campanile**  
Per la tradizione fu eretto sulla tomba del condottiero

**Il manufatto**  
Scoperto nel 1909 era stato dimenticato in un deposito

Santissimo Salvatore. Evvi costante tradizione, che detta torre sia un antico sepolcro eretto ad illustre personaggio morto ivi nell'ultima guerra e battaglia, che dai Romani fu data agli Etruschi, presso il Lago Vadimone. Il Costanzi parla dell'ultima decisiva battaglia di Roma contro gli Etruschi - coa-

lizzati con i Galli - Boi scrive Polibio nelle sue Storie - quindi si riferisce alla battaglia del 283 a.C.; per inciso presso questo lago, la cui ubicazione è tutt'altro che certa, 26 anni prima, nel 309, Tito Livio ci dice essersi svolta una battaglia cruciale tra i Romani e sempre di Roma contro i soli Etruschi stavolta. Il punto è: la leggenda riportata dal Costanzi è da ritenersi priva di qualsiasi fondamento? Mica tanto, nel 1909 nel corso dei lavori di restauro del campanile di San Salvatore, sotto alle sue fondamenta venne ritrovato un imponente sarcofago di travertino, e da questo può già significare qualcosa. Nulla di probante, ci mancherebbe, soprattutto perché di quel sarcofago non solo si erano perse le tracce, ma non esiste neanche un disegno. An-



Lo sfasciamento della base del campanile, a destra, dimostra che è stato davvero realizzato sopra una struttura preesistente. Sopra la porta murata

che se, a dire il vero, non ci sono dubbi circa il fatto che la torre campanaria è stata davvero eretta su una struttura preesistente: a confermarlo una vistosa sfasatura delle sue fondamenta con "qualcos'altro" che presenta, verso oriente, ben visibile, addirittura una porta murata. Tuttavia in mancanza di studi approfonditi non è possibile dimostrare alcunché.

Colpo di scena: sabato 19 giugno cosa salta fuori totalmente avviluppato dai rovi in un deposito comunale? Nientemeno che il sarcofago desaparecido ritrovato nel 1909 dove forse fu inumato Elbio. Cosa triste e davvero imperdonabile è che nonostante a Vasanello ci sia un bel museo, purtroppo mai aperto, a prescindere da chi abbia ospitato questo importantissimo reperto sia stato totalmente abbandonato alla curia. Qualsiasi studioso può ben testimoniare l'importanza delle leggende là dove lo scorrere del tempo ha impietosamente cancellato ogni traccia evidente. Non rappresentano una prova vera e propria, ma certamente un forte indizio per capire dove cercare. E spesso ci si azzarda perché la memoria orale, quella sì, non ha paura del tempo. Magari come una valanga si ingrossa man mano che rotola, ma di base tramanda fatti realmente accaduti sui quali poter indagare. Proprio per questo, che vi sia stato o meno deposto il mitico Elbio, il posto di quel sarcofago non è tra i rovi del deposito comunale ma nell'ambito del museo, magari nel cortile. Chissà allora che prima o poi, ad un qualche amministratore illuminato, possa persino venire in mente di farlo studiare? Così come sarebbe il caso di approfondire cosa si nasconde sotto la torre campanaria di San Salvatore: con le tecniche di analisi non invasive oggi a disposizione degli archeologi non dovrebbe essere difficile capire cos'era la struttura sulla quale, intorno all'anno millecento, fu eretto questo magnifico esempio di architettura ascensionale. Si parla tanto del turismo quale volano di ripresa, ma alla prova dei fatti, al solito, non resta che alzare gli occhi al cielo e incrociare le dita speranzosi.

The legends do not represent real proof, but certainly a strong clue to understand where to look. And we often get it right because oral memory, yes, is not afraid of time. Maybe like an avalanche it swells as it rolls, but basically it passes on real facts that need to be investigated.

In short, the next step was to try to understand what had happened to the sarcophagus. I'll spare you the various vicissitudes, you can find them in the essay, the fact is that thanks to my friend Giuseppe Purchiaroni, in the end the sarcophagus actually came out: **it had been forgotten for decades, surrounded by brambles... in a municipal warehouse!**

But it is still there, it is there: the legend handed down to us by Don Ermenegildo Costanzi may not be a fairy tale. I wrote this in an article published by the *Viterbo Courier* on 27 June 2021.



## Letter from Pliny the Younger to his friend Gallus

*Epistles*, book VIII, 20

I imagine you will find it very bizarre that this "workhorse" of the Lucignano Plan Theorem is considered by me as a probative element capable of demonstrating that on the contrary the Vadimóne was located in Vasanello...

A little while ago, when I spoke to you about this epistle, about the river that disappeared underground, etc., I said that I wouldn't go any further because this fact was more than enough to close it there. I therefore did not continue with a reference to **the Amerini Hills**, remember?

Well, listen to what Pliny writes about it: [...] *My father-in-law had wanted me to go and see the praedia Amerina (Amerini possessions). As I walked along them, I saw the lake below called Vadimone, about which incredible things are told. I arrived near it.* [...]

So Pliny's father-in-law, the eques of Como Calpurnio Fabato - he had married his daughter Calpurnia in his second marriage - **had a property on the Amerini Hills and had asked him to inspect it.**



Anonimus Pliny the Younger, 1482-'87, Council Balcony, Verona

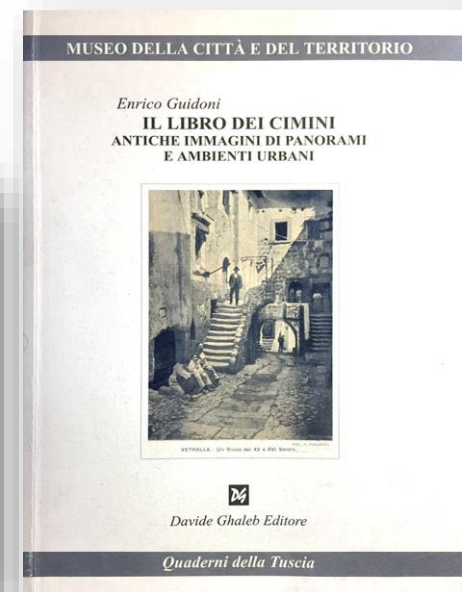


Nowadays there wouldn't be too much discussion about where the Colli Amerini are located, and in fact sinkhole fans rub their hands every time this letter is brought up because, even if they are careful not to mention the river that disappears underground etc., not only does it seem to describe the pool of the Lucignano Plain, but it is perhaps above all in Pliny's statement that he was among the Amerina praedia who saw the “smoking gun” to stick him in the Ortana Valley.

In this regard, describing Vasanello, listen to what the historian Enrico Guidoni wrote in 2002 in “*The book of Cimini*”:

[...] *It seems rather that there was the Amerino Castle, a station on the Via Amerina, near which was the residence of Calpurnio, father-in-law of Pliny the Younger. What is certain is that in this town Publio Cornelius Dolabella defeated the Etruscans in 741 in Rome.* [...]

Enrico Guidoni (1939-2007)  
*The book of Cimini*, 2002,  
Ghaleb Publisher, Vetralla



But how does Guidoni believe that Castellum Amerinum should be identified with Vasanello?





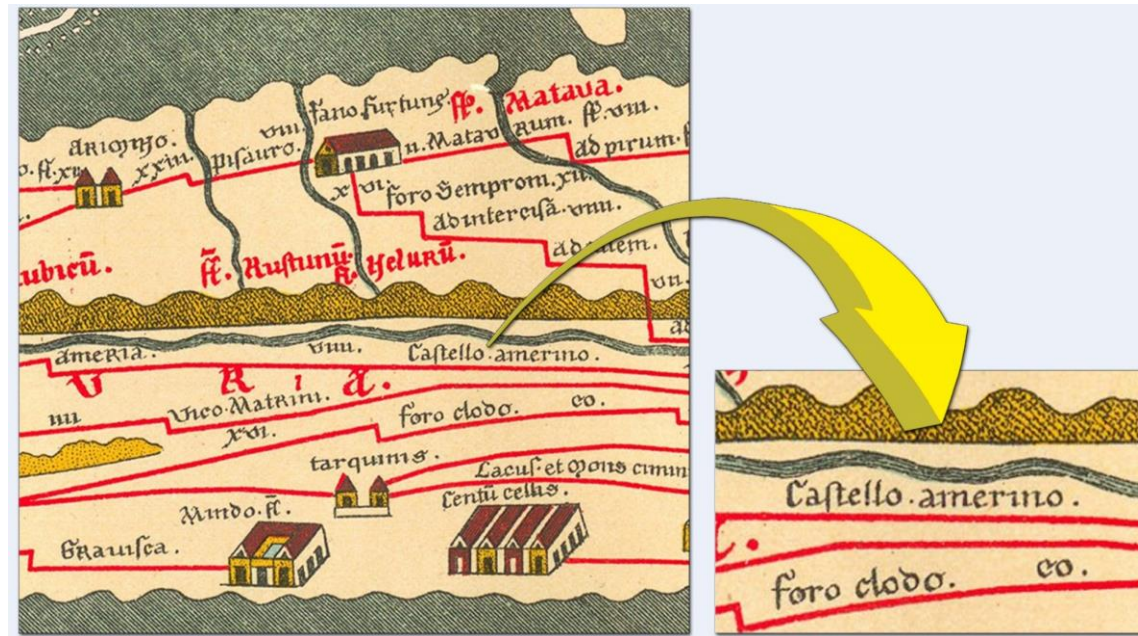
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NORD SUD

Codex Vindobonensis or Carta Peutingeriana

This belief probably derives from the **Tabula or Carta Peutingeriana**, the only plan of the Roman Empire that has come down to us, albeit in a medieval copy. It is not exactly what we would expect, but rather a diagram ante litteram like those of the subways.

Well, as you can see in the **Peutingeriana**, the Amerino Castle is not depicted on the left bank of the Tiber as it would be natural to believe today, but on the right, meaning that in ancient times this territory extended on both banks of the river.

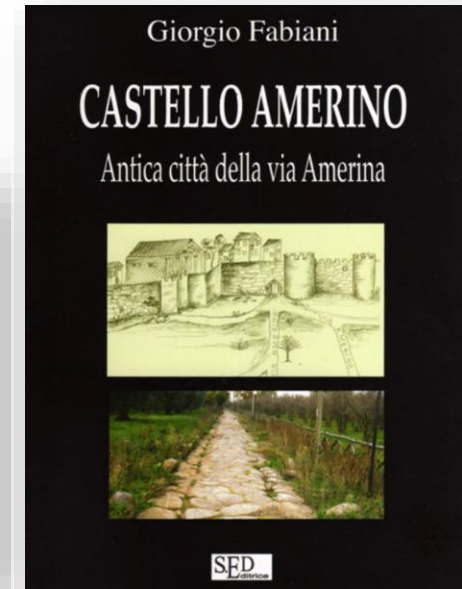
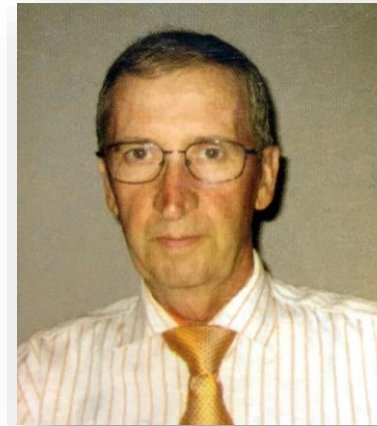






As a further demonstration of this, in 2010 the studios **Giorgio Fabiani** in *Amerino Castle* demonstrated that actually, in Roman times, **today's Vasanello was indeed Amerino Castle**.

**Giorgio Fabiani** (1948-2012)  
*Amerino Castle*, 2010,  
 S. ED Publisher, Viterbo



Therefore, unless the ancient editor of the Peutingeriana, as well as Guidoni and Fabiani were prey to the fumes of alcohol, when Pliny writes that Amerina saw Lake Vadimóne subjected to the praedia, it is **absolutely not certain that he is referring to the sinkhole of the Piana di Lucignano since Lake Vasanello was also located in the Amerini Hills area.**



In this regard I want to add a further element of reflection. In Vasanello, behind the Agricultural University building there is **Via Pliny the Younger**. In light of what has been said so far, it may even be obvious, but I guarantee you that no known document attests to the actual reason: **it is the only street in the ancient urban nucleus dedicated to a historical figure**.

What comes to us again is the oral memory according to which, listen, **the original body of the building was none other than Pliny's home!** Here memory has failed a bit, as the owner was, if anything, his father-in-law Calpurnio Fabato, but perhaps because of the easier name to remember or perhaps because the most famous character, the fact is that crossing the centuries and having a street dedicated to him is was Pliny.

This is completely unprovable, let it be clear, but from what can be seen right along Via Plinio il Giovane, inside the cellars in particular, there are no doubts about the Roman origins of the oldest part of the complex.

**In any case, the only reason why the historian may have inspired the name of this street in ancient times can only be connected to Castello Amerino and consequently to Lake Vadimóne.**





Is it possible that things are so simple to prove?

Oh yes, except that, over a century and a half ago, someone did an abracadabra!

Et voilà: the Vadimóne has magically flown towards Orte!

Here we are, the time has finally come to reveal the identity of the Great Puppeteer, of the Houdini who is responsible for the now universal belief that the Vadimóne is the sinkhole of the Lucignano Plain.

His name is Giovanni Vitali, parish priest of Orte in the years straddling the first half of the nineteenth century, author in 1845 of a *Historical Compendium* of the city of Orte published only in 1975. How could this prelate have proved decisive if his manuscript was published so many years after he wrote it?

A very interesting story that revolves around a great scholar who was, **completely unconsciously**, the real driving force, the bass drum of the Orte parish priest even at an international level: **I am referring to the British diplomat and etruscologist George Dennis.**

The two characters are so osmotic and decisive that unlike all the others, in the essay treated individually, I could only join them together since, in fact, **for the story that interests us they are the same thing.**



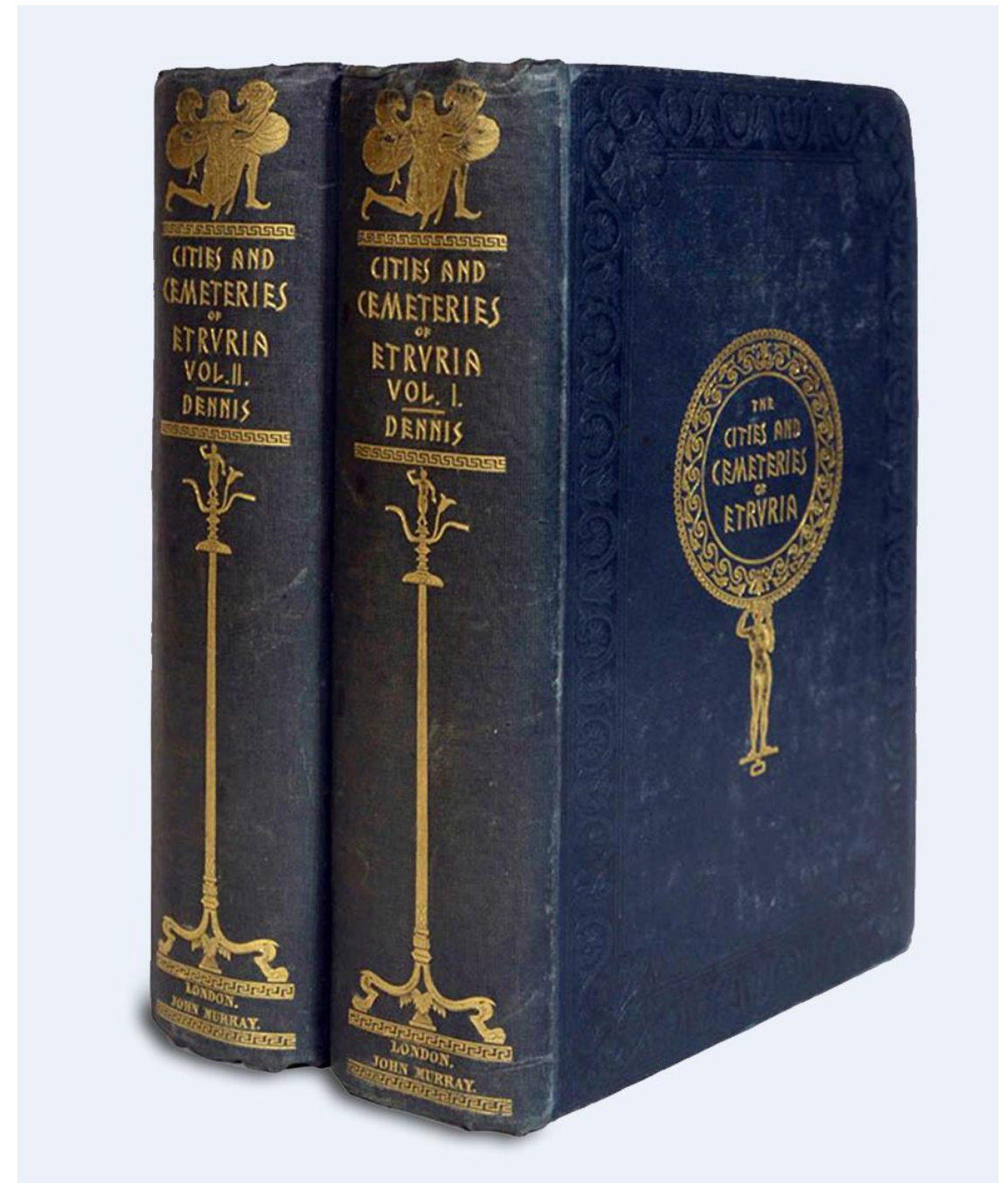


This is because, although Vitali's manuscript will remain anonymous until 1975, his positions will still be decisive when Dennis, in 1848, published *The cities and cemeteries of Etruria*, destined to become a world-class bestseller.

### How can I prove it?

Through this crucial passage from Vitali's *Compendium* taken from the chapter he dedicates to the Vadimóne: [...] *But it is now time to adduce the most convincing reason to which in my opinion there is no other way than to respond; reason with which I persuaded many curious travelers who honored me with their confidence in observing the rarities of this classic territory.* [...]

Don't try hard, apparently these lines don't say anything in particular. This is because, in order to fully grasp its extraordinary nature, it is essential to have read George Dennis' book. More precisely, this illuminating extract from the description he gives of Orte: [...] *These gentlemen [...] deserve all the credit for the interest they have in the antiquities of their city, and I am especially indebted to the learned canon Don Giovanni Vitali with his courtesy in providing me with information on the excavations carried out in Orte* [...]





**Cuckoo! Et voilà we have the name of one of the many curious travelers that Vitali has, more than persuaded, indoctrinated, about the incontrovertible location of the Vadimóne in the Lucignano Plain!**

There is no need to go into the detailed examination that the good Vitali carries out in refuting all those **who have dared to suppose the lake elsewhere**, except, because it is truly tasty, the extraordinary balancing act he performs to explain why Pliny the Younger, from the Amerini Hills, when in his letter he writes that he came down to see the Vadimóne up close, do not say that he had to cross the Tiber; which we remember never mentioning despite being practically close to the small Lucignano sinkhole.

It should be underlined that what follows starts exactly from the extract in which Vitali talks about the many travelers he convinced, including George Dennis, **and according to him it should be considered the main proof of his theorem.**

**Giovanni Vitali**  
*Historical  
Compendium  
Of the City of Orte*

Original manuscript  
from 1845, published  
by Ildo Santori  
Menna Typography  
Orte 1975

**Pagina 28**

**George Dennis**  
*The Cities and  
Cemeteries of Etruria*

Jhon Murray,  
London 1848

**Pagina 165**

feci osservare ai miei compagni, che stando sulle sponde del Lago vedonsi non solo le due colline di Giove, e di Penna, ma dietro di esse si vedono veramente li campi amerini.

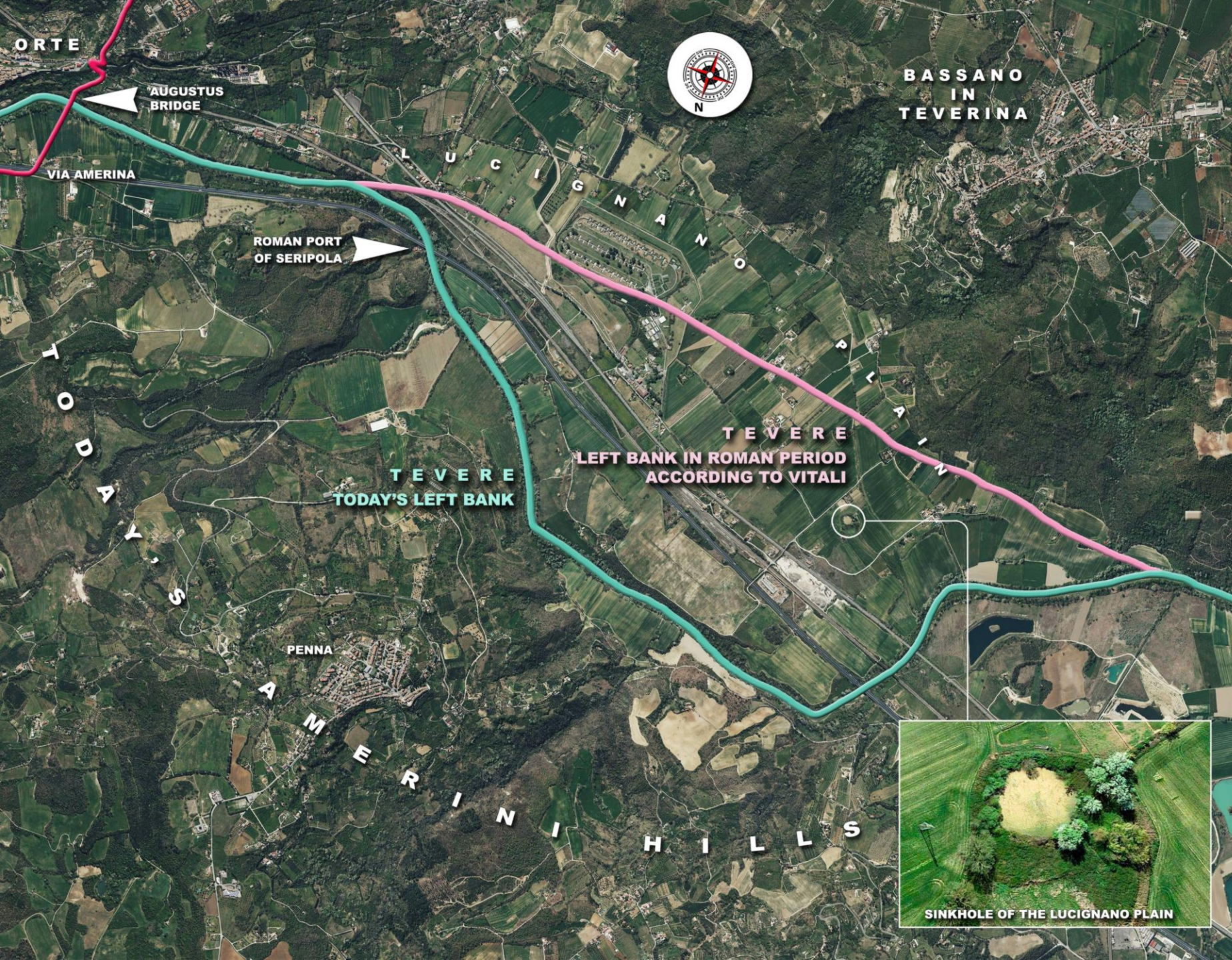
Ma è ora omai di addurre la più convincente ragione alla quale a mio credere non vi è che rispondere; ragione colla quale ho persuaso tanti curiosi viaggiatori che mi onoravano della loro confidenza nell'osservare le rarità di questo classico Territorio.

Io voglio concedere che Plinio nella sua relazione abbia a stimarsi veridico storico, ed esatto geografico, e che perciò sia sceso dai campi amerini, e siasi portato sulle sponde del Lago senza passare il Tevere perché o non vi

“ Odi, vede, e tace  
Se vuoi viver in pace.”

These gentlemen, whose want of experience in such matters may well excuse this blunder, deserve all credit for the interest they take in the antiquities of their town, and to the learned canon Don Giovanni Vitali I am especially indebted for his courtesy in furnishing me with information about the excavations which have been made at Orte, and in giving me copies of inscriptions there brought to light which his antiquarian zeal has preserved from oblivion What little I have to say of the Etruscan





In essence, after long, exhausting reasoning which I want to zip here as much as possible otherwise you'll fall down, do you know how Vitali explains Pliny's silence regarding the Tiber? Simple: in all probability at that time the riverbed was on another side, towards the west, and then: [...] here is Lake Vadimone subjected to the Amerini fields; Here Pliny was deprived of crossing the Tiber over bridges, or by means of boats, or without the risk of constipating himself to ford it. [...]

That's it, in an amen the good Vitali-Houdini not only managed to move Lake Vadimone from Bassanello to the Lucignano Plain, but even the course of the Tiber so as not to get Pliny's toga wet!

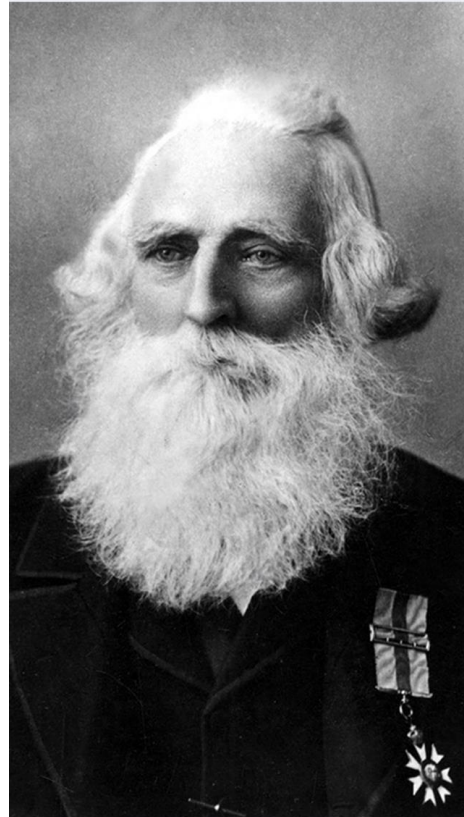


George Dennis' real interest was the actual antiquities of Etruria, therefore, even if as an excellent connoisseur of the classics and therefore of Pliny, **a doubt actually touches him**, in his book Vitali's vehemence will lead him to write exactly that that the prelate desired: that is to say that the Vadimóne is located in Orte. **As mentioned, The cities and cemeteries of Etruria became a bestseller and the omelette was made.**

**What doubt did George Dennis encounter?**  
As a serious and scrupulous scholar he just couldn't help but write:

*[...] I seemed to see the flow that Pliny talks about, in a ditch that carries superfluous water towards the Tiber; but I didn't perceive it as an underground course. [...]*

George Dennis before and after the chat with the parish priest of Orte Giovanni Vitali







As you have seen, the elements that place the Vadimóne in the Vasanello area are not few. Of course, it remains difficult to believe that they have been ignored by great history, but since there is still no BBC or CNN it is clear that no reporter followed the consul **Quintus Fabio Massimo Rulliano** when, in 311 BC, he crossed the Selva Cimina for the first time. Nor did this happen in 309, in what is defined as one of the bloodiest battles in history, when the **dictator Lucius Papirius Cursor** barely defeated the Etruscans at Lake Vadimóne. It didn't even happen twenty years later, in 283, with the consul **Publius Cornelius Dolabella** who returned to the same place to finish the work against the Boii-Etruscan coalition.



In short, the two victories at Vadimóne were recounted by those who fought them upon their return to Rome. Here someone wrote about it, of course, reporting however only that this blessed lake was somewhere in Etruria, no matter where, **but not very close to the Tiber otherwise imagine if some of the thousands of legionaries and their commanders hadn't been told.**

This total lack of information has thus not allowed any classical author to place it somewhere, which is why many modern authors have ventured to find a place for it... **often at the sound of bell towers.**

I would say to make the point, I really don't know what else to add, other than that I thank you for the interest you have shown. I don't know if Vadimóne will finally return to his home, **but if it were to happen it will be above all thanks to you and to those who read my book**, since this willing scribbler may have studied and written as much as he likes but if no one listens to him it is as if had ever done it.

In this case amen, that the Vadimóne remains in the limbo into which *he was forcibly dragged* and where evidently the Fates have decided to remain.

**3 august 2023** The Mayor of Vasanello Igino Vestri and Ardelio Loppi in front of the explanatory panel placed by the Municipal Administration in Poggio del Lago









ONLY THE  
TITLE  
TRANSLATED

Mayor Iginio Vestri intervenes: "The word parochialism should be deleted, this is only about justice and love of history"

## Municipality determined to take back Lake Vadimóne

VASANELLO

■ Nei giorni scorsi, in località Poggio del Lago, è stato installato un grande pannello esplicativo che rappresenta il primo passo ufficiale dell'amministrazione comunale per la riconquista del lago Vadimóne, il leggendario specchio d'acqua presso il quale si tennero due cruente battaglie dell'antichità.

Più determinato che mai il sindaco, Iginio Vestri, uno dei più convinti sostenitori dell'ubicazione a Vasanello piuttosto che ad Orte, dove, da circa un secolo, questo lago è universalmente collocato. Il ricordo delle due battaglie del Vadimóne ci è stato tramandato da Polibio (il primo in assoluto a scriverne con riferimento alla seconda, nel 283 a.C., vinta da Roma contro una coalizione di Galli-Boi ed Etruschi), e Tito Livio (che descrive la prima battaglia, nel 309 a.C., vinta da Roma contro i soli Etruschi), eppure, anche se da entrambi si evince che gli scontri si tennero nel comprensorio cimino, nessuno dei due autori fornisce elementi utili a capire dove si trovasse precisamente il lago. Per questo da secoli molto si



In alto a sinistra il cartello segnaletico e a destra il sindaco Vestri con Loppi davanti al pannello esplicativo voluto dall'amministrazione. A lato a sinistra la copertina de "Il Lago Vadimóne si trovava a Vasanello" del giornalista-saggista Ardelio Loppi e a destra Conca di Poggio del Lago, lo specchio d'acqua vasanellese si è prosciugato nel XV secolo.

dibatte e le individuazioni si sprecano. Tuttavia, con il trascorre del tempo, la querelle sulle località più verosimili si è ridotta ad Orte - un piccolo sinhole in località Piana di Lucignano - e Vasanello, il cui lago si è tuttavia prosciugato sul finire del XV

secolo. E' stato un saggio del giornalista-saggista Ardelio Loppi, "Il Lago Vadimóne si trovava a Vasanello", pubblicato dal Gruppo Albatros nel 2022, a convincere l'amministrazione comunale che il famoso specchio d'acqua si trovasse pro-



prio qui.

"Abbiamo voluto apporre questo pannello - dice il sindaco Vestri - perché nel saggio di Loppi emergono comprovati elementi circa le molte inesattezze ed anche mistificazioni che, nel 19esimo secolo, sono risultate determi-

nanti per 'spostare' il Vadimóne dall'allora Bassanello alla Piana di Lucignano, nel territorio di Orte. Visto pertanto che quando ci sono due diversi punti di vista, e nessuna evidenza documentale o archeologica, l'onere della prova deve essere re-

ciproco, per quanto ci riguarda lo studio di Loppi rappresenta, ad oggi, e fino a prova contraria, il più esaustivo contributo atto a sancire un tale importante dato storico. Si cancelli la parola campanilismo - conclude Vestri - qui si tratta di giustizia ed amor di storia".

La rilevanza storica è soprattutto legata alla seconda battaglia, quella del 283 a.C., che sancì il definitivo tracollo della civiltà dei Tirreni: da quel momento l'Etruria fu definitivamente assorbita nell'orbita romana.

Ma come mai risulta che il lago si trovasse ad Orte e non a Vasanello se, a quanto sembra, tutto indica questo paese? Nel suo saggio Ardelio Loppi riconduce lo "spostamento" a delle notizie del tutto arbitrarie fornite, a metà Ottocento, dall'allora parroco di Orte don Giovanni Vitali al grande etruscologo britannico George Dennis. Questi nel 1848 diede alle stampe il suo "The cities and cemeteries of Etruria" nel quale, su imbeccata del Vitali, individua appunto il Vadimóne ad Orte. Il libro diventò un best seller di livello mondiale e la frittata fu fatta.

R. V.