



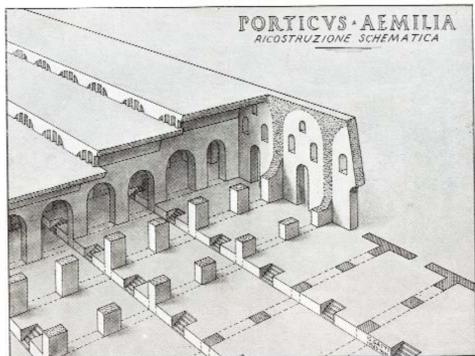
Challenging Testaccio

THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE PORTICUS AEMILIA

The building identified as Porticus Aemilia was situated nearby the Tiber and was connected to the Republican harbour of Rome. The archaeological research executed by the **KNIR (Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome)** and the **Soprintendenza Speciale dei Beni Archeologici di Roma** has revealed interesting results about the use of the Porticus through the centuries.



The Porticus Aemilia is one of the largest known buildings of the Roman era (487x60 m.) consisting in 50 aisles descending towards the Tiber. The aisles are separated by arches which are founded on a continuous wall following the width of the building. The enormous structure was covered by a barrel vault, which has been restored during the Roman Empire.



>> Burial of a child in amphora

<< Reconstruction of the Republican building (Gatti 1934, tav. IV)



the disuse of the antique commercial buildings in Testaccio, a process which starts from the end of the 3rd century AD.

This development does not imply a complete abandonment of the area of the Porticus. In the *horreum*, cut into the collapsed building material after the storage place was destroyed has been created a room, building small walls against the imperial destruction layers. A pit hole suggests that this room was covered. Thick organic layers indicate the importance of agriculture for Testaccio, while against the back wall of the Porticus numerous fillings indicate the need to heighten the ground level to avoid the Tiber to flood the plain at the foot of the Aventine Hill.

TEAM

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Floor of the room in *opus spicatum*

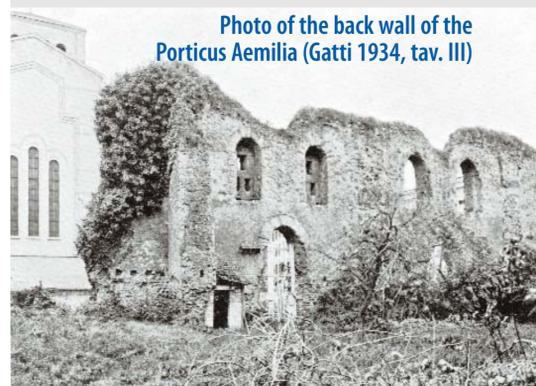


Photo of the back wall of the Porticus Aemilia (Gatti 1934, tav. III)



Excavating the medieval building



Photo of the medieval building, cut into the collapse layers of the imperial *horreum*



Collapsed barrel vault in tufa blocks, seen from the corridor between the two rooms in the XVth aisle of the Porticus

In this period the old walls of the Porticus have been reused for a new building in the XVth aisle. This new phase presents two rooms of well preserved and plastered walls, which are connected by stairs. The one located towards the back wall of the Porticus has a ground floor raised on piers to permit the circulation of air and to avoid damp. This floor and the plan of the building indicate a function as storage room (*horreum*) and the finds of carbonised emmer wheat, basic ingredient of bread for the Romans enforce this interpretation. Along the back wall of the Porticus, outside of the building, two rooms built with brick walls and in *opus mixtum* have been discovered. In one of these has been put into light the floor in *opus spicatum* or herringbone pattern.

Inside the rooms three burials have been examined, dating in the 5th and 6th century AD. The deceased were positioned inside amphoras and one of them has been identified as a child. The burials situated in the rooms can be considered as a clear indication of

Carbonised emmer wheat



The team and the participating students



Real emotion when discovering an intact imperial floor: bare feet to feel it!

