Preface

This monographic study of the 2nd and 4th century AD Roman farmhouse at San Biagio attempts to fill two major gaps in our knowledge of the history and civilization of southern Italy. First it describes how farmers of modest means, the backbone of the economy in all periods, lived. Second, it provides a snapshot of rural daily life in the Late Roman period, one that is incompletely known and only recently has attracted the attention of archaeologists and scholars.

This farmhouse is a typical and extremely well preserved example of the dwelling and workplace of a farm family in the Late Roman period, and an essential part of ICA's multifaceted study of the Metapontino. Such structures were the basic unit of the *chora* (agricultural territory) in both the Greek and Roman periods. They continued to be so from the 6th century BC for a millennium, centuries bracketed by the historical figures of Pythagoras and Constantine—in short, much of Classical Antiquity. Over this long arc of time there were changes in the basic architectural model, but they were slight despite the very different political and economic worlds of the 6th century BC and the Late Empire. The traditions of rural architecture and life have continued—with modifications—down to the present.

The site of the Late Roman farmhouse was excavated in the distant summer of 1980. It occupied a prominent position on a point of land below the landmark chapel of San Biagio overlooking the left bank of the Basento River. Several hundred meters to the north, overlooking the Venella valley, lay the major Archaic extra-urban Sanctuary of Artemis. That summer, ICA's Metaponto project undertook two initiatives that shaped its future direction. Plans were laid for a systematic field survey of a large and representative area of the *chora*. At the same time, excavation was begun at a number of representative farmhouses, the basic unit of the *chora*. ICA's project followed closely the research program outlined by Dinu Adamesteanu in the mid-1960s.

The remains on the surface and the good condition of the site, which had never been deeply plowed, first attracted our attention, and so it became one of two farmhouses to be completely excavated in that memorable summer. Nearly thirty years passed before the

last and most important step in its investigation was taken: its final study and definitive publication. This might never have happened but for the enlightened philanthropy of the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) and the enthusiasm and knowledge of Erminia Lapadula, author of much, coordinator of the rest, and spirit behind the publication.

PHI provided comprehensive and essential financial support for the publication of ICA's research results, including all aspects of the present work. PHI could not have made a more timely decision. There was the risk that the fruits of 35 years of archaeological investigation in the *chorai* of Metaponto, Croton, and Chersonesos would never see the light of day, and there was also a growing group of talented and highly trained archaeologists in Italy who were finding few opportunities to exercise their skills. The chance to study important material and publish it under their own names was made possible by grants from PHI. The Roman farmhouse at San Biagio is the first of a series of monographs on farmhouses and other sites that will appear in the coming years.

Much in the world of Italian archaeology has changed since 1980. In the specific case of Metaponto, the landscape has undergone significant transformations, which has had serious repercussions on archaeological investigations. It is unlikely that the farmhouse at San Biagio would have survived another 30 years to the present. Many rural sites, as we have noted during three decades of field survey, have been severely compromised. One thing that has not changed, I am happy to report, is the commitment of the Soprintendenza Archeologica della Basilicata to the preservation and study of sites in its territory.

In 1980, the then-Soprintendente, Dottorressa Elena Lattanzi, gave her permission to intervene and excavate at San Biagio. She actively followed the work, as did former Soprintendente Dinu Adamesteanu, with enthusiastic encouragement and wise words. The constant support of Antonio De Siena, longtime Director of the National Museum of Metaponto and Soprintendente since 2010, made the study of the San Biagio site and all the other research projects both practically possible and, because of his knowledge and personal interest, intellectually stimulating. The

first chapter of this volume, on the historical and geographical setting of the site, was contributed by our colleague and lifelong friend Liliana Giardino, student of Adamesteanu.

After more than a quarter-century of warm hospitality at Pantanello, in 2000 ICA and the Regione Basilicata signed a formal agreement of collaboration that made possible the creation of the Centro di Agroarcheologia at Pantanello. With the support of PHI, an ideal workspace was created in the farm structure that had formerly served to house excavation records, pottery restoration, and a small library. Here, the students and scholars engaged in preparing this and the many other volumes of the Chora of Metaponto series meet to study and exchange ideas. Some live in the former residence of the farm manager of the Regione Basilicata. We are grateful to the authorities of the Regione, and especially to Dott. Vito de Filippo, Presidente, to Maria Carmela San-

toro, Dirigente Generale Dipartimento Agricoltura, and to Vilma Mazzocco, Assessore all'Agricoltura of the Regione Basilicata. Particular thanks also to our friends Giuseppe D'Agrosa, Salvatore Martelli, and Carmelo Mennone for their foresight and continued support.

An agreement for the use of the land upon which the site lay, made in 1980 with Gaetano Stigliano who farmed it, is still honored by his son Giuseppe Stigliano and his son-in-law Cosimo Danzi, who regularly maintains the site so that it is visitable today. This effort, together with similar ones at several other sites in the chora excavated by ICA, including the Greek sanctuary and Roman tile factory at Pantanello, continue to give life to a long-held dream of creating an archaeological itinerary of the ancient territory. It is the best hope, I feel, for preserving the unique beauty and historical monuments of rural life and civilization in this area of Italy.

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The Chora of Metaponto 4
The Late Roman Farmhouse
at San Biagio

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