

CHAPTER ONE

Italic Architecture of the Earlier First Millennium BCE

Jeffrey A. Becker

Introduction

The origins of Roman architecture have long been sought, as its iconic and widespread form exerts influence even in the post-modern world. Recent scholarship has addressed the role played by social processes in the generation of a recognizably Roman material culture and places this phenomenon toward the end of the first millennium BCE (Elsner 1995b; Hölscher 2004; Stewart 2008). These studies are immensely valuable for examining the material culture of the Roman Republic and the ensuing imperial period, yet this same culture may be set in an even sharper focus by situating it against the background of deeply rooted Italic traditions that inform, at least in part, the aspects that make it “Roman.” This chapter will examine the underpinnings of Roman architecture by exploring some critical issues related to the architecture of central Italy primarily during the first half of the first millennium BCE. Four categories of buildings will be considered, namely domestic structures, civic buildings, fortifications, and sacred architecture. It can be shown that over the first half of the first millennium BCE, a tradition of indigenous construction emerged with characteristics of material and form that would continue to have a marked influence on architectural design throughout Roman history.

Roman authors in the Late Republic also sought to explain the origins of their society. Notions about the origins of architectural design received their due, especially from Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (d. after 15 BCE), whose *De Architectura* outlines numerous conventions that recommend (if not dictate)

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the way in which buildings of his time should be constructed. These writers of the late republic were, in most cases, speculating on an ancient past for which they had relatively little source material, especially in the case of scholars like Varro. One question that perhaps escaped – or did not even occur to – the minds of these writers was the degree to which the remote Italo-Roman past, a time prior to the direct contact Romans had with the Greek world from the third century BCE onwards, had much in common with the Rome of their own day.

In a curious way, archaeologists and architectural historians whose aim it is to trace the trajectory of the architectural forms and built environments of the Roman world often find themselves in a situation akin to that of Vitruvius and his contemporaries – seeking an aetiological explanation but having only fragmentary source material representative of diverse cultures occupying the Italic peninsula and spanning several centuries. It was both trade and Italy's first wave of urbanism that brought regional pockets of culture into sustained contact with one another and with a wider Mediterranean world through the agency of Punic and Greek traders. From a certain point of view, the identity question begins as early as the Orientalizing period when attractive eastern imports flooded into Italy; from that point on, separating the indigenous from the imported becomes a challenge, one that carries forward into the Roman culture of the later first millennium BCE and beyond.

This chapter offers some comments on the nature of the architecture of the Italian peninsula prior to the Hellenistic period and asks questions about the nature of indigenous architectural forms. Recent scholarly approaches to the archaeology of peninsular Italy have focused on regional (and even micro-regional) approaches that have dealt with settlement typology, economy, and identity, but to this point a similar treatment of architectural morphology has yet to materialize. It will prove constructive to examine the architectural traditions of central Italy across the first millennium BCE, concentrating, in this case, on forms leading up to the beginnings of the Roman conquest in the fourth century BCE and commenting on what connections may be drawn between forms across this broad timeframe. While the architecture of the bulk of first-millennium-BCE Italy is quite different, both in form and conception, from the “Roman” architecture of the first century BCE and later, one can argue that there are nevertheless elements of form that are persistent.

1. Early Domestic Architecture

In peninsular Italy, domestic architecture is the natural place at which to begin this discussion. During the Final Bronze Age (ca. 1150–950 BCE), in population centers connected with the Apennine culture across the Italian peninsula,

the most basic form of building is a fairly ephemeral hut constructed of wattle-and-daub and thatch with a beaten earth floor. At Sorgenti della Nova near Viterbo, Italy, several oblong buildings, constructed in wattle-and-daub with thatched roofs, occupy a settlement organized on a system of terraces (Negroni Catacchio 1983; Negroni Catacchio and Cardoso 2007). These buildings, sometimes referred to as “long houses,” are similar to remains from the sites of Luni sul Mignone and Monte Rovello. In all cases the structures are large (15 to 17 m x 8 to 9 m), leading scholars to speculate that they may represent the dwellings of elites who enjoyed higher social standing (Bartoloni 1989: 69–70; on Monte Revello, Biancofiore and Toti 1973; on Luni sul Mignone, Hellström 1975).

Iron Age huts are well attested at the sites of what would become the great urban centers of archaic Italy, and, in a sense, those of Rome’s Palatine Hill settlement have become something of an icon in and of themselves for Iron Age Italy (Figure 1.1). Among these, the so-called *tugurium Romuli* (hut of Romulus) was even iconic for ancient Romans who maintained it from the first century BCE onward as a reminder of their mythical founder (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.79; Vitruv. *De Arch.* 2.1.5).

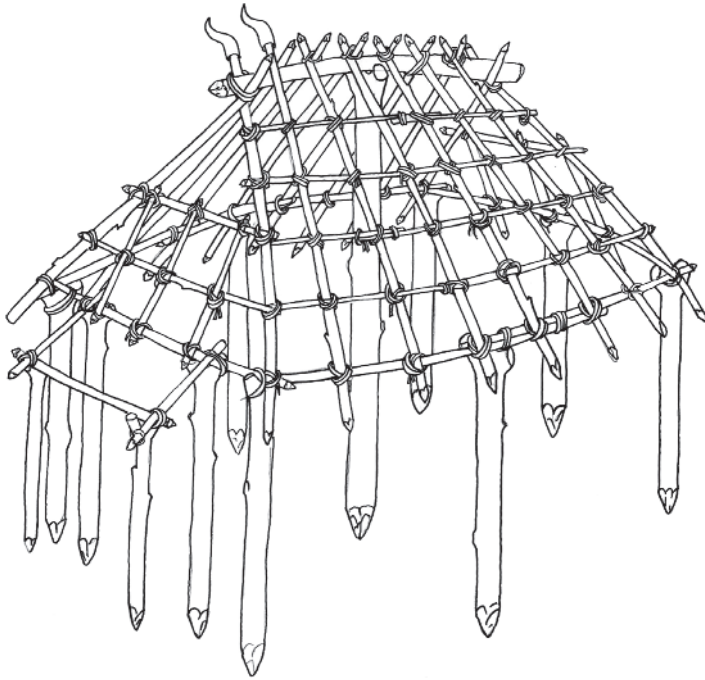


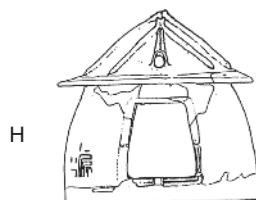
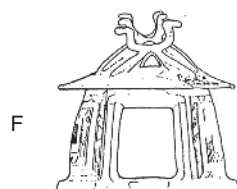
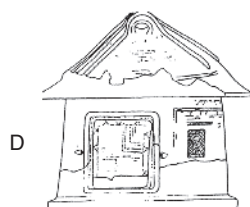
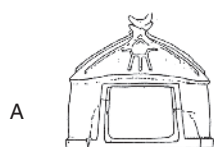
Figure 1.1 Reconstruction of an Iron Age hut. *Source:* Ulrich 2007: 92, fig. 6.1.

The footprint of these huts could be either rectangular or ovoid with a sunken floor and a superstructure that relied on vertical wooden posts to support a pitched roof covered in thatch; the walls are formed of wattle-and-daub. From a technical point of view this method involves a woven lattice of wooden strips or twigs (wattle) over which a mud plaster (daub) is applied. This plaster is highly variable in its composition, but can include wet soil or clay that can in turn be tempered with animal dung, straw, or sand. Wattle-and-daub is the likely precursor to the later Roman “in-fill” technique (*opus craticium*), known to Vitruvius (*De Arch.* 2.8.20) and employed in low-cost buildings, for example, urban *insulae* of Herculaneum, up to the first century CE. The continuity of this essentially static technique in modern Italy has been well documented (Shaffer 1993; Brandt and Karlsson 2001).

Terracotta cinerary urns modeled to resemble huts, and thus referred to as “hut urns,” provide a significant evidentiary body for the form and decoration of Iron Age huts (Bartoloni *et al.* 1987). These urns, characteristic of Latium and South Etruria, correspond closely with the archaeological remains of actual huts (Figure 1.2). An urn from Vulci, taken along with others, makes the case for the actual huts having sunken floors, as archaeological remains can confirm (Bartoloni 1989: 113, Figure 5.5). The exterior surfaces of the urns tend to be decorated with linear motifs common in the Geometric period (ninth to eighth centuries BCE) while the stylized roofs include zoomorphic termini, which may reflect the superstructures of actual huts and emphasize the ridgepole. The patterns of geometric decoration tend to emphasize exterior fasciae and to concentrate on framing door and window openings. A domestic scene with two huts carved into the Verucchio Throne, dated to the first half of the seventh century BCE, also depicts the ridge log of the roof carved with birds and monkeys (Haynes 2000: 41) (Figure 1.3). In addition to offering a better understanding of actual huts, the urns also highlight the important social status of hut owners in the Iron Age. The relative infrequency of these urns in the funerary record suggests that those whose remains are contained therein enjoyed a higher than average social position.

The seventh and sixth centuries BCE brought substantial social change to central Italy and revolutionary, concomitant changes in the forms of both structures and settlements. The radical phenomenon that acts as catalyst in this period is urbanism, the emergence of the first true cities in archaic Italy (Gros and Torelli 2010). In Etruria, Latium, and Rome, this process creates large nucleated centers with substantial territorial catchment areas; the social elite and their control of territory is key to the emergence of these cities (Smith 2006; Terrenato 2011). The advent of city centers also results in the differentiation of architectural typologies in that now one can speak of the dichotomy of urban and rural architecture. In addition to the rise of elites and their culture, another key outcome of urbanism is interconnectivity, both of cities

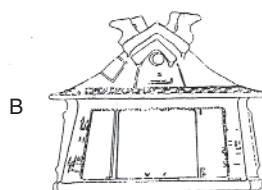
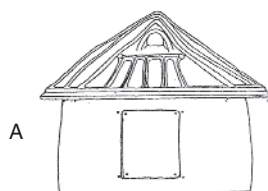
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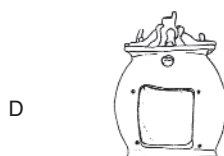
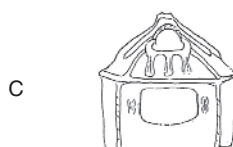
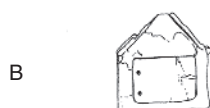
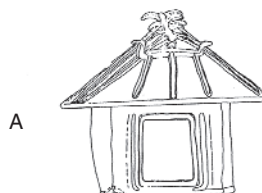
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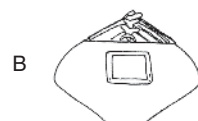
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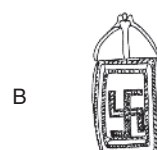
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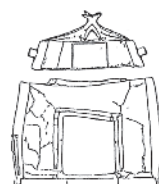


Figure 1.2 Iron Age hut urns. *Source:* Bartoloni *et al.* 1987: fig. 96.

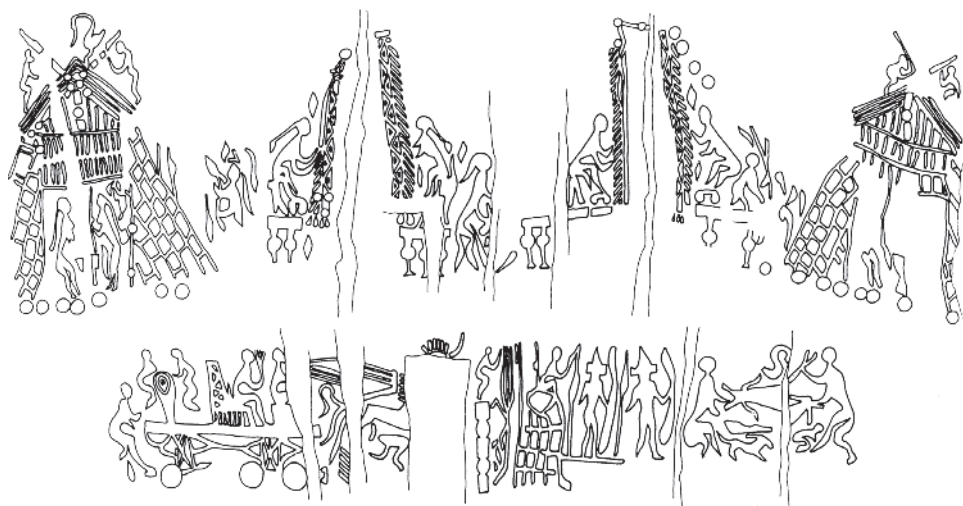


Figure 1.3 Drawing of the scene from the Verucchio throne. *Source:* Swaddling *et al.* eds. 1995: 175, fig. 5.

within Italy and between Italian cities and the wider Mediterranean world through the agency of Punic and Greek traders and Greek colonists in Sicily and Magna Graecia. The influx of imported goods for elite consumption affected the nature of Italic architecture and material culture.

While huts remained popular into the seventh century BCE, more elaborate, multi-roomed houses with rectilinear plans gradually replaced them in central Italy. Although the reasons for this shift in design from circular to rectangular structures continues to be debated (e.g., Hodges 1972), many scholars have suggested that it may be related to the greater suitability of rectangular structures within the framework of urbanized settlements, as well as to technical issues of construction. The emergence of houses with square or rectangular footprints in Etruria occurs across the seventh century BCE (Izzet 2007: 148) and is coincident with the emergence of cities with grid plans, for instance Gabii in Latium and Marzabotto in the Po plain (Govi 2007; Becker, Mogetta, and Terrenato 2009). These early rectilinear houses were built upon a stone socle with walls constructed of a variety of materials, including stone and brick (Izzet 2007: 152). Internal walls, also built from permanent materials, can now be clearly recognized within the nearly square houses. Some of the earliest known houses in Etruria with internal divisions date to seventh-century Acquarossa and sixth-century San Giovenale. These houses had either two or, in some instances, three rooms (Izzet 2007: 158). Houses with increasingly more rooms appear in sixth-century and later contexts, such as a house from Marzabotto (early fifth century) that had 16 “articulated spaces” (Izzet 2007: 158, Figure 5.6; see further discussion below). The appearance

of internal articulation suggests a diversification of function within the domestic sphere and an increasing complexity of community life, both surely a byproduct of urbanism. As house plans in Italy develop further, the incorporation of axiality and bilateral symmetry become important, perhaps influenced strongly by Hellenic models (reviewed by Sewell 2010: Chapter 4).

At Lago dell'Accesa, a mining settlement in the territory of Vetulonia, there is also substantial evidence for houses of the early sixth century BCE. Clusters of domestic architecture were discovered wherein each cluster of approximately 10 houses had its own corresponding necropolis (Steingraber 2001: 299). These houses are characterized by a ground plan that incorporated two or three rooms accessed by means of a vestibule. The houses at Lago dell'Accesa are of great interest from the morphological point of view as they have moved away from the ovoid ground plan of huts like those at San Giovenale to a more rectilinear plan, albeit still quite irregular. The adoption of this new building practice becomes more pervasive across the sixth century BCE, and it is evident in various forms in the farm at Podere Tartuchino (Attolini and Perkins 1992) and also in the area known as Zone F at Acquarossa (Östenberg 1975). In some cases, the settlements of this time period tend to be quite densely occupied and without any regular plan or organization. At Acquarossa there is evidence for a fairly dense occupation with some 70 “longhouses” and “broadhouses” discovered in a 1 hectare area of the site (Steingraber 2001: 297).

Given the relative scarcity of archaeological evidence for houses, especially those in urban contexts, during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, Etruscan rock-cut tomb architecture has long provided another source of surrogate evidence. The chamber tombs of the Banditaccia necropolis at Caere, to cite a famous example, began in the Orientalizing period and included early tombs such as the Tomba della Capanna (early seventh century BCE) whose interior styling seems to take its cue from the interior architecture of Etruscan houses (Prayon 1975; 1986; 2010). From the seventh to the sixth centuries BCE, the interior architecture of Etruscan tombs at Caere becomes increasingly more elaborate, providing further evidence not only of interior décor, but also of interior architectural details, including roof beams and moldings, which are often used to reconstruct visions of the interiors of actual Etruscan houses. While the *tumuli* of Caere are circular in plan, the interior tomb plans are typically rectilinear. They tend to include key elements like a *dromos*, vestibule, main hall, and tomb chambers with funeral biers, all organized in a linear arrangement. At Caere and Tarquinia the tomb chamber is often carved directly from the bedrock.

Connected to the issue of Etruscan tombs as surrogate evidence for domestic architecture is the debate over the development of the internal articulation of domestic buildings in the archaic period. Since many tomb chambers have

both vestibules and main halls, the question of the origins of the Italic atrium naturally arises (see Chapter 18). While some scholars look to the Greek world for models that inspired the development of the classic atrium in Italy (Torelli 2012), during the sixth century, we find spaces in both urban and rural houses that may be identified as precursors to this central organizing feature of the later Roman house. The “House of the Impluvium” at Rusellae, built in the middle of the sixth century BCE over an earlier structure, features a tetrastyle courtyard (ca. 300 m²) that contains a well. Donati connects this layout with the *atrium tetrastylum* discussed by Vitruvius and reconstructs a roofing system akin to those of late republican impluviate houses (Donati 1994). A portico framed the entry to the structure, and there was a sort of banqueting room, as well as a dedicated space for food preparation as indicated by the presence of a grinding stone, fireplace, and a small larder. At Gonfienti (Comune di Prato) the recent discovery of an Etruscan house dating to the late sixth to early fifth century BCE and with a footprint of 1,270 m² serves to reinvigorate the discussion about archaic houses in central Italy (Poggesi 2004; Cifani 2008: 275; Poggesi *et al.* 2010). This structure has a quadrangular plan centered on an internal, impluviate courtyard; at the back is a series of rooms.

The houses at Marzabotto, situated in the Po Plain, offer nearly unique evidence for domestic architecture of the late sixth to early fifth centuries BCE (Govi 2007; Bentz and Reusser 2008). The site’s status as the only purported Etruscan colonial foundation marks it as something of an unusual example of Italic urbanism, for the most part because it remains without adequate comparanda. While Marzabotto’s regularized layout continues to be a topic of scholarly debate, the recently discovered grid plan in the Latin city of Gabii provides a possible near chronological parallel for the evidence at Marzabotto (Becker, Mogetta, and Terrenato 2009). Regardless of the origins or rationale of the site’s plan, the blocks (*insulae*) contain up to eight houses each and measure 150 m in length; the houses in turn share a common facade along the street. These houses, like Gonfienti and Rusellae, are internally articulated and include a large courtyard (Cifani 2008: 277). Part of this discussion, but resting on less secure evidence, are the *domus* excavated by Carandini on the north slope of the Palatine Hill in Rome (Carandini and Carafa 1995). Here the structure labeled as “house 3” is advanced as a proto-typical atrium house of the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE, although this hypothesis has been put forth on the basis of insubstantial structural remains (Cifani 2008: 273–274).

In this period, roofs covered with terracotta roof tiles begin to replace the earlier tradition of thatched roofs. The advent of terracotta roof tiles is an important one, and their arrival demands a more substantial and sophisticated domestic architecture. Further, the practice of using terracotta revetment

plaques to sheath the wooden superstructures of Etruscan sacred and domestic buildings emerges in this period; Izzet points out that there is scant evidence for the manufacture of molded and painted terracotta frieze plaques and ante-fixes after the sixth century BCE (Izzet 2007: 163). Acquarossa provides important, early evidence for the advent of architectural terracottas. An open work terracotta *acroterion* with quadrupeds from Zone B at Acquarossa (third quarter of the seventh century BCE) demonstrates the ornamental function these terracottas assumed in the domestic context (Haynes 2000: 138–139, Figure 117). There is also evidence for the more practical use of these terracottas, including an example that serves to allow smoke to escape from the house interior (Stopponi 1985: 43, Figure 1.2).

Rural architecture also offers important evidence for construction technique and building layout in the archaic period (Figure 1.4). Particularly important are those sites investigated by Bedini, including Torino and Acqua Acetosa Laurentina (Bedini 1978; 1979; 1980; 1981; 1984; 1990). These rural structures, for the most part, demonstrate a shared morphological tendency, namely a proto-courtyard that tends to progress from being a partially bounded corral-type enclosure to a completely englobed area within the ground plan of the structure. The phenomenon of the courtyard is evident quite early in the Via Laurentina sites, such that by the end of the archaic period one can begin to argue for the emergence of the atrium in Italic architecture (Bedini 1990). The origins of the atrium remain fairly troublesome, yet the tendency in archaic architecture strongly suggests that the atrium's origins are latent in the indigenous tradition and that it is not an imported form.

Directly related to the discussion of the courtyard house in central Italy is the issue of exclusively elite villa structures that become prominent in suburban and peri-urban contexts during the sixth century BCE. A group of these sites has been identified, chief among them the Auditorium site in Rome, discovered in 1997 (Carandini *et al.* 1997; Carandini, D'Alessio, and Di Giuseppe 2006; also, Terrenato 2001; 2007). Other sites that can be grouped with the Auditorium site include the villa at Casale Ghella and the Villa delle Grotte, the latter just a bit further north along the Via Flaminia from the Auditorium site (on Casale Ghella, Messineo, Petracca, and Vigna 1985; 1987–1988; on Grottarossa, Becker 2006). The Auditorium site has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly discussion, one manifestation of which is the final volume publishing the results. Notwithstanding entanglements connected with interpretations that include slaves and ritual activity, it is most appropriate to situate the early phases of the Auditorium site in the architectural company of late archaic palatial structures such as those known from Etruscan sites like Poggio Civitate and Acquarossa. The Auditorium site and other peri-urban elite sites that display refined building techniques and a multi-phase, monumental trajectory of development provide evidence not



Figure 1.4 Archaic rural architecture in central Italy. *Source:* Attolini and Perkins 1992: fig. 21.

just for regular construction in ashlar masonry, but also articulation around centrally placed courtyards. As such, they likely represent the architectural grandfathers that would inspire the nouveau riche *homines novi* of the late republican period (*sensu* Terrenato 2011). Newly minted elites like the Volusii

Saturnini, for instance, relied upon the inspiration of prestige sites that still existed in the landscape since they did not have a grand ancestral tradition of their own upon which to call, much less a seat of ancestral power. These peri-urban elite sites also confirm that the link between social standing and building techniques should not be overlooked; the emergence of ashlar masonry as an elite building technique at Rome is an important development during the archaic period. Ashlar blocks (cuboidal, well-dressed masonry blocks) make up the foundations of elite structures in the increasingly monumentalized landscape of archaic Rome, notably the podium of the Temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus (see Chapter 9).

In Etruria, the sites of Poggio Civitate (Murlo) and Acquarossa also play a prominent part in the discussion of late archaic palatial architecture. At Acquarossa, the Zone F complex includes an L-shaped building that defines a courtyard area bounded by a colonnade, an arrangement that is also reminiscent of the arrangement of certain archaic tombs at Caere – for instance, the Tomb of the Greek Capitals. The Acquarossa structure also has a dining room that, in later Roman terms, would be called a *triclinium*. This structure, along with other parts of Acquarossa, was destroyed around 500 BCE when Volsinii annexed the territory (Haynes 2000: 141).

The archaic structure at Poggio Civitate (Murlo) also presents a case of an elite structure focused on a courtyard, this time a central courtyard surrounded on four sides by colonnades (de Grummond 1997; Turfa and Steinmayer 2002). The extent of the complex, measuring over 1,500 m² in the sixth century BCE, coupled with the presence of elite material culture, including bucchero pottery and architectural terracottas, suggests a locus of elite behavior and, likely, banqueting. The structure is destroyed around 525 BCE, and never again re-occupied, yet its brief floruit showcases the acme of elite architecture in the archaic period.

To this discussion one must also admit the archaic rural architecture of Latium (Acqua Acetosa Laurentina and Torrino) and Etruria (more developed examples like Gonfienti and Rusellae) that demonstrates a latent architectural tendency, that of a central, partially enclosed courtyard, as perhaps lying in the background of the full blown emergence of atrium architecture. But at what point does an atrium emerge? In 1989, Carandini advanced the argument for the villa at Selvasecca di Blera to be the earliest such structure in Italy (1989). The poorly understood chronology for the Selvasecca villa makes any evaluation of its possible role as the prototypical villa problematic at best (Berggren and Andréén 1969; Klynne 2006–2007).

One thing shared in common amongst the various elite structures and sites discussed in the paragraphs above is their rural and sometimes peri-urban status. This is intriguing both in terms of topography and also in terms of the possibility that landed elites, whose power derived from the rural lands they

controlled, lie behind the social structure of archaic central Italy and that it is these elites whose power is at work in allowing nascent urban centers to come to the forefront of the socio-political landscape (Smith 2006; Terrenato 2011: 231–244, Figure 12.4). It also is reasonable to infer that the power of these elites may be connected to the phenomenon of monumentalization in the cities of archaic Italy. This phenomenon is perhaps best represented by architecture in the civic, sacred, and defensive categories.

2. Civic Architecture

The emergence of civic architecture is an important development in the emergence of a Roman architecture. The emergence of urban centers brought new requirements, as previously independent village communities needed nodal points around which to coalesce. The most natural assembly points are sacred ones, and the linkage between the sacred and the civic is fundamental. But assembly at shrines and altars was not sufficient, especially in burgeoning settlements like Rome, where deliberate public works projects transformed the physical landscape. This is the case in the landfill project that raises the level of the valley of the Forum Romanum and eventually creates a channelized drain, the Cloaca Maxima (Ammerman 1990). This project, directed by the elites, had as its aim the creation of more in the way of usable, communal space, a key element in an archaic city, although Livy suggests that citizens did not feel that digging a sewer was worthy of them (1.56.2). Citizen assemblies were important in the archaic period both in Etruria and Latium, yet it is unclear when a purpose-built architectural context for such assemblies developed. Some republican sites, along with Rome herself, eventually developed the *curia-comitium* complex; the *curia* is a covered structure for the meeting of the council or senate and often has a tripartite internal subdivision while the *comitium* is an open-air space for the meeting of the citizen assembly. Both *curia* and *comitium* were sanctified spaces (*templa*), as we know that the councils and the assemblies could meet only within inaugurated boundaries. The Comitium at Rome and the adjacent Volcanal were the sites of various omens, including the *prodigium* of a shower of blood (Livy 39.46; 40.19). Despite the textual attestations, the archaeology of the republican Curia and Comitium at Rome is extremely fragmentary.

The very old debate about the eponymous Comitium at Rome demonstrates the multiplicity of readings that the fragmentary archaeological record make possible; it is worth noting that Ammerman's work argues convincingly for the earliest manifestations of the Comitium at Rome being connected to the natural topography (and geology) of the slope of the Capitoline Hill as early as the seventh century BCE (1996: 123–124).

A site that might be admitted as an early parallel (or even forerunner) to what would come to be the Roman *comitium* is the so-called “elliptical building” from the sixth-century-BCE Vigna Parrocchiale site in Caere (Cristofani 2003). Excavated by Cristofani, the “elliptical building” was, at one point, interpreted as a sort of sacred theater (Colonna 1993), an interpretation that has now been set aside in favor of a reading that considers the structure to be connected with the ruling elite of Caere on the basis of inscribed ceramics uncovered during the excavation (Cristofani 2003). The structure is essentially a horseshoe-shaped paved area with postholes and a series of headers that outline its margin. Even though the building is an architectural singleton of the archaic period, its importance for any discussion of civic architecture in Italy cannot be discounted. Its tendency to create an architecturally bounded, but essentially open, space may well lie in the background of later forms that include the *comitium* in the Roman context.

Comitia in republican colonies have been a subject of debate for some decades, and recent work demonstrates that there is not a one-to-one correlation between a purported colonial foundation and the presence of these structures (Becker 2007; Sewell 2010). We must also note that the morphological similarity that exists between the Roman *comitium* and the Greek *ekklesiastérion* has also been a part of the discourse. In the latter case, the site of Poseidonia/Paestum is particularly relevant. At Paestum, two separate campaigns of independent scholarly work have reached divergent conclusions about the circular structure there, demonstrating, if nothing else, that the typology and chronology of civic architecture in Italy is still in need of refinement (Greco and Theodorescu 1987; Brown, Richardson, and Richardson, Jr. 1993: 262). In a certain sense the underrepresentation of the *comitium* in the archaeological record makes the search for the origins of the form difficult.

Increased and sustained contact with the Greek world caused dramatic changes in the architecture and planning of civic spaces in Italic contexts. In the Late Republic the arrival of the basilica form changes the architectural landscape in terms of civic buildings as the basilica allows the *fora* of Roman cities to bring themselves in line with the Hellenistic fashion of portico-lined marketplaces (Welch 2003). With these new planning priorities, axial teleological symmetry becomes more of a concern, something that poses a problem for pre-existing forum spaces that try to bring themselves in line with the new conventions, famously evident in the case of Pompeii’s forum. These conventions stressed not only the prioritization of a certain axis, but the end point of that axis, a point where a major sanctuary could usually be found. It must be stressed, however, that in spite of prevalent trends, there is no standardized forum and certainly each is unique, as a review of the various plans demonstrates (viz. Lackner 2008). At this stage it is clear that more inquiry into the earliest forms of civic buildings in Italy is required before we can simply declare that Roman civic forms are Greek derivatives.

3. Defensive Architecture

Ancient city walls are incredibly sturdy, and, as such, the evidence for first-millennium-BCE defensive architecture in Italy is abundant. They are similar to civic buildings in that both result from community-minded projects that require elite mobilization of manpower and material, and perhaps even *corvée* labor. In central Italy, fortification systems seem to begin as early as the eighth century BCE, and generally, we see an admixture of built fortifications and the use of earthworks and ditch systems (Lindhout 1997). The patterns of Iron Age settlement in Italy tend to prefer a naturally defensible position for the establishment of a habitation, and thus it follows that these naturally defensible loci would then be further protected by the construction of built defensive systems.

The system known as “*agger* and *fossa*” represents an early approach to the need for a defensive network. This is essentially a “bank and ditch” technique, whereby the excavation of the *fossa* provides the soil to create the sloping *agger*, a sort of defensive berm of earth. The *agger* then requires two retaining walls for support. The city of Ardea had such a system by the sixth century BCE (Morselli and Tortorici 1982), while the site of Satricum may have had such a system by 600 BCE (Lindhout 1997: 302). This same defensive system is also evident at Rome; archaeological remains of the *agger* and *fossa* are known from the Esquiline Hill (Aurigemma 1961–1962: 19–36).

Walls built in stone are also an important feature of first-millennium-BCE urban centers. Among the earliest stone-built city walls of first-millennium-BCE Italy are those of Rusellae in Etruria. Rusellae’s earliest walls were constructed from sun-dried bricks and date to the later eighth to seventh centuries BCE (Bianchi Bandinelli and Laviosa 1959; Laviosa 1965). The wall in mud-brick came to be replaced by a wall built of locally quarried stones during the sixth century BCE. This wall, measuring 3.27 km in length, included five gates and projected a powerful image for the city of Rusellae (Eckstein 2006: 123). In contemporary north Etruria, other archaic cities, including Volaterrae, were also acquiring monumental circuit walls built in stone. This was the trend for other primate urban centers like Rome and Gabii, both of which have ashlar masonry fortifications by the archaic period. Rome’s walls, not surprisingly, have been studied for quite some time and have undergone important recent reappraisals (Säflund 1932; Cifani 1998; 2008). One could also look to the walls of Antemnae (Quilici and Quilici Gigli 1978) and Ardea (Morselli and Tortorici 1982), as well as to the little known walls of the Latin city of Gabii, now the subject of renewed interest (Helas 2010), for evidence of early walling techniques in central Italy. These early walls also show the transition from a reliance on naturally fortified positions to the construction of purpose-built defensive systems. Such a development reflects not only the

priorities of emerging cities but also the ability of local elites to mobilize both labor and material for large-scale (if not monumental) building projects.

Megalithic walls also represent an important and visible category of architectural evidence; these are variously referred to as walls constructed using either polygonal or Cyclopean masonry. Long-attested in Italy, megalithic architecture remains a major feature of first-millennium-BCE construction. These walls employ the dry stone technique and as such do not employ bonding agents. An important example in the archaic period is the terraced settlement at Monte Carbolino (Valvisciolo) in Latium (Venantzi 1966; Quilici 1986). Here a series of switchback terraces, constructed of roughly shaped stones, provides a settlement enclosure on the mountainside. A good many of the *priscae coloniae Latinae* have polygonal masonry circuit walls, and the construction of these walls seems, most probably, to be a phenomenon of the fourth through second centuries BCE. The debate over the chronology of polygonal masonry walls has been reinvigorated lately in light of, for example, arguments advanced by Becker (2007) and Wallace-Hadrill (2008b). Coarelli (1982: 388–389) noted in passing the congruence of limestone bedrock formations and polygonal walls, that is, sites with polygonal walls have underlying calcareous bedrock; Becker (2007) advances this point in order to suggest alternate arguments about the generative force of urbanism in the Middle Republic. Wallace-Hadrill provocatively argues that in the Hellenistic milieu of the later republican period, the cities in Latium, in particular, engage in campaigns of urban renewal and that, in keeping with past traditions, employ the time honored, local practice of polygonal masonry construction.

4. Sacred Architecture

Sacred architecture in ancient Italy begins with the *templum*, the technical term for the inaugurated boundaries inside of which ritual activities, including augury, took place. At the level of terminology, Roman religion distinguished between *templum* and *aedes*. The former is a space that has been ritually cut off from the non-sanctified surroundings; the augur would create the *templum* by aligning the *auguraculum* to the cardinal points with the sacrificant facing east along the east–west axis (Beard, North, and Price 1998: 1.23). Following this procedure the space was deemed “*effatum et liberatum*” (“defined and freed”), and ritual business could be transacted there. The idea of the *aedes* or built shrine was connected to the dwelling place of the deity. As such, the *aedes* would also be constructed within a sacred precinct, and since the Italic sanctuary must serve the needs of the augurs, the built temple preserves the axiality of the non-architecturalized *auguraculum* and

underscores its augural function by being both frontal and elevated on a moderately high podium.

The organizational principles that govern Italic *templa* set them apart from contemporary Greek forms. Axiality is a key concept since the augur required a fixed point, with a known orientation, from which to observe the sky, and this occurred within the sanctified space of the *templum* (Weinstock 1932; Linderski 1986). One of the most important attested examples of an augural *templum* is to be found at Bantia (modern Banzi) in Basilicata, remains that belong to the republican period. There a series of six *cippi* inscribed with the names of divinities and celestial positions was discovered by chance in 1962, leading Torelli to reconstruct an augural *templum* at the site (Torelli 1995a), aided by ancient writers like Varro and Martianus Capella. While the ancient sources are not in complete agreement about the preferred orientation for the *templum*, the Bantia site, taken together with other known augural seats, represents important evidence for the execution of augury and its reliance on fixed orientations (Torelli 1995a: 106). The augural *templum* remains an essential component of sacred spaces in Italy, and with the emergence of new architectural traditions in the archaic period, the Italian peninsula witnesses the monumentalization of sacred spaces.

The emergence of monumental sanctuaries in Rome represents a key turning point in Roman architecture. The early twin sanctuaries of the Area Sacra di Sant’Omobono provides evidence for sacred architecture in Rome’s fluvial harbor and may represent one of the earliest architecturalized sanctuaries in the city, although its chronology and phasing remain debated (Coarelli 1988a: 206–234; Terrenato *et al.* 2012). The Sant’Omobono temples demonstrate the axiality and frontality of the so-called “Tuscan style” as described by Vitruvius (*de tuscanicis dispositionibus* “about the Tuscan order”; *De Arch.* 4.6.6–4.7.5). In his treatise, Vitruvius provides the proportions that inform the tradition of these structures, while modern scholars have attempted to chronicle the extant sample of such buildings (e.g., Lake 1935).

The sixth century BCE proves even more important with the construction of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill (see also Chapters 11 and 24). It is perhaps, as Varro suggests, that the radical change in temple building results from the adoption of anthropomorphic cult images in Italo-Roman religion (Varro *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* frag. 18; Cardauns 1976), or perhaps the pressures of full-blown urbanism spur cities to compete with one another. The construction of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus that began in 580 BCE represents a turning point in Roman sacred architecture that coincides with other major building projects in Rome (Mura Sommella 1998; Stamper 2005; Hopkins 2010). According to Colonna, the temple plan itself changes with the introduction of both pronaos and *antae* that extend the cella and a podium that raises the temple

up and emphasizes its axuality (Colonna 2006: 154). The temple's ground plan is divided into two halves: the *pars antica* standing in front of the *pars postica*; the cella itself is tripartite with a central room and two flanking *alae*. The textual tradition holds that the Etruscan kings, the Tarquins in particular, are the agents of this phenomenon of monumentalization. Whoever the author, the effect of the enormous Capitoline Temple was profound. Its scale, measuring 54×74 m at the base of the podium, made it the largest structure in peninsular Italy, and its plan with tripartite cella and deep pronaos established traditional features of Roman temples that remained part of the vernacular of Italic architecture even after the Hellenization of the peninsula (Figure 1.5) (viz. Nielsen and Poulsen 1992: 118–132; Stamper 2005: 34–48). The Capitoline Temple maintains already established traditions in architecture, including a strong frontal alignment and a high podium. In addition, the adornment of the roof and roofline with acroterial sculptures recalls the stylization of the rooflines of Iron Age hut urns.

While these elements create a link between the sixth-century-BCE phase of the Capitoline Temple and the traditions of Italic architecture, it is also possible to situate the temple in a broader contemporary context. Other comparable sanctuaries include Temple B at Pyrgi (ca. 510 BCE), the Portonaccio sanctuary at Veii (ca. 500 BCE), and the “Great Temple” of Vulci (early fifth to fourth centuries BCE) (Colonna 2002). These sanctuaries all demonstrate morphological similarity with the Capitoline Temple, relying upon the deep *pronaos* with prostyle columns and high podia. The coroplastic decoration of the superstructures of these temples also unifies them as a group, and these remains, in fact, provide some of the best opportunity for assigning stylistic chronology to the phases of these sanctuaries (Brown, Richardson, Jr., and Richardson 1960; Taylor 2002). Winter's most recent work approaches coroplastic decoration as an important indicator of status, an approach that should find wide acceptance (2009). These architectural terracottas are clear markers of elite status and prerogatives as they adorn high value archaic building projects.

In Anglophone scholarship the example of Cosa in south Etruria has been used to create stylistic chronologies for architectural terracottas (Brown, Richardson, Jr., and Richardson 1960). Yet recent work has reexamined the way that Cosa has been used as an index to interpret other Capitulum-type temples in Italy and suggests that a scheme less complex than the one originally proposed ought to be adopted (Taylor 2002). The wider phenomenon of temple dedication and construction in the Middle Republic is quite important as it carries forward the Tuscan temple style; numerous sites, including Rome, offer evidence for temples in this period, although the temple at Signia is perhaps the best published (Coarelli 1987; Ziðłowski 1992; Cifarelli 2003). middle republican temple building will eventually collide with Hellenism in

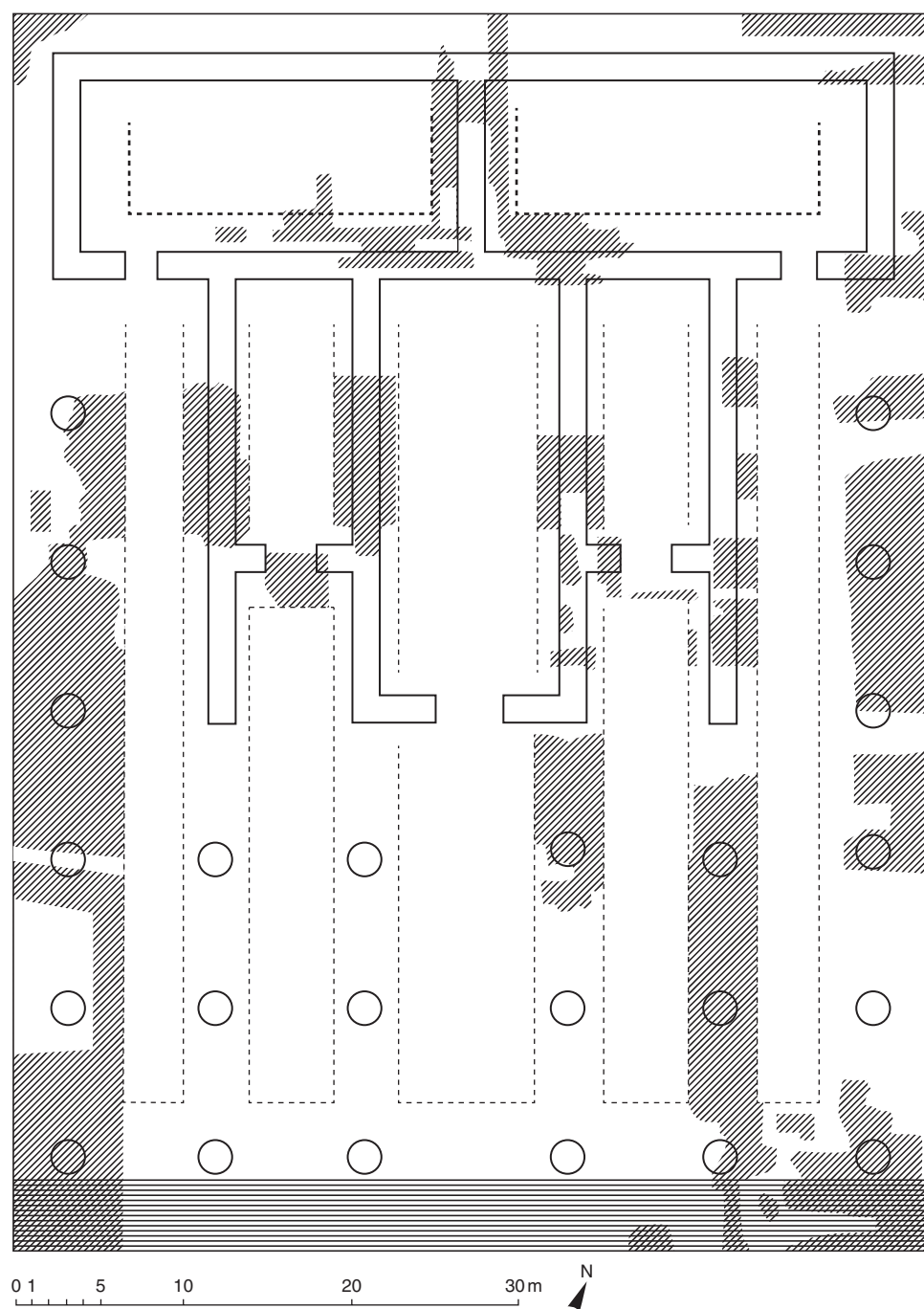


Figure 1.5 Plan of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. *Source:* Mura Sommella 1998: fig. 6.

Italy and thus produce interesting forms ranging from circular *tholos*-type temples that seem extracted directly from the Greek world (e.g., Temple of Hercules Victor in the Forum Boarium at Rome) to those that seem to show an architectural blending, such as the singular Temple of Portunus at Rome or the phenomenon of Hellenistic “theater-temples” in places like Gabii, Tibur, Praeneste, and Pietrabbondante (see Chapters 2 and 11). This latter group represents a key transition in Italic architecture when indigenous traditions can both be combined with and executed in an imported or borrowed fashion.

5. Conclusions

Having surveyed the wide range of evidence for peninsular Italian architecture of the first half of the first millennium BCE, it remains to comment on the nature of indigenous architectural traditions. It is clearly evident that a well-developed tradition of indigenous construction exists in Italy in the first half of the first millennium BCE and that it has distinct features. One prominent aspect of this tradition is a propensity for megalithic construction, as demonstrated by polygonal masonry circuit walls of the latter first millennium BCE. Another, also in terms of stone architecture, is the emergence of ashlar masonry during the archaic period. Cuboidal ashlar blocks of tuff become a hallmark of Italic architecture, with expert ashlar masonry appearing in the Etruscan cities and at Rome; in the latter, the massive podium of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus exemplifies the importance of this architectural tradition and its link to the archaic elite inasmuch as the community had to mobilize its resources to achieve monumentality. These ashlars are distinct, and their iconic value is only replaced with the advent of *opus caementicium* in the second century BCE. Yet we should note that, even after the arrival of concrete, Roman aesthetics still tended to prefer the appearance of a dressed ashlar wall face, thus informing the various veneers and surface finishes used to conceal a wall made from brick-faced concrete (see Chapter 9).

At the other end of the building techniques spectrum lies the tradition of simple domestic buildings fashioned from ephemeral materials. These huts and rustic houses are well represented in Italy’s archaeological record and, while never completely supplanted, they differ from the tradition of Hellenistic farms that eventually dominate the rural landscapes of later first-millennium-BCE central Italy. The fugitive nature of their remains in the archaeological record notwithstanding, the corpus of huts and rural buildings represents an important part of the evidence for domestic structures of the earlier first millennium BCE.

The traditions of Italic construction become firmly embedded during the first millennium BCE. These include particular approaches to axial alignment

that derive from the practice of augury, as well as to the creation of strong frontal orientations in the case of sacred buildings. In these tendencies, the function of the building and space ultimately determine their form since the observation of ritual practice was of tantamount importance. Axial alignment and symmetry will also play a leading role in the emergent *domus* architecture of the later republican period, wherein the classic atrium design seems to prefer a balanced, symmetrical ground plan as discussed by Vitruvius.

The Roman conquest of the Mediterranean profoundly affected the nature of architecture in Italy, not to mention other art forms (Pollitt 1978; see Chapter 2). The wholesale importation of material culture proved profound and sweeping, and we see engagement with imported forms by multiple culture groups in Italy, including the Samnites who otherwise eschewed Greco-Roman urbanism for the most part. It must be noted, however, that while Hellenism altered the architectural landscape, in most cases the issue should not be framed in terms of a complete changeover from an indigenous tradition to an imported design – just as Hellenization did not lead to a complete changeover of identity. The persistence of indigenous traits including axuality, frontality, and symmetry in Italic architecture is notable in the face of profound cultural change, as Wallace-Hadrill has argued in the case of urban renewal in southern Latium and Samnium in the second century BCE (Wallace-Hadrill 2008b). These indigenous building trends in domestic, sacred, civic, and defensive architecture clearly carried meaning and thus were worthy of being maintained, even when better and easier techniques were available; conservative voices like that of the elder Cato even decried the adoption of the “new” at the expense of indigenous tradition (Livy 34.4.4). Architectural forms and identity are closely linked, and we may also see this linkage demonstrated by the phases of wall building in peninsular Italy – the first during the archaic period and the second during the middle republican period. Since these walls served both to defend and define cities and towns, their symbolic value, just as with that of the buildings they enclosed, should not be underestimated when considering architecture and its formal manifestation in the changing landscapes of ancient Italy.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The architecture of pre-Roman Italy has not been the focus of a great deal of Anglophone scholarship in recent years, as the majority of scholarly writing on the subject has appeared in Italian, French, and German. The two-volume treatment of Roman architecture by Gros (1996a; 2001) principally treats forms from the Hellenistic period onwards. Useful treatments of Etruscan architecture, in particular, may be found in various multi-author volumes (e.g., Prayon 1975; Stopponi 1985;

Torelli 2001; Bentz and Reusser 2010). Specialist studies, such as Cifani's work on archaic architecture in Rome (2008), provide an in-depth treatment of the material pertaining to the early city and her monumentalization in the archaic period. Recent work on Italic religion and sanctuaries has also produced important scholarship on temple architecture (de Grummond and Simon 2006; de Grummond and Edlund-Berry 2011). The late archaic Etruscan site of Marzabotto has also been the subject of recent and noteworthy scholarship (Sassatelli 1989; Govi 2007; Bentz and Reusser 2008). Likewise, recent treatments of the archaeology of Etruria contribute new insights on urban centers and their architecture (Izzet 2007; Riva 2010). The newest edition of the urbanism handbook by Gros and Torelli also is useful for architectural studies (2010). For the archaic and republican city of Rome, the works of Coarelli (1983; 1985) and Ziðłkowski (1992), respectively, are quite important. Coarelli treats the development of the Forum Romanum from a chiefly topographical point of view, while Ziðłkowski focuses exclusively on middle republican temples in the city of Rome. The establishment of republican shrines and priesthoods also represents an important avenue of current scholarship (Clark 2007).

For building techniques one must still consult Lugli's two-volume work (1957), as it is a trove of information and wears its age better than does the work of Blake and Van Deman (1947). Essential also is Adam's *La construction romaine: Matériaux et techniques* (1984), which has been translated into several languages including English and Italian. Recent scholarly work on the treatise of the Latin author Vitruvius proves indispensable for the student of Roman architectural forms, their precursors, and outside influences. Most essential is the critical edition produced under the erudite editorial oversight of Gros (2006) and published in the Collection Budé series. Also extremely useful is an annotated and illustrated English translation produced a decade ago by Rowland and Howe (1999).