ROMAN FORUM

HISTORICAL NOTES

The valley of the Forum was carved out of the region's compacted volcanic tufa by one of the many rivulets and streams that spill into the Tiber. The depression thus formed lies between the Capitoline and Palatine and extends southwest toward the river through the low-lying Velabrum, the original name of the watercourse in this area.

Ancient writers unanimously emphasize the marshy and inhospitable nature of the valley. In fact, the earliest communities established themselves on the peaks or on the uppermost slopes of the hills—the Palatine and certainly also the Capitoline—whereas the plain was used as a necropolis. Excavations near the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, however, as well as sporadic discoveries made near the Temple of Divus Iulius and the Arch of Augustus, have shown that the Palatine village extended to part of the valley.

The main section of the surviving necropolis was discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century near the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina and can be dated to the first phase of Latial culture in the area (tenth century BC). Two tombs found in the 1950s near the Arch of Augustus, however, would appear to predate those in the cemetery near the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina; they are contemporary with a tomb found on the Palatine under the House of Livia. The relative dating of the two burial sites suggests a gradual movement of the Palatine village from west to east, a tendency that characterizes subsequent phases of Rome's development as well. In fact, the cemetery was used for adult burials only until the initial phase of the second Latial period, about the beginning of the eighth century BC. From then on, the cemetery was devoted exclusively to infant burials (children could be buried within the city, although even this custom came to an end at the beginning of the sixth century BC). Burials in the cemetery on the Esquiline began with the abandonment of the necropolis in the Forum; expansion of the Palatine community would appear to explain the change. The evolution from small separate burial groups associated with individual villages to a single unified necropolis—a typical development in the early life of a city—is a phenomenon that has been observed in the most important Etruscan urban settlements.

Around 600 BC or a little before, the Forum was paved for the first time—a pavement consisting solely of beaten earth. The conclusions to be drawn from this are clear: the Forum was no longer at the periphery of its constituent communities, but a city center. The correspondence between the archaeological data and literary tradition regarding this period is striking. At the end of the seventh century BC—the traditional date is 616 BC—the Etruscan Tarquins established their dynasty in Rome; the first king, Tarquinius Priscus, was reported to have begun a series of public works, in particular a large-scale system of sewers built to drain the valleys' swampy lowlands. The most important of these was the *Cloaca Maxima*, which diverted the stream running through the Velabrum into a regular channel and made the area usable from that time forward; its course through the central area of the Forum can still be distinguished today. It is clear, then, that we cannot divorce the literary from the archaeological evidence, which shows that the practice of burial ended at the same time that the Forum received its first pavement. On the other hand, the development of the valley as a city center also presupposes the incorporation of the Capitoline and Quirinal, located at the opposite side of the Forum, into the original Palatine city; this too would have been the work of the Etruscan kings. The construction of the huge Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline—according to tradition, a project begun by Tarquinius Priscus—is the best proof that the two hills lay within the city's compass at this time.

The division of the valley into two distinct parts, each with its own specific function, must also have occurred during the same period. These are the Comitium, the center of political and judicial activity lying at the foot of the Arx (the northern summit of the Capitoline), and the Forum proper, the marketplace of Rome. The antiquity of the Comitium, which means "meeting place," is clear not only from its explicit mention in the early Roman calendar and from its use for the earliest public meetings—those of the Comitia Curiata—but also from the discovery of a group of monuments beneath the *Niger Lapis*, which can be dated to the period of the kings (seventh to sixth century BC).

Recent excavations would appear to confirm the traditional date of 509 BC as the beginning of the Republic, corresponding to the inauguration of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and the initiation of the consular list. At roughly the same time, around the end of the sixth century BC, the old *Regia*, which tradition distinguished as the home of King Numa, was destroyed in a fire and reconstructed along a new architectural plan. The expulsion of the Tarquins, however, did not substantially interrupt the city's development. The most significant change in the Forum's topography occurred just before the middle of the fifth century BC, during the first years of the Republic, when two important sanctuaries were constructed: the Temple of Saturn and the Temple of Castor and Pollux (also called the Temple of the Castors). The Temple of Saturn, possibly begun under the kings, was erected on the spot occupied by an ancient altar consecrated to this god; the cult of Castor and Pollux, on the other hand, was imported from Greece, as the Hellenic names of the dedicatees indicate. The discovery in Lavinium of a sixth-century BC inscription containing a dedication to these deified heroes confirms both the traditional chronology and the cult's Greek provenance.

The second half of the fifth century BC is an obscure period in the history of the Forum, as it is for the rest of the city. Among the various legendary accounts handed down by Roman writers, at least one is historical and of fundamental importance: the creation of a body of written laws, possibly inspired by Greek models, that were inscribed on bronze tablets and affixed to the Rostra in the Comitium around the middle of the century. These were the famous Twelve Tables, which for centuries constituted the foundation of Roman law.

The next significant period of building activity in the Forum occurred in the fourth century BC. Around 390 BC, an army of Gauls sacked and set fire to the city. The extent of the damage inflicted during this attack was probably exaggerated by the ancient tradition, at least to judge from the almost total absence of archaeological evidence attesting to the event. The Comitium was rebuilt for the first time in 338 BC, when the prows of the ships sunk at the battle against the Latins at Antium were affixed to the speaker's platform, which assumed its name, *Rostra*, from these spoils. A second renovation, probably undertaken by the consul in 264, Marcus Valerius Messalla, occurred at the beginning of the First Punic War.

Tradition assigns construction of the Temple of Concord, located at the foot of the Capitoline, to Camillus, who defeated the Gauls in 367. In 305, the aedile C. Flavius—a protégé of the great Appius Claudius, censor in 312—dedicated a shrine to the same divinity near the Volcanal. The fourth and third centuries BC saw various statues erected in the Comitium, while the oldest food market, the *Macellum*, was probably built north of the square in the third century.

Large-scale building projects in the Forum, however, were not undertaken until after the wars against Carthage in the west. Following the wars against the Hellenistic states in the east, Rome extended its rule over the entire Mediterranean. The urban requirements of an empire's capital are reflected in the intense building program that transformed the appearance of the Forum in only a few decades. During the second century BC, no fewer than four basilicas—the Basilicae Porcia, Fulvia-Aemilia, Sempronia, and Opimia—replaced the single basilica built at the end of the third century and the temples of Concord and the Castors were entirely reconstructed, to mention only the most ambitious projects.

At the beginning of the first century BC, Sulla's reconstruction of the Capitoline included the building of the *Tabularium*, which provided the Forum with a monumental backdrop to the west. Prior to this, the Basilica Sempronia (the site of the future Basilica Iulia) and the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia delineated the southern and northern sides of the square. This tendency toward monumentalization set the stage for a complete rethinking and reorganization of the area, culminating in the building projects of Caesar and Augustus. The new configuration responded to a relocation of the political and judicial functions of the cramped Comitium to the Forum, the site of legislative assemblies and law courts as early as the second half of the second century BC. Similarly, many of the mercantile activities that had been concentrated in the Forum relocated to purpose-built facilities, such as the Macellum, which the censors of 179 BC reconstructed on a monumental scale.

At the end of the Republic, when Rome was firmly established as the capital of an empire extending from Gaul to Syria, the old Republican Forum was no longer adequate to the functions of central administration and public relations. The first to address these needs by initiating the construction of a new monumental complex (as early as 54 BC) was Julius Caesar, who presented the project initially as a simple enlargement of the old Forum. Caesar's sub-

sequent alterations of the Republican Forum were more radical, entailing the virtual elimination of the Comitium, replaced in part by the new Forum Iulium (Forum of Caesar), and the reconstruction of the *Curia Hostilia,* the ancient seat of the Roman Senate, in a different location, which essentially transformed the new senate house, the *Curia Iulia,* into an annex of Caesar's Forum. Construction of the Basilica Iulia on a scale much larger than its predecessor, the Basilica Sempronia, and renovation of the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia completed the total reconfiguration of the Forum's long sides.

Augustus, though more cautious and hesitant than his great-uncle, nonetheless had to take into account the revolutionary development that Julius had begun in his own building program. He thus completed the monumental frame of the Forum with the temple dedicated to the deified Julius that occupied the square's eastern side; the speakers' platform in front of this building was a companion to that on the opposite side of the Forum, which Caesar had built to replace the Republican Rostra. Propagandistic and dynastic needs, developing gradually over time, informed subsequent building projects. A Parthian arch—perhaps subsequently dedicated to Gaius and Lucius Caesar, the grandsons of the *princeps*—may have abutted the northern side of the Temple of Divus Iulius, balancing Augustus's Actian arch, which lay on the opposite side of the building; the complex subtly prefigured the succession to Imperial power that was planned for the two young men. After their premature death, the new heir, Tiberius, became deeply involved in other building projects: he oversaw the reconstruction of the temples of the Castors and of Concord, and, after becoming emperor, he had an arch erected alongside the facade of the Temple of Saturn. In this, Tiberius not only gave formal, public expression to his respect for tradition, but also clearly signaled his desire to appropriate that tradition for dynastic purposes, as had Augustus in the design and construction of his forum. Now stripped of its original political function, the old Roman Forum was transformed into a celebratory backdrop, intended to exalt the prestige of the dynasty.

Augustus's configuration of the Forum remained unchanged for a long time. New buildings, such as the Temple of Vespasian and Titus and that of Antoninus and Faustina, were designed to complement the Augustan layout without modifying it. Only Domitian, in conjunction with his decidedly monarchical policy, dared intrude upon the Imperial structure of the Forum by erecting a gigantic equestrian statue of himself in the center of the square. The size of the statue reduced the Forum to little more than a frame for a monument intended to exalt the *dominus et deus*.

Not until the beginning of the third century AD was the Forum again encumbered by the intrusion of new constructions—the arch and the equestrian statue of Septimius Severus, the seven commemorative columns on the southern side of the square, the monuments commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Tetrarchy, the new rostra at the Forum's east side; some of these edifices formed part of the massive task of reconstruction after the fire of Carinus in AD 283. The history of the Forum concludes with the Column of Phocas, the "construction" of which in AD 608 probably entailed little more than the rededication to this Byzantine emperor of a preexisting monument. In this we observe evidence of a new age, by then well under way, during which many pagan buildings were transformed into Christian sanctuaries: the Curia Iulia became the Church of S. Adriano in the seventh century, while other churches were installed all around the area, from S. Maria Antiqua to Saints Cosmas and Damian.

ITINERARY 1

The Western End of the Forum

The most complete views of the Forum are from the terrace on the Capitoline, to the right of Palazzo Senatorio, and from the arcade of the Tabularium. The terrace of the Farnese Gardens at the northern corner of the Palatine also offers a sweeping, panoramic vista.

The main entrance to the Forum lies along Via dei Fori Imperiali, near its intersection with Via Cavour. From here, the ancient level of the square is reached by a ramp that passes between the Basilica Aemilia and the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina (FIGS. **13:23, 13:32**). Another entrance to the site is located at the Arch of Titus (FIG. **13:41**). For the sake of convenience, the following description of the monuments follows a strictly topographical sequence, starting from the main entrance. A chronological itinerary, although longer and more winding, is possible and even recommended, for it affords a better understanding of the area's historical development. In that case, the tour would begin at the archaic necropolis and proceed to the Regia, the Temple of Vesta, the Fountain of Juturna, and the Temple of the Castors,

and subsequently to the Comitium (site of the Niger Lapis) and Curia. Thereafter, the topographical route resumes at the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia.

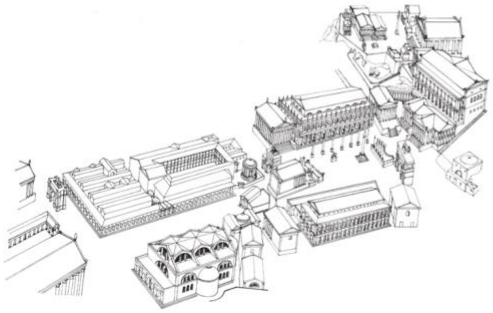

FIGURE 14. The Roman Forum. Reconstruction from the east.

THE BASILICA FULVIA-AEMILIA The Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia is the only surviving Republican basilica, the Basilicae Porcia, Sempronia, and Opimia having disappeared completely (FIG. **13:23**). The building, however, was restored several times during the empire, and it is this that we see today. It was erected by the censors of 179 BC, M. Aemilius Lepidus and M. Fulvius Nobilior. Given that Nobilior was responsible for the construction, the building was at first called the Basilica Fulvia; following restorations financed by various members of the *Gens Aemilia* (ca. 80 BC, and thereafter in 54, 34, 14 and in AD 22 under Tiberius), the building was renamed the Basilica Pauli, after Aemilius Paulus. According to a recent hypothesis, however, the Basilica Aemilia should be distinguished from the Basilica Fulvia and identified with another building, erected by Aemilius Paulus during his censorship in 159 BC, that occupied the short eastern side of the Forum and whose remains were found beneath the Temple of Divus Iulius. A final restoration took place after a fire that can be dated to the beginning of the fifth century AD on the evidence of coins that fused into the floor (the fire may be associated with the sack of Alaric in AD 410). After the blaze, a new floor was added at a higher level.

Scholars have attributed the origin of the basilica as a building type to the large cities of the Hellenistic east. The name, clearly Greek in origin, has been connected with the Royal Porch (*stoa basileios*) in the Athenian agora; it seems more likely, however, that the term is a hellenization of the Latin expression *atrium regium*, a building in the Forum recorded by ancient sources that seems to be associated with the nearby *Regia* (house of the king). It is generally held that the basilica first appeared as a distinct architectural form after the Second Punic War, but the reference to a basilica in comedies by Plautus that predate the construction of the Basilica Porcia supports the notion that the latter, far from being the oldest example of the type, was preceded by another basilica, built during the second half of the third century BC. Basilicas were little more than large covered spaces that provided protection from the elements for the activities that regularly took place in the Forum: the various judicial, political, and economic activities that were held outside in good weather. In its basic structure, a basilica covered as large a space as could be managed with a roof supported by rows of columns or piers, which formed a series of aisles. Lighting was introduced into the interior by raising the central nave one story higher than the side aisles, thus making it possible to insert large windows in the elevated section.

The Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia must have been constructed in this form from the beginning, as an excavated section of the building's oldest phase, still visible on the western side of the ruins, suggests. The design of the building was not modified in subsequent restorations; the only significant divergence from the previous plan was the presence of two smaller aisles on the northern side of the building, which underscores the desire of the architects to exploit the available space as fully as possible.

During the Augustan period, a facade of sixteen arches, composed of piers decorated with engaged columns in two superimposed orders, was constructed on the basilica's southern side facing the square. The structure, either the *Porticus Gai et Luci* or the *Porticus Iulia,* probably replaced an earlier porticus that stood on the same spot (FIG. **13:22**). After the fire of AD 410, it was replaced in turn by a much more compact colonnade; three of its granite

columns, which stood on white marble bases, have been reerected on the eastern side of the basilica, facing the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina. Farther to the east lies the large inscription dedicated to Lucius Caesar, *princeps iuventutis* (leader of the youth), which, together with the fragments of another dedication to his brother Gaius, probably belonged to an arch dedicated to Augustus's two intended heirs (FIG. **13:24**); it may have been built originally to celebrate the emperor's diplomatic victory over the Parthians. The arch must have stood between the corner of the Basilica Aemilia and the Temple of Divus Iulius, aligned symmetrically with the Actian Arch that was built on the other side of the temple.

Between the porticus and the basilica proper was a **series of shops** constructed of tufa in *opus quadratum;* these were an Imperial reconstruction of the *tabernae novae* (new shops) that served the Forum's bankers and originally stood in front of the Republican basilica. Three entrances lead to the interior of the hall (approximately 70 × 29 meters), which was divided into four aisles by columns of so-called African marble (the stone was in fact imported from Asia Minor). The floor and a large portion of the marble architectural fragments scattered about date to the Augustan restoration. Traces of the fire of AD 410 and remains of the coins that melted into the marble during the blaze can still be seen here and there on the floor.

The cast of a short **segment of a frieze,** decorated with subjects pertaining to the origin of Rome, is on display in the northeastern corner of the building, on the side nearest the entrance to the archaeological site (the Forum Antiquarium houses the original). This long relief in Greek marble must originally have been located inside the building. While the date of the work is debated, its reuse in the Augustan period confirms its Republican provenance. Since we know that older columns were reemployed in the restoration of 54 BC, and since the frieze was likewise reused, it is perhaps not overly rash to suggest that both the columns and the frieze date to a reconstruction undertaken during the reign of Sulla by M. Aemilius Lepidus, consul of 78. What makes this possibility even more attractive is the representation on contemporary coins of the same subjects of legendary Rome we see carved on the frieze.

THE SHRINE OF VENUS CLOACINA Next to the steps of the basilica on the western end sits a circular marble base that supported a small building. As can be inferred from coins depicting the superstructure, the monument was an open-air shrine, consisting of a low fenced enclosure, likewise circular, and two cult images that stood within it; Servius, the author of commentaries on Vergil, speaks of "statues" of Cloacina in the plural; these may have represented two aspects of the divinity, both Cloacina herself and Venus, with whom she was later identified. The monument marked the point where the Cloaca Maxima, with which the divinity is associated, entered the Forum. Two well-known episodes among the legends of Rome's origins took place alongside this small but important shrine: the purification of the Roman and Sabine armies with branches of myrtle following the war provoked by the celebrated rape, and the killing of Verginia by her father to protect her virtue from the designs of one of the decemvirs, Appius Claudius.

THE TEMPLE OF JANUS Alongside the Argiletum—the street that ran between the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia and the Curia toward the Subura—stood the small building that originally housed the oldest and most important sanctuary of Janus. The double-faced statue of the god, protector of every entrance and every beginning, was located in the center of the shrine. Some have suggested that this monument was an ancient gate of the city, enlarged to include the Capitoline; others maintain that it functioned as a kind of bridge on the Velabrum. A Neronian coin preserves the only image of the building, whose doors were opened in times of war and closed in times of peace. According to a recent hypothesis, the small brick structure on the southwestern corner of the basilica is to be identified as the temple's last reconstruction, following the fire of AD 410.

THE COMITIUM The *Comitium,* the ancient political center of the city, occupied the northern corner of the Forum, between the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia, the Arch of Septimius Severus, and the Forum of Caesar. Few elements of this ancient meeting place survived the large-scale transformations undertaken by Julius Caesar and Augustus; Caesar's construction of the Curia Iulia even encroached upon its space. Following an ancient rite, augurs defined the area of the Comitium along the cardinal points; evidence of this fact comes not only from the ancient writers, but also from archaeological remains (FIG. **15**). A passage of Pliny the Elder (*NH* 7.60) provides crucial information for

reconstructing the topography of the area. Prior to the introduction of the first sundial, which occurred during the course of the First Punic War (in 263 BC, to be precise), the principal hours of the day were announced by the consul's herald. Standing on the steps of the Curia Hostilia, the oldest seat of the Senate, he marked the passage of the sun between the Rostra and Graecostasis (the raised platform on which foreign ambassadors—particularly Greeks, whence the name—attended meetings of the Senate) to announce midday, and between the Columna Maenia and the Carcer to announce sunset. From this account we can deduce that the Curiamust have stood north of the Comitium, while the Rostra and Graecostasis were on the south, the latter lying to the west of the former. This configuration is confirmed by the position of the Rostra (as attested by other authors) between the Comitium and the Forum. Moreover, we know the exact location of at least two of the monuments mentioned by Pliny: the Carcer and the Republican Rostra. The latter was identified by a base that was set up between the Niger Lapis and the facade of the Curia Iulia and stood below the surviving travertine pavement of the Augustan period.

The chronology of the Comitium can be reconstructed on the basis of test trenches excavated by Giacomo Boni beginning in 1899. As a result of this work, we are able to identify eight levels that correspond to the same number of pavements. Description of the levels proceeds from bottom to top; that is, from the earliest to the most recent:

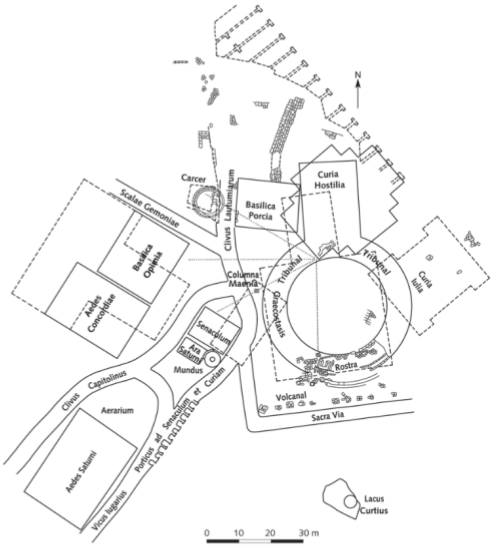

FIGURE 15. The Comitium and the western side of the Forum in the Republican period (before Sulla).

1. The first level was built at the end of the seventh century BC and thus coincides precisely with the date of the Forum's first pavement and of contemporary buildings such as the Regia.
2. Fire destroyed the structures in the Comitium within the first thirty years of the sixth century BC, around the same time that a similar disaster struck the Regia. The second pavement and some architectural

terracottas—possibly from the Curia Hostilia and similar to those of the Regia of this period—belong to the reconstruction following this fire. The archaic inscription underneath the Niger Lapis, which can be dated ca. 570–550 BC, is contemporaneous.

3. A third pavement was laid around the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century BC, at the same time as the earliest speaker's platform (Rostra), rectangular in form. This phase is almost certainly to be associated with the beginning of the Republic in 509 BC, as the construction of the Rostra, intended for public magistrates, strongly suggests.
4. During the second half of the fourth century BC, the Comitium was first paved in stone, as can be inferred from the ruins of the roadbed, the presence of an altar under the Niger Lapis that replaced an older one, and the enlargement of the Rostra. Here too, association with a precise historical event comes to mind: the attachment to the speaker's platform of the prows from the ships captured during the Latin war at Antium in 338 BC; from this time forward, the platform came to be called the *Rostra*.
5. A complete reconstruction of the Comitium took place during the first half of the third century BC, probably at the beginning of the First Punic War. At this time, the area acquired the circular shape and tiered seating that it preserved until the end of the Republic. The configuration, which recalls that of Greek *ekklesiasteria* (places of assembly), was probably introduced from Sicily. In fact, we know that M. Valerius Messalla, the conqueror of Carthage and Syracuse, mounted a painting, commemorating his achievements, on the western side of the Curia and brought the first solar clock to Rome from Catania. The new shape of the Comitium, found also among Roman colonies at Cosa, Paestum, Alba Fucens, Fregellae, and Aquileia, changed the area's orientation and thus ended its use as a large solar clock. The two quarters of the circle on the south corresponded respectively to the Rostra and to the Graecostasis. The northern half was probably occupied by the courts, which were situated on both sides of the Curia Hostilia.
6. The sixth pavement, constructed of tufa slabs, was certainly the one that Sulla installed ca. 80 BC. In this year, the new Curia was built on a larger scale to accommodate the considerably larger senate (six hundred members instead of three hundred) enrolled by the dictator. During this remodeling, the statues of Pythagoras and Alcibiades disappeared; these had been erected along the sides of the older Curia at the beginning of the third century BC. Also on this occasion, the monuments under the Niger Lapis were partly demolished and covered over by a pavement of black marble. The courts were moved out of the Comitium following the construction of the Tribunal Aurelium in another part of the Forum, also around 80 BC. The Rostra and Graecostasis, on the other hand, continued to be used.
7. Between 54 and 44 BC, the entire area was completely transformed by the construction of new buildings under Caesar. The last surviving monuments of the Comitium essentially ceased to exist. The Curia Hostilia, rebuilt by the son of Sulla (Faustus Sulla) after the fire that broke out during the funeral of Clodius in 52 BC, was converted into the Temple of Felicitas; its replacement, the Curia Iulia, was erected in a different location to accommodate Caesar's new forum. The Rostra was moved to the west, in alignment with the Forum's new axis, while the Graecostasis disappeared once and for all. Caesar's new pavement, constructed of regular travertine slabs, incorporated the black marble of the Niger Lapis, which can still be observed today.
8. The last pavement of the Comitium, the same one found throughout the Forum, was installed during the age of Augustus, probably after the fire of 9 BC. The extant inscription near the Column of Phocas identifies the praetor L. Naevius Surdinus as the project's sponsor. This pavement remained in use until late antiquity.

Numerous statues and monuments of various types must have filled the entire expanse of the Comitium: the shrine of Concordia, built of bronze in 304 BC by the curule aedile Cn. Flavius, was erected on the Graecostasis; the statue and well of the augur Attus Navius, which tradition attributes to Tarquinius Priscus, stood next to the Curia, near the Ficus Ruminalis and Column of Maenius erected in 338 BC. Here too were the statues of Marsyas, the symbol of freedom during the Republic, and of Alcibiades and Pythagoras, "the bravest and the wisest of the Greeks," which were erected

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at the beginning of the third century BC; statues of the three Sibyls (or Parcae), Camillus, and other figures were installed on the Rostra.

The Comitium was the oldest seat of political and judicial activity in the city. Its various components duly reflected the tripartite nature of the Roman constitution: the popular assembly, originally called the *Comitia Curiata* because its earliest structure was based on the old aristocratic *curiae* (wards), corresponds to the central area, which was set up for meetings; the Senate is associated with the Curia Hostilia and the nearby Senaculum; the Rostra calls to mind the magistrates who spoke from this platform. Here was the focal point of the city's political and judicial life from the end of the regal period to the end of the Republic, when a large number of its functions migrated to the Forum.

THE NIGER LAPIS At the end of the nineteenth century—10 January 1899, to be precise—a surprising discovery was made during the excavation of the Comitium: not far from the Curia Iulia, there appeared a section of pavement made of black marble, somewhat trapezoidal in shape and separated from the surrounding Augustan travertine pavement by a partition of white marble slabs (FIG. **13:12**). The discovery immediately brought to mind a passage from the second-century AD writer Festus (p. 184 Lindsay), which, though considerably garbled, explicitly defines the site's mystic association with Rome's founder: "the black stone in the Comitium indicates a place associated with death, because the death of Romulus was assigned to it." Other traditions identify the Niger Lapis as the location of the tomb of the shepherd Faustulus or, alternatively, that of Hostus Hostilius, the grandfather of the third king of Rome. The excavation beneath the black marble pavement revealed an archaic monumental complex, which can be reached by means of a short stairway. The monument consists of the following: a platform on which there stood a **U-shaped altar** that lacked upper moldings (FIG. **16:A** and **B**); adjacent to this, the truncated shaft of a **column** (possibly the base for a statue) **(G)**; and an **inscribed cippus (H)** whose upper portion is severely damaged. The inscription, in archaic Latin, was written vertically and in *boustrophedon* (i.e., the lines running alternately from right to left and left to right); the lack of the upper section makes its original length difficult to determine. The transcription is as follows:

1) *quoi hoṇ* [- - - / - - -] *sakros es / ed sord* [- - -]
2) [- - -]*..a ḥas / recei* ⋮ *i* [- - - / - - -]*euam / quos* ⋮ *r* [- - -]
3) [- - -]*m* ⋮ *kalato / rem* ⋮ *ha* [- - - / - - -] *od* ⋮ *iouxment / a* ⋮ *kapia* ⋮ *dotau* [- - -]
4) [- - -]*m* ⋮ *i*<:>*te* <:>*r.*[- - - / - - -]*m* ⋮ *quoi* ⋮ *ha / uelod* ⋮ *nequ* [- - - / - - -]*od* ⋮ *iouestod*
5) [- - -]*lou* <*i?*> *quiod* [- - -]

The only phrase whose sense can be fully grasped is the first, a formulaic curse that, in the language of the *leges regiae,* was directed at profaners of holy places: "may the one who will violate this place be consecrated [i.e., condemned] to the gods of the underworld." Formulas of this type are generally associated with sanctuaries, and in particular with altars. In fact, the inscription of the Comitium is located next to an altar, which makes it practically certain that this is a *lex arae*—a ritual and sacrificial regulation pertaining to the site.

The complex beneath the Niger Lapis is thus a small sanctuary, comprising an altar, a related inscription, and probably a statue of a god, mounted on the nearby column. The oldest part of the monument is the inscription, which, from its position in the second pavement of the Comitium, can be dated to the second quarter of the sixth century BC. The votive material of the sanctuary—numerous fragments of Greek pottery datable exclusively within the sixth century BC—not only confirms this date, but also shows that the cult had particular importance, primarily before the beginning of the Republic. All of this tends to confirm that the "king" mentioned in the inscription (*recei,* "to the king") was a real king, and not the *rex sacrorum*, a pale reflection of the monarch who, during the Republic, was charged exclusively with priestly tasks. Extant literary sources recount that during the

archaic period the king made sacrifices in the Comitium to ensure the successful consummation of the political and judicial tasks associated with this venue. The *calator* (herald) mentioned in the inscription was a functionary responsible for convening meetings *(comitia)*.

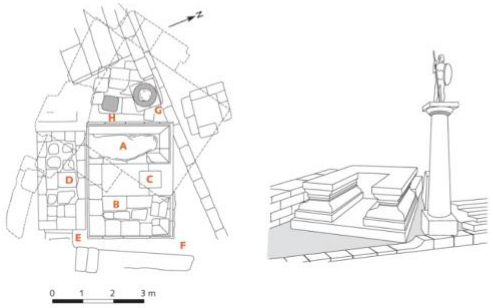

FIGURE 16. *Left*, plan of the Niger Lapis: A–B Altar. C Block between the side wings of the altar. D Platform. E–F Republican Rostra. G Column drum, or pedestal. H Inscribed cippus. *Right*, conjectural reconstruction of the monuments lying beneath the Niger Lapis.

This group of monuments, in my view, constituted the *Volcanal*, the very ancient sanctuary of Vulcan, which various witnesses situate in the Comitium near the Graecostasis and Rostra. In fact, the Niger Lapis sits precisely between these two Republican platforms. Accordingly, the traditional identification of the Volcanal with the ruins near the *Umbilicus Urbis* may now be discarded. As Festus, the only writer to use the term Niger Lapis, confirms, the Niger Lapis is not the tomb of Romulus—who was supposed to have disappeared miraculously—but the site of his death, according to one tradition, at the hands of the senators. Plutarch's *Life of Romulus* (27.6) informs us that the first king of Rome was supposed to have been assassinated in the Volcanal. Thus, the monuments beneath the Niger Lapis and the Volcanal appear to be one and the same.

The Volcanal, however, survived the destruction of the group of monuments underneath the black pavement, as references in writers of the Imperial period attest (e.g., Pliny the Elder, *NH* 16.236). Therefore, it must have been reconstructed in the immediate vicinity and probably corresponds to the small square area, partially excavated, 5 meters southeast of the Niger Lapis. A large slab bearing a dedication to Vulcan, dated to the reign of Augustus (9 BC), was found between the Arch of Septimius Severus and the Curia in the sixteenth century.

The description of the Volcanal in Dionysius of Halicarnassus accords perfectly with the extant remains of the earlier shrine: a small open-air sanctuary, with an inscription "in archaic Greek characters." Certainly the letters on the cippus might easily be thus construed, for the script derived from the archaic Chalcidian alphabet brought to Italy by the first Greek colonists.

In sum, the sanctuary beneath the black pavement was intimately linked in function to the Comitium, for it commemorates two potentially complementary aspects of Romulus: the city's heroic founder (Greek cities typically situated their founders' shrines in the center of the agora); and the divinity overseeing the Comitia Curiata, the oldest formal assembly of the Roman people, which met in the Comitium. When Romulus disappeared in the Volcanal, he was believed to have been transformed into the god Quirinus, the eponymous divinity of the Curiae—that is, of the assembled Romans, who called themselves *Quirites*.

THE CURIA The large brick building that occupies the corner between the Argiletum and the Comitium is the tetrarchic reconstruction of the Curia Iulia, the official seat of the Senate (FIG. **13:17**). Julius Caesar began the construction of a new Senate chamber to replace the earlier Curia Hostilia, which had burned down in 52 BC, but it was Augustus who completed and inaugurated the building on 28 August 29 BC. Between 1930 and 1936, the present building, which had been turned into the Church of S. Adriano at the beginning of the seventh century AD, was restored to the form of its reconstruction by Diocletian after the fire of Carinus (AD 283). This blaze had destroyed the entire area between the Forum of Caesar and the Basilica Iulia (the hall had been previously restored by Domitian in AD 94).

Recent studies, largely based on a drawing made by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, have considerably advanced our understanding of the Curia as a complex of several buildings: the Curia itself, a *Chalcidicum*, the *Secretarium Senatus*, and the *Atrium Minervae*. In fact, the Chalcidicum was nothing more than the Curia's colonnaded porticus, as represented on an Augustan coin. The Secretarium Senatus—not the "secretariat of the senate," as the term is generally translated and interpreted, but a special court convened to judge senators—came into existence only toward the end of the empire; its seat may have been the late antique apsidal building whose remains are still visible at the south of Caesar's Forum, behind the Curia. The Atrium Minervae may have been simply another name for the Chalcidicum in later years.

Recent work behind the Curia has shown that Caesar's Forum extended as far as the building itself, which means that the *Atrium Libertatis* could not have been located in this area, as was once believed. The Curia immediately adjoined the porticus of Caesar's Forum, for which it served, significantly, as a kind of annex. The present rectangular structure is strengthened by four broad buttresses, aligned with the facades, each of which culminates in a triangular pediment; a stairway in the front left buttress leads to the roof level. The principal facade, which preserves traces of medieval loculi (burial niches) at various levels, was embellished on the lower half by marble slabs and on the upper level by stucco laid down to imitate marble ashlar blocks. The bronze leaves of the central door are replicas of the Diocletianic originals; the latter were reused in the seventeenth century to formthe central doorway of S. Giovanni in Laterano.

The spacious interior, spanned by a flat ceiling (the present wood ceiling is modern), is 21 meters high, 18 meters wide, and 27 meters long; this corresponds, more or less, to the proportions suggested by Vitruvius (*De Architectura* 5.2) for *curiae*, whose height, according to the Augustan writer, should be roughly half of the sum of the building's width and length. The marble floor, partly original and partly reconstructed with ancient marbles, dates to the reign of Diocletian, as do the architectural decorations on the walls—niches framed by small columns supported by brackets and designed to hold statues. Paintings in the Byzantine style were added when the Curia was transformed into a church; their remains can be seen on the interior of the facade. The hall is divided into three sections running the length of the building (FIG. **17**). Those on the right and the left consist of three low and wide steps that accommodated the chairs of the senators, who numbered approximately three hundred. The wide platform between the two doors in the rear wall was reserved for the presiding official of the senate. Here too was the pedestal on which the statue of Victory (originally from Tarentum) probably stood, erected by Octavian. At the end of the fourth century AD, St. Ambrose and Aurelius Symmachus, one of the last pagan senators of Rome, argued bitterly over this statue and the altar connected with it; Ambrose won the argument, and the altar was removed.

Currently on display in the Curia are two large reliefs, discovered in the center of the Forum and known as the *plutei*, or **"anaglyphs of Trajan"** (FIG. **13:13**). The reliefs may have originally been part of a small enclosure, possibly surrounding the *ficus ruminalis* (ceremonial fig tree) and the statue of Marsyas. Scenes relating to the principate of Trajan adorn the monument: that on the right, which is incomplete, depicts the burning of financial records in the presence of the emperor—symbolizing the remission of debts owed to the treasury by the citizens; the one on the left depicts the institution of the *alimenta*—low-interest agricultural loans for impoverished youths. The scenes take place in the Forum, providing an important picture of this area in antiquity. The statue of Marsyas standing next to the *ficus ruminalis* appears in both reliefs, and the identical position of the statue and tree in both scenes shows that the *plutei* portray not the two sides of the Forum, but the same side: that on the south. Accordingly, we can identify the buildings as follows: in the relief on the left (from right to left), the Rostra, the Temple of Vespasian and Titus (distinguished by its Corinthian columns), an arched entrance to the Capitoline, the Temple of Saturn (distinguished by its Ionic columns), an empty space representing the Vicus Iugarius, and the arcades of the Basilica Iulia; on the other relief (also to be read from right to left) there follows the continuation of the Basilica Iulia, the empty space representing the Vicus Tuscus, the Temple of the Castors, the Arch of Augustus, and the Rostra of the Temple of Divus Iulius. In front of the Basilica Iulia, the emperor (or perhaps his statue) is shown seated on a platform. The reverse sides of the reliefs depict animals—a pig, a sheep, and a bull—offered in the solemn Roman sacrifice known as the *suovetaurilia*.

THE TEMPLE OF SATURN The large Ionic building that rises at the foot of the Capitoline, southwest of the Rostra, can be identified with certainty as the Temple of Saturn (FIG. **13:10**); the much older altar of Saturn, which tradition associates with the god's founding of the city on the Capitoline, was located in front of this temple. Construction of the temple began during the regal period; its inauguration, however, did not take place until the first years of the Republic (perhaps in 498 BC). After the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, this is the oldest Republican temple. It was entirely reconstructed by Munatius Plancus in 42 BC and restored after the fire of Carinus (AD 283). What remains of the superstructure—eight columns and the entablature, constructed largely of salvaged material—may date to the third-century restoration, or even to a later one. The still legible inscription on the frieze records a restoration that was undertaken following a fire (*Senatus Populusque Romanus Incendio Consumptum Restituit*). The magnificent podium, with travertine revetment, dates to the reconstruction overseen by Munatius Plancus. In front of the podium there was an extensive avant-corps, now largely collapsed, whose interior was entirely empty; entrance was on the east through a door, of which only the threshold survives. On the anniversary of the temple's dedication, 17 December, the feast of the year's end, the Saturnalia, was celebrated with unrestrained freedom.

A paved road passes in front of the facade of the temple and connects the *Vicus Iugarius* with the *Clivus Capitolinus*. The Arch of Tiberius (FIG. **13:11**), erected in AD 16 following the victories of Germanicus, stood just before the intersection, spanning the Vicus Iugarius, and not (as it is generally—and

erroneously—situated) on the road that runs along the facade of the Basilica Iulia. The two brick piers rising between the temple and basilica must have belonged to this monument. On the other side of the Clivus Capitolinus, of which a long tract of the ancient pavement survives, a group of buildings on the slope of the Capitoline marks the western end of the Forum: from south to north, these are the Porticus of the Dei Consentes, the Temple of Vespasian and Titus, the Temple of Concord, and the Carcer.

THE PORTICUS OF THE DEI CONSENTES According to Varro (*R.* 1.1.4), near the Forum stood twelve gilded statues of the *dei consentes,* six gods and six goddesses, which may have been a Roman version of the Greek *dodekatheon* (twelve Olympian deities) or possibly a group of gods of Etruscan origin. In 1834, a strange building was discovered above the Temple of Saturn on the slopes of the Capitoline consisting of eight rooms, made of brick, that were laid out on two sides at an obtuse angle; the colonnaded porticus in front of the rooms was reconstructed in 1858 (FIG. **13:1**). The colonnade is situated on a platform in which there were seven other rooms at a lower level and with a different orientation from the upper rooms. The statues of the twelve gods might have been displayed in pairs in six of these rooms. The inscription on the architrave of the porticus records that the statues of the Dei Consentes and the building that housed them were restored by Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, city prefect in AD 367. The rooms, architrave, and capitals (Corinthian, decorated with trophies), however, date to the preceding phase, probably a Flavian reconstruction following the fire of AD 80. The restoration of 367 is one of the last manifestations of the pagan revival of the fourth century AD that owes much to Vettius, whose aversion to Christianity, the dominant religion at that time, is well known.

THE TEMPLE OF VESPASIAN AND TITUS Immediately to the north of the Porticus of the Dei Consentes rises the base of a temple that abuts the large foundation wall of the Tabularium (FIG. **13:2**); in fact, the temple closed off an entrance to the building. Identification of the shrine was made possible by the fragment of an inscription still visible on the architrave: *[r]estituer(unt)* (they restored). A pilgrim of the eighth century AD, who left notes recording his visit to Rome (the so-called Einsiedeln Itinerary), transcribed the inscrip-

tion when it was still complete and the temple was in all likelihood mostly intact: *Divo Vespasiano Augusto S.P.Q.R. Impp. Caess. Severus Et Antoninus Pii Felices Augg. Restituer.* On that evidence, the building is the temple dedicated to Vespasian, whom the Senate had proclaimed a god, and later restored by Septimius Severus and Caracalla. We know that it was also dedicated to Titus, and thus the original construction would have been completed by Domitian.

The building was 33 meters long and 22 meters wide, prostyle and hexastyle, with a spacious cella in front of which rose six columns, flanked on each side by two lateral columns. A podium within the cella held the statues of the two deified emperors. (The two gigantic marble heads of Vespasian and Titus in the Farnese collection, preserved in the Museo Nazionale in Naples, belonged to these statues.) Of the colonnade, only three columns of the northeastern corner survive (Corinthian, 15.20 meters high and 1.57 meters in diameter). They support a fragment of the architrave on which, in addition to the remnant of the inscription, there is a frieze representing sacrificial implements. The late Flavian style of the capitals and the sculptures indicates that what remains of the building dates to the original construction; the Severan emperors' restoration of the temple was thus quite limited, as was their restoration of the Pantheon. The curious arrangement of the temple steps within the colonnade accommodates the limited space of the site; the steps, like the podium, were rebuilt in 1811.

THE TEMPLE OF CONCORD North of the Temple of Vespasian and Titus, and separated by only a small amount of space, is a large podium that also abuts the Tabularium. The identification of the building as the Temple of Concord is certain; it appears, for example, on a fragment of the Severan Marble Plan (FIG. **13:3**). The temple was popularly believed to have been vowed by Camillus in 367 BC to celebrate the end of the struggles between the patricians and plebs, which culminated that year in the passage of the Licinio-Sextian laws, setting the two classes of the city on an even footing, at least politically. The authenticity of the episode, however, has been called into question, since the practice of deifying abstract virtues did not begin until the end of the fourth century BC. It is possible that the temple was first built in 218 BC by the praetor L. Manlius. It was restored by L. Opimius after the murder of C. Gracchus and again by Tiberius between 7 BC and AD 10, the year of its new inauguration.

The present form of the cella, wider than deep (45 × 24 meters), dates to the last reconstruction, which took maximum advantage of the narrow space available. At this time it must have expanded into part of the area previously occupied by the Basilica Opimia, built north of the temple in 121 BC by the same L. Opimius who restored the temple itself; thereafter, the basilica disappears from the historical record. The narrow porch in front of the cella featured a hexastyle colonnade. Nothing of the splendid Tiberian building remains other than the podium and threshold of the cella. The latter consists of two enormous blocks of Porta Santa marble engraved with a caduceus, the emblem of ambassadors and thus a symbol of reconciliation. A segment of the very ornate entablature is housed in the Tabularium, while a capital from the cella, composite Corinthian with representation of pairs of rams instead of volutes, resides in the Forum Antiquarium.

Tiberius transformed the building into a veritable museum. Pliny the Elder (*NH* 34.73, 77, 80, 89, 90; 35.66, 131, 144ff.) catalogues the works that were housed there. For the most part, the pieces mentioned are Greek and can be dated to the post-Lysippean period, corresponding to the emperor's preference for Hellenistic art. During the Republic, the Senate would occasionally meet in the temple. It was here that Cicero made his Fourth Catilinarian speech and, during the early Empire, the Senate convened in the temple to condemn Sejanus, who was subsequently executed in the nearby Carcer.

THE CARCER TULLIANUM Identification of the Carcer as the ancient building at the foot of the Capitoline beneath the Church of S. Giuseppe dei Falegnami is secure (FIG. **13:4**). Pliny records its position as west of the Curia, and we know that it was in the immediate vicinity of the Temple of Concord and near the Forum. The remains beneath the church accord perfectly with the descriptions provided by ancient authors. The extant structure is only one part of the ancient Carcer—probably the innermost and most secret section, called the *Tullianum*. The attribution of the building to Servius Tullius or Tullius Hostilius probably derives from this name; according to Livy (1.33), however, its founder was Ancus Marcius.

A flight of stairs leads to the ancient level. The travertine facade dates from the beginning of the Imperial period, as is indicated by the large

inscription with the names of the two consuls, C. Vibius Rufinus and M. Cocceius Nerva, dating to between AD 39 and 42. The present facade covers an older one of Grotta Oscura tufa. An opening, probably modern, leads to a trapezoidal room constructed of Monteverde and Anio tufa blocks and thus datable to the second half of the second century BC. The original entrance possibly consisted of a small door, now walled in, which stood in the wall on the right at a higher level than the current floor.

The other rooms in the prison, called *lautumiae* (stone quarries) because they were fashioned out of ancient tufa quarries, must have stood beyond this entrance along the slope of the Capitoline. The floor has a circular opening that was once the only entrance to the lower room, access to which is now possible by a modern stairway. The lower room, circular in form, is built entirely of unmortared peperino blocks. A wall that cuts through the building on the eastern side is probably associated with the construction of the Basilica Porcia. When the latter was built, the ancient street that passed by the prison, the *Clivus Lautumiarum*, must have shifted to the west; in late antiquity this road appears to have been called *Clivus Argentarius*. We can thus be certain that this section of the Carcer predates the construction of the Basilica Porcia in 184 BC.

What survives of the building is the most secret and terrible part of the prison, known as the Tullianum. The infiltration of water, which can still be observed today, has suggested to some that the original construction was a cistern, but it is more likely that the building served as a prison right from the beginning. State prisoners were incarcerated here and then strangled after being led through the city in the triumphal parades celebrated by victorious generals. This fate was reserved for, among others, Jugurtha and Vercingetorix. Among the Romans, the partisans of Gaius Gracchus, the Catilinarian conspirators, and Sejanus and his children perished here. The medieval legend that Saints Peter and Paul were imprisoned here should be discounted.

Sallust provides the most detailed description of this gloomy place in his account of the execution of the Catilinarian conspirators (*Cat.* 55): "There is a place in the prison called the *Tullianum*, a little to the left as you go down, sunk about twelve feet underground. It is enclosed within thick walls and a vaulted stone ceiling. Its appearance is repugnant, even frightening, because of its neglect, darkness, and smell." The courage that Jugurtha showed in the face of death is memorable: when thrown into the Tullianum, he turned to his executioners and said, jokingly, "By Hercules, see how cold your bath is!"

ITINERARY 2

The Central Area of the Forum

OPEN SPACE OF THE FORUM The Forum's **first pavement** of beaten earth dates from the beginning of the Etruscan period; that is, to the end of the seventh century BC. Stone pavements were laid several times during the course of the Republic, traces of which can be seen in various points in the Forum. Near the Column of Phocas, an inscription in large letters, which has undergone considerable restoration, securely dates the last surviving pavement. It reads: *L. Naevius L. f. Surdinus pr(aetor)*. The same text appears complete on a relief discovered in the immediate vicinity, now on display in the Capitoline Museums, which depicts Mettius Curtius hurling himself into a chasm. A reproduction of the original is displayed beside the *Lacus Curtius*.

Surdinus was a *praetor inter cives et peregrinos;* that is, the official in charge of judicial transactions between Romans and foreigners; he probably held the position in 9 BC. It was long believed that the inscription pertained to the nearby tribunal of the praetor, but it has since been shown, on the basis of similar placements in other fora (such as those in Tarracina, Saepinum, and Veleia), that Surdinus had the pavement rebuilt. This pavement was installed following the great fires of 14 and 9 BC, which destroyed a large section of the Forum, extending from the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia to the temples of Vesta and the Castors and the Basilica Iulia. Most of the buildings were rebuilt immediately afterward. The new pavement covered over another laid during the reign of Julius Caesar, of which traces are visible where the Augustan pavement is missing. Between the Rostra and the Lacus Curtius, various rectangular openings, giving access to vertical shafts, can be seen in the Caesarian level. These were part of a system of **underground passageways,** probably constructed by Caesar, that extended underneath the entire Forum. In conjunction with the vertical openings, nineteenth-century excavators noted the remains of wooden lifts, an indication that these passageways were likely used in the gladiatorial games that took place in the Forum during the Republic, serving the same functions as the subterranean galleries of

the Colosseum. Surdinus's pavement, by closing these apertures, put the passageways out of use; the closure coincides with the cessation of gladiatorial games in the Forum at the beginning of the Augustan period.

The column that rises on a stepped base in front of the Rostra is the last of the commemorative monuments to be erected in the Forum (FIG. **13:14**). The inscription reads as follows:

> *Optimo clementiss[imo piissi]moque / principi domino n(ostro) / F[ocae imperat]ori / perpetuo a d[e]o coronato [t]riumphatori / semper Augusto / Smaragdus ex praepos(ito) sacri palatii / ac patricius et exarchus Italiae / devotus eius clementiae / pro innumerabilibus pietatis eius / beneficiis et pro quiete / procurata Ital(iae) ac conservata libertate / hanc sta[tuam maiesta]tis eius / auri splend[ore fulgen]tem huic / sublimi colu[m]na[e ad] perennem / ipsius gloriam imposuit ac dedicavit / die prima mensis Augusti, indict(ione) und(ecima) / p(ost) c(onsulatum) pietatis eius anno quinto.* (To the best, most clement, and most pious emperor, our lord Phocas, general in perpetuity, crowned by god, triumphator, always Augustus—Smaragdus, former head of the holy palace and patrician and exarch of Italy, devoted to his clemency on account of his innumerable acts of piety and the peace he conferred on Italy and his preservation of liberty, set this statue of his majesty, shining with the splendor of gold, upon this high column that his glory might last forever and dedicated it on the first day of the month of August, in the eleventh indiction, in the fifth year of his service after the consulship.)

The statue was dedicated in AD 608, but the column itself belonged to an older monument, probably of the second century AD; it was rededicated to Phocas after the original inscription was erased. A portion of the steps was removed at the beginning of the twentieth century to expose Surdinus's inscription.

The bombastic praise of the inscription, reiterated in Pope Gregory's letter to the emperor, cannot erase the memory of Phocas's ascension to the throne in 602 by his murder of the emperor Mauritius and his five sons. The new emperor's true legacy in his dealings with Rome was his presentation of the Pantheon to the pope, who transformed it into the Church of S. Maria ad Martyres in 609. As for Phocas, he was deposed and murdered in the year following.

In front of the Rostra lies a **square area** that was left unpaved. This was the site of the fig tree, olive tree, and vine that Pliny the Elder (*NH* 15.78) observed in the center of the Forum near the Lacus Curtius. All three were replanted in 1956.

A little to the east of Surdinus's inscription is a trapezoidal area below the Augustan pavement that has preserved both a segment of the ancient Caesarian paving and, where the latter is missing, a section of the underlying tufa pavement. On the eastern side, a twelve-sided base of friable tufa (cappellaccio) encloses a circular foundation, which is open in the middle; this was probably the base of a well. Farther to the west are two rectangular cuttings, possibly intended to secure bases for altars. The site can be identified with certainty as the **Lacus Curtius,** the subject of several legends (FIG. **13:16**). According to one of these, the site was originally a swamp into which the Sabine leader, Mettius Curtius, fell while riding his horse during the legendary war between the Romans and Sabines. According to another, it was named for a Roman, Marcus Curtius, who sacrificed himself in response to an oracle by throwing himself into a chasm that opened up at this spot. Varro's account (*L.* 5.150), however, is more plausible; according to him, the name derives from the consul of 445 BC, C. Curtius, who on the order of the senate oversaw the enclosure of a place struck by a thunderbolt.

The relief in Greek marble depicting the legend's climactic episode, discovered nearby in 1553, must have belonged to this monument. The work dates from the Republican period, as is evident from the fact that Surdinus's inscription, engraved on the reverse, shows evidence of having been added afterward by its clear traces of reworking. The sculpture may have been part of the balustrade contemporary with the Caesarian pavement—perhaps crafted by the same workshop of Greek sculptors that created the frieze in the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia, since it is as similar in style and content as it is in chronology.

A little to the east of the Lacus Curtius is a rectangular depression about a meter deep. On the basis of a contemporaneous description (Statius, *Silvae* 1.1), scholars have generally identified this as the site of the bronze equestrian statue of Domitian *(Equus Domitiani)*, erected in AD 91 (FIG. **13:18**). The monument is depicted as well in a contemporaneous coin. We know that under the raised foreleg of the horse is a representation of the Rhine, commemorating Domitian's victories in Germania. The three hollowed-out travertine blocks inserted into the concrete foundation, some have argued, might have been supports for the metal props that anchored the horse's

other three legs. A recent study, however, has demonstrated that the statue lay farther to the north, right in the center of the Forum, where the pavement shows clear signs of reworking. The monument was certainly pulled down immediately after the assassination of Domitian in 96. It has been proposed that the visible remains belonged instead to the *Doliola*, where vessels sacred to Vesta were buried at the time of the Gallic sack. In fact, several vases, datable to the seventh century BC, were found by Giacomo Boni in a stone receptacle *(theca)* inserted into the cement bedding.

THE BASILICA IULIA The Basilica Iulia occupies the whole area between the Temple of Saturn and the Temple of the Castors, bordered by the two principal streets that lead to the Forum from the Tiber: the *Vicus Iugarius* on the west and the *Vicus Tuscus* on the east (FIG. **13:15**, FIG. **19:3**). It is likely that the construction of the basilica in its current size prompted a change in the course and a regularization of the two streets; below the extant pavements, excavators have observed the remains of Republican constructions.

The building, 101 meters long and 49 meters wide, sits on top of one of the oldest basilicas in Rome, the Basilica Sempronia, which the censor Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, father of the famous tribunes Tiberius and Gaius, built in 169 BC. We know from Livy (44.16) that Gracchus had to demolish the home of Scipio Africanus, which stood in this location, as well as nearby shops, to make room for his basilica. The Basilica Iulia was certainly much larger than its predecessor since it took over the space occupied by the group of shops *(tabernae veteres)* that stood in front of the older basilica, balancing the *tabernae novae* located on the other side of the square in front of the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia.

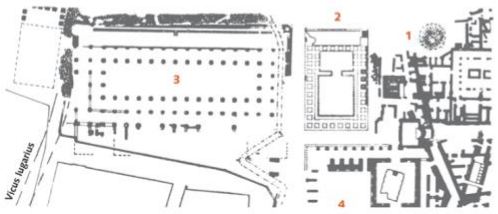

FIGURE 19. The area of the Velabrum. 1 Temple of Vesta. 2 Temple of the Castors. 3 Basilica Iulia. 4 Domitianic hall. 5 Church of S. Maria Antiqua. 6 Horrea Agrippiana. 7 Church of S. Teodoro. 8 Temple of Magna Mater (Cybele). 9 Church of S. Giorgio in Velabro. (After Astolfi, Guidobaldi, and Pronti)

Caesar probably began construction of the building as early as 54 BC, at the same time he was working on his new forum, as Cicero records in a letter to Atticus. Augustus completed the project, but it was destroyed immediately afterward in the great fire of 9 BC. Following reconstruction, the building

was dedicated to the emperor's two adopted sons, Gaius and Lucius, but always kept its original name. Diocletian rebuilt the basilica after it was damaged in the fire of Carinus (AD 283).

Unfortunately, because of continuous pillaging, little survives of the ancient building; in effect all that is left is the podium, which rises on several steps—seven on the eastern corner and one on the west, owing to the slope of the ground. The brick piers visible today are largely a nineteenth-century restoration. Nonetheless, the plan of the basilica can be reconstructed. The imposing building consisted of five aisles. Its large central hall (82 × 18 meters) was surrounded on all four sides by two concentric porticoes; the one on the outside facing the Forum had arcades on two stories, an indication that the central hall must have risen to a height of three stories. The basilica housed the tribunal of the *centumviri,* and its interior was sectioned off by curtains or wooden partitions so that it could be used by four tribunals at the same time. Only particularly important cases would have required use of the whole space; Pliny the Younger (*Ep*. 6.33.3) records that one of the cases in which he was involved drew such a crowd that people were massed not only in the hall but in the upper galleries as well.

On the steps of the basilica facing the Forum and on the floor of the aisles idlers passed the time playing board games *(tabulae lusoriae)* and left graffiti sketches of statues displayed in the area. Toward the center of the facade are two bases inscribed *opus Polycliti* and *opus Timarchi;* these supported two statues—originals, not copies—by the famous Greek sculptors named in the inscriptions, which were probably brought here in the Severan period, at least to judge from the style of the writing. One of these inscriptions now sits on a base that bears the name of the city prefect in AD 416, Gabinius Vettius Probianus, who records his relocation of a statue from another place into the Basilica Iulia. As indicated by similar bases found in the area, Probianus's work was probably undertaken as a result of the sack of Alaric.

Excavations carried out deep in the center of the building have brought to light the remains of a building—the Basilica Sempronia—that sat on top of even older structures, including, among others, the *impluvium* of a private house; this was very likely the house of Scipio Africanus. Two archaic terracotta antefixes, dating to between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth centuries BC, were among the discoveries and should be ascribed to the oldest phase of the nearby Temple of the Castors.

In the area south of the basilica and communicating with it are **several tabernae** that probably opened onto an ancient street. The Temple of Divus Augustus must have stood beyond this street, in the unexcavated area beneath the former Ospedale della Consolazione; the monument was begun by Tiberius and completed by Caligula. A fragment of the Severan Marble Plan probably contains a plan of this temple, which stood within a square identified by the inscription as the *Graecostadium,* possibly the location of a slave market during the Imperial period. The statue of Vertumnus, a god of Etruscan origin, must have stood on the corner of the street, near the *Vicus Tuscus* (Street of the Etruscans), named, according to legend, for the district's inhabitants, who came to Rome with King Tarquinius Priscus. Ancient tradition held that the statue marked the boundary of the Velabrum marsh prior to the construction of the Cloaca Maxima.

THE TEMPLE OF THE CASTORS The surviving three Corinthian columns of the Temple of the Dioscuri (or of the Castors, as the Romans more frequently called it, privileging one of the two divine twins) rise on a high podium immediately to the east of the Vicus Tuscus (FIG. **13:26**, FIG. **19:2**).

The Greek cult was introduced into Rome quite early, at the beginning of the fifth century BC. The legend states that during the battle near Lake Regillus in 499 BC, in which the Romans fought the Latins allied to Tarquinius Superbus in his attempt to reconquer Rome, two mysterious horsemen appeared and led the Romans to victory. Immediately afterward, the same horsemen were seen watering their horses in the city at the Fountain of Juturna, where they announced the victory and thereafter disappeared. In their honor, the dictator Aulus Postumius Albinus made a vow to erect a temple, which was dedicated by his son in 484 BC.

The discovery at Lavinium (Pratica di Mare) of an archaic inscription of the sixth century BC containing a dedication to Castor and Pollux confirms the early introduction of these two divinities into Latium. The strongly Hellenic tone of the language makes it certain that the cult migrated here from one of the cities of Magna Graecia, probably Tarentum. The patricians must have had a hand in introducing the cult to Rome, given the ease with which this foreign cult was welcomed in the heart of the city and inside the *pomerium*. Just as the Dioscuri were the protectors of the knights (i.e., the

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aristocracy) in Magna Graecia, they were also the tutelary gods of the nobility in Rome.

Important remains of the archaic temple with three cellae and a podium in cappellaccio, as well as its terracotta decoration, were brought to light during recent excavations, which have definitively confirmed the traditional dating of the temple. It was restored by L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus in 117 BC and then again in 73 BC by Verres, the governor of Sicily made famous by Cicero's brilliant prosecution. Tiberius oversaw the final restoration after the fire of 14 or 9 BC; the new building was dedicated in AD 6; the remains that can be seen today date to this reconstruction. The podium is in large part that of the 117 BC construction, which incorporated the remains of the earlier archaic phase, but only a section in *opus caementicium* survives; the tufa blocks that supported the more important structural parts of the building were removed by pillagers, and a marble block from the temple was used for the base of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitoline. The building (32 × 49.50 meters) can be reconstructed as peripteral, Corinthian, and octostyle with eleven columns on its long sides. Some have argued, though the issue cannot be definitively resolved, that the front section of the podium, which was approached by two side stairs, was decorated with ships' prows and that, together with the Imperial Rostra and another located on the podium of the Temple of Divus Iulius, it constituted one of three known speakers' platforms in the Forum (the so-called *Rostra Tria*). As was the case of the rostra of the Temple of Divus Iulius, however, it is likely that the platform was actually the independent structure, possibly built during the reign of Diocletian, that has recently been identified in front of the temple, along the eastern side of the Forum.

Several noteworthy episodes in the history of the Republic occurred in the temple of the Castors: Caesar argued in favor of his agrarian legislation on the platform, and the Senate met from time to time in the temple. The podium might also have served as the presidential tribune of the legislative assemblies that convened in the section of the Forum that faces the temple. We know, moreover, that the temple housed the office of weights and measures as well as bankers' stalls; these are probably the small rooms in the podium situated between the columns, which have been partially preserved on the eastern side.

THE FOUNTAIN OF JUTURNA Before the censorship of Appius Claudius (312 BC), as Frontinus records in his treatise on aqueducts (written at the end of the first century AD), water in Rome was drawn primarily from the Tiber, wells, and the few springs that existed within the city. During the archaic period, the most important spring was located at the foot of the Palatine between the temples of Vesta and of the Castors. As were others in antiquity, the spring was associated with a divinity, the nymph Juturna, sister of King Turnus, and its waters were considered salutary (FIG. **13:28**). An excavation in 1900 uncovered the spring and revealed that it had a monumental appearance as early as the Republican period. In the middle of a roughly square basin, clad in marble, stands a rectangular pedestal, designed to support a statuary group. The level of the basin is about a meter lower than the Augustan pavement; the extant arrangement is thus Republican and not early Imperial, as has often been claimed. The use of *opus quasi reticulatum,* typical of the end of the second and beginning of the first centuries BC, confirms this date. Restorations employing Anio tufa in *opus reticulatum,* which can be assigned with certainty to the beginning of the empire, can also be observed. The latter were probably contemporary with Tiberius's restoration of the Temple of the Castors, while the construction of the basin in its extant form likely dates back to Metellus's reconstruction in 117 BC. Recent discoveries have led to the identification of an older phase, in *opus incertum,* that can be dated to the middle of the second century BC, probably during the censorship of Aemilius Paulus. Confirmation of this dating can be found in the fragments of the marble statues of the Dioscuri (now in the Forum Antiquarium) discovered in the basin; these evidently once stood on the central pedestal. The statues are not Archaic Greek originals, as has been stated, but are in an archaizing style that is typical of the late Hellenistic era and can thus be ascribed, like the rest of the monument, to the second century BC. The sculptures must have come from a workshop of Greek artists active in Rome during those years. It is possible they were commissioned by Lucius Aemilius Paulus, the general who defeated Perseus of Macedon and who, according to Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 7.3), dedicated the statues of the Dioscuri in the *Lacus Iuturnae*. The statues show traces of fire damage and restorations in Carrara marble (the original marble was Greek). The fire of 14 BC must also have damaged the fountain, and so Tiberius may have also restored the statues afterward. In fact, the temple and the fountain appear to

belong to a single complex.

A marble cippus of the Trajanic period also comes from this area; a cast of the original, which is in the Forum Antiquarium, has been set on the edge of the basin. The cippus bears a relief sculpture of the Dioscuri, their parents Jupiter and Leda, and Juturna. **Juturna's shrine,** identified by the dedicatory inscription to the goddess located atop the monument, sits a little to the south of the basin. It too was reconstructed, probably during the Trajanic period. The shrine sits at an oblique angle to the other surrounding buildings, a fact that might be explained by the original orientation of *Nova Via,* which must have passed by here before the Neronian reconstruction in this area following the fire of AD 64.

In front of the shrine is a **marble wellhead** with an inscription, repeated twice, that names M. Barbatius Pollio, a *curule aedile* who lived between the ages of Caesar and Augustus. A Severan altar, with a relief depicting two divinities (probably Mars and Venus), sits in front of the well; the work is a reproduction (the original is on display in the Forum Antiquarium).

Behind the fountain toward the east stands a **building** that gives evidence of various phases, from the late Republic to the high Empire. The rooms, constructed in *opus incertum* and thus of Republican vintage, abut the House of the Vestal Virgins and once supported a ramp that led to the Palatine. The building was completely rebuilt in brick and furnished with a black and white mosaic floor during the late Empire. Its precise function can be identified from two inscriptions on a statue base that is still preserved *in situ* (in the room near the shrine). One of these mentions the dedication of a statue to Constantine by the curator of aqueducts and grain distribution *(Curator Aquarum et Minuciae),* Fl. Maesius Egnatius Lollianus; the other states that the same person built the *Statio Aquarum* (Office of the Aqueducts) on this spot in AD 328. The administration of the water supply and aqueducts was thus transferred here in that year from the office's original seat, probably within the Area Sacra di Largo Argentina. Another inscription preserved here, dedicated to the *Genius* of the Statio Aquarum, definitively confirms the identification. Various statues decorated the building. One of these was of Aesculapius, the god of medicine, perhaps an allusion to the salutary quality of the waters, and another was an archaizing representation of Apollo (now in the Forum Antiquarium).

Immediately to the south of the Fountain of Juturna is a room that also probably dates from the Trajanic period. With the addition of an apse, it was later transformed into a Christian oratory, called the "Oratory of the Forty Martyrs" (FIG. **13:27**). The martyrdom of forty Christian soldiers in Armenia during the persecutions of Diocletian is represented on the back wall in a fresco that probably dates to the eighth century.

THE TEMPLE OF DIVUS IULIUS After Caesar was assassinated in the Curia of Pompey (located in the Campus Martius, within the Area Sacra di Largo Argentina), his body was brought to the Forum in the vicinity of the Regia. This was in fact the official headquarters of the dictator, who held the religious office of *pontifex maximus*. It was probably here that the body was cremated, and here a marble column was erected with the inscription *parenti patriae* (to the father of the fatherland). The column was later removed and in its place the temple was built and dedicated to "Divus Iulius"—that is, to Julius the God (FIGS. **13:30, 20:3**). This is the first instance of posthumous deification in Rome, following an eastern custom embraced by Hellenistic dynasts.

The temple, erected by Augustus and dedicated on 18 August 29 BC, rises on the eastern side of the Forum, marking one of its borders. After the particularly destructive spoliations of the fifteenth century, only the ruins of a podium in *opus caementicium* survive. The empty spaces correspond to those sections of the structure that supported the colonnade and the walls of the cella; these were originally filled with tufa blocks. The front part of the podium is a hemicycle, within which is the core of a circular altar, probably erected over the spot where the body of Caesar was cremated. Later the hemicycle and altar were closed off by a straight wall. We know from Cassius Dio (47.19) that Augustus himself constructed a wall to block access to the altar in order to put an end to the increasingly popular custom of using the altar as a place of refuge. It is generally believed that the prows of the ships belonging to the armada of Antony and Cleopatra, captured by Octavian at Actium, were affixed to this podium.

The *Rostra ad Divi Iulii,* clear traces of which survive in front of the temple, was probably a structure independent of the temple itself (FIG. **13:21**). This tribunal is represented quite clearly in one of the Trajanic reliefs currently housed in the Curia. The temple, whose podium was approached by two lat-

eral stairs from behind, was probably Corinthian, consisting of a cella and porch with six columns on the front and two on the long sides. Fragments of the marble decoration, in particular the frieze decorated with Victories whose lower extremities emerge from floral shoots, are preserved on site and in the Forum Antiquarium. Within the cella stood the statue of Caesar, its head crowned by a star, the *sidus Iulium,* which was also featured on the pediment, as we can deduce from representations of the temple on coins.

ITINERARY 3

The Eastern End of the Forum

THE SACRA VIA A precise understanding of the course of the *Sacra Via*, the most important and oldest axial road of the Forum, is indispensable for locating the position of various public and private buildings that were associated with it by the ancient literary tradition and for identifying the extant remains. Contrary to scholarly opinion, the question has not been definitively answered, and numerous problems still remain unresolved. The many, and in some cases profound, transformations that occurred over the centuries in the center of Rome have frequently modified, even radically, the course of various street alignments and the orientation of buildings. It is necessary to take all of this into account.

Varro (*L.* 5.47) and Festus (p. 372 Lindsay) describe with great precision the course of the Sacra Via during the period between the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire—before, that is, the destruction and subsequent topographical reconfiguration occasioned by the Neronian fire. Both of these authors distinguish a short stretch, popularly known as the Sacra Via, from a fairly long one, known only by scholars. The first, to which the term *Sacra Via* normally refers, included the section between the Regia and the house of the *rex sacrorum* (which were two separate buildings [FIG. **21**]); that is, the road that ran between the Forum and the point where the slope of the Velia begins. The second, and longer, Sacra Via ran from the Arx to the Sacellum of Strenia on the *Carinae*—a saddle between the Velia and the Esquiline, behind the apse of the Basilica of Maxentius, that was partially removed for the construction of Via dei Fori Imperiali. The second definition distinguishes the Sacra Via as the road that passes in front of the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia on its way to the Comitium and from there to the Arx, and not the street that runs between the Regia and the Temple of Vesta, passes the long side of the Basilica Iulia, and proceeds to the Temple of Saturn.

Regarding the topography of the Sacra Via in its narrower sense, we know the exact location of the Regia; various ancient authors tell us that the house of the *rex sacrorum* was a building bordering on the House of the Vestals (*Atrium Vestae*), inhabited at first by the *rex sacrorum* and then by the *pontifex maximus*. This was the case until Augustus assumed the office of the pontifex and gave the official residence of this priestly official to the Vestals, who incorporated it into their house.

It is thus clear that the other end of the Sacra Via, in its narrow sense, does not lie in the vicinity of the Arch of Titus, but much lower, essentially where the ascent of the Velia begins, in front of the so-called Temple of Romulus and the Basilica of Maxentius.

Accordingly, the upper section of the street—the portion that lies between the house of the *rex sacrorum* and the Sacellum of Strenia—must be the side street, still partially visible immediately behind the so-called Medieval Porticus, that ran toward the *Carinae* but was subsequently cut off by the construction of the Basilica of Maxentius. Such an understanding of the course of the Sacra Via radically changes where we situate several monuments, such as the Porta Mugonia, the Temple of Jupiter Stator, the houses of the kings, and the Temple of the Lares. Thesemust no longer be sought near the Arch of

Titus, but rather in the area between the House of the Vestal Virgins and the Basilica of Maxentius. Even the position of the Nova Via, which probably disappeared in the Imperial period, must be modified as a result of this reading. The route that is currently ascribed to this street—at the foot of the Imperial palaces on the Palatine, running between the latter and the House of the Vestal Virgins—is in large part a result of the regularization that took place in this area after the Neronian fire of AD 64. During the Republic, this street, like the Sacra Via, must have passed through the Porta Mugonia, which perhaps should be situated in front of the Medieval Porticus that stands in front of the Basilica of Maxentius. Its original course from the gate toward the Velabrum must have run through the surviving House of the Vestal Virgins at an oblique angle; this complex as well was completely transformed after the Neronian fire. Traces of this older Nova Via may have been discovered to the south of the original Atrium Vestae. The oblique orientation of the shrine of Juturna, here respecting the course of an older street, might provide another indication of the street's ancient alignment.

THE REGIA The building of irregular form, standing between the Temple of Divus Iulius on the west, the Temple of Vesta and the House of the Vestal Virgins on the south, and the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina on the north, has been identified with certainty as the Regia (FIGS. **13:31, 20:4**). The construction of the building was ascribed to the second king of Rome, Numa, whose residence this is believed to have been. The interpretation of the name is obvious: according to Festus (p. 347 Lindsay), "the *Regia* is the house where the king lives." The problem remains of whether we are dealing with an actual king or with his Republican substitute, the *rex sacrorum,* who, at the beginning of the Republic, inherited only the priestly, and not the political or military, functions of his predecessor. The Regia, however, was never the residence of the *rex sacrorum;* he resided in a special house, higher up on the Sacra Via, that later passed into the hands of the *pontifex maximus*. It is likely that the house of the ancient king was in fact a much larger complex, including the Regia proper, the house of the *rex sacrorum,* and the Atrium Vestae.

If we ascribe the oldest remains of these buildings to a single complex, the result is a fairly uniform suite of several pavilions arranged around a central area; we can compare the resulting plan to similar archaic complexes interpreted elsewhere as royal residences, such as the one excavated at Acquarossa (near Viterbo), which can be dated, like the first phase of the Regia, toward the end of the seventh century BC. Using this model, we can identify the building as the residence of kings of the Etruscan dynasty. The larger complex, to which the palace belonged, was subsequently subdivided into its various constituent parts, intended for different functions, after the beginning of the Republic—that is, once its political, religious, and social integrity ceased to exist following the expulsion of the kings. This interpretation is confirmed by the discovery of a fragment of a *bucchero* vase, datable well into the sixth century BC, on which the word *rex* (king) is inscribed. The date of the vase seems to correspond to the end of the Etruscan monarchy, so the term does not necessarily refer to the Republican *rex sacrorum*.

The Regia was thus the place where the *rex sacrorum* and *pontifex maximus* performed their sacred functions. We know that the Regia housed a sanctuary of Mars, the repository for the spears and also for the sacred shields that were carried in procession by the *Salii,* the "jumping" priests, who constituted a very old priestly guild. It also contained a sanctuary dedicated to Ops Consiva, the goddess of the harvest. The important archives of the high priests, the calendar, and the annals of the city were stored here.

Recent excavations have clarified the structural phases of the Regia. Several huts, similar to those that were found on the Palatine, stood on the site before the Regia; they were replaced by a masonry structure toward the end of the seventh century BC. After a fire that struck in the first decades of the sixth century BC and two successive reconstructions, the building assumed its characteristic form, which it preserved up to the Imperial period. This defining change can be assigned to the last years of the sixth century BC. This event corresponds with remarkable precision to the traditional date of the beginning of the Republic (509 BC).

The building consisted of two parts. The first, on the south, has an elongated rectangular shape oriented along a perfect east-west axis and divided into three rooms. Entrance to the building was through the central room, from which there was access to the two side rooms; the one on the east was probably the sanctuary of Ops and the one on the west, equipped with a circular altar, that of Mars. The building's second part—a large trapezoidal space to the north, with colonnades along two of the sides—was certainly an open courtyard, with a cistern or rather a vaulted silo beneath it; the two laurel trees recorded by ancient writers must also have stood here. On the south, the building faced a street, identified by an inscription as the *Vicus Vestae,* that divided it from the Temple of Vesta, with which it was functionally connected. What survives, then, could not have been a home, but a sanctuary that imitated the form of a home. In addition to contemporaneous examples of Etruscan residences, a tomb in Tuscania, built into the rock, precisely imitates this type of archaic residence. Subsequent reconstructions of the Regia in the third century BC, in 148 BC, and that of Domitius Calvinus in 36 BC, to which the many marble fragments scattered about in the vicinity belong, did not modify the plan in the least, for the building was probably considered sacred.

To the west of the Regia, in the direction of the Temple of Divus Iulius, are the remains of a small room, whose entrance bore an inscribed architrave, preserved *in situ,* stating that it belonged to the heralds of the principal priestly colleges *(calatores pontificum et flaminum)*. The identification is confirmed by the discovery in the same area of another inscription, bearing a list of *calatores*.

One of Rome's oldest triumphal arches, the *Fornix Fabianus,* stood in the vicinity of the Regia. It was erected by Q. Fabius Maximus in 121 BC to commemorate his victory over the Allobroges and restored by his grandson in 56 BC. Fragments of the monument's inscriptions were discovered in the area in the sixteenth century, but the precise site of the arch remains unknown, though it certainly stood on the Sacra Via, probably at the western end of the Regia.

THE TEMPLE OF VESTA AND THE HOUSE OF THE VESTAL VIRGINS On the southern side of the Sacra Via, in front of the Regia, stood one of the oldest and most important sanctuaries of Rome, that of Vesta (FIGS. **13:29, 13:34**). Together with the House of the Vestal Virgins, the temple formed a single complex (Atrium Vestae) that was connected topographically and functionally with the Regia and with the house of the *rex sacrorum* and *pontifex maximus*.

Just as the Regia housed the cults most closely associated in origin with the person of the king, so too the Temple of Vesta probably replaced the most important domestic hearth—that of the king's house—and came to represent all the other hearths, thus corresponding to the "State Hearth." During the Republic a group of specialized priestesses, the Vestal Virgins, took the place of the king's daughters and the queen, who were probably originally charged with overseeing the hearth; these women would form the only female priesthood in Rome. The priestesses, six in number, were charged with tending the sacred fire and overseeing other rites, all closely connected with the domestic cult. Drawn from patrician families at between six and ten years of age, the Vestal Virgins had to remain in their priesthood for a period of thirty years, preserving their virginity. The penalty that awaited a Vestal who failed in this rule was death. In such a case, she was buried alive—the blood of a Vestal could not be spilled—in a small subterranean room in the Servian *agger* near the Porta Collina on the Quirinal. The place was called the *Campus Sceleratus*. Her accomplice faced death by flogging in the Comitium. In exchange for her commitment, the Vestal enjoyed considerable privileges: she was not subject to the power of her father, whose functions were in part assumed by the *pontifex maximus,* and she enjoyed financial independence and considerable prestige. A Vestal had the right to give testimony, make a will, ride in a wagon within the city, enjoy reserved seating at the games, and have a tomb, probably communal, inside the city. A person condemned to death who had the good fortune of encountering a Vestal on the day of execution was pardoned.

In its oldest phase, the Atrium Vestae complex was much smaller than the one that survives; it also had a different orientation, according to the cardinal points (FIG. **22**). Traces of the earlier structures can still be seen about one meter below the Imperial level. The early complex consisted of a courtyard adjacent to the Temple of Vesta, with six rooms, corresponding to the number of Vestals, situated on the southern end. Traces of pavement were seen south of these rooms, which some have argued constitute the oldest course of the Nova Via. Even at this time, the temple was set within an enclosure that united it closely with the residence of the Vestal Virgins. Whether the temple originally had its familiar circular form is unknown, but it is noteworthy that the entry always remained on the east, maintaining its original orientation. Two wells excavated in front of the temple have provided material of great interest connected with the cult of Vesta. The more recent well dates to the fourth century BC, while the older one dates back to the end of the seventh century BC and is thus contemporary with the oldest phases of the Regia.

The extant temple (FIG. **23:1**) belongs to the last restoration, undertaken by the wife of Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, after the fire of AD 191. The

building's function as the repository of the sacred fire exposed it to the risk of conflagration, to which in fact it succumbed several times. The temple is composed of a circular podium, in *opus caementicium* (about 15 meters in diameter) with a marble revetment, against which the bases that supported the peristyle of Corinthian columns rested. Within the cella, likewise circular, the sacred fire was kept burning continuously, while the center of its conical roof must have been open so that the smoke could escape. One part of the marble superstructure was reerected several decades ago, using original pieces supplemented by restorations in travertine. Identification of the *penus Vestae*, the *sancta sanctorum* of the temple, access to which was prohibited to all except the Vestals, is a complex problem. Here was the repository for the objects, pledges of the universal empire promised to Rome, which legend held that Aeneas brought with him from Troy. Among all of these, the most important was the Palladium, an archaic image of Minerva. The *penus* may be the trapezoidal opening (2.40 × 2.40 meters) in the podium, which could be approached only from the cella.

The entrance of the House of the Vestal Virgins lies east of the temple. To the right of the entrance is a small shrine **(2)**, supported originally by two Ionic columns (only one survives) and bearing an inscription on its frieze that states that the structure was built with public money by a decree of the Senate. Brick stamps date the shrine to the reign of Hadrian.

Because no image of the goddess was displayed in the temple, it has generally been thought that a statue of Vesta was located in the shrine. The shape of the structure, however, similar to a crossroads shrine *(compitum)*, suggests that this was a chapel dedicated to the *Lares Praestites*, the spirits that protected the city. An inscription of Alexander Severus records the reconstruction of the *compitum* of the *Vicus Vestae*, which might be a reference to this shrine.

Here a modern footbridge provides entrance to the central courtyard of the house, a kind of peristyle, below which remains of the oldest building, of the Republican period, can be seen. The earlier structure lay along a different axis and had a mosaic floor in which irregular tiles of colored stone were inserted. The rooms of the later house were laid out around the large courtyard surrounded by a porticus; there were originally several stories, two of which are preserved on the south.

The surviving building, built entirely in brick, is the result of a long series of transformations that have been thoroughly analyzed. Augustus, when he became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BC following the death of Lepidus, transferred the office of this priesthood to his house on the Palatine and then gave the ancient residence of the *pontifex* and *rex sacrorum* to the Vestals; it was subsequently incorporated within the Atrium Vestae. When the Neronian fire of AD 64 destroyed it, together with a large part of the city, including the Temple and the House of the Vestals, the two buildings were replaced at a higher level by the structure we see today. Despite numerous later modifications, the complex preserves the form and dimensions that were established at that time, together with a new orientation that adhered to the prevailing northwest-southeast orientation of the Forum. The complex was completely reconstructed during Trajan's reign, and both the house and the temple were restored under Septimius Severus. Following the formal abolition of pagan cults, enacted for the first time by a decree of Theodosius in AD 391 and again—definitively—following the defeat of the last champions of paganism near Aquileia in 394, the house was abandoned by the last Vestals and partially reoccupied by functionaries of the imperial court at first and those of the papal court later.

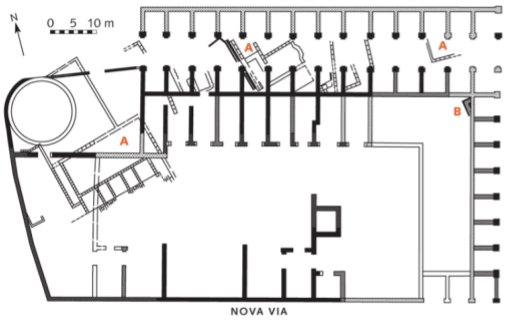

FIGURE 22. Atrium Vestae. Plan of the Neronian phase and of the archaic buildings lying beneath (A, B).

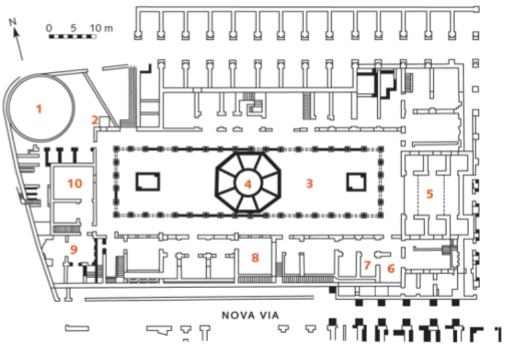

FIGURE 23. Atrium Vestae. Plan of the late phases (from Trajan to Constantine).

The central part of the building, as it appears to us in its late phase, comprises a huge rectangular courtyard **(3)**, surrounded originally by a porticus with a colonnade of two stories. At the center of the courtyard are three basins: two smaller square ones at the ends and a rectangular one in the middle; the latter was subsequently replaced, perhaps during the Constantinian period, by an octagonal structure made of brick **(4)** that might have served as a garden. Numerous statues of the presiding Vestals (the *virgo vestalis maxima* was the head of the religious college) were displayed beneath the porticus. In fact, many statues and bases were discovered, mostly in a heap, on the western side of the courtyard, evidently to be turned into lime. Some of the most beautiful of these were moved to the Museo delle Terme and the Forum Antiquarium; others remain *in situ* together with their bases, but their present location is entirely random, since their original position is unknown, and the statues do not correspond to the bases. All the inscriptions date from the buildings' last phase, beginning with the reign of Septimius Severus. Statues

were erected for the following Vestals: Numisia Maximilla (AD 201), Terentia Flavola (three statues, in 209, 213, and 215), Campia Severina (240), Flavia Mamilia (242), Flavia Publicia (two statues, in 247 and 257), Coelia Claudiana (286), Terentia Rufilla (two statues, in 300 and 301), and Coelia Concordia (380). Some of these bases (those of Campia Severina, FlaviaMamilia, Terentia Rufilla, and Coelia Concordia) are no longer displayed in the atrium. A base, dated to AD 364 and situated to the south near the stairway that leads up to the Nova Via, is noteworthy: while the Vestal's name was erased, the first letter, C, can still be read. She might have been the Claudia who, according to Prudentius, a Christian poet of the end of the fourth century AD, abandoned her priesthood to become a Christian. Her name would thus have been erased by the last followers of paganism as a sign of her disgrace.

On the eastern side there is a large room **(5)**, improperly called a "tablinum," that was originally vaulted and flanked by three smaller rooms on each side; it seems more logical to ascribe each of the smaller rooms to one of the Vestals. In the earlier phase, there was a sanctuary that corresponded to this part of the building, whose remains were excavated in the past. This may have been the place where a marble statue (now displayed in the Forum Antiquarium) once stood, representing Numa—the second king of Rome and, according to tradition, the founder of the cult of Vesta. The rooms on the south, the best preserved in the complex, open onto a long corridor. The first of these is a bakery **(6)**, followed by a mill **(7)**, with a well-preserved grindstone, and probably the kitchen **(8)**. Before this room there is a stairway that leads to the upper floor where the Vestals' private rooms may have been located, as well as numerous baths equipped with heating systems. At the end of the southern wing, two stairways lead to the upper floor. There was also a third floor, as indicated by the beginning of another stairway above the "tablinum." A good number of these rooms must have accommodated the service staff. Immediately to the west there is an apsidal hall **(9)**, which might have served as a sanctuary. Cicero mentions a grove (the *Lucus Vestae*) above the older house, between the Nova Via and the Palatine, from where in 390 BC a voice had warned the Romans, to no avail, of the imminent attack of the Gauls. Afterward a shrine was dedicated to this mysterious god called Aius Locutius, who is probably to be identified as Faunus. It is not unreasonable to think that the apsidal hall, whose position corresponds to that indicated by Cicero, is a reconstruction of the ancient sanctuary, incorporated later on within the House of the Vestal Virgins. Most of the building's western side is occupied by a large rectangular room that faces the so-called tablinum; it is usually identified as a triclinium **(10)**.

The rooms on the northern side are so poorly preserved as to make their identification purely speculative. On this side of the House of the Vestals lie the ruins of buildings, protected by sheds, that were in use prior to the Neronian fire; they stood, accordingly, at a lower level and along the older orientation. These are the remains of the *domus* of the *rex sacrorum* and subsequently of the *pontifex maximus* (*Domus Publica*). Caesar lived here from the day of his election as *pontifex maximus* in 62 until his death in 44 BC.

The oldest surviving remains, in cappellaccio, are clearly archaic. Other walls, built of tufa in *opus quadratum*, date to the Republic. Several structures, in particular the bases of a column and a semicolumn in travertine, are ofCaesarian date; a large apsidal room with mosaic flooring, probably part of a bath system, dates to the same period. To the east of this is another small room that preserves a marble floor and the remains of pictorial decoration on one of the walls. The painting, featuring a garden, is Third Style and thus Augustan; a copy of the painting, on display in the Forum Antiquarium, is more legible. Other parts of the same decoration were seen at the time of excavation, at the end of the nineteenth century. The painting must have been part of the restoration that was undertaken immediately after the fire of 12 BC, when Augustus ceded the *domus* of the *rex sacrorum* to the Vestals.

THE "TEMPLE OF ROMULUS" Beyond the Sacra Via, in front of the House of the Vestal Virgins, an important building immediately dominates the view, particularly because of its remarkable state of preservation (FIG. **13:37**). It is a circular domed temple, built entirely in brick; its facade is markedly concave, with four niches intended for as many statues. The doorway is flanked by two porphyry columns with capitals in white marble that support a richly carved white marble cornice. The bronze door is original. Flanking the sides of the central structure stand two deep rooms ending in apses and communicating with the central building; in front of each of these side halls were two cipollino columns set on high plinths; only those on the right are preserved.

In the sixth century AD, when the rectangular room in the Forum of Peace, adjoining the rear side of the rotunda, was transformed into a church dedicated to Saints Cosmas and Damian, a passageway was opened up between the two buildings, which were originally independent. Later, in 1632, the bronze door and the porphyry columns were reused in a new doorway at a higher level. Only at the end of the nineteenth century were these returned to their original position. The excavations undertaken at that time extended down to the Augustan level and exposed the foundations of the building, which occupies a post-Neronian street level; the openings of two sewers can be seen in the foundations.

The identification of this building is a matter of much debate The general opinion is that this is a temple dedicated to Romulus, son of Maxentius, on the basis of medieval notices that record a "Temple of Romulus" in this area and of a Maxentian coin with the representation of a circular building and the inscription *Aeternae Memoriae*. Sections of an inscription were still extant on the building in the sixteenth century; these record its dedication by Constantine in accordance with a decree of the Senate, but the inscription belongs to a second phase of the building.

A more profitable line of inquiry derives from the topographical context in which the monument is situated: it lies at the end of the Sacra Via (*in summa Sacra Via*) immediately outside the ancient gate of the Palatine, the Porta Mugonia, near the ancient house of the kings later inhabited by the *rex sacrorum*. The building that best corresponds to this context is the Temple of Jupiter Stator. According to tradition, Romulus founded this temple at the spot, immediately outside of the Porta Mugonia, where the Latins finally halted their flight during a battle against the Sabines. The original archaic shrine was probably an open-air sanctuary that was later replaced in 294 BC by a temple built by the consul M. Atilius Regulus following a victory over the Samnites. The identification of the Temple of Jupiter Stator with the so-called Temple of Romulus corresponds with the mention of the building still found in late Imperial inscriptions and literary sources. In particular, the Constantinian Regionary Catalogues, which are more or less contemporary with the temple in its present form, provide us with decisive confirmation. We know from these that the border between Region X *(Palatium)* and IV *(Forum Pacis)* was marked by the course of the Sacra Via and its extension to the Colosseum. In the description of Region IV, the catalogues list the following buildings in succession: the Meta Sudans, the Temple of Venus and Roma, the Temple of Jupiter Stator, the Sacra Via, the Basilica of Constantine, the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, the Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia—that is, all the buildings that lie on the right side of the street in the ascent from the valley of the Colosseum. The Temple of Jupiter Stator should thus be situated in this area. The only monument mentioned in the Regionary Catalogues' account of the public buildings in Region IV that has not been positively identified is the "Temple of Romulus." There is no room for another building here that might ultimately be identified as the Temple of Jupiter Stator. Accordingly, this and the Temple of Romulus must be one and the same. The building that is commonly identified with the Temple of Jupiter Stator, near the Arch of Titus, is not in Region IV, but in Region X (FIG. **13:42**). Recent excavations have shown that the structure is probably to be identified as a four-sided arch, not a temple.

The function of the two apsidal rooms that flank the central rotunda remains problematic. A coin of Maxentius that depicts this building, often confused with the tomb of Romulus on the Via Appia, reveals the presence of two statues within the two side halls; these can be readily identified as the Penates, or household gods. We know that the temple dedicated to these divinities was located on the Velia at the top of a flight of stairs in the immediate vicinity of the Forum and Macellum. At the beginning of the fourth century AD, the entire area of the Velia was occupied by the enormous structure of the Basilica of Maxentius (later of Constantine). So, it is likely that the Temple of the Penates disappeared at that time and that it was reconstructed immediately afterward at the nearest available spot—alongside the Temple of Jupiter Stator.

Moreover, it is quite natural that the emperor, who based his political program largely on the prestige of having made Rome his capital and who had for this reason given his son the prestigious name of Romulus, would have paid close attention to these buildings, bound as they are to the memory of the founder of Rome: the Temple of the Penates, the divinities introduced into Latium by Aeneas, and the Temple of Jupiter Stator, personally founded by Romulus. In fact, an inscription dedicated by Maxentius to Mars and the founders of Rome is located near the Niger Lapis.

On the other side of the street, opposite the medieval porticus located at the western corner of the Basilica of Maxentius, sits a **large brick exedra**, built, like the other surrounding buildings, on the level of the street that was constructed following the Neronian fire; this level was removed in the nine-

teenth century in order to expose the Augustan pavement presently visible. On the basis of a passage from Martial (1.70.9–10), who records the presence of a small sanctuary of Bacchus and Cybele at the point where the side street leading to the Carinae breaks off, these remains have been identified as this temple (FIG. **13:39**). The monument is represented on a medallion of Antoninus Pius as a circular shrine, built within an exedra. A fragment of the curved epistyle from the building was found nearby; it bears a relief representing a Maenad and part of an inscription alluding to restoration done by Antoninus Pius; the original is now in the Forum Antiquarium, while a cast is displayed a little higher up along the street that leads to the Arch of Titus. The discovery nearby of two terracotta antefixes with the figure of Cybele on a boat might confirm the location of the building.