

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### § 1 Subject-matter and aims of the study

The selection of the subject-matter of the present study was prompted by the antique distinction between *sacra publica* and *sacra privata*, discussed below, and by the promising ruins of Ostia, extensive and relatively well-preserved, but little publicized. Most of the available evidence of private religion in Ostia had so far either not been dealt with at all or at best summarily. Therefore my first aim was to gather evidence of private religion in and from Ostia, and describe it in detail. My second aim was to analyze the Ostian context of the evidence: the history and structure of the kinds of buildings and of each individual building containing evidence. Particular attention will be paid throughout the study to the relation the evidence might have to the social function of the various buildings, that is to the ways in which the buildings coincide with or contribute to social status and social relations. The study is restricted to pagan religion.

### § 2 Definitions of public and private religion

#### 2A The antique definitions

The only definitions of public and private religion which have come down to us from antiquity are formulated by Festus: *Publica sacra, quae publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus, pagis, curiis, sacellis; at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus, familiis, gentibus fiunt.*<sup>1</sup> My discussion of these definitions is based on the third part of Wissowa's "Religion und Kultus der Römer". Wissowa's study was published as long ago as 1912, but is still fundamental for the subject.<sup>2</sup>

Festus mentions two criteria to distinguish between public and private religion: in whose name the *sacra* take place (*pro...*), and with whose money they are financed (*sumptu*). Public religion, he explains, takes place

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<sup>1</sup> Festus, De Significatione Verborum 245.

<sup>2</sup> Wissowa 1912, 380-566, especially the pages 380-381, 385-386, 398-404, 432-434, 467-468, 477-478. Cf. De Marchi 1896, 1-26; Geiger 1920; Wachsmuth 1980.

in the name of the *populus* and is financed with money of the people, from public funds. It may be added that people could represent the *populus*, if they were authorized to do so (*populi iussu*). Examples of such representation are the consecration of a public temple by a magistrate, and the performing of sacrifice by priests or by cult-officials without the status of priests. The *populus* could furthermore permit that someone had a public shrine built or restored *de sua pecunia*.<sup>3</sup> Festus points out that public religion comprises the relations between gods and the whole *populus*, but also between gods and certain subdivisions of the *populus*, which together constitute the whole community: the *sacra pro montibus, pagis, curiis, sacellis* - i.e. the Septimontium, Paganalia, Fornacalia and Compitalia - are part of public religion. Private religion on the other hand takes place in the name of individuals, families and clans, where one should think of artificially created bodies (*collegia*, "guilds") as well.

Private and public religion did not function in complete separation. Private people could carry out their private religion without state priests, but the supervision over both public and private religion was in the hands of the state, through the *ius divinum*, which was part of the *ius publicum*. This meant for example that state priests, the *pontifices*, verified whether an inheritance passing to people outside a *familia*, when its last member had died, included the *sacra familiae*. And a private person could ask for advice from the *pontifices*. There was never any doubt however as to whether a cult belonged to private or public religion. Public religion was limited to a fixed number of gods and *feriae publicae*: those approved of by the government - representing the *populus* - as state gods and feasts. On the other hand, any god could be worshipped through *feriae privatae*, of individuals, families, clans, and artificially created bodies, unless this led to disturbances of the peace in town. The official approval of the *populus* is the crucial criterium. Consequently the performing of sacrifice or the placing of a votive offering in a public temple by a private person as private person belonged to the realm of private religion.

The difference between public and private religion implied a difference in terms of religious law in the status of things handed over to the gods, such as a shrine. The handing over of property to the gods took place through the *dedicatio*, both in public and in private religion. However, only if the transfer took place in the name of the people was the *dedicatio* also a *consecratio*, and only then did the property become *res sacra*. Therefore someone stealing the contents of a private shrine did not commit *sacrilegium*. Similarly only in public religion did shrines become *loca*

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<sup>3</sup> Stambaugh 1978, 565-566.

*sacra*, whereas private shrines were *loca profana*; only *loca publica* could become *loca sacra*.

Ostia was a *colonia* and the *coloniae, quasi effigies parvae simulacraque populi Romani*,<sup>4</sup> worshipped the Roman state gods. The *duoviri* and *decuriones* fixed the public feasts and sacrifices directly after the foundation of the *colonia*. According to the antique tradition Ostia was Rome's first colony, founded by Ancus Marcius. This is also stated in an inscription from the Imperial period found in Ostia.<sup>5</sup> Meiggs is inclined to lend some credibility to this tradition,<sup>6</sup> but more recently it has been argued that the town was given the status of *colonia* as late as the first half of the first century BC.<sup>7</sup>

## 2B Alternative definitions

Festus' definitions are to be understood from the point of view of religious law, they are formal: public religion is the religion of the state, of the *populus* as *populus*, private religion that of people in any other capacity than the formal one of members or representatives of the *populus*. The words *publicus* and *privatus* could in Roman antiquity also be used in a wider sense, without the formal criterium.<sup>8</sup> The two different meanings are still found in modern Western thought.<sup>9</sup> The central notions of the wider sense are "restricted" for "private" and "unrestricted" for "public". More specifically: restricted to a particular person or group or class of persons with regard to ownership, participation and benefit; shared by all members of the community, freely available to the public, for the general good, or not.<sup>10</sup> In this wider sense things public are related to the whole community, whereas something private is restricted to one or more parts of the community.

The use of the wider definitions has two advantages. First of all it becomes possible to work in conformity with the reality of social relations: all cults of subdivisions of the *populus* can be assigned to the realm of

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<sup>4</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 16, 13, 9.

<sup>5</sup> CIL XIV S, 4338; first half of second century AD (Meiggs 1973, 16).

<sup>6</sup> Meiggs 1973, 16-20, cf. 337-343.

<sup>7</sup> Pohl 1983. Cf. Pavolini 1988, 122-123.

<sup>8</sup> OLD s.v. "Publicus" 3a: "of or affecting everyone in the state, communal, public"; 4: "available to, shared or enjoyed by, all members of the community, public"; s.v. "Privatus" 1a: "restricted for the use of a particular person or persons, private".

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. WD s.v. "Private" and s.v. "Public".

<sup>10</sup> WD s.v. "Private" 1a and 1d2, s.v. "Public" 4. The meaning of "private" can also be narrowed down to the individual, to the extent that "personal" is offered as a synonym (WD s.v. "Private" 1b, 1c, 1d1), with a resulting gap between "public" and "private".

private religion, whereas all cults related to the whole community can be regarded as belonging to public religion. Secondly a basic approach is now possible, allowing the assessment at a later stage of various supplementary criteria, such as the role of the state - crucial in Festus' definitions -, and individual versus collective worship (including the worship effected by guilds).<sup>11</sup> Therefore in this book the evidence of private religion is selected according to the two wide definitions:

- Public religion is religion related to the whole community.
- Private religion is religion restricted to a particular person or group or class of persons.

I would like to stress that the word "religion" is in the present study used in an everyday sense. A statue of Mercurius is called a religious statue, because Mercurius was a deity. This is not meant to imply a particular attitude towards the statue in antiquity. Perhaps it was meant and understood as a reference to profit only, perhaps there was also a feeling that a superhuman being had been depicted.

## **2C Specification of the alternative definitions**

In view of the archaeological nature of this book private religion will be studied from the point of view of the material evidence in its material environment. Two categories of evidence, reflecting two basic attitudes, can be distinguished. Shrines are "objects, structures, or places that are considered sacred by religious groups and that serve as the focus of the performance of some ritual" (for example a cult-room with an altar),<sup>12</sup> and evidence which did not have this function and to which none or only incidental ritual acts were related (such as a relief with the depiction of a deity in the facade of a house). Consequently the people involved with the evidence are understood to be those participating in the rituals taking place at the shrines (the participants in the widest sense: those participating, having the opportunity to participate, or being represented), or, in relation to the remaining religious material, that is in the absence of (institutional) ritual, the people (beneficiaries) of whose daily environment the evidence formed a part.

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<sup>11</sup> On the latter criteria see Santero 1983, 115-116.

<sup>12</sup> WD s.v. "Shrine" 1, 3b. "Ritual": "the forms of conducting a devotional service especially as established by tradition or by sacerdotal prescription: the prescribed order and words of a religious ceremony" (WD s.v. "Ritual" 1); "a specific, observable kind of behaviour based upon established or traditional rules" (Penner 1981, 863). How a shrine can be recognized is discussed in § 5D.

### § 3 *Status quaestionis*

#### **3A The decay of Ostia, the plundering of the site, and the excavations**

In contrast to the Campanian cities, which were to a great extent sealed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD, Ostia slowly decayed over the centuries. The abandonment of the buildings began in the second half of the third century. The last regular inhabitants removed all objects which were important to them, the belongings they were devoted to and objects of financial value. What was left behind fell prey to nature and looters. Marble statues and the marble decoration of walls and floors were taken to lime kilns, the metal was melted down. The plaster decayed, the wood rotted away, and the collapsing beams supporting ceilings and roofs brought down with them the upper floors. Objects of artistic value were unearthed from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, to end up in private collections and various museums. Small wonder that as a rule only the bare walls of the ground floor and relatively few objects were found by the excavators.<sup>13</sup>

Systematic investigations began in the nineteenth century - financed by the Vatican -, but accurate excavations - according to the standards of the day - only took place in the first decades of this century. In the thirties the site was claimed by fascist propaganda, leading to the frantic clearing of numerous buildings from 1938 to 1942.<sup>14</sup> Needless to say that, because of the haste, much information was neglected in these years. During most of these excavations hardly any attention was paid to the stratigraphy. The precise place of discovery of an object in a building was usually not recorded. Excavations on a large scale no longer take place.

#### **3B General studies concerning Ostia**

In this century there has been a steady flow of standard text-books on Ostia. The first one is L. Paschetto's extensive and still important study "Ostia, colonia romana" (1912), which was followed by "Ostia, cenni storici e guida" (1914), written by D. Vaglieri, director of the excavations. His successor, G. Calza, published "Ostia, guida storico-monumentale" (1929 and 1930<sup>2</sup>). After the Second World War a general study with plans was published by various authors ("Scavi di Ostia, part I", 1953).

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<sup>13</sup> On the decline of Ostia: Meiggs 1973, chapter 5 and Pavolini 1986(2). On the exploitation and excavation: Meiggs 1973, chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup> "I nuovi scavi di Ostia Antica cominciano già a rivelare i segreti di quel lembo di terra laziale dove, secondo la leggenda virgiliana, sbarcò Enea per preparare i grandi eterni destini di Roma, che, per merito del Duce, romano nel pensiero e nelle opere, rifulgono di nuova luce nel risorto Impero." (Torri 1938, 8).

Somewhat later "Ostia, der Welthafen Roms" (1957), by H. Schaal, and "Ostia" (1959), written by R. Calza (Guido Calza's widow and the former wife of G. De Chirico), with photographs by E. Nash. In 1960 R. Meiggs' well-known, mainly historical study "Roman Ostia" (second edition 1973) appeared. R. Calza published a second book in 1965: "Ostia". More recently a guide to the ruins, containing the plans from SO I, was published by C. Pavolini (1983). It was followed by his "La vita quotidiana a Ostia" (1986). Finally R. Chevallier's "Ostie Antique. Ville et port" (1986) deserves mention.

Although Ostia has not received as much attention as Pompeii, the number of specialized publications dedicated in full or partly to Ostia is fairly numerous. What is conspicuously absent however are studies of the individual buildings conforming to modern standards, dealing in detail with the remains and the objects found among them. The buildings of Insula V,II are the only ones that have so far been studied in this way, by J.S. Boersma.<sup>15</sup> A great obstacle to this work is the dating of the masonry, especially from after the Severan period. In this field of studies the contributions by T.L. Heres are of great importance.<sup>16</sup> Because of this lack of publications the assessment of the history of a building is often necessarily provisional. Furthermore various aspects of many Ostian buildings have not yet been the subject of satisfactory, systematic studies: the functions, appearance, lay-out, size and distribution.

There is no specialized study of Ostia's social structure. The subject has been dealt with mostly by historians, notably R. Meiggs and J.H. D'Arms, both working mainly with inscriptions.<sup>17</sup> Archaeologists studying Ostia have been concerned with social implications from an early date, especially in connection with the growing knowledge of Ostia's rented apartments. Of those who took the archaeological evidence as starting-point, Pavolini is the one who has paid attention to this aspect of the city in the most consistent and penetrating way, in his book on daily life in Ostia. Nevertheless we are only beginning to understand how the social texture of Ostian society was related to the lay-out and equipment of individual buildings, and to the distribution of the buildings.

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<sup>15</sup> Boersma 1985 with Bakker 1987.

<sup>16</sup> See especially Heres 1982 and her contribution to Boersma 1985 (p. 11-71). Datings of second century masonry up to (not including) the Severan period: Blake 1973. The chronological index in SO I (p. 233-238) is terse and unreliable. See also SO I, 215-227 on the brick-stamps.

<sup>17</sup> Meiggs 1973, replacing the outdated Wilson 1935(1); D'Arms 1976; D'Arms 1981, 121-148.

### 3C Studies concerning religion in Ostia

Two overall studies of religion in Ostia are available: L. Ross Taylor's "The Cults of Ostia" (1912) and M. Floriani Squarciapino's "I culti orientali ad Ostia" (1962). Ross Taylor's book is supplemented by Meiggs.<sup>18</sup> There is no overall study of private religion in Ostia. The shrines of the Persian god Mithras have been studied by Becatti (1954).

### 3D Studies concerning Roman private religion in general and in cities other than Ostia

Private religion has, to my knowledge, always been dealt with according to the antique definitions. A *status quaestionis* concerning Roman private religion can be found in Orr's dissertation, finished in 1972, about private religion in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

The first important and only general study about the subject was written by A. De Marchi and published in 1896 and 1903 ("Il culto privato di Roma antica", dealing with, respectively, "La religione nella vita domestica. Iscrizioni e offerte votive" and "La religione gentilizia e collegiale"). Unfortunately these books lose much of their value, because all important detailed studies on the subject were yet to appear. It should be noted that many valuable remarks about private religion can be found in G. Wissowa's "Religion und Kultus der Römer" (1912), even though the book focuses on state religion. Important studies which have appeared since 1972 are: Orr 1978 (Orr on the subject of his dissertation), Wachsmuth 1980, Bömer-Herz 1981 (on the religion of the slaves), and Santero 1983 (on the private worship of the Emperor), and many publications about the cult of Mithras.

The archaeological evidence from outside Ostia is scarce, with the exception of that from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The material from these two cities has been made accessible through specialized studies: by G.K. Boyce ("Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii"; 1937) and D.G. Orr ("Roman Domestic Religion. A Study of the Roman Household Deities and their Shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum"; 1972). Hardly any attention is paid by these authors to the rooms and buildings in which the evidence is found, the functions of which must therefore often be regarded as uncertain. As a result this evidence can, from the architectural-utilitarian point of view, be used with only a limited degree of reliability: if the sample is large (this is true for the *domus*, shops, and bars), or if the function of (part of) a building can easily be established (especially shops).

Most of the studies have focused on the gods which were worshipped,

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<sup>18</sup> Meiggs 1973, chapter 15.

not on the people involved. An important exception is the epigraphical study about the religion of the slaves by F. Bömer and his collaborator P. Herz. For the cult of Mithras, Gordon 1972 and Rainer 1984 may be given special mention.

#### § 4 Selection of the material environment of the evidence

The evidence of private religion is found in a great variety of material environments: in habitations, in all sorts of commercial premises, such as workshops and guild-seats, and as separate shrines, some of which are found on streets and squares (guild-temples; shrines at crossroads). Because the large majority of the buildings in Ostia has not been studied in great detail, much of the evidence has not yet been related to a building period. If it has been, the function of the building in the relevant period is often unknown. And if the function is known many uncertainties remain concerning the appearance, lay-out, size, and distribution of that particular kind of building, impeding the interpretation of the evidence. In order to be able to pay sufficient attention to these aspects I have concentrated on part of the evidence, namely that found in buildings or parts of buildings used as habitation or for the actual handling and sale of goods. Notably the seats of the guilds have been left aside. On the other hand one category of evidence that is not found in the selected buildings has been added: the *compita*, shrines at crossroads, related to quarters of the city. They have been included in view of the worship of the Lares and Genius of the Emperor, which runs parallel to the worship of the Lares and Genii of *patres familiae* in habitations and commercial premises (on which see below, § 5A). The burial-places and Portus have not been included.

#### § 5 The evidence

##### 5A Conspectus of the material expressions of private religion

Five kinds of evidence of private religion have been distinguished and catalogued by Boyce and Orr in Pompeii and Herculaneum: cult-rooms, *aediculae*, pseudo-*aediculae*, niches with depictions of deities, and paintings of deities.<sup>19</sup> The cult-rooms have benches and niches.<sup>20</sup> An

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<sup>19</sup> Boyce 1937; Orr 1972, catalogues A and B. On the kinds of evidence: Boyce 1937, 10-18; Orr 1972, 84-94, 128-134. The antique denominations cannot be dealt with here. It may be noted that the widely used word *lararium* is found for the first time in the *Scriptores Historiae*



*aedicula* is a miniature temple, with columns, entablature and sometimes doors, on top of a podium. It may be in front of a niche. In Herculaneum wooden *aediculae* have been found. A pseudo-*aedicula* is a niche on top of a podium. Two kinds of niches can be distinguished: wall-niches and floor-niches, the bottom or floor of the latter being at the same level as the floor of the room.<sup>21</sup> The wall-niches regularly have an *aedicula*-facade - painted or made of stucco, terracotta, marble, or wood -, and often a projecting shelf. A projecting brick is sometimes found together with the simplest kind, the painting. Wooden tables with statuettes may have accompanied the paintings. In an appendix Boyce has listed paintings of deities on the facades of buildings.<sup>22</sup>

In the Campanian houses and commercial premises deities are often documented, usually the well-known combination of the Lares Familiares, Genius of the *paterfamilias*, Genii Loci, and Di Penates, gods well documented in antique literature and inscriptions.

The Lares Familiares protected all inhabitants of a house, including the slaves. As a matter of fact Lar or Lares could even mean "house" from the first century BC onwards. This cult is encountered in relation to the major events in the life of the family (such as births, weddings, deaths, the departure for a journey and returning home), but also in everyday life (of food fallen to the ground it is said: *In mensa utique id reponi adolerique ad Larem piatio est*).<sup>23</sup> Originally there was only one Lar, in the Imperial period they always form a pair. In Pompeii and Herculaneum the two Lares Familiares are depicted as dancing youths, wreathed, wearing a *tunica*, holding a *rhyton* and *patera* or *situla*.<sup>24</sup>

In between the Lares Familiares the Genius is usually found sacrificing at an altar. He was a deity under whose protection the *paterfamilias* resided. The Genius of the *materfamilias* was called Juno. In Pompeii and Herculaneum the Genius is depicted as a *togatus*, *capite velato*, holding for

Augustae, in the biography of Marcus Aurelius (SHA, Marcus Aurelius 3, 5).

<sup>20</sup> See also Di Capua 1950.

<sup>21</sup> Hornbostel 1979, 3. Floor-niches: Boyce 1937, nrs. 71 (with masonry altar), 112 (with painting of serpent and Ceres; with *aedicula*-facade), 226 (with painting of Jupiter), 365 (with masonry altar), 432 (with base for statue; with *aedicula*-facade; this may be called a pseudo-*aedicula* without podium).

<sup>22</sup> Boyce 1937, appendix II (not the paintings of the *compita*). See also Fröhlich 1992, 48-55. On the paintings in general: Fröhlich 1992.

<sup>23</sup> Plinius Senior, *Naturalis Historia* 28, 27.

<sup>24</sup> De Marchi 1896, 27-55; Wissowa 1897, especially 1875-1879, 1882-1885; Wissowa 1912, 166-175; Böhm 1924, especially 814-818. For a summary including later research: Orr 1972, 4-30; Orr 1978, 1563-1569.

example a *cornucopiae* and *patera*. It is not known how the Juno was depicted.<sup>25</sup> A male and a female snake - the male one with comb and beard -, have often been painted in the shrines of Campania. These are Genii Loci, protectors of the place.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from the Lares and Genius many other gods are present in the private shrines of Pompeii and Herculaneum. They are generally thought to have been the Di Penates, a denomination used for deities protecting the house, selected by the inhabitants, and passed from generation to generation. There are many problems concerning the origin of the Di Penates, and the interpretation is complicated by the fact that the Lares and Di Penates were frequently confused in antiquity.<sup>27</sup>

The gods worshipped in Campania were painted (sometimes symbols only), or present as statues, statuettes, or busts. Often a painting and statuettes are found together. The pseudo-*aediculae* regularly have a large niche, meant for one, larger statue. Permanent and portable altars were found. The former are made of stone or masonry, the latter of marble, travertine, tufa, terracotta, or bronze. The projecting shelves too could be used for sacrifice: sometimes the shelf is a roof-tile, which together with stucco imitates the top of an *ara pulvinata*.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore coins, lamps, vessels, *imagines maiorum*, and other representations of people could be present.<sup>29</sup> The diversity in the contents of a private shrine can be illustrated by the two *lararia* of Alexander Severus. His *lararium maius* contained depictions of Alexander the Great, deified Emperors, *animas sanctiores* (Christ, Abraham, Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana, and others), and his ancestors. The secondary shrine held depictions of Achilles, Cicero, Virgil, and *magni viri*.<sup>30</sup>

Statues of deities and semi-deities have also been found in the niches and

<sup>25</sup> Birt 1890, especially 1615-1617; De Marchi 1896, 69-78; Otto 1910, especially 1160-1161; Wissowa 1912, 175-181; Kunckel 1974. For a summary including later research: Orr 1972, 45-81; Orr 1978, 1569-1575. More recently: Dumézil 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Boyce 1942. Cf. Fröhlich 1992, 56-61.

<sup>27</sup> De Marchi 1896, 55-64; Wissowa 1909, especially 1882-1888; Wissowa 1912, 161-166; Weinstock 1937, especially 425-428. For a summary including later research: Orr 1972, 34-44; Orr 1978, 1562-1563. More recently: Radke 1981. On the origin of the Di Penates: Boyancé 1952; Radke 1965, s.v. Penates (247-252). On the relation Di Penates-Lares: Piccaluga 1961.

<sup>28</sup> Boyce 1937, 14-18; Orr 1972, 94-97, 100-125, 128-134; Orr 1978, 1575-1586. On terracotta altars from Pompeii: Elia 1962. An incense burner: Boyce 1937, nr. 350.

<sup>29</sup> See Boyce 1937, Index, and, lamps: Nilsson 1950; vessels: Petronius, *Satyricon* 29, 8; *imagines maiorum*: SHA, Alexander Severus 29, 2 and cf. Boyce 1937, nr. 49; people: SHA, Marcus Aurelius 3, 5; SHA, Alexander Severus 31, 4.5.

<sup>30</sup> SHA, Alexander Severus 29, 2 and 31, 4.5 with Settis 1972.

pseudo-*aediculae* of *nymphaea*.<sup>31</sup> They were not, however, always to be found in a cult-room, (pseudo) *aedicula* or niche. In the Casa del Moralista (III 4, 2-3) in Pompeii a statue of a deity, perhaps Isis, was found on a base, together with an incense burner and a brazier for burnt offerings.<sup>32</sup> Deities and semi-deities could be present as herms. Furthermore deities and apotropaic depictions are found in mosaics, on stucco reliefs, on intarsios, and on terracotta reliefs.<sup>33</sup> Special provisions were made in the houses of the wealthy for the *imagines maiorum*.<sup>34</sup> Apotropaic objects such as amulets, protected people from evil. Finally many utilitarian objects such as furniture and lamps had religious decoration.

The household gods were worshipped on all important occasions for the family, but especially on the Kalendae, Nonae, Idus and the birthday of the *paterfamilias*.<sup>35</sup> The Di Penates were offered food during every meal.<sup>36</sup> They may moreover have had a role in the feasts of the Lares and Genius.

There are several indications that these gods were actively worshipped in the first century AD. In Pompeii and Herculaneum no less than 555 cult-rooms, *aediculae*, pseudo-*aediculae*, niches and paintings were found, many of these with a provision for sacrifice (see also § 5D). Sometimes graffiti were found - for example: *Ite Lares; Lares propi[ti]os; Genio M(arci) n(ostri) et Laribus, duo Diadumeni liberti* -, testifying to more or less spontaneous worship.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Examples in Ostia of *nymphaeum*-niches in the Ninfeo degli Eroti (IV,IV,1) and Caseggiato I,XIV,9. The Ninfeo has three niches, in two of which statues of Eros were found. In the third one the feet of a statue, probably of Venus, were found (SO I, 158-159; Calza-Nash 1959, 33, fig. 41; Neuerburg 1965, 190 nr. 128, fig. 53). In Caseggiato I,XIV,9 is a *nymphaeum*-floor-niche, in the south wall of the west part of the central east-west corridor. In the vault are shells and pieces of pumice.

Mention may also be made of a niche in the underground service area of the Terme del Mitra (I,XVII,2) Here, behind a *mithraeum*, is a large room where the lower part of the apsidal basin in the west wall of the baths is seen. Behind the apse, to the left of a door leading to a staircase, is a floor-niche (for the position: Nielsen-Schiøler 1980, figs. 4 and 5). In the niche a statue of Vulcanus was found *in situ* (Becatti 1938, 307, fig. 41; Calza-Floriani Squarciapino 1962, 30 nr. 3; Helbig 1972, 23-24 nr. 3014). In the back wall of the niche is a round hole and on the front part of the bottom is a masonry rim. Obviously and surprisingly the niche was supplied with water.

<sup>32</sup> Jashemski 1979, 134-135.

<sup>33</sup> Anthropologists and historians of religion do not agree as to whether magic is a religious phenomenon (Middleton 1981; Versnel 1991). An apotropaic stone in a niche in the facade of the Caupona all'Insegna dell'Alessandria, o dell'Africa (I 12, 5) in Pompeii: Maiuri 1949; De Vos - De Vos 1982, 131.

<sup>34</sup> Bömer 1943, 104-123, and, on "Ahnenverehrung", 123-139.

<sup>35</sup> Wissowa 1897(1), 1877.

<sup>36</sup> Wissowa 1912, 162.

<sup>37</sup> CIL IV, 1539 = Boyce 1937, nr. 209 (below a niche); CIL IV, 844 = Boyce 1937, nr. 269 (on a painting); CIL X, 861 = Boyce 1937, nr. 385 (in a cult-room). See also Boyce 1937, nrs. 2, 47, 63.

Traces of fire on altars and remains of the last offerings were in a few cases found by the excavators of Pompeii: the drama of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius comes to mind.<sup>38</sup> When Germanicus died in 19 AD inhabitants of Rome worked off their frustration by flinging the statuettes of their Lares Familiares into the street. Suetonius reports: *Quo defunctus est die, lapidata sunt templa, subversae deum arae, Lares a quibusdam Familiares in publicum abiecti, partus coniugum expositi.*<sup>39</sup>

How the household deities fared after the first century AD is difficult to say, because an inventory and assessment of literary references, dedications, shrines and statuettes is lacking. That the pagan house cults had not yet disappeared in late antiquity is suggested by a law from 392 AD prohibiting the worship of the Lares, Genius and Di Penates (*Nullus omnino secretiore piaculo Larem igne, mero Genium, Penates odore veneratus accendat lumina, imponat tura, sarta suspendat*),<sup>40</sup> and by criticism of the cult of the Lares Domestici and Tutela in the early fifth century AD by Hieronymus.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand it is noteworthy that no depictions of the Genius are known that are later than c. 300-325 AD.<sup>42</sup>

## 5B The preservation of the evidence

Following up § 3A the preservation of the evidence of private religion in Campania and Ostia will now be considered. Elsewhere hardly any evidence has been preserved *in situ*.<sup>43</sup>

The evidence from Pompeii and Herculaneum is not nearly complete, in spite of the fact that these towns were to a great extent sealed in 79 AD. Statuettes may have been carried off when people fled their homes.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Boyce 1937, nrs. 103, 126, 253, 463.

<sup>39</sup> Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, Caligula 5 with Versnel 1980, especially 553-558, 576-577, 610-611. Versnel explains that the actions described by Suetonius took place in a mood of anger and destruction; the anger was directed towards the gods, because they had not been able to prevent the death; on a deeper level however the actions testify to a loss of faith in the future, that depended on the Emperor and his future successor. The graffito *Ite Lares*, mentioned above, may testify to similar feelings.

<sup>40</sup> Codex Theodosianus 16.10.12.

<sup>41</sup> Hieronymus, In *Esaiam* 16, 57, 7, 8 (c. 408 AD). On Tutela: Wissowa 1912, 178-179. Cf. CIL II, 4082: *Laribus et [Tu]telae, Genio L(ucii) n(ostri)*; CIL V, 3304: *Tute[lae] dom[us] Rupill[ianae]*; Hieronymus, cited above; Querolus p. 37, 5.6.7.8.9.10 (author unknown). Lares Domestici also in CIL II, 4160.

<sup>42</sup> Kunckel 1974, 72-76.

<sup>43</sup> Orr 1972, 134-137; 145-149.

<sup>44</sup> See Boyce 1937, Appendix I, nr. 9: a collection of numerous objects, among them three statuettes (Isis-Fortuna, Genius, nude female figure), found on a street. "These objects evidently comprised a treasure carried away by some fleeing inhabitant at the time of the catastrophe and dropped in the course of his flight".

After the eruption of Mount Vesuvius the ruins were partly searched by former inhabitants and plunderers. Often during the excavations no accurate notes were taken, and the buildings have deteriorated considerably since the early excavations. Boyce has noted that the evidence of private religion in Pompeii is scarce in those parts of the town which were unearthed long ago.<sup>45</sup>

Most of the Ostian evidence was destroyed or removed before the city was interred. Statuettes will as a rule not have been left behind when people moved to another dwelling. In late antiquity much evidence must have been neglected and removed by Christians. When decline set in, many marble and metal objects were scattered through the city, taken to the lime-kilns, or melted down.<sup>46</sup> In the deserted buildings the plaster of the empty niches crumbled. As a result the evidence which has been preserved is usually no more than an empty shell, devoid of statuettes and paintings. Finally, in spite of Ostia's reputation as the city "par excellence" where buildings with several floors are preserved, hardly anything is left of the upper floors. Only one piece of evidence originated there.<sup>47</sup>

### 5C The functions of niches

As has been explained above, many Ostian niches are empty, and in that case the problem arises as to which niches were used for religious purposes. The alternatives are discussed in this section.

*Nymphaeum*-niches can be recognized by holes for the supply and drainage of water and by parapets on the bottom to obstruct the water.<sup>48</sup> Large floor-niches in walls or below staircases may have been used for storage and may then have contained wooden shelves or a cupboard.<sup>49</sup> In the Caseggiato di Diana (I,III,3-4) a floor-niche below a staircase was probably a dog-kennel.<sup>50</sup> Large floor-niches may also have been left

<sup>45</sup> Boyce 1937, 8; cf. Orr 1972, 97-98.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Tertullianus, *Ad Nationes* 1, 10, 20: *Quanto enim inreligiosiores deprehendimini? Privatos enim deos, quos Lares et Penates domestica consecratione perhibetis, domestica et licentia inculcatis venditando, pignerando pro necessitate ac voluntate.* See also Tertullianus, *Apologeticum* 13, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Catalogue A, nr. 49.

<sup>48</sup> A comprehensive study of *nymphaea*: Neuerburg 1965.

<sup>49</sup> Below staircase: see e.g. Boersma 1985, fig. 363 (in the *Domus del Protiro* (V,II,4-5)). For wooden structures in shops: Gassner 1986, 36-40.

<sup>50</sup> South wall of room 19, at the end of the main entrance corridor (Packer 1971, fig. 25). Starting at 2.25 from east wall; h. 1.38; w. 0.66; max. d. 0.90. Back and sides of brick. Between the right side and the back is a bend, at an obtuse angle, corresponding with angles in the reverse side of the wall, in rooms 17 and 18. Had there been 90°-angles there would have been a hole passing through the wall. The apparent necessity of great depth, the position of the niche in the building, and the low position in the wall suggest to me that it was a dog-kennel. A dog-kennel in Pompeii: Jashemski 1979, fig. 163.

empty and served a decorative purpose.<sup>51</sup> The *apodyterium* of the Terme dell'Invidioso (V,V,2) has wall-niches in two walls where clothes were put away.<sup>52</sup> Small, simple wall-niches without plaster may have been places of attachment for wooden structures, or may simply be damaged spots.

In modern literature it is stated repeatedly that lamps could be placed in small niches. I know of only one instance of lamp-niches however. In the Terme del Foro (VII 5) in Pompeii long rows of wall-niches in several rooms, and one wall-niche in the apse of the *caldarium* of the men's section apparently held lamps. The niches had been blackened by the burning of lamps, of which over a thousand were found in the bath.<sup>53</sup> The single niche in the *caldarium* and a similar niche in the *tepidarium* may well have held a statue of a deity as well: lamps were found among the contents of many Pompeian private shrines.<sup>54</sup> The lamp-niches in the Pompeian Terme del Foro must however be an exception. It is significant that in Boyce's catalogue of Pompeian *lararia*, in which numerous empty niches and numerous niches with religious objects are described, there is not one niche in which only a lamp was found. As far as single niches are concerned this is not surprising. The large number of lamps and niches in the bath suggests that the few lamps which could be placed in one niche did not provide much light. Also, by placing one or more lamps in a niche dark corners would be left in a room (the loss of light resulting from placing a lamp in a niche could perhaps be compensated for by the reflection of white plaster). Therefore rows of niches would have had to be used, but with the exception of the bath mentioned above, these are not found in Pompeii or Ostia. And finally, if lamp-niches existed, they would have been installed not in just one or two, but in many rooms; but niches are found in few rooms. We may then conclude that lamps were placed on the *paterae* of candelabra, on shelves, etcetera.

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<sup>51</sup> This is the most likely function of a large number of floor-niches (partially blocked doorways) in the Caseggiato di Annio (III,XIV,4).

<sup>52</sup> Pavolini 1983, 211.

<sup>53</sup> Overbeck - Mau 1884, 203-211, figs. 116, 117, 119, 122; De Vos - De Vos 1982, 51.

<sup>54</sup> See Boyce 1937, Index; cf. Nilsson 1950.

### 5D The identification of shrines

It cannot always be established whether evidence of private religion was a shrine, installed for the purpose of ritual. There are two archaeological criteria for the identification of a shrine: the presence of the special household gods, the Lares Familiares and the Genius of the *paterfamilias*, testifying to rituals described in antique literature; the presence of an altar, testifying to sacrificial ritual. The Lares and Genius are documented 125 to 132 times in the 555 cult-rooms, *aediculae*, pseudo-*aediculae*, niches and paintings in the catalogues of the Campanian evidence. Of the 540 *aediculae*, pseudo-*aediculae*, niches and paintings in the catalogues 59 to 64 were found with provision for sacrifice. Of the 15 cult-rooms in the catalogues 10 were found with provision for sacrifice. The provisions are found in relation to the Lares and Genius, who may be accompanied by other deities, or in relation to other deities alone.<sup>55</sup>

But what if the Lares and Genius are not documented, and if no altar was found? The absence of an altar can either mean that a portable one was used, or that there never was one. If we are then dealing with a cult-room, it may still be assumed that it was a shrine, in view of the temple-like nature of this kind of evidence. The assessment of the *aediculae*, pseudo-*aediculae*, niches, paintings, reliefs, intarsios, free-standing statues, and stucco and mosaic depictions now becomes hazardous. Unlikely focuses for ritual are niches, reliefs and intarsios high up in the wall,<sup>56</sup> and painted, stucco and mosaic religious depictions not set apart from surrounding decorative elements. The former kinds of evidence could incidentally receive a ritual salute, as is indicated by a story taking place in Ostia in the late second or early third century AD. It is told by the Christian author Minucius Felix, who describes how a pagan on a walk through the city notices some image of Serapis, probably along the Decumanus, and salutes it: ... *Caecilius simulacro Serapidis denotato, ut vulgus superstitiosus solet, manum ori admovens osculum labiis pressit*. We know that the *imagines maiorum* were not worshipped inside the house.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Other deities alone: Di Penates: Boyce 1937, nrs. 61 (niche), 96 (painting), 108 (niche), 123 (niche), 350 (*aedicula*); Genii Loci: Boyce 1937, nrs. 71, 126, 188, 223, 230, 235, 301, 380, 425, and Orr 1972, cat. A, nr. 13 (all paintings).

<sup>56</sup> Minucius Felix, Octavius 2, 4 with Meiggs 1973, 490-492 and Veyne 1985. Cf. Cato, De Agri Cultura 2, 1: *Pater familias, ubi ad villam venit, ubi Larem Familiarem salutavit, fundum eodem die, si potest, circumeat*. Altars have never been found in relation to reliefs and intarsios, and the Lares and Genius are never depicted on these.

<sup>57</sup> Bömer 1943, 104-123.

### 5E Selection of the evidence

On the basis of the preceding sections the immobile and mobile evidence can now be selected. Of course all shrines have been accepted: the cult-rooms; remains with which altars were found; remains which have depictions of the Lares and Genius. I have furthermore studied three kinds of evidence which were regularly the focus of ritual in Campania: *aediculae*, *pseudo-aediculae*, and religious niches.

As religious niches we may include: all wall-niches, with the exception of those which resulted from the partial blocking of windows and have no religious characteristics, and of the simple small ones, which may have been places for the attachment of wood or accidental holes (the presence of plaster excludes the latter two possibilities); floor-niches characterized as religious, or too luxurious or too small to have been used for storage purposes.

I have furthermore accepted those religious depictions which have clearly been set apart, isolated visually, from surrounding decorative motifs: all reliefs and intarsios - which are always found isolated in a wall-, and a number of depictions in mosaics and paintings.

In view of the preservation of the evidence the mobile objects (statues, statuettes, altars, objects with inscriptions) have been catalogued only if they were found in or in close proximity to the selected immobile evidence, or if it can be shown that they must have been related to such evidence.<sup>58</sup> It should be remembered here that statuettes could be placed in temples and

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<sup>58</sup> Lares and Genii which have not been catalogued:

- Statuette of a Genius. "Trouvé à Ostie" (note by Walther Fol), found before 1871 (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, inv. nr. MF (= Musée Fol) 1267; Deonna 1916, nr. 198, fig. 198; Kunckel 1974, 98 nr. F VI 4, Taf. 63, 3; additional (negative) information was sent to me by dr. J.-L. Maier of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire).

- Statuette of a Lar. From the Domus sul Decumano (III,II,3), found "at a depth of one metre" according to the Ostian inventory (August 27th 1938) (St.-r. VIII, sh. 5, inv. nr. 3536; Calza - Floriani Squarciapino 1962, 102; Helbig 1972, nr. 3168(2). Helbig: first century AD).

- Statuette of a Lar. Place of discovery unknown, found before 1871 (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, inv. nr. MF 1273; Deonna 1912, 36 nr. 3; Deonna 1916, nr. 164, fig. 164; Neugebauer 1936, 96-97, Pl. VI, 3. Neugebauer: first half of second century AD).

- Two statuettes of a Lar. Place of discovery unknown, found before 1871 (in the former Museo Lateranense, Rome, room XV, Vetrina dei bronzi; Marucchi 1922, 34).

- Marble relief with a depiction of two snakes (Genii Loci), found in the Piccolo Mercato (I,VIII,1) according to the Ostian inventory (st.-r. I, wall A, inv. nr. 131; Calza-Nash 1959, 91, Pl. 128; Ostia neg. nr. C 256).

- Two fragments of a painting of a Genius and two snakes. Place of discovery unknown (First fragment: museum Sala delle Pitture, inv. nr. 10106; Veloccia Rinaldi in Floriani Squarciapino 1971, 33-34 nr. 2; Helbig 1972, 149 nr. 3188(1). Second fragment: st.-r. Sala delle Pitture, inv. nr. 10084; Veloccia Rinaldi in Floriani Squarciapino 1971, 33-34 nr. 3; Helbig 1972, 3188(2). Veloccia Rinaldi: Lar, second or third century AD; Helbig: Lar, c. 200-210 AD).



in the seats of guilds.<sup>59</sup>

Finally two kinds of incidental evidence have been added: religious graffiti and ritually buried bolts of lightning.<sup>60</sup>

If evidence from previous building periods was left in existence during modifications in a building, it is assumed that it was kept in use.

## § 6 Structure of the study

As to the buildings I have selected, a first distinction has been made between expensive dwellings owned and used by the inhabitants on the one hand, and simpler habitations - many of which were let out - on the other (simple dwellings may occasionally have been inhabited by the owners or their dependents, but no such habitations can be identified with certainty in Ostia).<sup>61</sup> A distinction has also been made between commercial premises accessible to the public and those which normally were not. In both cases the criterium for the distinction is the influence exerted by outsiders, such as landlords.

Thus the first four chapters are dedicated to, respectively: habitations owned by their inhabitants (*domus*; chapter 2); other, simpler habitations (chapter 3); premises used for the handling of goods, not open to the public (workshops and depots; chapter 4); premises for the sale of goods, open to the public (shops, bars, markets, and hotels; chapter 5). The letting-out of rooms in hotels does not belong in this chapter, but the buildings have to be added, because the sale of food and drink was an integral part of the service offered there.<sup>62</sup>

In the introductory section of each chapter the previous research on the Ostian buildings and, if necessary, the definition of the kinds of buildings are discussed (§ 1). Next a conspectus of the buildings in Ostia is offered (§ 2), followed by notes on their dates, appearance, lay-out, size, and distribution (§ 3), and by notes on the people involved with them (owners, workers, personnel, inhabitants, visitors) (§ 4). In § 5 the evidence of

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<sup>59</sup> That Lar-statuettes could be dedicated in the seats of guilds is suggested by CIL XIV S, 4293, found in the Caseggiato dei Triclini (I,XII,1), the guild-seat of the *corpus fabrum tignuariorum* (Hermansen 1982(1), 62-63). This is a dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus by Q. Varius Secundus, *sevir Augustalis idem quinquennalis*, of ten *Lares argenteos cum hypobasi argentea et titulo, ex viso*. It is however not certain that the inscription belongs to the building. Cf. CIL X, 6, recording the presence of seven silver Lar-statuettes in the town-hall of Regium.

<sup>60</sup> On the latter see Wissowa 1912, 122 and Pietrangeli 1951.

<sup>61</sup> See chapter 3, § 1.

<sup>62</sup> For details see chapter 5, § 1.

private religion is presented. In § 5A summaries of the descriptions in the catalogue are offered in topographical order. If necessary the dates, position, appearance, deities and explicit data concerning the participants and beneficiaries are discussed. Then follows a conspectus of the dates, the position and appearance, and the deities and their feasts, with additional information from other sites, epigraphy and antique literature (§ 5B). The final section draws upon epigraphical sources (from Ostia and elsewhere) and antique literature. It offers a conspectus of the participants or beneficiaries, and the way in which they were organized (§ 5C).

If evidence is found in a building or part of a building which may form part of the selected material environment, but cannot be identified as such with certainty, or if evidence is found in the selected material environment, but this cannot be specified (e.g. simple habitation or workshop), it is dealt with in chapter 6.

The *mithraea* are studied in chapter 7. A separate chapter has been dedicated to these shrines, in view of the composition of the groups of adherents, which in this case it would be unwise to neglect: the participation in this cult of people from outside the buildings in which the *mithraea* are found was extensive, and in this respect the cult differs from the other cults in the selected premises, the participants in which came primarily from these buildings. The shrines of Mithras are found in the selected material environment and elsewhere. Nevertheless all *mithraea* are studied, because the initiators took the presence of other *mithraea* into account, witness the regular distribution through the city. I have refrained from a theological study of the cult in Ostia, which is better left to the specialists. In chapter 8 the *compita* are studied, including uncertain and falsely identified *compita*.

The structure of chapters 6 to 8 runs parallel to that of § 5 of the first four chapters. Chapter 9 is dedicated to the Sacello del Silvano, a cult-room in a workshop in the Caseggiato dei Molini (I,III,1). A summary of this chapter is found in chapter 4, the separate treatment was prompted by the ample opportunity the shrine offers to study the Imperial cult. A technical, stylistic, and iconographic analysis of the paintings in the shrine ("Mural Paintings in the Sacello del Silvano") by E.M. Moormann, a specialist in the field of painting, can be found at the end of the study.

The evidence is interpreted in chapters 10-12. In chapter 10 the various aspects of the Ostian buildings highlighted in the preceding chapters are discussed. Chapter 11 focuses on the religious evidence in chapters 2-6, chapter 12 on that in chapters 7-9. The latter three chapters are treated as a group, because in all three cases the cult of, loyalty towards, and involvement of the Emperor stand out.

The bulk of the evidence is described in catalogue A. The *mithraea* have not been catalogued, because they have already been described satisfactorily by Becatti. Catalogue B contains the evidence pertaining to the *compita*, which stand out as a separate group. The Sacello del Silvano (Caseggiato dei Molini, room 25) is dealt with in catalogue C. This shrine is treated in a separate catalogue, because the succession of the layers of plaster in the room is discussed in the catalogue, in order to unburden the main text. The adjacent room (24) is described in catalogue C as well, because from a constructional point of view it forms an entity with the Sacello, and because it was apparently a shrine too.

## § 7 Technical data

The names given in this study to some of the Ostian buildings (labels, such as "Caseggiato" and appendages, e.g. "dei Molini") are not in common use. The use of the labels Caseggiato, Casa and Insula is discussed in chapter 3, § 1. Some alternative labels have been introduced on the basis of the functions of buildings. An alternative appendage has been used if the one in common use is wrong or questionable.

In order to unburden the descriptions in the catalogues eight kinds of niches have been distinguished (fig. 1):

A1: rectangular plan, no vault.

A2: semicircular or curved plan, no vault.

B1: rectangular plan and "shell"-vault.

B2: semicircular or curved plan and "shell"-vault.

C1: rectangular plan and vault going from left to right.

B2-C2: semicircular or curved plan, front part of vault going from left to right, back part of vault in the shape of a shell (C2, semicircular or curved plan and vault going from left to right, cannot be realized).

D: rectangular plan, with triangular, sloping top.

E: vault only, in the shape of a shell or going from left to right.

The description of cult-rooms is modelled after Boersma's catalogue of the Ostian Insula V,II (Boersma 1985; instructions for use: p. 302-303). The description of each room in the present study is made up of the following items:

A Measurements (north, east, south and west wall respectively); B Walls; C Floor; D Ceiling; E Data from the excavations; structures and objects in and from room.

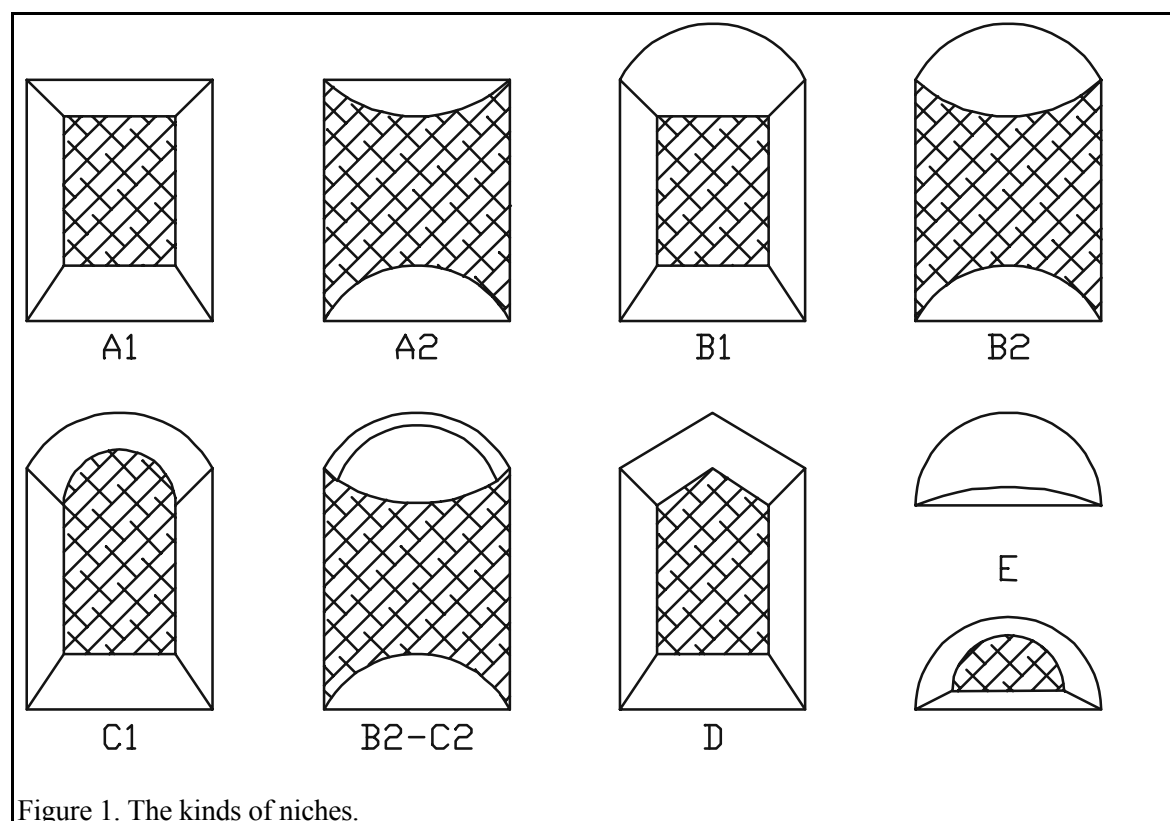


Figure 1. The kinds of niches.

Wall-sections have been distinguished. Different kinds of masonry (such as latericium, mixtum), and stretches of similar masonry separated by ajoint are given different numbers. The masonry on either side of a doorway is given the same number only if a lintel is present. The blocking of a doorway or window is numbered separately. Antique repairs are not given a separate number if they are insignificant. I have inserted the description of doorways and passages (Boersma's item c) into the description of the wall-sections, because I regard them as an integral part of the walls. Item C deals with the floor (Boersma's item d), item D with the ceiling (in Boersma under b).

The northern stretch of the *Cardo Maximus* is assumed to be oriented north-south, the eastern stretch of the *Decumanus* east-west. Measurements below one centimetre are in millimetres, all others in metres. Descriptions like "first ..., second ..." are from left to right.

Abbreviations not found in Boersma 1985 are: st.-r.: store room; sh.: showcase; mus.: museum.

Some datings of masonry in catalogue A are followed by the remark "(Heres from photograph)". These datings were kindly suggested to me by T.L. Heres after an examination of my photographs. They are of a provisional nature, because they are not based on a study in Ostia itself of the particular stretch of masonry.