

Chapter 8

The *compita*

§ 1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the *compita*: shrines at crossroads where the Lares Compitales and, from the time of Augustus, the Lares and Genius Augusti were worshipped. As has been explained in chapter 1, § 4, this chapter has been inserted in view of the worship of the Lares and Genius Augusti, which is similar to the worship of the Lares and Genii of other *domini*. This similarity will be discussed in more detail in chapter 12, § 2.

The Ostian *compita* have not yet been studied systematically. A *compitum*-altar on Piazza dei Lari was dealt with by Floriani Squarciapino,¹ the so-called Aedicula Larum Augustorum on the Forum and a group of inscriptions were studied by Bloch.² Only scattered references and remarks concerning the remaining evidence can be found.

§ 2 Presentation of the evidence

2A The evidence

The evidence from Ostia

Ostia's best preserved *compitum* is on **Piazza dei Lari** (catalogue B, nr. 1; fig. 17; pl. 81). The oldest evidence on this small square is a late-Augustan or Claudian altar with a relief and an inscription. It should be noted, as Floriani Squarciapino has remarked, that it is round: all other *compitum*-altars which have been found are square.³ What the Piazza dei Lari looked like when the altar was placed there is not known. All the surrounding buildings are Hadrianic or Antonine and the older strata have not yet been investigated. It may be of importance that the altar is found at the intersection of two roads, Via di Diana and Via dei Lari, which

¹ Floriani Squarciapino 1952.

² Bloch 1962.

³ For *compita*-altars: Wissowa 1897(1), 1894-1897; Ross Taylor 1925, 308-313; Pietrangeli 1936; Niebling 1945; Niebling 1956, 310-323; Alföldi 1973, 30-36; Hano 1986.

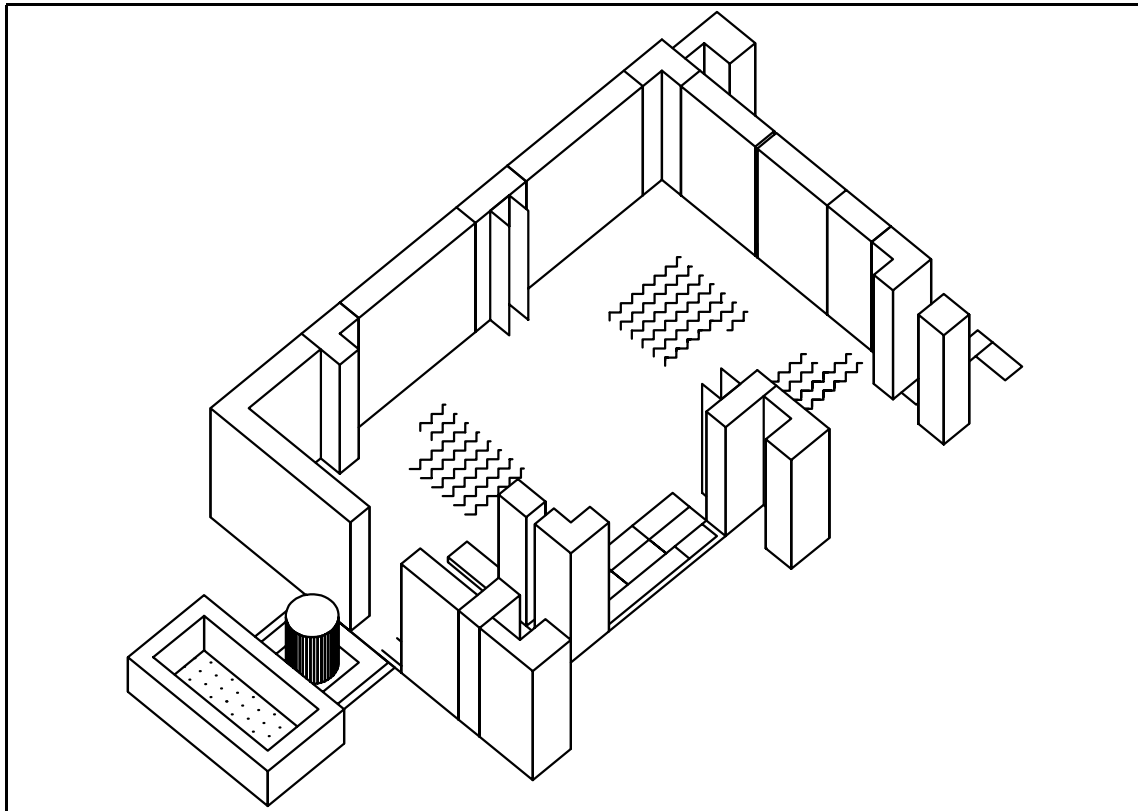


Figure 17. The edifice on Piazza dei Lari: 3D-view (max. w. 6.45, max. d. 10.64). From the southeast.

coincide with the beginning of the inner *pomerium* of the Castrum.⁴

According to the inscription the altar was dedicated to the Lares Vicin. by one or more *magistri*. The Lares are Lares Vicinales, Vicinis, or Viciniae.⁵ The central god in the relief on the altar is Hercules, standing next to an altar. A *thyrsus* close to Hercules refers to Liber Pater. On either side of Hercules Pan is seen, leading a Lar Vicin. towards him.⁶ The altar was at some point in time mutilated, presumably by Christians.

To the north of the altar is a small, rectangular edifice, probably from the Antonine period. To this phase belong four corner piers and two short

⁴ Meiggs 1973, 116-117; SO I, fig. 19. On early Ostia most recently: Cicerchia 1983; Rasmus Brandt 1985; Pavolini 1988.

⁵ Hermann 1961, 98. A dedication [*Larib*]us *Vicinalibus* was found in Otricoli (Pietrangeli 1941). In Trier a *Genius Viciniae* is documented (CIL XIII, 3652).

⁶ According to Calza two Fauni (1916(1), 147), according to Floriani Squarciapino Fauni or Panes (1952, 204). Equation of Faunus with Pan is found in the writings of some antique poets, from Lucretius onwards, but there is no evidence that Faunus could be actually depicted as Pan. The only known representations of Faunus are much different from the Panes (Wissowa 1890, 1458-1460; cf. Otto 1909, 2054-2073). On the duplication of Pan: Van Straten 1976, 9.

stretches of wall in between the corner piers, in the long sides. Similar corner piers, but a little thinner, belonging to the first floor, are reported by Paribeni. It is not known whether the building had a roof. No staircase was found. The foot used was c. 0.303 long. The thickness of the walls is one and a half feet. The corner piers are two times three feet long on the outside, two times one and a half feet on the inside. The short stretches of wall in between the corner piers are four feet long. The entrances in the short sides are fifteen feet wide, the four lateral ones nine. The whole edifice is a rectangle of 28 x 21 feet (4:3).

There are at least two further alterations to the building (c. 250-275 AD?). Several entrances were narrowed or closed off, and the room was apparently divided in a northern and southern half. A small room was set against the outer southern wall, between the building and the altar. Three L-shaped piers were set against the outer northern and eastern walls, a further pier was erected near the northeastern corner. Paribeni suggests that the piers supported a balcony.

The room is called "una specie di chiosco" by Paribeni, which is not very helpful. At first sight the wide entrances suggest that the edifice was a shop. This is unlikely however. The walls on the ground floor were almost entirely made up of entrances. There was therefore no storage space and the room must have been very draughty. This is why I think that a shop-threshold, placed in a door in the east wall, must belong to one of the later building phases, when several entrances were blocked. The curious lay-out of the original edifice and the close proximity to the altar justify the hypothesis that it was a *sacellum*, related to the altar, and probably replacing a shrine from the first century AD. I will return to this hypothesis in chapter 12, § 2.

In the **centre of the Forum** is a badly preserved structure, possibly Trajanic, regarded by some as a *compitum* (B 2; pls. 82, 83). The outer wall of the structure, or at least its lower part, was lined with marble, set in holes in the top of a marble cornice. Inside, six niches are found. Four of these are 0.88 or 0.89 wide, 0.44 or 0.45 deep, with intervals of 0.64 or 0.65. A further niche was originally a door, with a few steps leading down to the floor. At some point in time it was widened. Finally it was closed off. It may originally have been 0.91 wide, with standard intervals of 0.65 on either side. One niche, with an opening in the back, causes a curious asymmetry, which was always present in the building. If its width and the length of the intervals on either side are added, the resulting length is 2.20. This could have been divided in a standard width for the niche of 0.88 and two standard intervals of 0.65. Instead the measurements 0.54 - 0.57 - 1.09 were chosen.

The structure is regarded by Calza, without supporting evidence, as a *nymphaeum*.⁷ According to Bloch - who had not inspected the structure - it cannot have been a *nymphaeum* in view of "the absence of any trace of hydraulic mortar" and "the lack of any installation for bringing in and above all for the drainage of water".⁸ Instead, together with I. Gismondi, he had become convinced that a group of inscriptions dealt with here under number 4 belongs to it. Out of this group nos. 3 and 4 have the same diameter as the structure in the Forum.⁹ There can be no doubt however that the structure was a *nymphaeum* with niches for four statues.¹⁰ This is shown by the presence of hydraulic mortar on the floor and a hole in the back of the niche with the deviating measurements, which can only have served to allow the supply of water (pl. 83). If the Trajanic date of the masonry is correct, the inscriptions can for that reason alone not belong to the structure, because they are from the period of Claudius. It should be noted that the inscriptions were found near a structure on the Bivio del Castrum, discussed below. Do they perhaps fit the curved wall of its northwestern room (a basin)?

On the **Bivio del Castrum**, one of Ostia's major crossroads, is a badly preserved structure, made up of three rooms (B 3; fig. 18; pl. 84). It was erected before the Hadrianic period.

The function of the southwestern room cannot be established, the northwestern room was a basin, as is shown by the presence of hydraulic mortar. The room which is of interest here is the northeastern one, a narrow, rectangular room, built with large tufa blocks with doors in the short sides. The facade on either side of the northwestern door was accentuated by a moulding.¹¹ The floor of the room must have been somewhat above the present floor level, because the tops of the thresholds are at a higher level and because a foundation for reticulate walls which were set against the lateral walls is visible.

Becatti has suggested that this was a *compitum*, and furthermore that an inscription dealt with under number 6 belongs to it. The masonry of the narrow, rectangular room cannot be dated accurately, but could be from

⁷ Calza 1930, 160. So too SO I, 71 and Neuerburg 1965, 69 ("round basin").

⁸ Bloch 1962, 212.

⁹ No details are furnished by Bloch about the corresponding measurements.

¹⁰ On round *nymphaea*: Neuerburg 1965, 65-72.

¹¹ The facade on either side of the southeastern door may have had a similar moulding. Here only one loose block is preserved above the level of the threshold. It may have been placed there by the excavators.

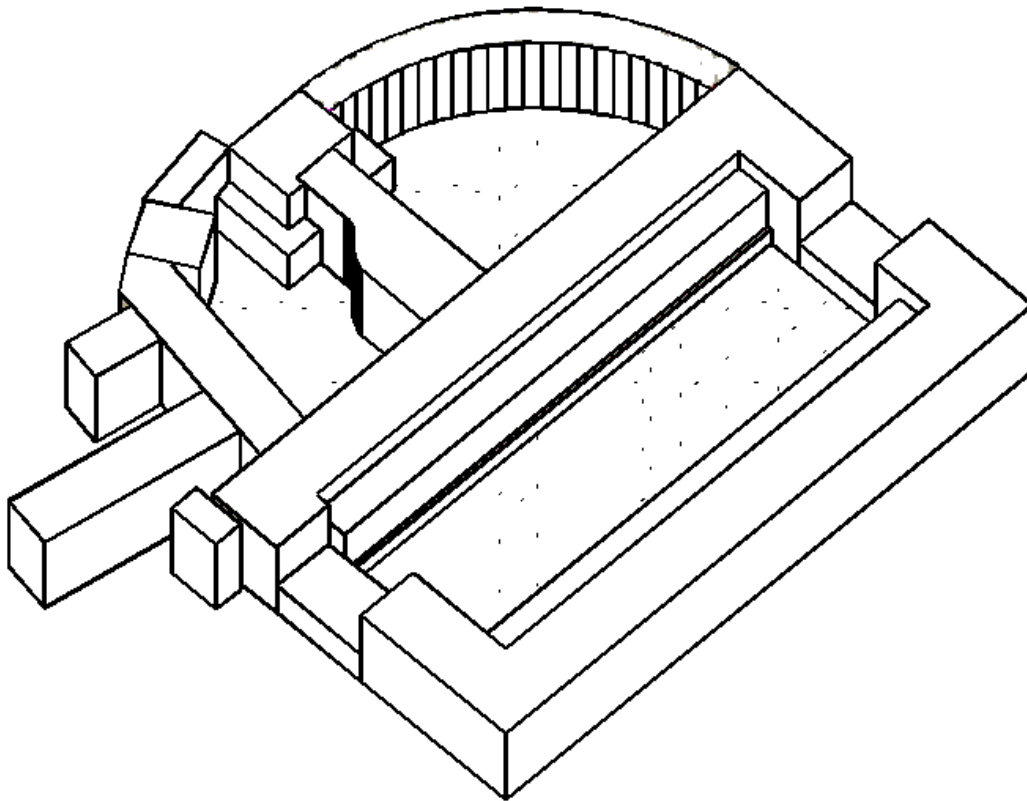


Figure 18. The shrine on the Bivio del Castrum: 3D-view (max. w. 2.37, max. d. 5.22). From the east.

the period of the inscription.¹² There is however no evidence for the relation. That the structure had a religious function is suggested by its position and by the respect shown towards it: the floor level was preserved when the street level of Ostia was raised.

A **group of inscriptions**, related to the erection and dedication of a shrine for the Lares Augusti and a *lustratio*, was found near the Bivio del Castrum (B 4). Three *magistri* are mentioned. As Bloch has remarked, the shrine from which the inscriptions come must have been called an *aedicula*.¹³ It was put into use in 51 AD. A *lustratio*, that is a *lustratio vici* (the ritual cleansing of a district), took place on June 26th.¹⁴ Herz has noted that on this day, in 4 AD, Tiberius was adopted by Augustus.¹⁵ The

¹² SO I, 107.

¹³ In view of *dedicata* and because this is the name used time and again for *compita* in Rome (Gatti 1906) and in antique literature (e.g. the *scholium* on Persius, Saturae 4, 28).

¹⁴ A *lustratio vici* is mentioned in CIL VI, 821, on which see Bloch 1962, 222. Cf. on the *dedicatio* Alföldi 1973, 41.

¹⁵ Herz 1975, 231.

day was entered as a feast-day in the official calendar and removed again under Vespasian.¹⁶ No other religious feasts are known on this day. It is an attractive hypothesis that Claudius, whose Lares were worshipped at the shrine, is being presented here as a new adopted Tiberius, i.e. as a follower and successor of Augustus. Claudius held Augustus in high esteem and sometimes used the policy of Augustus and Tiberius as a precedent.¹⁷ The dedication took place on January 1st, a day intimately connected with the cult of the Lares.¹⁸ The inscriptions were at some point in time damaged, presumably by Christians.

An **inscription** on a small altar with horn-shaped protuberances on the top was found to the east of the Terme del Mitra (I,XVII,2) (B 5). It has not been dated. It was erected as redemption of a vow by someone unknown and dedicated to the Deae Triviae and the Locus Divinus. The Deae Triviae are Hecate and Proserpina.¹⁹ Hecate, the goddess of ghosts, magic and the underworld, has here as so often been associated with a crossroads.²⁰ Her association with Proserpina, goddess of the underworld, was common.²¹ The Locus Divinus is obviously the *trivium*, the crossroads itself. The expression Locus Divinus is surprising: one would expect to hear of the Genius Loci. The TLL furnishes one parallel only, from Plautus: *Tum consilia firmiora sunt de divinis locis*, referring to an altar in front of a house.²² The inscription might come from a *compitum*.

An **inscription** referring to the transfer of a *compitum* was found near the Palazzo Imperiale (B 6). It has been dated to the end of the Republican or early Augustan period. The transfer must have been due to some building activity. The new location was on public ground, assigned by the *duoviri*. The actual transfer was carried out later by another *duovir*. Three

¹⁶ Wissowa 1912, 445-449.

¹⁷ ... *seque divo Augusto adaequabat* ... (Tacitus, Annales 12, 11, on the sending of a king to Parthia); *Sane novo more et divus Augustus avonculus meus et patruus Ti. Caesar omnem florem ubique coloniarum ac municipiorum, bonorum scilicet virorum et locupletium, in hac curia esse voluit* (CIL XIII, 1668, II, 1-4; Claudius mentions the policy of Augustus and Tiberius as a precedent for the admittance of people from Gaul into the senatorial order); *Conversus hinc ad officia pietatis ius iurandum neque sanctius sibi neque crebrius instituit quam per Augustum* (Suetonius, De Vita Caesarum, Claudius 11, 2).

¹⁸ Johnston 1939; Herz 1975, 115-117.

¹⁹ Wissowa 1912, 378. A distinction should be made between the Roman Deae Triviae and the non-Roman, provincial (Deae) Biviae, Triviae and Quadriviae, goddesses of the crossroads. For the latter: Heichelheim 1963. An amulet from Ostia with depictions of Hecate and Solomon: Calza 1917, 326-328; Calza 1918.

²⁰ Roscher 1890, 1893-1896; Wissowa 1912, 251-252; Ehlers 1939; Hopfner 1939.

²¹ Roscher 1890, 1898.

²² Plautus, Mostellaria 1104.

magistri vici erected a *maceries* (a light wall, an enclosure) and a *columna*.²³ Then the inscription ends with another name.

A mutilated **inscription** (date, appearance and place of discovery unknown) contains some fragmentary names and mentions an *[aedic]ulam Larum Au[g(ustorum)]*, possibly a *compitum*, which was erected or rebuilt *inpena sua* (B 7).

The northernmost room of the Hospitium delle Volte Dipinte (III,V) may originally have been a *compitum*, as is explained in chapter 6.²⁴ On the general plan in SO I several structures can be found (often badly preserved) which may have been *compita*, for example the Monumento Repubblicano V,XI,6.

The evidence from Rome

Apart from inscriptions and altars, the remains of four possible *compita* have so far been identified in Rome. The first one was found in Via di S. Martino ai Monti. Two phases have been recognized here, the oldest of which has not been dated, while the second one belongs to the Augustan period. Of the original structure only a few remains were found, notably a square structure of large travertine blocks, possibly an altar. From the second phase came a podium of large tufa blocks, lined with marble slabs, accessible by way of marble steps; a large base behind the podium, also lined with marble slabs; on top of the base a marble *cippus* or base, with an inscription dated 10 BC, recording the erection of a statue of Mercurius *ex stipe quam populus Romanus K. Ianuariis apseni ei* (i.e. Augusti) *contulit*. Basalt blocks belonging to streets or a square were found on three sides of this structure, but there is no mention of what was found on the fourth side.²⁵ Suetonius informs us that Augustus distributed a large number of statues *vicatim*, paid for with New Year's Day gifts he had received from the people.²⁶ The statue of Mercurius was one of these. The obvious destination of these statues would be the *compita*, which were related to the *vici* of Rome (see § 2B). It may be noted however that another statue from the series, this time of Vulcanus, was apparently related to the Volcanal.²⁷

During the building of Via dei Fori Imperiali the Compitum Acilium was

²³ A *mace[riam]* is also mentioned in an inscription set up by the *magistri Pagi Ianicolensis* in Rome (CIL I, 1001). For the *columna* cf. Hülsen 1900 and Wissowa 1912, 152.

²⁴ § 2A, catalogue A, nr. 40.

²⁵ Gatti 1888, 221-232, Tav. XII.

²⁶ Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, Augustus 57.

²⁷ CIL VI, 457; Jordan 1871, 340-341; Coarelli 1983(1), 169-170.

found.²⁸ Its lower part consisted of a podium (2.80 x 2.38; 1.40 high), lined with travertine slabs, accessible by way of four marble steps. In front of these steps and along one of the sides basalt blocks belonging to streets or a square were found. The upper part could be reconstructed by the excavators on the basis of some remains. On the back part of the podium was a *cella*, more wide than deep (2.38 x 1.56). In front two columns supported a roof. The shrine was given up when the Domus Aurea was built.²⁹ An inscription from 5 BC, mentioning *mag(istri) Vici Compiti Acili*, was found on a fragment of a marble architrave, and the same authority is mentioned in an inscription on a fragment of a marble altar, dated 3/4 AD.³⁰

A third *compitum* could be a structure set against the outer wall of the Atrium Vestae, to the west of the entrance. The superstructure is resting on two columns rising from a podium. This edifice may have been built in the second century AD and rebuilt in the third, as is indicated by brick stamps and the architectural decoration. To this structure both Lanciani and Coarelli would like to relate an inscription found in the Forum which records the rebuilding of the *aedicula reg(ionis) VIII Vico Vestae* in 223 AD. Coarelli holds it to be the *sacellum* of the Lares Praestites.³¹

Finally the find of a *compitum* on the intersection of the Vicus Iugarius and a secondary street is reported. Nothing substantial has been published about it. A plan shows a closed room, reminiscent of the Compitum Acilium.³²

The evidence from Pompeii

The remains of shrines at crossroads in Pompeii have been studied by Boyce, but of this study only a summary is available³³ Boyce claims, that 30 *compita* can be found in Pompeii, I know of only 23 possible ones. They are, in topographical order:

01 In the alley between I 7 and 8, against I 7, at the corner near Via dell'Abbondanza. Painting of two extremely long snakes on either side of a masonry altar.³⁴

²⁸ For the place of discovery: Coarelli 1983(1), 39-40, fig. 8.

²⁹ Colini 1933, 80; Colini 1962; Dondin-Payre 1987.

³⁰ Tamassia 1962.

³¹ Coarelli 1983(1), 265-270, figs. 69, 76, 77 (taking up a theory of R. Lanciani). On the Lares Praestites: Wissowa 1912, 170-171.

³² Coarelli 1988, 244, fig. 48.

³³ Boyce 1940.

³⁴ Della Corte 1912(1), 184-185; Della Corte 1912(2), 215-216; Maiuri 1927, 6 fig. 2; Spinazzola 1953, 161-185.

- 02** In the alley between I 9 and I 11, against I 11, at the corner near Via dell'Abbondanza. Painting of two Lares and a snake. Masonry altar.³⁵
- 03** In the alley between I 11 and 12, against I 11, at the corner near Via dell'Abbondanza. Painting of two Lares, someone sacrificing and two snakes. Names of *magistri* painted in *tabula ansata*. Masonry altar. Possibly abandoned in antiquity.³⁶
- 04** Near I 13, 10, near a crossroads. "Street-altar".³⁷
- 05** Against the main facade of II 2, 1-4, at the northwestern corner of the block. Painting of five people sacrificing. Names of *magistri* painted in a *tabula ansata*. Masonry altar. Abandoned in antiquity.³⁸
- 06** VI 1, 19, at a crossroads. Painting on a well of a statue on a base and seven people sacrificing. Masonry altar.³⁹
- 07** VI 8, 14, at some distance from a crossroads. Room accessible from street. Inside are a masonry bench, above which are two niches, and a travertine stone (possibly an altar). Small back room.⁴⁰
- 08** At the southeastern corner of VI 14. Freestanding wall with gable-top. Painting of four *magistri*, a *tibicen* and two Lares. Above, an eagle. Masonry altar.⁴¹
- 09** At the corner of Strada degli Augustali and Vicolo dei Lupanari, in Vicolo (= VII 1, 42). Badly preserved painting with a Lar and other figures.⁴²
- 10** Southern room behind main facade of Macellum VII 9, 7.8.19.52. Masonry base in the back.⁴³
- 11** Between VII 11, 11 and 12, in Vicolo dei Lupanari, at a crossroads. Painting of snakes.⁴⁴
- 12** North side of VIII 2 (probably in the inlet between VIII 2, 25 and 26 and in that case not at a crossroads). Freestanding tufa altar in a large floor-niche.⁴⁵
- 13** Between VIII 3, 11 and 12, in Vicolo dei Dodici Dei, at a crossroads. Painting of the Twelve Gods, two snakes, and other figures.⁴⁶
- 14** VIII 4, 24 (in the middle of the eastern facade of the block). Room accessible from street. Near the back wall is an altar, to the left is a masonry bench, to the right a niche.⁴⁷
- 15** At the southwestern corner of IX 2 (between IX 2, 12 and 13), in Vico di Balbo. Painting of two snakes. Niche.⁴⁸

³⁵ Della Corte 1913(1), 189-190; Spinazzola 1953, 161-185, fig. 210.

³⁶ Della Corte 1913(2), 478-479; Spinazzola 1953, 161-185.

³⁷ Eschebach 1982, 21, 23, n. 12, figs. 3, 14.

³⁸ Spinazzola 1953, 161-185.

³⁹ Helbig 1868, nr. 88; Overbeck-Mau 1884, 239-240, figs. 127, 128; Eschebach 1979, 4, fig. 28.

⁴⁰ Mau 1908, 238-240.

⁴¹ Helbig 1868, nr. 41; Overbeck-Mau 1884, 243; Saglio 1887, 1430, fig. 1888; Mau 1908, 238-240, fig. 114.

⁴² Helbig 1868, nr. 45.

⁴³ Overbeck-Mau 1884, 122.

⁴⁴ Helbig 1868, nr. 30; Mau 1908, 238-240.

⁴⁵ Overbeck-Mau 1884, 243, fig. 133; Mau 1908, 238-240.

⁴⁶ Gerhard 1850 with Tav. K; Helbig 1868, nr. 7; Mau 1908, 238-240.

⁴⁷ Mau 1908, 238-240, fig. 119.

⁴⁸ Helbig 1868, nr. 29; Overbeck-Mau 1884, 243.

- 16 Southeastern corner of Terme Centrali (IX 4, 5.10.18), at a crossroads. Altar and niche.⁴⁹
- 17 "To the right" of IX 8, 8, at the corner of an abandoned *angiportus*. Altar and niche. Painting of two *cornucopiae* and the text *Salutis | Salutei sacrum*.⁵⁰
- 18 Against the main facade of IX 11, 1, at the corner of the block. Painting of (left) the Twelve Gods, two Lares and a Genius, (right) two Lares, four *magistri*, a snake and the names of *magistri* in a *tabula ansata*. Masonry altar.⁵¹
- 19 Against the main facade of IX 12, 7, at the corner of the block. Painting of two gladiators, two Lares, a Genius, snakes, a *tibicen* and four *magistri*. Masonry altar with a painting of sausages.⁵²
- 20 Facade in Strada Nolana. Painting of two Lares, *tibicen*, four *magistri*, snakes, pig's head and objects looking like sausages.⁵³
- 21 Facade near Porta Nolana. Painting like that of nr. 20.⁵⁴
- 22 Probably from a facade, possibly of the Terme Stabiane (VII 1, 8). Painting of four *togati*, *camillus*, *tibicen* and two figures wearing a *tunica*.⁵⁵
- 23 "Immediately to the right" of the Porta Stabiana. Painting of two snakes.⁵⁶

Of these 23 possible *compita* 10 can be identified as such with certainty, because of the presence of Lares, *magistri* or the names of *magistri* (the actual title is not painted, the people depicted are generally held to have been officials in the cult).⁵⁷

2B Dates, position, distribution, appearance, deities

The evidence from Ostia stretches from the late first century BC to the period of Antoninus Pius. The latest epigraphical evidence from Rome is dated to the reign of Alexander Severus.⁵⁸ In the *Curiosum Urbis Romae* and *Notitia Dignitatum* (late fourth and early fifth century) 48 *magistri vici* are mentioned for each *regio*.⁵⁹ The Pompeian *compita* are of course not later than 79 AD.

⁴⁹ Mau 1908, 238-240, fig. 118.

⁵⁰ Mau 1889, 121-122; Mau 1908, 238-240; CIL IV S I.II, 3774.

⁵¹ Spinazzola 1953, 161-185, figs. 215-217; De Franciscis 1968, fig. 9.

⁵² Spinazzola 1953, 161-185, figs. 213, 214.

⁵³ Helbig 1868, nr. 42.

⁵⁴ Helbig 1868, nr. 43.

⁵⁵ Helbig 1868, nr. 44.

⁵⁶ Overbeck-Mau 1884, 243.

⁵⁷ Nrs. 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

⁵⁸ As to the inscriptions, from 100 AD onwards we have: CIL VI, 451 (100 AD); CIL VI, 452 (109 AD); CIL VI, 30958 (116 AD); CIL VI, 975 (136 AD); AE 1971, nr. 33 (149 AD; probably related to a *compitum*); AE 1971, nr. 34 (161-169 AD); CIL VI, 30959 (203 AD; perhaps related to a *compitum*); AE 1949, nr. 170 (205 or 208 AD); CIL VI, 30960 (223 AD); CIL VI, 30961 (222-235 AD; probably related to a *compitum*).

⁵⁹ Jordan 1871, 539-564.

The word *compitum* itself furnishes information about the location. It is derived from *competo*, "come together", "meet", and is explained by ancient authors and modern scholars alike as "crossroads" or "a shrine at crossroads".⁶⁰ The few *compita* found in Rome are on streets or squares. Those in Pompeii are at crossroads, both on main streets (Via dell'Abbondanza, Via Vesuvio) and secondary ones. The only certain Ostian *compitum*, on Piazza dei Lari, is on a square.

About the early distribution of the shrines we are informed by Dionysius Halicarnassus: "(Servius Tullius ...) commanded that there should be erected on every *compitum* (κατα παντας τους στενωπους) by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood (υπο των γειτωνων) chapels to the heroes who stand before the door (καλιαδας ηρωσι προνωπιοις) and he made a law that sacrifices should be performed to them every year, each family contributing a honey-cake. He also directed that the persons attending and assisting those who performed the sacrifices at these shrines on behalf of the neighbourhood should not be free men, but slaves, the ministry of slaves being looked upon as pleasing to the heroes".⁶¹

The distribution of the *compita* in Rome was, from the time of Augustus at least, related to the official division of the city-area. In the years 12 to 7 BC or in 7 BC Augustus started a reorganization of the *regiones* and *vici*, and of the cult at the *compita*.⁶² He divided the city into fourteen *regiones* - replacing the four into which the city had been divided previously, allegedly by Servius Tullius -, which were subdivided in *vici*: (Augustus) *spatium Urbis in regiones vicosque divisit instituitque, ut illas annui magistratus sortito tuerentur, hos magistri e plebe cuiusque viciniae lecti*.⁶³ Groups of *magistri*, to which I will return in § 2C, were put in charge of the quarters. Each *vicus* was furthermore given a *compitum* as its religious nucleus, and so Pliny the Elder can say that in 73 AD Rome *dividitur in regiones XIII, compita Larum CCLXV*.⁶⁴ Later the number increased to over 300 or 400.⁶⁵ At the shrines, both in and outside Rome,

⁶⁰ Wissowa 1897(1), 1872-1875, 1879-1882; Wissowa 1920(2); TLL s.v. *compitum*. The only different derivation is furnished by the *scholium* on Persius, Saturae 4, 28: *a conpotando, id est simul bibendo*.

⁶¹ Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 4, 14, 3.4 (after the Loeb-translation by E. Cary). A little further on Dionysius equates the *compita* and *στενωποι*. The *καλιας* is an unpretentious structure of wood (Holland 1937, 433).

⁶² For the Augustan reorganization and its date: Wissowa 1897(1), 1879-1882; Ross Taylor 1931, 184-194; Niebling 1956; Moretti 1958, 234.

⁶³ Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, Augustus 30.

⁶⁴ Plinius Senior, *Naturalis Historia* 3, 66.

⁶⁵ Jordan 1878, 315; Flambard 1981, 146.

the cult of the Lares and Genius Augusti was introduced (discussed at the end of this section). The *compita* will at least in some cases have had the same name as their *vici*. This is certain in the case of the Compitum Fabricium. The expressions Vicus Compiti Pastoris and Vicus Compiti Acili also suggest agreement.⁶⁶

As to the distribution of the shrines outside Rome, in Pompeii shrines have been preserved on several intersections of the important thoroughfare Via dell'Abbondanza, two of these at successive crossroads.⁶⁷ The one certain Ostian *compitum* which could be located allows no conclusions in this respect.

The *compita* could be called *sacella*,⁶⁸ i.e. *loca dis sacrata sine tecto*,⁶⁹ *locus parvus deo sacratus cum ara*.⁷⁰ Such a place could either be a freestanding altar with an enclosure (*saepum*), or a small shrine (*aedicula*). An *aedicula* is a small or miniature temple, in which the statue of the god was in a niche or under a roof, but also a *locus sine tecto*, because those sacrificing were standing on a spot without a roof.⁷¹ The altar could be permanent or portable: *Compita, ut Trebatius placet, locus ex pluribus partibus in se vel in easdem partes ex se vias atque itinera dirigens, sive is cum ara sive sine ara, sive sub tecto sive sub dio sit, ubi pagani agrestes bucina convocati solent inire concilia: hinc et Lares Compitalicii et feriae compitaliciae*.⁷² The Compitum Acilium in Rome is an example of an *aedicula*. Another small temple is apparently described in an inscription from Verona: *Magistri ... ministri ... compitum refecerunt, tectum, parietes allevarunt, valvas, limen de sua pecunia Laribus dant*.⁷³

More information about the appearance of the *compita* is furnished by Persius, who, when describing a miser celebrating the Compitalia, says:

⁶⁶ Jordan 1871, 589; Platner-Ashby 1929, s.v. Compitum Fabricium, s.v. Vicus Compiti Pastoris. For the Vicus Compiti Acili: § 2A, Rome.

⁶⁷ § 2A, Pompeii nrs. 18, 1, 19, 2, 3, 5. Nrs. 18, 19, 2, 3, and 5 can be identified as *compita* with certainty, nrs. 3 and 5 should be left out of consideration, the former because they may have been, the latter was because it was abandoned in antiquity.

⁶⁸ Antique sources: Wissowa 1912, 470 n. 4.

⁶⁹ Festus, De Significatione Verborum 318.

⁷⁰ Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticae 7, 12, 5 (Trebatius).

⁷¹ Wissowa 1897, 1873; Wissowa 1920(2); Wissowa 1912, 469-470. I leave out of consideration the data from inscriptions connected with the provincial cult of the (Deae) Biviae, Triviae and Quadruviae (see § 2A n. 19). Mention may be made of CIL V, 844, from Aquileia, with the words *compitum ex saxo fecere*.

⁷² Philargyrius on Vergilius, Georgica 2, 382.

⁷³ CIL V, 3257.

*qui, quandoque iugum pertusa ad compita figit.*⁷⁴ The *scholium* on Persius' line is worth citing in full: *Qui quotiens diem festum aratro fixo in compitis celebrat, timens seriolam vini aperire, acetum potat. Compita sunt loca in quadriviis, quasi turres, ubi sacrificia finita agricultura rustici celebrant. Merito pertusa, quia per omnes quattuor partes pateant, vel vetusta. Aut compita proprie a conpotando, id est simul bibendo, pertusa autem, quia pervius transitus est viris et feminis. Vel compita sunt non solum in urbe loca, sed etiam viae publicae ac diverticulae aliquorum confinium, ubi aediculae consecrantur patentes, ideo pertusa ad compita; in his fracta iuga ab agricolis ponuntur velut emeriti et elaborati operis indicium, sive quod omne instrumentum existiment sacrum. Vel compita dicuntur, ad quae plura itinera competunt. Quamvis rei divinae operatur: Nec sic tamen ab avaritia discedit: timetque dolium aperire diu servatum.* Calpurnius Siculus mentions *pervia compita*.⁷⁵ The structures described here were high (*quasi turres*) and had entrances on all sides (*pateant, pervia*).

A third kind of *compitum*, next to the *aediculae* and *pervia compita*, is found in Pompeii, where the *sacella* are often made up of no more than a painting and a masonry altar.⁷⁶

Finally the deities deserve our attention. The origin of the Lares Compitales has been hotly debated since the end of the last century, but the matter is still undecided. The discussion was started by Wissowa and Samter.⁷⁷ Samter regards the cult of the Lares as, originally, a cult of the dead, of the souls of ancestors. In his view it could be found at crossroads, because the intersections of roads were regarded in antiquity as the meeting places of the souls of the dead. Wissowa on the other hand claims that the Lares were deities of land which they protected. His view was taken up by

⁷⁴ Persius, *Saturae* 4, 28.

⁷⁵ Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogae* 4, 126.

⁷⁶ A description by Dolabella of shrines at the boundaries of estates has sometimes been related to the *compita*. It has however been pointed out that it does not mention *compita* or the Lares Compitales at all: *Fines templari sic quaeri debent, ut si in quadrifinio est positus et quattuor possessionibus finem faciet, quattuor aras quaeras, et aedes quattuor ingressus habeat ideo ut ad sacrificium quisquis per agrum suum intraret. Quod si desertum fuerit templum, aras sic quaeras: longe a templo quaeris pedibus XV, et invenis velut fundamenta aliqua. Quod si inter tres, tria ingressa, inter duos dua ingressa habet templum* (Dolabella, *Gromatici Veteres* 302, 20 to 303, 3, fig. 226 with Samter 1907, 369-371; Laing 1921, 135).

⁷⁷ The early steps in the discussion are: 1. Wissowa 1897(1), esp. 1888-1891; 2. Samter 1901, 105-123; 3. Wissowa 1904; 4. Samter 1907; 5. Wissowa 1912, 166-174. A summary: Böhm 1924, 821-826. See furthermore Warde Fowler 1906, Otto 1908, Warde Fowler 1920, Laing 1921, Vallois 1924, Tabeling 1932, Holland 1937, and more recently Palmer 1974, 115-117 and Bömer-Herz 1981, 56.

Holland, who, more specifically, calls the cult of the Lares Compitales a boundary cult, and remarks: "The *compita* in the city are set on district boundaries which only incidentally are streets".⁷⁸ A third proposal has been forwarded by Laing. He claims that the Lares were originally "a class of divinities the range of whose powers was not precisely defined in the minds of their worshippers. They were thought of 'en masse'". Later, epithets were attached to the Lares "indicating the special field in which they were supposed to operate". Thus the Lares Militares were "spirits that help in war", and the Lares Compitales "spirits that haunt the crossroads".⁷⁹

Whatever the right explanation, at least from the first century BC onwards the Lares Compitales were regarded both as the spirits of dead ancestors and as gods attached to land. Thus the *compita* are called *sepulcra heroum*,⁸⁰ but it is also said of the Lares Compitales: *arbitratur vulgus vicorum atque itinerum deos esse*.⁸¹

The feast of the Lares Compitales was called Compitalia. For these there was not a fixed date, they were *feriae conceptivae*. The feast is documented on December 31st, January 1st and January 2nd, related *ludi* are documented lasting from January 3rd to 5th. During the feast censuses may have been taken. Augustus ordained that the Lares Compitales were to be adorned twice a year with wreaths.⁸²

Augustus also introduced the cult of his own Lares and Genius at the *compita*, in Rome as part of the reorganization, witness many altars and inscriptions, but also outside Rome.⁸³ The Lares and Genius Augusti did not, however, drive out the other Lares completely. One of the Pompeian *compita* has a painting of two pairs of Lares, possibly the old and new deities.⁸⁴ In the same city the Lares Sanctos of a *compitum* were invoked by someone who appealed to passers-by: *(Per) Lares Sanctos rogo te ut [---]*.⁸⁵ In Ostia, on the altar on Piazza dei Lari, dated to after the Augustan

⁷⁸ Holland 1937, 436-437.

⁷⁹ Laing 1921, 136-137.

⁸⁰ Prudentius, *Contra Orationem Symmachi* 1, 190 with Wissowa 1897(1), 1869.

⁸¹ Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* 3, 41, with Böhm 1924, 819.

⁸² Wissowa 1897(1), 1872-1873; 1920(1); Harmon 1978, 1593-1595; Flambard 1981, 155-156; Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, Augustus 31: *Compitales Lares ornari bis anno instituit* (i.e. Augustus) *vernīs floribus et aestivis*.

⁸³ Outside Rome: Porphyrio on Horatius, *Saturae* 2, 3, 281 (text and commentary: § 2C). In two cases the Genius of a Pompeian *compitum* has been identified by Spinazzola as the Genius Augusti (§ 2A, Pompeii nrs. 18 and 19).

⁸⁴ § 2A, Pompeii nr. 18.

⁸⁵ CIL IV S III, 8426. Found at *compitum* 2 (§ 2a).

reorganization, we do not encounter Lares Compitales or Lares Augusti, but Lares Vicinales, Vicinis, or Viciniae.

2C Participants, organization

The cult at the *compita* was one of the *popularia sacra*, so that everybody living in the neighbourhood participated in it: *Popularia sacra sunt, ut ait Labeo, quae omnes cives faciunt, nec certis familiis attributa sunt: Fornacalia, Parilia, Laralia, Porca praecedanea.*⁸⁶ Wissowa has pointed out that by the Laralia the Compitalia are meant.⁸⁷

Before the Augustan reorganization the Lares Compitales were worshipped by officials called *magistri* and *ministri*: documented are *magistri vici* and *magistri vici et compiti*.⁸⁸ After the reorganization the Lares and Genius of the Emperor were worshipped in Rome by *magistri* and *ministri vici* - usually four *magistri* and four *ministri* -, who started their year of office on August 1st.⁸⁹ I do not know however of any Imperial *vicomagistri* outside Rome, with one exception, in Spolegium, where *seviri Aug(ustales) et compit(ales) Larum Aug. et mag(istri) vicorum* are enumerated.⁹⁰

Ross Taylor, discussing the situation in Pompeii, suggests that to the cult at the crossroads in this town should be related the *magistri Augustales* and *ministri Augusti*. She refers to a text which states: *Ab Augusto Lares, id est dii domestici, in compitis positi sunt et libertini sacerdotes dati, qui Augustales sunt adpellati*. Ross Taylor rightly remarks that this text cannot refer to Rome, because there the officials were called *magistri vici*, not Augustales. In her view the Pompeian *magistri Augustales* were the *Augustales* in the text.⁹¹ Furthermore, because the title *magistri Augustales* is not very frequent and rare after Augustus, she suggests that the title *magistri Larum Aug.*, found outside Pompeii, is another equivalent. The cult outside Rome would have been introduced at the end of the first century BC, because an inscription from Nepes in Etruria records *magistri Augustales primi* in 13-12 BC.⁹²

⁸⁶ Festus, De Significatione Verborum 253.

⁸⁷ Wissowa 1912, 171.

⁸⁸ Böhm 1924, 810; Accame 1942, 17-20; Niebling 1956, 306-307; Flambard 1977, 133-144; Flambard 1981, 159-161; Bömer-Herz 1981, 37-38, 43-47; Rome: CIL VI, 1324 (possibly from Rome; *magistri veici*); CIL VI, 2221 (*magistri de duobus pageis et Vicei Sulpicei*). Ostia: § 2A, cat. B nr. 6 (*magistri vici*). Pompeii: CIL IV, 60 (*magistri vici et compiti*).

⁸⁹ Gatti 1906; Degrassi 1935; Mancini 1935; Niebling 1956.

⁹⁰ The phenomenon was noted for Pompeii by Ross Taylor: Ross Taylor 1914; Ross Taylor 1920, 118-119 n. 7. The inscriptions from Spolegium: CIL XI, 4798.4815.4821.

⁹¹ See on the *magistri Augustales* and *ministri Augusti* also Duthoy 1978, especially 1287-1293, Kneissl 1980, and Mouritsen 1988, 92-94.

⁹² Ross Taylor 1914; Ross Taylor 1920, 118-119 n. 7; The text: Porphyrio on Horatius, Saturae 2, 3, 281. The inscription from Nepes: CIL XI, 3200 (cf. CIL XI, 3135, from Falerii). For Pompeian *magistri* and *ministri* see recently Bömer-Herz 1981, 105-109; Castrén 1975, 72-78, 119, 274-276;

The social status of the officials leading the cult has been analyzed in detail by Bömer and Flambard.⁹³ In the old, Republican days, sacrifices to the Lares were performed by both the masters and the slaves. This slowly changed, and already before the Augustan reorganization the role of the slaves and freedmen became more important. The social status of the officials was, as we have seen, fixed by Augustus outside Rome, and perhaps inside Rome as well. After the reorganization the *magistri* are freedmen,⁹⁴ the *ministri* slaves. As freedmen and slaves they could not be state officials, but as private people they were entrusted with the cult.⁹⁵ In Ostia three freedmen were involved with a *compitum* as *magistri* in the later first century BC, while a fourth freedman may have been *minister*.⁹⁶ Two or three freedmen were *magistri* in the first year of the Claudian *aedicula*.⁹⁷

Jongman 1988, 289-310.

⁹³ Bömer-Herz 1981, 32-56; Flambard 1981, 156-158. Cf. Wissowa 1897(1), 1873, 1875, 1880; Warde Fowler 1906; Warde Fowler 1920; Tabeling 1932, 60-62, 82-84; Holland 1937, 438-439.

⁹⁴ "... man darf annehmen, dass auch diese nicht lange vorher selbst Sklaven gewesen sind" (Bömer-Herz 1981, 46-47).

⁹⁵ Wissowa 1912, 171.

⁹⁶ § 2A, cat. B nr. 6.

⁹⁷ § 2A, cat. B nr. 4. Two certain freedmen. The third name is *L. Seius* [...] *Hermeros*. Bloch has remarked, that only two letters are missing, and that a possible completion is *l(ibertus)*.