



Ancient Rome

The Archaeology of the Eternal City

*edited by
Jon Coulston and Hazel Dodge*

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~~'If you wished to estimate the size of Rome by looking at the suburbs, you will necessarily be misled for want of a definite idea by which to determine up to what point it is still city and where it ceases to be city giving the beholder the impression of a city stretching out indefinitely'.~~

Dionysius of Harlicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 4.13-15

'The barbarians....can be left in peace, their part in the destruction of Rome being hardly worth considering when compared with the guilt of others. By "others" I mean the Romans themselves, of the Imperial, Byzantine, Mediaeval, and Renaissance periods.'

R. Lanciani, *The Destruction of Ancient Rome*, London, 1899, 9.

'Yet at the centre of the metropolis, hemmed in by an ever-expanding ring of gruesome suburban estates, the dream of a grand and tranquil civilisation could still become fleeting reality. There are capitals more efficient, more cosmopolitan than Rome; there are cities with brighter nightlife, better bookstores, superior theatres, more efficient telephones, more industrious bank clerks, less traffic and fewer thieves of all kinds. None, however, can ever grant the human heart the subtle and infusing pleasure that you find here.'

M. Sheridan, *Romans. Their Lives and Times*, London, 1994, 243.

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Table of Contents

Title Page

Copyright Page

List of Contributors

Editors' Preface

Preface: A Bird's-Eye View

1. Introduction: the archaeology and topography of Rome

2. Early and Archaic Rome

3. The City of Rome in the Middle Republic (c. 400–100 BC)

4. The Moral Museum: Augustus and the City of Rome

5. 'Armed and belted men': the soldiery in imperial Rome

6. Building the Eternal City: the construction industry of imperial Rome

7. The Feeding of Imperial Rome: The Mechanics of the Food Supply System

8. 'Greater than the Pyramids': the Water Supply of Ancient Rome

9. Entertaining Rome

10. Living and Dying in the City of Rome: houses and tombs

11. Religions of Rome

12. Lost Glories? Rome at the End of Empire

13. Back to the Future: Archaeology and Innovation in the Building of Roma Capitale

Appendix: Sources for the Study of Ancient Rome

Abbreviations

Research Bibliography for the City of Rome

Index

Editors' Preface

This book comprises chapters on different aspects of the city's development and history and is based on the most up-to-date original research by leading experts in the field. The idea for the volume originated in a conference on the City of Rome, held at Rewley House in Oxford (November 1993). However, the object of the exercise was never to produce mere conference proceedings, but to assemble a series of chronological and thematic studies which together provide an integrated view of Rome's archaeology. The project has taken many years to mature, but as a result it has been possible to coincide both with celebration of the millennium and the completion of the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*. The former has led to a massive amount of new archaeological work in the city, which in due course will create a wave of new publications. The *Lexicon* is a truly monumental achievement of Margareta Steinby and her collaborators which permeates this volume.

As with any project of this kind, debts are owed to many. We would like to thank the contributors, most of who spoke at the original conference, for their patience and cheerful co-operation in the production of this book. Help, support and advice was freely given by both our Departments and we would particularly like to thank Brian McGing and Christine Morris (Trinity College Dublin), and Christopher Smith and Greg Woolf (St Andrews). Thanks are due to Maggie Herdman and the Department for Continuing Education, Oxford University, for hosting the original conference. Barry Cunliffe has been very supportive on behalf of the Committee for Archaeology, Oxford University.

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Last but by no means least, Peter Wiseman read and commented on the overall manuscript at a late stage and contributed his delightful introduction to the book.

Jon Coulston

Hazel Dodge

September 2000

Preface: A Bird's-Eye View

T. P. Wiseman

'How great Rome was, her very ruins tell.' *Roma quanta fuit ipsa ruina docet*—but the medieval proverb no longer applies. Rome has become great again, or at least big, in the modern style of urban sprawl and air pollution. That, however, in the time-scale of the proverbially eternal city, is a very recent phenomenon. The thirteen centuries of papal Rome, which fall between the last two chapters in this book, saw a city which never outgrew, or even filled, the space enclosed by Aurelian's wall. The wall was last used for defence, and last breached by an invader, on 20 September 1870, only five generations ago.

A remarkable photograph taken about 1910 (Fig. 1) preserves the moment when the impact of modernisation was just beginning to be visible; the quintessentially modern medium of air photography shows us the Rome of Henry James. It is an image which neatly encapsulates the chronological span of this book. To the north-west [1], development of the Prati—the meadows between the Vatican and the Tiber—is proceeding behind the great square bulk of the Palazzo di Giustizia, completed in 1910 (*Petter 346, Fig. 13.20*). About four miles upstream [2], the point where the meanders of the Tiber turn south-west marks the site of 'fortified Antemnae' (fig. 2; Virgil *Aeneid* 7.631), Rome's nearest Iron-Age neighbour, supposedly conquered and colonised by Romulus.

Let us explore this Rome of 1910. Coming, like good Anglo-Saxons, from the north, we cross the river at Ponte Molle [3], the Milvian Bridge where Constantine defeated Maxentius and his praetorians (*Coulston 99*) in 312 and saw the fateful sign in the sky. The road that leads to the city in that bold straight line is the Via Flaminia, built in 220 BC, and rebuilt by Augustus, to take Rome's armies to the Adriatic and the north. At the time of the photograph, it was

a tramwayed suburban street delightfully encumbered with wide-horned oxen drawing heavy wagon-loads of grain, donkeys pulling carts laden with vegetables, and children and hens and dogs playing their several parts in a perspective through which one would like to continue indefinitely. (Howells 1908, 147)

The moment is precisely defined: modernity is the tramway, and the immemorial ox-carts (*comp. Delaine Fig. 6.11*) are not yet motorised.

The first bridge, the new Ponte Margherita (named for Italy's first queen), marks the line of Aurelian's wall. Inside the gate, at Piazza del Popolo (*Coleman 214, Fig. 9.4*), Flaminius' road becomes the Via del Corso. It continues dead straight to Piazza Venezia, identifiable by the bright neoclassical General Insurance Building, completed in 1907. The Monument to Vittorio Emanuele (*Petter 344, Fig. 13.17*) is still mostly under scaffolding and therefore mercifully unobtrusive. The dark foliage

below to the left is the garden of Palazzo Caffarelli, on the site of the Capitoline temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (Smith 27). Directly to the east, at the edge of the photograph [4], is the Roman Forum.



Fig. 1: 'Rome and the Tiber: from an airship'. Cervesato 1913, 258. The numbers are keyed in the text emboldened in square brackets.

More clearly visible [5] is the Quirinal Palace, seat of the popes until 1870 and thereafter of the kings, and then presidents, of united Italy. It is named after the hill of Quirinus, god of the Quirites, the Roman citizen body. Above that [6], more new development: the smart hotels of Via Veneto on what used to be the Villa Ludovisi, and before that the imperial Horti Sallustiani (Patterson 263). Aurelian's wall still defines the city. The Porta Pinciana, vainly attacked by Vitigis' Goths in AD 537 (Christie 323), is where the ancient Via Salaria, the 'salt way' older than Rome itself, came up from the Tiber flood-plain to cross the high ground before descending to the Anio valley at Antemnae (Fig 2). Conspicuous to the left, in splendid isolation, stands the Villa Medici, on the site of Lucullus' gardens (Patterson 263), where the empress Messalina met her wretched end in AD 48.

Now let us take another walk, this time from the south. At the bottom left [7], the street grid for the Testaccio district is being laid out. The second line of blocks in from the river marks the site of the Porticus Aemilia (Cornell 51, [Figs. 3.8, 3.9](#)). To the right, the Aventine cliff is shaded by the morning sun, making invisible one of the surviving stretches of the fourth-century BC republican city wall ([Fig. 2](#); Cornell 45, [Fig. 3.1](#)). A minor gate led to a street that has never gone out of use [8], called Via del Priorato at the time the photograph was taken. Going up past the new Benedictine seminary of S. Anselmo, built in 1900, we turn right on to another Roman-medieval-modern street, Via di S. Sabina. The fifth-century church itself (Christie 320, and [Fig. 12.3](#)) is on the left, by a little piazza with a park beyond. Then we go down to the right on the line of the Clivus Publicius, built by the plebeian aedile in 241 BC, to where the starting-gates of the Circus Maximus stood (Coleman 211). In 1910, the site occupied by the Rome gasworks. Just beyond [9], the trees and the new path for tourists mark the western corner of the Palatine, site of the eighth-century BC hut village (Smith 23, [Fig. 2.5](#)), and also of the Lupercal, where the flooded Tiber deposited the twins for the she-wolf to suckle. The house of Augustus and his temple of Apollo (Walker 62–63, [Fig. 4.1](#)) are just beyond the edge of the picture.



Fig. 2: Map of the environs of Rome with the 'Servian Wall' indicated.

Now look left, at this level, to the bridge below the island (Ponte Rotto, replacing the Roman Pons Aemilius). The riverside buildings have been cleared for the new *lungotevere* embankment, which enables us to see the rectangular second-century BC temple of Portunus (*Cornell 49, and Fig. 3.3*). Now up to the left along the embankment: opposite the island, just a little away from the river, are the trees of the garden of Palazzo Corsini, built into the Theatre of Marcellus (*Walker 63, Fig. 4.3; Coleman 223, Figs. 9.6, 9.7*). To the left again, the new Synagogue (1874) stands out, and beyond it the redevelopment of the demolished Ghetto. Due north from that, in the middle of the medieval

Campo Marzio—and probably used by the photographer as his central focus—is the great dome of Hadrian’s Pantheon. Due north again, at the narrowest point between the Tiber and the Corso, is what looks like another, smaller, dome. In fact, it is the roof of the concert hall that was built in 1907 on top of Augustus’ Mausoleum (*Walker* 69, *Figs. 4.8, 4.9*).

One last item may be pointed out. It is due west of the Pantheon, but easiest to find by crossing the river from the Palazzo di Giustizia. The bridge—named after King Umberto I, assassinated in July 1900—leads via a broad new street to the top end of Piazza Navona, that jewel of Baroque Rome which preserves the shape of Domitian’s stadium (*Coleman* 241–242, *Fig. 9.18*). The Borromini church of Sant’Agnese in Agone stands where the virgin Agnes was martyred in the great persecution of AD 303, while Bernini’s fountain of the rivers, visible on the photograph, features an obelisk transferred by Pope Innocent X from the Circus of Maxentius (*Coleman* 99), but originally brought to Rome by Domitian himself for the Isis sanctuary in the Campus Martius (*Price* 298, *Figs. 11.5 and 11.7*).

Wherever you look, the palimpsest shows through. Rome is a marvel, and the expert authors of this book have vividly illuminated the life of the city in the first thirteen hundred years of its history. Read carefully, and you will find the seven million man-days it took to build the Baths of Caracalla, the nine million porter-loads per year of grain, oil and wine to feed the city, the forty or fifty metric tons of human waste sent down the Cloaca Maxima every day. How great Rome was, not ruins only but statistics tell.

August 2000

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1. Introduction: the archaeology and topography of Rome

Jon Coulston and Hazel Dodge

Throughout her history Rome has been a centre of power, on a small scale initially, but steadily growing to form an empire which, for the first and last time, unified the Mediterranean world. In economic terms the influence of Rome eventually encompassed the whole of Eurasia and northern Africa. The city as consumer of mass imports (foods, water, luxuries, slaves, animals, building materials and people) grew physically in both extent and architectural complexity. Evolving building materials and techniques acted as a barometer of wealth and territorial power. The earliest structures, the huts on the Palatine (Figs. 1.1, 2.5), left only the negative imprint of sunken floors and post-holes but requirement for larger sacred and public buildings led to the use of less perishable inorganic materials, terracotta and local tufa stones (Smith, Cornell in this volume). These began to seriously impact the archaeological record, and an increasing range of stones reflected spreading control of the Tevere (Tiber) valley and Latium (Gabian, Alban and Veian tufas; DeLaine in this volume). Hellenising cultural influences from southern Italy and further east placed a premium on hard, white stones for buildings with fine sculptural detail (white-plastered tufa, travertine, eventually marble). Finally, under the emperors, the stone resources of the whole Mediterranean and its hinterlands were organised for exploitation in a polychrome display, which consciously emphasised territorial power and technical achievement.¹ There was inflationary competition between emperors and their predecessors in the provision of public amenities, such as baths or games, on an ever-increasing scale and level of luxury (Dodge, Coleman in this volume). Hand in hand with the need for buildings of increasing size to serve an ever-growing population was the development of concrete (*opus caementicium*) as a building material. This employed economic, mass-producible local resources in efficient, durable, vaulted structures (DeLaine in this volume).

Ancient Rome was certainly a huge urban development for any pre-industrial society to maintain, and modern scholars have tried every means to quantify her scale. Population has been calculated using overall area, built up and open space hectareage, funerary inscription statistics, and comparative modern population densities. Ancient figures for numbers of domestic dwellings by type (*domus* and *insula*), corn-dole recipients, and quantities of corn imports have all been pressed into service. Thus it has been postulated that up to 1,200,000 people lived in Rome at her 1st–2nd century AD height.² However, every method of calculation and set of statistics runs into problems. The most fundamental is that the modern desire to quantify Rome's scale uses evidence provided by an ancient society which had no real necessity for, nor ability to achieve, exactitude. Figures were quoted in the sources precisely to express magnitude, to reflect glory on the metropolis, or to laud the beneficent patron. Thus, the 4th century AD Regionary Catalogues presented statistics, which appear authoritative through their very detail (see Appendix). Nevertheless, close examination reveals them to have been

unusable for any 'official', administrative purpose, such as feeding or policing the city, or maintaining the urban fabric. The arithmetic is sloppy, with numbers spelt out in detail not tallying with quoted totals.³ Rather, these figures reflect the scale of Rome taking on a life of its own, drawing in the wonder and awe of observers by its sheer quantity of statues, temples, basilicas, theatres, amphitheatres, circuses, streets, houses, mansions, military bases, aqueducts, baths, fountains, warehouses, bakeries, cemeteries, and even public lavatories, churches, and brothels.⁴

When the economic tide receded from the 3rd century AD onwards, the urban fabric remained for future generations to live in, adapt, and continue to marvel at. The skeletons of massive buildings, their original functions often forgotten, remained to constantly remind of past glories and to provide language for expressing present and future aspirations. The transformation of Rome into a christian capital during the 4th century ensured her a continuing central place in medieval and modern history, and continuing patronage by a series of rulers concerned with a world stage.⁵ The 'idea' of Rome has been employed through epigraphy, numismatics, art and architecture to strengthen and project the successive regimes of Late Roman and Byzantine emperors, popes, Holy Roman Emperors and other western monarchs, secular local governments, Italian kings, a fascist dictator, and the post-war Italian republic.⁶ Rome, like an animal in hibernation living on stored resources, has always fed on herself for inspiration and physical means. The millions of tons of stone imported by the ancient emperors were thereafter available for recycling into churches, *palazzi* and other monuments. The thousands of inscriptions and artworks were there to be collected and emulated.⁷

Underlying and channelling this urban development are the fundamentals of geology, geomorphology and topography that are now rather difficult to envisage in the presence of the modern city. Much work has been done on hilltop and valley geology, dominated by volcanic deposits and fluvial erosion (Fig. 1.2).⁸ Indeed, the action of the Tiber and its tributary streams is critical to the city's location (Dodge in this volume). Erosion of the Esquiline plateau created a series of peninsulas and linked or isolated hills, divided by steep-sided valleys, which open out onto the flood plain. The Palatine Hill was small enough to be defended at an early date but large enough for a growing community (Smith in this volume). The Capitoline Hill was suitably small and defensible for it to subsequently become the acropolis of the expanded regal city. The Tiber Island provided the lowest fording-point above the mouth of the river and an overland line of communication between Etruria to the north-west and Latium and Hellenized Campania to the south-east. The river valley facilitated movement up into the Apennines, particularly commerce in salt from the coastal pans.⁹ Thus the city was locally well placed with regard to communications and trade. It was also on a cultural frontier between Etruscans, Faliscans and Latins. The local geology provided soft tufas for building and volcanic sands for mortars (DeLaine in this volume). The geologically ancient volcanoes close by in South Etruria and the Colli Albani, and the more recent eruptions further afield in Campania, ensure that not only the past but the present city is periodically rocked by earthquakes, as in AD 1980 (Fig. 1.2).¹⁰

Until the late 19th and early 20th century canalisation of the Tevere, the river dominated the life of the city, not least because of perennial flooding of the low-lying areas.¹¹ The Campo Marzio (Campus Martius, *Mezza Luna*) was particularly vulnerable when the Apennine snows melted (Fig. 1.2). At this time the river increased its rate of flow in a comparatively straight stretch to the north, then turned virtually ninety degrees to the west to pass round the meander core. The weight of water would burst over the bank flooding the flat area south of the turn. These inundations caused destruction of buildings and the spread of disease. They also resulted in a steady deposition of riverine silt which,

together with erosion from the hillsides and deposition in the valleys, raised the ground-level steadily over the city's history. This continuous depositional process is especially obvious in the Campo Marzio and is reflected in the observable depth of archaeological excavations. For example, the temples in the Largo Argentina were steadily overtaken by successive levels of paving from the early 3rd century BC to the later 1st century AD (Fig. 1.3). By the Hadrianic period the Augustan Ara Pacis sat in a pit, whilst the Augustan Horologium meridian paving required a 'facelift' around the same time.¹² The post-Roman build-up of material is extraordinary, comparing, for example, the modern ground level with the ancient surface around the Tomb of Hirtius under the Palazzo della Cancelleria.¹³

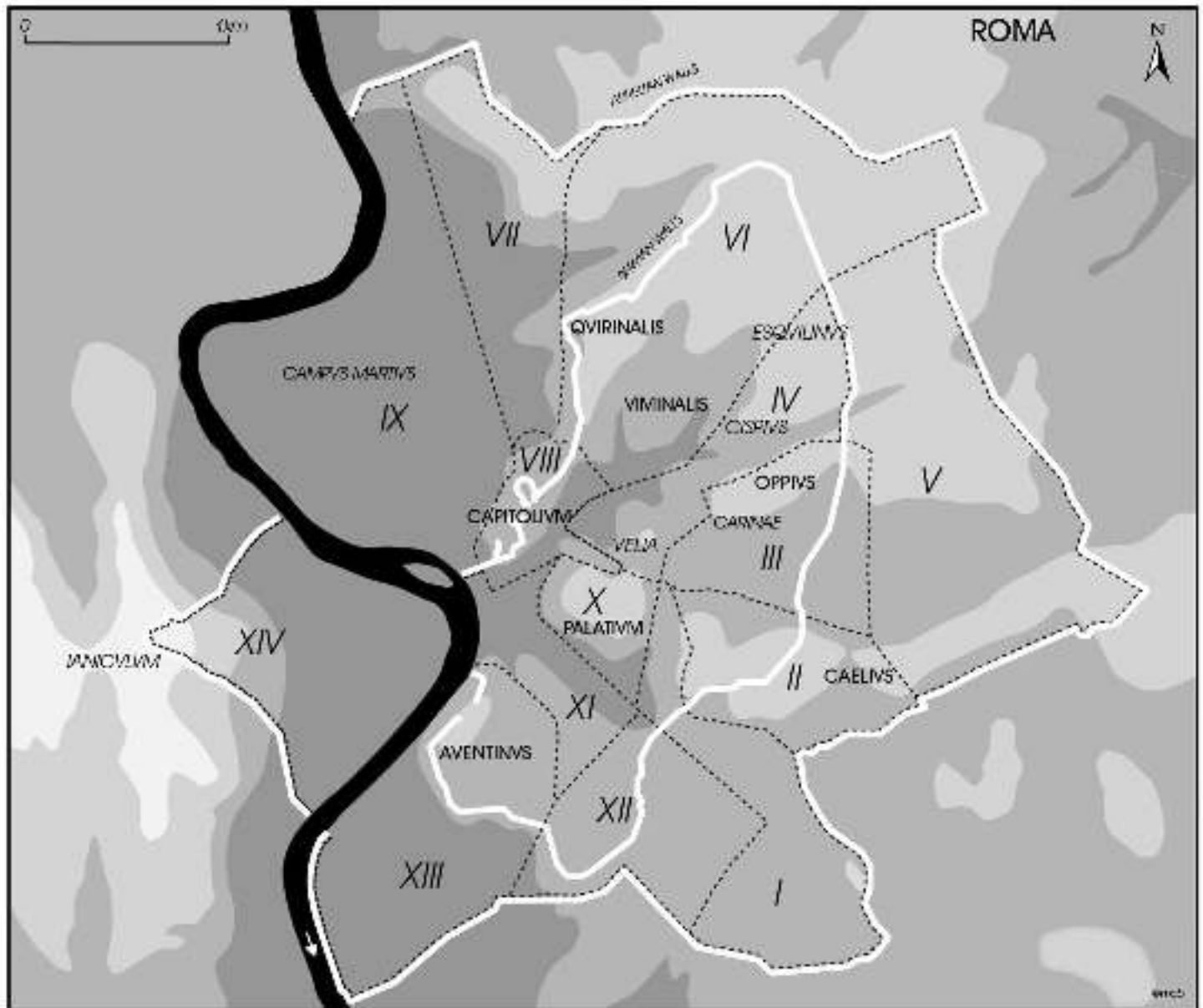


Figure 1.1: Map of Rome showing topography and main toponyms. The names of the Regiones are I Palatium, II Caelimontium, III Isis et Serapis, IV Templum Pacis, V Esquiliae, VI Alta Semita, VII Alta Semita, VIII Forum Romanum, IX Circus Flaminius, X Palatium, XI Circus Maximus, XII Piscina Publica, XIII Aventinus, XIV Trans Tiberim.

Elsewhere a combination of hill-wash and successive building activities has buried successive generations of building on the same site, as at S. Clemente in the valley south-east of the

Colosseum.¹⁴ Continuous building and levelling of sites, especially work on a large engineering scale under the emperors, often modified the morphology of hills and valleys, flattening hilltops and terracing out over their sides to increase horizontal building space. In the process earlier structures were incorporated as revetting and thus preserved, as in the cases of the republican buildings under the Palatine palaces, the Domus Aurea under the Baths of Trajan, and the Hadrianic house under the Baths of Caracalla, all with surviving wall-paintings.¹⁵ In places this has created veritable man-made cliffs as on the north-east side of the Palatine.¹⁶ One particularly famous and graphic example of human geomorphing is the cutting back of the Quirinal Hill to form a site for the Forum and Markets of Trajan, as celebrated in the inscription on Trajan's Column (*CIL* 6.960; [Fig. 1.4](#)). Elsewhere, the effect has been to smooth out and soften the topography, a process greatly accelerated by the development of open areas within the walls after 1870. The combination of fluvial deposition and human building activity has created an 'underground' Rome (*Roma Sotterranea*) of deep, excavated sites. Added to these are the ancient structures that were originally subterranean, such as cisterns, sewers, *mithraea* (Price in this volume), and of course catacombs.¹⁷ Thus a uniquely deep, rich and well preserved structural record exists in Rome.

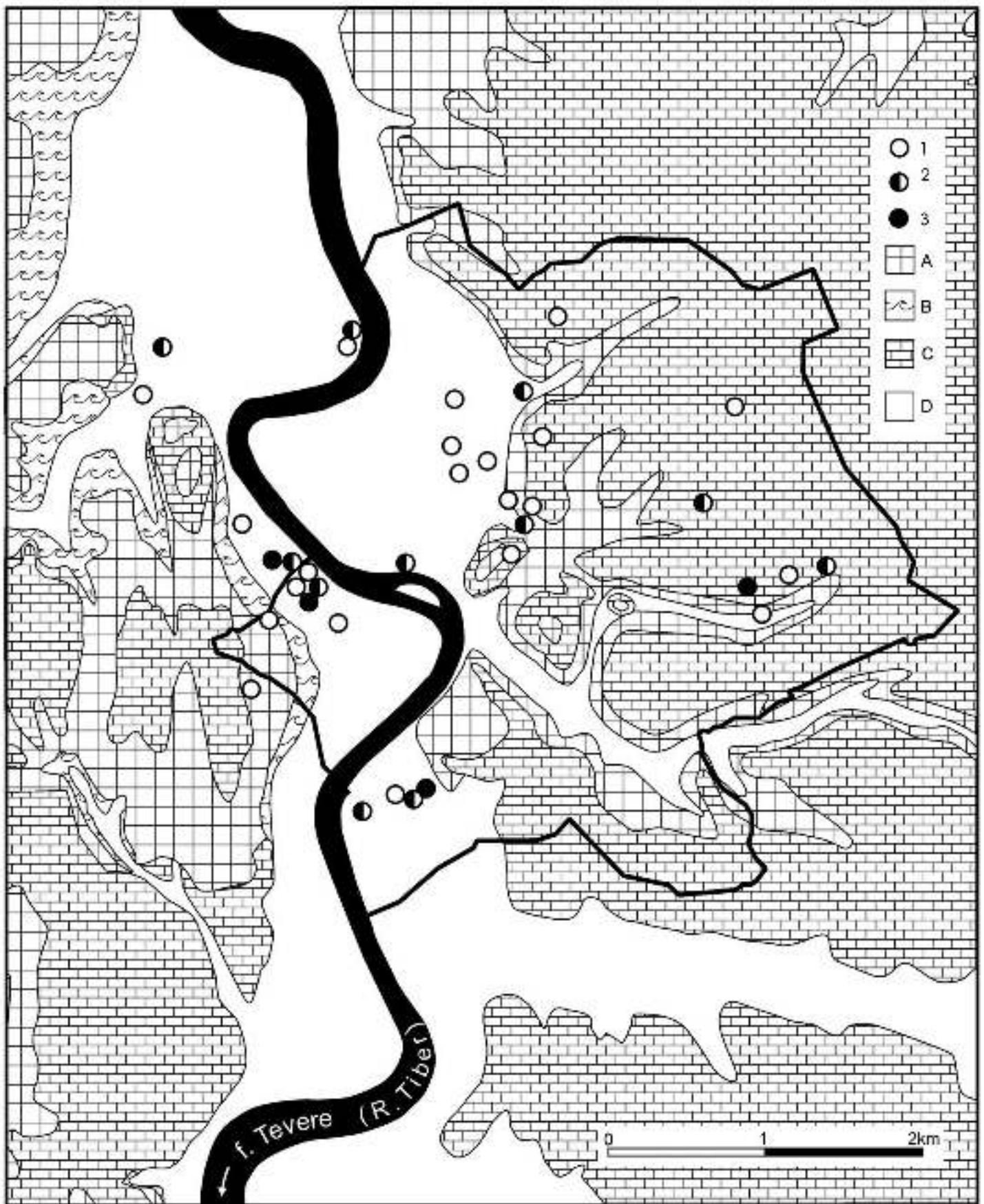


Figure 1.2: Map of Rome showing geological features and AD 1980 earthquake damage (after Benevolo and Scoppola 1988). Key: 1 light earthquake damage, 2 intermediate damage, 3 heavy damage; A volcanic material, B blue clay, C continental and transitional facies comprising the ‘fluvio-lacustrine’ and ‘marshy’ formations, and the ‘complex of clays, sands, and gravels’, D alluvium.



Figure 1.3: Largo Argentina Temple C. Successive periods of paving levels looking SW (Photo: authors).

Another agent of destruction, but also of renewal, was fire in the ancient city. The great fire of AD 64 was only the most famous and most destructive of many. For example, fires swept through the central Campo Marzio in AD 80 and the Forum Romanum area in AD 191 and 283.¹⁸ Most were accidental and were followed by major rebuilding activities. On a few occasions there was deliberate destruction, as when the Curia formed the funeral pyre of P. Clodius Pulcher in 52 BC, or when buildings on the Capitol were burnt during the Civil War fighting of AD 69. There were few actual sackings of Rome by external enemies during her long history that potentially damaged the whole city: by the Gauls in c.390 BC, by Visigoths in AD 410, and by Vandals in 455 (Cornell, Christie in this volume).¹⁹ Saracen destruction in 846 only really affected areas outside the walls, such as the Vatican and S. Paolo. Norman damage in 1084 was inflicted chiefly on outlying churches within the walls (e.g. SS. Quattro Coronati, S. Clemente). In 1527 Imperial troops concentrated on churches and *palazzi*, leaving the ancient buildings relatively untouched.²⁰

Notwithstanding these sacks, Rome's security was generally successfully ensured throughout her history by a strongly constructed series of defences. Circuits first enclosed the Palatine, and later included the Capitoline, Esquiline and Caelian Hills.²¹ This latter enclosed the city sacked by the Gauls. Following this event, the new 'Servian Wall' perhaps followed the same line as before and reusing earlier defences, but further enclosed the Aventine Hill (11 km, 6.5 mls; 400 ha, 1000 ac). It was built of tufa ashlar in Hellenistic style (Cornell in this volume). This circuit saw off Hannibal and remained in use until defences were no longer required in the 1st century BC. Thereafter Rome's shield was her provincial armies. However, in the AD 270s it was judged that the city again required defences, particularly because of barbarian pressures on the northern frontiers. The new 'Aurelian Wall' was constructed of brick-faced concrete in metropolitan style, reusing and incidentally preserving earlier structures along its line and recycling large quantities of brick. It was required to enclose the much expanded imperial city (19 km, 11 mls; 375 ha, 3393 ac) and represented the single largest building project ever undertaken in the city's history (see Christie in this volume). It also enclosed considerable areas of gardens (*horti*) which forever after remained open space, or at least



Figure 1.4: View of Trajan's Column and the Basilica Ulpia, looking WNW (Photo: authors).

The main problem in the medieval period was that a shrinking population without a standing defence force had difficulty in manning the immense Aurelian Wall circuit.²³ With the development of gunpowder artillery, an attacker's most efficient approach was to assault the papal defences to the west on the Gianicolo (ancient Janiculum Hill) front and then dominate the city with his guns. This is what happened in 1527 and when the French attacked in support of the pope in 1849.²⁴ The last time the Aurelian Wall was defended was by papal troops in 1870; there was some bombardment damage inflicted by the Italian royal army but only a token resistance at *La Breccia* beside Porta Pia (Petter in this volume).

Through the medieval period the population and its area of habitation contracted into the Campo Marzio and a few other centres (the *abitato*), leaving a zone of gardens, orchards and ruins within the walls (the *disabitato*).²⁵ Yet the city was a great pilgrimage centre with perennial influxes of people. The diplomatic, territorial and spiritual importance of the papacy, and the concentration of saints' shrines ensured major patronage of new building construction. This resulted in waves of church-building and decoration, notably in the Carolingian and 12th century renaissances.²⁶ Through much of the period local élite families and the papacy struggled over papal elections, city government and the interventions of European monarchs. Many of the larger ancient buildings still stood as concrete skeletons, stripped of their marble decoration (and often even their facings of reusable brick). Some were preserved by conversion into churches, some through their value as fortresses in the embattled city,²⁷ and a few because of their revenue potential.²⁸ Their marble went into churches, tombs, *palazzi* and other monuments. Alternatively it was burnt for lime and huge amounts of limestone and geologically 'true' marbles disappeared in this way to make mortar for medieval constructions. This has meant that other stones, principally breccias, granites and porphyries, have an artificially high profile in the surviving corpus of ancient imports.²⁹

Like the building of churches in the city, study of Rome's past has gone in waves of endeavour and

wider European interest. Excavation through the medieval and early modern periods was rather haphazard.³⁰ However, the acquisition and preservation of ancient artworks (albeit often with confusing ‘restorations’) by renaissance popes, cardinals, monarchs and aristocrats, established collections in the 15th–17th centuries which have acted as foci for subsequent research.³¹ The rise of encyclopedism and categorisation in the 18th century led to typological study and wider publication for a readership that was increasingly mobile, made up partly as it was of Grand Tourists. This rationalism of the European Enlightenment was rather bluntly expressed in the excavation and recording of buildings during the Napoleonic regime in Rome (1809–14).³² The 19th century saw the formalisation of antiquities institutions under papal rule and the flowering of studies in *Roma Sotteranea*, particularly with regard to the christian catacombs.³³

Roman urban archaeology was transformed by the establishment of the city as the capital of a ‘unified’ Italy in 1870 (Petter in this volume). The growth in population expanded the *abitato* out to, and beyond, the Aurelian Wall. Some areas of the *disabitato* were built over for the very first time. The need for grandiose new government buildings and planned infrastructure combined with the relative speed of construction resulted in a major impact on archaeological resources, an acceleration of archaeological ‘rescue’ work, and a proliferation of new artefacts and data.³⁵ To this period belong some of the great finds of bronze statuary, such as the seated boxer, found on the Teatro Drammatico site (Via Nazionale, 1885).³⁶ Technology, resources and political will came together in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to solve at last the age-old problem of seasonal Tevere flooding. The new travertine embankments both killed off river traffic (in common with earlier developments in London and Paris) and revealed the archaeology of ancient river-front wharves, warehouses and imperishable imports (Mattingly and Aldrete in this volume).³⁷ Development of the Stazione di Termini revealed a large area of housing and one of the best preserved sections of the ‘Servian Wall’.³⁸ The large-scale excavation of set-piece sites, such as the Forum Romanum, coupled with legislation to protect the ancient urbanscape, resulted in the creation of a great archaeological park (*passaggiato archeologico*) stretching from the city centre out into the Campagna along the Via Appia.³⁹ Although the area excavated in the Forum was large, there was a diachronic approach to recording and some developing appreciation of stratigraphic study. Both were perhaps not again attained until the 1970s.

Extremely fortuitously, the development of photography occurred just early enough specifically to record the events of 1849, but more generally to preserve the appearance of Rome before 1870. The gradual unveiling of the ancient city may be followed in sepia tone through the work of such early observers as Gioacchino Altobelli, Robert MacPherson and John Henry Parker.⁴⁰ Aerial photographs first from balloons, later from early aeroplanes, can be studied both for the whole city and for the small detail of individual sites, such as the Forum Romanum excavations. These follow closely on from the age-old tradition of maps and views (*vedute*) of Rome.⁴¹

The Rome which people have experienced since the Second World War is very much a product of fascist government planning. Indeed, the impact of Mussolini’s regime may be directly compared with the period 1870–1914 and the establishment of *Roma Capitale*. Fascist obsession with the ancient city affected the archaeology in many ways. On one hand old, long-known sites, such as the Imperial Forum and the Mausoleum of Augustus were cleared, the latter having passed through the various guises of imperial burial vault, medieval fortress, garden complex, bull-ring and music hall.⁴² On the other hand new sites were discovered, such as the S. Omobono temples in the Forum Holitorium.⁴³ There was a great emphasis on linking fascist urban renewal with the activities of Augustus, even down to the plentiful use of travertine in new buildings. The newly excavated sites were all tidied up with a

surround of travertine bollards, visually marking them out as regime achievements. Monumental fascist inscriptions were set up not just on the new edifices which replaced medieval structures that had been torn down (e.g. on the office-block in the Forum Holitorium), but also on ancient constructions, such as those still extant on the Theatre of Marcellus and the Markets of Trajan.

An enlarged Piazza Venezia was created by removal of the Palazzetto Venezia. This formed a hub of fascist spectacle extending ceremonial already focussed on the Vittoriano. It also allowed large public rallies to hear Il Duce's speeches, which were delivered from the Palazzo Venezia balcony in conscious emulation of papal presentation.⁴⁴ For the review of parades a new, fascist 'Via Triumphalis' was laid out between the Piazza Venezia and the Colosseum (Via del Impero/Via dei Fori Imperiali). This echoed the ancient triumphal route but could not follow the traditional line over the saddle between Velia and Palatine, under the Arch of Titus and down the Via Sacra, without remodelling and partly destroying the *zona archeologica*.⁴⁵ Thus an ambitious plan was formulated to cut an approximately parallel route through, and largely remove, the Velian Hill. In the process of execution (completed 1932) republican and imperial period houses were revealed, hastily recorded in plans and photographs, and destroyed. All evidence of a hilltop 'village', similar to that known on the western corner of the Palatine, was lost forever. The back of the Basilica of Maxentius, the platform of the Temple of Venus and Rome and the foundations of Neronian Domus Aurea buildings were isolated. To facilitate the marching of troops up the Via di S. Gregorio and past, or under, the Arch of Constantine, the Meta Sudans was demolished (1936).⁴⁶ North-west of the Velia the flat area of the Imperial Fora (the medieval Campo Torreggiato⁴⁷) was cleared of churches and houses to form the main avenue and parks on either side. This 'landscaping' went hand-in-hand with archaeological work, principally the rapid clearance of parts of the Fora of Caesar, Augustus, Nerva and Trajan, and the 'disengagement' of the Curia Iulia from its guise as S. Adriano.⁴⁸

Another road-clearance project extending out from the Piazza Venezia involved opening up the present Piazza Aracoeli and driving through a line south to join up with the Lungotevere. The result was Via del Teatro di Marcello cut a swathe through crowded medieval buildings and opened up the Forum Holitorium and Forum Boarium. In the process various ancient sites were excavated and/or 'isolated', including the Theatre of Marcellus, the Forum Boarium and Forum Holitorium temples, and the S. Omobono precinct.⁴⁹

Elsewhere in the city fascist planners and archaeologists carried out smaller-scale projects, such as the excavation of the curved end of the Stadium of Domitian and the clearance and restoration of part of a temple in the Via delle Botteghe Oscure. Monastic and other medieval buildings were swept away to reveal the four temples of the Largo Argentina.⁵⁰ More ambitiously, the Mausoleum of Augustus was cleared and patched up with the important discovery of imperial funerary inscriptions, but this was still deemed insufficient to link regime, monument and Augustan identity. The whole area was therefore turned into a fascist square (Piazza di Augusto Imperatore) and surrounded on two sides with colonnaded buildings in monumental fascist style with dedicatory inscriptions. The Ara Pacis, apogee of Augustan commemoration, was rebuilt using the original fragments in its present position on the west side of the piazza.⁵¹

Clearance of buildings to make way for public spaces and for broad, straight new roads was not a new experience in the city. Popes Julius II and Sixtus V had similarly left their marks on the south-west Campo Marzio and the *disabitato* respectively.⁵² Royal Rome saw the removal and even movement of buildings in the layout of roads, notably along the Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, and massive destruction of ancient, medieval and renaissance buildings on the site of the Vittorio

Emanuele Monument (Petter in this volume). However, it was the far more grandiloquent scale of fascist clearance, and the motives behind it, which distinguished it from earlier activities. Fascist archaeology was carried out in great haste with concern only for the final presentation of the monument. This had various results. Firstly, only one main period was investigated with evidence for subsequent occupation being destroyed and ignored unless it was very substantial. Thus the post-imperial structural history of the Fora of Augustus and Trajan is largely lost. Elsewhere, the *campaniletto* and frescoed apse of S. Biagio al Mercato/S. Rita were retained after clearance of the *insula* building below the Aracoeli steps. However, much might have been learned about how a 2nd century AD residential block evolved structurally into a Romanesque church complex.⁵³ As a result of such disdain for post-imperial evidence, the study of early medieval Rome is still in its infancy, despite major leaps forward in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁴ The speed of fascist work also went naturally with poor recording, and many sites were never published. It has been left to recent scholars to attempt coherent publication from fragmentary archives, for example, of the Largo Argentina temple and the Forum of Trajan.⁵⁵

The post-war renaissance of Rome as a centre of European culture and world heritage has seen many changes in the archaeology of the city and in the methodologies applied by archaeologists, both native and foreign. The spread of the Metropolitana has affected individual sites (Coulston [Fig. 5.9](#)). Construction of the outer ring-road (Grande Raccordo Anulare) has transformed the field of prehistoric archaeology (Smith in this volume).⁵⁶ In the early 1980s a new concern for reform galvanized the study and treatment of Rome's past, commencing with the plan for excavation, renovation and museum renewal advocated by the Soprintendente, Adriano La Regina. The effects of acid rain pollution on marble monuments became a prime focus.⁵⁷ Thus the 1980s will be remembered as the decade of monuments shrouded in scaffolding and green netting. This period had revolutionary impact on the understanding of ancient art and architecture because scholars were able to study monuments nose-to-nose, rather than just through engravings, photographs and binoculars.⁵⁸ The removal and cleaning of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius symbolised the new methods. There has been a wave of exemplary new publications that primarily study ancient technique based on a philosophy of detailed data recording.⁵⁹ Whilst the full import of this work is still being digested, a new impetus (and a new generation of scaffolding) is being felt in Rome, largely as a result of both state and church taking the millennium (*Giubileo*) year seriously. Major new excavations have been undertaken, notably in the Imperial Fora on either side of the Via dei Fori Imperiali ([Fig. 1.5](#)).⁶⁰

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