

# The Development and Architectural Significance of Early Etrusco-Italic Podia

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## Abstract

*The incorporation of podia into Etruscan and Latial religious buildings during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC marks the emergence of temples as a distinct architectural form in both the urban landscape and the archaeological record. Consideration of the significance of this change in elevation, however, has largely been overlooked to date in preference for the presentation of podia as a Roman form derived from Etruscan sacred aesthetics. This review of the evidence for the chronological and geographical development of podia in central Italy will suggest a means of differentiating podia from other substructures, demonstrate that they can be recognised in Latium before Etruria, and argue that their introduction may represent an architectural response to particular local conditions.\**

## INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on Roman temple architecture has traditionally focused on the form and function of building superstructures, with typologies based upon differences in roof design and the arrangement of columns and internal walls. Consideration of substructures, in contrast, seldom extends beyond a customary reference to Etruscan predecessors. The importance of raised substructures as a defining feature of Roman temples arguably justifies closer analysis of their qualities and development. This article aims to stimulate such research by proposing a new definition of podia and reviewing the evidence for their early use in western central Italy. The results suggest that the Etruscan origins of podia have been overstated and that their incorporation into temples during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC signals a fundamental change in the conception of religious architecture.

## TERMINOLOGY

There is no agreed definition of podia as an architectural element. In archaeology the term has come to signify either the low wall surrounding the arena within an amphitheatre upon which seats were placed (following the usage in Latin literature e.g. *Juv. Sat. 2.147: omnibus ad podium spectantibus*), or else a relatively solid masonry foundation upon which a temple was erected. In general literature it has become a form of shorthand for any raised platform, large or small, intended to support one or more items. As scholarly confusion with terms such as platform, terrace, and the Greek terms *krepidoma* and *stereobate* has

compromised the identification and analysis of podia, it is useful to begin with a working definition based on function and aesthetic effect.

I propose that podia are a distinctive type of raised substructure which must be negotiated to enter a surmounting building or superstructure. Specifically, the superstructure must occupy all, or very nearly all, the horizontal surface of the substructure. A large discrepancy between the size of the superstructure and the substructure, or else the complete absence of a superstructure, means that the substructure serves as a platform, rather than a podium. Similarly, substructures erected on sloping land to construct flat bases for one or more smaller superstructures may be regarded as terraces, rather than podia. Such a definition simultaneously looks downwards, to a clear demarcation from the ground around the full extent of the substructure, and upwards, to the walls and columns of a contiguous building.<sup>1</sup> The elevation of a true podium building is thus clearly distinguished from that on a platform or terrace, and requires the viewer to interpret the substructure and superstructure as a unified piece of architecture, rather than two separate construction projects where the substructure plays a secondary role.

A definition that focuses on the relationship between substructure and superstructure rather than decoration also recognises the nature of the relevant archaeological evidence. At many central Italic sites the state of preservation of the substructures is variable: some are essentially complete with finds that indicate their use, while others are represented by a few original courses and sections of fill incorporated into successive remodel-

Table 1. Central Italic podium temples dated prior to c.450 BC (by geographical region).

No.	Site	Date	Remains	Dimensions	Orientation
Latium					
1	Rome, Forum Boarium, S. Omobono (possibly a Temple of Fortuna), Phase 1 <sup>2</sup>	c. 575 BC	Seven courses of ashlar masonry, the second with a torus moulding	10.3 m square; 1.7 m high, with a staircase of possibly seven steps at the front	SW
2	Satricum, Acropolis, Temple I <sup>3</sup>	c. 540 BC	Four courses of ashlar blocks with a torus crowning moulding	27.43 x 17.1 m (but only 16.5 m at rear)	SW
3	Ardea, Acropolis, Temple of Juno Regina <sup>4</sup>	c. 540 BC	Only one course extant	Original size hypothesized at 39.5 x 25.3 m	SW
4	Rome, Forum Boarium, S. Omobono (possibly a Temple of Fortuna), Phase 2 <sup>5</sup>	c. 535 BC	Three courses of tufa, with a double moulding on three sides	13.2 x 11.54 m, 1.61 m high. Wide staircase with four steps	SW
5	Ardea, Forum, the Casarinaccio temple <sup>6</sup>	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> century	Three courses of tufa with different profiles of the upper round in different parts of the podium	Perhaps 35 x 23.35 m; preserved height is 1.82 m	SW
6	Rome, Capitoline, Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus <sup>7</sup>	c. 510 BC (dedicated 509)	Podium built of blocks of <i>cappellaccio</i> . 14 courses preserved in the SE corner, but two are thought to be later additions	Measurements vary, between 60-62.16 m long x 51-53.50 m wide. An original height of c. 3.60-3.75 m is proposed	SE
7	Rome, Palatine, Building N <sup>8</sup>	c. 525-475 BC	Four courses of <i>cappellaccio</i> .	10.5 m long	NW-SE
8	Rome, Forum Romanum, Temple of Saturn <sup>9</sup>	c. 500 BC (dedicated 498)	Two parallel podium walls in <i>cappellaccio</i> are buried in the present podium		N
9	Satricum, Acropolis, Temple II <sup>10</sup>	c. 500-480 BC	Four courses of tufa <i>lionato</i>	33.9 x 21 m	NE-SW
10	Signia, Acropolis, Temple of Juno Moneta <sup>11</sup>	c. 490 BC	Built in <i>opus siliceum</i> of local limestone	40.8 x 25.3 m	S
11	Rome, Forum Romanum, Temple of Castor <sup>12</sup>	c. 490 BC (dedicated 484)	Constructed in <i>cappellaccio</i>	Archaic podium measures 27.5 x 37.4 m; 3.5 m high	NE
12	Norba, Minor Acropolis, 'major temple' <sup>13</sup>	'Late Archaic'	Polygonal masonry; base of wall dividing cella from <i>pronaos</i> is preserved	22.8 x 12.90 m	NW-SE
13	Norba, Minor Acropolis, 'minor temple'	Early 5 <sup>th</sup> century		16.5 x 8.16 m	SW
Etruria					
14	Pyrgi, Temple B <sup>14</sup>	c. 510-500 BC	Tufa podium in <i>opus quadratum</i> . Four courses largely preserved	29.65 x 20.1 m	SW
15	Veii, Portonaccio Temple <sup>15</sup>	c. 510-500 BC	Tufa blocks. North wall preserved	18.5 m square	E
16	Vulci, Forum <sup>16</sup>	c. 510-500 BC	Five courses of ashlar tufa blocks, lined along the perimeter with <i>nenfro</i> during the 4 <sup>th</sup> century	42.6 x 28 m; 2.4 m high	SW
17	Orvieto, Belvedere Temple <sup>17</sup>	Early 5 <sup>th</sup> century	<i>Opus quadratum</i> of tufa	21.91 x 16.9 m (but only 16.30 m at front)	SE

Table 1 Continued.

No.	Site	Date	Remains	Dimensions	Orientation
18	Marzabotto, Acropolis, Temple C <sup>18</sup>	c. 500-475 BC	Round river stones faced with travertine	18.2 x 21.4 m; reconstructed height of 1.55-1.83 m	S
19	Vulci, Fontanile di Legnisina <sup>19</sup>	Early 5 <sup>th</sup> century	Large ashlar tufa blocks. Three courses preserved on the south side to a height of 1 m; two courses preserved on the north side	c. 17.6 x 25 m	SW
20	Marzabotto, urban area, Temple of Tinia <sup>20</sup>	480-470 BC	Scanty remains, one course	Building: 35.5 x 21.75 m	N-S
21	Pyrgi, Temple A <sup>21</sup>	c. 455 BC	<i>Opus quadratum</i> with eight courses preserved	34.33 x 23.98 m	SW

elling projects. The essential difference with the bases of earlier *oikoi* or *sacella* is however clear. Column bases no longer sat directly on the ground, and those wishing to enter the building required stairs. A survey of early podia in Latium and Etruria with sufficient evidence to enable reconstructions indicates that podia varied in dimension, shape, orientation, and decorative detail following no discernable chronological or geographical pattern (table 1). Excavators have proposed designs ranging from a Greek-style *krepidoma* with steps on all four sides, for example at Temple B at Pyrgi, to lateral stairs around a tribunal, as found on the Temple of Castor at Rome, as well as the more common flight of stairs between two masses of masonry centrally arranged on one side. There is sufficient evidence to establish that some podia carried ornamental mouldings. Moulded blocks of *nenfro* found at Orvieto are thought to have decorated the podium of the Belvedere Temple, where the pale colour would have stood in decorative contrast to the darker tuff facing the rest of the temple,<sup>22</sup> and mouldings on the two phases of the podium at S. Omobono show increasing complexity over time.<sup>23</sup> The majority, however, are likely to have been relatively plain.

The proposed criteria also clarify the architectural and aesthetic differences between buildings often described as podium structures. Temples I and II at the Ara della Regina site in Tarquinia were not podium temples, as the artificial terrace (55 x 31.5 m) built for Temple I extended far beyond the walls of the superstructure (27 x 12.2 m), and the enlargement resulting in Temple II (44 x 24.8 m) on the same terrace should again be understood as compensation for the terrain rather than an attempt to produce a structure with a unified elevation.<sup>24</sup> The edifice (4.8 x 9.6 m) beneath the *sacellum* (3.6 x 6.2 m) in the Celle sanctuary at Civita Castellana was a platform rather than a podium.<sup>25</sup> Structures

B and D on the acropolis at Marzabotto, carrying mouldings and frontal staircases typical of podia, did not carry superstructures and consequently can be regarded as platforms rather than strict podia.<sup>26</sup> The earliest securely identified podium in central Italy is found at the S. Omobono sanctuary in the Roman Forum Boarium, and it is this temple, dated to ca 575 BC on the basis of finds including Attic, Laconian, and Ionian cups, votive material, and architectural terracottas,<sup>27</sup> that marks the advent of the distinctive form of religious architecture known as the Etrusco-Italic temple.

This definition consequently acknowledges the significance of podia for histories of ancient Italic architecture. The similarities between the Regia at Rome, first monumentalised in stone in ca 625 BC, and houses such as that along the Via Sacra or in Zone 5A at Fidenae,<sup>28</sup> or between the courtyard complexes at Narce and Acquarossa,<sup>29</sup> suggest that there were no appreciable differences in ground plan or superstructure to distinguish sacred from profane spaces in 7<sup>th</sup>-century Latium or early 6<sup>th</sup>-century Etruria.<sup>30</sup> Material continuity between spaces with religious and residential functions is also expressed in debates over means of differentiating religious from other *oikoi* or mono-nuclear buildings, and the inherent architectural ambiguity of the period is further illustrated by the problematic interpretation of 7<sup>th</sup>-century votive models as representations of the houses of the living, the dead, and the divine.<sup>31</sup> The absence of distinctive architectural or artistic markers to indicate building function requires buildings associated with religious activities to be identified on the basis of artefact evidence which itself may take ambiguous forms. Careful evaluation of votives and faunal assemblages in the light of finds from comparable contexts produces a short list of structures that can be regarded, within the limits of problematic terminology, as shrines.

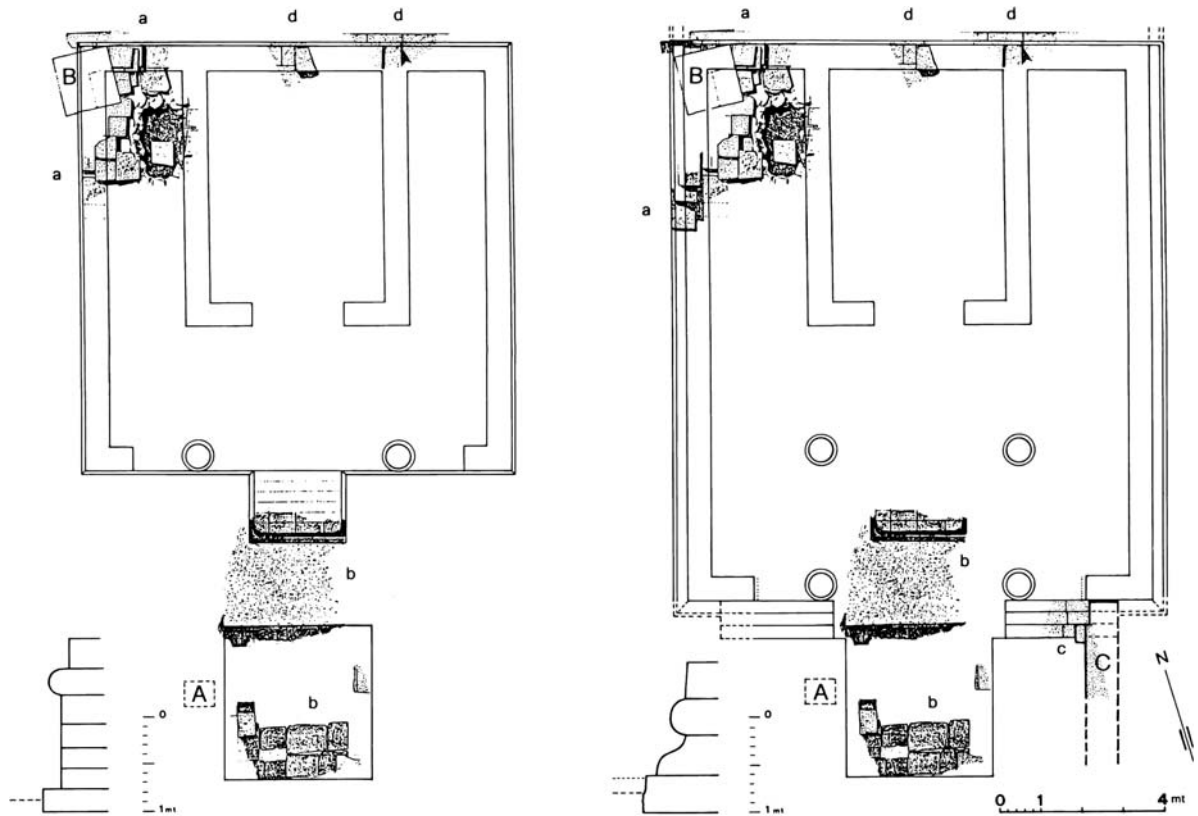


Fig. 1. Rome, S. Omobono complex.  
Plan of the first and second phases of the Archaic temple, with podium elevations (Colonna 1991, fig. 2a-b).

The introduction of podia is arguably the factor that transformed such shrines into temples. Although there is no typological rule against using the two terms interchangeably, each may carry connotations of size, contents, and worshippers, producing a conceptual uneasiness with describing a room within a primarily residential complex as a 'temple,' or using the word 'shrine' to describe a monumental building atop a flight of steps. The presence of a podium moves architectural histories out of functional ambiguity into structures characterised by a strong, easily recognisable marker. For all that architectural typologies often prefer to identify temples on the basis of their superstructures, the customary list of temple features including frontal orientation, a columned entranceway, a tripartite division of interior space, roof-top statuary, and architectural terracottas, becomes redundant upon comparison with the buildings of 7<sup>th</sup>-century Latium and Etruria, where they are common.<sup>32</sup> A podium may not become an intrinsic feature of a religious *aedes*, but it is the distinctive one.<sup>33</sup>

#### EVIDENCE

Table 1 lists the known examples of podia in western central Italy that can be dated prior to ca 450 BC and accord with the definition used in this paper.<sup>34</sup> The twenty-one examples come from thirteen sites in Latium and eight sites in Etruria; two represent second construction phases at sites with an earlier podium. Their dates are derived from associated archaeological evidence such as site stratigraphy, pottery, and mouldings that enable dating on stylistic grounds, as well as architectural terracottas when it is possible to establish a connection with a contemporary superstructure through evidence of walls or columns. Coins can also be useful for correlating dates and reconstructions, and in some cases it is possible to find foundation or dedication dates preserved in literary records.

The division of the twenty-one examples into Latial and Etruscan groups reflects growing scholarly challenges to the interpretation of all Latial material predating the foundation of the Roman

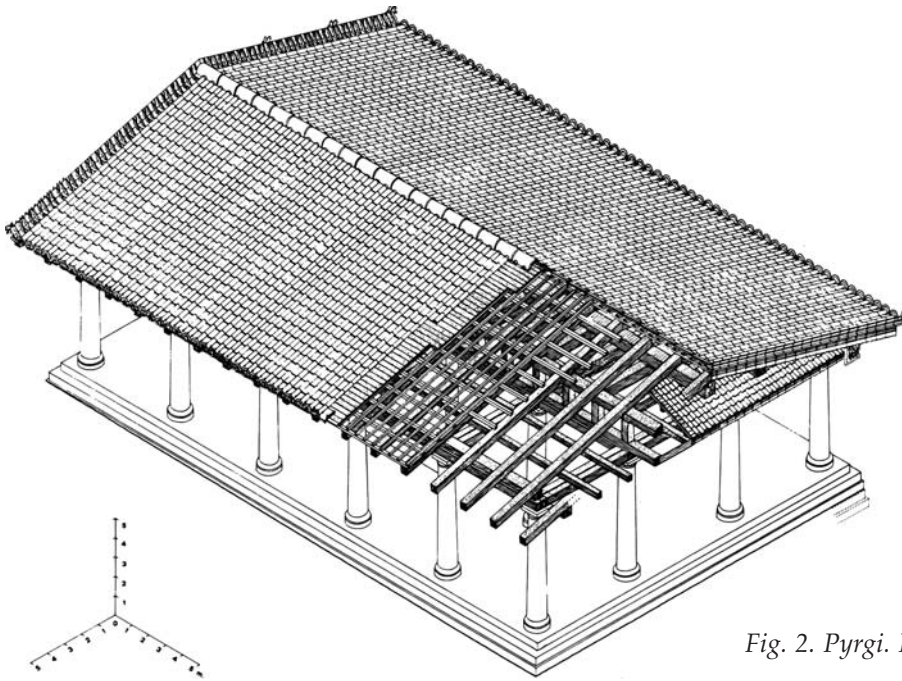


Fig. 2. Pyrgi. Reconstruction of Temple B  
(Melis 1985, fig. 7.1.B).

Republic as Etruscan exempla. The extent of Etruscan power in Archaic Rome is now debated; Etruscan presence does not denote Etruscan dominance, and factors such as the Etruscan ethnicity of certain rulers, attested by the literary tradition, may have been incidental in a city that was open to external elements but cultivated an independent identity.<sup>35</sup> Recognising that the archaeological record does not reveal agency allows for the analysis of regional developments within a larger architectural and artistic *koine* and a more geographically accurate description of significant phenomena. Topographical patterns can then be interpreted as expressions of particular agents and their concerns in ways that account for all aspects of the physical data.

Organising the evidence for early podia in Etruria and Latium by chronology and geography highlights hitherto overlooked regional contrasts. As mentioned above, the earliest securely identified podium in western central Italy is located in the Roman Forum Boarium. Fragmentary remains suggest that a 1.7 m-high podium crowned with a half-round moulding was constructed in ca 575 BC. A second phase saw the podium rebuilt and decorated with a double moulding on three sides in ca 535 BC (fig. 1). The second and third chronological examples also come from Latium. In the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century a podium measuring 27.43 x 17.1 m was built to support the so-called Temple 1 at Satricum.<sup>36</sup> Together with the new

superstructure of one rectangular room and an anteroom surrounded on three sides by columns, the use of a podium on the site of the former *oikos* marked the accession of a distinctive form of religious architecture. One course of tufa blocks suggests that the Temple of Juno Regina on the acropolis at Ardea also received a podium that can be dated by architectural terracottas to ca 540 BC.<sup>37</sup> The reconstructed substructure was larger than those at Rome and Satricum, with dimensions of 39.5 x 25.5 m, and it is tempting to speculate that the increase signals a growing technical confidence on the part of the architect or builders.

By contrast, the earliest securely identified podia in Etruria are dated to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. A low podium was constructed beneath Building A at Portonaccio in Veii in ca 510-500 BC. The substructure of Temple B at Pyrgi, also dated to ca 510-500 BC, has been reconstructed to resemble a Greek *krepidoma* measuring 20.10 x 29.65 m (fig. 2).<sup>38</sup> The spoliation of tufa blocks at the site may have caused an artificially low reconstruction of the substructure,<sup>39</sup> but there is sufficient evidence that the *krepidoma* elevated the ground floor of the superstructure with respect to its surroundings for it to be considered an example of a building in Etruria displaying the architectural characteristics of a podium.

The introduction of podia in Etruria proper coincides with comparable developments in other forms of Etruscan religious architecture. Structure

B at Marzabotto, variously dated between 520 and 500 BC, is an artificial platform measuring 4.10 x 4.10 m with a staircase in the centre of the southern side and no surmounting superstructure (fig. 3). The discovery of a pozzo in its centre holding animal bones, as well as a raised basin on the adjacent ground, suggest that the platform was a space for ritual activity.<sup>40</sup> The shape and decoration further allow for the possibility that this type of structure served as a formal or conceptual prototype for podia in subsequent Etruscan temples. But regardless of whether the earliest examples of Etruscan podia are the temples at Veii and Pyrgi or the raised platform at Marzabotto, as some who prefer a looser definition of the feature may argue, the available evidence indicates that podia appear in Latium approximately 50 years before they are recognisable in Etruria.<sup>41</sup>

#### FORM AND FUNCTION

Podia are traditionally presented as an Etruscan architectural form that became part of the canonical Etrusco-Italic temple.<sup>42</sup> Those who hold that Latium, and particularly Rome, were subject to Etruscan rule during the Archaic period will find no threat to this concept in the fact that podia in Latium appear to predate those in Etruria. The challenge posed by English scholarship to consider Latial developments as independent phenomena, however, cannot be overlooked. It is thus appropriate to review current hypotheses about the origins of these substructures in an attempt to clarify whether podia were Etruscan features and, if so, why they were first realised in Latium.

#### *Funerary tumuli*

One group of scholars has suggested that podia were derived from Etruscan funerary tumuli. From the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Etruscan aristocrats built conspicuous tumuli, or burial mounds, to commemorate deceased family members and visually emphasise their dominance over the land and community. Tumulus I and II in the Banditaccia necropolis at Cerveteri illustrate the placement of the burial mounds atop carved tufa bases with cylindrical cornices. Each of these tumuli, with respective diameters of 31 m and 40 m, was surrounded by a narrow ditch that could be crossed using a fixed ramp with stairs, a structure described in many publications as a podium (fig. 4).<sup>43</sup> Such 'podia' were joined to the base of the mound by small arches, tunnels, or blind doors that spanned the ditch and emphasised the demarcation of the



Fig. 3. Marzabotto, Acropolis. Structure B (Govi 2007, p.21).



Fig. 4. Cerveteri, Banditaccia necropolis. Tumulus (photo author).

tumulus from the surrounding space.<sup>44</sup> A resemblance to the podia of later Etrusco-Italic temples can be discerned in the monumental bases accessed by single flights of stairs, while a conceptual link between tumuli and podium temples may also have existed in the use of the stairs to access a raised area for religious purposes, as finds from the top of tumuli indicate the performance of rites above the burial chambers.<sup>45</sup>

### Monumental altars

A second hypothesis interprets podia as monumental altars. This idea draws on the resemblance between podia and the mouldings of carved tumuli bases, rather than the stairs used to link those bases to non-funerary ground, and also on similarities between podia and platforms such as Structure D at Marzabotto. Both the tumuli bases and the platforms were decorated with mouldings, raised from the surrounding ground, and accessed by single flights of stairs. The concept of the Etruscan tomb as altar further links the tumuli to the platforms.<sup>46</sup> As a result of these similarities, some scholars have argued that podia came into being to differentiate religious buildings from their profane surroundings by serving as monumental markers of the boundary between sacred and quotidian space.<sup>47</sup> Podia with mouldings thus resembled elaborate pedestals that raised temples out of the profane world, just as carved bases isolated tumuli. This argument does not account for the construction of podia within religious precincts unless sanctuary boundaries were insignificant, insufficient, or absent.

### Augury

A third hypothesis proposes an alternative derivation from the ritual demarcation of the earth by augurs to establish a space freed from spirits and thus suitable for consecration to the deity of the future building.<sup>48</sup> As this demarcation is usually envisaged as a series of straight lines, the augural markings are thought to have established the shape and orientation of a square or rectangular podium. Round podia presumably validate the existence of non-linear augural lines associated with the setting of city boundaries like the *pomerium*. It is also thought that high viewpoints may have facilitated the taking of *auspicia*. Augury and podium temples must consequently be regarded as synchronous developments. Relevant to this discussion is the proposal that augury and the auspices may have been of Latin or Sabine, rather than Etruscan, origin.<sup>49</sup>

All three of these hypotheses can be challenged by the observation that different forms of non-funerary religious architecture existed in Etruria and Latium well before the advent of podium temples. Evidence of religious activity at Building *beta* on the Pian di Civita at Tarquinia, near the *Casa del recinto* at Roselle, in the so-called spring sanctuary and the rectangular building near the

Pietrisco River at San Giovenale, and at Temple 0 at Satricum establishes that communities possessed alternative spaces for religious rites in which podia played no part. These shrines resembled the superstructures of Etrusco-Italic podium temples more closely than piles of tumuli earth and arguably fulfilled a closer ritual function than spaces for the performance of open-air rites; and for all that podia may have resembled monumental altars, Etrusco-Italic temples were not altars; the altar was a separate structure, frequently placed at a different orientation to the temple, and accessible to the view of all in contrast to enclosed temple interiors. The fundamental question about podia is hence not whence podia derive their decoration, but why the need to introduce such substructures to religious architecture was felt in the 6<sup>th</sup>, but not 7<sup>th</sup>, century BC.

### BEYOND RITUAL

The existence of non-funerary religious structures predating the construction of podium temples shows that podia were not the sole means of conferring religiosity upon a building. Thus while similar designs may have had a ritual significance elsewhere, there is no imperative to seek a ritual origin for the form or function of podia. Indeed, given the evidence that embellishments such as mouldings and the motifs typical of architectural terracottas were used widely in Etruscan culture irrespective of building or spatial function before the late 6<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>50</sup> it is possible that the use of similar mouldings on tumuli bases, platforms, and later podia was merely fashionable. Additional support for the idea that temple substructures may not have had an exclusively religious function comes from Roman evidence that podia gradually came to serve a variety of civic and commercial functions. The substructure of the Temple of Castor was rebuilt and repurposed through the late Republic, with a tribunal added to the frontal stairs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and the incorporation of twenty-five small chambers. These spaces may have been used in association with the Temple's imperial role as the official repository for weights and measures, although finds of assorted make-up and extracted teeth in a secondary drain from a chamber on the west side of the Temple suggest that this particular room was later occupied by a beautician-cum-dentist.<sup>51</sup> The podium of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century BC northern temple at S. Nicola in Carcere was likewise designed with a series of small chambers; the limited height of 1.5 m means they may have been used to store equipment related

to the nearby vegetable market.<sup>52</sup> The central temple of the same complex also had rooms in the podium that are likely to have sheltered *tabernae*.<sup>53</sup> Lastly, a vaulted chamber measuring 10 m x 3 m uncovered beneath the stairs of the Temple of Saturn has been identified as the Aerarium, or public treasury, based upon literary descriptions of the Temple's banking activities (Paul. *ex Fest.* 2L; Solin. 1.12; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.8.3).<sup>54</sup> Such designs and finds show that podia either did not retain, or ever have, a rarefied religious purpose. Together these points reinforce that form should be considered separately from function and considerations of the rationale for temple substructures may go beyond ritual demands.

The context for the construction of Rome's first podium temple accordingly requires analysis. The deity honoured with the construction of the Archaic temple is thought to have been Mater Matuta, based upon later literary references to the foundation of such a temple in the area by Servius Tullius, king of Rome from 578 to 534 BC (Liv. 5.19.6, 33.27.4; Ov. *Fast.* 6. 477-480, 569-572, 613-626).<sup>55</sup> An absence of extant references to the podium or the rationale for its construction means that external and internal catalysts must both be considered.

#### *Greek inspiration*

The Greek equivalent of central Italic podia was the *krepidoma* or stereobate. Both archaeology and the Greek tradition trace the earliest expression of many Greek monumental forms to Corinth and its hinterland. It is difficult to identify the earliest example of a Greek *krepidoma*, but it is possible that it first found expression in stone in Corinth, where other innovations such as tiled roofs and the regular frieze of the Doric order also emerged. If the *krepidoma* developed as part of the emergence and codification of early Greek, typically Doric, temple architecture, then the form may be dated to the late 7<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>56</sup>

The fact that significant developments in religious architecture may have occurred in Corinth and Rome at approximately the same time might suggest the expediting of Greek influence in Latium or, more likely, a simultaneous elaboration of construction methods and religious aesthetics in Greece and western central Italy. Other links between Servius Tullius, the Forum Boarium, and Corinth can be noted. Scholars have argued that Servius adopted pro-mercantile policies similar to those of contemporary Greek tyrants, including the development of the Forum Boarium as a Tiber

port and its attendant cults of Mater Matuta and Portunus, two deities connected with trade and Corinth by their assimilation to Ino-Leukothea and Palaimon.<sup>57</sup> The terracotta plaques decorating the pediment of the first-phase Temple depicted a winged Gorgon flanked by crouching felines, similar to the motif displayed on the front of the Temple of Artemis on Corcyra, erected in a Corinthian colony located on commercial trade routes.<sup>58</sup> Even if the Greek *krepidoma* or peristyle were inspirational, however, it is important to note that the single flight of stairs and the mouldings of the substructure in the Forum Boarium cannot be described as Greek forms.

#### *Near Eastern stimuli*

The extent of Near Eastern influence on Greek and Roman architecture in this period is difficult to determine. It is possible that particular methods of stone-working were copied from, or inspired by, Phoenician and Egyptian practices.<sup>59</sup> Remains of the White Temple at Uruk demonstrate that Sumerian mud-brick temples were being erected on raised platforms by the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium such platforms had developed into the series of stepped terraces known as ziggurats.<sup>60</sup> Although the terraced design differed sharply from Italic podia, there may have been a conceptual resemblance in regarding the temple upon the platform as the home of a god that could only be entered by religious professionals. The theological and practical significance of ziggurat design has been long debated, generating a long list of not incompatible hypotheses: suggestions include a desire to invoke the mountains associated with Sumerian migrations; the imitation of an elaborate altar; the provision of a raised point for celestial observations (Diod. Sic. 2.9.4), or for gods during their descents from the heavens (Hdt. 1.182); and, more prosaically, a means of protecting shrines from frequent flooding.<sup>61</sup> By the time that trade routes between the Near East, Aegean and Mediterranean become visible in the archaeological record, ziggurats had evolved into steeply-terraced pyramids with no visual resemblance to Italic podia.

The absence of a clear external prototype in Greece or the Near East allows podia to be interpreted as independent Italic designs. Local factors may in turn explain their introduction in Rome.

#### *Socio-political imperatives*

The competitive nature of those living in Archaic

Rome, particularly with regards to surpassing other communities' building projects, should not be underestimated. For example, it is possible that the Tarquin dynasty adorned Rome with structures that were designed to eclipse comparable buildings in Tarquinia with an impression of majestic grandeur.<sup>62</sup> The first podium temple may have monumentalised Roman identity and stimulated imitation by other settlements. This scenario does not deny Etruscan agency, but offers an explanation for why this architectural development began south rather than north of the Tiber.

### Topography

The Forum Boarium was a riverside centre of international and interregional commerce. As Tiber Island divided its namesake into two bridgeable channels, the shallower water and adjacent lowland to the east formed a natural landing point for ships pausing at Rome and Veii or travelling upriver to Antemnae, Fidenae, and Crustumerium. Such favourable topography was further improved by proximity to major roads: here ended the Via Salaria, bringing salt and transhumant herds to local exchanges, while one of the principal roads between Etruria and Campania passed close by and may have motivated the construction of Rome's first bridge, the Pons Sublicius.<sup>63</sup> International imports are evident from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards in sherds of late Geometric, Euboean, Cycladic, and Corinthian ceramics, as well as Ischian and Cumaean imitations of Corinthian styles.<sup>64</sup> The construction of a podium temple, orientated towards river-borne travellers, may have been designed to attract and welcome potentially lucrative visitors in an emphatic, impressive, and ritualised style. The use of a significant substructure to increase visibility and lower the chance of flood damage to the wooden columns of the superstructure would thus have had multiple benefits.

The limitations of the archaeological evidence mean that these scenarios can only be speculative. The suggestion that the first podium temple represents a response to local Roman concerns, however, reflects the corpus of relevant evidence more accurately than the conflation of Etruscan mouldings with Etruscan cultural and architectural supremacy.

### CONCLUSION

Although podia are but one element of many grand and imposing buildings, the study of their development arguably has the larger effect of

redefining the significance of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC for histories of central Italic religious architecture. The evidence for buildings with associated ritual activities in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, characterised by a variety of plans and lack of architectural markers to identify their primary function, establishes that the importance of the 6<sup>th</sup> century lies in the emergence of a recognisable religious architectural form, due principally to the introduction of podia. The common attribution of this change to the Etruscans is simplistic and does not accord with the location of the archaeological evidence or the growing scholarly recognition of the differences between Latial and Etruscan civilizations. The alternative proposal that podia were a Latial, or even Roman, phenomenon suggests that the conception and realisation of cult buildings in early Italy may represent more innovative responses to local, and perhaps prosaic, concerns than previously thought.

### NOTES

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- 1 Cf. Vitruvius *De arch.* 5.6.6 defining podia in *scaena* in relation to surmounting columns.
- 2 See n. 27 and Cifani 2008, 165-173 with bibliography.
- 3 *Satricum* 1986, 60-62; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1991, 91; Knoop/Lulof 2009, 32-35.
- 4 Stefani 1944-1945; Nielsen 1992, 124; Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. iv, 147-148.
- 5 Gjerstad 1962; Ippollo 1989; Pisani Sartorio 1990, 113; Colonna 1991.
- 6 Nielsen 1992, 124; Shoe 1965, 84-86.
- 7 Nielsen 1992, 118-9; Cifani 2008, 85-109 with bibliography.
- 8 Pensabene 1993, 24, 36-38; 1995, 457; Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. iv, 176.
- 9 Nielsen 1992, 119.
- 10 Colonna 1984, 404; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1991, 105; Knoop/Lulof 2009, 35-36.
- 11 Coarelli 1982, 177-178 with 396 for bibliography; Nielsen 1992, 127.
- 12 Nielsen 1992, 61-79, esp. p.75; Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. iv, 181.
- 13 The two podia at Norba are not well published; their inclusion in this table is based upon material displayed in the Museo Archeologico in Norma.
- 14 Colonna 1972, esp. p. 282; Melis 1985; Nielsen 1992, 132.
- 15 Colonna 1985, 101; Nielsen 1992, 132.
- 16 Sgubini Moretti 1993, 72; Moretti Sgubini 1997, 154.
- 17 Andr n 1940, 166-186; Colonna 1985, 80-83; Nielsen 1992, 131.
- 18 Nielsen 1992, 131; Bentz/Reusser 2008, 60.
- 19 Massab  1985, 17-20; 1988-1989; Sgubini Moretti 1993, 108-110.
- 20 Govi 2007, 23-25; Bentz/Reusser 2008, 54-56.
- 21 Colonna 1972, 23-47.
- 22 Izzet 2000, 42-43.

- 23 Colonna 1991, 57.
- 24 Bonghi Jovino 2010, 175-176.
- 25 Comella 1986, 177-181, 223-224 with bibliography.
- 26 Structures B and D have been variously presented as monumental altars, precincts, elevated *temene*, and *sacella*: Steingraber 1982, 107-108; *ThesCRA* iv: 312, s.v. 'Sacellum (Etruria e mondo Italico): Etruria' (A. Comella); Jannot 2005, 73; Colonna 2006, 140-141; Govi 2007, 21-22.
- 27 Gjerstad 1962; Ioppolo 1989; Colonna 1991; Mura Somella 2000, 7-20 in particular regarding the dating of the ceramics.
- 28 The house on the Sacra Via: Cifani 2008, 124-125 with bibliography. Edifice 5A at Fidenae: Rathje 1983 and Pavolini et al. 1990, 109.
- 29 For evidence of religious activities at Narce see Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. iv, 69-71. The bibliography on Acquarossa is extensive; for summaries see Östenberg 1975; Rystedt 1985; Haynes 2000, 139-140.
- 30 The presence of architectural terracottas on buildings with residential, funerary, civic, and religious functions is now widely recognised; see Damgaard Andersen 1993 and Winter 2009, 567-570.
- 31 Staccioli 1968, 67-68 interprets the models as *thesauroi*; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1995, 130 summarises the contrasting interpretations of the model from Satricum; Damgaard Andersen 1993, 75 prefers to interpret the models as private houses.
- 32 As Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. i, 166 notes, the characteristics of a temple have not been well-defined. Colonna 1985, 60 is the most often cited, although his insistence on a square or quasi-square plan makes no allowance for round temples. Examples of structures with these characteristics include: Hut A on the southwest corner of the Palatine in Rome (two holes outside the entrance suggesting a covered porch on wooden posts); the *oikos* building at Pizza d'Armi in Veii (frontal orientation); Buildings A-C in Zone F at Acquarossa (tripartite division of interior space); and the courtyard complex at Poggio Civitate (Murlo) (rooftop statuary and architectural terracottas); none of these sites have yielded unambiguous evidence of religious activity. See also n. 29.
- 33 Cf. Marius' decision to forego a podium when building his victory temple to Honos and Virtus on the Velia for fear it would interfere with the taking of the public auspices (Fest. p. 466.36-468.3 L).
- 34 Further examples are possible, indeed probable, as the presence or absence of podia is often not mentioned in excavation reports and cannot be discerned from published drawings or photographs. The problem is also noted in Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. i, 161 n. 699.
- 35 Cornell 1995, 151-172 on 'the myth of "Etruscan Rome"'; Smith 2000, 30.
- 36 Maaskant-Kleibrink 1991, 91; Knoop/Lulof 2009, 32-35.
- 37 Stefani 1944-1945; Nielsen 1992, 124.
- 38 Colonna 1972; 1985, 127-131; Melis 1985.
- 39 Nielsen 1992, 132.
- 40 Pozzo: Gozzadini 1865, 11 and Tav. 5 no 4; *pozzo* contents: Gozzadini 1865, 12-13.
- 41 Cf. Damgaard Andersen 1998, vol. i, 193-197 concluding that temples (as defined by applying multiple criteria excluding podia) appear in Latium approximately half a century earlier than in Etruria, with the caveat that the religious building at Gravisca is Greek rather than Etruscan.
- 42 For example, Boëthius/Ward-Perkins 1970, 38, 48; Colonna 1985, 60-61 (derived from the form of Etruscan houses and tombs); Ramage/Ramage 1995, 28-31; Jannot 2005, 73; Stamper 2005, 8. cf. Cifani 2008, 295 arguing an influence from the Greek stylobate.
- 43 As in Prayon 2010, 86.
- 44 Prayon 1975, 81-82.
- 45 Rosi 1927, 65-66; Colonna 1986, 398; 2006, 142; Izzet 2007, 93; cf. Prayon 2010. Note also Colonna 1985, 60 and 2006, 138 arguing that tumuli may have been appropriated by emerging states and gradually turned into symbols of civic religion. The transition from a private (burial) to a public (religious and civic) context remains problematic, but see Riva 2010.
- 46 Those who connect podia with tumuli bases have further cited the resemblance between domed tumuli covers and round altars, such as that at the Grotta Porcina necropolis at Vetralla, as evidence that both facilitated ritual sacrifices. See Prayon 1975, 81-85 and 2010; cf. Åkerström 1934, 78-84.
- 47 E.g. Kähler 1970, 19; Izzet 2000, 42; cf. Jannot 2005, 102.
- 48 *ThesCRA* iv: 142, s.v. 'Aedes (mondo Italico)' (M. Torelli). A similar idea is expressed in Kähler 1970, 19, Colonna 1985, 60, Gros 1996, vol. i, 122-125, and Cifani 2008, 290 relating the shape of podia to the form of a *templum* or *auguraculum*.
- 49 Smith 1875, 174.
- 50 On architectural terracotta mouldings and motifs see Winter 2009, 573-576; trends seem to have been linked to fashions in other media, particularly vase-painting, rather than building function.
- 51 Nielsen 1992, 56, 109-111; *LTUR* i, 242-245, s.v. 'Castor, Aedes, Templum' (I. Nielsen). The podium of the Temple of Vesta also contained an area that may have been used to store valuable documents and artifacts: Boni 1900, 163-165; *LTUR* v, 125, s.v. 'Vesta, Aedes' (R.T. Scott).
- 52 Claridge 1998, 249.
- 53 Nielsen 1992, 110-111.
- 54 Nielsen 1992, 119. The long-standing use of temples as treasuries indicates that there was no strong dividing line between religious and 'commercial' activities, hence caution is advisable in arguing that ancient religious space was ever fully exclusive.
- 55 On the ambiguous and problematic ethnicity of Servius Tullius, see Cornell 1995, 130-150 and Smith 1996, 151.
- 56 Barletta 2001, 39, 52-53, 79-83.
- 57 Mertens-Horn 1997; Coarelli 2007, 308.
- 58 Mertens-Horn 1995; Winter 2002-2003, 230; 2009, 191-192.
- 59 Waelkens/DePaepe/Moens 1990; Ratté 1993; Barletta 2001, 18, 151.
- 60 Bertman 2003, 194.
- 61 Bertman 2003, 197.
- 62 I am grateful to Sibylle Haynes for this suggestion.
- 63 On the topography of the Forum Boarium see Coarelli 1988; Pisani Sartorio 1989; Smith 1996, 179-180; Coarelli 2007, 307-308.
- 64 La Rocca 1982, 47-48; Holloway 1994, 165-167.

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