Sanctuary and society in central-southern Italy (3rd to 1st centuries BC): a study into cult places and cultural change after the Roman conquest of Italy
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Chapter 9

Roman Ritual in the Italian Countryside?
The Compitalia and the Shrines of the Lares Compitales

“the separation between city cult and family or farm cult should not be exaggerated” (BEARD, NORTH and PRICE 1998, 50).

What the Paganalia were to the pagi, were the Compitalia to the vici of Rome. The festival is the clearest religious aspect connected to the institution of the vicus and therefore will be discussed in some detail. The religious festival of the Compitalia or ‘cross-roads festival’\(^1\) was celebrated in both city and countryside. Even if clearly a Roman festival and best known from urban contexts, it is usually assumed that it originated as a rural cult which was later incorporated in the city, where it became the principal festival of the vici or urban quarters. Arguably, this conception of a rural origin resonates with the idea of the pagus-vicus system as an ‘immemorial’ Italic institution, discussed in Chapter 6. In this chapter, it will be argued that the spread of the Compitalia might have been in the opposite direction; in this view the Compitalia, a Roman urban festival with administrative aspects, was spread outside Rome alongside Roman influence – just as the Paganalia which have been discussed previously. It is argued, moreover, that the festival could have been important for the definition and enhancement of groups participating in it. Although the precise relation between the rural vici of Italy and the Compitalia is difficult to establish, there is clear evidence that the Compitalia were indeed celebrated in the countryside. It will be suggested that in some cases ancient Italic sanctuaries could have been re-used for celebrating the Roman rite of the Compitalia, apparently by now functioning within a Roman administrative and religious system.\(^2\)

**THE COMPITALIA: A PARADOXICAL PICTURE**

At the end of a letter to Atticus (2.3), Cicero writes, probably from his country house, after having referred to the political situation in Rome and Cicero’s own position within it: *sed haec ambulationibus Compitaliciis reservemus. Tu pridie Compitialia*

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\(^1\) From *compitum* = ‘crossroads’, cf. *infra*.

\(^2\) The main content of this chapter has been published in a slightly different form in STEK 2008.
memento. Balineum calfieri iubebo. Et Pomponiam Terentia rogat; matrem adiungemus (‘But this point must be reserved for our strolls at the Compitalia. Do you remember the day before the festival: I will order the bath to be heated, and Terentia is going to invite Pomponia. We will make your mother one of the party’).\textsuperscript{3} In this way, Cicero informs us on how he imagines spending the Compitalia or cross-roads festival, writing as it seems in December of the year 60 BC. The impression that arises, on a private level, is that of a relaxed holiday, with time for family and friends alike.

At the same time, the moveable feast of the Compitalia constituted the most important religious festival associated with the vici or wards of Rome. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the Augustan period, the festival was installed together with the urban vici as a means of administrative control, in order to be able to count the inhabitants of Rome. Other evidence confirms this public or civic character of the festival. Apparently, the Compitalia were relevant both to what we would define the ‘private’ and to the ‘public’ domain.

Another paradoxical aspect regards the location of the Compitalia. The festival is often associated with the urban plebs, and therefore placed in an urban setting. On the other hand, passages in Roman authors refer to a rustic setting of the Compitalia. Modern historiography has subsequently translated this situation in various ways. Most popular is the conception of the Compitalia as a festival of agricultural or rural origin which was only later incorporated in the city. Not much attention has been paid to the celebration of the Compitalia in the countryside however. Most disturbingly, it is actually not known in what places the festival was celebrated in the countryside.

The aim of this chapter is to delineate an historical development of the Compitalia and to shed light on its rural cult places, by reviewing these apparent oppositions of public vs. private and urban vs. rural. The conception of this development proposed here may have consequences for current ideas on the ‘religious romanisation’ of Italy and especially the countryside, the very existence of which, as has been seen in Chapter 2, tends to be minimised in recent studies.

After a short introduction of the Compitalia the attention will be focused on three main aspects.

In the first place, the character of the community that participated in the cult will be discussed. Often, the Compitalia are seen as “very much a family-affair”.\textsuperscript{4} On the other hand there seems to be a strong civic or public aspect to the festival. The relevant textual evidence will be discussed, and it will be argued that this ‘double’ image of public and private emerges from the archaeological record as well. It will be suggested that it is precisely this all-embracing quality of the Compitalia, cutting through these distinctions and including all inhabitants, that distinguishes it from other festivals.

Secondly, the location of the celebration of the Compitalia as indicated in literature and epigraphy will be considered. The situation for both city and countryside will be surveyed. Here, the issue of the presumed rural origin of the Compitalia comes up. It will be shown that the evidence for a development from an agricultural, rural cult to an

\textsuperscript{3} 2.3.5, translation Loeb (E.O. Winstedt).
\textsuperscript{4} SCULLARD 1981, 60.
urban Roman cult is meagre. As regards the evidence for the spread of the Compitalia in Italy at least, a development in the opposite direction is proposed: the Compitalia could have been exported from Rome to other areas influenced or inhabited by Romans at least as early as the second half of the second century BC. In the third place, the argument on the location of the Compitalia will be directed further to the cult places themselves: what exactly constituted a compitum shrine, and where were they located? Several urban compitum shrines have been unearthed, and their different architectural forms will be discussed briefly. The rural cult places where the Compitalia were celebrated in the countryside have never been identified however. It will be suggested that the problematic description in a scholion on Persius has distracted scholarly research on the shrines of the Lares Compitales from the question of where the Compitalia were actually celebrated. Tentatively, it will be argued that ancient rural sanctuaries built by ‘Italic’ peoples were suitable sacred places to be reused later within a Roman religious, social and political system. There is evidence to suggest that some of the resumed or continued religious activities in ancient ‘Italic’ sanctuaries related to the Compitalia.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE COMPITALIA

The Compitalia consisted of sacrifices at compita (cross-roads and by extension the shrines placed there; from competere or ‘coming together’ cf. infra) and games, the ludi Compitalicii. Certainly, meals were part of the festival, and, as has been seen, Cicero muses on strolls. The Compitalia were part of the feriae conceptivae; that is the festivals that had no fixed date but were to be established anew each year. At least in the late Republic, they were announced eight days beforehand, in December, by the praetor. Normally, the Compitalia were celebrated some days after the Saturnalia (17 December), probably most often at the very end of December or the beginning of January.

As to the cult personnel, magistri who were allowed to wear the toga praetexta presided over the Compitalia. For the rustic environment, Cato (Agr. 5.3) informs us

5 Cf. the alternative etymology from ‘conpotando, id est simul bibendo’ in schol. Pers. 4.28.
6 Cic. Att. 2.3.4. Dr. L. B. van der Meer suggests (pers. comm.) that with the ambulatio the lustratio may be meant, rather than ‘strolls’.
7 Gell. 10.24.3.
8 Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.14.4. Known dates include: December 31 67 BC, January 1 58 BC, January 2 50 BC (Asc. p. 65 C; Cic. Pis. 8; Cic. Att. 7.7.3).
9 Cic. Pis. 8; Liv. 34.7.2; Asc. p. 7. C. There has been much discussion on the date and character of the magistri vici; cf. FLAMBARD 1977, FLAMBARD 1981; FRASCHETTI 1990; TARPIN 2002; BERT LOTT 2004. On the date: it is clear that at least from the middle of the first century BC on magistri vici did exist (contra Fraschetti): cf. CIL IV, 60 which lists magistrates for a Pompeian vicus for 47-46 BC, and CIL VI, 1324 (= CIL I², 2514), a column from Rome, datable to around the 50s BC, that mentions magistri vici (TARPIN 2002, 133-134, also for other examples). Liv. 34.7.2 mentions magistri vicorum for 195 BC. Cf. also BERT LOTT 2004, esp. 41-44 who argues that magistri vici were already in action by the time of the second Punic War. On their character: the image that arises of the magister vici is not one of splendour. Juvenal (10.103) calls him a pannosus aedilis: an aedile in tatters. The office came to be associated mostly with the lower classes of society (Liv. 34.7.2: infimum genus for 195 BC), which has been seen as a ground to underscore the essentially popular character of the main
on the modus operandi at the ideal villa: the bailiff (vilicus) of the agricultural enterprise could assume the presiding role over the activities on behalf of his master.\(^{10}\)

In the literary tradition, the origin of the Compitalia is connected to the creation of the four urban regions by King Servius Tullius (cf. infra). Historically on some firmer ground, it appears that colleges of magistri that organised the Compitalia in Rome became a focus of popular political activity around the middle of the last century BC. Fear for ‘subversive’ political activities and riots of the collegia that were made up mainly of freedmen and slaves explains the suppression of the collegia and the connected ludi Compitalicii in 64 BC by the Senate.\(^{11}\) The consequent attempts, not always successful, to re-establish them attest to the political struggles of this period.

It was exactly this political connotation, and association with the plebs, that made the cult at the compita of each vicus an attractive focus of attention for Augustus.\(^{12}\) Between 12 and 7 BC Augustus restructured the city into fourteen urban regions and an unknown number of vici.\(^{13}\) A number of 265 vici becomes clear from the census of 73 AD.\(^{14}\) The objects of veneration were two Lares who are now associated with the Genius Augusti.\(^{15}\)

In this way, the compita were effectively used to disseminate the emperor cult over a wide and specifically popular audience. It is often assumed that Augustus deliberately revived and promoted the Compitalia in order to bring the emperor cult (in the form of the Genius) amongst the people also in the realest sense: absorbing him, as it were, between the ancestors.\(^{16}\) In the same vein, Augustus rededicated the old temple of the

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10 CIL V, 7739 from Liguria seems to confirm this privilege: here, a vilicus dedicates a comptum to the Lares.

11 Cf. on the subject: Flambard 1977, 1981; Fraschetti 1990, 204-273; Bert Lott 2004, esp. 54-55, who concludes that the ludi were curtailed, but the Compitalia (“a public ritual of the state religion”) themselves not.

12 Cf. e.g. AlfoLDI 1973; Fraschetti 1990, 204-273.


14 Plin. HN 3.66. Cf. also the maxima ter centum totam delubra per urbem installed by Augustus according to Verg. Aen. 8.716, explained by Servius ad loc. as compita, but the word maxima is maybe not fitting this interpretation. Cf. TarpIN 2002, 124, n. 89.


16 Cf. Beard, North and Price 1998, 185; Gradel 2002, esp. 116-130. The issue is complex: the Lares are seen by some as the spirits of the dead. In this view, the revival of the Lares-cult at the compita associated with the emperor would therefore reflect the dissemination of the private cult of the house of Augustus over the vici of the city. Cf. infra.
Lares in summa Sacra Via.\textsuperscript{17} The Augustan reform is important here, because all evidence dating after 12-7 BC may have been influenced by it. Having introduced the Compitalia, a festival with possibly archaic origins, which was organised by magistri (vici) and centred upon compita, the cult places of the vici, now we turn to some specific elements of the ritual and the festival.

\textit{Private and Public: An Integrative Cult}

For any analysis of its social and political significance, it is of central importance to ask to which group in society the Compitalia catered. Delineating the ‘community of cult’ is also pivotal for the question in what type of cult places the Compitalia could be celebrated. Although some sources direct us towards a conception of the Compitalia as a largely family-oriented festival, other evidence suggests a wider audience. Sometimes, these different locales have been interpreted as indicative of a distinction between a public and a private cult.

‘PRIVATE’: A FAMILY AFFAIR?

Let us first briefly review the argument for the Compitalia as a family cult. At least in later times it seems that the Lares Compitales were assimilated with deified souls of the dead, or gods of the underworld, as Festus says.\textsuperscript{18} To some, it has appeared that this aspect of veneration of the dead should be linked to an ancestor cult.\textsuperscript{19} In this way, the Compitalia would come close to a cult that is centred on the family. Other arguments have been brought to the fore as well to sustain the thesis that the Compitalia were essentially a family occasion: The presence of altars to the Lares and mural paintings documenting scenes associated with the Compitalia inside some houses on Delos may at first sight corroborate such an interpretation (but cf. infra).

Drawing broad comparisons (“as our New Year’s day follows Christmas, so a short time after the Saturnalia the Romans enjoyed a second period of feasting and goodwill”), Scullard emphasises that the Compitalia “still remained very much a

\textsuperscript{17} Res Gestae 19.2. cf. ZIOLKOWSKI 1992, 97-98.

\textsuperscript{18} Fest. p. 108 L. laneae effigies compitalibus noctu dabantur in compita, quod Lares, quorum is erat dies festus, animae putabantur esse hominum redactae in numerum deorum; p. 273 L.: pilae et effigies viriles et muliebres ex lana Compitalibus suspendebantur in compitis quod hunc diem festum esse deorum inferorum quos vocant Lares putarent quibus tot pilae quot capita servorum tot effigies quot essent liberi ponebantur ut vivis parcerent et essent his pilis et simulacris contenti. cf. Macrob. Sat. 1.7.34-35, describing the hanging of dolls from the compita during the festival. There has been much discussion on the credibility of the interpretation of the dolls (and the Lares in general) as indicating an ancestor cult (as Festus suggests) or even as a substitute for human sacrifices: Macrobius (as cited) mentions the practice of human sacrifice, apparently instigated by Tarquinius Superbus after a response of an oracle, which was subsequently abolished by – significantly – the founder of the Republic, Iunius Brutus, who replaced the real heads for ‘dummies’.

\textsuperscript{19} The discussion on the origin of the Lares, protective deities of the fields (Wissowa) or rather linked to the dead / ancestors (Samter), started with WISSOWA 1897, WISSOWA 1902, 166-177 and SAMTER 1901, 105-123; SAMTER 1907; LAING 1921; TABELING 1932. See now SCHEID 1990, 587-598; COARELLI 1983, 265-282.
family affair”. In order to lend weight to his argument, Scullard points out that Cicero did not want to disturb Pompey at his Alban villa during the Compitalia. Cicero indeed declares that he wanted to arrive one day later because he did not want to intrude in family affairs (ne molestus familiae veniam). This argument might not be valid. First, reference is made here to a social group that in all probability did not define itself primarily through neighbourhood connections, as is in fact already pointed out by Pompey’s leisure in his villa in the country during the Compitalia. Second, Cicero is known to have been extremely attentive not to disturb his hosts. For example, he was ridiculed for his preference to use deversoria, his own small inns, where he rested during his travel to his villae, instead of staying at befriended elite people in the countryside – as was common practice according to the custom of capitalising personal hospitia. But Cicero insisted – in almost literally the same words – because he would rather avoid in this way to disturb his hosts “ne semper hospiti molestus sim”. Leaving this last, rather anecdotal, argument aside, we may however conclude that the evidence for a ‘familial’ aspect, although present, is not very strong, and this aspect had in any case no exclusive character. There are indications to regard the principal group involved in the Compitalia as a somewhat larger unit.

‘PUBLIC’: THE ORIGIN OF THE COMPITALIA ACCORDING TO DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS

Indeed, there is evidence that the Compitalia had a public character. In the first place, the fact that a praetor announced the festival underscores its public and civic pertinence. However, the most important source for the apparently ‘public’ character of the Compitalia is Dionysius of Halicarnassus. According to this Greek author writing in the Augustan period, the Compitalia were closely bound up with the administration of inhabitants in the city. King Servius Tullius (trad. 578-535 BC) is evoked as the instigator of the festival that actually resulted as a corollary of the division of the city into four regions.

“And he ordered that the citizens inhabiting each of the four regions should, like persons living in villages, neither take up another abode nor be enrolled elsewhere; and the levies of troops, the collection of taxes for military purposes, and the other services which every citizen was bound to offer to the commonwealth, he no longer based upon the three national tribes, as aforetime, but upon the four local tribes established by himself. And over each region he appointed commanders, like heads of

20 SCULLARD 1981, 59, 60.
21 It seems certain that the villa of Pompey, not Cicero’s own villa, is intended, as e.g. LATTE 1960, 91-92 assumes (to strengthen a similar argument; that the city-based owners did not interfere with the ritual on their own estates, which were instead presided by their vilici).
23 Cic. Fam. 7.23.3.
24 Gell. 10.24.3.
25 Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.14.2-4, translation adapted from Loeb; for the connection with slaves also present in Dionysius’ account cf. supra n. 9.
tribes or villages, whom he ordered to know what house each man lived in. After this he commanded that there should be erected in every street (στενωπούς) by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood chapels (καλιάδας) to heroes whose statues stood in front of the houses (‘ήρωσι προνοπίους), and he made a law that sacrifices should be performed to them every year, each family contributing a honey-cake ... This festival the Romans still continued to celebrate even in my day in the most solemn and sumptuous manner a few days after the Saturnalia, calling it the Compitalia, after the streets (στενωπών); for compita is their name for streets.”

Analogous to the discussion of the Paganalia, the sequence Dionysius employs is worthy of attention: King Servius begins with the establishment of four regions (or tribes), in which people are obliged to be enlisted for the military levy and the collection of taxes. Then the king proceeds by establishing ‘commanders’ who administered the whereabouts of the population. Only after this, Servius turns to the religious component of his reform: the erection of shrines in every street and the institution of a yearly ritual, the Compitalia. According to Dionysius therefore – and this is of central importance – the Compitalia were devised as a means to establish cohesion between the people who had happened to end up in the same administrative units.

At the same time the Compitalia appear as a means to count the inhabitants of each district. This could be distilled from the already mentioned account by Festus, in which it is described that during the night before the Compitalia woollen dolls were suspended from the compita. Each member of the compitum community had to be represented: the free men and women with male and female woollen dolls (effigies) and woollen balls (pilae) for slaves. Leaving aside questions on the rather shadowy origins of this rite, the significance of the rite as a possible means to register the number of inhabitants is clear. For just as in the Paganalia, where people, according to Dionysius, could be recognised by the donation of different coins, the pilae and effigies (as well as the cakes) of the Compitalia could serve well as an indication of the number of people living in each unit. The presence of a similar rite in the two festivals, which are both linked to the administration of the Roman population, can be no coincidence.28

This possible administrative aspect mentioned by Festus and Macrobius can perhaps be traced in the material record.29 In Pompeii, representations of dolls hanging from the altars are indeed documented (figs. 9.1a and b).30

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27 Cf. supra n. 19.
29 SPINAZZOLA 1953, 179-180, figs. 215-218 for dolls. In fig. 218 the thread from which the doll is hanging can be seen. It should be noted that the rite could as well be related to the offering of the dolls to the Lares by girls reaching adulthood: Pseudoacronis Schol. on Hor. Sat. 1.5.65-66 (cf. also the three asses offered by a nubile woman, infra n. 41). The intimate link between rites de passage and Compitalia becomes clear as well from a fragment from Varro’s Menippeae (Varro, Sat. Men. fr. 463 Buech. = Non. Marc. p. 538) from which can be deduced that apart from balls and/or dolls also hair nets (reticula) and breast bands (stróphia) were offered, which are the same gifts offered by maidens.
On stylistic grounds Thomas Fröhlich assigns none of these particular paintings to before the Augustan period. However, one painting showing dolls is dated to the early Augustan period, around 20 BC. If Fröhlich’s date is trustworthy this is significant, since it would attest to the practice of hanging dolls prior to the Augustan reforms, otherwise only known from fairly late writers.

Fig. 9.1a. Painted compitum with hanging dolls from altar, Pompeii, (Via dell’Abbondanza, SW corner of Ins. IX, 11) (SPINAZZOLA 1953, 178 fig. 216).

32 L29, late second style, dated to the around 20 BC (FRÖHLICH 1991, 70-72). The first phase of F66 is similarly dated, but the paintings on which the dolls appear are from later phases (FRÖHLICH 1991, 337).
33 Festus (late second century AD; the possible influence of earlier sources [Varro?] cannot be proved) and Macrobius (late fourth / fifth centuries AD). It should be stressed that it is in no way clear that this practice goes indeed back to archaic times, as often seems to be assumed, apparently on the grounds that it appears as a very ancient custom, also present in other Indo-European cultures (cf. DUMÉZIL 1961). Delos can apparently not help to stretch the chronology back to before 69 BC: to my knowledge this type of depiction of an altar with schematic dolls does not appear at the painted altars from Delos (based on a cursory examination of the illustrations in BULARD 1926a, BRUNEAU 1970, BEZERRA DE MENESES and SARIAN 1973, and HASENOHR 2003 (on the altar depicted at wall Γ1 [BEZERRA DE MENESES and SARIAN 1973, figs. 21-22] is a stroke, but this does not seem to represent a doll). But of course, this absence of evidence cannot conversely attest to the absence of an administrative aspect of the Compitalia in this period, and could be explained by the particular political status of Delos.
Whether or not the origin of this festival may be traced so far back as the time of Servius Tullius is a question to which no satisfactory answer can be expected, but the point to be made here is that religious rituals could play an explicit role in consolidating administrative control. Dionysius could apparently understand the installation of a cult and festival rather straightforwardly as a deliberate means to integrate people.

**VICUS AND COMPITUM**

Certainly, the **Compitalia** brought the people from a defined neighbourhood together. The **Compitalia** are generally considered to be the festival *par excellence* that was celebrated in the *vici* and was organised *vicatim*. The connection with the *vicus* becomes clear from the associations in texts and the context of the relevant passages, and is stated explicitly by Asconius when he assigns a role to *magistri vicorum* in the organisation of the *ludi Compitalicii*. The passage by Pliny the Elder commenting on the division of the city sustains this connection: *ipsa dividitur in regiones XIII, compita Larum CCLXV*. Apparently, *compita* could be used as a metaphor or rather as a *pars pro toto* for the urban *vici*. At Pompeii a *collegium* of *magistri vici et compiti* is documented by a text painted on a tufa block and dated to 47 and 46 BC. This juxtaposition seems to indicate that the tasks of a *magister vici* included, or could

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34 It may seem rather arbitrary from a historical point of view, even if ideologically, and therefore historiographically, it indeed makes sense: many administrative institutions are ascribed to this king who was himself believed to be the son of a *Lar* (Plin. HN 36.204). The strong connection between the institutions of Servius Tullius and the counting of citizens is thus clear, and has since long been appreciated: e.g. Flambard 1981, 156; Tarpin 2002, 106-111; contra Bert Lott 2004, 36, who limits himself to the statement that the “meaning of this enigmatic ceremony [scil. hanging dolls] is unclear”. Fraschetti 1990, 208 does not think either that a form of *census* is intended, pointing to the other ways of counting inhabitants mentioned in Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.15: the offering of coins for newborns to Juno Lucina, for dead to Libitina, for youth becoming men Juventas. All these measures appear however in row in Dionysius (first *Compitalia*, then *Paganalia*, then Lucina-Libitina-Juventas) leading up to “the wisest of all measures”: the first *census*, which suggests a relation. Cf. Chapter 8.

35 Asc. p. 7 C. Cf. *supra* n. 9. For the problems with different readings on the basis of the different interpunctuation that can be applied, cf. Fraschetti 1990, 228.

36 Plin HN 3.66.

37 *CIL* IV, 60; cf. *CIL* VI, 14180 for Augustan Rome.
include, the maintenance of the *compitum*. In Dionysius’ account, the ambiguity of the terms becomes clear as well: he states that ‘κομπίτους γάρ τούς στενωπούς καλούσι’; ‘for they call στενωπούς *compita’; στενωπός is the normal Greek translation of Latin *vicus*.

**‘PRIVATE’ AND ‘PUBLIC’ IN CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE**

Thus, for the city the connection between the organisation of the festival and the urban *vicus* is clear; it were *magistri* of these territorial districts that organised and presided over the event. It would be peculiar to assume that a ‘family’ cult was supervised by (semi)-officials, if not expressly to forge a connection between the (members of the) family and a larger entity. Therefore, without rejecting the ‘familial’ aspect, which is undeniably present, it is perhaps better to understand the organisation of the *Compitalia* as an attempt to integrate family and society and to strengthen the ties between private and civic life, already intertwined so deeply.

The situation in the countryside may seem different at first sight: in the *villa* imagined by Cato the *vilicus* took care of the extended household, of which the bailiff himself was part. Here then, it seems at first glance that the *Compitalia* indeed involved the household, or extended family, and not a larger group. Leaving the problems and degree of credibility of the Catonian *villa* for what they are, there are other reasons to doubt the ‘family’ character of the *Compitalia* at the *villa*. In the first place one could be inclined, at least from the late Republican period on, to regard the community of a large *villa*, both in population quantities, dimensions and maybe also in structural character, rather as a small *village* than as what one normally associates with the word *villa*. It is possible that this community was physically more or less self-contained, and that therefore further inclusion or integration with other civic structures was simply not feasible. For an archaeological view on the questions around public and private, we now turn to the island of Delos.

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38 The explicit mentioning of both elements could, though, attest to the situation that these functions were not exactly synonymous or interchangeable, but perhaps the commissioners of the text (in all probability the *magistri* themselves) wanted to boast as many aspects of their function as possible, therefore including a facet of their profession that was actually taken for granted.

39 MASON 1974, 85. HASENOHR 2003, 193 thinks that the confusion is due to the co-existence of the Lares’ epithets *Compitales* and *Viales*, and that their cult was sometimes celebrated in the streets, sometimes at the cross-roads.

40 This would indeed be possible, of course, if one accepts the function of the *collegia* as a kind of mock-officials, or as a ‘propédeutique civique’ in order to give slaves something similar to the ‘real world’ to do, thereby reinforcing the existing power structures. I do not think this vision can be upheld however, in light of the undeniable public and administrative aspects. cf. infra n. 69.

41 Other rites performed at the *compitum* than the *Compitalia* proper underline this function: Varro *apud* Non. 531 M mentions the custom for a bride to offer three *asses*: one to give the bridegroom, one to offer *in foco larium familiarum*, and one in *compito vicinale*. Cf. the observations by PICCALUGA 1961, 90: “l’offerta fatta in occasione di un matrimonio univa in un tutto unico e le divinità legate alla casa e al focolare, e quelle venerate al crocivia.”

42 Cf. further in this chapter on Cato.
Ch. 9. The Compitalia

Delos

The best material evidence with regard to the *Compitalia* in the Republican period is not to be found in Italy but on Delos. From the third century BC onward this commercial centre, part of the Cyclades, was frequented by Romans and other people from Italy and flourished especially after 166 BC, when it was declared a free harbour and put under the administration of Athens. Notwithstanding its specificity, it is in this context of a community of merchants from Italy that settled on the island that the *Compitalia* come best in focus.

Wall-paintings in and on houses and chapels show sacrificial scenes and other aspects of the cult, and inscriptions in Greek mention the existence of a college of *kompetaliastai*. At the so-called ‘agora des compétaliastes’, a temple was probably dedicated to the *Lares Compitales*. The people that feature in these inscriptions are slaves and freedmen, mostly from the Eastern Mediterranean. The people who are depicted are clearly Italians: they wear toga’s (white and sometimes the purple-banded *praetexta*) and *calcei* at their feet. Moreover, they sacrifice *ritu romano* with veiled head (figs. 9.2a and b). The most plausible interpretation is therefore that the Greek and Eastern slaves and freedmen of the inscriptions were servants to Italian families.

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43. In the context of Delos, the term ‘Italians’ will be used to indicate both ‘Romans’ and other peoples provenant from Italy.

44. The inscriptions are normally found on bases of statues and include dedications to the *theoi*, perhaps to be identified with the *Lares Compitales: Inscriptions de Délos* 1760-1766, 1768-1771. Other deities do not fail however: Heracles, Zeus Eleutherios, Dionysos, Pistis, and Roma feature as well.


Because the paintings are located both in and outside the houses, the connection between the archaeological evidence and the epigraphical attestation of the *Compitalia* is not straightforward. Exemplary for the debate on the *Compitalia*, the paintings were first interpreted as a domestic cult of the *Lares Familiares*, for, as the argument ran, the *Compitalia* were rather to be expected at cross-roads. Later this attribution was revised and the festival depicted at the doors was identified as the *Compitalia*, and its entirely public character stressed.

Recently, Claire Hasenohr has opted for a more sophisticated solution, and concludes that the *Compitalia* on Delos were celebrated both on a ‘private’ level at the shrines near and in houses and on a more ‘official’ level at the temple of the *Lares* in the agora. At this temple, the *kompetaliastai* would have made an official, communal sacrifice on behalf of the Italian community during the *Compitalia*. This “double célébration” could be explained by the particular socio-political conditions on Delos; the *Compitalia* would even have become a means of self-affirmation of the Italian community. Apparently, the expatriated Romans and other Italians used the *Compitalia* in order to secure or re-affirm social relations, and it is presumable that this ‘constructing’ of the community by ritual was even more pronounced in this alien context.

There is evidence to suggest that this ‘double’ nature of the *Compitalia* does not apply to Delos alone. Also in Pompeii a distinction between domestic *lararia* and the shrines outside the houses (and especially on the crossroads) has suggested a separation between the domestic cult of the *Lares Familiares*, and the public cult of the *Lares Compitales* linked with the administrative organisation of the city. In light of the Delian evidence however, Hasenohr questions this neat distinction. There are rather many altars – also in the same street – to be maintained by the *magistri*, and sometimes they seem to be related directly to the more important Pompeian *domus*. She suggests that at least some of the shrines outside the houses were put up by the inhabitants of these houses, rather than by the city administration.

Also the literary sources indicate a varied location of the cult: whereas Festus states that the dolls were suspended from the *compita*, Macrobius locates them ‘at every door’. One passage of Cato may possibly be related to this diversification of location.

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47 BULARD 1926b.
49 HASENOHR 2003, 170, 214.
50 HASENOHR 2003, 214-218.
51 Cf., e.g. COHEN 1985, for anthropological examples; see Chapter 1.
52 For *lararia* cf. FRÖHLICH 1991 with TYBOUT 1996; for *Compitalia* and administrative aspects CIL IV, 60; CIL IV, 2984; VAN ANDRINGA 2000, 73-75.
53 HASENOHR 2003, 192.
54 Fest. p. 108 L; Macrobr. Sat. 1.7.35; cf. Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.14.3: προνοοντος. According to Hasenohr, this would indicate that the *Lares* were not only venerated at the crossroads as *Lares Compitales*, but also in the streets (as *Lares Viales*) and on the walls of the houses (she avoids to attach a name to these last *Lares*) (HASENOHR 2003, 194). In this way, cross-roads, streets and houses are all present. It is perhaps not necessary to see the location of the *Lares* in such a structured way (cf.
even more directly. In prescribing the responsibilities and duties of the *vilicus*, the bailiff, Cato states that he *rem divinam nisi compitalibus in compito aut in foco ne faciat*. Most often, this is interpreted to mean something like: “the *vilicus* must not partake in religious rituals, if not at the crossroads during the *Compitalia*, or at the domestic hearth.”

But if we may understand that both *in compito* and *in foco* refer to *compitalibus*, which seems possible to me, in this passage both aspects of the same cult, that of the family hearth and of the *compitum* community, are present. A possible translation would then be: “the *vilicus* must not partake in religious rituals, if not during the *Compitalia*, [which he can perform] at the crossroads or at the domestic hearth.” Then, the ‘twofold’ character of the *Compitalia* could not be summarised better; partly to be celebrated at the domestic hearth, partly at the local *compitum*, where the congregated community was somewhat larger, probably consisting of more family units together.

‘PUBLIC’ AND ‘PRIVATE’, OR INTEGRATION OF BOTH?

In conclusion, it is tempting to suppose that the *Compitalia* were celebrated in Italy in similarly diverse locales as documented for Delos. Still, one has to remain cautious with the division in and distinction of ‘public’ or ‘official’ and ‘private’ or ‘domestic’ locales, which might seem to suggest the existence of two parallel but isolated worlds. I would therefore hesitate to define the diversity of the contexts in which the *Compitalia* were apparently celebrated as ‘double’. It is important to underscore that in no literary source on the *Compitalia* a distinction between location (*in compito, in foco, in compitis, in foribus*) is equated explicitly with public versus private contexts. Ultimately, the matter is much too problematic to decide to which degree liturgical paintings in the atrium of a *domus*, or altars against the façade are to be considered private and to what extent a *collegium* or club of freedmen and slaves, certainly of the

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55 Cato *Agr.* 5.3.
56 Loeb [1934] gives: “He must perform no religious rites, except on the occasion of the *Compitalia* at the cross-roads, or before the hearth.”
57 Maybe better than understanding *in compito* as referring alone to *compitalibus* and *in foco* instead referring directly back to *rem divinam*. *In compito* would not add any further information to *compitalibus* if not used in some way to distinguish it from *in foco*: apparently this did not speak for itself and a specification had to be made. I thank Dr. V. Hunink for advise on this issue.
58 Thus also the translation by GOUJARD 1975, 15: “qu’il ne fasse pas de sacrifice, sinon lors de la fête des carrefours, au carrefour ou au foyer, sans ordre du maître.”
59 BAKKER 1994 includes the *compita* (just as *mithraea*) in his work on private religion in Ostia, defining ‘private’ as restricted versus ‘public’ = unrestricted, the cult at the *compitum* being restricted to the neighbourhood (cf. also review by R. Laurence, *CLR* 48, 2 [1998], 444-445). But then, the definition of the *compita* could maybe better be ‘compartimentalised’ *vel sim.*, since every citizen ended up at a *compitum* at some place.
same houses, can be regarded ‘public’ or ‘official’, with the risk of projecting modern ideas of public and private upon probably different ancient realities.\(^{60}\)

This is not to say that we have to leave the subject in aporia. Let us shift focus from the question of public and private to what actually seems to have happened: a festival being celebrated both in the open air, at open places, on the corners, in the streets and inside houses; the same rituals being performed both at a temple at the agora\(^ {61}\) and in front of the houses.

What appears is a clear image of a ritual of integration: the ramification of the same rituals in diverse contexts engineers the integration of these contexts in one festival; and it seems that this constitutes the pointe in our dossier on the Compitalia. The already mentioned practice of hanging dolls and balls to represent every inhabitant on the compita and doors ties in with this integrative competence of the Compitalia. As has been underscored, these objects could serve as an indication of the number of people living in each unit. And as Dionysius informs us, this was – in his opinion – the very intention of the Compitalia. Again, the formation of a community becomes clear from this practice, a community that transcends, or more correctly includes, the level of the family.\(^ {62}\)

If the peculiarity of the Delian Compitalia lies not so much in their presence in different social contexts, it may be in two other, interrelated, aspects. In the first place, it is striking that a festival bound up intrinsically with the administrative division in vici, as becomes clear from the Italian evidence, is present in a context that evidently lacked such an administration. The decision of the Italians to take the festival with them to Delos was therefore in all probability a voluntary one. Apparently the festival was popular enough amongst and ‘internalised’ in many of the Italians by the time they came to Delos. The second striking aspect is the relatively early appearance in the archaeological record of this phenomenon: the Compitalia were already celebrated by the third quarter of the second century BC.\(^ {63}\)

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60 Inasmuch as a division in public and private is tenable at all in this context; this should not coincide neatly with spatial divisions.

61 For Pompeii, the so-called ‘Tempio dei Lari pubblici’ (VII 9.3) in the forum would have represented a similar situation, but this identification is actually based on no evidence (cf. FRÖHLICH 1991, 37). The identification is from MAU 1896, esp. 299-301; also rejected by e.g. COARELLI, LA ROCCA, DE VOS and DE VOS 1997, 163-165.

62 Cf. the observations by PICCALUGA 1961, esp. 89-90 on the Lares. A very direct statement on the all-embracing ambit of the Compitalia is made in Festus, if we accept the identification of the Laralia with the Compitalia, as Wissowa suggests (WISSOWA 1912, 149): (Fest. 253 L) popularia sacra sunt, ut ait Labeo, quae omnes cives faciunt, nec certis familias attributa sunt: Fornacalia, Parilia, Laralia, Porca praecidanea.

63 The liturgical paintings were regularly renewed, and Bruneau has on the basis of technical research calculated that for the house opposite the Maison de la Colline the first painting may originate from around 120 BC (BRUNEAU 1970, 619-620), not much later, at least at the end of the second century BC, a collegium of kompetaliastai was in action (615). Although the literary sources indicate a relatively early date, in Italy most archaeological evidence does not. Sources: Naevius, third century BC; Cato, first half second century BC, also Lucilius (6.252-253 WARMINGTON 1938, second century BC) probably refers to the Compitalia when speaking of “that slaves festival which cannot be expressed in hexameters”: PALMER 1976, 167-168. For what it is worth, Livy (4.30.10) mentions vicis
These considerations leave us with two options for a conclusion: if we believe Dionysius, the *Compitalia*, part and parcel of the administrative organisation of the city of Rome from their early beginnings on – possibly in the archaic period, or the fourth century BC, in relation with other administrative reforms – had by then been rooted so firmly in the annual cycle of festivals that they were celebrated independently from their administrative function. If, on the other hand, we hold that Dionysius’ account reflects merely the reality at the time he was writing, and that his statement on the antiquity of the institution is just an example of the (unintentional) invention of tradition, one has to suppose that the *Compitalia* were originally just a popular festival that only later – perhaps in the first century BC, under Caesar, and surely with Augustus⁶⁴ – acquired its administrative aspect (possibly together with its ‘tradition’).⁶⁵

In conclusion, the following can be said on the character of the community of cult of the *Compitalia*. The often expressed argument, that the *Compitalia* were largely a family feast, might miss the point. Neither is it necessary to regard them exclusively as an official cult, extraneous to domestic cult.⁶⁶ The Delian evidence testifies to the celebration of the *Compitalia* in both contexts, as Hasenohr has made clear. The evidence from Italy, and the Catonian passage, may indicate that the Delian situation was not exceptional in this respect. At least in Rome and in Pompeii the *Compitalia* were associated with administrative and/or political concerns. However, it is not clear if this politico-administrative connection was present from the very beginnings, as Dionysius would have it, or was added at a later point in time. The evidence does not lead us further back than Caesar.⁶⁷ Whereas its politico-administrative dimension for this period remains obscure, it is certain that the *Compitalia* were already part of Romano-Italic society in the second century BC. The festival could by then be used to consolidate and ‘construct’ the Romano-Italic community.⁶⁸ The *Compitalia* were essentially an integrative cult, inclusive rather than exclusive in character, being an official festival.⁶⁹

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sacellisque for 428 BC, which, if not an anachronism, may reflect an early connection between *vici* and religious shrines. Cf. Bert Lott 2004, 39-41 for discussion, cf. also infra.

⁶⁴ Fraschetti 1990, 206-207 proves, on the basis that the *Lares Augusti* and new *ludi* do not yet feature, that Dionysius describes the *Compitalia* from before the Augustan reform.

⁶⁵ The Servian tradition may originate with the early annalists, who may have presented him as the first *popularis*: Alfoldi 1973, 19.

⁶⁶ E.g. Bruneau 1970, 603 on the paintings outside the Delian houses: “elles commémorent la célébration des *Compitalia* qu’organisaient des individus de naissance grecque, mais affranchis ou esclaves des Roomai et établis dans l’île. Les peintures des autels n’ont donc rien à voir avec la religion domestique des Romains ou des Italiens,” with emphasis on the ethnic differences, but as well implicating a strong private and public distinction.

⁶⁷ For Rome, Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.14; for Pompeii CIL IV, 60 (the attestation of *magistri vici et compiti* is in itself no evidence for the administration of people, cf. however Jongman 1988, 295-310; with Mouritzen 1990).

⁶⁸ Indeed, as Hasenohr 2003, 218 states a “moyen d’affirmation de la puissance de la communauté italienne de Délos”.

⁶⁹ Linderski 1968, 107 (cf. the remarks in Linderski 1995, 645-647); Bert Lott 2004; contra Graedel 2002, 128-130. Without wanting to play down the ‘servile’ aspect of the *Compitalia*,
The Development of the Compitalia: From the Countryside to the City or vice versa?

“Das Fest trägt einen ländlichen Character,” Wissowa stated in 1901. In both ancient and modern texts on the Compitalia, a contradictory image arises with regard to the locale of the Compitalia. On the one hand, rustic elements are emphasised, whereas on the other an urban setting is attested by both the rioting in the 60s and 50s BC and the association with the urban plebs, as well as the association with the administrative division of the city. In order to make sense of this situation, presumably in combination with the assumption that the Compitalia rituals are of very ancient origin, modern research has tended to conceptualise a development over time of the festival. This development would have encompassed the implementation or adaptation of a rural festival celebrated by agricultural communities in an urban context. Along these lines Scullard states: “thus the state, as so often, developed its urban counterpart of what had originally been a country festival.”

Timothy Potter follows this idea, and seems to imagine the introduction of the Compitalia in the city in a rather straightforward manner as a result of migration: “It [scil. the Compitalia] was in origin an agricultural ceremony to propitiate the lar, or spirit that presided over each farm, and it is striking to see how the traditions of the countryside became incorporated into the life of the towns, to which so many rural folk migrated.”

Although this conception of the development of the Compitalia is often present in studies on the subject, for instance in the most recent exhaustive treatment of the Roman vici and their rituals, actual evidence for such a development from rural to urban is absent.

especially emphasised by Bömer, Flambard and others (followed by Jongman 1988; cf. also Tybout 1996, 366-370), who seem to understand the integrative function of the Compitalia especially in the sense that lower status groups were accommodated by allowing them to mimic civic structures (Flambard 1981, 166 speaks of a “propédeutique civique”, Jongman 1988, 297 of a “pseudo cursus honorum”), I would like to emphasise here that nevertheless, in the end, apparently all inhabitants; slaves, freedmen and citizens, were included, as is testified by the woollen dolls for free persons, balls for slaves. Especially the fact that the praetor announced the festival is significant: cf. Fraschetti 1990, 204. Cf. supra n. 9.

70 Wissowa 1901a, 791.

71 Scullard 1981, 58: “Their [scil. Compitalia] history spans a thousand years, from primitive agricultural beginnings, through ‘the solemn and sumptuous’ celebrations which Dionysius witnessed in Augustan Rome, and on to the late Empire”; Wissowa 1897, 1872: “seit unvordenklicher Zeit.” Cf. also Flambard 1981, 146, who sees the “cérémonie immémorale” of the Argei as the predecessor of the Compitalia, since Varro (Ling. 5.45-54) states that the sacraria Argeorum were connected to the division of the city, just as the Compitalia were later. Latte argues that the festival was older than the institution of the praetorship (Latte 1960, 91 n. 1).

72 Scullard 1981, 59 (= Fowler 1925, 294).

73 Potter 1987, 173.

74 Bert Lott 2004, 38: “it is unclear when the probably earlier agricultural Compitalia was first adapted to an urban setting and focused on neighborhoods rather than farms, but it must have been early in Roman history,” and further on vici: “Indeed the replication of rural districts in imagined subdivisions of the urban space with local voluntary associations like the vici in Rome is a common phenomenon in societies making the transition from a non-urban to an urban existence,” but cf. Tarpin 2002 and infra. Similar ideas on the development from agricultural to urban in e.g. Gradeel.
It should be stressed that nowhere is explicit mention made of the Compitalia as an exclusively rustic cult. Festivals that are indeed clearly connected with the countryside are the festivals of the Robigalia (in order to protect the crops from blight), the Fordicidia (the sacrifice of a pregnant cow to Tellus), the Cerealia and Vinalia. The Ambarvalia (lustration of the fields) and the Sementivae (the sowing of the seed) seem to have catered even more exclusively to the countryside. In my view however, the Compitalia do not belong to this group.75

Of course there are instances of a rustic setting of the Compitalia (for example in Cicero, who documents the custom of some of the happy few to escape from the city during the Compitalia, and in Cato for the rituals at his ideal villa), which confirm that the Compitalia were celebrated outside the city as well. But they do not prove an anteriority of supposedly ‘rural Compitalia’ with respect to a later urban variant.76

75 Contra Beard, North and Price 1998, 50 who list as “quite specifically rural festivals” Ambarvalia, Sementivae and Compitalia (strangely, because specifying that they were celebrated “both in Rome and in the countryside”) together because they would be “outside the civic structure of the city”, being feriae conceptivae (not at a fixed date). Most mobile festivals have indeed an agricultural character (“quasi tutte” Dumézil 1974 (1977), 480), but this circumstance cannot vice versa serve as a proof. It is true that the Compitalia could assume the character of a yearly celebration of the end of the agricultural season: according to a scholion at Persius (4.28; cf. infra n. 120 for text) the Compitalia were celebrated finita agricultura, but this – by the way rather late – assertion does obviously not attest to the origin of the Compitalia as an agricultural festival. On the problems with clear-cut definitions of festivals, cf. in general Beard, North and Price 1998, 47.

76 Commenting quite explicitly on the relation between city and countryside is the scholion on Persius 4.28: vel compita sunt non solum in urbe loca, sed etiam viae publicae ac diverticulae aliquorum confinium ..., which, if anything, seems to attest to the urban setting as the more ‘natural’ one rather than the rural setting, although in the context the agricultural aspect is highlighted. An overview of the principal literary sources: 1) Cato Agr. 57.1; Plin. HN 19.114; Prop. 4.1.23; Festus p. 108 L, 273 L; Auson. De feriis Romanis, 17-18 do not specify. Equally, Varro, Ling. 6.25 does not specify if the roads are outside the city, but one may suppose it. Suet. Aug. 31 mentions the Compitalia together with the Lupercalia and the Ludi saeculares, all restored by the princeps, but a specification of the locale is absent. 2) For an urban context: Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.14; the references by Cicero on Clodius relate to a deeply urban-plebejan context, cf. Flambard 1977; Flambard 1981. The statement by Aulus Gellius (10.24.3) that the Compitalia were announced by the praetor locates them in the city. Ovid. Fast. 5.145-146 and Macrob. Sat. 1.7.34 relates to the city. If the maxima ter centum totam delubra per urbem installed by Augustus according to Verg. Aen. 8.716 do relate to compita (but cf. supra n. 14) this is another case in point. 3) For a non-urban (which is not the same as rural) setting: Pers. 4.26-30, with the scholion ad loc. (cf. infra n. 120). Dolabella apparently also refers to a rural setting, but it is unclear if this text refers to a compitum: cf. infra n. 123. Cic. Leg. 2.19 contrasts the Larum sedes in agris with the urban delubra, and Wissowa 1901b, 793 thinks that with the first the sacella at the compita are meant (cf. Cic. Leg. 2.27). Maybe not surprisingly Verg. G. 2.382 refers to a rural context. The description by Philargyrius on this passage of the compita can be related to the countryside because it is specified that pagani agrestes go there (Philarg. Verg. G. 2.382). Cf. Hor. Epist. 1.1.49-51. Macrob. Sat. 1.16.6: mentions the Compitalia as one group together with the ‘rural’ festivals of the Sementivae and the Paganalia, being all feriae conceptivae. Bert Lott 2004, 33 n. 34, sees two passages of Cicero as referring to “the rural Compitalia” once for 59 BC at a villa in Antium (Att. 2.3), and once for 50 BC at a villa of Pompey (Att. 7.7.3). But these villae relate clearly more to an urban way of life with rich urban people enjoying their otium than to countryside religion.
The archaeological evidence cannot prove a transition from rural to urban either. *Compitum* shrines have been found exclusively in urban contexts in Rome, Delos, Pompeii and Ostia, the earliest dating to the second century BC.\(^{77}\) The identification of one extra-urban *compitum* at Tor de’ Cenci that would even go back as far as the seventh century BC is not very convincing, since this interpretation seems actually to rely on the sole fact that ritual remains (especially animal bones) and burials were found in connection with a cross-roads.\(^{78}\) I do not deny that such places could have had religious and/or ritual importance from early times on, but the existence of a *compitum* with the associated *Compitalia* is not attested here. So the earliest archaeological evidence for the *Compitalia* relates to an urban setting,\(^{79}\) and this urban connotation is secured for the last century of the Republic, and emphasised by Augustus.\(^{80}\) Neither were the *Compitalia* an exclusively *stadttrömisches* festival however, since there is clear evidence that the *Compitalia* were celebrated in the countryside as well. At the same time it should be emphasised that all evidence relating to the *Compitalia* from outside the city of Rome is located without exception, both in time and space, in *Roman* contexts or in contexts strongly influenced by Rome. Cato’s passage, for example, cannot be related to traditional Italic countryside ritual: rather, he refers to a specific Roman situation in the countryside, the *villa*. Many aspects of the *Compitalia* are actually best attested for ‘romanised’ Campania,\(^{81}\) and for Delos, equally under strong Roman influence.\(^{82}\) Thus, the *Compitalia* were also celebrated outside the city of Rome, and also in areas with a large Italic component of the population, but influenced strongly, at least politically and apparently culturally, by Rome.

To sum up, on the basis of direct archaeological or textual evidence it is impossible to argue that the *Compitalia* evolved from a rural to an urban cult.\(^{83}\) There is, in my view,

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Augustine relates that the shameful cult of Liber was celebrated at the *compita* in the countryside, but the festival significantly includes the city as the worshippers move from the rural shrines into the city: *De civ. D.* 7.21.

\(^{77}\) For a clear overview of Rome, Pompeii and Ostia see BAKKER 1994, 118-133; for Pompeii, cf. VAN ANDRINGA 2000.

\(^{78}\) BEDINI 1990 apparently tries to connect the burials with the interpretation of the *Lares* as the *Manes* of the dead (Samter’s interpretation: cf. supra n. 19): “presso di essi era infatti usanza seppellire i morti dei vici confinanti, rappresentando il Compitum un luogo di confine, una ‘soglia critica’ come il limite fra i due mondi dei vivi e dei morti” (122).

\(^{79}\) At Delos. It does not seem possible to distinguish whether the location of the scene described by Naevius is rural or urban; Naevius ap. Festus 230 M.

\(^{80}\) Cf. PHILLIPS III 1988, who thinks that it was especially in the rural areas that the festival persisted in late Roman times: “In its rural guise it would of course find favour with the pagans who still populated the countryside. In its urban manifestation of *genius*-worship of a pagan emperor it would irritate Christians” (384). BAKKER 1994, 195 thinks that from the period of the Soldier emperors onwards the cult declined.

\(^{81}\) JOHNSON 1933, esp. 118-123; VAN ANDRINGA 2000.

\(^{82}\) BRUNEAU 1970, 586-589. On the Delian *rhoomaioi* and *italikoi* cf. e.g. BRUNT 1971, 205-214; and esp. ADAMS 2002; MAVROJANNIS 1995 sees a very strong Roman influence on Delos (and even assumes the presence of *vici* there, without presenting any evidence however).

\(^{83}\) The discussion on the character and origin of the *Lares* is of course intimately related to this question, as Wissowa and others would like to interpret them as protection gods of the fields (cf.
no reason to exclude the possibility beforehand that the festival of the *Compitalia* was actually related in the first place to the Roman urban texture, and was only later transposed to other areas.

No evidence whatsoever can be related to pre-Roman or non-Roman Italic contexts. To be precise, this does not exclude the possibility that the *Compitalia* indeed had old agricultural roots before being incorporated in the city of Rome (maybe even during the urbanisation process itself), but I would suggest that the subsequent spread over Italy and beyond started from the urban model of Rome.

From the moment that the *Compitalia* were intrinsically associated with the institution of the *vicus*, one could propose that the development of the *Compitalia* was parallel to that of the *vicus*. As we have seen in Chapter 6, the development of the *vicus* was essentially an urban Roman one, and the subsequent spread of this Roman institution in the Roman territory therefore basically depended on the urban model as well.

What is to be made of the *Compitalia*, keeping the administrative aspect of the *Compitalia* in mind? Could it be possible that the *Compitalia* were not so much a harmless agricultural festival of the olden days, but were rather exported along with a new Roman administration of the conquered territories?

**The Compitum Shrines: Form and Location in City and Countryside**

It is time to take a look at the sacred place and its possible architectural elaboration itself. First the evidence for the actual physical location of the *compita* will be surveyed, and subsequently their different physical aspects.

**‘CROSSROADS’ AND SHRINES**

Some evidence regarding the location of the *compitum* has already been presented in the preceding analysis of the context of the *Compitalia* and will not be repeated here. It has become clear that the shrines where the festival was held were located both in the city of Rome and in the rest of Italy, and sometimes clearly outside urban structures. Usually, one speaks of the *Compitalia* as the festival of the ‘crossroads’. The actual location however, is not unequivocal. The *OLD* gives as the meaning of *compitum* “a

*supra*). But I believe it is more correct to separate this discussion from the evaluation of the contexts of the festival of the *Compitalia*, involving the *Lares Compitales*. Anyhow, some myths link the *Lares Compitales* directly to the city of Rome, such as Ovid. *Fast.* 2.610-616 (nymph Lara, daughter of *Tiber*, mother of *Lares Compitales*).

84 In such a way see *LAURENCE* 1994 and *VAN ANDRINGA* 2000 the introduction of the *vici* and *Compitalia* as following the installation of the Roman colony at Pompeii. The institution of the *Compitalia*, including the dedication of altars, accompanied the division of the city of Pompeii in *vici* with the founding of the Roman colony by Sulla (*LAURENCE* 1994, 39; *VAN ANDRINGA* 2000, 72-73: states “De toute évidence, les fêtes compitalices organisées dans la cité vesuvienne étaient calquées sur le modèle romain. Les cultes de carrefour furent vraisemblablement institués lors de l’établissement de la colonie, initiant alors une réorganisation de l’espace urbain”). Put simply, this would mean that the *vicus*-division and the *Compitalia* were exported from Rome to other cities. I see no reason to think that this was different in other areas, and especially, in non-urban contexts.

85 *TARPIN* 2002.
place where three or more roads meet” (cf. fig. 9.3). In almost every standard study on Roman religion the idea recurs that ‘the Romans’ believed every crossroads to be charged with spiritual energy, and this seems to derive from this specific understanding of *compitum*.

Fig. 9.3. A Pompeian painting showing a *compitum* with shrines (Casa della Fontana Piccola) (Dar.-Sag. II, 1429 fig. 1887).

A more precise definition of *compitum* specifies this ‘crossroads’ meaning however, in that it constitutes the place where different territories (*partes*) meet, which means that the shrines should not by definition be located at (a conjunction of) roads. In any case, they were located at a central point, and they served as a meeting place for the inhabitants of a local group of people. As has been seen this was the case in the cities, but this basic principle will not have been different in the countryside. For example, Cicero tells us that the farmers and their dependants met at shrines *in fundi villaeque conspectu*. It becomes clear that people of the land aggregated (*rustici celebrabant*; *ubi pagani agrestes bucina convocati solent inire concilia*) at these shrines, which underscores their communal function. I believe it is difficult to arrive at a more precise identification of the places where the *Compitalia* were celebrated in the countryside on the basis of the cited sources. Therefore, I will first discuss the much richer evidence

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86 Cf. schol. Pers. 4.28: *Compita sunt loca in quadrivìis…*
87 Philarg. on Verg. G. 2.382: *compita, ut Trebatìo placet, locus ex pluribus partibus in se vel in easdem partes ex se vias atque itinerà dirigens, sive is cum ara sive sine ara, sive sub tectò sive sub divò sit.*
88 Cic. Leg. 2.27, cf. *supra* n. 76.
89 schol. Pers. 4.28.
90 Philarg. on Verg. G. 2.382. Fowler (1925, 279, n. 2): “no doubt discussion about agricultural matters.”
91 According to Wissowa 1901b, 793, CIL VI, 29784 (*Via quae ducit / per agrum / Noniamum / a m(illiarior) XX devertic(ulo) / sinistrosus / per compitum / secus piscinam / in fundo / Decimiano / Thalamiano / iunctis debetur / ita uti hodie / in uso est*) would prove that the *compitum* is “ein Heiligtum des ländlichen pagus”. Apart from the somewhat confusing introduction of a *pagus* in this context, which is not mentioned, this inscription (found ‘sub Aventino’) does to my mind only indicate
of the urban contexts, and the physical forms the *compitum* shrines could assume there. In light of the conclusions on the urban contexts, we will return to the problem of the countryside shrines.

The location of compita in the city

Many *compitum* shrines located in urban contexts have been identified, but they were not always, as the modern *vulgata* would have it, located at crossroads. The *compita* found in Rome were located on streets and squares, the only certain *compitum* of Ostia stands on a square, and in Delos shrines were located both in streets outside of houses and on a square.\(^92\) *Compita* at Pompeii\(^93\) are located on streets and crossroads.\(^94\) Whereas at Rome the *compitum* would constitute the cult centre for each *vicus*, this situation may have been different in Pompeii because the number of altars there is too high, and it has been suggested that the altars formed boundary markers of the *vicus*.\(^95\) The idea exists that before the Augustan reform the number of *compitum* shrines was much larger, and that Augustus reduced their number in order to avoid the uprisings associated with their personnel in the mid-first century BC.\(^96\) This could mean that the equalling of *vicus = compitum* by Pliny might represent the centralisation of the cult under Augustus.\(^97\)

Architecture

Apart from its indicating a location, the word *compitum* could also mean the sacred structure sometimes present at this location.\(^98\) Whereas some ancient written sources are rather enigmatic with respect to the physical appearance of the *compitum* shrines, from archaeology a rather familiar image arises. The archaeological remains that can

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\(^93\) LAURENCE 1994; VAN ANDRINGA 2000.

\(^94\) A surmised shrine of the *Lares* on the *forum* can be dismissed however: cf. *supra* n. 61.

\(^95\) LAURENCE 1994, 41. BAKKER 1994, 197: “Apparently the *compita* were here, [scil. at Pompeii] contrary to Rome, as numerous as in the Republican period and still meant for the *geitones*. Consequently the relation between the shrines and the *vici* was different from that in Rome: the Pompeian *vici* could have more than one shrine.” Van Andringa seems to think that the shrines included a larger entity than the *vicus* (*regiones*?): “De toute évidence, et le constat est au moins valable pour l’époque impériale, les sanctuaires de carrefour délimitent et définissent des circonscriptions administratives plus larges, englobant le réseau des *vici*” (2000, 75).

\(^96\) E.g. BAKKER 1994, 196: “If the number of shrines was smaller, the amount of officials was smaller, and thus control easier,” and LAURENCE 1994, cf. also preceding note.

\(^97\) This does, of course, not undermine the existing connection, which must not be 1:1, between *compitum* and *vicus*. LAURENCE 1994, 42 detects this process as well in Pompeii: “the identity of the inhabitants of each *vicus* became concentrated upon the centralised shrine of the *Lares Augusti* rather than the altars of the *Lares Compitales* that marked the boundaries of the pre-Augustan *vici* of their ancestors.” It should be noted however that for Rome there is no evidence that there were more *compitum* shrines in one *vicus* before 73 AD.

\(^98\) One could suspect that structures could sometimes, by extension, also be called *compitum* by association because of their function and/or appearance, even if they lacked a ‘formal’ location at a *compitum = crossroads / border point*, but this is impossible to prove.
securely be identified as compita (by inscriptions and/or images of Compitalia-rites) do all point to rather ‘normal’ shrines. Interestingly, there is a plethora of different forms of these compitum shrines. In Pompeii most shrines that can be interpreted as a compitum consist of painted façades and/or masonry altars. Delos also presents altars and/or paintings, and there is one central compitum shrine on the ‘agora des compétaliastes’, which had the aspect of a small round temple. In Rome some compitum shrines have been unearthed. One likely compitum shrine has been identified in Via di S. Martino ai Monti. It presents two phases, the most recent of which is dated by an inscription to the Augustan period. The scarce remains of the pre-Augustan phase, not dated more precisely, consisted of a square structure of travertine blocks, possibly an altar. The Augustan phase presents a podium of tufa blocks lined with marble slabs and a flight of marble steps. Behind the podium was a large base, with another base or cippus on top, with the inscription. Although not much is known, the absence of evidence for a superstructure could suggest an open-air (sub divo) shrine.

The Compitum Acilium, identified by an inscription from 5 BC mentioning mag(istri) vici compiti Acili, was found during the construction of the Via dei Fori Imperiali (figs. 9.4a and b). Its architectural form is known quite well: a podium (2.80 x 2.38 x 1.40 m) lined with travertine slabs was accessible by a flight of four steps. On the rear part of the podium was a cella, in front two columns supported a roof. In short, the aspect of this compitum shrine is very much that of a small temple, although no altar was found in front of it.

100 Hasenohr 2003.
102 For an overview of the Pompeian, Ostian and Roman evidence see Bakker 1994, 124-132, which is used here together with information in the relevant entries of LTUR, DONDIN-PAYRE 1987, Pisani Sartorio 1988, van Andringa 2000. Pisani Sartorio (esp. 31-32) identifies several mostly small rectangular structures on the Forma Urbis Romae as compita. Although sometimes suggestive, I do not consider these here since their status as compitum can not be proved and they can not add much to our architectural knowledge.
103 Gatti 1888.
104 Dated 10 BC, recording the erection of a statue to Mercurius, which can be related to the distribution of statues vicatim by Augustus: Suet. Aug. 57; this forms the basis for the identification as a compitum.
105 AE 1964, 74. Dondin-Payre 1987; Coarelli 1983, 39-40, fig. 8 for location.
106 Bakker 1994, 125.
Ch. 9. The Compitalia

Fig. 9.4a. The compitum Acilium (COLINI 1961-1962, 152 fig. 7).

Fig. 9.4b. The compitum Acilium (adapted from COLINI 1961-1962, 155 fig. 12).

An inscription mentioning the reconstruction of an aedicula reg(ionis) VIII Vico Vestae from AD 233 has been connected to a structure built against the Atrium Vestae on the forum.\(^\text{107}\) The structure consists of a podium with two columns supporting a superstructure: indeed an aedicula or ‘small temple’.\(^\text{108}\) During the excavations led by Andrea Carandini on the Palatine, near the cross-roads of the clivus Palatinus and the sacra via some remains of opus caementicium have been identified as a compitum shrine\(^\text{109}\) similar to the compitum Acilium, although one should bear in mind that its beautiful full-colour reconstruction drawings rely rather on this last mentioned

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\(^{107}\) CIL VI, 30960. LANCIANI 1882, 229-231; COARELLI 1983, 265-270.

\(^{108}\) Another compitum shrine with a similar rectangular plan has been noticed near the temples of Mater Matuta and Fortuna, at the vicus Iugarius, but almost nothing has been published: COARELLI 1988a, 244; for location, cf. 235 fig. 48.

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compitum than on the remains actually found. On the basis of a rather direct association with the textual sources on the repression of the collegia, the construction of the compitum is ascribed to Clodius himself (!) “per ingraziarsi il favore della plebe”, and would therefore date to 58-53 BC.

In Ostia inscriptions attest to the existence of compitum shrines there, but the only architectural remains which can be related securely to a compitum shrine consist of the marble altar at the Piazza dei Lari. The round altar was dedicated to the Lares Vicin[ales] by a magister or magistri. Directly south of the altar is a basin, north of the altar is a building with several entrances (some closed off in later periods). Jan Theo Bakker thinks this building behind the altar is connected with the altar (fig. 9.5), and that the ensemble would form a compitum shrine or building, relating the entrances to the somewhat enigmatic qualifications in ancient authors of compita as ‘pervia’ or ‘pertusa’. In this respect, Bakker follows Laura Holland in her interpretation of Persius’ story of a miser who, celebrating the Compitalia, iugum pertusa ad compita figit. The scholiast on Persius explains that it was the custom that farmers fixed broken yokes to the compitum as a sign of completed agricultural labour, or because the instrument was considered sacred. Holland points out that a yoke does not break easily, and that something else is meant: that the iugum refers to a sacred structure that was fixed in the ground, perhaps two uprights and a crossbeam, forming some sort of symbolic sacred gate. Bakker thinks that the structure north of the altar on the Piazza dei Lari at Ostia “with its many wide entrances, is actually to be understood as consisting of six gates, and that it belongs to the class of the pervia compita”. This would correspond to the description of the scholiast on Persius, who emphasises that compita could be accessible from all four sides, and that they were quasi turres; ‘almost towers’.

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110 Actually only a rectangular structure in opus caementicium, and another small piece of this opus in front of it was found; no trace of the roof or the columns has been found, not even the original height of the ‘podium’.
111 In any case, the structure was destroyed some time between the time of Caesar and 7 BC. M.L. Gualandi in: CARANDINI and PAPI 1999 (2005), 126.
113 The structure on the Bivio del Castrum, at a major crossroads, cannot be connected firmly to the relevant inscriptions: BAKKER 1994, 121-122.
114 CIL XIV, 4298.
116 Cf. Pers. 4.28; cf. infra n. 120 for text.
117 HOLLAND 1937.
118 BAKKER 1994, 200.
119 Cf. e.g. Lee and BARR 1987, 125.
120 schol. Pers. 4.28: Qui quotiens diem festum aratro fixo in compitis celebrat, timens seriolam vini aperire, acetum potat. Compita sunt loca in quadriviiis, quasi turres, ubi sacrificia finita agricultura rustici celebrant. Merito pertusa, quia per omnes quattuor partes pateant, vel vetusta. Aut compita propria 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 confinii, ubi aedicularae consecratur patentes, ideo pertusa ad compita; in his fracta iuga ab agricolis ponuntur velut emeriti et elaborati operis indicium, sive quod omne instrumentum existiment
A suggestive description by Dolabella, in the course of an explanation on how to establish boundaries within his general guidelines for land surveyors has often been related to *compita*:

“Boundaries relating to shrines ought to be examined in the following way. If the shrine is positioned where four boundaries meet and establishes the boundary for four properties, look for four altars; moreover the shrine has four entrances so that anyone can enter through his own land to conduct a sacrifice…Now, if the shrine is between three properties, it has three entrances, if between two, then it has two entrances.”

In a manuscript dating to the late ninth century AD (Gud. lat. 105) an illustration of this quadrilateral sanctuary is given (fig. 9.6). This illustration cannot be dated with certainty. The Gudianus manuscript is a copy of a copy of an illustrated manuscript of the early ninth century (Pal. lat. 1564). Although it seems plausible that some illustrations to the gromatic texts served a didactic purpose, and may date to the period of the writers collected in the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum*, it is impossible to determine the date of the illustrations with any precision. In any case, they will probably have been altered in the process of copying.

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sacrum. Vel compita dicuntur, ad quae plura itinera competunt. Quamvis rei divinae operatur: Nec sic tamen ab avaritia discedit: timetque dolium aperire diu servatum.

121 L 302.1: Fines templares sic quaeris debent; ut si in quadrifinio est positus et quattuor possessionibus finem faciet. Quattuor aras quaeris, et aedes quattuor ingressus habet ideo ut ad sacrificium quisquis per agrum suum intraret. Quod si desertum fuerit templum, aras sic quaeris. Longe a templo quaeris pedibus XV, et invenis velut fundamenta aliqua. Quod se inter tres, tria ingressa habet: inter duos dua ingressa habet templum.

122 Cf. the discussion in CAMPBELL 2000, xxi-xxvi.
Wissowa thought Dolabella’s text described a *compitum*: “An diesen Compitalsacella wird alljährlich die Festfeier der *Compitalia* abgehalten, aber auch sonst bilden sie für die umwohnenden Landleute den sacralen Mittelpunkt.” However, nowhere in Dolabella’s text is stated explicitly that a *compitum* is meant; rather, it is surprising that the word is not mentioned.  

Perhaps with the exception of Ostia, a structure fitting the descriptions of Persius’ scholiast and Dolabella has never been attested archaeologically. Moreover, one has to be careful not to read too much into the scholiion on Persius. The word *pertusa* used by Persius could also have been used to indicate the ‘shabbiness’ of the structure: *pertusa* in the sense of ‘rotten’ or ‘perforated’: such is the interpretation by Walter Kissel, who states that the interpretation of the scholiast of *pertusa* (*quia per omnes quattuor partes pateant*) is “weder sprachlich noch sachlich akzeptabel: Für *pertundere* bzw. *pertusus* lässt sich nirgendwo die wertneutrale Bedeutung “offen” nachweisen ... Richtiger wird man *pertusa* daher in seiner gängigen Bedeutung “durchlöchert” fassen ... und auf den ruinösen Zustand des *sacellum* beziehen.”  

Actually, the scholiast gives this option himself: “*pertusa*; because it is open on all four sides or because it is old”: *vel vetusta*. The interpretation of *pertusa* as indicating the shabbiness rather than the architecture of the structure would also fit quite well in the context of Persius’ satirical description of a pinchpenny. Although, then, the explicit explanation of ‘open on all four sides’ could be dismissed, the Calpurnian *compita pervia* remain. Calpurnius does not describe unequivocally the *shrines* however; he could have used *compitum*
here in the sense of ‘cross-roads’, and if indeed a shrine is intended, *pervia* could just indicate an association with the *location* of the shrine. Maybe it is best here, in the absence of conclusive archaeological and textual evidence, to leave the ‘class of the *pervia compita*’ for what it is.

Indeed, from other literary evidence, it becomes clear that the discrepancy between the shrines found in archaeology on the one hand and in texts on the other need not be so impressive in the end. From both inscriptions and texts appears that a *compitum* could be called *sacellum*, a freestanding altar with an enclosure (*saeptum*), or *aedicula*. An *aedicula* is literally a ‘small temple’, but can designate also other sacred structures or realities, such as a chapel containing a statue.

The variety of architectural forms apparent from the archaeological evidence finds direct confirmation in the description of *compita* by Philargyrius on Vergil’s *Georgics* 2.382: *compita ... sive cum ara sive sine ara, sive sub tecto sive sub di(v)o sit*: ‘be it with or without (permanent) altar, with or without roof.’ It is this freedom in the choice of what structure or place to use to celebrate the *Compitalia* that I would like to stress here: for above all, both archaeological and literary sources suggest that the *compitum* shrine had no uniform architectural form. Apparently, the physical appearance *did not matter* very much, as long as the place could fulfil its ritual functions. This observation is important for the following.

The absence of *compita* in the countryside

From both the literary and the epigraphical evidence it has become clear that the *Compitalia* were also celebrated in the countryside of Italy, and that there were indeed *compitum* shrines. However, in the whole of Italy none has been found.

In one of the few studies on agricultural cults in the countryside, Claudia Lega notes this discrepancy between the literary sources mentioning various rural and agricultural cults, and the silence from archaeology. In a situation like this, two options are usually put forward; the first is that archaeology has not yet provided, or is in general unable to provide, positive evidence of the rural or agricultural cults. The other is that the textual sources are wrong. Without doubt, the most logical conclusion in this case is to blame the poor state of archaeological knowledge or even its fundamental inability to furnish this evidence. Thus, according to Lega, these rites are just archaeologically invisible, because probably “si svolgessero su un altare provvisorio innalzato presso i campi e [che] le offerte fossero unicamente doni in natura. Questo spiegherebbe la perdita totale delle testimonianze archeologiche. Gli stessi *compita*, dove, come si è detto, gli abitanti delle zone agricole circostanti si recavano a celebrare

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129 Cf. Gell. 7.12.5.
130 Cf. MENICHETTI 2005.
131 Cf. supra esp. n. 76 for literary sources, infra for inscriptions.
132 Rejecting the identification of a structure at Tor de’ Cenci as a *compitum*, cf. supra n. 78.
133 LEGA 1995, 124.
la fine del raccolto, dovevano essere per la maggior parte strutture in materiale deperibile o piccole costruzioni andate completamente distrutte” (underscore TS).134

It is indeed perfectly possible that the absence of archaeological evidence indicates that these cults did not leave traces. Maybe it is fairer to say that there might still be some archaeological remains, but that until now nothing was found. That not even one rural *compitum* shrine has been found, should then be explained as coincidental. Still, it is somewhat surprising that a rite that apparently was celebrated by the whole population of Roman Italy did not leave any material trace.

This is odd, especially because inscriptions from Italy record elements that clearly do not belong to perishable constructions: apart from the rather explicit inscription mentioning *compitum ex saxo fecere*,135 an inscription dated 1 BC from Verona mentions the rebuilding of a *compitum* with a tectum, parietes, valvas and limen.136 Another inscription, from Picenum, records the building of a *crepidinem circum cumpitum tectum pertextum*: a podium or sidewalk (*crepido*) around a *compitum* and the roof of the *compitum* from the end of the second century or the beginning of the first century BC.137 From Beneventum comes an inscription recording the building of a *porticum cum apparatorio et compitum*.138 At least the first two seem to suggest the form of a small temple. Although it is impossible to be sure about the urban or extra-urban location of these examples (maybe the *compitum* from Picenum could be extra-urban, but this is not sure, whereas the *compitum* from Beneventum seems, because of its relation with a *lustratio* of a *pagus*, definitely extra-urban), it shows at least that *compitum* shrines in different areas of Italy were not inferior to those of Rome as regards architectural elaboration. Just to put things in perspective: most ‘normal’ temples in Italy do not yield any, let alone more elaborate inscriptions than the ones just cited.

Now, as has been said above, normally the solution to a discrepancy between archaeology and literary sources is to blame one of the two of ‘being wrong’. But maybe there is a third option, and that is to ask whether we are looking for the right model, or rather: for the right structures. The (literary) discussion on the scholion on Persius with its fascinating ‘*turres*’ and multiple entrances, and the consequent quest to retrieve this structure archaeologically may have attracted too much attention, without leaving room for other possibilities.

There is of course a danger in reasoning from silence. But we could ask ourselves what places were most eligible for the celebration of the *Compitalia*, or, as Philargyrius states, the places *ubi pagani agrestes bucina convocati solent inire concilia*; the places

134 LEGA 1995, 124. Cf. also KISSEL 1990, 537, who thinks they were mostly made of wood.  
135 *CIL* V, 844 from Aquileia. KISSEL 1990 sees the stone construction conversely as a “besonders hervorzuhebende Ausnahme” (537), proving that normally they were not made of durable materials, but cf. the other inscriptions I mention here. The fact that diverse inscriptions mention a rebuilding of *compta* (537, n. 112) proves nothing: most temple complexes have been rebuilt as well, but were not, therefore, made previously of perishable materials. 
136 *CIL* V, 3257.  
137 *CIL* F, 3078; CANCRINI, DELPLACE and MARENGO 2001, 154-156.  
138 *CIL* IX, 1618.
where the rural population, called together by a horn, used to meet'.\textsuperscript{139} Once one is not looking for a tower-like structure with multiple entrances, but accepts that virtually all known bigger \textit{compitum} shrines bore close resemblance to, or simply were, small temples, another option comes into view. Although as yet no conclusive evidence can be presented, I would make the cautious suggestion that the \textit{Compitalia} could have been, in part, celebrated at the ‘Italic’ sanctuaries dispersed over the Italian countryside.

This type of sanctuary – often of modest dimensions – formed, as has been argued in the previous chapters, the meeting place of old for the rural population. One could imagine that at least some of the pre-existing sanctuaries could have been adapted to serve this new purpose for the community, together with smaller altars or shrines of which virtually no trace has been left. It is also possible that new sanctuaries were erected if necessary: we should not exclude that some sanctuaries that have been regarded as ‘Italic’ are actually new constructions within the new Roman organisation of the landscape, as has been discussed in Chapter 7.

Perhaps strengthening this suggestion of re-use is the fact that in some ‘Italic’ temples evidence for a later \textit{Lares}-cult has been found. In the Italic sanctuary at Torre di Satriano which flourished in the fourth to third centuries BC in Lucanian territory for instance, a statuette of a \textit{Lar} and the introduction of oil lamps in the sanctuary have been connected with a cult of the \textit{Lares} and/or \textit{Mater Larum} in Roman times.\textsuperscript{140} The oil lamps would be explained by the fact that the \textit{Lares} cult was held noctu, as Festus states. The statuette, dated to the second or third quarter of the first century AD, indeed follows the iconography of a \textit{Lar Compitalis}, dancing and with a \textit{rhyton} in one hand, a \textit{patera} in the other (fig. 9.7).\textsuperscript{141} Suggestive in this regard is that also in many other ‘Italic’ sanctuaries oil lamps of especially the Roman period have been found.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{139} Phil. Verg. \textit{G}. 2.382.

\textsuperscript{140} S. De Vincenzo in: \textit{OSANNA} and \textit{SICA} 2005, 452-457. \textit{Lararia} have been found in the temple of Venus at Pompeii (wall paintings in the substruction rooms of the terraces). Cf. the contributions by Emmanuele Curti and Antonella Lepone on the “giornata di studi sul tempio di Venere a Pompei”, D.A.I. Rom, 4-5-2006, which will be published.

\textsuperscript{141} S. De Vincenzo in: \textit{OSANNA} and \textit{SICA} 2005, 198-199, 452.

\textsuperscript{142} E.g. as well at Campochiaro: \textit{CAMPOCHIARO} 1982, 72-75, and at San Giovanni in Galdo, cf. Chapter 5. But this could of course — as the scale of the phenomenon may suggest — reflect a more general change in ritual as well, or refer to other rites held noctu.
Although archaeological research has tended to neglect the later phases of Italic sanctuaries (which are often not even or only summarily published), a large number of these sanctuaries were frequented in the Roman period as well. This has been seen in the present study in the case of S. Giovanni in Galdo, where a substantial Roman phase is documented, as well (cf. Chapter 5). The character of this use in Roman times is poorly understood. If the suggestion is right that the ‘rural’ Compitalia could have been celebrated here at least in some cases, the interpretation of the re-use or even revival of Italic sanctuaries in the Roman period would become more facetted.

An inscription from Atina perhaps commemorating a dedication to the typical Italic goddess Mefitis and the Lares would be especially interesting as an illustration of the complexity of the processes at work.\(^\text{143}\) Aspects of the discussion on continuity and change between pre-Roman and Roman period would come to mind: for example, the shift to oil lamps in the Roman period attests to different cult practices, whereas continuity could be seen in the place of worship.

\textit{Vicus and sanctuary}

Perhaps, the strong relationship attested between some sanctuaries and rural vici could suggest that the festival associated with the institution of the \textit{vicus par excellence} was celebrated there. As has been seen in Chapters 4 and 7, sanctuaries in the internal Italic regions have often been described as ‘\textit{vicus}’ (here in the meaning of ‘village’ rather than urban ward) or ‘\textit{pagus}’ sanctuaries, and interpreted as part of a ‘typically Italic’ rural system, the so-called \textit{pagus-vicus} system. However, as has been made clear, it

\(^{143}\text{CIL X, 5048; CALISTI 2006, 267.}\)
seems in fact probable that both pagus and vicus were rather Roman institutions related to the administration of the conquered territory (cf. Chapter 6). This implies that the sanctuaries related to vici, that are documented already for the third century BC, served ‘Roman’ (or ‘romanised’) communities rather than ‘indigenous Italic’ groups, as has been argued in Chapter 7. In the previous chapter, it has been shown that, as to the pagus, one could have little doubt that in accordance with the installation of one or more pagi the Paganalia were instigated. Similarly, it could be suggested that the Compitalia were celebrated in the Roman rural vici in the Italian countryside. One could imagine how in this way a Roman rite served to enhance and reformulate the small new ‘Roman’ community; a situation which may not have been so different from that documented for Delos.

Conclusion: Roman Institutions and Ritual in the Italian Countryside

The Compitalia were the most important festival associated with the vici. Dionysius of Halicarnassus says that the festival was installed together with the vici in the regal period, as a means of administration and control of the urban population. It has often been regarded as a family or slave festival, but actually it involved all inhabitants of the vicus, and in the city of Rome the festival was announced by the praetor. This suggests an ambit that both exceeds and includes the private or personal sphere. The archaeological evidence supports this all-encapsulating characteristic of the festival: liturgical paintings and shrines related to the Compitalia are found in both domestic (houses) and public (temples on squares) contexts.

Evidence for the hypothesis that the Compitalia festival had agricultural or rural origins and was only later incorporated in or transferred to the city is meagre. Of course, it is possible that the Roman urban cult originated as a Roman agricultural ritual, but this must then have been in a period beyond our vision. From the moment that we are able to recognise the Compitalia as such its development rather seems to have taken the opposite direction, i.e. from the city of Rome outwards to other cities, and the countryside. The Compitalia seem indeed to be associated strongly with urban contexts, where they appear in our record first. Interestingly, their appearance is quite early: contemporary literary passages indicate that the Compitalia existed in Rome at least by the third century BC, and the archaeological and epigraphical evidence, especially from Delos, but also from Picenum, shows that it is possible to identify the Compitalia being celebrated at least by the second half of the second century BC outside Rome. It is therefore possible that the Compitalia were disseminated along with Roman control, perhaps in accordance with the institution of the vicus. This reading is in some way in line with Dionysius’ account.

In the urban centres of Rome, Pompeii, Ostia and Delos diverse compita (i.e. compitum shrines) have been identified. The literary evidence on the physical aspect of compitum shrines is equally diverse. Leaving out the discussion on the compita pervia,
enigmatic buildings with multiple entrances, but perhaps based on a wrong understanding of Persius by his scholiast, it can be concluded from both archaeology and literary sources that almost every sacred structure would do for the celebration of the *Compitalia*. The more elaborate *compitum* shrines, as those excavated in Rome and some attested epigraphically elsewhere, actually had the aspect of small temples. Despite the fact that the *Compitalia* were clearly celebrated also outside urban structures, *compitum* shrines have never been found in the countryside. It is possible that this is due to a lack of archaeological research or poor visibility, if it is assumed that these structures were constructed of perishable materials. It may also be suggested that some ‘Italic’ sanctuaries served as the structures were the Roman festival of the *Compitalia* was celebrated. Especially sanctuaries that epigraphically demonstrate an intimate link with one or more rural *vici* could be possible candidates, which would explain the references to the rural *Compitalia* and its Roman urban origin at the same time.