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A Roman cult in the Italian countryside? The *Compitalia* and the shrines of the *Lares Compitales*

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Abstract

The Roman religious festival of the *Compitalia* ('cross-roads festival') was celebrated in both city and countryside. It is generally 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. In this paper 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. It is not known where the *Compitalia* were celebrated in the countryside. It will be suggested that ancient 'Italic' sanctuaries have been re-used for celebrating the Roman rite of the *Compitalia*, apparently by now functioning within a Roman administrative and religious system.*

the separation between city cult and family or farm cult should not be exaggerated (Beard/North/Price 1998, 50)

INTRODUCTION. 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 Compitalia memento. Balineum calferi 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').¹ 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 contribution is to delineate a possible 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, the very existence of which tends to be minimised in recent studies.²

After a short introduction of the *Compitalia* the attention will be focused on three main aspects: 1) 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'.³ 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.

- 2) 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 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. It will be argued that 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 2nd century BC.
- 3) 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 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 re-used 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,⁴ and as has been seen Cicero mused on strolls.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷

As to the cult personnel, *magistri* who were allowed to wear the *toga praetexta* presided over the *Compitalia*.⁸ For the rustic environment, Cato (*Agr.* 5.3) informs us 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.⁹

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 can explain the suppression of the *collegia* and the connected *ludi Compitalicii* in 64 BC by the senate.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Between 12 and 7 BC Augustus restructured the city in fourteen urban regions and an unknown number of *vici*.¹² A number of 265 *vici* becomes clear from the census of 73 AD.¹³ The objects of veneration were two *Lares* who are now associated with the *Genius Augusti*.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ In the same vein, Augustus rededicated the old temple of the *Lares in summa Sacra Via*.¹⁶ 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 (vicorum)* and centred upon *compita*, the cult places of the *vici*, it is time to turn to some specific elements of the ritual and the festival.

1. 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 (cf. *infra* §3). 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 review briefly 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.¹⁷ To some, it has appeared that this aspect of veneration of the dead should be linked to an ancestor cult.¹⁸ 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*).

Also, 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'), Howard Scullard emphasises that the *Compitalia* 'still remained very much a family affair'.¹⁹ 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*).²⁰

It can be argued however that this argument is not valid. Firstly, 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*. Secondly, 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 persons in the countryside, - as was common practice according to the custom of capitalising personal *hospitia*.²¹ 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*'.²²

Leaving this last argument, maybe of too an anecdotal character to be seriously considered, aside, it is however possible to conclude that the evidence for a 'familial' aspect, however present, is not very strong and has 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 character.²³ 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. 575-535 BC) is evoked as the instigator of the festival that actually resulted as a corollary of the division of the city into four regions.²⁴

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 aforesaid, but upon the four local tribes established by himself. And over each region he appointed commanders, like heads of 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 (ἡρώσι προνοπίοις), 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.

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 front of the houses 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 that 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 puppets 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 puppets (*effigies*) and woollen balls (*pilae*) for slaves.²⁵ Leaving aside questions on the rather shadowy origins of this rite,²⁶ 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.²⁷

This possible administrative aspect mentioned by Festus and Macrobius can perhaps be traced in the material record.²⁸ In Pompeii, representations of puppets hanging from the altars are indeed documented (*figs. 1a-b*).²⁹ On stylistic grounds Thomas Fröhlich assigns none of these particular paintings to before the Augustan period.³⁰ One painting however that shows puppets is dated to the early Augustan period, around 20 BC.³¹ If Fröhlich's date is trustworthy this is significant, since it would attest to the practice of hanging puppets prior to the Augustan reforms, otherwise only known from fairly late writers.³²

Whether or not the origin of this festival may be traced so far back as the time of Servius Tullius

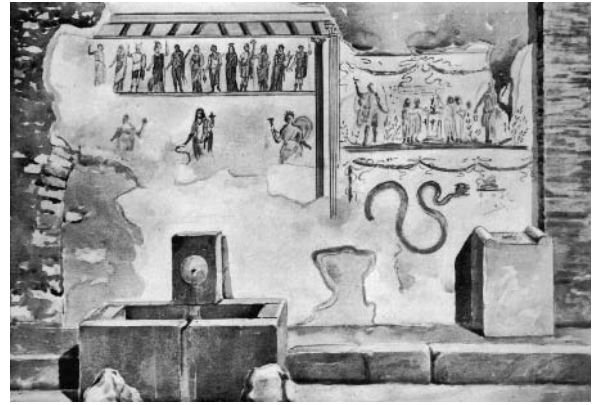


Fig. 1 a and b. Painted *compitum* with hanging puppets from altar, Pompeii at crossroads (Via dell' *Abbondanza*, SW corner of *Ins. IX, 11*) (Spinazzola 1953 p. 178 fig 216 and p. 179 fig. 217).

is a question to which no satisfactory answer can be expected,³³ but the point to be made here is that religious rituals could play an explicit role in consolidating state 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*. But what was this relationship between *vicus* and *Compitalia* precisely? The connection with the *vicus* becomes clear from the associations in texts and the context of the relevant passages, but is stated explicitly by Asconius when he assigns a role to *magistri vicorum* in the organisation of the *ludi Compitalicii*.³⁴ The passage by Pliny the Elder commenting on the division of the city sustains this connection: *ipsa dividitur in*

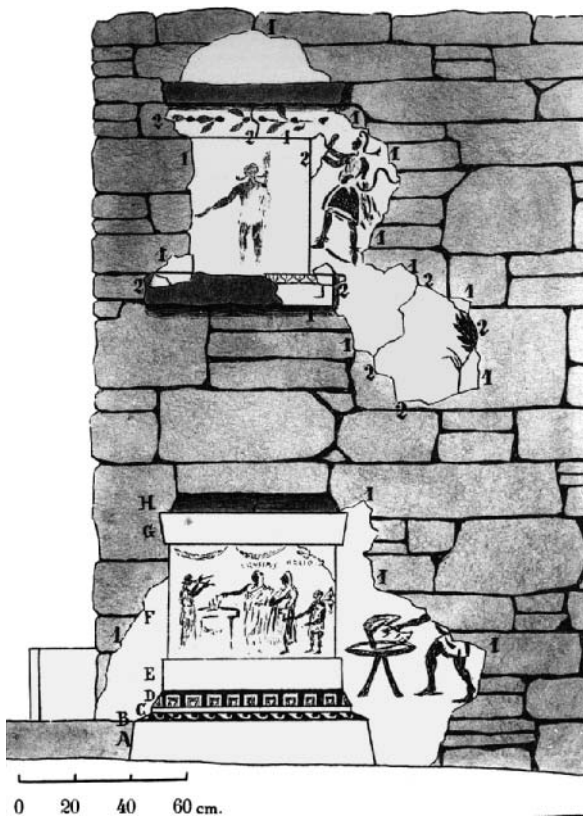


Fig. 2 a and b. Delos, painted altar indicating a sacrifice ritu romano (Bulard 1926b pl. XVII and XXIV).

*regiones XIII, compita Larum CCLXV.*³⁵ 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.³⁶ This juxtaposition seems to indicate that the tasks of a *magister vici* included, or could include, the maintenance of the *compitum*.³⁷ In Dionysius' account, the ambiguity of the terms

becomes clear as well: he states that 'κομπίτους γὰρ τοὺς στενωποὺς καλοῦσι'; 'for they call στενωποὺς *compita*'; στενωπός is the normal Greek translation of Latin *vicus*.³⁸

'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 presided by (semi)-officials,³⁹ if not expressly to forge a connection between the (members of the) family and a larger entity. Without therefore 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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹ For an archaeological view on the questions around public and private, we now turn to the island of Delos.

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 3rd century BC onward this commercial centre, part of the Cyclades, was frequented by Romans and other people from Italy⁴² 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 *kompétaliastai*.⁴³ At the so-called 'agora des compétaliastes', a temple was probably dedicated to the *Lares Compitales*.⁴⁴ The persons that feature in these inscriptions are slaves and freedmen, mostly from the Eastern Mediterranean. The people that 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. 2a-b). The most plausible interpretation is therefore that the Greek and Eastern slaves and freedmen of the inscriptions were servants to Italian families.⁴⁵

Because the paintings are located both in and outside the houses, the connection between the archaeological evidence and the epigraphical attestation of the *Compitalia* was not straightforward. Exemplary for the debate on the *Compitalia*, the paintings were first interpreted as a domestic cult of the *Lares Familiares*,⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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* on the agora.⁴⁸ At this temple, the *kompétaliastai* would have made an official, communal sacrifice on behalf of the Italian community during the *Compitalia*.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

Italy

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.⁵² In the 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.⁵³

Also the literary sources indicate a varied location of the cult: whereas Festus states that the puppets were suspended from the *compita*, Macrobius locates them 'at every door'.⁵⁴ One passage of Cato may possibly be related to this diversification of location 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*.⁵⁵ 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'.⁵⁶

But if we may understand that both *in compito* and *in foco* refer to *compitalibus*, which seems possible to me,⁵⁷ 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'.⁵⁸ 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. But one still has to remain cautious with the division in and distinction of 'public' or 'official' and 'private' or 'domestic' locales, which may 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'.⁵⁹ 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 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 on 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 agora⁶¹ and in front of the houses.

What appears is a clear image of a ritual of integration. Indeed, 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 puppets and balls for every inhabitant on the *compita* and doors ties in with this integrative competence of the *Compitalia*. As has been underscored, the images could serve as an indication of the number of people living in each unit. And as Dionysius is so kind to inform 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 2nd century BC.⁶³

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 4th 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 - maybe in the 1st 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 especially 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 2nd 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

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *COMPITALIA*: FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE TO THE CITY OR *VICE VERSA*?

'Das Fest trägt einen ländlichen Character', Georg Wissowa stated in 1901.⁷⁰ 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 60's and 50's 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, maybe in combination with the assumption that the *Compitalia* rituals are of very ancient origin,⁷¹ 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'.⁷²

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.⁷³ Although this conception of the development of the *Compitalia* is often present in studies on the subject, for example in the most recent exhaustive treatment of the Roman *vici* and their rituals,⁷⁴ actual evidence for such a development from rural to urban is absent.

It should be stressed that nowhere explicit mention is 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 a supposedly 'rural *Compitalia*' with respect to a later urban variant.⁷⁶

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 2nd century BC.⁷⁷ The identification of one extra-urban *compitum* at Tor de Cenci that would even go back as far as the 7th 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 crossroads.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 *stadt-römisches* 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, 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 institute of the *vicus*, one could propose that the development of the *Compitalia* was parallel to that of the *vicus*.⁸⁴ Now, Michel Tarpin has shown that 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.⁸⁵ 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?⁸⁶

3. THE *COMPITUM*-SHRINES: FORM AND LOCATION

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 consequently 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. In summary, 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. Generally, 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 place where three or more roads meet' (fig. 3). In almost every standard study on Roman religion the idea recurs that 'the Romans' believed every crossroad to be charged with spiritual energy, and this seems to derive from this specific understanding of *compitum*.⁸⁷

A more precise definition of *compitum* specifies this 'crossroad' 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.⁸⁸ Placed on crossroads or not, they were in any case located at a central point, for 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 differ-

ent in the countryside. This becomes clear, for example, from Cicero, according to whom the farmers and their dependants met at shrines *in fundi villaeque conspectu*.⁸⁹ More generally, it becomes clear that people of the land aggregated (*rustici celebrabant*;⁹⁰ *ubi pagani agrestes bucina convocati solent inire concilia*⁹¹) 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.⁹² Therefore, we will first discuss the much richer evidence of the urban contexts, and the physical forms the *compitum*-shrines could assume there. In the 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 (every) crossroads. The *compita* found in Rome were located on streets and squares, and the only certain *compitum* stands on a square, and in Delos *compitalia*-shrines were located both in streets in accordance with houses and on a square.⁹³ *Compita* at Pompeii⁹⁴ are located on streets and crossroads.⁹⁵ 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*.⁹⁶ 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-1st century BC.⁹⁷ This could mean that the equalling of *vicus* = *compitum* by Pliny might represent the centralisation of the cult under Augustus.⁹⁸

Architecture

Apart from its indicating a location, the word *compitum* could also mean the sacred structure sometimes present at this location.⁹⁹ 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 securely be identified as *compita* (by inscriptions or images of *Compitalia*-rites) do all point to

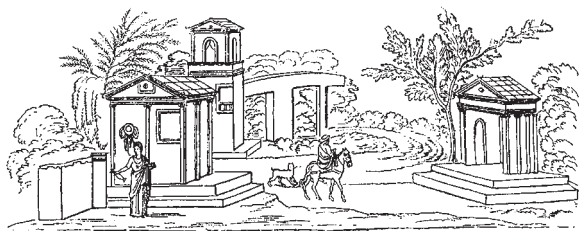


Fig. 3. A Pompeian painting with a *compitum* with chapels (Dar.-Sag. II, p. 1429 fig. 1887).

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.¹⁰⁰ Delos also presents altars and/or paintings,¹⁰¹ and there is one central *compitum*-shrine on the 'agora des compétal-iastes', which had the aspect of a small round temple.¹⁰²

In Rome some *compitum*-shrines have been unearthed.¹⁰³ One likely *compitum*-shrine has been identified in Via di S. Martino ai Monti.¹⁰⁴ It presents two phases, the most recent of which is dated by an inscription to the Augustan period.¹⁰⁵ 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. 4a-b).¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷ 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.

An inscription mentioning the reconstruction of an *aedicula regionis* VIII *Vico Vestae* from 233 AD has been connected to a structure built against the *Atrium Vestae* on the forum.¹⁰⁸ The structure consists of a podium with two columns supporting a superstructure: indeed an *aedicula* or 'small temple'.¹⁰⁹ 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*-shrine¹¹⁰ similar to the *compitum Acilium*, although one should bear in mind that its beautiful full-colour reconstruction drawings rely rather on this last mentioned *compitum* than on the remains actually found.¹¹¹ 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 ingrarsi il favore della plebe', and would therefore date to 58-53 BC.¹¹²

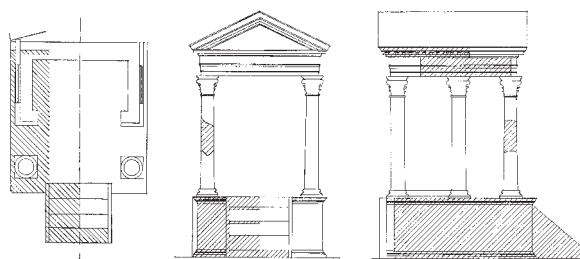


Fig. 4 a and b. The *Compitum Acilium* (Colini 1961-1962 p. 152 fig. 7 and p. 155 fig. 12).

In Ostia inscriptions attest to the existence of *compitum*-shrines there,¹¹³ but the only architectural remains which can be related securely to a *compitum*-shrine consist of the marble altar at the Piazza dei Lari.¹¹⁴ The round altar was dedicated to the *Lares Vicin[ales]* by a *magister* or *magistri*.¹¹⁵ Directly south of the altar is a basin, north of the altar is a building with several entrances (some closed off in later periods). J.T. Bakker thinks this building behind the altar is connected with the altar (fig. 5), and that the ensemble would form a *compitum*-shrine/building, relating the entrances to the somewhat enigmatic qualifications in ancient authors of *compita* as '*pervia*' or '*pertusa*'.¹¹⁶ In this respect, Bakker follows L.A. 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.¹¹⁷ 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, maybe two uprights and a crossbeam, forming some sort of symbolic sacred

gate.¹¹⁸ 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*’.¹¹⁹ This would correspond to the description of the scholiast on Persius, who emphasises that *compita* could be accessible from all four sides,¹²⁰ and that they were *quasi turres*; ‘almost towers’.¹²¹

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.¹²²

In a manuscript dating to the late 9th century AD (Gud. lat. 105) an illustration of this quadrilateral sanctuary is given (fig. 6).

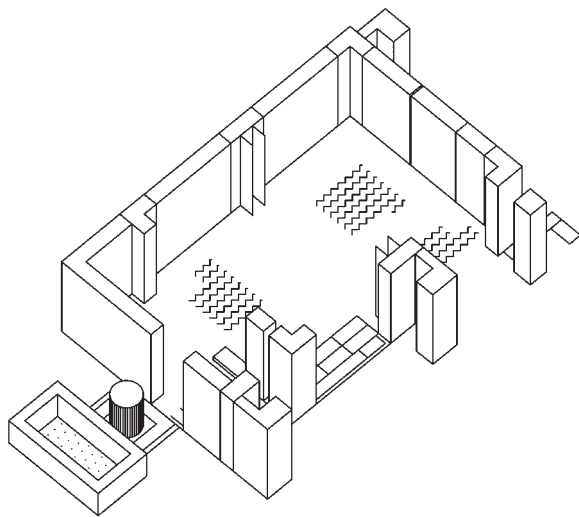


Fig. 5. A ‘*compitum pervium*’ at Ostia? (Bakker 1994, p. 119 fig. 17).

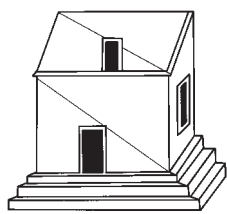


Fig. 6. Illustration of Dolabella’s text in Gudianus manuscript (drawing René Reijnen after Campbell 2000 p. 310 ill. 200).

This illustration cannot be dated with certainty. The Gudianus manuscript is a copy of a copy of an illustrated manuscript of the early 9th century (Pal. lat. 1564). Although it seems plausible that some illustrations to the gromatic texts served a didactical 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.¹²³

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.¹²⁴

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 scholion on Persius either. 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.’¹²⁵ Actually, the scholiast gives this option himself: ‘*pertusa*; because it is open on all four sides or because it is old’: *vel vetusta*.¹²⁶

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.¹²⁷ Although, then, the explicit explanation of ‘open on all four sides’ could be dismissed, the Calpurnian *compita pervia* remain.¹²⁸ Calpurnius does not describe unequivocally the shrines however; it could well be that *compitum* is used here in the sense of ‘cross-roads’,¹²⁹ and if indeed a shrine is intended, *pervia* could as well 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 archaeology and texts need not to 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.¹³⁰ Actually, 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 is 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.¹³¹ 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.¹³² However, in the whole of Italy none has been found.¹³³

In one of the very few studies on agricultural cults in the countryside, Claudia Lega notes this discrepancy between the literary sources that mention various rural and agricultural cults, and the silence from archaeology.¹³⁴ 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 la fine del raccolto, dovevano essere

per la maggior parte strutture in materiale deperibile o piccole costruzioni andate completamente distrutte' (underscore TS).¹³⁵

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*,¹³⁶ an inscription dated 1 BC from Verona mentions the rebuilding of a *compitum* with a *tectum*, *parietes*, *valvae* and *limen*.¹³⁷ 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 2nd century or the beginning of the 1st century BC.¹³⁸ From Beneventum comes an inscription recording the building of a *porticum cum apparatorio et compitum*.¹³⁹

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 answer 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 moreover the *iugum*, and the consequent quest to retrieve this structure archaeologically may have attracted too much attention, without leaving room for other possibilities.



Fig. 7. Lar Compitalis from the Lucanian sanctuary of Torre di Satriano (Osanna/Sica 2005, p.456 fig. 125).



Fig. 8. Lamp from the Samnite sanctuary of San Giovanni in Galdo, Colle Rimontato; lamps feature often in the Roman phases of sanctuaries. (excavations A. Di Niro; photo A. Dekker).

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 'where the rural population, called

together by a horn, used to meet'.¹⁴⁰ Once one is not looking for a tower-like structure with multiple entrances, but accepts that virtually all known bigger *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 *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 the meeting place of old for the rural population. Located mostly in rural places, these public sanctuaries were important for the pre-Roman peoples of Italy for socio-political as well as religious purposes, and indeed performed a pivotal role within Italic society.¹⁴¹ 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.¹⁴² Perhaps strengthening this suggestion is the fact that in some 'Italic' temples evidence for a later *Lares*-cult has been found. In the Italic sanctuary at Torre di Satriano which flourished in the 4th to 3rd centuries BC in Lucanian territory for example, a statuette of a *Lar* and the introduction of oil lamps in the sanctuary have been connected with a cult of the *Lares* and/or *Mater Larum* in Roman times.¹⁴³ The oil lamps would be explained by the fact that the *Lares* cult was held *noctu*, as Festus states. The statuette, dated to the second or third quarter of the 1st century AD, indeed follows the iconography of a *Lar Compitalis*, dancing and with a *rhyton* in one hand, a *patera* in the other (fig. 7).¹⁴⁴ Suggestive in this regard is that also in many other 'Italic' sanctuaries oil lamps of the Roman period have been found (fig. 8).¹⁴⁵

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. 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 reuse or even revival of Italic sanctuaries in the Roman period would become more faceted.

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.¹⁴⁶ Aspects of the discussion on continuity and change between pre-Roman and Roman period would come to mind: for example, the shift to the dedication of oil lamps in the Roman period attests to different cult practices, whereas continuity could be seen in the place of worship.

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 *vicus* par excellence was celebrated there. Sanctuaries in the internal Italic regions have often been described as '*vicus*' sanctuaries (here in the meaning of 'village' rather than urban ward) or '*pagus*' sanctuaries, the *pagus* being a territorial district.¹⁴⁷ The general idea is that sanctuaries fulfilled a central social and political role in the rural areas, in the absence of urban amenities such as the forum.

To indicate such a 'typically Italic' rural system with dispersed farms and villages the term '*sistema paganico-vicano*' *vel sim.* has been coined. However, recent studies have problematised both *pagus* and *vicus* as reflecting pre-Roman concepts as well as the relation between the two.¹⁴⁸ It seems in fact probable that both *pagus* and *vicus* were rather Roman institutions meant to administer the conquered territory.

This would implicate that the sanctuaries related to *vici*, that are documented already for the 3rd century BC, served 'Roman' (or 'romanised') communities rather than 'indigenous Italic' groups. As for 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.¹⁴⁹ One could imagine how in this way a Roman rite served to enhance and reformulate the small 'Roman' community; a situation which may not have been so different from that documented for Delos.

In that case, an interesting reversal of the conceptualisation of so-called *vicus*-sanctuaries would be established: whereas these have traditionally been interpreted as typical elements of an 'indigenous Italic' pattern of settlement, in this scenario they would have functioned within a basically Roman system.

With regard to the administrative aspect of the *Compitalia* and, for that matter, the *vicus*-system, i.e. the possible function of the festival to count inhabitants,¹⁵⁰ it could be suggested that this must

not *per se* implicate an innovation. Being the major central places within Italic society, it could well be imagined that the counting of inhabitants (by the *censors* or Oscan *kenszurs*?) took place at Italic sanctuaries well before the municipalisation or installation of *vici*.¹⁵¹

CONCLUSION

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 entirely public (temples on squares) contexts.

Although it is often assumed that the *Compitalia* were an agricultural, rural cult later absorbed by the city, evidence for this is meagre: it is still 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 3rd 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 2nd century BC outside Rome. It is therefore possible that the *Compitalia* were disseminated along with Roman control, maybe 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 *com-*

pita pervia, enigmatic buildings with multiple entrances, but maybe 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.

Although it is clear that the *Compitalia* were also celebrated 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 where the Roman festival of the *Compitalia* was celebrated. Also, sanctuaries that epigraphically demonstrate an intimate link with one or more rural *vici* could be possible candidates. This hypothesis could stimulate further research on the vexed question of the 'religious romanisation' of Italy, apparently at work already before the Social War.

NOTES

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- 1 2.3.5, translation Loeb.
 - 2 Cf. for the debate De Cazanove 2000 with Glinister 2006.
 - 3 Scullard 1981, 60.
 - 4 Cf. the alternative etymology from '*compotando, id est simul bibendo*' in schol. Pers. 4.28.
 - 5 Cic. *Att.* 2.3.4. L.B. van der Meer suggests that with the *ambulatio* the *lustratio* may be meant, rather than 'strolls'.
 - 6 Gell. 10.24.3.
 - 7 Dion. Hal. 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).
 - 8 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, 1981; Frascchetti 1990; Tarpin 2002; Bert Lott 2004. *On the date*: it is clear that at least from the middle of the 1st century BC on *magistri vicorum* did exist (contra Frascchetti): cf. *CIL* IV, 60 which lists magistrates for a Pompeian *vicus* for 47-46 BC, and *CIL* VI, 1324; *CIL* I², 2514, a column mentioning *magistri veici* datable around the 50's BC from Rome (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 of *magister vici* 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 festival they organised as well. Flambard (1981, 157) estimates that 3/4 of the *magistri* known to us through inscriptions were slaves or freedmen; he sees the *Compitalia* therefore as a specific 'slave-festival', or as a 'propédeutique civique' (166, cf. Dion. Hal. 4.14), a learning school for slaves and freedmen to learn to behave like real Roman citizens (followed by Jongman 1988, 297-298; cf. Bömer 1957 esp. 32-56). It seems however that, at least during the *Compitalia*, *magistri vici* held 'not just semi- or unofficial positions, but rather positions recognised as part of the civic and religious administration of the city': Bert Lott 2004, 43. Although, at least as results from the late Republican and early Imperial evidence, personnel was recruited from the lower echelons of society, it appears that within this range, they occupied a relatively elevated position, as is revealed for example by the costs of being in office (cf. Patterson 2006, 252-263).

- 9 Indeed, *CIL* V, 7739 from Liguria seems to confirm this privilege: here, a *vilicus* dedicates a *comp(itum)* [et] *aram* to the *Lares*.
- 10 Cf. on the subject: Flambard 1977, 1981; Frascchetti 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.
- 11 Cf. e.g. Alföldi 1973; Frascchetti 1990, 204-273.
- 12 Suet. *Aug.* 30.
- 13 Plin. *NH* 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.
- 14 For altars and *aediculae*: Alföldi 1973, 31-36; Hano 1986.
- 15 Cf. Beard/North/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.
- 16 *Res Gestae* 19.2. cf. Ziolkowski 1992, 97-98.
- 17 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 seroorum tot effigies quot essent liberi ponebantur ut vivos parcerent et essent his pilis et simulacris contenti*. Cf. Macrobi. *Sat.* 1.7.34-35, describing the hanging of puppets from the *compita* during the festival. There has been much discussion on the credibility of the interpretation of the puppets (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'.

- ¹⁸ 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, 1902, 166-177 and Samter 1901, 105-123; Samter 1907; Laing 1921; Tabeling 1932. See now Scheid 1990, 587-598; Coarelli 1983, 265-282.
- ¹⁹ Scullard 1981, 59, 60.
- ²⁰ 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, that were in turn presided by their *vilici*).
- ²¹ For *deversoria*: Cic. *Att.* 10.5.3; 11.5.2; 14.8.1; ridiculisation: Cic. *Fam.* 12.20. Cf. Pfeilschifter 2006, 134 n. 69.
- ²² Cic. *Fam.* 7.23.3.
- ²³ Gell. 10.24.3.
- ²⁴ Dion. Hal. 4.14.2-4, translation adapted from Loeb; for the connection with slaves also present in Dionysius' account cf. n. 8.
- ²⁵ Fest. p.108 L, p.273 L; Macrobius. *Sat.* 1.17.35, cf. n. 17 for text.
- ²⁶ Cf. *supra* n. 18.
- ²⁷ Cf. Delatte 1937; Holland 1937, 439; Dumézil 1961; Flambard 1981.
- ²⁸ Spinazzola 1953, 179-180, figs. 215-218 for puppets. On fig. 218 the thread from which the puppet is hanging can be seen. It should be noted that the rite could as well be related to the offering of the puppets 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, n. 40). The intimate link between rites of 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 (*strophia*) were offered, which are the same gifts offered by maidens before wedding to the *Lares*, Venus, and Fortuna Virgo (Samter 1907, 379-380; cf. Torelli 1984, 97).
- ²⁹ On two façade paintings: Fröhlich 1991, F29 and F66; Domestic shrines: Helbig 1868, 56, 60. Fröhlich 1991, 34; Genius altars: L1, L37, L82, L83; Snake altars: L24, L26, L29, L61, L81, L94, L98.
- ³⁰ Fröhlich 1991, 68-109. But cf. Tybout 1996, 362-364 for the problems with dating.
- ³¹ L29, dated to the late second style around 20 BC (Fröhlich 1991, 70-72). The first phase of F66 is similarly dated, but the paintings on which the puppets appear are from later phases (Fröhlich 1991, 337).
- ³² Festus (late 2nd century AD; the possible influence of earlier sources (Varro?) cannot be proved) and Macrobius (late 4th/5th century 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 puppets does not appear at the painted altars from Delos (based on a cursory examination of the illustrations in Bulard 1926, Bruneau 1970, Bezerra de Meneses-Sarian 1973 and Hasenohr 2003 (Bezerra de Meneses-Sarian 1973: on the altar depicted at wall Γ/1 fig. 21 and 22 is a stroke, but this does not seem to represent a puppet). But of course, this absence of evidence cannot conversely attest to the absence of an administrative aspect of the *Compitalia* before 69 BC, and could be explained by the particular political status of Delos.
- ³³ It may seem rather arbitrary from a historical point of view, even if it ideologically, and therefore historiographically, indeed makes sense: many administrative institutions are ascribed to this king who was himself believed to be the son of a *Lar* (Plin. *NH* 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 refrains himself to the statement that the 'meaning of this enigmatic ceremony [scil. hanging puppets] is unclear'. Frascchetti 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. 4.15: the offering of coins for newborns to Juno Lucina, for dead to Libitina, for youth becoming men to Juventas. All these measures appear however in row at Dionysius (first *Compitalia*, then *Paganalia*, then Lucina-Libitina-Juventas) leading up to 'the wisest of all measures': the first *census*, which suggests a relation.
- ³⁴ Asc. p.7 C. Cf. n. 8. For the problems with different readings on the basis of the different interpunctuation that can be applied cf. Frascchetti 1990, 228.
- ³⁵ Plin. *NH* 3.66.
- ³⁶ *CIL* IV, 60; cf. *CIL* VI, 14180 for Augustan Rome.
- ³⁷ 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.
- ³⁸ 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.
- ³⁹ 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 as the 'real world' to do, thereby reinforcing the existing power structures. I do not think this vision can be upheld however, in the light of the undeniable public and administrative aspects. cf. n. 69.
- ⁴⁰ 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 lararium 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 crociviva'.
- ⁴¹ It may however be precisely in Cato's words that an integration of the more private, family context and a somewhat larger context appears, if we accept a reading of Cato which will be presented below.
- ⁴² In the context of Delos, the term 'Italians' will be used to indicate both 'Romans' and other peoples provenant from Italy.
- ⁴³ 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.
- ⁴⁴ Hasenohr 2001.

- ⁴⁵ Bruneau 1970, 617-620.
- ⁴⁶ Bulard 1926b.
- ⁴⁷ Bruneau 1970, 589-620; esp. 603, 613 on the non-domestic character.
- ⁴⁸ Hasenohr 2003, 170, 214.
- ⁴⁹ Hasenohr 2003, 214.
- ⁵⁰ Hasenohr 2003, 214-218.
- ⁵¹ Cf. e.g. Cohen 1985 for anthropological examples.
- ⁵² For *lararia* cf. Fröhlich 1991 with Tybout 1996; for *Compitalia* and administrative aspects *CIL* IV, 60; *CIL* I², 2984; van Andringa 2000, 73-75.
- ⁵³ Hasenohr 2003, 192.
- ⁵⁴ Fest. p. 108 L; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.7.35; cf. Dion. Hal. 4.14.3: *προνόπιος*. According to Hasenohr, this would indicate that the *Lares* were not only venerated at the cross-roads 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. *infra*), but the main line of reasoning is convincing. Hasenohr uses the Italian evidence for both Delos and Italy (esp. Pompeii), but also emphasises the specificity of Delos.
- 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 any way *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. V. Hunink, who prepares a translation of Cato's works, thinks my reading is syntactically possible, but emphasises that it is improbable that the *vilicus* could not attend to the hearth at any occasion other than the *Compitalia*. Most ritual activities in Cato are however performed by the proprietor.
- 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, *CIR* 48, 2 (1998), 444-445). But then, the definition of the *compita* could maybe better be 'compartmentalised' *vel sim.*, as every citizen ended up at a *compitum* at some place. Admittedly, my reading of Cato's passage could be seen to point in this direction, but it would be misinformed to see his statement as an indication of an *opposition* between both contexts.
- ⁶⁰ Inasmuch 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 publici' (VII 9.3) on 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 *et al.* 1997, 163-165.
- ⁶² Cf. the observations by Piccaluga 1961, esp. 89-90 on the *Lares*. A very direct statement on the family-exceeding ambit of the *Compitalia* is made in Festus, if we accept the identification of the *Laralia* with the *Compitalia*, as Wissowa suggests (1912, 149): (Fest. 253 L) *popularia sacra sunt, ut ait Labeo, quae omnes cives faciunt, nec certis familiis 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 2nd century BC, a collegium of *compitaliastai* was in action (Bruneau 1970, 615). Although the literary sources indicate a relatively early date, in Italy most archaeological evidence does not. Sources: Naevius, 3rd century BC; Cato, first half 2nd century BC, also Lucilius (6.252-253 Warmington, 2nd 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 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 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*: Alföldi 1973, 19.
- ⁶⁶ Cf. 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 Roomaioi 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. 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 Mouritsen 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* Gradel 2002, 128-130. Without wanting to play down the 'servile' aspect of the *Compitalia*, 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 puppets for free persons, balls for slaves. Also the fact that the *praetor* announced the festival is significant: cf. Fraschetti 1990, 204. Cf. n. 8.
- 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 unvor-

denklicher Zeit'. Cf. also Flambard 1981, 146, who sees the 'cérémonie immémoriale' of the *Argei* as the predecessor of the *Compitalia*, as 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 (1960, 91 n.1).

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

⁷³ Potter (1987, 173): '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.'

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 nonurban to an urban existence', but cf. Tarpin 2002 and *infra*. Similar ideas on the development from agricultural to urban in e.g. Gradel 2002, 124; Fröhlich 1991, 26; Orr 1978, 1565-1566; Alföldi 1973, 19; Bailey 1932, *passim*, e.g. 107, 147, 172. Cf. also Pisani Sartorio 1988, 23 who states, unclear on what grounds, that: 'I Lares Compitales erano legati particolarmente alla sfera agricola, i Lares viales alla sfera pastorale e ai boschi.'

⁷⁵ Contra Beard/North/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 1977 [1974], 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. n. 121 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/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 rather to attest to the urban setting as the more 'natural' one 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. *NH* 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. 4.14; the references by Cicero on Clodius relate to a deeply urban-plebeian context, cf. Flambard 1977, 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 Macrobian *Sat.* 1.7.34 relates to the city. If the *maxima tercentum totam delubra per urbem* installed by Augustus according to Verg. *Aen.* 8.716 do relate to *compita* (but cf. n. 13) 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. n. 121). Dolabella apparently also refers to a rural setting, but it is unclear if this text refers to a *compitum*: cf. n. 124. 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. on Verg. G. 2.382). Cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.1.49-51. Macrobian *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). I would hesitate however to define the *Compitalia* 'rural', for these *villae* relate clearly more to an urban way of life with rich urban people enjoying their *otium* than to countryside religion. 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; cf. for Pompeii Van Andringa 2000.

⁷⁸ Bedini 1990, who apparently tries to connect the burials with the interpretation of the *Lares* as the *Manes* of the dead (Samter's interpretation: cf. n. 18): '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 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; cf. 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, since Wissowa and others would like to interpret them as protection gods of the fields: cf. n. 18. 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; cf. n. 86.
- ⁸⁵ Tarpin 2002.
- ⁸⁶ It is thought that 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 *vici*-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.
- ⁸⁷ Cf. schol. Pers. 4.28: *Compita sunt loca in quadriuiis...*
- ⁸⁸ Philarg. on Verg. G. 2.382: *compita, ut Trebatio placet, locus ex pluribus partibus in se vel in easdem partes ex se vias atque itinera dirigens, sive is cum ara sive sine ara, sive sub tecto sive sub di(v)o sit.*
- ⁸⁹ Cic. *Leg.* 2.27, cf. n. 76.
- ⁹⁰ Schol. Pers. 4.28.
- ⁹¹ Philarg. on Verg. G. 2.382. Fowler (1925, 279, n. 2): 'no doubt discussion about agricultural matters'.
- ⁹² According to Wissowa (1901b, 793), *CIL VI, 29784 (Via quae ducit / per agrum / Nonianum / a milliario) XX devortic(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 that there is a *compitum* somewhere, without telling anything about its 'audience', although presumably being situated in a rural setting.
- ⁹³ Dondin-Payre 1987; Pisani Sartorio 1988; Bakker 1994, esp. 128, 196-197; Hasenohr 2003.
- ⁹⁴ Laurence 1994; Van Andringa 2000.
- ⁹⁵ And on the *forum* if a shrine of the *Lares* is to be recognised there, which seems doubtful however: cf. n. 61.
- ⁹⁶ 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 *vici* (*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).
- ⁹⁷ 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.
- ⁹⁸ This does of course not undermine the existing connection, which must not be 1:1, between *compitum* and *vici*. Laurence (1994, 42) detects this process as well in Pompeii: 'the identity of the inhabitants of each *vici* 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 *vici* before 73 AD.
- ⁹⁹ 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* = cross-road/border point, but this is impossible to prove.
- ¹⁰⁰ Bakker 1994, 198; cf. overview of the Pompeian evidence 125-127.
- ¹⁰¹ Hasenohr 2003.
- ¹⁰² Hasenohr 2001; *contra* Mavrojiannis 1995.
- ¹⁰³ 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 as their status as *compitum* can not be proved and they can not add much to our architectural knowledge.
- ¹⁰⁴ Gatti 1888.
- ¹⁰⁵ 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*.
- ¹⁰⁶ Dondin-Payre 1987; Coarelli 1983, 39-40, fig. 8 for location.
- ¹⁰⁷ Bakker 1994, 125.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lanciani 1882, 229-231; Coarelli 1983, 265-270.
- ¹⁰⁹ Another *compitum*-shrine with a similar rectangular plan has been noticed near the temples of Mater Matuta and Fortuna, at the *vici* Iugarius, but almost nothing has been published: Coarelli 1988, 244; cf. fig. 48 p. 235 for location.
- ¹¹⁰ M.L. Gualandi in: Carandini/Papi [2005] (1999), 125-126.
- ¹¹¹ 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'.
- ¹¹² The structure was anyway destroyed some time between Caesar and 7 BC. M.L. Gualandi in: Carandini/Papi [2005] (1999), 126.
- ¹¹³ For the Ostian evidence: Bakker 1994, 118-124; 243-250.
- ¹¹⁴ The structure on the Bivio del Castrum, at a major crossroads, cannot be connected firmly to the relevant inscriptions: Bakker 1994, 121-122.
- ¹¹⁵ *CIL XIV, 4298.*
- ¹¹⁶ Pers. 4.28: *quandoque iugum pertusa ad compita figit.* Cf. Calp. *Ecl.* 4.126: *pervia compita.*
- ¹¹⁷ Schol. Pers. 4.28; cf. n. 121 for text.
- ¹¹⁸ Holland 1937.
- ¹¹⁹ Bakker 1994, 200.
- ¹²⁰ Cf. e.g. Lee/Barr 1987, 125.
- ¹²¹ Schol. Pers. 4.28. *Qui quotiens diem festum aratro fixo in compitis celebrat, timens seriolam vini aperire, acetum potat. Compita sunt loca in quadriuiis, quasi turres, ubi sacrificia finita agricultura rustici celebrant. Merito pertusa, quia per omnes quattuor partes pateant, vel vetusta. Aut compita propter 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 divorticulae aliorum confinium, ubi aediculae consecrantur patentes,*

- ideo pertusa ad compita; in his fracta iuga ab agricolis ponuntur velut emeriti et elaborati operis indicium, sive quod omne instrumentum existiment sacrum. Vel compita dicuntur, ad quae plura itinera competunt. Quamvis rei divinae operatur: Nec sic tamen ab avaritia discedit: timetque dolium aperire diu servatum.
- ¹²² L 302.1 *Fines templaes sic quaeri 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.*
- ¹²³ Cf. the discussion in Campbell 2000, xxi-xxvi.
- ¹²⁴ Samter 1907, 369-371; cf. Laing 1921, 135; Böhm 1925, 808.
- ¹²⁵ Kissel 1990, 537, who also thinks (n. 113) that *pertusa* is a conscious *imitatio* of the Calpurnian *pervia*. The interpretation in Holland 1937 is qualified as 'völlig verfehlt': 538, n. 114.
- ¹²⁶ Kissel 1990, 537, n. 111; see note 121 for text. The scholia on Persius are hard to date; the earliest manuscript dates to the 11th century; cf. Zetzel 2005.
- ¹²⁷ Cf. Harvey 1981, 116 (on lines 29-32): 'The wretched picture contrasts with the traditional lavishness of the *Compitalia*.'
- ¹²⁸ Calp. *Ecl.* 4.126.
- ¹²⁹ Cf. the translation by Amat 1991, 42: 'à la croisée des grands chemins', similarly Schröder 1991, 190.
- ¹³⁰ Cf. *ThesCRA* IV, s.v. *aedicula* (romano-republicana), 162-164 (M. Menichetti).
- ¹³¹ Maybe rather than establishing 'three classes' of *compitum*-shrines, as Bakker (1994, 130) envisages: 1) *aediculae*, 2) '*compita pervia*', 3) (masonry) altars.
- ¹³² Cf. *supra* esp. n. 76 for literary sources, *infra* for inscriptions.
- ¹³³ Rejecting the identification of a structure at Tor de Cenci as a *compitum*, cf. n. 78.
- ¹³⁴ Lega 1995, 124.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. also Kissel 1990, 537, who thinks they were mostly made of wood.
- ¹³⁶ *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 *compita* (537, n. 112) proves nothing: most temple complexes have been rebuilt as well, but were not, therefore, made previously of perishable materials.
- ¹³⁷ *CIL* V, 3257.
- ¹³⁸ *CIL* I², 3078; Cancrini/Delplace/Marengo 2001, 154-156.
- ¹³⁹ *CIL* IX, 1618.
- ¹⁴⁰ Phil. Verg. G. 2.382.
- ¹⁴¹ Cf. Letta 1992; on the problems with defining these sanctuaries as 'rural' cf. Stek/Pelgrom 2005.
- ¹⁴² It is not to be excluded that some sanctuaries that have been regarded as 'Italic' are actually new constructions within a Roman organisation of the landscape, cf. *infra* on *vicus*-sanctuaries.
- ¹⁴³ S. De Vincenzo in: Osanna/Sica 2005, 452-457. *Lararia* have been found in the temple of Venus at Pompeii (wall paintings in the substructure 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 Rome, 4-5-2006, which will be published.
- ¹⁴⁴ S. De Vincenzo in: Osanna/Sica 2005, 198-199, 452.
- ¹⁴⁵ E.g. as well at Campochiaro: Campochiaro 1982, 72-75, and at San Giovanni in Galdo: Di Niro 1980, 274. 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* as well.
- ¹⁴⁶ *CIL* X, 5048; Calisti 2006, 267.
- ¹⁴⁷ Esp. Letta 1992.
- ¹⁴⁸ Tarpin 2002; Capogrossi Colognesi 2002.
- ¹⁴⁹ For the early and mid-Republican period it is however less easy to be sure whether the *Compitalia* were already bound up so closely with the institution of the *vicus*.
- ¹⁵⁰ See above on Festus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Cf. Bakker 1994, 131: 'During the feast [scil. *Compitalia*] censuses may have been taken.'
- ¹⁵¹ At present there seems to be, however, no evidence for the counting of people in sanctuaries, if we exclude the various coins and coin-containers/ treasuries found in sanctuaries, which could, in theory, have functioned as a means to count people; cf. Dionysius on the *Paganalia*. But probably they were just that - treasuries. One treasury is however explicitly linked with *pagi*: that of *decem pagorum* at Carpineto della Nora (*CIL* I, 3269).

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