Remaking Rome

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1. The emperors and their city

The rulers of great empires tend to lavish special attention on their capitals. By shaping the fabric of urban life at the center of power, they can advertise the achievements on which their authority is founded, stake out the core values they claim to represent, and generally demonstrate the benefits that accrue from their control over the state. As Suetonius recognized, Augustus was the first to endow Rome with an ornamental splendor that accorded with the majesty of its empire, so much that he rightly could have claimed to have taken over a city of brick and left one of marble (Suet. *Aug.* 28.3; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.9.5). Contemporary scholarship is solid in its embrace of this assessment, with multiple studies demonstrating how Rome was transformed into a vehicle for a new Imperial ideology in the Augustan age (Haselberger 2007, Rehak 2006, Favro 2005).

Although no one should doubt the profound impact of monarchy on Rome's monumental and administrative character, a reign-by-reign approach to the study of the city's development under the Caesars imposes certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. Unlike Persepolis or Khanbalikh, Rome was not a new foundation when it became the seat of imperial authority, much less when it fell under monarchical control. As such, the city did not offer a blank canvas upon which a ruler could project a discrete vision of his power. Indeed, Augustus was particularly adept at incorporating existing urban features into his new, marble Rome. For

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example, he made sure that an ancient thatched hut, touted as the “house of Romulus” (*casa Romuli*), was assiduously maintained on the slope of the Palatine, not far from his own residence and the gleaming temple of Apollo he built next door (Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 1.79.11). For later emperors, the challenge of dealing with a preexisting urban landscape encompassed not just monuments hallowed by antiquity, but the interventions of their predecessors as well. Within the richly layered landscape of Imperial Rome, novelty, however significant, would always be seen as part of a continuum.

The greatest drawback to a discussion of Rome’s urban development organized according to the reigns of successive emperors is that it may obscure the importance of overlap between them. It was not uncommon for a project conceived under one emperor to be completed by another. The Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum), which was begun during Vespasian’s reign but inaugurated by Titus and only fully completed under Domitian, is a classic example. While we can still safely describe this monument as “Flavian,” we are on less solid footing with a monumental complex such as the one begun under Domitian but dedicated after his assassination as the Forum of Nerva (Suet. *Dom.* 5). Scholars who emphasize links between the architectonic decoration of this structure and the policies of the emperor in whose reign it originated may choose to promote the late antique nickname “Forum Transitorium,” which weakens the association with Nerva, but the fact remains that Nerva’s name was inscribed on the temple that stood at the heart of this narrow forum, proclaiming his responsibility for its construction (*CIL* 6.31213: *Imp. Nerva Caesar[ar] ... fecit*). Despite widespread hostility to Domitian’s memory, the next regime embraced this monument and, by extension, the messages conveyed in its iconography. Plenty of other monuments, including the grand Forum and Baths of Trajan, were

also begun by Domitian and completed after his death, but in these cases it is more difficult to determine how closely the final product reflected an original “Flavian” plan.

Similar problems in demarcating the dynastic boundaries of urban policy exist along the other edge of the period discussed in this volume. As will be discussed in more detail below, the Flavian Amphitheater can be viewed as a clear departure from the policies of Nero. And yet, the colossal statue of the sun god that stood on the crest of the nearby Velia, which Hadrian later relocated to a site nearer to the amphitheater (thus providing an etymology for the Colosseum’s modern name), suggests a more complicated response to the designs of the previous regime. Commissioned by Nero to stand in the “vestibule” of his enormous Golden House, this 30-meter tall bronze figure was seen through to completion by Vespasian, with the only change to its original design being that the god’s face would no longer resemble that of an emperor whose “criminality had been condemned” (Plin. *NH* 34.45, Albertson 2001). As much as the vanity and extravagance of Nero’s building projects were disparaged by the Flavians and their adherents, central elements of his grandiose (and self-aggrandizing) vision for a remade Rome were not abandoned.

It is not just monumental invocations of the theory of solar monarchy that persevered. Tacitus provides a lengthy discussion of the rebuilding that followed the great fire of 64, among which the Golden House was simply the most prominent element:

the arrangement of streets was measured off, roads were widened, the height of buildings was restricted, and spaces within them were left open. Porticoes were also added to provide cover along the fronts of tenement blocks. ... Such measures were appreciated for their utility and because they brought beauty to the new city. There were some, however, who thought that the old arrangement had been more conducive to health, because the

narrowness of the passageways and the height of the buildings had let in less steaming sunlight, whereas now the wide exposed spaces were unprotected by shade and burned with a more onerous heat. (*Ann.* 15.43.1-5).

The historian is unequivocal in ascribing the character of this “new city” (and its supposed consequences for public health) to Nero’s impetus, but the work of rebuilding after such an extensive disaster cannot have been completed by the time of Nero’s death in 68. Suetonius explicitly states that Rome was still disfigured “from old fires and cave-ins” at the start of Vespasian’s reign (*Vesp.* 8.5). He notes some of the steps that the new emperor took to encourage reconstruction, which are not inconsistent with incentives that Tacitus ascribes to Nero (cf. *Ann.* 15.43.2). Even if the primary focus of Vespasian’s efforts went to new projects that had little or no connection with Nero’s plans, it is unlikely that the reforms and regulations that underlay Nero’s *nova urbs* (the impact of which can be seen in remains excavated along the reorganized Sacra Via) were overturned. Such changes to the city’s basic form could not easily be undone.

Further complicating the issue of whether the new Rome that emerged after the fire of 64 should be described “Neronian” or “Flavian” is the fact that Nero’s urban prefect, whose office would have involved him in the application and probably also the formulation of the guidelines that governed the early stages of rebuilding, was none other than T. Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian’s older brother. Of course, Sabinus was killed in 69 amid fighting in the city, but the point remains that there was far more continuity in the institutional framework of the Roman Principate than the changing cast of *principes* might suggest. As natural as it seems to interpret every aspect of Roman policies as a manifestation of the personal idiosyncrasies of the emperor in whose name they were undertaken, it is important to remember that a biographical approach oversimplifies

what was often a rather complicated system of agency. Whatever dreams Nero or Vespasian might have had for remaking Rome, the implementation of their visions required the work of many hands. Insofar as the details were left to advisors and technical specialists, a change of ruler need not produce a radical shift in policy.

These caveats help to refine, not but do not contradict, my initial observation about the ideological importance of an emperor's relationship to his capital. Inscriptions throughout the city announced Vespasian's responsibility for the rebuilding of temples and restoration of roadways and sacred vineyards (*CIL* VI 936: *refecit*, cf. 934; 931, 933: *restituit*), though sometimes he merely takes credit for seeing to it that the work was done (*ibid.* 939: *faciendum curavit*). Titus made it clear that he regarded the great fire that broke out in 80 as a personal tragedy, even as he appointed a board of equestrian officials to oversee the rebuilding efforts (Suet. *Tit.* 8.3). Domitian's reputation as a builder was so great that neither the condemnation of his memory nor the credit-seeking of his successors could obscure his role in a great number of projects, many of which would never bore his name (Anderson 1983). Justly or not, the Flavian emperors both claimed and were given personal responsibility for the wellbeing and physical grandeur of Rome.

The scope and number of monumental building projects undertaken by these emperors clearly reflect the importance of public benefactions in the Flavians' self-presentation. Upon closer examination, the urban policy of the Flavians also reveals repeated emphasis on particular themes, which we may regard as having special ideological importance in the context of the history of this dynasty. First of all, the city's renewal was linked in a multitude of ways to the strength of its empire and the military fortunes of the ruling house. This led in turn to a renewed emphasis on the unrivaled authority of the *princeps* and his family, which was increasingly

assimilated to that of the gods themselves. In the end, however, it was the enduring stability of urban institutions and the way that the Flavians' projects merge into a much broader continuum of Imperial munificence that formed the most striking feature of their policy.

2. The city and its empire

In addition to the ongoing efforts to rebuild areas affected by the Neronian fire, fate also presented Vespasian with a further, unique opportunity to put his imprint on Rome's urban fabric. The rise of the Flavians brought not just an end to civil wars, but also a need to repair the damage inflicted by those wars. In Rome, the fighting between Vespasian's supporters and the forces of Vitellius that had led to Sabinus' death also caused the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, one of the oldest and most important sites in Roman state cult, to burn to the ground. This catastrophe in particular had a profound impact on the Roman psyche. It is no coincidence that the philosopher Epictetus used the phrase "to burn down the Capitol" as shorthand for the worst crime imaginable (*Disc.* 1.7.32–3, cf. *Tac. Hist.* 3.72.1), or that Civilis' revolt was thought to have been inspired by an interpretation of the fire as an omen that Rome was being abandoned by its gods (*Tac. Hist.* 4.54.2). Accordingly, the restoration of the Capitol was among the first business taken up by the senate after order was restored in the city. Vespasian moved quickly to appoint Julius Vestinus, a former prefect of Egypt, to supervise the project while he remained occupied in the East (*Tac. Hist.* 4.53.1). Upon his return to Rome, the new emperor made a public show of his commitment to the restoration work, deigning to help clear rubble from the site in person (*Suet. Vesp.* 8.5).

Figure 1: *Sestertius* of Vespasian, AD 70. Reverse depiction of planned facade of rebuilt temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. *RIC II*² 123 no. 886, drawing after Cohen (1880, 406).

Although appropriate emphasis was placed on the actual labor of rebuilding, this project was even more important for the thematic associations provided by the temple itself. Before Vespasian ever returned to Rome, he arranged for the pontifex Plautius Aelianus and the praetor Helvidius Priscus to lead others in a public ritual in which the stone of Terminus, Rome's unmovable god of boundaries, was hauled back into its proper position (Townend 1987). Terminus' presence inside the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was regarded as an integral part of the tradition that identified the Capitolium as the symbolic "head" (*caput*) of the Romans' empire and Jupiter as the guardian of their territorial dominion. These religious associations were

underscored by the presence of thousands of bronze plaques, inscribed with the texts of treaties and grants of privileges to allies, which had been set up in the precinct since time immemorial. With the senate's help, Vespasian also made sure that these inscriptions, which Suetonius describes as a beautiful and ancient "instrument of empire" (*Vesp.* 8.5), were reproduced as part of the temple's restoration.

As for the temple (*aedes*) itself, this was rebuilt on the same footprint, with little alteration to the original plan. Representations of its architectural form appeared on the bronze coinage throughout Vespasian's reign, starting as early as 71 (*RIC* II² 323, etc.: Figure 1). Though the construction work cannot have been completed so quickly, this was also the year when Titus returned to Rome to join his father in celebrating their triumph for victorious campaigns in Judea. The sacrifices offered in the sacred precinct of the Capitolium (described by Josephus, *BJ* 7.153-7) served to reinforce the link between the Flavians' rebuilding of the temple and the security they had restored to Rome's imperial might. There was a more practical connection as well, because the rebuilding of the Capitolium was paid for by the tax (*fiscus Iudaicus*) that had been imposed on Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (*ibid.* 7.218).

In fact, most of the changes to Rome's urban fabric under Vespasian and Titus were tied in some way to the glory of their Jewish triumph. After the spoils of Jerusalem had been paraded through the city in the triumphal procession, many of them were put on display in the Temple of Peace, which Vespasian dedicated in 75. This was an enormous public plaza, built over the site of the markets of the old Macellum, and its construction was likely part of the ongoing redevelopment of areas left devastated by the Neronian fire. In function and design it marked a departure from the legacy of Nero's Golden House, which Vespasian famously despoiled of

works of art and set them up in the colonnades of the new temple precinct and other public spaces throughout the city (Plin. *NH* 34.84). Moreover, the precinct's alignment and axial layout echoes those of the Fora of Augustus and Julius Caesar, which stood opposite, across the thoroughfare of the Argiletum. As in other aspects of Flavian policy, the goal seems to have been to associate the new dynasty with praiseworthy members of the Julio-Claudian household while repudiating the degeneracy of its final heir.

Figure 2: Temple of Peace as depicted in the Severan Marble Plan, Third Century AD. Garden of interior court shown with rows of rectangular water fountains. Drawing after Colini (1937, plate 3).

In this regard, it is significant that the Temple of Peace was, like these earlier Imperial fora, a triumphal monument. It advertised the military valor of its builder, a virtue held in common with Augustus and Caesar, but one not readily associated with the lyre-playing Nero. The dedication of such a monument to Peace may seem incongruous at first blush, but we must

keep in mind that *pax*, as the Romans understood it, was commonly achieved through the military subjugation of their enemies (Gruen 1985, Noreña 2003). Of course, this notion of peace presupposed the existence of another, more basic kind of peace, in which Rome (and its legions) could operate without the pernicious distractions of strife and civil war. Just as Pax had been a virtue (and a deity) closely associated with the omnipotent Augustus, so too could the Flavians, who almost simultaneously put an end to civil war at home and reasserted Roman military power abroad, lay claim to these twinned legacies of peace.

The confluence of these two valences of *pax* seems to have been nicely encapsulated in the garden plots that stood within the open space of the temple precinct (Lloyd 1982, La Rocca 2001, 201-3; Figure 2). On one hand, the presence of these plantings (along with elaborate water features and precious works of art) enhanced the complex's function as an appealing space for leisure and relaxation – *pax* in its basic sense. On the other hand, it is both plausible and tempting to interpret this garden as an exercise in “botanical imperialism” (Pollard 2009), which drew together flora from throughout the Mediterranean to show the broad reach of Roman power – *pax* in its more expansive, martial formulation. As with the restoration of the Capitolium, the Temple of Peace linked the renewal of the urban environment of Rome with the themes of military conquest and the prosperous stability of the empire as a whole.

Similar themes were also on display in the last of the monuments conceived under Vespasian's rule: a new amphitheater, ultimately inaugurated by Titus in 80 with 100 days of elaborate games. The arena offered its own microcosm of Rome's imperial reach, which we find reflected in the poems of Martial's *Book of Spectacles*, where both the cosmopolitan makeup of the spectators and the exotic origins of the animals featured in the games are celebrated (*Spect.* 3, 5-22, Coleman 2006, 38-41). Moreover, the building in which these elements came together was

itself a monument to the triumphal glory of the rulers who created it. As seen in contemporary reliefs and coins, one of its arched entryways took the form of a triumphal arch, complete with a triumphal chariot (*quadriga*) atop its attic (Welch 2007, 136-41; Figure 3). Added to this visual evidence is Alföldy's compelling reconstruction of the amphitheater's original dedicatory inscription (1995), which confirms that the new amphitheater was built *ex manubiis*, that is, from the generals' share of the loot acquired in the conquest of Judaea.

Figure 3: Sestertius of Titus, AD 80: Obverse: Colosseum, flanked by Meta Sudans and portico of Baths of Titus (?). Reverse: Titus holding laurel branch, seated on curule chair, surrounded by enemy spoils. *RIC II*² 210 no. 184, drawing after Cohen (1880, 461).

Martial also drew pointed contrast between the public benefit provided by the Flavian Amphitheater and the invidious private grandeur of Nero's Golden House, which had previously occupied this sector of the city (*Spect.* 2.11: "Rome has been restored to itself"). While we should be skeptical of the hostile treatment that almost all of Nero's endeavors receive in our sources, it is clear that the Colosseum was meant to represent a deliberate departure from the urban policies of this denigrated predecessor. Whereas Nero evidently felt that the wooden amphitheater he had built in the Campus Martius (cf. *Tac. Ann.* 13.31) was adequate for Rome's

needs after the amphitheater of Statilius Taurus was destroyed in the fire of 64, Vespasian undertook to replace the latter structure (and render the former obsolete) with the construction of an enormous stone amphitheater nearer to the heart of the city. As Martial attests and archaeology confirms, the ornamental lake that had anchored the sprawling complex of the Golden House was drained so that the massive foundations could be laid for the new amphitheater that would rise in its place. To clear the approach to the site from the west, porticoes that had stood around the edge Nero's lake were demolished, while the public fountain known as the Meta Sudans was rebuilt on a grand scale (Panella 1990, 75-81; Longfellow 2011, 31-9).

Vespasian and his sons no doubt encouraged the interpretation of these architectural changes as reflections of a fundamental shift in Imperial priorities – away from Nero's self-indulgence and toward a renewed commitment to the common good – but this was more pretext than reality. In all likelihood, most areas of the Golden House (including the ornamental *stagnum* that Vespasian eliminated to make way for the amphitheater) were open to Rome's populace on a regular basis. The difference in the public benefit provided was therefore one of kind, rather than degree. If the Golden House brought the amenities of the elite bucolic villa into the city so that the urban masses might enjoy them, the Colosseum took the favorite pastime of the urban plebs and gave it the imprimatur of high culture (Welch 2002). A series of statues (similar to the Greek masterpieces Vespasian had removed from the Golden House and set up in the Temple of Peace) were displayed in the archways of the upper stories. The interior vaulted passageways that led spectators to their seats were decorated with elaborate stuccoes featuring mythological scenes. And of course, never before had a venue for gladiatorial games occasioned a book of poetry.

Martial also mentions the opulent baths (*thermae*, 2.7) of Titus that overlooked the amphitheater from the Oppian hill, but here the implied contrast with Nero is more tenuous. To be sure, the dedication of these baths was an important public benefaction, but Nero had also built public baths, which stood next to those of his great-grandfather Agrippa in the central Campus Martius (Fagan 1999, 110-12). It is possible, though not proven, that Titus' baths, which appear to match the alignment of the remains of the Oppian wing of the Golden House, were simply the culmination, however modified, of an original Neronian design (Coarelli 2007, 186-7). Understanding the Baths of Titus in this way would explain our sources' astonishment at how quickly they seemed to have been constructed (Mart. *Spect.* 2.7, Suet. *Tit.* 7.3).

Bronze *sestertii* minted to commemorate the inaugural games of 80 show the Colosseum as it would appear after Domitian completed the top level of the facade a few years later (Figure 3). The amphitheater is flanked by the Meta Sudans on one side and what seems to be the portico that fronted the entrance to the Baths of Titus on the other. It is tempting to read this image as a further statement about the redefinition of the area previously occupied by Nero's Golden House, but the coins themselves obviously make no mention of what these structures were replacing. The more important message may have been the one conveyed by the image on the opposite face of these coins (which was struck as the reverse: Elkins 2006). Here Titus is depicted as the sponsor of the games, seated on a curule chair, surrounded by the arms of defeated enemies. The composition of this scene, which evokes representations of the goddess Roma (cf. *RIC* II² 209 no 163), suggests the extent to which the emperor's munificence within the city was linked to his ability to maintain the outward projection of Rome's imperial might.

Figure 4: Map of Colosseum valley and surrounding hills.

3. The city and its gods

In the same year that Titus opened the Colosseum, Rome burned once more. As had happened after the Neronian fire, catastrophe quickly gave way to renewal, and destruction opened up large swathes of the city (particularly in the Campus Martius) to redesign. These opportunities were not lost on Titus' successor Domitian, who pursued a program of public building that far surpassed anything undertaken by his father or brother. Even at such a remove, Domitian continued to present this work as part of a continuing Flavian effort to restore Rome to its pre-Neronian salubrity. In 83, he established a series of sacred precincts throughout the city in areas that had been left vacant "in order to prevent fires" (*CIL* 6.826, 30837: *incendiorum arcendorum*

causa) ever since the city burned for nine days in the age of Nero. Altars were set up in these precincts where prayers would be offered during the Vulcanalia, presumably with the same preventive purpose. Remarkably, the inscriptions set up in these precincts omit any reference to the fire of 80, reflecting a deep-seated unwillingness to acknowledge the extent to which this more recent calamity might have set back the ongoing project of Flavian renewal.

Most obviously, the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, which Vespasian had rededicated only a few years earlier, was destroyed and had to be rebuilt again. In this second Flavian restoration of the Capitol, new themes begin to emerge. If the meaning Vespasian ascribed to the Capitolium was best expressed in the triumphal procession that concluded there, Domitian marked his rebuilding with the revival of the Capitoline games as a Greek-style quadrennial festival of athletic and literary competitions, over which he presided in the guise of Juppiter/J Zeus (Suet. *Dom.* 4.4, Coleman 1986, 3097-100). The dynasty's connection with a "Jovian ideology" of power centered on the Capitol (cf. Fears 1981) was no longer mediated by the amorphous but traditional theme of imperial triumph; it was now predicated on a more direct relationship (and implied equivalence) between the emperor and the god. Whereas our sources stress the conservatism of Vespasian's rebuilding of the Capitoline temple, accounts of the *aedes* constructed by Domitian emphasize its unprecedented opulence (Plut. *Popl.* 15.3-4, cf. Mart. 9.3.1-8). Elsewhere on the Capitol, Domitian set up a temple for Jupiter Custos, in which could be seen a statue of himself in the god's lap (Tac. *Hist.* 3.74). Presumably it was in this guise (or that of Jupiter Conservator, to whom Domitian had previously dedicated a shrine) that the god had provided for Domitian's salvation in 69, when the young prince escaped from the siege in which the Republican temple of Jupiter Capitolinus had been destroyed.

On the slope of the Capitol overlooking the Forum Romanum, Domitian completed the temple of his deified father, Divus Vespasianus, in which Titus would be worshipped as a *divus* as well. The location of this temple on the *clivus Capitolinus* reinforced the link between the Flavian house and the gods of the Capitoline, while its visibility from the Forum provided an opportunity for the new dynasty to insert itself into the traditional epicenter of political and ideological communication in the city. From their perch alongside the temple of Concord, the newly deified emperors looked out across the steps of the temple of Saturn toward the temple of Julius Caesar, which stood at the opposite end of the Forum along an axial alignment first imposed upon this space by Augustus.

Just as the Flavian era saw new developments in the nature of the imperial cult outside of Rome, inhabitants of the city also witnessed a renewed emphasis on the posthumous deification of members of the Imperial household. In addition to the temple of Vespasian and Titus on the Capitoline, Domitian also constructed a porticoed precinct of these *divi* (the Divorum) on the Campus Martius and rebuilt the site of the house where he was born on the Quirinal as a temple of the Gens Flavia. The Arch of Titus is rightly regarded as a monument of the Judaean triumph commemorated in its relief panels, but its dedicatory inscription records that it was set up as an honor for Divus Titus, who is duly identified as the son of Divus Vespasianus as well (*CIL* 6.945). Titus' apotheosis (on the wings of Jupiter's eagle) is even depicted at the top of the archway's coffered ceiling (Pfanner 1983, 76-7, 99).

The Temple of Julius Caesar has already been mentioned as a precedent for such things. In addition, there was an altar of the Gens Iulia that stood on the Capitol both before and after the fire of 69 (*CIL* 16.7, 12). On the Caelian hill, overlooking the site of the Colosseum, was the temple of another deified predecessor, Claudius. Its precinct had been established on a grand

scale under Nero, but the temple itself was notoriously left unfinished after more than thirteen years (Suetonius even suggests that it was demolished at some time after Agrippina's downfall in 59: *Vesp.* 9.1). The temple's completion thus became one of the great accomplishments of Vespasian's building program. The Flavians' attention to this monument may be interpreted as a rebuke to Nero's lack of filial piety or as a heartfelt expression of regard for an early patron of the family's fortunes, but it also marks the beginning of their interest in the concept of an emperor's incipient divinity.

Figure 5: Sestertius of Domitian, AD 95/6. Reverse depiction of Equus Domitiani. *RIC* II² 324 no. 797. Drawing by author.

Pliny the Younger is characteristically ungenerous when he suggests that Titus only deified Vespasian and Domitian Titus so that they might be regarded as the son and brother of gods (*Pan.* 11.1), but there is no denying that this kind of honor for dead relatives raised the

stature of surviving members of the household as well. This is not the place to rehash the evidence for Domitian's association with the titles *dominus et deus* ("master and god": see Jones 1992, 108-9; Bendlin in this volume), but we may note Pliny's further complaint about the number of Domitian's statues, which stood on the Capitol and elsewhere (*Pan.* 52.3). Many of these would have been triumphal dedications, continuing the dynasty's emphasis on that theme (cf. Suet. *Dom.* 13.2), but the most prominent one would have been the *Equus Domitiani*, a colossal statue of Domitian on horseback, which stood in the open plaza of the Roman Forum, with its hand outstretched in the direction of Caesar's temple (*Stat. Silv.* 1.1.22-31, Figure 5).¹ Beyond this, along the Sacra Via, stood the Arch of Titus, as well as Nero's colossus of the Sun, which in its final form some viewers felt bore a resemblance to Titus (Dio 66.15). The scale and orientation of the *Equus* thus suggest that Domitian was at least willing to place himself in a dialog with his defied predecessors.

In the area of the Campus Martius that was damaged by the fire of 80, Domitian rebuilt the Iseum Campense, Rome's principal temple of the Egyptian goddess Isis. His family's interest in the site can be traced to 71, when Vespasian and Titus spent the night there before their shared triumph (Joseph, *BJ* 7.123). The exact form of Domitian's rebuilding is not certain, but it is likely to have included a Serapeum housed in an apsidal portico at one end, which faced the temple of Isis proper at the other end of a long dromos (Roullet 1972, 23-35). The precinct's most remarkable Flavian feature was an obelisk of red granite, which now stands above the central fountain in the Piazza Navonna. The inscription of Egyptian hieroglyphs along its shaft honors Domitian as the "lord of the Two Lands" and "beloved of Isis" in a manner traditional to

¹ The precise location of the *Equus Domitiani* remains in doubt. In Figure 4, I position it according to the generally accepted view of Guiliani and Verduchi (1987). Cf. Thomas 2004, however, who would place it closer to the Rostra of Augustus, on a sight-line with the entrance to the Forum of Nerva.

the praise of the pharaohs (Darwall-Smith 1996, 145-7).² The text would have been unintelligible to the overwhelming majority of Rome's inhabitants, and thus became one of the only honors to survive the condemnation of Domitian's memory. It certainly offers a unique glimpse onto the nature of his relationship to the divine.

Figure 6: Map of the Campus Martius, Capitulum and Forum.

² Cf. Grenier 2009, who thinks the obelisk was set up by Domitian on the Quirinal as part of the temple of the *gens Flavia*.

Augustus had been the first to introduce obelisks to Rome, bringing two over from Heliopolis in 10 BC and setting them up as dedications to the sun (*CIL* 6.701, 702, *Amm. Marc.* 17.4.12). One of these stood on the *spina* of the Circus Maximus, the other in a spot to the north of the Iseum on the Campus Martius, near the Ara Pacis. The latter obelisk functioned as the *gnomon* of an enormous solar calendar, which traced the progression of the seasons through the changing length of the shadow cast along a meridian line at noon each day. A recent reassessment of this monument stresses the fact that the only excavated remains are those of a meridian line that was reset in a pavement of Domitianic date (Heslin 2007). This restoration of the Augustan monument was apparently an attempt to recalibrate the device, which Pliny the Elder (*NH* 36.73) says had become inaccurate over time. Such a gesture accords well with an interpretation of Flavian policies as an effort to restore the principate from its Neronian decadence to the harmonious balance it had enjoyed under Augustus. It should also be noted, however, that the reconfiguration of this monument by an emperor who attempted, again following Augustan precedent, to rename September and October after himself (*Suet. Dom.* 13.3) was itself a striking exercise of the power he wielded as *pontifex maximus* in matters calendrical.

A similarly bold assertion of religious authority can be seen in Domitian's reauthorization of the Secular games (*ludi Saeculares*), notionally a once-per-century festival, which had last been held in 47 under Claudius (*Tac. Ann.* 11.11.1). For these games, the emperor constructed a new, permanent stadium for chariot races on the Campus Martius, as well as an odeum for choral performances nearby. Although the occasion was extraordinary, the construction of such buildings was in keeping with what might be described as a Flavian emphasis on providing new spaces for public entertainment in Rome. Domitian also completed work on the Colosseum and augmented it with the Ludus Magnus, a training arena and barracks for the gladiators that

communicated with the amphitheater by means of an underground passageway. Elsewhere, he constructed a pool for staged naval battles, or Naumachia, the location of which is now unclear.

In addition to these singular examples, Domitian also built or restored a number of religious sites of a more conventional character. In the Forum, he restored the temple of the Dioscuri, as well as the statues of the Dei Consentes, archaic gods of Rome's earliest pantheon, which he placed in a portico that stood along the *clivus Capitolinus* beside to the temple of his deified father. Pride of place went to Minerva, however, who was also a member of the Capitoline triad housed in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. On the Campus Martius, a tholos-like temple of Minerva Chalcidica was built next to the Iseum, immediately to the north of the new Divorum. The Chronographer of 354 (Mommsen 1892, 146) attributes a *templum Castorum et Minervae* to Domitian, but this is probably the result of a conflation of the temple of the Dioscuri he restored with a separate temple of Minerva, which stood nearby on the Palatine (cf. *CIL* 16.36, Mart. 5.5.1).

The most prominent of Domitian's temples to Minerva, however, was the one dedicated after his death by Nerva, which stood in the precinct that Martial (1.2.8) describes as a *forum Palladium*, but would ultimately be known as the Forum Nervae. Domitian (or, rather, his architects) overcame considerable challenges in transforming what was left of the Argiletum, a once busy commercial and residential district that had been compressed down to a narrow passageway between the Forum of Augustus and the Temple of Peace, into something that resembled those spaces in its formal coherence. First of all, the plan of these adjacent monuments had to be altered. Some of the entrances to the Temple of Peace were walled off on one side, while on the other, one of the hemicycles of the western portico of the Augustus' Forum was removed (Viscogliosi 2009). Along the walls of the narrow corridor thus created,

columns supporting an *en ressuat* entablature give the appearance of porticoes flanking the temple, but none of the practical benefits (Anderson 1984, 133-5).

The frieze of this entablature, preserved on the extant portion of the wall known as *la Colonnacce*, shows women engaged in the spinning and weaving of wool. These scenes of domesticity are relevant both to Minerva's status as the patron goddess of handicrafts and to the project of restoring traditional values that Domitian evidently took quite seriously (Suet. *Dom.* 8.3: *correctio morum*). Above the archway leading out of the forum into the Subura neighborhood to the north, a frieze appears to depict Minerva in the act of punishing Arachne for profaning the art of weaving with irreverent obscenity. The invocation of this myth evokes Domitian's strict enforcement of religious scruples in his role as *pontifex maximus*, such as when he twice punished Vestal virgins for breaching their sacred chastity (D'Ambra 1993 50-54, Suet. *Dom.* 8.3-4). It is worth noting that the solemn procession that took Cornelia, the priestess condemned on the second of these occasions, from the house of the Vestals in the Forum to the place where she would be buried alive for her supposed crimes at the Porta Collina, would have passed along this very route.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the extent to which Domitian was elevated above other mortals can be found in the new imperial residence he built on the southeast corner of the Palatine hill. Those who were granted access to the public areas of palace (known today as the "Domus Flavia") were meant to be overawed. The immense dining room, which could seat as many as 180 guests, would have impressed with its soaring vertical dimensions. Marble-clad walls rose three stories in height, with columns *en ressaut* giving way to pilasters in the upper levels (Gibson, DeLaine and Claridge 1994). The name *cenatio Iovis* ("Jupiter's dining room" SHA *Pert.* 11) comes from a late source, but already in 95 Statius compares the experience of

dining in Domitian's palace to reclining alongside Jupiter in the heavens (*Silv.* 4.2.10-11).

Across a courtyard from this stood the so-called "Aula Regia," an equally impressive reception hall, which conflated the function of a private *atrium* with a scale hitherto reserved for public buildings. Next to this, a slightly smaller room expressly mimics the layout of a basilica, with two aisles along either side set off by colonnades. Each of these rooms featured a large apse set into the east wall, and it must be assumed that this is where the emperor sat when receiving visitors. Whether hosting a dinner party, greeting well-wishers, or sitting in judgment, Domitian was set apart from his subjects, as the architecture of these spaces reinforced his exalted status (Zanker 2002, 118).

Without going into detail about the more private sector of the house (the "Domus Augustana," cf. Packer 2003, 194-7), it is clear that the opulence of the polychromatic marble veneers and the geometric complexity of the layout suggests certain similarities to the Oppian wing of the Golden House. We should resist the temptation to adduce these in support of Juvenal's disparagement of Domitian as a "bald Nero" (4.38), however. Vespasian may have earned his subjects' approval for abandoning the Golden House, but he can hardly be described as austere for preferring to stay in the opulent Gardens of Sallust (Dio 66.10.4, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3.30.2). In fact, recent investigation suggests that work on Domitian's Palatine complex was already under way during his father's reign (Wulf-Rheidt and Sojc 2009, 268). Moreover, the Julio-Claudian complex on the side of the Palatine facing the Forum ("Domus Tiberiana") remained in constant use (and was continuously remodeled) throughout the Flavian period (Kraus 1995). If we keep in mind the complexities inherent in the development of Roman urban design, it is hardly surprising that Domitian's architect Rabirius tried to rival what Severus and Celer, his predecessors under Nero, had accomplished (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.42.1).

4. The Eternal City

There can be no disputing the fact that the Flavian emperors increased Rome's monumental splendor in myriad ways. Pliny the Elder (by no means an impartial observer) described the Temple of Peace as one of the "most beautiful works the world has ever seen" (*HN* 36.102). Martial regarded Domitian's palace as greater than even the pyramids of Egypt (8.36.1-3). And yet, neither of these monuments truly transformed the character of life in the city. The poor still lived in densely packed tenements (*insulae*), while the rich continued to inhabit well-appointed *domus* when in town and retreat to their suburban villas as often as they could. The creation of new gardens, porticoes, baths, and venues for spectacular entertainment was of course relevant to the urban populace's ability to enjoy their leisure time, but everything that Vespasian and his sons provided already existed at Rome in one form or another. The Flavians' building programs may have increased the availability of these amenities and perhaps altered the way they were experienced in superficial ways, but their urban munificence was not substantially different in type from that of emperors who came before or after them (cf. Zanker 2010).

This continuity, I suggest, was ideologically significant in itself. It was not just Rome's power or that of its emperors that the Flavians sought to promote, but also their restoration of stability and good government. In 75, Vespasian enlarged the *pomerium*, or sacred boundary of the city, exercising his rights as someone who had expanded Roman territory through conquest (Gell. *NA* 13.14.3, cf. *CIL* 6.930). The ceremony, which had also be performed by Claudius, suggested a symbolic refounding of Rome, and marked the emperor's responsibility for the city in its fullest territorial extent. Two years prior, Vespasian and Titus held the censorship, an office traditionally associated with the maintenance of public buildings. In this capacity, they

conducted a survey of the entire city, from which certain measurements have found their way into the work of Pliny the Elder (*HN* 3.66-7). Clearly this data was used to produce a map of some sort, and it seems likely that this could have provided the basis for a precursor to the massive plan of the city that was engraved in marble and mounted on the wall of a room in the porticoes of the Temple of Peace during the Severan period (Castagnoli 1983, 262-4, Rodriguez Almeida 2002, 61-6). It would only be fitting for such a map to be set up as part of the precinct's original dedication, in the same year as Vespasian's expansion of the *pomerium*. A marble plan would provide an enduring testament to the city's revival and, more important, its permanence (Traub 1993).

If comparison with the pyramids offers a way to gauge the significance of particular monuments, perhaps we should also consider the testimony of Sex. Iulius Frontinus, a prominent member of the Flavian establishment who took over the administration of Rome's water supply after Nerva came to power. Surveying the system of aqueducts in his care, he notes, "When you compare them with so many structures required by all these aqueducts, the pyramids are clearly frivolous and the celebrated accomplishments of the Greeks are worthless" (*Aqu.* 1.16). Rome's abundant supply of clean water was both a monumental good and a practical one. It was essential, not only for the creation of new gardens and baths, but also for the maintenance of life itself. Although the Flavians did not build any new aqueducts, Vespasian did restore the Aqua Claudia, which he claims had lain in disrepair for nine years, at the start of his reign (*CIL* 6.1257).

As the person most responsible for Rome's continued survival, an emperor had to concern himself with the entire physical infrastructure of the city. The successful operation of these systems had less to do with the ingenuity of one's architects than with the diligence of

careful administrators like Frontinus. To ensure an adequate supply of food for the city's population, the Flavians would build new warehouses (including a *Horrea Piperataria*, where spices imported from the East were stored). But Titus also made sure to appoint a trusted figure like L. Laberius Maximus, who had been Vespasian's first procurator in Judaea, to oversee the grain supply (*CIL* 6.2059). Although less visible than a monument like the Colosseum, this too was an important part of his legacy for Rome.

Further Reading

Steinby (1993-2000), comprised of articles by an international team of experts, is the fundamental starting point for any investigation of the monuments discussed above. Platner and Ashby (1926) remains an indispensable supplement, especially for the English-only reader, as does Richardson (1992), which is obviously more current in its discussion of the archaeological material. For a more synthetic treatment, readers can now turn to Dyson (2010), which offers a thorough overview of five centuries of urban development, including invaluable discussions of the administrative and quotidian aspects of city life. For the Flavian period in particular, Darwall-Smith (1996) is an incomparable guide to the numismatic and literary evidence, while Packer (2003) is concerned principally with issues of architectural history. Last but not least, Coarelli (2009) contains several articles on the city and its monuments under the Flavians, many of which incorporate cutting edge information from recent and ongoing excavations.

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