

CHAPTER 22

Material Culture, Italic Identities and the Romanization of Italy

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1 Introduction

Far from Italy, in the foothills of the Sierra Morena in Baetica in southern Spain, a remarkable monumental cult complex was built during the reign of Vespasian (Figure 22.1). Laid out on a hill dominating the forum area, the complex formed literally the culmination of a general architectural makeover of the tiny urban center of Munigua in this period. The sanctuary was laid out over three terraces, the first of which was reached by two opposing ramps, visually forming a triangular base. From here, lateral stairs moving away from the central axis led to the next terrace. This level supported a podium with the temple building in the center, and was visually framed on three sides by a pi-shaped portico. In front of the actual temple building, which was elevated on a high podium, was a hemicyclic exedra, which formed part of the entire visual composition of the complex in that it directed the view from the opposing ramps at the base to the cella at the summit.

In its scenographical layout on a hill-side, its extensive application of substructures for terracing, and more in particular in its access ramps and hemicyclic space in front of the temple, the sanctuary closely echoes the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste in Latium, Italy (Figure 22.2). The similarities are so precise that there can be no doubt that its commissioners must have chosen deliberately to model the new Flavian sanctuary after the renowned Republican Latial cult place. In its composition of the upper levels, the rectangular temple building integrated in the raised pi-shaped portico as well as the hemicycle in front of it, the sanctuary at Munigua moreover reflects a similar Late Republican building complex in Latium, the sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tibur (Figure 22.3). The otherwise unexpected choice to include these particular references to

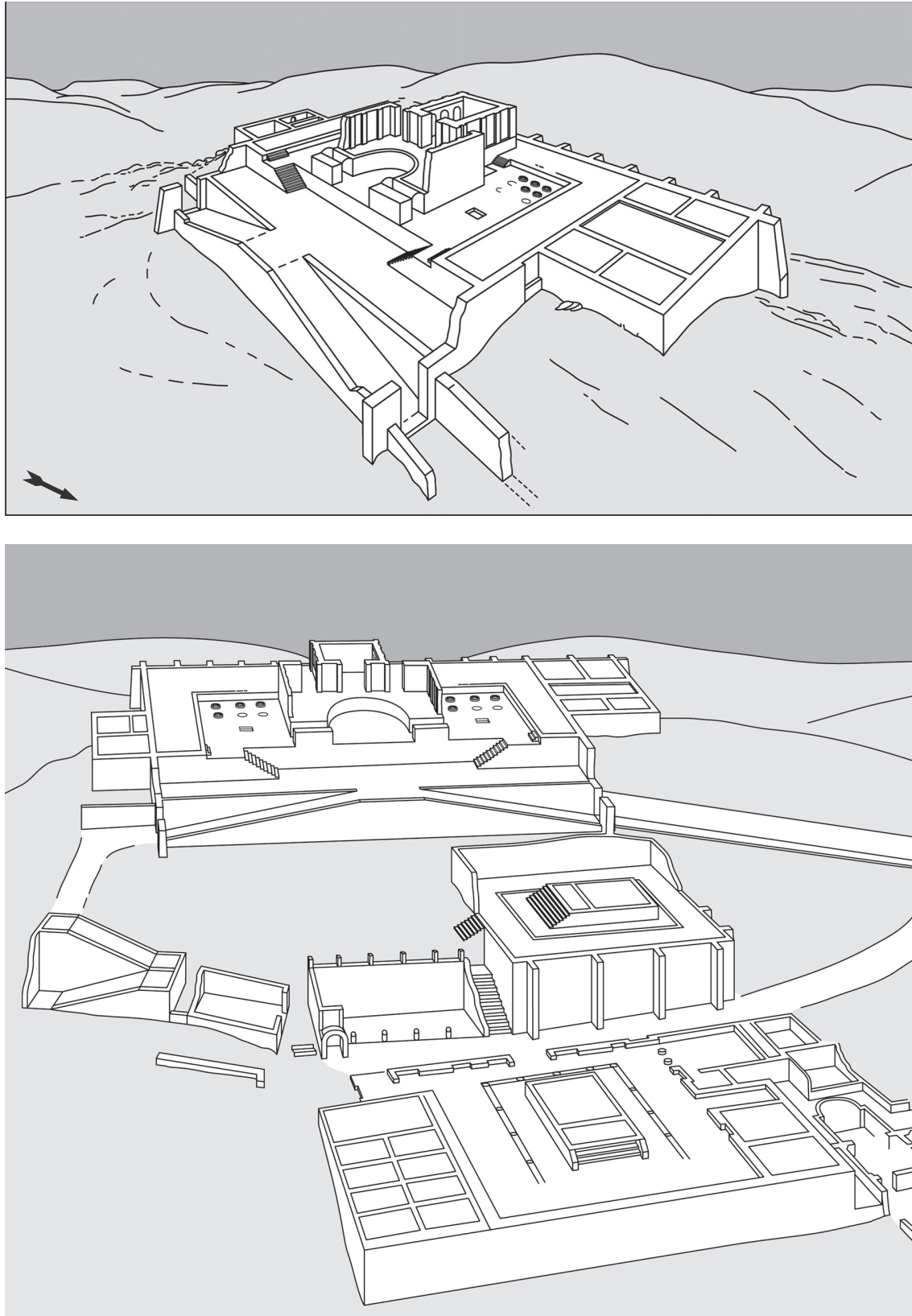


Figure 22.1 The terrace sanctuary at Munigua, two views. Source: Illustration by T. Stek, after Grünhagen (1959: fig. 5) and Hauschild (1968: fig. 3).

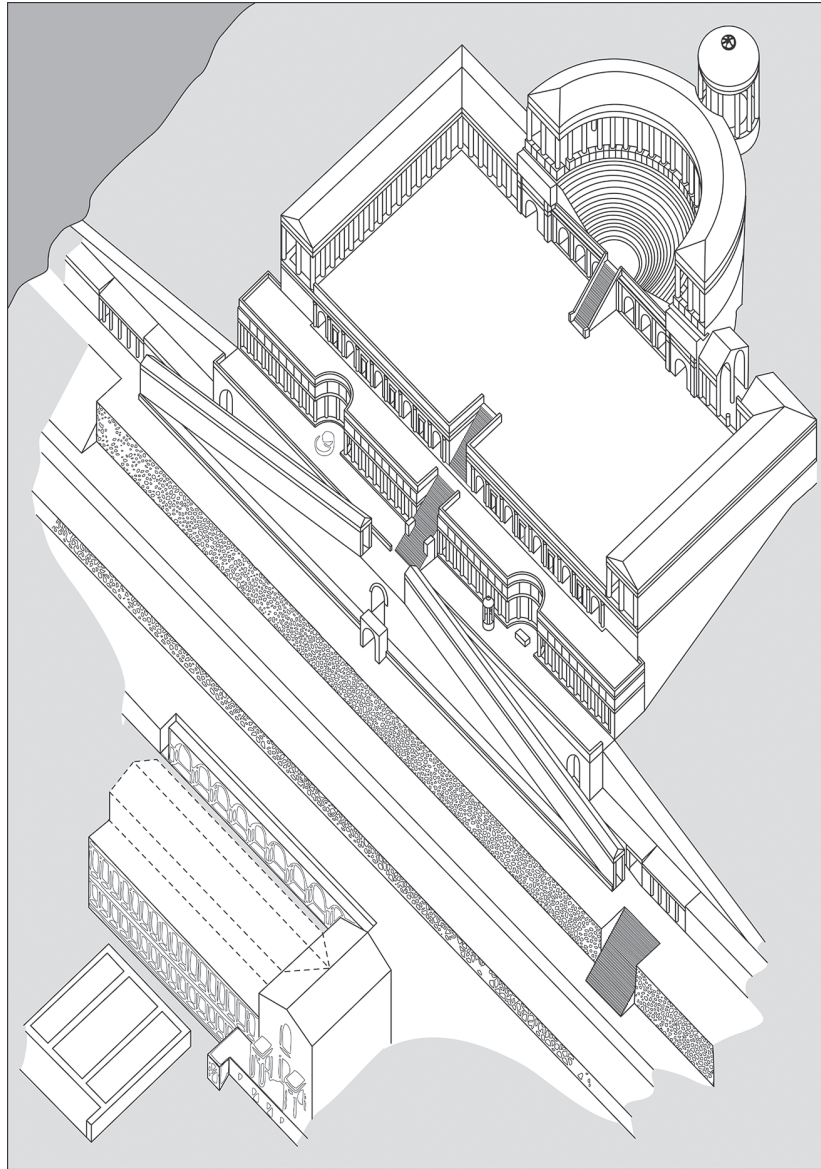


Figure 22.2 The sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste. Source: Illustration by T. Stek, adapted from Kähler (1958).

antique religious architecture from Latium in the new building project is best explained by the promotion of the civic community of Munigua to Latin status at precisely that time (Coarelli, 1987a). The Latin right (*ius Latii*) was a particular legal status within the Roman imperial hierarchy. It denoted a relatively favorable set of rights which had initially been bestowed on the Latin peoples near Rome, before evolving into a legal category detached from any ethnic connotations, as its application to new communities outside Latium as far as Spain exemplifies. The new sanctuary of Munigua thus consciously symbolized its newly acquired Latin status in a Roman world.

How could an ancient local Italic ethnic develop into an indicator of privileged status in relation to Rome, and eventually be evoked in a province far from Italy by citing the architectural lay-out of a Hellenistic sanctuary? The perplexing case of Munigua pushes

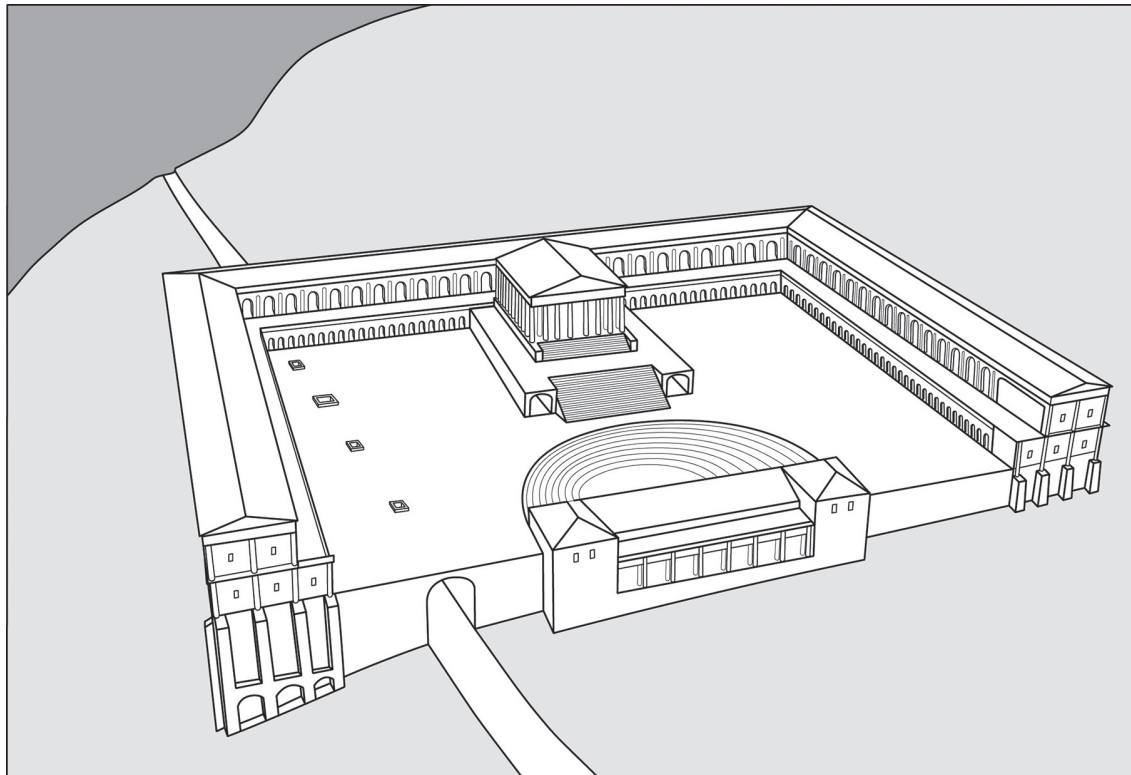


Figure 22.3 The sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tibur. Source: Illustration by T. Stek, adapted from Giuliani (2004).

the boundaries – at least in geographical and chronological terms. But it goes to the heart of important questions about the intricate connections between conceptualizations of non-Roman Italian identities, Roman imperial ideologies, and its material expressions, questions that will be central to this chapter on cultural change in Republican Italy. Intended as an introduction to the ensuing contributions on specific Italian regions or localities and their (material) interactions with Rome, this chapter focuses on some recent trends in thinking about the impact of Rome in peninsular Italy, the significance and expressions of local or regional identities in these areas, and the relationships between the two.

2 The Terms of the Debate: De-centering Rome and Italic Identities

The inhabitants of the geographically diverse areas that make up peninsular Italy were implicated in momentous changes during the Republican period. Often within one or two generation's time, these transformations in the political, social, economic and cultural realms will have changed the living environment, including its material appearance, significantly and in some cases beyond recognition (Chapter 13). Much less clear, though, is how these developments, material and otherwise, connect to collective self-perceptions (“cultural,” “ethnic,” or more generally “group” or “aggregative”

identities) in this period, and how they were, if at all, related to the Roman conquest and incorporation of these areas – the two main terms in which the debate has historically been posed. Any narrative is predicated on the questions and terms of the debate that are chosen, and this is no different for the study of ancient Italy. It is therefore important to emphasize at the outset that focusing on the specific issues of “Roman expansion” and “Italic identities/peoples” significantly structures the way in which we perceive cultural change in the Italian Peninsula during the time that the city-state of Rome was a republic. It almost naturally leads to an overly bipolar model of Roman and native, traditionally highlighting Roman impact, at the cost of broader contextualization (cf. Woolf, 1996–7).

In fact, many changes, cultural and otherwise, which occurred in the Italian Peninsula during the last four or so centuries BCE are probably better understood without *direct* reference to Rome. In most cases, our understanding of developments in material culture and settlement organization in specific areas of the Italian Peninsula benefits from regarding these areas as implicated in the dynamics of the Hellenistic world at large, a world in which the aggressive city-state of Rome formed merely one – though increasingly important – factor among many others (Purcell, 1994; Curti, Dench and Patterson, 1996; Keay and Terrenato, 2001; Dench, 2003; van Dommelen and Terrenato, 2007; on interpreting Hellenistic material culture cf. esp. Gallini, 1973; Zanker, 1976; Wallace-Hadrill, 2008). Such a shift of perspective is, at the least, a salutary counterbalance to overly Romano-centric approaches which long dominated the debate. Strong views of Romanization presented Rome as bringer of civilization in the Italic areas, promoting the formation of a politically, technologically and culturally advanced and unified Italy. In the case of Italy, they had their origins not so much in ancient Roman literary discourse or modern colonialism (particularly significant in other parts of the Roman Empire), as in the Romantic nationalism of nineteenth-century Italy and Germany (Terrenato, 1998a; Mouritsen, 1998). Some of the most influential historical works on “Roman Italy” were written in this period, paramount among which is Mommsen’s *Römische Geschichte* (1854–6). In a much more explicit way than has long been appreciated in scholarship building on them, these works reflect specific contemporary preoccupations with the unification of highly diverse areas in Europe into nation-states, in which context the history of ancient Italy could be explored as a precursor or historical example. The most important strand of this discourse for our concerns here is the concomitant conceptualization of cultural change in Italy, which was presented as a gradual process of convergence under Roman guidance, predating but eventually leading to a politically and culturally unified whole. The general narrative thus created posited a neat sequence, in which the dissolution of the Iron Age “Italic peoples” preceded the emergence of a Romano-Italic culture promoted by Rome and her colonies, preparing the smooth establishment of Roman rule in the centuries thereafter. Such a conception and its chronology have perhaps been supported in part by the supposed fifth-century “crisis” of Italic cultures and the increased standardization of material culture during the mid-Republican period. But the framework itself is unmistakably of historiographic derivation, and observed developments in material culture have as a rule contributed little to it. The other way around, however, this general framework logically led to the attribution of many different social, economic and cultural developments in Italy in the last four centuries BCE to the rise of Rome in this period.

Thanks to important advances in both historical and archaeological research this state of affairs is now rapidly being corrected. Historiographical studies exposed the ideological roots and pervasiveness of the convergence model, which is a precondition for looking afresh at cultural developments in this period (Mouritsen, 1998; Bradley, 2002). Combined with the careful reconsideration of the development of Rome itself as part of the Italic Hellenistic world (on the “Romanization of Rome,” see Curti, 2000: 90–1; Chapter 26), the self-evidence of Roman cultural dominance in Italy before the Social War has been fundamentally undermined. These developments tap into two broadly contemporary trends in archaeological work. First, archaeological field work especially over the last three decades has yielded an enormous amount of new data allowing better contextualization of developments, both regionally and in a wider Mediterranean perspective. Second, theoretical studies have increasingly pointed out the malleability of material culture, styles, and the meanings and associations attached to it, compromising any attempt straightforwardly to link certain types of material culture with specific and static groups or ideologies.

3 De-centering Rome

The correctives following from these and related insights have, over the last two decades, generally tended to de-center Rome from many developments in the Republican period. For instance, previous generations have insisted on Roman expansion and colonization as the cause of some of the most radical changes in rural settlement organization, for the Republican period notably the explosive spread of small farms in fourth- and third-century landscapes (see Chapter 13). But field survey data increasingly show that this development is actually part of a much wider Mediterranean phenomenon already in gear, that is, irrespective of Roman conquest (Terrenato, 2007; Attema, Burgers and van Leusen, 2011; see Chapter 12). Also, phenomena which have commonly been interpreted as indirect consequences of, or reactions to, Roman expansion can benefit from a broader perspective. The widespread construction of massive hillforts, for example, has in many Italian areas been related to specific moments of conflict with Rome (e.g. Oakley, 1995). This is not in itself improbable in particular cases, but the fact that the construction of such walled sites appears to be part of a much wider Mediterranean phenomenon related to general changes in modes and intensity of warfare puts it into perspective. Similar arguments can be made for the spread of other technologies and categories of material culture. At the moment that black-gloss pottery, originally conceived in Athens, is produced in several different areas, notably Campania and Latium, but equally in virtually every other region of Italy in locally specific forms, it requires special pleading to see the appearance of such crockery in general as an indicator of “Romanization” (Roth, 2007a; Chapter 5). Even villas, traditionally perceived as symbols of the Roman way of life *par excellence*, served very specific local and traditional functions, sometimes in fact perpetuating long-existing power structures dominated by the same elite families, as has notably been demonstrated for the Caecinae in Volterra (Terrenato, 1998b). Such findings concur with recent work on areas outside Italy, in which the Roman conquest is increasingly being regarded as much less decisive than other distinct socio-economic and cultural convulsions that were, in part, not causally related to Roman hegemony, and

may indeed have enabled its spread in the first place (Wells, 1999; Keay and Terrenato, 2001; Terrenato, 2008).

In sum, many of the socio-economic and cultural developments in Italy in the (Mid-) Republican period can be characterized as momentous, dynamic, and often coupled with increased interaction and exchange, but not necessarily causally related to or centered on Rome. However, necessary and salutary as this revisionist line of reasoning is, there is a risk in turn of overly minimizing Roman impact. As regards historiography, demonstrating that the way by which previous scholars supported a certain view of historical developments was wrong does not automatically imply that that view itself is wrong, and must be turned on its head. Similarly, the multi-interpretability of material culture does not preclude that in certain historical contexts specific objects, styles and ways of living indeed did relate to Roman agency, and were meant to signal association with the new dominant power, or even document its blunt imposition. The most important realization, therefore, is that Roman political and cultural dominance is not self-evident – not that it was non-existent. A new perspective for analyzing specific historical situations has thus been opened up, which has suggested different emphases in research. To illustrate these points, we will briefly consider two issues; first, changed ideas on the actual mechanisms of cultural interaction between Italic and Roman people, and second, the creation of centrality in Rome itself by seizing, and internalizing, powerful symbols.

4 Cultural Interaction in Practice

One logical consequence of the re-thinking of the self-evidence of Rome as a dominant cultural factor is increased attention to the practicalities of cultural change. How and where did cultural interaction take place? Migrations, in the form of colonization, and, to a lesser extent, the army, have traditionally been regarded as key factors in the Romanization of Italy. Both fields are currently undergoing thorough revisions, in part stimulated by the above-mentioned intellectual developments. Manpower from the Italian allies was seminal for Rome's military success (Brunt, 1971). But the image of the army as a melting pot promoting allied identification with Rome turns out to be problematic (Pfeilschifter, 2007). To begin with, the levy and swearing-in of the soldiers, potentially integrative events, proceeded according to local community standards, not according to Roman standards, for Latin and allied Italic soldiers alike. Moreover, for reasons of practical administration and communication, the allied units were usually composed according to ethnic or regional criteria (thus, we know of a *cohors praenestina*, *paeligna*, etc.), and presumably usually addressed in their own language. Even later acknowledgements of allied contributions advertised in their home towns were in Oscan, as for instance a dedication by the Roman commander Mummius, captor of Corinth in 146, to the allied community of Pompeii (Martelli, 2002). Although shared experiences of Roman citizen soldiers and the soldiers from different Latin and Italic communities in victory and defeat in areas often far from Italy undoubtedly contributed to enhanced interaction and mutual awareness at some levels, this particular constellation of the army will equally have reinforced and shaped ethnic or regional sentiments. At the same time, it is quite possible that the logistical requirements imposed on the Italic allies led to increased or changed patterns in centralization in terms of settlements or other foci of

social communication. That is to say, Roman agency had presumably considerable impact on various aspects of the lives of part of the non-Roman Italic population, but not in a traditional integrative “Romanizing” sense.

An example with a somewhat clearer material correlate regards colonization. Colonies established by Rome from especially the fourth century onwards have traditionally been viewed as key instruments in the spread of Roman ideas, models, and associated material culture *par excellence*. But this view is to an extent predicated on the assumption that colonies were small replicas of the city of Rome (Gell. *NA* 16.13.9), a view that is, as it now turns out, difficult to maintain even for the Triumviral and Imperial periods (e.g. Beard, North and Price, 1998: 331–4; see also Chapter 30). The character and rationale behind colonies in the Mid-Republican period is currently intensely debated (Bradley and Wilson, 2006; Stek and Pelgrom, forthcoming). The degree of their Roman-ness has been questioned, and a much more heterogeneous image emerges when the local archaeological and epigraphic evidence is taken as a starting point rather than later literary images (Bispham, 2006). Moreover, the indigenous contribution to colonial communities, though still debated, might have been considerable (Bradley, 2006). In terms of identity, locally constructed civic identities, as expressed in coinage, epigraphy and cults, will in most situations have been more relevant than their status as a colony related to Rome. In this respect they do not differ much from other civic communities in Italy.

Even their colonial persona was not necessarily centered directly on Rome. The most numerous and largest colonies had Latin status, and in certain historical circumstances these preferred to focus on an imagined shared Latin, rather than Roman, descent (people from Latium were often part of the new colonial populations, but underlining the Latin element has probably more to do with the new colonial configuration). Specific emphases in colonial panthea may be explained in this sense, in all their local variegation. For instance, a dedication at the Latin sanctuary of Diana at Nemi by a magistrate of the Latin colony of Ariminum on behalf of his community must be interpreted in this vein (*CIL* I².40; Cicala, 1995). If the role of colonies in the urbanization of Italy on a Roman model can also be contested for at least the Early and Mid-Republican periods, little seems to remain of the image of proud new Roman cities irradiating Roman culture over the peninsula. Many colonies were actually established in pre-existing cities, with many of the urbanistic details derived from contemporary Greek, not Roman, models (Sewell, 2010), and some new foundations may only have developed a proper urban aspect later in their history (Pelgrom, 2008). This is not to deny the significance of colonies in cultural and other developments in Italy altogether. But it shows that framing their role in terms of straightforward Romanization does not do justice to the various modes of cultural interaction at play. For instance, whereas the role of urbanism in the spread of Roman culture is being redressed, recent research points at the establishment of small rural communities integrated in the Roman administrative system (Tarpin, 2002; Capogrossi Colognesi, 2002). Interestingly, these communities tapped into new Roman ideologies at least as early as the colonial centers (Stek, 2009: 123–70). Such developments undermine the center–periphery models of cultural change normally underpinning narratives on the spread of Roman influence, and confound the neat contiguous geographical and territorial conceptualizations of Roman and non-Roman.

Another example related to colonization regards the debate on a special category of terracottas, the so-called Etrusco-Latium-Campanian group. As the name suggests, the group originates in these areas, but its subsequent appearance in other parts of Italy has traditionally been related to Roman colonization. It seems now that their static interpretation as “guide fossils” of Roman colonists and associated notions of the progression of superior Roman material culture are problematic and overstated (Gentili, 2005; Glinister, 2006). Yet it remains to be seen if their association with the newly established communities, closely connected in a dynamic network of urban and other communities in Italy and the wider Mediterranean, as such is to be rejected. It is rather their direct association with Roman ideologies that is presumably anachronistic. The complexity of such issues on the ground is only beginning to emerge, as a recent study on votive heads from a deposit in the territory of Vulci shows (Söderlind, 2002). Here, local Etruscan workshops deliberately adapted existing types, invariably uncovered heads, by applying hand-made veils. The secondary creation of a *capite velato* type must reflect the adoption of new ritual traditions in the region alongside the existing uncovered ritual, as uncovered types continued to be produced too. Whether this complex situation must be connected with the influx of colonists or broader changes or diversification in ritual practice is hard to prove, but the possibility that different social or cultural identities were played out in such a way remains distinct.

5 Seizing Symbols of Power

Rome itself was in this period developing fast in conceptualizing its newly acquired central position in the known world, a position created both physically, in the network of roads centered on Rome (Coarelli, 1988a; Laurence, 1999; for discussion on the dating, Pékary, 1968; Chapter 19) and mentally, in growing proprietorial attitudes to Italy and beyond (Purcell, 1990; Dench, 2005). This new position and ambition was increasingly reflected in the shaping of the material environment (Purcell, 2007a). In identifying such expressions, one should naturally not be looking for primordial and intrinsically Roman forms. But that does not mean that those implicated in the power game at Rome were not industriously looking for appropriate ways to express their superiority. For this purpose, common languages and symbols of success, victory and dominion available in the Hellenistic Mediterranean were mined. Perceived origins do not matter much at that point, or can, conversely, even be actively used to accentuate the power of incorporation. For instance, it would be perverse to argue that the Capitulum-type temple (three cellae, high podium) cannot have been a symbol of Rome, because Roman writers construed it as based on an Etruscan tradition. What seems to happen here is the successful adaptation of a widely existing, yet powerful, symbol and its subsequent promotion as an icon of Roman authority. How and when the model developed and spread is a different matter. Recent studies have rightly questioned the importance, and very existence, of Capitolia in the earliest colonies – another case of the projecting back of later literary images to earlier colonization (Bispham, 2006). But just as significant is the actual establishment of the model, beginning at least in the early second century, and its gain in popularity in the latter half of the first century and beyond, in line with different historical contexts within which both allegiance to, and centralizing ambitions from, Rome were growing (Purcell, forthcoming).

Just as Rome, other Italic communities were in search of new and powerful ways to express themselves, and this explains competing claims and shared symbolic languages. In general, the models were ultimately derived from Greek Hellenistic examples, but could be recast to serve diametrically opposed purposes. This process can be seen already before Rome became a factor of significance, famously in the Lucanian tombs of Paestum (cf. Chapter 24 and Figure 24.3). Here, the Greek-Barbarian dichotomy is effectively turned around, with a Lucanian warrior cast as the victor (Rouveret and Greco Pontrandolfo, 1983: 121; Greco Pontrandolfo and Rouveret, 1983; Curti, Dench and Patterson, 1996: 184). Powerful as they were, these south Italian pictorial traditions were to have an important influence on Roman visualizations of victory, and perhaps not incidentally started to appear in our record after the capture of these areas (Nicolet, 1962; Holliday, 2002). For the process in the mid-Republican period, the concept of Victoria might be emblematic. Ultimately inspired by the Greek notion of Nike, it was a relatively new cult in Rome, receiving a temple only in 294 after a victory over the Samnites. After that, Victoria and related concepts of success and valor became very popular and quite certainly associated with Roman power, as Victoria's appearance on mid-Republican silver coins, *victoriati*, underlines (Hölscher, 1967; Fears, 1981). In all its architectural distinctiveness and cosmopolitan eclecticism, it is quite clear in what discourse the "resistant" Samnites, the Pentri placed themselves with their late second-century temple at Pietrabbondante, with its three-cellae, high podium temple and dedication to *Vikturrai*. As with the Capitolium temple, the layers of meanings attached to these cultural models is a given, but that does not make them less powerful when applied at the right moment at the right place.

6 Italic Identities: Beyond Ethnic Regionalism?

De-centering Rome has thus been an important and productive shift in approach for Republican Italy, as long as care is taken not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Less clear, however, is if one should instead focus on Italic ethnic groups or regions associated with them as the basic units of analysis. Regionalism along ethnic lines has a long history in research on ancient Italy, which can in part be connected with the fertile ground it has found in contemporary societal developments – most recently in modern discourses of regional particularism, in reaction to EU or central Italian government policies, before that in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century erudite humanism of especially south Italy, while its modern roots reach further back to the Etruscologia of the seventeenth century (Torelli, 1999: 1–2; for the analogous issue of methodological nationalism for the provinces cf. Woolf, 2004; Chapter 27). Traditionally, this separate branch of studies has had limited impact on conceptualizations of the Romanization of Italy, because their chronological focus was, not incidentally, usually placed before the advent of Roman expansion. Simply put, the process of subsequent change has thus traditionally been rendered as an equation in which Italic sentiments and customs are supposed to diminish proportionally to the adoption of new ways of life, that is, the substitution of peculiar Italic identities with a Roman one (Brunt, 1965; Toynbee, 1965; Keaveney, 1987: 21). That such a view of (ethnic) identity is not merely modern is

proven by the observations of the Cappadocian Strabo, who wrote a historical geography in the Augustan period:

But the [Leucani], and the Brettii, and the Samnites themselves (the progenitors of these peoples) have so utterly deteriorated that it is difficult even to distinguish their several settlements; and the reason is that no common organization longer endures in any one of the separate tribes; and their characteristic differences in language, armor, dress, and the like, have completely disappeared; and, besides, their settlements, severally and in detail, are wholly without repute ... The Leucani are Samnite in race ... But now they are Romans.

(VI.1.2–3, trans. H. Jones, 1929, Loeb)

There are similar accounts for other peoples throughout Strabo's work. The problem here is the unitary, and therefore untenable, conception of identity, presenting the process as that of communicating vessels. Whereas we must be careful not to confuse fluidity and flexibility with total freedom in choosing one's role with respect to others, the situational nature of identity is indubitable. Ironically, one usually has to look hard for unambiguous expressions of ethnic identities in the diverse Italic areas precisely until the start of Roman interference in these areas. References to Italic ethnic designations can be found well into the Imperial period. Any temptation to link this with the recent reconsideration of Roman impact to suggest that little changed must, however, be suppressed. Indeed, emphasizing in turn the continued importance of Italic identities after Roman incorporation poses its own problems, especially when presented in terms of persistence, as will be seen below (cf. section 9 below).

7 Archaeology and Ethnic Identity

To start with, the notion and usefulness of ethnicity has, even for the perceived apogee of the Italic peoples in the Iron Age and classical period, met with major theoretical and methodological challenges. Anthropological, historical and archaeological research over the last few decades has shown how deeply problematic is the connection between peoples mentioned in the (mostly later) Greek and Roman sources and archaeological cultures distinguished by modern scholars (cf. Chapter 25). This regards its culture-historical theoretical premises, failing to acknowledge that certain assemblages of material culture are but one of many indicia possibly signaling ethnic feelings (e.g. Shennan, 1989; Hall, 1997, 2002). They may equally relate to other expressions and historical processes, such as other levels of congregation, patterns of trade, fashion, and so on, which blur ethnic distinctions (see Torelli, 1995 for examples). Objects and styles can start a new life, and can be imbued with new significance in different contexts. The localized process can be described as cultural *bricolage* (Terrenato, 1998a); that is, the changing roles of the object can only be understood by studying its cultural biography (Kopytoff, 1986). Related to these problems is the high risk of circularity in linking material assemblages and ethnic groups, as identification of a specific material assemblage is subjective and highly dependent on what types of evidence are privileged. Even arguably "emblematic" types or styles raise considerable problems of interpretation, as an example from south Italy illustrates. In the so-called Messapian area, female burials

were characterized by the positioning of a specific pot with high handles decorated with wheels or *trozzella* in the grave. Originally an Iron Age form developed in the eighth century, it continued to be made until at least the third century, exclusively for funerary use. But whether it signaled a “Messapian” identity, or rather relates to a localized form of gender or other social identity, or combinations of all these facets, can only be guessed. Incidentally, it is worth noting that the pot itself is the result of *bricolage*, as it draws on Greek technologies (the use of the wheel; slip) and fashion (decorative motives), which are blended with a native form and arrangement of decoration (Yntema, 1974).

Further complicating our recognition of ethnic expressions is its profound volatility. Ethnic identity is highly political, and therefore extremely sensitive to changing historical circumstances. By definition (or by most definitions, at least), a shared past is essential in the construction of ethnic identity, but the way in which it is presented is profoundly more telling about contemporaneous concerns than that evoked past. This means that accepting the long lines of continuity drawn through time and space as intentionally presented in ethnic expressions must be avoided. For instance, in the second century a “Samnite” (*safinim*) group identity is being asserted in modern Molise (Vetter, 1953: 149; Chapter 25). It apparently builds upon the prior existence of a *safinim* identity that is attested epigraphically already by the sixth century in modern Abruzzo further to the north. But rather than indicating the stable and everlasting presence of an ethnic group over such distant geographical areas, the second-century referencing relates to contemporaneous claims to a distant and heroic past, quite possibly as part of the antagonizing political climate in reaction to Roman dominion in this period (Dench, 1995: 198–203; Tagliamonte, 1996: 7–13). These points show that, at least from an archaeological point of view, ethnic frameworks are not exactly the most self-evident path to follow, unless we are willing to abandon now commonly accepted definitions of ethnicity (e.g. Morgan, 2009; Antonaccio, 2009). In light of the essential fluidity of ethnic identities over time and space, ethnic regionalism is something of a contradictio.

8 Asserting Local Distinctiveness in New Forms

More important than noting difficulties in recognition, however, is asking how important ethnic identity was *vis-à-vis* other levels of organization or congregation. Posing our historical narratives in ethnic terms, thereby properly following the ancient authors, sometimes obscures the fact that most evidence—epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological—actually points at smaller (and occasionally at larger) communal identities as worthy of monumental expression as the ethnic groups known from literary descriptions (for Etruria, see Chapter 23). Thus, urban communities from south to north generally signal their civic identities by displaying their name on coinage, by worshipping polyadic deities, and sometimes claiming their territories by *necropoleis* or extra-urban sanctuaries (e.g. Zifferero, 2002). Although there is evidence for coinage being used for larger, presumably ethnic groups at specific historical moments, such as, for instance, in the Lucanian case (*loukanom*, discussed by Isayev, 2007b: 9–54, 2009; *safinim* and *italia/viteliu* on coins, discussed by Pobjoy, 2000a), we do not normally find “boundary markers” of ethnic or tribal territories, neither in urban nor in non-urbanized areas. Rather than a result of modern inability to recognize such boundaries, this questions the very existence of, and surely the importance attached

to, expressions of fixed boundaries in these terms. As with Roman colonial territories and other administrative categories, the maps indicating peoples and statuses to which we are so accustomed appear to represent profoundly anachronistic ways of thinking.

This does not mean that ethnic identities were insignificant. These clearly emerged in various periods in relation to internal structuration processes, their ultimate causes being increased population densities and increased contact with other groupings, be they fellow Oscan speakers, Greeks in the south or Romans in the west. But we most certainly risk overemphasizing the importance of a level of aggregation that presumably only in certain circumstances came to the fore, at the cost of other, more evident levels of communal organization and related identities (Bradley, 1997; Bradley, Isayev and Riva, 2007). The ways in which emphasis on the ethnic or “state” level has obscured our understanding of other levels of socio-political organization and its cultural significance are several, both in less urbanized and urbanized areas. One example of the former, with quite penetrating historical consequences, regards the internal areas of central-southern Italy, or “Samnium,” itself an ethno-geographical concept presumably developed first in a Roman context (*Samnio* appears in the elogium on the Tomb of the Scipiones, *CIL* I².6–7, dated to the mid-third century; see discussion on the probably adjectival form *safinim* in Rix, 2002). Whereas historical studies are rapidly dilapidating previous conceptions of the Samnites as a unitary state (in different ways; Letta, 1994; Cornell, 2004; Senatore, 2006), with all its consequences for our understanding of the Roman conquest of Italy, archaeological research increasingly points towards local variegation in material culture and practices (for instance in burial practices: Scopacasa, 2009; Chapter 25). This warrants more attention to local communities in their own right – all the more so since the relationship between such communities and higher levels of political organization is much less evident now than it was before the rejection of the main model of Italic political organization, the *pagus-vicus* system (Capogrossi Colognesi, 2002; Tarpin, 2002; F. Russo, 2003; Stek, 2009: 107–21). The evidence may show that different communities only organized themselves in the face of external threat.

In the more urbanized areas the importance of local civic identities is even more evident. The case of Latium is illustrative. The area around and east of Rome inhabited by Latin speakers consisted in the first place of different urban communities. These shared a common material culture nowadays called *cultura laziale*. Yet there seems to be no reason to assume that any political organization existed along ethnic lines (Cornell, 1997, 2000b). The shared rituals at the common sanctuary of Jupiter Latiaris on the Alban Mount rather served to establish power relationships between the different urban communities, which are proudly listed (Plin. *HN* 3.69; Livy XXXII.1.9, XXXVII.3.4). Difference in unity seems also to be expressed in the 13 different altars in the sanctuary of Lavinium, probably reflecting different Latin communities. Presumably, Latin speakers could identify with each other in the face of external threat (at least on one occasion apparently against Rome: Cato *Orig.* 58 P) and it is precisely such processes that allowed Rome to gain a dominant position in the first place (Cornell, 1995: 293–301).

Otherwise, however, the archaeological and historical evidence for the communities in Latium primarily points at the expression of local civic pride, all the more so in the Late Republican period (Wallace-Hadrill, 2007, 2008). The famous urban and extra-urban sanctuaries built in this period by different cities in Latium, but equally in other parts of Italy, are best interpreted as efforts by local communities, and their leading elites, to put

themselves on the map (cf. e.g. the local senate and censors mentioned for the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste: Degrassi, 1969, or the quattuorviri involved in the construction of the Temple of Hercules Victor at Tibur, *CIL* I².1492). The relationships between such building projects must therefore surely be seen in terms of peer polity interaction, and particularly competition, rather than as expressions of a common Latin identity. In terms of material culture, these sanctuaries are radically innovative, both in the adoption of new construction techniques (notably opus caementicium) and the application of architectural notions and models freely inspired by contemporary architecture in the Mediterranean east. At Praeneste, this is visible in the scenographical layout with terraces and ramps, creating an imposing sacred landscape over the town, as well as in many of its architectural decorative details (see Chapter 17). It probably incorporates an older cult place, as is suggested by the use of opus quadratum for the oracular pit on the hemicycle level as well as its position (Coarelli, 1987b: 50, 72–4). The same mechanism met throughout this chapter, that of expressing local difference in newly acquired material forms, incorporating new techniques as well as real or perceived traditions, applies here. For the contemporary Praenestini (who, incidentally, did not have Latin status) and presumably most other observers, the new magnificent sanctuary will have stirred up many associations, but most of all civic pride and achievement. If the sanctuary ever evoked a shared Latin identity, it must have been later, in a Roman Imperial context.

9 Questioning Continuity: Roman Imperialism and Italic Identities

After the Social War, all free inhabitants of the peninsula became Roman citizens, and were now also officially politically integrated into Rome. The first century has, in many ways, been seen as crucial in the integration of Italy, in socio-economic, cultural and notional respects. It is now that a notion of “Italy” as a whole, which had been developing since the third century, becomes fully articulated and indeed seems to culminate with Augustus’s *tota Italia*. It has been observed, however, that the traditionally envisaged “end of the Italic peoples” in this period must be reconsidered, pointing to the vitality of Italic ethnic designations far into the Roman Imperial period (e.g. Giardina, 1997; Bradley, 2007; Chapter 23). The question is what such evocations in a still more uneven power balance mean, in terms of self-perceptions and cultural strategies by both those in power and those not in power. The earlier noted flexibility and topicality, in both temporal and spatial terms, of ethnic designations gains special significance in Roman Imperial discourse.

Certainly, outsiders’ designations of ethnic groups had of old played a role in the formation and shaping of ethnic identities, not only in the common oppositional mechanism but also in terms of auto-identification with *etic* labels (e.g. Hill, 1996). Such processes formed an essential part of ethnogenesis in Italy, where ethnic identities were often modeled on dominant Greek ways of seeing, and the same mechanism applies to the period when Rome became dominant. In the Transpadane area, for instance, Roman interference may have generated the first instance when the people living there saw themselves as Galli. Indeed, the ethnic categories of Insubres and Cenomanni, which persisted until the late first century, presumably developed through a process of

auto-identification with what were essentially Roman categories (Williams, 2001: 214–18). An early example of Rome's role in the formation and/or expression of ethnicity may be the Volscians of the Pontine area (Gnade, 2002), and, as discussed above, in second-century Molise political mobilization against Roman pressure may have catalyzed a process of ethnic construction. Also in the case of Umbria, the Roman conquest may have enhanced, rather than weakened, expressions of regional or ethnic identity (Bradley, 1997, 2000a: 190–269). But Roman agency may actually have gone much further, as notably Dench has shown (1995, 2005). The key issue is that specific and variegated images of the incorporated peoples of Italy were of direct importance to developing Roman policies and Roman constructions of identity in relation to others. In this way, peoples previously depicted as dangerous and anti-Roman, such as Samnites and other central Apennine peoples, could evolve, after their incorporation and useful employment in the Roman armies, into brave and frugal role-models for a Rome that was perceived as morally degenerate. In the process, a whole new ethnic was coined, Sabellians, to evade negative connotations and forge a connection with the ancient morally upright Sabines (Dench, 1995). Actually, the “Samnite” did survive, but in a profoundly perverted way – the adjective became a specific type of gladiator, attested already under the Republic (Lucil. 149–52 M). This could lead to the interesting situation reflected in an inscription from Cádiz (*Inscripciones Latinas de la España Romana* 5690), where a man of Greek origin (natione Graeca) with a Latin name (Germanus) defines himself as “Samnis” (Caldelli, 2001).

Pushing this line of enquiry further, the continued importance of evoking Italic ethnic identities throughout Late Republican and Imperial times can be related to the development of a plural notion of Roman identity, in which Italic difference could offer an attractive model for later incorporations and related mechanisms of self-positioning (Dench, 2005). The variegation of Italy provided, in other words, a point of reference for further imperial projects and this may be one of the key reasons for its continued existence. The question is, then, how such discourses relate to ethnic or other local identities on the ground. Most self-references to Italic ethnicities or localities come from individuals thoroughly entangled in the Roman power game, in Rome itself. This not only accounts for the well-known evocations of their non-Roman Italian roots by Late Republican and Early Imperial writers and poets (Gasser, 1999), but also for the numerous ethnic names adopted or promoted by influential families (Farney, 2007). The specific class context of such evidence can hardly be overstated, and it is good to remember that the often-evoked meditations on the conciliation of different loyalties, such as in Cicero (*Leg.* 2.5), or earlier indeed in Ennius's “tria corda” (Gell. *NA* 17.17.1), are quite exceptional. Imperial period references to ethnic identities pitched at local Italian audiences bear, perhaps not surprisingly, no recognizable relationship to continued archaeological regional variability, but they do point to the dominance of Rome in the negotiation. An inscription put up by the inhabitants of Superaequum, a small community in what is nowadays Abruzzo, seems to encapsulate some of the processes at work: Q. Varius Geminus, apparently native to the area, is being honored by the Superaequani for his achievements in Rome. Notably, he is “the first of all Paelignians” to have become senator. The phrasing demonstrates firm reference to a Rome-dominated power structure, the existence of something of a Paelignian identity as a relevant frame of reference still in the first century CE, but equally competition between different Paelignian

communities and indeed local Superaequan pride (*CIL* IX.3306). Only from a different perspective can conscious Roman strategies be recognized in the antiquarian revivals of ancient Italic festivals, notably under Augustus. The *ludi saeculares* revived in 17, for instance, highlighted the incorporation of the Latins (and not other or all Italians) because these, subjugated and incorporated successfully already in the fourth century, provided an appropriate role model for the empire as a whole (Cooley, 2006: 230–7). The Rescript from Spello documents the celebration of “ethnic” festivals in Umbria and Etruria as late as the early fourth century CE, probably in a form conceived under Augustus (Coarelli, 2001). These examples show that the extent to which Italic ethnic designations can be confounded and indeed manipulated cannot be underestimated, and that the creation of the Italian *regiones* by Augustus with its probably unofficial yet suggestive ethnic labels is merely one of the clearest examples of the forms that such reconfigurations could take (Nicolet, 1991; Laurence, 1998). From this perspective, the transformation of the ethnic Latin to a legal status within the Roman administrative organization, detached from any geographical and ethnic reference points, can be seen as just one particular expression of a much broader phenomenon in which ethnic designations are employed to conceptualize the new order in terms both of geography and different sorts of statuses. The shift from an ethnic to a legal definition of Latinity was only possible in a Roman imperial framework – and so was its signaling through the quotation of the material forms of the civic sanctuaries of Praeneste and Tibur in the Baetican cult place of Munigua.

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FURTHER READING

Historical overviews of Italy in the Republican period in relation to Roman history can be found in the *Cambridge Ancient History* (esp. Purcell, 1994; Cornell, 1989; Crawford, 1996; on the Samnite wars see now Cornell, 2004). Important contributions/introductions to the debate on the Romanization of Italy in English include Curti, Dench and Patterson (1996), Keay and Terrenato (2001), Dench (2003) and Bradley (2007), and part of Torelli’s fundamental work is accessible in English (1995, 1999). For the general theoretical framework, see, for example, Hingley (2005, 2009). The historiographical background of the convergence model of culture change is discussed in detail in Mouritsen (1998). On Hellenization, its relation to Roman hegemony, and its local meaning, see Gallini (1973), Zanker (1976) and Wallace-Hadrill’s work (most recently Wallace-Hadrill, 2008). Further key contributions on socio-cultural change in this period include *Modes* (1983), Mertens and Lambrechts (1991), Herring and Lomas (2000), Jehne and Pfeilschifter (2006), van Dommelen and Terrenato (2007) and Roth and Keller (2007).

More specifically on changes in settlement patterns, see, for example, Barker and Lloyd (1991), Lo Cascio and Storch Marino (2001), Attema, Burgers and van Leusen (2011); on the revision of the pagus-vicus system, see Tarpin (2002), Capogrossi Colognesi (2002), discussed in Russo (2003) and Stek (2009); on colonization, see Crawford (1995), Fentress (2000), Bispham (2000), Bradley and Wilson (2006), Sewell (2010) and Stek and Pelgrom (forthcoming). On migration and demography, see, for example, Scheidel (2004) and de Ligt and Northwood (2008); on the socio-cultural effects of migration, see, for example, Pina Polo (2006). On important linguistic aspects, see J.N. Adams (2003, 2007); on religion and cult places, see, for example, Torelli (1999), Bispham and Smith (2000), Schultz and Harvey (2006), de Cazanove (2007) and Stek (2009, in press). On the municipalization of Italy, see Bispham (2007a); on the relationship between Italic identities and Roman imperialism, see Dench (1995, 2005).

For regional studies see, in Italian, the *Biblioteca di Archeologia* series of Longanesi (e.g. Cerchiai, 1995, Tagliamonte, 1996), and, in English, for example, Harris (1971), Dench (1995), Bradley (2000a), Isayev (2007b), Lomas (1993), Holloway (1994), now complemented geographically by the essays in Bradley, Isayev and Riva (2007), and, of course, the chapters in this section and their Further Reading sections.