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# The Antinoeion of Hadrian's Villa: Interpretation and Architectural Reconstruction

ZACCARIA MARI AND SERGIO SGALAMBRO

## *Abstract*

Recent excavations at Hadrian's Villa have revealed the remains of a structure with a large exedra, numerous architectural elements, and some sculptural fragments in the Egyptian style. The characteristics of some of the finds immediately brought to mind Hadrian's connections with Egypt, the long-standing "Egyptian problem" in studies of the villa (e.g., the Canopus-Serapeum), and naturally, Antinous. In this article, we examine specific aspects of the structure and identify it as the Antinoeion, based, in part, on a masonry foundation that may be connected to the famous obelisk of Antinous at Rome. We also present, for the first time, an architectural reconstruction of the building. We argue that the Antinoeion is not simply a mausoleum or cenotaph and temple where the cult of the dead youth Antinous, who was assimilated to Osiris, could be associated with that of other Egyptian divinities. Rather, it is a true tomb housing the remains of Antinous. It is here suggested that this tomb was built so that Hadrian could commemorate his paramour to whom he was joined by a deeply passionate and spiritual bond.\*

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE COMPLEX

### *The Discovery*

In 1998, there came to light at Hadrian's Villa the poorly preserved remains of a complex structure that

was, because of the presence of a large exedra, initially thought to be a nymphaeum. Its position along the last stretch of the road leading to the Grand Vestibule of the villa seemed to support this interpretation because the nymphaeum would have embellished the route followed by the imperial cortege (figs. 1, 2). Exploratory soundings carried out in 2002 recovered some Egyptian-style sculptural fragments. This led to more precise and extensive excavations that to date have brought to light almost the entire plan of the building and have made possible the recovery of important architectural and decorative elements.<sup>1</sup> After the first field season, it seemed possible to describe the structure (which was almost immediately named the Antinoeion) as a mausoleum or, perhaps, a cenotaph and temple. The second season, however, revealed a masonry foundation that may be connected to the famous obelisk of Antinous at Rome, which led us to interpret the structure as a true tomb housing the remains of Hadrian's paramour.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Architectural Plan*

Let us first examine specific aspects of the structure, its architectural plan, and reconstruction, which are

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\*This article is the collaboration of two authors: Mari describes the structure and discusses its historical background. Sgalambro undertook the architectural analysis and created the reconstructions and plans. We are grateful to Anna Maria Reggiani, archaeological director for Lazio, for including the excavation in the long-term research plans at Hadrian's Villa (Reggiani 2002–2003). We are also grateful to Andrew Lemmons for translating this text, which was submitted to the *AJA* in Italian. All graphic and photographic documentation belongs to the authors and is housed in Rome, at the Archivio della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio.

<sup>1</sup>Owing to the importance of the discovery, the results of two of the three annual excavation campaigns (2002–2004) were published in a timely fashion in different articles. These articles, in addition to describing the structure, present the most noteworthy discoveries and collect the data from previous centuries that relate to the current discoveries (Mari 2002–2003, 2003–2004, 2005a, 2005b). For discussions on the architecture, see Sgalambro 2002–2003, 2003–2004. For discussions on the tomb of Antinous at Hadrian's Villa, see Salza Prina Ricotti 2002–2003, 2003–2004.

<sup>2</sup>Hadrian met the 13-year-old Antinous in 123 C.E., during his first voyage through the empire, in Bithynia in the city of Bithynion, later called Claudiotopolis (and known today as Bolu) (Lambert 1992; Mambella 1995; MacDonald and Pinto

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1995, 18–19, 345–46 n. 19). They spent about seven years together, three of them (125–128 C.E.) in the villa at Tivoli. In 130 C.E., during the court's sojourn in Egypt, the young Antinous drowned in the Nile. The late biography by the scriptor Aelius Spartianus includes the rumors that circulated then about the event and records Hadrian's despair with ridicule (*SHA Hadr.* 14.5–7). The account of Cassius Dio contains more information, although it survives in a Byzantine-era compendium (Cass Dio. 69.11. 2–4); it speaks of an accidental death or spontaneous sacrifice, the divine honors given by Hadrian, the foundation of the city of Antinoöpolis, and the star born of Antinous' spirit. Epigraphic and numismatic sources illuminate the postmortem events in detail. The day after the drowning at a spot not far from the future city of Antinoöpolis, Antinous was deified. It is uncertain if the drowning was suicide or homicide (see Birley 1977, 235–58; Voisin 1987; Levi 1993, 86 [the last argues that Antinous was eaten by a crocodile]). Temples were then erected mostly in the eastern provinces of the empire (first in Bithynion, where some of the mysteries were probably celebrated), and Antinous was assimilated, as documented in art, to Hermes, Dionysos, and other deities (Meyer 1991). Between 133 and 138 C.E., his effigy also appeared on coins (Equini Schneider 1987). The cult of the youth, although opposed by Christianity, was still widespread in late antiquity (Alföldy-Rosenbaum 1991).



Fig. 1. View of the area in front of the Hundred Rooms during excavation.

presented here for the first time (figs. 3, 4). The Antinoeion (fig. 5) was built on a gentle tufaceous slope that faces the long substructure called the Cento Camerelle, or the Hundred Rooms, and was cut to a depth of about 3 m to create a surface for a horizontal foundation. The ground plan is divided into two parts: a rectangular enclosure, or temenos (63 x 23 m), containing two temples and oriented along the road toward the Grand Vestibule, and a broad, colonnaded exedra (27.3 m in diameter). The temples and the colonnade of the exedra were made entirely of marble, and the remaining buildings were of brick, faced with marble or plaster.

Though the complex is almost completely destroyed, it is possible to reconstruct the plan with reasonable precision. The precinct was defined by a single continuous wall. Only the side facing south, supported by a cut in the rocky bank, is sufficiently preserved. This side exhibits a nymphaeum wall with rectangular niches covered by local “spongy” rock in imitation of a grotto (fig. 6). Each niche was served by a small lead pipe that branched off from a larger tube at the base of the wall and which produced a small jet of water that fell into two long basins in front of the wall (fig. 7). At a higher level, on the southwest end of the complex, a small cistern (see fig. 5[h]) and a collection basin (see fig. 5[g]) is supplied by a channel (see fig. 5[a]).<sup>3</sup> The two long basins in front of the wall were separated by a landing, providing access to

a passage that divided the nymphaeum wall into two sections and from which a narrow ramp (figs. 5[f], 8) led to an upper terrace arranged as a park in antiquity. It is significant that the preserved niche at the southwest corner was made larger in the course of construction; this may also have been the case on the opposite corner, though that niche is missing. These two larger niches, together with the central passage of an almost equal width, defined the limits of the nymphaeum wall with its modular rhythm (see fig. 8) and constituted the architectural backdrop of the ambulatories flanking the south temple.

On the other sides, the enclosure wall is preserved only at ground level, so it is impossible to establish its original elevation. It was probably adorned with niches and, judging from the modest thickness of the wall (0.9 m), rose only a few meters in height. Intense agricultural activity has completely destroyed the remains of the only entrance to the road that, in any case, could not have been very wide.

The temenos, as we have suggested, enclosed two rectangular temples facing each other. All that remains of either temple is the base of the podium (each measuring 15 x 9 m) faced in the local travertine known as Lapis Tiburtinus. The extant foundations allow us to reconstruct each temple with a pronaos and a spacious cella (fig. 9), as well as a central stairway; the facades were almost certainly tetrastyle *in antis*. The temples were constructed of Parian marble up to the apex

<sup>3</sup>The situation here is very complex, and the excavation is not yet complete. The basin, probably covered or protected by simple wooden planking, must have been rather wide; a square tank is linked to the principal underground channel into which the basins in front of the nymphaeum wall also emptied; the nymphaeum wall is protected from moisture by a hollow space.



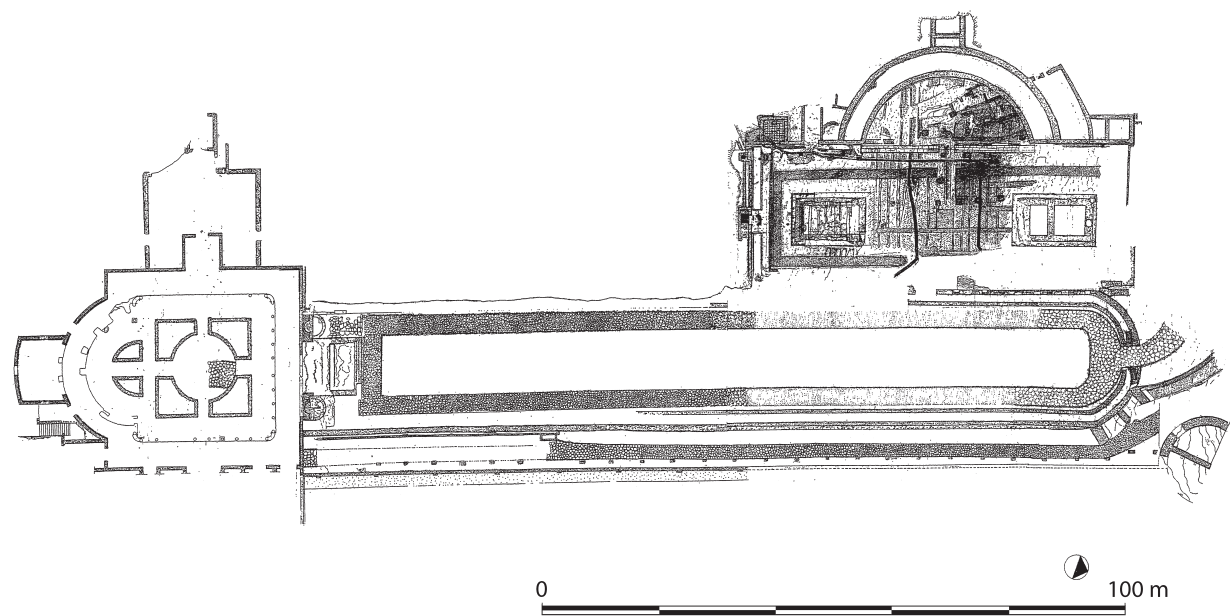


Fig. 2. The plan of the structure of the Antinoeion, of the street in front of it, and of the Grand Vestibule.

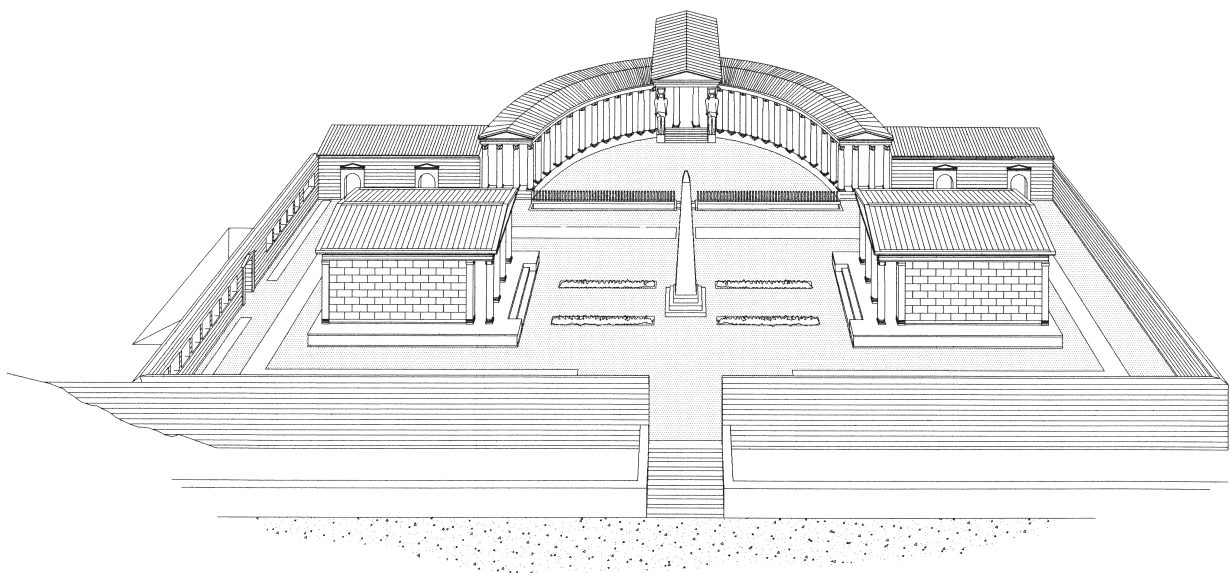


Fig. 3. Hypothetical axonometric reconstruction of the complex.

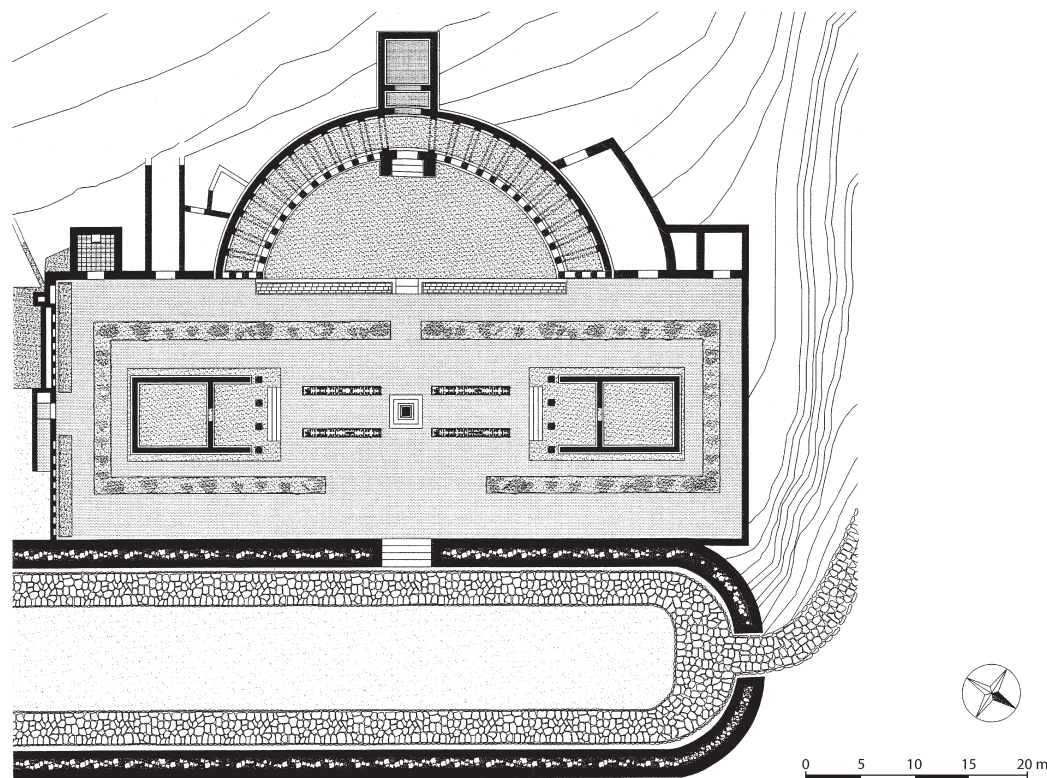


Fig. 4. Hypothetical planimetric reconstruction of the complex.

of the roof. An enormous quantity of architectural material, the remains of the extensively plundered temples, has been recovered. This material belongs to the rusticated ashlars of the cella walls, the Ionic entablatures, the sloping blocks of the pediments, the lateral cornices with lion-head water spouts, and the roofing tiles. The order of the columns and their capitals, however, remains uncertain.

The broad furrows dug in the 18th century for the installation of a vineyard and the tree-planting pits of a still more recent era have spared, precisely at the center between the two temples, the scanty remains of a square concrete foundation (ca. 3 m on a side) laid in a trench dug into the tuff (fig. 10). This valuable archaeological element allows us to pinpoint the precise location of Antinous' obelisk. This red granite obelisk, which is also known as the Barberini obelisk, rises to a height of 9.35 m and is today located on the Pincian Hill in Rome. It is the most important evidence available to us regarding Antinous' tomb, because it bears a sepulchral inscription. Therefore, we may deduce that a tomb for Antinous must have existed in whose ambit the obelisk would likely have had a prominent place. We will return later to the distinct possibility that the obelisk came from the Antinoeion of Hadrian's

Villa and that it constitutes the principal key for the interpretation of the complex.

In the space between the temples, a large semicircular, colonnaded exedra appears in the background like a stage backdrop. Today, only two low concentric walls corresponding to the foundations for the colonnade and the back wall of the portico remain (fig. 11). The exedra was fronted by two long narrow basins (13.20 x 1.05 m) covered by marble slabs (fig. 12). Between the two basins, at the center, was a stepped, 3 m wide passage. On the surface of the tufaceous bank, it is still possible to detect the traces of two walls (with the basins extending in front of them); these walls, which define the slightly higher level of the exedra, may have supported a balustrade or a grill. The despoliation and destruction were so drastic that, of the entire floor of the annular portico, there remains only a single strip of pavement. This fragment of pavement is a little higher than the external area and still bears impressions of tiles of the *opus sectile* decoration that paved the portico and also covered the wall. It is very likely that the columns of the exedra portico were made of Chemtou marble (also known as giallo antico), for some Chemtou fragments with spiral grooving have been recovered, including a portion of the bottom of

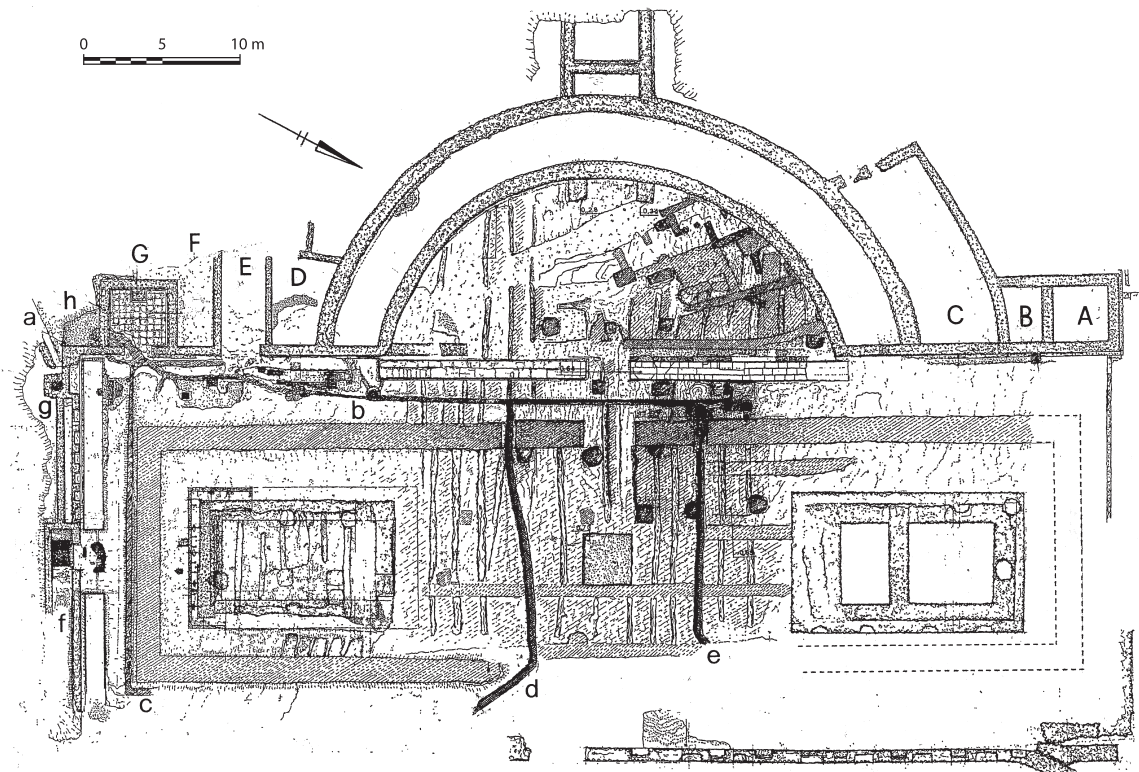


Fig. 5. State plan of the complex (after the 2004 excavation).

a column shaft (fig. 13). From the diameter preserved on this fragment, it is possible to reconstruct a column height of about 3 m; not enough remains, however, to determine the order of the column base or the capital. Given the absence of masonry, we propose that the semicircular portico, which measures 3 m in length, was covered by wooden beams or by a barrel vault constructed of light material.<sup>4</sup>

Two large plinths project from the center of the exedra and are preserved only at ground level; they probably supported a marble element that might have been a pillar or a column. It is somewhat more likely, however, that they supported the two red granite telamonic statues in the Egyptian style (ht. 3.35 m) that were uncovered at the site in the early 16th century.

These mirror-image statues, each with a lotus-flower capital on its head, would have supported the architrave of a kind of porch with a central staircase, emphasizing the entrance to a structure standing behind the exedra at a somewhat higher elevation (see figs. 3–5). In this building, extending some meters beyond the curve of the exedra, one recognizes—from the prominent position it occupies (the focal point on the median axis of the entire complex)—the true and proper tomb. The surviving foundations show a plan like that of the temples described above (i.e., consisting of a cella preceded by a pronaos; fig. 14).<sup>5</sup>

Doors cut through the temenos wall lead to rooms that are structurally diverse and lie to either side of the exedra (see figs. 3–5). The height of the temenos

<sup>4</sup>According to a hypothetical reconstruction (Salza Prina Ricotti 2002–2003, 116–18, 138–41; 2003–2004, 253–361), formulated when the excavation was still in progress, only the foundations of the exedra would have been completed, designed to support an enormous vault in *opus caementicium*. To confirm the hypothetical reconstruction proposed here, we compared the structure to two other Hadrianic buildings: the Serapeum of Hadrian's Villa and the Pantheon. In both, the foundation is composed of a single, very thick, solid mass of wall—albeit articulated by a series of voids (rectangular or

semicircular niches)—that forms an adequate support for the dome. In the exedra of the Antinoeion, however, there are two concentric walls that are not very thick (ca. 1 m, excluding the foundation) and are statically independent from one another without any cross-walls. This difference in structure makes it impossible for the exedra to have had a massive covering.

<sup>5</sup>At present, the excavation is still incomplete, so it is not impossible that the depth of the cella was greater than suggested in fig. 4, and that the rear wall had a different orientation.





Fig. 6. View of the area of the enclosure with the nymphaeum wall at the rear.



Fig. 7. South side of the enclosure with the nymphaeum wall and the two basins in front.

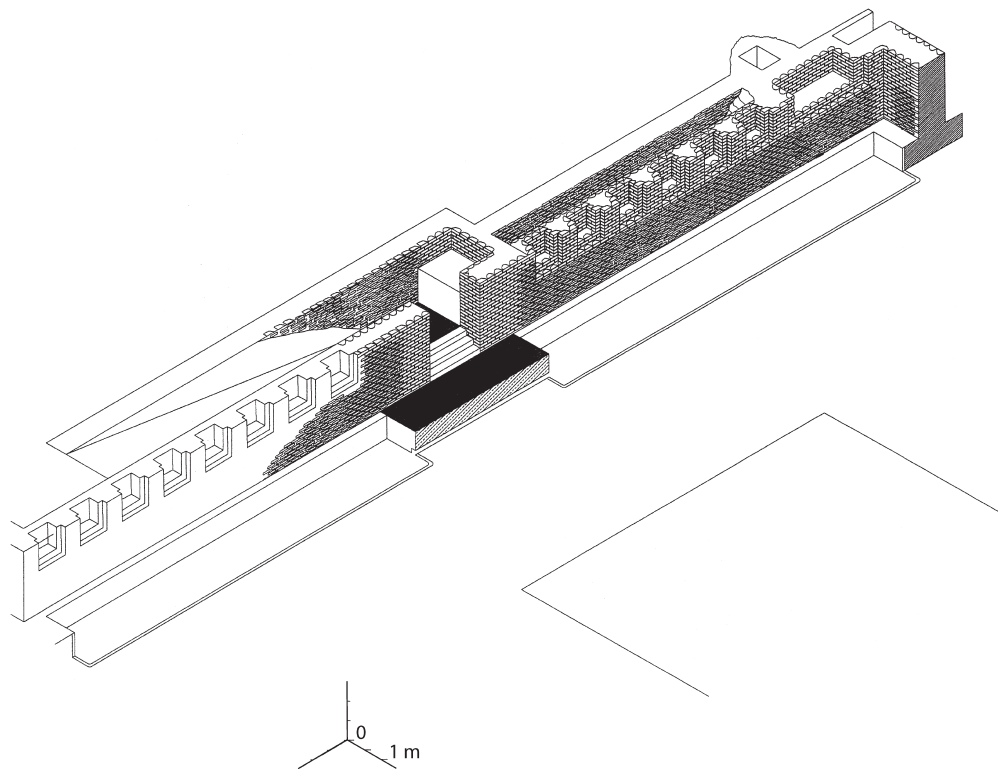


Fig. 8. Hypothetical reconstruction of the nymphaeum wall.

wall ensures that these rooms are not visible to anyone standing in the temenos. The rooms to the north (see fig. 5[A–C]) have been reduced to their foundations, so we can only determine that two are rectangular in plan and one, somewhat larger than the others, follows the curve of the exedra. It is possible to say something about the functions of those to the south: figure 5(D) is a small atrium plastered in *opus signinum* that collected water from the exedra roof; figure 5(E) is an open corridor paved with a mosaic made of large tesserae that allowed access from the temenos to another room or to an area not yet excavated; figure 5(F) is another atrium. Figure 5(G) seems to have been the most important of these rooms, as evidenced by the presence of a statue base against the rear wall (fig. 15) and the *opus sectile* floor and wall revetment.<sup>6</sup> These elements, coupled with the axial view that one has of it from the pathway in front, allow us to identify it as a sacellum.

<sup>6</sup>Of the pavement there remains the impressions of a design of internally divided squares (Betori and Mari 2006, 395).

<sup>7</sup>Tresserras (forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup>Palm trees and telamons appear in a scene of an Isiac festival on the interior of a sanctuary on the so-called Relief

#### *The Temenos Area*

Vegetation appears to have been of special significance in the complex. Trenches cut into the tuff enclosed the temples on three sides (figs. 16–18). The significant size of these trenches—at least 1.2 m deep x 1.5 m wide—indicates that they were able to accommodate plants with very developed root systems. Archaeobotanical analysis has revealed the presence of phytoliths from the date palm in some of the soil samples that were taken from the bottom of the trenches.<sup>7</sup> Date palms, in addition to recalling an Egyptian landscape, were particularly suited to this location because their height and slender trunks would not have obscured the sight of the temples (figs. 18, 19).<sup>8</sup> There are four other trenches alongside the foundation of the obelisk (two to either side) (see figs. 5, 6, 17); these were not as deep as the other trenches, so it is likely that they contained flowers or other plants.<sup>9</sup>

of Ariccia, attributed to the Hadrianic era (Bommas 2005, bibliography).

<sup>9</sup>Note that in figs. 3 and 4, only the flower beds of the two most evident pairs of trenches, those that are set between the two temples, have been restored.





Fig. 9. Remains of the north temple.

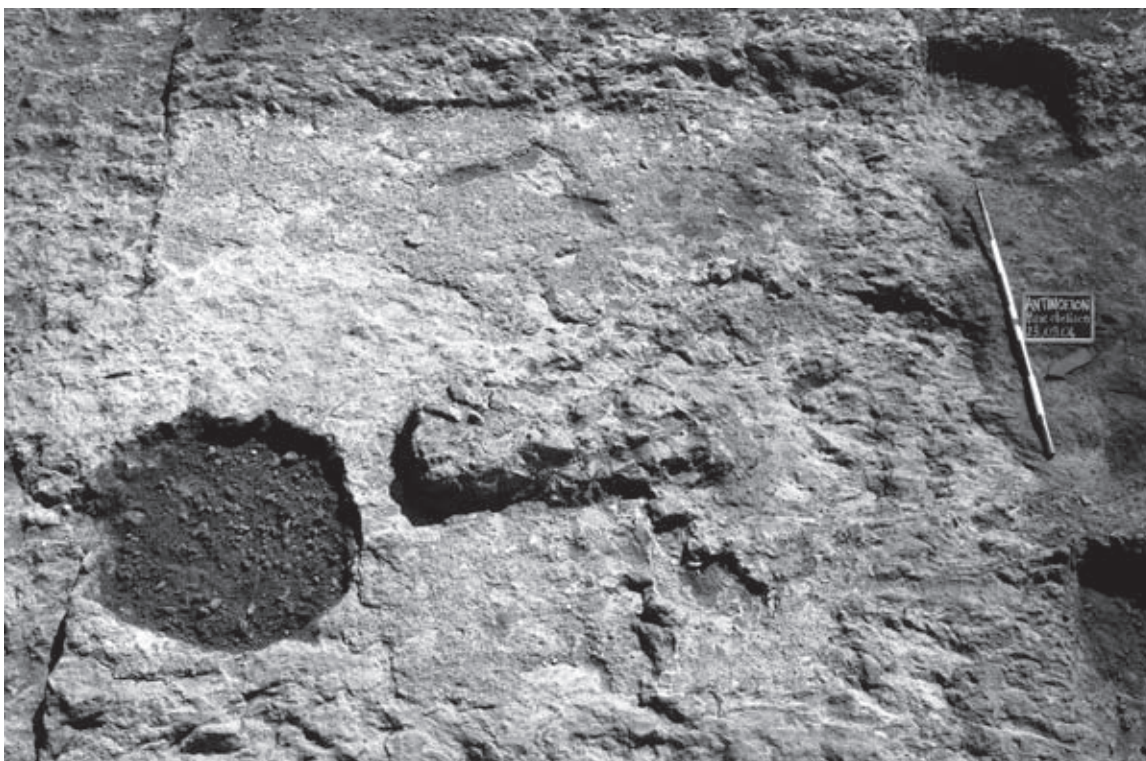


Fig. 10. Remains of the square concrete foundation.



Fig. 11. View of the remains of the exedra (foreground) and the north temple (rear left).

The rest of the enclosed courtyard of the temenos was paved with a mosaic of large marble tesserae.<sup>10</sup> The poor state of preservation of the mosaic reveals an underground hydraulic system. Lead pipes run in small channels that are cut in the tuff (see fig. 5[b, c]) and originate from the cistern situated at a higher elevation (see fig. 5[h]). These pipes supply the water for the fountain and for irrigating the plantings in the temenos (fig. 20). The lead pipe that ran in front of the exedra (see fig. 5[b]) extended above a collection channel, excavated entirely in the tuff, which was equipped with pits and collected rainwater discharged by two smaller channels placed in front of the temples (see fig. 5[d, e]).

#### *The Sculpture*

The numerous sculptural fragments that have emerged from the excavation play a fundamental role in our interpretation of the structure. Although they are only the “crumbs” left behind from the remarkable discoveries of previous centuries, they clearly belong to

the bas-reliefs that adorned the temples, to the statues, and to various other decorations. Some blocks assigned to the cellas have on one side a rather common but unmistakable scene in bas-relief that may have been repeated in both temples: a figure who ought to be Antinous stands in front of a seated divinity whose companion stands behind him (fig. 21). The scene is analogous to that which appears on the four sides at the top of the Pincian obelisk: the youth appears as a new god (Antinous-Osiris) in front of four other Egyptian gods (Ra, Thoth, Horus, and a missing figure) in order to offer and receive divine honors.

The fragments belong to the same corpus of 15 statues (in dark grayish marble, 1.5 m tall) known as a result of two fortuitous discoveries made in the 17th and 18th centuries (fig. 22).<sup>11</sup> Some statues are recognizable as divinities (fig. 23), while others—a larger group—are interpreted as priests or worshippers bearing offerings. The artistic level is very high, and their execution, given their Egyptian style, may be attributed to an atelier of sculptors who were active at

<sup>10</sup> Used frequently in the open spaces in Hadrian's Villa (see Betori and Mari 2006, 395–97).

<sup>11</sup> The first group is now lost but known from drawings; the

second is housed in the Vatican Museum (Museo Gregoriano Egizio) (Mari 2003–2004, 279–89).





Fig. 12. The basins in front of the exedra.

Hadrian's Villa. Seeing that there are other sculptural fragments in red or white marble, it may be inferred that the sculptural program consisted of several tens of figures. There is also a group of statues representing divinities in animal forms (e.g., the Horus falcon and the Apis bull). It is difficult to ascertain where all these sculptures were placed; perhaps they were displayed in the niches along the temenos wall or on bases inside the exedra.<sup>12</sup>

A third group of sculptural fragments (all in white marble) is associated with bases, altars, basins, and vases. They bear fanciful hieroglyphs and Egyptian symbols and must have constituted part of the decoration placed in the open part of the temenos. The numerous vases and basins should be understood in relation to the importance that the lustral water, symbolically assimilated to the water of the Nile, had in Egyptian funerary and cult ritual.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF THE COMPLEX

##### *Comparison with the Serapeum in Rome and Other Monuments*

The excavation of the structure, which is almost complete, and the reconstruction of its elevation, which is based on in situ remains and recovered material, allow us to recognize certain large-scale similarities between the Antinoeion at Hadrian's Villa and the Serapeum of the Campus Martius in Rome. Our knowledge of the plan of the Serapeum is based on fragments from the Forma Urbis Romae (also known as the Severan Marble Plan of Rome). These show a large semicircular exedra bisected by a projecting apsidal hall and placed on the long side of a rectangular area labeled SERAPAEVM (figs. 24, 25). The rectangular area has a frontal entrance with three



Fig. 13. A fragment of a spiral column shaft and a fragment of the top of the shaft ornamented with smooth leaves.

<sup>12</sup>In an important study by Grenier (1989), virtually all the Egyptian sculptures of Hadrian's Villa, including the portraits of Antinous, have been assigned (without taking into account their real provenance) to the so-called Serapeum, the monumental triclinium at the end of the famous basin of the Canopus, which has thus been interpreted as a temple in honor of Serapis.



Fig. 14. Remains of the external edifice at the curve of the exedra.

offset columns, two entrance arches on its short sides, and an obelisk at the center. The complex is found at the southern end of the long peribolos (the Iseum) that encloses the temple of Isis and dates back to the Late Republican era; the Serapeum is, in contrast, an Imperial-era addition (see fig. 25).<sup>13</sup> Some similarities between the Serapeum in Rome and the Antinoeion in Tivoli are immediately apparent (fig. 26). The enclosures are very similar in size (Rome: 60 x 32 m; Tivoli: 63 x 23 m), but the internal diameter of the exedra in Rome is larger (Rome: ca. 40 m; Tivoli: ca. 30 m). On the fragments of the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the columns of the exedra are clearly represented; at Tivoli, they are attested by the numerous spiral fragments in Chemtou marble.<sup>14</sup> The exedra of the Serapeum in Rome has been restored by scholars as a semicircular portico, exactly as has been conjectured for the Antinoeion (see fig. 26[c]).<sup>15</sup> The two complexes also share a certain similarity in plan concerning the chambers adjoining the exedrae. For example, according to the fragments of the *Forma Urbis Romae*, there is a rectangular chamber on the east side of the exedra of the Serapeum in Rome that is comparable to Chamber G (the sacellum) at Tivoli. The *Forma*

Urbis also shows semicircular niches along its exedra wall, which are not extant in the Antinoeion, since it is preserved only to the level of its foundations, but which could have been found at a higher level on the wall. Also significant is the similarity between the two structures that extend beyond the point of maximum curvature of each exedra. In the exedra in the Campus Martius, it is a question of an apsidal hall or, rather, a deep passage with two columns at the entrance. This plan differs, therefore, from the temple-like plan of the central structure of the Antinoeion with its pro-naos and cella, though it, too, derives from a kind of porch or a monumental facade with stairs. This apsidal structure is certainly the focal point of the Serapeum and is commonly identified as the actual temple of Serapis,<sup>16</sup> which was on axis with the temple of Isis situated at the center of the southern peribolos. In the Serapeum in the Campus Martius, the space enclosed by the exedra is believed by some to be a large basin with water flowing from the apsidal structure, a perplexing hypothesis. The importance of the central axis, on the other hand, is clear in both structures and is underscored by the presence of an obelisk in each. The *Forma Urbis Romae* records a square base

<sup>13</sup>For questions concerning the large sanctuary, see Lembke 1994; most recently, see Scheid 2004, 308–11. For the Marble Plan, see Carettoni et al. 1960, 1–98.

<sup>14</sup>Columns of Chemtou marble were also discovered in the 16th century, in the exedra in the Campus Martius (Vacca 1741, 227).

<sup>15</sup>Fasolo and Gullini 1953, 382.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Coarelli 1996, 109. Lembke (1994, 21–5) locates the temple within the peribolos, while Ensoli (1998, 413–17, 430–31) identifies it as one of the two temples in the neighboring Porticus Divorum. We consider this latter identification doubtful.





Fig. 15. Area between the nymphaeum wall and the south temple, with Room G at the rear.



Fig. 16. Detail of the planting trench beside the north temple.

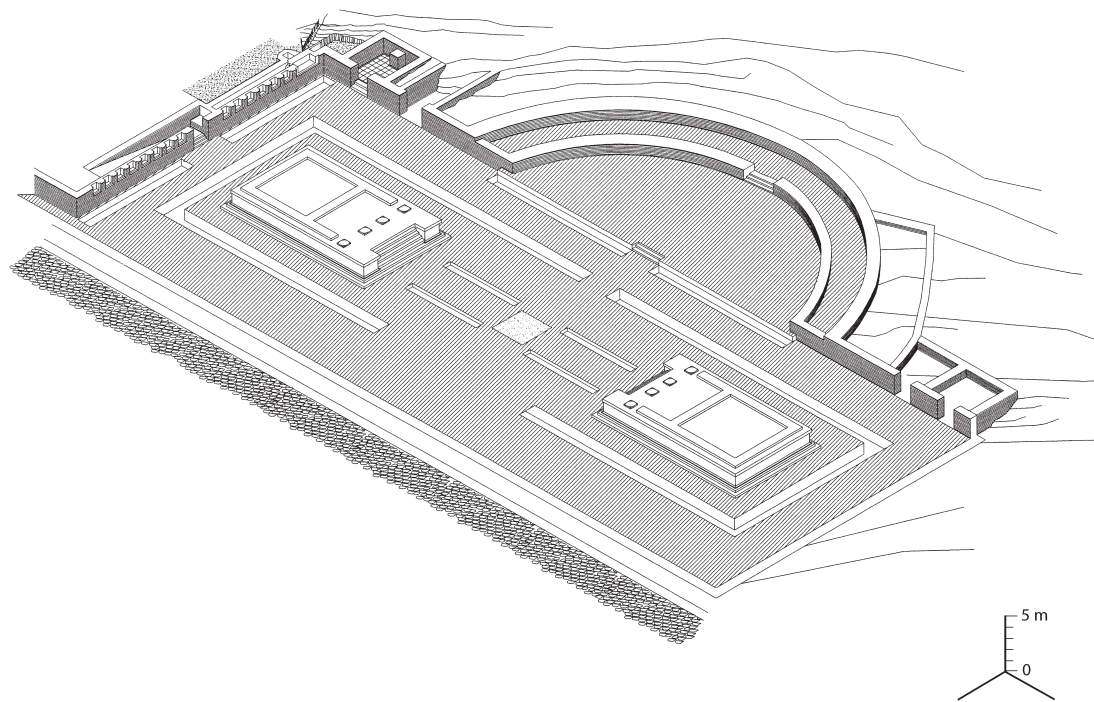


Fig. 17. Axonometric plan of the excavated remains.

(flanked by a circular fountain) for an obelisk that has been identified as the obelisk of Domitian that currently resides in Rome, in the Piazza Navona.<sup>17</sup>

The element that most strongly differentiates the Antinoeion from the Serapeum in the Campus Martius, however, is the presence in the former of two, possibly twin, temples positioned on either side of the obelisk. While there may be any number of possible identifications for these temples, they ultimately must remain anonymous.<sup>18</sup> The facades, which were probably tetrastyle prostyle with a staircase between the flanks of a projecting podium, recall that of other temples of Isis, notably the one in the Campus Martius, which is illustrated on a Vespasianic denarius of 71 C.E. (fig. 27).<sup>19</sup> That coin depicts a temple with an arcuated pediment and with the central intercolumniation wider than the others; the pediment houses

a statue of the astral Isis-Sothis riding on the back of the dog Sirius. The obelisk of the Antinoeion, like that in the Campus Martius, had four privileged points of view: (1) toward the entrance from the street, (2) toward the porch at the back of the exedra, and (3–4) toward the staircases of the two temples. It is impossible to know how the inscriptions were oriented on the obelisk, but it is probable that the principal one, which praised Hadrian, faced the entrance.

The similarities we have touched on so far between the Antinoeion and the Serapeum in the Campus Martius are, then, all the more remarkable in light of the Hadrianic date (ca. 125–130 C.E.) for the general rearrangement of the Serapeum at Rome.<sup>20</sup> According to the most recent studies, Hadrian redefined—monumentalizing in particular the lateral approaches—the first courtyard constructed by Domitian, which had

<sup>17</sup> Lembke 1995, 110–12; an identification not shared by Grenier 1987, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> One could think of a dedication to one of the divine couples of Hellenistic-Roman Egypt or to different manifestations of Antinous, but only the discovery of other parts of the interior decorative program, or especially of inscriptions, could resolve the problem. Also of interest are the two small temples found in the Isiac sanctuary of Industria (Turin) that belong to the first century C.E. but are placed at the point of maximum curvature of the vast exedra that characterizes that

complex as well (Zanda 1997; Zanda and Gaspani 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Lembke 1994, 24, 52, 67, 179 n. 1, 221; Sisti 1997; Ensoli 1998, 411–13. Another interesting comparison is with the well-preserved Iseum of Pompeii, reconstructed after the earthquake of 62 C.E. (Golvin 1994; Gallo 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Ensoli (1998, 424–30) has recently argued for a Hadrianic date for the Serapeum in the Campus Martius. She had earlier proposed a date in the Domitianic era (with which Lembke [1994, 69–70, 93–4] agreed).



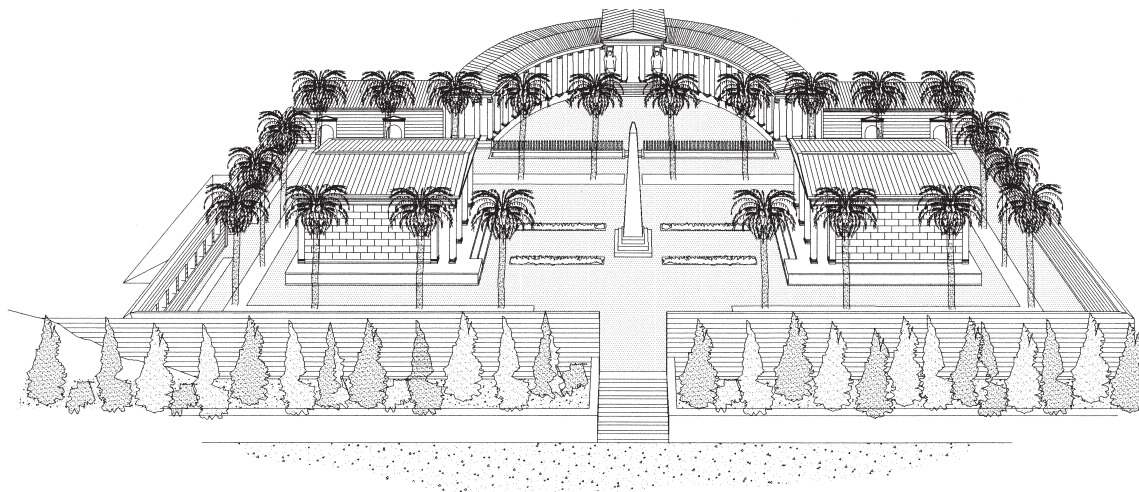


Fig. 18. Hypothetical reconstruction of the complex and the tree plantings.

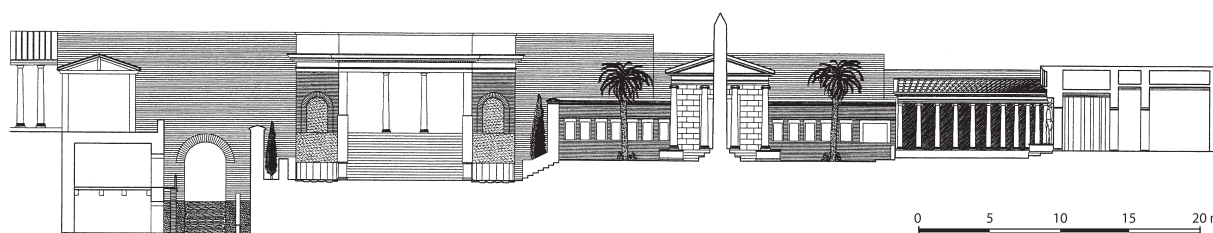


Fig. 19. Section of the hypothetical reconstruction with the Hundred Rooms at left and the exedra at right.

the obelisk at its center, and he constructed the large semicircular exedra that completes the entire sanctuary toward the south. The exedra at this time would not have been intended specifically for the cult of Serapis (this happened only under the Severans) but rather for Egyptian cults in general, among which was the cult of Antinous, as is confirmed by an altar inscription.<sup>21</sup> Comparison with the so-called Serapeum of Hadrian's Villa must be considered. Such a comparison, however, although suggested by a resemblance to elements of the ground plan (i.e., the exedra and apsidal hall), is in reality excluded both by the much smaller diameter (17.25 m) of the exedra of the Tiburtine Serapeum and by the form of the foundation walls that are sized to support a heavy vault. The proper comparison, instead, is with the Antinoeion, which was constructed after the Serapeum of the villa. At this point, then, the relationship to be investigated is that between the Antinoeion and the Serapeum in

the Campus Martius. One could, in fact, argue that the villa at Tivoli inspired the realization of the plan in the Campus Martius, where the introduction of the cult of Antinous, desired by Hadrian, led perhaps to the construction of the large exedra.

The area in the Forum of Trajan that consists of the famous column with the two libraries to either side of it also has similarities with the Antinoeion. According to recent research, the libraries were not originally designed as libraries (were they perhaps intended to be temples?), and the area received its final arrangement only between 125 and 128 C.E., when Hadrian completed the intervening courtyard and added a funerary meaning to the original honorary meaning of the Column of Trajan.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Identification of the Tomb of Antinous*

Let us now consider why the structure that has come to light at Hadrian's Villa cannot simply be an Iseum

<sup>21</sup>Vidman 1969 n. 383; Lembke 1994, 141 n. 4.

<sup>22</sup>Meneghini 2002; La Rocca 2004, 193–238.

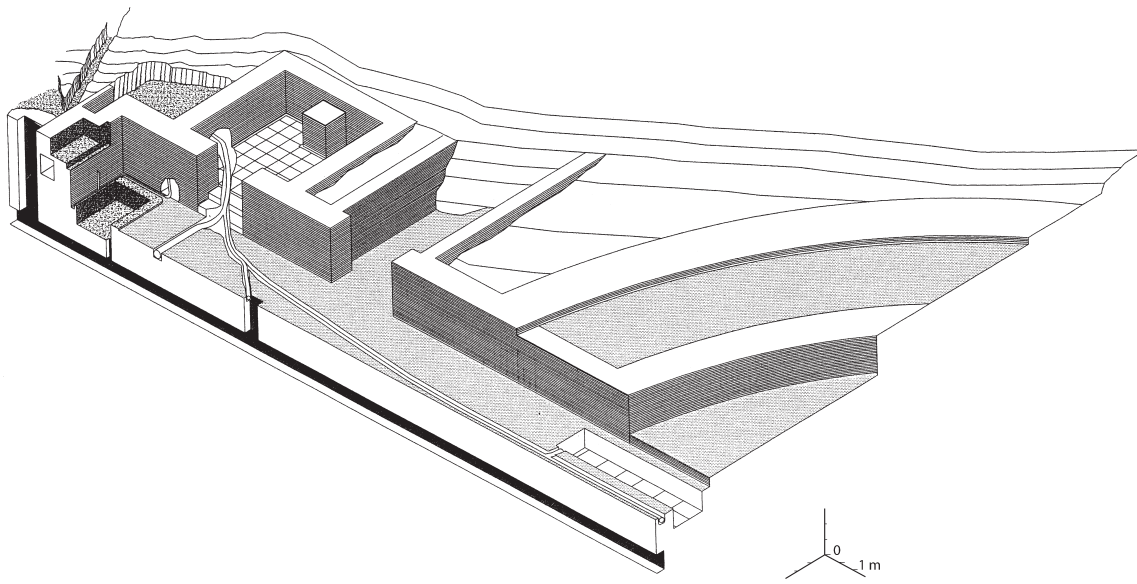


Fig. 20. Axonometric view of the area at the western corner of the enclosure with indications of the *fistulae*.

or Serapeum inside which Antinous was also venerated but is, rather, his tomb. Although the principal reason centers on the obelisk, it is worth making some other, somewhat relevant, observations. First, there is the position of the structure, which—if one compares the Hundred Rooms of the villa with the street in front of a stretch of the city wall—is typical of extra-urban funerary monuments and dynastic mausolea attached to large villas. Second, the date of the structure is of fundamental importance: the brickstamps date to soon after 130 C.E., the year of Antinous' death. In addition, the masonry exhibits signs of hasty execution. It is not a case of *opus mixtum* composed of bands of *opus reticulatum* and bricks (as found throughout the central part of Hadrian's Villa). Rather, the construction consists of a coarser facing on oblong fragments of tuff, with ashlar blocks used only at the corners (see fig. 15).<sup>23</sup> It is difficult not to connect this to the beginning of the third decade of the second century C.E. After Antinous drowned in the Nile during the journey of the imperial court to Egypt, Hadrian began the construction of the temple-tomb after his return to Rome in 133–134 C.E. or two years earlier.<sup>24</sup> From that point, the work must have proceeded rapidly, and this would explain the rather sloppy construction. On the basis of this reconstruction, the Antinoeion was, therefore, the last structure to be built at the villa, especially considering that one or two years would have

been necessary to complete it, and that Hadrian died after a long illness in 138 C.E.

There is also, then, the issue of the sculptural decoration, which, even though diverse in subject matter, does not seem to exhibit the extreme heterogeneity found in the sculptures of the known Isis temples. A large number of statues—among which prevail figures that perhaps form a kind of ritual group with unusual clothing and attributes—seem from their distinct characteristics to have been commissioned to venerate a new divinity. One category consists of statues and busts in white, red, and black marble, now scattered among various museums, that are said to have come

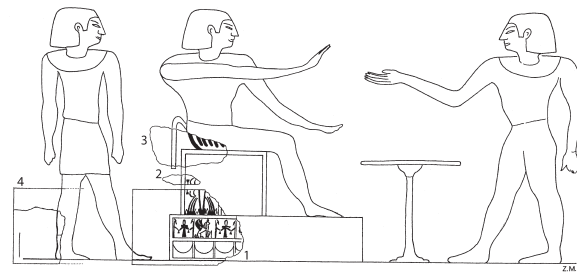


Fig. 21. Reconstruction of the bas-relief scene inside the two temples, showing Antinous approaching a seated divinity.

<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Sgalambro 2003–2004, 338.

<sup>24</sup> On the chronology of the voyages, see Halfmann 1986, 194.



Fig. 22. Statues in the Vatican Museum: *left*, priestesses; *right*, the gods Ptah and Nefertem (Museum Gregoriano Egizio, inv. nos. 106 and 92; courtesy Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio).

from Hadrian's Villa or are otherwise assigned to it. They represent the deified Antinous in a regal Egyptian posture and attire (with headgear [*nemes*] and a short skirt [*shendyt*], an iconography similar to that of the telamonic statues mentioned above. Even if it is not entirely believable that all of these were found in the Antinoeion, it is highly likely that at least some of them were, as can be argued for the colossal statue (ht. 2.4 m) of Antinous-Osiris now in the Vatican Museum (fig. 28).<sup>25</sup>

One can only assume that some portraits of Antinous were, in fact, from cult statues, and that these statues were found in the cellas of the temples, on the projections of the podiums at the sides of the staircases, or in the rooms attached to the enclosure. We consider the placement of the Egyptianizing telamons in the porch at the back of the exedra, however, as secure. Their placement emphasizes the enormous importance of the rear edifice that constitutes the true *sanctum sanctorum* of the entire architectural concept

(i.e., the true and proper tomb). If this is the case, the telamons must represent Antinous himself, whose dual representation at this point received particular emphasis. The telamons recall in their pose and garments the other statues of the youth but with the addition of the *uraeus* on their foreheads.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly the most significant element for identifying the complex is the obelisk, which would have originally been located in the tomb of Antinous itself (fig. 29).<sup>27</sup> Concerning the tomb, various locations have previously been proposed. Because the obelisk was reported for the first time in the 16th century as standing outside the Porta Maggiore in Rome, along the Via Labicana, Antinous' tomb was hypothetically located in the area of the Circus Varianus, and the obelisk was thought to have been placed on the spina of that circus at a later date.<sup>28</sup> It has also been suggested that the obelisk was transported to Rome from Antinoöpolis, the new city created by Hadrian near the place of Antinous' death, to hold his remains.<sup>29</sup> A more re-

<sup>25</sup> On the location of the discovery, see Mari 2002–2003, 166–71, 180; 2003–2004, 300. On the statue, see, most recently, Parlaska 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Antinous is depicted with the *nemes* alone or with the *nemes* overlapped by the *uraeus* (symbolic of the regal power of the Pharaohs) as, e.g., the Dresden head, Staatliche Kunst-

sammlungen, Dresden, inv. no. A.B. 423.

<sup>27</sup> Grimm et al. 1994; the most recent contribution is Baines 2005, 410–12.

<sup>28</sup> Paterna 1996, 820–21.

<sup>29</sup> Boatwright 1987, 239–60.





Fig. 23. Head of a regal statue, with the *nemes* headdress and the *uraeus* on the forehead (from recent excavations).

cent hypothesis places the tomb on the Palatine Hill in Rome (in the area of the Vigna Barberini) and suggests that the obelisk would then have been transferred from there to the Circus Varianus during the building projects of Elagabalus.<sup>30</sup> Others have sought it in the villa at Tivoli.<sup>31</sup> In fact, we do not know with certainty that the obelisk was in Rome *ab origine*. We know only that at the beginning of the 1500s, it lay outside the Porta Maggiore.<sup>32</sup> It is not unreasonable to suggest that it was transported there from another location. Since two telamones discovered in the Antinoeion were at Tivoli in the first years of the 16th century, it is also reasonable to suppose that the obelisk was also excavated there in the same period and that for some unknown reason it was transported to Rome, where it remained abandoned and unused in the area of the circus. It is, however, not entirely out of the question that Elagabalus himself, in order to decorate the spina of his circus, removed it from Hadrian's Villa. Such a situation would raise the problem of the despoliation of a sacred place (a mausoleum or temple) less than a century after its construction.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Coarelli 1986; Lembke 1995.

<sup>31</sup> Hannestad 1982.

<sup>32</sup> The obelisk could have been transported along the Via Tiburtina, whose gate is not far from the Porta Maggiore, or along the Via Praenestina (easily accessible from Hadrian's Villa), which enters the walls of Rome through the Porta Maggiore.

<sup>33</sup> According to the appealing hypothesis of Ensoli Vittozzi (1990, 47–50), the obelisk of Antinous could have inspired the

The obelisk, which was certainly made in Italy—judging from its structural characteristics (slabs mounted on a central column) and the style of its hieroglyphics—bears four inscriptions. The first expresses well-wishes to Hadrian and the empress Sabina, and three concern Antinous, focused in particular on the cult of the new god Antinous-Osiris. In accordance with the *interpretatio Romana*, only one obelisk—with a commemorative function—was used in the Antinoeion, while in Egypt, obelisks were normally in a pair. In the Antinoeion, the obelisk constituted the principal funerary *titulus* and was intended to be read from the outside. One passage from the fourth inscription contains a direct reference to the Antinoeion: “Antinous rests in this tomb situated inside the garden, property of the Emperor of Rome.”<sup>34</sup> The term “garden,” in our opinion, must expressly mean Hadrian's Villa, given its particular characteristic of a park strewn with buildings. In addition, it must be noted that the villa was the most obvious place to bury a person who had not held public office but whose role was defined entirely

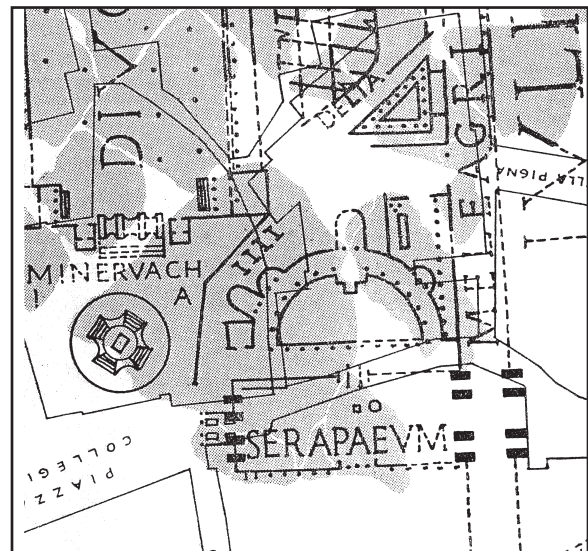


Fig. 24. Plan of the Serapeum of the Campus Martius according to the fragments of the Forma Urbis Romae (Carettoni et al. 1960, 98, fig. a).

cult scene (in which an obelisk appears) on a krater of gray granite discovered at Hadrian's Villa. This hypothesis recalls the similarities noted above between the scene repeated at the top of the obelisk and the reliefs found inside the temples.

<sup>34</sup> This translation is based on the reading of Grenier (1986, 225, 229), who, however, fills in the lacuna at the final preposition with “in Roma.” For the specific preposition, see Grimm et al. 1994, 61, 82 n. 176.





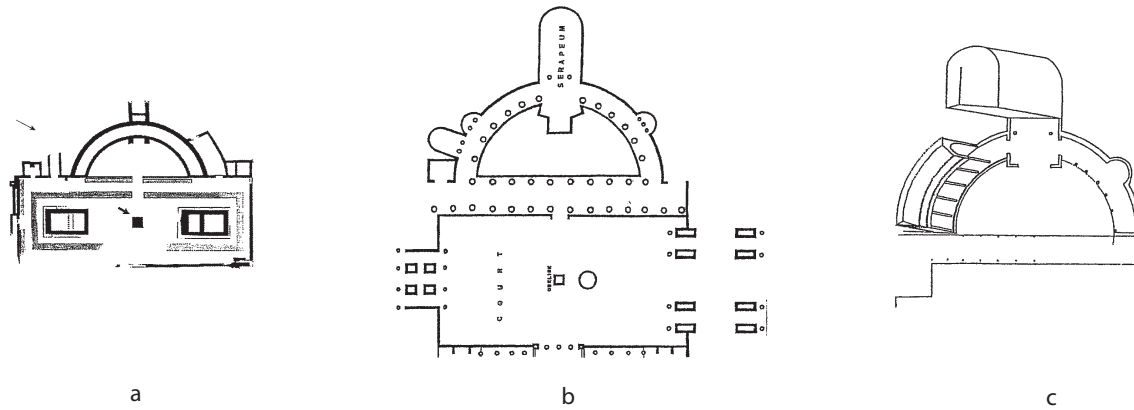


Fig. 26. Comparison at the same scale of the plan of the Antinoeion (*a*) with the plan and reconstruction of the Serapeum of the Campus Martius (*b*, *c*).

by his private relationship with the emperor. Furthermore, on the basis of the content of the cited passage, it is necessary to acknowledge that the Antinoeion was a tomb rather than a temple, and a true tomb at that, not merely a cenotaph or honorary sepulcher. Here were placed the remains (almost certainly a mummy), which, according to the most natural hypothesis, we must believe were brought to Rome from Egypt.<sup>35</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

This article does not exhaust the archaeological problems of the Antinoeion. Other results will certainly appear after the excavation is complete and all the evidence is studied. New results could fill some of the gaps still existing in the plan (e.g., the back wall of the building projecting from the curve of the exedra), but they will not entirely overturn the reconstruction presented here. In addition, the acquisition of other architectural elements in marble or of other decorative parts of the temples could help clarify some particulars of the elevation.

It should be stressed that the tomb-temple of Antinous does not represent the entire “Egyptian problem” of the villa. The 2006 field season yielded other *Aegyptiaca* in the area of the so-called Palaestra that should be added to the corpus.<sup>36</sup> On a more general level, the excavations in progress are important because they allow us to contextualize numerous materials, mostly sculptural, of which the provenance is unknown, and to reveal complexes on the periphery of the villa that were poorly known. The excava-

tions also make a fundamental contribution to our knowledge of Hadrianic architecture. It is precisely from this point of view that we intend to underline the originality of the plan of the Antinoeion, which is explained by the particular nature of this complex. The similarities with the sanctuaries of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt and with the Isea scattered throughout the empire<sup>37</sup> are, in fact, rather generic and relevant only to individual elements of the plan, such as the temenos or the exedra. In the absence of precise information on the architecture of the two temples and other elements that were entirely of marble (such as



Fig. 27. Denarius of Vespasian, with the representation of the Iseum of the Campus Martius (Münzkabinet, Berlin, collezione Martinetti, inv. no. 1749; Lembke 1994, 1, table 4).

<sup>35</sup> Coarelli (1986, 246) believes, however, that the mummy was returned to the land of the pharaohs after the relocation of the tomb on the Palatine, whereas Salza Prina Ricotti (2002–2003, 259–60), maintaining that the tomb at Tivoli was never completed, believes that the mummy would have re-

mained in Antinoöpolis. Both these hypotheses are improbable because they are too contrived.

<sup>36</sup> Mari and Sgalambro 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Wild 1984.



Fig. 28. Statue of Antinous-Osiris in the Vatican Museum (Museo Gregoriano Egizio, inv. no. 22795; MacDonald and Pinto 1995, 144, fig. 178).

the porch supported by the telamons or the principal entrance from the street), we are not in a position to establish the degree of blending between the classical tradition and the Graeco-Alexandrian tradition in the Antinoeion. This mix was certainly more evident in the decorations inside the temples, but on the outside, there was a clear reference to Egypt—in the obelisk, the sculptural ornaments, and the plan.

Finally, in comparing the complex with previous architectural forms associated with Isiac cult, we should consider the location chosen for the Antinoeion. It could not have been determined solely by the presence of the street along which the tomb happens to lie. In that stretch, in fact, the street that led to the Grand Vestibule split into two branches (see figs. 2, 4). One winds

around the base of the substructures of the Hundred Rooms, constituting a service road that then branches off under the villa in underground galleries (*viae tectae*). Another, at a higher level, represents the passage reserved for the elite. The latter, covered by an arch (of which only the footing remains), also splits, curving in two narrow one-way passages (width. 3.15 m) that continue for 130 m and reunite at a right angle in front of the stairway of the vestibule. The large space between (10.5 m) certainly had an arrangement for gardens, as well as for a flower bed that ran entirely around it. A high wall, in which was the arched opening, hid the view and the crowds of the Hundred Rooms, the upper rooms of which were intended as lodgings for servants and the personnel of the villa. Structural analysis has demonstrated that the entire street system, supported in the east by immense terracing, postdates the construction of the Hundred Rooms, and the brickstamps used in the wall support a date of 128 C.E.<sup>38</sup> A few years later, the Antinoeion was founded at the head of this ring road. At that point, what had been a simple access route to the villa, even if it was monumentalized, would



Fig. 29. The Barberini obelisk (also known as the obelisk of Antinous) in its current location on the Pincian Hill, Rome.

<sup>38</sup>Mari et al. 2002.

have been reworked to become a kind of *dromos*, or ceremonial road (similar to examples known in other Graeco-Roman Isea), related to the funerary and divine cult that arose on that spot.

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