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## **A Changing Cityscape in Central Italy: The Gabii Project Excavations, 2012–2018**

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Excavations carried out at the Latin city of Gabii between 2012 and 2019 have contributed new data to a number of debates around the emergence, lived experience, maintenance, decline, and resilience of cities. Gabii's urban trajectories demonstrate both seemingly familiar forms of urbanism and, on closer study, many locally circumscribed elements. Specifically, the Gabii Project excavations have uncovered an early Iron Age (8th–5th centuries B.C.) hut complex that has provided evidence for architecture, funerary rites, and quotidian activities during the initial polynuclear settlement at urbanizing Gabii. A unique monumental complex constructed in the 3rd century B.C. has been identified and is interpreted as a public structure potentially used for ritual activities; the study of this complex raises questions about the creation and reception of markers of civic identity. Excavation data has further characterized the reorganizations that took place during the first centuries A.D., when Gabii's settled area contracted. Rather than unidirectional decline, evidence for industrial activities increases, and elite investments in the city persist, especially in the mixed-use elite domestic and agricultural complex. These results provide detailed evidence for how ancient cities developed and transformed in the face of shifting local and regional conditions, especially smaller urban centers (Gabii) at the periphery of mega-urban centers (Rome).

**Keywords:** urbanism; urban archaeology; urbanization; monumentalization; decline; Gabii; Italy

## Introduction

The emergence, maintenance, resilience, and decline of cities have been the subjects of seemingly inexhaustible studies and debates across academic disciplines as societies continue to grapple with fundamental questions of what makes a city and what constitutes urban life. The city of Gabii, one of several centers in the region of Latium with close ties to Rome (Figure 1), provides a salient context in which to engage with these ongoing discussions of urbanism, building on Gabii's place in both ancient and modern narratives of urban growth and decline. In ancient historiography, Gabii appears as an early ally of Rome, and emerging tensions between the two cities are part of the Roman self-narrative of expansion. Literary sources include Gabii in mythological accounts of Rome's origins as the place where Rome's founders, Romulus and Remus, were schooled (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.84), and the same sources document the Gabines' increasing involvement in Roman political affairs, as both allies and rivals to Rome's expanding hegemony from the 7th–5th centuries B.C. (Livy 1.53–54; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 4.53–58). In the modern literature on urbanization, Gabii appears predominantly through association with the Osteria dell'Osa necropolis (Bietti Sestieri 1992), which has provided a key case study in archaeological discussions around the role of kin groups in connection to the emergence of social hierarchy and urbanizing communities. Likewise, at the other end of the city's life cycle, Gabii has featured since antiquity in stories of the deleterious local effects of the growth of the Roman empire. As Rome consolidated its power first over Latium and then the Mediterranean world, Gabii largely disappeared from historical narratives, relegated in its supposed abandonment to an evocative symbol of urban decay and change over time in the exaggerated rhetoric of politicians and the melancholic nostalgia of poets (Cicero *Pro Plancio* 23; Propertius *Elegies* 4.1.34; Horace

*Epistles* 1.11). These ancient meditations on decline continue to find echoes in contemporary debates in the archaeology and sociology of ruins (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014; Devecka 2020; Stewart 2020; Witmore 2020).

The past fifty years of archaeological research, including evidence emerging from our own work through the Gabii Project (led by the University of Michigan, 2007–present), have challenged this picture by producing substantial evidence of continued activity (Majerini and Musco 2001; Angelelli, Boscarini, and Lugari 2012; D’Agostini and Musco 2016). This new evidence has prompted us to set aside the received narrative of decline and reevaluate the picture of social and economic life at Gabii in the Imperial period, Late Antiquity, and beyond, which has in turn led to a broader reassessment of Gabii’s overarching trajectory from the 8th century B.C. through the 10th century A.D.

Contemporary studies in cross-cultural urbanism (e.g. M. L. Smith 2014; Raja and Sindbæk 2020; M. E. Smith 2020) provide the theoretical underpinnings for our new narrative, embedded in our project’s evolving understanding of the latest evidence from ten excavation areas explored over a decade across a 2 ha area (Figure 2). Our initial research questions focused on the city’s emergence and development, aiming to better understand the origins of Roman urbanism (see Mogetta and Becker 2014 for the results of the 2009–2011 campaigns, focused on the excavation of Areas A and B in Figure 3B). These excavations revealed evidence for the later phases of activity at Gabii, which merited further investigation (discussed below). In coordination with the Soprintendenza Speciale Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio di Roma (hereafter SSABAP-Roma), in 2013, we decided to expand upon research undertaken more than two decades ago in the so-called “Area Urbana,” the area of Imperial occupation situated along the city’s main trunk road (Majerini and Musco 2001; Angelelli and Musco 2013). This physical

shift expanded our research questions to include the final stages of Gabii's occupation. Both the discoveries made in recent excavations and the ongoing study of previously excavated areas have revealed a more complicated picture of continuity and transformation in the city from A.D. 100–450 (for an overview of previous work, see our 2014 preliminary publication, Mogetta and Becker 2014, and area-specific interim reports: Johnston et al. 2018; Evans et al. 2019). The evidence has produced a more holistic picture of Gabii as it formed, transformed, contracted, and persisted. In this article, we set out key current interpretations and open new questions, aiming to contribute to broader debates on urbanism and inform comparative discussions of ancient urban life.

### **An Overview of the Topography of the Site and the Excavation Areas**

To structure our discussion of these diverse data and how they fit into our emerging picture of Gabii's urbanism, we proceed area-by-area in broadly chronological order. Ten areas (Areas A–J) have been excavated, with five newly under analysis (Areas F–J) since the last preliminary report was published in 2014 (Mogetta and Becker 2014). These new areas sit at the intersection of two major roads—the so-called Via Gabina and Via Praenestina—that linked four important regional sites (Rome, Gabii, Tibur, and Praeneste) (Figure 3). Elements from each area help elucidate how Gabii came to be a city, reached a mature urban form, and then declined, transforming and reorienting its major functionalities to serve as a waypoint along an important eastward route from Rome.

The later phases of Areas C and D appear in the 2014 preliminary report, but since that time, an Iron Age (ca. 800–500 B.C.) hut complex spanning the two areas has been unearthed, preliminarily discussed here. This discovery represents one of the few nodal occupation sites in

central Italy excavated stratigraphically; it offers new information on activities of daily life and elite funerary ritual (Evans et al. 2019).

The architecture of the early phases of the Area F Complex has been published (Johnston et al. 2018), and further discussion of that material, as well as preliminary findings from the later phases of the complex, are included here. Area F comprises a monumental terraced structure situated just north of the intersection of the Via Gabina and the Via Praenestina. Occupying an entire city block, this complex represents a multifunctional public building as yet unparalleled in the Republican period (ca. 500–30 B.C.). As Gabii transformed and the built area contracted over the final centuries B.C. and first centuries A.D., this building's lowest terrace remained in continuous use, repurposed for more commercial functions. This portion of the site is perhaps the inspiration for Dionysius of Halicarnassus' description of Gabii, written toward the end of the 1st century B.C., in which he suggests that the city had shrunk to a point that it was now mostly composed of inns along the road (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 4.53.1).

Area G lies one block east of the Area F Complex. Excavations so far have revealed that the commercial functions of the lowest terrace of the Area F Complex extended into this sector in the Imperial and Late Antique periods (ca. 100–400 A.D.). Even the road that initially separated these two blocks was eventually built over, thus presenting a continuous facade to a passerby. Heavy spoliation in the post-Roman period (ca. 300–450 A.D.) makes it difficult to determine the functions of specific rooms in this area but provides a glimpse into Gabii's later history. Along with a large negative feature cutting through multiple excavation areas, several irregular walls of dry-stone masonry, referred to as *muretti* by the original Italian excavators, have been discovered both in Areas G and H by the Gabii Project and to the west by the

SSABAP-Roma in the late 1990s (Majerini and Musco 2001). These walls provide evidence for the latest activities that took place at Gabii, after its days as a city had seemingly ended.

Directly south of Area G across the Via Gabina, excavation concentrated in the northeast and north-central sectors of Area H, where a series of shops were uncovered around what appears to have been the primary entrance to a large, piazza-like space at the center of this part of the city. Preliminary dating of the material and architecture suggests active use of this area from the mid-Republican period (400–100 B.C.), if not earlier. Documentation is ongoing, but with its relationship to the early Medieval church of San Primitivo just to the south, this area promises to elucidate complex processes of continuity and change at a vital nexus of the city from the 4th century B.C. to the Medieval period.

Area I comprises a residential and productive complex opening onto the Via Gabina, preserving multiple phases of occupation from the Late Republican or Early Imperial period (100 B.C.–A.D. 100) to the later Imperial period (A.D. 200–400), with traces of an earlier occupation visible in the eastern half of the building. Architectural preservation is quite good in places, with walls preserved up to 1.3 m. However, most of the deposits within the walls constitute secondary contexts, and recent plowing activity has cut through the stratigraphy and architecture in the northern half of the building.

The most recently opened area at Gabii, designated Area J, was selected with the specific purpose of better understanding the development of the Via Gabina, particularly the stretch of the road at a key junction with the Via Praenestina in front of the Area F Complex. By excavating a section of the large negative feature cutting through the road, it was possible to identify a series of surfaces from the 4th century B.C. onward. Detailed stratigraphic information

about the road can be found elsewhere (Mogetta et al. 2019), so this area is not discussed in detail here.

### **Urbanization: The Early Iron Age, Orientalizing, and Archaic Periods in Areas C and D (ca. 800–500 B.C.)**

While our early investigations of Gabii's urbanization processes focused on the evidence for the aggregation of wealth as expressed through elite burials (Becker and Nowlin 2011; Mogetta and Becker 2014; Mogetta 2020), further investigation has opened new lines of inquiry around the use and organization of archaic settlement compounds, crafting traditions, and engagement with local and regional networks. Together, these highlight the diverse and mutable priorities of the community emerging at Gabii by the 8th century B.C.

By 2011, Areas A and D had produced substantial evidence for activity predating the imposition of the urban grid plan that marks a certain urban maturity at Gabii (Mogetta and Becker 2014, 177–178; Evans et al. 2019; Mogetta 2020; Banducci and Gallone 2021). In subsequent years, a series of habitation structures forming an elite complex came to light in Areas C and D, comprising together one settlement node within a multinodal settlement system of the type that intramural field survey suggests predominated at sites of later central Italian cities (see Guaitoli 1981; Pacciarelli 2017). In Area D, between the 8th and 6th centuries B.C., habitations gradually changed from a collection of several small huts to a single sizable structure with a stone foundation made up of at least two rooms (see Figures 4A, 5; for a full phase plan, see Evans et al. 2019). Their elite character is confirmed by a series of materially rich infant burials situated around and communicating with various phases of domestic construction (Mogetta and Cohen 2018; Evans 2020).

Further evidence for this complex was recovered through excavation beneath the floor level of the Republican-period structure in the adjoining Area C (for the Republican phases of this building, see Mogetta and Becker 2014, 179–183; Mogetta and Opitz forthcoming). Notably, a section of wall foundation in irregular drystone masonry, similar to the Area D boundary wall, and a series of large beaten-earth surfaces contemporaneous with the phases of the Area D complex suggest that these two areas represent different sections of a larger complex. Fragmentary evidence for communal activities including crop processing, craft production, food preparation, and consumption has been discovered in the material recovered from Area C (Moses 2020; Beydler 2020; Samuels forthcoming).

Three infant burials were excavated in Area C, likely defining the settlement's eastern limit. Two produced rich grave goods, comparable to the rich infant tombs in Area D (for Area D, see Mogetta and Cohen 2018; for Area C, see Figure 4B–D); the third burial, materially poorer, consists of an infant placed without grave goods under fragments of a ceramic vessel. This tomb finds parallels in Area D, notably Tombs 30 and 49, which were likewise located at the margins of the complex and consist of infants placed in fragmentary ceramic vessels (see Figure 5; Mogetta and Cohen 2018). These burials provide further evidence for either social stratification within this community or differences in burial rituals contingent on the community's varying needs (Cohen and Naglak 2020). The presence of large multifunctional spaces connected to those already known from Area D suggests the importance of the complex as a locus for varied community activities prior to the imposition of the urban grid system.

The ceramic assemblage from these early phases highlights Gabii's connections to local, regional, and super-regional networks and hints at shifts in priorities and activities within the community. The repertoire of shapes and decorations is similar to contemporary regional sites,

and a high proportion were likely locally made, although kilns or workshops remain undiscovered. *Impasto bruno*, a coarse ware handmade, or in rare cases crafted using a slow wheel, predominates in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. With the diffusion of the wheel in the late 7th century B.C., impasto production changes to include new wheel-made impasto (known as *impasto rosso-bruno* or *impasto grezzo*), highlighting Gabii's engagement with technological developments and regional networks of expertise. Though rarer in this period, finer drinking vessels, often featuring excised or incised decorations with precise comparanda from rich grave goods assemblages in Latium, Rome, and Etruria (e.g. Evans et al. 2019, fig. 7, especially 3179/2 and 3018/1), suggest engagement with elite regional styles.

The number of ceramic classes also increases in this period, and the shapes become more standardized, a phenomenon perhaps connected to more systematic production and access to a diversified market. Jugs (called *ollae*) and bowls become the most common forms, followed by large storage containers and basins. Across the assemblage, perhaps unsurprisingly, utilitarian shapes and wares dominate. More interestingly, these are followed by drinking and feasting sets, suggesting the important role these events played. Some sherds from miniature vessels and terracotta bread models (or *focacce*), unknown so far from other urban contexts but common in votive deposits in the region, were recovered from colluvial deposits at the margins of the complex. While the nature of their recovery does not suggest any particular spatial patterning, the presence of this type of object potentially suggests sacred or ritual activities in the compound, supporting the idea of a multifunctional space (D'Acri and De Luca 2020). During the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., finer drinking vessels are scarcer, and new forms such as *thymiateria*, a type of incense burner associated with ritual activities, appear, perhaps pointing to a shift in funerary practices.

Imported ceramics are not numerous at Gabii but do speak to both intermediate and long-distance trade from the earliest phases of occupation. Ceramics from Etruria or Greek-speaking communities of southern Italy—Italo-geometric imitating Euboean Greek motifs, Etrusco-Corinthian, and *bucchero* (an Etruscan fineware)—are present, if somewhat rarely, by the end of the 8th century B.C., and continental Greek imports (e.g. Attic pottery and Ionic cups) appear by the 6th century B.C. Imported fine wares represent less than 1% of the pottery from Areas C and D, mirroring the proportion from the nearby Osteria dell’Osa necropolis, which was probably associated with the Iron Age community at Gabii (Bietti Sestieri 1992). While few, their presence deserves attention. The infant burials’ grave assemblages contained imported ceramics: *bucchero*, Italo-geometric, and Etrusco-Corinthian vessels (Cohen 2020; see Motta et al. 2020 for a broader discussion of the evidence for the use—or not—of these vessels in funerary rituals). Similar ceramic sherds appear in habitation deposits, possibly reflecting the elite community’s attempts to show their status and regional connections in ways unrelated to the burial ritual.

While excavations in Area D are complete, future excavations in Area C may provide further evidence for the earliest Gabines. Truncations of the natural soil beneath the first phases of the Area D huts and residual ceramics dated to the mid-9th century B.C. from survey (Guaitoli 1981) hint at occupation preceding this initial hut phase, which was destroyed to accommodate subsequent structures. Further examination of the infant and adult burials, whose deposition marks the end of occupation in Area D (for adult burials, see Evans 2018), may elucidate the roles of multi-generational family relationships in urbanizing communities.

### **Monumentalization: The Middle Republican Period in Area F and H (ca. 400–100 B.C.)**

The work of the Gabii Project has added significantly to our record for the Middle Republican period, otherwise poorly documented archaeologically in central Italy. In the context of expanding Roman hegemony over the Italian peninsula, this transitional period saw cities begin to take on a more “mature” urban form, both socially and materially, and a consensus begin to emerge among central Italian communities around certain parameters of the form. New evidence from Gabii bears on crucial questions about the interplay of local initiatives within the city and its engagement with these broader cultural trends. A planned road system—a monumental feature in itself—was laid out to structure a new, quasi-orthogonal urban grid at the end of the 5th century B.C. (Becker, Mogetta, and Terrenato 2009; Keay 2013; Mogetta 2014; Mogetta et al. 2019). This grid represents a notable departure from the archaic settlement’s organization, fundamentally changing the architectural landscape and imposing a new alignment upon the urban space, in many places obliterating features belonging to the previous phase of occupation, such as the adult burials in Area D (Evans 2018). The imposition of this grid has been interpreted as tantamount to a refoundation of the city (Johnston and Mogetta 2020).

Within the grid created by the roads, excavation has revealed domestic architecture, as well as monumental public buildings. Middle Republican domestic contexts investigated in the 2009–2011 seasons shed light on processes of private investment in Gabii’s urban project (evidence from Areas A, B, and C presented in Opitz, Mogetta, and Terrenato 2016; Banducci and Gallone 2021; Mogetta and Opitz forthcoming). From 2012, work increasingly focused around the intersection of the Via Gabina and the Via Praenestina to better understand the development of what appears to be the urban core of Gabii, expanding on initial studies undertaken by the SSABAP-Roma in the 1990s (Majerini and Musco 2001). Central to our interpretation of the intersection’s monumentalization are two areas, designated the Area F

Complex and the Area H Piazza, whose architectural transformations reflect important shifts in the community over the course of the Republican and Imperial Periods. Study of these areas introduces further questions about the specific uses of monumental architecture as a key means to articulate and enact various civic, political, or family agendas in the context of urban formation.

The Area F Complex visually dominates this central location at the intersection of the roads from Tibur, Praeneste, and Rome. Occupying the width of an entire city block, it is organized over three artificial terraces ascending the volcanic slope from south to north (Phase F<sub>1</sub> in Figure 6). The initial construction phase is dated with reasonable security to the mid-3rd century B.C. (Johnston et al. 2018, 5–10). There is stratigraphic evidence that a monumental portico formed the building's façade along the Via Gabina, onto which a series of large rooms paved in tuff slabs opened (Rooms F<sub>1</sub>-1, F<sub>1</sub>-2, and F<sub>1</sub>-3), though the extant remains of this portico date to the 3rd phase of the structure. These rooms on the lower terrace were laid out on either side of a broad central ramp, which served as an entryway into the large, open, paved courtyard around which the middle terrace was principally organized. The courtyard was bordered to the east and west by smaller rooms (Rooms F<sub>1</sub>-5, F<sub>1</sub>-6, F<sub>1</sub>-7, and F<sub>1</sub>-11) and to the north by three larger rooms (Rooms F<sub>1</sub>-8, F<sub>1</sub>-9, and F<sub>1</sub>-10), which likely served, at least in part, functions related to collective gatherings and feasting, based on their formal layout (analogous to spaces for reception and dining in contemporary domestic architecture) and features (such as large vessels for food storage and floors finely decorated with geometric patterns of inlaid tiles). The westernmost room also served as a distributive space, providing access from the central courtyard to the rest of the building to the north. To the west, a secondary courtyard connects to a suite of rooms to the north that housed a small, relatively simple bathing facility (Rooms F<sub>1</sub>-14,

F1-15, and F1-16) (Johnston et al. 2018, 15–20). At the northern end of the middle terrace, a long open area runs the width of the building, with an alternate entrance provided by a small staircase descending from the eastern side street. A grand stone staircase with a cylindrical altar (Figure 7) at its foot provides access to the upper terrace. A massive retaining wall built in large regular blocks of drystone masonry, *opus quadratum*, emphasized the transition between elevations. The upper terrace was an open-air platform (perhaps with only a beaten-earth floor surface) surrounded by a low precinct wall in polygonal masonry, with commanding views to the south over the city center and the Alban hills beyond (Figure 8).

Although certain features of the complex find parallels in Republican domestic architecture, especially the resemblance of the main courtyard to the cruciform atrium typical of the canonical Roman house, the complex can be identified with reasonable certainty as a public building on the basis of its scale, location, layout, and monumentality (an interpretation recently endorsed by Yegül and Favro 2019, 35–36). It reflects a high degree of local initiative and experimentation, especially in its early adaptation of facilities for Hellenistic cultural practices like public bathing (see Johnston et al. 2018, 18–20, 31). At the same time, it may have been designed to accommodate performances of traditional rituals associated with the Gabine community. In this regard, the upper terrace is key to understanding the complex as a whole: our working hypothesis is that this open-air platform was an *auguraculum*, the ritual space from which public priests—*augures*—made their divinatory observations of the sky. It is worth noting that in Roman tradition, Gabii was closely—even uniquely—associated with the practice of augury (Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 5.33; cf. Bottini 2012). During the ritual, the augur and auspician faced east and south, respectively; oriented southeast, this viewing platform optimizes the field of vision for both participants. Moreover, *auguracula* were open-air and meant to evoke

the archaic simplicity of the ritual itself, the only significant internal feature being the augur's temporary tent. At the best-documented archaeological example of an auguraculum at the southern Italian site of Bantia, the ritual space was closely connected to a structure that, as at Gabii, has some affinities with a public building (the so-called *domus publica*), as well as to a bath complex (Torelli 1966; Sodo 2006, 12–13; Di Giuseppe 2009, 232). The elevated position, orientation, and sparse architecture of the upper terrace, alongside its relationship to the facilities of the middle and lower terraces, could support this interpretation. While aspects of its three-dimensional reconstruction await further analysis, if the hypothesis about the upper terrace is correct, this public complex represents a dynamic blend of innovation and archaism, an eloquent statement of Gabine civic identity at a crucial moment in the history of Latium. Regardless, because there are exceedingly few comparanda from this period, this building makes an important contribution more generally to our knowledge of mid-Republican public architecture.

The scenic architecture of the Area F Complex would have made a striking impression on those approaching from the south along the Via Praenestina. Here, across the Via Gabina, previous investigations by the SSABAP-Roma (Majerini and Musco 2001) and Gabii Project excavations from 2016–2018 have revealed the northeastern quadrant of a large, piazza-like public space delimited by a series of structures along its northern and eastern sides (Figure 9A). This open space at the city's center, bounded by the main thoroughfare to the north and respecting the alignment of the grid plan, appears to be an important hub of activity. Initial stratigraphic analysis suggests that the demarcation of this open space was almost certainly initiated at the time of the reorganization of the city's urban fabric, the end of the 5th century B.C. (Mogetta et al. 2019). However, like much of the urban area at Gabii, the 4th century B.C. piazza lacks significant building activity. Although there are hints of precursors to the later

architectural development of the space, the structures belonging to the first extensive constructions in opus quadratum (drystone ashlar masonry using uniform rectangular worked blocks; Figure 10) date to around the mid-3rd century B.C., contemporaneous with—and perhaps connected to—the creation of the Area F Complex and its associated portico. This portico seemingly extended to the east and the south around the perimeter of the central intersection, physically linking the piazza space with the Area F Complex. This 4th century B.C. disjuncture again highlights open questions about the arrangement of public space as part of significant community reorganizations.

In this mid-Republican phase, one of the principal axes of the piazza was a basalt-paved entrance that opened southward directly off the main thoroughfare, about half a block east of the central intersection of the city (Figure 11A). This entranceway's elevation, matching that of the mid-Republican basalt-paved roadway of the Via Gabina, provided access for both pedestrian and wheeled traffic to the large, open space to the south. A large tuff block integrated in the pavement appears to have functioned as a guide for wheeled vehicles steering their way into and out of the piazza (Figure 11B). From this narrow transitional area, traffic entered the basalt-paved open area of the piazza proper, which measures at least 25 m north to south. In its center, remnants of ashlar walls, probably belonging to a mid-Republican phase, appear. Due to successive reorganizations, questions remain about the precise layout of these structures and about the original orientation, extent, and accessibility of the open area and its relationship with the adjacent Via Praenestina to the west (Majerini and Musco 2001). We hope to gain a fuller understanding of this situation through future excavation.

The western side of the entranceway leading from the main thoroughfare is delimited by a large room (Room H<sub>1</sub>-1). For most of the ashlar walls, only the foundation course is preserved,

and a full understanding of their original configuration is complicated by the presence of later phases. The occupation and construction levels have not yet been reached, limiting present interpretations of this space's function. Just to the east of the main entranceway is a large rectangular room (Room H<sub>1</sub>-2) with walls built of massive ashlar blocks. Its original floor, constructed with large, closely fitted tuff slabs, incorporates a circular wellhead. Excavation of layers beneath the floors revealed a long drain in worked tuff blocks. This drain, associated with the slab floor, runs diagonally into a deep rectangular shaft in the bedrock in the room's southeastern corner and ultimately connects to a subterranean *cuniculus* (an underground water channel). The extensive network of these *cuniculi* in the city center is evidence of careful planning and significant investment in the area's infrastructure.

A series of small shops (Rooms H<sub>1</sub>-3, H<sub>1</sub>-4, and H<sub>1</sub>-5), often called *tabernae* in other Roman contexts, are accessible from the piazza's eastern side. Three courses of the ashlar masonry of the back wall of these rooms are preserved, but only the foundations remain of the subdividing walls, which were leveled during subsequent reorganizations. Parts of the original tuff slab floor, resembling that of Room H<sub>1</sub>-2, were found in situ, together with further drainage features. In the western half of these rooms, there are traces of a crushed tuff preparation layer, which would have accommodated a fine *cocciopesto* floor composed of crushed ceramic materials and mortar, perhaps similar to those from the Area F building (Gallone and Mogetta 2013; Gallone, Mogetta, and Johnston 2016). Large, square tuff bases at the front of these rooms suggest there was originally a colonnaded façade along this side of the piazza, which, together with the long ashlar wall, further indicate the ambitiousness of its architecture. A long, apparently open corridor, delimited on its eastern side by another massive ashlar wall (Room H<sub>1</sub>-6), ran behind these rooms, accessible from the main thoroughfare at its northern end, but not

communicating directly with any of the rooms to the west. This corridor may have been a side-street off the main road in the city grid's initial layout, built over as the piazza space developed.

The discovery of these structures will refine our understanding of the development of a shared Roman vocabulary for the monumentalization of public space. Certain porticoed buildings (*stoa*) of Sicily and southern Italy seem to provide the closest contemporary comparanda. The eastern and northern stoas of the central public space (*agora*) at Morgantina in Sicily offer a vaguely similar layout, as well as the northwestern stoa of the Asclepion at Agrigento, all dated by their excavators to the 3rd century B.C. (Wilson 2013, 89–93, esp. 92). The larger framing room at the northern end of the piazza's eastern rooms, projected in front of the main façade, specifically supports these comparisons (as does the long rear corridor running the length of the building, a feature shared with Morgantina's eastern stoa). However, the remarkably idiosyncratic Area F Complex across the street—for which there exists no direct comparanda—provides a cautionary warning against expecting to find exact parallels for the mid-Republican phase of Area H. While there seem to be discernible Hellenistic influences from Sicily, the evidence discussed here highlights local experimentation, improvisation, and adaptation of architectural models into new forms. Future study of this piazza, which in many ways does not conform to what would become the ideal type of a central *forum* that we find repeated later across Roman colonial foundations, invites us to reconsider how we think about the form, function, and development of public space in the mid-Republican period.

### **Transformation and Transition: The Late Republican and Imperial Periods in Areas F, G, and H (100 B.C.–A.D. 450)**

It is increasingly clear that Gabii was not abandoned to the extent implied by certain contemporary authors (see Johnston and Mogetta 2020, 108–109). Gabii’s built footprint contracted in the late 1st millennium B.C., with many spaces repurposed for new activities (in 2011, this transition was already evident in the domestic structures of Areas A, B, and C; see Mogetta and Becker 2014; Opitz, Mogetta, and Terrenato 2016; Banducci and Gallone 2021; Mogetta and Opitz forthcoming). This transformation appears to consist primarily of a refocusing of activity along the Via Gabina, an adaptation that speaks to the resilience of the community and challenges interpretations that tend to use physical contraction as evidence of urban “failure.” This transition is particularly clear in the radical transformation of the monumental Area F building by the middle of the 1st century B.C. Spoliation of building materials and construction of new features suggest ongoing productive and commercial activities here through the 4th century A.D. On the upper terrace, several walls were reconstructed using new techniques around the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 1st century B.C. The function of these later spaces, however, remains unclear, and the upper terrace fell completely out of use sometime after the 1st century B.C., as indicated by a series of large negative features that were likely the result of extensive spoliation and natural erosion. On the middle terrace, new concrete walls subdivided the earlier larger spaces (e.g. Room F<sub>2</sub>-17), indicating a possible transition from public to private use (see Phase F<sub>2</sub> in Figure 6). By the early 1st century A.D., the middle terrace was abandoned and gradually filled with refuse. Two massive new walls were constructed using concrete (faced with *opus reticulatum*, diamond-shaped stone facing around a concrete core, and *opus incertum*, irregular stone facing around a concrete core, both typical construction techniques for this period; see Figure 10), which form a corner on top of the earlier grand staircase. The long north-south wall bisects the middle terrace. Its foundations were cut into

almost 1 m of post-abandonment accumulation, suggesting that the gradual infill of this terrace had been underway for some time and that it was likely built to contain further refuse dumped into the structure.

While the upper two terraces were transformed into refuse dumps, the lower terrace remained a locus for various activities, likely due to its location along the city's main road (see Phase F<sub>3</sub> in Figure 6), which was repaved together with the Via Praenestina in the 1st century B.C. and continued to facilitate connections with the neighboring cities to the east. The persistence of activities on the lower terraces of the Area F Complex illustrates the positive economic impact that continued maintenance of the suburban road network could have in Rome's periphery. An east-west wall divided the area that remained in use from unoccupied spaces to the north. The original ramp, slightly reconfigured, was repaved and continued to provide access from the main road to a limited portion of the middle terrace through a passage in this wall. A portico incorporating massive tuff pillars was rebuilt between the rooms of the lower terrace and the basalt road, using spoliated materials from the portico of the earlier Republican phase. Similar pillars along the thoroughfare to the east and west, adjacent to other contemporary structures, suggest attempted reconfiguration of this space in a unified architectural style. These modifications suggest the presence of a group of public benefactors committed to maintaining the buildings that faced onto the road, underscoring the continued importance of this route for both local residents and travelers in the late Imperial period.

East of the central ramp, four rooms (F<sub>3</sub>-1, F<sub>3</sub>-2, F<sub>3</sub>-3, and F<sub>3</sub>-4) remained in use. The largest (F<sub>3</sub>-1) was accessed from the main thoroughfare through a wide threshold of multiple repurposed tuff blocks with a carved groove and holes for a doorpost and bolts. This entrance suggests a commercial function (for comparanda, see Ellis 2018, 29–76). Ancillary spaces are

tentatively interpreted as latrines or service areas, based on the presence of drains lined in tiles (for Roman latrine architecture, see Koloski-Ostrow 2015, 26–37). The reorganization of these spaces included an eastward extension into what had, in the Republican period, been the side street delimiting the eastern side of the Area F complex (Road 4). The obstruction of the side street—preventing access to sectors of the city to the north—is another indicator of the contraction of occupation to a narrow area along the Via Gabina. On the opposite side of the ramp, Rooms F<sub>3</sub>-6, F<sub>3</sub>-9, and F<sub>3</sub>-10 were similarly entered over wide thresholds consisting of several tuff blocks, while smaller doorways in the northern walls allowed access to the four smaller rooms at the rear (F<sub>3</sub>-5, F<sub>3</sub>-7, F<sub>3</sub>-8, and F<sub>3</sub>-11). The blocking of a doorway leading into Room F<sub>3</sub>-11 indicates at least one later reorganization.

Room F<sub>3</sub>-10 offers the clearest picture of these rooms' function. In its latest phase, the room opened onto the main road to the south across a long (2.65 m) tuff threshold. Its western wall was built over two stone blocks from an earlier phase, which may have marked an additional threshold allowing access from a side street. Remnants of an L-shaped concrete counter in front of a small vaulted space built into the eastern wall sit in the southeastern corner of the room. This arrangement—a room open to streets on two sides, with a counter and small storage space—is typical of *tabernae*, with clear parallels at Pompeii (similar to Ellis's type A.1 and A.1.H; see Ellis 2018, 70–75). Additional latrines were located within this cluster of shops in Rooms F<sub>3</sub>-8 and F<sub>3</sub>-11. New subterranean features, such as a large cistern serving these latrines, cut through the buried Republican walls and floors of the middle terrace to the north.

Room F<sub>3</sub>-10 also offers the most valuable evidence for dating this area's developments. The earliest deposits above the mid-Republican pavements contained ceramics dating to the 1st century B.C. and 1st century A.D., while material from leveling deposits beneath the latest floor

suggests the construction of the final phase after the 3rd century A.D. A light bronze coin, a half *follis* of the Emperor Maxentius, was found sealed in a fill beneath the penultimate surface of the floor sequence in Room F<sub>3-5</sub>. Issued by the mint at Rome ca. A.D. 310–312, it gives a terminus post quem for the final two floors in this room, demonstrating that the lower terrace of the Area F Complex continued to be frequented well into the 4th century A.D. While no longer the monumental building of the preceding centuries, it persisted as a retail and commerce space along an important regional road.

Similarly, excavation in Area G to the east has demonstrated multiple successive Imperial and post-Imperial period reorganizations (Figure 12A). Tuff pillars, not in primary deposition, and the basalt-paved surface of a side street, are the only evidence for the mid-Republican phase. Room G<sub>1-1</sub>, just north of the main road, occupies the area that had likely been part of the Republican porticoed space discussed above (Figure 13A). A later apsidal wall encroaches on Road 4 and supports evidence from Area F that, by the Imperial period, this road was out of use. The latest evidence for the occupation of this space, based on ceramics and coins found in a layer of floor preparation for a poorly preserved concrete surface in G<sub>1-1</sub>, dates to approximately A.D. 450. Remnants of obliterated walls parallel to the Via Gabina indicate the entire space was enclosed at some point in the Imperial period. These walls were subsequently destroyed and replaced with a late occupation surface likely covering the entirety of Room G<sub>1-1</sub>.

Due to the spoliation of floor surfaces and a large negative feature that runs diagonally across the site and bisects Area G, we lack a definitive chronology or interpretations for these rooms. Nevertheless, there are some clues that point to their date and function. Based on various wall construction techniques (*opus reticulatum*, subsequent phases in *opus incertum*, and the latest phases in *opus vittatum*, a building technique that alternates courses of stone blocks and

bricks), activity in Area G generally dates to the Imperial period. A feature in Room G<sub>1</sub>-4, while poorly preserved, could possibly be a counter for serving food and hints at a commercial function similar to that of F<sub>3</sub>-10. A later blocking of the door between Rooms G<sub>1</sub>-4 and G<sub>1</sub>-2, the spaces to the north of the enclosed G<sub>1</sub>-1, reflects another change to the relationship between these spaces.

In Area H, Imperial activity transformed the spaces occupied by Rooms H<sub>2</sub>-4 and H<sub>2</sub>-5 (Figure 9B). Concrete walls were constructed to subdivide the area, often incorporating pre-existing ashlar masonry. Leveling fills raised the occupation level over 1 m above the Republican layers in the adjacent rooms. Most features in these rooms are associated with water: a repurposed *dolium* (a large ceramic storage vessel) formed a wellhead located along the western wall of Room H<sub>2</sub>-5 and connected to a long drain built of repurposed tiles, mortar, and concrete. Another large cut in the northeastern corner of Room H<sub>2</sub>-4 likely represents a well, though an apparent spoliation cut (perhaps for the well structure) obscures many features in this space. Underneath very poorly preserved floor surfaces in Rooms H<sub>2</sub>-4 and H<sub>2</sub>-5, there is an extensive leveling layer that spans both rooms, characterized by large basalt stones visible across the surface. Room H<sub>2</sub>-3 seems to have undergone a transition to productive or industrial use at a significant scale. Atop a leveling fill that obliterated the earlier Republican features in the room, a series of crude beaten-earth floors were laid down; these were associated with a new wellhead, built from a reused *dolium*. The extensive evidence for burning on these surfaces, together with the large amounts of iron slag and charcoal that were recovered, suggest that this was a metalworking facility, perhaps associated with the quarrying activity taking place a short distance away up the volcanic slope (see Banducci and Gallone 2021). In Area H, what had been part of the monumental public heart of the city in the preceding phases was transformed to support a new, industrial focus.

The area's roads also saw renewed activity during the late Imperial period. Both the Via Gabina in Area H and a north-south side street (Road 3) in Area G continued to be in use until at least the 5th century A.D. In the early Imperial period, when the Via Gabina was repaved in basalt, a gravel surface was laid down on top of the old mid-Republican basalt pavement in the southern half of Area G to match the elevation of the Imperial basalt trunk road. After this glareate pavement (thick preparation layers of gravel, crushed ceramic, and earth topped by a compact surface), beginning in the mid-late 5th century A.D., five successive late gravel roads continued to raise its sloping surface, maintaining an elevation similar to the Via Gabina as it was repaved repeatedly (Mogetta et al. 2019, 17). While the scale of construction is certainly diminished, the reuse of these buildings and roads through the late Imperial period support arguments for the continued, if somewhat altered, importance of a contracting Gabii within the regional Roman urban network.

At some point after the 5th century A.D., the buildings and roads in Area G—including, notably, the Via Gabina itself—became inactive. A large linear cut, running across the entire site, is our best evidence for a terminus ante quem for the abandonment of this area (visible in Figure 3B), partially obliterating the north-south side street and several buildings in Area G (as well as buildings in Areas C, D, and I). While we are still investigating the purpose and date of this feature (excavations in our Area J undertaken for this purpose await full analysis), it cuts across buildings and through basalt roads, demonstrating both a significant amount of labor and disregard for pre-existing infrastructure and architecture. Initial calibrated radiocarbon dates from three seeds found at the bottom of the cut in Area J suggest at least this segment of the cut was filled after the second half of the 11th century A.D.

Just under the topsoil throughout Area G, our excavation uncovered linear features constructed with spoliated materials, including reused blocks, large basalt pavers, ceramic fragments, tile, and marble architectural fragments. Previous excavations by the SSBAP-Rome have demonstrated that these small, dry-stacked walls, termed *muretti*, covered both the Via Gabina and the fill of the large linear cut (Majerini and Musco 2001) (Figure 13B). These *muretti* run through Area G, across the Imperial era-paving stones of the Via Gabina, and into the northern portion of Area H (Figure 12B). They represent the latest activity in the area, perhaps associated with the church of San Primitivo to the south.

Much like the large linear cut, the function of these small walls is still unknown, but previous excavations hypothesized that these “*muretti a secco*” may have had an agricultural purpose, to aid drainage in order to make the area into garden plots for the occupants of San Primitivo (Majerini and Musco 2001, 492–494). An alternate hypothesis is that the *muretti* are the result of the spoliation of these spaces, constructed successively in order to shore up soil displaced in the process of systematically searching deep under the contemporary surface levels. Evidence for large-scale exploration of these spaces in search of valuables, especially building materials, could explain why very few floor levels remained in Area G, whereas areas without *muretti*, such as Area I, discussed below, survived with floors, including mosaics, intact and were clearly not subjected to intense spoliation. Whatever their exact function, the construction of these walls and the excavation of the linear cut following the abandonment and spoliation of the spaces and shops of Areas F, G, and H mark a fundamental disjunction in the life of this sector of the city. Thereafter, a new phase of occupation develops to the south with the construction of religious features in the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods.

## **Persistence and Production: The Imperial and Late Antique Periods in Area I (A.D. 100–400)**

Evidence from Area I provides insight into quotidian life in the late 1st century B.C. through the 4th century A.D. As elsewhere, reuse and reorganization are common. The large structure that occupies Area I is particularly important for our reconsideration of the activities associated with urban entities as their populations and footprints reduce (Figure 14).

The earliest identifiable feature is a rectangular building, opening southward onto the Via Gabina. Its opus reticulatum walls incorporate some ashlar blocks, probably from an earlier structure. Other traces of earlier structures include patches of floors made from crushed red tuff and a tuff wellhead (Figure 15A). Extensive later repurposing and robbing makes it difficult to reconstruct the internal layout of the earliest phase, but in overall plan, it is roughly comparable to the mid-Republican houses in Areas A and B (Opitz, Mogetta, and Terrenato 2016; Banducci and Gallone 2021). On these grounds, we tentatively interpret it as a residence. Absent any diagnostic finds or primary contexts, we date it to between the 1st century B.C. and 1st century A.D., based on construction technique. Preexisting features in the surrounding areas, however, suggest the beginnings of its residential occupation in the 3rd century B.C. Excavations uncovered the floor of a Republican-period building, tentatively dated between the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. in an adjoining plot of land in Area C, which may have connected to the Area I structure; this Republican-period activity would provide further support for postulating an earlier occupation in this area.

Later, an additional building was added to the west of the rectangular structure, incorporating the preexisting structure into a new larger complex (Figure 15B). The complex was divided into two halves: a domestic residence to the west and a productive facility to the east (the

productive facility is visible in Figure 14A, while the domestic portion is visible in 14B). Its walls consisted of a concrete core faced with regular courses of rectangular stones (*petit appareil*) or alternating courses of rectangular stones and bricks (*opus vittatum*) (see Figure 10). Its excavated portion measures some 23 × 33 m., but it likely extended further west, where its limit has not yet been exposed. Although not all of its rooms have been fully uncovered, the general layout and mosaic decoration preserved in some rooms suggest a rich domestic building. A number of bricks used to construct the walls, stamped with a variety of small, circular, anepigraphic stamps well-attested in the Baths of Caracalla and the structures from the Palatine Hill in Rome (Broise 2000; Botticelli 2017) tentatively date the building to the early 3rd century A.D. The layout and decoration are similar to other rich houses (in Latin, *domus*) of the Imperial period in other parts of the Mediterranean which date to the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. (Ellis 1988; Osland 2017).

A series of rooms appears to have been organized around Room I-17, a roughly square central space accessible from the south, possibly identifiable as an atrium (or even a peristyle, depending on further investigations). Its mosaic floor, preserved in patches, was decorated with a band of small white tesserae and a set pattern of rectangular slabs of marble (*crustae*). In its center, a large square concrete feature is surrounded by a series of concrete walls, preserved at floor level. The surface, covered by a patchy calcareous deposit with several linear cut features, likely indicates the presence of a drainage or water feature, which may be interpreted as a basin (*impluvium*) or fountain.

A large doorway connected Room I-17 to a smaller apsidal hall to the north, featuring a semi-circular apse with recesses, possibly used for attaching revetment, and a mosaic floor, poorly preserved in the eastern section of the space. Based on comparanda with other domestic

complexes, the apsidal room belonged to an area accessible to visitors likely functioning as the office (*tablinum*) or audience hall (Ellis 1988). A buttress of irregular stones finished in *opus signinum*—a waterproof mixture of mortar and ceramic sherds, crushed tiles, or bricks—was later built against the northern wall of the apse. The addition may have functioned as a support for vaulting over Room I-20, but the evidence of waterproofing makes it more likely that it operated to prevent the infiltration of water and offset the weight of the earth embankment upslope.

Two parallel rectangular rooms east of the apsidal hall were also lavishly paved (Rooms I-18 and I-10), covered with black and white tessellated mosaics featuring geometric circle and rhombus decorations. One room featured a decorative socle with pieces of inlaid worked marble and holes in the walls suggesting revetment attachments. The growing popularity of black and white tessellated mosaic in central Italy during the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. strengthens the dating of the building (Dunbabin 1999, 56).

The rooms east of the atrium (Rooms I-11–I-14) connected the domus to the productive facility. Although the original functions of Rooms I-11 and I-12 are obscured by their later repurposing, an arch in Room I-11, made of concrete bound by mortar, suggests it may have been a substructure for stairs leading to a second story. Rooms I-13 and I-14, by contrast, are isolated from the residential part of the complex, with entrances providing access to the road. Room I-13 is paved with *opus signinum* and features six postholes cut directly into the floor, indicative of a wooden structure, such as a shelf, or later spoliation. The orientation of both rooms to the main road and their position between the residential and productive areas of the complex suggests these rooms functioned as a shop.

When the Imperial domestic structure was constructed to the west, the earlier building to the east was significantly restructured and incorporated as an annex. The entrance from the street to the south was blocked, with access now via two doors from the domus. Features, including evidence for a press, in two new rooms built on the building's northern side (Rooms I-1 and I-2) suggest the area was dedicated to agricultural production. The press floor and a low basin in the same room drained through a lead pipe set in the southern wall into a sunken rectangular tank (Figure 16). The tank was lined with opus signinum and contained two built-in steps, which point to liquid processing and storage. The room containing this tank (Room I-8) was paved with a concrete floor marked by several circular and rectangular cuts, possibly to contain vessels. A similarly paved room to the west (Room I-9) was also likely related to processing, while small rooms to the south may have served as storage chambers (Rooms I-6 and I-7).

Although it is often difficult to distinguish between olive and wine processing from the archaeological remains (Brun 2004, 7–60; Marzano 2013, 88–90), there is evidence to suggest that the Area I facility was used for wine. The eastern half of Room I-1 features an apparent treading floor, used for crushing grapes, which slopes towards a single rectangular basin used to collect liquid must. The pits adjacent to the press likely held ceramic jars embedded in the ground, possibly for fermentation. These features seem to be characteristic of wine-making facilities, whereas olive presses instead preserve olive mills and groups of tanks of various sizes for collection and sedimentation (Rossiter 1981; Brun 2004, 7–60). The Area I structure is comparable in layout to contemporary wine-making facilities in the region, including Sites 10 and 11 along the Via Gabina about 6 km west of Gabii (Brun 2004, 11; Widrig and Oliver-Smith 2007), the Villa della Via Tiberina (Felletti Maj 1955), and, further afield, Settefinestre

(Carandini and Settis 1979). The presence of grape pips in related contexts further supports this identification, although the data remain preliminary.

Portions of the residential area in the western part of the domus were subsequently repurposed for productive or industrial purposes (Figure 15C), probably during the 3rd century A.D. Internal and external doorways were blocked and a buttress added to the northern side of the apse. Several new spaces appear, including a long east-west corridor north of the apse (Room I-21), its walls lined with opus signinum, and a higher concrete-floored room on its eastern end (Room I-23). Further east is a long signinum-lined tank oriented north-south (Room I-3) with a brick floor sloping south, where an outlet led into Room I-11. This room was renovated with a shallow concrete basin draining to the west, where another brick-floored tank at a lower level disappears beneath the building, probably joining the subterranean drainage system to the south through a circular opening identified in the foundation of the east-west wall of the room.

A shallow concrete basin also appears in this phase in the room west of the apsidal hall (Room I-22), with a surface sloping east toward an irregular gap in the wall (possibly resulting from a spoliated lead pipe). Beneath this gap, in the apsidal hall, is a square basin cut into the earlier floor. The southwestern corner shows a similar set of features to the atrium/peristyle, where another basin was built covering the mosaic floor, bounded by new walls (very partially preserved) and draining through a lead pipe set into the southern wall. The transformation of the building points to a significant shift in its function, although of what nature remains the subject of investigation. While the many concrete basins suggest an intensification of industrial and/or productive activity, the extent to which they were connected to wine production remains unclear.

As elsewhere, Area I's buildings went out of use gradually. Dumping began in several rooms by the early 4th century A.D. and continued over a long period, attested by large amounts

of later pottery and other finds, including a coin of the Emperor Justinian (A.D. 527–565). A gradual abandonment in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. aligns with the dates currently suggested for the cessation of use of the intramural necropolis nearby in Area B (Banducci and Gallone 2021), contributing to an impression of a decrease in activity and further transformation in this part of Gabii. The latest significant activity in Area I dates to the 3rd or 4th century A.D., seemingly related to spoliation and the production of building materials (Figure 15D). A small room was built next to the eastern side of the original building, set higher than the interior occupation levels. The techniques used in its construction were irregular—a thin mortar floor covered a layer of roughly level rubble, bounded by thin walls built variously of mortared rubble and reused ashlar (Room I-16). On its northern side, an irregular mortar basin, accessible from both inside and outside the room, was filled with intentionally chipped amphorae and many sherds with mortar accretions. The room and basin were likely constructed ad hoc to mix mortar for construction. They may be associated with several nearby deposits evidencing burning or containing large deposits of marble fragments, indicating lime production. A late road surface just to the south might also date to this period, attesting to regular, if diminished, traffic in the area.

The domus and its adjacent productive facility make an important contribution to the narrative of residential, industrial, and commercial life at Imperial Gabii. Occupation does concentrate near the Via Praenestina, as suggested by literary sources (Almagro Basch 1958, 23) and now confirmed by the archaeological investigations that document the contraction, abandonment, and repurposing—notably for quarrying—of formerly inhabited areas (Guaitoli 1981, 52–54; Mogetta and Becker 2014, 181–183). The quantity of Imperial sculptures and inscriptions, recovered mainly from 18th century A.D. excavations, nevertheless reveals ongoing

efforts of the local and Imperial elite to revitalize the city's infrastructure and institutions (Cima 2005; Johnston 2019), especially in relation to investment in Gabii's sanctuaries and the construction of facilities such as baths (Banducci and Gallone 2021). One of the major building projects of the 2nd century A.D., for example, was a shrine to Domitia Longina, the wife of the emperor Domitian; it was later transformed into a temple dedicated to the imperial cult which held the sculptures of various emperors. The emperor Hadrian took an active interest in the city's development in the early 2nd century A.D., when he constructed an aqueduct and a second unknown monument. When contextualized with the evidence from Area I, these initiatives complicate the conventional narrative of decline in the city and instead point to a sustained period of continuity and change.

The complex's layout and location reveal the increasing ruralization of the urban area. It mimics the composition of many Late Antique urban residences that, in contrast to their earlier functions, combined residential and agricultural functions into a new type of suburban dwelling (Métraux 2018, 407–408). By the 3rd century A.D., the building would have been surrounded by vast tracts of now-vacant land, which may have been used for agricultural production as the area within the old walls of the city underwent a semi-rural transformation. This development, signaling the movement of rural activities into the urban area, reflects broader changes in settlement patterns experienced throughout the Mediterranean beginning in the 3rd century A.D., which saw once urban neighborhoods transition into rural or semi-rural communities (Métraux 2018), increasingly characterized by the presence of hybrid residential and productive structures (Chavarría and Lewit 2004). The Area I building, even in the preliminary interpretation given here, further problematizes any clean categorization of “rural” and “urban” activities—categories already understood as arbitrary. Moreover, it contributes to an emerging body of evidence for

deeper changes in the urban fabric as Gabii adapted to incorporation into Rome's expanding suburbium, a situation paralleled in other regional centers, including Praeneste, Tibur, and Tusculum (Notarian 2011; Banducci and Gallone 2021).

### **Key Conclusions and Future Research Directions**

Cross-cultural studies of urbanism (e.g. M. L. Smith 2014; Carballo and Fortenberry 2015; Yoffee 2015; Krause and Fernandez-Götz 2017; Smith 2017; Bernardini and Schachner 2018) have highlighted diversity in the character of individual cities while also emphasizing similarities between cities that make urban places and their generative process globally recognizable. Gabii provides a rare opportunity to investigate the earliest processes of urban formation, the institutionalization of urbanism through infrastructure, and its transformation in a changing regional context, all within a single longitudinal study.

The Gabii Project began with ambitions of expanding our knowledge of the city's early urbanization process and its expressions of urbanism in the Republican period. Continued excavation uncovered extensive evidence dating to the Imperial and later phases of the city and prompted the broadening of our research agenda to address questions concerning the development and maintenance of active cities and processes of de-urbanization. Moving forward, the project aims to answer new questions generated by the past decade of excavation.

The elite complex in Areas C and D provides a novel window into the initial phases of occupation at Gabii, suggesting an early established system of inherited rank and social stratification. As we continue to expand our knowledge of the formative phases of this complex and refine our understanding of life in urbanizing central Italy, these areas provide a promising opportunity to enter into broader debates around the lived experience of the diverse members of

this type of community and the role these actors and their quotidian activities played in nascent cities (e.g. M. E. Smith 2014; Jennings and Earle 2016; Pacifico and Truex 2019; Robin 2020; C. Smith 2020).

The Area F Complex, a unique work of mid-Republican architecture, has been key to the coalescence of a picture of public space and civic life in a period that has hitherto remained, for Roman archaeologists, poorly understood. The Sabine architectural choices identifiable in this building, and the range of influences that we can posit as models for its design and construction, suggest a web of interconnections between Sabii and the broader Mediterranean. The challenges of interpreting the intended use(s) and role(s) of the Area F Complex highlight the need for further consideration of the adoption of markers of civic identity and the use of the urban fabric as a canvas for its expression by individuals and groups in an increasingly urbanized and interconnected region. Current scholarship on urbanism outside the ancient Mediterranean has rightly focused attention on questions around the motivations, audiences, and receptions of these kinds of expressions of civic identity, since, as illustrated at Sabii, they can provide critical insights into how urban communities relate to one another, as well as how they build and reinforce internal narratives (e.g. McMahon 2019; Hodos 2020; Raja and Sindbæk 2020).

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of our recent work has been the reassessment and nuancing of narratives concerning the decline of the city. This period should be seen as one of transition, a moment of redefinition for the city that emerged out of the same formative processes as Rome and initially vied with it for control of Latium. The Republican city was outward-looking, engaging in the construction of monumental public buildings and spaces, represented within the urban center by the Area F Complex and the Area H Piazza, and more broadly by the city walls, sanctuaries, and temples (Mancini and Pilo 2006; Helas 2010, 2013;

Fabbri 2011; Fabbri and Musco 2016). In Imperial Gabii, we see the repurposing of these spaces, as the remaining Gabine population reoriented itself toward industry and private commercial enterprise. At this stage in Gabii's trajectory, we posit a shift from investment in the projection of a collective urban identity, aimed at a regional audience, toward investment in a collection of private initiatives and projects (in addition to limited, Imperially-sponsored programs attested in the epigraphic evidence and dated primarily to the 2nd century A.D.). Areas G and H, along with the lower terrace of F, remained functional and active, thanks to their location along a still-important route to Rome, which provided opportunities for commercial enterprise. A likely typical Republican domestic structure in Area I was expanded or completely obliterated to integrate the means for agricultural processing. This transformation into a post-urban community, with pockets of domestic, commercial, and productive activity, presents a different kind of multi-nodal settlement pattern to that seen in early Gabii (for discussion of post-urban transformation in Italy and the Roman world, see Christie and Augenti 2012; Diarte-Blasco and Christie 2018). The evidence for Gabii's re-articulation provides a key early example of the experience of smaller cities in the periphery of expanding mega-urban centers, a global phenomenon receiving ongoing attention in archaeological studies of de-urbanization (e.g. Martínez Jiménez, Sastre de Diego, and Tejerizo García 2018; Baron, Reuter, and Marković 2019; Carneiro, Christie, and Diarte-Blasco 2020).

Across its urban lifespan, the material remains recovered at Gabii at times appear representative of urban life and development seen in contemporary central Italian towns, while also often appearing idiosyncratic and, at least at present, uniquely Gabine. More broadly, the situation at Gabii highlights how seemingly familiar forms of urbanism, on closer study, can contain many elements that are unconventional. Even in the well-studied world of Roman towns,

much is yet to be understood about the development of civic spaces during the middle Republican period and the ways in which they functioned as expressions of collective identity. The extent of the rearticulation of Gabii's urban fabric in its Imperial phases, the character of the community that resulted from these changes, and its place in Rome's suburban landscape together constitute another key subject of debate. Important work remains to be done on long-term trends in the relationship between the city and its rural surroundings, as well as on the roles of less archaeologically visible non-elites in the community's civic, social, and commercial institutions. The evidence emerging from the project's excavations and research, combined with important contributions from concurrent active research by teams from the Louvre (Glisoni, Hasselin, and Roger 2019) and the Soprintendenza (Angelelli and Musco 2013) provides the basis for exploring these questions and contributing to longstanding discussions across archaeology, classics, anthropology, and the social sciences on the world's kaleidoscopic urban communities.

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## Figure Captions

Figure 1: Map of central Italy, showing the location of Gabii and notable surrounding sites.

Figure 2: Composite aerial photo showing the Gabii Project excavations from 2008–2018.

Figure 3: A) Restored city plan of Gabii, based on the interpretation of the magnetometer survey and corroborated by excavation. B) State plan of the structural remains of the Gabii Project excavations from 2012–2018.

Figure 4: A) Photograph of Area D (oriented with north at the top) showing the hut depressions and drystone masonry walls belonging to the Area D habitation complex. The complex's boundary wall and the stone foundations of the latest occupation phase are most prominently visible. The hut depressions belong to the earliest occupation phases beginning in the 8th century B.C. B–D) In situ grave goods from two burials excavated in Area C, Tomb 56 (infant) and Tomb 57 (young child): B) deposit of three ceramic vessels, a sheet-bronze bowl, and personal ornaments (T.56); C) deposit of personal ornaments from T.56, including a small bronze bracelet and bronze fibulae with amber decoration; and, D) large fossa tomb under excavation with deposit of ceramic vessels (T.57).

Figure 5: Plans showing the various phases of the residential compound in Areas C and D: A) the mid-8th century B.C. multi-hut compound; B) the late 8th century B.C. single-hut compound; and, C) the 7th century B.C. stone complex. These plans show the transformation of the complex to

incorporate more architecturally sophisticated structures, as well as the location of the different burials that suggest this complex was occupied by elites with associated non-elites.

Figure 6: Plans showing the various phases of the monumental building in Area F. F<sub>1</sub>: the 3rd century B.C. phase; F<sub>2</sub>: the 1st century B.C. phase; F<sub>3</sub>: the post-1st century B.C. phase. These plans show the monumental nature of the complex in its initial phase, followed by the abandonment of the upper terraces and the transformation of the lower terrace to accommodate commercial spaces.

Figure 7: Cylindrical altar in the Area F building. The presence of this altar is one piece of evidence suggesting that parts of this complex served a ritual function and is consistent with our interpretation of the space as an auguraculum. That it was a feature belonging to the original phase is clearly indicated by the working of the slab floor, which has a raised circular platform designed to accommodate the altar.

Figure 8: A photograph facing south from the upper terrace of the Area F building. The church of S. Primitivo is visible in the foreground, while the Alban Hills are visible in the background. The view offered by this structure may have played a central role in its function as an auguraculum.

Figure 9: Plans showing the various phases of the northeastern corner of the piazza space: A) the Republican phase; and, B) the Imperial phase. These plans reveal how this portion of the piazza space slowly began to be built up over time, mirroring similar processes taking place in locations like the Roman forum.

Figure 10: Wall facing techniques at Gabii: A) ashlar masonry; B) opus incertum; C) opus reticulatum; D) opus vittatum; E) *opus testaceum*; and, F) petit appareil. These different wall facing techniques, all present at Gabii, have traditionally been used to date architectural remains that lack associated stratigraphic deposits.

Figure 11: A) Aerial photo (oriented with south at top) showing Room H<sub>1</sub>-2/H<sub>2</sub>-3 at center. Most prominently visible are the remains of the mid-Republican phase: the tuff slab floor with wellhead, the tuff block drain, and stretches of the original ashlar walls (especially on the western side and the eastern ends of the northern and southern sides). Also visible are several large, circular negative features that belong to the imperial phases, when the space was converted to industrial use. B) A tuff traffic guide located near the intersection with Road 3. Its presence suggests that access to these areas was managed either throughout the life of the road or during its later phases of use.

Figure 12: A) Aerial photo of Area G (oriented with south at the top) with G<sub>1</sub>-1 at the center. Most prominently visible are the remains of the late Imperial phases: the apsidal wall encroaching on Road 4, the pairs of tuff blocks along the Via Gabina, the threshold blocks connecting Rooms G<sub>1</sub>-1 and G<sub>1</sub>-2, and the counter in G<sub>1</sub>-4. The large linear cut that runs across the site is visible at the bottom right of the image. B) Example of a *muretto* from Area G built of spoliated material and irregular masonry. These walls may be related to agricultural activity and belong to some of the latest phases of habitation at the site, after the late 4th century A.D.

Figure 13: Plans showing the various phases in Area G: A) Imperial phases; and, B) post-5th century A.D. phases with muretti. These plans show the change in the use of the Area between these phases, highlighting evidence for the road going out of use and the change in use of adjacent areas.

Figure 14: Aerial photo of the Area I building showing: A) eastern production space and eastern half of domestic space (oriented with east at top) and B) western domestic space (oriented with south at top). Most visible are the remains belonging to the 2nd–3rd century A.D. occupation, including the treading floor, tank, and pits probably related to the production of wine (see also Figure 16) and the central atrium and tablinum of the residence.

Figure 15: Plans showing the various phases of the Area I building: A) 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.; B) 2nd–3rd century A.D.; C) 3rd century A.D.; and, D) 3rd–4th century A.D. These plans show the change in use of the Area from what is likely a domestic complex in the Republican period to a large mixed-used domestic and industrial complex in the subsequent periods.

Figure 16: Composite photogrammetry model of the Area I press facilities. These spaces were likely used to make wine and suggest a transformation of the Area I complex in the Imperial period to include both domestic and production activities.