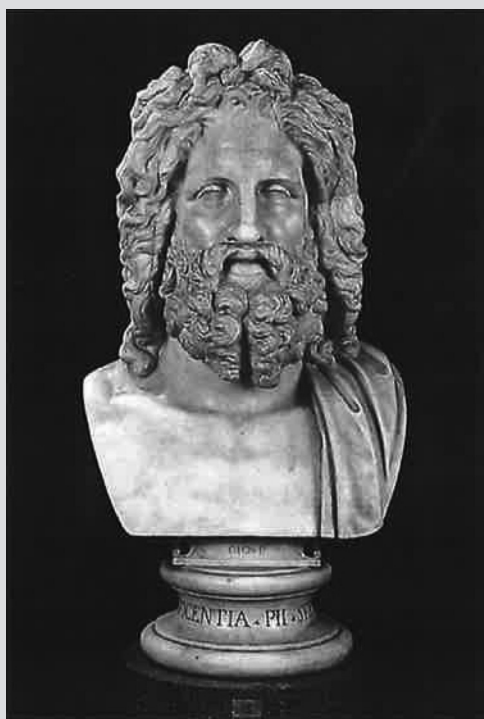




SOVRANO MILITARE ORDINE OSPEDALIERO
DI SAN GIOVANNI DI GERUSALEMME DI RODI E DI MALTA

AMBASCIATA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE



OTRICOLI

VISIT OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE
AND THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA

The Embassy of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the Holy See is extremely grateful to Count Enrico Floridi and his spouse Benedetta for offering the wonderful opportunity to share with our colleagues, the Heads of Mission accredited to the Holy See, and some members of the Roman Curia the very peculiar experience to visit the remains of an important Roman city, which today is in the middle of agricultural land and surrounded by olive trees, fields of corn and soya beans and wheat.

Living in Rome one can easily get used to Roman monuments popping up behind traffic jams and modern buildings. Also in many other Italian cities you can see Roman artefacts which are part of the urban landscape: the Arena of Verona, to quote one for all. Even Aquileia, which 2.000 years ago had 100.000 inhabitants, is next and interwoven to a much smaller town in the countryside of Friuli.

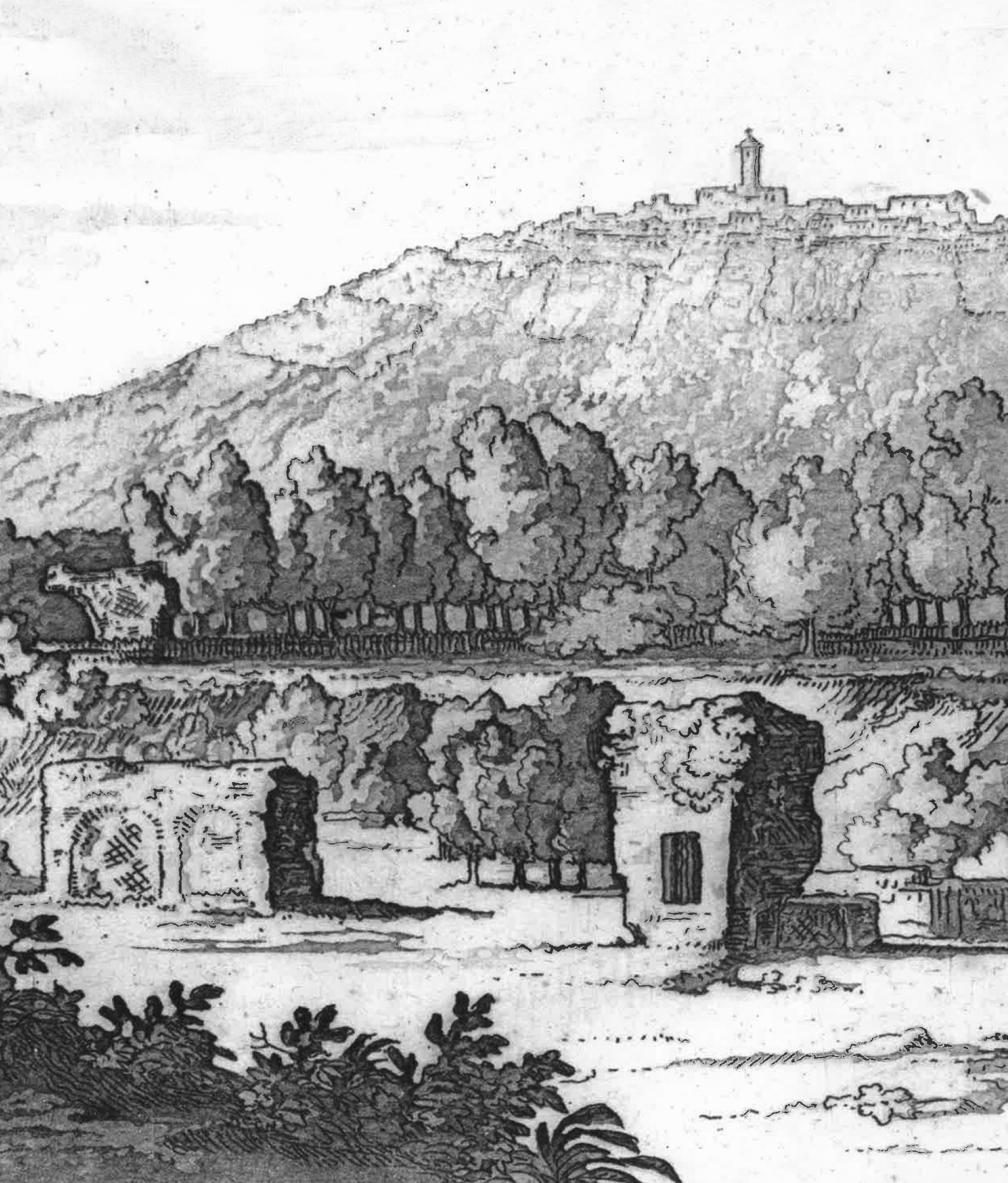
Admiring the theatre and the amphitheatre, which Enrico Floridi has been struggling for decades to prevent them being submerged with bushes and ivy, one can easily understand that Otricoli was a very big town indeed. The monumental graves, the “sepulcra” flanking the Roman road going north were meant for very affluent and socially high placed Roman citizens.

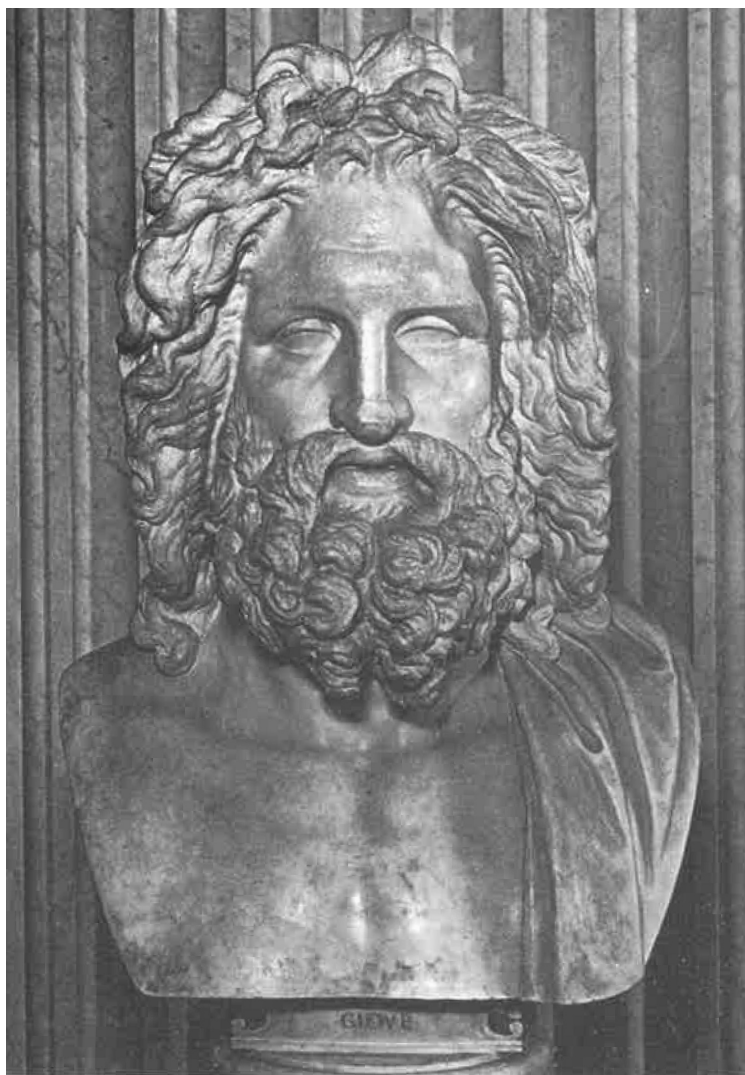
But where has the old Roman town of Otricoli gone?

I hope that this visit with the help of very knowledgeable guides will answer this and many other questions and will help you discover another piece of the puzzle of Rome beyond the Aurelian walls.

After a little stroll in the “modern” Otricoli, whose houses have been built also with stones and marbles excavated from the Roman site, a friendly welcome in the Villa Floridi will complete this day that, we hope, will remain as a pleasant memory.

Antonio Zanardi Landi
AMBASSADOR OF THE S. M. ORDER OF MALTA
TO THE HOLY SEE





The marble head, 58 cm. high, was found in the 1781-82 excavation campaign: we don't know where it was found. Being restored in 1783, it should be part of a colossal robed statue, with the naked parts carved in marble and the rest of the body made of some other material, brickwork or plaster. The head identified as Jupiter, was a worship simulacrum in the *Capitolium*, together with the statues of Juno and Minerva. It is a roman republican copy from a greek original, and it is now kept in the Sala Rotonda at the Vatican Museums

The ancient town of *Otriculum* is one of the most important sites in modern Umbria: settled at first in pre-roman times on the rise where the modern town of Otricoli stands too, probably at the end of roman republican age it was moved to the plain below, near a wide bend of the Tiber where the town's riverport developed.

The name may refer to the greek *ocris* (mount), word that should have influenced the umbrian *ocar* and the etruscan *ukar* (equivalent of the latin *arx*).

Being an ally to Rome in 308 B.C., after the battle of *Mevania*, it played the strategic role of border-town between Umbria and Sabina and trade point between the river-way and the land route through the Via Flaminia.

Trade exchanges with Rome were busy, through the

close riverport on the Tiber, known as "Porto dell'Olio" ("Oil Port"), of roman origin but still used during the Vatican government, and through the Via Flaminia, commanded in 220 B.C. by C. Flaminius consul (M.L.Caldelli, *Nuovo peso da Otricoli, Epigraphica* 56, 1994, pp. 200-210). The ancient town's importance appears also in most recent studies, T. Ashby's work about the Via Flaminia (JRS 11,1921, pp. 162-166), and especially C. Pietrangeli's two volumes: *Otriculum*, 1943 (*Italia romana. Municipi e colonie*, 7) and *Otricoli*, 1978. Ascribed to the Arnensis tribe, it became a municipium, ruled by quattuorviri; in the subdivision worked out by Augustus it was assigned to the 6th *Regio*, of which it was the farthest end towards Sabina.

During the roman Empire it flourished with an economy based on agriculture, commerce and pottery industry: we mention here the renowned relief-cups ("Popilius's cups") and the bricks and tiles factories whose stamps were found in the Tiber in Rome.

The beauties of its surroundings made the place fit for holiday-resort: Titus Annius Milo, a politician from the middle of the 1st century B.C., owned a villa there (Cic., *pro Milone*, 24, 64); At the end of the 1st century A.D., Pompeia Celerina, Pliny the Younger's wealthy mother-in-law, had large estates in Otricoli, too (Plin. Jun., EpJ, 4, 1).

Otricoli is mentioned in 69 A.D. during the struggles between Vespasian's and Vitellius's supporters. In the age of Diocletian it became part of *Tuscia et Umbria*. The town was destroyed between 569 and 605 A.D., during the Lombard invasion. In the early Middle Ages, maybe in the second half of the 7th century A.D., the inhabitants quitted the lower town, moving to the upper town, because of some circumstances among which we may number the Tiber's floodings and the riverbed's shifting.

The remains of Otricoli that travellers can see along the Via Flaminia are mentioned by the 16th to 18th centuries books, dealing with umbrian and sabine antiquities.

The first regular excavations were managed during the pontificate of Pope Pius VI, in the second half of the 18th century, with the intention of enriching the Vatican Museums. The works' management was committed to the architect G. Pannini who also drew the map of the town and the plan of some monuments.

The excavations carried out from 1775 to 1783 were published by G.A. Guattani.

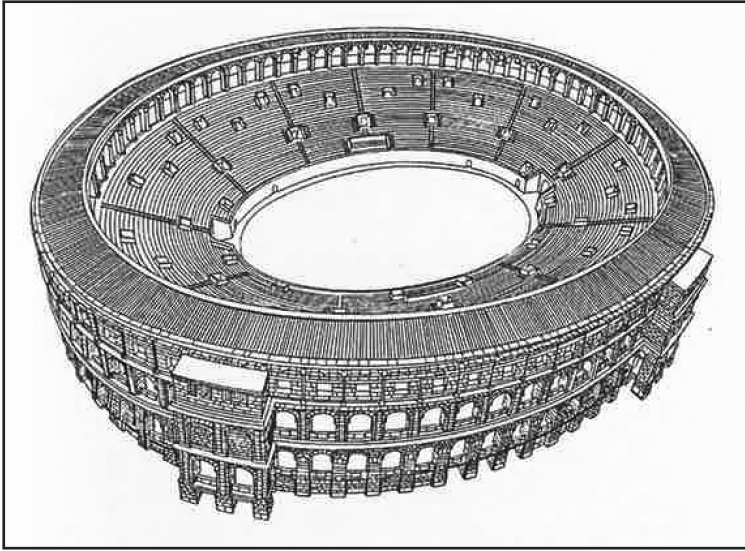
The Vatican excavations explored many monumental buildings, such as the basilica and the baths, and the works of art found there (mosaics, sculptures, inscriptions, etc.) were taken by river to enlarge the Vatican collections; other pieces are now scattered in Italian and foreign museums (Louvre, Ermitage). Some remarkable groups of pieces are still kept in Otricoli, partly reused in the modern town, partly in the town collection, partly in private collections.

During the latest years the *Soprintendenza Archeologica per l'Umbria* started again the researches, carrying out archaeologic excavations in some places of the ancient town, especially in order to understand and reconstruct the ancient topography and to exploit and arrange the site.

On the rise where the modern Otricoli stands, the only remains that may be ascribed to the ancient town consist of some stretches of city walls built in big tufa blocks, dated to the end of the 4th century B.C. (M. Cipollone -E. Lippolis, *Le Mura di Otricoli, Nuovi Quaderni dell'Istituto di Archeologia dell'Università di Perugia, Studi in onore di F. Magi*, 1, 1979, pp. 57-75). The archaic cemeteries ascribed to the town on the hill were spread near the town, in the sites known as Lupacchini and Cerqua Cupa, connected with the regions of Falerii, Capena and Sabina. You can still visit the main buildings of the roman town, settled between the hill and the Tiber: the 2nd century A.D. baths of which it is still left the octagonal hall whose polychrome mosaic is now in the *Sala Rotonda* at the Vatican Museums, the theatre, the big and the little substructures the area With the forum 'and other public buildings such as the basilica (of which nothing is left). The predominant group of monumental remains is situated near the brook of *S. Vittore*, a Tiber's affluent descending today from the town of Otricoli. In ancient times this brook had a different course: it was dammed and canalized in an underground conduit for about 300 m. in the area of the baths and big substructure; it originally emerged down the theatre and then flowed into the Tiber beneath the church of S. Vittore.

The ancient Via Flaminia, lined with funeral monuments before entering the urban area, went through the town that was not enclosed by walls. You can see a stretch of the road, paved with leucite slabs, just after trespassing the town gate.

Otriculum, sprawling about 36 hectares, may be seen by itineraries almost exclusively on foot, visiting the ancient buildings, whose remains preserve imposing elevations.



Reconstructive drawing of a Roman amphitheatre



Detail of the ambulatory
with the stairs connecting the cavea

When you are coming from Rome, you can see the amphitheatre, outside the urban area, standing on the left side of the Via Flaminia. Since the 16th century it has been mentioned by authors writing about Otricoli.

In 1784 G.A. Guattani published G. Pannini's drawings including a plan, a section and a reconstructive elevation, with arbitrary supplements.

The *Soprintendenza Archeologica per l'Umbria* has been investigating and excavating this monument since 1958. The amphitheatre looks partly built, partly leaning against the hill, that was dugged out to hold the masonry works; the walls are built in reticulate work (masonry consisting in square stone quoins inserted in the concrete core just to form a grid) with toothing of little tufa blocks at the corners. The longer axes measure about 120 by 98 m.; the whole external part of the monument is now lost, but some stretches of the cavea's middle ambulatory are still left; this one is cross vaulted and surmounted by little rooms with sloping vaults to support the stands, stairs connecting the ambulatories and the upper cavea, remains of a more inner ambulatory on which the stands stood straight; beneath these you see some stretches of a low corridor, partly built, partly dugged in the rock. Remains of the two main entrances are left on the longer axes: on the one side they communicate with the ambulatories, on the other side, where the amphitheatre leans against the hill, they are bounded by the rock itself. The arena's ancient level is still preserved and part of the podium has been brought to light.

The building method, with the monument partly leaning against the hill, partly built, is common to other amphitheatres from republican (Sutri, Pompei, etc.) to imperial times (Cagliari).

The amphitheatre of Otricoli is very similar to that of Lucera, dating to the Augustan age; to this period we can also date the masonry in reticulate work, with no evident phase of reconstruction.



Black and white mosaic, representing Ulisse's ship, now in the Sala Rotonda at the Vatican Museums



Statue of Juno, found during the excavations, now in the Vatican Museums

The baths are the only ancient monument certainly mentioned by epigraphic sources, with regard to their construction and restorations. Built in the 2nd century A.D. by *L. Iulius Iulianus*, *quattuorvir* quoted on a dedicatory inscription reused in Squarti palace, they were restored and enlarged (as winter baths) in 341 A.D. by *C. Cluvius Martinus* and *M. Caesolius Saturninus*; they were restored again in the late 4th or 5th century A.D. by *C. Volusius Victor*. They stand on an artificial level ground, settled in roman times to carry the waters of the brook of S. Vittore in an underground conduit. The ruins, that should always have been in view, were explored during the Vatican excavations in early 1780. You, can see still the so-called octagonal hall, partly preserved, built of concrete work faced with bricks.

The four wider sides alternate with the four narrower ones, opened by niches, doors and main entrance.

The octagonal hall's covering belongs to the "shell" type. From this room comes the polychrome mosaic now kept in the Sala Rotonda at the Vatican Museums, representing in the centre a Medusa's head and in two bands of eight parts each struggle scenes between Greeks and Centaurs, Tritons, Nereids and sea monsters.

In a room close to the octagonal hall they also found a black and white mosaic representing Ulysses lashed to the mast of his ship; also this piece is kept in the Sala Rotonda at the Vatican Museums.

In 1780 G. Pannini, with skilled workers, removed from their finding place the mosaics, cut in 108 pieces, stuck up on a travertine lining, and carried to the Tiber to be embarked on two "navicelli" (little boats) and taken to Rome, like the other sculptures and materials found in Otricoli.

In the octagonal hall, a few traces of two barrel, vaulted rooms remain, at the back of the best preserved rear wall. Nearby, there is a round hall, about 9 m. in diameter, built in *opus latericium* (brick work), included in a square body, on whose external wall traces are left of a *signinum* facing ("cocciopesto"). A large basin, built in the same *signinum* work, has been recently found and filled again with earth. On account of the building technique and mosaics' style, the baths date from the middle of the 2nd century A.D., with later restorations.



Partial view of the vaulted rooms on the upper level



Reticulate walls

The “big substructure” represents one of the most imposing and typical monuments in Otricoli, amongst those left. Like most part of Otricoli’s buildings, it is built in reticulate work. Now it looks almost the same that it was at the end of the 18th century, except for the central forepart and the set of little rooms on the left side, now partly destroyed.

The building, drawn by Pannini with some arbitrary supplement, according to Guattani belonged to some “ancient barracks”. Actually this edifice was built in order to hold the ground, originally (before the filling) sloping fast to the brook of S. Vittore; so it used the upper level ground and formed at the same time a monumental front de towards Rome. The building, 80 m. long, is part of a big terrace, probably belonging to a shrine similar to *Jupiter Anxur*’s in Terracina. It consists of 12 vaulted rooms set on two levels: the upper one has plastered reticulate walls and concrete vaults cast in wooden centring that still bear the holes for the scaffolding; the lower one, now almost impracticable, built in concrete work. Giuseppe Pannini, the draughtsman of the Vatican excavations, reconstructed the edifice in a completely symmetric way, inserting a forepart on the axis, now missing. On the contrary, according to Pietrangeli, they should be two different bodies, more or less linked up in the centre, perhaps built in various times, with differently thick walls; the left body, with thicker walls, directly holds the earth at the back, while the right body has on the back wall little inaccessible rooms, isolating it from the ground. The two parts don’t perfectly fit and their joint consists of a wall, about 2 m. in its turn wide, in its turn made of three assembled walls. The

substructure rooms are communicating through round arches.

The side near the theatre shows a range of arches, downhill on two levels, uphill on one.

The imposing edifice dates from the late republican period, and it should carry a public building, maybe a temple, of which nothing is left; it would be an attractive theory that the “Jupiter from Otricoli”’s famous head, found during the excavation campaign in 1781-82, came from here; but we cannot exclude that some founds were made also elsewhere in the town. More probably the monument was consecrated to another deity, the goddess Valentia, according to some conjectures.



General view: on foreground, the parados



Upper ambulatories: pillars in squared tufa blocks

The roman theatre leans with its back on the slope of the hill, while an artificial levelling supported by substructures now hidden was set before the cavea (stands): one of these, very imposing, decorated with niches on the front, remains on the Tiber's side.

The level ground hides the underground shaft in which the S. Vittore brook flows, coming out openly downhill near the aforesaid substructure. The cavea is 79 m. in diameter, it uses the ground behind, only partly leaning on it, and on both ends is built with substructure-rooms, three on the left, one on the right; it is divided in three parts, *summa* (highest part), *media* (middle) and *ima* (lowest).

Two partly visible ambulatories run behind the stands. The lower one with its vault in some points collapsed, is still left on both ends: on the right you see the *parodos* (entrance) to the stage built with big tufa blocks. Through some openings, only one of which still visible, the ambulatory joined the cavea, here without steps. From the ambulatory, open outside, with a concrete vault cast in wooden centring, and reticulate walls, the radial rooms supporting the cavea lead off, fanwise set, with a slightly tapered plan.

Only a sector of the upper ambulatory is left, barrel-vaulted; the exterior perimeter is made of a containment wall in reticulate work, reinforced by pillars in squared tufa blocks, in accordance with a kind of masonry also used in Gubbio. The doors opening on the ambulatory have horizontal lintels surmounted by discharging plugged arches, and lead upstairs to the highest stands where the *porticus in summa gradinatione* stood.

On the whole, the monument can be compared to the augustan theatre in Ostia.



A Pompeii bakery. Penn State Libraries Pictures Collection

THE ROMAN HAND-DRIVEN GRAIN MILL IN THE FLORIDI GARDEN

The Romans constructed mills for use in agriculture, mining and construction. Around the 3rd century BC, the first mills were used to grind grain. Mills became an important part of the Roman economy, decreasing the reliance on human labour, and dramatically increasing productivity and efficiency in many sectors of the Roman economy. In agriculture, mills allowed the production of large quantities of flour which was essential to bread production. The work in the bakery began with the weighing of the wheat, then the wheat was

placed in the mills by the bakers' boys (pistoires). The millstones were made of lava stone (catillus), a material that left no tooth-damaging residue in the flour. They had an hourglass shape driven by long wooden beams, and a smaller conical element (meta) was inserted inside them. These millstones were operated by slaves or donkeys, who gave them a rotating motion in order to grind the grain introduced at the top of the millstones. Sifting of the flour and Bread-making then followed.



BREAD OVEN IN POMPEI

In the foreground the large millstones. In the background the large oven made of terracotta bricks (*opus latericium*). The floor of the ovens was paved with basaltic lava slabs, the same used to pave the streets.



Young men dressed as ancient Romans operate a grain mill (Maiuri 1932)

THE 17TH CENTURY OIL MILL IN THE KITCHEN OF THE TORRE OLIVARA GUESTHOUSE

The oil mill consisted of a millstone usually operated by a donkey or mule, and two wooden presses operated manually through a monaco, i.e. a wooden pole moved by men. The bar was tied to an iron board with a very robust rope, which allowed the presses to roll and press the bags containing the ground olives, thus causing the oil to filter through



Engraving by Giovanni Stradano (Jan Van Der Straet) (1523–1605) commissioned by Luigi Alamanni Florentine nobleman and erudite (1558–1603) from Museo Galileo, Florence

