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Form and Meaning in Etruscan Ritual Space

Vedia E. Izzet

Monumental sanctuaries in Central Italy, more specifically South Etruria, appear suddenly in the middle of the first millennium BC. *Ancient Greek and Roman authors wrote about the Etruscans, and the Etruscans themselves produced a mass of material evidence which they buried in their tombs, and which drew on Classical elements including mythology. As a result of the wealth and breadth of archaeological material, this society provides much, so far unexplored, scope for cognitive investigation. Here my concern is why sanctuaries emerged in the late sixth century, and why the highly codified temple architecture of South Etruria took the form that it did.*

Monumental temples appear suddenly in South Etruria in the late sixth century BC. Previous studies seeking to explain this development have concentrated on the temples and sanctuaries as complete, fully-formed phenomena, associated with the establishment and maintenance of boundaries. What these studies ignore, however, is the way in which the physicality of the temple is concerned with articulating the same message. Previous approaches have failed to engage with the temple as a building which was meaningfully constructed, viewed, and visited. The decorative and formal elements of the temple must be incorporated into the debate for a more complete understanding of the rise of formal sanctuaries in Etruria. In a move towards such an approach, this article will examine the material remains of Etruscan temples as part of the meaningfully-constructed Etruscan built environment. Taking the expression of boundaries as a starting point, it will examine the ways in which Etruscan craftsmen and builders manipulated the materials in their hands in order to express boundedness.

The archaeological remains of Etruscan sanctuaries should not be considered *en masse* as reflecting meaning in a passive manner simply because they exist. Nor should they be seen as symptomatic, or symbolic, of overarching social or cultural changes in Etruria, a view in which the temple becomes the by-product of a social phenomenon. Instead, the stress here is on the planning and construction of temple architecture, with all the choices involved in how this should be accomplished, in the deployment of style, form and decoration. We can thus acknowledge the intentionality in the construction of the temples which survive today. At every stage, alternatives (both well-established and innovatory) were available to the constructors, and decisions were made on how to proceed. Every element in temple architecture was made deliberately, and, equally, the method of construction was intentionally selected. This, of course, applies to all material culture and to all aspects of the Etruscan ritual environment, from the location of the temple in the landscape to the details of the decoration of the gutter tiles. The manner in which objects or buildings are made or decorated is never arbitrary, but results from the choices and selections made by craftsmen in the process of production. They exist because they have meaning, and they occur in the forms that they do because those forms have significance.

At the outset we must acknowledge a number of problems inherent in the material available in trying to tackle this problem. The first is that not many temples and sanctuaries actually survive. At

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Cerveteri, it has been suggested that eight sanctuaries existed in the urban area (Mengarelli 1935; though see Nardi 1989); of those, only two have been investigated and published: the supposed Temple of Hera at the Vigna Parrocchiale and the small Manganello sanctuary (Mengarelli 1935; 1936); a third is currently under excavation at Sant'Antonio (Izzet 2000). If the numbers from Cerveteri are anything to go by, we have a very small sample of the original whole. A similar picture emerges at Orvieto, where only two of the nine temples noted have been excavated (Colonna 1985, 81). Accordingly, since we have very few examples from which to extrapolate wider trends, questions of the representativeness of our sample must always be borne in mind. The sample size could be increased by the inclusion of sites from Latium (for instance Cornell 1995, 108–12; Rendeli 1990; Smith 1996; Torelli 1990 (1981), 165–70), but this would incorporate sites from a different cultural milieu, thus adding to the difficulties of assessing representativeness. In addition to small sample size, the few Etruscan examples that do survive span several centuries, from the sixth-century BC Piazza d'Armi at Veii to the fourth-century BC Ara della Regina at Tarquinia (Stefani 1944–5, 228–90; Romanelli 1948, 238–70).

The second problem inherent in the material lies in the nature, rather than the quantity, of the evidence. Etruscan temples often underwent several changes and renovations, so that, for instance, the Belvedere Temple at Orvieto has at least two sets of architectural terracottas (Andrén 1940, 169; Colonna 1985, 82; Riis 1941, 100–101), as does Temple B at Pyrgi (Colonna 1970, 402–5). This is a particular problem when considering temples excavated earlier in this century, before systematic excavation practices were adopted on Etruscan sites. There are, in fact, few sites which have been excavated recently, giving us very little information from modern techniques such as stratigraphic or palaeobotanical data (notable exceptions to this are Pyrgi: Colonna 1988–89, 131–8, 233–4; Punta della Vipera: Torelli 1967; and the ongoing investigations at Sant'Antonio at Cerveteri: Izzet 2000). Finally, though it is easy to talk of an 'Etruscan Temple', no two surviving examples are the same, and none fits Vitruvius' description exactly. The Belvedere Temple at Orvieto, though close to the Vitruvian model, is wider at the back than at the front, so that the columns are not aligned with the cella walls as prescribed (Pernier & Stefani 1925, 159). The record we have, in other words, is somewhat fragmented, and this cannot be ignored during enquiries into the nature and form of Etruscan sanctuaries. The problem of restricted evidence of all kinds is not new (Morris 1992, 11); the greatest danger being to cobble together the few sources to make one scrambled example, what Morris has called a 'composite' picture, which is temporally static. The alternative 'one-off study' is wholly inappropriate when trying to explain the emergence of a broad cultural phenomenon. At the cost of ignoring temporal and regional variation in the later history of Etruscan sanctuaries, I will draw together the evidence from the different sites available, using the extant examples to provide sharp focus within a much broader cultural picture. It is only through examination of the individual examples together that an attempt at capturing the more complete picture can be made. Given that we are dealing with the dramatic transition from the absence to the presence of built sanctuaries, the general similarities between them justify such an approach. In addition, although later examples will be incorporated, an attempt will be made to concentrate on the earlier sanctuaries. The fragmented nature of our information should not restrict enquiries (Morris 1992, 15), and what follows is an attempt to see how far we can take the evidence we do have in order to understand the development of sanctuaries in the sixth century, and in particular, to understand why they took the shape they did.

Early Etruscan ritual: the problem

The late sixth century BC saw the beginning of an intensive period of sanctuary foundation in southern Etruria: it was at this time that large sanctuaries were first built, usually comprising at least one temple in a bounded sacred area, and associated with an altar and a votive deposit. Most significantly, these sanctuary complexes quickly developed, and were to retain, a standardized architectural form.

Previously, ritual had taken place in sites that were selected according to the natural landscape. These can be categorized according to physical geography such as lakes, caves or mountain tops, and are identified archaeologically by votive deposits (for the best summary see Edlund 1987). A striking example of the first type is the Lago degli Idoli at Monte Falterona, about thirty kilometres east of Florence (Colonna 1960, 589–90; Dennis 1883, 107–11; Edlund 1987, 56–7; Fortuna & Giovannoni 1975). The site is now destroyed, but yielded one of the richest collections of votive offerings in Etruria. This included an impressive collection of bronze figurines (Brendel 1978, 225–6, fig. 152; Richardson 1983, for example 292–3, pl. 204, fig. 692; Riis 1941, 135), as

well as anatomical terracottas, coinage, weapons and plentiful *aes rude*. The site could have been the centre of a healing cult, as indicated not only by the presence of the anatomical votives, but also reproductions of actual suffering and disease: one figure, for instance, has a wounded chest (Dennis 1883, 108). The total number of objects exceeded 600, indicating the considerable popularity of the sanctuary, which remained in use from the sixth until the fourth century BC. Despite this popularity, evident both in terms of the numbers of votives and the longevity of the site, there was no associated structure.

Monte Soracte is possibly the most famous mountain-top ritual site in Etruria, owing no doubt in part to Horace's evocation (Edlund 1987, 46–9; Horace *Odes* 1, 9). Other literary sources tell us about a cult of the *Hirpi* on the mountain (Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis* 7. 19), and the poisonous gases and fumes emanating from the site. This is corroborated by archaeological survey which has noted sulphur fissures on the mountainside (Jones 1963, 126). Pottery indicates usage from the Neolithic onwards (Edlund 1987, 49), but although there seems therefore to be evidence of cultic activity on the site from pre-Etruscan times, there is no trace of any sort of temple or sanctuary building.

These two examples serve to show the existence of cultic practice in Central Italy from the Neolithic onwards. The locations for these activities were determined by the selection of special places in the landscape — hills, springs, lakes and caves. These natural features were the setting for ritual action. Religious ceremonies and worship did not need a humanly-made environment in which to take place. This changed dramatically in the second half of the sixth century, when we see the construction in South Etruria of buildings specifically for religious practice. For the first time in Central Italy, sanctuaries — architectural spaces specifically built for ritual practice — emerge and, along with them, codified temple architecture.

This is not to discount completely the possibility of earlier buildings which were used for religious purposes. Sanctuaries and temples may have precedents from before the sixth century BC. It has been argued, for instance, that the seventh century building at Roselle served a religious function (Bocci Pacini 1975, 21–33; Colonna 1985, 53–6). A similar instance has been found at Tarquinia, where ritual action, including burial, has been demonstrated within a building on the settlement plain (Bonghi Jovino 1986, 89–94 & 98–105; Bonghi Jovino & Chiaramonte Treré 1986; 1997, 164–94). Perhaps the most convincing suggestion for an early sanctuary is the 'palace' at Murlo. This monumental complex, with its perpetually ambiguous status and function, is often seen as a precursor to the built sanctuaries of Etruria. The suggestion is particularly convincing, given the unequal tripartite division of the building at the end of the 60 m by 60 m courtyard, foreshadowing the *cella* of the Etruscan temple (Colonna 1985, 53; 1986, 423–4; Edlund 1987, 91; Prayon 1986, 195; Stopponi 1985, 64–154). Even in this instance, however, the classification of sanctuary does not fit easily. The presence of quotidian paraphernalia, specifically dining equipment (Rathje 1994, 98; Spivey & Stoddart 1990, 73), and the excavator's arguments for a political meeting place of the putative Etruscan League (Phillips 1993, 80–81), as well as those for the domestic residence of a powerful leader (Spivey & Stoddart 1990, 73; Torelli 1990 (1981), 174–81; 1983), add to the uncertainty in assigning the complex an exclusively ritual function. In fact, the confusion of modern scholars and the continued debate over the function of the complex may not be accidental, but may rather be indicative of ancient ambiguity towards the building's function. In a wider context, Torelli and Ruiz have suggested that the complex belongs to a type of political formation involving extra-urban residence-cum-ritual structures in evidence from Iberia, and Central and Southern Europe (Ruiz 1998, 192–3). In so doing, they acknowledge the overlapping functions of the building, and the ambiguity between ritual and non-ritual practices enacted in the complex.

Despite the very likely religious or ritualistic function of these buildings, it would be difficult to classify them as temples or sanctuaries in the same sense as the complexes from the late sixth century BC and later. The multiplicity of uses and functions of the earlier structures discussed above is replaced by the specificity of ritual function in the later sanctuary complexes. These share a codified and uniform style of religious architecture in the form of the temple, an external altar or podium for sacrifices, a *temenos* wall which surrounds the sanctuary, and the presence of votive deposits (Colonna 1985, 23–7). At the same time, it must be stressed that such a definitive list is not ubiquitous in the archaeological record, and that the decorated temples were a predominantly South Etrurian phenomenon. The specific features we can call typical of Etruscan sanctuaries emerged in the second half of the sixth century, in marked contrast to the ambiguity in the physical location of cult of the preceding centuries. Attempts to explain the sudden appearance of this phenomenon run par-

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allel to intellectual trends in Classical archaeology in general. What follows is a brief summary of the six most influential approaches to sanctuaries in Etruria.

Early Etruscan ritual: the solutions

Six former treatments of Etruscan sanctuaries form the framework for the analysis presented below. The approaches and their conclusions provide a breadth and depth to the study of Etruscan ritual architecture, which will be integrated into an analysis of temple form.

1. Perhaps the most prevalent approach remains the art-historical. Here the main emphasis is on the objects found in votive deposits, or on the decoration of the temple. Sanctuaries are seen largely in terms of the 'art' that was found in them. This has been the fate of one sanctuary in particular, the Portonaccio at Veii, though others, such as Pyrgi (Pairault Massa 1992, 72–5) or Orvieto (Riis 1941, 96–107), have been drawn into similar discussions. The discovery at Veii of the famous acroterial sculptures in 1916 refocused attention on this uniquely Etruscan form of production, at a time when the independence of 'The Etruscans' was a central issue in Italian nationalism (Pallottino 1991, 12–14). The importance of these haughty cultural icons is evident in the continued emphasis they still receive: no work on Etruscan art is complete without reference to these astonishing feats of coroplastic genius. Most recently, Spivey talks of the 'archaic smile', 'breeze-blown drapery' and 'Ionian profile' of the so-called Apollo; a little earlier, Brendel argued, if rather optimistically, for a 'School of Vulca' in a manner unmistakably reminiscent of John Beazley's work on Athenian vase painters (Beazley 1942; 1956; Brendel 1978, 237–8; Gantz 1974–75; Spivey 1997, 66; Torelli 1990 (1981), 170). As well as the emphasis on artistic value, a further element of the art-historical tradition is to trace the origins of certain styles or techniques. So, for instance, 'Greek workmanship provided the initial impetus' for architectural terracotta decoration in Etruria (Spivey 1997, 60; see also Colonna 1986, 433). In such approaches sanctuaries are important as repositories for *objets d'art*, with the objects themselves overriding the contexts in which they were found. These enquiries have the potential to tell us a great deal about the objects themselves; they make no claim to explain the emergence of the contexts in which the objects were found.

2. Linked to this school of thought is that of architectural history, where use of the Roman writer Vitruvius is most prominent (*De Architectura* 4, 7). In an architectural treatise dedicated to Octavian (later to become the Emperor Augustus), Vitruvius described, and thereby defined, the Tuscan Order for the Romans. His definitions still inform modern accounts of Etruscan temples. This material will not be used here, partly because Vitruvius' account has been so expertly discussed elsewhere (for instance, Andrén 1940: xxxv; Barker & Rasmussen 1998, 219; Boëthius 1955–56; 1978; Colonna 1985, 60; Knell 1983; Lake 1935, esp. 89–92; Pfiffig 1975, 55; Prayon 1986, 104; Spivey 1997, 62); partly because his account of Etruscan architecture is descriptive rather than analytical or explanatory; and partly because, as a Roman, Vitruvius was writing several centuries after the buildings and events he discusses, and as a non-Etruscan, his account is likely to be 'unbalanced', or written for ulterior motives. (For the problems of using Roman sources for earlier periods, see Beard *et al.* 1998, 4–9; for the use of Roman sources for Etruscan ritual in particular, see Dumézil 1970, 661, 626).

In architectural histories of Etruria, the origins of Etruscan temples are sought in indigenous domestic architecture, as a continuous local development. The progression, discussed above, is seen as running through the mud-brick house at Roselle, through the complexes at Murlo and Acquarossa, culminating in the monumental sanctuary (Colonna 1985, 53; 1986, 433). These enquiries document Etruscan ritual practice from at least the Iron Age, tracing the history of the physical location of cult practice. The emphasis on the indigenous roots of Etruscan ritual architecture is important in highlighting issues of origin and influences on Etruscan architectural forms. Precedent alone, however, is not enough to explain temple form; questions of why such local models were maintained and why other features were imposed still need to be addressed. The answers to such questions must lie in the selection of forms in the first place, and in an examination of those forms.

3. Moving away from the physical details of sanctuary architecure, a broader stance is taken by those attempting to write a socio-political history of Etruria. Mario Torelli, for example, sees the dedication of sanctuaries as an explicitly anti-aristocratic gesture (Torelli 1990 (1981), 181). He and others emphasize the importance of tyrants in the foundation of temples, in the transition away from regal power (Pairault Massa 1992, 60–75). This interpretation is given unusually strong backing by the inscription on the gold plaques from Pyrgi claiming that Thefarie Velianas,

ruler of Cerveteri, had dedicated the sanctuary, perhaps as an anniversary celebration (Colonna 1985, 134; Cornell 1995, 147; Pairault Massa 1992, 68; Pallottino 1964). In these cases, sanctuaries are integrated into historical accounts, taking their emergence in the first place for granted.

4. Another historical approach has been to see the development of sanctuaries as an obvious component of an emerging city state. Based loosely on the criteria for urbanization outlined by Gordon Childe (Childe 1950, though the development of sanctuaries is not listed by him), this argument sees the development of sanctuaries as part of what being a city is all about, and so a natural part of the process of urbanization. For Colonna, the creation of an acropolis, with a sanctuary or sacred area, defines a city in the political sense. He sees the '*appropriazione del sacro*' as crucial for the aggregation and equilibrium of the urban community (Colonna 1986, 433). These approaches are based on the binding quality of ritual as a mechanism for urban cohesion; the appropriateness of the specific form of the Etruscan temple in expressing this is taken as given.

5. More recently, influences from other areas of archaeological research have affected approaches to Etruscan sanctuaries. Two in particular have been influential, and been developed further by Etruscologists. The first is the notion of peer-polity interaction (Renfrew & Cherry 1986). Through the mediation of Snodgrass' work on Greek sanctuaries, competition between Etruscan city states in Central Italy has been analyzed by Rendeli (Snodgrass 1986; Rendeli 1990). From a diachronic survey of temple size he has shown that inter-state competition does indeed seem to be a major component in the construction of Etruscan temples (see also Torelli 1990 (1981), 169). Although this may account for the increased size of temples in the early fifth century BC, it does not explain the choice of the temple form.

6. The other new approach has again entered through Classical archaeology. This is the work of Andrea Zifferero, based on that of de Polignac for Greek sanctuaries (de Polignac 1995; Zifferero 1995; see also Nardi 1989). Zifferero shows convincingly that the location of temples was very strategic: temples and sanctuaries, along with cemeteries, were located to serve as 'ritual halos' (Riva & Stoddart 1996, 91, 99–100) to distinguish between urban and non-urban space, and also between the territories of different cities. Sanctuaries were sited at the frontiers of territories, acting as the focus of conflicts over territorial control, and their resolution (Zifferero 1995, 333). In addition, sanctuaries were regarded as a '*zona franca*' for exchange and interaction between cities (again argued for Greece by de Polignac 1994; 1995, 5–11; for Etruria see also Rendeli 1993, 357–60). In a similar way, the new sanctuaries are seen by others as points of Etruscan interaction and exchange with Greece and Phoenicia (Cornell 1995, 108–12; Cristofani 1983, 119–22; Spivey & Stoddart 1990, 123–5).

The interpretative approaches discussed above generally share two characteristics. The first is that they are all, in some way, concerned with marking difference. This is perhaps even applicable to the art and architectural histories, where the concern with origins can be linked with the expression of cultural difference. It is still more explicit in the other approaches, where sanctuaries are shown to mark differences between socio-political systems, between individual cities, and between different territories. The concern with marking boundaries will be taken as the starting point of my analysis below.

The second characteristic, shared by all but the art and architectural histories, is a lack of interest in what the temples looked like. Concern with the size of a temple, or its location, overrides the details in the construction of the temples. The links between these details and the 'meanings' which they carry are not explored. For such approaches, it seems that it is not really necessary to know what a temple looked like (for instance de Polignac 1995, and the original 1984 French edition, contains no illustrations), or rather, the appearance of a temple is taken so much for granted that it raises no comment whatsoever.

In the following section, I will examine the form and decoration of Etruscan temples in an attempt to re-integrate the physical specificity of the temple into these cultural explanations centred around boundedness. Rather than seeing the approaches outlined above as competing and conflicting, I see them as unified in negotiating difference. Further, the integration of temple form and decoration is crucial for our readings of Etruscan ritual landscapes and the wider cultural context of sanctuary foundation.

Etruscan temple form

The physical appearance of the temple is the starting point of the analysis which follows. The specifics of the temple's physical form were deeply implicated in the creation and transference of meaning. Form and decoration, usually the domain of the architec-

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tural- or art-historian, must be integrated into a broader cultural understanding of Etruscan sanctuaries. Though this has been attempted before (Pairault Massa 1992; Spivey 1997), the means by which the physical form of the temple and its decoration transmit meaning in synchrony have not been confronted satisfactorily, largely because too strict a distinction has been drawn between form, decoration, and cultural meaning.

Etruscan temple architecture was designed to create and maintain physical, cultural and ontological differences. This analysis is based on three interrelated presuppositions about the creation and transmission of meaning in material culture. The first two concern the production and the reception of objects, and so involve the creation of meaning in, and by, objects (in this case expressing difference). The third concerns the interrelatedness of the different spheres in which one particular object can operate simultaneously.

By beginning with the details of temple construction, and concentrating on the physicality of objects, it is possible to build up layers of meaning at which the temple operates, from the materially specific to the cultural. Objects (and temples) are the result of a process of production, a process which is deeply enmeshed in culture. Examining objects and their details (such as form and style) acknowledges the choices and selections made by producers, and so the cultural weight of production. The importance of agency in the production of objects (Gell 1998; and similarly Shanks' 'primacy of production': Shanks 1999, 18–19), combined with a stress on the physicality and visibility of artefacts (Buchli 1995, 189–90; Jenks 1995; Heywood & Sandywell 1999) imbues them with power to transmit, absorb and create meaning. Such concentration on style, form and technique does not signal a return to an art-historical fetishization of objects. On the contrary, acknowledging the interplay between culture and producer gives objects an active cultural presence.

Similarly, the importance of seeing and being seen is essential in the experience of material culture, and so in the creation and reception of its meaning, be it object, building or landscape (Barrett 1994; Bradley 1998; Tilley 1994, 12). Again, this is not to argue for a universality in the human experience of forms or styles; given the importance of the producer of the object as a cultural agent, this is no longer possible. The creation of meaning in objects comes from two directions: the producer and the consumer; the meeting place for the two is the object itself, or in this case the temple. In other words, the culturally-informed cultural actions of the producer impregnates the object he or she is creating with knowledge (Gell's 'magic of production': Gell 1992; 1998, 49–50). Simultaneously, the knowledgeable consumer (Jenks' 'artful viewer': Jenks 1995, 10, or the sanctuary visitor) reads, extrapolates and creates meaning, and so posits creative agency back on the object (Gell 1992, 51–2). In this sense, style and form are more than a means of communication (Weissner 1990) between far more knowing human agents, or even a 'register' of social conventions (Whitley 1991, 4–5). Rather, as the object is the point of interaction between the producer and consumer, style and form are part of the meaning itself. In addition to the symbolic messages which accrete around objects in a sociological sense, where objects are manipulated in power strategies (for instance, Bourdieu 1977), the ways in which objects are made — their style (Hodder 1990, 45) — is fundamental to the meanings they embody.

The third basis for the following analysis of Etruscan sanctuaries concerns the multiplicity of levels on which objects and artefacts operate. Material culture creates, bridges and transcends physical and cognitive categories. Thus an architectural detail, for example a terracotta plaque, not only marks the structural difference between the wall and the roof of the temple, but also spatial differences between inside and outside, the political differences between territories, and the ontological difference between the sacred and the profane. In addition, the choice of style, material, and location of the plaque are all bound up with such differences, which are expressed simultaneously. In such a case, the plaque is not merely reflecting or highlighting a broader cultural difference (say, territorial); it is instrumental in creating the difference itself. In this sense, examination of form and style allows objects to act more than metaphorically (Tilley 1999). Material culture slips between and among ontologically differing and interrelated spheres (political, religious, social, spatial, structural) in creating meaning, rather than being placed in the linear and hierarchical relationships that metaphor implies. Material culture hovers between the cognitive and material (Davey 1999, 13). Thus the temple, its builders and worshippers (and interpreters) collude in a reciprocal symbiotic relationship in manufacturing meanings on many different levels. Meaning is reflected back and forth between the material elements of the temple and the cognitive spheres which are embedded in it, each augmenting and supplementing the other.

Once we have established a scheme in which

meanings are transferred, and can slip between cognitive spheres, it is necessary to return to the function of the temple as a religious building. Though the details of the temple architecture are deployed in order to articulate difference, this emphasis on the difference between spheres draws attention to the function of a temple as a bridge between spheres. By highlighting the gulf between the sacred and the profane, the temple draws these two categories into dialogue, and allows passage between them. When considering temple architecture in particular, the articulation of difference need not exclude the potential for transgressing those differences; indeed it allows negotiation between them.

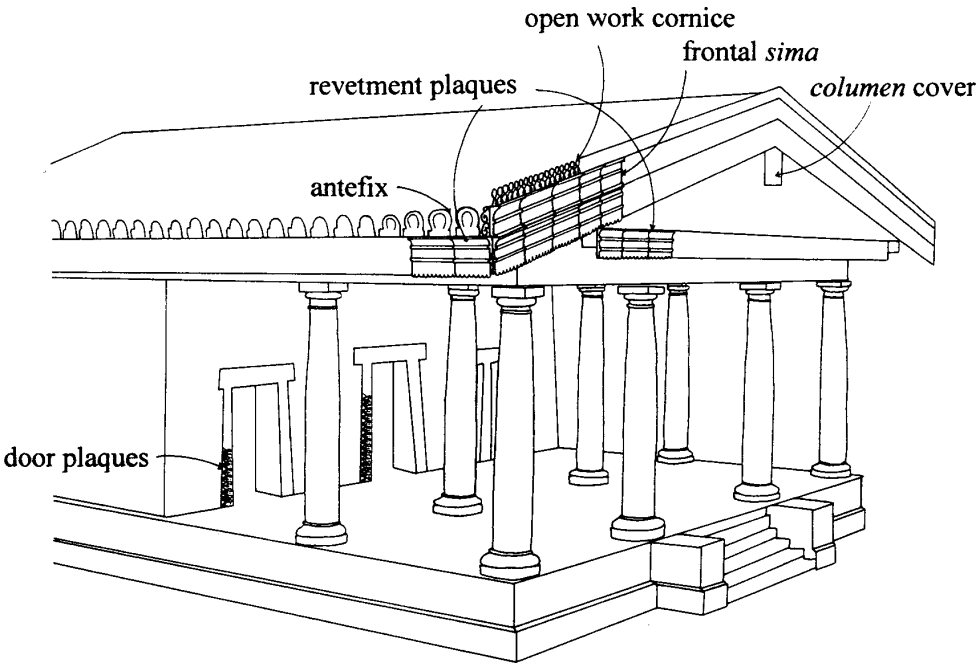

Figure 1. *Reconstruction of a typical Etruscan temple. (After Colonna 1985, 50, 63.)*

It is precisely through the elision of these categories of difference within the physical form and style of the building that the efficacy of the temple in negotiating them becomes so great. In tracing this negotiation, it is useful to think in terms of two distinct, but inter-related, aspects of the temple: decoration and form.

Temple decoration

When considering decoration, it is important to distinguish (for analysis at least) between the subject and content of the decoration, the manner in which it is executed, and its location within the temple's decorative scheme. The Etruscan temple was encrusted with decoration, from the bottom up (Fig. 1). It is now well established, through the work of anthropologists, architects and archaeologists (e.g. Bachelard 1994 (1958); Dissanayake 1992; Douglas 1984 (1966); Hodder 1982; Lefebvre 1991 (1974); Parker Pearson & Richards 1994), that when separate categories of any sort are under stress in some way, there is an accompanying cultural emphasis on the points of interaction between those categories. In other words, there seems to be a reinforcement of those threatened categories. In material culture, the reaction to stress takes the form of elaborated boundaries. The physical points of interaction between different types of spaces are given physical emphasis, for example through monumentalization or decoration. Differences are emphasized and sharply defined in order to preserve their integrity.

a) Temple bases

Etruscan temples were placed on discrete bases. Like the Greek temple, the 'house of the god' was separated clearly from the ground on which it stood. Unlike the straight steps of the Greek stylobate and stereobate, however, the Etruscan temple sat on a base which was moulded and carefully shaped with convex and concave curves, the so-called Etruscan round, and its variations into points and angles (Shoe 1965, 14). The alternating *tori*, *fasces*, and 'hawk's beak' mouldings were carved into the blocks which fit together almost seamlessly (Fig. 2). Within Etruria itself, the moulded bases of only two temples survive.[1] These are the Belvedere Sanctuary at Orvieto and the fourth-century phase of the Ara della Regina at Tarquinia. A third is mentioned from Roselle (Andrén 1940, xxxix, note 20; Dennis 1883, 229; Lake 1935, 147). Of the Belvedere Sanctuary, only the moulded blocks, which were not found *in situ*, survive (Andrén 1940, xxxviii; Minto 1934, 78); in the Ara della Regina, the base is made up of rectilinear steps, surmounted by one large, and one narrow

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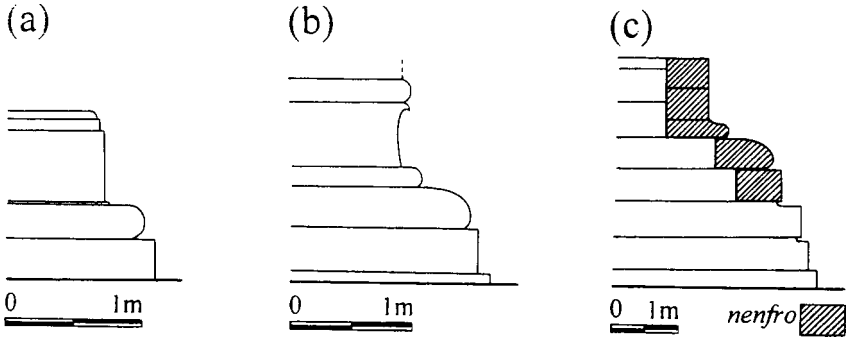

Figure 2. *Profiles of: a) the altar from Punta della Vipera (after Torelli 1967, 333); b) the altar at Vignanello (after Colonna 1985, 24); and c) the base of the Ara della Regina temple at Tarquinia (after Colonna 1985, 73).*

curved stone 'cushion' (Fig. 2 (c); Romanelli 1948, 242–8; Shoe 1965, 89–90). A better idea of the bases may be gained from the surviving altars in Etruria (Shoe 1965, 20), such as those at Pieve a Socana, Punta della Vipera, Vignanello, and Marzabotto, where the alternating bands are particularly elaborate (Fig. 2 (a) & (b)) (Brizzolara *et al*. 1980, 105–6; Brizio 1891; Colonna 1985, 24, 164–7; Mansuelli 1972; Torelli 1967, 332). Both sets of bases are reminiscent of statue bases, so that the religious is seemingly placed on a pedestal, physically raised above, and separated from, the quotidian (Shoe 1965, 21). In both the altars and the temple podia, the interplay of light and shadow caused by the varying undulations in the interconnecting surfaces of the mouldings would have drawn the eye to this area, emphasizing it visually. At both temple sites, the blocks of the base were faced with a different stone from the rest of the temple; this stone was *nenfro* (Fig. 2(c)) (for recent excavations at Cerveteri see Izzet 2000). This is significant enough in itself in drawing attention to this part of the temple, and alerting us to the fact that something is at stake here. *Nenfro* is also paler, and is a finer-grained stone than the surrounding tuff, and so would have stood out starkly against the rest of the temple. So, not only is difference stressed by the act of using a different stone *per se*, but also in the specific choice of stone. Such details are integrated into the emphasis of difference, setting the religious apart, from the foundations upwards.

b) Terracotta plaques

Perhaps the most idiosyncratic element of the Etruscan temple was the mould-made terracotta plaques which adorned them (Andrén 1940; Shoe 1965, 27–9). These highly decorative slabs of terracotta were moulded and painted, and attached to the temple by bronze nails through holes in the terracotta (for example at Pyrgi: Colonna 1970, 710, fig. 550). There were two principal rows of plaques, both running all the way around the temple (see the reconstructions in Andrén 1940, pl. CCXLIII; Boëthius 1978, 59–63; Colonna 1985, 63). The first row was at the point at which the walls of the temples ended and met the overhanging pitched roof (Fig. 3). Here there was a single row of revetment plaques, each divided into three discrete zones by a half-round or roll moulding: an *anthemion* at the bottom, usually taking up about half of the plaque, a *fascia*, and a concave cornice decorated with tongues or strigils (Andrén 1940, cciii; Colonna 1985, 63). The whole plaque was moulded and painted. The *anthemion* was usually decorated with a lotus-palmette design, resulting in a scolloped lower edge to the plaque, while the *fascia* was restricted to geometric patterns such as lozenges, zig-zags, horizontal lines or a *guilloche* (Andrén 1940, cciii). The cornice was almost always a deep, ridged strigil moulding, painted in alternating colours (for example at Pyrgi, Temple A: Colonna 1970, 346–62; see Shoe 1965, 27–9 for Etruscan terminology).

The second row of plaques ran along the outside edge of the overhanging pitched roof (Fig. 1). Here a row of plaques similar to those described above was surmounted by a row of antefixes along the side-walls of the temple, and a row of frontal simas at either end (for example on Temple B at Pyrgi: Colonna 1970, 362–71; see also Andrén 1940, pl. ccxliii; Colonna 1985, 63). The frontal sima was made up of two parts bounded by small half rounds: a flat *fascia* and a convex cornice, ending in a thin beak, decorated with a series of strigils (Shoe 1965, 211–15). The sima was surmounted by an open-work cornice or cresting, again usually lotus and palmette (Andrén 1940, clxxxviii; Colonna 1985, 63).

The details of the decoration serve to emphasize the stress and significance given to temple decoration. These continuous friezes of plaques went all the way round the temple, in repeated motifs and sets of patterns. The obtuse angles of the terminal plaques made the plaques face the viewer on the ground (Andrén 1940, clxxxvi). This results in a frieze where the plaques fit together without seams or joins, producing a constant tonal effect around the monument; there is no change of rhythm or tempo in a

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frieze decorated in such a way. Through its repetitious nature, the frieze is emphatically non-narrative and as such can have no beginning and no end; it is a continuous, impenetrable whole. Unlike, say, the Parthenon frieze (Osborne 1987, 99–100), it does not invite the viewer in; rather, at the point where roof meets wall, it presents a hard, painted façade all the way round the temple, like an impenetrable halo.

c) Antefixes

The pitched roof of the Etruscan temple was made up of pantiles covered and sealed by ridged tiles. At the end of each row of ridged tiles was an antefix (Figs. 1 & 4). These were most commonly the 'tongue-framed' faces of gorgons, satyrs, the gods Achéloos and Silenus, and maenads, for example at the Portonaccio sanctuary at Veii (Andrén 1940, clxix, 5–8, pls. 1–3; Giglioli 1919). All but the last are not particularly surprising subjects, given their well attested and widely corroborated apotropaic nature throughout the range of archaeological material, down to personal ornaments, such as necklaces with the face of Achéloos (Briguet 1986, 103), which are surely the precursors of the Roman *bulla*. These protective deities have a natural position on a temple. One of the factors, however, which contributes to the apotropaism of these characters explains their selection for temples specifically, and also incorporates the maenads. This is, of course, their hybrid nature. All these creatures are, in some senses, between categories and transcend them, or, in the language of structural anthropology, they are all liminal (Leach 1976, fig. 7; for a funerary context for such figures in Etruria see Martelli 1988; Spivey & Stoddart 1990, 116–17). The gorgon is half woman, half beast; the satyr half man, half beast; Achéloos half man, half bull, and the maenad half mad, half sane. By virtue of belonging to neither and both categories simultaneously, these figures are ideal for mediating between one world and another, in this case religious and non-religious, and temple and non-temple. At the same time, their liminality challenges the boundaries of categories into which, and between which, they fall. They therefore act not only as guardians of the boundary between inside and outside the temple; they are guardians of boundedness itself.

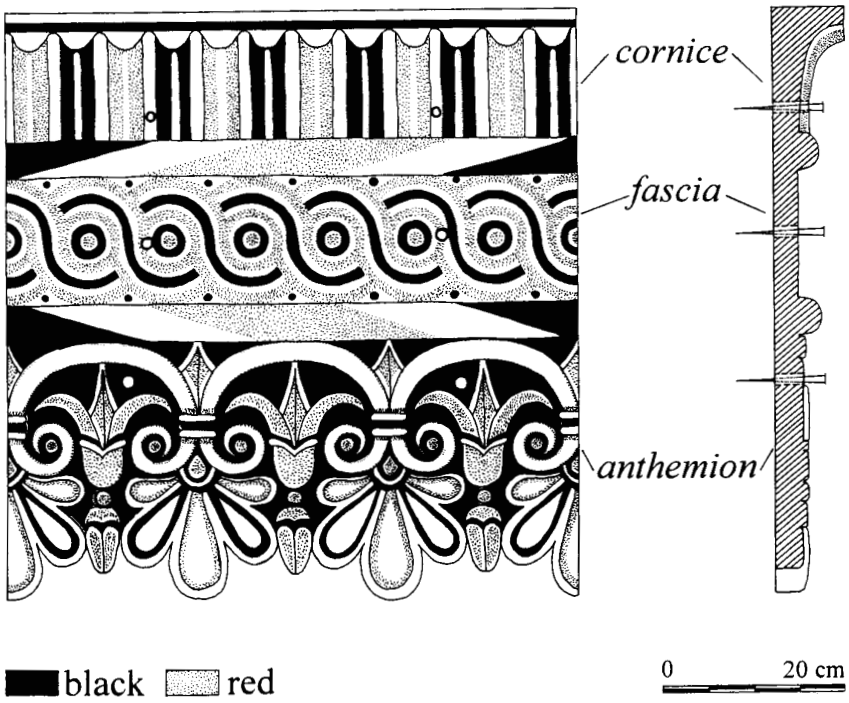

Figure 3. *Terracotta plaque from Temple B at Pyrgi. (After Colonna 1970, 346.)*

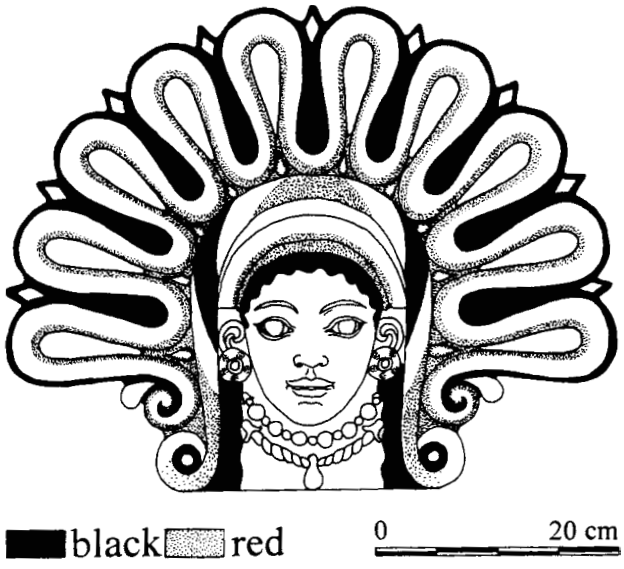

Figure 4. *Antefix in the form of a female head from Temple B at Pyrgi. (After Colonna 1970, 333.)*

The gorgon and Achéloos are particularly apposite in other ways. Achéloos, as a river god, was intrinsically linked with movement and passage and

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hence transition. As well as being a hybrid being, he was also metamorphic, with the capacity to transform himself into a bull, serpent or bull-headed man at will. The person of Achéloos challenges the categories of his identity through his transformation. This questioning of categories, and thereby definition of them, fits neatly into the broader message of the temple. The placing of gorgons acts in a different way. These images serve, in some ways, normatively. One account tells us that the formerly beautiful Medusa's transformation was a punishment for the crime of sleeping with Poseidon in the Temple of Athena, and so desecrating the sanctuary. In this sense she is an object lesson in behaviour at sanctuaries. More interesting, however, is the danger of her gaze, reputed to petrify and emasculate. It must have been a distinctly disturbing experience to catch the eye of a gorgon in the sanctuary, and, given her prominent positioning, this would have been almost unavoidable.

As well as their attested mythical attributes, which it is assumed were understood in Etruria by the Archaic Period (Spivey 1997, 56), the mode of representing these figures also implicated them in the expression of difference and in the marking-off of the temple as different. All the characters are disembodied heads, and they are all frontal, staring out from the temple. When looking up at the temple; viewers would have encountered face after face looking down on them, angled by the pitch of the roof. The frontal stare of the faces would have confronted, and engaged them; they stared straight back, like a mirror. Thus the viewer's gaze is reflected back, from the very point at which it meets the temple. The antefixes make the viewer engage with their faces, and so define the outside of the temple, and, by association, the beginning of the sacred. In this way the antefixes implicate the viewer in the creation of difference.

d) Sculpture

The last element of decoration on Etruscan temples is large-scale individual sculpture. The most complete pedimental group is from Temple A at Pyrgi dating to about 460–455 BC, which shows a scene from the Theban cycle (Colonna 1970, 48–82; dating p. 82; Pairault Massa 1992, 72–4). Spivey has argued that this choice of subject is fitting because of the elements of 'hubristic impiety', which are shown punished in the scene (Spivey 1997, 98). So, rather like the lesson of Medusa, the choice of subject is deliberately normative. The most famous group of architectural sculptures, however, is probably that from the Portonaccio sanctuary at Veii (Giglioli 1919). Here over-life-size terracotta sculptures were placed along the roof-ridge of the temple. At least four figures survive, and again the liminal nature of two of them is self-evident: Hermes and Herakles. The others, Apollo and Leto, are more difficult to explain, although Apollo's role as an arbiter may be useful in understanding his presence, if indeed these are correct assignations (the temple is no longer thought to be dedicated to Apollo: Colonna 1986, 468, cf. Andrén 1940, 1–2). Again, beyond their meanings as mythical characters involved with mediation and negotiation, the statues as objects — in other words, how the statues were made and what they looked like — are effective in transmitting a similar message. These moulded and painted figures would have crowned the temple, though their exact order and which way they faced is not clear (compare Spivey 1997, 63, fig. 44 and Boëthius 1978, 62, fig. 51). Whatever it was, they would have been seen in profile from the side of the temple. While the antefixes, through their brazen frontality, fix a point from which the viewer's gaze bounces back, the roof sculptures, through their studied insouciance, rebuff the viewer just as effectively. Unlike the pedimental groups with their narrative framework and 'action shots', which we can observe with no difficulty, these figures deliberately avoid our gaze, in an analogous way to that in which the antefixes command it. These figures, with their sublime smiles, looked enigmatically over the heads of the visitor, not giving anything away.

So far, only the decoration of the temple has been considered. The details of the content of the decoration have been integrated into the broader messaging of the structure in several ways. Subjects and myths explicitly dealing with boundedness were deliberately selected, the arrangement of the decorative elements was such that it emphasized difference, and the integration of decoration and sculpture within its architectural setting was achieved in such a way as to corroborate this. As hinted above, however, the form of the temple was equally important in the expression of this meaning.

Temple form

The themes of axiality, frontality, and centrality play an important part in the architectural form of the Etruscan temple (for example Boëthius 1978, 37). The pedimental sculpture was at both ends of the temple (in fact, the surviving Pyrgi example is from the back of Temple A), and the exact placing of the roof-sculptures from Veii is uncertain (Spivey 1997, 63).

So, though it could be argued that the importance of frontality has been overstated in the foregoing discussion of the temple's decoration, this emphasis seems entirely justified when examining temple form. Frontality and centrality are closely knit into the design of the Etruscan temple, principally in the treatment of columns and steps (Fig. 5).

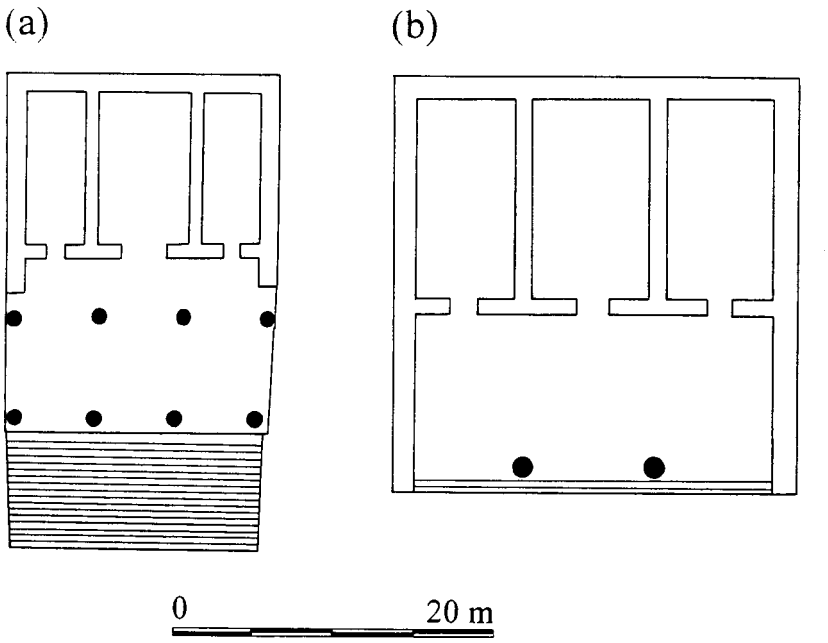

Figure 5. *Plans of: a) the Belvedere Temple at Orvieto (after Colonna 1985, 82); and b) the Portonaccio Temple at Veii (after Colonna 1985, 100).*

a) Columns

The Etruscan temple had three *cellae*, the central one larger than the two on either side (see, for instance, the plans of the Belvedere Temple at Orvieto and the Portonaccio Temple at Veii in Fig. 5). The columns were aligned with the *cella* walls, and were only at the front of the temple (Fig. 1; Castagnoli 1955). Columns should be considered architectural elaboration: they are points of particular concentration in terms of both construction and building, and also in terms of the viewing of the temple (see Rykwert 1996). Yet again, the concentration of this elaboration is at the front of the building, signalling the most important part of the temple. Comparison with Greek temples serves to emphasize the distinctness of the Etruscan deployment of columns, and so highlights the specific Etruscan concern with expressing boundedness. Columns themselves are rather ambiguous in their allegiance; together they form a line or colonnade but this is, necessarily, penetrable. When looking at the temple from the outside, the columns seem indisputably part of the structure, and those looking on are undoubtedly outside. Yet when standing within the colonnade, the viewer's status is unclear: he or she is neither in the 'outside' space formerly occupied, nor is he or she inside the *cella*, the walls of which can still be seen, and even more clearly than before. Columns are at the same time inside and outside the categories which the temple is defining. In the Greek temple the colonnade acts as a permeable screen around the cella. By contrast, in the Etruscan temple, this mediative area is only present at the front. Thus, in the Etruscan temple, the transition between inside and outside is only present and possible at the front of the building.

The number of rows of columns varied from site to site, allowing for even greater emphasis on frontality. At the Portonaccio sanctuary, according to some reconstructions, there were only two columns in total (Fig. 5(b); Colonna 1985, 100; Rendeli 1990, 6). These were aligned with the central *cella*, and the sides of the temple were completely blocked off by the continuation of the *cella* walls (Colonna 1985, 100; Rendeli 1990, 6; though see Prayon 1986, 198, figs. V–38 & V–39). From the sides and back, the temple would have presented completely blank walls, topped by the decoration mentioned earlier. By the blocking of the sides, and the placing of the columns at the front, the temple signalled the entrance to the sacred most emphatically; it was impossible to enter from anywhere else. Movement across the boundary was limited and restricted to one point only. This was emphasized further by the irregular intercolumnation at the front of the temple. The alignment of the columns with the *cella* walls resulted in a wider opening in the centre of the façade, concentrating the location of the boundary at that point. In other temples this is less extreme. Some have a row of columns across the entire front (for example Temple A at Pyrgi), and in others the number of rows is increased (for example at Orvieto, Fig. 5(a)), but this never exceeds two (though again, from outside Etruria the Temple of Capitoline Jove could be cited; see Cristofani 1990, 75–6; Gjerstad 1960, 180–84; Prayon 1986, 196). Although in these cases concentration on the centre of the front is less acute than at the Portonaccio temple, in all of them the location of

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the columns emphasizes the frontality and centrality of the beginning of the sacred. Temple form was instrumental in reducing the potential entry to or exit from the temple to a single point, and so was crucial in defining and confining the sacred.

b) Steps

The same frontality is evident in another element of temple form: steps. Again, comparison with Greek temples is instructive. Greek temples had a stylobate and stereobate around the entire structure. It would have been possible to step up on to the temple at any given point. In contrast, the Etruscan temple only had steps at the front (Figs. 1 & 5) (e.g. at Orvieto: Pernier & Stefani 1925, 159; and Tarquinia: Romanelli 1948, 239.) In an Etruscan temple it was physically impossible to get up onto the podium in any other way than that which was intended by the builders: the front. By being given no other choice, the visitor would have been forced to collude in the definition of the temple. As well as physically dictating the location of the transition between the sacred and the profane, the steps also provided a visual focus at the front of the temple in a similar way to the moulded base.

c) Location of decoration

So far, the ornateness and the subject of the decoration has been the main emphasis. It is also important, however, to consider where on the temple the decoration was placed. The sum of all this decoration is a highly ornate building which must have glistened with the moulding, colour and pattern which was imprinted upon it. All the decoration discussed so far is from the outside of the temple, making it stand out in the landscape like a jewelled casket. Given the importance of elaboration in marking difference, the extensive decoration of the surface of the Etruscan temple should be seen in terms of marking the importance of the distinction between inside and outside, in other words, between religious and non-religious space. It is not surprising, then, that where these categories meet is precisely where decoration is located on the temple: on the outside. The importance of decoration in articulating difference does not end here. The location of the decoration on the outside is also integrated into the dialogue. Where decoration is concentrated on the building, the choice of which parts of the temple are ornamented, provides crucial clues as to the differences which are particularly at stake. It is therefore no surprise that the decoration of Etruscan temples is concentrated on the points of apparent weakness (apparent because they do not coincide with structural weaknesses). All the elements of decoration discussed above are in places where there seems to be a danger of seepage between categories: the join between floor and ground, wall and roof, and roof and sky. At all these points the integrity of the structure, and the differences it embodies, are challenged, and protected through ornament. This is perhaps most explicit in the treatment of doorways, possibly the weakest point of all. The doors to the *cellae* were surrounded by more painted relief plaques (Fig. 1; Boëthius 1978, 62), for example on Temple B at Pyrgi (Colonna 1970, 380–87), where the door-jamb terracottas are the most complex and intricate of all the plaques on the temple (Fig. 6).

The care with which the terracotta panels for the entire temple were made indicates the importance of these pieces and where they went on the temple. Temple B at Pyrgi provides at least two examples of terracotta plaques which were made for their specific locations. One is a revetment plaque from the rear right-hand corner of the temple (Colonna 1985, 130); the other is from the corners of the door-jamb pieces (Fig. 6; Colonna 1970, 381, 384–5, fig. 302). It was imperative to cover these areas with decoration, yet the mass-produced identical plaques would not fit into these awkward areas. The solution was the special manufacture of interlocking pieces, tailor-made for the spot.

Two further aspects of the location of temple decoration implicate it in negotiating difference. These are linked to the messages and meanings of temple form, in that they reinforce elements which are expressed in form. They illustrate most clearly the manner in which meaning, built form, and decoration are not only linked, but inextricably intertwined within the structure as a whole. The first is the 'great architectural emphasis laid on the facade' of the temple (Andrén 1940, lxxii). In addition to the decoration running around the temple, there was a concentration of decoration at the two ends of the temple, in the form of pedimental sculpture, for example those from Temple A at Pyrgi (Colonna 1970, 48–82). The form of the temple allows for the placing of this additional architectural sculpture here, in the two triangular gable spaces under the pitched roof (Andrén 1940, ccix). This extra sculpture emphasizes the longitudinal axis of the temple, setting up a conceptual (and, as it was placed on the ridge pole, real) central line from which to view the temple. The front/back relationship is securely established by the location of these sculptural elements. The emphasis on the ends cannot, of course, be seen from the sides.

This does not, however, detract from the sculptures' ability to emphasize the longitudinal axis on two counts: first, because even if the visitor had never seen an Etruscan temple before, when he or she did get to the front he or she would know it; and second, if the visitor had been to such a site before, he or she would anticipate what was waiting around the corner. For the Portonaccio group of sculptures, Spivey has argued that the placing of sculptures along the roof indicates that the temple 'was clearly to be appreciated by a viewer approaching from the side' (Spivey 1997, 63, caption to fig. 44, though he also admits that the placement is uncertain, see above). Viewing the sculptures from the side in profile would, however, have made it impossible for viewers to engage with them, their gaze constantly eluding them. In order to interact, the viewer would have had to move round to the front, the disdain of the sculptures almost forcing him or her to move and, equally important, move to the front. Although the temple could have been appreciated from the side, the visual cues moving the viewer to the front would have ensured that this would not have been for long. Thus the way in which the sculptures were executed (the archaic smile), and their composition (the profile view), and their location (axially on the roof) all combine to force an appreciation of the temple from the front.

The second aspect which the location of the decoration emphasized is centrality. Etruscan pedimental sculpture, unlike Greek, does not extend over the entirety of the *tympanum*, at least, not until the fourth century BC (for instance at Tarquinia and Talamone; Tarquinia: Pairault Massa 1992, 101–2; Romanelli 1948, 254–5; Talamone: Gamburi 1888, 686; Pairault Massa 1992, 240–3.) Instead, sculpture is only present in the very centre of the gable triangle (Fig. 1). The sumptuous ornamentation, in the form of the extremely deep relief, like that from Pyrgi, is located in line with the central roof beam, and covers it. By being located on the *columen*, the sculpture joins the structural centre of the building with the symbolic centre.

Conclusion

Visually and physically, Etruscan temple form — the columns and steps in particular — directs and guides the visitor to a certain area. The nature and location of the decoration do the same thing. These combined efforts give very clear messages about the location of the front of the temple, and therefore the point from which the temple should be viewed. Creating a viewpoint leads to the objectification of the

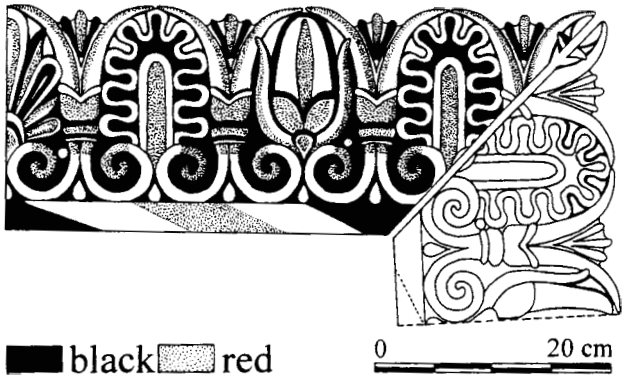

Figure 6. *Terracotta plaque from around the door of Temple B at Pyrgi. (After Colonna 1970, 380.)*

viewed (Berger 1973; Bryson 1983), and objectification implies control over it. By establishing a viewing point for the temple, the sacred is put in its place within the general order. Simultaneously, by directing the viewer to a certain point, through the visual cues discussed above, temple form exerts control over the viewer. All the elements of the temple are unified in expressing the difference of the sacred from the profane, and thus ordering the relationship between the two. The Etruscan temple achieves this on many interacting levels. Difference is expressed in the iconography chosen for the outside of the temple, for instance the gorgon; in the choice of the form the decoration should take, like the repetitive patterns, frontal faces, or aloof stare of the acroterial sculpture; in the location of the decoration at points of vulnerability or along the longitudinal axis; and in the deployment of architectural features such as the columns and steps. Obviously these cannot, in practice, be separated as distinctly as implied here; the elision in meanings of the location, form and content of the ridge pole relief sculpture at Pyrgi, or the roof sculpture at Veii, shows this most clearly. Rather, all these factors are in play simultaneously. Inevitably this results in the separate elements also affecting or influencing each other. The meanings of the individual pieces of ornament or sculpture are constantly reflected in each other, so that the meaning of one is dependent on and reinforced by that of another. For instance, the interpretation of the Veiian roof sculpture above is related to the importance of frontality and the longitudinal axis of the temple. This, in turn, is mirrored in the far broader Etruscan context of the temple as a mechanism for marking difference. This stratigraphy of meanings is how meaning is transmitted, maintained and understood.

Though the rise of sanctuaries and temple ar-

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chitecture can be explained in terms of urbanism, with temples as somehow symptomatic of a city-state, or as a means of competition between cities and territories, it must be remembered that the forms of temple architecture were deliberately chosen to articulate difference most clearly. By being so effective at expressing differences, the sanctuary and temple also create and reinforce them. Thus, once built, the temple becomes instrumental in the creation and structuring of differences as well as reflecting them. This can be traced from the detail of the terracotta plaque to the topographical location of the site. An analysis of form allows for the integration of these different levels on which the meanings operate; but this is only possible if we take all elements of the sanctuary, including its form and decoration, as occurring because they have meaning.

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Note

1. Though it would be possible to cite others from Latium (for instance at the sanctuary of Sant'Omobono: see Cristofani 1990, 115–30; Ioppolo 1989; Ross Holloway 1994, 68–80, esp. 75; or at Ardea: Stefani 1954). Some continue to see structures B and D at Marzabotto as temples (for example Barker & Rasmussen 1998, 221, caption to fig. 79) though they are generally thought to be altars (Brizzolara *et al.* 1980, 105–6; Colonna 1985, 89; 1986, 473; Mansuelli 1972, 130; Shoe 1965, 21).

Vedia Izzet
Christ's College
Cambridge
CB2 3BU

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