houses) one would not be able to pinpoint their origin. In both towns the form of the house remains the same because the fundamental element, i.e., the concept of space, is common to both" (Lavas 1974, 332).

THE ROMAN ATRIUM HOUSE

The typical Roman house, the *domus*, was a composite derived from the Etruscan and Hellenistic house forms. The Etruscan dwelling prototype was characterized by an axial plan with a central hall and open skylight, which perhaps had been a smoke hole in an ancient version of the house and had eventually become a courtyard well and atrium. “The courtyard wells, exemplified at Marzabotto, would ultimately yield to the compluvium-impluvium arrangement. As cities became more populous and the pressure on building space intensified, the courtyard wells yielded to the compluvium and cistern arrangement familiar in Pompeii, Herculanenum, and Ostia at a later date” (McKay 1977, 22).

The typical Etruscan urban dwelling had the following arrangement: Facing the entrance way, or *fauces*, and across the atrium, the central courtyard, was the *tablinum*, originally perhaps the main bedroom but later a record (*tabulum*) depository and reception room. The principal space of the house was, of course, the atrium. Its far end was flanked by two *alae*, or alcoves. At the rear of the tablinum and accessible through a corridor adjacent to this reception room was an *hortulus*, an enclosed garden, no doubt affording an admirable vista along the axial sequence starting from the entrance, then through the atrium space and the tablinum, and ending in the small garden.

As a result of the Hellenistic influence, the typical Roman urban house in time became a composite of the Etruscan atrium house and the Greek peristyle house with its oriental heritage. Thus, the typical urban house that emerged during the Late Roman period had two rectangular interior court
gardens, the smaller called the atrium and the larger, the peristyle. Quite frequently it had a third outdoor space, a small rear garden. The atrium with its surrounding area formed the more public section of the house, while the peristyle section, the more secluded area, was the private or family quarters.

Viewed from the street, the Roman atrium houses seemed surprisingly small and remarkably similar. The façades were rather simple with few openings toward the narrow street and were interrupted only by recessed areas that were used for shops. Most windows opened onto the courtyards and in larger homes also onto an enclosed garden in the rear. The remains of Pompeian houses suggest that the Roman domus was usually a one-story building.

In contrast to the exterior simplicity, the interior of the domus was sumptuous. The floors were patterned mosaic or marble, the walls were decorated with frescoes, and the ceiling timbers were often gilded. In addition to the family altar in the atrium, the two courtyards were lavishly adorned by fountains, statues, vases, and other embellishments.

The main entranceway to the house had a recess, called *vestibulium*, before the fauces. The wooden front door had a particular importance. It was usually decorated, and on feast days it was carefully lit and garlanded. In fact, the doorway was a sacred object protected by four deities: Janus guarded the doorway itself, Forculus, the cornice; Limentius, the threshold; and Cordea, the hinges. The door led to the fauces, which in turn opened into the atrium. The images of the Lares, or household gods, were placed in the hallway with a lamp burning in their honor. The hallway was guarded by the porter, a slave; frequently a long chain was attached to his foot to prevent him from leaving to gossip with the neighbors.

The atrium, as mentioned earlier, served as a center for the more public functions of the home and was surrounded by small rooms and recesses. Some of these rooms, lit only from their doorways, were used as bedrooms for guests (*hospitia*), others were used by slaves (*ergastucae*). Recesses (*alae*).
were used as either reception rooms or conversation rooms. A protective roof called the *compluvium*, supported on brackets projecting from the wall, gave shelter around the periphery of the atrium and shed the rainwater toward the center into the *impluvium*, or catch basin, sunk in the pavement. In the tetrastyle atrium columns at the four corners of the courtyard supported the roof girders.

Opposite the entranceway the atrium was linked to the peristyle area by narrow passageways as well as by an open reception room (tablinum), which could be curtained off. The peristyle area was used for family activities and was usually larger than the atrium. It, too, had an impluvium for rainwater, but here the roof was supported by a colonnade. In the absence of a rear garden (and in contrast to the hard surface of the Hellenistic peristyle) the Roman peristyle often served as a garden with climbing vines and potted plants. In summer additional shade was provided by red-dyed veils called *cortinæ*. The rooms surrounding the peristyle were the bedrooms (*cubicula*), which had stone slab beds; the dining room (*triclinium*) with couches; recesses for conversation (*alæ*); the family reception room (*oecus*); and the kitchen (*culina*) with its ancillary storage rooms.

Pompeii, buried in pumice stone and light ash to a depth of 10 to 23 ft (3 to 7 m) after the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, provides us with the most reliable information available on the structure of Roman residential areas as well as the form of Italic and Hellenistic-Roman urban houses. A few years before its destruction, Pompeii had suffered damage from an earthquake; hence many of the houses show traces of the renovation and enlargement made just prior to the city’s demise.

Pompeii was small by modern standards like nearly all cities of antiquity. According to Hiorns (1956), the area within its walls was about 160 acres (64.6 hectares). Its population may have numbered between 25,000 and 30,000; a considerable proportion composed of leisureed and cultured
people of the patrician and middle class, including wealthy merchants.

Pompeii was a fortified city with eight gates, one of them leading to the waterfront. Its streets were well paved and were provided with raised sidewalks. Mercurio Street was the widest at 32 ft (9.7 m), and the lesser roads of the gridiron network ranged between 12 and 18 ft (3.6 and 5.5 m).

The city was a planned community with no evidence in its street layout of any improvisation. It had a copious water supply stored in tanks and water towers, and its sewage system was reasonably effective. Shops were built into the fronts of houses along the main streets and supplemented the provisions made by the residents of Pompeii in the central marketplace. Even palatial homes, such as the House of Fansa (No. 8) and the House of the Faun (No. 9), had shops and workshops built into their street façades but without communication to the interior.

The dwelling units of the sixteen-block residential area of Pompeii show a great disparity in sizes ranging from the palatial to a tiny dwelling with a total area equal to that of the mere atrium of the largest homes. Even the smallest, unnamed dwellings appear to have atria, but have neither a peristyle court garden nor a rear hortulus. It appears that in Pompeii, too, there was a mix of income groups in a given residential quarter, especially if one takes into account that the large palatial homes had, in addition to shops, a number of cænaula built into their peripheral walls. It can also be observed that the housing plots within the city blocks were less orderly than the street layout itself, yet another characteristic of the residential quarters of oriental cities. Probably the irregular building plots evolved over time through accretion, just as in oriental cities, when a resident acquired a portion of a neighbor's property in order to enlarge his own home.

The dwellings identified on the plan of this residential quarter are, from left to right and top to bottom: No. 1, the House of the Surgeon; houses No. 2, 3, and 4; No. 5, the House of Sallust; houses No. 6

Pompeii: Northwest district
(after Hans Eschebach)
and 7. No. 8, the House of Pansa; No. 9, the House of the Faun; and No. 10, the House of the Vettii.

An excellent early example of an urban dwelling with an atrium but without a peristyle court is the House of the Surgeon, named for the surgical instruments found in its ruins. This dwelling dates from the fourth or third century B.C., a period when Hellenistic influences such as peristyle courtyards had not yet enriched the plan of the Roman domus. The massive walls were built of sandstone blocks and the successive courses of blocks were laid with mud. Two shops flanked the entrance along the street façade.

The House of the Surgeon was basically a cavernous and austere dwelling meagerly lit through the wood-beamed square atrium. Arranged in a traditional and axial fashion around the atrium with its catch basin were the cubicula, the alae, the triclinia, and the tablinum; the latter also opened upon a portico and a small garden beyond, a feature that no doubt made this important reception room also the brightest room of the house.
"Between the tablinum and impluvium in the atrium court, the architect located the traditional dining table (cubilium), which a more prosperous age transformed into an elegant marble table with elegantly carved legs. Behind the tablinum was the walled garden and, in a corner, the shrine of the Lares (lararium), the household's protective gods" (McKay 1977: 37).

The House of Sallust is a good example of the tufa (the oldest) period, to which the Roman luxuries of a peristyle with summer triclinium and separate kitchen were later added. Several shops occupied the main street front of this house. The largest commercial establishment was a bakery (pistrium) complete with mills, oven, and storage space as well as living accommodations on the upper story. A cook shop (thermopolium) was located adjacent to the main entrance and may have been operated by the slaves of Sallust’s household.

The principal space of this dwelling was the atrium, a Tuscan hall with an impluvium in its center. Along the main axis of the atrium was a large tablinum or drawing room, which opened upon a rear portico and a viridarium (pleasure garden) beyond. The narrow garden contained potted plants and the rear wall was painted with trees and shrubs to give the illusion of space. A rear entrance (posticum) led to a secondary street.

A passage linked the atrium of the old house to the peristyle addition of the house. In this addition, a flower garden was enclosed on three sides by colonnades. Two richly ornamented bedrooms and a large summer dining room faced the garden; a staircase led to a balcony and additional rooms on the upper floor. The mural paintings in this part of the house belong to a later and less severe Roman style than those of the older part of the house (Longfellow 1895, 316).

The House of the Vettii also exemplifies a luxurious middle-class dwelling with a large peristyle courtyard addition. The house was entered through a fauces from the east and was protected by a servant whose cella ostiaria (doorman’s room) was nearby. The atrium ensemble was unusual in this dwelling because of the absence of a tablinum. Another departure from typical dwelling layouts
Pompeii: House of the Surgeon
(after A. G. McKay)

Pompeii: House of Sallust
(after F. R. Hiorns)
was the provision of a second, smaller atrium, called an *atriolum*, which was the focal point of the kitchen and servants’ quarters located north of the main atrium. A beautiful lararium, or shrine, adorned one of the walls of the atrium. A large peristyle court garden occupied the southwest corner of the property. It was directly linked with the atrium, and several large rooms opened upon it. A second smaller and more secluded peristyle court with an elegant dining room was located in the north section of the house (McKay 1977: 56–58).

Also of the tufa period is the large and stately palatial dwelling with a classical plan known as the House of Pansa. This dwelling shows additions and modifications to the original house. For example, numerous shops or tabernae were added along the front of the house, including a large bakery. Several of the shops had living accommodations above, and therefore formed small houses in themselves. The main doorway of the house was in a small recess or vestibule and led through a corridor to a large Tuscan-type atrium with a central *piscina* (pool). Traditional rooms surrounded the atrium, and the axial tablinum together with an adjacent fauces linked the formal section of the house to the private part, which was dominated by a spacious peristyle court garden. The central piscina was surrounded by sixteen columns that supported a gallery on the second story. Bedrooms, dining rooms, and a large living room, or *exedra*, opened upon the peristyle court. Beyond the exedra was a covered walk, or *xystus*, which overlooked a garden arranged in parallel beds, probably used to grow vegetables. Several of the second-story bedrooms have survived, and many ornaments and toilet accessories used by the
Pompeii: House of Pansa
(after A. G. McKay)
women of the household were found in them (Longfellow 1895, 315).

Urban houses excavated in Herculaneum and Ostia are very similar in principle to the Pompeian dwellings, and it seems reasonable to assume that they also represent the typical Roman house in most cities of the empire including its capital, Rome. Of course, the domus, as mentioned earlier, represented only a small fraction of Rome’s housing stock, since by far the most numerous dwellings were tenement flats.

An analysis of the land-use efficiency of a typical residential area in Pompeii shows that the area devoted to public rights-of-way is 21 percent. The percentage of the area occupied by buildings is 63 percent. Private court gardens represent a mere 16 percent.

It is clear from the foregoing that the Roman house is closely related to the oriental urban house in both character and design. The central courtyard, the recessed alcoves off the atrium, the centrally located large reception room, the kitchen, in some cases with its own courtyard, and the separation of the family quarters from the public area of the house are also indigenous elements of the urban house in the Orient.