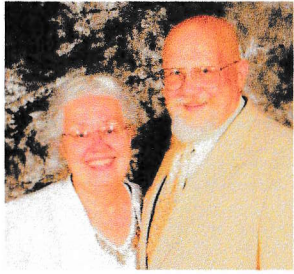


## About the Lecture Series

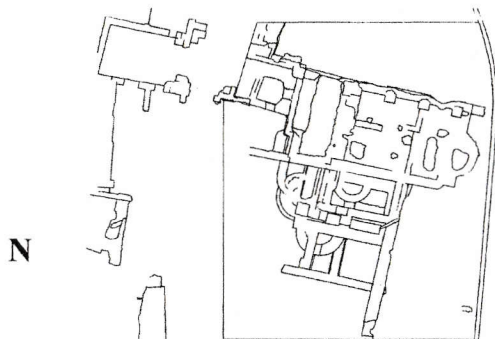


The Thomas J. and Anne W. Sienkewicz Lecture on Roman Archaeology was established by an anonymous donor in 2017 in order to support the annual archaeological lecture series sponsored by the Monmouth College Department of Classics and the Western Illinois Society of the Archaeological Institute of America. Tom Sienkewicz was Minnie Billings Capron Chair of Classics at Monmouth College from 1985 until 2017. During his career he taught a wide range of Classics courses, many with strong archaeological features, including Classical Mythology, the

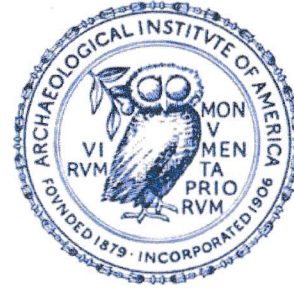
Ancient Family, and Africa in the Ancient World. In 1984 he founded the Western Illinois Society of the Archaeological Institute of America, which, since its inception, has hosted hundreds of archaeological lectures at Monmouth. His wife, Anne, has been a loyal supporter of archaeology and over the years has hosted countless speakers.



View of Palatine East Excavation



Plan of Palatine East Excavation



The Monmouth College  
Department of Classics  
and the  
Western Illinois Society  
of the  
Archaeological Institute of  
America



present

the Inaugural  
Thomas J. and Anne W. Sienkewicz Lecture  
on Roman Archaeology

# The Decline and Falls of the Roman Material Economy or How to Trash Talk Rome

by

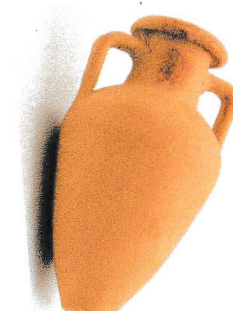
Víctor M. Martínez

Lecturer in Art History

[ymmartinez001@gmail.com](mailto:ymmartinez001@gmail.com)

Thursday, November 2, 2017

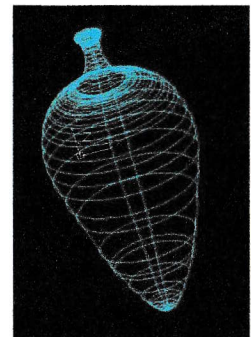
7:30 P.M.



Dahl Chapel

Monmouth College

Monmouth, Illinois







Originally from Rockford, IL, Victor M. Martínez is currently a lecturer in the Department of Art and Design at Arkansas State University. He received his undergraduate degree in Classic at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a M.A. in Classical Art and Archaeology from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He also studied Etruscology with Giovanni Colonna and Roman Archaeology with Andrea Carandini student at the University of Rome “La Sapienzalosa.”

He earned a Ph.D. in Art History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign under Prof. Eric Hostetter. His dissertation, *Etrusco-Italic*

*Herclé: A Study in the Formation of Image, Cult, and Regional Identity*, argues that the hero-god, known by various related names—Etruscan Herclé, or the Roman Hercules, for example—may have had a partial indigenous ancestry in central and northern Italy. Although a direct teleological evolution for Hercules Italicus that goes back to the beginning of anthropomorphization cannot be traced, earlier and more anonymous Italic hero-figures may have embodied indigenous and deeply-rooted cultural meanings evident in subsequent representations. This approach recovered cultural and religious contexts embodied by the hybrid iconographies of the pre-Roman hero-god. Defining the distinct roles of masculine identity that Herakles embodies in Italy, as opposed to the Greek ideas of the hero God, was at the heart of this project.

Martínez has conducted fieldwork primarily in Italy and Spain. He began his training in the field in Rome at the Palatine East Excavations, for which he eventually became the terracotta specialist and senior member of the pottery crew. He has published the terracotta sculpture from the project and he is currently working on the western amphorae from the site as associate director of the Palatine East Pottery Project (<http://resromanae.berkeley.edu/node/100>). As co-director of the Najerilla Valley Research Project ([www.najerillavalleyproject.org/](http://www.najerillavalleyproject.org/)), he is documenting the material culture and processes of transformation from the late Roman to the Medieval world in the upper Ebro Valley of Spain. Two edited volumes are planned on this research, one on the medieval built environment of Najera, including the first extensive study of the Jewish quarter; and a second documenting the reused Roman and Medieval materials in the Church of the Assumption in San Vicente del Valle.

His recent publications include articles on ancient libraries, the archaeometry of oil amphorae and 3D modeling of pottery for volumetric analysis. He is currently at work on an historical monograph tentatively entitled *Networks of Intoxication: the Case of Late Roman Wines from Italy, ca. 250-700 CE*, a theoretically motivated study which will reconcile trends visible in the archaeological record with patterns tied to political, cultural, and rhetorical “behaviors” in written sources. Unlike related studies based around textual sources, *Networks of Intoxication* turns to humble pottery sherds—the refuse of Roman civilization—in order to seek a more nuanced model for the social, economic, and cultural disintegration of the Roman Empire in its waning centuries. This project bridges Martínez’s interests in Roman pottery and his experience as part of the NEH Summer Seminar at the American Academy in Rome, “The ‘Falls of Rome’: the Transformation of Rome in Late Antiquity”

## About the Lecture

Whether Rome declined, fell, or just stumbled into the Middle Ages, it did so neither on an empty stomach nor without some wine to ease the transition. While much has been written about the political, cultural, and social reasons for Rome’s collapse, less attention has been placed on the day-to-day lives of the people during Rome’s twilight. In this regard, excavated objects offer a high potential for informing us of the production, distribution, and consumption of basic staples, luxury goods, or state-subsidized durable goods. Among the most ubiquitous and underutilized of resources is Roman pottery, especially transport containers or *amphorae*, which can serve as proxies for commodities such as oil, wine, and salted fish products. The past few decades have been especially rich archaeologically with important excavations at the heart of Rome as well as its ports at Ostia and Portus.

In this paper, I draw upon my work on the Palatine East Excavations, directed by Eric Hostetter (now professor emeritus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and sponsored by the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma and the American Academy in Rome. This was the first systematic excavation on the eastern slope of Rome’s storied hill. It is noteworthy that much of the Palatine East pottery comes from large and closely-datable deposits with minimal chronological breaks, allowing for a good sample size, ripe for comparison with other sites in Rome and elsewhere. The pottery assemblage comprises over 15 metric tons of Roman material. Contexts date from the early first to mid-sixth centuries CE, with small amounts of post-Roman materials. Our analysis of the pottery, which is still in progress, now falls under the Palatine East Pottery Project (henceforth PEPP) under the direction of J Theodore Peña of the University of California, Berkeley. The only final reports of an assemblage of Roman pottery at this scale to have been published to date from central Italy are the materials from the Baths of the Swimmer in Ostia. Although the first volume of the Ostia pottery appeared in 1969, the most recent appeared in 2014 and more still remains unpublished. With PEPP’s work so close to completion, we stand to make a profound contribution, in our thorough exploration of a significant, urban location from the heart of Rome.

Aside from the typical characterization of pottery—counting, weighing, and drawing—PEPP has been able to evaluate pot sherds for evidence of production techniques, with the goal of understanding more about production and labor processes, i.e., the life history of pottery. For the amphorae, PEPP has also initiated an ambitious campaign of estimating the containers’ volumetric capacities. I have worked with student assistants to create 3D models in AutoCAD, in order to estimate the maximum capacity (in liters) transported by different amphora classes. How much was carried by these containers, whether modules were used to define the amphorae (much like our gallon, half-gallon, or quarter containers), and even their efficiency as measured by a ratio of capacity to vessel displacement are among the questions the PEPP amphorae research is designed to answer.

This lecture begins with the examination of a few specific case studies in order to understand the changes in the material record of late Rome and to illustrate some of the methodologies employed by the project. While each example offers insights into specific elements of the material record, they also serve to frame broader theoretical and methodological problems that will be addressed in the second part of the lecture.