

Rom und Provinzen

Richard Neudecker and Paul Zanker (eds.), **Lebenswelten. Bilder und Räume in der römischen Stadt der Kaiserzeit**. Symposium am 24. und 25. Januar 2002 zum Abschluß des von der Gerda Henkel Stiftung geförderten Forschungsprogramms »Stadtkultur in der römischen Kaiserzeit«. Palilia 16. Publisher Dr. Ludwig Reichert, Wiesbaden 2005. 256 pages, 124 illustrations.

The ambitious aim of this important colloquium proceedings on Roman urbanism is to attempt an all-embracing vision of urban culture (Stadtkultur), one which reflects the complexity and interconnections in city life in a holistic way, integrating public and private to provide a broad cultural history predicated on the contribution of the widest possible variety of individual elements to fundamental patterns of meaning in the social realm. Inspired by the late nineteenth-century creation of civic culture in its broadest sense, and with particular reference to the impact of the growth of leisure on public spaces and private responses, it presents the city as a stage set, against which individuals play out, as if in a moving picture, their daily lives.

In order to do this, the organisers brought together contributors from a variety of disciplines within the fields of ancient history and classical archaeology, in an attempt to overcome the divisions inherent in the increasing specialisations of modern scholarship which have tended to fragment the study of ancient urbanism. The fifteen papers which make up this volume thus range from the largely text-based (Palombi, Grüner, Stein-Hölkeskamp, Neudecker) to the predominantly iconographic (Dickmann, Lorenz, Muth, Zanker), by way of excavation and structural remains (Kockel, Steuernagel, Pirson, Heinzelmänn, Kastenmeier), funerary evidence (Busch) and household pottery (Galli). Theory and methodology play a direct and explicit part only in excavation strategy (Pirson), discussions of cooking and table wares (Galli), and the relation between image and observer (Lorenz, Muth). The greatest gap in approaches is in the environmental field, where recent work on fauna and flora assemblages and human skeletal analyses are rapidly transforming ideas about diet and health, both critical elements in understanding urban demographics and the social rituals of eating. Context is the most important thread, both the physical context of visual representations within domestic structures and the location of structures and activities in the cityscape. In terms of individual cities, Rome, Ostia, and Pompeii predominate, although these are kept distinct, as is so often the case in the scholarly literature. This is partly explained by the disparate nature of the evidence for the three cities, in the availability of written sources, the state of preservation and accessibility of the physical remains, and the date and nature of the excavations, and partly by the different periods to which the bulk of that evidence belongs, but it would have been useful in a volume of

this kind if some of the authors had at least attempted to make comparisons. Heinzelmänn comes closest, but only in pointing out that Pompeii gives a very limited picture of daily life inappropriate for the megapoleis which were Ostia and Rome. Only Galli (Ariminum) and Muth (Piazza Armerina) move out of the safe triangle of these much-studied areas.

While the introductory essay splendidly explains the rationale of the colloquium and the contribution of each paper to the overriding theme, the papers themselves are independent contributions to their own fields, which either highlight recent approaches in their disciplines or have the potential to create new directions outside the context of the colloquium and its aims. Take Domenico Palombi's elegant exercise in Roman topography, which attempts to reconstruct not just the actual previous nature and topographical features of the area later occupied by the imperial fora in the second century B. C., but also how these were integrated into the landscapes of foundation myths by authors of the Augustan period. The different versions of Propertius and Ovid in particular relocate and reformulate the story of Tarpeia and the battle between Romans and Sabines, in order, according to Palombi, to create a cultural memory, based in the immemorial past, for the new fora of Caesar and Augustus. Indeed, Palombi's arguments might be strengthened by the recent identification of fountains at the foot of the Temple of Venus Genetrix, which may explain the otherwise seemingly gratuitous inclusion of springs in both these accounts.

The response of the present to the past in the light of changing political and social structures is also the theme of the papers by Andreas Grüner and Valentin Kockel. Grüner tackles the question of how the state dealt with ruins in the early imperial landscape of Rome. This is an important element in the process of urbanism which has rarely been given due attention, and would benefit from the type of quantification that has been applied to construction in recent years. Prefaced by a clear-headed analysis of the methodological problems involved with both the literary and the archaeological evidence which provides a narrow definition of 'ruin' as requiring structural destruction, the discussion focuses on the changes in perception and practice. Recognition of the emotive force of ruins as reminders of civil strife and a breakdown in the structure of urban society underlies the emphasis in Augustus' *Res Gestae* of rebuilding, including iconic structure such as Pompey's theatre which are unlikely to have lain in total ruin at the time. The author argues that the activities and edicts of later emperors (Claudius, Nero, Vespasian), on the other hand, were more concerned with problems caused by natural disaster and general neglect, regulating for both the passive removal of rubble and for the active replacement of buildings, in order to restore or maintain the aesthetic appearance of the city as much as its continued functioning. Kockel's

study of the restructuring of the forum in Pompeii, both before and after the earthquake of A. D. 62, as well as providing a master class in the meticulous use of all available data, furnishes a practical illustration of the type of reconstruction and adaptation to which Grüner's paper refers. Almost incidentally, Kockel also provides a convincing demonstration that the well-known elogia of Aeneas and Romulus did not come from the building of Eumachia, but most likely from the so-called ›Sanctuary of the Public Lares‹, a building with long-recognised parallels in the Forum of Augustus. While this is a highly satisfactory association, we may however need to rethink some of our long-standing interpretations of the Eumachia building.

The two papers on Ostia together give a feel for the overall parameters of urban life and social imperatives of a rather different class of inhabitants in a very different type of city to that of Pompeii. Michael Heinzlmann brings together recent research and ideas on the nature of residential buildings in the second century to paint a picture of a city made up almost entirely of flexible rental accommodation, from single rooms to quite luxurious apartments, but with very few owner-occupiers. Somewhat ironically, his own most important contribution to the debate comes in the form of evidence for two previously undiscovered very large luxury residences (the result of his extensive geophysical surveys of the unexcavated areas of Ostia) which are now the main contenders for the previously ›missing‹ and long-sought domiciles of the Ostian elite. For the rest of the population, he argues, the laws on landownership and servitudes resulted in rental being the only option, with even the Garden House complex being most likely the result of a consortium of financiers, none of whom, however, intended to live there. I find this too extreme a view, as even at Pompeii in the well-known case of the *Insula Arriana Polliana*, Pirson (in R. Laurence / A. Wallace-Hadrill [eds.], *Domestic Space in the Roman world*. *Journ. Roman Arch.*, Suppl. 22 [1997], and compare his paper in this volume) has argued that the main house remained owner-occupied with just the peripheral units and upper floor apartments to rent. At Ostia we also need to take into account potential seasonal occupation by shippers and merchants from elsewhere in the empire, who may indeed have acted together to build the Garden Houses, but with the intention of combining income from free rents with the provision of suitable individualised apartments for themselves and their dependents whilst in Ostia on business.

The public face of these occupiers of rented accommodation is the subject of Dirk Steuernagel's paper, which looks at the public and private aspects of the cults belonging to the numerous social, religious and work-related associations at Ostia. In particular he is concerned with the various settings for these, from the temple and the so-called ›Piazzale delle Corporazioni‹ behind the theatre, which he reads – I believe rightly – as a space used collectively for large gatherings of these associations rather than a commercial space, to

the placement of individual cult buildings on prominent streets but with limited access, to emphasise the exclusivity of the membership while maintaining a very visible presence. Steuernagel argues that this acts as a substitute for truly public – in the sense of state or civic – cult, for a populace which has lost any possibility of direct involvement with the politics and organisation of their community. If we put this in the context of Heinzlmann's view of the relative scarcity of the type of large wealthy households which formerly acted as a focus for a wide range of clients and dependents and provided them by association with a domestic cult, a focused community, and (by proxy) a public presence, we could also argue that these associations and their cult places were a substitute for the *domus*.

Questions of belonging within a vast urban community in the absence of familial connections is the focus of Alexandra Busch's paper on one particular section of Rome's inhabitants, the soldiers, in the first two centuries of the empire. Through a careful analysis of the distribution of military tombstones relating to the various urban cohorts, she demonstrates a surprising integration with the civilian population at least in death, that runs contrary to the what is usually assumed to be the case, for example in Jon Coulston's 2000 study of soldiery in imperial Rome (in: H. Dodge / J. Coulston [eds.], *Ancient Rome. The Archaeology of the Eternal City* [Oxford] 76–118), which takes for granted the existence of specific and carefully differentiated military cemeteries. The few examples where concentrations do occur are argued to be the result of imperial benefaction or of particular funerary collegia, in a manner directly paralleled in the civilian population, for example by the imperial household or other common-interest collegia. On the other hand, the strong similarities in design and iconography of the tombstones appear to emphasise the degree of belonging to the military in general rather than to specific parts of it, with the possible exception of the *Equites Singulares*, while the apparent modesty of the tombstones is argued to reflect the not unproblematic position of the military in relation to the civilian population. Here Busch is on weaker ground; the simplicity of the monuments overall and mediocre quality of the carving may simply suggest the relative similarity of means between the soldiers commemorated and many of the civilians they were buried alongside.

Visibility in the cityscape of Rome is also the main theme of the paper by Richard Neudecker, whose focus is on shopping, or rather on the changing topography of retail outlets, and in particular their growing connection with sacred spaces from the days of Tarquinius Priscus to those of Aurelian. In many ways it is a classic exercise in that unique discipline which is ›topografia romana‹, using the written and epigraphic records for the names, dates, activities, sights and sounds which provide the picture, played against a background provided by the archaeology of the city of Rome itself. This is not, however, a topography of high politics, but of increasingly conspicuous consumption, not just in foods but

in all kinds of luxury items from pearls and purple-dyed cloth to objects in bronze, silver and gold. The growing presence of custom-built structures for retail and their insertion into the most prestigious areas of Rome, from the Forum of Caesar and Forum Romanum, through the Velabrum and the Forum Boarium, to the southern Campus Martius and ultimately the Forum Suarium on the other side of the Via Lata. The author particularly identifies the areas around temples as places of special concentrations of retail outlets, profiting from the associated public spaces with their natural attraction for crowds and from the reflected status of these prestigious urban foci.

Provisioning the city at a more lowly level is the focus of two papers on Pompeii. Both Felix Pirson and Pia Kastenmeier focus on large kitchen spaces, the first in the Casa dei Postumii, the second in the middle floor of the Suburban baths complex. Both argue that the scale of the facilities is too large for purely household consumption, and must reflect the sale of prepared food to a wider public. For Pirson, this activity was just part of the portfolio of economic opportunities exploited by the owners of the domus, which included several tabernae and separate apartments. Such an interest in the commercial exploitation of their property brings us perhaps closer to the world of Ostia than Heinzelmänn's paper would seem to suggest.

Eating is such a fundamental cultural element that it is not surprising to find it as the underlying theme of two further but very different papers by Marco Galli and Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp. Galli makes elegant use of Claude Lévy-Strauss' culinary triangle as the starting point for a social interpretation of changes in cooking and table wares from Ariminum. The fundamental change in eating habits of the native inhabitants brought by the Roman colonists is demonstrated by the cooking wares, which reveal the introduction of Greek-style food preparation in addition to the Italic porridge-based tradition, in the form of shallow casseroles and frying pans and baking lids. In contrast the tablewares show a reduction in variety and choice in the early days of the colony, relying exclusively on black-glaze forms which originate in Rome and Latium, diversifying again only in the early days of the empire. Galli makes clear the interesting tension between conservative traditions in what is eaten, where acculturation is slow, and the more rapid and nuanced changes in how it is eaten, which rather reflect self-presentation of, or aspiration to, a superior position in the new society.

Stein-Hölkeskamp's paper also addresses issues of culture and change, but this time in dining practices at the upper levels of Roman society, rather than the daily eating habits of colonists in distant Ariminum. Here it is the presence of women at banquets as part of a distinctly Roman cultural practice, as evidenced by the literary sources of the late Republic and early empire. In the earlier literature the contrast with Greek customs is common and explicit, indeed, as the author points out, it almost becomes a metaphor for broader ideas about

the difference between the two cultures. The Roman banquet of the late Republic is identified as one of the few occasions when ambitious women might come into direct contact with and indeed influence public affairs, yet by the early empire it also becomes the locus of sexual intrigue. The important point Stein-Hölkeskamp makes is that, in these literary sources, women reflect the dichotomous ideals – helpmeet and whore – of the writers, who are, of course, all men; reality and women's points of view are elusive.

Some of the same elements are shown to be at play in a selection of mythological scenes of Pompeian houses, where Jens-Arne Dickmann argues for an increased erotic content in a group of unusual depictions of Admetus and Alcestis – with an effeminate Admetus as the sexual interest – and a naked Deidameia abandoned by Achilles on Skyros, both possibly creations of the Neronian-Flavian period. Dickmann further connects this with the ready availability of slaves, particularly females and youths, for sexual gratification within the household, and not just by men.

The remaining papers also take purely visual evidence as their window onto Roman society, focusing particularly on the responses of the observers rather than just on the images themselves. Those that look at the use of mythological scenes are representative of recent developments in the interpretation of myth which focus on its role and reception in domestic and funerary contexts, often through the lens of literary ekphrasis, which are now becoming the norm rather than the exception. Katharina Lorenz and Susanne Muth very much address the question of image and space proposed by the colloquium through the intermediary of the observer, Lorenz in relation to combinations of myths in text and both domestic and public settings at Pompeii and Herculaneum, while Muth is concerned with the rich concentration of all kind of figured elements at the late antique villa of Piazza Armerina. Muth's choice of a late-antique villa is a curious one for a volume about urban culture, although the author does point out that her approach could be applied to any domestic context. Her focus is on how the overwhelming presence of figures in the mosaic decoration, such as the master and attendants in the salutatio mosaic of the vestibule, creates a series of implicit observers towards whom the action of the scene is directed, requiring the real observer, whether dominus or privileged guest, slave or client, either to distinguish themselves from the implicit observer or to adjust their behaviour to fulfil the expectations of the scene. Muth uses this as a way to understanding the historic reality of intention behind the images, in the same way, I believe, that the study of the original architectural intention of a building is often most easily understood in terms of the possibilities implicit in the original design, which ought to reflect some real cultural expectations however the building is actually used subsequently.

The volume closes with a relatively short paper by Paul Zanker on urban sarcophagi, which gives a stimulating synthesis of the main shifts in decoration over

the course of the second and third centuries A. D., first in the choice of particular mythological representations and then in their gradual abandonment. The two tables which give the ›raw‹ data alone provide much food for thought, for example the consistently high numbers of Persephone and Endymion sarcophagi across the hundred years from the mid second to the mid third centuries, contrasted with the concentration of the numerous versions of the Meleager myth at the start of that period. The author is particularly concerned with the overall changes, in particular the shift from images of death and grief to ones of visions of happiness in the Antonine to Severan period, and then the almost total abandonment of mythological scenes by the middle of the third century, and the underlying wider mentalités of Roman contemporary society. Fundamental to this are the spread of sarcophagi as a consumer item to a less well-educated clientele, changing attitudes to classical culture and education, the rise of a new ideal of the good life, and potentially the growing influence of Christianity, leading to changes in representation which reflect a growing spirituality as a response to the increasingly negative experiences of the contemporary world, coloured by the political, military and economic crises of the third century. This is not a new explanation of the transformation of the visual world between the high empire and late antiquity, and not all readers will necessarily be entirely convinced by the explanation. What is incontestable, however, is the phenomenon itself, due to the large size of the sample (over two thousand sarcophagi including nearly five hundred mythological ones), one which needs addressing in terms of its broader social and historical context.

In terms of the individual papers, this volume does indeed present a wide range of possible approaches to Roman life. The focus on daily life and private individual concerns – housing, shopping, eating, sex, death – in terms of identity, self-representation, and the nature of communities, is very much in tune both with modern fixations and much recent scholarship on the ancient world. There is much in these papers that is new, whether in evidence or interpretation, and much that showcases current trends in methodology and approach, but, surprisingly, very little that is genuinely radical. Some of this is due to the choice by the authors to deal with those areas which provide the most (and the most studied) evidence, that is the cities of Rome, Ostia and Pompeii, and to treat them as separate entities.

What the papers do achieve in terms of the wider aims of the colloquium is to demonstrate just what the organisers wanted to overcome, the fragmented and fragmenting nature of specialisation. This is surely inevitable. Harnessing such disparate material to provide the holistic vision of Roman urban culture requires a single vision, or a series of single visions, of the kind we now have in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's ›Rome's Cultural Revolution‹ (Cambridge 2008). The editors' introductory essay, showing how this might be done for the multiple urban cultures of Rome and central Italy under the

empire, based on the material provided by these collected papers, is the great achievement of the volume. While the exposition is perforce linear, only a two-dimensional matrix could coherently reproduce the intersection and overlapping of ideas about urban culture which the various essays provoke; indeed, one could argue that only a three-dimensional continuum could fully do justice to its complexity, which is rather the point of the volume. Through the groupings domestic life, the experiences of communities, the multiplicity of urban spaces, and images of pleasure and of death, run ideas of the blurring between public and private, the manipulation and redefinition of space to answer new social relationships, the importance of eating in general and banqueting in particular, as a ritual in formulating social identity, and the appreciation of pleasure, happiness, and an ideal life. *Otium*, not *negotium*, is the ideal, with the emperor as the guarantor of all that is desirable.

This is a stimulating volume, both for the contribution of each paper to its own discipline, and for the first glimpse of what a new imperial Roman ›Stadtkultur‹ might look like.

Oxford

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