

HANS-PETER KUHNEN (ed.), Amphitheater Trier I. Ausgrabungen und Forschungen 1816–1996 mit Auszügen aus Skizzenbüchern und Grabungsakten der Jahre 1816–1996. By Sibylle Bauer, Evamarie Bange-Goddard, Bruno Kremer, Hans-Peter Kuhnen, Stefan F. Pfahl, and Marcus Thiel with a contribution by Frieder Enzmann and an English summary. Archäologie aus Rheinland-Pfalz Band 2. Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, Rahden / Westf. 2017. € 69.80. ISBN 978-3-86757-652-9. XV + 336 pages, 154 illustrations (many in colour), 166 plates (most in colour), and 12 inserts.

In his account of his visit to Trier (DE; *Colonia Augusta Treverorum* in *Gallia Belgica*) on October 29, 1792, the peripatetic Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes that “The remains of the Roman amphitheatre I found not without interest; but as the building had fallen in, and had, in all probability, served for several centuries as a quarry, *little was to be deciphered*. We admired, however, the way in which the ancients, in their wisdom, were able to produce great results with moderate means; and how they had made use of the natural advantages offered by the site between two hills, to lighten the work of both excavating and building” (for the original passage, see E. GRUMACH, *Goethe und die Antike. Eine Sammlung*, Bd. 1 [Berlin 1949] 471–472, my emphasis).

Much has been cleared away from the amphitheatre since Goethe’s visit, of course, but much has also been restored. This means that a modern visitor to the site – even one informed by the brief passages in one of the few archaeological guidebooks to Trier – could be forgiven for not knowing exactly what was ancient and what was not (for instance, most of the original seating was later quarried as Goethe suspected, and thus estimates of ancient spectator capacity vary wildly). This is all the more remarkable given that the amphitheatre is one of the largest structures of its kind in Roman Germany (the arena is c. 2700 m²) and that it was among the earliest Roman remains to have been studied archaeologically in that country. In light of the amphitheatre’s important status, long history of study, and the longstanding confusion about its form and development, Hans-Peter Kuhnen’s edited volume brings welcome clarity. Far more than any previous work, *Amphitheater Trier I* distils the building’s chronology, its architectural features, and its relationship to other urban structures in Roman Trier in admirably lucid and exhaustive detail.

The amphitheatre is one of nine well-known Roman and early Christian architectural landmarks (e. g. the *Porta Nigra*, Imperial Baths, *Barbarathermen*, *Aula Palatina*, Roman bridge, etc.) that earned the city of Trier its designation as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 1986. Unfortunately, however, only part of the Imperial Baths and the *Porta Nigra* have seen complete scientific study and publication by staff at the former *Provinzialmuseum Trier* (which is now known as the *Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier*, overseen by the *Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz*, GDKE). The present volume is part of the admirable attempt to rectify this situation through a series of “comprehensive final publications” (p. XI): in this case, all the archival records related to the 200 years of excavation and research of the amphitheatre by the *Landesmuseum* (where these records are still kept). The volume is the first of two; the publication of early documentation in this volume is to be followed by the results of more recent (1996–1999) archaeological work, including a Late Roman cemetery (beyond the north-eastern *cavea*), a series of water installations, and additional remains of the later Roman city wall in the second volume.

The volume is organised into 15 sections. The first two sections are short summaries by Kuhnen: a “Prolog” (pp. VII–X), in which he sets the volume within its wider research history and context, and a “Summary” (pp. XI–XV, in English), in which he outlines the different authors’ major conclusions. The heart of the book are the five historiographical and interpretive essays by the scholars that follow, each of which exploits a wide range of visual documentation in drawing its conclusions: diagrams (especially with CAD), plans (archival and modern), postcards, photographs,

lithographs, and various archival documents. This visual documentation is generously interspersed throughout the chapters, in the 166 (mostly colour) plates at the end, and in the inserts.

In the first of the core essays, “200 Jahre Ausgrabungen und Forschungen: Fragen und Ergebnisse” (pp. 1–42), Kuhnen places the excavations within the context of their study locally as well as (briefly) that of amphitheatres generally. His chapter contains an “Einführung” and sections on “1816–1916: Konfliktfall Amphitheater”, “Die Forschungen seit 1816”, “Die Dokumentation der Ausgrabungen”, “Die Jahrtausendwende und der Paradigmenwechsel der Amphitheaterforschung”, “1816–1999: Die Bilanz”, and “Offene Fragen und zukünftige Forschung”. Kuhnen provides a fast paced and generously illustrated overview of the episodic and uneven history of research at the site, charting its changing perception by different actors (e. g. pp. 13–16: “Mit den Augen von Künstlern”). He also explains the shifting face of the structure itself, which has undergone a series of restorations to meet modern needs, most recently in 1996 with the installation of facilities for performances at the instigation of the State Government of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Sibylle Bauer’s chapter concerns the “Arena, Arenakeller und Stadtmauer nach den Ausgrabungen 1891–1912” (pp. 43–114), treating finds from the arena floor and its underground “cellar” as well as the town wall. There are many fascinating details about the infrastructure that are covered in this section, most notably the wooden beams belonging to two stage machines in the “cellar” that were preserved due to high ground water. Most of these beams can be dated based on dendrochronology to the second half of the 3rd century AD, though some more exactly to AD 298 to 304. The arena is said to have gone out of use in the 5th century AD, but its cellar experienced re-use in the early medieval period, possibly as a Christian memorial space. In addition, Bauer argues that the nature of the intersections of the foundations of the city wall at the north-western and southern ends of the *cavea* indicate that it would postdate the amphitheatre (see further below).

Bruno Kremer and Marcus Thiel discuss “Der Entwässerungskanal” (pp. 115–132). This sewage channel is mostly hewn out of the rock and runs south in a nearly straight line for c. 133 m, from the southern end of the cellar to the Altbach valley.

Evamarie Bange-Goddard’s chapter reviews “Cavea, Carceres und Vomitorien nach den Ausgrabungen 1923–1979. Grabungen und Restauration” (pp. 133–206). As Bange-Goddard discusses, the *cavea* has suffered a lack of interest in contrast to the arena, but this lengthy contribution contains many important findings (the oval arena runs 70.54 m north to south and 48.92 m east to west, while the oval *cavea* spans 142.62 m north to south and 122.4 m from east to west). In the Roman period, the *cavea* reached a height of 168.79 m (it is nowadays 2 m higher as a result of modern interventions). In addition, only four of the original stone seats are preserved, the majority having been sold off when the amphitheatre was quarried in 1211; the number of Roman seating rows is thus estimated to have been between twelve and 27 (!) (see pp. 145–147 fig. 8). There were originally six *vomitoria*, all of which were vaulted and which crossed the *cavea* as subterranean tunnels. The side walls of one *vomitrium* (western, V3) were originally painted with red and white panels.

In “Das Umfeld” (pp. 207–223), Stefan F. Pfahl and Marcus Thiel investigate their topic through sections on the distribution of bones and on the town wall and residential area. The authors demonstrate here that the amphitheatre is adjoined to a cemetery at the northeast and that its western surrounds were heavily populated in the late Roman period.

The remainder of the volume is an apparatus of documentary evidence, including “Auszüge aus Skizzenbüchern und Grabungsakten der Jahre 1816–1996” (pp. 225–310), a bibliography (pp. 311–318), “Liste wichtiger Bauglieder und Befunde” (pp. 319–325), “Konkordanzen der ausgewerteten Skizzenbuchseiten und Pläne” (pp. 326–333), abbreviations (p. 334), and illustration

credits (pp. 335–336). This is followed by 166 “Handzeichnungen aus den Skizzenbüchern mit digitalen Extraktionen”. Twelve supplementary plans appear as six inserts (printed front and back) in the interior cover of the back of the volume. Given the vast scope of this work, the absence of any indices is most unfortunate.

As the volume’s editor insists, “Das vorliegende Werk spricht also nicht das Schlusswort zum Amphitheater Trier, sondern den Prolog” (p. IX). While it would thus be unfair to criticise a work framed as preliminary conclusions, especially based on evidence that was often imperfectly collected by earlier scholars, the reader of this volume should beware that some of the conclusions laid out here are not as settled as they appear. For instance, Bauer dates the construction of the city wall to around the middle of the 4th century AD (p. 97), and thus sees its incorporation with the amphitheatre as a separate and much later phenomenon. However, in a recent study Hans-Joachim HUPÉ (*Die römische Stadtmauer im Trierer Amphitheater. Ein Forschungsproblem im Licht alter und neuer Untersuchungen. Trierer Zeitschr.* 79/80, 2016/17, 61–84) argues convincingly that the amphitheatre was constructed and integrated with the wall on the east side of the city during the second half of the 2nd century AD. The latter highly contrary view clearly needs to be taken into consideration (and ideally reconciled in Kuhnén’s planned second volume), especially in light of still further research relevant to this debate (e.g. Ch. LINDNER, 170 n. Chr.: Zur Datierung der römischen Stadtmauer und der Porta Nigra in Trier. *Funde u. Ausgr. Bezirk Trier* 50, 2018, 77–84; F. TANZ, Wasser im spätantiken Trier – neue Einblicke. *Ant. Tardive* 28, 2020, 101–112. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.AT.5.122356>). In addition, it is to be hoped that, because of the modern sources of data collection, the second volume will adopt a more critical, interpretive approach than the positivist, documentary approach that is (largely) pursued here.

These matters aside, *Amphitheater Trier I* appears at a time when the study of Roman amphitheatres, especially in provincial contexts, is undergoing a golden age of study and – crucially – publication. This renaissance was heralded by the meticulously researched, wide-ranging study of Thomas HUFSCHMID (*Amphitheatrum in Provincia et Italia. Architektur und Nutzung römischer Amphitheater von Augusta Raurica bis Puteoli. Forsch. Augst* 43,1–3 [Augst 2009]; with the important review by D. L. BOMGARDNER, A breakthrough from the frontier: from Augst to the heart of empire. *Journal Roman Arch.* 25, 2012, 831–841. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1047759400001896>). More recent work on provincial sites includes Britain and Germany: T. WILMOTT / D. GARNER, *The Roman Amphitheatre of Chester. Vol. 1. The Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology. Chester Arch. Excavation and Survey Report 16* (Oxford 2018). doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1dnx9>; B. DIMDE, *Gladiatur und Militär im römischen Germanien. Hamburger Stud. Ges. u. Kulturen Vormoderne 7* (Stuttgart 2019). In addition, there is an updated edition of David L. BOMGARDNER, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre* (London, New York 2000). Finally, readers will also want to consult the highly valuable online gazetteer of amphitheatres run by the GDKE, available at: <http://www.amphi-theatrum.de/> (last access: 3 Feb. 2021).

In summary: any discussion of amphitheatres in the Roman world, and in Roman Germany in particular, will have to take into account the significant mass of data and analysis contained in this volume. And yet, despite its weightiness, archaeologists must await the results of the second volume to fill in the gaps that remain, particularly since that work reaches its conclusions through proper archaeological field methods and modern scientific techniques. Once both volumes are published, they should at last quench Goethe’s curiosity about the amphitheatre at Trier by demonstrating *how much* and not how “little was to be deciphered”.

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