

the procurator. This interpretation would have major implications for the social reconstruction of the population of the early town. A potential difficulty, however, is that Wallace relies on reconstructions of the Iron Age–Roman transition, including the processes of urban development, that do not take into account more recent developments in critical analysis relating to themes such as Romanisation and its alternatives: identity and ethnicity. It also places heavy emphasis on two specific pieces of evidence: the Tabard Square inscription referring to Gallic traders and a writing tablet referring to landowners in the area of modern Kent, both of which are later in date and provide too little information to support such conclusions, especially considering what other sources may have been lost.

The reconstructions of the nature of the different areas of the town are useful, as is recognition of their different phases of development, although from the attractively produced plans and descriptions of features it is clear how fragmentary much of the surviving evidence is, and how much may be missing. The discussion of the roundhouses identified within the early town is interesting and perhaps more could have been made of how these buildings have been studied by Iron Age archaeologists more generally.

A fire-destruction horizon widely attested in excavations across London has long been associated with the Boudican destruction of *c.* AD 60/1, as described by Tacitus. Although Wallace acknowledges that the horizon could date to anywhere between AD 50 and AD 70, and that there are problems with using the historical sources to date and interpret the archaeology, some more critical analysis would have been valuable here. Recent work in Iron Age and Roman archaeology, for example, has considered whether or not Boudica actually existed in the way that the texts suggest.

Chapter 5 examines the evidence relating to the townspeople with interesting analyses of a large amount of material evidence from these early phases. It examines the potential existence of different communities within the settlement, how they may have interacted and the evidence of different crafts and other activities. It creates a vivid image of the lives of the early settlers, although in some cases greater caution was required to avoid projecting modern behavioural assumptions onto the past.

Overall, this is a useful and interesting volume, collating the archaeological evidence of the earliest phases of Roman London in order to shed new light on the origin of the town. Wallace's attention to the detail of these early structural phases strengthens the book's value, as does the analysis of the material culture from the settlement, and it demonstrates the potential of what can be achieved when the data are available. It might have been further strengthened by broadening the study through comparative consideration of some of the other towns of Roman Britain and through the integration of more recent theoretical debates on the subject matter.

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J.A. BAIRD. *The inner lives of ancient houses: an archaeology of Dura-Europos*. 2014. xix+395 pages, 105 figures, 1 table. Oxford. Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-968765-7 hardback £85.



Dura-Europos, the ancient city located on the left bank of the Euphrates River in present-day Syria is famous for many things—its paintings, synagogue, Christian baptistery, papyri and military records—but not

for its houses. This book by J.A. Baird demonstrates that this lack of fame is unjustified. The archaeological campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s excavated more than one hundred houses and thousands of associated artefacts, generating the largest corpus of urban houses in the Roman East. Baird is not only the first to publish this material as a whole (an appendix to her study lists all finds from domestic contexts recorded in the archives), but she also uses it to gain insight into the daily life of the city's inhabitants. Dura is particularly suitable for such an undertaking because it is one of the few places where it is possible to study the archaeological remains *in tandem* with written sources from the same site, notably papyri, graffiti and dipinti. For her project, Baird has combined

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a profound study of the extensive archaeological archive stored at Yale University Art Gallery, with new fieldwork as a member of the *Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura*. As it turned out, Baird conducted her work just in time: Dura-Europos was extensively damaged in 2012 during the ongoing Syrian civil war. This tragic state of affairs underlines the importance of this well-written, illuminating and inspiring publication.

The introductory chapter first explores the history of the excavation and wider intellectual study of Dura, and proceeds with an overview of the site's history; the city was variously under Hellenistic, Parthian and Roman control, finally falling to the Sasanians in AD 256. The chapter concludes with an elucidation of Baird's biographical approach towards the study of Dura's houses, which serves as the structuring principle for the following five chapters. Both the architecture and the artefactual assemblages from within are considered as active components of social action. This biographical approach allows for the detailed description of the differing 'lives' of individual houses in Chapter 2.

In addition, Chapter 2 pays ample attention to the literary evidence from the site. A crucial text for Baird's understanding of houses in the Parthian period (and later) is *PDura* 19 dated to AD 88/89, a parchment dealing with the distribution of two houses belonging to a certain Polemocrates amongst his four sons. This document is used to show how changes in the plans of houses may be related to kinship structures in the city. Baird herself is the first to admit that one cannot simply project kinship structures onto house plans, but she argues that a close reading of such documents and their comparison with the archaeological evidence demonstrates that these remains are to be interpreted quite differently from what was suggested by the original excavators. In Baird's new reading, houses are more densely populated and their forms more directly related to kinship and descent than to any need for gender segregation.

A biographical approach also accounts for the afterlife of objects, the subject of Chapter 3 on the Roman military presence in the houses. Baird argues that by the time of its demise in AD 256, Dura was not a city into which a military garrison had been installed, but rather it had effectively become a military settlement. With this view on Dura's development, she challenges the traditional understanding of Dura's final years. Around the beginning of the third century, the

northern part of the city was transformed into a military camp; over the next 50 years, however, an increasing number of military personnel were stationed in other parts of the city as well (although she convincingly questions the traditional view on the billeting of soldiers).

Chapter 4 sets out to reconstruct everyday life at Dura, and focuses upon activities within the house that may be reconstructed on the basis of artefactual evidence. We learn about eating and drinking and religious practices in these houses, as well as household manufacture and shops, bars and brothels. Chapter 5 uses these data to reconstruct identities at the site, more specifically civic and religious identities, but also those of gender, age, status and language. Dura is frequently described as polyglot and multicultural, but Baird points out that the houses are surprisingly homogenous. Elite houses share a spatial grammar with the smallest houses indicating the fundamental needs of their inhabitants were the same. Similarly, religious affiliation did not affect where in the city one lived or the form of one's house. The material record testifies to a state of hybridity, in which many cultures had long been entangled. It is impossible to account for this in terms of monolithic—let alone ethnic—entities. As such, Baird rightly questions the so-called 'Greekness' of Dura's elite families.

Finally, Chapter 6 brings all the material discussed in the previous pages together and offers an overall biographical approach to a selection of houses, aiming to show that the architectural development of these houses is related to social practices such as marriage, divorce and death. Particularly interesting is the discussion of the 'House of Lysias' in block DI. This is not just the largest house of the city, but also the only one in which we find human inhumation beneath the floor. Given the high status of its inhabitants, Baird interprets this burial as evidence for ancestor veneration—one of the few points in this study on which this reviewer disagrees.

In this important book, Baird corrects quite a few fossilised ideas about Dura, provides important new insights into domestic developments at the site and, rightly, emphasises Dura's hybrid culture. As such, it is a monumental study of a mundane subject.

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