

SURVEY ARTICLE

A Survey of Excavations and Studies on Ostia (2004–2014)*

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ABSTRACT

The paper is a bibliographical and critical survey of the archaeological research on ancient Ostia and Portus in the decade 2004–2014. The first part deals with some general themes, such as cults, architectural typologies and urban history, decoration: wall-paintings, mosaics and marble, the guilds and their seats, trades, etc. The second part is a survey of individual monuments and buildings which have been the subject of recent excavations and interpretations. The critical problem of late antique Ostia is treated separately, as well as the archaeology of Isola Sacra and Portus, with the Imperial harbours.

Keywords: Ostia; Portus; Isola Sacra; temples and cults; *collegia*; baths; *domus*; apartments; wall-painting; water supply; *horrea*; Late Antiquity; current research in archaeology

The surveys and excavations carried out at Ostia and Portus in 2004–14 have produced an enormous quantity of information.¹ I concentrate in this survey on books or articles published during this decade, with a very few exceptions where there is a pressing need to connect new and older publications. Major developments in this period include the complex identified near the mouth of the Tiber (the presumed Tempio dei Dioscuri); the series of new bath complexes brought to light in the south-eastern sector of Ostia, along the Via Severiana; the paintings and stuccoes from the Domus dei Bucrani, beneath the so-called ‘Schola del Traiano’; the investigations in the *castellum aquae* at Porta Romana; the information on the final restoration and occupation phases of the Forum area and the monumental centre of Ostia; the results of geophysical studies on the Isola Sacra; the new series of excavations and surveys at Portus (the so-called ‘Palazzo

* Among the many friends who have helped me to gather information I would like to express special thanks to Elizabeth Jane Shepherd and Claudio Salone.

¹ To this we will shortly be able to add the important results obtained by M. Heinzelmann, K. Strutt and others with a geophysical prospection campaign in 2001, which identified whole unexcavated and hitherto unknown parts of Ostia, both inside the walls (Regiones IV and V) and outside, to the south and south-west. These data will be definitively published in the near future (I thank Heinzelmann for this information). Currently, a brief report is available on the web (cf. <http://www.ostia-antica.org/heinzelmann/2001.htm>), without a plan; a map is published in Heinzelmann 2002, pl. IV.2, showing — subdivided by functional types — some buildings identified in the unexcavated parts of the settlement.

Imperiale', the probable *navalia*, etc.) and its suburbs (the *salinae*). Indeed, this is just a small selection of many interesting findings, limited to the most significant discoveries 'in the field'. The reflections and new historical theories (sometimes truly 'revolutionary') on monuments which were already known are a far more complex issue that cannot be summarized in a list; these are analysed in greater depth below.

To start with, the history of excavations and studies at Ostia has been enriched with new research. Dante Vaglieri was commemorated with a study day just after the centenary of his death,² but one of his pioneering initiatives, the 1911 survey of the remains then visible at Ostia using aerial photography from a balloon, had already been celebrated in a specific study in 2006.³ An exhibition and catalogue were dedicated to another protagonist of documentation and restoration at Ostia and Portus, Italo Gismondi.⁴ For a general overview and for visits to the ancient town, the new edition of the *Guida Archeologica Laterza*⁵ can be useful; also helpful is the website www.ostia-antica.org, which is regularly updated.

GENERAL THEMES, LATE REPUBLIC TO MID-THIRD CENTURY A.D.

Moving on to more strictly historical and archaeological topics, Late Republican Ostia has continued to attract considerable attention.⁶ In this field, much food for thought will emerge from the notes on some individual monuments and complexes, but we should deal first, in a unitary way, with the proceedings of a conference held at Ostia in 2002 in memory of John H. D'Arms.⁷ The bulk of the conference was devoted to problems in Ostia's history revolving around the figure of the 'first Gamala', one of the most important politicians of the Late Republican city.⁸

In this context, Fausto Zevi tackled the relations between Cicero, the Ostian élites and Gamala (perhaps related to Cicero's attempts to find a suitable place for his daughter's tomb);⁹ elsewhere,¹⁰ he revised the chronology of the 'works of Gamala', as listed in the well-known inscription *CIL XIV, 375*. Partly as a result of his dating the walls of Ostia to the time of Cicero, Zevi now suggests that Gamala senior's public career lasted from around 75 to 37 B.C.¹¹ and believes, with Meiggs, that the *bellum navale* financed by this prominent Ostian politician was the war against Sextus Pompey (40–36 B.C.) and not Pompey Magnus' *bellum piraticum*.¹²

² De Vico Fallani and Shepherd 2014.

³ Shepherd 2006. The same author also discussed the first shows held in the Theatre of Ostia in the 1920s (Shepherd 2005) and Raissa Calza's photographs of Ostia (Shepherd 2012).

⁴ Filippi 2007.

⁵ Pavolini 2006 (a completely up-dated edition of the guidebook published in 1983).

⁶ Unlike the problem of archaic (or regal) Ostia, somewhat overshadowed in recent studies, with the exception of the chapter on Ancus Marcius and Ostia in the book by T. Camous (2004: 251–5).

⁷ Gallina Zevi and Humphrey 2004.

⁸ Zevi 1973.

⁹ Zevi 2004a.

¹⁰ Zevi 2004b.

¹¹ However S. Panciera, in the same proceedings (Gallina Zevi and Humphrey 2004: 69–74), advances the hypothesis that the material redaction of *CIL XIV, 375* dates to the Augustan period and that Gamala himself was still active at this time. E. Lo Cascio (ibid.: 83–8) even suggests that the epigraph of the first Gamala may have been drawn up in the Antonine period and based on the *cursus* of his descendant, the 'second Gamala' (*CIL XIV, 376*): in other words, that the first inscription imitated the second and not vice versa, as usually thought.

¹² Zevi's first hypothesis, suggesting Pompey's war against the pirates of 67 B.C., was defended by Filippo Coarelli (2004: 98). Angelo Pellegrino's paper on the colony's suburbs also references the possible repercussions in Ostia of the political struggles of the late Republic (Pellegrino 2004), relating the post-Sullan reconstruction of the farms at Dragoncello to the institutional changes taking place at this time in the city. Contributions to the proceedings dealing with the Quattro Tempietti are considered below.

In fact, the cults practised at Ostia, with the problems relating to temples, sanctuaries and spaces used for ritual purposes, are perhaps the most hotly debated and widely studied issue in the past decade of research on the colony. The critical energy expended on this by various scholars (with an intense debate between sometimes very divergent positions) has entailed not only a discussion of the archaeological data, but also — and above all — of religious history and ‘anthropology’. I will briefly survey the contents of the books and articles tackling this issue, whilst numerous observations on individual buildings and problems will find space below, in the section on topography.

Two very ambitious books on religion at Ostia were published in Germany in 2004, by Anna-Katharina Rieger¹³ and Dirk Steuernagel respectively.¹⁴ The former deals exclusively with our site, the latter with cults in Roman ‘port cities’, three of which are used as case studies and investigated in depth: Ostia, Pozzuoli and Aquileia. Rieger also selects three case studies from Ostia for detailed analysis: the Quattro Tempietti, the Campo della Magna Mater and the Tempio Rotondo. Subsequent chapters deal with Ostia’s other religious areas, albeit in lesser detail. Rieger covers both cults that cannot yet be assigned with confidence to a specific building or place, and sanctuaries that can be identified with certainty from an archaeological point of view.

The parts of Steuernagel’s monograph devoted to Ostia take a different approach, avoiding ‘hierarchies’ among the various cultic manifestations and structures, all placed on the same level and studied systematically, following a criterion of rigorous rejection of any identification not based on certain proof.¹⁵ In the opening chapters, on divinities and cults that are not strictly ‘Ostian’, the ordering is roughly chronological, but these are followed by thematic treatments of, among other things, ‘city’ gods and local cult traditions, the guild *scholae* and their temples, and ‘foreign’ religions.

These two books have been discussed in depth in two long reviews (in fact two genuine articles) by Patrizio Pensabene, who dealt with both authors,¹⁶ and by Françoise Van Haeperen, who analysed only the former.¹⁷ We will return to these critiques in the section on individual sacred complexes below.

In the following year, Van Haeperen published another article on Ostian cults from the perspective of religious relations between Rome and its maritime colony.¹⁸ Again, we will examine her views in greater detail when dealing with the issue of cult spaces and specifically ritual aspects. The numerous problems tackled include some that had previously been neglected, such as the theories on the nature of the sacrifice being performed by Claudius in A.D. 48 when he received news of Messalina’s marriage to Silius.¹⁹

Though limited to the Republican period, Zevi’s most recent article on Ostia’s cults and sanctuaries²⁰ represents — for its length and the range of topics dealt with — the culmination of a corpus of publications that has in the space of a few years significantly changed our perceptions not just of religious life in Ostia, but of the entire public sphere and even the daily life of its inhabitants.²¹ Specifically, this article comprehensively

¹³ Rieger 2004.

¹⁴ Steuernagel 2004.

¹⁵ This would in itself be praiseworthy, were it not for the fact that the author sometimes makes the same mistake (as we will see in the case of the ‘Curia’).

¹⁶ Pensabene 2005a.

¹⁷ Van Haeperen 2005.

¹⁸ Van Haeperen 2006.

¹⁹ Van Haeperen (distancing herself from an earlier idea of Zevi, who had proposed *sacra privata*) prefers the *Volkanalia* of 23 August and does not rule out that the emperor himself performed the rite as a *duumvir* of the colony. The latter hypothesis has been rejected by Zevi (2009: 503–4), mainly because emperors held the post of *duumvir* at Ostia in census years, which A.D. 48 was not.

²⁰ Zevi 2012.

²¹ Zevi’s essay is in Ceccarelli and Maroni 2012, a useful catalogue that collects the sources and bibliography for each site, with a summary of the archaeological data and an exhaustive catalogue of illustrations. Ostia as a whole is discussed in another section of the volume (ibid.: 270–375).

revises the sacred topography of the Forum²² between about 60–50 B.C. and A.D. 40–50.²³ Zevi also focuses on the Quattro Tempietti and above all, in great depth, on the sacred area of Hercules which, in his view, also has important links to the cults of Vulcan and the Dioscuri (see *infra*).

Many studies have also been devoted to eastern pagan cults.²⁴ These include Steuernagel's numerous notes on Egyptian religion,²⁵ the aforementioned analysis by Rieger of the rites in the Campo della Magna Mater (see below, in the topographical section), the general re-examination of Mithraism at Ostia by White,²⁶ and above all the chapter devoted to the issue of 'foreign' cults in the book by Rohde.²⁷

ARCHITECTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DECORATIVE MATERIAL

On architectural and residential typologies we should first mention an article by Janet DeLaine,²⁸ a masterful analysis of the type of ground-floor residence known as a '*medianum* apartment' (or, as DeLaine rightly prefers, atrium-hall apartment²⁹): this is a fairly luxurious architectural form, very common in Trajanic-Hadrianic Ostia (but unknown in Rome). The general features of *medianum* residences were already well known and much studied; however DeLaine — referring mainly to the *insulae* of the Hadrianic Case a Giardino (*infra*) and particularly the central blocks of this large complex — offers some new and important thoughts on the dimensions of the ground floors (generally fractions of a square *actus*) and the original connection of some apartments by twos, later separated (were these initially related families?³⁰). She also records some interesting forerunners of the luxury residential forms typical of late antique Ostia, such as the separate pathways inside the house for slaves and visitors.

Another important aspect of this article is the links it makes between building types, the housing market and Ostian society. Thanks in part to the subdivision of *medianum* apartments into three different groups on the basis of their size and elegance, DeLaine suggests that the most prestigious apartments³¹ were occupied by owners or renters belonging to the wealthy merchant class, perhaps provincial importers, who might only have needed to reside at Ostia at specific times of year. In any case, the construction, for example, of the Case a Giardino certainly entailed a considerable investment and the author proposes a potential group of *socii*, rather than an individual investor.³²

²² Or more accurately of what developed, from the Augustan period onwards, as the colony's first true 'Forum space' (*infra*), definitively completed under Hadrian.

²³ cf. Zevi 2012: 537–41, and see the chronological table *ibid.*: n. 15.

²⁴ As for the Jewish presence in Ostia, the Synagogue was the object of many studies by Scandinavian scholars in the early 2000s.

²⁵ Steuernagel 2004: 212–27. On the same subject cf. Mols 2007 (who, among other things, queries the theories previously advanced by R. Mar on the ownership of the whole 'Serapeum district' by the presumed college of the priests of Serapis) and Bricault's catalogue of Isiac inscriptions (Bricault 2005: on Ostia and Portus, 580–92).

²⁶ White 2012. The principal results of this study are the dates of some shrines (overall later than the traditional interpretations) and the theory that some votive objects were transported from one place to another, as the epigraphy suggests: the names of the same donors are present in more than one mithraeum. White explains this phenomenon with the early abandonment of some cult places; for different interpretations, see Rohde 2012: 247–8 and Marchesini 2013: nn. 22–3.

²⁷ Rohde 2012: 208–60. The author mainly studies the analogies between the associations of the worshippers of these religions and the other *collegia* present at Ostia, from the point of view of their integration into society.

²⁸ DeLaine 2004.

²⁹ In the following sections, as in DeLaine's text, the term *medianum* will thus be used purely conventionally.

³⁰ Alternatively, these were passageways left open during the 'worksite' phases and were closed once the construction of the *insulae* was finished (Falzone and Zimmermann 2010: 112–13).

³¹ Covering two storeys: the ground floor and the upper first floor.

³² Both articles are connected to DeLaine's previous publications as concerns the calculation of the total number of work days needed to build a medium-sized Ostian *insula*.

Studies employing the notions and techniques of Space Syntax are an extension of the research field on built heritage. At Ostia this methodology has been applied particularly by Johanna Stöger, whose monograph³³ examines the second- and early third-century phases of Block IV, II, identifying it as a multi-purpose structure capable of promoting a high degree of social interaction between residents and visitors. She then broadens her scope to analyse the whole urban road network using the same criteria. Elsewhere³⁴ she also considers the guild *scholae* as buildings defined essentially by their rapport with the external context, the road network and the public.³⁵

The painted decorations of residential buildings are re-examined by Stella Falzone in two important survey articles.³⁶ The first discusses the decoration of *insulae* dating to the period between Commodus and the mid-third century; the second offers a general picture of all periods of wall-painting in Ostia. The analysis suffers from the fragmentary state of much of the evidence, but nonetheless succeeds in giving a sense of art historical development that, given the total absence – or disappearance – of First Style paintings in Ostia, starts from around the mid-first century B.C.³⁷ and proceeds by identifying specific analogies with the later Pompeian styles. Among these, as expected, Ostia mainly offers examples of the Third and to an even greater extent the Fourth Style, with a particularly broad sample of those second-century A.D. wall-paintings that continue the trends of the Fourth Style, sometimes in simplified form,³⁸ linear and serial, with a widespread use of white backgrounds. For the period for which evidence is most abundant (c. A.D. 150–250), Falzone stresses progressive standardization and decreasing quality, though these trends are not uniform or exclusive: in some cases, they are contradicted by the care with which patrons underlined³⁹ the hierarchical relationships between the various rooms in the house. Such phenomena of flexibility and adaptation do not conflict with the existence on the Ostian market of predetermined ornamental schemes, applied serially by artisanal workshops and more or less complex depending on the patron's means.

Pensabene's monumental monograph on the use of marble in Ostia⁴⁰ is not limited to the ornamental features of the city's buildings. Many parts of the book are indeed devoted to a systematic investigation of the technical and stylistic features of the stone architectural decorations of buildings, particularly public buildings and those open to the public: here we should note the attempt to clarify the relations between imperial, colonial or euergetic commissions on the one hand, and on the other the activity of workshops and craftsmen, for each of which a Roman or local origin is suggested.⁴¹ However, Pensabene's interests are not restricted to this sphere alone, and he devotes an entire section to the marble trade in the two harbour towns at the mouth of the Tiber, and thus above all to the *statio marmorum* of Portus and related issues (for example the finishing of the blocks that arrived in a rough or partially worked state;⁴² the links with the corresponding *statio marmorum* in Rome below the Aventine, for which most of the

³³ Stöger 2011a.

³⁴ Stöger 2011b.

³⁵ The same line of research is followed in an essay by J. R. Brandt (2004) employing a methodology different to that typical of Space Syntax, but dealing – not just in Ostia – with sightlines and pathways inside houses.

³⁶ Falzone 2004; 2007.

³⁷ With the Second Style painting cycle in the House of the Bucrania (*infra*).

³⁸ The *mediana* ground floors mentioned above, though certainly owned in many cases by the affluent classes, did not usually have very elaborate decoration (Falzone 2007: 95, and see also *infra*, on the Case a Giardino).

³⁹ Also using floor decoration: and indeed S. Falzone devotes constant attention to the relationship between paintings and mosaics in the residences examined.

⁴⁰ Pensabene 2007.

⁴¹ In the latter case, too, Ostian workshops are always strongly influenced by the decorative fashions prevailing in Rome at different periods.

⁴² Especially column shafts or drums, but also pieces to be turned into capitals or sarcophagi.

products were destined, but also with Ostia, where a share of the material was used; the interpretation of the letters and quarry marks present on many blocks, etc.).

We will return below to the reuse of marbles from the third century onwards (and in general to the sections on late antique Ostia), but we should not forget Pensabene's contribution to the study of local statuary workshops,⁴³ distinct from those devoted to architectural decoration and also investigated in relation to the artistic trends prevailing in Rome at different times. Marble is analysed here in all its many aspects and for Ostia this volume is undoubtedly the most coherent and exhaustive study hitherto devoted to this subject.

The problems of the city's water supply have finally been tackled in a complete and convincing way thanks to the publication of a study by the *École Française de Rome*⁴⁴ starting from the soundings and surveys carried out in 2003–5 at the *castellum aquae* of Porta Romana, adjacent to the Late Republican fortification⁴⁵ and already partially excavated (though without adequate documentation) in 1985–6. Naturally, Ostia's aqueduct is one — but not the only — protagonist of this study, since the cistern at Porta Romana was the point at which it entered the city.⁴⁶ One of the conclusions of the French archaeologists⁴⁷ is that the creation of the *castellum* at Porta Romana — dating to the late Flavian period⁴⁸ — did not coincide with a construction or reconstruction phase of the aqueduct and that the Domitianic reservoir continued to use the supply system created (as already known) some decades earlier. They also confirm that the aqueduct underwent important reconstruction during the Severan period.

A second crucial contribution of this monograph to our understanding of the development of Ostia's water system concerns another *castellum*, the water cistern underneath the palaestra of the Terme del Nettuno in Regio II,⁴⁹ probably built around A.D. 30–40. This was radically altered in the late first century, after two concomitant events: the creation of the water storage facility at Porta Romana, which replaced that of Regio II in its functions, and the first construction phase of the baths, whose foundations severed the connection between the aqueduct and the cistern. From then on, the latter served to discharge rainwater from the surface.

The book also offers a detailed examination of the connections between the final *castellum* of the aqueduct and the remainder of the city's water system, with particular attention to inscriptions on *fistulae* and theories concerning the public and private commissions⁵⁰ to which the authors ascribe the various works.⁵¹ Of considerable interest for later periods is — in the third century — the work to turn the old patrol-walk on the city walls into a cocciopesto-clad channel to supply water.⁵² We do

⁴³ Pensabene 2007: 559–81.

⁴⁴ Bukowiecki, Dessales and Dubouloz 2008. For the systems of water supply see also Bedello Tata 2005b (the *noria* of the Terme dei Cisiarii).

⁴⁵ This intervention marked the start of disuse of the fortifications themselves, evidently no longer important for defence (see Spanu 2012, listing comparable situations for other stretches of the walls and a series of cases in which private individuals usurped Ostia's public spaces).

⁴⁶ Much new information has also emerged on the route of the aqueduct outside the city: cf. Bedello Tata *et al.* 2006, with the identification of three catchment devices at Fosso di Malafede (about 13 km from Ostia).

⁴⁷ Bukowiecki, Dessales and Dubouloz 2008: 57.

⁴⁸ A slightly earlier intervention under Vespasian (A.D. 76–77) is attested by an inscription, incomplete but certainly belonging to an aqueduct (Marinucci 2006). I will return to this below when discussing the Terme del Nuotatore.

⁴⁹ Bukowiecki, Dessales and Dubouloz 2008: 59–76.

⁵⁰ cf. also *infra* for the lead pipes connected with the Terme del Nuotatore.

⁵¹ Particularly controversial is that concerning some pillars in the Forum Baths, for which the French team (see Bukowiecki, Dessales and Dubouloz 2008: 190–4) tends to prefer a third-century date and rules out a connection with the aqueduct.

⁵² *ibid.*: 176 (and see *ibid.*: 190 on another late intervention in the south-eastern area of Ostia, with which a *specus* also clad in cocciopesto was placed on top of a stretch of the wall circuit).

not know for certain when the aqueduct was abandoned, though this happened after the fourth century.⁵³

A completely separate topic is that of Ostia's gardens, most of which belonged to *domus* or complexes of *insulae*, but also to 'public' areas like the Piazzale delle Corporazioni. Hitherto neglected, this topic is exhaustively investigated in an article⁵⁴ that, after a general survey of the issues, discusses those gardens whose existence has been verified by excavations and those that, by contrast, are currently 'suspected' and require archaeological confirmation.

SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

It is difficult, and perhaps misleading, to distinguish epigraphical research from historical and archaeological studies on a given site. However, for practical reasons I will cover some important 'purely epigraphical' publications that appeared during this decade of studies on Ostia. Christer Bruun analyses the problem of the *familia publica* and especially the colony's freedmen starting from the epigraphical evidence on the name *Ostiensis* (or *Ostiensius*),⁵⁵ whilst Ivan Di Stefano, continuing his research on the Volusii Saturnini between the first and third century, collects the documentation on them (or their freedmen) attested at Ostia.⁵⁶

M. Cébeillac, M. L. Caldelli and F. Zevi have edited a selection of inscriptions, far larger than the symbolic figure of 100 specified in the title,⁵⁷ that seeks to provide a complete picture of the city's history and the institutional and social life of its inhabitants and is drawn, in turn, from an epigraphical heritage that, with over 6,500 specimens, is the largest in the Roman world outside Rome itself. Practically all the entries making up the volume are published or known texts dating from the third century B.C. to the fifth century A.D., but countless new interpretations are offered.⁵⁸ Also important is the methodological objective — announced in the title and largely achieved — of establishing a constant link between the epigraphical documents and their archaeological and monumental context.

On the subject of Ostia's *collegia*, Zevi re-examines the whole problem⁵⁹ with a new interpretation of the policies adopted at Ostia (through the prefects of the *annona*) by Commodus and his successors, Pertinax and the Severans. According to Zevi, Ostia's 'annony' associations saw a turning point between the late second and the early decades of the third century;⁶⁰ always closely linked to the central power, they were now subjected to new provisions, particularly by Septimius Severus, in a context that we could describe as markedly 'state-controlled'. Zevi identifies the connection between

⁵³ *ibid.*: 187–8.

⁵⁴ Shepherd and Olivanti 2008.

⁵⁵ Bruun 2008. The author tackles, among other things, Ostia's *plumbarii*, on which we have a large amount of epigraphical documentation on *fistulae*: see also the studies of R. Geremia Nucci (most recently, Geremia Nucci 2006).

⁵⁶ Di Stefano Manzella 2010.

⁵⁷ Cébeillac-Gervasoni *et al.* 2010 (Italian edition, with additions and revisions, of a work published in France in 2006). For a detailed description and critique, see Nonnis and Pavolini 2013.

⁵⁸ The catalogue of inscriptions alternates with paragraphs destined to form the core of a new general manual of Latin epigraphy, not limited to the Ostian evidence.

⁵⁹ Zevi 2008.

⁶⁰ The *navicularii*, the *codicarii*, the five *corpora* of the *lenuncularii*, the *marmorarii*, and the *pistores* (cf. *ibid.*: 486–7, and, for the whole argument summarized here, 487–505). As for the associations of the *lenuncularii*, confirmation of Zevi's opinions can be found in a later study (Tran 2014), in which — dating inscription *CIL* XIV, 4144 no longer to A.D. 147, but to 217 — Tran ascribes the *floruit* of these colleges to the early decades of the third century and provides further information on how they operated and their organization.

these developments and the historical events of the period in the dramatic series of convictions of pretenders to the empire and other prominent individuals, and the resulting confiscations that in Ostia benefited the *corpora* vital to the Roman administration. It is thus no accident that many buildings with an associative function, such as the temples of the *fabri navales* and the *fabri tignuarii*, were founded in this period.

It is evident that this series of provisions with regard to Ostia's associative institutions began under Commodus, not just from the (known) excavation data from the sanctuary of the *fabri navales*, but also from the epigraphical evidence on the headquarters of the *pistores*.⁶¹ The site of the latter is unknown, but Zevi, following on from Bakker's studies,⁶² identifies the Caseggiato dei Molini (after its transformation into a large bakery under the Severans) as a structure belonging to the imperial *annona*, as confirmed by the paintings in the adjoining Sacello del Silvano. Zevi also discusses the so-called Schola del Traiano and its 'collegial' phase,⁶³ but we will deal with this issue in the topographical section of this survey.⁶⁴

In any case, as for the *collegia*, the most complete re-examination of all the evidence in the recent bibliography is found in the aforementioned book by Rohde,⁶⁵ which — for each *corpus* — also contains an analysis of the prosopography of the magistrates and associates, from the point of view of the integration (fundamental for Ostian society) of professional associations with the city's institutions.

Flohr's monograph does not deal extensively with professional associations, but does focus on a profession of enormous importance in Ostia: that of the *fullones*.⁶⁶ We thus have an extremely useful up-to-date revision of this topic, many decades after Pietrogrande's book. Flohr tackles the Ostian evidence mainly from the perspective of the archaeological remains, but there is no shortage of theories on those manufacturing processes that cannot be identified easily on the basis of the structural data alone.⁶⁷ One interesting idea is that the owners of fulleries sent the partially worked fabrics for the necessary finishing to retailers, who then sold them.⁶⁸ Further, the probable total volume of textile production, which certainly exceeded local demand,⁶⁹ raises new questions about the export trade or redistribution 'out of' Ostia, which — for this and other reasons — can no longer be considered just a consumer city.

Moving on to a different area of research, E. Spagnoli's examination of the corpus of coins, published and unpublished, held in the Ostia storerooms and found in the city and its suburban area offers a new study of the numismatic material, although only up to the Flavian period.⁷⁰ The more strictly specialist aspects of this text are counterbalanced by constant reference to the colony's historical situation as it unfolded, and to the differing monetary policies adopted by rulers.

Aside from this work, what we would describe as 'material culture' boils down almost exclusively to research on pottery production and trade (aside from the narrow field of non-ceramic artefacts like glass and metals, etc.⁷¹). In Ostia, these studies flourished

⁶¹ Zevi 2008: 494–6.

⁶² Bakker 1999.

⁶³ *ibid.*: 501–5.

⁶⁴ See *infra* the references to a specific study of this building by the same scholar, with C. Bocherens.

⁶⁵ Rohde 2012 (for the section on Ostia, 95–274).

⁶⁶ Flohr 2013.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*: 169–70.

⁶⁸ See also, along the same lines, Rohde 2012: 189.

⁶⁹ See the dimensional aspects of the fulleries, on which the author dwells (*ibid.*: 77–8) to an extent rarely or never seen in the past. These suggest that Ostia's fulling capacity significantly exceeded that of Pompeii, another decidedly 'textile-oriented' city (though there is no comparison with the total production of Rome, if we accept some recent data).

⁷⁰ Spagnoli 2007 (530 coins out of a total of 3,715 present in the storerooms).

⁷¹ Without forgetting the archaeozoological finds: for Ostia see the overview by MacKinnon (2014).

considerably during the period 2004–14: nonetheless, though there were local pottery workshops, their location remains largely unknown. G. Olcese, editor of the *Atlante* covering the Tyrrhenian area and devoted to sites where pottery was certainly made and to wrecks,⁷² includes for Ostia a review of the published pottery data from the 1970 excavation in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni (mostly of the Claudian period and including much information on manufacturing discards).⁷³ This is accompanied by some references to traces of kilns, almost always of uncertain function, present elsewhere in the city.⁷⁴

The largest quantity of information on this topic is found in the volume edited by Clementina Panella and Giorgio Rizzo as part of the series devoted to the excavation of the Terme del Nuotatore, examining, in particular, the soundings of 1973–5 in the north-eastern area, on the edge of the bath complex.⁷⁵ The most important achievement of this very detailed work is the complete publication of the amphorae, coins and African table ware⁷⁶ from a single huge deposit⁷⁷ consisting of 125 m² of pottery discards (about 20,000 fragments) found in a ‘secondary context’, as they came from rubbish tips in the city or the district. The way this deposit was formed explains the very few residual finds noted in the study: the resulting picture is very coherent and allows us to date the activity in question to the time of the last Antonine emperors (A.D. 160–80/90).

With *Ostia VI*, then, we finally have the almost complete publication of a ceramic corpus that had become famous in studies of material culture — in Italy and elsewhere — from 1970–80, and whose composition was already known from many overviews or studies of individual ceramic classes, but that had never been studied as a whole. Its fame results from the unusual size of the deposit and its materials, their chronological homogeneity and crucial contribution to the study of trade in Ostia and the Mediterranean during the second half of the second century A.D.⁷⁸ The historical conclusions drawn by the volume editors cannot be summarized here, and the same is true of the monumental study by G. Rizzo devoted more specifically to the amphora finds from this stratigraphic context.⁷⁹

The other major contributions on Ostia’s pottery trade — in the decade under consideration — are the analyses undertaken by two American scholars, Archer Martin and Eric De Sena (or Martin alone), of the large quantity of materials yielded by the test pits dug jointly, in 1998–2001, by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut and the American Academy of Rome.⁸⁰ Most of this information actually concerns the late antique period (see below), but Martin has published an article on amphora imports in Ostia in the early and middle imperial period,⁸¹ which isolates four groups of contexts or ‘horizons’: for the moment we are interested in the first two, dating respectively to about A.D. 50–100 and 100–50. The accompanying graphs allow readers to visualize the

⁷² Olcese 2011–12.

⁷³ *ibid.*: 175–8. As for bibliographical parallels, we can observe that in this work we have no adequate survey of the recent literature on the ceramic classes considered.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*: 178–9. For some villas and probable adjoining kilns in the Fiumicino area, see *ibid.*: 164–5.

⁷⁵ Panella and Rizzo 2014.

⁷⁶ These are the only classes considered in *Ostia VI*, *ibid.*, in accordance with the criteria set out in C. Panella’s preface. The author describes the book as ‘a tutti gli effetti una monografia sulle anfore’, but accompanied by analyses of the other aforementioned ‘dating’ materials: the chapter on coins was written by G. Pardini, that on African table ware by S. Napolitani. Excluded from the study, by contrast, were those classes that by the late Antonine period could already be considered wholly ‘residual’ and that are in any case numerically marginal (see immediately below).

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*: 30–3 (Period V, Activity 13).

⁷⁸ It should be said that the book does not consider only the sequence of the Antonine period, but all the layers recovered in the test pits in the north-eastern area of the baths until their abandonment around A.D. 230–50.

⁷⁹ Panella and Rizzo 2014: 77–442.

⁸⁰ Henceforth DAI and AAR.

⁸¹ Martin 2008.

percentage variations over time in the geographical provenance of the containers and the foodstuffs imported. The documentation of the DAI-AAR soundings then presents a chronological gap between about A.D. 150 and 280, now partially filled by the publication of the late Antonine contexts of the Terme del Nuotatore (*supra*).

Another two articles not based directly on the ceramic evidence deal with the more general problems of trade in Ostia's boom period. Michael Heinzelmann's approach⁸² is novel, though some of his conclusions are problematic. He explains the colony's massive development in the second century A.D., despite the new Trajanic basin at Portus, by the hypothesis — unlikely in my opinion — that the large *horrea* built or enlarged at Ostia during the century of the 'architectural revolution' were not used primarily to store grain, and were not for essentially annonary purposes and funded by the State, but should be ascribed mainly to private investment.⁸³ The resulting image of Ostia as an import-export centre — devoted mainly to mediating between the provinces of the Empire rather than to supplying Rome — is intriguing, though unproven and overly dependent on modern theoretical models.⁸⁴

By contrast, DeLaine's article⁸⁵ — in part covering the same problem — does not aim to construct a theoretical framework applicable to all the commercial phenomena affecting Ostia during the middle imperial boom. Her specific subject is Ostia's 'domestic market' (which of course cannot be completely separated from the problem of imports and exports⁸⁶). She offers fresh treatments of auctions (on the one hand the products auctioned, on the other the spaces⁸⁷ and the ways that sales were organized) and of the existence of covered markets like Islamic bazaars or souks; there may also have been places in which to install temporary sales facilities, for fairs or other occasional events. The section on *horrea*⁸⁸ is perhaps the most important revision of the subject since Rickman's classic work. The main new conclusion is the impossibility of distinguishing clearly between their function as warehouses and that as markets, confirming that 'multi-functionality' that increasingly seems to be typical not just of Ostian, but of Roman architecture more generally.

TOPOGRAPHICAL STUDIES

I turn now to the topographical examination of those individual buildings, monuments, complexes and archaeological remains that were the object of specific studies during the decade 2004–14. The chronological period remains that between the late Republic and the mid-third century A.D.: the data are presented in the conventional topographical sequence since, in the absence of any other viable criterion, it closely follows the route adopted in the *Guida di Ostia*.

One of the buildings on which recent academic debate has been most heated is the Domitianic temple at the centre of the Piazzale delle Corporazioni. During this decade, only L. Bouke van der Meer has devoted a stand-alone article to it,⁸⁹ but practically all those who have written on Ostian cults have formulated hypotheses and interpretations

⁸² Heinzelmann 2010.

⁸³ The issue should not be tackled with 'contemporary' parameters: we cannot in any way rule out, for example, that there may have been — in the management of *horrea* — an intersection of the interests of the central power (in any case prevalent), initiatives of the colony and private economic strategies, but this requires further in-depth study.

⁸⁴ The Small World Model mentioned in Heinzelmann 2010: 8.

⁸⁵ DeLaine 2005.

⁸⁶ See the author's observations on the working or recycling, in Ostia's fulleries, of fabrics that could then either be sold to the local population or entrusted to overseas *negotiatores* (ibid.: 30, and see also *supra*).

⁸⁷ However, there is insufficient evidence that buildings like the Horrea Epagathiana or the so-called Piccolo Mercato were used as *atria auctionaria* (the idea set out ibid.: 43–5).

⁸⁸ ibid.: 39–43.

⁸⁹ Van der Meer 2009.

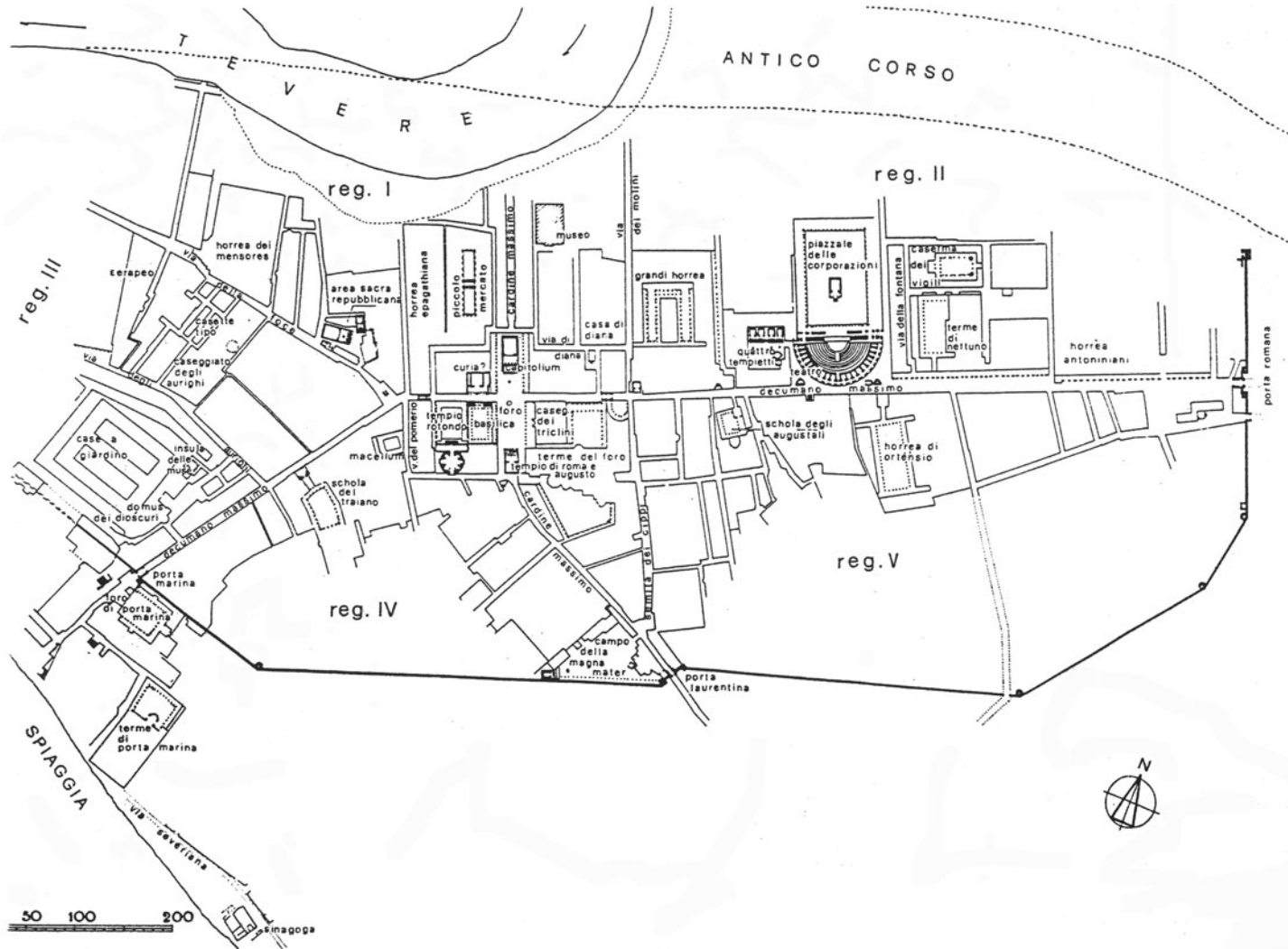


FIG. 1. Plan of Ostia showing buildings and complexes mentioned in the text.

of this structure. Rieger⁹⁰ identifies it — given the connection between the square and the area of the river port — as the temple of Pater Tiberinus, known at Ostia from inscriptions: the building, thanks to its location at the centre of a space connected with trade, navigation and the *annona*, thus replaced the nearby Quattro Tempietti of the Republican period⁹¹ as a place intended to facilitate relations between Ostia's residents and the foreigners frequenting the port. Steuernagel⁹² prefers to interpret the temple as the seat of a probable 'federal' cult shared by the *collegia* represented in the *stationes* of the peristyle, thus rejecting Rieger's hypothesis in part because the front of the building faced the Theatre and not the Tiber.⁹³

Rieger's reconstruction is rejected by the other authors who discuss this issue: Van Haepere, whose review denounces its shaky foundations⁹⁴ and prefers, albeit with caution, the idea — already formulated in the past — of an imperial cult, and van der Meer, mentioned above. The latter refers to an *ordo corporatorum*, known from an inscription⁹⁵ as the institution that funded the enlargement of a temple which van der Meer identifies as the building at the centre of the square. It was indeed altered during the central decades of the second century, but the identification relies exclusively on the Antonine date of the inscription, its uncertain attribution to the *corpus traiectus Luculli* (whose *alba* date back at the earliest to A.D. 140⁹⁶) and the more or less corresponding start date (A.D. 146) of the statuary dedications that van der Meer thinks come from the square. Antonine enlargement aside, the author ends by suggesting that the temple was originally used for the cult of the emperors, as also accepted by Pensabene.⁹⁷ Clearly, this thorny issue is far from resolved.

The aforementioned Quattro Tempietti are notoriously one of Ostia's most important sacred spaces, studied and discussed from the earliest research on the town. Rieger suggests⁹⁸ that, from their construction, the Tempietti were a sanctuary aimed at encouraging exchanges between people arriving from the river port and the colony's inhabitants. However, this new reconstruction (including drawings) is rejected by Van Haepere, who considers the openings and the stairs behind the podium of the Tempietti, on the Tiber side, to be much later and not original. Pensabene's reconstruction plan and elevations diverge significantly from Rieger's,⁹⁹ and he proposes his own different sequence of chronological phases.¹⁰⁰ Steuernagel,¹⁰¹ espousing the 'early' date for the building technique employed in the first phase of the sanctuary (the

⁹⁰ Rieger 2004: 241–9.

⁹¹ See *infra* for the scholar's interpretation, motivating her arguments on the temple of the Piazzale.

⁹² Steuernagel 2004: 199.

⁹³ Not to mention that the entrances to the Piazzale on the river port side had already been closed before most of the famous mosaics in the porticoed spaces were laid. See Steuernagel 2004: 198–9 for perhaps the most extensive recent critique of the 'state-control' interpretations advanced by G. Calza on the Piazzale and its mosaics and inscriptions. By contrast, Steuernagel — and others — prefers to stress the relationship between the triporticus, with its mosaics, and the Theatre. However, an interpretation of the Piazzale as a 'commercial meeting place' is still followed by Rohde (2012: 103–4, 109–10).

⁹⁴ Van Haepere 2005: 241–2.

⁹⁵ *CIL* XIV, 246.

⁹⁶ But see the revision now in Tran 2014.

⁹⁷ Pensabene 2005a: 502–3. Cf. now (along the same lines and with a summary of the various opinions on this problem) Terpstra 2014.

⁹⁸ She dedicates a long section of her book to the sanctuary (Rieger 2004: 39–92, and for a survey of the site's building phases see the useful table 2). A novel element is the author's identification of the so-called 'Nymphaeum' in front of the four shrines as a possible imperial cult place (*ibid.*: 88). F. Coarelli's interpretations of both the shrine of Jupiter and the 'Nymphaeum' are very different (Coarelli 2004: 93); he also repeats his attribution to Gamala of the earliest phase of the so-called Casa di Apuleio, behind the Tempietti. As concerns the 'Nymphaeum', Steuernagel's chronology and functional hypotheses (Steuernagel 2004: 90) also differ from Rieger's: more traditionally, the author considers it a simple fountain.

⁹⁹ Pensabene 2005a: 505–11.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*: 526–8.

¹⁰¹ Steuernagel 2004: 66–8.

early decades of the first century B.C.¹⁰²), implicitly questions the attribution of the Tempietti to the euergetism of Gamala,¹⁰³ though he does not advance his own alternative hypothesis.

The new and complete documentation of the Grandi Horrea by a French team has hitherto produced only preliminary reports; the latest¹⁰⁴ confirms existing theories and refines our understanding of some features. The authors date its foundation to the early first century A.D. (slightly before the traditional Claudian date), show that the theory of the original existence of a portico on the north side of the courtyard (G. Calza) is not supported by the archaeological data and confirm that the major refurbishment phase should be ascribed to the time of Commodus¹⁰⁵ and the Severans, when the building's storage capacity was enlarged to its maximum extent: from then on it was certainly used for grain. Finally (and this is another confirmation), the French researchers mention no building work in the Grandi Horrea after the late Severan period.

The final report on the soundings and studies of the 1990s in the Casa di Diana was published in 2013,¹⁰⁶ but in a volume without exhaustive documentation of the excavations (there are no stratigraphic sections). However, the reconstruction of the *insula's* building history has been significantly modified, with the identification of an initial Hadrianic phase (c. A.D. 130) when the ground-floor residence already had the form with a courtyard that it basically kept from then on. In the later Antonine phase this small courtyard was adorned with a fountain clad in precious marbles, whilst the marble and mosaic floors were relaid.¹⁰⁷ After further alterations to the structure and painted decoration between about A.D. 180 and 225, the floors were raised between A.D. 225 and 250 with a large deposit rich in materials, whilst the insertion of the mithraeum into the north-east sector is thought to be later still (second half of the fourth century?). However, in the book both the correspondences between the chronologies and the subdivision into phases and subphases, and the reasons for the hypothesis that the shrine co-existed first with a single-family use of the ground floor and then with its transformation into a hotel¹⁰⁸ (an old conjecture), are unclear. What is certain is that the homogeneous ceramic corpus yielded by the large deposit dates at the latest to the mid-third century¹⁰⁹ and represents the last phase in the life of the house that can be documented with certainty through movable artefacts.¹¹⁰

¹⁰² The chronological issue — now relaunched by Zevi's new dating of the walls of Ostia to about 63–58 B.C. — continues to raise doubts, because the *opus quasi reticulatum* of the Tempietti and their podium is attributed by many to a slightly earlier period. Zevi himself has taken up the issue (Zevi 2004b: 59–64; 2012: 541–6), repeating the theory that the establishment of the sanctuary presupposes that of the fortification, at least as a project, and that consequently the Tempietti must date to more or less the same time as the walls (or even to the mid-first century).

¹⁰³ On the contrary, Zevi repeats the Gamala hypothesis (Zevi 2012), in keeping with what we have just said. In other words, Gamala the Elder turned the place into a sort of family *monumentum*, though it was on public land, leading Zevi to suggest authorization by the Roman quaestor. Finally, the enclosure present in the area and sacred to Jupiter was pre-existing (*ibid.*: 546) and connected to the middle Republican materials found by Vaglieri.

¹⁰⁴ Bukowiecki, Monteix and Rouse 2008.

¹⁰⁵ At this point the report rightly raises a problem, querying the idea that the contemporary transformation of Via dei Molini into a *via tecta* served to create a functional connection between the Grandi Horrea and the Caseggiato dei Molini (this is Bakker's theory: cf. Bakker 1999), since the house had not yet been turned into a bakery, which happened under the Severans. I should add that the contrary could also be argued: it was the existence of the *via tecta* that explains the project to use the *insula* on the other side of the road as a large bakery. But this line of research requires development.

¹⁰⁶ Marinucci 2013, with papers by H. Dessalles, S. Falzone, V. Treviso and M. Ceci.

¹⁰⁷ Also dating to this phase is a *fistula* naming the owners, M. Cornelius Secundus and Sergia Paulla, the former with interests in Ostia, the latter from a noble family of Antioch (according to Zevi 2008: 500–1).

¹⁰⁸ On all this see Marinucci 2013: 101–5.

¹⁰⁹ cf. *ibid.*: 133–92.

¹¹⁰ Zevi (2008: 498–500), adopting an earlier reconstruction (Bakker 1999), thinks that during the last period of occupation of the Casa di Diana some ground-floor rooms were turned into stables (see the basalt paving), serving

Among the public complexes — religious and civic — surrounding the Forum, the true function of the so-called ‘Curia’ on the north side remains the subject of controversy, driven by the discovery nearby of fragments of both the lists of Augustales and the *Fasti Ostienses*.¹¹¹ Rieger¹¹² believes that both documents may have been displayed in the building, which was thus a seat of the imperial cult given the presence of the Augustales, and at the same time — since the *Fasti* were in her opinion drawn up by the *pontifex Volcani* — a space connected to Vulcan. However, she also cites clues suggesting that the structure may in fact have hosted the meetings of the decurions, thus taking the form of a typical multi-purpose building (though the accumulation of functions in this case seems excessive). In this context, Rieger identifies one of the two Republican temples north of the Decumanus (the western temple) as the original sanctuary of Vulcan, later replaced, in her opinion, by the Domitianic or Trajanic ‘Curia’.

Steuernagel¹¹³ does agree that the ‘Curia’ might be a cult place of Vespasian and Titus; this, in his opinion, does not necessarily contradict its interpretation as the headquarters of the decurions or of the Augustales (again, the superimposition of too many different hypotheses undermines the argument). A difficulty in Rieger’s reconstruction (identified in the reviews by Van Haeperen and Pensabene)¹¹⁴ is the lack of proof that this building was in fact where the *Fasti* were displayed; it is also uncertain that these were drawn up by the priest of Vulcan.¹¹⁵ Zevi suggests that the ‘Curia’ is not a *templum* and points out that, if the western temple north of the Forum was indeed dedicated to Vulcan and later replaced, as *Volcanal*, by the ‘Curia’, it is unclear why the two buildings co-existed for some time.¹¹⁶ This problem is so far unresolved.

As for the Forum Basilica (on the opposite side of the Decumanus from the supposed Curia), work has been done¹¹⁷ to recompose and complete a figurative cycle from fragments identified in groups: an initial group in the 1940s, others in the 1980s, until — with the most recent research and the publication of a study — the documented portions now consist of about 120 fragments (reconnected pieces aside). More than a unitary frieze, the reliefs originally formed a series of twenty-eight panels placed in the intercolumnar spaces in the upper order of the building. The scenes¹¹⁸ depicted episodes of the *primordia Urbis*, from the deeds of Aeneas in Latium to the myths of the foundation of Rome, and present strong analogies with the frieze from the Basilica Aemilia, but probably date to the late Flavian period; they are attributed to a workshop in Rome and may have been commissioned by aristocratic families active in the area (the Acilii Glabrones?).

To conclude this survey of the public buildings in the Forum, the Tempio di Roma e Augusto has finally been definitively published in the excellent monograph by Roberta Geremia Nucci,¹¹⁹ with M. A. Ricciardi’s fine reconstruction drawings. The author provides her own assessment of all the main problems hitherto raised: the statue of Victory must have stood, as an acroterion, on the *columen* of the front pediment; the *clipeus* and civic crown at the centre of the pediment were held up by two *Nikai*; the

the bakery in the adjoining Caseggiato dei Molini. The aforementioned mithraeum in the Casa di Diana may also be connected to these developments (White 2012: 459).

¹¹¹ But scattered and reused, not just in this area. By the way, C. Bruun has again insisted that the *Fasti Ostienses* are a document unique of its kind among the epigraphical sources of the Roman world (Bruun 2009).

¹¹² Rieger 2004: 220–5.

¹¹³ Steuernagel 2004: 73–4.

¹¹⁴ Van Haeperen 2005: 240–1; Pensabene 2005a: 500–2.

¹¹⁵ Pensabene also cites Vitruvius, according to whom temples of this god had to be built outside the walls.

¹¹⁶ Zevi 2012: 540–1. The scholar (with Meiggs) thinks that the first structure is a sanctuary of Jupiter, replacing another, older one.

¹¹⁷ Marini Recchia and Zevi 2007–2008.

¹¹⁸ Only about 5 per cent survive, according to the authors’ estimates.

¹¹⁹ Geremia Nucci 2013.

statue of Roma — probably one of two cult statues — is not the (lost) original, but a modern cast; both Roma and the acroterial Victory are original high quality creations by Roman sculptors, in the Augusto-Tiberian classicizing style which also characterizes the building's architectural decorations.

The most hotly debated issue is the temple's date, connected to the problem of the establishment of the imperial cult outside Rome. Geremia Nucci prudently prefers a chronology between around A.D. 10 and 20,¹²⁰ and thus between the end of the principate of Augustus and the start of that of Tiberius, and a commission that, again, may have resulted from a convergence of local private euergetism¹²¹ and imperial intervention, thus leading to the first true monumentalization of the Forum space.

We now leave the Forum and continue westwards along the Decumanus, but we cannot abandon the Forum, in the broad sense, without discussing a structure that is no longer visible, but that must originally have been connected to the Basilica. The space west of the latter now looks very different due to the construction (between the late Severan period and that of the Gordians) of the large Tempio Rotondo and the square in front, but there is considerable evidence that there was another complex of public importance here between the early and middle imperial period. On inscriptional evidence the construction of this vanished building should be ascribed to the initiative of a noblewoman (perhaps with an estate in the Ostian suburbs but linked to the Roman aristocracy): a Terentia, wife of a Cluvius, who made her mark on other places in the colony and has already been studied in the past.¹²² Two articles appeared simultaneously on the relations between this Terentia and the site in question,¹²³ which do not challenge existing theories: two inscriptions refer to the lost building (one of which was found nearby), with identical mentions of a *crypta et chalcidicum* built by the woman in A.D. 6 on her own land and at her own expense, but authorized by the Senate and by a decree of the decurions. This would thus be the fullest expression of that 'tripolar' model of private euergetism, Roman and colonial participation that is emerging for many of Ostia's monuments. Beyond this point opinions diverge: there is no agreement either on the terminology used in the inscriptions or consequently on the architectural form of the various parts of the complex,¹²⁴ or, finally, on its purpose.¹²⁵ E. Fentress believes that it was used for slave auctions whilst D. Manacorda prefers to see it as a multi-purpose space for religious ceremonies, but also, for example, commercial activities.

In any case, there was certainly an intermediate construction phase between the Terentian buildings of A.D. 6 and the Tempio Rotondo of the third century. For Pensabene this was — as already proposed by Becatti — a 'quadriportico'¹²⁶ of which virtually nothing survives; a fragment of the *Fasti Ostienses*, mentioning a restoration of the *crypta Terentiana* in A.D. 94, may correspond chronologically to the construction of

¹²⁰ Though without entirely dismissing the date of A.D. 6, when Agrippa Caesar was *duumvir* with censorial powers at Ostia, perhaps with Tiberius Caesar. Pensabene previously espoused the theory of a late Augustan date and an initiative on the part of the colony's authorities (Pensabene 2007: 372).

¹²¹ The dedicatory inscription is thought to refer to a *patronus coloniae*, again perhaps an Acilius Glabrio (though he has not been identified with certainty). Cf. Geremia Nucci 2013: 233–9.

¹²² Her various Ostian benefactions, including the work under discussion, are summarized in C  beillac-Gervasoni *et al.* 2010: 122–5.

¹²³ Fentress 2005; Manacorda 2005.

¹²⁴ In our case, the *chalcidicum* would be a large porticoed vestibule and the *crypta* a covered portico, not necessarily a *cryptoporticus*: thus C  beillac-Gervasoni *et al.* 2010: 125 (but these theories are not universally accepted).

¹²⁵ No definitive conclusions are reached even by the references — provided by all the scholars mentioned — to the Edificio di Eumachia in the Forum at Pompeii, another example of female euergetism that certainly represents a parallel, but is no less controversial.

¹²⁶ Pensabene 2007: 300–3, and see the reconstruction plan, fig. 166.

the Domitianic Basilica and the adjoining presumed ‘quadriportico’, originally connected to the Basilica by five apertures and later turned into a square in front of the Severan temple. Given the evanescence of the archaeological traces, Rieger — who offers perhaps the most detailed analysis of all the relevant evidence — is rightly cautious regarding the architecture of the lost monument (conventionally termed ‘Tempio Rotondo 1’), but agrees on a date in the Flavian or Trajanic period.¹²⁷

The sacred area of Hercules and this god’s relationship with Ostia were among the hottest topics in religious history in the decade under consideration.¹²⁸ Fausto Zevi has written extensively on the topic:¹²⁹ of particular importance is his very early date (third century B.C., perhaps in connection with the Punic wars) for the establishment here of an oracular cult of Hercules, partly based on the ceramic finds. There was thus a (lost) temple far older than that now visible.¹³⁰ Zevi also discusses the god’s augural importance, alongside his functions as a deity of merchants and warriors and his ‘Roman’ connections, linking these features to the bases with the signatures of Greek artists found in the area’s third sacred building, the so-called Tempio dell’Ara Rotonda. These are clearly evidence of a *donarium* of exceptional importance, which Zevi hypothetically ascribes to individuals of the calibre of Sulla (the sack of Athens?) or Pompey (a recompense awarded to Ostia, after the victory over the pirates who had attacked it?).¹³¹ He also attributes this sacred site to Vulcan,¹³² on the basis of a complex argument¹³³ involving the transposition *in publicum* of a family cult of the Voturii, a decision thanks to which the Senate instituted the rites of Vulcan at Ostia¹³⁴ and the staff in charge of them, starting from the pontifex. In other words, contrary to what has always been believed, the Ostian Vulcanal is of relatively ‘recent’ origin (first half of the second century B.C.), though its roots lie in a far more archaic world.

Finally, Zevi hypothetically assigns to this building — in his opinion the colony’s only temple of Vulcan — the architrave with a dedication to this god that A. Pellegrino had previously attributed to the temple in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni (*supra*).¹³⁵ The formula *ex s(enatus) c(onsulto)* that we read here is thus further proof that the whole sanctuary, with its three gods (Hercules, Aesculapius, Vulcan¹³⁶), prospered thanks to the constant convergence of three interests: those of the central state, those of local powers¹³⁷ and those of the Roman élite, in accordance with a scheme that we have already seen at work in the colony on other occasions.

¹²⁷ Rieger 2004: 186–90.

¹²⁸ Boin’s dismissal (Boin 2013: 133–6, and see earlier Boin 2010a) of the attribution to Hercules of the cult practised in the sanctuary has been generally rejected (see e.g. Zevi 2012: n. 62; Pavolini 2014a).

¹²⁹ Zevi 2012: 547–63.

¹³⁰ For the patron of the latter, Zevi suggests — rather than the father or grandfather of the Augustan Poplicola, as argued by others — an unknown member of the city aristocracy.

¹³¹ The existence of an earlier phase of the temple before the current Flavian or Trajanic one was already known.

¹³² And not to Apollo, as suggested contemporaneously by A. Carini (2012).

¹³³ Already set out in full in an article shortly beforehand (Zevi 2009).

¹³⁴ Incidentally, M. E. Micheli and F. Zevi identify the scenes depicted on a frieze of the Antonine period from an unknown monument perhaps in the Forum area, reconstructed from the fragments in the museums of Ostia and Berlin, as depicting the myths of Hephaistos and Athena (Zevi and Micheli 2012). On the personnel of the cult of Vulcan see also Caldelli 2014.

¹³⁵ Pellegrino 1986. Steuernagel (2004: 161–3) also adopts the hypothesis that this dedication referred to a second, smaller temple of Vulcan, perhaps Julio-Claudian (though he does not specify the location either of the first or of this hypothetical second sanctuary of the god).

¹³⁶ Their cults may have been established in the area in this chronological order. At its centre was an ‘Aula delle Are’, whose altars may be evidence of ancient open-air rituals, later moved into the temple buildings in around the second century B.C.

¹³⁷ The *duumviri* dedicated the inscription studied by Pellegrino on the occasion of the refurbishment of a pronaos, and Zevi notes a chronological correspondence with the second phase pronaos of the Tempio dell’Ara Rotonda.

Scholars have recently devoted almost as much attention to the cult of the Dioscuri at Ostia as to Hercules or Vulcan. The hypothesis that the so-called Tempietto Repubblicano on the corner of the Decumanus and Via dei Molini was dedicated to Castor and Pollux and to Neptune was seen as ‘possible’ by Rieger¹³⁸ and Steuernagel,¹³⁹ but not by other authors, since it is based exclusively on the text of an inscription of uncertain provenance.¹⁴⁰ However, interest in the issue was rekindled by the geophysical survey and test excavations carried out by German and American teams on the Tiber bank between the so-called Palazzo Imperiale¹⁴¹ and the Tor Boacciana.¹⁴² A large complex thought by the excavators to be a temple of the Dioscuri (perhaps established in the Julio-Claudian period) was found, set on substructures in the form of *concamerations*, which the archaeologists hypothetically identified as *navalia*; Van Haeperen,¹⁴³ however, considers these vaults too small for genuine war ships,¹⁴⁴ though — theoretically — they may have been suitable for small military vessels used to protect the river mouth.

The interpretation of this monument as a temple of Castor and Pollux — and the whole problem of the cult spaces of the two gods in Ostia — is linked to the interpretation of a well-known passage of Ammianus Marcellinus,¹⁴⁵ re-examined in depth by Van Haeperen¹⁴⁶ and Bruun:¹⁴⁷ it speaks of a sacrifice made in A.D. 359 by the *praefectus Urbi* Tertullus, who thus ended a famine afflicting the Roman people.¹⁴⁸ The problem is: where did the sacrifice take place and, consequently, where was the temple? Ammianus says ‘apud Ostia’,¹⁴⁹ but on a philological basis this does not necessarily mean, according to Bruun, ‘near Ostia’, in other words outside the city and specifically on the Isola Sacra,¹⁵⁰ but could mean ‘at Ostia’, supporting the hypothetical location proposed by Heinzelmann and Martin.

Another late source cited by Bruun, the *Cosmographia* of Pseudo-Aetichus,¹⁵¹ is often quoted in support of the theory that the Isola was not only home to the sanctuary of the Dioscuri but also where the annual equestrian *ludi* in their honour took place. However, Bruun’s entire analysis seems to challenge this and thus leaves open the possibility (not the certainty) that both the annual festival celebrated by the Roman magistrates and the games took place on the left-hand bank of the Tiber.¹⁵²

¹³⁸ Rieger 2004 (e.g. 259).

¹³⁹ Steuernagel 2004: 65, 167–8. Bruun (2012: 115–16) is also among those who note the possibility that there were two cult places of the Dioscuri in the colony (this would thus be their ‘minor temple’).

¹⁴⁰ cf. Pensabene 2005a: 504; Van Haeperen 2005: 240. Additionally, the connection with Neptune underlines the specifically ‘Ostian’ rôle of the divine twins as protectors of navigation, implicit throughout recent debate.

¹⁴¹ Where research and conservation work, particularly on the mosaics, have continued: cf. Spurza 2012. The mithraeum of the ‘Palazzo’ has been revisited by R. Marchesini, who — based on epigraphic evidence — has proposed, for the phases of the shrine, a different chronology in comparison with the previous studies of Spurza (Marchesini 2013).

¹⁴² Heinzelmann and Martin 2002.

¹⁴³ Van Haeperen 2006: 34 n. 15.

¹⁴⁴ In any case Augustus had by now moved the fleet from the Tiber mouth to Misenum.

¹⁴⁵ Amm. Marc. 19.10.1–4.

¹⁴⁶ Van Haeperen 2006: 36–41.

¹⁴⁷ Bruun 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Van Haeperen dates the ‘peak’ in food shortages to July–October of that year, thus ruling out that the episode took place during the winter period of *mare clausum* (from November onwards). But the rite at which Tertullus officiated was exceptional in nature: why, then, Van Haeperen later asks, did the ‘fixed’ festival of Castor and Pollux, patrons of navigation, take place at Ostia in mid-winter, on 27 January? Her explanation, though currently lacking alternatives, is fairly unconvincing: the protection of the gods was thus invoked for those who set sail anyway.

¹⁴⁹ It is worth noting the neuter plural (from *Ostium*), a less common — but possible — form of the city’s name, instead of the usual feminine singular *Ostia* (assuming that the text of Ammianus is not corrupt at this point).

¹⁵⁰ But this is what many scholars think, including Rieger and Pensabene (cit. in Bruun 2012: n. 5), or Van Haeperen herself (2006: 37–8), or Zevi (2012: 558).

¹⁵¹ cf. Ps.-Aetichus 1.25, in Riese 1964: 83.

¹⁵² However, we can ask whether there was sufficient space here since, as also borne out by recent non-destructive studies and the soundings in this sector of Regio III, the whole area must have been fairly heavily built-up.

Finally, Zevi¹⁵³ dates the introduction to Ostia of Castor and Pollux to an extremely early period (the fourth century B.C.) and shows that their rôle complemented that of Hercules (*supra*) on a common ‘maritime’ basis, with the former acting as gods of commerce and the latter as a primarily oracular and warrior deity.

The topography of Regiones II and I, with which we have dealt hitherto, has almost exclusively supplied bibliography on the colony’s public and sacred complexes. This is at least in part because these sectors of the city — revolving around the monumental centre — hosted the city’s annony, institutional and cult functions. Moving on to the more residential southern districts (Regiones III, IV and V), we are faced with problems and publications that mainly concern domestic and ‘service’ buildings.

Among the residential districts, the large Hadrianic rectangle of the Case a Giardino — a construction and urbanism project unique of its kind — has continued to attract most attention from scholars. I have already mentioned DeLaine’s 2004 article. S. Stevens¹⁵⁴ has developed some ingenious calculation and simulation systems confirming — and not just ‘empirically’ assuming, as has hitherto been the case — that these *insulae* had four storeys each¹⁵⁵ and that their total height was 60 Roman feet, in accordance with the imperial building regulations known from the sources. The article is also important for the district’s water supply. It is correct that the six fountains adorning it were more easily accessible to the inhabitants of the *insulae* at the sides of the rectangle than to those of the central blocks. As for the latrines, the author’s hypothetical reconstruction allows us to refute an often repeated idea: that the upper storeys of the *insulae* did not have them.

S. Falzone and N. Zimmermann deal with the same apartments in the central blocks.¹⁵⁶ For architectural and social aspects, the authors largely follow DeLaine’s hypotheses (*supra*), extending them to the typology of some *insulae* situated not at the centre but at the sides of the complex (Houses of the Graffito and of the Pareti Gialle). The conclusions regarding the distribution of the various pictorial schemes in different sectors and rooms on the ground floor are identical to those already drawn by S. Falzone in her 2007 monograph (*supra*) on trends in Ostian painting of the late Hadrianic and Antonine period. This is the date of the majority of the decoration in houses in the central blocks, which present close parallels, for example, with those of the *Insulae* of the Muse¹⁵⁷ and of the Ierodule (other houses in the so-called ‘garden’ rectangle). These are interchangeable and standardized schemes, to the extent that the authors attribute them to no more than two painter’s workshops active contemporaneously.

The Casa delle Ierodule,¹⁵⁸ on the west side of the complex, is a Hadrianic building whose excavation — begun in a partial and non-stratigraphic way in the 1960s and effectively unpublished — has been resumed with scientific criteria by a team led by S. Falzone.¹⁵⁹ It has given rise to a publication edited by Falzone and A. Pellegrino,¹⁶⁰ with a wealth of specialist studies by numerous authors.¹⁶¹ The volume covers not only

¹⁵³ Zevi 2012: 556–9.

¹⁵⁴ Stevens 2005.

¹⁵⁵ But the argument that, since the two lower storeys were connected by an inside staircase and belonged to the same owner (see *supra*), this must necessarily also have been true of the two upper storeys, now lost, seems forced.

¹⁵⁶ Falzone and Zimmermann 2010.

¹⁵⁷ Whose paintings are dated by Falzone, unlike others, to the Hadrianic period (Falzone 2007: 56–67).

¹⁵⁸ Or of Luceia Primitiva, from the name of an unknown individual attested by a votive graffito. On this see the paper by C. Molle (2004), connecting the *Fortuna Taurianensis* of the graffito to T. Statilius Taurianus, active in Ostia around the mid-second century and perhaps the husband of Luceia.

¹⁵⁹ The research took place in 2002–4 and covered rooms 5, 10 and 11 (part of the ground floor thus remains unexcavated).

¹⁶⁰ Falzone and Pellegrino 2014.

¹⁶¹ Chief among them the chapters on the extraordinary ‘microstratigraphic’ recovery of the collapsed painted plaster and in general on the conservation of the decorations and structures.

the excavation data, including the movable artefacts, but the residence as a whole. Its findings, emerging from the limited test excavations in front of the *insula*, identify the existence of an earlier building phase (with a portico, perhaps Julio-Claudian, with travertine columns) and suggest that, in the final Hadrianic arrangement, the famous ‘garden’ may have been just a paved courtyard, embellished with trees.

The book then illustrates all the aspects of the architectural configuration of the *insula* and its painted and mosaic decoration (now dated to around A.D. 130–140), for which I refer to the above remarks on the ornamental features of the Casa a Giardino in general: in this context, the Casa delle Ierodule is a particularly luxurious and elegant example of the residential *medianum* type.

The so-called Domus Fulminata, on the continuation of the Decumanus outside Porta Marina, has been thoroughly re-examined by L. B. van der Meer.¹⁶² He establishes a closer link between the building and the adjoining imposing funerary monument in tufa and travertine, which he dates to about 30–20 B.C.; he does not rule out the attribution of this mausoleum to a ‘great Ostian’ like the first Gamala.¹⁶³ However, of most significance are the conjectures on later developments. The area is thought to have remained in the ownership of the Gamalae, and the Domus Fulminata — for which the author confirms a foundation date of about A.D. 65–75 — may have been built by the Lucilius Gamala who was *duumvir* at Ostia in A.D. 71, as we know from the *Fasti*.¹⁶⁴ This would explain the connection that the house maintained with the tomb, where the famous ancestor of the Flavian magistrate may have been buried.

But was the Domus Fulminata really a residence? In this regard van der Meer reconsiders (and then rejects) the idea, often expressed in the past, that it was actually the headquarters of a college. The reason for ruling out this theory lies in his final interpretation of the central core of the building.¹⁶⁵ Van der Meer believes — another opinion that re-emerges periodically in the bibliography on Ostia — that the so-called ‘Foro di Porta Marina’, a rectangular colonnaded enclosure on the other side of the road, was the area sacred to Vulcan, whose cult places were often open-air and confined *extra muros*: this would thus solve a major mystery of Ostian topography (on all this, see above). However Vulcan was the husband of Maia, sometimes identified with the Bona Dea, and a known sanctuary of this goddess lies between the ‘Foro di Porta Marina’ on the one hand, and the road and the Domus Fulminata on the other. Finally, we know that the religious personnel in the service of Vulcan did not form a *collegium*¹⁶⁶ and were not numerous, and could therefore be accommodated — for rites and sacred banquets — in the *biclinium* at the centre of the peristyle of the *domus*, and perhaps in some of the rooms opening onto it. Van der Meer’s reasoning implies that we are dealing with a sort of *domus publica*, at the disposal of the *pontifex Volcani*, who officiated and perhaps even lived here. This would have occurred from the construction of the building by the Flavian Gamala (and we know that some Gamalae were priests of Vulcan¹⁶⁷).

This argument, nonetheless, provokes some doubts, less because the so-called ‘Foro’ is Trajanic-Hadrianic (but may have replaced an older sacred space) than due to the persisting uncertainties over the actual location of Ostia’s *Volcanal*. The areas where

¹⁶² Van der Meer 2005. The article, based on research by the University of Leiden (2003), also contains papers by other authors (N. Stevens and J. Stöger) on specific features.

¹⁶³ We know the dates attributed to him by recent studies, according to which this individual might have died at a very old age in around 30 B.C.

¹⁶⁴ On the family tree of the *gens* at Ostia, see now Manzini 2014. On the *duumvir* in question, *ibid.*:10.

¹⁶⁵ Aside from its commercial annexes (the *tabernae* facing onto the continuation of the Decumanus).

¹⁶⁶ Thence the rejection of the ‘corporative’ interpretation of the Domus Fulminata by the Dutch scholar, as I have said.

¹⁶⁷ Van der Meer 2005: 103–5.

fragments of the *Fasti*¹⁶⁸ were found are not decisive, since they are distant from one another, suggesting a significant dispersal of the panels for reuse (see n. III). Furthermore, the idea that the ‘square’ outside Porta Marina was a sanctuary, and specifically that of Vulcan, is explicitly rejected by some recent authors.¹⁶⁹ The problem, then, like others discussed here, cannot be considered resolved.

Studies in the south-western sector of the city, between the ancient beach and the edge of the excavations, have been boosted by the research projects of the Universities of Rome ‘La Sapienza’ (Terme di Musciolus) and Bologna (buildings in Block IV, IX). Altogether, the data thus collected have considerably enhanced our knowledge of this area, filling out the existing picture of a belt outside the city that flourished thanks to the presence of coastal roads later systematized with the creation of the Via Severiana. We now have confirmation of the extraordinary development of bath complexes, forming an almost uninterrupted sequence on the north side of this road and amounting to as many as six *balnea*, attested by old and new research.¹⁷⁰ In some of these complexes we see, in recurrent forms, the phenomenon of the late transformation into baths of buildings that originally had other functions.

We will now go on to examine individual finds. Between the Severiana and one of its *diverticula*, facing the Synagogue,¹⁷¹ the Terme di Musciolus were brought to light in several stages between the 1960s and 80s, but had remained unpublished: the documentation has now been reprocessed and published by M. Turci.¹⁷² The first two construction phases identified — between the Antonine and the Severan period, when the coastal road was built — belong to a building that did not serve as a bath: the baths were added in the late third- and fourth-century phases and entailed the laying of polychrome mosaics, some of which are figurative (including those with athletes and the *gymnasiarca* Musciolus); some of these were unfortunately stolen in 1981.

New studies were undertaken west of the Terme della Marciana as part of the ‘Progetto Ostia Marina’, a collaboration between the University of Bologna and MiBACT.¹⁷³ Two separate buildings can be identified, named A (at the centre of Block IV, IX) and B (south-east of the former, along Via della Marciana). Sector A coincides with the so-called Terme del Sileno, which in this case functioned as a *balneum* from their construction in the Hadrianic period and were then radically altered in the second half of the fourth century; given their size M. David considers them of potential public interest.¹⁷⁴ The building in Sector B (already partially uncovered in the 1970s) has a similar history: again the initial construction is Hadrianic with a refurbishment in the late fourth century, involving the insertion of a small *balneum*. In a final phase of use, between the late fourth and early fifth century, metalworking or in any case artisanal activities were carried out in this complex.

Moving up the western Decumanus, on the eastern side of the road, the so-called Schola del Traiano and the pre-existing buildings are among the Ostian monumental complexes

¹⁶⁸ Many do in fact come from the ‘Foro di Porta Marina’.

¹⁶⁹ See for example Steuernagel 2004: 91.

¹⁷⁰ These are (from east to west): the Terme di Musciolus, the *balneum* documented in the excavations of the late 1970s (Pavolini 1981), the imperial baths of Porta Marina or della Marciana, the modest independent facility on the south-east corner of the latter (IV, X, 2), and the two *balnea* discovered *ex novo* in Block IV, IX.

¹⁷¹ O. Brandt (see Brandt 2004), in the context of a project of the University of Lund, has revisited the phases of this building, confirming the existence of a Synagogue already in the first century, in contrast with the previous hypothesis of L. M. White.

¹⁷² Turci 2014.

¹⁷³ David 2014.

¹⁷⁴ A problem that they may share with the Terme del Nuotatore (*infra*). However, in M. David’s reasoning there does not seem to be sufficient support for the theory — presented as an alternative to the ‘public’ hypothesis — of a connection with the Edificio dell’Opus Sectile, located even further west.

on which — thanks also to new excavations¹⁷⁵ — the greatest discoveries have emerged. We cannot yet do full justice to this debate, in part because the ‘Schola’ was one of the most discussed areas during the Secondo Seminario Ostiense (2014), whose proceedings are in press.¹⁷⁶ However, some wide-ranging analyses by various scholars are already available and I will attempt to summarize their positions.

Chronologically, the oldest building attested here is the *Domus dei Bucrani*, unknown before the excavations of recent years. We now have a definitive publication of this discovery,¹⁷⁷ consisting mainly — aside from the contextualization of the *domus* and its phases (initial construction in 60–50 B.C., partial new painted decoration in 40–30 and destruction in 20–10)¹⁷⁸ — of four chapters by J.-M. Moret:¹⁷⁹ together, these texts form a sort of very long unitary essay devoted to the ‘*oecus* of the Dwarves’ and its extraordinary Second Style painting cycle (40–30 B.C. phase). Moret’s interpretations of this figurative programme are evocative, though they cannot be verified with certainty given the fragmentary preservation of the paintings:¹⁸⁰ they are based¹⁸¹ on the hypothesis of a connection between the motifs depicted in the *oecus*, the myths of the foundation of Rome and some festivals of archaic origin, mainly celebrated by the lower classes of Rome. Furthermore, according to Moret, the dwarves and deformed beings that appear in some scenes may allude to the conflicts of the second triumvirate and the antagonism between Antony and Octavian. The élites of Ostia were famously involved in these political struggles and in this context the painting with dwarves — according to Moret — may also be linked to a contemporaneous change in ownership of the *domus*: see below.

Fundamental reading on these events — and the building’s later history — is the reconstruction proposed in an article by C. Bocherens and F. Zevi,¹⁸² based on some epigraphical materials found at the site at different times: a *fistula* and two stone fragments of a single inscription. The authors conclude that the complex still had a residential function in the Antonine period and was owned by C. Fabius Agrippinus, the suffect consul of A.D. 148. But their argument goes much further back in time, seeing in this building plot a fairly exceptional example of continued ownership, despite the succession of residential buildings each constructed on the rubble of its predecessor. After the destruction of the *Domus dei Bucrani* and following a significant raising of the floor level, a peristyle *domus* was built in the mid-Augustan period: it was already known, but Bocherens and Zevi now identify its owner as a C. Fabius Longus, ancestor of Agrippinus.¹⁸³

At the other chronological extreme, this continued presence in the area of the same aristocratic family was interrupted only when a figure with the same *cognomen* as the consul of A.D. 148 — another Fabius Agrippinus, then governor of Syria — was murdered in A.D. 219 on the orders of Elagabalus, and his properties were confiscated.

¹⁷⁵ Undertaken, from 2000 onwards, by the Université Lyon II (J.-M. Moret and T. Morard), in collaboration with the Soprintendenza di Ostia.

¹⁷⁶ Among the organizers of the seminar was T. Morard, whose paper in the proceedings is thus awaited particularly eagerly. As for the preliminary excavation reports hitherto published, see among others Perrier 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Bocherens 2012.

¹⁷⁸ cf. Morard and Girard 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Bocherens 2012: 49–108; 109–35; 137–62; 163–77.

¹⁸⁰ cf. the review by M. Papini (2013), very critical especially of the strongly conjectural aspects of Moret’s reconstructions.

¹⁸¹ I leave out here strictly stylistic considerations and the connections (also queried by Papini) that Moret establishes with the presence at Ostia of Hercules, already discussed *supra*.

¹⁸² Bocherens and Zevi 2007.

¹⁸³ On the *Domus dei Bucrani* the positions of the two scholars diverge (*ibid.*: n. 36): Bocherens believes that the Ostian Fabii possessed it from its construction in around 60 B.C.; Zevi, only from the redecoration phase of 40–30 B.C.

Only then¹⁸⁴ (as confirmed by the pottery and coin finds) was the splendid building now visible constructed; it may have been a collegial seat, though there is no certainty regarding the *corpus* that occupied it.¹⁸⁵ However, it was probably not used for long, since the building works of the fourth century suggest that at this time the structure was again turned into a *domus*. For the latter developments we must await the definitive publication of the data from the new excavations.

On the corner of the western Decumanus and Via del Pomerio stands a building traditionally thought to be Ostia's *macellum*. This interpretation was challenged after the soundings of the University of Augsburg and the considerations of the excavators, who did not, however, suggest an alternative attribution.¹⁸⁶ Now F. Marini Recchia¹⁸⁷ re-examines some known epigraphical fragments alongside other recently identified ones and offers a stringent analysis and his own rendering of the probable inscription on the façade of the *macellum*. It was built, *de sua pecunia* and *in solo privato*, by two wealthy freedmen of the Julio-Claudian family, a Nymphodotus and a Pothus: the latter was the former's ex-slave, and the names of both are also present in other inscriptions.¹⁸⁸ Finally, a panel previously published by H. Bloch is thought to commemorate the refurbishment of the meat market under Trajan by an unknown *curator*; on this occasion the above text, dating to the early imperial period, was copied without variations and inserted into the new inscription.

As for the function of the building facing onto Via del Pomerio, though Kockel and Ortisi's observations are undoubtedly well founded, Marini Recchia does not accept that they rule out the standard interpretation, particularly as all the inscribed materials cited come from the complex of the so-called *macellum* and the adjoining Tabernae dei Pescivendoli. Finally, the scholar asks what relation there may have been between the *macellum* built by the first Gamala and the foundation of the two freedmen.¹⁸⁹

Moving on to the Campo della Magna Mater, Rieger's complete re-examination of the Ostian rites of the Phrygian gods¹⁹⁰ confirms, among other things, that the cult structures of the Campo were initially built in the first century, probably during the principate of Claudius,¹⁹¹ and that — after some works in the Hadrianic period — the main renovation phase (and most of the epigraphical dedications and votive statues) dates to the time of Antoninus Pius.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ And not around A.D. 145–55 as in the traditional chronology.

¹⁸⁵ The old hypothesis that these were *navicularii* has now been rejected by most scholars (but is surprisingly still accepted without variations by Rohde, see Rohde 2012: 113–17). The attribution to the *fabri navales*, who owned the temple in front, has also been called into question.

¹⁸⁶ Kockel and Ortisi 2000.

¹⁸⁷ Marini Recchia 2014.

¹⁸⁸ Among others, a funerary dedication (from the Via Laurentina necropolis) to Pothus, who held some minor posts and was an *Augustalis*. Other epigraphical finds are two dedications by the same individual to Drusus and Germanicus.

¹⁸⁹ However, the author oddly fails to mention either the later transformations of this complex, or A. Gering's theories on the very late restoration of a *macellum*, which may or may not be this one (see *infra*).

¹⁹⁰ In the following years, an equally extensive survey was conducted by D. Rohde (Rohde 2012: 208–36), focusing particularly on the activity and composition of the *collegia* connected with these cults (*dendrophori*, *cannophori* and *bastiferi*) and their strong influence on life in the city.

¹⁹¹ As is known, he promoted a radical 'reform' of the festivals of Cybele and Attis. The same conclusions were reached in the 1990s by the Spanish archaeological mission, whose soundings in the Campo have remained virtually unpublished.

¹⁹² Significantly, this emperor also introduced some important changes to the Phrygian rites. Pensabene proposes a slightly different chronological sequence in his critique of Rieger (Pensabene 2005a: 528); see also, for the works of the fourth century in the Schola degli Hastiferi, Bruno and Pellegrino 2012. We should also mention (see Rieger 2004: 158–9) the absence of communication between the sanctuary on the one hand and the Terme del Faro and the Mitreo degli Animali on the other, and the theories on the tubs or basins inserted into the access stairs to the Tempio di Cibele (for the sacred pine trees of Attis?) and in the *Attideum* (for purification rituals?). However, according to Steuernagel (2004: 231), any conclusion regarding this evidence is hypothetical.

The completeness and accuracy of all the documentation devoted by Rieger to the Campo are not doubted,¹⁹³ but this has not exempted even this chapter of her book from criticisms. I have already mentioned some; other critiques have focused on the author's tendency to backdate some epigraphical and archaeological evidence present in the sanctuary.¹⁹⁴

Finally, Rieger has raised doubts about the *fossa sanguinis* for the *taurobolia*,¹⁹⁵ according to Calza cut into a tower of the Republican walls next to Porta Laurentina. The (now universal) rejection of Calza's theory is shared by Steuernagel¹⁹⁶ and Van Haeperen.¹⁹⁷ They add some considerations deriving from recent trends in studies of the cult of Cybele (also mentioned by Rieger), which tend to deny that the *taurobolium* was actually the bloody initiation ritual described by Christian apologists of the fourth century.

We end our topographical tour inside the walls of Ostia with the new theories of A. Pellegrino on the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria¹⁹⁸ and finally by examining the Terme del Nuotatore. I have already discussed these citing a monograph on material culture,¹⁹⁹ another volume in the same series²⁰⁰ was devoted to an overall reconsideration of the building's occupation phase, obtained thanks to a very detailed 'translation' — in contemporary archaeological parlance — of the stratigraphic recording of the excavation, undertaken many years ago (between 1966 and the first half of the 1970s). The hard work of the book's authors is evident from both the chronological tables by phases and activities²⁰¹ and the high quality of the plans, sections and architectural reconstructions.

As concerns the historical contents, the confirmation of the building's initial chronology — in the Flavian period — allows us to establish a connection with two known facts. First, Maura Medri²⁰² believes that the cistern of the baths was supplied by the Domitianic *castellum aquae* at Porta Romana. Second, the discovery — in nearby Via del Sabazeo — of an inscription attesting work by Vespasian on an aqueduct²⁰³ suggests a unitary plan by the Flavian emperors aimed at increasing the colony's water supply, especially to its south-eastern districts.²⁰⁴ The epigraphical evidence is also crucial for the interpretation of the Trajanic-Hadrianic phase of the *balneum*, the date of the *fistulae* inscribed with the name of two related noblewomen, Larcia and Arria Priscilla. Aside from the genealogical issues and the opinions of earlier scholars, M. Medri²⁰⁵ thinks that we are dealing with a private act of munificence, connected to the contemporaneous refurbishment of the baths. This does not conflict with her conviction that the Nuotatore complex was a public building, given its size (between

¹⁹³ See the appendices with entries on the sculptures and other votive finds, inscriptions, etc.

¹⁹⁴ Steuernagel (2004: 77–8) and Pensabene (2005a: 515–16) reject the attribution of some dedications in the Tempio di Bellona to the early imperial period (Rieger 2004: 106–8), preferring the traditional second-century date (and Pensabene does not consider the first-century sculptures found on various occasions during excavations to belong to the cult, but as possibly reused). Furthermore, for Van Haeperen (2005: 237) the Flavian/Trajanic date of some building work in the Campo is surprising (see the summary of the phases in Rieger 2004: 119, tab. 3), though she does admit that there are stratigraphic and pictorial reasons to support a phase in the second half of the first century for the aforementioned Tempio di Bellona.

¹⁹⁵ Rieger 2004: 110–12.

¹⁹⁶ Steuernagel 2004: 231–7.

¹⁹⁷ Van Haeperen 2005: 238–9.

¹⁹⁸ Pellegrino 2006, especially on the Severan mosaic in Room H and its possible symbolic interpretations. On the yet later phases of the house, see *infra*.

¹⁹⁹ cf. above (Panella and Rizzo 2014).

²⁰⁰ Medri and Di Cola 2013.

²⁰¹ 70 Activities and 687 US (= *Unità Stratigrafiche*).

²⁰² In Medri and Di Cola 2013: 87–94.

²⁰³ *supra*, n. 48.

²⁰⁴ See in the same vein also Cébeillac-Gervasoni *et al.* 2010: 147–8.

²⁰⁵ In Medri and Di Cola 2013: 94–6.

that of Ostia's large imperial complexes and that of normal *balnea meritoria*) and the existence of a palaestra, not usually present in private baths. Certainly, in light of these new considerations, we can suggest a structure serving not a single district but a larger sector of the city, or even the whole colony. The building's history, before its abandonment (see below), nonetheless ended with a further transformation in the Severan period, entailing a subdivision into two sectors and the probable residential use of one of these, in line with the signs of difficulties that began to emerge — in my opinion — during the first half of the third century, in various aspects of the city's life.²⁰⁶

LATE ANTIQUITY

Ostia's late imperial phases (between about A.D. 250 and 450) remain an open critical problem, perhaps more so than the various aspects of the city's earlier history. The hypothesis of a first serious crisis in the system of *insulae* and service buildings at Ostia in the second half of and towards the late third century²⁰⁷ has been fully confirmed by new discoveries and studies. The early date (from A.D. 230–40) of the abandonment phases of the Terme del Nuotatore remains unchanged after the re-examination of the complex by M. Medri and V. Di Cola (see above). For the Casa di Diana we have no certain evidence of a final construction period lasting until the late fourth century,²⁰⁸ and the most plausible hypothesis thus remains the traditional one of abandonment in around A.D. 270–80. But above all, a fact of enormous importance was provided by the aforementioned study of the Casa delle Ierodule,²⁰⁹ the first major stratigraphic excavation of the destruction layers of a residential building at Ostia. The archaeologists have shown that the abandonment deposit of the ground floor, the collapse of the ceilings of the upper floors and the spoliation of the brick walls of the *insula* date at the latest to the early fourth century, and that this house did not even see the poor and precarious occupation of the upper storeys (above the deposits) found in other *insulae*.

Contrasting with the serious difficulties experienced by the ancient colony at this time²¹⁰ is a group of well-known aristocratic *domus* with luxurious decoration, a true architectural type that first appeared at Ostia in around the Gordian period²¹¹ and whose development lasted until the early decades of the fifth century. Among the most recent research

²⁰⁶ Little has been written on Ostia's necropoleis since M. Heinzemann's exhaustive monograph (2000), but see Bedello Tata 2005a for the re-examination of the Augustan Tomb 18 ('della Sacerdotessa Isiaca') in the Via Laurentina necropolis. For the colony's immediate suburbs in imperial times see, among the few other studies, Camardo *et al.* 2010, with a new reconstruction by phase of the history of the so-called 'Villa di Plinio' at Castelfusano.

²⁰⁷ On the probable historical causes cf., alongside my earlier articles, Pavolini 2016 (an attempt to reconsider the whole issue of late Ostia).

²⁰⁸ As believed by the editor of the report on the recent excavations (Marinucci 2013: 56); for an argument against this theory, see Pavolini 2016. Some remains of walls might, however, date to a period of late and impoverished reoccupation of the ground floor.

²⁰⁹ Falzone and Pellegrino 2014.

²¹⁰ The negative phenomena characterizing various aspects of the building heritage of the period are ascribed by many scholars to a series of earthquakes thought to have struck Ostia, especially in A.D. 275–76, 345–46 and at an unspecified point in the fifth century. This is a genuine recent interpretative trend, embraced by, among others, A. Gering, whose articles will be discussed below: however, it lacks a secure scientific basis. Papers by eminent seismologists have noted the lack of certain historical evidence for these earthquakes and the absence of documented consequences at Ostia (Guidoboni 1989: 199; Galadini and Galli 2004; Galli and Molin 2012, and cf. also Galadini *et al.* 2006: 400–2, challenging the idea that the rotation observed in a pillar in the Piccolo Mercato is of certain seismic origin).

²¹¹ An article by G. Gessert (2006) suggests a much earlier chronology for one of the residences of this type, the Domus del Tempio Rotondo (though the interpretation of its previous building phase as the seat of a *collegium* does not seem to me well-founded). A new examination of this area is needed.

Pensabene records all the decorative architectural elements found not only in the aristocratic *domus*, but in all the monumental complexes of Ostia and Portus between the mid-third and early fifth century:²¹² this is the most complete documentation hitherto published on these features and has made it possible to modify or refine many chronologies.

Secondly, the catalogue of certain or presumed aristocratic residences has seen some new additions with respect to the ‘canon’ established by G. Becatti: these complexes are always highly luxurious and monumental. The so-called Edificio dell’Opus Sectile outside Porta Marina, famous for its marble decorations and much debated on an interpretative level, is now usually thought to be a residence,²¹³ the richest and perhaps the largest in Ostia. The so-called Schola del Traiano is considered with a high degree of probability to be a luxurious *domus* (cf. *supra*) during the fourth-century occupation phase. Finally, the so-called Sede degli Augustali on the Decumanus (Regio V) can no longer be considered as the meeting place of this college after the well-founded criticisms by M. Laird of G. and R. Calza’s old theories:²¹⁴ many believe that in the fourth century it may have been used as a house (during this phase it presents some of the features typical of late Ostian *domus*).²¹⁵

Many recent studies have discussed these residences as a group. In addition to Pensabene’s work, R. Tione²¹⁶ concentrates particularly on some *domus* considered to be ‘minor’ (but in fact very interesting, for their architectural typology if nothing else) and on specific problems relating to building techniques, with confirmation of the late use of *opus reticulatum* in private construction at Ostia. The proceedings of the annual AISCOM²¹⁷ conferences also contain numerous papers on the mosaics and *sectilia* of Ostia (especially late Ostia), most notably an essay by Pensabene on the form taken by reuse and late restorations in floor coverings²¹⁸ and two articles by M. Bruno and F. Bianchi.²¹⁹ In the first of these, the unusual mosaics of some rooms in the Domus dei Pesci and in the Domus del Protiro stand out: here, in the mid-third century A.D., the patrons attempted to reproduce the ‘refined’ decorative motifs of the early imperial period. In the second article, the authors highlight the heterogeneity of the mosaic schemes adopted in the fourth-century Domus del Ninfeo: for Room H they speak, as for the aforementioned cases, of copies of ‘antique’ motifs, whilst the mosaic in Tablinum D is qualitatively on a par with the most important examples known not just at Ostia but even in Rome.

Two of my own recent studies reconsidered, after some years, the problem of the ‘major’ Ostian *domus*: the first attempted to contextualize them historically as a group,²²⁰ whilst the second examined two case studies, the adjacent houses delle Colonne and dei Pesci.²²¹ In the transition between the third- and fourth-/fifth-century phases, the crisis in the relationship between aristocratic residences and small-scale commerce was accentuated

²¹² Pensabene 2007: 470–546, and see also *ibid.*: 547–55. Cf. also the section on the marble warehouse in the former Tempio dei Fabri Navales, with the determination of the provenances and the re-examination of the well-known stamps bearing the name of the owner, a Volusianus, confirming a date in the late fourth or early decades of the fifth century (*ibid.*: 407–17).

²¹³ Arena 2005, and see previously Guidobaldi 2000.

²¹⁴ cf. Laird 2000. This is a complex argument, connected with the alternative hypothesis on the meeting place of the Augustales, according to some the so-called Curia in the Forum: this is Meiggs’ theory, taken up by Laird and, as we know, by Rieger. However, the question still remains open.

²¹⁵ cf. Rieger 2004: 35–6, 176; Steuernagel 2004: 114–15; Pavolini 2012.

²¹⁶ Tione 2004.

²¹⁷ Associazione Italiana per lo Studio e la Conservazione del Mosaico.

²¹⁸ Pensabene 2005b.

²¹⁹ Bruno and Bianchi 2012; 2014.

²²⁰ Pavolini 2011.

²²¹ Pavolini 2014b. For the Domus dei Pesci I was able to use the results of one of the first stratigraphic excavations in the under-floor layers of an Ostian *domus* (Zevi *et al.* 2007).

sharply, with the abolition of numerous *tabernae*, and the demographic crisis in Ostia worsened: single-family *domus* invaded the space previously occupied by one or more intensively inhabited *insulae*, whose upper storeys (previously used for rented apartments) were usually abandoned or incorporated into aristocratic residences. The most striking instances of these developments can be found in some of the most luxurious and latest houses (the Domus del Ninfeo, dei Dioscuri, dei Tigriniani,²²² dating to the second half of the fourth and the early decades of the fifth century): it is no coincidence that they are concentrated in the western sector of Ostia, in connection with the route of the Via Severiana²²³ and its continuation in the urban area, leading — via the Decumanus and Via della Foce — to the river crossing and Portus.

At the same time, the architectural typologies based around a central peristyle (still adopted in the third century) fell into disuse and more irregular schemes were established, suggesting possible differentiated internal pathways for the family of the *dominus*, visitors and slaves.²²⁴ From the point of view of social history, the occupants of these residences, virtually all unknown, were probably members of the Roman senatorial class (of whose presence in the city there are epigraphical traces) or of the surviving local élites.²²⁵ Evidently these individuals found it economically advantageous to buy buildings cheaply²²⁶ and turn them into wealthy houses in order to control, from a discreet distance, trade at nearby Portus (*infra*), in which the aristocrats were interested either for private reasons or because they held posts in the *praefectura annonae*²²⁷ and the *praefectura Urbi*. Finally, it is highly likely that these houses were frequently bought and sold, or even rented, since the *domini* might need them only for certain seasons of the year or during their tenure of specific offices.

Studies of domestic architecture certainly do not exhaust the research potential offered by late antique Ostia. Douglas Boin's recent monograph tackles this topic as a whole,²²⁸ but his analysis of the archaeological evidence is partial and his methodological

²²² Previously believed by some scholars to be the city's Christian Basilica: it actually had a residential function, as demonstrated in Brenk and Pensabene 1998–99.

²²³ On the numerous bath complexes facing onto the final stretch of the coast road and in use until the fourth century see *supra*. On Ostia's *balnea* in the late period see more generally Poccardi 2006, but the distribution of baths in the various city districts is better illustrated, in its diachronic development, in Medri and Di Cola 2013: 101–9.

²²⁴ Pavolini 2011, and see previously Brandt 2004 (for the part on late antique Ostia). The same methodology was applied in Danner 2014, especially for the Domus delle Colonne and del Ninfeo, with results that partly agree with mine.

²²⁵ The members (pagan and Christian) of these groups may have engaged in philosophical and religious debates implied by the subtle symbolism of the figurative decorations, which can be reconstructed only in part. See, for example, the problem of the portraits of the supposed Plotinus, known at Ostia from several copies, including two from the so-called Terme del Filosofo and its environs. In fact their identification as the Neoplatonic thinker is no longer accepted, but there is a tendency to return — following L'Orange, who proposed identifying these portraits as Plotinus — to a date of between around A.D. 250 and 270, rather than the Severan period (as others had claimed). The clearest recent review of the entire problem is by I. Romeo (2009; see also Papini 2011), but I am not convinced that the traditional interpretation is entirely wrong: the series of portraits (or just Romeo's specimens A–C, of which B and C come from the aforementioned Ostian site?) may deliberately recall a portrait type of an intellectual or sage, possibly applied to the real features of an unknown individual from Ostia. The issue is linked to the interpretation of the third-century phases of the building as a possible philosophical *schola* with an adjoining *balneum*: this structure stood between the two aristocratic houses della Fortuna Annonaria and del Protiro, and, hypothetically, the *domini* of the two residences may have organized debates in the collegial seat. In this context, the problem of the statuary from the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria (on which see Boin 2013: 191) also requires further study.

²²⁶ Thus also Gering 2004: 309–10. We have seen that the *insulae* were largely abandoned by the inhabitants when the commercial and annony activities that had once led Ostia to flourish came to an end.

²²⁷ See the interesting hypothesis that the owner of the Domus di Amore e Psiche was Numerius Proiectus, *praefectus annonae* in A.D. 393–4 and restorer of the nearby Tempio di Ercole (Coarelli 2011).

²²⁸ Boin 2013.

framework contentious.²²⁹ One of the main objects of Boin's study is the issue of the different religious identities (pagan or 'traditional', Jewish, Christian) present at Ostia during the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. The author examines the clashes — and to an even greater extent the interactions — between these religious groups and treats in detail the events in the city's Christian community, so that his work could be considered, title notwithstanding, as the first historical (more than archaeological) analysis devoted specifically to 'Christian' Ostia,²³⁰ although Boin's views in this matter remain decidedly personal.

Axel Gering's work offers, by contrast, a complete archaeological overview of the final centuries of Ostia's history, up-dated with respect to the bibliography of the 1980s. He paints²³¹ a very complex picture of the late third to fifth centuries, marked by dramatic inequalities, with a contrast between aspects of continuity in the embellishment of the city (also through an unprecedented profusion of marbles) and instances of crisis and serious decline. The monumentalization is concentrated in what Gering calls the *Promenade*, giving access to the city, the central area and the Forum (in other words, the east–west stretch of the Decumanus), and is manifested particularly in the construction of nymphaea, fountains, squares and porticoes. By contrast, the decline,²³² originated, among other things, by the closure of the river docks and the warehouses,²³³ led to population decrease, the closure or narrowing of many minor streets (invaded by ruins and debris), and the collapse of entire residential buildings — some abandoned for good, others reoccupied, but in a context of evident hardship.

Essentially, in this important essay Gering alternates between two tendencies: one leads him to draw all the consequences from a realistic depiction of the city's crisis as it emerges from countless pieces of archaeological evidence; the other induces him to stress — perhaps excessively — examples of late flourishing, moments of 'recovery' and new building initiatives,²³⁴ all of which nonetheless surely took place.²³⁵

Three further closely linked texts by the same author go in the same direction.²³⁶ In these, Gering adopts the same documentation criteria as in the previous article, such as the fine colour maps that, among other things, provide an enlightening representation of the phenomena of pedestrianization and blockages used to prevent road traffic entering

²²⁹ cf. my review (Pavolini 2014a).

²³⁰ Generally ignored in the decade under consideration, compared to the many earlier studies. See also Boin 2010b for a dating of the epithaphs for S. Monica and for Bishop Cyriacus to the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, perhaps under the influence of the style of Gregory the Great's works.

²³¹ See especially Gering 2004.

²³² An indispensable tool for interpreting this is Gering 2004: fig. 49, which finally gives us an overall archaeological 'map' of Ostian Late Antiquity.

²³³ *ibid.*: 300.

²³⁴ cf. especially *ibid.*: 306.

²³⁵ Specifically, between the late third and the first decade of the fourth century there appear to be signs of a renewed interest in Ostia on the part of central government, then emerging from the worst phase of the so-called 'military anarchy'. Well-known are the passages of the *Historia Augusta* on a new Forum of Aurelian near the sea (*Hist. Aug., Aurelian* 45.2) and on the 100 columns donated to Ostia by Tacitus (*Hist. Aug., Tac.* 10.5), but hitherto nothing of the sort has been found in the field. Additionally, the restorations under Aurelian of two gates in the city walls and the adjacent roads — identified in the aforementioned studies by the DAI and the AAR — were limited in extent, making it completely inopportune to speak of the 'Aurelian wall of Ostia' (Gering 2004: 309–10 and n. 32). Then there is the mint of A.D. 308/9–313, established by Maxentius and newly examined in two recent studies. One (Drost 2014) stresses the fact that this Ostian mint, founded for contingent reasons (the closure of that at Carthage after the revolt of Domitius Alexander), later increased in importance and — with that of Rome — remained the only mint active in Italy until its suppression in favour of the facility at Arles. In a slightly earlier article, Pesciarelli, among other things, interpreted the suppression of the Ostian mint by Constantine as a political 'vendetta' against a city that may have supported his adversary (Pesciarelli 2011). In any case, these signs of favour by the rulers of the late third century and of the Tetrarchs towards Ostia seem to have been fairly ephemeral.

²³⁶ Gering 2010; 2013b; 2013c.

not just roads, but entire districts (especially north of the Decumanus). However, the resulting picture contradicts the stated — but not detailed — existence of new markets similar to souks, and also of new production zones.²³⁷ More generally — leaving aside some individual building ‘microhistories’ in the areas of Via della Foce and Caseggiato del Sole, analysed by Gering — it is difficult to accept his idea that, between the fourth and fifth century, the reuse of ruins to reoccupy a certain number of *insulae* can be interpreted as the result of an intelligent, creative and planned ‘crisis-management’, with a view to a new and positive urban transformation, rather than as an expedient adopted — in an unplanned and often problematic way — to live with the ruins themselves.

In any case, in the same years the interpretative framework of late antique Ostia has been redrawn by Gering and his collaborators in another series of publications, with help from the results of the BKO project²³⁸ conducted between 2008 and 2010 by the Humboldt-Universität (Gering) and the University of Kent (Luke Lavan), and later continued by the German team alone. This stratigraphic study covered the city centre, between the so-called Foro della Statua Eroica and the road-fork west of the *castrum*, focusing on the Decumanus and the old Forum, with its baths and adjacent complexes: the main reports hitherto published²³⁹ are splendidly illustrated. One of the focal points of the study is the aforementioned Foro della Statua Eroica, with the adjacent exedra on the Decumanus: these spaces saw refurbishment and monumentalization phases that Gering and Lavan date to between the late third and the second half of the fifth century. As concerns its functions, the excavators believe that in its late configuration the Foro della Statua Eroica can be identified as the *macellum* restored by the city prefect Aurelius Anicius Symmachus in A.D. 418–20, as we know from an inscription found not *in situ*, but in the area.²⁴⁰

The second major zone covered by the BKO project is the colony’s ‘official’ Forum, and especially its porticoes, documenting in particular the relaying of the floors with reused marble slabs,²⁴¹ and their preparatory layers. These works followed one another over time and in Gering’s most recent publications the chronologies of their later phases present some oscillations: however, the scholar dates them to between the middle and the second half of the fifth century, or even later.

The published results of the BKO project lend themselves to numerous considerations and some criticisms. To verify the very late dates of the layers documented by the German and British teams we must await the complete publication of the pottery and coin finds. For the time being, we are doubtful of interpretations according to which, for example, the Forum continued to be Ostia’s civic centre long after the mid-fifth century.²⁴² Other assessments seem more prudent, for example seeing the Forum area in this period as a place where market stalls or wooden stands, for spectacles and events of various types, could be erected.²⁴³ The hypothetical identification of the complex of the Aula del Buon Pastore and the so-called ‘Basilica’ on the Decumanus (I, II, 3–4) as a late seat of the prefects of the *annona*²⁴⁴ or the prefects of the city, and the theories about the new administrative and cult activities established in the palaestra of the Terme

²³⁷ Gering 2013b: 265–6.

²³⁸ Berlin-Kent Ostia Ausgrabungen.

²³⁹ cf. Gering and Lavan 2011 (with a chapter by L. Kaumanns); Gering 2013a; 2014 (but a synthesis is also in Gering 2013c: 309–15).

²⁴⁰ CIL XIV S 4719.

²⁴¹ The reported findings of the Anglo-German archaeologists throughout the central area have made it possible, among other things, to date the *terminus ante quem* of the abandonment of the Tempio di Roma e Augusto and the reuse of its marbles to around A.D. 450 (see most recently Gering 2014).

²⁴² Gering 2013a: 222.

²⁴³ Gering 2014: 17.

²⁴⁴ Lavan 2012: 686–7. In my opinion it is more probably a *schola*, in the sense that this word took on in fourth-century Ostia.

del Foro seem insufficiently supported.²⁴⁵ Finally, it is not certain that the Foro della Statua Eroica did in fact host the *macellum* later restored by Symmachus, the more so since Gering also says that there may have been more than one late meat market at Ostia: the problem of the connection between this issue and the enigma of the building traditionally considered to be the colony's *macellum* remains open (see above).²⁴⁶

More generally, the adoption of an interpretative scheme more orientated towards continuity entails — in the most recent texts by the directors of the BKO project — a far smaller number of notes on the relations between this late and very late monumentalization of the city centre and the data on luxury residential architecture (where significant work is no longer documented after about A.D. 420), not to speak of the demise of the rôle previously played by guilds and their headquarters at Ostia.²⁴⁷

A new overall and convincing picture of how the city functioned in its last centuries of life, and its relations with Portus (see *infra*), is thus still lacking. Nonetheless, the enormous scientific importance of the BKO project is an established fact and — awaiting more precise chronologies — the data supplied by the programme directors allow us to move forward by at least a generation the start of what, in my opinion, can be considered the definitive crisis of the city. In absolute terms, I would currently tend to date an important breaking and turning point in the settlement's history to around the mid-fifth century, since recent stratigraphical information indicates that this is when some *domus* were abandoned.²⁴⁸

In conclusion, whilst no-one would deny the importance of the phenomena — in any case very well known — attesting a late antique architectural flourishing at Ostia, sometimes in luxurious forms, we nonetheless need to continue studying its nature, motivations and limits (spatial and chronological). We can already formulate some hypotheses: the aristocrats who continued to occupy the fine *domus* of Ostia may now have acted collectively as the city's *patroni* as the colony's old magistracies had vanished some time before (or, at least, are no longer documented). It was unfitting for individuals of senatorial rank to frequent a city marked too visibly by decay, and this may explain the unequal, fragmented and highly contradictory situation that seems to characterize the late antique city (*supra*). In other words, those members of the dominant classes who continued to take an interest in Ostia may have entrusted to the prefects of the *annona* and of Rome — prominent functionaries belonging to the same social class — the monumentalization of the entrance to the city from Via Ostiense (Piazzale della Vittoria), of the *Promenade* and of the Forum, alongside the restorations of the fourth and early fifth centuries in the most important spectacle and service buildings (the Theatre, the large imperial baths, the *macellum*).²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*: 688–9.

²⁴⁶ On all this see the discussion in Gering and Lavan 2011: 442–5, mentioning, among other things, the square in front of the Tempio Rotondo as one of the places where a meat market may have been established in the late period.

²⁴⁷ On the movement of the activities of the *corpora* essential to the Roman State to Portus, where they continued to function for a long time, the most complete treatment is currently Pensabene 2007: 439–52. As confirmation of the relatively early end of the Ostian guilds see also — in addition to the many known cases of reused inscriptions — the data on the movement and reuse at Civitavecchia, perhaps in the fourth century, of some inscriptions of an Ostian *corpus*, that is currently not identifiable with certainty (Caldelli and Slavich 2015), while other fragments surely belong to the Ostian *pistores* (Caldelli and Slavich *in press*).

²⁴⁸ From the test excavations conducted by M. Danner (Danner *et al.* 2013) we learn that the last phase of the raising of the floor in the Domus del Serapeo dates to the late fourth century (this is of no importance regarding the date when it ceased to be used), but above all that the abandonment stratigraphy of the Domus delle Colonne dates to around the mid-fifth century, despite some oscillations in the statements of the various authors of the article. The date when the sewer network of the so-called Schola del Traiano filled up is similar, based on the preliminary excavation data (see Perrier 2007, and I thank T. Morard for his personal communication confirming this).

²⁴⁹ I have already mentioned the theme of the 'collapses' and 'recoveries' that we can identify in the late urban history of Ostia. Without wishing to be excessively schematic, the data suggest a cyclical pattern: a first crisis

The repercussions of these high profile presences directly or indirectly benefited the city's remaining lower and middle classes, certainly impoverished and lacking significant means of sustenance, but, for example, still able to attend the theatre or frequent the public and private baths.²⁵⁰ As such, it is significant that the city did not shut itself into an 'autarchic' economic dimension²⁵¹ not even after the 'second crisis' at Ostia mentioned above.²⁵² This is demonstrated by two sets of data: the high proportion of amphorae from the provinces — especially Africa, but also the Aegean — and of table and kitchen ware from North Africa in the layers of the fourth to fifth centuries and even beyond,²⁵³ and the fact that even in the mid-fifth century the Ostian economy, no less than that of Portus, was characterized by a lively monetary circulation, as shown by an article by E. Spagnoli²⁵⁴ starting from a specific excavation, but of more general interest.

PORTUS

It is impossible to fully understand Ostia without studying Portus, from the creation of the imperial basins north of the river mouth and the development around them of an independent urban settlement, and the strip of land between the two cities, later named Isola Sacra. Here the existence of an 'Ostian Trastevere' of the imperial period had been known for some time, but no-one thought that this Ostia on the Isola, in other words on the right-hand bank of the natural branch of the Tiber, was of the size and importance revealed in 2014 by the magnetometric studies of the British universities that had been working in the area for years (see below). The results were initially disseminated exclusively through the mass media, but S. Keay has recently discussed them during the Terzo Seminario Ostiense (2015). For a historical and archaeological evaluation we must await their publication in the proceedings, but it is already clear that the geophysical data show the unprecedented and extraordinary image of a large 'Trastevere' made up of probable *horrea* and other possibly public buildings, and surrounded by a wall with towers.

Previous Italo-British surveys had already made it possible to re-examine many ancient remains present on the Isola,²⁵⁵ crossed by the Via Flavia (probably connected to Ostia by a bridge over the natural branch of the river) and by an artificial canal running parallel to the road: the latter discovery is new and of enormous interest. The Necropolis of Portus, by contrast, is less studied in recent research, though an important phase of excavation and conservation had been undertaken in the necropolis in the 1970s and 80s.²⁵⁶

in A.D. 250–80 (*supra*) was followed by stagnation and then a new wave of interventions and restorations, concentrated mainly in the last decades of the fourth century (a fairly similar reconstruction, though differently motivated, is in Gering 2010 and 2013b), until a second crisis supervened (between about A.D. 420 and 450).

²⁵⁰ I have already mentioned the latter, fewer in number than in antiquity (see Medri and Di Cola 2013: 101–9), but still present in the city.

²⁵¹ This did occur from the eighth century onwards and marked a radical break with the past (Martin 2005a: 128–30).

²⁵² This crisis in no way led to the immediate and total abandonment of the settlement, but to the definitive loss of that urban dimension that had hitherto characterized Ostia. But this is not the place to discuss the survival of a settlement until the ninth century, aside from the areas of 'Christian' Ostia.

²⁵³ On these aspects see Martin and De Sena 2005; Martin 2005a; 2005b; 2008 (for the parts on Late Antiquity).

²⁵⁴ Spagnoli in Danner *et al.* 2013: 230–6.

²⁵⁵ cf. Germoni *et al.* in Keay and Paroli 2011: 231–60.

²⁵⁶ Though there have been some new and important publications on individual groups or categories of finds. See first of all the fundamental review of Thylander's epigraphical catalogue, for the section concerning the cemetery (Helltula 2007). Cf. also the study of the corpus of mosaic emblemata from the necropolis (Bragantini 2005); the thematic discussions, perhaps excessively hypothetical, of E. D'Ambra on the 'collection' of sculptures from the tomb of Giulia Procula (D'Ambra 2006); the new analysis of the two terracotta reliefs with scenes of wine and oil selling by a Lucifer Aquatari(us?) (Ozçariz Gil 2008, with the precise identification of all the amphora types

North of the Isola Sacra and the Fossa Traiana, our archaeological knowledge of the imperial ports, the city of Portus and its territory has increased significantly in recent times: an aforementioned book²⁵⁷ summarizes most of these, gathering an impressive amount of data on all aspects of this issue. The volume summarizes the results of the Portus Project, an Italo-British research project²⁵⁸ started in 2006 (as a continuation of studies begun in previous years) and still ongoing. As already said, the methodological significance of the project lies, among other things, in the large-scale and combined use of geophysical surveying techniques, accompanied by traditional test excavations. The texts are the work of almost thirty authors: significant discoveries include geological and hydrogeological evidence that the Claudian basin was accessed from the west, via two stretches of sea at the sides of the lighthouse island (thus definitively adopting the Castagnoli-Giuliani theory).²⁵⁹ Another strong point of the book is the preliminary reports of the excavations in the so-called ‘Imperial Palace’, whose building phases have been reconstructed (indicating that it was also equipped with an amphitheatre-like structure).

Many chapters are devoted to a brief examination of the pottery and coins yielded by the soundings,²⁶⁰ and this is true both for the ‘Palazzo Imperiale’ and for the so-called ‘Antemurale’ (in fact an internal bank of the basin of Claudius on the south-western side). The result is one of the volume’s most important historical findings: the very late date of the so-called ‘Constantinian’ walls of Portus. Their chronology had already been moved to the early fifth century in the 1990s, but it is now fixed at around A.D. 475–90, with the identification of a *praefectus Urbi* of Odoacer as the possible patron. This and countless other data support the image of a late antique flourishing of Portus, with its chronological focal point far later than was until recently thought, during the decades in which Ostia was facing its definitive crisis: the city’s large Christian Basilica²⁶¹ was turned into a genuine church of canonical type (probably the cathedral of Portus) only in around A.D. 430.²⁶² On another level, the first signs of contraction of Portus’ *horrea* emerge only in the second half of the fifth century,²⁶³ but this did not entail their abandonment, to the extent that the walls intended to defend them were built at the same time. Also important are G. Boetto’s new interpretation of the Roman ships from the basin of Claudius;²⁶⁴ other publications by S. Keay, which — after *Portus and its Hinterland* — have tackled, among other things, the excavation and study of a possible building with *navalia* overlooking the hexagonal Trajanic basin;²⁶⁵ and the writings of C. Morelli and others, dedicated to the new (and often extraordinary) data on the

depicted). Finally, we should note an important physical anthropological study conducted on the skeletal remains from the necropolis (Bruun 2010).

²⁵⁷ Keay and Paroli 2011, described and discussed in greater detail in my review (Pavolini 2013).

²⁵⁸ Universities of Southampton and Cambridge, British School at Rome, Soprintendenza di Ostia and other institutions.

²⁵⁹ Keay and Paroli 2011: 2–5, 47–65.

²⁶⁰ But we should never forget the crucial importance of the grain trade, ‘not visible’ archaeologically: on this, for Portus, see Keay 2010, revising the idea that the creation of the Trajanic basin led immediately to a rerouting of the Alexandrian grain fleet from Pozzuoli to Portus.

²⁶¹ The excavation has now been definitively published in Maiorano and Paroli 2013.

²⁶² *ibid.*: 367–8 and *passim*. A concomitant sign is the dating of the ‘larger’ Basilica of S. Ippolito on the Isola Sacra to the period between the mid-fifth and the mid-sixth century (Fiocchi Nicolai 2015, whose theory is based on the convergent opinions of other scholars of Christian archaeology), against the traditional and earlier date first advanced by P. Testini.

²⁶³ Keay and Paroli 2011: 144 and *passim*.

²⁶⁴ See for example Boetto 2011.

²⁶⁵ Keay 2012b. See also Keay 2012c, and the particularly important fig. 2.9 (a reconstruction of the flows of maritime and river traffic between Portus, Ostia and Rome).

environs of Portus, and especially to the organization of the area of the *salinae populi Romani*.²⁶⁶

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is difficult to predict how future research will unfold in the coastal area where the cities of Ostia and Portus lie. This will depend in part on the resources available (currently scarce), which inevitably condition the potential for new research in the field. Given these economic constraints, it is to be hoped that efforts will concentrate mainly on the study of the materials already recovered rather than on new extensive excavations, as the finds from old surveys in many cases remain unpublished. Of particular importance is the large amount of pottery, whose analysis may help us to complete what is already a very interesting picture of Ostian material culture. It is also to be hoped that the geophysical studies both in the area south-east of Ostia and on the Isola Sacra (see above) will soon be definitively published, as this is the only way of truly understanding the actual size and layout of the ancient urban settlements. It is also important to continue (even with ‘traditional methods’) the Italo-British-led research at the site of Portus, the knowledge of which has increased notably over the space of a few years; also beyond the boundaries of the two cities it would be helpful to resume and extend research on the suburban areas of Ostia and Portus, which have considerable archaeological potential that has hitherto not been fully exploited.

The recent debate on the hottest historical topics (the religious sphere, the critical problem of late antique Ostia and its continuity, the issues related to construction, urban planning and social developments in the city and their transformations over time, etc.) may continue fruitfully if it is fed by new discoveries. The same could be said for those issues that have recently been somewhat neglected (the presumed ‘regal’ Ostia, the cemeteries, etc.). But we should never forget the need to allocate substantial and continuous funding to conservation and maintenance work which, thankfully, in recent years has been diligently undertaken, ensuring access to many buildings and areas that had long been buried in spontaneous vegetation.

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²⁶⁶ cf. Keay and Paroli 2011: 261–85; Morelli and Forte 2014; Cébeillac-Gervasoni and Morelli 2014; Caravaggi and Morelli 2014. On the salt pans we should also mention the study by E. Martelli (2013), which — on the basis of a new contextualization and a complete catalogue of the well-known clay figurines of *saccarii* — proposes the compelling theory that these represented the *genius* of the professional association of these workers, known from inscriptions.

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